

TATT'S INK-SPIRING!

Having a tattoo can be a big decision and for some it's loaded with meaning too. Here, three readers share the story behind their inkings



Alicia

It's got a RING to it!

My boyfriend Lewis and I arrived at our holiday destination and I immediately texted my mates.

I'm certain he's going to propose while we're here, I told them, excitedly.

We'd been together for eight years and it had become a running joke about when he was finally going to pop the question.

It didn't help that I worked as a wedding photographer, so I was constantly reminded that while everyone else was getting hitched, I was still waiting for my man to put a ring on it!

But when Lewis had

suggested a holiday in the beautiful north Wales countryside, I thought this must be it.

Now, as we headed out to some incredible waterfalls, it seemed like the perfect setting, so when it didn't happen, I was gutted and thought maybe I'd got the signs wrong.

Next morning, we got up at the crack of dawn to climb Yr Wyddfa with our dog, Leo.

By the time we reached the summit hours later, I was a sweaty red mess. But as I took in the views, I noticed Lewis rummaging through his bag.

And seeing him on one knee, I blurted out, 'Oh p*** off! I look disgusting!'

We both laughed, then I burst into tears as he finally popped the question.

'Yes!' I said.

Then, I couldn't wait to text my friends to tell them I'd been right and it had finally happened.

Back home in Sheffield, South Yorkshire, as I threw myself into wedding planning, I made

another decision.

I wanted a tattoo to mark my long-awaited proposal. I researched some ideas then booked myself in with a local tattooist who got to work on the design.

I'd kept it secret from Lewis, so when I got home, I couldn't wait to show him. 'I have a surprise,' I told him.

Then I lifted up my shirt to show him my new tattoo – an outline of Yr Wyddfa, along with the co-ordinates of where he proposed to me.

'I love it!' he said, laughing.

The following year, we got married in front of our nearest and dearest.

Now I can't wait to make my memories with my new husband – and maybe another will be an excuse for a new tattoo!

Alicia Sloan, 30, of Sheffield, S Yorks



A moment marked



Teri

Stop and TH-INK

The doctor spoke and I felt like someone had just dropped me into a black hole.

'You've entered premature menopause,' he said.

It explained the headaches and hot flushes I'd been suffering for ages. But at 35, I felt my hopes of becoming a mum had just been snatched away.

Struggling to cope with what was happening to me, I ended up off sick from work and in therapy.

Still determined to try for a baby, my partner and I had IVF abroad, but when that failed, it hit us both hard and we split.

At my lowest, I knew I needed positivity to keep me going and watching the show *Our Girl* one day, I heard the phrase, *This too shall pass*.

It struck a chord and when it began hearing it and seeing it in other places too, I thought, *This must be a sign*.

I decided to have it

tattooed on my arm where I could see it to remind myself that whatever I may go through, it won't be forever.

As the tattooist got to work and the words that had brought me comfort began to appear, I felt tears welling.

'I love it,' I said as he finished up.

Soon after, I met someone new and from the beginning, I was open about what I'd been through and how much I wanted kids.

He had kids from a previous relationship, but as things got serious between us, we began talking about IVF.

'I don't want to get too old and regret not having tried just one more time,' I said.

So we got the ball rolling and when I began to feel sick, I took a test and it was positive.

'I'm finally pregnant!' I cried. Months later, I gave birth to our beautiful baby daughter, Kodie.

Now I'm a mum, my tattoo has taken on a new meaning. It reminds me to take a moment, slow down and enjoy

life – and not take anything for granted.

I'm a community nurse and the patients I look after love it too.

So many have said the message has given them comfort while they're recovering.

The words have got me through some tough times and I'm sure they always will. It's definitely a tattoo that makes you th-ink!

From Teri Barker, 44, of Leeds



Teri's message

By my side FOREVER

My daughter Katie excitedly grabbed my hand and started running.

'Come on, Mum, let's go!' she said.

She was just five, and it was our first time at Disneyland Paris. It was also our first holiday abroad, and we were there with my mum Christine and dad Kenny, too.

We spent the next few days enjoying the rides, meeting the characters and soaking up the magic of the park.

Seeing my parents being big kids alongside Katie warmed my heart.

When Katie was 10, we all went to Florida together, but Dad seemed distant.

He was snappy too, which wasn't like him at all, and in a quiet moment, I said, 'Dad, maybe you need to see a doctor when get home.'

Dad agreed and after his doctor sent him for tests he was diagnosed with dementia.

As his health deteriorated, he went into a nursing home. But we'd visit him all the time.

Then finally, eight years after his diagnosis, Dad died, leaving us heartbroken.

After his funeral, I thought about having some of his ashes made into jewellery. But I wasn't much of a jewellery wearer so then I had a different idea.

I'm going to get his ashes

put into a tattoo!' I explained to Mum.

I'd always believed that when you saw a white feather it was a loved one letting you know they were near, so I chose a feather design.

The tattoo artist explained that I only needed a small amount of Dad's ashes, so I carefully popped some into a plastic bag and took it with me.

After mixing it into the ink, he got to work tattooing the feather with Dad underneath on my arm.

'It's amazing,' I said, tearfully admiring the finished work.

Dad was a wonderful man and always there for us.

So to have him always here with me, even in the afterlife, is the perfect way to keep his memory alive.

Debbie Travis, 55, of Droylsden, Gtr Manchester



Just for Dad