

In 1933, Rolf and Mariabella Gardiner bought Springhead. During his lifetime, Rolf contributed greatly to farming and forestry in the area. With his uncle, the composer Henry Balfour Gardiner, he planted the 3 million trees you see across the eastern horizon, which until the 1930's was just bare downs. Springhead became a centre for music and dance, with performances held in the mill room and the garden. In 1973, after the death of Rolf Gardiner, the Springhead Trust was established for the promotion of the arts and environmental study in the widest sense. Rolf's son, conductor Sir John Eliot Gardiner, still lives in the parish.

If you move on a further 50 yards to **C**, a view of the lovely natural gardens may be obtained – if the hedge height permits. But, all the same, please respect the owner's privacy. Behind you, to the south, you will see the ancient strip lynchets on the side of the hill. Between you and the lynchets is a large field. This is Netton Field and is an 'open field.' For centuries, villagers would have worked strips of this field, and used this field and the other two surviving fields to the east (across Mill Street) for rotation of crops.

Now retrace your steps to **A** and, if you wish, you can continue westwards along the shady drove to **Parsonage Street**. The little stone cottage on the left is **Scallow Cottage** or 'Scholar's Cottage'. The curate or assistant priest lived here, who was also the village schoolmaster or scholar. Look left and you will see the green hollow which, although hard to believe now, was the old main road from Shaftesbury to Blandford until the early 19th century. Wagons and the occasional coach used this narrow 'hollow way', which was metalled with flints and pebbles - most of the transport then was by horseback and pack-horse.

A 17th century rectory, demolished in 1870, was on your right, directly opposite **Little Orchard**. In 1871, the imposing **Fontmell House** across the meadow was completed and became the rectory.



FONTMELL MAGNA RECTORY.

It was later occupied by Canon Charles Edmonds, our longest serving Rector, who served the parish loyally and generously for over 46 years from 1903 to 1949, seeing his parishioners through two world wars and the sale of the village in 1926. He is commemorated with a plaque in the Church which was only erected there in 2018, on the initiative of his grand-daughter, who visited the village for the first time two years earlier. Fontmell House ceased to be used as a rectory when Canon Edmonds retired and was eventually replaced by the 'Old' Rectory in Mill Street.



Glebe Cottage, Parsonage Street

When you get to the far end of Parsonage Street, with **Glebe Cottage** on your left, take **great care** crossing the A350. There is no footpath and blind bends. You are better advised **not** to cross here, but to retrace your steps back to the start.

Welcome to Fontmell Magna

A walk round the village



The Fontmell (formerly known as the Crown Inn) in about 1905



A view from Sutton Hill, looking west

Price £1

Starting the tour

On leaving the village stores and post office, you will first see the **Methodist Chapel**, built in 1797 and once the oldest functioning Methodist Chapel in Dorset. Until relatively recently, it was used as a Doctor's surgery by Dr Tapper. The **War Memorial** opposite lists 20 men who died in the 1st World War, and three who died in the 2nd World War.

Next turn left up **Church Street**. On the left is **Watermill Cottage**, formerly the home of Olive Philpott, the village poetess. There used to be a water wheel here, which drove machinery, both above and below it, through a series of cranks to the old dairy across the road – now **Moore's Farm** which dates from 1787.

Visit **St Andrew's Church**, in its award winning churchyard. The church has a 15th century tower, but was largely rebuilt in 1862. It contains a Norman font, as well as the remains of an even older (possibly Saxon) font, and a 16th century carved oak screen. The church contains leaflets on the history of the church and village, on the six church bells, on the 1730's church clock and carillon (which chimes the hymn 'O worship the King' every 3 hours), and on the six stained glass windows.



Holbrook House & Church beyond

In the churchyard there are various memorials, including a large stone monument erected in memory of Lt. Philip Salkeld of the Bengal Engineers, who was killed in the Indian Mutiny in 1857. He was mortally wounded blowing open the Kashmir Gate at Delhi, for which he received the Victoria Cross. He was the eldest son of the Rector, Robert Salkeld.

Continuing up Church Street, you will pass the 18th century **Cleeve Cottage**, a former bakery. At the top of Church Street, you will notice a Lime tree, planted on the site of the village cross. The village cross was once a focal point in the life of the community. From here proclamations were made and the banns of marriage announced, market tolls collected and doles paid out to the poor.

