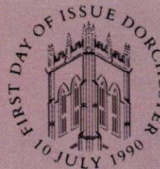


# Thomas Hardy

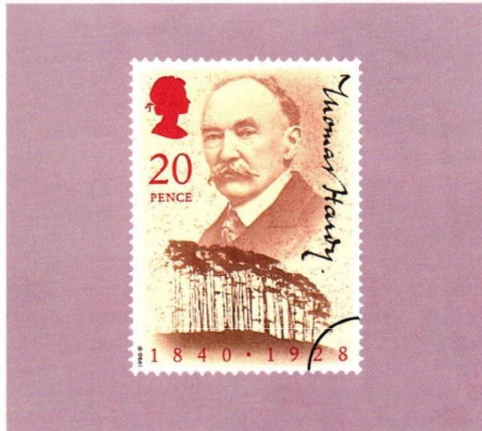
10 July 1990



A single 20p stamp (inland and EEC basic rate) is to be issued on 10 July to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Hardy, one of Britain's greatest and most respected writers.

Please note that just one stamp is being issued, not two as was originally intended and announced in the *March Bulletin*.

Hardy was born in Dorset in 1840 and grew up among rustic people and rural scenes which he later shaped into the "Wessex" that formed the background to all his novels. Although not greatly read nowadays, Hardy and "Wessex" are known to many people through the cinema and



television adaptations of his books. Each year many thousands visit his birthplace at Higher Bockhampton and the Hardy Memorial Room in the Dorset County Museum in Dorchester. There is a fine statue of Hardy in that town. In the 1890s Hardy turned his attention to poetry and by the time of his death in 1928 he was recognised as one of the major British poets.

The 20p stamp features a portrait of Hardy in middle age with, in the foreground, Clyffe Clump, Dorset, representative of the landscape featured in his books.

Thomas Hardy was born, son of a stonemason, at Higher Bockhampton ("Melstock" in his books) in the parish of Stinsford, near Dorchester, on 2 June 1840. He became apprentice to an architect in Dorchester at age 16 and remained interested in architecture and stonework for the rest of his days. Architectural work took him to London in 1862 where he was encouraged to write by the classical scholar Horace Moule (on whom Jude the Obscure is partly based). In London he read Shakespeare and regularly visited the opera. In 1867 he returned to his native Dorset to assist in church restoration work.

His first work, *The Poor Man and the Lady* was not published, his first book in print *Desperate Remedies* appeared in 1871; it concerned love and murder but was not well received. This was followed by *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) and *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876). The romance, *The Return of the Native*, written at Sturminster Newton, was published in 1878, the year in which Hardy returned to London. There he met Tennyson, Browning and Edmund Gosse and continued his literary works with *The Trumpet Major* (1880, set in the Napoleonic Wars), *A Laodicean* (1881), *Two on a Tower* (1882), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) and *The Woodlanders* (1887).

In 1885 he moved into his famous home "Max Gate" (a mile or so from Dorchester), the building of which he had supervised; his first guest there was Robert Louis Stevenson. Two of his best known novels *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* were published in 1891 and 1896 respectively. Most of Hardy's works, like those of Dickens, were originally published in serial form and Hardy sometimes resented preparing them for publication as books. By the 1890s this led to disillusionment and at the same time his marriage came under strain. He turned

Thomas Hardy

from novels to poetry, his first published verses, *Wessex Poems and Other Verses* appeared in 1898. *The Dynasts*, a verse drama of the Napoleonic War period, was published in 1904. His wife Emma died in 1912 and some of Hardy's subsequent poetry reflected his sadness; in 1914 he married Florence Dugdale.

Towards the end of his life Hardy received considerable public recognition, he was awarded the Order of Merit, the Royal Society of Literature Gold Medal and honorary degrees from Oxford and Cambridge. The Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII) visited him at Max Gate in 1923. He died in January 1928 and his ashes were interred in Westminster Abbey. His heart is buried near his parents grave at Stinsford church where he sang as a boy in the choir. His last volume of poems, *Winter Words*, was published later that year.

### Technical Details

The Hardy stamp was designed by John Gibbs and printed by Harrison & Sons Limited in photogravure on phosphor-coated paper. It is of vertical format, 30 x 41mm, printed in sheets of 100 with PVA Dextrin gum. Perforation measures 14 x 15.

### Presentation Pack

The presentation pack (No. 209) will cost 45p; it was designed by John Gibbs with text by Christopher Somerville and printed by Moore & Matthes (Printers) Limited.

### Royal Mail Stamp Card

A Royal Mail Stamp Card, featuring an enlargement of the stamp design, will be available approximately two weeks before the stamp issue, price 18p. It is numbered 127.

### First Day Cover

The Royal Mail first day cover will be available from the British Philatelic Bureau, philatelic counters and main post offices approximately two weeks before 10 July, price 18p. Two pictorial postmarks will be used for the first day cover service — one for the British Philatelic Bureau, the other for Dorchester.

A first day cover service will be provided by the Bureau with the official Royal Mail cover addressed to the destination required with the

stamp cancelled with the requested postmark. Application forms, available from the Bureau and main post offices, should be returned not later than 10 July.

