

# THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2024  
ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Common Blue described in 'The Pine Wood' (*The Open Air*) with  
'buff spots, and dark dots and streaks drawn on the finest ground  
of pearl-grey, through which there came a tint of blue...  
The pattern was not mechanical; it was hand-painted by Nature,  
and the painter's eye and fingers varied in their work.  
... look long and lovingly at this blue butterfly's underwing,  
and a feeling will rise to your consciousness.'

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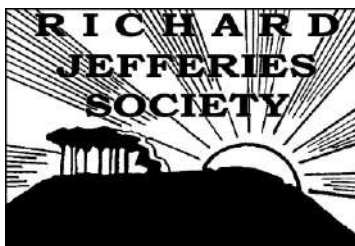
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THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY was founded in 1950 to promote appreciation and study of the writings of Richard Jefferies (1848–1887).

CONTACT: Jean Saunders  
Hon. Sec.  
The Old Mill, Mill Drive, Foulsham,  
Norfolk NR20 5RB  
☎ 01362 683210  
Email: [richardjefferiessociety@btinternet.com](mailto:richardjefferiessociety@btinternet.com)  
Website: <http://www.richardjefferiessociety.org>  
Literary Award: <http://www.richardjefferiesaward.org>

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The Richard Jefferies Society is required by law to obtain permission from members to hold their contact details on a database. That information will be used for communication purposes (e.g. sending out newsletters etc.) and will not be divulged to a third party. On termination of membership, information held will be removed from the database.

### NEWSLETTER

The newsletters and *Journal* are edited by Jean Saunders and Peter Robins. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Editors or the Society.

The deadline to submit material for the Autumn Newsletter is 1 September 2024. Please send your contributions to the Hon. Secretary. The newsletter and *Journal* are also available as free downloads on the Society's website.

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Cover images of butterflies by Tom Saunders to illustrate this year's spring lecture. See pp.6–7.

## FROM THE VICE CHAIR

Colin Corkerton

Welcome to the Spring Newsletter 2024 and the Annual Report for 2023. As usual I am sure there is plenty to interest you in the following pages.

Sadly we report on the passing of some long-standing members including those who were significant contributors to increasing our knowledge of Richard Jefferies' life and writings.



George Miller, along with Hugoe Matthews, produced *Richard Jefferies: A bibliographical study* (1993), an invaluable resource giving details of all the editions of Jefferies' books and articles available at that time. Ken Burnley recounts his friendship with George and you will also find two of George's poems. One, 'Leaving the Farm,' is a very moving way of saying goodbye.

Colin Blundell wrote several articles about Jefferies and of note were the 'found poems' Colin discovered in Jefferies' essays. Michael Stagg was also a poet and at the time of his death was the longest serving member of the Society. More detailed summaries of the lives of Colin and Michael will be found in this newsletter.

In their absence it is important we continue to build on their contributions. This winter our Zoom meetings gave us the opportunity to talk about how members found Jefferies and we also took a detailed look at *Amaryllis at the Fair*. Reports on these meetings are included in the newsletter. Next winter we plan to look at *The Dewy Morn* and if you wish to suggest a topic, either a book or a subject or anything else, for a meeting do please let us know your suggestions. Dates for these meetings are included in the following pages. Of course before then there is the AGM and Spring meeting where Matthew Oates, a renowned butterfly expert and very entertaining speaker, will give us a talk on butterflies. Do please join us either in person at the museum or by Zoom on Saturday 27 April.

In the next couple of years there are two notable events for the Society. 2025 will be our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Society was founded in 1950. The Executive Council would like to mark this anniversary. We have some ideas but we are

interested to hear any you may have. Please contact us using the contact details at the front of the newsletter. To have almost reached 75 years is a mark of the hard work of all those who have been involved in the Society, past and present, and is something we can be proud of. The second event concerns Jean Saunders, a notable contributor to the life of the Society for many years. As previously advised, she will be stepping down from all her roles in April 2026. The Executive Council has set up a sub-committee to manage this transition and to plan for many more years in the life of the Society. An initial part of this work was to email a survey to members to give us an idea of the make up and skills of our members and I thank all of those who have responded so far. For those of you who don't use email I am happy to post a paper copy of the survey form to you, to complete and return. Again use the contact details in this newsletter. We would like to hear from as many members as possible. In the autumn newsletter we will provide a report on the results of the survey. In the meantime we are always interested in hearing from anyone who would like to help in the running of the Society.

To finish, most of you will be reading this during spring. (Apologies to our members in the southern hemisphere). I cannot predict what the weather will bring this spring, even less so now our climate does not seem to follow any rules. But it is a time of renewal with the reappearance of life in the country and in our towns and cities, something to celebrate and enjoy. In 'Hours of Spring,' Jefferies wrote:

How happy the trees must be to hear the song of birds again in their branches! After the silence and the leaflessness, to have the birds back once more and to feel them busy at nest-building; how glad to give them the moss and fibres and the crutch of the boughs to build in! Pleasant it is now to watch the sunlit clouds sailing onwards; it is liking sitting by the sea.

The touch of the wind, the moisture of the dew, the sun-stained raindrop, have in them the magic force of life—a marvellous something that was not there before.

I hope you too will celebrate the spring along with the birds and the trees.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### ZOOM MEETING

**T**he Richard Jefferies Society organises Zoom meetings on the second Monday of the months of November to January inclusive from 7.30–9.00pm. Full details of the next group of winter meetings will be provided in the next newsletter. It is hoped that the author of the next recipient of the Richard Jefferies Award will speak at the Richard Jefferies Birthday Lecture on **11 November 2024**. Other dates are **9 December 2024** that will focus on *The Dewy Morn* and **13 January 2025**.

Members with an email address are provided with details of how to attend nearer the time of the Zoom meeting.

If anyone is not receiving the messages and would like to be kept informed, please send your email address to the Hon. Sec. at:

richardjefferiessociety@btinternet.com

### WILD FELL AND RSPB HAWESWATER

**O**n Monday 13 November 2023, about 50 people gathered on Zoom to hear Lee Schofield talk about his Richard Jefferies Award winning book *Wild Fell* and his work at RSPB Haweswater in the Lake District—about which the book is based. Regrettably Storm Debi put paid to proceedings—the Lake District was in the middle of the storm at that time and power lines were down. No electricity—no speaker! The talk was postponed and rescheduled for **Monday 11 March 2024 at 7.30pm**.

### SPRING MEETING, SAT 27APRIL, 2024

Richard Jefferies Museum, Marlborough Road, Coate, Swindon SN3 6AA from 11.00am–3.30pm. Doors open from 10.30am.

**Annual General Meeting (11am–1pm)** Agenda on p.69.

**Spring Lecture (2–3.30pm)** Matthew Oates (see pp.6–7)

There will be a Zoom link too that will be sent to all members on email.

Bring packed lunch. Park at Coate Water car park, a short walk from the Museum (Parking charge: £4.40). See map on p.70.

## RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY SPRING LECTURE

Saturday 27 April 2024, 2pm

Richard Jefferies Museum, Marlborough Road, Coate, SN3 6AA



Rebecca Welshman and Matthew Oates at the Richard Jefferies Museum in March 2013. Photograph by Andrew Dawes.

Matthew Oates will be talking, in person and via Zoom, about ‘The Meaning of Butterflies: science, aesthetics, spirituality, poetics, relationship with place.’ Matthew describes himself as ‘an English naturalist and nature writer, in love with the natural world, particularly with butterflies—especially the mighty Purple Emperor.’ Book titles include *His Imperial Majesty, a natural history of the Purple Emperor* (2020), *In Pursuit of Butterflies* (2015) and *Beyond Spring* (2017). He worked in nature conservation for some 40 years with the National Trust, the Nature Conservancy Council and Hampshire County Council, and retired in April 2018.



Jefferies didn’t write extensively about butterflies but he describes the two flushes of the sulphur butterfly (brimstone) in great detail and with affection. This from ‘The Pine Wood’ (*The Open Air*):

Down the dusty road, inches deep in sand, comes a sulphur butterfly, rushing as quick as if hastening to a butterfly-fair. If only rare, how valued he would be! His colour is so evident and visible; he fills the road, being brighter than all, and for the moment is more than the trees and flowers.

Coming so suddenly over the hedge into the road close to me, he startled me as if I had been awakened from a dream—I had been thinking it was August,

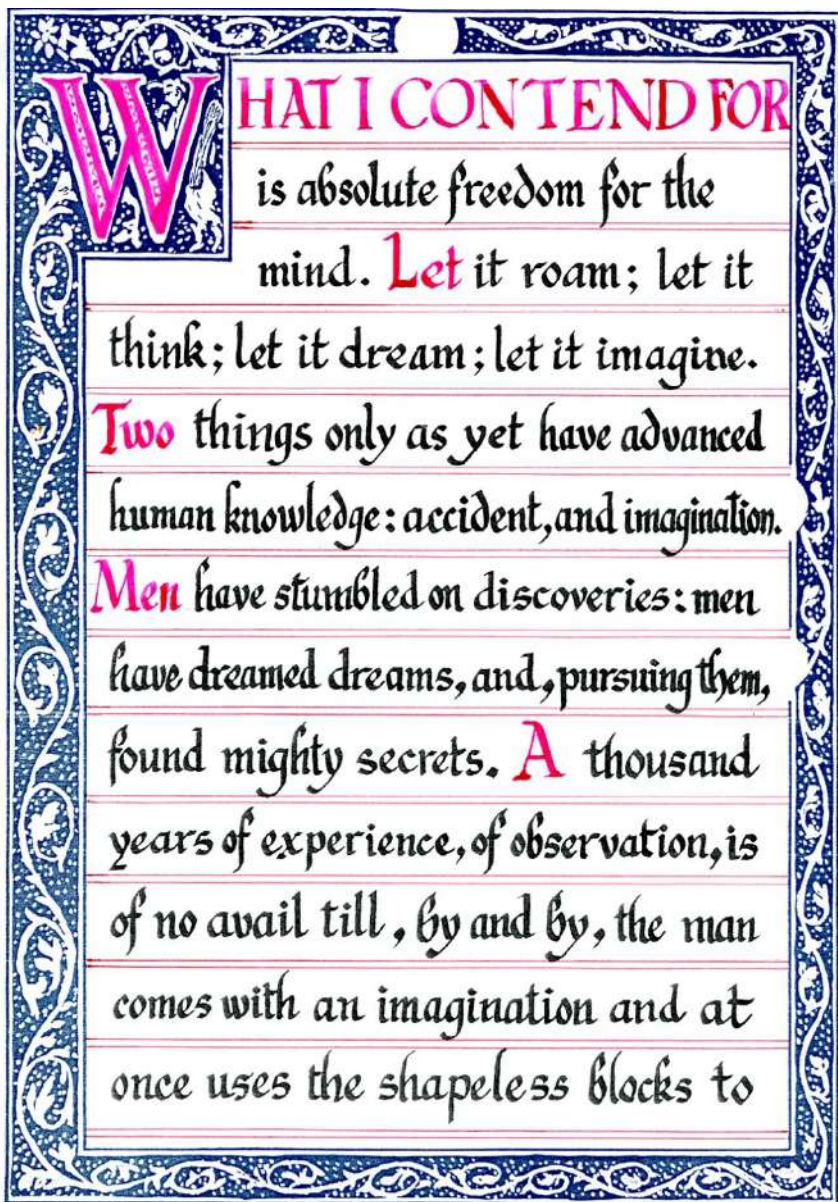
and woke to find it February—for the sulphur butterfly is the February pleasure. Between the dark storms and wintry rains there is a warm sunny interval of a week in February. Away one goes for a walk, and presently there appears a bright yellow spot among the furze, dancing along like a flower let loose. It is a sulphur butterfly, who thus comes before the earliest chiffchaff—before the watch begins for the first swallow. I call it the February pleasure, as each month has its delight. So associated as this butterfly is with early spring, to see it again after months of leaf and flower—after June and July—with the wheat in shock and the scent of harvest in the land, is startling. The summer, then, is a dream! It is still winter; but no, here are the trees in leaf, the nuts reddening, the hum of bees, and dry summer dust on the high wiry grass. The sulphur butterfly comes twice; there is a second brood; but there are some facts that are always new and surprising, however well known. I may say again, if only rare, how this butterfly would be prized!



Brimstone butterfly

This from 'Nature and Books' (*Field and Hedgerow*):

The yellow butterfly, if you meet one in October, has so toned down his spring yellow that you might fancy him a pale green leaf floating along the road. There is a shining, quivering, gleaming; there is a changing, fluttering, shifting; there is a mixing, weaving—varnished wings, translucent wings, wings with dots and veins, all playing over the purple heath; a very tangle of many-toned lights and hues.



Extract from Jefferies' first draft of Chapter III of *The Story of My Heart* (London, Constable, 1947), edited by Samuel J. Looker. Poster designed by an unknown hand.

build with. **To** deny imagination, to compel the mind to act in mechanical limits, to shut out the soul, is to put us back a hundred thousand years.

**L**et us, instead, set it free. **Let** us endeavour to discover other ideas than these three ancient ones: the existence of the soul: its immortality; the creative deity; for that there are others to be found I feel no manner of doubt. In a measure, I lay claim to a fourth; in the conception of the thought that there are others.

TO THOSE DEPARTED:  
GEORGE MILLER AND COLIN BLUNDELL

We are deeply saddened to learn about the death of two members who both joined the Society in the 1980s and died in December within days of one another. George Miller and Colin Blundell—both poets and book binders (George professionally)—have done so much to bring the name of Richard Jefferies to the public. By chance George reviewed Colin’s last book *Richard Jefferies Seventy Years On* (Hub Editions, Sep. 2022) in our *Spring Newsletter* 2023, pp.31–36 whilst Colin published George’s last book of poetry *The News and Weather, and other recent poems* (Hub Editions, Feb. 2022) [See *RJS Spring Newsletter*, 2022]. We don’t know whether they ever met: George lived in Oswestry, Shropshire whilst Colin lived in Spalding, Lincolnshire, but their spirits were aligned.

**GEORGE MILLER**



Left to right: George Miller, Hugoe Matthews & Bill Keith. Taken at Coate Water by Hiroko Keith, circa July 1978.

‘The Triumvirate’, as Bill Keith used to call the trio, who brought Jefferies alive, are no more, but their works, research and studies, in common with Jefferies, live on.

George Miller was a student of Jefferies for over 60 years. Born in Stanwell, Middlesex in 1939, he was raised in West Sussex—his father was a headmaster. George graduated from Cambridge University. In our Looker

archives there is a letter from George to Samuel J. Looker dated 22 November 1963—he was already seeking answers to questions about Jefferies.

George wrote *Richard Jefferies: A bibliographical study* with Hugoe Matthews (Scolar Press, 1993) and was responsible for all the introductions to Jefferies' essays, articles and books. The 'Bib' is the best record of any writer's works and to this day, cannot be bettered. George edited newly discovered texts, and compiled the section on Jefferies for the *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*. He provided the biographical detail for the Richard Jefferies Wikipedia page.

His other publications include a novel titled *The Buzzards of Zinn: a Story of War and Peace* (The Medlar Press, 2010) and many books of poetry, all bound in beautiful covers. George was a bookbinder by profession. His poetry reflects his pacifist views, his abhorrence of injustice and his personal love of the beauty of nature. This poem is a prime example from Vol I of *Rehearsal: An Eclogue* (2019)

WHILE

While there is breath in my mouth let me  
curse and rage against cruelty,  
and ever yet more warmly bleed  
for those in fear, in pain, in need.

George Miller's works also include:

*The Prospect of Whitby* (Tern Press, 1981)

*The Burial* (Tern Press, 1985)

*Message in a Space Bottle* (Hedge Sparrow Press, 2003).

*A Lessening* (Hedge Sparrow Press, 2007)

*Roads, Rivers, Hills & The Sea* (Hedge Sparrow Press, 2011)

*Who Says Money Doesn't Grow on Trees?* (Hedge Sparrow Press, 2012)

*Poems in Plantin* (Hedge Sparrow Press, 2013)

*Permission* (Silver Birch Press, 2014)

*Seven Pastorals* (Hedge Sparrow Press, 2015)

*Rehearsal: An Eclogue* in 2 Vols. (Hedge Sparrow Press, 2019)

*The News and Weather* (Hub Editions, 2022)

Regrettably, as a young man he worked in a job cutting up sheets of asbestos, perhaps in his university years. He was diagnosed with malignant pleural mesothelioma in April 2023 and died surrounded by his family on 7 December 2023. His service was held on the 12 January 2024 at St Cedwyn's Church, Llangedwyn. Our deepest sympathies go to his wife, Sue and his children, Joel and Jessie.



George representing the Oswestry Coalition for Peace, 25 April 2015.  
Anzac Day event held in Llangollen.

## GEORGE MILLER—THE MAN AS I KNEW HIM

*Ken Burnley*

(RJS member, compositor and printing historian)



In human affairs, in the relations of man with man, in the conduct of life, in the events that occur, in human affairs generally, everything happens by chance.  
(Richard Jefferies, *The Story of My Heart*)

So it was in such happenstance circumstances that I first met George Miller, who at the time (about fifteen years ago) was casting traditional metal type on a Monotype caster at The Grange country house in Shropshire. Our paths crossed there quite coincidentally, for I was on a mission to collect type for

the hand-setting and printing of the first letterpress book to be published by the newly formed Gwydir Press of Gwydir Castle, Llanrwst.

As a time-served compositor, I immediately recognised the unmistakable ‘clickety-clack’ sounds emanating from the Monotype casting room adjoining the letterpress workshop located in The Grange’s idyllic parkland setting, and introduced myself to its operator who barely noticed me enter the workshop, so intent was he on keeping the fiery, noisy beast of a machine, with its 500-degree melting-pot, under control.

The man operating the machine, cherishing the gleaming metal type as it emerged from the machine’s innards, appeared to be a natural part of the Dickensian-looking workshop with its ancient and very beautiful hand-presses, case-racks and associated print-room equipment. He saw me enter, stopped the machine and introduced himself as George Miller.

We put the kettle on and, starting to share our life-stories, immediately recognised kindred spirits in each other with much common ground running through our lives.

‘You must have been casting type all your life,’ I remarked, admiring the confidence he showed at the caster.

