

So many memories over a number of years. Can't put dates to them; despite being a bit of a historian, I'm useless at dates. These are some happenings that stand out in my memory:

Archaeologists! Following a chat over the phone with Mark (Bradshaw), I was invited to become a volunteer at Lyveden. My very first assignment as a volunteer was to help out with a children's activity.

The moat had been dredged and all the findings laid out in an adjacent field. Jane (Harris) was bringing a group of children, from the William Law School, in Werrington to the site to be 'archaeologists' – to sort through the finds, to identify them and discuss their uses. A very exciting day!

The largest object was a supermarket trolley; the smallest a shard of a pot. Many of the pieces were later displayed in the Visitor Reception shed.

Shakespeare. A very atmospheric performance one August. One of the royal plays – can't remember which (Ed. - Henry V) – involved some of the actors appearing in armour. All went well until the weather changed. Thunder and lightning – very Shakespearian – resulted in the play being abandoned and a mass exodus.

Garden Tours. The highlight of weekend openings, enjoyed by visitors and the guides alike. We tried to arrange it so that visitors were brought to the Bield via a route similar to that which Sir Thomas's visitors would have taken – seeing the building in its full glory from the top of a mount. Beautiful.

The Book Shop. This was brought into being during the time that the five of us – Susan (Lees), Barbara (Ding), Geoff (Fairhurst), Gerald (Fisher) and yours truly – were responsible for the day-to-day running of the site. We had an empty shed next to the Visitor Reception Shed – crying out to be put to use and what better than a Book Shop. Book shelves arrived from various locations and the books started arriving. So many of them that we had to take over the metal container at the back of the Visitor centre as storage. I set to and put my librarian skills to work sorting and categorising the books. Very satisfying!

Children's Space. This was Clare Barratt's initiative – to set up an activity area for children behind the Visitor Reception Shed. Materials were donated by various people and the space proved to be extremely popular, not only with the children but with parents and grand-parents who welcomed the opportunity for the children to be positively occupied. I should say that the volunteers also enjoyed getting involved with the children.

All of these times, and many more, took place in an amazingly peaceful setting. Standing outside the Visitor Reception Shed, overlooking the site where there was no evidence of recent centuries – sublime.