

GREEN CURTAIN THEATRE
ST BRIGID'S DAY PROJECT 2024

www.greencurtaintheatre.co.uk

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Information For Parents And Carers

1. What is this project?

Our project is to create a video to be shown on February 1st St Brigid's Day 2024. We want the story of St Brigid and her amazing skills, talents, creativity and achievements as a woman to form the heart of our project by displaying how these are present in young girls from across the Irish diaspora living in Great Britain. This video will be a compilation of short videos of girls performing.

2. Who can take part?

Any child who identifies as a girl and will be aged thirteen or under by the end of the school year 2023/2024. They should live in Great Britain or the Channel Islands. Our performers need to be either born in Ireland or have a parent, grandparent or great grandparent who were.

3. Will there be any adults in the video?

The video will be introduced by Deidre Fraser wife of Martin Fraser, Ambassador of Ireland to the UK. The rest of the performers will be children.

4. What are the children allowed to perform?

We are happy for the children to perform anything that **connects to St Brigid or Irish culture** provided their parents are able to film them on a Smart phone or Green Curtain Theatre can film them remotely. This could be:

- reciting a poem in Irish or English
- doing some Irish dancing
- performing a monologue in Irish or English
- singing a song
- playing an instrument in Irish or English
- talking about an activity such as playing GAA sports
- making something
- something else that is not on this list provided you contact us first. We can then talk this through with you.

5. How Long Should the Piece be?

There is no limit on minimum length, but the ideal length is between 1-2 minutes for an individual performer, slightly longer for a group.

6. Can you provide us with some suggestions of what to perform?

We will be happy to provide you with some ideas. Please contact anne@greencurtaintheatre.co.uk or 07803 015587 in the first instance.

7. Do the children need costumes?

The children should wear whatever they are comfortable in, however a bit of green or a 'bit of bling' is always nice if you have any around the house.

8. How do you do the filming?

There are two options: you can film your child or we can film them for you.

If you wish to film your child **yourself** (*most parents choose this option*) then you will need a Smartphone that has a video camera and sound. You should use the 'Landscape' setting on your phone. It is helpful for the young performers to be in a quiet room which is well lit. It is also helpful if we can video the children against a plain wall as they stand out better. The sound is usually better if the room has some soft furnishings in it.

- a) If you would prefer **Green Curtain** to film your child(ren) for you then you will need to have a laptop/P.C or similar that has a webcam (*most of these come as standard*). You will also need to have and access to Wi-Fi or broadband. Please get in touch if you don't have these as I am sure that we can help you find a solution.

9. Where will Green Curtain film the children?

All the children are filmed in their own homes or at a location of their parents choosing. We need the performers to be in a quiet room which is well lit and has space for the parent or carer to be out of site of the camera. It is also helpful if we can video the children against a plain wall as they stand out better. Don't worry if you don't have this as we can work around it.

Filming normally takes about half an hour but we would advise you to set aside an hour for this purpose. We will arrange two sessions with you a few days apart. The first is a practice session and the second the actual recording that we will use.

10. Do you need the filming done in any particular way?

In **Landscape** please. We also need you to **leave 15 seconds** from the time that you start the video on your camera on until your child **begins speaking** and **15 seconds from when your child finishes speaking** until you switch the camera off. This is so we can edit the piece without cutting into your child's performance.

- The children should begin by introducing themselves on camera. e.g. 'My name is X and I am X years old'.
- Say what they will be performing.
- At the or end of their piece we would like them to:
 - a) Say a few words about a woman who has inspired them and why.
 - b) Say what they would like to be when they grow up.
 - c) Say a few words on how they would like to change the world when they grow up.

Again, if you can leave a 15 second gap between when your child has finished performing and saying (a), (b) or (c) that would be great.

11. When do you need the film clips of the children by?

Ideally as soon as possible but before the end of the year. St Brigid's Day falls on

February 1st which makes it impossible for the closure date to be anytime in January as we need time to edit the piece together and distribute it before February 1st 2024.

12. What happens to the video once it has been made?

It will be broadcast on Green Curtain's YouTube channel from February 1st 2024. We will send you a link in advance to enable you to send it on to your family and friends. It will also go on our Facebook page.

13. What information do you keep?

We do not keep any information on your child other than their first name, age and the area they live in. We will keep your email address to allow us to communicate with you.

14. Will my child's name appear on the video?

Only their first name and a broad location e.g. Sorcha from Essex.

15. How much does this cost?

It is free to take part.

16. Where do we send the completed videos?

Please email to anne@greencurtaintheatre.co.uk or use We Transfer if the file is too big to send via email.

17. Who are Green Curtain Theatre?

We are a very small fringe theatre company who create and perform plays and videos which tell stories about Irish people living in Great Britain. We have been going for about eleven years. You can find out more about us from our website www.greencurtaintheatre.co.uk.

