

THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2008



Jefferies' Mulberry Tree snapped in two by freak storms – September 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, plus a £1.50 postal supplement for new overseas Members. Life membership, for those over 60, is available at ten times the annual rate.

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.



Hon. Secretary

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www.rjsoc.com (in preparation)

<http://richardjefferiessociety.blogspot.com>

RJ's Life and Works

www.bath.ac.uk/~lissmc/rjeffs.htm

THE RICHARD JEFFERIES MUSEUM, COATE FARM

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. The 'Footsteps' writers' workshop is also held on the same Wednesdays. Admission is free.

NEWSLETTER

The spring newsletter has been edited by Jean and Tom Saunders and despatched by Margaret Evans.

The deadline set to submit material for the Autumn 2008 Newsletter is **6th September 2008**. Please send your contributions to the Hon. Secretary.

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.

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PLEASE NOTE: ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES AGM

The Richard Jefferies Society is hosting the Annual General Meeting of the Alliance of Literary Societies on 17-18th of May at Coate. It is our opportunity to raise the profile of Jefferies and Coate. Your support and help for this event will be much appreciated. The full programme for the event is provided on pages 19-22 of the newsletter as a pull-out. An application form to take part is included separately. Halcrow's has given us special permission to explore the grounds of Burderop Park as part of the Literary Treasure Hunt on Sunday 18th. The tenant of the Gamekeeper's Cottage is prepared for an onslaught of clue-seekers peering into his gardens.

If anyone in the Swindon area is able to offer overnight accommodation to a visitor or to another Member of the Society, please could they inform Jean Saunders. Anyone requiring help to find overnight accommodation should also get in touch with her. Guides will also be needed to help show visitors around Coate Water and the Museum and generally help anyone who is looking lost. Your assistance will be much appreciated.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS 2007-2008

Mrs Margaret Evans 01235 765360 evansme@ntlworld.com	Mem. Sec. Re-elected 2006-9	23 Hardwell Close, Grove, Nr Wantage, Oxon OX12 oBN
Mr Brian Fullagar 01293 524110	Vice- President	20 Tushmore Lane, Northgate, Crawley, E Sussex RH10 2JJ
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Mr Stan Hickerton and Mr Ray Morse are co-opted Council Members		

FROM THE CHAIR



Photograph by John Webb, December 2007

As you can see from this “bumper” issue of the Spring Newsletter, your Society has been, and is being very active in a number of areas. Our hosting in May of the Alliance of Literary Societies’ AGM is challenging, but exciting; and we hope that many of you will be able to join in at least part of the weekend, and share your knowledge and enthusiasm for Richard Jefferies with those of other authorial convictions and leanings.

The indexing of Jefferies’ work being undertaken by Hugoe Matthews and Phyllis Treitel will provide a much needed and welcome help to Jefferies scholars and enthusiasts, and the new biography by Andrew Rossabi when it is published, should provide a further stimulus to the appreciation of the author in the context of the 21st Century.

Our efforts to secure the future of the Coate Farmhouse and its surroundings have made much less spectacular progress. We have a further meeting with the leading Officers and Members of Swindon Borough Council arranged for a date in late February, and we have just received details of the new Swindon Core Strategy document, which abandons the idea of a University on the Coate site, but is still proposing a development of 750 houses and an employment site to the East of Day House Lane. It would be good to think that a possible side-effect of the current economic wobbles and fall in house prices, might be the complete abandonment of the project – but that may be too much to hope for.

I have been reading some of D. H. Lawrence’s letters recently, and in two written to Edward Garnett, in December 1911 and January 1912, he mentions *The Story of My Heart*. In the first he refers to “that novel MSS” (unspecified title), and says, “Don’t bring it back, unless you have read all you want to read. I don’t want it a bit. It is a work too charg  , too emotional. It is a sponge dipped too full of vinegar, or wine, or whatever – it wants squeezing out. I shrink away from it rather. I wonder whether Jefferies used to wince away from *The Story of My Heart*?” And then, later, “I often think that Stendhal must have writhed in torture every time he remembered *Le Rouge et Le Noir*

was public property; and Jefferies at *The Story of My Heart*. I don't like *The Story of My Heart*."

This is an interesting comment, and puts Lawrence fair and square amongst many other readers who feel embarrassed by the *Spiritual Autobiography*. We know that Lawrence very much enjoyed Jefferies' other work, and he says, in a letter to Louise Burrow in 1911, "It is so nice of you to remember me – how did you know the date? I am very fond of Jefferies, and the pieces in *The Open Air* are so many of them down here." This was written from Addiscombe, near Croydon. I was already aware that Lawrence knew this volume, as I have a copy that once belonged to Jessie Chambers, his great friend, and the original of Miriam in *Sons and Lovers*, that she bought in October 1908; and I have often imagined them sitting down together and reading some of the essays. The book opens most readily at "Haunts of the Lapwing", and it may or may not be significant, that the only underlined phrase in the whole text is "Nothing despairs but man", in "Out of Doors in February".

Continuing with the theme of *The Story of My Heart*, but on a much less serious note, I have been amused to see a book, written by Richard Jefferies, coming up repeatedly on ebay – the online auction site. This book is titled "The Story of My Hearth" – presumably a previously unknown book by Jefferies on the history of fireplaces. It led me to speculate what other masterpieces may have been overlooked because of a Printer's Devil removing one letter from the intended title, to leave us with the book that has survived to this day. Some possible suggestions are:

"Wild Life in a Southern Country" – a book on big game hunting in Africa.

"Brevis" – a very short story about a boy who finds a puddle and throws his Coate on it – emulating Sir Walter Raleigh.

"Sue'z Cider" – an account of scrumpy making in Somerset. Researched at the same time as Red Deer, while staying with a woman called Sue on Exmoor.

"Dafter London" – for those who say that Jefferies had no sense of humour; this is the answer. Some of the lighter moments he experienced in the City while watching "Pigeons at the British Museum" (*Life of the Fields*), or studying "The Red Roofs of London" (*The Open Air*); the latter activity forming the basis of the extremely rare (and as yet untraced) essay "Rafter London".

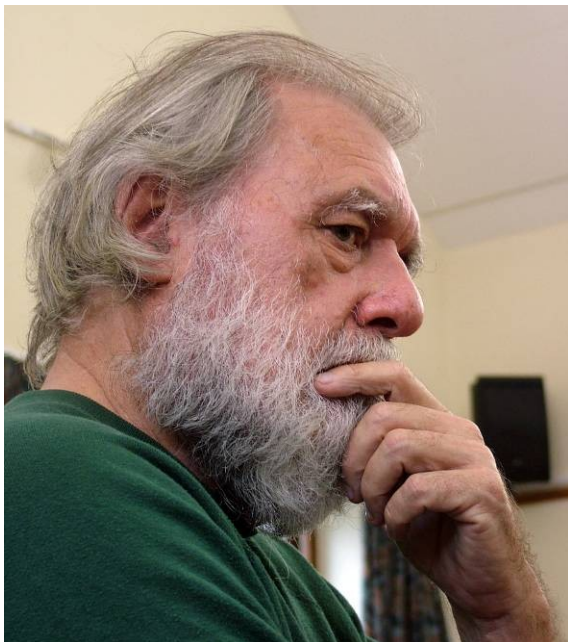
I wish you all health and fulfilment in 2008, and hope that we may see you at some of our events.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John T. Price'.

John Price
February 2008

THE BIRTHDAY LECTURE 2007 REPORT

13 October 2007 held at Liddington Village Hall.



Brian Morris, pictured left, held the audience of over 30 people captivated by his talk on 'Richard Jefferies: The Pioneer Ecologist.' Brian's academic interests are natural history, people/social history and anarchism/libertarianism. He professed to four inspirational heroes who might all be described as pioneer ecologists and who recognised the importance of the inter-relationship of humans and the natural world. These exalted people are the writer and naturalist Ernest Thompson Seton, the Indian poet Tagore, the Russian anarchist Kropotkin and Richard Jefferies.

Photograph by John Webb, October 2007

Brian looked at the way mankind's view of the natural world has altered over the centuries, identifying three main shifts in perception. The early respectful vision of nature, exemplified by Black Elk, a native American who considered and honoured everything on the planet. The mechanistic stance, promoted by the rise of science around 300 years ago, where nature is seen solely as an asset to be exploited for human benefit and profit. Finally, in the 19th century: the wider understanding of the natural world inspired by the writers and painters of the Romantic movement, Darwin's theory of evolution and the works of a new breed of literary naturalists like Thoreau, Burroughs, Seton, W H Hudson and Jefferies. Unlike philosophers like Galileo and Descartes, who saw nature as a means to an end, the literary naturalists advocated a more inclusive way of looking at the world, their approach both organic and realistic.

Jefferies was a key figure in this new ecological vision for a number of reasons. He was a great observer and recorder of nature, but doing so in a detached way. He realised that to monitor animals truthfully it was necessary to sit still and be very quiet, to seem indifferent to them. As soon as an animal knew it was being watched, it would not act naturally. Jefferies was gifted in that he was able to observe events from a remove then describe them in great detail.

Examples quoted by Brian included Farmer Iden's (*Amaryllis at the Fair*) care in planting his crop of Fortyfold potatoes, the description of people going into church for service (*Greene Ferne Farm*) and how Little John (*The Amateur Poacher*) broke the neck of a rabbit – a characteristically clinical and dispassionate piece of writing.

