

## Meghan & Jonathan, New House Farm – Sept 2018

Why did you look for a planner?

We weren't planning on having a planner, originally. Meghan is super organised and had pretty much been planning her wedding since she was little, so we didn't think we'd need one. Then we had a chat with our photographer, who strongly recommended we have someone - at least on the big day, if not also for a few check-ins along the way - to take the stress off and make sure we hadn't forgotten anything, as our wedding barn was completely dry hire. We took her advice, and it proved to be invaluable!

Why did you choose Annabel?

Our photographer recommended Annabel, saying not only did she know our venue and all its nuances inside and out, but that she was a top-notch organiser, made sure everything happened seamlessly on the day, and was really lovely to work with. She also told us a coordinator was essential for a completely blank canvas venue like ours, which we hadn't fully realised. We called and booked Annabel straight away, and she exceeded expectations. She was always available when we needed her, but we were able to book catch-ups and meet ups as and when we really needed to, which we appreciated, as we weren't sure how much we'd need to consult with her before our rehearsal the night before, and didn't want to have to commit to a big package when we were budgeting for everything else, as well! That being said, every consultation and bit of time we booked with Annabel was worth its weight in gold. Having Annabel to go to and to run our wedding day was some of the best money we spent on our wedding.

What element of the wedding would you change, if at all?

It sounds cliché, but we wouldn't change a thing! All the organisation and work that went into the wedding in advance meant every single element was perfect and better than we imagined. People always tell you something will go wrong, but don't believe it! Be in the moment and go with the day, but if you plan in advance, your wedding will be better than you imagined.

What advice would you give someone else planning a DIY wedding?

Definitely get a planner to make sure you've covered all your bases, make suggestions you might not think of, and take all the stress off you to ensure the day runs smoothly. There are so many logistics involved not even the most organised bride and groom can anticipate, and it can all come to a stressful head as the wedding gets closer. Being able to hand over your big day from the night before means you're both able to relax and enjoy and be present to every single moment - and that's invaluable.

Also, make it your own! We wanted most of the really traditional elements at our wedding, but we also had a few tricks up our sleeves that made the day fun for our guests and a true reflection of us. It's so easy to get bogged down in what you see on Pinterest, so use it as a bit of a starting point for inspiration or to research different ways of doing something creative you've come up with, but then leave it behind. You'll find you just end up with the same images over and over, and you don't want a Pinterest wedding - you want your wedding. So have fun, follow the rules you want, and make up the rest!

If your venue is in the proverbial 'middle of nowhere' like ours and/or if you have lots of guests from abroad like we did, bite the bullet and get a shuttle service. It's not cheap, but it's worth it to make sure your guests arrive where they need to be and on time. (It also saves them constantly messaging you about how to get where, by when, etc. when you just want to get the last bits in order and then relax and enjoy! But if they still do that, have Annabel deal with them!)

Lastly, choose a core vendor or two, then get recommendations from them for the rest of your vendors. Not only does that mean you get suppliers others in the industry hold in high regard, it also means you've got individuals who know each other and are practised in coming together as a team. It's another thing that makes the day run smoothly, and the synergy across vendors gives your wedding that extra magic.

Any advice or even stories about certain parts of the wedding etc that you feel another Bride would benefit from reading?

Book early! Maybe we were a bit over-excited, but we booked our venue and all of our vendors way in advance. This meant we could have exactly who we wanted to do our photos, video, flowers, food, hair, everything. If you're planning your wedding a year and a half out, you're in a great position to snap up your suppliers whilst they're still available. Some vendors only book a year in advance, so pop it in your diary to get back in touch to book them in then. We were able to get every single one of our vendors of choice, and it made for a spectacular day! If your favourite vendor isn't available, don't be shy in asking them to recommend someone else who does similar work. Especially in the Lakes, we found all the vendors we spoke with to be incredibly friendly and more than happy to pass on business to someone they respected or make further recommendations when we needed them. It made the whole process really easy.

Finally, make sure you take a few opportunities throughout the day to just be with each other in the moment. There will be times when you feel like you're the only ones in the room, and those are such precious memories. A few people gave us this piece of advice before our big day, and we made sure to remember it. It was worth it.

We just wanted to say the biggest of thank yous for everything you did to ensure our special day ran completely smoothly! Even the most organised and colour coded spreadsheet-using bride and groom need the perfect person to hand their day over to the night before to just relax and enjoy, and you were exceptional. Your patience with our random questions, worries, and stresses from our earliest planning days right up through our wedding day were second to none. Your help was invaluable, and we can't tell you enough how much we appreciate your impact on our wedding. Multiple guests commented to us later how smoothly the day ran, and that's definitely down to you! We couldn't recommend you highly enough! THANK YOU!!!!

