



## **School Project Sheet**

# **Combe Mill Workers**

# The Men of the Mill

# James Coombes

Can you find this man who worked at Combe Mill?

Use the short film to complete what he tells us about working at the Mill.



My name is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ and I live in the  
village of \_\_\_\_\_.

I am a \_\_\_\_\_  
and I am employed by  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Other workers at the  
Mill do jobs like:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

My jobs include  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The Saw Mill cuts wood by using  
\_\_\_\_\_ power from the water  
wheel whenever possible, but  
the problem is...  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

When I need wood, I  
order it from Combe  
Mill by putting in a  
"chitty".

So the \_\_\_\_\_ was  
installed to provide power when the water  
wheel wasn't working.

Now find some historic documents such as the Workers' Record Books and the old Census Documents. Can you read the writing?

### The Coombes Family:

	Name:	Job (Occupation)
Head of household:	_____	_____
Wife:	_____	_____
Children:	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____

Other information:

### A challenge!

Can you find any records of Benjamin Long (1822-1902), a **Sawyer**? One of the volunteers at the Mill today is related to him! Can you discover who? What is the relationship? What was the ancestor's work as a sawyer? What is the volunteer's skill that you are going to try today?

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# The Men of the Mill

# John Smart

Can you find this man who worked at Combe Mill?

Use the short film to complete his account of his life and work at the Mill.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ and I live in  
\_\_\_\_\_.

I am the \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ and  
I am employed by the  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Before moving here I lived  
in \_\_\_\_\_ in the  
"\_\_\_\_\_ Country"  
and worked as a  
\_\_\_\_\_.

But my boss is  
\_\_\_\_\_,  
the Clerk of Works



My sons all work too:  
John: \_\_\_\_\_  
Ben: \_\_\_\_\_  
James \_\_\_\_\_

I earn \_\_\_\_\_  
per week.

Now find some historic documents like the *Census* records and the work record books.

What else can you discover about John Smart and his family and work? Make notes:

The Smart Family:		
	Name:	Job (Occupation)
Head of household:	_____	_____
Wife:	_____	_____
Children:	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
Other information:		

Now look at one of the images of a *Worker's Record Book*. Sketch one of the diagrams.

What can you read about the order?



## Edward Nash – Clerk of the Works

Did you know the wage bill for the estate is almost £60. Can you believe it, £60 every week. You can only begin to guess how many men we've got working here with such a huge amount of money being paid out. That's my job though. I'm the Clerk of Works for Combe Yard, for the Blenheim Estate. The Duke of Marlborough's estate that is, although of course I don't see the Duke down here. I get the money each week from the estate office and I work out how much each man had earned.

Each labourer gets about two pounds a week, some a little more, some a little less. Some of the more experienced workers can get up to five pounds a week, a good wage that is. There's lots to do here and for the men it's a secure job, some of them get a house too. I live here at the Mill. It's very quiet, but that's how we like it. Nellie, the wife, used to work as a governess. She finished now though, needs to be at home for Eva...our grand daughter, she's nine and the apple of our eye. She was born in Birmingham but has come down to live with us for a while so her Mom and Dad can get sorted out with a house of their own.

I started life as a builder up in Bromsgrove, that's where me and Nellie set up home. She comes from that way so we decided it was as good enough a place as any to start our married life. I did alright really...ended up employing two men, but I like it here too. I started working for the estate in 1884...took over from Charlie Lane.

Funny thing about the way the estate works is that I pay the men every week but my wages get paid every month. There have been times when they've paid me for a whole quarter year, over £30! I don't like having that much lying around the house mind you, fair puts me on edge. And the other thing, in all the years I've been working here I've not had a pay rise. Still, mustn't grumble, life could be a lot worse and I've got all I need.

You're in my office now and every Friday the men line up and sign for their wages, I dare say a lot gets handed over to their wives to run the house, but I'm sure they had a few bob left over for the odd pint or two.

