

Woodland



We do not discern those eyes
Watching in the snow;
Lit by lamps of rosy dyes
We do not discern those eyes
Wondering, aglow,
Fourfooted, tiptoe.
from 'The Fallow Deer at the Lonely House'

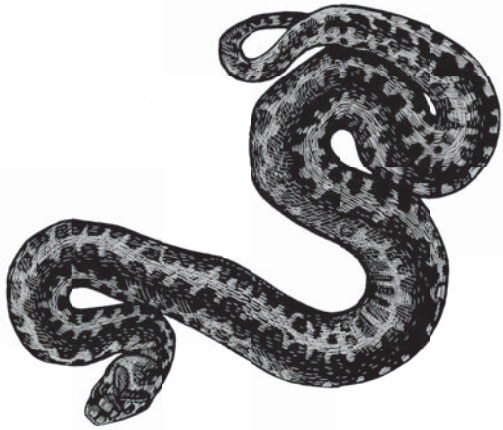
Hardy was fascinated with wildlife, in particular its effect and impact on the landscape. Later in life, Hardy's love of wildlife developed into a desire to protect all creatures, and he became an active campaigner against animal cruelty.



Hardy's Cottage

Here is the ancient floor,
Footworn and hollowed and thin,
Here was the former door
Where the dead feet walked in.
She sat here in her chair,
Smiling into the fire;
He who played stood there,
Bowling it higher and higher.
from 'The Self-Unsealing'

Hardy's great-grandfather built this cottage, and Hardy lived here with his parents, siblings and grandmother. In later life, he fondly recalled a childhood memory of being surrounded by his family and dancing in the parlour, as his father played the fiddle.



Heathland

Snakes and efts,
Swarmed in the summer days and nightly bats
Would fly about our bedrooms. Heathcroppers
Lived on the hills, and were our only friends;
So wild it was when we first settled here.
from 'Domicilium'

There was something that Hardy found eerie and magical about the heathland. He made it home to his fictional Conjuror Trenchle. This character represented the old, superstitious ways of the heath, which persisted within an increasingly urban and rationalising world.



Rushy Pond

On the frigid face of the heath-hemmed pond
There shaped the half-grown moon:
Winged whiffs from the north with a husky croon
Blew over and beyond.
from 'At Rushy-Pond'

Although at the top of a hill, Rushy Pond's permanency in a landscape, where few other ponds survived the summer, meant that it was, and remains, a hub of all things Hardy cherished about the heathland; the ponies, snakes and dragonflies.



Roman Road

But no tall brass-helmeted legionnaire
Haunts it for me. Uprises there
A mother's form upon my ken,
Guiding my infant steps, as when
We walked that ancient thoroughfare,
The Roman Road.
from 'The Roman Road'

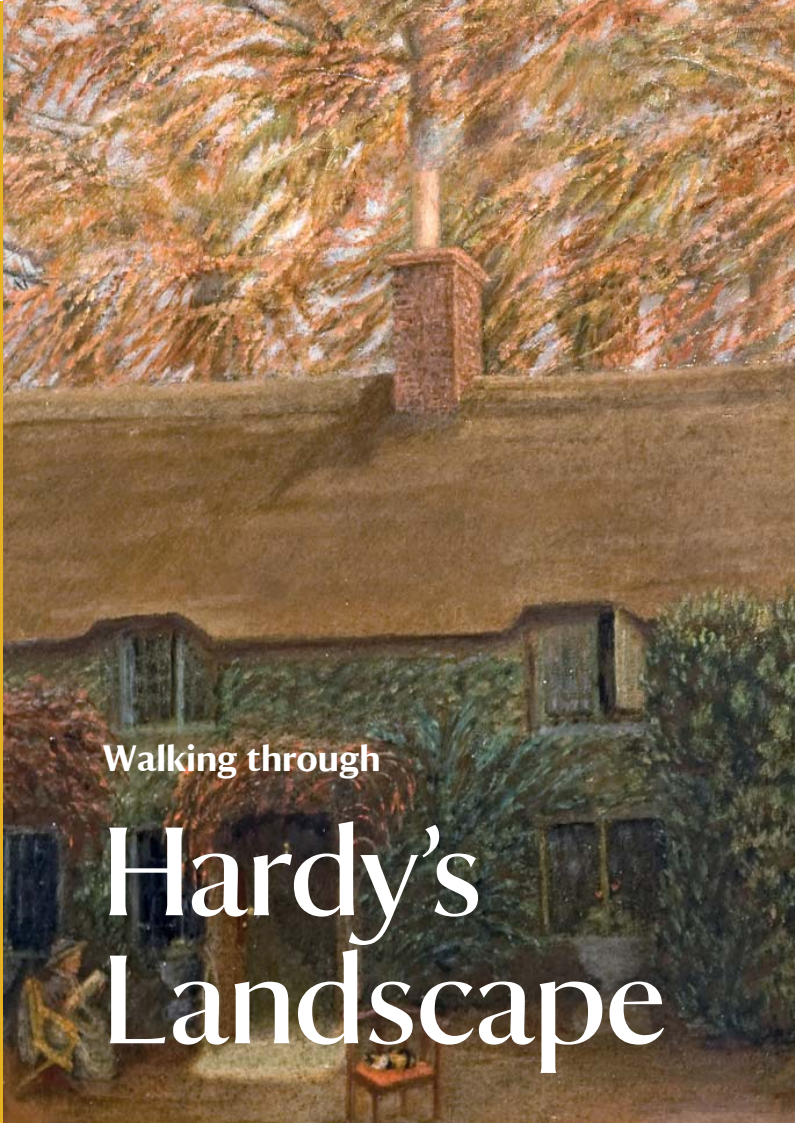
Hardy and his mother often walked the Roman Road to visit his aunt in Puddletown. He recalled one particular time carrying cabbages and pulling the nets over his face to scare his aunt when they arrived at her house.

