

## Christmas Traditions with Loraine December 2023

[Lisa] Dia dhuit! (Hello!) This is Podcrawl Podchroal, the podcast from the McClelland Irish Library. I'm your host, Lisa, the Librarian, with Loraine Dalton Gist. On today's episode we'll talk about Christmas Traditions in Ireland.

Thank you for joining us, Loraine.

[Loraine] Dia dhuit thank you Lisa for having me.

[Lisa] Can you believe it's nearly time to deck the halls and celebrate Christmas? This year has flown by! But there's still time to prepare for the festivities, and get into the holiday spirit. What is a decorating tradition for Christmas in Ireland?

[Loraine] Most Irish families do not decorate before Dec 8th.

[Lisa] Which happens to be today!

[Loraine] Oh, we can both go home and decorate! In old Ireland, before christmas trees were introduced, people decorated with Holly and Ivy-the more berries on the holly the better luck for the coming year. Many people in Ireland still decorate with Holly. Churches built cribs to display the birth of Jesus and the arrival of the three kings.

[Lisa] I've also read that the candle in the window symbolizes when a family member was away or has died as a way to remember them. The light was seen as a silent prayer for their safe return home. It's a meaningful tradition to help families remember loved ones, especially during the Christmas season.

[Loraine] Another meaning of the Candle in your window which would be lit at sunset Christmas Eve to symbolize guidance for Mary and Joseph before the birth of Christ. The symbolic candle is explained to children, but they also were told the candle helps Father Christmas find their home.

[Lisa] We were talking recently about St. Stephen's Day, on December 26. Boxing day is also on that day, and that is what you celebrated growing up. Can you explain St. Stephen's Day and Boxing Day?

[Loraine] Saint Stephen was killed for his beliefs and considered the first Christian martyr. St Stephen looked after the poor and needy. According to an Irish myth, a wren betrays Saint Stephen, while he was hiding from his enemies. This is where the hunting of the wren comes from. While not celebrated in all parts of Ireland today, it's still celebrated in some rural areas of Ireland. Today a fake wren is attached to a pole and people dress up in straw costumes and parade through the towns and villages.

Boxing day is thought to have come from traditions of charitable giving. People that were better off would box up their extras from Christmas and give it to the less fortunate.

Today Boxing Day is more of a sporting day, horse racing and football.

Though Northern Ireland celebrates Boxing Day, southern Ireland celebrates St. Stephen's Day.

[Lisa] Let's chat about a holiday favorite: the food.

[Lorraine] Most people in Ireland will have turkey. However some still prefer to have a traditional meat of either roast goose or spiced beef served with potatoes three ways: roasted potatoes, creamy mashed potatoes and potato stuffing (which is made with mashed potatoes, bread crumbs, celery and onions). A side dish would be pan fried Brussels sprouts with bacon.

Christmas pudding served with brandy sauce, mince pies (fruity pie)

We can't forget the sweets, everyone will have a tin of Boxes of Roses

Or a tin of Quality Street (which both are wrapped chocolates)

And a tin of biscuits (cookies)

[Lisa] There's a tradition you told me about that I wouldn't associate with Christmas: swimming?

[Lorraine] The Christmas swim has been a long tradition in Ireland. Braving the freezing cold water on Christmas Day, many people will go for a swim. One of the most popular places is the Forty Foot on Dublin's southside coastline and people do it just for fun and also as a fundraiser.

[Lorraine] If I could I would like to read a Christmas candle poem that you could also recite as you and your loved ones carry on this Irish candle tradition

May your Christmas be filled with the light of the son,  
From whom comes our salvation, over darkness He's won,  
To family and friends but especially the poor,  
May the candle in your window be a light at the inn.  
Of your heart and home to the stranger and kin.

[Lisa] Thank you for sharing that poem. Thank you for joining us today. We hope to see you at McClelland Library! Nollaig Shona Duit! (Happy Christmas!)

\*Music can be found on <https://pixabay.com/music>  
Jolly Tidings (Christmas Jazz) by Monument\_Music