Jefferies approach to nature was nevertheless sensuous. He heard, felt, saw, smelt and tasted the beauty around him, whether it be from a ray of sunlight touching his hand, the music of the wind, the running water in the brooks or the feel of the earth. He could not just describe the people going to church but had to include descriptions of the sounds of the corncrake, the larks and the woodpeckers.

Jefferies sense of place comes across vividly in his writing. We gain a better understanding of the nature of both man and beast from his descriptions of habitat. *Round About a Great Estate* and *Wild Life in a Southern County* were quoted as good examples of this.

Jefferies was acutely aware of man's impact on nature. He recognised that the Downs, for example, were not natural – before farmers and their sheep they would have been covered in forests. He was the first to recognise that wild species have territories. He noticed this behaviour particularly amongst bird life. He disliked exotic and non-native plants, they gave nothing back to nature. It also concerned him that the ecological balance might be upset if the plant became aggressive and naturalised in its own right. He recognised the importance of micro-climates, the way certain species might only be found in particular habitats. He understood the importance of the food-chain, each species occupying a vital place in it. He recognised how nature could be used to control natural pests and be a friend to the farmer. He accepted that native trees, particularly the oak, not only brought great pleasure to people but were important as a centre for wildlife. Above all, Jefferies acknowledged that, while we require nature to survive, it has no concern for us – it does not need human beings.

Jefferies believed the pleasures he derived from nature should be celebrated. He also felt they should be enjoyed by others. Despite his mystical absorption in the natural world he was not anti-science. Although animal welfare writer Henry Salt had qualms about Jefferies often unemotional descriptions of cruelty to wildlife, he still thought of him as a poetic naturalist.

Jefferies has many sides to him. He is a comprehensive genius with a wide-ranging vision, bringing together nature, social history, field sports, aesthetics and mysticism. He relates to nature without feeling the need to exploit it. He does not see the world as a pastoral idyll. He looks to the future and how we might live with nature. He has an ecological sensibility yet he is a realist.

Discussion revolved around authors who had been influenced by Jefferies. William Morris, Rachel Carson and Henry Williamson were mentioned, three writers who have, in their turn, also made a great contribution to nature. It was a most illuminating and inspiring lecture. Brian's enthusiasm, knowledge and passion left us wanting to read more.

FREDDY BRITTAIN (1893-1969) TALK

Sixteen people gathered at the Jefferies Museum on Saturday 1st December to listen to John Price who had researched Freddy Brittain, his background, his Jefferies' articles and his correspondence with Samuel Looker. John Price reports:

Freddie Brittain, whose library of books by and about Richard Jefferies was given to the Society in 2007, was unknown to our membership until May of that year. In that month, by an extraordinary coincidence, I happened to be in Cambridge, and bought three volumes by Alfred Williams from Davids' bookshop, each of which was inscribed "Freddie Brittain, Jesus College", to which the bookshop had added (incorrectly), "Master of Jesus". Two of the volumes also had a pencilled note by Brittain on the front pastedown, giving the page references of paragraphs about Richard Jefferies.

On my return to Wiltshire, Jean Saunders contacted me a few days later to say that she had been approached by a solicitor, who informed her that a Muriel Brittain, who died in December 2006, had expressed a wish that her husband's collection of Jefferies books should come to the Society.

Freddie Brittain came from a long line of rural labourers in the South Mimms area of Hertfordshire. His reminiscences in his autobiography of his grandparents are very similar to some of Richard Jefferies' accounts of his family and others around Coate. He escaped his rural and labouring background via a scholarship to Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School Barnet, and thence to the Civil Service. In 1914 he joined the RAMC and served on the *Egypt* – a hospital ship. The Ship's Chaplain was a graduate of Jesus, and Freddie Brittain then wrote to the Master, and was admitted to read Modern and Medieval Languages. He became a Fellow of the College in 1937, married in 1959 (at the age of 66), and died ten years later.

Because his books are mostly inscribed with the date (and sometimes the place) of purchase, we know exactly the order in which he acquired the volumes, and it is perhaps significant that his first purchase was in Alexandria in January 1917, whilst serving on the *Egypt*. It was the 1911 edition of *The Hills and the Vale*, with the Edward Thomas introduction. In 1948, the centenary year, he purchased 12 of the newly published editions. There are 52 volumes on all, purchased between 1917 and 1956. We also have, from 1947 to 1949, one side of an exchange of correspondence with Samuel Looker; that is, 5 original letters from Looker to Brittain.

Brittain's interests were eclectic: The Anglican Church; Rowing – he accumulated the largest known collection of rowing books and pamphlets in various languages, which are now in the care of the Stewards of Henley; Music Hall; and Troubadors; and for five years he edited *The Cambridge Review*. It is in this latter publication that we find the only three articles that we know he wrote on Jefferies; in 1947, 1948, and 1949.

He published over 20 books, ranging from Medieval Latin Romance Lyrics, through Rowing books, to the history of South Mymms (as he insisted on spelling it). He also wrote the official biography of Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch ("Q"), with whom he had been very friendly for years whilst living in adjacent rooms on the same College staircase. It would be fascinating to know about

conversations they must have had about Richard Jefferies – given “Q”’s published expressed views!

Amongst the collection of books was one of real rarity, of which only one other copy is known to exist. This is: *Some London Thoughts of Richard Jefferies*, printed for private circulation and inscribed April 1896. There is no unpublished Jefferies material in it, but it is an extended essay, quoting liberally from seven published texts.

DISCOVERIES I. TWO FRAGMENTS

George Miller writes: After 120 years of research since Jefferies’ death it is unlikely that any major new discoveries will be made about his life and works. However as a collector and bibliographer I occasionally chance on scraps of new information which add detail to the general picture. The Society’s newsletter seems like a good place to pass these on.

The 1890 volume of Cassell’s Family Magazine contains an anonymous article entitled ‘An Anatomy of Handwriting; by an Expert’. Several notable contemporary authors are discussed and examples of their handwriting printed in facsimile – among them Richard Jefferies. The author makes but one brief comment on Jefferies’ hand:

“The late Richard Jefferies wrote in a characteristically careful style; the specimen of his handwriting here shown exhibits some of that attention to the minutiae of detail by which his literary workmanship is so well known.”

But more interesting than this observation is the actual passage reproduced, since, as far as I can recall, the letter it comes from is not otherwise known to us:

“I am afraid to promise a series straight off the reel having a good many engagements, but possibly somewhat later I might do so. At all events I will do my best.

I remain

Faithfully yours

Richard Jefferies”

Here we have an author very much in demand, but wise enough to keep his options open. It seems likely that this was written in the wake of the success of *The Gamekeeper at Home*, with a series of articles coming out in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Standard* and a novel, *Greene Ferne Farm*, in *Time*. We can only speculate on which publisher’s or editor’s enquiries he was responding to, and what the projected series might have been. But how tragically brief was this expansive period of acclaim and opportunity, before illness set in, and book sales began to decline.

My second fragment comes from the same period: an original scrap of manuscript in Jefferies’ hand, written on the same notepaper that he used at his Surbiton address in 1878 and 1879. Our expert would not have been so complimentary about the handwriting of this hastily scrawled note, and it is only after much scrutiny that I’ve puzzled it out as follows:

“Twilight

As for barn owls – you may stay all night and hardly hear one: all shot and

nailed to the shed wall – with rows at one end dried shrivelled and green at the other one [or “end”] in their plumage white and beautiful.”

Inserted after “green” above and below the line we have: “wrapped by nature in a mummy case of green”. There is a link here to ‘Traitors on the Gibbet’ in *The Amateur Poacher* (1880 p.89) where the grisly gallery of the keeper’s victims are itemised in detail: “In the second row the dried and shrivelled creatures were closely wrapped in nature’s mummy-cloth of green”. Clearly Jefferies abandoned the original context in which the note was written, but the telling phrase that occurred as an afterthought was preserved. Even in this small instance we see the artist at work.

HAROLD ADAMS’ MEMORIAL

As part of the Memorial to Harold Adams, a bookcase with leaded glass doors and a carved wooden Green Man have been purchased for the Museum. The Green Man celebrates Harold’s love of nature. A small brass plaque on the bookcase bears the inscription “In fond memory of Harold Adams (1918-2000) founder of the Richard Jefferies Society”. A sketch of Harold Adams by John Webb is displayed on the wall above the cabinet.



INDEX OF JEFFERIES' WORKS

Hugoe Matthews and Phyllis Treitel have been working extremely hard on compiling an index to Jefferies' works. Hugoe is now completing the typescript. The new publication will include an updated version of "The Published Works of Richard Jefferies" in which items will be numbered as well as listed in monthly order of publication. Hugoe is hoping to present the final document for printing around late spring.

HUMPHREY JENNINGS & RICHARD JEFFERIES

Brian Burrows writes: Humphrey Jennings and Richard Jefferies share common ground. Both were lovers of the countryside and rural life and were interested in the changes needed for a better society. Whilst Jefferies is not as well known as he should be, Jennings is almost forgotten. He was possibly the greatest maker of documentaries. He played a major role during the war producing morale-lifting films and later the theme was for a better post-war Britain. His first documentaries were made before the war and included several films on farming. He became well known with films such as "London Can Take It," "Listen to Britain," "Diary for Timothy" and "Fires were Started." He made a few documentaries after the war and was offered several films to direct but nothing came of them. In 1950, he was killed accidentally during the making of a documentary in Greece.

