

THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2019



From a watercolour of Jefferies' mill, old Swindon, by John Luckett Jefferies. Holy Rood church is in the background. Photograph taken by John Povey c.1980. See pp.13-17.

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).



Annual Membership is open to all on payment of the current subscription of £12 single or £14 couple (£8 students). Overseas Members incur additional postal charges of £6.

Members receive spring and autumn newsletters along with a *Journal*. The next annual report will be included in the spring 2020 newsletter. The Society has a library of books by and about Richard Jefferies stored at Michael Sherwood's home in Devon. The Society's archives are placed in the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre, Chippenham, or are on display at the Richard Jefferies Museum. The Society awards an annual literary award for excellence in nature writing and provides a research bursary for projects that promote a new understanding of Richard Jefferies.

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NEWSLETTER: edited by Jean Saunders; and proof-read by Peter Robins. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Society. The deadline to submit material for the Spring 2020 Newsletter is **1 February 2020**. Please send your contributions, preferably by email, to the Hon. Secretary as above. The newsletter is also available on the Society's website as a free download.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY, 2020

Sat 4 April, 2.00-4.30pm. Joint meeting with the Friends of Alfred Williams. Richard Jefferies Museum, Marlborough Road, Coate, Swindon SN3 6AA. Select a short extract to read to others by or about Richard Jefferies or Alfred Williams or just come along to listen. The meeting is open to the public and free to attend.

Sat 9 May, RJS Annual General Meeting and Spring Lecture. Liddington Village Hall, Church Road, Liddington (11am to 4.30pm). Dr. Mark Frost, Senior Lecturer in English Literature at Portsmouth University, will be delivering the key address. More information in the Spring 2020 newsletter and annual report.

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PLEASE NOTE THE NEW WEBSITE AND EMAIL ADDRESS

info@richardjefferiessociety.org

<http://www.richardjefferiessociety.org>

If you have access to the Internet, the Society's website is updated regularly and new material is added constantly. Newsletters dating back to 2006 can be downloaded along with the text of all the *Journals*, Jefferies' main titles, nearly 200 documents in the 'Talks and Articles' series, pamphlets and more.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS 2018-2020

Pete Bainbridge (re-elected, 2016-20), Simon Coleman (re-elected, 2016-20), Patrick Dillon (re-elected, 2018-22), Roger Ebbatson (re-elected, 2016-20), Margaret Hunt (Swindon Secretary, re-elected 2018-22), John Price (re-elected 2018-22), Mike Pringle (elected, 2016-20), Andrew Rossabi (President, re-elected, 2015-21), Jean Saunders (Hon. Secretary, re-elected, 2015-21), Tom Saunders (Hon. Treasurer, elected 2017-2023), Barry Sloan (elected, 2016-2020. Elected as Chair 2018), Richard Stewart (contact for Literary Award, tel: 01473 216518, re-elected 2018-22), Phyllis Treitel (Honorary Vice President), Rebecca Welshman (re-elected, 2016-2020). In order to secure a degree of data protection for the Society's Executive Council members, full contact details are no longer provided.

It is with great sadness and regret we announce that Ray Morse, an Honorary Vice President, died in April 2019. There is a tribute to him on pp.8-9.

GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION

The Richard Jefferies Society is required by law to obtain permission from members to hold their contact details on a database. That information will be used for communication purposes (e.g. sending out newsletters etc.) and will not be divulged to a third party. On termination of membership, information held will be removed from the database.

2020 MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Annual memberships are due for renewal on 1 January 2020. Those of you who pay your subscription by standing order (there is an '[s]' after your name/s on the mailing envelope) will not have to do anything—your instructions to your bank will automatically deal with this (unless you haven't notified your bank of the change of date from 1 July—indicated by [sp] on envelope label). Others, apart from Life Members, will find a membership renewal notice with this mailing.

Please send your remittance to the Hon. Sec as soon as possible albeit that any cheques received early won't be banked until 1 January 2020.

To those of you who always need to be sent a reminder (you know who you are!), please try to pay your membership fees on time and spare the Hon. Sec. extra work.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Subscriptions can also be paid by card online via our Paypal account. Go to: <https://www.richardjefferiessociety.org/p/membership.html>

FROM THE CHAIR

Barry Sloan

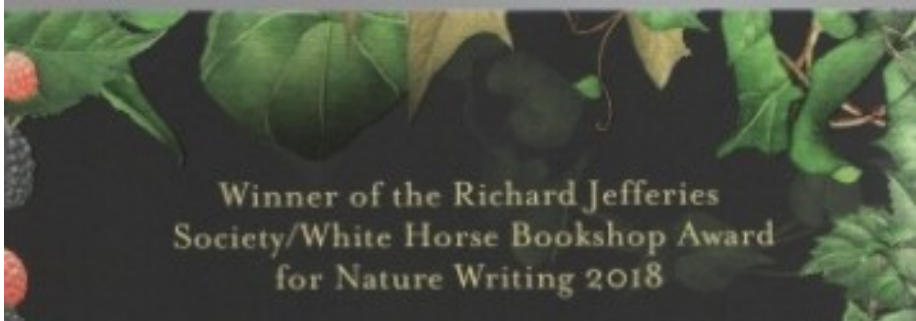
As is reported elsewhere in this edition of the newsletter (see pp.34-35), the Richard Jefferies Society and White Horse Bookshop Literary Prize for Nature Writing (2018) was awarded to Isabella Tree for *Wilding*—a book which was in *The Times* best-seller lists for several weeks earlier this summer. We were delighted when Isabella expressed her readiness to travel to Marlborough to receive her prize in July, and further excited when it became apparent that the demand for tickets quickly exceeded the capacity of the Bookshop. In the event, St Mary's Church provided the venue for an audience of just under 200, representing a wide range of ages, who gathered on the evening of the hottest day of the year and were captivated by Isabella Tree's riveting account of the extraordinary project she and her husband have overseen on their estate at Knepp, West Sussex, since 2000. She used a wide range of photographs and video clips to illustrate the radical changes to the agricultural landscape that have taken place and to show how cattle, ponies, deer and pigs now enjoy freedom and space to roam and live almost entirely without human intervention. This, however, is not all: the wilding of the estate has led to the return of seriously endangered species such as turtle doves and butterflies and the land is now host to all species of British owls and bats and provides a rich environment for wild flowers, a number of which are also struggling to survive elsewhere.



