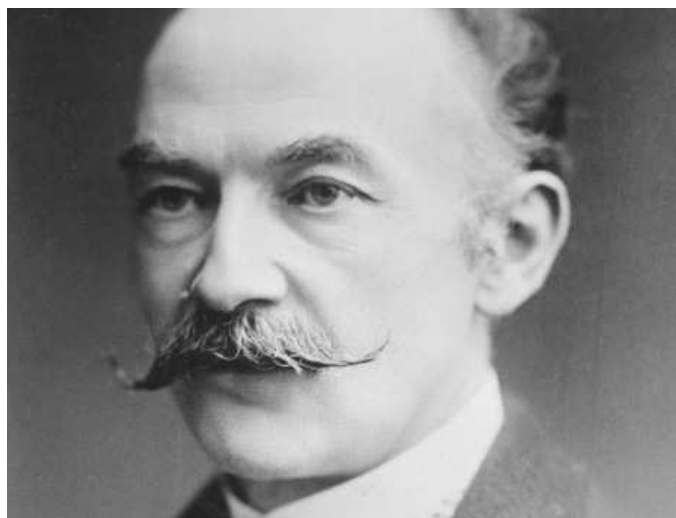


Thomas Hardy (2 June 1840 – 11 January 1928)

Exeter and Topsham



Thomas Hardy was an English poet and novelist. He was born near Dorchester, the son of a stone mason.

He used Exeter in four of his novels, only he gave it the name of Exonbury. The city is featured in *The Trumpet Major*, *Jude the Obscure*, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and *The Woodlanders*. Hardy visited Topsham, where his close friend, Tryphena Sparks, is buried.

Two of Hardy's most important relationships were founded in Devon.

In March 1870, Hardy met and fell in love with Emma Lavinia Gifford, who came from Plymouth, and fictionalized their courtship his third novel *A Pair of Blue Eyes*.

Tryphena Sparks was a cousin and close friend of Hardy. She and Hardy may have been engaged, although the evidence is inconclusive. The friendship was certainly romantic, although it rapidly cooled when Hardy met Emma in 1870.

Tryphena died in childbirth in 1890 and sometime after the funeral Hardy cycled to Topsham with his brother Henry and visited the grave. He left a note saying "in loving memory – Tom Hardy"

It was in the same year that Hardy started writing *Jude the Obscure*, with the character Sue Bridehead who may have been based on Tryphena Sparks. He certainly wrote of her in his poetry of which this is an extract:

*Not a line of her writing have I, not a thread of her hair,
No mark of her late time as dame in her dwelling, whereby
I may picture her there;
And in vain do I urge my unsight
To conceive my lost prize
At her close, whom I knew when her dreams were upbrimming with light,
And with laughter in her eyes.*