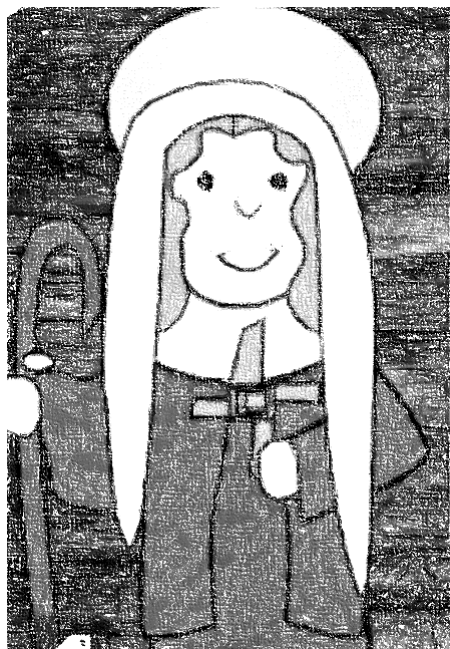
The Feast of St Brigid and Imbolc

St Brigid's feast day is celebrated on February 1st, the first day of Spring in Ireland and the beginning of the season when lambs are born. However, St Brigid's Day had been an important day and a festival long before St Brigid was born. This was because there was a Pagan goddess who had a similar name to Brigid and it was her special day too.

It is important to remember that whether people are celebrating the Pagan goddess Brigid or the Christian Saint Brigid on February 1st that they are celebrating a good and talented woman.

St. Brigid has been named as the patron saint of lots of things: babies, blacksmiths, boatmen, cattle farmers, children whose parents are not married, children whose mothers are mistreated by the children's fathers, the Clan Douglas, dairymaids, dairy workers, fugitives, Ireland, Leinster, mariners, midwives, milkmaids, nuns, poets, the poor, poultry farmers, poultry raisers, printing presses, sailors, scholars, travellers, and watermen. And of course she is a patron saint of Ireland. She is certainly a busy saint!

St Bridget of Kildare



St. Bridget was born in Ireland over fifteen hundred years ago in 452 AD. There were two main religions in Ireland at that time Paganism which had been in Ireland for a long time and Christianity which was brought to Ireland by St Patrick.

Legend has it that Bridget's mother Brocca who had been a Pagan was baptised into the Christian faith by Saint Patrick. Bridget's father was Dubthach a Pagan chief who sold Bridget and her mother to a Pagan man before she was born.

Life as a young slave would have been very hard for Bridget. This is because a slave must do whatever their master tells them to, go wherever they tell them. Your master was allowed to sell you to another family even if this meant never seeing your own family again. Imagine that!

Luckily for Bridget, she was able to stay with her mother for the first ten years of her life. Growing up, she was a good and holy child who always put other people's needs before her own. She fed the poor and healed the sick.

Bridget was returned to her father when she was ten years old. However, her kind heart and good nature meant that she wasn't the easiest person to live with. Every time she saw a poor person who needed something that was in her father's house, she would simply give it to them. One moment something useful was there- the next minute it was gone! Can you imagine never knowing if something you had left in your house would be there later on? How annoying that would be!

Bear in mind that all of this happened nearly 1,500 years ago so the details aren't as clear as they might be. Maybe Bridget asked her father before she gave his things away. One thing that is certain is that she always helped the poor.

In time Dubthach, her father became tired of Bridget's kind nature and took her to the king of Leinster to see if he would buy her. However, whilst her father and the king were speaking, Bridget spotted the King's jewelled sword. She took it and gave it to a passing beggar so he could sell it and buy food for his family.

Most people would have been very angry but the king was a Christian who thought deeply, he could tell that Bridget had only stolen his sword because she wanted to help someone. He told Bridget's father to free her from slavery with the words: *"Her merit before God is greater than ours."*

Bridget chose to return to her mother who was in charge of running a dairy for her master. But Bridget couldn't stop being kind and she gave a lot of milk away to the poor. On one occasion

she gave away all of her mother's butter! God rewarded her generosity and the butter miraculously appeared after she had prayed to Him. The dairy did very well too. After a time her mother was freed from slavery too.

Dubthach wanted Brigid to get married but she refused, saying she wanted to become a nun so that she could be married to God. Brigid prayed to God to turn her ugly so no one would want to marry her. Legend says that God granted her request. But later, after she had taken her final promises to be a nun, she became radiantly beautiful.

Saint Patrick and Brigid stayed in touch St Patrick heard her make final vows or promises to be nun. St Patrick said, *'She is destined for great things.'*

And he was right, Saint Brigid's started a monastery in Kildare, called the Church of the Oak. It was built above a pagan shrine to the Celtic goddess Brigid, which was beneath a large oak tree.