Isabella Tree. Photo by Kerry Davies ©

The questions from the audience after the talk not only showed how Isabella had fired people's imaginations, but also their interest in how the project at Knepp might be taken forward in other locations—even at small-scale local level—and it was good to hear that there is a plan to produce a practical handbook to wilding to encourage more people to get involved.

This was first rate event and a real success for the Society and the Bookshop whose manager admitted his delight that paperback copies of *Wilding* now show that it was the winner of the Richard Jefferies Society and White Horse Bookshop prize (as detailed below).



THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY AND WHITE HORSE
BOOKSHOP LITERARY PRIZE 2019

PLEASE SEND YOUR NOMINATIONS FOR THIS YEAR'S
PUBLICATIONS TO RICHARD STEWART, 112, WESTERFIELD
ROAD, IPSWICH, IP4 2XW, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE & BY
1 DECEMBER 2019 AT THE LATEST.

Nominations can be sent by email to
award@richardjefferiessociety.org

RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY (RJS) / FRIENDS OF ALFRED WILLIAMS (FoAW) JOINT MEETING HELD ON 6th APRIL 2019

Margaret Hunt

This was held at the Richard Jefferies Museum, starting at 2.00pm, hosted by the Friends of Alfred Williams (FoAW) and organised by Roy Burton. FoAW member Caroline Ockwell took the chair for the meeting. A total of eight persons (almost half the number present in 2018) were in attendance. These were: two Members of RJS and FoAW, one Member of RJS, four Members of FoAW and one visitor.

Apologies for Absence had been received from two RJS members, both of whom had prior engagements. A third member was in hospital. There was more than one FoAW member absent due to illness.

Before the event began, the sad news was given of the death on 1 April of Ray Morse, RJS Honorary Vice President. He would be greatly missed.

The first reading was an extract from the personal records of the visitor member. It was followed by a passage from Alfred Williams' 'Life in the Valleys,' then by a description of the death of a farm labourer taken from *The Pocket Richard Jefferies*. A poem from Alfred Williams' 'The Testament' and a reading from the same author's 'I Care Not For Politics' came next. Roy Burton took over at this stage, and with the help of printed papers he had produced, invited members of the group to share readings with him. These were taken from Alfred Williams' *Folk Songs of the Upper Thames* (accompanied by CDs of two of them by local performers) and *Poems in Wiltshire*. The Richard Jefferies material came from *Field and Hedgerow*, *The Story of My Heart*, *The Open Air*, *The Pocket Richard Jefferies* and *Nature Near London*. After a reading of Alfred Williams' 'Ranikhet', the event closed with the recitation of 'Liddington Hill' from *Poems in Wiltshire*. This gave rise to an adverse report about proposed house-building in the garden of Alfred Williams' cottage in South Marston. A plea for this historic residence to be awarded Grade II* Listing had not been supported by the local council. The January 2019 visit of the Countess of Wessex to the Literacy Hub in Swindon was also referred to, as was Alfred Williams' association with Liberal MP Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice.

Throughout, readings were interspersed with comment and discussion, and this continued, less formally, during the light refreshments period that concluded the meeting. A final piece of information is that, despite a low audience turnout, Roy Burton was keen for the annual Joint Meeting to continue.

TO THOSE DEPARTED: RAY MORSE

Our dear friend Ray Morse died on 1 April 2019 after a valiant struggle against cancer. He was born in Swindon on 11 September 1933, the second of four children—one brother and two sisters.

As a youngster Ray was in a gang of seven friends who were inseparable. Ray's parents had a television and this brought them all together on a Sunday evening. One prank they enjoyed was to tie cotton from one door knocker to another across the street—no fear of cars snapping the cotton in those days. When one door opened it lifted the knocker on the door opposite. Whoever opened the door first caused a chain reaction back and forth from one door to another. This would go on until someone twigged what was happening. Then whoever was caught in the act was clipped around the ear! Of the seven friends, four ended up in the army and three in the RAF—only one is still alive now.



In October 1948, aged just fifteen, Ray started work at Western Cycles as a cycle mechanic earning £1.00 a week. He was there for 4 years before joining the Royal Air Force. After basic training he was sent to the Radio school at RAF Yatesbury and trained as a teleprinter operator—this was to be his main career thereafter taking him over the country and abroad, although he was stationed at RAF Wroughton for a while. .

He met Sylvia Waite at a dance at the Locarno in old Swindon and they married at Christchurch in October 1959. From 1960, for three years, Sylvia and Ray lived in Hong Kong. They had one daughter—Helen. By 1965 Ray worked at the Department of Health and Social Security until he retired.

Ray had many interests including music and playing in the Wroughton Dance band. He enjoyed the tea dances. As a young man he often disappeared on his own on his bicycle and went camping.

Always ready to help the Richard Jefferies Society, he has served in many ways and has been a loyal member for about 50 years along with his wife. As well as an Executive Council member, Ray was Vice Chair from 1982-2000 and 2005-2006. In 2016 he was made an Honorary Vice President. He also maintained our Jefferies' cuttings from newspapers.

Ray was instrumental in working with Dorcan Technical College who made wooden plaques for both the Richard Jefferies Museum, where Ray was a regular guide, and for the 'Council Oak' at Coate Water. Ray also organised many Society outings to places associated with Jefferies and led tours of old



Ray at the unveiling of the 'Council Oak' plaque, 10 September 2006

Swindon in the footsteps of Jefferies.

