

THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER & ANNUAL REPORT 2010-2011



Venus Accroupie

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 runs from 1st July and is open to all on payment of the current annual subscription of £7 single or £8 couple. New overseas Members should add £1.50 towards additional postage costs. There is a facility for Members to join using Paypal or credit/debit cards at richardjefferiessociety.co.uk (with an additional £1 supplement to cover charges incurred).

Members receive spring and autumn newsletters, an annual report and a *Journal* (in 2011, a Spring and Autumn *Journal* was produced) and can take advantage of the Society's extensive library. Activities include spring meetings, a study day, special outings, events, a Birthday Lecture and an Annual General Meeting.

TRUSTEES AND COUNCIL MEMBERS 2010-11

Simon Coleman, Roger Ebbatson, Margaret Evans (Membership Secretary), Norma Goodwin (Sales), Geoff Hirst (Treasurer), Eric Jones, Helen Newman (ALS Representative), Duncan Pepper, John Price (Chairman), Andrew Rossabi (President), Jean Saunders (Secretary), Richard Stewart, Phyllis Treitel (Vice President), John Webb (Librarian) and Rebecca Welshman (Student Representative). Ray Morse is a co-opted member.

Hon. Sec.

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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. The Sunday open day season runs from May to September from 2-5pm. The Footsteps writers' group meet on the same Wednesdays. Admission is free.

NEWSLETTER: edited by Jean & Tom Saunders. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the editors or the Society.

The deadline set to submit material for the Spring 2012 Newsletter is **14 February 2012**. Please send your contributions to the Hon. Secretary.

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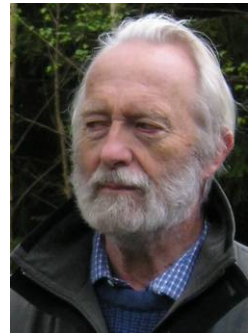
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DATA PROTECTION ACT

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.

FROM THE CHAIR

When I wrote an appreciation of Hugoe Matthews as retiring President in my introduction to this year's Spring Newsletter, I had no idea that he would no longer be with us by the Summer. Phyllis Treitel's tribute in this Newsletter speaks on behalf of all of us, and several members of the Society attended Hugoe's funeral in the small town of Bampton, near his home in Devon, where it was most appropriate that Andrew Rossabi, our new President, was invited to read a passage from Jefferies as part of the tributes. The tragedy was that Hugoe was so relatively young, but it was wonderful that he was able to complete his work on the *Anthology*, and see it published before his death. We shall miss his depth of knowledge, his wisdom, and his ability to suggest and stimulate action for further Jefferies scholarship. His (far too few) talks to the Society over the years have all been most memorable occasions. His publications will forever be a source of fundamental information and inspiration to Jefferies lovers.



It is easy sometimes to think that there is nothing more to discover about one's favourite author, because generations of scholars and collectors must have exhausted all there is to find that could be new. This year, however, that assumption has been completely disproved as far as Richard Jefferies is concerned. Earlier this year, we were contacted by a family living in Frome, who were anxious to sell a box of documents that had come down in their family, and related to Jefferies. In it were not only two further letters written by Richard Jefferies to his Aunt Ellen, and a youthful drawing done by Richard for his brother Henry; but also 40 odd letters from Richard's mother to Sarah Jane Gyde. There were also books, and some previously unseen ephemera.

Later, in June, an opportunity arose to inspect the contents of Samuel Looker's late grandson's loft. Here were boxes and boxes of material – some of it family related – but much of Jefferies relevance. The grandson's widow wishes the collection to come to the Society, and even a cursory inspection showed that there was much material of interest, including a book that had been owned by Richard Jefferies when he lived in Victoria Street about the Wayland Smith legend, and a letter from Harold, Richard's son. No other written documents by Harold are known.

These discoveries have been made, not by assiduous scholarship on our part, but by serendipity, and in both cases, the individuals who contacted us did so through internet searches.

It would also seem that references to Jefferies and his writing are becoming more numerous in books and articles. We are grateful to our members who report these citations, but it does seem that Richard Jefferies' ideas, and the way in which he expresses them, are becoming more and more pertinent to our current situation. There was even a letter in *The Independent* (reprinted in *The Week*), quoting Jefferies in respect of the August city centre riots and looting!

We are very grateful to Michael Parrott for taking up the suggestion raised at our Sussex visit last year, and commissioning, and arranging the installation of a new memorial bench for the Jefferies/Hudson Memorial Garden at Broadwater Cemetery. There is now somewhere for visitors to sit whilst enjoying the garden, whether before or after visiting the graves.

Closer to home, what could be the final battle to preserve the countryside round Coate, is about to commence. Following the quite unexpected decision by the elected members of the Swindon Borough Council Planning Committee to turn down the latest application for development at "Commonhead" as they now wish to designate it, the developers have appealed, and there will be a further Public Enquiry in November where an Inspector will yet again hear the arguments for and against, and make a decision. Once again, we will be represented at the appeal, and once more will have to make the case for the literary importance of Richard Jefferies, as Swindon have decided not to pursue this argument against, on the grounds that it has been rejected by two previous Inspectors! It is quite extraordinary, that an Inspector, who is trained only in planning matters, is able to decide arbitrarily whether a particular author, or gardener, or artist, is of sufficient merit to justify refusing permission to develop a particular area. This is what happens, however, and it is up to us and our many supporters to convince the individual concerned that we have a strong case.

The week in which I write this report is the one in which a Jefferies Festival is being held. It started on Monday, with the opening of a new path from Coate Water to the back entrance to the Museum, tracing the hedge referred to as "The Highway of the Birds". It will allow much easier access from the Country Park to the Museum, and can be signposted on those occasions when the Museum is open. The current Mayor of Swindon, Councillor Ray Ballman formally cut a ribbon to declare the path open, and there was good coverage on BBC Radio Wiltshire and in the *Swindon Advertiser*.

On Wednesday evening, the Festival was officially opened – again by the Mayor - at the preview of an exhibition of paintings by David Brackston; all of which were inspired by passages from Jefferies' writings. What I particularly liked about this collection was that the style varied according to the passage being responded to; and most paintings were accompanied by the appropriate passage of text. This means that visitors, even if they do not wish to, or feel able to buy a painting; may be inspired by the extracts to seek out and read more Jefferies.

For the logistics behind this week's activities, we are extremely grateful to Dr. Mike Pringle, Director of Cultural Development for Forward Swindon, who has found the necessary time and other resources for these activities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Price', with a large, stylized initial 'J' and 'P'.

John Price, 25th August, 2010

MOREDON FARM & MOREDON HOUSE

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Re the letter by J B Jones quoted on page 11 of the Spring Newsletter 2011. I think it's about time I put the facts straight as they are incorrectly stated by J B Jones.

True Richard Jefferies – great grandfather of Richard Jefferies, the author – did live at Rodbourne Cheney and his three children were baptized at St Mary's Church, Rodbourne Cheney (information from the bible of James Luckett Jefferies). However Richard Jefferies snr did not live at Moredon Farm as the land tax assessments show. The property occupied by him was valued at 6s per year – far too low for a farm house!

Yes in 1948 the council did buy the old Moredon House which was in a sorry state but they did not demolish it. The building was restored providing sheltered accommodation for the elderly. It was opened by Princess Ann as she was then.

The grand holm oak tree shading the house was not felled, but in recent weeks it shed its branches which fell onto a parked car. Tree surgeons have made the tree safe but have left the stump for children to climb on! (*Swindon Advertiser*, 14 January 2011).

The only connection with the Jefferies and Moredon House is that Fanny Catherine Hall (daughter of Martha (Jefferies) Hall) went there to school.

Hope this clears up the facts!

From *Sheila Povey*, Swindon, 28 June 2011

Debra Edmonds provided the following information:

Moredon Farm, also known as Maundrell's Farm, was at the end of The Street, where there is a row of shops today, almost opposite the Red Lion/Boundary House pub. Today, Park Farm was definitely Moredon House before being re-named Park Farm by the Loder family.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT 2010-11

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

Miss L G Baldock, Sandhills, Oxford, Oxon
Mr N Ball, March, Cambridgeshire
Mr L Bovill, Warragul, Victoria, Australia
Mr B Clements, Brentwood, Essex
Mr P J Deane, Sutton, Witney, Oxon
Mr M J Docherty, Harrogate, North Yorkshire
Mr I Hamson, Swindon, Wiltshire
Miss L Hares, Swindon, Wiltshire
Mr & Mrs M Jefferies, Stroud, Gloucestershire
Mr & Mrs R A King, Ogmere Vale, Bridgend, South Wales
Ms V Price, Llandough, The Vale of Glamorgan, Wales
Mr R Pulley, Littlehampton, West Sussex
Mr R Robinson, Swindon, Wiltshire

Mrs J J Sharp, Swindon, Wiltshire
Mr J B Silver, Crowborough, East Sussex
Mr & Mrs R Slade, Swindon, Wiltshire
Miss A C Stenning, Malvern, Worcestershire
Mr & Mrs S Taylor, Ladysmith, BC, Canada
Mr R K Ward, Marlborough, Wiltshire
Mr M Wilson, Worcester, Worcestershire

18 of the above mentioned new members (3 of which were joint) joined in the 2010/11 membership year, and 6 in the 2011/12 membership year (this includes 1 joint member).

The total membership during the 2010/11 subscription year numbered 280, being made up of 172 single, 30 joint (60 members), 27 Life, 6 Joint Life (12 members), 2 Hon Life, 2 Joint Hon Life (4 members) and 3 Corporate memberships.

During the 2010/11 membership year 4 members sadly died. A member who had not renewed his subscription for the 2010/11 membership year notified me in February that he wished to resign.

At the time of writing the 2011/12 membership is 209. Of these 31 are joint, i.e. 62 members.

Although the majority of members live in England, other countries are represented: Australia 5, Belgium 1, Canada 5 (3 joint), Channel Islands 1, China 1, Eire 1, Germany 2, New Zealand 1, Northern Ireland 1 (joint), Scotland 6, USA 1, Wales 7 (2 joint).

At the time of writing 75 members (9 of whom are Joint, ie 18 members), and 1 Corporate member, have not paid their subscriptions for the 2011/12 membership year. 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
25 August 2011

HOW DID YOU DISCOVER RICHARD JEFFERIES & THE SOCIETY?

Mrs Audrey King from Bridgend says that she 'spent 40 years of [her] lifetime in phenomenal reflecting [and] journeying through unknown parts of our world.' She happened to come across *The Story of My Heart* in a rare-books library. The book struck a chord – she had found a spiritual thinker and sought out the Jefferies Museum in the summer of 2010. There she bought more Jefferies' works in order to learn about Jefferies' innermost thoughts and reflections. Mr and Mrs King joined the Society immediately after their visit to the Museum.

Mr Lindsay Bovill, a teacher of biology and general science to secondary school students in Victoria, Australia writes:

I have been intending to join the Society for some time, but it is the recent events with the proposed development at Coate which has spurred me on to do so now. I wish to offer what little help I can from afar – if there is anything at all I can do to help the Society towards its

intentions of halting the development at Coate, I wish to offer my services in any way I am able to. Even if you would like me to attempt to get an article about the development into one of the larger rural-based weekly newspapers we have in Australia, I would be more than willing to try... I consider it a great honour to be part of an organisation of people that respect his work and land.

REPORTS OF MEETINGS 2011

Readings from Alfred Williams and Richard Jefferies: 5 March

It was another of those sudden cold March days that drew in fifteen members from the Society and the Friends of Alfred Williams for our annual joint meeting; this year it was our turn to host – John Price chaired the session. By coincidence, it was also World Book Day. Our hearts and bodies were warmed up as we listened to quotes from the works of the two authors.

Roy Burton started the session by reading a piece of Jefferies' prose that Colin Blundell had set to poetry. Entitled 'In Swindon', taken from 'The Story of Swindon' (*The Hills and the Vale*), Jefferies describes the work of the hammerman at the railway works, 'toying with danger'. Roy then read an Alfred Williams' poem entitled 'The Valley of White Horse' that describes the views from the downs across the Vale and the wildlife that surrounded him.

Margaret Evans read a description of the Ridgeway from *Wild Life in a Southern County* – the chain of hill-forts, the stunted hawthorns, the shepherd boys playing their whistles with passion albeit that no recognisable tune was produced and the, otherwise, welcome and deserted solitude of the footpath.

Kaye and Graeme Franklin. Kaye introduced a new poem that had been found by Graham Carter in the archives of the Wiltshire & Swindon Heritage Centre. It had never been published and appeared to have been written around 1926, ten years after Alfred had left work at GWR. He writes with affection about the work of the furnaceman who 'sweats his life away'. Graeme then read out the poem entitled 'The Furnaceman'.

Phyllis Treitel read a short piece about sparrows from Jefferies' 'Nature on the Roof' (June 1884); published in *The Open Air*. Jefferies mentioned how the Parisians had great skill in taming the sparrow. No doubt, he was using the opportunity of the article to boast that he had visited Paris.

Ray Morse read Jefferies charming essay about the water colley (dipper) published in *The Life of the Fields*; a bird that Jefferies had obviously observed at close-quarters. He described the bobbing and curtseying mannerism that we associate with the bird.

Jean Saunders opted for a short piece from *The Story of My Heart* (Ch 5) where Jefferies describes his exaltation at stepping a short distance east of Coate Farm enabling him to get a clear view of his beloved Downs whilst leaving behind the every-day worries of life on the farm.

John Price closed the day by reading Jefferies' letter to Aunt Ellen dated 22 September 1870 where he writes at length about his trip to Brussels – his amusing account of the channel-crossing taking hours because the boat gets lost in the fog. He mentions the beautiful Belgian ladies and their high fashion.

Meeting on 2 April 2011

The meeting was partly dedicated to memories of Stan Hickerton and his artwork, followed by the reading of a letter which revealed that Jefferies did take note of what an editor had said to him. Twenty Members were present.

Memories of Stan Hickerton

Stan's brothers (Philip and Robert) joined us along with their wives (Audrey and Liz) to add their stories about Stan who lived an unconventional lifestyle surrounded by books and papers in his small Swindon flat. John Price read out the memorial presentation he gave on behalf of the Society at the funeral service whilst Phil Hickerton filled in much interesting background information about Stan's life and interests. Stan was a chartered engineer. He joined the Society in 1987 and, whilst an extremely active member, he always kept a very low profile. He took great pleasure in exploring all corners of the country to find Jefferies-related material and then sharing this information with other Members. We then looked at photographs, scrap-books of posters and art-work that Stan had compiled. Stan designed superb posters for virtually all our meetings that many of our Members now treasure. As such, we were delighted to see some of the original artwork for the posters along with some that did not make it that had never been seen before. The Hickertons made a generous donation of Stan's collection of Jefferies' books and his original posters and drawings, for which we are most grateful. As a fitting memorial, the Society has placed a farmhouse chair bearing an inscribed brass plaque to Stan in the parlour room of the Museum. The inscription says: 'Stan Hickerton: a good friend and an extraordinary man, 1930-2011'. The chair took pride of place at the gathering.

