

Lymm



a guide to the village



LYMM
PARISH COUNCIL



Lymm is situated in North Cheshire between Liverpool and Manchester. To the north it is bounded by the Manchester Ship Canal and to the south it merges into the Cheshire countryside. It forms part of the Borough of Warrington. It is well connected with good access to motorways, airports and railway stations.

The village has its origins in Anglo-Saxon times and the name Lymm probably comes from the Old English 'noise-word', 'hlimme' suggested by the rush of its stream. Its population today is around 12500.

This guide tells you some of its history and describes some of the main items of interest. There is a Heritage Trail with interpretation boards along its route. Each year a number of very popular events and festivals take place, run by volunteers, which attract many visitors to the village.

There is a wide variety of cafes, restaurants and pubs catering for all tastes. During your stay in Lymm, make sure you visit our shops too.

According to the Sunday Times, Lymm is one of the top 101 places in the country in which to live.

For more information, visit these websites:

www.lymm.net

www.lymmvillage.co.uk

www.lymmparishcouncil.gov.uk

www.warrington-worldwide.co.uk/categories/Community/Lymm+Life

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A brief history of the village

7th to 11th Centuries – the origins

Prior to settlers arriving, the area now known as Lymm was empty forest and swamp. Families of Anglo-Saxons arrived in the seventh century and settled on the slopes south of the River Mersey. By the time of Edward the Confessor, there were two small manors, Lymm and Oughtrington.

The first church was probably built in the tenth century and Lymm became part of the Bucklow 100 and the Shire of Cheshire. During the next century, the manors were laid waste by William the Conqueror. By the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086, Lymm had been granted to Norman knights and it was inhabited by a few peasants who worked the land. Its church was one of only three in North Cheshire.

12th to 15th Centuries – early growth

At the beginning of this period, the forest was gradually cleared and fields made. There was a corn mill and a fish weir. The Parish Church was rebuilt in the fourteenth century at a time when Adam or his son Gilbert was Lord of Lymm. The feudal system was decaying and was being replaced by tenant farming.

The de Lymm family owned much of the village and lived in Lymm Hall up to 1342 when the property passed to the Domvilles by marriage. Much of the land to the south west was owned by the Booth family.

During the fifteenth century, the Cross dominated the landscape although its origins are unclear.

16th to 17th Century – new buildings

St Mary's Church acquired a tower in 1521 and the Grammar School was founded in 1597 by Sir George Warburton and W Domville. It was located next to the Church.

Sandstone blocks cut from quarries along the stream were used as footings for black and white farmhouses. A new Hall was built besides the old one.

By this time most of the land in the Parish had been enclosed field by field.

18th Century – industrialisation begins

The Lymm section of the Bridgewater Canal was opened in 1777. The Canal runs from Leigh to Runcorn and was a stimulant to the rise of local industries. New sandstone quarries were opened up and there were tanneries. Bricks and tiles were made of local clay. A slitting mill was an important feature of the economy for most of the century. This was situated below Danebank and was worked by a stream, Bradley Brook.

19th Century – population and prosperity growth

In 1824 a turnpike was built to by-pass the difficult route through the village centre so helping the mills. Today this is part of the A56. The opportunity was taken to build a dam. This was created by flooding the marsh near the Church to create a natural looking lake. This was later landscaped by Lord Leverhulme who built a concrete bridge at the southern end. He planted trees and improved the lakeside footpath to the south of the Dam known as ‘the bong’s’ which is dialect for ‘banks’. He also planned a major housing scheme for the area but this was never built.

The railway opened in 1853. This made Lymm more prosperous because people could look for employment in Warrington and Manchester and it enabled local businessmen from the towns to have homes in Lymm.

Fustian cloth cutting expanded until it employed most of the non-agricultural population.

In 1894 the Manchester Ship Canal was opened. This created well-drained meadows to the north of Lymm whereas the land flooded previously. The River Mersey which had flowed north of Whitbarrow Road was filled in and a golf course was laid down on spoil excavated from the Canal bed.

