

THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER
& ANNUAL REPORT 2006-2007



The Richard Jefferies Society (Registered Charity No 1042838) was founded in 1950 to promote appreciation and study of the writings of Richard Jefferies (1848-1887).

Membership is open to all on payment of the current annual subscription (£7 single, £8 couple).

Members receive spring and autumn newsletters, an annual report and a *Journal* and can take advantage of the Society's extensive library. Activities include winter meetings, a study day, special outings, events, a Birthday Lecture and an Annual General Meeting.

TRUSTEES AND COUNCIL MEMBERS 2006-7

Margaret Evans, Brian Fullagar, Norma Goodwin, Geoff Hirst, Eric Jones, Hugoe Matthews, Helen Newman, John Price, Jean Saunders, John Savage, Richard Stewart, Phyllis Treitel and John Webb.

Co-opted members Stan Hickerton and Ray Morse.

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COATE FARM MUSEUM The Richard Jefferies Society provides the volunteers to open the Jefferies' Museum at Coate to the public on the second Wednesday of the month throughout the year from 10am to 4pm as well as the first and third Sundays of May to September from 2-5pm. This year's Heritage Open Day takes place on 9th September from 11am to 5pm when additional attractions are planned. The "Footsteps" writers' workshop is also held on the same Wednesdays until the end of December 2007. Admission is free.

NEWSLETTER

The autumn newsletter and annual report has been edited by Jean Saunders, proof-read by Tom Saunders and despatched by Margaret Evans.

The deadline set to submit material for the Spring 2008 Newsletter is **15th February 2008**. Please send your contributions to the Hon. Sec.

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DATA PROTECTION ACT

Members' names and addresses are held on a computer data base. We are required by the Data Protection Act 1998 to inform members that they have the right to object to information being held in this way.

Front Cover: the photograph on the front cover shows some of the young performers from 'The Romanska School of World Dance' who took part in 'The Battle of Coate' dance that was premiered in the gardens of Coate Farm on 3rd June. See the report on page 21 for more information.

N.B. Additional Event: Jefferies' Literary Treasure Hunt.

Please note that an additional outdoor event has been planned on Sunday 30th September, meeting at Coate Farm at 10.30am. In preparation for hosting next year's Alliance of Literary Societies AGM, a dry run of the planned Literary Treasure Hunt will take place. There are two elements to the event that involve a walk around Old Town and a car-sharing journey into the surrounding area. Contact John Price for further details on 01672 515150.

FROM THE CHAIR

We have recently repeatedly reported in your Society's Newsletters and Annual Reports on the distressing vandalism that has been occurring at the Coate Museum and Farmhouse, and the inability or unwillingness of the Swindon Borough Council (SBC) to take any practical steps to solve the problem. I am now very pleased to say, however, that at the time of writing there does seem to be some real progress being made in attempts to tackle these issues.

Your Secretary Jean Saunders, your Librarian, John Webb, and I, have now met twice with the Chief Executive and The Council Leader of SBC. As a result of these meetings with the chief decision makers, we have cut through the inertia and procrastination that had marked our numerous previous meetings – going back at least ten years – with lower tier officers.

The first decision taken was that CCTV cameras will be placed around the building so that any intruders can be identified. Finance has been agreed for this.

The second, and more momentous decision, on behalf of SBC, is that they would be prepared to lease the Coate Farmhouse site to the Richard Jefferies' Society. This would; (a) enable the cottage to be let to a suitable tenant (an important contribution to the security of the site), thus obviating the problem of "right-to-buy" legislation; and (b) it would allow your Society to apply for grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Landfill Tax, etc., to enhance the premises.

I do see this as being a way of breaking the stalemate that has been causing so much frustration in recent years. We are therefore putting an important Motion to the AGM this year, which will read as follows:

The membership authorises the Executive Committee of the Society to negotiate with Swindon Borough Council with a view to the Society taking a lease on the Coate Farmhouse and immediate site, including outbuildings. The membership also authorises the appropriate officers of the Society to enter into such a lease, if the terms are found not to disadvantage the Society and its Membership.

I do hope that you will support this immensely exciting and potentially advantageous proposal; and I shall welcome views from members before the AGM, especially if you have practical advice to proffer.

Now on to other matters...

Serendipity for me, is one of the major pleasures of life, and earlier this year, at the beginning of May, when in Cambridge to plan a conference a few weeks later, I called in at David's bookshop to look at their second-hand stock. The last time I called in, several years ago, I was very pleased to find a copy of the Everyman edition of *Bevis* from the collection of the late Richard Burton (actor not explorer); and this time I spotted three Alfred Williams titles; signed copies of *A Wiltshire Village* and *Villages of the White Horse*, and a first edition of *Selected Poems*, which was unsigned, but had loosely inserted a newspaper letter from Galloway Kyle. All three volumes had belonged to one "F. Brittain" whom the bookshop had incorrectly identified as "Master of Jesus College".

What made the books of even greater interest to me, however, was that on the front pastedown of the two signed volumes were page references to passages about Richard Jefferies.

Further research was clearly needed, but before I had started on this our Secretary informed me about the Brittain Bequest – referred to on pages 18-19 of this Report. Further correspondence with the Archivist at Jesus College proved extremely helpful, and this is why I then decided to produce a paper on Freddy Brittain, which I shall give as a talk to the Society on 1st December, in place of the scheduled event. The most interesting discoveries were letters from Samuel Looker at the time of the Richard Jefferies Centenary in 1948, and the copy of *Some London Thoughts of Richard Jefferies*. Only one copy of this title was previously known, but it is in private hands, and consequently not referred to in the Miller and Matthews Bibliography.

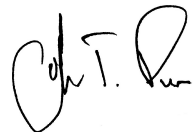
Another amusing discovery earlier this year was a copy of *The Story of my Heart* seen at a book fair, with a bookseller's sticky "post-it" note inside saying "Signed by the Author". The only problem with this claim was that the book was a copy of the Ethelbert White illustrated 1923 edition, and the signature "Richard ? Jefferies" was dated 1928 – posthumous by 41 years! Because of the boldness of the signature, however, and its central position on the free front endpaper, I did later wonder whether it might have been Harold Jefferies' signature, but I have been unable to trace a copy of Harold's signature with which to compare it. If anyone reading this does have knowledge of where a copy of Harold's signature might be found, I should be most interested to hear from you. The question mark signifies a middle initial, but it is unclear as to whether it is "H" or not.

Finally, I am indebted to Giles Wood, one of our members, who has lent me a copy of Richard Ingrams' *England; An Anthology* published by Collins in 1989. It includes four extracts from Richard Jefferies, two of which are particularly appropriate in this wet summer.

"Summer cold in June. Shivering in the evenings in the parlour, with flowers and lilac in the grate...". *Nature Diaries*. 1878.

"Out of the thirty days of June, fourteen were wet at my station near London...through despondent May and darkened June, morning after morning has come grey and shrouded thus". *Midsummer 1879 in Chronicles of the Hedges*.

As Yogi Berra, the American baseball player remarked, "It is déjà vu all over again"

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Price', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Price
15th August 2007

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

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

Mr W E Alton, Tiverton, Devon
Mrs J Ballard, Highworth, Wilts
Mrs B Bartle, Liden, Swindon, Wilts
Mrs G A Bromhead, Swindon, Wilts
Mr R Burge, Cinderford, Glos
Mrs D M Cornforth, Belper, Derbyshire
Mr N J Curry, Ulverston, Cumbria
Mr S M Eagles, Reading, Berkshire
Mrs J Elder, Liden, Swindon, Wilts
Mr C J Emberton, Nunburnholme, Yorkshire
Mr E Esnault, Briand, France
Mrs S Irving, Tunbridge Wells, Kent
Mr & Mrs B A Jones, Carnkie, Cornwall
Miss J M Lingley, Northwood, Middx
Mr E McMillan-Scott, Wick, Worcs
Mr J C Morgan, Islington, London
Mrs L O'Leary, Liden, Swindon, Wilts

Mr C Partis, Anlaby, Yorkshire
Dr J H Payne, Frome, Somerset
Mr & Mrs K Pickett, Swindon, Wilts
Mr A Pitt, Bidford on Avon, Warwickshire
Mr & Mrs J T Roberts, Wakefield, Yorkshire
Mrs J Saunders, Pencoed, South Wales
Mrs H Sheehan, Westlea, Swindon, Wilts
Mrs T J Simpson, Swindon, Wilts
Mr K Smith, Stromness, Orkney
Mrs W J Spence, Mytchett, Surrey
Mr K W Stone, Ashbourne, Derbyshire
Mr & Mrs C Taylor, Ladysmith, BC, Canada
Mr J Toman, Bishopston, Bristol

The total membership during the 2006/07 subscription year numbered 290, being made up of 182 single, 29 joint (58 members), 27 Life, 5 Joint Life (10 members), 3 Hon Life, 3 Joint Hon Life (6 members) and 4 Corporate memberships. 26 of the above mentioned new members joined in the 2006/07 membership year. 4 in the 2007/08 membership year.

At the time of writing the 2007/08 membership is 290. This takes account of 1 resignation, 4 deaths and 1 single member becoming joint.

Although the majority of members live in England, other countries are represented: Australia 4, Belgium 1, Canada 4 (1 joint), Channel Islands 1, China 1, Eire 1, France 1, Germany 2, Northern Ireland 1 (joint), New Zealand 1, Scotland 7 (1 joint), Spain 1, USA 3, Wales 6 (2 joint).

At present 58 members (5 of whom are Joint) have not paid their 2007/08 membership year subscriptions. Gentle reminders will accompany their mailing of the Annual Report in the hope that they will bring their membership up-to-date. In anticipation, many thanks.

Margaret Evans
17th August 2007

BOOK DRAW 2007

Thanks to those of you who applied to purchase books from the list published in the Spring Newsletter. 19 books were sold, raising a total of £285.51 for the Society's funds. A few books remain unsold. They are numbers: 2 *Amaryllis at the Fair*, 14 *Nature Near London*, 21 *The Story of my Heart*, 22 *The Toilers of the Field*, 28 Edna Manning, 29 Edward Thomas's *Richard Jefferies*, 32 Catalogue of RJ Books in Swindon Library, 38 *The Gamekeeper at Home*, and 39 *Red Deer*, from the original list. Anyone wishing to buy any of these should contact John Price before the end of October, when those unsold will be added to the books for sale to the general public at the Museum.

REPORTS OF MEETINGS HELD AT COATE FARM 2007

Readings from Alfred Williams and Richard Jefferies

It was the Society's turn to host the annual joint meeting with the Friends of Alfred Williams on 3 March 2007. Twenty people gathered in Jefferies' sitting room to share readings and enjoy the atmosphere. Unlike the evening meetings held at the Arts Centre, where people rushed to get home, some had to be herded out of the door!

Kaye Franklin read from William's *Round About the Upper Thames*. Kaye's copy of the book contains an inscription to Cyril Wright dated 1960. She chose a powerful extract that describes the building up of a thunderstorm over the Cotswolds: the oppressive atmosphere, the dark skies, the storm finally breaking into lightening and glittering brightness.

Graham Walker read an extract from *Bevis* selected for publication in *Open Road*, an anthology of Jefferies' writing. The piece describes Bevis's fascination for the stars as he lies beneath a young oak tree watching the sky and reveals his knowledge of the positions of the constellations.

Michael Ponting chose an extract from *Red Deer* describing the Somerset lanes in addition to information about the red deer, or 'Forrester' as it was known. Red deer were becoming extinct through poaching and hunting and, even then, shooting them was frowned upon. The extract also features the story of a particular shooting party who consume too much spirit after a stag has been shot. The killer of the stag falls asleep and the other members of the party set fire to the heather, starting a major heathland fire that engulfs the sleeping hunter, who then has to be doused in a nearby stream.

Wendy MacLeod Gilford selected the *Pageant of Summer*. Jefferies is asked to explain why he walks along the same road every day. He replies that he does not care for change and wants to see the same trees and flowers, to hear the same birds in the same place and to look forward to observing the seasonal changes that occur in nature.

