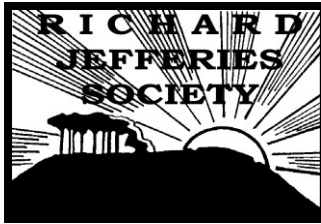


THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2013



Victoria Street, Swindon c.1855 (see p.7) – now Victoria Road



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 £12 single or £14 couple. Overseas Members should add £1.50 towards additional surface mail postage costs whilst there is an option to pay an extra £5 for airmail carriage. There is a facility for Members to join online using our Paypal account that accepts credit/debit cards at richardjefferiessociety.co.uk. There is an additional £1 supplement to cover Paypal charges incurred.

Members receive spring and autumn newsletters, an annual report and two *Journals*. They 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.

THE RICHARD JEFFERIES MUSEUM, COATE FARM

The Richard Jefferies Society provides the volunteers to open the Jefferies Museum at Coate to the public on the second Wednesday of the month throughout the year from 10am to 4pm as well as on Sundays from May to September (incl.) from 2-5pm. Admission is free. There is usually a good selection of Jefferies' books on sale at reasonable prices.

NEWSLETTER

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

The deadline for submitting material for the autumn 2013 Newsletter is **September 1st 2013**. Please send your contributions to the Hon. Secretary preferably by e-mail (info@richardjefferiessociety.co.uk), or by post to Pear Tree Cottage, Longcot, Oxon SN7 7SS.

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.

CONTENTS

Page

4	Contact details for the Executive Council Members
5	From the Chair
7	From the Secretary
7	News in brief
9	Report of the Birthday Lecture, 2012
11	Denys James Watkins-Pitchford (BB)
13	Jefferies and Kipling – Janice Lingley
15	Simply a biographical issue? - Tom Wareham
19	Discoveries 10 – George Miller
22	Samuel Looker Archive
23	Mail order books
24	Save Coate campaign
26	Study Day programme: Food & Drink
27	Coate Farm and Museum Report
29	Letter from James Luckett Jefferies to his daughter
30	How did you discover Richard Jefferies & the Society?
30	Citings of Jefferies
34	Books by members
35	News from other Societies
36	Meetings and events calendar: 2013

For more information contact:

The Richard Jefferies Society

Hon. Secretary

Pear Tree Cottage, Longcot,

Oxon SN7 7SS

Tel. 01793 783040

Email: info@richardjefferiessociety.co.uk

Website: richardjefferiessociety.co.uk

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS 2012-2013

Mr Peter Bainbridge Bainbridge-peter@sky.com	Member Elected 2012-15	95 Hamfield, Wantage, Oxon OX12 9EG
Mr Simon Coleman 01225 332367 simoncoleman007@btinternet.com	Member Elected 2010-13	55 Cowgate, Norwich NR3 1SZ
Prof Roger Ebbatson 01684 567612 ebbatson@tiscali.co.uk	Member Elected 2010-13	157 Upper Welland Road, Malvern, Worcs WR14 4LB
Mr Geoff Hirst 01969 663553 geoff@vghirst.fsnet.co.uk	Treasurer Re-elected 2009-14	Scarr House, Thoraby, Leyburn, N Yorks DL8 3SU
Professor Eric Jones 01285 712657 el_sbjonas@hotmail.com	Vice-Chairman Re-elected 2011-14	6 Leafield Road, Fairford, Glos GL7 4LL
Miss Helen Newman 01214 232100 hnewman1820.higgins.lne@gmail.com	ALS rep Re-elected 2010-13	67 Higgins Lane, Quinton, Birmingham B32 1LJ
Dr Duncan Pepper 0117 9249088 dr.duncan.pepper@gmail.com	Member Re-elected 2011-14	1 Nugent Hill, Bristol, BS6 5TD
Mr John Price 01672 515150 jtprice@waitrose.com	Chairman Re-elected 2010-13	Granham West, Granham Hill, Marlborough, Wilts SN8 4DN
Mr Andrew Rossabi 0208 347 5447	President Elected 2010-2015	1 Bloomfield Court, Bloomfield Road, Highgate, N6 4ES
Mrs Jean Saunders 01793 783040 jeanadsaunders@tiscali.co.uk	Secretary Re-elected 2010-15	Pear Tree Cottage, Longcot, Faringdon, Oxon SN7 7SS
Mr Richard Stewart 01473 216518	Member Re-elected 2010-13	Valezina, 112 Westerfield Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 2XW
Lady Phyllis Treitel 01865 735678	Vice-President & Friends of Ridgeway	Eidsvoll, Bedwells Heath, Boars Hill, Oxford OX1 5JE
Mr John Webb 01793 853171 WWWebb@aol.com	Librarian Re-elected 2011-14	Padbrook, Bincknoll Lane, Wootton Bassett, Wilts SN4 8QR
Ms Rebecca Welshman 01460 75008 rw296@exeter.ac.uk	Member Elected 2010-2013 Student rep.	The Coach House, Mainscombe, Roundham, Crewkerne, Somerset TA18 7TL
Mr Ray Morse is a co-opted Council Member		



FROM THE CHAIR

It seems to have been the case for many years now that the bulk of your Officers' time has been taken up with planning issues, and trying to secure the future of the Jefferies' birthplace and the remains of its surroundings. From the planning of the new Great Western Hospital, through the 10 year series of building development applications, (sometimes involving Universities), and more recently the extension of the model railway into the immediate precincts of

the house, and the new plans for an extension to the adjacent Sun Inn; there has been a continuous stream of applications and necessary responses. We are all immensely grateful to Jean Saunders who came on board as Secretary at just the right time, and has guided and encouraged us all as members to respond to these threats with her informed briefing notes and background knowledge. We have been far from 100% successful, but we have stood up for Richard Jefferies in the Swindon context in such a way that our voice has been heard. The plans now being formulated under Mike Pringle's initiative to form a Trust that would take over the running of the birthplace, may also lead to a more stable future away from the uncertainties associated with Swindon Borough Council.

I mention these recent events, because I know we have members who think on the Richard Jefferies Society as being just a literary organization. If they are concerned that we are spending too much time and energy on what seem to be non-literary activities, then I can only apologise, but if a local authority won't look after its own literary heritage, then we have no choice.

Reading on through this Newsletter, you will see there are plenty of lively issues being debated. It is a very healthy sign when responses are stimulated by articles; and we have a continuation of the "Did Jefferies die a Christian?" debate, and some elucidation of the Kipling and Jefferies' books observation raised in the last newsletter. Our members in the world of academe also continue to keep Jefferies to the fore in their writings and lectures.

An issue exercising us much at present relates to where the recently acquired residue of Samuel Looker's papers should be placed. Suggestions include Exeter University, The British Library, the Wiltshire Local History Centre, and even the Birthplace, should it be adapted for a proper Study Centre. One problem is that the papers do

not constitute a comprehensive archive. They contain some important elements, but also include much to do with Looker's council work in the various parts of the UK he lived in at various times; some family papers, and the fag-end of his personal collection of letters and other memorabilia that he had accumulated. The arguments for the different prospective locations are compelling; Exeter has a large collection of material associated with West Country authors – including Williamson; The British Library has the main Looker archive, including Jefferies' manuscripts; the Wiltshire Local History Centre has our Society's archive, including Williamson and Looker material, and is very conveniently located for Jefferies Land. Gloucester University has also been mentioned, as our nearest Higher Education establishment, and one that contains archives relating to the Dymock Poets.

We had a very good and frank discussion at our very recent Executive meeting, and it was decided to keep the archive at the Birthplace in the short term. This will enable its contents to be listed and evaluated, and later, when this task is complete, will allow Executive Council members to inspect the totality of the papers, and so be better informed before making a decision as to its long-term placement.

Finally, I am pleased to announce two important changes to the membership of the Executive Council. We have a new member, Peter Bainbridge, who brings to our group a wide knowledge of, and interest in many "country" authors and matters. His background in engineering will broaden our expertise base considerably.

The second change concerns the appointment of a new Vice-Chairman of the Society.

Since 2006, when Ray Morse stood down as Vice-Chairman, the post has been unfilled. As our Constitution requires that the Executive Council should appoint from amongst their members a Vice-Chairman, I am very pleased to be able to tell you that Professor Eric Jones was duly elected to that position at our meeting held on 20th October 2012. I shall welcome his support, and his willingness to stand in when necessary. I would also like to congratulate him on his two top-ten placements as recorded on page 31 of this Newsletter.

