

THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT & AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2001-2002

REGISTERED CHARITY No. 1042838

TRUSTEES AND COUNCIL MEMBERS 2001-2002

Hon. Sec. Lady Treitel, Eidsvoll, Bedwells Heath, Boars Hill, Oxford OX1 5JE Tel. 01865 735678 (Best before 7.00 pm or Saturdays)

Patrick Dillon, Margaret Evans, Brian Fullagar, Margaret Gould, Len Grugeon, Geoff Hirst, Jeremy Hooker, Robert McCloy, Ray Morse, Helen Newman, John Price, Richard Stewart, Phyllis Treitel, John Webb, Co-opted: Stan Hickerton, John Savage.

FROM THE CHAIR

I am glad to say that some readers enjoy these Jefferies-slanted notes but they probably wonder why they are written. "What's his Mission Statement" they must ask. The primary answer is that my part of the publishing strategy is an attempt to express enthusiasm for Jefferies' writings in a non-academic way, conscious that I occupy a time-slot which steadily becomes remote and alien from nineteenth century experience. For this there is no remedy: *I* do not presume to relate Jefferies' literature and philosophy to present-day terrorism or to Euro-economics. It is sufficient to share the writer's joy in life while the scenes he loved recognisably survive.

Since Greece in C5 B.C. dedicated enthusiasts - fan clubs, if you wish - have sought to visit sites associated with the worthy few, members of an elite Honours List not connected with vanished empire. The Jefferies Society is quietly among this fraternity, not given to aggression or colonising. There is no Wiltshire equivalent to the Broadstairs Dickens festival, no Presley-like cult or Sealed Knot theatricals. Our shrines are modest, such as Coate Farm, the house at Eltham, the chalk hills of Ashdown Forest and Jefferies' terminal home by the sea. He never prospered as some of his magazine contemporaries prospered but his last home was substantial and comfortable. Strange - or perhaps not strange - that a landlocked Wiltshireman should be attracted to Sussex and the sea. But Jefferies liked nature on the move: winds across the hills and the sea troubling a shingle beach. (His Crowborough house was called 'The Downs'; the one at Goring was 'Sea View'.)

Although we cannot tramp tourist-wise through these still-private houses we may imagine Jefferies in them, young and strong enough to exult in the fresh upland air as much as in the salt tang of the coast. But at this stage of his life he had no cause or will to exult: financially pushed to keep working, his nine months at 'Sea View'¹ were darkened by tuberculosis, known as the dread disease "consumption". This remained a terror well into my lifetime. A scene from my tenth year is vivid: friends of my parents, who lived in Lethbridge Road, Swindon, called at our home one evening after visiting the Great Western Hospital (Swindon was entirely a railway town in those days). The husband had been diagnosed consumptive. Faces and voices of the four grown-ups conveyed even to my child's imagination that this was a verdict of death, and so within a year it proved to be.

Recently I survived a close encounter of the unkind kind; one hundred and fifteen years of medical progress spared me the fear and misery which must have weighed down Jefferies as he moved without hope into 1887. We have to imagine him, then, far from young and strong but weak and exhausted, watching patterns of light move across his ceiling but unable to view the sea from 'Sea View'. He could hear trees in the wind and probably breakers on the shore marking the passage of desolate time. The gramophone, radio and television had yet to find a domestic voice so household sounds from below - muffled to spare the invalid - would have emphasised the grave silence rather than have modified it. Meanwhile and incessantly, squadrons of house flies restlessly changed formation but kept station just below the centre of the ceiling (where the unhygienic flypaper might have been hanging as a reminder of mortality). This was a gloomy feature of houses familiar with oil lamps and gas mantles before the days of killer sprays. Nature observation at its most primitive, the sole entertainment for a genius reduced to sharing a dismal bed with bitter anger amidst the memories. Healing Sussex could not out-balance the effects of overwork and worry; it was not a proper end for a writer who had so happily celebrated the good fortune to be alive.

Len Grugeon

P.S. At this year's Swindon Literary Festival our Founder Member, Ethelwyn Gregory, published a memoir of her mother, Frances Josephine Gay. I felt honoured when asked to review the book for this periodical because I had known Ethelwyn's parents before the War. They had been keen supporters of the League of Nations Union, (precursors of the United Nations Association), of which I was an inexperienced member. Ethelwyn's father, John, persuaded me to public speaking, literally on a box at the Swindon equivalent of 'Speakers' Corner' by the old canal site at Bridge Street. He did not tell me that my contribution was to follow a rousing speech from the M.P., W.W. Wakefield, nationally renowned in Rugby football circles and millionaired through 'Wakefield Castrol' motor engine oil. He collected a great crowd, spoke at some length and volume, then instantly departed. I climbed on to the box to address the one member of the crowd who had stayed to hear me. Consolingly, he seemed interested.



Mrs Margaret Evans, Membership Secretary;



Mr Geoff Hirst, Treasurer .

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

A warm welcome is extended to the new members who have joined the Society since last September:-

Professor E L Jones, Fairford, Glos
Mrs S E Camburn, Toothill, Swindon, Wilts
Mr N Jones, Hanover, Germany
Mr D G Moss, West Didsbury, Manchester
Mr R J Tattersall, Ingatestone, Essex
Mr & Mrs Saw, Kingston-Upon-Thames, Surrey
Mr N R Manser, Twickenham, Middlesex
Mr R Walker, Parwich, Derbyshire
Mr K N C Hewett, Dartford, Kent

The total membership during the 2001/02 subscription year numbered 293 being made up of 184 single, 39 joint, 18 Life, 2 Joint Life, 4 Hon Life (1 Joint), and 4 Corporate memberships. 6 members let their membership lapse.

At the time of writing the 2002/03 membership is 290. This takes account of 3 members having resigned at the end of, 1 joint member becoming a single member, and 1 paid-up member having sadly passed away during, the 2001/02 membership year, and one new member and a previously single member becoming joint during the 2002/03 subscription year.

Although most members live in England, other countries are represented: Australia 5, Belgium 1, Canada 3 (1 Joint), the Channel Islands 1, Eire 1, Germany 2, New Zealand 1, Northern Ireland 2, Scotland 8, Spain 1, the USA 3 (1 Joint), Wales 7 (1 Joint).

I am happy to report, that as a result of requesting members to consider the option of Life Membership in the Spring Newsletter, 5 members (1 Joint) have taken up this option. Another member has also arranged to pay their subscription by Bankers' Order. Many thanks to those members (you know who you are!) ... more please!

At present 49 members (10 of whom are Joint) have not yet paid their 2002/03 subscriptions. Gentle reminders will accompany their mailing of the Annual Report in the hope that they will now bring their membership up-to-date. In anticipation, many thanks.

Margaret Evans

REPORTS OF WINTER MEETINGS

Jefferies' Land (Ed. Grace Toplis, 1896)

3 December 2001

R Discussion (Part II) led by Roy Burton

Part Two of Roy Burton's examination of *Jefferies' Land* was presented in the same format as Part One: photographs on every level surface; a 'book' of photographs, all cued both to the book and also to the pages of the fat handout. The handout which, with Part One, makes a very good substitute for the book itself, consisted of extracts from it, plus extracts from Miller and Matthews' *Bibliography*, Arthur Mee, Robert and Monica Beckinsale's *The English Heartland*, Timothy Mowl on Pevsner, *Kelly's Directory* (1935) for Chiseldon and Coate, and, finally, from our past President, Bill Keith's *Richard Jefferies: A Critical Study* (1965).

We read aloud as many extracts as we had time for, starting with Aldbourne, Ashbury, and Barbury, and ending with Wansborough. But - should we be doing this at all, Roy asked himself? This early work of Jefferies, so easy to

condemn, should it concern us? To help us to decide, he selected from Grace Toplis's Introduction the words 'why then do these early efforts make their appearance in permanent book form? ... the reason is that they illustrate — the mental growth of the man, and his unusually slow development as a writer.' (Jefferies wrote these articles for the *North Wilts Herald*, beginning in 1867, before he was 19.) Roy then cites Edward Thomas, who thought it good that no trace of such writing remained. But then he quotes from pages 155-6 of Keith, and here may be the nub. As Keith points out, it is in *Jefferies' Land* that Jefferies first mentions the brook at Wanborough Nythe; in *The Gamekeeper at Home* it occurs again when he recalls seeing a skeleton removed from the bank of the brook.