C J Longman's letter to Richard Jefferies

John Price reported that he bought a first edition of *The Dewy Morn* in a Charing Cross bookshop a few years ago. It contained a short letter from C J Longman dated 17th of December 1883 and was addressed to Richard Jefferies. This letter clearly had an impact on a Jefferies' article Longman published in February 1884. An earlier letter from Longman dated November 1883, made clear that he wants the article in question by December and requests that Jefferies 'will leave the purely political question – also the hateful Irish complication to take care of itself.' He adds: 'Indeed your position I take to be above the pettiness of party politics. The probable effects of this change on the daily life of high and low is what we want to forecast before we take a leap in faith.'

The follow-up letter reads as follows:

39, Paternoster Row, London, E.C.
December 17th 1883.

Dear Mr Jefferies,

I like your picture of a village managing its own affairs. I hope it may come to pass. One suggestion only I have to make. On page 4 you seem to argue that the landowner and tenant are to be excluded from the village council. This would be

class legislation with a vengeance. Imagine the rural council sitting down and voting away the landlords and the farmers money with light hearts in their absence. No no. Fair play is a jewel. Let a man have but one vote if you will, but let him attend and vote at a meeting where his property is to be taxed. I daresay you will be able to modify this paragraph.

I am, yours very truly

C J Longman.

The final article was republished as 'After the County Franchise' in *The Hills and the Vale*. The relevant extract states:

But it may be asked, Is the village council, then, composed of small proprietors, to sit down and vote away the farmer's or landowner's money without farmer or landowner having so much as a voice in the matter? Certainly not. The idea of village self-government supposes a distinct and separate existence, as it were; the village apart from the farmer or landowner, and the latter apart from the village.

Richard Jefferies' visit to Paris – 1883



Phyllis Treitel



Venus Accroupie

Sixteen Members attended a meeting held on the 7th of May at the Museum. Phyllis Treitel brought to our attention all that was known about Jefferies' trip to Paris in 1883 along with some educated guesswork on her part. Why did Jefferies choose to travel to Paris? How did he afford the trip? Did he enjoy it and was it worthwhile? Lady Treitel assumed that income from the publication of *Red Deer* helped to pay for the trip, that might have been a treat to himself. Perhaps his wife Jessie felt that with the arrival of their third child, Richard might be permitted to escape and search out new material to write about? He clearly loved sculpture and art and his earlier trip to Brussels had been a most enjoyable excursion. He stayed in a cheap hotel in Paris that was very close to the Tuileries and the Louvre. His notebooks reveal extremely unflattering and negative observations about the city he once described as 'The Plainest City in Europe' (*The Life of the Fields*). He made several trips to the Louvre. While

there, he was drawn to the Venus Accroupie (pictured on the front cover and above) and visited the statue several times as well as recording the event in 'Nature in the Louvre' (*Field and Hedgerow*). Perhaps it was an awareness of Pissarro's impressionist artwork that originally encouraged the visit? Pissarro stayed in Norwood, London around 1871 and painted views of places familiar to Jefferies that include the Crystal Palace, Sydenham Hill and Sydenham Avenue as well as Dulwich College. It is probable that Jefferies' experience of Paris was marred by the lack of a knowledgeable guide, his poor French and not knowing precisely where he should go. A trip to the left-bank of the Seine would, perhaps, have exposed him to an architecture more in keeping with his tastes. Nevertheless, it is possible Jefferies' refusal to be impressed by Paris and his positive response to a statue not always favoured by others are reflections of a powerful need to feel and judge everything according to his own heart rather than to just echo received opinion.

Study Day: Richard Jefferies and Sport

Twenty four members of the Society gathered in the Richard Jefferies Museum on 30th of July to examine Jefferies' views on all types of sport. The text of the main talk presented by Rebecca Welshman in the afternoon session has been published in the Autumn 2011 edition of the Society's *Journal* (No. 21) and need not be summarised here. It did point out how important horse-racing was to the community, a pastime both rich and poor could enjoy. She also discovered a possible association between several famous racehorse and greyhound names of the time and the names of some of Jefferies' characters. The choice of individual readings from Members was far ranging. They revealed how important sport was to Jefferies even though he was personally restricted in what he could do as a result of ill health and a weakened constitution. In the circumstances, walking was clearly his favourite sport. As a born and bred countryman, he wrote about blood-sports in a matter of fact way. Nevertheless, his close observations of animal behaviour reveal great insight into the intelligence of the hunted species and animals in general.



Boys Own 6 October, 1883

Margaret Evans read the passage in chapter two of *The Scarlet Shawl* (1874) describing the sailing race at the regatta at St Leonards. Nora decides to join the all-male crew even though she has no experience. The smallest craft forges ahead under the expert sailing skills of Herbert Spencer who undertakes some dangerous manoeuvres to win the race, much to the delight of the audience on shore who are even more amazed when they realise that a woman is on board.

David Chesham read from 'The Squire and the Land' (*The Old House at Coate*) where the Squire bemoans the fact that the public seldom consider the expertise of the sportsman and his passion for the sport in their judgements. 'You must kill every pigeon, or finish the mile in two seconds less time than all who have tried before.' Also 'How you walk, or how you shoot, in good style or not, matters not the least. The record is everything.'

Brian Morris spoke of hunting as the true 'sport of kings' and any attempts at conservation by the nobility and landowners exist only to provide habitats where game might be shot for sport rather than food. He read an extract about a pheasant shoot in *The Amateur Poacher* where you feel more sympathy for the hunted than the hunter.

Eric Jones followed this with another extract from *The Amateur Poacher* about hare-coursing. He said that the sport was very popular in Jefferies' time, with nearby Ashdown Park the site of the second largest meet in the country. It seemed likely because of this that Jefferies would have attended. However Prof Jones pointed out that the aim was not necessarily to kill the hare but to score points for achieving various manoeuvres by the dogs. The extract that Prof Jones read out did not describe a meet but explained how Dickon worked his greyhounds for hare-coursing.

Helen Newman read the passage in *The Story of my Heart* (Ch. 7) that shows just how important it was for Jefferies to walk – 'Never have I had enough of it; I wearied long before I was satisfied, and weariness did not bring a cessation of desire; the thirst was still there.'

Pete Bainbridge read the passage about the boys fishing in the pond – how they made a day of it and got great pleasure from catching a perch – from the essay 'A Brook' (*Nature Near London*).

Andrew Rossabi read the charming description of the dog compelled to leap a brook in order to stay with his master. Jefferies compares the man's thought processes as he weighs up whether he can jump to the other side with those of his dog faced with the same problem, showing by his observations that the dog thinks rather than simply following instinct. The extract from *The Gamekeeper at Home* (Ch 5) highlighted the intelligence of the dog.

Ray Morse read from 'Mind Under Water' (*The Life of the Fields*). In this instance, Jefferies' writes about the ability of fish to learn from experience and modify their behaviour accordingly. He notes the way they are able to correctly interpret the sounds up on the riverbank, their skill in distinguishing between noises which indicate dangerous situations to them and noises that do not.

Phyllis Treitel read a brief passage from *Red Deer* (Ch. 8). In it, Jefferies is acutely aware that some people disapprove of hunting. However, from listening to the local Somerset farmers it is clear to him they are as much interested in the deer as animals as they are in the sport. He notes that hunting gives the

community something to talk about and, as a consequence, helps to maintain social cohesion.

Michael Parrott read from Reginald Arkell's biography of Jefferies where he describes how youngsters, who are too young to carry a gun, get involved in the trapping of rats.

Anna Stenning read an extract from 'Childhood of Edward Thomas' (not published), a description of some of Thomas' youthful adventures. In London, he walks to Wimbledon and enjoys a general appreciation of nature. For more widespread nourishment he has to rely on books on travel and nature – this, of course, includes reading Jefferies. Better still, while on holiday in Wiltshire, he spends much of his time fishing with 'Dad Uzzel', who teaches him all he needs to know about how to fish successfully.

Michael Ponting, who knows Exmoor really well, also read from *Red Deer*, the passage detailing the activities of the hind. She is able to run much longer than a stag if chased and, to protect her offspring, she has learnt many tricks to throw off the hounds, including running for a river in order to lose her scent in the water.

Jean Saunders chose extracts from 'Shooting Poachers' (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 13 December 1884). Jefferies criticises the double standards of a public who are outraged at gamekeepers killing cats and yet feel it is perfectly acceptable for a gamekeeper to shoot a starving man who needs to catch a rabbit or pheasant for the family pot. Jefferies makes it clear that he is 'a champion of sport, a true believer in sport', but he trusts a stop will be put to killing poachers 'or in time we shall get back to the days (and ways) of spring guns, steel man traps, bloodhounds, and similar amenities.'

Simon Coleman read from 'Strength of the English' (*The Old House at Coate*), an extract in which Jefferies particularly admires the arm-strength of Captain Webb, who had recently swum the channel. Jefferies longed for more strength himself and was always looking for physical perfection in others.

Raymond Roys read from *The Amateur Poacher* (Ch. 2). The passage focuses on rabbit hunting with ferrets and the skills of a man called Little John who is an expert at choosing the right ferret for the job and laying nets over rabbit holes.

John Price first mentioned Jefferies love of skating and then went on to read part of the short-story 'A Midnight Skate' (*RJS Journal* No 4) describing a 12 mile journey along a frozen canal. In it, Florence and Charley make the long journey on the ice in the hope of eloping. John then read from *Red Deer*, the extract explaining how to work out the weight, speed and pace of a deer by examining the hoof marks or slots left in the ground.

Discussion then followed about the differences in hunting for food and for sport and why it was considered acceptable by some to cull a species. It was noted that there is a ritualised moral code amongst those taking part in blood-sports, a set of unwritten rules in regard to circumstances when the hunter is deemed to have an unfair advantage and it is therefore considered bad form to kill an animal.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Loughborough University Conference

Three papers were given at a conference titled 'English and Welsh Diaspora: Regional Cultures, Disparate Voices, Remembered Lives' April 13th-16th, at Loughborough University, which mentioned Jefferies. Professor Roger Ebbatson gave a plenary lecture (Framing the South Country), that included many quotations by Jefferies and drew attention to the depth and quality of the writing. Rebecca Welshman presented a paper 'Imagining the Ancient Britons: Victorian Adventures in Wye-Land' and mentioned Jefferies' quotation about the 'ever rolling ... human stream ... that [once] ran through Rome' from 'Lions in Trafalgar Square'. Anna Stenning (a PhD student who has just joined the Society) spoke about Jefferies and Edward Thomas. By the end of the conference people were talking about Richard Jefferies and, especially, those who had never heard of him before.

Victorian Network

Rebecca Welshman had an article published in the journal *Victorian Network*. The edition was Victorian Network Special Bulletin, 'Richard Jefferies and D.H. Lawrence: Literature and the Ecological Imagination' (Summer 2011) 51-63, and it can be read online at <http://www.victoriannetwork.org/index.php/vn>

Readings at Swindon Public Library

Roger Trayhurn invited the Society to host a Jefferies' reading session at the new central library. After nearly 50 years service, Roger was about to retire from Swindon Library, and this was his final event. The readings took place on Tuesday 19th April – Simon Coleman, Margaret Evans, John Price and John Webb took turns to read to a small audience drawn from the general public.

Swindon Heritage Forum

On 20 May, Ray Morse represented the Society at a special focus day that brought together representatives from all of the main heritage groups in Swindon, and which was organised by Swindon Council. The purpose of this meeting was to provide a discussion forum that will lead to a new proposed Heritage Strategy for Swindon. Mr Morse pointed out that the Council made little of their available opportunities to promote the Jefferies Museum and that most of the time, the resource was ignored and forgotten as a heritage asset.

Malmesbury Philosophy Town

Our Chairman, John Price was invited to give the opening lecture at a weekend festival on the theme of 'Ideas of Nature and Countryside' held in Malmesbury Town Hall on 9-10th July. The Festival aimed to connect the history and culture of the countryside with sustainability and green philosophy. John was invited to open the Saturday session with a talk about Richard Jefferies. Many other well-known names followed including talks by Satish Kumar, Shaun Spiers, Sue Clifford and Roger Scruton.

Jefferies Festival 24-28 August

Mike Pringle, Rebecca Welshman and Simon Coleman organised a Jefferies Festival in Swindon to celebrate the centenary of the first festival that was

held at Coate Farm in 1911. The Museum was open to the public on Saturday and Sunday with guided walks around Coate Water. There were readings from the cart, story-telling, stalls and workshops whilst cream teas were served by Ambience café. A poetry competition sponsored by the Society (that is also open to Society Members – see p.20) was launched. An exhibition of paintings and drawings on Jefferies' life and work, by Somerset landscape artist David Brackston, was held at the Postmodern Gallery in Swindon Town Centre for 3 days. Our film 'Jefferies Land' was shown on the Swindon Big Screen. One evening event was dedicated to a talk by Rebecca Welshman who spoke about the significance of Richard Jefferies in the twenty first century. We do not have a full report of the event at the time of going to print.

Jefferies Exhibition

Marlborough artist Ray Ward is running a pop up exhibition at Swindon Museum and Art Gallery in Old Town in September that will include an exhibit of material collected from the Jefferies' house at Coate – namely the remnants of nests made by jackdaws cleared from the chimney – as well as film and interviews from the Jefferies' Museum.

Association for the Study of Literature and Environment

In September the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment are holding a conference for postgraduates: 'Emergent Critical Environments'. Rebecca Welshman had a panel proposal of three papers accepted for the event – ‘ “When ideas came into natural history, it ceased to be natural history, and became philosophy”: Richard Jefferies' ecological imagination and the consciousness of place'. Simon Coleman will be giving a paper titled 'The agitated pool of life: mankind and nature in Jefferies' later works', and James Riding, PhD student in the geography department at Exeter University will be speaking on 'Literary Hitchhiking: The Edward Thomas Fellowship and The Richard Jefferies Society in The South Country.' Rebecca's paper will be 'Richard Jefferies: Nature's Archaeologist'. The Society has allocated a grant of £100 to offset some out-of-pocket expenses that Simon and Rebecca will incur.

Broadway Arts Festival

The next Broadway Arts Festival will take place from 8-17 June 2012 and will feature Alfred Williams Parsons RA (1847-1920) who was commissioned by the *English Illustrated Magazine* to illustrate Jefferies' essay 'St Guido' for the 1884 edition of the book. The Society is planning an outing to the Arts Festival in Gloucestershire next year. There will be more information about the visit in the Spring 2012 newsletter.