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

John Price
25 February 2013

FROM THE SECRETARY

Overseas members will find a Membership Renewal notice for 2013-14 with this mailing. Annual subscriptions will be due on 1st July 2013. UK members will receive their reminders with the Summer *Journal* that will be sent out in early July. Please would you notify me by the beginning of June should you wish to terminate your membership on 30th June 2013. In order to save a considerable amount of work, it would be appreciated if UK Members might instruct their bank to pay their subscription automatically by standing order. With this in mind, where appropriate, Members will find a Standing Order form with this mailing. Your co-operation would be much appreciated. Thank you.

Jean Saunders
26 February 2012

Victoria Street, Swindon – front cover photograph circa 1855

The view in the old photograph looks down Victoria Street, Swindon from Old Town. The date is assumed by the costume and could be even earlier. The building on the right currently houses the *Swindon Advertiser* and it is close to the former home of Richard and Jessie Jefferies from 1875-1876 (22 Victoria Street) and where their first child, Harold, was born. The rubble on the left may well be the work for the excavations for the Congregational Chapel on Bath Road (completed in 1866, then demolished after World War II during a process of road widening). The original photograph is held in the Swindon Collection archive, Central Library.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Literary Soundscapes for Swindon

Barry Andrews, a local musician and record producer in Swindon, (he was a band member of XTC and is freelance now at Create Studios, at the Wyvern Theatre) applied for funding from the Arts Council, with our support, for a project he described as a:

Proposal for a series of sonic (sound, spoken word and music) pieces celebrating the literary life of Swindon created in collaboration with four established local groups: the Swindon Literary Festival, the Poetry Society, The Richard Jefferies Society and Matt Fox/Jesse Thompson (Swindon the Opera)... exploring the idea of using sound to make narratives; to use the spoken word in innovative ways, and to apply my musical and production skills to creating an experience more dramatic and multi-layered than that of the 3 minute song. My suggestion would be to make a 30 minute piece from extracts of Jefferies book *After London*. The evocative 'sci-fi' elements of this book would work almost as a radio play and would serve as an accessible intro to Jefferies to those who might have previously found him dry and difficult. The resultant piece would be made in consultation with you and

would of course be available for you to use however you chose in your promotion.

Unfortunately his application was unsuccessful on the grounds that there was 'insufficient public engagement'. Mr Andrews is rethinking his proposal.

Audio recording of *Bevis*

Historian Matthew Ward has recorded about 3 minutes of the beginning of *Bevis* that can be heard on the Internet at <http://audioboo.fm/HistoryNeedsYou>. Mr Ward hopes to record further extracts. Evidently *Bevis* is a personal favourite of his.

Some of you will remember the excellent Michael Williams' reading of *Bevis* that was transmitted by BBC radio's 'Book at Bedtime' in 1981. Thanks to Sheila Povey, we have tapes of the recording that are played regularly in the attic of the Richard Jefferies Museum.

Kaye Franklin



Congratulations to Kaye Franklin once again. After being awarded an MBE in 2011, she has now won a Member of the Year 2012 award by the Mid-Counties Co-operative. In their winter 2012 newsletter, Kaye is given credit for Chairing the Swindon Volunteer Centre that offers advice and support to help people volunteer. Her involvement in the Richard

Jefferies Society is, of course, mentioned.

Monty Don

In an email sent to Mike Pringle (Richard Jefferies Museum Trust), Monty Don (presenter of BBC's *Gardeners' World*) wrote: 'I adore Jefferies work and he has been a very important part of my life for the past 40 odd years so am completely supportive of the project.' He is referring to the project to enable the Richard Jefferies Museum Trust to take over the running of the Museum at Coate. Monty Don is totally committed to organic gardening to demonstrate that you can grow food and flowers successfully and encourage wildlife without chemicals.

It would be super if we might tap into his gardening skills to help with the renovation of the grounds at the Richard Jefferies Museum.

BIRTHDAY LECTURE 2012

**RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY
BIRTHDAY LECTURE**

Saturday 3 November 2012 at 2.30pm
Liddington Village Hall
Church Road

**Imagining Archaeology:
nature and landscape
in the work of
Richard Jefferies**

An illustrated talk by
Rebecca Welshman
University of Exeter

All welcome. Admission free.

Richardjefferiesociety.co.uk
Tel: 01793 783040

**RICHARD
JEFFERIES
SOCIETY**

Rebecca Welshman, 'Imagining Archaeology: Nature & Landscape in Richard Jefferies'

The Birthday Lecture was held on 3rd November 2012 at Liddington Village Hall where we feel quite at home now. 30 people attended. The first half of Rebecca's talk is published in the RJS *Journal* 24; the second half will appear in a later edition. Prof. Ebbatson provided the following report:

In an illuminating and expertly researched paper, Rebecca Welshman analysed the role of archaeology in Jefferies' work, but also placed the 'growing inclination to excavate sites' within the wider 19C context. She began by explaining that at this time archaeology gained in popularity alongside the renewed interest in nature and rural pursuits, the vogue for excavation being also

prompted by accidental discoveries in railway construction or agricultural digging and ploughing. The acceptance of archaeology as a new 'science' alongside the interest in prehistory coincided with the development of Jefferies' own fascination with earlier civilisations, so that as he wrote 'the country seems alive with the dead'. This aspect of his work owes a great deal, as Rebecca showed, to the central importance of Wiltshire, with its hillforts, earthworks and Ridgeway, to archaeology. Jefferies would correspond with leading members of the local archaeological society, such as Canon Jackson and the Revd Goddard, and even entertained ideas of becoming an archaeological writer, and in 1873 presented a paper to the Wiltshire Society. However, he felt uncomfortable in the company of his social 'superiors', and subsequently pursued this interest in a more solitary way, writing on such notable remains as Wayland's Smithy and Belas Knap. His descriptive or journalistic work was to be supplemented in his later writings by a newly spiritual attunement, as in his memorable account of communing with the spirit of the prehistoric man at the beginning of *The Story of My Heart* (1883). Pevensey Castle and the Sussex Downs became central to Jefferies' later work, as Rebecca observed, not only in the more speculative essays but also in the fantasy of *After London* (1885), where the Uffington White Horse also played a significant part.

The final section of this rewarding talk focused upon Jefferies' creative response to the varied landscapes of the Isle of Wight, a topic rather neglected by other commentators. Rebecca argued persuasively that Carisbrooke Castle, the cliff scenery of Ventnor and even the Solent itself fuelled Jefferies' literary imagination. In conclusion she suggested that these archaeological interests offered 'potential for the mind to explore new depths of the soul'. This authoritative and finely illustrated talk was followed by some discussion which covered a number of topics canvassed, including the relevance of Eric Hoskins' notion of 'reading' the landscape, the dominance of a gentlemanly class in 19C archaeological societies, the notion of 'the spirit of place', and the central significance of chalk downland landscapes to Jefferies' imagination.

Roger Ebbatson
6th November 2012

DENYS JAMES WATKINS-PITCHFORD (BB)

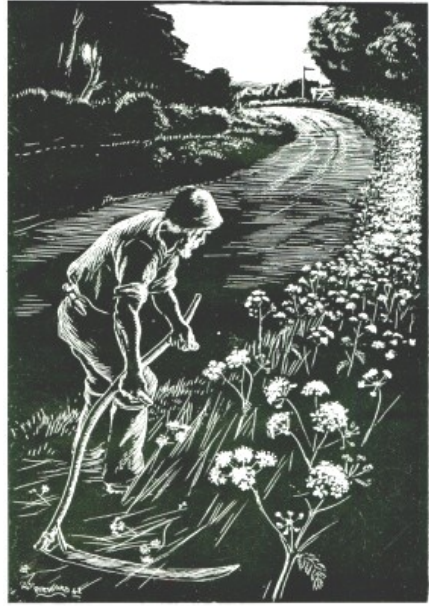
On Saturday 11th May 2013, Ray (Badger) Walker will talk about his personal friendship with Denys James Watkins-Pitchford. Badger is a Derbyshire man and he met BB in the early 1980s. Their shared passion and interest for the countryside, and of Jefferies' writing, led to a solid friendship. By coincidence, Badger's father was born in Chiseldon opposite the church where Richard Jefferies married Jessie Baden.



Denys James Watkins-Pitchford MBE – pictured above – was a naturalist, an illustrator and a children's author writing under the pseudonym 'BB' (a name based on the size of lead shot he used to shoot geese). Born on 25th July 1905 in Northamptonshire, he was the second son of the Revd Walter Watkins-Pitchford and his wife, Edith. His elder brother, Engel, died at the age of thirteen. Denys was himself considered to be delicate as a child, and because of this he was educated at home, whilst his younger twin, Roger, was sent away to school. He spent a great deal of time on his own, wandering through the fields, and developed a love of the outdoors. He enjoyed hunting, fishing and drawing – all of which were to influence his writing. He left home at the age of fifteen to study at the Northampton School of Art where he won several prizes and a travelling scholarship to Paris where he worked at a studio and attended drawing classes. In the autumn of 1924, he entered London's Royal College of Art. In 1930 he became an assistant art master at Rugby School where he remained for seventeen years. Whilst at Rugby School he began contributing

regularly to the *Shooting Times* and started his career as an author and illustrator. He married Cecily in 1939, and they had two children; Angela and Robin – the latter died at the age of seven from Bright's Disease. Cecily died in 1974. By the late 1980s, Watkins-Pitchford needed regular dialysis treatment. He was awarded an honorary MA by Leicester University in 1986, and was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire in 1990. He collapsed suddenly in September of that year, and died while under anaesthetic in the operating theatre on 8th September 1990.

