

# A leap year proposal



In *leap year* a woman can propose to the man of her dreams instead of waiting for him to pop the question. It is claimed that a Scottish law of 1288 gave maidens the right to '*bespeak the man she likes*'. If free, he had to marry her or pay a fine. Nobody knows how many women took advantage of the right and, as the law itself was never recorded, the custom may have been based on myth. In England a man was supposed to give the lady a silk dress if he wished to decline tactfully – based on the tale that St Patrick softened his rejection of St Bridget in this way