Finally, in 'A Roman Brook', the evolution of thought and feeling is complete: 'The brook has forgotten me, but I have not forgotten the brook ...' (LF) For some, at least, there is a need to study Jefferies' early work.

Members' Evening jointly with The Friends of Alfred Williams 7 March 2002

The readers and their choice of text:

RODNEY ATTWOOD (of South Australia) read the passage from chapter four of *Round About a Great Estate* which describes how a swarm of bees settled in the church and greatly disturbed the congregation. The church is assumed to be Chiseldon.

KAY FRANKLIN read a brief outline of Alfred Williams's arduous life. His father left home, leaving his mother to bring up eight children. He worked on the land, and then in the railway factory, rising to Hammerman. He was mainly self-educated but attended Ruskin College in Oxford. The reading came from an introduction by Michael Justin Davies to *Life in a Railway Factory* (1984) by Alfred Williams.

JOHN PRICE chose passages from 'Out of Doors in February' from *The Open Air*. First the one mentioning the 'warm interval' in February, and 'the murmur of the poets ...' (The Hon Sec had always assumed that this was a printer's error!) and then the passage recommending February as a good time to select where plants are most likely to appear: 'having observed the spot in winter you can almost make certain success in spring.'

GRAEME FRANKLIN read extracts from the transcript of a BBC broadcast about Alfred Williams (July 1949) by Victor Bonham Carter. It included the sonnet 'On the road to Baydon' and then, from *Villages of the White Horse*, an extract (read out by Ralph Whitlock) quoting Bennie Haylock as he rebukes the squire for bringing his dog into the woods. There were two interviews, one of which was with J B Jones. Williams was granted a Civil List Pension, but it came too late to help him or his wife.

ROY BURTON (who is a member of both societies) read first a poem (or hymn) by Anna McCourt: 'To RJ on Reading His Book¹'. The McCourts lived at Eltham and were kind to Jefferies during his time there. He then read part of Williams's long poem *Homeland*, beginning at the line 'Ofttimes on Liddington's bare peak I love to think and lie ...'

SHEILA POVEY, prompted by the pigeons in her garden, read 'The Pigeons at the British Museum' from *The Life of the Fields*. Jefferies regrets the time spent reading books - 'this beating and turning over of empty straw' - and envies the pigeons their time in the sunlight - 'there alone will thought be found'.

PHYLLIS TREITEL read the passage from 'Wild Flowers' (*The Open Air*) about the yellowhammer in Stewart's Mash. Jefferies analyses (or confesses to) his addiction to colour, and as he does so, reveals his affinities with painters of pictures.

RAY MORSE read from 'April Gossip'¹ (*Field and Hedgerow*). This is a late essay (1886) with charming references to the cuckoo, picking and selling wild flowers (to their detriment) but rejoicing that wood anemones will not bear the journey to London, the jug handle that on being touched became a blindworm, and the out-of-work men who are quite choosy about what they will do.

JOHN WEBB does not search for unusual passages, he goes straight to the most significant. He read from the last page of *The Amateur Poacher*: 'Let us always be out of doors ...' and then from *The Old House at Coate*, parts of 'The Life of the Soul', with its echoes of *The Story of My Heart*.

Plans for the Coate Museum

8 April 2002

by Isobel Thompson

Although Mrs. Thompson became Curator of Swindon Museum and Art Gallery in 1990 (following the promotion of Robert Dickinson), it has taken some time for us to get to know her. It was gratifying therefore to have a larger audience than usual to hear her talk about her job in general, and the part of it that most concerns us, Coate Museum. She had previously worked in Slough, has a degree in Classics and a Museum Diploma in Social History.

Swindon's main museum began in 1920 in Regents Circus. In 1930 it moved to its present premises in Bath Road, and in 1933 its first curator, a geologist Charles Gore, was given the freedom of the borough. The Art Gallery was added and now has an exceptional collection of 20th century art. An Egyptian gallery is the latest addition. Later this year, to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee, there will be a Royal Swindon event, followed by a display dealing with all aspects of music in Swindon over the years; also a special children's display with an exhibition of David Hockney's work in the Art Gallery.

The Richard Jefferies Museum, the third oldest in Swindon, was opened in 1960, and is a Registered Museum - which means it has to reach certain standards. It is a listed building. For more information, enquirers can approach www.swindon.gov.uk or www.swinlac.co.uk. Since the opening, the gradual decay of objects in the natural history cases has meant that that aspect of the display has been scaled down. Because the house was built on two kinds of foundation, the back wall has needed buttressing, and cracks in the front wall had to be monitored. Holes in the thatch over the old part of the house meant that damp was getting in, but since the new thatch was laid (at a cost of £15,000) this problem had now been corrected.

Projects for 2002 include decorating the old part of the house so that a tenant whose presence will help to deter vandals, can take up residence. In August, the Education Officer, Nicky Pardoe, will stage a Victorian Day. Children will be invited to dress up and play games in the orchard, and learn about life in Jefferies' time. Volunteers will help. From September onwards this theme will be expanded to involve schoolchildren (7-10 years) who will learn about childhood in 19th century Swindon from a study of Bevis. The room which presently holds Alfred Williams' books may be used for this. It is hoped that by introducing Swindon's schoolchildren to Jefferies¹ home and his books, the museum will get a

boost. With the same aim in mind there will be a panel about Jefferies at the Bath Road Museum, directing visitors to Coate.

Questions were asked about parking; about the signing directing strangers to Coate Museum; about access to the garden from Coate Water Car Park; about the house's steep staircase; and about the now-unused agricultural museum at Coate Water. Harold's memorial seat, Mrs. Thompson suggested, might be placed in the front garden - not exactly quiet, but perhaps safer.

Past, Present, and Future in Jefferies¹ Thought

13 May 2002

by Simon Coleman

By way of introduction, the Chairman read out Mr. Coleman's contribution to the 2001 Annual Report (p 12) where he described his first encounter with Jefferies while cataloguing Jefferies' papers in the British Library. He had been impressed with the freshness of Jefferies' writing, and especially with his quasi-mystical ideas involving time and eternity.

Mr. Coleman was certain that Jefferies¹ struggle to explain the mystery in the material world was the central work of his career, and he had selected *The Story of My Heart*, 'The Pageant of Summer', 'St Guido', 'Wild Flowers', and 'My Old Village' to illustrate his theme. In each of these works it was possible to see Jefferies¹ deep involvement with time: the 'now' (perhaps the most important), the past (the man in the tumulus), the future (perfectibility for mankind), and eternity. In *The Story of My Heart*, he approached time via the old walls at Pevensey; in 'St. Guido' via childhood; in 'My Old Village' as a man looking back and remembering; in 'The Pageant of Summer¹' via the early June Rose - 'straight to the heart'; in 'Wild Flowers' via the innocence of childhood and its openness to sensations.

Each of these works (and of course others) enabled Jefferies to come at his task of searching for the truth through nature. He had abandoned step-by-step logical thinking and hoped to break through to a wider consciousness. The buttercups (*The Old House at Coate*) are there for themselves; Jefferies was sure that men must understand and develop themselves. (We hope to make the whole text available, in due course.)

STUDY DAY, CHISELDON - 27 JULY 2002

This was our second Study Day, and the question Council had to answer was: do we want them to continue? Apparently we do. The format works well: lots to look at; brief individual contributions in the morning; long lunch hour; lecture in the afternoon; tea/coffee etc. ad lib thanks to Margaret Bathe and her team.

It was a fine day, though not the scorcher we had been promised. We were without Len and Lisl Grugeon who had been in a car smash in France and were still 'picking up the bits'; another member could not find a suitable train. But we were 19 of whom one had spent Friday night in a B & B in Chiseldon and will share the (private) B & B list on application.

The Hon. Sec. had brought a selection of photographs from the Society's archive, plus some posters by Paul Peter Piech; a set of pictures of Brighton in Jefferies' day was sent by Mark Daniel; John Price brought copies of *Art Journal* and *Magazine of Art* containing articles by Jefferies. There was a perpetual crowd round these two items as they contained relevant illustrations which most of us had never seen before. More pictures appeared as part of the morning talks.

