



Celebrations and events at the farm

Charlie & Dom: We knew we wanted a relaxed celebration with 120 friends and family; that was super low waste, that our friends and family could contribute to and that made a difference to our local community.

After a frustrating year looking at traditional wedding venues which were expensive, generated lots of waste and did little for the community Charlie had a brainwave. Would the farm consider hosting our ‘homemade celebration’?

The farm said “erm yes, but we’ve never done a wedding celebration before and yes if you can work within the constraints of being a working farm and being open to the community”.

We embraced that challenge. Our celebration took place after the farm closed at 4pm on a Friday evening, with drinks and nibbles in the veg patch, a celebration service in the courtyard, a BBQ on the cobbled road and music, magicians and cake round the campfire ‘til 11.

We wanted a unique shared experience that we created together and that’s exactly what we got. Yay! Friends played music, decorated tables, helped set up and clear away, made cushions, performed magic tricks and went completely overboard when we asked people to make their favourite cake to share for dessert.

We also wanted to make a difference to the farm. We aimed for a zero waste wedding; we checked any materials we bought (for example tarpaulins for wet weather) would be useful when we donated them to the farm afterwards, we paid the hire fee and we asked friends and family to give a gift to the animals of the farm instead of a wedding list. It was funny and amazing to hear conversations about pig oil, chicken feed, ferret beds, donkey play balls and much else.

And (when we last checked) there are two fruit trees growing that we planted as a discrete reminder of this unique and wonderful day.



We asked friends to make their favourite cake to share for dessert and add the story behind the recipe. 60 cakes appeared, we'd created our own episode of Great British Bake Off.

Is the farm right for my event?

The farm is a special and unique place. It's a working farm and is here to serve the local community, that's what makes it special and it means there are some important questions to ask if you're thinking of an event here.

- **What kind of food are you thinking of?** If you want a formal sit down dinner it's not the right place. If you want picnic's, BBQ's, buffets and outdoor charm then it's perfect. Onsite catering facilities are limited, the trick is to do the work off-site.
- **What kind of music are you thinking about?** If you want a rocking disco it's not the right place. If you want guitar round the campfire, beautiful voices and great conversation it's amazing.
- **Do you like planning and logistics?** It might be sunny, it might pour down and you need a plan (and to spend some money) to accommodate both. You need to create extra covered space for wet weather, think about serving food in the rain and how older relatives might deal with wet cobbles and walking on a slippy veg patch.
- **Do you want to keep your impact low?** The farm works hard to minimise its environmental impact, so a traditional wedding with lots of wasted decoration, plastics and wasted food felt inappropriate, but minimal or zero waste weddings are possible with some planning. We'll happily share our mission to find genuinely "compostable" cups and plates and a caterer that would send them to the appropriate "commercial composter"
- **Do you want to contribute to the community?** As well as the hire fee, what else do you want to contribute to the farm?





So you want to make a plan ...?

Here are some of the things Charlie and Dom thought about:

- **Capacity:** on a fine day the farm can easily accommodate small events (20-40 people) in the yurt and safari tent areas and up to 200 across the courtyard and veg patch.
- **Time of the event:** small events (up to 40 people) can be arranged during farm opening hours. This means you'll be sharing the farm with visitors. Having an event outside of farm hours is great for larger events, but costs more. Events need to finish by 11 and the site made tidy and safe by midnight.
- **Wet weather:** the safari tent and yurt can just hold 30-40 people sat down, but you'll need to create more space (by hiring a small marquee)
- **Catering:** there are limited catering facilities. Think about a menu than can be prepared off-site and brought and served cold. BBQ's can deliver hot food and are easy to hire.
- **No glass:** because the animals move through the farm and we don't to injure the animals there's a no drinking glasses policy – it was paper compostable cups, plates and cutlery all the way.
- **Zero waste:** we talked to the farm at several stages during our planning to minimise waste – we borrowed things from friends (bunting, chairs, cushions, blankets etc), made things (paper decorations, flowers from recycled tins) and hired things (BBQ, deck-chairs, marquee, mic and speaker). The few things we did buy we checked the farm would be able to re-use. The main disposable items were drinks for the bar (all

bottles and cans recycled) and catering plates, cups and cutlery, all of which were commercially compostable and we found a caterer that would do this.

- **Security and guestlist:** we provided a guest list for the gate security person (arranged by the farm).
- **Parking:** limited parking is available out of normal office hours
- **Seating:** the farm has great picnic benches and some chairs, probably enough for 80+ people. But you'll need to hire extra chairs and tables for more than that. We asked friends to bring cushions and chairs with those that found hard surfaces and no backs challenging.
- **Lighting:** the farm can be quite dimly lit in places, so we took care to make sure pathways and steps were well lit to avoid trips and falls.
- **Accessibility:** the farm can be challenging for those with mobility needs and for the partially sighted, so it's good to check with any friends and family with those needs.
- **Staffing:** you'll need to book and pay for staff from the farm to keep the event safe, but you might like to consider asking friends and family to help set up and clear away. We planned the event so each section of the farm could be cleaned up as the evening progressed. The aim was to have minimal cleaning up by 11pm (when it's dark and you can't see any litter!).
- **The morning after:** For a night time event everything needs to be collected offsite by the following lunchtime – so someone needs to be ready to be there at 8am.
- **Fire pit:** it's a wonderful place to gather but needs some special precautions taken and a 'fire-watcher'. The farm can advise.
- **Hearing the celebration service:** we hired microphones and a speaker so that people could hear the celebration service.

Our budget was £10k and we came in slightly over.

£1600 Hire fee*

£1200 Farm staff costs*

£1200 Wet weather protection / marquee hire

£5000 Food: starter and main for 120 people and serving staff.

£1200 Drinks, cups and ice deliveries

£600 Guitarist, magician and photographer

£300 Mic and speaker hire

£ 11,000 direct costs for 120 people (£90 per head)

+ friends gave gifts to the value of over £4,000 to the farm

**Correct at the time of 2021 wedding, please check with SCF for the latest fees*