

Don't panic – this will be the royal show of the century

FROM the world of cake-making and embroidery to that of hoteliers or flag manufacturers, the mayhem starts now. And I think we can safely say the same for the media world.

Every aspect of what can safely be described – without any exaggeration – as the wedding of the century will now be subject to international debate, conjecture and scrutiny. It is hard not to sympathise already with the unnamed dress designer whose life is about to change for ever.

But in a quiet, ground-floor corridor in Buckingham Palace, there will be no panic. Instead, one of the most impressive production companies in the world will calmly start up its well-oiled machine and press the button marked 'Wedding'.

It is the Lord Chamberlain's Office which will co-ordinate the most important royal aspects of the wedding. Of the five Palace departments, this is the one which covers all things ceremonial and also has responsibility for clergy – or the Royal Ecclesiastical Household, as it is known.

Always run by an unflappable ex-Army officer called the Comptroller, the LCO will take charge of the guest list, the seating plan, the processions, the protocol – even the carriages.

It will not just be a case of making sure that all the relevant family and friends are included. Whole countries have to be considered. Almost everything involved in a wedding of this magnitude can cause offence.

When it transpired that the 1981 honeymoon cruise of the Prince and Princess of Wales would include Gibraltar, the King of Spain was advised by his ministers to boycott the entire wedding, because of Spain's historic claim on the British colony.

For all major royal occasions, the Comptroller and his team will commandeer the Palace Billiard Room and the South Drawing Room. These will become operations rooms from where every invitation will be dispatched, every detail recorded.

There will already be an extensive database of automatic invitees for this wedding, but the Comptroller and his invitations secretary will ensure that nothing is taken for granted, that every name is treble-checked before it is written on a stiff invitation.

Is Lady so-and-so still Lady so-and-so? Has someone remembered to include the Aga Khan?



by Robert Hardman

When Lady Diana Spencer arrived for her wedding at St Paul's Cathedral in 1981, it was the Comptroller, Lt-Col Sir John Johnston, who was calling the shots rather than the bride or the Archbishop of Canterbury.

'I'll let you know when you can go,' he told the bride and her father, as they waited to walk down the aisle.

Well-used to his rehearsals, Lady Diana replied: 'You've been telling me that for the last six weeks. You haven't told me how I look.'

'You look wonderful,' Sir John replied with a grin and gave her the signal to go. So crucial was his contribution to the day that when the moment came to board the honeymoon train, the new Princess of Wales gave him a kiss.

This will be a team effort right across the royal domain. Prince William has a tiny staff who form part of the Prince of Wales's team at Clarence House. However, for an event of this size, they are also going to need the resources of the old pros over the road at Buckingham Palace.

For the couple's first public appearance at St James's Palace yesterday – a major international media event – reinforcements had been drafted in from the Buckingham Palace Press office to ensure that the whole event went as smoothly as possible.

OCCASIONS such as this are not only good for bonding the different royal households, but also for bringing the Monarchy and the politicians closer together. The death of Diana, Princess of Wales, three months into Tony Blair's administration suddenly threw courtiers and politicians together in common cause, forging some surprising friendships.

Now, in much happier circumstances, David Cameron's team will suddenly find themselves dealing with their royal counterparts over all sorts of very

important minutiae. A Prime Minister might have more important things to worry about than dresses and confetti. But great efforts will be made to get the tone spot-on for the impending age of austerity.

It can be a tricky call. When Labour MPs demanded cost-cutting measures ahead of the wedding of Princess Elizabeth to Prince Philip in 1947, the public were appalled. They wanted glamour and romance amid the gloom, not the lowest common denominator.

Right now, any number of little girls will be dreaming of the call-up to be bridesmaid. It is easier to predict the choice of best man – or supporter, as he is usually known at a royal wedding. This is almost certainly a job for Prince Harry – but Prince William would be following tradition if he chose to add a couple of others, too.

The only certainty is that some things will not go according to plan. On the day of Princess Elizabeth's wedding to Prince Philip, there were several dramas.

The future Queen's tiara broke and required urgent repairs. Then, when she came to put on the double string of pearls which her parents had given her, they were nowhere to be found.

Someone had neglected to retrieve them from the public exhibition of wedding gifts and the Princess's private secretary, Jock Colville, was dispatched to fight his way through the crowds to get them.

Worse still, the bouquet had gone missing. After every available footman had been ordered to scour the Palace, the missing bouquet was eventually tracked down to a storeroom.

Organising the reception will be a matter for the Master of the Household and his team. Because we know that the wedding will be 'in London', it is safe to assume that Buckingham Palace will be the venue.

If the couple choose to follow tradition, then that will be a wedding 'breakfast', not that it will bear much resemblance to the average breakfast – or even brunch. Prince Charles and Diana chose quenelles of brill in lobster sauce, chicken breasts and strawberries.

As for the cake, there will be no shortage of volunteers. The bride's brother has a cake business and the Palace has an excellent team of pastry chefs.

Perhaps the most diplomatic option will be to leave it to the chefs of the Armed Forces. But which one? One tier from each of the Services perhaps?

How I'd



Frothy: Diana in her wedding gown



Classic: Emanuel's modern design

No frills and flounces this time. I'd keep it elegant and simple

WHEN I heard that Prince William had proposed to Kate Middleton, I thought it was absolutely fantastic news – just what the country needs to cheer us all up after all the doom and gloom.

The fact he's given Kate his mother's engagement ring gave me goose pimples. It's going to be so romantic.

Naturally, I was cast back instantly to the day 30 years ago when my now former husband David and I were asked to design Diana's gown and the huge responsibility we felt to create something truly special.

It was such a lot of pressure – especially as David and I were fairly new designers.

As she got engaged in October, I'd be very surprised if she doesn't know already who is designing the dress.

As the wedding is in spring or summer, many people might think that's not enough time. But we took only three months to make Diana's, with just three people working on it, so Kate doesn't need to panic – she has plenty of time.

The first thing her designer must remember is that though they are creating something that will be seen by millions, there is only one person who needs to be happy with it: Kate.

I'd advise them to go through lots of design and history books to come up with plenty of ideas.

It may not be what the public is expecting, but sometimes it's good to think outside the box.

With Diana, the first thing we did was try on lots of different styles. It's imperative to be able to see how you suit different silhouettes and I hope



by Elizabeth Emanuel

that Kate does the same. We settled on a design with a tiny waist and big skirt, but all brides must get a feel of what she's comfortable in.

I imagine Kate will steer well clear of a big, bouffant dress. Diana's was all frill and founce, and while it was absolutely perfect for the Eighties, it wouldn't be suitable now.

Back then, it was all about wild romance, and every bride's dream was to wear something frothy.

My design for Kate's dress is simple with a layer of complexity. I'd make it in an off-white silk – I hardly ever use bright white because I think it's unflattering – in a moss crepe that has a heavy drape when cut on the bias.

I've not seen crepe used often in bridal wear – most brides stick to taffeta or satin – but crepe creates a flattering, slim-line silhouette.

I wouldn't give her sleeves, but I'd put a silk organza drape over the shoulders to keep her sufficiently covered over the top half. I would apply a lace applique over the drape to make it more detailed.

Then I think it would be lovely to include a beautiful brooch, perhaps something from the Royal Family's collection. Kate could add a personal