Ray spent many hours cleaning green paint off a prized exhibit that is now on display at the Richard Jefferies Museum. It is a small wooden toy chest-of-drawers made by Jefferies as a boy. The words 'TOY BOX' are impressed into the front of the top drawer. It was donated to the Society by Nancie Cator in 1987; she died last year (see Spring 2019 newsletter, pp.10-11). Phyllis Treitel (former Chair and Secretary of the RJS) had written to Mrs. Cator on 23 October 1987 to say that 'Ray Morse, our Vice-Chairman, made an excellent job of cleaning the paint off the little chest of drawers, that you kindly presented. It now looks much as it did I



suppose when it was made by Richard as a boy, possibly for his sister? The Museum at Coate are delighted to know that this endearing and important item will be handed to them for display'. Nancie replied: 'The little chest appears to have a place of importance! I do assure you that both my mother & grandpa [R.J.'s brother, Charlie] told me it was Richard's first piece of woodwork. My grandpa had kept it for many years, and my mother let me have it for my dolls' house! Then, my husband decided to paint it, when my daughter had it in her dolls house. I'm so glad that it has been restored to its original appearance.'

Ray's funeral took place on Thursday 18 April at Kingsdown Crematorium, Swindon. John Price attended and was interested to learn so much about Ray's life in the RAF that we knew so little about.

Ray was a softly-spoken, kind and gentle man, always there to help. He will be remembered fondly forever.

A MAN OF OUR TIME, NATURALLY

Mike Pringle

As part of the Swindon Festival of Literature, a lecture about Richard Jefferies will be a regular annual event. Dr. Will Abberley presented the first with the title: 'Richard Jefferies: Nature Writing Power' on 9 May 2019 at the Arts Centre. Dr. Abberley is a senior lecturer in Victorian Literature at the University of Sussex, and is currently working on a history of British nature writing. The full text of the talk can be read on the Society's Talks and Articles webpage with Dr. Abberley's kind permission. See No. 126: <http://www.richardjefferiessociety.org/p/articles.html>

Will Abberley introduced the talk with a quote from Jefferies in which he appeals to us that to find health, happiness and wisdom in natural landscapes, 'Let us be always out of doors.'

This statement perhaps sums up the underlying message of everything that Jefferies left to us: nature is the answer; the colours, the vistas and the sounds, and the hope and joy that they fill us with, helping us to discover hidden depths within ourselves, through an unnameable 'divine' something.



Will Abberley, 9 May 2019. Photo credit: Fernando Bagué ©

We can never really get outside nature; we are always part of it.

It is also fitting that the lecture was delivered by someone from Sussex, a place which Jefferies knew well, likening it to his precious Wiltshire homeland, and where he met his early death at the age of 38, in 1887.

Dr Will Abberley is Senior Lecturer in the School of English at the University of Sussex. He specializes in intersections between literature and science, particularly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and was a BBC New Generation Thinker in 2014.

The talk started with a discussion about exactly what nature writing is, or isn't, and of Jefferies' part in its evolution. Abberley suggests that although Jefferies is not as well-known now as he once was, his writings prefigure the ideas of much of the nature writing that is filling our bookshop shelves today.

He cites people like Robert Macfarlane, John Lewis-Stempel, Richard Mabey, Melissa Harrison, all of whom refer to Jefferies, and describes the genre of nature writing as a mixture of carefully researched facts plus aesthetic and emotional responses.

For example, Helen Macdonald's *H is for Hawk*, explores the natural wonders of the goshawk through the eyes of the author dealing with personal grief, following the death of her father.

Abberley tells us that nature writing is as much about studying ourselves as it is looking at flora and fauna; it marries fact with personal, science with art, and reason with emotion. Our view of nature is just that, a view. A subjective, abstract view trying, in many ways, to simplify or make sense of something unbelievably deep, complex and, ultimately, unknowable. That 'divine' which Jefferies described 150 years ago.

Abberley reminds us that Jefferies was writing at a time when science was the fashion. Jefferies' rambling, impressionistic style, he argued, captured more of a real version of nature, contrary to the growing scientific ethos of the Victorian age, where prestige was shifting to the study of nature in artificial spaces—dissecting animals and categorising everything based on the findings. To Jefferies, this didn't tell us anything about how organisms lived.

In *Wild Life in a Southern County*, he says: 'Nature is not cut-and-dried to hand, nor easily classified. Each subject shades gradually into another; for example, the life of the starling cannot be separated from the farmhouse in the thatch of which it often breeds.'

The complex life of anything in nature cannot be discerned from dissection, but only from long observations in the field which give a glimpse, however, tiny, of the broader reality of nature.

In contrast to the scientific approach, Jefferies suggests that no amount of research or clever language can ever depict, for example, the colours of nature: 'wheat passes from green and succulent, to a bluish tinge paling into yellow by sensible gradations.' Language is inadequate to describe the final rich hue of nature's infinite variation; nature writing instead simply mimics nature. Jefferies suggest that the best his own books can do is encourage us to look at nature for ourselves, and have the full, rich experience.

Nowadays there is something of an idea that nature writing has developed, and is new. Richard Mabey, for example, breaks down the spaces between nature and human life, asserting that nature is not a separate thing, rather simply part of a bigger picture in which human kind and every other kind take

their small part. But these are not actually new approaches. Richard Jefferies was an early example of someone grappling with such ideas.

Abberley went on to give a brief history of this Wiltshire writer, and how in 1877 he moved to Surbiton and found his first real success with books like *The Gamekeeper at Home*, *Hodge and His Masters*, and *Round About a Great Estate*. Perhaps success would have grown, had it not been for the untimely contracting of TB and early death.

The talk turned to some of the reasons why Jefferies' message is still important to us today. Abberley talked about how Jefferies observed the way landscapes can put us in touch with the deep past, giving us a flavour of what has gone before, and maybe of what is to come. This continuity of nature made Jefferies realise that there is only now—this moment. Through sitting on ancient barrows and watching brooks trickle by, he created his very own version of mindfulness.