‘No, I’m a bookbinder by trade, and have only recently taken up casting type.’

I was astounded, for, traditionally, Monotype operators served a five-year apprenticeship backed up by hundreds of hours of training at college, and most operators had a background in hand-setting, being traditional compositors like myself. George, I came to discover, had no background in the printing industry and was self-taught.

In the coming weeks and months, as we chatted over countless cups of tea while casting type, we discovered our shared love for many things, including books, the natural world, wildlife—and of course Richard Jefferies and his writings. George’s natural modesty, though, forbade him at the time to mention his involvement with the RJ Society—only later when I noticed his name as the writer of articles in the Society’s publications did I come to realise the depth and extent of his knowledge of, and affection for, the life and work of Jefferies.

I discovered, too, George’s creative ability as a poet, and soon came to realise that this passion was the principal reason for him wanting to cast type. George had a small but wonderfully stocked letterpress workshop—the delightfully named Hedge Sparrow Press—at his home and bindery in Oswestry town where he worked with his daughter to print traditional letterpress items. By casting his own type for his poetry, George was able to bypass the demanding and time-consuming hand-setting that was usual for privately printed books.

Not long after my first meetings with George at his type-casting setup at The Grange, he moved the outfit a few miles west into a small shed inside a large barn in the lovely Welsh foothills just outside Oswestry where he spent a very happy—if at times very challenging—ten years casting type for his books of verse.

On my occasional visits, the first thing he always did was to proudly show me the dozens of galleys of freshly cast type of his own verse in traditional typefaces such as Plantin, Baskerville and Bodoni. And, while the caster was clattering away merrily (most of the time!) we would chat about Richard Jefferies and other things such as nature, typography, the landscape and other subjects that were close to our hearts.

George was truly a ‘private press’ artisan printer of the old school; but more so in some ways, for he was a man who wrote his own material, set it on the Monotype keyboard, cast the type, assembled the type into pages, proofread, imposed the pages, printed them on his old ‘Arab’ treadle-platen press, and hand-bound the sheets to produce finished books.

His enthusiasm, dedication and tenacity—and above all his love of the printed word—knew no bounds, qualities which reached their zenith in the two-volume work *Rehearsal: An Eclogue*, two small-in-format but rich-in-substance books containing over 250 of his verses, printed one per page on his treadle-press, and a delight to hold and to read. They, perhaps more than anything, encapsulate all that George Miller was as a master of the written, printed and bound word.

And so this gentle, gracious and talented man was laid to rest in peaceful and idyllic Llandegwyn churchyard on an overcast yet benign January afternoon not all that far from the shed where he spent so many hours setting type for his writings, one of which was printed in a small book entitled *Last Thoughts* and given out at his funeral.

‘Leaving the Farm’ surely describes George closing the door on his typesetting den<sup>1</sup> as he neared the end of his days:

Goodbye old shed, all shut now and dark,  
the horse in the meadow, untroubled sky;  
O woods and far hills I bid you goodbye,  
and Bob the Rott with his fearsome bark.  
Goodbye stout oak and tall wandering ash,  
old cars in the long grass covered in rust,  
bright finches and sparrows that bathe in the dust

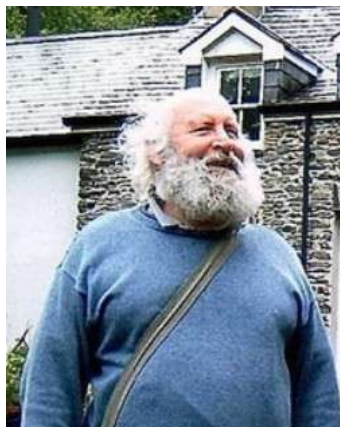
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<sup>1</sup> As a footnote, I am delighted to report that George’s typesetting setup has been offered to the TYPA Printing Museum in Estonia, where the new curators will set it up as a working facility—exactly as George would have wanted.

and swallows aloft that dip and dash.  
Goodbye hens, with a nod and a cluck,  
and goodbye cats asleep on a sack;  
goodbye my darlings, I hope to be back,  
but maybe I won't—so goodbye and good luck.

*Ken Burnley, January 2024*

## COLIN BLUNDELL



Spring 2017

Colin was born in Kingston-on-Thames on 4 October 1937. He writes this about himself in his book *Some Spirit Land: Found Poems from the Essays of Richard Jefferies*, (Hub Editions, 1987) which was the first book he handmade:

Lived for twenty years in Worcester Park, Surrey, a place mentioned in Jefferies' essays but which, like Coate, he would find impossible to recognise now. Frequently cycles down the A24 to Worthing. Writes music for school productions, paints a bit, writes poems. Earns money as a teacher.

Robert Albright reviewed *Some Spirit Land* for the *RJS Annual Report & Bulletin* 86–87 and *Newsletter* and commented:

This book is for everyone interested in Richard Jefferies as the craftsman of thought in words. ... At the core are the root ideas of Zen. This is perceived in the structure of the writing and you can turn to 'the Nirvana of indifference' in 'Savernake' to prove it. There are poems within the poems ... Some ... are amazingly modern in their conception and construction ... Jefferies wanted 'freer expression' than could be released by strictly rhyming forms; for him and for us Colin Blundell has found it.

We have reproduced many of these poems and extracts in our newsletters and journals. Hub Editions was Colin's initiative and he was responsible for publishing W.J. Keith's *Worshipper of Earth: A Centenary Tribute in Verse to Richard Jefferies* (Hub Editions, 1987).

Here is one of the extracts from Jefferies' 'My Old Village' (*Field and Hedgerow*) that Colin selected for *Some Spirit Land*:

they are all faded  
these footpaths  
I planted myself everywhere  
under the trees in the fields  
and footpaths by day

and by night—I would not  
go back there: nothing but  
my own ghost to meet me  
by every hedge I fear  
lest I should find myself

more dead than all the rest:  
no one else seems to have seen  
the sparkle on the brook

heard the music at the hatch  
or felt back through the centuries;

no one seems to understand  
how I got food from the clouds  
nor what there was in the night  
nor why it is not so good  
to look at it out of the window—

they turn their faces away  
from me: perhaps after all  
I was mistaken  
and there never was  
any such place

Colin gave two lectures to the RJS. The first on 6 February 1989 was titled 'Richard Jefferies—Novelist?' He selected four which demonstrated Jefferies to be a competent novelist, *Greene Ferne Farm*, *The Dewy Morn*, *After London* and *Amaryllis at the Fair* which he considered to have an extraordinary power, before his time, and stepping into the world of the modern novel before it had been defined as such by theorists. The second lecture was given on 8 November 1993 on the subject 'Richard Jefferies and Zen Buddhism'.

In 1993 he published *Something Beyond the Stars (from the Nature Diaries and Notebooks of Richard Jefferies)*, Hub Editions, 1993. We lost Colin as a Member for a few years, no doubt too busy with the British Haiku Society. He was a President of the British Haiku Society and edited its journal, *Blithe Spirit*, for 14 years on and off from the first edition in 1992. But when he rejoined the Society in 2021, he was back with great enthusiasm again. This time it was Jefferies' early fiction that came under scrutiny as he had never the opportunity to read the Tinsley imprints before. He had a lot of good to say about *The Scarlet Shawl*, *Restless Human Hearts*, and *World's End* that he wrote up in a blog. Finally a collection of Colin's essays about Jefferies, a selection of found poems and haikus in Jefferies' works and more were published by Hub Editions in September 2022. The hardback volume, titled

*Richard Jefferies Seventy Years On*, all started in 1952 when Colin, attracted to a girl on his bus who was reading *Bevis*, wanted to strike up ‘a beautiful relationship’ with Elaine and bought himself a copy. That was never to be but Colin continued to explore Jefferies’ writing where he found much in common with his own spiritual thoughts and beliefs that he shared in his splendid book.

And so on 12 December 2023 he died after a long illness but a lifelong follower of Richard Jefferies.

## MICHAEL HENRY STAGG

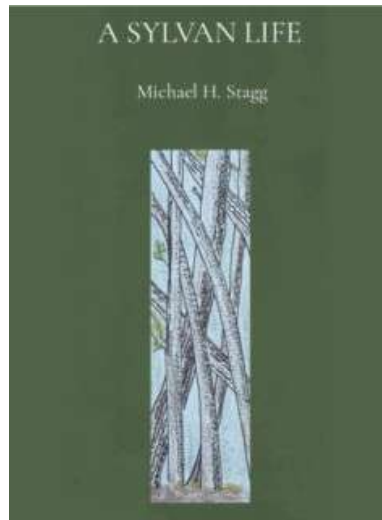
In January we were shocked to learn that Michael Stagg died on 7 August 2023 at his home in Suffolk. He was born in Wiltshire in 1936, grew up in the beautiful village of Wootton Rivers near Marlborough and had been a member of the Richard Jefferies Society for 50 years. We never knew that he wrote poetry all his life. A book of his poetry, published by Woodsman Books on 22 June 2023, titled *A Sylvan Life* and edited by his wife Margie and his grandson, Chris, (ISBN 9781447548454, paperback, 80pp) was handed to Michael a few weeks before his death.

His biography at <https://asylvanlife.com/> reads:

Michael Stagg has lived his life grounded in nature.

He has worked as a forester, a ranger and in environmental protection and education for nearly half a century. He started work at fifteen years old as the youngest member of a group of ninety woodmen in Savernake Forest in his native Wiltshire; and has tended trees in the West Country and North Wales, before coming to his beloved adopted county of Suffolk when he was appointed Country Park Warden in Clare. He was the first Warden of the Suffolk Heritage Coast, and his final post was as Head Ranger of the Ipswich Borough's more than 1,000 acres of parkland and woodland.

He has been a spiritual seeker and a watcher of the natural world since his very early days—he has always found great solace and inspiration in nature and poetry. He has spent a lifetime observing, protecting and loving nature and wondering at the beauty of God’s Creation. This collection, written in his ‘vintage years’ expresses his heartfelt response to the miracle of life, which he sees in the mundane as well as the extraordinary.



We are grateful to Margie for letting us reproduce the information about her dear husband and are very sorry for the Stagg family's sad loss. She described him as 'a lovely, gentle, steady man—forever reading, writing and sharing his great love for, and knowledge of, the natural world.' Her wish was to pass on Michael's Jefferies books to the Society in the hope that they bring as much pleasure to someone else as they did her husband.

A SWEET VIEW: THE MAKING OF AN ENGLISH IDYLL  
MALCOLM ANDREWS

On Saturday 29 April 2023 Malcolm Andrews discussed the different visions of the English countryside idyll in the Victorian and Edwardian periods. Malcolm gave the Richard Jefferies Society Spring Lecture via Zoom to an audience of Members gathered at the Richard Jefferies Museum and online via the Zoom link.

Colin Corkerton, Vice Chair, introduced Malcolm Andrews. Malcolm is Professor (Emeritus) of Victorian and Visual Studies, University of Kent. He was for 30 years the Editor of *The Dickensian*, the journal of the Dickens Fellowship, and a past President of the Dickens Society of America.

His special interests are in Dickens and in landscape art.

Malcolm gave a presentation on his book *A Sweet View: The Making of an English Idyll* which was published in October 2021 and is on the personality of English rural scenery as represented by writers and artists of the nineteenth century including Richard Jefferies.

Malcolm Andrews began his talk with an overview of the book. He felt his publishers had spoilt him with the quality of the production of the book. It is full of lavish illustrations, 160 in all. The title comes from Jane Austen's *Emma* (1815), when Emma is visiting Mr. Knightley's estate, Donwell. What had always struck Malcolm about the description of the estate was the intense patriotism or nationalism that is infused in her delight with the scene, sweet to the eye and the mind, and it seemed to capture something that became distilled in the idea of the English idyll as it developed from the Regency into the Victorian and Edwardian period. Malcolm's book is organised around what exactly created this sense of an English idyll. It is an English idyll because there is not a single English idyll. It was also very much a southern English idyll, the South Country.

Malcolm looks in detail at the works of Samuel Palmer and Myles Birket Foster, two artists, and Richard Jefferies, a writer, and their contributions to this idea of an English idyll.

Writing the book really introduced Malcolm to the work of Richard Jefferies. Previously he had read a small number of his essays but researching the book led him to read more and he said he became 'quite hooked' and a devotee of Jefferies.

The talk was an exploration of an English tradition that evolved over the so-called long 19<sup>th</sup> century, from the 1780s through to the First World War. The

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tradition that developed was the way the English regarded and valued their countryside and he was particularly interested in the idea of the rural idyll as a sanctuary, whether this was in the form of a secluded nook or dell, or something more abstract and generalised. Either way it was shaped by the values and anxieties that were particularly peculiar to the period. How did the idyllic rural sanctuary come to be so precious, what was it secluding itself from? What forms did it take? Malcolm explored this through the work of the three figures already mentioned together with the work of several other writers and artists of this period.

He discussed some examples of the high values of the rural retreat over the last two centuries and many of these focus on English experiences in wartime conditions. He also looked at peacetime conditions in the Victorian period and the different kinds of threats these conditions generated.

At the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> into the 19<sup>th</sup> century England was at war with revolutionary France and facing a threat of invasion. In 1795 the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, by then in his early twenties was living in a cottage in Somerset and was uneasily feeling the pull on his conscience of an engagement with the political and military worlds beyond this. He called his cottage his pretty place of retirement. Malcolm quoted from Coleridge's poem *Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement* (1796). Here the tension between the inner private world of the cottage home and family, and the call to service in the dangerous public world, is figured in the relationship between the secluded dell and wider landscape. Amplifying these tensions is the man of business from Bristol who pauses and admires the cottage and landscape. Tourists liked to enjoy the romanticised spectacle of a cottage idyll. Coleridge is relishing the qualities of peace, privacy and contentment with a simple subsistence way of life, and an environment that he calls green and woody, that gave refreshment to the eye in their different ways and in peacetime.

Palmer, Birket Foster and Jefferies all addressed these issues of how to live in the shadow of mass urbanisation, how to adjust to the momentous change in life from an age that was predominately rural to the stresses of modernity and its new set of values. He quoted from Jefferies' essay *To Brighton* (1880) from *Nature Near London* where Jefferies writes:

It is not easy to realise in these days of quick transit and still quicker communication that old England was mostly rural.

There were towns of course, seventy years ago, but even the towns were penetrated with what, for want of a better word, may be called country sentiment. Just the reverse is now the case; the most distant hamlet which the

wanderer in his autumn ramblings may visit, is now more or less permeated with the feelings and sentiments of the city.

The term 'local attachment' became popular at this time and this sentiment was scientifically accounted for by the psychological term, association theory. This was the belief that everyone is a product of their sensory experiences. We are not born with knowledge of this kind, we acquire it after birth, ideas evolve from raw sense data received into the mind by all our senses. Once received into the mind they settle into associative clusters and these clusters in turn influence the currents of our thought and memory. Association theory and the sentiment of local attachment acquired very wide currency in this period. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), Mr Darcy talks about a very strong local attachment. Also the Romantics, for example Coleridge, Wordsworth and Keats, wrote about personal, sentimental feelings which were legitimised by the scientific, psychological association theory. Similarly sentimental association shaped the output of the painter Constable. Malcolm illustrated this in Constable's work by looking at *The Cornfield* (1826).

In the early years of the twentieth century, a commercialised imagery of English cottage scenes became very popular, particularly in the works of Birket Foster and Helen Allingham. A book celebrating Allingham's cottage scenery *Cottage Homes* (1909) said:

If one were asked what is the most typical thing in England one would reply at once, the old English cottage, in its style of building. It reflects truly the national character.

Similarly, recruitment posters for the First World War showed a version of Englishness assimilated into carefully selected and edited imagery of English landscapes. Ford Maddox Ford in his novel *No Enemy: A Tale of Reconstruction* (1929) describes a vision his central character Gringoire experiences on the Somme battlefield:

It was just country, but perfectly definite, rather an untrimmed and a rather hidden spot. Not quite a landscape, a nook, rather closed up by trees with a little stream, just a trickle, you understand.

Lastly in this part of the talk, Malcolm described a retrospective exhibition in 2019 of the works of the photographer Don McCullin, contrasting his famous war photography with his English landscape works taken near his home in Somerset. The latter are of enclosed woods and water and the exhibition included a quote from McCullin:

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I dream if this when I'm in battle, I think of misty England.

Palmer, Birket Foster and Jefferies register the changes occurring during their lifetimes although in different ways. Their responses offer comfort from nostalgic escapism. These three makers of the rural idyll all came to live and work in Surrey, as did several other writers and artists such as Tennyson, George Elliot, Gertrude Jekyll (the noted garden designer) and the Pre-Raphaelite painters Holman Hunt and Millais.

Malcolm then moved through his three makers of the English Rural Idyll.

Samuel Palmer (1805-1881). His idea was that city folk found enormous refuge, even a kind of sanctuary, in books of pastoral poetry, as the next best thing to true rural sanctuary. The turning point for Palmer's magical early paintings came when he discovered the work of William Blake, particularly Blake's woodcuts. Palmer distilled his landscapes into idealised sanctuaries with a mystic glow to their nooks and dells and he emphasised their distinctively English character.

Myles Birket Foster (1825-1899) was a painter and illustrator. He was more documentary in his idyll creation than Palmer, but the serenity of his snug enclosed landscapes masks the great changes that were happening all around him in rural life. He worked very much with the market as a prolific illustrator of books, as well as being an independent painter, and unlike Palmer he sold very well during his lifetime. He became very prosperous. He supplied versions of the countryside as a softly focused retreat from the modern world, where the old way of life in England continued, as it had done for centuries, or so it seemed.

Richard Jefferies acknowledged the interpenetration of country and city, as already illustrated by the quotation from his essay *To Brighton*. In the same essay Jefferies describes a collection of old English pottery, the Henry Willett collection, which can still be found in Brighton Museum. Malcolm said they relate to Jefferies' aim of both conserving the past culture in writing and trying to reconnect his contemporaries with the spirit of the countryside that still survived. Jefferies wrote for the delight and understanding of his city readership. He describes scenes of rural life that were passing away; horse-drawn ploughing, harvesting by hand and he detailed the wildlife of the country, trying to teach his readers not just to look and know the names of wildflowers, trees and birds, and their natural habitats, but also less tangible treasures such as the solace of loitering to gaze for long stretches on the minutiae of natural life. Malcolm was particularly taken by Jefferies' phrase 'frequent glances and a dreamy mood.' Jefferies found as much birdlife close to

London as in the country and he had placed himself in a borderland between nature and city. Jefferies contrasts a working ploughman with the sunshine on the glass roof of the nearby Crystal Palace and perhaps with a nod to Birket Foster the fact that so many pictures and illustrations seem to proceed upon the assumption that steam ploughs and reaping machines did not exist, that the landscape contains nothing but what it did a hundred years ago.

