

Holidays with a religious connection

The Diocese of Salisbury

January 2017



The statue of Thomas Hardy in Dorchester. In Hardy's tragic novel, Michael Henchard is the eponymous *Mayor of Casterbridge* who lives in the fictional town (based upon Dorchester). In 1931 the statue was unveiled by James Barrie, author of *Peter Pan*. Each year wreaths are laid here on the Saturday nearest to the anniversary of Hardy's birth on 2 June.

Day 6

We began Day 6 with a look at 'All Saints' counterpart' in **Sturminster Newton, St Mary's**. When we arrived they had just celebrated midweek communion and parishioners were enjoying a coffee morning together. They came in from remote rural communities around Sturminster – so they arrange to give one another lifts to enable people to attend.

The church has a long history. It had a 572-year connection with the abbots of Glastonbury until the dissolution of the monasteries. It was rebuilt by the abbots in 1486.

In 1824 Thomas Henry Lane Fox became Curate and Patron of the Church. He was credited with a fortune estimated at £100,000 - the equivalent of perhaps a million pounds today. He lost no time in setting about having the church surveyed and assigned an architect to draw up plans for rebuilding it.



St Mary's Church, Sturminster Newton.



Martin (left) was invited to join the small congregation after the service for their coffee morning, and he chatted at length to the retired lady vicar (second from left) who held the service. Interestingly, she had been in charge of St Michael and All Angels, Himley in the Smestow Vale Team in her past career.



The nave and altar at St Mary's, Sturminster Newton.



The church was heavily modified in the 19th century, but the carved 'wagon roof' remains.



The beautiful Lady Chapel at St Mary's, Sturminster Newton.



The outside of St Mary's, Sturminster Newton.

After Sturminster Newton, we drove to the county town of Dorset, **Dorchester**.



Exploring Dorchester - Martin in High Street West. The spire of St Peter's Church, Dorchester can be seen in the far distance.



Martin outside St Peter's Church, Dorchester, which was restored by Thomas Hardy (1856-7), in his early career as an architect working for J Hicks.

Our first stop in Dorchester was **St Peter's Church**. The church building largely dates from the mid fifteenth century, and it was significantly restored in 1856-7 by J Hicks, and his pupil Thomas Hardy, the novelist. Hardy trained as an architect in Dorchester before moving to London in 1862; there he enrolled as a student at King's College London. He won prizes from the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Architectural Association.



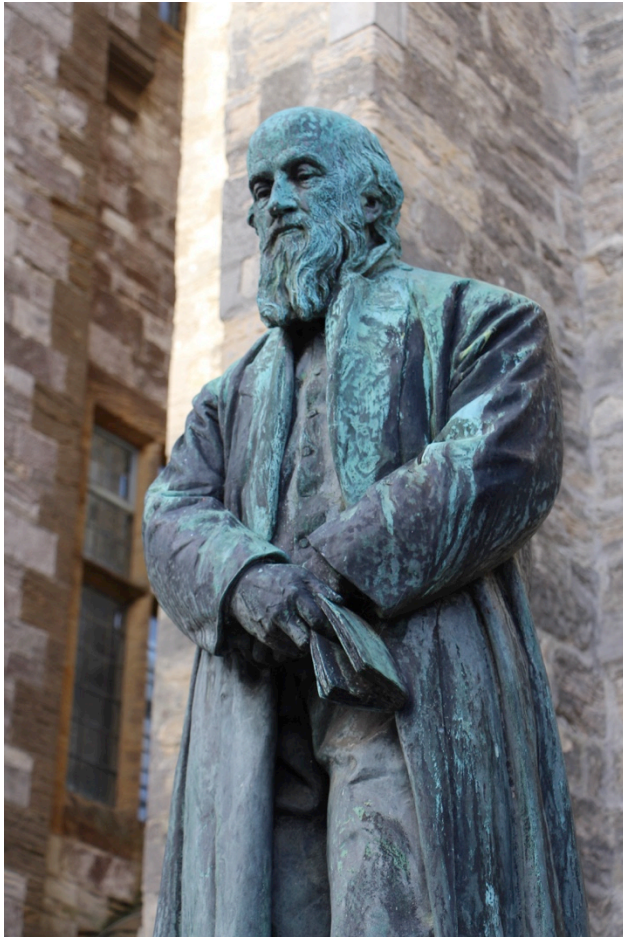
14th century effigies of knights on window ledges in the Hardy Chapel, St Peter's Dorchester.



The nave at St Peter's, Dorchester.



The High Altar and Reredos depicting The Last Supper, at St Peter's Dorchester.



Statue of William Barnes outside St Peter's, Dorchester. Barnes served at nearby Whitcombe as curate and then rector of Winterbourne Came in 1862. A gifted schoolmaster (he was virtually a polymath interested in mathematics, astronomy, natural sciences, and geography) and brilliant student of languages, Barnes tutored young Thomas Hardy, for whom Barnes's scholarship and verse in local dialect served as personal models. A considerable poet, Barnes published numerous volumes of verse, including *Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect* (1844).



Memorial to Lord Holles (d. 1699), Baron of Ifield at St Peter's, Dorchester. Holles served as an MP. His most famous contribution came at the height of the crisis between Parliament and King Charles I in 1629. He was one of the MPs who restrained the Speaker of the House of Commons when he passed motions criticising the king. For this he was sent into exile, but returned to favour at the Restoration of the monarchy. Charles II appointed him ambassador for important diplomatic missions.



The statue of Thomas Hardy as one enters the town of Dorchester.

