

The Lymm Dance – can you help keep it alive at Rushbearing?

THE Lymm Dance, a Morris dance unique to Lymm and sometimes called the Old Dance, was known to have been performed at least 200 years ago and will take centre stage at the Rushbearing Festival which returns on Sunday, August 8 at the Lower dam at 4pm.

It was first danced as part of the Lymm Rushbearing, when a cart of rushes was processed through the village to the church where the rushes were strewn on the floor.

In the late 19th and early 20th Century it was also performed at May Queen festivals by teams from both Lymm and Oughtrington.

However, the tradition gradually died out in part due to the First World War and the Old Dance began to be replaced by Carnival Morris performed by large troupes of young girls.

In the 1970s the Thelwall Morris Men were formed. One of the Thelwall dancers began to delve into the history of the old Lymm Dance.

Although optimistic, Geoff Bibby thought it unlikely that anyone alive would have a memory of the dance. Fortunately, the dance had been taught in the 1920s by the last leader of the team, Ned Rowles, to a boys' team from Statham.

Geoff managed to trace Dick Rowles, Ned's son, who provided him with a photograph of the boys' team and put names to the boys.

Amazingly, most of the team were still alive and living in or near Lymm, so Geoff was able to reconstruct the dance from their memories.

The Lymm Dance has a rich history which has been collated by Geoff (see lymm-morris.org.uk).

The Lymm Rushbearing was revived in 1972 by Chris Limb and since the 1980s the resurrected Lymm Dance has been performed regularly at the Rushbearing as well as at the Lymm May Queen and more recently on the Lymm Dickensian Day.

It has also been performed at Morris events across the country and has even been taken abroad. The Lymm Morris has a style and look which is quite different to other Morris dances. As such it is a unique tradition that the community in and around Lymm are rightly proud of.

However, the team who have performed it since the 1980s are now ageing themselves and it is time to pass the dance on to a new, younger and preferably local team. They hope to keep performing as long as they can, but if you or your group think you may be able to contribute to keeping the Old Dance alive, please watch them (hopefully) at: Lymm Rushbearing on Sun 8 August, Lymm May Queen on Sat 25 September and Lymm Dickensian on Sat 11 December

Or contact lymm-morris@hotmail.com for more details.



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