



The buffet lunch was excellent, tasting as good as it looked, and was complemented perfectly by the delicious cake, which was, literally, the icing on the cake!

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The final formal item on the programme was a talk by local historian, Kay Kearsley, on history of Kingston Maurward and the connection with George Singer. This was given in the magnificent Pengelly Room, formerly the music room, which is richly decorated with hand-painted Italian wallpaper. Entered through the Grand Entrance Hall, it commands great views of the rolling lawns and five-acre lake.



Kay's first picture was a watercolour of



where we were - Kingston Maurward House - but as it looked in about 1900, being unchanged outwardly from the time George Singer senior was farm bailiff. The house was built for George and Lora Pitt in about 1720.

The white marble font (pictured) was given to the church by Lora Pitt, as the original font of Norman origin had been broken and was thought to be lost. It

was discovered by Thomas Hardy himself in the churchyard and restored in 1920, when it replaced the marble font. All George and Hellen's children were christened using the marble font - George on 28 Feb 1847, Arthur William on 3 Sep 1848, and Mary on 3 March 1850. A third son Frederick was christened on 7 Dec 1851, but died aged 5 months and was buried on 14 Apr 1852.

Thomas Hardy was also christened using the marble font, which was donated to the diocese after WW2, and now resides in the rebuilt St Luke's Church, Winchester.



BAPTISMS solemnized in the Parish of <i>Stinsford</i> in the County of <i>Somerset</i> in the Year 18 <i>47</i>						
When Baptized.	Child's Christian Name.	Parents Name.		Abode.	Quality, Trade, or Profession.	By whom the Ceremony was performed.
		Christian.	Surname.			
1847 Feb 28 <sup>th</sup> No. 529.	George	George Belau	Singer	Kingston House	Howard & E. B. Martin Esq	Arthur Hardy Vicar



St Michael's Stinsford, and left, the church record of baby George's Christening.

And so, with final expressions of heart-felt thanks to all involved in making this event so special, the Singer folk dispersed to visit the various other attractions of Kingston Maurward, including the Animal Park and Gardens, and St Michael's Church, Stinsford, a short walk through the grounds and along the road, which in addition to the Singer family connection, is the place where Thomas Hardy's heart is buried. Stinsford is also the village of 'Mellstock' in Hardy's novels 'Under the Greenwood Tree' and 'Jude the Obscure'.



But as Simon Bishop said in his words of welcome at the reception, it would be nice to think that if only 1 in 10 that casually read the blue plaque at the Old Manor, then go home and Google George Singer and learn that they are not just in Thomas Hardy country, but also in George Singer country, then we have done a good job.

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Chris' scenic route back to the hotel took us to the west of Charminster, then via Cerne Abbas, Sydling St Nicholas, through a ford, then the long climb to the A37. Time now to get ready for the 'Big Red Bus' trip to the Green Man pub at King's Stag for an informal meal and George Singer quiz.

The bus was full of happy passengers, so Mike and Jeremy followed in their Hunter. The weather was foul, with the hotel in the clouds as we set off back down the long hill to the ford, by which time at least we were out of the clouds! The bus successfully negotiated the ford, but then the 'fun' started as it toiled up the equally long climb from the ford, getting slower and slower until it came to an even steeper bit, which was the last straw, and the passengers had to disembark and walk up the steepest part, whilst Robert Lovegrove



got his head under the bonnet. Modesty forbade him to reveal exactly what he did, but thereafter the bus was able to proceed, and the passengers re-embarked. The journey continued without further ado, and everybody arrived safely at the Green Man, where a special room had been prepared for us. The meal was very good - and efficiently served - we had chosen from a menu of Ham, Egg & Chips or Lamb, Beef or Chicken casserole. This was followed by a



*Crossing the Sydling Ford*

'George Singer' quiz devised by Barry, which proved to be both interesting and informative. Did you know, for



*Everybody out, as the Hunter passes the stricken bus*



*Robert fixing the Engine*

instance, that at the age of 14, George Singer became an apprentice with Marine Engineers **John Penn & Sons**, of Lewisham? And that whilst in Lewisham he met



another future car manufacturer, **William Hillman**? Also that when he moved to Coventry he lived in **Paradise Street**, where his future wife lived next door? As Barry's clue said, he must have felt in heaven!

Our 'Guardians of the Grave', John Taylor and Richard Hoare, certainly did, as they were the only ones to score full marks!

Altogether a very enjoyable evening - and the Big Red Bus took a longer but less hilly route safely back to the George Albert, without further 'incident'.

\* \* \*

A fitting end to a quite remarkable Singer day.



