



Combe Mill

ACCESS STATEMENT

Combe Mill Access Statement

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Issue 1	Published 15 November 2012	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
Issue 5	15 November 2012	Revised after conservation project

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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 collection of historic working turret clocks.

Refreshments are available in our riverside Tea Room.

Pre-Arrival

If you wish to learn more about the museum you should first look at our web site 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 358694 and request details.

There is good access to the Mill for wheelchair users including a lift to the upstairs Foreman's Office and Pattern Shop.

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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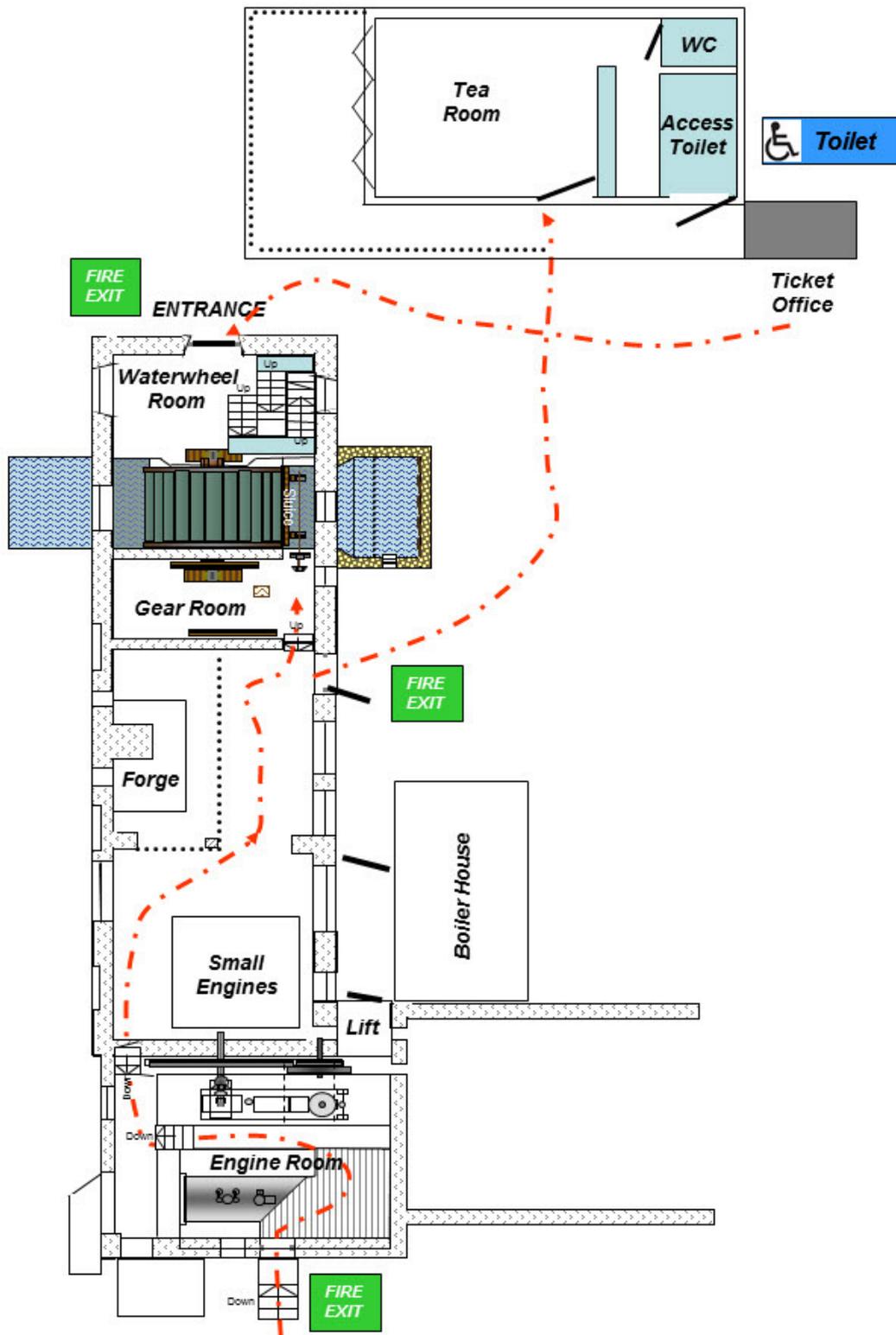


