

**THOMAS HARDY AND HIS WRITINGS AS A SOURCE FOR THE  
STUDY OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE IN DORSET**

**by**

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## ABSTRACT

Thomas Hardy's fiction and verse contain numerous references to traditional culture, in all its aspects, but this body of material has attracted very little attention since Firor's *Folkways in Thomas Hardy*, published over seventy years ago. The neglect of Hardy's work by folklorists is judged to stem from a suspicion of fictional material and a belief that Firor's seemingly comprehensive review leaves no scope for further consideration. This study sets out to establish the importance of Hardy as a source, first by assessing the reliability of the folklore references in his work and, secondly, by considering all examples of his writings, both published and unpublished, many of which were not available to Firor for her study.

References by Hardy to traditional culture are set out in chapter 2, classified on a basis developed at the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition. Chapter 3 then demonstrates that, with very few exceptions, the traditions recorded by Hardy are likely to be genuine. A review of the range and significance of Hardy's references follows, from which it is clear that the detailed consideration of a restricted range of subjects is likely to be more profitable than a general commentary in assessing Hardy's worth in this field.

The subject of west gallery bands is then considered in detail and Hardy's writings on this subject are compared to other accounts, mostly brought together here for the first time, to demonstrate how Hardy complements and extends knowledge of the subject. A similar approach is then adopted, first in respect of mummers' plays and then of witchcraft. These major chapters are followed by some shorter notes on other traditions, less extensively documented by Hardy, but equally illustrative of the value of his testimony.

Finally, the extent of Hardy's contribution to the subject is appraised and further avenues for research are outlined.

# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT FOR THE TITLES OF HARDY'S WRITINGS**

## **CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION**

- 1 Preface
- 2 The Nature of Traditional Culture
- 3 The Literature on Traditional Culture in Dorset
- 5 Thomas Hardy's Life and Work
- 7 The Literature on Hardy and Traditional Culture
- 12 Source Materials
- 18 Methodology

## **CHAPTER 2 - INDEX OF REFERENCES TO TRADITIONAL CULTURE IN HARDY'S WRITINGS**

- 23 Introduction
- 24 Language
- 25 Childlore
- 26 Custom and Belief
- 33 Folk Narrative
- 34 Folk Music, Dance and Drama
- 41 Material Culture, Work Techniques, Arts and Crafts

## **CHAPTER 3 - INVESTIGATION OF THE VERACITY OF THE TRADITIONAL CULTURE IN HARDY'S WRITINGS**

- 46 Introduction
- 46 Possible Motives for Falsification of Traditional Culture in Hardy's Writings
- 48 Hardy's Policy on the Portrayal of Traditional Culture
- 49 Thomas Hardy's Wessex
- 52 Probable Sources for Descriptions of Traditional Culture in Hardy's Fiction
- 55 Some Links between Hardy's Sources and the Folklore in His Writings
- 60 Comparison of Hardy's Descriptions of Traditions with Independent Accounts
- 64 Instances Where Hardy's Use of Tradition May Be Unreliable
- 71 Conclusions

## **CHAPTER 4 - OVERVIEW OF HARDY'S VALUE AS A SOURCE FOR THE STUDY OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE IN DORSET**

- 76 Introduction
- 76 Traditional Language
- 81 Childlore
- 82 Custom and Belief
- 86 Traditional Narrative
- 88 Folk Music, Dance and Drama
- 93 Material Culture

## **CHAPTER 5 - HOMAS HARDY AND HIS WRITINGS AS A SOURCE FOR THE STUDY OF WEST GALLERY BANDS IN DORSET**

- 99 Introduction
- 99 The West Gallery Tradition
- 101 Principal Sources for the Study of the West Gallery Tradition in Dorset
- 102 West Gallery Bands in Hardy's Work.
- 102 The Hardy Family and West Gallery Music
- 103 Stinsford and *Mellstock*
- 104 Membership of the West Gallery Bands
- 106 West Gallery Band Instruments
- 108 The Dual Roles of West Gallery Musicians
- 109 The Christmas Perambulation
- 112 Other West Gallery Band Customs
- 113 Some Artefacts Relating to West Gallery Bands
- 115 The End of the West Gallery Bands in Dorset
- 118 Hardy's Value as a Source

## **CHAPTER 6 - THOMAS HARDY AND HIS WRITINGS AS A SOURCE FOR THE STUDY OF THE MUMMERS' PLAY IN DORSET**

- 124 Introduction
- 124 The Nature of the Mummers' Play
- 125 The Mummers' Play in Dorset
- 126 Thomas Hardy and the Mummers' Play in Dorset
- 127 The Play of Saint George
- 137 Background and Style of Performance in Dorset Plays
- 139 Costume in Dorset Plays
- 142 The Value of Hardy's Writings



## **CHAPTER 7 - THOMAS HARDY AND HIS WRITINGS AS A SOURCE FOR THE STUDY OF WITCHCRAFT IN DORSET**

- 146 Introduction
- 146 The Nature of Witchcraft
- 146 The Literature on Witchcraft in Dorset
- 147 Hardy's Sources for his References to Witchcraft
- 148 Hardy's View of Witches and Witchcraft
- 150 Hag-Riding
- 154 Counter-Measures Against Witchcraft
- 156 White Witches
- 163 Hardy's Value as a Source

## **CHAPTER 8 - SOME OTHER SIGNIFICANT REFERENCES TO TRADITIONAL CULTURE IN HARDY'S WRITINGS**

- 167 Introduction
- 167 Shroving and Wassailing
- 169 Midsummer Eve Divination
- 171 November the Fifth Celebrations
- 172 The Portland Courtship Custom
- 173 Skimmity-Riding
- 174 Divination by Bible and Key
- 175 Ghosts
- 179 Cattle kneeling on Christmas Eve
- 181 "The Outlandish Knight"
- 183 Smuggling

## **CHAPTER 9 - CONCLUSIONS**

- 189 Review and Conclusions
- 191 Suggestions for Further Research
- 192 Extending the Boundaries of Traditional Culture
- 193 Closing Remarks

## **195 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

## **APPENDICES**

1. National Centre for English Cultural Tradition, University of Sheffield – Classification of Folklore, Folklife and Cultural Tradition
2. Hardy's Wessex Place Names and Their Dorset Counterparts
3. Illustrations

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT FOR THE TITLES OF HARDY'S WRITINGS

*CL (1-7) - Collected Letters*  
*CSS - Collected Short Stories*  
*CP - Complete Poems*  
*DR - Desperate Remedies*  
*D - The Dynasts*  
*ECS - Excluded and Collaborative Stories*  
*FMC - Far from the Madding Crowd*  
*HE - The Hand of Ethelberta*  
*JO - Jude the Obscure*  
*L - A Laodicean*  
*LW - The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*  
*MC - The Mayor of Casterbridge*  
*PBE - A Pair of Blue Eyes*  
*PN - Personal Notebooks*  
*PV - Thomas Hardy's Public Voice*  
*PW - Personal Writings*  
*RN - The Return of the Native*  
*TM - The Trumpet Major*  
*TD - Tess of the d'Urbervilles*  
*TT - Two on a Tower*  
*W - The Woodlanders*  
*UGT - Under the Greenwood Tree*  
*WB - The Well-Beloved*



## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

## PREFACE

It quickly becomes apparent to the reader that folklore, in all its forms, figures prominently in Thomas Hardy's major novels. Consideration of the lesser novels, the large corpus of poetry and the relatively neglected collections of short stories reveals a similar picture. Indeed, Hardy's published work would appear to represent a very significant source for the study of folklore. Nevertheless, only one book has been published which examines the folklore in Hardy's writings, and that more than seventy years ago,<sup>1</sup> few Hardy scholars have given serious attention to this aspect of his work and folklorists have almost entirely ignored him as a source. This neglect of such a seemingly fertile field for exploration may probably be attributed to two factors. First, that the author of the seminal study of Hardy and folklore might be thought to have carried out her work so well that further consideration of the subject is superfluous. Second, since Hardy was writing fiction and verse, it could be argued that his writings cannot, by their nature, be a reliable source for the academic study of folklore.

In fact the seminal work, Ruth Firor's *Folkways in Thomas Hardy*, has long been left behind by the development in the fields of both folklore and Hardy studies. Posthumously collected verse and fiction by Hardy, manuscripts, letters, notebooks and recollections provide both additional folklore references and invaluable background to his use of folklore. At the same time the concept of folklore as a vestige of primitive religion, unquestioningly accepted by Firor, has been largely rejected by scholars, while writers on folklore, both in Dorset and further afield, have produced ample new material to supersede the Victorian references which were available to Firor.

Even when first published, Firor's study exhibited a serious failing, namely the absence of any attempt to establish whether the folklore in Hardy's work is genuine. It is arguably this lack of established credibility which has led successive generations of folklorists to ignore such an otherwise promising corpus of material.

Therefore the time seems ripe for a fresh look at the subject of folklore in Hardy's writings and for a serious attempt to establish the extent to which it is based on genuine tradition. This will enable the reappraisal of Thomas Hardy and his writings as a source for the study of folklore in Dorset.

It is the aim of this study to systematically draw together the folklore references in all Hardy's writings, published and unpublished, and to set them in the context of the established knowledge of the subject in Dorset. In order to do so it is necessary, first to consider the nature of traditional culture and the accounts of the subject in Dorset, and then to look at Hardy, both as a man and as a source. These sections of this chapter will be followed by a review of the literature on Hardy and folklore and by an account of those of his writings which contain appropriate material for consideration here. Finally, the format for the ensuing discussion will be outlined.



## THE NATURE OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE

The term "folk-lore" was coined by W. J. Thoms in 1846.<sup>2</sup> It is taken to encompass:

- The traditional learning of the people.
- Material handed on traditionally, usually by word of mouth.
- The common heritage of a group.

This definition implies a form of verbal or mental transmission and as a result, early investigations in the subject tended to centre on superstition and custom. William Barnes, "The Dorset Poet", saw the concept of folklore in a broader sense, in that it could encompass material as well as verbal and behavioural traditions:

Folklore, taken in broad meaning, is a body of home-taught lore, received by the younger folk from elder ones in common life, and in the form of knowledge or faith, or mindskills and handskills; and so differing from the lore of schooling and books, which is often called by the people "book-learning", as they call a scholar a "book-learned man"<sup>3</sup>

In this respect, the use by Firor, in her study, of the term "folkways" rather than "folklore" is helpful in indicating a field of investigation which extends beyond consideration of custom and superstition. Even so, although she considers song, dance and drama, her study does not extend far beyond the usual bounds of the folklore studies of her time.

Problems with the use of "folklore" as a defining term are not solely due to its association with custom and belief, rather than the wider aspects of tradition. In England, the study of the subject failed to gain a foothold in the mainstream academic world in the early twentieth century and then, for some decades, became bogged down in origins theory and what has been termed "armchair scholarship", to the detriment of original research. When the study of folklore in England began to revive in the later part of the twentieth century, with academic departments being set up at the universities of Leeds and Sheffield, a new defining term was sought which avoided the restrictive and pejorative connotations of "folklore". The terms "cultural tradition", "traditional culture", "vernacular culture" and "folk life" have all proved useful in this respect.

For the purpose of this study it is intended to use the term "traditional culture" to define the field of study for investigation. Nevertheless, due to its use by Hardy and other writers, the word "folklore" will also be used in the text, where it should be understood as equating to traditional culture in its widest sense.

Traditional culture is taken to encompass the six areas proposed by Halpert,<sup>\*</sup> which are:

- Language
- Childlore
- Custom and Belief
- Traditional Narrative

- Traditional Music, Dance and Drama
- Material Culture, Work Traditions, Arts and Crafts.

[Information from Professor J. D. A. Widdowson]

The content of these six categories will be considered in chapter 2.

Even within what is now a better-defined area of study, there is room for a good deal of subjective judgement. Hence west gallery music, believed by Firor “scarcely to be termed true folk-music”,<sup>4</sup> is considered here to be a central element of traditional culture in Dorset and is afforded detailed examination in chapter 5. Smuggling is also regarded as a legitimate part of traditional culture, although it is not usually considered as such by folklorists. This and other traditional modes of work, such as poaching, as well as vernacular architecture and foodways are listed in the index of Hardy references in chapter 2. Although it is thus intended to undertake a wide-ranging study, even at the risk of including some material which might be thought inappropriate, it should be appreciated that the boundaries of this subject will continue to change. Therefore this study too, in its turn, may eventually be judged as too restricted or as straying beyond the legitimate boundaries of its subject.

## THE LITERATURE ON TRADITIONAL CULTURE IN DORSET

The only reasonably comprehensive work on traditional culture in Dorset is Udal’s *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore*.<sup>5</sup> Although the writer, like Firor, takes a narrower view of the subject’s boundaries than would now be accepted, and also tends to concentrate unduly on custom and belief, his work is largely free of obsession with primitive origins. Udal’s materials were assembled in the 1880s but, due to personal circumstances and the onset of the First World War, his book was not published until 1922. In the interim, as he ruefully remarks in his preface, other writers published his material without acknowledgement (a process which continues to the present day).

Some of the chapters of *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore* were originally published as journal articles, while the remainder are made up of extracts from the folklore column in the *Dorset County Chronicle* of the 1880s, of information from personal correspondents and, unusually for a nineteenth-century folklorist, from personal observation. There is a “Fore-Say” by William Barnes, written in 1886, which constitutes the only extended commentary on folklore in Dorset by that very well-informed writer. The headings for the book’s twelve chapters are then as follows:

1. Customs and Superstitions Appertaining to Particular Days of the Calendar.
2. Customs Appertaining to Particular Seasons of the Year.
3. Local Customs
4. Local Legends and Superstitions
5. Birth, Death, and Marriage Customs and Superstitions.
6. Witchcraft and Charms.
7. Superstitions Relating to Natural History



8. Weather-Lore
9. Miscellaneous Customs and Superstitions.
10. Proverbs and Proverbial Sayings.
11. Ballads and Songs.
12. Children's Games and Rhymes.

Apart from its value as the only full-length study of traditional culture in Dorset, this work is particularly useful in assessing Hardy's contribution to the subject. Udal's work in gathering the contents of *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore* was carried out from about 1872 to 1889, a period which almost exactly coincides with that during which Hardy produced his published fiction. Since both writers were looking back over the previous few decades for their material, and were covering the same geographical area, the basis for comparison is a very sound one. Further, due to the delay in the publication of *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore*, Hardy did not have first-hand access to its contents during most of his writing career (he was eighty-two when the book was finally published) and thus he was unable to draw on it to any great extent in his work.. Therefore Udal's study and Hardy's writings may be taken as independent accounts of the same subject area.

It is true that *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore* sometimes refers to examples from Hardy's novels but Udal never cites Hardy as a primary source. The two men became acquainted late in life but there is little evidence of any interchange between them on traditional culture. Although Hardy was sent a copy of *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore* on its publication, by the author, he did not comment on its contents, an omission which greatly disappointed Udal..

There are two further substantial sources for individual aspects of traditional culture within the county. The first is the folk song collection made by Henry and Robert Hammond from 1905 to 1907. Their collection has never been analysed and almost all of the songs remain unpublished. The only article on their work is a short introduction by Purslow.<sup>6</sup> The significance of this collection and its relation to Hardy's folk song sources will be outlined in chapter 4.

The second further major source, this time for calendar custom, is the present writer's unpublished 1988 dissertation.<sup>7</sup> Originally intended to document those customs, first listed by Udal, which had survived to the late twentieth century, it establishes that Udal recorded, at best, only about half of the customs in the county. Therefore the dissertation goes on to give a comprehensive listing of calendar customs, with descriptions and notes, and it also describes the writer's fieldwork on shroving and on May garlanding. Although restricted to one genre, this study offers a full and systematic account of its subject, against which Hardy's contribution may be assessed.

Apart from the three major sources, the information on traditional culture in Dorset is distributed throughout a very large number of disparate areas. The most productive is the journal *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club* (later *Society*), particularly the earlier volumes. The *Dorset Year Book* also contains some useful articles, again particularly in its earlier volumes, as do local magazines of the late twentieth century such as *Dorset – The County Magazine*. Local histories and reminiscences can also



contain information on traditional culture. Those articles and books particularly useful to this study will be cited at the appropriate points in the following chapters.

## THOMAS HARDY'S LIFE AND WORK

Thomas Hardy was born at Higher Bockhampton, a hamlet some two miles north-west of Dorchester, in 1840, the eldest of four children of a local builder. He was educated at local schools and then apprenticed to a Dorchester architect. After completing his apprenticeship he moved to London in 1862 and, while working there as an architect, wrote poetry and succeeded in having a humorous prose sketch published. He returned to Dorset, for health reasons, in 1867 and, a year later, unsuccessfully submitted his first novel, *The Poor Man and the Lady*, for publication. His next book, *Desperate Remedies (DR)*, did find a publisher, in 1871, and eventually the success of his fourth published novel, *Far from the Madding Crowd (FMC)*, in 1874 enabled him to become a full-time writer. He continued to successfully write novels and short stories until 1897 when he abandoned the writing of fiction and went on to produce several volumes of poetry. He married Lavinia Gifford in 1874 and, following her death in 1912, he married Florence Dugdale in 1914. Thomas Hardy died in 1928 and is buried in Westminster Abbey. There have been several biographies, of which that by Millgate is the best-regarded.<sup>8</sup>

Hardy himself classified his fiction into "Novels of Character and Environment", "Romances and Fantasies" and "Novels of Ingenuity". It is the first of these categories which contains all his best work, such as *Tess of the d'Urbervilles (TD)*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge (MC)* and *The Return of the Native (RN)*. This group of writings is also the richest in folklore references, an illustration, perhaps, of the importance of Dorset background to the appeal of Hardy's work. Similarly, the two most popular of the short story collections, *Wessex Tales* and *Life's little Ironies*, contain many such references. The poems, nearly 950 in number, are less productive in this respect but some individual poems, such as "The Dance at the Phoenix" and "The Choirmaster's Burial" can yield information of great value on aspects of traditional culture in nineteenth-century Dorset. The background to Hardy's writing of fiction and the links between Hardy's own life and his work have been explored by, amongst others, Millgate.<sup>9</sup>

An appreciation of the circumstances of Hardy's life, and of their effect on his writings is vital not only for the better appreciation of his work but also in assessing his value as a source of traditional culture. On the face of it, Hardy is an ideal source, "the intelligent informant", one who grew up in an isolated rural society, absorbed its lore directly and then, educated and articulate, was able to describe it to a wide audience in later life. The problem for folklorists, as already stated, is that Hardy's published output is largely in fictional form and thus of dubious provenance. This study will demonstrate, in chapter 3, that there is ample folklore material provided by Hardy outside his fiction and it will go on to examine, in chapter 3, the validity of the fictional references.

Even so, there is a further barrier to the usefulness of Hardy's testimony and this stems from his class-consciousness, natural for a man of his time, and his attempts to distance himself from his origins. Far from being proud of rising from an artisan family to the



pinnacle of literary fame, Hardy was acutely conscious of his humble antecedents and made every effort to conceal them. He attempted to do so partly by largely cutting himself off from his former acquaintances, and partly by making dubious claims as to his family's decline from a once elevated social position. His first wife, from a family of Cornish minor gentry, saw herself very much as Hardy's social superior, even when he came to move in the highest circles and he remained acutely aware of this perceived social gulf. Therefore, although it will be demonstrated that Hardy obtained folklore material at first hand and almost certainly from his immediate family, his attempts to conceal its origins by phrases such as "from an old woman" or "from one now dead" make it difficult to precisely identify his sources. A further difficulty stems from his intense dislike of literary critics, one of his principal characteristics as a writer.

...he displays a consistent hostility, ranging from irritability to outright ferocity, in responding to the pronouncements of contemporary critics.<sup>10</sup>

Although this attitude prompted Hardy to go to great lengths to ensure the verisimilitude of his background settings it also caused him to intensify his efforts to cover his tracks, even to the extent of producing a ghosted "biography" and ordering the destruction of his personal papers after his death.

While emphasising Hardy's conscious efforts to distance himself, in sociological terms, from his roots, it should be appreciated that, in reality, he did leave his background very far behind. Although he began and ended his life in Dorset, he spent much of his twenties in London and, once established as a writer, spent several months of each year in that city for most of his adult life, as well as travelling in Europe. The resulting detachment from his home county enabled him to see its setting in a wider context than would have been the case had he remained within its boundaries. At the same time, as an examination of his surviving correspondence shows, Hardy was an astute man of business, ever ready to capitalise on those elements of his work which could be seen to have a particular appeal for his readers. His perspective view of his home county and his acute sense of his readers' expectations were brought together in his creation of "Wessex", the half-real, half-dream world in which his fiction and much of his poetry is set. Traditional culture is an essential element in the make-up of this world and the significance of Hardy's Wessex in relation to this study will be explored in chapter 3.

Despite his detachment, Hardy's attitude to traditional culture is not value-free. Although he disclaimed any training or expertise in folklore, his attitude towards it is very much that of the educated and rational Victorian intellectual. This results in references such as that in *TD* to Mrs. Durbeyfield's "fast-perishing lumber of superstitions, folk-lore, dialect and orally transmitted ballads"<sup>11</sup> and his statement that the old traditional ballads were "slain at a stroke" by London comic songs on the arrival of the railway in Dorset.<sup>12</sup> Both of these assertions are demonstrably exaggerated, but a decline in the prevalence of traditional culture was certainly evident over the period of Hardy's long life. In his writings he accepts this, with regret, as inevitable but does not share the nostalgia of, for instance, William Barnes towards this change.



It is too much to expect them [farm labourers] to remain stagnant and old-fashioned for the pleasure of romantic spectators”<sup>13</sup>

## **THE LITERATURE ON HARDY AND TRADITIONAL CULTURE**

As previously stated, the only major study of traditional culture in Hardy’s work is Firor’s *Folkways in Thomas Hardy*, published in 1931. Despite the considerable passage of time since its publication, this continues to be cited as the authoritative work on the subject, even in fairly recent books by respected Hardy scholars such as Brady<sup>14</sup> and Ray.<sup>15</sup> Therefore some consideration of *Folkways in Thomas Hardy* is necessary at this point.

Firor was, of course, unable to draw on the vast quantity of writing by and on Hardy which is now available and her work can only be fairly judged by assessing how successfully she was able to achieve the aims which she set herself at the time of writing. In fact this judgement is rather difficult to make, since she does not set out her aims or terms of reference at any point in her book. Her very brief preface consists mainly of acknowledgements and it is followed immediately by the first of a series of chapters on various categories of folklore without the author giving any idea of how the subject is to be approached. Her PhD thesis, of identical title and also published in 1931, is similarly constructed.<sup>16</sup> Therefore it is necessary to try to deduce the author’s aims by consideration of the contents of her work and, on this basis, they seem to have been:

- To identify and classify instances of folkways in Hardy’s novels, short stories and poetry.
- To set these instances in the context of similar examples from other parts of Britain and from further afield.
- To show how different categories of folkways derived from primitive beliefs and behaviour.
- To show how Hardy’s use of folkways is an essential element of his work.

The extent to which these assumed aims are realised may be assessed as follows.

### Identification and Classification

The chapter headings adopted by Firor are as follows:

1. Omens, Premonitions and Fatality.
2. Divination.
3. Ghost and Fairy Lore.
4. Magic and Witchcraft.
5. Folk-Medicine.
6. Weather Lore and the Language of Country Things.
7. Seasonal Festivals and Customs.
8. Sports and Pastimes.
9. Folk-Songs, Country-Dances and Folk-Drama.
10. Folk Wit and Wisdom.



11. Folk-Law.
12. Prehistory and Survival of Ancient Religions.
13. Medieval Legends and Napoleana.
14. Hardy's use of Folklore and Folk-Custom.

The first thirteen chapters may be taken to represent Firor's scheme of classification, which does not derive from Gomme's *Handbook of Folklore* and is presumably idiosyncratic. This classification is heavily biased towards belief, the first six and parts of some of the following chapters falling within this category. Within the area of belief, Firor includes some material from the poems, comprising omens, premonitions and ghosts which, as will be shown in chapter 3 of the present study, may be of a folkloric nature, but is not genuine and is not intended by Hardy to be seen as such. These inclusions may be instructive regarding Hardy and his literary imagination but cannot be classified as genuine folklore. Material culture is omitted, as are some types of traditional music. The chapter on "Folk-Law" is a discursive one, which covers not only popular attitudes to laws and mores but also elements of rites of passage and social customs. That on prehistory and survivals is the nearest that the author comes to rationalising her material.

Firor's idea of folkways, as thus ascribed, is in some respects narrower and in others broader than the current understanding of traditional culture although there is a significant area of overlap between the two concepts. Despite this overlap, and despite the apparently comprehensive nature of *Folkways in Thomas Hardy*, there are substantial areas of omission. For example, the index in chapter 2 of the present study lists over forty songs mentioned in Hardy's published work, but fewer than two-thirds of these are mentioned by Firor. Similarly, she notes only about half of the legends and anecdotes used by Hardy and an even smaller proportion of the calendar customs. This partial coverage of the field detracts from the book's status as the only comprehensive work in this area of study.

### Contextualisation

In describing, chapter by chapter, the various instances of folkways in Hardy's fiction and poetry, Firor is punctilious in producing corresponding examples from elsewhere and, in so doing, she ranges far afield. Analogies with Pennsylvania Dutch folkways are often adduced, presumably through the influence of one of her university colleagues, while other comparisons come from various European countries, particularly in the north of the continent, and from as far away as China. Within Britain her comparisons come mostly from Scotland and the north of England.

The immediately obvious flaw in Firor's approach is the virtual absence of analogues from the south-west of England, the area in which virtually all of Hardy's literary output is set. Most of the Dorset-based articles in the early volumes of *Folk-Lore Record* are missed, as are those in the Dorset Field Club *Proceedings*. Worst of all, there is no mention of Udal's invaluable *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore*, although this work was published nine years before the completion of Firor's PhD thesis. It is difficult to see how Hardy's work can be set in its local context without reference to these sources. Even when a west country writer, Baring



Gould, is cited, it is his works on general folklore, such as *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages*, which are chosen rather than his studies of local folklore and song.

### Derivation from Primitive Beliefs

Firor's eclectic selection of comparisons should be seen in the light of the belief, largely accepted in her day, that folklore was shared internationally and derived from a common ancestry in the remote past. Even so, this approach gives rise to some dubious analogies and flimsy parallels. Hence the attempted cure of Gertrude Lodge's arm in "The Withered Arm" is related to Odin hanging for nine days and nights between heaven and earth to learn the runes of magic might.<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere, the marriage divination by hemp-seed sowing in *The Woodlanders (W)* is compared to German brides putting flax in their shoes for luck<sup>18</sup> and the skimmity ride in *MC* is related to the erection by the Goths of the "Nidstaeng", the stake of infamy against lawbreakers.<sup>19</sup> It is reasonable that an English graduate in the 1930s should adhere to the ritual origins theory of folklore and should rely on J.G. Fraser and Margaret Murray as sources, such was the orthodoxy of the time, but Firor's erudite forays into anthropology, mythology and classical religion are all too often irrelevant to Dorset folklore. Her abbreviated history of marriage customs from Teutonic times does not connect in any way with her ensuing discussion of the Portland courtship custom from *The Well-Beloved (WB)* which, in any case, she misinterprets,<sup>20</sup> nor with the wife sale in *MC*, nor any of her subsequent examples in this field. Similarly, the lengthy digression on English racial types, referring, ironically, to the Piltdown skull as archaeological proof, is not connected to the subsequent discussion of "primitive" beliefs in Dorset.<sup>21</sup> It seems unnecessary to the author to demonstrate any link between primitive beliefs and Dorset folklore, given the widespread acceptance of such links at her time of writing, but the examples which she does give are not convincing.

### Hardy's Use of Folklore

Little attention is paid to this topic until Firor's final chapter, although short comments intersperse the previous text and some, such as that on folk humour in chapter 10, are perceptive. Nevertheless, the chapter on Hardy's use of folklore is perfunctory, so much so that the subject would better have been omitted than given such scanty treatment. In addition, the reasoning used here displays a fundamental misunderstanding of Hardy's characters and, moreover, one which has been repeated by subsequent writers.

This misunderstanding stems from Firor's frequent references to Hardy's characters as "peasants", a term inappropriate for rural workers in nineteenth-century England and, even in the loose sense used here, incorrect, since Hardy's leading characters are not farm workers. In *Under the Greenwood Tree (UGT)*, the hero, Dick Dewey, is a partner in a tranter's (i.e. carrier's) business and the heroine, Fancy Day, is a schoolmistress. Henchard in *MC* is a corn merchant, Jude Fawley in *Jude the Obscure (JO)* is a stonemason, Gabriel Oak in *FMC* is a farmer, and similar examples may be found throughout Hardy's novels. With the exception of those of higher social class in such relatively unsuccessful novels as *The Hand of Ethelberta (HE)*, Hardy's leading characters occupy a social niche above that of the labouring classes, but not far above. They are frequently bent on self-improvement



and their attitude to traditional culture is often patronising or derogatory. They may be contrasted with minor figures, genuinely of the working class, such as Thomas Leaf in *UGT*, Granfer Cattle in *RN* and Joseph Poorgrass in *FMC* who form part of the “chorus” of background characters in Hardy’s rural settings. His leading protagonists replicate the Hardy family’s own social position and it is not possible to fully understand Hardy’s picture of life in rural Dorset without being sensitive to the nuances of class division which so much exercise him.

The preceding analysis has shown that *Folkways in Thomas Hardy* is by no means a comprehensive guide to the subject, even taking into account the limitations placed on the author in terms of the materials available at her time of writing. It also fails to set Hardy’s examples in a Dorset context or in a valid British or European one. Nor does the book adequately address the question of Hardy’s literary use of folklore. In addition to these shortcomings there is a more fundamental flaw in Firor’s approach to her subject and this is the absence of any attempt to assess the validity of Hardy’s folkways references. Given the exceptional longevity of this book as a standard work, all consideration of traditional culture in Hardy’s work was, until the late twentieth century, built on an unsubstantiated assumption regarding the validity of the source materials.

Since the appearance of *Folkways in Thomas Hardy* in 1931, very little serious attention has been paid to Hardy’s role as a source for the study of traditional culture. Pre-war dissertations, such as that by Everett<sup>22</sup> add nothing to Firor’s discussion and they share its faults. Post-war studies in the United States, by Conlin<sup>23</sup> and Gates<sup>24</sup> are unavailable for examination but have not been cited by subsequent writers and must therefore be assumed to include no new insights. A more recent examination, by Berry, also adds nothing of value.<sup>25</sup> It was not until the 1970s that any new thinking on the subject became apparent, first in Lombardi’s article on Hardy’s sources<sup>26</sup> and then in her extended consideration of the folklore in his novels.<sup>27</sup>

Lombardi’s PhD thesis, which may be taken to encompass the salient points of her earlier article, attempts to simultaneously consider both the literary use of folklore by Hardy and the author himself as a source of genuine traditions.

In the following chapters on the Wessex novels an attempt will be made to demonstrate inasmuch as possible through biographical, internal, and corroborative evidence that Hardy’s use of folklore, including folk custom, tradition and folk music, contribute to the materials, techniques, and art of his fiction. Also, Hardy’s novels should be read because they depict a fairly accurate account of rural Dorchester in the late nineteenth century.

Through biographical evidence it can be shown how much Hardy was in direct contact with the oral traditions. Through internal evidence it can be shown that Hardy plausibly described the folk milieu and subsequently must have observed much of the folklore firsthand. Finally, the corroborative evidence in the form of folklore indexes and collections must be consulted to show that Hardy used an item with an independent traditional existence.<sup>28</sup>

There is some confusion here. All Hardy’s novels are called “Wessex Novels”, although Lombardi considers only five (*FMC*, *RN*, *MC*, *W* and *TD*), and he writes about Dorset, not just Dorchester; and of the mid-, not the late, nineteenth century. Nevertheless Lombardi

goes on to give a competent account of the folklore in the chosen novels, albeit with a rigid but relatively unobtrusive adherence to primitive origins theory and a consistent misuse of the term "peasant". Where she significantly departs from Firor and her imitators is in her attempt, outlined in her second paragraph above, to look at Hardy's value as a source. She describes Hardy's background in rural Dorset and draws attention to valuable materials, such as notebooks and manuscripts, which had not previously been investigated for folklore references.

Even so, Lombardi does not validate Hardy as a source since her demonstration that he had direct access to genuine traditional material does not, in itself, prove that he used it in unadulterated form in his writing. Long digressions into his interests in archaeology (presumably inspired by the supposedly primitive origins of folklore) and into architecture lead nowhere. There is an attempt to validate some of Hardy's musical references but the argument here is not adequately sustained. The account of the Stinsford band and the Hardy family manuscripts is not linked to Hardy's writings, since the list of "Wessex Novels" under consideration inexplicably excludes *UGT*. The comparison of the songs in the novels with those in the Hammond collection is a worthwhile exercise but the writer does not appreciate the fluidity of traditional material nor the interplay between the broadside press and local tradition. For example, the variation between the text of "The Seeds of Love" in *FMC* and in the Hammond collection is attributed to Hardy's using a broadside version, which Lombardi attempts to trace. In fact, Hardy had ample opportunity to pick up local material at first hand and Jackson-Houlston plausibly argues that he obtained the text of this song from the sister or mother of Robert Barratt, the Hammonds' informant.<sup>29</sup>

Despite these flaws, Lombardi's study is a valuable step forward in this field as it opens up extensive new sources of information and begins to ask questions, as yet unanswered, about the relationship between Hardy's experience of folklore and his writing on the subject.

No overall analysis of Hardy and traditional culture has subsequently appeared but, over the years, his use of individual elements or genres of tradition has attracted the attention of a number of writers. The most fertile field for investigation has proved to be his use of dialect, an immediately obvious feature of his better-known novels. In fact, the question of the extent to which Hardy used dialect, as such, in his writings is rather a complex one and it will be considered in chapter 4. It is sufficient to say, at this point, that the material available on Hardy and dialect is so extensive that it has generated a full-length thesis by a dialect specialist which by no means exhausts the subject.<sup>30</sup>

While childlore, narrative and material culture have received little attention from writers on Hardy, the fields of custom, belief and music have elicited numerous short articles. At the lowest level these are merely catalogues of particular elements of traditional culture in his work. They began to appear during Hardy's lifetime, are still occasionally produced, and are not given further consideration here. Other articles, for the most part, look at the literary significance of Hardy's use of traditional culture and do not address the validity or otherwise of the material in question. Neither do they explore the relevant tradition itself but merely reiterate Hardy's description. They may be illustrative of the use of folklore in Hardy's (usually better known) writings but they offer nothing new regarding the



traditional material itself. Examples include Doel on superstition,<sup>31</sup> Lentz and Short on song,<sup>32</sup> and Radford on dance music<sup>33</sup>

Articles which seriously address the relationship between the customs, beliefs or songs in Hardy's work and those in reality are very few in number. Preston's examination of Hardy's "Play of Saint George", the mummers' play in *RN*, is a valuable contribution to the study of traditional drama.<sup>34</sup> This author uses computerised textual analysis, an innovation in this field at his time of writing, in 1977, to draw conclusions as to the validity of the text and his findings will be considered in chapter 6.

Equally valuable, in another area of study, is Jackson-Houlston's study of Hardy and traditional song. This ranges widely over the songs mentioned by Hardy, his sources and the way in which he uses folksong within his novels.<sup>35</sup> Further consideration will be given to Jackson-Houlston's work in chapter 4. Again in the field of music, Dodge's article on Hardy's writings on west gallery music is much shorter but contains some good background to the subject, drawn from traditional practice.<sup>36</sup>

On a smaller scale, Davies touches briefly but illuminatingly on the hag-riding incident in "The Withered Arm" within his study of the hag-riding belief in Newfoundland and his conclusions will be reviewed in chapter 7.<sup>37</sup>

Given that Hardy died more than seventy-five years ago, the number of useful studies of the traditional culture in his work is surprisingly small. This absence of scholarship, together with the wealth of new source material now available, as described below, reinforces the belief that a full study of this aspect of his writings is long overdue..

## SOURCE MATERIALS

Those few studies of traditional culture in Hardy's work which have appeared since the publication of Firor's *Folkways* have tended to concentrate upon the novels for source material. This is understandable, since most writers have been interested in Hardy's literary use of folklore, and his novels have been taken to be his greatest contribution to literature.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, this process has left other areas of his writings largely unexplored. Such uneven coverage, coupled with the availability of much posthumously published writing, both fictional and non-fictional, necessitates a review to ascertain the full extent of those writings of Hardy which are likely to be of use here in assessing his contribution to the study of traditional culture.

### Novels

Thomas Hardy produced fourteen published novels. He destroyed the manuscript of his first, unpublished, novel "The Poor Man and the Lady" but the west gallery band scenes in *UGT* were taken from the text of the earlier work. Details of publication of the novels, and of Hardy's other published work, may be found in Purdy's valuable bibliographical study, recently revised by Pettit.<sup>39</sup>

The novels were first published in serial form and then republished as books, with texts which were often substantially altered.<sup>40</sup> Some serialisations also appeared in America, sometimes with different texts. Hardy continued to revise his novels for new editions long after their initial publication and all are still in print, most in several different editions. These variations, together with the survival of some manuscripts and proofs, again in different versions, make the selection of appropriate texts a matter of extreme difficulty. Hardy scholars have generally agreed that the Macmillan “Wessex Edition” of 1912 is as near to the “authentic text” as may be attained, as stated by Purdy in his study of Hardy’s literary output.

The Wessex edition is in every sense the definitive edition of Hardy’s work and the last authority on questions of text.<sup>41</sup>

On the other hand, it could be argued that the author’s original intentions are best expressed in his manuscript versions and Morgan has made such an “original” text available for *FMC*.<sup>42</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this study to investigate all the textual variations in Hardy’s novels. It is fortunate, therefore, that there seems to be little difference in the traditional culture content of the different versions of the novels. For instance, in the case of *FMC*, where a complete variant text is available, there are only seven additional instances of this kind. Of these, three are textual variations, and the others occur in a chapter excised from the book as originally published.

The references in this study will be drawn from the “New Wessex” edition of the novels, which was issued from the 1970s onwards.<sup>43</sup> This reproduces the text of the long out-of-print Wessex edition, albeit with some further amendments, and shares the text (but not the pagination) with the easily available Macmillan paperback edition. In those few cases where there are variations in folklore content between this and earlier editions, the alternative version will also be cited.

### Short Stories

There are forty six short stories, most of which were published in the four collections *Wessex Tales*, *A Group of Noble Dames*, *Life’s Little Ironies* and *A Changed Man*. Seven further stories were published in collections after Hardy’s death. The publication history is again complicated and is described by Purdy. The variation in textual versions mirrors that of the novels, with the additional complications that some stories were published on different occasions under different names and that there are more manuscript versions available than is the case for the novels.

The stories are more sharply divided than the novels in terms of their content of traditional culture. A few, such as “The Withered Arm”, and “A Few Crusted Characters” are very rich in references, but most others do not venture into this field to any great extent. Studies of textual variation in the short stories have revealed a use by Hardy of dialect to characterise social standing and this feature will be addressed in chapter 4.



As for the novels, the texts cited here are generally from the New Wessex Edition, in this case of *The Collected Short Stories (CSS)*. This comprises nearly all of the short stories, collected into one volume. References to the remaining stories are from *The Excluded and Collaborative Stories (ECS)*.

### Poetry

The collection of Hardy's poetry cited in this study is *The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy (CP)*, in the New Wessex Edition, which contains 947 examples. Verse attributed to Hardy still occasionally appears, up to the present time. Poems lend themselves, perhaps even more than fiction, to revision and reinterpretation and Hardy can be shown to have continued to revise his verse throughout his life. In this context, Gibson's exhaustive account of the variations is invaluable.<sup>44</sup>

Only a small proportion of the poetry is useful as a source of local tradition but a few poems are of great interest in this respect. For instance, "The Bride-Night Fire" is rich in dialect words and is the only sustained example of the deliberate use of dialect in verse by Hardy. Other poems, such as "The Dance at the Phoenix", give information on local dance repertoire while west gallery music is referred to in several poems, most notably in "The Chapel-Organist". Most of the supernatural material in the poetry, included in Firor's study, is not considered here for the reasons set out in chapter 3.

Again, no attempt is made here to systematically examine all textual variations for folklore references. A sampling of significant poems reveals no additional material in the variant texts so that, for instance, "The Bride-Night Fire", which Hardy revised extensively, provides nothing additional in its variations other than different wordings of the section describing a skimmity-ride.<sup>45</sup> This description is discussed in chapter 8.

### Drama

Hardy wrote two full-length dramas, the notoriously unperformable *The Dynasts (D)* and *The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall*. The former, which is set in the period of the Napoleonic wars has a number of scenes set in Wessex and several useful references, particularly to the social context of what were to become "country dances". The single volume New Wessex Edition is used in this study.

Hardy also dramatised his short story "The Three Strangers" as "The Three Wayfarers" and his play text contains some notation for the traditional dance mentioned in the story.

*The Play of Saint George*, a reconstruction of a mummers' play seen by Hardy in his youth, was written by him for the dramatisation of *RN* and is discussed at length in chapter 6.

## Non-Fictional Works

*Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings*, brings together various non-fictional pieces produced by the author, together with his prefaces to the novels. Of particular interest, in the context of this study, are the account of a November the Fifth demonstration in Dorset, to be discussed here in chapter 8 and an article on traditional cottage construction, considered in chapter 4. The long essay "The Dorsetshire Labourer" is illustrative of Hardy's attitude to the changes taking place in rural life in his day, as well as giving information on custom and belief.

*Thomas Hardy's Public Voice (PV)* sets out more of Hardy's non-fictional writings, including items almost certainly written by Hardy but not endorsed by his signature. These include, inter alia, correspondence on the nature of traditional dance, which will be examined in chapter 4.

## Biography

In 1928, shortly after Hardy's death, his second wife, Florence Emily, published *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy*,<sup>46</sup> followed in 1930 by *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy*.<sup>47</sup> The authorship of these biographies was queried as early as 1950, by Purdy, and in succeeding years it became clear that the books were, in fact, written by Hardy himself, with his wife fulfilling a secretarial role.<sup>48</sup> The original works have long been out of print but Millgate has produced a combined and revised version, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy (LW)* which attempts to recover the text as Hardy intended it to be published. It is this edition which is used as a source for reference here.

The biography, produced as a "pre-emptive strike" against potential biographers (a tactic which signally failed), contains many reminiscences of Dorset, both in Hardy's youth and from his parents' recollections. It is an invaluable source of traditional culture, particularly in respect of west gallery and traditional dance musicians and was intended by the author, in part, to be a record of aspects of traditional culture in Dorset

Some incidents of his country experiences herein recorded may be considered as trivial, or as not strictly appertaining to a personal biography, but they have been included from a sense that they embody customs and manners of old West-of-England life that have now entirely passed away.<sup>49</sup>

## Letters

From 1978 to 1988, Purdy and Millgate produced their monumental seven-volume collection of Hardy's letters. These span the period from 1862 to 1927 but the majority come from the latter part of Hardy's life, when the recipients were, perhaps, more likely to retain his correspondence, due to the fame of the writer. The letters had never, until the present study, been systematically examined for references to traditional culture and, in this field, they yield a rich harvest. Particularly towards the end of his life, writing to close friends and unaware of the likelihood of eventual publication. Hardy could be uncharacteristically forthcoming about his sources and his personal experience. It is also possible, reading the correspondence in its totality, to obtain a very clear picture of Hardy



the man and of his attitudes, an essential concomitant, it is argued, to the interpretation of traditional culture as he portrays it.

More letters have come to light since Purdy and Millgate's collection and a further volume is currently in the course of preparation.

### Notebooks and Miscellaneous Materials

Despite his instructions that his personal papers should be destroyed on his death (another unsuccessful ploy to foil biographers and the hated critics), a number of Hardy's notebooks and manuscript notes survive. For the purpose of this study, the most useful compendium of such survivals is *The Personal Notebooks of Thomas Hardy (PN)* edited by Taylor in 1978. The earlier part of this collection contains some interesting references to traditional culture, of similar nature to those which appear in *LW*, for which publication they may originally have been intended. The notebooks also reveal the assiduity with which Hardy researched the background to his fiction, a significant attribute in the context of assessing the reliability of his references to traditional culture.

The "Facts" notebook, yet to be published, consists mostly of cuttings and transcriptions and, while further confirming the quality of Hardy's research, contains some useful pointers to his particular interests within the field of traditional culture.

Hardy also possessed a small number of printed song books, some of which he annotated with references to local tradition. These will be considered in chapter 4. Reference will also be made in that chapter to his annotations to his personal copy of Barnes' Dorset glossary.

As well as manuscript drafts of subsequently published works, Hardy drafted plots for five short stories, none of which he developed further. One provides some insight into west gallery music and will be mentioned in chapter 5.

An architect by profession, Hardy produced many drawings and sketches, a number of which survive and which have never been systematically examined. A very few of these bear upon traditional culture and these are reproduced as an appendix to this study and are referred to in the relevant chapters.

There are also some minor fragments and annotations, which will also be referred to in the appropriate chapters.

Hardy inherited, from his father, several manuscript books of dance tunes, songs and west gallery music. These books, which date from the early nineteenth century, are of great interest for the study of the traditional music of this period and have yet to receive serious critical attention. A detailed examination of them would require specialist musical knowledge and would constitute a significant academic exercise. For this reason, and because they constitute an independent Dorset source from a period prior to Hardy's life, they will not be considered in detail here. Reference to the carol books is made at the appropriate points in chapters 3 and 5.

### Collaborative Works

Hardy produced one short story in collaboration with Florence Henniker and two with Florence Dugdale (subsequently his second wife). One of the latter stories, "Blue Jimmy: The Horse Stealer" contains folklore items, but these pertain to Somerset.

In 1916, Hardy collaborated with T.H. Tilley in producing *Wessex Scenes from "The Dynasts"* at Dorchester, on behalf of the Red Cross. As its name suggests, this drama brings together those parts of *D* which are set in Dorset. There are additional linking speeches and action, which contain some traditional material. The reader familiar with Hardy's style can detect those few passages which he did *not* write and no less an authority than Millgate states that *Wessex Scenes* was largely written by Hardy.<sup>50</sup>

Although not normally listed amongst his collaborative works, Hardy assisted Henry Colley March with the dialect representation in the latter's account of witchcraft at Piddlehinton.<sup>51</sup> It is not possible, in this case, to ascertain Hardy's precise contribution, but the story in question must have been familiar to him through his sister's period of teaching at Piddlehinton School at about the time of the events in question.

There are a small number of illustrations to the serial versions of the novels, which contain elements of traditional culture. It is no longer possible to assess the extent to which Hardy collaborated with the illustrators, but it is reasonable to suppose that, once a successful author, he was unlikely to have accepted illustrations with which he was unhappy. Those few illustrations which bear upon traditional culture will be mentioned in the appropriate chapters here and are reproduced in an appendix.

### Secondary Sources

Hardy, a private man, had a small circle of close friends, but feared casual visitors and avoided interviews. Like the destruction of his private papers, his avoidance of contact with what would now be called "the media" was counterproductive in that it served only to intensify curiosity as to the man and his private life. Therefore, during his lifetime, a number of supposed interviews with Hardy were published, often concocted from previously published material and imaginatively re-worked by journalists. Gibson has done an excellent service to Hardy scholarship in critically examining these various pieces, giving an idea of the reliability of their authors and selecting the most useful recollections.<sup>52</sup> Amongst the latter is that by William Archer, who actually submitted drafts of his interview article to Hardy for correction and to whom Hardy spoke informatively about mummings' plays.<sup>53</sup>

Possibly the only casual visitor to consistently breach the Hardy fortress at Max Gate was Rebekah Owen, a young American woman who somehow persuaded Hardy, not only to speak to her about his work, but to show her some of his locations. The results of her extensive researches, edited by Weber, contain many topographical identifications and a number of references to traditional culture.<sup>54</sup>



During the 1960s, J. Stevens Cox spent a great deal of time in tracking down and interviewing people who could recall Hardy, and the results of his labours were published in a long series of pamphlets, subsequently collected into two volumes.<sup>55</sup> The content is of variable quality but the sheer bulk of the material ensures that there is something of value for this study. Further recollections of Hardy have emerged in the memoirs of those who knew him and, even to the present time, new reminiscences are occasionally unearthed and some of these are useful in this study.

Since the sources discussed in this section are quoting Hardy at second hand, they cannot be considered to offer the same level of reliability as his own writings. Therefore they are excluded from the index in chapter 2, but are cited in the subsequent chapters, where appropriate.

## **METHODOLOGY**

It will be clear from the preceding section, that those writings of Hardy which contain references to traditional culture are extensive and varied and that they extend far beyond the areas which have hitherto been studied in this context. Chapter 2 goes on to list all Hardy's references, from these sources, to traditional culture in Dorset. Some analytical system of listing the material is clearly necessary and, as previously stated, the classification used here is based on that devised by Halpert. The rationale of this system, its limitations and the innovations used for the purpose of this study are also discussed in chapter 2.

The small number of previous explorations of Hardy's use of traditional culture have tended to concentrate on the novels, with the inevitable question mark which this use of fiction places against the source material. Even so, little, if any, attempt has been made to assess the validity of the folklore in question. The extension of the source material to include Hardy's non-fictional and personal writings sets the researcher on an ostensibly firmer footing but, it must be contended, the question of validity cannot remain unanswered. Therefore chapter 3 is devoted to an assessment of the reliability of Hardy's references.

This assessment is not so easy to make as might be imagined. The dearth of alternative sources with which to compare Hardy's testimony presents an immediate obstacle, as does his tendency to distance himself from his sources and to mediate his material to suit his literary purpose. The non-fictional works, particularly the letters, are particularly useful here in supplying additional references, often drawn directly from Hardy's own experience, and it has proved possible, by approaching the investigation from a number of different angles, to make a reasonable assessment. This demonstrates that, with a small number of caveats, Hardy's writings represent descriptions of actual traditions. This conclusion, in itself, represents a significant step forward in this area of study and makes it possible to proceed with confidence to critically examine some of the numerous examples of individual traditions which are mentioned by Hardy.

Although the index of references in chapter 2 is very extensive, it presents three problems to the researcher seeking to put together a comprehensive account of Dorset's traditional culture as represented by Hardy.

- Some aspects of tradition; notably dialect and music, require specialist knowledge to properly assess Hardy's contribution to the subject.
- Hardy's choice of material is skewed, in that some areas, such as superstition, generate frequent references while others, such as childlore, rarely figure in his writings.
- Although the number of references to traditional culture is very large indeed, many consist of a very few words and merely register the existence of the tradition, without further explanation or description. This is particularly true of the various examples of material culture.

The latter two observations should not come as a surprise. Hardy was writing fiction and verse, not articles on folklore, and, for that reason, he might reasonably be expected to choose examples with which he was particularly familiar and to develop them only as far as was necessary in order to serve his literary purpose. There is no reason why he should supply a body of references consistent in range and depth across the whole gamut of traditional culture. Therefore, an account of folklore in Hardy's writings is going to be uneven in its treatment, as is the folklore content in his work.

In order to address these problems, two immediate strategies suggest themselves. First, to present an account which covers all the areas in the index, but at a minimal level of detail, in order to iron out the discrepancies in Hardy's level of coverage and to avoid detailed reference to specialised areas. Second, to concentrate in great depth on a restricted part of the index in order to illustrate the way in which the whole corpus could be addressed. After careful consideration, it was felt that an extended commentary on all the aspects of traditional culture covered by Hardy would result in a very lengthy but superficial study which could not do full justice to the more interesting and valuable aspects of the subject. On the other hand, a detailed study of a single genre would be too restricted to adequately demonstrate the full value of Hardy as a source. Some form of compromise is clearly necessary, but it is important that it should not be an uneasy one.

The approach adopted here is to identify certain areas of traditional culture for which Hardy provides extensive information, which may be compared with that from external sources, and to make these areas the subjects of detailed study. Prior to these studies, in order to illustrate the full range of traditional culture represented in Hardy's work, chapter 4 will consider in outline how his writings may inform an investigation of each of the six categories from the index in chapter 2. The aim will be to briefly review the coverage of each category by Hardy, and by other writers, and, where appropriate, to suggest avenues for future research.

In chapters 5, 6 and 7, three areas are chosen for detailed study, these being west gallery musicians, the mummers' play and witchcraft. In each case, Hardy's references are



extensive and provide a coherent picture, which may be compared with alternative sources, some cited here for the first time. It is then possible to assess how Hardy's writings confirm, modify, contradict or extend existing knowledge of the areas in question. These individual studies are followed, in chapter 8, by a number of shorter case studies of individual elements of tradition drawn from across the whole range of genres. Finally, in chapter 9, the conclusions of the preceding chapters are drawn together and reinforced.

The aim of this study is to demonstrate and explore the contribution of Hardy and his writings to a study of traditional culture in Dorset. It is not intended to consider the way in which Hardy used traditional culture for his literary purposes. Previous studies, it is felt, have failed to adequately distinguish between the concepts of Hardy as a folklore source and Hardy as a user of folklore material. Nevertheless, in order fully to understand the value of Hardy's writings as a source, some consideration of the interplay between his folklore material and his fictional purposes will, from time to time, inevitably be required.

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37. Owen Davies, "Hag-Riding in Nineteenth-Century West Country England and Modern Newfoundland. An Examination of an Experience-Centred Witchcraft Tradition", *Folk Life*, 35 (1996-97), 36-53.
38. Hardy, who always considered himself primarily to be a poet, would not agree with this analysis.
39. Richard L. Purdy, *Thomas Hardy. A Bibliographical Study*, edited by Charles P. C. Pettit, London, The British Library, 2002.
40. In the case of *WB* , the differences are such as to constitute an alternative version of the story.
41. Purdy, p. 286.
42. Thomas Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, edited with an introduction and notes by Rosemarie Morgan with Shannon Russell, London, Penguin, 2000.



43. Some of the New Wessex Editions, such as *TD* and *W* have been re-issued with a larger typeface, which results in altered pagination. The references to the novels in this study are to the later editions in such cases.
44. *The Variorum Edition of the Collected Poetry of Thomas Hardy*, edited by James Gibson, London, Macmillan, 1979.
45. The earliest version is entitled "The Fire at Tranter Sweatley's".
46. Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1891*, London, Macmillan, 1928.
47. Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928*, London, Macmillan, 1930.
48. Michael Millgate, "Autobiography", in *Oxford Reader's Companion to Hardy*, edited by Norman Page, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 20-23.
49. Florence Emily Hardy, Prefatory Note to *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1891*, in *LW*, pp. 3-4.
50. *PV*, p. 372.
51. H. Colley March, "Dorset Folklore Collected in 1897", *Folklore*, 10 (1899), 478-489 (pp. 482-487).
52. James Gibson, *Thomas Hardy. Interviews and Recollections*, London, Macmillan, 1999.
53. The significance of Archer's discussions with Hardy on this subject is explored in chapter 6.
54. Carl J. Weber, *Rebekah Owen and Thomas Hardy*, Waterlooville (Maine), USA, Colby College Library, 1939; *Hardy and the Lady from Madison Square*, Waterlooville (Maine), USA, Colby College Library, 1952.
55. J. Stevens Cox (ed.), *Thomas Hardy: Materials for the Study of His Life, Times and Works*, St. Peter Port, Toucan, 1962-1968; *Thomas Hardy: More Materials for the Study of His Life, Times and Works*, St. Peter Port, Toucan, 1971.

## CHAPTER 2

# INDEX OF REFERENCES TO TRADITIONAL CULTURE IN HARDY'S WRITINGS

### INTRODUCTION

The classification of traditional culture is a somewhat arbitrary process; the methods used, for example, by Udal and by Firor being different but equally capable of dealing with the authors' intentions. The system of classification used here is based on that first introduced by Halpert at Memorial University, Newfoundland and subsequently developed at the University of Sheffield. It divides examples of traditional culture into the following six categories:

Language  
Childlore  
Custom and Belief  
Traditional Narrative  
Traditional Music, Dance and Drama  
Material Culture, Work Techniques, Arts and Crafts

Within each category there are a number of sub-categories. For example, those for Language might be:

“Regional and social dialects; occupational and other special vocabularies; blason populaire; sayings, proverbs, rhymes and riddles, blessings, graces, prayers and toasts; placenames and personal names, mnemonics, gestures.” (See appendix 1)

Further sub-division may be adopted within these headings for more specialised work. The Sheffield classification is reproduced as appendix 1.

This system has the advantage of being modern and widely adopted, but it was developed as a response to the needs of contemporary folklore research and includes a number of sub-headings which are not useful in the study of historical material. For instance, in the case of language, as detailed above, only about half of the sub-categories are represented in Hardy's writings, sometimes by only one or two examples. This is not too great a problem in itself, since those areas which are not represented may simply be omitted. Conversely, some elements of traditional culture mentioned by Hardy, notably west gallery music and foodways, do not figure in the basic Halpert classification. Nevertheless, the system is flexible enough to admit new categories, or to sub-divide existing ones, and this is the strategy which is adopted in the ensuing index.

The index identifies and categorises all instances of traditional culture mentioned by Hardy in writing, other than those recorded only in works set in Cornwall. It does not include instances attributed to Hardy by other writers. The six main categories and the various sub-



categories are numbered for ease of reference and cross-referencing is kept to a minimum, in order to avoid an unduly lengthy list.

References are given in abbreviated form, since full details may be obtained from the notes to the ensuing chapters and from the bibliography. Hardy's Wessex placenames are denoted by italics, e.g. *Casterbridge*. Spellings are as in Hardy's texts. Explanatory notes are indicated by square brackets.

## **1. LANGUAGE**

As will be indicated in chapter 4, the very substantial volume of dialect representation in Hardy's writings renders it unrealistic, in a study of this length, to give a comprehensive listing of dialect words and expressions or an adequate analysis. Therefore section 1.1, "Regional and Social Dialects" is restricted to the listing of references to the attitude towards dialect shown by Hardy's characters. The remaining sections follow the Sheffield format, but sections 1.7 and 1.8, "Names for Animals" and "Names for Plants" are additional and represent a restricted area of language for which Hardy provides some interesting examples.