Malcolm closed with extracts from Jefferies' essay 'Round a London Copse' (1882), from *Nature Near London*. An old orchard now neglected and scarcely recognisable as nature slowly resumes its own quiet governance and opens its hospitality to wildlife, but within reach of modernity:

The apple trees are not set in straight lines: they were at first, but some have died away and left an irregularity; the trees lean this way and that and they are scarred and marked as it were with lichen and moss. It is the home of birds. A blackbird has its nest this spring in the bushes on the left side, a nightingale another in the bushes on the right and there the nightingale sang under the shadow of a hornbeam for hours every morning while 'City' men were hurrying past to their train.

Without a path through it, without a border or parterre, unvisited and left alone, the orchard has acquired an atmosphere of peace and stillness such as grows up in woods and far-away lonely places. It is so commonplace and unpretentious that passes by do not notice it; it is merely a corner of a meadow dotted with apple trees—a place that needs frequent glances and a dreamy mood to understand it as the birds understand it. They are always there. In spring, thrushes move along rustling the fallen leaves as they search among the arum sheaths unrolling beside the sheltering palings. There are nooks and corners whence shy creatures can steal out from the shadows and be happy. There is a loving streak of sunshine somewhere among the tree trunks.

This concluded an informative presentation that was much enjoyed by the audience at the museum and online.

*Report by Colin Corkerton*

A review by Roger Ebbatson of Malcolm Andrews' *A Sweet View: The Making of an English Idyll* can be found in the *Richard Jefferies Society Spring Newsletter* 2022, pp.32–34.

COME ALL YE!

The Zoom meeting held on 11 December was an opportunity to learn more about our Members and how they 'discovered' Richard Jefferies. There were an equal number of Society members present who joined in the 1970s to those who were more recent. The stories told were most varied and interesting. Jean Saunders hosted the event and started by reading out a communication from John Price who had sent his apologies for absence.

**John Price** first discovered Richard Jefferies properly when he read one of his essays in the early 1970s. He was doing a lot of talks about Wiltshire's natural history at that time on behalf of the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust of which he was Vice-Chairman, and finding some passages to quote made him realise that here was someone who responded to chalk downland in the same way that he did.

He had encountered Jefferies earlier at school via *Bevis and Mark*, but that made no positive impression whatever.

John lives in Marlborough and was formerly headmaster of St. John's, a 1500 pupil Comprehensive school and then went on to St Helena in the South Atlantic Ocean, as their Chief Education Officer.

Along with a small group of other Wiltshire teachers, in the early 1970s John helped write the first A level syllabus in Environmental Science.

He has been active in the Society for many years and is best known as the Vice Chair and then Chair and was our major participant in the Save Coate campaign. He spent many fruitless hours trying to persuade Swindon Council, as owner of the 'old house at Coate', to take better care of the Richard Jefferies Museum and many days leading walks around Coate Water, and showing visitors around the museum.

Favourite Jefferies books: *Amaryllis at the Fair* and *After London*.

**Colin Corkerton** (who now lives near Newton Abbot) still has his original letter of welcome when he first joined the Society back in 1978 as a young man and when the annual membership was 80p. He remembered the advertisement to join the Society in *The Countryman*. Colin had a 55-minute train journey to work that gave him plenty of reading time and he made good use of the public library.

It was Henry Williamson who introduced Colin to Jefferies when Williamson extolled the virtues of *The Story of My Heart* that he had bought in a bookshop in Folkestone. And then Colin came across a copy of Edward

Thomas's biography of Richard Jefferies with an introduction by Roland Gant.

Colin's own passion for nature and reading Jefferies' writing grew stronger but it is only in recent years that Colin, in his retirement (as a meteorologist), had time to become actively involved in the Society and is now our Vice Chair and Treasurer.

Favourite Jefferies books are *Amaryllis at the Fair* and *Nature Near London*.

**Annabel Gormack**, who lives in New Zealand, was reading *Landmark* by Robert Macfarlane (2015) that explored the literature of nature and gave examples of nature writers' works. She was 'knocked out' by the Jefferies' quotes and managed to get hold of a copy of *Nature Near London* and then *The Story of My Heart* and wanted to read more.

Annabel had visited England four times and was already a member of the Dickens Fellowship when she joined the Society some four years ago. Annabel retired from an office job last year and is looking forward to returning to England to explore Jefferies' Land. Asked if there were any comparable nature writers in New Zealand, Annabel gave this some thought and said that Phillip Temple wrote lyrically about our natural world but would think about this question a bit more.

**Lucille Kelleher**, Jefferies' great granddaughter, joined us from Florida and was about to return home to Ontario, Canada the following day.

It was not until the late 1950s that she remembers her father receiving notice of the death of Phyllis Hargrave (Richard Jefferies' daughter) who had left an inheritance to her brother Harold and his children. That was the first mention of Richard Jefferies, the writer, that she can remember.

Lucille then read the entry for him in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* which gave her a lot more information about Richard Jefferies. The part about him observing a family of rabbits for some time, writing about what he saw, and then killing one was disturbing for her as an animal lover. This did not impress her at all—a hunter that watched and then killed rabbits.

It wasn't until High School that she read any Jefferies' books and wrote an essay about him. Nature has always been a comfort to Lucille as she grew up spending time in a forest behind their house and by Lake St Louis, in Quebec. Her father, also named Richard Jefferies, was an avid fisherman and canoeist who won a Canadian Paddling Championship and would take his family on weekends to the Lachine Racing Canoe Club.

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Lucille now lives in a house overlooking Lake Simcoe in Ontario and continues to enjoy native plant gardening, bird and animal watching.

She joined the Society in 1979 and continues to try persuading family members to do likewise.

Favourite Jefferies book: *The Story of My Heart*—for its depth of mind and emotion.

**Robin Stapleford** recounted that his father was very fond of Robert Way's 'The Garden of the Beloved' (1975)—a modern spiritual fable—and the positive spiritual impact of nature was not only felt by his father but inherited by Robin. As a Londoner evacuated to the countryside during the War, Robin's father learnt to have a passion for the countryside—its hedgerows thronging with life—and not to take nature for granted. Robin isn't sure if his father ever read Jefferies but Robin first came across the name in three short extracts from *The Story of My Heart* quoted in Robert Way's anthology 'The Wisdom of the English Mystics' (1978), some 5 years ago. Robin read out one of the quotes that made him seek out his own copy of Jefferies' book:

Touching the crumble of earth, the blade of grass, the thyme flower, breathing the earth-encircling air, thinking of the sea and the sky, holding out my hand for the sunbeams to touch it, prone on the sward in token of deep reverence, thus I prayed that I might touch to the unutterable existence infinitely higher than deity.

Robin now has most of Jefferies' books but *The Story of My Heart* is his favourite—he now has 14 different editions of it—particularly the copy edited by Samuel Looker that includes a transcription of the text of Jefferies' first draft of the book. Robin is a vicar, now in Norfolk, but by coincidence Robin's first parish was in Leicester, living close to Looker's last residence, and working as a Revd at the church where Looker's ashes were laid to rest. Robin often includes Jefferies' quotes in his sermons from the pulpit and in the parish magazine.

**Andrew Rossabi** was another member who joined the Society in the late 1970s after seeing its advertisement in the small-print columns at the back of the *Countryman* magazine. He had recently written introductions to four Jefferies titles published in paperback by Quartet Books.

Andrew grew up in a cottage with no electricity near Wainhouse Corner in St Gennys—a wild and remote corner of North Cornwall. This is where his love of nature was born. His first sight of the sea at Crackington Haven made

an indelible impression, and he was exploring the rock pools under Penkenna and Bray's Point almost as soon as he could walk.

His mother urged him to read *Bevis* ('the best boy's book ever written') but her emphatic endorsement set up a resistance and it was many years before he finally did. At Cambridge University Andrew described himself as a 'pseudo intellectual' and it was not until the early 1970s and the chance discovery of a photograph of surf waves in a library book that led him to make a pilgrimage back to Crackington Haven, to which he walked along the cliffs from Newquay, sleeping rough in church porches and elsewhere. As a result of the walk his passion for nature was reborn and it was through his love of fishing that he came to Richard Jefferies.

Andrew used to night fish for carp at Broadwater Lake near Godalming and this led to the discovery of the writings of 'BB', alias Denys Watkins-Pitchford, founder member of the Carp Fishers' Club and author of *Confessions of a Carp Fisher* and *Be Quiet and Go a-Angling*. BB's anthology *The Fisherman's Bedside Book* contained Jefferies' essays 'A Brook' and 'A London Trout' (condensed into a single piece) and the story deeply impressed Andrew. Soon afterwards Andrew found a set of Jefferies titles, together with the Aldine Library edition of Thomas's biography, in the basement of Fisher and Sperr's second-hand bookshop on Highgate Hill. And thus Andrew became hooked on Jefferies.

**Ruth Chambers** is a retired ecologist living in Durham. She discovered Jefferies about 3 years ago as a result of a chance finding of a copy of *Thoughts from the Writings of Richard Jefferies* selected by H.S.H. Waylen (Longmans, 1895). The book was in lovely condition and rescued from a wall in her local churchyard. Ruth was unsure about the mixture of 'mysticism' and natural history in the excerpts, but then she bought a copy of *Richard Jefferies' London* and began to get a better understanding. Ruth has always been a keen reader of nature-writing but it was the rapture with which Jefferies described what he saw and his ability to paint acute detail in words that distinguished him from other nature writers.

Did Jefferies have an eidetic memory? Certainly others believed so.

Having only joined the Society a year ago, Ruth has a good reading list of Jefferies' works to look forward to and enjoy.

**Jean Saunders** started her story through that of her husband Tom, who is also a Society member. He grew up on a Greater London council housing estate, went to a dire secondary modern school where English Literature wasn't on the syllabus, but he had always loved books and was reading

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before he went to school. He made good use of the local library and at around the age of ten, had just finished reading all twelve books of Arthur Ransome's 'Swallows and Amazons' series. Upset that there were no more, the librarian suggested *Bevis* which he enjoyed but was then disappointed to learn there were no more.

On moving to Oxfordshire in the mid-eighties, Tom and Jean visited Coate Water and saw a signpost for Richard Jefferies when the story of *Bevis* came flooding back to Tom. He could picture it all as Tom has an amazing recall of what he read as a child. So Jean read *Bevis*. They later visited the Richard Jefferies Museum and bought a copy of *The Old House at Coate*.

It was a few years later that a fellow environmental campaigner mentioned the Society to Jean. Wendy was a member and her father had joined in the 1950s. So Tom and Jean joined in 2004.

Jean was more pre-occupied with Friends of the Earth at the time—the Swindon group had been involved in a long-standing battle to protect Coate Water's designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Jean was the spokesperson at planning enquiries. As a passionate lover of nature, for Jean, the protection of the biodiversity beloved by Jefferies was just another reason to protect it, but she was never a lover of nature-writing essays and preferred novels. Favourite Jefferies books: *The Dewy Morn*, *Greene Ferne Farm* and *Amaryllis at the Fair* in that order.

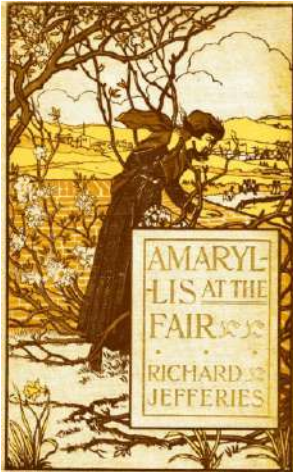
It was altogether an illuminating meeting and good to hear members' stories. It would be splendid to hear from more members and find out what had attracted them to Jefferies' works and why they joined the Society.

Do tell.

### *AMARYLLIS AT THE FAIR*

Our second winter meeting took place via Zoom on Monday 8 January 2024 and the topic was Jefferies' last novel *Amaryllis at the Fair*. Colin Corkerton chaired and thirteen members joined the meeting.

Colin started with a brief introduction to the book. *Amaryllis at the Fair* was published in March 1887, less than six months before Jefferies' death. In *The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies*, Hugoe Mathews and Phyllis Treitel write: 'Notebook entries indicate that the work, which is part fiction and part autobiography, was begun in January 1884 and continued at least until March 1885, where Notebook 14 ends. The next notebook is missing, but the work was offered to' various publishers from May 1886 onwards.



The book is set at Coombe Oaks, a small farm, and relates a series of episodes featuring sixteen-year-old Amaryllis Iden, her parents Mr. and Mrs. Iden, Grandfather Iden and two relations, Alere Flamma and Amadis Iden. Amaryllis' father is a tenant farmer and Mr. Iden's father, Grandfather Iden, owns the farm. Iden, the father, is hard-working and his work is of a high standard, but debt hangs over the farm and therefore his family. There has been a falling out between Iden and his father. Grandfather Iden is believed to be very rich but the son will not ask for financial help from his father and his grandfather will not offer it.

Colin read from Edward Thomas' biography of Jefferies which gives a good summary of the book. Thomas writes that 'Five or six days fill the book.' Firstly a March day, secondly Lady Day, a fair day, thirdly (many days in one) the day when Amaryllis is in her attic trying to draw, and lastly days in May when some of the main characters talk in the round summerhouse.

The main characters in the book, and the locations, are all drawn from real people in the life of Jefferies. Coombe Oaks is Coate Farm and Woolhorton is Swindon. Amaryllis, according to Edward Thomas, is based on Jefferies' sister Sarah, but is also Jefferies himself and possibly his wife, Jessie. Mr. and Mrs. Iden are his parents, James Luckett Jefferies and his wife Elizabeth (Betsy). Grandfather Iden is Jefferies' grandfather, John Jefferies. Alere Flamma is his uncle Frederick, on his maternal side (the Gydes) and Amadis Iden may be based on his paternal uncle John Luckett and Jefferies as well. The other main character is the narrator, Jefferies himself. There are many digressions where Jefferies is speaking to the reader.

Colin highlighted some of the things that he had noted as he reread the book. For example the humour in the book; the engaging sketches of some of the more minor characters; digressions on the effects of poor health and on available treatments; thoughts on religion; the references to many other historical figures; to many other writers and their books; poverty and charity and the views and actions of the suburban classes.

Andrew Rossabi said it was one of his favourite books of Jefferies, if not his favourite. He told how he had bought his first copy of the book in Lewes, East Sussex and he and his wife took alternate turns to read the book as they both

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enjoyed it so much. Andrew quoted from the introduction to the new Duckworth edition of the book in 1904 written by the editor and publisher Edward Garnett, where Garnett says '*Amaryllis at the Fair* is one of the very few later-day novels of English country life that are worth putting on one's shelf, and that to make room for it he would turn out certain high-praised novels by (Thomas) Hardy which do not ring true, novels which the critics and the public again with touching unanimity, have voted to be of the high rank.' He mentions various critics who denigrated Jefferies' novels and the lack of a plot in *Amaryllis at the Fair*, but cites *Tristram Shandy* by Laurence Sterne as another novel that does not obey conventions. Garnett feels that *Farmer Iden* is a masterly piece of character drawing.<sup>1</sup>

Andrew referenced an article by Carolyn Clarke<sup>2</sup> which shows that Garnett's comparison of Jefferies with Thomas Hardy prompted a response from Hardy. In a letter dated 21 November 1904 Hardy wrote about *Amaryllis at the Fair*:

I have finished reading the book that you have been kind enough to send me ... It is a very thorough study, on a large scale, of a farmer and his family, and would have made a good first book of a novel as long as *Tom Jones* or *Clarissa*. I like it exceedingly.

Hardy trained to be an architect and it is thought this may explain his intricate plots.

John Price referenced *Richard Jefferies: A bibliographical study* (1993) by George Miller and Hugoe Matthews which shows *Amaryllis at the Fair* was generally well-received at the time it was published. The *Athenaeum* and the *World* gave favourable reviews. A common thought was it was the first volume of a series, a point picked up by Hardy as well. This may have been due to the final paragraph in the book:

And as I must leave them (I trust but for a little while) I will leave them on the brown oak timber, sap-stain brown, in the sunshine and dancing shadow of summer, among the long grass and the wild flowers.

There are also hints in the notebooks of Jefferies this may have been the intention.

Jean Saunders referred to whether *Amadis Iden* was based on Jefferies' uncle, John Luckett Jefferies, who died from TB, aged just 32, in 1856. Jefferies

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Garnett's introduction to Richard Jefferies' *Amaryllis at the Fair* was reprinted in the *Richard Jefferies Society Journal* No.35 [2020], pp.71-75.

<sup>2</sup> Carolyn Clarke, 'Richard Jefferies and Thomas Hardy: Parallel Lives?', the *Richard Jefferies Society Journal* No.11 [2002], pp.17-20.

was only seven years old at the time of his death, and had been living with his Aunt Ellen since he was about four, and so it is unlikely he knew his uncle well. She felt that Amadis was Jefferies very much reflecting on his own illness. Also Amaryllis was based on Jessie, Jefferies' wife.

Jean also spoke about comments written in a copy of *Amaryllis at the Fair* which belonged to George Miller. Jean had photocopies of these. These comments were written by Florence Bott, a cousin of Jefferies. She had written 'Do not lend this book, it is too painful' and 'it is true but untrue.' Florence was eight years younger than Jefferies. She also wrote how unkind the grandfather was to his son James Luckett Jefferies, his favourite child was one of his daughters. She said what a kind lady Betsy, Jefferies' mother, was and remembers her feeding poor children. There was some untruthfulness in the book, for instance the Pamments were kind people and not as shown in the book. Jean said her favourite part was where farmer Iden is walking barefoot in the grass:

Of a summer's eve, when the day's work among the hot hay was done, Iden would often go out and sit under the russet tree till the dew had filled the grass like a green sea. When the tide of the dew had risen he would take off his heavy boots and stockings, and so walk about in the cool shadows of eve, paddling in the grass, he liked the refreshing coolness and the touch of the sward. It was not for washing, because he was scrupulously clean under the ragged old coat; it was because he liked the grass. There was nothing very terrible in it; men, and women, to take off their shoes and stockings, and wade about on the sands at the sea, and no one thinks it is anything but natural, reasonable, and pleasant. But, then, you see, *everybody* does it at the seaside, and Iden alone waded on the dew, and that was his crime—that he alone did it.

