

SECRET SUSSEX

IT'S A FAIR COP



Today's singletons seem to be addicted to the internet when seeking their next partner, even though we are assaulted on an almost weekly basis with horror stories of lies, deceit and fraud along with, I am sure, many matches made in heaven.

Matchmaking is as old as time, and in some cultures the role of the matchmaker was quite professionalized. The Ashkenazi Jewish shadchan and the Hindu astrologer were often thought to be essential advisors, who also helped in finding the right spouses as they had links to and a relationship of good faith with the families. In cultures where arranged marriages were the rule, the astrologer often claimed that the stars sanctified matches that both parents approved of, making it quite difficult for the possibly hesitant children to easily object – and also making it easy for the astrologer to collect his fee.

Things have moved on and matchmaking is back in vogue, none more so than with South Downs Introductions, founded by ex-police detective Tara McDonnell. PBM met up with Tara and asked her how it came about. "I set the company up due to my experiences with online dating in my 30s, when I was single. I found that some people lied about their age, weight, height and even their marital status. I put being single down to my career choice. I served as a police detective for 10 years and shift work made meeting single men difficult. The thought of putting my picture on the internet for all to see, including those I may have arrested, was horrifying. I eventually met my partner off-line through our love of sailing and have been together now for seven years. I left the police to attend university and study law and found that matchmaking agencies in the area were few and far between, and so expensive that they became prohibitive."

On-line dating fraud is ever-growing as singles turn to the ease of the online route, but such fraud rose by 33% in 2015 to a staggering £34 million, with one woman losing an eye-watering £800k. "Fraudsters, adept at grooming techniques, prey on the vulnerable; 68% are women and the rest are men. I saw there were even more sinister issues when a female suffered a brutal sexual assault and beating from a man she met on a well-known online dating site. Our objectives are to put the personal touch back into dating and strive to

keep people safe. I meet everyone in person and I ensure they are who they say they are. I really get to know my clients and I am using my skills as a trained and certified matchmaker, and as an ex-detective, to put compatible, busy,

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professional people together, and it works. My testimonials are evidence of that. My clients put a lot of trust and faith in me. I work with some wonderful, inspirational people who have some marvellous life stories and some equally poignant ones. Honesty is my policy, and if I believe that I cannot assist someone, I will say so in a tactful way.

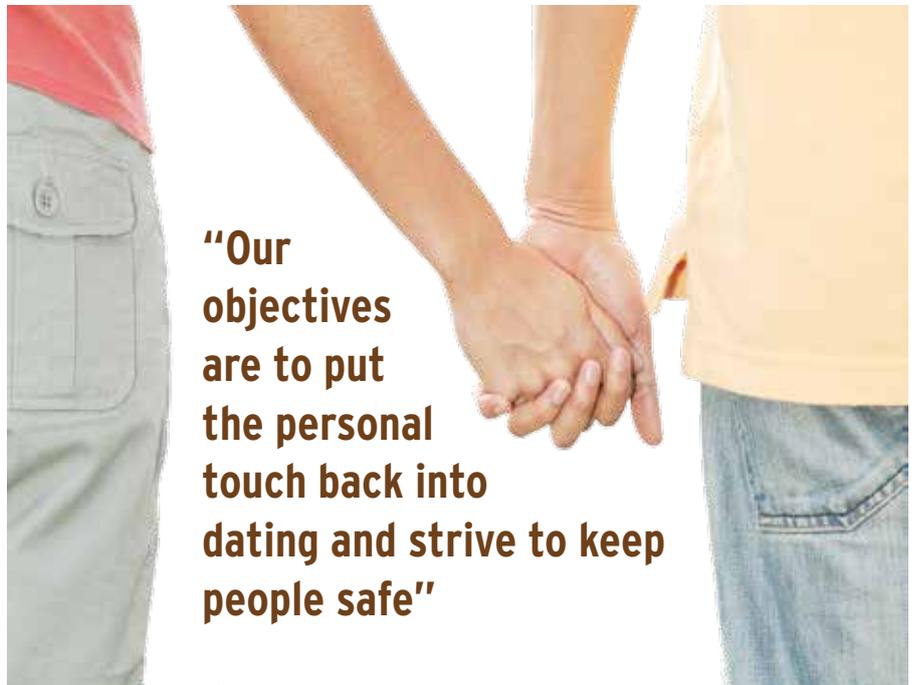
"I would rather turn down a client than take their money and have a sleepless night. I am entering the UK Dating Awards 2015 as Best



Newcomer to the industry. My company also provides bespoke, relaxed, no-pressure singles events, which include sailing taster days, wine tastings in elegant venues and summer barbecues."

It seems quaintly old-fashioned that dating agencies and matchmakers are back in fashion, but as with so many things online, there is no substitute for meeting face-to-face, and the technological age can be a curse as well as a blessing. As our professional lives get busier, it becomes ever more difficult to meet a new partner outside of one's own workplace. Help is certainly needed, and with the on-line route presenting an unknown quantity, the key is to locate a firm that is professional and does what it says on the tin, and South Downs Introductions certainly seem to be at the top of the tree.

Who better to match you up and keep you safe than a law student and ex-police detective such as Tara McDonnell?



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SOUTH DOWNS INTRODUCTIONS

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