

Tony and Sheila Simmons

Started volunteering at Lyveden in May 2000

1. Cold wet days in the visitor's centre, usually two of us waiting for someone to come. One particular day when Mark rang us to say only one was needed. We had one visitor who only wanted a photograph. On days like these, if Mark was working on site he would let you go home early.
2. The coffee machine, which could be temperamental. We had lots of floods when it went wrong.
3. The winds at Lyveden. I think in my 20+ years I could probably count on my fingers the number of days when I did not need a sweater.
4. The peace and quiet before opening and after the last visitor left. The red kites.
5. The people we met as visitors, their stories and place they came from. Some were more memorable than others
 - On lady who remembered that my father had taught at her junior school in Lancashire. She was probably my age and had brought her grandchildren to sweep for insects etc. in the hedges.
 - a pupil I had taught at Preston Grammar School 30+ years before who remembered me.
 - two young Japanese who arrived by taxi just after opening who stayed until midday and were picked up by taxi to take them to Prebendal Manor. They particularly wanted to see those two gardens.
6. The majority of visitors appreciated our help and some even thanked us for giving up time to volunteer.
7. The people we met as staff and volunteers and who we came to regard as friends and came to look upon almost as a family.
8. Special events like the 'Son et Lumière' evenings involving school children, the Sunday band concerts, carols in the Lodge at Christmas and the drama events.
9. Development of the Orchard and Wild Flower Meadows. Laterly, I spent many hours doing surveys on fruit development for David our Ranger. I loved the time when it was quiet and could watch the wild life as I worked.
10. The Volunteer outings organised by Mark, like the Christmas meal at Stoke Doyle and a visit to Grimsthorpe Castle.