The Butterfly Isles

Carolyn Clarke brought the following book to our attention:

Whilst reading a recently published natural history book, *The Butterfly Isles* by Patrick Barkham, where he quotes BB's *Brendon Chase* and explores the work of different naturalists and writers, I was struck with the thought that reading this book would be of interest to RJS members as it bears many similarities to Jefferies' country books, such as *Wild Life in a Southern County*, and is possibly the type of book that Jefferies would have written had he been writing in the 21st Century. The

'plot' is centred round a quest to see all the 59 species of British butterflies in one season. In common with Jefferies there is a lot of description of the butterflies, their habits and their environment, as can only be conveyed by a person who has seen them for himself as a result of patient observation. Also, in common with Jefferies, there are also the digressions, in Barkham's case about his family, friends and fellow lepidopterists. I really enjoyed his descriptions of the history of butterfly collecting and the 'main players' in discovering and naming species. In those days of clouds of butterflies, thousands were destroyed in order to acquire a dead specimen, this is compared to today when collecting is fortunately by photographing the species and collectors are now at the forefront of the ecological movement; for me, this gave a note of optimism for the future, providing that people are proactive in helping preserve our diminishing and fragile environment.

Although the book does not cite Jefferies directly, a number of other naturalists and nature writers such as BB are included. I feel that the book is very much in the spirit of what Jefferies would be, if writing today, and would recommend it to everyone who is interested in the environmental and observational aspects of Jefferies' work.

Sunlife

Rebecca Welshman and Simon Coleman are co-writing a book called 'SunLife: Richard Jefferies and the Language of the Soul'. 'Sunlife' was what Jefferies intended to call the revised version of *The Story of My Heart*. The co-writers hope to present Jefferies' work to a modern audience.

Claudine Bulpitt Collection

Mrs Claudine Bulpitt is a direct line descendent of Elizabeth (Gyde) Jefferies' brother Samuel. She visited the Richard Jefferies Museum on 17th February 2011 and brought with her some inherited archive material. The collection included first edition books, about 40 letters from Elizabeth Jefferies to Sarah Jane Gyde (Richard's cousin who lived in Islington), a letter from Aunt Ellen Harrild to Sarah Jane, two letters from Richard Jefferies to Aunt Ellen, a pencil drawing by Richard Jefferies for his brother Henry and a lot more.

At this year's Birthday Lecture John Price will talk about the collection that we have purchased on behalf of the Society.

A short note, that Elizabeth Jefferies sent to her niece, has been reproduced in the Society's latest *Journal* (Autumn, 2011, No 21) along with two photographs of sketches of Coate Farm by John Luckett Jefferies (Richard's uncle). The note does not form part of the Bulpitt collection – it is one in the Society's existing archives.

Samuel Looker Archives

On 3 June John Price and Rebecca Welshman travelled to Doncaster by train to look at the Looker archive (see p.13 of the Society's Spring Newsletter 2011). They discovered that the whole collection was massive and incredibly mixed and spent hours going through sorting out material of interest to the Society. There are several letters from Phyllis (Jefferies' daughter) to Looker with reminiscences about her father, an example of Harold's (Jefferies' son) hand-writing not seen before, and some photographs not known to us. There was one book from Richard Jefferies' own library: a copy of the legend of Wayland Smith, with 'Richard Jefferies, Victoria Road, Swindon' written on the

endpaper in his own writing. Looker was also friendly with W H Davies, and there are one or two items of correspondence from Davies. Looker's grandson wanted the archive to go to the Society albeit that the Society's Executive Committee agreed that an ex gratia payment should be made to the family of £750. John Price will be collecting the archives by car when convenient. Simon Coleman (who is trained as an archivist) will sort and list the paperwork making use of any material he would like to publish before deciding whether the less immediately important paperwork should be kept in the Museum, or offered to the County Records Office for keeping. The collection could prove to be a unique PhD opportunity and we shall take a closer look at the material and discuss ideas once the material has been collected. John Price will reveal a little more about the treasure trove in his Birthday Lecture this year.

MEMORIAL BENCH AT BROADWATER CEMETERY



Michael & Pat Parrott and new Memorial Bench, photograph by Mark Daniel, May 2011.

On the occasion of the Richard Jefferies Society visit to Sussex on 10 July 2010, John Price noted that a new bench was needed to replace the one stolen

from the Richard Jefferies and W. H. Hudson Memorial Garden at Broadwater and Worthing Cemetery. The proposal was put to Members at the AGM in November, when it was agreed that the funds for a suitable park bench, in an English hardwood, should be made available. The task to purchase and install the item of furniture was taken up by myself. I am already attending to Jefferies' grave, which is resplendent with wild flowers whilst the marble sparkles in the sunshine. Local suppliers of seats said they would not use English oak; it rots too quickly when stood on wet ground – all right in a Tudor cottage for a few centuries, I remarked. This led me to speak to Terry Tyhurst the blacksmith at Glynde, a beautiful downland village a few miles east of Lewes. In his hundred year old forge he had made many seats in the style of one found on Glynde Green dedicated to Queen Victoria for her jubilee. This I felt was ideal to honour both Jefferies and Hudson.

The two-seater bench was delivered to the garden on the afternoon of 12 May 2011 by Terry and his lady assistant and bolted to the ground by him. John Stepney (he is the work and clearance co-ordinator for the Friends of Broadwater and Worthing Cemetery Group), Mark Daniel, my wife and I, along with passing members of the Friends group tested it for comfort and polished the brass plaque attached to it which reads simply 'Richard Jefferies Society 2011'.

At a meeting of the Friends of Broadwater and Worthing Cemetery Group the chairman Tom Wye asked for the thanks of the meeting to be passed on to the Richard Jefferies Society for the handsome addition to the memorial garden. The friends have obtained a Heritage Lottery Fund award to maintain and research and make respectable the graves in Broadwater cemetery. We try to strike a balance between the public expectation of a cemetery and the requirements of wildlife – a fitting resting place for Richard Jefferies.

Michael Parrott, June 2011.

UPPER UPHAM HOUSE

As part of her efforts to paint places identified in Jefferies' writing, Kate Tryon wrote to the owner of Upper Upham House in 1911 seeking permission to do so. Chapter IV of *Jefferies' Land: a History of Swindon and its Environs* (edited by Grace Toplis) contains a detailed description of both the interior and exterior of the building that was owned by a Goddard family member in Jefferies' time. Jefferies introduced the place as follows:

UPPER UPHAM lies about seven miles from Swindon in an easterly direction. It simply consists of a mansion and an adjoining cottage or two, which stands upon the summit of a ridge of downs immediately behind Liddington Castle—that conspicuous and well known landmark, to all the neighbourhood round about.

Kate Tryon in her *Adventures in the Vale of the White Horse: 'Jefferies Land'* (Faringdon: Petton Books, 2010), mentions the place frequently and, after the long walk from Coate to Upper Upham, she is disappointed to find that the owner (Miss Hanbury) is 'not at home, but in Italy'. However, the housekeeper is welcoming and admits her to the mansion and is 'soon confessing the

dreadful loneliness and desolation of a winter on the downs, after which faces from the outside world were a welcome sight.' Tryon then wrote to Miss Hanbury requesting that she might be allowed to paint the house and was rewarded by an invitation to stay and do so. One of the oil-paintings is reproduced below.



Lady Treitel came across some interesting information about Thomas Hanbury F.L.S. of La Mortola, Italy [possibly once the owner of Upper Upham; to be investigated further] in *Riviera Nature Notes* with this foreword by Rob Cassy:

Hanbury (1832-1907) was a man of many parts. The second son of a well-to-do London Quaker family in the pharmaceutical business, he became an unpaid clerk to a firm of City tea brokers at the age of 17. He learned his trade well, and was soon augmenting a small allowance from his parents with profits from his own import/export investments. Come 1853 he set sail to Shanghai in partnership with a cousin, a friend and two older, more experienced hands. Over the next twenty years he amassed a fortune and travelled widely, but neither his money nor his time was ever idly spent. Good Quaker businessman that he was, he is remembered in China, Great Britain and the Riviera as a philanthropist who looked after the working man; the gardening world still looks on him as one of the great plant collectors and horticulturalists. In 1867 he bought the derelict Palazzo Orango at La Mortola with the aim of restoring it to its former glory and of creating a botanical garden in the grounds; in 1892 he presented a Botanical Institute to the University of Genoa; he was awarded the Victoria Medal of Honour in 1903 – thanks in part for buying Wisley in Surrey for the benefit of the Royal Horticultural Society. If Hanbury had a hand in anything it was bound to be of interest.

This book [*Riviera Nature Notes*], published at Hanbury's expense by the Labour Press in Manchester, by an author mysteriously signing himself only C.C. in the modest preface, was clearly worth closer inspection.

THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY POETRY COMPETITION

2011-2012

‘Nature and Landscape: The concentrated silence of green things’

The Richard Jefferies Society is looking for poems which take an intimate look into the English countryside, its nature and inhabitants, and the emotional and spiritual ties which connect them.

Richard Jefferies was one of England’s greatest writers on nature, landscape and rural life. His finest works, often classed as prose-poetry, evoke in great detail the colour, life and movement of the natural world, its mysteries, its interconnections, and its deep and subtle kinship with humanity’s inner ‘soul’. Through his work Jefferies also conveyed an underlying sadness at mankind’s weakening bond with nature.

This competition seeks to encourage others to explore the magic of the sun, sea, stars and, in Jefferies’ words, the ‘concentrated silence of green things’.

We welcome submissions relating to Jefferies’ writing on nature and landscape including, but by no means limited to, such themes as:

- ❖ City and country
- ❖ The human presence in nature
- ❖ Mankind’s need to engage with the natural world
- ❖ Rural change
- ❖ Victorian rural life or thought
- ❖ Landscape and perception
- ❖ A strong attachment to a place
- ❖ Wild life
- ❖ The elements
- ❖ Consciousness and the wider universe

COMPETITION RULES

- ❖ Closing date for receipt of postal and online entries: 30th June 2012.
- ❖ Poems should have no more than 40 lines, and no fewer than 3 lines.
- ❖ Maximum of 3 entries.
- ❖ Entries MUST NOT have been previously published (including online).

ELIGIBILITY

- ❖ Open competition.

ENTRY FEES

- ❖ £5 per entry.
- ❖ £8 per 2 entries.
- ❖ £10 per 3 entries.

(payable by cheque to ‘Richard Jefferies Society’ or online via Paypal at richardjefferiescreativity.co.uk/poetrycompetition)

ENTRY FORMAT

- ❖ Entries must be in English.
- ❖ Postal entries must be typed, single sided, with pages numbered and securely fastened with a staple. Each entry on a new sheet.

- ❖ Poems to be single spaced.
- ❖ Entries must show no name, address or identifying marks other than the title (Online entries should have an ID number which we will supply when you enter).
- ❖ The filename of online entries must be the title of the entry and it must be either a .doc, .docx, .rtf, .wps, .pdf or .txt file.
- ❖ Entries cannot be returned, so please keep a copy.
- ❖ No corrections can be made after receipt, nor fees refunded.
- ❖ Postal submissions should be sent to:

Richard Jefferies Creativity
c/o Rebecca Welshman
Old Coach House
Maincombe
Crewkerne
Somerset
TA18 7TL

- ❖ Email submissions should be sent in the form of an attachment to:
poetrycompetition@richardjefferiescreativity.co.uk
- ❖ **Closing date: 30th June 2012.**
- ❖ Please ensure that you use the correct postage.

RECEIPT OF ENTRY

- ❖ Enclose a stamped addressed postcard marked 'ACKNOWLEDGEMENT' if you require acknowledgement of receipt of your postal entry. It is not possible to confirm receipt of entries by phone, but email entries will be acknowledged by return.

RESULTS

- ❖ To receive the judges' report for the winning entry only, enclose an A5 stamped addressed envelope. Alternatively, check the website for details after July 2012.

COPYRIGHT

- ❖ Worldwide copyright of each entry remains with the author, but the Richard Jefferies Society will have the unrestricted right to publish the winning poem (including runners up), in any relevant promotional material.

JUDGING

- ❖ The judging panel will consist of: Professor Tim Kendall (Head of the English Department at the University of Exeter and published poet); Paul Davidson (published poet); Simon Coleman (Richard Jefferies Society), and Rebecca Welshman (Richard Jefferies Society). The judges' decision is final and no individual correspondence can be entered into. Judges are unable to comment on individual entries.

PRIZE

- ❖ **The winner will receive a certified £100 Richard Jefferies Poetry Prize and one year's free membership of the Richard Jefferies Society. The winning entry will be published in the *Richard Jefferies Society Journal* (Autumn 2012).**

PRIZEWINNERS

- ❖ The prize-winner will be notified in writing by 15th July 2012.

- ❖ Entry implies acceptance of all the rules Failure to comply with the entry requirements will result in disqualification.

Further details about the competition and the judges can be found on the poetry competition webpage: <http://www.richardjefferiescreativity.co.uk>

Discoveries VIII: DID JEFFERIES DIE A CHRISTIAN AFTER ALL?

The story that Jefferies reverted to Christianity in his final days or hours stems from an account by the artist J W North, who arrived at ‘Sea View’, Goring, on August 14th 1887. Jefferies had died earlier, at 2.30am. North reports: ‘His wife said that their time had been *for long* [my italics] spent in prayer together and reading St. Luke. Almost his last intelligible words were: ‘Yes, yes, that is so. Help Lord, for Jessie’s sake. Darling good-bye. God bless you and the children, and save you from such great pain.’ North’s account is quoted and confirmed in Walter Besant’s biography, *The Eulogy of Richard Jefferies*, published in 1888.

In the years immediately following Jefferies’ death a controversy ran in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and elsewhere about ‘the pernicious works of Richard Jefferies’, as some orthodox believers perceived them, and surrounding the question: ‘Did Richard Jefferies die a Christian?’ Henry S. Salt, in his own words ‘rationalist, socialist, pacifist and humanitarian’, vigorously challenged the idea of a deathbed conversion (or re-conversion) in a series of articles, followed by his book: *Richard Jefferies: a Study*, published in 1894, reprinted in 1905, and a pamphlet on the subject in 1906. He does not question North or Mrs Jefferies as witnesses, but argues that whatever Jefferies said when broken in body and mind could not gainsay all that he had written at the height of his powers, which proclaimed him a freethinker and agnostic. ‘Herein is the simple explanation of Jefferies’ alleged conversion. He was very weak – so weak that he could not but yield outward acquiescence to the affectionate importunities to those around him, while still inwardly holding the views which, as he recently avowed, ‘expressed his most serious convictions.’

