

The Feast of St Hygienus is marked with a dance and a pint at moorland pub

Morris Men honour the dancing doctor

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THERE was another memorable celebration held at the Old Inn, St Breward on Saturday, when the Trigg Morris Men raised a glass or two to toast their erstwhile member and mentor Dr Christopher Penton.

Trigg Morris Men were formed in the Bodmin area in 1971 and little did the group realise that as a newcomer to the area in 1972, Christopher Penton would prove to be such an inspiration to them, leaving a lasting legacy with his knowledge of Morris dancing and the steps he passed on to them.

When Dr Penton came to work at St Lawrence's Hospital in Bodmin prior to his retiring, his input to the newly formed Trigg Morris Men was invaluable.

An interesting man of many and varied talents, Dr Penton had studied at Cambridge University in the early 1930s and it was during this time that he began dancing the Morris with the University Team, known as the Travelling Morris.

While at Cambridge he spent time at Berlin University, learning German and Russian. During the Second World War he became a psychology adviser to the British Army.

While he was working at a hospital near St Albans, he continued his dance interest with a local Morris Team and eventually, in 1952, Dr Penton moved to Claygate in Surrey, Thames Valley Morris Men, with whom he stayed until his move to Bodmin.

Significantly, a party of 15 members from the Thames Valley Morris Men joined the Trigg team for the first time last Saturday to support the local dancers in celebration of Christopher Penton and his contribution to the art.

One of the reasons Dr Penton moved to Cornwall was his friendship with the well known potter Michael Cardew, who had a pottery at Wenfordbridge. Dr Penton was also an acquaintance of Bernard Leach of St Ives, both potters being his contemporaries at Cambridge.

Dr Penton's birthday was January 11 and each year he would throw a party, which he named the Feast of St Hygienus. After his death in 1987, at the age of 77, the Trigg Morris Men decided to keep that Feast in his memory.

Hence the tradition of cutting a birthday cake in Christopher Penton's honour, continues to this day. Last Saturday was no exception, when the great man's old hat was passed around his present team mates to remember him with a song, dance or poem on his



● CELEBRATION: Trigg Morris Men in full swing at the Old Inn, St Breward, on Saturday

Feast Day. Trigg Morris Men resplendent in full costume, with fond memories of their absent friend, are accustomed to giving a dance display outside the Old Inn at St Breward.

Like Cornishmen before them, the Trigg Morris Men have travelled far and wide. During 2002 they enjoyed an active year, visiting Brittany in early June to dance for Bodmin's twin town, Le Relecq-Kerhoun.

Later in 2003, they are planning to travel to Georgia in the USA to dance for the family and friends of one of their members, Bob Mann, whose father was a captain in the American Air Force, but who lost touch after the invasion in 1944.

Bob eventually traced his family a few years ago, although sadly his father had already passed away. However, to his delight, he discovered he had a half sister.

One thing is for sure, the splendid spectacle of the Trigg Morris Men's dancing will certainly be matched by some equally splendid Southern Hospitality in the USA.

