

CIVIL PART NERSHIP GUIDE.COM

#3

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with

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inside...

p03 *Very Valentine's*
Jo Webber lists her Valentine's Day do's and don'ts.

p04 *Cake advice from*
confectionary designer Jane Asher.

p06 *Make Ups to Break Ups*
Legal whiz Laura McCaffrey serves up a dose of reality.

p09 *Directory*
Find your CP specialist here.

p12 *Pretty in Pink*
Civil Partnerships: behind the scenes with Pink Weddings.

your FREE pull-out guide

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WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Valentines Day is always shrouded in media frenzy, peppered with sentimental cards, romantic city breaks and universal proclamations of love on a global level. Is this juncture simply another money-making initiative, or a romantic occasion for us all to share? Jo Webber investigates.

Valentines Day places the nation, irrespective of sexuality, into two very distinctive demographics: the smug marrieds and (sometimes bitter) singletons. Does February 14 necessarily have to be depressing, even you aren't off for dirty weekend with your future wife?

Here is g3's foolproof guide to surviving a vitriolic Valentine's while maintaining your single status:

DON'T



call the ex. It may be tempting, because seeing all those cards may get you in a soppy mood, but don't give in. If you broke up, there was a good reason for it!

DON'T



rent a romantic movie. g3 recommends D.E.B.S for a happily ever after ending! Watching an amorous film will uplift you and make you think that love is possible again in your life.

DON'T



send yourself flowers at work. Yes, everyone else is getting them. But if you do it, you'll have to concoct an elaborate lie to identify your mysterious (or not so mysterious) admirer.

DON'T



get your single buddies on the phone pronto. Commiserating with your friends or even arranging a 'singles' night out is perfectly acceptable, perhaps interspersed with a healthy trash-talk of ex's, and can provide excellent respite.

GET CREATIVE

1 Inspire Her

Write her a poem or paint her a picture. You could even knit her a cap or sew her some knickers? Nothing is more appreciated than a handmade gift!

2 Rub Her

Treat her to a massage. Who doesn't love an all-over, decadent erotic body rub? Get some sweet smelling oils, take your time and make her your queen for the day.

3 Extreme Her

Prove you'll do anything for your Valentine and take the plunge together in a thrilling bungee jump. Celebrate your achievement with a glass or two of champagne, and toast a memorable Valentine's Day 2007.

www.viewlondon.co.uk/experiences_details_276.html

GET VOCAL

Marcella Detre, 26, IT:

"I think that up until a few years ago, the idea that gays and lesbians would want to celebrate what has traditionally been a heterosexual event just hasn't been on the commercial radar. However, with the advent of civil partnerships, traditional companies are finally catching on to the value of the pink pound."

Kate Sebastian, 27, PR:

"I'm fairly ambivalent about it – it's really hard to make February 14 special without being clichéd or corny. Make Valentine's Day unique with less sickly sweet overblown gestures and more originality! I once got told to do it on the 13 instead."

Maria House, 26, Medical Researcher:

"I think there's something totally adorable about seeing two boys or two girls on a date. Valentine's Day, though, always seems so forced...and in London it seems to be code for restaurant's refusing to offer decent food in preference of overpriced set menus. And I'm not sure the cuteness of the former outweighs my animosity to the latter!"

HAVE YOUR CAKE AND



Not unlike the gown or bride, a lady's wedding cake is an important part of her big day. In this month's Civil Partnership Guide, expert cake designer **Jane Asher** is on hand to advise g3 readers on the rules of successful wedding confection.

Who ever said a girl can't have her cake and eat it too?



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D EAT IT TOO

There are certain general rules to follow about cakes for big occasions that can help to make your day run smoothly and ensure that it's a successful part of a glorious, happy ceremony. For instance, you'll have loads of arrangements to think about as the date of your partnership draws near and having your cake made by a professional company means that it's at least one thing you can arrange well in advance then forget all about. So, make sure you choose the design and get it ordered in good time, at least a couple of months if possible, and use a reputable cake company (ask for tasting samples if you're not sure). Don't forget to arrange delivery too. If necessary, put the cake makers in touch with your caterers about positioning and cutting up the cake on the day.

If you do decide to make the cake yourself, then start in very good time or ask a gifted friend or relative to make it for you. The last thing you want is an eleventh hour cake disaster when you have so much to think about, and when you'll be feeling pretty emotional in any case. Check out our website, www.jane-asher.co.uk, for design ideas, browse through the sugarcraft items and order your icings and decorations as soon as you can so you have them to hand in good time.