### **1.1 Regional and Social Dialects - Dorset**

Despised by outsider – *CSS*, 685-686 ("Enter a Dragoon").

Eradicated by education - *WB*, 36.

Local variation recognised by Mrs. Fennel - *CSS*, 13 ("The Three Strangers").

London superior to Dorset - *CSS*, 504 ("The Fiddler of the Reels").

Use by Anne Garland disapproved by her mother - *TM*, 28.

Use by Bob Dewey disapproved by Mrs. Reuben Dewey - *UGT*, 64-65.

Use by church choir discouraged by Rev. Torkingham - *TT*, 45-46.

Use by Elizabeth-Jane Henchard disapproved by Michael Henchard - *MC*, 125-126.

Use by Sophy Twycott criticised by her son - *CSS*, 403 ("The Son's Veto").

Use by waiter varies according to season - *CSS*, 353 ("The Honourable Laura").

### **1.2 Occupational and Other Special Vocabularies**

Dairyman's call - *TD*, 119, 181.

Shepherd's call - *FMC*, 53.

### **1.3 Blason Populaire**

Cerne Abbas men have no whiskers - *LW*, 224.

*Weatherbury* men's reputation - *FMC*, 57.

### **1.4 Sayings**

Shaftesbury characteristics - *JO*, 168.

### 1.5 Rhymes and Riddles

Dairyman Dick - *TD*, 121.  
Fox/goose/corn puzzle - *HE*, 273.  
Langterloo rhyme - *W*, 84.  
What Shall I Bring You? - *CP*, 693-694 ("The Colour").

### 1.6 Placenames and Personal Names

Devil's Bellows - *RN*, 258, 295.  
Devil's Door - *CSS*, 705 ("What the Shepherd Saw").  
Devil's Kitchen - *TD*, 283.  
Field names - *FMC*, 134.  
Town of Smokeyhole [Hell] – *CSS*, 128 ("Interlopers at the Knap").  
Var [River Frome] - *CL3*, 200.  
Charles's Wain [Great Bear] - *TM*, 39.  
Green Linnets, [The Dorset Regiment] - *CL3*, 74; *D*, 88n.  
Jack-o'-Lent [stuffed figure] – *CSS*, 148 ("Interlopers at the Knap").  
Leonard/Leonarde [as girl's name] - *CSS*, 750 ("The Duke's Reappearance"); *LW*, 11.

### 1.7 Names for Animals

Barrow-pig [castrated boar] - *JO*, 27; *TM*, 118.  
Dairy cows, names for - *TD*, 122, 133, 156.  
Dumbledores [bumble bees] - *MC*, 126; *UGT*, 50.  
Efts, effets [newts] – *CP*, 4 ("Domicilium"); *RN*, 265.  
Heathcroppers [wild ponies] – *CP*, 4 ("Domicilium"); *RN*, 266.  
Mott cows/nott cows [homeless cows] - *CL6*, 75; *TD*, 123.  
Night-Hawk [nightjar] - *JO*, 16; *PBE*, 188; *RN*, 269.

### 1.8 Names for Plants

Apple-blooth [apple blossom] - *CL6*, 76.  
Black-hearts [whortleberries] - *RN*, 295.  
Boys' Love [southernwood] - *CSS*, 495 ("The Fiddler of the Reels"); *FMC*, 244.  
Holmberry [holly berry] - *TD*, 70.  
Lords and Ladies [cuckoo-pint] - *TD*, 136-137.  
Picotee [carnation variety] – *FMC*, 272.  
Summer's Farewell [Michaelmas daisy variety] - *FMC*, 272.

## 2. CHILDLORE

There is a relative dearth of childlore in Hardy's writings and only a small proportion of the Sheffield sub-categories are employed here.



## 2.1 Nonsense Verses

Thomas a-Didymus - *CL5*, 300.

## 2.2 Bogeys

Bonaparte – *RN*, 91.

Reddleman – *RN*, 89, 91, 346.

## 2.3 Game Rhymes and Games

All around the gooseberry bush - *CL5*, 279.

Cat-and-mice - *HE*, 226.

Cross-dadder - *UGT*, 78.

Dibs - *JO*, 243.

Divination of future husband's occupation by materials - *PN*, 26.

Ducks-off/cobb-on - *CLI*, 181.

Green gravel – *CL5*, 279.

London Bridge is broken down – *CL5*, 279.

Lords and ladies – *TD*, 136-137.

Marnels [marbles] - *RN*, 264.

Prisoner's base - *FMC*, 25, 269.

Sally water - *CL5*, 279.

## 3. CUSTOM AND BELIEF

Almost all the Sheffield sub-categories are represented here. The number of references to witchcraft by Hardy is such as to warrant a new sub-heading for this area of belief.

### 3.1 Calendar Customs

Candlemas:

as start of hiring season -*TD*, 332.

dole - *FMC*, 68.

fair - *PW*, 174-176 (“The Dorset Labourer”).

*Casterbridge Fair* - *FMC*, 55; *MC*, 148-151.

Christmas:

back-brand burned - *FMC*, 308.

carols not sung before Christmas morning - *CSS*, 664-665 (“The Grave by the Handpost”); *UGT*, 48.

dancing forbidden on Christmas Day – *UGT*, 66.

dole - *HE*, 350.

hobby horse as entertainment – *LW*, 116.

holly as decoration - *FMC*, 361, 374; *RN*, 120-122, 142; *UGT*, 61.

ivy as decoration - *FMC*, 361, 374.  
 mistletoe as decoration - *FMC*, 361; *RN*, 142.  
 old style usage - *DR*, 241.  
 perambulation of church bands - see West Gallery Music.  
 Club-walking - *CP*, 240 (“After the Club-Dance”); *FMC*, 200; *RN*, 66; *TD*, 36, 38-43; *TM*, 166; *TT*, 44; *UGT*, 119, 185.  
*Greenhill* Fair - *CSS*, 494 (“The Fiddler of the Reels”); *FMC*, 290-301; *RN*, 67; *TT*, 106.  
 Harvest supper - *CP*, 777-778 (“The Harvest-Supper”); *FMC*, 25, 214-216; *LW*, 25.  
 Hiring Fairs – *LW*, 335. See *Casterbridge*, *Shottsford*.  
 Lady Day, old-style - *CLI*, 282; *TD*, 304, 332, 334, 339.  
 Lammas as a time for drinking - *RN*, 49.  
 Martinmas:  
     as a seasonal indicator - *TT*, 44.  
     fair – *CP*, p. 765 (“Last Look round St. Martin’s Fair”).  
     [old-style] fair, - *WB*, 126.  
 May songs - *CL4*, 68.  
 Maypole - *CP*, 275 (“One We Knew”); *RN*, 346-347.  
 Midsummer Eve, old style:  
     death divination - *CSS*, 533-534 (“A Few Crusted Characters”).  
     marriage divination - *JO*, 194; *PN*, 10; *UGT*, 71-72; *W*, 139-144.  
 Mummers – see Traditional Plays.  
 New Year's Day, old style - *W*, 135.  
 New Year's Eve bellringing - *CP*, 911-912 (“No Bellringing”).  
 November the fifth bonfires – *LW*, 26; *PW*, 230-231; *RN*, 39-41, 50, 308.  
 Potato-digging as a seasonal indicator - *RN*, 48.  
 Shearing supper - *FMC*, 145-149; *FMC* (2000 edition), 398-402.  
 Shic-sac Day - *CLI*, 181; *LW*, 231.  
*Shottsford* Fair – *FMC*, 57; “Wessex Scenes”, 19.  
 Shroton Fair - *LW*, 19.  
 Shroving - *PN*, 13.  
 Turnip lantern - *TM*, 104.  
 Twelfth Night, customary to burn holly - *CP*, 889-891 (“Burning the Holly”).  
 Valentines - *CL2*, 186-187; *FMC*, 25, 100-102.  
 Wassailing - *PN*, 13-14.  
 Woodbury Hill Fair - *LW*, 98.

### 3.2 Rites of Passage

#### Birth

Churching after childbirth – *LW*, 241.

#### Courtship

Portland local custom - *WB*, 36, 39, 40, 58, 85, 130, 131.



## Marriage

Newly-married couple perambulate village – *UGT*, 184-186; *W*, 298.

Newly-married couple serenaded - *CP*, 420 (“In the Nuptial Chamber”); *RN*, 64, 359.

Slipper thrown after bride - *RN*, 159.

## Separation

Wife-selling - *CL3*, 241; *MC*, 25, 31-36.

## Death

Church band funeral custom - see West Gallery Music.

Funeral bearers chosen by dying person - *CP*, 246n (“Julie-Jane”).

Funeral bell-ringing custom - *CP*, 791 (“Retty's Phases”).

Hatband retained for Sunday service after funeral - *CP*, 954n (“The Hatband”).

Pennies placed over corpse's eyes - *MC*, 118.

Second wife buried on husband's right - *CP*, 165-166 (“Her Late Husband”).

Stinsford funeral custom – *LW*, 233.

Suicides buried at crossroads with stake through heart and without grave mound - *CSS*, 669-670, 671 (“The Grave by the Handpost”), 925n; *PN*, 24.

Telling the bees [of a death] - *CSS*, 141 (“Interlopers at the Knap”).

Windows opened at death - *MC*, 118.

## **3.3. Social, Domestic and Occupational Customs**

### Household customs

First meetings should take place out of doors - *JO*, 81.

Important business discussed in garden - *UGT*, 153.

### Occupational Customs

Journeymen go together to pub after church - *MC*, 204-205.

Parish Clerk attends all birth, wedding, funeral parties - *CSS*, 523 (“A Few Crusted Characters”).

### Social Behaviour

Burning in effigy - *D*, 605.

Skimmity-riding - *CP*, 74 (“The Bride-Night Fire”); *MC*, 227-229, 241-243; *RN*, 64.

Widow remains true to deceased husband by:

going to his grave - *JO*, 267.

wearing brooch containing his hair - *JO*, 266.

### Adult Games

All Fours - *CSS*, 523 ("A Few Crusted Characters"); *FMC*, 197.  
 At Casterbridge - *MC*, 106-107.  
 At Sturminster Newton - *LW*, 118.  
 Bull baiting - *MC*, 174.  
 Cockfighting - *PW*, 30-31.  
 Dice - *RN*, 214-221.  
 Grinning matches - *D*, 79, 105; *TM*, 185.  
 Langterloo - *W*, 84.  
 Pitch and toss - *FMC*, 63; *HE*, 355.  
 Put - *CSS*, 523 ("A Few Crusted Characters"); *TM*, 274.  
 Racing for smocks and gown pieces - *RN*, 67.  
 Raffling - *CL3*, 70; *RN*, 209-211.  
 Single-stick [cudgels] - *RN*, 210; *TD*, 79, 105; *TM*, 206.  
 Skittles [women's] - *FMC*, 90.  
 Snapdragon - *HE*, 116.  
 Thread-the-needle - *TM*, 185.

### 3.4 Superstitions

Bonaparte eats babies - *D*, 85.  
 Butter will not form when dairymaid is in love - *TD*, 143.  
 Cerne Giant eats babies - *D*, 85.  
 Charms:  
   apostles charm - *RN*, 52.  
   scriptures recited to free gate - *FMC*, 72.  
 Cross-in-Hand:  
   holy relic or boundary stone - *TD*, 296-297.  
   scene of miracle or murder - *TD*, 283.  
   scene of torture and execution - *TD*, 298.  
 Death omens:  
   candle wax forms shape of shroud - *CP*, 887 ("Standing by the Mantelpiece"), *TM*, 77.  
   church bell rings heavy - *CP*, 818 ("Premonitions"); *CSS*, 532 ("A Few Crusted Characters").  
   clock, broken strikes - *CP*, 818 ("Premonitions").  
   clock falls - *CSS*, 622-23 ("The Waiting Supper").  
   corpse, limp presages further death in family - *CP*, 526 ("Signs and Tokens").  
   does heard trotting - *CP*, 527 ("Signs and Tokens").  
   dog disturbed - *LW*, 461.  
   dog howls - *DR*, 114-115.  
   flies wear "crape scarves" - *CP*, 526 ("Signs and Tokens").  
   owl cries by day - *CP*, 818 ("Premonitions").  
   raven flies over house - *CP*, 818 ("Premonitions").  
 Devil notes names of swearers - *HE*, 34.  
 Devils impersonate husbands - *JO*, 335-336.  
 Display of happiness tempts providence - *MC*, 93.



Divination by Bible and key - *FMC*, 25, 99-100.

Fairies:

belief in Blackmore Vale - *CP*, 122 (“The Bullfinches”); *TD*, 326.

belief in Stinsford area – *LW*, 336.

believed by children to mend clothes at night - *HE*, 188.

jack-o’-lanthorn – *CP*, 451 (“To my Father’s Violin”).

pixies lead travellers astray - *RN*, 54.

Fortune-telling:

belief in - *TD*, 43.

by “planet ruler” - *PN*, 12.

Ghosts:

appear to single sleepers - *RN*, 49.

at Melbury Osmond - *PN*, 14.

at *Sylvania Castle* - *WB*, 93.

claim their own - *RN*, 186.

of a deceased wife – *LW*, 316.

of Roman soldiers at *Casterbridge* - *MC*, 81.

of smuggler at Corfe Mullen – *LW*, 164.

of The Two Brothers - *TW*, 35, 135.

of d’Urberville coach - *CL3*, 93; *TD*, 171, 212, 334.

of William Privett - *CSS*, 534 (“A Few Crusted Characters”).

return on All Souls’ Eve - *CP*, 378-379 (“I Rose Up as My Custom Is”).

return on Christmas Eve - *CP*, 861 (“Yuletide in a Younger World”).

seen by Hardy – *LW*, 475-76.

Letter indicated by spark in candle flame - *TM*, 99.

“No moon, no man” - *RN*, 48-49.

Reddleman, only one believed to exist - *RN*, 89.

Speaking of person causes him to come - *UGT*, 134.

Wraith of William Privett - *CSS*, 532-534 (“A Few Crusted Characters”).

### 3.5 Witchcraft

Belief in witchcraft persists - *CL3*, 47; *CL4*, 154-155.

Characteristics of witch - *RN*, 162; *UGT*, 157.

Diana Chester - *PN*, 12.

Ducking of witches, *TD*, 326.

Elizabeth Endorfield – *UGT*, 156-159.

Frogs believed to be charmed by witch - *RN*, 90.

Gypsy witch and Hardy’s great-grandfather – *LW*, 12.

Hag-riding:

of horse - *W*, 188.

of person – *CP*, 159 (“The Ruined Maid”), *CSS*, 57-58 (“The Withered Arm”); *MC*, 126; *TD*, 311-312.

Influence of witch on house - *CL4*, 154-55.

Overlooking - *CSS*, 66 (“The Withered Arm”); *LW*, 213, *RN*, 272.

Pigeon’s heart;

as charm against witch – *LW*, 211, 263.  
 as charm against false lover – *PN*, 10.  
 Pricking the witch - *RN*, 174-175; *TD*, 326.  
 Sickness believed to be caused by witch - *RN*, 294.  
 “Son of a witch” term of abuse - *RN*, 52.  
 Stream believed to run dry through action of witch - *ECS*, 182 (“Our Exploits at West Poley”).  
 Wax image:  
     used against witch - *RN*, 322-323.  
     used by witch - *MC*, 174.  
 Witch is “broomstick old woman” - *RN*, 272.  
 Witch’s potion - *MC*, 174.  
 White witch:  
     Bartholomew Gann - *ECS*, 182 (“Our Exploits at West Poley”).  
     causes enemy to rise in a glass of water - *PN*, 12.  
     Conjurer Fall – *MC*, 169-171; *TD*, 142.  
     Conjurer Minterne - *CL3*, 264-265; *CL4*, 206-207; *LW*, 169; *TD*, 143.  
     Conjurer Trendle - *CL3*, 264-265; *CSS*, 62-65 (“The Withered Arm”): [and son] *TD*, 142.  
     forecasts weather - *MC*, 171.  
     in Blackmore Vale - *PN*, 12.  
     produces image using egg white - *CSS*, 65 (“The Withered Arm”).  
 Witch's book - *UGT*, 72.  
 Witches, white and black - *W*, 135.

### 3.6 Luck

Coffin-shaped shadow unlucky - *RN*, 143.  
 Friday, unlucky day for wedding - *DR*, 241, 243.  
 Fortune-telling book, unlucky to keep in house - *TD*, 43.  
 Hangman’s rope, lucky, sold by the inch - *CSS*, 72 (“The Withered Arm”).  
 Key, unlucky to break - *FMC*, 196.  
 Magpie, single unlucky - *FMC*, 79.  
 Mirror, unlucky to break - *CP*, 515 (“Honeymoon Time at an Inn”).  
 Sixpence, crooked lucky - *RN*, 77.  
 Wedding band preceding married couple unlucky - *CP*, 651 (“The Country Wedding”).

### 3.7 Beliefs Concerning the Human Body

Adder bite, cure for, *RN*, 272, 279.  
 Bee sting, cure for - *UGT*, 152.  
 Caul proof against drowning - *RN*, 211.  
 Cramp avoided by brimstone over bed - “Country Remedies”.  
 Newsbell [ringing in ears] portends bad news - *FMC*, 79.  
 Rheumatism avoided by carrying hare’s foot – “Country Remedies”.  
 Turning the blood [by touching corpse of hanged man] - *CSS*, 3 (*Wessex Tales* preface), 68, 74, 76 (“The Withered Arm”); *PW*, 22.



Wart-charming – *MC*, 171.

### 3.8 Cosmic Phenomena

Comet, a sign relating to great people - *TT*, 106.

### 3.9 Weather

Bad weather presaged by cocks crowing in afternoon - *TD*, 213, 215.

Fine weather presaged by pheasants roosting on ends of boughs - *W*, 78.

Martinmas Summer - *ECS*, 22 (“How I Built Myself a House”); *MC*, 92.

Rain presaged by frog jumping into pond - *RN*, 77.

Rainbarrows weather portents - *TD*, 85-86.

Storm presaged by animal behaviour:

    cows - *FMC*, 221.

    sheep, *FMC*, 217.

    slug – *FMC*, 217.

    spiders - *FMC*, 217.

    toad, *FMC*, 216.

### 3.10 Beliefs Concerning Animals and Plants

Adders do not die until sunset - *RN*, 272.

Cattle:

    kneel on Christmas Eve - *CL2*, 188-189; *CP*, 468 (“The Oxen”); *PW*, 202 (“A Christmas Ghost-Story”); *TD*, 124.

    milk better when sung to - *TD*, 123.

    protected from disease by heart of dead calf – *LW*, 115.

    take milk into horns - *TD*, 122.

    will not milk well when stranger present - *TD*, 122.

    see also Weather Beliefs.

Cockerels:

    come from long eggs - *TM*, 110.

    crowing in afternoon sign of bad luck - *TD*, 213.

    see also Weather Beliefs.

Cuckoo, only one believed to exist - *CP*, 887-888 (“Boys Then and Now”); *RN*, 89.

Dog – see Death Omens.

Flies – see Death Omens.

Fox, only one believed to exist - *RN*, 89.

Frogs – see Weather Beliefs.

Horse, lame, unlucky to travel behind - *ECS*, 304 (“The Spectre of the Real”).

Magpie, single, unlucky - *FMC* – 79.

Mandrake shrieks when uprooted - *DR*, 235.

Miller moths are souls - *CL2*, 54; *CL6*, 251-252; *CSS*, 534, (“A Few Crusted Characters”).

Mistletoe gift for newly married couple - *TD*, 230.

Owl - see Death Omens.

Pheasants – see Weather Beliefs.

Pigeons' hearts:

used in love spell - *JO*, 307; *LW*, 263; see also Witchcraft.

Pigs will find their way back if driven away from home - *JO*, 76.

Raven – see Death Omens.

Rooks – see Weather Beliefs.

Rose thorn, prick by, unlucky – *TD*, 61.

Sheep avoid track of humans - *DR*, 364-365 see also Weather Beliefs.

Slugs – see Weather Beliefs.

Toads – see Weather Beliefs.

Toad bag/toad Fair – *LW*, 115; *MC*, 171; *PW*, 106.

Trees, newly planted, will not thrive if owner looks at them when hungry - *CL2*, 136.

#### 4. TRADITIONAL NARRATIVE

Of the four sub-headings for this subject in the Sheffield classification, only folktales are absent from Hardy's writing. Nevertheless, it is likely that Hardy was aware of such tales and that they formed a part of local story-telling sessions, such as that mentioned in *W* (pp.42-43) as taking place during copse work.

##### 4.1 Legends

“A Tradition of Eighteen Hundred and Four” - *CSS*, 28-34; *LW*, 424-425; *PW*, 23-24 (*Wessex Tales*, 1919 preface); “Wessex Scenes”, 19-21.

Bellringers and sacrament wine *CP*, 911-912 (“No Bellringing”).

Broaching the admiral - *CL3*, 114, 124; *D*, 157.

Cerne Giant - *PN*, 26.

Church painters and the Devil - *JO*, 255-256.

Death of Lord Milton - *CSS*, 909 (“The Doctor's Legend”).

Lost pyx, the - *CP*, 173-175; *CL3*, 93.

Milton townspeople and bells - *CSS*, 906-907 (“The Doctor's Legend”).

Joseph Poorgrass and the owl - *FMC*, 71.

Paphian Ball, the – *CP*, 814-816 (“The Paphian Ball”).

Parson Toogood and the Bishop – *PW*, 30-31 (*Life's Little Ironies*, 1894 preface).

Two Brothers, the - *W*, 35, 135.

White Hart of Blackmore Vale, the – *PW*, 95 (review of *Poems of Rural Life*); *TD*, 33-34.

William Dewey and the bull - *TD*, 123-124.

##### 4.2 Anecdotes and Jokes

Casterbridge beer - *TM*, 119.

Children found in parsley bed - *WB*, 153.

Horse thief and honest man - *ECS*, 354-355 (“Blue Jimmy: the Horse Stealer”).

Landlord's weak beer - *PW*, 179.

Nott cows - *TD*, 123.



Quiet woman, the - *RN*, 61.

### 4.3 Personal Experience Narratives

Swetman family and the Monmouth rebellion - *CSS*, 749-756 (“The Duke's Reappearance”).

Transportation of poacher – *LW*, 223.

Watch re-starts on wedding day - *LW*, 316.

## 5. TRADITIONAL MUSIC, DANCE AND DRAMA

This group of genres is strongly represented in Hardy's work. It is likely that all of the tunes which he mentions, listed in 5.1, were associated with dances, but this is not always made explicit in his text. Therefore, those tunes where the connection is not confirmed are indicated by “(t)” to signify “tune only”. No attempt is made to distinguish between “society” dances and folk dances, in view of Hardy's comments regarding the relationship between the two, as set out in chapter 4.

The list of songs in 5.2 includes all those mentioned by Hardy, without seeking to distinguish between “traditional” and “non-traditional” material, although almost all would generally be regarded as falling into the former category. Hardy rarely does more than mention a song and does not always give a title. Instead, he may quote a line or two or simply refer to a song's content, which often makes it possible to identify the piece in question. The songs in 5.2 are listed either under his title (where given) or otherwise by the first line of the text quoted by him (in quotation marks). Where the song is more usually known by another name, the usual name is placed in square brackets, e.g. “In Scotland lay brothers all three” [Henry Martin]. Those songs whose titles have been deduced from the information in Hardy's text are similarly indicated by square brackets.

Section 5.3 is additional to the usual Sheffield sub-categories and covers the field of west gallery music, a genre frequently mentioned by Hardy and which is considered in chapter 5.

### 5.1 Tunes and Dances

#### List of Dances and Tunes

Bridge of Lodi, the - *CP*, 46 (“The Dance at the Phoenix”); *CP*, 107-109 (“The Bridge of Lodi”); *LW*, 203-204.

Brighton Camp (t) - *FMC*, 90; *TM*, 63; “Wessex Scenes”, 36.

College Hornpipe, the - *CL4*, 126, 179-180; “The Three Wayfarers”, 5, 9, 21.

Dashing White Serjeant, the - *CP*, 779 (“At a Pause in a Country Dance”); *CSS*, 545-556 (“A Few Crusted Characters”).

Devil Among the Tailors - *CSS*, 546-547 (“A Few Crusted Characters”).

Devil's Dream - *RN*, 136.

Dorchester Hornpipe, the (t) - *CL4*, 125, 126; *LW*, 362-363.

Downfall of Paris/Fall of Paris, the - *CP*, 46 (“The Dance at the Phoenix”); *D*, 504.  
 Duke of York's, the - *CP*, 46 (“The Dance at the Phoenix”).  
 Enrico – *LW*, 19; *D*, 509.  
 Fairy Dance, the - *CP*, 46 (“The Dance at the Phoenix”); *CSS*, 507 (“The Fiddler of the Reels”); *LW*, 19.  
 Fancy-Lad/My Fancy Lad or Johnny's Gone to Sea - *CP*, 45 (“The Dance at the Phoenix”); *CSS*, 506 (“The Fiddler of the Reels”); *LW*, 19.  
 Girl I Left behind Me, the - see Brighton Camp .  
 Hanoverian Dance, the – *D*, 614.  
 Haste to the Wedding - *CL4*, 125, 126; *CP*, 648 (“In the Small Hours”); *UGT*, 189.  
 Honeymoon, the - *CSS*, 601-602 (“The Waiting Supper”).  
 Irish Washerwoman, the - *CP*, 797 (“Donaghadee”).  
 Jilt's Hornpipe, the (t) – *WB*, 78.  
 Jockey to the Fair (t) - *FMC*, 57, 77.  
 Kitty O'Linch - *CP*, 797 (“Donaghadee”).  
 Life's a Bumper (t) - *CP*, 606 (“The Chimes Play ‘Life's a Bumper’”).  
 Lord Wellington's Hornpipe (t) - *D*, 605.  
 Maiden Coy - *CP*, 45 (“The Dance at the Phoenix”).  
 Major Malley's Reel - *CP*, 46 (“The Dance at the Phoenix”); *FMC*, 301.  
 Miss M'Leod of Ayr - *LW*, 19; *MC*, 109.  
 Nancy's Fancy - *RN*, 135.  
 New-rigged Ship, the - *CP*, 274 (“One We Knew”); *LW*, 28.  
 Off She Goes - *CSS*, 689 (“Enter a Dragoon”).  
 Prime of Life, the – *D*, 622.  
 Regency Hornpipe, the - *D*, 428.  
 Roast Beef of Old England, the (t)– *MC*, 49.  
 Rogues' March, the - *MC*, 206.  
 Row-dow-dow, the - *CP*, 46 (“The Dance at the Phoenix”).  
 Soldier's Joy, the - *CP*, 45 (“The Dance at the Phoenix”); *FMC*, 215.  
 Speed the Plough - *CP*, 46 (“The Dance at the Phoenix”); *CSS*, 601-602 (“The Waiting Supper”); *D*, 429.  
 Sylph - *CP*, 46 (“The Dance at the Phoenix”).  
 Triumph, the or Follow My Lover - *CP*, 46 (“The Dance at the Phoenix”); *P*, 274 (“One We Knew”); *UGT*, 66-69;  
 When War's Alarms (t) - *D*, 610.  
 White Cockade, the (t) - *D*, 573, 613.

#### Other References to Music and Dancing

Allemanding – *CP*, 275 (“One We Knew”).  
 Country dancing versus folk dancing – *CSS*, 495 (“The Fiddler of the Reels”); “English Country Dances”; *LW*, 18.  
 Dance tunes at wedding - *CP*, 651 (“The Country Wedding”).  
 Dancing at Christening – *CSS*, 9-11 (“The Three Strangers”).  
 Dancing at Stinsford – *LW*, 428-429.  
 Fiddler plays for dances - *CSS*, 497 (“The Fiddler of the Reels”).



Five, four, three-handed reels - *CSS*, 506-507 (“The Fiddler of the Reels”).  
Hardy and father play at village dances – *LW*, 28.  
Hardy's grandmother's recollections of dances - *CP*, 275 (“One We Knew”).  
Outdoor village dance - *RN*, 242-246.  
Pousseting – *CP*, 275 (“One We Knew”).  
Six-hands-round - *UGT*, 70.  
Time signature - *CP*, 779 (“At a Pause in a Country Dance”).  
Village band instruments - *FMC*, 343; *RN*, 245; *TM*, 76.  
Violin used by Hardy's father - *CP*, 451 (“To My Father's Violin”).

## 5.2 Songs

Further abbreviations are used in this section, as follows:

*BMA* – *Border Minstrelsy Annotations*

*HA* – *Hullah Annotations*

*OCS* - *Words of Old Country Songs*

### List of Songs

“A coffin then they did continue” [The Fortunate Fair] – *OCS*.  
“All daintie meats I doe decry” – *OCS*.  
“And here’s a hand my trusty fiere” [Auld Lang Syne] – *MC*, 236.  
“And then she arose” - *LW*, 283.  
[Apprentice Boy, the] - *TD*, 123.  
“As I came down through Cannobie” [Bonnie Peg] – *CL5*, 88-90; *MC*, 99.  
“As I came in by my bower door” [Bonnie Peg] - *MC*, 68.  
Auld Lang Syne - *MC*, 66, 236.  
Banks of Allan Water, the, *FMC*, 148.  
Barley Mow, the - *RN*, 359.  
Bay of Biscay, the – *HA*, 114.  
“Bayonets and firelocks!” [The Sentry Box] - *D*, 607.  
Bold Friar, the – *OCS*.  
Break o' the Day, the- *OCS*; *TD*, 304-305.  
“Come ashore jolly tar with your trousers on” - *LW*, 284.  
Dame Durden - *FMC*, 77.  
Demon Lover, the – *BMA*, 170.  
Down in Cupid's Gardens - *CL3*, 247; *HA*, 94; *RN*, 359; *TD*, 259, 324.  
Early One Morning – *HA*, 88.  
Fairy Queen, the – *HA*, 128.  
False Sir John/May Colvine [The Outlandish Knight] - *BMA*, 162-163; *CL3*, 247; *CP*, 778  
 (“The Harvest-Supper”); *LW*, 25.  
Farmer Coggan’s song [The Haymaking Courtship] – *OCS*.  
Foggy Dew, the - *RN*, 359; *W*, 144.  
Girl I Left Behind Me, the - *HA*, 76.  
“I sowed the seeds of love” - *FMC*, 146-147; *HA*, 40.

"He told her that she was the joy of his life" - *RN*, 64-65.  
 "In Scotland lay brothers all three" [Henry Martin] - *OCS*.  
 Irish Molly O - *CP*, 797 ("Donaghadee").  
 It's hame and it's hame - *MC*, 65.  
 "I've journeyed over many lands" - *LW*, 24.  
 "I've lost my love and I care not" - *FMC*, 146.  
 "I have parks, I have hounds" [The Farmer's Toast] - *TD*, 324.  
 "It happens on a certain time" - *OCS*.  
 Jacob Child's Song [The Cobbler] - *OCS*.  
 Jockey to the Fair - *CL3*, 247.  
 John Dart's Song [The Willow Tree] - *OCS*.  
 Jovial Crew, the - *DR*, 315; *RN*, 50; *OCS*.  
 Kathleen Mavourneen - *CP*, 797 ("Donaghadee").  
 King Arthur He Had Three Sons - *CL1*, 198-199; *UGT*, 151.  
 Kitty of Coleraine - *CP*, 797 ("Donaghadee").  
 Lass of Richmond Hill, the - *HA*, 136.  
 Lass that Loves a Soldier, the - *HA*, 100.  
 "Let's go a shooting said Richard to Robin" [Wren Hunting Song] - *OCS*.  
 "Loving son what is the matter" - *OCS*.  
 Miller Brice's Song [The Sweet Nightingale] - *OCS*.  
 Mistletoe Bough, the - *L*, 98, 106.  
 My Man Thomas - *HA*, 115.  
 Nancy Dawson - *CP*, 797 ("Donaghadee").  
 "O I thought it had been day" [The Light of the Moon] - *D*, 289.  
 "O Jan, O Jan, O Jan" [The Keys of Canterbury] - *CL6*, 191.  
 O Nannie - *MC*, 66.  
 "O the willow tree will twist" - *FMC*, 147.  
 Old Betty Sargent's and Becky Swetman's Song [Sheepcrook and Black Dog] - *OCS*.  
 Old Dorset Ballad [The Greenland Whale Fishery] - *OCS*.  
 Old Dorset Song [Poor Nell] - *OCS*.  
 "On Friday morn as we set sail" [The Mermaid] - *OCS*.  
 Phillis, Talk to Me of Passion - *HA*, 137.  
 Poor Tom Bowling - *HA*, 106.  
 Queen's Marie, the [Mary Hamilton] - *BMA*, 612.  
 Ratcatcher's Daughter, the - *JO*, 100.  
 "Said she, a maid again I never shall be" - *W*, 86.  
 [Saucy Sailor, the] - *RN*, 87.  
 Shall I go Walk the Woods So Wild? - *HA*, 127.  
 "Shall we go dance the round?" - *TM*, 244.  
 "She called to her love" - see The Foggy Dew.  
 She May Go to the Devil for Me - *W* (1887), vol. 1, p.194.  
 Shepherds I Have Lost my Love - *CL3*, 247; *HA*, 143.  
 Shroving song - *PN*, 13.  
 Somebody Here Has Been [The Gown of Green] - *LW*, 284.  
 Susan, Pride of Kildare - *CP*, 797 ("Donaghadee").  
 Spotted Cow, the - *CL3*, 247; *TD*, 39; *W*, 321.



Storm, The – *HA*, 118.  
 Such a Beauty I Did Grow - *TD*, 324.  
 Sweet William and Fair Janet – *BMA*, 71.  
 Tailor's Breeches, the - *CSS*, 515 (“A Few Crusted Characters”); *TD*, 259, 324.  
 “That never would become the wife” [The Boy and the Mantle] - *CL1*, 282; *TD*, 205.  
 “The chimney-sweeper's daughter Sue” - *DR*, 149.  
 “The King call'd down his nobles all” [Queen Eleanor's Confession] - *RN*, 42-43, 50.  
 There Were Three Drunken Maidens – *OCS*.  
 “Tomorrow, tomorrow” - *FMC*, 253.  
 “Tw-s on a s-m-r after-n” [The Lass of Gowrie] - *MC*, 156-157.  
 Wassail song – *PN*, 13-14.  
 When the Rosebud of Summer – *HA*, 140.  
 “When the sad news to Plymouth came” [Scilly Rocks] – *OCS*.  
 “Whilst I'm in the humour” - *CP*, 456 (“Sitting on the Bridge”).  
 Why Are You Wandering Here, I Pray? - *UGT*, 146.  
 “With the rose and the lily” [Rosebuds in June] - *UGT*, 32, 34.  
 “Young Jimmy went a-fowling” [Polly Vaughan] – *OCS*.

#### Other References to Songs and Singers:

##### Ballads:

heard at feasts, weaving shops, spinning-wheels – *LW*, 345.  
 learned orally - *CP*, 777-778 (“The Harvest-Supper”).  
 sold at *Budmouth* - *D*, 157.  
 sold at fair - *CP*, 239 (“The Ballad Singer”); *CP*, 242 (“After the Fair”); *MC*, 27.  
 sold at hangings - *CSS*, 75-76 (“The Withered Arm”).  
 sung at Kingston Maurward Farm – *LW*, 260; *PN*, 84.  
 superseded by fashionable songs - *WB*, 36.  
 Songs sung at “The Pure Drop” - *TD*, 248.

### **5.3 West Gallery Music**

#### List of West Gallery Tunes

Arabia - *CP*, 634 (“The Chapel Organist”).  
 Arise and Hail - *UGT*, 48.  
 Behold the Morning Star - *UGT*, 54.  
 Blandford – *LW*, 363.  
 Bridehead – *LW*, 363.  
 Bridport – *LW*, 363.  
 Cambridge New – *CP*, 429 (“Afternoon Service at Mellstock”); *LW*, 16.  
 Charmouth – *LW*, 363.  
 Cutler - *CL5*, 129.  
 Devizes – *LW*, 16; *TT*, 45.  
 Eden New - *CP*, 511 (“Jubilate”).  
 Eton - *CL3*, 38.

Frome – *LW*, 363.  
 Hark the Glad Sound - *CSS*, 543 (“A Few Crusted Characters”).  
 He Comes the Prisoners To Release - *CSS*, 668, 673 (“The Grave by the Handpost”).  
 Jackson– *LW*, 16.  
 Langdon - *TD*, 100.  
 Lulworth – *LW*, 363.  
 Lydia - *CL3*, 38; *LW*, 16.  
 Lyme Regis - *CL3*, 285.  
 Melcombe - *CL3*, 285.  
 Mercy – *LW*, 363.  
 Mount Ephraim - *CP*, 534 (“The Choirmaster's Burial”).  
 New Poole – *LW*, 363.  
 New Sabbath - *L*, 40-42, *LW*, 16.  
 O, What Unbounded Goodness! - *UGT*, 51.  
 Old Fordington - *CL3*, 144.  
 Old Hundredth – *CP*, 634 (“The Chapel Organist”); *LW*, 16.  
 Old Hundred and Fourth – *CP*, 620 (“On the Tune Called the Old-Hundred-and-Fourth”).  
 Old Hundred and Thirteenth - *CL4*, 327.  
 Rejoice, Ye Drowsy Mortals All - *CSS*, 544 (“A Few Crusted Characters”).  
 Rejoice, Ye Tenants of the Earth - *CP*, 816 (“The Paphian Ball”); *UGT*, 51.  
 Remember Adam's Fall - *UGT*, 50-51.  
 Rockborne – *LW*, 363.  
 Round World and Them that Dwell Therein, the - *D*, 82.  
 “Saint Stephen's tune” - *CP*, 255 (“The Rash Bride”).  
 Star Arise - *CSS*, 543 (“A Few Crusted Characters”).  
 ‘Tivity Hymn, the – [see While Shepherds Watched].  
 Wareham - *CL3*, 285, 286; *LW*, 363.  
 While Shepherds Watched - *CP*, 257 (“The Dead Quire”), 815 (“The Paphian Ball”);  
     *CSS*, 543 (“A Few Crusted Characters”); *LW*, 468-469; *TD*, 124.  
 Wilton - *CP*, 963n ; *LW*, 16; *PN*, 63.  
 Wiltshire - *MC*, 206-207.

#### Other References to West Gallery Music

##### *Casterbridge* church band:

instruments - *TM*, 121.

custom of visiting “The Three Mariners” - *MC*, 204.

*Chalk Newton* church band perambulation – *CSS*, 664-674 (“The Grave by the Handpost”).

Church band funeral custom - *CP*, 534-555 (“The Choirmaster's Burial”).

Instruments used - *CP*, 511 (“Jubilate”).

Key used, example of - *CSS*, 544 (“A Few Crusted Characters”).

*Kingsbere* church band - *RN*, 66-67.

##### *Longpuddle* church band:

last appearance in church - *CSS*, 545-548 (“A Few Crusted Characters”).

visits Squire's house at Christmas - *CSS*, 543-545 (“A Few Crusted Characters”).

*Maiden Newton* church band– *LW*, 14.



*Mellstock* church band:

- a fairly true picture of real church bands - *UGT*, 27.
- attitude of Parson Grinham - *UGT*, 86.
- chronology - *CP*, p.256 ("The Dead Quire"); *CSS*, p.495 ("The Fiddler of the Reels").
- funeral custom - *CP*, p.255 ("The Rash Bride").
- gallery positions - *UGT*, 60.
- ghosts of - *CP*, 255-259 ("The Dead Quire"); 59-60 ("Friends Beyond").
- instruments - *CSS*, 664 ("The Grave by the Handpost").
- perambulation - *CP*, 814-816 ("The Paphian Ball"); 252-253 ("The Rash Bride"); 393-394 ("Seen by the Waits"); 734 ("Winter Night in Woodland"); *UGT*, 47-57.
- play for dance at *Athelhall* - *CSS*, 601 ("The Waiting Supper").
- wedding custom - *CP*, 650-651 ("The Country Wedding").

Puddletown church band:

- instruments - *LW*, 14, 128.
- Hardy's grandfather plays violoncello - *LW*, 13.
- Hardy's grandfather and Tom Sherren copied music books during sermons - *LW*, 128-129.

Serpent - *CSS*, 496 ("The Fiddler of the Reels").

Stinsford Church band:

- Christmas perambulation - *LW*, 16-17.
- comprised old man with oboe to 1801 - *LW*, 13.
- disbanded about 1842 - *LW*, 11, 17.
- funeral custom for members - *LW*, 17; *PN*, 3-4.
- gallery positions, sketch of - *LW*, 15.
- Hardy's father plays counter-viol, tenor, treble, organises band - *LW*, 14.
- Hardy's grandfather plays bass-viol - *LW*, 13, 17.
- Hardy's mother's recollections - *LW*, 262-263.
- music books - *UGT*, 28.
- practise at vicarage - *LW*, 14.
- re-formed by Hardy's grandfather in 1801 - *LW*, 13.
- remuneration - *PN*, 215; *UGT*, 27-28.
- repertoire - *LW*, 16.
- superior to Maiden Newton, Puddletown bands - *LW*, 14.
- supply of music, sundries - *UGT*, 28.
- visit Stinsford House at Christmas - *PN*, 26-27.

Tuning fork, use of - *TT*, 46.

Tuning of stringed instruments - *TM*, 164; *UGT*, 59.

Violin used by Hardy's father - *CP*, 451 ("To My Father's Violin").

Wakely, Samuel tune - *MC*, 206.

*Weatherbury* church band perambulation - *UGT*, 49.

*Welland* church choir rehearsal - *TT*, 44-47.

Winterbourne Steepleton church music by bass-viol and singer - *LW*, 130.

## 5.4 Traditional Plays

Costumes - *CLI*, 54-55.

*Egdon* Mummers' play – *The Play of Saint George*; *RN*, 127-141.

Property – *CL6*, 134.

Style – *D*, 7-8.

Texts – *CL6*, 47, 232.

## 6. MATERIAL CULTURE, WORK TECHNIQUES, ARTS AND CRAFTS

The categories here are less useful than those in the previous sections, in that they encourage a fragmentary treatment of the material. Hence the description of a milkmaids' dormitory is classified as vernacular architecture, brass knobs on cows' horns as traditionally made artefacts and milking as a traditional mode of work. These might better be combined, together with dairyman's dress, skimming milk and other related entries, under a heading such as "traditional dairy work". Nevertheless, to be consistent with the remainder of the classification and because material culture does not form a major part of this study, the Sheffield mode of classification is used here with only minor rationalisation.

Section 6.7, on foodways, is additional to the usual Sheffield categories and includes references to types of food, the preparation of foods and the names of local varieties of fruit and vegetables.

### 6.1 Vernacular Architecture

Apple closet - *CSS*, 666 ("The Grave by the Handpost").

Bobbin as door latch - *RN*, 134.

Cheese loft - *TD*, 126.

Lath and plaster cottages - *CSS*, 739 ("Master John Horseleigh, Knight").

Malt-house – *CLI*, 25.

Milkmaids' dormitory - *TD*, 125-126.

Mudwall cottages - *PW*, 233-235 ("The Ancient Cottages of England").

Rubble walls - *CSS*, 38 ("The Melancholy Hussar").

Sheep-washing pool – *CLI*, 25.

Spit and Daub cabin - *CSS*, 136-137 ("Interlopers at the Knap").

Straw-barton - *TD*, 200, 201.

### 6.2 Traditionally Made Artefacts

Beehives - *CSS*, 11 ("The Three Strangers").

Beaufet/Bo-fet - *CSS*, 677-678 ("Enter a Dragoon"); *WB*, 95.

Brass knobs for cows' horns - *TD*, 120.

Bucket – *CLI*, 30.

Cart wheels - *D*, 34, 608.

Chimney-crooks - *TD*, 131.

Coffin-stools - *PN*, 4; *W*, 29.



Copse work products - *W*, 35.  
 Cradle rocker - *TD*, 40.  
 Furze faggots - *RN*, 236.  
 Hacker - *TD*, 293.  
 Hollow-turner's wares - *W*, 195.  
 Horse-bells - *W*, 100.  
 Leads (lead skimming trays) - *TD*, 124, 131, 175.  
 Lerret [local type of boat] *D*, 89; *TM*, 237; *WB*, 41-42, 85.  
 Mirror improvised from window and cloak - *TD*, 65.  
 Musical instruments (crowd, humstrum, kit, ram's horn, serpent) - *MC*, 243.  
 Ooser [animal mask]- *CSS*, 238 ("The First Countess of Wessex"); *RN*, 265.  
 Oven pyle - *MC*, 225-226.  
 Rick-staddles - *CLI*, 25.  
 Sein, *WB*, 42.  
 Settle - *RN*, 140.  
 Sheep bell - *ECS*, 91 ("An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress").  
 Shepherd's chair - *CSS*, 739 ("Master John Horseleigh, Knight").  
 Shepherd's hut - *FMC*, 33-34, 41-42.  
 Shepherd's medicines - *FMC*, 34.  
 Shepherd's tools - *CLI*, 25, 30.  
 Spit and pulley - *W*, 58.  
 Swingel - *MC*, 225.  
 Thistle-spud - *TD*, 151.  
 Tree as advertisement for sale of cider, apple trees - *W*, 51.  
 Turf spade - *LW*, 477-478; *RN*, 46.  
 Turnip grave - *TD*, 299.  
 Waggon - *CL6*, 80, 83; *W*, 35.  
 Water meadows - *TD*, 194-195.  
 Withy basket - *TD*, 326.  
 Wring (cheese press) - *D*, 126.  
 Yoke - *HE*, 34.  
 Zull [wooden plough] - *CSS*, 128 ("Interlopers at the Knap").

### 6.3 Traditional Modes of work

Binding [at harvest] - *TD*, 103-104.  
 Bird catching - *CP*, 734 ("Winter Nights in Woodland"); *UGT*, 135.  
 Copse work - *W*, 223.  
 Cows, renting - *CSS*, 52 ("The Withered Arm").  
 Hares, wiring - *CSS*, 56 ("The Withered Arm").  
 Hay-making - *FMC*, 158.  
 Horses:  
   catching - *FMC*, 121.  
   tracking - *FMC*, 191-192.  
 Hurdle making - *W*, 206-207.  
 Lacemaking - *TM*, 205.

Mail coach guard - *PN*, 15-17.  
 Maintenance of Cerne Giant, - *CL6*, 355.  
 Milk pails hung on peeled oak limb - *CSS*, 53 (“The Withered Arm”); *TD*, 173, 181.  
 Milking - *TD*, 120.  
 Oat harvest - *FMC*, 196.  
 Pig-killing - *JO*, 48-53.  
 Poaching - *CP*, 734 (“Winter Nights in Woodland”); *MC*, 225-226; *PN*, 16, 25.  
 Postillion - *PN*, 21-23; *TD*, 210.  
 Quack doctor - *JO*, 17-20, 43.  
 Reddleman - *RN*, 35, 91-92.  
 Reed-drawing - *TD*, 277-281.  
 Sawyers - *W*, 42.  
 Sheep breeds kept at *Weatherbury* - *FMC*, 291-292.  
 Sheepshearing - *FMC*, 137-142.  
 Skimming milk - *TD*, 174-176.  
 Smuggling – *CP*, 734 (“Winter Nights in Woodland”); *CSS*, 3-4 (*Wessex Tales*, 1912 preface); 687 (“Enter a Dragoon”), 157-59, 176-77, 179-94, 197-99, 202-03 (“The Distracted Preacher”); *D*, 86; “Facts” notebook, 3a; *LW*, 110-111; *PN*, 8-9; *TM*, 49, 111.  
 Sparmaking - *W*, 29.  
 Telling time without a clock - *PBE*, 108-109.  
 Thatching tools - *FMC*, 219, 221.  
 Threshing - *TD*, 310.  
 Travelling Fairs - *JO*, 168, 209.  
 Tree barking - *W*, 132-133.

#### 6.4 Manufacturing

Gin-traps – *W*, 78.  
 Man-traps - *W*, 70.  
 Mill machinery - *TM*, 28.  
 Spring-guns - *W*, 70.  
 Threshing machine, advent of - *ECS*, 88-89 (“An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress”).

#### 6.5 Domestic Crafts

Allotments, cultivation - *TD*, 328-331.  
 Back-brand - *CP*, 775 (“Vagrant’s Song”); *CSS*, 8 (“The Three Strangers”).  
 Barked oak twigs to kindle fire - *TD*, 97.  
 Bed-tick, making - *RN*, 357-360.  
 Bees, hiving – *FMC*, 166-167; *UGT*, 183.  
 Blower, for fire - *TD*, 208.  
 Dips used for lighting - *CP*, 274 (“One We Knew”).  
 Fern used as packing material - *RN*, 119.  
 Pomace used as fuel - *W*, 165.  
 Rush lights - *RN*, 129.



Sand used to keep floors clean - *RN*, 124; *W*, 320.

## 6.6 Costume

### Bonnets:

harvest bonnets - *CP*, 480 (“At Middle Field Gate in February”); *TD*, 103, 274.

milkmaid’s bonnet – *TD*, 187, 189.

tilt-bonnet – *FMC*, 158; *TD*, 271.

wing-bonnet - *TD*, 313, 316.

Boots worn unlaced on Sundays - *RN*, 85.

Boys dressed in pinnies when young - *HE*, 350.

Caps worn by old ladies - *CP*, 275 (“One We Knew”).

Children's clothes - *ECS*, 101 (“An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress”).

Dairyman's dress - *TD*, 120, 125.

Field women's dress - *TD*, 273.

Gaiters – *CLI*, 25.

Gloves (working) - *TD*, 103, 315.

Hairstyles of milkmaids - *TD*, 183-184.

Pattens - *D*, 78; *FMC*, 85; *TD*, 120; *W*, 44, 49-50.

Pinner - *CSS*, 146 (“Interlopers at the Knap”) *TD*, 120, 125, 309, 313.

Skitty boots – *TM*, 118.

Smockfrocks – *CLI*, 25; *FMC*, 25, 85; *TD*, 329; *UGT*, 47.

Wropper - *TD*, 103, 186, 273.

## 6.7 Foodways

### Apple varieties:

Bitter-Sweet - *W*, 56.

Cleeves - *TM*, 120; *W*, 86.

Codlin - *CP*, 701 (“A Bird Song at a Rural Dwelling”); *W*, 165.

Costard - *CP*, 701 (“A Bird Song at a Rural Dwelling”); *FMC*, 166, 199; *W*, 165.

Early Ball - *FMC*, 199.

Four-Corners – *UGT*, 36.

Horner - *TM*, 120; *W*, 86.

John-apple – *W*, 56.

Old Five-corners - *TM*, 120.

Rail– *UGT*, 36.

Ratheripe - *CSS*, 677 (“Enter a Dragoon”); *FMC*, 199; *RN*, 259; *W*, 165.

Russet - *RN*, 119.

Quarrendon - *FMC*, 166, 199.

Sansom – *UGT*, 36.

Streaked Jack – *W*, 165.

Stubbard - *TM*, 34; *TD*, 50; *UGT*, 36; *W*, 165.

Tom-Putt - *FMC*, 199; *TM*, 120.

### Beer:

drunk at threshing - *TD*, 315.

brewing - *MC*, 75; *PN*, 25.  
 Black-pot [black pudding] - *JO*, 50; *TM*, 119; *TD*, 32  
 Breakfast of cider and ham - *CSS*, 750 ("The Duke's Reappearance").  
 Butter making - *TD*, 131, 142-144.  
 Cheese making - *TD*, 178-190.  
 Chitterlings - *TD*, 32.  
 Christmas food - *CSS*, 543 ("A Few Crusted Characters").  
 Cider making - *CP*, 810 ("Shortened Days at the Homestead"); *DR*, 145-150; *W*, 164-165,  
 190; *UGT*, 36-37.  
 Ciders, geographical variation- *TD*, 193.  
 Cider-wring - *W*, 323.  
 Furnity - *MC*, 30.  
 Honey, taking - *UGT*, 147-151.  
 Mead, metheglin - *CSS*, 15 ("The Three Strangers").  
 Nammet-time - *CL6*, 76.  
 Pancake - *TD*, 312.  
 Potato varieties:  
     Ashleaf - *DR*, 249.  
     Early Flowerballs - *FMC*, 87.  
     Thompson's Wonderfals - *FMC*, 87.  
 Skimmer-cake - *CSS*, 22 ("The Three Strangers").  
 Strawberry variety, British Queen - *TD*, 59.  
 White-pot [rice pudding with cream, currants etc.] - *TM*, 119.



## CHAPTER 3

# INVESTIGATION OF THE VERACITY OF THE TRADITIONAL CULTURE IN HARDY'S WRITINGS

## INTRODUCTION

It was suggested, in chapter 1, that the acceptance of Hardy's work as a source for the study of traditional culture has been hampered by the absence of any serious attempt to establish the veracity of his references. Lombardi's 1975 thesis begins to address the question, but serves only to further demonstrate what is already known, namely that Hardy could have been aware of genuine traditions in his youth.<sup>1</sup> The much more difficult task of identifying his sources for individual items of folklore has been successfully attempted only by Jackson-Houlston, and then only for a small number of instances in the field of traditional song.<sup>2</sup> A wider-ranging examination of Hardy's writings is necessary if his reliability as a source is to be adequately judged.

The demonstration, in chapter 2, that Hardy's non-fictional and personal writings contain numerous non-fictional allusions to folklore goes some way to endorsing their author's status as a reliable source in this field but some external corroboration is still essential. The most productive approach, on the face of it, is simply to compare Hardy's descriptions of selected traditions with those of independent observers but, as shown below, this is rendered difficult by the scarcity of such alternative descriptions and the problem of ensuring their independence from Hardy's own writings. Also, such an approach does not address the question of Hardy's sources, whereas knowledge of these would go some way to establishing his own reliability.

To overcome these problems, it is proposed to begin by examining, for the first time, the question of whether Hardy had any reason to fabricate material which he claimed to be traditional, and to go on to consider his stated policy on the representation of tradition. It is then possible to identify some of his sources and, a matter of some difficulty, to attempt to link individual representations of traditions in his writings to their sources. It is at this point that instances of folklore in Hardy's work may be compared with independent accounts, as discussed above. Finally, some of Hardy's more dubious folklore references are reviewed in order to identify possible areas of falsification.

## POSSIBLE MOTIVES FOR FALSIFICATION OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE IN HARDY'S WRITINGS

Hardy never expressed any pretension to being a folklorist and, in correspondence with J. S. Udal, he specifically rejects the idea.

There are a good many scraps of folklore in my old books, but I never studied it systematically, which a well-known folklorist tells me makes the items which I mention the more valuable.<sup>3</sup>

I have never systematically studied Folk lore, nor collected dialect words. If I had done so I might have gained some valuable material in both kinds.<sup>4</sup>

Since he rejected the status of folklorist, Hardy had no academic incentive to manufacture or falsify traditional material in order to verify a cherished theory or to make a reputation by some form of original discovery. He was writing fiction and verse and there was no need for him to do anything other than use those traditions which were known to him and which suited his literary purpose. Even so, consideration of his career as a novelist shows that falsification of tradition would have been advantageous to him.

His first novel, *The Poor Man and the Lady*, was rejected by several publishers and never appeared in print, the manuscript subsequently being destroyed by the author. The rejections stemmed from the supposedly offensive nature of his onslaught on the upper class characters in what was supposed to be a radical commentary on contemporary social life. Nevertheless, one publisher, Macmillan, saw some saving graces in the book, since a reader's report, sent to Hardy by Alexander Macmillan, is encouraging.

A very curious and original performance: the opening pictures of the Christmas Eve in the tranter's house are really of good quality; much of the writing is strong and fresh.<sup>5</sup>

This early illustration of the tension between Hardy's desire to be a social commentator and his readers' preference for pastoral stories prefigured the pattern of his subsequent output of fiction. He went on to achieve published status with *DR*, a crude but effective thriller, but his first real success came with *UGT*. The early chapters of this, his first pastoral novel, describe Christmas Eve at a tranter's cottage and are believed to have been recycled from *The Poor Man and the Lady*, an early example of his readiness to give his readers what they wanted in order to ensure commercial success.

From then on, Hardy's output varied between, on the one hand, books which he termed "Romances and Fantasies" (such as *TT* and *WB*) or "Novels of Ingenuity" (*HE*, *L*) and, on the other, "Novels of Character and Environment" (such as *TD* and *RN*). Of his novels, those in the last category, which were placed in a well defined rural setting based on Dorset and are sometimes known as the "Wessex Novels" were considerably the more successful. Their commercially shrewd author quickly saw the potential of the Wessex milieu which he had created and he went on to build upon its success. This entailed not only the setting of each new story in a carefully constructed partly real, partly imaginary Wessex landscape, but also the revision of the topography of his earlier works to conform to the geography of Wessex. This setting extended beyond topography to encompass the way of life of the inhabitants.

At the dates represented in the various narrations things were like that in Wessex; the inhabitants lived in certain ways, engaged in certain occupations, kept alive certain customs, just as they are shown doing in these pages.<sup>6</sup>

The lives and customs of the people of Wessex include, as a major element, the language, beliefs, customs and music which are the subjects of this study. Therefore, in order to



sustain the authentic atmosphere of Wessex, its creator was obliged to include numerous references to traditional culture in his fiction.

It is reasonable to suppose that *UGT*, set in a barely disguised version of the Hardy family's home village of Stinsford, was based on genuine traditions from that family and particularly on Father Hardy's memories of the Stinsford Church Band, metamorphosed into "The Mellstock Quire". The action of the next pastoral novel, *FMC*, takes place in and around *Weatherbury*, based on Puddletown, the home of Hardy's extended family. Although less rich in folklore than *UGT*, this novel could still draw upon traditions from within the family. Beyond this, it could be argued, Hardy had exhausted his supply of readily available and genuine traditional material. Faced with a continuing demand for Wessex background and in the absence of a systematic study of folklore on his part, he had every incentive to seek other sources. Given his readers' ignorance of the details of country life in Dorset and their confidence in him as a reliable guide, Hardy could have falsified tradition with little prospect of being detected. In considering whether he actually took this course it is necessary first to consider what he said about his sources and whether his claims were accepted at the time by reliable judges.

