

Maureen Knight interviews Helen Battilana on 28 February 2016

Content:

Helen is a dancer who regularly attends Halsway events, worked at the Manor in 1973 for a few weeks and also spent her honeymoon here!

Helen learned country dance at Manchester University in 1970. She went on to become the chair of the University Folk Dance Society in 72-73.

In 1973 she had a gap before she started her first job, and university friend Eileen Barratt (nee Crossley) (TT44) suggested she worked at Halsway Manor as a General Assistant. Helen remembers whitebait being on the menu, although she didn't know before then that it was little fish.

The staff ate in the room next to the kitchen and she occasionally joined in with evening dances.

Helen and Tony Battilana booked the only double bedded room at Halsway for their honeymoon in December 1973, only to find they had been set up with an "apple-pie bed"! They joined in some of the New Year House Party but mostly went walking.

Twenty five years later, Helen & her husband returned for a Folk Camp (staying in the Manor) and then attended all of Andrew Shaw's series of February dance weekends (around 14 of them).

Changes at Halsway include the purchase of the Mews and the development of en-suited rooms.

"It's magical when you come back... you drive up the narrow Halsway Lane, and it opens up and you see the glorious vision of Halsway Manor. It's a wonderful feeling to be coming for dancing with wonderful company."