

Summer LOVING

From Pimm's to picnic blankets, Vanessa and Andrew's summer wedding was the relaxed affair they had always planned

Images courtesy of Becker Photography



Vanessa and Andrew tied the knot on 2nd July, 2011 at South Farm, Royston



Vanessa and Andrew met back in 1999 when they were students at Southampton University. However, it wasn't until some years later they tied the knot. Despite their long courtship, Andrew's proposal still caught Vanessa by surprise. "We had spoken many times about marriage, and even looked at rings together," says Vanessa. "But that was more than a year before we got engaged so I had kind of forgotten about it." Andrew popped the question during a skiing holiday on the top of Col-De-Fresse in Val d'Isère and got down on one knee in the snow. Vanessa tells us: "I was initially annoyed because he stopped above me on the piste and made me walk back up to him, but I soon forgave him! I was so shocked and happy that I initially forgot to say 'yes', he had to prompt me!"

Surf's up

The couple exchanged the slopes for the surf as they waved goodbye to their single days and both enjoyed fun-filled hen and stag events. Vanessa and her hen party spent a weekend in Bude, Cornwall. "It was action-packed: kayaking, surfing and coasteering, ending more sedately with a spot of archery. Everyone seemed to have fun, even my friend who had laryngitis and couldn't swim was seen to be jumping from the cliffs!"

Further along the coast in Newquay were the stags, who started with a game of golf, before also trying coasteering and surfing throughout the weekend. "I managed to get off quite lightly on the pranks front," laughs Andrew.

Al fresco celebrations

Being fans of the great outdoors, it was a natural choice for Vanessa and Andrew to choose an al-fresco celebration. "We opted for a July wedding to give us the best chance of having good weather, as we both loved the idea of holding the ceremony outside. It paid off; the weather was amazing," says Vanessa. The couple were also very clear about the kind of vibe they wanted on their big day. "We wanted our wedding to be as relaxed as possible, informal and fun," she explains. Finding the perfect venue is important for any bride and groom but for Vanessa and Andrew it was crucial that their location ticked every box on their list. "We wanted somewhere where everyone could relax and enjoy the sun," explains Vanessa. "South Farm was perfect. There was plenty of outdoor space and we had both our ceremony

"Don't worry about the finer details on the day. An hour before the ceremony we discovered our seating plan had some people allocated to two different tables, and others missed off completely. It made no difference – everyone had somewhere to sit." – Vanessa





and speeches in the summer house. We were also looking for a venue where our guests could stay the night – some even stayed in the gypsy caravans located on-site.”

Time to sparkle

If a relaxed setting was to set the tone for the big day, Vanessa was equally relaxed about choosing the dress. She says: “I didn’t have any set ideas about my gown – I was open to trying anything.” Vanessa chose a strapless A-line dress from Jan-L in St Ives. “It had a lot more sparkle than I imagined, and it took a bit of persuading for me to wear a veil, but I’m glad I did,” she says. Vanessa opted for a minimalist look for her hair and make-up, and kept her accessories simple to complement the look. “I only had two items of jewellery, diamond earrings that Andrew bought me for the wedding and a bracelet that belonged to my granny. Both are very special to me.”

Andrew and his groomsmen wore dark grey suits teamed with pinstripe trousers and ivory-coloured waistcoats. The couple chose a teal colour scheme for their wedding, a shade that was picked up in the groomsmen’s cravats and handkerchiefs.

The three bridesmaids, Hollie, Vanessa’s sister, Jo, a friend from work and Helen, a university friend, wore teal halterneck maxi dresses. “We wanted something summery that the girls would feel comfortable wearing,” says Vanessa. The summer vibe was also reflected in Vanessa’s choice of flowers. “I wanted something fun and bright,” she explains. “My bouquet had pink lilies with white roses, while the bridesmaids had white roses. Our table flowers were bright pink gerberas.”

The couple were also keen for their photographs to capture the relaxed flavour of the day. “My bridesmaid Jo told me about Becky Kerr as she had been her wedding photographer. We liked Becky as soon as we met her, and her unobtrusive style was exactly what we were after,” says Vanessa.

