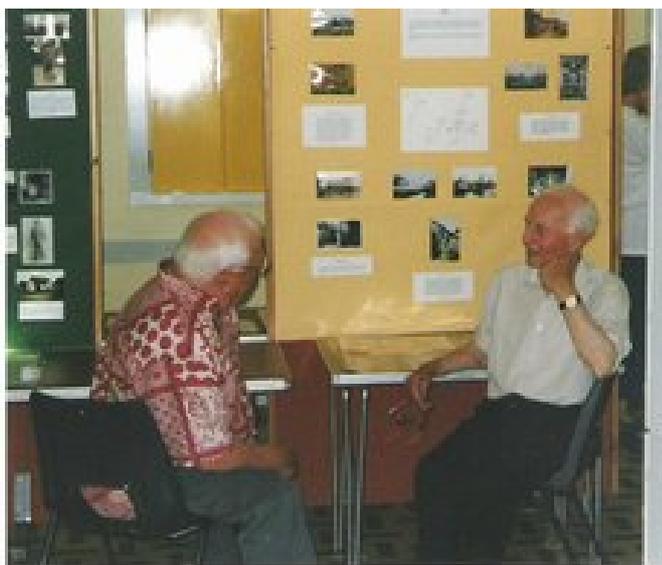


FONTMELL MAGNA VILLAGE ARCHIVE SOCIETY

How we started, who we are and what we do.

During the early 1980s, several residents had collected historical items associated to the village. By 1988, sufficient material was available to enable a week long exhibition in the old village hall, made up of the most interesting material from the 300 items then available. The first exhibition proved to be a great success and resulted in a further 100 items being brought in for identification, inclusion in the exhibition or donation to the collection.

By 1999, the archives had grown to about 2,000 items related with the village and its history and, having gained a glowing accolade from the Museum of Rural Life in Reading, a society was formed, with a proper constitution drawn up and a committee elected. The collection now comprises well over 3,000 items and is still growing after some 26 years, with about 50-80 new accessions annually, all with Fontmell Magna associations.



A scene from one of our early exhibitions.

Our Primary Objectives.

To collect, identify, preserve, classify, and catalogue documents, artefacts and other materials solely to do with the parish of Fontmell Magna, its residents, former residents and their relatives, then to publish and make known, worldwide, much of what we have in the archives.

Examples of Achievements to date.

As well as on-going accession and archival work:-
15 illustrated Newsletters distributed with 'The Gossip Tree', one major book in colour, two booklets and 5 other technical publications, two editions of the 'Village Walk' leaflet, 8 public and two privately themed exhibitions encompassing about 50 displays of village material so far, a website with some 43 articles, approaching 80 monthly workshops, two village data collecting visits to the Dorset History Centre and dozens of enquiries from across the world answered.

.... But we need more members!

New Accessions.

1. The Salkeld VC loan.

A framed illustration of the Salkeld VC loan to the Parochial Church Council in 1957, plus photos of the ceremony.

2. Chapel records.

A collection of the Chapel Records copied for us by the Dorset History Centre.

The August, 2011 Exhibition.

We held our 8th exhibition in August, which resulted in several comments of 'The best yet'. Approaching 200 visitors attended during the 4 days. There was no particular theme this year and members were invited to research and mount their own displays. Displays were mounted by Chris Bellers, Roger Hillman (who also oversaw the exhibition), John Gadd, Gay Mole, Geoffrey Tapper, Peter & Judy Westgate.

There was plenty of interest to view; for example:-

Fontmell to the rescue

At the outbreak of the 1st world war, all manufacture of brewing machinery was stopped and the Fontmell brewery bottling plant began making shells. In 1915, the Germans, with Dutchman Anton Fokker's help, designed what was called an 'interrupter gear' which synchronized a forward firing machine gun, making it possible to fire through the rotating propeller of its new Eindecker fighter plane. This gave it a huge advantage in attack, the pilot now being able to aim the whole aeroplane at his victim. Our pilots became known as 'Fokker Fodder' for 4 painful months.

Eventually one such device was captured by the French, but was found to be missing a vital part of the interrupter mechanism. The war office contacted John Flower, Fontmell's brewery manager and, with his engineer working all night, made the missing part, sending it off on the first train next day.

The Royal Flying Corps soon had the answer to the technological advantage, and Flower was awarded the MBE.

(Newsletter 15; October, 2011)

(continued overleaf)

A narrow squeak.

Springhead as we know it now, along with Rosalind Richards and her brother Sir John Eliot Gardiner, might never have existed but for a quirk of fate. In September, 1914, a month into the 1st World War, the Gardiner family were taking a holiday in Norway, young Rolf and his nanny intending to visit Hardanger Fjord up the coast, but they stopped off for a day to explore Bergen. The boat continued on but was torpedoed and all perished.

Two 'factory chimneys' in Fontmell.

A photo of 1920s vintage, shows two tall chimneys at the back of the old Malthouse (near to the rear of the village stores). Because of the low-lying aspect, these chimneys were the flues of the furnaces that heated the malt and carried the fumes up high to clear the adjacent properties.

The next Exhibition.

Because of the Olympics, the Queen's Jubilee, our street party, and not forgetting the village fete, all crowding into the summer holiday period in 2012, we are not holding an Archive Exhibition next year. However, we are already planning displays for 2013.

The old Sheepwash in Mill Street



The 'Sheep washing place'. Here's a scene that changed little through the centuries.



The same view today before renovation.



Looking downstream after cleaning.

The sheepwash was renovated by the Society in 2011 and a sketch plan made (see below). Many of the larger stones were lying in the brook and have been replaced on top of those forming the foundations of the layout.

As a farm student early in his career, John Gadd dipped over 10,000 Welsh sheep in 1949; he writes:-

The sheepwash was primarily used for **washing** sheep, not dipping them against blowfly and scab, which was usually done in a roughly circular tub alongside the stream so as to retain the chemicals as long as possible. The job was left until after shearing. The small pool marked 'B' on the plan, could have been used for this. Sheepwashing didn't use chemicals and was done to clean the fleece in late spring/early summer before shearing and a good dunk or two served to clean the fleece. However, the rear dags had to be removed with hand shears. This was a tricky, messy and above all, disgusting job, which the farm staff gladly delegated to the junior - which meant me!



We are always pleased to increase support for the society and welcome new members. Meetings are normally held at the village hall on the 3rd Thursday of the month, from 4.00 - 5.30. If you would like to help, please come along. Telephone Roger Hillman on 01747 811878