

Diamonds – for Eternity

by Sally Thornton

Throughout the year, I will be writing about the birthstone of the month and as it is already April it is the turn for diamonds.

Only last year, however, I wrote five articles for Village Connect on diamonds in which I discussed the history and the significance of four or five 'C's' and, for those who missed these or would just like to refer back to them, they are available to read via our web site www.aathorntonjeweller.com. So as not to bore you by going over same ground I thought it would be much more interesting if I took a look at a particular style of diamond ring: *The Eternity Ring*.

Eternity rings date back as far as 2000BC with the earliest recorded examples of a plain eternity ring being traced to the early Egyptians, followed later by those of the Greek Empire. Some of these early eternity rings were multi stranded or plaited, which again represented this endless or eternal loop, symbolic of eternal love, whilst other themes involved the shank to be formed like a snake, sometimes swallowing its own tail.

For obvious reasons, the history of the eternity ring is closely related to the

wedding ring and was also usually worn on the 'ring finger', the third finger on the left hand. What is probably less understood is that keeper rings were also for-runners to modern eternity rings and a good example of this was the diamond-set keeper ring given by George III to Queen Charlotte, but later passed on to Queen Victoria and now to be found in the Royal Collection in Windsor Castle.

The relationship between these three rings is still further intertwined due to the more modern style of diamond set wedding rings which can also be worn as eternity rings.

Opinions vary widely as to when the appropriate time is for giving and receiving an eternity ring. Some believe that the first wedding anniversary is the right time, which is certainly better than paper!!! Others believe the birth of a first child is appropriate, and if most men could empathise with their partners over the pain of childbirth, I am sure they would gladly prefer to buy an eternity ring, than go through the alternative! However, if both these occasions have slipped you by there is no reason why you cannot give or receive at any time; after all it is a symbol of love.

I often get asked in which order eternity rings should be worn relative to the wedding ring and engagement ring. As I have mentioned, eternity rings can evolve from or replace keeper rings and, when this is the case, they would go on top of the wedding ring. You may find yourself drawn to a particular style of eternity ring which will fit better in one position rather than another so the important thing is to do whatever feels best or is right for you.

The common feature of the eternity ring is that they are set with stones, most often with diamonds. A 'full' eternity ring has stones that are set completely around the band whereas a 'half' eternity ring has stones set partially around the shank, and it is important you make up your mind which is going to be appropriate for you as there are very real considerations

A full eternity ring cannot usually be adjusted for finger size whereas the half eternity ring can be fairly easily sized. Because of this, full eternity rings in general have to be made to order and, for this very reason, very few jewellers keep a sample range in stock. The making of the ring is also a more skilled and difficult task, increasing the price which, when taking into account that more diamonds will be needed, will often result in a full eternity costing up to three times more than its half eternity sister. But it is not just the price that you should be considering, as I have already mentioned that a full eternity is often impossible to size at a later date if required. The advantage of the full eternity is that it can spin on your finger without spoiling the effect and, anyway, what girl is ever going to turn down all those beautiful diamonds?

There is also the question of the cut of the stones and their setting. Many modern half eternity rings feature a 'raised' head which is a departure from the wedding type ring. Such a setting maximises the show by concentrating all the diamonds in the visible head or front of the ring. Although there are many diamond claw-set eternity rings you can also have a setting style where the stones are set into the metal of the shank such as grain, flush or pave, which are more secure. Channel-set rings are also extremely popular as you can see in our illustration. The princess-cut square diamonds or baguette-oblong diamonds are an excellent choice for eternity rings because they can be set edge to edge in a continued band or line. A full diamond eternity ring given to Marilyn Monroe by Joe di Maggio after their wedding in 1954 was set with diamond baguettes.

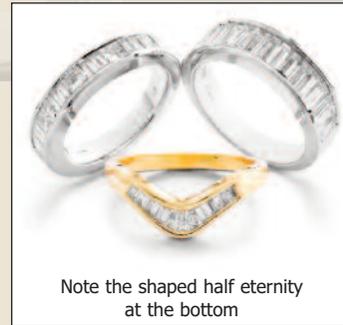
Despite today's modern scepticism over the magical powers of precious stones, the diamond – intrinsically the greatest and most beautiful of all gems – will always be, in its shining indestructibility, the supreme symbol of the union of two people in love.

"Rhyces be unstable
And beauty will decay,
But faithful love will ever last
Till death dryve it away"

Two torches in one ring of burning fire
Two wills, two hearts, two passions
Are bonded in marriage by a diamond.



Half eternities with mixed cuts and semi rub over settings



Note the shaped half eternity at the bottom



Note the mix of cuts and settings in this group of full eternities



This diamond eternity band was given to Marilyn Monroe by Joe di Maggio after their wedding in 1954. Notice how similar it is to current designs.



Princess cut half eternity



Half eternities but notice the raised setting on the lowest ring