The Morning

1. John Price. Most of us read Jefferies' essays from a book, but as John pointed out, almost all Jefferies' essays first appeared in journals and newspapers, and often were illustrated. He selected 'Field Sports in Art' from *Art Journal* (1885) and 'Nature in the Louvre' from *The Magazine of Art* (1887) to show how much was gained by having specially made and relevant illustrations.

2. Phyllis Treitel. Her examples were both sent in by Peter Robins. The first was a xerox of a portrait of Jefferies (with a distinctive spottiness) which belonged to a member of the Society. It showed Jefferies as a fit young man, probably about 1880. The intriguing thing was the name and address of the photographer selling the carte de visite: John Henry Newman of 12 Oxford Street, Hyde Park, Sydney NSW. Mr. Robins had undertaken research into this flourishing photographer but had been unable to discover how an Australian came to be selling pictures of Jefferies.

The second concerned 296 Ewell Road (formerly Jefferies' home, 2 Woodside), Surbiton. These were a photograph of the house as it is today and one taken in the 1940s. In order to make sure that 296 was 2 Woodside, Mr. Robins had delved into local authority records and obtained detailed information, including photographs of the bomb damage there resulting from a raid in 1941. Both files are now in the Society's archives.

3. Helen Newman. Helen brought 2 portraits of George Smith of the firm of Smith Elder, the later one from a painting by G.F. Watts. She read details of Smith's correspondence with Jefferies, and explained that Smith had owned both *The Pall Mall Gazette* (edited by Greenwood) where Jefferies' early essays were first published, and Smith Elder who produced the first 5 books.

Smith had also been Charlotte Bronte's publisher, and she, unmarried and 8 years his senior, had grown attached to the handsome publisher. He married someone else. He was generous to Jefferies in many ways, and endowed 40 houses in Whitechapel for the poor, but in 1901 still died a millionaire.

4. John Webb. He first read a letter dated January 1883 from Jefferies to Cassells (publishers) complaining that the illustrations they proposed to use in his book *Nature Near London* were not specially made, therefore cost them nothing, and therefore did not justify the low offer they had made him. It is not known whether this letter was ever sent but *Nature Near London* was published by Chatto. Jefferies' essay 'Haunts of the Lapwing' as originally published in *Good Words* was shown as an example of how publishers used old engravings from stock as "illustrations".

Second, he read, from W.H. Hudson's *Nature in Downland*, Hudson's account of his stay in the house in Goring where Jefferies died, and how he met a tramp who briefly seemed to be Jefferies. The essay is "Thistledown" and the incident illustrated is in *The Worthing Cavalcade* 1947.

5. Andrew Rossabi. Andrew had found pictures of George Smith's commercial premises, a portrait of Frederick Greenwood (a good friend to Jefferies both at the *Pall Mall Gazette* and later at *St James's Gazette*) and also a group photograph showing Charles James Longman, another publisher and friend to Jefferies. Andrew gave a brief biography of each man, explaining that Smith was also the publisher of the *Dictionary of National Biography* with Leslie Stephen as its editor.

6. Stan Hickerton. Stan's subject was C.P. Scott, editor of *The Manchester Guardian* - 'the Jehovah of editors' - and showed 3 portraits. He was so young (25)

when he began as editor that he had to grow a beard. He employed James Comyns Carr as art critic and, probably through him, gave work to Jefferies. When Jefferies was very ill and earning nothing Scott was both kind and generous. Scott later became a Liberal MP.

7. Eric Jones. Professor Jones is researching Wiltshire and the counties bordering it, with a view to a history of the area. He studies Jefferies when he writes as an agricultural historian, eg in *Round About a Great Estate*. What seems to be lacking is a school of painters who recorded the area for us and he asked for help in finding pictures.

Old barns, still standing 20 years ago, are gone; old wagons kept for years, are gone; these are what he needs to examine, or pictures of them. Even early slate roofs are of interest: men were deeply suspicious of them when they first came into use and were convinced that thatch would last longer. He showed an early slate roof in Marlborough.

8. Sheila Povey. Richard Jefferies' uncle John (born 1824) was an artist, and left many drawings and paintings of Swindon and its environs, before his early death in 1856. Mr. and Mrs. Povey were allowed to make photographs of a sketch book of his, belonging to Andrew Lewis, and Sheila made her file of photographs available to the audience. There were scenes of Holy Rood Church, Lydiard House, Lawn House, the Jefferies' bakehouse, the old canal and the old station. Sheila has done a little detective work and discovered that some of the paintings are not done from life but copies.

9. Roy Burton. Roy bought along his copy of the very large anthology of Jefferies, *The Eye of the Beholder*, to show the fine illustrations by Esdaile Hudson. As a contrast, he had made several copies of all the illustrations in Grace Toplis's *Jefferies' Land*, and presented these sets to the audience.



The Venus Accroupie see 'Nature in the Louvre'

The Afternoon

Andrew Rossabi: 'Could Jefferies have been an Artist?'

To find the answer to this question Andrew went to Jefferies¹ notebooks. Not the published ones, not even the microfilm set, but to the actual books in the British Library - tiny, about the size of the palm of the hand. There, he counted roughly 350 drawings and diagrams. There, if anywhere, one could judge Jefferies¹ artistic ability.

And drawing was in the family. His mother's brother, Fred Gyde, was a professional book-illustrator. His Uncle John Luckett Jefferies (see 8 above) was capable artist, and Jefferies sent his son Harold to have drawing lessons. Amaryllis is a budding artist.

Andrew analysed the subject matter of Jefferies¹ notebook drawings: plants, of course, the sky, houses (including Shanklin Villa), ships, speculations about aerial flight, and curiosa. He thought that Jefferies would sketch a plant while out on a walk, go home and identify the plant, and then write in its name. He also seemed to make more drawings when he was cheerful than when he was 'down'. But could he have been an artist? He had excellent eyesight. He saw with a special kind of concentration which enabled him to detect, and allocate the importance of, the most minute details. But nothing he ever drew could match his skill with words, and his ability to bring clear, brightly-coloured pictures into the reader's mind. The drawings are delicate, careful, literal, but only somewhat above average, whereas the best writings display genius.

Xeroxes of a selection of the drawings mentioned, kindly provided by Mrs. Rossabi, were handed round.

Phyllis Treitel: 'Could Jefferies have been an Art Critic?'

Phyllis began by asking whether there was anything to prevent Jefferies from becoming an art critic, such as lack of qualification. It would seem not, since Oscar Wilde, Henry James, and James Comyns Carr, all of an age with Jefferies, and all art critics, had had no training.

The 1876 notebook suggests that he may have thought of becoming an art critic. He certainly visited the Royal Academy several times, and wrote about it. In 1878 he published 'The Nude in London'.

And he did in fact write art criticism. Sometimes whole articles would be about art: 'Nature in the Louvre' (1887 but written by March 1884) about a nude sculpture; 'Notes on Landscape Painting' (1881 & 2), and 'Field Sports in Art'¹ (1885). But frequently pictures, art, and the function of art cropped up in essays about other matters: 'Nature and Books' (1887) where he talks about colour; *The Dewy Morn* where in chapter 47 he ridicules the idea of pictures for the poor; in 'Walks in the Wheatfields' (1887) where the words 'If I were a painter ...' introduce a paragraph that may summarise Jefferies' artistic position.

Art was a subject Jefferies could never leave alone; he saw with an artist's eye, and he looked at pictures critically, but he could never have produced enough work about art to satisfy his editors, and certainly not enough to earn his living.

MUSEUM REPORT

By the time this Report arrives on members' door-mats, the Museum will have opened on 10 Sundays. The Sunday of 19 May was special because there was a

visit by Swindon USA, and also a guided walk round Coate Water for The Friends of the Ridgeway who visited the Museum as well, and made a generous donation.

The date, 19 May, was memorable as well for Chris Bowles and his wife, and Smith, who were in charge. They arrived to find all the ground-floor windows smashed, broken glass everywhere, plus the odd beer bottle. They summoned the curator and then swept up the glass. This was the second episode of vandalism this year. By July, when it was the Hon. Sec's turn to volunteer almost all the glass been replaced, some curtains hung, and a light installed which comes on if the building is approached at night. There is no resident yet.

