



# **Combe Mill Museum**

# **ACCESS STATEMENT**

# Combe Mill Access Statement

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Issue 1	Published 28 January 2008	For issue
Issue 2	Revised 9 December 2008	Disabled toilet now available
Issue 3	Revised 22 March 2009	To reflect site development
Issue 4	Updated 7 July 2010	Re-validated

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## Introduction

Combe Mill is a Grade II\* Listed building that was once the powerhouse and workshop of Blenheim Palace Sawmills. It is now run as an industrial heritage museum by the Combe Mill Society. Combe Mill is owned by Blenheim Estates.

The mill houses a rare 1852 steam powered beam engine, a restored waterwheel and a double blacksmith's forge. Upstairs in the pattern shop are collections of local trade and craftsmen's artefacts together with a refreshment area.

## Pre-Arrival

If you wish to learn more about the museum you should first look at our web site [www.combemill.org](http://www.combemill.org) which contains many photographs.

The website gives details of opening times and admission charges.

If you are unable to use the internet, you may telephone 01993 891851 or 01865 379402 and ask for details.

Disabled visitors are welcome and every Open Day and Steaming Event is staffed with many volunteers who are most willing to assist you to enjoy your visit.

Please wear sensible sturdy shoes especially if you intend to try your hand at making something in the forge. The picnic area can also become muddy after heavy rain.

Volunteers on duty will be wearing green Polo shirts bearing the Mill logo or green boiler-suits so that you will know who to ask for information or assistance.

## General Safety Awareness

Combe Mill is an industrial building that contains machinery some of which is working. The floors on the ground floor are stone that have been patched with concrete and this is uneven in places reflecting the evolution of the building and the work done in it over the generations.

Combe Mill Society takes the matter of safety very seriously but we do not compromise the integrity of the historic structure by destroying history in order to remove all risk hazards.

Therefore visitors need to avoid tripping hazards and should not cross safety barriers to touch moving parts.

Children should be accompanied by an adult at all times.

We encourage visitors to handle the exhibits on display and to try their hand, under skilled supervision, at making objects in the forge and on the wood turning lathe. We provide visitors with appropriate protective equipment for the tasks but you take part entirely at your own risk.

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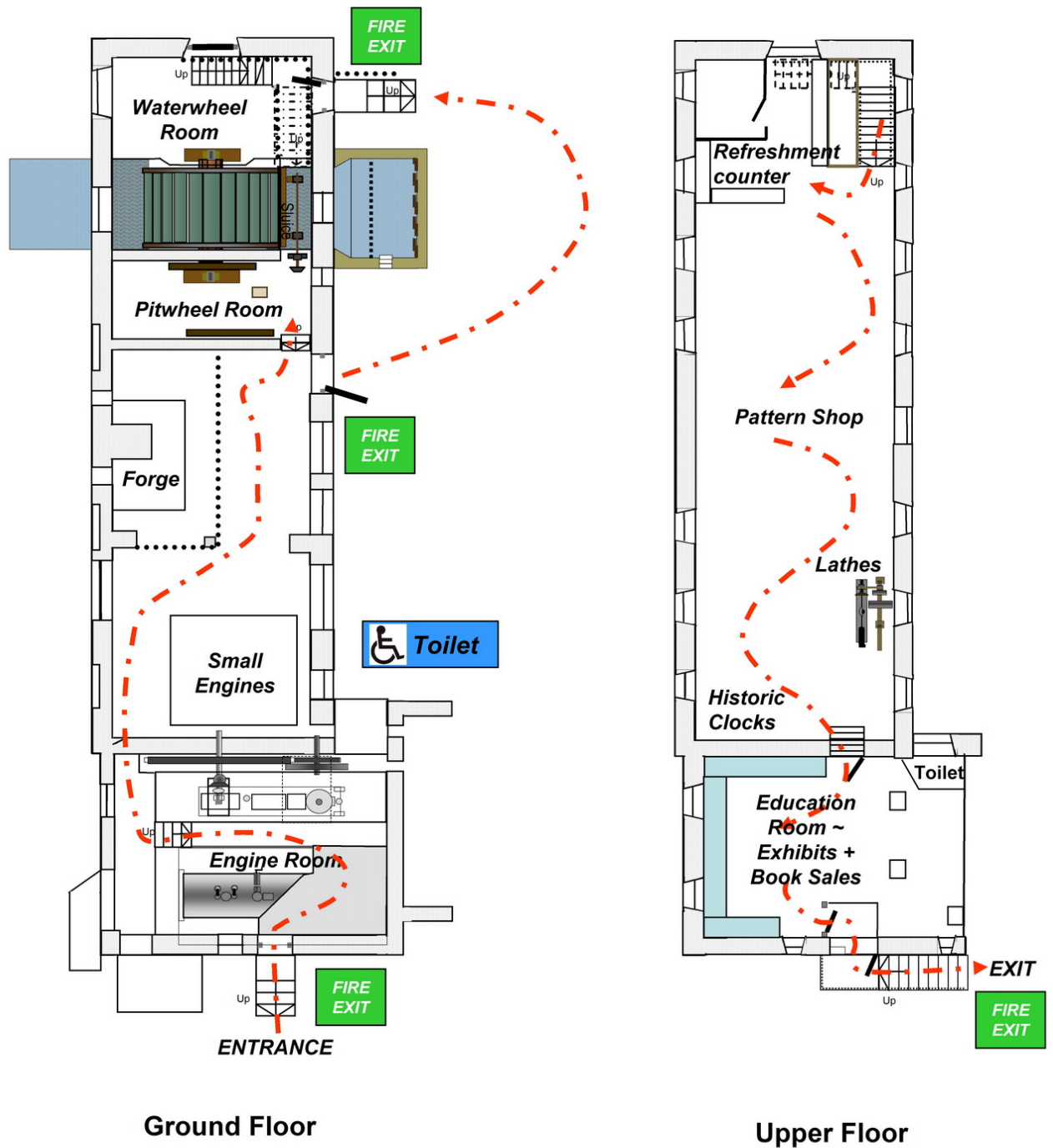


