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world

EUROPE 6,800 Couples Marry in U.K.

More than 6,800 same-sex couples have gotten married under the United Kingdom's Civil Partnership Act since it took effect in December. The law grants civil partners all the rights and obligations of traditional marriage.

In England and Wales, male couples tying the knot have vastly outnumbered female couples—4,311 to 2,205.

In Scotland, 343 ceremonies have taken place. Male couples lead there also—220 to 123.

"Local registrars have been exemplary in introducing this new legislation, helping same-sex partners to have a relaxed and happy experience on their important day," said Scottish Registrar General Duncan Macniven.



Member of Parliament Ben Bradshaw married his longtime partner, BBC journalist Neal Dalglish, June 24 in Exeter, England.

In Exeter, England, Member of Parliament Ben Bradshaw married his longtime partner, British Broadcasting Corp. journalist Neal Dalglish, June 24.

Bradshaw told the BBC: "The sort of things I worried about were things like being able to visit my partner in hospital, being treated as next of kin, not being clobbered for inheritance tax, which were some of the things that were inflicted on same-sex couples before we had civil partnership."

EuroPride Numbers Disputed

EuroPride, held July 1 in London, was either somewhat of a flop or a smashing success—depending on whose numbers you trust.

Organizers were hoping for a turnout of 500,000 and say they got 750,000. But police said only 40,000 people were present.

The march went down Oxford and Regent streets, to Piccadilly Circus and Trafalgar Square, then on to the Houses of Parliament and Victoria Embankment. Royal Navy sailors marched for the first time—about 40 of them, in uniform.

Mayor Ken Livingstone told the British Broadcasting Corp., "What this shows as we march through the city of London—one of the greatest cities on earth—is a city can be a wonderful place to live in with people of every race, religion and sexuality."

Well-known activist Peter Tatchell carried a poster depicting the pope in drag that said, "Pope 'Betty' Benedict XVI—Queen of Homophobia."

He explained: "The pope talks like a gay man, walks like a gay man and dresses like a gay man. If the pope is gay, his hypocrisy is breathtaking...."

Is he using homophobia to deflect rumors about his own sexuality?"

Benedict has authorized Vatican documents that condemn gay love as "objectively disordered," "contrary to natural law," "debased," "grave depravity" and a "tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil."

Czech Gays Register

Three same-sex couples tied the knot July 1 in the Czech Republic as the nation's new registered partnership law came into force. Two of the weddings were in Ostrava, Moravia, and the third was in Kladno, Bohemia.

"We've saved some money together. Now we are sure of not losing it if one of us passes away," Karel, who married Josef in Ostrava, told the Czech News Agency (CTK).

Vendulka and Stepanka, also married in Ostrava, told CTK they were happy to be registered but hope lawmakers now will move on to approval of same-sex adoption.

The registered partnership law was approved only after the Chamber of Deputies overrode President Vaclav Klaus's veto of it. While it extends to registered couples many of the rights and obligations of traditional marriage, it withholds equality in the areas of adoption, pensions, taxation and joint ownership of property, CTK said.

MIDEAST/AFRICA Gay Prince Disowned

A gay prince in India has been disowned by his parents for coming out in a news article.

Prince Manvendrasinh Gohil's wealthy royal family once ruled the princely state of Rajpipla in what is now eastern Gujarat state. The 40-year-old said that he previously came out to his parents privately and that they sent him to doctors in an effort to set him straight. Coming out in the media, he said, was the last straw for them.

In a newspaper ad disinheriting him, Gohil's mother, Rukminidevi, declared: "Manvendra ceases to have rights as a son over the family property, and the power of attorney issued to him also stands canceled. Henceforth, no one must refer to my name as mother of Manvendra. If any individual or organization dares to do so, it will invite contempt proceedings against him."

Gohil works as the director of a Gujarat HIV organization. "I have no regrets, since I have found family in the [gay] community," he said.

Actions Against Iran Planned

Activists in 20 cities in 12 nations planned to take part in an International Day of Action Against Homophobic Persecution in Iran on July 19.

"It is shaping up as the biggest-ever event of international solidarity with gay Iranians," said blogger Doug Ireland, who is helping organize the events.

The date is the first anniversary of the public hanging of teenage boys Mahmoud Asgari and Ayaz Marhoni in the Iranian city of Mashad—either because they were lovers (according to local gays and some international activists) or for the crime of raping a 13-year-old boy (according to the government).

In either case, "men and women suspected of homosexual conduct in Iran face the threat of execution," affirmed Scott Long of Human Rights Watch's gay rights program. "We have documented