When it comes to the design, your imagination is the limit! Interestingly, in the cakes that we've made for civil partnership ceremonies since they started (and I'm pleased to say that we were one of the first companies to be commissioned) the girls seem to be far more innovative, creative and daring than the guys. Whereas men tend to stick to classic themes and tiered cakes, the women show more of a personal flair and go for designs that mean something special to them. For example, we've made a double decker bus for one lesbian couple as they owned one, and it was involved in the ceremony. For another pair, the cake design was of two cats: their 'fur babies', as they called them!

The girls also seem to know exactly what they want; they plan ahead and bring in lots of reference material to help with the design.

There's always something that can be used as a starting point for your design. The cake can match the colour theme of your wedding, or be inspired by something personal like where you met, a favourite holiday place, flower, pet or love of food - anything that means something special to you both. Alternatively, just choose a beautiful, simple but classic design, either floral or just delicately piped and then you know you can't go wrong. And don't feel you have to stick to the traditional fruitcake either. Chocolate sponge is very popular nowadays, or you can have different fillings in each tier.

Above all, let the choice of cake be your own. Listen to friends' and relatives' opinions by all means, but remember it's your special day, and you will look back on the cake as a beautiful symbol of the start of your 'official' life together.

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Valentine's Day is a traditional date to pop the question; she says yes, you get married and live happily ever after. But spare a thought for those whose dreams of loving each other forever don't work out, says Laura McCaffrey of www.gay-friendly-wedding-venues.com

It's no surprise to anyone that sometimes relationships don't last. Gay or straight, the romance of Valentine's night does not always stand the test of time. And now that same sex couples can have civil partnerships, they can also have 'divorces' or dissolutions.

Civil partnerships give gay couples the same rights as married straight couples, as well as the same responsibilities. If the civil partnership is dissolved, then both parties have to agree – privately or if not in court – fair arrangements for property division, residence arrangements and appropriate contact with children. A civil partnership has to have been in existence for a year before either party can apply for a dissolution. The law only came into force in December 2005, so the first dissolutions are only just coming through. "We have had three or four so far. Interestingly, they are all women, but it is very early days," says Jacqueline D'Hazzard of Engleharts Solicitors.

Not that this has stopped some high profile dissolutions being announced, much to the delight of the right-wing press. In May 2006, two of the first women to get hitched, Daphne Lighthart and Liz King, made headlines when it emerged that their eight-year relationship had ended after just three months of civil partnership. Ironically, the pair had got married on 11 February to coincide with St Valentine's Day.

Not to be upstaged, one of the first male couples to marry on 21 December 2005, Darryl Bullock and Mark Godfrey, made the headlines again when they started dissolution proceedings as soon as the year was up. "We were completely committed but things change in any relationship. We are



She loves me

lucky that there are no property or kids involved but we have both moved on now in our own way," says Darryl.

The formal dissolution proceedings both couples are now going through start with submitting an application known as a 'Petition', giving the reasons why they are applying, to show the civil partnership is definitely over. Anyone applying for a dissolution must be able to prove to the court that they have reasons (or 'grounds') for saying the civil partnership is at an end, or 'irretrievably broken down' as the court jargon calls it. It is not enough to be bored or just fed up with the other person.

The court will accept one or more of the following grounds as proof:

- that your civil partner's behaviour has been so bad that you can no longer bare to live with them
- that your civil partner deserted you at least two years ago
- that you and your civil partner have lived apart for at least two years and they agree to dissolution
- that you and your civil partner have lived apart for at least five years

Unlike heterosexual marriage, there are no grounds for adultery as a specific reason for wanting a dissolution – this is because there is no legal definition of lesbian or gay sex. Instead, if your civil partner has had an affair with somebody (male or female), you will have to cite ‘unreasonable behaviour’ in the dissolution petition. In all cases, the partner has to be contactable so that they can receive the legal papers. If they have disappeared or gone abroad, they will have to be located before a dissolution can go through. If there are children involved you should also complete a form called a ‘statement of arrangements’ in which you tell the court what plans you have made for the children once the dissolution is final. You will then receive a conditional order, like the decree nisi in a divorce, followed by a final order – the equivalent of a decree absolute – six weeks later, after the ‘cooling off’ period. “Divorces tend to take eight to 12 weeks, and dissolutions will probably take the same, or perhaps slightly longer at the beginning because they are new,” says Alison Burt of Bindmans Solicitors.