I have just re-read the best book about Jennings by Kevin Jackson: *Humphrey Jennings: the Definitive Biography of one of Britain's most important film makers*, (Picador, 2004). I became aware of the similar attitudes of Jennings and Jefferies. Jackson does not mention Jefferies but refers to a book of readings selected by Jennings, published after his death, entitled *Pandaemonium: The coming of the machine as seen by contemporary observers, 1660 - 1886*, (Andre Deutsch, 1985). In it, Jennings quotes from Jefferies. There are three long extracts from the following: *Jefferies Land: a History of*



Brian Burrows and Jean Saunders photographed in Jefferies' garden at Coate by Tony Hillier, July 2006.

Swindon in a section entitled "The Swindon Railway Works" (p311- 312), *Hodge and his Masters*, entitled "The Romance has Departed" (p345 – 341) and *After London* (p354). Jennings book is divided into four parts: Part One 1660 -1729 entitled "Observations and Reports", Part Two, 1730- 1790 entitled "Exploitation", Part Three, 1791 – 1850 "Revolution", and Part Four, 1851-1886 "Confusion".

The common theme shared by Jennings and Jefferies is their examination of the impact of

mechanisation and coping with the change. Jefferies realised that the steam plough was here to stay but was concerned about its affect on agricultural workers and their potential ultimate fate of ending their days in the workhouse.

THE BAILIFF'S DAUGHTER OF ISLINGTON

Jean Saunders asks: Was the old traditional song "The bailiff's daughter of Islington" Richard Jefferies favourite ballad? There are several clues, apart from the obvious references to it being Geoffrey Newton's favourite song in *Greene Ferne Farm*. The heroine of the novel, Margaret Estcourt, has the same family name as Richard's grandmother who moved to Clerkenwell with Charles Gyde after their marriage in 1815. Clerkenwell is less than 2 miles from Islington, London, albeit that some assert that the Islington in question in the ballad refers to a village in Norfolk. Richard's mother, Betsy, was born near Islington in 1817 and so was his father, James Luckett; born in Somers Town in 1816. Richard's parents were married in Islington in 1844 and the Islington link continued into Richard Jefferies life with an assortment of his relations living in the area.

The three references to the old ballad in *Greene Ferne Farm* appear as follows:

In Chapter 2, Geoffrey Newton is taking a circuitous route through the wood near Greene Ferne Farm. He has glimpsed his beloved Margaret Estcourt, sitting in the copse. He wants to approach without alarming her and for the meeting to appear accidental. He rustles the under-growth and snaps a branch:

"He lifted his voice and sang - he had a naturally fine voice - a verse of the dear old ballad, his favourite:

If she be dead, then take my horse,
My saddle and bridle also;
For I will unto some far country,
Where no man shall me know."

In Chapter 4, Margaret and her friend May Fisher decide that the cut grass must be lifted after the agricultural labourers had cut the meadow and then gone on strike. Geoffrey Newton and Valentine Browne, another admirer of Margaret Estcourt, along with others offer their help to load the wagon. It turns into a competition between Geoffrey and Valentine as to which of them could lift the grass the fastest and impress Margaret. Margaret's mother brings them a picnic and as they all sit by the hedge:

"Valentine begged Margaret to sing: they all joined in the request, and she sang with a faint blush, looking down - for she knew, though the rest did not, that it was Geoffrey's favourite - the beautiful old ballad of the 'Bailiff's Daughter of Islington.' With the wild-rose in her hand, the delicate bloom on her cheek, the green hedge behind, the green elm above, and the sweet scent of the hay, she looked the ballad as well as sang it.

'Ah,' said Felix, 'no sign of study in those old ballads, no premeditation, no word-twisting and jerking; rugged metre so involved that none can understand it without pondering an hour or two'.

The final mention of the old song appears in Chapter 5 when Geoffrey is hoping to find Margaret on the Downs as she makes her way back from May

Fisher's home:

"From behind the bushes Geoffrey watched the bend of the track. Then the sweet voice he knew so well floated towards him. Margaret was singing, little thinking any one was near:

'And as she went along the high-road,
The weather being hot and dry,
She sat her down upon a green bank,
And her true love came riding by.'"

Geoffrey finally marries Margaret and the story, like the song, ends happily. I can imagine Richard Jefferies singing "The bailiff's daughter" as he wandered around the Downs and the Coate countryside while conjuring up his stories of romantic fiction.

The ballad appears to have been popular in the late seventeenth century and remained so through the eighteenth according to *Everyman's Book of British Ballads* edited by Roy Palmer (published J M Dent & Sons). Stan Hickerton discovered two other slight variations of the song (including one collected by Alfred Williams and edited for *Folk-Songs of the Upper Thames*) besides the following verse and music that was collected from *Old Songs and Young Voices* by Agnes L Money in 1898. This text is the closest to the version that Jefferies uses in *Greene Ferne Farm*.

There was a youth, a well-loved youth,
And he was a squire's son,
He loved the bailiff's daughter,
That lived in Islington.

But she was coy and never would
On him her heart bestow,
Till he was sent to London town,
Because he loved her so.

When seven long years had passed away
She put on mean attire,
And straight to London she would go
About him to inquire.

And as she went along the road,
Through weather hot and dry,
She rested on a grassy load,
And her true love came riding by.

"Give me a penny, thou 'prentice good;
Relieve a maid forlorn."

"Before I give you a penny, sweet heart,
Pray tell me where you were born."

"Oh! I was born at Islington."

"Then tell me, if you know,
The bailiff's daughter of that place?"
"She died, Sir, long ago."

"If she be dead, then take my horse,
My saddle and bridle also,
For I will to some distant land,
Where no man doth me know."

"Oh, stay! oh, stay! thou goodly youth;
She standeth by thy side.
She's here alive, she is not dead,
And ready to be thy bride!"



COATE FARM AND MUSEUM REPORT

Mulberry Tree

The mulberry tree has been a major focal point for those spending time in the gardens at the Museum. The tree has provided everyone with great beauty, age, delicious fruits and shelter and inspired a new generation of writers to write about it. Jefferies wrote: "O Mulberry tree, O mulberry tree, Dear are thy spreading boughs to me". How sad that freak storms, sweeping across central England in the early hours of 24th September, brought down the main trunk of the tree, leaving just a spindly branch. (See photograph on the front cover.) A similar fate affected the tree in the 1978 storms. We are hoping the old tree will survive again and we will see new growth this year. A large section of the fallen trunk has been converted into a good rustic seat and thoughts are turning to what might be done with the rest of the wood. In fact, 'turning' is the operative word, as the idea is for a wood-turner to be encouraged to create something attractive with it. Hundreds of cuttings have been taken from the branches by an assortment of people, including Mark Daniel, who made a special trip from Brighton to try out some varied propagation techniques. Between us all, we trust a new generation of mulberry trees might now be allowed to grow.

After visiting the tree on the day of the storm, Hilda Sheehan (pictured right a few days before the tree was damaged) wrote:

The Old Tree

Although you are brittle and broken you still have much leaf to show,

even though most of what you are is sleepy and old and restricted from revealing your true beauty of age.

And those who have passed beneath your fruity branches; who've tasted,

rubbed, leaned, gained shelter can see you for who you are now,

here and now,

with every crack and hollow accepted and loved.

You are still that tree.



New Acquisitions at the Museum

A page of Jefferies nature notes dated 9 January.

Mark Daniel bought a copy of Besant's *Eulogy of Richard Jefferies* in a Swindon bookshop in 1975. Pasted on the fly-sheet is a page of nature notes written in Jefferies' hand-writing. On the reverse of the page, it states in pencil "These are Nature Notes in the handwriting of Richard Jefferies. Circa 1878. Samuel J Looker editor of Jefferies England etc. 2/5/45". Mark Daniel donated the book to the Society to display at the Museum on 1st of November. There is more information in our *Journal* 12, pp 12-13, 2003.

January 9 th . Two rooks – or crows –after a starling – starling cries – escapes. Frosty day morning. Rooks on trees- morning.	
Robin crumbs	No frost
from sparrow	J....gh Hedge?
on wall	More green
Robin & cat	But bitterest
	cold Thermometer
Tits are really woodpeckers in habit	no record
Fields smaller in winter – the scene shrunk - & trees less high	

The content of the notes appears in an unpublished manuscript 'January Notes' that relates to the winter of 1884-5 although the observations were recorded much earlier. Looker published extracts of this MS in *Chronicles of the Hedges* ("Tits and Trees", "The Rooks" and "Shrinking of the Scene in Winter") and *Field and Farm* ("A Winter Scene") but left out certain paragraphs that S Peter Dance reproduced in full in *The Archives of Natural History* (October 1981).

Detailed map of the 'New Sea and the Bevis Country'

Janice Lingley has produced a splendid map to accompany her article entitled "Richard Jefferies' *Bevis* and *Swallowdale*." The papers have been published as a preface to the The Arthur Ransome Society's 2008 Library Catalogue. The Arthur Ransome Society has also given permission for the papers to be lodged in the Richard Jefferies Society's library of "Talks and Articles." A copy of the map is now on display at the Museum. It is hoped an appropriate border of bird photographs mentioned in *Bevis* will be added. Miss Lingley's essay will be published in the Society's 2009 *Journal*.