John Webb quoted from Jefferies' observations of the different flowering times recorded for blackthorn in *Chronicles of the Hedges*. These not only illustrate the other plants and birdsong seen or heard on each occasion, but also how weather conditions could be very unreliable even 130 years ago.

Graeme Franklin read from ***A Wiltshire Village***, where Williams describes sitting under a willow tree by the River Cole at South Marston. He enjoys the peace and tranquility he shares with the wildlife: a little mouse cleaning itself, a wren and the fish. The music of the stream passing over the hatch is only broken by the sound of the express train that went by on the embankment.

Margaret Evans explained she works in particle physics, a branch of science specialising in the infinitesimally small. She quoted from 'Wheatfields' in ***Nature Near London***. Jefferies describes the effort of threshing out just three ears of ripe wheat in his hand. He considers the labour necessary to farm successfully, something that Londoners, passing by on the train, perhaps never contemplate. Did the amount of the work that went into a wheatfield ever occur to them – did they imagine that the crop planted and harvested itself? Jefferies wonders how much ale is consumed by the field workers and describes their food as being as “hard as their labour”.

Kathleen Wyatt read another evocative description of a river in ***Round About the Upper Thames***. This time the river is the Coln – the most beautiful and a “radiant bride” swimming along over her stony bed with a smile on her face – an example of perfect beauty.

Margaret Bathe read from an article about James Agate (journalist and novelist 1877-1947) including the subject's views on the life of Alfred Williams. Agate admired Williams' capacity to teach himself by getting up to study at 4am, working a gruelling day at the railway works and then studying again in the evening. Margaret then read from one of Alistair Cooke's letters '**from America**'. Cooke describes Agate as a man of many interests and as an “extreme diarist” with a passion for golf and boxing. Agate was known to sleep through concerts that he was there to review!

Eric Ball chose the extract from ***A Wiltshire Village*** where Williams describes first learning about Jefferies and, at twelve years of age, visiting Liddington Hill. It seemed strange to Eric that Williams could have lived so near to Coate yet taken so long to discover Jefferies.

Jean Saunders read from ***Wood Magic***, recounting young Sir Bevis's amazement at the forgotten pleasures he continually happens upon in his small toy cupboard, which seems to him a bottomless pit. Jean then pointed out Jefferies' own toy cupboard to the audience, still there in the corner of the room.

Phyllis Treitel quoted from Jefferies' introduction to an edition of Gilbert White's ***Natural History of Selborne***. Jefferies dwells on White's powers of observation and the amount of detail provided in his writing. Jefferies criticises those who do not see what is in front of them.

Betty Lovell read Williams' poem '**The Brook**' – the happy stream that leads to the shining river.

Ray Morse read from the opening paragraphs of 'By the Exe', ***Life of the Fields***, that describes the River Barle along with the Exe. Jefferies records the flora and fauna in the fields and woodlands through which the streams flow.

Graham Walker rounded off the day with a piece from ***In a Wiltshire Village*** that describes Farmer Tull in the chapter 'Granny Bowles'.

The showing of *The Man on the Hill* - 14 April 2007

As part of the centenary celebrations in 1987, HTV produced a two part documentary film about Richard Jefferies scripted by Roger Fitter. The hour long film was mostly taken up with readings from Jefferies' works, beautifully spoken by Paul Scofield, with a focus on *The Story of my Heart*.

Most of the audience of fifteen hadn't seen the film for some time, although for some it was a new experience. Sheila Povey remarked that, at the time the film was first shown on the television, there was a surge of new members joining the Society. The documentary compared old with new shots of Swindon, showing it at its modern-day worst. The scenes were accompanied by strident music that seemed totally at odds with the calmer pastoral pictures on view. The readings highlighted Jefferies' spiritual writing, his concern for the poor and hungry and his hope that the human race should spend more of its time in pleasurable pursuits rather than with toil and the humdrum. In all, it was agreed that the film had not dated but that a better choice of music to accompany the serene episodes of the film would have greatly improved its quality.

The Weasel's Tale and *The Cunning Spider* adapted by Hilda Sheehan - 14 May 2007.

The May meeting was supported by the "Footsteps" project and the Swindon Festival of Literature. Hilda narrated the two extracts from *Wood Magic* based on the adventures of the crafty weasel that escaped capture many times and the not so cunning spider who was outwitted by the toad. See the report on pages 24-25.

Hilda Sheehan, pictured right, telling *The Cunning Spider* story



N. B. Changes to the meeting to be held on 1st December 2007.

The reading of Paul Casimir's paper, presented originally in February 1956, has been postponed until December 2008 in order that John Price might speak about his research on Dr Freddy Brittain, former Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge. See page 5 for more information.

STUDY DAY AT JEFFERIES MUSEUM 28 JULY 2007
SUBJECT: CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN JEFFERIES' DAY.

The recent heavy rainfall and freak flooding in the area had subsided sufficiently to allow eighteen members to gather at Coate Farm to discuss the children's books Richard Jefferies might have read.

Wendy MacLeod Gilford chose Charles Kingsley's ***Water Babies*** (published in 1863), relating it to Jefferies' *Wood Magic*, noting both main characters are able to talk to insects and animals. She first chose an extract from *Water Babies* in which the dragonfly describes to Tom how he wants to split from his larval stage and emerge with wings and then, by way of comparison, read an extract from a *Wood Magic* in which the grasshopper explains to Sir Bevis why he hops from side to side rather than in a straight line in order he might see more of nature.

John Webb selected Robert Louis Stevenson's ***Treasure Island*** (published in 1883, one year later than *Bevis*). As there are no female characters, John considered *Treasure Island* to be, in essence, a boys' book. He particularly enjoyed the descriptions of the pirates and renegades: the sinister Blind Pugh, the evil Israel Hands - who tries to kill young Jim Hawkins, the wicked and greedy ship's cook, John Silver, with his peg-leg and parrot on his shoulder shrieking "Pieces of eight". And, unforgettably, the eccentric Ben Gunn who, marooned for 3 years, craved only for a piece of cheese.

Brian Morris picked Ernest Thompson Seton's ***Two Little Savages*** (published in 1902), a work sharing much in common with *Bevis*. Both books are semi autobiographical, focusing on the adventures of two boys of 10-14 years of age. Neither authors were scholars in the accepted sense, being mainly self-taught. They also shared a passion for nature. Jan, Seton's hero, like Bevis, is a complex, dreamy boy, a self-absorbed character estranged from home-life. Their companions, Sam (*Two Little Savages*) and Mark (*Bevis*), are ideal foils, being practical, down-to-earth and skilful. Both books are written in a loose narrative style and both are episodic - 52 chapters in *Bevis* compared to 62 in TLS. They are also crammed with practical information and Jan and Bevis are alike in seeing themselves as "savages" hunting for their food and living off the land. Throughout both novels, the authors love of nature is evident. Seaton was later involved in founding the woodcraft movement, an inspiration when it came to the creation of the Boy Scouts.

Phyllis Treitel chose Thomas Hughes' ***Tom Brown's Schooldays*** (published in 1857, when Jefferies was around nine years of age). The book has the added local interest in that Hughes lived nearby in Uffington, describing the area in *The Scouring of the White Horse*. Tom Brown's story is based around life in a boys' public school. Jefferies only attended day school, but he also wrote about school life in *Ben Tubbs Adventures*, a novel that exists in manuscript form only. Phyllis contrasted the fight between Tom Brown, a relative weakling, and Slogger Williams with the real life drama of the burly Baden boys from Day House Farm setting upon Jefferies. The two authors shared other similarities. Both had brothers who emigrated to Texas where

land was being given away. Jefferies brother Harry even wrote a book entitled *G T T – Gone to Texas*.

Eric Jones professed an aversion to nineteenth century children's literature and recommended later books such as *Missee Lee* by Arthur Ransome and *Brendon Chase* by B. B. Nevertheless, he discussed Captain Marryat's ***The Children of the New Forest*** (published in 1847), a book Jefferies might easily have read, despite its Royalist propaganda theme. The novel deals with life in a humble forester's cottage where the family endeavour to make ends meet using the most basic tools while relying on the forest for produce. Marryat describes the patience and hard work needed to grow crops and rear pigs. The family's work even stretches to building a cow-house - although where they might find a cow in the forest soon becomes an issue.

Barbara Bartle spoke on Lewis Carroll's ***Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*** (published in 1865). It is a work of wild imagination and includes talking animals, elements recognisable in a number of Jefferies' books. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson grew up in a rectory with his ten younger brothers and sisters. His need to produce games and entertainment for his many siblings perhaps explains why he was always more comfortable in the company of children. *Alice* was created for a little girl called Alice Liddell. Dodgson made the story up for her one afternoon while they were on a river picnic in Oxford with her family. Later he wrote it down and presented her with a copy. Given his close associations with Oxford, where he was a don, and his visits to relations in Sussex, where Jefferies also lived, Barbara wondered if the two authors' paths ever crossed.

Andrew Rossabi read from Chapter 8 of *Bevis*. Bevis and Mark come to a witch's cottage, set in a deep coombe. The boys' plan to dash in and pinch gooseberries from the garden and Bevis wishes they had some "moly". Andrew explained that moly is a plant mentioned in Bevis's favourite book, ***The Odyssey***. There half of Odysseus' men are turned into pigs by the beautiful witch Circe. Odysseus is able to rescue the men after the god Hermes gives him some moly to counter Circe's magic. The plant – it has black roots and white flowers - could be wild garlic or ramsons, which according to Geoffrey Grigson (*An Englishman's Flora*) is still called moly in parts of Devon and Somerset.

Jean Saunders, who read girls' books as a child, followed her husband's advice and selected R. M. Ballantyne's ***The Coral Island*** (published in 1857). This is a boys' adventure story that Jefferies might have read as a youngster. The tale recounts the exploits of three young men aged between 14-18 shipwrecked and having to fend for themselves on a South Seas island. Jean read a passage from Chapter 28 about sailing and the boys' practical efforts at making a mast and sail for their home-made boat using cocoa-nut cloth.

John Price felt Jefferies' quote about having read Gilbert White's ***The Natural History of Selborne*** later in life had been misunderstood. It was clear he had read it much earlier. The misinterpretation arose because the first edition of *Selborne* did not include the Naturalist's Calendar. John suspected Jefferies had originally read the first edition and had not come across the Calendar until much later. Hence the confusion.

John Price took up the theme of practical books for children, mentioning last year's best-seller ***The Dangerous Book for Boys***. Jefferies' *Bevis* was quoted as a good model for boys in one review of the book. It was agreed children these days wouldn't be allowed to learn the practical skills of Jefferies' childhood, nor might they want to learn, surrounded as they are by disposable consumer goods.

In the afternoon, **Helen Newman** gave a talk on '**Victorian Children's Literature**'. Because the subject was so vast, Helen decided to give a very general outline and something of a personal one too. She confessed that many of her own favourites, such as Mrs. Hodgson Burnett and E.E. Nesbit are more Edwardian than Victorian. Even Barrie's *Peter Pan* wasn't staged until 1904 and not published in book form until 1911 and Beatrix Potter's *Peter Rabbit* didn't come out until 1901. Most children's literature prior and during the early part of the Victorian age is of a moralising and cautionary nature, stemming from its strong associations with Christian teaching. The Puritans first saw the benefits of books specifically for children; to teach them from an early age the difference between right and wrong and the terrible things that would happen to them were they to stray from the narrow path, a trend that was to continue way into the 19th century. The Puritans were hostile to fiction of any kind, particularly fairy tales.

Such strict moral guidance was relaxed a little when John Newbery began to publish books specifically aimed at the young; these were called Pretty Pocket Books and were a huge success containing riddles and fables. The Evangelical strain soon returned, however, and with the spread of literacy in Sunday Schools there was a ready market for storytelling with a religious bias. The worst elements of it were revealed in moral anecdotes by the likes of Mrs. Sherwood and Mrs. Trimmer who led a campaign to clean up nursery rhymes of their less savoury aspects.

Charlotte Bronte had first hand experience of this Calvinist strain of moral teaching when she and her sisters had the misfortune to attend a school for the daughters of clergymen run by the Rev. Carus Wilson who specialised in writing religious tales of a cautionary nature for his pupils. Anyone who has read *Jane Eyre*, will get a good impression of the Rev. Carus Wilson in the character of Mr. Brocklehurst.