BB dedicated his last book (*Confessions of a Coastal Gunner*) to Ray Badger Walker. He accompanied BB on a number of his epic annual trips to the Wash, and latterly to the Solway Firth and the Northumberland Coast in search of the pink foot and greylag geese that overwinter in these islands. In his foreword to the book, Badger writes: 'It is well known that BB was an old-time hunter-gatherer and shot for the pot, not the size of the bag. He would never waste anything edible, and had his own recipes for serving up a meal.'



Illustrations by Denys James Watkins-Pitchford

LETTER to the EDITOR: JEFFERIES and KIPLING

Janice Lingley has written to the Editor of the Newsletter concerning Jean and Tom Saunders' visit to Bateman's last year (the Autumn 2012 edition, 'Citings of Jefferies', p 26, refers). Miss Lingley writes:

The National Trust brochure referred to is an authoritative description of the house and its contents by Adam Nicholson, first published by the National Trust in 1996, the most recent, revised edition appearing in 2004.

The move to East Sussex in 1902 proved to be something of a watershed in Kipling's career as a writer. In a letter to his American friend Charles Norton Kipling declared that he had not simply acquired a new home for himself and his family, he had discovered a new land: 'We left Rottingdean because Rottingdean was getting too populatedThen we discovered England which we had never done before . . . and went to live in it. England is a wonderful land. It is the most marvellous of all foreign countries that I have ever been in.' In another of his letters, dated April 1904, Kipling, the pioneer motorist, writes: ' . . . the chief end of my car, so far as I am concerned, is the discovery of England. To me it is a land full of stupefying marvels and mysteries and a day in the car in an English county is a day in some fairy museum where all the exhibits are alive and real and yet nonetheless delightfully mixed up with books. For instance, in six hours, I can go from the land of the *Ingoldsby Legends* by way of the Norman Conquest and the Barons' War into Richard Jefferies' country, and so through the Regency, one of Arthur Young's less known tours, and *Celia's Arbour*, into Gilbert White's territory.'

The very fine poem 'Sussex', composed in the year of the Kiplings' move to 'the Very-Own House', conveys a joyous sense of a new beginning and of commitment, for the Kiplings had not simply acquired a property, they were now also the owners of a country estate. Kipling very readily assumed his new role as a farmer. In his autobiographical *Something of Myself, For My Friends Known and Unknown*, published posthumously in 1937, Kipling refers to his collection of books as 'tools of my trade'. Besides the books providing reference and inspiration for his creative work, Nicholson notes that 'the shelves, particularly at the far end of the room to the left of the window, are full of the rural England he was so greedily drinking in.' Apart from the 'complete set of Jefferies', the collection here includes two or three volumes of W.H. Hudson. Books on agriculture – poultry keeping, manures, fences and gates, the art of rat-catching – also beekeeping and angling, are also well represented.

For the author's two young children, Elsie and John, the little river valley of the Dudwell, was a wonderful area to roam and explore. In the summer of the year *Puck of Pook's Hill* was published (1906), Kipling presented Elsie and John with a mock-medieval document, drafted in Kipling's own hand, entitled 'The Charter of the River' (reproduced in facsimile in the Nicholson brochure), granting the children navigational rights to that portion of the Dudwell stream 'between Turbine Point and the Great Ash commonly called Cape Turnagain'. One of the Charter's clauses is echoed, in part, in the introduction to the *Puck* stories: 'By right of Oak, Ash and Thorn are you free to come and go and look and know where I shall show and best you please,' Puck tells Kipling's fictional children Una and Dan. The place-names of the magical topography of the stories, not only reflect their significance in terms of Una and Dan's imaginative play – Volaterrae, Otter Pool, the Fairy Ring theatre with its audience of Three Cows – but also their historical significance with regard to the stories identified with them – Weland's Ford, for Willingford, for example. The site of the old Burwash Forge is called at various times in its fictional career Cyclop's Forge, Thor's Forge and John Collins' Foundry. Thus Kipling's stories are based on the kind of notional development of landscape that Jefferies pioneered in *Bevis, the Story of a Boy*. In the introduction to the third *Puck* story, 'Knights of the Joyous Venture, with what seems to be a nod in Jefferies' direction, Kipling has his worldwide explorers, Una and Dan, opting in their playful pretence for 'a voyage up the Amazon and the sources of the Nile'.

Jefferies' biographer, the writer and philanthropist, Walter Besant provides another link with Kipling, for the two men, both members of the Savile Club, were on very good terms. Kipling felt a great sense of gratitude to Besant, for it was a passage in Besant's book *All in a Garden Fair* that prompted him to leave India with a view to developing his writing career in the capital of Empire. Kipling arrived in London in 1899, the year following the publication of Besant's *Eulogy*, and Besant became the young and inexperienced author's friend and mentor.

Janice Lingley
January 2013

SIMPLY A BIOGRAPHICAL ISSUE?

Since reading George Miller's article 'Did Jefferies Die a Christian After All?', in a Society newsletter, I have been waiting eagerly for someone to offer a response. However, as far as I can see no one has written on the subject so I offer the following observations which I hope lovers of Jefferies will find pertinent.

George Miller's article addressed the much debated question of Jefferies' supposed death bed conversion to Christianity. After sifting through some of the evidence he came to the following conclusion:

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. (Society Autumn Newsletter 2011, p25).

There are some key issues here, however, the statement as a whole and the way in which it is presented, hints at yet something else, which will become evident in due course. In the first instance however, there are two things which need to be said straight away. The question of Jefferies' supposed death bed conversion to Christianity is certainly not an uncritical issue for us today, and it is not simply a biographical issue. To try and reduce the importance of this issue is to deny the importance of all Jefferies' more thought provoking and mystical works. Because, if Jefferies did recant all of his observations about 'Sun Life', if he did repent of his observations about Christianity, then *The Story of My Heart* and other similar mystical writings become reduced to Victorian literary curiosities with no philosophical value to those of us who read them today. The matter is indeed one of critical relevance, so why has George Miller taken the opposite view? The answer I think, lies in a motivation that lay behind the article.

'Did Jefferies Die A Christian after all?' begins levelly enough by presenting what Miller sees as the evidence for his claim. He starts by reiterating the known background to that suggestion, that is, that when J W North arrived at the Jefferies' house on August 14th 1887, he found his close friend but a few hours dead and was told by the bereft widow that, in his final hours, he had found great comfort in the words of the Gospel of St Luke. Or at least this is the story as reiterated by Walter Besant who arrived at the house later to discuss his writing of the *Eulogy of Richard Jefferies*. There are actually two different stories here, which appear to have been conflated. The first is the detail recorded by North; the second is the greater elaboration by Besant. As George Miller fairly records, Besant's elaboration of Jefferies' death bed conversion was later

challenged by Henry Salt, and in response Besant wrote admitting essentially that he had been misinformed:

Now here is an important point. I stated in my Eulogy that he died a Christian. This was true in the sense of outward conformity. His wife read to him from the Gospel of St Luke, and he acquiesced. But I have since been informed ... his views never changed from the time that he wrote 'The Story of my Heart'. (Henry Salt: *The Faith of Richard Jefferies*)

The role of J W North in all this is not discussed. But it is worth bearing in mind that North's first concern was to see how he could go about securing financial support for the widow and her children. An appeal to the public for subscriptions was suggested and North was canny enough to see that playing-down his old friend's more controversial philosophy would do this no harm. He therefore had no reason to challenge Besant's interpretation of events.

