

# We ♥ Civil Partnerships



## Over One Gay Marriage a Day in Greater Manchester

Three years after the UK's first Civil Partnership ceremony took place; research suggests that there has been more than one Civil Partnership per day in Greater Manchester.

The Civil Partnership Act 2004, allowed gay and lesbian couples to enter into Civil Partnerships and share the same legal rights as married couples.

Halfway through 2008 nearly **60,000** Britons had entered into a same sex union.



The Manchester Evening News reported on the third anniversary of the first same sex partnerships, that there have been 1,365 same-sex civil ceremonies in Greater Manchester - averaging more than one a day, since the UK's first Civil Partnership took place in December 2005.

Manchester was the most popular place in the region for gay weddings - with 659 ceremonies held so far.

However, other popular areas across the Greater Manchester region for tying the knot include Salford with 115 ceremonies and Stockport with 108. Trafford and Bolton were both close to the hundred mark, with 97 and 91 ceremonies respectively.

Encouragingly, there have also been a high proportion of Civil Partnership ceremonies in the region, in areas that offer limited social opportunities for their LGBT communities; there have been 71 ceremonies in Oldham, 65 in Rochdale, 63 in Wigan, 52 in Tameside and 44 in Bury.

Across the North West there have been 424 partnerships registered across Lancashire with a further 300 in Blackpool alone. Cheshire has seen 371 same sex ceremonies since 2005, and in the last year Liverpool has had 70.

Even Wallasey MP Angela Eagle the only out lesbian in Parliament and her partner have taken the plunge "We have been together for 18 years and after the civil partnership act came in we both knew that we wanted to." She told Pink News in September.

On the national front, it has also been reported that **less than 1% of civil partnerships end in divorce.** Between December 2005 and December 2007, there were 24,629 Civil Partnerships in England and Wales, and less than 250 of those have ended in dissolution.

## An Alternative Gay Wedding Ceremony

When spoken word artist J. Fergus Evans and accordion-wielding Andrew Speak got married last year, they wanted to make it a night to remember but they were on a tight budget.

Both of them have a deep love of underground arts and dirty dives, so they chose a 1930's American prohibition-era speakeasy with a 'Great Gatsby' theme.

The reception, which took place downstairs at the Rampant Lion Pub in Victoria Park, Rusholme was decked out in 'dustbowl chic' - gingham tablecloths, handfuls of wildflowers in old booze bottles, and candles in jam jars.

The night began with a set of speakeasy spoken word delights, featuring queer poets Jackie Hagan, Gemma Bradley and Lisa B, and hosted by Gerry Potter. There was a DJ set from DJ Spinderella, inspired by the dirtier sounds of the Great Depression. Every guest made an effort by dressing in 1930s period clothing.

The couple say that the best compliment of the night came from a friend who used to work as a Wedding planner and declared the event to be the best reception she had ever been to!



# A GUIDE TO THE PERFECT DAY

By GINO & MIKE MERIANO

Gino Meriano and Mike Meriano are gay rights campaigners, who were key in helping change the UK law regarding Civil Partnerships. They are also directors of Pink Weddings, a company set up to help same-sex couples arrange their perfect Civil Partnership Ceremony and organise the United Kingdom's first and official Gay Wedding Show. The couple have also written a new book to help couples through all the things they need to consider before planning their commitment ceremony.

## What would you say to those couples who don't feel that a Civil Partnership is for them?

*"Something you should always look for is what the benefits will be if you're in a relationship, what rights the Civil Partnership gives you and how this would impact on your life if you didn't have a Civil Partnership."*

*"We agree it's not for everyone, but ultimately it's also worth looking at the benefits and protection."*

## What's the most surprising thing that you have learnt in the years you have been helping to promote understanding of Civil Partnerships?

*"How dedicated and committed couples are to Civil Partnerships, it's an amazing feeling every time we hear from a couple wanting to hold their special day, for us every time another couple signs the register it's another name that goes down in history."*

*"Sometimes it's easy to forget how historical this is for our community and all that the Civil Partnership brings with it for our couples."*

## What's the most unique ceremony you have been involved with arranging?

*"A private jet to four different countries, started with the Civil Partnership signing and ceremony in the UK then the couple and a few selected friends boarded a private jet and flew around Europe."*

*"They had a starter, main course, dessert and party in four different countries which was an amazing and unusual way of celebrating the partnership."*

## What would you say to people who want to have a Civil Partnership ceremony but think that it involves spending lots and lots of money?

*"I was told about a lovely couple that managed to have their special day with all the trimmings they wanted, with careful planning, help from family and friends they planned their day for only £1000."*

## How have you found the reactions from families who are used to going to heterosexual celebrations but would not normally attend a 'gay' event?

*"Families play a strong part in any wedding and with a Civil Partnerships this is also true, but on occasion we do offer help and support when we hear of stories about families accepting their son or daughter is gay, but when the mention of Civil Partnership is brought up, it conjures images of "Marriage" and "Religion" which has split families apart and often causes additional stress for the couple."*

*"It has not been uncommon to see some members of family not support based on their faith. However, times are changing and Civil Partnerships are becoming more and more acceptable in today's society."*

## What does it mean to you both on a personal level to be Civil Partners?

*"Being asked to be one of the first couples to hold a Civil Partnership was an amazing feeling, it's something Mike and I have always wanted and to be finally together under the eyes of the law and accepted by our friends and family as Civil Partners is truly amazing. Mike still goes on about how this was a Nelson Mandela moment."*

*"It puts everything into perspective and finally we can enjoy our lives as partners and not worry about all the legal bits."*

**Civil Partnership – A Guide to the Perfect Day**  
by Gino & Mike Meriano is published in March.  
Priced £6.99.

[www.pinkweddings.biz](http://www.pinkweddings.biz)

