

One of the happiest days of my life

It's the 28th May 2016 and I can't believe that I'm getting married today to a wonderful, beautiful woman called Pru. We had met on-line 5 years before, emailed and spoken on the telephone. We were getting on well but hadn't met up as we lived a distance apart. We had shared some sensitive things and I decided to tell 'my big secret'. I had become Peter sixteen years ago and was very comfortable in my skin. I wanted to be honest and had decided that it was better to tell someone early in a relationship, rather than wait, worry, agonise and maybe be rejected again. I spent hours writing an email, sent it and then I waited. Pru replied with a lovely message. She told me that she had been rather taken aback at my revelation but had gone for a very long swim in the pool and thought it through and decided that she should meet me. We arranged to meet up the next day half-way for dinner. We met, chatted, laughed and had a great evening. She took hold of my hand on the way back to the cars and we arranged to meet up again very soon.

We spent every weekend together after that. It was a wonderful feeling to look forward to Friday evenings and driving down the M6 to Warwickshire. I was loved and accepted as Peter and was very, very happy and so was she. Pru introduced me to classical singing and I surprised her by proposing in song, altering the words of the Beatle's song, at her singing summer school, on one knee with an engagement ring in my hand. The whole room was in tears. That's the only time I've seen Pru speechless. So, we set a date and got planning.

Our vicar was great and our wonderful friend Ruth filled the church with flowers and baked us a four tier wedding cake. My mum and my aunt travelled over from Dublin for the ceremony and I joined them and my son John, who was my best man, for breakfast on my wedding morning. Sadly, my dad was too unwell for the journey and my sister refused to come. John and I went up to the church early as I was then a church warden. The sun was shining and I had a huge grin from ear to ear. My new suit fitted, ties were



tied and John and I welcomed everyone. The church filled up, my Sibyls friends were there looking as gorgeous as always, some of Pru's choir came to swell our church choir, the organ was playing and then Pru arrived, looking as beautiful as ever.

She came into Wagner's 'Ride of the Valkyries' wearing her special horned headdress but half-way down the aisle she took it off (she says symbolically!). It was a wonderful service full of joyful singing and a great sermon woven around music. We are part of a group of five churches and everyone was invited to the church and shared Prosecco and wedding cake after the service before we headed off for afternoon tea with family and close friends.

The tea party was great fun and afterwards Pru had arranged for a pianist and some of her friends to sing for us. The sun shone, more friends arrived, more food, the dancing began and we were the last to leave – tired but very happy. Not far to go – we only lived around the corner! It was a fantastic day. We have just celebrated our 6th

wedding anniversary and I am looking forward to many, many more.

Peter Raftery