

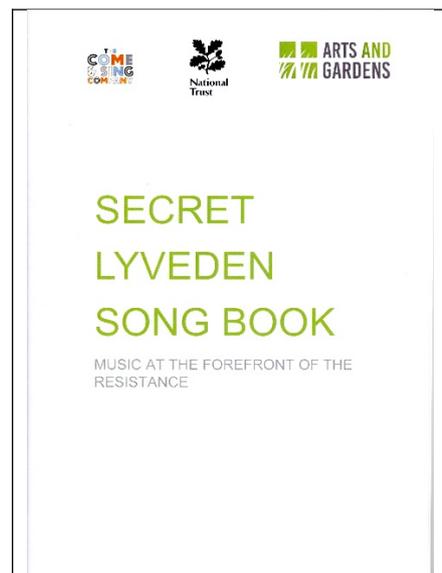
I have been a volunteer now for about 5 years, so am one of the newer members of the "team".

My first "shift" was on May Bank Holiday, and we were very busy. I was in the Visitors Centre trying to help those who were not yet members and were paying customers on the day. It may have been busy but there was a lovely atmosphere, and everyone was cheerful and helpful...both volunteers and customers. A good start to my volunteering and my thanks goes to those volunteers who were there on the day for making it so enjoyable and supporting me so well.

I usually cover a Sunday and it has been lovely to walk up past the orchard and the moat early on a Sunday morning before opening. The birds sing, the orchard is quiet and it sets you up for the day if not the week.

There are always customers that make you smile. I particularly remember the man who complained that going over the speed bump had broken the flask that was in the boot. When asked if he had not seen the warning signs he said no, how could he have when he was busy watching the kites fly overhead!

The special events have also been enjoyable. The singing of carols in the kitchen was part of our Christmas for several years and it is missed. The year we had all the children and choirs singing too was very memorable. We all learnt a lot about the nursery rhymes we thought we knew and will think of them in a different light because of that event.



Then there are the events aimed at the children but generally enjoyed by all. The "Little Grey Men" trails and the apple juicing days have all been enjoyable for young and old alike.

The end of season volunteer socials have always been a time to catch up with people you knew who had been about but not at the same time as you. The year Mark Bradshaw and Zoe Wilson swam the moat was particularly memorable. It was cold and wet just standing on the bank let alone being in the water trying to swim through the pondweed...rather than me. I preferred to be a sponsor rather than the sponsored.

The opportunities offered by volunteering have been great. Working on the archive with a different group has forged new friendships and being part of the Shared Learning Project has meant visits to different places to source reference material.

At Lyveden we are fortunate to have a wonderful site with its own character and story to tell. The atmosphere says different things to different people but most, including me, enjoy the peace it offers and have happy memories of both the site and the people we have met because of it.