



NOTE

This document was developed by the Wide Skies Learning Coordinator Team for Wisbech & Fenland Museum and was shared with other Wide Skies Museums during its development. It is intended to provide a guide to producing a Volunteer handbook and should be adapted to suit the needs of the individual museum concerned.

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WISBECH & FENLAND MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS' HANDBOOK

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1. Welcome by the Curator

Welcome to Wisbech Museum. We offer opportunities for volunteers to get involved in our work and although we are a small organisation we may have something to suit you. We hugely value the contributions our volunteers make to the running of our wonderful museum; I am not exaggerating when I say we simply could not operate without them!

This handbook is designed to help you decide whether to apply to volunteer with us and to tell you what you will need to know if we have something suitable for you. Firstly I would like to mention some of the benefits of being a volunteer:

For some people, volunteering can be a way of:

- Gaining new skills, knowledge and experience
- Improving their employment prospects
- Using their skills and knowledge to benefit others

For others, volunteering appeals because of its social benefits:

- Meeting new people
- Making new friends
- Getting to know the local community

On top of this, many people volunteer for other reasons, such as:

- Feeling part of a team
- Feeling valued
- Having quality time away from work or a busy lifestyle
- Gaining confidence and self-esteem

In section 3 you will find descriptions of the roles which we often need help with. If any of these appeal to you will need to apply using the form in section 3. We will then let you know if we might be able to involve you and if so we will ask you to meet us for an informal interview. If both sides agree to work together we will arrange suitable times and when you start you will be given help to make sure what we need.

If you want to know more about the Museum, please see the Appendix at the end of this handbook (not *included in this published version*).

If we both agree that there is a suitable role, we will give you a warm welcome. I look forward to meeting you!

.....

David Wright, Curator

2. Volunteer policy

Volunteers are essential to the operation of the Museum and the close contact that this creates with the local community is a valuable aspect of the Museum's 'ethos'. The Museum also aims to broaden the services on offer to our visitors through the skills and attributes of volunteers. Because of the special responsibilities of volunteers and the trust placed in them, volunteers need to follow established procedures and policies, and guidance provided by members of the Museum's staff.

Recruitment of Volunteers

- Volunteers are actively welcomed from a variety of backgrounds
- No formal qualifications are required, but a positive interest in the Museum's work and ensuring all our visitors enjoy their contact with us is essential
- The Curator or other member of the museum staff, or Volunteer Co-ordinator, will carry out an informal interview with all potential volunteers to assess their suitability and to explain the work of the Museum, and references may be required.
- Volunteers are required to complete a registration form for our records
- Volunteers also need to understand and accept the Museum's code of conduct and complaints procedures (see sections 5 and 6).
- Volunteers are encouraged to become Friends of the Museum

Responsibilities of Volunteers

- Volunteers will make an initial choice of the area in which they wish to work, and will have an informal induction and be given 'on the job' training.
- There will be an opportunity to develop skills and experience, and attend further relevant training.
- Volunteers will not be asked to take responsibility for any activity beyond their comfort level.
- Volunteers will be given the opportunity to help develop museum events, resources and activities if they are interested in so doing.
- Volunteers working with children, young people and other vulnerable people will be asked to undergo a CRB check and have a Certificate of Enhanced Disclosure. The Museum will meet the costs.

Time commitment

- Volunteers are free to work whichever hours suit them, by prior agreement – but some activities will be held on particular days/ times. 'Front of house' volunteers will be encouraged to work half-day shifts to help keep the museum open. Punctuality and reliability are essential in maintaining the high standards to which we aspire.
- As part of their induction, volunteers will be asked to indicate which days and times are most convenient to them. This information will be used to help match volunteers to rota requirements (for front-of-house role) or other activities.

Training for volunteers

- Informal induction and 'on the job' training will be provided for all volunteers. General training and information sessions (usually of particular relevance to front-of-house volunteers) will be held at the Museum at least twice a year.

- Additional training will be provided appropriate to the tasks undertaken. This may be held in-house or outside the museum, for instance through the Regional Museums 'SHARE' programme.

