

**Mary Reece interviewing Anne Horsey for Telling Tales on the ninth of December 2014.**

**Mary:** Anne, I understand you've got a longstanding association with Halsway Manor; um, I'm wondering if you could tell me, you know, about that – how it began?

**Anne:** Uh, well it really began with my parents, and it was, uh, I don't know, quite a few months before it all happened that mum told my husband and myself that it was in the air that Halsway was going to be bought as a Folk Centre and they were very much involved.

**Mary:** Gosh, and when was this?

**Anne:** Uh...must be... 1963? Maybe? Can't remember exactly...round about then.

**Mary:** And your parents and...how did they get involved then?

**Anne:** Er... I'd better say straight away my parents were May and Bob Bradbury. (Right) Right, they were debenture holders and when it all started I understand that Mum chaired the committee that sorted out all the furnishings and everything for the Manor and Dad chaired the committee that sorted out the programme. (Ah, right) So right from the start they were very much involved. Mum was making curtains and all sorts of things while Dad was here a lot of the time doing odd jobs because he was a very practical sort of person.

**Mary:** And it was at that point that it was to become a Folk Centre?

**Anne:** Right, yes

**Mary:** And were they folk singers or what was their interest in folk music?

**Anne:** Oh, uh, Mum was definitely a folk singer but they were both folk dancers...Dad was a Morris dancer...yes...uh...they weren't actually involved with Folk at all, I think, until I was eleven or it was on Coronation Day when they saw the Morris Men and that really sparked their enthusiasm (yeah) and they got involved from there. (oh, amazing). Uh, we, uh, lived in Lichfield actually, until 1955 and there wasn't much folk involvement then, but then we moved to Somerset in 1955 and they started a folk dance group in Burnham and that's when I got more involved. (I see ) Yes.

**Mary:** So what was your involvement when you got involved? Were you dancing or singing or...?

**Anne:** Dancing, yes, yes. But when they started the property that we were living in was a big house which they converted, and they had two big rooms downstairs on the front, er, on to the street, and they'd knocked them into one big room and we

started off with the dances in that room, with records. (Goodness me.)Yes. So a quick dance, change the record or play it again and then on again.Right.

**Mary:** And then when they saw the Manor was up for sale...did they...

**Anne:** That happened quite a long time afterwards.. (oh, afterwards, right) you're looking at eight or ten, well, at least eight years later.

**Mary:** So they'd developed a folk group of interest in Burnham...

**Anne:** In Burnham, yes, but we used to go to dances all over the county, into Devon, some...into Dorset (really?) everywhere, oh yes, yes.

**Mary:** And where were your venues then...was it...?

**Anne:** Mostly church halls, school halls.

**Mary:** Not pubs then?

**Anne:** Ah, pubs for singing (laughter) and music definitely, and afterwards...because in the meantime Dad had joined the Mendip Morris Men and of course they did tours sometimes in the summer, just out dancing, but they did regular tours around, sometimes onto the Quantocks and what have you and Dad was very involved in those and invariably we ended up with the pub singing.. .(Yes) Wonderful.

**Mary:** Yes, well that goes with the Morris Men (laughter)

**Anne:** It does. Well not so much nowadays because of this music licence business, but...which is a shame but , uh...yes.

**Mary:** So when they started up at Halsway were you living still in Burnham or did you...?

**Anne:** No, by that time I was married and left home

**Mary:** Oh , right, right. But your parents, where were they?

**Anne:** They were living in Burnham ( yeah) Yes

**Mary:** So was there any residential, er, goings on at the Halsway?

**Anne:** Quite soon after it opened, yes, yes, very much so, yes.

**Mary:** And what were the things were going on in Halsway at the beginning?

**Anne:** There were lots of dances organised locally from what I can remember but also people were booking the Manor, the whole Manor, to bring groups here to do things, and sometimes that was during the week and sometimes it was weekends.

**Mary:** So similar to the kind of things that still go on, the events and singing and dancing.(Yes) Did they do courses then or...?

**Anne:** I think they did courses. Yes (Yes, they did?) Yes. And from what I can remember it wasn't all Folk either. There were...you know... it was a case of getting people in here.

