

North Mayo Heritage Centre



The  
North Mayo  
Heritage  
Centre

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# NEWSLETTER

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Feature article

**OICHE NOLLAIG NA mBAN**

Brief history of the  
**CONROY SURNAME**

**BOOK OF THE WEEK**

**Crossmolina Chronicle 2021**

Buy it now from our eBay bookstore

€12

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Cover photo by Suzy Hazelwood from Pexels

The North Mayo Heritage Centre is dedicated to preserving and promoting the rich heritage of the region

The traditional last day of the Christmas season in Ireland, the feast of the Epiphany, was commonly known as Little or Women's Christmas. A festive meal was eaten on this day, but it was of lesser proportion than the one consumed on Christmas Day.

**Taken from the Ordnance Survey Namebooks of 1838**

The townland of  
**POULADOOHY/**  
**POLLADOOHY**

(Poll a' Dubhaighe, meaning hole of the blackening stuff)

A central townland in the parish of Crossmolina.

This townland is bounded on the north by Gortnahurra Upr, Cloonooragh and Enaghbeg; on the east by Tobermore; on the south by Carrowkeel; and on the west by Carrowkeel, Coolturk and Cloonooragh.

It contains 461 acres, 0 roods, 3 perches, including 8 acres, 0 roods, 1 perch\* of water.

The property of M. Pratt, Esq., Inishcoe, and is held by tenants at will, at a yearly rent of £63 for the whole townland, which is principally mountain.

The part cultivated is moory clay, producing oats, flax, rye and potatoes. Houses are of stone. There are 25 families living here, all are Roman Catholics.

In the west of the townland, on the boundary, are two loughs, called respectively Loughadoo and Brackloon Lough.

\* There are 40 perches in a rood, and 4 roods in an acre.

It was believed that water turned to wine on this night. Some people say this miracle was in honour of the Magi, others because it was the anniversary of the Wedding Feast of Cana. It was the height of bad luck to try to observe the miracle taking place.<sup>1</sup> In parts of Co. Cork, an extra bucket of water was carried into the house in honour of the miracle of Cana.<sup>2</sup>

The appellation 'Women's Christmas' is never clearly explained. Although it was believed that having laboured to prepare the household for the festive season and cook the festive meals, this was a night of respite from housework for the women of the household. Another custom of the night of the sixth was to make a circle of straw, and to place in it twelve candles. Another candle was placed at the centre of this circle. This was in honour of Jesus and the twelve apostles.<sup>3</sup> The final feasting done, the 7<sup>th</sup> of January was the day to take down the Christmas decorations.

Holly was burned on the fire, as it was bad luck to throw it onto the manure heap. It was common to store the holly, and use it on the fire on Shrove Tuesday to heat the griddle.<sup>4</sup>

It was three weeks to St. Bridget's day, and the traditional start of Spring, but already people looked forward. There was an old tradition that when the cockerel stood atop the manure heap to crow, he raised one leg slightly higher each day, to signify the gradual lengthening of the days.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Danaher, K. 1972. The Year in Ireland. Mercier Press. 264.

<sup>2</sup> The Schools' Collection, Volume 0290, p132 (Dunbeacon National School, Co. Cork). From duchar.ie.

<sup>3</sup> Swords, L. 1997. A Hidden Church. Columba Press, 272.

<sup>4</sup> Danaher, K. 1972. The Year in Ireland. Mercier Press. 264.

<sup>5</sup> The Schools' Collection, Volume 0145, p86 (Newtownwhite National School, Co. Mayo). From duchar.ie.

A brief history of  
**The surname**  
**CONROY**

Other variants include (O) Conroy, Conree, Conary, Conry: descendants of *Cū-raoi*' (hound of the plain)

These mainly Connacht names, owing to the similarity of the anglicised forms, have become indistinguishable.

They represent four Gaelic originals, *Mac Conraoi* (in Galway and Clare), *Ó Conraoi* (in Galway), *Ó Conaire* (in Munster) and *Ó Maolchonaire* (an important literary family of Co. Roscommon).

Of the seventy eight Conroy births in Ireland in 1890, including variants, forty five occurred in Leinster, nine occurred in Munster, one occurred in Ulster, and twenty three occurred in Connacht.

The surname was principally found in Galway, Queen's County (Laois) and Dublin.

Our research has found that, in Co. Mayo, the Conroy surname is predominantly found in the Kilmore Erris and Moygownagh area.

*Quote of the Week:*

**If you shake your family tree, wait for the nuts to fall!**

(genealogybank)

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*Our friendly staff will be glad to assist.*  
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