



Love in a cold climate

Love should be the last thing on the minds of the eight men and women gathered outside the London Eye: they are wrapped in duffel coats and unflattering jumpers as a raw January wind whips off the Thames into their rapidly reddening faces.

But these are four couples that have agreed to take part in *Building's* Valentine special. Each pair was struck by Cupid's arrow through their involvement in the erotic hotbed that is the construction industry. They have agreed to share memories of those first knowing glances and stolen moments, as well as those irritating habits that can only develop over a long and loving relationship - and all for a few free glasses of bubbly.

The London Eye is the offspring of architecture's most famous mister and missus team, Julia Barfield and David Marks, and they lead the way to the pod that will take the couples 135 m over the capital, providing views that would melt even the coldest of hearts.

Before setting foot in the pod, the couples have to be security checked. Paul Hurford, the managing director of cost consultant Boxall Sayer, whispers to his wife: "It'd be funny if Julia and David weren't let on ..."

What is arguably more amusing is that Paul's wife is called Pauline, which even Mr Hurford concedes sounds "a bit sad". He might be self-deprecating, but Paul is also the most enthusiastic about tonight's event, having earlier emailed *Building* with some incredibly detailed notes of their first meeting. Such minutiae include the exact time that he first clapped eyes on Pauline ("8.45am, 30 December 1971") and the make of lift that she had just stepped in to (an "ancient Otis with trellis gates").

Paul, who was helping out at his dad's QS practice at the time, also included this rather glorious anecdote in the email: "As I approach the lift it is trundling off upwards. On my eye level is a deliciously short skirt, followed by the best pair of legs I've ever seen. Love at first ogle."



**Couple number one
The secretary and the boss' son**



Who they are

The Hurfords - Paul, 52 and Pauline, 51. Met in 1971, married in 1977.

How they met

At the QS practice of Paul's dad, LA Francis & Partners. Paul was helping out on his university Christmas holidays, while Pauline was a secretary. Today, Paul is managing director of Boxall Sayer and Pauline is a medical and legal secretary.

What do you remember about the time you first met?

Paul Seeing those legs disappear in the lift! It was the era of pirate radio, men on the moon ... miniskirts. Our generation was very lucky to have been young at that time.

Pauline We first went out for lunch in a little restaurant in Holborn. It seems a lifetime ago now ...

Do you talk about work at home?

Paul Yes, when you're running a business it's never far from your mind. I mainly talk about people I've met, not the job - because she has six years' experience as a QS secretary, it can be quite beneficial.

Pauline If you've worked in the industry, you understand that there are deadlines, a lot of tense periods of work.

What's the other one's most irritating habit?

Pauline Paul's is probably not listening. Usually his mind's on his work.

Paul I have to concentrate on one thing at a time. Pauline's is map reading.

Pauline That's not fair. I've got you to lots of places!

Paul Not necessarily the right places though ... But I suppose that's more of a male-female thing, not just Pauline, is it?

Pauline Like only being able to concentrate on one thing at a time ...

The champagne starts to flow

As the wheel begins to turn, David Marks marches over to the champagne and pops the cork. This is despite the presence of a hostess. The impression is instantly etched in everyone's minds: the London Eye is still very much David and Julia's baby.

Julia frowns, and then rushes up to the edge of the pod. "Oh my god! What is that?" she exclaims, pointing to a large logo stuck onto the pod's glass skin. "It's all right," says David soothingly. "It's just an advertisement for the Brit awards. It'll be coming off soon."

But like a father quietly appalled at his errant teenager's tattoo, David does not like the Eye being used for advertising: "I don't think that there should be any branding on it."

Talk soon turns to the conception, as it were, of the Eye. They had set up Marks Barfield in 1988, having previously co-founded model-making company Tetra with fellow students after they had started dating at the Architecture Association in the 1970s. Bar a short period in the 1980s when Julia worked for Norman Foster, they have spent their entire working lives together.

Marks Barfield had been up and running for four years when *The Sunday Times* ran a competition for a new London landmark. "David came up with the idea when walking into work one day," explains Julia. It was Julia who came up with the location, by drawing a circle around greater London and finding that the centre point was just by Westminster Bridge.

As the pod reaches that top point, David is moved to mention the twinkle in his eye - lighting the Thames. He points along the river, commenting that few parts are well lit at the moment. He wants to see lights placed along the north and south banks, illuminating the area's rich architecture. About 20 architects and artists would design the patterns. "I'm beginning to talk to people about this. The idea is something for the Olympics in 2012, using new, sustainable technology that lasts 10 years."



**Couple number two
The proud parents**

Who they are

David Marks and Julia Barfield, both 53. Met in the early 1970s; married in 1981.

How did you meet?

Julia We were at the Architecture Association, but also lived on the same street in Stockwell [south London]. We still live on that street.

David She lived in the pub opposite me. The first time we met was in our friend Andy's house in Crystal Palace.

Julia Really? [Looking impressed]

What's it like working together?

David It works. I think it makes it a lot easier for people in the practice. It's a nice office to work in because we're a couple.

Julia There are so many other people involved - architecture really is a group activity.

Do you talk about work at home?

Julia It did dominate our lives over years, until the Eye went up in 1999, apart from the children [The couple have three children].

David I remember when the wheel first went up. We were sitting opposite (on the north bank) for the second lift on a Sunday morning - when it went from 30° to 60°.

Julia We could almost reach out and touch it.

What's the other one's most irritating habit?

Julia Mine would be interrupting. He gets annoyed with that because he's impatient.

David Yes, impatience [nodding]. I do get annoyed when interrupted.