Helen remembered reading her first "big book" as she called it when she was 8. The book in question was *Black Beauty* by Anna Sewell published in 1878, and Helen wondered if Jefferies might have read Anna's tale to his own children. She then listed many books of the later Victorian period or turn of the century that had a focus on animals, e.g. Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows*, Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book*, Kingsley's *Water Babies*. And, of course, Jefferies used the formula very well in his own *Wood Magic*.

Boys' books, especially those set in public schools, were also fashionable, such as *Tom Brown's Schooldays* by Thomas Hughes. Though *Bevis*, is a boys' book, it is free of some of the more mawkish sentimentality prevalent at the time, many of Jefferies' books containing elements of cruelty. Jefferies was never preachy and neither was R L Stevenson who was born only two years

after Jefferies; *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, *Catriona* and *The Black Arrow* are all children's classics. R M Ballantyne was another Scot who wrote rattling good yarns for boys with tales like *The Coral Island* and *Martin Rattler*.

Books specifically for girls were a bit thin on the ground until the *Alice* books by Lewis Carroll. By the middle of the 19th century fairy tales were back in favour with the translation of Hans Christian Andersen and Grimm; George MacDonald, another Scot, wrote fairy tales for children, including *At the Back of the North Wind*. Silliness came into its own with Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense* and Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky*.

Another thing she noticed was that in many famous classics, childhood forms a significant part, e.g. *Jane Eyre*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and *David Copperfield*, where those chapters devoted to the early years of the main characters could have a cut-off point which would make them books in their own right. She regarded this as one of the better aspects of the 3 volume novel, in that it gave scope for detailed development of character; it also had its downside, but padding in the hands of genius had its advantages.

Jefferies was very dismissive of Charles Dickens, so it is doubtful whether he read Dickens *A Child's History of England* or a *Child's Bible*. By the end of the 19th century most writers had tried their hand at writing stories for children, including John Ruskin and Oscar Wilde, and prior to writing *The Wind in the Willows* Grahame had written very perceptively of the way children actually think in his books *The Golden Age* and *Dream Days*. And with illustrators like Randolph Caldecott, Kate Greenaway and Walter Crane, children's books became increasingly attractive.

She then went on to speak of books Richard Jefferies read as a child. We know he had the run of his grandfather's library and a small stock of books at home, and during the years he spent with his Aunt and Uncle Harrild he spent hours just reading or drawing. From an early age he was well versed in the Bible and Shakespeare; other favourites were *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the frontier tales of Fenimore Cooper, the romances and poetry of Walter Scott, the Arthurian Legends, also the *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* as transcribed by Thomas Percy. One of the first books he read was *Koenigsmark the Robber*. Poets he mentions specifically are Chaucer, Byron, Longfellow and Dryden. He also had a taste for the exotic which he found in *The Arabian Nights* and the adventures of *Don Quixote*. He liked dipping into an old encyclopaedia, in particular the section giving all the old alphabets; another section which never ceased to fascinate him was that devoted to "Magic"; his leanings were definitely towards the arcane and the mysterious. He read *Punch* and the *Illustrated London News* and, of course, his love of Greek and Latin is well recorded. He also mentions Goethe and had a passion for *Faust*; other favourites were Voltaire and Rabelais. His love of nature and the great outdoors was encouraged through reading Gilbert White's *Natural History of Selborne*, the *Book of Nature* and *Culpepers Journal*, the latter, apparently, for the information it gave him on poisons and love potions, the natural instinct of a child with an enquiring mind. He also read Charles Darwin and books on astronomy, an interest which is revealed in all his major works. His reading was seemed pretty omnivorous, also a rather heavy diet for a youngster. He

does mention *Lorna Doone* in *Field and Hedgerow*, and given his love of beautiful women and physically strong heroes, it can be seen why it appealed to him.

Helen saw nature as Jefferies' primary teacher; to escape into the great outdoors and get over that stile possibly meant more to him than anything he could find out in books; from nature he derived his physical and spiritual well being. But it was more than mere observation; it was a profound reaching out for that immortal something that lies just beyond our grasp.

Andrew Rossabi then talked about **Richard Jefferies and the Classics**.

From first to last there were many references to the classics in Jefferies' work. The young reporter likened the Swindon works to a Cyclops' cave and the section of a broad-gauge rail to the Greek letter omega. 'Amaryllis' was the name of a stock character in classical pastoral, and *Amaryllidaceae* the Latin name for a large family of plants that included the daffodil.

Given the curtailed, irregular nature of his schooling, Jefferies probably received only a basic training in the Latin and Greek languages. On his own testimony in 'Nature and Books'¹ he read the classical authors in translation from the age of 18, although his father had earlier introduced him to Homer's *Odyssey*. In Victorian times a classical education was the hallmark of a gentleman and Jefferies probably exaggerated his attainments in his 1886 letter to the publisher George Bentley. Like Thomas Hardy and Alfred Williams he was largely self-taught. In *The Amateur Poacher* Jefferies said that Ulysses 'was ever my pattern and model'.

The mock battle of Pharsalia in *Bevis* was an action replay of one of the most decisive battles in Roman history, between Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great. Andrew explained the background to the battle and discussed the accuracy of the boys' re-enactment.

The Greek philosophers believed the contemplative was the highest form of life for man. Jefferies demonstrated his contemplative nature by his careful watching of a trout in the Hogsmill brook through four seasons. The younger Jefferies, the erstwhile amateur poacher, would probably have found ways of extracting the fish. The more mature man reasoned, 'What would be the pleasure of catching him, compared to the delight of watching him day by day?' Jefferies shared the Greeks' tragic vision of life but remained an optimist, and in the beauty of Greek sculpture he found both rest of spirit and a cause for hope, as movingly described in 'Nature in the Louvre'. There Jefferies stated his belief that when we were absorbed in the contemplation of the beautiful our hearts were unconsciously filled with hope, care was banished, and we lived 'the life of the immortals'.

The afternoon rounded off with an interesting discussion of the value of reading books in the language they were written; what might be considered so beautiful that it gave hope; and how the majority of children might have gained access to books, for example as prizes for regular attendance at Sunday School or church.

WOOD MAGIC AND ITS 'STAR CAST'

Michael Taylor, Society member in New Zealand, writes:

Many writers have woven nature into their fiction but perhaps none more so than Richard Jefferies. *Wood Magic* (1881) is my case in point, where Jefferies's preoccupation is reflected in the wealth of birds, animals, insects, trees and flowers that become the characters of his tale.

The central figure is, of course, the small boy, Sir Bevis, about seven years old, accompanied by his spaniel, Pan. The only other human of any substance is the Bailiff. However Bevis shares the stage with a large cast of wild creatures who speak to him, as well as among themselves. I have attempted to identify and list them here.

Principal Characters

SIR BEVIS, and his spaniel dog PAN; AH KURROO KHAN and KAUAHAHA, both Rooks; CHOO HOO, the Wood-pigeon, with his son TU KIU; CLOCTAW, the Jackdaw; ERIC, the Missel-thrush; ESS, the Owl; HUR-HUR, the Pig; LA SCHACH, the Jay; KAPCHACK, the Magpie, with his son PRINCE TCHACK-TCHACK; KAUC, the Crow; KI KI, the Hawk; REYNARD, the Fox; PHU, the Starling; RAOUL, the Rat; SEC, the Stoat; TCHINK, the Chaffinch; TE-TE, the Tom-tit; ULU, the Hare; YISH, the Mouse

Supporting Roles - with speaking parts

Humble-bee, Toad, Weasel, Squirrel, Thrush, Woodpecker, the Brook, the Flints, the Reeds, the Wind.

Extras - all introduced to good effect

Ants, badger, bat, blackbird, bee, beetle, blue-bottle, bullfinch, butterfly, cat, cricket, crows, cuckoo, dove, drake, dragon-fly, farm animals - cows, horses, pigs, fowls; fieldfare, fish - cod-fish, perch, pike, roach; flies, frog, goldfinch, gnats, grasshopper, greenfinch, hares, hedge sparrow, heron, house martin, insects, kingfisher, lark, leveret, mole, moorhen, moth, nightjar, nightingale, partridge, peewit, pheasants, pigeons, rabbits, redwing, robin, rooks, seagulls, snail, sparrows, spider, starlings, swallow, swan, swifts, thrush, tree-climber (treecreeper), wagtail, wasp, water-rat, woodcock, wild ducks, wood-pigeons, wren, yellowhammer.

Scenery - a great variety of flowers, trees, ferns and fungi provides the lavish setting of *Wood Magic*.

The first group - twenty or so Principal Characters - are given individual names. For the birds, these are mostly based on their calls. However in Jefferies' hands the onomatopoeia is more subtle than the direct transposition of voice familiar for 'Cuckoo' or 'Chiff-chaff'. Nice cases are the magpie, Kapchack, with his son Tchack Tchack; the jackdaw, Cloctaw, the wood-pigeon, Choo Hoo, whose son is Tu Kiu; the chaffinch, Tchink, and the starling, Phu. A further ten Supporting Roles stand out through Jefferies use of capital letters in the text for Toad, Weasel, Squirrel and others who commune with Sir Bevis. The omission of a raven as the source of wisdom (that role being given to the Toad) seems surprising; but the explanation appears when the Reed tells Bevis of 'an ancient philosophy which was delivered by the Raven before he left this country' - thus confirming the setting

as the Wiltshire of Jefferies' own boyhood. In fact the dominant birds, then as now, are the magpies and wood pigeons whose struggle for territory is at the heart of the book.

Besides the principals, many Extras enrich the story, making their appearance individually or in parties - such as the massed ranks of the battle scenes. The list numbers at least sixty. The animism of *Wood Magic* extends to flowers and trees and even to inorganic nature, as in the elaborate tale of a fatal accident told by the Squirrel: "Now all this happened through the flint, and as I told you, Bevis dear, about the elm, the danger with such things is that the will wait so long to do mischief." The Squirrel goes on to caution Bevis about water; about the candle through fire; and the sea through the agency of rust. Referring to water, the Squirrel warns "And I daresay you have seen people swimming, which is a very pleasant thing, I hear from the wild ducks; but all the time the water is lying in wait and if they stop swimming a minute they will be drowned, and although a man very soon gets tired of swimming, the water never gets tired of waiting but is always ready to drown him."

Wood Magic is an extraordinary book. So said John Savage in his lecture *The Art and Craft of Richard Jefferies* printed in RJS Journal No. 10 (2001) where he notes 'the various creatures are so like humans that young readers, as with *Aesop's Fables*, should learn moral lessons about human behaviour.' The recent Wordsworth Classics Edition on its cover suggests that Bevis's dealings with the animals and their wild and unsentimental habits anticipate *The Jungle Book*. Furthermore, the cast of wildlife enacts scenes - the courtroom clash, various plots, rivalries and intrigues, blood-thirsty battles, and the resolution of the struggle for power through the Treaty of Windflower Copse - which convey social and political satire, presaging the manner so powerfully employed seventy years later by George Orwell in *Animal Farm*.

Such parables of talking animals are in marked contrast to Jefferies' supreme work, *Bevis*, where the writer adopts a graphic style appropriate to the identities of his principals, Bevis and Mark, practical youngsters of about twelve or fourteen years. I hope to examine this realistic use of nature in fiction by means of an article, *Birds in Bevis*, intended for a future edition the Society's *Journal*.

COATE FARM AND MUSEUM REPORT

Attendance figures at the museum continue to rise. Coate Farm has excelled as a centre for creative arts this year, partly thanks to the grant from the National Lottery but mainly as a result of the work of dedicated volunteers who have given their time freely. There has been a stunning dance performance, children's activities, story-telling events, writers workshops and a session run by Michael Cady as part of the Swindon Festival of Literature on how to get your book published. Nearly 40 people squeezed into the study room for this session. Amongst the museum visitors, we were pleased to welcome Corey Taylor, Richard Jefferies great great grandson, whose great grandfather, Harold (known as Toby) was Richard's first born child in Swindon. Corey, who lives in Canada, was visiting Britain in May with his

girl-friend Teresa. They were about to marry at Gretna Green! Eric Esnaut, a French student, visited the museum as part of his research for a thesis on *After London*. Gillian Webb from Australia spent the day with us in June. She is a 7th cousin of Richard Jefferies. Coate farm belonged to her great great great grand parents. There was a visit from a descendent of the Lawrence family whose grandfather managed Coate Reservoir and its boats. Job Lawrence bought Coate Farm for £1,250 in 1915 and lived there until his death in 1922.

