

**NAME**

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**DATE**

September 23, 2021

**DURATION**

10m 58s

**4 SPEAKERS**

Cathy

Alex

Interviewer

Alex and Cathy

**START OF TRANSCRIPT****[00:00:03] Cathy**

A lot's changed for LGBT people, or is in a state of flux, I think, over the last few years. And so certainly, we got caught up in that kind of accidentally, didn't we, with the change in the law. So, I suppose it's just happened by accident really that we found that that happened. So it's sort of nice to, when people like yourself ask, you know, we're happy to take part in that. I think it's important.

**[00:00:28] Alex**

Yeah, we've both got quite close links to Cumbria. And I think it is interesting to document the changes. Certainly, as you said, with there- with the law changing in 2014 and how we just happen to be the, you know, the first people to have a same-sex marriage. After- after that change in the law is quite nice, it feels like part of history. It's nice to just document it really, isn't it?

**[00:00:54] Cathy**

Yeah.

**[00:00:56] Interviewer**

Great. And- so, well, obvious question is, why did you choose to get married in Cumbria?

**[00:01:03] Alex**

We- well, a few reasons really. I guess- I mean, I grew up there. We met there for the first time, we met in Keswick, first time we met. We tend to go on holiday there once a year. We both really like walking. So it just felt the- the obvious place, really, I mean, I don't know we discussed getting married anywhere else, did we?

**[00:01:25] Cathy**

No.

**[00:01:25] Alex and Cathy**

It just felt like this place.

**[00:01:30] Cathy**

Yeah, it's lovely.

**[00:01:30] Interviewer**

So, how was the process, how did you find it?

**[00:01:33] Cathy**

The process of organising to get married? It was- it was busy, wasn't it? It was a busy time, we- I can't remember how we-booked. We went to Rydal Mount, didn't we? To- because that's where we got married, was Rydal Mount. And I think, well, you did a search, didn't you, of all the places in the area you could get married in?

**[00:01:52] Alex**

Yeah. That's right. I mean, we got engaged two years before we got married, so we had plenty of time to prepare. We knew we didn't want a massive wedding, so we didn't need a huge venue, but at the same time we thought rather than a registry office it would be nice to see what other venues were available there. So it was really through doing a search of venues that we came across Rydal Mount as a, you know, it was- it was really the perfect size, wasn't it?

**[00:02:21] Cathy**

Yeah.

**[00:02:23] Alex**

As well as being in the area we wanted it to be. I guess the rest of it, it was- it was very much getting the venue sorted and the place sorted to have a party afterwards, with a- the big things we sorted out quite early on. And then the rest of it was, we sort of did in bits and bobs, didn't we, as, you know, closer to the time. But to say, on the whole an enjoyable process.

**[00:02:50] Cathy**

Yeah, it was an enjoyable process. I think much the same as other people getting married.

**[00:02:55] Alex**

Yeah, yeah.

**[00:02:56] Cathy**

But then we- well, it was a civil partnership we'd originally organised, wasn't it?

**[00:03:00] Alex**

It was, yeah. Yes, we'd originally booked to have a civil partnership. It was only, was it a couple of months beforehand we found out we could have a wedding rather than the civil partnership? It wasn't long, was it?

**[00:03:12] Cathy**

I think it was March the 17th we applied for- in Newcastle- for the marriage license order.

**[00:03:20] Alex**

Yeah. It was very- a very short period beforehand.

**[00:03:23] Cathy**

When we realised, I think it was March the 29th, wasn't it, they changed the law.

**[00:03:27] Alex**

Yeah, they- did they call us? I think they called- the registry office-.

**[00:03:32] Cathy**

John Chester, John Chester at Kendal, actually, he's a lovely registrar. He called us, didn't he, and said "what you want to do, you've got this option now". And we sort of thought that might be the case, but we weren't sure until he rang, I think that's how it happened. And then yeah, then we had to go through the whole process again. So we paid for the civil partnership and then had to pay for the marriage, marriage license, which was fine. But it was quite funny because we were the first in Newcastle and they were very confused by it. And there's a guy on the phone, who I don't know if he was quite junior, but he sort of, you could hear the cogs going around in his brain. He was like, "if I just change it from the CP to an M, I'm sure that's fine" and I said, "no, I think there's a bit more paperwork you've got to do, it's a bit different". So- which was very nice of him to try and sort of change it like that for us, but we realised there's quite a bit of a difference.

**[00:04:20] Alex**

Yeah, so I guess with living in Newcastle, but getting married in Cumbria, we were dealing with the- the two registry offices, and we were the first for both. So they were very much, quite, almost reliant on us to tell them what to do at times it felt. So- what I thought was really nice was in terms of, say the wording for our ceremony, they- I mean, they were writing the wording with us just before we went in, weren't they? Saying "oh, what should we say instead of man and wife, you know, shall we say wife and wife or married couple?" And you know, it felt like we were helping write the words that are probably then going to then be used in subsequent ceremonies, which was- yeah, so it was quite a special time as well, I would say.

