



## **Ancient Scottish Traditions**

Scotland is renowned for its many ancient customs and traditions ranging from old Highland superstitions to customs that have survived for many centuries into modern Scottish society. These unusual customs were believed to bring the couple luck, fertility, wealth and eternal happiness. Although many remain common custom today, here are a handful of weird and wonderful traditions, some that have been long forgotten, and others that remain popular in regions across Scotland today.

### **Feet Washing**

On the eve of the wedding, a tub of water is placed in the best room of the house, in which the bride places her feet. Her female friends then gather around to wash them. A wedding ring from a happily married woman is placed in the tub and it is believed that whoever finds the ring will be the next to get married. The groom is then made to sit by the tub where his legs are daubed with soot, ashes and cinders. This tradition is still carried out in some parts of Scotland.



### **Blackening**

A popular custom which is carried out even today, is the 'blackening'. The couple are captured by their friends one night before their big day and covered with treacle, feathers and soot and then paraded around the village.



### Creeling of the Bridegroom

A particularly cruel Highland tradition was the 'Creeling of the Bridegroom' where a large basket of 'creel' was filled with stones and tied to the grooms back. He then was forced to carry the basket around the entire town and wasn't until his bride agreed to kiss him when his friends would allow the 'creeling' to end.

### Wedding Procession

On the day of the wedding, the bridal party make their way towards the church whilst throwing flower petals in front of the bride. It is believed to be bad luck if the party encounter a pig or funeral on their way and must return home and set out again if they do. The first person they come across is called the 'first foot' and would be given a coin and a drink of whisky by bride. He would then have to accompany the bridal party for one mile before being allowed to continue on his way.

### The Silver Sixpence

The bride is given a silver sixpence to place in her shoe the morning of her wedding as a token of good luck and fortune.

### The Presentation of the Sword

An unusual tradition that was popular in ancient times was the 'Presentation of the Sword'. The groom presents his bride with a family sword that will be given to their first born son or; the Bride's family would present the Groom with their sword as an act of acceptance into the family and signifying the obligation to protect her.

### The Wedding Scramble

Following the ceremony, the father of the bride throws a handful of coins outside the church for the children of the village to collect. This is believed to bring financial luck.



### The Pinning of the Tartan

Following the proclamation of husband and wife, a further ceremony known as 'the Pinning of the Tartan' takes place. This ceremony is customized to each family depending on whether the bride or the groom is being accepted into the clan. For instance if the bride is marrying into the clan, any member of the grooms family may present the bride with clan tartan in the form of a rosette pin or sash which is fastened with the clan badge as an acceptance into the grooms clan. A variation of this which was also common in clan times was instead of the tartan being pinned, the couple would rip their wedding plaids (clan tartan) and tie the two strips of material together as a sign of the two families joining together. It is said that this is where the popular phrase 'tying the knot' came from.

### The Lang Reel

Popular amongst fishing communities in the North-East of Scotland, the 'Lang Reel' is a traditional dance where the wedding guests start a dance procession at the towns harbour or pier and dance their way through the town or village. The procession gradually thins out as guests leave the lang reel when they reach their house. The newlywed couple are last to leave the procession and have the last dance of the night.

Sadly, many of these ancient Scottish customs have been lost in time. However, there are a few small Scottish villages that still indulge in some of these unusual traditions, with the whole village celebrating a couple coming together in matrimony.



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