



WADDESDON



Chris Blumer

A House Host's Perspective

I had simply no idea what to expect when I first applied to become a volunteer at Waddesdon. House Hosts were probably in the greatest demand at the time and it is in that direction that I was pointed. And 18 months later I have no regrets at all! Every day is different - from not knowing what one's duties are going to be to the nature of the visitors for that day.

It did not take long to get over the fear of being asked a profound question about a certain work of art or a detail about Rothschild family history that I did not know. As at school, the best reply to a question you don't know the answer to is to say "I don't know" - and I have yet to meet a visitor who hasn't been completely happy with that as an answer! Of course it is good to try and find out via the "Companion Guide" or our Black Binder, or better still to direct them to one of our fantastic Guides! Finding out the answer afterwards is very rewarding and means we can learn something new every day. Today my main fear is coming face-to-face with a visitor in the House who I ought to know from home but cannot for the life of me remember who they are!!

Meeting people and talking to visitors is a key and thoroughly enjoyable part of the role. The vast majority are delighted to have a little chat and appreciate often the smallest piece of information. One thing that is much appreciated is when one is able to use a torch to highlight a specific object they are looking at e.g. in a display cabinet; as we know some items really do come to life when a bit of light is shone on them and that is much valued and appreciated by visitors.

There is such an enormous amount to learn around the House that it seems impossible to tire of being in any of the rooms and our "rotation" system helps hugely in having much variety - even getting to understand the idiosyncrasies of the lift when on East Door duty!

And not least among the attractions of being a volunteer is getting to know and working with one's fellow volunteers and feeling part of a very special team. Many, if not most House Hosts are like me retired and it is really good to feel part of an organisation such as Waddesdon and supported so well by all of the full time staff and managers - thank you!!