

Remote control

Can you organise the perfect Highland wedding when you're based on the other side of the Irish Sea? Lucy Barnett and Mike Hurley did, and it turned out brilliantly

Words by Beth Forsyth Photography by Justin Scobie



“The night before, we had an informal welcome dinner – lots of guests had travelled a long way and this was a brilliant meet-and-greet”



I love to have a nosey at the names written on the placards you see held aloft by chauffeurs when you exit an airport. Lucy Barnett was doing the same when she flew back from a trip to Australia, only to spot her boyfriend Mike Hurley brandishing a sign with her name on it. “When I drew closer, he opened up the sign to reveal ‘Will you marry me?’ written inside. He got down on one knee and held out a ring. It was all very romantic,” recalls Lucy.

The couple met at medical school in Dublin and still live in the Irish capital, but they decided to get married in Scotland since Lucy’s family home is in Nairn. They also decided to have an 18-month engagement so they could really enjoy planning their day and getting everything right – they’d be putting everything in place from across the Irish Sea, after all. Friends and family helped out as much as they could, but Lucy and Mike felt they needed someone on the ground to assist them, so they called on the services of Angela Stewart, a wedding co-ordinator, events specialist and florist. “From the moment we first met Angela for a planning session, she just seemed to understand exactly the look and atmosphere we wanted. She turned our dreams into reality,” Lucy beams.

Having secured Achnagairn House, a country house just outside Inverness, for their celebrations, Mike and Lucy’s dreams began to take shape. “We wanted an intimate wedding with close family and friends, in a venue where we’d all feel at home,” says Lucy. “We both knew instantly that Achnagairn was for us: it’s a spectacular place that we could have exclusively for the whole weekend. It

Opposite: Lucy and Mike met at medical school in Dublin **This page:** The happy couple arrive at Achnagairn House for their reception; Lucy with her bridesmaids – note the similar necklines of their dresses; the ballroom is a fantastic venue for the wedding breakfast; perfectly behaved little guests in Highland kilts



meant we could party as late as we wanted and add our own personal touches," she says.

As it turns out, stamping their personalities on the day was very important to the pair. Lucy explains, "We hoped for a personalised touch, where people would say, 'Oh, that's so Lucy and Mike!'" The traditional 'something blue' was nicely taken care of with a blue-and-white colour scheme, but two other motifs became the inspirational driving force behind their plans: "The first was 'A Summer Country Garden', bringing the outdoors in, so the ballroom was awash with flowers and herbs – including a spectacular centrepiece around the fireplace in the ballroom complete with potted plants and candles," reveals Lucy. "Our second inspiration was 'Young and Fun'. For this we used lots of quirky touches around the place: chalkboard menus, a Polaroid message board, a 'treat yourself' favours hamper filled with little trinkets we'd collected during our engagement, and a 'Who's Who in the Bridal Party' photo board."

Some of the couple's 85 guests arrived the day before the wedding (50 of those stayed in the house all weekend), something that Lucy and Mike really enjoyed. "One of our favourite moments was the night before the wedding when we had an informal welcome dinner – made



by Good Highland Food, who were absolutely brilliant. Many guests had travelled a long way, and it was a great way to have a relaxed meet and greet before the big day. After dinner, we played rounders on the lawn. That was the great advantage of Achngairn – we could do fun things like that!"

Meanwhile, Angela Stewart was busy putting the finishing touches to the venue decoration, both at Achngairn and at St Mary's Catholic Church in Beaully where the ceremony was to be held. "We wanted to be able to relax throughout the weekend, without trying to make everything go to plan. Having worked with Angela and her team in the lead-up to the wedding, it made sense to have them there throughout the weekend to ensure everything ran smoothly," says Lucy.

Almost unbelievably for the Highlands, the weather stayed warm and sunny for the whole weekend, which meant that photographer Justin Scobie could capture the day against beautiful blue skies. "We liked the spontaneity of Justin's pictures: most weren't posed and look really natural," says Lucy. In addition to the breathtaking backdrop of Achngairn, he had plenty of fabulous details to work with, sourced by the car-loving couple, including a Ford Mustang, two Rolls-Royce and a fun VW Camper van cake! ■



Opposite page, clockwise from top: Justin Scobie's atmospheric photographs really captured the day; the church in Beaully was chosen as it's close to Achngairn; Achngairn's magnificent ballroom, beautifully decorated with flowers and pots of herbs for the 'Summer Country Garden' theme; the bridal bouquet; a young guest looks on **This page, from top:** The top table; a holiday on Skye was the inspiration behind the VW Camper van cake; more cute pots of flowers; the dining tables were given a blue-and-white theme; the hand-drawn order of service; the groom looks pleased with his wedding gift – Lucy hired this Ford Mustang for him for the big day



Slice of the day

Venue

Lucy and Mike exchanged vows at St Mary's Catholic Church in Beaully, then headed to nearby Achngairn House. "The staff are absolutely fantastic, always there to help," notes Lucy. **0845 057 4212, www.perfect-manors.com/achngairn**

Photography

"He's a master of his art," enthuses Lucy of Inverness-shire-based Justin Scobie who photographed the day. "We liked the spontaneity of his pictures – most weren't posed and look so natural. During the day, we hardly knew he was there; he was discreet, especially during the church service, which was important." **01463 871790, www.justinscobie.co.uk**

Dress

Tamem Michael, one of Dublin's leading bridal boutiques, was where Lucy happened upon her 'Lady Verona' lace gown. **www.tamemmichael.com**

Bridesmaid dresses

The neckline on the stunning royal-blue chiffon dresses by Dessy Collection echoed that of the bridal gown and featured a lovely diamanté belt. **www.dessy.com**

Cake

Truly Scrumptious Designer Cakes in Linlithgow made the fun VW Camper van cake. "It was inspired by a holiday we had on the Isle of Skye," laughs Lucy. **01506 671133, www.trulydesignercakes.co.uk**

Planning and flowers

"She's fantastic – professional yet friendly. You can always rely on her and her team," says the bride of Angela Stewart who coordinated the day and provided the beautiful arrangements and bouquets. **01463 871400, www.angela-stewart-creative.com**

Catering

Good Highland Food were on hand to feed guests from Friday dinner right through to Sunday breakfast. "Mike Crook and his team are absolutely fantastic. I cannot recommend them highly enough," Lucy comments. "So many people told us they loved the food – it was restaurant-standard." **01463 470995, www.goodhighlandfood.com**

Music

Rose Street Quartet played during the ceremony and relocated to Achngairn to entertain during the wedding breakfast. A Highland Piper from Inverness filled the hall with the skirl of the pipes when guests were having drinks, while function band Soul Inferno brought the party to life later, playing both ceilidh music and an eclectic mix of hits from the 1960s to the present. **07719 702265, www.rosestreetquartet.co.uk; 07961 573485, www.ahighlandpiper.co.uk; www.soulinferno.co.uk**

Transport

"My wedding present to Mike was a Ford Mustang for the weekend," recalls Lucy, who hired it from Highland Classic Cars. KK Timeless Classics supplied two Rolls-Royce to transport the bridal party. **www.highlandclassiccars.co.uk; 01463 798156, www.kktimelessclassics.co.uk**

Childcare

The couple employed Smart Childcare to run a crèche during the wedding breakfast. They also provided a babysitting service during the evening. **01463 703040, www.smartchildcare.co.uk**