

# A Hardy way of life

**W**HAT was it like for Thomas Hardy's second wife, Florence, when she found out that he was writing love poetry to his dead first wife?

It is a question that has fascinated Hardy scholars but now Peter Tait has used his imagination to provide a possible answer.

He has written a fictional account of the relationship between Florence – who first met the Dorset genius who was 40 years her senior – in 1905.

This is a fascinating concept that New Zealand-born Tait, the head of Sherborne Preparatory School, has executed with fluency.

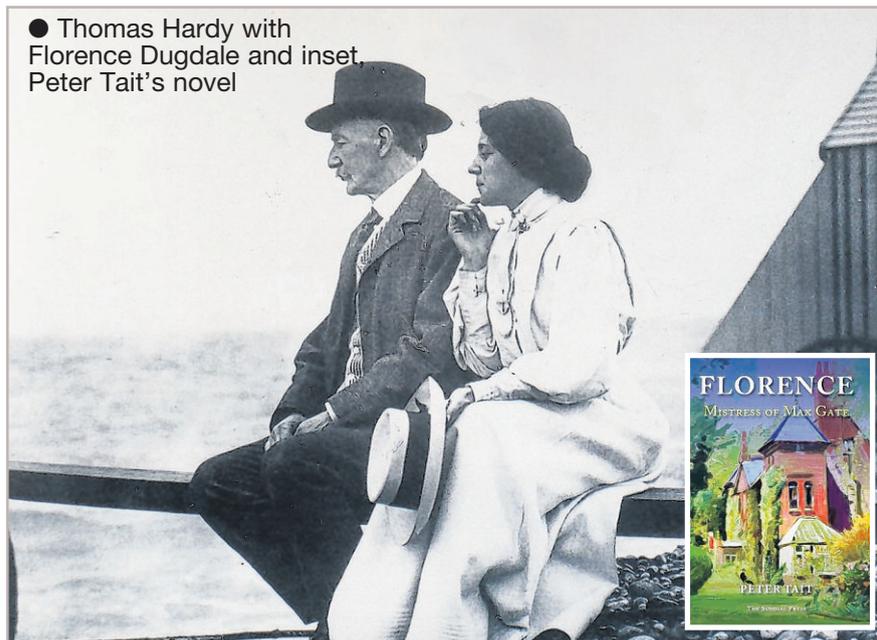
Emma, Hardy's characterful first wife, died in 1912. He married Florence Dugdale, his secretary with whom he had had a clandestine relationship, in 1914... just months before the publication of his elegiac poems to Emma.

Tait endeavours to see the developing relationship that reached an impasse before the First World War was finished, through Florence's eyes.

"I'm trying to get inside the head of Florence," said Peter Tait at the book's launch last month. "I was always astounded by how she put up with it."

The book is based on the life of

● Thomas Hardy with Florence Dugdale and inset, Peter Tait's novel



Florence from 1905 to 1916, giving an insight as the author sees it, of Florence's psychology, her attitudes and how she felt. By the time the book finishes, there are still 12 years of marriage ahead of the couple before the author's death, when Florence, who is feeling isolated, resisted the role that Hardy tried to make her

carry – that of a "helpmate to his genius" with her talents clipped back.

Peter Tait's concept is intriguing and his book adds to the mountain of Hardy literature by viewing a key relationship in Hardy's life from a different perspective.

● Florence: Mistress of Max Gate by Peter Tait. Sundial Press, £16.50

## Book Ends

### Piers appearing

Piers of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is a new book that has just been published by Amberley (£17.99). Written by Martin Easdown and Linda Sage, it looks at the area's association with piers right back to 1814.

### Unmasking lies

Ferndown writer Arthur Green has just published his first book called When Fables Fall: Unmasking the Lies of Distorted Science, Secularism and Humanism (Sovereign World £10.99). Its sections are entitled Christianity in Crisis; Science and Religion; Liberal Theology; and When Fables Fall.

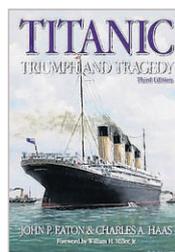
### Quirky quips

Brian Moore wrote regular quirky columns for many West County newspapers in the 1980s and 90s. Now he has published a collection called Bitz and Pieces, illustrated by Sue Burleigh (Lydden Press £4.95).