Not dismayed by this setback, perhaps even provoked by it, Isobel Thompson Nicky Pardoe (Museums Service) plan to use the Museum more for school projects this coming winter. To help put the Museum 'on the map' (many Swindonians do not know its existence) they organised an amazing Victorian Extravaganza on 11 August. It had been given wide publicity, with the result that the house and garden were thronged with people from 11.00 when it opened, until 4.00 when it closed - visitors still arriving hoping to be in time. Isobel and her assistants were in Victorian dress; there were displays by a hurdle maker, a wood turner, a corn dolly maker, lace maker, and supporters of the Wilts and Berks Canal. "Queen Victoria" honour the occasion with her presence after lunch. There were Victorian games for the children to play with and Victorian clothes for them to dress up in. Tables and chairs under the mulberry tree were provided for those taking refreshment.

Inside, members of the Society's Council sat or stood about to talk about Jefferies and sell books and journals. There were a great many children, who know nothing of Jefferies, an equal number of grandparents, who had learned at school, and a fair number of residents who remembered the cottages, demolished when the road was widened. The secret of success was the excellent sign-posting and the use of the field, behind the garden, as a free car park. Even so, many arrived by bicycle. Congratulations to Mrs. Thompson and her team.



The Hon. Sec., 'Queen Victoria' and the Vice-Chairman

**REPORT ON THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ALLIANCE OF
LITERARY SOCIETIES HELD AT THE GEORGE HOTEL, BURSLEM
ON 27TH APRIL 2002**

This year's meeting was hosted by the Arnold Bennett Society in commemoration of the centenary of the publication of one of Bennett's best loved novels *Anna of the Five Towns*. It was a blustery day, stormy skies with occasional bursts of sunshine which brought the countryside sharply into focus with all the vibrance and detail of a Pre-Raphaelite painting.

Our destination was the George Hotel in Burslem. A few beehive shaped kilns could still be seen along our route, once such a feature of a thriving pottery industry, now sadly in decline. The main focal point of Burslem is its huge Town Hall which rests firmly in the centre of the town, a symbol of former civic pride, but there is much more to Burslem as we would later discover.

John Potter, Chairman of the Arnold Bennett Society, gave a short welcome address during which he proudly showed us two ceramic figurines, one of Bennett himself and one of his heroine Anna. He pointed out Bennett's connections with Burslem and how he had renamed it Bursley in his novels. We were fortunate to have Ruth Bennett with us, a niece of the author, to whom was presented a bouquet of flowers. She only recalled meeting her famous uncle once when she and her brother were invited as guests to an elegant dinner party where they felt rather awkward and ill at ease; she referred to the finger bowls and their bemusement over what they should do with them. Asked if she remembered her uncle saying anything to them, she could only recollect him having said, "Do as you're told." It ought to be pointed out that at the time she was 17 years of age! After this short introduction the AGM of the ALS was formally opened by Nicholas Reed, Chairman. We have 9 new member societies, amongst them Robert Graves, Margery Allingham, Friends of Coleridge and Frank Richards (Billy Bunter). A warm welcome was extended to representatives of The Dubliners Society who were present for the first time, having made the long journey from Eire. Rosemary Culley, Secretary was congratulated on her Website for the ALS which is proving a great success and attracting new interest. The Editor of "The Open Book", Thelma Thompson, has brought out Volume 3 of the Alliance's new magazine. As this is the main literary publication of the ALS, she would like to have further contributions, especially from any of our members who have written short stories, it being one of the aims of "The Open Book" to encourage new talent. For anyone interested, we are also running an essay competition this year sponsored by the David Thomas Charitable Trust. Next year the AGM will be hosted by the Dylan Thomas Society in Swansea (26th/27th April). 2003 also sees the 30th anniversary of the formation of the Alliance by Kathleen Adams and we are hoping to mark this in some special way.

After lunch, John Potter took us on a short guided tour of the town. Like many authors Bennett drew extensively on local landmarks and actual people under the guise of different names. As an instance of this, Waterloo Road is changed to Trafalgar and Swan Bank to Duck; the name Clayhanger is taken from an old farm of that name. Burslem boasts a new town hall as well as the old one, Burslem being over confident of becoming the administrative centre when the six towns (note six) amalgamated in the early part of the 20th century, whereas Stoke was given the privilege. As a matter of interest, there have always been six towns, but Bennett thought five sounded better and dismissed Fenton altogether, an

oversight for which Fenton has never forgiven him. Even now, it is told of some Fenton folk that they will never read Bennett on principle. The old Town Hall is surmounted by a golden angel which Bennett often mentions in his books; the angel has recently undergone restoration and now positively beams down on the town. The most beautiful building in Burslem and something of a breathtaking surprise is the Wedgwood Institute which was formerly the school attended by Bennett. Built of red brick, its facade is a wonderful feat of high relief carving depicting the seasons, the signs of the zodiac and the town's industrial heritage. Rudyard Kipling's father had a hand in the architecture. Georgian buildings are also a feature of the town, but due to the decline in the pottery trade are much in need of restoration.

We then reconvened in the George Hotel for a talk on Bennett's life illustrated by slides. Enoch Arnold Bennett was born on 27th May 1867 in Hanley. He was the eldest of 9 children, all being talented in some way or other. His father trained to be a solicitor and it was some years before the family was financially secure. He expected his son to join him, but Arnold hated it and left as soon as he could. Already his interests were literary, and like Richard Jefferies he became a journalist. Again, as with Jefferies, at the age of 21 he moved to London to establish himself as a writer. Winning a competition in "Tit Bits", he became assistant editor on "Woman" magazine, writing all kinds of articles ranging from cookery to lingerie under various female pseudonyms. One can only imagine what fun that entailed! After four years with the magazine his first novel was published followed in 1902 by *Anna of the Five Towns* which proved an instant success.

Restless and ambitious he moved to the literary scene in Paris which he loved, remaining there until 1911 when he returned with his French wife to England. Noted as one of the best dressed men in London, Bennett liked to cut something of a figure, but his habits were such that they revolved around a rigid routine which made him difficult to live with. This was eventually to tell on his marriage and the couple separated in 1922; they were unable to divorce, but shortly afterwards he formed a relationship with a young actress, Dorothy Cheston, spending thousands of pounds in a futile attempt to further her career. They had a daughter, Virginia, who lives in France and is now President of the Arnold Bennett Society. Bennett was never to return to the Potteries, even though he was to immortalise them in his writings. His output was prodigious: novels, essays, journals, plays, etc. He hated public speaking, however, and perhaps capitalised on a stammer he had suffered from since boyhood. It is said that on one such occasion he stood up, flourished a pen, saying "This is what *I* speak with" and promptly sat down again.

Short readings from the novels followed and then a showing of the film adaptation of one of his favourite novels *The Card* (1950) starring Alex Guinness, Glynis Johns and a very young Petula Clark. Partly autobiographical, it tells of a young man's escape from the boredom of a solicitor's office in Bursley to a life of fame and fortune, such as Bennett enjoyed.

Just as Richard Jefferies, when removed from the place of his birth, wrote of Coate with a kind of retrospective insight, so did Arnold Bennett of the Potteries. He wanted people to know that the cups from which they drank and the plates from which they ate had an origin, just as he did, in a word to put the Potteries on the map of an England which might otherwise have overlooked them.

This was another very successful day for the ALS, a friendly get-together of people having one special thing in common, a love of writers and writing.

Helen D Newman

RICHARD JEFFERIES AT URCHFONT MANOR COLLEGE

Our member, Roy Burton, was one of the three joint leaders of 'The Countryside in Literature', a course held at Wiltshire's Adult Education College, Urchfont Manor from Monday 27 August to Friday 31 August 2001. 24 people attended the course which covered six countryside writers - Ida Gandy, W H Hudson, Richard Jefferies, Edward Thomas, Gilbert White and Alfred Williams. Roy was responsible for presenting Richard Jefferies, Alfred Williams and the poetry of Edward Thomas. The course was a natural blend of in-house sessions with lectures, readings, videos and discussions, coupled with coach excursions to Barbury Castle and Coate Museum (RJ and AW); a walk around South Marston (AW); Aldbourne and Bishops Cannings (IG); Eastbury and Steep (ET); the Wylde Valley (ET and WHH) and Selborne (GW).

