

# My Big Fat Irish Wedding

The story of our (not so) big fat Irish wedding is so outrageous that we don't want to wait until we can tell it to our grandchildren. We have shared it many times before and people stare at us in disbelief. And to stick with famous movie titles, it might as well have been "Two Weddings and a Funeral."



## We're getting married!

But from the start. After we got engaged on our first anniversary it didn't take us long to work out when and how we wanted to get married. As soon as possible and low key. So we never actually planned to have a big fat Irish wedding, but a small intimate celebration with family and a few close friends. At that stage we thought that the biggest challenge was going to be to ship our guests over from Germany and America. Little did we know that this would be the easiest part.

## Finding a Location



Irish Weddings are huge events and people plan it long in advance. So we were aware that most wedding locations would be booked up pretty early. Therefore we had to find a place for our reception, before we could start filing the paper work with the Marriage Registration Office. On one of our weekend trips we discovered the [Conyngham Arms Hotel](#) in Slane by accident. We spontaneously spoke to the wedding coordinator and set the date for a rather modest Irish wedding: 7<sup>th</sup> May 2016.

## **Registration of Marriage**

The day came – three months before our planned wedding date – when we were finally able to register our wedding. I had made sure I got all the required paperwork from Germany, translated and notarised. John brought a big pile of papers too, including his divorce certificate from America. The appointment with the registrar was swift and the many, rather redundant questions answered quickly. It took a couple of weeks before we received a reply. Our request to receive permission for getting married was denied.

## **It's still a No**

We had already suspected something like that as the registrar mentioned an inconsistency in John's divorce papers. She didn't give us any guidance whatsoever what to do in order to solve the issue. 'We would have to wait to hear back', was her response. So we did and sent in all the apparently missing details once we got the 'no'. That didn't help to receive the anticipated go-ahead either. On the contrary, more valuable

time was wasted and we were left mo



## **Loosing precious Time and Money**

We didn't have another choice but to consult a lawyer who specialised in foreign divorces. Her field of expertise was so rare and her office in one of the fanciest parts in Dublin, that we paid a fortune to even talk to her. At least she was confident that the issue would be resolved shortly and that we would be able to proceed with our wedding as planned.

## **Hopeful Anticipation**

Meanwhile we had paid a large deposit to the hotel and booked accommodation for our oversea guests. The Conyngham Arms Hotel was just what I wanted, providing the country style and cosy feel, perfect for a traditional Irish wedding. Assured the lawyer would have it all sorted out (while massively eating into our wedding funds at the same time), I allowed myself to relax a little and to look forward to our big day.

## **Crushed Hopes**



A call from our lawyer crushed my positive spirits. She told us that the courts had turned down the recognition of John's American divorce as she had forgotten to previously inform them about her approach. Whilst this was totally on her (and she wouldn't charge us additionally), John would have to go to

court again, in order to file for an *Irish* divorce this time. Not only were we running out of time in order to keep our wedding date, we also needed to involve John's ex wife this time.

## **Three Divorces and no Wedding**

John hadn't spoken to his ex wife in over thirteen years at that stage. And whilst he was supposedly still married to her according to Irish law, she had re-married years ago as per my internet research. We didn't know whether we should laugh or cry about this absurd situation. But either way we were forced to play along and go through another divorce. Well not until we had paid for our and the ex wife's lawyer and she had thankfully signed the Irish divorce papers. The pinnacle of the farce was the court appearance where John had to answer whether there was a chance of reconciliation with his ex wife.

## **Change of Plans**

At that stage it was unlikely that we were able to keep our planned wedding date. Of course we were devastated. To cut our financial losses, we cancelled the hotel as more expenses were about to be due. I felt so embarrassed to tell our family and friends, who had already booked their flights and had obviously been looking forward to our wedding too. Luckily most of our guests were understanding and agreed to come over anyway. Hence we picked ourselves up and organised a coach tour and pub dinner to make up for our busted wedding. We figured if we showed everybody the lovely [Dublin & Wicklow Mountains](#) and treated them to a dinner in [Johnnie Fox's](#) they would come back to celebrate a proper Irish wedding on the second attempt.



Again it came differently. About one week before our original wedding date, the Irish divorce was officially through. Too late to obtain the Marriage Registration Form, let alone to re-arrange the hotel reception. But our local priest, who had been sympathetic and supportive all the way through, offered to give us the Sacrament of Marriage regardless. Not knowing when we would have our dearest from far away over again, we decided to go for it. Even though it meant to wave goodbye to our conventional Irish wedding as intended. Thus three days before 7<sup>th</sup> May and with guests arriving already, we were back in the wedding game.