Figure 1 Combe Mill Ground Floor Plan

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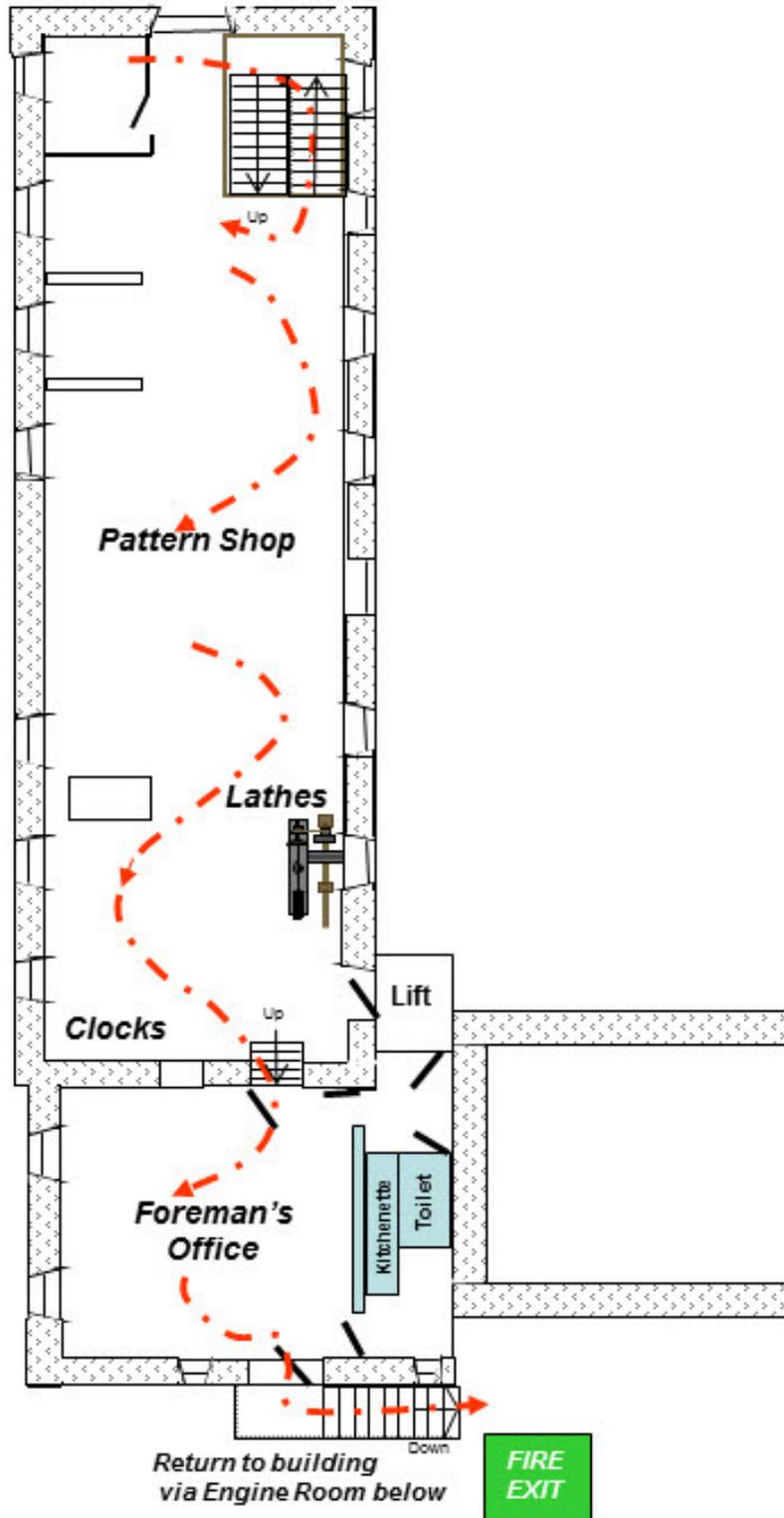


Figure 2 Combe Mill Upper Floor Plan

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Fire and Smoke Alarms

The Mill is equipped with a fire and smoke alarm system that will sound in the event of an emergency. Instructions for visitors on what to do in the event of a fire are posted at the exits.