Mrs. Iden storms and rages at Iden for doing this and 'if she had not been afraid to touch firearms, she would have brought out the gun, and had a shot at him.'

Annabel Gormack said she particularly liked the part where Amaryllis is on top of the wall at the farm watching all the people going to the fair.

It was asked if anyone found anything they did not like in the book. It was felt that although Farmer Iden was cast as a heroic figure, he also had some unpleasant features. For example he insisted on complete silence at meals, only he could talk. This is something that Jefferies himself insisted on with his family. Also his initial response to Amaryllis when she asked him to come and see the newly-flowered daffodil was not friendly. He was not an entirely pleasant character something also reflected in real life in Jefferies' father's letters written late in his life where he shows little interest in his son's writings.

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There was discussion about the debt hanging over the Iden family and how this matched real life. Jean pointed out that the book was in a different order to what actually happened. In real life the debt accrued after the death of Jefferies' grandfather rather than during his lifetime.

Jean recalled the reading by Simon Russell Beale of some of Jefferies' writings which took place during Covid in place of the Marlborough Literary Festival. These readings include an extract from *Amaryllis at the Fair* where the mice are feeding on the crumbs dropped on Iden's trousers, as he rested after dinner.<sup>3</sup>

Andrew Rossabi talked about the letters between Richard Jefferies and George Bentley of Messrs. R. Bentley & Son, publishers, written in 1886. Richard Jefferies first sent *Amaryllis at the Fair* to them, but they declined to publish the book. The letters include a long one about his father and confirms Iden is based upon him. The letters give further background to the novel.<sup>4</sup> Andrew also mentioned the alternative title for the book, 'Scenes From Country Life', plus the wonderful description of the garden and the summer-house:

The round summer-house was their Parliament House whenever the east winds sank and the flowers shone forth like sunshine; as the sun shines when the clouds withdraw, so when the harsh east winds cease the May flowers immediately bloom and glow.

Colin mentioned some of the humorous parts of the book. One example he gave related to dinner. Should Mrs. Iden and Amaryllis admire the quality of the food at dinner they were 'immediately helped to another plateful (of potatoes), and had to finish them, want them or not.' If they praised the mutton 'several thick slices were placed on your plate, and woe to you if you left a particle.' They 'warned by previous experience, discreetly refrained from admiring either mutton or potatoes.'

An enjoyable evening was had by all in this study of *Amaryllis at the Fair*. If you have not read it recently, it is recommended you read it again.

*Report by Colin Corkerton*

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<sup>3</sup> Recordings of the readings are available at <https://www.marlboroughlitfest.org/litfest-speaking/>

<sup>4</sup> The letters are reproduced in Samuel J Looker, *Field and Farm* (London: Phoenix House Ltd 1957), pp.39-44. The book was accepted by Messrs. Sampson Low and Co.



**A**ndrew Rossabi gave a lecture to the School of Philosophy in August 2023 titled 'Richard Jefferies: Nature Writer and Mystic'. The lecture can now be enjoyed online via YouTube at <https://youtu.be/BJ24ktLQr78> or accessed through the 'Video' tab on the Jefferies Society's website.

The Philosophy School has branches not only in England and Ireland, but in the USA, Canada, Venezuela, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Trinidad, Belgium, Cyprus, Greece, Holland, Malta, Spain, Hungary, Germany, Israel, Fiji, and Argentina. There are 70 or 80 branches around the world, with roughly 20,000 members in all. Each branch shares the same curriculum, with the same content.

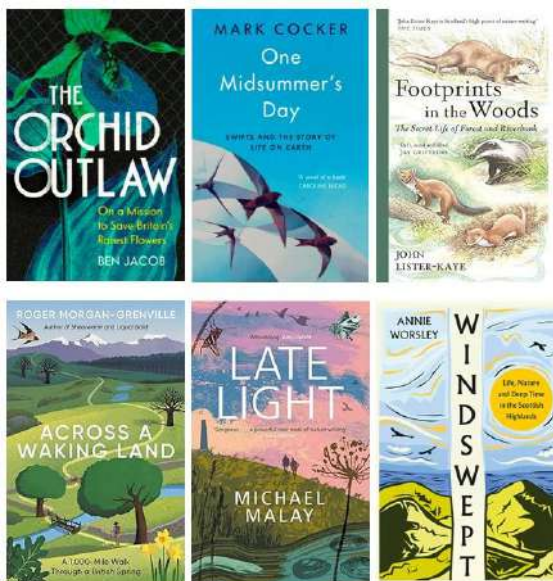
As a result of a lecture that Andrew gave previously to the School, Richard Jefferies is now part of the curriculum. His August 2023 Lecture resulted in all the copies of *The Story of My Heart* (the edition with the introduction by Jeremy Hooker) in the School bookshop being sold that same evening.

Andrew has done a fine job introducing a new audience to Richard Jefferies for which we are extremely grateful. He has been a champion of Jefferies since a young man and we are proud to have him as our President.

## THE RICHARD JEFFERIES AWARD

Nominations for 2023 publications drew in a record number of 49 nominations. John Price and Rebecca Welshman, after many months of reading through the submissions, agreed the following short list on 23 January 2023:

- *The Orchid Outlaw: On a Mission to Save Britain's Rarest Flowers* by Ben Jacob (John Murray)
- *One Midsummer's Day: Swifts and the Story of Life on Earth* by Mark Cocker (Jonathan Cape)
- *Footprints in the Woods: The Secret Life of Forest and Riverbank* by John Lister-Kaye (Canongate Books)
- *Across a Waking Land: A 1000-mile Walk through a British Spring* by Roger Morgan Grenville (Icon Books)
- *Late Light* by Michael Malay (Manilla Press)
- *Windswept: Life, Nature and Deep Time in the Scottish Highlands* by Annie Worsley (Harper Collins)



The judges panel, chaired by Barry Sloan, will announce the winner on 3 May. That person will be invited to speak at the Society's Zoom Birthday Lecture (11 Nov) and to the Marlborough Literary Festival (26–29 Sep).

## RICHARD JEFFERIES MUSEUM TRUST

Those of you who follow the Richard Jefferies Society on Facebook will be aware that on 21 October 2023 Mike Pringle (Director of the Richard Jefferies Museum Trust) ended an epic bike ride visiting **all** the houses where Richard Jefferies stayed. Mike covered nearly 200 miles in five days, and mostly in pouring rain.

(See Trust's website at <https://www.richardjefferies.org/wildlife-walk>)



As well as celebrating the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jefferies' birthday, the occasion was also a fund-raising trip for Mike to raise money for the initial stage of the proposed project to restore the old cow sheds and barn at Coate Farm for use as a meeting room. This facility is much needed, and would free up space in the Museum. Mike raised a total of nearly £7000, which was more than double the amount needed to complete the planning application.

Many other people took part in their own tribute to Richard Jefferies to celebrate the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Richard Jefferies birth on 6 November 1848. This included a walk along the Ridgeway by Bevis Watts (the CEO of Triodos Bank) who is now the patron of the Richard Jefferies Museum Trust.

The funding for the project covered the costs of a proposed publication which, as well as having articles and photographs from participants, will contain commissioned articles from writers including Matthew Oates, Conor Jameson, Claire Ratinon, Leif Bersweden, Nicola Chester, Kate Bradbury, Stephen Davis, and Roger Morgan-Grenville.

The celebrations were brought to a head on 6 November 2023 when a birthday party, with nearly 100 guests, was held at the Museum. An RJ-shaped birthday cake with 175 candles lit up the night sky that Lucille Kelleher (Jefferies' great granddaughter from Canada) and Kenny Taylor (Jefferies' great great grandson, also from Canada) blew out.



Lucille Kelleher and Kenny Taylor (first cousins once removed) with Barbara Parry, Mayor of Swindon, 6 November 2023, Richard Jefferies Museum.

Photo courtesy of Roy Cartwright.

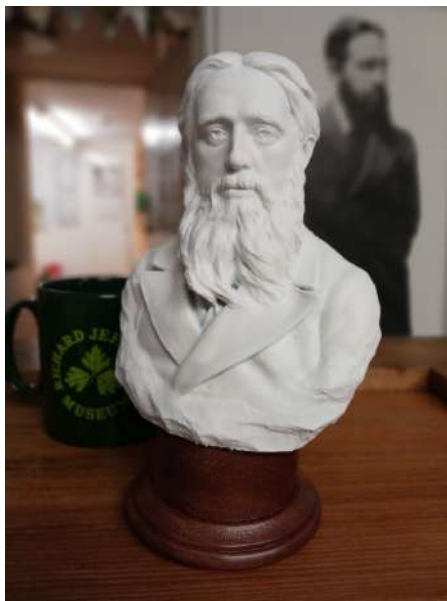
### **Update on the miniature bust**

Reproduction of the Harrogate bust of Jefferies, in a miniature version, has proven to be time-consuming, and complicated. The best result is a resin/plaster cast, sprayed white, and fixed to a turned wooden plinth. The result is pictured right and measures about 8.5" tall. It is expensive to make and if posted to customers will need very special protective packaging to avoid damage.

It has been agreed that the bust will be made to order but will incur a cost of £100 to make and send within the UK.

Should anyone wish to order a bust, please contact Mike Pringle on 07768 917466 or write to the

Richard Jefferies Museum, Marlborough Road, Coate, Swindon SN3 6AA.



## NEWS IN BRIEF

***The Countryman***

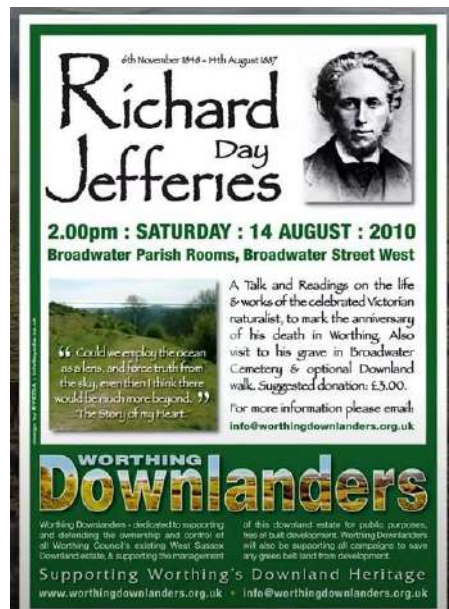
The country life monthly *The Countryman* has folded after 96 years; the last issue was November 2023. Its publisher, Dalesman Publishing, blamed rising production costs, a drop in advertising revenue, the cost of postage and falling sales, estimated at its end to be under 10,000. At its peak it was selling 23,000.

The magazine was launched as a quarterly but moved to bi-monthly in the 1990s then monthly. Notable subscribers included Ramsay MacDonald, Winston Churchill, H.G. Wells and Rudyard Kipling and the late Queen acknowledged its 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2017.

Jefferies was cited frequently in its pages and the issue of Autumn 1987 carried an article by the poet and writer Kim Taplin titled 'The Need of Richard Jefferies' followed by W.J. Keith's poem, 'Jefferies Country'.

The loss of a well-established country magazine is more than an inconvenience for readers as its closure shuts off opportunities for writers and journalists, perhaps potential successors to Jefferies.

An award-winning short film by Ma'at Films titled '**Spirit of the Downs—Perseverance brings Success**' is a semi-finalist in the London International Filmmakers Festival 2023. It is a short documentary about the Worthing Downlanders and their campaign to create public access land at Tenants Hill and Mount Carvey, near Cissbury Ring, West Sussex and stop proposed development. Richard Jefferies features heavily along with quotes and the poster is taken from the film. It is a pity that the 30 years plus campaign by the Richard Jefferies Society, and Swindon Friends of the Earth didn't achieve similar success at Richard Jefferies' birthplace. But we tried...



6th November 1846 - 11th August 1887

# Richard Day Jefferies

2.00pm : SATURDAY : 14 AUGUST : 2010  
Broadwater Parish Rooms, Broadwater Street West

A Talk and Readings on the life & works of the celebrated Victorian naturalist, to mark the anniversary of his death in Worthing. Also visit to his grave in Broadwater Cemetery & optional Downland walk. Suggested donation: £5.00.  
For more information please email: [info@worthingdownlanders.org.uk](mailto:info@worthingdownlanders.org.uk)

“Could we employ the ocean as a lens, and force truth from the sky, even then I think there would be much more beyond.”  
—The Story of my Heart—

## WORTHING Downlanders

Worthing Downlanders - dedicated to supporting and restoring the remaining wild country of all Worthing Council's reserves, West Sussex Downland estate, & supporting the management of this Downland estate for public purposes, that is past development. Worthing Downlanders will also be supporting all campaigns to save any green belt land from development.

Supporting Worthing's Downland Heritage  
[www.worthingdownlanders.org.uk](http://www.worthingdownlanders.org.uk) • [info@worthingdownlanders.org.uk](mailto:info@worthingdownlanders.org.uk)

**The Alliance of Literary Societies' weekend** and AGM event will be hosted this year by the Arthur Ransome Society from 17–19 May 2024 in Bowness-on-Windermere. The full programme information and the registration forms can be found on the ALS website: <https://allianceofliterarysocieties.wordpress.com/agm-weekend/>



### **Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre**

The *RJS Autumn Newsletter* 2023 (p.8) gave notice of how the Malcolm Porteous legacy would be used to enable a full cataloguing of our Looker Archive held at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, based in Chippenham.

The Richard Jefferies Society was invited to use the exhibition space at the History Centre to display Jefferies' material. The exhibition was put together by John Price, our Vice President, and every visitor to the Centre would have seen it in the reception area from early October 2023 to the end of January this year.

Naomi Oakley, the lead officer at the History Centre for the Looker Archive Project, updated the Society's Council at their meeting dated 7 February 2024. She reported that the team have been merging and repackaging all three of the Society's collections. Four volunteers are helping Naomi with indexing and cataloguing the contents and entering information on spreadsheets in preparation for loading the results onto their online catalogue. It is hoped that the bulk of the work will be finished by the end of March.

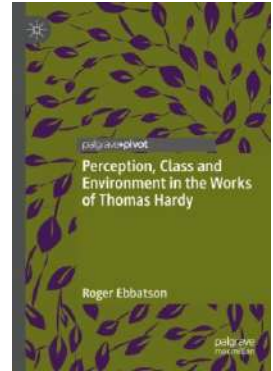
Another exhibition is planned for the Looker Archive Project in early spring (hopefully around the time of our AGM), along with a blog about the project and information about Samuel Looker. Naomi had found that the Society archives are not only informative but also much of the Looker material, that was not Jefferies-related, had relevance to Wiltshire and was a very valuable asset.

### **Judy Matthews**

Some of you might have met or known Judy Matthews—the wife of the late Hugoe Matthews who played such an important part in the Society's history and in bringing Jefferies to the masses with his painstaking research and publications. We regret to announce that Judy died in January 2024.

## BOOKS BY MEMBERS

**Roger Ebbatson's** new book on Thomas Hardy includes a chapter on Hardy and Jefferies, in which he compares *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* with *The Dewy Morn*. Titled *Perception, Class and Environment in the Works of Thomas Hardy*, it is published by Palgrave Macmillan. Roger examines Hardy's writing in both prose and poetry, focusing on issues of perception, 'being', class and environment. It illustrates the ways in which Hardy represents a social world which serves as a 'horizon' for the individual and explores the dialectic between the perceptible world and human consciousness. Roger Ebbatson demonstrates how, in Hardy's oeuvre, modern life becomes alienated from its roots in rural life—individual freedom is achieved in works like *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure* or *The Woodlanders* at the cost of personal insecurity and a deepening sense of homelessness.



**Seán Street's** *Running Out of Time* will be published by Shoestring Press (ISBN: 978191553461) by June this year. The book cover is adorned with Eric Ravilious's image of Capel-y-ffin, and the collection of poems is dedicated to Jeremy Hooker. Seán described the content as 'a kind of sequel to *Journey into Space*, which came out in 2022 from the same publisher. Its overall concerns are with time and the environment, although I'd be disingenuous if I were to claim that the title, and the long poem from which the collection takes its name, has nothing to do with personal mortality as well!'



