



MÚSAEM CATHRACH NA GAILLIMHE
GALWAY CITY MUSEUM

Saint Bridget in the Schools' Collection

Between 1937 and 1939, pupils from more than 5,000 primary schools across Ireland compiled around 740,000 pages of folklore and local traditions for the Irish Folklore Commission. It is known as the Schools' Collection (see www.duchas.ie). Here is a small selection of material relating to St Bridget gathered by Galway schoolchildren. Why not try and find your school or a nearby school in the Schools' Collection to find local stories and traditions associated with St Bridget: (<https://www.duchas.ie/en/cbes/GA>)

“Long ago when St. Brigid was living in Ireland, there was a poor old pagan dying. He was in an old barn and he was lying on straw. There was a man passing by the barn, and he heard the poor pagan dying. St. Brigid's house was a short distance from the place. The man went for her. When she came she told the man to go for the Priest. The man and while he was gone. St. Brigid was telling him that he was dying. The pagan asked for the cross our Lord die on. She had no cross and she made one for him. She placed it on his chest, and it was supposed that it was that cross that converted him. When people heard about the cross, they kept it going on in honour of her. Up to the present day the people of Ireland are still keeping the custom. On the 31st January they get unthreshed oats and plait it. They get a potatoe and a stick, and put it over the door. When they are sowing the crop, they take down the oats and potatoe and bless them and that is the first potatoe and first grain of oats they sow. In some parts of Ireland, there is a general feast held on St. Bridget's Eve. The youngest girl in the house puts a cloak on her, and goes out, and kneels She knocks at the door and says, "down on your knees, and say your prayers and let in Bridget". The people answer "Bridget is welcome". Then the rushes are carried in an laid on the table. Then everyone makes a share of the crosses, and puts them aside to be blessed on all saint's day, and then all make a fest in honour of Saint Bridget. She is buried in the same grave as "Saint Patrick" and "St. Columcille" in Downpatrick in County Down.” (Kiltormer, Co. Galway)

“Long ago on Saint Bridget's Eve the people used to have feasts in honour of Saint Bridget who died on that day. On that the people had many old customs such as, making crosses and puting them up on the rafters. The crosses were made of rushes and straw woven round them. On that night also the Brideogs used to go from house to house gathering money and eggs. They used to be dressed in old clothes, and they used to have a doll with them to represent young

Bridget. Every house they went into, they danced and sang”. (Creggs, Co. Galway)

“Long ago it was the custom of the people to make crosses out of rushes on Saint Bridget's night. Early in the evening before the sun would set the man of the house would go out and cut a lot of long rushes and would bring them in to the house. After a while he would go out again and would tap at the door and the persons inside would open it. The man at the door would say, "Téigighidh ar bhúr glúnaibh agus abraigidh bhúr bpaidreacha agus leigigidh brigidh Nomtha isteach" [Go on your knees and say your prayers, and let St Bridget inside]. The people inside would do so and then he would be invited to a meal. After the meal they used make the crosses”. (Ardeevin, Co. Galway)

“An old custom connected with St. Bridget's Day is to make a cross and hang it on the roof. This is done because as St. Bridget was once travelling she got a drink in which there was poison and she made the sign of the cross over the cup and it broke in pieces.” (Windfield, Co. Galway)

“On St. Bridget's night the people used make crosses of straw and they used bury them in the fields that the year's crops in so that they would be good.” (Glenamaddy, Co. Galway)

“On St. Bridget's night the children go around with the Brideóg. Both boys and girls go around. They knock at the door and when it is opened they go in and say this rhyme:-
*Here's Saint Bridget dressed in white
Give her something in honour of the night
She is deaf and she is dumb
She cannot speak without a tongue
There are holes in her stockings and there are holes in her shoes
Give her something to mend the two.”*
(Oughterard, Co. Galway)