Volunteer Handbook

Every volunteer will be issued with and taken through the Volunteer Handbook as part of their induction programme. This includes:

- An Introduction to the Museum*
- Volunteer role descriptions
- Health and Safety Information
- Code of conduct for museum volunteers and complaints procedures

***An Introduction to the Museum**

To include background of the museum and brief guide to the exhibits, displays and collections

Other useful information:

- Public admissions policy, group visits, private views, etc
- Where to access further information about exhibits, displays and collections
- Guide to reserve collections and how to access them
- Study facilities available
- Any other services / facilities offered

Equal Opportunities and making the Museum accessible to all

The Museum is an Equal Opportunities Employer and this approach is carried through to encompass volunteers. Volunteers will be expected to promote equality of opportunity to all our visitors and work with staff to promote accessibility to all visitors. Access is seen in terms of identifying barriers which prevent participation and developing ways to overcome them.

Insurance

Approved activities of Museum volunteers are covered under the Museum's liability insurance policy.

(Note: each museum should check that they have adequate insurance cover)

Resolving problems

The Museum operates an open-door policy and it is hoped that any difficulties or issues that might arise can be resolved informally between volunteers or in discussion with a member of staff. If this is not possible, then the complaints procedure will be followed. If a volunteer wishes to cease their placement, they should notify the Curator.

Expenses

- Mileage/ travel costs are not paid for volunteers to travel to the museum (exceptional circumstances may be considered by the Curator), but can be paid for authorized travel undertaken as part of volunteer duties.
- Any necessary expenditure on resources or materials for museum use will normally dealt with through normal museum ordering/ supply systems, authorized by the Curator. Any other expenditure must be approved in advance by the Curator, and receipts must be supplied.

Benefits

- We hope that anyone who decides to offer their time and services as a volunteer will find the experience interesting, fulfilling and rewarding.
- Volunteers may develop new skills or interests and will certainly have the opportunity to make many new friends.

3. Role descriptions

Below are a few of the ways which you may be able to assist in the running of the Museum. You don't need to be a specialist, just an enthusiast!

If you would like more details of any of the roles, please ask the Curator for more details.

- Exhibition / Display
- Administration
- Collections / Documentation
- Front of house
- Learning
- Marketing and Publicity
- Maintenance
- Fundraising

NB – it is possible to combine different museum volunteer roles if you have several areas of interest.

a) Exhibition / Display volunteer

Purpose : To assist the Curator with preparation and mounting of temporary displays and exhibitions, and occasionally with aspects of 'permanent' displays.

This role involves:

- Using the museum's computer catalogue to find information
- Writing texts and captions as needed
- Arranging objects, photos and text/ captions to create both 3D and 2D displays
- Mounting text, photos and captions

Requirements/ skills:

- Display volunteers need good design/ visual sense and reasonable practical skills for tasks such as cutting and fixing display materials
- Good written English is necessary for writing captions and texts
- Reasonable IT skills are an advantage
- Ability to 'be creative on a shoestring' and work as part of a small team

Commitment:

There are no fixed hours or time commitment for this role – likely to be intensive work over short periods, timing of which will depend on museum exhibition schedule.

b) Administration volunteer

Purpose : To assist the Curator to keep paperwork in order and/or help organise museum mailings.

The role involves:

- Sorting, organising and filing paperwork in the office
- Help establish and maintain recording systems for variety of admin purposes
- Keep track of forthcoming activities/ exhibitions and organise/ assist with mailings
- Maintain and update mailing lists
- Help create, maintain and use e-mail list of museum volunteers and for general (public) mailings

Requirements/ skills:

- Good level of IT skills useful but not essential
- Must be well-organised
- Able to work on own initiative

Commitment:

A regular half-day per week – preferably

c) Collections / Documentation Volunteer

Purpose : To assist the Curator with cataloguing and managing the museum's extensive collections.

The role involves:

- Manual or computer cataloguing of museum exhibits, including those in store
- Finding information from the computer catalogue as needed
- Helping with conservation 'housekeeping'
- Sorting and photographing items in the museum's stores
- Occasional assistance with other museum duties – e.g. small display tasks etc.