Early picture postcards of Coate Reservoir

John Price acquired a set of about 50 early picture postcards of Coate, Hodson Woods, and Coate Reservoir at an auction last year. Some reveal how the reservoir might have looked in Jefferies' time – a wilder and a more natural-looking place than at present. Where postcards have been used, it is surprising to see how many people came to Swindon for their holidays. Some of the pictures have been enlarged and are now on show at the Museum. The

picture below has a postmark dated 1906 – a time when the canal company owned the reservoir but allowed the public access to it.



Good-bye Blu Tack!

Over 30 photographs displayed on the walls of the Museum have been put into oak frames and hung properly. Up until now, they have been held up with Blu Tack and fallen down regularly.

Attendance figures

In 2007, the Museum attracted 1150 visitors compared to 650 in 2006 and about 100 a year before that. The numbers last year were greatly increased by the 'Footsteps' project activities held at the Museum. Our thanks go to all the volunteers who helped. Fortunately, new Society Members are now coming forward with offers to help at the Museum and we are contemplating whether to open the Museum every Sunday afternoon from May to September. At the time of writing, no decision has been made.

Vandalism

Our fingers are crossed that 2008 can be a vandal-free year. If so, it will be the first for some time. Swindon Borough Council (SBC) has obtained planning permission and set aside a budget of £5000 to install six CCTV cameras in the grounds. There is no sign of the cameras at the time of writing. SBC has also set aside and agreed a budget of £23,000 to be spent on essential repair work to buildings.

Lease

As reported at our last Annual General Meeting, SBC offered the Society a lease for Coate Farm at a meeting with them on 3rd October 2007. It was not quite what we had anticipated. The plan behind the proposal was that, with a long-term lease in place, the Society would be in a position to apply for grants to restore the out-buildings and grounds in order to improve the Museum facilities. We would also be able to sublet the old cottage to a suitable tenant. In return for a reduction in rent, the tenant would be asked to perform some care-taking duties, their presence acting as a major deterrent to unwelcome intruders. At the meeting, SBC presented us (John Price and Jean Saunders) with two documents: a “Heads of Terms” paper and a “Service Level Agreement.” There was no time to digest or discuss the content. The bare bones of the first document, with some amendments, might have been acceptable to the Society but the draft Service Level Agreement was not. The offer applied to the management of the entire Museum, leaving the Society to cover all running costs, liabilities and insurance while meeting all legal obligations required to operate a building open to the public. Although the offer to the Society provided for a 15-20 year lease and a peppercorn rent, even without access to information about running costs and work needed to meet legal requirements, it was obvious the Society’s ability to function would be compromised both financially and in terms of man-power. John Webb sought the advice of his solicitor. The solicitor’s report was helpful in pointing out inconsistencies and pit-falls in the two draft documents. The matter generated much discussion at our AGM and other options were explored, including the possibility of us negotiating a lease on the cottage and outbuildings only. There was a clear mood of unease about the entire proposal. It was agreed that, if the terms were found not to disadvantage the Society and its Membership, the Society’s Executive Council should continue to negotiate a lease on the cottage and/or Coate farmhouse and/or the immediate site including the outbuildings.

Also at the AGM, John Price mentioned that SBC could take advantage of a new Community Assets Grant of up to £250,000 allowing them to improve a community building (e.g. Coate Farm) prior to leasing it to a community group. The deadline for applications was 15th November and, despite a considerable amount of work on our part, no application was made.

The Society’s Executive Council discussed the matter of the lease again at their meeting on 27th October. The advice of John Webb’s solicitor was used as a basis for a letter to SBC in order to extract more information and to clarify contradictions. Another meeting with SBC took place on 8th November and our concerns were expressed. It was agreed that SBC would obtain legal advice as to whether the Society might lease only the cottage, out-buildings and grounds. A new Service Level Agreement was to be drafted with this in mind. Currently, no new offer has been proposed but your Officers are meeting with senior councillors and SBC officers again on 20 February as they are keen to resolve the matter and find an acceptable solution.

RICHARD JEFFERIES MUSEUM



THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY

welcomes members of the
Alliance of Literary Societies

**to the ALS AGM
& to a weekend of activities**

at Coate, Swindon

17th & 18th May 2008



COATE FARM

Richard Jefferies [1848-1887] born at Coate Farm, next to the Sun Inn, spent his childhood exploring the local fields, woods and Coate Water keenly observing nature that formed the inspiration for most of his writing.

Contact Hon. Sec. of the Richard Jefferies Society for more information.
Tel: 01793 783040 E-mail: R.Jefferies_Society@tiscali.co.uk

Richard Jefferies (1848-87) has been a major influence on many writers that include Edward Thomas, W H Hudson, Henry Williamson, D H Lawrence, Arthur Ransome and John Fowles. Jefferies has been described as a “many sided genius.” Historians cite him as an authority on agriculture and rural life in Victorian England. Major studies of mysticism have anthologised his work and discussed his ideas largely portrayed in *The Story of my Heart*. He wrote one of the great novels for boys, *Bevis*, as well as several highly original novels for adult readers that include *Amaryllis at the Fair* and *After London*. He is recognised as one of the greatest nature writers in the language and he topped a *Guardian* 2005 poll for favourite country writers.

Jefferies had a particular affection for Coate Water, now a country park and Site of Special Scientific Interest, and Liddington Hill set in the beautiful Marlborough Downs overlooking Coate. The area around his home is known as “Jefferies Land.” It is a place of pilgrimage for generations of readers who can visit features and places mentioned in Jefferies’ works. In his brief life (he died of tuberculosis at 38) he wrote over 20 books and hundreds of essays.

Jefferies married Jessie Baden, a local girl, born at the neighbouring farm in Day House Lane. The couple and their young son moved from Swindon to Surbiton in 1877. Jefferies believed that his literary career would be better served living nearer London. The family moved several times. Jefferies spent his last months at Goring-by-sea in Sussex. He never returned to the old house at Coate and the farm was sold not long after he left the area. Jefferies writing is heavily influenced by his years spent there and there is a strong autobiographical element to many of his books and essays.

Directions to the Holiday Inn, Coate Water and the Jefferies Museum - see the map overleaf. The National Express coach, that runs from Victoria Bus Station in London, stops opposite the Museum/Holiday Inn. Local buses from Swindon town centre that stop at Coate Roundabout include service numbers 10, 12, 13, 14 & 21.

The Holiday Inn can offer **accommodation** at a rate of £60 single and £70 for a double room including breakfast. To secure a bedroom by credit card, phone 01793 817082 or 817040 quoting the booking reference ‘Richard Jefferies Society.’ The Swindon Tourist Information Centre can help find and book other B&B in the area on 01793 530328 or 466454.

Raffle and stalls

Please bring an item (normally a book) that might be raffled to raise funds for the Alliance. The Alliance’s Members are invited to set up their own stalls at the Richard Jefferies Museum over the weekend.

PROGRAMME

SATURDAY 17 May 2008

Holiday Inn, Marlborough Road, Coate, Swindon

- 10.30 Registration and coffee.
- 11.00 Welcome by John Price, Chairman of the Richard Jefferies Society: A brief account of Richard Jefferies and his associations with Coate.
- 11.30 ALS Annual General Meeting.
- 12.30 Luncheon.
- 14.00 "Richard Jefferies: His Life and Thoughts" - a Lecture by Hugoe Matthews, President of the Richard Jefferies Society.
- 15.30 Assemble at the Jefferies Museum**
- 18.00 "Jefferies Land" a short film produced by the Richard Jefferies Society that shows local places associated with the writer. Coate Water and Jefferies Museum - guided tours.
- Refreshments at the Museum & Raffle Draw.
- 19.00 Evening meal at the Holiday Inn (use booking form). As there will not be any formal entertainment over dinner, if anyone would like to bring their favourite literary piece (a short poem, etc.) to read at dinner, please do so.

SUNDAY 18 May 2008

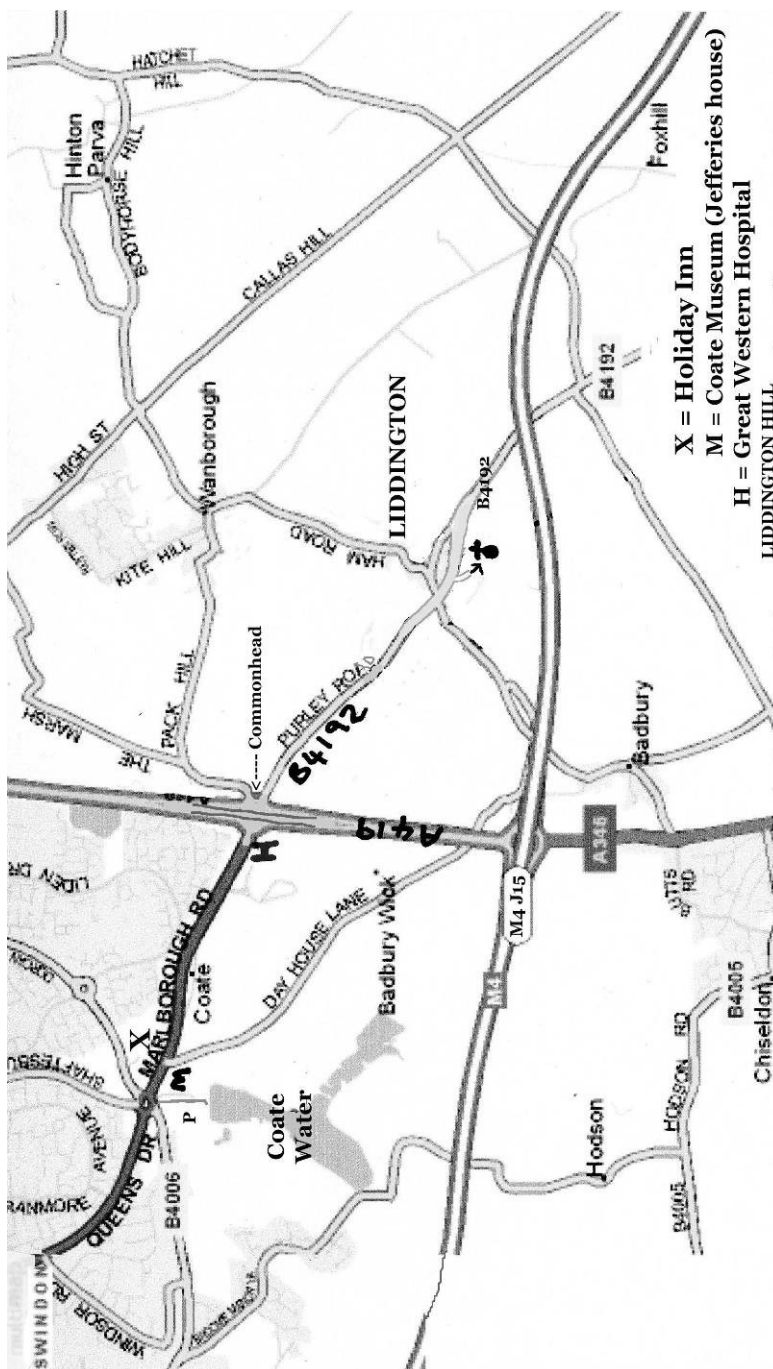
Home base: Jefferies' Museum at Coate (luggage can be stored)

