



# Friends of Coultershaw Newsletter No. 32    November 2023

**Welcome to our Autumn Newsletter**

**Our new look site...**



There was quite a dramatic change to the site in August when the Estate cleared the mostly fallen trees and undergrowth from the sand islands and eastern bank of the mill pool. It is now back as it was in 2011 and will be maintained as mostly grass which will make a great summer picnic spot.....assuming the floods have subsided by then!

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## **2023 season**

Possibly Coultershaw's best ever season with well over 1,000 visitors. Special events, notably the Trains day, drew in many additional visitors so thanks to all the organisers and volunteer stewards for making this possible. Remarkably, our open day income increased by 25% compared with last season. Our schools programme was another success with universally great feedback from the staff and children.

The challenge for the team next year is to sustain this level of engagement without the benefit of the Heritage Lottery project which ends in January 2024.

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### **Can you help?**

The Coultershaw Trust is looking for new trustees to help with the running of the Heritage Site and assist in the development of new ideas, projects and exhibitions. We are particularly keen to find individuals with an interest in curation, widening participation and publicity. The Trust would also benefit from trustees who are less hands-on but willing to act in an advisory capacity.

If you can help or know someone who may be interested then please visit the [website](#) for more information.

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### **Site works**

Our maintenance team is doing a fantastic job on the conversion of the old workshop into a study room and archive document store.



The South Warehouse floor is in the process of being raised above flood level and we expect to have this completed by the end of November. Our volunteer team will then set about renovating the walls and adding a central partition separating the workshop and exhibition space.

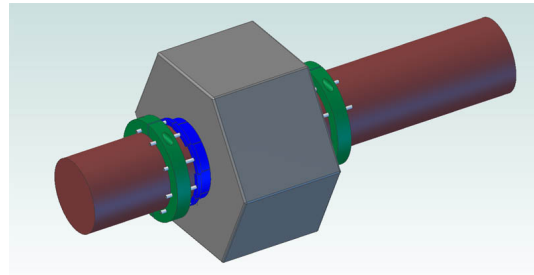
There is still quite a daunting amount to do so we would really welcome more help on our Tuesday morning maintenance sessions.

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### **Waterwheel**

Investigation of the problem which has affected operation throughout the

season has revealed significant wear to the main shaft and a misalignment of the very worn key which locks the parts together. The image below is a view along the keyway which shows that the shaft and the central part of the waterwheel were never intended to work together as they have different sized keyways!



After taking advice from expert engineers a new key will be fabricated to accommodate the differing widths of keyways and clamps and shims will be made to give extra support. This fully reversible solution has been sent to Historic England for scheduled ancient monument consent.

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### **Coultershaw Research Team**

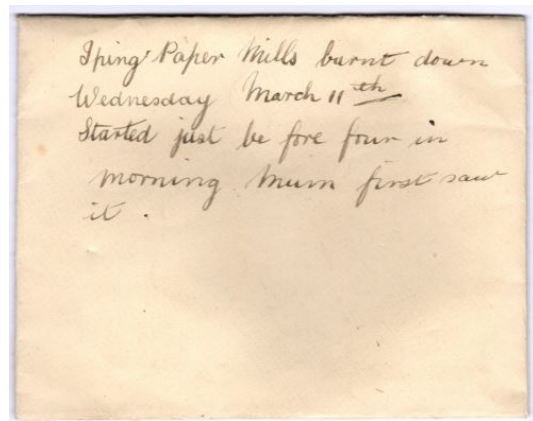
Hazel Flack has written an article on Iping Paper Mill, building on a talk she gave to the Coultershaw History Group. This is due for publication in the December edition of the Petworth Society Magazine.

You may wonder why we are researching Iping Mill? It relates to the [Rother Valley History Project](#), our recently launched local history project which will form the basis of the exhibition in the new south warehouse.

We are pleased to have support from both the Sussex and Hampshire Mills Groups and aim to build supportive links with other groups active in the Rother Valley.

The experience of researching Iping Paper Mill has been rewarding and encouraging as, apart from the hours Hazel has spent searching online, a simple Facebook post resulted in three very productive links, one of which is with the son of the lady who was the first to notice the fire that destroyed the mill in 1925. He has given us a collection of documents and artefacts, one of which is a small envelope containing three pieces of blotting paper (an Iping Mill speciality) with charred edges - a remnant from the fire.





This project has shown us the rich resources of knowledge and interest which still exist along the 45 miles of the River Rother and its tributaries.

We are a very small team and have a major task ahead to gather enough resources and research material to begin to fill the 57m<sup>2</sup> in the south warehouse. We are looking for others to join us in this exciting project.

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### **Coultershaw History Group**

Our History Group is growing in popularity and we have been enjoying a fascinating series of talks about local topics, although 'local' is sometimes quite a broad heading.

This autumn we have heard about Almshouses, Fernhurst Furnace, Petworth Town Band, The Wey & Arun Canal, Coultershaw People and Iping Mill. The social aspect of the group is important and tea, coffee and biscuits always play a big part each time we meet. Our last meeting of the year (13 December at 12:00-14:00) will be a social with mince pies and mulled wine!

We meet in the morning of the second Wednesday of the month and in the evening of the fourth Wednesday. We have a great list of talks planned for the new year - see [website](#).

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### **Turbine**

Having mentioned in the July newsletter how well the turbine was doing, just one week later the hydraulic pump motor (which raises and lowers the sluice gate) failed. Shortly after fitting a new motor the valve which controls the sluice direction also failed. Anyway, it is now fixed but only to see recent floods



preventing electricity generation.

You can see how the river level affects power generation [here](#).

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