In a preface to the 1905 edition Salt revealed his trump card: that in correspondence between 1891 and 1893 Besant had retracted his support for the conversion story. It was a question of ‘outward conformity’, when he was ‘weak, too weak not to acquiesce, and his views never changed from the time that he wrote *The Story of My Heart*.’ Salt in fact had echoed Besant’s wording. In *Richard Jefferies, his Life and Work*, 1909, Edward Thomas supports Salt’s view, and quotes Besant in more detail on the reasons for his change of mind. Partly, he (Besant) indicates, it was due to receiving further information, though he doesn’t give the source. Salt later (*Seventy Years among Savages*, 1921) reflected that whereas his 1905 reissue of the *Study* provoked ‘some further outcry in a section of the press’, this was not repeated on the publication of the Thomas biography. His interpretation had prevailed.

The affecting tale of Jefferies’ return to the fold had not, however, entirely disappeared. An evangelical newsletter published in Hull in 1914 has the following, in a column headed ‘To the Children’:

Not long since there lived a naturalist whose heart was set on the fields and woods of dear and beautiful England, our inheritance from God. He wrote very clever books about them, but, sad to say, the Giver of all good was far from his thoughts. He was a freethinker, hated churches, and neglected the Bible. But 'the kindness and love of God our Saviour' had not left him. His health was shattered in his prime, and this was 'God's opportunity.' He found flowers and animals could not soothe his conscience or satisfy his heart. But his good wife had a balm which the fields he loved could not yield. She read to her dying husband the Word of Life, and he listened wistfully. The Spirit of Life applied it to his spirit, and he said 'those are the words of Jesus, they are true, and all philosophy is hollow.' Later on, 'I have done wrong and thought wrong. It was my intellectual vanity.' (How these words fit in with Isaiah lv., 8, please read them.) Almost his last words were 'Help, Lord, for Jesus' sake.' So Richard Jefferies died. 'According to His mercy He saved' him. So if you should read Jefferies' charming descriptions of the works of Him who 'hath made everything beautiful in its time,' then remember that at the last the naturalist could say 'Thou has magnified Thy Word above all thy Name.' You know Who is 'the Word' 'by Whom and for Whom all things are made' I am sure.

If not, the capital letters offer a clue. A Christian commentary on Jefferies' life, work and belief that needs to be taken more seriously can be found in Edward Ingram Watkin's *The Philosophy of Mysticism*, 1920. His extensive analysis finds Jefferies' mystical writings not only consistent with but supremely affirmative of Christian mysticism and his return to theistic belief its natural and fitting conclusion.

The creed of his childhood – an imperfect Christianity childishly understood – he rejected with contempt. But the work of the spirit of God in his soul overcame the philosophy of his extra-mystical intelligence, and compelled him to bear witness to the Light in an age of darkness, to affirm an experimental knowledge of God and eternal life which his lower reasoning denied. His witness even extended to the affirmation of theism taught by Christian mystics, of the soul, of eternity, of angels and of miracles, although this witness was strangely unconscious... Nor was he left in the end in his intellectual ignorance. As he lay on his bed of sickness, nigh to death, Christian faith was infused into him. This faith was indeed very imperfect, being limited by an ultra-Protestant individualism which rejected all church membership. Nevertheless it was the knowledge of God, clear and certain now to the discursive reason, as well as to the intuition of the centre, and thus accepted by the whole man.

Though flowing from an altogether fuller and deeper response to the works than the Hull evangelist's, this might none the less be seen as another attempt to force Jefferies back into the mould of orthodoxy. It is possible that Watkin had not read Salt or Thomas, and took his cue from Besant's more popular work, unaware that its author had recanted. On the other hand the Hull evangelist had clearly read an article in *The Girls' Own Paper* of December 1889 by a lady who gives a more detailed account than North or Besant of Jefferies' conversion based on Mrs Jefferies' letters to her:-

He used to pray so earnestly for me and the children, that we might be preserved from danger and trouble; he used to say, 'O God, for my beloved children. I love them so, I know not what to ask.' I give you his very words... Another time he said 'O God, I have done wrong, and thought wrong; it was my intellectual vanity. Listen to the prayers of my dearest girl; she has done no evil as I have done'...

Almost his last conscious words were, 'I have given myself unto God and Christ, and you pray for me; dear, merciful God, merciful Father.'

The author of this article signs herself C.W.M., the Catherine Winkworth Mackintosh who later wrote a rejoinder to Salt in *The Spectator*. She is also presumably the lady she refers to in the article who took pity on the sick and impoverished author on his move to Eltham in the spring of 1884 (somewhat earlier than is generally supposed). She offered spiritual healing as well as the physical comforts of her home and garden, urging that the Christian faith offered the solution to his anguished questionings and 'restless craving'. He 'listened, reasoned, and rejected', but crucially 'did not forbid the topic', and the discussion continued in correspondence after the move to Crowborough. One day Jefferies asked her why she had not shown him the Revised Version of the Bible, and her sending him this seems to have precipitated a change of heart. 'Throughout the long weary *months* [my italics again] that preceded his death the Bible was his constant companion.'

If we take this as a truthful witness we must accept that Jefferies' return to orthodox Christian doctrine and discourse was more self-controlled, and over a longer period, than the 'chance words and speeches' and 'pain-wrung' final utterances, or simply consideration of others' feelings, proposed by Salt, Besant and Thomas. Those writers had not the benefit of Jefferies' notebooks, where it is clear that *The Story of My Heart* was not Jefferies' last word on matters of belief and the meaning of life. He planned a sequel, though admittedly it would not have resembled a religious tract. His notes end within two months of his death, and in them he seems to be in a state of agonised doubt as to whether life is entirely material or entirely spiritual; whether there is 'nothing', or a 'Beyond'.

Salt clearly enjoyed the controversy, viewing himself as the embattled voice of reason against an army of zealots. In the 'further outcry' following the re-issue of his Study he replied to an unfavourable review in the *Spectator* that suggested he had used Jefferies to 'air his own opinions', and again paraded Besant's apostasy to support his view that Jefferies' return to the faith he had long abandoned was 'incredible'. The editor not unreasonably commented: 'incredible is not the question', it was 'purely a question of evidence', and in a subsequent issue C.W.M. restates the evidence from letters sent her by Mrs Jefferies. The salient feature that emerges is that Jefferies renewed interest in Christianity was not simply a reversion to the puerile pietism of his youth. Three weeks before his death he asked to be read St. Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount in which 'the great socialist' (as Besant refers to Jesus in one of his letters to Salt) explains his doctrine of universal love, forgiveness and spiritual redistribution. Although 'angels and miracles' didn't come into it, there may be some truth in Watkin's view that this development was consistent with Jefferies' intellectual progress, and that in going directly to those words, as revolutionary in Jefferies' day, and in ours, as when they were first spoken, he was still rejecting the overlay of centuries of tradition. And it is conceivable that Jefferies was sincere in accusing himself of 'intellectual vanity' for having rejected all previous philosophy and belief.

However, the controversy is one that can be said to have ended not through

resolution but loss of impetus, in an age and place where creedal religion has been widely abandoned, or reduced to mere custom and sentiment. Thomas's final comment is judicious:-

The majority will be those who, orthodox Christian or not, see in the work of Jefferies, when he was most alive, a force at one with the good that is in the world, with what makes for wisdom, beauty and joy, whether it can be usefully connected with Christianity or not.

What had been a live issue for readers in the 1890s no longer has any critical relevance. But it remains a biographical issue, and the balance of evidence suggests that Jefferies did embrace the teachings of a certain Galilean peripatetic philosopher at the end of his life when, despite intense physical suffering and concern for his loved ones, his mental faculties were unimpaired.

Sources:-

- ❖ A cutting found in a copy of the 1897 edition of *Field and Hedgerow*. There are references to Hull and Grimbsy, and the date 1914. The title appears to be the name of a church in Hull, subheaded *Occasional Notes*.
- ❖ Henry S Salt, *Richard Jefferies: a Study*, London, Swan Sonnenschein, 1894, reprinted with the subtitle *His Life and Ideals*, Fifielf, 1905. *The Faith of Richard Jefferies* (pamphlet) London, Watts & Co., 1906. Letter in *The Spectator* of April 22 1905. *Seventy Years among Savages*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1921.
- ❖ Edward Ingram Watkin, *The Philosophy of Mysticism*, London, Grant Richards, 1920.
- ❖ Catherine Winkworth Mackintosh, 'Richard Jefferies' in *The Girl's Own Paper*, December 21 1889, Letter in *The Spectator*, May 6 1905.
- ❖ *Gospel According to St. Luke*, Chapter 6.

George Miller

COATE FARM AND MUSEUM REPORT

The Richard Jefferies Museum is now fully accredited and registered with the Museum, Libraries and Archives Council. This means that it has achieved certain standards with regard to looking after the collection. A great deal of work has gone into improving security and protecting exhibits from light pollution, damp, insects and extremes of temperature. All the items on display have been fully catalogued and assessed for insurance purposes. The insurance value of exhibits belonging to the Society or specified Members runs to over £200,000. Jean Saunders undertook the majority of the work but Margaret Hunt, Gill Bromhead and John Price should also be thanked for their help in cataloguing the exhibits. The only down-side to implementing the required actions for accreditation is that it now takes the volunteers from the Society an extra half-hour to open the Museum to visitors and then a further half-hour to close it!

Apart from the open days, Society meetings, Jefferies' Festival and the various poetry groups that meet regularly at the Museum, there have been other special open days for Members and groups. A guided walk around Coate Water followed by a visit to the Museum was organised for 25 ladies from the Women's Guide Guild on 19 February 2011. 40 members of the Swindon Society had a special event at the Museum on 8 June. Andy Binks organised a quiz for members in order to get them searching around the Museum to find the answers. Members of the Arthur Ransome Society visited Coate on 17 July to learn more about Jefferies' *Bevis* that had been a great source of inspiration

to Ransome and was noted as one of his favourite books. They took in a walk around Coate Water in the morning and then visited the Jefferies Museum in the afternoon. In August, ladies from the Wootton Bassett & District Art Society organised a visit in order to paint aspects of Jefferies' house from the gardens.

At the time of writing this report (mid August), there had already been over 600 visitors to the Museum and Society volunteers had given up the equivalent of 118 full working days to open the Museum to the public, to clean and maintain it and look after the gardens. The Jefferies Festival will boost the numbers further. The Society cannot express the gratitude it owes to these volunteers, many of whom travel great distances to do their bit.

Photographs of the oil-paintings that feature at the Museum, albeit that the records were taken two years ago, can now be viewed in the Wiltshire and Gloucestershire collection published by the Public Catalogue Foundation who have been going around the country recording oil paintings in public buildings that are not normally seen. The paintings can also be viewed on the BBC website, including those at the Museum.

Donations and additions to the Museum.

Jane Milner-Barry has completed two still-life oil-paintings of Jefferies' writing table in the attic and of a stack of Jefferies' books and a pot of snow-drops placed in the first floor gable-end window. The paintings are hanging in the Parlour. Jane has kindly donated the paintings to the Society.

A wooden farmhouse chair bearing a plaque for Stan Hickerton (see p.9) has been purchased and placed in the 'Parlour' as a memorial to Stan and represents the seat where Jefferies spent many hours gazing out of the south-facing window observing wildlife in the garden as well as the stars at night.

Thanks to Mike Pringle, there is now a dedicated path from Coate Water to the Museum that runs along parallel to Jefferies' 'Great Hedge' in Brook Field and will bring visitors into the gardens via the extension to the orchard.

A lovely Wiltshire-style gate has been placed along the Day House Lane entrance to the Jefferies' garden where you can now stand and gaze across to Liddington Hill – the view was previously obscured by brambles. The gate was purchased by the Jefferies Land Conservation Trust.

The Museum development trust

There is little progress to report on this matter albeit that the emerging development trust is in the process of establishing a constitution that meets Charity Commission requirements.

SAVE COATE CAMPAIGN

Much to the surprise of all concerned, Swindon Council's planning committee deferred making a decision about the Coate planning application on 8 March asking their officers to explore grounds for refusal and to secure better protection of the buffer land. The officers came back with a new report claiming that there were no strong grounds for refusal whilst the developers proposed to give a community trust the field around Dayhouse Farm. However, this came at a price and meant a loss of £1million to improve Coate

Water.

We were even more amazed that, at the planning committee meeting held on 7 June, councillors finally voted to refuse planning permission and the vote was 9:2. This followed a long debate and a degree of bullying from certain councillors and officers who said planning permission must be granted. The planning committee cited traffic, heritage, culture (Richard Jefferies), sustainability and public opinion as the main reasons to refuse. The developers have appealed to the Secretary of State about the decision and another inquiry will be held. Our Chairman, John Price, has spoken on behalf of the Society at all the planning meetings and his comments about Jefferies were repeated by one Swindon Councillor for rejecting the planning application. Well done and thank you, John!

The appeal inquiry opens on 15 November and will sit for 6 days at Swindon's STEAM Museum. Mr E Grace, the government's planning inspector will listen to the evidence from all concerned and you can make your own views known to him as soon as possible, ideally 23 September and no later than 18 October. We need as many people as possible to stress the importance of the appeal site to Richard Jefferies as an inspiration for his writing – please also mention the importance of Liddington Hill and the views across to Coate Water. If nothing else, please send the postcard with this mailing.

We urge all our Members throughout the world to please write to: Mr E Grace, Planning Inspector, The Planning Inspectorate, 4/02 Kite Wing, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6PN, UK.

Quote: Appeal Reference Number: APP/U3935/A/11/2155834/NWF - Land at Day House Lane, Coate, Swindon.

You can also send in your comments over the internet at <http://www.pcs.planningportal.gov.uk/pcsportal/ViewCase.asp?caseid=2155834&cid=40978>

George Miller has done sterling work engaging his contacts in the literary world to support the campaign and, in particular, Adam Thorpe, Andrew Motion and Richard Mabey. Adam Thorpe wrote a letter that was published in the *Times Literary Supplement* (see below) and he sent letters to all members of the planning committee, as did George Miller who wrote to them several times. Many of our Members have also written letters to newspapers, to Councillors and to planners. All this has helped enormously and we are most grateful to the efforts of our Members around the world including Lindsay Bovill, who true to his word, did do all that he could to help (see p.7-8).

The public consultation on the Swindon Core Strategy closed on 16 June and a great effort has been made to encourage the public to object to the emerging policy for Commonhead (NC3) that currently gives the developers what they want in order to secure planning permission to build 900 houses at Coate. However this document was written before the planning committee made their decision. English Heritage has added weight to our concerns about a lack of literary landscape assessment for the area and has advised Swindon Council to remedy the situation. The proposed 'Commonhead' policy is a matter that should be subject to a planning inquiry before it can be adopted in the town plan – we are moderately hopeful that a change for the better will

result. As such, this means that there are two separate planning inquiries in the offing that will require a good deal of input from the Society.

