

Wedded bliss

The Anna McDonald Bridal Gallery is flourishing on a happy marriage of excellent service and gorgeous gowns.

for weddings that will be taking place later this year and throughout 2009. Another source of encouragement has been just how far afield clients have been happy to travel. As well as brides-to-be from the Thame area, Anna has welcomed people from Manchester and Warwick.

Best of all, perhaps, is the feedback Anna has had from clients which, she says, has been truly encouraging. People have been impressed by Anna's service, not to mention the gorgeous bridal gowns. Rebecca Withy, who is planning an autumn wedding, is typical in her praise: "This being the one and only time I would purchase a wedding dress, I wanted the experience to be as exciting as the dress – and the Bridal Gallery gave me both a



The Anna McDonald Bridal Gallery opened on 4th July this year. To date, Anna's expectations have been far exceeded. Against the backdrop of a stuttering economy, Anna decided to buck the trend and open a new business selling exclusive yet affordable bridal gowns in an area – Oxfordshire – that she felt was under-served.

It might have struck some as a high risk plan. Anna was starting a business from scratch, and with little experience in retail. She faced several challenges from the outset. Finding a location with enough space to accommodate the needs of a luxury bridal business, for instance.

Once she had tracked down the right property, it then had to be fitted out in such a way as to create the sort of surroundings and ambience that customers wouldn't enjoy in other bridal shops. Next came sourcing stock from selected designers that would provide her clients with a unique range of gowns and accessories. Last, but not least, came a rapid learning process on sizing, fitting, retailing and promotion.

From her early appointments and sales, it appears that Anna is well on the road to success. Within a month of opening, Anna conducted over 40 private appointments

wonderful experience and a beautiful dress. Anna is overwhelmingly helpful, attentive and friendly and I loved the look of her shop and dresses, all very opulent and bridal. I enjoyed the experiences and service so much I purchased my bridesmaids dresses from the Bridal Gallery as well."

Visitors to the gallery receive a one-to-one private appointment with Anna, an approach which she sees as vital to ensuring that her clients' needs are met. The approach is helping to generate further appointments through word-of-mouth recommendations. But Anna hopes to raise the Bridal Gallery's profile further by appearing at shows and events. **One such will be the Wedding Show, due to be held at the Oxfordshire Golf Club on 19th October.** The Bridal Gallery will be conducting a fashion show throughout the day, another completely new experience for Anna.

Whilst the Gallery has changed Anna's life from "housewife" to "business owner", she is clearly loving the challenge. Not least because, for Anna, it is a real pleasure to play some part in the biggest day of her clients' lives.



The Anna McDonald Bridal Gallery,

The White House, 2 East Street, Thame, Oxfordshire OX9 3JS T. 01844 214190