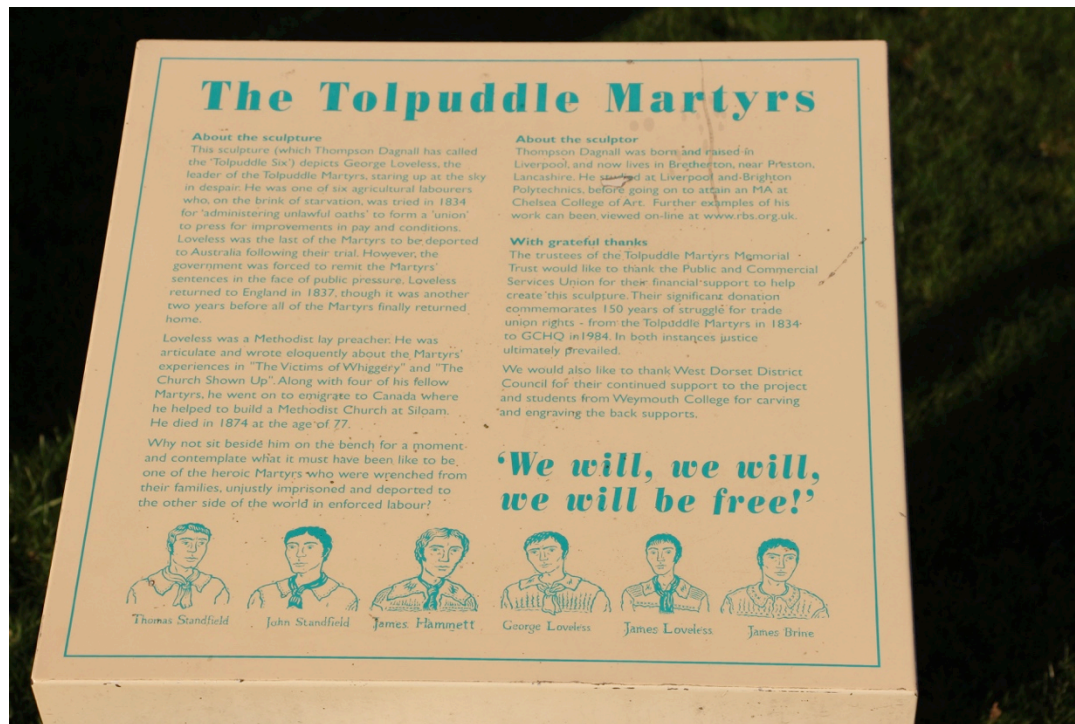
After visiting the church, we wandered round the **shopping centre in Dorchester**, before going to the village of **Tolpiddle**.



The shopping centre in Dorchester.

Tolpuddle is a 20-minute, 10 mile drive from Dorchester along the A35, going through the quaintly-named **Puddletown**, in the valley of the **River Piddle!**

The village is famous as the home of the **Tolpuddle Martyrs** who were sentenced to be transported to Australia after they formed a trade union in 1833. A row of cottages, housing agricultural workers and a museum, and a row of seated statues commemorate the martyrs.



The information board about the sculpture of the Tolpuddle Martyrs in the village of Tolpuddle.

In the 1830s life in villages like Tolpuddle was hard and getting worse. Farm workers could not bear yet more cuts to their pay. Some fought back by smashing the new threshing machines but this brought harsh punishments.

In 1834, farm workers in west Dorset formed a trade union. Unions were lawful and growing fast but six leaders of the union were arrested and sentenced to seven years' transportation for taking an oath of secrecy. A massive protest swept across the country. Thousands of people marched through London and many more organised petitions and protest meetings to demand their freedom.

In 2000 the TUC organised a competition to design a new sculpture at Tolpuddle. It was won by Thompson Dagnall from Liverpool.

His design marks the time when George Loveless is in Dorchester Prison but is so ill his warders fear for his life if he is transported. So he is held behind for a few weeks to recover whilst his five fellow Martyrs are put aboard the hulks before being shipped to Australia.

The sculpture, made from Portland stone, is designed for visitors to sit alongside George. On the back of the six seats are words from the trial at which George Loveless said: "We will, we will, we will be free."



Martin with the statue commemorating George Loveless of the Tolpuddle Martyrs in Dorchester Prison, in front of the Martyrs' Museum in Tolpuddle. The Museum features displays and interactive exhibits about the martyrs and their effect on trade unionism. Alas it wasn't open on our visit.



The well-tended grave of James Hammett (1811-91) at St John the Evangelist Church in Tolpuddle. After he was pardoned, he returned from Australia to England in August 1839. Hammett then remained in Tolpuddle and died in the Dorchester workhouse in 1891.



St John the Evangeist, Tolpuddle is dedicated to St John the Evangelist and dates from the 13th century.



The Martyrs' Tree at The Green in Tolpuddle. It is believed that whilst sitting under this sycamore tree, the six Tolpuddle Martyrs agreed to form a trade union. There is also a commemorative shelter, built in 1934. The annual festival to commemorate the memory of the struggle of the Tolpuddle Martyrs is held on the third weekend of July every year.



The Green, sycamore tree and memorial shelter at Tolpuddle.

Martin and Magda Jones

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St Mary's Sturminster Newton

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/sturminster-newton-st-mary/history-of-st-mary-s-church.html>

<http://stmaryssturminsternewton.org.uk/History.php>

St Peter's, Dorchester

<http://www.dorchesteranglican.info/churches/st-peter/history>

<http://www.britainexpress.com/counties/dorset/churches/dorchester-st-peter.htm>

Thomas Hardy

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Hardy

William Barnes statue in Dorchester:

<http://www.victorianweb.org/photos/hardy/64.html>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Barnes

Tolpuddle

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tolpuddle>

<http://www.tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk>

Tolpuddle Martyrs' sculpture

<http://www.tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk/museum/martyrs-sculpture>