

## I'm third in line

By LEE PRICE

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**AN astonishing tent city had sprung up outside Westminster Abbey last night as Royal Wedding fever gripped the nation.**

The temporary homes provided shelter for the keenest fans — all determined to grab spots with the best view of William and Kate today.



Sun man Lee Price took his tent and joined them. He was the third hardy camper to arrive — and three days of roughing it lay ahead.

Here is his diary of life on the pavement:

**TUESDAY. DAY ONE** I arrive at the Abbey at 11am and bag a space directly opposite the door from where the couple will emerge.

I find two superfans are ahead of me. First there was John Loughrey, 56, from Wandsworth, South West London. He was followed by Gwen Murray, 76, of Attleborough, Norfolk.

Gwen proudly reveals she goes to every royal marriage.

I set up my tent and zip myself inside to get some rest.

The pavement is cold and hard and Friday seems a long way away. Finally I manage to sleep, only to wake suddenly with a news cameraman squatting over me, filming.

Fellow enthusiasts continue to arrive all day.

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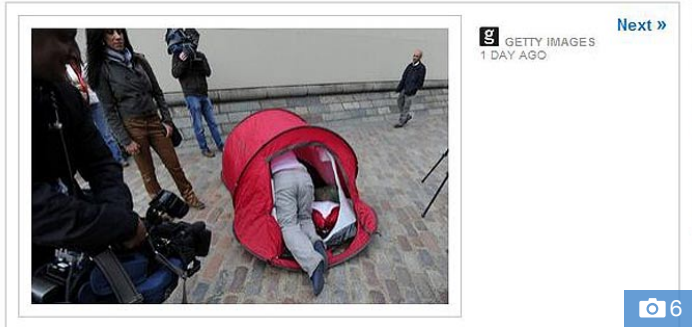
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I help Canadian Bernadette Christie to set up her tent next to mine. She's been planning her visit for six months and has forked out £1,400.

Bernadette, 57, from Grand Prairie, said: "I told my husband, as soon as it was announced, that I wanted a ticket to England as a Christmas gift.

"I had to be here — there won't be another royal wedding in my lifetime."

I am also joined by sisters Nichola Gooderham, 57, and Bernie Smith, 49, from Suffolk.

We make a pact to watch each other's tents when we go on toilet breaks.

Bernie tells me: "I wanted to go to Charles and Diana's wedding but I had a small baby. I jumped at the chance to come to this one."



By evening, there is a community of around ten tents and we enjoy a sing-song.

*But I am regretting not bringing more bedding. I have just a pillow and a blanket — and it is freezing. I pull on every item of clothing I have.*

I just hope Wills and Kate appreciate my dedication.

There is no hope of proper sleep here, because the road is horrendously busy.

Still, I drift off with a smile on my face. So far I'm having a great time!

**WEDNESDAY. DAY TWO** My smile is erased at 2am, when I awake to find something is afoot at the Abbey.



Wearily and with a very sore back, I join my new friends behind recently-installed barriers.

I wrap my blanket around me and shiver and grumble. My head is throbbing.

To my right is Terry Hutt, who is 76 on the day after the wedding, and considers it to be his best-ever birthday gift.

A great British eccentric, he says: "I've been to all the Royal Weddings, every event they have, and always will. I'll always support our monarchy."

Terry is prancing around enthusiastically in Union Jack T-shirt, putting me to shame.

Following his lead, I peer across the road — and watch in awe as a dress rehearsal for the big day takes place.



Soldiers march and stand to attention in perfect formation to shouted orders. Then the Household Cavalry trot into view.

It's a carefully choreographed routine, with all the pomp we Brits do so well.

*We all hold our breath as the wedding carriage pulls up. Kate is not in it. I expect she's still in bed. But it's a taste of what to expect on Friday and we can barely wait.*

As the day draws on, a sense of "them and us" develops between those camping out and the passers-by.

Some people laugh and throw snide comments at us as they pass. A man tells me I "must be crazy". I totally disagree.

People queued overnight for the new iPad2 last month — which was hardly a great moment of history, was it?

What is so strange about wanting a front-row seat at this occasion?



And there's a real camaraderie between us campers.

Terry gives me a hug as I walk past his tent and Gwen, who has nine of her family camping here, makes me an honorary son.

That night, there's another rehearsal — and this time the Royal couple are there.

We only catch a glimpse of them, but it sends a real buzz around the camp.

With everyone high on adrenaline, we hold what was probably the first Royal Wedding street-party.

Someone gets beers from a supermarket and everyone shares out their food.

**THURSDAY. DAY THREE** I wake up to find a host of new arrivals. There are now around 100 tents. Another neighbour, Cynthia McAllister, has flown from New Orleans.

Cynthia, 43, tells me: "America is frenzied about the whole thing. We love the Royal Family. The history, the ancient customs and tradition. It's something we don't have."

Less than 24 hours to go now — and the place is throbbing with excitement.

Police officers eye us. They are friendly but I'm told they watch the royal fans carefully.

*Bernie, Nichola and I pull our tents tighter together and push them right up against the barrier. There's no way we're sacrificing our perfect view at this stage.*

My mum calls to say that she's seen me on the TV news. I'm on internet sites as far away as India and China — with my bottom sticking out of the tent. How embarrassing.

It's Bernie's birthday, so we get her a cake and sing Happy Birthday.

We're one big, happy family.

But the police warn that we'll have to pack our tents up early tomorrow — 4am at the latest.

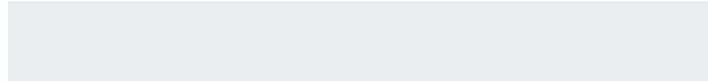
A lot of people are now looking for a front-row perch and I'm starting to feel defensive over the spot I've waited so long to secure.

I'm so excited, there's no way any of us can sleep.

I leave my tent and see that everyone else has had the same difficulty.

So we sit up through the night, chatting excitedly, and counting down the minutes and hours to our own little piece of history.

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