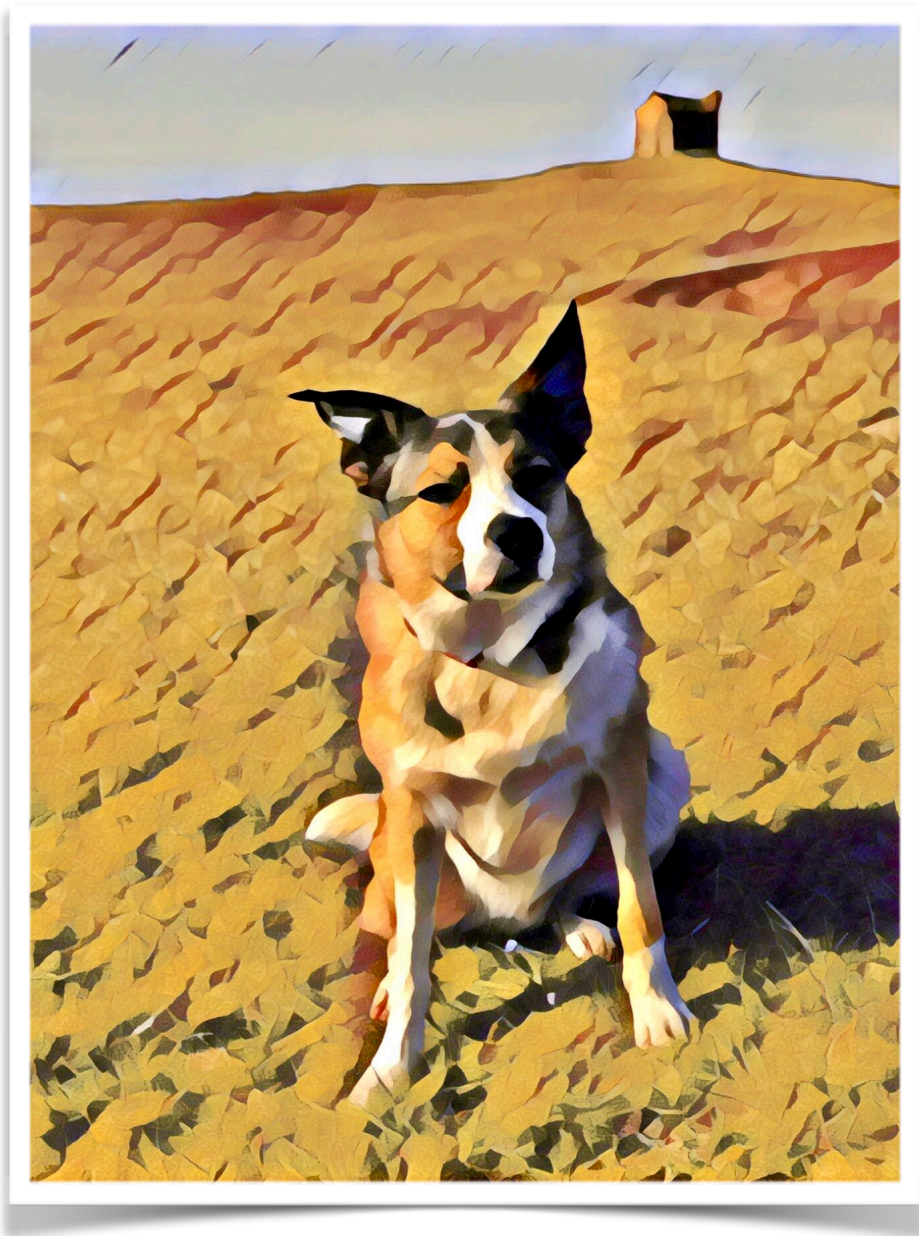


Chapter 1: Timmy on the Jurassic Coast

The historic Ilchester Arms in Abbotsbury has always been a pet-friendly tavern, for here one of the ghosts is the apparition of a large black dog bounding through the hallways and bar. There's also a phantom numismatist called Charlie, who can be seen and heard throughout the inn, and there's an apparition of a lady standing behind people in the downstairs toilets. Timmy loves it here, often settling down by the window after a hard day sleuthing with the mysterious black hound. You'll have to wait for Timmy's adventures on Dartmoor to hear of the Hound of the Baskervilles, but Black Storm is definitely a Dorset spectre. Storm's sightings describe the hound as harbinger of doom, yet some know him as friendly, helping travellers lost out along the beach find their way to safety. It is whispered by the folk of Abbotsbury that a large black dog haunts the whole village after he was killed saving a local girl from the advances of a lascivious monk. Or maybe the black dog stalking the highways is the dog whose owner crashed his carriage descending Abbotsbury Hill one hundred years ago. Archaeologists at the abbey stumbled upon the remains of an enormous mastiff, surrounded by Elizabethan pottery. This is where folklore and fact intermingle.