For his presentation on Richard Jefferies, Roy had prepared an extensive handout based on the programme for a Richard Jefferies Society event held at The Wyvern Theatre on 3 June 1974. This provided an interesting background to Jefferies' life and work through Cyril Wright's essay 'The Eternal Quest'¹, and the story of the Richard Jefferies Society, as written by Harold Adams. The main part of Roy's presentation consisted of the reading, shared by all course participants, of three dramatic sequences originally devised in 1974 by Mark Daniel, who had kindly given copies of the scripts to be re-enacted at Urchfont. The sequences were from *The Amateur Poacher*, *Bevis*, and *Amaryllis at the Fair*. The video 'The Man on the Hill' was shown and created considerable interest.

Everyone enjoyed the excursion to Barbury Castle and Coate Museum (where Sheila and John Povey were waiting for us, and Sheila very kindly spoke about the writers and exhibits), followed by a picnic lunch at the edge of Coate Water.

Roy had taken to Urchfont a large collection of books by and about Richard Jefferies, and all these were available to course participants throughout the week.

THE SWINDON FESTIVAL OF LITERATURE 2002 - MRS. FRANCES GAY

In 1999 Mrs. Ethelwyn Gregory gave two talks about her mother Frances Gay, founder member, and Secretary of this Society. The talks expanded into a book and on 11 May 2002 Ethelwyn gave a talk as part of the Swindon Festival of Literature about her mother and her book. Frances Josephine Gay (1886-1974) was also a Swindon writer and teacher, and the book's contents are mainly Frances Gay's own writings. These cover her recollections of her early childhood, her teaching experiences in town and country, her work for the Society, and essays about Jefferies and other writers.

A copy of the book has been presented to the Society and is reviewed by our Chairman, himself a Swindonian, at page 18. If you wish to buy a copy, Ethelwyn's address is: 40 Stratton Road, Princes Risborough, Bucks. HP27 9AX. Cheques should be made out to Ethelwyn Gregory.

Jane Muir, whose painting is the subject of the Society's latest postcard, also spoke briefly at the Festival. The following is part of her text which she has kindly allowed us to include here.

"Not tomorrow but today"

"Not tomorrow but today", these words sum up the excitement I felt when Ethelwyn and Nigel Gregory commissioned me to make a painting based on the vision and work of Richard Jefferies.

The writings of Frances Gay, Ethelwyn's mother, are a revelation of a way of life and dedication to learning totally in tune with the Wiltshire landscape. A streak of poetry emerges in her writings about Richard Jefferies and Alfred Williams. It was made concrete in her chairmanship of the Richard Jefferies Society.

So, how was this commission to be met? As I read *The Story of My Heart* and other Jefferies works I realised that its essence was a poetic appreciation of landscape, founded upon his intimate knowledge of farm and country life.

The dominance of the sun; his walks in the wind up to Liddington Castle; the child lying in the grass with the wild flowers close to his face; hearing the larks in an intense blue sky; sheltering from a shower in the green ramparts of Barbury hill fort and watching the storm-blown clouds.

There was a wild, misty day out with the Gregorys visiting the Jefferies' country. Plants were collected to be studied in drawings, leaves to be pressed to use in the painting process. Some of the studies can be seen in my sketch book on display.

I decided to amalgamate Liddington and Barbury castles in my watercolour. The whole to be dominated by a dazzling sun, with some of the local plants in the foreground. There is a circular movement, symbolic of Jefferies' perception of the sun's generative power over the universe.

I also made a second painting, concentrating on mystical rather than illustrative qualities, so that there could be a choice in the interpretation of the idea. As Jefferies said, "I spoke to my soul in the earth, the sun, the air". In the second painting I worked much more freely without preliminary pen drawing. Much thought is given to the composition of the watercolour palette, which must evoke the mood. In this case the rainbow of blue, purple, red, verdian and yellow tries for a visionary quality. Then, the colours are applied in broad washes on wet paper with controlled drying. Finally, one or two linear touches may be added.

In the past, much of my work has been based on landscape and its significance in an attempt to go beyond illustration. Exploring the nature of a visionary landscape is a challenge to any artist. Poetry in paint is hard to achieve. I am grateful to Frances Gay, Ethelwyn and Nigel Gregory for giving me this opportunity to learn and to make.

Jane Muir, May 2002 (C)

THE SCARLET SHAWL ON THE INTERNET

Richard Jefferies published his first novel, *The Scarlet Shawl* in July 1874.

Although it was reprinted later, copies are scarce, and can cost hundreds of pounds. The Spring Newsletter (p.10) carried details of a plan by Professor Richard Wright of New South Wales, Australia, to put this book on the Internet so that people wishing to read it could do so, free of charge. Two members of the Society volunteered to help: the Hon. Sec. xeroxed pages from the Society's copy and sent them to Australia; Richard Wright scanned them into his computer; Carolyn Clarke proof-read the resulting pages. Now, except for a final check, the work is done. The whole cost of the exercise has been borne by Professor Wright.

Since finishing *The Scarlet Shawl*, Richard has, in addition, put *Jefferies' Land* on to the web page (this was simpler as he had his own copy).

What you have to do

Provisional copies of *The Scarlet Shawl* and *Jefferies' Land* have been put on a temporary web page. To access the web page and download the electronic version of the books go to: <http://homepages.ihug.com.au/^/richwrig> (the wiggle before 'richwrig' is a tilde; you will find it on your computer but not on most typewriters.)

There you will find two directions: one devoted to *The Scarlet Shawl* and the other to *Jefferies' Land*. The books can be downloaded and read at leisure. Richard Wright welcomes lists of any corrections that should be made. He can be contacted at: richwrig@tig.com.au

Once he has received corrections and suggestions, he will find a more permanent electronic home for the books.

The Future

Professor Wright is looking for volunteers with access to other rare books by Richard Jefferies. He is at present doing *Greene Ferne Farm* but suggests *World's End* or *Restless Human Hearts*. These are both three times longer than *The Scarlet Shawl* and may prove daunting. The Society owns a copy of *World's End* but does not own *Restless Human Hearts*. If anyone has a copy that would not be spoiled by photocopying, please offer.

If you have a computer and would like to help, you may reach Richard Wright at: 72 Campbell Street, Balmain, NSW 2041, Australia

Phone/fax: +61 2 9818 1037

E-mail: richwrig@tig.com.au

HOW I DISCOVERED RICHARD JEFFERIES

Professor E L Jones D.Litt (Oxon)

Richard Jefferies almost certainly first came to my notice at the end of the 1940s through finding two or three of his works in the tiny natural history section of the public library at Andover, where I grew up. There was an absurd delay before one could borrow from the adult section of the library or I would have come across his works a little earlier! Some of Looker's works seem indicated; I know I soon bought one or two. But there were also good programmes for children on the wireless at that period and I cannot be sure that Jefferies was not mentioned on one of them. Of the odd novel I could make nothing - looking for more of a plot, I suppose.

Moreover, Jefferies presented as such an imprecise naturalist that I drifted away from him, as from the more 'local' Hampshire author, Hudson. Both of them were disappointing compared with earlier Hampshire naturalists such as Gilbert and Henry White and even Peter Hawker. I turned to more scientific writers like the maligned James Fisher.

It is doubtful if even the additional material now found by Bill Keith in more obscure Jefferies¹ writings would rescue RJ in this respect. And in my early boyhood I did not know the Swindon area and had not yet developed an interest in the topography of that district, nor in agricultural history, which is where Jefferies really does score.

As to the Society, I can't say. It would have been later. I was always scanning material on local, natural and agricultural history that was likely to mention it. During the 'sixties I was briefly a member but from Oxford to Swindon

seemed a long trek in the evenings and in any case I soon went overseas for thirty years.

Denis Moss

I was about 9 years old at Prep School. We had a book of Eng. Lit. extracts, 'The Old Punt'¹ being one of them. Somehow I felt that there was something magical about it. Later an aunt bought me *Bevis*, the illustrated 1920 edition. We lived in a slum in Bolton, my father being a clergyman there. I had never heard a dove cooing!

Bevis made a great impression! I learnt to swim following the method suggested, and my brother made a gun, and shot marbles over the open ground behind the vicarage.

Some time later, I came across the steel engraving 'An English Merrymaking in the Olden Time'. I was going to buy it and present it to Coate Farm museum but the shopkeeper wanted a huge sum of money for it.

