



The Open
University

Literature & Music Research Group

WORDS, MUSIC & PLACE

Study Day Programme



Friday 26th June 2026, Bournemouth University

In partnership with University Music Bournemouth
and The Thomas Hardy Society



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Welcome

Welcome to this study day on words, music and place.

Following a lecture-recital in September 2023 and a one-day symposium on the theme of words, music and silence in June 2024, today's event marks the third collaboration between the Open University Literature and Music Research Group and University Music Bournemouth. We are thrilled that The Thomas Hardy Society and their Chair and Academic Director, Mark Chutter, have also joined us for this occasion.

The three parts of this study day adopt different formats for exploring the theme of words, music and place: paper presentations, a panel discussion, and a lecture recital, with readings and performances of instrumental music and song within those sessions. The three sessions offer a broad response to the idea of 'place', incorporating a wide range of subjects and methodological approaches. From how words and music inspired by 'place' can stimulate artistic excellence yet reinforce divisions of nation to how the symbolic invocation of place can increase the literariness of music and the musicality of literature, from how places —specifically houses — inspire and influence creative approaches to writing to the place of writers and musicians in wider historical, social and cultural contexts, it is clear that the co-dependency of words, music and place holds far-reaching implications that resonate across disciplines.

We hope that you enjoy the study day.

Natalie Burton & Robert Samuels

Study Day Convenors

The Open University Literature and Music Research Group

The study of connections between music and literature has become a flourishing area of international research activity. The Open University's Literature and Music Research Group aims to encourage wide-ranging interdisciplinary study of literature and music and to foster a research community in this area within and beyond the university.

Members of the Research Group publish in the interdisciplinary field of Word and Music studies, organise and participate in international conferences and offer graduate supervision. They also engage in public engagement activity and events including consultancies for broadcasting and the performing arts.

University Music Bournemouth

University Music Bournemouth is a joint department, serving the staff and students of Bournemouth University and Arts University Bournemouth as well as the wider local community. The department boasts a range of accomplished ensembles, including a string orchestra, concert band, choral society and chamber choir. Each term there is a busy programme of performances and events that see musicians performing on campus, in the local area and further afield. Engagements this academic year have included the Chamber Choir singing Choral Evensong at Salisbury, Winchester and St Paul's Cathedrals, performances of Glazunov's *Saxophone Concerto*, Purcell's *Come Ye Sons of Art* and Handel's *Dixit Dominus* with student soloists, as well as performances of Ole Gjeilo's *Sunrise Mass* and Bob Chilcott's *Little Jazz Mass*.

The university scholarship scheme allows students to continue their musical training alongside their undergraduate and postgraduate studies in a range of other subjects, with many scholars working towards performance diplomas and some even going on to pursue postgraduate music studies at conservatoires.

We are delighted to be working in partnership with The Open University Literature and Music Research Group and The Thomas Hardy Society on this Study Day.

Ian Davis

Head of University Music Bournemouth

The Thomas Hardy Society

The Thomas Hardy Society was founded in 1968 to promote understanding and appreciation of the life and works of the novelist and poet Thomas Hardy (1840-1928). One of the largest literary societies in the world, the Thomas Hardy Society is a community of general readers and enthusiasts as well as students and academics.

Based in Dorchester, the Society organises a lively programme of public engagement and academic events including lectures, Study Days, guided walks through Hardy's Wessex and in London and elsewhere, concerts, poetry readings, and more. With an international membership, three journals a year, a biennial festival and conference, and strong links to other organisations promoting Hardyan themes, the Thomas Hardy Society acts as a hub for the education and enjoyment of anyone with an interest in Thomas Hardy.

