

FEAST of SAINT BRIGID – second patron saint of Ireland

A new Bank Holiday has been introduced in Ireland this year connected to the feast of St Brigid.

History of St. Brigid

St Brigid is considered a patron saint of Ireland and February 1st marks the first day of spring. Brigid is a Catholic and Orthodox saint. She was a pupil of St. Patrick and became famous for her kindness, mercy, and her miracles. In addition, Brigitte founded Ireland's most famous mixed (male and female) monastery in County Kildare.

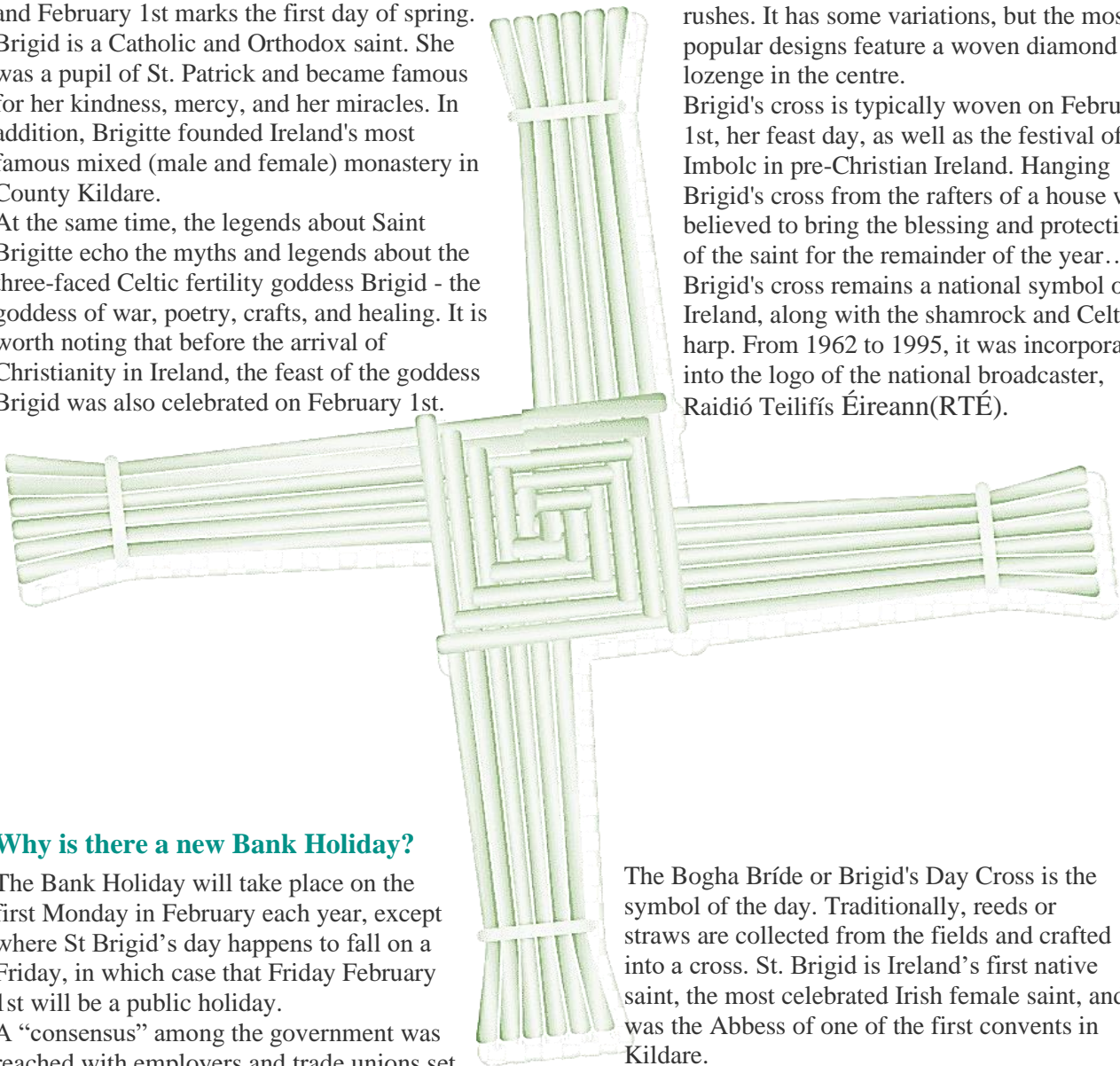
At the same time, the legends about Saint Brigitte echo the myths and legends about the three-faced Celtic fertility goddess Brigid - the goddess of war, poetry, crafts, and healing. It is worth noting that before the arrival of Christianity in Ireland, the feast of the goddess Brigid was also celebrated on February 1st.

Brigid's Cross

Brigid's cross is cross woven from straw or rushes. It has some variations, but the most popular designs feature a woven diamond or lozenge in the centre.

Brigid's cross is typically woven on February 1st, her feast day, as well as the festival of Imbolc in pre-Christian Ireland. Hanging Brigid's cross from the rafters of a house was believed to bring the blessing and protection of the saint for the remainder of the year....

Brigid's cross remains a national symbol of Ireland, along with the shamrock and Celtic harp. From 1962 to 1995, it was incorporated into the logo of the national broadcaster, Raidió Teilifís Éireann(RTÉ).



Why is there a new Bank Holiday?

The Bank Holiday will take place on the first Monday in February each year, except where St Brigid's day happens to fall on a Friday, in which case that Friday February 1st will be a public holiday.

A "consensus" among the government was reached with employers and trade unions set to name the 10th Bank Holiday after the patron saint as part of the pandemic bonus to thank the public in general, and frontline workers in particular.

The holiday is to help recognise the enormous sacrifices made by Irish people during the Covid pandemic and highlight better times ahead.

Also, a bank holiday on February 1st will bridge the considerable length of time between existing public holidays on January 1st and March 17th.

The Bogha Bríde or Brigid's Day Cross is the symbol of the day. Traditionally, reeds or straws are collected from the fields and crafted into a cross. St. Brigid is Ireland's first native saint, the most celebrated Irish female saint, and was the Abbess of one of the first convents in Kildare.

Imbolc

Imbolc is a Celtic pagan religious holiday celebrated from February 1–2 each year. Imbolc originated as a festival in honour of the pagan goddess Brigid, which marked the halfway point between the winter solstice and the spring equinox.

Imbolc was one of four Gaelic seasonal festivals, some of which still have echoes in the festivals of today. Along with Imbolc Beltane (May 1st), Lammass (August 1st) and Samhain (November 1st - All Saints' Day).