To Jefferies, observation is the key; observation with empathy and sympathy. Furthermore, and perhaps appropriately given the climate change conversations taking place now, he was also aware of just how indifferent nature is to the human state. In 'The Hours of Spring,' as he effectively lay dying in his Sussex bed, he mused on the fact that the things of nature meant so much to him, how could he not mean the same to them: 'The old, old error: I love the Earth therefore the Earth loves me.'

But as well as understanding the importance of nature to our wellbeing and, indeed, to our survival Jefferies was first and foremost a nature writing pioneer—W.H. Hudson, Edward Thomas, Rachel Carson all refer to his crucial influence in our understanding of the importance of nature and the need to protect it. Jefferies may have had a romantic, human-centred view of the beauty of nature, rather than a more scientific understanding of bio-diversity, but as journalist and environmentalist George Monbiot says, subjective 'appeals to our emotion' are crucial in engaging people in environmental politics. 'We care because we love.'

As Abberley sums it up, nature's destiny is our destiny, and if we want to be absorbed in nature's capacity to fascinate, surprise and bewitch the human mind with its endless beauty, then we should turn to Richard Jefferies.

If, in the audience, you knew all about Jefferies, this was a bright and rich talk about the man, which stimulated knowledgeable questions and lively discussion at the end. If you didn't know about Jefferies at all, and the incredible impact this Swindon boy had on the world of nature writing, you do now!

THE JEFFERIES' BAKERY AND GROCERY

Jean Saunders

Edward Thomas informs us that Richard Jefferies' great grandfather¹, also named Richard, 'purchased Coate Farm in 1800, together with a mill and bakery at Swindon.'² Up until the time of his death in 1825 Richard was always referred to as a baker,³ but where was the bakery? Although he left a will, leaving possessions to his children, there is no clue as to the location of any of his premises apart from noting that they are in Chiseldon [Coate] and Swindon.

The development of the farm at Coate is well documented.⁴ The location of the mill is known and it is likely that this was on lease from the Goddard family. John Luckett Jefferies⁵ painted two splendid watercolours that show the position of the water mill in relation to Holy Rood church and the mill pond. One of these paintings is reproduced on the front cover of this newsletter, the second appears below.



¹ Richard Jefferies was born in 1772 at Draycott Foliat.

² *Richard Jefferies: His Life and Work* by Edward Thomas, (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1909), p.25.

³ *Hampshire Chronicle*, 31 January 1825: 'Died last week, at Swindon, after a short illness Mr Richard Jefferies, baker, aged 87 years.'

⁴ 'Jefferies Farm, Coate, Swindon' by Clive Carter and Jean Martin, July 2013, for the Wiltshire Buildings Record Farmstead Project, in cooperation with the Richard Jefferies Society. Full report at No.130, <http://www.richardjefferiessociety.org/p/articles.html>

⁵ John Luckett Jefferies, born 1 September 1824, was the youngest of John and Fanny Jefferies' nine children and the brother of the father of Richard Jefferies (the writer).

The watercolours depicted on the back cover of this newsletter are also by John Lockett. The figure looking over the wall of the mill pond is said to be the miller, John Lockett's uncle, James Lockett Jefferies (the 'ghoul of the old mill') who took delight in frightening children.⁶ The mill was closed in 1850—the year that James Lockett died.⁷

But what of the whereabouts of the early bakery and, later on, the grocery that John Jefferies introduces? Perhaps, like me, you pictured the house and shop in the High Street on the corner of Market Square. It was here that John baked his popular lardy cake described in *Amaryllis at the Fair*. John Lockett Jefferies drew a pencil sketch of the building too, reproduced below⁸ and added a Jefferies' family Coat of Arms for good measure.



⁶ *op. cit.*, Edward Thomas, p.27.

⁷ According to Vol. 9 of *A History of the County of Wiltshire* (London: Victoria County History, 1970) Thomas Goddard acquired the mill along with the manor in 1563. The mill was supplied with water from a spring called Church Well which flowed through a large pond north of the mill. According to William Morris, the mill was on lease to a Mr. Kemble before it was demolished.

⁸ The pencil drawing is one of several in John Lockett Jefferies' sketchbook that belongs to Andrew Lewis and is on loan to the Richard Jefferies Museum along with the watercolour paintings. The sketchbook is inscribed 1840 which is probably the date of the first sketch. John Lockett died in August 1856 from tuberculosis aged nearly 32 when Richard, the writer, was just seven years and nine months old. An article about John Lockett Jefferies' artwork can be viewed at No.123 <http://www.richardjefferiesociety.org/p/articles.html>

A brief article, possibly submitted by Richard the writer, under 'Local and District News' appeared in the *North Wilts Herald*, dated 18 April, 1868. This announced the death of John Jefferies. After listing his virtues, the article ends: '... an old friend, Mr. Westmacott, informed us that since he has been in Swindon, a period of 36 years, so many have been the changes that only two persons now occupy the same dwellings which they resided in when he first came to the town ... for Mr. Jefferies was one.' Now this suggests that John Jefferies lived in the High Street bakery from 1832 to 1868, but this is not apparent from census information collected from 1841.

Edward Thomas claims that John Jefferies, who worked at Taylor's the Fleet Street printer and publisher, returned to 'Swindon in 1816 to look after the Swindon business'.⁹ James Luckett Jefferies (the author's father; not to be confused with the 'ghoul'—his uncle) appears to be the last child born in London on 8 December 1816, and then Martha was born on 12 July 1818, presumably in Swindon. It wasn't until 15 May 1822 that siblings James Luckett, Martha, Sarah (b. 3 March 1820) and Richard (b. 10 March 1822) were all baptised together at Holy Rood church. This suggests that the family were living close to the High Street in old Swindon.

