

# DORSET IN FILM

A CINEMATIC JOURNEY  
THROUGH THE COUNTY

Anwar Brett

*Dorset in Film* takes an extended tour through one of England's most beautiful counties as depicted by the many movies that have been filmed here over almost a hundred years.

Pointing out areas of cinematic interest along the way, author Anwar Brett draws upon his long experience as a film journalist as well as more than 50 interviews especially conducted for this book, gleaned insights from some of the talented industry professionals who have visited (and in some cases settled) in the area.

This throws up some curious facts, such as Kevin Spacey selecting Lulworth Cove to double for Big Sur in California in his Bobby Darin biopic *Beyond The Sea*; or the story of the Hollywood filmmaker who chose his Dorset location after seeing a photograph of it on a music CD; or the true identity of the person under Meryl Streep's cowl in that iconic scene on the Cobb in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

In addition elements of local history are put into the context of their cinematic heritage, and there are more in-depth descriptions detailing the creation of such locally shot, internationally acclaimed classics as *Tom Jones*, *Far From The Madding Crowd*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *Comrades*.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anwar Brett is a Dorset-based journalist specialising in cinema, and has been ploughing that particular furrow from this improbable location since the late 1980s. In that time he has written for a broad range of different national and regional news-papers and magazines.

He has also contributed to *The International Director of Film & Filmmakers* and the 1995 edition of the *Children's Britannica* as well as the odd radio programme. His cinematic tastes range from silent comedy classics to the musicals from Hollywood's Golden Age; from 1940s film noir to the output of the Pixar Studios.

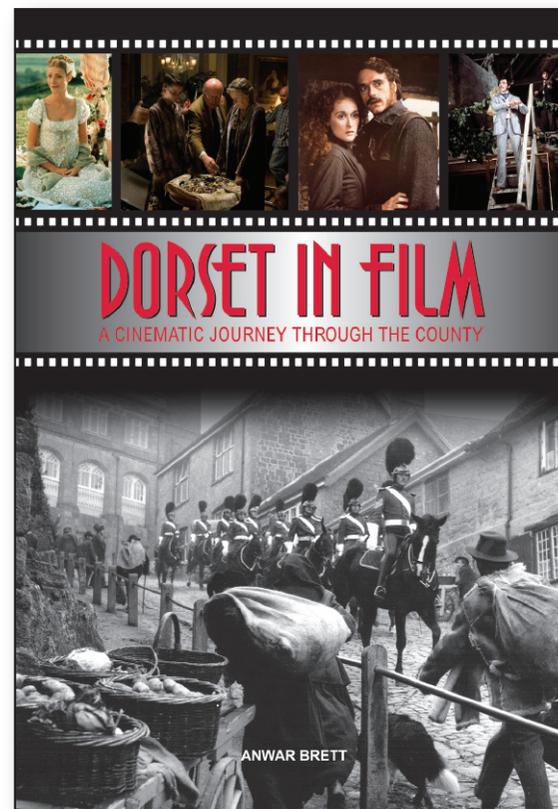
Married with two daughters, he lives in Dorset. *Dorset in Film* is his first book.

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Troy (Terence Stamp) shows off his swordsmanship to Bathsheba (Christie) at Maiden Castle. Far from the Madding Crowd.



The lanternist, one of several roles played by Alex Norton. Comrades.



George Loveless (Robin Soans) walks through the village of Tolpiddle as his wife Betsy (Imelda Staunton) looks on. Comrades.



CHAPTER 2  
To Bournemouth and Poole



As you drive west on the A31, leaving the M2 motorway behind and heading into the New Forest, you pass the market town of Ringwood and in a moment or two enter the county of Dorset. At the Ashley Heath roundabout you can take the first left and travel on the spur road to Christchurch, Bournemouth and Poole.

This is the route to take for Bournemouth International Airport, formerly known to one and all as Hurn, and a blessedly stress-free alternative to the far bigger airports a hundred miles to the east. Hurn Airport, in more innocent times, allowed local film productions to shoot scenes where security concerns would now deem it impossible.

Bald Eagle Films' drama *Cash In Hand* (1998), starring Charley Boorman, for example, and micro budget feature *The Accountant* (1999), directed by local filmmaker Andrew White. Neither achieved a big screen release, but underline the fact that in towns far beyond the major cities in the UK there are ambitious young actors, writers, cinematographers and directors eager to develop their craft. Talents, like local filmmaker Christian James for instance, who shot his debut feature *Frank Out* (2004) in the area and has used it as a springboard to a flourishing directorial career.

A more formal means of achieving this goal is at the Arts University College at Bournemouth, which runs degree courses in all aspects of film production. Notable alumni include *Sinner of the Day* and *Hot Feet* director Edgar Wright, *The Fall Monks* and *Shanghai Millennium* screenwriter Simon Beatofoy and Nick Love, writer-director of *Goodbye Charlie Bright*, *The Football Factory* and director of *The Swervey*.

'I went to the film school wanting to make films,' Love explained by way of simple endorsement, 'and I left making films.'

Bournemouth itself has only been a part of ceremonial Dorset since 1974, when the county boundary was redrawn, having been a part of Hampshire before that. Now the Christchurch-Bournemouth-Poole conurbation is much like a city in its own right, and is cited as the most densely populated area of the county.

For all that the town has been sparsely utilised as a location for feature films over the years. Some footage of the town appears, apparently, in the Grace Fields stage deer comedy *King Smiling* (1938) which was probably shot by a second unit crew to set the scene of the story that followed. In a similar way images of Bournemouth night-life, shot by local photographer Keith Nichol, were used to represent

The Mirrors of  
Fetmark, shooting  
on location near  
Poole Quay.



Gemma Arterton plays the eponymous heroine in *Tamara Drewe*.

Example of a double-page spread.