



This map is the inspiration for The Dorset Pavilion.  
Found at an auction house – the site of so many local treasures as they change hands and pass down through generations – it was originally created in 1622, to illustrate ‘Poly-Olbion’, a topographical poem describing Great Britain by Michael Drayton. It exquisitely captures the playfulness of the land: the map is almost empty, except for trees, ancient names, a person scything, several frolicking river nymphs, and extraordinary hills that drift to the sea. Welcome to Dorset-shere!

The two executioners stalk along over the knolls  
Bearing two axes with heavy heads shining and wide,  
And a long limp two-handed saw toothed for cutting great boles,  
And as they approach the proud tree that bears the death-mark on its side  
...

The saw then begins, till the top of the tall giant shivers:  
The shivers are seen to grow greater with each cut than before ...

‘Throwing a Tree’ by Thomas Hardy

# DORSET PAVILION



LOST SHEEP PRODUCTIONS,  
LOWER HEWOOD FARM &  
COMMON GROUND PRESENT

## DORSET PAVILLION 2024

SALIZADA STRETA 96, 30122 VENICE, ITALY  
SEPTEMBER 3RD – OCTOBER 30TH 2024  
TUESDAY–SUNDAY 12.00–19:00

The Dorset Pavilion exhibits practices unique to the place: art that is made locally but speaks transglobally, art made away from cities at the border of the sea that speaks to deep time, art that is political, literary, historical, land-based and the visceral.

### ARTISTS

Jon Adam \* David Appleby \* Robyn Bamford  
Alexa de Ferranti \* Silva de Majo \* Bill Douglas  
Hugh Dunford Wood \* Jane Fox \* Jeremy Gardiner \* Andy Goldsworthy \* Ed Hall  
\* Henrietta Hoyer Millar \* Ellen Harvey \* Veronica Hudson \* Lower Hewood Farm \* Kali Kulukundis \* Sophie Molins \* Fiamma Montagu  
\* Alan Rogers \* Ella Squirrel \* Jacy Wall \* Amanda Wallwork \* Will White \* Flora Wood

## HOLDING ON TO HOPE

Alexandra Blanchard

A man that I have taught for six months recently wrote, ‘I hope for a day when I can live without fear and build a new life. Until then, I wait on the Bibby Stockholm, holding on to hope’. He is living on the Bibby Stockholm, a barge moored on the Isle of Portland and housing around 350 single, male asylum seekers. He is waiting, like 118,329 other people in the UK, for a decision to be made by the Home Office about his future; he is waiting for his life to begin.

I get asked regularly whether Bibby Stockholm is a prison. The answer seems to be a matter of semantics; how do you define a prison? In many ways, the asylum system itself is a prison, locking people into an indeterminate limbo. For the residents on the Bibby Stockholm, the uncertainty created by the unpredictable decision-making is hugely destabilising. Whilst some residents have been on the barge for almost as long as it has been there, others come and go within a few weeks. The decisions come without warning; one learner received a phone call during our class, telling him he was leaving. Goodbyes are sparse with the residents of the Bibby Stockholm.

Portland itself is an island of prisons. Four miles long by 1.7 miles wide, it currently houses HMP The Verne and The Grove (also known as the HMP Portland). Where the Bibby Stockholm is currently moored, the imprint of the HMP Weare, a prison ship also known as the Bibby Resolution, has barely faded. The parallels are inescapable. These prisons, historic and current, muddy the definition of ‘prison’.

The residents on the Bibby Stockholm have committed no crime except the act of movement, so they can’t be imprisoned, right? Between the years of 2014 to 2017, The Verne was used as an Immigration Removal Centre, imprisoning those caught on the wrong side of the UK’s migration system for an undetermined length of time before deportation. Before and after this, it was used as a Category C men’s prison, an open-style prison where residents are often not locked up in their cells, and they have minimal supervision and perimeter security. The residents of the Bibby Stockholm aren’t locked up either, and they can only leave the barge if they catch the hourly bus, and have to go through the metal detector when they get back.

If prison can’t be defined by crimes committed or a definite amount of liberty lost, how is it defined? These questions are embedded in Dorset’s coastline. Around 200 years ago, six Dorset farm workers, the Tolpuddle Martyrs, were imprisoned for the

‘crime’ of creating an iteration of the first trade union, after their wages were cut for the third year in a row. The judge, when sentencing them to seven years transportation, claimed that if societies like this ‘were allowed to exist, it would ruin masters, cause a stagnation in trade, destroy property’. This proclamation sits at odds with the simplicity of the statement by George Loveless, one of the Martyrs: ‘it was impossible to live honestly on such scanty means’. He urged, ‘Has not the working man as much right to preserve and protect his labour as the rich man his capital?’

