



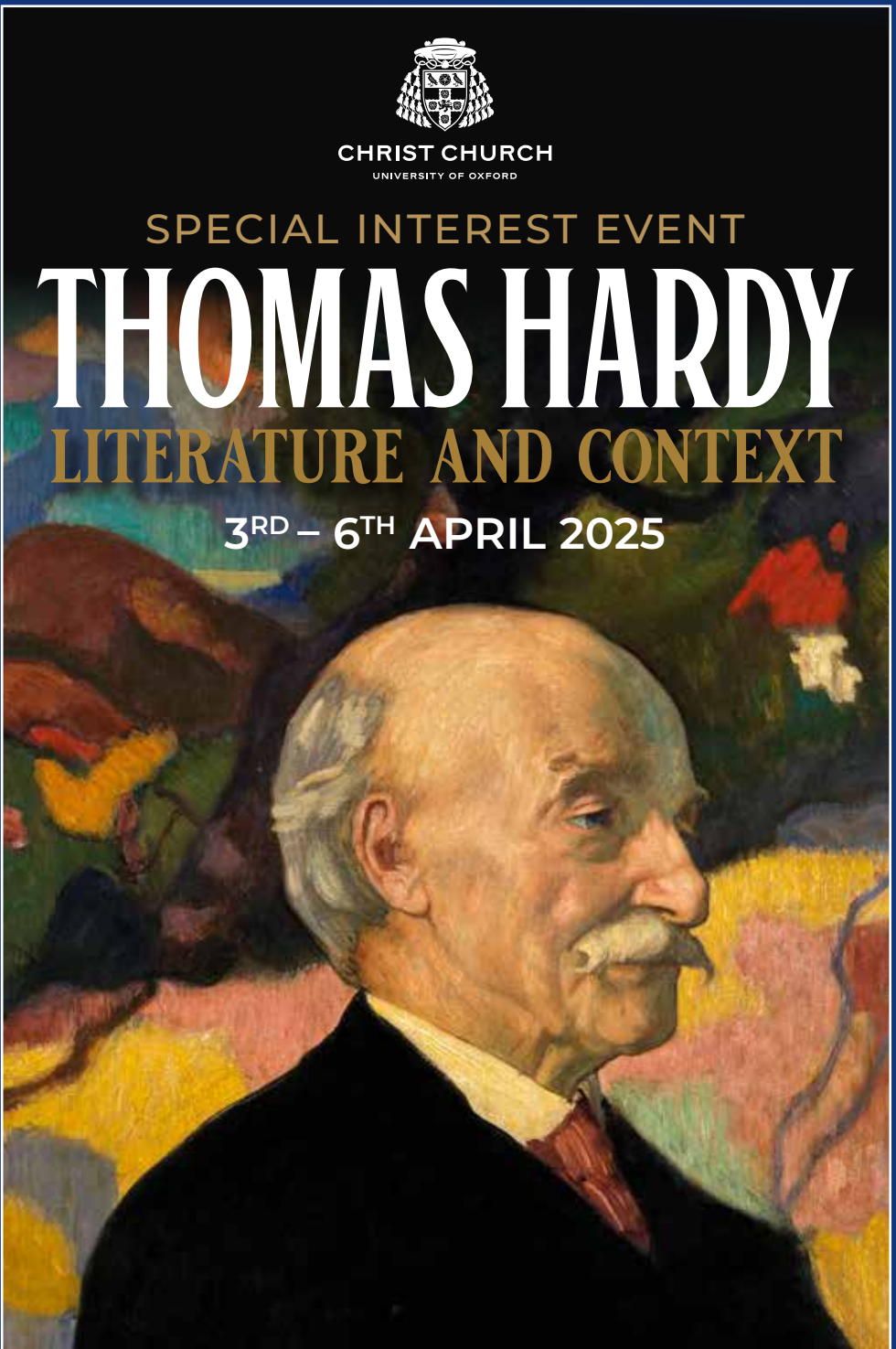
CHRIST CHURCH
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

SPECIAL INTEREST EVENT

THOMAS HARDY

LITERATURE AND CONTEXT

3RD – 6TH APRIL 2025



THOMAS HARDY

LITERATURE AND CONTEXT



Thomas Hardy and his second wife, Florence (before their marriage). Courtesy Dorset Museum and Art Gallery