Customers requiring only the special pictorial postmarks may obtain them under the reposting facility by sending on the first day of issue a stamped envelope under an outer cover endorsed "Special First Day of Issue handstamp" to:

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British Philatelic Bureau      20 Brandon Street  
EDINBURGH EH3 5TT

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Dorchester

South East Special Handstamp Centre  
Windsor Post Office  
Peascod Street  
WINDSOR  
Berks, SL4 1AA

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or      Special Postmark Duty  
Bournemouth LDO  
PO Box 300  
BOURNEMOUTH BH1 1AA

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First Day Posting Boxes will be provided at most main post offices for those collectors who wish to post covers to receive the standard, non-pictorial "First Day of Issue" handstamps.

A pictorial First Day postmark, showing the arms of the City of London, will be used at the London North Special Handstamp Centre, City of London LDO, King Edward Street, LONDON EC1A 1AA. Durham Post Office will be using a pictorial First Day handstamp showing the cathedral. Items for this postmark should be sent to: Pictorial First Day of Issue Postmark Duty, Durham Post Office, 33 Silver Street, DURHAM DH1 3RE.

A number of special handstamps sponsored by stamp dealers and others, will be used on 10 July - details of these will be found in the *British Postmark Bulletin*, available on subscription from the British Philatelic Bureau.

### Souvenir Cover

A souvenir cover, of similar design to the first day cover, will be available from all philatelic counters from 11 July, price 18p. This will be on sale for one year.



*The pen used (and inscribed) by Hardy for "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" (Dorset County Museum/Fotek)*



Thomas Hardy.  
THE NOVELIST 1840-1928  
ROYAL MAIL  
FIRST DAY COVER

Mrs J Robinson  
200 Manorbier Road  
ILKESTON  
Derbyshire  
DE7 4AB



...affecting to affect this  
business way of life, as mechanisation took hold and the  
farming settlements became depopulated.

The stonemason taught his son the violin, and  
Thomas had plenty of opportunity to observe the  
characteristics of his fellow countrymen and  
women as he played in the church band and  
at the village dances and celebrations.  
This country childhood was to prove the  
single strongest influence on him  
throughout his long life.

After leaving his Dorchester  
school, Hardy studied architecture,  
first locally and then from the age of  
twenty-two in London. He  
enjoyed life in the big city and lived  
it with a head-over-heels enthusiasm.  
He returned to Dorset after five years a  
worldly-wise young man who had lost  
his religious faith and was already begin-  
ning to write. His first completed novel,  
*Desperate Remedies*, which he published at his own  
expense, came out in 1871. The three novels which  
followed quickly after this - *Under the Greenwood Tree*  
(1872), *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873) and *Far from the Madding  
Crowd* (1874) - present vivid scenes of rural life, espe-  
cially the last, in which Bathsheba, the young woman-  
farmer, and her suitors, Shepherd Gabriel Oak, Farmer  
Boldwood and Sergeant Troy, are imaginatively brought  
to vibrant, subtly-drawn life. This book became such a  
success that Hardy was able both to give up architecture  
for full-time writing and to marry Emma Gifford,  
whom he had met in 1870 at St Juliot in Cornwall while  
surveying the church there. His writing went from  
strength to strength, broadening in scope and darkening  
in tone as he pitched his characters against the elemental  
forces of nature, of love and suffering, betrayal and  
humiliation, implacable tradition and irresistible change  
that he had seen at work all round him in the not so idyllic  
Dorset of his youth. The Wessex he created, with its  
pseudonyms for

ter, 'Shaston' fe-  
vast reading pul  
The Hand of I  
cessful satire on l  
two years later



Hardy's birthplace at Higher Bockhampton  
and Max Gantt, his house from 1885



...affecting to affect this  
business way of life, as mechanisation took hold and the  
farming settlements became depopulated.

The *Woodlanders*, a sensitive study of a rural commu-  
nity and its daily activities, appeared in 1887. Four years  
later, in 1891, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* was published. In  
this, perhaps his most famous novel, Hardy portrays a  
steadfast, spirited woman dragged down and defiled by  
the hypocrisy of men and the too rigid code of tradi-  
tional morality. It was a shocking theme for  
those late Victorian times, and Hardy ram-  
med home his point with a provocative  
subtitle for the book: 'A Pure Woman'.  
The Dorset where he had been  
brought up and was now settled  
again was a place where life was  
lived hard against the brutal facts of  
agricultural slump and empty sto-  
machs, and where ambition and  
desire for self-improvement could  
be dangerous handicaps, alienating  
an individual from the safety of custom  
and tradition. But all through Victorian  
society the non-conformist suffered, as  
Hardy so effectively pointed out.

Critics had always found his novels depressing,  
gloomy and pessimistic, and their disapproval grew to a  
storm of protest with the publication of *Tess of the  
D'Urbervilles*. In 1896 Hardy published *Jude the Obscure*,  
and this book, too, was lambasted by the critics - and by  
his wife, Emma. The marriage had turned out to be an  
unhappy one. Feeling under attack from all sides, Hardy  
gave up writing novels and turned instead to the poetry  
which he had always regarded as a higher form of literary  
creation. His feeling for music and the rhythms of song,  
developed during childhood, gave his poetry a strong  
and idiosyncratic flavour, and he imbued it, like his  
novels, with a realism which was often too harsh for the  
critics. For the last thirty years of his life he continued to  
publish poems, including a movingly painful and self-  
accusatory series after Emma died in 1912.

Hardy remarried in 1914, and lived on until 1928.

ROYAL  
MAIL

Thomas Hardy.  
THE NOVELIST 1840-1928

MINT  
STAMP

