

YS – Yvette Staelens interviewing Maddy Prior at Halsway Manor on 1st December 2014.

Maddy you have some history with Halsway Manor tell me about it.

MP – Well it was sort of on one occasion but it was back in the sixties with Tim Hart and I remember that we came here but I can't for the life remember what but Tony Foxworthy seems to ring a bell. I do seem to think it was something to do with Tony that we came here but I don't know if we were doing a course or if we just did concert. I suspect we might have done a concert. But I remember the gardens, that comes back, but the main thing I remember was that we went to the local pub. The Carew Arms is it? And those days we would stay with people as we travelled round the world. We would stay in people's houses to do the gigs and they would throw us out at 8 o'clock in the morning when they went off to work and so we would spend all day kind of going round. We were very keen on grave yards. We used to look at graveyards quite a lot and do brass rubbings and all that kind of thing and we would go round museums and what have your but of course come lunch time we would go to the pub and we would go and play darts and that was kind of what we did and what I remember about being here at Halsway was that the Carew Arms we had a game of darts and for the first time I threw this dart and it hit the floor and Tim said "what are you doing" I said I don't know and I threw another dart and it went way up in the air and I could not hit the dart board at all and I've never been able to throw a dart since. Apparently this is a thing that happens to dart players. There is something about letting go of the dart and I suddenly couldn't let go of the dart at the right time and it was quite interesting to know that professional dart players can get this as well. Suddenly lose it! So that is my memory really and that stuck in my mind alongside of that strange event.

YS – When would that be roughly, Maddy?

MP – Well, it has got to be 65 to 66 I would say.

YS – So really early on your career.

MP – Yes really early on, yes. It was when Tim and I were travelling round the folk clubs which we did for about four years before Steeleye began and I had done a year before that on my own with the banjo so yeah so I travelled for about a year with a banjo and I remember my decision to sort of do this was that the only other work I have really done is a week in a Wimpy Bar and I got £10 for doing a week in a Wimpy Bar and I got £8 for doing a gig on my own with the banjo and I thought I'll do this.(laughter) and that was it.

YS – and how did you come to Halsway as it were? What was the reason?

MP – I don't know as I was saying I can't remember. I know that we came but I've no idea why, as I say, I don't know if it was a concert, or we were doing a course. I can't imagine that though. But it was all very small time and low key in those days. The folk world was in the back of pubs those were the gigs we were doing. Down here we often played in churches as well, funnily enough. I remember in Barnstaple we played in churches I did a clog dance on

somebody's grave (laughter) so there are those kind of memories it was very day to day. Tim and I were in a Morris Traveller – a half-timbered car as it were and that was the life for about four years until we joined the Steeleye which came out of the blue as it were.

YS – Terrific, thank you very much. It is just a short memory of Halsway and you been back this time.

MP – This is the first time I've been back since I don't know why we've not been here since. It seems, I thought it was sort of something that was there because obviously I went into the sort of pop world in essence and moved out of the folk world for awhile although I still did traditional music but I sort of lost touch with it a bit. So I assume it was kind of in that world and that I had lost it and then I thought it had just disappeared and then I saw it starting to appear on the back of the magazine. The EFDSS magazine. Oh it's still going it's got lots of courses on.

YS – and you do lots of courses, as well, I know.

MP – We do, we do up in the North.

YS – Where do you live?

MP – I live in North Cumbria so it is right under the Fells. Again it is the same sort of thing as here that there are people that come regularly and come every year, some two or three times a year and they just like the whole communal. The Barn Stoners who are their own little group now and it's been very good thing to do and people really enjoy it. They love it and what I think that it is three days because we do weekends. It is three days when you get right out of your life and you are totally overtaken with something that you love doing. But you know most people don't get the chance to sing for three days and they love it. They love it and its great fun and we eat very well.

YS – I think that is the essence of Halsway actually it is that time away.

MP – Yes, yes. It's just that you kind of immerse yourself suddenly and then when you come back your world is kind of slightly different because you have suddenly gone (sigh) right. But it is not too long. Because if it is too long then you have got to take time out of your life. Yes this is just a short break. They are very valuable to people.

YS – Yes, so this is one last question Maddie, just thinking about Halsway, the future, your work, do you think there will be any more connections with Halsway?

MP – Well I am hoping so. They are asking me to be an Ambassador which will be really good and it would be lovely to have links and kind of and I've got to get my FDSS gold badge as well which sort of links us all together. It is a world that's kind of personal and involved and we are all passionate about this stuff, this English Folk thing in all its different forms and it is so I hope it will be very beneficial for all of us. I think it will be great.

