

THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT & AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2004-2005

REGISTERED CHARITY No. 1042838

TRUSTEES AND COUNCIL MEMBERS 2003-2004

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Margaret Evans, Brian Fullagar, Geoff Hirst, Eric Jones, Hugoe Matthews, Ray Morse, Helen Newman, John Price, John Savage, Richard Stewart, Phyllis Treitel, John Webb. Co-opted: Stan Hickerton.

FROM THE CHAIR

"... the poet's pen turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothings a local habitation and a name." Thus wrote Shakespeare in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and although the quotation is certainly not exactly apposite for most of Richard Jefferies' writings, the fascination and importance of the "local habitation and a name" has always intrigued me with regard to literary figures. Why is it that literary pilgrimages are, and always have been, important to admirers of various writers' works? Do these enthusiasts somehow hope to get nearer in spirit, empathy, or understanding to their heroes by visiting their birthplaces, graves or sources of inspiration? Or is there some real sense of a pilgrimage; that in undertaking a physical (albeit nowadays usually not very personally inconvenient) journey to the author's birthplace, or similar, one is paying tribute in some atavistic sense to their genius?

In the case of Richard Jefferies, doubtless both the above suggested reasons apply, and at the present time, our thoughts have been concentrated, because we are all very much concerned with trying to save what is left of Jefferies' Land in the vicinity of Coate, and to prevent it disappearing under a sprawl of housing, car parks, industrial sites, and university buildings and playing fields. Our motives for visiting the various Jefferies' sites, however, must relate partially at least to the circumstances that first drew us to the writer. In my own case this was through his country books and essays. Having grown up in Kent at the foot of the North Downs, I was amazed to find somebody 100 years earlier who noticed and described with a loving touch the same things I had grown to value in the 1950s. It didn't matter to me then exactly where the places were that he had described; it was (and still is) sufficient to be outdoors amongst similar plants, animals, landscapes - and people; I knew the local gamekeeper, and there were still "Hodges" around in Kent at that time. Later, when I moved to Wiltshire, the opportunity presented itself to visit Coate, and other locations, specified or not, featuring in Jefferies' writings. Later still, I visited the other houses in which he had lived, and these in their turn helped me understand more about the man as he had lived and worked. At Tolworth, for example, one can read the dates of construction proudly displayed on the villas which gradually surrounded Woodside Villas, and cut them off from the copse next door, and the open heath

and fields across the road. What happened there around 1880 was parallel in so many ways to what has happened and is happening at Coate. No wonder (hat the family moved from here early in 1882. At Eltham, where the Jefferies family lived for only a year, it is possible to walk in a very short time from 14 Victoria Road, where they lived, to the churchyard, where Jefferies' second son, Richard Oliver Launcelot was buried, having died at 18 months. And yet one can understand that even that short distance was too great for his father to undertake on the day of the child's funeral.

I now have to make a, perhaps surprising, confession: I have never visited Richard Jefferies grave in Broadwater Cemetery. Why should this be? The answer is twofold; firstly, I have never been in the area with time to spare to make the visit, and secondly, I have never felt a strong urge to make a special visit. I almost certainly shall visit the grave one day, but to me, although his remains lie there, Broadwater is not part of "Jefferies' Land". Richard Jefferies' relationship to "the man in the tumulus", I think, is much more related to the location of the tumulus, and the grass and flowers covering it, and the insects flying over it, and the larks singing above it, - than to the simple fact that it is a grave. And for me, I feel much closer to Jefferies sitting looking at my lawn of chalk grass land; the knapweed, scabious and bird's foot trefoil flower heads giving the bees and butterflies a dizzying feast of choices, than I would as a pilgrim in Broadwater Cemetery. Richard Jefferies lives on through his writings, and as long as we can experience and share those wonderful "outdoor" moments with him, their exact location, perhaps, does not ultimately matter, and we can agree with him and feel, "it is eternity now - and I am in the midst of it."

John Price

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

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

Mr D Aitken, Swindon, Wilts
Mrs J Bending, St Albans, Herts
Mrs Y Chen, Loughborough, Leics
Mr & Mrs H Clayton, Didcot, Oxon
Mrs S Green, Marlow, Bucks
Mr S Harrison, Denby Dale, West Yorkshire
Mr J S C Higgs, Clayhidon, Devon
Mrs M Warren, Liddington, Wilts

The total membership during the 2004/05 subscription year numbered 274 being made up of 169 single, 31 joint (62 members), 27 Life, 4 Joint Life (8 members), 2 Hon Life, 1 Hon Life Joint (2 members) and 4 Corporate memberships.

At the time of writing the 2005/06 membership is 267. This takes account of 4 members having resigned at the end of, and 4 paid-up members having sadly passed away during, the 2004/05 membership year; two joint memberships becoming single and 3 new members.

Although most members live in England, other countries are represented: Australia 4, Belgium 1, Canada 3(1 Joint), the Channel Islands 1, Eire 1, Germany 2, Mexico 1, New Zealand 1, Northern Ireland 2 (1 Joint), Scotland 5 (1 Joint), Spain 1, Tasmania 1, the USA 3, Wales 7 (1 Joint).

At present 44 members (7 of whom are Joint) have not yet paid their 2005/06 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

Planning from an Environmental Perspective with a focus on Coate by Jean Saunders

6 December 2004

Jean Saunders has earned the admiration of all lovers of Coate for her well-informed, temperate, but relentless attack on Bath University and Persimmon/Redrow Homes, for their plan to 'develop' Coate. This was a chance to meet her, and to learn more.

She began by describing the planning system, and how it is supposed to work, apologising for dwelling on such a dull subject: 'planners are sad people' she said. In theory, development plans are made years ahead; Regional Government dictates to the Strategic Planning Authority (Wiltshire and Swindon B.C.). Swindon seems to accept that it must make provision for most of the houses. At a meeting in Exeter, the Swindon reps said not one word in defence of Swindon; the only objector was Jean herself. At the planning application stage, most decisions have already been taken; some are slipped in at the last moment, like the 2 square kilometres at Coate. Yet, at the Structure Plan Enquiry in 1998, Coate was not even included: too sensitive to be considered.

There are several criteria. One is jobs. Coate is 'sustainable' because 9,000 jobs are at stake. An almost audible raising of eyebrows at this point. On examination, this fantastic figure was seen to be obtained by including land as far away as Piper's Way in the calculation. Another is the grade of agricultural land: the best land is not to be built on. Jean has found an old MAFF map showing land of high quality round Coate Water. Archaeology matters too. The stones adjacent to Day House Farm (reported by the young Jefferies) are well known, but other recent finds suggest there is more. Wild life matters. And so on.

So why does Bath University insist on Coate, and nowhere else? 1. Bath City won't allow expansion. 2. The land at Coate would cost nothing, as the developers would donate it in return for having a free hand. 3. Another developer has offered free land nearby, so why Coate? Because it is attractive, in fact Swindon's one and only 'beauty spot'. 4. Why is Bath so desperate? Because Bath University is to become a 'world-class' university and must expand. The Higher Education Funding Council which controls the money has not said that the money is site-specific, contrary to claims.

In this discussion, a member of the Swindon Civic Trust announced the formation of Swindon Action in February 2005, to provide a forum for objections. They have listed vacant lots in Swindon proper, analysed business trends, and are confident that Swindon could have both the beauty spot and the university.

The Public Enquiry begins on 18 January 2005, and goes on until April. John Price will represent this Society; and we have other plans.

The excellent paper, written by John Chandler, on the importance of Jefferies to the Coate area, will be made available to members. Jean Saunders gave out charming picture postcards, for delivery to councillors and others of influence, and window or car posters. The campaign will go on.

Members' Evening jointly with The Friends of Alfred Williams 7 March 2005

The readers and their choice of text:

GRAEME FRANKLIN read from the book *Cor Cordium*, the poem by Alfred Williams 'Tell Me Dear'. It was a plea for understanding and forgiveness, possibly on the occasion of a quarrel.