## HARDY'S POLICY ON THE PORTRAYAL OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE

Hardy was unequivocal in his claims for the authenticity of the folklore in his work, a question to which he returned on several occasions. For instance, almost at the end of his career as a novelist, he wrote to his friend, the folklorist Edward Clodd, as follows:

I may say, once for all, that every superstition, custom &c., described in my novels may be depended on as true records of the same (whatever merit in folklorists' eyes they may have as such) - & not inventions of mine.<sup>7</sup>

The use of the expression "once for all" shows that Hardy had been questioned on this aspect of his work previously. Nevertheless, this attempt to establish his position seems to have been unsuccessful since, ten years later, he was moved to issue a further assurance.

To your other question, if the legendary matter & folk-lore in my books is traditional, & not invented, I can answer yes, in, I think, every case; this being a point on which I was careful not to falsify local beliefs & customs.<sup>8</sup>

In his preface to the Macmillan Wessex Edition of his novels, written in 1911, Hardy spells out, to his wider reading public, the policy already revealed to his correspondents. In so doing, he is aware of the likelihood, referred to in the previous section, that his readers are incapable of distinguishing between spurious and real traditions.

...I have often been reminded of Boswell's remarks on the trouble to which he was put and the pilgrimages he was obliged to make to authenticate some detail, though the labour was one which would bring him no praise. Unlike his achievement, however, on which an error would as he says have brought discredit, if these country customs and vocations, obsolete and obsolescent, had been detailed wrongly, nobody would have discovered such errors to the end of Time. Yet I have instituted inquiries to correct tricks of memory, and striven against temptations to exaggerate, in order to preserve for my own satisfaction a fairly true record of a vanishing life.<sup>9</sup>



This passage is also illuminating in that it demonstrates Hardy's desire to be, to some extent, a social historian of his native county as well as a novelist. It also shows that he is aware of the obscurity of some of the practices which he describes and of the fact that he is likely to be their only chronicler.

It should be noted that Hardy's reliability as a chronicler of traditional culture was accepted, not only by the readers of his novels, but also by some leading folklorists of his day. He was invited to join The Folklore Society in 1887, but declined, and he was invited to take the chair at one of its meetings in 1912, when he again felt obliged to decline. In the same year, the Society's chairman was fulsome in his praise of Hardy's authenticity as a source.

When much of the literature of our day is forgotten, the philosophical historian of the thirtieth or fortieth century will seek in the novels of George Eliot or Thomas Hardy, the poems of William Barnes, the sketches of Richard Jefferies, for a living picture of rural thought and life in our time.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, J. S. Udal, in a letter following his presentation of a copy of his newly published *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore* to Hardy, had no doubts as to the latter's merits as a folklorist.

I have always looked up to you as a master of the subject to which I have devoted so many years of my life and would have been so thankful for any little criticism.<sup>11</sup>

Even on the subject of the mummers' play, on which he was arguably the better informed of the two, Udal defers to Hardy's observations on the style of performance of Dorset mummers.

Mr. Hardy does not appear to see in the play any cheery or humorous expression of the jollities of a Christmas festivity such as I have always considered it to typify....

...Be that as it may, Mr. Hardy possesses such a marvellous insight into all that concerns the psychology of the Dorset peasant that I will not venture to gainsay his deduction.<sup>12</sup>

The acceptance by Hardy's contemporaries, both informed and uninformed, of the veracity of his folklore references is an indication that these references are probably genuine. A further perspective on this element of his work may be obtained by consideration of his concept of "Wessex".

## THOMAS HARDY'S WESSEX

As mentioned above, Hardy's major novels, and many of his other writings, are placed in an imaginary setting termed "Wessex". Although imaginary, the geography of this area corresponds closely to Dorset and some areas of adjoining counties and, in a few cases, to Cornwall. Since traditional culture is an integral component of Wessex, it is possible to assess the reliability of this element of his work by considering the extent to which the other components of Wessex, namely characterisation, topography and history, each reflect actuality.

## Characterisation

Although there has been no systematic examination of the origins of Hardy's characters, there is no doubt that he drew freely on real individuals in peopling his stories. In fact, this is one of the few areas in which he seems to be open and specific about his sources.

.... Hardy visited the then Rector of St. Juliot, who wrote to a friend in 1936: "Mr. Hardy on both his visits talked freely about his first wife and his novel *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, and told us that the heroine of that book was indeed Miss Emma Gifford. He said that nearly all the incidents in the story were true, as inventing fiction was too much trouble."<sup>13</sup>

Hardy told me that all the characters in his novels represented people who actually lived in these parts, but with a few exceptions he used assumed surnames. One of his exceptions was Will Latimer in "The Distracted Preacher", and I have a letter which Hardy wrote to me in which he says:- "All I am able to say is that the character of the Customs Officer whom you personate in the play of 'The Distracted Preacher' is given under his real name of Latimer, as told me forty years ago, by one of the smugglers, in his old age. I believe I am correct in stating that the Latimer buried in Osmington Churchyard whose headstone you can see there any day, was the same man."<sup>14</sup>

Mr. Hardy said he could show me where Henery Fray and Joseph Poorgrass are buried. I think he said Fray's name was Isaac West and Poorgrass's John Amey.<sup>15</sup>

It is not necessary to give a comprehensive list of these borrowings here, but the extent to which Hardy drew on real life may be further illustrated by mentioning a few more of the many examples. Hence, the tranter in *UGT* is based on William Keates of Stinsford,<sup>16</sup> Sergeant Troy in *FMC* is based on Hardy's uncle, John Sharpe,<sup>17</sup> Captain Flower in *HE* comes from Captain Masters of Swanage,<sup>18</sup> Rev. Clare in *TD* comes from Rev. Henry Moule<sup>19</sup> and Parson Toogood in "A Group of Crusted Characters" comes from a real clergyman whom Hardy declines to name.<sup>20</sup> The most remarkable example of Hardy's use of real people as models for fictional characters comes from *TD*. Here, he acknowledged that Augusta Way, a dairymaid whom he saw at Kingston Maurward in the 1870s, was the physical embodiment of Tess Durbeyfield. His subsequent fascination with the amateur actress Gertrude Bugler, whom he chose to play Tess in the dramatisation of the novel, was based on her striking resemblance to his idealised Tess. He later discovered that Gertrude Bugler was Augusta Way's daughter.<sup>21</sup>

## Topography

The physical setting of Wessex is even more noteworthy than are Hardy's characters for its close relationship to reality. Initially annoyed by queries as to the real equivalents to his fictional placenames, Hardy soon came to realise the commercial possibilities of a partly real, partly fictional world based on his writings. As early as 1878, on the publication of *RN* in book form, he provided a map of the novel's setting, which is immediately recognisable, on rotation through ninety degrees, as the environs of the Hardy family cottage at Stinsford.

Hardy was anxious to emphasise that his Wessex locations were fictional creations based on real places, not direct equivalents. Of his many statements to this effect, a recently published recollection from a friend is particularly illustrative.



I often discussed with Mr. Hardy the identity of the places described in his works. He was at pains to explain that the localities as described were not necessarily the same in every detail as those on which they were based. For example in his references to "Casterbridge" the town was not necessarily Dorchester, although the resemblance of the two was obvious, yet occasionally features in the topography were moved to other spots to meet the requirements of the narrative. In this connection I once asked him about certain scenes in *The Trumpet-Major*. He replied "I wanted a mill-house where you could go out at the back, so I took the one from Sutton Poyntz."<sup>22</sup>

Provided the nature of this relationship was understood, he was quite happy to reveal or confirm his topographical borrowings; the following responses being typical.

Your inquiry is in large measure answered by an article which appeared in the *Bookman* for Oct. 1891 (Hodder and Stoughton) I did not write it, but the investigator is fairly accurate in his disclosure of the real names of places described under fictitious ones in the novels. To the best of my recollection that article did not include the names in *Tess*. They appeared in the *St James's Gazette* a little while back. I do not know the date of the article. If however you assume "Shaston" to be Shaftesbury; "Marlott", a village a little to the west; "Emminste[r]" Beaminster; "Kings-Bere" Bere Re[gis]; "Sandbourne" Bournemouth; & "Casterbridge" Dorchester; you will not be far wrong. The different hills, vales, rivers and lanes, in that story are for the most part unde[r] their real names<sup>23</sup>

I will with pleasure give you any information that you may require as to the real names of the places described in my Wessex novels. Such information in the Handbook will perhaps relieve me of the many letters I receive on the subject, & perhaps serve to correct the erroneous identifications of places by journalists & others. I shall be in England again (Max Gate, Dorchester) some time in October, & will then answer any questions.<sup>24</sup>

[Hardy goes on to give a list of identifications]

The identification of the real origins of Hardy's physical settings has generated much literary detective work and it remains a focus of debate to the present time. For the purpose of this study, the significance of this literary industry lies in the picture which it reveals of Hardy's practice of using real originals of places, as of people, as the basis of his fictional descriptions. Since he is so consistent in these areas, it is likely that his folklore illustrations are similarly drawn from real life.

## History

First-hand knowledge and reference to real individuals was more difficult when writing of historical events such as the Napoleonic wars, a subject which held such a fascination for Hardy. Even so, his assiduity in verifying events, characters and background was, if anything, even greater than for the other parts of his Wessex creation. Initially inspired, as a child, by his grandmother's reminiscences of the Napoleonic era (when his grandfather had been a volunteer with the local militia) Hardy later took the trouble to track down former Peninsular War veterans when amassing material for *D*. He also visited the field of Waterloo in 1876 and travelled to Chelsea Hospital in 1875 and 1876 to interview survivors of the battle.<sup>25</sup> In preparing to write *TM* he first studied local newspapers, notes and memoranda and subsequently spent much time in researching the period in the British Museum during 1878 and 1879. Unlike the majority of Hardy's papers, the *TM* notebooks have survived and are lengthy, wide-ranging and precise, including several sketches.<sup>26</sup>



Given the lengths to which Hardy was prepared to go in his pursuit of verisimilitude in the area of history, as in those previously instanced, it is difficult to disbelieve his claim to have used only genuine folklore in his writing and to have taken steps to ensure its accuracy. Nevertheless it is now necessary to consider the sources on which he may have drawn in order to further assess the reliability of his descriptions.

## **PROBABLE SOURCES FOR DESCRIPTIONS OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE IN HARDY'S FICTION**

The only examination of Hardy's sources is by Lombardi, who suggests that these comprised personal collection, reading (including books of antiquities), his mother, friends, servants and newspapers.<sup>27</sup> There is little attempt to assess the individual contributions of these possible sources, still less to link them to individual passages of Hardy's writing. Therefore Lombardi's suggestions are briefly reviewed below.

### Personal Collection

As indicated to Udal, in a passage quoted earlier in this chapter, Hardy did not personally collect folklore, his only recorded excursion into this territory being a collection of songs which he assembled towards the end of his life.<sup>28</sup> Even so, the songs are so fragmentary as to suggest that they are recalled from memory rather than collected in the field.

### Reading

Hardy's reading is unlikely to have elicited much in the way of traditional material, since very few books in this field were available at the time that he was writing fiction. Apart from songbooks, the only books in his library, at the time of its dispersal, which related to rural life were Hammond's *The Village Labourer* and Heath's *The English Peasant*, neither of which are folklore sources. Nevertheless Grigson, writing of *UGT*, believes that "The touches of folklore are out of books rather than the recesses of the Dorset mind or the practices of Stinsford."<sup>29</sup> The only evidence advanced to support this statement is a suggestion that the Midsummer Eve divination described in *UGT* is taken from Chambers' *Book of Days*. In fact, the custom described by Chambers is different from that used by Hardy, whose version actually parallels that given in Hone's *Year Book*.<sup>30</sup> The Hone account was written by William Barnes "The Dorset Poet" in 1832 and so, if Hardy does draw on Hone, he is describing a genuine Dorset tradition. In any case, since he knew Barnes well, he may have obtained the description directly from him. Nevertheless, since Hardy's writings include other variants of the custom, which are not mentioned by Barnes, it is more likely that he is drawing upon his own experience.<sup>31</sup> This is the only case in which a Hardy folklore description may arguably be linked to a literary source.

### His Mother

Hardy's mother, Jemima, née Hand, is widely believed to have been an important source for his writings, not only on folklore but also anecdote, local history and other aspects of Wessex background. This is acknowledged by Hardy himself in her obituary, which he contributed anonymously to *The Times*.

...much of her son's work in prose and verse was based upon her memories and opinions.<sup>32</sup>

Evidence as to which parts of Hardy's work specifically derive from Jemima is difficult to obtain, given his efforts, as his fame grew, to distance himself from his humble origins. For instance, the incident of the incubus in "The Withered Arm" is based on an actual experience related to Hardy by an informant described as "an aged friend".<sup>33</sup> This has been taken by Hardy scholars to refer to Jemima Hardy, and probably does so, but no evidence has been adduced to support the suggestion.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, the "Old Song Sung at Melbury Osmond about 1820" [The Break of the Day], in Hardy's song collection, probably derives from Jemima, who was a girl in the village at the time. Nevertheless Hardy, in referring to his mother's song repertoire, dissociates her from traditional material of this type, preferring to mention only genteel parlour songs such as "Why Are You Wandering Here I Pray?"<sup>35</sup>

### Friends

There is no evidence that any of Hardy's friends supplied him with folklore, although, of this circle, Edward Clodd and J. G. Frazer were sufficiently knowledgeable to do so. Instead, there are many examples, throughout his correspondence, of friends seeking information on the subject from Hardy. An exception might be made in the case of William Barnes, whose possible contribution to a custom described in *UGT* is referred to above. There is also a possibility that Hardy drew on Barnes's recollections for parts of *TD*, since the novel is partly set in the Blackmore Vale, where Barnes was born and brought up. On the other hand, Hardy seems only to have begun to plan the novel in 1888, two years after Barnes's death.<sup>36</sup>

### Servants

Lombardi's reference to "servants" as sources of folklore is largely inaccurate, since the Hardy family were too poor to employ servants. Also, from what is known of Jemima Hardy, she would have made every effort to discourage her son from associating with the workmen employed by her husband in his building business. The exception here is an ex-smuggler, in the Hardys' employ on whose recollections Thomas Hardy drew in writing "The Distracted Preacher".<sup>37</sup>

### Newspapers

Newspapers constitute a more promising potential source for Hardy's folklore descriptions, since his surviving notebooks show that he researched these extensively for background material. For a few years from 1881, at the instigation of J.S. Udal, the *Dorset County Chronicle* instituted a folklore column, to which Udal himself and William Barnes were contributors. Even so, there is little evidence that Hardy drew on this resource.



Therefore, of the possible sources suggested by Lombardi, only Jemima Hardy is likely to have been significant in the context of Hardy's writing on traditional culture. Even so, there were other family members whose influence on this aspect of Hardy's work is likely to have been important. The first and most obvious is the writer's father, Thomas Hardy Senior.<sup>38</sup>

Hardy's father was a traditional musician, playing fiddle and cello, with whom Hardy performed at village dances as a boy. He was also a west gallery musician, as were his own father and his brother. It was from his father that Thomas Hardy inherited the family manuscript music books, containing both dance and west gallery music, and his grandfather's songbook. Recollections of the social aspects of west gallery music were also readily available since, as well as the family's membership of the Stinsford Church band, Hardy's grandfather had played in the Puddletown band and also seems to have had links with the church band at Maiden Newton.

The other family members to whom Hardy was probably indebted for information on local traditions, were his paternal grandmother, née Mary Head, who lived with the family in his boyhood and his maternal aunts and cousins at Puddletown. His lifelong fascination with the Napoleonic period certainly stemmed from his grandmother's stories, as mentioned in the poem "One We Knew"<sup>39</sup> and from his memories of childhood.<sup>40</sup> Since his early novels are set in the Stinsford/Puddletown area, it seems likely that Mary Head, rather than Jemima Hand, who came from north Dorset, was the principal source for Wessex background. The Puddletown Hands, as well as supplementing Jemima's stories from Melbury Osmond, were the organisers of their village's mummers' play, on which Hardy drew for the play in *RN*.<sup>41</sup>

The most important consideration, and one largely ignored by previous writers on the subject, is that Thomas Hardy was himself a tradition bearer. The success and fame which accompanied his later years should not be allowed to obscure the fact that he was born and brought up in an artisan family, in a remote hamlet, at a time when customs, beliefs, songs and other manifestations of traditional culture were very much part of everyday life. A recollection of his younger brother, Henry, illustrates the nature of the family's background.

Henry, a carpenter and builder, has carried with him (alas!) to another world a priceless store of Dorset lore – old customs, manners, talk, traditions.<sup>42</sup>

Thomas Hardy also had access to this "priceless store" and, given his retentive memory and exceptional powers of description, was better placed to recall local traditions. His descriptions were, moreover, based on first-hand experience rather than mediated through a folklore collector. References to other sources, such as those postulated by Lombardi, could serve only to confirm and extend what he already knew. For example, although he certainly researched the *Dorset County Chronicle* for details of wife-selling for the relevant passages of *MC*, he was already aware of the practice since it had taken place in Dorchester in his early years.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, he was familiar with the mummers' play from his adolescence, but

the full version which he produced for performance many years later was “completed from other sources, and from local tradition, collocated and revised by Thomas Hardy”.<sup>44</sup>

It should also be noted that Hardy was not only a tradition bearer in the sense of preserving family experience, but was also an active participant since, as a boy, he frequently performed as a musician at local dances and parties. His prowess as a folk musician was recalled by those who recalled his performances as a youth<sup>45</sup> and by those who heard his rare excursions into fiddle playing in his later years.<sup>46</sup>

It is clear that Hardy had access to an extensive body of traditional culture from personal and family experience, but this, in itself, is insufficient to confirm his credentials as a folklore source. Instead, it is necessary to go further and to attempt to identify, in his writings, instances of folklore which may be traced to identifiable origins.

## **SOME LINKS BETWEEN HARDY’S SOURCES AND THE FOLKLORE IN HIS WRITINGS**

Of the large number of folklore references listed in chapter 2, very few can be traced directly to their source. As previously stated, this is partly because Hardy was writing fiction and therefore had no need to identify his sources, and partly because he wished to avoid drawing attention to the social position of his family, through whom he obtained much of his information. Nevertheless, by considering his non-fictional writing as well as his fiction, together with some manuscript sources, it is possible to trace a few descriptions back to their origins. The rigour with which this link may be established varies from one case to another but the following examples may be taken to illustrate the more reliable derivations. They are listed in the order in which they appear in the chapter 2 index.

### The Funeral Custom at Stinsford

In the poem “The Choirmaster’s Burial”, a church band traditionally plays over the open grave at the funeral of any of its members.<sup>47</sup> Hardy’s notebooks show that this custom is derived from actual practice at Stinsford at the time that his grandfather led the band.<sup>48</sup> Further consideration is given to this custom in chapter 5.

### Candle Wax Shape as a Death Omen

In *TM*, Hardy describes how some wind-blown candles had “guttered into coffin handles and shrouds”.<sup>49</sup> The superstition attending the shape of candle wax is underlined in the poem “Standing by the Mantelpiece”.

The candle-wax is shaping to a shroud  
To-night. (They call it that, as you may know) –  
By touching it the claimant is avowed,  
And hence I press it with my finger - so.<sup>50</sup>

This illustrates the belief that candle wax, shaped like a shroud and pointing at an



individual, presages his or her death.<sup>51</sup> The poem is dedicated “H. M. M. 1873” and it refers to Horace Moule, who committed suicide in that year. The superstition reflects Hardy’s own experience.

... it was only in retrospect that Hardy read a superstitious significance into the fact that the previous evening, as Moule stood talking by the mantelpiece, he had pointed unconsciously at a candle whose wax was “shaping to a shroud”.<sup>52</sup>

### Ravens as a Death Omen

The morbid poem “Premonitions” refers to a number of death omens, one of which is “And a raven flew over the house”<sup>53</sup>. Hardy recalled this belief from his own childhood, since he told Llewelyn Powys that he had often seen Bockhampton people bless themselves on seeing a raven fly over their chimneys.<sup>54</sup>

### Death Omens in “A Few Crusted Characters”

Two uncharacteristically well documented traditions may be found in “The Superstitious Man’s Story”, a chapter within the short story “A Few Crusted Characters”. First, William Privett is asleep in a hayfield when his fellow mower witnesses an unusual sight.

... he saw one of those great white miller’s souls as we call ‘em – that is to say a miller-moth – come from William’s open mouth while he slept, and fly straight away.<sup>55</sup>

William is later found to have died in his sleep. Subsequently, his ghost is reported to have been seen, at the time at which he died, at *Longpuddle Spring*, a place which he has always avoided.

In a letter written in 1894, some three years after the story was first published, Hardy discloses the origin of the belief that the soul left the body as a moth.

Certainly, all that about the “miller’s soul” is, or was till lately an actual belief down here. It was told to me years ago by an old woman.<sup>56</sup>

In a 1924 letter, Hardy gives some further information about the story.

The incident of the “miller moth” flying out of a man’s mouth at the moment of his death – supposed to be his soul – is or was a belief of this county.

The spot whereon the particular instance of it that I had in mind is assumed to have occurred was a place named “Buttock’s Spring” in the parish of Melbury Osmond.

How old the superstition may be I do not know. The old lady who told it to me said it happened in her childhood, & this would have been about 1820.

The common white moth is still called a “miller’s soul” by the peasantry, for obvious reasons.<sup>57</sup>

Hardy’s mother, Jemima, was born in Melbury Osmond in 1813 and Buttock’s Spring has been shown to be outside her childhood home in that village. Therefore there can be no

doubt that the ghost motifs included in “The Superstitious Man’s Story” are derived directly from real traditions and that the “old lady” in question was Jemima Hardy. The dismissive reference to a belief of “the peasantry” illustrates exactly why Hardy cloaks his mother’s identity. It should also be noted that the fictional story is set in *Longpuddle*, a location based on the Piddle Valley villages in central Dorset, while Melbury is some miles to the north west. As in the case of topography, Hardy is ready to transfer traditions between geographical locations when it suits his literary purpose.

### Witchcraft in “The Withered Arm”

This short story contains descriptions of the activities of a white witch named “Conjuror Trendle”, notably the production of images in a glass of water and the use of a freshly hanged corpse for curative purposes. Consideration of Hardy’s sources for the witchcraft in this and other parts of his work, to be addressed in chapter 7, shows that he is drawing on a real individual in his portrayal of the fictional Trendle.

### Cattle Kneel on Christmas Eve

The belief that cattle kneel at midnight on Christmas Eve is featured in the poem “The Oxen” and is the focus of a story told in *TD*. This superstition is considered in chapter 8, where it is shown to stem from Hardy’s own recollections of Stinsford, although he was aware of a similar belief in France.

### Pigeons’ Hearts Used in a Love Spell

In *JO*, the quack “Physician Vilbert” reveals that the love philtre, which he attempts to sell to Arabella, is made from pigeons’ hearts.<sup>58</sup> The efficacy of this ingredient in charms is another instance of Hardy’s recalling Stinsford beliefs, as he acknowledges both in his autobiography and his notebooks.<sup>59</sup>

### The Toad Bag

In *MC*, Michael Henchard questions the white witch “Conjuror Fall”, as to his magical abilities:

“Can ye ... cure the evil?”

“That I’ve done – with consideration – if they will wear the toad bag by night as well as by day.”<sup>60</sup>

This is a reference to the toad cure associated with the real white witch, known as “Doctor” Buckland. Hardy obtained his information on Buckland from William Barnes, as he indicates in his obituary for that writer.

And there used to come to a bridge, close to his father’s door, till quite recently, a conjuror or “white wizard”, who cured afflicted persons by means of the toad-bag – a small piece of linen having a limb from a living toad sewn up inside, to be worn round the sufferer’s neck and next his skin, the twitching movements of which limb gave, so it was said, “a turn” to the blood of the wearer, and effected a radical change in his constitution.<sup>61</sup>



### “The Triumph” in *UGT*

Chapter 7 of *UGT* (“The Tranter’s Party”), centres on the dancing of “The Triumph”, although there is not a continuous description of this country dance. The music for “The Triumph” may be found in Hardy’s grandfather’s music book, which also includes, in the novelist’s hand, a detailed description of the figures.<sup>62</sup> This is yet another instance of Hardy drawing on his own experience. As a dance musician, he must have played for “The Triumph” as a boy and was to do so again, late in life, when he demonstrated the performance of the tune at a rehearsal for the dramatisation of *UGT*.<sup>63</sup> At the same time, he confirmed to Florence Henniker that he had seen the dances described in *UGT* in his boyhood.<sup>64</sup>

### The Ballad in “The Harvest Supper”

The section of chapter 8 entitled “The Outlandish Knight” identifies this as the ballad mentioned in the poem “The Harvest Supper”. It also shows that Hardy had heard the song in just such a setting, in his boyhood, and that he was familiar with the words of some verses.

### Traditional Carols in *UGT*

Given his family’s connection with local church bands, it has always reasonably been assumed that the numerous references to west gallery music in Hardy’s writings are drawn from family sources. In order to test this thesis, reference may be made to *UGT*, which is sub-titled *The Mellstock Quire*, due to the account of that body which is given in the first part of the novel. Three of the Hardy family manuscript carol books survive, having passed through the possession of Thomas Hardy, and it is possible to use them to authenticate the carols in the novel.

Chapters 3 to 5 of *UGT* describe how the *Mellstock* church band prepare for and then carry out their annual Christmas morning perambulation of the parish. Before setting out, the leader of the band, William Dewey, admonishes the singers for a previous poor performance of a carol entitled “Arise and Hail”.<sup>65</sup> This carol may be found as number 69 in the 1842 family book.<sup>66</sup>

The next carol to be mentioned is number 78, “Remember Adam’s Fall” for which, unusually, the author gives a full text and also observes:

Then passed forth into the quiet night an ancient and time-worn hymn, embodying a quaint Christianity in words orally transmitted from father to son through several generations down to the present characters...<sup>65</sup>

This carol also appeared in the family music book, numbered 78 as in the novel, but the relevant page has been removed. A printed copy of the carol, with music, was preserved by Hardy in his personal collection. “Remember Adam’s Fall” seems to have been first published in 1611, which supports the reference to “several generations” but not that to “orally transmitted”.<sup>68</sup>

The band then move on to *Mellstock* school, where they sing their number 59, “O, What Unbounded Goodness”, followed by number 44, “Rejoice Ye Tenants of the Earth”.<sup>69</sup> These carols, too, figure in the 1842 book; the former as 59, as in the novel and the latter as number 79.

Finally, the band visits the house of Farmer Shiner, the churchwarden, and perform number 32, “Behold the Morning Star”.<sup>70</sup> This is not listed in Hardy’s Stinsford carol book, but is listed in his grandfather’s book of Puddletown carols, where it is numbered as 69.<sup>71</sup> Following Mr. Shiner’s unenthusiastic response to this offering, accompanied by his demand for silence, the band retaliate with an unnamed carol, number 19, which they play fortissimo to drown his protests. It is illustrative of Hardy’s (much underrated) sense of humour and his subtle use of tradition, that number 19 in the Puddletown carol book is “Awake Ye Slumbering Mortals All”.

### The Mummers’ Play in *RN*

Chapter 7, which is devoted to a consideration of Hardy’s contribution to a knowledge of the mummers’ play in Dorset, shows that the play in *RN* is based on that performed at Puddletown in the 1850s.

### The Miller’s Kitchen in *TM*

*TM* contains a description of traditional dishes, which are being prepared in the kitchen of *Overcombe* Mill. As instanced earlier, Hardy told his solicitor that he had chosen Sutton Poyntz mill as a model for this scene because “I wanted a mill where you could go out at the back”<sup>72</sup> Since he was obviously well acquainted with the mill kitchen at Sutton Poyntz, it may reasonably be concluded that the foods and utensils described at *Overcombe* are based on actual practice. Indeed, Hardy was so familiar with the scene that he provided a sketch upon which his publisher based an illustration for the serial version of the novel.<sup>73</sup>

### The Coachman in *TD*

The driving of horse-drawn vehicles is not an obvious example of traditional culture, but it fulfils two of the Sheffield criteria, namely that it was a skill handed on traditionally and was the common heritage of a group.

In *TD*, the heroine’s journey to her ill-fated wedding gives the author an opportunity to describe her driver and the scarring occasioned by his trade.

The postillion was a venerable “boy” of sixty – a martyr to rheumatic gout, the result of excessive exposure in youth, counteracted by strong liquors – who had stood at inn-doors doing nothing for the whole five-and-twenty years that had elapsed since he had no longer been required, as if expecting the old times to come back again. He had a permanent running wound on the outside of his right leg, originated by the constant bruising of aristocratic carriage-poles during the many years he had been in regular employ at The King’s Arms, Casterbridge.<sup>74</sup>



The description of the postillion, and his industrial injury, is firmly based on William Young, a retired coachman whom Hardy interviewed in July 1881.

W.Y.'s right leg, outside, is discoloured – though not by bruising. It was where the carriagepole used to rub for so many years – and when the horses began to get weary they would lean in against the pole.<sup>75</sup>

### Cider Making

Cider is often mentioned in Hardy's writings and cider making is described, albeit fleetingly, on more than one occasion.<sup>76</sup> Once more, Hardy is recalling the Dorset of his early years, since he was familiar with the process in his youth, when he assisted at his father's cider makings.<sup>77</sup> His knowledge in this field was confirmed in a conversation which he had with R. Pakenham in 1925, when he described the variation between the techniques which were used in Devon and in Dorset.<sup>78</sup>

Most of the above examples come from Hardy's personal experience, thus bearing out his status as a tradition bearer. It may be thought that those instances for which Hardy effectively verifies his own description, through his non-fictional writings, are not rigorous demonstrations of his reliability. It is possible, it could be argued, that he falsely claims to have recalled elements of folklore from his childhood in order to underpin similar examples from his subsequent writings. In fact, consideration of the context of Hardy's recollections shows that this is most unlikely to have been the case. His letters were not intended for publication, and so were unsuitable as a medium for self-justification, while his conversations with friends fall into a similar category. He left instructions that his notebooks should be destroyed after his death, as most were, which is not consistent with his intending them to establish the reliability of his folklore references. The only source upon which some doubt might be cast is *LW*, which was specifically written to produce the account of Hardy's life which the author himself intended. Nevertheless, some of the *LW* references are independently confirmed and, given the validity of the other examples cited, it would require a conspiracy theory of the highest order to suggest that Hardy used *LW* to lay a trail of false references to validate his earlier writings.

## **COMPARISON OF HARDY'S DESCRIPTIONS OF TRADITIONS WITH INDEPENDENT ACCOUNTS**

The previous sections of this chapter have shown that it was Hardy's declared policy to use only genuine and verified folklore in his published work, that he had access at first or second hand to plenty of suitable material, and that some instances of folklore in his work may be traced to authentic sources. It is possible to further validate his contributions in this field by comparing them with independent accounts.

There are many instances where Hardy mentions a tradition which is so well known as to be immediately acceptable as genuine. Examples might include the custom of New Year's Eve bellringing, that of throwing a slipper after a bride and the belief that mandrake shrieks when uprooted, all of which are listed in standard compendia of folklore.<sup>79</sup> These are not,

perhaps, of great interest, partly due to their familiarity and partly because Hardy does not go on to describe them further. Therefore, for the purpose of assessing the accuracy of his descriptions, it is necessary to select less common examples, or those for which greater detail is given, and to compare these with independent descriptions. Moreover, given the variation of tradition over place and time, it is desirable to use for comparison, reasonably contemporary accounts from Dorset, insofar as these are available.

In practice, it is difficult to find descriptions of Dorset traditions which may safely be said to be independent of Hardy's published work. If a description was produced prior to his own writing, there is a possibility that Hardy drew upon it. Alternatively, given his status as an authority on Dorset lore of all kinds, there must be a suspicion that later writers were, in their turn, drawing on Hardy.

The most useful text for the validation of Hardy's folklore references is J. S. Udal's *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore*, the only full length work on the subject.<sup>80</sup> Also, due to the unusual circumstances of its publication, outlined here in chapter 1, its contents come from much the same period of time as that covered by Hardy's novels, whereas the book was unavailable to Hardy at the time when the novels were written. Those instances where Udal describes traditions which are also mentioned by Hardy may be categorised as follows;

- Udal cites Hardy as his only source.
- Udal describes a tradition, with sources, and then goes on to mention a parallel instance in Hardy's work.
- Udal describes a tradition but does not mention a Hardy connection.

The first category, very rare in Udal's book, must be discounted for the purpose of the present argument. The second category provides useful examples for examination here and the third is equally valuable. The following comparisons are based on *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore*, with two additional local sources, and are set out in the order in which they appear in the index in chapter 2.

### Burning the Holly

Hardy's poem of this name refers to a calendar custom.

And we were burning the holly  
On Twelfth Night, the holly  
As people do: the holly,  
Ivy and mistletoe.<sup>81</sup>

Udal, far from confirming Hardy's reference, gives an opposing view of the disposal of Christmas greenery.

... Christmas decorations of evergreen plants, which should never be burnt after they are taken down, on pain of the most terrible disasters following upon the infringement of the rule.<sup>82</sup>



Nevertheless, elsewhere in *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore*, Udal cites an entirely different means of disposing of Christmas decorations, which corresponds to that mentioned by Hardy.

But care should be taken that they are not thrown away as ordinary rubbish, but should be entirely destroyed in the fire. If otherwise, it portends death or misfortune to some one of the household before another year is out.<sup>83</sup>

Although, for the second reference, he refers to Dorset, Udal's confirmatory source is Burne's *Shropshire Folk-Lore*. Since he was not a Dorset man, there must be some question as to whether either of Udal's descriptions is based on actual Dorset practice. Therefore in this case, while it is not possible to judge Hardy's reliability, it seems likely that he was describing actual local practice and that Udal's second reference is therefore the more reliable.

### Shroving and Wassailing

The relevant sections in chapter 8 show that Hardy's descriptions of these two calendar customs, in his personal notebooks, have been validated by the present writer's fieldwork.

### Telling the Bees

The custom is mentioned in the short story "Interlopers at the Knap".

It was the universal custom hereabouts to wake the bees by tapping at their hives whenever a death occurred in the household under the belief that the bees themselves would pine away and perish during the ensuing year.<sup>84</sup>

This well known practice is also described by Udal, who cites a Dorset source.

Informing bees of the death of their master or mistress by tapping upon their hives and announcing it in order to prevent them forsaking the place is a common superstition in Dorsetshire, as in other counties<sup>85</sup>

Although the fate of the bees differs between the two versions, the substance of the custom described by Hardy is independently confirmed by Udal.

Hardy's short story is set in the Melbury Osmond area, where his mother grew up, and it includes incidents from her courtship, by his father. Therefore the source for this belief is likely to be Jemima Hardy.

### Church Bell Death Omen

This superstition is mentioned in "A Few Crusted Characters".

...the bell that was ringing for church went very heavy all of a sudden; the sexton, who told me o't said he'd not known the bell go so heavy in his hand for years – and he feared it meant a death in the parish<sup>86</sup>

The occurrence in Dorset of this well known belief is independently confirmed by Udal in a passage first published in 1893, two years after Hardy's short story.

At Long Burton, near Sherborne, it is customary for the sexton to ring the tenor bell every Sunday morning, and if it should happen to sound dull and heavy-it is said that someone in the parish is sure to die before the week is out. I have also heard this said in the parish of Symondsburry.<sup>87</sup>

The Longburton reference is likely to have been sent to Udal by Canon Mayo, the antiquary, who was the rector of the parish at that time.

### Howling Dog Death Omen

The widely held belief that a dog can foretell death is introduced in *DR*, where Mrs. Aldcliffe's dog howls during the night on which her father dies.<sup>88</sup>

The contemporary occurrence of the belief in Dorset is confirmed by Miss Summers of Hazelbury Bryan, writing in 1888, some years after the publication of *DR*.<sup>89</sup> Miss Summers, as an active folklore collector, may be assumed to have collected the belief herself rather than obtained it from Hardy's (little read) first published novel.

### Overlooking

In *LW*, Hardy recalls an incident in which a farmer is "overlooked" by himself.<sup>90</sup> Chapter 7 of this study, in the section entitled "The Nature of Witches and Witchcraft", shows that this belief is independently confirmed by Rawlence and that a similar belief was also held by Hardy himself.

This example differs from most of those cited previously in that it is Hardy's non-fictional writing which is being validated.

### Pricking the Witch

In chapter 7, the section "Counter Measures against Witchcraft" shows that Hardy's description, in *RN*, of pricking a suspected witch is confirmed by Udal, who quotes such an incident from a court case which took place several years after the publication of the novel.

### Unlucky Cock-Crow

In *TD*, Tess is disconcerted by a cock, which crows three times in the afternoon as she sets forth to her wedding. From the reactions of the others present, it is plain that an afternoon cock-crow is considered unlucky.<sup>91</sup> Udal confirms this by an instance of the superstition which he collected himself in Symondsburry.<sup>92</sup>

In the novel, Tess attempts to lessen the significance of the omen by placing another construction on the cock's behaviour.

"It only means a change in the weather," said she, "not what you think: 'tis impossible!"<sup>93</sup>



This alternative explanation is also confirmed by Udal, who quotes a rhyme, which he presumably obtained at Symondsburry.

If a cock goes a-crowin' to bed  
He'll cęartenly rise wi' a watery head.<sup>94</sup>

The number of cases in which Hardy's accounts may be verified by comparison with contemporary Dorset sources is fairly small. This is partly because he does not set out to provide clues as to verification and partly because the above examples are restricted to those where "cross-fertilisation" between Hardy and the other sources may reasonably be eliminated. Again, the picture which emerges, as in previous sections of this chapter, is of Hardy as a faithful recorder of traditional culture in Dorset. Even so, before leaving this examination of Hardy's credentials as a folklore source, it is necessary to examine the other side of the argument, namely those cases where he might appear to distort or invent tradition.

#### INSTANCES WHERE HARDY'S USE OF TRADITION MAY BE UNRELIABLE

Firor's *Folkways in Thomas Hardy* includes a chapter "Omens, Premonitions, Fatalities" which contains a number of seemingly dubious superstitions, taken from Hardy's poems.<sup>95</sup> For example, the poem "A Last Journey" describes how a sick man dreams that his father is shaking apples from a tree, while looking meaningfully at him. On the following day the man dies.<sup>96</sup> Despite the large number of superstitions associated with apple trees, there is no corroboratory reference elsewhere to a dream of apple harvesting being seen as a death omen. Therefore there must be a possibility that Hardy invented the belief, or that the poem may have been inspired by a dream experienced either by Hardy or by someone whom he knew. Even if there were such a dream, it could not constitute a genuine tradition unless it could be verified by other instances and its implications accepted by other people.

Further examples occur in the poem "She Saw Him She Said", in which a woman sees her husband, sad-faced, speaking to the sexton. On returning home, she finds that he has not left the house. In the meantime he has heard the church bell tolling, although she knows it to have been silent.<sup>97</sup> The first of these motifs, that of a wraith as a death omen, is rare in English folklore and does not appear in a Dorset context, other than in Hardy's writings.<sup>98</sup> The second, the hearing of a non-existent death bell, seems a plausible death omen but is not recorded outside this poem. Again, Hardy appears to either invent tradition or to draw upon individual, rather than shared, experience.

Such dubious usage extends beyond omens and superstitions to the realm of ghost belief. For instance, there is an imagined conversation between dead villagers in the poem "Voices from Things Growing in a Country Churchyard"<sup>99</sup> and there are ghosts which seem to stem from Hardy's own imagination or experience in "The Old Neighbour and the New".<sup>100</sup> These, and other ghost motifs in the poetry, stray from traditional ghost belief and, although they are included by Firor in her collection,<sup>101</sup> they cannot be regarded as genuine

traditions. The question must now be addressed as to whether Hardy is making a conscious effort to deceive his readers by presenting such fictional beliefs as being traditional.

Since these instances all occur within the poetry, in which Hardy explores human behaviour by placing imaginary figures in hypothetical situations, it would be unfair to suggest that he is attempting to mislead his readers. Instead, as a poet, he would expect his readers to treat his poems as literary constructions and as such, they are of dubious value as source materials for the folklorist. Nevertheless, to completely ignore the poetry as a folklore source would be to lose several genuine examples, such as the traditional dances and tunes in "The Dance at the Phoenix"<sup>102</sup> and the belief that cattle kneel on Christmas Eve, expressed in "The Oxen".<sup>103</sup> In response to this dilemma it would be easy to adopt a policy of including the seemingly genuine traditions from the poetry but of excluding those which seem not to be genuine. This would, however, require a series of value judgements and would render the central point of this study, namely Hardy's reliability as a folklore source, a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The approach taken here, in listing cultural traditions in chapter 2 and in discussing them in ensuing chapters, is to exclude from consideration all supernatural material from the poetry unless it can be verified by external references. This does give rise to the possibility that a few genuine beliefs, for which Hardy is the only source, may be omitted but, given the nature of the material, this is thought to be unlikely. The corroborated folkloric references in the poetry are taken to be genuine and are explored in the appropriate ensuing chapters.

An example of this selection process might be the poem "The Paphian Ball".<sup>104</sup> In this poem, the *Mellstock* church band, on their Christmas perambulation, meet a dark stranger who persuades them to accompany him to a ballroom, where they play for a host of strange dancers in return for a large store of gold. At last, tiring from their exertions, they inadvertently break into "While Shepherds Watched", whereupon hall, dancers and gold disappear and they find themselves back on the heath. The *Mellstock* band is based on the Stinsford band, largely comprised of Hardy's family and the events described clearly did not happen to those individuals. In that sense, the story is imaginary and, as an example of supernatural belief in the poetry, should not be considered further. On the other hand, it encapsulates a traditional motif, "Devil leaves on hearing hymn tune" which Hardy has transposed to the setting of Stinsford.<sup>105</sup> Given this verification, the story is listed in chapter 2 as an example of traditional narrative. Unfortunately it is of little value for further investigation, since it is impossible to determine whether Hardy obtained it from a literary or a traditional source or to establish the extent to which he altered it to fit the Stinsford environment.

It is worthwhile, at this point, to further illustrate the problem of separating artistic imagination from reality in Hardy's poetry, or indeed in his fiction, by considering a poem whose imaginative elements extend beyond the supernatural. "The Choirmaster's Burial" describes how a church band have a custom of playing a hymn over the grave, following the funeral of any member. When the choirmaster dies, the reforming vicar denies him this tribute and, on the following night, a ghostly band appear and play a hymn over the grave.<sup>106</sup>



The poem may initially be dismissed as encompassing an unverified supernatural belief, namely the ghostly band, but the funeral custom for band members is genuine, since it is twice recorded by Hardy in his non-fictional writings.<sup>107</sup> Further, Hardy's grandfather was the choirmaster at Stinsford and, when he died, the band did not play over his grave. At about this time, a new vicar arrived at Stinsford and was instrumental in the demise of the church band. Therefore the poem appears to offer evidence not only on local tradition, but also on local history. In fact, a closer examination of the facts shows that things are not quite as they seem, since Grandfather Hardy's truncated funeral was not attributable to the new vicar.

The first Thomas's death having been quite unexpected, inasmuch as he was playing in the church one Sunday and brought in for burial on the next, there could be no such quiring over his grave as he had performed over the grave of so many, owing to the remaining players being the chief mourners.<sup>108</sup>

The vicar of Stinsford in 1837, when grandfather Hardy died, was still Rev. Edward Murray, a long-time supporter of the church band, who was unlikely to have inhibited its activities in any way. The reforming clergyman who oversaw the end of the band was Rev. Arthur Shirley, who did not succeed Murray until later in 1837, several months after the funeral of Grandfather Hardy. The character of the vicar in the poem is based on Shirley, whom Hardy disliked, but the connection of the reforming clergyman with the funeral is anachronistic.

As a factual record, "The Choirmaster's Burial" is unreliable. Instead, it should be read as a piece of poetic fiction which takes a real incident, Grandfather Hardy's burial without the accompanying tribute, and uses it to say something about the attitude of modernising clergymen towards tradition and, in so doing, about Hardy's own attitude to modernising clergymen. This does not undermine Hardy's status as a reliable source, since he makes no claim that the poem is literally true but, although the events described did not take place precisely as detailed, the poem reveals a number of facts about village life in mid-nineteenth century Dorset. Hence there was a particular funeral custom at Stinsford, a certain tune was played over the grave, Grandfather Hardy was not afforded this tribute on his own death, Stinsford had a vicar who was unsympathetic to west gallery bands and this was considered regrettable by Hardy.

It must be concluded that, even with the exclusion of the supernatural poems, the folklore in Hardy's poetry should be treated circumspectly. It can reveal a great deal about traditional culture in Dorset but cannot be taken as a literal record. In adopting this position, it is argued that Hardy was not attempting to mislead his readers.

Turning to the prose works, it is much more difficult to identify instances where traditional culture is described other than faithfully. There are instances of geographical transposition, as in there are in the topography of Hardy's Wessex, but they do not materially reduce the value of the traditional material. For instance, as will be shown in chapter 7, the operations of Conjuror Trendle in "The Withered Arm", set in the Stinsford area, are at least partly based on those of a cunning man in the Blackmore Vale. Similarly the Ooser, a mask mentioned in *RN*, which is again set in the vicinity of Stinsford, was actually kept at

Melbury Osmond.<sup>109</sup> Despite the changes of setting, these examples still provide evidence of traditional belief and practice.

There are also very occasional instances where Hardy, in describing an aspect of traditional culture, omits those elements of which he disapproves, the most noteworthy example being that of November the Fifth celebrations, to be considered in chapter 8. Even so, there is no reason to suppose that he misrepresents those elements which he does choose to describe.

Although cases such as those cited are few in number, it is still necessary to exercise caution in interpreting the folklore material in Hardy's fiction too literally. At the same time, a search for direct and externally verifiable description is likely to overlook the equally valuable information on context, which he so frequently supplies.

Unlike the poetry, where a single piece, such as "The Paphian Ball" may revolve entirely around an instance of folklore, the novels generally use traditional culture as a background rather than as a focus. Therefore there is no need for the author to develop this aspect of his fiction in any detail and the need for invention is unlikely to arise. Nevertheless, there are a few short stories in which folklore plays a prominent part and it is here that the possibility of invention might appear more likely. Interpretation of such cases is by no means clear-cut, as may be illustrated by reference to the humorous story "Absent-Mindedness in a Parish Choir".<sup>110</sup>

In this story, the Christmas season finds the *Lower Longpuddle* church band exhausted by their parallel function as the village dance band. In order to fortify themselves during a church service, they smuggle alcohol into the gallery and, following its consumption, they fall asleep. On being awoken, they confusedly strike up "The Devil among the Tailors" instead of the psalm and are expelled from the gallery in disgrace. A barrel organ is subsequently installed in their place on which "however sinful inclined you was, you could play nothing but psalm-tunes whatsoever".<sup>111</sup>

"Absent-Mindedness" is told, in the vernacular, by a character within the main story of "A Few Crusted Characters" and it has the appearance of folk narrative. Nevertheless, the story is not recorded by any other Dorset source, whereas, given the striking nature of the event which it describes, it is most unlikely to have gone unrecorded had it actually happened. Hardy himself makes no claim that the story is traditional and he underlines its fictional character by his choice of setting. Hence, although the story was written in 1891, quite late in his career as a writer of fiction and when his Wessex settings were well developed, the origin of the village setting for "A Few Crusted Characters" is impossible to identify.<sup>112</sup> In fact, Ray shows that Hardy considered some twenty-five possible options before coming up with *Lower Longpuddle*.<sup>113</sup> This seems consistent with a desire, on the part of the author, to emphasise that the story is fictional. Even so, this short story is, by no means, without value for the student of traditional culture.

First, the story may actually be a traditional narrative, albeit from outside Dorset, since Weir records a parallel incident, when the East Retford (Notts) church band inadvertently played a polka rather than a hymn after drinking hot toddy.<sup>114</sup> No supporting reference is



adduced and, given the extreme similarity to Hardy's story and the fact that west gallery bands did not play hymns, the anecdote must be regarded with some suspicion. Even so, Court reports a similar situation in that it was the practice of the Leighland (Somerset) church band to repair to a nearby alehouse during sermons, returning when prompted by a boy on watch in the church.<sup>115</sup>

Given his family's background as west gallery musicians, it is possible that Hardy heard the story as a traditional narrative and later worked it into a local setting, as he probably did with the Devil motif in "The Paphian Ball".<sup>116</sup> Alternatively, and more profitably, the story should not be regarded as a single instance of traditional culture but as a fictional construction which embodies a number of elements of genuine tradition. In this respect, there are three interrelated elements which inform on west gallery band practice. These are as follows;

- West gallery bands also served as village dance bands, with the possibility of unfortunate consequences.
- West gallery bands, while taking part in church services, were divorced from the religious proceedings.
- These two attributes were used by clergymen as a justification for the discontinuance of west gallery music in churches.

All of these aspects of the bands will be examined in chapter 5, where appropriate references will be used to illustrate the three statements. Briefly, the duality of function is confirmed by the contents of the Hardy family music books, the detachment of the bands may be illustrated by Grandfather Hardy's writing out his music during the sermons and the actions of clergymen by examples from beyond Dorset. Therefore, "Absent-Mindedness" may be seen as conveying valuable information on the social context of a traditional activity and, as such, it is arguably of greater value than a description which simply lists tunes or reproduces the words of carols. References of the latter kind are not difficult to find, whereas accounts of contemporary social attitudes are much less accessible. Within this story, and similarly folklore-based stories, such as "Old Andrey's Experiences as a Musician" and "The Superstitious Man's Story", Hardy may be exonerated from the charge of fabricating tradition.

Two other short stories should also be mentioned as instances where the veracity of Hardy's use of tradition might reasonably be questioned. The first is "The Duke's Reappearance", in which a stranger, implied to be the Duke of Monmouth, visits a Dorset household after the Battle of Sedgemoor in 1685.<sup>117</sup> The story is styled "A Family Tradition" and Hardy uses the real names of his ancestors, on his mother's side, for the protagonists. Although it has every appearance of verisimilitude, the story is a fictional extension of the actual events, as Hardy admits in his biography, published some thirty years after the story's publication.

Another tradition, of more doubtful authenticity, is that to which "The Duke's Reappearance" approximates. Certainly a mysterious stranger did come to Swetman after the battle, but it was generally understood that he was one of Monmouth's defeated officers.<sup>118</sup>

The difference between this story and those of the "Absent-Mindedness" type is that, in the latter, Hardy does not claim any traditional basis, whereas in the former he styles the story "a tradition". On the other hand, the story undoubtedly is a tradition, albeit one which has been modified, and Hardy makes no secret of this in his autobiography. Once again, any suggestion that he is attempting to mislead his readers may be rejected. At the same time, consideration of this story's background illustrates the importance of exploring all of Hardy's non-fictional writings, not merely his fiction, in assessing the value of his contribution to the study of traditional culture.

The final short story for consideration, "A Tradition of Eighteen Hundred and Four", written in 1882, represents the only instance in which Hardy seems to be less than honest in his approach to a tradition. The controversy surrounding this work also illustrates the need to understand Hardy, the man, in order to interpret his writings.

In the story, the narrator describes how an old man, Solomon Selby, recalled to him an occasion during his childhood, when he had seen Napoleon Bonaparte land on an exploratory mission to "the three quartered cove".<sup>119</sup> This setting may easily be identified as Lulworth Cove. The story is also included, in slightly modified form, in "Wessex Scenes from *The Dynasts*".<sup>120</sup> Although the story has every appearance of a traditional narrative, it is entirely fictional, having been set originally in Sussex and entitled, more accurately, "A Legend of Eighteen Hundred and Four". The South Dorset setting was substituted in 1894 when the story was collected in *Life's Little Ironies*.<sup>121</sup>

Unlike "The Duke's Reappearance", in which Hardy extends a real tradition to form a fictional narrative, "A Tradition" is a fictional narrative written to resemble a traditional one. In this respect, it resembles "Absent-Mindedness in a Parish Choir". Hardy makes no claims for the veracity of the events which he describes and Brady suggests that the story abounds in clues which indicate that it is not intended to be taken seriously.<sup>122</sup> In 1912, the story was republished, this time in *Wessex Tales*, but the question as to its authenticity was not resolved until 1919 when *Wessex Tales* was republished since, in the preface to the later edition, Hardy acknowledges that the story is fictional.<sup>123</sup> Therefore, as a fictional narrative it has no direct interest for the folklorist. Instead, the folkloric value of the story comes from its possible link to an actual tradition. The existence of such a link is also revealed by Hardy in his *Wessex Tales* preface.

The incident of Napoleon's visit to the English coast by night, with a view to discovering a convenient spot for landing his army was an invention of the author's on which he had some doubts because of its improbability. This was in 1882, when it was first published. Great was his surprise several years later to be told that it was a real tradition. How far this is true he is unaware.<sup>124</sup>

In two further comments on the genesis of this work, again written in 1919, Hardy, while still making no claim for the truthfulness of his published story, further acknowledges that he had misled his readers regarding the independent tradition.



Being struck with the extreme improbability of such a story he [Hardy] added a circumstantial framework describing it as an old tradition to blind the reader to the hoax.<sup>125</sup>

It may be that my having, with the licence of a storyteller to tell lies, pretended there was such an account in being, led people to think there was. Of course, I did it to give verisimilitude to the story.<sup>126</sup>

In recent years, “A Tradition” has attracted increasing critical attention and King expresses the general acceptance that Hardy invented the “real tradition” to restore credence to the story, which had been criticised for its unreality;

... a close look at the various stories, authorised and critical, surrounding “A Tradition of Eighteen Hundred and Four” demonstrates that we can no longer accept at face value Hardy’s story of having somehow stumbled upon (or invented) a “real local tradition”<sup>127</sup>

It is hard to escape the conclusion that Hardy the storyteller is engaging here in an imaginative working-up of his meta-tradition, a process of lending fictitious exactitude to a fictive account.<sup>128</sup>

This would explain why the author is so ready to acknowledge the implausibility of his story, while insisting on a traditional counterpart which shows that it is realistic after all, a typical piece of Hardy’s self-justification. Ray concurs with the view that Hardy’s retrospective confession of having misled his readers is disingenuous.

So, Hardy proves himself correct on all counts: he was correct to believe that Napoleon never landed, but he was also correct (albeit accidentally) to imply that a tradition that he had done so existed.<sup>129</sup>

Although these arguments seem to confirm that Hardy intended to mislead his readers, not as to the veracity of his original story, but as to the existence of an independent traditional version, there is further evidence on this question which has not been addressed by previous writers.

Healey, in a 1992 article, goes to some length, as others have tried to do before him, to prove that Napoleon could not possibly have landed at Lulworth Cove in 1804.<sup>130</sup> This is, of course, to completely miss the point. In the case of a folk tradition, the question is not whether an event actually happened, but whether people believe that it could have happened. Given the state of anxiety, bordering on panic, which existed along the Dorset coast at this stage of the Napoleonic Wars, as described by Hardy in *TM*, the idea that the French were preparing to land at Lulworth Cove would have been only too credible. Indeed, the French would have been remiss had they not investigated this potentially convenient landing place and, in his story, Hardy enumerates good reasons for such a choice. Had such a reconnaissance actually taken place, as it may well have done, the presence of French officers could easily have been magnified locally to an erroneous sighting of Bonaparte himself. Therefore Hardy’s short story, although fictional, would be entirely credible as a local tradition, without the necessity for the invention of an independent local version of the same events.

Most importantly, a local tradition regarding a landing by Napoleon does seem to have existed. It appeared, almost simultaneously in a collection of West Lulworth stories<sup>131</sup> and, in summary form, in Dacombe’s collection of 1935.<sup>132</sup> Each account stems from an

unnamed member of the West Lulworth Women's Institute. In this local version of the story, a farmer's wife is searching for her husband, who is late in returning from a smuggling expedition, when she sees Napoleon and a French officer at Lulworth Cove. The author states "The lady was born in 1794 and lived to be 104, and was alive when I first heard the story." This suggests that the author heard the story before 1898, but waited over thirty-five years before revealing it.

In fact, as is often the case in published accounts of traditional culture, there has been a recycling of a previous account, since the story was published, in identical form, in a local newspaper of 1909.<sup>133</sup> This date is a more credible one in terms of its separation from the date of death of the original teller and it takes the story well within Hardy's lifetime. Since the newspaper, in turn, drew upon an unspecified issue of *The Naval Gazette*, the story is probably of even earlier date. It has a number of features (which will not be discussed here) which give rise to suspicion as to its authenticity and there must be a possibility that it was inspired by Hardy's "A Tradition" at some time after that story's publication in 1882. Nevertheless, as already stated, it is the local acceptance of a story, not its authenticity, which defines it as traditional.

The existence of the second account of the Napoleonic landing legend further confuses the relationship between Hardy's version of the story and local tradition. This confusion could only be resolved through knowledge of the date at which the independent Lulworth tradition appeared and the extent to which Hardy was, if at all, aware of it. Even then, it would be necessary to assess the value of "A Tradition" by balancing Hardy's habitual reliability against his ever-present desire to out-manoeuvre his critics. In the absence of a resolution to this problem, the mystery surrounding "A Tradition" does give a further pointer as to Hardy's qualities as an interpreter of traditional material. On the one hand, his short story is so close to tradition that he may have unwittingly replicated an existing piece of traditional narrative. On the other, it is so close to tradition that he may, instead, have inspired a new local piece of traditional narrative. In either event, the judgement on his value as a source is clear.

## CONCLUSIONS

From the preceding discussion, there is every reason to accept Hardy's assurance that the traditional culture in his fiction is drawn from genuine examples and verified by him. His own position as a tradition bearer is unassailable and it has proved possible both to identify his secondary sources and to trace some of his descriptions back to them. Comparison of his material with other accounts of Dorset folklore similarly confirms his accuracy. Such reservations as exist may largely be eliminated by excluding the supernatural poetry from consideration, which leaves only a few instances of dubious traditional narrative, which Hardy does not seem to have expected his readers to take at face value. Some allowance must be made for transposition to fictional locations and for incomplete or occasionally selective accounts but this does not unduly detract from the value of Hardy's testimony. When the substantial additional materials from his non-fictional writings are added to those in his novels, short stories, verse and drama, there is a vast resource to be explored, as



already indicated in chapter 2. Chapter 4 now goes on to review the nature and value of this resource.

