

Flora Day

The most famous Furry Dance takes place in Helston, Cornwall, UK. It is one of the oldest British customs still practiced today. However the modern dance holds few similarities with the original, having been revived long after the event had died out. The dance is very well attended every year and people travel from all over the world to see it, Helston town band play all the music for the dances.

The Furry Dance takes place every year on 8 May (or the Saturday before if 8 May falls on a Sunday or Monday). In Helston, 8 May, the Feast of St. Michael, is called Flora Day, and the word probably derives from Cornish: fer, "fair, feast". It is a celebration of the passing of winter and the arrival of spring. The schedule of the day is: morning dance at 7 a.m., the first performance of the Hal-an-Tow pageant at 8:30 a.m. with the last completed by 9:30 a.m., children's dance traditionally at 10 a.m. though in recent years the numbers and logistics have seen this advanced to 9.50 a.m. and in 2016 to 9.40 a.m., midday dance at noon, and evening dance at 5 p.m.. Of these, the midday dance is perhaps the best known: it was traditionally the dance of the gentry in the town, and today the men wear top hats and tails while the women dance in their finest frocks.

Traditionally, the dancers wear Lily of the Valley, which is Helston's symbolic flower. The gentlemen wear it on the left, with the flowers pointing upwards, and the ladies wear it upside down on the right. Lily of the Valley is worn on Flora Day by dancers, bandsmen, Flora Day stewards and by those who are "Helston-born".