



SPRING NEWSLETTER 2025

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



'Chiseldon Church', painting in oils by Kate Tryon circa 1910.
Richard Jefferies and Jessie Baden were married here on 8 July 1874.

SPRING MEETING, Saturday 5 April 2025.

Richard Jefferies Museum, Marlborough Road, Coate, Swindon SN3 6AA
1.00pm–4.00pm. Doors open from noon.

Annual General Meeting (1.00pm) Agenda on p.40.

Spring Lecture (2.30pm) Michael Malay *Late Light*

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

Park at Coate Water car park, a short walk from the Museum

(Parking charge: £4.60 for the day).



Michael Malay will be at the Museum on 5 April. He spoke to a packed room about his prize-winning book, *Late Light*, at the White Horse Bookshop on 28 September 2024 as part of the Marlborough Festival of Literature. Our Vice President, John Price (seated right in the photograph), introduced Michael and presented him with a first edition copy of *Hodge and His Masters* and *Round About a Great Estate* with the John Fowles introduction as an addition to his £1000 prize. The *RJS Autumn Newsletter* 2024 contains information about Michael and the reason why his book was selected as the Richard Jefferies Award winner last year.

ZOOM MEETINGS IN 2025

Zoom meetings are held on the first or second Monday of the months of November to January inclusive from 7.30–9.00pm. Details of the next group of winter meetings will be provided in the Autumn Newsletter. Hopefully the author of the next recipient of the Richard Jefferies Award will speak at the Richard Jefferies Birthday Lecture on 3 November 2025 whilst the meeting on 8 December 2025 will focus on a study of and readings from *The Dewy Morn*.



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

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Literary Award: <http://www.richardjefferiesaward.org>

The Annual Membership is £15 for individuals/couples and £8 for UK students. Overseas members pay an extra £8 towards additional postal costs.

GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION

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 2025. Please send your contributions to the Hon. Secretary. The latest newsletters and *Journals* are also available as downloads on the Society's website via the MEMBERS ONLY page. Older publications are available to all on the relevant tabs going back to 1951 for newsletters.

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FROM THE CHAIR

Colin Corkerton

Welcome to the Spring Newsletter 2025 and the Annual Report for 2024.

This year is a significant anniversary for the Richard Jefferies Society. It was founded in 1950 and so this year we celebrate our 75th birthday. In the Society's Journal for 2025, that accompanies this newsletter, Jean Saunders and Peter Robins have written an Editorial Comment to mark the anniversary and also their passing on of the baton for the Journal as this is the last one they will produce. I'm sure all of our members will join me in thanking them for providing such interesting and varied Journals for a number of years. However they haven't left us just yet, they will still be producing the next two newsletters, and so there will be plenty more opportunities to thank them for all they have contributed.



You may have noticed a slight change at the top of this column since the last newsletter. I have been acting Chair since 2023 and now I have put myself forward to become Chair. I follow a very distinguished line of people and find the thought of following them quite daunting. However I want the Society to thrive and continue its long history. I will of course need the help of my fellow trustees to achieve this and also the membership. We continue to look for help in running the Society and would love to hear from any members willing to join us, however small a contribution you think you are able to make. Any help will be appreciated.

We are fortunate that we have many members who have been part of the Society for a long time and must have many memories of their involvement with the Society and those who have joined us more recently will have some stories to tell. Occasionally we include items on why a member joined the Society but if you have other memories I would be interested to hear them. If you would like to email any memories you have to me I will happily read them and maybe we can share them more widely in the future.

Email: cdc.corkerton3@gmail.com

During these 75 years our knowledge of Jefferies and his works has continued to increase and as this newsletter and the latest Journal illustrate

we are still finding out something new each year. Andrew Rossabi has been researching references to Jefferies in Parliament and the one included in this newsletter is just one example showing how much he was concerned with the life and rewards of those who worked as farm labourers. I wonder if any current politician would find cause to quote him in Parliament.

Jefferies should also be a favourite of the Brighton tourist board. His essays on Brighton are amongst his most brightest and they should be delighted with the content of the advert for the Royal Albion Hotel, which Peter Robins discovered, that includes Jefferies' description that 'Brighton is a Spanish town in England, a Seville.' In the following article 'Neologisms' it shows he came up with the word 'champagniness' when describing a portion of Brighton beach. This still feels very apt. Brighton is also the venue of this year's Alliance of Literary Societies (ALS) AGM weekend hosted by the Kipling Society. Our Society will probably be represented there.

I'm sure I'm not the only one who finds our current world a confusing and worrying place. Therefore it is always good to find a reason to be optimistic and find comfort in nature. On the scale of things it may be small, but the regrowth of the Jefferies memorial elm in Surbiton, reported by Alison Fure, is a welcome sign of the resilience of nature. Within Jefferies' writings we find reasons to be optimistic and to experience the radiance of nature.

Lastly, I hope to see some familiar and, hopefully, new faces at our AGM and Spring Lecture on Saturday 5 April at the Richard Jefferies Museum. The Spring Lecture will be given by Michael Malay winner of the Richard Jefferies nature writing award for 2023. I will be there in person but it will also be available online once again for those who cannot make it. Meanwhile I hope you enjoy a 'tumbling sense of abundance and optimism [this] spring' (see pp.19–20).

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## MEMBERS ONLY

The Richard Jefferies Society's website now has a 'Members Only' area whereby those of you, with access to the Internet, will be able to read and download all manner of articles, information and images, along with the texts of works by and about Jefferies and access to some of our archive material.

The link to the contents will be provided by email on request. Please email [richardjefferiessociety@btinternet.com](mailto:richardjefferiessociety@btinternet.com) if you wish to receive the password.

TO THOSE DEPARTED: MARGARET GOULD (1929–6 October 2024)



Margaret Gould on duty at the Richard Jefferies Museum, 1998



RJS outing to Malmesbury Abbey, Sat. 8 June 1996, with many familiar faces including Margaret Evans, Margaret Gould, Phyllis Treitel, Margaret Bathe and Ray Morse in the front row; Sheila and John Povey and Stan Hickerton peering over shoulders.

The Society is saddened to announce the death of Margaret Gould—one time Treasurer of the Richard Jefferies Society (1974–1992) and a member for some 53 years or so. She was also the Society's Librarian and housed our archive of books in her bedroom.

Her very good friend Margaret Bathe (also a Society member) kept in touch for many years. Both Margarets met at Lawn Infants School in Swindon where both their sons, named Graham, were at school together. So a friendship of some 60 years continued—Margaret Gould introduced Margaret Bathe to Alfred Williams and to Richard Jefferies and the two literary societies where they were both very active members.

Margaret was born in 1929 in Walsall and moved to Swindon in 1966 where she was a close friend and neighbour of Harold Adams, founder of the Richard Jefferies Society.

Chris Bowles recalled many happy memories of her at meetings—‘softly spoken with a gentle Brummie accent’. He said that Margaret was a devout Christian and attended Bath Road Methodist Church in Swindon. She knew that she would miss the church deeply when she moved to London to live with her son in 2004. Her son, Graham, said that she ‘was proud of her Black Country roots as well as her Wiltshire connections.’

Evidently, although Margaret championed both Williams and Jefferies, George Eliot was her favourite author whilst *The Mill on the Floss* was her favourite book.

The last Society event she was able to attend was the ‘Jefferies in London’ study day some 10 years ago when we met initially in a church for readings from Jefferies about the city and then listened to Simon Coleman give the key lecture about Jefferies’ London before going to the British Library to look at some of the archive material for Jefferies that included his notebooks.

At her funeral on 30 October 2024 Margaret had requested that a passage from Richard Jefferies should be read out. Her son found this extract from ‘Wheatfields’ marked in her copy of *Nature Near London* and read from ‘watching the reapers from the shadow of the copse’ to ‘before the Pyramids, upon this tiny yellow grain here rubbed out from the ear of wheat.’

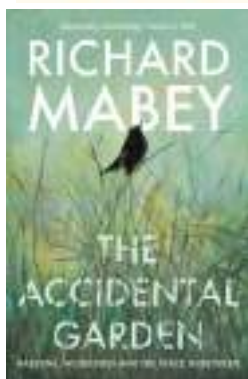
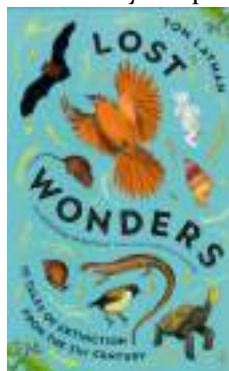
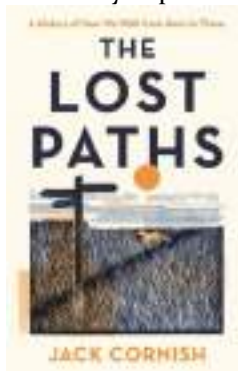
Margaret Bathe said that her dear friend was ‘a positive influence to many through her remarkable life’ and that she ‘fought a long illness with fortitude’.

Our thoughts are with her friends and family.