The engraving was about 2\ feet x \\\ feet: I got the impression that the floating down the stream on the wooden case bit never took place. Perhaps one day he had an idea about floating down the stream?

Farmer Alan Dewey of Blossom Farm, Sileby, near Loughborough

My sister frequented second-hand book stalls and brought home some back issues of *The Countryman*. My wife and daughter gave me *The Amateur Poacher*; this came from Tideline Books. I became aware of Tideline Books because of a poacher who came to kill the rabbits and pigeons on the land: John was a Robin Hood and described himself as a straight rogue, and kept a Saluki cross lurcher. On one of his ferreting visits he brought some literature concerning trapping and I noticed The Richard Jefferies Society - it was advertised in *The Countryman*. The advertisement was placed by Cyril Wright. My wife Celia and myself never actually met Cyril Wright but we felt that we had known him for a very long time, it was a privilege and a pleasure. A teacher and a pacifist, he is a credit to his beliefs and a good example to us all. I had written just before Christmas but he replied by return of post. There said my wife that is an unexpected Christmas present. Sheila Povey at this time played an important part and was rapidly on his heels. Cyril Wright wrote of searching for pig nuts. I gathered as much information from him as was possible. He sent me a library copy of *Hodge and His Masters*. My father kept pigs on the same basis as mentioned in this book.

Richard Jefferies' work is so curiously fascinating that I often read the same few sentences over and over again: Brook Paths, Winter's Night, the woodland brightly illuminated by the moonlight. The smell of stale ale, cigar smoke and the brown brandy. Dickon and the lurchers hitting hard the open half door with their feet. How strange it all is, and I realised - it is to walk through Old England, that is what lingers in the mind.

Editor: There was not room for all Mr. Dewey's contribution but his papers are still on file.

OUTING TO SAVERNAKE FOREST

After much postponement the expedition to Savernake Forest took place on Saturday 8 June. Those on the coach were met at an agreed point on the A4 by John Price who had planned the visit, and by a member from Winchester.

Our first walk was to The Monarch (Cathedral; Millennial) Oak, a tree of great age and girth, its trunk a mass of nobbles and interesting fissures. We returned to the coach and were driven to the point where 8 walks diverge. From there we set off down 12 o'clock drive to see what we are fairly sure is Queen Oak, plus the remains of King Oak. These two are thought to have been planted to mark the marriage of Henry VIII to Jane Seymour. Finally, from the vantage point of the coach we inspected Big Belly Oak which grows close, too close, to the A346. Jefferies' own visits must have been made in fair weather (there were readings) which alas contrasted with our own conditions - mud under foot and a warm, gentle rain on our heads. From time to time we stopped to inspect vast sweet-chestnut trees, curious multi-trunk beeches, and to listen to the cuckoo, but mostly we marvelled at the extent of the forest, and congratulated ourselves on having a sure guide; there are few landmarks, and one could get thoroughly lost in no time.

We proceeded to John's house in Marlborough where we were regaled, damp and muddy as we were, with a delicious tea.

The return trip took us through the centre of Marlborough, looking wonderful as usual, and then to Rockley to see the tiny school where Mrs. Gay used to teach and the charming cottage of one of our members. We arrived back in Swindon punctually at 6.00.

MEMORIAL BENCH

In the Spring Newsletter there was a hint (p.6) that the bench we proposed to install at Coate in memory of Harold Adams would be unveiled on 8 June. Alas, as members will have read in the report on the Museum, there was wanton damage to the windows of the house in mid-May. This made us cautious. We still want a seat in the garden, for visitors, and we will install one as soon as it seems safe to do so.

BOOK NEWS

Our President, Professor Jeremy Hooker has sent the Society a copy of *Resurgence* (No. 213) a lavish ecology magazine. At pages 55-57 are glowing reviews of his book *At Home on the Earth*, one by Richard Deakin, the other by Kim Taplin.

Booksellers Members have asked where they can now buy Jefferies' books.

Hugoe Matthews (tel. 01398 331 573) no longer issues catalogues but still has about 100 items ranging from paperbacks to nice early editions which he is happy to sell at reduced prices.

George Miller (tel. 01691 658330 e-mail george.miller@virgin.net) has sent a 4-page list of books by and about Jefferies. Those interested can apply to George for a list, or ring the Hon. Sec. to enquire.

John Price (tel. 01672 515150) our vice-chairman also has Jefferies books for sale. Simon Westall (more for the serious collector) is at 01404 871600; e-mail island@swauk.freemove.co.uk

Hobnob Press has another title that might interest members: *Figures in a Wiltshire* (Scene by Ken Watts. 288 pages. It covers 2,000 years in 200,000 words, illustrated hardback. It costs £20. If you can get your order in by 30 September it

costs only £15. Hobnob Press, PO Box 1838, East Knoyle, Salisbury SP3 6FA. Cheques to The Hobnob Press.

Andrew Rossabi our past-President recommends an excellent article on Jefferies by Keith Wilson (University of Ottawa) pp 192-204 in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography vol.98: Modern British Essayists First Series*, Detroit, New York, London, 1990.

Andrew also has written to us about the fine work by the craftsmen at the British Library who have rebound the British Library copy of *Restless Human Hearts*. Torn pages have been repaired, the boards firmly rebound using the original cloth, and the 3 volumes now contained in a handsome maroon box. He thinks it would be a good idea for the Society to adopt a book, or even a notebook in the Library.

PBFA

The 2002-2003 issue of *Directory of Antiquarian and Secondhand Booksellers* has been sent to the Society and is available for reference. It contains details of this Society.

CITINGS OF JEFFERIES

Neil Underwood has sent an article from the RSPB magazine *Birds*. The subject is a day in the Alps; the message is that special moments need to be recorded. The writer, Conor Jameson, had what he called a 'Richard Jefferies moment' and recorded it. His article is headed by a quotation from 'Meadow Thoughts' - "the gleaming rays on the water in my palm hold me for a moment ___" Jefferies' essay was published in *Graphic* on 5 April 1884 and can be found in *The Life of the Fields*.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY - POETS CORNER

As minute IOa of the last AGM will show, the idea of proposing a memorial to Richard Jefferies in Poets' Corner generated a heated discussion. As a result, the experiences of other societies, several years ago, were obtained. Mr. Richard Stewart approached the Abbey for detailed, up-to-date information. Miss Newman was given information by the Marlowe Society.

The conclusions were that since neither Edward Thomas, nor W H Hudson were in Poets' Corner there might be difficulty obtaining permission for a place for Jefferies. That at least £4,000 would be needed to mount a campaign and pay for the memorial. Finally, because Poets' Corner is now so crowded (some 120 names), there is no more room for memorial plaques, let alone busts, and all that can be had is a small pane of window glass. With these considerations in mind, Council decided not to proceed.

BOOK REVIEW

Memories of Another Age: Frances Josephine Gay 1886-1974. Collated by Ethelwyn Gregory. Trowbridge, The Cromwell Press 2002. 125 pp. Illustrated. (Special price to members of the Society: £7.00 plus 60p p&p. One copy only per member)

A reviewer's objectives should be modest but thorough. Prospective readers should be led to texts with honest appraisal, perhaps encouraging readers to try them, perhaps discouraging them, but never divulging so much that reading becomes unnecessary. Accordingly I shall leave much to be discovered in describing this

affectionate memoir of an intelligent and energetic lady loved and respected throughout North Wiltshire in her time. In 1961 she was called to serve Swindon as First Lady (a.k.a. Mayoress) when her husband was elected Mayor. But the book, the collation? Well, it is not quite as other books because it consists mainly of its subject's own words, often reproduced from her many contributions to the local press. Vividly she describes her early life in Swindon, creates a revealing picture of rural school life when she taught the village children at Rockley and assembles a gallery of local celebrities. This includes an affectionate view of Richard Jefferies (overlapping him by one year) as a sociable, very human being, a view difficult to reconcile with that of the introspective loner of literary legend. The six main sections of the book contrive an interesting and readable account of an interesting and varied life. Frances Gay was drawn to people, their children and their histories. Her descriptions reveal a novelistic talent but she avoided make-believe and her words always ring true. Moreover they are elegantly assembled. The book is a pleasure to handle and to read, a tribute to all concerned in its production. Those familiar with the geography will enjoy a bonus of recognition; others will sample a life as it is no longer lived, but as it is worthily recalled.