## BARGAIN PUBLICATIONS

Postal sales of the Society's publications are managed by the Hon. Secretary. Prices are set at print-cost or lower and include postage within the UK. Overseas postage is extra.

|                                                                                                                                                           |                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>A Peculiarly English Genius: a Biography of Richard Jefferies, Volume I, The Early Years, (1848–67)</i> by Andrew Rossabi 2017 (hardback 800pp)        | £20.00<br><del>£40</del>    |
| <i>A Peculiarly English Genius: a Biography of Richard Jefferies, Volume II, The Years of Struggle, (1867–76)</i> by Andrew Rossabi 2017 (hardback 800pp) | £30.00<br><del>£60.00</del> |
| <i>A Peculiarly English Genius: a Biography of Richard Jefferies, Volume III, The Years of Success, (1876–83)</i> by Andrew Rossabi 2023 (hardback 800pp) | £40.00<br><del>£60.00</del> |
| <i>Richard Jefferies: A Spirit Illumined.</i> Various writers, 1987 (pamphlet)                                                                            | £1.50<br><del>£3.50</del>   |
| <i>The Jefferies Canon</i> – W.J. Keith, 1995 (pamphlet)                                                                                                  | £1.50<br><del>£3.50</del>   |
| 'A Natural System of National Defence' – Richard Jefferies, 2014 (pamphlet)                                                                               | £1.50<br><del>£3.50</del>   |
| <i>Richard Jefferies' Letters to Aunt Ellen</i> , 2009 (softback)                                                                                         | £ 3.00<br><del>£4.50</del>  |
| <i>Amaryllis at the Fair</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2009.<br>Introduction by Carolyn Clarke (softback)                                                      | £ 3.00<br><del>£6.00</del>  |
| <i>Ben Tubbs Adventures</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2016.<br>Introduction by Andrew Rossabi (softback)                                                       | £6.00<br><del>£12.00</del>  |
| <i>Greene Ferne Farm</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2009.<br>Introduction by George Miller (softback)                                                           | £ 3.00<br><del>£5.00</del>  |
| <i>The Interpreter: A Biography of Richard Jefferies</i> – Audrey Smith, 2008.<br>Introduction by Eric Jones (softback)                                   | £ 3.00<br><del>£5.00</del>  |
| <i>The Scarlet Shawl</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2009.<br>Introduction by Andrew Rossabi (softback)                                                          | £ 3.00<br><del>£6.00</del>  |
| <i>The Dewy Morn</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2009.<br>Introduction by Rebecca Welshman (softback)                                                            | £ 5.00<br><del>£7.00</del>  |
| <i>The Farmer's World: Richard Jefferies' Agricultural Journalism in the late 1870s</i> , 2016. Introduction by Eric Jones (softback)                     | £7.00<br><del>£12.00</del>  |
| <i>Restless Human Hearts</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2008.<br>Introduction by Andrew Rossabi, 2008 (hardback)                                                | £10.00<br><del>£20.00</del> |
| <i>Richard Jefferies: An Index</i> – Matthews & Treitel, 2008. (hardback)                                                                                 | £10.00<br><del>£20.00</del> |
| <i>The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies</i> – Matthews & Treitel, 1994. (hardback)                                                                       | £10.00<br><del>£15.00</del> |
| <i>World's End</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2008.<br>Introduction by Andrew Rossabi (softback)                                                                | £5.00<br><del>£8.00</del>   |
| <i>Richard Jefferies: An Anthology</i> – Matthews & Welshman, 2010. (hardback)                                                                            | £10.00<br><del>£20.00</del> |

# CITINGS OF RICHARD JEFFERIES

Please email your citations to richardjefferiessociety@btinternet.com. or post to the Hon. Sec.

Geoff Hirst found this citing about V.S. Naipaul in the 19 October 2023 edition of the *London Review of Books*. In Tom Crewe’s review of a book on Charles Lamb (written by Sarah Ogilvie and attributed to V.S. Naipaul): ‘V.S. Naipaul said that Lamb was one of the four 19<sup>th</sup> Century writers—the others being William Cobbett, William Hazlitt and Richard Jefferies—who gave him the most “novelistic pleasure”.’ A source for this can be found in Landeg White’s *V.S. Naipaul: A Critical Introduction* (London: Macmillan, 1975) p.186 who quotes Naipaul:

And the nineteenth-century English writers who now give me the most ‘novelistic’ pleasure—provide windows into human lives, encouraging reflection—are writers who in their own time would not have been thought of as novelists at all.

I am thinking of writers like Richard Jefferies, whose essays about farming people carry so much knowledge and experience that they often contain whole lives. Or William Hazlitt. Or Charles Lamb, concrete and tough and melancholy, not the gentle, wishy-washy essayist of legend. Or William Cobbett, the journalist and pamphleteer, dashing about the countryside, and in his break-neck prose, and through his wild prejudices, giving the clearest pictures of the roads and the fields and the people and the inns and the food. All of these writers would have had their gifts diluted or corrupted by the novel form as it existed in their time. All of them, novelistic as they are in the pleasures they offer, found their own forms.

In *The New York Review* (23 April 1987) ‘On being a Writer’, Naipaul also wrote the exact same words.

Phyllis Treitel gave a talk to the Swindon U3A on 12 April 1999 at the Ellendune Hall, Wroughton and she commented that ‘Even the writer V.S. Naipaul, who praised nobody, said that Jefferies’ “brambly” writing was good,’ but we don’t know Phyllis’s source.

Michael Sherwood came across an unexpected citation in his local free September 2023 issue of *Honiton and Village News*. In an article by Miranda Gudenian titled ‘A View from the Hills’, that was written at a time of summer storms and no sunshine, she remembers a childhood of scorching summer days. She reflects on Jefferies’ descriptions of ‘dreamy summer days’ and Traherne’s everlasting summers of cornfields. But Gudenian feels sure that summers were equally good and bad 100 or 200 years ago, as they are

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now, and advises that we live in the moment but recall the fleeting memories of perfect days as both Jefferies and Treherne did.

Peter Robins found this lavish praise of Jefferies in *The Atlantic Monthly*. In its issue of November 1889 the magazine printed a review of six newly-published nature books under the heading 'Outdoors and Indoors', a nod to one of the books under review, *Indoor Studies* by John Burroughs, published here by Dent in 1895. Of the six authors only Burroughs is remembered now.

But none, even Burroughs, compare to Jefferies in the opinion of the anonymous reviewer who gives generous praise to Jefferies, as this extract shows:

But Nature is not exhausted, and outdoor ingredients can be mixed agreeably in a variety of ways. In our own day Richard Jefferies has lived and died, leaving a handful of books of a distinctly fresh and individual order; literary in their ideas, it is true, the work of one whose task was letters and his goad poverty; lacking, too, the sweetness and human interest of the Selborne letters, but giving nevertheless with a sincerity of their own both fact and interpretation. It is singular that the personal element should have shown itself so little in his writings. With youth and a sort of passionate individuality which he seems never fully to have comprehended or subdued to literary ends, he was primarily the artist, impersonal, unmoralizing, an eye and a vocabulary. His pictures are so minute that the imagination is fatigued, now and then, in following their details; each saliency stands out as if embossed, but they are so lovingly painted, with such truth of touch, such happiness in seizing the right word, everything is so fresh and harmonized, that there is no lack of breadth or atmosphere. It is nearly impossible to avoid speaking of Jefferies as a painter, for he seems almost to take words out of literature to put them into form and colour. No such chiseled, original work in this line has been attempted here. Our essays are of a looser texture. Our foremost writer on outdoor matters, Mr. Burroughs, is thoroughly of the literary persuasion, with a graceful style and command of his instrument, but with a vocabulary far less unusual or concentrated than the author of *Wild Life*.

*The Atlantic Monthly* was founded in Boston in 1857 by publisher Moses Dresser Phillips with the support of literary figures including Emerson, Longfellow and Whittier. It has been described as one of finest magazines in the English-speaking world and today covers events and political issues through literary and cultural commentary.

Giles Wood is keen always to put in a mention of Richard Jefferies in his column for *The Oldie*. The November 2023 edition was no exception. In

his article titled ‘Mary’s new diagnosis? I’ve got rural dementia’, Giles writes of his yearning for the country idyll, the simple life, the places where no other foot ventured, and the general excitement amongst villagers at the arrival of the postman who might bring news from elsewhere to the very quiet village where he lives. Giles wants time to gossip over the garden fence, to loiter, to shuffle along slowly walking the dog—and hence, Mary’s comment. Giles quotes from Jefferies’ ‘Village Hunting’ (first published in *Globe* in 1877 and collected in *Landscape & Labour*) that encourages tourists to seek out the old-world life of England, rather than the busy hot-spots, if they are looking for peace and quiet for good mental health. Jefferies felt that engineers might have had some sense of ‘Fung-shuy’ (as he described it) when they picked out the most idyllic setting for many villages to be established by little streams, trees, woodlands and natural beauty.

David Sleep, who is a member of The Eltham Society and the Richard Jefferies Society, gave a talk to the former about ‘London Blue Plaques’ on 5 October 2023. This was reported in their November 2023 Newsletter by Terry Timmons and on p.16 there was a picture of Richard Jefferies’ blue plaque in Footscray Road, Eltham.

In his Apple book of haikus, titled *Always Sparrows* (November 2023) Clive Bennett acknowledged his thanks to RJS member Colin Blundell, as a ‘fellow traveller’ exploring the byways of Jefferies’ Land who ‘unwittingly sparked [his] interest in writing haiku’. Regrettably Colin died the following month.

Neil Underwood posted this image on our Facebook page and thought it a nice way to send New Year greetings to everyone. The card was printed in Germany at the beginning of the last century and contains the lovely quote by Jefferies from ‘The Pageant of Summer’. It’s a pity that Jefferies’ name was spelt incorrectly.



## Citations

When *Field and Hedgerow* was published in January 1889, the collection of essays was reviewed in *The Scotsman*, *Morning Post*, *Saturday Review* and *Academy* among others. But unrecorded until this recent discovery is a review published in the September 1889 issue of *De Gids* [The Guide], the oldest Dutch literary periodical founded in 1837 and still published today.

The 20-page review was contributed by Geertruida Carelsen (pictured right) and offered an analysis of the essays together with an account of Jefferies' life based on Besant's *Eulogy*. Geertruida Carelsen was the pseudonym of Amy Geertruida de Leeuw, born in Haarlem in 1843. She showed an early interest in gardening and the English language and at twenty turned to journalism using a male pseudonym at first but increasing confidence led her to sign off as Geertruida Carelsen. Female journalists in the Netherlands at the end of the nineteenth century faced discrimination and were few and far between. In contrast, here in Britain the Society of Women Writers and Journalists boasted 200 members by 1894.



Although Carelsen was disposed to write articles, poems and books reflecting her botanical knowledge, after the death of her parents Carelsen moved to London in 1888 as correspondent for *Nieuws van den Dag* and there wrote the review of *Field and Hedgerow*, which obviously had a personal appeal for her. After three years she left for Berlin as correspondent for *Nieuws van den Dag* and *Utrecht Dagblad*.

In retirement she spent the last fourteen years of her life in Haarlem writing articles on nature or horticulture, dying there aged 95.

The enigmatic Mr. C. St. John who claimed, in a letter to *The New York Times* (29 Mar 1902), that he had met Jefferies several times, (see *RJS Autumn Newsletter* 2023) came up again in that newspaper a few weeks later. In an announcement published in the issue of 19 April a reader in Maine requests St. John's address:

Will not Mr. C. St. John, who wrote the letter about Richard Jefferies which appeared in THE TIMES SATURDAY REVIEW of March 24 [29], 1902, page 223,

please write to Box 662, Bangor, ME.? A gentleman wishes his address, and a letter directed to him as above has been returned to the writer.

The US Postal Service doesn't have records of who was using its Box. Nos. for this period and we have been unable to identify the person.

Whether C. St. John responded to the request isn't known and adds further mystery to this character.

**A**lfred Newton (1829-1907) held the Chair of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy at Cambridge from 1866 for forty years and died in post. He edited the periodicals *Ibis* and *Zoological Record* as well as contributing to Yarrell's *British Birds* and Newton's own four-volume *Dictionary of Birds* was published 1893-6.

His science was exact, objective and followed a strict method which gave rise to a harsh criticism of popular natural history writers. A biography of Newton, *Life of Alfred Newton* by A.F.R. Wollaston (John Murray, 1921), includes numerous letters to many ornithologists of the time, two of which feature Jefferies which demonstrate the long-standing dissension between science and art. Newton's contempt for Jefferies is clear.



Letter to the Norfolk naturalist and author Thomas Southwell, 5 Mar 1902:

The articles in *The Standard* that I mean began fully 20 years ago. Perhaps you know whether Mr. S—— has been writing all that time. I never heard of Mr. R—— or saw to my knowledge any of his articles. What a discovery for him to make about Dodman and Thrushes! If he be an imitator of Jefferies he must be bad indeed, for I think the writings of the latter to be in the worse taste possible. It has always amazed me to read how much he is admired, for greater rubbish there can hardly be. Whenever he tried his pen on human beings the reviewers were down upon him, and most justly, for they saw what stuff it was; but knowing no Nat. Hist. they did not find him out there. All the same I pity the wretched man.

Yours very truly,  
ALFRED NEWTON

Letter to the British/Irish naturalist G.E.H. Barrett-Hamilton, 12 Sep 1904:

You must go elsewhere for details of Jefferies. Several books have been written about him. He was an unhappy man, with bad health and a genius for 'word painting,' which took with the public. He tried to write novels, but they were

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invariably scouted; yet such is the ignorance of people in regard to Natural History that his books about animals were read with rapture, though they were every bit as bad as his novels. The greater part of the poor wretch's life was spent in abject misery, as he was too proud to let his friends know that he often had not enough to eat; at least so I have heard say. I believe at the last he was better off, but then it was too late. I regard the poor man with great commiseration, but there is an utterly false tone (as it seems to me) in all his writings.

Yours very truly,  
ALFRED NEWTON

The division between science and art was still apparent forty years later; see 'Why I do not like Richard Jefferies' in *RJS Journal* No.39, 2024.

Elizabeth C. Wolstenholme Elmy, described by Emmeline Pankhurst as 'the brains behind the suffragette movement', was a regular contributor to *The Westminster Review*. Her fourteen-page article 'The Enfranchisement of Women' appeared in the issue of September 1907 with the concluding paragraph quoting Jefferies:

We toil and struggle today because we know that with justice between the sexes once assured, all else is secured—justice between man and man, between race and race. We work for the advent of higher humanity, and for the time, foretold by Richard Jefferies when 'the sunshine and the summer, the flowers and the azure sky, shall become, as it were, interwoven into man's existence. He shall take from all their beauty, and envy their glory'. This, and nothing less, is the inner meaning and message of 'Women's Suffrage.'

Jefferies had taken a rather light-hearted look at the changing place of women in society thirty years earlier in his essay 'The Coming Woman', published in *The World*, 28 Jun 1876 (reprinted *RJS Journal* No. 16 [2007]), speculating,

It really may be that these crude ideas of women's rights, these false starts and miserable fiascos, do represent a genuine movement, just as the grinding and splintering of the edge of a field of ice against the Polar shores gives warning that the ice in motion.

An apt analogy from Jefferies as it took more than another forty years for women to get the vote.

Richard Stewart responded to an article and letter in the *BBC Wildlife* magazine. The article was about W.H. Hudson and the letter added the

information that he was buried in Worthing cemetery, where Richard Jefferies' grave was also to be found. Richard then added the following:

It is no coincidence that W.H. Hudson is buried in the same Worthing cemetery as Richard Jefferies. Hudson recognised, as many have done subsequently, that Jefferies was the greatest writer about the English countryside, its wildlife and human inhabitants, that this country has ever produced. Consequently he asked to be buried as close to Jefferies as possible.

Valerie Haworth has collected a selection of references to Richard Jefferies contained in *Letters from Edward Thomas to Gordon Bottomley*, edited and introduced by R. George Thomas (Oxford University Press, 1968).<sup>1</sup>

The letters of Jefferies interest are focused on the time that Thomas was writing his biography of the writer.<sup>2</sup> In his letter dated 22 April 1907, from his home in Berryfield Cottage,<sup>3</sup> Thomas writes to Bottomley<sup>4</sup> about the possibilities of embarking on the work that would take about two years and build upon the Besant and Salt studies.<sup>5</sup> He was considering covering Jefferies' 'native country' that he personally knew so well and Jefferies' books. He asks Gordon Bottomley to be on the lookout for copies of Jefferies' 'early and most bad novels', citing *The Scarlet Shawl* as an example, so that he had his works to hand as 'the museum is closed'. That being said, in his letter of 14 May 1907 he owns up to having never read *The Scarlet Shawl* and would be pleased to look at it when he visits Bottomley who, obviously, had a copy. Thomas had heard that the book was 'an entirely vain attempt to write an ordinary novel about lords,' which is patently untrue. By this time he still hadn't settled arrangements, presumably with the publishers, and was 'afraid of it' as 'it is a silly thing to do a bad life of a good man & I shall have no leisure to try to make a good one.'

Three months later, he had made very little progress and wrote on 10 August that 'the damned blues are on me again' and he had not even written any reviews for a month. He had seen a few of Jefferies' unpublished letters, that held no interest, but he was going to see Jessie Jefferies the following day. There is no recorded follow-up to the meeting with Jefferies' widow and

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<sup>1</sup> Every effort was made to obtain permission from the Oxford University Press to reproduce quotes.

<sup>2</sup> *Richard Jefferies. His Life and Work* by Edward Thomas (London: Hutchinson & Co., January 1909).

<sup>3</sup> The Thomas family were living at Berryfield, Ashford Lane, Steep from 1906–1909.

<sup>4</sup> Gordon Bottomley (20 February 1874 – 25 August 1948) was an English poet.

<sup>5</sup> Sir Walter Besant, *The Eulogy of Richard Jefferies*, 1888; Henry S. Salt, *The Faith of R. Jefferies*, 1906.

## Citations

by 22 September Thomas was concerned that, despite writing to many people, information that would help him to know Jefferies as a person was only coming in ‘scraps’. He felt that he was going to have to rely on Jefferies’ works and to use more quotes which he didn’t like to do.

Thomas’s next few letters of interest came from Minsmere, near Dunwich, on the Suffolk coast. On the 15 January 1908 Thomas had been giving the biography his full attention for the last ten days. He estimated that he had written 40,000 words for a book that only needed to be twice that number albeit that he felt that it might end up as 100,000 words. He has made himself ‘weary with it all.’ By 7 February 1908 he felt that he was ‘just a machine ... churning out lengths of *Jefferies*.’ And it bothered him that he would produce an untidy anthology as he had to use so many quotes ‘in order to make my special claims for him quite clear’. On 26 February Thomas communicated that he was hoping to finish the draft in two days’ time as his wife, Helen, would be joining him in Minsmere after nursing their children through measles. He writes: ‘The book ... may have a lot of small lights, but no light on the whole man. Trying to mingle biography, criticism & mere exposition of his matter, I have made confusion.’ He wanted to leave it to lie for some months.

Back home again in Berryfield Cottage, on 30 March Thomas feels that the book still needs a lot of work but by 19 July, apart from an introduction and preface he had finished the biography. He had spent the last two days on compiling a ‘monstrous bibliography’. He asked Bottomley if he might proof-read it and says ‘Life is not long enough for me to tell you how I have enjoyed<sup>6</sup> copying out—being unable to amend and too poor to destroy—innumerable rants, vaguenesses &c.’

Bottomley surely agreed to proof-read. Thomas replied to him on 24 September addressing the former’s query as to why there was not a fuller account of the progress of affairs in Jefferies’ family. He replied that he knew so little apart from the sale of the farm at Coate and that Jefferies’ parents moved to Bath where his father became a gardener. He remarked that ‘It was not even possible to say that RJ was a good husband & father with any certainty. But the exact extent of my insufficiency you will not see just yet.’