20th to 21st Century – the present

In the early part of the twentieth century, there was a salt-working industry in Heatley. ‘Lymm Pure Salt’ on red and white railway carriages became known nationally. Gold leaf from Lymm is present on the high altar at St Paul’s Cathedral.

The first car appeared in 1902 and thirty years later widespread ownership led to Lymm’s growth as a commuter area. However building was kept in check by planning restrictions and the Green Belt. Recently new estates have been built following successful appeals by developers against local planning refusals.

Features of Lymm

The Ship Canal

A hundred years after the opening of the Bridgewater Canal in 1777, Parliament approved in 1885 a proposal to build a new Ship Canal. Work began two years later and Lord Egerton cut the first sod. The Canal was finally opened by Queen Victoria in 1894. It was arguably the most outstanding engineering achievement of the Victorian era.



At the peak of its construction, 16,000 labourers were employed together with specialist workers. Construction work was hit by numerous difficulties and between 1888 and 1893 there were a thousand major incidents.

The driving force behind the construction of the canal was the demand for large sea-going ships to reach the heart of industrial Lancashire. This brought a good deal of prosperity to the region but its use peaked in the 1950s. Currently there are plans to once again increase traffic on the Canal.

Bridgewater Canal

The Canal was started in 1759 by the third Duke of Bridgewater. It is the first 'true' canal to be built in the country. The first section was constructed to transport coal from the Duke's mines in Worsley into the city of Manchester. The engineers were James Brindley and John Gilbert. It starts at the intersection with the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Worsley and finishes at Runcorn where it links in to the Mersey.



The Cross and Stocks

The age and function of the Cross are unclear. The original Cross on the spot may date from the fourteenth century with alterations carried out in the seventeenth century when a Cross was placed on top of steps cut out of natural sandstone. The present structure pre-dates 1897 when minor works were carried out to mark the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria.



The site may have been a meeting place for villagers, the location of a small market or a base for itinerant preachers. Legend has it that John Wesley once preached here.

The present day stocks are a replica of the original ones used for the punishment of 'misdemeanours such as drunken or over-boisterous behaviour'.

Slitting Mill

The earliest reference to the Slitting Mill in Slitten Gorge is 1720. Powered by water wheels, wrought iron bars were rolled out into thin sheets of metal. Its original purpose was the production of nails. This gave way to the production of metal bands for barrels made nearby at Thelwall. They were transported there by boat on the River Mersey. In 1800 the mill was taken over by the textile industry. The site was excavated and reclaimed in the early 1970s and forms part of a linear park.



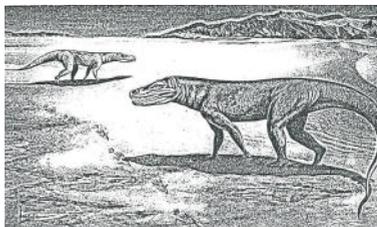
Fustian Cottages

Fustian is rough cotton cloth known as ‘the poor man’s velvet’ and was used for making working clothes. Bales were brought to Lymm by barge and distributed to cutters who worked in their own homes. Examples of fustian houses or workshops can still be seen in the three-storey cottages in Church Road and Woodlands Avenue.



Prehistoric Lymm

There is a slab of sandstone in Lymm which bears the footprint of an animal that lived here 200 million years ago. The rock dates from the Triassic Period and was left by a creature that looked like a crocodile and was probably about eight to ten feet long. The footprint resembles the print of a human hand and was formed by the animal walking on mud. The sun dried out the mud causing cracks and then another layer of mud was deposited on top. The sandstone was found in 1842 on a low ridge to the south-east of Lymm. It is hoped it will be put on public display soon.



Lymm’s churches

The present St Mary’s Church by Lymm Dam is the fourth one on the site. A Saxon Church is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. A Norman Church replaced the original building and a third church was probably built in the first half of the fourteenth century. The present church was extensively rebuilt in 1851 and the replacement tower dates from 1887.