PHYLLIS TREITEL read part of 'The Squire and the Land' from *The Old House at Coate*. Eric Jones's recent Birthday Lecture, 'The Land that Jefferies Inherited', prompted her to re-read Jefferies' treatment of the Land Reform topic in this extract (unpublished in his lifetime).

ROY BURTON made no bones about reading the whole of the 154-line poem 'Homeland' by Alfred Williams from *Poems in Wiltshire*. It would have pleased Jefferies, dealing as it does with an imagined fight between Britons and Romans on Barbury; memories of local places (Jefferies is named); and the attractions of the River Cole. Copies of the poem were provided.

JOHN WEBB read from *Amaryllis*, the much-loved observations of the mice, the crumbs, and Iden in Chapter IV, beginning 'Slight sounds ...' and ending 'I will only make one remark. That nothing is consistent that is human'. A brief discussion of the growing, cooking, and eating of fortyfolds followed.

KAYE FRANKLIN had recently been by the sea, so she deserted Alfred Williams and read from 'Sunny Brighton' (*The Open Air*). Jefferies' description of the horses, the idle fishermen, the well-dressed crowd pleased her, but especially the phrase 'the human sunshine of laughter'.

MICHAEL PONTING chose 'The Labourer's Daily Life' from *The Toilers of the Field*; reading that part that deals with the practice of encroaching land. But, as Jefferies pointed out, there are exceptional cases, and he gave details of a patch of ground in the middle of an estate, enclosed without permission. Unchallenged for 60 years, the squatter became the owner.

SHEILA POVEY is to introduce Jefferies to her newly-formed local history group. For her readings, she selected 5 short quotations to indicate Jefferies' relevance to modern life: a. From 'Walks in the Wheat-fields' (*Field and Hedgerow*) a passage about the camera obscura - perhaps anticipating television, b. 'January in the Sussex Woods' (*The Life of the Fields*) dealing with bird migration and man's migration, especially: 'If... men should acquire the art of flying, there can be no doubt that migration would become the custom, and whole nations would change their localities.' c. From 'Wild Flowers' (*The Open Air*) - Feng-shui. d. From *The Dewy Morn*, chapter XXI 'All you with little children ... take them somehow into the country among green grasses and yellow wheat - among trees -by hills and streams, if you want their highest education, that of heart and soul, to be completed.' e. As a riposte to Graham Carter, who recently filled half a page in the *Evening Advertiser* under the heading 'Jefferies - he's a bore', she offered the closing words from 'My Old Village' (*Field and Hedgerow*), 'No one seems to understand how I got food from the clouds, nor what there was in the night, nor why it is not so good to look at it out of the window. They turn their faces away from me, so that perhaps after all I was mistaken ...'.

JOHN PRICE read from 'The Story of Swindon' (*The Hills and the Vale*) written in 1875. 'Swindon' Jefferies says, 'rose as Chicago rose, as if by magic.' He comments on the qualities of the army of men who do the work, their liking for information - 'the Mechanics Institute is always full of readers' -their liking for meat, their lack of immorality, readiness to spend. He concludes that improvements in Communication are responsible for the increase in employment, and so in prosperity.

**Richard Jefferies' Use of Dialect
by Mark Daniel BA**

4 April 2005

Mark, who has been a member of the Society since 1973, and has recently obtained a degree in English Language, began with a brief introduction to language in general, and English in particular. It is thought that our language can be traced back to a tribe in eastern Europe, and that ancient Sanskrit supplies written clues to it. After the Romans left Britain, Nordic-speaking tribes invaded and settled. Wessex became the most powerful kingdom, and its language might have dominated had not the eastern side of England, with its universities and profitable contact with the Continent given it greater influence.

Language is changing all the time: aitches are dropped, or sounded, the glottal-stop, once confined to London, is now spreading. This is in spite of the unifying effect of TV and radio. No one knows how Jefferies himself spoke, but he was well aware of dialect, (see 'Village Miners' in *The Life of the Fields*). The first example Mark chose was the exchange between Tummas and Rause in *Greene Ferne Farm*, and then Iden's reference to 'vartyfolds' (fortyfolds) in *Amaryllis* - the 's' sound becomes V and the T becomes V. Dartnell and Goddard list many of Jefferies' dialect words in their *Wiltshire Words*; a more modern reference to Wiltshire speech is Malcolm Jones and Patrick Dillon's *Dialect in Wiltshire*. Jefferies often explains his special use of words because he is conscious of it; he also uses words without explanation; eg brakefem for bracken, fogger for feeder of cattle, which we would now call dialect. So the concept is complicated.

Mark then circulated his 11-page list of dialect words, the Jefferies book from which each word comes, what it means, and its category. After an interval for a hasty perusal, the discussion became general: what about Jefferies' use of Sussex dialect; what the North-country equivalent was; why did Jefferies not include the words of children's games such as 'fainites' or 'barley'? This last led to spontaneous singing of 'The Farmer Wants a Wife'. A good time was had.

**Along Chalk: On Walking the Downs in the Spirit of
Richard Jefferies by Jon Cannon**

9 May 2005

Jon Cannon is someone we did not know until our member John Chandler suggested him as a speaker. Jon lives at Ogbourne St. George, between Swindon and Marlborough, up on the chalk downs. He knows the downs very well, especially the Wiltshire Downs, and has pondered on their origin, their evolution, and their significance.

With the aid of a borrowed projector, he was able to show us examples of the sort of terrain he finds so suggestive, and it is clear that he has no difficulty in understanding why Jefferies found the heights and hollows so alluring.

All chalk downs, he says, have a ridgeway, giving several days' walking, indeed they invite walking. Though not really high, they give the impression of height because of the curves and the openness. A map showed how chalk downs cover several parts of Southern England, landlocked Wiltshire, with easily developed Avebury and Stonehenge in the middle. But if these monuments represented a large population, where are the remains of the people? Was the land overfarmed? Was there a disaster? And earlier? There were trees before 8,000 BC.

The chalk is just bone from the sea floor, the skeletons of millions of creatures; it is more organic than mineral, cast up by the sea, or left behind by it.

There may well have been, as Jefferies pretends in *After London*, an inland sea that evaporated or flowed away. What is left, mostly unploughed, still fresh and appealing, are the dry valleys and the smooth curves. And old names like Tan Hill (for St. Ann), sheep lynchets, old tales, and wild flowers. Jefferies would have added: and the air.

We are grateful to Jon Cannon for this inspired talk, and we were delighted to be joined on the occasion by Mrs Cannon and Mrs Jon Cannon. Also little Miss Cannon, who slept through it all.

SUBJECT; RICHARD JEFFERIES AND COATE

The Morning

Members' contributions were as follows:

Stan Hickerton read from 'Meadow Thoughts' (*The Life of the Fields*) choosing paragraphs 2 and 3 which deal with the garden wall and the lime trees (still there) and the wild life they attract.

Chen Ying read from Chapter 1 of *The Old House at Coate*, 'The Blue Doors'. This too was a particular part of the property and the wild life special to it. The blue doors of Jefferies' day have long since rotted away but Swindon Borough have painted 2 other doors blue. The gateway is still there.

Margaret Evans, mindful of the noise now to be heard from traffic passing Jefferies' house read from Chapter 3 of *The Old House at Coate* beginning 'The blue doors were banging ceaselessly', and ending at midnight when Jefferies hands to the mailcart his letters to be posted. They will be delivered in London in the morning. Noise is not new.

Graham Walker comes from a family of apple growers, and chose Chapter 4 of *The Old House at Coate*, 'Under the Apple Tree'. Jefferies states that the sun 'sank towards Ladder Hill'. With the help of an Ordnance Survey map, Ladder Hill was located.

John Webb chose 'The Cattle Shed at Coate' (Chapter 4 in *Field and Farm*) for 2 reasons: although it no longer exists, he thinks he knows where it was, viz. between the barn (still standing) and the front wall; the second reason was to draw attention to Jefferies' desire to be outside and on the move. He valued places where he could 'stroll up and down and dream' while sheltered from the rain.