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33. "Preface to *Wessex Tales*" (1898), *PW*, p. 22.
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70. *UGT*, p. 52.
71. "TH Piddletown"
72. Udal, 1922.
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74. *TD*, p. 210.
75. *PN*, p. 24.
76. See, for example, *UGT*, pp. 36-37; *W*, pp. 164-165.
77. *LW*, p. 99. This is an interesting reference, since it shows that, in the mid-nineteenth century, home cider making was carried out in the Dorchester area. This is well away from the north and west of the county, to where this activity is now confined.
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79. "No Bellingring", *CP*, pp. 911-912; *RN*, p. 159; *DR*, p. 235.
80. Udal, 1922.
81. "Burning the Holly", *CP*, pp. 889-891.
82. Udal (1922), p. 260.
83. Udal (1922), p. 20.
84. "Interlopers at the Knap", *CSS*, pp. 125-152 (p. 141).
85. Udal (1922), p. 246.
86. "A Few Crusted Characters", *CSS*, pp. 511-566 (p. 532).
87. Udal (1922), p. 182.
88. *DR*, pp. 114-115.
89. Udal (1922), p. 181.
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118. *LW*, p. 129.
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## AN OVERVIEW OF HARDY'S VALUE AS A SOURCE FOR THE STUDY OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE

### INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to demonstrate and explore the contribution of Hardy and his writings to a study of traditional culture in Dorset. As indicated in the concluding section of chapter 1, a detailed study of a single genre would be too restricted to adequately demonstrate the full value of Hardy as a source. On the other hand, an extended commentary on all the aspects of traditional culture of which he wrote would result in a very lengthy study which did not do full justice to the more interesting and valuable aspects of his testimony. Therefore the approach adopted here is to identify three areas of traditional culture for which Hardy provides extensive information, which may be compared with that from external sources, and to make these the subjects of detailed individual studies. The areas chosen are west gallery bands, the mummers' play, and witchcraft and they are considered in chapters 5, 6 and 7 respectively. These individual studies are followed, in chapter 8, by a number of shorter accounts of individual elements of tradition, which are drawn from across the whole range of genres.

Prior to these detailed studies, in order to illustrate the full range of traditional culture represented by Hardy, the current chapter will consider in outline how his writings may inform a study of each of the six categories within the index in chapter 2. The aim will be to illustrate the extent of Hardy's coverage, to briefly review accounts of the same areas by other sources and, where appropriate, to suggest avenues for future research.

### TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE

#### Hardy's Knowledge of Dialect

Hardy's fiction and verse have attracted the attention of students of language, due to his knowledge of dialect and also to the interest which he so clearly displays in this subject.

Although he was a student of our dialect, he never used it in conversation, but he could interpret the remarks of old crusted characters and could understand the leisurely conversations of transters, maltsters and farm hands quite easily.<sup>1</sup>

Although no recording of Hardy's voice exists, those who met him do not mention any trace of local accent, still less dialect, in his speech, while Hardy, predictably, distanced himself from the use of dialect.

I did not speak it. I knew it, but it was not spoken at home. My mother only used it when speaking to the cottagers, and my father when speaking to his workmen.<sup>2</sup>

This stance of detached observer is typical of Hardy and is reflected in his attitude to other aspects of traditional culture but, in fact, his knowledge of dialect was much more direct

than he chose to admit. Although he claims that his parents spoke dialect only to the cottagers and workmen, it is highly unlikely that his father; a small builder and the son of an itinerant mason; or his mother, a former domestic servant, would not have spoken some dialect to one another. This view is supported by a letter from Hardy to his sister Mary after a visit to London with their father in 1902, when he reports his father as saying “she zid a lot of others [be gone on afore?]”<sup>2</sup> Similarly Nathaniel Sparks, the son of Hardy’s cousin, recalled Jemima Hardy, the writer’s mother, speaking of Emma Hardy in a broad Dorset accent as “a thing of a ’ooman”, insisting that “she were wrong for I”.<sup>4</sup> Hardy’s brother Henry is said to have “spoken Dorset all his life” and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Hardy grew up in a dialect-speaking family, but eliminated dialect from his own speech through conscious effort.<sup>5</sup>

This first-hand knowledge would appear to qualify Hardy as an important source for the study of Dorset dialect, but the policy which he adopts towards dialect in his work places some restrictions on his value in this respect.

### Hardy’s Policy on the Use of Dialect

Before considering the extent to which traditional language figures in his work, it is necessary to consider how Hardy chooses to represent such language. His policy towards dialect in verse is set out in his preface to his first collection of poetry.

Wherever an ancient and legitimate word of the district, for which there was no equivalent in received English, suggested itself as the most natural, nearest, and often only expression of a thought, it has been made use of, on what seemed good grounds.<sup>6</sup>

This sparing use of traditional language may be contrasted with the writings of William Barnes, whose poems in the Dorset dialect enjoyed considerable popularity in Dorset, but not beyond it, when Hardy was a young man. Although he knew Barnes well and admired his work, Hardy chose not to emulate “The Dorset Poet”. This is partly, Millgate suggests, to escape any sense of being under Barnes’s shadow, and partly to avoid the eccentricity and obscurity inevitably associated with dialect forms.<sup>7</sup> Hardy’s own reference to this subject, in his preface to an edition of Barnes’s verse, confirms the latter aspect of Millgate’s suggestion:

It may appear strange to some, as it did to friends in his life-time that a man of insight who had the spirit of poesy in him should have persisted year after year in writing in a fast-perishing language.<sup>8</sup>

Hardy’s use of dialect words and expressions in prose is governed by considerations which are similar to those for his verse and again he is ready to explain and defend his principle.

The rule of scrupulously preserving the local idiom, together with the words which have no synonym among those in general use, while printing in the ordinary way most of those local expressions which are but a modified articulation of words in use elsewhere, is the rule I usually follow; and it is, I believe, generally recognised as the best, where every such rule must of necessity be a compromise, more or less unsatisfactory to lovers of form.<sup>9</sup>

Thus Hardy achieves what Millgate calls “an unmistakably rural speech that avoids mere quaintness and dialectal eccentricity while achieving distinctiveness through a reassuring



sufficiency of localisms”<sup>10</sup> This is successful from the point of view of the writer and enjoyable for his readers but would seem, on the face of it, to limit the value of Hardy’s work as a source for the study of Dorset dialect.

### Hardy’s References to Dialect

Although Hardy’s policy avoids the direct rendition of dialect, it also results in the inclusion within his published work of very many dialect words and expressions. Therefore section 1 of the index in chapter 2 could be populated by some hundreds of examples. Nevertheless, since this is not a study of dialect as such and since other writers, as instanced below, have already explored his contribution to dialectology and philology, the index does not list all the dialect words and expressions found in Hardy’s writings. Instead the entries are restricted to those categories of language specifically listed in the Sheffield classification, such as animal, plant and place names. More interesting, and largely unrecorded elsewhere, are the attitudes of both users and non-users towards dialect and those instances recorded by Hardy are included in section 1.1 of the index.

### Studies of Hardy’s Use of Dialect

Even in Hardy’s lifetime, books began to appear which described “Wessex” and purported to identify those locations which featured in the author’s fiction. These guides could also include references to dialect words and expressions but without any attempt at analysis, the earliest of such being Sherren’s glossary of 1908<sup>11</sup> which Hardy describes as “faulty”.<sup>12</sup> It was not until the second half of the twentieth century that serious studies began to appear, the first such being by Gilcreast in 1956.<sup>13</sup> This is a short examination, based on the novels only and with a very limited bibliography. Gilcreast acknowledges that Hardy did not write in dialect as such, but believes that authentic dialect can be reconstructed from the clues in his writing.

The fullest and most systematic study of the subject is Baugner’s 1972 thesis, which sets out to determine the extent to which Hardy can be said to give a faithful representation of Dorset dialect in the light of research on dialect in the south west of England.<sup>14</sup> Whereas Gilcreast is inhibited in her study by a shortage of works on Dorset dialect, Baugner is able to draw on the *Survey of English Dialects* for her comparisons. She reaches the opposite conclusion to Gilcreast (whom she does not cite) in asserting that Hardy makes sparing use of spellings indicative of dialectal pronunciation. She then goes on to consider his attitude to and use of dialect and, without access to Hardy’s personal writings, comes to conclusions which reflect Hardy’s stated policy as quoted above. The remainder of her thesis is devoted to a seemingly exhaustive study of phonology and vocabulary from which she concludes “it seems justifiable to accept Hardy as a trustworthy source of information as regards the dialect vocabulary of his native county”. This conclusion seems to have satisfied subsequent writers on the subject, none of whom has questioned the status of the dialect words and expressions in Hardy’s work.

Moving on to the 1980s, Elliott devotes one chapter of his study of Hardy’s English to the use of dialect.<sup>15</sup> He comments on the author’s policy for its use and points out that Hardy indicates “Wessex” dialect, not just Dorset, although he arguably also distinguishes

between dialect variants within Dorset. Elliott then goes on to illustrate the use of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation, leaning heavily on Baugner's earlier work. Chapman's approach, again in a single chapter within an overall study of Hardy's use of language, is similar although he gives more attention to the allocation of dialect features to Hardy's fictional characters according to their social position and the context in which they appear.<sup>16</sup>

The 1980s also saw the beginning of an awakening of interest in Hardy's short stories and Smith's article from this period investigates the dialect content of the shorter fiction. His conclusions are similar to those of Elliott and Chapman while producing some less familiar examples of characterisation by dialect use.<sup>17</sup>

A different aspect is explored by Taylor who, in an extensive investigation of Hardy's contribution to philology, returns several times to his part in the provision of dialect items for both *The Oxford English Dictionary* and *The English Dialect Dictionary*.<sup>18</sup> This writer produces new evidence of Hardy's interest in and knowledge of dialect, such as his copy of Barnes's *Glossary of the Dorset Dialect* with his hand-written additions, his correspondence with Joseph Wright and his annotations on dialect in his copies of Shakespeare and other authors. The annotation of Barnes's glossary, in particular, endorses Hardy's depth of knowledge of the subject. Taylor's useful appendix lists the dialect words supplied by Hardy for both of the dictionaries mentioned and identifies those for which he is the only source. In this context it should be mentioned that, in the course of her study, Baugner reviews that proportion of Dorset words (about ten percent) which are included in Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary* on the strength of Hardy's use alone. She is able to corroborate the validity of Hardy's use in a number of cases by demonstrating the subsequent collection of the relevant words in Dorset or Somerset.

The contributions of these writers provide a comprehensive account of Hardy's value as a source. Given this wide coverage it may be asked whether anything further might usefully be said in an overview of the present kind. In fact there is one aspect of Hardy's use of dialect representation which warrants a few words more, particularly since it is consistent with his treatment of other areas of traditional culture within his work.

### The Value of Hardy's Writings as a Source

For dialect, as for other aspects of traditional culture, Hardy provides what other writers, and the folklorists of his time, largely fail to provide, namely context. In particular he shows how dialect was regarded by users and by non-users, proving himself, in this respect, a precursor of the use of qualitative dialectology.

Several writers on Hardy's English comment on the way in which he indicates the social position of characters in his fiction by their use, or non-use, of dialect. This feature is readily apparent to the reader of the major novels; hence Granfer Cantle (*RN*), Joseph Poorgrass (*FMC*) and Robert Creedle (*W*), are comic rustic characters, all of whom are indicated as dialect speakers. Other characters who, from their background, might reasonably be expected to speak dialect, do not do so, since they are serious characters and



central to the action of the novels. Examples here include Diggory Venn (*RN*), Gabriel Oak (*FMC*) and Giles Winterbourne (*W*). Even so, Chapman points out that Oak partly reverts to dialect in conditions of stress.<sup>19</sup> Tess Durbeyfield, on the other hand, although a central character, does speak some dialect but is essentially bilingual (as, one suspects, was Hardy in his youth).

Mrs. Durbeyfield habitually spoke the dialect; her daughter, who had passed the Sixth Standard in the National School under a London-trained mistress, spoke two languages; the dialect at home, more or less; ordinary English abroad and to persons of quality.<sup>20</sup>

Hardy's use of dialect speech as a social delineator was sufficiently central to his way of working to lead him, when he revised his work, to change his characters' mode of speech to alter their interrelationships. For instance, Ray shows, how, in "The Distracted Preacher", the heroine, Lizzy, speaks standard English with occasional colloquialisms, thus placing her in a position intermediate between her suitor Stockdale (a Methodist preacher) and her fellow smugglers. When Hardy revised the story, first published in the USA, for British publication, in *New Quarterly Magazine*, he substantially increased the dialect content of her most important speech in order to emphasise her social separation from Stockdale. When he revised the story again, for inclusion in *Wessex Tales* he systematically reduced Lizzy's dialect use to restore his original concept of her as sufficiently genteel to be a suitable match for Stockdale.<sup>21</sup>

Through such characterisation, Hardy tells the folklorist that, in rural Dorset at the time of which he wrote, the use of dialect was associated with people like Cattle and Poorgrass; while Venn, Oak and others of artisan class chose not to use it. Dialect was being abandoned by the more intelligent and forward-looking members of the working class. This is not an unexpected conclusion, but no-one else has demonstrated that this was the case, since the only systematic study of Dorset dialect, by Widén in the 1940s, is based on selected dialect speakers with no attempt to put the use of dialect in context.<sup>22</sup> It would be impossible now to carry out any research to verify the social context of dialect use in the 1840s and, without the testimony of Hardy, the knowledge of this aspect of the subject would have been lost. Even so, there has been no full and systematic examination of this aspect of Hardy's use of dialect and such a study would be useful in extending and confirming the argument outlined here.

In addition to his routine association of dialect with backward-looking characters, Hardy gives several examples of the hostility with which dialect use was viewed by those who sought to escape from their humble origins. Section 1.1 of the chapter 2 index lists several such instances; by Ann Garland (*TM*), Mrs. Dewey (*UGT*), Randolph Twycott ("The Son's Veto") and, most fully, in *MC*. by Michael Henchard, whose reaction to his (supposed) daughter's use of a dialect word is violent.

"Bide where you be," he echoed sharply. "Good God, are you only fit to carry wash to a pig-trough, that ye use such words as these?"

...in time it came to pass that for "fay" she said "succeed"; that she no longer spoke of "dumbledores" but of "humble bees"; no longer said of young men and women that they "walked together," but that they were "engaged"; that she grew to talk of "greggles" as "wild hyacinths"; that when she had not slept she did not

quaintly tell the servants next morning that she had been “hag-rid,” but that she had “suffered from indigestion.”<sup>23</sup>

This rejection of Dorset speech was probably shared by outsiders, as evinced by Sergeant-Major Clark in “Enter a Dragoon” who “not being of local extraction, despised the venerable local language”.<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand the attitude of Dorset people to modes of speech which differed from their own could be positive, as shown by the reaction to the accent of the returning Amelia, the “Ruined Maid”.

“At home in the barton you said “thee” and “thou”,  
And “thik oon” and theās oon” and “t’other”; but now  
Your talking quite fits ‘ee for high compa-ny!” –  
“Some polish is gained with one’s ruin,” said she.<sup>25</sup>

It may be assumed that Amelia’s new career as a lady of pleasure has led to her adoption of a London accent. The preference of some Dorset villagers for this mode of speech is also shown by Car’line Aspent in “The Fiddler of the Reels”

To return to where she had once been despised, a smiling London wife with a distinct London accent, was a triumph which the world did not witness every day.<sup>26</sup>

It is also noticeable that Hardy usually associates dialect speech with older characters and shows a reduction in dialect use over generations, as in the cases of Reuben and Dick Dewey in *UGT* and Mrs. Durbeyfield and Tess in *TD*. Hardy shows then that dialect use in nineteenth century Dorset, far from being simply a preserve of the rural working class, was a more complex matter, involving age, education and social mobility. Dialect use was certainly in decline but the pattern of that decline was complex and a fuller study of Hardy’s observations would be of value in determining that pattern.

It should be said that Baugner, and the other writers on Hardy’s language, largely choose to pass over, or had no access to, Hardy’s personal writings, such as letters, notebooks and biography. Future dialect studies might take into account these sources, rather than merely the verse and fiction, and could thus establish a fuller picture of Hardy’s contribution to the subject.

## CHILDLORE

Hardy writes very little of children and therefore his work is of very limited value as a source of childlore. Of the examples given in section 2 of the index, about half occur outside his published work and most of these are in one letter. The majority of the references are to children’s games, either personally recalled by the author, or mentioned in passing in his novels. Only the games of cat-and-mice and lords and ladies are described.

The belief, mentioned in *RN*, that the reddleman carries children away in his bag is an instance of the use of a frightening figure to control children’s behaviour.<sup>27</sup> In this context,



Hardy's comments on the temporary substitution of Napoleon Bonaparte for the reddleman is an interesting Dorset variation, stemming from the local invasion scare of the early nineteenth century.<sup>28</sup>

The references to children's games in Hardy's published work precede Udal's 1889 study of such games in Dorset,<sup>29</sup> which subsequently formed the basis of a long chapter in *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore*.<sup>30</sup> There has been no systematic study of children's games in Dorset since that of Udal, although references to individual games may be found in local histories and recollections. Hardy did not comment on Udal's collection when it appeared, although all but two of his own examples may also be found there, but a later study, by Pentin on children's rhymes, in 1918<sup>31</sup>, moved him to report some further examples from his own memory.<sup>32</sup> Of the games mentioned by Hardy, but not listed by Udal, prisoner's base is described by the Opies,<sup>33</sup> while ducks-off or cobb-on is presumably a game recorded under a different name outside the county.

## CUSTOM AND BELIEF

### Custom

Customs, both calendric and social, appear in profusion throughout Hardy's fiction and, to a lesser extent, in his verse, serving as part of his Wessex background in each case. Their appearances are governed by the requirements of plot or context and this leads to an unevenness of treatment. For instance, Hardy writes of three calendric fairs, all in *FMC*. *Shottsford* Fair is mentioned, in passing, as Gabriel Oak's destination when heading towards *Weatherbury*, while *Casterbridge* Fair is described in greater detail since it is instrumental in Oak's transformation from bailiff to shepherd. Finally, *Greenhill* Fair is described at still greater length, in view of its importance to the book's plot as the scene of Sergeant Troy's return. This is understandable in a literary context but unsatisfactory to the folklorist who may be seeking to obtain the maximum of information on nineteenth century hiring fairs from Hardy's writings.

Even in his non-fictional writings, Hardy's references to custom are not presented on a consistent basis. In his letters, for example, he only responds to enquiries on specific customs raised by his correspondents, while in his autobiography and notebooks his entries on custom appear sporadically and seemingly only as they come to mind in other contexts. Therefore, although Hardy's writings are a rewarding source for the study of Dorset custom, they do not represent a coherent or consistent body of information which may be analysed and discussed as may, for instance, Rawlence's early twentieth century papers on North Dorset folklore.<sup>34</sup>

In this study, the more important examples of custom are addressed separately in later chapters. The Christmas custom in which carol singers perambulated the parish is examined as part of the study of west gallery bands in chapter 5 and another house-visiting custom, the mummers' play, is considered at length as an individual topic in chapter 6. Some other important calendar customs are considered, in less detail, in chapter 8, namely shroving,

wassailing, Midsummer Eve divination, harvest suppers and November the Fifth celebrations.

Of the remaining instances of calendar custom there is less to be said. From the examples in the chapter 2 index, it seems that the old style calendar was employed for the observance of customs to a greater extent than indicated by Udal in *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore*. Similarly, from the context of Hardy's examples, it is clear that fairs and saints' days were more important as seasonal indicators in his youth than in later years. The Christmas customs are those which are well known elsewhere, with the exception of his father's recollection of the visit of the hobby horse to West Stafford, although this parallels the visits of hobby bulls at Shillingstone, Dorset and in other western counties. Club walking is mentioned several times, without materially adding to existing knowledge of the subject, while the incident of the valentine in *FMC* gives some indication of the seriousness with which the sending of valentines could be regarded in the mid-nineteenth century. The description of the sheepshearing supper, also in *FMC*, including the seating arrangements illustrated by Allingham (no. 1 in the appendix of illustrations to this study), and that of the harvest supper, recalled by Hardy from his youth, are useful complements to the somewhat sparse information obtainable elsewhere on events of this kind in Dorset.

The two major examinations of calendar customs in Dorset, by Udal in *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore* and by the present writer were outlined in chapter 1. Neither writer cites Hardy as a primary source, although each mentions some of his examples to complement those from the literature or from field collection. Given the establishment, in this study, of Hardy's credentials as a source, and the revelation of the extent of his relevant references, the time is ripe for an enhancement of the already substantial corpus of information on Dorset calendar customs by the incorporation of his material.

Most of the rites of passage mentioned in Hardy's work are familiar, such as throwing a slipper after the bride and telling the bees, while the Stinsford funeral customs seem to be local variants of customs known elsewhere. The Portland courtship practice merits closer examination and will be considered separately in chapter 8. The description of wife-selling in *MC* is not drawn from local tradition, since Hardy based it on a number of newspaper accounts which he researched for the purpose of the novel.<sup>35</sup> This is not to say that his description is an unreliable source of information on the custom, but it does not necessarily reflect Dorset practice.<sup>36</sup>

Rites of passage, together with social and other forms of custom have fared less well in terms of scholarly attention since, apart from Udal's examples and some references to individual customs in local histories and reminiscences, there has been no investigation of the field. The present writer's recent short account of Dorset customs gives a brief overview but a systematic analysis must continue to be awaited.<sup>37</sup>

The various references in Hardy's work to household and social customs give an interesting insight into domestic life in the Stinsford area in the mid-nineteenth century and the more important, namely skimmity riding and divination by Bible and key, will also be considered



further in chapter 8. The references to adult games complement those in later descriptions, such as that by Rawlence.<sup>38</sup>

As already stated, one of the valuable aspects of Hardy's writings, from the viewpoint of the folklorist, is the way in which he illustrates the social context of traditions and the attitudes of performers and audiences towards them. In the case of custom, this value is somewhat reduced by his staunch espousal of the "primitive survival" or "ritual origins" theory of folklore, prevalent when he wrote in the second half of the nineteenth century and still firmly established when Firor reviewed Hardy's folklore writings in 1931. This stance is reflected in the description in *RN* of the mummers and their audience, which will be considered in chapter 6. It also figures in some other references to calendar custom, where the performers are seen as unthinking tradition bearers and the audience as calmly playing their part in a fixed ritual. This picture is inconsistent with the modern view of customs as dynamic and purposeful events and must be taken as an instance of Hardy's scholarly inclinations outweighing his personal experience.

### Superstition and Belief

The index in chapter 2 lists, in sections 3.4 to 3.10, very many references to superstition and belief, often taken from Hardy's personal writings rather than his fiction. These examples cover a wide spectrum of belief but are not usually described in any detail by the author, unless they are either important to his literary purpose or possess a particular interest for him. The outstanding example in the latter category is that of witchcraft and Hardy's writings on the subject are considered in detail in chapter 7.

Some of Hardy's references to superstition parallel those reported from Dorset by Udal or other writers, whilst others are well known outside the county, but have not previously been reported from within it. Examples of the latter include the indication of a forthcoming letter by a spark in a candle flame, the portending of bad news by ringing in the ear and the luck supposedly contained in a hangman's rope.

In terms of Hardy's value as a source, a more interesting category of superstition is that for which his descriptions differ from those from elsewhere. Hence Hardy indicates in *PBE* that the gift of a lock of hair is unlucky<sup>39</sup>, while Udal states that it is a "a much prized love token".<sup>40</sup> Again, there is the discrepancy, already highlighted in chapter 3, between Hardy's reference to burning Christmas holly as a Twelfth Night custom<sup>41</sup> and Udal's statement that the practice is deemed unlucky.<sup>42</sup> In both these, and in similar instances, it may be judged that the nature of a superstition could vary even within the relatively small geographical area of a medium-sized county.

Finally there are many examples of beliefs, recorded by Hardy as occurring in Dorset, but which do not seem to have been recorded by any other writer either in the county or elsewhere. It is not proposed to carry out a detailed analysis of all of such beliefs here, but the following notes identify some of the more interesting.

The preponderance of death omens in section 3.4 of the index is not necessarily attributable to Hardy's supposedly morbid nature, since a similar imbalance is displayed by Udal and, no doubt, reflects the actual state of affairs amongst local communities. The striking of a broken clock, the trotting dogs and the wearing of "crape-scarves" by flies do not seem to have been recorded elsewhere. A well-known superstition, namely the supposed ability of dogs to foretell death, is illustrated by an anecdote concerning Hardy's notoriously unpopular dog Wessex, who, unusually, showed a partiality towards one of the author's friends. William Watkins, the honorary secretary to the Society of Dorset Men in London, visited Hardy at Max Gate on 18 April 1925.

The dog, as was his wont, rushed into the hall and greeted his friend with vociferous barks. Suddenly these gave way to a piteous whine, and the change was so startling that Wessex's mistress went to see what had happened.

Nothing, however, seemed amiss and the dog returned into the room where Hardy was sitting and where he was joined by Mr. Watkins. But even here Wessex seemed ill at ease, and from time to time went to the visitor and touched his coat solicitously with his paw, which he always withdrew giving a sharp cry of distress.

On the following morning, Hardy received a telephone message that Watkins had died about one hour after his return to his hotel.<sup>43</sup>

Fairy beliefs have seldom been recorded from southern England in the late nineteenth century so that Hardy's occasional references to the subject are of some value. Twice he refers to the survival of belief in the remotest and most backward part of the county and he is probably drawing on the recollections of William Barnes, who grew up in North Dorset.

It was the heavy clay land of the Blackmoor Vale, and a part of the Vale to which turnpike-roads had never penetrated. Superstitions linger longer on these heavy soils. ...

The harts that had been hunted here, the witches that had been pricked and ducked, the green-spangled fairies that "whickered" at you as you passed; - the place teemed with beliefs in them still, and they formed an impish multitude now.<sup>44</sup>

When I flew to Blackmoor Vale,  
Whence the green-gowned fairies hail<sup>46</sup>

Elsewhere in Hardy's work, some traditional characteristics of fairies are briefly mentioned. Hence pixies are believed to lead travellers astray on Egdon Heath<sup>46</sup>, as does the jack o' lantern elsewhere.<sup>47</sup> A more beneficial aspect of fairy behaviour is recalled in *HE*, where children believe that fairies mend their clothes if they are left out overnight.<sup>48</sup>

According to Millgate, Hardy was aware of the local belief that Rushy Pond, near his home at Stinsford was dug by fairies but, in a letter to Rider Haggard, Hardy laments the disappearance of such beliefs in his locality.

For example, if you ask one of the workfolk (they always used to be called "workfolk" hereabout - "labourers" is an imported word) the names of surrounding hills, streams, the character and circumstances of people buried in particular graves; at what spots parish personages lie interred; questions on local fairies, ghosts, herbs &c, they can give no answer: yet I can recollect the time when the places of burial even of the poor and tombless were all remembered, and the history of the parish and squire's family for 150 years back



known. Such and such ballads appertained to such and such a locality, ghost tales were attached to particular sites, and nooks wherein wild herbs grew for the cure of divers maladies were pointed out readily.<sup>49</sup>

In fact, the suggestion that local folklore disappeared entirely in a generation (due, in Hardy's opinion to the mobility of labour), while popular among Victorian folklorists, can be shown to be incorrect by the volume of material collected long after this period. Indeed Hardy's own references to ghost belief, to be discussed in chapter 8, show the persistence of this element of superstition. Nevertheless the above passage may be taken to indicate a marked decline in traditional beliefs, of which that in fairies is likely to have been the least tenacious.

Several weather portents, recorded by Hardy, do not appear in the national or Dorset collections and may be taken as local variants. For example, some are localised on Rainbarrow, a tumulus at the rear of Hardy's birthplace, but are of a type common to any locality. In them, rain is indicated by hearing the cows in the Frome Valley below and by seeing the lantern shining brightly at Max tumpike gate in Dorchester. Both circumstances presumably indicate clear air.

A belief relating to the human body, which is probably unique to Dorset, is that of the efficacy of the toad bag in "turning the blood", as outlined in chapter 3. A Dorset belief concerning animals, namely the supposed kneeling of cattle on Christmas Eve, is examined in chapter 8.

The principal source of information on belief in Dorset is Udal's *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore*, in which more than half the chapters are wholly or partly concerned with this genre. There are also useful papers from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries respectively, by March<sup>50</sup> and Rawlence.<sup>51</sup> Further information may be derived from works on local history and tradition, of which those by Carré<sup>52</sup>, Dacombe<sup>53</sup> and Roscoe<sup>54</sup> are particularly useful. The gathering together and organisation of this data and the incorporation of the substantial corpus of material available from Hardy's writings would represent a worthwhile development in the study of this field.

## TRADITIONAL NARRATIVE

It was argued in chapter 3 that Hardy's short stories, even when set in the form of a traditional tale told by a participant, are not examples of folk narrative, although they may contain valuable information on various aspects of folklore. Even so, distributed through the novels, short stories and poems, and in Hardy's notebooks and letters, there are a few examples of folk narrative. These are listed in section 4 of the index in chapter 2.

The older literature on the subject of traditional narrative in Dorset is fragmented and limited in quantity, comprising Udal's chapter on "Local Legends and Superstitions" in *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore* (mostly superstitions and ghost stories),<sup>55</sup> some stories in Dacombe's compilation<sup>56</sup> and a few further examples in parish histories. In more recent years, some more contemporary material has appeared in Palmer's *Oral Folk Tales of Wessex* (largely Somerset based)<sup>57</sup> and Waring's short collection,<sup>58</sup> both authors having

obtained a good many of their examples at first hand. Most recently, Harte has drawn on a number of written sources to produce a well-researched collection of legends, some of which could be regarded as encapsulating folk narrative.<sup>59</sup>

Given the paucity of traditional narrative in his work and the absence of an organised and substantial body of comparable material from other Dorset sources, it would be difficult to make a valid assessment of Hardy's value in this field. Nevertheless, a few brief observations can be made.

Of the stories listed in the index as legends, only that of Joseph Poorgrass and the owl may be unequivocally identified as a traditional tale.<sup>60</sup> Joseph's naming of himself in response to the owl's call of "whoo" is a version of "owl's hoot misunderstood by lost simpleton", a motif noted in Thompson's index.<sup>61</sup> In Dorset, the story of the lost man and the owl is associated with the village of Winterborne Houghton, whose residents are still known as "Houghton Owls".<sup>62</sup> A Houghton resident claims that the story had actually originated in Ibberton, a few miles away, and that Hardy had "pinched it" while working on the restoration of Turnworth church, a few miles from Ibberton. The present writer has found no recollection of the story in Ibberton.<sup>63</sup>

As described in chapter 3, in "The Paphian Ball", a group of village musicians are transported to a fabulous ball by a mysterious stranger, only for those surroundings to disappear when they inadvertently play a hymn tune.<sup>64</sup> Although fictionalised into a local setting, this story also contains a motif, in this case "Devil disappears on hearing hymn tune".<sup>65</sup>

The story of the Devil outwitting some drunken church painters, in *JO*, has the ring of a cautionary tale of the type which originated from eighteenth century Methodist sermons, similar to those attributing diabolical origins to various standing stones in Cornwall.<sup>66</sup> The church in *JO* has been identified as being near Shinfield in Berkshire, but this is not to deny the story a Dorset origin, since Hardy's own early career as a church architect and his father's job as a mason afforded ample opportunities to pick up pieces of ecclesiastical folklore.<sup>67</sup> Similarly the poem "No Bellinging", in which a group of New Year's Eve bellringers drink the communion wine, again sounds like a traditional cautionary tale, but Hardy may have remodelled a separate local tradition in this case.<sup>68</sup> His "Facts" notebook contains a story noted by L. C. Boswell-Stone in 1895 in which the sexton of a Dorchester church and his assistant drink communion wine and are admonished by the ghost of a former rector.<sup>69</sup>

Some of the remaining stories in the index, such as those of the Cerne Giant, the White Hart of Blackmore Vale and the death of Lord Milton are clearly taken directly from local tradition and may usually be confirmed from other sources. Others, such as that on the qualities of *Casterbridge* beer and that of a landlord's weak beer are paralleled in other counties and may be Dorset versions known to Hardy. For one such story, that of the hunting parson, which appears in the short story "Andrey Satchel and the Parson and the Clerk", Hardy subsequently identifies, but does not name, a Dorset original. He then goes on to tell a further local story of this "Parson Toogood", this time involving a Bishop.



Hawkins states that the inspiration for Parson Toogood was Rev. William Butler of Frampton, but gives no evidence for this identification.<sup>70</sup> A more likely candidate is Rev. James Acland Templer, Vicar of Puddletown at the time that Hardy's father and grandfather played in that village's church band. Of him, Lady Dorothy Neville recalled:

... at heart I think he lived and loved but for one thing, which was hunting. I remember hearing that on one occasion a funeral had to be kept waiting at the church till his return from a particularly exciting chase.<sup>71</sup>

He was also said to have celebrated service with top boots and spurs "scarcely concealed by his surplice".<sup>72</sup>

## FOLK MUSIC, DANCE AND DRAMA

The index in chapter 2 divides this subject area into the four categories of tunes and dances, songs, west gallery music and traditional plays. The first two categories are considered in outline below, while the latter two will be the subjects of detailed study in chapters 5 and 6 respectively and therefore will not be considered further here.

### Tunes and Dances

Hardy's writings on music and dance are of particular value, since the author was himself a traditional musician and a member of a family of such musicians. He played for local dances as a boy and, according to his own recollection, was a dedicated and enthusiastic performer.

... and on another occasion at a homestead where he was stopped by his hostess clutching his bow-arm at the end of a three-quarter-hour's unbroken footing to his notes by twelve tireless couples in the favourite country-dance of "The New-Rigged Ship". The matron had done it lest he should "burst a bloodvessel", fearing the sustained exertion to be too much for a boy of thirteen or fourteen.<sup>73</sup>

Hardy obviously recalls this incident in his description of the boy fiddler and the anxious hostess in "The Three Strangers", another example of his drawing on personal experience when illustrating traditional culture.<sup>74</sup>

He retained a lively interest in traditional music throughout his life and was reckoned a remarkable performer on the violin, even in old age.<sup>75</sup> His writings contain references to some forty tunes; all, no doubt, drawn from his personal experience or repertoire. From the context of his writings, most of the tunes, which are listed in section 5.1 in chapter 2, were associated with dances. Some, such as "Miss M'Leod of Ayr" and "Nancy's Fancy" may plausibly be assumed to have accompanied dances, although this is not made explicit in his text. A few others are non-dance tunes such as "The Girl I Left Behind Me" (a march) and "Jockey to the Fair" (the tune of a song). A number of the tunes, such as "The Triumph" and, again, "Jockey to the Fair", both mentioned in *FMC*, may be found in the Hardy family music books. These numerous references, together with the tunes in the family music books would form an excellent starting point for an investigation into the local dance tune repertoire in the mid-nineteenth century.

It is sometimes possible to recover elements of dance notation from Hardy's descriptions, for example that of "The Triumph" as described in *UGT*.<sup>76</sup> Walker, in a recent article on the history of this dance, draws not only on the description in the novel, but also on the notation appended by Hardy in his grandfather's music book of 1800.<sup>77</sup> Walker's investigation demonstrates the consistency of Hardy's description with those of other writers and also reveals some distinct local nuances within the Dorset version. When the dramatised version of the novel (titled "The Mellstock Quire") was staged in 1918, Hardy, by then aged seventy-eight, attended the rehearsals, coached the cast in the performance of the country dances and even seized the fiddle to demonstrate the technique required of the player.<sup>78</sup> Full notations for four dances, together with tunes, were provided by Hardy for the Hardy players and are preserved amongst his surviving papers.<sup>79</sup>

As in other areas of traditional culture, Hardy gives information on the social context of dance, which would not have been recorded by most folklorists of his period. He describes how dancing took place at christenings, weddings, Christmas parties, outdoor "gypsyings", at the maypole and on other festive village occasions. The atmosphere of the dances is well described and the author does not shrink from showing the seamier side of village celebrations. Hence his hint as to the influence of dust as a sexual stimulant to female dancers in *TD*<sup>80</sup> and the fiddler's wry observations on the effects of his performances at country dances in "The Fiddler".

He twangs "Music hails from the devil,  
Though vaunted to come from heaven,  
For it makes people do at a revel  
What multiplies sins by seven".<sup>81</sup>

The description of Hardy's father, in *LW*, includes some interesting comments on the style and origin of dances.

He was good too, when young, at hornpipes and jigs, and other folk-dances, performing them with all the old movements of leg-crossing and hop, to the delight of the children, till warned by his wife that this fast perishing style might tend to teach them what it was not quite necessary they should be familiar with, the more genteel "country-dance" having superseded the former.<sup>82</sup>

These views on the distinction between folk and country dances were to lead Hardy into difficulty with some members of the English Folk Dance Society. In 1926 he uncharacteristically allowed his views on this distinction to be printed, in the Society's journal, albeit under the name of W. E. F. Macmillan. In an article on the dance "The College Hornpipe", which was described but not named in *UGT*, he again compares the two styles.

These "Country dances" were not the same as "folk-dances", though usually considered to be. They superseded and extinguished the latter a hundred to a hundred and fifty years ago, as being more "genteel", though sometimes the folk-dances were done within my memory...

... The history of the Country dance is puzzling. If it was the dance of the country people, how comes it that new figures and tunes are first heard of in London ball-rooms (see London magazines and musical publications throughout the eighteenth century), whence they gradually spread into the rural districts?<sup>83</sup>



These views were at odds with those of the many Society members who were disciples of Cecil Sharp, and who saw country dances as the products of unlettered people and as an art form in their own right. Nevertheless, Hardy maintained his position and reinforced his point in the following year, this time in an anonymous article. The relevant passage is worth quoting in full, not only for the information which it provides on traditional dance in Dorset in the mid-nineteenth century, but also for the insight which it gives into Hardy's background and attitudes.

...I ask those who maintain otherwise to explain the following rather formidable facts:

1. Down to the middle of the last century, country villagers were divided into two distinct castes, one being the artisans, traders, "liviers" (owners of freeholds), and the manor-house upper servants; the other the "work-folk", i.e. farm-labourers (these were never called by the latter name by themselves and other people till about 70 years ago). The two castes rarely intermarried, and did not go to each other's house-gatherings save exceptionally.
2. The work-folk had their own dances, which were reels of all sorts, jigs, a long dance called the "horse-race", another called "thread the needle", &c. These were danced with hops, leg-crossings, and rather boisterous movements.
3. Country-dances were introduced into villages about 1800 onwards by the first group or caste, who had sometimes lived in towns.. The work-folk knew nothing of the so-called folk-dances (country-dances) and had to be taught them at mixed gatherings. They would lapse back into their own dances at their own unmixed merry-makings, where they never voluntarily danced country-dances.
4. That in the London magazines of the eighteenth century, and by music publishers of that date, country-dances were printed, music and figures, as new dances.

Of course I speak only of the west and south-west of England, and don't wish to contest other explanations which may be possible. Also I speak of the Wessex village of seventy to eighty years ago, before railways, when I knew it intimately – and probably not many of your members did, not even Mr. Sharp, who gave such good labour to the subject – and know little of its condition in the present century.<sup>84</sup>

As a traditional musician and the son and grandson of traditional musicians Hardy was ideally placed to observe and judge the shift which took place in dance repertoire in the nineteenth century. Indeed, his grandfather would have been playing for dances at just the time when those changes took place. This is not to say that his notion of a single seismic shift in style is necessarily correct; it seems more probable that local dance repertoire was sustained by a series of introductions from outside and that the superseded "folk-dances" were themselves the products of an earlier wave of innovation. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that Hardy was correct as to the origin of "country-dances" and, moreover, some twenty years before this correspondence, he had illustrated the genesis of the new repertoire in *D*. Here he shows tunes and dances such as "Enrico" and "Speed the Plough", which were described in his fiction as local dances of the mid-nineteenth century, being introduced as fashionable "country-dances" in the polite society of the Napoleonic period.<sup>85</sup>

As indicated in chapter 1, the distinction made between artisans and work-folk is crucial to an understanding of Hardy's Wessex and it has eluded those many critics who portray the author as a chronicler of "peasant" life. Hardy was acutely aware of his own family's

position as members of the artisan class and, in his novels, he consistently portrays his principal characters as being of this class. The work-folk characters, such as Granfer Cante, Joseph Poorgrass and the rest are peripheral to the main focus of his novels. This being so, the reference to the two groups' lack of admixture, culturally as well as socially, places a different perspective on Hardy's position as a source for the study of traditional culture. If he portrays artisans dancing country-dances, rather than work-folk performing folk-dances, in his fiction and verse, then may his descriptions of song, custom, narrative and so forth exhibit a similar sociological bias? Did other aspects of traditional culture exist in varying manifestations depending upon the social sub-class in which they took place? These are fascinating questions, but they can never now be answered, at least in a Dorset context. There is some evidence, outlined later in this study, that a social division did exist in respect of song and of west gallery music. On the other hand, Hardy was ever anxious to show that the boundary between artisan and workman, disappearingly small to an outside observer, was actually a social chasm and that his family stood firmly on the artisan side. For himself, although unable to conceal his youthful participation in local culture, he systematically detached himself from it as an adult, as in his remark, quoted above, "I speak of the Wessex village of seventy to eighty years ago.... and know little of its condition in the present century".<sup>86</sup>

### Songs

Hardy's references to traditional song extend beyond his published and personal writings to two unusual sources. The first is a collection of the words of "old country songs" compiled by him in about 1926,<sup>87</sup> and the second comprises his annotations in song books, by Hullah,<sup>88</sup> Percy<sup>89</sup> and an unnamed compiler,<sup>90</sup> in which he indicates the individuals who sang various songs locally and where, in some cases, he adds or corrects verses.

Given the continuing disagreement amongst scholars as to what does or does not constitute a traditional song, the list in section 5.2 of the chapter 2 index includes all the songs mentioned by Hardy, irrespective of their origin. It may be said that the songs from the novels, poetry, letters etc. could mostly be regarded as traditional, as would those in Hardy's song collection. Those songs annotated in the songbooks would probably not be regarded as falling within the traditional canon but, having said this, it must be emphasised that they were sung by members of the working class community in which Hardy grew up. Hence his father sang "Shall I go Walk the Woods So Wild" and his grandmother "Shepherds I Have Lost My Love". The porosity of the boundary between "art" and "traditional" songs may be illustrated by the changing status of "The Banks of Allenwater". This is sung by Bathsheba Everdene in *FMC* to distinguish her social standing from that of her workers but, over a hundred years later, was in the repertoire of the Suffolk traditional singer, Bob Hart.<sup>91</sup>

Despite these uncertainties of classification, of nearly ninety songs in the chapter 2 index, the great majority would generally be regarded as traditional and, if Hardy's authority is to be accepted, all were sung in Dorset in the nineteenth century. As in other references to traditional culture in his work, Hardy rarely does more than mention a song. Tunes are not given, although Hardy, as a musician, must have known many of them, and the words



quoted rarely extend beyond a line or two. Therefore, as a source of additional information on individual traditional songs in Dorset, the examples in the index have little to offer. On the other hand, as an illustration of local repertoire, they are much more important. In this respect there are two other major sources of information on Dorset song repertoire; one being Hardy's grandfather's songbook<sup>92</sup> and the other the Hammond song collection.<sup>93</sup>

Thomas Hardy the First's book is a manuscript collection of songs compiled in 1807 and its value as a record of the repertoire of a rural working class family is comparable to that of "Brasser" Copper's Rottingdean songbook of over a hundred years later.<sup>94</sup> None of the songs from the 1807 collection appears elsewhere in Hardy's writings.

Between 1905 and 1908, Henry and Robert Hammond collected 764 song texts, tunes and fragments in Dorset and this collection is of paramount importance in the study of traditional song in the county. They left little record of their informants or of their backgrounds, but they seem to have collected largely from older men and women, which indicates a group born between about 1825 and 1840. This is slightly younger than Hardy's mother (born 1820), from whom many of Hardy's "country songs" were probably derived and also younger than the middle-aged singers whom he would have heard in his boyhood in the 1840s and 1850s. Therefore the family songbook and Hammond collection offer material from parts of the nineteenth century which are earlier and later, respectively, than the Thomas Hardy corpus, and the three sources together would form a unique opportunity for a diachronic study of song repertoire within a fairly small geographical area.

The only serious study of Hardy and traditional song is a 1989 paper by Jackson-Houlston,<sup>95</sup> subsequently included, with minor modifications, as a chapter in her book on folk song in nineteenth-century literature.<sup>96</sup> The thrust of her article is to attack the assumption that Hardy drew on traditional ballads in his writing and she demonstrates that Hardy very rarely refers to ballads in his work. In the course of her argument she identifies a number of the songs mentioned by Hardy, suggests some sources and makes some preliminary comparisons with the material in the Thomas Hardy the First and Hammond collections. Jackson-Houlston's paper is essential reading in this field but she could be said to have underestimated Hardy's personal knowledge of local songs. Her suggestion that Hardy relied heavily on printed sources for quotations in his work is inconsistent both with the sheer volume of songs of which he was aware and with his deep knowledge of all forms of traditional culture, as demonstrated by the extent of the material in the chapter 2 index of this study.

As in the case of other genres, it is possible to obtain information on social context from Hardy's references to traditional song. Hence he describes how songs were sung at weaving shops, spinning wheels, and sheepshearing and harvest suppers. They are also a staple entertainment at the Pure Drop Inn at *Marlott* and here Mrs. Durbeyfield is a noted performer. She is also shown, in *TD*, to be an ignorant and credulous woman. Similarly Granfer Cattle, in *RN*, an enthusiastic performer of traditional material, is a silly and vainglorious old man. The singing postman in *DR* is a drunkard, as is Joseph Poorgrass, in *FMC*, who sings at the *Weatherbury* sheepshearing supper. In short, Hardy usually portrays traditional singers as members of the lower echelons of the social order and as disreputable

characters even within that group. Such treatment may be compared with the generally favourable picture painted of rural musicians. Some allowance must be made, of course, for the fact that Hardy himself was a musician rather than a singer, but his picture of class distinction between singers and musicians is paralleled in the case of west gallery bands (to be considered in chapter 5). It also reflects the social division between different types of dance, as described above. Incidentally, despite his generally unsympathetic picture of singers, Hardy himself is known to have performed at least two songs in his youth, namely "Dame Durden"<sup>97</sup> and "She Wore a Wreath of Roses".<sup>98</sup>

In his concept of the nature of traditional song, Hardy inclines to the orthodox view of his day, namely that "true folk songs" were being displaced by songs of urban origin, hence the reference, in the title of his song collection, to country songs being "killed by comic songs of the music hall". More specifically, in relation to a harvest supper which he attended in about 1850, he writes:

It may be worthy of note that this harvest-home was among the last at which the old traditional ballads were sung, the railways having been extended to Dorchester just then, and the orally transmitted ditties of centuries being slain at a stroke by the London comic songs that were introduced.<sup>99</sup>

In fact, as in the case of dances, discussed above, the local song repertoire is likely to have been developed by a series of importations from other areas and social strata. Hence the local repertoire indicated by the Hammond collection is quite different from that from Thomas Hardy the First's songbook, showing a development of repertoire over time. Hardy also unwittingly demonstrates the influence of urban material, even before the coming of the railways, in referring to the sale of ballads (i.e. town-produced song sheets) at fairs,<sup>100</sup> hangings<sup>101</sup> and in *Budmouth*.<sup>102</sup>

Further reference will be made to an individual traditional song, "The Outlandish Knight", in chapter 8.

## MATERIAL CULTURE

In much of his fiction Hardy is writing of a rural environment which he invests, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously, with verbal illustrations of agricultural and domestic life. This background is rarely important in terms of plot or character delineation, unlike, say, his use of custom or song, but it can cumulatively offer a good deal to the student of folk life. Even so, the area of material culture, perhaps more than any other, exemplifies the way in which traditional culture occurs in his work; namely with an abundance of occurrences but (usually) a paucity of detail. The more interesting references within this area are summarised below.

Vernacular architecture is usually only briefly mentioned (despite Hardy's architectural background) but there is a valuable short article on the construction of mudwall (or in Dorset "cob") cottages.<sup>103</sup> This is a technique which has rarely been described, and Hardy's article, written for The Royal Society of Arts, is probably the only description of Dorset practice in this field. It is also a rare instance of his writing a technical article.



Traditionally made artefacts are frequently mentioned by Hardy; mostly items of furniture, agricultural and domestic tools and home-made musical instruments. His description of the mode of cleaning the Ceme Giant (a Dorset chalk hill figure) is historically useful,<sup>104</sup> and his two references to the Dorset Ooser, (a wooden mask from Melbury Osmond) are helpful in tracing the background to that mysterious object.<sup>105</sup> He is known to have made sketches of items such as smock-frocks, sheepcrooks and rick-staddles for his illustrators and it is unfortunate that so little of this material seems to have survived.<sup>106</sup>

In his references to traditional modes of work Hardy covers a very wide field, from the prosaic occupations of fishermen, shepherds and sparmakers to those of more recondite figures such as the mail coach guard and the reddleman (a travelling dealer in a dye for marking sheep). On a less respectable level, the crafts of poaching and smuggling, both, it is argued, traditional occupations, make several appearances in his writings. Poaching figures more frequently in terms of its consequences than its technique, suggesting that his father's account of the transportation of a local practitioner had an indelible effect on the young Hardy.<sup>107</sup> Smuggling, on the other hand, figures in what can only be described as a suspicious level of detail and this occupation will be considered further in chapter 8.

Domestic crafts are lightly represented, while manufacturing is also rarely mentioned and then usually in negative terms, in relation to man-traps, spring-guns and the tyranny of the threshing machine over its attendants.

It is clear from his writings that Hardy took an interest in costume, particularly that of women. Hence there are numerous references to rural and agricultural costume and these are discussed by Worth.<sup>108</sup>

References to foodways, virtually all of which are in Hardy's published work, are dominated by those to apples, a fruit to which he obviously had some devotion. An examination of these references would be of value in any study of traditional apple varieties, a currently fashionable area of investigation. A preliminary survey by Cox lists twenty-three varieties as grown in nineteenth-century Dorset, which seems a surprisingly low total.<sup>109</sup> Of these, only four (Tom Putt, Costard, Stubbard and Quarrendon), also occur amongst the seventeen varieties mentioned by Hardy, which suggests that there is much room for further enquiry.

Given his interest in apples, it is regrettable that Hardy does not give more detail of cidermaking, since he took part in the activity both as a child and young man,<sup>110</sup> and was able to describe the differences between the way in which cider was made in Dorset and in Devon.<sup>111</sup> The fact that Hardy's father made cider at Bockhampton, as did his cousins at Puddletown, shows that the production and consumption of the beverage was much more widespread in Dorset in the mid-nineteenth century than at present, when it is restricted to the north and west of the county.

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## CHAPTER 5

# THOMAS HARDY AND HIS WRITINGS AS A SOURCE FOR THE STUDY OF WEST GALLERY BANDS IN DORSET

## INTRODUCTION

In this, and the succeeding two chapters, it is intended to look in detail at specific areas of tradition which are well represented in Hardy's writings, to review information from other sources which relate to these areas and thus to set Hardy's testimony in context. The first area chosen is that of west gallery bands, a subject which requires some definition and explanation.

The nature of west gallery music is considered below. This is a subject which has undergone a revival of interest in recent years and which is now the subject of considerable research and reconstruction. An adequate investigation of west gallery music in Dorset would require a lengthy study, based on specialised musical knowledge.

Although Thomas Hardy had a particular interest in this kind of music, and features it prominently in his work, he gives very little specific information on the words or the music of west gallery compositions. The Hardy family music books give ample detail of this kind, but they represent written evidence from a period prior to Hardy's life and consequently they are not considered in detail here. On the other hand, Hardy has a great deal to say about the individuals who performed the music, and of the place which that music occupied in the community. As already illustrated in previous chapters, his ability to demonstrate the context, as well as the content, of tradition sets him apart from other writers in the field.

Given the present writer's lack of specialised musical knowledge, and taking into account the nature of Hardy's references to the subject, it is not intended here to consider details of west gallery music as such. Instead, the text will concentrate upon the bands, musicians and singers, who performed the music and who played an important role in their local communities.

## THE WEST GALLERY TRADITION

Between the end of the seventeenth and the middle of the nineteenth centuries, the singing in Anglican and nonconformist churches in England was often accompanied by a band of instrumentalists and singers. The band would be housed in a wooden gallery at the western end of the church and, therefore, the type of music played has become known as "west gallery music". The musicians, insofar as information on them has survived, seem to have been drawn from the artisan class, which Hardy regards as the mainstay of traditional culture in Dorset and of which he writes so memorably. The singers have passed largely unrecorded, but they appear to have been drawn largely from the labouring class.

The idea that west gallery music is a traditional genre, and that its practitioners and their customs and practices are a legitimate area for exploration by the folklorist, would not have



been accepted by Firor. In considering Christmas carols, arguably the most interesting part of the west gallery repertoire, due to their performance outside the church setting, she writes:

The musician will look in vain among these Wessex carols for any really old and choice fourteenth- or fifteenth-century carols; most of those mentioned by Hardy are the work of seventeenth or eighteenth-century composers....<sup>1</sup>

Old as are some of the carols, rich in tradition as are certain hymns, they are scarcely to be termed true folk-music.<sup>2</sup>

Hence Firor believes that antiquity is the prime criterion for defining a genuine musical tradition and she seems to suggest that derivation from known composers disqualifies songs from inclusion in the traditional canon. In this case she is being inconsistent for, in discussing traditional song, she comments:

There are true folk-songs, however, which do not have the fine antiquity of the traditional English and Scottish ballads. A century ago these were still on the lips of the country people....<sup>3</sup>

She goes on to cite, inter alia, "The Spotted Cow", "The Break o' Day" and "Down in Cupid's Gardens", all recognisable as products of the eighteenth century London pleasure gardens and, if anything, of later composition than the carols mentioned by Hardy in his fiction.

Firor's view that antiquity and anonymity are the arbiters of tradition are understandable from an author writing in 1931, when Cecil Sharp's view of folk song as a communally developed art were dominant.<sup>4</sup> Although this is not the place to embark upon a lengthy discussion of the still controversial subject of what does or does not constitute a "folk" or "traditional" song, it is probably fair to say that a song's mode of transmission would now be regarded as more important than its time or place of origin. For instance, Jackson-Houlston, in discussing Hardy's use of folk song observes:

Traditional folk songs, carols and instrumental tunes are *performed*, being handed down, shaped and partially re-created through transmission by ear. This mode of preservation may be modified by cross-fertilisation with printed texts on broadsides and elsewhere. Also, songs from other sources can be subjected to traditional processes of transmission and re-creation.<sup>5</sup>

West gallery tunes were written by both well-known and little-known composers and by others whose names have been lost. They were amended in transmission, both deliberately and unwittingly, and thus show variation with time or place (as so abundantly illustrated by the numerous variant tunes for "While Shepherds Watched"). West gallery music, as will be shown, was performed by the same musicians as was country dance music, while the carols were performed outside church at dwellings ranging from the squire's hall to the humblest cottage. Therefore west gallery music could reasonably be called "vernacular religious music" and its practitioners should take their place with those of the more generally recognised forms of folk song, music and dance.

## PRINCIPAL SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF THE WEST GALLERY TRADITION IN DORSET

The fullest description of west gallery practice in Dorset is by F. W. Galpin, a local clergyman and the author of *The Textbook of European Musical Instruments*, who wrote sympathetically of several church bands, mostly in the Winterbourne Valley area.<sup>6</sup> Hardy attended the meeting of the Dorset Field Club at which Galpin's paper was read (at Dorchester Museum on 21 February 1905) and asked if the author could "account for the curious fact of their always playing the tenor on a treble instrument an octave higher? I have known many of the old bands play in this way."<sup>7</sup> This comment not only illustrates Hardy's interest in west gallery music but also suggests that he had heard some bands in action.

So far as the customs of the bands are concerned, Galpin's brief descriptions of the annual payments made to the bands and of the Christmas feast at Winterbourne Steepleton are valuable. His anecdote of the Winterbourne Abbas band's playing "Onward Christian Soldiers" as a married couple left church on an occasion "of particular interest to myself" refers to his own wedding.

The most prolific collector of west gallery carols in Dorset was W. A. Pickard-Cambridge. His collection stems from a nucleus of eight carols given to his father, the Rector of Bloxworth, by John Skinner, the parish clerk, who had led the annual Christmas perambulation until his death in 1879. Pickard-Cambridge then went on to collect several hundred carols from south and central Dorset, either from former performers or from manuscripts. Forty-two of these were published in 1926 as *A Collection of Dorset Carols* but the author felt compelled to "rewrite rather freely" the tunes.<sup>8</sup> Most carols are attributed to two or more villages and it is not clear (unless the words were identical between villages) as to which set of words is being quoted. To make matters worse, the full collection was destroyed by enemy action during the Second World War. Fortunately, the author copied out the words of several village collections and his transcriptions are preserved in Dorset County Record Office, although the tunes, and any notes which may have existed, are lost.

The only other collection of any substance is by Mayo who, in 1893, collected twelve carols, which had "long been cherished" in his parish of Longburton. The music was copied from the singers' manuscript books, but, regrettably, was then "arranged with suitable harmonies".<sup>9</sup> The remaining references to the subject are distributed through a number of miscellaneous sources, such as local histories, newspaper reports and personal reminiscences.

There is evidence for the existence of some seventy west gallery bands in Dorset and this figure is likely to represent only a proportion of the bands in the county. The sources for this information are generally superficial in their accounts of both the nature of the participants and the background of performance and, where detailed description is available, it relates to repertoire. At the same time, the revival of interest in west gallery music in Dorset (and elsewhere) is chiefly confined to collection of repertoire and revival performance. In this respect, there is a similarity to the collections of the early twentieth



century folksong collectors. Their enthusiasm for tune variants, and to a lesser extent textual, variants outstripped their interest in the singers from whom they collected or the place of the songs in the communities which they visited. It is in this context, of an extensive but unbalanced picture of west gallery practice, that Thomas Hardy's importance as a source for the study of this genre may be appreciated.

