

# Bringing the forgotten back to life in village

David Morgan discovers how a lost piece of morris dancing history was returned to the streets of Lymm



Morris dancers, including Geoff at the centre, at this year's May Queen festival. If you are interested in learning more about the Lymm Dance call Geoff on 812725



Lymm Dancers from 1923 which Geoff Bibby managed to track down almost 50 years later



A painting of the Lymm Dance and Rushbearing from 1840 is held in York



The team during a breather at the Lymm May Queen event in 2015

**L**YMM has an ancient tradition that has almost been lost over the centuries.

The Lymm Dance dates back hundreds of years and was last performed in 1923 before being revived in 1980 by morris dancer Geoff Bibby. It is now danced once a year at the village's Rushbearing in August.

But Geoff is keen to raise awareness and interest in the rare dance, particularly in the Lymm community, fearing it could fall out of use again.

The 67-year-old learnt the Lymm Dance in the 1970s after tracking down some of the original dancers from 1923. Most of them were 11 at the time, led by Ned Rowles.

Geoff said: "I dug out a couple of

photos and locals identified who they were and I traced most of them.

"It was a shot in the dark really as otherwise the dance would have been forgotten.

"I just wanted to heighten people's awareness that there is this rare dance in the Lymm area.

"I also want to get people in Lymm more interested in preserving it for the future as it's their dance."

The Lymm Dance is an eight-man dance and is performed by the Lymm Morris Men, made up of dancers from the Thelwall Morris Men and groups.

Geoff added: "It's in the tradition of north west dancing but the structure of it is different and it involves these great big lengths of cloth.

"George Ormerod's History of

Cheshire was published between 1816 and 1819 and he talked about the Lymm Dance and the Rushbearing as being ancient in those times so we're talking something that goes back a long way."

Geoff has also discovered the earliest known illustration of the Lymm Dance at the Rushbearing in an 1840 painting which has somehow ended up at a folk museum in York.

He said: "Nobody knows how it got there and it isn't on display - it's just in their archives.

"So it would be nice to get it on show in Warrington even if it's on loan. I've contacted Warrington Museum."

Geoff has been a morris dancer since 1973 and his interest came from traditional singing and going to folk clubs.



The Lymm Dance at the Rushbearing festival this year which is held each August