

Wedding traditions

Dorothy Toyn

Giving away the bride, the tossing of the bouquet, and 'something old, new, borrowed and blue'. Where did they come from? Read on..

1. The white dress Historically, brides used to wear the best clothes they had, and they could be any colour – even black. It wasn't until Queen Victoria married Prince Albert in an ivory-white gown in 1840 that white became a fashionable wedding dress colour. Old Queen Vic was quite the trendsetter!



2. Giving away the bride For many fathers and daughters this tradition is a poignant, beautiful moment during the wedding ceremony. But you might be a little shocked when you hear its true meaning. It dates back to the Middle Ages, when daughters were considered their father's property and quite literally sold to the groom.

3. "Old, new, borrowed, blue" This fun tradition is based on an old rhyme by an unknown English poet: "*Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue, and a silver sixpence in her shoe.*" The *old* represents the past, *new* stands for the future. *Borrowed* refers to the happiness given to the bride by the new husband. *Blue* colour was believed to ward off evil. Nowadays, the final line about the *sixpence* is often not quoted. But as you may have guessed, it refers to wealth.

4. The wedding rings The custom of wedding rings goes back to Old Egypt, where their circular shape was considered to symbolise eternity. Ancient Egyptians wore wedding rings on the ring finger of the left hand. That's where they believed the 'vena amoris' (the vein of love) began, leading all the way to the heart.

5. Throwing rice This joyful wedding custom has its roots in ancient Rome. Throwing grains of wheat or oats at newlyweds was thought to bring them fertility and wealth. These days, many people prefer confetti, because it's available in many colours and doesn't hurt when it's thrown at you. Rose and other flower petals may be used, especially today as they are more easily biodegradable!

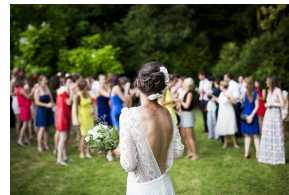
6. The wedding cake Pies, buns and cakes have played a part in British weddings for centuries. During medieval times, the groom had to

try to kiss the bride over a pile of sweet bread rolls. By the 1800's the tradition had evolved: relatives would leave a pie hidden underneath the bride's pillow. The modern UK custom, where the couple cuts a slice out of a wedding cake, is a little less messy!

7. The first dance In the grand old days of royal balls, the first dance was normally the 'opening number' that kicked off the party. It was customary for a male guest of honor to invite the lady of the house to join him in the first dance. This tradition subsequently became a wedding custom. The host, usually the bride's father, would dance with her first, followed by the groom.



8. The bouquet toss During the more barbaric times of 15th century Britain, there was a peculiar tradition at the end of the wedding day. The guests would have to try and tear off bits of the bride's dress, flowers or hair. People believed that grabbing a piece of the bride's outfit would pass some of her good luck on to them. However, the guests could get very rowdy, so a tradition evolved where the bride would simply toss her flowers at the mob and run for her life.



9. The honeymoon Surprisingly, the romantic idea of a honeymoon is attributed to the most feisty and war-loving of all people, the Vikings. Newlywed Viking couples were sent to live in a cave for one month. Every day, during 30 moons, a family member would visit them and bring them honeyed wine. That's where the name 'honeymoon' comes from.

10. Carrying the bride over the threshold This back-breaking wedding custom came to Britain from Germany. In the days of the Germanic tribes, the groom had to hoist the bride over his shoulder and carry her into his hut. Why? It made her look less enthusiastic about the wedding night, and was therefore regarded as a guarantee of her chastity.

