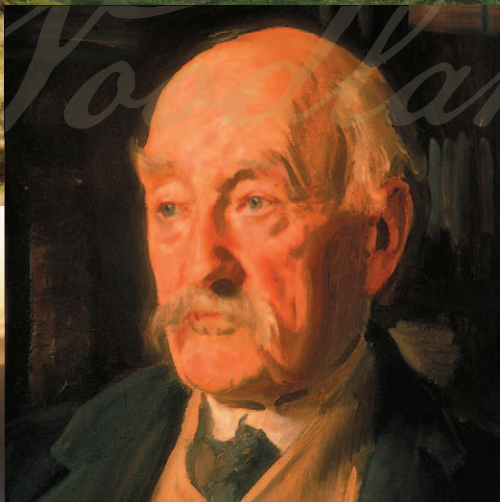


Exploring Thomas Hardy's Rural

# DORSET



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# Hardy's Wessex



*Thomas Hardy*  
1840 - 1928

This is the landscape that internationally renowned poet and novelist Thomas Hardy used time and again as a backdrop for his tales of love and tragedy.

Hardy spent most of his life in Dorset and his works are now held in high esteem and studied in schools and universities throughout the world.

Much of the grassy vales, pebble-strewn beaches and furze-flattened heaths of the county he dubbed South Wessex are little changed today and it's easy to imagine florid farmers and caddish aristocrats flirting with doomed maidens in the low-ceilinged, flagstone-floored barrooms within his fictional hamlets.

**This leaflet will help you explore the area that inspired Thomas Hardy throughout his life. Discover his birthplace, locations he wrote about and the church where his heart is buried. Find out about specialist tours, Hardy events and the filming locations used for movie and TV adaptations of his classic novels.**



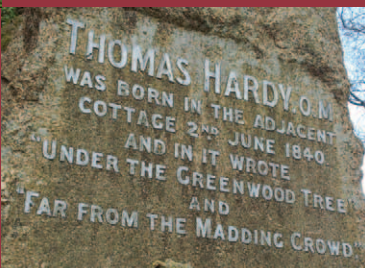


# Thomas Hardy

POET & NOVELIST 1840 - 1928



Hardy's birthplace



Thomas Hardy was born in 1840 at Higher Bockhampton, near Dorchester. He was the eldest of four children and his father was a master mason. As a child he was shy and reflective, encouraged by his mother to read and study beyond the usual level for local children. He was also a keen fiddle player and often went with his father to play at local christenings, weddings and parties.

At 16 Hardy became apprenticed to an architect in Dorchester. He practised as an architect in London for five years but returned to Dorchester after deciding he wanted to write. His first attempt at a novel was rejected, but with the help of Emma Gifford, whom he later married, his second attempt was successful. Over the next 25 years he wrote in all 14 novels and over 50 short stories. In 1895 he published *Jude the Obscure*, after which he abandoned novel writing and devoted the rest of his life to poetry.

In 1885 he and Emma moved into Max Gate, the house he had designed on the edge of Dorchester. Emma died in 1912 and in 1914 he married Florence Dugdale. He died on 11th January 1928.

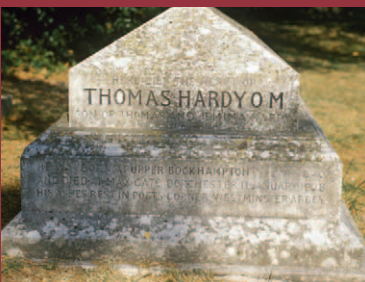


Max Gate

Hardy adopted the historical name of Wessex as the name for his own 'partly real, partly dream country'. The raw materials for his novels came from his life, the country folk and the contrasting landscapes of Dorset.

He used a mixture of real and fictional names for landscape features and the towns and villages, drawing from his extensive knowledge of the area.

The great majority of locations in Hardy's novels and stories are set within the rural landscape to the west of the county of Dorset. Among these are *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Woodlanders* and *The Return of the Native*. Many of the key locations from these novels are mentioned throughout this leaflet, the real place names are shown first, followed by those used by Hardy.



## Big Screen and TV locations

So much of the rural Dorset landscape has remained unchanged since Hardy's time that it is not surprising that several film and TV adaptations of his novels have been filmed here.

In 2013 Hollywood film crews descended on Sherborne and Mapperton House near Beaminster to shoot Thomas Vinterberg's adaptation of Hardy's fourth novel and first major literary success **Far from the Madding Crowd**. Starring A-listers Carey Mulligan, Tom Sturridge and Matthias Schoenaerts, film locations include Mapperton House, Sherborne Abbey, Castleton Church and Abbey Close. The streets of Sherborne were transformed to resemble an 1870s market square in Hardy's town of *Casterbridge*. The last big screen adaptation of this classic novel was in 1967 and starred Alan Bates and Julie Christie using locations including Maiden Castle, Max Gate and 14th Century Tithe Barn at Abbotsbury.

