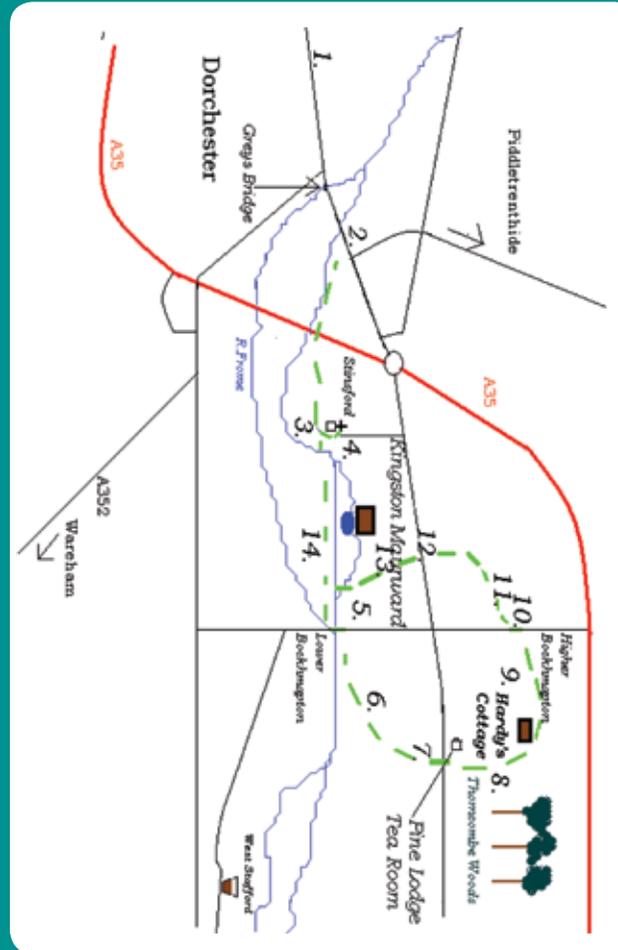


11. At the end of the track with a barn on your right keep straight on through a gate into a field. Cross the field, keeping the hedge close on your right.
12. Go through the next gate and follow the middle of the field downhill to meet a cart track. On reaching a minor road go straight across following the signs for Kingston Maurward and Lower Bockhampton. Follow the track between the paddocks keeping the grand house to your right. Continue through the Animal Care Centre following the blue footpath signs.
13. On reaching a T junction turn left following the signs for the Old Manor. Immediately after going over the cattle crossing turn right following the green footpath sign over the bridge. Take this path and on reaching a gate turn right.
14. You are now back on the path you walked earlier. Retrace your steps. Where the path divides ignore the turnings to Stinsford or St Georges Road but instead follow the bridleway signs that will take you back to Dorchester and your starting point.

Recommended reading

'Thomas Hardy The Time-Torn Man' by Claire Tomalin £8.99 (paperback)



Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this leaflet is correct at the time of print, West Dorset District Council cannot accept any responsibility for any errors or omissions. Inclusion in this leaflet does not imply any recommendation by West Dorset District Council. Produced by Dorchester Tourist Information Centre (Tel: 01305 267992)

West Dorset Walks

Dorchester to Thomas Hardy's Cottage



Set in the beautiful Thorncombe woods, now a nature reserve, Hardy's home and birthplace lies in a quiet and remote position. It is an easy walk from Dorchester visiting Stinsford and its church, the resting home of his heart and his two wives. Much of the route would have been walked by the great writer and were used as settings and inspiration for many of his works.

The return walk is approximately 7 miles long. It can be quite muddy in places and walking boots or stout shoes are recommended.

