



Guide to Volunteering



Could you help us?

You may be thinking of helping and this short guide will tell you something about Combe Mill and give you a flavour of the various activities you might like to help with.

We are all volunteers and do our various tasks for the sheer fun and reward we get out of what we do. Why not read on to see what we get up to and perhaps put a 'toe in the water' and see if an activity or two is of interest. You will meet many people of different ages and backgrounds so don't feel shy.

What is the Combe Mill Society?

Our Society exists to maintain and operate Combe Mill and we need volunteers who can commit to helping out on a regular basis in practical ways and also those who can only help at occasional times.

We work here because we are interested in one or more aspects of running this working hands-on industrial museum. We all enjoy the pleasure we give our visitors and share great pride in keeping the machinery working.

Who runs the Combe Mill Society?

The Society is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee and we have no paid staff. A committee of Members are elected at our annual general meetings as Trustee/Directors to manage the affairs and operation of the Mill. Members devote a fair amount of their time to various tasks and much of the back office work can be done from home.

Why do we need volunteers?

We are not a museum in the conventional sense with shelves and glass cases but we take great care of the machinery, tools, artefacts and documents that are here. Our overriding interest is to maintain things in a working condition and visitors are encouraged to touch and handle exhibits.



Volunteers at Combe Mill get to meet others having similar interests and complementary skills.

Whatever challenges present themselves our Society has always managed to find a member or a friend of a member who has the skills or contacts to deal with the challenge.

The Mill is best known for its steam- and water-powered woodworking machinery and taking care of this is a significant task. We also have a fascinating collection of working historic turret clocks. Our blacksmith's forge is in regular use for giving demonstrations, hands-on sessions, or for working on commissions.

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We still need you even if you are not mechanically minded. Combe Mill is an old building and needs constant care and attention.

The riverside grounds need landscaping and maintenance and our Tea Room is in constant use by volunteers and the visiting public.

There is much housekeeping, administrative and cataloguing work which is ongoing and keeps several volunteers occupied.



Whatever your skills we can surely make use of them. The Mill can benefit from your experience and enthusiasm in some aspect of its operations. If you want to learn a new skill you can get the opportunity with us.

Enjoy being a volunteer at Combe Mill where you will:

- use your experience and skills
- learn new skills
- receive training
- enjoy the company of other like-minded people
- share interests
- reminisce
- pass on your expertise and skills to the next generation though school visits
- take part in social events and visits
- share pride in Combe Mill Society's achievements
- be needed
- be supported
- help others.



Our volunteers help with all aspects of running Combe Mill such as:

- demonstrating crafts or operating machinery
- being an 'explainer' (a.k.a. steward) for our visitors
- planning and organising events
- gardening and landscaping
- interpreting the Mill's machinery and geography

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- researching and interpreting the Mill's history
- selling
- promoting and marketing the Mill
- retail management
- catering – cooking and serving
- curatorial – taking care of our collections
- cleaning, maintenance and repair of machinery and buildings
- re-enactment and costume making
- administration (incl. finance, legal, commercial)
- writing and publishing
- graphic design
- website development and support.

Can't find the time?

Retired volunteers usually work at the Mill on Wednesdays while others, still working, come along on Thursday evenings or to our occasional working weekends. We all have the same problem of how to fit in everything we want/need to do and, indeed, several volunteers do most of their work from home.



I can see what I might enjoy doing but what am I *expected* to do?

First, what can you expect from Combe Mill?

You will:

- never be asked to do something you are not happy to do or do not have the competence to perform
- never be asked to do anything beyond your physical capability
- always be given instruction before doing any task that is new to you
- always have the proper tools for the job at your disposal.

Also when we are open you will have access to the Tea Room for free tea/coffee and biscuits.

Volunteers also get free entry to Mill events and a discount on our retail sales. You will also be able to attend our social events and occasional trips to other museums as well as receiving our monthly newsletter.

So, that's our side of the deal, what must you do?

Volunteers enjoy coming to the Mill but there is a serious side, too.

We expect that:

- you will be flexible with respect to the task you are asked to perform
- if you accept a task it will be completed in an agreed timely manner
- if you cannot attend a pre-agreed commitment, you will let us know in advance
- if you become a member you will accept the Society's memorandum and articles of association
- you will report any damage, breakages to machinery or tools or exhibits immediately
- you will accept democratically reached decisions of the Board of Directors.

Aren't I the wrong age for all this?

No matter how old you are or how old you feel you will find a welcome at Combe Mill so come on and meet us.

Want to get involved? What next?

If you think you would like to help please come along on any Wednesday (morning) or Thursday (evening) or a Sunday (when we are open between March and October) and ask to talk about it. We suggest that you do a few tasks with us and meet other volunteers. We will assign another volunteer to 'show you the ropes' and after a few weeks you can decide on how much time you wish to contribute.

A volunteer will show you round and answer your questions and discover what we can do to help you to enjoy working at Combe Mill.

Remember, you do not have to know anything about machinery or engineering to be of great help to the Mill.

Can't commit to all this but still want to help?

Not everyone can spare the time or feels energetic enough to get physically involved but you can still help. If you can't become a volunteer, how about being a 'Friend'.

Quite simply we need your money and in return we will send you our regular newsletter and hold an event especially for Friends each year.

Become a 24hr volunteer and give one day a year – you just need to spare 2hrs a month for 12 months

What sort of work goes on at the Mill?



There is usually some sort of project underway at the Mill. These may involve replacement of steam pipework, strip-down of machinery, re-layout of displays, the design of fresh interpretation panels or planning of new activities for visitors.



We always need volunteers to help run our events. From car park attendants, ticket sellers, meeters and greeters, to caterers and demonstrators, there are jobs for everyone.



The grounds need continuous maintenance. During the visitor season the grass needs cutting and every couple of years the willow trees need pollarding.



Volunteers care for and interpret our documentation records. Much work is still needed to uncover the history of the work done at Combe Mill. Visitors are often interested in ancestors who were once employed here.



Those with a practical bent will always find something to do of interest. The steam-raising boiler requires an annual inspection and the waterwheel needs regular attention.



Several of our volunteers are teachers who help us to develop learning packages for visiting school groups and we operate a school's partnership with support from the Edina Trust.



We love working with our visitors to demonstrate and explain how tools were used and how machinery works. We will give you training in how to explain the various aspects of the Mill to our visitors.



We encourage the interchange of skills and have a competency assessment and training program. Our safety policy requires that only competent volunteers demonstrate to visitors and operate machinery.



It's not all work. Recently we have organised trips to other museums to pick up ideas on how to improve our offering at the Mill. Each year we have an autumn dinner and a summer BBQ.

Volunteering – enjoy being YOU and inspiring OTHERS