In 1643, Parliament issued an ordinance calling for the destruction of all crosses of this kind. The broken pillar of the Fontmell cross remained until the 1870's, when it was removed by the parish authorities who decided it was



The old Gossip Tree at the top of Church Street c.1900

'doing no credit to so respectable a village'.

An elm tree, known as the '**Cross Tree**', had been planted near the cross. Having survived 250 years, it became a victim of Dutch Elm disease and, in 1977, it was felled and replaced by the present tree. The old tree was known more recently as '**The Gossip Tree**', from which our monthly village newsletter/magazine takes its name.

The next house on the right was, up until 1997, used as a tailor's shop, one of the last remaining working shops in the village.

As you proceed on up **Mill Street** the stream flows from a series of ponds, rich in wildlife. Ducks, Coot and Moorhen swim on the village pond and the rasping call of the Water Rail may be heard. This is the site of **Middle Mill**, a grain mill. The mill ceased to function by the 1880's and burned down in 1907.

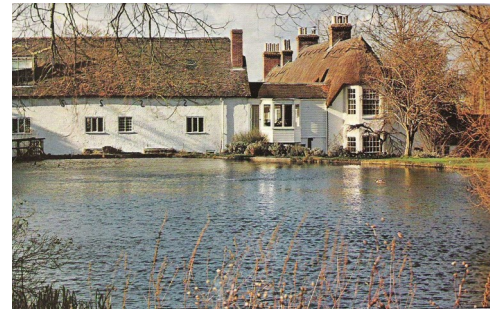


The tailor's cottage in Mill Street (painted by former resident Mary Edwards)

The old mill pond remains, terminating in a weir with a sluice, across which leads an ancient footpath to Sutton Hill (*see plan*). In the 1920's, two ram-pumps, replaced later by an electric pump, supplied water up to Ashmore village, 500 feet higher and nearly 3 miles away to the east. This continued until 1960. The huts containing the pumps still remain. Below the pond dam, the long, low house was once a range of outbuildings belonging to the mill. The Middle Mill site is an important community area and is now owned by the Fontmell Magna Public Amenity Site Trust.

It is worth visiting **Springhead** about a third of a mile further on. This is best seen from behind, as follows. Cross the weir and sluice and proceed up the footpath to the stile at **A**, then turn left (east) and walk 250 yards along **the old drove road** to Springhead at **B**.

The mill at Springhead (formerly known as Higher Mill) was used for a variety of purposes over the centuries. A Saxon charter records that there was a mill on the site over 1,000 years ago. In 1665, the mill was being operated as a fulling mill by Henry Monkton. Fulling is the process of washing, shrinking and drying long lengths of woven cloth on racks: the ground-up earth powder used as the cleansing agent is known as Fuller's earth.



Springhead

By the late 18th century, Springhead had become a corn mill. In 1797, Samuel Bishop rebuilt and enlarged the mill, whilst also joining the three houses into one. Later, his son Richard Bishop ran the mill while his other son, Joseph, ran Middle Mill. Richard later ran Woodbridge Mill and Robert Hussey became the miller.

The mill closed down in 1883 and Robert Cousins (who is commemorated in one of the stained glass windows in St. Andrew's

Church) converted it into engineering works, establishing an iron foundry, known as Springhead Works. He soon went into partnership with the Flower brothers.

In 1906, the Works moved to Wimborne and Springhead became the home of the Blackmore Valley Dairy Company. As well as distributing milk, cheeses were made and set to mature along the beams in the mill room - the greasy marks were still visible two generations later. With the 1st World War, Springhead became empty and fell into ruin. It was bought by an artist, Harold Squire, who restored the property and started the gardens.

The tour continued ...

Walking on towards **The Fontmell** (formerly known as the Crown Inn) you pass a large building, formerly a brewery with a manager's house (**Millbrook House**) attached, built in 1876 by George Flower. The large amounts of water needed for this industry were obtained from an artesian well at the back of the property. John and Augustus Flower inherited the Brewery from their father George in 1884. John Flower's eldest son was Sir Newman Flower (1879-1964), publisher with Cassells and author.

While both John and Augustus were trained for the brewery business, they were both more interested in engineering and were soon inventing and designing various machines connected with the brewery business, built at the Springhead Works (see page 6). In 1896, their 'Eclipse' Automatic Filling & Corking Machine and their 'Lightning' Hopping Machine both won gold metals at the Leeds Brewers Exhibition. The brewery closed in 1904. It was later used briefly as a Flax Mill and later still (1969-1984) as a pottery. The sign 'Fontmell Potteries' can still be seen below the hoist.

