



Hardy's Wessex - Wiltshire Museum 2022

'Ancient Landscapes Seen and Imagined' with Helen Garrett

Saturday 25th June 10.30am-3.30pm

10.30 Meet and Introduction

We will begin by viewing the Hardy exhibition and considering the connection between landscape and people as well as exploring the idea of 'ancient presence' within the landscape.

Through his descriptions Hardy evoked a strong atmosphere - whether quiet foreboding or elemental in its expression. It was almost as if the landscape stood in watchfulness, or as a witness of what was to come. We also sense keen observation and an understanding of the sensibilities of the local country folk, their wisdom and their folly as their converging lives affect each other. How does landscape express itself through the spirit of the people? Hardy's curiosity and interest in archaeology added yet another layer of meaning and poignancy to his descriptions.

Comment on 'The Woodlanders' 'The Tree' - how the dying old man is disturbed by it yet when it is cut down by the pragmatic and self-assured new Doctor the outcome is surprising.
Darwinism/ progress vs the old ways/ intuition/ connection

On returning to the classroom, we view images of Dorset in Hardy's time, rural life; hardship, farming and talk about superstitions and country customs (including some of my own family photos) images of pastoral scenes, romantic landscapes, standing stones, mounds. Voice recordings will also be played of the local Dorset dialect and participants own ideas and memories will be welcomed. I will bring in props to create a multi-sensory experience.

11am Drawing

Beginning with some simple drawing exercises, we will experiment with mark making and some basic drawing techniques using natural pigments and local material from the Dorset countryside. We will make a drawing inspired by the exhibition and mornings study onto coloured ground with sepia pencils chalk / graphite and using fine watercolour paper...symbolism, atmosphere, narrative.

1-1.45pm Break for lunch

1.45 - 3.30pm

We will create a mixed media piece in response to our conversations and visual inspiration from the exhibits using coloured and handmade papers, layering, drawing - considering scale, symbolism, atmosphere.

...this will be interspersed with readings and snippets from Hardy's poetry and novels. Considering the relationship to land as a two-way meeting place.

'Venture into the ancient landscape of Wiltshire, to see how the burial mounds and beliefs of Wessex seeped into Hardy's writing. A short journey from Stonehenge, one of the most iconic prehistoric monuments in the world, this exhibition will explore how past and present merge in the writings of this 'time-torn man'. Within this ancient landscape, old beliefs died hard, and Hardy's plots are set against a background of superstition'

'Something moves between me, and it. Place and mind may interpenetrate till the nature of both is altered. I cannot tell what this movement is except by recounting it.'

Nan Shepherd - 'The Living Mountain'