



Volunteer Manual 2021

Volunteer Duties in a Nutshell



Thank you for agreeing to be a part of the museum team.

You never know who is going to come through the door, it can be very exciting and pleasurable experience for you, and the public!

Have fun!

Find us:

www.museum-newtonabbot.co.uk | 01626 201121 | www.facebook.com/Newton.Abbot.Museum

Volunteer Roles

1) Front of house (FofH)– includes:

- ◆ Welcome Desk
- ◆ Exhibition Stewards
- ◆ Enquiries
- ◆ Sales
- ◆ Visitor Numbers
- ◆ Fielding donation offers



2) Behind the Scenes– includes:

- ◆ Accessioning
- ◆ Packing
- ◆ Condition checking
- ◆ Moving objects
- ◆ Scanning and OCR
- ◆ Research, Transcribing and Writing

3) Remote Volunteers–

- ◆ Transcribing
- ◆ Research
- ◆ Social Media

4) Events Volunteers- helping at one off events, this can vary wildly

When you arrive for your shift please make sure you sign in and sign out when you've finished your shift. If you are leaving the building for a break during your shift please sign out (but remember to sign back in when you return!). The sign-in sheet is kept on the Welcome Desk.

This booklet summarises the main duties but laminated cards with full details of specific procedures are kept at the front desk, so no need to memorise everything :)

1) Front of House

The Welcome Desk



The Welcome Desk (and you sitting at it) is the first thing visitors see when they enter the main museum space.

Your main purpose here is to welcome the visitors to the museum and to make sure their visit is a safe and enjoyable experience. Remember, the museum is a public service and when you are on duty you are the 'face'

of the museum.

As visitors enter, welcome them let them know you are available for any questions they may have during their visit.

If they seem receptive, you may like to list the extra facilities available such as the tactile booklet* and audio guide* and let them know there is also a small exhibit/seating area upstairs. *Sensory backpacks* and ear-defenders are also available for visitors with autistic spectrum disorder or other communication and sensory conditions.*

Some visitors will prefer to look around the museum without much input from you and others will enjoy a lengthy introduction: it can be tricky to gauge what people want at first, so offer a welcome you feel comfortable with but don't be alarmed if visitors don't engage with you.

An important part of Welcome Desk duties is to record the **number of visitors** in the day book- these are broken down into adults and children.

The 'Good Goodbye': try and acknowledge visitors as they leave the museum and make sure they know how to get in touch with us with any complaints, suggestions or even complements.

*coming soon, not yet available

Enquiries

As a volunteer, being friendly helpful and approachable is much more important than vast historical knowledge. If visitor questions are not answered within the relevant themed display then enquiry forms are available at the front desk. Make sure they leave their contact details, otherwise they will never receive an answer to their question!



Complex questions may require some research from staff and the response will not be immediate, so it is important that the visitor is aware of this and to manage expectations.

If a visitor wishes to donate an object to the museum...

See if the Curator or Museum Assistant are available, if they are **not** available and a donation is offered to the museum (object, photo etc) please ask the donor to complete the ***'Possible Object Donation Form'*** (located in the red folder on the Welcome Desk). This form will prompt the visitor to include as much information as possible about the object they would like to donate.

They will need to take the object away with them (if they have brought it into the Museum), and the Curator will contact them to discuss the object as soon as they can.

It is important to avoid duplicates with the museum collection, or inadvertently accepting something that doesn't meet the collection policy:

"to only accept objects that have connections with Newton Abbot and its local environs or with the Great Western Railway."

Regardless of the suitability of their object, thank them for their interest and for bringing the object in.

If a visitor wishes to provide a copy of a photograph (but not the original)...

Occasionally people bring in photographs to be scanned so that we can have a copy, but wish to keep the original. In these cases we do not need to accession the scanned photo's.

Procedure for copied photographs:

Use the 'scanning photos' form (located in the red folder on the Welcome Desk) so we know (and have a record) of what we are allowed to do with the image provided.

Museum Sales

The FofH role will include using the till, taking payments by card and cash, refilling the shop stock. Full training on the shop till will be provided.

If you do not feel comfortable/do not wish to use the shop till please let us know and we can ensure you are on the volunteer rota with someone who is comfortable using the till (or we can always assist with any sales).

Bookings

Group bookings need to be approved by the Curator. Booking request forms can be found under the welcome desk.

The bare minimum they must fill out is: contact details, preferred dates and group size, but encourage them to leave as much information as possible.

Telephone Enquiries

The phone at the welcome desk will also ring in the museum office, so the majority of the time it will be answered by museum staff. If you know there is no one in the office during your shift, it's very helpful if you're willing to take messages for us. Use the supplied enquiry forms or group booking forms to record call information as appropriate.

In-Exhibit Stewards

If you are one of our new roving steward's your responsibilities are slightly different , you will either walk the floor ready to give help and advice to visitors, or have a particular spot and share your specific knowledge.

You are unlikely to have to deal with sales or donation but everything else from the stewarding section also applies to you.

Your additional role is to check the status of interactives and displays to see if anything needs fixing, replacing or cleaning. You are our eyes and ears inside the museum so let us know about anything you think might help us improve in future: recurring questions, persistent problems, places where crowds bottleneck etc.

Training required/provided:

- ◆ Front of House Skills
- ◆ Museum documentation procedure (optional)

Procedure for when you are unable to volunteer at your usual time:

If you know in advance that you are unable to volunteer please email or speak to Charlotte Edwards, Charlotte Dixon or Katie Petley-Jones.