We have had no luck getting support from Natural England for a national landscape designation to protect Jefferies Land.

TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT - Letters to the Editor, April 15, 2011

Richard Jefferies

Sir, - Sean O'Brien's mention of Richard Jefferies in his review of *Edgelands* by Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts (March 11) was apposite; Jefferies told us to look for 'uncommon species' in 'uninteresting places behind incomplete buildings . . . where speculation has been and gone' (*The July Grass*, 1889). Poignantly, his own cherished landscape beside the family farm (now the Richard Jefferies Museum) is under imminent threat as Swindon's edgelands advance to Coate - the fields and copses that feature in his works to be replaced by 900 houses and a business park, and renamed 'Commonhead'.

The area's 'high landscape value' having been removed by a planning officer ignorant of its literary significance back in 2005, the latest report has decided that Jefferies 'is not known or thought of in the same way as more major figures such as Hardy or Wordsworth' and that his 'works' are what matters - a view which, despite chiming with a certain strain of literary theory, betrays a total ignorance of said works.

The development should have been rubber-stamped by Swindon Borough Council in early March. Surprisingly, the decision was deferred several weeks, the councillors responding to protest. Further proof of this Swindon child's international significance is urgently needed, and I call upon concerned readers of the *TLS* to write to Councillor Roderick Bluh (Swindon Borough Council, Civic Offices, Euclid Street, Swindon SN1 2JH, UK), to this end.

ADAM THORPE 1 Grand' Rue, Nîmes.

Adam Thorpe was contacted by several eminent American professors of English who could not understand the British mentality of not protecting sites of literary importance. Mr Thorpe visited the Richard Jefferies Museum on 27 June 2011 and spent two hours delving into every corner of the house and gardens. Jack Watkins (who also visited the Museum) gave a boost to the campaign in his article that was published in *The Independent* on 5 August 2011. Entitled 'Battle for Jefferies' land: How a 19th-century naturalist became a cause célèbre in Wiltshire', he ends with the paragraph:

But Jefferies, reared on the homely terrain at Coate, urged us to seek uncommon species in common places. A commonplace flower held as much delight for him as a rare one. No wonder the planners of Swindon would have us believe he wasn't a major writer. He was their spiritual enemy, and his prose still hounds them from his grave, 120 years after his death.

BOOKS AND ARTICLES BY OR ABOUT JEFFERIES

A new edition of *After London* will be published by Broadview Press (Canada) in 2012. This will incorporate very full supporting material: contemporary reviews, other related pieces by Jefferies, extracts from other utopias/dystopias of the period, accounts of contemporary natural disasters, and some evolutionary/ecological articles. The editor is Dr Heidi Scott, an ecocritic at Florida International University. Professor Ebbatson has been asked to check the editorial material.

A journal article 'Machiavelli Writes the Future: History & Progress in After London', by Caroline Sumpter, Queens Univ, Belfast, will be published in

‘Victorian Contexts’.

Wild Life in a Southern County, new edition from Little Toller Books, sewn paperback with flaps , 256 pages, ISBN 978 1 908213 00 6, £10.

A new edition of *Wild Life in a Southern County* was recently published by Little Toller Books that has a splendid introduction by Richard Mabey, some Tunnicliffe illustrations and a cover photograph of David Inshaw’s painting of goldfinches. The publishers supplied three copies of the book to the Society – one is in the RJS library, one in the Museum library and the third copy will be used as a raffle prize as part of the Jefferies Festival that David Inshaw is attending.

In addition to a mention of the book by Jack Watkins (*The Independent*, 5.8.2011), Geoff Hirst came across this in the *London Review of Books* Vol 33 No 14. In the Summer Reading selection the book is recommended using Richard Mabey’s quotes:

Richard Jefferies was born on a Wiltshire smallholding in 1848, but this lyrical evocation of the county’s downlands, copses, streams and hedgerows was written after the author had moved to the outskirts of London in search of literary fame. ‘To read these essays today is chastening’, Richard Mabey writes in his introduction to this new edition. ‘There is, in the best of them, an electric attentiveness, a noticing, that is hard to aspire to. They are chastening, too, in what they are able to describe - an abundance of bird and insect life that, despite the contemporary passion for slaughter (in which the author played his part), is unimaginable in the modern industrial countryside ... Jefferies did not know this, but he was sending, in a faltering new language, a message in a bottle from a disappearing country.’

Pete Bainbridge recommends ***Nature Tales: Encounters with Britain's Wildlife*** compiled by Michael Allen and Sonya Patel Ellis (Elliott & Thompson Limited, 24 Sep 2010, ISBN-10: 1904027946). The book is a collection of encounters with the natural world from historic greats to modern household names that include Bill Oddie, Charles Darwin, Chris Baines, Colin Tudge, Dorothy Wordsworth, Edward Thomas, Francis Kilvert, Gavin Maxwell, Geoffrey Grigson, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Gilbert White, Henry Williamson, John Alec Baker, John Aubrey, John Buxton, John Clare, Jules Pretty, Richard Jefferies, Richard Mabey, Robert Macfarlane, Roger Deakin, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Simon Barnes, Sir Alfred Russel Wallace, Sir John Lister Kaye, Sir Joseph Banks, William Cobbett, etc. Including beautifully drawn illustrations, *Nature Tales* is a charming celebration of Britain’s wildlife and countryside. The Jefferies’ selections are about a hawk (*The Gamekeeper at Home*) and from ‘The Pine Wood’ (*The Open Air*).

Society Publications

No new titles have been published by the Society this year, but a postcard has been produced using a picture of the oil-painting of ‘Jefferies Last Days at Goring’ by Stephen Makepeace Wiens. There was an order form for books included in the Spring Newsletter 2011 and these can also be purchased by credit/debit card on our web-site.

Richardjefferiessociety.co.uk

For those of you on the Internet, many facilities are now available through our web-site that include a forum for discussion, latest news, Jefferies' works, the 'Jefferies Land' film, film shot at the Museum, various photographs of people and places associated with Jefferies, information about the Museum and a selection of favourite quotes from his works. You can also download some of our publications including some editions of the Society's *Journal*, newsletters and booklets. There are Jefferies' pages on Facebook and on Twitter (<http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=101501295294555> and <http://twitter.com/#!/Jefferiesauthor>).

THOSE WHO HAVE DEPARTED

We are sorry to announce the death of Hugoe Matthews and Graham Walker who both died in March this year. We are indebted to the editor of *The Telegraph* who allowed us to reproduce the Obituary for Hugoe Matthews. This is included below, followed by a personal tribute from Lady Treitel, our Vice-President. There are also two tributes to Graham Walker by Society Members.



Hugoe Matthews

Hugoe Matthews, who died on March 10 aged 72, was an eminent thoracic surgeon expert in diseases of the oesophagus; he was also an authority on the Victorian nature writer and mystic Richard Jefferies.

During his career as a consultant at East Birmingham (now Birmingham Heartlands) Hospital, Matthews developed several new techniques to improve treatment of a range of problems of the chest and oesophagus.

In the field of thoracic surgery, he developed what has become known as the 'minitrach' (short for mini-tracheotomy) — a small plastic tube placed in the windpipe during chest surgery through which the lungs can be cleared with a suction device. The minitrach

has been used on the battlefield as an emergency breathing aid — saving the lives of soldiers in Afghanistan and other theatres.

His own interests focused on diseases of the oesophagus. He established a laboratory for oesophageal disorders (which became a referral centre for the whole of the West Midlands) and had great success in reducing death rates among people with oesophageal cancer by giving chemotherapy before their operations — an unusual move at the time. In 1984 he set up the Oesophageal Cancer Research Appeal to raise money for a laboratory which was opened in 1989. He was instrumental in establishing the British Oesophageal Group and worked closely with a former patient to establish an Oesophageal Patients' Association in 1985.

In the early 1990s he developed links with the Department of Biological Sciences at Warwick University, with the result that he was created honorary Professor of Thoracic Surgery. His work at Warwick helped to lay the foundations for a flourishing postgraduate medical school.

At Birmingham he and a colleague set up an Escapists' Dinner Club (ably organised

by his wife Judy) where medical talk was banned and guests discussed their hobbies.

His own hobby was Richard Jefferies, a contemporary of Thomas Hardy, known for his semi-mystical writing about nature and the countryside. He had stumbled across Jefferies by chance, thinking that his *Gamekeeper at Home* might be a sequel to *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. He read every known work published by Jefferies (and much unpublished work in his notebooks and letters), gaining a clear insight into the development of his writing and the evolution of his thoughts and ideas. He served as president of the Richard Jefferies Society and in 1993, with George Miller, published a thorough and authoritative bibliography of Jefferies' work. He followed this with *The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies* (1994, with P Treitel). He also produced a new index and anthology of Jefferies' works with the assistance of Rebecca Welshman.

The son of a Baptist minister, Matthews was born on April 18 1938 at New Malden, Surrey, and named Hugoe with an 'e' because his mother was descended from French Huguenots. His second name, Redvers, was chosen in honour of General Sir Redvers Henry Buller VC, GCB, GCMG, hero of the Zulu War.

He was educated at Sutton County Grammar School where, even as a teenager, he knew he wanted to be a surgeon. He qualified in Medicine and Surgery at University College, London (despite pronouncing a 55-year-old woman pregnant in his practical exams). After a number of jobs in London, he moved to Bristol in 1968 as a registrar in cardiothoracic surgery. Then, following a spell as senior registrar in Liverpool, he became a consultant at East Birmingham Hospital in 1976.

Matthews published many papers and was editor of the professional journal *Thorax*. He lectured around the world and served as vice-president of the Society of Thoracic Surgeons from 1993, and as president in 1995.

A contemplative man who enjoyed a pipe and listening to jazz, Matthews devoted himself to books and, after his retirement in the mid-1990s, developed his skills as an artist. He exhibited his pictures at shows held by the Tiverton Arts Society, of which he was a member.

In 1968 he married Judy Thain, who survives him with their son and daughter.

Daily Telegraph (Thursday, 14 April, 2011)

Richard Jefferies has attracted some notable champions: Edward Thomas, Samuel Looker, W J Keith, Alain Delattre, Andrew Rossabi; to this list (and there are other names) we must add that of Hugoe Matthews, who died in March.

Once Hugoe had discovered Jefferies' works, he could not rest until he had one of everything. The knowledge he gained getting these titles together, and in the correct order, enabled him, and George Miller, to undertake the *Bibliography* (1993).

The more work Hugoe did – the *Journal* (1992), the *Chronology* (1994), the *Index* (2008), the *Anthology* (2010) – the greater his respect for Jefferies. In my view, this judgement was set out in the 2005 Birthday Lecture 'Richard Jefferies: an Independent Mind' (see *Journal* No 15). We all knew that Jefferies was a great observer, with strong feelings, which he expressed clearly and persuasively. But this assessment of Jefferies' intellectual mastery was one that only Hugoe was equipped to make.

I was honoured to have worked with him; we are all fortunate to have known him.

Phyllis Treitel

Graham Walker

8 April 1942 – 3 March 2011

Sadly, I only knew Graham for a few years. We met through the Richard Jefferies Society, and he came on an Alfred Williams summer outing. He was a delightful gentle gentleman, with a wonderful smile and an engaging personality.

I can do no better than quote from the cover notes from two of his books, *Starting Out*, published in 2003, and *Full Sail*, published in 2007.

Graham spent most of his early life growing up among beautiful countryside of Buckinghamshire. He travelled around Europe, particularly Germany & Austria. He started writing about the age of fifteen.

He was thrilled to have some of his poems set to music and performed publicly. We spoke often of his love of his family, and about the works of Richard Jefferies & Alfred Williams. He was saddened by the increasing use of e-mails and text messages and the impact this had on the art of conversation. Those who knew him will miss this charming man.

I finish this tribute with one of Graham's poems:

LOVE

Love comes down to find me
though I did not care
Love came down to bind me
in its tender snare.
It came without condition
it did not count the cost,
I needed no physician
Though I myself was lost.

Kaye Franklin

I first met Graham at the Newbury Poets workshop about 7 or 8 years ago. This is a group of writers/readers of poetry who meet on a regular basis in Newbury. I soon warmed to Graham and looked forward to discussing books and authors/poets with him. I particularly enjoyed showing him and a number of other members around Betjeman's Wantage on a summer outing, where I read some of Betjeman's poetry and prose to illustrate my tour of places that he frequented in Wantage. Graham made this more enjoyable with his conversation, anecdotes and his knowledge which further enhanced my tour. Also it quickly became apparent that we had a mutual interest in Edward Thomas. I was really pleased when he gave me a copy of *Once They Lived in Gloucestershire* by Linda Hart, which is a Dymock Poets anthology. As Thomas belonged to this group and Graham actively encouraged wider/background reading about Thomas and his contemporaries, it became a springboard for me to find out and read further about these poets.

However, it was his suggestion I should read the Thomas biography of Jefferies that I really have to thank him for. This book was the catalyst for my interest in Jefferies. After reading this he then suggested I should try Jefferies for myself.

As I write this I can see my treasured copy of the Dymock Poets anthology he gave me, which brings back many happy memories of talking Thomas with Graham. I know without him my enjoyment of Thomas wouldn't be so great.

Finally if it wasn't for his encouragement into 'Jefferies Land', I wouldn't have read Jefferies for myself and gone on to join the Richard Jefferies Society.

Peter Bainbridge

CITINGS OF JEFFERIES

Geoff Hirst came across an article in the 17 February 2011 edition of **The London Review of Books** (Vol.33, No4) by Mary Beard. The review entitled 'From Swindon to Swindon' looked at Ferdinand Mount's *Full Circle: How the Classical World Came Back to Us* (Simon and Schuster, June 2010). Mary Beard includes this passage in her review:

The book's finale is a faux pas of a different sort, but in almost the same place; the full circle of the tide is much more a journey from Swindon to Swindon than from the ancient world and back again. Here, at the end, Mount is on the trail of one of the book's heroes, Richard Jefferies, Victorian polymath, nature writer, campaigner against the exploitation of agricultural labourers, fantasist and (in Mount's semi-serious conceit) a 19th-century avatar of James Lovelock and his Gaia hypothesis. One of Jefferies's favourite haunts was Liddington Hill (now within the official town boundary of Swindon), with its remains of an Iron Age hill fort and famous clump of beech trees, Liddington Clump. Visiting Liddington, Mount is at his most whimsical and ironic. 'It is inexplicably satisfying,' he writes, 'to be lolling more or less where Jefferies used to loll more than a century ago. I too am in Gaia's arms. It feels almost like keeping an appointment.' But he soon needs 'to take a leak', and chooses one of the beech trees for the purpose. When only halfway through, he notices that he is pissing on a plastic statuette of the Virgin Mary ('I have got through life so far without pissing on the Virgin and I don't want to start now'). Further exploration reveals all kinds of religious bric-a-brac and memorials ('In Loving Memory of Pearl, 1923-2006') on the trees round about. It turns out that Jefferies's favourite spot for communing with nature has become a sacred grove of a fairly cheap, tacky, plastic kind. But cheap though it all is, as Mount reflects in his final sentence, 'I still wish I hadn't relieved myself in it.' He has inadvertently blundered into a kind of continuity, and into a sense of the sacred, which even Jefferies, he guesses, would have enjoyed.

