

THE GREAT SOUTHERN FARMER

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No longer searching for a Sheila, Wandering's Shane Kelliher and his British bride Nicola – "all five foot of explosive personality" – celebrate their second wedding in eight days at opposite ends of the world by riding in the back of Shane's ute.

Sheila, sweetheart, spouse

This story is so good it would make the perfect script for a movie.

Oh, wait, it has.

Well, not a movie, but certainly its very own TV series.

First there was *Desperately Seeking Sheila*.

Now we have the sequel – *Desperately Keeping Sheila*.

And one of the Aussie hunks on the show has done just that.

Wandering beef cattle farmer Shane Kelliher made a last minute decision to send his resume into the production company planning the SBS show *Desperately Seeking* in 2004.

He was so late he did not actually make the first series but got called up from the bullpen when one of the original couples did not pan out and were dropped.

On the other side of the world in Essex, insurance broker Nicola Ames had always dreamed of doing the "Aussie thing" – visa, backpack and working her way around the country.

So the chance to get a kickstart on *Desperately Seeking* seemed like a good idea at the time.

The two never met during production as they were paired with different people in different parts of the State.

Both of those "reality relationships" went nowhere.

So a disappointed Nicola did a little bit of travelling and went home to England.

Shane went back to work with his 1200 Hereford Shorthorn cross breeders and selling his steers to the feedlot trade.

End of story.

Until the production company announced it was throwing a thank you party in Fremantle.

All the cast, crew and lovemom stars were invited to come.

Shane said yes – it is not that big a trip from Wandering to Freo.

Nicola had to be pushed by her father.

He told her to go, close the door on her Australian experience and then come home and get on with the family construction business, which she had joined.

The party was on October 23.

Nicola and Shane met and were married on October 8 the next year.

She says the second she was introduced to Shane she knew he was the one.

"We just really hit it off and he invited me to come and see his farm and when he was showing me around I was just about in tears," Nicola says.

"It was all so beautiful and Shane showed me more, and taught me more, about bush life in Australia than I had been able to see in all my



Perfect picture: The arrival of David Elvis completed the fairytale romance of the TV show lovers.

travels," she says.

"I just loved it and I knew I loved him."

But it still wasn't going to be smooth sailing.

Nicola had to go back to England so now it was Shane's turn to chase his dream.

"I had read about the show and thought 'Why not?'" Shane says.

"When I finally got on I was paired with a girl called Georgia and while she was nice, there was no spark," he says.

"But Nicola was so different, she had a bubbly, explosive per-

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sonality and I asked her to come to the farm straight away.

"I was rapt. Too often too many people seem to settle for 'she'll do' but if I was going to marry it was going to be to someone that I really wanted to spend the rest of my life with."

Shane followed Nicola to England as soon as he could get away from the farm and they were engaged there in the July.

Which is when Nicola not just proved the dream of his life, she may have also saved his life.

"We had gone down to London to find a ring and Nicola had picked one out but wanted to think about it. We were going to go back on the Thursday and get it," Shane recalls.

"But on the Wednesday she found another one in her home town and we bought that and cancelled the next day's trip to London," he says.

"The next day, right where we were going, the bombings started and so many people were killed and injured,

right where we were going."

But the couple escaped the horror and the wedding went ahead in England, complete with horse drawn carriage.

And eight days later it was back into the wedding dress for Nicola for a repeat performance – this time at the Quindanning pub for all Shane's Australian mates.

"We had to have two weddings because it was going to be too hard for everyone's friends and relatives to get to one or the other – and not many brides get to use their wedding dress twice."

And now to complete the fairytale the Kelliher's are proud parents of David Elvis.

Elvis is what he was referred to during the pregnancy, and the name became so fixed Nicola even suggested to Shane that if the baby was a boy they call him Elvis.

"I had to explain to her this is Australia and a kid called Elvis would have to fight his way out of every pub in the country."