## WEST GALLERY BANDS IN HARDY'S WORK

The first half of *UGT*, subtitled *The Mellstock Quire*, is given over to the Christmas activities of the *Mellstock* band and to its eventual discontinuance at the instigation of Parson Maybold. This band, either as a group or as individuals, figures elsewhere in Hardy's fiction and also in his verse, notably in "The Choirmaster's Burial", "The Dead Quire" and "The Paphian Ball".

The *Longpuddle* band appears in two vignettes within "A Few Crusted Characters", of which the first, "Absent-Mindedness in a Parish Choir" has been discussed in chapter 3. The second, "Old Andrey's Experience as a Musician" concerns an attempt by Andrey to pass himself off as a member of the band and his ignominious ejection on being discovered. The story is useful in illustrating both the favoured place which the band holds in the local community and the hospitality afforded to it by the gentry.

The *Chalk Newton* band is featured in a further short story, "The Grave by the Handpost" in which, as in *UGT*, a Christmas perambulation forms the backdrop to the plot. The *Welland* band figures briefly in *TT*, as does the *Casterbridge* band in *MC*. Information on some real bands, notably those from Puddletown and Stinsford, may be obtained from Hardy's non-fictional writings.

The accounts of these various bands, and Hardy's numerous other references to west gallery practice, make up an appreciable body of knowledge, which may now be considered in the context of the information on Dorset bands derived from other writers. First, it is necessary to re-emphasise Hardy's credentials as a source in this area by considering his family's background in west gallery music, which leads to a consideration of the relationship between the fictional *Mellstock* band and the real Stinsford band of Hardy family recollection. The nature of Dorset bands is then discussed first by considering their instrumentation, then the very different venues at which they performed. The important Christmas perambulation is then addressed, together with other band customs, following which some artefacts relating to west gallery music are considered. Finally, the demise of the bands is described and Hardy's contribution to this area of tradition is appraised.

## THE HARDY FAMILY AND WEST GALLERY MUSIC

Hardy's grandfather, also named Thomas Hardy, played violoncello in the Puddletown church band, until he moved to Stinsford in 1801. The Vicar of Stinsford, Rev. Edward Murray, was a keen musician and, with his active encouragement, Grandfather Hardy led

the Stinsford church band, playing bass viol himself and eventually joined by his sons James and Thomas (the author's father) and their neighbour James Dart, all playing violins.<sup>10</sup> Grandfather Hardy was a church musician of some repute, who was in demand to assist in other church bands and he is acknowledged by Hardy to have been the model for Mr. Yeobright in *RN*.<sup>11</sup> The anecdote in which that character plays the clarinet in a village club walk and then joins the church band to play the bass viol "as if he'd never played anything but a bass-viol" is, therefore, based on the eldest Thomas Hardy's musical exploits.<sup>12</sup> Hardy's father was also an accomplished musician and is known to have performed on the cello at Gloucester Cathedral.<sup>13</sup>

Rev. Murray retired in 1837 and the band ceased to play in church in about 1842, five years after Grandfather Hardy's death.<sup>14</sup> Although Hardy was too young to remember the Stinsford band he had ample opportunity to learn of them from his father and his uncle. His mother was also well able to supply anecdotes about the band, and her description of the three elder Hardys, on their way to Stinsford Church, is recalled by him in an 1892 note.

They were always hurrying, being rather late, their fiddles and violin-cello in green baize bags under their left arms. They wore top hats, stick-up shirt-collars, dark blue coats with great collars and gilt buttons, deep cuffs and black silk 'stocks' or neckerchiefs. Had curly hair, and carried their heads to one side as they walked. My grandfather wore drab cloth breeches and buckled shoes, but his sons wore trousers and Wellington boots.<sup>15</sup>

Hardy also seems to have been familiar with the Maiden Newton church band, described as the *Chalk Newton* church band in his fiction. Maiden Newton is some six miles from his mother's birthplace and there may have been some family connection with that village.

## STINSFORD AND MELLSTOCK

Hardy's practice of basing fictitious places on real ones has led to much harmless literary detective work and a certain amount of confusion, although the author himself was always clear as to the relationship between his Wessex settings and their parallels in Dorset and elsewhere e.g.

The place names in the novels were only *suggested* by those real names given - as they are not literally portraits of such.<sup>16</sup>

I have again and again denied that the fictitious places "are" such and such real ones, but are merely ideal places suggested by them.<sup>17</sup>

Despite these strictures, the relationship between Hardy's birthplace of Stinsford and the *Mellstock* of his fiction is very close, both topographically and in the description of its inhabitants. Indeed, the relationship between the fictional *Mellstock* band and the actual Stinsford band is the closest of any such parallels in his work. The author admits that he treated the *Mellstock* band too lightly in *UGT* and that a more serious study might have been made.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, he terms the novel, and his other descriptions of church bands elsewhere in his work, "a fairly true picture, at first hand, of the personages, ways and customs which were common among such orchestral bodies in the villages of fifty or sixty years ago"<sup>19</sup> When *UGT* was dramatised, he expressed the view that the play was "a



genuine reproduction of the local life of sixty or eighty years ago by the grandsons of the characters of that date".<sup>20</sup>

Parallels between the real and the fictional bands are easy to find; hence the bands both consisted (unusually in Dorset) of only strings, their funeral custom was recognisably the same, they ceased to play in the early 1840s on the appointment of a new incumbent, and so forth. Although the supernatural experiences of the *Mellstock* band did not happen to the corresponding members of the Stinsford band, it otherwise seems reasonable to take Hardy's fictional *Mellstock* band as a valid representation of the real band at Stinsford. This evidence is supported by the various pieces of information which Hardy gives, in his non-fictional writings about the actual Stinsford band. This band is unrecorded by other sources, so that all knowledge of it stems from Hardy.

### MEMBERSHIP OF THE WEST GALLERY BANDS

According to Hardy, a church band might comprise from six to ten players with "numerous" singers<sup>21</sup> and at *Mellstock* he indicates four musicians, four men singers and seven boys.<sup>22</sup> He does not comment upon the absence of females from the band, from which it must be assumed that such an arrangement was normal practice. The occupations of the musicians, and the apparent social division between musicians and singers, are amply illustrated in his fiction and the existence of this division is supported by some evidence from elsewhere.

Within the Stinsford band, Grandfather Hardy and his two sons were builders, while the fourth member, James Dart, was a hay dealer. The fictional *Mellstock* band is led by Reuben Dewy, a tranter (private carrier), and it includes his son Dick, in the same business, and Reuben's seventy year old father, William, who has presumably been similarly employed. Dick's maternal grandfather, James is a retired mason, although it is not clear as to whether he is a member of the band, while a further member, Robert Penny is a shoemaker and Mr. Spinks, who once kept a night school, is also a member. The singers are very much background figures, with the exception of the unfortunate Thomas Leaf who, as Michael Mail observes, will "never be able to tell how many cuts d'take to sharpen a spar".<sup>23</sup>

The occupations of the players in Hardy's other fictional bands are less well defined although, at *Longpuddle*, Nicks, the oboe player, unlike the remainder of the band, is referred to as "Mr." which suggests that he might be a schoolmaster of some kind, like Mr. Spinks.

It is possible that Hardy, as a musician and the product of a family of musicians, is deliberately undervaluing the importance of the bands' singers by portraying them as mere appurtenances to the instrumentalists. On the other hand, he may be reflecting a real social division between the two groups. The only occasion on which his fiction focuses on singers, as opposed to musicians, is in *TT* which, from the astronomical events described within it, may be dated to the 1870s or 1880s. By this time, the church bands were largely

defunct and the story finds the vicar rehearsing the *Welland* singers himself. The occupations of the singers are not mentioned but the author's treatment of these characters makes it clear that they are of a lower social status than the *Mellstock* musicians or of Hardy's other fictional musicians. The following is an exchange between two members of the choir.

"The devil send that I had but the making of labouring men for a twelvemonth! I'd gie every man-jack two good backbones, even if the alteration was as wrong as forgery."

"Four, - four backbones," said Haymoss decisively.

"Yes, four", threw in Sammy Blore, with additional weight of experience. "For you want one in front for breast-ploughing and such like, one at the right side for ground-dressing, and one at the left side for turning mixens."<sup>24</sup>

The vicar, Rev. Torkingham, is shown to have a low opinion of the choir's diction.

There was a noise as of atmospheric hoes and scrapers, and the bass contingent at last got under way with a time of its own:

"The Lard looked down vrom Heavn's high tower!"

"Ah, that's where we are so defective – the pronunciation," interpolated the parson....<sup>25</sup>

Other writers' descriptions of Dorset church bands are concerned mainly with music, but some information on the players and singers is occasionally revealed. Where such revelation does occur, it tends to confirm Hardy's picture of artisan musicians while paying little, if any attention to the backgrounds of the singers.

At Bradford Abbas, the leader of the church band was a shoemaker<sup>26</sup>, while the Winterbourne Steepleton band was led by a tailor, Samuel French, who was a prolific composer of west gallery music.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, at Martinstown, the village blacksmith wrote settings for psalms and anthems. Stoke Abbott band was led by "Clerk" Hann, presumably literate, from his nickname, but whose occupation is unrecorded. He said that he could not see why he could not write music as well as Handel.<sup>28</sup> The Briantspuddle carols were collected by Pickard-Cambridge from a thatcher, who played the melodies on the fiddle,<sup>29</sup> while at Winterborne Zelston, he noted the words of carols from the singing of a farmer and his wife.<sup>30</sup> At Broadwindsor, the occupations of the band are unrecorded, but the players are described as "as motley a crew as were ever immortalised by the pen of a Thomas Hardy".<sup>31</sup>

Galpin visited Winterbourne Abbas church at some time prior to 1895, when the band ceased to play, He noted that the instruments used were clarinet, flute and bass, played by a thatcher, farm labourer and shepherd respectively. This band played on a podium at the west end of the church, there being no gallery, and each tune was preceded by "a curious four-note phrase" called "sounding off the tune". The rector would not allow a violin in the band since he shared the general opinion that it "savoured of the public house". Galpin believed that the arrangement which he saw had remained the same for fifty years at least.<sup>32</sup>



An 1895 drawing of the three players, formerly displayed in the church, is now in preservation and a copy is included as illustration 8 in the appendix.<sup>33</sup>

A further useful sketch is that by Cooper, of Yetminster church band in 1835 (illustration 9). It shows four singers, one a woman, accompanied by bassoon, flute, viol and clarinet.<sup>34</sup> Occupations of the members included miller, plasterer, thatcher and schoolmaster.<sup>35</sup>

The musicians' occupations described above are consistent with those of the small tradesmen and artisans described by Hardy. Only the flute player at Winterbourne Abbas is described as a labourer and this at the very end of the west gallery period, when bands were probably glad of any musician who came to hand. Gammon demonstrates a similar social origin for Sussex west gallery musicians.<sup>36</sup>

In actuality, as in Hardy's fiction, the singers in church bands are usually anonymous. A note on the Puddletown band in the 1840s does, at least, name the singers but fails to distinguish between trebles, tenors and so forth.<sup>37</sup> Cooper's Yetminster drawing identifies the musicians and their instruments, but names only three singers, one of whom is a musician's son and one, most unusually, a schoolmaster.

## WEST GALLERY BAND INSTRUMENTS

As shown above, the Stinsford band consisted, at least in its latter days, of three violins and a cello, (having been reduced to a single oboe before the arrival of Grandfather Hardy). In his imaginative poem "Jubilate" Hardy describes a ghostly church band, seen through supernaturally transparent ground, playing tambourines, dulcimers, hautboys, shawms and three-stringed double bass, all, presumably, being instruments which he knows to have been used in the past.<sup>38</sup> His *Casterbridge* band includes fiddles and clarinets;<sup>39</sup> *Chalk Newton* boasts two or three violins, two cellos, a tenor viol, double bass, hautboy, clarinets, and serpent;<sup>40</sup> while *Kingsbere* has at least two clarinets.<sup>41</sup> *Longpuddle* has two fiddles, bass-viol, serpent, clarinet and oboe.<sup>42</sup>

The instruments described by Hardy parallel those recorded as being used by actual church bands and the following examples illustrate the range which existed.

Ashmore - flageolet, violoncello and possibly shawm.<sup>43</sup>

Broadwey - Two clarinets, serpent, bass-viol, key-bugle.<sup>44</sup>

Broadwindsor - fiddles, flutes, violoncello.<sup>45</sup>

Corfe Castle - serpent.<sup>46</sup>

Martinstown - In 1820 there were four clarinets, a bass viol and an hautboy. (A man in a neighbouring village was reputed to have blown himself blind by trying to play the latter instrument, known locally as the "vox umaner"). At a later period there were two flutes, a clarinet and a bass, with a serpent for "out-a-door work", presumably a Christmas perambulation.<sup>47</sup>

Puddletown - In 1820, the band had two clarinets, two bass-viol, a flute and a bassoon. The fiddle was excluded as being "Devil's music", through its use for dancing in public

houses.<sup>48</sup> During the 1840s there were five singers accompanied by clarinet, bass-viol, fiddle and fife.<sup>49</sup>

Stratton – violin, bass-viol, clarinet.<sup>50</sup>

West Lulworth – flutes, violins, cello and double bass.<sup>51</sup>

Whitechurch Canonorum – violins and “grandfather fiddle”.<sup>52</sup>

Winterbourne Abbas - clarinet, flute and bass.<sup>53</sup>

Winterbourne Steepleton – violin, flute, two clarinets and a bass.<sup>54</sup>

Yetminster – bassoon, flute, viol and clarinet.<sup>55</sup>

The lists above do not necessarily represent the complete band in each case and they are by no means contemporaneous. As the entries for Martinstown and Puddletown show, the composition of the bands varied over a period of time. Only Whitechurch Canonorum was a band of string instruments only, which supports Hardy’s recollection that the Stinsford band was unusual in this respect. A passage in *UGT* might explain this rarity, since it suggests that string bands were formerly the normal arrangement, but were superseded as other instruments became available.

“I can well bring back to my mind,” said Mr. Penny, “what I said to poor Joseph Ryme (who took the treble part in Chalk-Newton Church for two-and-forty year) when they thought of having clar’nets there. ‘Joseph,’ I said says I, ‘depend upon’t, if so be you have them tooting clar’nets you’ll spoil the whole set-out. Clar’nets were not made for the service of the Lord: you can see it by looking at ‘em.’ I said. And what came o’t? Why, souls, the parson set up a barrel-organ on his own account within two years o’ the time I spoke, and the old quire went to nothing.”<sup>56</sup>

The range of instruments varied from band to band, both in Hardy’s fiction and in reality and, at least in the latter two thirds of the nineteenth century, this probably reflected a necessity to use those instruments which were available rather those which the music required. “The Grave by the Handpost”, in which the *Chalk Newton* band is featured, is set during the Napoleonic wars, and the greater range and balance of the band’s instruments probably represents the situation when the bands were in their heyday.

Another constraint on the make-up of the bands was the question of the suitability of the violin. As shown above, this instrument was barred from the church bands at Puddletown and Winterbourne Abbas; due to its association with public houses (an illogical reason, since the same could be said of several other instruments).<sup>57</sup> The discussion on the relative merits of the various band instruments in *UGT*, although predictably biased towards string instruments, probably reflects the ambivalent attitude of the west gallery musicians towards the violin.

“As far as look is concerned,” said the tranter, “I don’t for my part see that a fiddle is much nearer heaven than a clar’net. ‘Tis further off. There’s always a rakish, scampish twist about a fiddle’s looks that seems to say the Wicked One had a hand in making o’em; while angels be supposed to play clar’nets in heaven, or som’at like ‘em if ye may believe picters.”<sup>58</sup>

Although a fiddle player himself, Hardy has to acknowledge the limitations of stringed instruments in the church context and, in doing so, is, no doubt, drawing on family recollections.



“Please, sergeant, can I fall out, as I am master-player in the choir, and my bass-viol strings won’t stand at this time o’ year, unless they be screwed up a little before the passon comes in?”<sup>59</sup>

...the bass-viol and fiddles were taken from their nook, and the strings examined and screwed a little above concert-pitch, that they might keep their tone when the service began, to obviate the awkward contingency of having to retune them at the back of the gallery, during a cough, sneeze or amen – an inconvenience which had been known to arise in damp wintry weather.<sup>60</sup>

## THE DUAL ROLES OF WEST GALLERY MUSICIANS

The reluctance, in some parishes, to include fiddles in church bands is illustrative of the dual roles of church band musicians and their instruments, in sacred and secular music. This situation held a particular fascination for Hardy and, in his poem “To My Father’s Violin”, he recalls that his father performed both church and dance music on that instrument.

In the gallery west the nave,  
But a few yards from his grave,  
Did you, tucked beneath his chin, to his bowing  
Guide the homely harmony  
Of the quire  
Who for long years strenuously –  
Son and sire –  
Caught the strains that at his fingering low or higher  
From your four thin threads and eff-holes came outflowing

And, too, what merry tunes  
He would bow at nights or noons  
That chanced to find him bent to lute a measure,  
When he made you speak his heart  
As in dream  
Without book or music-chart,  
On some theme,  
Elusive as a jack-o’-lanthorn’s gleam,  
And the psalm of duty shelved for trill of pleasure.<sup>61</sup>

Elsewhere he indicates that, in the Stinsford church band, such dualism of repertoire was the norm.

It was customary to inscribe a few jigs, reels, hornpipes and ballads in the same book, by beginning it at the other end, the insertions being continued from both front and back till sacred and secular met together in the middle, often with bizarre effect, the words of some of the songs exhibiting that ancient and broad humour which our grandfathers, and possibly grandmothers, took delight in, and is in these days unquotable.<sup>62</sup>

Reference to the Stinsford music books, and to those from other parishes in Dorset, confirms the practice of inscribing church and dance music from opposite ends, although the inclusion of songs is much less common. Gammon notes a similar pattern in nineteenth-century manuscript music books from Sussex, although, in that county, sacred and secular tunes were frequently completely mingled.<sup>63</sup>

Nothing is known of the level of musical literacy among the Dorset working class in the mid-nineteenth century but it seems reasonable to suppose that the number of individuals who could play an instrument (and could afford to own one) was very limited. In that case, it seems reasonable that such musicians would be in demand for differing types of music. Even so, from the evidence for Dorset parishes, only two musicians are recorded as playing outside the church context. One was the leader of the Martinstown band, who also played bassoon in the village band.<sup>64</sup> The other was William Dunford, the last leader of the Winterbourne Abbas band, who died in 1943. He played cello in church and also played the fiddle at village dances.<sup>65</sup> His daughter recalled that Mr. Dunford, who also played the clarinet, would play the fiddle for step-dancing at Martinstown Fair.<sup>66</sup> Trask emphasises the popularity of dancing at Winterbourne Abbas and the vitality of performance.<sup>67</sup> Mr. Dunford's wife was recalled, by her daughter, as dancing the Dorset four-handed reel a few weeks before her death from old age.<sup>68</sup>

This lack of evidence for the versatility of rural musicians may be due partly to the fragmentary nature of the sources, but must also reflect the almost total lack of interest of collectors in the musicians themselves, as opposed to their music. Without the evidence from Hardy, this aspect of musical culture in Dorset would go unrecorded.

Hardy also shows that not only individual musicians, but whole bands, would play for dancing as well as perform church music. Hence the *Longpuddle* band:

...were very much in demand Christmas week for little reels and dancing parties; for they could turn a jig or a hornpipe out of hand as well as ever they could turn a psalm, and perhaps better, not to speak irreverent. In short, one half-hour they could be playing a Christmas carol in the squire's hall to the ladies and gentlemen, and drinking tay and coffee with 'em as modest as saints; and the next, at The Tinker's Arms, blazing away like wild horses with the "Dashing White Sergeant" to nine couple of dancers and more, and swallowing rum-and-cider hot as flame.<sup>69</sup>

The incompatibility of these different types of musical performance is a subject to which Hardy returns again and again. For instance, in his poem "Barthélémon at Vauxhall", the composer is pictured returning from a night spent playing at the pleasure gardens, but composing church music as he walks home.<sup>70</sup> So fascinated was Hardy by the composer's situation that he made four attempts to write a short story on the theme, none of which progressed beyond draft stage.<sup>71</sup>

As described in chapter 3, at *Longpuddle*, the tension between the band's dual role is exemplified by their inadvertently breaking into a dance tune during a church service, an error which leads to their dissolution.<sup>72</sup> In "The Paphian Ball" Hardy employs the converse of that situation, when the *Mellstock* band lose their gold, earned by playing at the Devil's ball, by unwittingly breaking into a Christmas carol.<sup>73</sup> These tensions, treated humorously in Hardy's fiction were in reality one of the factors underlying the demise of the church bands

## THE CHRISTMAS PERAMBULATION



The present writer has shown, in a previous study, that it was the practice for church bands in Dorset to perambulate their parish on Christmas morning, singing and playing carols.<sup>74</sup> Such perambulations were calendric house visiting customs and, as such, were considered in that study, along with shroving, mumming, wassailing and so forth, under the heading of customary doles. They were occasions when dolers believed that they were entitled, through custom and practice, to request alms of householders who, in turn, felt obliged to make appropriate payments, provided certain formulaic practices were observed. These usually required that the doling visit should take place on a specified date and by a specified group of people, who would provide a particular cue, such as a song or play. The householders would, in return, respond with a particular reward, such as milk for mayers or pancakes for shrovers although, in the late nineteenth century, these rewards were increasingly commuted to cash payments.

Several such perambulations are mentioned in the various Dorset references to west gallery bands. Details of the custom are rarely given, but they seem invariably to have taken place in the early hours of Christmas morning, at least until the later years of the nineteenth century, when the “waits” by then described had probably ceased to constitute the members of the local church band.

The earliest reference is from Bloxworth, where Pickard-Cambridge’s grandmother recalled, on Christmas Day 1828, “the singers have come again and the noisy band”.<sup>75</sup> From Moreton, Mary Frampton’s diary for 1830 records that “The carol singing from Mr. Frampton’s own parishes ushered in Christmas Eve and Christmas Morn as usual”, thus indicating a nocturnal perambulation of the traditional type. She goes on to remark that, unlike the carol singers, the mummers were not allowed to enter the house, which was only just returning to normal, having been barricaded and guarded during the Captain Swing riots. This suggests that the carol singers were regarded as more trustworthy than the mummers by James Frampton, the leader of the opposition to the rioters.<sup>76</sup>

Humphrey Gifford’s father heard the Durweston carollers visiting his remote farm at about 4 o’clock on Christmas morning in the 1850s, but he did not recall whether a band was present.<sup>77</sup> In about the 1860s, a band played in the gallery of Lydlinch church and perambulated the parish at Christmas “visiting the squire’s house, the vicarage and the farms, never missing one even on the coldest night”. Unusually, the choir included women.<sup>78</sup>

From these, and other references, it may be seen that the Christmas perambulation exhibited all the characteristics attributed above to customary doles. Hence it took place at a specific time and was carried out by a specified group, the church band. The cue provided by the visitors was, of course, a performance of carols from the local repertoire. Nevertheless, there are only two references to any form of reward for the bands, namely at Stratton and Winterbourne Steepleton, where feasts were provided. At Stratton, the band “spent two jolly evenings”, one at each of the local inns, seasonal music was played and the players received food and money.<sup>79</sup> The funding of the feast is unspecified but, at Steepleton, the “Feastivall Song of the Winterbourn Choir” (1816) includes, in its last line a suggestion of voluntary gifts from householders.

Friends and Brethren here we meet  
In music joined divinely sweet,  
And this convivial board surround,  
Since we have walked our village round.  
After walking thro' the snow  
The lib'ral village this bestow.<sup>80</sup>

For more details of remuneration and other aspects of the perambulation custom, it is again necessary to turn to Hardy and, in this case, to *UGT*, which includes a full description of the Christmas perambulation of the *Mellstock* band. At *Mellstock*, it is essential that the carol performances should not begin until Christmas morning and, to that end, the party sets off just before the clock strikes twelve on Christmas Eve. In fact, Hardy is using a little licence here, since in reality at Stinsford, the band was obliged to tour the northern (and more sparsely populated) part of the parish before supper followed by the southern part from midnight onwards and, even so, did not finish until about six in the morning.<sup>81</sup> The requirement for strict calendric observance is also mentioned in Hardy's description of the *Chalk Newton* perambulation:

...someone observed that they were full early, that it was not yet twelve o'clock. The local waits of those days mostly refrained from sounding a note before Christmas morning had astronomically arrived, and not caring to return to their beer, they decided to begin with some outlying cottages in Sidlinch Lane, where the people had no clocks, and would not know whether it were night or morning.<sup>82</sup>

The reference to the band's visiting outlying cottages where, moreover, the inhabitants were unable to afford clocks, illustrates another feature noted by the present writer for Dorset customary doles. This is the dolers' practice of visiting all dwellings in the parish, irrespective of the remoteness of their position or the poverty of their inhabitants. Hardy illustrates this where he touches on Christmas perambulations elsewhere in his work.

Mellstock was a parish of considerable acreage, the hamlets comprising it lying at a much greater distance from each other than is ordinarily the case. Hence several hours were consumed in playing and singing within hearing of every family, even if but a single air were bestowed on each.<sup>83</sup>

Then at each house: "Good wishes: many Christmas joys to you!"<sup>84</sup>

'Tis the quire, just afoot on their long yearly round  
To rouse by worn carols each house in their bounds..<sup>85</sup>

In his imaginative poem "The Paphian Ball" Hardy indicates that the band received no payment for their Christmas round, which is in accordance with his belief that customs were carried on for their own sake, rather than for financial gain.<sup>86</sup>

These ancient hymns in the freezing night,  
And all for nought? 'Tis foolish, quite!<sup>87</sup>

Hardy's reluctance to acknowledge that his family, the inspiration for the *Mellstock* band, played church music for money, probably also inhibited him from considering the vulgar details of such remuneration in *UGT*. Later in life, twenty-four years after the book's publication, he felt able to reveal the financial arrangements of the Stinsford band.



In the parish I had in my mind when writing the present tale, the gratuities received yearly by the musicians were somewhat as follows; from the manor-house ten shillings and a supper; from the vicar ten shillings; from the farmers five shillings each: from each cottage-household one shilling; amounting altogether to not more than ten shillings a head annually – just enough, as an old executant told me, to pay for their fiddle-strings, repairs, rosin and music paper.<sup>88</sup>

There is no indication that these payments took place at Christmas but, given that they were made annually and that Christmas is very near the beginning of the church calendar, it seems reasonable to suppose that they were made at that time. It is most unlikely that they were made during the perambulation which, at Stinsford, lasted through the early hours of the morning, when most householders, like those described in *UGT*, were in bed.

The level of subscription from the inhabitants of Stinsford seems to have been determined by their individual financial circumstances but it is not clear as to how the payments were organised. Stinsford Church accounts for the period 1820-1840 do not show any direct payments to the band, while records from the previous century show that church rates were levied on only twelve households, mostly farmers and landowners which precludes the cottagers mentioned by Hardy.<sup>89</sup> It must be assumed that money was paid directly by the householders at a prescribed level which made it unnecessary to link payment directly to performance, as was the case for other house visiting customs. This prescribed nature of donation is more characteristic of statutory doles, such as Maundy money, rather than of customary doles, although the source of largesse was not a statutory body (the church) but, it seems, the local householders, as in customary doles. Alternatively, Hardy's account of the remuneration of the Stinsford band may be read as indicating that the payments were in respect of the band's services throughout the year, in which case the perambulation by the band may be seen as a reciprocation rather than a dole.

Although, at Stinsford, perambulations ceased on the dissolution of the church band in about 1842, the custom continued to a later date in those places where the band survived, such as Pulham (c. 1875)<sup>90</sup> and Swanage (1880s)<sup>91</sup>. There is also evidence to suggest that, in some villages, the perambulation custom continued after the bands ceased to play in church. For instance, a story about Puddletown in 1880, "founded on fact" refers to carol singers touring the area on a cart with a harmonium, bass-viol, fiddles and flute.<sup>92</sup> If this refers to actual practice, it suggests that a perambulation of a kind continued for many years after the band's removal from the church in 1845.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, at Portesham, the band left the church in 1872, but Christmas perambulations continued to the late date of 1914. The twelve participants in 1900 had a cello, violin, clarinet and portable harmonium and the perambulation included the adjacent hamlets of Corton and Friar Waddon.<sup>94</sup> At West Lulworth, perambulations continued until the First World War, following which the two Chaffey brothers continued a form of the practice until about 1945.<sup>95</sup>

## **OTHER WEST GALLERY BAND CUSTOMS**

The poem "The Choirmaster's Burial", set in *Mellstock*, describes the band's custom of playing a psalm, to the tune "Mount Ephraim" in this case, over the grave of each of their members at his funeral.<sup>96</sup> Hardy refers to a similar practice in another poem, "The Rash

Bride”, sub-titled “An Experience of the Mellstock Quire”, although, in this case the funeral is not of a band member:

And we the quire formed round the grave, as was the custom then.

Our old bass player, as I recall – his white hair blown – but why recall! –  
His viol upstrapped, bent figure – doomed to follow her full soon –  
Stood bowing, pale and tremulous; and next to him the rest of us...  
We sang the Ninetieth Psalm to her – and to St. Stephen’s tune.<sup>97</sup>

As shown in chapter 3, these are direct references to the actual funeral custom at Stinsford, where Grandfather Hardy had presided over events, sitting on a “joint” stool. A similar custom is recorded at Huish Episcopi, Somerset until about the 1860s<sup>98</sup> and Gammon reports instances from Alfriston and Ditchling, Sussex, in 1850.<sup>99</sup> Hardy’s references, in these poems and in his notebooks,<sup>100</sup> indicate that the practice was probably formerly carried out at all funerals (“as was the practice then”), later becoming restricted to those of band members. It also seems likely that the custom was general in the south of England but, apart from Gammon’s researches, little work seems to have taken place on church band funeral practice.

In two novels, Hardy mentions the custom of couples perambulating their village following their wedding<sup>101</sup> and, in his poem “The Country Wedding”, he shows that it was unlucky for the church band to lead, rather than follow the procession.<sup>102</sup>

A less common, if not unique, custom is recorded in *MC*, where the local church band are involved in a weekly ritual in their town.

At this date there prevailed in Casterbridge a convivial custom - scarcely recognised as such, yet none the less established. On the afternoon of every Sunday a large contingent of the Casterbridge journeymen – steady churchgoers and sedate characters - having attended service, filed from the church doors across the way to The Three Mariners Inn. The rear was usually brought up by the choir, with their bass-viols, fiddles, and flutes under their arms.

The great point, the point of honour on these sacred occasions was for each man to limit himself strictly to half-a-pint of liquor. This scrupulosity was so well understood by the landlord that the whole company was served in cups of that measure. They were all exactly alike - straight-sided, with two leafless lime-trees done in eel-brown upon the sides –one towards the drinker’s lips, the other confronting his comrade.<sup>103</sup>

This level of detail is unlikely to have been invented, so Hardy must be referring to an event described to him by a Dorchester relative or friend. This custom, localised and restricted to a particular social group, is the type which so often goes unreported and upon which Hardy is such a valuable source.

## **SOME ARTEFACTS RELATING TO WEST GALLERY BANDS**

A number of music books and musical instruments from the west gallery period have survived and are preserved, either in the Dorset County Museum or in private collections, notably the music books from the Hardy family. West gallery tunes were usually played in



three parts and surviving manuscripts are usually individual part books but, at Puddletown, four carol books were found, two of which belonged to James Saunders who is named as a singer in the 1840s. Some of the band's instruments also survive, having been discovered in a vestry cupboard in the 1970s. A. D. Townsend has used these artefacts to reconstruct some of the carol tunes<sup>104</sup> and these may be heard, on various recordings by the Mellstock Band, played on modern copies of nineteenth-century instruments.<sup>105</sup>

The earliest surviving examples of music books seem to be those from Fordington, where manuscript chant and song books of the late eighteenth century are preserved, as are two books of anthems, hymns and psalms dated 1805 and one dated 1816. One of the 1805 volumes contains Thomas Hardy's visiting card, inscribed "With many thanks".<sup>106</sup>

Throughout his long life, Hardy maintained an interest in church bands and their music and, as a trained draughtsman, he was able to preserve his parents' recollections of the Stinsford band in two sketches. One of these (illustration 2 in the appendix) is of the gallery and its occupants<sup>107</sup> and the other (illustration 3), gives the positions of the musicians and singers.<sup>108</sup> The latter sketch parallels the organisation of the *Mellstock* band within their gallery as described in *UGT*.

Old William sat in the centre of the front row, his violoncello between his knees and two singers on each hand. Behind him, on the left, came the treble singers and Dick; and on the right the tranter and the tenors. Further back was old Mail with the altos and supernumeraries.<sup>109</sup>

Two other sketches with west gallery connotations are of interest, although not produced by Hardy. One is the drawing of the band in *Longpuddle* church gallery, published to illustrate "Absent-Mindedness in a Parish Choir" in 1891 (illustration 7).<sup>110</sup> The verisimilitude of the illustration must be in some doubt since, by this stage in his career as a writer, Hardy did not collaborate closely with his illustrators, but the appearance of the musicians is consistent with his descriptions in *UGT* and *LW*. The second of these sketches is of the Hardy family members of Stinsford church band and is by Hardy's sister Mary (illustration 4).<sup>111</sup> Again it may be assumed that Hardy's parents were the source of the details.

A further sketch, by Hardy and entitled "Silent Christmas Voices", shows a violin and cello hanging in his study (illustration 5).<sup>112</sup> Unfortunately, the sketch is too small to enable a detailed examination of the instruments but the violin is presumably that of his father, which is now preserved in Dorset County Museum. The instrument is of great interest, since it is the only surviving violin which is known to have been played in a Dorset west gallery band. Hardy's description, in "To My Father's Violin", suggests that it was in a decrepit state in his lifetime.

While your strings a tangled wreck,  
Once smart drawn,  
Ten worm-wounds in your neck,  
Purflings wan  
With dust-hoar,<sup>113</sup>

In fact, it required little work to bring it into playable condition when restored by John Dike at Sherborne in 1986.<sup>114</sup> Mr. Dike terms it "a nice instrument", "bassish sounding", of

continental manufacture and of better quality than Hardy's own violin. Even so, it would not have been so expensive as to put it beyond the reach of a reasonably prosperous artisan like Thomas Hardy Senior.

Finally, Hardy's architectural notebooks contain a sketch of some church musicians who, since they include a wind instrument, are not based on the Stinsford band (illustration 6).<sup>115</sup>

Another aspect of the church bands' operations relates to their procurement of musical sundries and here, again, Hardy provides an insight which is lacking from all other sources:

The aforesaid fiddle-strings, rosin and music-paper were supplied by a pedlar, who travelled exclusively in such ware from parish to parish, coming to each village about every six months. Tales are told of the consternation once caused among the church fiddlers when, on the occasion of their producing a new Christmas anthem, he did not come to time, owing to being snowed up on the downs, and the straits they were in through having to make shift with whip-cord and twine for strings. He was generally a musician himself, and sometimes a composer in a small way, bringing his own new tunes and tempting each choir to adopt them for a consideration.<sup>116</sup>

## THE END OF THE WEST GALLERY BANDS IN DORSET

From the 1830s, west gallery bands began to disappear from the churches of the south of England. Their demise coincided with, and is generally believed to have resulted from, reforming movements in the Anglican Church. Hence Bradley cites the Oxford Movement, particularly J.M. Neale for the replacement of west gallery music by modern hymns and carols.<sup>117</sup> Woods also emphasises the influence of The Oxford Movement and suggests that, in country parishes, the Movement's thrust expressed itself through church restoration which, in turn, led to the removal of west galleries and with them their bands.<sup>118</sup> On the other hand, Gammon, while accepting the importance of the Anglo-Catholic Movement, believes that reforms cut across doctrinal divisions and had as much to do with class attitudes as religion.<sup>119</sup> Certainly the independence and solidarity of the bands did not endear them to the new, university educated, reforming clergy. The following comments are typical of those made by proponents of reform.

Removed too great a distance from the clergyman's eye, having a separate entrance to their seats, possessed of a strong *esprit de corps*, and feeling themselves indispensable to the performance of a certain part of public worship, and too often, alas! privileged to decide what their part should be, - what wonder if they generally acquire those feelings of independence and pride, which makes the singers some of the worst members of the parish.<sup>120</sup>

Whatever the reasons for the decline of west gallery bands, the process was reflected in Dorset. The approximate latest dates of performance, where known, for Dorset bands were as follows:

- 1830 Kingston<sup>121</sup>
- 1830s Fordington<sup>122</sup>
- 1840 Bourton<sup>123</sup>
- 1845 Broadwindsor<sup>124</sup>, Puddletown<sup>125</sup>
- 1848 Whitechurch Canonorum<sup>126</sup>



1860s Morden<sup>127</sup>, Bradford Abbas<sup>128</sup>  
1870s Stratton<sup>129</sup>  
1872 Portesham<sup>130</sup>  
1881 Winterbourne Steepleton<sup>131</sup>  
1895 Winterbourne Abbas<sup>132</sup>

Physical resistance to the removal of galleries and the demise of the bands is recorded in Dorset only in the notoriously lawless parish of Fordington (Hardy's *Durnover*). In the early part of the nineteenth century, the vicar, John Palmer, was a vigorous supporter of the church band and is believed to have written some of its music. During his incumbency the west gallery was extended. His successor, Henry Moule, inducted in 1829, quickly fell out with the church band, leading to their striking and to a halving in church attendance. His demolition of the west gallery was greeted by vandalism and the stoning of the vicarage.<sup>133</sup> Hardy was friendly with Moule's sons and his short story "A Changed Man" is based on Henry Moule, who became revered in Fordington due to his actions during the cholera outbreaks of 1849 and 1854.<sup>134</sup>

The situation at Whitechurch Canonorum, where the band had already staged a walk-out from the neighbouring church at Stanton St. Gabriel, was probably more typical.

Great was the heart burning and ill feeling that the dethronement of the old choir occasioned....

....The old hands cut the connection completely and ceased coming to church even. One of them did after a time condescend to patronise the new choir and harmonium. He was however, above using the words of praise and the set music, but bum-bummed, trombone-like, a sonorous bass of his own and to his own evident satisfaction.<sup>135</sup>

Given the paucity of information on the background to the end of the bands, it should be helpful to be able again to turn to Hardy, whose father had first hand knowledge of the situation. The author states that the Stinsford band ceased to play in church in 1841 or 1842,<sup>136</sup> although Millgate believes that the band must have finally left in 1843, when the church accounts record the withdrawal of financial support.<sup>137</sup>

In fact, the record in question states that the church council met "to take into consideration the best means of paying the choir"<sup>138</sup>. Granted, the term "choir" was used rather loosely to refer to singers, musicians, or both together but, in this case, it is likely that the remuneration refers to a group of singers, not the church band. The minute book had already recorded the purchase, in 1842, of an organ, unlikely if the band were still in operation, and in 1844 the church bought five surplices, essential concomitants to the establishment of the new men's choirs beloved of The Oxford Movement. Therefore the records are consistent with the expulsion of the band in 1842, as indicated by Hardy, which is an early date compared to the other Dorset examples above. Millgate also states that the carolling perambulation was kept up "for a good many years thereafter" but cites no evidence. Although perambulations survived church performance elsewhere, as shown above, any such continuation at Stinsford would surely have been recorded by Hardy.

Hardy describes the circumstances surrounding the dissolution of a church band in two works, "A Few Crusted Characters" and *UGT*. In the first case, in the story "Absent-

Mindedness in a Parish Choir”, members of the *Longpuddle* band smuggle liquor into the gallery, fall asleep and, on being awoken, break into “The Devil among the Tailors” rather than the psalm. As a result, they are ejected and replaced by an organ.<sup>139</sup> As indicated in chapter 3, this is unlikely to be an account of an actual occurrence (although similar stories are told from other counties) but, instead, a fictional exploration of the possible consequences of the dual role of church bands. The story also gives useful insights into the attitudes of band, vicar and squire towards church music. The consumption of liquor in the gallery is not inherently unlikely and such behaviour would only give further impetus to the reforming efforts of incoming clergymen.

The plot of the first half of *UGT* centres on the removal of the *Mellstock* band from the church by the new parson, Mr. Maybold. His predecessor, Parson Grinham, had let the band have a free reign, (“blare and scrape what ye will, but don’t bother me!”)<sup>140</sup> and had neglected his pastoral duties but Maybold is full of reforming zeal, which extends to reorganising the church building and discontinuing the band. The musicians plead for a deferment of the vicar’s plans until Christmas, but he is all for swift action and a compromise is reached, for “about Michaelmas”. No reason is given for the dissolution other than the vicar’s bringing an organ with him to the parish, although he blames the churchwarden for the proposal. In any event, the musicians offer no resistance and seem to accept the band’s demise as inevitable, prompted, perhaps, by earlier references to the demise of other bands and their position as one of the few surviving groups.

“Times have changed from the times they used to be... People don’t care about us now! I’ve been thinking we must be almost the last left in the county of the old string players?”<sup>141</sup>

In practice, although the real Stinsford band was discontinued at about the same time as their fictional *Mellstock* equivalents, their dissolution was early compared to those of other bands in Dorset, an example, no doubt, of the author adjusting reality to suit his artistic purpose. There are also differences between Parson Maybold and the real Vicar of Stinsford, Arthur Shirley, and these are explored by Hands in his biographical sketch of the latter.

Shirley, who was related to the Earl of Ilchester, patron of Stinsford Church, was appointed to the living of Stinsford in 1837. According to Hands, he was a zealous reforming churchman, of Tractarian persuasion, who “initiated an ecclesiastical revolution in Stinsford”. In contrast to the snobbish and calculating Parson Maybold in *UGT*, he was, for his time, democratic and charitably inclined. The new organ, which replaced the Stinsford band, was substantially funded by Shirley and, through his efforts, by Lord Ilchester and others. The refurbishment of the church was similarly financed.<sup>142</sup>

Despite the wealth of detail in *UGT* relating to west gallery bands, the circumstances governing the demise of the *Mellstock* band receive disappointingly little attention. Similarly, the reactions of the villagers, for whom the band perform, are not recorded, other than those of the principal characters whose attitudes are determined by the plot of the novel. Therefore it is not clear whether the end of the band is contentious or whether it is regarded as inevitable by the local community as well as by its members.



## HARDY'S VALUE AS A SOURCE

The references cited in this chapter give some idea of the extent to which west gallery bands existed in Dorset, the type of repertoire which they employed and the instruments which they used. It is also possible to estimate the extent to which perambulations took place and the dates on which the bands departed from the churches. Thanks to Hardy, it is possible to extend the knowledge of all these features and to recover details, unobtainable elsewhere, of the make-up, organisation, and instrumentation of the Stinsford band. There are also numerous brief insights into both the behaviour of the musicians and the attitudes of the higher social orders towards them. In the latter context, the story "Old Andrey's Experiences as a Musician" is of particular value.<sup>143</sup>

Collectors of traditional music have generally concentrated on performers and participants, to the neglect of audiences, and one might reasonably look to Hardy to redress the balance in the case of the west gallery tradition which he knew so well. In the event, apart from the attitudes of squires and clergymen, we learn little of how the bands and their performances were received by other villagers and nothing of villagers' reaction to the disappearance of the bands.

Gammon suggests that local newspapers ignored the protests by church musicians, threatened with expulsion from their churches, and preferred instead to publicise the unveiling of new church organs.<sup>144</sup> This is probably true, but where protests led to violence, some publicity was inevitable. Such was the case at Fordington, a mile from Hardy's home, the village where his uncles were resident and where he was well acquainted with the sons of the clergyman involved. Given his knowledge of the Fordington affair, his anodyne treatment of the downfall of the *Mellstock* band is surprising. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, as in the case of mumming plays and 5 November celebrations, to be discussed here in subsequent chapters, Hardy prefers to gloss over social realism in order to paint the picture which he thinks his readers wish to see.

If Hardy is, indeed, guilty of sanitising reality so far as church bands are concerned, his attitude towards this area of traditional culture is nevertheless more positive than towards many others. Generally, he regrets the passing of the old ways, but accepts this as inevitable if progress is to take place. In the case of church bands, he believes that their extinction was a retrograde step.

One is inclined to regret the displacement of these ecclesiastical bandsmen by an isolated organist (often at first a barrel-organist) or harmonium player, and despite certain advantages in point of control and accomplishment which were, no doubt, secured by installing the single artist, the change has tended to stultify the professional aims of the clergy, its direct result being to curtail and extinguish the interest of parishioners in church doings. Under the old plan, from half a dozen to ten full-grown players, in addition to the numerous more or less grown-up singers, were officially occupied with the Sunday routine, and concerned in trying their best to make it an artistic outcome of the combined musical taste of the congregation. With a musical executive limited, as it mostly is limited now, to the parson's wife or daughter and the school-children, or to the school-teacher and the children, an important union of interests has disappeared.<sup>145</sup>

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84. "The Rash Bride", *CP*, pp. 252-255 (p. 252).
85. "Winter Night in Woodland", *CP*, p. 734.
86. Hardy's view of the rationale of calendar customs is briefly reviewed, in relation to November the Fifth celebrations, in chapter 8.
87. "The Paphian Ball", p. 814.
88. *UGT*, pp. 27-28 (1896 preface).
89. Dorset County Record Office, Stinsford Church Account Book 1752-1842, PE/STF CW1/1.
90. Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Hammond Collection, notes to D84 – D92.
91. Sir Stephen Collins, "The Swanage of my Boyhood", *Dorset Year Book*, 1915-16, 44-48 (p. 45).
92. E. Garland, "A Dorset Christmas Yarn", *Dorset Year Book*, 1944/45, 159-162 (pp. 160-162).
93. Dorset County Record Office, Helps.
94. ----, *Under Black Down; the Story of Portesham, a Dorset Village*, Portesham, [Portesham School?], 1968, pp. 31-32.
95. P. Robson Collection, notes of interview with Miss B. Chaffey, March 1984.
96. "The Choirmaster's Burial", *CP*, pp. 334-335.
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99. Vic Gammon, "Singing and Popular Funeral Practices in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries", *Folk Music Journal*, 5.4 (1988), 412-447 (p.413).
100. *PN*, pp. 3-4.
101. *TW*, p. 298; *UGT*, p. 184.
102. "The Country Wedding", *CP*, pp. 650-651. The names of the musicians suggest that the *Mellstock* band were the participants.
103. *MC*, p. 204. The setting is easily identified as the former Three Mariners Inn, High East Street, Dorchester, with All Saints Church opposite.
104. A. D. Townsend, *The Mellstock Carols. Original Settings of Nineteenth-Century Village Carols from the Hardy Family and Puddletown Church Manuscripts*, Witney, The Serpent Press, 1989.
105. For example, The Mellstock Band, "Under the Greenwood Tree", long playing record, SDL 360, Saydisc Records, 1985.
106. Dorset County Record Office, W. A. Pickard-Cambridge Archive, D/WPC-Z1, Z3.
107. Dorset County Museum Collection, Thomas Hardy, sketch (photocopy) "Old West Gallery, Stinsford Church", THMC, no .614.
108. Dorset County Record Office, Thomas Hardy "Plan of Stinsford Church Gallery c. 1835", PE/STF CW 7/1.
109. *UGT*, p. 60.
110. "Absent-Mindedness in a Parish Choir", *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, May 1891.
111. Dorset County Museum Collection, watercolour by Mary Hardy, THMC "Paintings by Others". This appears to be a home-made Christmas card, sent to Thomas Hardy on 24 December 1891. It seems that it has not been reproduced elsewhere.
112. Dorset County Museum Collection, sketch by Thomas Hardy, "Silent Christmas Voices", L and M-1941-7-18-(a).
113. "To My Father's Violin", *CP*, pp. 451-452.
114. P. Robson Collection, notes of interview with John Dike, March 2001.
115. Untitled sketch by Thomas Hardy in *The Architectural Notebooks of Thomas Hardy*, introduced by C. J. P. Beatty, Philadelphia, George D. MacManus, 1966. Illustrations, p. 26.
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122. Richard Grosvenor Bartelot, *The History of Fordington*, Dorchester, Henry Ling, 1915, p. 157.
123. Dorset County Museum Collection, caption to flute from Bourton Church, formerly on display, not catalogued.
124. Milne.
125. Dorset County Record Office, Helps.

126. Dorset County Library Collection, Broom.
127. Barbara Kerr, "The World of Thomas Pearce, Vicar of Morden, 1853-1882", *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, 94 (1972), 70-74 (p. 73).
128. Garrett, pp. 77-78.
129. Brown.
130. ----, *Under Black Down*.
131. Galpin, p. 175.
132. Galpin, pp. 173-175.
133. Bartelot, p. 157.
134. "A Changed Man", *CSS*, pp. 571-587.
135. Dorset County Library Collection, Broom.
136. *LW*, pp. 13, 17.
137. Millgate, p. 14.
138. Dorset County Record Office, Minute Book for the Parish of Stinsford (1842-1871), PE/STF:CW1/2, (16 June, 1843).
139. "A Few Crusted Characters", pp. 545-548.
140. *UGT*, p. 86.
141. *UGT*, pp. 48-49.
142. Timothy Hands, "Arthur Shirley (Vicar of Stinsford 1837-91)", *Thomas Hardy Annual*, 2 (1984), 171-186, (pp.180-184).
143. "A Few Crusted Characters", pp. 543-545.
144. Vic. Gammon, "Babylonian Performances; The Rise and Suppression of Popular Church Music 1670-1860", in *Popular Culture and Class Conflict*, edited by Eileen and Stephen Yeo, Brighton, Harvester, 1981, pp. 62-88 (pp. 78-79).
145. *UGT*, p. 27 (1896 preface).



## CHAPTER 6

# THOMAS HARDY AND HIS WRITINGS AS A SOURCE FOR THE STUDY OF THE MUMMERS' PLAY IN DORSET

### INTRODUCTION

Traditional drama is a somewhat narrow field of study within English traditional culture, and one for which up-to-date analysis has only recently begun to appear. Whereas, for most branches of traditional culture, Hardy's references are scattered and fragmentary, his writings on this subject are largely concentrated in one work, namely *RN*. In this novel, and in its subsequent dramatisation, he gives a detailed account of the mummings' play as recalled by him from his Dorset childhood.

As in the case of west gallery bands, the nature of the subject will first be outlined, followed by a review of the contribution of other writers. Hardy's own writings, particularly his full play text, will then be considered and their significance set in context.

### THE NATURE OF THE MUMMERS' PLAY

The earliest description of a mummings' play in England refers to Exeter in 1737.<sup>1</sup> From the number and dates of subsequent references, the plays seem to have been widespread and popular from the late eighteenth century but, by the end of the nineteenth century, their popularity was waning and very few survived beyond the First World War.

In the South of England, the time for performance was invariably the Christmas season and the participants were usually young working class men. Performances took place in farm kitchens, public houses or in busy streets; in fact in any place where a reward might reasonably be expected. Towards the end of the period of the plays' popularity, this reward was financial, but play texts suggest that the original motivation was the giving of food and drink.

The South of England play, which normally lasted for only a few minutes, had a basic cast of five stock characters; the introducer (usually Father Christmas), the hero (usually Saint George or King George), the villain, the doctor and the collector. Additional heroes, villains and collectors could be introduced but the overall course of action was always the same. First the introducer cleared a performance space and attracted a crowd. The hero and villain then fought, one being killed. The comic doctor appeared to restore the "dead" man to life and the performance was concluded by a collection from the audience. A song often preceded the collection.

The literature on mummings' plays was, until very recently, sparse and largely unsatisfactory. Tiddy's early study gives a useful selection of texts but is based upon the theory, widely held when the book was written but now largely rejected, that the play is a relic of a primitive fertility rite.<sup>2</sup> The most significant study continues to be that by Cawte,

Helm and Peacock which consists, for the most part, of a very extensive listing and classification of plays together with a lengthy bibliography.<sup>3</sup> Discussion of the nature and mode of performance of the plays is limited and the fertility theory continues to underlie the authors' approach. A more detailed study of the nature of the play, by Helm, was published posthumously in 1981 but, by then, the fertility theory, which Helm still espoused, had become untenable, thus severely limiting the value of his conclusions.<sup>4</sup> From the 1980s, the Traditional Drama Research Group produced a great deal of useful analysis, first through their journal *Roomer* and then through the occasional volumes of *Traditional Drama Studies*, both of which have stimulated further studies elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, the bulk of the Group's materials are not, at present, easily available for study. In 2001 Cass produced his detailed study of the Lancashire pace-egg play which incorporates a useful and up-to-date review of the state of scholarship in the field. Finally, and most usefully, in 2002, the appearance of Cass and Roud's *Room, Room, Ladies and Gentlemen* provided an up-to-date and wide-ranging examination of the subject.<sup>6</sup>

### THE MUMMERS' PLAY IN DORSET

The earliest Dorset reference is in William Holloway's poem *Scenes of Youth*, where the action of a play performed near Winterborne Whitechurch is briefly described.<sup>8</sup> The first examination of the subject is by J. S. Udal in a series of articles published between 1874 and 1904, the genesis of which is described by Cawte.<sup>9</sup> The substance of Udal's findings is reproduced in *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore*, where texts from Symondsbury and from an unknown West Dorset location are given.<sup>10</sup> (In the discussion below, the latter play will be referred to as "Unlocated" to avoid confusion with the West Dorset *style* of play). The Symondsbury play, which is still extant, has also been described by Kennedy.<sup>11</sup> A text exists for Sixpenny Handley<sup>12</sup> and two for West Lulworth, one of the latter transcribed by Helm from a BBC radio recording made in 1936,<sup>13</sup> A further play was recorded at Evershot during the same period but the text, which is based on the Litton Cheney play, has yet to be transcribed.<sup>14</sup> The text listed in *English Ritual Drama* as "Bridport" is, in fact, a version of the Symondsbury play<sup>15</sup> and that described, in the Dorset County Museum Collection, as from Upwey, is not consistent in its text with other Dorset plays and was deposited by a donor who had moved to Dorset from elsewhere.<sup>16</sup> The present writer's brief notes on songs in Dorset plays identify some further locations and consider an aspect of the plays which has yet to be systematically investigated.<sup>17</sup>

Further references in newspapers, local histories and in the present writer's personal collection provide evidence for the existence of some fifty plays but such evidence is usually limited to a recollection of a play's having been performed, perhaps with some fragments of text or memories of the mummers' behaviour. The ubiquity of the mummers' play in Dorset seems to have equalled that in other southern counties, but the number of surviving texts is small when compared with those for counties, such as Berkshire or Hampshire. Where writers have considered Dorset plays they have generally concentrated on the texts, a feature paralleled for other parts of the country.



One noteworthy feature emerges from the scattered and incomplete information on Dorset plays, namely a division between the east and west of the county in terms of the type of play performed. In the east, the play resembled those in neighbouring Hampshire and Wiltshire, in that there were about half a dozen characters, dressed in costumes covered with coloured rags or paper, and performing the usual hero-combat play. In West Dorset, the teams were about twelve strong, they dressed in ribboned white costumes and hats and the play often included a hobby horse. A longer version of the usual action was used and burlesque intervals were added. In some places, the play was re-written to introduce historical characters and scenes. It is in this context of largely text-based studies and an unusual local variant of the play that Hardy's contribution to the subject may be assessed.

### **THOMAS HARDY AND THE MUMMERS' PLAY IN DORSET**

Hardy's mother had two sisters living in Puddletown and, as a boy, he often walked the two and a half miles across the heath to spend time with his aunts, cousins and other relations in that village. The Sparks family, Hardy's cousins, organised the Puddletown mummers' play, the rehearsals for which were held in a barn adjacent to the family home at "Sparks Corner" in Mill Street. At one such rehearsal, according to family tradition, the young Hardy made a sexual advance to his older cousin Rebecca, prompting a family row.<sup>18</sup>

Hardy was able to draw on his knowledge of the Puddletown play for those passages in *RN* which describe the *Egdon* mummers. They rehearse in Captain Vye's fuel store and Eustacia Vye, seeing them, conceives the idea of taking part in the play as a means of gaining entry to Mrs. Yeobright's Christmas party and thus seeing her son Clym, (the returning "native"). The nature of the mummers' rehearsal is described, as are their costumes and, in the following chapter, the performance of the play at the Yeobrights' party is also described, including the quotation of several passages of the play's text.<sup>19</sup>

The place of rehearsal resembles that of the actual play at Puddletown and the only mummer fully named, Jim Starks, can only be based on Hardy's cousin Jim Sparks. In a further echo of the author's own experience, another mummer, Charley, makes a mildly sexual advance to Eustacia, who "regarded the youth steadfastly. He was three years younger than herself, but apparently not backward for his age."<sup>20</sup>

There are further references to mummers' plays in Hardy's letters, as listed in the index in chapter 2, but the most informative passage, outside *RN*, comes from an interview with the American journalist William Archer. According to Gibson, Archer was one of the more reliable Hardy chroniclers, who sent two drafts of his transcript of this interview to Hardy, for approval, before the final text was published.<sup>21</sup> In the transcript, discussion runs as follows:

Hardy: Then, again, the Christmas mummers flourished well into my recollection, - indeed they have not so long died out.

Archer: I can remember a sort of mummers in Scotland whom we called "Guisers"; but they were simply boys wearing masks and begging for half-pence.

Hardy: Oh, our mummers hereabouts gave a regular performance – “The Play of St. George” it was called. It contained quite a number of traditional characters: the Valiant Soldier, the Turkish Knight, St. George himself, the Saracen, Father Christmas, the Fair Sabra and so on. Rude as it was, the thing used to impress me very much – I can clearly recall the odd sort of thrill it would give. The performers used to carry a long staff in one hand and a wooden sword in the other, and pace monotonously round, intoning their parts on one note, and punctuating them by nicking the sword against the staff – something like this:- “Here come I, the Valiant Soldier (nick), Slasher is my name (nick).”

Archer: The pacing and rhythmic sing-song suggest kinship with the Chinese acting I have seen in San Francisco and New York. And what was the action of the play?

Hardy: I really don’t know, except that it ended in a series of mortal combats in which all the characters but St. George were killed. And then the curious thing was that they were invariably brought to life again. A personage was introduced for the purpose, the Doctor of Physic, wearing a cloak and a broad-brimmed beaver.

Archer: How many actors would there be in a company?

