

# WHY WE'RE GETTING married in our 50s

As official figures show women in their 50s are now more likely to get married than women in their 20s, four women tell us their stories

**CARRIE TAYLOR, 56,** writes about her decision to marry long-term partner Mark this spring. They live in Kent and Carrie is associate editor on w&h. So I'm trending (at last!)... joining the ever-increasing numbers of 50+ women getting married. So... why? There wasn't an awful lot of mulling over of the decision to get married... it just happened! I simply came home from work one evening last summer in a bit of a strange mood and, out of the blue (to me as much as to Mark), out it came: "I want to get married."

I'd come in late because I had a couple of appointments in London and in between had half an hour to spare. I found myself sitting in Trafalgar Square, just people watching to pass the time. The students larking around,



the dad who'd brought his children up to London for the day, the young couple from overseas with their tiny toddler, the old couple sitting silently on the bench... I can only think that seeing these little slices of other people's lives must have stirred something and gave me a nudge...

Mark and I have been together for more than 25 years, meeting when he was 23 and I was in my early thirties with two young children from a previous relationship. I was financially independent with my own home, a good job, sorted – part of that first generation of women who didn't "need" to get married: we wouldn't be vilified by living in sin, we were encouraged to have careers not just jobs. So, although we had discussed marriage before, it wasn't something we felt really mattered to us. Our relationship worked – we'd been through the usual ups and downs of any couple and were still very happy together – so why rock the boat?

Part of my reasoning was that I'd always been the "lead" in our relationship: our house and all the bills in my name, and in many ways, it didn't feel as if we were a true out-and-out partnership and I wanted to put that right. Mark's initial response to the idea was simply: "Why?" My response: "I don't know, I just do..." When he realised I was serious he said, "All

right, then... but can we keep it really small?" And the decision was made... we were getting married!

My big surprise: I loved the whole business of it. Deciding on a venue and the guest list, the invites... the dress! Early on I bought a very beautiful dress in an online sale – reassuring Mark that I wouldn't do "the wedding dress thing" – and it was lovely,

***"I was that generation who didn't need to get married... so what changed?"***

but if I'm honest, more "mother of" than bride. Then I went shopping with my sister for her outfit... and happened upon a dress that, if I were going down the wedding dress route, was very much "it". What harm to try it on, just for fun? Oh dear, it fitted perfectly, oh dear, suddenly at 56 I wanted to be a princess! It was bought on the spot. From then on I became not a bridezilla, but so into the whole thing. The anticipation of creating a special celebration was joyous – and when our most recent family get-togethers had been for funerals, this was such a fabulous lightness in our world.

The day itself was all that I could have dreamed: the sun shone, the family and friends gathered all smiles (and a few tears!). My sons were Mark's best men and made the most lovely speech. Nothing passed in a daze – we savoured every moment.

So has anything changed? Well, neither of us had thought it would but it seriously has... we simply feel more "joined up". Our families are as one, the threads of our lives entwined. I know it sounds soppy, but that's just how it feels. I, we, feel complete now. It may be still honeymoon period, but we're being kinder to each other, more considerate, not taking each other for granted. It's a brilliant feeling and I hope that continues forever.

Getting married later on may not be for everyone, but right now it feels very good and I'm so happy we decided to go for it.



Carrie and Mark with her sons Will (left) and Dan



## SURPRISE WEDDING

**FRAUKE GOLDING** got married for the first time aged 52 to her partner Adrian. She is director of her own business, Hampshire Furniture ([hampshirefurniture.co.uk](http://hampshirefurniture.co.uk)).

I had no intention of ever getting married – I'd had relationships before Adrian, but they only ever lasted three or four years. I'm very independent and I've always been happy doing my own thing.

I knew Adrian from our social circles, but we were just acquaintances, not friends. He'd been married for 23 years before getting divorced.

I had a good friend who was going to travel round Australia for a year and I told her I would love to visit her out there for a holiday. Adrian also knew her and was planning to visit her too – so she suggested we meet up, get to know each other and go out to visit her together. We had no idea at the time that she was trying to set us up – it was only later that we realised.

We met for dinner a few times and we just clicked, and I thought, "Oh, you're okay. I actually do fancy you!" It was me who eventually broached the subject of our friendship turning into something romantic. He was too afraid of scaring me off! Nearly a year later, when we were ready to go to Australia, we were living together.

Adrian never actually proposed to me. Over the years, we went on holidays to a few places where you could get married on the beach. Every time we saw a beach wedding, Adrian would say >>

what a great idea he thought it was, and how he'd love a beach wedding at sunset. I just took it as a joke.

But then he decided to throw me a surprise wedding on the beach in St Lucia. I wasn't supposed to find out about it until the big day! But one day, in the car after visiting his brother Graham, we got a phone call on the hands-free from his brother's

***"I never thought I'd marry as I'm very independent but then a friend started matchmaking..."***

partner. She said, "What's this about you two getting married next year?" Turned out Adrian had discussed the wedding plans with Graham.

I felt quite shocked, but I did want to marry him, so we went ahead and got married on the beach in St Lucia on Valentine's Day.

I made Adrian walk down the aisle with me because I was terrified. I was very happy – I spent the whole time grinning – but I was shaking like a leaf, and Adrian says it was very obvious that I was petrified. It was a really lovely day – we had 12 guests who flew out to St Lucia, including my mother, who was 85 at the time.

Now it's very unusual for Adrian and me to be apart. We do everything together. My advice for women looking for love in their fifties? Don't go looking for it – you'll never find it. But if you do come across it, it does work. Even if you think you'll never get married, you really can never tell what might happen.