Timmy explores Chapel Hill in Abbotsbury

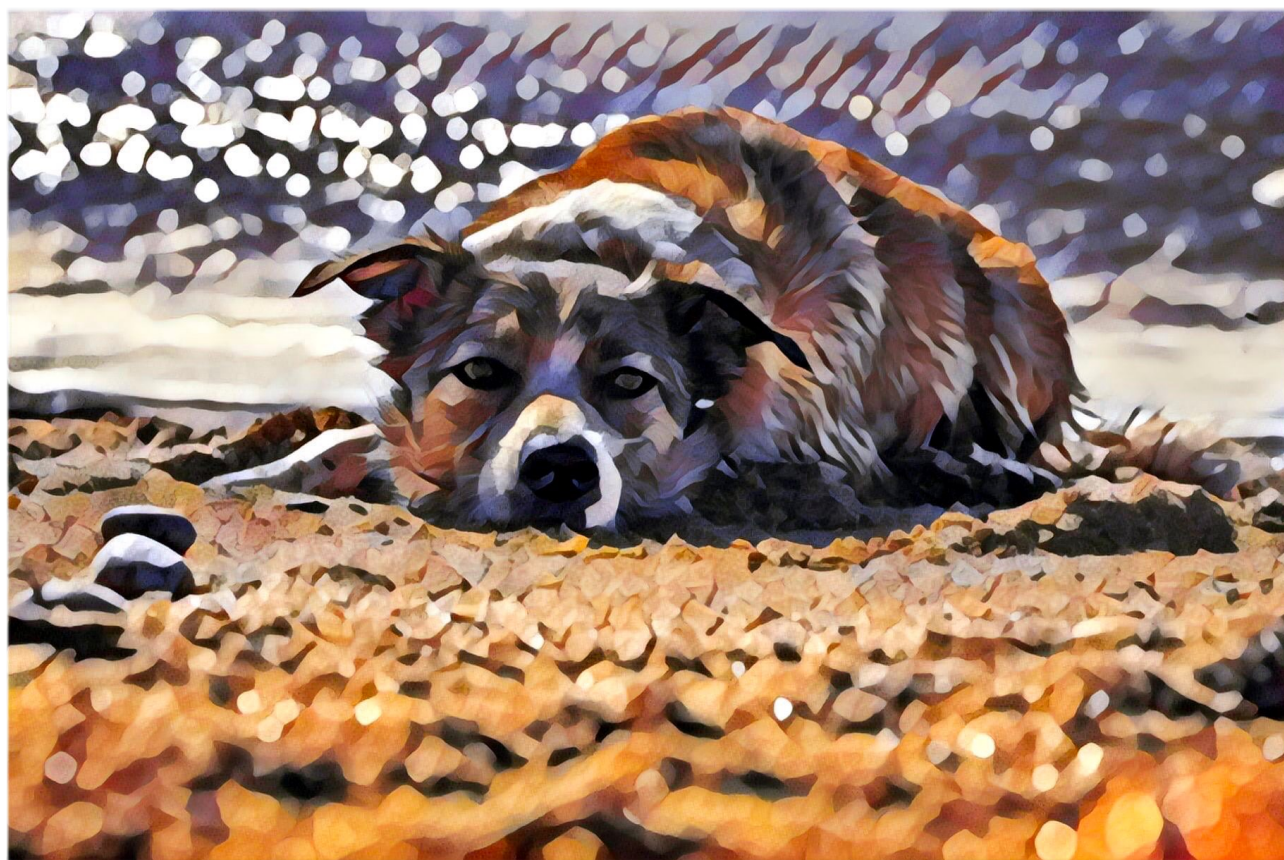
This is Thomas Hardy country. Not just the rugged landscapes of the great novels, but the hedgerows of smaller verse: 'at once a voice arose among the bleak twigs overhead in a full-hearted evensong of joy illimited'. Countryside meets the sea at Abbotsbury, and for a dog on the trail of adventure, these smells and scents create an alluring cocktail of such variety. The first (and most striking) view down to Abbotsbury is of the deserted but beautiful St Catherine's Chapel which sits atop Chapel Hill. Built by the monks of Abbotsbury as a place of pilgrimage and retreat, today the chapel still sits in splendid isolation, surrounded by a herd of cows. Sniffing around the village brings you to various remains of the magnificent monastery. But beware Chesil Beach. Once, lulled by the dog-friendly Hive beach at Burton Bradstock, with its famous cafe, Timmy set out along an eleven-mile stretch of 'the Chesil' to Weymouth. The pebbles become hideously abrasive for an enthusiastic puppy's little paws, especially on a rugged, violent winter's day when the waves give a pummelling on the south side, and on the other, the menacing Fleet lagoon offers no solace. Sometimes beaches can be frightening places.



Timmy enjoys a visit to Durdle Door

Bridport is awash with antiques, where a whole slice of the town has been reclaimed and repurposed into a haven for budding Lovejoys. Moving from stall to stall, Timmy sniffs like a divvy, showing an almost supercanine intuition for the exotic and quixotic, licking ancient artefacts, each with its own taste and unique story to tell. On the way to Wareham, of course a sheepdog should ask for a stop at Wool, where it's only by the light of a full moon that the ghostly apparition of a coach and horses travelling to Turberville can be sniffed out on the medieval bridge. But Timmy sensed something intangible here. At Corfe Castle Timmy investigated both Edward the Martyr, slain by the evil Elfrida, mother of Ethelred the Unready, and Edward II who was imprisoned here. And since the Civil War, the headless Woman in White has gracefully patrolled the battlements.

Pushing onwards, Swanage means a visit to see Old Harry Rocks, but it's Durdle Door and Man O' War which caused Timmy the most excitement, sniffing the air in expectation from a distance. Here the ghosts are Dorset Rhine Maidens. Fleeing the burning Lulworth Castle, they sought shelter on the beach, but were swept away by the fierce waves. Just to the west lies Lulworth Cove, where the Grey Lady has haunted Lulworth Castle for generations; indeed she still taunted a fireman trying to rescue her in the conflagration of 1929. Onwards towards Dorchester, it wasn't the burial ground of Maiden Castle which pricked Timmy's ears, but the ghost of a Roman soldier hovering in the local woods at the level that Ackling Dyke would have been at the time of the legionary's heroic death. Finally, Timmy made it to West Bay for a spot of light relaxation on the beach. But wait: whilst there's no denying that in this country we have a broad church, surely ghosts don't really exist? But that spectre disappearing into the waves could well be the ghost of Reginald Perrin.



Timmy relaxes at West Bay