Hardy: Twelve to fifteen, I should think. Sometimes a large village would furnish forth two sets of mummers. They would go to the farmhouses round, between Christmas and Twelfth Night, doing some four or five performances each evening and getting ale and money at every house. Sometimes the mummers of one village would encroach upon the traditional “sphere of influence” of the other and then there would be a battle in good earnest.

Archer: Did women take part in the performances?

Hardy: I think not – the Fair Sabra was always played by a boy. But the character was often omitted.

Archer: And when did the mumming go out?

Hardy: It went on in some neighbourhoods until 1880, or thereabouts. I have heard of a parson here and there trying to revive it; but of course that isn’t at all the same thing – the spontaneity is gone.<sup>22</sup>

Assuming that Hardy was basing his recollections, in the main, on the Puddletown play, the date of 1880 for its demise is consistent with changes in that village towards the end of the nineteenth century. In the 1870s the village was largely rebuilt under the influence of a reforming squire and it is likely that the ensuing community changes undermined the existence of the play.

## THE PLAY OF ST. GEORGE

Given the relative dearth of texts for Dorset mummers’ plays, Hardy’s recollections of the Puddletown play, and his re-creation of it as the *Egdon* play in *RN*, are of great interest. In chapter 5 of the novel, the course of the first part of the play is described, along with some extracts of text. First, Father Christmas is identified as the introducer.

Father Christmas .... informed the company in smart verse that he was come, welcome or welcome not; concluding his speech with  
“Make room, make room my gallant boys,  
And give us space to rhyme;  
We’ve come to show Saint George’s play,  
Upon this Christmas time.”<sup>23</sup>



The reported speech paraphrases the introductory lines from many plays, such as that from West Lulworth:

'Ere comes I, wold Father Christmas, welcome or welcome not,  
And I hope wold Father Christmas will never be forgot.<sup>24</sup>

The phrase "St. George's Play" is not normally found in traditional plays, the usual equivalent in this speech being "sport and play" but Hardy is reflecting Dorset usage here since an identical opening speech was used at Sixpenny Handley.<sup>25</sup>

The Valiant Soldier then enters and his first couplet is quoted.

Here come I, the Valiant Soldier,  
Slasher is my name.<sup>26</sup>

The same character appears at Handley, again with identical opening lines. Hardy then introduces the Turkish Knight, the villain of the piece.

Here comes I, a Turkish Knight,  
Who learnt in Turkish land to fight;  
I'll fight this man with courage bold,  
If his blood's hot, I'll make it cold.<sup>27</sup>

This is again a recognisably traditional speech, with a local analogue in the Unlocated play:

Here comes I that Turkish Knight,  
Just come from that Turkish land to fight<sup>28</sup>

In *RN*, the Valiant Soldier's response is typical of traditional texts in repeating the content of the previous speech, rather like succeeding verses of a traditional ballad.

If, then thou art that Turkish Knight,  
Draw out thy sword and let us fight!<sup>29</sup>

"Thou art" now sounds like self-conscious archaism but "thee" and "thou" forms were still common in the west country in the nineteenth century and occur in traditional Dorset plays, as at Symondsburry.

St. George:  
Tremble, thou tyrant, for all thy sin that's past...

Gracious King:  
I'll die before I yield to thee or twenty more.<sup>30</sup>

The Valiant Soldier is dispatched by the Turkish Knight, whereupon Saint George enters with a typical vaunting speech.

Here come I, Saint George, the valiant man,  
With naked sword and spear in hand,  
Who fought the dragon and brought him to the slaughter;

And by this won fair Sabra, the King of Egypt's Daughter;  
What mortal man would dare to stand  
Before me with my sword in hand?<sup>31</sup>

This is again a familiar traditional speech with Dorset parallels; for instance from the Unlocated play.

Here comes I, King George,  
With my glittering sword and spear,  
I fought the dragon boldly and brought him to the slaughter,  
But 'twas thus I gained the fairest maid of all, the King of Egypt's daughter.<sup>32</sup>

The final two lines of the *Egdon* speech do not seem to fit with the remainder and may have been recalled by Hardy from another play since a similar couplet was used by the Valiant Soldier in the Handley version.

Is there arné a man who dare to stand  
Before me with my naked sword in hand? <sup>33</sup>

In the *Egdon* play the Turkish Knight is then wounded, restored by the Doctor, fights again and is killed. Further detailed description ceases at this point but it is subsequently indicated that Saint George kills another opponent, the Saracen, and that the fallen champions revive:

They sang the plaintive chant which follows the play, during which all the dead men rise to their feet in a silent and awful manner, like the ghosts of Napoleon's soldiers in the *Midnight Review*.<sup>34</sup>

As shown in the preceding paragraphs, the *Egdon* mummers' play in *RN* follows the course of a traditional hero-combat play and the text, so far as it is quoted, is consistent with traditional texts from elsewhere in Dorset. This shows, if further illustration were required, that folklore material in Hardy's fiction is based on genuine tradition. It does not, however, reveal much about the Puddletown play which, even in the absence of this evidence from Hardy, might be expected to be a traditional text with a marked resemblance to other Dorset plays. Nevertheless there are two features of the play which merit further comment, the first being the role of the Valiant Soldier. This character is usually one of the opponents of Saint George and is accordingly killed by him and then restored by the Doctor. In the *Egdon* play he appears "in the interest of Saint George" and fights and is killed by the Turkish Knight, before Saint George himself appears to challenge that character. There is a parallel here with the West Dorset style play at Symondsburry, where Saint Patrick begins the action by fighting against Captain Bluster on behalf of Saint George:

I will always stand by that man who did me first enlarge,  
I'll thank thee now in gratitude, my worthy friend, St. George;<sup>35</sup>

The second hint of a link to the West Dorset style of play may be found in Hardy's conversation with Archer, another illustration of the necessity to look beyond Hardy's published work in order to assess his value as a source of tradition. Here he says that the cast of the Puddletown play numbered "Twelve to fifteen, I should think.", a number typical of a West Dorset play. Only five characters are named in *RN*, although the



truncation of the description of the play, necessitated by the plot's transfer of attention to Clym and Eustacia, could explain the absence of any mention of further characters. Further elucidation did not appear for over forty years, when Hardy again turned his attention to the play, during the dramatisation of *RN*.

The dramatisation of Hardy's principal novels by the Dorchester Debating, Literary and Dramatic Society, later the Hardy Players, is documented by Wilson.<sup>36</sup> His account illustrates the author's ambivalent attitude to the productions; as he distances himself from them in public but, literally behind the scenes, anxiously tries to ensure that the plays represent the novels as he wishes to see them. This is well illustrated in the case of *RN*, where it was necessary to obtain a full text for the mummers' play, causing Hardy to write to Harold Child about the arrangements.

The Dorchester Dramatic Society is going to perform *The Return of the Native* next week. The dramatization is entirely the work of our respected Alderman, Mr. Tilley – to whom I have given no assistance whatever, beyond letting him have the complete words of the old mumming play from which speeches are quoted in the novel.<sup>37</sup>

Hardy not only produced a text for the play, but also insisted on costume details and turned up at rehearsals in order to coach the mummers in their style of delivery, an impressive effort for an eighty year-old who affected detachment from the Society's activities. His level of participation in this respect may be taken to indicate his continuing fascination with mumming plays.

Following the performances of *RN*, Hardy's text of the mummers' play was printed, for private circulation, by his second wife, Florence Emily Hardy, in 1921. The full title is *The Play of "Saint George" as Aforetime Acted by the Dorsetshire Christmas Mummers Based on the Version in "The Return of the Native" and Completed from Other Versions and from Local Tradition. Collocated and Revised by Thomas Hardy*. The play was also published by Roger Loomis in 1928<sup>38</sup> and, in giving his permission for the reprinting, Hardy again refers to the text's origin.

I have great pleasure in permitting you . . . to reprint the recension of the "Play of St. George" that I managed to concoct from my memories of it as acted in my boyhood.<sup>39</sup>

Hardy's intention was, of course, simply to provide sufficient text for that part of the play necessary to the plot of *RN* and hence there is no attempt to reconstruct the whole of the play from which the *Egdon* play was derived. Therefore the characters are as in the novel; namely Father Christmas, Valiant Soldier, Turkish Knight, Saint George, the Doctor and the Saracen. The course of action is also as in *RN* although a song is added, a feature absent from the novel.

In 1977, Preston subjected the text of Hardy's "Play of Saint George" to computer analysis and he concludes it to be "not traditional in any strict sense of the term", a judgement which is questioned below.<sup>40</sup> The ensuing criticism is based on external evidence, not available to Preston at his time of writing, and on the nature and use of his data.

Preston produced a concordance from a database of one hundred and fifty six plays and thirty-eight fragments. His program makes it possible to alphabetically list each word in the concordance centred in eighty characters of context with the succeeding words and characters alphabetised. For instance the first four usages of the key word "I" in the concordance are:

I AM A KING AND A CONQUEROR AND NOW DO I  
 I AM A KING AND A CONQUEROR TOO-AND HERE  
 I AM A KING AND A KING THATS HIGHLY KNOW  
 I AM A LADY BRIGHT AND FAIR MY FORTUNE I <sup>41</sup>

If thirteen of the first fifteen characters succeeding the key word are identical between the specimen text and the concordance, as in the first three examples above, then the key word is said to be matched. This enables each word in every play to be scored by the number of matches which it achieves. For example the opening lines of the Cinderford, Gloucestershire, play may be scored as follows:

27    13 25    30    9    3  
 Room a room brave gallants all

7    42 9 22    2 2  
 Pray give me room to rhyme <sup>42</sup>

Hence "Room" is followed by thirteen of the fifteen characters " a room brave g" on twenty-seven occasions in the concordance, "a" is followed by " room brave gal" on thirteen occasions and so forth. On this basis the Cinderford play scores 67.2% since 234 of its 348 words are matched at least once in the concordance. Hardy's text scores 47.8% (571 matches out of 1205 words). It is on this basis that Preston bases his judgement of the play's validity.

The application of computer technology to mummers' play texts, highly innovative in 1977 and relatively little used since, is a powerful and useful technique. It is particularly effective, as Preston observes, in highlighting similarities, rather than differences, between texts. Nevertheless it throws up a number of practical difficulties. For instance, the texts used in the database must themselves be "traditional" (a term not defined in Preston's paper) and, as its compiler has subsequently acknowledged, a number are, in fact, suspect in this respect.<sup>43</sup> It is also misleading to judge the significance of a play's score on a very small sample of comparators, in this case one only. The Hardy play may well score lower than Cinderford, but this may not, in itself, be a bad result. In order to make such a judgement it would be necessary to know the score of all the plays in the concordance, in rank order, and to establish a cut-off point, below which a play is not traditional. Further problems arise from the disparate lengths of the plays and fragments in the concordance. The basic course of action of all hero-combat plays is similar and so is the substance of the main speeches but, the longer the play, the more non-basic (and thus non-matching) material it will contain and thus the lower it will score on analysis. In this context it is significant that Hardy's play contains 1205 words against only 348 at Cinderford.



Reference to the Dorset element of Preston's database also proves instructive. There are three Dorset texts, namely Symondsburry and Unlocated from Udal's paper "Christmas Mummers in Dorsetshire" and a further Symondsburry text from Kennedy's 1952 paper. Examination of the scoring of Hardy's play shows that, where its words score as matching the concordance, it is almost invariably with these Dorset versions. For example, part of Hardy's Valiant Soldier speech may be compared with the corresponding speech in Unlocated.

Hardy:

2 0 0 0 0 1 0  
 One of my brethren I've seen wounded,

1 0 0 0  
 Another I've seen slain,

0 32 2 0 0 0 0  
 So I will fight with any foe

0 0 0 0  
 Upon this British plain.<sup>42</sup>

Unlocated:

One of my brothers I have seen wounded  
 And another I have seen slain  
 I'll fight thee King George  
 On the British plain.<sup>44</sup>

From the scoring, the Hardy version looks very anomalous, with only "I" associated with "will fight" appearing to be traditional. On the other hand, comparison with Unlocated reveals a marked similarity, which would be enhanced by simple transpositions such as brethren/brothers or upon/on. An even greater similarity occurs between a low scoring couplet from Father Christmas in the Hardy version and the corresponding speech at Symondsburry.

Hardy:

4 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0  
 I've heard tell of a mill that grinds old people young,

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 4 0 0 0  
 But not of a leech to give these dead men tongue.<sup>45</sup>

Symondsburry:

I have heard talk of a mill to grind old men young, but I have never heard of a doctor to bring dead men to life again.<sup>46</sup>

These are the only instances in which the motif of the mill, which grinds old men young, appears in mummers' play texts. The motif is believed to have made its first appearance in

print in England in about 1672.<sup>47</sup> Interestingly, it was associated in sixteenth century Europe with the rejuvenation of old women by miraculous means. Such rejuvenation is the subject of the second part of the Symondsburry play.

The resemblance between the Hardy play speech and that from Symondsburry is obvious although, according to the computer analysis, the former is almost completely non-traditional. The play on which Hardy drew may have had the mill couplet in the form given by him or it might be that he recalled the words incorrectly. In fact it is probable that his first line is traditional, but that he altered the second one to fit his rhyming scheme (since his play is in verse while traditional Dorset plays are largely in prose). Therefore the couplet may well technically be corrupt, but it nevertheless records the essential elements of the traditional speech, albeit in amended form. As a result, we know that the Puddletown play contained this very rare element in this particular context. A completely accurate reconstruction would be better, from the point of view of the folklorist, but what Hardy does give us is of sufficient value for it not to be dismissed as “non-traditional”.

A final illustration may be given of the way in which the “Saint George” play text may score badly on computer analysis while demonstrating a close relationship to the Dorset tradition. The closing lines of Hardy’s text are spoken by Father Christmas, as follows:

0 0 0 1 1  
Your needs will have confest

0 0 0 2 0 0  
That our calling is the best

0 1 2 0 0 0 0 0  
But now we won’t delay, lest tediousness befall,

1 10 17 20 26 58 36 1 14 3  
And I wish you a Merry Christmas, and God bless you all.<sup>48</sup>

The only recognisably traditional part of the speech is the Christmas greeting in the last line, while odd words elsewhere show a minimal correlation to the concordance. For comparison, the closing part of the Symondsburry play is set out below, with the critical lines asterisked:

Servingmen (singing)

- \* So we need must confess
- \* That your calling is the best,  
And we will give you the uppermost hand;
- \* So no more we won’t delay,  
And we will pray both night and day,  
God bless the honest husbandman.

Servant-man

- Well done, old Father Christmas, and that is the best of all,
- \* I wish you “Merry Christmas”, and “God bless you all”<sup>49</sup>



It is clear that Hardy had only partly recalled the closing lines of the play and had linked these lines (using the dreadful “lest tediousness befall”) to produce a coherent rhyming conclusion. Once more the computer analysis fails to identify the very close relationship between the Saint George text and the traditional West Dorset style play.

When *RN* was staged, in 1921, Hardy told the cast that the mummers’ play should finish with a song. Having forgotten the actual song employed, he suggested the use of “A Mumming We Will Go”.<sup>50</sup> In fact, the textual comparison above shows that he had recalled some of the closing lines of “Husbandman and Servingman”, the song traditionally used to end mummers’ plays in West Dorset.

Further instances could be given in which “The Play of Saint George” closely parallels West Dorset style mummers’ plays while appearing to be non-traditional on computer analysis. This anomaly is consistent with the thesis that the Hardy play was a fairly accurate reconstruction of a West Dorset style play, from Puddletown, as seen by the author in the mid-nineteenth century. The text is not traditional in the sense that the text from Symondsburry is traditional, but is a good deal closer to that ideal than is suggested by computer analysis. Where lines are obviously amended or interpolated by Hardy, it is in order to retain his rhyming scheme while retaining the sense of the partly remembered traditional original.

Preston’s views on the nature of Hardy’s text are as follows:

Hardy did make use of a few traditional speeches, but most of them occur in *Return of the Native*, and to these he coupled speeches which may yet be found in play texts from Dorsetshire. Much of this he re-wrote and expanded to make a coherent verse version based on his general knowledge of the local tradition.<sup>51</sup>

The interpretation advanced in this study is not altogether inconsistent with these views, but it shows that Hardy’s knowledge of the tradition was, as demonstrated above, much greater than envisaged by Preston.

Given the correlations between “The Play of Saint George” and the Symondsburry and Unlocated plays it is necessary to consider whether Hardy might have drawn on the texts of those plays as published by J.S. Udall in 1880. He may not have seen them at the time of publication, but he subsequently became aware of their existence since, in November 1918, he wrote to Udall seeking a sample text.

I have been searching for the mumming play of “Saint George” of which I had a copy many years ago, and which, as you may remember, I referred to in “The Return of the Native”. I believe that you worked up the subject of Dorset mumming for the folk-lore [sic] Society, and hence it occurs to me that you may have an old copy of the play that the Dorset Dramatic Society could use in giving a short entertainment in the Corn Exchange here to raise funds for a charitable object connected with the war. I have promised the Society to enquire if you have such a copy, or could tell them where they could get one.<sup>52</sup>

This passage is interesting since it reveals that Hardy possessed a written text of the Puddletown play at an earlier period in his life. Udall evidently responded quickly, since Hardy acknowledged receipt of the (presumably two) texts four days later:

Thanks about the play. You may depend on my returning it as soon as one of the versions has been copied.<sup>53</sup>

In the event the “short entertainment” did not take place, presumably due to the signing of the Armistice, two days later, on 11 November. There is no further reference to the plays in Hardy’s correspondence although they were duly returned, since they are held in Dorset County Record Office under Udal’s name. The question must now arise as to whether Hardy drew on Udal’s texts in writing “The Play of Saint George” some two years later.

Although there are very obvious familial similarities between Hardy’s text and those from Symondsburry and Unlocated, the differences between the Hardy version and the two traditional texts are sufficient to establish that Hardy did not have Udal’s texts to hand when he wrote “The Play of Saint George”. For instance, the first speech of The Turkish Knight in the Hardy and Unlocated versions is as follows:

### Hardy

Here come I, the Turkish Knight,  
Come from Turkish land to fight;  
I’ll fight Saint George and all his crew,  
Aye countryfolk and warriors too.<sup>54</sup>

### Unlocated

Here comes I that Turkish Knight,  
Just come from that Turkish land to fight;  
If King George do meet me here,  
I will try his courage without fear.<sup>55</sup>

The resemblance is obvious but it is clear that Hardy is not quoting or paraphrasing the traditional text. Similarly the Doctor’s introductory speeches may be compared between the Hardy and Symondsburry plays:

### Hardy

Being a doctor of great fame  
Who from the ancient countries came,  
And knowing Asia, Afric-ay,  
And every mystery out that way,  
I’ve learned to do the best of cures  
For all the human frame endures.  
I can restore a leg or arm  
From mortification or more harm,  
I can repair a sword-slit pate,  
A leg cut off – if not too late.<sup>56</sup>

### Symondsburry

Yes, I am a doctor – a doctor of good fame. I have travelled through Europe, Asia, Africa and America, and by long practice and experience I have learned the best of cures for most disorders instant to the human body;



find nothing difficult in restoring a limb, or mortification, or an arm being cut off by a sword, or a head being struck off by a canon ball, if application have not been delayed until it is too late.<sup>57</sup>

Again the parallels are obvious, but Hardy is neither quoting nor paraphrasing the Symondsburry version, even allowing for alterations to fit his rhyming scheme. Similarly, Hardy's mistaken conflation of the last verse of "Husbandman and Servingman" with the play's closing lines, as described above, is not consistent with his having the traditional play before him as he wrote his own version. He would also have been unlikely to tell the cast of the *RN* play that he had forgotten the name of the closing song if he had copies of Udal's manuscripts to hand. Further comparison of the Hardy text with the two traditional versions reinforces the conclusion that Hardy is paraphrasing a text closely related to but different from the Symondsburry and Unlocated versions. For instance, he also includes lines which, although traditional according to Preston's analysis, are not found in the Symondsburry or Unlocated texts. It is therefore difficult to escape the conclusion that he is trying to reconstruct a different play, which bears a pronounced similarity to the known West Dorset style of traditional play.

So far as the borrowing of Udal's texts is concerned, it must be assumed that, copying having been rendered unnecessary by the cancellation of the entertainment, Hardy read the texts with interest and returned them to Udal. When unexpectedly approached to provide a mummers' play text some two years later he was scarcely able to ask Udal for the texts for a second time and, instead, fell back on his own, by then imperfect, recollection of the Puddletown play. At most, his reading of the traditional texts in 1918 may have refreshed his memory of corresponding parts of that play, such as the miraculous mill. This mirrors the situation, briefly outlined in chapter 3, whereby Hardy uses printed versions of traditional songs to refresh his memory of songs formerly familiar to him, but does not directly use the printed versions.

"The Play of Saint George" is an interesting document, indicating the existence of a West Dorset style play at Puddletown and giving the outline of its text and action. As a West Dorset play, the Puddletown version would have included some twelve characters, as confirmed by Hardy in his conversation with William Archer. The names of those characters which are not mentioned in *RN* have been lost, other than that of "the Fair Sabra", the King of Egypt's daughter. Although named during Saint George's opening speech in some texts, for instance that from Sixpenny Handley, the character does not appear as such in any Dorset play. Hardy told Archer that the character "was always played by a boy", while the West Dorset style plays at Symondsburry, Unlocated and Pymore include a female character played by a male.<sup>58</sup> In all these cases the "female" is an old woman, Father Christmas's wife, who plays a comic role which does not correspond to The Fair Sabra as described by Hardy. Since he told Archer that "the character was often omitted", he may have seen an unusual play, which included the Fair Sabra, but, if so, this was a complete departure from the usual cast of a mummers' play. In West Dorset style plays the comic female character appears in a burlesque scene following the usual hero-combat element. Hardy makes no mention of such a scene in the "Play of Saint George" but does acknowledge its existence in a comment to a friend following the 1920 dramatisation of *RN*;

Some versions are loaded with all sorts of absurdities, which were shorn off the reading that was used here. No doubt they were "gag" added by the irresponsible performers of past generations.<sup>59</sup>

## BACKGROUND AND STYLE OF PERFORMANCE IN DORSET PLAYS

Hardy was probably the only Victorian commentator on mummers' plays to have actually attended a rehearsal; so his description of the mummers' rehearsal in *RN* is unique. The participants are "seven or eight lads", which is three or four more than mentioned in the subsequent description of the play, again showing that Hardy had edited down the play for the purpose of his plot. Father Christmas, who takes charge of the collection, is played by an adult. The mummers learn their words aurally, from prompting by a former performer, which suggests that the lads are illiterate. This is consistent with Clym Yeobright's strictures, in *RN*, on the state of education on *Egdon Heath* and his decision, at the end of the novel, to start a school in the area. Nevertheless, as has already been shown, the Puddletown play, upon which *Egdon* is based, was written out and Hardy was aware of this since he had owned a copy. The final rehearsal takes place on 23 December, the day before the performance, although Charley, who plays the Turkish Knight has taken three weeks to learn his short part.

The mode of performance of mummers' plays is described on more than one occasion by Hardy, notably in his frequently quoted observation in *RN*.

A traditional pastime is to be distinguished from a mere revival in no more striking feature than this, in that while in the revival all is excitement and fervour, the survival is carried on with a stolidity and absence of stir which sets one wondering why a thing that is done so perfunctorily should be kept up at all. Like Balaam and other unwilling prophets, the agents seem moved by an inner compulsion to say and do their allotted parts whether they will or no.<sup>60</sup>

A further description of mumming style is given in Hardy's preface to *D*.

In respect of such plays of poesy and dream a practicable compromise may conceivably result, taking the shape of a monotonous delivery of speeches, with dreamy conventional gestures, something in the manner traditionally maintained by the old Christmas mummers, the curiously hypnotizing impressiveness of whose automatic style - that of persons who spoke by no will of their own - may be remembered by all who ever experienced it.<sup>61</sup>

References in *RN* to "strutting" and "ranting" should therefore be understood as indicating unnatural movement and speech, rather than physical and verbal vigour. The existence of a specific style is also indicated by Eustacia's imitation of the young mummer Charley's actions in *RN*.

Eustacia then proceeded in her delivery, striking the sword against the staff or lance at the minatory phrases, in the orthodox mumming manner, and strutting up and down.<sup>62</sup>

Hardy is, of course, speaking from personal recollection, as shown in his conversation with Archer.

. The performers used to carry a long staff in one hand and a wooden sword in the other, and pace monotonously round, intoning their parts on one note, and punctuating them by nicking the sword against the staff - something like this:- Here come I, the Valiant Soldier (nick), Slasher is my name (nick)."<sup>63</sup>



Udal queries Hardy's description, in the light of his own experience of plays in the Symondsburry area:

Mr. Hardy does not seem to see in the play any cheery or humorous expression of the jollities of a Christmas festivity such as I have always considered it to typify.....

...Be this as it may, Mr. Hardy possesses such a marvellous insight into all that concerns the psychology of the Dorset peasant that I will not venture to gainsay his deduction. I can only say for myself that I have noticed no such perfunctoriness in the spirited little performances that I have witnessed down in West Dorset;... Any occasional want of vivacity or self-abstraction in a performer I have put down to the unaccustomed burden of having to commit so many lines to memory.<sup>64</sup>

In fact, Hardy's description of the mummers' delivery is borne out by J. H. Cooke, the Rector of Shillingstone in North Dorset, writing of that village's mummers, as recalled from the 1850s.

Wearing tight-fitting garments of red and white, and high mitre-like headdresses, they stood stiffly in a row and slew one another like marionettes with their white wands. Their heroic declarations, delivered in the broadest Dorset dialect, would have been wellnigh unintelligible to anyone not familiar with the local vernacular. Such was the curious survival of the mystery plays – formal, undramatic, incredibly dull: to revive the mummers now would be futile.<sup>65</sup>

Incidentally, Cooke's description of the costumes identifies the Shillingstone play as of the West Dorset type, like those at Puddletown and Symondsburry.

In 1936, the BBC recorded a mummers' play called "Crimea" at Evershot. The text was based on a West Dorset style play, which had been collected at Litton Cheney, by G. W. Greening, from Harry Webber and two companions, all of whom who had been in the play, when younger. Mr. Webber took part in the recording, during which he is described as being seventy-eight years old and therefore, assuming that he took part in the play as a young man, he would have originally performed in the 1870s. Reference to the recording, in which Mr. Webber plays Friend Turk, reveals a marked difference between his rhythmic, automatic mode of speech and the naturalistic tones of the other performers. As a reproduction of the mumming style of the 1870s this bears every resemblance to the delivery described by Hardy.<sup>66</sup>

As well as describing the mummers' automatic style of delivery and disinterested attitude Hardy mentions the audience's reaction.

Nobody commented any more than they would have commented on the fact of mushrooms coming in autumn or snowdrops in spring. They took the piece as phlegmatically as did the actors themselves. It was a phase of cheerfulness which was, as a matter of course, to be passed through every Christmas, and there was no more to be said.<sup>67</sup>

Cass has shown that spectator reaction to pace-egging plays varies with venue and type of audience and this is also likely to have been the case in respect of Dorset mummers' plays in Hardy's youth.<sup>68</sup> Certainly, Hardy's description of the reaction of the *Egdon* audience to the mummers could apply today to the annual performances of the Stour Vale Mummers, as they tour East Dorset pubs with their performance of the Sixpenny Handley play.<sup>69</sup>

It should be said that, as in some other instances such as the celebration of November the Fifth, Hardy avoids mention of the less attractive features of traditional culture. For example, on Christmas Eve 1828, the Bockhampton Band ventured into Fordington, where they were set upon by the Fordington mummers, who considered that they had a monopoly on Christmas entertainment and its rewards in that district. In the ensuing battle, the mummers emerged victorious, but subsequently appeared in court, where three received prison sentences.<sup>70</sup> Hardy was well aware of this event since, not only had his family lived at Bockhampton at that time, but he subsequently made notes on the newspaper account of the trial, some sixteen years before the publication of *RN*. His notes seek to disguise a family involvement in the fracas, since the man he notes as J- or H-, an injured member of the Bockhampton Band, was, in fact, John Hardy, his uncle. It may be this incident to which he refers during his interview with Archer.

. Sometimes the mummers of one village would encroach upon the traditional "sphere of influence" of the other and then there would be a battle in good earnest.<sup>71</sup>

Despite this comment the mummers in *RN* present a picture of decorum which, apart from Hardy's own knowledge of mummers' behaviour, is not consistent with recollections from elsewhere in Dorset.

I haven't heard about mummers for almost longer than I can remember. There used to be some at Litton Cheney. When you opened the door they fell in.<sup>72</sup>

During the performance [at West Lulworth] they were supplied with drink and mince pies, and by the time they had called at the farms and large houses in the village, they were really merry and if they had not known their various parts perfectly it would have been a fiasco, but as it was performed by the same persons every year they could take any part required, and if one had had a little too much he would be left on the settee until the play was over, and then taken on with the others to the next place by which time in the winter air he would be fit to take part.<sup>73</sup>

## COSTUME IN DORSET PLAYS

Outside Hardy's writings, there is little information on nineteenth-century Dorset mummers' costumes. The earliest description, which is by Holloway, refers to the end of the eighteenth century and is brief, but informative.

...., behold a glitt'ring train;  
In Sunday's best apparel, richly lac'd  
Down every seam with paper, gold-embossed  
Of paper too, aloft their ensign waves;  
Their helmets shine with nodding plumes adorned,  
Pluck'd from the barn-door cock or turkey's tail;  
With swords of wood, or lances, trembling white,  
The peasant champions onward proudly stride.<sup>74</sup>

Barnes, referring to North Dorset in the early nineteenth century, gives less detail but is consistent with Holloway.



A set of youths who go about at Christmas, decked with painted paper and tinsel, .... One of the characters, with a humpback and bauble, represents "Old Father Christmas"<sup>75</sup>

Udal, writing of the 1870s, much closer to the time at which Hardy was familiar with the Puddletown play, gives a picture resembling that given by that author in *RN*.

"Father Christmas" himself was sometimes mounted on a wooden horse, covered with trappings of black cloth, from which the old man was generally more than once thrown. The rest of the party was decked out as befitted the character each was intended to assume, garnished with ribbons, coloured strips of paper, caps, sashes, buttons, swords, helmets etc.<sup>76</sup>

The costumes worn by the Puddletown mummers seen by Hardy may be reconstructed from his descriptions of the *Egdon* mummers' costumes in *RN* and from that group's subsequent manifestation in "The Play of Saint George". The description of the costumes in *RN* is detailed and illuminating:

Without the co-operation of sisters and sweethearts the dresses were likely to be a failure; but on the other hand, this class of assistance was not without its drawbacks. The girls could never be brought to respect tradition in designing and decorating the armour; they insisted on attaching loops and bows of silk and velvet in any situation pleasing to their taste. Gorget, gusset, basinet, cuirass, gauntlet, sleeve, all alike in the view of these feminine eyes were practicable spaces whereon to sow scraps of fluttering colour.

It might be that Joe, who fought on the side of Christendom, had a sweetheart, and that Jim, who fought on the side of the Moslem, had one likewise. During the making of the costumes it would come to the knowledge of Joe's sweetheart that Jim's was putting bright silk scallops at the bottom of her lover's surcoat, in addition to the ribbons of the visor, the bars of which being invariably formed of coloured strips about half an inch wide hanging before the face, were mostly of that material. Joe's sweetheart straightway placed brilliant silk on the scallops of the hem in question and, going a little further, added ribbon tufts to the shoulder pieces. Jim's, not to be outdone, would affix bows and rosettes everywhere.

The reality was that in the end the Valiant Soldier, of the Christian army, was distinguished by no peculiarity of accoutrement from the Turkish Knight; and what was worse, on a casual view Saint George himself might be mistaken for his deadly enemy, the Saracen. The guisers themselves, though inwardly regretting this confusion of persons, could not afford to offend those by whose assistance they so largely profited, and the innovations were allowed to stand.

There was, it is true, a limit to this tendency to uniformity. The Leech or Doctor preserved his character intact: his darker habiliments, peculiar hat, and the bottle of physic slung under his arm, could never be mistaken. And the same might be said of the conventional figure of Father Christmas, with his gigantic club, an older man, who accompanied the band as general protector in long night journeys from parish to parish, and was bearer of the purse.<sup>77</sup>

There is a difference here from the descriptions of Holloway and Barnes, in that paper, tinsel and feathers are not mentioned, being superseded by ribbon. Hardy's suggestion as to the reason for the lack of differentiation in the costumes is ingenious. It is a fact that mummers in the south of England did not generally dress "in kind" and, with the exception of the Doctor and sometimes Father Christmas, were indistinguishable. This may account for the repetitive introductions on the entrance of characters, as they seek to distinguish their identity from one another, as at Symondsburry.

Egyptian King;

Walk in Saint George, his warlike (ardour?) to display,

Walk in Saint George

Saint George:

Here am I Saint George, an Englishman so stout.<sup>78</sup>

When *RN* was first published, in serial form, Hardy gave assistance to the illustrator and his account of the mummers' costumes is detailed and includes sketches.

The sketch of a mummer's dress which I sent was merely intended to show the general system on which they used to decorate themselves; the surcoat or tunic was formed of a white smockfrock rather shorter than usual, tied in round the waist by a strap – this was almost invariably the groundwork of the costume; thus,

[Three illustrations]

The figure in these sketches is however too short, except the third. The helmet was made of pasteboard, & was much like one of those articles called "tea-cosys" with a tuft at the top. .... Father Christmas was a conventional figure – an old man with a hump-back and a great club.<sup>79</sup>

Hardy's sketches are reproduced in the appendix as illustration 10, as are Hopkins' interpretation of them in his subsequent drawing (illustration 11).

When *RN* was dramatised in 1920, Hardy advised on the nature of the costumes, and the results may be seen in a contemporary photograph (illustration 12). Father Christmas wears a conventional outfit, the Doctor seems to be dressed in a black suit and the four combatants are dressed in white suits, decorated with ribbons, and in crescent-shaped helmets, with ribbons hanging over the face. The latter characters may be distinguished by the decoration of their hats; the Turkish Knight's, for instance, being decorated with a crescent and star.

In 1961, "The Play of Saint George" was revived by Gertrude Bugler, who had played Eustacia and the Turkish Knight in 1920, and it was presented at Beaminster. Photographs of the performance show costumes similar to those in the earlier presentation and reveal that the decorative ribbons are red, green and yellow (illustration 13). Father Christmas wears a Santa Claus style of costume, rather than the robe worn in 1920, which may indicate that the costumes were newly made for the 1961 performance, although the remaining costumes appear the same. The Doctor may be clearly seen and is wearing a black cloak and soft cap. He carries a large stone bottle, an item seemingly deemed by Hardy to be an important prop, given his response when a friend had supplied a suitable version, following the 1920 production.

My sincere thanks for the translation & for the pilgrim's bottle which will be admirably adapted for "the doctor's use" in the mumming play, if the company ever do it again, as he says that his unrivalled medical knowledge has been acquired in the east.<sup>80</sup>

The crescent-shaped helmets are characteristic of Hampshire plays, those in West Dorset being high and mitre shaped, but the former style was used at West Lulworth up to 1913 and, from Hardy's evidence, must also have been used at Puddletown.<sup>81</sup>



The mummers in "The Play of Saint George" carry lances of elaborate design, as sketched by Hardy for the illustrator of *RN*. The use of lances in Dorset mummers' plays has not subsequently been noted, but is referred to in Holloway's poem and may have been a feature more common during that earlier period of which he wrote.

Dorset is very fortunate in having an extant traditional play, at Symondsbury, thus enabling a comparison between Hardy's recollections and the current style of mummers' costumes. This Symondsbury play lapsed during the 1920s and was revived in 1951, with costumes made locally, on the lines of those formerly used. The hobby horse survived from the 1920s team and is probably that seen by Udal in about 1870. The costumes used in the 1952 performance, which was filmed by Kennedy are, for the most part, more elaborate than those used at the present time (illustration 14).<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, both the 1952 and current versions are based on white suits, decorated with ribbons and rosettes, and on high caps, with ribbons covering the face. This shows a remarkable degree of continuity with the costumes seen by Hardy at Puddletown in the 1850s and subsequently described and reconstructed in *RN* and "The Play of Saint George".

## THE VALUE OF HARDY'S WRITINGS

The literature on Dorset mummers' plays refers mostly to the period from 1870 onwards and comprises five texts, of which one (Unlocated) is incomplete and one (Evershot/Litton Cheney) is partly re-written, together with a number of fragments and some brief descriptions and observations. There is also, of course, the invaluable resource of an extant play at Symondsbury. Hardy's various writings on the subject offer a complementary perspective in that they are based on pre-1870 practice and, while offering limited authentic textual material, provide information on other aspects of the plays, which are largely or completely unobtainable elsewhere.

His "recension" of the Puddletown mummers' play, in the guise of "The Play of Saint George" provides a mixture of traditional and reconstructed text which gives a clear outline of the first part of a traditional West Dorset type of play. Rehearsal technique and mode of performance are clearly outlined in the relevant chapters of *RN*, while the dramatisation of that novel, together with Hardy's own sketches and recollections, give a very clear picture of Dorset mummers' costumes in the mid-nineteenth century. The attitudes of mummers and their audience are also described in *RN*, albeit modified for the purpose of the author's characterisation.

In order to draw fully on Hardy's knowledge of and interest in this aspect of traditional culture it has again proved necessary to consider not only his fiction but also illustration, drama, correspondence, interview and personal recollection. Only by exploring all these facets of Hardy and his work is it possible to fully appreciate his value as a source.

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58. For the Pymore play, see A. G. Eveleigh, "The Mummers", in *Dorset Year Book*, 1928, 32-34.
59. Letter to Sir Hamo Thornycroft, 28 November, 1920, *CL6*, p. 47.
60. *RN*, pp. 127-128.
61. *D*, pp.7-8.
62. *RN*, p. 133.
63. Archer.
64. Udal (1922), p. 99.
65. Rev. J. H. Cooke, *Shillingstone – the Story of a Dorset Village*, Shillingstone, The Author, 1912, pp. 87-88.
66. "Crimea".
67. *RN*, p. 141.
68. Cass, pp. 56-58.

69. The present writer noted a similar response to the Uttoxeter [Staffordshire] Guisers, a traditional team, in the 1970s.
70. -----, "Epiphany Sessions", *Dorset County Chronicle*, 24 January, 1828, no pagination; Charlotte Lindgren, "Thomas Hardy: Grim Facts and Local Lore", *Thomas Hardy Journal*, 1.3 (October 1985), 18-27 (pp. 21-22).
71. Archer.
72. Roy Vickery, "West Dorset Folklore Notes", *Folklore*, 89 (1978), 154.
73. E. C. Cawte Collection., letter from L. H. Shutler to M. I. Duncan, 5 August 1972.
74. Holloway.
75. William Barnes, *A Grammar and Glossary of the Dorset Dialect*, Berlin, A. Asher for The Philological Society, 1863, p. 71.
76. Udal, p. 86.
77. *RN*, p. 128.
78. Udal, p. 89.
79. Letter to Arthur Hopkins, 20 February 1878, *CL1*, pp. 54-55.
80. Letter to Lady Hoare, 3 January 1922, *CL6*, p. 134.
81. P. Robson Collection, note of an interview with Mrs. Shutler, Dorchester, 1984.
82. "Walk in St. George", cine film, English Folk Dance and Song Society, 1951.



## CHAPTER 7

# THOMAS HARDY AND HIS WRITINGS AS A SOURCE FOR THE STUDY OF WITCHCRAFT IN DORSET

## INTRODUCTION

The index in chapter 2 lists very many examples of superstitions and beliefs. Of these, by far the most frequently represented are those connected with witchcraft, a subject which held a particular fascination for Hardy. His references to witchcraft are sufficient, both numerically and in their level of detail, to form a basis for comparison with those from other sources, which may significantly enhance the knowledge of this subject in a Dorset context.

As in the previous two chapters, the analysis begins with a definition of the nature of the subject, followed by an indication of the extent of the material available from other writers. Hardy's own contribution is then assessed, first by attempting to identify his sources, and then by detailed consideration of his references. In this respect, his treatment of hag-riding and counter-witchcraft are of particular value.

## THE NATURE OF WITCHCRAFT

The term "witchcraft" has come to have a number of meanings including, for instance, supposed pacts with The Devil and some beliefs associated with modern paganism. So far as this study is concerned the term is used as defined by Udal, i.e.

...a malefic influence possessed by certain individuals (generally old women, though male witches, or wizards, were not uncommon), over the person and property of those with whom they might be brought into contact.<sup>1</sup>

## THE LITERATURE ON WITCHCRAFT IN DORSET

Udal devotes a chapter of *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore* to witchcraft<sup>2</sup> and the subject is touched upon by the late nineteenth century antiquarian, March<sup>3</sup> and, in the early twentieth century, in a paper by Rawlence.<sup>4</sup> There is a collection of historic Dorset cases of witchcraft, edited by G. J. Davies<sup>5</sup>, with an interesting commentary on the subject, and there is a useful short account by Lea.<sup>6</sup> Owen Davies's recent study of Somerset witchcraft frequently strays into North Dorset for its coverage, and his period, the mid to late nineteenth century, coincides with that of which Hardy writes.<sup>7</sup>

## HARDY'S SOURCES FOR HIS REFERENCES TO WITCHCRAFT

In a 1903 letter, commenting on a draft article by Hermann Lea, Hardy refers, with a typical side-swipe at his critics, to the survival of witchcraft belief in Dorset.

It is singular how these old beliefs survive, though even so long ago as when I introduced some of them into the *Return of the Native*, & other stories, people would hardly credit them as facts.<sup>8</sup>

*RN* was published in book form in 1878, so Hardy is suggesting that, at that time, and despite the rejection of witchcraft belief by his middle class readers, such beliefs continued to maintain a hold over their less-educated contemporaries. In another letter, written eight years later in response to a query as to whether the witchcraft references in *W* were drawn from his own experience, he was able to reiterate his position and to give a contemporary example.

Whether belief in dealings with the Evil One by means of magic, as in the supposed case of Fitzpiers, still survives in this county I am not quite aware, but belief in witchcraft - another form of it - still flourishes here in nooks & corners. Quite recently a man would not let his newly married son and daughter-in-law go into a cottage occupied by an old woman, on the ground that she had been a witch, & that her malign influence lingering in the house would injure them.<sup>9</sup>

This survival of witchcraft belief into the second half of the nineteenth, and even the early part of the twentieth century is similarly testified by Udal, who cites a number of examples from written sources.<sup>10</sup> Owen Davies's extensive researches reveal a similar picture in Somerset, but he also suggests, from a decline in the number of court cases involving witchcraft allegations, that "By the late nineteenth century the popular fear of witches and the resort to magic was undoubtedly waning in Somerset."<sup>11</sup> This may well have been the case in Dorset also, but Udal, Lea, Rawlence and other writers on the subject were more concerned to demonstrate the survival of belief than to offer a quantitative analysis, although Udal does concede that "even at the close of the nineteenth century in the county of Dorset the belief in witchcraft still eked out a flickering existence".<sup>12</sup> Hardy's reference to survival in "nooks and corners" in his 1911 letter, also accords with Davies's position.

If witchcraft belief were indeed still alive in the second half of the nineteenth century, then Hardy, who was in his teens in the 1850s, would have had ample opportunity to observe the phenomenon at first hand. Even as late as 1913, the *Dorset County Chronicle* reported a case of "overlooking" at Higher Bockhampton, Hardy's birthplace and his family's home for many years thereafter.<sup>13</sup> Hardy also records a story from an earlier period, concerning his maternal great-grandfather (John Swetman, 1770-1822), which recalls direct family contact with a supposed witch.

A fortune-telling gypsy had encamped on the edge of one of his fields, and on a Sunday morning he went to order her away. Finding her obdurate he said: 'If you don't take yourself off I'll have you burnt as a witch!' She pulled his handkerchief from his pocket, and threw it into her fire, saying, 'If that burn I burn'. The flames curled up round the handkerchief, which was his best, of India silk, but it did not burn, and she handed it back to him intact. The tale goes that he was so impressed by her magic that he left her alone.<sup>14</sup>



Hardy's references to Conjuror Minterne and Conjuror Trendle, set out later in this chapter, also show that he was drawing on actual practitioners for his characterisation.

## HARDY'S VIEW OF WITCHES AND WITCHCRAFT

Two witches are named in Hardy's writings. The first is Diana Chester, whose activities are mentioned in an 1872 note in contrast to those of a "planet ruler" (i.e. astrologer).

Diana Chester was the opposite. She used to work her spells by the Devil.<sup>15</sup>

The second, Elizabeth Endorfield, appears in *UGT*. Despite her suggestive surname it is clear from Hardy's description that she possesses no occult powers.

Elizabeth Endorfield had a repute among women which was in its nature something between distinction and notoriety. It was founded on the following items of character. She was shrewd and penetrating; her house stood in a lonely place; she never went to church; she wore a red cloak; she always wore her bonnet indoors; and she had a pointed chin. Thus far her attributes were distinctly Satanic; and those who looked no further called her, in plain terms, a witch. But she was not gaunt, nor ugly in the upper part of her face, nor particularly strange in manner; so that when her more intimate acquaintances spoke of her the term was softened, and she became simply a Deep Body, who was as long-headed as she was high. It may be stated that Elizabeth belonged to a class of suspects who were gradually losing their mysterious characteristics under the administration of the young vicar; though during the long reign of Mr. Grinham the parish of Mellstock had proved extremely favourable to the growth of witches.<sup>16</sup>

This is a remarkably prescient statement of a theory which became popular in the last quarter of the twentieth century, namely that those accused of witchcraft were not necessarily wilful evil-doers. Instead, they were often individuals perceived to be outside the bounds of the normal community; typically lonely old women of eccentric habits. Hardy's understanding of the reality of witchcraft belief is similarly illustrated in *RN*. Here, Eustacia Vye is single but independent, of foreign parentage, comes from a large town, rarely attends church and generally lives outside the day-to-day communal life of *Egdon Heath*. As a result, when Johnny Nunsuch, who has performed small errands for her, falls sick, Eustacia is accused by Johnny's mother of causing the illness by witchcraft.

Witches were generally believed to cause harm to people and animals by "overlooking" them or viewing them with an "evil eye". The results are described by Lea.

The immediate effect on a person who has been "overlooked" . . . . consists as a rule of some sort of indisposition. This gradually increases to severe sickness, and finally death intervenes. The disease is usually of an extremely subtle nature, defying accurate diagnosis, and is often termed by the medical man mental or hysterical.<sup>17</sup>

This is what happens to Johnny Nunsuch in *RN* and, in the novel, Christian Cantle's remarks on seeing a recently killed adder reflect the heath folk's view of Eustacia's supposed actions towards Johnny.

Look at his eye –for all the world like a villainous sort of blackcurrant. 'Tis to be hoped he can't ill-wish us! There's folks in heath who've been overlooked already.<sup>18</sup>

A similar link between illness and supposed overlooking is illustrated in Hardy's short story "The Withered Arm", where the suspected witch is Rhoda Brook, again a liminal figure in the local community.

But in some way or other a story was whispered about the many-dairied lowland that winter that Mrs. Lodge's gradual loss of the use of her left arm was owing to her being "overlooked" by Rhoda Brook.<sup>19</sup>

The power of overlooking is not, according to Hardy, restricted to witches, as the following recollection, recorded by him in 1888, demonstrates.

Heard a story of a farmer who was "over-looked" (malignly affected) by *himself*. He used to go and examine his stock every morning before breakfast with anxious scrutiny. The animals pined away. He went to a conjuror or white witch, who told him he had no enemy; that the evil was of his own causing, the eye of a fasting man being very blasting: that he should eat a "dew-bit" before going to survey any possession about which he had hopes.<sup>20</sup>

This is a rare instance of Hardy believing in one of the superstitions of which he wrote. He told J. G. Frazer, author of *The Golden Bough*, that he never looked at the newly planted trees at his Max Gate home before breakfast, since they would not thrive if their owner looked at them while hungry.<sup>21</sup> This idea, that a fasting person might effectively have the evil eye, does not seem to have been recorded in the standard works on belief, but it was known elsewhere in the South West, since Rawlence, writing in 1914, records an instance from Wiltshire, very similar to that described by Hardy.

One H-, a dairyman who resided at Bishop's Down, had a turn of very bad luck, and he was persuaded that he had been bewitched by someone who had an evil eye upon him. His pigs would not fatten properly and some had died, and when he put the curd of the cheese into the vats and applied the pressure of the press it oozed out over the heads of the vats. He became so depressed under this supposed spell that he made an appointment at Yeovil with one Gulliver, a Somersetshire man, who had a reputation for undoing spells. ... Gulliver then said – "Now I'll tell you who he be," and pointing his finger at H- said, "You be the man." You be so anxious about yer stock that yer overlooks what you ought to do and does what yer ought not to do. Yer overheats yer curds and that makes 'em too zoft, so that when yer puts it into the press it spews out.. Yer gets up in the mornin' and runs out in the dark to veed yer pigs and don't do it properly. Now yer must be more quiet like and careful. Have a cup o' tea and zomethen to eat when yer gets up and don' go out we' an empty stomach.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, the employment of other witchcraft techniques seems not to have been solely the preserve of perceived witches, but could occasionally be used by members of the mainstream community. This is illustrated by the following case, noted by Hardy.

Among the many stories of spell-working that I have been told the following is one of how it was done by two girls about 1830. They killed a pigeon, stuck its heart full of pins, made a tripod of three knitting-needles, and suspended the heart on them over a lamp, murmuring an incantation while it roasted, and using the name of the young man in whom one or both were interested. The said young man felt racking pains about the region of the heart, and suspecting something went to the constables. The girls were sent to prison.<sup>23</sup>

The latter part of the anecdote seems unlikely, but the technique described is, no doubt, traditional. This note also confirms that Hardy learned the story orally, and that it by no means represents the full range of his knowledge of this aspect of the subject.



## HAG-RIDING

In *TD*, as Tess descends from the threshing machine, her wearied appearance causes a workmate to express concern.

“You ought to get a quart o’ drink into ‘ee, as I’ve done,” said Marian. “You wouldn’t look so white then. Why souls above us, your face is as if you’d been hagrode!”<sup>24</sup>

A similar expression is used in *MC* when Elizabeth attempts to obey her adoptive father’s injunction to avoid the use of dialect.

... when she had not slept she did not quaintly tell the servants next morning that she had been “hag-rid,” but that she had “suffered from indigestion.”<sup>25</sup>

In these cases, Hardy is using the term “hagrode” or “hag-rid” in its literal sense as defined by Barnes, that is “the nightmare attributed to the supernatural presence of a witch or *hag* by whom one is *ridden* in sleep.”<sup>26</sup> The victims of hag-riding could be horses or human beings. Both forms of usage are evident in a passage from *Romeo and Juliet*, where the perpetrator is a fairy rather than a witch.

This is that very Mab  
That plaits the tails of horses in the night  
And bakes the elf-locks in foul sluttish hairs,  
Which once untangled much misfortune bodes.  
This is the hag, when maids lie on their backs,  
That presses them and learns them first to bear,  
Making them women of good carriage.<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, when horses were found to be sweaty and dishevelled in their stable in the morning, it was believed that they had been ridden by a witch during the night. March reports an instance of this type of hag-riding from 1897.

Mr. Bridge, J.P., to his groom: “John, that mare in the field looks disgraceful! All over dirt, and her mane knotted and ragged!” “Sakes! sir, don’t ‘ee know what be the matter wi’ ‘er. Why, her’s hag-rodde every night into a solid sweat! And they knots? Why, they be the stirrups the hags they do ride un wi’! Poor creature, I do clane and clane her, but tidden no use!”<sup>28</sup>

Lea gives another Dorset example, in which he mentions that the affected horses had their “tails and manes tightly plaited up with straw”, as in the Shakespearean reference above.<sup>29</sup> Hardy’s only reference to hag-riding of horses is in *W*, when Fitzpiers has been making illicit nocturnal visits to Mrs. Charmond, on his wife’s mare.

In the yard there was a conversation going on about the mare; the man who attended to the horses, Darling included, insisted that the latter was “hag-rid”; for when he had arrived at the stable that morning she was in such a state as no horse could be in by honest riding. ... The unprecedented exhaustion of Darling, as thus related, was sufficient to develop a whole series of tales about equestrian witches and demons, the narration of which occupied a considerable time.<sup>30</sup>

*W* was originally set in the Melbury Osmond area, so it is likely that Hardy heard of this belief from his mother, thus dating its usage to the early nineteenth century. The reason for the horse's condition in March's example was probably as in Hardy's, namely illicit overnight use. According to Harte this could sometimes have been by smugglers.

C.V. Goddard, who left some notes on Chideock smugglers to the Dorset County Museum, mentions another "supernatural" belief – the horses which smugglers had borrowed overnight were supposed to have been ridden by the fairies. This must have been a euphemism rather than a real deception since farmers were coerced into helping smugglers in the way by threats of rick burning and worse.<sup>31</sup>

Hag-riding of people was more frequently reported, particularly in the West Country; the following Dorset example having been collected from Mrs. Fudge of Marnhull in the 1930s.

As I was standing by my door .... I saw a woman coming down the hill who was a witch or hag. She saw me laugh at her. After I went to bed that night I felt a weight on my legs which gradually went upwards to my chest. I screamed, and my son came into the room. As he opened the door, the lump fell off, and I distinctly heard the hag walk down the stairs and out of the door.<sup>32</sup>

Another instance is recorded in a court case of 1871, in which John Bird was accused of beating an eighty-five year old woman whom he believed had hag-ridden him. Despite a lengthy newspaper report of the proceedings, details of the actual hag-riding are sparse. Bird is alleged to have said "I used to see her come into my bedroom window as plain as I can see you now." which suggests that he believed, like Mrs. Fudge at Marnhull, that hag-riding was a waking experience. From the laughter frequently reported in court and the scathing references by the lawyers it seems that belief in hag-riding was not shared by many of Bird's contemporaries.<sup>33</sup>

Given the paucity of description of hag-riding, it is particularly valuable that Hardy describes such an experience in detail in his short story "The Withered Arm". Further, he is insistent upon the veracity of the events in the story, which he had learned at first hand.

I may add that the cardinal incidents are true, both the women who figure in the story having been known to me.<sup>34</sup>

Following this assertion, made to William Blackwood, who published the story in serial form, Hardy told Lady Margaret Wallop that it was "founded on fact"<sup>35</sup> and Florence Henniker that it was "largely based on fact".<sup>36</sup>

In "The Withered Arm" Rhoda Brook, the former mistress of Farmer Lodge and the mother of his child, hears that Lodge has married and has brought his new bride back to the village. Three weeks after her arrival, and before the two women have met, the hag-riding incident takes place.

But the figure which had occupied her so much during this and the previous days was not to be banished at night. For the first time Gertrude Lodge visited the supplanted woman in her dreams. Rhoda Brook dreamed – since her assertion that she really saw, before falling asleep, was not to be believed – that the young wife, in the pale silk dress and white bonnet, but with features shockingly distorted, and wrinkled as if by age, was sitting upon her chest as she lay. The pressure of Mrs. Lodge's person grew heavier; the blue eyes peered



cruelly into her face, and then the figure threw forward its left hand mockingly, so as to make the wedding-ring it wore glitter in Rhoda's eyes. Maddened mentally, and nearly suffocated by pressure, the sleeper struggled; the incubus, still regarding her, withdrew to the foot of the bed, only, however, to come forward by degrees, resume her seat, and flash her left hand as before.

Gasping for breath, Rhoda, in a last desperate effort, swung out her right hand, seized the confronting spectre by its obtrusive left arm, and whirled it backward to the floor, starting up herself as she did so with a low cry. "O, merciful heaven!" she cried, sitting on the edge of the bed in a cold sweat; "that was not a dream – she was here!"<sup>37</sup>

The story was republished, in the second edition of *Wessex Tales* in 1896 and, in his preface, Hardy gives further information on the genesis of the hag-riding incident.

Since writing this story some years ago I have been reminded by an aged friend who knew "Rhoda Brook" that, in relating her dream, my forgetfulness has weakened the facts out of which the tale grew. In reality it was while lying down on a hot afternoon that the incubus oppressed her and she flung it off, with the results upon the body of the original as described. To my mind the occurrence of such a vision in the daytime is more impressive than if it had happened in a midnight dream.<sup>38</sup>

The "aged friend" was presumably Hardy's mother; since the original of "Rhoda Brook" had died since the story was first published in 1888.

Ray, in his valuable study of the short stories, shows how Hardy progressively amended the description of the hag-riding incident over the four occasions on which "The Withered Arm" was published during his lifetime.<sup>39</sup> The effect was increasingly to suggest that Rhoda's experience was, in fact, a dream; an interpretation which differs both from the author's original intention and from the real incident which inspired the story. The belief that hag-riding was a real experience is implicit in the descriptions from Dorset cited above and those from other south-western counties. The tension between Hardy's knowledge of hag-riding and the necessity to mediate this knowledge for the purpose of his fiction is typical of his use of folklore elements and must be borne in mind when assessing his value as a source.

Hufford, who has extensively investigated the hag-riding phenomenon, with particular reference to Newfoundland, interviewed a large number of victims, few of whom believed in witchcraft, in order to establish the primary and secondary diagnostic features of the experience. These are given as follows:

#### Primary

1. Subjective impression of wakefulness.
2. Immobility variously perceived (paralysis, restraint, fear of moving).
3. Realistic perception of actual environment.
4. Fear.

#### Secondary

1. Supine position (very common).
2. Feeling of presence (common).

3. Feeling of pressure, usually on chest (common).
4. Numinous quality (common).
5. Fear of death (somewhat common).<sup>40</sup>

Returning to Hardy's description of Rhoda Brook's experience, it immediately becomes clear that there is a substantial correlation with Hufford's primary criteria. Hence Rhoda (and Hardy's original source) believe that they are awake when hag-ridden and Rhoda feels constrained since she "struggled". She perceives the actual environment, since she is aware of the foot of the bed as the incubus temporarily retreats, and her fear is shown by her being "maddened mentally" and "in a cold sweat". Most of Hufford's secondary features may also be detected as follows:

1. Rhoda is supine since Mrs. Lodge is "sitting on her chest as she lay."
2. There is more than a feeling of presence since Rhoda actually sees her oppressor and notes her features, dress and bonnet.
3. The feeling of pressure is stated: "The pressure of Mrs. Lodge's person grew heavier".
4. If "numinous" may be taken to indicate a sense of the supernatural then the description of the young wife as having "features shockingly distorted and wrinkled as by age" may be taken as sufficient indication.
5. Rhoda seems to fear death since her dislodging of the incubus is "a last desperate attempt".