The Thomas Hardy Society

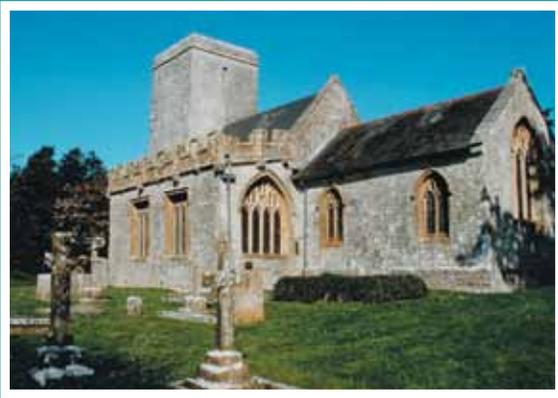
If you would like to know more about Thomas Hardy then why not join the Hardy Society and meet those who share your interest? You will receive the Hardy Society journal twice a year as well as having the opportunity to go to lectures, walks, meetings, plays and musical events.

www.hardysociety.org

www.westdorset.com
www.visit-dorset.com

1. From High East Street, walk on the right side over Grey's bridge.
2. Ignoring the first footpath sign, you will soon see a road sign to Poole, Blandford and Ringwood. Opposite this you will see on your right a bridleway sign, a blue picture of a horse. Go through the gate and take the path, which will take you under the busy bypass. Follow the track straight ahead and after a noisy start you will soon reach more tranquil pastures.
3. A sign will give you the choice of going straight on, turning right to St Georges Road or left to Stinsford. By taking the left turn after a short distance you will reach Stinsford church.

Stinsford Church



It was here that apart from worshipping and playing in the choir, the Hardy family helped restore this 13th century church. Inside the church gate are the graves of the Hardy family including Thomas' heart and his wife, Emma. The churchyard also contains the grave of Cecil Day-Lewis whose request it was to be buried near Hardy.

4. After visiting the church retrace your steps back to the river. Take the left hand route, which will lead you to the village of Lower Bockhampton keeping the river on your left hand side, a path used and much loved by Hardy.
5. On reaching the road turn left passing over the bridge. After about 20 yards on your right by Bridge Cottage you will see an arrow taking you right and through a farmyard and a gate with more footpath signs. After going through a gate you will then enter an open field with the river on your right. Head slightly to the right and look for a gate towards the corner.
6. On entering another field walk towards the gate in the left corner. Soon you will see a signpost pointing left for Thorncombe Woods. Follow the drive, which will take you gently uphill for approximately half a mile.
7. On reaching the road take the path opposite with the footpath sign Thorncombe Wood and Pine Lodge Tea Room, (01305 266052.) Follow the drive with tearooms on your left hand side. You will soon see a stile, which you climb over on to a narrow grass track. Continue along here until you come to another stile, which leads you into Thorncombe Woods.
8. On entering the woods and keeping in a straight direction you will soon see the sign to Hardy's Cottage and Thorncombe Trail. Soon you reach Rushy Pond with seats around it. Bear left around the edge and follow the track downwards until you see a Dorset Heath land guide on your right. Go through the gate to a crossroads of paths. Continue in a straight direction. Shortly you will come to a path on your right, which will lead you to Hardy's cottage.

Thomas Hardy's Cottage



The house is open from the middle of March until the end of October, Wednesday to Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays. Telephone 01305 262366. By the side of the house you will see a monument erected by American admirers informing you that he was born here on 02 June 1840 and wrote Under the Greenwood Tree and Far from the Madding Crowd.

9. You now have a choice of either continuing your walk to Puddletown, or following a different route back to Dorchester. To get to Puddletown you can either follow the signs through the forest, a distance of just over 2 miles, or take the route which will pass over the A35 and into Yellowham wood which features in many of Hardy's novels. For those returning to Dorchester, walk past Hardy's Cottage on your left and continue straight up the lane and past the turning to the car park. When you reach the minor road turn until you see a farm track leading right with a bridleway sign for Kingston Maurward and Stinsford.
10. Turn right and walk down the track, which can be muddy. In the far distance you will see Admiral Hardy's monument.