Vandalism has been particularly awful this year. It appears groups of boys and girls aged between 10 to 13 years have been systematically destroying windows, roofs, doors, walls, bird boxes, dedication plaques and the new fruit trees, respecting nothing. Security Patrols have succeeded in catching a few suspects and youngsters have been cautioned by the police. CCTV will be installed to help identify any future culprits. The Society may well be given a long-term lease by Swindon Borough Council in order that we might make better use of the museum and sublet to a tenant. The old thatched cottage has been empty many years largely because the council could not find a way around the right to buy rule. Recent meetings with the Council's Chief Executive and the new Leader have been extremely fruitful and positive. We are most grateful to Gavin Jones and Cllr. Rod Bluh who have instigated more action in six weeks than has been achieved in the last 12 years. Our grateful thanks also go to Paul Blacker, the Director of Recreation and Leisure. Although Mr Blacker is no longer responsible for the Jefferies Museum, now part of the remit of the department for economic development (!), he was keen to see progress and not pass the task over to yet another officer.

The Thomas bust of Richard Jefferies. The official unveiling of the plaster copy of the Salisbury Cathedral bust took place on 2nd April as planned (see Spring newsletter page 14). We were joined by Salisbury's mayor, Mrs Sheila Warrander and Cllr Justin Tomlinson for Swindon Borough Council who did

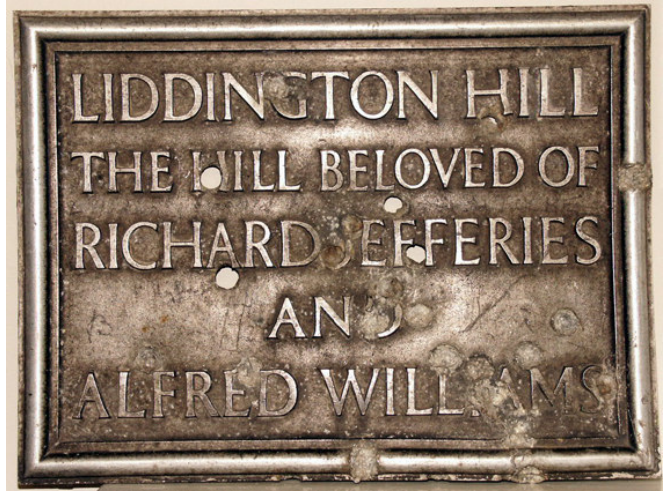


the honours. Thanks to Steve Milton for pointing Salisbury District Council in our direction and for taking the photograph of the event.

The news of the unveiling appeared in the *Swindon Advertiser* on 10th April. The Museum was open the following day and one of the visitors, Dennis Chandler, a sculptor himself, presented the Society with a four inch high bust of Jefferies he had carved out of plaster. Dennis's

carving was completed around 2005 and it shows the writer smiling subtly, a bonus we feel. This bust is now on display in the main museum room along with a bust of Alfred Williams and a Green Man plaque Dennis also carved and donated to the Society.

Liddington Hill plaque. The original tribute plaque to Richard Jefferies and Alfred Williams, mounted on the Triangulation pillar at Liddington Hill in 1938, has now found its way to the museum. J B Jones, a Swindon scholar and schoolmaster, went to inordinate lengths to erect a memorial to the two writers, engaging the support of national figures that included Neville Chamberlain and John Betjeman. He planned to place a large sarsen stone on Liddington Hill. Instead, he had to settle for erecting the stone, with memorial inscriptions to Williams and Jefferies, on Burderop Downs. The Ordnance Survey Department also allowed him to place this plaque on their Triangulation point column.



In the autumn of 1944, vandals - in the shape of American troops - used the plaque as a target for firing practice, then wrenched it off the pillar and threw it away. Another plaque was manufactured and affixed on 24 October 1945. Regrettably, this second plaque was also stolen and lost in 2000.

The old tablet, much pitted and perforated by bullets, was found under a neighbouring hedge in 1947. It was returned to Mr Jones who donated it to Bath Road Museum in the same year. This plaque is now on loan to the Jefferies Museum thanks to Swindon Borough Council.

Book donations for the library. Our thanks go to many individuals, notably Vivian Stinchcombe, Brian Burrows and Edward Browning, who have supplied the museum with both reference books and books for sale. Mr. Stinchcombe, who now lives in Bristol and was once a teacher in Swindon, donated a large number of W H Hudson and Henry Williamson books. These are now available on loan from the museum. His Jefferies' books have been added to the Society's library at John Webb's house. A substantial collection of books by and about Jefferies was donated to the Society in June 2007. The collection belonged to Dr Freddy Brittain (1893-1969), a Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge from 1937 to 1969. His wife, Muriel, died last December and the Richard Jefferies Society was mentioned in her papers as a possible recipient of the library, which contains over 60 relevant books. The collection includes a copy of *Nature Near London* inscribed by Edwy Thomas (we suspect

this might be Edward Thomas's copy) and first and limited editions of works. Along with the books, there were letters to Dr Brittain from Samuel Looker dating back to the 1940s. Brittain wrote about Jefferies in the *Cambridge Review*: 'Richard Jefferies' (9 April 1947), 'The Centenary of Richard Jefferies' (22 May 1948) and 'Richard Jefferies and Others' (5 February 1949). One little book in the library, entitled *Some London Thoughts of Richard Jefferies*, aroused great interest. There was no publisher's name on it and no indication as to who edited it, only a sticker that said 'printed for private collection'. An inscription, dated 1896, gave the only clue to its age. There were also books by W H Hudson in the collection. The books are on display at the Jefferies Museum and some can be borrowed from the library. John Price will be talking further about the Brittain collection, the Looker letters and the Brittain articles at the Society's public meeting this December.

Paintings. Society member Geoff Moss, who lives in Chesterfield, sent the Society five beautiful watercolours he sketched during a visit to Coate some years ago. He asked that the pictures be used to benefit the Society in some way. We are most grateful to him. The original paintings have been framed and are on display at the Museum. Copies of them have been printed on greeting cards to be sold to visitors. There are thirteen cards so far, all bearing a relevant Jefferies' quote.

Memorials. Society member Wendy MacLeod Gilford, donated three wooden benches for use in the garden and a small oak drop-leaf table for the museum, where it is used to display Society literature. These gifts to the Society are a belated tribute to her parents. Her father, Cecil MacLeod Iles, was an early member of the Society and a friend of Harold Adams, the founder. Cecil died in June 1989, some four years after his beloved wife, Marion (See Annual Report 1988-9 page 11). Wendy has already donated some of her father's books to the library at the museum and she is a member of the Footsteps writers group, where she has read from her father's own poetry. Cecil liked to write in dialect and always left his typing and spelling errors intact for added effect. Little has altered over the years in regard to Coate Farm, it seems. Wendy has an entry in her diary dated Saturday 2 July 1955 about a visit with her father. It reads: "Lovely house gone to waste". Her father went on to help persuade Swindon council to set up a museum at Jefferies' home.

Harold Adams' Memorial

The Executive Council has delayed purchasing a garden seat as a memorial to Harold Adams in view of the potential damage by vandals. It has been agreed it would be more appropriate to buy a piece of furniture for the Museum, along with a dedication plaque to the Society's founder. As such, we are now looking for a display cabinet.

A special thank you must go to John Maccalay, a neighbour, who lives a few minutes walk from the Museum. He has been keeping an eye on Coate Farm and reporting problems. He has helped water the garden plants, provided DVD's of the *Jefferies Land* film and donated a DVD player.

E H Shepard exhibition. Jean Saunders has put up an exhibition in the attic of copies of E H Shepard's illustrations for *Bevis* complete with relevant quotes from the book. Extracts from the adventure story can also be heard on tape. The Shepard illustrations were first brought out in the Jonathan Cape edition in 1932. Shepard visited Coate earlier that year and drew at Coate Water. In an unpublished manuscript written by Shepard he wrote: "Another book for boys that I enjoyed illustrating is Richard Jefferies *Bevis*. This story of boyhood gives a vivid description of the adventures of Bevis and his brother Mark in Queen Victoria's reign when Swindon was a county town and Coate Farm, where the boys lived, was surrounded by



THE COUNCIL OAK

meadows with Coate Water, the big lake, on the far side. The lake was the boys unexplored sea. They mapped it, built and rigged their boats, made bows and arrows and even made a gun while they hunted with their spaniel. I believe the book had never been illustrated till Jonathan Cape commissioned me to do so in 1932. I went to Swindon early in the year and found farm and lake much the same as it must have been when Bevis lived there - the lake was weedy and uncared for, the council oak was still standing and there were many features that could be identified. Now Swindon has spread almost as far as the farm and the lake is an ornamental water for the townsfolk".

E H Shepard's notes and diaries are held at the University of Surrey. Their archivist was kind enough to send us records of material they hold where Shepard mentions *Bevis*. The illustrations and information about Shepard, who resented being known as the 'Man who drew Pooh', will form the basis of a talk at the Society's public meeting on April 5th.

JEFFERIES LAND CONSERVATION TRUST

Garden Gate. The Jefferies Land Conservation Trust paid for a gate in the gap in the 'Great Hedge' at the end of the ha-ha wall, giving easy access to Brook Field and Coate Water. Sadly, vandals have used it to get into Coate Farm, so it will be kept padlocked and only opened for events taking place at the museum. Trust member, Jason Reeves (also a distant relative of Richard Jefferies) has made a sign, now hung by the gate, displaying the opening times of the museum. Regrettably, the Trust has not progressed very far with improving the gardens this year. More time has been spent clearing up after the vandals and the workmen.

Battle of Coate

In the Coate Farm gardens on the 3rd of June, Trust members Marisa Zoeller & Steve Rouse previewed 'The Battle of Coate' with the help of youngsters from their Romanska School of World Dance. A large audience watched in appreciation as the story, narrated in the persona of Richard Jefferies, unfolded in dance, the choreography inspired by Swindon's rural history, the coming of the railways and Jefferies' passion for the countryside and, in particular, Liddington Hill. The unsympathetic development and growth of the town into the countryside was highlighted along with the pain suffered by the Giant Albion, who represented nature. Other characters included the Lady of the Lake in her Coate of Water, the Green Man, Molly the Milkmaid, Councillor Money Bags, Urban Sprawl and Concrete Box. It was a magical performance, cutting and funny – Richard Jefferies would have loved it.



The movement of country folk to the Great Western Railway

SAVE COATE CAMPAIGN

At the beginning of August, Persimmon Homes and Redrow Homes submitted new planning applications for the Coate site, despite the loss of support from the University of Bath and the Swindon and Marlborough NHS Trust. The Trust is making its own arrangements to expand the Great Western Hospital at Commonhead whilst Swindon Borough Council are pushing for a university campus in the town centre. No other university is interested in Coate. The new planning application for Coate includes 1800 houses, about 44 hectares for the university and a 14 hectare business park. The housing area has expanded at the expense of campus land. Recent archaeological studies have revealed more 'no go' areas than previously detected. As a result, the house-builders are showing their true colours – the new proposals are nothing more than another housing estate for Swindon. Swindon Borough Council has stated most emphatically 'No university – no houses', but the national house-

builders continue to push through their proposals. Over 32,000 people have now signed the Save Coate petition. Please write to Ian Halsall, Planning Department, Swindon Borough Council, Premier House, Station Road, Swindon SN1 1TZ stating why you object to development next to Coate Water Country Park. Quote reference number SO7/1688 and SO7/1689.

In the meantime the Society has joined other organisations in requesting that the next town plan should support a central site to expand higher education facilities and to secure landscape protection policy for land at Coate/Badbury Wick/Burderop and at Coate Farm.

