

# SOMETHING'S *gotta* GIVE



Photo: wonderfulandstrange.co.uk

**National Mining Museum Scotland**

"The Lady Victoria Colliery, once a working coal mine, is now home to the **National Mining Museum Scotland**, an independent charity with a nationally recognised collection," says the venue's Quonya Huff. [nationalminingmuseum.com](http://nationalminingmuseum.com)



Photo: imacimages.com

Weddings are wasteful, selfish events, right? Not even close, finds *Rosie Patrick*, as she meets some of the many venues doing good with your big day dosh

**S**ay what you like about millennials, but you can't deny we're a #woke generation. Park the avocado-on-toast chat: we're taking to the streets to demand action on climate change, to protest Brexit, and to make our voices heard on abortion bans; we're fighting for gender equality; we're valuing experiences over possessions. And if we're this passionate about every other aspect of our lives, you can bet we're planning on marrying with similar intent.

It's true that weddings have earned themselves a bit of a reputation for over-indulgence and being an environmentalist's nightmare (who doesn't over-order on the evening buffet or send out a sea of paper invites?), but what if tying the knot could actually help the world rather than damaging it? Give back with Scotland's most altruistic venues.

## HISTORY REWRITTEN

There's no getting away from it: venues stand to profit greatly from hosting our nuptials. But are the benefits always purely financial? Well, fall for a crumbling castle or stately home, for instance, and you might find yourselves playing a crucial role in keeping the country's architectural heritage alive.

"Duntarvie Castle is a restoration project in West Lothian," the venue's Tricia Sutherland tells us. "Every penny received from events held here goes back into renovating the historic site - Duntarvie was often visited by Robert the Bruce and then later by Mary Queen of Scots and by James VI. Thanks to every wedding we host, we can rebuild a staircase, repoint an original window or repair a fireplace. You become part of the story."

The National Trust for Scotland operates under

an equally worthwhile remit. “We’re an independent charity that loves and cares for some of our country’s most beautiful landscapes and historic places on behalf of the people of Scotland,” explains the Trust’s Derrick Lothian. “Since 1931, we’ve protected magnificent buildings, fascinating art collections and wild habitats across the nation. We look after houses, battlefields, castles, gardens, coastlines, islands, mountain ranges and the surrounding communities, plants and animals depending on them. It’s an honour to preserve our cultural heritage for future generations.” Many of the NTS’s properties can be hired for weddings, including the likes of the Hermitage, Pollok House and Falkland Palace, pictured below.

attractions,” Derrick says. “Between 2018 and 2023, we will be investing £60 million, enhancing our visitors’ experience.”

## SWEET CHARITY

Another type of venue to set your sights on is one with a philanthropic angle. Do your research, and you might be surprised what’s out there – and what they’re doing with your hard-earned cash.

“The Trades Hall is part of a registered charity whose key objective is to support people in Glasgow who are in need of financial and social aid,” says Laura Cook at the venue. “This, along with our educational initiatives to



VENUES *advice*



Photo: clairetenant.com

*National Trust for Scotland*

“The desire to give something back has become stronger in this commercial age, and our venues offer a unique, authentic and unforgettable experience,” says Derrick Lothian at the National Trust for Scotland.



[From top] The Hermitage’s riverside location makes it home to myriad forms of wildlife; Pollok House, the ancestral home of the Stirling Maxwell family in Glasgow, houses an impressive collection of Spanish art, on public display thanks to the National Trust’s efforts; the Oak Lawn at Falkland Palace (known for its ‘cathedral’ of trees) can host large ceremonies and the walled garden can hold up to 250 guests in a marquee. [nts.org.uk](https://nts.org.uk)

We’ve all lamented that romantic castle or manor lying in ruins because of a lack of funding – there’s no doubt the work these venues do is invaluable. Who’d have thought weddings would make it possible? “The reception we’ve received from the community has been amazing,” says Tricia. “Many of the locals played in the grounds as children and were sad to see Duntarvie deteriorate. The build has very much been a labour of love, but every stone, step and second has been worth it.”

And warm fuzzies aren’t the only thing you’re gaining by doing your good deed. “The Trust offers couples a complimentary one-year membership to its newlyweds, which gives them access to a wide range of

motivate, inspire and reward those of all ages, is our number-one driving force.

“The Trades Hall is the home of the Trades House of Glasgow and the 14 Incorporated Crafts, established in 1605 to provide a structure, rules and rights for those who shared a trade. Today, the House and Crafts are charities, reaching out to those in need, making donations in excess of £800,000 a year to deserving causes.”