## **Spontaneous, Chaotic, Authentic**



With three days to re-organise our wedding, options were limited. And with my emotions all over the place I could hardly focus on flower arrangements, or getting my hair and nails done. Nonetheless I was happy being able to get married to John after all. Our tiny apartments in Rathgar were busy like beehives on the days before our wedding. Everybody helped

where they could and shone with their secret talents. My sister looked after the flower arrangements for the church and saved my botched wedding bouquet last minute. A friend did my nails and tried out a few hairstyles. John's best man and his wife helped him to pick out a rental suit and buy snacks for our coach tour after the ceremony. My parents tied up some loose ends and entertained the guests away from the chaos. We couldn't have asked for better wedding gifts.

## **The Morning Of**



Our wedding day didn't start out great. I woke on a wobbly airbed with the rain drumming against the window. There were suitcases, clothes and provisional beds spread out all over our two apartments. My wedding dress was hanging down from the curtain rail. I didn't care that I wasn't in a fancy hotel room. Neither did I mind that I was going to do my own make-up in my scruffy little bathroom. I wasn't even upset about the weather as John had sent me a lovely text earlier on. "Look out, God is washing the earth for us" it read and made me smile. I was definitely marrying the right man. And I was ready to be a bride. Well, almost. My two unofficial bridesmaids kept me on schedule as I was getting ready, excitedly maneuvering through the cramped space. We had a great laugh and a lot of precious moments despite the chaos. Nothing was staged or forced, everything had a natural, though

chaotic, flow to it. By the time I squeezed myself into my sister's tiny rental car\* for the short drive to church, I was surprisingly calm. (\*The Vintage Car John had originally booked blew its engine a few days earlier. Nothing surprised me at that stage.)

## **Our not so big fat Irish Wedding**



The moment my Dad walked me down the aisle, I didn't think about all the stress and worries of the past few months or the day ahead. I focused on John, standing tall in front of the altar, looking at me with love. Two amazing ladies were singing the songs we had picked during mass a long time ago. It was just perfect! Our priest did a fantastic job with the ceremony and a friend spontaneously helped translating it into German.

As we left the church, our tour coach was waiting to take us to [Glendalough](#) in the Wicklow Mountains. But instead of rain jackets and hiking boots we obviously had dresses, suits and high heels. John had already loaded the snacks and drinks to tide people over until the pub dinner. We held our "wedding reception" in Sally Gap, one of the most scenic places in the country. Toasting with plastic champagne flutes, and sharing Supermarket sandwiches.

## Best Day Ever



The sky was wild and it was breezy. And while messing up my hair, nothing could have ruined that day for me. Everybody seemed to enjoy themselves and took our supposedly traditional Irish wedding with humour. My Dad gave a speech, standing on a big rock like a Celtic king, summing up all the mixed emotions which he had been displaying in a heartwarming way all morning.

We went on to the monastery site of Glendalough and had our wedding photographs taken (luckily the photographer had still been available). The cloudy sky was the perfect backdrop and resulted in magnificent pictures. The bus ride to [Johnnie Fox's Pub](#) was cheerful. Everybody enjoyed the stunning views of the Wicklow and Dublin mountains and a few drinks on the way. Upon arrival at the pub I got a fantastic welcome and standing ovations from the crowds. It was apparently a bit of an attraction to celebrate an Irish wedding amidst a regular Saturday pub crowd.

## Perfect Little Irish Wedding

The dinner as the main part of our celebrations was very much to our liking. Everybody ordered what they wanted instead of



having a set formal menu like in the hotel. We had a lovely snug which gave us full privacy for John to deliver a touching speech, honouring me for bringing out the best in him. We were grateful for the casual setting and the people who were part of it. In hindsight it was much better than if we had tried to pull off a traditional Irish wedding with cake cutting and couple games.

## **The Promise**

Not only did we promise everlasting love to each other on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2016, we also made a promise to our priest. We gave him our word that we would follow through with the civil marriage as soon as possible. We will forever be thankful to our priest that he was putting all his trust in us, and taking the risk of marrying us without the official go-ahead from the state. When we eventually faced the Marriage Registrar again she was visibly nervous, remembering our case well. Maybe she knew that she could have saved us a lot of trouble if she had told us straight out what was wrong with our papers. Instead she had chosen to leave us in the dark, and was now facing a still very resentful couple.

We civilly married almost a year after our church wedding. It was not more than signing a contract in a dull, plain proceeding. No religious music or any references to faith allowed. Unless for official matters, we don't recognise this as our wedding day. It will always be 7<sup>th</sup> May 2016 when we celebrated our perfect Irish wedding after three divorces and luckily no funeral.



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