Figure 1 Combe Mill Floor Plans

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## Fire Exits

Fire exits on the ground floor are the engine room entrance door or the workshop door to the rear yard. The waterwheel room has its own fire exit.

The fire exits from the pattern shop are down the staircase and out via the waterwheel door to the rear yard, or through the Education Room and down the outside stairs.

All exits are marked on the floor plans – Figure 1.

## Arrival & Car Parking Facilities

Supervised car parking is available on Sunday Steaming Events and we can cater for about 150 cars at any one time.

There is adequate parking for the occasional visitor to our Wednesday and Sunday viewing days – non-steaming days. However, we encourage groups of visitors to come by minibus or coach because parking is limited. There is space to park and turn round a standard coach.

If you are disabled you can be dropped off at the front entrance to the Mill or at the rear door to the workshop where volunteers will assist you in your tour if you ask for help.

The car parking surface is a mixture of tarmac and gravel as is the walk to the front of the mill building.

## Main Entrance & Reception

On steaming days tickets are on sale at the front entrance of the mill where you can also purchase our Guide book.

You enter the building down two steps and are directly on top of the Cornish boiler which is no longer in service. Wheelchair access is possible – just ask for assistance. A wheelchair ramp is available.

There is no defined reception area and once you enter the mill you see the steam beam engine from a viewing platform from which you can descend to see the Cornish boiler before proceeding into the forge area.

The route from the engine room to the forge/workshop is unsuitable for wheelchairs and we recommend that disabled ticket holders re-enter the workshop area from the rear of the building.

On non-steaming days visitors ascend the outside stairs and enter the Mill via the Education Room where tickets and guidebooks are sold. Stewards are on duty and can advise disabled visitors on how to access the building if required.

## Public Areas – General

To reduce congestion inside the building you are encouraged to walk through the mill starting at the front door and leaving the ground floor from the workshop door to the rear yard which gives access to the car park.

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We also prefer that you enter the upper floor using the rear inside stairs and leave via the Education Room and down the front external stairs.

### ***Engine Room***

You enter the engine room through the front door and are protected from touching the moving parts of the beam engine by safety barriers. Potentially hot steam and condensate pipes are thermally lagged.

If you are above average height there are a couple of places where you might need to stoop.

There is a viewing platform where diagrams and photographs explain how the engine and boiler work. Wheelchairs may be brought onto this platform.

There is a low step towards the front of the viewing platform and you then leave it down a short flight of steps to get down to the lower level of the Cornish boiler.

You can view the Cornish boiler although at present it is not possible for us to fire it up and raise steam.

### ***Workshop and Forge***

After seeing the beam engine and the Cornish boiler, you get to the workshop and forge through a narrow doorway.

The floor in the workshop is uneven and you should take care to avoid tripping.

In the workshop are several working steam engines and you should not go behind the barriers.

At the forge you may try your hand, under supervision, at making a poker. We supply suitable protective wear for this. Please do not enter the area behind the safety barrier without being invited by a supervising volunteer.

Moving belts in the workshop are fitted with safety guards.

### ***Pit-wheel Room***

Before leaving the workshop, you can go into the small gear room and see the pit-wheel gearing that once connected the waterwheel to the line shafting.

You can then leave the workshop through the rear door which leads to the rear yard and the picnic area.

### ***Rear Yard and Picnic Area***

You reach the rear yard and riverside through the rear door of the workshop area on level ground. The yard immediately outside the mill is laid to tarmac which leads onto the grass of the riverside picnic area.

We particularly ask parents with young children to keep their children in view while in the picnic area, since it borders on the river Evenlode.

By entering the mill building again the other side of the head race visitors can proceed upstairs to the Pattern Shop which houses collections and displays. There is a short set of steps from the yard down to this door and our volunteers will be pleased to assist with handling wheelchairs at this point – please just ask.

