

POINTS OF INTEREST

Swallet Holes are common throughout the woods. Similar to sinkholes, these are the natural process of erosion by water.

The area of heath beside Hardy's Birthplace is thought to be the inspiration for the fictitious '**Egdon Heath**' in Hardy's novel *The Return of the Native*. It was inhabited by the people who cut the furze (gorse) that grows there.

Castle Hill is one of the many bronze-aged barrows in the area. It is believed that before the forest plantation grew up, this tumuli looked like a tall castle from a distance.

Conifer Plantations are sustainably harvested and restocked by Forestry England every year to help reduce our dependency on imported wood and provide low-carbon materials, fuel and energy.

The **Rainbarrows** are three bowl barrows at the top of Duddle Heath. Partly excavated in 1887, the urns that were found, containing cremations, are now in the Dorset County Museum.

A well-preserved **Roman Road** runs through the site. This Scheduled Ancient Monument once stretched from Dorchester to Badbury Rings. Ghostly apparitions of Roman legionnaires marching along the road have been reported!

Photo credits: © Amy Baker, Kath Clay, Tim Ennion, Ian Metcalfe



THORNCOMBE WOOD WALKABOUTS

WALKABOUT 2

Thorncombe Wood / Puddletown Forest / Duddle Heath / Black Heath

A selection of long distance routes to explore the landscape that Thomas Hardy grew up in and was inspired by.

Thorncombe Wood, owned and managed by Dorset Council, is a mixed broadleaf woodland reserve and is home to a great diversity of trees. The woodland gives way to Black Heath, an area of heather and gorse with Rushy Pond, a small watering hole for much wildlife.

Neighbouring Duddle Heath is a privately owned area of lowland heath which shares the benefit of having our herd of Dartmoor ponies graze the scrub, as they would have done in Hardy's time.

Puddletown Forest is one of several conifer plantations which took over much of the Dorset heathland just after the war. Although mainly for commercial forestry, some heathland restoration is underway which will benefit the specialist heathland wildlife. Head up to the higher areas of the forest and you will be rewarded with fine views!

When walking, please remember:

- leave gates, waymarkers and property as you find them
- leave no trace of your visit and put your litter and dog waste in bins provided
- keep dogs under effective control and on leads if signs instruct you to do so
- horse riding and cycling are only allowed on Public Bridleways
- please do not stroke or feed our resident ponies
- use caution in extreme weather conditions

Appropriate footwear is recommended, since wet or muddy conditions can be encountered at any time.

Visitor Centre www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/hardysbirthplace

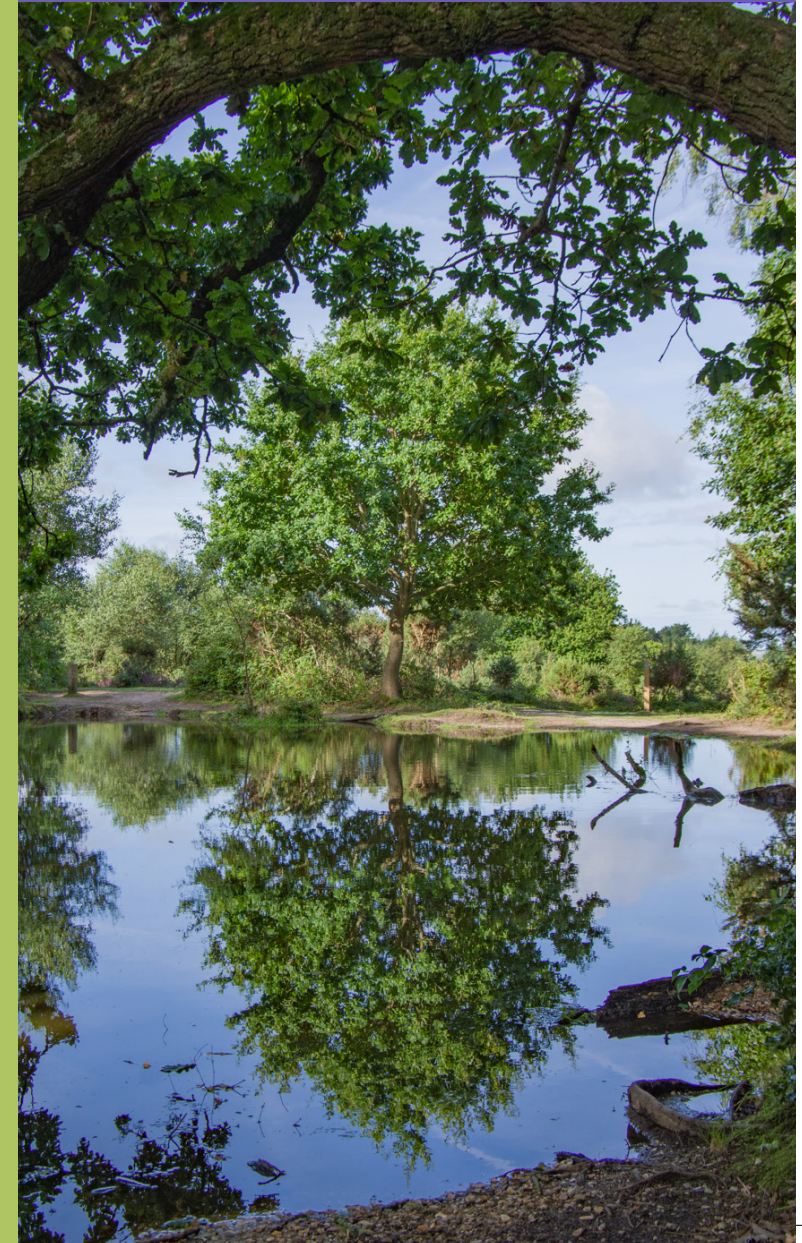
Hardy's Cottage www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hardys-cottage

Walkabout leaflets can be downloaded from www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/walkabouts



THORNCOMBE WOOD WALKABOUTS

Thorncombe Wood / Puddletown Forest / Duddle Heath / Black Heath



THORNCOMBE WOOD / PUDDLETOWN FOREST / DUDDLE HEATH / BLACK HEATH

A selection of long distance routes to explore around the landscape that Thomas Hardy grew up in and was inspired by.