It is at this point however, that George Miller's article appears to take a slightly questionable turn, because suddenly the idea of Jefferies recanting of 'Sun Life' becomes, as Miller describes it, 'the affecting tale of Jefferies return to the fold'. Quite why this is affecting or who is affected by it is not clearly revealed at this stage. Instead we are introduced to another 'witness' to Jefferies death-bed conversion, someone Miller calls 'the Hull evangelist'. This witness is the author of an article written for children in an evangelical newsletter published in 1914. The identity of the author is not immediately revealed to us, though we can speculate easily enough upon this. Miller then presents a quotation from the 1914 article which is, in fact, a value laden and highly dubious account of Jefferies' final days, his godless state ('... the Giver of all good was far from his thoughts ... He was a freethinker, hated churches, and neglected the Bible') – and his return to the fold, stating that his last words included the statement – 'those are the words of Jesus, they are true, and all philosophy is hollow ... I have done wrong and thought wrong. It was my intellectual vanity.' The language here attributed to the dying Jefferies would undoubtedly raise the eyebrows of any of his usual readers. Even in illness, Jefferies' words never plodded so heavily and turgidly across a page. These words are, on the contrary, archetypically tractarian.

George Miller does not draw attention to this. In fact he offers no observation on the statement of this witness at this point. Instead he offers what is suggested to be a more balanced and intellectual comment. This being what he describes as 'a Christian commentary on Jefferies' life work and belief **that needs to be taken more seriously**', [my emphasis]. He then goes on to quote a paragraph from Edward Ingram Watkins *Philosophy of Mysticism* (1920). It was Watkins contention that Jefferies' rejection of Christian dogma was really the result of his own failing to understand it properly, that is that it was '... an imperfect Christianity

childishly understood'. Rather than condemning Jefferies' philosophy, Watkins argued that his mysticism and seeking of understanding was, in fact, the spirit of God working within him and, therefore, that *The Story of My Heart* was really Jefferies attempt to bear witness to the knowledge of God and eternal life.

The problem for Jefferies was, as Watkins puts it, that he himself was 'strangely unconscious' of bearing witness to this. Happily however, this failing was finally rectified on his death bed when 'Christian faith was infused in him'. That this was not made abundantly clear to his many admirers is explained by the fact that Jefferies' final acceptance and understanding of Christianity 'was indeed very imperfect, being limited by an ultra-Protestant individualism which rejected all church membership. Nevertheless it was the knowledge of God ... and thus accepted by the whole man.'

This then is what George Miller seems to believe and it would indeed be a powerful rejection of 'Sun Life' if it were true. It is at this point that George Miller reveals that the source used by the Hull evangelist in 1914 was an article produced by Catherine Winkworth Mackintosh in 1889. As he acknowledges, the article by the Hull evangelist has an astonishing similarity to this article, so much so that one has to ask whether both articles were by the same person.

So who was Catherine Winkworth Mackintosh? We know that she was relatively wealthy, that she was an evangelical and that she appears to have adopted the ill and impoverished Jefferies as early as 1884. George Miller acknowledges that she offered the family the benefit of her financial support and then, vitally, he observes that she 'offered spiritual healing ... urging that the Christian faith offered the solution to his anguished questionings and "restless cravings".' Here at last we start to get a little information that shines some light on the claim about Jefferies' death bed conversion. Catherine Winkworth Mackintosh was actually born in Shanghai in 1866, into a family of zealous evangelicals; her aunt and uncle were active missionaries in Africa, and Catherine wrote two books about them: *On the threshold of Central Africa: a record of twenty years pioneering amongst the Barotsi of the Upper Zambesi* (1902) and *Coillard of the Zambesi* (1907).

In Catherine Mackintosh, Jefferies had come to the attention of a Christian sect whose primary mission, as they proclaimed it, was to bring unbelievers to Christ, whether they wanted it or not and wherever they were, be it central Africa or central Stepney. And the more intellectually significant their target, the greater their exertion. In his final, most vulnerable years, Jefferies was besieged by their ministrings until they were able to convince themselves that they had conquered. Even George Miller seems to imply that there is some evidence in the notebooks that Jefferies was finally 'in a state of agonised doubt' about 'Sun Life'. However, on the contrary, the notebooks contain numerous very clear

statements affirming Jefferies rejection of Christianity, e.g. 'I do not believe one word of it – Neither the philosophers of old ... the religions of the World, not the science of today. Not one word of what I have been taught or read' or 'They merely disguise their ignorance under God. Another word for ignorance. The Thunder was god once till understood. There is no benevolent deity.' There is no ambiguity here. Jefferies' beliefs were as strong as they ever had been.

Sadly this obviously did not stop an unseemly tussle over his corpse. There is a parallel for this in the case of the poet Swinburne. We know that Jefferies read Swinburne and had a copy of his *Poems and Ballads*, which included the 'Hymn to Proserpine' with its condemnatory line 'Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown grey from thy breath'. The two men clearly shared similar views.

Not only this. At his death in 1909 Swinburne had left strict instructions that he was to be buried with no Christian symbol or ritual of any kind. At the graveside, however, his friends were horrified when the officiating clergyman promptly covered the dead poet's coffin with a cross and, despite their protests, insisted on implementing the full Christian funeral rite.

In the case of both Swinburne and Jefferies, Evangelical Christians attempted to claim their victory by appropriating the remains of the deceased. In Swinburne's case, it was by imposing their ritual upon him after death; in Jefferies', by claiming his return to their philosophical fold. This last being entirely the claim referred to above by Edward Watkins and it is, of course, the same claim that is made by George Miller in 'Did Jefferies Die a Christian After All?' In noting the effect of C W Mackintosh's intrusion, he states that Jefferies "Listened, reasoned, and rejected", but crucially "did not forbid the topic", and the discussion continued.' An awful lot seems to hang on that word 'crucially'! It is not impossible that the sensitive Jefferies would have allowed his wife and friends to read from the bible at his sick bed. He would have seen it as a comfort to them if not to himself. But there is no evidence at all that Jefferies even considered renouncing 'Sun Life' and embracing Christianity, a creed which he abhorred. On the contrary, it seems that the evangelists are still attempting to claim him! For those of us who believe as Jefferies believed, the issue is still highly critically relevant to us today.

Tom Wareham
September 2012

DISCOVERIES 10: DID JEFFERIES DIE A CHRISTIAN AFTER ALL? – REVISITED

A response to Tom Wareham's critique of Discoveries 7, published in RJS Autumn Newsletter 2010-11. The italics throughout are my own.

In my article 'Did Jefferies die a Christian after all?' I described a controversy that ran for a few years after his death, but no longer claims attention – at least had not done so until Mr Wareham's riposte. In his opening paragraph he remarks on the lack of comment on the article from any other lovers of Jefferies. Perhaps this is because no one else formed such a perverse interpretation of it.

In his second paragraph Mr Wareham quotes the conclusion I reached 'after sifting through *some* of the evidence'. I say in fact that '*the balance of evidence*' '*suggests*' to me, that Jefferies did return to an acceptance of Christian teaching. Jessie Jefferies had always maintained this, but the article drew attention to another witness, CWM (Catherine Winkworth Macintosh), who had met Jefferies some three years before his death and claimed to have engaged in conversations and correspondence with him about the Christian faith throughout this period. I'm careful to say '*If we take this as truthful witness...*', and of course, both ladies may have invented or fantasised the whole thing. The fact (if it is a fact) that CWM was a member of 'an evangelical sect' seems enough to discredit her in Mr Wareham's eyes. I don't myself share the ladies' belief system any more than he does, but to me that is no reason to dismiss their witness. Rather their Christian values might have prompted them to tell the truth.

In paragraph three Mr Wareham challenges my view that the issue of Jefferies' supposed conversion is of biographical interest but of no critical importance. I base this on the observation that many great writers have held crazy or dangerous opinions without it affecting the esteem in which their published works are held. Isaac Newton dabbled in alchemy, Conan Doyle believed in fairies, Henry Williamson worshipped Hitler, and so on. Reading from the Gospel of St Luke rates pretty low on the scale. But Mr Wareham maintains that: 'To try and reduce the importance of this issue is to deny the importance of all Jefferies' more thought provoking and mystical works. Because, if Jefferies did recant all of his observations about 'Sun Life', if he did repent of his observations about Christianity, then *The Story of My Heart* and other similar mystical writings become reduced to Victorian literary curiosities with no philosophical value to those of us who read them today.' This greatly overstates not only the likely effect but also the reported extent of his renunciation. The quest for the fuller life of the soul, for 'ideality', 'the beyond' 'eternity' etc. reiterated in his 'Sun Life' musings is entirely in line with Christian mysticism. This was the point of my citing Watkin, and there are many other scholarly

works (James, Bucke, Underhill etc.) on the subject that could have been referenced. If faith is such a blight on art, thought and creativity what can we make of the works of Milton, Herbert, Donne, Crashaw, Blake and in Jefferies' time Newman and Hopkins, not to mention the great artists, philosophers and musicians who were profoundly Christian in outlook? Jefferies' observations on Christianity are either valid denunciations of hypocrisy, bigotry and narrow sectarianism, or the inclusion of Christianity in the rejection of all previous systems, creeds and philosophies – a standpoint he might well have come to reconsider. The statement that Christianity was 'a creed that Jefferies abhorred' is frankly nonsense.