Helen Newman likes the image of Iden paddling his bare feet in the wet grass after a long hot day. This is in Chapter 9 of *Amaryllis* and gives us also Mrs Iden's scornful comments. Helen did not carry her reading on to the passage about the lavender hedge: where was that?

Richard Stewart also favoured Iden's paddling, but moved back to the passage in Chapter 4 where Iden sat, apparently asleep, while mice searched his lap for crumbs.

Andrew Rossabi read from Chapter 2 of *Round About a Great Estate* where Cicely sits on a stool made from an ash-tree log, and looks at the sky up the kitchen chimney, or at the sun-rise over the Downs through the ground-level window. This part of the house, the original part, is not open to us.

Ray Morse chose Chapter 7 of the same book, 'The Cuckoo Fields'. It is an observation of the behaviour of birds, but also questions how this is affected by man-made items such as posts. The area in question, Ray told us, lies between Coate and the start of Old Town.

John Price read 2 paragraphs from Chapter 9 of *Wild Life in a Southern County* about the summer house with conical thatched roof and circular window. It was festooned with blown birds' eggs, up to 40 varieties. In *Wood Magic*, Bevis went inside the summer house which, we are told, was near the ha-ha wall. Edward Thomas stated that the ha-ha was gone but, though hidden by weeds, it still exists.

Sheila Povey, still in Coate but to the west of Jefferies' house, read from 'My old Village' (*Field and Hedgerow*), the description of John Brown's cottage. It was later demolished to allow for road widening but was roughly where the Shell garage is now in Marlborough Road. It had a tall chimney - a welcome landmark for Jefferies when he was tired and nearly home.

Phyllis Treitel, still in Coate but now in Day House Lane, read from Jefferies' letter to his Aunt Ellen, of 16 October 1871 about a fight he had been in. Then from an item in the *Swindon Advertiser* of 16 October 1871 setting out the case against Thomas Jenner Baden (half-brother of Jessie) who lived at Day House Farm, and set upon Jefferies as he walked home from Liddington.

Eric Jones referred to the last chapter of *Wild Life in a Southern County* and the 'large diving bird'. 'Grebes', Jefferies wrote 'are often shot'. Professor Jones visited Coate Water in 1953 and made a diary entry which he read to us. He paid 2 pence (old money) to get in. Grebes are no longer shot and it is not unusual to see them there now.

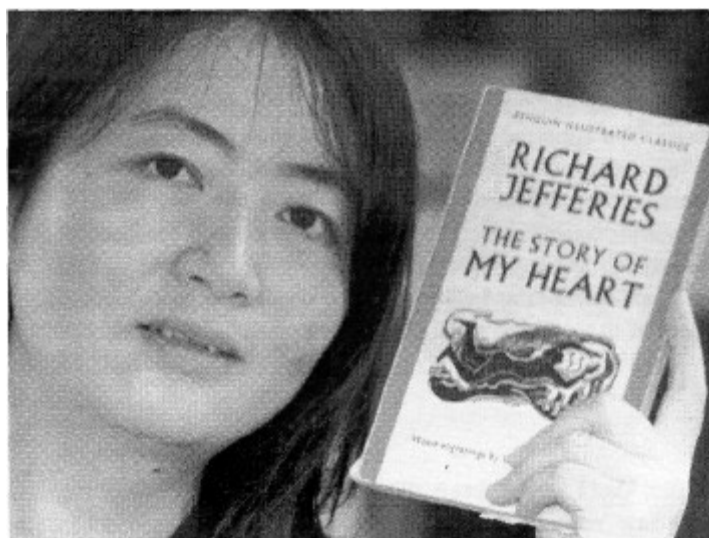
The Afternoon

After the usual picnic lunch, we set off in 6 cars for Coate, leaving John and Sheila Povey and Jean Bone to guard the room. We identified the site of the cow shed, peeped through the windows of the old part of the house (still no occupant) and went into the Museum to look at the family tree, and upstairs the precious papers and photographs. The two top-floor rooms are a great attraction but a small window pane had been broken.

Outside, after parting the undergrowth, we were able to identify part of the ha-ha wall, now much reduced; doing the same near Coate Water, we saw one of the lake's feeder streams. Was this 'the brook'? Coate Water itself looked quite beautiful. One can, at present, stand at the edge, and screened only by 3 or 4 trees, see straight out to Liddington Hill

A party of us then walked to the milestone (near The Spotted Cow) and uncovered it. How long it will remain is unsure. Meanwhile Chen Ying, over here from China to study Jefferies, photographed the house. She had travelled from Loughborough by train, via London, to Swindon station from where she got the bus to the Lawn Community Centre. Her English is excellent and we hope she may join us again at the AGM. Swindon's *Evening Advertiser* sent a reporter and a photographer to our meeting to interview her.

It was a fruitful Study Day, though not well attended. We all learned something. Margaret Bathe and Margaret Evans plied us with tea and coffee; John and Sheila Povey brought a treasure trove of books, maps, and documents. Not content with that, they cleared up after us, with Jean Bone's help, for which we are most grateful.



Chen Ying. This photograph appeared in the Swindon [Evening] Advertiser (1 August 2005) and is reproduced by kind permission of the editor. Chen Ying is a graduate of Beijing Foreign Studies University where she now teaches. She is studying Jefferies under Professor Ebbatson for a year at the University of Loughborough. She is married with one son.

COATE MUSEUM REPORT

The Museum has been open more than usual this year, so that extra demands have been made on the volunteers. There will have been the usual 10 openings, plus the special openings for those taking part in walks, plus Heritage Day. On the whole, this has been productive, though on one day, not a single soul turned up. The room with the video in it has proved very popular and the Society's Council honoured the room by holding one of its meetings there.

The garden is neglected. The grass gets mown, but no more, so that paths are overgrown and weeds multiply. Volunteers come with secateurs so that gates can be made to open.

The frequency of our visits has not deterred the vandals: several downstairs windows were broken again in July - the third time.

To save money, Swindon Borough Council has axed the heritage post occupied by Robert Dickinson, and we are sad to lose his friendly support. We had grown to know and depend on his fellow officer, Isobel Thompson, and the enthusiastic input of Nicky Pardoe. Alas, both are leaving.

Wiltshire is one of England's most magical counties. Swindon itself lacks attractive comers, so that Coate and its environs is especially precious. Coate Water Country Park recently won an award. Swindonians voted it their favourite place. But we dare not think how long this green setting for Jefferies' house and for the lake behind it, will remain. And see the report of Study Day.

THE SAVE COATE CAMPAIGN

Since the report on this campaign in the Spring Newsletter, the following developments can be reported:

1. Swindon Local Plan Enquiry. This concluded in April, and I represented the Society at the final Round Table Session. Later followed a site visit with the Inspector, during which we crossed the M4 and looked back on the proposed development site from the edge of the AONB. The Inspector's report is due out in the autumn, unless the whole plan is called in.

2. Gateway Partnership Planning Application. The planning application for the proposed University/Housing/Industrial Development has been submitted, and the Society has registered a formal protest. It is expected that revised plans will be submitted in the next few months.
3. Archaeological Objections. For some extraordinary reason, the proposals for the Coate site had not been brought to the attention of the Swindon Borough Council Archaeologist until the planning application was submitted. He has now objected strongly to all the proposals on the grounds that there are both listed and unlisted important sites in the area, which would be destroyed if the proposals were to go ahead.
4. Bath University. Despite the apparent great enthusiasm of Bath University to come to Swindon, no application has yet been made to the Higher Education Funding Council, who would have to approve, and then grant the development money required.
5. Petition. Jean Saunders has handed in a petition to Swindon Borough Council, bearing over 20,000 signatories against the proposed development, and is continuing to collect more names.
6. Swindon Advertiser. The "Adver" has been running a series of articles and letters over the past few weeks on the pros and cons of the development. It can be congratulated on keeping the debate well and truly alive.

