



Volunteer Manual



Combe Mill Society - Volunteer Manual

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Your Volunteer Manual

Name _____

Start date _____

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Combe Mill Society - Volunteer Manual

Introduction

Welcome to the Combe Mill Society that operates Combe Mill as a working industrial museum.

This document tells you what we think you need to know about the Society and where to find things.

About the Society

Our Society was formed in 1973 to organise the first public steaming of the beam engine after restoration.

We became a limited company in 1999 and registered as a charity in 2005.

The objectives of the Society are stated in the *Articles of Association* which can be viewed on the website.

Combe Mill lies within Combe Yard that is now known as *Blenheim Estate Sawmills*. It belongs to the Vanbrugh Trust which is a 'financial vehicle' of Blenheim Estate. The Society has a long lease on the Mill for which we pay a rent.

The Society receives no income other than that which we generate ourselves. We do seek external funding for specific activities and initiatives.

About Combe Mill

Unless you have visited the Mill on many occasions you will have many unanswered questions about the Mill itself and the various machines, documents and artefacts it contains.

Combe Mill is next to the old sawmill which is now a showroom. The building provided the water or steam power to drive the saws and woodworking machinery to deal with the timber brought to the sawmill.

Within the surrounding Combe Yard would have once existed all the various crafts and trades required to maintain the Blenheim Estate and the Palace.

A booklet called *Story Lines* has been produced to give you a briefing on what you might tell visitors about.

We take pride in being a 'hands on' museum that has working exhibits. A visitor wrote that we are a 'black fingernail museum' which we all took as a great compliment.

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How we are organised

There are about one hundred members of the Society of which about 45 are actively involved in running the operation. We are managed by a board of at least six but no more than ten directors who are also trustees of the charity.

Wendy Foster	Chairperson and education
Peter Trowles	Secretary & accreditation
Philip Hawtin	Director of safety and training
Derek Goddard	Director
Tony Simmons	Treasurer, Webmaster, Newsletter Editor
Margaret Gruber	Retail
Nigel Evans	Director

Although a non-director, Terry Bailey looks after membership.

A committee (Board Meeting) meets regularly to which all members may attend but not vote at. The committee comprises the above-named directors together with other members who have been co-opted to serve.

Currently members may only stand for election as a director after being a member for one year. Any member may be co-opted to the committee at any time.

Not all roles in the Society have to be filled by a board member.

Our AGM is held in early April.

Heads of Technical Areas

A member who is deemed proficient in working with the public is appointed by the board as Head of Technical Areas (HoTA) for each activity. They are responsible for mentoring those volunteers working in that area and thus are a great resource for new volunteers to get involved in suitable tasks. The HoTA develops a competency assessment scheme for the area against which can be determined those volunteers who can safely work with visitors and demonstrate skills or operate machinery unsupervised – proficient persons. Those deemed suitable to work under supervision of a proficient person are rated as competent. The assessment process results in volunteers getting the training and experience they need to improve and develop their skills and confidence.

HoTAs are regularly involved in the review of risk assessments and working methods for their areas.

Apart from general housekeeping and tidying all tasks/projects MUST have the approval of the HoTA in the area of which the task/project is to be conducted. (In certain cases the HoTA will have to consult the Combe Mill Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) to ensure the

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continued integrity of the Mill and its contents: this normally happens quickly unless a large expenditure is required)

There is a list of all HoTAs on the volunteer's noticeboard, and photos of all current active members, in the foreman's office

Our Visitors

We attract a wide range of visitors having differing interests. Visitor numbers are recorded using our computer-based ticketing system. We welcome visitors in three different types of way.

Firstly, eight times a year between March and October we raise steam and stage steaming events during which we run all machinery and welcome visiting displays such as wood turners. We try to arrange a different theme on each steaming day to attract visitors. Typically up to 350 people visit on such days.

Since 2015 we have run a Christmas Market in early December.

We also open for viewing on each Wednesday between April and October.

On these occasions, the Mill is staffed a volunteer steward who collect ticket money and offer visitors a conducted tour if they feel confident so to do.

