

Weddings and events in a sheep shed – not a baaaad idea

FARMING FAMILY TRANSFORMS FORMER SHEEP SHED INTO STUNNING CONTEMPORARY EVENT VENUE

Cairns Farm Estate near Edinburgh will now host weddings and events alongside its day-to-day life as a working sheep farm

Following a £1.9m investment and a 24-month build project, a former sheep shed on a working family farm just outside Edinburgh has been transformed into a contemporary luxury wedding and event venue with overnight accommodation. The new venue, [Cairns Farm Estate](#), sits on the shores of Harperrig reservoir within the Pentland Hills Regional Park.

The new venue is the result of an idea that first hatched several years ago and was subsequently developed through a partnership between the Hamilton family and award-winning luxury venue management and event catering company, [Hickory](#).



With Covid-19 restrictions on travel and events easing, [Cairns Farm Estate](#) is set to host its first wedding on 22 May and already has a diary full of bookings stretching into 2022. Many of these were made before the main conversion of the sheep shed had started, based on the venue's stunning location and design plans.

The 1200-acre country estate and hill farm is located near Kirknewton and around eight miles from Edinburgh. The estate has been in the Hamilton family since 1869. With their three children on-board, the family teamed up with Hickory to diversify their estate and create a new chapter in its history.

Caroline and Graham Hamilton have led the project with their children taking on individual roles to match their own skills; Joanna as an interior designer, younger son Bobby assisting with finance and funding, and Alistair as project manager and joiner.

Working with Chris Duncan of Mill Architects, local

contractors and craftspeople, the Hamiltons developed a modern multi-use wedding and event venue that reflects its agricultural roots and sits naturally in the stunning rural location.

The main venue is built around sheds that were once home to cattle over the winter and sheep during lambing season. Now it is a stylish and modern contemporary space which can hold up to 180 guests and includes a Ceremony Room, main function room, bar, breakout areas, and state-of-the-art kitchens.



Throughout the building, there are references to its agricultural heritage and a strong ethos of sustainability through the repurposing of materials found on the estate or sourced locally. For example, the building is clad in Scots Pine, planted by Graham's great grandfather, the building timber comes from trees felled on site as part of an ongoing woodland management programme, while the striking entrance has been formed around an old grain silo sourced from a local farm.

Inside, wedding couples will enter the Ceremony Room through horse stalls up-cycled from the farm's stables while a feature

wall, has been hand built re-using stones from the drystone dykes in the old building. In the function room, the bar, tables and wooden furnishings have been hand crafted from Sycamore and Scots Pine, harvested on the estate, by a team of carpenters led by Alistair.

Cairns Farm Estate also features a range of luxurious on-site accommodation which can sleep up to 24 guests. This includes Cairns Farmhouse, a 19th-century country house that sits on the edge of Harperrig Reservoir, which has been fully renovated to sleep 10; a honeymoon hideaway, The Keep, and six brand new en-suite luxury cabins sleeping a total of 12.

All the events and catering at Cairns Farm Estate will be managed exclusively by Hickory. The Edinburgh-based company has a growing reputation in Scotland for exceling across a range of services including catering, wedding planning, event management and venue management.



Alongside its exclusive responsibility for Cairns Farm Estate and Eskmills Venue in Musselburgh, Hickory works with a portfolio of more than 30 unique venues around Scotland, including the Assembly Rooms in Edinburgh, Mount Stuart on the Isle on Bute, Newhall House in Midlothian and Gilmerton House in East Lothian.

In addition to weddings, Cairns Farm Estate will host a range of events such as private parties, corporate away days and charity events. It will also operate as a destination for self-catering short breaks.

Caroline Hamilton said: “This has been an incredible journey for our family; from having the initial idea, to teaming up with Hickory in 2017 then battling on through the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, it’s almost hard to believe that we will soon to be hosting our first wedding in May.

“It’s been a real labour of love, with each member of the family adding their unique skill and personality throughout the planning and the build. We’ve also worked with friends and local crafts men and women, so there’s been a real sense of community and care that’s gone into the project.

“The idea was driven by the modernisation of our agricultural industry and the need for diversification to create a secure future for the family and the estate. It was crucial that the venue would reflect its roots as a sheep shed and sit naturally in the environment and so it maintains the beauty and integrity of the land and landscape. When I look at the finished venue now, I’m incredibly proud of what we’ve achieved and can’t wait to share it with our guests.”

Brian Galbraith, managing director of Hickory, added: “Cairns Farm Estate is absolutely spectacular. With its stunning setting, on-site accommodation and its amazing conversion from a country barn into a stylish and flexible modern event space, it’s already attracting huge interest for weddings and events. It’s been a pleasure to team up with the Hamilton family and be part of the journey. With the first wedding just around the corner, and many more booked in, we can’t wait to get started.”

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