



Sutton Poyntz - A guided historical tour

Introduction

Sutton Poyntz owes its location to its geology; it sits in a valley almost entirely surrounded by hills, with a fault line in the hills immediately to the north from which a spring gives a regular supply of water - the grandly named River Jordan. For centuries the river has powered mills; more recently it has been the main water supply for Weymouth. The village was originally located in an S-shape closely hugging the stream's west bank.



The Mill Pond and cottages

This note is in the form of a conducted tour of the village, with historical notes on the main buildings and other features.

The Springhead

We will start (and end) at the village pub. This was built as the Springhead Hotel in 1897, to serve the growing tourist trade.

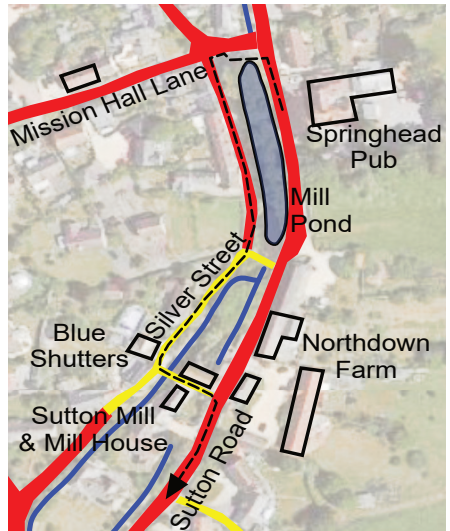
It had a garden, with a pavilion, for quits, tennis and croquet, and served lobster teas. It still serves excellent food and drink, but no tennis now.

Mill Pond and Sutton Mill

From the pub, turn right and walk up to the top of the mill pond. On the south side of the wall, there is a Date-stone put up in 1989 to commemorate the earliest written reference to the village - a Saxon deed dated 891AD transferring "*land that the locals call Sutton next the sea shore*" to royal ownership.

Sutton was still a royal manor in Domesday Book (1086), but was transferred to the Poyntz family very early in the 13th Century; the Poyntz family owned the village for only 100 years, but long enough for their name to be attached to the village name.

The earliest reference to a mill is in 1311, but it is not clear which mill. Two mills are listed in a 1435 document. The present Sutton Mill was built



in 1815, with a large overshot wheel that required a Mill Pond.

Walking down alongside the Pond, you pass a row of agricultural cottages, mostly 18th/19th Century but perhaps with some older fabric; the middle cottages became unsafe and were demolished and replaced (with some sensitivity to their location) in the 1950s.

Silver Street

Pass the footbridge at the bottom end of the pond, and enter the narrow footpath known as Silver Street (it is believed this name was made up by village children in 1930s or '40s). Following the line of the stream, this would originally have been the main thoroughfare for villagers.

The cottage called Blue Shutters probably has some 16th Century fabric, but has been enlarged several times from its original structure. It was the home in the 1960s of sculptor & stonemason Eric Morris - the paving slabs making up the footpath are apprentice-pieces by his students.

The water standpipe outside Blue Shutters is the last of 4 that were provided to the village by Weymouth Waterworks in 1898.

A planning application in 1945 to convert a store into a bathroom was turned down because of a lack of drainage; the Chief Medical Officer commented that the stream was "*already highly polluted*". The Chief Medical Officer had written ten years earlier that many of the dwellings in Sutton Poyntz were little better than slum quality.



Blue Shutters

Sutton Road

Cross the bridge opposite Blue Shutters and go along the path between the Mill and Mill House to Sutton Road. The house opposite is called the Old Courthouse, and is understood to have been used for meetings of the Liberty Court. Until 1830, Liberty status gave the Lord of the Manor some extra administrative freedoms from normal County structure.

The house and converted barns surrounding the Old Courthouse make up Northdown Farm; the farmhouse was rebuilt in about 1840, the barns are probably older. The earliest reference we have found to Northdown Farm is in 1648, when it consisted of a house, barn, stable and cartshed, with over 300 acres.



Mill & Mill House

Now turning south along Sutton Road, the Mill House is probably a little later than the Mill itself; the Listed Buildings entry gives it as mid-18th Century but a map made about 1800 shows the older Mill there, at a completely different orientation. Milling ceased in the early 1980s; both the Mill and the Mill House were rescued at about that time from significant structural decay.

Going on south along Sutton Road, one comes to the fork, where Sutton Road and Plaisters Lane meet. Here can be found what used to be the blacksmith's forge (now the garage for Bellamy Cottage) and the local carrier's Cartshed (now a car repair business).