STARTING POINT

Various car parks / laybys around the Forest

DISTANCE

3 to 5 miles

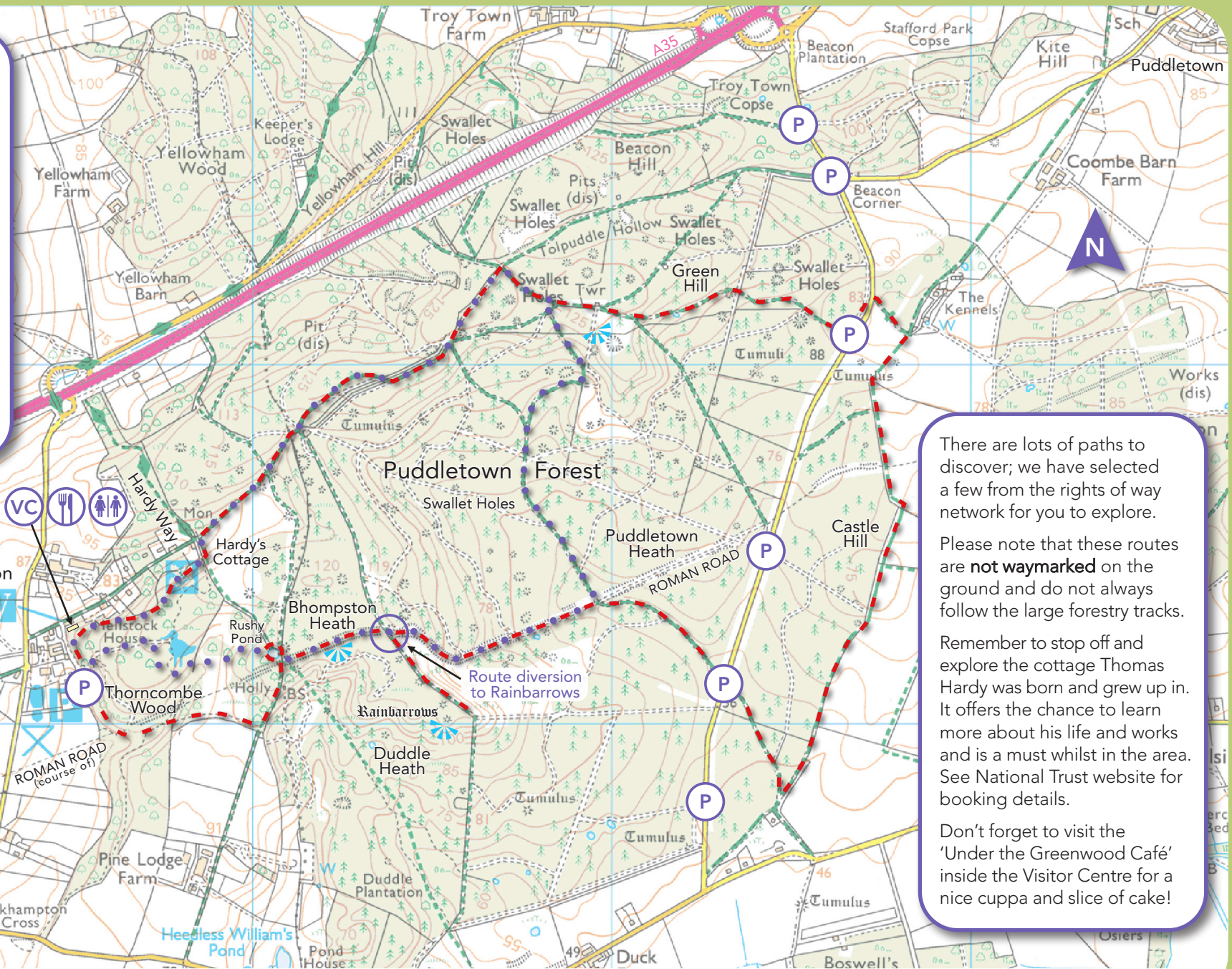
Start your walk from any of the free car parks or laybys to the east of Puddletown Forest or from the Hardy's Birthplace Visitor Centre (DT2 8QH). Parking charges apply.

Set in the heart of Hardy Country, the Visitor Centre is a gateway for local people and visitors alike to discover more about the life and works of Thomas Hardy and the local landscape. It is located on the edge of Thorncombe Wood and is a great half way point and refreshment stop for longer routes exploring neighbouring Duddle Heath and Puddletown Forest.

KEY

- Short route (3 miles)
- — — Long route (5 miles)
- - - Other rights of way
- VC Hardy's Birthplace Visitor Centre
- ☺ Café
- ♿ Toilets
- P Parking
- 🗨 Viewpoint

200 m
500 ft



There are lots of paths to discover; we have selected a few from the rights of way network for you to explore.

Please note that these routes are **not waymarked** on the ground and do not always follow the large forestry tracks.

Remember to stop off and explore the cottage Thomas Hardy was born and grew up in. It offers the chance to learn more about his life and works and is a must whilst in the area. See National Trust website for booking details.

Don't forget to visit the 'Under the Greenwood Café' inside the Visitor Centre for a nice cuppa and slice of cake!