We hope you enjoy your visit.
Dorset County Council and the National Trust.

The Thomas Hardy Society is pleased to support the National Trust in its work to promote and maintain Thomas Hardy's homes. The society welcomes all who are interested in the life and work of Thomas Hardy. An annual programme of events includes lectures and meetings, poetry readings, musical events, walks and tours in 'Wessex'.

The Dorset County Museum is proud to support the National Trust in the presentation of Thomas Hardy's homes. The Thomas Hardy collection at Dorset County Museum is part of the UNESCO UK 'Memory of the World' register of important literary heritage. Visit the Writers' Dorset gallery to see Hardy's manuscripts of poems and novels, letters, photographs and architectural drawings.

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Walking through
Hardy's Landscape

The landscape through Hardy's eyes

As you follow the trails around Thorncombe Wood and Black Heath, you will come across many places that were engrained in the young Thomas Hardy's mind and translated into the sentences and stanzas of his writing; from memories of walking the Roman Road with his mother, to the impact of witnessing an execution in Dorchester from Rainbarrows.

Stop for a moment at Rushy Pond or wander through the gardens of Hardy's Cottage. Using Hardy's own words, imagine these places as he saw them, through the eyes of a boy who was to become one of England's most important and loved writers.





I went by footpath and by stile,
Beyond where bustle ends

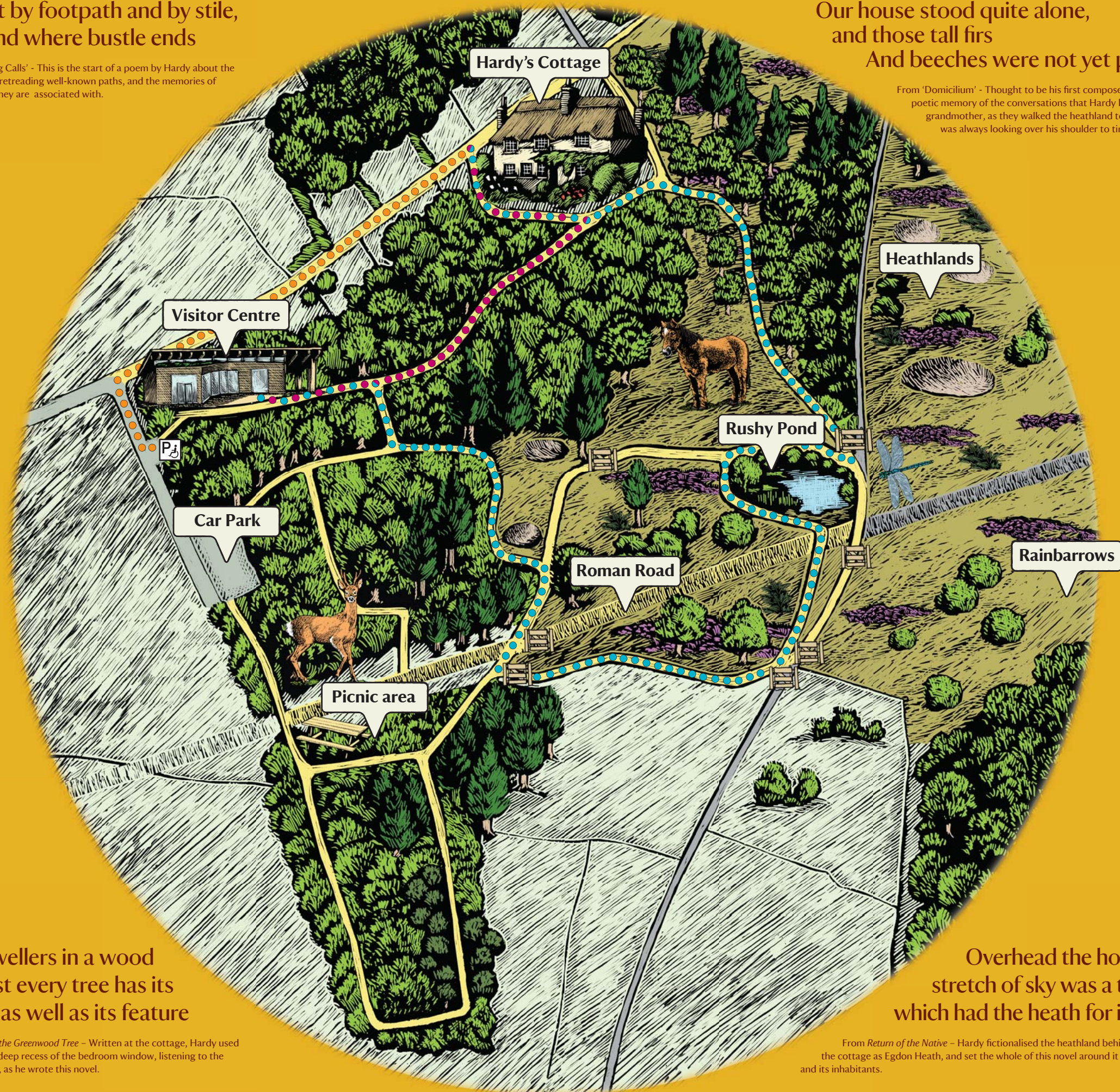
From 'Paying Calls' - This is the start of a poem by Hardy about the nostalgia of retreading well-known paths, and the memories of the people they are associated with.

Our house stood quite alone,
and those tall firs
And beeches were not yet planted