## ◆ Top 20

- 1 **Jamie's Great Britain**  
Jamie Oliver
- 2 **Guinness World Records 2012**  
Guinness World Records
- 3 **Where's the Meerkat?**  
Paul Moran
- 4 **Home Cooking Made Easy**  
Lorraine Pascale
- 5 **Steve Jobs: The Exclusive Biography**  
Walter Isaacson
- 6 **Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Cabin Fever**  
Jeff Kinney
- 7 **River Cottage Veg Every Day!**  
Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall
- 8 **Frozen Planet**  
Fothergill & Berlowitz
- 9 **The World of Downton Abbey**  
Jessica Fellowes
- 10 **Gangsta Granny**  
David Walliams
- 11 **The Life of Lee**  
Lee Evans
- 12 **May I Have Your Attention Please?**  
James Corden
- 13 **The Help**  
Kathryn Stockett
- 14 **Beano Annual**  
Beano
- 15 **The Faithless**  
Martina Cole
- 16 **I, Partridge: We Need to Talk About Alan**  
Alan Partridge
- 17 **Ripley's Believe It or Not!**  
Robert Le Roy Ripley
- 18 **A Tiny Bit Marvellous**  
Dawn French
- 19 **Tick Tock**  
Patterson and Ledwidge
- 20 **An Idiot Abroad**  
Karl Pilkington

## ◆ Book reviews



An updated third edition of a classic cornucopia

### Titanic: Triumph and Tragedy

John P Eaton and Charles A Haas

Haynes, £30

★★★★☆

NEXT year marks the centenary of the bleak day when the Titanic hit an iceberg and sank on its maiden voyage, with the loss of 1,500 lives.

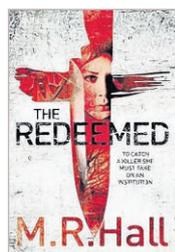
This encyclopaedic volume is a remarkable collection of facts, figures and details ranging from the size of her propeller to the list of passengers on board.

It also includes the cargo that was on the ship, for example, two cases of horsehair and seven cases of raw feathers.

It is packed with pictures from the glory of her launch to the poignant relics such as the shoes of an unknown child.

A timely insight into an Edwardian engineering triumph that ended with catastrophe.

Ed Perkins



A coroner's quest for conclusion battles the conspiracy

### The Redeemed

Mr Hall

Pan Books, £7.99

★★★★★

WHEN a body turns up in a churchyard, Coroner Jenny Cooper is called in to examine the corpse.

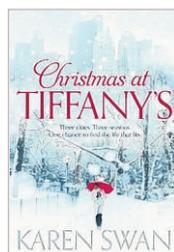
Subsequently a young priest arrives on her doorstep, almost begging her to examine in greater detail the death of Eva.

There are unanswered questions about her death, despite the confession of a convicted killer.

As Jenny investigates, she comes across a new religious group. When the legal race begins, they're there at the starting line, with friends in high places who aim to disrupt.

When the final judgement comes, their God cannot help. An all-to-human judiciary condemns those who have meddled with people's minds.

Nick Ellis



The third offering from Swan, about self-discovery

### Christmas at Tiffany's

Karen Swan

Pan, £6.99

★★★★☆

CASSIE Fraser, 20, married her first serious boyfriend, dropping out of university and moving to rural Scotland.

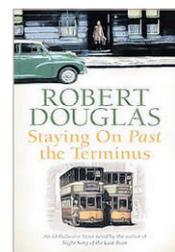
Ten years on, a revelation that her husband has another family shatters her life.

Heartbroken, Cassie's three best friends come up with a year-long plan to help her rebuild her life.

For four months at a time, Cassie goes to live and work with each of her friends in New York, Paris and London.

She immerses herself in their lives and the cultures of each location while developing new friendships, but remains confused about where she belongs. Can her friends help her find the answer? A heart-warming read.

Julie Cheng



A book about McNostalgia for a long lost Glasgow

### Staying on Past the Terminus

Robert Douglas

Hachette, £16.99

★★★★☆

THE tenement blocks are just the same, although the people are 10 years older.

It's 1961, a new era dawns as Frank the tram driver moves intae Dalbeattie Street.

Youse can tell it's Glesgae frae hoo the people speak. We learn hoo they eat, drink, love and worrrk.

Visitors to the hoose and trips out aw feature alongside the references to Cliff, Fyffe and Zodiacs.

If you like a good read, with enough giggles and tears to last until Boxing Day, this yin's fer yoose.

It's got romance, an' a touch of tragedy too. An' it's jess 10 days in September...

Nick Ellis



New edition that does what it says in the title

### A Dictionary of British Place Names

AD Mills

OUP, £10.99

★★★★☆

AD Mills, whose other books include a dictionary of Dorset place names, lists 17,000 places from across the land.

It's a useful book and a pleasure for browsers who can look up everything from Great Snoring to Broadbottom to see how they came by their names.

Dorset has some of the most evocative village names and you'll find the origins of, for example, Toller Porcorum (from the old Celtic name for a river and a reference to pigs) and Ryme Intrinseca (place at the inner edge) listed.

More recent place names include Waterloo (from the Royal Waterloo Hotel, itself named after the 1815 battle.)

Ed Perkins