

Many Brides-to-be have been left distraught after discovering the hotel which was to hold their wedding reception has closed down – without them being told.

One couple, Fiona Womack and Raymond Francis, from Highfields in Debden, were due to get married a week on Saturday. But the closure of the Whitehall Hotel in Broxted has thrown their plans into turmoil – leaving Mr Francis, who turned 40 on Tuesday, to spend his milestone birthday looking for an alternative venue. Miss Womack, 33, who works as a cashier at Barclays Bank in Saffron Walden, told the Reporter: “My fiancé only found out the hotel had closed last Friday after he spoke to another couple who were due to get married this weekend. I thought he was joking when he told me but when I realised he wouldn’t joke about something like that I just broke down. I spent the whole weekend crying.

“We had been planning our big day for over 12 months. Your wedding is something you dream about and have to wait long enough for it as it is – to find out two weeks before that we couldn’t have the reception where we wanted it was devastating.” The couple had paid the hotel £2,500 and were due to transfer the final instalment of £3,600 last week before hearing of the closure.

Miss Womack said they were extremely disappointed the hotel had not informed them it was closing down and that no apology had been forthcoming. The company which owns the Whitehall Hotel, Albermarle Hotels (No.2) Limited went into liquidation on Tuesday – leaving dozens of couples unsure whether they will get their money back.



Louise Forster, 30, and her fiancé Matt Goulée, 23, who live in Mill End, Thaxted, have also

been caught up in the chaos. Miss Forster said she went to the hotel and paid about £3,000 just under a week before the closure became apparent – and none of the staff mentioned any problems. Although she managed to stop the cheque and get the money returned to the couple's savings account, it is still uncertain whether they will see anything of the £500 deposit paid last November.

"We've got 100 guests coming to the reception in July and they have all had to be told it's got to be at a different venue," Miss Forster explained. "Many of them had booked rooms at the hotel so they may have lost money as well, which is very embarrassing for us. It has just been an absolute nightmare."

Another bride-to-be, Nancy Prior, 31, who lives in Hay Close, in Balsham, with her partner Kevin Henry, 30, was left devastated by the news too. They are due to marry in Hadstock in three weeks' time and had paid about £1,600 to the Whitehall Hotel. "We have been on the phone to the solicitors trying to find out if we can get our money back," Miss Prior told the Reporter.

"We only found out the hotel had closed through Facebook and I think it is terrible that no-one has been told what is going on."

A spokesman from Kitsons Solicitors, the firm acting on behalf of Albermarle Hotels (No.2) Limited, confirmed that Bryan Lucas of CMB Partners had been appointed as the liquidator on Tuesday (May 9). CMB Partners declined to comment further.