



Real Life Wedding Story

Something Blue

By Frances and Neil Wallace (nee Harsley)

A wedding day full of the joys of spring
Photography: David Morphew

THE MEETING... I met Neil in April 2005 at a ball, near Tewkesbury. He'd spent most of the evening dancing near to me in the hope that he would catch my eye... and needless to say I eventually succumbed to his impressive moves!

THE PROPOSAL... For my 30th birthday in December 2006 Neil took me to New York and a few days in we went for a walk in Bryant Park – a place where Neil has fond memories of his mother – and it was there he proposed. He presented me with an enormous diamond ring, but unfortunately it had cost £5 from Sainsburys! Neil wanted to ensure I got the ring I wanted so we immediately went to Fifth Avenue to shop for an engagement ring. Much to the disgust of the assistant, I turned down the rings in Tiffany's as they didn't have the setting I wanted, but we eventually found a beautiful four-claw round brilliant cut solitaire diamond ring in De Beers that just about matched Neil's budget!

THE PLANNING... Having briefly considered marrying abroad, we decided it was more important for everyone we care about to be there on such a special day so set about looking locally. Dumbleton Hall, near Evesham, provided the perfect setting, but due to its popularity there was only one available spring 2008 date. Getting married in Deerhurst church was also important due to Neil's family connections, so after confirming availability, the date was set for April 26.

I set about organising everything immediately to alleviate as much stress as possible in the final months. I wanted the day to be perfect and made sure everything coordinated with our theme and colour scheme where possible. Neil arranged the menswear and men's presents and a close family friend took care of the flowers. Where possible I used my graphic design skills and made invitations, order of services, menus, place

cards, table plan and names, and favours which was excellent for keeping costs down.

THE DRESS... After dress searching for hours online I eventually stumbled upon designer Ronald Joyce and short-listed a few of his creations. I was thrilled to discover a local bridal store stocked them and knew which was 'the one' the minute I tried it on – an a-line ivory taffeta gown with scalloped neckline and encrusted crystals. I chose a scalloped-edge veil to complement the dress and shoes by Benjamin Adams, and with silver jewellery and a simple tiara, I was all set!

THE DETAILS... I wanted to incorporate my love of spring and flowers with my dad's favourite colour, pale blue, as I wanted to remember him during the day. The bridesmaids wore floor-length sky-blue Alfred Angelo gowns accessorised with silver-grey handbags and matching silver sandals with diamantes. We all carried similar hand-tied posies of ivory akito roses with muscari, freesias and beargrass and the groomsmen wore corresponding buttonholes to match their navy tails, sky-blue cravats and handkerchiefs. In order for Neil to be dressed slightly differently, he wore an ivory waistcoat where the others wore pale blue.

I wanted the theme carried through all aspects so the table displays were the same flowers as the bouquets arranged in glass pots with crumpled clear cellophane in the water to give an icy feel. We chose pale blue favour boxes tied with white ribbon containing five foil-wrapped chocolate hearts and added an individual touch by customising the stationery to each table's flower name. Our cake, made locally, was a replica of a Peggy Porschen design with three tiers of blue and white stripes and pink rose buds on top.

The only stress we encountered during the preparations was our men's formal hire. Despite



ordering the outfits months in advance, we collected them and discovered they were either dirty, incomplete, or the wrong size. The shop owner wasn't helpful in rectifying the situation, so the day before the wedding we had to search elsewhere for new set of suits! Luckily Tuxedo Junction came to our rescue and the men looked superb.

THE DAY... I woke to sunshine which was a relief as it had been raining constantly in the days before. There were no nerves, just excitement as my two bridesmaids and I left for the hairdressers. Then, after photographs were taken of us getting ready, I eagerly awaited the arrival of my 1950s Bentley saloon and the family friend who was driving the bridesmaids and my mother to the church in his silver Mercedes. The journey was such fun. People beeped their horns at me and my brother Andrew and we even arrived early so had to take a detour! Neil's uncle had made a big red aluminium love heart pointing towards the church and I buzzed with excitement when I saw it. I was nerve-free until I arrived, but they soon disappeared as I walked up the aisle towards Neil grinning at the altar. Our friends did an amazing job arranging the flowers; I remember walking

into the church, which was bursting with stunning blue, lilac and ivory arrangements that smelt wonderful. We tried not to laugh throughout our vows as the cows mooing outside provided some amusement to the proceedings, but thankfully they kept quiet when the vicar asked if there were any objections to our marriage! As the vicar pronounced us husband and wife, Neil gave me a big kiss and the congregation cheered – it was a wonderful moment.

We arrived at the hotel and the reception room looked spectacular – I was so proud of what my helpers and I had achieved. The food was delicious and our evening disco ensured the dance-floor was filled with people having a good time. We'd attended jazz-jive and swing lessons so decided to choreograph our own first dance to Queen's 'Crazy Little Thing Called Love'. Amazingly we got the routine correct for only the third time ever on the night – it was such a surprise to everyone including us! There were lots of comments about how fantastic the day was as it all came together perfectly in the end.

THE ICING ON THE CAKE... Both venues were amazing and the spring lambs in the fields around Dumbleton Hall added an extra special touch! ■

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