

Wedding Special - A Sussex Affair



We met, my husband and I, at a Brighton house party. Never did either of us imagine then that our careless conversation on that kitchen floor would bring us to the quiet altar of East Chilmington Parish Church ten years later. You find love in the most unexpected places, they say, and in our case it was true.

He proposed on Formentera. I was reading on a platform bed over-looking the Mediterranean sea and suddenly there he was - dressed in swimming trunks and tails with two glasses of champagne and a vintage diamond ring. As we hurtled back to the Ibiza ferry, ring firmly on finger, I started planning our wedding - ideas came almost as fast as the pot-holes beneath the flimsy tyres of our trusty moped....

By the time we were home in Sussex, it was time to get the wedding plans underway. As an event organizer I knew that we had to get the fundamental elements of the wedding in place before we addressed the details.

Start with a vision of your perfect day! This bit is really fun. Spend time dreaming up a blue-sky scenario and from here build an unshakable operational plan with in-built wet-weather contingency! For me that meant a rustic-nostalgic theme and a stout pair of wedding wellies!. I wanted our love of local landscape, food and people to form the heart

of our celebration. Kegs of ale, barrels of wine, trugs of apples, rounds of cheese, baskets of bread, slabs of butter, meats, pies and pickles - all sourced locally. I saw jute, hops, sheaves of barley - all the textures of the barn adorned with flowers, raffia, ribbons and of course loads and loads of bunting!

Set the date - Whilst the vision is brewing set your date. Rather than simply opting for all-popular summer you might like to choose a date that is significant to you. Maybe you adore May - go for it! Maybe you have always fantasized about a mid-winter wedding with a big fur cape and roaring fires - make it yours! For me September has always had a special resonance, and I wanted the abundant richness of harvest time to form the heart our celebration. Know your budget but don't let it hold you back. Weddings give us one of the few chances in life to bring our dreams to life - even if budget is an issue do not let that stop you fantasizing at this stage - you will find that with creative thinking, careful accounting and unshakeable faith dreams can become reality.

Find a venue that reflects your vision - There are many beautiful venues throughout Sussex which are geared for Weddings. Budget is often the primary consideration, but also bear in mind the ambience of your vision. For us the humble parish hall, was perfect. We chose Westmeston, with its backdrop of the downs, plenty of space outside



for games, and best of all it was a horse-ride away from the Church. We spent our first hour as husband and wife riding together through beautiful countryside - unforgettable. Ditchling Morris gave us a sensational welcome on arrival at Westmeston, making an avenue of sticks for us to ride through and then dancing the party into being. Once we dismounted we had the first of many glasses of Ridgeview wine - divine!

Attention to Detail Once you have got the infrastructure of your wedding in place it is time to get creative with the details. Try to run your theme through as many elements as you can. Think colours, textures, food, drinks, entertainment and even possibly dress code. We suggested our guests wear 'Country attire'. This produced a vintage collection of hacking jackets, canes, hats and shawls which made for outstanding photos! During the speeches we had Punch & Judy for the kids, and afterwards good old-fashioned games on the lawn, including The Tug of Love - his family against mine! As the evening drew in the Ceilidh began - Unreel had

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us whirling and twirling - old and young alike - until the DJ's came on and took us into a party to remember!

Utilize the talents of the people you already know and don't be afraid to ask! Friends and family generally love getting involved in weddings and often harbour rich pools of talent. My brother-in-law drew the church for the invitations, my mum created the cake, my sister did the flowers, my brothers organised the music. Friends sang, DJ'ed and danced for us late into the night. All these things saved money, but even more importantly made it a real family affair.

Have a beautiful place to go at the end of it all Wonderful though the day is, I have yet to meet a bride or groom who were not ready to disappear by midnight. The Shelley's Hotel in Lewes provided us with the perfect get-away, and we were able to sit on their terrace with a last bottle of champagne and reflect together on our amazing day. The next day, we boarded the sleeper train to Fort William - not quite

'A local country wedding made unforgettable by Sussex's incredible abundance of local food and wine and its talented, open-hearted people'



the Orient Express, but eating breakfast in the highlands was unforgettable! Climbing Ben Nevis was the first challenge we set ourselves as husband and wife so after retreating to the Isle of Skye we made it all the way to the top of the British Isles.

So from the kitchen floor to the top of the world - what an incredible journey it has been! Heartfelt thanks go out to all the people who have supported us on our journey and who made our wedding day so magical. Special thanks go out to our family, our children and our friends and to my priceless husband without whom there would have been no wedding at all.

Thanks also to Sophie from Sussex Style for enabling me to realize another dream - to write about my wedding and share it with you. Good luck with your Sussex Affair - may you too have a glorious journey to Love.

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Michelle and Michael Pearce moved from Brighton into the Sussex countryside in 2006 where they live with their three children. They married at East Chiltington Parish Church in September 2007. They run an Osteopathic Clinic from the GP surgery in South Chaley and Michelle also teaches yoga, writes and organizes events.