This goes I hope some way to explaining why I think the conversion controversy has no critical relevance. Jefferies could have ended up a Buddhist or Zoroastrian and Bevis would still be Bevis, the Gamekeeper would still be at Home, and *The Story of My Heart* the great prose poem on its author's spiritual development that it is. But asking the question why I should take a view so different to his own, Mr Wareham proposes: 'The answer I think, lies in a motivation that lay behind the article.' What this hidden agenda is becomes clear in the rest of the piece. I cite a chance discovery of a clipping from a Hull evangelical tract which, as late as 1914, relates the conversion story in Besant's facile and sentimental manner as a homily for children. I describe this as 'the affecting tale of Jefferies' return to the fold', but my irony is lost on Mr Wareham. He believes that I think it affecting, and my plot is to re-instate it in the narrative of Jefferies' life and work to the detriment of all Jefferies' mystical and philosophical writings. Again he comments on the passage I quote from Watkin 'This then is what George Miller seems to believe and it would indeed be a powerful rejection of 'Sun Life' if it were true.' Clearly Mr Wareham doesn't know me and hasn't read any of my published works, on Jefferies or other, and hasn't read this one with any attention. It requires no conjecture about what I 'seem' to think: I'm quite specific about how Watkin fits into my argument:

'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.'

But Mr Wareham is a dab hand at conjecture, which fills the place of any new evidence he has to offer. He suggests that North worked up the

conversion story to help raise funds for Jefferies' family, that CWM, who Jefferies took for a kind and caring friend, was member of a sect actively targeting vulnerable literary figures, and it was her again, in another guise, addressing the children of Hull some twenty years later. He spares Jessie Jefferies any direct accusation of falsehood (though he rejects the words of Jefferies she quoted on stylistic grounds!) but it is implicit in his view of the matter (either that or she was deluded) as it was in Salt's: 'It is not impossible that the sensitive Jefferies would have allowed his wife and friends to read from the bible at his sick bed. He would have seen it as a comfort to them if not to himself.' But this only works if you completely strike CWM's witness from the record, and Mr Wareham produces no valid reason for doing so.

Thus in conclusion Mr Wareham upgrades the question in my title: 'Did Jefferies die a Christian?' to a '*claim*', adding my name to the Watkin/Mackintosh conspiracy to demote and defame Jefferies' most advanced and original writings. He refers to these throughout as 'Sun Life', a heading used in Jefferies' last notebooks for his troubled meditations on nature, the soul and human destiny. Even in this random, disjointed and at times illegible form the notes make an extraordinary and moving fugue of visions and ideas, but it is doubtful that, even if he had survived, Jefferies could ever have formed a coherent text from them. For every passage that echoes the Olympian self-confidence of *The Story of my Heart* (interspersed in Looker's version) there are moments of doubt that what he feels and sees so vividly has any objective reality, or that words could express it. The questioning deepens as to whether his aspirations for mankind and his own soul are nothing in the end, but a 'dream'.

So I stand by my article, but I have to admit that I got it very wrong in supposing the religious issue was dead and a balanced and cautious reappraisal was possible. The Christian evangelicals, lead by the redoubtable General Booth, have long since left the field, but their place has been taken by the militant atheists, championed no doubt by the equally redoubtable Dr Richard Dawkins. For myself I have no quarrel with what anyone believes or doesn't believe, provided he or she is prepared to accept the beliefs and unbeliefs of others. But given that so many of the great artefacts of mind and matter in Western and indeed World culture, from the Pyramids onwards, are rooted in religious beliefs of one kind or another, those who cannot understand or accept them on any level have a problem.

George Miller
January 2013

SAMUEL LOOKER ARCHIVE

The Society's Executive Council has given a considerable amount of time with regard to deciding the best place to store the material in the Looker archive that was purchased by the Society in November 2011 from the wife of Looker's grandson. The preferences expressed by members include Exeter University (that promotes west country writers), another university such as Gloucester (that specialises in literary archives), the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre at Chippenham (where the Society's archives are stored), the Richard Jefferies Museum (obviously, but has limited space) and the British Library (where much of Looker's original collection relating to Jefferies is stored). The most important considerations have been to make the collection accessible to Members, researchers and the general public; to try to keep the collection together albeit that we own a small part of a far larger collection of Looker's papers; and to find a secure and appropriate repository.

It has been a chicken and egg situation given that until we know the exact contents of the many boxes, it is difficult to make a decision. Simon Coleman and Rebecca Welshman have had the greatest opportunity to go through the collection so far and have put the papers in some semblance of order. They report that 'the archive gives an unprecedented insight into the life of Looker, his works, his imagination, hopes and literary associations'. Rebecca's parents were kind enough to provide storage space for it but the boxes are now stored temporarily at the Richard Jefferies Museum awaiting a complete listing of contents and an evaluation that Jean Saunders and John Price recently agreed to undertake. A special meeting will be organised in order that Members can look at the contents themselves, although anyone attending this year's Study Day might like to take a look.

As reported in the Spring 2012 newsletter (p. 21), selected items have been placed in the Richard Jefferies Museum that include the two original manuscripts in Richard Jefferies' hand. The first of these is 'The Heart of England' published in *Richard Jefferies: Man of the Fields* by Samuel Looker and Crichton Porteous (London: John Baker Publishers, 1965). The second: a conspectus detailing Jefferies' ideas for a new magazine that has been transcribed by the Hon. Secretary and published in the Society's *Journal* No.24 (winter 2012). Jefferies' copy of *Wayland Smith* (that bears Jefferies' name and Victoria Street, Swindon address) was a very special find and is also on display along with Looker's pamphlet that mentions the book.

The 37 letters and cards sent to Looker between 1941-1956 by Phyllis Hargrave (Richard and Jessie's daughter) have been transcribed by Rebecca Welshman and Jean Saunders and are held in a special file at the Museum. These transcripts can be downloaded as a pdf file from the Society's website at <http://richardjefferiessociety.co.uk/research.html>.

Mail order sales

Postal sales are dealt with by the Hon. Secretary (see p.2 for contact details). We have a good stock of books at the Richard Jefferies Museum besides our own publications listed below. If you are looking for a particular book, please ask.

'Essay on Instinct' – Richard Jefferies, 2012 (pamphlet)	£2.50 (incl. Postage)
<i>Richard Jefferies' letters to Aunt Ellen</i> , 2009 (softback - 155g)	£ 4.50
<i>Amaryllis at the Fair</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2009. Introduction by Carolyn Clarke (softback – 295g.)	£ 6.00
<i>Greene Ferne Farm</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2009 Introduction by George Miller (softback – 207g.)	£ 5.00
<i>The Interpreter: a biography of Richard Jefferies</i> – Audrey Smith, 2008 (softback – 279g.)	£ 5.00
<i>The Scarlet Shawl</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2009. Introduction by Andrew Rossabi. (softback – 294g.)	£ 5.99
<i>The Dewy Morn</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2009. Introduction by Rebecca Welshman (softback – 442g.)	£ 7.00
<i>Adventures in the Vale of the White Horse: Jefferies Land</i> – Kate Tryon, 2010 (limited edition soft-back)	£12.00

(Add UK postage & packing £1.20 extra per copy)

<i>Restless Human Hearts</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2008. Introduction by Andrew Rossabi, 2008. (hardback; £20 – 776g.) (Softback version £8 – 711g.)	£20.00 ----- £ 8.00
<i>Richard Jefferies: An Index</i> – Matthews & Treitel, 2008 (hardback – 558g.)	£15.00
<i>The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies</i> – Matthews & Treitel, 1994 (hardback – 561g.)	£12.00
<i>World's End</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2008. Introduction by Andrew Rossabi (softback – 576g.)	£ 7.99
<i>Richard Jefferies: An Anthology</i> – Matthews & Welshman, 2010 (hardback – 525g.)	£20.00
<i>The Rise of Maximin</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2012 (hardback – limited edition of 60 copies)	£20.00

(Add UK postage & packing £2.75 extra per copy)

SAVE COATE CAMPAIGN

You are all aware that, on 19th March 2012, the Secretary of State granted planning permission for nearly 900 new houses to be built between the hospital and Dayhouse Lane along with approving land to build a primary school, shops and a hospital extension. There is also a large parcel of land for employment use that lies to the west of Dayhouse Lane on the Coate Water side of the pretty country road.

The Section 106 agreements were signed off in May last year. These relate to the funding for various infrastructure provisions on and off site which the developer pays for. This does not include any money for the Richard Jefferies Museum despite our best attempts to lobby for some. Redrow Homes and Persimmon Homes have full planning permission to start working on the access roads but there's no activity on that front so far.