The 2003 ITV adaptation of **The Mayor of Casterbridge** starring Ciaran Hinds and Jodhi May was filmed at locations including Maiden Castle, Cerne Abbas and Charmouth. Cerne Abbas and Minterne Gardens provided locations for the filming of the 1998 ITV production of **Tess of the d'Urbervilles**.



Mapperton House



© Sally Head Productions

Juliet Aubrey (Susan)  
Ciaran Hinds (Michael  
Henchard) in *The Mayor  
of Casterbridge*



Filming *Tess of the  
d'Urbervilles* in Cerne  
Abbas © ITV Pictures



© Fox Searchlight Pictures



Tithe Barn, Abbotsbury

Carey Mulligan (Bathsheba) and Matthias Schoenaerts  
(Gabriel Oak) in *Far from the Madding Crowd*

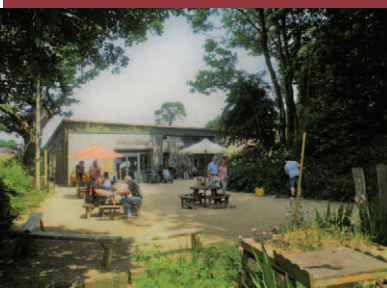




Thomas Hardy's study recreated at the Dorset County Museum



If you are interested in joining the Thomas Hardy Society contact:  
 Thomas Hardy Society  
 c/o Dorset County Museum,  
 Dorchester, Dorset. DT1 1XA  
 Tel/Fax: 01305 251501  
 info@hardysociety.org  
 www.hardysociety.org



Hardy's Birthplace Visitor Centre

**Further information:** Visit [www.hardycountry.org](http://www.hardycountry.org). The Discover Dorchester leaflet includes a Thomas Hardy walk that follows plaques on the ground around the town. The Hardy Way book is a unique, 220 mile long walking trail through Hardy's Wessex with his words and poems alongside each section of the route. [www.thehardyway.co.uk](http://www.thehardyway.co.uk)

**Guided tours:** For details of group tours visit: [www.thomas-hardy-explorer.co.uk](http://www.thomas-hardy-explorer.co.uk) or contact Dorchester TIC or the Thomas Hardy Society.

**Events:** The international Thomas Hardy Conference and Festival is a bi-annual week-long event offering an exciting programme of lectures, seminars, talks, poetry readings, walks and entertainment. The Thomas Hardy Birthday Weekend event includes the laying of wreaths at the Hardy Statue in Dorchester on the Saturday nearest the anniversary of his birth (2nd June). For more information on events contact the Thomas Hardy Society (see left).

**Dorset County Museum, Dorchester:** This museum houses the largest Hardy collection in the world, the bulk of which was bequeathed by his wife Florence. The most fascinating material from this collection, including manuscripts, books, diaries, photographs, notebooks and paintings, is on show in the gallery 'A Writer's Dorset'. At the centre of the gallery is a reconstruction of Hardy's study at Max Gate, with all his books and furniture. *Please note:* The museum will be closed from 1 Oct 2018 for two years for a major Heritage Lottery funded refurbishment. During this time there will still be events and activities relating to the museum and to Hardy. Visit [www.dorsetcountymuseum.org](http://www.dorsetcountymuseum.org) or follow the Dorset County Museum Facebook page for details.

**Hardy's Birthplace Visitor Centre:** Located on the edge of Thorncombe Wood Nature Reserve, this is the place to discover more about the life and works of Hardy and enjoy the landscape which inspired him. The centre is a partnership project between Dorset County Council and the National Trust and was awarded a Green Flag in 2018. The centre houses displays, a café, the rangers' office and a National Trust shop where you can buy tickets for Hardy's Cottage which is just a short walk away. Regular activities include wildlife walks, Forest School activities, conservation and seasonal events.

Open: daily 10am - 4pm except Christmas. For more details visit [www.dorsetforyou.com/Hardysbirthplace](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/Hardysbirthplace) or follow their Facebook page @Hardysbirthplace.

**Accommodation:** Visit [www.visit-dorset.com](http://www.visit-dorset.com)



For further information on the area visit our website [www.visit-dorset.com](http://www.visit-dorset.com) or download the Dorset Visitor App



## TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRES ON THE TRAIL

**DORCHESTER:** t: 01305 267992 e: [dorchester.tic@dorset.gov.uk](mailto:dorchester.tic@dorset.gov.uk)

**BRIDPORT:** t: 01308 424901 e: [bridport.tic@bridport-tc.gov.uk](mailto:bridport.tic@bridport-tc.gov.uk)

**SHERBORNE:** t: 01935 815341 e: [sherborne.tic@dorset.gov.uk](mailto:sherborne.tic@dorset.gov.uk)

See [www.visit-dorset.com](http://www.visit-dorset.com) for other Dorset Tourist Information Centres.