From 'Domicilium' - Thought to be his first composed poem, it is a poetic memory of the conversations that Hardy had with his grandmother, as they walked the heathland together. Hardy was always looking over his shoulder to times past.

Hardy's Inspiration

Thomas Hardy once said of the delicate details of nature, that he wished to be remembered as a man 'who used to notice such things'. He was born here in Higher Bockhampton in Hardy's Cottage, and described the surrounding heath and woodland as 'his playground'. It was the inspiration for his imaginary Wessex. Here he created some of England's best-known literary works and characters. Although he eventually settled in Max Gate, in Dorchester, many of the sites and sounds around you feature time and again in his poetry and stories. There are few other English writers more associated with their native landscape.



To dwellers in a wood
almost every tree has its
voice as well as its feature

From *Under the Greenwood Tree* - Written at the cottage, Hardy used to sit in the deep recess of the bedroom window, listening to the nightingales, as he wrote this novel.

Overhead the hollow
stretch of sky was a tent
which had the heath for its floor

From *Return of the Native* - Hardy fictionalised the heathland behind the cottage as Egdon Heath, and set the whole of this novel around it and its inhabitants.

Key to map

- **Pink route**
Walking time approximately 15 minutes
- **Blue route**
Walking time approximately 35 minutes
- **Wheelchair access**
Accessible route approximately 15 minutes on uneven, sandy track
- Disabled parking**
For Blue Badge Holders visiting Hardy's Cottage, please ring 01305 262 366 or ask in the Visitor Centre for more information

Please note:

The paths through the wood are uneven and can become muddy in wet weather. Due to the nature of the landscape, some of the paths have steep inclines and descents. Please take care in wet weather.