



Residential volunteers' handbook



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A message from the Director

Welcome to The Magdalen Environmental Trust a place which I hope you will enjoy becoming part of. We look forward to your valued contribution and getting to know you better.

As you will discover Magdalen means different things to different people. It is part of The Wessex Foundation, an educational and environmental charity that seeks to provide an inspirational exploration of sustainability, organic food production and ecological land management. It calls on a diverse range of managed and natural habitats, interpretation materials, workshops and courses. The Magdalen Environmental Trust offers visitors the opportunity to deepen their understanding of their environment and to develop a greater sensitivity towards it. Reconnecting with the physical environment and developing a sense of responsibility towards it and each other, is a source of growth and inspiration for all participants.

Our purpose is to:

- Help people recognize their environment as integral to their wellbeing
- Strive towards sustainability in our practices, and demonstrate it in action
- Provide understanding and enhanced wellbeing through inspirational experiential learning for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds
- To use sound organic farming and conservation practices which enhance biodiversity, while recognizing the needs of a hungry world

A dynamic and inspiring team of staff and volunteers has been developed here at Magdalen, which works incredibly hard in an inspiring place. It is this team who are the key to Magdalen's success and I hope you never feel like "just another volunteer".

We try to take a holistic approach to work, integrating ideas about education and sustainability, supporting best environmental practice at all times, and not always adopting the most conventional way of doing things. It seems to work most of the time!

We very much look forward to having you on the team.

Giles Aspinall



A bit about Magdalen

In 1990 Alan Heeks formed The Wessex Foundation, an environmental education charity, which bought Magdalen Farm. The first three years were spent renovating the farmhouse, farm buildings and farmyard - now the courtyard. Many people worked on the site in the early years, often on training courses through the building trade.

Since the conversion most of our work has been with primary and secondary schools: to help them learn about the environment and sustainability. We attract groups from across the country whilst weekends have usually been booked by adult groups, health groups, businesses or for private receptions. Recently we have developed successful programmes in management training, team building, built up a range of rural craft courses and built a reputation as a venue for “green” weddings. We also have a Care Farming facility here, where we offer therapeutic day and residential visits to people who are disadvantaged in some way.

We insist that all our courses and activities are rooted in sound ethical and environmental practices. Over the years, the Project has increasingly become recognised as offering practical examples of sustainable development and ecological land management whilst pioneering new courses in education for sustainability.

The farm converted to organic status in 1990, although it is thought the land was farmed extensively during the years before then with little or no chemicals being used.

Currently our horticultural enterprise is focused squarely on feeding the many thousands of visitors we have per year (eating in excess of 20,000 meals). Future investment has been allocated to build up fertility on the smallholding and to develop the farm to better demonstrate practices needed by smallholders and farmers.

A number of sustainable buildings have been erected and brought into use by the Project: a thatched straw bale round house, a straw bale shed with a sedum roof, a recycled tool shed and in the summer of 2009, a timber outdoor classroom.



The Magdalen Team

There is never a typical day here which I am sure will be both interesting but equally frustrating when trying to find someone or something! Lunch is always a good time to catch up and is often shared with 60 school children who are experiencing their first trip away from home.

Because of the diverse work we do we can be focused on a number of aspects of the business at the same time and can, on occasion, be guilty of not seeming to give you the full support you require. This is not an excuse, but a plea for you to ask if you need help.

That said, to give you an idea of who is who, the team is divided into the following (there's a diagram on the next page):

- The Senior management Team—the Director, Facilities Manager, Business Manager and Finance Manager
- The Hospitality team including the Housekeeper, Catering Team Leader and Cook
- The Learning and Wellbeing Team including the Education Team Leader, Farm Overseer and Care Farming Manager. They are responsible for managing the Outreach Teachers, Organic Kitchen Gardener, Farm Education Officer and Residential Volunteers.
- The Management, Administration and Overheads Team, comprising of the Development Manager, Accounts Clerk, Apprentice and Day Volunteers