For more information about the Save Coate campaign or the Jefferies Land Conservation Trust, contact Jean Saunders (see page 2) or visit these web sites: www.savecoate.org.uk and www.jefferiesland.org.uk.

SUN INN PROPOSALS

Arkells Brewery submitted a planning application for 20 new letting rooms and more car parking at the Sun Inn, adjacent to Coate Farm's western boundary. Apart from rejecting any suggested access from the public house to the Jefferies' gardens, the Society has not objected to the principle of the development. We have asked for the visual impact of any new buildings to be softened and for features to be incorporated into the development to ensure the Jefferies' boundary wall and the fruit trees are not damaged.

CITINGS OF JEFFERIES

The **Swindon Advertiser** has continued to publish Richard Jefferies' monthly nature notes, taking photographs and selections from text submitted by John Webb. There is usually a full page colour article that includes publicity for the Museum. The local paper has covered, in detail, other events at the Museum and stories about the vandalism. The **Western Daily Press** also publicised the vandalism with pictures. The **Faringdon Folly** ran a major feature about the Museum, Richard Jefferies and the Save Coate campaign in the August edition. The **Newbury Weekly News** has advertised museum open days and helped boost visitor numbers. There should be an article about Jefferies in the September issue of the **Countryman**.

George Miller heard a selection of John Betjeman's radio talks ('Trains and Buttered Toast', Murray 2006) that included an interesting piece on the development of Swindon. In it he referred to Coate as "the country which Richard Jefferies has described in the best nature books in the language".

Stan Hickerton has assembled extracts from letters sent by Edward Thomas to Gordon Bottomley in which Jefferies is mentioned. In particular, Thomas records his progress on the Jefferies' biography. The letters were published in 1968 by the Oxford University Press. Should anyone wish to borrow the edited collection, contact our librarian, John Webb.

Wendy MacLeod Gilford was given a picture post card of a meadow with buttercups produced by Common Ground, a registered charity. It included the inscription: "Those who love fields and every briar in the hedge, dislike to see them entered irreverently. Richard Jefferies".

Wendy also spotted an article by Lin Bensley in the **Countryman** (July 2007, pages 25-28) entitled 'A crown prince among predators', which includes : "Victorian naturalists in particular used to eulogise upon the bird's mastery of flight. Like Richard Jefferies in his lengthy, but perceptive essay, *The Hovering of the Kestrel*, or Charles Dixon in his book, *Rural Bird Life* (1880)".

An unexpected source of publicity appeared in local Swindon papers in March 2007. John Pounder released his novel *Amaryllis Iden* based on *Amaryllis at the Fair*. Mr Pounder attempts to tie up some of the unanswered questions and loose ends that remain in the Jefferies' novel.

Peter Robins watched Jonathan Meades series *Abroad Again*, broadcast on BBC2 television on May 30th. Richard Jefferies was mentioned and a photograph of him shown as part of an investigation into rural living.

Norma Goodwin noted reference to a quotation from a Jefferies' article in the *St. James Gazette* in 1883 about the extermination and persecution of species in southern England that included the pine marten and polecat. The piece was used to introduce an article in the John Muir Trust's Annual Report for 2006. The Trust seeks to protect Britain's wild places. The article examined the progress that some rare species had made since Jefferies' time.

The Yorkshire Post (8th of June) 'Living in Harmony with Nature' by Martin Kilby. Mr Kilby extolled the virtues of Lilius Rider Haggard and remarked that: "Lilius reminds us of what 19th century naturalist Richard Jefferies so wisely said, calling on his fellow men to look and live in the beauty of natural things – 'The longer we can stay among these things, so much the more is snatched from inevitable time. This is real life, all else is illusion or more.'" Kilby adds "That was written more than a hundred years ago. How more relevant it grows".

Stan Hickerton picked up a copy of the summer 2007 edition of **Wiltshire Magazine** produced by Wiltshire County Council. The headline to an article entitled 'With a spring in your step', by the Rights of Way Manager, quotes: "A fresh footpath, a fresh flower, a fresh delight. The reeds, the grasses, the rushes – unknown and new things at every step – something always to find, no barren spot anywhere.' So wrote Wiltshire born essayist, Richard Jefferies, of the countryside he loved so much. A century on, and people continue to enjoy the lyrical aspects of Wiltshire's landscape".

Helen Newman noted that in Chapter 14 of **Howards End** by E M Forster, Leonard Bast, the poor friend of the intellectual Schlegel sisters, is telling them how, after reading Richard Jefferies, he had felt impelled to walk out into the night and follow the Pole Star. "Curious it should all come about from reading something of Richard Jefferies," he says. The feeling upon completing the expedition is described more fully in the following paragraph: "Within his cramped little mind dwelt something that was far greater than Jefferies' books - the spirit that led Jefferies to write them".

A letter published in the **Guardian Review** on 7th of July caught Tom Saunders' eye. There had been a previous debate in the newspaper about books that had influenced Will Self's *The Book of Dave*. Jim Anderson wrote: "... how about Richard Jefferies's *After London* of 1885? In this novel, the capital has imploded thanks to its own excess into a noxious swamp, the

countryside has relapsed into barbarism, and the remaining inhabitants huddle in quasi-medieval settlements". That being said, Will Self acknowledged in previous interviews that his book was influenced by *After London*.

Michael Taylor, who collects autobiographies of early years, came across this quote from a 1935 book by Eleanor Acland entitled ***Good-bye for the Present: The Story of Two Childhoods 1878-88 & 1913-24***. Mrs Acland's daughter, Ellen, was tragically killed as a girl while riding her brother's bicycle which had a faulty brake. Eleanor records her own early years in the Victorian era and pays tribute to her lost daughter of whom she writes: "To have a book read to her was still her favourite pastime. It was only during the last two or three years of her life that she arrived at reading to herself at a satisfactory pace, and then she devoured Richard Jefferies' *Bevis* in a very few evenings." Of their shared passion her mother records: "We read *Ivanhoe* and *Great Expectations* and *Emma* and *Feats on the Fiord*, and the *Pickwick Papers* and *The Jungle Book* among others. And when the last page was turned she used to say. 'What *shall* we do now? Do you know of another book to read?'"

The three brothers who feature in their own adventure in B. B.'s ***Brendon Chase*** (published in 1944) take Thoreau's *Life in the Woods*, Jefferies' *Amateur Poacher* and *Bevis* along with Twain's *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* (Chapter 8) to read in the their outlaw camp in the woods.

In the review of a newly published book, ***Crow Country*** by Mark Cocker, about members of the Crow family in the UK, Ann Wroe, in the *Daily Telegraph*, writes, "Cocker is a beautiful writer, not exactly in the tradition of Gilbert White or Richard Jefferies – he is too informal for that – but in his ability to capture, in very few words, a bird, a song, or a scene." (August 2007)

BOOKS by members

The Grubby Expedient by Helen D. Newman has been published by Amherst. The novel is set in the late nineteenth century and records the plight of a hard-working farming family who become destitute. 213 pages, pb, £6.99, ISBN 1- 903637 – 44 – 9. Available from Helen by phoning 01214232100.

The Anarchist Geographer: An Introduction to the Life of Peter Kropotkin by Brian Morris. Genge Press, 119 pages, pb, £8, ISBN 978-0-9549043-3-3-3.

FOOTSTEPS PROJECT

The Spring 2007 newsletter gave details of an award for a three-tiered project approved by the *Awards For All* Lottery fund.

FOOTSTEPS STORY WALKS were held on Saturday 12th of May 2007 at Jefferies' House and gardens. Despite the wet weather, over 100 young children and adults squeezed into the museum to listen to tales adapted from Jefferies' *Wood Magic*, to explore the gardens, to find places mentioned in the book and to create their own artistic version of the garden and the cunning spider. There were two sessions for children in the morning and one for adults in the afternoon that were widely advertised as part of the Swindon

Festival of Literature.



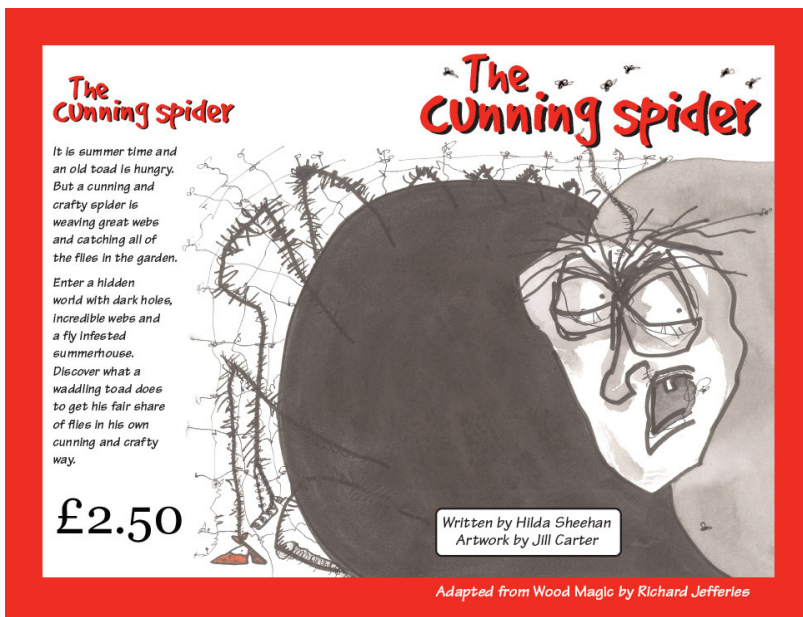
Children working with Jill Carter to produce a collage of spiders and garden features

Hilda Sheehan adapted Jefferies' story about the clever and cunning toad who trapped a greedy and boastful spider into getting fat on flies in the summerhouse, only to be rid of the spider when she is eaten by the robin, leaving the toad with more flies to eat. The story, suitable for small children, has been published in a book beautifully illustrated in cartoon form by artist, Jill Carter. The little booklet entitled *The Cunning Spider* promises to bring a new generation of readers to both Richard Jefferies' house and to his writing.

At the story-telling walk, children and their parents listened to *The Cunning Spider* in Jefferies' study and, between the showers, they were shown around the garden to point out the features mentioned. Jill helped children create their own images of spiders using materials, including moss and daisies, gathered from the garden. Children were also given an activity book based on nature that might be found in the garden.

As many of the children attending the event were very young, it is to the credit of Hilda and Jill that the following feedback was received from Alex Martin. She wrote: "I wanted to thank you and Jill for a fantastic event this morning at the Richard Jefferies House - it was a meeting of art, writing and nature of which Richard Jefferies would have approved most wholeheartedly! Mary is only three and a half so I was concerned that she was too young to get a lot out of it. I needn't have worried - she spent the entire journey home retelling the story, and hasn't been parted from her copy of *The Cunning Spider* ever since".

The Cunning Spider is available from the Society or at the Jefferies Museum.



FOOTSTEPS WRITERS' WORKSHOPS

Tony Hillier has built up the adult writers' workshops into a thriving, enjoyable, regular attraction involving over 20 enthusiasts keen to write. Some visitors have blossomed as their confidence has grown, encouraged by Tony and others in the group. Some have now joined the Society and started to read Jefferies' work. During the summer months, the writers' group has met twice a month. The project will end in December with the publication of the best of the year's work. It is hoped that the group will continue to meet on the second Wednesday of the month between 10am to 4pm next year.

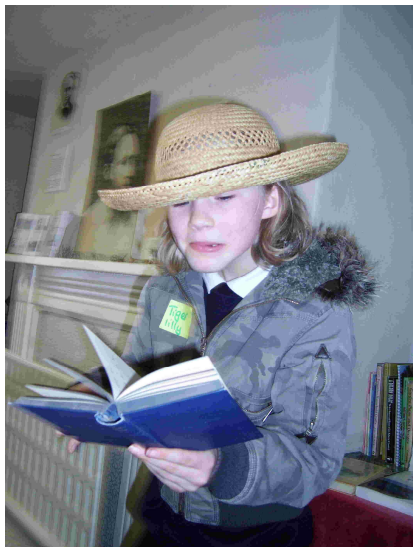
Children have also benefited from the writers' sessions. On 29 March, a dozen children from Orchid Vale Primary School in North Swindon explored the museum, danced around the mulberry tree and were then inspired to write and read out their works. On their return to school the head-teacher could not wait to report the fun the children had experienced.