In his letter dated 1 October 1908 Thomas was extolling the virtues of *The Dewy Morn*.<sup>7</sup> ‘Don’t they express a love of beauty that never was excelled,

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas was presumably being ironic.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas’s discussion of *The Dewy Morn* (Ch. XV pp.232–262) consists largely of quotations from it.

though as to the expression I see its limitations? But I wonder what people will say of a biographer who allows his subject to hold the field so.'

The biography was published in January 1909 and by 15 February Thomas was pleased to tell Bottomley that Garnett<sup>8</sup> likes the book very much. 'His praise means a great deal as I feel his ideas have ramified through me until there is little else, at least when I am writing of books.'

On 4 June 1909 he informs Bottomley that 'The Complete Jefferies' that he was editing was likely to 'fall through.' By 1 September 1909, apart from reviews, he had 'nothing profitable to do except edit a volume of unpublished & uncollected essays by Jefferies.'<sup>9</sup>

Thomas and Bottomley continued to write, regularly and often frequently, until March 1917. The following month Helen Thomas wrote briefly to Bottomley to give the sad news of Thomas's death. This was followed by a longer letter from Eleanor Farjeon, written at the request of Helen who wanted Eleanor to say more about Thomas and promised that she, Helen, would continue the correspondence.



George Bottomley



Edward Thomas

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<sup>8</sup> Edward Garnett (1868–1937). Author, critic and biographer.

<sup>9</sup> *The Hills and the Vale* with an introduction by Thomas, 1909.

RICHARD JEFFERIES

*T. Michael Pope*

First published in *Academy*, 28 March 1908, pp.617-8. Thomas Michael Pope (1875-1930) was a self-made freelance journalist and highly respected in Fleet Street. Baptised in Kennington on 30 May 1875, his father Joseph was a grocer in Lambeth who died when his son was only six. Pope was a ledger clerk and civil servant who wrote for *Academy*, *The Boy's Own Paper*, *The John o' London Weekly*, *The Daily Graphic*, and the *London Mercury*. His poems appear in anthologies and he edited a collection of prose and verse about Middlesex in 1930. His range of topics include biography, poetry, and the use of language.

During the last few years the fame of Richard Jefferies appears to have passed under a cloud, and his works have been made the subject of much adverse criticism. There are not wanting, however, indications of a revival of interest, and it may be worth while to inquire whether the author of *Field and Hedgerow* and *The Gamekeeper at Home* may not, after all, be destined to occupy a permanent niche in the Pantheon of English literature.

It is obvious that his appeal must always be to a comparatively small number of readers. His form was at times faulty, and his sentences not infrequently bear the marks of hurried and careless composition. He was not, like Izaak Walton, a great artist. One need not be an ardent devotee of rod and line to enjoy the measured and stately prose of *The Compleat Angler*; but Jefferies demands from his reader an interest in his subject-matter almost as keen as his own. Without that interest he will infallibly prove dull, tedious, and uninspired.

His critics have accused him of declining into a mere compiler of catalogues, and Mr. Quiller-Couch, in an amusing essay, has pressed his charge home with considerable force. There is, it must be admitted, some truth in the indictment; but the offence is, at the worst, pardonable. I think it was Mr. E.V. Lucas who once wrote a paper on the poetry of a rose-grower's catalogue, and there must be quite a lot of people, beside myself, who experience an intense joy in the repetition of such words as 'celandine,' 'violet,' 'woodspurge,' or 'primrose.' The works of Richard Jefferies are full of this nomenclature of the fields and woodlands. They are fragrant with the breath of honeysuckle and wild thyme, and all the varied odours of a country lane. He could never have enough of Nature, and it is possible that he occasionally miscalculated the requirements of his reader. In 'The Pageant of

Summer,' one of the finest of his essays, he has described, with an almost microscopic minuteness, the appearance of a country meadow on a day in June. There is nothing that escapes his attention, for there is nothing that he does not love.

His worst fault would appear to have been a false and distorted sentimentality. It is difficult to realise that he was a contemporary of Darwin. He was, indeed, hopelessly out of touch with current scientific thought and speculation. While Tennyson was writing of Nature, 'red in tooth and claw with ravine,' Jefferies was inditing panegyrics on the friendliness of the flowers. He affords a marked contrast in this respect to such a writer as Thomas Hardy, who discerns in external Nature the working of those pitiless and cruel laws which appear to direct and control the life of man. In one of the finest and most characteristic of his poems Hardy describes how, in a moment of weariness, he sought relief from the cares and vexations of City life in the sylvan peace of a wood, only, however, to be rapidly disillusioned:

Sycamore shoulders oak,  
Bines the slim sapling yoke,  
Ivy-spun halters choke  
Elms stout and tall.

But in the ears of Richard Jefferies the pipes of Pan are never shrill. The gods above may be pitiless or impotent, but in the life of the fields there is love, and helpfulness, and warmth.

Jefferies had little of the scientific spirit. The dominant note in his writings is a sensuous enjoyment of the life of Nature, tempered by an intellectual pessimism which was probably the result of ill-health. He had a vivid appreciation of colour, and loved to describe the effects of light on flowers, or the blue shadows chasing each other across the downs. For the jargon of the laboratories he displayed the profoundest contempt, and he would gladly have burned all books of botany. 'The books have yet to be written,' he wrote; and, again, in a moment of genuine illumination, 'I want the soul of the flowers.'

It was through Nature that he looked for the ultimate and supreme revelation to man. He was never tired of dreaming of a larger life, a life that should be free from commonplace duties and sordid cares, a life at one with the trees, the rivers, and the hills :

I hope (he writes) that at some time, by dint of bolder thought and freer action, the world shall see a race able to enjoy it without stint, a race able to enjoy the flowers with which the physical world is strewn, the colours of the garden of

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life. To look backwards with the swallow there is sadness, to-day with the flock of cloud there is unrest; but forward, with the broad sunlight, there is hope.

This conception possessed him to such an extent that it succeeded in crowding all other interests out of his mind. He could not find words with which to express the new emotions and ideals which clamoured for utterance, and in *The Story of My Heart* he attempted the impossible. He became sublimely inarticulate.

It is, I think, on his earlier works that his fame must ultimately rest, and particularly on such books as *The Gamekeeper at Home* and *The Amateur Poacher*. His delineations of rural landscape are executed with a grace and delicacy which have never been surpassed in English descriptive literature. Something of the charm of a fast vanishing period is preserved in these records, the gracious and leisurely life of an English homestead in days when the countryside afforded an ample sustenance to the farmer and the agricultural labourer, the gossip of a village ale-house, the pleasant intercourse between squire and peasant. It is surely not too much to assert that Richard Jefferies will be read and loved when the life which he described so faithfully shall have disappeared before the advent of multitudinous factories and the tramping of great armies.



Charles Whymper's illustration for *The Gamekeeper at Home* (Smith, Elder & Co., 1892) titled 'A Good-for-nothing Keeper' (p.219).

## KEN CAVALOT'S PILGRIMAGE, 1956

Mike Pringle's epic bike ride (see p.35) brought to mind a journey or pilgrimage made by Ken Cavalot in 1956. This report comes from the *RJS Annual Report 1981*:

### ***RICHARD JEFFERIES' GRAVE AT WORTHING***

It is interesting to know that somewhere in the grass within the marble surround is a small square of turf from Jefferies' much-loved Liddington Hill near his birthplace in Wiltshire, cut out by Mr. Ken Cavalot, of Rugeley, now a member of the Society, during a walk on The Ridgeway in 1956.

Kenneth James Cavelot died on 13 Feb 2006, aged 84, in Rugeley, Staffordshire. He bequeathed some of his Jefferies' books to the Society but didn't join until September 1980.

John Price had asked Ken to write up his adventure, but he never did. It is such a pity as he told John that he undertook the entire journey on foot and slept in the hedgerows.

Ken was born on 17 July 1921 in Bradford-on-Avon and at some stage moved to Swindon with his parents where he was employed as a Railway Clerk (1939 register). Ken married in Coventry in 1944 and, probably around this time, he was an educational officer at Gartree maximum security prison and then taught at the John Wilmott Grammar School in Sutton Coldfield (newspaper report 1973).

So at the age of thirty-five Ken tramped from Liddington to Broadwater Cemetery with his small piece of turf from Liddington Hill, and slept under bushes.

You'll need to imagine the rest.

*THE NATURE WRITERS: A GUIDE TO RICHER READING*

*Herbert Faulkner West (1898–1974)*

The following chapter, devoted to Richard Jefferies' works, was published in Faulkner's *The Nature Writers: a Guide to Richer Reading*, published by Stephen Daye Press, Brattleboro, Vermont, 1939. The volume was introduced by Henry Beston and runs to 155 pages. The Richard Jefferies chapter is on pages 82–87.

RICHARD JEFFERIES (1848–1887)

*The Gamekeeper at Home; or, Sketches of Natural History and Rural Life*, by Richard Jefferies. London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1878. Jefferies is here the farmer's son who has used a gun and knocked about with gamekeepers. The book shows his absolute familiarity with country life. Edward Thomas calls the book: 'As it stands it is perhaps the first thoroughly rustic book in English, by a countryman and about the country, with no alien savours whatever.' It is significant that the essence of the book derives from the sayings of the gamekeeper himself. There is nothing of Oriel in this book as there is in White's Selborne.

*The Amateur Poacher*, by Richard Jefferies. London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1879. In this book Jefferies writes frankly in the first person about his own doings. It is full of the life of the man whom he knew as he knew the fields. He writes of Coate Farm openly as his own home. Here appears Molly the milkmaid—who used to say, when people laughed at Jefferies: 'Ah! you med laugh, but if you was inside Dick's yed for five minutes you wouldn't want to get back into your own.'

*Wild Life in a Southern County*, by Richard Jefferies. London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1879. Jefferies is more of a naturalist than a sportsman in this book, which concerns the countryside of North Wiltshire. His boyhood farm, the Downs, the springs and streams, agriculture, birds, animals, and fish, village architecture, superstitions of the natives, are all described by one who had patient eyesight, and who had been familiar with these things all his life. Loosely written, as the book is composed of newspaper articles from the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

*Round About a Great Estate*, by Richard Jefferies. London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1880. Let Edward Thomas speak of this book: 'For almost the first time in English literature a pure countryman who is nothing but a countryman reveals his life and neighbourhood. No man could be neglected who had so much knowledge which it is impossible to acquire by effort and time alone; his power of showing the joy in things, and of making them a means to joy, gives him still higher claims. Thus, at his best, he writes as if his hand had in it part of that spirit which builds the hills and lights the stars over them; in his veins are the saps of oak and ash and elm, the brood of things that run and fly and creep. Like Constable he might have said: "I love every stile and stump and lane in the village; as long as I am able to hold a brush I shall never cease to paint them".'

*Hodge and His Masters*, by Richard Jefferies. 2 volumes. London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1880. Has recently (1938) been re-edited by Henry Williamson in a one volume edition. Discusses the agricultural labourer in England in the seventies of last century. Lacks the richness of perspective and style of his later books.

*Bevis: the Story of a Boy*, by Richard Jefferies. London: Sampson, Low and Co., 1882. This is the book which had so great an influence on a contemporary nature writer, Henry Williamson. Readers of *Beautiful Years* by this author will surely note the connection. Bevis is Jefferies when he is a young boy twelve or fourteen years of age. The surroundings are those of Coate Farm, in Swindon, where Jefferies spent his boyhood. The boy Mark is Jefferies's brother Harry who afterwards migrated to America. The nature descriptions are Jefferies at his best.

*The Story of My Heart: My Autobiography*, by Richard Jefferies. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1883. *The Story of My Heart* is a poignant confessional. Early in life there came to him, 'a deep, strong, and sensuous enjoyment of the beautiful green earth, the beautiful sky and sun.' Later the thought 'that I might be like this; that I might have the inner meaning of the sun, the light, the earth, the trees and grass, translated into some growth of excellence in myself, both of body and of mind; greater perfection of physique, greater perfection of mind and soul; that I might be higher in myself.' I can recall no book which expresses so clearly man's link to the earth; his love for sun, wind, and rain. When Jefferies wrote this book it was

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as if he had a premonition of death, and the earth and the sky was so much the dearer to him, for soon he must leave it for the darkness of the grave.

*Nature Near London*, by Richard Jefferies. London: Chatto & Windus, 1883. These papers deal mainly with Surrey, and as he knew nobody here, the tone of this book is less human than the Wiltshire books. 'Nuttty Autumn,' 'Wheatfields,' and 'A Barn,' have a unity of feeling and colour, and the total effect is of a rich, humanized landscape. In his walks he probably took the advice which he gives in 'Footpaths': 'Always get over a stile.' Jefferies resided from 1877-1882 at Tolworth, Surbiton, and from here he introduced himself to the country depicted in this book.

*Red Deer*, by Richard Jefferies. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1884. In Jefferies' own words this book is 'a minute account of the natural history of the wild deer of Exmoor and of the mode of hunting them. I went all over Exmoor a short while since on foot in order to see the deer for myself; and in addition I had the advantages of getting full information from the huntsman himself and from others who have watched the deer for twenty years past. The chase of the wild stag is a bit out of the life of the fifteenth century brought down to our own times. Nothing has interested me so much, and I contemplate going down again.' Of all his books it is the most orderly and complete. Exmoor, from my own knowledge, is one of the most fascinating parts of England. Henry Williamson has also written of the stags of Exmoor.

*Field and Hedgerow: being the Last Essays of Richard Jefferies*, collected by his Widow, by Richard Jefferies. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1889. This book consists largely of his last essays written during his fatal illness at Sea View, Goring. The subjects taken are about the neighbourhood of Coate, of Surbiton, of Brighton, of London, of Exmoor, and the Quantocks. In several essays it is clear that he is thinking about death as something that is soon for him. 'He seems to exclaim directly that beauty and joy are right, and all else wrong, and with all the more frankness and terrible simplicity because he has learned it for himself.'

## TALES OF THE STAVE: ELISABETH LUTYENS

Peter Robins

Elisabeth Lutyens was one of the five children of the architect Edwin Lutyens and his wife Emily (née Bulwer-Lytton) a theosophist and vegetarian. Despite a lack of interest in music, Lutyens' parents encouraged her to learn the violin and piano, later she attended the École Normale de Musique de Paris and the Royal College of Music, where she studied composition.

Lutyens' stylistic evolution was a slow process as she had little time for the 'cow pat' school of early 20<sup>th</sup> century composers such as Holst, Bax and Vaughan Williams. She was an early adopter of a modern style of classical music employing the twelve-tone, sometimes a fourteen-tone, technique, developed by Schoenberg.

In 1933 she married the singer Ian Glennie producing two daughters and a son but it was not a happy relationship and Lutyens left her husband and became the partner of Edward Clark, a former BBC programme maker, and another son was born in 1941. Clark was never gainfully employed, obliging Lutyens to support her family by composing for theatre and film as her discomfiting cacophonies were well-suited for horror film scores, notably for Hammer Films and Amicus Productions.

Lutyens turned to alcohol during these difficult years and suffered a nervous breakdown. Her eccentricities meant life was generally unstable and in the later years of her life she became addicted to various medications.

Lutyens' use of the twelve-tone technique was not appreciated in the 1950s and it wasn't until 1973 that her 1954 chamber opera *Infidelio* and her cantata *De amore* (1957) were performed. It was in this decade that Lutyens was inspired by Jefferies.

Lutyens' 'By All These...' was composed in 1977, a seven-minute piece for soprano and guitar. The song was created using an abridged passage from Ch. I of *The Story of My Heart*:

I was alone with the sun and the earth. I spoke to the earth, the sun, the air, and the distant sea far beyond sight. I thought of the earth's firmness—I felt it bear me up, I thought of the wandering air—the air touched me and gave me something of itself. I spoke to the sea: I desired to have its strength, its mastery and glory. Then I addressed the sun desiring its endurance. I turned to the blue heaven. The rich blue of the unattainable flower of the sky drew my soul

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towards it, and there it rested—for pure colour is rest of heart. By all these I prayed.

'By All These...' was commissioned by the soprano Mary Thomas and Timothy Walker, the internationally-known guitarist. Lutyens' love of poetry had featured in her works but prose also featured celebrating Rimbaud, Flaubert, Shelley, Conrad and Auden among the musical settings.

Its first public performance of 'By All These...' was given by Alison Horriben (soprano) and Nicholas Hooper (guitar) on 30 March 1981 at a New Music event held at the British Music Information Centre, London. The venue no longer exists but its archives are now under the care of the University of Huddersfield. It is fortunate that a recording of this performance of 'By All These...' can be accessed and heard more than forty years after the event: <https://heritagequay.org> (enter 'By All These' in Search box. The recording can be clicked bottom right). Lutyens can be heard talking about her music in an interview originally broadcast on the World Service, 20 Apr 1970, available on BBC Sounds.

In an exchange of emails Alison Horriben told us that she remembered enjoying the piece but that Lutyens was not present at the event. Lutyens died in London of a stroke in 1983. Her musical manuscripts as well as letters are held by the British Library.



## ‘COUNTRY LITERATURE’ (Part V)

*Richard Jefferies*

‘Country Literature’ was first published in *Pall Mall Gazette* in five parts from 22 October 1881 to 30 November 1881. The first four parts were republished in *Life of the Fields*, June 1884. Part V was never included but brought to light by Andrew Rossabi recently. As the article is of biographical interest, revealing Jefferies’ own struggles to gain access to good reading material at Coate and his suggested solution to the problem, part V is now reproduced as it appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* ‘Supplement’ (which is why it was difficult to find) for the 30 November 1881 edition.