These proclamations are electric with meaning today, when wages are struggling to meet the costs of living and the rich man is ring fencing his capital. A ‘crime’ of meeting to discuss wages and poverty was committed, and the punishment was meted out: transportation.

The Rwanda scheme is not the first time that the UK has settled on deportation as the answer to their problems. Penal transportation, exile, banishment, began in the 1600s to America, as a ‘merciful’ alternative to the death sentence, and to empty Britain’s rapidly filling prisons – a by-product of the evolution of law enforcement. Transportation had a secondary use as a means of colonisation, and rose to its height with the British Empire. When America began its fight for independence, the ships used to transport prisoners became the prisons; prison hulks, the kind that festered on Charles Dickens’ murky rivers and were glorified in brilliant hues in J. M. W. Turner’s Fighting Temeraire.

HMP Weare was, in 2005, Britain’s only prison ship. But it was not the first. These prison hulks began to lumber again in 1787 to the newly discovered Australia. This is where the Tolpuddle Martyrs were sent on ships, chained in irons with around 500 other prisoners, to years of slavery and misery in appalling working conditions, losing their hold on hope. Meanwhile, in Britain, huge demonstrations and protests organised by the trade unions flooded the streets of London demanding – and getting – a full pardon for these six Dorset farm workers.

In Dorset today, 200 years later, protesters, not unified but deeply at odds, gathered to show their displeasure at the Bibby Stockholm’s arrival in Portland. There were those who worried about how the Bibby residents might affect the local economy and community – a faction of which were supported by touring far-right protesters. And there were those protesting about the use of such isolating and prison-like accommodation. Whether or not we see the Bibby Stockholm as a prison, it is a deeply divisive political symbol against migration, just as the Tolpuddle Martyrs’ punishment and pardon has



In July 2024, at the annual Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival in Dorset (above), refugees from the Bibby Stockholm carried the ‘Justice Knows No Borders’ banner made by Edmund Hall for The Dorset Pavilion. The banner creates a visual and historical link between the Tolpuddle Martyrs transportation ships of the nineteenth century and the twenty-first century detention barge, Bibby Stockholm moored off Portland. ‘Success’ (pictured right) was one of many decommissioned ships used as floating prisons, or ‘hulks, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

come to represent the ongoing struggle of worker and employer. But those on board are just people, like those six Tolpuddle farm workers, who have committed no crime except that of movement. Eugene O’Neill said, ‘There is no present or future – only the past, happening over and over again – now.’ Even now that the Rwanda transportation policy and the Bibby Stockholm have been scrapped by the new Government, the last residents floating off Portland are still just holding on to hope.





PARTLY REAL,  
PARTLY IMAGINED

Jon Woolcott

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928), novelist, poet, sometime architect, was also a place-maker. He was instrumental in resurrecting and popularising the ancient kingdom of Wessex, with Dorset at its heart: a place but mostly an idea. He recast Dorset, changing the names of towns and villages, making it a playground for fiction, a ‘partly real, partly dream country’. Other writers are forever in his shadow. It’s Thomas Hardy’s county: the rest of us just live in it.

There’s a tug to Dorset: something which attracts writers to this south-coast, predominantly rural county. A combination of nature, history, folklore, tradition, topography, lanes that loop and slip along the hills and into the woods, to heaths, nudging barrows, along the coastline; the folded hills to the west, the expanse of the northern vale. Peel away the layers of Hardy’s Dorset and other writers emerge with their own distinct visions, each their own place-maker.



The famous Cerne Abbas Giant (above) was once thought to date from Romano-British times, although because he doesn’t appear in the written record until 1694, more recently he was thought to be a caricature of Oliver Cromwell, charging over the landscape. But archaeology and soil testing carried out in 2020 has revealed him to be a trickster, neither ancient nor seventeenth century, but early medieval, dating from around 900CE. Photo courtesy of Dorset’s Archaeology by Peter Stanier, published by Dorset Books in 2004.



WINTER MUD AROUND A SHEEP FEEDER IN PINCE’S KNAP, LOWER HEWOOD FARM (2021) by Alexa di Ferranti: ‘As a producer of food and fibre on a small north facing marsh in west Dorset, I know the sheep that offer me everything from company to supper. I recognise the expression in their strange eyes, notice their position in the flock, remember what happened to them last year and the year before and try to preserve their friendships (because sheep develop long-lasting loyalties).Of all the objects that lie between me and my return to earth, cured sheep skin might be the one I love the most. Each unique, insulating, aerating, soft, fleecy, tough, leathery, beautiful relic serves as a reminder of the creature I knew, the toll I’ve taken, the ground beneath my feet and the time I’ve got left before I rejoin the soil’s bacterial fray. It speaks of agriculture’s deadly nature, the ambivalence and contradictions inherent in the work I’ve chosen, a complex shield of solace that lies somewhere between art and the soil.’”

