

# ENQUIRE WITHIN

**Question:** *Well Neil, as a professional, what did you make of the Royal Wedding in April?*

**Answer:** Yes, you are right, I am something of a professional wedding-taker! I hesitate to estimate how many weddings I have conducted, but I have been at it since 1975 and that is a long time!

Not being much of a royal supporter, I always approach occasions like royal weddings with a willingness to use a pinch of salt.

I well remember the uncomfortable feelings which the wedding of Charles and Diana created in me and many others, and the deeply tragic end to that relationship and the subsequent death of a young woman in Paris.

However, on this occasion, I was impressed by a variety of factors.

The Archbishop of Canterbury spoke to the press about the couple using words like “responsible and direct” and “deeply unpretentious.”

Having the highest regard for Rowan Williams, whom I have met, however briefly, I was able to form a positive opinion of the royal couple, whom I have not met.

Then there was the fact that Prince William is a skilled helicopter rescue pilot and is respected for his skills and professional abilities by his peers in the same job.

Then there was the public appearances which Kate and William made, and in which they did seem, from a distance admittedly, to present themselves as real, truly in love, and in many ways recognisably human which not all the royal family are able to manage.

Then, of course, there is the fact that although already posh and rich, the Middleton family have relatively normal origins and Kate is not in any way involved in the history of the royal families of Europe.

The couple met in a normal way and fell in and then out and then in love again, as you do! This was all encouraging me to believe that here was a real relationship rather than one based on considerations other than the simply personal ones which we all know.

So far, so good!

As for the ceremony in Westminster Abbey, I was delighted by the addition of trees in the nave and the sense of celebration which seemed to bring so many people to see some aspect of the day for themselves.

On the down-side, I thought that the use of the 1662 wedding rite was a disaster.

The 17th century words are so clunky and totally inappropriate for 2011.

In particular, the prayer that Kate should be a follower of godly matrons was silly and the prayer saying that divorce was contrary to the law of God was ridiculous, bearing in mind the marital state of so many of the

royal family.

This aspect of the ceremony was the triumph of tradition over common sense and reality. What was needed was the ceremony to be according to the rite of 2000, which emphasises the equality of husband and wife and the mutuality of their responsibilities of marriage.

I was also taken aback by the announcement that Kate was to be henceforth known as the Duchess of Cambridge. How silly!

What should have happened is that William should have stood down from his princely status and become one of us, one of the commoners, and enjoy a normal life with a wife and kids!

Neil Richardson