In mid-February Swindon Council alerted us to a consultation on the design code proposed by the developers for the first phase of building work in the northern half of the plan (i.e. Coate rather than Badbury Wick). It is not a detailed planning application for the design of individual buildings – just a general outline. The developers want to start building at the northern end first i.e. Coate. They plan to build their tallest buildings (3-4 storeys) on the highest points in the rolling landscape alongside the main road through the development (“The Boulevard”) and all would be of a contemporary design. These buildings would be clearly visible from Coate Water, Liddington Hill and Dayhouse Lane. The main design of other houses at the Coate end is fairly traditional – red brick or rendered walls with pitched roofs (red tiles or slates) but with very little variation or features that would detract from the bland nature of the appearance. There are plans to stop up Dayhouse Lane to prevent access to the development area from the north but there would be access at the southern end. The employment area is located on the west side of Dayhouse Lane – hence the potential for problems. We have argued that there should be no access allowed from Dayhouse Lane to the development area and that a bridge should be erected over the lane to accommodate internal development traffic. We will object to the height and design of buildings.

The County Archaeologist, Melanie Pomeroy Kellinger, reported at a Swindon Council meeting (Archaeological Advisory Body) that further investigations of archaeological features had been requested as part of the pre-planning process. Melanie Pomeroy Kellinger confirmed that archaeology from various periods had been identified between Coate Water and the Hospital site and covered the period between the

Neolithic and Medieval eras. As the site is rich in archaeology, there will be an archaeological presence at the site to record any findings. Discussions would be undertaken with the developers regarding the preservation of the archaeology found at the site and interpretation panels regarding the site would be erected to provide information to the local community. It was proposed that consideration be given to theming new road names with an archaeological connotation.

Along with the loss of a very old ash tree, there is a brand new Coate roundabout sign at the top of Dayhouse Lane and next to the Richard Jefferies Museum on the Marlborough Road. It is huge and another intrusion on the setting of the Museum. Whereas before 'Coate Water Country Park' was clearly identified as such on the old sign, on the new one it just says 'Coate'. Is Swindon Council trying to abolish Coate hamlet as a geographical area?

You will be aware that Swindon Council's draft Swindon Core Strategy had a policy in place to develop land at 'Commonhead' that paved the way to planning permission being granted at Coate and Badbury Wick. This draft strategy has now been replaced with a new consultation document: the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026. Consultation ran to 23rd February 2013. Swindon Council is proposing that 22,000 new houses should be built in Swindon by 2026. This is an astronomic figure of approximately 1,500 houses a year when in the current climate of recession, housing completions have been in the order of about half this rate. The draft policy for Commonhead (Policy NC2) purports to protect buffer land at Coate Water but it only includes an area between the proposed Coate development east of Coate Water; the fields to the south are not included and it is only marked as a 'non-coalescence' area on the main proposal map. The Plan runs to 2026 when it will be reviewed; just in time for Redrow Homes and Persimmon Homes to submit a planning application to finish destroying the remaining fields around Coate Water. The policy for Coate's buffer land requires some permanency about it – to protect the landscape, ecology, literary and historic value of the fields in perpetuity. The Society has responded to the consultation document suggesting changes.

STUDY DAY

Food and drink in Jefferies' world.

SATURDAY 27th July 2013, JEFFERIES' MUSEUM, COATE

PROGRAMME

Jefferies writes about food and drink more often than you might imagine but he falls short of writing recipes! He mentions the price of crops regularly, growing food and the food and drink enjoyed by characters in his novels. The programme for the day is somewhat flexible as we have been unable to guarantee a key speaker at the time of going to print. There may be more time to devote to your choice of readings for the day. To prevent repetition, it would be helpful if members let the Hon. Sec. know what piece they would like to read.

10.30 Doors open and refreshments.

11.00 Welcome and an introductory talk by the Chairman, John Price.

11.30 Select a relevant piece of Jefferies' writing by or about Jefferies (5-10 minutes long) on the subject of food and drink to read to others.

1.00-2.30 Lunch break. RJS publications and second-hand books will be on sale and you can explore the Museum, the Looker archives and Coate Water.

2.30 Key Speaker? Further readings?

3.45 Refreshments.

4.15 Depart



COATE FARM AND MUSEUM REPORT



Some of the volunteers working in the gardens, autumn 2012

Volunteers from Intel, Nationwide and RCUK based in Swindon worked in the gardens from September to November 2012 alongside Groundwork UK. A new pond was created that will be managed to encourage wildlife. Fences have been replaced and the farm out-buildings have been cleared of brambles. More spring bulbs have been planted, new fences erected and paths improved. The old cow-yard area has been taken over by volunteers who plan to grow vegetables and herbs. It has been a major ordeal digging over the area – the wet weather conditions haven't helped.

The Society has succeeded in obtaining a grant for £1,000 to buy a ride-on mower in the hope that this might attract more people to volunteer to cut the grass! The grant is administered by Swindon Council under their Grassroots' scheme.

North Wilts Model Engineering Society succeeded in gaining planning permission for change of use of the woodland created in Jefferies' Home Field. They plan to extend the miniature railway track at Coate Water to the back garden of the Museum but dropped the proposal to place a Richard Jefferies Halt and Platform next to the Museum as a result of our opposition to the concept. Swindon Council's planning officer granted planning permission on 21st November 2012 and dismissed possible archaeological concerns and loss of tranquillity because he believed that the noise of traffic on the Marlborough Road had already taken away tranquillity from the

Museum! Our concerns, that a change of use of the woodland would set a precedent for more development, were ignored on the grounds that any further proposals would be judged on their own merit. We shall see. The railway group have already cut down a considerable number of trees and the view from the main Museum window has already been compromised.

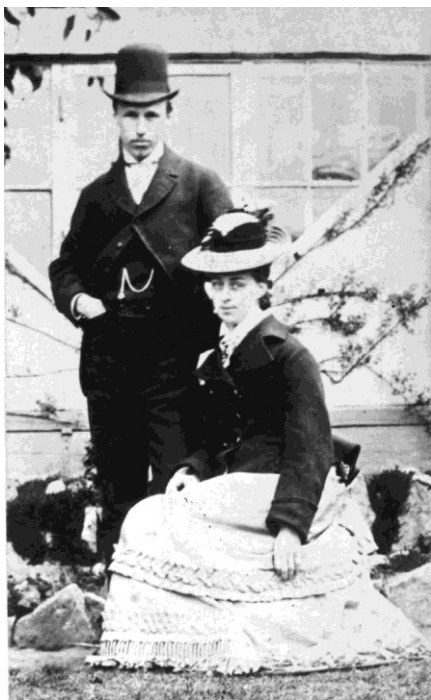
From the beginning of May to the end of September, the Museum will be open every Sunday from 2-5pm as well as the usual second Wednesday of the month from 10am-4pm throughout the year. We are extremely grateful to all the volunteers who have helped at the Museum. During 2012, volunteers donated the equivalent of 266 full days to work in the garden and in the building and there were 1,156 visitors to the Museum.

In January 2013 Arkells Brewery submitted a planning application to erect a detached building in the garden of the Sun Inn at Coate. You may remember that this area was once part of Brook Field and Jefferies' farm but was sold to Arkells by Swindon Council. Arkells is planning to erect a two-storey bed and breakfast building directly opposite the infamous ha-ha wall next to the Museum boundary fence. The view from the Jefferies' gardens would be of a long rendered wall with no features to break it up and sky-lights in the pitched roof. It would also be sited over the main sewer from Coate hamlet! The Society has submitted objections to the planning application.

Some delightful visitors from the USA visited the Museum on 23rd February. Terry Tempest Williams (a prolific nature writer) and Brooke Williams (Great West Institute) are involved in an American reprint of *The Story of My Heart*; they will be writing a forward/introduction. They came to England from Paris in order to see the Venus Accroupie first. Hours were spent at the Richard Jefferies Museum and they left armed with about twenty books. They intended to explore Jefferies' land and the downs before leaving Swindon to visit Goring and Jefferies' grave at Broadwater Cemetery in Worthing. As great lovers of Thoreau, they plan to sing the praises of Jefferies to all and sundry in the USA. Added to this Norman Chaney and his wife Freda (also from the USA) will be visiting the Museum on 2nd March and joining us at our joint meeting with the Friends of Alfred Williams.

A LETTER FROM JAMES LUCKETT JEFFERIES TO HIS DAUGHTER SARAH

In the Society's autumn newsletter 2012 (p.33), we published a previously unknown photograph of Richard Jefferies' sister, Sarah, taken in 1910. Members might enjoy reading a touching and warm letter to Sarah (also known as Lily to differentiate her from her father's sister Sarah) who was about to marry Robert Billing on June 10, 1875 at Sydenham. For many years Sarah lived with Aunt Ellen Harild at Shanklin Villa, Sydenham. The photograph below of Robert and Sarah was taken in 1875. Richard Jefferies was not at the wedding.