The ten-yearly census first begins in 1841. At that time there were no bakers recorded in the High Street but there were several in Newport Street that runs at right angles to it. Whilst house numbers are not given, John Jefferies and his older brother James Luckett (the 'ghoul') lived together as 'bakers' in Newport Street along with John's wife Fanny and three of their children: Mary, Martha and John Luckett (the artist). It is odd that James Luckett's occupation is given as a baker and not miller but perhaps he had already ceased working at the old mill nearby. There were several other bakers in the same street at that time; Jack Wheeler (b.1801), John Lang (b.1796), Robert Vines, (b.1806) and Henry Stoad (b.1771).

By the 1851 census John Jefferies and his family had moved to the dwelling house in the High Street; his older brother James Luckett died in January the year before. John's occupation in 1851 is still given as 'baker' but his son, John Luckett (the artist) is listed as 'grocer' which suggests that the shop was now a bakery and grocery shop and this is confirmed by an advertisement for the Corner House, Market Place, Swindon that states:

John Jefferies begs respectfully to announce to the inhabitants of SWINDON and its neighbourhood, that in addition to his present business as BAKER, &c, he intends opening the above shop on Saturday, January 18, 1851, with an entire new stock of GENERAL GROCERY, and in soliciting an inspection and trial of the QUALITY and PRICES of the various Goods, he feels confident that they will merit

⁹ *op. cit.*, Edward Thomas, p.25.

a share of Public Support.

The Teas, Coffees, &c., have been carefully selected from the choicest sorts, and every endeavour will be made to offer the best qualities at the lowest prices.

British and Foreign Cigars, Tobacco, Snuffs, &c.¹⁰

It seems that the shop sold many other items too including 'Glenfield Patent Double-refined Powder Starch' for laundry use and manufactured in Glasgow. An advertisement for the product urging ladies to make a trial of it appeared in the *Oxford Chronicle*, 15 March 1851, that gave '21, High Street; in Swindon, by Mr. Jefferies, grocer' as a retailer along with a shop in Oxford and wholesalers in London.

As previously said, no bakers are shown in the High Street for 1841 but there were several grocers. In particular a Thomas Plummer (b.1816) was listed and he also appears in the directory for 1842 and 1844 as a grocer in the High Street¹¹. Thomas Plummer disappears from the 1851 census but the Jefferies' family appear instead suggesting that John Jefferies bought the grocer's shop and dwelling where Plummer resided.

The 1851 census also reveals that John Jefferies' eldest daughter Eliza, who had married George Sewell in 1848, is now living at 35 Newport Street. George Sewell's occupation is given as a 'Tailor employing 3 men'. So could this have been the same house where the Jefferies' family were living on the 1841 census and, perhaps, the house that Richard Jefferies originally bought as the bakery? Evidently, 'Like Wood Street, Newport Street was the home of many of the lesser tradesmen of the town, shoemakers, bakers and the like, but was reckoned more humble.'¹²

In 1856 John Luckett (the artist) died of tuberculosis. John Jefferies not only lost his talented son but also his resident grocer. By the 1861 census, the Sewells had given up the tailor's business in Newport Street and both Eliza and George Sewell were now living at the High Street address with John Jefferies (who is still recorded as a baker) and their occupations are given as 'Grocer and assistant'.

By the 1871 census (after John Jefferies died in 1868 and Eliza had inherited the house and shop¹³), George Sewell is listed as a 'Master Grocer'—the bakery no longer mentioned.

¹⁰ *A Peculiarly English Genius: A Biography of Richard Jefferies*, Vol. 1, by Andrew Rossabi (Petton Books, 2017), pp.160-161.

¹¹ *Early Trade Directories of Wiltshire* by K.H. Rogers and indexed by John Chandler (Wiltshire Record Society, 1992) includes *Pigot's Commercial Directory of Grocers and Dealers in Sundries for Swindon and Neighbourhoods*.

¹² Vol. 9 of *A History of the County of Wiltshire* (London: Victoria County History, 1970).

¹³ Apart from the farm at Coate left to James Luckett Jefferies (out of which he had to give his sisters Fanny Cox and Martha Hall legacies of £800 and £500 [with interest] respectively), and the shop/house in the High Street left to Eliza (Jefferies) Sewell, John Jefferies also left two adjoining

An advertisement appears in the *Western Daily Press* dated 17 April 1872 where George Sewell, grocer, offers the house and shop to be let: 'Modern Plate-Glass Fronted Shop, with Six-roomed Dwelling House. Good situation. Close to the Market Place and Corn Exchange. Possession may be had at once.' George died just two years later and Eliza moved to 2, Lansdown Road.

On the 1881 census there was a James Hartland at 27 High Street—'Grocer Employing 2 assistants & 1 apprentice' and an application to the magistrates on 26 June 1873 confirmed that George Sewell had been granted permission from the magistrates' court for a 'hold-over of his certificates to sell wine &c., in bottles, to Messrs. Hartland, to whom he had transferred his business'.¹⁴

So it seems that the grocery business continued but the bakery stopped with John Jefferies' death, thus ending an era of bakers in the Jefferies' family.

Regrettably most of the buildings mentioned have been pulled down, including the High Street bakery and the old water mill. Newport Street is barely recognisable now with nearly all the houses demolished along one side for road widening. Newport Street, Wood Street and the High Street were once the oldest roads in old Swindon. Below is a postcard picture of Newport Street, around 1905, and it is where Richard Jefferies went to school for a short period.¹⁵ Perhaps one of these houses in the photograph was once the original Jefferies' bakery.



houses in Wood Street in his will, dated 11 November 1867, to his daughters Fanny Cox and Martha Hall.

¹⁴ *Swindon Advertiser*, 30 June 1873.

¹⁵ See *A Peculiarly English Genius: A Biography of Richard Jefferies*, Vol. 1, by Andrew Rossabi (Petton Books, 2017), pp.325-326.