Just the tonic

Vanessa spent the night before the wedding with two of her bridesmaids. “On the morning of the wedding I felt excited and almost in disbelief that the day was here. It was only during the hour leading up to the ceremony that I got nervous,” she says. Meanwhile Andrew was in good company with his best man Mark, who helped to keep him relaxed on the day. “The morning started with champagne, pancakes, maple syrup and bacon outside in our garden. Mark did a good job of getting rid of any last-minute nerves by taking me to a nice country pub for a gin and tonic,” says Andrew.

Vanessa arrived at South Farm in a VW camper van, “It was suitably decorated to let others know the bride was on board” says





Vanessa. “Meanwhile Andrew travelled to the venue in our MX5.”

With the weather being sunny and warm, the ceremony was held in the summerhouse as guests looked on. “We had two readings, *Union* by Robert Fulghum, read by Andrew’s dad and a love story by Edward Monkton, read by my mum,” says Vanessa. The couple hired a string quartet to play before, during and after the al-fresco ceremony, playing Pachabel’s *Canon in D* as Vanessa walked down the aisle and *Arrival Of The Queen Of Sheba* as they left the ceremony. “My favourite point of the day was the ceremony, seeing Vanessa for the first time and all our friends and family,” says Andrew.

Party people

Guests were treated to a Pimm’s reception before the wedding breakfast, which included a butternut squash ravioli starter, a main course of chicken wrapped in parma ham and a summer fruit pavlova for dessert. “The wine was previously chosen during a tasting evening at home, which perhaps sounds more civilised than it actually was!” says Vanessa.

Designed and handmade by Vanessa’s mum, the wedding cake was a pretty three-tiered creation decorated with sugar gerberas. “My mum also made a separate chocolate cake decorated with a doctor and a golfer, representing me and Andrew,” adds Vanessa. Meanwhile the couple got creative with the invitations and place names. “We had great fun making them with our families. Our place names were luggage tags tied onto individual pink gerberas and our favours were a collection of our favourite retro sweets.”

Sunshine and speeches

Moving back outside for the speeches, the couple and their nearest and dearest watched from picnic rugs in the sunshine, with best man, Mark, starting his speech with a surprise for Andrew. “He produced two envelopes, one decorated with a skull and cross bones and the other decorated with flowers. I had to make a choice, and of course I didn’t choose the one with flowers. Luckily there was nothing in it I hadn’t already heard before.”

Vanessa and Mark organised a Ceilidh to kick off the evening celebrations which proved to be a fun way to get everyone up and dancing. “It really helped to break the ice,” Vanessa says. “Our first dance was a Ceilidh dance with our bridesmaids and groomsmen. We chose to do this as neither of us really wanted to get up and dance on our own in front of everyone,” she adds. As the evening drew on, the fun continued with music from the DJ. “Loads of people were dancing and we had a great time. I think most things during the reception went to plan, but we wouldn’t have minded – or noticed – if they hadn’t as long as people were enjoying themselves,” says Vanessa. ♥

The honeymoon

“We went to Thailand, spending one week in Koh Samui and one week in Koh Phangan. We spent our last night in the Mandarin Oriental in Bangkok. We had plenty of sun, sea, local food and cocktails and rode an elephant. It was a very relaxing holiday,” says Vanessa.

Victoria & Gareth’s contact book

Photographer

Becky Kerr Photography
www.beckerphotography.co.uk

Wedding rings

GL Bicknells & Sons
www.bicknells.com

Bride’s dress

Jan-L
www.janl.co.uk

String quartet

Le Soiree
www.lesoiree.co.uk

Hair & make-up

D&D Makeup
www.d-dmakeup.com

Ceilidh band

Tam Lin Ceilidh
01767 683 583

Bridesmaids’ dresses

Vanilla Bridal, Newport Pagnell
01908 217 757

DJ

Titan Roadshow
www.thediscoman.com

Flowers

Wildwood Floral Events
www.wildwoodfloralevents.co.uk

Chair covers

Chair covers by Cathy
www.chaircoversbycathy.co.uk