## THIRD TIME HAPPY

**ROSE EARL, who lives in Gibraltar and works in property, got married last year for the third time at 54 to her husband Graham, who was 50. She has three daughters from her previous marriages.**

After two marriages and years of being on my own, I really didn't see myself meeting someone again. I'd had relationships, but nothing serious – I didn't let anyone get that close. Then one day while I was scrolling through Facebook, a group called "Are You Interested" popped up. Out of curiosity, I clicked on the group and realised it was a dating forum. As I flicked through the photographs, I came across Graham's. Although I tried to dismiss it – he wasn't my type, or so I thought – his profile kept popping up again and again, and he just had such a nice, kind face.

When it came to adding on my location, Gibraltar, it automatically came up as Gibraltar in Lincolnshire – not where I live. So although Graham had seen my profile and was interested, he thought I lived in Lincolnshire and even that was too far to travel, as he was in Romford, Essex!

But eventually, curiosity got the better of him too. We chatted for some time via Facebook, then emails and later on Skype. I learned that he had previously been married for 20 years, but had no children. Eventually, Graham asked if it was okay for him to come to Gibraltar to meet personally.

I thought, well, if I'm going to hitch up with Graham, he's got a job to fill! Was he good enough for me? Was he going to look after me and treat me well? I'm not into tattoos, or piercings, or smoking. He needed to like DIY as well. Graham was happy to show me lots of photos, and let me speak to his friends and family. I was doing my research! I wasn't going to get it wrong a third time. I'd had too many lessons.

The first time I married, I was 18. I'd lost my mother to cancer at 16, and was a bit lost. I met someone who I'd known from childhood, and moved in with his family for a while.



I ended up marrying him because it seemed the right thing to do and we had a daughter, Rosie. Then he was offered a job in Gibraltar, which is how I ended up here, and though we divorced when I was 27, I've now been here for 28 years. I met my second husband and the father of my other two girls, Roslynn and Rochelle, but it was a very unhappy marriage. I left after eight years and after that being on my own was just fantastic.

***"When I met Graham on Facebook I did my research... I wasn't going to get it wrong a third time!"***

But Graham ticked all the boxes. The first time I met him, I felt as though I'd known him all my life. He's so kind-hearted and fantastic with the girls. He's from the old school of men. He looks after me and I look after him.

After much thought and several visits to Gibraltar, Graham decided to give up his 20-year career with the Metropolitan police so he could start a new life here with me. He got a job with the MOD Defence Police in Gibraltar.

We have so much fun together – in our heads, we're still young. When Graham visited we used to go clubbing and, one night, we were dancing for so long that they had to throw us out at 5.30am!

We got married at the beautiful Alameda Botanic Gardens, where I worked at the time. On the wedding day, I literally felt like I was flying. I just thought, "This is how it's meant to feel." Graham was actually very emotional and tearful. It was so different to my last two weddings which were in register offices.

I don't want people to think I just found the perfect guy on the internet, though. If you're going to do online dating, you can't just believe everything that they've written!

I finally feel that I have love and harmony in my life – it's never too late.

WORDS CARRIE TAYLOR, REBECCA HASTINGS PHOTOGRAPHS MR GLEN PHOTOGRAPHY

## relationships

### FIRST LOVE, SECOND CHANCE

**HEATHER SNOWLING, from Suffolk, married her childhood sweetheart at 55. This was her second marriage.**

Andy and I started dating when we were 16, but my mother didn't approve – she was very protective and thought I was too young – so we parted ways and later both met other people. I was married the first time for 24 years, and had two daughters, but eventually we just became more like brother and sister, and grew apart. When we separated in 2012 it was very hard, but we wanted different things.

Andy had actually messaged me on Friends Reunited in 2010, while he was still married, saying, "I'm listening to 10cc in the garage and thinking of you." They were our special group when we were young, but I didn't see the message till much later as I didn't really use the website. I replied straight away, but Andy had left the site by then.

***"We were teenage sweethearts but married other people first time around"***

When my marriage ended I looked for Andy on Facebook and couldn't believe my eyes when I found him. It turned out that his marriage had ended too. We arranged to meet and when I saw him, I instantly felt relaxed and happy.

We drove to nearby Shotley, a local beauty spot, walked along the river and had fish and chips in the pub. We talked about everything that had happened in our lives since we parted, and discovered that our likes and dislikes were almost exactly the same. It wasn't a date – just old friends catching up – but we more or less instantly realised we wanted to be together again.

We moved in together in April 2013. I think a lot of friends thought it wouldn't work, but they soon changed their minds – it was like we'd always been together. Three years after we reunited, Andy proposed to me at a Valentine's ball.

For the wedding, we had a marquee on the farm where we live – and we also had a horse and carriage. We saw it at a wedding fair, and I told Andy that as a little girl, I had always dreamed of having a horse and cart for my wedding. Andy just booked it, and my friend Katherine Cresswell, who runs My Savvy Wedding Planner, helped.

I was so happy on the wedding day – I felt I had everything I wanted this time round. Katherine's two-year-old son was a pageboy, Andy's son was the best man, my two daughters, aged 27 and 22, and Andy's daughter, who's 29, were my bridesmaids. The girls had reservations about my getting married at first, but they're happy for me.

Andy made me give a speech at the wedding and, at the end of it, I thanked him for coming back into my life. I would say that if you're in your fifties, you've got a soulmate and you know it's right, then why not get married? Life's too short – you have to do what makes you happy. **w&h**

