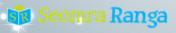


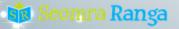


# NOLLAIG ma mBAN





January 6th is the 12th day of the season of Christmas. Traditionally, it is celebrated as the day when the three Kings arrived at the stable in Bethlehem with their gifts for the baby Jesus. Sometimes this is called the feast of the "Epiphany".





In some churches, the statues of the three Kings are only added to the crib scene on this date.



January 6th is usually regarded as the last day of the Christmas celebrations. Many people will not take down their Christmas tree or decorations before this date.









January 6th is sometimes known in Ireland as "Nollaig na mBan" or "Women's Christmas". It is also sometimes referred to as "Little Christmas".



In olden times, especially in the south of the country, January 6th was traditionally marked as a "Thank-you" to the women in a household who had worked so hard to prepare for Christmas.

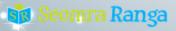




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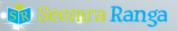


It was also a recognition of the central role that women in particular had played in the planning, preparation, cooking and cleaning in the household for the Christmas period.





On January 6th the traditional household roles were reversed — women sat back and had a rest while the men did all of the chores and the household tasks.





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It was also traditional for women to gather informally on January 6th. Sometimes, women would visit the homes of their friends and neighbours to enjoy tea and the last of the Christmas cake.



In some areas, it was believed that women reared some turkeys in the run-up to Christmas to sell at the local market. They used the money to pay for treats for the family at Christmas. If there was any money left over, they would spend it on themselves on Nollaig na mBan.



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Sometimes, children would present gifts to their mother or grandmother on Nollaig na mBan to mark the celebration of the day.



One curious tradition that used to take place on January 6th was that mothers used to rub the tail of a herring across the eyes of her children to give them immunity from disease for the rest of the year!



Another January 6th tradition was to ensure that the floor was swept and to have a bucket of clean water ready before going to bed that night. That bucket of water was not to be used on the following day.



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An interesting belief in ancient Ireland was that all well water was said to briefly turn into wine at midnight on Little Christmas. It was considered bad luck if anyone went out to check on the well at this time, or even to taste the well water!



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While the traditions of Nollaig na mBan died out for many years, the celebration of the day on January 6th is experiencing a revival. In many areas, special celebration events aimed at groups of women, such as restaurant meals or artistic gatherings, are becoming more common.





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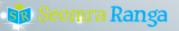
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