

The Inquirer

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Lymm - a step back in time

THE first thing most visitors to Lymm see is the historic Cross and Stocks which dominate the centre of this ancient village.

The village is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 which, considering its size, is surprising, but then so is the fact that Lymm was a centre for early Christianity in this part of Cheshire, with historians believing the cross was erected as a memorial to the coming of Christianity to the area.

Historians also tell us that the stocks are believed to date from the early 16th century and were last used in 1840 when one William Astbury, and another unidentified man, were punished by being locked in them for 12 hours.

cockfighting

The space around the stocks and cross were also a hive of activity for local residents who gathered for cockfighting, (the last being recorded in 1821), and bull-baiting, with ox-roasting also taking place to celebrate events of national importance such as royal jubilees or coronations.

Rushbearing also took place in Lymm on the second Monday in August each year when rushes were taken to the parish church and laid on the floor for 12 months. Rushbearing also marked the beginning of Lymm's annual holiday week with Morris dancers adding to the merriment by dancing through the village.

The poor population of Lymm were

**A look back at one of Cheshire's most historic villages
by Peter Riley**

treated with contempt by the local landowners and in 1903 the daughter of one local landowner published a book titled *'Fifty Years Ago'*, in which she noted: "In buying Beechwood (one of three major halls in the region) my father became the owner of perhaps as depraved and neglected a population, half agricultural half manufacturing, as could be found in England. It had the unenviable notoriety of being the last place in England where bull-baiting and cockfighting was carried on. From all accounts the penal colonies were largely

populated with the poachers and bad characters whom Mr. Trafford, my father's co-magistrate, used to deport wholesale from the neighbourhood."

In the Victorian era the two main industries in Lymm were fustian cutting which took place in the top room of cottages during winter, and agriculture the rest of the year.

hordes

Lymm still retains its village atmosphere and each year still attracts hordes of visitors from throughout the British Isles and overseas - with its stocks and ancient cross still the centre of attraction - as they have been for centuries.



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