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# Follow the Hardy Trail

Follow the Hardy Trail and discover Hardy's Wessex for yourself. The map below shows a trail linking the key sites mentioned in the text, but you can pick it up or leave it at any point. The trail does not follow an actual road route so please refer to the appropriate OS maps for the area if you wish to walk, cycle or drive between locations.

## Beaminster Emminster

A prosperous market town which once thrived from woolcloth and sailcloth. The town was much loved by Hardy, describing it as “*the hill-surrounded little town*” with “*the Tudor church-tower of red stone*” in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*.



## Bridport Port Bredy

A vibrant and colourful town with a long history, once renowned as the centre of the country's rope and net-making industry. The town was the setting for the story *Fellow Townsmen* in which the Town Hall, St Mary's Church, The Bull Hotel and the flax and rope-making industries all feature. A mile south of the town is West Bay, the “*little haven, seemingly a beginning made by Nature herself of a perfect harbour*”.

## Portesham Pos'ham

A pleasant village where Admiral Sir Thomas Masterman Hardy lived until 1807. It was also used in *The Trumpet Major* when Bob Loveday visited Captain Hardy to ask if he could serve on the Victory. The monument to Admiral Hardy is a popular viewpoint above the village and provides almost 360 degree views. It would have been visible from Hardy's bedroom window on a clear day.

## Dorchester Casterbridge

The county town of Dorset and the setting for one of Hardy's finest novels, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, in which he describes the town as being reminiscent of old Rome: “*Casterbridge announced old Rome in every street, alley and precinct. It looked Roman, bespoke the art of Rome, concealed dead men of Rome*”.

Hardy was educated here and spent much of his later life in the town. In 1885, he moved to **Max Gate**, a house that he designed and his brother built, located on the outskirts of Dorchester. Whilst here, Hardy wrote many of his well-known novels including *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. Max Gate is now owned by the National Trust and is open to the public regularly throughout the year. For details visit [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk) or contact Dorchester Tourist Information Centre.

**The Dorset County Museum** (see opening pages) has an award winning Writers' Gallery, which includes the world's finest collection of Hardy memorabilia, including the reconstruction of his study as it looked at Max Gate. Hardy himself was also a member of the museum's council.

Of the many buildings in Dorchester associated with Hardy's novels and characters, mention should be made of **St Peter's Church, The King's Arms Hotel, The Corn Exchange, Greys Bridge and the Antelope Hotel** (now Antelope Walk) which all feature in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Trumpet Major*

and *Under the Greenwood Tree*. The traditional thatched Hangman's Cottage, located north by the river Frome, was the home of the town's executioner and was cited in the short story *The Withered Arm*.

## Melbury Osmond Great and Kings Hintock

This quiet and unspoilt village is where Hardy's parents were married in 1839 and the marriage certificate can be seen framed on the wall in the church. At the northern end of the footpath through the churchyard, is a thatched house where Hardy's mother is thought to have lived as a child. The church features in the final scene of *The Woodlanders*, where Marty South is a solitary loyal figure at Giles Winterborne's grave and Melbury House is Hintock House. Several short stories including *The Duke's Reappearance* and *Interlopers* at the *Knap* are set in the village.

## Melbury Bubb Little Hintock

This tiny village is sheltered by a wooded area and Bubb Down. The wooded area is reminiscent of how the region would have looked in the 19th Century. In *The Woodlanders*, Little Hintock is described as “*such a little small place that, as a town gentleman, you'd need to have a candle and lantern to find it if ye don't know where 'tis*”. All the dwellings of Little Hintock are fictional but the setting closely resembles the villages of Melbury Bubb and Stockwood.

## Evershot Evershead

An interesting village in which little has changed since Hardy's time. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, on her journey to and from *Emminster*, Tess stops for refreshments at a cottage which is located west of the church and that is named after her. The 'Sow and Acorn' (Acorn Inn) is mentioned in both *The First Countess of Wessex* and *Interlopers* at the *Knap*.



## Sherborne Sherton Abbas

Located to the north of Dorset, this historic town nestles in green valleys and wooded hills. It is a fascinating town with many ancient and beautiful buildings. The market place is where Giles Winterborne stood with his sample apple trees in *The Woodlanders* and today markets are still held in the town on Thursdays and Saturdays. The magnificent 15th Century Sherborne Abbey is where Giles Winterborne and Grace Melbury walked and talked of their future in *The Woodlanders*.