## THE RICHARD JEFFERIES AWARD

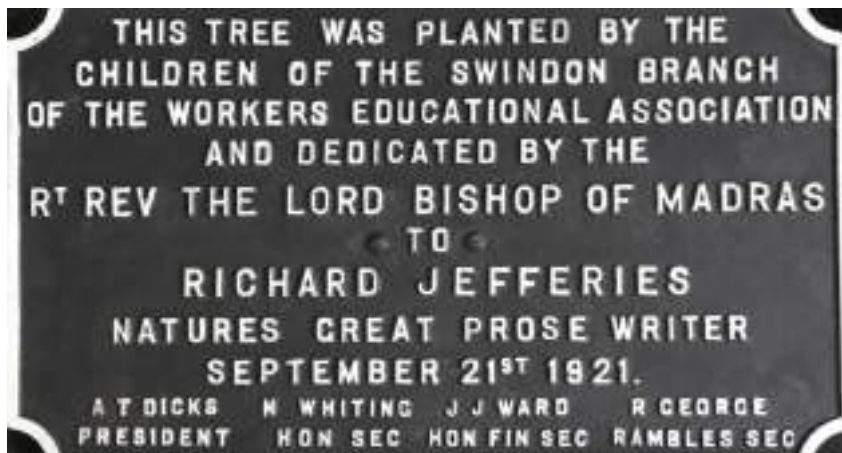
Nominations for 2024 publications drew in 39 books. John Price and Rebecca Welshman, after many months of reading through the submissions, agreed the following short list on 22 January 2025:

- *The Lost Paths* by Jack Cornish, published by Penguin Michael Joseph
- *Lost Wonders* by Tom Lathan, published by Picador
- *The Accidental Garden* by Richard Mabey, published by Profile
- *Nature's Ghosts* by Sophie Yeo, published by Harper North



The judges panel, chaired by Barry Sloan, will announce the winner by May. It is hoped that the author will be able to attend a presentation event at the White Horse Bookshop, Marlborough (sponsors of the award) and might speak at a Society's Zoom meeting too.

## W.E.A. MEMORIAL PLAQUE RESTORED



The Richard Jefferies Museum Trust has restored the cast iron memorial plaque to commemorate a tree-planting event (an oak tree grown from an acorn from Jefferies' farm) by the children of the Swindon Branch of the WEA on 21 September 1921. The original location of the tree-planting event is unknown but the coverage in the *Evening Advertiser* refers to a field near the Coate Reservoir (a stone's throw from the farm). It is unknown when the plaque was moved to the Jefferies' garden. The plaque is now on display in the Museum next to a fireplace. The report of the tree planting that follows was published in the *Swindon Evening Advertiser* (26 September 1921). John Whitehead was the Bishop of Madras at that time.

### **BIRDS' SANCTUARY AS POET'S MEMORIAL Oak Tree Planted Near Coate Reservoir TRIBUTE TO RICHARD JEFFERIES**

*Evening Advertiser 26 Sep. 1921*

An event unique in the history of the Swindon and District Branch of the Workers' Educational Association was the visit on Saturday afternoon to Coate, the birthplace of the great Wiltshire prose poet, Richard Jefferies, and the planting of an oak tree in a field adjoining Coate Reservoir, within a stone's throw of Jefferies' old home.

The young tree was grown from an acorn which came from a tree on the farm, and the ceremony of planting was carried out in the presence of a large gathering by children of members of the W.E.A.

At two o'clock a numerous company assembled at the Corn Exchange, Swindon, and walked across the fields to Coate Reservoir. The company included the Bishop of Madras and his wife, Mrs. Whitehead, C.B.E., Sir James and Lady Currie, the Mayor of Swindon (Ald. E. Jones), Ald., Reuben George, Councillor H. Whiting, Councillor Mrs. Tanner, Mr. Peter King, Mrs. H. Sawyer, J.P., Mrs. E. Whitworth, M.B.E., J.P., Mrs. Gavin and others.

In opening the proceedings, Ald. George said they were particularly pleased to have with them that day the Bishop of Madras and Mrs. Whitehead. Their presence on such an occasion was most exciting. It expressed the world-wide influence of the church, and the sympathy shown with the W.E.A. work. The Bishop would dedicate the tree, and that day would be looked back upon in years to come with pleasant recollections by the children of today who were taking part in the ceremony.

#### The Lonely Poet.

Mr. Peter King then gave a thoughtful address on the life and works of Richard Jefferies and his associations with Coate. He quoted extensively from several of Jefferies' works, including *Round About a Great Estate*, the scenes described in which are laid in and around Coate, *Wood Magic*, *Beavis (sic)* and *The Story of My Heart*. Jefferies, he said, always loved to be alone. As a boy he was lonely, and when he grew to manhood that loneliness created for him a host of friends, but the friendship of the woods and fields and the birds.

It would have been interesting if Jefferies had been alive today—he would have been 72 years old—to have seen him at a gathering of the W.E.A. He would probably have gone away quietly on to the Downs, and spent his time with Nature. In all probability he would have come back after they had gone, and admired the tree, for he was a great lover of woodland.

#### Jefferies' Gun

In a book recently published by Mr. Hudson, who was a present-day Richard Jefferies, he attacked Jefferies because he was fond of using the gun, and actually shooting kingfishers. In defence of Jefferies, he (Mr. King) would like to say he thought it ought to be remembered that Jefferies was a farmer's son, and a farmer carried a gun almost as habitually as a townsman carried a

stick. And as Jefferies grew older he did not use his gun, although he carried it.

Mr. King read quotations from *Wild Life in a Southern County* in support of this statement and ventured to say that Jefferies' bedroom was a bird sanctuary. In conclusion, the speaker said that in years to come the future generations would come to that spot and look upon that tree as a bird's sanctuary, erected to the memory of Nature's great poet.

The tree was then planted by the children, who quickly got to work busily with their little spades, assisted by some of the grown-ups. The Bishop of Madras then dedicated the tree, and this brought the ceremony to a close.

The whole company then just sat down to tea, which was provided in the open air, the afternoon being beautifully fine.

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THE ALS GATHERING AND AGM 2025



The Richard Jefferies Society is a member of the Alliance of Literary Societies.

The 2025 AGM weekend gathering is being held in Brighton on 16–18 May 2025 and will be hosted by the Kipling Society.

The conference on Saturday, 17 May will be at the University of Sussex at Falmer, on the outskirts of Brighton. The conference dinner on the Saturday evening and the welcome dinner on Friday evening will be held at The Old Ship and Hotel Du Vin, both of which are located on the seafront in the centre of Brighton.

For those wanting to stay in Brighton, rooms have been reserved for the ALS at a number of hotels. The link can be found here:

<https://allianceofliterarysocieties.wordpress.com/agmweekend/>

There will be talks about Rudyard Kipling and other authors, a round table discussion on the role of literary societies in the digital age, and a display of items from the university's Kipling papers. Sunday options will be a guided walk around Rottingdean (where Kipling lived for five years; also associated with Angela Thirkell) or a visit to Kipling's house Bateman's at Burwash (N.T.)

BERTHA NEWCOMBE: REDISCOVERED

Those of you who are lucky enough to own the large limited edition (280 copies) of H.S. Salt's *Richard Jefferies: A Study* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1894) will be aware of four illustrations by Miss Bertha Newcombe (17 Feb. 1857–11 June 1947)—an artist and suffragist who attended the Slade School of Art. She made a special visit to localities associated with Jefferies' birthplace in 1893 to paint from life and also wrote an article for *Sylvia's Journal* in March 1894 titled 'Richard Jefferies and his Home in Wiltshire' that included eight illustrations from sketches that we haven't seen. Her 'Coate Farm' and 'Grass Meadows at Coate' watercolours were reproduced in the Worthing Cavalcade edition of *Richard Jefferies: A Tribute* edited by Looker (1946) and attributed to 'Miss B. Newcombe in 1893' whilst the source of the paintings was given as Swindon Corporation.



'Coate Farm'



'Grass Meadows at Coate'

Illustrations reproduced from *Richard Jefferies: A Tribute*

It so happens that Andrew Dawes visited a Thomas Hardy's Wessex exhibition at Museum and Art Swindon (run by Swindon Council) on 25 January 2025 that included a mini-Jefferies' display with three of Miss Newcombe's original watercolours: 'The Reservoir, Coate', 'Grass Meadows at Coate' and 'The Wiltshire Downs from Liddington Castle'. Evidently Swindon Council had only recently discovered the full name of the artist who signed the monochrome paintings of Coate as 'BN' in their archives.

The painting of 'Coate Farm' is currently missing but it is superb news to learn that the original watercolours still exist and can be seen at the new art gallery in Swindon.



'The Reservoir Coate' 'The Wiltshire Downs from Liddington Castle'
Illustrations reproduced from *Richard Jefferies: A Study*



Andrew Dawes' photograph of the original watercolour of
'The Wiltshire Downs from Liddington Castle'

NEWS IN BRIEF

THE FATE OF THE JEFFERIES MEMORIAL ELM, SURBITON

In early September 2024 Alison Fure reported on the memorial elm that was planted next to the Richard Jefferies Bird Sanctuary in Surbiton in September 2018 after Andrew Rossabi had given a talk about Jefferies at Surbiton library. It was a lovely occasion only to be spoilt a few years later when the tree was found to have been brutally attacked and looked beyond recovery. But with some care and love by local people it has started to regenerate again.



11 January 2022

4 September 2024

Photos by Phil Renton

The Society is also extremely grateful to Alison Fure (an ecologist and RJS member) for recording a most interesting and informative interview about Jefferies' Surbiton at the end of November. Ben Ball, a reporter for the 'Birds and Bees' radio show for Swindon 105.5 contacted the Society as he wanted to speak to someone locally about Jefferies. Alison obliged and showed Ben around Jefferies' haunts. The broadcast went out on 20 December and can be downloaded from their website: <https://www.mixcloud.com/swindon1055/birds-and-bees-197/>

There is worrying news from Alison that Richmond College has decided to sell Hillcroft College next to the Richard Jefferies Bird Sanctuary and The Wood—key and sensitive Surbiton wildlife sites. Hillcroft's grounds are an important part of the range and home of many wild animals already struggling in an increasingly urbanised setting. Each plan for the site so far includes the removal of most of the natural habitat, including trees.