Thirsty work here, it's a very busy mill what with all the different jobs the blokes have to do. Everything from woodwork to metalwork, and a lot in between. We keep all the paint here for estate, and the wallpaper and all the moulds for the plasterwork and metal casting. Basically we make and mend nearly everything they need on the estate, on the farms and in the houses and cottages. If anything needs doing on the estate, this is where the workers come for supplies.

Right, can't stand here talking to you all day...(turns away from camera)...James! About this chitty for gate hinges.



## James Coombes - Carpenter at Combe Yard

James Coombes from Combe at your service , a bit confusing but you'll get used to it! I've lived here all my life, born in the village, work in the village and I'll probably end up dying in the village. I'm a carpenter and I do a lot of work for Combe Mill and the estate, mind you most people round here do the same, such a big place you see. The Duke owns thousands of acres of land – whole farms and villages *and* woodland. I spend a lot of time building and mending gates and fences. You can imagine though, with this much land there's a lot of fences, *and* a lot of gates. Just done a job to repair and re-hang 23 gates and put posts in for a further 22 new gates. Cost the estate the best part of 12 pounds.

I get all the wood from down here at the mill. Just pop in with me chitty and come back the next day and its all cut and ready to go. Bloomin' great trees they are that come here for cutting. Keeps that huge circular saw busy I can tell you. The power comes mainly from the waterwheel, which is fine, but they do have to keep an eye on it. Too much water and it'll go dangerously fast, too little water, like in the summer or when the mill stream freezes and off it goes...no power at all. Mind you the beam engine they put in with the Cornish boiler doesn't half make life easier, no need to rely on the water. Means the mill can be running all the time, and with the amount of wood us carpenters need, it needs to be sometimes.

They've got some good blokes down there at Combe Yard, can turn their hands to anything. They do metalwork there too in the forge. Make all the iron work for the gates I put up, be lost without 'em really. That reminds me, I must put in a chitty for a dozen sets of gate hinges, that's another lot of work for me.

They'll always need the fences replacing so they're always going to need wood down here. You mark my words there'll be wood in the yard for many a year to come. Anyway, I'll go and put that chitty in, I'll be needing those hinges next week. See y' now.



## John Smart – Engine Driver at Combe Yard

Alright? My name's John Smart and I'm what they call a stationary engine driver here at Combe Mill. What it means is that I work on the engine, it don't move like a train, it's the beam engine what we use when we can't use the waterwheel. I do other stuff an' all, general work round the mill and yard an' such. The work's hard but I'd much rather work here than back 'um, it's just a nicer place to be, no so much going on like but we're used to this slower pace of life now, I think it suits us... and the Duke of Marlborough ain't a bad gaffer to work for, don't see 'im that often, not on a big estate like this. I work for Edward Nash, the Clerk of the Works. We do all sorts here for the estate, making sure it's maintained proper. It's like a country in miniature.

Y'can tell by me accent I ay from these parts. Ar come from Tipton, in the 'eart of the back country. We used to live in the middle of all the dirty horrible factories, movin' here I feel like a country gent. The kids and the missus love it too. Mind you they was only babbies when we moved down here like. I come down here because of the work. I saw this advert in the Birmingham Gazette for this job reckoned I'd give it a try.

Anyway we moved down and we live in East End up in the village. They reckon the village used to be down here by the Mill, it moved cos of the plague. Anyway, whatever it was moved it for, it means I've got a down hill walk in the morning and a long uphill walk on the way um. Wish it was the other way round sometimes!

Pays not bad ere, I get about fifteen bob a week. Me lads work here too, John works on the estate as well, Benjamin's a labourer and James is apprenticed to the blacksmith, that's a good job he's got there. They all still live with me and the missus. *Turret bell rings in background*

There goes the bell, home time. I'll have t' leave you now, I need to go and shut the engine down...almost time for that long walk up the hill!

See ya...ta-ra a bit!