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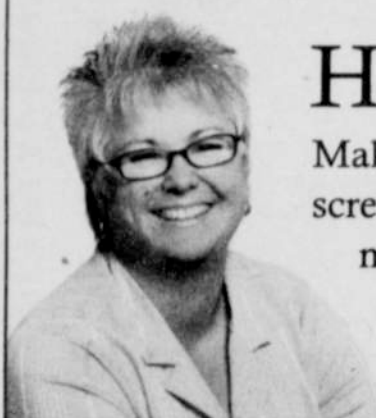
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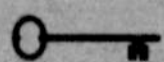
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Denied Civil Partnership**

The Queen of England's official composer, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, has been denied the right to enter an official civil partnership with his longtime partner on the remote Scottish Orkney island of Sanday, where they live.

The Orkney Islands Council blocked the wedding, claiming the local Sanday marriage registrar, Charlie Ridley, who later resigned in protest, was not authorized to perform gay unions.

Instead, the council said, Davies and partner Colin Parkinson could travel 90 minutes by boat to the Orkney capital of Kirkwall and marry at the central registration office. Later, following extensive media coverage, the council reportedly also offered to send a senior registrar from Kirkwall to Sanday to conduct the ceremony.

Reports varied as to why Ridley allegedly lacked authority to perform civil partnerships, with some saying he was unqualified because he was too new on the job, and others saying the council always intended for the ceremonies to be performed only by one or two Kirkwall-based senior registrars because it didn't expect there to be any demand elsewhere.

Davies initially sought legal help to challenge the edict against Ridley but gave up Jan. 10 after Ridley resigned his position.

"Everything has gone so sour, it's spoiled everything for us," Davies told local media. "We are under the impression that a local registrar can conduct civil ceremonies.... I will not give the council the pleasure of me marrying in Kirkwall. We will do it elsewhere in the U.K."

Meanwhile, the islands council appears to have taken punitive action against Ridley, who operates a small, free tourist attraction called the Sanday Light Railway. In the letter in which Ridley was informed he could not conduct civil partnerships, the council also told him his miniature railway lacks a required \$10,000 annual public entertainment license, which Ridley says he cannot afford.

"The council approved the planning application for the railway, and we have been operating

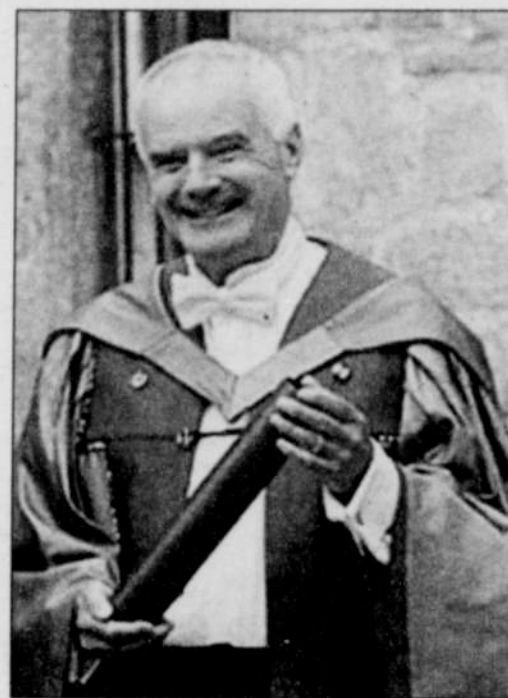
with no problems," he told local media. "But as soon as I apply for this gay civil partnership, I get this letter which effectively closes us."

As a result, Ridley has begun dismantling the \$100,000 railway.

Well-known British gay activist Peter Tatchell called Jan. 6 for a tourism boycott of the Orkneys if officials don't stop being obstructionist.

"The Orkney officials seem to be creating no-go areas for civil partnerships," he told Scotland's *Sunday Times*. "It smacks of sexual apartheid."

Sanday has 521 residents.

**Sir Peter Maxwell Davies was denied a civil partnership in Scotland.****Kylie Minogue Is Top
British Gay Icon**

Singer Kylie Minogue is the greatest gay icon of all time, according to the British market research company OnePole. The company questioned more than 5,000 gays and lesbians on the topic.

Dolly Parton took second place, Abba was third, Judy Garland fourth and Marilyn Monroe fifth.

David Beckham placed sixth, Madonna seventh, Audrey Hepburn eighth, Peter Andre and partner Katie Price (aka the model Jordan) ninth and Liza Minnelli 10th.

Czech Gay Group Shuts Down

The gay group that worked 17 years to pass a civil union law in the Czech Republic has closed up shop, saying its work is done.

Gay Initiative chairman Jiri Hromada told *The Prague Post*, "I don't want to say that everything has been accomplished, but our priorities have been achieved."

More than 200 same-sex couples have taken advantage of the civil union law since it came into force last July. The statute, which became law after the Chamber of Deputies overrode President Vaclav Klaus's veto, grants many of the rights and obligations of marriage but withholds equality in the areas of adoption, pensions, taxation and joint ownership of property.

Other activist groups, including the Gay and Lesbian League, will pick up the slack resulting from Gay Initiative's dissolution.

"The reality is that the [partnership] law is not ideal," the league's Martin Strachon told the *Post*.

He said the group will seek parity with heterosexuals in the areas of adoption, property rights, income tax and fast-track immigration.

**Gays Protest
at Vatican**

About 150 gays and lesbians picketed the Vatican on Jan. 13, protesting against Pope Benedict XVI's outspoken opposition to civil union and same-sex marriage laws.

The protest marked the day nine years ago when a gay man, Alfredo

**Kylie Minogue beat out Judy Garland as top gay icon by a British poll.**