

Christmas at Halsway Manor - 2010

Fancy a Christmas with no cooking, no television and no family? Then the place for a wonderful Christmas break is Halsway Manor. It has been refurbished and made almost totally en-suite since the last time we were there. The food was excellent and the staff so helpful.



Group photo in Great Hall

We did wonder, because of the weather, whether we would ever get there but there was no problem with the roads. The manor is only a ¼ mile away from a good A road and the access had been cleared all the way.

The event was led by the charismatic Chris Turner, ably supported by his wife, Elaine Norman, and they really made the weekend. Our days were full of dancing, singing (before every meal - did wonder if you didn't sing whether you'd get a meal!), games, competitions and much more. There were jigsaw puzzles for those who liked them; there was

lego to make models (prizes at the end - every one was a winner!); there was plenty of snow to build snowmen. The sun shone and the view across the snow covered hills was superb. We were also very pleased to see another Leicestershire dancer there—Jean Forrester from Quorn.

In the day time there were various music and dance workshops, with superb music throughout provided by Rod Stradling and his wife, Francis, plus other workshops on hand bells and chimes. One of the dance workshops was on the Flamborough sword dance. This is unusual in that it is for 8 dancers making a sword lock of 8 swords. At the end there were 4 teams of 8 dancing and we made a 32 sword lock - quite amazing.



Flamborough sword dance — 32 sword lock!



Photos by Elaine Norman

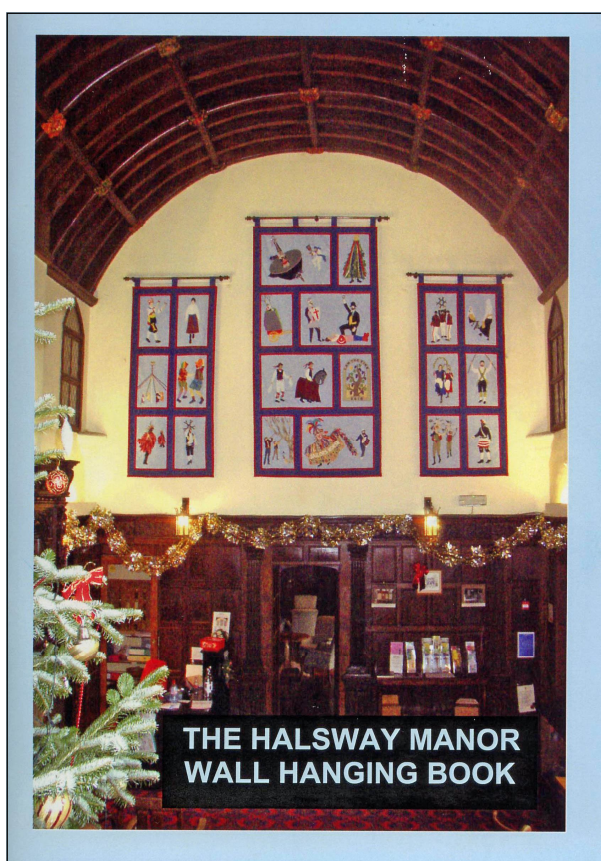


*Santa's elves ready to help hand out the presents.
Photo by Elaine Norman*

In the afternoons some went for a walk; some rehearsed a mummers play to be performed during the ceilidh on the last evening; others concentrated on the various quizzes or just chatted or read quietly - there were plenty of interesting books in the library. Each evening we danced from about 8 to 10.00 pm, then for about an hour sat in the bar, relaxed and listened as various people sang, told jokes or read short poems or pieces of prose.

We were delighted to see three superb new machine appliqué hanging murals adorning one of the very high walls under the barrel ceiling of the Great Hall. They illustrate many different forms of traditional English

dance and customs and are fully described, with pictures of each panel, in a 56 page booklet published by the Halsway Manor Society.



See the Photo Gallery on this website for larger photos of each of the three hangings. There is also a short article in the January 2011 issue of Set & Turn Single. We only hope these hangings will be treated better in the long run than the Diamond Jubilee hanging at Cecil Sharp House - but feel sure they will be.

Mary & Keith Oughton