

Maureen Knight interviews Maggie Fletcher on 10 September 2015

Content: Maggie is a dancer and musician, who has come to Halsway regularly since the 1960s. She played the piano on the "Halsway Millennium Players" and "10 years on" CDs.

Maggie talked about:

1946 dance classes at Portsmouth for Morris/ Sword/country dance

1947 Exeter University / St Luke's (men's) Teacher Training College for country dance and square dance

1964 Brian Heaton (EFDSS SE area organiser) (TT23) organised a dance tour to Denmark clubs Maggie belonged to: Chertsey; "Curfew club" Saturday musicians and dancers sessions with open evening dances; Twyford day of dance

1966 formed "Blue Mountain Band*" with Richard (Rick) Smith (fiddle) from Rose & Thistle Band, Linda Bradshaw (Healey?) (double bass), David Green (accordion) specialised in American and Scottish dance styles, played for Barndances, festivals

1968 ran musicians workshop with caller Paddy O'Neils Anglo-Irish

In 70s Coral Charles brought dancers to Halsway from Guildford area, including Skip Ellicott bringing her young granddaughter Alison (accordion) other musicians were: Judith Cooper (double bass), Tom Lilley-Jones (fiddle, accordion & piano, perfect pitch- has tuned Manor's pianos)

Rick Smith got married and became busy with young family

1990 Christmas at Halsway with David Roberts (accordion)

1991 Christmas at Halsway with Alison Ellicott all dressed up for Pirate's Party, Captain's Ceilidh and Admirals Ball. Maggie's husband Bob very surprised to get his dance card completely signed up

1992 Christmas at Halsway Brian Stone extended until the New Year

changes at Halsway:

shared rooms with no en-suites

liked Room 11 with "the Bishops Hole" rumoured to have been slept in by Cardinal Wolsey.

beautiful full length window removed when the organ was taken out

Played "Table Music" for moving tables in long Room

Beautiful Wellingtonia cut down (now heather pimple)

gave Sundial which has been moved about

financial contributions to improve Halsway:

room 1 carpet because kept tripping over old one

en-suited rooms 15 & 16 to avoid falls down the stairs during the night

bulbs & roses for gardens (used to be in drive way but shaded out by trees) mentions David &

Eileen King = gardeners

oak sleepers for Golden Garden

carpet for office

“Millennium CD” made a tidy sum for Halsway also “PLUS ten”
musicians invited by Dave Brown
lots of frivolity and serious playing, jam sessions in evening
Jonathan Corkett’s 26th birthday became a 6th birthday party with jelly/ balloons and riotous
behaviour!

Clubs with long connection with Halsway – Phoenix Club near Weybridge (W Surrey was a
flourishing EFDSS district) Ashford (Middlesex) and Kingston Thames Valley District ,
Guildford still come to Halsway in summer
“Do it yourself weekend” each March, 2 musicians and club callers had a go
Coral Charles ran excellent holidays in the summer. Musicians got a day off when there was
a coach trip, and were even paid travel expenses as well as bed and board!
highlight was Friday evening Maggie’s sister (no name) a “real pianist” with the Portsmouth
Festival and played with Rick Smith for “silent movie”
Alison Ellicot as heroine and tied to the railway line; hero was Dennis Wickens.
Maggie still has a scroll with the famous names: (all dance names)
Portsmouth Lasses (Maggie & her sister)
Mr Beveridge and his Maggot
Mr Issacs and his Maggot etc
continuity provided by David Robert’s father Graham
signs with irrelevant messages at inappropriate moments eg “ Died and never called me
mother” “ no, no , not the chain saw” etc
they spent the whole week preparing and making crepe paper costumes!

Halsway provided holidays at very little cost... no need for a holiday home abroad.

“The moment I turn off the Motorway and turn off across the Quantocks, come through
Crowcombe and turn into Halsway Manor, I feel as if I’ve come home!”

*EP 33.3 rpm “Let’s dance to the Blue Mountain Band” EFDSS 1973

*45 rpm “Blue Mountain Band – American favourites” producer Leigh Dyer (of Ranchers &
Southerners)