



**A CHRISTMAS HOUSE PARTY IN DORSET**  
PLUMBER MANOR  
AN INSCAPE RETREAT

FRIDAY 9 TO MONDAY 12 DECEMBER 2016

NICHOLAS FRIEND

For our first Christmas INSCAPE Retreat, we will be the most welcome guests of one of the oldest families in Dorset whose ancient home is their small country house hotel. Cosily ensconced in historic book and art-lined rooms, warmed by lively scholarship, good company, central heating and open blazing fires, we will focus on Dorset's colourfully chequered history as a county of rebels and smugglers. Beginning with Dorset's earliest documentation in the Domesday Book, we will move through the early middle ages to the Clubmen of the Civil War to shortly after the last battle in England to be fought by an army of Dorset's proud nonconformist artisans and farmers with pitchforks in 1685. Our special private visits will be to the ancient medieval and Jacobean manor houses of the noteworthy Dorset families we discuss. In our evening readings we will jump ahead to the life and times of native Thomas Hardy, with readings especially from *The Mayor of Casterbridge* on the 130th anniversary of its publication. We will certainly not overlook Hardy's evocative reminder of a rural Dorset Christmas in 'Under the Greenwood Tree'. The poetry of William Barnes, multitalented poet and autodidact, born in Rushay, Dorset, will be the focus for a study of the ancient Dorset dialect. The food will be delicious- its restaurant is one of the finest in Dorset, featured in the Good Food Guide every year since 1978. In the small private Dorset County Museum owned by the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, where Nicholas worked 40 years ago, we visit the museum's excellent collection and the Hardy papers with Helen Gibson, Hardy Curator. Set in Nicholas' most beloved winter landscape, the mild Dorset countryside, this gentle Inscape Retreat will provide a perfect lull before the distractions and demands of Christmas.

## **FRIDAY 9 DECEMBER**

- 09.35 Train leaves Waterloo
- 12.04 Arrive Dorchester South station for minibus
- 12:15 Optional lunch at Taste Restaurant
- 1.50 Walk to Dorset County Museum
- 2.00 Arrive Dorset County Museum for private visit to Thomas Hardy material with curator Helen Gibson
- 4.00 Leave for hotel
- 4.45 Arrive hotel for check in
- 5:00 Rest
- 7.00 Welcome drinks
- 7:30 Opening group dinner

## **SATURDAY 10 DECEMBER**

- 10.30 Coffee
- 11.00 Lecture: 'Peasants, Rebels and Smugglers: a short history of Dorset'
- 12.30 Group lunch in Hotel
- 2.00 Leave for Sandford Orcas Manor
- 2.30 Sandford Orcas Manor with owner Sir Mervyn Medicott
- 4.00 Leave for hotel
- 4.30 Arrive hotel to rest
- 7.00 Group dinner
- 9.00 Optional Talk and Readings from Thomas Hardy novels

## **SUNDAY 11 DECEMBER**

- 10.30 Coffee
- 11.00 Lecture on 'Dorset Families and their Manor Houses'
- 12.30 Leave for optional lunch in Athelhampton House
- 12.45 Optional lunch
- 2.00 Visit Athelhampton
- 4.00 Return to hotel
- 7.00 Group dinner
- 9.00 Optional Talk and Readings from Thomas Hardy poetry

## **MONDAY 12 DECEMBER**

- 10.00 Leave for Wolfeton House
- 10.30 Coffee and tour at Wolfeton House with owner Mrs Catharine Thimbleby
- 12.30 Optional lunch in No 6, Dorchester
- 2.15 Leave for Dorchester South Station
- 3.00 Arrive Yeovil Station
- 3.29 Train leaves for Waterloo
- 5.49 Train arrives Waterloo



**PLUMBER MANOR**  
Sturminster Newton  
Dorset DT10 2AF

Rare are the “historic” hotels so full of authenticity, so unassuming, they could be said to be the perfect setting for Inscape’s first Members Only ‘country house party.’ Even more rare are the “historic” hotels still in the hands, four hundred years on, of the family who first broke ground and built it. Yet Inscape found one! Plumber Manor, a Jacobean gentleman’s home in Dorset meets the criteria on both counts. Still lived in and loved by the Prideaux-Brunes, an ancient Dorset family, Plumber Manor is a healthy survivor of over four hundred years of continuous life. In 1978 with sheer drive coupled with just enough innovation, the family saw the writing on the wall and began to transform their home (and themselves, in the process) from a purely ‘private’ home into a nearly “private” and most excellent hotel. When fully occupied the Manor resonates with the atmosphere of a country house party of an earlier era. The Manor is ready. We hope you will join us!

**COST** £1295 members, £1345 non-members, single room supplement £180, deposit £250. This cost includes three nights accommodation with breakfasts, all dinners with wine, one lunch with wine, all tuition and lectures, entry fees and private tours where applicable, all travel during the tour, all gratuities, VAT. This cost **excludes** travel to and from the tour.