Len Grugeon

A LOST JEFFERIES BOOK

Some years ago, Cyril Wright, who was the Hon. Sec., showed an interest in a copy of *Bevis* belonging to our member Paul Portmann. This was a somewhat battered copy of the 1949 edition published by P R Gawthorn Ltd. It is special because it has illustrations by Frank Jenriens. Mr. Portmann donated the book to the library but it cannot now be found.

It is possible that the book was offered for sale to members and that one of our readers bought it. If so, would they please write to the Hon. Sec. If anyone knows of the whereabouts of a Gawthorn edition, the Hon. Sec. would be glad to know of it. According to the *Bibliography* (George Miller and Hugoe Matthews) there is a copy in the Swindon Public Library.

BRIEF NOTES

Wiltshire Public Libraries

John Webb has kindly arranged a Jefferies display for his local library - Wootton Bassett - and has organised similar displays for Malmesbury (5 August for 2 weeks), Marlborough (7 October for 2 weeks) and Calne (21 October for 2 weeks).

Holy Rood Plaque

Richard Jefferies was baptized at Holy Rood church, Swindon. The church is now an impressive ruin, only the chancel remaining, but in November 1961 the Richard Jefferies Society presented a seat and on the seat was a plaque 2f" x 9". It bears the words:

Presented by The Richard Jefferies Society.
Richard Jefferies. Author born 1848 died 1887.
Baptized in this church.

Where the seat stood and when it was removed is not known, but the plaque was rescued by the late Mr. Dennis Bird. Mrs. Janet Finch, who dealt with his things, has kindly returned the plaque to the Society. If possible, it will be placed in Holy Rood; if not it will be placed in Coate Museum.

Jefferies on the Radio

Wiltshire Sound, as part of local history week, wanted a few appreciative words about Richard Jefferies. The Hon. Sec. was happy to oblige, stressing how much remains of the places Jefferies so lovingly described. The item came at 7.30 am just after the weather forecast. I hope Jefferies would have approved.

Old Town Walk 2 July

Ray Morse, backed up by the Hon. Sec., once again led a tour of Old Town, as part of the Old Town Festival. Holy Rood church, usually locked, was specially opened for us.

One of Jefferies' schools re-opened

As a small child Jefferies went to a school in Devizes Road, run by the Misses Cowell - Clarendon House, corner of Phillips Lane. Clarendon House is still there and this year Mrs. Nicola Cowling has opened Headstart Tuition there. She found teaching in a school in Chiseldon wonderful, but too exhausting.

Jefferies in the Crosswords

The Editor has unfortunately lost Geoff Hirst's FT crossword with a *Bevis* clue, but still has a crossword from the 1965 *Times*, supplied by John Price, with 2 Down, 7 letters. The clue is: 'Farnol's Gentleman, Jefferies's Poacher'.¹

OTHER SOCIETIES

The William Morris Society The Society has a new President, Dr. Linda Parry. Our member, Martin Haggerty is still on the Committee. Professor Ruth Levitas will give the Kelmscott Lecture: 'William Morris, Hammersmith, and Utopia'.¹ The lecture will explore *News from Nowhere*. 1 November, 6.30, Art Workers' Guild, 6 Queen Square, London. £6.00.

An International Arts & Crafts Exhibition will open at the V & A in 2005. The Curator, Karen Livingstone, will lecture to the Society on 7 December, Kelmscott House.

The American Newsletter reports an exhibition at the University of Delaware of 'Portraits of Late-Victorian Writers & Artists'. The Tate exhibition, 'Exposed: The Victorian Nude', is moving to Brooklyn Museum of Art on 6 September.

The Edward Thomas Fellowship Mr. Richard Emeny, who has been the Secretary for 11 years has resigned and will now concentrate on editing the Newsletter. The new Secretary is Colin Thornton. The ETF and RJS have been thinking of ways of joining forces occasionally. The first opportunity was to have been the Autumn Walk, led by Ken Watts, but unfortunately it will take part just before this Newsletter is scheduled to go out. The details are: meet Sunday 22 September at Avebury main car park at 11.30 for a 6 mile walk including Hackpen Hill, Glory Ann, Fyfield Down, and Totterdown Woods. Ends 3.00 pm. Local enthusiasts will be alerted individually. Another idea is to hold a joint Jefferies/Thomas Study Day.

Southern Arts A game of musical chairs is solemnly being played with Regional Arts Councils. Swindon used to be under Southern Arts; is, for now, under Southern and South Eastern Arts (based in Brighton), and will, from 1 April 2003, be under South Western Arts (base not divulged).

The Henry Williamson Society The March 2002 Newsletter had plenty to report: a visit in 2001 by 45 members to WWI battlefield^; the meeting to celebrate the Society's 21st birthday, held at Saunton Sands; and the London Study Day devoted to *The Flax of Dream*. There is a new leaflet designed by Arthur Stafford. And a justifiably proud boast that 40,000 copies of the Penguin *Tarka* were sold last year!

Wilts Archaeological and Natural History Society Like many another institution, WANHS is having to cut costs, in spite of much successful activity: the post of Chief Executive has had to go, and there are other economies. Yet it is clear from a perusal of *Trilithon* and the Annual Report that Devizes Museum (as we call it) serves a real need. Next year will be the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Society.

The Society is lobbying hard to prevent the new access to, and bypass of, Stonehenge from being a disaster; there was an exhibition of the Society's pictures and a book 'Art in Wiltshire'¹ will be published in 2003; there will be a trip to Crete in April 2003 to study Minoan civilisation.

The Friends of Alfred Williams The Friends' fourth Newsletter appeared in April. It contained an obituary of Marjorie Leigh (who donated her Jefferies books to the RJS) and an account by Chris Bowles of an interview with Mrs. Claridge, Alfred Williams' niece. She was able to put right some misconceptions and supply interesting information. The Friends have a full programme for the coming year; details from Chris Bowles, 27 Belgrave Street, Swindon SN1 3HR.

FRIENDS OF THE RIDGEWAY

The ding-dong battle for the preservation of the surface of the Ridgeway goes on. Swindon Borough Council leads the way in declaring a temporary Traffic Regulation Order to a Section of The Ridgeway within its boundaries. What the sanctions are is not stated. Geoff Bryant is in charge. Behind it are Julia Drown MP and Councillors Milton and Small. West Berkshire Council has followed on, the Newbury authority agreeing to lead the way in an all-out ban on recreational vehicles. They favour a change in the legislation.

Mr. Robert Jackson MP initiated an adjournment debate on the state of the Trail. The reply for the Government by Alun Michael was lengthy, polite, and rather hum-ha, but he ended by leaving it to the relevant local authorities to take the initiative. Happily they have begun to do so.

Phyllis Treitel, Ridgeway representative



Should these off-rovers be on the Ridgeway at all?



And this is what The Ridgeway is like by the Winter.

RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE

If you would like any of the following, please write to Ethelwyn Gregory, 40 Stratton Road, Princes Risborough, Bucks. HP27 9AX

Postcards:

now 25p each or any 3 for

Watercolour of Liddington Hill & quotation Wild flowers & quotation Portrait of Richard Jefferies

Leaflets:

Richard Jefferies & Old Town (guided walk)

Richard Jefferies in Eltham

Richard Jefferies in Surbiton

Richard Jefferies & Coate Water (guided walk)

A Jefferies Land itinerary

Back numbers of the Journal

65p

25p 25p 50p 5 Op 20p £1.00

Postage Add 20p for orders up to £1, 40p for orders up to £2 and 60p for orders over £2. Very small orders can be paid in postage stamps.

DATA PROTECTION ACT

Members' names and addresses are held on a computer data base. We are required by the Data Protection Act 1984 to inform members that they have the right to object to information being held in this way.

The Newsletter has been compiled and edited by Phyllis Treitel, Robert McCloy and Andrew Rossabi. Helen Newman has done the typing. Printing and despatch by Margaret Evans and Phyllis Treitel. Website : www.bath.ac.uk/~lissmc/rjeffs.htm

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Richard Jefferies Society held at the Church Hall, Chiseldon, Wiltshire on 13 October 2001.