John Price

A RICHARD JEFFERIES WALK BY COATE WATER 15 MAY 2005

Four members gathered at the car park, and were joined by three members of the public (and one dog). The weather was unbelievably beautiful and the Park was thronged. The queue at the tea place was as long as the queue to sign the petition. We walked as far as Cicely's Bridge, pausing for readings on the way. Then we walked back, via Day House Lane, to the Museum, which was also doing good business. The walkers watched the video, declared themselves pleased, and one joined the Society.

COATE WALK 5 JUNE 2005

On Sunday afternoon 5 June, a group of five members led by Mark Daniel were joined by a small contingent from Swindon Wild Life for a walk round Coate Water.

Various spots described by Jefferies in *Bevis* were identified and illustrated by relevant readings. Of particular interest was the view south to Liddington Hill which, if the planners and builders get their way, will become permanently obscured by buildings up to 5 storeys high. A map of the planned development was studied with considerable dismay and disbelief.

We all cheered up at the wing of the reservoir called the wildlife sanctuary (accessible only with a permit) with its noisy heronry (17 birds at the last count), and everyone wanted to spot the bittern, recorded a number of times this year, that is roosting there. The last Coate bittern was shot by RJ's father. We kept quiet about this. We didn't see it, of course, nor any of the otters that are supposed to be quite numerous there now.

Several people found plants they couldn't *quite* identify. So, all in all, it was an exciting and rewarding excursion. We ended at the museum with a look at the new displays and the *Jefferies Land* video. The afternoon had been most enjoyable, we were told. Even the weather was kind.

John Webb

HOW I DISCOVERED RICHARD JEFFERIES

I first became aware of the writings of Richard Jefferies as a schoolboy when I was lent one of his books (I think *The Amateur Poacher*) by a local schoolmaster who knew of my natural history pursuits. However, my interest in Jefferies only really developed about ten years ago when I happened to pick up a copy of *Field and Hedgerow* in the local library. I was so enthralled by his essays that I was prompted to borrow all his works that I could find listed in the library catalogue and, thus, gradually read my way through all the more readily available books. Subsequently I have acquired my own copies of most of his books (mainly second-hand; the Internet being a very useful source) and Looker and Porteous' biography *Man of the Fields*. To my mind Richard Jefferies remains one of England's most extraordinary and original writers, investing often the simplest of subjects with amazing power and beauty (e.g. The Blue Doors from *The Old House at Coate*); his acute observations of nature being, perhaps, only rivalled by W H Hudson. I find some of his more 'mystical' writing rather harder going and do not altogether share his early enthusiasm for some aspects of field sports but that apart I still obtain great pleasure from dipping into his books.

The Richard Jefferies Society I believe first came to my attention some years ago when I saw a small advert at the back of *The Countryman* (the green magazine which I think used to be produced in Burford). However, I'm afraid I only took active steps to join the Society following a visit to the birthplace museum and subsequently obtaining a form from the Society's Website.

Stephen Higgs (Devon)

CITINGS OF JEFFERIES

Brian Morris sent a cutting from the *Daily Telegraph* of 25 June 2005. The whole article (in the ARTS section) by Andrew O'Hagan, entitled 'Why it's cool to love nature' was worth reading; one paragraph is reprinted here: 'For the right audience, the natural world creates its own brand of concern and its own intimate dramas. "Now and again a finch, a starling or a sparrow would come meaning to drink - athirst from the meadow or the cornfield - and start and almost entangle their wings in the bushes, so completely astonished that anyone should be there." Richard Jefferies wrote this in *The Life of the Fields*, published in 1884. We see in this passage a period now lost, a time when nature, as it were, had the country pretty much to itself, when things like dragonflies still existed in great numbers, before our own era of prairie-style combine-harvesters and GM crops put an end to all that. Jefferies' kind of writing is elegiac - the sad as opposed to the jolly kind I spoke about earlier - and much of that excellent prose has faded away, for the common reader, just as its subject faded away from the forefront of our lives.'

Margaret Bathe's contribution is from the *Guardian* of 18 June. Under 'Hot reads', books recommended for holiday reading, Lee Hall after praising *Walden* goes on: 'But my great excitement is the work of Richard Jefferies, born in 1848, the son of a Wiltshire farmer, who wrote the most extraordinary visionary prose about the English countryside despite poverty and ill-health. I have a Faber anthology edited by Henry Williamson in the 30s and am now desperate to read *The Story of My Heart* (Green Books), *Field and Hedgerow* (Oxford University Press), *The Life of the Fields* (Oxford Paperbacks) and *Amaryllis at the Fair* (Sutton Publishing).'

A FERN NAMED BEVIS

Stan Hickerton reports hearing a broadcast, earlier this year, in which the Bevis fern was mentioned (8 January 2005, R4). A hedger, by name John Bevis, had found one growing in the wild in Devon in 1876 and taken it to show the Doctor. With the help of Swindon Library, and Google, Stan has discovered that its full name is 'Plumosum Bevis' *Polystichum Setiferum*. *The Plantfinder's Guide to Garden Ferns*, (Martin Richard, 2000) gives: height 24 to 48 inches, "fronds lance shaped, bipinnate, darkish green, tapering to an almost plaited tip. Pinnules narrow, tapering to an acute angle at point of attachment to the midrib ... This cultivar is now one of the most prized in collections."

WHERE THE WILD THINGS WERE

This was the title of an article by Robert Macfarlane in the Guardian Review on 30 July. Readers had been asked to write in nominating the great classic writers of British nature. Many familiar names surfaced, of course: Geoffrey Grigson, Henry Williamson, Ted Hughes, Thomas Hardy, W H Hudson, Richard Church, Flora Thompson, Laurie Lee, George Borrow, Mary Webb, William Wordsworth and a dozen or so more. Curiously, though, no mention of Gilbert White. However, more important for us, here's an extract from Macfarlane's piece:

'... by far the most frequently nominated was the novelist, memoirist and country-essayist, Richard Jefferies (1848-1887). Jefferies was born near Swindon, and spent much of his life exploring the rural southern counties of Wiltshire, Sussex, Gloucestershire and Somerset. His writings show him to be the exponent of a rare but deeply English materialist-mysticism. For he possessed and practised what the poet Jeremy Hooker has called 'ditch vision' - an ability to find the extraordinary in the rurally local. For Jefferies, the English countryside was rife with wilderness. Not in the North American sense as a function of grandness of scale, a phenomenon to be experienced only amid the red-rock dihedral citadels of the desert states, or the vaporous magnificence of the Niagara Falls, or the vast mirror lakes of the Rockies. No, Jefferies located the wild in the strange and ragged interzones of a farmed English landscape - in hedges, ditches, ponds, spinneys - and he wrote about that landscape with the same astonishment and wonder that his travel-writing contemporaries were voicing in their reports on the Amazon, the Pacific and the Rub al-Khali.'

Jean Saunders of Friends of the Earth (and a RJS member) wrote to the Guardian's Letters Page Editor expressing her delight at the readers' principal nomination. She went on to describe the present threat to Jefferies Land from developers and an uncomprehending, insensitive Borough Council. This letter elicited much positive response from other readers, several offering help with the *savecoate* campaign. (So far we have over 22,000 signatures protesting against the proposed vandalism.) The battle continues.

John Webb

THE STAINED GLASS WINDOW IN *RESTLESS HUMAN HEARTS* (see **Spring Newsletter pages 8-9)**

Carolyn Clarke's request for help in identifying the two stained glass windows depicting the Last Judgement in Jefferies' *Restless Human Hearts* (1875) met with a generous response. The first came from Professor Eric Jones, who lives at Fairford: 'The church with the window that Jefferies described enthusiastically in *Restless Human Hearts* was without much doubt Fairford, despite a few anomalies in his description. The stained glass at Fairford is probably the best medieval glass in England; what Jefferies referred to is its culmination in the great West Window, which *inter alia* shows people being pitched into the fiery pit. The devil squats toad-like at the bottom right, with minions carting sinners in his direction - a former verger used to make play of the fact that they are all naked young women. The West Window contains the blue and purple colours that Jefferies details. The only false note is his emphasis on yellow, of which there seems to be almost none in the relevant sections. Nor can I spot the 'yellow and blue' lilies of the valley. Flowers do not appear in the subject index of Sarah Brown *et al.* (eds), *The Medieval Stained Glass of Fairford Parish Church*, Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997. In any case, lily of the valley is surely white. But Jefferies' description is somewhat picturesque and will have been written from memory. I do not think these minor discrepancies invalidate the identification of place.