### FARMHOUSE READERS—CONCLUSION

New books are a long time reaching the farmhouse. They dribble thither in slow time through crooked channels, halting on the way. One comes as a present, another is brought by a visitor, a third purchased at a railway bookstall during a journey, a fourth is borrowed and lingers like borrowed books generally. There is no regular source of supply, and it is seldom that a volume is ordered at the bookseller’s in the market town. The bookseller really has no stock to offer, or rather his stock is of the conventional order, and attracts none but the dullest of dull people. Books are wares which require the most judicious selection to tempt the public; this may be observed at the railway bookstalls, and the shops of the popular booksellers in London, where the art is carried to perfection. If you stop to look you are sure to see something you would like; it is the same with others as with you, if they look they will notice something just suited to their taste. This is the bookseller’s skill. It is lacking in the window in the country market town, and consequently those who come into market, or fair, or to make other purchases, go away without leaving an order. But why do they not look down a list of volumes and choose one at home and write directly to the publisher for it? Why, it may be asked in reply, do wine merchants and manufacturers of aerated drinks so largely advertise their goods? They do so because they know that if a thing is constantly under people’s observation sooner or later they will make a trial of it. If it is not constantly under their observation, the chances are that they will not. This is pre-eminently the case with books. No list of volumes reaches the farmhouse to choose from. No titles are brought constantly under notice. The farmhouse and the other middle-class houses

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in the country are ignored. Wine merchants in the town, and some even in London, send their lists of choice liquors round at regular intervals, and as a consequence the names of metropolitan wine merchants are well known in the remotest places. Publishers are not. The residents in farmhouses and in the middle-class houses in the village have no well-selected lists of volumes put into their hands every month and perhaps never see the actual books themselves from one year's end to another. How then can they be expected to buy? The ladies complain that when they drive into the market town and look (as they have looked times enough before) at the books on the shelves of the circulating library, hoping against hope for something new, they only find the same old, well-thumbed dingy volumes that have been there these five years. They cannot get anything to read unless friends in town send them down a parcel. To buy novels outright at the published price for the three volumes is out of the question. No one thinks of doing so. They are not to be obtained at the circulating library till at the least twelve months old. As for books of travel science, or discovery, to look for them on the shelves of the so-called library in the market town would be as sensible as looking up in the elm trees for them. If, as is the case once now and then, the library is in connection with some great London institution, it is just possible to get them after much waiting; but it is slow and weary work. Books of a solid description are now often offered in London at very low rates, far below the published price, and little or none the worse for wear, some quite new. But country people never see or hear of these: pray how should they?

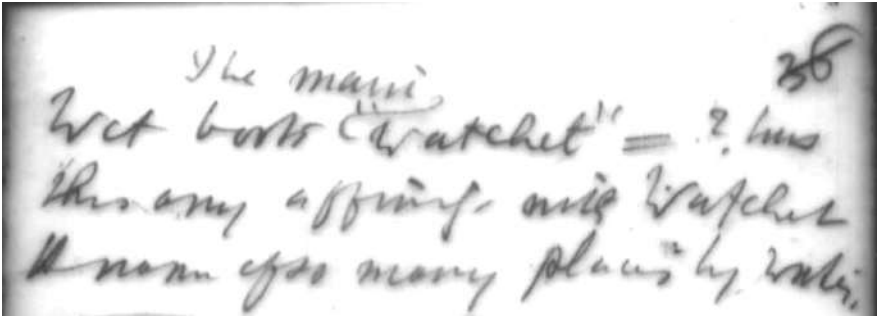
This mattered little long ago when agriculturalists rarely read a book beyond an almanac from year to year. But times have changed and agriculturalists are now a reading people—reading, too, in earnest. If any one doubts, ask him if agriculturalists do not write letters to papers, pamphlets, essays—sometimes even books—and if they do not speak in public: if, too, they have not made their voices heard to some purpose. Those who write and speak in public must read first—that is incontrovertible. With every difficulty in the way farmers will have and do have literature. They supply themselves with newspapers from the railway stations in many and roundabout ways. Those who work in town and walk back to their cottages at night in the hamlet bring the paper: milkcarts, carriers, women who go to and fro with donkey-carts taking vegetables to the towns—anybody is pressed into the service. Somehow or other the farmer gets his paper; and somehow or other, once now and then, he gets his book. The older folk hesitate at ordering a book; they want it, they feel a strong inclination for it,

yet when it comes to driving into the market town and actually entering the shop and positively ordering it, they hunt for an excuse and apologise to themselves for the extravagance and presumption. With all the hesitation, having once determined they still do get it, most frequently writing to friends in London or some large city, as if they felt they could get it better like that. The modern generation have no such scruples: they go if they possibly can to a railway bookstall; but these are few and far between in the country. These younger men never go to an agricultural show or a city, whatever may be their business, without bringing home a book or two. They have been well educated and they must have something to read. The sons of agriculturalists are now always educated, not perhaps crammed or sent through examinations; but their parents submit to much deprivation, and despite depression and losses, will insist on getting their children fairly well grounded. With the daughters it is the same, and in addition these acquire some accomplishments. They must have something to read and if they manage to get out on a visit beg, borrow, or buy books to take home. The most acceptable present at any country house is a parcel of modern books. It is easy to sneer at novels; but the fact is that if people do not read novels they feel outside the day. The cheap sneer at novels might be omitted from a modern view of life. Lighter magazines are great favourites in country houses—‘country houses’ is used here in the sense of middle-class; nothing here applies to those who are fortunate enough to be able to spend the season in London. Lighter magazines are favourites, but unless regularly subscribed for difficult to get. In this versatile age few people care to regularly subscribe; they like to buy what suits their fancy when they read down the list of contents. Now, if any one in the country reads down the list of contents of the magazines published in a daily paper towards the end of the month, he has to do one of two things—he must drive or walk five miles to a town and order it, and wait a week till it arrives, or must address the publisher and enclose postage, and a stamp must be put, too, on the letter containing the order. In London, on the contrary, shilling magazines may be purchased for ninepence. Country people are looking forward with much interest to the promised parcel post, which, if it should turn out to be really what it appears, and not hampered with ridiculous petty restrictions like so many post-office improvements, will quite double country traffic and bring the farmhouse into close contact with London. By such parcel post they hope to receive books from the circulating libraries of London, whose business, if they choose, could thus be doubled. The same guinea that will now only buy

two or three books of any value would then enable the country resident to get down two or three dozen to read and return. A parcel post, liberally managed, will place the remote hamlet in almost the same position as the suburban districts. Allowing even double the time taken by letters for delivery—not an unreasonable allowance—the advantage would be wonderful, giving country people not only access to the libraries, but to the stores from which they are now practically shut off. The parcel post will enable the publisher or bookseller who first makes his name a household word in country districts to get at his customers and supply them with books as cheaply as they can be supplied in Fleet-street. But even then he must give them proper information, lists to choose from, and must show them at least a good selection of his wares.

The books supplied to the villagers must be cheap, and the profit on cheap books is very small, from which arises a drawback to enterprise in this direction. But the villagers are not the only persons to be supplied. As just shown, the agriculturalists and their families are now a reading people, anxious for books, and books of a more expensive class. Besides the villages there are the market towns not half supplied. If depots, as sketched out in a preceding article, be established for the sale of cheap books in villages when the traveller comes round at intervals, one of his principal duties would be to call at farmhouses and exhibit specimens of more valuable works, besides offering facilities for purchasing the lighter current literature of the day. His task would be made the easier by circulars arriving as regularly as those of the wine merchants or the London draper. By these means the return on the cheap books would be supplemented by the return from higher-priced books, and a reasonable profit obtained. The country wishes to read, but it would repudiate any less robust motive for supplying it with books than that of genuine trade; and therefore the foregoing observations have been directed to pointing out the channels through which such trade might be successfully conducted.

'I BE MAIN WATCHET'  
(I BE VERY WET)



Andrew Rossabi was interested to read the above entry in Jefferies' second Notebook on page numbered 36 and dated around early April 1878. He pondered on the derivation of the words:

Wet boots—I be main 'watchet' == ? has  
this any affinity with Watchet  
the name of so many places by water.

In Ch. VI of *Wild Life in a Southern County* Jefferies describes the difficulty of negotiating a flooded lane in an out-of-the-way hamlet (undoubtedly Coate):

The lane, at the same time, is crossed by a torrent, which may spread out to thirty yards wide in the hollow, shallow at the edges, but swift and deep in the middle.

If you wait a couple of hours it will subside, as the farmers lower down the brook pull up the hatches to let the flood pass. If you are in a hurry, you must climb up into the double mound beside the lane, and force your way along it between thorns and stoles, till you reach the channel through which the current is rushing. Across that an old tree trunk will probably lie, and by grasping a bough as a handrail it is possible to get over. But either way, by lane or footpath, you are sure to get what the country folk call 'watchet' i.e. wet. So that in winter the hamlet is practically isolated; for even in moderately good weather the lane is an inch or two deep in finely puddled adhesive mud. It is so shaded by elms and thick hedges that the dirt requires a length of time to dry, while the passage of hundreds of sheep tread and puddle it as only sheep can.

This passage is cited by Dartnell and Goddard in their *Wiltshire Glossary* (p.178):

## Articles

**Watchet, Wetched, Wetchet.** Wet about the feet. **Wotshed** at Cherhill. **Wetched** (A.).—N.W.

‘Either way, by lane or footpath, you are sure to get what the country folk call “watchet,” i.e. wet.’—*Wild Life*, ch. vi.

‘You’d best come along o’ me to the lower lands ... for it be mighty wet there these marnins, and ye’ll get watshed for certin.’—*The Story of Dick* (by Gambier Parry, 1892], ch. xii. p. 142.

The Oxford English Dictionary gives the meaning of ‘watchet’ as ‘blue’.

Dartnell and Goddard, p.99 state:

**Main.** (1) *adv.* Very, as ‘main good,’ excellent (A.B.).—N.& S.W. (2) *adj.* ‘A main sight o’ frawk,’ a great number (S.).—N. & S.W.(99)

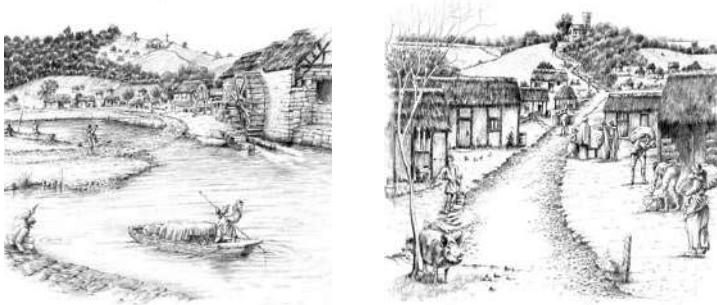
And so we arrive at the meaning of Jefferies’ entry in his notebook as ‘I be very wet’ which is surely a description of the weather conditions for much of his time spent rambling in the countryside.

And of course Watchet is a harbour town in West Somerset where The Ancient Mariner waylaid the wedding guest at St Decuman’s Church on the hill above the town. Watchet is near Bicknoller, where Jefferies’ good friend J.W. North lived. Jefferies refers to Bicknoller and Watchet in *Summer in Somerset* that North illustrated for the *English Illustrated Magazine* in October 1887:

Somewhere in a wood there is a stone, supposed to be a tombstone of the prophetess Mother Shipton, and bearing an undecipherable inscription. One of her rhymes is well remembered in the neighbourhood:

When Watchet is all washed down  
Williton shall be a seaport town.

This is founded on the gradual encroachment of the sea, which is a fact, but it will be some time yet before masts are seen at Williton.



An artist’s impression of Medieval Watchet

## THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY ANNUAL REPORT

1 January to 31 December 2023

The Richard Jefferies Society was founded in June 1950 and is registered with the Charity Commission. Charity Number: 1042838.

Registered contact: Jean Saunders, Hon. Secretary, The Old Mill, Foulsham, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 5RB. Tel: 01362 683210.

The RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY (referred to as the SOCIETY in this report) is governed by a Constitution that is agreed by its Members and approved by the Charity Commission.

The OBJECTS of the SOCIETY are:

1. To promote interest in, and respect for the life and works of Richard Jefferies.
2. To hold meetings of its members and others, at which lectures may be given bearing on the life, work and times of Richard Jefferies.
3. To maintain a collection of and help make available to members copies of the works of Richard Jefferies and associated literature.
4. To monitor and protect as far as possible the buildings and countryside associated with Richard Jefferies.
5. To provide members with news and information about Richard Jefferies by means of a newsletter and/or journal.

The SOCIETY has a special concern for such places as the writer's birthplace (now a Museum run by the Richard Jefferies Museum Trust but owned by Swindon Borough Council), Coate Water, Liddington Hill, and the memorial stone on Burderop Down—all in Wiltshire. Other places of pilgrimage are places where Jefferies lived in Surbiton, Sydenham and Eltham near London, and Brighton, Crowborough and Goring-by-Sea, Sussex, where he died in 1887. His grave is in Broadwater Cemetery at Worthing.

MEMBERSHIP of the SOCIETY is open to all individuals/families, corporate bodies, learned societies, public libraries, schools and similar institutions who are interested in the objects of the SOCIETY as defined above. Members pay an annual subscription, due on 1 January, the rates of which are agreed at the AGM. There were 199 Members at 31 December 2023, mainly based in the UK, but also in Europe, USA, New Zealand, Australia and Canada.

## Annual Report

The following people joined the SOCIETY in 2023: Paul Barnes, Ruth Chambers, Lee Schofield, Kelvin Ravenscroft, Roger Pemberton, Robert Brewer, Ken Taylor and Paul Weiner. Regrettably four members died.

The SOCIETY is managed by an Executive Council who meet three times a year in February, June and October. Executive Council Members are elected at the Annual General Meeting held in the spring. All elected Executive Council Members are Trustees, registered with the Charity Commission, and Members of the SOCIETY apart from the Honorary Vice Presidents who are appointed for life. There are no paid staff. The Treasurer, Secretary and President are appointed for a 5-year term of office; the Vice President, once elected, also holds the position for life. Other Council Members are elected for a 3-year term of office and other officers (e.g. Chair and Vice Chair) are appointed by the Executive Council. The Executive Council can co-opt Members, as required, but these have no voting rights.

Members of Executive Council at 29 April 2023 (\* not a trustee)

| Name              | Office                                                 |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Colin Corkerton   | Elected Treasurer and Vice Chair to 2028. Acting Chair |
| Andrew Dawes      | Member. Elected to 2026                                |
| Roger Ebbatson    | Member. Re-elected to 2026                             |
| Eric Jones        | Hon. Vice President*                                   |
| Lucille Kelleher  | Co-opted *                                             |
| Blake Lee-Harwood | Member. Elected to 2026                                |
| John Price        | Vice President. Elected 2020                           |
| Mike Pringle      | Member. Re-elected to 2026                             |
| Andrew Rossabi    | President. Re-elected to 2026                          |
| Jean Saunders     | Secretary. Re-elected to 2026                          |
| Barry Sloan       | Member. Re-elected to 2026                             |
| Richard Stewart   | Hon. Vice President*                                   |
| Phyllis Treitel   | Hon. Vice President*                                   |
| Alastair Watts    | Member. Elected to 2026                                |
| Rebecca Welshman  | Member. Re-elected to 2024                             |

The SOCIETY's FINANCIAL YEAR coincides with the Membership year and calendar year. The main source of funds arises from Membership subscriptions and donations that attract Gift Aid. Book sales account for some income. Book stocks are estimated at £1,000 at the end of this financial year. There were no grants received during the year and no bursaries

awarded. The annual income is normally in the region of £5,000 a year and well below the Charity Commission's requirement to supply a published Annual Report. The SOCIETY holds a current bank account with Lloyds Bank (Swindon), a savings account with the Coventry Building Society and a Paypal account. The Examiner of the Accounts is elected each year by its Members at the AGM. The major expenses incurred are for printing and postage.

The SOCIETY obtains permission from Members to hold their contact details on a database under the General Data Regulation Act. That information is only used for communication purposes (e.g. sending out newsletters etc.) and is not divulged to a third party. On termination of Membership, information held is removed from the database.

The SOCIETY has Professional Indemnity Insurance with Markel Insurance.

The SOCIETY provides a research bursary for projects that promote a new understanding of Richard Jefferies thanks to the former Jefferies Land Conservation Trust which transferred assets of £20,000 to the SOCIETY in December 2013 on the understanding that these would be used for educational purposes. Regrettably the take up of the award has been poor.

The SOCIETY awards an annual literary prize of £1,000 for excellence in nature writing in memory of the late John Webb, former Society librarian and benefactor. He left a legacy of £25,000 in 2014. The Richard Jefferies Award is sponsored by the White Horse Bookshop, Marlborough (which donates half the prize money) and was first introduced in 2015. The Society manages a dedicated website for the Award: richardjefferiesaward.org. The judging panel, drawn from the SOCIETY's Members and a representative from the White Horse Bookshop, deserve praise for their contribution, expertise and for giving their time and service freely.

Where possible the SOCIETY provides financial support to care for Jefferies' family graves through a dedicated Grave Fund supported by Members, albeit much good work is carried out for free by local Members.

The SOCIETY's website is a rich resource of information that is made freely available to the public. There is a Facebook group with 308 members and managed by John Shortland. 573 people follow the SOCIETY on X. There is an email group for Members wishing to receive news items of interest throughout the year.

The SOCIETY organised Meetings and Lectures that take place by Zoom in winter months as well as a Spring Lecture and Birthday Lecture.

The SOCIETY is a member of the Alliance of Literary Societies, the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society and the Eltham

Society.

The main activities of the SOCIETY centre on the dissemination of information, publications, meetings, the Richard Jefferies Award and support for Jefferies-related activities. Indeed the advances in social media are such that the SOCIETY now reaches thousands of people around the world.

Zoom meetings are held in the winter months. The Spring meeting is held on the same day as the AGM at the Museum.

The Richard Jefferies Award attracts a growing number of nominations each year. Lee Schofield won the latest prize for *Wild Fell* and this generated a flood of publicity for the SOCIETY and the author.

Spring and Autumn newsletters were produced and distributed to Members, and made available to the public for free via the online facility and social media.

The SOCIETY's annual *Journal* was produced and distributed to major libraries and to Members, as well as to the public via the online facility. The principal aim of the *Journal* is to present material by Jefferies that has not been published or reprinted, or that is difficult to obtain, together with articles about Jefferies, items of research and discovery, synopses of talks and lectures, book reviews, material relating to where Jefferies lived, and correspondence.

An Annual General Meeting was held on 29 April 2023 in accordance with the Constitution.

The SOCIETY maintains a stock of Richard Jefferies' works that are available for purchase by the public or our Members as well as publications produced under the SOCIETY's imprint: Petton Books.