St Peter’s Church at Oughtrington was built in 1871. Originally part of St Mary’s Parish, it became a separate Parish in 1881.

Lymm Hall

The Domville family lived in Lymm Hall for five hundred years. At one time the estate consisted of 564 acres but has now been reduced to 10 acres. Within the grounds are a pair of cockpits and an old icehouse. The Hall is privately owned and is not open to the public.



Lymm's Twin Town

Lymm has been twinned with Meung-sur-Loire in France since 1968. Meung has a population of about 5000 and is situated on the northern bank of the River Loire. Meung's eleventh century church and château mean that the two places date from about the same time. Its inhabitants are called Magdunois which comes from the old Celtic name of Magdunum. Engineering is now the most important industry but Meung used to be dominated by mills for producing flour.



The emphasis of the twinning relationship is on individual contacts and exchanges rather than on official visits. There are also exchanges involving the schools.

Local government

Lymm has had a Council for over a hundred years. The first meeting of Lymm Urban District Council was held in January 1895 and one of its main functions was the care of the poor and needy. Representatives came from each of the four wards of Booths Hill, Heatley, Lymm and Statham. These were formed, as they still are today, by the intersection of the Bridgewater Canal with Bradley Brook / the Lower Dam / Slitten Brook.



During the first eighty years there were various proposals to link Lymm with parts of Cheshire but nothing ever came of them. There was also a proposal after the Second World War for Lymm to greatly increase its population by acting as an overspill for Manchester.

On 1 April 1974 as part of local government reorganisation, Lymm lost its independence when it became part of the Borough of Warrington. It still retains a Parish Council but its powers are limited.

Tim Lythgoe's ghost

There are said to be numerous ghosts in Lymm. Here is the story of one of them.

Tim Lythgoe lived in the Barsbank Lane area of Lymm in the 1890s. He was called the Singing Bargeman because he used to sing as he pulled the barges along the Bridgewater Canal at Statham. He was a sailor and like many sailors was a heavy drinker. When he burst into song at the Star Inn, bottles and glasses shook.



Once the landlord told him to stop because he was losing too many customers. Tim was upset by this and sang a song so loudly that all the bottles and glasses fell off the shelves. He then left and made his way along the Canal but fell in and drowned. Tradition has it that bottles and glasses rattle and shake at the Star Inn on the anniversary of his death.

(Attributed to Wally Barnes)

Images of Lymm



Festivals and Events

- ◆ **Easter Monday – Duck Race from the Upper Dam to the Lower Dam**
- ◆ **Second Saturday in June – May Queen Festival**
- ◆ **End of June – eleven day Lymm Festival**
- ◆ **August – Rushbearing Parade**
- ◆ **Early September - Round Table Beer Festival**
- ◆ **Remembrance Sunday in November – Parade to Church**
- ◆ **Early November – Round Table Bonfire and Fireworks Display**
- ◆ **Second Saturday in December – Dickensian Day**
- ◆ **Christmas Eve – Carols round The Cross**



May Queen

The May Queen Festival takes place on the second Saturday in June! It originated in 1889 when the Lymm and Oughtrington Band of Hope first held a festival in the village. Its origins are uncertain but they are probably similar to the Walking



Days of Lancashire. It lapsed in 1937 but was revived by a group of enthusiasts in 1947.

Lymm Festival

Lymm Festival started in 1999 and puts on over fifty events during the summer at the end of June. It also puts on other events during the winter months. The scope includes classical music, folk and blues, art, dance, drama, poetry, photography, historic transport, open gardens, sport, food festival and local history walks.



Rushbearing Parade

The Rushbearing Ceremony in August is part of an ancient tradition in which rushes are symbolically carried into church. In medieval times they served both as a carpet and as insulation and were renewed annually. The tradition was revived in 1970 after a lapse of eighty-one years. This ceremony survives in very few places these days.