In short, Hardy's 1888 description of hag-riding in Dorset corresponds more or less exactly with the salient features of the phenomenon as recorded in Newfoundland in the late twentieth century. Since his is the only detailed nineteenth-century account of this phenomenon, it offers a unique opportunity to demonstrate the continuity of belief, over time and across continents, in an unusual form of superstition.

It should be said that there is one feature in Hardy's account which does not appear in Hufford's analysis, but which may have been another recurring feature of the hag-riding experience, at least in the West Country. In the Marnhull account Mrs. Fudge recalls "I distinctly heard the hag walk down the stairs and out of the door." In "The Withered Arm" Rhoda's son comments on the events of the previous night as follows:

"What was that noise in the chimner, mother, last night?" said her son. "You fell off the bed, surely?"

"Did you hear anything fall? At what time?"

"Just when the clock struck two."<sup>41</sup>

Hence, in the Marnhull case the victim, and in the Hardy example an independent observer, hear the visitant, thus enhancing the sense of reality associated with the experience. Bob and Jacqueline Patten collected some reminiscences of hag-riding in early twentieth-century Somerset from Harry Adams, (b. 1903) and sounds are again associated with the attack, although in this case it is the victim who produces them.



Have you ever heard anyone being hag-ridden? Never heard the noise they make? Cor, enough to frighten the Devil. You know what a fox is [sounds]like in the night when it's mating? Something like that. Horrible row!  
42

## COUNTER-MEASURES AGAINST WITCHCRAFT

Given the belief in and fear of witchcraft, overlooking, hag-riding and their ramifications, it is not surprising that potential victims devised a number of protective counter measures.

One such, the keeping in the house of animal hearts pierced with pins is mentioned by Udal as a recourse frequently used in Dorset, and these talismans are still occasionally retrieved from old cottages in the county. Hardy gives an instance of the use of pigeon's hearts in this way.

A variant of the superstitions attached to pigeon's [sic] hearts is that, when the counteracting process is going on, the person who has bewitched the other *enters*. In the case of a woman in a village near here who was working the spell at midnight a neighbour knocked on the door and said: "Do ye come in and see my little maid. She is so ill that I don't like to bide with her alone!"<sup>43</sup>

A more active measure, which could be used when the identity of the witch was known or suspected, was that of pricking, since spilling a witch's blood was supposed to break her malevolent spell. Again there is a Shakespearean antecedent for the belief, as indicated by Talbot's remark to Joan of Arc.

Devil or devil's dam, I'll conjure thee.  
Blood will I draw on thee – thou art a witch –  
And straightway give thy soul to him thou servest.<sup>44</sup>

There are a number of Dorset examples of this practice, the most striking being cited by Udal. His description is taken from a court case and the setting is Sherborne, an important town (by Dorset standards), not the sort of rural backwater where witchcraft belief might be expected to linger.

.... on the nineteenth day of September, 1884, an old woman named Sarah Smith, who lived at Cold Harbour, and was 83 years of age and in receipt of parish relief, was violently attacked by a next-door neighbour, one Tamar Humphries, a married woman, in order that the latter might draw blood from the old woman, on the ground that she had bewitched her daughter, a confirmed invalid, suffering from rheumatism. It appeared from the report that the poor old woman, who was well known as a quiet inoffensive person, was in her garden digging potatoes when she was set upon by the defendant, who put her hands on her shoulders and said: "Oh! You Sal Smith, what's thee done to my daughter? I'll draw the blood of thee." The defendant then repeatedly stabbed her with a darning- or stocking-needle about her hands and arms, making them bleed, telling her at the same time that she was a witch and that she would draw her blood for "witching" her daughter.<sup>45</sup>

The pricking of the equally innocent Eustacia Vye by Susan Nunsuch in *RN* follows a similar pattern, as graphically related by an onlooker.

"This morning at church we was all standing up, and the pa'son said, "Let us pray. " "Well," thinks I, "one may as well kneel as stand"; so down I went; and, more than that, all the rest were as willing to oblige the

man as I. We hadn't been hard at it for more than a minute when a most terrible screech sounded through church, as if somebody had just gied up their heart's blood. All the folk jumped up, and then we found that Susan Nunsuch had pricked Miss Vye with a long stocking-needle, as she had threatened to do as soon as ever she could get the young lady to church, where she don't come very often. She'd waited for this chance for weeks, so as to draw her blood and put an end to the bewitching of Susan's children that has been carried on so long. Sue followed her into church, sat next to her, and as soon as she could find a chance in went the stocking-needle into my lady's arm."<sup>46</sup>

Hardy's description adds an element which is absent from other accounts of pricking, namely the efficacy of carrying out the attack in church. This in itself would be a difficult proposition since, as the description of Elizabeth Endorfield in *UGT* indicates, witches did not attend church, a characteristic largely shared by Eustacia.

The practice of pricking suspected witches seemed to survive in Dorset later than other witchcraft beliefs, the last recorded incident being from the 1930s.

I have been told by Miss Ainsworth of Charlton Marshall that only one or two years ago a man in the village of Charlton (he was not one of the brightest!) had the fixed idea that another man in the village was "overlooking" him so one day when they met in the village Public House he took a pin and scratched the other mans [sic] hand right down as he was sure that if he could draw this mans [sic] blood he would have no more power over him.<sup>47</sup>

In *RN*, the pricking of Eustacia fails to achieve the desired end and Susan resorts to another strategy, namely the use of a wax image. This action is more usually imputed to witches themselves, as indicated in *MC* by Henchard's musing on the cause of the decline of his fortunes.

I wonder if it can be that somebody has been roasting a waxen image of me, or stirring an unholy brew to confound me!<sup>48</sup>

Nevertheless, wax images could also be used in counter-witchcraft and Lea, in describing the activities of a "wise-woman" or "conjuress" of his acquaintance, identifies the charm which she uses.

The charm, which, by the way, the mother was directed to burn directly her daughter was out of danger, was preserved for some time. It consisted of a small lump of wax, roughly modelled into the face of a woman, the face bearing a distinct likeness to the accused witch!<sup>49</sup>

The preparation and use of the wax image by Susan Nunsuch, in *RN*, is described in considerable detail and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Hardy obtained the facts from a practitioner. Following a description of the raw materials and utensils the principal features of the process are as follows:

Susan took down the lump [of beeswax], and cutting off several thin slices, heaped them into an iron ladle, with which she returned to the living-room, and placed the vessel in the hot ashes of the fireplace. As soon as the wax had softened to the plasticity of dough she kneaded the pieces together. And now her face was more intent. She began moulding the wax; and it was evident from her manner of manipulation that she was endeavouring to give it some preconceived form. The form was human.  
.... She had in about a quarter of an hour produced a shape which tolerably well resembled a woman; and was about six inches high. She laid it on the table to get cold and hard....



‘Did you notice, my dear, what Mrs. Eustacia wore this afternoon besides the dark dress?....

Mrs. Nunsuch went and searched until she found a fragment of the narrowest red ribbon, which she took downstairs and tied round the neck of the image. Then fetching ink and a quill from the rickety bureau by the window she blackened the feet of the image to the extent presumably covered by shoes; and on the instep of each foot marked cross-lines in the shape taken by the sandal-strings of those days. Finally she tied a piece of black thread round the upper part of the head, in faint resemblance to a snood worn for containing the hair.

From her work-basket in the window-seat the woman took a paper of pins, of the old long and yellow sort, whose heads were disposed to come off at their first usage. These she began to thrust into the image in all directions, with apparently excruciating energy. Probably as many as fifty were thus inserted, some into the head of the wax model, some into the shoulders, some into the trunk, some upwards through the soles of the feet, till the figure was completely permeated with pins.

.... She took a few pieces of fresh turf from the chimney-corner and built them together over the glow, upon which the fire brightened. Seizing with the tongs the image that she had made of Eustacia, she held it in the heat, and watched as it began to waste slowly away. And while she stood thus engaged there came from between her lips a murmur of words.

It was a strange jargon – the Lord’s Prayer repeated backwards – the incantation used in proceedings for obtaining unhallowed assistance against an enemy.<sup>50</sup>

From Hardy’s description it is evident that it was important to prepare an image which closely resembled the intended victim. The type of pins and the incantation used also seem to be significant, although the use of the Lord’s Prayer backwards is known in other forms of traditional magic.

## WHITE WITCHES

If the methods outlined in the previous section failed, then the perceived victim of Dorset witchcraft could call on the counter-witchcraft expertise of a white witch. These practitioners were usually known as “cunning men” (or occasionally women) in the West Country, although Hardy uses the term “conjurer”. Owen Davies has extensively investigated cunning men in Somerset and his evidence is complemented by March, Rawlence and others in Dorset. Lea defines this type of practitioner and goes on to distinguish between different types.

A “conjurer” or “white witch” is an individual who, possessed of certain gifts (to some considerable extent hereditary), is able to point out to those who consult him (or her – for either sex may have the qualifications) the person who is causing the mischief. ....

... There are, or rather were, conjurers *and* conjurers. Some took a delight in frustrating the efforts of a witch whether paid for their services or not; whilst others used their knowledge merely as a means of livelihood and drained their patients of every copper or possession of value.<sup>51</sup>

The Somerset cunning men described by Davies fall very much into the latter category, while those recorded by Hardy were of a more benevolent nature. Four individuals of this kind figure in his writings and they are considered below.

The first is mentioned briefly in the children's story "Our Exploits at West Poley", in which a group of boys unwittingly divert a stream. The villagers' imputation of the event to witchcraft, and their immediately proposed remedy, are in accordance with parallel instances in Hardy's more serious works.

"My belief is that witchcraft have done it," said the shoemaker, "and the only remedy that I can think o', is for one of us to cut across to Bartholomew Gann, the white wizard, and get him to tell us how to counteract it."<sup>52</sup>

The next white witch, Conjuror Fall, appears in *MC* when the mayor, Henchard, who is a corn merchant, goes to see him in order to obtain a forecast of the weather for the forthcoming harvest. The cunning man's cottage is in a particularly remote and inaccessible spot.

In a lonely hamlet a few miles from the town – so lonely that what are called lonely villages were teeming by comparison – there lived a man of curious repute as a forecaster or weather-prophet. The way to his house was crooked and miry – even difficult in the present unpropitious season. .... The turnpike-road became a lane, the lane a cart-track, the cart-track a bridle path, the bridle-path a footway, the footway overgrown.<sup>53</sup>

Hardy is going to some lengths here to emphasise that this practitioner of traditional magic lives on the outermost rim of the community and, by implication, that such magic is itself, (by the 1840s in which the book is set), at the periphery of belief. In fact, it may be demonstrated that neither of these propositions is true.

So far as the status of witchcraft is concerned, the preceding parts of this chapter have shown that, far from being peripheral, such beliefs would have been very much alive and well in Dorset in the 1840s. Similarly, the association of cunning men with remote places is also unsupported by the Dorset literature. Hence, of the white witches described by March and Rawlence; Conjuror Curtis lived at Batcombe,<sup>54</sup> Farmer Barrett at Ilchester,<sup>55</sup> "the old woman" at Dorchester<sup>56</sup> and Gulliver at Yeovil,<sup>57</sup> Three of these are towns and the other, Batcombe, a medium-sized village. Such locations are entirely consistent with the Somerset findings of Davies, who points out the advantages of towns as bases for the operations of white witches.

It was possible for cunning-folk based in villages to attract fame and fortune but being in a town made the task easier. Not only was there a large pool of potential clients right on the cunning folk's doorsteps but on market days country folk would also pour in to sell their goods, do a bit of shopping, and, perhaps, seek out some occult help.<sup>58</sup>

The same author suggests that the coming of the railways actually encouraged recourse to cunning men in making them more accessible to potential clients.<sup>59</sup>

Therefore, the siting of Fall's cottage in *MC* might well owe more to the requirements of Hardy's characterisation than to reality. This illustrates the continuing necessity to remember that he was writing fiction and that his writing must be interpreted accordingly.

Hardy presents *Casterbridge* as a town in the throes of change, following the repeal of the Corn Laws, and Henchard as a man unable to adapt to change. His recourse to a cunning man is designed to illustrate his backward-looking attitude, while the portrayal of Fall as a



peripheral figure, literally and metaphorically, is understandable in this context. Despite these reservations, Hardy's description of Michael Henchard's visit to Conjuror Fall is instructive in the way in which it portrays both the methods used by cunning men and the attitudes of their clients towards them. First, Fall impresses his visitor by seeming to have prior knowledge of his visit.

"Maybe so, Mr. Henchard," said the weather-caster.

"Ah – why do you call me that? asked the visitor with a start.

"Because its your name. Feeling you'd come I've waited for 'ee; and thinking you might be leary from your walk I laid two supper plates – look ye here."<sup>60</sup>

The succeeding dialogue then indicates some of the supposed accomplishments of the conjuror.

.... Now, for instance, can ye charm away warts?"

"Without trouble."

"Cure the evil?"

"That I've done – with consideration –if they will wear the toad-bag by night as well as by day."

"Forecast the weather?"

"With labour and time."<sup>61</sup>

Fall then further surprises his visitor by having the answer to his question almost before he has asked it, although the narrating author immediately reveals the secret of his technique.

"Then take this," said Henchard, "'Tis a crown piece. Now, what is the harvest fortnight to be? When can I know?"

"I've worked it out already and you can know at once." (The fact was that five farmers had already been there on the same errand from different parts of the country.) "By the sun, moon and stars, by the clouds, the winds, the trees, and grass, the candle-flame and swallows, the smell of the herbs; likewise by the cats' eyes, the ravens, the leeches, the spider and the dung-mixen, the last fortnight in August will be – rain and tempest."<sup>62</sup>

Fall's stage management of the situation is also revealed here in the unnecessary litany of signs and symbols which follows his advice. In the event, his forecast proves correct and Henchard, who first heeds but then ignores it, is ruined.

The position of Fall in the local community is also made clear in this part of *MC*.

He existed on unseen supplies; for it was an anomalous thing that while there was hardly a soul in the neighbourhood but affected to laugh at this man's assertions, uttering the formula, "There's nothing in 'em." With full assurance on the surface of their faces, very few of them were unbelievers in their secret hearts. When they consulted him they did it "for a fancy." When they paid him they said "Just a trifle for Christmas," or "Candlemas," as the case may be.

.... Behind his back he was called "Wide-oh," on account of his reputation; to his face "Mr" Fall.<sup>63</sup>

It may be assumed that Hardy is here reflecting the attitudes to cunning men during his youth in rural Dorset, a very few years after the period during which *MC* is set. By his portrayal of the behaviour of Henchard, who is a town-based businessman, he shows that recourse to cunning men was, by this period, becoming unfashionable among the better-off. Henchard is so embarrassed at the nature of his errand that he visits the conjuror in disguise, although he is immediately recognised, and he affects disbelief in the conjuror's powers. Fall, for his part is only too familiar with such agnosticism.

"O no, no," said Henchard, "I don't altogether believe in forecasts, come to second thoughts on such. But I ---"

"You don't – you don't – 'tis quite understood," said Wide-oh, without a sound of scorn. "You have given me a crown because you've one too many. ...."<sup>64</sup>

From Hardy's account, it seems that Fall (and presumably the real equivalents whom Hardy has in mind) is an honest man who is able to make an adequate living by weather forecasting and minor cures and charms. Such practitioners were thought equally capable of extending their activities to countering the maleficent activities of witches. Hence, in *TD*, when the butter fails to appear in the churns at *Talbothays Farm*, witchcraft is naturally suspected and the services of a conjuror are deemed necessary.

"'Tis years since I went to Conjuror Trendle's son in Egdon – years!" said the dairyman bitterly. "And he was nothing to what his father had been. I have said fifty times, if I have said once, that I don't believe in 'em; though he do cast folks' waters very true. But I shall have to go to 'n if he's alive. O yes, I shall have to go to 'n if this sort of thing continnys!"

Even Mr. Clare began to feel tragical at the dairyman's desperation.

"Conjuror Fall, t'other side of Casterbridge, that they used to call "Wide-O", was a very good man when I was a boy," said Jonathan Kail. But he's rotten as touchwood by now."

"My grandfather used to go to Conjuror Mynterne, out at Owlscombe, and a clever man a' were, so I've heard grandf'er say," continued Mr. Crick "But there's no such genuine folk about nowadays!"<sup>65</sup>

*TD* is set in a period some years later than *MC*, and the above passage indicates the subsequent death or decline of Fall, as well as giving a clue as to the area in which he lived. It also mentions Hardy's remaining two white witches; Conjurors Trendle and Mynterne, who are discussed below. By this time, belief in the efficacy of white magic is seen to have further declined and its principal exponents are dead. There is probably an element of exaggeration here, again for the purpose of characterisation, but a decline in witchcraft belief during the late nineteenth century is also postulated by Owen Davies, from Somerset prosecution and trial records. The passing of Conjuror Trendle's mantle to his son also reflects the history of some of Davies's subjects. The same author indicates that cunning men were in particular demand by dairy farmers, presumably through the frequent vicissitudes to which butter making was subject, and this is in accordance with the events described at *Talbothays*.

In contrast, there is an apparent concentration of cunning-folk practising in the south Somerset/North Dorset border region. This is partly explained by the fact that south of the border towns of Yeovil, Sherborne and Crewkerne there is a large swathe of land encompassing the Blackmore Vale and the Dorset downs without



any significant towns at all. This meant that there was no major focal point, and so we find a more scattered distribution pattern of cunning-folk. It is also likely, though that the area generated a considerable trade for cunning-folk. The Blackmore Vale was a predominantly dairying economy, and it was dairy farmers who made up a considerable proportion of cunning-folks' clientele. It would seem, as a result, that there was sufficient demand in the area to support quite a few practitioners.<sup>66</sup>

Conjuror Trendle makes his principal appearance in "The Withered Arm". Following the hag-riding incident, described earlier, Gertrude Lodge develops a mark on her arm in the place seized by Rhoda Brook in her dream. The condition of the arm grows steadily worse and, recourse to orthodox physicians having proved unsuccessful, witchcraft is suspected. Although Rhoda Brook is subsequently believed to be a witch, on the evidence of Mrs. Lodge's affliction, it should be noted that, since Mrs. Lodge was perceived to carry out the hag-riding, she was technically the witch.

Hardy originally set this story in the period 1826-1832, although he subsequently revised the setting to some eight years earlier. In either event, since it precedes both *MC* and *TD*, it provides another opportunity to note the subtle changes of attitude towards witchcraft according to historical period.<sup>67</sup> In *TD*, belief is restricted to farm workers and even they are doubtful. In the earlier period of *MC*, belief is still quite well established among Fall's neighbours but unusual among the middle classes. In the still earlier period of "The Withered Arm", Gertrude Lodge, the wife of a wealthy farmer, is prepared to seek the services of a cunning man, despite initial reluctance.

"Trendle – yes. Is he alive?"

"I believe so," said Rhoda with reluctance.

"Why do you call him conjuror?"

Well – they say – they used to say he was a - he had powers other folks have not."

"Oh, how could my people be so superstitious as to recommend a man of that sort! I thought they meant some medical man. I shall think no more of him."<sup>68</sup>

After a further two days, Mrs. Brook resolves to visit Trendle.

"... I have again been thinking of what they say about Conjuror Trendle. I don't really believe in such men, but I should not mind just visiting him, for curiosity – although on no account must my husband know. Is it far to where he lives?"

"Yes – five miles." said Rhoda backwardly. "In the heart of Egdon."<sup>69</sup>

Since Egdon Heath is portrayed in Hardy's work as a vast wilderness, it may be seen that Trendle, like Fall, is to be presented as a figure on the edge of society. Trendle also resembles Fall in being an honest man, using his powers for good rather than gain, quite unlike Davies's Somerset examples.

He did not profess his remedial practices openly, or care anything about their continuance, his direct interests being those of a dealer in furze, turf, "sharp sand", and other local products. Indeed, he affected not to believe largely in his own powers, and when warts that had been shown him for cure miraculously disappeared -

which, it must be owned they infallibly did – he would say lightly, “O, I only drink a glass of grog upon ’em at your expense – perhaps it’s all chance,” and immediately turn the subject.<sup>70</sup>

Descriptions of the activities of real cunning men indicate that they did not themselves name the supposed perpetrators of witchcraft, but enabled their clients to make this identification. Trendle is no exception in this respect, but the interest in Hardy’s account stems from the detailed description of the actual process of identification, which again doubtless derives from a witness.

“An enemy? What enemy?” asked Mrs. Lodge.

He shook his head. “That’s best known to yourself,” he said. “If you like I can show the person to you, though I shall not myself know who it is. ....”

.... He brought a tumbler from the dresser, nearly filled it with water, and fetching an egg, prepared it in some private way; after which he broke it on the edge of the glass, so that the white went in and the yolk remained. As it was getting gloomy, he took the glass and its contents to the window, and told Gertrude to watch the mixture closely. They leant over the table together, and the milkwoman could see the opaline hue of the egg-fluid changing form as it sank in the water, but she was not near enough to define the shape that it assumed.<sup>71</sup>

In *TD*, Trendle’s son is said to “cast folks’ waters” and this may be taken as a reference to the process described above, not to “making forecasts from people’s urine” as suggested in Furbank’s notes to the New Wessex Edition of the novel.<sup>72</sup> The use of egg whites in water as means of divination is reported by Opie and Tatem, citing examples from 1684 to 1956.<sup>73</sup> Their instances mostly relate to identifying future husbands and never to the identification of persecutors, as in Hardy’s story.

Gertrude Lodge resorts to the conjuror again, after six years, and Trendle offers a traumatic cure for her withered arm by “turning the blood”.

“You must touch with the limb the neck of a man who’s been hanged.”

She started a little at the image he had raised.

“Before he’s cold – just after he’s cut down,” continued the conjuror impassively.

“How can that do good?”

“It will turn the blood and change the constitution.”<sup>74</sup>

Trendle claims that he has used the cure before and that it has never failed but, on putting it to the test, the shock to Gertrude’s system is too great, with fatal results. The touching of a hanged corpse to cure various complaints has been widely recorded. Hardy knew Davies, the Dorchester hangman, and probably obtained the details from him.

Hardy is uncharacteristically forthcoming about his source for Conjuror Trendle in a letter to Hermann Lea.

I have no objection whatever to your saying what you say about ‘Conjuror Trendle’ – I do not remember what his real name was, or rather, he is a composite figure of two or three who used to be heard of. I have a vague idea that Baker was the name of one, but cannot be sure.<sup>75</sup>

Lea, for his part, was able to directly trace Hardy’s source.



It may be interesting to note here that Conjuror Trendle, as in the former's [Hardy's] story entitled "The Withered Arm" was no fictitious personage, but had a veritable existence. He is still well remembered (under his real name, of course) by some of the older people who dwelt near and the house in which he lived, in the central portion of "Egdon Heath" may still be traced in a heap of decayed walls and rotten timbers<sup>76</sup>

It is interesting to note that Trendle did, indeed, live "in the heart of Egdon" as described by Hardy, thus exonerating the author, on this occasion, from the manipulation of the setting of his cunning man's dwelling for the purpose of characterisation.

The last cunning man in Hardy's fiction, Conjuror Minterne, is mentioned only briefly in *TD* as living at *Owlscombe* and having flourished in the time of the grandfather of one of the dairy workers. Outside his fictional writings, Hardy is more informative about this character.

Conjuror Minterne, or Mynterne, who lived out Blackmoor way, you have of course heard of: he was one of the most celebrated.<sup>77</sup>

You may possibly be aware that there once lived a Conjuror Minterne (or Myntern as his name was pronounced) at Batcombe. I have talked to old people who knew him, & have mentioned him in some of my writings.<sup>78</sup>

Minterne was, no doubt, the unnamed Blackmore Vale cunning man described by Hardy as using the same technique, based on egg white, as already described for Conjuror Trendle.

Another man of the sort was called a conjuror; he lived in Blackmoor Vale. He would cause your enemy to rise in a glass of water. He did not himself know your enemy's name, but the bewitched person did, of course, recognizing the form as the one he had expected.<sup>79</sup>

It seems then that Hardy is, unusually, placing a character in his fiction under their real name. His contact with older people who had known Minterne, gives rise to an anecdote which, once more, underlines the significance of the showing of an image in a glass of water.

Conjuror Mynterne, [of whom mention has already been made], when consulted by Pult P---- (a strapping handsome woman), told her that her husband would die on a certain day, and showed her the funeral in a glass of water. She said that she could see the bearers moving along. She made her mourning. She used to impress all this on her inoffensive husband, and assure him that he would go to hell if he made the conjuror a liar. He didn't, but died on the day foretold. Oddly enough she never married again.<sup>80</sup>

In fact, Hardy may have been mistaken in the identification of Conjuror Minterne, since there was more than one cunning men based at *Owlscombe* (Batcombe). The famous magician of Batcombe was *Conjuring* Minterne, a village squire of the eighteenth century, famous for his supernatural horseborne leap over Batcombe Church tower. On his death, the conflict between, on the one hand, his diabolic reputation and, on the other, his ownership of the village, led to him being buried "neither in the church nor out of it", i.e. in the church wall. By the mid-nineteenth century, the Batcombe cunning man was Conjuror Curtis "a wise and a good man" and it must have been him of whom Hardy's informants spoke.<sup>81</sup>

## HARDY'S VALUE AS A SOURCE

The collectors of witchcraft memories in Dorset, such as Udal and March, were educated middle class men, who obtained their material, directly or at second hand, from working class informants who inhabited a quite different world from their own. In this, as in all branches of traditional culture, there must be some doubt as to the freedom and accuracy with which informants responded to their enquiries. Hardy, on the other hand, while equally well educated and socially separated as a middle-aged adult, had grown up with the type of informant on whom the later folklorists drew. He was able to observe, or even experience at first hand, those aspects of traditional culture which others could only "collect". Further, he had access to family recollection, which was denied to writers of less humble origin. So far as witchcraft is concerned, his chief informant is usually taken to be his mother, but this was probably not always the case. For example, the date of operation of Conjuror Trendle, and his place of residence, make Hardy's paternal grandmother, who lived at the time and in the area in question, a more likely source.

Given this background, Hardy is able not only to reflect and confirm beliefs such as hag-riding and witch-pricking, already noted by others, but is able to go on to furnish otherwise unobtainable details of technique. In this field, the examples of image-making and water divination are outstanding. At the same time he is able to provide the valuable external dimension of community reaction to witchcraft and also some idea of how this changed over time. The fictional and artistic nature of his writings cannot be ignored but, in the field of witchcraft, a good deal of his testimony is in the more reliable form of notes or letters.

Given the painstaking research of Owen Davies in Somerset and North Dorset, a discrepancy may be observed between Hardy's portrayal of the cunning man, as a remote but beneficent figure, and Davies's picture of this type of practitioner as an often town-based charlatan. In fact, despite the extent of Davies's research, his sources are, necessarily, limited. Having, for the most part, eschewed the accounts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century antiquarians, he draws on court records for detailed descriptions of the activities of cunning men and of the beliefs of their clients. This evidence is of great value but it is also misleading if generalised. Those cunning men who appeared in court, as a result of legal action by disaffected clients, were, given their behaviour, going to be those who were unscrupulous and mercenary. In this respect, the nature of his selected cunning men is self-fulfilling. Indeed, it is realistic to suppose that Hardy's self-effacing "conjurers" were probably as numerous as Davies's hard-faced cheats, but were necessarily less likely to be officially recorded.

Hardy was well aware of the existence of sham practitioners, and he was not afraid to portray them accordingly, as in the case of the quack "Physician" Vilbert in *JO*, but in general he shows that white witches did more good than harm. Such considerations are important in underlining the necessity to combine the evidence from observers of different perspective: antiquarians, researchers and authors, in order to obtain a balanced picture and here Hardy's writings are an invaluable resource, complementary to those provided by the other two types of commentator. In this respect, Dorset is particularly fortunate: many



counties have their equivalents of Udal and March, some are fortunate enough to have an equivalent of Davies, but only Dorset has a Hardy.

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## CHAPTER 8

# SOME OTHER SIGNIFICANT REFERENCES TO TRADITIONAL CULTURE IN HARDY'S WRITINGS

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers some further examples of traditional culture which are described by Hardy in sufficient detail to enable comparison with accounts from orthodox folklore sources. In each case, it is possible to consider his treatment exhaustively without requiring the length of analysis afforded to the topics examined in chapters 5 to 7.

Three of the following sections deal with calendar customs, three with social and domestic customs, two with superstitions, one with traditional song and one with material culture. The sections are set out in the order in which the subjects appear in the index in chapter 2.

## SHROVING AND WASSAILING

Hardy's notebooks contain details of two calendric house-visiting customs which do not feature elsewhere in his writings and for which full details are not available from other sources.

### Shroving

The practice of visiting houses on Shrove Tuesday to solicit food or money was commonplace in Dorset in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>1</sup> Hardy does not mention the custom in his published work, but his personal notebooks contain the following entry:

1873 Feb.

Shroving in Dorset:

When going shroving they used to carry a bag for flour, & a basin for fat. Their words were:

"Ma'am, ma'am, ma'am  
I be come a shroving  
For a piece of pancake  
Or a piece of bacon  
Or a round ruggle-cheese of your own making  
Ma'am, ma'am, ma'am.

Subjoined at Puddlehinton and other villages.

Hot, hot, the pan's hot,  
Buttery doors open,  
Pray mis'ess, good mis'ess  
Is your heart open?  
I be come 'ithout my bag,



Afeard I shall have nothing.”<sup>2</sup>

There can be little doubt that the details came from Hardy’s sister Mary, who was teaching at Piddlehinton School in 1873, although the note suggests that Hardy was aware of other instances of the custom. Shroving was carried out at Piddlehinton until the Second World War and the present writer was able to collect versions of the rhyme used until that time, through fieldwork carried out in the 1980s. Hardy’s 1873 version was then compared with that used some seventy years later in the same village, thus validating his information and affording a diachronic study of a shroving rhyme within a single village, the only Dorset location for which such a comparison is possible.<sup>3</sup>

Hardy’s account also indicates that, at the time of which he wrote, the shrovers still collected food to make pancakes, a gift which had been commuted to cash payments by the time that the twentieth-century informants took part in the custom.

### Wassailing

Hardy’s notebooks also contain a reference to the custom of wassailing.

At Melbury, on a certain day of the year, a family used to go round to the houses saying:-

Wassail, wassail,  
All round the town,  
The cup is white  
And the ale is brown:  
The cup is made of an ashen tree  
And the ale is made of good bar-ley  
We’ll set tha cup upon the bron’ (brand)  
And hope we shall have good luck anon,  
Hope all the apple-trees ‘ill bud, bear and bloo’,  
This year, next year, the year after too.  
For this our ‘sail, our jolly wassail,  
O joy go with our jolly wassail! <sup>4</sup>

Melbury Osmond was the home of Hardy’s mother and, since he says that the family “used to” perambulate the village, it may be assumed that the custom took place in her youth, in the 1820s. The travelling (i.e. house-to-house) wassail, a post-Christmas custom, has often been reported from Somerset and Devon but only once from Dorset, from an unknown location.<sup>5</sup> The first six and last two lines of Hardy’s song closely resemble the first verse of the travelling wassail songs still extant at Drayton and Curry Rivel, in South Somerset.

Wassail, oh wassail  
All over the town  
The cup it is white  
And the ale it is brown,  
The cup it is made of the good old ashen tree  
And so is the beer of the best barley.  
For it’s your wassail and it’s our wassail,  
And I’m jolly come to our jolly wassail.<sup>6</sup>

Hardy's remaining four lines, with their exhortation to the apple trees, probably come from a rhyme associated with the separate practice of apple tree wassailing. This custom was also observed during the post-Christmas season, albeit usually separately from the travelling wassail. Only two apple tree wassail rhymes have been collected in Dorset, neither of which resembles the Melbury version.<sup>7</sup>

## MIDSUMMER EVE DIVINATION

### Marriage divination

In *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore*, Udal gives four examples of Dorset Midsummer Eve marriage divination practices, namely throwing hemp-seed, crossing shoes, choosing letters of the alphabet and laying out bread and cheese.<sup>8</sup> All but the third are also mentioned by Hardy but, whereas Udal assumes that the customs took place on the new style date of 23 June, Hardy makes it clear that his descriptions pertain to Midsummer Eve Old Style (5 July), one of a number of such instances which suggest the persistence of the old-style calendar into the years of the author's youth.

Divination by throwing hemp-seed is described in *W*, where the village maidens visit a wood at midnight and scatter the seed in order to raise the spirits of their future husbands.<sup>9</sup> At one point, an apprehensive participant expresses second thoughts.

"I wish we had not thought of trying this," said another, "but had contented ourselves with the hole-digging to-morrow, and hearing our husbands' trades. It is too much like having dealings with the evil one to try to raise their forms."<sup>10</sup>

Udal, in referring to this passage, says that he is unaware of a custom of divination by hole-digging but, since the publication of *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore*, a description has been published from Hardy's notebooks.

On old Midsr. noon dig a hole in the grass plot, & place your ear thereon precisely at 12. The occupation of your future husband will be revealed by the noises heard.<sup>11</sup>

From the same source, comes Hardy's reference to divination by the crossing of shoes.

June. Old Midsummer custom: on old Midsr. eve, at going to bed:  
"I put my shoes in the form of a T,  
And trust my true love for to see."<sup>12</sup>

The couplet closely resembles a version quoted by Udal from Canon Mayo.

I place my shoes in the form of a T,  
Hoping this night my true-love to see,  
In his apparel and in his array,  
As he goes forth on every day.<sup>13</sup>



The custom of leaving out bread and cheese, to attract the spirit of the future spouse, is mentioned by Hardy in both *JO* and *UGT*.

His supper still remained spread; and going to the front door, and softly setting it open, he returned to the room and sat as watchers sit on Old-Midsummer eves, expecting the phantom of the Beloved.<sup>14</sup>

“Yes; never was I in such a taking as on that Midsummer-eve! I sat up quite determined to see if John Wildway was going to marry me or no. I put the bread-and-cheese and beer quite ready, as the witch’s book ordered, and I opened the door, and I waited till the clock struck twelve, .... and when the clock had struck, lo and behold I could see through the door a *little small* man in the lane wi’ a shoemaker’s apron on ..... In he walks and down he sits, ....”<sup>15</sup>

This Midsummer Eve divination custom was still current in Dorset in 1881, according to one of Udal’s informants.<sup>16</sup>

As discussed in chapter 3, Grigson, in his introduction to the New Wessex Edition of *UGT*, wrongly attributes the example of Midsummer Eve divination in this novel to Chambers’ *Book of Days*.<sup>17</sup> The evidence, from this study, of Hardy’s close personal knowledge of all forms of traditional culture reinforces the judgement that this attribution is incorrect. It should be noted that, although Hardy recorded the Midsummer Eve customs of hole-digging and shoe-crossing in his notebooks, he mentions only the former in his published work and then only in passing. This is consistent with his drawing on a store of personal experience as and when required, not of his seeking out published material to add colour to his writing as suggested by Grigson.

### Death Divination

The custom of watching at the church porch on St. Mark’s Eve, to see the wraiths of those who are to die in the following year, has been reported from a number of locations in the north of England, with an instance as early as the seventeenth century.<sup>18</sup> The earliest published Dorset reference is by Hardy in “A Few Crusted Characters”, first published in 1891. Here the custom takes place on Midsummer Eve old style, and is described by the narrator as follows:

You may not remember, sir, having gone off to foreign parts so young, that on Midsummer Night it is believed hereabout that the faint shapes of all the folk in the parish who are going to be at death’s door within the year can be seen entering the church. Those who get over their illness come out again after a while; those that are doomed to die do not return.<sup>19</sup>

The subject of the story, William Privett, does not return and does indeed die within the year.

Both the date and the form of the custom are confirmed by Udal, who cites a Hazelbury Bryan informant from 1881, ten years before Hardy described the belief in his short story.

She stated that a curious old custom was still believed in Dorsetshire, that if you sit in the church porch on Midsummer Eve you will see those who are to die during the ensuing year enter the church and not come out again; whilst those who will have a serious illness will go in and return again.<sup>20</sup>

Similar information is given by March for Buckland Newton in the early nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> Palmer, describing an analogous custom in Somerset, refers to a Hallowe'en date of observance but, in Dorset at least, Midsummer Eve old style seems to have been the appropriate date.<sup>22</sup>

## NOVEMBER THE FIFTH CELEBRATIONS

Udal briefly refers to the violence with which November the Fifth was celebrated in nineteenth-century Dorset<sup>23</sup> and the present writer has produced additional evidence to demonstrate the prevalence of tar barrel rolling, rioting and anti-Roman Catholic demonstrations on this date.<sup>24</sup> Hardy's description, in *RN*, of the peaceful bonfires lit by the inhabitants of Egdon Heath on November the Fifth bears no resemblance to these activities, a discrepancy which cannot entirely be explained by his portrayal of the Heath as remote from the nearest town.<sup>25</sup> In fact, from an early age, Hardy was well aware of the reality of November the Fifth in Dorset, and of its anti-Roman Catholic connotations, as he recalls in *LW*.

When still a small boy he was taken by his father to witness the burning in effigy of the Pope and Cardinal Wiseman in the old Roman Amphitheatre at Dorchester during the No-Popery Riots. The sight to young Hardy was most lurid, and he never forgot it; and when the cowl of one of the monks in the ghastly procession blew aside and revealed the features of one of his father's workmen, his bewilderment was great.<sup>26</sup>

This childhood memory furnished Hardy with material for an article which he wrote for *The Times* in 1908 about Maumbury Rings, a Roman amphitheatre in Dorchester,<sup>27</sup> Here, he further recalls that the effigies in question were taken in procession from Fordington Hill to Poundbury (i.e. from the eastern to the western edge of the town via the main street) and placed on a bonfire before being blown to pieces by fireworks concealed within them. This description is entirely consistent with contemporary accounts of events at Dorchester on 5 November, albeit omitting to mention the violence customary at this time.

It could be argued that Hardy fails to mention this aspect of Dorset's November the Fifth celebrations in *RN* since it is not directly relevant to his plot but, in this novel, he makes mention of several superstitious practices and beliefs to emphasise the backwardness and ignorance of the Heath dwellers. In particular, he describes the pricking of a suspected witch, an event which prompts Clym Yeobright, who plans to open a school on the Heath, to observe to his mother "Do you think I have turned teacher too soon?"<sup>28</sup> In this context, the portrayal of effigy burning and religious prejudice in *RN* would be quite apposite.

It is likely that the barbarism of 5 November in Dorchester was something of which Hardy was so ashamed that, in writing *RN* in the mid 1870s, when the violent practices were still in full swing, he chose to ignore them. By the time that his 1908 *Times* article was published, things had changed for the better in the town and he could safely indulge in personal reminiscence.

Although this is understandable from a writer's point of view, it does mean that *RN* gives an incomplete view of November the Fifth celebrations in Dorset and that this detracts from



Hardy's value as a source. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that it is an incomplete view, not a fictitious one. It is true that reference to the novel alone does not give the whole picture, but a more rounded picture of this particular custom may be obtained through consideration of Hardy's personal recollections in *PW* and *LW*. This again illustrates the necessity to consider the full range of Hardy's writings in order to assess his value as a folklore source, a strategy which has not been employed prior to the present study.

It is unusual for Hardy to comment on the supposed origins of elements of traditional culture but he does so in *RN* with respect to November the Fifth bonfires.

It was as if these men and boys had suddenly dived into past ages, and fetched therefrom an hour and deed which had before been familiar with this spot. The ashes of the original British pyre which blazed from the summit lay fresh and undisturbed in the barrow beneath their tread. The flames from funeral pyres long ago kindled there had shone down upon the lowlands as these were shining now. Festival fires to Thor and Woden had followed on the same ground and duly had their day. Indeed, it is pretty well known that such blazes as this the heathmen were now enjoying are rather the lineal descendants from jumbled Druidical rites and Saxon ceremonies than the invention of popular feeling about Gunpowder Plot.<sup>29</sup>

Such an analysis is now firmly rejected by folklorists but, at the time that Hardy wrote, it was current orthodoxy and in stating it he shows himself to have absorbed the theories of the Frazerian folklorists of his day. This makes it necessary to treat his references to origins theory in his writings with caution but, as stated, this is a subject which he rarely addresses in his work.

## THE PORTLAND COURTSHIP CUSTOM

In *WB* Hardy makes a number of oblique references to "island custom", the first being when his hero, Jocelyn Pierston, is engaged to be married to Avice Caro.

Pierston thought of the native custom on such occasions, which had prevailed in his and her families for centuries, both being of the old stock of the isle. The influx of "kimberlins", or "foreigners" (as strangers from the mainland of Wessex were called), had led in a large measure to its discontinuance; but under the veneer of Avice's education many an old fashioned idea lay slumbering, and he wondered if, in her natural melancholy at his leaving, she regretted the changing manners which made unpopular the formal ratification of a betrothal, according to the precedent of their sires and grandsires.<sup>30</sup>

This is a euphemistic reference to the Isle of Portland courtship custom, described by Udal.

....a young woman never admits the serious addresses of a young man but on the basis of a thorough probation. When she becomes with child it is then considered the proper time to be married, which then almost invariably takes place. If she should not prove with child "after a competent time of courtship", they separate....a similar courtship may follow without any more aspersion on the woman's honour than if she had been a widow or remained a maid.<sup>31</sup>

Udal's account is taken from one published by Hutchins, some fifty years earlier<sup>32</sup> and the earlier author, in turn, draws on passages from Smeaton's *History of the Eddystone Lighthouse*, which was written in 1791. As is often the case amongst writers on folklore, neither of the later authors troubled to ascertain whether the custom obtained in their own time, being content merely to reiterate an earlier description. In this respect, Hardy's

references in *WB* are useful since they indicate the status of the custom in the nineteenth century.

The early part of the novel is set in about 1850 and Avice Caro describes the custom as “nearly left off”. Nevertheless, some twenty years later, her daughter practises island custom and observes that her husband, a quarryman, does not accept that it is out of date since “he’s so old-fashioned in his notions”<sup>33</sup> There is an indication here that a custom might not cease in a particular location but, instead, continue to be practised by less educated and outgoing members of the community whilst abandoned by others. This is a good example of Hardy’s supplying temporal and social context for a tradition where these are absent from the standard sources.

- According to the recollections of one of Cox’s informants, who was born in 1883, the “island custom” was also practised on the mainland of Dorset in her youth.<sup>34</sup>

## SKIMMITY-RIDING

The demonstration of social disapproval by a satirical procession was very widespread in England until the late nineteenth century and was variously known as skimmington, skimmity-riding, riding the stang, etc. The form of the custom varied, but it generally involved the parading of images or impersonators of the offenders, accompanied by rough music, i.e. a discordant noise from the beating or blowing of impromptu instruments. The victims were usually alleged perpetrators of domestic misdemeanours such as adultery or wife-beating.<sup>35</sup>

In Hardy’s poem “The Bride-Night Fire”, a young woman marries an old man, Tranter Sweatley, who fails to consummate the marriage through drunkenly setting the house on fire. The bride is then rescued by her erstwhile lover, Tim. The marriage of an old and incapable man to a young girl is a typical pretext for a skimmity-ride, as Hardy goes on to observe in his poem.

Then followed the custom-kept rout, shout and flare  
Of a skimmity-ride through the neighbourhood, ere  
Folk had proof o’ wold Sweatley’s decay.  
Whereat decent people all stood in a stare,  
Saying Tim and his lodger should risk it and pair:…<sup>36</sup>

The poem distinguishes between the perpetrators of the skimmity-ride and “decent folk”, thus giving an indication of the social level at which this custom operated.

The more famous skimmity-ride in *MC* also sets the organisers in a lowly social context, namely the notorious *Mixen Lane* in the seedy *Durnover* area of *Casterbridge*. In the subsequent procession, the victims, Michael Henchard and his former mistress, Lucetta are represented by carefully dressed images tied back to back. The instruments of rough music are also detailed.



Meanwhile Mr. Benjamin Grower, that prominent burgess of whom mention has already been made, hearing the din of cleavers, tongs, tambourines, kits, crowds, humstrums, serpents, rams'-horns and other historical kinds of music, as he sat indoors in the High Street, had put on his hat and gone out to learn the cause.<sup>37</sup>

Hardy is likely to be using first or second-hand recollection here, since the custom was extant in Dorset in the second half of the nineteenth century; Udal citing three instances, at Whitechurch Canonorum, Okeford Fitzpaine and Weymouth, all in 1884.<sup>38</sup> These, and other descriptions of the custom in Dorset are censorious and patronising and only Hardy gives an idea of the effect of the proceedings on the victims, who are clearly horrified by their experience. Hence, in another reference to the custom, in *RN*, the newly-wed Thomasin Yeobright is alarmed by the approach of singing villagers.

“What does it mean – it is not a skimmity-riding, I hope?” she said, with a frightened gaze at Wildeve.<sup>39</sup>

In *MC*, the effect of the skimmity-ride on Lucetta, is more severe since the shock of seeing herself parodied leads to seizure and death.

“ ’Tis me!” she said, with a face pale as death. “A procession – a scandal – an effigy of me, and him!....

....“She’s me – she’s me – even to the parasol – my green parasol!” cried Lucetta with a wild laugh as she stepped in. She stood motionless for one second – then fell heavily to the floor.<sup>40</sup>

## DIVINATION BY BIBLE AND KEY

The practice of using a Bible and a key to divine the identity of prospective lovers was first recorded in the mediaeval period.<sup>41</sup> The nature of Hardy’s evidence on this custom is interesting in that it entails graphic, as well as verbal, description.

In his preface to the 1902 edition of *FMC*, Hardy compares his fictional *Weatherbury* to its real counterpart, Puddletown, and refers to the decline in various traditions in the village.

The practice of divination by Bible and key, the regarding of valentines as things of serious import, the shearing-supper, the long smock-frocks, and the harvest-home, have, too, nearly disappeared<sup>42</sup>

Although he is correct about the other practices mentioned, divination by Bible and key is recorded by Opie and Tatem as still extant in the 1960s and Udal’s account of the Dorset version implies that it was extant in the county at least until the late nineteenth century.<sup>43</sup>

The description of such a divination, by Bathsheba and Liddy, in *FMC* is rather vague. First, “the special verse in the Book of Ruth” is sought out and a key placed on the Bible.

The verse was repeated; the book turned round; Bathsheba blushed guiltily.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, the potential lover (Boldwood) is identified.

Full details of the practice are revealed in Helen Allingham’s illustration to the serialised version of *FMC*, published in *Cornhill Magazine* in March 1874 (illustration 15 in the appendix to this study).<sup>45</sup> Here, Liddy and Bathsheba are seen holding a large key with the

third fingers of their left hands. The Bible is bound shut and suspended from the key by what appears to be a ribbon and, from the illustration, it is easy to see how the Bible could turn as described. Hardy had the highest regard for Mrs. Allingham as an illustrator and it may be assumed that her drawing represents the practice as he described it. On the other hand, the two did not meet until several episodes of the serial, including the one bearing this illustration, had been published. Jackson, in her study of Hardy's illustrators, believes that Hardy must have given Mrs. Allingham details of the method used in the Dorset form of the divination but, if so, no correspondence has survived.<sup>46</sup>

Both the Hardy description and the Allingham illustration are similar to the version recorded by Udal. Here a key is secured between the pages of a Bible, at the first chapter of the Book of Ruth, verse 16, and the book held up with the key by the forefingers of the right hands of the two participants. If the Bible turns when the verse is read it confirms the love or friendship of the participants or of one of the participants and a named third party. The verse in question reads:

And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest I shall lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God;

More than fifty years after the publication of *FMC*, Hardy told the journalist Stewart M. Ellis how the divination was performed and this brief account was published in the *Fortnightly Review* in March 1928:

He said that the girl's garter was tied about the key, and both were placed hard against the text chosen; and if impress from the Bible type was made upon the light garter it was presumed to be an omen that the suitor was the right man and that he should be accepted.<sup>47</sup>

This is entirely different from the description in the novel and it must be assumed either that, over fifty years after writing *FMC*, Hardy's memory is at fault, or that Ellis's recollection of the interview is inaccurate or that Hardy is recalling a different version of the custom.

## GHOSTS

Hardy's view of the state of ghost-belief in his day is expressed in a letter written to Rider Haggard in March 1902.

For example, if you ask one of the workfolk (they always used to be called "workfolk" hereabout – "labourers" is an imported word) the names of surrounding hills, streams, the character and circumstances of people buried in particular graves; at what spots parish personages lie interred; questions on local fairies, ghosts, herbs &c, they can give no answer: yet I can recollect the time when the places of burial even of the poor and tombless were all remembered, and the history of the parish and squire's family for 150 years back known. Such and such ballads appertained to such and such a locality, ghost tales were attached to particular sites, and nooks wherein wild herbs grew for the cure of divers maladies were pointed out readily.<sup>48</sup>

Despite these gloomy strictures, this element of superstition survives and flourishes, in Dorset as elsewhere, to the present day. The most comprehensive collection of ghost stories



from the county is by Legg, but additional items continue to appear in newspapers, magazines and local histories.<sup>49</sup>

Bennett argues persuasively that the nature of the ghosts, as experienced by those who believe in them, is culturally and historically determined and she draws attention, for instance, to the contrast between the “political ghost” of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the “romantic ghost” of some two hundred years later.<sup>50</sup> In this context, the references to ghosts in Hardy’s writings are useful in providing examples of belief from the second half of the nineteenth century, a hundred years before those recorded by Legg.

As already indicated in chapter 3, this study does not consider the ghosts in Hardy’s poems, since he generally uses his poetry to explore and invent, rather than to record. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning two related beliefs which appear in the poems, namely that the dead return to the world on All Souls’ Eve<sup>51</sup> and on Christmas Eve.<sup>52</sup>

Two further general characteristics of ghosts are mentioned in *RN*. The first is that ghosts appear to single sleepers<sup>53</sup> and the second that the dead “claim their own”, in this case by taking away their bones from the houses where they are kept, following archaeological excavations.<sup>54</sup> Here Hardy is probably recording local tradition, since the area around Dorchester has frequently yielded human remains on excavation.

The most ancient ghosts mentioned by Hardy are those of Roman soldiers at *The Ring at Casterbridge* (Maumbury Rings, Dorchester).

...some old people said that at certain moments in the summer time, in broad daylight, persons sitting with a book or dozing in the arena had, on lifting their eyes, beheld the slopes lined with a gazing legion of Hadrian’s soldiery as if watching the gladiatorial combat; and had heard the roar of their excited voices; that the scene would remain but a moment, like a lightning flash, and then disappear.<sup>55</sup>

Hardy took a great interest in the history of Maumbury Rings and he may be reporting a genuine local tradition but, if so, it is unrecorded elsewhere until 1947 and then probably influenced by his own reference.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, Harte has drawn attention to the absence of sightings of Roman ghosts in the Dorchester area until the twentieth century and the increasing frequency of such reports from then on, as more people became aware of the former Roman presence in the area and began to “see” ghosts as Romans.<sup>57</sup> This observation is consistent with Bennett’s view that the form in which ghosts are seen is culturally determined.

Further ancient ghosts are mentioned in *W*, in which the older people tell the story of the spirits of the Two Brothers.

who had fought and fallen, and had haunted King’s Hintock Court a few miles off till they were exorcised by the priest, and compelled to retreat to a swamp, whence they were returning to their old quarters at the Court at the rate of a cock’s stride every New Year’s Day, Old Style, hence the local saying, “On new-year’s tide, a cock’s stride”<sup>58</sup>

The motif of the cockstride ghost is well known in Devon and Cornwall<sup>59</sup> and, since Hardy’s first wife was from the latter county, there must be a possibility that she was the

source for this story. On the other hand, Hardy's mother, Jemima, was a native of the countryside in which *W* is set and actually worked for the owners of Melbury House, the haunted *King's Hintock Court* of the novel. It seems unlikely that Hardy would have imported a Cornish story when Jemima was a ready source of local tales. Therefore this story could be a unique, example of a cockstride ghost tradition from Dorset.

The first nineteenth-century ghost recorded by Hardy again seems to stem from Jemima's recollection and dates from about 1820.

At Melbury Osmond there was a haunted barn. A man coming home drunk entered the barn & fell asleep in a cow's crib that stood within. He awoke at 12, & saw a lady riding round and round on a buck, holding the horns as reins. She was in a white riding-habit, & the wind of her speed blew so strong upon him that he sneezed, when she vanished.<sup>60</sup>

This is an unusual form for a ghost but the notion of haunted barns and purposeless ghosts is in accordance with Bennett's observations on the nature of nineteenth-century apparitions.

Another story was collected by Hardy in 1883, when he stopped to inspect a former coaching inn at Corfe Mullen.

Passed a lonely old house, formerly an inn. The road-contractor now living there showed us into the stable, and drew our attention to the furthest stall. When the place was an inn, he said, it was the haunt of smugglers, and in a quarrel there one night a man was killed in that stall. If a horse is put there on certain nights, at about two in the morning (when the smuggler died) the horse cries like a child, and on entering you find him in a lather of sweat.<sup>61</sup>

As shown in chapter 7, smugglers were not above trading upon superstitious beliefs in witchcraft to cloak their illicit activities. This story bears the hallmark of an attempt, this time using a ghost story, to dissuade investigation of their base and to explain the exhausted condition of the horses used by them during the night.

A further story, collected by Hardy in 1897, comes from the midwife who had delivered him.

She used to tell a story of a woman who came to her to consult her about the ghost of another woman she declared she had seen & who "troubled her" – the deceased wife of the man who was courting her.

"How long hev' the woman been dead?" I said.

"Many years!"

"Oh, that were no ghost. Now if she'd only been dead a month or two, and you were making her husband your fancy-man, there might have been something in your story. But Lord, much can she care about him after years and years in better company!"<sup>62</sup>

The best known of Hardy's ghosts is the phantom d'Urberville coach, which appears in *TD*. Tess Durbeyfield, a descendant of the ancient and aristocratic d'Urberville family, on seeing the antiquated carriage provided for her wedding transport, observes that she has seen it before, possibly in a dream. Her bridegroom then relates the story of the coach and, in so doing, elicits a superstitious response from Tess.



“A certain d’Urberville of the sixteenth or seventeenth century committed a dreadful crime in his family coach; and since that time members of the family see or hear the old coach whenever – but I’ll tell you another day – it is rather gloomy. Evidently some dim knowledge of it has been brought back to your mind by the sight of this venerable caravan.”

“I don’t remember hearing it before,” she murmured. “Is it when we are going to die, Angel, that members of my family see it, or is it when we have committed a crime?”<sup>63</sup>

Subsequently Tess is told a further version of the story by Alec d’Urberville.

“Ah! You heard the d’Urberville Coach perhaps. You know the legend, I suppose?”

“No. My – somebody was going to tell me once, but didn’t.”

“If you are a genuine d’Urberville I ought not to tell you either, I suppose. As for me, I’m a sham one, so it doesn’t matter. It is rather dismal. It is that this sound of a non-existent coach can only be heard by one of d’Urberville blood, and it is held to be of ill-omen to the one who hears it. It has to do with a murder, committed by one of the family, centuries ago.”

“Now you have begun it, finish it.”

“Very well. One of the family is said to have abducted some beautiful woman, who tried to escape from the coach in which he was carrying her off, and in the struggle he killed her – or she killed him – I forget which.”<sup>64</sup>

In a letter written some twelve years after the book publication of *TD*, presumably in response to a query as to the source of the story, Hardy indicates its traditional origin.

The legend of the phantom coach is well known here, the scene of its wayfarings being the road between Woolbridge manor-house & the site of the destroyed manor-house at Bere Regis – two properties formerly owned by branches of the same family – the Turbervilles. The cause of the appearances is said to be some family murder, but this may be an invention of recent times, such supplementary detail being often added to mediaeval tales; as, for instance, to the legend of the Lost Pyx, (versified in “Poems of the Past and Present”) a black-hoofed animal that would not kneel is subjoined by some tellers.<sup>65</sup>

It is interesting that Hardy comments on the rationalising element of the family murder, thus showing a healthy cynicism for explanations added at a later date to explain the stories of purposeless nineteenth-century ghosts.

The d’Urberville coach seems to have been a genuine tradition, one of several such apparitions in Dorset,<sup>66</sup> since H.J. Moule, in 1884, some four years before Hardy began to write the novel, read a paper to the Dorset Field Club which included a reference to the coach.<sup>67</sup> Hardy, who was a member of the Club, must have been aware of this, but he gives his source for the story as “an old woman”.<sup>68</sup> This description is usually taken to indicate Jemima Hardy but, given that Woolbridge Manor and Bere Regis are both some miles to the east of Stinsford, whereas Jemima came from West Dorset, it seems more likely that grandmother Hardy, from Puddletown, was his source. On another occasion, Hardy told Clive Holland that “he had heard the legend from the lips of several people in Wool who claimed to have seen the spectral coach”.<sup>69</sup>

The motif of the coach's being visible only to Turbervilles is present in Moule's account, in which the man who sees it turns out, to his listeners' surprise, to be a Turberville descendant. A later version of the story, by Windle, is almost identical, other than the gender of the Turberville descendant,<sup>70</sup> and subsequent accounts follow similarly derivative lines. Given the relative inaccessibility of Moule's paper, compared to Hardy's fiction, it may be surmised that twentieth-century stories of the Turberville coach are largely based on Hardy's fictionalisation of a genuine tradition.

The remaining ghost in Hardy's fiction is that of William Privett in "A Few Crusted Characters". On the day after his death Privett appears at *Longpuddle Spring*, a place always avoided by him since the death of his son at the spot. As discussed in chapter 3, Hardy based the location on Buttock's Spring, in his mother's home village of Melbury Osmond, and drew on local tradition for the story of Privett's ghost.<sup>72</sup>

Wraiths, the supernatural images of the living, are most unusual in southern English folklore, but Hardy mentions William Privett's wraith twice, once at a Midsummer Night church porch watch and once when he is heard to leave his house shortly before his death.<sup>73</sup>

Hardy seems to have had a positive attitude towards ghost belief, since he said that, as a young man, he would have mortgaged ten years of his life to have seen a ghost.<sup>74</sup> According to his second wife, writing in 1927, he may have unwittingly achieved this ambition towards the end of his life.