10.00 LITERARY TREASURE TRAIL

An opportunity to explore the North Wiltshire countryside and places that Jefferies immortalised in his works. The event will take the form of a literary treasure trail, with clues, that will include visits to places associated with other local writers. Car-sharing will be encouraged in order to take part in the treasure hunt and will involve some walking over rough terrain.

Luncheon: there is a variety of good country pubs that include inns at Wanborough, Hodson, Badbury, Liddington and Chiseldon as well as in the Marlborough area.

Refreshments will be available at the Jefferies Museum until 5pm.



STUDY DAY: EARLY FICTION OF RICHARD JEFFERIES

SATURDAY 26 JULY 2008

RICHARD JEFFERIES MUSEUM, COATE

PROGRAMME

- 10.30 Doors open and refreshments.
- 11.00 Individual contributions by Members (5 minutes each). *
- 12.30-2.00 Lunch break. Time to look around the Museum or Coate Water.
Meals available at the Sun Inn or bring a packed lunch.
- 2.00 **Speaker:**
Margaret Evans BA (Hons.), MA: 'Small Acorns - An Appreciation of
the Early Works of Richard Jefferies.'
- 3.45 Tea
- 4.30 Depart

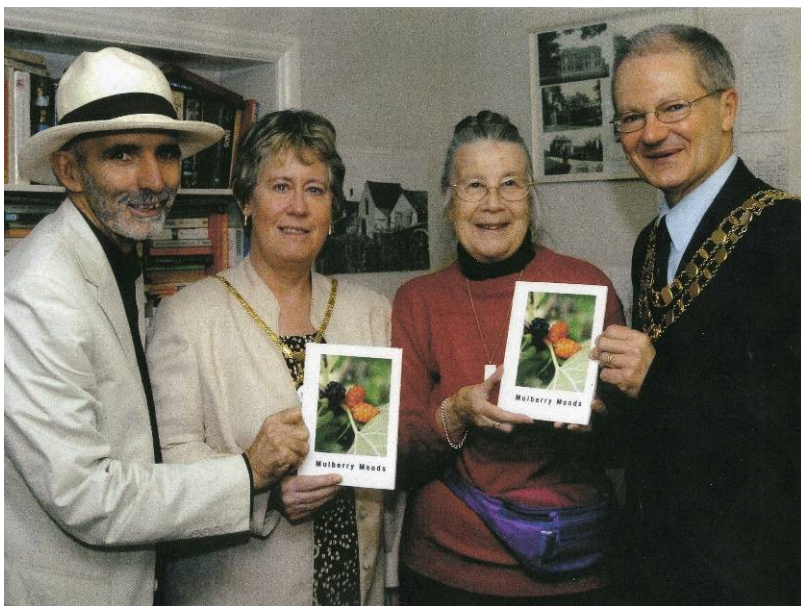
*** Guidance** Jefferies' early fiction has been dismissed as immature and worthless, but do you share this opinion? Margaret Evans believes otherwise and will reveal the seeds of great writing. Please select a passage from Jefferies' early fiction (*Scarlet Shawl*, *World's End*, *Restless Human Hearts*, or from 'Toplis' choice of Early Fiction) and comment on it. If you do not have access to any of the books or short stories, contact the Hon. Sec. who can supply text on a CD-Rom or by e-mail. Some volumes can be borrowed from the library whilst two short stories can be read in the *Journal*.

<u>Reading.</u>	T T T	RJS <i>Journal</i> No 1 p 52
	<i>A Midnight Skate</i>	RJSJ No4 p 10
	'The Fiction of RJ', Edward Thomas	RJSJ 4 p17
	'The Scarlet Shawl', review by A Rossabi	RJS J 4 p 20
	<i>Richard Jefferies</i> by Edward Thomas	

There is free parking available at Coate Water Country Park and limited parking at the Museum and along Day House Lane. Parking is also allowed at the Sun Inn, particularly so if taking luncheon there. Directions to the Museum are given on page 40. There is a map on page 22.

FOOTSTEPS PROJECT

The Footsteps project drew to a close on the 12th December with a final event attracting an audience of about 40 people to the Jefferies Museum. Tony Hillier succeeded in securing the presence of Councillor Michael Barnes, Swindon's Mayor and his wife to the 'launch' of the final booklet of works produced by the Footsteps writers' group and funded by the lottery. The book is entitled *Mulberry Moods* and the Mayor has been kind enough to write a brief introduction to it. Many of the contributors to the book are new to writing poetry, but thanks to the encouragement of Mr. Hillier their confidence has grown over the months. *Mulberry Moods* costs £2 and it is on sale at the Museum. The writers group continues to meet once a month at the Museum.



Tony Hillier, Sue Barnes, Wendy MacLeod-Gilford and the Mayor of Swindon
We must express our enormous gratitude to the National Lottery and the Awards for All team for giving the Society the financial security to undertake events we would have struggled to make successful. It has been a joy to be able to attract the general public to projects promoting so worthy a literary figure and to assure the local population of their town's cultural reputation. The various elements of the project have also attracted good local media coverage.

An unexpected bonus from the grant was obtaining the funding to print a **tour guide of Jefferies Land**. Relevant quotes from Jefferies' works are added along with colour pictures of paintings and photographs of places mentioned on the tour. This 16 page pamphlet is available for 50p.

Tour in the Footsteps of Richard Jefferies

This literary tour includes Coate Museum, Day House Farm, Liddington, Chiseldon, Barbury Castle, Burderop Down, and the Gamekeeper's Cottage at Hodson. The journey is about 18 miles (29km) long. There are optional detours to Draycot Foliat, Marlborough, Savernake Forest and Uffington. The roads mainly used in this guide are small country lanes. It is recommended that you follow Ordnance Survey Explorer maps 169 and 170. Some of the illustrations are copied from oil paintings by Kate Tryon, an American visitor who travelled around Jefferies Land in 1910. The quotations are taken from Richard Jefferies' writing.



The memorial stone on Burderop Down

SAVE COATE CAMPAIGN

No new university has come forward to take up the free site offered by the housing developers. However, the planning application is still extant and objections to it can still be submitted to SBC. The planning officer in charge of the case advises that the Planning Committee will be recommended to refuse planning permission. SBC has signed a collaboration agreement with the University of the West of England regarding setting up a campus at a town centre site at North Star near Swindon railway station. A University Capacity Study has been completed and it is estimated that a 1000-2000 student University campus could be accommodated there by 2011. This could increase

to 7,000 students by 2012 assuming funding is forthcoming. The campus forms part of SBC's draft 'Swindon Central Area Action Plan.' However, Coate is still not safe as Government planning inspectors have recommended that over 37,000 new houses should be built in and around Swindon between 2006-2026. With this in mind, SBC is about to embark, in March, upon a public consultation for their proposed "Swindon Core Strategy." Their preferred option for Coate is to accommodate 750 houses, 15 hectares of employment land and a primary school, albeit that development would be mainly located north and east of Day House Lane. They propose that buffer land between the development and Coate Water should be integrated into the Park but give no details as to how this might be achieved and advise that views from Coate Water and the Downs should be respected. The Jefferies Land Conservation Trust recently pledged, at their AGM, to continue to hold SBC to their word: "no university, no houses." The Trust also voted in favour of setting up a Land Fund in order that donations can be made in perpetuity to be used for the purchase of all or part of the farmland under threat. If successful, the land would be managed as a wild life area.

SUN INN PROPOSALS

Arkells Brewery withdrew their planning application for 20 new letting rooms and more car parking at the Sun Inn, adjacent to Coate Farm. However, in January they submitted new plans for 19 letting rooms.

ART EXHIBITION

Ancient Landscapes/Pastoral Visions- from Samuel Palmer to the Ruralists.