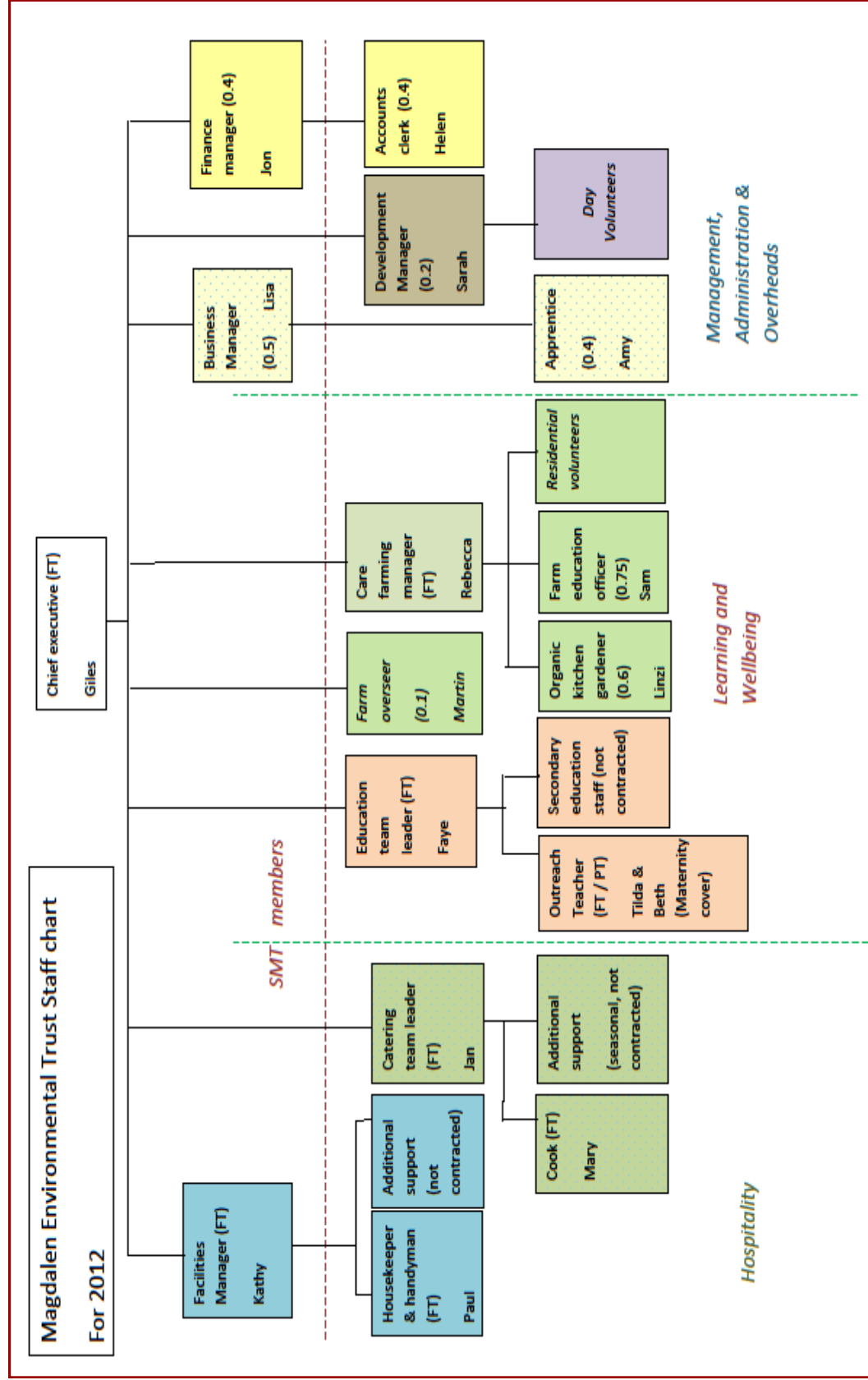
Trustees - actually these ought to be at the top of the list as they are responsible for the whole Project, but they are unlikely to impact on your time here unless there is a meeting scheduled and then you will meet them



Some of the Magdalen Team have a go at the low ropes . . .communicating well . . . and not so well . . .!



The Magdalen Team



What you can expect from us

A supportive, respectful and patient relationship

A dedicated supervisor / mentor

Good food and refreshment breaks

Accommodation and laundry facilities

Suitable tools and equipment

A weekly timetable or access to a list for self directed work

Reviews at least monthly so we can reflect on your work and take on board any requests or suggestions you may have

Appropriate instruction and coaching where needed

A mixture of tasks and opportunities to learn

Public liability and employer's insurance cover



What we expect from you

Respect for our staff, land, buildings and animals - please value them as much as we do

Willingness to take and carry out instructions and requests made by staff

Contact from you before breakfast if you are unable to work through illness

A working week of normally, Monday to Friday and 9 - 1 and 1:30 - 5

That you make your own travel arrangements to and from the Project although we will offer help and advice about best routes etc

That you make your own insurance arrangements, eg travel, health, possessions and any other insurances that you might like to have

Adherence to all our policies

A willingness to practice sustainability day to day by switching off lights, recycling, composting, etc.

