

Spring is in the air and all over the county excitement is building for numerous summer weddings. Detailed planning is no doubt in an advanced stage, especially as many weddings are now held in exciting and exotic locations. But there is just one very important ingredient to this special day, which has been part of the ceremonies for thousands of years and will in turn last a lifetime; the wedding ring.



The beginnings of wedding rings lie in the deserts of North Africa where the ancient Egyptian civilisations sprang up along the River Nile. Here the rushes and reeds growing along the river banks were twisted and braided into finger rings. For the Egyptians the ring, as a circle, was a symbol of eternity and like time, it has no beginning or end. The shape was also worshipped in the form of the Sun and the Moon, even the hole in the centre symbolized a gate way or door. So it is not difficult to see how the ring began to be associated with love.

These early rings usually lasted about a year before wear and tear took their inevitable toll, so those

who wanted a longer lasting material chose leather, bone or ivory to craft their token of love. Later metal was used, whilst in early Rome iron was adopted as the metal of choice, rather than brass or copper. This symbolized the strength of love a man felt for his woman, though rust must have been a problem! In turn, Silver was used by the Romans, whilst Gold was introduced some time in the 2nd century AD.

The late medieval goldsmiths used their imagination and romantic visions to incorporate subjects such as rosettes and fleur-de-lys into their designs. At the same time posies (meaning little poems) were often inscribed on the inside. These secret words of love might be decorated with roses and picked out in vivid enamels. There are many examples of such messages on rings. Anne of Cleves, who married Henry VI 11 in the 16th century, had this optimistic inscription on her wedding ring: 'God send me well to keep'.

Just as we do today, the Egyptians wore the ring on the third finger of the left hand, as they believed that the vein of that finger travelled directly to the heart. This legend was subsequently taken up by the Greeks when they conquered Egypt and from them passed on to the Romans, who called this 'Vena amoris' which is Latin for 'the vein of love'. Christians in turn adopted the custom and a ring became an integral part of the marriage service that young couples will participate in this summer.



Fleur de lys inside



But wedding rings have not always been worn on the third finger, as in the 17th century they were often worn on the thumb. There have been other variations, as the priest in the wedding service would touch three fingers of the left hand with the ring 'In the name of the Father... Son...and Holy Ghost.' ending by placing the ring on the fourth finger.

In the preparations for wedding the choosing of the rings is one of the last jobs on the check list, but if you are having a summer wedding now is the time to make the decision. For sor couples this can be quite difficult as designers have encompassed every possible design. Diamond set wedding bands have for some time been sought after, although more recently designs incorporate bright cut finishes have become popular as this finish makes the rings sparkle, giving the illusion of a diamond set band but without the price tag! I personally quite like the idea of engraved patterns that are inside the ring. Classic designs such as cherry blossom or fleur-de-lys are available, as well as new ideas such as neo tartan and tattoo. It is also possible to shape a wedding ring to fit around the engagement ring or you can have a ring fitted and made to your own specification, but do be aware that this can take a little longer. So with all this choice you can see why some couples find it hard to make up their mind.

The decision doesn't end with the design, as you also have a choice of metals. Some years ago it was 9 or 18ct yellow or white Gold or perhaps platinum, but today other metals have become popular. We have seen a growth in Titanium ring sales, but do take advice before you buy if you think you may need to change the size at some point. Then there is Palladium, which only a few years ago was almost unheard of, but is now so popular that Palladium 500 with a lower palladium and higher silver content has been introduced, making it even



Engraved Inside



Bright cut to give the illusion of Diamonds



more competitively priced. If you would like to read more about precious metals and Hallmarking, I have covered this in previous articles which are available on www.aathorntonjeweller.com.

We are all aware of people's tightening budgets coupled with rising precious metals prices and how difficult it must be for young couples when starting out together; indeed this is part of the reason for the growth in Palladium ring sales. So we at AA Thornton have decided to have a Wedding rings SALE with between 20-60% off selected rings until the end of May.

Wedding rings are a lasting statement of commitment and the celebration that brings two people together. It always gives me a great feeling of pride and joy when customers pop into the shop to show us their rings which were purchased from my grandfather in the original shop in Market Street. Like my grandfather, I am pleased to say we continue to use British manufacturers who provide high quality rings.

Sally Thornton,
AA Thornton,
1/7 High Street,
Kettering
Tel: 01536 513014
www.aathorntonjeweller.com