



The Old Church

Ali Deegan and Ken Keane were charmed by the elegance of Napier's five-star venue The Old Church on March 12, 2009

Ken and I moved to Napier from Ireland in 2007 and fell in love with the area. It probably would have been easier to return home for our wedding, but Hawke's Bay has so many beautiful locations to choose from that we didn't want to marry anywhere else.

We exchanged vows in the garden of The Old Church Villa, next to its restaurant, The Old Church Restaurant and Bar. Walking into the restaurant was definitely a 'wow' moment! It's opulent and glamorous in every way. We didn't need to add a thing – even floral arrangements weren't necessary. The staff had a range of tablecloths and chairs for us to choose from, and provided all of the centrepiece candles and place cards.

Our antique theme started with my 1930s engagement ring and influenced my hairstyle, makeup and dress. I purchased my silk satin gown with lace back and sleeves from Gowns on Gloucester. I didn't want a bouquet – I carried three white orchid stems instead. The guys wore black suits with white shirts, and instead of ties, the groomsmen wore greenstone pendants Ken had given them.

The early autumn colours looked great in our photos. To protect their Irish skin from the Hawke's Bay sun, my bridesmaids carried red parasols instead of bouquets. Their red and black dresses matched the season, as did my mum's dress and Dad's tie.

We served canapés and a three-course sit-down meal accompanied by local wine. A friend made my favourite dessert – strawberry jelly and vanilla ice-cream – into a wedding cake. Everyone laughed when we tried to cut it as it was frozen solid – we had to come back to it later in the evening!

Marrying on a Thursday in March made it easy for us to secure vendors and services, and it meant we were able to share the whole weekend with our guests. Most of our 25 Irish guests were still here for Saint Patrick's Day, so it really was a time of celebration.