This was echoed by other sessions in March held for young people drawn from the home education system. This feedback arrived from one of the parents:

"Last week we had the privilege of attending a Home Educator's poetry day at the Richard Jefferies museum in Swindon. The museum is in his childhood home. It is difficult to imagine it surrounded by fields as it is now by a huge dual carriageway but once inside it feels like you are back in 1880!

Tony Hillier (community poet) held a workshop at the museum for what turned out to be 30 kids. It was all completely free because of a grant from the national lottery. The kids wandered around the museum completely freely. They were allowed under the ropes!! They read books and looked through old photos. They produced poetry

together and individually and ran about in the garden. Tony is just inspirational. He never asks them to write anything; he just chats and inspires! Anyone who can get a 9 year old boy to write poetry is a genius as far as I am concerned!!”



Children from Orchid Vale Primary School with Tony Hillier

This was the poem written by her young son:

It's 8 o'clock, it's dark
wondering round the car park
I don't know what I'm doing here
Richard Jefferies leading to this
sitting in a circle
talking about poems
all others doings

FOOTSTEPS WALK AROUND COATE WATER.

The Walk Around Coate Water leaflet was launched on Sunday the 3rd of June with a stroll around the lake guided by Society member, Mark Daniel, pictured by John Webb on the next page. About twenty people took part, visiting some of Jefferies' favourite places mentioned in *Bevis* and *Round About a Great Estate*. It was a glorious day, we listened to the music of the hatch and to the birds singing, watched 'crocodiles' in the lake but could find no treasure under the Great Grey Boulder. However, we all treasured the event, which ended in the gardens of Jefferies' House, where a dance took place in magical tribute to Jefferies' land (see page 21). The 'walk' leaflets have been made freely available at Coate Water and other public places. It has been equally pleasurable to see new visitors arriving at the Museum clutching the leaflet in their hand.



Mark Daniel at Cicely's Bridge

HOW DID YOU FIRST DISCOVER RICHARD JEFFERIES AND THE SOCIETY?

John Toman of Bristol first became acquainted with Jefferies' works while researching his book on Francis Kilvert: *Kilvert: The Homeless Heart* (Logastan Press, 2001). He read a number of Jefferies' books in order to learn about 19th century rural life in Wiltshire and to sample more rural writing. Mr Toman is a member of the Kilvert Society and learned of the Richard Jefferies Society through it.

J Morgan apologised that he had nothing exciting to report. He discovered Jefferies in the 1960s when he lived in Devizes and he discovered the Society through the Internet.

Thelma Simpson of Swindon described it as “a slowly percolating process”. She first encountered Jefferies at primary school in Swindon, when *Bevis* was read out to them in class. Thelma writes: “Then I guess other writers came to the fore. As a teenager I was a great admirer (and still am) of Thomas Hardy - John Steinbeck and Jack Kerouac were also very much part of 60s culture. Many more writers and poets followed ... books have always been a very important part of my life. In 1994 I found a lovely book at a Christmas Craft Fair (being held at Alexander Palace) called *The Golden Thread – words of hope for a changing world* - an anthology compiled with illustration and calligraphy by Dorothy Boux. I bought it for my father and now have it myself - it contains two really lovely passages by Richard Jefferies. The first passage is as follows: ‘The whole time in the open air, resting at mid-day, under the elms with the ripple of heat flowing through the shadow, at midnight between the ripe corn and the hawthorne hedge on the white camomile and poppy pale in the duskiness, with face upturned to the thoughtful heaven. Consider the glory of it, the life above this life to be obtained from constant presence with sun-light and stars.’ The second passage is too long to copy here but it starts ‘I was utterly alone with the sun and the earth. I spoke in my soul to the earth, the sun, the air ...’.

When I moved back to Swindon in 1999, my awareness started to increase. My close friend Paul got back in touch, after about 35 years, as he was often in the area visiting his mother. We found ourselves talking about Richard Jefferies in conversations as we sometimes walked together around Coate. The local newspaper must also receive credit for making reference to him on a regular basis - as someone that Swindon should be very proud of. That's it really, an awareness that grew alongside my love for places like Coate and the wonderful Wiltshire Downs”.

Bryan Jones of Redruth first discovered the works of Richard Jefferies when browsing in a second-hand bookshop, as he did so many of the world's great authors. Mr Jones writes: “I did ‘O’ level English Literature at school, but was completely unaware of the existence of Jefferies, until, one day, in my mid-thirties, when browsing in a second-hand bookshop in Northampton (sadly, no longer there) I came across a copy of *Field and Hedgerow*. I was captivated: here was something very special. Soon, I had found all of Jefferies works, obtained from various old bookshops.

I discovered the Richard Jefferies Society whilst researching information about Coate Farm as, for many years, I had been desirous of visiting Jefferies’ birthplace”.

Lindy O’Leary of Swindon was first acquainted with Jefferies from walking around Coate Water and taking note of the Council Oak with the plaque. Mrs O’Leary wrote that she became more interested as she got older. “I ordered the book *Bevis* from the library. From there a friend of mine had some old copies of booklets prepared by the Richard Jefferies Society in 1977: *A Guide to the birthplace and its surroundings with notes on the life, writings and associations of Richard Jefferies, 1848-1887* Mrs O’Leary was pleased to find that the Society was still running and decided to join.

Barbara Bartle first heard about Richard Jefferies seven years ago when she first moved to Swindon as a Residential Care Manager. One of the residents was reading *Bevis* and she mentioned that Jefferies was a local writer. Barbara writes: "I heard about the R J Society after reading some reference to it in the *Advertiser*. Two of my daughters in Bolton visited me last Easter and we visited the museum, where I picked up a leaflet about the Society. My friend (and neighbour), Joan Elder and I decided to join the writing group and the Society and we're very pleased that we did!"

ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES

The Richard Jefferies Society will be hosting the Annual General Meeting of the ALS in 2008 in Swindon. Plans are already underway for the weekend of 17-18th of May to raise the profile of Jefferies and Coate. Your support and help for this event will be much appreciated. A novel event being planned for the Sunday will include a literary treasure hunt based on Jefferies' favourite local haunts. Hugoe Matthews will be giving the key talk on Jefferies. The Society will be testing out the treasure hunt on Sunday 30th September. Please join us at the Jefferies Museum at 10.30am to take part.

REPORT OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES HELD AT ST. HILDA'S COLLEGE, OXFORD, AND HOSTED BY THE TOLKIEN SOCIETY ON 19/20 MAY 2007

Aeronwy Thomas, our President, warmly welcomed those present, a sentiment echoed by our Chairman Nick Reid. A special welcome was extended to The Dubliners Society who had once again made the journey from Ireland to be with us. The AGM was formally opened by Nick Reid. Rosemary Culley, Secretary, reported that one new Society had joined, the Kenneth Grahame Society, which is one of the first societies to be run entirely via the web. Rosemary, who has worked so tirelessly on behalf of the ALS, is now stepping down for a well earned rest, although she will continue to run the website. The Treasurer, Julie Shorland, reported a slight decrease in subs, and suggested that the subscription for small societies be raised from £6-10; this was adopted by a show of hands. The Dubliners Society commented that overall they thought the subscriptions excellent value and saw no reason why at some future date they might not be raised again by way of giving the ALS a much higher profile. All future committee meetings will revert to Birmingham to save travel expenses. Linda Curry and Robin Healey were complimented on producing the new journal *ALSo* which will have a specific theme each year; this year is copyright, next year will be literary tourism. *ALSo* can also be logged via the website. Nick Reid is to stand down as Chairman but will remain on the committee, his place being taken by Linda Curry. We were very fortunate in acquiring a new secretary at the meeting, Christine Bromley agreeing to take on the role. The role of Publicity Officer remains vacant. After a short discussion on the ongoing issue of copyright, the business side of the AGM was brought to a close.

Trevor Reynolds gave a short introduction on behalf of The Tolkien Society. So popular are the works of John Ronald Reuel Tolkien (1892-1973) that a

Tolkien weekend was going ahead at the same time in his home town of Birmingham. Indeed, most of Tolkien's childhood and youth was spent in Birmingham where his extraordinary imagination wove fantasies around what to most of us would be ordinary and rather unspectacular features. Sarehole Mill, for instance, and Moseley Bog which feature in *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*; Sarehole in his time was a small hamlet on the edge of the country and he absolutely loved the four years he spent there. The family moved house several times, and on his mother's conversion to Roman Catholicism they went to live in Ladywood to be near to the Oratory founded by Cardinal Newman in Edgbaston; Ronald attended St. Phillip's school adjacent to the Oratory, and in 1904 when his widowed mother died from diabetes Father Francis Xavier Morgan became guardian to her two sons. It was on rambles around Edgbaston that he discovered his two towers, the outlandish folly named after John Perrott who built it in 1758 and the nearby Waterworks Tower. It was also in Edgbaston that he was to meet the girl he subsequently married. At his last address in Highfield Road he was to learn that he had gained a place at Exeter College, Oxford, and it was at Oxford that he was to spend the majority of his life. His interest in languages was already keen, Old and Middle English and Gothic being his favourite subjects at school. Notwithstanding the "dreaming spires" of Oxford and its wealth of history and learning, it was to his childhood memories of Birmingham that he returned for inspiration in writing his best loved books.

David Doughan was our first speaker on the theme of Women, Tolkien and Oxford, a somewhat tongue in cheek discussion on the reaction of a male dominated preserve to those women both eager and brave enough to challenge it in the 19th century. As far as men were concerned, the idea of women and universities was not only unseemly but faintly ridiculous. The better enlightened, and there didn't appear to be many of them, were patriarchal in their attitude towards women, such as Tolkien himself who became professor of English language and literature from 1945-1959; over the years he mellowed, although his views on women at university remained complex. The prevailing attitude can be summed up in the following comments by two of Oxford's most eminent men: Dr. Pusey: "the greatest misfortune for Oxford - not the place for women"; Ruskin: "I cannot let the bonnets in." And as for the famous Professor Jowett, on being asked by a woman what his thoughts were on the subject, he was said to retort "We don't think of you at all." But following the establishment of Girton and Newnham for women at Cambridge in 1878, Oxford could not be seen to lose face by lagging behind, and in 1879 Lady Margaret Hall and Somerville College were founded for women, Lady Margaret taking its name from Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII, and Somerville from Mary Somerville, a distinguished mathematician; others were St. Hilda's named after St. Hilda of Whitby and St. Hugh's named after St. Hugh of Lincoln. But though the women were permitted to study, they were not allowed to take degrees, and it took the First World War and much campaigning, both to enfranchise them in 1919 and to allow them to take degrees in 1920, although the numbers were strictly limited. Women had to work that much harder to prove themselves the equal of their male

counterparts and the rules and pressures imposed upon them must have been exceptionally trying. Although Tolkien's stance was said to have mellowed, there is evidence to the contrary from comments he made at a much later date, and David Doughan suspects that he was not exactly happy at the idea of women at Oxford. That aside, it is stated in the New English Dictionary that women got on with him, and in 1990 one of them referred to him as "Darling Tolkien", and since his daughter studied with him we will probably never know his true feelings on the matter. Perhaps he didn't know himself.

This entertaining talk was followed by a Publishing History of *Lord of the Rings* given by Pat Reynolds. As we know, Tolkien's huge trilogy contained a glossary and appendix of archaic and arcane words all attributable to his fascination with old English. Originally the work was to have been in two volumes only and was to have included the *Silmarillion* which was not published until 1977, four years after the author's death. As it stood, *The Lord of the Rings* was eventually published by Allen and Unwin in three volumes, volumes 1 and 2 coming out in 1954 and volume 3 in 1955. Subsequently there was a re-edited version in 1964 and a second edition in 1966. The history of its publication was rather convoluted, including further complications with Ace Books, the American publishers. What infuriated Tolkien, and probably amused him as well, was the way in which the proof readers altered his spelling at will. Many translations have been made over the years, including a Russian edition in 1994, such is the enduring appeal of Tolkien's fantasy world.