ELINOR LYON (1921–2008) AND RICHARD JEFFERIES

John Price

When I got my first teaching post at Rugby School in 1963, I was attached as a Tutor to some of the boys in Town House, which took the local day boys. The housemaster was Peter Wright, a much decorated (but very modest) ex-RAF pilot, and he had married the daughter of a previous headmaster of Rugby, Hugh Lyon. Elinor was a very quiet, but highly intelligent woman, and I was aware that she wrote children's books; though during my time at Rugby, I was never shown any of these. Apparently, the Wright family would go off to Scotland or the Lake District each summer, and whilst there, Elinor would write another book, which she published under her maiden name, Elinor Lyon.

I had thought no more about Elinor, until, one day in February this year, I was looking through the second-hand books in a Devizes charity shop. There, amongst the so-called 'collectable books' was a book by Elinor Lyon, titled *Hilary's Island*, published in 1948. I bought the book for £1.99, and took it home to read.

The first feature I noticed was the quality of the illustrations. The colour plates were all done by Eileen Soper, who illustrated the Enid Blyton books, and the many line drawings were exquisitely done by Elinor herself. The story concerned two girls who had been sent to stay with an uncle for the duration of the school holidays, and the adventures they get up to.

The girls are encouraged to befriend another girl who is living with some maiden aunts nearby. Her parents had been killed in an avalanche in the Alps, and the girls find her a delicate 'precious' individual, who they nickname 'the china doll'. There is also (to add to the excitement) a seemingly feral boy who lives nearby, who takes horses to ride, and also 'borrows' locals' boats to sail out on the nearby lake.

After visiting Amaryllis (first clue), the two girls are talking afterwards:

'I'd like to borrow some of her books,' said Jane thoughtfully.

'Oh, they'd be awfully sloppy things called *The Honour of the Lower Fourth* or something like that,' said Judy scornfully.

'Some of them were, but there were lots on the bottom shelf that boys usually have, like *Treasure Island* and *Swiss Family Robinson* and stories about pirates and outlaws. I don't suppose she has read them. She probably thinks they are unladylike.'

'Why does she have them, then?'

'I think they must have belonged to her father. There was one by the bed that I looked at, and it had "Dick Arkwright" written in the front. *Bevis* it was called.'

'What's that about?'

'I don't know. It looked rather dull, no pictures or anything. Come on, let's go.'

Later on in the book (and the story) the two girls are talking to their uncle:

‘Oh, Uncle John!’ ‘What is it now?’

‘What is a book called *Bevis* about?’

‘Oh, about some boys, as far as I remember. Yes, they camp out on an island.’

‘Oh’, said Jane, and smiled to herself.

Towards the end of the book, it has become clear that Amaryllis, is in fact also the feral boy, who calls herself ‘Hilary’. Whilst Hilary is hiding out in the nearby woods, the two girls ask her:

‘What did you read? *Bevis*?’

‘No, I nearly brought it with me, but at the last moment I decided on *Swiss Family Robinson*. Things happen oftener in that than in any other book I know.’

So; three references to *Bevis*; a girl named Amaryllis who likes to dress and behave like a boy whenever possible; and adventures involving taking a boat out to an island in a lake. The Jefferies influence is very clear. Though the choice of the name ‘Hilary’ is probably because of its gender neutral nature, rather than of any assumed knowledge of the Luckett family!

Further reading about Elinor Lyon gave no clues to any Jefferies influences. Comments from her *Times* and *Guardian* obituaries, and from Wikipedia, add the following information: Between 1948 and 1976 she wrote over twenty books for children, which had some success on both sides of the Atlantic. She found they ‘came much more easily’ than writing for adults and believes her inspiration came from ‘omnivorous reading’.

Lyon began *The House in Hiding*, for example, after reading *Swallows and Amazons*, because she disliked the characters within it (they were too good at everything). In response, the children in *The House in Hiding* get things wrong, but still manage to succeed eventually. The development was pinpointed in an obituary by Julia Eccleshare: ‘Lyon’s adventures, with their strong girls and sensitive boys and shared leadership between the sexes, were firmly within the Arthur Ransome tradition, yet felt more modern, more thoughtful about how children’s behaviour is affected by what they experience, especially the way they are treated by adults. Within the adventures, her intention was to show the themes that she felt children cared about: justice, freedom and compassion.’ The main characters, Ian and Sovra (pronounced with a long ‘o’, from *sóbhrach*, meaning primrose in Gaelic, son and daughter of a local doctor, appear in a series of stories recognisably set in the Ardnish Peninsula, specifically Arisaig and Mallaig.

I have not yet managed to track down and read any of her later titles (*Hilary’s Island* was her first book to be published), and I am wondering if any members of our Society came across Elinor Lyon’s books in their youth, and can identify

any further Jefferies influences? I only wish that I had had the time and inclination to discuss her books with Elinor when I knew her. She was clearly a writer well ahead of her time in her portrayal of non-stereotypical boys and girls.

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## GOING, GOING, GONE!

*Peter Robins*

At an auction of first editions of American and English authors in Metuchen, New Jersey, on 30 November 1929, four books by Richard Jefferies were included in the 100-page catalogue. The titles were *The Amateur Poacher* (1879); *Wood Magic* (1881); *The Open Air* (1885) and *The Toilers of the Field* (1892). But what lifted these from the usual lots was that ten letters from Jefferies to his publishers accompanied the books and dated from 1878, 1879 and 1880. Most were to Jefferies' publishers acknowledging receipt of books, or about reviews, and one in which he stated his preference in a binding. Another, dated 5 Sept., 1880, asked if they had seen an issue for 4 September of "Punch" regarding "Cobbling Cooker."

These letters were unknown to us and are not included in *The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies* (Hugoe Matthews and Phyllis Treitel, Petton Books, 1994). The auctioneer, Charles F. Heartman, claimed the catalogue lots came from three private libraries, which is the nearest we'll get to knowing the consignor. If the letters survive they may emerge at some future date but meanwhile their whereabouts remains a mystery.