Acknowledgement

This event was supported by OpenARC, the Open University Arts and Humanities Research Centre

Symposium Programme: Day View

10:45	Arrival (Fusion Building, Bournemouth University)
11:15	Welcome
11:30	Open University Paper Presentations (Chair: Professor Delia da Sousa Correa) Professor Robert Fraser Words, Music and Nation: Bartók, Vaughan Williams and the Nostalgic Descant of War Dr Robert Samuels The Rhine and the Heath: mythical landscapes in nineteenth-century words and music Dr Joanne Reardon Music, character and place: a creative approach to finding Handel in London
13:00	Lunch break
14:15	The Thomas Hardy Society Panel Discussion: Hardy's Houses (Chair: Mark Chutter) A panel discussion exploring the theme of words, music and place in relation to some of the Dorset houses that inspired Hardy's writings and the broader area of Literary Tourism.
15:45	Tea break
16:30	University Music Bournemouth Lecture Recital: Song settings of Dorset Poets Dr Natalie Burton explores song settings of poets with connections to Dorset. Tenor: Paul Heaslip, Baritone: Jonathan Prentice, Piano: Rob Taylor
18:00	Drinks reception
18:45	Study Day ends

Session 1 Paper Abstracts

Professor Robert Fraser (The Open University)

Words, Music and Nation: Bartók, Vaughan Williams and the Nostalgic Descant of War

From Hungary to England, and across a range of artistic forms - specifically across literature and music - cultural nationalism was a rising force in the years between the nineteenth-century fin-de-siècle and the First World War. This impulse stemmed from a renewal of - and a renewed commitment to - a sense of place, and is most clearly seen in the attention paid to folklore, folk tales and folk song. Historically viewed, moreover, there is an undeniable link between these artistic developments and the outbreak of war itself. Sentimentality bred violence. I would like to flesh out this claim with reference to a clutch of composers - Béla Bartók and Ralph Vaughan Williams - and a few poets - Edward Thomas, A.E. Housman and A.C. Benson, since even those vocally opposed to the conflict sometimes evinced, despite themselves, symptoms of the canker or malaise. So, is cultural nationalism a force for creative good, or is it an incitement to division, or is it maybe both?"

Robert Fraser is Emeritus Professor of English at the Open University, and the author or editor of twenty-seven books. A Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, the English Association and the Royal Asiatic Society, he has sung in choirs ranging from Winchester Cathedral Choir to the London Symphony Chorus and was a founding member of the Open University's Listening Experience Database. His book Literature, Music and Cosmopolitanism: Culture As Migration was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2018.

Dr Robert Samuels (The Open University)

The Rhine and the Heath: mythical landscapes in nineteenth-century words and music

Few would doubt that the sense of place in a work of literature is of determining force in its creation of meaning. One thinks of Dickens's London, Balzac's Paris, and of course, Hardy's Wessex. For the realist novel of the nineteenth century, the sense of place is a primary guarantee of its realism.

The same cannot be said of works of music. While many musicians are strongly associated with particular places, such as Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven with Vienna, the association is rarely carried through to the interpretation of their works. However, as musical works of the nineteenth century tend to encourage narrative interpretation, their invocation of place increases.

This paper considers two locations of mythical status in their respective works. One is the Wessex heathland of Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, and the other is the river Rhine, backdrop to Robert Schumann's Third Symphony, "The Rhenish". It argues that, as a sense of place increases in importance, so music becomes more literary, and literature becomes more musical.

Robert Samuels (robert.samuels@open.ac.uk) is Senior Lecturer in Music at The Open University in the UK. His work is principally concerned with analytical theory, aesthetics, and the relationship between music and literature. His most recent publication is 'You Can Leave Your Hat On: Schumann, Ein Opus II Repeats Chopin, Op. 2, Varying Mozart, La ci darem la mano' (2026) in the latest volume of *Word and Music Studies*. His book *Symphony and Novel: A study of nineteenth-century genres* is scheduled to be published by Brill in 2027. He is convenor of the Literature and Music Research Group at the Open University and a member of the International Word and Music Association.

