



Friends of Coultersshaw

Newsletter

No. 38 May 2026

Coultershaw is free!

Entry is now free on all Open Days

Our finest museums and many of our great Cathedrals have struggled with the concept of free admission for years. Is it effective to simply rely upon donations rather than charge a standard entrance fee?

The comparison with national institutions is valid not because Coultershaw is similar in scale, but because the principle is the same: should places of cultural and educational importance be freely accessible, and if not can they thrive in an increasingly competitive leisure market place.

Free admission usually increases footfall, encourages repeat visits and strengthens educational and community engagement. For smaller heritage sites such as Coultershaw these benefits can be as important as additional income. Charging admission may raise a predictable revenue, but equally it could be a barrier for some visitors.

Early results are encouraging for both visitor numbers and income and we will report back in our end-of-season Newsletter.

Upcoming Events

24 May - Last train to Petworth: Model railways and much more

21 June - Father's Day with Vintage Tractors & Machinery

5 July - Classic Cars: Classic cars of all ages

19 July - Mechanical Music: A collection of mechanical musical instruments – big & small and intriguingly wonderful

9 August - Heritage Crafts

Coultershaw is open every Sunday with the Beam Pump operating alongside all the other exhibits. Why not bring a picnic?

See all events here - coultershaw.co.uk/open-days

New for 2026 – Hot Drinks

We now have hot drinks available in the Pump House for visitors on non-event days



This is not quite what we had planned as we had more ambitious thoughts on this subject. Consequently we recruited several young enthusiastic baristas, but unfortunately we were unable to use them – see below. Incidentally my solicitor has asked me not to identify individuals.

Our efforts to obtain an espresso maker were thwarted by the failure of our ram raid on Starbucks Petworth. Firstly, we had trouble locating the place.

Secondly, it may have been a mistake to use a male sheep, no matter how strong its horns were – next time a Range Rover. However, thanks to M*ch*ll* and the Cr*ft Gr**p for the face masks but next time, if there is a next time, can you include eye holes, please.

T*ny and B*rry, I hope to see you next Sunday provided that the T**sd*y G*ng can complete the human carrying drone in time.

Yours, from Lewes Prison,

J*ck

What's new in the archive?

Most people imagine archives as places filled with dusty old documents and fading photographs. To some extent that is true, but at Coultershaw we believe it is just as important to preserve the everyday material of today which might otherwise disappear without trace tomorrow.

During the Covid pandemic, for example, countless leaflets arrived through our letterboxes urging us to book vaccinations or follow the latest guidance. Most were quickly discarded, yet they now form part of an important social record. We also had a



volunteer walking around the town photographing hand sanitiser stations outside chemists and the now familiar notices reminding customers that only one person could enter a shop at a time. Such things may already seem distant memories, but future generations may well find them fascinating.

More recently, we have been collecting flyers distributed by candidates in the local elections. While many are currently finding their way into

household recycling bins, a selection has been carefully preserved for posterity. Parish magazines, too, continue to be valuable additions to the archive, providing a lasting chronicle of local births, deaths and, occasionally, marriages. Thanks to a recent donation, we are also now receiving the monthly Three Parishes Magazine, covering Tillington, Duncton and Upwaltham.

The Coultershaw archive now contains around 10,000 documents, and we are always grateful for donations of material that helps record the life and history of our community. If you would like to visit us and discover more about the collection, the archive is open every Tuesday from 10 a.m. until midday.

Miles

Craft at Coultershaw

A selection of crafts for children is always available on our special event Sundays.



We put things out that hopefully appeal to all ages and there are always volunteers on hand to get you started! Sometimes we like to theme the crafts to whatever is going on. Other times we mix it up. We find adults enjoy the crafts as much as the children. Look out for the Heritage Craft day on **9th August** when there will be lots of crafters demonstrating and selling their crafts. These include basketmaker, traditional sign writer, woodworkers, potters and more.

The Coultershaw horse and Stable are having a makeover...

Visitors to Coultershaw will soon notice that one of the site's most familiar figures is looking smarter than ever. The full-size model horse has recently been given a fresh deep oak brown coat together with a new striking white strip down its nose, helping it look more lifelike and ready to tell an important local story. Its mane and tail have also been cleaned and tidied, giving the model a well-cared for appearance. In addition, the stable is also being given a spring clean. The out of place man and woman models have been removed along with the old straw bales, the floor has been cleaned and there are plans to whitewash the back wall. Unfortunately, all this cleaning and tidying has meant that the resident rat has had to find a new home!

The makeover is more than simple cosmetic work. It is part of an effort to help bring the history of the River Rother and the old navigation at Coultershaw to life for today's visitors. Plans are also in place to give our horse a recorded voice, allowing it to "speak" to visitors and explain how horses were once used to pull cargo boats on the River Rother more than two hundred years ago. This new feature should add a lively and memorable touch to the display, especially for children and families, while also helping people to imagine the hard-working animals that were once essential to local transport and industry. By combining visual improvements with spoken interpretation, the Coultershaw horse will become more than a model. It will be a storyteller, helping connect modern visitors with the working past of the site. The newly



refreshed coat, neat mane and tail, and forthcoming voice recording all promise to make the exhibit more engaging. In a place where waterpower, transport and engineering history come together, the horse will offer a simple but powerful reminder that people and animals once worked side by side to keep trade moving along the River Rother.

The Tuesday Maintenance team. Work is continuing on the conversion of part of the South Warehouse into an exhibition room