Requirements/ skills:

- Collections volunteers need to be methodical and careful
- An interest in/ knowledge of social/ local history is helpful.
- Familiarity with computers is not essential, but would be helpful for some tasks.
- Willing to work as part of a small team.

Commitment:

The cataloguing group normally meets onfrom, but there may also be other occasional work needed.

d) Front of house volunteer

Main purpose: To provide a warm and friendly welcome to all our visitors.

This role involves:

- Meeting and greeting visitors
- Opening and/ or closing of the Museum following written procedure (this will NOT normally include locking/ unlocking and alarm setting)
- Operating museum till, cash handling and recording – for admissions and shop and exhibition sales
- Dealing with public enquiries in person and on the phone
- Being aware of Health and Safety, Security and Emergency Procedures and know location of necessary equipment
- Helping to maximise museum income from visitors – admissions, sales, donations
- Ensuring museum reception/ shop area kept clean, orderly and tidy – including re-stocking of shop displays.
- Occasional assistance with other museum duties e.g. publicity mail-outs, small display tasks etc.

Requirements/ skills:

Reliability and punctuality

Good communication and inter-personal skills

A reasonable level of written and spoken English

Commitment:

The Museum is open on.....; Two front of house volunteers are needed whenever the Museum is open to the public.

A rota is normally arranged in advance and you may sign up for as many or as few shifts as you wish. You may be contacted by the Volunteer Co-ordinator with a request to work additional shifts if there are gaps in the rota. If you are unable to attend for a shift you have signed up for, please try and arrange a 'swap' with another volunteer OR contact the Volunteer Co-ordinator as soon as possible

e) Learning Volunteer

Purpose: To engage schools, families, young people and adults with the museum and its collections. Learning groups are an important link to the community and you will help to make sure that their visit is enjoyable and memorable.

The role involves:

- Setting up equipment and preparing for school visits and family activities
- Running a workshop such as Victorian high life and low life
- Going to schools with boxes of objects from the collection
- Undertaking research for new workshops and activities
- Assisting with outreach in care homes using the Museum's reminiscence boxes
- Managing and maintaining the loans boxes

Requirements/ skills:

- Enthusiasm
- Enjoys working with people of all ages
- Good communication and interpersonal skills
- For all roles which involve working with children and/or vulnerable adults we will request an enhanced CRB check.

Commitment:

During term times school visits take place onfromHoliday activities run onfrom. Preparation for these happens

f) Marketing and Publicity volunteer

Purpose: To assist in the production of leaflets, posters, flyers and other items of publicity to promote the Museum and the events and services it offers.

The role involves:

- Distribution of posters and leaflets to local shops, B&Bs and hotels, other museums and tourist information outlets.
- Maintaining and updating the computerized mailing database.
- Ensuring leaflet stocks are kept maintained.
- Attending outside events such as fetes to promote the museum.
- Undertaking market research of our visitors.
- Updating free websites with museum details.

Requirements/Skills:

- Reasonable level of IT skills would be an advantage
- Good communication and interpersonal skills

- Marketing volunteers need to be well organised

Commitment:

There is no fixed time or days but we would encouragehours to make the role mutually beneficial.

g) Museum Maintenance Volunteer

Purpose: To help us to keep the Museum and its facilities in good working order. The museum is housed in purpose built Victorian building with original display cases. There are two reference libraries and a substantial archive. It is a major resource for the local community

The role involves:

- Carrying out 'odd-jobs' around the Museum, for example, simple carpentry, plumbing, yard maintenance.

It is possible to combine different museum volunteer roles if you have several areas of interest.

Requirements/skills:

- Any previous experience of maintenance would be an advantage

Commitment:

We encourage a schedule of 1 day (3-7 hours) per week, ideally for 4 months or more, where possible, to help ensure that this placement is mutually beneficial.

h) Fundraising Volunteer

Purpose: To assist in developing a strategic approach to fundraising. The Museum is an independent charity that relies on grants and admissions income to keep the doors open to the public.