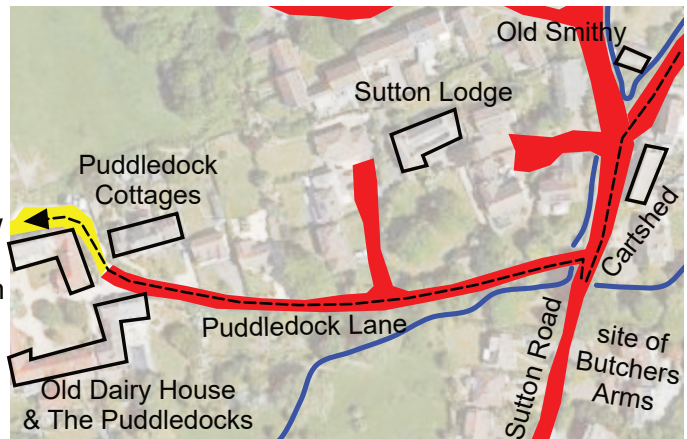


Bridge under Sutton Road

Walk on to the bridge where Sutton Road crosses the river. Just a little further on, on the left, is the site of an old pub, variously called Butcher's Arms and Three Horse Shoes. The Sutton Poyntz murder may possibly have happened at a cottage near here. In 1862 Dr Adam Puckett, the local Poor Law medical officer, was murdered by a young labourer, John Cox, who was suffering from mental illness. Having killed the doctor, John proceeded to dismember the body and hurl pieces one by one into the road. When arrested and later tried, he was found criminally insane, and was sent to Broadmoor as one of the very first inmates.

Puddledock Lane

Now take the side-road just north of the bridge, along Puddledock Lane. Soon on your right you pass a house now called Sutton Lodge. This used to be Sutton Farm. The present building dates from the 1840s, when it was built as a



residence for John Allen Pope who came to Sutton Poyntz and farmed much of the parish (1950 acres, employing over 40 people!). Two of his sons bought into the Dorchester brewery, Mason Eldridge, and renamed it Eldridge Pope.

Sutton Farm had previously been farmed by the Scutt family, who later farmed in Preston and built the Scutt Memorial Hall in Preston. Sutton Farm (originally called West Farm) was probably only created as a recognisable farm in about 1800, after the parish was Enclosed.

Before the Pope family arrived, the line of Puddledock Lane went to the north of the old farmhouse - it was re-aligned to 'gentrify' the driveway to the farmhouse, over an artificial lake.

Further along Puddledock Lane, there is on the left the Old Dairy House which is probably early 19th Century, and The Puddledocks which is a recent development preserving the layout of what had been Puddledock Dairy, and on the right Puddledock Cottages, built in 1890 (with a dedication to landowner Reginald Weld of Lulworth Castle).



Old Dairy House & The Puddledocks

A little further on, two footpaths off to the right give access to the fields west of the village, and Chalbury hill fort. See later for information on the footpaths.

Plaisters Lane

Retrace your steps back to Sutton Road, and take the left fork up Plaisters Lane (whose name was probably originally "Play-street" - the place where ball games took place). On your left, you pass a 1970s side-road, Old Bincombe Lane. The villagers at the time took some pride in having influenced the design to give it a more rural look; they also took pride in the choice of name, although in truth there was never a lane to Bincombe at that point.

Soon on the right, Laurel Cottage is a thatched, cottage with buttressed stone walls. This is probably 18th Century, and was at one time the village's Poor House. The buttresses have caused speculation that this may be the site of the village's medieval Chapel, but more recent



archaeology (see later) has shown this to be unfounded.

A little further up, on the left, Prospect Cottage (now enlarged and divided) was the home of the Harrison family, wheelwrights, carpenters and builders. They had a workshop behind, now converted as holiday accommodation. Old Ordnance Survey maps suggested land behind Prospect Cottage as the site of the medieval Chapel, but there never seems to have been any evidence for this.



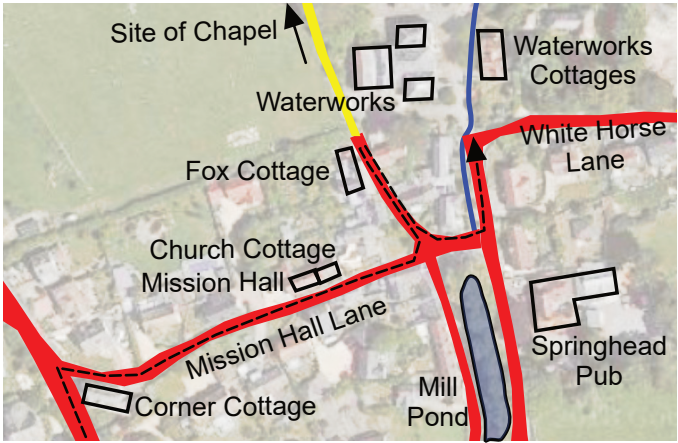
Laurel Cottage & start of Silver Street

Just before the turn right into Mission Hall Lane, Corner Cottage was built in 2000 (showing good faith to vernacular style) on the site previously occupied by a Body Repair Shop opened in 1966. Before that, this area was occupied by “The Bungalow”, the home and market garden of Mr & Mrs Bailey; Mr Bailey was the grandson of Albert Bailey, a Sutton Poyntz labourer, who was known as “the Ploughman Poet”, part of a grand Dorset poetical tradition.