Dr Joanne Reardon (The Open University)

Music, character and place: a creative approach to finding Handel in London

My novel, *Mr H's Angel*, is a work of historical fiction set in London in 1750, the year that Handel's great oratorio *Messiah* was first performed in full at The Foundling Hospital. The novel is set in two locations – the Foundling Hospital and 25 Brook Street, Handel's house in Mayfair. The novel is about Handel and his music, and the effect it had on those who heard it and, in the case of *Messiah*, the way it changed their lives. The novelist's job is to recreate the texture of the lived experience of their characters through building an impression of their everyday lives. Their challenge is to not only create a good story but also to blend historical detail into a narrative that will stand the test of critical examination. In choosing a historical subject the novelist is working to explore a different kind of truth that comes from imagining the interior world of their characters and understanding them through the places they lived. This paper will introduce consider some of the ways this might be achieved.

Joanne Reardon is Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at The Open University where she is also Qualification Lead for Creative Writing. Her first novel, *The Weight of Bones* was shortlisted for the Cinnamon Press Debut Novel Award and published by Cinnamon in 2020. Her second novel, *Mr H's Angel*, won the BPA Pitch Prize in 2025 and will be published in 2027/28. Other publications include short stories from collaborations with artists on site specific installations including *My Mind's Eye* for the Mythopoeia exhibition at Warrington Art Gallery and a novella, *Still Life with Blackbirds*, published by Artists Choice Editions with Cirencester's Corinium Museum. Her plays and adapted readings have been produced by BBC Radio Drama. She holds an MA in Creative Writing from UEA and a PhD in Creative Writing from Lancaster University. She was a producer with BBC Radio Drama and Literary Manager at the Bush Theatre and National Theatre in London for many years before joining the OU.

Session 2 Panel Discussion “Hardy’s Houses”

Introduction

Thomas Hardy’s writing is intrinsically linked to place, with his fictionalised Wessex landscape characteristically inspiring and featuring in his novels and poems. ‘Places’ provide setting, drive plot and narrative, and support and develop characterisation in Hardy’s work. Throughout the county of Dorset particular houses are especially important, because they either feature in his writings or are places where his creative process gave shape to the rich legacy of words we now enjoy. These historically important houses exist within and outside of Hardy’s work, but their connection to the author generates a unique interest amongst the visiting public. Music is an equally important feature of Hardy’s life and works, and this panel discussion weaves discussion with performances of words and music to explore the intriguing connections between literature, music, heritage and literary tourism that arise from Hardy’s Houses.

Panel Members

Alastair Braidwood A musician and actor born and bred in Dorchester, Alastair has thrown himself into all things Hardy and Victorian Dorset since his return from studying Music at Royal Holloway, University of London. Alongside his formal training in classical music, he also has a passion for traditional folk music from Dorset and further afield, and leads the local ceilidh band Tatterdemalion – who only perform tunes which were being used in Dorset 200 years ago for dancing and enjoyment – as well as leading Folk Song Walks, where unaccompanied songs are tied into the landscape from which they came. As Musical Director for the New Hardy Players, Alastair has also written music to accompany Hardy’s stories, and set some of his poems to music.

Alban O'Brien is a retired English teacher who has since retirement led over seventy Literary and Discovery holidays. In 2017, inspired by the literary holidays he led here, he moved down from the North West to Puddletown where he has been able to indulge his love of Thomas Hardy through volunteering at the cottage and the museum, acting as a member of the New Hardy Players, singing in a West Gallery Choir, giving talks and leading school and adult groups on Hardy tours. He is a member of the Thomas Hardy society and committee, has presented a series of on-line talks on a range of literary subjects and has an MA in Shakespeare and Theatre from the Shakespeare Institute.

Mark Damon Chutter is the Chair and Academic Director of the Thomas Hardy Society. He has been teaching for over 30 years and is the Head of Performing Arts at Wey Valley Academy. Mark is a Drama and English specialist and he was shortlisted for ‘The Times ‘ Teacher of the Year’ and ‘ Most Innovative Teacher of the Year ‘ respectively. Mark has published articles and essays in both the *Times Educational Supplement* and *The Thomas Hardy Journal*. Mark is a committee member

of the Dorchester Civic Society, the Dorchester Heritage Committee, and he is a trustee of the Dorset History Centre.

