



SPOSA BAGNATA SPOSA FORTUNATA

Sarah Attard and **Lord John Gretton** tied the knot on 14 October 2006 at the Metropolitan Cathedral in Mdina. As for the reception? Well, that's another story...



Walking down the aisle at the Metropolitan Cathedral, Mdina

Sarah describes the way she met John as something straight out of the film *Four Weddings and a Funeral*.

"I went to England for my cousin's wedding in October 2005 and John was a guest there. It turned out that he has known my family for the last ten years and his best friends happened to be our first cousins. At one point he went up to my aunt, cousin and sister, and was asking them 'who's that girl?' Imagine his surprise when he found out that I'm related to all of them. We met only twice while I was there and then we continued our relationship by email and SMS. Out of the blue, he suddenly sent me a ticket to go to England and visit him for the weekend, so I went, and at the end he asked me not to leave. It was literally a whirlwind romance. I moved to London in January 2005 and he proposed the following Boxing Day."

Sarah still seems to be amazed at how fast her life changed in the space of two years. She never intended to leave Malta and her beloved family and friends, but destiny put her in the right place at the right time to meet the man she was meant to be with, and even more amazing was when she found out that the man she had fallen in love with was an English Lord. Does that mean that by marrying John, Sarah has become a



Lady? "Yes," she laughs, still trying to get used to the idea that she is now the Maltese equivalent of a *Baronessa*.

Sarah's family took to John's easy going personality immediately, "although it was a shock for my Mum because I did the reverse of what she did - she sailed to Malta 34 years ago where she met my father and never left. Now it's all come round full circle, and ironically history has repeated itself."

The decision to get married in Malta was John's. "We had come to Malta in September 2005 for my mother's birthday and John completely fell in love with the island's history, weather and more importantly the way of life, so there was no doubt it would be in Malta. We decided on a very traditional wedding in Mdina Cathedral, which we chose as I was baptised there. 250 guests were invited to the wedding dinner. 130 people were invited from England alone, out of which we were very honoured that 100 came."

Sarah only had nine months to organise everything. Although originally she thought she could do it all through the Internet, her parents together with her good friends Tania Farrugia and Marcelle Mercieca helped her to check out the venues in person and get everything arranged. >>



The parents of the bride



Sarah with bridesmaids: Marcelle Mercieca, her sister Jane Attard and Stephanie Rizzo

<< "Tania, who was my witness, finally found us Castello Zamitello which is run by the Corinthia Group. She took photos and sent them to me; the sun was setting, and the castle was romantically floodlit. We used it and decided to use it as an outside venue with a large marquee for the dinner. The catering was handled by Corinthia, while the wine was provided by Cleland and Souchet."

A champagne reception at the De Vilhena palace was planned for before the dinner and John booked the beautiful Xara Palace for all his family and ushers.

Everything was set, all the overseas guests had arrived a week before the wedding and were enjoying the wonderful weather. The day before the wedding some were even swimming and jet skiing. For the hen weekend, Sarah's friends organised a surprise weekend and rented a beautiful farmhouse at Tas-Salib in Rabat.

Then, on the day of the wedding - disaster struck! Sarah woke up at 4am to a torrential rain-storm; every bride's worst nightmare had happened to her. By 8am her lovely venue was flooded by the storm, and the carefully set up tables and chairs were ruined.

"I remember praying, 'Please God I'll go to church every day of my life if it stops raining'. I had no choice, I had to change the venue at the last minute! So we spent all morning phoning all the guests, telling them not to go the Castello. We had to put up a sign at Castello Zamitello to re-direct guests to the new venue."

Out of the eight venues which Corinthia have, every single one was booked, all except Corinthia San Gorg where a conference was being held until 2pm, so they couldn't set up before that. They had to dismantle everything from the Castello and transport it all, including all the drinks, sound systems and flowers. In the end, Corinthia staff moved everything from one venue to another in the space of four hours. Sarah is full of praise for Rowena Spiteri who organised everything and all her friends who helped at the last minute. "Vanessa Sammut Cesareo who did the flowers transported them and re-arranged them again; she even missed my wedding to make sure they were perfect."

John was very worried but had full faith in Sarah. He took care of his family and guests, assuring them everything would be OK.

"Meanwhile, I was firing out orders for people to do things, praying that I had remembered every-



John and Sarah with the ushers



thing that had taken nine months to organise, because I had to get ready for church. I was in tears in the car with my Dad, but suddenly the rain stopped at 3.30pm, just in time ... in the end I didn't care about the weather, I had one priority - I just wanted to get married to John."

In fact, since Sarah's unfortunate mishap, Castello Zamitello are now offering a back up venue just in case. "The problem was that mine was a sit down meal rather than a reception, that's why there was no space to do it inside the Castello, and we thought a marquee would be enough in case of slight rain."

Sarah rode into Mdina in a *karozzin*. "I had lost a lot of weight before the wedding and with the stress of that morning I must have lost another two pounds; so as I was lifting my leg to get onto the *karozzin*, my garter just slipped off. At that point, I just laughed and said, 'that's it, nothing else can go wrong'. Then, as we trotted through Mdina gate, I heard lots of clapping and cheering, and

found around 200 tourists strolling around Mdina piazza, so I gave them a regal wave! Everyone was taking photos and that's when I started enjoying it. During the ceremony, my English cousins Sam and Nick Evans sang a duet, *All I want of you*, from *Phantom of the Opera*. My mother's 60 strong choir, the St Paul Choral Society also sang, conducted by Hugo Agius Muscat. Fr Tony Agius said Mass, assisted by Anglican priest, Fr Peter Woolfenden. At the reception, there was no formality or posing, everything just flowed naturally. The music was by DJ Toni Toni, who was great."

Sarah hired typical Maltese buses to transport all the guests, while Wembley provided all the cars. When it all worked out well in the end, Sarah was overwhelmed with relief.

"We were just laughing the whole time, even through the ceremony, it was surreal... and afterwards I could hardly remember how we managed to end up with the most amazing wedding! Our guests could not believe it. >>



The couple arriving at Vilhena Palace



Walking through Mdina

<< It was 12 hours long and we all got blind drunk, partying until 3am."

Sarah's dress was designed in England by Cocoa Designs, the bodice, matching bolero and the skirt were made of vintage beaded French lace and pure silk, and it had a nine-foot long train. She also wore the Gretton family tiara. Her hair was skilfully done by Kathleen Cassar, while Rachel Farrugia artistically did her make-up.

The bridesmaids Stephanie Rizzo, Marcelle Mercieca and her sister Jane Attard wore deep red gowns, also designed in England, which



John's family



Sarah's extended family

The couple with the Gretton Family: Sarah Biddulph, Alice, John Biddulph, Tom and Jennifer Lady Gretton



Sarah's best friends: Rachel, Roberts, Vanessa, Tania and Stephie



The couple with Sarah's sister Jane and parents Alfred and Lindy

gave a very rich, classic, autumn colour scheme, set against the ivory roses. The flower girls and pageboys Alice, Ruby, Tom and Daniel wore adorable matching outfits and were very well-behaved.

Looking back at her wedding, Sarah can now laugh. "Not that I ever had any doubt, but on that day I realised what amazing friends and family I have. It's difficult to organise a wedding, let alone from abroad, but everyone just pulled together, especially on the day, and everybody was determined not to let the weather ruin our special day. It was perfect!"

For their honeymoon, Sarah and John went to Kenya on a safari followed by a week on North Island in the Seychelles.

And there wasn't a raindrop in sight!



Sarah with the girls