





**I**T was, without a doubt, an event that Carrie, Samantha, Charlotte and Miranda would have absolutely loved – had they been invited.

But in some ways they perhaps were involved in Mark Burgess and Darren Pearce's civil partnership.

For even though the girls were not there in person, *Sex in The City* was very much on the agenda.

When Darren and Mark's 120 guests sat down to a sumptuous wedding breakfast, they discovered the boys had named each table after either a character or a place from the hit TV sitcom. "We're

# Fabulous

addicted to *Sex and the City*," said Mark.

"It's pure escapism and very funny. In fact we'd love to be like the four girls - al-

ask for their permission. "They were over the moon," he said. "And really chuffed for us."

With the proposal out of the way, the two men then had the next 18 months or so to plan the perfect party. And what a party it was.

They had decided to tie the knot at The Oxford Thames Four Pillars Hotel in Sandford-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, on October 16 2010.

"Oxfordshire presented the best option in terms of >>

**'I think we both always felt what we**

**had was something special'**

ways eating out, going out and shopping."

Mark, now 38, had proposed to Darren on New Year's Eve 2008

But like a true gent, he had called Darren's parents first to



geography for the guests as well as being a beautiful county," said Mark.

"The hotel itself we both fell in love with and was the perfect mix of old meets new, and of class without being stuffy."

What mattered more than anything was that all their suppliers were gay-friendly.

"Anyone with extreme views is no friend of ours," said Mark.

They spent the night before their civil partnership at the hotel.

Both men had opted for chocolate-coloured suits with burnt orange cravats to suit their autumn theme.

"We had originally decided on a blue colour scheme but we changed our minds because the flowers in bloom in October were so vibrant," said Darren.

They also chose something similar for their best men Mark Manley and Craig Els and their four ushers.

On the day of their civil partnership, both were feeling a tad nervous but excited.

Their guests were already in the room when they made their entrance to Pachelbel's Canon in D.

"We walked in at the same time from either side of the

back, met in the middle and walked down to the front together," said Mark.

During the exchange of vows, it was Mark who got a little choked.

"He had to pause momentarily which set off a lot of our guests," said Darren.

They had opted for two readings, which were chosen by their friends.

"Both of them know us so well so it made sense to let them choose," said Mark.

One read 'I Love You' by Roy Croft; the other 'I Wanna Be Yours' by John Cooper Clarke.


"They complemented each other perfectly because one

was traditional and very moving, and the other comical but also very moving," said Mark.

Mark's sister, Clare Matthews and one of their best friends Tina Oversby, then joined them to sign the register as harpist Alexandra King played Pure Imagination from the film Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory.

The Beatles' Here Comes the Sun was the song that signalled the end of the ceremony when Darren and >>





## Our dream team

**VENUE:** Oxford Thames Four Pillars Hotel  
[www.oxford-thames-hotel.four-pillars.co.uk](http://www.oxford-thames-hotel.four-pillars.co.uk)

**SUIT HIRE:** Dickies Suit Hire  
[www.dickies-suit-hire.co.uk](http://www.dickies-suit-hire.co.uk)

**FLORIST:** Fabulous Flowers  
[www.fabulousflowers.biz](http://www.fabulousflowers.biz)

**VIDEOGRAPHER:** Adam Huckle Films  
[www.adamhuckle.com](http://www.adamhuckle.com)

**HARPIST:** Alexandra King  
[www.harplistalex.co.uk](http://www.harplistalex.co.uk)

**DJ:** Jon Saunders  
[www.jon-saunders.co.uk](http://www.jon-saunders.co.uk)

<< Mark left the room hand-in-hand to a round of applause.

After the ceremony guests were treated to a drinks' reception before sitting down to a delicious wedding breakfast of salmon gravlax, roast beef and Yorkshire pudding and mango possett followed by cheese and biscuits.

Mark and Darren had invited a further 30 people to the evening reception so they saved their speeches and cutting of the cake until everyone had arrived.

Once they had, the two newly-weds made their entrance with a personalised announcement recorded by the X factor voiceover guy, followed by the theme tune to Sex and the City.

"The looks on people's faces when they heard those familiar tones and saw us bouncing through the crowd was just such a highlight of the day for us," said Mark.

They had chosen Pat Benatar's We Belong for their first dance and anyone who knew them would have known why.

For the song featured in one of their favourite musicals - Priscilla Queen of the Desert.

The disco ended in the early hours when everyone went home with a big smile on their faces.



Their £23,000 civil partnership celebrations had been a rip-roaring success.

The next day Mark and Darren headed straight to Brighton where they spent two nights.

"It was somewhere we knew we'd feel comfortable," said Mark.

Then it was back to work – at The Carphone Warehouse for Darren and hSo for Mark.

A year on – and after a magical honeymoon in California – they are as close, and

happy, as when they first met on holiday in Gran Canaria seven years ago.

"I think we both always felt that what we had was something special," said Darren, now 34.

"Married life has brought us even closer together and made us stronger as a team." Although children are not in their plans, the two men, who live in Harrow, North West London, are considering moving to Oxfordshire.

"We love London but Oxfordshire holds such great memories for us," said Darren.

And while they may not want children of their own, their five nephews and several godchildren keep them very busy.

"Time with our friends is also so important to us," said Mark.

Their message, meanwhile, for anyone who might be reluctant to tie the knot is this: Just do it.

"It's a wonderful opportunity to celebrate your relationship with your friends and family, plus legally it can help no end being recognised as a legally-joined couple," said Darren.