Sean O'Brien gave a passing mention of Richard Jefferies in his fine review of Paul Farley's and Michael Symmons Roberts's *Edgelands* (March 11) in the *Times Literary Supplement*.

Rebecca Welshman came across an article dated 6 April 2011 in **The Northern Echo** by Harry Mead. Entitled 'The Simple Joys of the Countryside', it is mainly about Jefferies but starts with an appreciation of Kate Humble, the BBC presenter of many wildlife programmes and continues:

As for the soul, the 19th-Century writer Richard Jefferies was the "countryside-forsoul" advocate par excellence. In 1884 he anticipated la belle Humble's country visits plea with these passionate words: "All of you with little children... take them somehow into the country, among green grass and yellow wheat – among trees – by hills and streams, if you wish their highest education, that of the heart and soul, to be completed... Therein they shall find a secret, a knowledge not to be found in books... They shall know the sun and the wind, the running water, the breast of the broad earth. They will forget their books. They will never forget the grassy fields... If

you wish your children to think deep things, to feel the holiest emotions, take them to the woods and hills and give them the freedom of the meadows.”

Jefferies (1848-1887) is a neglected genius. In an age when virtually anything that moved was shot or trapped, he led the way in urging respect for wildlife. The shooting of a porpoise that ventured far up the Thames brought this heartfelt comment: “It is really a wonderful thing that a denizen of the sea, so large and interesting as a porpoise, should come right through the vast City of London... I think there is not a single creature, from the sand marten to the broad winged heron, from the water vole to the otter, from the minnow to the porpoise, big and little, beasts and birds (of prey or not) that should not be encouraged and protected on this beautiful river.” But Jefferies was no romantic. The son of a Wiltshire farmer, he highlighted the appalling living conditions of agricultural workers – the flip side of the rural idyll. Encapsulating the two key aspects of the countryside, he observed: “The wheat is beautiful, but human life is labour.”

Recent events in Japan have reinforced his largest message. He urged those who believed that “with every modern luxury” they could disregard nature to go to their window... See – there is but a thin sheet of brittle glass between the artificial man and the air, the light, the trees and the grass... Between him and those irresistible laws which keep the sun upon its course there is absolutely no bar whatever...

But, near the end of his sadly-short life, he felt that no-one had shared his intense vision of the countryside: ‘I begin to think that my senses have deceived me. No one else seems to have seen the sparkle on the brook... No one else seems to understand how I got food from the clouds.’

Wrong, Richard. You’ve a most charming disciple in Kate Humble. And there are one or two more of us.

Sheila Povey wrote to the Editor of the *National Trust Magazine* (Spring 2011) in response to an article about saving our children from nature-deficit disorder. She sent the extract from *The Dewy Morn* where Jefferies extols the virtues of educating our children through nature.

John Price was asked to write a brief account of his favourite Jefferies’ book for the Spring/Summer 2011 edition of *The Mudlark*, a periodical that records news and articles about the Medway Swale Estuary and beyond. John chose *After London* to describe to potential readers.

There was a short quote from Richard Jefferies essay ‘Village Churches’ (*The Hills and the Vale*) in an article based around Ramsbury in the *Daily Mail* (1 June 2011). The headline of the article by Mark Palmer reads: ‘Watch TV and you’d think Britain a cruel and selfish place. But my village reveals a far more uplifting story.’ The quote reads:

And Richard Jefferies, author of *Village Churches*, wrote in 1875 that: ‘in so busy a land as ours there is no place where the mind can, as it were, turn in on itself so fully as in the silence and solitude of a village church.’

‘The hours when the mind is absorbed by beauty are the only hours when we really live...’ Andrew Rossabi reports that this short extract from ‘The Pageant of Summer’ in *The Life of the Fields* appeared as the first of two epigraphs to the essay ‘**The Cult of Beauty: the Victorian Avant-Garde in Context**’ by Lynn Federle Orr in the catalogue of the exhibition *The Cult of Beauty: the Aesthetic Movement 1860-1900* which ran at the V&A between 2 April and 17 July this year. The other epigraph was from *The Critic As Artist* (1890) by Oscar Wilde. Helen Newman brought this citing to our attention too.

Giles Wood mentioned Jefferies twice in his article in the summer edition of **The Oldie**. In an article entitled 'House Husbandry ... a mini-city of new homes with garages but no gardens', Mr Wood offers advice as to how the loss of butterfly habitats could be improved by using bramble rather than Berberis species to keep intruders out of new-build communal gardens. He quotes: 'In 1883 Richard Jefferies made a stand against foreign evergreens. 'Let me beg them to think of the bramble, to have at least one good thicket in some corner, if merely for the sake of old England – the old England that these times have done so much to destroy.'

Geoff Hirst came across the following in **My Secret Planet** (published in 1992) by Denis Healey, former Labour Chancellor and Defence Secretary. It records the poems primarily, but also other fictional and non-fictional writings, which had and still have impact on Healey today. In his first chapter titled 'Boyhood' he writes:

The great books about children are written by grown-ups and are best read by adults. Even Kenneth Grahame's *Dream Days* and *The Golden Age* seemed rather sentimental when I read them as a boy. An exception was Richard Jefferies' *Bevis* which describes the adventures of a boy in the country who builds an encampment on an island in the local reservoir. I enjoyed this book enormously when I was no older than Bevis himself.

George Miller writes: 'It's interesting that the man who talent spotted a young reporter by the name of Richard Jefferies, also displayed his acumen in a matter of current interest. The following is from **The Oxford Book of Literary Anecdotes**:

FREDERICK GREENWOOD (1830-1909), editor of *The Pall Mall Gazette*, met in his club one day Lord Riddell... and in the course of conversation Riddell said to him, 'You know I own a paper.' 'Oh do you?' said Greenwood, 'what is it?' 'It's called *The News of the World* – I'll send you a copy, and in due course did so. Next time they met Riddell said, 'Well Greenwood, what do you think of my paper?' 'I looked at it,' replied Greenwood, 'and then I put it in the wastepaper basket. And then I thought "If I leave it there the cook may read it" – so I burned it!'

In a review by Polly Devlin of *Ghost Milk: Calling Time on the Grand Project* by Iain Sinclair for the **Irish Times** (23 July 2011) on the theme of ecological disasters, Devlin writes: '...he has produced a large body of work in the tradition of artists and writers such as William Blake, Richard Jefferies, Thomas de Quincey and George Orwell and their explorations of the connections between landscape and the mind.'

Peter Bainbridge supplied copies of two pages from **The Ridgeway** by John Cleare (London: Frances Lincoln Ltd, 2011). Cleare is a photographer who specialises in wild places and landscapes. In this book he includes mention of the memorial stone to Jefferies and Alfred Williams near Barbury Castle along with photographs of Liddington Clump, Liddington hill-fort, the Trig point and the new memorial for the two writers erected by Liddington Parish Council. He writes: 'Liddington Hill was an especially inspirational spot for Richard Jefferies, the celebrated Victorian naturalist and writer, who was born at its foot.'

Peter Bainbridge cited ***The Book-lovers' Anthology*** edited by R M Leonard (Oxford University Press, 1911) that contains two quotes from Jefferies. The first is from *The Dewy Morn*:

The reason the classics are not read is because there still lingers a tradition, handed down from the eighteenth century, that it is useless to read them unless in the original...'

The second is taken from the essay 'The Pigeons at the British Museum' (*The Life of the Fields*) where Jefferies expresses his disappointment that the British Museum library only seems to contain books on subjects that repeat or paraphrase what he has read before: 'The shade deepens as I turn from the portico to the hall and vast domed house of books...'

Now All Roads Lead to France: The Last Years of Edward Thomas by Matthew Hollis (Faber & Faber, 4/8/2011) is centred on Thomas's extraordinary friendship with Robert Frost and his fatal decision to fight in the war. Pete Bainbridge reports that Jefferies is mentioned frequently.

Eric Jones reported that Jefferies still gets a continual if thin scatter of references in Internet blogs. Recent items have included ten Jefferies' books listed in ***The Ultimate Science Fiction Collection***, vol.6 (though some of them have nothing to do with science fiction); a description of the Coate Museum in French; Jefferies on the language of farm workers, which he called 'hedge talk'; something by Jonathan Calder, who wrote his Masters on Jefferies, and never misses an opportunity to mention Jefferies and David Horton (in Australia) who 'has been a fan of Richard Jefferies, ever since [he] came across his *Bevis*'.

Pete Bainbridge picked up a copy of ***Images of the Downs*** by John Mosley and Caroline Hillier (Macmillan 1983). To paraphrase the overview from the inside of the dust-jacket:

Images of the Downs captures in words and photography the spirit of the North and South Downs, the Dorset Downs, those of Wiltshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Hampshire. Its themes include geology, archaeology, agriculture, racing and sport, manor houses, conservation, natural history and the great writers on the countryside, such as Gilbert White, Richard Jefferies and W H Hudson, who have immortalised downland.

The numerous Jefferies' mentions include quotes from *The Open Air*, *The Hills and the Vale*, *The Story of my Heart* and it mentions Looker's *Jefferies Countryside* for '...essays and a complete summary of Jefferies's writings.'

John Price came across two citations in mid-August. The first, in a letter from Chris Ware, published in ***The Independent*** refers to the Inner City riots: 'Richard Jefferies observed that "every now and then some individual member of the Army of Wretches turns and becomes the Devil of modern civilisation".'

The second is in ***A Book of Dovecotes*** by Arthur O. Cooke, published by T. N. Foulis in 1920. This is an extraordinary example of quoting Jefferies for what he should have said, and, as a matter of fact, he did! In the chapter on Wiltshire dovecotes Mr Cooke says:

Passing now westward into Wiltshire, it is possible that, to readers well grounded in the works of Richard Jefferies, there will occur a curious omission; dovecotes are surely never mentioned in his most delightful books. Yet it is difficult to think of any

building that, for its uses and associations, ought to have appealed more strongly to his tastes. Surely among the farms he haunted, the old villages in which he loved to wander and to dream, somewhere a dovecote stood. ... A circular stone example, with a stone-tiled roof and small arched doorway, is in the yard at Wick Farm, Lacock. 'Wick' was the pseudonym that Jefferies gave to his old home of Coate; was it this place he had in mind?

THE SAMUEL JOHNSON SOCIETY HOSTS THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES AT LICHFIELD 21/22 MAY 2011

The AGM this year was held at the Guildhall in Lichfield where our hosts the Samuel Johnson Society were waiting to greet us. It was encouraging to see such a large gathering of members from so many different societies.

The Mayor, Brian Baker, officially opened the proceedings by referring to the rich cultural heritage of Lichfield, its numerous luminaries, including Samuel Johnson and David Garrick and, of course, the magnificent three spired Cathedral of St. Chad.

About 45 minutes was then devoted to the business side of things. Jenny Uglow was warmly introduced as our new President. The secretary will be issuing three newsletters per annum and a booklet on finance in regard to literary societies. A grant of one hundred pounds will be made to the Gaskell Society in memory of Joan Leach who did so much to promote the Society. The money will go towards the restoration of Mrs. Gaskell's house at Plymouth Grove. The editor apologised for the delay in publication of ALSO, the ALS journal, which should be available later in the year. The theme for next year's journal will be 'Fashion in Literature'. The 2012 AGM will be hosted by the Dickens Society in Nottingham. It will be the bi-centenary of Dickens birth.

Business concluded, Peter Barrett, was our first speaker from the Samuel Johnson Society. He began with a brief history of the Guildhall which has played such a prominent role in Lichfield's history. The first such building was erected in the 14th century, and over the years has served as a meeting place for the Corporation, as a court, a police station and a prison. At one time the Fire Station was housed beneath its portals. But in Johnson's time it was also a theatre, and Samuel Johnson, an avid lover of the drama, regularly attended performances. When at one performance he found that his chair had been occupied during his absence, so affronted was he that he picked up both the chair and its occupant and threw them into the audience. With his heavy bulk and irregular features, he must have presented a terrifying figure.

Following lunch Joanne Wilson, Lichfield Museums and Heritage Officer gave us a talk entitled *In his native place: Johnson and Lichfield* which provided us with a broad overview of Johnson's life, his years in Lichfield and his abiding fondness for the city long after he had left it.

Samuel Johnson was born on the 18th September 1709 to elderly parents; his father Michael was a bookseller, also a church warden and a bailiff. He had little business acumen, however, a situation which led to friction within the marriage and a wife who was over anxious and fretful. Samuel was so sickly at birth, that he was not expected to live. He contracted scrofula at a very early age which left him with defective hearing and eyesight; when he was

three he was taken to be touched for the king's evil.

Having a bookseller for a father obviously stimulated his interest in books, and from an early age he was reading voraciously. His father taught him to swim and jump over fences and carried him on his shoulders to listen to sermons in the cathedral. He attended a Dame School ran by Anne Oliver who maintained he was her best pupil and gave him a piece of gingerbread when he left for Oxford, a gesture of kindness which Johnson never forgot. He went on to Lichfield Grammar School, where the headmaster was a brilliant tutor but a bully and a tyrant. His time at Pembroke College, Oxford was dismal; owing to his family circumstances he was always short of money, and despite his scholastic ability left without a degree after only fourteen months. Naturally his father was hoping that his brilliant son would help him run the bookshop, but Johnson had no head for business and spent most of his time reading the books rather than selling them. On one occasion he refused to accompany his father to Uttoxeter to set up a bookstall and repented of it for the rest of his life. Johnson desultorily drifted in and out of jobs, working briefly in Stourbridge as an under-master and then moved to Birmingham where he contributed essays to a Birmingham journal and worked on translations. Michael Johnson died in 1731, leaving the family with a string of debts and an unpaid mortgage. The Johnson's live-in servant, Kitty Chambers undertook the running of the bookshop and did it exceptionally well.

Both prior and following his father's death, Johnson was plagued by constant bouts of depression which he referred to as 'a vile melancholy'. Unprepossessing in appearance and given to strange mannerisms and convulsive like twitches, he was only too aware of his lack of good looks. But what he lacked in good looks, he made up for with sparkling wit and brilliant conversation. There was nothing Johnson liked better than to engage in debate on any given subject and to win through in argument. As an example of his wit, he would say: 'In Lichfield we think with our heads while the boobies in Birmingham support us with their hands'.