A forthcoming art exhibition may be of interest to Members. It will include a work by Graham Arnold inspired by Jefferies. The exhibition opens at Southampton City Art Gallery on 17th April 2008 and then travels to Bath, Falmouth and Plymouth.

CITINGS OF JEFFERIES

We are now into a third year of the ***Swindon Advertiser*** devoting one page of the newspaper a month to an extract from Jefferies' nature writing appropriate for the month in question. John Webb has done sterling work selecting and editing these pieces and he has also provided the paper with a selection of superb photographs. Thank you, John.

The September issue of the ***Countryman*** includes an excellent article by Jack Watkins. It explores why Jefferies remains firmly in the public consciousness some 120 years after his early death. There is a discussion of Jefferies' writing with allusions to the old house at Coate. Mr. Watkins also takes a brief look at the Society, the Trust and the building threats to "Jefferies Land". Various photographs enhance the article.

Wendy MacLeod-Gilford found two references in the January 2008 edition of the ***Countryman***:

Page 10: article by David Bellamy (The Conservation Foundation) called 'The future is not all doom and gloom'. In the article Bellamy refers to: "ring fenced with hedgerows and drystone walls and managed by yeoman farmers, gamekeepers and ghillies of the Richard Jefferies ilk."

Page 15: Humphrey Phelps quotes from Jefferies: "There is the grass and the wheat, the clouds, the delicious sky, and the wind, and the sunlight which falls on the heart like a song".

Professor Eric Jones noted that in the newly published (2007) **125 Years of Shooting Times & Country Magazine 1882-2007**, on pp 24-27, there is a reprint of the article from 29th of January 1910 called "Notes from the game preserves: The Gamekeeper's Home". In the article the author says the home he has in mind, "would have been a place beloved of Richard Jefferies, and he would have been yet more interested in the man who occupied it in our boyhood days".

Professor Jones also noted that David Bellamy was quoted as saying "Richard Jefferies is one of my heroes" in an article about Bellamy in **The Shooting Times**, 3rd January 2008.

Professor Jones reported that the vast new book **Birds of Wiltshire** has a section on pp.80-81 entitled "Two renowned writers on wildlife with strong Wiltshire connections" (sic) referring to Jefferies and Hudson (are they under the impression that *A Shepherd's Life* is about a Wiltshire village?) Prof. Jones has only briefly glanced at the book – it costs £45. Five of Jefferies' books are cited plus Keith (1965) and Looker and Porteous (1966). There is no serious attempt to use or evaluate Jefferies' material on birds but the work clearly gives praise where praise is due.

Peter Eyink came across a reference to *After London* in a book entitled **The Occult Establishment** by James Webb, La Salle, Illinois 1976, p. 509: "There is a particular genre of Utopian fantasy that is the natural vehicle of expression for plans for social reform. From Bacon's *New Atlantis* and More's *Utopia* itself, the pedigree of the imagined society is directly traceable down to modern science fiction. The Progressive Underground has frequently used fantasy as a means of communicating ideas. For example, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888) and Richard Jefferies' *After London* (1885) were powerful influences on the Progressive Underground of the 1890s".

Another naturalist, whose work is admired by Society Member Michael Taylor, is the Welshman, Ronald Mathias Lockley (1903-1998). He lived in New Zealand during his later years, continuing his writing and conservation work in his adopted country. His output includes 55 books and nearly half of these are in Michael's collection. He recently added **The Nature-Lovers' Anthology** edited by R.M. Lockley, with illustrations by Phyllida Lumsden, published by H.F. & G. Witherby in 1951. Seventy writers are represented in prose or verse. Most appear only once - although Gilbert White of Selborne has nine entries. Lockley includes an excerpt from Henry Williamson's *The Lone Swallows*. Richard Jefferies takes pride of place in the anthology, the book opening with the passage "Spring" from *Field and Hedgerow*. "Just Before Winter," a second

piece from the same source, appears later and is nicely placed between two poems; *The Scholar Gypsy* by Matthew Arnold and *Lapwing* by Rex Warner.

Stan Hickerton discovered an article entitled “Chiseldon countryside in a tale of two writers” by Michael Marsham, **Wiltshire Life**, January 2007 that focuses on Jefferies and Edward Thomas. The magazine also includes an article about the poet Charles Sorley, another great admirer of Jefferies. Stan looked through some more back issues of **Wiltshire Life** and discovered two excellent articles referring to Jefferies by Chris Cole who described a walk around Barbury Castle (February 2003) and “In the footsteps of Bevis and the M4” (March 2003) that guides walkers around Coate Water, Hodson and Chiseldon.

Stan Hickerton has been looking through works by Edith Olivier and found a quote from *Hodge and his Friends* (sic) in her book *Wiltshire* (published by Robert Hale Ltd) that describes how much more time a farmer could save if he could send messages to agricultural workers by cable. Did Jefferies foresee the advent of the mobile phone?

Wendy MacLeod Gilford found the following poems and illustration in an old copy of **Swindon Review**: a local miscellany of the Arts, No. 9, published by The Libraries, Museum, Arts and Music Committee of the Swindon Borough Council 1957.

Liddington Hill by Margaret Fusland

Go to the hill not far from here
When the roar of progress deafens you.
The angular harsh screeching of our age,
The shattering, clattering, battering stridency,
Yields to the peace of former years.
Go to the hill whose tranquil brow,
Symbolic of permanence in Time,
Ignores the futile crazy lust for speed,
The hurrying, scurrying, worrying urgency,
With calm immutable, sublime.



Night on the Downs by Margaret Fursland

The fleecy clouds had gambolled on the field
Made by the smiling sky at May-day noon
Which now becomes this curtain velvet black

Embroidered with a single yellow moon.

The hollows that had seemed in noon-day sun
Like giants' goblets filled with golden wine
Are now deep pits of blackness stark and grim
Where surely never ray of light could shine.

The tender curves of hills that distance washed
Softly in ev'ry iridescent hue
Become majestic mountains tall and still
In bold black outline that a firm hand drew.

In Jefferies country by J Stafford

This is the Jefferies countryside,
This stretch of placid water, Coate,
This lake where Bevis fought and dreamed
Of the wide world beyond its shores;
Where the eye lifts to Hodson Woods
And beyond, the Downs where he walked
With mind at rest, and heart singing
In tune with the hovering lark
Over Barbury's lonely hill
Or Liddington's last grim stronghold.
There is no living part of him
In that far-off Sussex country
Whose downland called him at the end;
Here prevails the spirit, restless
Yet serene, even now unspoiled
By these late days he never knew.
These things the quiet watcher sees
On any summer's evening,
If he will only turn and go,
Leaving the drab grey Swindon streets.

JOHN LAWLEY

In November John Price bought a first edition of *Red Deer* on the Internet, partly because of some writing on the free end paper which he could not decipher online. It turned out to have been a poem about Jefferies, which is reproduced below:

Richard Jefferies by John Lawley

Favourite of Nature, who didst early learn
To love the woods and downs and hedgerows green
With all their free-born denizens; and to spurn
The crowded slums where live the low and mean;
Oft have I felt the magic of thy pen,
And laid me down in quiet nook to read
Thy pleasing tales of rook and finch and wren;
Of heath and blossom, flower and vagrom weed
Till I have heard again the zephyr sigh

Among the twinkling leaves, laden with sweets
 From beanfields and from limes. Oft heard the cry
 Of hern and bittern from their green retreats
 Among the grenadier sedges; while the bleat
 Of nibbling flocks upon the thymy downs
 Fell faintly on my ear, like music sweet
 From fairyland. Then cared I nought for frowns
 And gibes and spurns, in envious ranks arrayed.
 For in thy presence comes a healing calm
 That anger's fiercest storm can not invade
 And fills my soul with rapture like a psalm.

John Price's notes:

hern = heron

vagrom = Dogberry's perversion of vagrant. Much ado. III 3. 26
 twinkling appears to be the word used, though it seems odd.

The poem is signed G.T.Lawley, Priestfield House, Wolverhampton. Looking on the Internet, it turns out that Lawley was a well-known local historian, whose papers are now in the Wolverhampton archives. He wrote a book on the History of Bilston - which curiously enough was published by a John Price in 1893! He also wrote a carol, known as the Bilston Carol. Our John Price thinks that Lawley, whose papers date from 1895 to 1920, probably bought the copy of *Red Deer* new in 1884, but whether his poem was published elsewhere, he does not know. Perhaps a Member from the Wolverhampton area may be able to find out a little more about Lawley?

BOOKS BY MEMBERS

Francis by Richard Stewart. This new short book covers a wide variety of writings by Francis Simpson MBE, whose *Simpson's Flora of Suffolk* is now a collector's item. Rather than concentrating on the book Richard has selected accounts of field meetings, comments from those who knew him well, thoughts on habitat preservation and countryside management, and wistful reflections of his beloved county at a time when the world was little affected by motor cars and housing estates. Richard also includes a section showing Francis as an all round naturalist, a long and amusing account of trying to get the better of a greenhouse toad, and several angry denunciations of vandals wrecking the places he loved so much. Francis was no great respecter of private property, especially if it contained rare flora he wanted to study, and in his introduction the author relates several stories of his escapades, including nearly being shot in a private wood during a deer cull. Obituaries appeared in many national and local publications and one from his successor as County Flora Recorder ends the selection. A few photos are also included. Francis was also a great admirer of Richard Jefferies and there are a few short references to Jefferies in the book. Copies at £5.50, including postage, can be obtained from Richard Stewart at 'Valezina', 112, Westerfield Road, Ipswich, Suffolk. IP4 2XW. Please make cheques out to 'Richard Stewart'.