Thomas Hardy continues to elicit admiration and controversy almost a century after his death on the 11th Jan 1928. His daring depictions of female agency and desire, inspired by strong role models in his own life, attracted admiration from suffragists and feminists; his innovative style and subject matter – particularly his ardent advocacy of sexual and social freedom – was praised by leading modernist novelists and poets, and influences writers, pop musicians, film makers and even cartoonists across the world today. Mainly situated in the semi-fictionalised region of Wessex, Hardy's work offers us vivid portrayals of rural life, with its saturation in folk traditions and gothic horror and its appreciation of music, dancing, cider and the natural and ancient world. The publication of his last great tragic, and most controversial, novel *Jude the Obscure* in 1895 (much of which is set in an imagined Oxford or 'Christminster') aroused such hostility that Hardy abandoned novel-writing altogether to concentrate on publishing

shorter fiction and establishing himself as a poet, which he always declared to have been his primary ambition. Indeed, Thomas Hardy is one of the few great writers to enjoy an equally illustrious career across all three genres.

Join us for this Special Interest Event as we explore some of Hardy's best-known fiction and poetry, and its contexts, in the company of leading experts on his work. Issues such as sexual equality, university access, finding a basis for Christian faith in the modern world, and the complex relationships between death and desire, the past and the present, the place of nature, the supernatural and archaeology remain as relevant today as they were in Hardy's own time.



View of Oxford from Shotover Hill in Floodtime, When the Water was Out, 10th January, 1791 (w/c over pencil on paper) by John Baptist Malchair © Ashmolean Museum / Bridgeman Images

EVENT TIMETABLE

THURSDAY 3RD APRIL

14.00 – 15.30 Registration and Afternoon Tea

16.00 Programme Welcome
Professor Jane Thomas

16.15 Monuments, Memories, and Megaliths: Thomas Hardy and the Pathways of Time
Dr Rebecca Welshman

18.30 Welcome Drinks Reception
Upper Library

19.30 Dinner

FRIDAY 4TH APRIL

8.00 Breakfast

9.15 The Landscape of *Jude*: Infidelity on the Great Western.
Dr Tony Fincham

10.45 Morning Refreshments

11.15 'I have been looking for God for 50 years': Thomas Hardy, the 'churchy' unbeliever'.
Professor Elisabeth Jay

12.45 Lunch

14.00 Hardy's Elegies.
Professor Mark Ford

15.30 Afternoon Refreshments

16.00 Thomas Hardy's Music. *Tim Laycock and members of The Bockhampton Band* [Phil Humphries serpent, Angela Laycock recorder and tambourine, and Harriet Still violin.]
Followed by
Concert and dance with *The Bockhampton Band*, caller *Angela Laycock*. Music, dance and song from Hardy's Wessex.

19.30 Dinner

SATURDAY 5TH APRIL

8.00 Breakfast

9.15 Thomas Hardy and May Sinclair: A Personal and Literary Connection.
Dr Claire Drewery

10.45 Morning Refreshments

11.15 Dreaming of Infrastructure on Egdon Heath.
Dr Karin Koehler

12.45 Lunch

14.00 Optional activities:
Christ Church Tour
Cathedral Tour
General Readers' Seminar
Guided Walk: Jude Fawley's 'Christminster'.
Leonor-Jo Barnard, Tom McDonnell

15.00 Afternoon Refreshments

16.15 Haunted Hardy: Thomas Hardy and Ghosts.
Professor Tim Armstrong

19.00 Closing Drinks Reception
Upper Library

19.30 Gala Banquet

SUNDAY 6TH APRIL

8.00 Breakfast

9.30 Toward a Hardyan Folk Horror: Thomas Hardy and the Folk Horror Tradition.
Professor Robert Edgar

10.45 Morning Refreshments

11.15 Speech and Silence in *Jude the Obscure*.
Mr Phillip Mallett

12.45 Lunch

14.00 Depart

HOW TO BOOK

The programme fee is £781 per person and the en suite supplement is £107 per room. The fee includes the full lecture programme, three nights' accommodation, all meals, dinner wines and refreshments as timetabled. Day delegate tickets are also available. Gratuities are not expected.

Bookings can be made online or by phone. Full payment must be made at the time of booking. A full refund [subject to an administration fee] will be offered in the event of cancellations made up to and including 60 days prior to the start of the event. No refunds will be offered after this time.