Email: charlotte.edwards@newtonabbot-tc.gov.uk or museum@newtonabbot-tc.gov.uk

Important: if you are unable to cover your usual FoH shift, it is vital that you let us know as soon as you can.

If you are showing any symptoms of COVID-19, or have recently been in contact with someone who has been told to isolate/shown symptoms please do not come into the Museum.

Please call the Museum on 01626 201 121 (and leave a message if you can't get through)

Most of all: thank you for signing on as a volunteer at the Museum, without you we couldn't continue sharing our wonderful stories with the world!



2) Behind the Scenes

There are a wide variety of jobs that happen out-of-sight of daily visitors. When you become a behind-the-scenes volunteer you get access to areas of the museum the public don't often see. Here are the jobs you are most likely to encounter:

Accessioning:

Before an object gets to the store room it will be given an E-form (entry form) the white copy must be added to the E Form folder and the blue copy stays with the object.

Information about the object will be added to an accession card by hand, the object will be clearly described, measured and photographed. The object must be marked with its accession number.

The next step is for someone trained to use our electronic collection management system to transfer the handwritten information into the computer and attach the digital photograph.

Training required/provided:

- ◆ Museum documentation procedure
- ◆ Object labelling
- ◆ Introduction to MODES (optional)

Packing, condition-checking and handling:

Making sure all our objects are stored in a safe and stable environment. This could include moving objects, wrapping objects and checking conditions of items within stores.

Training required/provided:

- ◆ Manual Handling (if you signed up to deal with heavy/ outsized objects)
- ◆ Working at height (if you signed up for exhibition install)
- ◆ Object Handling
- ◆ Museum documentation procedure (optional)
- ◆ Object labelling (optional)

Research, Transcribing and Writing:

Transcribing: we have many old documents in a variety of handwriting types. Transcribing these documents is immensely helpful as it means we can search for key words on a computer, and provide easily readable copies for people. Transcribing can be done on-site using the original documents, or off-site via scanned copies.

Researchers: for this role you will need to be computer-savvy and passionate about all things Newton Abbot. Using our archival materials and digital resources to help the public answer their questions about the Town and it's people.

Writing: if you enjoy working with words there are opportunities to write object labels, exhibit interpretation, blog articles and more.

Training required/provided: none required, links to free online palaeography resources are available if needed

Scanning and OCR:

The museum has many paper based information files that we have amassed over the years to help with object research, displays and enquiries. One of our key aims now that we have moved is to scan all of these bits of paper into the computer. The scanning is in two parts– first the item must be scanned in, then the digitised copy needs to be corrected (sometimes the OCR– Optical Character Recognition- gets things wrong!

Training required/provided: Digitising documents

3) Remote Volunteers

If you are unable to commit to physically coming to the museum regularly some jobs can be done from the comfort of your own home. Transcribing and researching can be done for us via email and makes a valuable contribution.

Training required/provided: none required, links to free online palaeography resources are available if needed

4) Events Volunteers

Throughout the year we run a variety of outreach sessions and events. Volunteers in this area do not normally have a spot on the rota, instead they are contacted during the organisation phase of planned events.

Examples of events volunteer work could be: helping brainstorm ideas, organising an event, creating and disseminating posters, speaking with the public on the day, looking after tickets and much more.

Health and Safety/ Emergencies

When you join the museum as a volunteer you will have received a copy of our full Health and Safety Policy.

The key things to remember in the museum environment (particularly in stores) are be aware of trip hazards, never attempt to relocate a box or object on your own– check with staff first and always work in pairs.

Do not attempt to lift heavy objects or any high shelves unless you have attended the Manual Handling Training.

If you are every worried or unsure in **any** situation, stop what you are doing and ask a staff member.

If you have a security problem/unwanted visitor

- ◆ You have the right to ask the person to leave if they are not behaving in an orderly manner.
- ◆ You can call security via the walky-talky on the front desk, this is switched on and tuned to the correct channel every morning
- ◆ You will never be left alone in the building, museum and office staff will be in their respective offices

If there is Fire/Emergency

- ◆ Make sure that all visitors and staff exit quickly through the nearest fire exit.
- ◆ Call the Fire Brigade if you have time, or ask someone to make a call.
- ◆ If volunteers are in the Store follow the Exit signs and leave as quickly as possible.
- ◆ The assembly point is in Newfoundland Way Car Park (adjacent to Newton's Place)

The sign in sheet on the front desk should be filled in by all volunteers on arrival and departure from the building (this is the list we use in event of fire to make sure you are safe)

First Aid

First aid box locations and current first aiders are on display throughout the museum.

Questions?

Need to get in touch?

Check for info online:

www.museum-newtonabbot.co.uk

www.facebook.com/Newton.Abbot.Museum

Call us:

01626 201 121

Email:

Museum Admin:

charlotte.edwards@newtonabbot-tc.gov.uk

(if you can't make your usual volunteering spot, Charlotte will pass this info on to the right person)

Other Useful Resources:

- ◆ Museum Policy– this is all kept in the computer and in the museum office so if you want to see our official guidelines on anything, don't hesitate to ask
- ◆ Free online course about object packing (with video and test!)

<https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/Resources/e-learning/packing-museum-objects-for-storage/index.html>