Stothert and Pitt: the rise and fall of a Bath Company by John Payne (48pp, many photographs) is on sale at the price of £6.50. It is published by Millstream Books and the ISBN is 978-0-948975-79-0. If interested in purchasing a copy, John encourages readers to order it from a local independent bookshop or directly from him by post. Please send a cheque for £7.50 (including p&p) to John Payne, Mortimer House, 9 Vallis Way, Frome, Somerset BA11 3BD. Tel 01373-464634, e-mail: jhpayne777@pop3.poptel.org.uk

Something Stirred, a collection of poetry (42pp) by Bob Woodroffe. Available from Greenwood Press, 10 Woodward Close, Pershore, Worcs WR10 1LP. Tel: 01386 556177 E-mail bob@woodroffe.fsworld.co.uk. ISBN 978-0-9521165-7-8 price £4.50.

Search by Bob Woodroffe

you and I
searched
we found

brown velvet in short turf in cool spring wind
shared midsummer cushions with Clare
saw curled tails on tall stems race across the heath
walked in Jefferies footsteps under azure skies
tiny spirals white in grassy rings under sun's autumn glare
touched engraved coldness of chalk wall under busy street
felt earth energy flow through body hand and rod
dined on the sweet food of love on rolling down
heard calmness descend from the tor bubble from the spring
we searched
we nearly found
you and I

Full Sail – More Voyages in Verse by Graham K A Walker with a foreword by Sir John S Marsh. Published by Bucks Books, 2007. Softback, 101 poems price, £11.50. Available as a signed limited edition of 100 copies. Contact Graham for details on 01189 574793.

A Lessening – a book of 28 poems by George Miller, with a wood engraving by Alan May. Available as a limited edition of 45 copies (40 pp) hand set and printed on Zerkall Ingres, with specially printed and decorated covers: quarter leather and gold and blind tooling £25; or paperback £10. Post UK £1. Available from Hedge Sparrow Press. 10 Upper Church Street, Oswestry SY11 2AE or telephone George Miller on 01691 658330 or e-mail George.miller@virgin.net.

George Miller has been writing poetry since 1978 and has published three previous volumes.

HOW DID YOU FIRST DISCOVER RICHARD JEFFERIES AND THE SOCIETY?

Janice Lingley of Northwood is especially interested in children's literature and she is a member of The Arthur Ransome Society. She confessed that she was ignorant of Jefferies as a writer until earlier last year. *Bevis* appeared in a list of books reproduced in Christina Hardyment's *Arthur Ransome and Captain Flint's Trunk* (Jonathan Cape, 1984, p220). Ransome compiled the list for those who had enjoyed reading his Swallows and Amazons stories and who wished to read more books about sailing adventures. Miss Lingley writes: "It was this recommendation that prompted me to read *Bevis*. I was delighted by the story and fascinated by Jefferies' descriptions of the natural world of the countryside and lake featured in the text. I was also at once interested to know if the lake that Jefferies describes was still in existence and whether it was possible to visit it. I discovered the existence of the Society from the website on Coate Water, which led me to the Society's web site".

Jeremy Boswell, of Berkhamsted, first became acquainted with Richard Jefferies almost 60 years ago. He was a keen amateur naturalist - and bird watcher in particular. In his first job as a local newspaper cub reporter in Essex, he came across several remaindered copies of Lutterworth Press titles edited by Samuel Looker in a local book-shop. Mr. Boswell bought several of these books that included *Wild Life in a Southern County* with illustrations by Tunncliffe. A year or two later his father was appointed to the staff of the Royal Military College at Shrivenham which led to family outings to the nearby Ridgeway, Liddington Hill, etc. He came across the Society in an advertisement in the *Countryman* and so joined, since when it has given him great pleasure. Indeed, his collection of Jefferies titles now numbers about 60! Mr. Boswell is happy to say that an early appreciation of Jefferies led to the literary pursuit of others including W.H.Hudson, Edward Thomas, Gilbert White, John Clare and Henry Williamson.

Mr W Alton of Tiverton reported that Richard Jefferies name kept cropping up during his reading of rural works. He found reference to the Society on page 159 of *The Victorian Village* by David Souden and joined out of curiosity, in the belief that he had a lot to learn.

NEW BIOGRAPHY OF RICHARD JEFFERIES

Members of the Society have commissioned Andrew Rossabi to write a new biography. It will focus on Richard Jefferies relevance to today.

Anyone wishing to contribute to the Commission should please send a cheque, made payable to the Richard Jefferies Society, to our Treasurer, Geoff Hirst (contact details on page 3). Please include a note to indicate that the money is to be used for the Commission.

OLD BIOGRAPHY OF RICHARD JEFFERIES

"The Interpreter" by Mrs Audrey Smith

Mrs Smith's son, John, contacted the Society in November. After his mother's death last year, just shy of 84, he inherited a large amount of material from

her concerning Richard Jefferies. Included in it was an original typescript she had written about him entitled "The Interpreter" (named from a description in *Dewy Morn*) and some research material. When she was alive, John Smith had often said to his mother "wouldn't it be good for other Jefferies lovers to see this material?" to no avail. Now they can - it has been sent to the Richard Jefferies Society.

Audrey Smith was born on 27th June 1923. She was an ardent nature lover as well as a great book lover. Her son wrote to the Society: "In my childhood Jefferies was often mentioned. We lived in Surbiton in the 1960/70s, which, as you know, has R.J. connections... My mother was something of a solitary and not really a group or party person... She was certainly very active within the Society of Friends (Quakers) in Kingston... She was also something of an amateur naturalist and was involved with a butterfly monitoring group... My mother wrote extensively poetry and prose as well as a diary and journal and every Tuesday during that time would 'go up to town' to the British Museum, Somerset House, Guildhall, or other location researching for what ultimately became three biographies, the Brontes, 'Michael Fairless' and the typescript you have. Only the Jefferies was ever offered as far as I am aware - to Cassell & Collier Macmillan - who returned it on May 17th 1976... I believe that my mother must have thought it very worthy to have done such a thing as when we as a family asked her about submitting work to publishers (there are hundreds of poems, over seventy short stories, an autobiography of her early years in Guildford and wartime in London, plus some local history research done on retirement to Yorkshire) she always said 'maybe' or 'it would be a lot of trouble' and the like. I think (to) her it was the fun of the research activity and its subsequent collation itself, rather than a desire to be published... Though time has moved on, at the least the material will act as a snapshot of the state of Richard Jefferies studies at the time, and of course she might still have filled a gap in the knowledge by accessing sources now unavailable to present researchers."

Well, she certainly has! The biography contains much new information. At some stage, Mrs. Smith sent the first two chapters of her typescript to the Society - we had them in our archives and they were used to provide information for *The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies*. What a pity Mrs. Smith did not tell us that her researches had prompted her to write five more chapters. She fills in many of the gaps in knowledge about the Gyde family, outlining the links between the Jefferies, Gydes, Billings and Harrilds and the London printing and publishing trade. Her local knowledge of the history of the Surbiton area adds greatly to an appreciation of how it was in Richard Jefferies' time. Mrs. Smith's style of writing is most engaging - although she is seduced, perhaps, into confusing fact with fiction on occasion, proving herself to be too ready to draw parallels between Jefferies life and the lives of the characters in his books.

Should anyone like to read a copy of the typescript, Jean Saunders can send it by e-mail or on CD-Rom in A5 format (150 pages). The Society is considering the best way to make paper copies available to Members.

CAN ANYONE HELP IDENTIFY ANY OF THE PEOPLE IN THE PHOTOGRAPH?

This photograph has been on display in the Jefferies Museum bordering the Jefferies Family Tree for some time.

We have been unable to track down the identity of any of the people in the picture.

Can anyone help?

NEWS FROM OTHER SOCIETIES

Friends of the Ridgeway

With many of its aims now achieved, or partly, it is tempting for the Friends to look around for new challenges: the Greater Ridgeway; better access for horses; the right to roam; the coastal path. For this Society, however, what matters is the Wiltshire stretch of the present Ridgeway. There are fewer walkers than there used to be, and we want to remedy this.

As a start, the Friends have refurbished their website, and invite us all to log on and discover its delights: a new Photo Gallery, the Google Map facility, a place for users' contributions, and many more.

Website: www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk

Comments to: jandjgoddard@googlemail.com

Or to: PeterGould18@aol.com

Meanwhile, for a real Jefferies Moment you can do worse than park at Barbury Castle, walk for 5 minutes to Smeath's Ridge, and look towards Liddington Hill.

The Friends' AGM is on Sunday 16 March at the Ridgeway Centre, near Wantage. Your rep. hopes to be there.

Phyllis Treitel



THE EDWARD THOMAS 1ST WORLD WAR BATTLEFIELD TOUR

WEDNESDAY, 31 OCTOBER – SATURDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 2007

This tour was particularly meaningful as it commemorated 90 years since the writer and poet was killed in action on Easter Monday, 9 April 1917.

Our group numbered twenty-two, plus our excellent guide, Christopher Thronksen, our Holts Tour Representative, Julia Hayward, and our most able driver, John Hayward. Our bright yellow coach picked up some of our party from Victoria Coach Station, London, and, the rest of us, from the Eastern Docks Travel Centre Dover, en route to the ferry terminal for the sailing to Calais.