In 1925, the village was sold in lots by the Welds of Lulworth Castle; this started a rapid expansion of the village to the south and the north west. Further up Plaisters Lane, a number of attractive detached houses were built in the 1930s, some by a well-regarded architect Ernest Wamsley Lewis who was a founder of the Weymouth Civic Society.

Mission Hall Lane

Turning off Plaisters Lane to the right, Mission Hall Lane takes you past the Mission Hall and Church Cottage on the left. Church Cottage was built around 1880, to house a Church Army mission. The Mission Hall was built in 1892, funded by donation from Miss Williams of Little Bredy.



The Mission Hall was sold to Salisbury Diocese in 1925, with a conveyance stipulating a number of church, religious, and educational uses, and almost as an afterthought for uses that “*promote the spiritual intellectual moral social or physical welfare of the members of the Church*”

of England in the parish or Diocese” and even more as an afterthought “not necessarily to the exclusion of others from sharing in the advantages provided”. It is now run as the Village Hall, and we hope the uses the village puts it to do not infringe that covenant too severely.

A little further on, go up the narrow lane to the left, past Fox Cottage into the fields alongside the Waterworks. Excavations by Wessex Water in the 1990s found evidence of a building that was the right size, alignment and date, and so was almost certainly the medieval Chapel that the village was known to have had.

For the reasonably energetic, an attractive walk up the Ridgeway starts here - see later on for information on footpaths.

Waterworks and Upper Mill

At the end of Mission Hall Lane, turn left to the top end of Sutton Road. The site in front of you was probably in medieval times the location of the bailiff’s house (Sutton Poyntz never had a manor house as such), and also of one of the two mills in the village. This mill ceased operation in 1855 when the site was bought by Weymouth Waterworks Company for the supply of water to Weymouth. Industrial buildings (designed by Thomas Hawkesley and George Crickmay) were put up around the old Upper Mill house which was retained as the Site Superintendent’s house, and house some now rare pumping equipment.



Waterworks site

Waterworks Cottages on the right, were built just before 1900, also designed by Crickmays, in an Arts & Crafts-inspired style.

Whether you have ventured off into the countryside or not, your walk around Sutton Poyntz finishes, as we promised, at the Springhead Pub, and we hope you enjoy a glass and maybe a bite of something there.