On the right over the main road, the Old Coach House, built in 2008, is on the site of a garage which was formerly the stables and Coach House for The Fontmell opposite.



Cows progressing up Lurmer Street

On the left over the main road, compare what you see today with the adjacent picture of the same cottage in 1926. This cottage is typical of many thatched cottages built in the village. It seems that it was once an inn and it dates from the 15th century,

Often built of ashlar and stone rubble, the buildings were usually single storey, with dormer windows in the thatch.

Note how, at a later date, extra space was created by topping the stone with brickwork, thus allowing the roof to be raised.

Now take great care crossing the busy A350. This is a main route from the Midlands to the ferry port at Poole; an A class road but with only C class width in over eleven places through the parish. Proceed up Mill Street. To the left you can see the grassy bulk of Fontmell's Fore Top hill. (The name Fontmell is thought to be of Celtic origin: FONT = Spring, Moel = Bare Hill thus, 'Spring by the bare hill').

Just after the entrance to the 'Old Rectory' (built in 1957) on the right, the stream widens out into an area which was used as a sheep wash until the 1930's. Opposite is Fernlea Cottage, previously known as **Glyn Gift Cottage**, dating from the 17th century.



Facing the tree is a stone and thatched cottage adjoined by a brick and tile garage & stable (**Gossips Tree**). From 1908, the cottage was used by the Fontmell Rifle Club, whilst the garage was formerly used for motor car repairs. The stable and yard were the site of the village pound. The pound was a small enclosure in which stray animals were kept until their owners came to collect them, on paying a fee.



Gable Cottage, West Street, next to the school

Now turning right along **West Street**, on the left hand side, you come to **Gable Cottage**, which is reputed to date from the 14th century (the date 1350 is inscribed above the left hand door). This makes it the **oldest building in the village**.

Until the 1920's one room of this building was used by villagers as a reading room – rent free. During the winter, there were classes for adults three nights a week, to help tackle high illiteracy rates. The Fontmell Rifle Club used part of the garden as a rifle range.

The **Village School**, which was founded in 1864, is still thriving. On the opposite side of the road from the school can be seen some thatched cottages. In front of one is a little conical thatched roof over the village pump, previously a tap. There were at least five taps in the village prior to the arrival of mains water and, within living memory, water was collected by bucket. The water came down by gravity from a spring to the north of the village, called **Piney Wells**.

Optional. At the end of **West Street**, about a third of a mile away, are our **modern Surgery and Village Hall** (with play area). Beyond this is the Village's own **Brookland (or Millennium) Wood**, where you are free to walk.

Retrace your steps past the **Cross Tree** and walk past **Cross House** dating from the late 16th century. It was originally a rest house for travellers on route to the Abbey at Shaftesbury. It was later home to the lord of the manor,

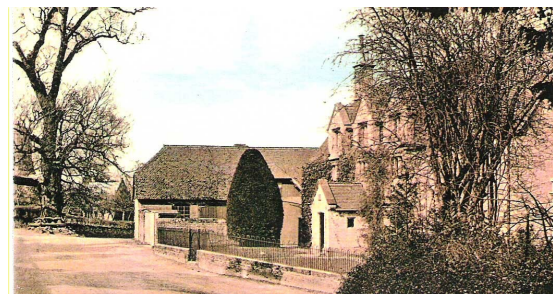


West Street c. 1900. The school is on the left.

Sir Richard Plumptre Glyn, who founded the village school and rebuilt the church in 1862.