A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE: DAYHOUSE LANE

In September 2024 a Wiltshire man, named Sandy, put up a short 17-minute video of his tricycle ride down the hill from Liddington village along Medbourne Lane and on to Dayhouse Lane, passing Jessie (Baden) Jefferies' birthplace and the stone circle first discovered by Richard—then up to Coate farmhouse. Inspired by Jefferies' 'Meadow Thoughts' Sandy cycled on to show the milestone along the old Marlborough Road that indicated 79 miles to London. The video is a charming clip of the old country lane but will also make you shudder to see the ghastly housing development at Coate and the busy Marlborough Road. The video can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpXW8rPDqQk>



RICHARD JEFFERIES WAY

Tony Hewitt is working up an idea to compile a long-distance walk from Lechlade to Goring covering some 252 miles which can be undertaken in sections: North Wessex Downs, Hampshire Downs, High Weald and North Downs, Low Weald and Ashdown Forest, and South Downs, eliminating as much road-walking as possible.

Tony is a new Society member who hails from Cheadle, a place much known to us as Samuel J. Looker's home for many years. Looker was our first President (1950–1965) to whom we owe a great debt. He was a passionate follower of Jefferies and brought many of his unpublished works to the public eye. Tony reminded us that Looker was also a prolific poet and an active member of Staffordshire County Council Library Committee.

'TWEET OF THE DAY' was broadcast on Radio 4 on the 2 December when Sir Michael Palin read a quote by Richard Jefferies about the robin. It was repeated twice on Christmas Day. Thanks are due to Andrew Dawes, our new membership secretary, who produced the programme for the BBC.

INSTAGRAM

Thanks also to Andrew Dawes the Richard Jefferies Society now has an Instagram account to add to the existing Facebook page, to X, to our YouTube channel and our two websites (one is dedicated to the Richard Jefferies Award).

OUR NATURE

The Richard Jefferies Museum Trust's epic 2023 'Wildlife Walk', as part of the Jefferies' 175th birthday celebrations, started from the Old House at Coate to his grave in Broadwater Cemetery, Worthing. The route covered all the main places where he lived in his short life, ending with a birthday party at the Museum on 6 November 2023. All the contributions from the many people involved were put together in a superb journal published in November 2024. Titled *Our Nature*, (A4, 90pp. in full colour), and edited by Mike Pringle, it is available at the Museum (£5 donation) or by post (extra £2.50 UK). For more information email: info@richardjefferies.org, telephone 07768 917466 or send cheque with details to Richard Jefferies Museum Trust, Marlborough Road, Coate, Swindon SN3 6AA.

Richard Stewart's review of *Our Nature*.

Bearing in mind how many books have been published about Richard Jefferies this was definitely something different, as indeed was Mike's previous book *Wild Life*. The subject, a 175-mile journey from Coate farmhouse to his grave at Worthing, should attract those new to the writings of 'the world's first and still greatest nature conservationist' (Roy Cartwright). Getting such a talented and well-known groups of writers to contribute was a definite bonus and each page was carefully designed to attract the reader. I have immersed myself in the writings of Richard Jefferies for many decades but I was still surprised at how many places or street names bore his name. Also the many quotes from Jefferies tended to avoid the well-known passages, again a bonus. I must admit that the front cover didn't have much personal impact but it is obviously more difficult to find a suitable photo in vertical format. This was never meant to be an academic work but the articles did vary in quality. The three-page 'Get Off My Land' which connected to the front cover needed a more nuanced approach to what is a complex matter. However my main concern was the first line of the 'Happiness' article which was a verbatim plagiarised quote from 'The Glory' by Edward Thomas. Mike Pringle's penultimate article was an excellent summary of the contents though far too self-deprecating! Finally, here is a quote from that article which sums up this publication and the passion Jefferies had: 'I realised that what I was experiencing was simply nature doing what nature does: living'.



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. If not listed below, the publication is now out of stock. Some *RJS Journals* are still available. Please enquire.

<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 £40
<i>A Peculiarly English Genius, Volume II, The Years of Struggle, (1867–76)</i> by Andrew Rossabi 2020 (hardback 800pp)	£30.00 £60.00
<i>A Peculiarly English Genius, Volume III, The Years of Success, (1876–83)</i> by Andrew Rossabi 2023 (hardback 800pp)	£30.00 £60.00
<i>Richard Jefferies: A Spirit Illumined.</i> Various writers, 1987 (pamphlet)	£1.50 £3.50
<i>The Jefferies Canon</i> – W.J. Keith, 1995 (pamphlet) - was £3.50	£1.50
'A Natural System of National Defence' – Richard Jefferies, 2014 (pamphlet)	£1.50 £3.50
<i>Richard Jefferies' Letters to Aunt Ellen</i> , 2009 (softback)	£ 3.00 £4.50
<i>Amaryllis at the Fair</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2009. Introduction by Carolyn Clarke (softback)	£ 3.00 £6.00
<i>Ben Tubbs Adventures</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2016. Introduction by Andrew Rossabi (softback)	£6.00 £12.00
<i>Greene Ferne Farm</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2009. Introduction by George Miller (softback)	£ 3.00 £5.00
<i>The Interpreter: A Biography of Richard Jefferies</i> – Audrey Smith, 2008. Introduction by Eric Jones (softback)	£ 3.00 £5.00
<i>The Scarlet Shawl</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2009. Introduction by Andrew Rossabi (softback)	£ 3.00 £6.00
<i>The Dewy Morn</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2009. Introduction by Rebecca Welshman (softback)	£ 5.00 £7.00
<i>Restless Human Hearts</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2008. Introduction by Andrew Rossabi, 2008 (hardback)	£10.00 £20.00
<i>Richard Jefferies: An Index</i> – Matthews & Treitel, 2008. (hardback)	£10.00 £20.00
<i>The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies</i> – Matthews & Treitel, 1994. (hardback)	£10.00 £15.00
<i>World's End</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2008. Introduction by Andrew Rossabi (softback)	£4.00 £8.00
<i>Richard Jefferies: An Anthology</i> – Matthews & Welshman, 2010. (hardback)	£10.00 £20.00

CITINGS OF RICHARD JEFFERIES

Please email your citations to richardjefferiessociety@btinternet.com.

A *Blegburn Dikshonary* by Lancashire journalist Joseph Baron (pictured right) was published locally in 1891 and was hailed with delight by the readers of a number of Lancashire newspapers in which it was syndicated. Although primarily a humorous work it was an important record of local dialect.



In the extract below, published in the *Blackburn Standard* 21 April 1895, a passage from *The Story of My Heart* is quoted to define ‘Tumulus’.

A LANKASHIRE ENCYCLOPAEDIA

Bi Tum O’Dick O’Bobs

TUMULUS—This is th’ name gi’n to a ‘mound’ raised o’er th’ grave o’ onybody as hed bin famous, th’ heighest is i’ Wiltshire—170 feet—an’ there’s one i’ th’ same keawnty as is moore nor a hundred yards long. We use tombstooans i’ these civilized days, wi’ heigh flown inscriptions on’ em. Aw wonder iv it were ayther o’ of th’ two aw’ve mentioned as Richard Jefferies used to sit aside on, an’ think o’ th’ two theawsand year as had slipped away as a second sin’ it were raised: ‘Two thousand times,’ he says in th’ “Story of My Heart,”

the woods grew green, and ring doves built their nests. Day and night for two thousand years—light and shadow sweeping over the mound—two thousand years of labour by day and slumber by night. Mystery gleaming in the stars, pouring down in the sunshine, speaking in the night, the wonder of the sun and of far space, for twenty centuries round about this low and green-grown dome. Yet all that mystery and wonder is nothing to the thought that lies therein, to the spirit that I feel so close.

There’s moore as aw wish aw could quote yo’, but yo’d better wear two and eightpence i’ th’ book an’ read every word for yo’rsels.

Colin Corkerton came across a quote from Jefferies’ ‘Haunts of the Lapwing’ (*The Open Air*) in the National Trust book *Britain’s Landmarks and Legends* (2023) that uses an image of the Uffington White Horse on the cover. In the section for the southwest discussing the haunted places of our ancestors:

Through the sand the water slips, and through the mist the light glides away. Nearer comes the formless shadow and the visible earth grows smaller. The path has faded, and there are no means on the open downs of knowing whether the direction pursued is right or wrong, till a boulder (which is a landmark) is perceived.

Gideon Perret discovered two citations of Richard Jefferies in Nicolas Jenkins' *The Island: W.H. Auden and the Last of Englishness* (London: Faber & Faber, 2024). *The Island* presents the young Auden in the interwar years and gives close readings of his early poetry. On p.124, when discussing Auden's 'The Dying House' (1925) Jenkins says 'Auden was particularly fascinated by imagining human eyes about to pass over into the glazed unresponsive state of a corpse's eyeballs.' He sees parallels in Auden's poem 'Richard Jefferies', written at about the same time in 1925: 'In a poem about the nature writer Richard Jefferies, Auden thinks about the dying man watching the sky "with eyes as bright/As kestrel".'

A few pages later Jenkins examines Auden's 'Lead's the Best' (1926), a poem about mining in the north, which refers to the miners' strike in 1926. Auden sees a world without mine workers as a world losing its symbols of Englishness. In the last stanza Auden mentions Hodge, the figure of the rural peasant 'celebrated by Jefferies and Thomas and so many others, [who] is also now corrupted.' (p.154) This interpretation, however, somewhat follows Katherine Bucknell in *W.H. Auden, Juvenilia, Poems 1922-1928* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994, p.129).

In August last year, Andrew Dawes was alerted to an article about Richard Jefferies in the Spring 2024 edition of *Country Walking Magazine*. Andrew was attending the John Moore Society AGM in Tewkesbury as a guest of their Chair Tony Boyse. Having partaken of a very hospitable morning followed by lunch, the afternoon was taken up with talks and presentations. Tony had asked Andrew to say a few words on the Richard Jefferies Society to the 42 members of the John Moore Society assembled. It was a surprise to Andrew that Tony proceeded to introduce him by holding a copy of *Country Walking Magazine* which contained a double-page spread on Jefferies across pages 58 and 59. The passage quoted came from Jefferies' *Field and Hedgerow*, with an information box alongside noting that 'Richard Jefferies (1848-1887) [was] one of Britain's most influential nature writers and remembered as "the Prose Poet of England's Fields and Woodlands".'

