

# MATCHES MADE IN *Marlborough*...

There should be so many ways to meet people and yet, with our busy lives, our smart phones and social media it can sometimes seem that we have been robbed of the opportunity to actually meet anyone at all. With the Christmas season not so far away we spoke to **HEATHER HEBER PERCY** Founder of **THE COUNTY REGISTER** and Chairman of The Association of British Introduction Agencies about how she brings likeminded people together and how this can be a life-changing experience.

***You must have one of the best jobs in the world, making people happy, how did this happen?***

In 1983 I was working for The Samaritans in Shropshire mostly on the phones but then as a trainer. I became all too well aware of the loneliness factor, especially amongst farmers and country people. Together with Geraldine Turner a close friend, we decided to start a club for lonely farmers and we called it Country Partners. We very rapidly received a huge amount of publicity from the media all of it good in those days and we subsequently went on to do a documentary for the BBC. In 1983 there were only four introduction agencies in the whole of the UK and of course online dating did not exist. We have gone on from strength to strength and my daughter Zara Heber Percy joined the company ten years ago, bringing with her qualifications that hugely enhance our business especially for the younger age group who join us. My other daughter Tamara Heber Percy also retains an interest in the business, when she is not busy as The Founder of SMITH HOTELS (Mr and Mrs Smith.com), but continues to advise us on the technical stuff which is her forte.

***One of the most interesting things about the County Register is that the initial phase is conducted personally by someone from The County Register, how does it work?***

We literally meet and interview every single potential joiner and if necessary we will arrange interviews throughout the country, depending upon the response from the various counties, this means that people do not necessarily have to travel to London to meet us. The initial interview is free of charge and without obligation on either

side, we certainly do not try to persuade people into joining, they can simply go away and think about it.

***For people who are looking for companionship it can be such a maze, 'How should I look, what should I say' – you offer a consultation service, tell us a little about that.***

It's all about trying to find out what is going wrong, why they are not meeting people and helping to change some of those impossible wish lists that people seem to attach to human beings. It's all about bringing a bit of realism into the mix and allowing people to see themselves in a more realistic way, literally by looking in the mirror, bringing them to an acceptance of what is or is not possible when going out there and trying to find a partner again. Sometimes people we meet are unrealistic about the age group they wish to meet, so again we explain how important it is to keep an open mind in this respect, men especially are the culprits here because - without exception - they always want to meet a younger woman!

***And finally what is the best thing about what you do?***

The best thing about what I do is meeting people from all walks of life in the first instance and that in itself is truly stimulating. Secondly it is so, so rewarding when we do get two people together who in the normal mix of life would never have met and as a result led a lonely life. It's still really exciting when we receive notification of this and boosts moral and belief in what we are doing. For me personally I would never ever contemplate running an online agency, I think its dangerous and really hit and miss. As Chair of The Association of British Introduction Agencies I know beyond reasonable doubt that traditional dating is safe and secure.



## Have you ever thought of employing a **PERSONAL MATCHMAKER?**

**Then look no further - you are never too old, even if you are simply looking for close friendship.**

For a **FREE** private consultation without obligation contact

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