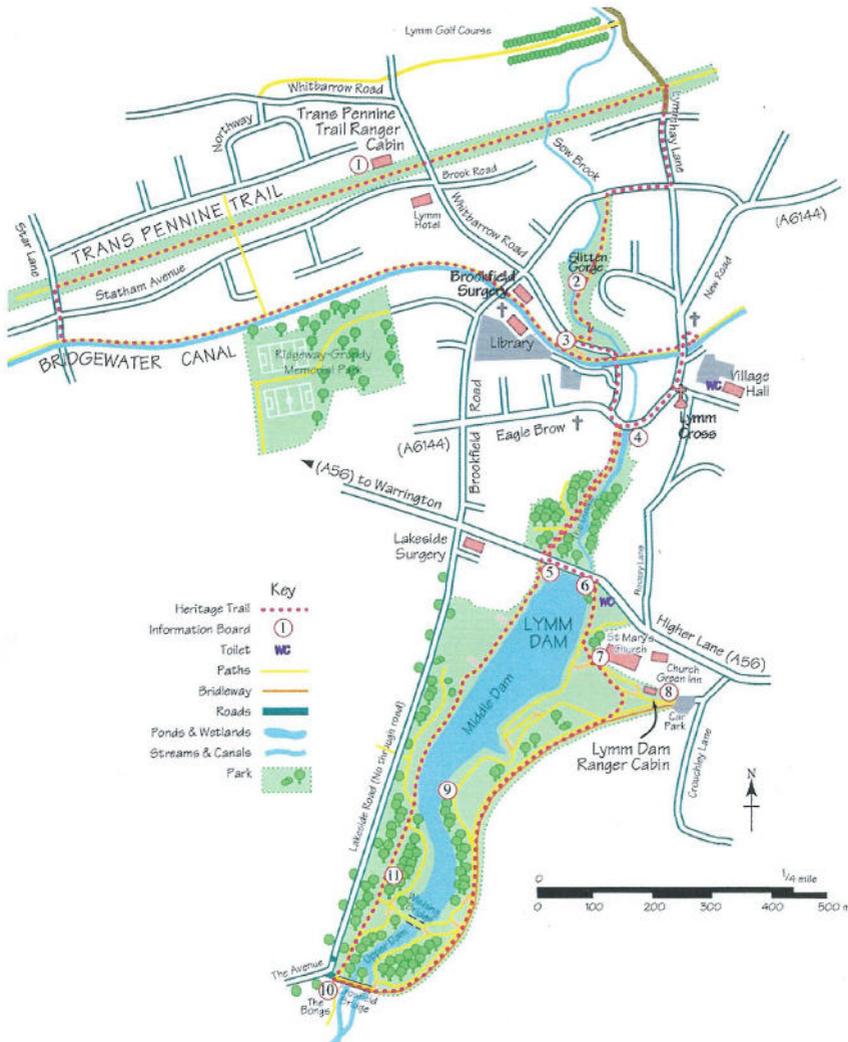
Originally the best horses in the Parish were chosen to pull the decorated carts which wended their way from house-to-house to church preceded by Morris Dancers. The horses from Lymm were always grey. This is the origin of the phrase 'Lymm Greys' which is used to describe the members of old Lymm families.

Dickensian Day

Dickensian Day on the second Saturday in December is much more recent and only started in 1986. Shopkeepers and villagers dress up in Victorian costume and the centre of the village is closed off to traffic. There is a procession and street entertainment.



Lymm Heritage Trail



The Lymm Heritage Trail is a self-guided trail exploring the built and natural heritage of the village. The full route is three and a half miles long. It is based on the north / south valley which runs through the village centre and two east / west routes – the Bridgewater Canal and the Trans Pennine Trail.

The Trans Pennine Trail is on the line of the former Warrington to Altrincham railway and runs from coast to coast. It links in with trails to the west coast of Ireland and across Europe to Istanbul and St Petersburg.