## Cerne Abbas Abbot's Cernel

A quintessentially English village lying in the valley of the River Cerne and famous for its 180 foot hill-side giant carved into the chalk as well as its ruined Abbey. The great barn in *Far from the Madding Crowd* owes some of its architectural features to the ancient tithe-barn in the village.



Key: Thomas Hardy information panel at site

**Henchard's House** in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is described as “*one of the best, faced with dull red and grey old brick*”. **Barclays Bank** in South Street is the reputed location of the house.

Two plaques at **39 South Street** (opposite the entrance of Hardy Arcade) mark the home and office of John Hicks, the architect with whom Hardy worked between 1856 and 1862. William Barnes, the Dorset poet, friend and mentor of Hardy, lived and kept his school next door. His memorial statue stands outside St. Peter's Church next to the Dorset County Museum.

Located at the **Top o' Town** is the Hardy memorial statue sculpted by Eric Kennington and unveiled in 1931 by Hardy's friend Sir James Barrie.

**Maumbury Rings** located on the southern outskirts of the town centre just beyond the market is a good example of a Neolithic Henge. It was the scene of Henchard's secret meetings in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.

## Puddletown Weatherbury

Nestling in the Piddle Valley, surrounded by rolling hills and woodland, lies Puddletown. Hardy's grandfather and great-grandfather came from the village, as did other relations. The church is memorable for its fine west gallery, home to a long tradition of music making which Hardy celebrated in *Under the Greenwood Tree*. Fanny Robin was buried in the churchyard and Troy sheltered from the rain in the church porch in *Far from the Madding Crowd*.

## Bere Regis Kingsbere-sub-Greenhill

This ancient village was described by Hardy as “*the decayed old town*” in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. The annual sheep fair on Woodbury Hill was colourfully described as “*the busiest, merriest, noisiest*” of them all. The village was also the home of the d'Urberville family in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* based on the real life family of the Turbervilles.

## Athelhampton Athelhall

A magnificent manor house dating from the 15th Century with award winning gardens. Thomas Hardy was a regular visitor to Athelhampton. His father, a stonemason, worked on the house in the 19th Century and during this time Hardy painted a watercolour of the house. He was also lunching at Athelhampton when news of the declaration of war was received in 1914. The church of St John's, Athelhampton was built whilst Hardy was working with the Dorchester architect John Hicks and Hardy's cousin worked at the school opposite. He set the poem *The Dame of Athelhall* and his short story *The Waiting Supper* in the house and garden and the poem *The Children and Sir Nameless* refers to the tombs of the Martyns who built Athelhampton in 1485. Athelhampton Gardens are open to the public. [www.athelhampton.co.uk](http://www.athelhampton.co.uk) Tel: 01305 848363.



## Woodsford

On the edge of the village is the unusual thatched Woodsford Castle. In 1856 Hardy's father was employed by John Hicks to undertake repairs on the building. The young Hardy helped with preliminary drawings at the castle and on the strength of these was offered an architectural apprenticeship with Hicks.

## West Stafford Fromm-Everard

It was the church of St Andrew's in the village that was the apparent setting for Tess and Angel Clare's marriage in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Lower Lewell Farm, located outside the village is a possible site for *Talbothays Dairy*. The village was also the setting of the story *The Waiting Supper*.

## Weymouth Budmouth Regis

A vibrant Georgian seaside town with a large sandy beach and historic harbour. Hardy lived in Weymouth in 1869 when the architect's firm he had been working for in Dorchester was bought out by a Weymouth firm. *Under the Greenwood Tree* was partly written while he was staying in the town. In *The Return of the Native*, the heroine Eustacia Vye says “*I was happy enough at Budmouth. O the times, O the days at Budmouth!*”

## Portland The Isle of Slingers

Portland is a tied island to the south of Weymouth, famous for its stone. Hardy's *Isle of Slingers* is based on the island and is the main setting for *The Well Beloved*. The cottage that now houses the Portland Museum was the inspiration for the home of Avice, the novel's heroine.

## Lower Bockhampton Lower Mellstock

The Old School House in this hamlet was built and endowed by Mrs Julia Martin of Kingston Maurward House in 1847 and Hardy was possibly one of the first pupils to attend. The Old School House is where Fancy Day was a teacher in *Under the Greenwood Tree*.

## Higher Bockhampton Upper Mellstock

Hardy was born here on 2nd June 1840 in a woodland cottage on the edge of Puddletown Heath. His great grandfather built the cottage and little has altered since the family left. He lived here for most of his first twenty two years and it was from the bedroom behind the right hand dormer window that he wrote his first five novels including *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *Far from the Madding Crowd*. The cottage is now owned by the National Trust and is open to the public along with Hardy's Birthplace Visitor Centre (see opening pages). Visit [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk) or contact Dorchester Tourist Information Centre for more details.

Hardy's Birthplace