Hywel Dix is Professor of English at Bournemouth University, UK. He has published extensively on the relationship between literature, culture and political change in contemporary Britain, most notably in *Postmodern Fiction and the Break-Up of Britain* (2010), *After Raymond Williams: Cultural Materialism and the Break-Up of Britain* (Second Edition, 2013) and *Multicultural Narratives: Traces and Perspectives*, co-edited with Mustafa Kirca (2018). His wider research interests include modern and contemporary literature, critical cultural theory, authorial careers and autofiction. His monograph about literary careers entitled *The Late-Career Novelist* was published in 2017 and an edited collection of essays on Autofiction in English was published by Palgrave in 2018. His study of Brexit and fiction was published by University of Wales Press as *Compatriots or Competitors? Welsh, Scottish, English and Northern Irish Writing and Brexit in Comparative Contexts* in 2022. He has recently completed a study entitled *Autofiction and Cultural Memory* with Routledge and his monograph *British Covid Fictions: Reading Pandemic Politics* was published in 2025.

Sarah Gregson, the present owner of rambling Poxwell Manor, decided in 2021 she needed a project and so debunked from Central London to rural Dorset. No problems about finding a parking space. Prior to this Sarah, despite being educated at a convent in Brentwood, had forged a successful career as a lawyer in television culminating in helping launch *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire* to a grateful public. While she does not want to blow her own trumpet she was involved in taking the wind out of the Coughing Major and will not need to phone a friend in the Q and A session after her presentation.

Joining Sarah on this odyssey is **Kenneth Young** her long term consort. A one time shipping lawyer. There is a similarity to Bob Loveday in Kenneth's recent pass since he was involved in a maritime adventure in the Red Sea and the prevention of a major oil spill of a rotting hulk of a supertanker called the MT Safer which entailed spending two months in Sana'a with the Houthis. He was not involved in any armed hijackings of merchant ships though.

Harriet Still studied English and History at University of York before working for the National Trust at Hardy's Cottage, Max Gate and Clouds Hill in Dorset. During this time, she undertook an MA in Heritage and Interpretation at University of Leicester. After 2 years working for Shire Hall Historic Courthouse Museum, she became the curator of the Wessex Museums' four Hardy's Wessex exhibitions in the south west of England (2022). Since then, she has completed her MSt in Building History with University of Cambridge and currently works as a Heritage Consultant for Donald Insall Associates in Hardy's Christminster (Oxford).

Songs and Readings

Athelhampton House:

Greensleeves - Traditional English folk song

'The Dame of Athelhall' from *Poems of the Past and Present*, 1901

Outlandish Knight – English traditional, with words as noted by Thomas Hardy

Hardy's Cottage:

Domicillium, an uncollected poem written when Hardy was sixteen years old

The Rosebud in June – English traditional, collected in Dorset

Poxwell Manor:

Extract from Chapter 6 of *The Trumpet Major*, 1880

Nightingales Sing – Traditional English song

Max Gate:

Extract from *The Fiddler of the Reels*, 1893

Enrico – Traditional tune, said to be Hardy's favourite

'To My Father's Violin' from *Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses*, 1917

Regret Not Me – A setting of Thomas Hardy's words by Alastair Braidwood

Session 3 Lecture Recital

Introduction

When one thinks of Dorset poets, the towering figures of Thomas Hardy and William Barnes are perhaps those that most immediately come to mind. Yet Dorset is a county that has attracted hundreds of writers across the centuries, whether for the peaceful solitude of the rural landscapes in the West, the romance of the glorious Jurassic Coast in the South, the dramatic hills and ridge lines in the North of the county, or for the healing pines, sandy beaches and restorative waters in the East. In a programme of words and music that combines familiar names from the worlds of literature and music with lesser-known figures, we examine the wider social, cultural and historical implications of 'place' beyond locality.

