

## 1992 Dunmow Flich Trials, A Maiden's Memories, by Wendy-Jo Marchant



*Wendy-Jo Marchant is the first maiden in the foreground of the picture.*

It was an honour to be selected as one of the six maidens of the jury and take part in my home town's traditional ceremony.

The Flich Procession took place before each Trial; it began outside The Saracen's Head on the High Street and travelled along the Stortford Road to Talberds Ley. We rode in a horse drawn cart and 11 years later I rode in a horse drawn carriage to my own wedding vows in the same town!

Crowds lined the streets and there was a wonderful community spirit.

The 'Trial' was held in a marquee on Talberds Ley; it was beautifully decorated with flowers and the 'Flich of Bacon' was displayed on a special 'frame' with garlands of flowers surrounding it.

The counsel for the bacon was the Agony Aunt Claire Rayner; a larger-than-life character who brought great humour to the proceedings.

All the couples who claim the flich could be successful but only those who the judge and jury believe to be truly happily married for "twelvemonth and a day" win. Of the three couples, known as 'Claimants', we found two successful: Reginald William James and Madeleine Helen Beard and, Brian John and Olive Margaret Crosby.

After each of the trials (from memory there were two in 1992) there was a procession where the successful couples were carried, shoulder high, in the 'Flich Chair' (an ancient carved oak double ceremonial chair) by eight men dressed as farm workers in smock clothes, followed by another four similarly dressed men carrying the Flich of Bacon, the counsel, Judge, Jury, Vicar of St Mary's Church and Town Crier (for information, the unsuccessful couple, who walked behind, were awarded a gammon)

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The oath-taking ceremony took place in front of the judge, jury and assembled public outside the Old Town Hall in the Market Place. It was very interesting to be part of this particular ceremony as in 1992 a new precedent was set, usually the successful claimants take an oath kneeling on pointed stones but that year one of the claimants was disabled and could not kneel, instead he took his oath holding the pointed stones in his hands.

The names of the 1992 Flich Trial Jurors were:

Christina Biddlecombe  
Diana Foster (now Dee Coe)  
Catherine Jones  
Wendy-Jo Marchant (now Wendy-Jo Atter)  
Michelle Overy (now Michelle Hunt, she was the forewoman of the Jury and on the cart is the one sitting to my right - between me and Dee Coe)  
Helen Schorah

Ben Abbott  
Simon Abbott (these were the sons of Nicholas Abbott, Nicholas had a role in the event, possibly counsel?)  
Mark Banham  
James Faithful  
Stephen Molloy  
Iain Willsher

The parents of one of the maidens in 1992, Stephen and Pat Schorah, successfully 'claimed the bacon' twenty years later (on Saturday 14 July 2012).



*James Faithful and Wendy-Jo Marchant in the foreground of the picture.*