

## **DRESSING YOUR RETINUE**

*By Val Thomas – Alice Bridal*

“I have been the owner of Alice Bridal for the past two and a half years and love dealing with the brides and helping them choose their gown for the most important day of their life, but without my experienced team of designers and seamstresses., it wouldn't be possible. We are one happy family at Alice Bridal and hope to make you feel part of the family when choosing your dress.”

You've spent months agonising over who you'd like your bridesmaids to be and it hasn't been an easy decision to make. There may be friends or relatives who you've disappointed but you couldn't include everyone or else you would have ended up with a retinue to rival Princess Diana's. You've finally made your choices with the minimal fuss, but don't think that you're able to relax just yet! Elation at being chosen to be in the retinue short lived – it generally lasts up until the first discussion of what you'd like them to wear and then the real difficulty begins!

In order to minimise disputes, try to keep the following in mind:

- Choose an outfit that both you, as the bride, and your bridesmaids will like. Even though it is your big day, forcing an outfit on someone will only make them feel uncomfortable and resentful. Your bridesmaids are there to help alleviate the stress and to assist you which they may best be able to do if they are not embarrassed by the outfit you have chosen. Discuss your different tastes and try to compromise. The ideal is to choose an outfit that they can wear again – perhaps to evening functions. Two pieces are functional because you can mix and match them after the wedding.
- Allow for different styles so that each bridesmaid can wear the style that most suits them. Depending on their bust shapes, you can change the necklines on each outfit or you can allow for totally different outfits where some bridesmaids wear pants suits and others wear dresses. The matron of honour should always stand out from the rest of the retinue so make her outfit quite different to the rest. Shawls can also be used creatively to compliment outfits and set people apart.
- When selecting shoes, make sure they are comfortable and try to ensure that they will be worn again.
- Jewellery can vary just as the colours of the outfits vary. Jewellery is often given as a gift to the retinue so try to make sure that each piece suits the taste of the recipient.
- Tradition has changed with regards to who should carry the cost of the retinue's gowns and, today, the retinue generally contributes towards the cost of their outfits. Each wedding is different so discuss this with your retinue at the outset so that they know what to expect.
- If you're having flower girls, don't make their dresses too long as they're likely to be tripped up. Also, don't choose a style that is too old for them; embrace their youth and go for cute outfits.

Your retinue should be made up of all the women and girls you cherish the most. Your wedding day is a very special day for them as they get to walk down the aisle with you and stand next to you as you take your vows. If you ensure that each of them is looking and feeling their best, you'll be assured of a retinue that does you justice and celebrates your happiness as if it were their own.