The itinerary was varied and intensive. We were to make our way down the British sector of the Western Front between Langemarck several kilometres north of Ypres to Maricourt, west of Albert, in the south, which covered activity in the Ypres Salient, Loos, Arras and the Somme. We spent the first night at Ypres and the following two nights in Arras. As the group was literary biased a particular focus was on visiting places associated with WWI writers, among them Edmund Blunden, Robert Graves, Julian Grenfell, Ivor Gurney, William Hodgson, David Jones, Isaac Rosenberg, and Charles Sorley.

Apart from visiting Memorials, Cemeteries and battlefields the tour included visits to places associated with the conflict. For example, Talbot House, also known as TocH, an all ranks social club at Poperinge; Essex Farm Advanced Dressing Station; St George's Memorial Church in Ypres; Sanctuary Wood, which boasts the longest stretch of trench in its original state (but without duck boarding). It was a gloomy, oppressive place with a dank, foetid atmosphere caused by stagnant water-filled shell holes left exactly as they were from the First World War. Le Retoir Farm was of interest as it became the Headquarters for the 2nd and 3rd Brigades. Vimy Ridge also had a length of trenches, (this time with duck boarding!) plus a network of communication tunnels dug by the Canadian Corps in preparation for their attack on 9 April 1917.

The most impressive Memorials we visited were at Vimy Ridge and Newfoundland Park. The monument at Vimy Ridge was breathtaking, its two pylons rising 30 metres above a large rectangular platform, both platform and pillars being adorned with classical figures. The Memorial to the Missing at Newfoundland Park has a stunningly beautiful statue of a caribou standing on a high stone mound.

The Memorial at Delville Wood is outshone by the Commemorative Museum, a hexagonal building, which lies some distance behind it. It is remarkable for the four large bronze relief panels adorning the outer walls and several inner

walls, which contain large windows etched with the battle honours of South African forces.

The main reason for the tour was to pay tribute to Edward Thomas. On the evening of arrival, Edward, grandson of the writer and poet (pictured left), said a few words in respect of the Edward Thomas Fellowship (ETF) visit prior to giving the Exhortation at The Last Post Ceremony, and laying a wreath at the Menin Gate, Ypres. On the Friday afternoon we visited areas mentioned in Edward Thomas' War Diary, from which grandson Edward read excerpts. The visit included the Beaurains RA Observation Post, where Edward Thomas was killed at the age of 39. We then made our way to the cemetery at Agny to visit his grave for a moving tribute and



readings. Jennifer Thomas, wife of grandson Edward, planted some pansies and laid a posy of old man, lavender, rosemary, rose hips and spindle berries, which were collected



from grandson Edward and Jennifer's garden. Already on the grave was a wreath which, it is believed, was placed there by the local mayor on the 90th anniversary of the writer and poet's death on 9 April this year. On the card was Edward Thomas' poem *In Memoriam 1914*.

Other cemeteries visited included Brandhoek, where Captain Noal Chavasse (1884-1917), the only man to win the Victoria Cross twice during the Great War, is buried; Mansell Copse where William Noel Hodgson MC

(1893-1916) is buried. He was one of the war poets. Readings were given by his graveside and Jill Day-Lewis laid a posy of poppies. In St Mary's First Aid Dressing Station we saw a grave for John Kipling (1897-1915). In Bailleul Road East Cemetery lies Isaac Rosenberg (1890-1918), the artist and poet.

The Memorial Wall at Dud Corner bears the name of Captain Charles Sorley (1895-1915). He was killed during the battle of Loos. He was a devotee of Richard Jefferies and highly rated as a WWI poet.

On our last morning, the Saturday, in the footsteps of the battle of the Somme, we stationed ourselves at the point the troops would have poured out of the trenches for the attack and slowly began working our way towards the German front line. Chris was giving a running commentary and the tension was becoming palpable when, in what would have been no-man's land between the two front lines, the coach slipped off the single track road and got stuck in the mud! A large number of stones had to be collected and placed under the back wheel to enable enough traction to get back on to the road!

The overall effect of the tour was very powerful. One hears, reads and sees images of the mass slaughter and conditions endured by the troops. However, the horror of it didn't fully impact on me until I actually saw the number of cemeteries with their row upon row of headstones. Not only in the major cemeteries, but as one drove along, smaller graveyards scattered in the countryside, by the side of the road, in fields, at the side or bottom of people's gardens. The latter were for soldiers who had died at field hospitals and been buried there. Also the height and length of the memorial walls crammed with names of those 'missing' and 'killed in action' for whom no bodies were recovered. I found it appalling that this mass slaughter could be, and was, sanctioned. It is an experience that will stay with me a long time, if not forever.

This article is, of space necessity, brief and I have prepared a fuller version of the tour. If anyone is interested in having a copy please let me know. I will also be giving an illustrated talk on this visit to the Society on 6th December 2008.

Margaret Evans



RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS & SERVICES

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.

<u>Postcards:</u>	25p each or any 3 for 65p	
	Watercolour of Liddington Hill & quotation	
	Wild flowers & quotation	
	Portrait of Richard Jefferies	
	Set of 5 cards Jefferies' birthplace circa 1910	£1
<u>Leaflets:</u>		
	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
	Jefferies Land Direction Indicator/Frances Gay Memorial	50p
<u>Booklets:</u>		
	Jefferies Land tour of North Wilts & Oxon. (NEW)	50p
	Coate Museum Guide	£1.00
	<i>A Spirit Illumined</i>	£1.00
	<i>The Jefferies Canon</i> #	£1.00
	* Back numbers of the <i>Journal</i>	
	(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
	<i>Mulberry Moods</i>	£2.00
	Published Works of Richard Jefferies (in order of date	
	Published) by Hugoe Matthews - A4 size	£2.00
	A5 size (same text)	£1.50

* NB many *Journals* are now out of stock or in very short supply – notably numbers 1, 10, 13, 15 and 16. However, when stocks are completely exhausted, photocopies can be supplied at 50p.

The Jefferies Canon by W J Keith, published 1995. This is a 40 page booklet of notes on essays attributed to Jefferies without full documentary evidence. A dozen new copies have been found and are available for £1 plus postage on a first come first served basis.

Postage: Second class for the UK add 25p for orders up to £1; add 60p for orders up to £2, add 75p for orders £2 and over.

For Europe add the minimum airmail charge of £1.03p for up to 100g

(printed matter). Contact Norma for larger orders.

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

‘Jefferies Land’ film.

Copies of this film produced by the Society, that shows places associated with Jefferies in the Coate area, may now be obtained in DVD format as well as video. Price: £10 including postage, from John Webb, Padbrook, Bincknoll Lane, Wootton Bassett, Wilts SN4 8QR or from the Museum. Cheques payable to ‘John Webb’.

Library of books

John Webb also houses the Society’s complete library of books that can be borrowed by Members. For more information phone John on 01793 853171. A collection of library books and reference books is also held at the Museum. Nick Holmes has kindly donated Society newsletters and *Journals* dating back to 1987 for use in the public reference library. George Miller has added a copy of *Richard Jefferies: A Bibliographical Study* – a ‘must have’ for any researcher.

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.

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. See page 43 of the Annual Report 2006-7 for the full list of books available.

Talks and Articles library.

There is an extensive archive of over 90 talks and articles produced for the Society that can be purchased as photocopies at cost or sent electronically by e-mail for free where possible. Contact the Hon. Sec. for more information.

There are recent additions that include Janice Lingley’s article examining Jefferies influence on Arthur Ransome’s work (see page 16) with particular reference to *Bevis*; Professor Roger Ebbatson’s chapter on Richard Jefferies and Thomas Hardy that has been published in *Moment of Earth: Poems & Essays in Honour of Jeremy Hooker*, ed. Christopher Meredith (Aberystwyth: Celtic Studies Publications, 2007) and an article by one of Prof. Ebbatson’s Loughborough University colleagues which is scheduled soon to appear in the journal *English Literature in Transition*. The article by Nick Freeman is entitled ‘Edward Thomas, Swinburne, and Richard Jefferies: “The dead oak tree bough”’.

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 e-mail group run by Yahoo. Contact the Hon. Sec. for details.

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2008

- 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*. Illustrated talk with discussion about favourite sketches led by John Webb & Jean Saunders.
- Sat/Sun 17/18 May Alliance of Literary Societies AGM hosted by the Society. See pages 3, 19-22 for more information.
- Sunday 18 May Literary Treasure Hunt – meet at Museum at 10 am for briefing – car-sharing event.
- Saturday 26 July STUDY DAY (10.30-4.30) – Jefferies Museum. Richard Jefferies' early novels: See page 23 for more information.
- Saturday 11 October AGM & Birthday Lecture: Roger Vlitos *Spirit Country*. The Downs and the Arts. More information in the next newsletter. Venue to be announced.
- Saturday 6 December* An illustrated lecture by Margaret Evans on the Edward Thomas 1st World War Battlefield Tour. See pages 35-37 for more information.

*Meetings begin at 2.00pm in the Jefferies Museum, Marlborough Road, Coate, Swindon. Doors open at 1.00pm. 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, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 21. Monday to Saturday - evenings: Numbers 12, 13 and 14.

Please note:

The Society is planning other visits to the new Wiltshire and Swindon Records Office in Chippenham, that now houses our archives, and to the 'Gamekeeper's Cottage' at Hodson.