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 Foreman's Office and down the outside stairs.

All exits are marked on the floor plans – Figures 1 and 2.

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 Open 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.

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

Public Areas – General

To reduce congestion inside the building you are encouraged to walk through the mill starting at the main Waterwheel Room door and then continue upstairs through the Pattern Shop and leaving via the Foreman's Office before entering the ground floor through the Engine Room. You then proceed through the Blacksmiths Forge and leave the building via the forge door to reach the rear yard from which the Tea Room can be reached.

Main Entrance & Reception

On steaming days tickets are on sale at the Ticket Office at the rear of the Mill where you can also purchase our Souvenir Brochure and Guide book.

You enter the building after walking past the Tea Room and down a slope then into the Waterwheel Room. The floor here is particularly uneven and you should take care.

There is an audio/visual display unit in the Waterwheel Room where further information is available to watch.

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You can watch the waterwheel turn from a viewing platform as you go up the staircase when you can also examine the Time Line giving an overview of the history of the Mill and then reach the upstairs Pattern Shop.

Disabled visitors can gain access to the Pattern Shop by taking the lift that is reached along a short corridor between the Boiler House and the Forge.

On non-steaming Open Days visitors ascend the outside front stairs and enter the Mill via the Foreman's Office where tickets and guidebooks are sold. Stewards are on duty and can direct those accompanying disabled visitors on how to access the building using the lift.

Pattern Shop

The Pattern Shop houses the displays of artefacts, tool collections and historic clocks. It is reached either by climbing the stairs in the Waterwheel Room, by means of external stairs at the front of the mill building which leads to the Foreman's Office, or by taking the lift.

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

You can walk through the Pattern Shop and enjoy the various displays and demonstrations country skills including wood turning.

Foreman's Office

The Foreman's Office is reached from the far end of the Pattern Shop, by means of external stairs at the front of the mill building, or by taking the lift.

The Foreman's Office contains our collection of historic documents and trade catalogues and also a toilet and kitchenette.

The original wood floor is slightly uneven.

If the Office is in use for a meeting or group visit, refreshments may be obtained from the kitchenette revealed behind sliding doors. Children may also wash their hands here.

Off this room is the lobby for the lift and a toilet with hand wash facilities.

You leave the Foreman's Office and descend the outside steps to re-enter the building through the Engine Room.

Engine Room

You enter the Engine Room from ground level 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.

Once you enter the Engine Room 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.

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

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

On the viewing platform are diagrams which 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 it is no longer possible for it to be used to raise steam.

There is an audio/visual display unit at the Cornish boiler where further information is available to watch.

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.

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.

Gear 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, Tea Room and the picnic area.

Rear Yard, Picnic Area and Tea Room

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 brick pavers and gravel paths which lead past the Tea Room/ Access Toilet 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.

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

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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.

Lift

There is a corridor between the Boiler House and the rear wall of the Mill by which the lift is reached. This is a platform lift and accommodates one wheelchair and accompanying person. Users must keep clear of the doors which open and close automatically.

Public Areas – WC

There is a toilet with hand wash facilities upstairs reached from the Foreman's Office and another inside the Tea Room.

There is a unisex Access Toilet at ground level in the Tea Room accessed from outside.

Tea Room

You can buy refreshments on steaming event and open days inside our riverside Tea Room which contains seating for 16-20 with an outside deck area for a further 16-20 people. You might prefer to consume food sitting in the grass picnic area.

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.

Conference & Meeting Rooms

Meetings for up to 35 people can be held in the Tea Room or Foreman's Office.

Displays, exhibits, ride 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.

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.

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Additional Information

At points around the Mill are audio/visual display panels that provide more information about the machinery and history of the Mill.

There is a children's trail for Millie the mill cat at nine locations around the building.

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

Contact Telephone

Bookings 01993 358694

There is a telephone at the mill (01993 358694) and mobile phone reception can sometimes be poor but depends on your service provider.

Fax

n/a

Minicom

n/a

Email

events@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

01993 358694 (not staffed when the Mill is not open)

