



# Scottish Culture and History



## Candlemas

February 2nd is Candlemas, the first of the Scottish Quarter Days. It was traditionally the day that pupils used to give gifts to their schoolmasters — originally peat for heat or candles for light but in time, this became siller or a cockerel.

Candlemas was originally a festival for the return of Spring held by the Romans in honour of Februa, the daughter of Mars. They carried torches through the city on 1 February (the same date that was celebrated by the Celts as the first day of Spring). This festival was Christianised as the "Purification of the Virgin Mary" and was held on 2 February. In medieval Scotland, it was a day of pageants, processions and religious plays in honour of Our Lady, as we can see from the Burgh Records of Aberdeen for 30 January 1505 —

*"The provest and baillies statut and ordanit that the said craftsmen and thair successoris sal in order to the Offering in the Play pass twa and twa togedir socialie; in the first the flesheris, barbouris, baxteris, cordinaris, skineris. Couparis, wrichtis, hatmakeris and bonatmakaris togider; walcaris, litstaris, wobstaris, tailyeouris, goldsmithis, blaksmithis, and hammermen; and the craftsmen sal furnyss the Pageants."*

From the North-East comes a rhyme to help us fix the date of Easter

'First comes Cannlemas and syne the new meen,  
The neist Tyesday efter that is Festern's Een;  
That meen out and the neist meen's hicht,  
And the neist Sunday efter that's aye Pace richt.'

As this is being compiled on a cranreuch caul day prior to Candlemas, it is too early to know the outcome of the bittie Scottish weather lore which goes —

'If Candlemas day be dry and fair,  
The half o the winter's to come and mair;  
If Candlemas day be wet and foul,  
The half o the winter's gane at Yule.'