Finally we take bookings from community groups and schools at any time and give them the choice to pay extra for us to raise steam.

By agreement with Blenheim Estate, we are able to take supervised groups of visitors across Julie's meadow and into Mill Wood.

The Future

Following a major conservation and improvement project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund we look forward to a sustainable future as a volunteer run organisation. To succeed in this we recognise that our visitors must enjoy coming and want to return. We must also remain cost-conscious so that our income matches our expenditure.

We have a Business Plan – currently under review - that is maintained each year that contains our key aims:

1. Deliver eight steaming events annually and up to two school/group visits each month
2. Improve income generation
3. Effective marketing and promotion of Combe Mill
4. Develop the organisational structure and strengthen the board. Develop membership management, widen volunteer base and provide training.
5. Obtain museum accreditation by Arts Council
6. Develop a partnerships with local organisations and provide CPD training for teachers
7. Provide a greater learning experience for our visitors
8. Conserve and maintain the Mill and its contents and create and operate a Maintenance Management Plan and Operations Plan.

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Volunteering Policy

We depend on volunteers for the operation of Combe Mill and our policies have been developed to protect the interests and health and safety of everyone involved with our activities.

We strongly encourage those wishing to sign up as a member to provide practical support for our operations. Membership is not rescinded for members who are no longer able to take part in physical activities.

Those wishing to visit regularly but not participate can purchase a gift-aided annual pass while those wishing to give purely financial support can become a Friend of Combe Mill.

Volunteer commitment

Members of the Combe Mill Society agree to contribute in practical ways to operating the Mill. You agree to abide by the Society's procedures and to accept direction from its Board of Directors.

Volunteer procedure

When entering and leaving Combe Mill site please sign your name in the log book in the ticket office

Check before leaving the site whether you are the last person to leave and in which case perform the exit procedure to ensure you leave the Mill safe and secure.

General Volunteer Roles

Many activities connected with opening the Mill for visitors require no particular skills but volunteers will receive training or briefing in how to perform the various roles.

Skilled Volunteer Roles

There are some activities that have associated safety risks and volunteers doing these tasks will have their competency assessed and receive appropriate training. See – Heads of Technical Areas

Coming to the Mill

The Mill is open every Wednesday where members can complete maintenance duties, general housekeeping or project work. For defined projects the members involved will organise their own work pattern and on occasions the committee may arrange for a working Saturday during which everyone lends a hand to tackle various tasks.

For those not having to work office hours, Wednesdays have become a regular day when members gather.

Member's Contribution

New members generally discover a topic for which they hold a particular interest – it might be operating the steam engines, or working the forge, or historic clocks and so on. Others

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become intrigued by the social history of the Mill and being to explore and uncover the stories of past employees of Blenheim.

We hope that once you have got the hang of everything that you will volunteer to act as a ticketing steward on our non-steaming days, or as a car park attendant or ticket seller on steaming events. Serving tea can be fun too and so can engaging with visitors to reminisce with them about times gone by and the memories triggered by objects around the Mill.

We hope that everyone will have a part to play, feel involved, and make many friends within the Society.

We have a list of role descriptions that describe the various jobs you can choose to do.

Benefits and Facilities for Volunteers

The Society will reimburse the cost of a Lincoln Green boiler suit, or warehouse coat, which is the work-wear of the Society on open days. We also wear green polo shirts that carry an embroidered society logo. New members may have their boiler suits similarly embroidered at no cost whenever there are enough to justify an order (usually at least six). More recently members have chosen to apply sew-on logo badges rather than the embroidered logo.

Members benefit from discounts on certain retail items.

Supplies of free tea, instant coffee are always available to volunteers from the Tea Room

Each year we organise a social event in the summer - usually a BBQ at the Mill.

Communicating with members

There is a Combe Mill web site that provides access to the public to descriptions and photographs of the Mill and its contents. There are pages that only Society members can access and you can obtain a password by contacting Tony Simmons. Your user name will be the e-mail address that you normally use.