I did detect points of similarity between Jefferies and Tolkien, in that they never tired of visiting small areas of countryside, not remote or even of great scenic interest, but which became special to them through association and a shared love of nature. Given Jefferies childhood fascination with magic, I think he might well have enjoyed the works of Tolkien.

In the afternoon there was a walk around Tolkien's Oxford. Back in the 1930s Tolkien, C S Lewis and Charles Williams, along with other friends, all Christians, set up a very loosely formed group known as the Inklings, who met informally to read and discuss literature, either in Lewis's rooms at Magdalen, or in the back rooms of three pubs, the Eagle and Child (known as "Bird and Baby"), the Burning Babe and the Lamb and Flag where they could read and drink undisturbed; tea, as opposed to beer, appeared to be the favourite beverage. No women were permitted; there were no written rules, except that any potential new members had to be approved by the existing ones. I was unable to join the walk itself, but I believe it was very informative.

In the morning we visited the Oxford Story in Broad Street, a new attraction which explores Oxford's 900 year history via a time tunnel. Headphones on, we boarded a kind of ghost train which made a slow progress through the darkness, the late Magnus Magnusson giving the commentary as key moments in the city's history were illuminated by very lifelike tableaux. I tend to be a bit sceptical about such attractions, but this one worked particularly well. After saying our goodbyes, we each went out separate ways, having enjoyed another excellent ALS weekend.

Helen D Newman, July 2007

NEWS FROM OTHER SOCIETIES

Wilts Archaeological & Natural History Society.

We have tickets which enable our members to visit, and make use of the facilities of the Museum at Devizes. If you would like to borrow a ticket, please apply to John Price. Telephone 01672 515150.

Friends of Alfred Williams

The *Friends* summer outing in June revisited Toddington, the home of the Gloucestershire & Warwickshire railway. It included a ride on a steam train from Toddington to Cheltenham Racecourse, the line running for ten miles through beautiful Cotswold countryside. The station at Cheltenham once belonged to the Great Western railway. It was originally built for race goers and was only used on race days. The timber booking office, which has been refurbished, was built at the Swindon railway works.

After twelve years serving as the Hon. Sec of the *Friends*, Chris Bowles announced that he will be standing down at the AGM on 6th September. He will be missed for certain and it is hoped that a volunteer will step forward to fill the vacancy.

The Edward Thomas Fellowship.

Autumn Walk: Saturday 29th September 2007. This year's Autumn Walk will be less than 4 miles exploring the Malvern Hills/Dymock area of the Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire borders. Meet at 10am in the village of Cliffords Mesne.

Visit to Agny: Wednesday 31st October - Sunday 3rd November 2007
This will include the Somme area, the Ypres battlefields and attending the Last Post ceremony at the New Menin Gate. For the full programme and booking details, please contact Colin Thornton colingthornton@btopenworld.com (phone 01983 - 853 366).

LECTURE

An illustrated lecture by Roger Vlitos, photographer, on "Spirit Country". Tuesday, 25th of September 2007 from 12:15 to 13:30pm at the University of Bath's Oakfield Campus, Marlowe Avenue, Swindon. The price is £6.50 and this includes a sandwich lunch. The lecture will show how writers such as Jefferies, Thomas Hardy and Robert Byron; artists like John Piper, Paul Nash, Eric Ravillious and David Inshaw; photographers like Bill Brandt, Charlie Waite and Fay Godwin, all found inspiration in their local landscapes.

Roger Vlitos's father was with a trainload of Allied servicemen delayed in Swindon station on their way to prepare for the D-day invasion. There he met an elderly couple who gave him a book by Richard Jefferies to pass the time. Roger's father, who was 18 at the time, read it and scribbled words like 'wonderful' in the margins. After the war he kept it for many years until he gave it to his son. That book by Richard Jefferies, and the inspirational landscape of Wiltshire, drew Roger to work here as a photographer.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & BIRTHDAY LECTURE

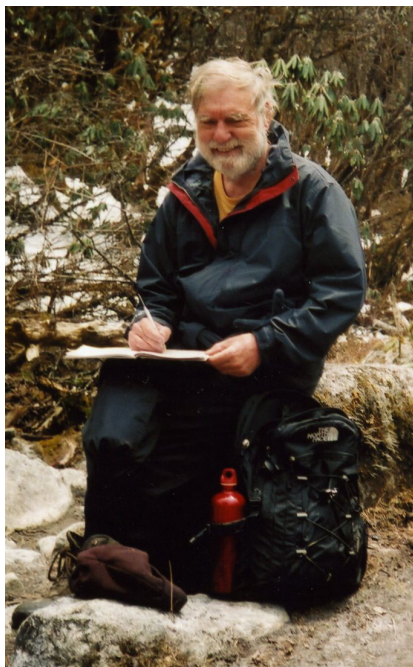
SATURDAY 13 OCTOBER 2007

VILLAGE HALL, LIDDINGTON

PROGRAMME

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 10.30 | Doors open and refreshments. Easy parking. |
| 11.00 | AGM (members only) – see Agenda next page. |
| 1.00 | Lunch break. Bring packed lunch. Local pubs serve food.
The hall is next to Liddington church with views across to
Liddington Hill. |
| 2.30 | The Birthday Lecture (visitors welcome)
Speaker: Brian Morris
Subject: 'Richard Jefferies: the Pioneer Ecologist'. |
| 4.00 | Tea |
| 4.30 | Depart |

Brian Morris on a recent trek to Kanchenjunga



Leaving school at the age of fifteen, Brian Morris had a varied career; foundry worker, seaman, and tea-planter in Malawi, before becoming a university teacher. Now Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at Goldsmiths College, University of London, he has written and published articles on a wide range of topics and issues in the fields of botany, ecology, ethnobiology, religion, history, philosophy, as well as anthropology. His more recent books include *Richard Jefferies and the Ecological Vision* (Trafford Publishing, 2007), *Western Conceptions of the Individual* (Berg, 1991), *Anthropology of the Self* (Pluto Press, 1994), *Insects and Human Life* (Berg, 2004), *Kropotkin the Politics of Community* (Humanity Press, 2004), *Religion and Anthropology* (Cambridge University Press, 2006) and *Ernest Thompson Seton. Founder of the Woodcraft Movement 1860-1946, Apostle of Indian Wisdom & Pioneer Ecologist* (Mellen Press, 2006). Brian is a member of the

Richard Jefferies Society.

There will be a review of Brian's *Richard Jefferies and the Ecological Vision* that will be published in the next Society *Journal* by Norma Goodwin.

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
SATURDAY 13 OCTOBER 2007 AT LIDDINGTON VILLAGE HALL
CHURCH ROAD, LIDDINGTON**

AGENDA

- 1 Chairman's introductory remarks.
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Minutes of the last AGM 14 October 2006 [see pages 36-37]
- 4 Matters Arising
 - 4a) Coate Museum and grounds
 - 4c) The Save Coate campaign
 - 9a) Trees
 - 9b) & c) Index & Strategy
- 5 Annual Report
- 6 Treasurer's Report [see pages 38-39]
- 7 Election of Examiner of Accounts
- 8 Elections to Council; the following are due to retire:
Helen Newman. John Price and Richard Stewart. All are proposed for re-election for the years 2007 to 2010.
- 9 Motions (see below*).
- 10 Any Other Business

A copy of the minutes of the 2006 AGM should be brought to the AGM. Any motions or resolutions for debate should be sent to the Hon. Sec. (Jean Saunders) before 1 October, as should nominations for Council members. Both should be proposed and seconded.

*** The following proposals are put forward by the Executive Committee for approval by members at the AGM:**

1. That the annual subscription rate for new overseas members should be £1.50 more than the current standard rate, as a contribution towards the higher postage costs involved.
2. That the age at which Life Membership of the Society may be applied for, be raised from fifty to sixty years of age, and that the Life Membership category for those over seventy years of age be abolished for new members. Life membership rates to remain at ten times the ordinary rate.
3. That the Executive Committee of the Society is authorised to negotiate with Swindon Borough Council with a view to the Society taking a lease on the Coate Farmhouse and immediate site, including outbuildings. The membership also authorises the appropriate officers of the Society to enter into such a lease, if the terms are found not to disadvantage the Society and its Membership.

Minutes of the Annual General meeting of the Richard Jefferies Society held at Holy Cross Church Hall, Chiseldon on Saturday 14 October 2006

PRESENT: Margaret Bathe, Sue Birley, Brian Burrows, David Chesham, Marie Chesham, Mark Daniel, Roger Ebbatson, Margaret Evans, Norma Goodwin, Martin Haggerty, Stan Hickerton, Geoff Hirst, Eric Jones, Hugoe Matthews, Ray Morse, Sylvia Morse, Helen Newman, Michael Parrott, Michael Ponting, John Price, Andrew Rossabi, Raymond Roys, Jean Saunders, Phyllis Treitel, Graham Walker, Ray Walker and John Webb.

1. THE CHAIR

John Price was in the Chair. He welcomed new and old members and thanked John Webb for providing extracts of Jefferies' writing and appropriate photographs for the *Swindon Advertiser's* monthly 'Nature Notes', Hugoe Matthews for providing the Museum with acquisitions bought from Nancie Cator and Jean Saunders for her enthusiastic take-up of her first year as secretary.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were given in respect of Roy Burton, Simon Coleman, Wendy MacLeod Gilford, Lisl Grugeon, David Hackman, John and Sheila Povey, Richard Stewart, John Savage and Gillian Webb.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2005 were signed as correct. Proposed by Ray Morse and seconded by Graham Walker.

4. MATTERS ARISING

a) Coate Museum and grounds. There are new Swindon Borough Council officers in charge of the Museum. Sarah Finch Crisp is based at Lydiard Park and Kirsty Hartsiotis at the Bath Road Museum. There have been several meetings of the Coate Task Group set up by Cllr. Justin Tomlinson who is the council's cabinet member for culture and recreation. The initial enthusiasm shown by both Kirsty and the councillor, to improve the Museum, now appeared to lack any commitment. Arkells Brewery has proposed to add 20 accommodation rooms to the Sun Inn, to share the Museum gardens and to provide access from the pub. As the new fence erected between the Sun Inn and the Museum has considerably reduced the attacks made by vandals, the Society has expressed concern about the proposals and is meeting with Arkells soon to discuss proposals. The old cottage is still without a tenant. The gardens and museum have been transformed thanks to the work of volunteers whilst visitor numbers have increased dramatically. The storage of Garrard equipment, that nearly fills the 'parlour', is likely to remain until 2008 or longer.

b) Archives. The Gay/Williamson letters are now lodged with the Wiltshire Records Office that is relocating from Trowbridge to Chippenham next year. Phyllis Treitel is putting together a final set of material, that includes the Harold Adams' collection, to deposit at the WRO after it is on display at the Society's meeting on December 2nd. Sue Birley has Cyril Wright's diary that covers his bicycle tour of the Dordogne. She would like to get it published subject to the agreement of any living relative.

c) The Save Coate campaign. The developers are still conducting an archaeological study of the proposed development area. A new planning application is still anticipated although English Nature and the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust have both seen a potential new plan and have raised concern that the proposed buffers around the nature reserves are still inadequate. There is still no

literary landscape assessment albeit that the Society has lobbied the planning department to undertake one. Brian Burrows mentioned the potential for flooding from Coate Water. The pumps failed in the 1950s and flood water reached as far as Walcot.

5. ANNUAL REPORT

The new format of the report met with general approval. The content of the report was accepted. Proposed – Phyllis Treitel; Seconded – John Webb.

6. TREASURER'S REPORT

Geoff Hirst had detailed the accounts on page 31 of the Annual Report. He explained that there was a small discrepancy of £1 due to a rounding up or down of figures. He invited questions. He believed that the financial situation was good if not better than comparable literary societies. Eric Jones proposed acceptance of the accounts; Mark Daniel seconded the proposal. It was carried.