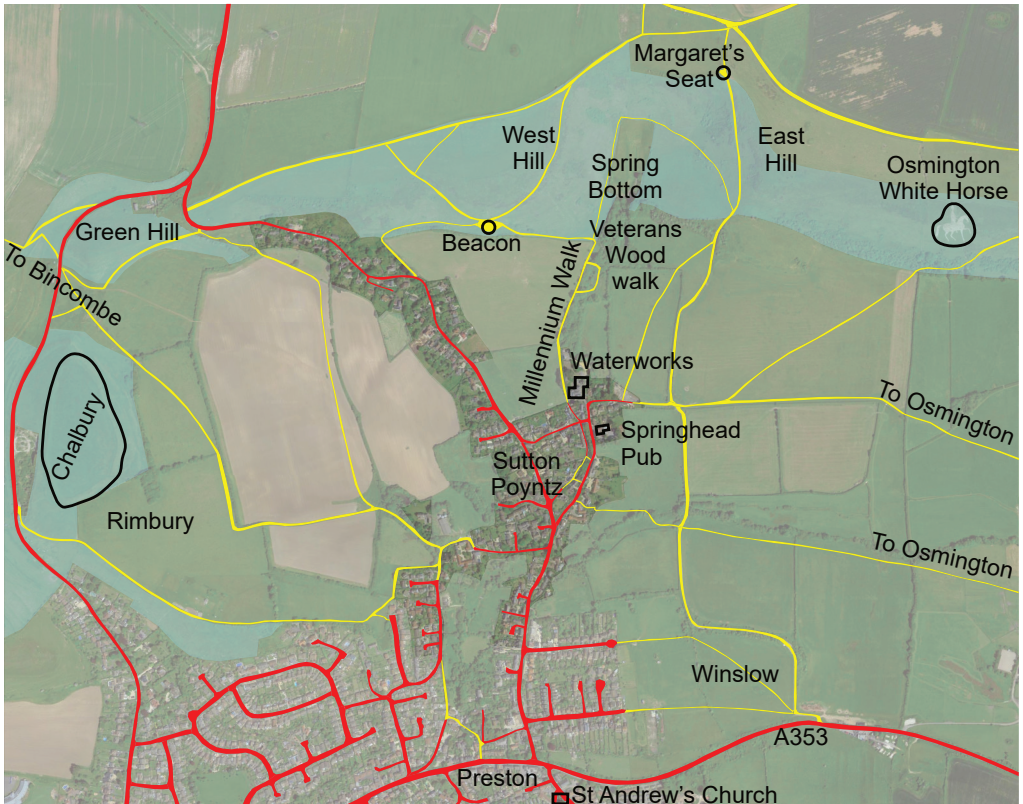
Thomas Hardy and Sutton Poyntz

Thomas Hardy lived about 5 miles away, at Max Gate in Dorchester, and certainly knew Sutton Poyntz well. He acknowledged that it was one of the places he had in mind in writing *The Trumpet Major*, Upwey being the other. The novel was set in 1804, during the Napoleonic War, and focused on the occupants of Overcombe Mill.

The layout of Overcombe village in the novel matches that of Sutton Poyntz extremely well, with its mill pond, tracks up the hills behind, and roads to right and left at the top of the pond. Unlike Overcombe, Sutton Poyntz does not have a church. The Mill itself is not quite such a good match for Overcombe Mill (and in any case in 1804 there was an older and

smaller Mill whose appearance is not known), so perhaps Thomas Hardy had in mind a building more like Upwey Mill, but relocated to Sutton Poyntz.

Footpaths and countryside



There are a number of attractive footpaths around the village, offering some stunning views.

Chalbury, Rimbury, and Bincombe - Chalbury is a hill fort, dated to approximately 800 BC and therefore a bit older than Maiden Castle. Rimbury is the hill spur south-east of Chalbury; a middle bronze age burial field, dated to about 1200 BC, was found there in the 19th Century by some workers sent to clear the field for ploughing. The workers were so disappointed that the urns contained bone and ash, rather than the gold they expected, that they lined the 3000-year old urns up and used them as stone-throwing target practice. The walk to Chalbury is the further of the two footpaths starting on Puddledock Lane. The nearer of the two paths leads to the north of Chalbury, and on to Bincombe (with a spectacular group of round barrows on the hill above). Mainly gently sloping; Chalbury

is just over 1 km one way and Bincombe village is 2.2 km one way.

Osmington - there are two footpaths along the valley to Osmington, one starting at the end of White Horse Lane and the other starting off Sutton Road south of Northdown Farm and the Mill. Reasonably flat, about 1.8 km one way.

The White Horse - The direct path to the Osmington White Horse starts at the end of White Horse Lane. The footpath goes alongside a hedge at the side of a large field; there is no marking, and the line of the footpath is not always obvious, but one needs to fork left towards the far top corner of the field. The path goes through a copse and then up the steep hillside just below the White Horse. At the top of the hill, turn left to find the White Horse itself. It was cut into the chalk by a local landowner in 1808, and depicts George III, who used to holiday in Weymouth. There is a rumour that King George never visited the resort again because he disliked having been depicted riding away from the town, but in truth health had ended his visits a few years before. Steep, about 1.2 km one way.

The Ridgeway - There are several paths up onto the ridgeway above the village; from half way up Plaisters Lane, from Fox Cottage, or from half way along White Horse Lane. From the centre of the village to the Ridgeway track at the top of the hill is about 1 km one way, but a steep climb. There is a shorter path, from Fox Cottage around the top of the Wessex Water reservoir and back to White Horse Lane, which is a total of 1.7 km but only steep for short sections.

The Ridgeway track itself is the inland spur of the Dorset Coastal Path. Turning left, one can walk to the top of Plaisters Lane or to Bincombe beyond. Turning to the right one can follow the Ridgeway to the White Horse, or to the track down into Osmington, or beyond to Pixon Barn beyond Osmington, and then back to Osmington.

On one of the paths up the hill behind the village, there is the village Beacon, which was donated by British Gas for the Millennium, moved up the hill for the Trafalgar bicentenary, and is lit for national occasions. At the top of another path, Margaret's Seat commemorates a lady who loved our village and the walks into the hills beyond.

View of Sutton Poyntz, with Weymouth Bay and Portland beyond, from Margaret's Seat