A typical day

- Wake Up** to the sound of the birds and farm animals waiting to be fed (this is the summer, of course). Wash and dress ready for work. Water the poly-tunnels (approximately between March and October).
- Breakfast** is at 8.00am for groups, go to kitchen early to see if you can help. The children and teachers are always fed first - delicious cooked breakfast with toast and marmalade, sometimes succulent Magdalen sausages or creamy porridge. Help to clear, and tidy up the kitchen.
- 9:00am** Check with the kitchen to see if they need any vegetables harvesting. (Please record the weight of all the vegetables and fruit. Take kitchen recycling to recycling area. Take kitchen compost to vegetable compost heap. Check your weekly timetable for jobs! Check risk assessments, ensure you have been given training and that you know where the correct equipment is and that you are wearing appropriate clothing
- 11:00am** Coffee and cake break, make cooks a cuppa!
- 1:00pm** Lunch break, Visiting groups are always served first, staff and volunteers must wait until they are told it is safe to dig in! We sit outside in sun and discuss progress on projects. We have a rota for clearing up . Another cup of tea!
- 1:300pm** Continuation of jobs., either horticultural, farming, educational or care farming.
- Break** Yet another cuppa and another cake, careful, you'll soon start putting on weight!
- Later** Final job for the day is watering in the polytunnels. Time for a shower .
- 6.00pm** Supper, arrive early to offer help.
- Evening** Rest and relaxation
Go for walk across fields or go to the pub for a beer or help out with an evening group and go to bed tired but happy – it will have been a tiring but great day!



Safety and Security



We take your safety extremely seriously - you should too. Understand what you are meant to be doing. Be prepared to ask questions if you are not sure

For every task there is a Risk Assessment. You should read these the first few times you do a job until you are familiar with the tasks and actions. Be sure of the safety measures for the task, if in doubt, ask

If you feel you are being asked to do something unsafe, you should refuse to undertake the task and recheck with your supervisor, or the health and safety officer, until you are happy

If any specialist tool or clothing is required, make sure it is provided, looks in good order, and that you know to use it safely. Always use the safety equipment provided. If you can't find it, ask someone. **Do Not** do a task without it

Fire - know what the fire alarm (and smoke detectors in the caravans) sound like. Ask someone to sound it so you are sure. Look for the fire exits. See where the fire points are in case you find the fire. Make sure you know how doors and windows open. Always treat the fire alarm as serious even if you think it might be a drill. Go to the fire assembly point

Read the Employee and Volunteer Safety Handbook, you will be asked to sign to say you have read it, understood it and will abide by it. Always ask if there is anything you do not understand

Do not use any machinery unless asked to do so and then not until you are sure you can use it safely - get trained first

If you have an accident or injury, inform a member of staff, get advice or treatment from a First Aider, ensure the accident is recorded in the accident book

Animals - be quiet and calm around them. Beware they can bite. Do not feed them anything the farm staff haven't instructed you to

Tools - are often sharp. You may be asked to use them on the farm, in the garden or in the kitchen. Beware of the dangers

Employee Safety Handbook - you should be given this to read. If not ask for it now

Insurance - we have public and employers liability insurance and you are covered for the most part under this. Take good care of yourself, especially your belongings as we are unable to cover your personal effects

Drugs - not allowed ever. Anyone found with them will leave immediately

Smoking - not allowed in any building, bedroom, caravan or tent. Ask staff where to smoke. We do not smoke in front of any of our visitors

When there are no residential visitors you will be expected to cater for yourself. Familiarise yourself with the cooking facilities, discuss with the kitchen staff. There is further information about catering later on in this pack

If you see a health and safety hazard, report it to your supervisor or the health and safety officer. They will log it and take the necessary action

Hygiene - wash hands and use the disinfectant hand cleanser after working on the farm or with animals and before meals

Gates - Leave gates as you find them, do not climb over them

Machinery - Do not touch any machinery you have not been asked to work with, and Insurance - we have public and employers liability insurance and you are covered for the most part under this. Take good care of yourself, especially your belongings as we are unable to cover your personal effects

Gates - Keep all gates closed, do not climb over them

Electric fences - be aware. Switch off while you work. Ensure you turn back on when you have finished

General awareness of the terrain - banks, slopes and gullies can become treacherous in wet or icy weather. Take extra care around the ponds and by the river

Traffic - be aware of farm vehicles. Do not assume drivers have seen you as they may be concentrating on their immediate task. You are responsible for you!