**Mary:** Oh , that's interesting. (Hmmm) So, although it was a Folk Centre it was also a venue for...for other things...it would make most use of it. (Right yes, yes).Oh, well, it's fascinating. So... it's amazing to think it's gone on, you know, so long (yes, lovely, yes,) and that you're still carrying on the tradition that your parents started, getting involved, yeah. Right, so Anne, your parents were obviously involved in the management of Halsway (yes) from the start. What other things did they get involved in here?

**Anne:** Well, Dad started the Morris Men here. Bill Rutter asked him to start the Morris Men and he was only too delighted.

**Mary:** Was that an actual side? Crowcombe or Halsway or what?

**Anne:** Oh they called themselves the West Somerset...

**Mary:** Oh, right. It was the West Somerset, right.

**Anne:** Yes.

Mary And anything else?

**Anne:** And still going strong (yeah) and they came along to support as many of the activities and whatever that were going as they could...(ahumm) Open Days and concerts and all sorts...yes.

**Mary:** And any particular events that they held here that you remember particularly?  
**Anne:**Oh well, they took over the entire Manor and the Mews for their Golden Wedding.

**Mary:** Oh , how wonderful!

**Anne:** So we had a whole weekend here which was absolutely brilliant. (Gosh)Lovely party on the Saturday night and lots of Folk friends here. So... brilliant

**Mary:** Have you any particular favourites or any songs that your parents used to sing or any particular memories of...

**Anne:** Oh, Mum, was...she had an absolutely incredible memory for songs and you could give her a couple of words or a snatch of tune and she could come up with the entire piece. It was... I was always in awe of that ability, yes.(yeah) yes.

**Mary:** Any particular one that was her favourite that you can remember?

**Anne:** Uh, I know she was very fond of 'The Seeds of Love' (oh yes) that was the one that Cecil Sharp collected at Hambridge and we... we all went to the ceremony that they had at Hambridge when they unveiled the plaque there, (oh, lovely), the memory of that...that event..yes. (It's beautiful, I can understand that being a favourite.) But Mum would sing songs of all sorts, yes.

**Mary:** And of course, some of them were quite saucy too.

**Anne:** Oh yes, very much so. (laughter) Not when the children were around (laughter) And quite often they did pieces together as well, which was lovely (oh how lovely). They did a duet about a wedding at our eldest daughter's, or their eldest granddaughter's wedding, so that was a nice moment. (oh, very special) Yes, yes.(yeah) especially as Dad couldn't remember his words.(laughter) He needed a bit of help.(Laughter...yes, it happens to us all) It does, yes.

**Mary:** And did the dance...apart from Morris were there other folk dances?

**Anne:** Yes, oh yes, yes. They were everywhere, yes. And they went on the Folk holidays; I think Mum went first of all to Poland and Czechoslovakia and Dad went, and uh...and they had...they were in business when all this started so they couldn't go away together (ahuh) but when they gave up the business they were able to have holidays together and go and enjoy themselves and it was wonderful. (Yeah) Yes.

**Mary:** So Halsway, for your parents, was a major part of their...their life (Oh yes.) for.. for, many years

**Anne:** Yes, yes, both of them quite involved until they passed away, mmmm.

**Mary:** But it's a wonderful thing and you've still got the memories of that involvement and your still involved yourself so I think that's marvellous. Right, I'm going to... um... bring this interview to an end pretty soon (ok) but is there anything else that, you know, you think you'd like to share with us about your...your memories or your parents' involvement?

**Anne:** I remember Mum on a Folk Camp learnt how to do corn dollies. (oh, really?) She got really, really good at them and she had a whole stall at one of the Open Days selling her corn dollies. (oooh) Yes. That was to help raise funds for the Manor.

**Mary:** Oh, to help funds? I was going to say that was a nice little earner! (Laughter)

**Anne:** No, she did it all...

**Mary:** Dedicated to Halsway Manor!

**Anne:** Yes.

**Mary:** Oh, how lovely. Well, thank you very much Anne for sharing your memories with us about your parents and, you know, your memories of Halsway Manor. It's been lovely, Thank you.

**Anne:** Right, you're welcome.