Jean Saunders traced the issue of *Punch* referred to by Jefferies, 4 Sept 1880, Vol. 79, p.106 and the text follows. The original reference can be found in pages 79-80 of *Round About a Great Estate*.

### COBBLING AND COOKERY

According to Mr. RICHARD JEFFERIES, the "Amateur Poacher," author of *Round About a Great Estate*, and other delightful and instructive books on the way of wild animals, and the manners and customs of typical rustics. The cobbler of "Okebourne Village" has actually been known to sole and heel shoes of his customers with highly dried and hardened bacon. This cobbler would hardly have held that "there is nothing like leather." In his time, and in a season of famine, the natives of Okebourne might really have contrived to subsist, in a measure, on a species of fried soles, and heels also to boot—hob-nailed boot.

## THE INNER LIFE

*Peter Robins*

G.E. Fussell (1889-1990) was working for the Ministry of Agriculture when he contributed an article, 'The Inner Life: Colour and the Subconscious' to the theosophist journal *The Herald of the Star* (issue of 2 July 1923). Fussell went on to be an expert in agricultural history writing more than twenty books and six hundred articles and, a decade after this article, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

Interest in Eastern philosophy, spiritualism and theosophy grew as a reaction to the mechanical horror of the Great War. *The Herald of the Star*, a monthly publication which ran from 1912-1927, was founded by Charles Leadbeater and Annie Besant (sister-in-law of Walter Besant) and others as an organ of the Order of the Star in the East to promote the concept that her adopted Indian son, Jiddu Krishnamurti, was the coming World-Teacher or Redeemer. Each issue of the journal carried this message from Besant:

*Brothers of the Star,*

*As the coming of the World-Teacher approaches, the unrest and turmoil of the nations of the earth increases its volume and intensity. That is but natural, for He comes to lay the foundations of a new civilization which will gradually replace the old. Be not then fearful, for the swift changes of the time are but part of the preparation of His coming. Rather rejoice and lift your heads, and see, through the whirling clouds, the steady shining of the Star.*

ANNIE BESANT

But the shining of the Star never came as Krishnamurti moved away from the Order of the Star in the East and in 1929 dissolved the organisation.

Whether George Edwin Fussell was a 'Brother' is not clear but he appears not to have contributed to any other issues of *The Herald of the Star*. His essay 'The Inner Life: Colour and the Subconscious' explores the significance of the colours with which man has been most familiar throughout history—blue (sky); yellow (sunlight); green (grass/foilage); brown (earth) and red (fire). In the following extract he quotes from Jefferies' *The Story of My Heart*. Fussell concludes his article with: 'Today the great majority of mankind has a less intimate knowledge of the immediate significance of the colours of Nature than mankind possessed in its infancy.'

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The relief that the modern man feels at the first appearance of Spring is not in any respect to be compared with the relief that was felt by an agricultural

community even so late as one hundred and fifty years ago, and when it is remembered that mankind had lived in this hand to mouth fashion from the dawn of prehistoric culture until what is for practical purposes the present day, it will be realised that the blue of the sky had upon the mentality of man an effect incalculable in its influence upon the development of physiological and psychological sedative reaction.

In this connection I should like to mention Richard Jefferies, who had perhaps the most keen appreciation of Nature of any modern man. In his *Story of My Heart* he tells the effect of his return to Nature from the worries and troubles of urban life, when he paid a periodical visit to the top of a high hill in his neighbourhood. He says, 'There was a secluded spring to which I sometimes went to drink the pure water, lifting it in the hollow of my hand. Drinking the lucid water, clear as life in solution, I absorbed the beauty and purity of it ... I turned to the blue heaven overhead, gazing into its depths, inhaling its exquisite beauty and sweetness. The rich blue of the unattainable flower of the sky drew my soul towards it, and there it rested, for pure colour is rest of heart.'

The influence of a written word like Jefferies' is very great upon a certain section of what is known as cultured society, but although it may have an influence upon one generation, it is not for one moment comparable to the influence exerted by the racial subconscious developed out of the experience of many generations. The experiences which Jefferies describes are perhaps the culmination, the highest note, finding its expression through genius, which this unconscious has developed out of a common emotion. A mind less illuminated by the unconscious racial heritage merely finds a satisfaction, a relief, when the blue sky is seen once again, and is, in many cases, unable to give expression to that feeling. Men and women certainly know they are more happy, but they do not know why.



Jiddu Krishnamurti and Annie Besant

JOHN MOORE ON 'HUDSON ON JEFFERIES'

Valerie Haworth

One of John Moore's books which does not now receive the exposure which it deserves is *Country Men*, a work 'of criticism, of biography and of praise of England.' In his opening chapter, recalling some of the literary chroniclers of England, he refers to,

... a little parson at Selborne writing more sweetly about birds than anyone had ever done before ... George Borrow going gustily about Wales as if he were carried along by the great winds ... and Richard Jefferies, finding new wonders in a dusty hedgerow, and W.H. Hudson, watching the birds and writing about them in such prose as a man might use who had watched the angels.

In the chapter about Hudson titled 'The Eagle and the Caged Bird' Moore recalls the beginning of *Nature in Downland* where

Hudson relates a disturbing encounter in the village of Goring where Richard Jefferies died. On a cloudy melancholy day in September, Hudson was looking for Jefferies' cottage and thinking much about him 'who had doubtless often walked here too, feeling the icy hand on him of one that walked invisible by his side.' Suddenly he heard the crunching of gravel beneath other feet than his own, and behold 'there before me stood the man himself, back on earth in the guise of a tramp! It was a most extraordinary coincidence that at such a moment I should have come face to face with this poor outcast and wanderer who had the Jefferies countenance as I knew it from portraits and descriptions. It was the long thoughtful suffering face, long straight nose, flowing brown beard, and rather large full blue eyes. I was startled at the expression, the unmistakeable stamp of misery that was anguish and near to despair and insanity. He passed me and then paused, and after a moment or two said hesitatingly: "Can you spare a penny?" I gave him something without looking at his face again, and went on my way sorry that I had met him, for I knew that those miserable eyes would continue to haunt me.'

