

Handsel Monday

Handsel Monday is the first Monday of the year, particularly as used to be celebrated in Scotland and northern England. Among the rural population of Scotland, *Auld Hansel Monday*, is traditionally celebrated on the first Monday after the 12th of January.

The "handsel" refers to small tips and gifts of money that it was customary to give at the beginning of the first working week of a new year. In this respect it is somewhat similar to Boxing Day. If the handsel was a physical object rather than money, tradition said that the object could not be sharp, or it would "cut" the relationship between the giver and the recipient.

*It is worth mentioning that one William Hunter, a collier (residing in the parish of Tillicoultry, in Clackmannanshire), was cured in the year 1738 of an inveterate rheumatism or gout, by drinking freely of new ale, full of harm or yeast. The poor man had been confined to his bed for a year and a half, having almost entirely lost the use of his limbs. On the evening of **Handsel Monday**, as it is called, some of his neighbours came to make merry with him. Though he could not rise, yet he always took his share of the ale, as it passed round the company, and in the end he became much intoxicated. The consequence was that he had the use of his limbs next morning, and was able to walk about. He lived more than twenty years after this, and never had the smallest return of his old complaint. —Sinclair's Statistical Account of Scotland, 1792, xv., note on p. 201*