

Wedded Bliss Among the Ruins
By Mary E. Hart

(Published by Bermuda Weddings Magazine in 2016)

When two people are fated to meet, not even living on different continents can keep them apart. Joanne Bellm and Andrew Buxton-Forman first met in fourth grade, after Andrew immigrated from South Africa to Canada with his family.

“Andrew and I started dating in high school and have been best friends ever since,” recalls Joanne.

During their relationship, Joanne and Andrew spent quite a bit of time in Bermuda starting in 2011. On one truly memorable visit to the island, Andrew proposed.

“In May of 2014, we were on vacation in St. George’s with my family,” Joanne says. “During this trip, Andrew proposed on the dock of the vacation rental where we were all staying. It was a surprise to me, although the rest of my family knew. They were all quite relieved after Andrew proposed and I said yes, so the celebration and relaxing part of our vacation could start.”

The location of the proposal as well as many other happy memories from over the years, Bermuda was an easy choice for Joanne and Andrew’s wedding location. Planning started almost immediately after Andrew’s proposal.

“As soon as Andrew proposed, my sister, Jennifer, went online to look for wedding venues in Bermuda,” Joanne says. “We were struck by the great photos of The Unfinished Church at St. George’s in Bermuda. The next day, my whole family went with Andrew and I to see the venue and once we did, there was no looking back. We didn’t even look at any other venues because The Unfinished Church was the one.”

The Unfinished Church is entirely outdoors as it doesn’t have a ceiling, floor, or windows. The venue’s open-air elegance has made it a popular wedding venue. For the reception, they chose The Beach House at The St. George’s Club.

“During the trip when Andrew proposed, we all had dinner at The Beach House on the trip,” Joanne says. “We also met the chef during another dinner at Griffin’s Bistro at The St. George’s Club. The food and service were excellent and the location was so picturesque.”

Once Joanne and Andrew decided on the wedding and reception location, they turned to a professional wedding planner for help.

“My biggest tip is to hire a wedding planner as they have the best local knowledge of all of the vendors and they take the stress out of trying to communicate and coordinate with various companies,” Joanne says. “Kathleen Dodwell from Event Solutions was our planner and she was my angel on the day of our wedding. During our planning, she was so quick at getting back to emails and making sure our wedding day went off smoothly. I seriously could not have gotten through the whole planning process without her.”

Kathleen also helped organize transportation throughout Joanne and Andrew’s wedding day.

“To transport our guests from our ceremony to our reception, Kathleen organized for two red trolley trains,” Joanne says. “That was just magical and such a unique touch for our wedding. She also organized transportation with The St. George's Club to get everyone back to town at the end of the night.”

“The Beach House at The St. George's Club was so very easy to deal with and very professional throughout our planning,” Joanne continues. “Along with our wedding planner, they also took all the stress out of our day and the staff that worked on our wedding day were so friendly to our guests. Overall, it was such an enjoyable experience.”

Thanks to the help of their wedding planner and the team at The Beach House, Joanne and Andrew didn't have to worry about a thing on their wedding day; instead, they enjoyed every moment from start to finish, and they'll be able to remember those moments forever thanks to their photographer.

“Becky Spencer of Becky Spencer Photography was excellent,” Joanne says. “She was just very professional and was one of those photographers who takes pictures without anyone even realizing it. The quality of our photos were outstanding and the variety of the photos she took was great. The best photos in my eyes were the ones of the expressions on our faces during some of the speeches given during our reception. They are priceless. Becky really captured how we were feeling at every moment of our wedding day.”

Once the speeches were over it was time to let loose and celebrate the couple's union.

“The moment I liked best about our reception was the party,” Joanne says. “Dancing under the stars with our families and closest friends was so amazing. Plus, we had given the DJ a list of songs to play and he did such an outstanding job of blending them together. He played the right songs at the right time, which kept our dance floor packed the whole night.”

When looking back on her wedding day, Joanne's favorite moment comes easily to mind.

“I married my best friend,” Joanne says. “That was the best moment hands down.”