## SNCW 2013 - Dorset - Day 2

**On Saturday 14th** we awoke to a day as bright and cheerful as Friday had been wet and miserable. Off came the covers, down came the hoods and off we went on



the next of Chris' scenic drives, heading first towards Sydling St Nicholas, then along a narrow Roman road with passing places, to Grimstone Viaduct, where [Chic Photographic](http://www.chicphotographic.co.uk) were again waiting to take pictures as we drove through.

After a series of right-angle bends through a council estate, we arrived in the architects' paradise of Poundbury, a pleasant urban



development on the South West outskirts of Dorchester, where we parked in the Queen Mother's Square. Poundbury was designed by the Prince of Wales, who outlined his pioneering ideas in his 1989 book, 'A Vision of Britain'.

Leaving Poundbury via the old A35 Bridport Road, which forms a broad avenue with gentle road humps through the centre of the estate, we drove through the pretty villages of Martinstown, Winterborne St Martin and Winterborne Steepleton, where we took the road sign-posted 'Hardy's Monument - Portesham'. Before long we could see the 72ft high edifice towering over the 780ft Black Down hill. The Hardy family



chose this site

because they wanted a monument which could be used as a landmark for shipping - it is visible from a distance of 100 kilometres.

*Vice-Admiral Sir Thomas Masterman Hardy served as flag captain to Admiral Lord Nelson, and commanded HMS Victory at the Battle of Trafalgar in October 1805 during the Napoleonic Wars. Nelson was shot as he paced the decks with Hardy, and as he lay dying, Nelson's famous remark of "Kiss me, Hardy", (or "Kismet, Hardy"?) was directed at him.*

Somewhere along the way, Klaas Blankevoort had a problem in the rh rear hub of his LM, but fortunately he was





It was fortunate the skies were clear, and we had breath-taking views along the coast to Portland. Also, [Chic Photographic](http://www.chicphotographic.co.uk) picked a great spot to photograph our cars as they climbed the Black Down hill approaching the entrance to the Monument car park, as well as snapping them on the way out.

See more pictures of this event at [www.chicphotographic.co.uk](http://www.chicphotographic.co.uk)



© Chic Photographic

Hardy Monument



View to Portland

\* \* \* \* \*

Next on the itinerary was the picturesque village of Abbotsbury, via a steep descent on a narrow road, with St Catherine's Church below on the hill to our left and, ahead, more amazing views over the English Channel, before arriving at the Swannery at feeding time. The Swannery was, in a word, stunning.



St Catherine's Church

As Jana Taylor said, "You just don't expect to see so many swans in one place at one time - I thought there might be a few dozen, but there were hundreds!"

The Swannery was established by Benedictine Monks, who built a monastery in the village during the 1040s.



Abbotsbury

The monks farmed the swans to produce food for their lavish banquets. The monastery was dissolved by Henry VIII in 1538, but some of the ruins are still visible near St Nicholas' Church.

The Swannery is a sanctuary, not a zoo - there are no cages and the swans are all free flying. Today, this is the only place in the world where you can walk through the heart of a colony of around 600 Mute Swans, and help to hand feed them, as Jana - in green trews and with bucket - is doing, whilst one opportune specimen avoids the crush!

The cygnets, which in May and June you can actually watch as they crack open their shells, were already quite large and would soon be learning to fly. Generally the young were kept in separate enclosures, as the parents are fiercely protective, but some families were paddling up the many inlets and rivulets, along the banks of which they build their nests.



\* \* \* \* \*

From the Swannery we drove back through Abbotsbury village and took the Jurassic Coast road up the steep incline of White Hill for more spectacular coastal views.



*Portland and Chesil Bank*



*The Jurassic Coast*

Once over the brow of the hill the vista extended beyond West Bay and Burton Cliff, the location for TV's Broadchurch, and where most of the fossils are found.

At the bottom of the hill and on the right is the small village of Punc-knowle, pronounced 'Punnel',



**Crown Inn, Puncknowle**



**Colin Conducts.**

where, after a tight squeeze in the car park of the thatched Crown Inn, carefully choreographed by Colin and others too numerous to mention, we had a buffet lunch.



**A tight squeeze**



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Chris' scenic return route to Dorchester took us back up to the top of White Hill for yet another feast of Dorset scenery as we drove down White Hill to Abbotsbury, then through the Dorset countryside to Waddon, Upwey and Winterbourne Monkton, before passing below Maiden Castle and into the bustling, historic, Roman town of Dorchester.



**Dorchester High Street**

On a walk up the High St you could visit 'Bloody Assizes' Judge Jefferys' lodgings - now



**Judge Jefferys' Lodgings**

a restaurant, or The Dorset County Museum, where you can walk on an actual Roman mosaic, or see fossils from the Jurassic Coast, including the 155 million year old Weymouth Bay Pliosaur - the World's Biggest Bite!



**Dorset County Museum**



Or you could take a walk around the Roman town of Durnovaria and see part of the original Roman wall, visit the beautiful Borough Gardens, see a