Coate

June 7th. 1875.

My Dear, dear Daughter,

I now forward what I spoke of, a cheque to you in your Maiden name, Thirty-five Pounds which I beg You to accept, as a trifle for you to know I am not unmindful of You(I need not say what I would, no if I could).

I reached home twelve o'clock wanting a quarter, found all right. Charlie up this day as turned out dull for haymaking. I feel much more satisfied now I have seen You, Your Dear Kind Aunt and Your Loving and Lovable Dear Robert for you to be among so many Kind Friends is very very gratifying indeed My Dear -- Mrs. Billing so shortly can scarcely believe my senses. May you be happy both of you, is a very common saying, everything seems to be done to make you Happy both on Your Wedding day and afterwards.

My Dear Sarah whether I might attempt to write again before you are Mrs Lily Billing I must not promise the Boys are waiting now to be off, if you want Richard with you on Thursday order him to come, we must all help him if he is afraid of the expense –

Good bye Dear

Jas. L. Jefferies

HOW DID YOU FIRST DISCOVER RICHARD JEFFERIES AND THE SOCIETY?

I cannot be exact about the date [first discovery of Jefferies]. I have no diary entry or strong clue as to when I became aware of R.J. Having sifted through my many volumes the earliest ‘pencilled-in’ date I find is 31st August 1978 in the joint volume containing *The Gamekeeper at Home & The Amateur Poacher*. This was a birthday present from a close friend who would have known about my interest in nature & the great outdoors.

My childhood was certainly one steeped in the natural world. I collected & bred butterflies and spent most of my free time in the countryside – a sort of Tom Sawyer existence.

I became the 100th member of the Henry Williamson Society in 1980 and it was around then that I started collecting H.W. & R.J. in a serious way. H.W.’s works were more readily available & so naturally my H.W. collection grew rapidly.

After seeing a first edition of *Amaryllis* in a Brighton bookshop on the 20th April 1979 for £35! I sold various personal items (including a quart pewter pot) and was able to purchase the volume in December of that year. Earlier in that year I had purchased *The Gamekeeper* 1880 with the Whymper illustrations (£25). The rest is history. In 1987 I watched ‘The Man on the Hill’ by Barry Gavin on T.V. and was not very impressed by the music BUT earlier this year, 23rd March [2012], I watched the film again at Prestigne in Powys when Barrie Gavin was present. Being some 25 years older, my sharply critical young mind of 1987, had become more mellowed & matured and I saw the film in a far more illumined light. It was indeed this ‘Damascus’ light that rekindled my interest in R.J. so much so that I’ve rejoined the Society and am ‘fired-up’ to help promote the works and offer my physical abilities at Coate.

The Society’s 2012 A.G.M. was memorable and my 1½ hour paddle circumnavigating Coate Water in my hide coracle was fantastic.

My first membership of the R.J. Society was inspired by dear Brian and Beryl Fullagar whom I met at H.W.S events.

Peter Faulkner

29th December 2012

CITINGS OF RICHARD JEFFERIES

Both Peter Bainbridge and Andrew Rossabi came across ***The Green Road into the Trees*** by Hugh Thomson (Preface Publishing, 2012. ISBN: 978-1848093324) subtitled ‘An Exploration of England’. This is an account of the author’s walk along the Icknield Way (in the footsteps of Edward

Thomas). On pp. 105-111 Thomson gives a readable potted biography of Jefferies with particular reference to *The Gamekeeper at Home* and *The Story of My Heart* and writes that his 1948 edition of *The Gamekeeper* is one of his favourite books. Mr Thomson has kindly agreed to talk about his travels at the Society's Birthday Lecture this year.

Cambridge Journals Online has been celebrating its 15th anniversary with the offer of a free read of the top most downloaded fifteen articles 'of all time' in Rural History. Prof. Eric Jones' Birthday Lecture, 'The Land that Richard Jefferies Inherited' comes in at number 6 and his 'Blood Sports' paper, which uses some of Jefferies' material, at number 8.

The Wilts & Gloucestershire Standard or 'Hedger and Ditcher' as it is fondly known by its older readers (on account of the number of agricultural advertisements that appeared on its pages for more than 100 years) celebrated 175 years of the newspaper. Thanks to John Hyde who passed on the insert in the newspaper dated 20th September 2012, we have a potted history of the newspaper that included a colour photograph of the plaque on the *Standard's* wall in Cirencester that remembers 'Richard Jefferies, the Wiltshire author, [who] was at one time its chief reporter'. Interesting to note: it is reported that printing of any kind was expensive in 1837 because of the taxes imposed on knowledge. The *Standard* cost 5d at this time and 4d went as tax.

The Loughborough **Rural Experience Conference** takes place from 26-28th March. Roger Ebbatson will be presenting a paper on Jefferies whilst a panel with Rebecca Welshman, Anna Stenning and Prof Ebbatson will hold a session on Jefferies.

Eric Jones pointed out that Richard Jefferies gets enthusiastic mentions in Ferdinand Mount, **Full Circle: How the Classical World Came Back to Us** (London: Simon & Schuster, 2010). On p. 383 Mount says, 'The suburbs have now invaded the little hamlet of Coate, and Coate farmhouse where Jefferies was born shrinks beside the dual carriageway leading to the motorway.'

Rebecca Welshman came across this quote from Richard Jefferies in the Woodland Trust's publication **'New Woods for People'**: 'The great painter, Autumn, has touched with the tip of his brush a branch of the beech tree, here and there leaving an orange spot, and the green acorns are tinged with a faint yellow.' *The Hills and the Vale*.

It is well known that **T E Lawrence** had a collection of Jefferies' works at his home at Clouds Hill, Dorset. Evidently, on his death, Lawrence's brother sold all his books and the ones on display at Clouds Hill are not the originals. A telephone call from Carl Pennington of Wigan

confirmed this information as he is the proud owner of Lawrence's copy of *Nature Near London*. Mr Pennington's brother was a book dealer and handled the sale of many of Lawrence's book collection. Most only bore Lawrence's book plate but some had his signature too. Mr. Pennington's copy of *Nature Near London* is a first edition, it is well read but only bares a bookplate. He has offered to show the book to anyone interested – phone 07843 161227.

Margaret Keeping wanted to let us know about her biographical fiction ***A Conscious Englishman***, published on 7th February 2013 by Street Books (ISBN 978-0-9564242-3-5, £9.99). This poignant novel tells the story of the last years of Edward Thomas's life. Told from the point of view of both Edward and his loyal wife Helen, it shows him wrestling with words along with marriage, children, the perpetual lack of money, and eventually with his conscience. Inspired by Edward and Helen's writings, the novel is set in Gloucestershire and Hampshire. The book includes reference to Jefferies' influence on Edward Thomas. Ms Keeping writes in an email to the Hon. Sec.: 'I wrote an MA dissertation on Thomas in 1999 and became interested in his evolution from prose to poetry and in all his "nature" writing. My mentor during the writing of the novel was Dr Guy Cuthbertson the Thomas scholar. ... The only unresearched "made-up" material concerns some speculations about the artist Edna Clarke-Hall.'

Peter Bainbridge supplied a copy of page 32 of the ***Church Times*** (14th December 2012) that is dedicated to an interview with Candida Lycett Green – author, broadcaster, journalist and member of the Society. The questions cover a considerable amount of ground but her clear passion for the Berkshire Downs around the Uffington White Horse and the Ridgeway near to where she lives and her love of old buildings and England's countryside reveal how she follows in her father's (Sir John Betjeman) footsteps. In response to changing one thing in England, Ms Lycett Green said that she would 'stop the present Government making a balls-up of the planning system ... They will be the Government to go down in history as wrecking England'. And her anger is directed at 'greedy developers building on Richard Jefferies's sacred Greenfield landscape outside Swindon'.

Felicity Cobb was delighted to read an article by Candida Lycett Green in the January 2013 edition of the ***Countryfile*** magazine. It is all about development, and she writes a heartfelt plea about what has happened to Swindon, and in particular how no one has taken any notice of the Richard Jefferies Society at Coate. She states that David Cameron says that he will defend his beautiful part of Oxfordshire against the builders, and then compares this to the fate of poor old

Swindon (her nearest big town), where countless developments have covered the town, and in spite of many in-fill sites available how Redrow have been all set to build on the only decent and historical/literary area of land in the town – *i.e.* Coate.