Deep in the Blackmore Vale, strung out along a lane, is the almost-village of Bagber, the birthplace of William Barnes (1801-1886). A clergyman, a collector of tales, a schoolmaster, his lasting achievement lies in his dialect poetry. He was described by Edward Thomas as ‘the mouthpiece of the Dorset carters, cowmen, mowers and harvesters.’ The two-times Mercury Prize winner PJ Harvey used Barnes’ Glossary of The Dorset Dialect to inform her poetry collection, *Orlam*, following nine year old Ira, living in the village of Underwhelem, through the course of a single year, the first book in decades to be written in the Dorset dialect.

Dorset encourages experimentalism. John Fowles (1926-2005) employed his home town of Lyme Regis as the setting for *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, playing with structure, the authorial voice and time. When the book was adapted for film in 1981, nineteenth century facades were added to Lyme’s existing buildings – the bookshop memorialised this metafiction by retaining its movie frontage for thirty years. The Cobb, where Meryl Streep was pictured on the film’s poster, was also the site for a pivotal moment of drama in Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*: Louisa Musgrove’s fall from the harbour wall. Austen knew Lyme well – she

once danced in the Assembly Rooms, though the image of the Regency author waltzing as if in one of her own novels is diminished by knowing that this site is now a car park.

Buried too is the setting for Geoffrey Household’s (1900-1988) muscular spy thriller *Rogue Male*, in which the hero, on the run after attempting to assassinate a European dictator, buries himself in a holloway to escape his pursuers. The writers Robert Macfarlane and Dan Richards, along with the artist Stanley Donwood, came to west Dorset in search of this place for their book *Holloway*. Household had disguised the sunken lane, though his daughter tells me that if one follows the clues in *Rogue Male* the location is revealed.

In the 1960s, the broadcaster Kenneth Allsop (1920-1973) settled nearby in West Milton. Here he wrote a series of newspaper columns, collected as *In The Country*, detailing his life in the maze of shady lanes under Eggardon Hill – his passage on how difficult it was to obtain good Dorset Blue Vinny cheese reeks with desperate enthusiasm. He was also a conservationist, calling for a rebalance with nature and defending his patch against insensitive development.

More flamboyantly counter-cultural was the literary set which gathered in the village of Chaldon Herring, between Weymouth and the Isle of Purbeck. This included the extraordinary Powys family: Llewellyn, John Cowper, Theodore (who fictionalised Chaldon Herring in his allegorical novel *Mr Weston’s Good Wine*), Philippa and Gertrude; and their assorted friends and lovers. Most prominent was Sylvia Townsend Warner (1893-1978) and her partner, the poet Valentine Ackland. Townsend Warner’s feminism found its expression in her novel *Lolly Willowes*, in which the heroine finds a new life amongst witches. Writing also in the 1920s was Mary Butts (1890-1937), largely forgotten now although Virginia Woolf disliked her enough to describe her as ‘Malignant Mary’. Butts’ modernist novels are unsettling, hallucinatory, full of ancient symbolism, and sometimes plotless. Dorset was her muse, but her version was empty and barren.

Seaside towns often attract writers and artists. At the end of the nineteenth century F. W. Rolfe (1860-1913), the self-styled Baron Corvo, author of the cult novel *Hadrian VII*, came to live in Christchurch, at that time in Hampshire. Rolfe might have been the creator of Renaissance style frescoes of the archangel Michael in the Catholic church, photographing models leaping in mid-air, making lantern slides from the results, which he then projected onto the walls to trace their outlines. Equally, it might have been another artist



TITLE (2021)  
by PJ Harvey

altogether. But Dorset is no literary tomb – the county still exerts its influence. In her bestselling 2022 debut novel, *The Whalebone Theatre*, Joanna Quinn created a grand house and a family navigating the crises and opportunities of the early decades of the twentieth century, making her own partly real, partly dream Dorset.

Writers have always been shaped by Dorset, this well-spring for dreams, a cultural exchange between place and imagination. The land lies in the stories, the stories lie also in the land.



The aerial photograph (top left) of the Roman amphitheatre at Dorchester, called Maumbury Rings, is a physical expression of Dorset’s connections with European mainland. Small fragments, too, have been found at the base of the ramparts of the Roman fort at nearby Waddon Hill, like the silver lunate pendant (top right). This piece would have been a powerful magical symbol intended to fend off evil or bad luck. The pendent would have hung from a Roman soldiers armour or possibly a horse’s harness – moon-shaped pendants often appeared on the leaves of horses military tombstones, hanging from the broadband, breast strap or haunch strap. Many other pendants with different shapes have been found at Roman military sites, such as teardrops, bird-headed, phallic or triffid. This particular charm and others found in Waddon Hill have been remade in brass to hang from a Murano glasswork – a green, glass, totem, water vessel named after Europa (below) as a homage our Roman and European past, and the mythologies we share.