While you’re dancing under the opulent baroque chandeliers in the Grand Hall, the lives of other people are being improved as a result. “We regularly hear about children living in a chaotic home situation who are directly helped through the Trades House Kinship Care Initiative, or about a struggling

parent getting a hand with paying for their child’s bed from the Trades House Drapers Fund,” Laura says. “It is really gratifying for us and our clients to know that such a positive difference is being made through their weddings. Couples know that rather than shareholders or business owners making a profit, it’s individuals or organisations who prosper instead.”

As much as you want to help in any way you can, the inescapable fact remains that you have a budget to stick to. Does the Trades Hall’s worthwhile work impact on the hire price? “The Hall’s charitable endeavours do not affect the cost of weddings,” Laura clarifies. “We carefully monitor the market to ensure we’re competitive and also →

“WITH EVERY WEDDING WE HOST, WE ARE ABLE TO REBUILD A STAIRCASE, REPOINT AN ORIGINAL WINDOW OR REPAIR A FIREPLACE. YOU BECOME PART OF THE STORY”

that our facilities are top notch. Recently, we undertook a major refurbishment of the building, installing state-of-the-art air conditioning and a cutting-edge lighting system that highlights the many outstanding structural features of the interior. As the second-oldest building in Glasgow still used for its original purpose, we want to continue sharing this stunning space with as many people as we can.”

NO PLANET B

We recycle, carry our shopping in canvas totes and watch our weekly meat intake – so why wouldn’t we expect our wedding venue to be eco-conscious? Breathe easy: in 2019, there’s no shortage of places that have made sustainable and environmentally friendly practices a priority. Just ask East Lothian’s Wedderburn Castle.

“We’re very excited about the installation of our new ground-source heating system,” Cat Macdonald-Home reveals. “Heating a large historic property like Wedderburn always took a lot of oil, but this new system means we no longer need to burn fossil fuels. We were particularly keen not to have a biomass boiler as this would have involved burning wood. Instead, our guilt-free system takes energy from a ground loop and converts it into heat, warming the entire castle and providing hot water for the 12 bedrooms and bathrooms. You can feel the warmth as soon as you walk in the door!”

That’s not all. “When we have open fires burning at the castle to add to the atmosphere at winter weddings, all of the firewood comes from fallen trees on the estate,” Cat adds. “And if an especially large tree falls, rather than burn it, we send it to be made into furniture.”

Remember our talk of restoration? Although there’s no end to the cultural benefits of programmes like Duntarvie’s, if you’re not cautious, the environment could pay the price for repairing and maintaining such old structures. How to prevent it being damaged in the process? “We try to reuse as much original stone and materials as possible,” says Tricia. “And where required, we work with local refuse companies to

make sure that any waste is responsibly disposed of.”

It’s a similar picture at Wedderburn. “With any restoration projects taking place around the castle and barns, we are very conscious of recycling existing wood and stone,” Cat explains. “When we renovated the barns, we gathered up stone from around the estate to fix the tumbledown wall in the courtyard garden, and salvaged timber to update the beams on the roof and



Trades Hall of Glasgow

“Wedding parties have exclusive use of the whole building, with all six rooms at their disposal,” says Laura Cook at the Trades Hall. “This gives couples huge flexibility.” tradeshall glasgow.co.uk



countertops. Occasionally, if it hasn’t been possible to do this, we use local, natural materials where we can, as this is what would have been done when the castle was initially constructed in the 18th century.”

Glasgow’s Trades Hall also takes a holistic approach to its carbon footprint. “We’re always trying to lessen our impact on the environment,” says Laura. “This includes everything from seemingly small gestures, such as maximising recycling and reducing food waste, through to reducing energy consumption (we installed a new heating system last year). We are very lucky

to have a city-centre location with fantastic public transport links close by, so if couples can, they should encourage their guests to use these instead of driving.”

If food is your focus (and if not, you’ve clearly never spent a typical day in the TTKS office), there are ways and means to keep your celebration green. Ask the chef: where do the ingredients come from? How are they being cooked? Who’s preparing them? Knowledge is power.

“Our contract caterers are a local company with a massive amount of experience in supplying the best possible food with minimal impact on the environment,” says Laura of the Trades Hall. “The team uses locally sourced ingredients where possible and members all live in Glasgow or nearby. They also organise chef school programmes at the City of Glasgow College, training up future talent and providing jobs for the community. We are always delighted when our couples request a menu with ingredients that are in season as it reduces food miles.”