Anonymous in form, the pages did not discuss Jefferies or walking but simply provided a direct quote of the final paragraph from Jefferies' essay

Citations

‘Hours of Spring’. By way of the magazine’s introduction to this it was however noted that: ‘Few have captured the tumbling sense of abundance and optimism a walker feels in spring as Richard Jefferies in 1889’.

Aside from the error in the date, it is poignant of course to remember that Jefferies wrote this essay on the tumbling sense of abundance that spring has to offer while confined to his sick bed, an outdoor man no longer able to connect with the natural world as he once did, a man increasingly hemmed in by the four walls of an indoor life.

The magazine article provided a direct link between writing, and walking, with the use of Jefferies’ words providing something of a literary thought for the day in some ways. The reason why this passage by Jefferies was chosen is not revealed, but that article, and Andrew Dawes’ few words, caused a number of John Moore members to discuss the life of Richard Jefferies at the conclusion of their AGM.

Valerie Haworth came across this by Henry Williamson in an essay ‘Country Life’ published in the *Eastern Daily Press*, 10 April 1944 (and reproduced in *Green Fields and Pavements*, 1995, The Henry Williamson Society).

The born writer is the lonely, odd individual who makes his or her own world, believes in it passionately, and so creates passionate belief in it, among others of a similar nature. Emily Brontë and Richard Jefferies are such born writers: they died before they could build themselves a house or farm with the proceeds of their books.

Michael Sherwood found an extract from *Wood Magic* (‘The Brook’) in a collection of essays and poems extolling the virtues of Britain, titled *Our Nation’s Heritage*, edited by J.B. Priestley (London: Dent, 1939), p.43. It starts: ‘When he woke the next morning, Bevis quite forgot..’ and ends: ‘Why don’t you sing and do nothing else?’ and is the opening passage to Chapter VIII when Sir Bevis questions the brook as to what it is singing about.

Andrew Dawes read an article praising *After London* as a post-apocalyptic novel. On 22 June 2024, James Wallace Harris wrote a comprehensive review of the book for ‘Classics of Modern Literature’ that also included links to where the book could be read and to the audio version recorded for Librivox in 2013 by Ruth Golding.

<https://classicsofsciencefiction.com/2024/06/22/after-london-by-richard-jefferies/>

Peter Robins saw this advertisement (right) for a Brighton hotel that appeared in the 27 June 1929 issue of *The Times*. It is significant to note that the advertiser thought Jefferies was still relevant to readers of *The Times* forty-five years after his essay ‘Sunny Brighton’ was published in *Longman’s Magazine* July 1884 (collected in *The Open Air*).

Let nothing check the descent of those glorious beams of sunlight which fall at Brighton. Watch the pebbles on the beach; the foam runs up and wets them, almost before it can slip back the sunshine has dried them, again. So they are alternately wetted and dried. Bitter sea and glowing light, bright clear sky, dry as dry—that describes the place. Spain is the country of sunlight, burning sunlight; Brighton is a Spanish town in England, a Seville.



The Royal Albion Hotel was built in 1826 and is Grade II* listed but suffered a major fire in 2023 and is permanently closed pending a decision to rebuild or demolish it.

Andrew Rumsey is known to us for having written a very positive review of *Richard Jefferies: A Miscellany* (selected and edited by Andrew Rossabi) for the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society journal. What escaped our notice is an article he wrote about Richard Jefferies and Liddington Hill for his online blog and dated 17 January 2021—also beautifully written and described.

<https://andrewrumsey.wordpress.com/2021/01/17/on-liddington-hill/>

Giles Wood (RJS Member) in the December 2024 issue of *The Oldie* reflects on the difficult task of choosing music for a forthcoming funeral in ‘Requiem for my atheist mother’. He considers Jefferies’ atheism;

Richard Jefferies is often described as an English naturalist and mystic. Where Jefferies is unusual is that this mysticism is combined with atheism. He does not believe in creation, design or providence. To him God is an ‘invisible idol’. And the mind ‘deserves something higher than a god’.

Instinctively wishing to provide some numinous content Wood includes some hymns and organ music by Bach. Better than *My Way*, he concludes.

Citations

Andrew Rossabi has been researching citings of Richard Jefferies in Parliament and found a few references in Hansard. One stood out because it illustrated Jefferies' ability to encapsulate a whole lifetime in a single arresting image. During the second reading of the Agricultural Wages Bill on 2 June 1924, Mr Noel Buxton, the Minister of Agriculture, said:

To sum up this matter of the conditions of labour, there is a very interesting quotation from Richard Jefferies of which I think the House would like to be reminded. Jefferies said that if in front of the farm labourer could be piled up all the work he had done in his life, what a huge pyramid it would make, and then if it were possible to place before him all the rewards of his life's work, they could be held in a clenched hand, like a nut, so that nobody could see them.

Buxton quotes from 'My Old Village', in *Field and Hedgerow*:

If a man's work that he has done all the days of his life could be collected and piled up around him in visible shape, what a vast mound there would be beside some! If each act or stroke was represented, say by a brick, John Brown would have stood the day before his ending by the side of a monument as high as a pyramid. Then if in front of him could be placed the sum and product of his labour, the profit to himself, he could have held it in his clenched hand like a nut, and no one would have seen it.

Michael Sherwood came across a most illuminating discussion about Jefferies between Henry Williamson and C.F. Tunnicliffe (1901–79) in Ian Niall's *Portrait of a Country Artist: C.F. Tunnicliffe RA* (Gollancz, 1980). Tunnicliffe had been introduced to Williamson to undertake the wood-engraved illustrations for a new edition of *Tarka the Otter*, to be published by Putnam's in Autumn 1932. Tunnicliffe visited Williamson at his home in Shallowford, Devon on 24 May [1932] and wrote to his wife, Winifred, about the occasion. Niall probably gathered what happened from the letters. It seems that Tunnicliffe was bombarded with Wagner 'full blast' from the 'great man' when he personally preferred Beethoven and Bach; whilst Williamson declared that he had no time for delicate airs and soothing chords. Williamson extolled the virtues of Richard Jefferies and, in particular, *Bevis* but, whilst Tunnicliffe was also fond of Jefferies' writing he would have 'kicked Bevis's backside'.

Niall writes about this difficult meeting on p.58: 'Williamson had opinions he didn't expect to be questioned by a farmer's son who spoke with a Cheshire burr' whilst Tunnicliffe wanted to learn about Williamson's world and wasn't expecting to tell him that 'Wagner was loud and violent and Bevis

was a prissy lad—the least believable character Richard Jefferies had created, apart from *The Story of My Heart*.’

Tunncliffe went on to illustrate the Lutterworth edition of *Wild Life in a Southern County* (edited by Samuel Looker, 1949) with some twenty glorious wood engravings.

A recent application for the Society’s bursary funding was approved on 6 February 2025. The project will enable Prof. Kübra Baysal to translate *After London* into Turkish. In the process we learnt that Prof. Baysal’s friend and colleague, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nilay Erdem Ayyildiz (whose research focus is British children’s literature) has already translated *Wood Magic* into Turkish and this was published as *Ormanın Büyüsü* (translates as the magic of the forest) in January 2022. Evidently Prof. Ayyildiz was ‘mesmorized by the book.’ We also learnt that Prof. Baysal gained her PhD dissertation (2019) that included presenting *After London* as a window on the Anthropocene.

NOTE ABOUT KATE TRYON

Kate Tryon (1865–1952) was an American Artist, writer and nature lover. She was so passionate about Richard Jefferies’ writing that she wanted to paint in the footsteps of his Wiltshire haunts and came to Coate first in 1910. She revisited five more times and produced 230 oil paintings. Travelling alone with her portable sketch-box, she sought out the views Jefferies described, including those on the cover of this newsletter. The photograph of her (right) at that time was taken on the doorstep to Coate Farm.

In 1960, Sylvia (Tryon) Kramer visited the area and presented thirty-five of her mother’s paintings to the newly-opened Richard Jefferies Museum located in the author’s birthplace. Most of them can still be seen today in their original wooden frames hand-carved by Kate Tryon. At the time a villager told Sylvia, ‘No one in Coate will ever forget the American lady who came over to paint “Jefferies Land”.’

The Society published Kate’s memoir of her visits titled *Adventures in the Vale of the White Horse: Jefferies Land* in 2010.



THE CHURCH OF HOLY ROOD, OLD SWINDON

This article was first published in the Society's Annual Report, 1962 but without the photographs that now add value to the words.

This is the old Parish Church of Hye Swindon which has records of Vicars dating from 1302. It is situated at the junction of the Planks and Mill Lane, behind the Corn Exchange, High Street. The ruins of the church (partially renovated in 1960-61) include a Saxon arch which may indicate the existence of a church on the site before 1302.

The church and churchyard were in continuous use up to about 1850 and in the church Richard Jefferies was baptized. On Sunday, 5th November 1961 a seat in memory of him, presented by our Society was placed in the churchyard which is now a quiet Garden of Rest. A formal presentation was made by Miss K.M. Sewell, second cousin of Richard Jefferies, and the seat was accepted on behalf of Swindon Corporation by the Mayor of the Borough, Alderman T.G. Gay.