Make sure you do not leave valuable items around. Ask to have, cash, jewellery or passports placed in our safe



Accommodation and Domestic Things

You may be in an upstairs bedroom, a caravan or camping. Any improvements you would like to make must be approved by the Housekeeper or Centre Manager first. Always remember and be sensitive to the fact that public areas such as the dining room are used by visitors, you may be asked to leave at anytime.

On arrival - you may be issued with keys, you are responsible for keeping keys safe and will be charged for replacements should you lose them

Bedding - will be provided. You need to launder this on a regular basis. Make sure you ask the housekeeper if you require more, do not help yourself

Tidying / Cleaning - your space will be clean on arrival, you are required to keep it clean and tidy at all times. Always return dirty crockery to the kitchen immediately you have finished with them. We often show visitors around the centre, your room, caravan, or tent may be part of that tour! Rooms are checked regularly by the housekeeper and centre manager to ensure they are being looked after. Please ask the housekeepers or centre manager for cleaning materials and toilet rolls etc. Accommodation will be checked before you leave and you will be asked to put right or pay for any defects

Personal Laundry - you are welcome to use our laundry for washing your clothes. Please liaise with the housekeepers on how to use the machines, the best times to use them and when and where you can dry your things. Be aware that bedding from school visits has to be laundered ready for the next booking so you may have to wait

Toilets / Showers - The upstairs bedrooms have en-suite facilities. There is also a shower, toilet and sink next to the caravan for campers use, you are responsible for cleaning after use. If you are camping on our camp ground there are compost toilets and an outside sink at the bottom of the field. It may be possible for you to use the showers in the centre, please liaise with the Centre staff about appropriate times to do this. **Do not use without asking first on every occasion.**

Fire - there are extinguishers in every area and a fire bucket on the campsite. Caravans have smoke detectors - check they work on arrival so you know what they sound like. Find out where the fire assembly point is. **Do not use the fire extinguishers unless you are trained to do so**

Guests (yours) - It may be possible to accommodate a guest for the odd day, always ask first, they will be asked to make a monetary contribution for accommodation and food

Visitors (ours) - please be very sensitive about associating with guests. Be aware they have made private bookings to be here as a discrete group. Most are friendly and may invite you to join them for an activity / chat in your free time. Please don't assume that you can join in or ever invite yourself - it makes things awkward for all.

Tools and Safety

During your time as a volunteer at Magdalen you will be involved with a variety of tasks, whether this is working in the vegetable gardens, helping out in the kitchen or any of the other numerous jobs around the site. Whilst working on, preparing for and tidying up after these tasks you will be expected to follow the guidance notes below. These are designed to ensure your safety and that of the people around you and to make sure that any tools used are kept in good order for the next time you or anyone else may use them.

Always be sure of the safety measures of the task you have been asked to do. If in doubt ask someone

Use any safety equipment that is provided. If you require some equipment that has not been provided then ask a member of staff

Understand what it is you are meant to be doing and again, ask if you are in doubt

If you feel a situation is not safe then please let a member of staff know and they will ensure the situation is addressed

Familiarise yourself with where tools and equipment are stored. Be aware that different “departments” of Magdalen may have similar sets of tools, but kept in different places

Always clean and return tools and equipment to the correct place at the end of the task or day. It is hard to do this at the end of a busy day but it is essential otherwise we spend lots of time looking around for missing tools

Please keep the tool store neat and tidy. If you see tools lying around and have a couple of spare minutes then use that time to tidy up. A tidy tool store where everything is in the correct place means we can all enjoy our work without the frustration of searching for tools

Please report any broken or damaged tools to a member of staff straightaway. It may be crucial that they are replaced quickly

Enjoy your work and have fun



Food and Kitchen Arrangements

The relaxed attitude we appear to have at Magdalen is only achievable by good organisation and meticulous planning. There is no more crucial place than the Centre kitchen. Please ensure that you fit in with what is happening in and be aware that a seemingly insignificant action (or non-action!) could throw a big spanner in the help everything run smoothly.

