

WEDDING *Day*

AUTUMN/WINTER 2012

DREAM DRESSES

Choose your perfect look

MAKE-UP

Fresh-faced and beautiful

REAL LIFE WEDDINGS

Our Kent couples' stories

VA VA GROOM

Here come the boys



REAL-LIFE *weddings*

King & Queen

MAJESTIC BACKDROP

Claire Davies and Paul Drake tied the knot at Leeds Castle, a beautiful setting for photographs

Stunning moated Leeds Castle was the glamorous location for the wedding of Claire Davies and Paul Drake. Wedding Day reports. >





FORGET ME NOT
Claire's lacy dress



UNDER THE PORTCULLIS
Claire and Paul, in his regal tartan



FAIRFAX HALL
A stately venue

With a colour theme of teal and lemon plus a special appearance of the groom's family tartan, the wedding of one Isle of Sheppey couple was always going to be a colourful day.

Add to that a relaxed and simple itinerary – with the whole occasion spent at sumptuous Leeds Castle, near Maidstone – and the day quickly became one to remember forever. Claire Davies, 29, who is pastoral manager at the Isle of Sheppey Academy and her bridesmaids; daughter Mia, aged nine and groom's sister Hayley Piper, 28, prepared for the day at one of the castle's courtyard bedrooms.

The bridesmaids wore teal and the bride's dress was by Forget Me Not Designs.

Her earrings were a present from the groom, her diamante bracelet a last-minute buy from Boots for £12.

The bride arrived for the ceremony at the castle's historic Gatehouse, in a Morris Minor convertible.

Groom Paul Drake, 31, was wearing a kilt in the family tartan, Maclean of Duart, made especially for him. With him were two best men and an usher, all with teal cravats to match the bridesmaids' dresses. The page boy was the couple's nephew Owen Piper, aged two.

Claire said: "We chose teal as a main colour, with accents of lemon to make the palette more spring-like as this was an early May wedding. I had always liked teal and it fitted well with the colours in Paul's tartan."

After a wedding breakfast in the Gatehouse, with an acoustic set by singer Adam Chandler and guitarist Simon J Pinto, the party moved to the castle's Fairfax Hall, where more musicians arrived to create a five-piece band.

Claire said: "I can honestly say that I do not think there is a more beautiful venue than Leeds Castle. Even in the evening, it looked stunning as we overlooked it all lit up from the Fairfax Hall."

"It was comforting to be able to hold the entire event in one venue. We did not need to worry about travelling from one location to another and it even has the added bonus of accommodation on site so we didn't even need to travel once the evening had finished."

"The day went better than we had even imagined. It was great to have the photographer, Darryl Curcher, who knew exactly what we wanted from our pictures and took the time to meet us at the venue and talk through what we wanted and also add his suggestions."

"The wedding breakfast was intimate, with only 30 close family and friends, which meant it was relaxed and slightly informal and having the live acoustic duo gave the whole meal a great atmosphere. The food was exceptional and guests are still commenting on how outstanding it was."



Clockwise from top left: Chief bridesmaid Hayley Piper and her son, page boy Owen Piper, two; Hayley and Claire's daughter Mia; teal on the tiered wedding cake; the bride arrives in a Morris Minor; Claire's shoes were Tiger by Belle Bridal Shoes from Bridal Gowns at Jodi Ltd in Maidstone



"I would say to anyone planning a wedding that the most important thing to remember is that it's your day. It's easy to get caught up trying to satisfy everyone else that you forget what you wanted."

"Unfortunately, you cannot always please everyone, whether it be because of the guest list, menu, seating plan ... as long as you're happy that's what really counts. Also make

the most of wedding fayres, they are a great place to get ideas and meet suppliers. You often find they offer lower prices as they are competing against other providers."

The couple spent the wedding night in a courtyard room at the castle, had a short honeymoon to the Kensington Hotel in London and are planning a longer holiday with daughter Mia.

CHECKLIST

- The bride's car, a Morris Minor convertible, was from Kent-based Karen's Cars, see www.karencars.co.uk
- Bride's dress was the Anguilla from The Paradise Collection, designed by Forget Me Not Designs, from Marianne Jessica in Bromley, see www.mariannejessica.co.uk
- Bride's shoes were Tiger by Belle Bridal Shoes and were purchased at Bridal Gowns at Jodi Ltd, Maidstone.
- Groom's kilt was made to order, from the Canterbury branch of Slaters.
- The teal bridesmaid dresses and the teal cravats were purchased from Perfection Bridal and Menswear in Maidstone
- Musical entertainment was by singer Adam Chandler, www.adamchandler.co.uk

ON THE MENU

Starter: Smoked duck salad, with candied kumquat and micro cress

Main course: Fillet of beef with duck liver parfait, dauphinoise potatoes, savoy cabbage and asparagus

Dessert: Traditional English dessert plate; a mini trio of gypsy tart, treacle tart and sherry trifle

