



Fairfax House
YORK

Volunteer Role Description

Conservation Assistant

What is a Conservation Assistant?

Conservation Assistants provide vital assistance to the work of the house team by helping to care for house and collection and maintain presentation standards in Fairfax House. Working with the House Steward, you will learn how to protect historic items so that our visitors can enjoy them for as long as possible. Conservation Assistants also help share our conservation messages with visitors through demonstrations during opening hours.

What's in it for you?

- Becoming part of a friendly and dedicated team
- Learning new and useful skills
- Personal satisfaction, since you have the opportunity to make a real difference to our visitors' experiences
- Volunteering in a beautiful historic environment
- Enjoying new experiences and enjoying a variety of roles
- Discovering new things about you and what you can do
- Going behind the scenes and handling interesting objects
- Enhancing your cv and getting hands-on experience

What's involved?

- During the winter conservation cleaning period (January to the first week of February – see more below), helping to clean each room from top to bottom, treating each object individually; dusting, cleaning, washing or polishing
- Undertaking basic conservation cleaning tasks.
- Being involved in the annual inspection, checking on pest activity such as wood worm and treating as required.
- Alerting the house team to any items that are missing, damaged, deteriorating or in need of specialist attention: updating condition and inventory records
- Helping the Property Assistant to inventory and check any items on display and in storage.
- Learning the principles of good object handling and conservation cleaning techniques.
- During the Open season (February to December) supporting the house team to carry out preventative conservation cleaning of the collection and condition checking.

- Becoming familiar with and then following Fairfax House’s Health and Safety Policy at all times.
- Working behind the scenes in other parts of the house on a variety of tasks.
- Following security procedures to prevent theft or damage.
- There may be other activities where we could use your help.

The Winter Clean: Dusting down and scrubbing up

Every January after Fairfax House closes its doors at the end of another season, the staff and volunteer conservation team begin in earnest on their biggest annual task – the Winter Clean. Winter is the time when we are able to give the house, and the collection within, a thorough clean and check to see how they are doing. Conservation volunteers play an integral, hands-on part in this, working side by side with the House Team.

The team carefully dismantles our annual *Keeping of Christmas* exhibition putting everything carefully away for next year. Then after meticulously covering furniture in dust sheets, they move systematically through the whole house, room by room, and object by object, to deep clean, check and inventory so that all our items are ready for the new season starting in February. Professional conservation treatment also happens during this period, and any special building works or installations. It’s a busy time and a tight schedule but the whole team pulls together to make sure everything is in order and thoroughly ready for the year ahead.

This role will suit people who... enjoy working as part of a team, and have an enthusiasm for learning conservation techniques, a good eye for detail and an interest in historic collections. Ideally, conservation assistants will also be able to work from a ladder and lift objects.

Extra information

Time commitment

Intensively during the Winter Clean or on a regular basis during the house’s open season – usually one morning a week throughout the year. As much or as little as you can commit to.

Staff Contact: House Steward

What you need to wear

Bring sensible clothes for working, casual clothing, flat shoes and lots of layers for cooler days.

Training/Resources General induction and ‘on the job’ training under the guidance of the House Steward, Property Assistant and house team.

This role is purely voluntary and this arrangement is not meant to be a legally binding one or an employment contract.