

A Tale of Two Weddings

This year we've had the pleasure of seeing our daughter marry twice – to the same man, I should hasten to add. The ceremonies took place in Manhattan and Stocklinch.

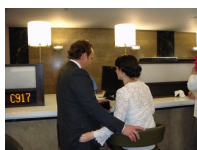


The New York traffic meant it was easier to walk to the service at City Hall. Passers by wished the happy couple well and we waited in vain for a New Yorker to shout "dont' do it girl, the



guy's a joik" but he isn't and they didn't and another stereotype bit the dust. In fact, New York has been overwhelmed by a tidal wave of polite friendliness so maybe something positive came out of Nine Eleven after all.

The scene in City Hall NY would be instantly familiar here. Steff and Phil followed the age-old



format of a traditional civil wedding, starting by taking a ticket number, a system

first established internationally by Ilminster Post Office – "counter number three please.....". The tension mounted as ticket number 917 came close:

The ceremony was brief and to the point and City Hall thoughtfully



provided a background for photos and the armed guards on the door took time off from chasing a child trying to escape his mother's

wedding to wish us well, then back to the apartment for the "reception".

Forward three months and the scene shifts to a wet wedding field in Stocklinch. Nothing in the groom's Ivy League education had prepared him for spending the morning lifting cowpats or mowing Alan's pasture,".



A word of advice for any prospective fathers of the bride – be very

suspicious when your daughter says she wants a "simple country wedding". Particularly if she's a fashion designer working in, as she

describes it, the "luxury end of luxury" part of the rag trade.

The guests gradually assembled during the week, from three continents. Somerset had not seen such a trans-atlantic invasion since the Eighth Air Force arrived in East Anglia in 1942.

As ever, it all came right on the day. The heavens opened – but fortunately closed again an hour



before we walked to the Church.

The village looked a picture, a small crowd had assembled outside the Church and we were only eight minutes late! Stocklinch is very

fortunate in our vicar, whose wise words struck a chord with the trans-Atlantic congregation. John Gauterin's organ was in fine form and the balcony, which had not been designed with large Americans in mind, stood up to the test.



So what of the cultural differences?

Well, not as many as we'd expected. "Two

nations separated by a common language" is less in evidence. There are differences of style – the Brits by and large secured a supply of booze and steadily chugged throughout the evening, whilst the Yanks fell into two camps - those who do and those

who don't. The former are no slouches, just as well that Susie Mount was at hand later.

A sixteen year old turned up, announcing that he was the Managing Director of the fireworks company and very good he was too. He made a slight adjustment to the launch area when I alluded to the presence of Alan's bull in the same field but the display was spectacular and much enjoyed by Barrington, but not Puckington who got sound but no picture.

Keeping it local was the secret. Amanda Partington was universally acclaimed for her wonderful catering, Susie was able to provide some medical top-cover and Liv Calderon enjoyed her first waitressing job. The band were school mates, the cake was made by a friend who found time from her 20 hour day as a doctor in a London teaching hospital, although she was still icing ten minutes before leaving for the church. She caught the theme perfectly, as the cake began to subside in time with the rest of us as the night drew on. Geoff Wade and Alan Speed looked after the spiritual and temporal, with Valerie ringing the bells, and of course all the villagers who turned out to throw things at the happy couple (but not in the church yard). As Geoff said, weddings are not only fun but bring the community together.

With grateful thanks.
Stephen and Kate