George Miller reports that the Prime Minister also appeared on Countryfile and was interviewed by John Craven. David Cameron gave an assurance that no greenfield land would be built on where the following applied:

1. Special interest – historic, landscape, cultural
2. Local people opposed
3. Local authority opposed
4. Other sites available

He is obviously unaware of what is happening at Coate where all these contraindications apply. The Hon. Secretary wrote to the Prime Minister at the end of the year to put him right!

Eric Jones came across the **Reading Experience Database** (RED) run by the Open University on the Internet and found references to Jefferies. There is clear enthusiasm for Jefferies' writing during World War I as indicated by extracts taken from minutes of a Quaker reading group based in Reading. Evidently detailed minutes were kept of decades' worth of meetings since the 1890s and the OU has been given permission to enter all of the minutes up until 1945 into RED. Dr Edmund King, Research Associate for RED has given us permission to quote from the minute book and he is currently collecting information about what soldiers were reading during World War I. He said that 'if I find any further references to Jefferies, I shall let you know'.

Ernest E. Unwin's *XII Book Club Minute Book, Vol. 2 (1915-31)*. The following meeting minute was dated 28th May 1915:

The evening was then devoted to Richard Jefferies –Poet-Naturalist.

Ernest E. Unwin [born 1881] read a paper dealing with his life & the main aspects of his work. In this it was shown how the changes in environment & in health affected the style of his writings & an attempt was made to give a critical appreciation of his work. This was helped by numerous readings given by H.M. Wallis, Rosamund Wallis, C.I. Evans, Ursula D. Unwin, Howard R. Smith, & Ernest E. Unwin.

On 20 December 1918: 'Mary Hayward described her discovery of *The Story of my Heart* by Richard Jefferies & read some extracts from it.'

In Penelope Fitzgerald's ***Charlotte Mew and Her Friends*** (London: 1984) p.53, she writes: 'In 1889 [...] [Charlotte Mew] had been reading Jeffries' [*sic*] *Field and Hedgerow*, his last essays, a book published after his death (which supplied the epigram for Mew's story 'The Minnow Fishers').' From information on the back cover of the book:

Charlotte Mew (1869 – 1928) was a poet with a formidable reputation who, Thomas Hardy declared, was ‘far and away the best living woman poet’ and who wrote some of the finest English poems of the twentieth century. Her private life, to all appearances, was content and respectable: she was a dutiful daughter, living at home in late Victorian Bloomsbury, waiting, with the help of a sister, on a monster of an old mother. The proprieties had to be observed and no-one suspected that the Mews had no money, that two siblings were insane and that Charlotte was a lesbian, living in the dark thrill of self-inflicted frustration. On all this Charlotte put a brave face, but despite literary success and a passionate, enchanting personality, eventually the conflicts within her drove her to despair, and she killed herself by drinking a glass of the household disinfectant, Lysol, the cheapest poison available.

Andrew Rossabi reported that the catalogue of the *Pre-Raphaelites* exhibition at Tate Britain this winter revealed that the river in which **Ophelia** is shown floating was none other than the Hogsmill, setting of ‘A Brook’ and ‘A London Trout’ in *Nature Near London*. Millais painted the background to the picture on the spot in summer 1851, which he spent with Holman Hunt at Ewell.

Holman Hunt painted two pictures of Fairlight Glen: *Our English Coasts (Strayed Sheep)* (1852) and *Fairlight Downs–Sunlight on the Sea* (1852-8). Jefferies made an outing by rowing boat to Fairlight Glen in September 1870 when staying at Hastings before his Brussels trip.

BOOKS BY MEMBERS

Pioneers of Ecological Humanism is Prof. Brian Morris’s latest book (Sussex: Book Guild Publishing, 2012). Prof. Morris examines the lives, works and philosophy of three key thinkers in the field of modern ecology: Lewis Mumford, René Dubos and Murray Bookchin. He argues that all made a major contribution in the field but have been unfairly overlooked or misunderstood by their contemporaries and successors.

Literature & Landscape 1830-1914, by Prof. Roger Ebbatson is with Palgrave and will be published in June. It contains substantial material on Richard Jefferies, along with Tennyson, Hardy, Ruskin & Edward Thomas.

Rebecca Welshman has contributed a chapter to ***Mysticism, Myth and Celtic Identity***, published on 20th November 2012 by Routledge. The book ‘explores how the mythical and mystical past informs national imaginations. Building on notions of invented tradition and myths of the nation, it looks at the power of narrative and fiction to shape identity, with particular reference to the British and Celtic

contexts. The authors consider how aspects of the past are reinterpreted or re-imagined in a variety of ways to give coherence to desired national groupings, or groups aspiring to nationhood and its “defence”. Rebecca’s contribution quotes from *The Story of my Heart* and discusses Jefferies’ ‘Celtic’ influences.

The Fabric of Society and how it creates wealth – wealth distribution and wealth creation in Europe 1000—1800.

Published by Arley Hall Press this year, Charles Foster’s books are mainly based on study of the Arley Hall archives (that illuminate life and work in rural Cheshire). His new book, written in conjunction with Eric Jones, is different and is an attempt to understand why industry, trade and machinery came to Europe after 1000AD and why North West England was the major centre of this revolution between 1750 and 1850. This book is available to buy as a paperback (ISBN 09518382 5 9) or it can be read on-line and downloaded free from this website (<http://www.arleyhallarchives.co.uk/press.htm>).

NEWS FROM OTHER SOCIETIES

Alliance of Literary Societies

The ALS Literary Weekend 2013 will take place in Oxford on 1-2 June. This will be organised and hosted by the Barbara Pym Society. A weekend of talks, tours and conversation about books and writers is planned, centred on St Hilda’s College.

Contact Helen Newman should you require further information (see contact details on p.4) or use the Alliance’s website at:

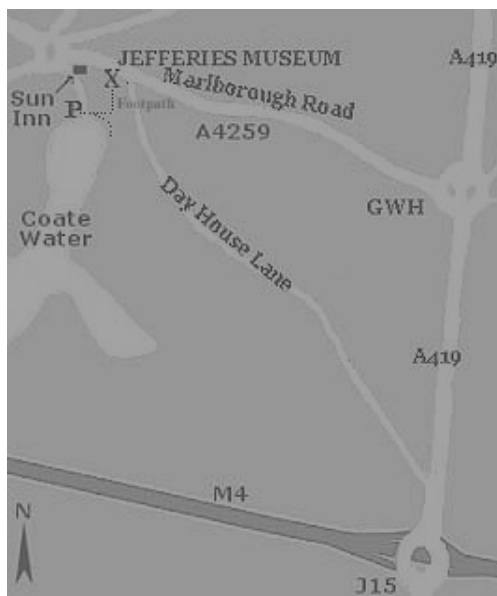
<http://www.allianceofliterarysocieties.org.uk/>.

Wiltshire Heritage Museum 41 Long Street, Devizes. The Richard Jefferies Society is a long-standing member of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society. We have a ticket that will admit 3 members to the Museum at any one time. The ticket is also valid at Salisbury Museum. Please contact the Chairman if you would like to borrow the ticket (see p.4).

Michael Parrott reported that the **Friends of Broadwater Cemetery** organised a themed tour related to ‘entertainers’ buried at the Broadwater and Worthing Cemetery on 6th October 2012. Approximately 30 visitors attended and the event included information about W. H. Hudson and Richard Jefferies. When the group run these tours they produce a booklet about the subject matter. Mr Parrott was also invited to say a few words at Jefferies’ grave, where he distributed ‘Jefferies in Sussex’ leaflets.

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2013

- Sat 2 March* Joint meeting with the Friends of Alfred Williams. This year it is the Society's 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.
- Sat 6 April* Simon Coleman talk – 'The London experience and how it affected Richard Jefferies.'
- Sat 11 May* Ray (Badger) Walker will talk about his personal friendship with Denys James Watkins-Pitchford ['BB'] (see pp. 11-12 for more information).
- Sat 27 July A Study Day. Jefferies' Museum: 10.30am-4.30pm. Theme: Food and drink in Jefferies' world. See p. 26.
- Sat 2 Nov AGM and Birthday Lecture, Liddington Village Hall. Hugh Thomson will be talking about his walk along the Icknield Way (see pp. 31-2). More information in the Autumn 2013 newsletter.



* Meetings begin at 2.00pm in the Jefferies Museum, Marlborough Road, Coate, Swindon, SN3 6AA. Doors open at 1.00pm – an opportunity to look around.

The museum is adjacent to the Sun Inn pub and next to Dayhouse Lane. Parking is free at Coate Water Country Park where a footpath, near the miniature railway, leads to the Museum. There is limited parking at the Museum during soft ground conditions.

Regular buses run between Swindon town centre and Coate roundabout (*e.g.* 13, 14 & 20) where you need to alight.