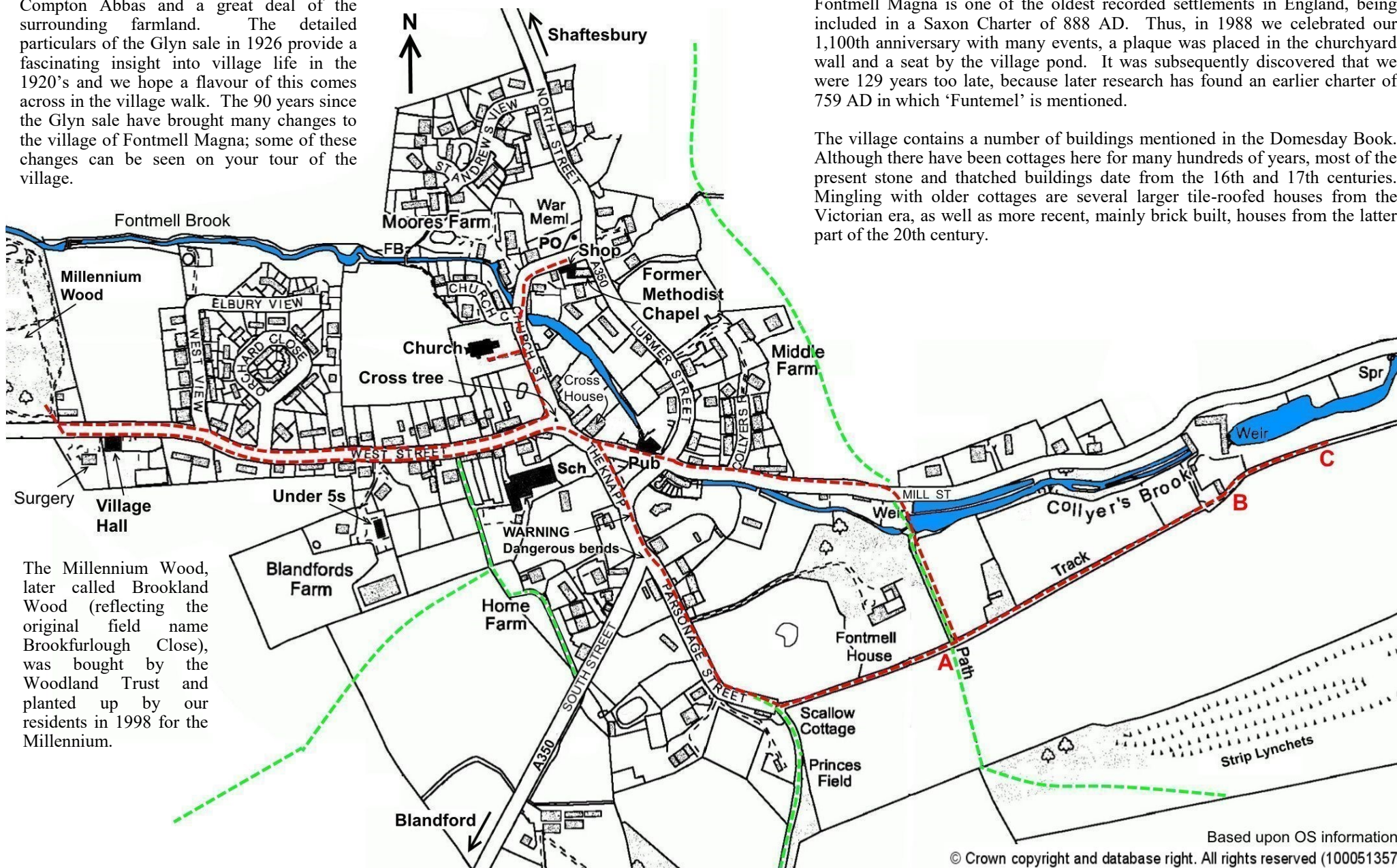
He also extended Cross House, adding dormers and front porch (on which can be seen the Glyn family crest - eagle's head with a scallop in its beak).

During the 2nd World War, the house was used as a rest home for American soldiers and later it was a small hotel.



Cross House

Until 1926, much of the village was owned by the Glyn family who, in the 19th century, also owned most of the neighbouring village of Compton Abbas and a great deal of the surrounding farmland. The detailed particulars of the Glyn sale in 1926 provide a fascinating insight into village life in the 1920's and we hope a flavour of this comes across in the village walk. The 90 years since the Glyn sale have brought many changes to the village of Fontmell Magna; some of these changes can be seen on your tour of the village.



The Millennium Wood, later called Brookland Wood (reflecting the original field name Brookfurlough Close), was bought by the Woodland Trust and planted up by our residents in 1998 for the Millennium.

The village plan

Fontmell Magna is one of the oldest recorded settlements in England, being included in a Saxon Charter of 888 AD. Thus, in 1988 we celebrated our 1,100th anniversary with many events, a plaque was placed in the churchyard wall and a seat by the village pond. It was subsequently discovered that we were 129 years too late, because later research has found an earlier charter of 759 AD in which 'Funtemel' is mentioned.

The village contains a number of buildings mentioned in the Domesday Book. Although there have been cottages here for many hundreds of years, most of the present stone and thatched buildings date from the 16th and 17th centuries. Mingling with older cottages are several larger tile-roofed houses from the Victorian era, as well as more recent, mainly brick built, houses from the latter part of the 20th century.

Based upon OS information

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