As well as the emotional cost, the proceedings are likely to set you back around £340, and potentially much more if you need a lot of legal advice to settle disputes about joint assets or arrangements for children. It can help to prepare a pre-nuptial agreement indicating intention and who owns what going into a civil partnership, but these are not binding on the court.

So if you are tempted to pop the question this Valentine’s Day, be sure it is really what you want to do and you’re not getting carried away with the romance of it all. As gay pressure group Stonewall advises: “It’s legally binding,



so it’s not something to do for a laugh or a quick romantic gesture. You’ll have to live with the consequences.” Which of course, I hope for every couple out there, are blissful.

She loves me not

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Arona Sarwar & Co: Same sex specialists. Legal areas include Civil Partnership advice, cohabitation agreements, company and commercial, family, and immigration law, landlord and tenant disputes, taxation, wills. 13c Hoe Street, Walthamstow, London E17 4SD. t: 020 8520 5170.

Anthony Gold Solicitors: Experienced legal advisors for the gay community. New London Bridge House, 25 London Bridge St, London SE1 9TW. t: 0800 3893474.

Bindmans & Partners: Advice available on matters of family, civil partnerships, finances, separation and divorce, cohabitation agreements and same-sex parenting. We also advise in areas of human rights, immigration, crime, housing and employment. t: 0207 833 4433.

Beecham Peacock: Newcastle-based solicitors, supporting the lesbian and gay community in family affairs. 7 Collingwood Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 1JE. t: 0191 232 3048.

B.J. McKenna & Co: Specialists in wills, probates, personal injury law and civil partnerships. 182a Heaton Moor Road, Heaton Moor, Stockport SK4 4DU. t: 0161 432 5757.

Burton Woods: Property sales, family and divorce solicitors. 25 Museum Street, Holborn, London W1A 1JT. t: 020 7636 2448.

Browell Smith & Co: Civil Partnership Advice from UK and abroad, pre-registration agreements, parenting issues, dissolutions, wills and probate. Offices in nationwide. t: 0800 107 3000.

Cooper Sons Hartley & Williams: Legal advice on matrimonial and family, property, personal injury, wills, probate and civil law. 9 Terrace Road, Buxton, Derbyshire SK17 6DU t: 0129 877 511.

Danielle Cohen: Immigration law solicitors specialising in same-sex applications. Unit 4, Stucley Studios, Stucley Place, Camden Town NW1 8NS. t: 020 7267 7163.

Ecology: A unique mortgage lender, they offer deals to people who want property that helps the environment. t: 0845 674 5566.

Engleharts: Specialising in same-sex estate planning, parental responsibility agreements, pre-registration advice, agreements wills and probate. 18 Blatchington Road, Hove, East Sussex BN33YN. t: 01273 204411 ext 244.

Gherson & Company: Immigration advice on same sex couples and civil partnership. 1 Great Cumberland Place, London W1H 7AL. t: 020 7724 4488.

Irene Cherery Maher: Provides advice on registering a civil partnership, the legal and tax implications, relationship breakdown, wills. t: 01200 422264.

Josiah-Lake: Gay solicitors dealing with civil partnerships/gay marriage. Soho. t: 020 7439 2900.

Kaltons: Civil Partnership agreements, wills, living wills, conveyancing, business law. 9 White Lion Street, Angel, London N1 9PD. t: 020 7278 1817.

Lynch & Co: Civil partnership rights, same-sex parenting issues, donor insemination agreements and advice, divorce and separation and more. 3 Catherine Place, London SW1E 6DX. t: 020 7808 5566.

Osbornes: Separation, cohabitation disputes, financial settlements, pre-registration agreements and adoption. Livery House, 9 Pratt Street, Kings Cross, London NW1 0AE. t: 020 7485 8811.

Newsome Vaughan: Specialising in inheritance tax planning, wills, co-ownership of property, powers of attorney, trusts, impact of civil partnership on wills and tax planning. t: 02476 633433.

Wards Solicitors: Wills, tax planning, pre-partnership agreements. t: 0117 929 2811. www.wards.uk.com.