All monies are held by Christ Church. Please direct enquiries to: Special Interest Event, The Steward's Office Christ Church, Oxford, OX1 1DP
Tel: +44 (0)1865 276174
Email: specialinterest@chch.ox.ac.uk
<https://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/visit/special-interest-event>

FORCE MAJEURE

The College reserves the right to make alterations and substitutions to the programme. It will not be liable for any non-performance under this contract arising out of circumstances beyond its control.



'Mary Sinclair, Kensington, 1910'. TWL 2000 70. Encyclopædia Britannica. © LSE Library



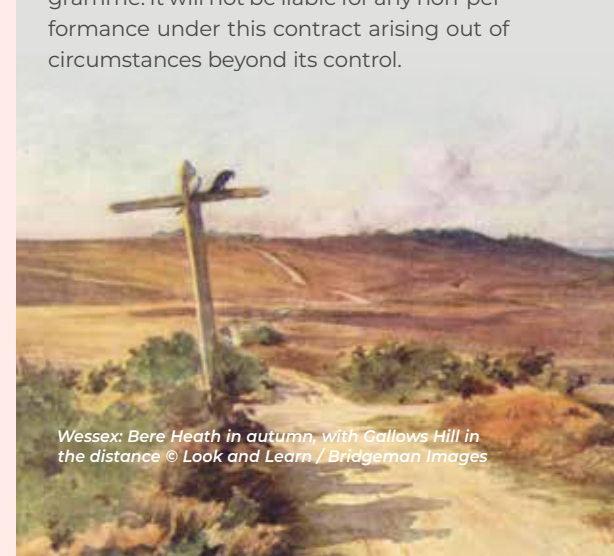
Display of instruments in Hardy's Dorset Gallery. Courtesy Dorset Museum and Art Gallery



Emma Lavinia Gifford. Courtesy Dorset Museum and Art Gallery



UK, England, Wiltshire County, Megalithic monument of Stonehenge. © NPL - DeA Picture Library / G. Wright / Bridgeman Images



Wessex: Bere Heath in autumn, with Gallows Hill in the distance © Look and Learn / Bridgeman Images

THE CHRIST CHURCH EXPERIENCE

Christ Church, established by Henry VIII in 1546, is a unique foundation of college and cathedral. It is home to some 650 undergraduate and postgraduate students and over eighty Senior Members. Christ Church occupies a 150-acre site in the heart of the city, including the Meadow, a tranquil area of pasture, preserved for centuries and bounded by the Rivers Isis and Cherwell. Lectures take place in the Sir Michael Dummett lecture theatre, in Blue Boar Quad. The lecture theatre has fixed seating with foldaway writing tables and is fitted with a sound amplification system with an induction loop for hearing-aid users. Accommodation is located in buildings of architectural and historical interest which reflect the different centuries since the college's foundation.

Rooms are single, twin or double occupancy and are situated on the ground, first, second and third floors (low floor rooms are available on request). All rooms have tea and coffee making facilities, complimentary Wi-Fi and a refrigerator. A laundry room is also available. Meals are prepared under the direction of the college's Executive Head Chef and are served in the magnificent Tudor Great Hall. Dietary requirements can be catered for provided they are requested at the time of booking. Refreshments are served in the Sir Michael Dummett Exhibition Space. The Buttery Bar, adjacent to Hall, will be open at set times during the event. House wines, included in the price, will be served at dinner. Lift access is available to the Buttery Bar and Hall.



SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

JANE THOMAS the Academic Director for this course, is Professor Emerita of English at the University of Hull. A Vice-President of the Thomas Hardy Society, she was for over a decade its academic director. Her publications include *Thomas Hardy, Femininity and Dissent: Reassessing the 'Minor' Novels* (1999); *Thomas Hardy and Desire: Conceptions of the Self* (2013) and editions of Hardy's *The Well-Beloved* with *The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved, A Changed Man and Other Stories*, and *Life's Little Ironies* and its joint editor with Phillip Mallett of the Norton Critical Edition of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (2024). She has also written on Thomas Hardy, sculpture and the visual arts, the Boer War, and masculinity. Co-editor with Sue Kennedy of *British Women's Writing, 1930 to 1960: Between the Waves* (2020;2023), her media appearances include Radio 4's 'In Our Time' and 'Woman's Hour', BBC 2's 'Great British Railway Journeys' and BBC 4's 'Books that Made Britain'.