The West Window is also described and illustrated in *Jefferies Land*; Jefferies claims to have visited every place mentioned therein. 'Fairford lies at a considerable distance from Swindon, and in another county, but is of a celebrity so great that it can scarcely be passed over in silence', so he tells us (p. 198). Fairford is fourteen or fifteen miles from Old Town but only nine miles from Cirencester, where Jefferies worked. Moreover, there seem to be no other churches anywhere around with glass depicting the same sort of theme and none, as *Restless Human Hearts* puts it, 'buried in the obscurity of a wretched little town, or rather village' - specifically an 'obscure Gloucestershire village.' (Italics added). This label must clinch the identification as Fairford, which to this day has an ambiguous status halfway between a tiny town (with central streets on an urban scale) and a large village.

Ironically, whereas Jefferies says in *Restless Human Hearts* that the place with the window is 'out of the track of tourists or seekers after art', only three years after his death the American painter, Edwin Abbey, took a tip from William Morris and rented Morgan Hall, Fairford. There he was joined for long spells by John Singer Sargent and visited by almost everybody else of note in the art world. Abbey became specially close to Alfred Parsons, a Jefferies illustrator.'

The second came from Dr Kedrun Laurie who lives in Belgium. She explained that the cathedral in Brussels of St. Michael and St. Gudule must be the St. Gudule of Jefferies' book. Jefferies visited Brussels in 1870 and is likely to have seen the great west window (1528) depicting the Last Judgement.

Jefferies (Claudius) compares the great cathedral window unfavourably with the one in the 'obscure Gloucestershire village' for which he provides descriptive details. Dr. Laurie kindly sent two illustrative booklets about St Gudule, each depicting this window. Using these, Mrs Clarke describes the window as follows: 'On looking at the guide-book and pictures which Dr Laurie sent me, the west window of St Gudule is beautifully proportioned being divided into three registers, in the top there is Christ the Redeemer sitting on a rainbow, surrounded by the

apostles, the colours being predominantly yellow and red. The middle register shows the cross of the passion surrounded by a host of soaring angels blowing trumpets and bearing symbolic objects against a pale blue sky, whilst the bottom register, which Jefferies compares unfavourably to the work of the 'unknown artist' in the obscure Gloucestershire village, contains the resurrected dead anxiously awaiting their judgement, with the obligatory inclusion of the donor, Erard de la Marck praying before an allegorical figure and Erard de la Marck's family motto. The dominant colours here are the green of the background grass and the whitish yellow of the naked dead. The figures are beautifully drawn, the window is pleasing to look at and perfectly executed, but on looking closely at the pictures of the window I had to agree with Jefferies that the window at St Gudule, with all its delicate proportion, its exquisite colour, was tame and flat - a mere drawing-room sketch in copybook handwriting, like the flourishes on the first page of the ciphering book - clever penmanship, but meaning nothing.'

Dr Richard Wright, away in Australia, brought up the Fairford window on the www and was able to say that Jefferies probably did not refer to 'lilies of the valley' but 'lilies of the valley of death' which could well have been yellow. This still left some doubt over Jefferies' colour descriptions.

A colleague of Professor Jones, Shaun Kennaely, on being approached, contributed the following (paraphrased): Dramatic changes in ocular perception take place when leaving daylight and entering a gothic church. The eye must make important adjustments which sometimes take 15 to 30 minutes, hi Jefferies' day there would have been no lighting in the church but even with lighting there is still the need for adjustment.

In addition, medieval glass has a particular spectrum, and the effect is different to modern glass; depending on distance, the red/blue spectrum can reverse completely. There is also evidence that colour memories can be deceptive. Mr Kennaely's source is James Rosser Johnson: *The Radiance of Chartres* 1964.

In addition to the Brussels booklets we also have a picture postcard of the window at Fairford.

NEWS FROM LISL GRUGEON

It is good to be able to report that Len's wife Lisl has settled happily in Brighton, having sold the Grugeons' house in Shalford. She has a 3-room warden-controlled flat, is near one of her two daughters, and sees her grandchildren frequently.

Half of Len's ashes have already been buried in Shalford but Len would have liked some of them to be scattered in a place that was important to Jefferies. So Lisl plans to attend the AGM at Chiseldon on 8 October, and we shall do our best to carry out Len's wishes - he once lived in Chiseldon.

MYFANWY THOMAS

On page 11 of the Spring Newsletter we mention 'a charming recent photograph of Myfanwy Thomas'. We did not know then, that she died, aged 94, on 8 March 2005. Richard Emeny had visited her in the Great Western Hospital in January, during her last illness; he says she was the last direct link with Edward Thomas. There was an obituary notice in *The Times* of 9 April recounting that she was six when her father was killed at Arras and remembered his last Christmas at home. She became a secretary and then a teacher, ultimately caring for her mother, Helen, and collecting all her mother's writing in *Under Storm's Wing* (1958). Her

own book, *One of These Fine Days* (1982) gives a poignant account of her childhood and youth. Her daughter survives her. She had a great affection for this Society and we are sorry that we shall see her no more.

BOOK NEWS

First, thank you very much, those of you who sent or handed in, books for us to sell at the Museum. We had a very good response and now have a nice row of titles to offer visitors, almost all under £5.

Second, Hobnob Press is, to quote their leaflet, "a publisher of books about Wiltshire and the surrounding region, owned and run by local historian Dr John Chandler." We occasionally give details of titles which may interest members. John Chandler is a member of the Society and a good friend. On the retirement of Roger Jones (another good friend of the Society) John has taken over the distribution of Ex Libris Press titles.

Hobnob Press, PO Box 1838, East Knoyle, Salisbury SP3 6FA. Tel. 01747 830 015. Email john@hobnobpress.co.uk

OTHER SOCIETIES

THE ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES WEEKEND HELD AT THE SWEDENBORG HALL IN LONDON ON 21/22 MAY 2005, HOSTED BY THE CHARLES LAMB SOCIETY

Nicholas Reid, Chairman, welcomed the delegates present, and the members of the committee gave their reports. There are approximately 109 member societies in all. Thanks must go to our Secretary, Rosemary Culley, who has worked hard to achieve the growth in numbers via use of the Internet. Thelma Thompson, Editor of the "Open Book" is retiring and a new editor is to be appointed. Robin Healey, Publicity Officer, asked for further press cuttings; he is particularly interested in the Coate Campaign. The Jane Austen Society will host the 2006 AGM on 13/14 May in Bath.

The Charles Lamb Society is celebrating the 230th anniversary of the birth of Charles Lamb, whose reputation rests on his essays written under the pen-name Elia, or A lia as Charles liked to pun, and a child's guide to Shakespeare written with his beloved sister Mary.

Lamb, we discovered, was not only a perfectionist in prose, but a consummate letter writer, poet and critic. He was good to his friends, devoted to his family, witty, a hater of pretension, a little over fond of the odd tippie and given to giggling in inappropriate places; his build was slight, he dressed rather quaintly and talked with an engaging kind of stammer. He was also a shy man, who revealed little of his true feelings except through his writings; there was something of a thin shell about him which few were able to penetrate. Maybe it was his knowledge of the thread of insanity that ran in his family that caused him to seek protection behind such a carapace.