UK Lesbian & Gay Immigration Group: Immigration advice for lesbian and gay people. Advice on UK Lesbian & Gay Immigration Group tenant disputes, taxation and wills. t: 020 8520 5170.

Entertainment

A40 Fireworks: Low noise and fantastic fireworks. www.A40fireworks.com. t: 01844 281358/07989 580425.

Blow the Fuse: Great live music provided by talented and experienced women musicians, from background jazz duos to full dance band with DJ. www.blowthefuse.com. e: info@blowthefuse.com. t: 020 7254 8935.

Classic Fireworks: Low noise, snow, red heart fire. www.classicfireworks.co.uk. t: 01254 887144/07739 043503.

Decent Chaps: Highly experienced professional musicians offering 'a personal service tailored to suit'. t: 01636 893229/07766 694963.

Eye Candy: Visual performances for something different. www.eye.candy.net. t: 020 7476 7841/07778 101711.

Girls Night In: Ideal pre-CP hen parties. Facials, massage, waxing, aromatherapy etc. All treatments can be done at home. 20% off when quoting g3. t: 07786 066597.

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Love: Bespoke and unique bridal wear. www.lovecouture.co.uk. t: 01603 612216.

House of Weddings: Bridal, table decorations, balloons, stationary, confetti, cake tops. www.houseofweddings.co.uk. t: 02392 499600.

Planners/Organisers

Pink Weddings: Planning services www.pinkwedding.uk.com www.pinkweddings.biz.

Pinkweddingdays.co.uk: Wedding Planning services for gay and lesbian couples dealing in floristry, cakes, honeymoons, entertainment and gifts. t: 0870 116 2960.

Yourperfectday.uk.com: Wedding Planner specialising in Civil Partnerships. e: spenro2000@yahoo.co.uk. t: 0790 054 3200.



Doing a table plan for your civil partnership reception sounds simple enough, just put together people who get on and keep apart those that don't. But in practice the table plan is one of the most time-consuming and stressful parts of planning the event. The traditional approach using scraps of paper can take hours and is highly error-prone. But there is a better way.

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PerfectTablePlan is available for £19.95 from www.weddingtableplan.com.

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Venues

Bush Hall: 25-acres of landscaped gardens in Hertfordshire. www.bush-hall.com. t: 01707 271251. enquiries@bush-hall.com.
Chandos House: Period house off Oxford Street. www.chandoshouse.co.uk. t: 020 7290 3860.

Epsom Downs Racecourse: Great open space, 10 to 360 guests. www.epsomdowns.co.uk. t: 01372 726311.

Fennes: Homely Georgian country house licensed for civil ceremonies and after parties. Excellent food available. Bocking, Essex. t: 01376 324 555.

Folio Hotels: Venues for CP throughout the country, including Richmond, Windsor, Cheltenham etc. www.foliohotels.com.

Gay-friendly-wedding-venues.com: e: info@gay-friendly-wedding-venues.com. t: 020 8806 9893.

The Granville: Gay-owned seaside hotel available for civil partnership ceremonies. 124 Kings Road, Brighton BN1 2FA. t: 01273 326 302.

Hammersmith & Fulham: Elegant rooms, friendly staff, tailored ceremonies to suit you. t: 020 8753 2140.

Islington and London City Register Office: 13 venues available for civil ceremonies. Islington Town Hall, Upper Street, Islington, London N1 2UD. t: 020 7527 6350/6347.

Kings Hall: Kent Edwardian building with seafront views. t: 01227 374 188. www.thekingshall.com.

London Beach Country Hotel: Ashford Rd, Tenterden, Kent. The impressive long room has its own private bar that can hold up to 120 guests and 250 for an evening reception. Sam Docker t: 01580 766279.

Philpot's Manor: Family-run, Grade II listed Manor House in Kent. Ideal venue for intimate ceremonies, 40 guests max. Only 40-mins from London. Helen Garvey t: 01732 833 047.

Renaissance Gatwick Hotel: CP ceremonies. www.renaissancehotels.com/LGWBR. t: 01293 820169.

Renaissance Heathrow Hotel: CP ceremonies. www.renaissancehotels.com/LGWBR. t: 020 8897 6363.

Springs Hotel: Oxfordshire large estate. www.springhotel.com. t: 01491 836687.

Stansted Manor Hotel: Set in 8 acres near Stansted Airport. www.stanstedmanor-hotel.co.uk. t: 01279 859800.

