

RUSHBEARING.—The venerable institution known as Lymm Rushbearing may be regarded as a reunion by which old associations, old friendships were revived, old memories awakened and renewed, and an institution by which the sad tendency, that centrifugal tendency of the present day to break away from the centre of old ties and claims, would be counteracted. The rushbearing was fixed on the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, and the rushes were carried to the Parish Church each August previous to that festival.

Ormerod says :—“A great and peculiar feature of the festival (Lymm Wakes) is the Rushbearing which is still in use in many parts of the county. This ceremony (as at use in Lymm in 1817) consists of carrying the church rushes intended to be strewed on the clay floor under the benches, which are piled neatly up in a cart, and a person constantly attends to pare the edges with a hay knife if disordered in progress. The cart and the horse, which are carefully selected from the various village teams, and decorated with flowers and ribands, and on the rushes sit persons holding garlands, intended to ornament the church for the ensuing year. These are composed of hoops slung round a pole, connected by cross strings, which are concealed by artificial flowers, paper, and tinsel. One is placed in the rector's, or principal chancel, and others in the subordinate ones belonging to the several manor houses of the parish. They are frequently ornamented by young ladies of the respective mansions. The cart, so loaded, goes round to the neighbouring hamlets preceded by male and female Morris Dancers, who perform a peculiar dance at each house, and are attended by a man in female attire (something between a fool and a Maid Marian), who jingles a bell to a

tune, and holds out a large wooden ladle for money. As night approaches the cart, with its attendants, returns to the town where the church is situated, and the garlands are fixed, whilst a peal is rung on the bells, and a concourse of village revellers is attracted to view the spectacle.”

Two troupes of Morris Dancers paraded the village each Rushbearing Saturday until a few years ago, the Lymm contingent led by a well-known Lymm fustian cutter, Thomas Brooks, better known as “Dossey” Brooks, and the Oughtrington dancers by Tom Holt of Sandy Lane, both now dead, but of late years only the Oughtrington troupe has turned out at the annual wakes.

Up to about 1881 a rushcart paraded the streets each Rushbearing, drawn by grey horses, from which fact is derived the name still applied to natives of Lymm, viz., “A Lymm Grey,” generally denoting that the person so called belongs to a good old Lymm family. One often hears the saying, “Lymm Greys and Statham Blacks,” and probably the latter part of the saying arose on account of the Statham Rushcart in days of old being drawn by black horses. Another authority says :—“In former days different townships were called after the peculiar breed of their fighting cocks; by which afterwards, and to this day, the inhabitants are designated, although the origin of the name is forgotten by, or unknown to, nine hundred and ninety nine out of a thousand inhabitants. Thus we have ‘Lymm Greys,’ ‘Peover Pecks.’” People still living in Lymm can remember the rushes being taken to the parish church each August to help to keep the worshippers' feet warm during the winter months, but gradually the custom died out.