His father was clerk to the lawyer Samuel Salt, Charles being born within the somewhat rarefied atmosphere of the Inner Temple on 10 February 1775. He was one of three surviving children, the others being John (1763-1821) and Mary Ann (1764-1847). Aged seven he was sent to Christ's Hospital to be educated,

wearing the traditional blue gown and yellow stockings of a Blue Coat boy. Here he met Samuel Taylor Coleridge who was to become his lifelong friend, in 1791 he was employed as a clerk at South Sea House, subsequently moving to the East India Company where he stayed for the remaining 33 years of his working life. His sister Mary was a very competent dressmaker and was able to employ a female apprentice.

Almost from the cradle Charles Lamb was addicted to literature and his association with Coleridge only served to foster this love. Apart from Coleridge, his circle of friends included Southey, Wordsworth and Hazlitt. But work had to come first, his literary ambitions being confined to what periods of leisure were at his disposal. He was derogatory of writers of his own age, reserving all his praise for those of the past; in some respects such praise was excessive and he has been criticised for it. "Damn the Age! I'll write for antiquity" he wrote.

On 21 September 1796 occurred the tragedy that was to have such a profound effect on his life and that of his sister Mary. It happened at dinner when Mary was in one of the peculiar moods to which she was subject, only this time it was much worse than usual. Picking up a knife she began to pursue her terrified apprentice round the table, and when her mother, who was more or less an invalid, told her to desist she turned upon her and stabbed her to death. The jury brought in a verdict of lunacy, and rather than see Mary detained in an asylum, Charles took it upon himself to look after her. Such fits of insanity were not confined to Mary alone, Charles and his father having inherited the same instability, but it was Mary who was to manifest the worst of its symptoms. Moving home frequently, Charles was now everything to Mary who in between her fits of madness was sane and well balanced. It was during these interludes of sanity when she was more of a comfort than a burden that sister and brother were able to collaborate together in producing works such as *Tales from Shakespeare*, for which Mary wrote the comedies and Charles the tragedies; indeed, Charles was to remark to Dorothy Wordsworth that whenever Mary was ill, he felt "like a fool bereft of her co-operation; so used am I to look up to her in the least and the biggest perplexity... I can conceal nothing that I do from her. She is older and wiser and better than I... She lives but for me." Noble though these sentiments were, they prevented Charles from marrying, though throughout his life he was to form a number of sentimental attachments. There was Anne whose father, knowing the Lambs' history of madness, discouraged his daughter from associating with Charles. Then there was the little Quaker, Hester Savory, who died tragically young; she lived at the end of his street, and being familiar with the Witch of Endor in the Book of Samuel Charles referred to her as the 'Witch of End-door'. Anne is immortalised in *Dream Children* and Hester in *When Maidens such as Hester die*. There was also the much adored Fanny Kelly, an actress at Drury Lane, to whom he made an unsuccessful proposal of marriage.

From 1820 Charles began his essays to *The London Magazine* under the pseudonym Elia, the name of an old Italian clerk with whom he had worked at South Sea House. The first 28 of these essays were issued in book form in 1823 as *The Essays of Elia* followed in 1833 by *Last Essays of Elia*.

The afternoon saw us taken on a guided tour of Lamb's London. Lamb's birthplace of "kindly engendure" as he called it is no longer standing, but a plaque has been placed on the newly built Crown Office Row. We looked at Temple Church, restored after bomb damage during the war; Charles loved the Gothic

heads to be seen inside the church. Many of the buildings associated with Lamb have disappeared altogether or have been much altered, such as Bartlett's Passage where he attended school as a very small boy with Mary. Imagination has to play its role in appreciating the London Charles so fondly records, but the Inns of Court do appear to retain much of that special world within a world to which he refers. The Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, much loved by Lamb, was to stage his signally unsuccessful play *Mr H*, which was so booed and hissed that Lamb himself felt obliged to join in the general condemnation.

Returning to Swedenborg Hall we took our seats for the one-man play "Lamb's Tale or My Gentle-Hearted Charles" written and performed by G. Leslie Irons, who took on the character of a man for whom he obviously has a deep affection. In the play Charles conducts an imaginary conversation with his publisher Edward Moxon. Edward Moxon was to marry Emma Isola, the little girl whom Charles and Mary had taken under their wing at the age of 11; Emma brightened their lives considerably, both Mary and Charles loving to surround themselves with young people and children. It was Coleridge who called him "gentle hearted", though Charles was anything but flattered. "For God's sake, don't make me ridiculous any more by terming me gentle-hearted."

In the evening we had dinner at Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese in Fleet Street, noted for the literary/artistic luminaries that have gathered there over the centuries. There were pictures of them on the dark panelled walls; what rollicking times they must have enjoyed. All we could do was capture a little of the atmosphere of that bygone time.

On the following day we boarded the coach for a tour of Enfield and Edmonton. It was around 1823 that Charles and Mary decided to move away from the centre of London in search of somewhere a little more peaceful. They began their travels in Islington, lodging at a cottage adjacent to the New River which had been constructed in the 17th century to alleviate the shortage of water. At that time Islington was a leafy suburb and Charles was delighted with the novelty of "a spacious garden, with vines, pears, strawberries". In his own words he "planted, pruned and grafted". He retired from the East India Company in 1825, moving from Islington further into the country where he and Mary took up residence with a Mrs. Leishman at Clarendon Cottage. This was the first house we stopped to look at, a lovely Georgian house, once again bordering New River; the sun was shining and there were geese and goslings on the river. It did indeed look more country than town. Mary and Charles stayed with the Leishmans from 1825-1827; we then walked on to 87 Chase Side, only a short walk, where Charles and Mary resided for a further two years before moving next door to lodge with the Westwood family, or in Lamb's words "only twenty four inches further from Town". Contented initially, they decided to move again when the Westwoods began to take advantage by charging them excessively for their services, e.g. being asked for an extra sixpence to cover the cost of Wordsworth taking "such a quantity of sugar in his tea." Westwood Cottage is not so much a cottage as another fine Georgian house with a plaque to the Lambs hiding beneath a wealth of wisteria. After lunch we continued to Edmonton where Charles was to spend the remaining years of his life.

By the time of this move in 1833 the novelty of the rural idyll had long worn off. Mary's attacks of insanity were becoming more frequent, and Charles, ever a city man at heart, was bored and depressed. He wrote to his nature loving friend

Wordsworth of "intolerable dullness" and of the danger of believing in poets who "entice men from the cheerful haunts of streets", but with Mary growing ever more unstable, there was little possibility of returning to London. The house they rented was known as Bay Cottage and was run as a private asylum by Mr. & Mrs. Walden. Hardly visible from the road, and having a long and secluded front garden, Bay Cottage (now called Lamb's Cottage) was ideally situated. Opposite Bay Cottage was the Girls' Charity School fronted by the sculpture of a little girl dressed in blue which is still in existence and much as Lamb would have known it.

Crossing the road to Lamb's Cottage we were warmly welcomed by George and Sandra who allowed us to freely wander round their lovely home and garden which is not normally open to the public. It is thought that Bay Cottage was built around 1680 or even earlier, but such have been its manifold alterations that even the experts remain baffled as to its actual history. George and Sandra have worked effortlessly to retain its unique character, every room bearing witness to the care they have lavished upon it. Indeed, we felt privileged to peek into every nook and cranny and see how an old house can be made warm and comfortable without losing anything of its old world charm. Low ceilings are a feature of the house, as are the fireplaces which can be seen in nearly every room, in the dining room we were shown the Bedlam cupboard which was used as a lock-up to restrain dangerous patients. Mary herself was said to have spent periods in this cupboard.

Charles' time at Bay Cottage was to be of short duration. The move to Edmonton took him further away from London, and he spent much of his time looking mournfully along the London Road. On one of these melancholy walks he fell and grazed his face. The wound did not heal, resulting in erysipelas and then septicaemia, from which he died on 27th December 1834. He and Mary, who survived him by 13 years, are buried together in the churchyard of All Saints which is only a short walk away.

So what have Lamb and Jefferies in common - very little apart from then- capacity to write near perfect prose, Lamb in his tales of the town, Jefferies in his of the country.