Torna-Coille Hotel, Banchory: Victorian elegance in Deeside. www.tornacoille.com. t: 01330 822242.

Windmill Hill Place: Award-winning Grade II listed Georgian building available for civil ceremonies/weddings with golf and tennis facilities. Windmill Hill, East Sussex. e: info@windmillhill.co.uk. t: 08700 339 997.



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Finliz: Honeymoon by the sea. Worthing, West Sussex. www.finliz.co.uk. t: 01903 231229.

Heaven Sent Travel: Honeymoons exclusively for same-sex couples. www.heavensenttravel.co.uk. t: 0161 942 9924.

Madisontravel.co.uk: Independent travel company specialising in gay-friendly holidays. e: jo@madisontravel.co.uk. t: 0207 690 6878.

Perfect Gay Honeymoons: Overseas CP, Honeymoons, Hen weekends, pamper breaks. www.perfectgayhoneymoons.co.uk/g3mag. t: 08708 030105.

Starr's Hotel: Brighton hotel with bottle of comp champagne for newly-hitched. t: 01273 607456.



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Jon Prangnell: Contemporary photography. www.link.uk.net. t: 07971 953587.

Kelvin Brown Photography: A gay owned photography company.

410 Hestia House, City Walk, London, SE1 3ES
www.kelvinbrown.co.uk. t: 07771 946 640.

Venus Aphrodite: Stylish contemporary photography service for civil partnerships and weddings. e: venus-aphrodite@ntlworld.com.



KELVIN BROWN PHOTOGRAPHY is a gay owned company specialising in natural, contemporary, reportage-style photography for civil partnerships. The company was launched ahead of the introduction of civil partnerships to cater for the specific needs of the gay community. The strength of Kelvin's photography is his ability to capture the moment as it happens, bending creative and contemporary images with reportage photography. This gives you a unique set of images that tells the story of your day in a natural and spontaneous way, an approach that leaves you to enjoy your civil partnership without having to spend hours posing in front of the camera.

410 Hestia House, City Walk, London, SE1 3ES. 07771 946 640. www.kelvinbrown.co.uk

Gifts / Accessories

Diana Porter: Contemporary rings for your special day. www.dianaporter.co.uk. Brochure/enquiries, t: 0117 9090225.

DigiStyle: Personalised wedding book to commemorate your day. www.digistyle.biz. t: 01276 21284.

Exclusively Eve: Pleasure accessories for women. Sex toys, jewellery, cards, clothing and lingerie.

www.exclusivelyeve.co.uk

Mandalay: Designers of wedding stationery at Harrods and Liberty. t: 020 8691 6100. www.mandalaybride.co.uk.

Pink Pendulum: Specific gay greeting cards including wedding and engagement cards. www.pinkpendulum.com. t: 020 8202 1369.

Pink Products: Over 1200 products online. Everything you need to make your wedding extra special. www.pinkproducts.co.uk. t: 0870 020 1712.

Precious Moments: Provides personalised wedding stationary, invites etc. Contact Gary for free brochures on 0151 625 1022, or email: gary@apws.co.uk.

Purely Diamonds: Diamond rings. www.purelydiamonds.co.uk. t: 0800 032 3422.

Rainbow Gay: Wedding products. www.rainbowgay.co.uk.

Silver Moon: Large selection of lesbian books and films. Mail order available. 113-119 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0EB. t: 020 7440 1562.

Solstuf: Fragrant petals, natural confetti and décor. www.solstuf.co.uk. t: 0845 434 9599.

Stephen Einhorn: Quality bespoke rings for engagements and wedding. Upper St, Islington, London. t: 020 7359 4977.

www.stepheneinhorn.co.uk.

Totally Crackers: Handmade wedding crackers. www.totallycrackers.co.uk. sales@totallycrackers.co.uk.

Wedding Gift Bag: Wedding bags, gifts and more. www.theweddinggiftbag.co.uk. t: 01737 832869.

The Women's Stand/Olive & Oscar: Shrewsbury shop sells women's postcards, greeting cards & gifts. Buy securely online at www.womenstand.com. t: 01743 236600. email: enquiries@womenstand.com for a free catalogue.



Miscellaneous Services

Atoz: Couple counsellor, Zing Jean t: 07939 314008.

