

On cloud nine

It rained all the way but for skydivers Mike and Carol Henderson nothing could spoil the day they took the plunge in the Lake District



ike and I met in 1999, whilst learning to skydive at The North West Parachute Centre in Cark, Cumbria but it was not until we formed a competitive formation

skydiving team in 2003 and started to train together most weekends, that our feelings for each other grew as we discovered we had far more in common than just throwing ourselves out of planes!

There was no big romantic proposal, I started to hint after we had been living together for a couple of years, and Mike bought me a beautiful platinum emerald cut diamond solitaire - which he presented to me on Christmas morning 2005. We spent the following year talking about what kind of wedding we would like, as we've both been married before and wanted an informal, but really special day. We finally decided we wanted to get married in the Lake District as we had met there, at a venue where both the civil ceremony and the reception could take place, and guests could stay over:

From all the stunning venues available, one stood out from the rest as ideal for us - The Castle Green Hotel in Kendal. Their wedding package was completely flexible, with a choice of reception and ceremony rooms, and a gazebo which was licensed for outdoor weddings, so we booked our wedding for August 1, 2008

The hotel provided us with a list of suppliers in the area, and I requested further information from them all. As with the venue, one photographer stood out by offering flexible wedding packages. We contacted Lorraine from Bowness Wedding Photography and ended up booking her immediately. For our flowers, we chose Flowers by Something Special, as the venue use Elizabeth their floral arrangements.

Elizabeth recommended we order our cake from Bealea's Cake Studio. We called in, and had a chat with Lea who specialises in making icing figures, which was just what we wanted for our informal theme. We also had a separate cake made, which was a table with two figures which represented my parents, who have both died. I really needed to





Special moment

Being completely overwhelmed as I stood outside the door and heard The Carlton Ensemble start to play 'Gabriel's Oboe' I had always loved this music - that's why I chose it - but hearing it now takes me instantly back to that moment.

have something to remember them on the day, but nothing which may overwhelm me when emotions would already be running high.

This sat beside our wedding cake and we didn't tell our guests what it represented, but the figures were so good that all my family recognised them, whilst Mike's family all thought they were supposed to be Mike and I when we grow old together. How wonderful!

My thoughts turned to one of the most important things - my wedding dress. I was very conscious that at 47, I was old enough to be the mother of the bride - in fact I was already a grandmother! I still wanted to look like a bride though. I had already spent hours looking at lots of different designs without success, and decided that I would have a bespoke gown made by Yvonne Gillon. It was a wonderful experience, and Yvonne and her wonderful team turned the image in my head into a truly elegant gown in the

most stunning fabric.

Meanwhile, Mike decided he quite fancied wearing a kilt - having never worn one before. He isn't Scottish

but my mother was. My son Drew now lives near Edinburgh with his wife and family and on a trip to visit them, we called in at Hector Russell Kiltmakers on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh, so Mike could try one on to see how it felt. An hour later we left the shop, having bought the whole outfit, ordering a kilt in Henderson tartan.

Time flew by, and before we knew the week of the wedding had arrived. We went to stay at the hotel two days before the wedding, to relax and go through the final plans with the wedding team. My son Drew, who was giving me away, arrived at the hotel the night before the wedding with his family, as did my bridesmaid, her partner and her daughter. We all enjoyed a relaxed meal together, and went to bed convinced I wouldn't sleep.

We woke in the morning to black skies - the forecast had been appalling all week, so we were already prepared to get married indoors. The rain arrived, exactly as predicted, shortly after lunchtime and stayed all afternoon, and most of the evening. I had my hair and makeup done, then when I was dressed I suddenly started to get really nervous.

My son arrived at that point, looking really chilled and very handsome. I thought about how proud my parents would be and felt really emotional and as we stood outside the ceremony room and I heard the quintet start to play "Gabriel's Oboe" I was completely overwhelmed.

The ceremony was very emotional; there was not a dry eye in the house. When the registrar announced we were husband and wife, I heard a huge cheer behind us. Despite the weather, it was all exactly as I hoped it would be: informal, but special with real meaning.

The meal was also perfect and The Carlton Ensemble played requests throughout, while my cousin Ralph entertained us with his Frank Sinatra




tribute, accompanied by the quintet. We did not have any formal speeches. Mike and I thanked everyone before the meal started, so we could relax and enjoy the rest of the day.

Meal over, we went with the photographer for some photos alone together and even managed to dodge the heavy showers, to get a few shots in the hotel gardens. Then it was time to start the evening reception with cutting the cake, followed by our first dance to Snow Patrol's Chasing Cars.

We had decided against the traditional disco, and booked a traditional ceilidh band through Jigs and Reels - The Bon Accords from Dumfries. This was a bit of a gamble given that only my aunt and uncle from Inverness really knew what they were doing, but everyone joined in the spirit of things and had a great time. I don't think the band had ever seen so many people with two left feet together at the same time before!

The day after the wedding dawned with blue skies and fluffy white clouds - perfect for weddings and skydiving!

We resisted the urge to head for the parachute centre and went to drink champagne on the shore of Buttermere Lake, just the two of us. We reflected on our perfect wedding, and I thought I was the luckiest person in the world to have married the most wonderful man, who gave me the courage to dream again, and then made my dreams come true. 



Top tip

Enjoy your day without worrying. If something doesn't go according to plan, don't dwell on it as it does not change the true meaning of the day.

We recommend

-  **The Castle Green Hotel**
01539 734000

-  **Yvonne Gillon**
0161 427 1881

-  **Adina Bridal in Whitefield**
0161 796 1788

-  **Beaulea's Cake Studio**
01539 448204

-  **Stefan's**
0161 969 7625