

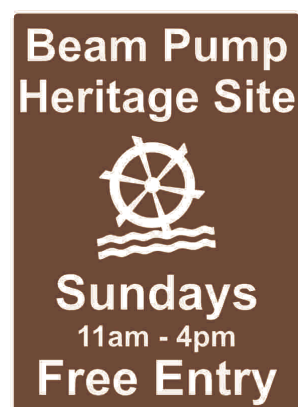
Friends of Coultersshaw Newsletter No. 39 October 2026

A truly record-breaking year!

Our first season with free entry has been a remarkable success. We were hopeful of welcoming some extra visitors but nothing like the 40% increase we have seen. New road signs may have encouraged passing motorists to call in.

There have been event days which were so busy we were unable to keep a tally of visitors though more significantly our normal Sundays have seen a 50% increase which keeps our volunteer stewards much more busy. We have received many appreciative comments from visitors regarding the heritage and the helpfulness of our volunteers.

Also, and unexpectedly, our income from visitors actually increased as many donated generously. All the donations received are eligible for gift aid, adding an extra 25%. Needless to say the trustees have agreed that free entry will continue.



Upcoming Events in the Warehouse - free to attend and all are welcome

Wednesday 28 October at 7pm. Treasures in Store – West Sussex Records Office with guest speaker Nichola Court

Wednesday 11 November at 10:30am. Charlotte Latham – The Godmother of English Folklore, speaker Miles Costello

Wednesday 25 November at 7pm. Arthur Russell the miller – Terwick, Bex, North Mill & more, speaker Tony Sneller

History group events will resume in the Spring and the site opens again at Easter.

Crafts at Coultersshaw



Three of the craft team attended a full day workshop at Petworth House and created willow and tissue mushroom lantern sculptures. These will form part of their Winter Wonderland display at Christmas.

A very enjoyable if somewhat 'sticky' day.

We had another very successful Heritage Crafts day in August. Visitor numbers were a bit of a record with cars parked in every nook and cranny of the site. A total of 14 amazing local crafts people demonstrated and sold their wares and all thoroughly enjoyed their day.



Curating Coultershaw



In 1879 the recently married Florence Rapley wrote a poem called My Home. She and husband Stephen were living in the former Turnpike Cottage just to the north west of the Coultershaw bridges. The poem describes life by the river between the mill and the station and we are pleased to display it just over the

road from where the Rapleys lived. [Click this link to read the poem](#)

The research team has been busy creating the exhibitions for display at Coultershaw. Among the highlights was The Gwillims of the Four Mills exhibition researched by Hazel that launched our 2026 season. It told the story of the Gwillim family who came to North Mill Midhurst in 1902 and were involved in running the mills at Fittleworth and Ebernoe until the mid 1920s



and Coultershaw until 1972. This was published as an article in the Petworth Society Magazine.

We also celebrated the use of the River Rother for pleasure with a new exhibition covering journeys along the river by the family and household of the 3rd Earl of Egremont as well as published accounts in the early 20th century. This story will also be published as an article early in 2027.

This, and other research, contributes to our Rother Valley History Project and will shape the planned exhibition in the South Warehouse.



Miles Costello writes...

I understand that the new free-entry arrangement has been a great success. It was certainly a brave initiative and not without some risk, however I imagine that it has made the administration of the open days considerably simpler.

As for the **Coultershaw Collection**, matters that affect the heritage site as a whole seem to have relatively little impact on the archive and research room, where life continues to move along at its own sedate pace, without any great sense of urgency. After all, it would seem rather vulgar to be in too much of a hurry when dealing with items that may have been around for several centuries and will, one hopes, still be here tomorrow. The adage 'put off till tomorrow what can't be achieved today' seems particularly well suited to the calm and measured pace of archive life.

The photographic collection, however, is quite another matter. Graham has undertaken a truly remarkable task in devoting so much of his time and energy to digitising this vast collection. The sheer number of images involved makes it a painstaking and immensely time-consuming undertaking, with each photograph needing to be scanned and digitally recorded before being carefully removed from its album, placed in an archival sleeve and properly filed for future reference. I understand that Graham has already worked his

way through more than 6,000 photographs, with many thousands still awaiting his attention. This is far more than a technical exercise: Graham is helping to safeguard a valuable visual record of our local history and, in doing so, making it much more accessible to future researchers and generations to come.

One can only imagine that at times the task must resemble painting the Forth Bridge: however much progress is made; there always seems to be another stretch awaiting attention. Yet the scale of the undertaking makes Graham's achievement all the more impressive. It is a substantial contribution to the long-term preservation of the Coultershaw Collection, and one for which we should be genuinely grateful.

South Warehouse

Our Tuesday volunteers have spent much of the Summer keeping the site looking wonderful but they have also managed to make some progress on the new exhibition space - it now has windows and the beginnings of a ceiling.



We were fortunate to have received professional advice on exhibition room design and are now incorporating these ideas into the next phase of work.

Turbine (Archimedes Screw)

Having thought that we had addressed some of the design problems causing early bearing failure, the turbine's 6th (and longest lasting) main bearing broke in July. After a lot of delay in obtaining the parts this is now fixed and the

turbine will, hopefully, spend at least the next 6 months generating electricity to pay for the repair!