Speaker and Performer Biographies

Dr Natalie Burton studied Music and Musicology at Southampton University, later completing a postgraduate degree in English. Supported by an AHRC studentship, she completed her PhD with The Open University in 2023, writing a thesis proposing new melopoetic methodologies for the twentieth-century English song cycle. She remains an active member of the OU Literature and Music Research Group. Her publications include a chapter on narrative structure in Vaughan Williams's *On Wenlock Edge* for the *Routledge Companion to Literary Media*.

As a clarinettist, pianist and singer, Natalie divides her week as a practising musician and academic researcher. She teaches, performs and conducts, working with choirs, singers and instrumentalists at Bournemouth University as well as in her private practice.

Paul Heaslip is a busy choral singer and tenor soloist. He sings regularly with the choir of Christchurch Priory, The Orlando Singers, the choir of St Peter's Church Dorchester and with University Music Chamber Choir. Recent solo engagements have included performances of the Mozart *Requiem* and Stainer's *Crucifixion* as well as a short programme of English song as part of the Thomas Hardy Society Birthday Weekend events.

Jonathan Prentice is University Music Bournemouth's singing tutor and in addition to his teaching, he directs choirs and produces an annual opera. He studied music at University of Bristol and was a lay clerk at the cathedral. He then completed an MA in Film Music composition at Bournemouth University. He is in great demand as a baritone soloist, has recorded a Gilbert and Sullivan disc for the Sony label and appeared on the Alan Titchmarsh show!

Rob Taylor studied piano at the Guildhall School of Music and later at Manchester University with Gordon Fergus-Thompson and Martin Roscoe. Following a long career teaching in schools, colleges and universities Rob spent several years travelling the world performing on cruise ships. He now lives in Bournemouth, performs frequently in the south of England, and teaches at Canford, Parkstone Grammar and Barton Peveril.

Lecture Recital Programme

Settings from *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885) by Robert Louis Stevenson 1850-1894

'The Swing' from *The Daisy Chain, 12 Songs of Childhood*

Liza Lehmann 1862-1918

'Where go the boats' from *Four Child Songs, Op.5*

Roger Quilter 1877-1953

Settings of poems by Thomas Hardy 1840-1928

'The Comet at Yell'ham' from *A young man's exhortation, Op.14*

Gerald Finzi 1901-1956

Text from Hardy's 1901 collection: *Poems of the Past and Present*

'At Middle-Field Gate in February' from *I said to love, Op.19b*

Text from Hardy's 1917 collection: *Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses*

'Budmouth Dears' from *A young man's exhortation, Op.14*

Text originally published as part of *The Dynasts*, 1904, 1906, 1908

Setting of 'The Soldier' from *1914 and Other Poems* (1915) by Rupert Brooke 1887-1915

The Soldier

Harry T. Burleigh 1866-1949

Settings of poems by William Wordsworth 1770-1850

The Daffodils

Frederick Septimus Kelly 1901-1956

Text from Wordsworth's 1807 collection: *Poems in Two Volumes* (revised 1815)

Lucy

Samuel Coleridge Taylor 1875-1912

Text from Wordsworth's 1800 collaborative collection: *Lyrical Ballads*

Settings of poems from *The Espalier* (1925) by Sylvia Townsend Warner 1893-1978

From *Songs Sacred and Profane*

John Ireland 1879-1962

2. 'Hymn for a Child'

5. 'The Soldier's Return'

6. 'The Scapegoat'

Settings of poems by Percy Bysshe Shelley 1792-1822

'The Widow Bird' from *4 Songs, Op.22*

Herbert Howells 1892-1983

Text from Shelley's unfinished verse drama: *Charles I*

In Moonlight

Edward Elgar 1857-1934

Text from Volume II of *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*