The role involves:

- Developing corporate contacts and sponsorship programmes
- Organising fundraising events
- Legacy development
- Promoting the Museum to groups.

Requirements/skills:

- Previous fundraising experience. It would be desirable if the experience is for a charitable organisation.
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills.
- Strong interpersonal skills

It is possible to combine different museum volunteer roles if you have several areas of interest

Commitment:

We encourage a schedule of 1 day (3-7 hours) per week, ideally for 6 months or more, where possible, to help ensure that this placement is mutually beneficial.

(Note: further site-specific volunteer roles can be included if desired)

4. Health and Safety; Emergency Procedures

POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of Wisbech & Fenland Museum to meet all legal requirements and to seek the cooperation of all who undertake duties in the Museum in promoting good Health, Safety and Environmental (HSE) Practices and Safe conditions for Visitors. The Curator welcomes all suggestions for HSE improvement.

ORGANISATION AND ARRANGEMENTS

General

1. All accidents, injuries and incidents should be recorded in the **accident and incident book** (located in the office). They must also be reported to the Curator or Assistant Curator as soon as possible.
2. A **First Aid Box** is located in .research room although it should be noted that treating visitors should be avoided due to legal implications. **In the event of serious accident, injury or illness dial 999**. Advise the senior person on site of the problem and action taken.
3. Everyone has a responsibility for following the Health & Safety procedures and for assisting in the prevention of hazards when noticed.
4. Report any maintenance issues to Curator.
5. Regular inspections of the premises, fire escapes, fire alarms, fire extinguishers and electrical equipment will be carried out by the Curator, an appointed person or outside contractors.
6. Smoking is not permitted anywhere within the museum or museum grounds.
7. Contractors on site should be made aware of this policy.

Manual handling

1. Do not lift more than you can comfortably manage. If need be, get help. Check the route before setting off and make sure you can see above the load. Split loads and never carry more than one large item at a time. Use available trolleys.
2. Use available ladders (not chairs and shelves) safely and on firm level ground.

Housekeeping

1. Keep stairs, corridors, fire exits and traffic routes clear of obstruction. Return equipment after use.
2. Do not leave unattended tools, knives and scissors etc. in public areas.
3. Keep cupboards locked when the Museum is open and return keys to the key board.
4. Heating will be suitably maintained and should operate automatically. Report any problems to the Curator or Assistant Curator.
5. Please help to keep the toilet and kitchen as clean and free of waste as possible.
6. Please do not eat or drink in view of the public where possible.

Electrical equipment

1. Avoid trailing cables that are an effective trip hazard causing serious injury.
2. Do not use faulty electrical equipment or attempt temporary repairs. Report faults to the curator.

Action in the event of Fire

1. In the event of fire, activate the nearest alarm by breaking the glass. Although this automatically calls the Fire Brigade, as a back-up and to confirm that this is

not a false alarm, dial 999. Evacuate the building, guide visitors out and ensure everyone has left.

2. Know which type of extinguisher is appropriate to which type of fire and their locations.
3. Know exit routes, locations of fire doors and fire extinguishers.
4. Always use an extinguisher with your back to a means of escape but do not attempt to fight a fire yourself if you do not feel confident or competent to do so. **If in doubt, just get out.**

5. Code of conduct

Part 1: Code for Museum Volunteers

1. Volunteers are expected to do their best to promote the interests of the Museum. 'Front of house' volunteers, in particular, should be positive about the Museum and its activities. All publicity and promotional activities should have the approval of the Curator.
2. Volunteers are asked to wear museum badges while on duty so that they are easily identified by visitors.
3. Volunteers should be courteous in dealing with the public. If they are unable to answer a query, they should refer to the Curator or other sources of information. All enquiries, particularly those requiring a reply from the Curator, should be recorded in the Day Book. Any problems with members of the public, or the building and its contents should also be recorded in the Day-Book, and the Curator informed.
4. In the event of any problems in relationships between volunteers, or between volunteers and staff, which the Volunteer feels they cannot resolve, the matter should be referred to the Curator, or the Chairman of the Management Committee and not discussed with other Volunteers.
5. If a Volunteer notices that anything is missing from the Collections, they should inform the Curator, a Trustee, or member of the Management Committee as soon as possible. The matter should then be investigated in a systematic but courteous manner.
6. Volunteers should not carry out museum duties when under the influence of prohibited drugs or alcohol.
7. The museum photocopier may be used for personal copying with the agreement of the Curator
8. Personal use of the museum telephone should be kept to a necessary minimum