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The stairs to reach the upstairs Pattern Shop are of the open-tread variety and are fitted with hand rails on both sides.

There is currently no provision for wheelchair access to the upper floor. However, visitors may view a constantly running audio/visual presentation about the upstairs displays on a screen on the ground floor.

### ***Boiler House***

Outside in the corner of the mill building, where it meets the old sawmill, is located a wood clad building that houses our oil-fired steam raising boiler. You are not allowed to enter this building as part of the usual visit. However, if you have a particular technical query please speak to one of our volunteers.

### ***Waterwheel Room***

When you re-enter the building to go upstairs you are in a room with the waterwheel on your left and the mill race running through. The floor here is particularly uneven and you should take care.

### ***Pattern Shop***

The Pattern Shop houses the displays of artefacts, documents and historic clocks. It is reached either by climbing the wooden stairs in the waterwheel room or by means of external stairs at the front of the mill building which leads to the Education Room.

The pattern shop has a wood planked floor which has a few uneven areas where machinery was once installed.

From the top of the inside stairway you can walk through the Pattern Shop and enjoy the various displays and demonstrations of wood turning.

### ***Education Room***

The Education Room is reached from the far end of the Pattern Shop or by means of external stairs at the front of the mill building.

The Education Room is used for a variety of purposes including the sale of publications and souvenirs.

## **Public Areas – WC**

There is a toilet with hand wash facilities, for society volunteers, upstairs reached from the Education Room.

There is a unisex disabled toilet at ground level at the rear of the Mill near to the exit from the workshop.

Visiting school groups are welcome to make use of either toilet.

## **Refreshment Bar**

You can buy refreshments upstairs in the Pattern Shop and there is a small seating area. However, because space is limited we encourage visitors in fine weather to use the riverside picnic area, where you can bring your own picnic.

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## Shop

Publications and souvenirs are on sale upstairs in the Education Room.

## Outdoor Facilities

The riverside picnic area is adjacent the mill and on Sunday Open Days is fenced off so that small children can play safely.

At the edge of the picnic area is a display of working barn engines and machinery.

## Conference & Meeting Rooms

Meetings for up to 20 people can be held in the Education Room.

## Displays, exhibits, rides etc.

From time to time visiting attractions take place in the yard at the rear of the mill. In the past these have included steam roller rides. Displays of woodturning take place in the Pattern Shop on Sunday Open Days.

## Grounds and Gardens

The riverside picnic area leads via a footbridge into woodland owned by Blenheim Estates that are used in the course of school visits for the forest trail experience. Young children should take care crossing the bridge. Those intending to walk in the woodland are advised to wear sensible clothing – there are stinging nettles.

At present there is no gate on this bridge and you can explore this area and look back at the mill from across the river. If you do so please respect the flora and fauna.

Visitors need to note that the river is often fast flowing and deep at times and school children and teachers should take caution in such circumstances.

## Additional Information

A continuously running presentation is available on the ground floor for disabled visitors to see what is on display in the upper floor.

Teachers intending to visit the mill are welcome to make a pre-visit at no cost so that they can prepare necessary risk assessments.

## Contact Information

### *Address*

Combe Mill  
Blenheim Palace Sawmills  
Combe, Long Hanborough  
WITNEY, Oxfordshire, OX29 8ET

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## **Contact Telephone**

Bookings 01865 379402 or 01993 891851

There is no telephone at the mill and mobile phone reception is usually poor but depends on your service provider. We understand that *Vodafone™* coverage is the best.

## **Fax**

n/a

## **Minicom**

n/a

## **Email**

chair@combemill.org

## **Website**

<http://www.combemill.org>

## **OS Grid reference**

SP 41650 15050 Landranger map 164

## **Hours of Opening**

Steam events 10am - 5pm

Non-steaming open days 10.30am – 4.30pm (last admission 3.30pm)

## **Emergency number**

None

## **Nearest A&E**

John Radcliffe Hospital (9.0 miles)

Headley Way, Headington, Oxford, Oxfordshire, OX3 9DU

Tel: 01865 741166

## **Local Minor Injuries Centre**

Witney Community Hospital, Welch Way, Witney, Oxfordshire, OX28 6JJ

Tel: 01993 209458

## **Local Surgery**

56 Churchill Way

Long Hanborough, Witney, OX29 8JL

Tel 01993 881330

## **Local public transport numbers**

Stagecoach

01865 772250

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## ***Local accessible taxi numbers***

A2B Taxis	Oxford	0776 768 5257
Abacus Taxis	Witney	01993 709188
Angela's Travel	Witney	01993 771122
Olivers Private Hire	Combe	01993 891431 or 07713 214483
Woodstock Taxis	Woodstock	01993 240005

## **Disability Provisions and Future Plans**

We will be conducting a full audit to assess our compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and where it is practical to make improvements. We will seek funds to implement its recommendations.

We would like to install a lift to allow disabled access to the upper floor.

We recognise that working machinery makes it difficult for the deaf and hard-of-hearing to hear explanations of what is happening.