Magdalen is committed to providing you with food and refreshments for your stay and will provide for any special diets or allergies

Food is good and wholesome, our aim is grow as much food on the farm for use in our own kitchen, failing this we try to purchase local food thus saving on food miles and supporting our local growers

When there are no visitors or staff to feed you will have access to the kitchen, you will be provided with food and shown how to use equipment safely, you are responsible for washing up your pots, pans and crockery. Always leave the kitchen clean and tidy

Please do not take food that hasn't been allocated to you as it throws catering arrangements into disarray

You will be shown how you should leave the kitchen after you finish (what needs to be wiped, put away, covered, etc) and what to lock up

You should never start up the dishwasher for your own use. It costs a lot of money to heat it up. If it is already on you should use it

Always check you have turned the gas cooker off

The caravan has basic cooking facilities. Do not take pots and pans from the kitchen without asking first. Please return mugs, plates and cutlery straight away

If you are staying in the caravan, you will be given tea, coffee and sugar etc. You can top this up from the kitchen during your stay ask the kitchen staff for help



Beware of mice, keep your food area clean and food packed away. Ask for mouse traps if you notice a problem

Times for meals are strict as we are normally serving to a timetable. That said there can also be delays so you will need to be patient if this happens

Breakfast is at 8.00am, Lunch at 1.00pm and Supper at 6.00pm. The kitchen staff will tell you if there is any change to these times. If you do not turn up for a meal at the correct time you will go without unless you have informed the kitchen staff and made other arrangements

Please wait whilst visitors are served before helping yourself



Advice for when there are no kitchen staff on site

There will always be a meal or the makings of a meal left for the volunteers, it is your responsibility to check with the kitchen staff on a daily basis

No food to be taken from the larder unless you have cleared it with the kitchen staff,

Any leftover food cooked by volunteers / staff must be put into plastic containers, put on the appropriate shelf in the fridge, labelled with the appropriate day sticker, what the item is, and who made it

When there are no staff in the building, at weekends or at night, the urn in the kitchen will remain turned off and the kettle will be put out for use

All dishes, pots and pans must be washed, dried and put back where you took them from

If you have used the cooker, check that you have turned the gas off and that the cooker is clean

Please ensure you leave the kitchen as you found it - clean and tidy

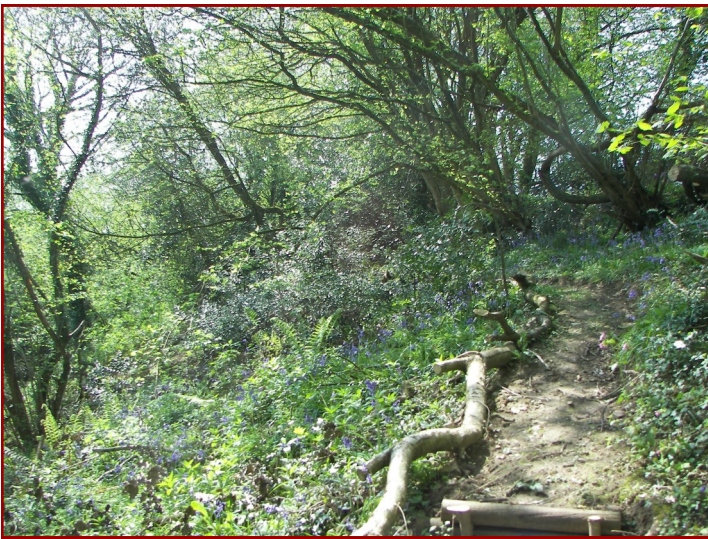
Bon appétit!