Helen D Newman

THE EDWARD THOMAS FELLOWSHIP Newsletter 54 is mainly devoted to Myfanwy Thomas. She was a paragon among letter-writers and there are many testimonials to this skill, as well as photographs of her. Of special interest is the text of a long letter written by Dad Uzzell of 6 St John Terrace, Swindon, to Helen Thomas on hearing of Edward's death, dated July 16, 1917.

THE HENRY WILLIAMSON SOCIETY. The Society is 25 years old and celebrates with a bumper 96-page Jubilee Journal. The first 35 pages are devoted to Jefferies, and Henry's debt to him. There are also pages illustrating Henry's years as this Society's President, and two interesting photographs: Henry at Coate Water (1937) and Henry at Jefferies' grave in Worthing (no date). As usual, a most interesting book.

THE FRIENDS OF THE RIDGEWAY are pleased with themselves. After years of lobbying, they are able to say 'rejoice, rejoice!' Oxfordshire Council has passed an order banning recreational traffic in winter, and so has Wiltshire. West Berks is

nearly there. Swindon B.C. has yet to join the angels. A proposed bill will define 'Restricted Byway' in such a way that motor vehicles are excluded; more later.

HE FRIENDS OF ALFRED WILLIAMS. Newsletter 7 contains details of a farewell gift and ceremony for Margaret Gould and her picture on the cover. There is a poem by our member Graham Walker entitled 'Trespassing' and several other interesting items.

WANHS. Earlier this year the Devizes-based Society announced that it was in financial difficulties and appealed for help. In its latest newsletter, Trilithon no. 54, the Chairman is able to announce a large number of generous gifts, and fruitful approaches to a number of charities. The programme, as usual, is most tempting; in addition there is to be a fund-raising lecture on 26 November in Devizes Town Hall by Sir David Attenborough. The subject is 'Discovery and the Camera'; tickets price £11.

RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE AND LOAN

If you would like any of the following, please write to Mrs. Norma Goodwin, Wildings, 3a Momford Road, Oliver's Battery, Winchester SO22 4LE.

Postcards:	now 25p or any 3 for	65p
Watercolour of Liddington Hill & quotation	Wild flowers & quotation Portrait of Richard Jefferies	
Richard Jefferies & Old Town (guided walk)		25p
Richard Jefferies in Eltham		25p
Richard Jefferies in Surbiton		50p
Richard Jefferies & Coate Water (guided walk)		50p
A Jefferies Land itinerary		20p
Back numbers of the Journal		£1.00
<i>The Story of My Heart</i> (paperback)		£2.00
Richard Jefferies in Sussex (New)		25p

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

Scarce Jefferies Works on CD

These may also now be obtained on loan from Mrs. Goodwin:

- CD-01 *The Scarlet Shawl*
- CD-02 *Jefferies Land*
- CD-03 *Greene Feme Farm*
- CD-04 *Restless Human Hearts*

A fee of £1 is charged for the loan of each CD. See page 6 of Spring Newsletter 2004 for details.

Cheques to the Richard Jefferies Society.

Other Publications. There are still some copies of *The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies: A Chronological Study*, by Hugoe Matthews and Phyllis Treitel. It is a great help to anyone researching Jefferies' daily life and work. A copy can be obtained from Phyllis for a special price of £10 including postage. Cheques to 'The Richard Jefferies Society' to whom all proceeds will go.

Also *The Jefferies Canon*, by our ex-President W J Keith. This is a 40-page booklet listing and summarising 74 of Jefferies' essays with a view to their authenticity. Price £3.

Copies of the video, *Jefferies Land*, may still be obtained, price £10, from John Webb, Padbrook, Bincknoll Lane, Wootton Bassett, Wilts. SN4 8QR. Cheques to 'John Webb'.

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. Helen Newman has done the typing. Printing and despatch by Margaret Evans and Phyllis Treitel. Website: www.bath.ac.uk/~lissmc/rjeffs.htm

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & BIRTHDAY LECTURE

SATURDAY 8 OCTOBER 2005

HOLY CROSS CHURCH, CHISELDON

PROGRAMME

Reception and refreshments AGM (members only)

Break for lunch and walks. The hall is close to the church where Richard and Jessie were married. Easy parking.

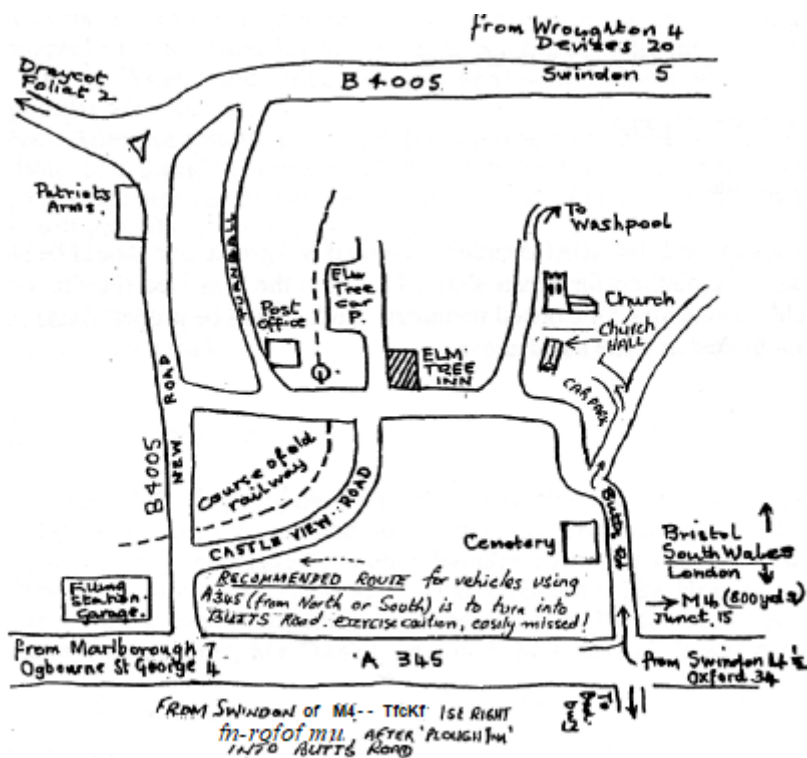
The Birthday Lecture (visitors welcome)

Speaker: The President, Hugoe Matthews

Subject: 'Richard Jefferies: An Independent Mind'.*

Tea

*New **Booklet**. Hugoe Matthews has compiled a chronological list of all Jefferies' known works; each entry supplies date and source; essential to anyone studying Jefferies. Copies will be for sale at the AGM and later by post. A4 size £2.00. A5 size (same text) £1.50. 20 pages plus cover.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SATURDAY 8 OCTOBER 2005 AT CHISELDON CHURCH HALL

AGENDA

1. Chairman's introductory remarks.
2. Apologies.
3. Minutes of the last AGM 2 October 2004.
4. Matters arising: Russet apple tree
5. Annual Report.
6. Treasurer's Report.
7. Election of Examiner of Accounts.
8. Elections to Council; the following are due to retire:
Phyllis Treitel (Hon. Sec.) Eric Jones John Savage John Webb

Eric Jones, John Savage, and John Webb are proposed for re-election for the years 2005 to 2008.

Phyllis Treitel is not standing for re-election.

9. The Save Coate Campaign.

10. Any Other Business.

A copy of the minutes of the 2004 AGM is circulated with this Agenda, and should be brought to the AGM. Any motions or resolutions for debate should be sent to the Hon. Sec. (Phyllis Treitel) before 1 October, as should nominations for Council members. Both should be proposed and seconded.

Nominations are not limited to those listed above.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Richard Jefferies Society held at The Village Hall, Liddington, Wilts, on Saturday, 2 October 2004.

PRESENT: Margaret Bathe, Jean Bone, Marie Chesham, David Chesham, Mark Daniel, Patrick Dillon, Margaret Evans, Lisl Grugeon, Stan Hickerton, Geoff Hirst, Eric Jones, Sylvia Morse, Ray Morse, Brian Morris, Helen Newman, Sheila Povey, John Povey, Angela Price, John Price, Paul Ricketts, Andrew Rossabi, Michael Stage Richard Stewart, Phyllis Treitel, Graham Walker, John Webb.

