

Graham and Eileen Barrett

Content: Eileen is a musician and Graham is a Morris dancer and caller, busy in the Somerset/ Devon area. They worked at Halsway Manor for a year in 1972, and later ran the Hobby Horse Club at Bradford-on-Tone.

Eileen started folk dancing at Manchester University in 1965.

Graham was a member of Jockey Morris Side at Redditch, and they met at Whitby Festival and married in 1972.

1972, Eileen saw an advert for live-in staff at Halsway in the EFDSS magazine and they were interviewed by manager, David Whewell.

First impressions : chaos and lots of washing up! Big dance for Midsummer

Francis Pook the gardener and keen dancer, lived in the thatched summer house known then as "Pooky's Hole" He took them to Carew Arms in his Austin Cambridge car for their first taste of cider.

1972 Worked as General Assistants and because cooks left, Eileen ended up cooking although she had not cooked anything more than student food before. She showed me her hand written notebook of cooking instructions, including how to boil large quantities of potatoes or eggs

Two vegans came to a two week early music course, so she learned savoury Hotpot and nut things!

Graham washed up, cleaned, peeled potatoes, and had afternoons off. Had to polish the long room floor and thought it too slippery to be safe for dancing. Cleaned wood panelling with linseed oil

David Whewell's sons Simon (15) and Timothy (11) helped with the washing up and it took all evening.

Met Gibby Swaine (TT19)

Eileen and Graham's bedroom was the small room off the current main office. Very tiny and no room to fall out of bed!

Staff ate in Rumpus Room (Marden Room) although when there were guests the Manager and his family ate on a dias at the side of the Long Room

Number of staff varied. Cynthia Allison all the time and young girls from the village or as holiday jobs, plus Mrs Wrexworthy.

60 guests maximum with some some staying at Carew Arms

(Mews belonged to 4 head teachers before it was bought by Halsway Manor)

A tame pheasant called Cocky came to breakfast at the kitchen door daily

Ghosts: 1 early in the morning the cook comes to light the fire

2 Eileen often felt she was being watched from the top of the stairs when putting out the coffee and also heard music from the minstrels gallery.

3. Graham had a cold scary feeling in the loft when the TV aerial was being fitted

Staff played music and danced when there were no guests. Knew all the 2-couple Playford dances like Parsons Farewell and Heartsease

By the time they joined Brute Force (originally Brian Heaton and 40 sets of spoons) everyone was learning instruments, and Eileen already played piano accordion, and Graham, boran

Pranks played on guests eg moved Ted (Paul's father TT77) Hutchinson's bed to the bathroom
Put Cecil Sharpe's head in a staff member's bed (like a 1970's film)

Changes:

Summer house at Tennis Court was falling apart even in 1972, although it was used as a bar for dances
people camped in the Watergarden – staff tried to make the ponds waterproof as a spare time project.

Random reminiscences:

Millie Chidley (secretary of hfdg) called for Halsway Folk Dance Club
The first dance that ever Graham called was Bridge of Athlone
Graham taught “double step” to the embryo Taunton Deane Morris
Bill Rutter was interesting and let you know what he thought. Notice his initials WAR.
Graham felt privileged to have interviewed Bill for “What's Afoot” (Devon Folk Magazine)

They showed me the book “ Introduction to Halsway” by managers, Bruce Green and Pepsi.
Graham and Eileen put some walks together along with Chris and Barbara West.

What does Halsway mean to you?

1972 was a very intensive year (first year of marriage too)
Halsway has always been there, we think of it with affection, and a good symbol, although we stopped going when our daughter took up Irish dance, and hope to go back more when Graham retires.