She also found two religious communities and a school of art that taught people how to do metalwork and draw beautiful illustrations.

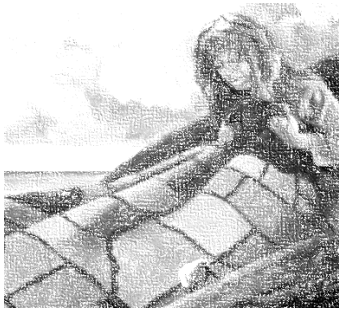
Pope Boniface made Brigid a saint in 1391 almost nine hundred years after her death. St Bridget's Day became a national holiday in Ireland in 2023 – one hundred and twenty years after St Patrick's Day had become a national holiday.



Stories That Are Told About St Brigid

St Brigid's Cloak

Brigid thought that the edge of the Curragh in Kildare would be the ideal place to start her monastery. It had ample oak forests for building and firewood. There was freshwater in a nearby lake and a large, fertile, open plain for growing food.



The King of Leinster, who had been kind to Brigid before, owned the land. She asked him if she could use the land, but he refused. He told her that he did not want to let go of the land that he had fought so hard to get.

Brigid was very disappointed. She asked her followers to pray to God that the King would change his mind. A few days later he asked Brigid to meet with him on the Plains of Kildare. Brigid wore her cloak because it was very cold. The King asked Brigid how much land she needed for her monastery. She told him that she needed '*as much land as her cloak would cover*'. The King saw how small her cloak was and agreed to her request straightway.

Brigid took off her cloak and told four of her followers to take hold of a corner each and walk in four different directions, north, south, east and west. As they walked away from Brigid, the cloak grew and grew and grew until it covered many hundreds of acres.

The King was amazed but he kept his word and granted Brigid the land for her Monastery. He was so amazed by this miracle that he sent his men to help her with the building. He also gave her food and other things she needed.

So it was on this land that Brigid founded one of Ireland's most sacred Early Christian monasteries in about the year 470 AD. It was often called The Church of the Oak.

A Cathedral dedicated to St. Brigid still stands on the site to this day, next to a wonderful Round Tower from the top of which you can look over the land that was covered by St. Brigid's Cloak!

St Brigid, the Beer and the Bathwater



One of the most famous stories about St Brigid was how she turned some ordinary bathwater into beer.

The story goes that one day, whilst St Brigid was working in a leper colony, someone came and told her that they had run out of beer. This was worrying because in those times people drank beer instead of water. They did so because many of the water sources close to villages and towns were often so infected that drinking this water could result in death.

Brigid was very worried that the lepers would die of thirst, so she prayed to God to turn the bathwater into beer. Once again God answered her prayers, and everyone said that the beer was delicious to drink.

Customs Associated with St Brigid.

St Brigid's Cross

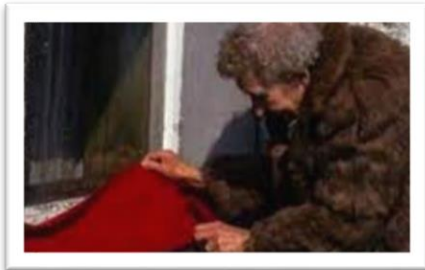


One of the most popular customs for this time of year is to make a St Brigid's Cross from rushes. The cross has four arms which are tied at the end. There is a woven patterned square in the centre.

There are two stories about how these crosses came to be popular. One is that Brigid was called to the bedside of a dying Pagan chieftain. She sat beside him to be with him in his final hours. While sitting by the dying man, Brigid picked up some rushes from the floor and began to weave them into a cross.

It is important to remember that these crosses were popular in ancient Ireland before they were renamed after St Brigid. They were hung over doors to protect the house from fire, illness and evil spirits.

The 'Brat Bride'



A custom that is still popular in some parts of Ireland is called Brat Bride or Ribin Bride.

People practising this custom leave a small piece of material outside their house on the 31st of January, the evening before the feast of St Brigid.

They believe that as St Brigid crosses through the country she touches the Brat Bríde, which is what they call that small piece of material. They believe that 'St Brigid's touch' gives the material special powers to ward off illness and pain in humans and animals.

The family keep this small piece of material in a safe place throughout the year and bring it out when they needed its help.

Two Poems to St Bridget

St Bridget

Born in Kildare
The Heart of the oak
Known for her cross
And growing her cloak

Kind and loving
Patron of the arts
On February 1st
She is in our hearts.

St Bridget

A humble girl born to a slave.
Her life and soul to God she gave.
A beauty, yet she always knew.
That she'd never marry when she grew

Brigid used a cross of reed.
To spread the word to those in need
Remember that every spring.
The joys St Brigid's story brings.

©

.....and a slip jig

<https://thesession.org/tunes/21524>