The SOCIETY maintains an extensive library of books, along with archives, family memorabilia and documentation related to the SOCIETY or Richard Jefferies. The most important archives, that include original manuscripts and letters, are accessible at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre or are on loan to the Richard Jefferies Museum Trust. Other archives are stored by members of the SOCIETY.

The SOCIETY provides speakers on Richard Jefferies to other Societies, organisations and educational establishments. Our President gave lectures to the School of Philosophy and Esher District Local History Society this year.

Two generous legacies and a gift from the SOCIETY were used to enable the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre to integrate our three archives and to catalogue the contents for their online resource and to assist the Richard Jefferies Museum acquire the Harrogate bust of Jefferies and get it scanned.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & SPRING LECTURE  
RICHARD JEFFERIES MUSEUM,  
MARLBOROUGH ROAD, COATE, SWINDON SN3 6AA  
SATURDAY 27 APRIL 2024, 11am–3.30pm

This year the AGM and the Spring Lecture (see p.5–7) will take place at the Richard Jefferies Museum, courtesy of the Richard Jefferies Museum Trust. A Zoom element will be in place for those unable to attend in person. A Zoom link will be sent by email to all members with a registered email address.

The Museum will be open from 10.30am.

AGENDA for Annual General Meeting from 11am

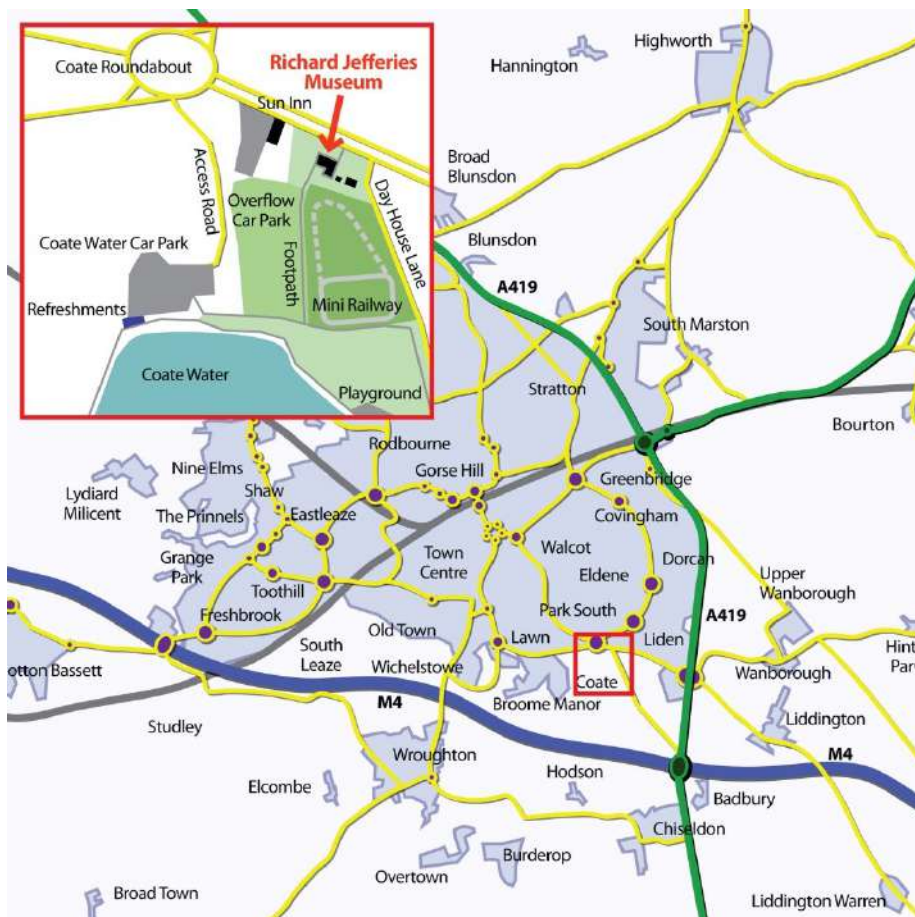
- 1 From the Vice Chair
- 2 Minutes of the last AGM, 29 April 2023 (see pp.71–73)
- 3 Matters Arising
  - 3.1 Richard Jefferies Award
  - 3.2 Looker Archive Project
  - 3.3 Management of the Society
  - 3.4 Richard Jefferies Museum Trust
- 4 Agree Annual Report (see pp.65–68)
- 5 Treasurer's Report (see pp.74–75)
- 6 Election of Examiner of Accounts: Rob Brailsford.
- 7 Elections to Executive Council.

Rebecca Welshman has completed her 3-year term of office but is willing to be re-elected. Current members Andrew Dawes and Alastair Watts will be re-elected for a further 3-year term of office to 2027.
- 8 Motions (none proposed by the Executive Council)
- 9 Any Other Business

Any motions or resolutions for debate should be sent to the Hon. Sec. before 20 April 2024, as should nominations for Executive Council members. Both should be proposed and seconded.

Lunch from 1-2pm. Please bring a packed lunch.

2–3.30pm SPRING LECTURE: Matthew Oates: 'The Meaning of Butterflies: science, aesthetics, spirituality, poetics, relationship with place.' Matthew hopes to present his Lecture in person at the Museum. See pp.5–7.



### Buses

There are several buses (e.g. 1, 1A, 3, 12, 13A, 14A) from Fleming Way in the town centre, a few minutes walk from the railway station. Ask for the Sun Inn, Coate, and you'll be dropped at the petrol station opposite the Museum. Some coaches from London stop here too.

Parking at Coate Water Car Park, a short walk to the Museum. It is a Pay-and-Display car park with a charge of £4.40 for the day.

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY

Held at the Richard Jefferies Museum on Saturday 29 April 2023 at 11.00am.

Present: Gillian Bromhead, Roy Burton, Royston Cartwright, Colin Corkerton, Andrew Dawes, Elizabeth Derrington, Roger Ebbatson, Brian Morris, Mike Parrot, Mike Pringle, and John Price.

Present on Zoom: Blake Lee-Harwood, Fiona Oakley (part), Andrew Rossabi, John Sanders, Rosemary Savage, Michael Sherwood, Jean Saunders, and Tony Taylor.

Apologies: Robert Albright, Pete Bainbridge, Tom Bowly, Colin Blundell, Anthony Boakes, Patrick Dillon, Peter Faulkner, Norma Goodwin, Valerie Haworth, Eric Jones, Lucille Kelleher, Piers Maynard, Tom Saunders, Barry Sloan, Alastair Watts and Giles Wood.

### **1. FROM THE VICE CHAIR**

Colin Corkerton welcomed all present at the Richard Jefferies Museum and on Zoom. He conveyed Barry Sloan's abject apologies at being unable to Chair and took the opportunity to offer a vote of thanks to Barry for his excellent Chairing for the last 5 years.

### **2. MINUTES OF LAST AGM**

The minutes of the last meeting, held at the RJ Museum and by Zoom on 7 May 2022, were accepted as a true record of proceedings. Proposed by John Price, seconded by Royston Cartwright and carried by Members with a show of hands. Colin signed a copy of the minutes as correct.

### **3 MATTERS ARISING**

#### **3.1 Richard Jefferies Award**

Colin announced that the winner of the best 2022 publication should be agreed by the judging panel on Monday 15 May or soon after if the decision goes to a second vote. An announcement will appear on social media on 22 May. The winner will be invited to give the Birthday Lecture in November via Zoom and the White Horse Bookshop may hold a presentation event in Marlborough. There has only been one nomination for this year's Award and members were encouraged to nominate any worthy titles.

#### **3.2 Richard Jefferies Museum Trust**

Mike Pringle reported that, unlike previous winter months when the Museum is quiet, the last season was extremely busy. Now the focus is on events related to the 175 year anniversary of Jefferies' birth that includes the acquisition of the superb marble Jefferies' bust from Harrogate that has now

## *Annual Report*

been digitally scanned professionally. Mike gave details of the 175 mile walk that starts at Broadwater Cemetery and which will end at the Museum on Jefferies' birthday (or the day before—a Sunday) linking all the houses where Jefferies has lived. The public is invited to walk a small part and send a report of their journey illustrating what they saw of the natural surroundings. Progress can be followed on the Trust's website.

Royston Cartwright offered a vote of thanks to Mike for all his hard work at the Museum that was echoed by those present.

### 3.3 Graves: Broadwater Cemetery, St Piran's, Christ Church

Bryan Jones and Jennifer Carpenter re-visited Jessie Jefferies' grave in St Piran's churchyard, Perranzabuloe in March to find that nearly all the spring bulbs they planted last autumn had been eaten by mice AGAIN! Only daffodils were left. However, in a later visit in April, the graveyard was looking magnificent with primroses in flower.

The planned work for the Jefferies' family tombstones at Christ Church, Swindon has been completed, thanks to Mike Pringle.

Mike Parrot said that Jefferies' Broadwater Cemetery grave has been kept clean. Work on the fractured kerbstone at the foot of Hudson's grave is still outstanding. Mike Pringle offered to contact a relation (a builder) in Worthing to offer suggestions—re-cement or prop level.

### 4 Annual Report

The annual report was accepted as a true record of the Society's activities. Proposed by Mike Pringle; seconded by John Price and carried.

### 5 Treasurer's Report

There is a very healthy balance at the moment with over £15,000 available for unexpected expenses. A recent statement from the Coventry Building Society reveals a ten-fold increase in interest to that received last year. Mike Pringle proposed acceptance of the accounts, seconded by Royston Cartwright and carried.

### 6 Election of Examiner of Accounts.

Rob Brailsford, a retired chartered accountant, is willing to continue to offer his excellent services. Proposed by Jean Saunders, seconded by Brian Morris and carried. An engagement agreement, issued by Rob, will be signed by the Vice Chair that outlines what is expected of both parties.

### 7 Elections to Executive Council.

Pete Bainbridge is standing down as a trustee but hopes to help again when work and family matters are easier. A vote of thanks and appreciation were recorded. Barry Sloan, Roger Ebbatson and Mike Pringle have served their

latest 3-year term in office but have accepted a nomination by the Executive Council to continue as trustees, along with Andrew Dawes who introduced himself as part of the BBC team in Bristol that works on nature and farming programmes, and as a former trustee of the Richard Jefferies Museum Trust. Brian Morris seconded the nominations, carried by members. The Chair is elected by the Trustees, and this will be discussed at a future meeting. In the meantime, Colin, as Vice Chair will fill the role.

Alastair Watts, a farmer in Cambridgeshire, has been nominated by Jean Saunders and seconded by Barry Sloan to become a member of the Executive Council. Alastair had apologised profusely for being unable to attend today. Blake Lee-Harwood has been nominated by Jean Saunders and seconded by Colin Corkerton. Blake introduced himself as having a lifelong passion for nature and has worked for Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, the RSPB and for the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership. Blake and Alastair's nomination for a 3-year term of office was carried by members.

The Executive Council has formally nominated Colin Corkerton as Hon. Treasurer for a 5-year term of office. Jean reported that Colin had been the Society's deputy Treasurer for several months. Mike Pringle seconded the nomination and the vote was carried.

Jean will be retiring as Hon. Secretary and as a trustee in 3 years time.

8        Motions — None submitted.

9        Any Other Business

9.1 The Malcolm Porteous legacy of £5,000 is a new acquisition and the Executive Council have not discussed ideas fully so far except that projects should have an educational bias given Malcolm's background as a headmaster. Members were asked for practical and achievable suggestions as to how the legacy might be used.

9.2        John Price brought up the problem again about what to do with our own books in store in his garage and would like permission to dispose of the bulk of them. He agreed to compile a list of what was present. Added to that, Michael Sherwood is storing 14 boxes of Jefferies books in his attic, whilst Jean has about 10 large boxes too of miscellaneous items that were rejected as archives for the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre. Royston Cartwright volunteered to speak to Darryl Moody at Swindon library to ascertain whether some books might be distributed to other libraries in the borough.

The business part of the AGM ended at noon.

*Jean Saunders, Hon. Sec., 4 May 2023*

# Annual Report

## TREASURER'S REPORT

**Financial Statement for financial period 1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023**

## Receipts and Payments Account

| <b><u>Receipts</u></b>                  | Unrestricted Funds | Designated Funds | <b>Total 2023</b> | Total 2022 |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| <b><u>Subscriptions</u></b>             | 2472.32            |                  | 2472.32           | 2766.78    |
| <b><u>Donations:</u></b> <i>General</i> | 325.68             |                  | 325.68            | 298.26     |
| <i>Porteous Legacy</i>                  |                    |                  | 0.00              | 5000.00    |
| <i>Rhodes Legacy</i>                    |                    | 1000.00          | 1000.00           | 0.00       |
| <i>BirdinBelly</i>                      |                    |                  | 0.00              | 500.00     |
| <i>Webb Lit</i>                         |                    | 500.00           | 500.00            | 500.00     |
| <b><u>Book Sales:</u></b>               | 1308.75            |                  | 1308.75           | 1017.54    |
| <b><u>Gift Aid Reclaim</u></b>          | 849.43             |                  | 849.43            | 1004.86    |
| <b><u>Interest received</u></b>         | 434.76             |                  | 434.76            | 44.98      |
| <b>Total receipts</b>                   | 5390.94            | 1500.00          | 6890.94           | 11132.42   |

### Expenditure

|                                  |                |                |                 |
|----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| <u>Publications</u>              | 1173.73        | 1173.73        | 1210.90         |
| <u>Rent/Room Hire</u>            | 243.88         | 243.88         | 203.88          |
| <u>Subscriptions paid</u>        | 66.00          | 66.00          | 66.00           |
| <u>Lecture fees</u>              | 50.00          | 50.00          | 80.00           |
| <u>Administration</u>            | 1552.57        | 1552.57        | 1211.31         |
| <u>Insurance</u>                 | 28.00          | 28.00          | 28.00           |
| <u>Webb Lit. Prize</u>           | 1025.00        | 1025.00        | 1036.24         |
| <u>Jefferies Land Fund (JLF)</u> | 175.63         | 175.63         | 240.00          |
| <u>Porteous Legacy</u>           | 5000.00        | 5000.00        | 0.00            |
| <u>Rhodes Legacy</u>             | 1000.00        | 1000.00        | 0.00            |
| <u>Bird in Belly Concert</u>     |                |                | 1000.00         |
| <u>Gift</u>                      |                |                | 0.00            |
| <u>Graves</u>                    |                |                | 550.00          |
| <u>Biography</u>                 |                |                | 3784.00         |
| <b>Total payments</b>            | <b>3114.18</b> | <b>7200.63</b> | <b>10314.81</b> |
|                                  |                |                | <b>9410.33</b>  |

**Excess of receipts over payments**

-3423.87

1722.09

### Statement of Assets

### Designated funds

|           |         |         |
|-----------|---------|---------|
| Biography | 3404.67 | 3404.67 |
|-----------|---------|---------|

|           |          |          |
|-----------|----------|----------|
| Webb Lit. | 20708.87 | 21233.87 |
|-----------|----------|----------|

Cash

funds:-

|     |          |          |
|-----|----------|----------|
| JLF | 10530.40 | 10706.03 |
|-----|----------|----------|

|        |          |
|--------|----------|
| Lloyds | 13755.74 |
|--------|----------|

|        |        |        |
|--------|--------|--------|
| Graves | 138.57 | 138.57 |
|--------|--------|--------|

## Annual Report

|          |           |                 |                 |                 |          |
|----------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|
| Paypal   |           | 0               | General         | 3500.00         | 3500.00  |
| Coventry | B/Society | 41,939.01       | Reserves        | 17412.24        | 15135.48 |
|          |           | <b>55694.75</b> | Porteous        | 0.00            | 5000.00  |
|          |           |                 | Rhodes          | 0.00            | 0.00     |
|          |           |                 | <b>55694.75</b> | <b>59118.62</b> |          |

### Notes to the accounts

The JLF (Jefferies Land Fund) reserve is designated to ensure that any disposal is for educational use. An annual allocation of up to £250 is allowed for research and up to £2000 for the Bursary. There were a couple of enquiries about the Bursary this year but no applications for bursary awards were made.

The John Webb legacy is designated for the annual Richard Jefferies Award. The Award of £1000 is shared by the White Horse Bookshop which sponsors it.

Volume III of the Rossabi biography was published on 1 January 2023.

General funds cover the essential running costs of the Society.

Reserves are available for unexpected expenses, gifts etc.

Administration costs remain relatively low thanks to the generosity of Trustees and members who give their time freely to manage the Society, and contribute towards the objects of the Society. However postage costs continue to increase.

Thanks also to members who have made generous donations in appreciation of the Society's work.

We received a legacy from the Reverend Anthony John Rhodes for £1000. This was used as a contribution to the work by Wessex Archaeology to scan the Richard Jefferies Harrogate bust, the production of a 3D print master of the bust and the production of a silicon mould from the master.

The legacy from Malcolm Porteous for £5000 received in 2022 was given as a grant towards the cost of cataloguing the Samuel Looker Archive at the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre.

All monies received in the PayPal account are routinely transferred to the Lloyds account. There have been no withdrawals from the Coventry Building Society savings account since 2011. The only income arises from interest received.

The Society's Trustees provisionally approved this financial statement at their meeting dated 7 February 2024.

The figures for the yearly receipts and expenditure have been sent to the Charity Commission.

Rob Brailsford (Institute of Chartered Accountants England and Wales), Examiner of Accounts, has checked the accounts, confirmed that the accounts are correct and signed his report, to that effect. We are most grateful and thankful to him for his good service and advice.

*Colin Corkerton, Hon. Treasurer*  
*7 February 2024*



**CHARITY COMMISSION**  
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

**Independent examiner's  
report on the accounts**

**Section A**

**Independent Examiner's Report**

**Report to the trustees/  
members of**

**The Richard Jefferies Society**

**On accounts for the  
period ended**

31 December 2023

**Charity no  
(if any)**

1042838

**Set out on pages**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the period ended 31 December 2023.

**Responsibilities and  
basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

**Independent  
examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

**Signed:**

*Robert Brailsford*

**Date:**

7 February 2024

**Name:**

Robert Brailsford

**Relevant professional  
qualification(s) or body**

Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales

**Address:**

19 Prospect Place, Swindon, SN1 3LQ



Red Admiral on Echinacea, *The Open Air*



Small Tortoiseshell on white Valerian, *Field and Hedgerow*