7. EXAMINER OF ACCOUNTS

Mr Chris Jones had examined the accounts, for which the Society is most grateful. Geoff Hirst proposed that he be elected to serve next year. Phyllis Treitel seconded the proposal. It was carried.

8. ELECTIONS TO COUNCIL

Margaret Evans was re-elected to Council and Norma Goodwin was elected having served as a co-opted member. Both were proposed for election by Council and seconded by Raymond Roys. They will serve from 2006 to 2009. Ray Morse, who stepped down this year as a Council member and as Vice-Chairman, was thanked by the Chairman for his many years of hard work on behalf of the Society and for his perfect attendance record at meetings. The post of Vice-Chairman is now vacant.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) Trees. Mark Daniel said that sapling Jefferies' Russets had been distributed into some prestigious places. He has taken a leaf and apple from his own garden tree to Brogdale in Kent who may be able to establish the name of the variety. If they cannot, Mark will enter the variety as the 'Richard Jefferies Russet.' Mark hopes to move his tree and plant it as close as possible to its original position near the ha-ha wall. Eric Jones queried what might be done to propagate the Mulberry Tree. Mark will investigate the best way to take cuttings as previous attempts by Reading University had failed.

b) Index of Jefferies writing. Hugoe Matthews suggested that this should form a project for the Society.

c) A strategy. Hugoe Matthews proposed that a small group should explore a short and long-term strategy for the Society. Where are we going? What are we trying to achieve? This item generated much discussion that fell into two groups: Coate related activities and disseminating Jefferies works to a wider audience. Suggestions included the possibility of acquiring the Coate Museum, co-ordinating the ad hoc manner by which Jefferies' works are published, publishing a new book on Jefferies to show why RJ is **still** important as the voice of nature [John Chandler is currently working on a biography based on the Wiltshire years] and generating new local interest among young people in Swindon [e.g. producing a 'Swallows & Amazons' type film, taking on an education officer at the Museum, story-telling] and, hopefully, acquiring new younger members.

d) Museum rota. An appeal was made for new volunteers to come forward to keep the Museum open.

The meeting ended at 1.00pm.

Jean Saunders, Hon. Sec. October 2006

TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT

Published accounts

Receipts and Payments Accounts for the year ending June 30 2007

2006	Receipts	2007	2006	Payments	2007
	Balances brought down		1072	Publications	692
890	Bank	1093	176	Rents	92
10cr	Petty Cash	41	35	Subs	68
9727	Cov. B/Soc	<u>9332</u>		Lecture fees	105
		10466			
1639	Subs	1548	610	Administration	435
710	Donations	1033	80	Miscellaneous	354
40	Sales:Mus	286	194	Insurance	194
101	Other	450			
1	Videos	<u> </u>		Project	5414
		736			
332	Tax Reclaim	182		House/grounds	617
305	Interest:B/Soc	310			
		<u> </u>			
		310			
	Grant	9200			
	Repairs SBC	<u>100</u>			
		9300		Bank	5937
				Petty Cash	25
				Cov. B/Soc	<u>9642</u>
					15604
		<u> </u>			<u> </u>
		23575			23575

Treasurer's Report to the Richard Jefferies Society 2006-7

This has been the most topsy-turvy year for the society as regards finance since I became treasurer. On the one hand you will note the continuing fall in subscriptions. This trend has, sadly, been well established for at least three years. It cannot go on indefinitely.

On the other hand this fall has been more than compensated for by the significant increase in museum sales (which shows great dynamism and enthusiasm on the part of those members involved there), and also of "other sales". These are through the direct action of our librarian meeting enquiries and member's needs, and also the sales of books bequeathed to the society. In addition the donations to the society show a healthy increase but I must point out here that much of this has occurred where members have donated their expenses or made one-off gifts, many of which are Gift Aided. This benefit of reclaimed tax will show in next years accounts.

We have been economical housekeepers though this is to some extent a false figure because of those instances of individual members' actions mentioned above. (Neither you nor I know the exact cost of running the society.) The general membership owes a great deal to the generosity and dedication of the society's active minority. Little surprise then, that notwithstanding the issue of subscriptions, our general reserves have increased by around £1300 in the course of the year.

We have projects afoot which will eat into the reserves, and these will be separately addressed by those more closely involved. Similarly I have left the "Project" report to those more qualified to speak on it. Suffice to say that the balance between the grant of £9200 and the outlay to date (see below) remains a restricted fund within the terms of the Charities Act. The general reserve at the moment includes £155 which the executive has agreed to put towards the proposed memorial to Harold Adams which matches the donations already received.

As usual I have allocated the Building Society interest on a proportionate basis between the Coate fund and the General Reserve. The figures at 30 June 2007 are as follows:-

General Funds	£2000
Coate	£688
Harold Adams	£155
Project reserve	£3786
General Reserve	£8950

G.W.Hirst
16th August 2007

N. B. The Independent Examiner's report to the Trustees of the Richard Jefferies Society will be made available to members at the AGM.

Directions to Liddington Village Hall (see map on the next page)

Liddington Village Hall is next to Liddington Church, Church Road, just off the main B4192 road from Commonhead Roundabout, at Swindon, to Aldbourne. There is ample parking space at the hall and the Village Inn (that serves food from 12am to 2pm – tel: 01793 790314) is a short walk away.

Liddington can be approached by road from the A419 trunk and M4 motorway Junction 15. Note that there is now a fly-over at Commonhead Roundabout on the A419 next to the new Great Western Hospital and, at the time of writing, the signposts for the new exit are not clear. From the old Commonhead roundabout, take the B4192 to Liddington. Progress up the hill passing a staggered cross-roads. Church Road is a few yards further up the hill on the right hand side.

Buses (Routes 46 to Hungerford & 48 to Marlborough) run between Swindon Bus station (it should leave from Bay 9, but watch out for changes) and through Liddington village. There is only one bus available that is of use to members on Saturday morning: **the 48 service to Marlborough leaves the Bus Station at 10.35am and arrives at Liddington at 10.52am. If possible, ask to get off at the Liddington Turn before the bus goes through the village past the Village Inn pub.**

Regular and frequent buses run from Fleming Way in Swindon town centre to the Great Western Hospital (including numbers 11 and 16). For the brave and fit, there is a stiff 2km walk from the hospital up the hill to Liddington. We could arrange to collect people from the hospital bus stop by prior arrangement: contact the Hon. Sec if you think that you might need help.

Return buses from Liddington (near the Village Inn) to Swindon Bus Station:

Bus Service	48	46
Departs Liddington (Spinney Close)	16.12	16.30
Arrives Swindon Bus Station	16.30	17.29

Bed and breakfast

Should anyone require overnight accommodation or information about Bed and Breakfast facilities in the area, contact the Hon. Sec. Mr & Mrs Michael Dixon run a small B&B at Street House Farm (near the Village Inn, Liddington). Contact them on 01793 790243 for more information.

In an emergency, on the day, you can contact Jean Saunders on mobile phone number 07709 524787. Please note that this phone is not normally switched on!

If you would like any of the following, please write to Mrs. Norma Goodwin, Wildings, 3a Momford Road, Oliver's Battery, Winchester SO22 4LE. E-mail norma.goodwin@btopenworld.com. Cheques should be made payable to the 'Richard Jefferies Society' although small orders can be paid for by postage stamps.

Leaflets:	
Richard Jefferies Farmhouse and Museum	free
Richard Jefferies in Eltham	25p
Richard Jefferies in Surbiton	25p
Richard Jefferies in Sussex	25p
Coate Farm and 'Bevis Country'	50p
Richard Jefferies & Coate Water (guided walk)	free
Richard Jefferies & Old Town (guided walk)	25p
A Jefferies Land itinerary (guided tour)	25p
Jefferies Land Direction Indicator/Frances Gay Memorial	50p

Coate Museum Guide	£1.00
A Spirit Illumined	£1.00
Back numbers of the Journal	
(see contents list on page 36 of ANLAR 05-06)	£1.00
<i>Richard Jefferies and Coate</i> by John Chandler	£1.00
<i>The Cunning Spider</i> by Hilda Sheehan	£2.50
Published Works of Richard Jefferies (in order of date	
published) by Hugoe Matthews - A4 size	£2.00
A5 size (same text)	£1.50

Outside Europe, please contact Norma to find out postage cost.

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John also houses the Society's complete **library of books** that can be borrowed by members. For more information phone John on 01793 853171.

Second-hand books for sale There is a selection of readers' copies of Jefferies' books available at the Museum. John Price has a good stock of second-hand Jefferies' books at his home. Contact him on 01672 515150. Copies of Jefferies' books in various editions, magazines containing his essays, and books and articles about him, can be obtained from George Miller, 10 Upper Church Street, Oswestry, SY11 2AE, tel. 01691 658330, email george.miller@virgin.net. A list can be sent on request.

Electronic books available on CD Rom

Most of Jefferies' works have been scanned and are available on one CD Rom at a cost of £5 including postage. Please note, there can be no guarantee of accuracy, given the limitation of scan-to-text hardware. The majority of the files are in WORD format but can be altered on request to pdf files. The current list of books available is as follows:

After London
The Amateur Poacher
Amaryllis at the Fair
Bevis
Chapters on Churches
Chronicles of the Hedges
The Dewy Morn
The Early Fiction of RJ
Field and Hedgerow
Greene Ferne Farm
Hodge and His Masters
Jefferies Land
The Life of the Fields

The Old House at Coate
The Open Air
Pageant of Summer
Restless Human Hearts
Round About a Great Estate
The Scarlet Shawl
Some London Thoughts of RJ
The Story of my Heart
T T T
Wildlife in a Southern County
Wood Magic
World's End

Talks and articles library. There is an extensive archive of over 80 talks and articles produced for the Society that can be purchased as photocopies at cost or sent electronically for free where possible. Contact the Hon. Sec. for more information.

Web site. A new Society web site is being set up by Steve Milton where we hope to post membership details, newsletters, minutes of meetings and texts for Jefferies' books. Details in the next newsletter.

Electronic mailing group. If you would like to be better informed about the Society's activities or you would like to share information with other members, you can subscribe to a free mailing group run by Yahoo. Send an e-mail to the Hon. Sec.: jeanadsaunders@tiscali.co.uk for more information.

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2007-2008

2007

- Sunday 9 September **National Heritage Day** 11am-5pm Richard Jefferies Museum. Story telling at 2.30pm
- Sunday 30 September **Literary Treasure Hunt** starting from Coate Museum at 10.30am. See Page 3.
- Saturday
13 October **Annual General Meeting** - Village Hall, Liddington.
Birthday Lecture .
Speaker – Brian Morris:
'Richard Jefferies: the Pioneer Ecologist'.
For details, see page 30.
- Saturday 1 December* Dr Freddy Brittain: his Jefferies' articles, correspondence with Samuel Looker and observations from his collection of Jefferies' books by John Price. See page 5.

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- Saturday 1 March* Joint meeting with the Friends of Alfred Williams. Select an appropriate short extract [no longer than 5 minutes] for reading or just come along and listen. This year the Friends are hosting the event.
- Saturday 5 April* E H Shepard: The Man who Illustrated *Bevis*. See page 20 for more information.
- Sat/Sun 17/18 May Alliance of Literary Societies AGM hosted by the Society. Full programme in Spring 2008 newsletter.
- Saturday 26 July STUDY DAY. A suggested theme is Richard Jefferies' early novels: More information in next newsletter.
- Saturday 11 October AGM. More information in the next newsletter.
- Saturday 6 December* Reading of Paul Casimir's paper entitled 'Richard Jefferies and Other Writers' originally given in February 1956 by this former Swindon librarian.

*Meetings begin at 2.00pm in the Jefferies Museum, Marlborough Road, Swindon. Doors open at 1.00pm. See map on page 41. Park free at Coate Water, only 5 minutes walk away. Those with a disability can park at the Museum; space is limited. Parking is also available in Day House Lane and at the Sun Inn. Meetings are open to the public and free to attend.

From Swindon town centre (Fleming Way), there are several bus services that stop next to Coate roundabout. These include: Monday to Saturday - daytime: Numbers 10, 12, 13, 14 and 21. Monday to Saturday - evenings: Numbers 12, 13 and 14.