Conservation Cleaning Volunteer

Role Description

Responsible to: Heritage Building & Facilities Manager
Time Commitment: Approximately 2 hours per fortnight, on a Tuesday or Thursday morning.
Regular activity times:

- Tuesday, 10:00-12:00
- Thursday, 10:00-12:00

About the Role

As a Conservation Cleaning Volunteer, you will play an important role in caring for the historic interiors and collections of The Bishop's Palace. Through careful and methodical cleaning, you will help preserve the building's historic character, protect its contents from deterioration, and ensure that visitors continue to enjoy the Palace at its best.

Dust is one of the most persistent challenges in historic buildings. It accumulates on furniture, fixtures, architectural features and collection items, carrying particles that can cause abrasion, attract insect pests, encourage mould growth in damp conditions, and accelerate the deterioration of sensitive materials. Regular conservation cleaning is therefore an essential part of collections care and preventative conservation.

You will help maintain high standards of care throughout the historic house. The programme focuses on the systematic cleaning of historic rooms, objects and interior features.

What You Will Do

Volunteers will undertake conservation cleaning tasks using specialist equipment and techniques appropriate to historic environments.

A backpack vacuum cleaner is used in conjunction with specialist conservation tools. Historic surfaces are not vacuumed directly; instead, soft natural-hair brushes are used to carefully lift dust while it is captured by the vacuum. Full training and guidance will be provided.

Some particularly fragile or specialist objects will be excluded from volunteer cleaning activities and will remain under the care of trained staff or professional conservators.

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What We're Looking For

We are seeking volunteers who have an interest in heritage, collections care or conservation, and who enjoy practical, hands-on work.

The role particularly suits individuals who are:

- Careful, patient and methodical in their approach.
- Comfortable working around historic objects and sensitive materials.
- Able to follow instructions and established conservation procedures.
- Observant and able to pay close attention to detail.
- Interested in learning new skills and contributing to the preservation of a nationally significant heritage site.

When undertaking conservation cleaning, protecting the object is always the priority. Volunteers are encouraged to work at a pace that allows tasks to be completed safely and carefully rather than quickly.

Physical Requirements

This role involves a reasonable level of physical activity. Volunteers should be comfortable with:

- Crouching, kneeling and working at low levels for extended periods.
- Wearing and operating a backpack vacuum cleaner for periods of time.
- Carrying out light handling of objects where appropriate and under staff guidance.

Knee pads and hearing protection will be provided where required.

Some working at height is involved, and all volunteers shall receive training in safe ladder use.

Training and Support

No previous conservation experience is required. Volunteers will receive training in conservation cleaning techniques, object handling awareness and the safe use of equipment before participating in the programme. Ongoing support and guidance will be provided by Palace staff.

Registering Your Interest

We are currently seeking expressions of interest for Conservation Cleaning Volunteer positions. Training sessions will be arranged later in the year, after which volunteers will join the conservation cleaning programme.

This is an excellent opportunity to work closely with historic interiors and collections while helping to safeguard The Bishop's Palace for future generations.

If you are interested in becoming a Conservation Cleaning Volunteer, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please get in touch with the Community Engagement Manager.

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