PRESENT: Margaret Bathe, Sarah Bellhouse, Tony Boakes, Jean Bone, Marie Chesham, David Chesham, Mark Daniel, Margaret Evans, Margaret Gould, Norma Goodwin, Ethelwyn Gregory, Nigel Gregory, Len Grugeon, Stan Hickerton, Geoff Hirst, Sue Miller, George Miller, Sylvia Morse, Ray Morse, Stewart Mortished, Helen Newman, Sheila Povey, John Povey, John Price, Andrew Rossabi, John Savage, Richard Stewart, Phyllis Treitel.

1. THE CHAIR

Mr Len Grugeon, the Society's Chairman, presided and welcomed those present.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were given in respect of Rodney Attwood, Chris Bowles, Dr Bulkeley, Roy Burton, Nancie Cator, Lisl Grugeon, Roger Kemp, Howard and Kathleen Kensett, Gordon Stowe, A and E Voce, John Webb.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2000 were approved and signed.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Memorial to Harold Adams. The Hon. Sec. reported that £135 had been collected so far. In the normal course of events, a bench would by now have been installed, but Council had been advised to delay its purchase and installation until there

was a new tenant in the occupied part of the house at Coate. Quotations for metal benches as well as timber benches were being invited.

5. ANNUAL REPORT

The Report was accepted unanimously. The Hon. Sec. explained the purpose of the new format, and invited submissions of small illustrations. Copies of a leaflet about the repairs to Liddington Hill were available at the meeting.

6. TREASURER'S REPORT

There were no questions about the accounts. Mr Hirst drew members' attention to the introduction of a comparison with the previous year. He said that £18 had been reclaimed on covenants for 2000; he estimated that Gift Aid would produce between £100 and £200. Ray Morse proposed the acceptance of the accounts; John Price seconded the proposal. The Report was accepted.

7. ELECTION OF AUDITOR

The Treasurer reported that Mr McGing was willing to continue as the Examiner of our Accounts. Mrs Evans proposed his election; Mrs Bone seconded the proposal. Carried nem. con.

8. ELECTIONS TO COUNCIL

Mrs Gregory was thanked for her six years service on Council. She agreed to continue dealing with Society publications.

Mr Richard Stewart, who was proposed by Mrs Gregory and seconded by Mrs Gould, was elected to serve from 2001 to 2004.

Miss Helen Newman was re-elected to serve from 2001 to 2004.

9. LIFE MEMBERSHIP

At last year's AGM it was decided that life membership for those over 70 could be obtained by payment of 5 times the annual subscription. The matter of life membership for couples was referred back to Council who proposed that: (a) the qualifying age for life membership should remain at 50; (b) if a couple applied for life membership, both members would need to be 50 or over; (c) on the death of one member of the couple, the survivor would revert to single life membership without further payment.

This was carried.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Poets' Corner. Roger Frith had asked the Dean of Westminster to explain what the Society would need to do to get a memorial to Richard Jefferies into the Abbey. The Dean had replied. Before coming to a decision, Council sought the opinion of those present. There had been one postal 'vote'.

There was a lively and informative discussion, the following points being raised: would Jefferies, not being religious, have wanted it? Some thought this not decisive. Did Jefferies really rank? While not vetoing the proposal, two members thought he did not while one thought he did. Would an application get the support necessary? Several thought not, since only three of his books were in print, and academics, who were bound to be consulted, would be likely to dismiss him. What was the purpose of a memorial in Poets' Corner? Some thought it would be a good advertisement for Jefferies while others thought it would do nothing. Was there not a better place for a memorial to Jefferies, and was not the bust in Salisbury Cathedral sufficient?

The likely cost was not known but it would probably be high. In spite of some misgivings, the general feeling was that more information should be sought. Helen

Newman would enquire from the George Eliot Society and the Hon. Sec. from the John Clare Society.

(b) Study Day. Members were asked to indicate which of several Saturdays they would prefer for a summer Study Day. Sheila Povey's suggestion, that it should come roughly halfway between May and October, was accepted and 27 July chosen.

(c) Mark Daniel wished to correct an announcement in the Autumn Newsletter. He had only small pieces of the russet apple tree trunk to give away; the large piece would be kept for posterity.

(d) Ethelwyn Gregory announced that she was about to publish a book of Mrs Gay's writings; she pointed out that the material was copyright.

(e) The Hon. Sec., in the unavoidable absence of John Webb, announced that a video was in course of preparation by him. All being well it would be shown at the 2002 AGM.

The meeting ended at 12.30.

Phyllis Treitel, Hon. Sec. October 2001.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SATURDAY 12 OCTOBER 2002 AT 11.00

LAWN COMMUNITY CENTRE, SWINDON

AGENDA

1. Chairman's introductory remarks
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of the last AGM 13 October 2001
4. Matters arising:
 - (a) Memorial to Harold Adams;
 - (b) Memorial to Jefferies in Poets' Corner
5. Annual Report
6. Treasurer's Report
7. Election of Auditor (Examiner of Accounts)
8. Elections to Council:

The following are due to retire: Margaret Gould Patrick Dillon John Webb

Margaret Gould does not wish to stand for re-election. Patrick Dillon and John Webb are proposed for re-election by Council, 2002-2005.

Mr. John Savage, co-opted by the Council on 16 March 2002 is now proposed for election (2002-2005) by Ray Morse, seconded by Helen Newman.

9. Any Other Business

The Richard Jefferies Society

Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 30 June 2002

2001	Receipts	2002	2001	Payments	2002
	Balances brought down		1238	Publications	723
			118	Marketing	21
1198	Bank	1199	107	Rents	167
23 or	Petty Cash	42	38	Subs	38
5738	Cov. B/Soc	6934	40	Lecture fees	20
		8175		Donations	
1686	Subs	1814	525	Administration	565
110	Donations	68	170	Miscellaneous	230
97	Sales: Mus	19			
204	Other	283		Summer Outing	
		302		Cost	120
	Tax Reclaim	165		Receipts	78
296	Interest: B/Soc	231		Loss	44
4	Bank	1			
		232			
				Bank	603
0	Miscellaneous	10		Petty Cash	46
				Cov. B/Soc	8366
100	H Adams seat	55			9015
1000	HA bequest				
		10822			10822

Thanks to a windfall through one life membership, subscriptions are up this year. Our cash flow, partly through this, our own sales, and good housekeeping as regards cheaper sources of printing, is £500 to the good before addition of accrued interest. £155 is restricted funds for the Adams memorial, and with other projects in the pipeline we cannot be too complacent. The amount of museum sales accountable to Swindon Borough Council has been subtracted from the total sales as a truer figure of RJS activities. In previous years this payment showed under miscellaneous, and, if restated, year 2000/1 would read £78, not £97 as shown. As is customary the interest received has been allocated between the general fund and the Coate Farm Restoration-Eund, and these balances stand at £5493 and £565 respectively.

3/W.VfiretHonbrary Treasurer

u/s

I certify that I have examined the books of the society and am satisfied that on the information supplied to me, the accounts for the year ended 30 June 2002 show a true and correct record.



T.P. McGing Chartered Accountant

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & BIRTHDAY LECTURE
SATURDAY 12 OCTOBER **2002** AT
LAWN COMMUNITY CENTRE, SWINDON

PROGRAMME

10.30 Reception and refreshments

11.00 AGM

1.00 Break for lunch

2.30 The Birthday Lecture (visitors welcome) Speaker: John Webb Subject:
The Making of the Video 'Jefferies' Land' followed by the first showing of the video.

4.00 Meals:

Parking: Directions:

Refreshments

Public Transport:

The Sun Inn (Coate): a variety of places in Old Town, e.g. Wood Street.

There is some parking at the Centre. If more is needed we shall park at a school nearby. Look out for notices.

Lawn Community Centre was formerly The Gamekeeper, a public house. It stands at the corner of Windsor Road, and Guildford Avenue. Windsor Road runs between Queens Drive (dual carriageway) and Marlborough Road. See maps. Old Town is about 20 minutes' walk away; Coate, the same. There are shops opposite the Centre. In extremis ring Mrs. Povey - 01793 535248.

Catch bus number 10 or 11 in Fleming Way (opposite side of the road from Debenhams). Book to Windsor Road.

Frequency: 4 times per hour. Thames Transport 01793 428 428