About this time he was paying court to a young girl called Lucy Porter, but when Lucy rejected him he turned his attentions to her mother Elizabeth, a widow aged 46, 21 years his senior. Both the Porters and the Johnsons were fiercely opposed to the marriage, but the young Samuel and his much older fiancé married in Derby in 1735. Elizabeth or Tetty as she was affectionately called soon had to accustom herself to frequent separations from her much younger husband.

With a wife to support, Samuel opened a private school at Edial, near Lichfield which attracted few pupils, though among them was a young David Garrick. When the school closed in 1737 Garrick and Johnson set off to London with the vague idea of making their mark. In his pocket was a play he had written called *Irene*. In London he contributed numerous articles to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, including his *Parliamentary Debates*, which purported to be the speeches of the politicians of the day, but in fact were mainly of his own invention. His poem *London* was published in 1738 and in 1750 he founded the *Rambler*, a periodical composed of articles written mainly by himself; when his mother died in 1759 he wrote a novel within a week to pay

for her funeral. He soon surrounded himself with the well known figures of the day, including Joshua Reynolds and Oliver Goldsmith and, of course, James Boswell, whose chief claim to fame rests on his biography of Johnson.

Indolent by nature, he maintained that the only reason he wrote was for money, so when the bookseller Robert Dodsley suggested he write a dictionary he was not exactly keen on the idea. He reckoned, however, that he could complete it within three years; in the event it took him nine. It was finally completed in 1755 under the patronage of Lord Chesterfield in two volumes at a cost of four pounds ten shillings. Included within it is a special definition of his native birthplace, which he prefaces with its motto 'Salve, magna parens' ('Hail, great mother').

His wife died in 1752; despite the disparity in age and frequent separations, the marriage appears to have been a relatively happy one and Johnson was devastated by her death.

In 1765 he met the Thrales; Mr. Thrale was a brewer by trade, but it was Mrs. Thrale with whom Johnson established a close and long friendship, but the relationship later became soured, especially when the widowed Mrs. Thrale married the Italian singer Piozzi. Whether Johnson regarded himself as a possible suitor is open to question as Mrs. Thrale was thirty years his junior.

On the strength of his dictionary he gained his degree and was also in receipt of a yearly pension of three hundred pounds. He could now enjoy himself without the necessity of having to write for a living. But his health remained indifferent and the periods of depression never left him. His faithful black servant, Francis Barber, a freed slave, cared for him for many years. Wit and spirited conversation, however, never deserted him and he was at his most brilliant in the company of friends who revelled in such brilliance. Samuel Johnson died in 1784 and is buried in Westminster Abbey, close to his friend David Garrick.

The Samuel Johnson birthplace was bought for the city by a Mr. Gilbert in 1900 and opened to the public in 1901.

Following Joanne Wilson's very interesting talk, Dr. Graham Nicholls spoke on 'Literary Lichfield'. Various elements combined to make it a flourishing literary centre: its city status, its Cathedral Close, a literate clergy and a thriving market. Few of its literary luminaries, apart from Johnson himself and Elias Ashmole, were actually born there, but many chose to settle there owing to its cultural reputation, including Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of Charles, and his fellow Lunar Society friend Thomas Day. Joseph Addison was another resident as was David Garrick and George Farquhar, playwright, wrote *The Recruiting Officer* and *Beaux Stratagem* at the The George Hotel, then a coaching inn; Anna Seward 'The Swan of Lichfield' also lived in Lichfield for most of her life. There was a distinct division between Cathedral and City, however, most of the intellectual elite living in the Cathedral Close, over 200 in all, while the majority of the population, roughly 3000 dwelt in the city, as did Samuel Johnson. The Cathedral Library and the St. Chad's gospels were obvious attractions; Johnson himself often used the library

Our appetite whetted after these two fascinating talks, some of us joined the Philip Larkin trail while others, including myself, had free time to wander

round the city.

In the evening a party of us went to Johnson's House to hear Dr. Graham Nicholls give us readings from Johnson. He began by reading Johnson's preface to the annotated works of Shakespeare, believed to be one of his finest writings. But imagine our surprise when the great man himself entered our midst, bewigged, breeched and booted, and in sparkling form (for this unexpected apparition we must thank Ken Knowles who gave a virtuoso performance). Cameras at the ready, nearly everyone went away with a photo of 'Dr. Johnson'.

We then had our own photograph taken in front of the Johnson statue in Market Square before having dinner at the Olive Tree, followed by readings from our favourite authors. Jenny Uglow also spoke on the importance of bringing societies together.

The following morning a group of us returned to the Samuel Johnson Birthplace for a guided tour, our guide explaining that for many years the house was occupied solely by women, namely Johnson's elderly mother, his wife Tetty and his stepdaughter Lucy. We also discovered that Johnson had many strange habits, such as keeping orange peel in his pockets which he used to aid the digestion. The play *Irene*, which he carried in his pocket to London, ran for 9 days under Garrick's direction, although it might have run longer had Johnson not insisted on making unwelcome and unnecessary alterations.

What was pleasing to discover was Johnson's love of cats, the most well known being Hodge who he referred to as a 'very fine cat indeed'; the story goes that in the presence of Hodge, he had told Boswell that he had had prettier cats, whereupon seeing that Hodge looked rather put out, he wittily back tracked. Incidentally, Boswell did not share this feline passion.

In the afternoon the Bishop's Palace was our venue to hear a talk given by Marion Roberts on Anna Seward. Anna Seward was born in Eyam, Derbyshire, in 1742, but the family moved to Lichfield in 1750 when her father took up his post as Canon of Lichfield Cathedral. The Swards soon moved into the Bishop's Palace, where Anna quickly established herself in the cultural life of the Close, forming friendships with Erasmus Darwin, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, the father of Maria the novelist, and William Hayley who was to call her 'The Swan of Lichfield'. When her mother died in 1750 Anna was left to care for her father and undertake the running of the household.

A tall red haired beauty, she was both a poet, a biographer and a novelist. Darwin encouraged her to write, but her father disapproved, seeing her literary talent as being a hindrance to contracting a suitable marriage. Women of her class were encouraged to develop the domestic virtues and devote their leisure activities to sewing, dancing and playing a little music. Anna was very good at all these things, but she also had a good intellectual head on her shoulders. Neither was she willing to marry in accordance with her father's wishes; her first choice was Hugh Temple; they exchanged tokens, a ring and a locket of hair, but her father dismissed him on the grounds that he was not sufficiently wealthy. Her younger sister Sarah, more compliant, agreed to marry Joseph Porter, a relation of Samuel Johnson, but died just four days before the

wedding. Thereafter, Anna stubbornly went her own way. She quickly became enamoured of a concert singer called John Savile who was hired by her father to teach Anna the harpsichord. Savile was unhappily married with two daughters, but he and Anna became devoted to one another, enjoying a long and loving friendship. When John Savile died Anna ensured that his family were well cared for.

The Lunar Society would often meet at the Bishop's Palace, where Anna played the perfect hostess. How she must have enjoyed these intellectual gatherings. Despite her father's disapproval, she continued to write, leaving a vast canon of work, including *Memoirs of the Life of Dr. Darwin*. Apart from the Lunar Society, other visitors to the Bishop's Palace included Walter Scott, who, following her death, wrote an introduction to three volumes of her vast output, and John Howard, the prison reformer. She visited the famous ladies of Llangollen, championed the emancipation of slavery and on a lighter note wrote sermons for five pounds per sermon. She did not, however, like Samuel Johnson and the feeling appeared to be mutual. As she grew older and her beauty faded, she wittily if sorrowfully referred to her features as 'victims of their time'. Anna Seward died in 1809.

At the close of the talk, we made our way to 'Chapters' where we chatted over cream tea before saying our final goodbyes. This had been another memorable ALS weekend.

Helen D Newman
July 2011

The Wiltshire Archaeological & Natural History Society:

If you want to borrow the tickets for Devizes Museum, please apply to John Price. ☎ 01672 515150.

The Henry Williamson Society will be holding their AGM weekend at the Park Hotel, Barnstaple from 30th September to 2nd October. The theme of the event is to celebrate the wild red deer of Exmoor, with films, relevant readings and a trip to Exmoor.

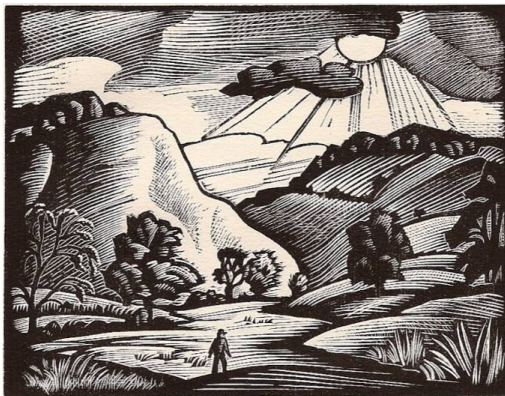


Illustration by Ethelbert White

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & BIRTHDAY LECTURE
SATURDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2011
VILLAGE HALL, CHURCH ROAD LIDDINGTON**

PROGRAMME

- 10.30 Doors open and refreshments.
- 11.00 AGM (members only) – see Agenda next page.
- 1.00 Lunch break. Bring a packed lunch. Local pub serve food. The hall is next to Liddington Church with views across to Liddington Hill.
- 2.30 The Birthday Lecture
 Speaker: John Price (see below)
 Subject: ‘A Box of Treasures. A previously unknown collection of letters from Richard Jefferies’ Mother to Sarah Jane Gyde and other gems plus a loft full of Treasures – some preliminary remarks on the Looker Archive’. See pp.16-17
- 4.00 Tea
- 4.30 Depart

John Price has been Chairman of the Richard Jefferies Society since 2004. He is now retired, but spent a lifetime working in Education. Having gained a Degree in Natural Sciences at Cambridge, he taught for eleven years, before becoming an Education Officer and Advisor/Inspector. He then became Head of the truly “Public” School in Marlborough, St John’s, where he stayed for 14 years. For three and a half years, until 1999, he lived and worked on St. Helena, where he was Chief Education Officer. John also chaired an ‘A’ Level Biological Sciences Committee for one of the major Examining Boards, and for many years was the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. He has no formal literary training or qualifications whatever, apart from ‘O’- level English Language!

Directions to Liddington Village Hall

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 – ☎ 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. 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 (the bus should leave from **Bay 9**, but watch out for changes) and through Liddington village. There are two possibilities available for use on Saturday morning: one that arrives far too early and one a tad late. **The 46 leaves Swindon Bus Station at 10.45am and arrives at Liddington at 11.02am.** The earlier bus (48) leaves at 9.45 and arrives at 10.02. 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 to Swindon Bus Station:

Bus Service	48	46
Departs Liddington (Spinney Close)	16.12	17.12
Arrives Swindon Bus Station	16.30	17.30

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

AGENDA

- 1 Chairman's introductory remarks.
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Minutes of the last AGM, 6th November 2010 (see pp.44-48)
- 4 Matters Arising
 - Richard Jefferies House & Museum at Coate
 - The Save Coate campaign
 - Broadwater Cemetery
 - Hugoe Matthews Memorial
- 5 Annual Report
- 6 Treasurer's Report (see pp.49-50)
- 7 Election of Examiner of Accounts
- 8 Elections to Executive Council. The following Members are due to retire: Eric Jones, Duncan Pepper and John Webb – all three have been nominated to stand for re-election for a further three years.
- 9 Motions
- 10 Any Other Business

A copy of the minutes of the 2010 AGM should be brought to the AGM.

Any motions or resolutions for debate should be sent to the Hon. Sec. (Jean Saunders) before 19 October, as should nominations for Executive Council members. Both should be proposed and seconded.

Motion 1: subscription proposal.

The Executive Council of the Richard Jefferies Society propose that Members consider a new rate of subscription charge to be introduced in 2012 with a guarantee that there will be no further increase for 5 years. It is recommended that a single membership fee should be set at £12 and £14 for couples. Life Membership would remain at ten times the annual fee for those over 60.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Richard Jefferies Society held at the Village Hall, Liddington on Saturday 6 November 2010

PRESENT: Margaret Bathe, Gillian Bromhead, Roy Burton, David & Marie Chesham, Simon Coleman, Roger Ebbatson, Margaret Evans, Stan Hickerton, Geoff Hirst, Margaret Hunt, Eric Jones, Ray & Sylvia Morse, Helen Newman, Michael Parrott, Duncan Pepper, Michael Ponting, John Price, Mike Pringle, Andrew Rossabi, Raymond Roys, Jean Saunders, Phyllis Treitel, John Webb and Rebecca Welshman.

1. THE CHAIR

John Price welcomed Members to the 60th Annual General Meeting, the date of which also coincided with Jefferies' birthday.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were given in respect of Peter Bainbridge, David & Sue Birley, Mark Daniel, Susan Fitzpatrick, Norma Goodwin, Valerie Haworth, Hugoe Matthews, Brian Morris, Sheila Povey, Richard Stewart, and Gillian Webb.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2009 at Liddington Village Hall were signed as correct. Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Michael Parrott and seconded by Margaret Evans.

4. MATTERS ARISING

It was taken as read that Members had noted relevant updates in the Annual Report 2009-10 and in the autumn newsletter. Matters arising relate to new information since the report was published in early September.

4.1 Richard Jefferies House and Museum at Coate

The Chairman reported that the most significant advance discussed with Mike Pringle (Director of Swindon Cultural Partnership) at our recent Executive Council meeting was that Swindon Borough Council has agreed that the evolving Museum development trust group should take over the management of the Museum. There is no budget, but the group can now move forward with ideas to expand facilities at the Museum. As a trial, Mike Pringle organised a special cream-tea/fruit picking event to coincide with Heritage Day on September 12th. This drew in about 250 people – thus proving that extra publicity, better signage at Coate Water and good weather can make the Museum an important attraction to Coate Water visitors. He has permission to lay a hardcore path from Coate Water along Jefferies' 'Great Hedge' in Brook Field to the Museum. The Museum has been granted Provisional Accreditation by the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council for six months during which time Swindon Borough Council needs to take some Required Action to obtain full accreditation. Next year the Society is planning to open the Museum every Sunday from May to the end of September.

4.2 The Save Coate campaign:

Several of the Planning Authority's statutory consultees have lodged objections to the Swindon Gateway planning application and this includes Natural England, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency, and CABE. Unfortunately, the forward planning team at Swindon Borough Council has not objected and this gives a clear indication that the Council still support a housing estate for the land between Coate Water and the new hospital.