1. THE CHAIR

The Vice-chairman, Mr Price, was in the Chair, in the place of the Chairman, Mr Grugeon, who had died on 5 September 2004. Several members of the Society had attended the funeral in Godalming; Mr Price read from the address, given there by Mr Alasdair Buchan.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were given in respect of Chris Bowles, Margaret Gould, Norma Goodwin, Robert McCloy, Gillian Piper, Michael Ponting, Jean Saunders, John Savage, Pam Smith (who came later), Alan and Eileen Voce. Mrs Piper, who lives in Western Australia, invited anyone visiting there to get in touch.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2003 were signed as correct.

4. MATTERS ARISING

a. The Museum at Coate. There was still no fence between the Sun Inn and the garden. The security system to the house (both parts) had been renewed and extended. A tenant for the inhabited part is not yet in residence. Mr John Webb plans a renewal of the natural history cases, making them relevant to words of Jefferies. The 'Jefferies Land' video can now be viewed in the room downstairs and is proving popular with visitors.

b. Archives. After consultation, Council has agreed to deposit the Society's archives with the Wilts and Swindon Record Office in Trowbridge. Papers pre-1995 are affected. They will remain the property of the Society, but will be available for study. The move will probably take place in 2006.

5. ANNUAL REPORT The Report was accepted.

6. TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr Hirst explained the high figure for publications: the Society's colour leaflets (first printed in 1997) had run out and had been reprinted. This had cost £344 for 2000 copies. He had shown the figure for public liability insurance separately since it was so large. There was some discussion as to what it covered. The Hon. Sec. had, once again, searched for a better bargain but without success. Professor Jones proposed acceptance of the accounts; Mr Daniel seconded the proposal. It was carried.

7. EXAMINER OF ACCOUNTS

It was hoped that Mr Michael Steel, who had examined the accounts again this year, would continue to do so. Members agreed that he should be approached, and thanked for his work this year.

8. ELECTIONS

Professor Hooker had decided, because of continuing health problems, not to stand for re-election as President of the Society. Mr Hugoe Matthews, well-known to members as a dealer in books by Jefferies, and for his bibliography of Jefferies (with George Miller) and his chronology of Jefferies (with Phyllis Treitel) expressed his willingness to stand for election as President (2004-2009). He was elected unanimously.

Mr Hirst was re-elected unanimously as the Society's Treasurer (2004-2009). Miss Newman and Mr Stewart were both re-elected unanimously as Council members (2004-2007).

9. THE SAVE COATE CAMPAIGN

Mr Price set out the story so far: developers Persimmon, Redrow wish to develop the whole of the greenfield area between the Great Western Hospital and Coate Water Country Park, that is up to the edge of the garden of Jefferies' birthplace, affecting much of the atmosphere and outlook of the place, and inhibiting wildlife. The campaign to prevent this development, which Swindon Borough Council would permit in order to pay for the land for an extension of Bath University, has been engaging the Society's officers' time since last year. It has been led by Jean Saunders of Friends of the Earth, but numerous other local bodies, including this Society, have taken part. Newspaper publicity was given to the fact that RJS member John Fowles had sent in a petition form. There is to be a Public Enquiry, possibly in January.

There was vigorous discussion of what more could be done. Mr Webb has plans to gather the protesting parties together, to make a common manifesto. Mr Stewart suggested a letter to a national newspaper with, if possible, the signatures of people of influence, to draw attention to the danger. Professor Jones thought that members of Bath's governing body might be influenced by publicity reflecting badly on the University. The effort of the Swindon Civic Trust, to promote alternative sites in Swindon (since the university itself is welcomed by most) should be supported.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman congratulated Andrew Rossabi on his Richard Jefferies entry in the new Dictionary of National Biography. He congratulated Richard Stewart on his new book of poems - Green Man. Richard read an extract.

Mark Daniel reported the demise of the russet apple, and is having further grafts done. He offered one of these to anyone willing to plant one in their garden, and thus have a reserve stock.

The meeting ended at 12.45.

Phyllis Treitel, Hon. Sec. October 2004.

Published Accounts

The Richard Jefferies Society

Receipts and payments accounts for the year ending June 30 2005

2004	Receipts	2005	2004	Payments	2005
	Balances brought down		1061	Publications	686
				Marketing	
1068	Bank	653	209	Rents	204
67	Petty Cash	31	64	Subs	50
9198	Cov B/Soc	9198	30	Lecture fees	93
		9883	8	Donations	2
1481	Subs	1905	588	Administration	646
21	Donations	383	19	Miscellaneous	360
57	Sales: Mus	13	194	Insurance	194
92	Other	127			
	Videos	21			
		161			
218	Tax Reclaim	185			
188	Interest: B/Soc	279			
3	Bank				
		279			
				Bank	840
1	Miscellaneous			Petty Cash	
				Cov. B/Soc	9727
	Petty Cash cr	10			10568
		12806			12806

Treasurer's report to the Richard Jefferies Society 2004-5

The double count of subscriptions in 2002-3 has now worked itself through the accounts and the subscription figure for the last year would show a small increase. I would not go so far as to state that membership has stabilised and I shall be watching and remarking on trends as I see fit during the next year or two.

Your executive works hard and pretty successfully to keep expenses down, and the increase in administration is more than accounted for by postal charge rises and a new supply of letter headed stationery. This latter work was kindly done in-house by a member of the executive, again minimising costs.

The rise in miscellaneous expenditure must be read in conjunction with that in donations. A member of your executive kindly donated the video monitor for Coate and to allow the society to gain tax relief on this gift through Gift Aid, we needed to "purchase" the item at its true cost, and then receive the equivalent amount as a gift. There is a benefit to the society of almost £100.

Petty cash shows as a credit as there is a net amount owed to the petty cash holders by the Society.

We have continued our practice of stating where our resources are placed and note the following breakdown. An element of investment income as been apportioned to Coate on the usual formula. There has been an increase in the General Reserve of £699.

General Funds	£2000
Coate	£614
Harold Adams	£155
General Reserve	£7799

G.W.Hirst Honorary Treasurer

Independent Examiner's report to the Trustees of the Richard Jefferies Society

I report on the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 30 June 2005.

The respective responsibilities of Trustees and examiner are as follows:

The Trustees of the Richard Jefferies Society are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The Trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under Section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993 and that an independent examination is needed.

As Independent Examiner it is my responsibility to:

- * examine the accounts (under Section 43(3)(a) of the 1993 Act);
- * follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners (under Section 43(7)(b) of the 1993 Act); and
- * state whether any particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. Such an examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by a charity - in this case the Richard Jefferies Society - and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes the consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the Trustees via the Society's Treasurer concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent Examiner's statement

I have now undertaken these required actions in respect of the 2004-05 accounts; in connection with this examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (i) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that, in any material respect, the requirements to keep accounting records in accordance with Section 41 of the 1993 Act and to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and to comply with the accounting requirements of the 1993 Act, have not been met; or
- (ii) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn, in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

C E I Jones
Retired Museum Administrator
8 August 2005

41 Staples Road
Loughton
Essex. IG10 1HR

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2005-2006

2005

Saturday 11.00 AGM at Church Hall, Chiseldon.

8 October

2.30 Birthday Lecture.

Speaker: Hugoe Matthews (President of the Society) 'Richard Jefferies: An Independent Mind'. For details, see page 17.

Monday * Ray Morse: Slides from the Society's collection.

5 December

2006

Thursday * Joint Meeting with The Friends of Alfred Williams.

2 March

Monday * Phyllis Treitel: 'Charles Sorley (1885-Oct. 1915) poet and disciple of Jefferies'. Research by A.S. Hickerton.

3 April

Monday * To be arranged.

8 May

* Meetings begin at 7.30 at the Arts Centre, Devizes Road, Swindon. Visitors welcome; no charge. Pay and display car park close by.