We publish a monthly newsletter which keeps those unable to visit the Mill regularly up to date with happenings. Articles and news for publication are always welcome from members. We prefer to issue it electronically using e-mail. Anyone who prefers a paper copy can pay a hard-copy premium in addition to their subscription

The board of directors (committee) meet at regular intervals and any member is welcome to take part in the meeting. Only directors have voting rights.

Continuous Development

We are committed to provide continuing support for our volunteers so that you enjoy coming to the Mill. This support is mainly directed to seeing you have adequate training and resources to do the tasks required. You are encouraged to take an active role in not only supporting ongoing activities but also in managing our future. Normally after being a member for one year, you are eligible for election to the Board of Directors. Training will be

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provided from time to time to build the skills required by the Board to fulfil its role effectively.

Building Security

The Mill may be entered by any one of four external doors each fitted with a five lever mortise lock. There is a key safe in the lift corridor and members who are regular attendees at the Mill are told the code number

Other parts of the Mill and its outbuildings are locked by various other keys and a key box is located in the Foreman's Office.

The main Mill and Tea Room buildings are protected by an intruder alarm system.

Society Affiliations

We are members of the following organisations:

Oxford Museums Council (OMC)

Association for Industrial Archaeology (AIA)

Association of Independent Museums (AIM)

Rural Museums Network (RMN)

British Association of Friends of Museums (BAfM)

Association of British Transport and Engineering Museums (ABTEM)

Newcomen Society

Museum Status

The Society is working towards achieving Accredited Museum status. There is a 'standard' that sets out the procedures and methods a professional museum needs to adopt in order to be officially recognised.

As a small museum we are seeking to adopt only the essential requirements of the 'standard'.

Individual volunteers will be briefed as the procedures mature and in the short term need only to remember the following relating to objects and collections:

Our mission at Combe Mill is to represent the equipment, tools and artefacts that might reasonably have been made or mended by the crafts and tradesmen in Combe Yard during Victorian times. We are not an agricultural museum and do not collect examples of farming machinery. If in doubt ask one of the directors.

No object must leave the Mill without approval and without the correct Exit Form

Members of the public who turn up offering items for our collection should be told that we will examine their offering and let them know if we can accept it. An object Entry Form must be completed and signed by a responsible person and the donor and given as a receipt.

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Finally – if you are tempted when seeing a rusty old tool to strip off the rust and paint it with Hammerite™ then please resist the temptation – we are not that sort of museum. Our policy on conservation is strict – ask for details.

Policies and Guidelines

Volunteers are asked to observe our procedures whenever you are on the Mill site both for your safety and the safety of others. In particular you need to read and comply with our Safeguarding, Equality and Occupational Safety and Health Policies which are viewable on our website and at the Mill.

Health and Safety

Should you wish to visit the Mill regularly to help you will receive a health and safety briefing and be asked to sign that you have understood our various risk assessments and method statements which are viewable on our website and at the Mill.

The Society does not encourage lone working.

You should read and comply with our Emergency Procedure and Fire Procedure that are on display at the Mill.

We have done a risk assessment for every routine activity and developed a method statement that describes the safe way to perform each task. You need to discuss with fellow volunteers the risks associated with any new or non-routine activity and agree a safe working method to follow.

You must record any significant injuries incurred at the Mill in the Accident Book that is kept in the Foreman's Office.

Fire Alarm and Emergency Lighting Testing

A routine test of selected fire alarm call points is conducted each Wednesday and the results logged. Battery supported lighting is tested at regular intervals and the results logged.

Insurance

You are covered by our Employers Liability Insurance policy when working at the Mill as long as you comply with our safety procedures and working practices.

Complaints and Grievances

In the unusual case of a volunteer needing to make a complaint or resolve a grievance, we have relevant procedures that can be viewed on our web site.

We also have a disciplinary procedure in place if an exceptional circumstance arises.

Leaving the Society

When you leave Combe Mill we would welcome your feedback and evaluate your time with us. Should you require a reference for your CV we are happy to give feedback and a reference on request.

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Where to find things

You can learn more about where to find things in the Mill by having a look at Section 19 of the REFERENCE MANUAL.