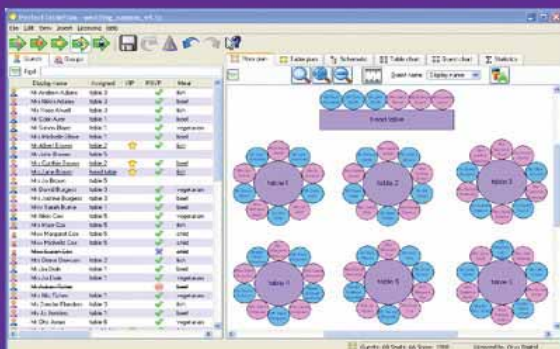
NCH Adoption Agency: Adoption information for same-sex partners/families. 148 Crawley Road, Horsham, West Sussex. t: 01403 225 916.

Pink Line Chauffeuring: Civil Partnerships and receptions services as well as other events. e: info@pinkchauffeuring.co.uk. t: 01296 747 338.

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Doing a table plan for your civil partnership reception sounds simple enough - just put together people who get on and keep apart those that don't. But in practice the table plan is one of the most time-consuming and stressful parts of planning the event. The traditional approach using scraps of paper can take hours and is highly error-prone. But there is a better way.

PerfectTablePlan is available for £19.95 from www.weddingtableplan.com.

The publishers of PerfectTablePlan will give away free copies to the first 5 people to email sales@perfecttableplan.com with the subject "g3 magazine competition".

WEDDING *fm* .CO.UK

PerfectTablePlan, is a software package designed to solve all your table planning headaches. It handles the whole process, from managing your guest list and RSVPs, through to assigning seats and printing charts and place cards. It is even clever enough to assign guests to seats automatically based on who you tell it should sit together or apart. Plus, the software is easy to use and it only takes 5-10 minutes to download and install, read the quick start guide and get started on your table plan.

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Perfect Pink Weddings

We look at what it takes to plan the perfect wedding with Gino Meriano from Pink Weddings.

What would you advise when planning a wedding? Give at least a year, the first thing you have to do is secure your venue and make sure you get the registry office booked.

Are people booking the same venue for the registration and party? Most people are booking both under the same roof; popular venues include country manor houses, hotels and town houses.

What's the biggest civil partnership you've planned? The huge one we've got is a £45,000 wedding, with a stately home and full-on fun fair, drag queens are serving and a stage with live acts playing. There's a lot of planning, this one is not happening until 2009!

Average wedding cost? Usually, for around 40 to 60 people, the expenditure is between £5,000 and £7,000.

Should we copy traditional heterosexual weddings? I'd stay away from traditional, but most are going for simple, modern and stylish weddings. We're creating our own market. Although we aren't changing the structure, in

that we're giving each other rings etc., people are going with something unusual, possibly opting for a wedding cake and then there's the wow factor, and finding something unique. Our market's a lot more stylish. I would happily arrange a gay wedding rather than a straight wedding, you often don't get the brides mother interrupting, you're just dealing with the couple.

What part would Pink Weddings play in the planning? Usually we'd have a consultation, then we'll organise most of it. Nothing will get confirmed until the couple says yes and give the go ahead, we allow them the option to get on with their lives. But by the same token, if someone phones in and says they want a photographer, we'll do that too!

After planning hundreds of weddings, how was your civil partnership? I had enough of my wedding planners around to help me, but I got more stresses and I wanted to make the final arrangements as I'm a bit of a control freak, but it was good fun.

For more information check: www.pinkweddings.biz, phone: 0700 596 4293, email: gino@pinkweddings.biz. g3 magazine is an official sponsor of the Gay Wedding Show hosted by Pink Weddings, please check www.gayweddingshow.co.uk.



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A photograph of two women standing on a grassy hillside at dusk. The woman on the left is wearing a green dress and a large belt buckle, and the woman on the right is wearing a white ruffled top and blue jeans. They are both smiling and holding a large bunch of colorful balloons (red, purple, orange, green, white) that are floating in the air. The background shows a sunset over a valley with mountains in the distance.

Bircham Dyson Bell

Look before you Leap

It is sadly true that not every relationship will be a loving and lasting one. And when it ends, to add to the emotional turmoil, there are possible financial consequences.

Bircham Dyson Bell is a law firm experienced in offering advice to those planning a civil partnership. We offer a range of services including:

- Pre-civil partnership agreements
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For more information contact either
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John Darnton: johndarnton@bdb-law.co.uk

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