Communications

Computers - if you have brought your own you should be able to connect to the internet using our wifi, please ask staff for the password, always disconnect when not in use. If you need access to a Centre computer please ask the office staff when access would be convenient, normally before 9.00am and after 5.00pm. You should not use the computers without a member of staff being present in the office. Only certain computers can be used by volunteers

Mobile Phones and Centre Telephones - Some mobiles work a bit, and some only work at the top of the lane! There is a public telephone in the reception area - accepts incoming calls (telephone number 01460 30799). If you need to ring out on an urgent matter you may be able to use an office telephone. Do not use any centre telephone without asking a member of staff only, you may be charged if phoning abroad unless it is an emergency

Vehicles - If you have brought a vehicle please drive considerately and ask where you can park. You may be asked to move your vehicle to accommodate visitors or staff. You should have appropriate insurance, etc. you may be asked to produce this.



Free Time

The Magdalen Environmental Trust is fairly isolated and although you may be happy to stay around the site, we hope you will make the most of your time off to see as much of the wonderful Dorset and Somerset countryside as possible. Weekends in particular can be very quiet if there are no visitors you might like to plan some time off site then.

Staff that live on site or locally may offer to give you lifts if they are going somewhere they think might interest you. They may also invite you to join in some of their social gatherings – be pleased to be asked but respect that you cannot always be part of their lives.



The nearest village - Winsham, is 1 mile away (turn right at the end of the lane), there is a shop / post office which sells most things, and a pub called “The Bell”. You can walk on the road but there is no pavement so be careful, or across the fields. Ask the staff for directions or a map

The nearest pub - is “The Squirrel” and is about half a mile from the end of the lane (turn left) - it’s on the right. There is no pavement so be careful walking there and especially walking back after a few pints!

The nearest towns - for things like banks, supermarkets, hairdressers etc are Chard and Crewkerne, both medium sized towns with all the usual facilities, both also have swimming pools and fitness gyms

There is a bus service that goes to Chard, Crewkerne and Taunton, it picks up at the end of the lane by the sign. www.travelinesw.com

Day trips - there should be lots of information in reception about places to visit. You could obtain a local paper from Winsham to see what’s on locally. Forde Abbey is about the closest place of interest. Ask for directions.

Maps - ask in the office if you would like to borrow a map or you may be able to print one from the internet

Feedback

Review—at least one month after you begin your stay at Magdalen you will have a review to talk about your progress and if there is anything you would like to discuss or change. If there are any issues these will be discussed as and when they arise. If all is well then the initial one month can be extended for a further two months.

Exit Review - this is the best time to record your overall impression of the Project and to offer constructive comments on your experience. Anything that helps us to improve the way we work with volunteers work is welcome



Keeping Your Accommodation Clean and Tidy

While you are with us we ask that you keep your accommodation clean and tidy and that it is left in a good state when you leave so that those who come after you have a pleasant and clean experience too!

Accommodation will either be in an en-suite room main or a caravan. There is a possibility that you may have to change accommodation during your stay, but we will try to keep this to a minimum and let you know well in advance.

Daily

Always return dirty crockery to the kitchen immediately you have finished with them

Sort your rubbish and recycle what you can at the recycling point in the farmyard opposite the office buildings. Compostable materials need to be added to the compost area in the kitchen garden.

Any rubbish for land fill is to be put in the green wheelie bin opposite the office buildings

Generally keep your accommodation tidy. There will be occasions when the lounge in the upstairs accommodation is used for meetings, we often show visitors around the centre including volunteer accommodation, without notice so these areas need to be respectable at all times

Weekly

Vacuum carpets, mop bathroom, shower room and toilet floors, clean toilets and sinks, dust and wipe surfaces, empty bins

General

Laundry can be washed in the centre laundry but you will need to check with the housekeepers for convenient times

Report any broken items to the housekeeper without delay

Obtain replacement light bulbs, toilet rolls, etc from the housekeeper

Cleaning equipment and materials are available from the housekeepers. Please always ask as helping yourself may mess up the cleaning system

On Departure

Tidy up and remove all rubbish, empty bins and wipe out if necessary

Vacuum carpets and mop bathroom and toilet floors

clean sinks, toilets, tiles, showers and mirrors

Dust and wipe all surfaces

Accommodation will be checked to ensure that it is left in suitable condition.

Confirmation of Content of Volunteer Handbook

I have read The Magdalen Environmental Trust Volunteer Handbook and understand, accept and will comply with its contents. I will keep myself aware of its contents and any updates which I am made aware of

Name of volunteer

Signed by volunteer Date

Volunteer Confirmation of Content of Employee Safety Handbook

Please ensure that you have read and signed the copy of the Safety Handbook

If you have not seen the handbook please ask for it now.