4.3 A memorial bench for the Memorial Garden at Broadwater Cemetery

Members agreed that the Richard Jefferies Society should provide a Memorial bench to Richard Jefferies and W H Hudson to be placed in the Memorial Garden at Broadwater Cemetery. A budget of up to £500 was agreed: proposed by Ray Morse; seconded by David Chesham and carried. The Secretary will liaise with Michael Parrott who is also a member of the Friends of Broadwater Cemetery.

4.4 The Richard Jefferies Society Journal.

The Executive Council had been unable to reach an agreement with regard to a proposed change to the format of the Society's yearly *Journal* as it might have significant financial implications for Members. The current problem is that both the Newsletter and *Journal* cannot be expanded to more than 48 pages whilst there has been a record amount of news and new material to publish. A suggestion was made to move some material from the newsletter, that is more appropriate for the *Journal*, and increase the size of the *Journal* by publishing it in a booklet with a spine. Opposing views were expressed; some like the current simple format – i.e. A4 folded to A5 and stapled with a card cover – others would prefer a soft-back book format. One suggestion was to produce two *Journals* in the current format. The point was made that University libraries now have a shortage of literary papers and would welcome a copy of our publication (many journals are now only available to libraries on the Internet). No conclusion was made albeit that it was agreed that Membership fees do not cover what our members currently receive and that a subscription review was in order for the 2012-13 membership year. Our Treasurer supported a review. It was resolved that the Executive Council will discuss the format of the newsletter/*Journal* further and possible subscription changes.

4.5 Gravestone for [Richard] Oliver [Lancelot] Jefferies

John Kennet, from the Eltham Society, had just received a reply from the local diocese for permission to erect an appropriate memorial to Richard Jefferies' baby son in the Eltham Church graveyard. However, there were more questions raised by the diocese and they were keen to hear the views of any surviving relatives. The children of Richard's son Harold, who moved to Canada, have been contacted and they are happy to write a letter of support for the proposal. Our Society agreed a budget of £100 towards the memorial at our last AGM.

5. ANNUAL REPORT

The content of the report were accepted as a true record of the Society's activities.
Proposed — Phyllis Treitel; Seconded — Michael Ponting and carried.

6. TREASURER'S REPORT

Geoff Hirst reported that there was a mistype in the Annual Report on page 44. The figure in column 2 should read 16828 not 1628 against the Coventry Building Society. The published accounts should be headed year ending 2010 not 2009. Mr Hirst emphasized that the Society was receiving more income through book sales than membership but that this might tail off albeit that current stocks would furnish at least £3000. Eric Jones proposed acceptance of the accounts; Michael Parrott seconded the proposal. It was carried.

7. EXAMINER OF ACCOUNTS

Mr Chris Jones had examined the accounts and his positive report was published in the Annual Report. The Society is most grateful for his assistance in these matters and he had expressed a willingness to look at next year's accounts. Geoff Hirst proposed that he be elected to serve next year; seconded by Phyllis Treitel. It was carried.

8. ELECTIONS TO EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

The following members of the Executive Council stood down at the AGM: Hugoe Matthews (President), Helen Newman, John Price (Chairman), Jean Saunders (Secretary) & Richard Stewart. Apart from Hugoe Matthews, who is unable to stand again for health reasons, all retiring members were willing to stand for re-election. The Executive Council had also proposed for nomination Rebecca Welshman and Andrew Rossabi who would also stand as President. In addition, at the Council meeting held on 23 October, Simon Coleman and Prof Roger Ebbatson were also proposed for nomination. The Secretary had received no other nominations.

8.1 The Secretary took the chair for this item. Those standing for re-election for a three-year term from 2010-13: Helen Newman, John Price and Richard Stewart. It was proposed by Ray Morse and seconded by Michael Parrott that all three members should be re-elected to Council. This was carried. Jean Saunders proposed and Andrew Rossabi seconded that John Price should be re-elected as Honorary Chairman. This was carried.

8.2 Standing for re-election and for the position of Honorary Secretary for a five-year term from 2010-2015 Jean Saunders was proposed by Phyllis Treitel and seconded by Eric Jones. This was carried.

8.3 Standing for the first time for election from 2010-2013; David Chesham proposed that Simon Coleman, Professor Roger Ebbatson and Rebecca Welshman should be elected. This was seconded by Michael Parrott and carried.

8.4 Standing for election for a five-year term as President from 2010-2015, Andrew Rossabi was proposed by John Price, seconded by Margaret Evans and this was

carried.

8.5 The Chair, in welcoming Mr Rossabi as President, also paid tribute to Hugoe Matthews for his work to promote Richard Jefferies and the Society. His collaborative work with others was highlighted that gave rise to publications that required painstaking research, time, dedication and a thorough knowledge of Jefferies' works. These included the Bibliography, *The Forward Life*, the *Index* and, more recently, the new anthology. As a token of our appreciation, the Society will present Mr Matthews with an original framed woodcut by David James (1882-1972) that was originally an artist's proof for *Gulliver's Travels*.

8.6 Andrew Rossabi gave a brief address to thank Members for the honour of his appointment, albeit that he wished that it had been in happier circumstances. Having served as President between 1991-6 and unable at that time to continue, Mr Rossabi hoped that, this time, it would be a longer association. Mr Rossabi gave a progress report on the new Jefferies' biography and has been overwhelmed by the amount of new material that has come forward. He has reached 1873 – 'Reporting, Editing & Authorship' and a fashionable publishing time for the sensation novel.

8.7 The Chairman offered a vote of thanks to all the Members of the Executive Council who have worked so hard behind the scenes to raise the profile of Richard Jefferies and the Society.

9. MOTIONS

No motions had been submitted.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 Publications

Richard Jefferies: An Anthology by Hugoe Matthews and Rebecca Welshman was, in theory, published today (stitched hard-back book). It was highly commended.

Copies of Kate Tryon's *Adventures in the Vale of the White Horse: Jefferies Land* and 'Walks in Jefferies Land' published this year along with other books published by the Society were available at the AGM.

Two suggestions were made for future publications: a new landscape book with photographs and quotes and a revision of *Jefferies Land: History of Swindon* with an update of the editor's footnotes to reflect Swindon at the present time.

10.2 Alfred Williams Heritage Festival

The Chairman drew attention to this festival that will be held at the STEAM museum on 12-13 November. The Society has been invited to run a Jefferies' information stall on Saturday.

10.3 Samuel Looker papers

The Chairman and George Miller have been invited to look through a major collection of Samuel Looker's papers that are in the loft of the widow of Looker's grandson. They will advise Mrs Looker about the Jefferies-related material and where other archives

might be sent.

10.4 Jefferies Land

Appreciation of John Webb's selections of Jefferies' extracts from *Jefferies Land* for the *Swindon Advertiser* were not going un-noticed. Particular appreciation had been expressed by Linda Hares who realised that her Great Great Uncle (Joseph Shaylor) was the managing director of Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co (the publishers of *Jefferies Land*) at this time and that he had written a book published in 1912 that mentioned Jefferies entitled *The Fascination of Books*.

10.5 Swindon Museum and Art Gallery

Swindon Borough Council's cut-backs agreed in September include a reduction in the number of open days at Swindon Museum and Art Gallery from 6 days to 4. The cuts take immediate effect.

10.6 Swindon History Forum

A meeting was held at the Central Library on 21 October 210 to launch a Swindon History Forum Meeting. The Society was invited to participate. Andy Binks will represent us at future meetings.

10.7 Bishop of Salisbury letter to Walter Besant

Stan Hickerton found an interesting letter pasted in the back of the Swindon Library copy of Walter Besant's *Eulogy*. The book bore a card inscribed as a presentation copy to the Bishop (John Wordsworth – his father was a nephew of the poet William Wordsworth), and a rough draft of a letter from the Bishop to, presumably, Walter Besant dated 3 June 1890. The Bishop suggests that Jefferies' 'unhappiness & want of literary success – even in his best work, which is in parts so beautiful' is linked with 'his loss of faith.'

10.8 Art Exhibition inspired by *After London*

An exhibition running from 3 March to 2 April 2011 takes place at Greenwich University next year based on visualising Greenwich and its imagined fates with *After London* as the starting point.

10.9 Stan Hickerton's posters

It was agreed that the superb posters that Mr Hickerton has produced over the years for our meetings should form the basis of an exhibition.

10.10 William Golding by John Carey

John Carey's new biography of William Golding was recently voted book of the week.

10.11 The 1948 Tribute Film

Duncan Pepper wondered if this silent film could be made available in its current form. The Secretary said that copies are available from her on DVD.

The business part of the AGM ended at 12.50pm.

Jean Saunders, Hon. Sec., 7th November 2010

TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT: 2010-11

Published accounts

RECEIPTS and PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS for the year ending 30 June 2011

<u>Receipts</u>	Unrestrict ed Funds	Designate d Funds	Restrict ed Funds	Total 2011	Total 2010
<i><u>Subscriptions</u></i>	1480.83			1480.83	1591.69
<i><u>Donations:</u></i> <i>General</i>	1184.00	1000.00		2184.00	704.68
<i>Grave</i>					470.00
<i><u>Sales:</u></i> <i>Museum</i>	421.75			421.75	129.04
<i>Others</i>	1562.11			1562.11	1401.58
<i><u>Income Tax Reclaim</u></i>	312.11		126.92	439.03	957.27
<i><u>Interest received</u></i>	42.95			42.95	42.17
Total receipts	5003.75	1000.00	126.92	6130.67	5296.43
<u>Expenditure</u>					
<i><u>Publications</u></i>	3163.29			3163.29	1360.43
<i><u>Rent/Room Hire</u></i>	54.00			54.00	54.00
<i><u>Subscriptions paid</u></i>	59.50			59.50	55.50
<i><u>Lecture fees</u></i>					20.00
<i><u>Administration</u></i>	1428.40			1428.40	966.81
<i><u>Books/ Archive Purchases</u></i>	1171.30	1000.00		2171.30	15.93
<i><u>Insurance</u></i>	172.50			172.50	228.68
<i><u>Grave</u></i>	450.00			450.00	1150.00
<i><u>House/ Grounds & Seat</u></i>	179.00			179.00	1577.38
<i><u>Gifts</u></i>	130.00			130.00	
<i><u>Memorial</u></i>		5.00		5.00	
Total payments	6807.99	1005.00		7812.99	5063.16
<u>Excess of receipts over payments</u>				1682.32	-132.30

Bank/B.Soc/Paypal/P.Cash

as at 1 July 2010 19626.87

as at 30 June 2011 17944.55

		Restricted and Designated funds	
<u>Statement of Assets</u>		Biography	5970
		Coate	740
1. Cash funds:-	:	H Adams	155
Bank	2490.31	Looker	750
Paypal	133.50	Others (4)	<u>350</u>
P'ty cash	32.31		7965
B/Society	15288.43	Gen Funds	2000
	<u>17944.55</u>	Gen Resve	<u>7949</u>
			<u>17914</u>

2. The Bulpitt collection at cost price £2000

3. Books, other publications and other stock in the ownership of the society conservatively valued at £8000.

I have revised the traditional format of the accounts. These are in a now more conventional form and which I believe allows easier comparison, year on year. I have also moved away from round pound accounting.

The initial and perhaps the most startling point in the accounts is the negative figure against receipts over expenditure (£1682). This is entirely accounted for by the purchase of the Bulpitt archives at a cost of £2000. Your executive considered this a highly justifiable action in view of your Society's purposes, and for which some of the accumulating reserves from earlier years could be used to a hugely beneficial effect.

Other items I consider noteworthy include the sales of the Society which go from strength to strength. In fact the figure shown understates the position, as donated books under Gift Aid, when sold, are included under donations and which, when included under that heading, more closely equate with the Inland Revenue claim. Gift Aid itself is down primarily because there is no more money due to the Society in the current year as a result of the donations received for the production of the biography.

The figure for publications is inflated by the cost of the anthology (£1790) which accounts for all the difference between the two years (and is one significant reason for the increased sales figure).

The increase in administration costs is readily accounted for. Postal charges are partly to blame, but included also is the periodic claim (in excess of £300 over four years) made by a member of the Executive but who immediately donates it under Gift Aid to the Society allowing a reclaim of the tax element. Also included this year is a travel claim made by your treasurer under the terms of his appointment twelve years ago.

I am comfortable both with these figures and also with the expenditure committed by your executive which is to be incurred in the current financial year. The proposal, however, to increase subscriptions is well-timed

particularly when opportunities to acquire valuable archive material arise and which makes the decision to purchase so much easier.

G. W. Hirst
Honorary Treasurer
10th August 2011

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

I report on the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 30 June 2011.

The respective responsibilities of Trustees and examiner are as follows:

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

As Independent Examiner it is my responsibility to:

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

Basis of Independent Examiner's statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. Such an examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by a charity – in this case the Richard Jefferies Society – and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes the consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the Trustees via the Society's Treasurer concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view'. This report is thus limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent Examiner's statement

I have now undertaken the required actions in respect of the 2010-11 accounts; in connection with this examination, no matter has come to my attention:

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



C E I Jones
8 Woburn Avenue
Retired Museum Administrator
Theydon Bois
Essex CM16 7JS
12th August 2011

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2011-2012

2011

- Sat 5 Nov AGM and Birthday Lecture at Liddington Village Hall. John Price will give the Birthday Lecture on troves of new treasures that came to light this year (see pp.16-17). Further details about the event are detailed on pp.42-51.

2012 – please note the following dates in your diary. The next newsletter will not be circulated until March.

- Sat 3 March* Joint meeting with the Friends of Alfred Williams. This year it is the Friends turn to host the gathering. Select a short extract to read to others by or about Richard Jefferies or Alfred Williams or just come along to listen.
N.B. – for those who want to make a day of it, there will be a guided walk around Coate Water meeting at the Coate Water Rangers Information Centre at 10.30am, finishing at the Museum. The event is hosted by the Rangers but will be led by a Society Member. Check details with the Hon. Sec. nearer the time.
- Sat 14 April* Professor Eric Jones will talk about the American pioneering naturalist Robert Kennicott (1835-1866). Lecture entitled: 'Saving Kennicott's Grove: successful conservation at an American Coate'.
- Sat 12 May* '*Selborne*, Gilbert White, Jefferies and others' – a talk by Peter Bainbridge.
- 8-17 June Broadway Arts Festival featuring Alfred Parsons RA (1847-1920) (see p.15). A day trip is planned for Society members during the festival – details in next newsletter.
- Sat 28 July A Study Day. More information in the Spring 2011 newsletter. Venue: Jefferies' Museum.
Possible theme: The Working Wo/man in Jefferies' writing.
- Sat 3 Nov AGM and Birthday Lecture. More information next autumn.

* 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 but when the ground is firm there is plenty of room. 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.