



In the name of the mother

BY LISA LINTERN

I always knew I'd keep my 'maiden' name when I got married.

Not because of my husband's unusual Irish surname (although it could make you giggle if you say it fast 10 times).

Not because of my feminist views (although I'm definitely not comfortable with the archaic concept of being 'sold-off' to another family).

Not because of the paperwork (although I am prone to the odd meltdown when faced with anything administrative).

And definitely not because of a lack of commitment to my husband (trust me, if you knew what we've gone through to be together, you'd know I'm in this for the long haul).

It's just that, well, I quite like being Lisa Lintern. I've been told my name has a nice 'ring' to it. The double-barrelled initials. Signing off my emails with an easy LL. It's me, and I can't imagine being called anything else.

I guess I've always had a strong personality - one that was nourished by parents who gave me the freedom to be myself. My father is the first to say I've never been good at doing what I'm told, his frustration unable to hide his pride.

Thankfully my husband wasn't bothered at all when I told him about my desire to keep my name. It was pretty much a non-event for him. Well, apart from the congratulatory cries of "Welcome Mr and Mrs Lintern!" at our honeymoon island resort, an assumption made because I was the point of contact for our booking.

(His manly pride was wounded much more when we learned his bag was lost and he would have to wear fluorescent floral shorts and shirts, from the island's only souvenir shop, all week.)

Five years on, we now have two children. They have their father's surname, but my son has Lintern as a middle name, and my daughter's second name is Lisa. I feel content that they have been 'branded' with some of me, as well as my husband.

My kids totally understand that I have a different surname to them, and they don't question it at all. Although I have no doubt my daughter would be delighted if I legally changed my name to Dora.

So, keeping my maiden name has never been an issue for me...until now.

Recently we attended an orientation session for my son's new school - those gatherings when you sit in ridiculously small chairs and wonder why, to this day, you still feel compelled to be on your best behaviour in front of the Principal.

When we arrived I walked up to the registration table with my husband to collect our nametags...and there it was. My first name next to my husband's surname, written as it would have been, had I taken his name.

My husband giggled like a child. I blushed.

Surely they noticed I had a different surname on the endless enrolment forms I completed? Surely they weren't trying to 'right a wrong', giving me my husband's name to save me from the public humiliation? Surely this wasn't a simple mistake (ok, maybe it was, but bear with me while I inject a little drama in the lead-up to making my final point).

I felt like a wanton harlot, a brazen floozy who didn't do the honorable thing and take her husband's name. I pinned on the nametag and scarpered to my seat, my husband tittering behind me.

Later that night, I mulled over my reaction. Is this the unspoken pressure (whether we put it on ourselves or not) that prompts 90 per cent of marrying women to change their name to their husband's? While we strive for equality in the workplace and kitchen, it seems the last thing to change is this archaic tradition?

I sat there wondering if it was time to put Lintern out to pasture and fall in with the crowd. The arguments rolled through my head. The convenience. The symbolism. The kids.

But then I was distracted by some breaking news.

After only 72 days, Kym Humphries would be no more.

"Who's Kym Humphries?" asked my husband.

And in a blink of an eye my decision was made.

There's more to marriage and being a family than just sharing the same name. And as some people fight for the right to be married, does it really matter whose name we take at all?