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local NEWS



■ The winning moment as Tanya Howett received the news that she and fiancé Ian Aitken had won their dream wedding.

Photos: SU ANDERSON



■ Tanya and Ian have been together for ten years, having met up by chance eight years after parting their ways while at school

Childhood sweethearts Tanya and Ian scoop wedding prize

Charlotte Smith-Jarvis

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Tears of joy from the happy bride-to-be greeted the announcement of the winners of the *East Anglian Daily Times* Win a Wedding competition.

Tanya Howett and Ian Aitken, both 31, from Braintree, joined four other couples at a Champagne reception at Seckford Hall, picking out the winning envelope from the five laid in front of them.

Tanya, an accounts manager and Ian, a meter technician for Anglian Water, were overcome with emotion as they discovered they had taken the prize, with the bride bursting into tears.

"We're just absolutely gobsmacked, really speechless, and very, very excited," Tanya said.

"We've been waiting 10 years for a wedding and to get this is absolutely fantastic. I cannot put into words how we feel. When I told my mother we were finalists for the wedding at Seckford she was overwhelmed as she knows how lovely the venue is.

"I just can't wait to pick out my dress, or for the ceremony."

The prize won by Tanya and Ian includes a ceremony and reception plus first night accommodation at Seckford Hall Hotel, photography by Andy and Suzy Abbott, flowers by Myrtle and Mint, a cake from Amelie's Kitchen, a dress from The Suffolk Bridal Company, invitations from A Vintage Wedding, suit hire from Coes, hair by Saxby's Hair Salon, make-up by Flawless Image and a disco from Flame Entertainments.



■ Tanya and Ian with the Win a Wedding prize suppliers, from left to right, Anne Musolino from Seckford Hall, Kevin Bernhardt from The Suffolk Bridal Co., Andy and Suzy Abbott from Abbott Photography, Charlotte Smith-Jarvis from the East Anglian Daily Times, and Jason Saxby from Saxbys hair salon

All four runners-up were offered free venue hire at Seckford Hall.

To pick Tanya and Ian as finalists, a panel of eight judges sifted through entries and put the couple into the 'yes' pile after being touched by their romantic story.

Tanya explained: "We met at school but we unexpectedly parted ways. Eight years later I moved back to my hometown of Braintree and went out with a girlfriend for a drink. Somebody sent drinks across the bar to us and it was Ian. That was it. We've been together ever since and that was 10 years ago."

Tanya and Ian, who have two daughters, aged five and 10, plan to tie the knot in July this year.

Pure Weddings editor and EADT

features writer Charlotte Smith-Jarvis, who awarded the prize said: "I am delighted that Tanya and Ian have won. Any one of our finalists would have been a worthy winner, but it's wonderful that this couple, who met each other again after all those years, had fate on their side once more at our ceremony.

"They are so in love and this wedding will allow them to celebrate their relationship with all their friends and family.

"I would like to thank each of the suppliers involved with the competition, particularly Seckford Hall Hotel, and we look forward to publishing the couple's wedding photos in the autumn edition of *Pure Weddings*."

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