The seat bears a plaque with the following words inscribed:

PRESENTED BY
THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY
RICHARD JEFFERIES. AUTHOR
BORN 1848. DIED 1887.
BAPTIZED IN THIS CHURCH



In the churchyard are still standing the vaults of the Goddard and Jefferies families. The following relatives of Richard Jefferies are buried in the family vault:

- Richard Jefferies—died 1825. Aged 87 years. Great-Grandfather of author Richard Jefferies.
- Fanny Jefferies, daughter of Richard and Frances Jefferies—died 1835 Aged 61 years. Great-Aunt of author Richard Jefferies.
- James Luckett Jefferies, son of Richard and Frances Jefferies—died 1850. Aged 74 years. Great-Uncle of author Richard Jefferies.
- Richard Jefferies—died 1832. Son of John and Fanny Jefferies. Aged 10 years. Uncle of author Richard Jefferies.
- Ellen Jefferies, daughter of James Luckett and Elizabeth Jefferies—died 1851. Aged 5 years. Sister of author Richard Jefferies.
- William George Hall M.R.C.S. L.S.A. son of Martha Hall (née Jefferies)—died 1899. Aged 41 years. First cousin of author Richard Jefferies.



Jefferies' family tomb

Until some time in the 19th Century the church pond lay in front of the church. It was replenished from its bed by a spring and the overflow made a stream, which ran southward down the east side of Mill Lane and then turned sharp east around the foot of the hill on which the church stands.



Oil painting of Holy Rood and the mill pond by John Lockett Jefferies, circa 1800

The last mill to straddle the stream in Mill Lane was demolished in 1857. This was the mill looked after by Richard Jefferies' great-uncle, James Lockett Jefferies, the eccentric who was called 'The Old Ghoul'. The whole site of the church and churchyard is now the responsibility of Swindon Corporation.

For a number of years it was the custom for the Vicar of the new Parish Church, built on the hill called Christ Church, to hold a service in the old church to be followed by a procession to the new church. After a lapse of some years this custom was renewed this year.



Remains of Holy Rood, 2012

‘RURAL DYNAMITE’

Horace L. Traubel (1858-1919), an American poet, essayist, friend and biographer of Walt Whitman, launched his own monthly journal *The Conservator* in 1890, which he described as ‘an exponent of the world-movement in Ethics.’ Based in Philadelphia, Traubel typeset the magazine himself, a skill he had acquired when he worked for a local newspaper after leaving school.

Horace L. Traubel
by John Sloan, 1916.
(Pennsylvania Academy
of the Fine Arts)



The issue of September 1900 (No.7) carried a standfirst on page one extracted from Jefferies’ ‘Rural Dynamite’, part II of ‘The Field-Play’, first published in *Time* Dec 1883 and collected in *The Life of the Fields*. The self-confessed digression of Jefferies’ political views was chosen by Traubel to support his lifelong sympathy with the oppressed, and he attacked in *The Conservator* those who sought to constrain liberties. Whitman featured frequently in the journal along with Edward Carpenter and other sympathetic authors.

[Text in brackets omitted by Traubel]

Never was the distinction so sharp between the poor—the sullen poor who stand scornful and desperate at the street corners—and the well-to-do. The contrast now extends to every one who can afford a black coat. It is not confined to the millionaire. The contrast is with every black coat. Those who only see the drawing-room side of society, those who move, too, in the well-oiled atmosphere of commercial offices, are quite ignorant of the savage animosity which watches them to and fro the office or the drawing-room from the street corner. Question it is if any mediaeval soldiery bursting abroad in Sinigaglia were so brutal as is the street rough, that blot and hideous product of

Articles

modern civilisation. How easy it is to point to the sobriety and the good sense of the working class and smile in assumed complacency! What have the sober mass of the working class to do with it? No more than you or I, or the Rothschilds, or dukes of blood royal. There the thing is, and it requires no great sagacity to see that the present mode of dealing with it is a failure and likely to be worse. If you have gunpowder, you should not put it under hydraulic pressure. You should not stir it up and hold matches to it to see if it is there. That is what prosecutions and imprisonments [on charges of atheism and so on] do. [It is stirring up the powder and trying it with a match]...

[All over the country,] hydraulic pressure, in the name of science, progress, temperance, and similar perverted things, is being put on the gunpowder—or the dynamite, if you like—of society. Every now and then some individual member of the Army of Wretches turns and becomes the Devil of modern civilisation. Modern civilisation has put out the spiritual Devil and produced the Demon of Dynamite. Let me raise a voice, in pleading for more humane treatment of the poor—the only way, believe me, by which society can narrow down and confine the operations of this new Devil. A human being is not a dog, yet is treated worse than a dog.

Force these human dogs to learn to read with empty stomachs—stomachs craving for a piece of bread while education is crammed into them. In manhood, if unfortunate, set them to break stones. If imbecility supervene give them bread and water. In helpless age give them the cup of cold water. This is the way to breed dynamite. And then at the other end of the scale let your Thames Embankment Boulevard be the domain of the street rough; let your Islington streets be swept by bands of brutes; let the well dressed be afraid to venture anywhere unless in the glare of gas and electric light! Manufacture it in one district, and give it free scope and play in another. Yet never was there an age in which the mass of society, from the titled to the cottager, was so full of real and true humanity, so ready to start forward to help, so imbued with the highest sentiments. The wrong is done in official circles. No steel-clad baron of Norman days, no ruthless red-stockinged cardinal, with the Bastile (*sic*) in one hand and the tumbril in the other, ever ruled with so total an absence of Heart as the modern 'official,' the Tyrant[s] of the nineteenth century; whose rods are hobbies in the name of science miscalled, in the name of temperance perverted, in the name of progress backwards, in the name of education without food. It is time that the common-sense of society at large rose in revolution against it. [Meantime dynamite.]

For more of Jefferies' political views see *Richard Jefferies Society Journal* No.8, Spring 1999.

NEOLOGISMS

The newly-coined words ‘chumocracy’, ‘wokery’, ‘safe word’ and ‘swearbox’ among others were added to the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 2024, part of a quarterly update for new words.



In 1879 the noted lexicographer James Murray (1837–1915), pictured above, began editing a new version of a dictionary that was to become the *Oxford English Dictionary* and regularly published updates of the latest neologisms. In a review in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7 Dec 1889, of Part V (Cast – Clivy) of the dictionary, Jefferies was cited as having introduced ‘champagniness’.

As for the neologisms of the newspapers, Dr. Murray certainly gives full space and credit to them. Sometimes, indeed, ‘newspaper words’ are treated as belonging to a language of their own—*journalese*, let us call it; but for the most part they are hall-marked, as it were, by Dr. Murray, and admitted to the full honours of a place in the New Dictionary. The *Pall Mall Gazette*—as is natural, we suppose, in an exponent of ‘The New Journalism’—does its fair share of word-coining. *Casual*—both in the sense of ‘a casual pauper’ and in that of ‘a casual ward’—was one of the *Pall Mall*’s earliest coinages. Richard Jefferies, in the *Pall Mall*, invented *champagniness*. Neither this, however, nor *chaperonee* is anything to be greatly proud of. A far more useful coinage—or rather passing of foreign coin—was *chauvinism* and *chauvinist*: both words were used first in the *Pall Mall* (1870). Another *Pall Mall* word, which is surely admirable, is *churchy*. ‘His politics,’ it was written in 1866, ‘are benevolent, Conservative, and churchy.’ It is to be hoped that some of those who read and mark our columns will send to Dr. Murray for his list of special quotations wanted for the next part of his colossal work.

Jefferies’ coining of ‘champagniness’ first appeared in his essay ‘The Bathing Season’, published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 28 July 1884, and collected in *The Open Air* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1885). Describing a crammed triangular patch of Brighton beach he writes,

Yet you hear nothing and see nothing; it is perfectly comfortable, perfectly jolly and exhilarating, a preferable spot to any other. A sparkle of sunshine on the breakers, a dazzling gleam from the white foam, a warm, sweet air, light and brightness and champagniness; altogether lovely.

This passage was quoted in Ann Wroe’s *Six Facets of Light* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016) and in Howard Cunnell’s *Fathers and Sons* (London: Picador, 2017) perpetuating Jefferies’ new noun into the twenty-first century.

JEFFERIES SILVER CUP AND SEAL

RICHARD JEFFERIES

I see in *The Times* of May 21 that it is proposed to erect a memorial to Richard Jefferies. I beg to state that he was my grandfather's cousin—I do not know if there are other relatives living. I have a silver cup which belonged to Richard's grandfather and, incidentally, my grandfather's grandfather, marked R 1 1765. I was informed it was won in a quarterstave contest. I also have a seal with the family arms engraved thereon.—Mr. ROBERT JEFFERIES, Teasel, Lodge Lane, Collier Row, Romford, Essex.

Peter Robins came across an interesting letter in *The Times* dated Wednesday 25 May 1938 that contains information new to us, albeit somewhat of a mystery too. The letter was written by a Robert Jefferies who isn't on the Jefferies' family tree but who is clearly related from what he writes. Richard Jefferies senior (1738–1825), who started up the bakery and mill business in Old Swindon and who bought the farm at Coate in 1800, would have been a fit young man of 27 in 1765 and, perhaps, the engraved silver cup trophy was won in a quarter-staff event by our Richard Jefferies' great grandfather. Richard's grandfather John wasn't born until 1784. But why and how did Robert end up owning the silver cup and seal?

Robert George Jefferies was born on 5 March 1893 in Hampshire to George Henry and Fanny Jane Jefferies. His father was a corn dealer and baker; born in Kensington in 1864. Robert's grandfather was Phillip Jefferies (bp December 1826); a farmer of some 100 acres in Seend, Wiltshire (situated some 28 miles from Swindon), Phillip was not a first cousin of Richard Jefferies. Robert's great-grandfather was also a Robert, born in Seend on 12 October 1782—a yeoman, just 2 years older than Richard Jefferies' grandfather and it is possible that they were friends as well as distant relations of the Draycot Foliat Jefferies line that goes back to the 1600s. At the time of Robert's letter to *The Times* he was a section house warden in the police. He lived with his wife Grace (née Chipping), daughter Vera and son James. The couple married in Chertsey in 1914 where Vera was born in 1921 but were in Romford by the time their son arrived in 1923. Robert died on 27

May 1945 aged 52 in Ilford as a result of 'war services'.

