



the HERALD'S
Christmas Gift Guide



Who'll be the first foot?

On New Year's Day, in Scotland, and Christmas Day in rural England, the first person to enter the house is of utmost importance.

If a woman is the first person to enter, according to superstition, the results would be disastrous. Thus, in some places, families hire men as "first-footers", to make sure everything occurs according to tradition.

These men, however, should

have dark hair; they cannot, under any circumstances, be redheads, as that would be unlucky (red is the color of Judas Iscariot).

There are certain actions associated with first-footing, as well. The first-footer must enter the home through its front door, walking through it and exiting in the back.

He usually bears a twig of evergreen - a symbol of life in the

midst of winter's barrenness. And, while within the house, in many locations he is given a token gift - usually salt or bread.

What is the aim of all this elaborate ritual? An old carol offers one answer, when it recounts "a pocket full of money and a cellar full of beer, and a great fat pig to last you all the year."

SEASON'S Greetings

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