

York Museums Trust

Costumed Volunteer – Kirkgate, York Castle Museum



Opened in 1938, Kirkgate became the world's finest re-created Victorian Street. Its period shops and cobbled thoroughfare have captured the imagination of generations and helped make many fond and lasting memories for our visitors.

Having researched contemporary costume from the late Victorian period based on York Castle Museum's collection, alongside researching the daily lives of people working in Victorian York, we have made a series of reproduction costumes for volunteers to wear on this project.

Our costumed volunteers interact with the public, talking to visitors about Kirkgate and demonstrating the daily activities of shop keepers.

As a costumed volunteer, you can chose to be in the following shops:

Chemist - John Saville & Sons pharmacy opened in York in 1876, selling medicines and remedies such as 'Howden Stomach Pills', 'Ebor Cough Balsam' and 'Saville's Golden Liver & Stomach Mixture'. They served people from across the city, hospitals and even produced treatments for animals.



Sweet Shop - Terry's of York was one of Britain's oldest confectionery making companies, able to trace its roots back to 1767. They produced sugar sweets, lozenges, comfits and candied peel and later became famous for their chocolate.

Drapers – Leak and Thorpe opened in 1847 in Parliament Street, and in 1888 moved to what is now 19 Coney Street (now Next). They traded in a range of clothing, fabrics and household drapery for the latest fashions and were part of an industry which pioneered department stores.



Please state on your application form which shop you would prefer to volunteer in.

You will be provided with information about the shop you are in and will be trained in how to run activities appropriate to the space, which you can demonstrate to the public. **You will not be in character or acting**, all of your interaction with visitors will be in the third person; costumed volunteers are in place to inform the public about the lives of a typical shop keeper in the Victorian period.

You should be confident in speaking in front of members of the public, be able to engage with a range of people of different ages and backgrounds, and have the ability to quickly learn new information. Experience of cash handling would be advantageous as some shops have period appropriate products available for visitors to buy. As a costumed volunteer, you must also be comfortable having your picture taken.

Costume



We will provide basic costume such as shirts, blouses, hats, waistcoats and skirts. We would expect you to provide:

Men - black trousers (linen, cotton or wool) and shoes (ideally black or brown leather brogues).

Women – shoes (ideally black or brown leather brogues or lace up ankle boots).

Both men and women can also wear their own period appropriate accessories (such as jewellery/watches).

All costume brought in by volunteers is subject to approval by our Curatorial Team.

Volunteers must be prepared to hide or remove piercings and body art, as well as jewellery/watches etc which are not contemporary to the period. In addition, make-up, hairstyle and hair colour must look authentic for the period; anything which does not must be covered. Exceptions include items linked to health issues such as glasses.

Time Commitment

Initially, we are looking for volunteers who are able to make a regular commitment, and preference will be given to volunteers who are available during weekends and during school holidays as this is when the museum is at its busiest. However, flexibility is required as the training for this role will take place during the week. Volunteer sessions will have fixed times, morning sessions will run 10am – 1pm and afternoons 1 – 4pm. We are looking for a minimum commitment of 1 x 3 hour session per week with the opportunity to cover more sessions.

Ideally we are looking for volunteers who can commit to the project for a minimum of 6 months as it will take several weeks to get through the initial training programme.

Training

All volunteers will need to attend two mandatory half day training sessions. These will take the form of:

- An Introduction to Costume on Kirkgate and Customer Care training
- Specific shop training which will include any relevant activities and money handling training

Volunteers must use the information provided by the Curatorial Team, any additional research must be approved and can only be added after approval. All our volunteers receive a full health and safety site induction.

Volunteers will need to complete 4 trial sessions to assess their competence. Training and supervision on this project will be ongoing.

Other essential information

As a charity, we do not have a budget for travel expenses or meal allowances, so unfortunately we are unable to reimburse travel or subsistence costs incurred by volunteers in the course of their day to day volunteering.

We do cover the cost of all the training and training materials that we provide.