“We’re finding more and more couples are conscious of what they eat, whether that be for ecological or dietary reasons, and, as such, we allow them to bring in their own choice of caterer to Duntarvie,” adds Tricia. “We’ve seen it all, from vegan dishes to organic cocktails, and welcome any

supplier who will aid the couple in achieving a carbon-neutral wedding.”

OVER TO YOU

And that’s the thing – the responsibility of giving back doesn’t just lie solely at the venue’s door. It’s up to you two to do your bit, wherever you can. Not sure where to start? The experts have plenty of ideas.

“We often get asked to run a charity bar, with all proceeds going to local organisations or causes close to the couple’s heart,” Tricia suggests.

Maybe you’d like to contribute over and

# SEE IF *I care*

Charitable, educational, historical, eco-friendly – Scotland’s venues have admirable principles

• **National Mining Museum**

**Scotland** This registered Scottish charity and five-star visitor attraction boasts one of the finest surviving examples of a Victorian colliery in Europe and a collection of over 17,000 photographs, covering the history of the Scottish collieries and their communities. Nuptials are typically held in the revamped Power House, and guests can take a guided tour of the pithead with an ex-miner.

[nationalminingmuseum.com](http://nationalminingmuseum.com)

• **The Ecology Centre**

New to the wedding scene, the Ecology Centre in Kinghorn, Fife, is an inclusive, community-led charity, providing a haven for wildlife and plants. The venue has an award-winning education programme, offers volunteering and training opportunities and welcomes over 5,000 visitors a year. What could be more deserving of your support? (By the way, the lochside setting is as lush as you might imagine.)

[www.theecologycentre.org](http://www.theecologycentre.org)

• **Carlowrie Castle**

The West Lothian venue is so conscientious, we couldn't hope to mention everything it does here. The castle's owner, Andrew Marshall, founded RESTART in 2009, a charity that supports the homeless and long-term unemployed; the chef responsibly sources ingredients, often from the back garden; and the venue is also involved in a patronage scheme for emerging artists. [carlowriecastle.co.uk](http://carlowriecastle.co.uk)

• **The National Piping Centre**

Given that the Glasgow venue and former Italianate church serves as a national and international centre of excellence for bagpipe music, the advantages of marrying here are glaringly obvious – not only will you score a breathtaking setting, but the piper, if you'll excuse the pun, is already in the bag. It's also a very worthwhile organisation: pour your money into a big day at the centre, and the funds will go back into preserving our precious musical heritage.

[www.thepipingcentre.co.uk](http://www.thepipingcentre.co.uk)

• **New Lanark Mill Hotel** If you grew up in Scotland, chances are you went on a school trip to New Lanark at some point. And with good reason: the 18th-century mill village is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and integral part of our manufacturing history. By tying the knot at the site's resident hotel, you're allowing the team to carry on with their crucial maintenance work and develop future exhibitions.

[www.newlanarkhotel.co.uk](http://www.newlanarkhotel.co.uk)

• **Cromarty Arts Trust** A scenic spot isn't all this Highland venue has going for it. The centre, based in a renovated stables, promotes and embraces the arts, education and the conservation of buildings of architectural importance via its ambitious annual events programme. Oh, and there's a unicorn in the grounds. Magic!

[www.cromartyartstrust.org.uk](http://www.cromartyartstrust.org.uk)



[Above and right] "We charge a one-off price, all of which goes back into supporting the project," says **Duntarvie Castle's** Tricia Sutherland. "Any additional costs, such as the hiring of extra marquees, are directly pocketed by the suppliers. This makes the site very affordable for large weddings." [duntarviecastle.com](http://duntarviecastle.com)



above the cost of your big day? "You could make a donation to the National Trust," Derrick says, "or encourage guests to do so."

Laura echoes this: "You can donate to one of the Trades House charity appeals or become involved in its work by joining a Craft or becoming a Friend, or even ask that guests make contributions to a chosen charity instead of giving gifts. Another positive gesture that also helps raise awareness of a charity is giving pin favours to loved ones. It's easy but effective."

Think too about what exactly is happening on your big day. Are you considering putting on a dazzling firework display? "We don't allow airborne fireworks as the cast-offs can disturb the wildlife," Tricia warns. There's also the small matter of confetti – the paper variety won't decompose if tossed outside.

All it takes is a little more attention to detail. Your day has a ripple effect. Wouldn't it be better to share the love? ♥



[Below and right] "When we rebuilt the estate's cottages, we gave them floorboards fashioned from fallen trees," says **Wedderburn Castle's** Cat Macdonald-Home. "There has always been a huge emphasis on sustainability here." [www.wedderburn-castle.co.uk](http://www.wedderburn-castle.co.uk)