During the evening he spoke of an experience he had a few years ago. There were four or five people to tea at Max Gate, and he noticed a stranger standing by me most of the time. Afterwards he asked who that dark man was who stood by me. I told him that there was no stranger present, and I gave him the names of the three men who were there, all personal friends. He said that it was not one of these, and seemed to think that another person had actually been there. This afternoon he said: "I can see his face now".<sup>75</sup>

## CATTLE KNEELING ON CHRISTMAS EVE

Strangely, the belief that cattle kneel in their stalls on Old Christmas Eve is not mentioned in Opie and Tatem's *Dictionary of Superstitions*, but the earlier *Encyclopaedia of Superstitions* describes it as a "well-known and very widespread tradition" and refers to analogous beliefs in parts of Europe.<sup>76</sup> It has also been reported from Newfoundland.<sup>77</sup> Even so, the only Dorset source for the belief is Hardy and, in particular, his well-known poem, "The Oxen", first published in *The Times* on 24 December 1915.

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.  
"Now they are all on their knees"  
An elder said as we sat in a flock  
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where  
They lay in their strawy pen,  
Nor did it occur to one of us there  
To doubt they were kneeling then.



So fair a fancy few would weave  
In these years! Yet, I feel,  
If someone said on Christmas Eve,  
“Come; see the oxen kneel

In the lonely barton down by the coomb  
Our childhood used to know,”  
I should go with him in the gloom,  
Hoping it might be so.<sup>78</sup>

The poem evocatively expresses its author’s own ambivalent attitude towards traditional belief and gives an indication of the decline of such belief over time. Hardy was seventy-five when the poem was written, and it is clear from the text that he is referring to the belief as pertaining to the past, presumably his youth in the mid-nineteenth century. This chronology is confirmed in his characteristically combative response to critics of his 1899 poem “A Christmas Ghost Story”, during which he refers to “Christmas Eve (when even the beasts of the field kneel, according to a tradition of my childhood)”<sup>79</sup>

Hardy’s interest in this superstition extended beyond nostalgic recollection to an interest in parallels from elsewhere, as demonstrated in a letter written in 1898, some years before the publication of “The Oxen”.

I wonder if the custom you allude to, of the Cévenol cattle being brought to the church door on Xmas night, is of the same pedigree as the belief still held in remote parts hereabout, that the cattle kneel at a particular moment in the early hours of every Christmas morning – just at, or after, 12, I think.<sup>80</sup>

This reference to the belief as “still held” indicates its survival into the very late nineteenth-century.

The notion of cattle kneeling on Christmas Eve was exercising Hardy’s imagination at an even earlier period in his writing career, since the motif occurs in an incident related in *TD* by Dairyman Crick. He tells the story of the fiddler, William Dewy (a leading character in *UGT*), who, while crossing a field one night, is pursued by a bull. In an attempt to distract the animal, he strikes up a jig on his fiddle, with only temporary success.

The bull softened down, and stood still, looking hard at William Dewy, who fiddled on and on; till a sort of smile stole over the bull’s face. But no sooner did William stop his playing and turn to get over the hedge than the bull would stop his smiling and lower his horns towards the seat of William’s breeches.<sup>81</sup>

Eventually, William hits upon the ploy of playing “the ’Tivity Hymn” (i.e. “While Shepherds Watched”) in an attempt to trick the bull into thinking it to be Christmas Eve and thus induce it to kneel. The bull is indeed hoodwinked and, as it kneels, William makes his escape over the hedge.

The story sounds like an inspired invention on the novelist’s part, but Perry, in a short article, claims that Hardy obtained the story from a written source, namely *The Young Cricketer’s Tutor* of 1833.<sup>82</sup> Although a version of the story does appear in the *Tutor* it seems unlikely, to say the least, that Hardy, who never showed the slightest interest in

sport, would have read of it there. Instead, his brief comment on the story, in a 1906 letter, shows that he was well aware of its traditional origin and wide distribution:

What a number are in existence: the English form of the German wolf-and-fiddle as may be. They mostly begin alike but end differently.<sup>83</sup>

In the incident described in *TD*, Hardy supplies the beginning from the musical animal group of stories and the ending from the kneeling cattle superstition. The latter was, as demonstrated above, a Stinsford tradition, while the former may have been another local tradition or may have come from a literary source. It is not usually possible to demonstrate Hardy's knowledge of the international background of his material in this way and is possible only to speculate as to how frequently a seemingly inconsequential passage of folklore in his writing is based on a level of knowledge higher than mere personal recollection.

### “THE OUTLANDISH KNIGHT”

In his poem “The Harvest Supper”, Hardy describes how the local girls sat in a row and sang ballads, the heroine's being recognisable, from his description, as “The Outlandish Knight”.

She sang of the false Sir John of old,  
The lover who witched to win,  
And the parrot, and cage of glittering gold;  
And the other maids joined in.<sup>84</sup>

The setting for the poem may be identified as Kingston Maurward Barn, where Hardy attended a harvest supper as a boy in about 1850, an experience which he describes in *LW*. This is one of the few occasions on which his original source can be traced and, as elsewhere, he may be shown to reproduce the details faithfully.

It may be worthy of note that this harvest-home was among the last at which the old traditional ballads were sung, the railways having been extended to Dorchester just then, and the orally transmitted ditties of centuries being slain at a stroke by the London comic songs that were introduced. The particular ballad which he remembered hearing that night from the lips of the farm-women was that one variously called “The Outlandish Knight”, “May Colvine”, “The Western Tragedy”, etc. He could recall to old age the scene of the young women in their light gowns sitting on a bench against the wall in the barn, and leaning against each other as they warbled the Dorset version of the ballad, which differed a little from the northern:

“Lie there, lie there, thou false-hearted man,  
Lie there instead o' me;  
For six pretty maidens thou hast a-drown'd here.  
But the seventh hath drown-ed thee!”

“O tell no more, my pretty par-rot,  
Lay not the blame on me;  
And your cage shall be made o' the glittering gold  
Wi' a door o' the white ivo-rie!”<sup>85</sup>



The ballad clearly made an impression on Hardy, who, more than fifty years after hearing it sung at the harvest supper, was able to offer details to Harry Pouncy, who was giving recitals of old local songs.

“False Sir John” you would get in collections of old ballads, but as this may be difficult, I think I could give you the tune approximately as I recall it - & a copy of the words if necessary.<sup>86</sup>

Unfortunately, there is no record of Hardy having supplied the details in question.

This ballad is included in Child’s collection as number 4, “Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight”, but is usually known as “The Outlandish Knight” and has been widely collected.<sup>87</sup> Some versions have False Sir John and May Colven as the main characters and Hardy’s names for the ballad doubtless reflect this. The events in the ballad vary in detail between different versions, but generally centre upon on a King’s daughter who is courted by a knight, who is from a far country (i.e. “outlandish”). He persuades her to steal horses and treasure from her father and to elope with him but, when they reach the sea, he announces his intention of drowning her, as he has six previous victims. She tricks him into turning his back and succeeds in drowning him. On returning to her father’s castle she is questioned as to her absence by a talking parrot, but manages to bribe the bird to keep her secret.

Despite the wide currency of “The Outlandish Knight”, no text has been published from Dorset, so Hardy’s verses, which refer to the drowning of the knight and the bribing of the parrot, are of some interest. In addition, Hardy annotated the text of the ballad in his copy of *Ballad Minstrelsey* (where it is titled “May Colvine and False Sir John”) to give a slightly different text of the drowning verse and also a further verse which precedes it:

He dropped high he dropped low  
Until he came to the side  
Catch hold of my hand my pretty lady  
Tomorrow I’ll make you my bride!

Lie there, lie there, thou false hearted man  
Lie there instead of me:  
If six pretty maidens thou hast a drowned here  
But the seventh hath drowned thee.<sup>88</sup>

He also makes minor amendments to the *Minstrelsey* parrot-bribing verse, by substituting “parr-ot” for “poll”, and quoting the phrases “made of the glittering gold” and “door of the best ivory” as Dorset variants. This is more or less in accordance with the verse quoted in *LW*.

The three verses recovered by Hardy do not greatly extend the knowledge of this song in Dorset but, as usual with Hardy, the context is illustrative. Hence he records approximately the year in question and also the setting and time of the performance and the nature of the singers. Since the other farm girls join in, it is also apparent that the ballad was well known in the Stinsford area at the time.

Despite the absence of published Dorset versions of “The Outlandish Knight”, the song was sung as late as the 1950s by Tom Collard, a carter at Manor Farm, Purse Caundle. John Waltham, whose grandfather employed Mr. Collard, learned several verses of the ballad from him as a boy and recalls them as follows:

An outlandish knight came from the north-land  
And he came a-wooing me  
And he said we must ride and ere we returned  
Its married we should be.

Go and fetch me some of your father’s gold  
And some of your mother’s fee  
And two of the best horses in the stable  
Where there stand thirty and three.

---

“Oh where have you been my pretty fair Queen?”  
The parrot he did say  
“For you have been out all of the night  
And returned at the break of day.”

“Now hush, now hush my pretty Polly,  
And don’t breathe a word” said she  
“And your cage it shall be of the glittering gold  
With a door of white ivory.”

Then up and spoke her father so dear  
From the bed in which he lay  
Saying “What ails thee, what ails thee my pretty Polly,  
A-chattering so long before day?”

“Well the cat he came to my cage door  
A-thinking to eat me  
And I did cry for help to come,  
To come and deliver me.”

“Well turned, well turned my pretty Polly,  
Well turned, well turned” said she.  
“Now your cage it shall be of the glittering gold  
With a door of white ivory.”<sup>89</sup>

The Hardy and Collard versions are complementary in recovering a Dorset text for this ballad, since only the fourth verse of Mr. Collard’s version coincides with a Hardy verse. There is a clear resemblance between the two stanzas, although it must be said that very similar wording appears in other versions.

The song’s survival, a hundred years after Hardy’s prognostication of its imminent demise, is a rare instance of his espousing conventional wisdom rather than reflecting reality.

## SMUGGLING



Smuggling, like poaching, which was briefly considered in chapter 4, is probably not considered by most folklorists as falling within their remit. Nevertheless, despite the illegality of both pursuits, it must be argued that they are traditional occupations, which should rightly be considered as elements of material culture. Indeed, they conform to the criteria set out in chapter 1 for classification as folklore, in that they encompass:

- The traditional learning of the people.
- Material handed on traditionally, usually by word of mouth.
- The common heritage of a group.

Hardy gives a succinct description of smugglers in the Stinsford area in his poem “Winter Nights in Woodland”.

Out there, on the verge, where a path wavers through,  
Dark figures filed singly, thrud quickly the view,  
Yes, heavily laden; land carriers are they  
In the hire of the smugglers from some nearest bay.  
Each bears his two “tubs”, slung across, one in front, one behind,  
To a further snug hiding, which none but themselves are to find.<sup>90</sup>

The role of Stinsford as a staging post for contraband liquor is also indicated in “Enter a Dragoon” and in *D*.

“A drop o’ that Schiedam of old Owlett’s that’s under stairs, perhaps,” suggested her father. “Not that nowadays ‘tis much better than licensed liquor.”<sup>91</sup>

“Well, come in and take a drop o’ summat we’ve got that will warm the cockles of your heart as ye wamble homealong. We housed eighty tubs last night for them that shan’t be named – landed at Lulwind Cove the night afore, though they had a narrow shave with the riding-officers this run.”<sup>92</sup>

By far the richest source of information on smuggling is the short story “The Distracted Preacher”, which centres on a love affair between a Wesleyan minister and a female smuggler.<sup>93</sup> Here, Hardy describes the economic basis of the local smuggling gangs, the tactics used to land or to sink and retrieve cargo and the transfer of cargoes to their immediate hiding place or to inland holding points (such as Stinsford). There is a very high level of detail, with fifteen examples of hiding places being listed, ten examples of clothes typically searched for traces of illicit spirit and nine of places where spirits might be discarded in an emergency. Hardy also describes the use of the church tower to store contraband at *Nether-Moynton* (Owermoine) and the use of a living apple tree in a tub to disguise the entrance to a vault of contraband tubs in the same village. Finally there is a highly detailed account of how liquor could be sampled and then replaced by water, without broaching the barrel or leaving a trace of evidence.

Unusually, Hardy identifies his source for the descriptions of smuggling techniques in this story, in his preface to the 1896 edition of *Wessex Tales*.

Among the many devices for stealing smuggled goods in caves and pits of the earth, that of planting an apple-tree in a tray or box which was placed over the mouth of the pit is, I believe, unique, and is detailed in “The

Distracted Preacher” precisely as described by an old carrier of “tubs” – a man who was afterwards in my father’s employ for over thirty years.<sup>94</sup>

He goes on to give further examples of information received from the “old carrier”, and of the historical incidents on which the action of the story is based. Ray identifies this informant as James Selby and also instances further informants on whose recollections Hardy could have drawn in describing smuggling in his fiction.<sup>95</sup> On the face of it, this is an excellent example of Hardy’s obtaining material on a traditional technique from an identifiable informant and reproducing it faithfully in a fictional context.

In fact, some of Hardy’s sources were even closer to home than he acknowledged and his unusual readiness to identify his informant may have been intended to disguise his actual source. The Hardy family’s direct connection with smuggling is revealed in Hardy’s personal notebooks, which he intended to be destroyed following his death.

While superintending the church music from 1801 onwards to about 1805, my grandfather used to do a little in smuggling, his house being a lonely one, none of the others in Lower Bockhampton being then built, or only one other. He sometimes had as many as eighty “tubs” in a dark closet (afterwards destroyed in altering staircase) each tub containing 4 gallons ..... They were brought at night by men on horseback, “slung,” or in carts. .A whiplash across the window pane would awake my grandfather at 2 or 3 in the morning, & he would dress & go down. Not a soul was there, but a heap of tubs loomed up in front of the door. .He would set to work and stow them away in the dark closet aforesaid, & nothing more would happen till dusk the following evening, when groups of dark long-bearded fellows would arrive, & carry off the tubs in twos and fours slung over their shoulders. The smugglers grew so bold at last that they would come by day, & my grandmother insisted to her husband that he should stop receiving the tubs, which he did about 1805, though not till at a christening of one of the children they “had a washing pan of pale brandy” left them by the smugglers to be merry with.<sup>96</sup>

Hardy’s “Facts” notebook, on which he draws in writing “The Distracted Preacher”, also records that his grandfather knew the East Lulworth smuggling gang.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, the connection may have extended to a further generation of Hardys, according to a recollection of Hermann Lea, who was living at the Stinsford cottage at the time.

One day when he paid me a visit he pointed out a tiny window at the back of the house that lighted the staircase. “Smugglers”, he said, “used to tap this window with their whips when passing at night and when my father opened it a small keg of brandy used to be handed in.”<sup>98</sup>

Although he states in the *Wessex Tales* preface that he learned of the apple tree tub ruse from the “old carrier”, Hardy later told Rebekah Owen that he had often seen the tree in question “sometimes in full bloom” lifted out of and into its hole.<sup>99</sup> Since his father was a cidemaker it is probable that the apple tree in the short story was based on one which grew in the Hardy family garden at Lower Bockhampton.

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## CONCLUSIONS

### REVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter 1 of this study discusses the nature of traditional culture and introduces the concept of Thomas Hardy and his writings as a potential source for the investigation of this field in a Dorset context. It also outlines the shortcomings of previous approaches to the subject and demonstrates, for the first time, the full range of sources available to the researcher. Chapter 2 draws on these sources to present a comprehensive and systematically ordered list of the references to traditional culture in Hardy's writings. It is then possible, in chapter 3, to address the vital question, avoided by previous writers, of the validity of the traditional material described by Hardy and to demonstrate, with minimal reservations, that his examples are firmly founded on actuality.

To an extent then, the question implicit in the title of the study has been answered in that Thomas Hardy and his writings are shown not only to be a source for the study of traditional culture in Dorset but, moreover, to be an extensive and largely reliable one. At the same time, two important conclusions may be drawn. First, that it is necessary to look beyond Hardy's familiar published work and to explore the extensive range of his other writings in order to obtain a complete picture of him as a folklore source. Second, that Hardy the man, his background, beliefs and attitudes, must be understood and taken into consideration when studying the view of traditional culture which he provides.

Chapter 4 gives an overview of Hardy's contribution to the six areas of traditional culture used for classification in chapter 2, but detailed study of selected elements of such culture is reserved for the succeeding four chapters.

Hardy does not usually write specifically about folklore as such and the choice of folklore material in his work is based on personal interest and literary requirements rather than on a desire to present a comprehensive and holistic study. Therefore an account of the subject based solely on his writings is likely to be unbalanced. Depending upon the level of detail in which he writes, he may represent either a principal source, a complementary source or a corroborative source.

Chapters 5 to 7 investigate three areas for which Hardy is a principal source. For the study of west gallery musicians, addressed in chapter 5, he is in a unique position amongst writers on the subject in that he is a member of a noted family of such musicians. This, coupled with his own enthusiasm for the subject (he cites "old church music" as his hobby), ensures that his writings, both fictional and personal, provide a vivid and wide-ranging picture of west gallery musicians. Consideration of the other Dorset sources, some of which are cited for the first time in chapter 5, makes it clear that the value of Hardy's testimony far exceeds any other. Indeed the current picture of west gallery bands in Dorset would be greatly diminished in the absence of his writings. It is also interesting to note that Hardy's are the only references to the Stinsford band and that, without them, the very existence of that band



would be uncertain. How many other such bands, it may be conjectured, have failed to leave a record of their existence in the absence of a Hardy to chronicle them? None of the other Dorset sources, it should be added, had direct experience of the west gallery tradition; all were antiquarians or professional musicians.

Chapter 6 demonstrates the value of Hardy's knowledge of the mummers' play, as expressed in fiction, drama, correspondence and interview. Other sources on the play are sparse, so far as Dorset is concerned, and they concentrate largely on text rather than on performance. Within the area of performance, such as in costume, dramaturgy and organisation, Hardy provides details unobtainable elsewhere, drawing, as he does, on family involvement and personal experience.

In chapter 7, witchcraft is examined and here there is no shortage of alternative sources both for Dorset and for adjoining counties. In this case, Hardy is addressing a subject in which his family probably had little direct involvement but one which was familiar to everyone with whom he grew up. It is noticeable how, in writing of witchcraft, he tends to concentrate on the effects, real or imagined, of the process and on the counter-measures available to the perceived victims. This approach separates him from other sources whose interest is in the techniques of witchcraft and the rationale of witchcraft belief. This is also an area in which it is possible to gain a diachronic perspective, since Hardy's writings on witchcraft cover a long time scale, both in the dates of the events described and the period of time over which he wrote.

In chapters 5 to 7, Hardy provides unique and irreplaceable evidence through his personal, family and social background. These attributes serve him equally well in other fields of traditional culture but in them, for varying reasons, he chooses not to write so extensively. Examples of such areas are given in chapter 8. In these cases, the information supplied by Hardy must be considered in conjunction with that from other sources in order to obtain a comprehensive picture. Hence his note on wassailing at Melbury Osmond is, in itself, clearly interesting in the context of calendar custom, but is tantalisingly brief and incomplete. Comparison with Udal's account of the custom of wassailing, together with descriptions, both historical and contemporary, from adjacent counties, puts Hardy's note into context. Thus, the significance of the Melbury Osmond custom becomes clear and, at the same time, the knowledge of the extent of wassailing in the West Country is extended. Similar considerations apply to the other areas of tradition described in chapter 8, each illustrating how Hardy's writings are complementary to other sources, both in revealing the nature of traditional culture in Dorset and enabling a better understanding of such culture.

At the lowest level of detail, Hardy supplies very many brief references, listed in chapter 2 and discussed in summary in chapter 4, on all aspects of traditional culture. Some, such as those to death omens, could be drawn together to provide a starting point for a short study of a genre but, for the most part, they represent individual instances within genres. Even here, Hardy's testimony would be of value for a national or regional exploration of an area of tradition. His many references to foodways, for example, while fragmentary in themselves, would constitute a unique source of data for a study of traditional food and

drink in the West Country. There are many such instances where Hardy's material, taken in a broader context, offers corroboration of material from other counties.

Chapters 4 to 8 also illustrate another feature of Hardy's contribution to the study of traditional culture, namely the social context which he provides. Hence there are references to the motivation of participants, to the attitudes of audiences and to the effect of class and age on participation in traditional culture. These are considerations almost completely ignored by the early collectors, but now of great interest to folklorists and for which Hardy's writings offer a valuable reference source.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

It should not be thought that the analyses in the preceding chapters, nor the conclusions above, exhaust the potential of Hardy's writings on this subject. As stated in chapter 1, this study does not venture into detailed consideration of dialect, since this would require specialist knowledge. The review of writings on Hardy and dialect, set out in chapter 4, shows that this has become a field of increasing interest in recent years and that a good deal remains to be said, particularly in respect of the social context of dialect. Further, Baugner's thesis, the only one on this subject by a dialectologist, is over thirty years old and does not cover the whole of Hardy's writings. Therefore there would appear to be an opportunity for the advancement of scholarship in this field.

Turning to the area of custom and belief, it is suggested, in chapter 4, that Hardy's numerous references to Dorset calendar customs could be integrated with the already substantial corpus of material on this subject. This would produce a study of the subject more comprehensive than that available for any other English county. The references in chapter 2 to other forms of custom, and to superstition and belief are also sufficiently numerous and wide-ranging to form the basis, along with the work of Udal and other sources, for a fairly comprehensive account of these genres within the county.

Hardy's examples of traditional narrative could have formed (and at an early stage did form) the subject of a chapter of this study, similar to those on west gallery musicians, mumming plays and witchcraft. There is room here for further consideration of what does, and what does not, constitute traditional narrative within Hardy's work and for the identification of the local people on whose characteristics he draws in constructing his fictional form of this genre. There is an overlap here between the study of Hardy as a source and of Hardy as a writer who makes literary use of traditional material.

The area presenting the greatest scope for further investigation of Hardy's contribution is that of traditional music. His many references, both fictional and non-fictional, to dance and to dance music are deserving of detailed study. These, together with the material in the Hardy family music books, could form the basis of a comprehensive account of traditional dance music repertoire in an English county in the first half of the nineteenth century. The carol repertoire, again represented in published writings and manuscript is equally worthy



of examination, particularly given the appreciable quantity of comparable information available from other Dorset sources.

The information on traditional song in Hardy's writings is less well documented than that on music, although here again there is supporting manuscript material in the form of Grandfather Hardy's song book. Dorset is fortunate in having been the subject of quite extensive song collecting by the Hammond brothers in the early twentieth century and, as intimated in chapter 4, their collection has not been systematically studied, other than in Purslow's valuable work of organising and cataloguing. Given the potential overlap between the Hammonds' informants and Hardy's own sources, and the differing motives and requirements of Hardy and of the Hammonds, the two bodies of material are, to an extent complementary. There is an excellent opportunity here for an examination of repertoire, sources and context within the county.

## **EXTENDING THE BOUNDARIES OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE**

The basis of this study is taxonomic, drawing as it does on the Sheffield index and, in that respect, it resembles the earlier work of Firor and Udal, although their systems of classification are different. It could be argued that this approach obscures larger patterns within the field of traditional culture. For example, reference is made in chapter 2 to the way in which certain elements from different sub-categories of the Sheffield index could be drawn together to give a broad perspective on traditional dairy farming. Similar aggregation could be carried out in other fields such as vernacular religion (encompassing, charms, legends, superstitions and west gallery music) or the form of household celebrations (encompassing customs, games, belief, music, dance and drama). These and other areas would cut across the boundaries imposed by a framework based on classification.

At the same time, there is a possibly artificial division between what are usually separately regarded as folklore and folk life. This division is, to an extent, bridged in this study by the adoption of a broad view of traditional culture but, even so, it is possible to further extend the boundaries of the subject. For example, Hardy writes, in "The Withered Arm", of the folklore associated with hanging, namely the sale of the hangman's rope as a charm and the therapeutic use of a freshly hanged corpse. Elsewhere he writes of the general background to hanging, a subject which seems to have held a particular fascination for him. Hence he told Newman Flower that, in his youth, some young men who were hanged were so emaciated by undernourishment that it was necessary to attach lead weights to their feet to ensure that their necks were broken by the drop.<sup>1</sup> Such macabre sociological information is arguably well worth recording and is part of a wider corpus of material connected with the traditional punishment process, which subsumes both folkloric and non-folkloric elements.

Another focus for study might be that of traditional fairs, considered here as calendar customs but for which Hardy gives a good deal of information regarding agricultural hiring and organisation. In fact the whole area of agricultural economy is one which seems inseparable from rural traditions in Hardy's work. This intimate association may be appreciated in his non-fictional essay "The Dorsetshire Labourer"<sup>2</sup> Here he links the farm

worker's domestic life to the requirements of contemporary agricultural practices and to seasonal imperatives, notably Lady Day, a topic to which he returns in his correspondence and, especially, in *TD*. Most of what he says is not ostensibly folkloric, but the link between tradition and working life is clear. It is, perhaps, best expressed by him in a letter to H. Rider Haggard, written in 1902.

The labourers have become more and more migratory – the younger families in especial, who enjoy nothing so much as fresh scenery and new acquaintance. The consequences are curious and unexpected. For one thing, village tradition – a vast mass of unwritten folk-lore, local chronicle, local topography and nomenclature – is absolutely sinking, has nearly sunk, into eternal oblivion.<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting that Hardy distinguishes between folklore and “local chronicle, local topography and nomenclature”, all of which would now arguably fall into the category of traditional culture. He goes on, in this letter, to attribute the increased mobility of labour to the decline of the system of granting freeholds for the duration of three lives. The centrality of this practice to the decline of rural traditions may be exaggerated, but it is an interesting thesis and persuasively argued by Hardy in a number of his writings, notably in *W*, where it is crucial to the plot, and, in a smaller compass, in the gruesome short story “Netty Sargent's Copyhold”.<sup>4</sup> The boundary between, on the one hand, the language and lore of working people and, on the other, the rural economy seems a tenuous one and it is consistently transgressed in Hardy's writings. Therefore the resource which Hardy offers, shown here to be so prolific in respect of “traditional culture” as currently defined, also constitutes a valuable, and currently unexploited starting point for a wider study of rural culture in nineteenth-century Dorset.

## CLOSING REMARKS

The original aim of this study was to completely supersede Ruth A. Firor's *Folkways in Thomas Hardy* by presenting an up-to-date and comprehensive account of Hardy and all of his writings as a source of information on traditional culture in Dorset. In the event, for reasons already instanced, such an undertaking cannot be accomplished within the bounds of the current exercise. Therefore, rather than closing down the subject of Hardy and folklore, the foregoing chapters open up the field of study by demonstrating the resources available to the researcher and by beginning to indicate what use might be made of them.

Although the focus of this study is on Hardy as a folklore source, it is impossible to ignore the fact that his principal claim to fame is as a great writer. The question of the way in which he makes literary use of traditional culture has been largely avoided here, since it is beyond the scope of the immediate investigation. Such explorations of this area as have been carried out are undermined, it is argued, by their writers' inaccurate and outdated ideas of the nature of traditional culture. It is hoped that the evidence presented here will make it possible for the study of Hardy's literary use of folklore to be put on a more reliable footing in the future.

It is commonplace for writers on traditional culture to identify a particular social or historical event in their lifetime as a turning point for the subject, the time when such



culture fell into irrevocable decline. For John Aubrey, perhaps the earliest English exponent of this theory, writing in the seventeenth century, the watershed event is the English Civil War. For Hardy it is the time of the decline of the copyhold system and the coming of the railway to Dorset and he is followed by Udal who seizes upon the board schools as the final destroyers of traditional culture in the county.<sup>5</sup> More recently the First World War has been widely cited as marking the end of "folk life", a view argued particularly persuasively by George Ewart Evans in respect of rural life in Suffolk.<sup>6</sup>

All these prognostications have proved to be premature, but there is no doubt that, in his long life, from 1840 to 1928, Thomas Hardy did witness, and to an extent experience, profound changes in Dorset's rural culture, which were greater than any witnessed by previous observers. In that respect he could be said to have observed the end of an era. His experience of those changes, and his value as their chronicler, are best expressed in his own words. These are taken from his obituary for William Barnes, written in 1886, but (omitting his reference to Barnes' date of birth) they could equally describe Hardy's own position as the unique source for the study of Dorset's traditional culture.

...the world has lost not only a lyric writer of a high order of genius, but probably the most interesting link between present and past forms of rural life that England possessed. The time of his birth,... is less explanatory of his almost unique position in this respect than the remoteness, even from contemporary provincial civilisation, of the pastoral recesses in which his earlier years were passed – places with whose now obsolete customs and beliefs his mind was naturally imbued.<sup>7</sup>

#### NOTES

1. James Gibson, *Thomas Hardy. Interviews and Recollections*, London, Macmillan, 1999, p. 176. The weights in question are preserved in the Dorset County Museum.
2. "The Dorsetshire Labourer", *PW*, pp. 168-189.
3. *LW*, pp. 336-337.
4. "A Few Crusted Characters". *CSS*, pp. 511-566 (pp. 560-566).
5. John Symonds Udal, *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore*, Hertford, The Author, 1922, p. xi.
6. Initially in *Ask the Fellows Who Cut the Hay*, London, Faber and Faber, 1956.
7. "The Rev. William Barnes B. D.", *PW*, pp. 100-101.

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## APPENDIX 1

### NATIONAL CENTRE FOR ENGLISH CULTURAL TRADITION, UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD: CLASSIFICATION OF FOLKLORE, FOLKLIFE AND CULTURAL TRADITION

#### 1. Language

Regional and social dialects; occupational and other special vocabularies; blason populaire; sayings, proverbs, rhymes and riddles; blessings, graces, prayers and toasts; placenames and personal names; mnemonics; gestures.

#### 2. Childlore

Pre-school lore – lullabies, nursery rhymes, feature-naming etc., putoffs, evasive answers, teasing, threats.

School-age lore – jeers, taunts, reproofs, retorts, calls, cheers, chants, mockery, parody, humorous stories, verses and songs, nonsense verses, linguistic play – including abbreviations, epithets, euphemisms, insults, tongue twisters, trick languages etc.

#### 3. Custom and Belief

Calendar customs, rites of passage, social, domestic and occupational customs; superstition, luck, beliefs concerning the human body, social relationships, travel, cosmic phenomena, weather, animals and plants.

#### 4. Traditional Narrative

Folktales (Märchen), legends, anecdotes and jokes, personal experience narratives.

#### 5. Traditional Music, Dance and Drama

Traditional tunes and songs, dances and plays.

#### 6. Material Culture, Work Techniques, Arts and Crafts

Vernacular architecture, traditionally made artefacts, traditional modes of work; manufacturing and domestic arts and crafts.



## APPENDIX 2

### HARDY'S WESSEX PLACE NAMES AND THEIR DORSET COUNTERPARTS

*Athelhall* – Athelhampton.  
*Budmouth* – Weymouth.  
*Casterbridge* – Dorchester.  
*Chalk-Newton* – Maiden Newton.  
*Durnover* – Fordington.  
*Egdon Heath* – Heathland east of Stinsford.  
*Greenhill* – Woodbury Hill.  
*Kingsbere* – Bere Regis.  
*King's Hintock Court* – Melbury House.  
*Longpuddle* – Piddlehinton/Piddletrenthide.  
*Longpuddle Spring* - Buttock's Spring, Melbury Osmond.  
*Mellstock* – Stinsford.  
*Mixen Lane* – Mill Street, Fordington.  
*Nether-Moynton* – Owermoigne.  
*Owlescombe* – Batcombe.  
*Shottsford* – Blandford Forum.  
*Sylvania Castle* – Pennsylvania Castle, Portland.  
*The Ring* – Maumbury Rings, Dorchester.  
*Weatherbury* – Puddletown.  
*Welland* – Vicinity of Charborough Park.

## APPENDIX 3

### ✓ LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. *Weatherbury* Sheepshearing Supper.
2. The Old West Gallery of Stinsford Church.
3. Seating Plan of the Old West Gallery of Stinsford Church.
4. Hardy Family Members of Stinsford Church Band.
5. Two Church Band Instruments.
6. Dorset West Gallery Musicians.
7. *Lower Longpuddle* Church Band.
8. Winterbourne Abbas Church Band, 1895.
9. Yetminster Church Band, 1835.
10. The Preparation of Mummers' Costumes.
11. *Egdon* Mummers, 1878.
12. *Egdon* Mummers, 1920.
13. *Egdon* Mummers, 1961.
14. Symondsburry Mummers (Saint Patrick and Saint George) 1992.
15. Divination by Bible and Key.

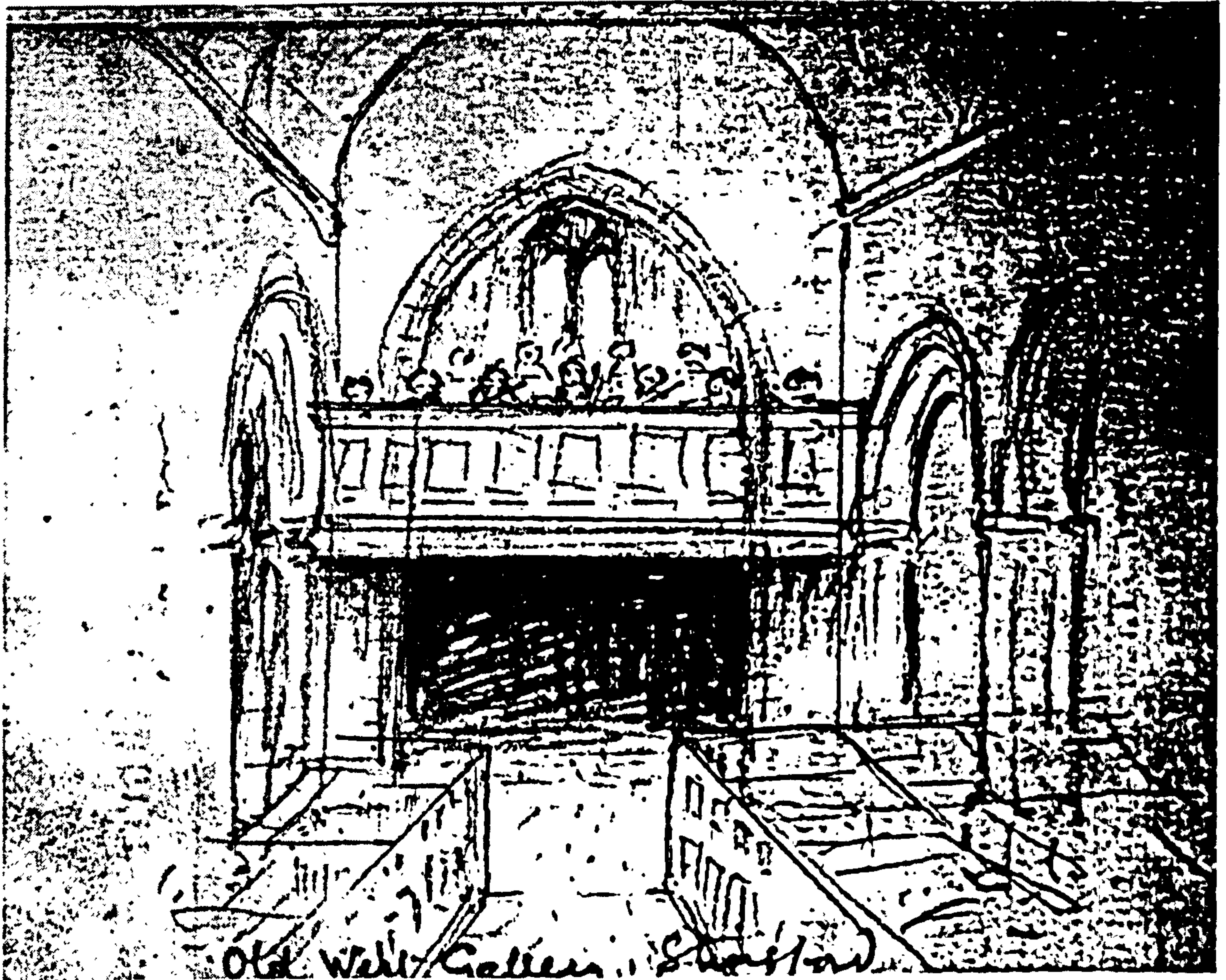


**ILLUSTRATION 1 – WEATHERBURY SHEEPSHEARING SUPPER**



“She stood up in the window opening, facing the men.”, illustration by Helen Paterson Allingham. *The Cornhill Magazine*, May 1874.

**ILLUSTRATION 2 – THE OLD WEST GALLERY OF STINSFORD CHURCH**



“Old West Gallery, Stinsford Church”, photocopy of sketch by Thomas Hardy, Dorset County Museum Collection.



**ILLUSTRATION 3 – SEATING PLAN OF THE OLD WEST GALLERY OF STINSFORD CHURCH**

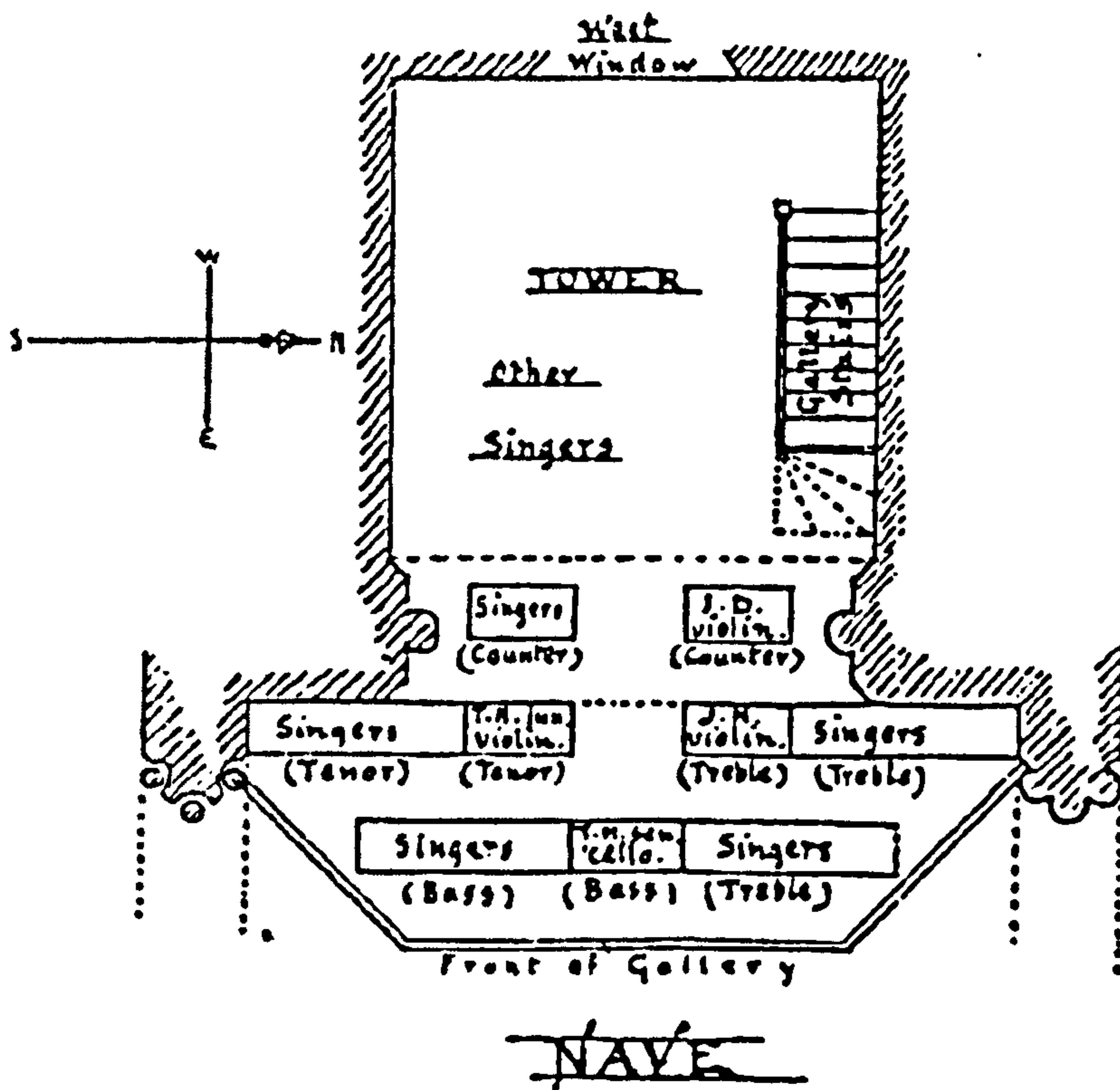
STINSFORD CHURCH.

Plan of West Gallery - circa 1835,

Showing Positions of Choir.

Explanation

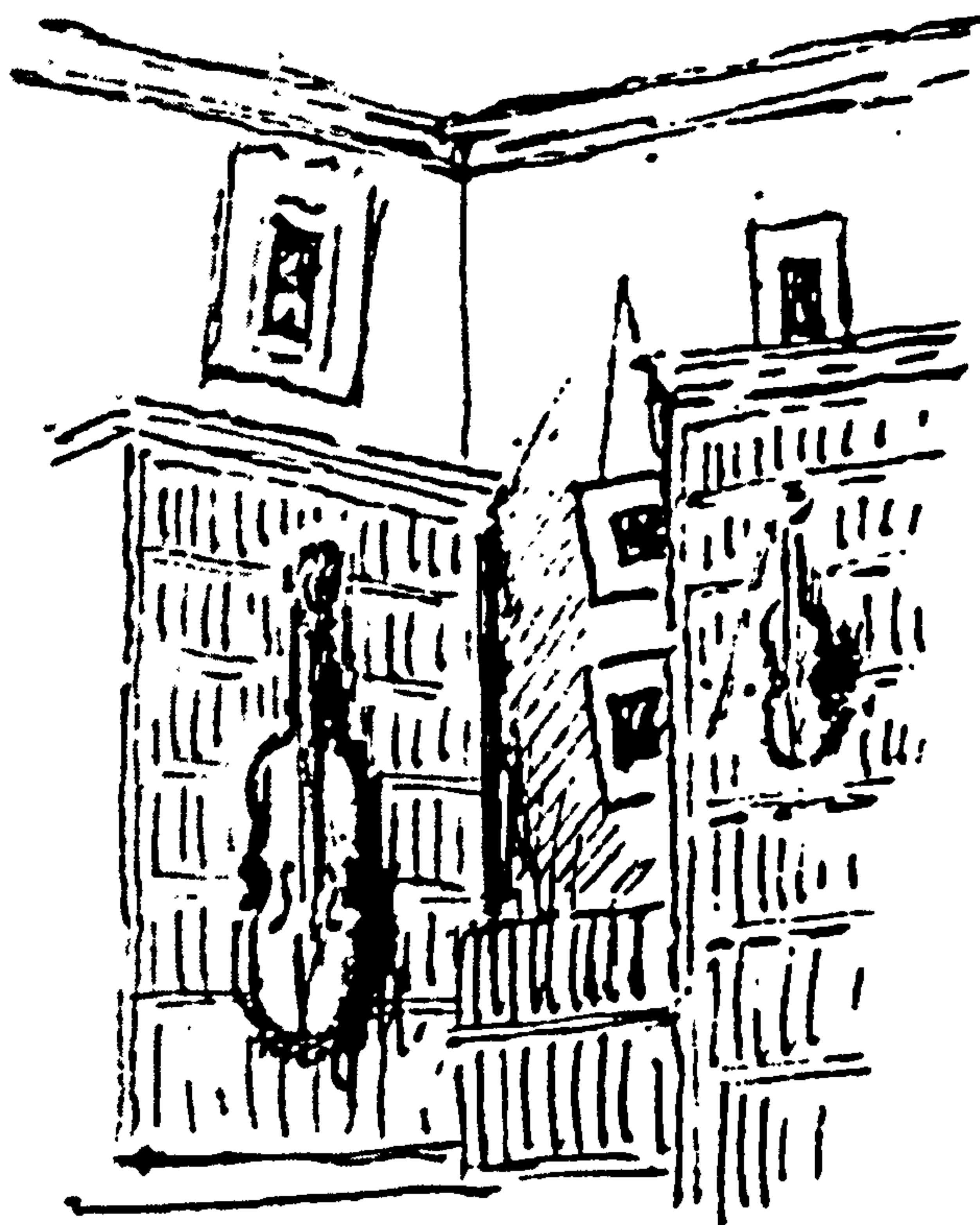
I.H. sen. The Hardy b. 1778 d. 1837.  
I.H. jun. The Hardy b. 1811 d. 1892.  
J.H. James Hardy b. 1805 d. 188-  
J.D. James Dart b. 181- d. 187-



“Plan of Stinsford Church Gallery, c. 1835”, sketch by Thomas Hardy, Dorset County Museum Collection.

ILLUSTRATION 5 - TWO CHURCH BAND INSTRUMENTS

*Silent Christmas Voices.*



*The Study, Max Gate  
(Fiddle Corner)*

*Dec 24.05*

“Silent Christmas Voices”, sketch by Thomas Hardy, Dorset County Museum Collection.



**ILLUSTRATION 6 – DORSET WEST GALLERY MUSICIANS**



Untitled sketch by Thomas Hardy, in *the Architectural Notebook of Thomas Hardy*, introduced by C.J. Beatty, illustrations, p. 26.

**ILLUSTRATION 7 - LOWER LONGPUDDLE CHURCH BAND**



*"Then Levi Limpett nudged Timothy and Nicholas".  
The full illustration to "Absent-Mindedness in a Parish Choir" in  
Harper's New Monthly Magazine, May 1891.*

**"Then Levi Limpett nudged Timothy and Nicholas", illustration to "Absent-Mindedness in a Parish Choir", *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, May 1891.**



**ILLUSTRATION 8 – WINTERBOURNE ABBAS CHURCH BAND, 1895**



“In Winterborne Abbas Church 1895”, sketch in Dorset County Museum Collection.





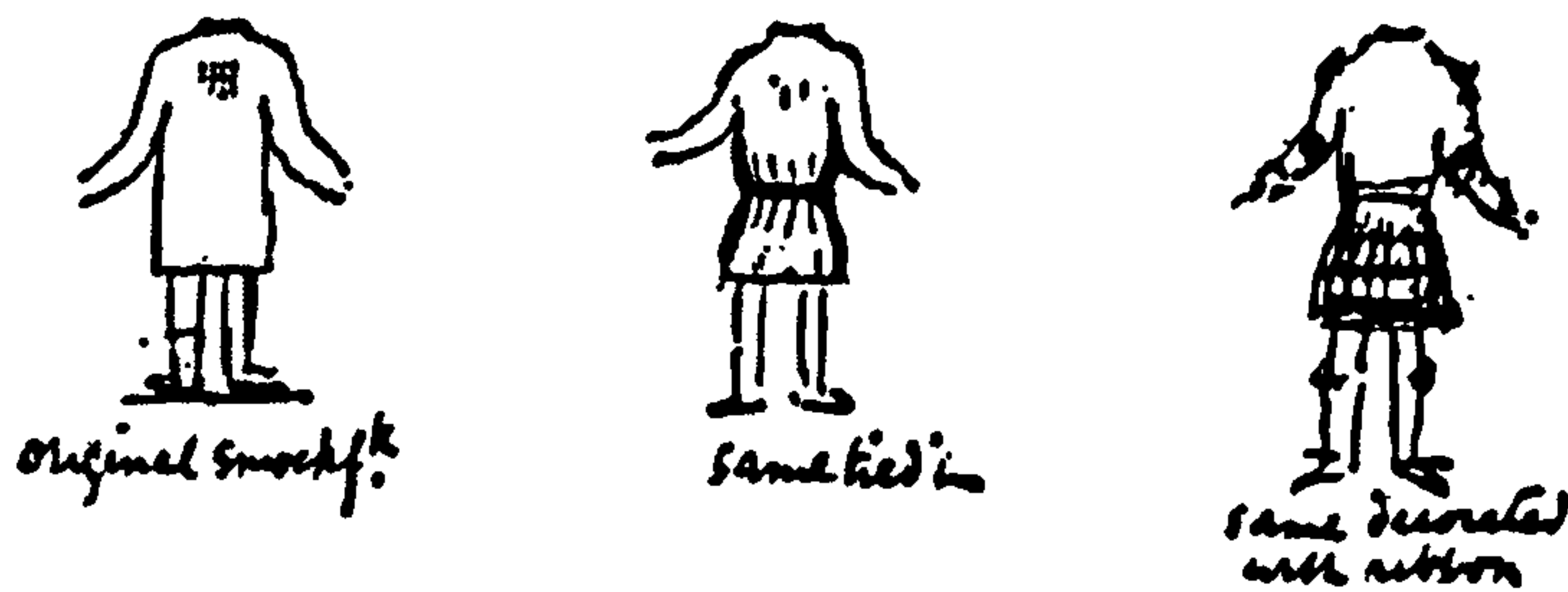
## ILLUSTRATION 10 – THE PREPARATION OF MUMMERS' COSTUMES

To ARTHUR HOPKINS

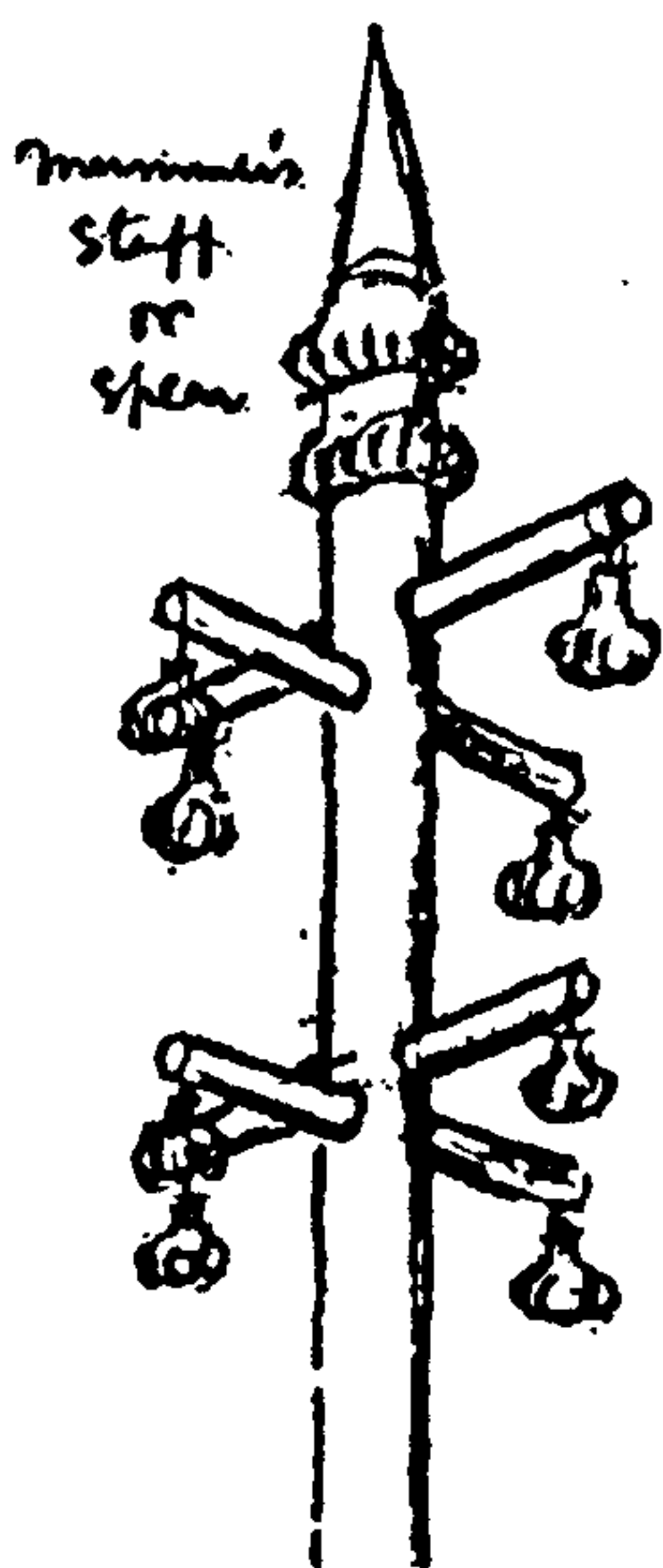
STURMINSTER NEWTON, | BLANDFORD. | February 20. 1878

My dear Sir,

I think you have chosen well for the May illustration—certainly the incident after the mumming, with the mummers looking on, will be better than the mumming performance itself. Eustacia in boy's clothes, though pleasant enough to the imagination, would perhaps be unsafe as a picture. The sketch of a mummer's dress which I sent was merely intended to show the general system on which they used to decorate themselves: the surcoat or tunic was formed of a white smockfrock rather shorter than usual, tied in round the waist by a strap—this was almost invariably the groundwork of the costume: thus.



The figure in these sketches is however too short, except the third. The helmet was made of pasteboard, & was much like one of those articles called "tea-cosys" which people use now a days for keeping the tea-pot warm, with a tuft at the top. The sword was wood, of course, & the



staff, which was never dispensed with, consisted of a straight stick the size of a broom handle, 5 or 6 feet long, with small sticks inserted cross wise at the upper end: from the end of these small sticks paper tassels dangled. This was held erect in the left hand while the sword was brandished in the right. Father Christmas was a conventional figure—an old man with a hump-back, & a great club.

I should prefer to leave Clym's face entirely to you. A thoughtful young man of 25 is all that can be shown, as the particulars of his appearance given in the story are too minute to be represented in a small drawing.

A mummer or two in the picture would make it very interesting—but do not be at all hampered by my suggestions for I may attach an undue importance to the mummers.

Very truly yours  
Thomas Hardy.

ILLUSTRATION 11 - EGDON MUMMERS, 1878

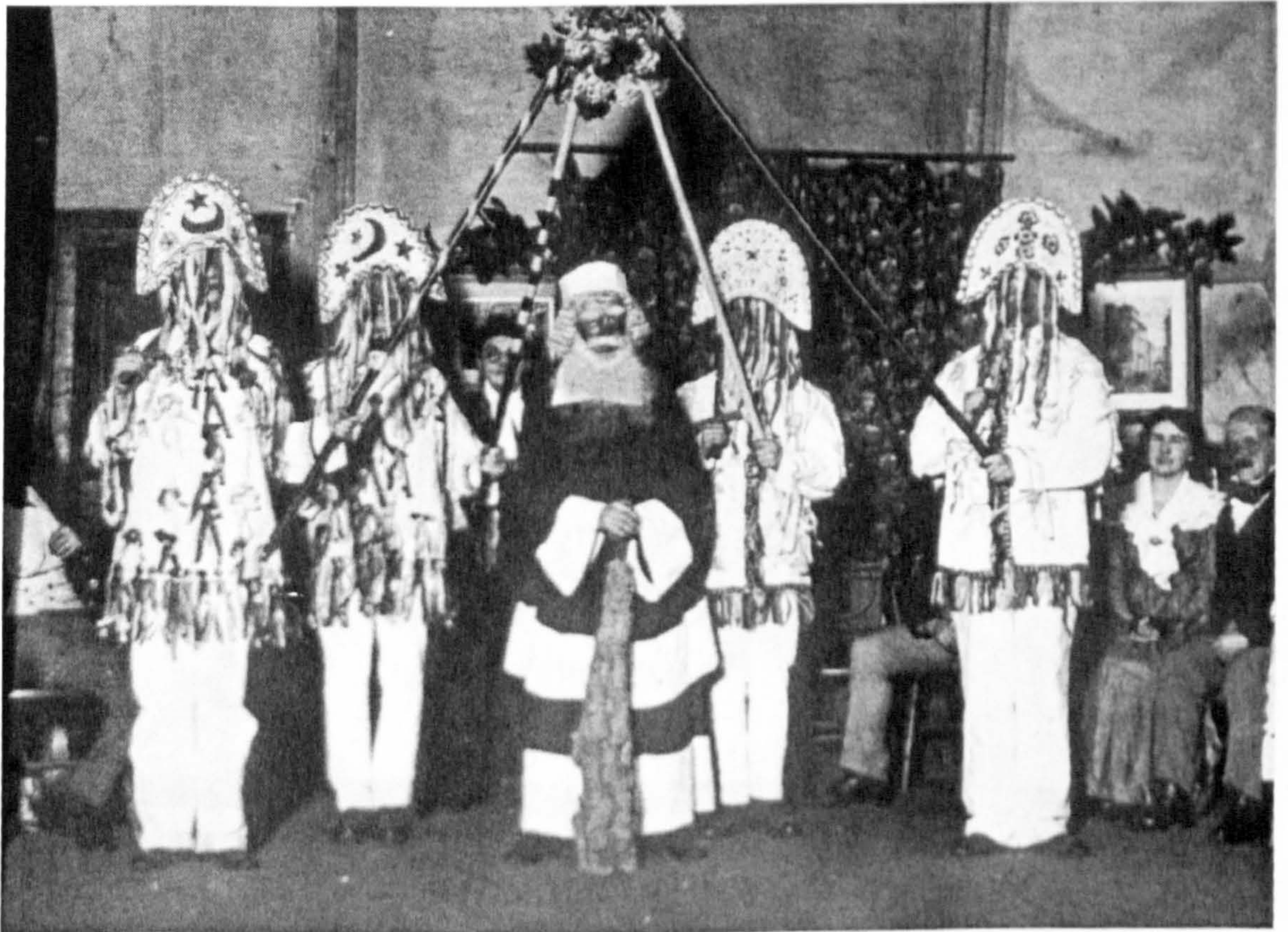


*"If there's any difference, grandfer is younger."*

"If there's any difference, grandfather is younger.", illustration to "The Return of the Native" by Arthur Hopkins, *Belgravia*, May 1878.



ILLUSTRATION 12 – *EGDON MUMMERS*, 1920.



Copy of a photograph formerly in the possession of the late Gertrude Bugler, P. Robson Collection.



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Papers  
Not filmed  
for Copyright  
reasons

ILLUSTRATIONS

13 + 14

