

How a 200-year old dance came to be

■ Hunt is on to find new people aiming to keep the tradition alive for future

By Gareth Dunning
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A MORRIS dance unique to Lymm which has been performed for more than 200 years returns next month.

The Lymm Dance, a Morris dance unique to Lymm and sometimes called the Old Dance, was 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



As it was when it started

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). Most notable is a painting, believed

to be from 1840, which has somehow made its way to the York Folk-Life Museum, but the Lymm Heritage Centre has a copy.

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 Lymm Dickensian Day.

However, the team who have per-

formed 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.

If you or your group think you may be able to contribute to keeping the Old Dance alive, please see them at: Lymm Rushbearing on August 8, Lymm May Queen on September 25 or Lymm Dickensian on December 11

Or contact lymm-morris@hotmail.com.