Part 2: The Museum's Obligations to Volunteers

1. The Museum carries insurance covering both public and employee liability which should cover any incident occurring whilst a Volunteer is carrying out duties in the Museum.
2. The Museum has a Health and Safety Policy, a copy of which is included in the Volunteer Handbook. Volunteers should read and follow it, taking reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of others.
3. The Museum will not ask Volunteers to carry out any duties which may contravene the Health and Safety policy, or which endanger their health and safety.
4. Volunteers will not be expected to work on their own in the Museum. The Museum will keep all Volunteers informed of the whereabouts of the safety alarm, important telephone numbers, and the names and telephone numbers of key holders, First Aid Kit, and essential keys.
5. The Museum will provide good working conditions for Volunteers.

6. The Museum will provide regular training for Volunteers, and an appropriate and a regular forum for them to express their opinions and ideas.
7. A copy of the Museum Complaints Procedures for Volunteers and of the Code for Museum Volunteers will be kept in the Volunteers Reference file at the desk, and copies are included in the individual Volunteer Handbook.
8. The Museum reserves the right to exclude Volunteers in breach of this Code from the Museum. Volunteers so excluded will have the right to appeal according to the Volunteer Complaints Procedures mentioned above.

6. Complaints procedure

Complaint by a Volunteer

1. If a Volunteer wishes to make a complaint which concerns the Museum they should raise the matter in writing with the Curator. In her absence they should raise it initially with the Chair of the Management Committee who will nominate another member of the Management Committee who will discuss the details privately with the Volunteer. If a satisfactory solution is achieved, no further action need be taken.
2. If it is not resolved, either the Volunteer, the Interviewer or the Curator should request the Chair of the Management Committee to examine the information available in the case. The Chair may or may not involve others members of the Management Committee. The Chair will make their decision known to the Volunteer. This decision will be final.
3. Any complaint against the Curator must be reported to the Trustees through the Museum Secretary.

Complaint against a Volunteer

1. If a complaint is received by the Museum against a Volunteer, or it is felt that the Volunteer has infringed the Volunteer Code of Conduct, the matter should, in the first instance, be dealt with promptly and privately by the Curator, or in her absence, by a member of the Management Committee nominated by the Chair of the Management Committee. The subject of the complaint should be discussed with the Volunteer and their views sought. If there is an agreed satisfactory outcome from these discussions, the Interviewer should notify the Chair of the Management Committee, who may keep a record of the incident, but no further action needs to be taken.
2. If there is not an agreed satisfactory outcome, either the Volunteer or the Interviewer may request the Chair of the Management Committee to examine the subject of the complaint and arrange further discussions with the Volunteer, who may at this stage be accompanied by a member of the Friends of the Museum. The Chair will decide the management representation of at least two other members of the Management Committee in these secondary discussions. The decision will be made known to the Volunteer and will be final and will also be reported to the Trustees through the Company Secretary.
3. Any complaint against Volunteers which involves theft, wilful damage to property, or other inappropriate behaviour which required the removal of the Volunteer from the premises must be reported immediately to the Trustees through the Company Secretary.

Curator, David Wright
Chair of Management Committee
Museum Secretary

7. Staff contacts

Main Museum switchboard: 01945 583817

Curator : David Wright , curator@wisbechmuseum.org.uk

Assistant Curator: Robert Bell, info@wisbechmuseum.org.uk

Learning Co-ordinator: Karen Chancellor, wideskies@wisbechmuseum.org.uk