

# DATE WITH HISTORY

## From Fifties austerity to Noughties excess, how Big Days have changed!



1960s



1970s



1980s



1990s



2000s

I'd just lost my catering job so money was tight, and we left those flash things to the youngsters. Instead, we had a wedding we could afford, I settled for a £50 yellow suit from Debenhams and Tony wore a new double-breasted suit which he bought from the local market. My bridesmaids — my sister, Margaret, and Susan, my brother's wife — both made their own outfits.

We had the reception at a community centre in Brinnington, Stockport. We provided the sparkling wine and our friends brought along food they'd made and even served it themselves.

They'd thought of everything: quiches, chicken pieces, salads and homemade cakes. Our guests even provided the entertainment — some of them got up and did comedy, others played instruments or sang.

And another friend baked our three-tier wedding cake. It was so wonderful how they all pitched in to make our day so special. Tony and I left the reception at about 10.30pm and went back to my flat to spend our first night together.

We'd waited until the wedding before moving in together. Even though it was our second time around, we didn't believe in sex before marriage. Our honeymoon was spent at a cottage in Wales, and today we'll be spending our anniversary at an Abba tribute weekend in Hayling Island, Hampshire.

### NOUGHTIES

**'We had a wedding cake made entirely of cheese'**

*Kate Chandler, 31, works in PR in London. She married David, 40, an IT consultant, at The Priory Barn in Little Wymondley, Hertfordshire, on April 29, 2009.*

**Kate says:** David and I met in Faliraki on the Greek island of Rhodes. I was handing out nightclub flyers and he was walking by. It was love at first sight.

Back in the UK, we had a long-distance relationship for three years — David lived in Newbury while I finished university in Sheffield — and finally ended up moving in together in 2003, in Reading.

He proposed in March 2008 in a teepee in Lapland where we were skiing, and presented me with a huge, over-the-top, diamante ring, which he replaced with the real thing when we got back to the UK.

Our wedding was small by today's standards — just 54 guests — but that didn't stop it being expensive. We spent £30,000. And apart from the flowers, which were a present from my parents, we paid for it all ourselves.

We didn't really save up, we just paid for each thing as it came along. The venue one month, the rings the next.

Hotels were charging £150-a-head to cater for the food and drink. Our parents couldn't believe how expensive things were, but weddings are so commercialised these days and every bride wants the best for their big day.

We had everything we wanted, champagne, canapes, a band, a DJ, even a magician — and it all mounted up very quickly.

We also had a wedding cake made of cheese: it was three-tiers and made up of Cornish Yarg, Stilton, Cheddar and Cornish Brie. We cut it just like a wedding cake.

It sounds odd, but we both adore cheese and don't like fruit cake much. The two biggest expenses were my £2,400 wedding dress from a London boutique, and our Maldives honeymoon. We also ran up a £2,000 bar bill! It was worth every penny, though.

■ **AS TOLD to Jill Foster and Olivia Warmsley**

### EIGHTIES

**'My dress was typical 80s with big puff sleeves'**

*Michael Early, 45, and Anne, 43, married on April 29, 1989, at Holy Trinity Church in Windsor. Michael, 45, is director at a London bank, and Anne, 43, is an outreach worker for a charity. The couple have two daughters, Laura, 12, and Hannah, 10, and live in Lower Earley, near Reading, Berkshire.*

**ANNE SAYS:** Michael and I met in 1987 when we worked together at a bank in Windsor — I was a cashier and he was tall, dark, handsome and worked in securities.

Banks at the time didn't allow colleagues to date each other, and in the era before emails and mobile phones, it felt exciting sneaking around.

Michael proposed in July 1988 when I picked him up from the airport after his holiday in Greece — apparently he'd missed me.

I've always teased him that it wasn't a very romantic proposal, but he reminds me my reply was: 'Yes, I'll

marry you — but I'm tired now, I need to go home.' We bought the ring together, a blue topaz encircled by diamonds — much like Princess Diana's. My dress was also typical of that time, with big puff sleeves up the elbow. It cost £200, which felt like an awful lot of money. My three bridesmaids wore lilac, a very popular colour for Eighties weddings.

We got married in my local church, the one I'd dreamed of marrying in since I was a little girl. We both have huge families so it was a big wedding — 150 guests came to our reception at the local social club. We had a sit-down buffet of cold meats and salad, and our first dance was to a typical Eighties hit: Peabo Bryson's Tonight I Celebrate My Love.

Our reception went on until 11.30pm. I remember everyone dancing to all the big Eighties tunes, and I didn't want it to end.

Afterwards, we went to Halkidiki in Greece for our honeymoon. It was the first time I'd ever been abroad. When we got home, we opened our presents — Mum had bought us our first ever microwave and we had two woks — Ken Hom was popular back then.

### NINETIES

**'We didn't sleep together until our wedding night'**

*Tony, 65, and Pat Whitehurst, 61, both retired, got married on April 29, 1995, at the Kingdom Hall in Manchester. Pat has three children from her first marriage to Eddie — who died in 1992 — Melissa, 40, Michaela, 38 and Stephen, 35. Tony has two children from his first wife, Lynn — who died in 1986 — Stephen, 34, and David, 31.*

**PAT SAYS:** Tony and I had been friends for years through our church and he was wonderful to me when my first husband, Eddie, died. His wife, Lynn, had died from breast cancer, so he knew what I was going through.

Our children were delighted when he proposed to me two years later.

We had more than 200 guests at our wedding and managed to arrange the whole thing for just £2,000. By the Nineties, it was popular for stags and hens to go away to places such as Dublin and Las Vegas, but we didn't bother with anything like that.