TIM ARMSTRONG is Professor Emeritus at Royal Holloway, University of London. His books include *Modernism, Technology and the Body* (1998), *Haunted Hardy: Poetry, History, Memory* (2001), *Modernism: A Cultural Study* (2005), *The Logic of Slavery: Debt, Technology and Pain in American Literature* (2012), and *Micromodernism: Unmapping Literary History in the Long 1930s* (2025). He has also edited an annotated edition of Hardy's poetry (Longmans).

CLAIRE DREWERY is a Senior Lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University. Co-founder of the May Sinclair Society she is General Editor of the May Sinclair Critical Editions Project, and volume editor of *A Defence of Idealism: Some Questions and Conclusions, Mary Olivier: A Life and Short Fiction, Volume 1*, and *The Divine Fire*. She has published widely on Sinclair and her contemporaries and on Modernism and Stream of Consciousness. She is currently writing a monograph on Modernism's Corporeal Epiphany.

ROBERT EDGAR is Professor of Writing and Popular Culture at York St John University. He is a series editor for *Spectres, Hauntings and Horrors* (Bloomsbury). Publications include *Thomas Hardy and the Folk Horror Tradition* (2023), *The Routledge Companion to Folk Horror* (2023). He is currently writing *Haunting Lives, Alan Garner: The Work of Time and Eighteenth-Century Folk Horror: Roots Representations and Returns*. He is the co-convenor of the Hauntology and Spectrality Research Group.

TONY FINCHAM is a semi-retired GP from West Kent with a PhD on Thomas Hardy and two MAs from the University of Kent. A previous Chairman and current Vice-President of the Thomas Hardy Society, he is a lifelong Hardy enthusiast, who started exploring Wessex 50 years ago. A firm believer in medicine as a healing art rather than exclusively a science, he has published on Hardy and Medicine and Hardy's Landscapes.

MARK FORD is a Professor in the English Department at University College London. His publications include two monographs on Thomas Hardy: *Thomas Hardy: Half a Londoner* (2016), and *Woman Much Missed: Thomas Hardy, Emma Hardy, and Poetry* (2023). *Woman Much Missed* was adapted into a stage play called *The Haunters* by Deadpoetslive, starring Toby Jones as Hardy, Leslie Sharp as Emma, and Rosie Sheehy as Florence.

ELISABETH JAY is Professor Emerita at Oxford Brookes University. Here she was Director of the Institute for Historical and Cultural Research and has published widely on Victorian fiction, non-fiction and poetry. Recent work includes *British Writers and Paris, 1830-1875* (2016) and the *General Editorship of The Bible and Western Christian Literature*, 5 vols (2024).

KARIN KOEHLER is a Senior Lecturer at Prifysgol Bangor. Since publishing *Thomas Hardy and Victorian Communication* (2016), she has worked on nineteenth-century poetry about communication and connectivity (in Welsh and English) and a project exploring the relationship between fiction, infrastructure, and national identity. She is the principal editor of *Nineteenth-Century Communications: A Documentary History, 1784-1918* and recently co-edited a special issue of the journal *19*, based on the AHRC-funded project 'Victorian Literary Languages' (both out in 2025).

TIM LAYCOCK is a folk musician, actor and storyteller living and working in Dorset. He has appeared in many Hardy adaptations on the stage, and has a long association with the New Hardy Players in Dorchester. In 2024 Tim was awarded the gold badge of the English Folk Dance and Song Society for services to folk music. Publications include *Dorset Folk Tales and Dorset Folk Tales for Children*, and CDs include *Any Little Old Song Will Do* [recorded in Hardy's Cottage] and *Sea Strands* [traditional folk songs and dance tunes from Dorset].

PHILLIP MALLET is Honorary Senior Lecturer in English at the University of St Andrews, a vice president of the Thomas Hardy Society, and an honorary fellow of the Centro Universitario di Studi Vittoriani e Edoardiani and the French Association for Thomas Hardy Studies. Editor of the *Thomas Hardy Journal* from 2008 to 2018, he has published on Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, and masculinity. He is editor of Norton Critical Editions of *The Return of the Native* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*; Oxford World Classic editions of *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *Flora Thompson's Lark Rise to Candleford* and is joint editor with Jane Thomas of the Norton Critical Edition of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (2024).

REBECCA WELSHMAN is an Honorary Research Fellow of the University of Liverpool, and has published widely on nineteenth-century literature and history in particular on Thomas Hardy and Richard Jefferies and a chapter in *Reading the River in Shakespeare's Britain* (Edinburgh University Press, 2024).