The Jefferies' Coat of Arms we know about but not the fact that a seal existed. John Luckett Jefferies (RJ's uncle) drew 'Jefferies coat of arms' which he labelled as such in his sketch book .



There is an interesting piece about the game of quarter-staff in *Old English Sports: Pastimes and Customs* by P.H. Ditchfield M.A (Methuen & Co., 1891). Ditchfield was a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and Secretary of the Berkshire Archaeological Society; his book focuses on sports in Berkshire.



The game of quarter-staff is an old pastime which was a great favourite among the rustics of Berkshire. The quarter-staff is a tough piece of wood about eight feet long, which the player grasped in the middle with one hand, while with the other he kept a loose hold midway between the middle and one end. The object of the game was, to use the forcible language of the time, to 'break the head' of the opponent. On the White Horse Hill, where Alfred fought against the Danes, and carved out on the hill-side the White Horse as a memorial of his victory, many a rural sport has been played, and at the periodical 'scourings of the Horse' many a Berkshire head broken to see who was the noted champion of the game.

But none of this brings us any closer to knowing who won the silver trophy or why Robert ended up with it. And where is it now?

BIRTHDAY LECTURE: *DOWNLAND*—Zoom Meeting 4 November 2024.
Attendance: 34. Report by Andrew Dawes.

For many we unconsciously absorb sights, sounds and emotional connections during our formative years; deeply rooted experiences which we recall fondly in later life. Some, including Richard Jefferies of course, wrote of his awakening experiences through essays and prose. Others like Anna Dillon and Jonathan Davidson revisit past, transient events through art and poetry.

The Society was delighted to host both Anna and Jonathan who had agreed to present the Richard Jefferies Birthday Lecture to discover more of their new collaborative book *Downland*, an artistic venture of poems by Jonathan and paintings by Anna creatively deepening our appreciation of a familiar landscape through a journey of words and imagery. Chair of the Society Colin Corkerton began the proceedings promptly with a brief résumé of Richard Jefferies' life for those joining in who may be less familiar with his work, before then passing the baton, or should that be creative wand, over to Anna and Jonathan.

Anna was recovering from a cold, so to save her voice, Jonathan began by detailing the genesis of their book. *Downland* was inspired by the Vale of the White Horse which when Jonathan was growing up in 1960's Didcot was in Berkshire. Today this area has become Oxfordshire but he suggested we can think of the landscape of the Ridgeway extending as 'a curve in the shape of a bow, a doubly-curved Cupid's bow' as Edward Thomas described it in his book *The Icknield Way*. It was however a book by Patrick Dillon (Anna's father) and the late Eric Jones, *The Middle Ridgeway and its Environment*, illustrated by Anna which first brought her artwork to Jonathan's attention, not least and intriguingly as her large paintings do not contain people. Creatively the artist and the poet have collaborated ever since.

Throughout the talk, which both Anna and Jonathan sprinkled with references to Richard Jefferies, they outlined some of their creative results for this vast rolling landscape. Anna revealed a number of her paintings; *The Icknield Way* (the book's cover), 'Old Down', 'Lammy Down', 'Juniper Hollow', 'Bury Down', 'Wayland's Smithy', 'Sparsholt Firs' and others. Her painting 'The Aerial Horse', was followed by an explanation of the colours she uses with a reference to Jefferies' 'Marlborough Forest' essay, which as she commented, shows Jefferies extraordinary writing is of an artist who has an eye for colour, almost in the same way as David Hockney creates vibrancy in his landscape paintings. Alongside Anna's images Jonathan read excerpts from his poems

written to accompany her paintings in the book, which he described as taking the reader from just south of Swindon to the Thames at Goring.

One painting, 'The Industrial Henge', a dramatic landscape complete with the now-demolished Didcot Power Station, prompted Anna to ask 'What would Jefferies feel about the industrial aspects of this landscape?' The associated poem was influenced, Jonathan continued, by the works of Australian artist Roye England who wanted to preserve the landscape of his adoptive country.

Before the talk came to an end with their final painting of the presentation, Anna and Jonathan replied to a number of questions from those gathered. Patrick Dillon reminded the audience that her painting 'The Liddington Climb' was Eric Jones's favourite as it encompasses the landscape around Ashbury and the Red Barn which Jones wrote about in 'The Gamekeeper Away From Home', detailed in the *Richard Jefferies Society Journal* No. 17 (2008). Jean Saunders added to the discussion with a lively and informative account of the memorial shrines hanging on the trees in Liddington Copse..

Their presentation was then concluded with Anna's painting, 'Kingstanding Hill', a view commanding the landscape Edward Thomas would have walked while on the Icknield Way. Jonathan's final poem referenced this landscape, the poppies advancing towards the viewer, a landscape he finds inspirational, due to his remembering the many people who have passed this way, as they have done for millennia.

An apt ending then from both artist and poet to their book *Downland*, whose introduction contains a quote from *The Amateur Poacher*:

Those only know a country who are acquainted with its footpaths. By the roads, indeed, the outside may be seen; but the footpaths go through the heart of the land.

READINGS FROM *AFTER LONDON* —Zoom Meeting, 9 December 2024.
Attendance: 19. Report by Andrew Rossabi.

The meeting was led by our President, Andrew Rossabi, who observed that *After London* had replaced *The Story of My Heart* as the work by Jefferies most often referenced today. The first draft, in three volumes, was completed as early as the summer of 1882, almost three years before the novel's publication in one volume by Cassell in April 1885. That *After London* was thinly disguised autobiography was especially apparent in the first twelve chapters of the second part. Andrew related the characters to their originals, and associated Felix's voyage across the Great Lake with the period when

Reports of Meetings

Jefferies left his wife and baby son behind in Swindon while he stayed for most of 1876 with his aunt in Sydenham, to look for a house near London and strengthen his Fleet Street contacts.

Our Hon. Sec. Jean Saunders selected an extract from Part I Ch. IV ‘The Invaders’ that showed Jefferies’ sense of injustice and compassion for the ordinary man. Society had relapsed into barbarism: the able-bodied were reduced to slaves, and their labour was brutally exploited. Savage punishments were inflicted on the slightest pretext and lined the pockets of the Prince and the barons. Jefferies ended with bitter irony: ‘... and all these things are done in the name of morality and for the good to the human race’.

Our Chairman Colin Corkerton read the opening of Part I Chapter 1, ‘The Great Forest’. Jefferies’ account of the land reverting to woodland was corroborated by an article in *British Wildlife* magazine (October 2024) titled ‘Rewilding and the Woodland Ground Flora’ by forest ecologists George F. Peterken and Keith J. Kirby. They referred to the Broadbalk Wilderness at Rothamsted Research station in Herts, where an area had been left to develop ‘naturally since 1870 when part of an arable field was left untouched.’ The timescales for reforestation mentioned by Jefferies tallied with what had happened at Broadbalk. The account of abandoned farmland in Chapter 7 of Isabella Tree’s book *Wilding* described the same process. Finally, in *Wild Life in a Southern County* Jefferies had said that the downs in olden times were mostly covered in wood.

The character of Oliver in Part II Chapter II ‘The House of Aquila’ resonated with Lucille Kelleher as a portrait of Richard Jefferies’ brother Harry, while the description of Felix’s physical weakness, pride, and sarcasm tallied with all she had read about Jefferies, her great-grandfather. Lucille read the passage at the end where Felix, at last successful and powerful, meets fresh difficulties, because he cannot easily leave the shepherds and return home. The regeneration of Chernobyl and plans for rewilding cemeteries to encourage insects, birds, and flowers, showed Jefferies was ahead of his time in his description of the regeneration of the landscape.

After London did not particularly resonate with Robin Stapleford. He read the passage from Part II Chapter XXI ‘A Voyage’, where Felix wakes and is struck by the beauty of the lake, the waters of which are perfectly still and mirror the trees along the banks. He launches his canoe, paddles out, and hoists the sail. The breeze catches it, the cutwater divides the ripples, a bubbling sound arises, while Felix reclines in the stern: ‘Physically awake, he mentally slumbered. It was rest.’

Alison Fure related the dystopian element in *After London* to the so-called regeneration of London's housing estates, such as the Heygate Estate at Elephant and Castle, and the decanting of its population, so that the estate was left in a state of dereliction 'with leaves piling against walls'.

Jefferies' concern with water pollution was evident in his description of the Thames: 'The black water bears a greenish-brown floating scum, which forever bubbles up from the putrid mud of the bottom. When the wind collects the miasma, and, as it were, presses it together, it becomes visible as a low cloud which hangs over the place'. (Part I Chapter V 'The Lake') The passage echoed a diary entry Jefferies made in 1884: 'The Thames. Putrid black water, decomposed body under the paddle wheel. Deeds of darkness... The sewer system and the W.C. water... The ground prepared for the cholera plague... The whole place prepared for disease & pestilence'. (NB XIII, 21 July 1884, cited in Mike Davis, *Dead Cities* (2002), p.366)

The note may echo Jefferies' real-life experience of the drainage system in Tolworth. In the 'The History of Tolworth' Bob Phillips writes that the owner of 'Woodside', the terraced house rented by Jefferies, requested the Surbiton Drainage Board to provide proper drainage for the property. This was refused and we know from minutes of meetings held in the Metropolitan Archives that the older parts of Surbiton were covered in cesspools without proper drainage.

Finally, Jefferies lived not far from the Lambeth and Chelsea Waterworks that supplied London with clean water using a sand filtration system. The Lambeth Waterworks supplied Brixton where, decades before, John Snow discovered that those taking water from a pump that supplied one side of the street were infected with cholera and those living opposite were not. The latter were supplied by the Lambeth Waterworks, which took its water from the River Mole rather than the Thames.

