The Stuff that Dreams are made of …

My vintage cadillac sweeps through wrought iron gates and makes its way down the grand tree-lined avenue, a canopy of cool green above, with just a glimpse of golden stone in the distance. Then suddenly the building is revealed – a stunning Victorian Gothic façade, heavy oak doors, soaring towers and intricate gargoyles, all bathed in summer sunshine. I drive on past the original Jacobean Wing with its pretty mullion windows, manicured gardens and sunken croquet lawn, where later my guests will sip pink champagne and nibble chocolate-dipped strawberries at our drinks reception.

But before all that, the marriage itself … I step out on my father’s arm and enter the little chapel to see my partner, silhouetted against a magnificent stained glass window. Beams of sunlight dart through its coloured panes, dappling the woodwork and brightening the faces of the waiting crowd. The whole chapel fills with song as I reach the altar and the ceremony begins, joyful and interactive – a truly splendid occasion.

Afterwards there are so many photo opportunities – ancient trees and stone steps where we create romantic poses within the grounds – and all the while our guests are happy and entertained until we are ready to lead a procession of revellers up the clock tower steps to a prestigious first floor room. The wedding breakfast is laid out, tables set with crisp white linen and festooned with flowers; old English tea roses and heavy peony blooms loll in crystal vases, pink bows and sashes drape the chairs, all co-ordinated to give a warm glow. Fine food and wine, speeches and cake; everything runs to order with quiet precision and then the dancing begins. We take to the floor as Mr & Mrs.

It’s our great celebration. Late into the night, windows thrown open, views across the fields, cool air across the quadrangle until gradually the building sinks away into the night, with just dots of light glimmering behind so many windows. And finally we tumble into bed – a turret room steeped in history. Our dream wedding is complete and all in one glorious location.

But this wasn’t a dream. This was the reality of a Cotswold Wedding at the Royal Agricultural College in Cirencester.