**[00:05:05] Cathy**

And it was quite funny as well to hear, you know, because they were a bit concerned on the phone, weren't they, about what the wording would be in terms of its- used to be, you know, marriage is between one man and one woman, they were concerned how that would come out. So, I mean, actually at the moment when they said it I was thinking "what, what're they going to say?" And then it was "marriage is between two people". And I was like, "Ohrright! Someone had a meeting about that", [laughs] which I thought was quite sweet. Yeah, it's nice. Really good. And the registrar was really positive, wasn't he, about-.

**[00:05:38] Alex**

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, that's something I would say actually is pretty much everyone we approached, so the venue, the place we had the party, and the registrars were all quite excited by it as well. You know, that they felt like they were being part of the history, and our photographer, who was- he wrote a blog about it as well, didn't he, so yeah. Yeah. It was nice. Definitely. I'd say an exciting time. [baby sounds in background]

**[00:06:06] Interviewer**

That's great. That sounds nice. And so when you realise that you could get married, you can actually have a wedding ceremony rather than a civil partnership one, is that a no brainer to switch between the other?

**[00:06:20] Alex**

Yes. It was.

**[00:06:23] Cathy**

It was for us, yeah.

**[00:06:23] Alex**

I'm trying to- yeah, I mean, I guess a year before we found out that the law was going to change but we didn't know whether it would change before- before our ceremony or not.

**[00:06:36] Cathy**

Well they said June, didn't they-.

**[00:06:37] Alex**

Initially it was going to be after the ceremony, but-.

**[00:06:40] Cathy**

So we were just going to have an upgrade, weren't we.

**[00:06:43] Alex**

Yeah, because we'd- for our civil partnership we'd say we got engaged by mutual agreement in a pub, hadn't we, we were just chatting and sort of agreed upon it. So when we found out we could get married, I actually then proposed to you, didn't I, because I felt like I'd missed out proposing the first time. And so I felt it was something that we ought to- we ought to discuss, rather than saying "yes, of course we're going to do that". But yeah, it was something we really- we really wanted to do. It felt like the, you know, that step towards equality, because for as much as it would be great to have a civil partnership it felt like having the marriage would be the- you know, an actual equal to say our peers and friends, what they are able to have.

**[00:07:28] Interviewer**

So, you think that the same sex marriage is still really important even though civil partnership offers- already offered quite a lot?

**[00:07:37] Alex**

Yes, I do. I think it's- I think, even just by having the same word, being able to say, you know, "we are married" rather than "we are in a civil partnership". It just gives it that level, there's no, "oh right, you're a civil partnership because you're a same-sex couple", it's saying that, you know, regardless of who you are, you can have- you can have a marriage and I think, yeah, that is really important. So it just irons out differences. It becomes, you know, anybody can get married, rather than you can get married, but you can have this almost marriage which is probably what it felt like before.

**[00:08:15] Cathy**

Yeah, it did feel a little bit like a- a bit of an inferior type of thing. Although I know a lot of people are really pro-civil partnership still, and that's what they want to do and I think that's great that you have the option as well. I think what surprised me was, working in Newcastle and working as a chiropractor, in mentioning it to some of my patients that were coming in, and these were well educated people, heterosexual people, so they weren't necessarily interested in what goes on between same-sex couples. A lot of them already thought that we could get married. They didn't realise that the law hadn't- didn't cater for the likes of us, which I thought was really interesting. But wow, people don't- they just assume because it's like- well, why wouldn't- why wouldn't you have that, that equality? Because they obviously saw- saw the relationship as in equal standing to what they- they had, so it was quite- there were a few eyebrows raised actually. People- "Oh really? You can't? You know, have they not sorted that out yet?" Kind of thing. It's like, no yeah, we're actually the first. So that was interesting. And because obviously you get kind of- when you're part of that and you've got more of an awareness, haven't you, of what's going on in terms of how legal things affect you. But for most of the population, they're not really- it's not on their radar and it's not that they're not supportive, it's just that they're not aware, so it's quite interesting.

**[00:09:38] Interviewer**

Yeah. Because when I was trying to track people down for first civil partnership and first marriage, I found the first two couples who got married, actually on the first day of the civil partnership, and the local newspaper just reported it as a gay wedding, which I found quite interesting because, you know, all the things we talked about, as- you know, as a civil partnership ceremony is not a wedding in a sense, and for- some people don't see the difference, but I think there still is.

**[00:10:07] Alex**

Yeah. Yeah. There still are subtle differences and, I mean, I have read up about it at some point. There are very, sort of, slight changes around different types of pensions and tax laws and stuff. So there are minor changes, which probably aren't necessarily going to affect us day-to-day, but it is- it's just having that, sort of, equal standing to say, you know, this- you are all entitled to- to get married, which is very important.

**[00:10:33] Interviewer**

Yeah. Yeah. I think I had a chat with another couple friends of mine who are- one of them is British, another one is American, and they said that actually it's quite important to them because, especially when they travel internationally, because lots of countries don't know what civil partnership is and- but they know what marriage is.

**[00:10:53] Alex**

Yeah. Oh right, okay yeah.

END OF TRANSCRIPT



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