In response, Colin mentioned the 'Great Stink' in London in 1858, caused by the sewage in the Thames, and how it affected MPs in the newly built Houses of Parliament. This led to the construction during the 1860s and 1870s of the sewage system designed by Sir Joseph Bazalgette. Previously, diseases such as cholera were thought to be caused by foul-smelling air, miasma. It was not until 1883 that Robert Koch identified the cholera bacillus in India. Even so, the idea that the air was to blame persisted for some years. See Stephen Halliday, *The Great Stink of London. Sir Joseph Bazalgette and the Cleansing of the Victorian Capital* (Sutton Publishing, 1999).

Reports of Meetings

Robert Albright thought *After London* resonated today because of what was happening to the environment and the dismal prospects for the survival of mankind, let alone the possibility of nuclear war. Robert was less interested in the development of the characters, which many people generally found difficult in Jefferies' novels.

Tim Bowly was puzzled by the abrupt ending. Jefferies hadn't resolved some major problems: how, when he returned home, would Felix persuade Aurora to accompany him to the new kingdom he planned to found? Would he bring his father and Oliver with him? Andrew agreed that the ending was controversial and thought by many readers to leave the novel hanging in the air. However, the *Pall Mall Gazette* reviewer judged it artistically perfect. Jean wondered if the ending was the result of the abridgement enforced by Cassell. However, Jefferies' synopsis of the three-volume version suggested that the original ending was the one we have.

Annabel Gormack cheerfully admitted to being one of the 'dull' readers identified by the *Pall Mall Gazette*, one who would have liked more at the end. She was amazed by the foresight Jefferies showed in the first part, by how far ahead of his time he was. She loved that part and also enjoyed the story of Felix's adventures, but felt the ending was too abrupt.

Discussion then turned to the original manuscript of the novel in the British Library, which Andrew had examined. Jefferies had originally left blank spaces for the names of the characters, which he had inserted later. There were no chapter divisions or paragraphing, which was carried out by Cassell, who also corrected Jefferies' English in one or two places. But in essence, the manuscript was the same as the printed version.

In conclusion, Jean thanked Andrew for leading the meeting and for his research on *After London* and on Jefferies' life and works in general.

STUDY OF *THE SCARLET SHAWL*—Zoom Meeting, 13 January 2025.
Attendance 14. Report by Jean Saunders

Our Chair, Colin Corkerton, suggested that the Society might study Jefferies' first published novel by Tinsley in 1874 and he hosted the meeting. Is *The Scarlet Shawl* truly as bad as many otherwise favourable commentators of Jefferies' writing proclaimed? What are its failings and strengths? Colin provided background information about the novel drawn mainly from Andrew Rossabi's excellent introduction to the Petton

paperback edition that the Society published in 2009,¹ Jefferies' biographical content and overview of the novel drawn from Vol II of Rossabi's *A Peculiarly English Genius*, along with an essay penned by the late George Miller that gave bibliographical details (*RJS Journal* No. 29 (2015)).

Colin noted that the 1870s was a period of change in industry, agriculture, education, travel, and political reform along with the mass movement of people from rural areas moving into towns. Bookshops in railway stations became a source of popular reading matter particularly the cheap and melodramatic yellowbacks with their absurd plots and dramas. It was to this audience that *The Scarlet Shawl* was aimed. Andrew Rossabi confirmed that Jefferies' motives for writing the book were purely financial. Fiction was seen as a means to open the doors to 'fame and fortune' and Richard had a new wife to support.

The published reviews at the time were favourable but it was Besant, Salt and later commentators who denigrated the novel's value so strongly.

There is little dialogue, the key players are unlikeable, but there is wit and sarcasm in the description of characters and Jefferies' passages of narrative are excellent. He writes as a reporter not a novelist. There is much use of the symbolism of colours including that of the scarlet shawl itself. This in itself was questioned by Tim Bowly as Jefferies mixes up descriptions of Tyrian purple, derived from sea snails that produced a reddish purple, with scarlet—a more vivid red that is often associated with immorality—its use in the book's title would have widened its appeal. Tim agreed that the characters aren't developed (Master George for example) and become isolated. John Price also found the main characters (Nora and Percival) unattractive, the lack of dialogue striking—and their actions described through the eye of an observer. Jefferies uses very educated language, throwing in classical and philosophical allusions that might have put off readers of pot-boilers. Jefferies' own feelings are well-expressed and very interesting. Jean Saunders gave an example of a passage that demonstrates Jefferies' own strength of character and strong self-belief—he was not afraid to stand out from the crowd—the 'poppy in the cornfield'. Jefferies writes well about the subjects he knows about: e.g. the description of the regatta based on his own experiences of sailing on Coate Water² and, perhaps, on

¹ The Society's own paperback edition used the cover image of the yellowback version of *The Scarlet Shawl* that Tinsley Brothers published in 1877 particularly for sale at railway stalls.

² Ed. Jefferies wrote an article about the Coate Water Regatta for the *Wilts & Glos Standard* in July 1873 (a year before *The Scarlet Shawl* was published). See *RJS Journal* No 36 (2021).

Reports of Meetings

the sea; his detailed knowledge of the inside of a church that Nora describes and loves. But the story lacks narrative drive and the action all comes in the last few pages. John compared the books of writers whose novels were first serialised in magazines and newspapers that left the reader with a cliff-hanger at the end of each episode.

Lucille Kelleher, in common with others present, took a while to get into the story. Jean wondered whether this was the reason why Besant and Salt hated the book—perhaps they got no further than the first chapters that are the worst and dreary. Lucille was pleased to see the dedication of the book to Jefferies' Aunt Ellen Harrild—he might have drawn on his many years sharing her lifestyle for his characters. But Lucille disliked Jefferies' objectivization of women and wondered about his own relationship with Jessie, his wife. There are so many negative remarks about marriage in the novel when he was about to marry himself, and even more so in *Restless Human Hearts* as Andrew Rossabi pointed out. But Andrew could find no evidence of problems in their marriage albeit Jefferies needed periods of solitude to recharge—marriage would have disrupted this. Jessie was also very religious—a possible source of antagonism. And Jefferies did leave Jessie with a young baby in Swindon for many months whilst he was seeking somewhere for them to live nearer London. Sylvia Jones was not at all surprised about the subjugation of women at that time—Jessie would have known what was expected of her. It is only in very recent years that men and women have taken a more equal role in family life. That being said, Andrew pointed to the very strong personalities, largely based on Jefferies' own, of many of his female characters in his works. It was often the male characters who were portrayed as weak in Jefferies' novels.

John Price wondered if the situations in the story that stopped Nora's wedding at the altar was a trope followed by others, e.g. 'The Graduate' and the final episode of 'Gavin and Stacey'.

There was much to like in the book—his passages of description are there but so little of Jefferies' nature-writing and his mysticism. But there are gems where he excels at painting pictures with words. Andrew liked *The Scarlet Shawl* the most of the three Tinsley books.

Colin thanked everyone for their contribution and for the interesting discussion. He encouraged members to read the excellent information published about the novel mentioned in his introduction to the meeting as well as the novel that is still available as a paperback from the Society under our Petton imprint.

THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY

1 January to 31 December 2024

Membership

There were 196 Members at 31 December 2024, mainly based in the UK, but also in Europe, USA, New Zealand, Australia and Canada. The following joined the SOCIETY in 2024: Larissa Adameck, Louise Bessent, Mark Haller, Tony Hewitt, Karen Housby, Michael Malay, Gina Musty, Naomi Oakley and Sarah Paiero and Paul Smith. Sarah Troughton rejoined as a Life Member. The Facebook page has 366 members, X has 591 followers and Instagram 107.

The Executive Council met in February, June and October.

Members of Executive Council at 27 April 2024 (* not a trustee)

Name	Office
Colin Corkerton	Treasurer elected to 2028. Vice Chair and then Chair from 2/10/24
Andrew Dawes	Member. Re-elected to 2027. Mem. Sec. from Oct 2024
Patrick Dillon	Co-opted Vice Chair 2/10/24*
Roger Ebbatson	Member. Re-elected to 2026
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*. Died on 1 May 2024
Alastair Watts	Member. Re-elected to 2027
Rebecca Welshman	Member. Re-elected to 2027

A sub-committee consisting of Colin Corkerton, Andrew Dawes, Lucille Kelleher, Blake Lee-Harwood and Rebecca Welshman was set up to find replacements, by the 2026 AGM, for the roles currently carried out by Jean Saunders. However the objectives of the sub-committee also include developing a strategy for the future of the Society. Andrew Dawes was appointed as Membership Secretary from October 2024.

Zoom meetings were held in the winter months including the Birthday Lecture and Study Day. The Spring Lecture followed the AGM at the Museum and was given by Matthew Oates.

The Richard Jefferies Award was won by Michael Malay for *Late Light*. The judging panel consisted of Barry Sloan (Chair), John Price and Rebecca Welshman (who drew up the shortlist), Roger Ebbatson, Colin Corkerton, Patrick Dillon and Debby Guest.

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

The Society commissioned staff at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre to fully catalogue our archives. The catalogue is available on the website.

Social media now plays an important role. The Society has a presence on Facebook, X, Instagram and You Tube.

Annual General Meeting

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & SPRING LECTURE
RICHARD JEFFERIES MUSEUM,
MARLBOROUGH ROAD, COATE, SWINDON SN3 6AA
SATURDAY 5 APRIL 2025, 1.00–4.00pm

This year the AGM and the Spring Lecture will take place at the Richard Jefferies Museum, courtesy of the Richard Jefferies Museum Trust. There will be a Zoom element for those unable to attend in person. The Zoom link will be sent by email to all members with a registered email address. There is no need to register.

The Museum will be open from noon.

