

What to ask when choosing a site

Soon after the engagement is announced, another important task begins – the search for the perfect location for the wedding and reception. Many sites are booked at least a year in advance, so it's best to begin early. The most desirable locations will usually be reserved first. If the location of your choice is booked Saturdays, check the possibility of having your reception on Friday evening or Sunday afternoon. Many couples prefer to have the ceremony and reception at the same place.

This lessens the time spent traveling and reduces the chance that some guests may get lost or not attend. Guests enjoy watching the couple get their wedding photos taken. This also provides a relaxing atmosphere for guests to chat together and sample hors d'oeuvres and beverages. You should try to visit as many location sites as time allows before making your final choice. Prepare a list of questions ahead of time so you get all the information you need during your visit.

Visit your chosen facility when it is set up for a wedding. Get all details in writing, and check the expiration date of the cost estimates. Take into account additional items or time charges that could be added to your bill. Be sure to ask the facility how many weddings it books at one time. If two receptions are taking place at one time, it may take away from your special event. You may also find people wandering into the wrong reception. Consider how much service the staff at the site will

offer you. Be sure to ask this question when considering a site for the reception. Will a personal coordinator from the staff be present during the event to be sure things are running smoothly? How should you contact the staff if they are in another reception or down the hallway in the ballroom? Be sure to ask lots of questions concerning the availability of assistance from the staff. Once you have taken care of these details, one of the hardest parts of planning the wedding will be finished.

Creative ideas make reception memorable

A little extra creativity can turn your wedding reception into the party of the century. Appoint yourself creative director of your day, and brainstorm about details and delicate touches to make the occasion more memorable. Some traditions you might consider:

- An honoured French custom is to drink the wedding toast from the *coupe de marriage*, a large double handled goblet or bowl.
- Amend a Chinese tradi-

tion, and pass out fortune cookies at the reception.

- In military weddings, it is customary for the couple to pass under the framed arch of swords. Why not have a personal arch that's geared to your occupation? In England, pitchforks are used for farmers and nightsticks for constables.
- At German receptions, guests are given a large red and blue checkered napkin in which they are invited to take home leftovers.



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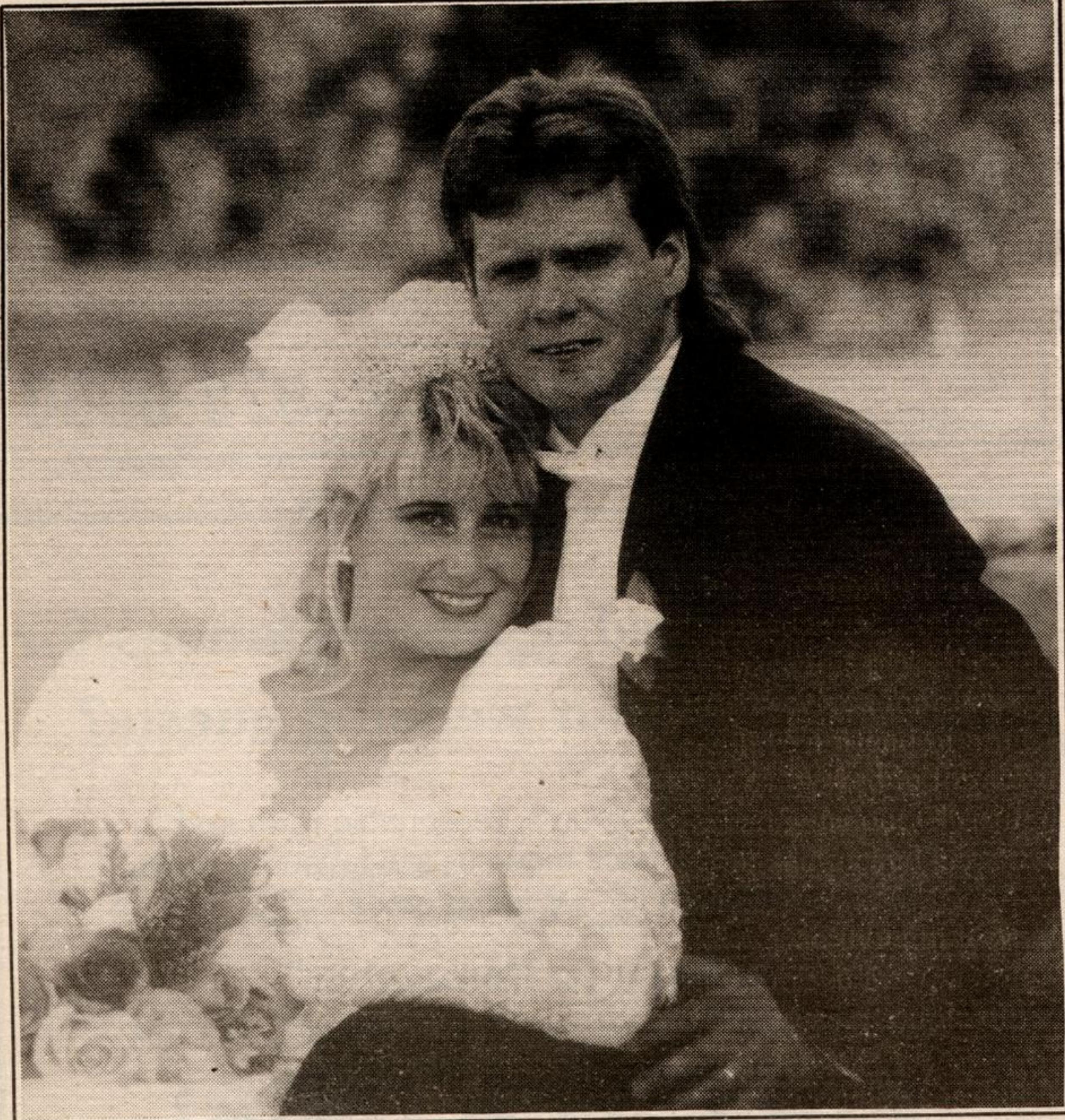
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