

Name of project/group
Doddington Hall, a member of the Historic Houses Association (HHA)
Type of project
Social Action
Location
Doddington Hall, Lincolnshire, East Midlands
What was involved
<p>Doddington Hall is a grade I listed building, built in 1595 by Robert Smythson. Doddington offers a wide range of opportunities for volunteers to develop their skills. Volunteer house stewards are the face of the Hall for visitors and are central members of the team, without whom it would be impossible to open to the public. They play a vital part in contributing to visitors' enjoyment and understanding of the Hall. Stewards are trained in a variety of tasks: welcoming visitors, providing information about the house's history and contents, helping children with activity sheets, assisting the disabled with tours, dealing with enquiries, security and health and safety issues. There are also many opportunities for volunteers in the Ornamental Garden. These include care of the herbaceous borders and irises (featured on BBC Gardeners' World); care of roses and rhododendrons; care of the wild garden areas; lawn and edging-work, clipping the extensive topiary and box edged parterres.</p>

Achievements
<p>The greatest impact of volunteering at Doddington has been on the Walled Kitchen Garden where, since 2007, a large area which has been fallow since the 1950's has been brought into production again. Without the volunteers this would not have happened and the area around Lincoln would not have had the farm shop. This opened in 2007 and also sells produce from other Lincolnshire growers. Surprisingly for such an agricultural county, before Doddington opened theirs, there was no farm shop within a radius of 15–20 miles of Lincoln. The shop and café are open to the community even when the house is closed.</p> <p>The Kitchen Garden's wide variety of traditional fruit and vegetables, including 28 different kinds of potato, are grown following organic principles. These are then sold in the farm shop and café. All volunteers are trained and among those involved a local special needs school was delighted at the prospect of a small team of its autistic children working in the garden and learning basic horticultural skills. Volunteer gardeners in the Kitchen Garden at Doddington Hall are involved in a wide array of garden tasks. These can range from setting out paths and plots, organising composting, planting fruit trees and seeds, weeding, pruning, explaining the garden</p>

to visitors, harvesting and preparing fruit and vegetables for the farm shop and café. Doddington always attempts to make good use of the skills or knowledge of volunteers, and works with them to try to ensure any special objectives are met within the practical constraints of running a successful garden.

Lessons Learnt

The volunteer schemes at Doddington, particularly that which has regenerated the Kitchen Garden and developed the farm shop and cafe into a successful enterprise, demonstrates the mutual benefits derived by volunteers and those who train and provide opportunities for them.



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