AGENDA

Annual General Meeting will start at 1.00pm

- 1 From the Chair
- 2 Minutes of the last AGM, 27 April 2024 (see pp.41–43)
- 3 Matters Arising
 - 3.1 Richard Jefferies Award
 - 3.2 Management of the Society
 - 3.3 Richard Jefferies Museum Trust
- 4 Treasurer's Report (see pp.44–45)
- 5 Election of Examiner of Accounts: Rob Brailsford.
- 6 Elections to Executive Council. Patrick Dillon and our co-opted Vice Chair is nominated by the Executive Council to be elected for a 3-year term of office to 2028. Roger Ebbatson and Blake Lee-Harwood (current Members) are nominated to extend their period of office from 2026 to 2028.
- 7 Motions (none proposed by the Executive Council)
- 8 Any Other Business

Any motions or resolutions for debate should be sent to the Hon. Sec. before 20 March 2025, as should nominations for Executive Council members. Both should be proposed and seconded.

There will be a very short break between the AGM and Spring Lecture. The Museum will be open from noon for anyone wishing to look around or eat their packed lunch beforehand in the garden.

2.30pm SPRING LECTURE: Michael Malay will talk about his award-winning book *Late Light* in person. See inside front cover for more information.

MINUTES of the Annual General Meeting of the Richard Jefferies Society held at the Richard Jefferies Museum on Saturday 27 April 2024 at 11.00am.

Present: Gillian Bromhead, Roy Cartwright, Colin Corkerton, Andrew Dawes, Roger Ebbatson, Mike Pringle, John Price, Alastair Watts and Tim Walsh. **Present on Zoom:** Tim Bowly, Mike Parrot, Andrew Rossabi, John Sanders, Jean Saunders and Barry Sloan.

Apologies: Andy Binks. Elizabeth Derrington, Patrick Dillon, Valerie Haworth, Geoff Hirst, Lucille Kelleher, Michael Malay, Piers Maynard, Brian Morris, Naomi Oakley, Tom Saunders, Rosemary Savage, Robert Slade, Tony Taylor and Rebecca Welshman.

1. FROM THE VICE CHAIR

Colin Corkerton welcomed all present at the Richard Jefferies Museum and on Zoom. He conveyed our deep regret to announce the death of Eric Jones, on 1 March 2024. John Price was invited to give a brief tribute to our Honorary Vice President. John spoke of Eric's huge and active role within the Society, his distinguished academic and literary career, his passion for bird-watching and his relation to Jones the gamekeeper at the infamous keeper's cottage, Hodson in the 1940s. Eric will be sadly missed.

2. MINUTES OF LAST AGM

The minutes of the last meeting, held at the RJ Museum and by Zoom on 29 April 2023, were accepted as a true record of proceedings. Proposed by Mike Pringle, seconded by John Price and carried by Members with a show of hands.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Richard Jefferies Award. The winner of the best 2023 publication will be announced publicly on 3 May. The winner will be invited to give a presentation to the Society and will be speaking at the Marlborough Literary Festival at the end of September at a gathering at the White Horse Bookshop.

There have been two nominations so far for this year's publications. Jean Saunders queried the position with regard to the acceptance of poetry collections for nomination. Barry Sloan advised that poetry collections by the same author would be acceptable but that we might overlook the requirement to not include any previously published material.

3.2 Looker Archive Project. Colin reminded members about the Porteous legacy of £5,000 that was donated to the Wilts. & Swindon History Centre to catalogue the Samuel Looker archive and to integrate it with the Society's other archives. Naomi Oakley, the project leader and her team of volunteers

Annual General Meeting

have virtually completed the work and a draft catalogue running to 107 pages was sent to the Executive Council two days ago for comment. When finalised this will form the basis of the online catalogue. Colin visited the History Centre on Thursday and described the new exhibition about the project that has been put together in the entrance foyer and will run until the end of May.

3.3 Management of the Society. Colin explained that the Society's Executive Council has set up a sub-committee to find ways to keep the Society alive for another 75 years. He is preparing an article for our next newsletter to highlight the results of the recent survey that was sent to 130 members. There was a 50% response rate which is encouraging. There is some progress in filling some of Jean Saunders' roles. Andrew Dawes recently attended an Alliance of Literary Societies' meeting where other Societies described how they were making best use of social media to good effect to promote their activities.

3.4 Richard Jefferies Museum Trust. Mike Pringle reported that the Jefferies' sitting room (i.e. current meeting room) was currently being redecorated. The Trust has produced and printed a programme of events for 2024 that will be circulated to Society members. The planning application for the cowshed restoration project is awaiting one final report before submission to Swindon Council but the money to pay for the planning application was met as a result of Mike's epic fundraising cycle ride last autumn.

4. ANNUAL REPORT

The annual report was accepted as a true record of the Society's activities. Proposed by Roy Cartwright; seconded by Tim Walsh and carried. Tim Bowly questioned whether it was necessary to include so much constitutional information in the Report. The Executive Council will review what the Charity Commission requires in an Annual Report [albeit that the Society is under no obligation to produce one with an income well below the £25,000 threshold].

5. TREASURER'S REPORT

Colin Corkerton had nothing further to raise and there were no queries. Andrew Rossabi proposed acceptance of the accounts, seconded by Alastair Watts 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 Andrew Dawes and carried by Members.

7. ELECTIONS TO EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Rebecca Welshman has served her 3 year term of office but has accepted a nomination to continue as a trustee. Our Constitution requires that a third of our trustees stand down at the AGM. To meet this requirement, Andrew Dawes and Alastair Watts are nominated to stand as trustees until 2027 instead of 2026. A vote was carried by Members that Rebecca, Andrew and Alastair's terms of offices should be extended to 2027.

The Exec. Council is still without an elected Chair. This should be resolved soon.

8. MOTIONS — None to consider.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.1. Andrew Dawes highlighted the fact that it is the 75th anniversary of the Society next year and asked for practical and achievable suggestions as to how this might be celebrated. He suggested a possible visit to Halsway Manor, Somerset, that offers year-round residential courses and workshops focusing on traditional folk arts. Jefferies would have visited Halsway on his Somerset venture that led to the writing of *Red Deer*.

9.2. Broadwater Cemetery. Michael Parrott updated Members on the Jefferies' grave and the cemetery in general that has flourished this spring with an abundance of primroses. He was particularly concerned about the discolouration of the marble and the algae growth. He has been advised that using bleach regularly does more harm than good and is not good for wildlife either. When the grave was thoroughly cleaned and the letters were re-leaded some 14 years ago the stone mason, employed by the Society, skimmed off a thin layer of marble and the grave looked like new. But this isn't an exercise that can be repeated regularly either.

9.3 Future AGM and Spring Lecture. Tim Bowly suggested that future AGMs and Spring Lectures might be timetabled to follow each other rather than break for lunch in between. He suggested, perhaps, an AGM at 2pm followed an hour or so later by the talk. The pros and cons of this idea were highlighted but the Executive Council will give this serious thought in view of the fact that fewer numbers of members can attend meetings in person now compared with the good old days at Liddington Village Hall.

The business part of the AGM ended at 11.50.

Jean Saunders
Hon. Sec.
28 April 2024

Annual General Meeting

TREASURER'S REPORT

Financial Statement for financial period 1 Jan 2024 - 31 Dec 2024

Receipts and Payments Account

<u>Receipts</u>		Unrestricted Funds	Designated Funds	Total 2024	Total 2023
<u>Subscriptions</u>		2695.56		2695.56	2472.32
<u>Donations:</u>	General	218.97		218.97	325.68
	Rhodes Legacy			0.00	1000.00
	Webb Lit		500.00	500.00	500.00
<u>Book Sales:</u>		303.67		303.67	1308.75
<u>Gift Aid Reclaim</u>		522.32		522.32	849.43
<u>Interest received</u>		1191.32		1191.32	434.76
Total receipts		4931.84	500.00	5431.84	6890.94

Expenditure

<u>Publications</u>	1255.27		1255.27	1173.73
<u>Rent/Room Hire</u>	255.88		255.88	243.88
<u>Subscriptions paid</u>	75.00		75.00	66.00
<u>Lecture fees</u>	150.00		150.00	50.00
<u>Administration</u>	822.85		822.85	1552.57
<u>Insurance</u>	28.00		28.00	28.00
<u>Webb Lit. Prize</u>		1012.00	1012.00	1025.00
<u>Jefferies Land Fund (JLF)</u>		0.00	0.00	175.63
<u>Porteous Legacy</u>		0.00	0.00	5000.00
<u>Rhodes Legacy</u>		0.00	0.00	1000.00
<u>Gift</u>	500.00		500.00	0.00
Total payments	3087.00	1012.00	4099.00	10314.81

Excess of receipts over payments

1332.84

-3423.87

Statement of Assets

			2024	2023	
			<u>Designated funds</u>		
<u>Statement of Assets</u>			Biography	3404.67	3404.67
			Webb Lit.	20196.87	20708.87
Cash funds:-			JLF	10530.40	10530.40
Lloyds	current	8897.26	Graves	138.57	138.57
Lloyds	fixed term	10000.00	General	3500.00	3500.00
Coventry	B/Society	38,130.33	Reserves	19257.08	17412.24
				57027.59	55694.75

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 some enquiries about the Bursary in 2024 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 who sponsor it.

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.

All monies received in the PayPal account are routinely transferred to the Lloyds account.

A Lloyds Fixed Term (1 year) Deposit Account was opened using monies from the Coventry Building Society savings account and the Lloyds current account.

The Society's Trustees provisionally approved this financial statement at their meeting dated 6 February 2025.

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, 19 Prospect Place, Swindon SN1 3LQ, has checked the accounts, confirmed that the accounts are correct and signed his report, to that effect. His report will be available to view at the AGM. We are most grateful and thankful to him for his good service and advice.

Colin Corkerton
Hon. Treasurer
13 February 2025

Annual General Meeting



'Bluebells in Hodson Woods', painting in oils by Kate Tryon circa 1910.



'Job Brown's Cottage', Coate, painting in oils by Kate Tryon circa 1910.