

School Visits



A visit to Combe Mill affords a wonderful hands-on experience of the history of small-scale industrial technology. See the old workshop of Blenheim Palace.

There has been a mill here since the Domesday Book and until 2000 Blenheim Sawmill provided timber products for use by Blenheim Palace and for sale to the public. The actual mill is run by the Combe Mill Society as an Industrial Heritage museum.

- See how water was used directly to drive the waterwheel and is now boiled to create steam to drive the beam engine.
- See how mechanical power is transmitted within the building to drive the machinery.
- In the forge see how iron can be worked more easily when it is heated than when it is cold.
- Look at the tools used to make boots and shoes, by wheelwrights to make cartwheels, or by farriers to shoe horses.

Many old crafts can be brought to life by handling the old tools in our collections and members of the Combe Mill Society are on hand to explain the various crafts and trades.

The waterwheel was the main source of power for the mill until 1852 when the beam engine and its associated Cornish boiler were installed to provide an alternative power source.

The waterwheel drove the line shafting which transmits power via leather belts to the woodworking machinery upstairs in the Pattern Shop.



<<<<The beam engine can be seen working and driving the line shafting. Other small working steam engines show how the design of steam power changed over the years.

In the forge you can see how metal is worked hot by the blacksmith into useful shapes such as pokers and toasting forks.

See how leather bellows are used to provide air to make the hot fire in the hearth.

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In the Pattern Shop you can see how timber was cut and turned for making wooden cart wheel parts and how wooden patterns were made for casting iron window frames and hearths for the Palace.



We can show you old catalogues and ledgers relating to the work of the mill at the turn of the 19th century.

Find out how much workers were paid in the early 20th century.



Pre-visits by teachers are encouraged as we can tailor each tour to suit your requirements. Such pre-visits are free of charge and can be arranged together with bookings by calling 01865 379402 or e-mailing education@combemill.org

An 'in-steam' visit costs £140 a day regardless of numbers - we need to cover the cost of raising steam. Non-steaming visits cost £2.50 per head.

Visit our website www.combemill.org to learn more.

Location: Blenheim Palace Sawmill, Combe, Long Hanborough, Witney, Oxfordshire, OX29 8ET

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