This queer meeting that was not a meeting at all was the only occasion when the two naturalists came face to face: for Hudson never saw Jefferies during his lifetime. Jefferies had been dead twelve years when Hudson, for a brief moment of time, looked into his haunted melancholy eyes. What he saw there he pitied, and did not much care to think about. One wonders what Jefferies would have seen if he could have looked at Hudson through the eyes of that unexplained, accidental tramp. Nothing to pity and nothing much to envy, I think. Hudson stood six foot three, and stooped a little as if he feared his great head would brush the heavens. ... he looked as if he might at any moment take to the skies 'and return no more to those earth-bound creatures with whom he had made his temporary home.' Poor sick Jefferies, crushed by the world, would have envied such soaring freedom, such a strong-winged spirit. Perhaps (because he was very gentle) he would have feared it too.

Moore refers to Hudson's years of wretchedness and poverty in London, a city he hated. 'But circumstances could not hurt him as they hurt poor Jefferies. The caged linnet fears its jailers ...'. Hudson, enduring squalid surroundings and poverty, went on writing steadily and unsuccessfully. 'Jefferies, in such a situation, would have died of a broken heart or lost his reason; but Hudson was very much tougher than Jefferies, and moreover he was a trained scientist, whereas Jefferies was ever a sentimentalist.'

While Hudson was writing his early books in London, 'Jefferies' lesser lamp was burning itself out; and Jefferies was bitter and disappointed and afraid, because he was a dying man and because the world had been unkind to him....' While Hudson saw the world as if from a great height, as if he were an eagle;

... poor Jefferies, studying his meadow-grasses, saw only a little of it—out of proportion. Jefferies made a small patch of Wiltshire live, in rather laboured, not-very-distinguished prose; he wrote, possibly better than anyone else, of the humbler country sports, ferreting, rabbit-shooting, and poaching, and of the gamekeeper's round, of the dark damp nights in the woods and the dusky autumn evenings when the pheasants clatter up into the trees; and he achieved in *Bevis* (possibly his best book) an altogether charming and delightful study of a country boyhood. However, that was the limit of his achievement; he wrote very pleasantly of the country scene, but he was not an original observer, like White and Hudson...

Acknowledgement: John Moore Society for permission to quote from *Country Men* (London: J.M. Dent, 1935).

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See Richard Jefferies Society's *Newsletters*, autumn 2013, p.20 and spring 2016, pp.30-31 relating to correspondence between John Moore and Samuel Looker and the former's negative view of Richard Jefferies.

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The full extract from Chapter I of Hudson's *Nature in Downland* (1901):

We may say of Sussex that its native writers have done nothing, or nothing worth doing, for it; and that no outside writers of note have come to its aid, as has happened in the case of some other counties. Had Richard Jefferies lived it would, I believe, have been different.

It is true that his soul was dyed, and dyed deeply, in that North Wilts nature which he had first beheld, where his revelation came to him; but the visible world was too much for him, and his senses too well trained, to let him rest satisfied with memories; and we may see in *The Story of My Heart* and some other of his writings, that the Sussex coast country where he found a home powerfully attracted and held him. The thirteen years that have passed since his

sad death would have brought his splendid powers, always progressing until the last day of his life, to their fullest maturity: perhaps, too, that strain of intense unnatural feeling, which he so strangely misinterpreted, and which in his book just named touches the borders of insanity, would have been outgrown. I am not sure that he had not outlived that phase before he died, since his latest work is decidedly of a higher quality and, even when most inspired by passion, essentially more sober than the famous *Story*. That he would eventually have written a book about the downs and the maritime district of Sussex, as good as any work we have had from him, I feel certain.

Why I said so much about forgotten Hurd is a little while back has been explained, and now a second apology seems necessary. Jefferies was much in my mind just now because by chance I happen to be writing this introductory chapter in the last house he inhabited, and where he died, in the small village of Goring, between the sea and the West Sussex downs.

A strange, I had almost said a mysterious, adventure befell me as I came hither. On a cloudy melancholy day in September I came in search of this cottage, and walking to the church by a narrow lane with a low trim wall-like hedge on either side, my thoughts were of Jefferies, who had doubtless often walked here, too, feeling the icy hand on him of one that walked invisible at his side. My mind was full of sadness, when, hearing the crunching of gravel beneath other feet than my own, I suddenly looked up, and behold, there before me stood the man himself, back on earth in the guise of a tramp! It was a most extraordinary coincidence that at such a moment I should have come face to face with this poor outcast and wanderer who had the Jefferies countenance as I knew it from portraits and descriptions. It was the long thoughtful suffering face, long straight nose, flowing brown beard, and rather large full blue eyes. I was startled at the expression, the unmistakable stamp of a misery that was anguish and near to despair and insanity. He passed me, then paused, and after a moment or two, said hesitatingly, 'Can you spare a penny?' I gave him something without looking at his face again, and went on my way sorry that I had met him, for I knew that those miserable eyes would continue to haunt me.

Here, sitting in the room that was his—the author of the strange *Story*—the morning sun filling it with brightest light, the sounds he listened to coming in at the open window—the intermittent whispering of the foliage and the deeper continuous whisper of the near sea, and cries and calls of so many birds that come and go in the garden, each 'deep in his day's employ'—I cannot but think of him and lament again that he was prematurely torn away from this living green world he worshipped.

A LIFE ON THE OCEAN WAVES

Peter Robins

The conduct of sailors ashore had been a constant concern for the moral guardians of the nineteenth century. The seafarer's tendency to frequent bars, low boarding houses and brothels promoted Christian organisations to form special missions for mariners. The Mission to Seamen, an Anglican welfare charity, was formed in 1856 and in New York, the American Seamen's Friend Society had its origins in the 1830s.

The missions grew out of the same religious revival that promoted temperance and sought to provide sailors with alternatives to the bars and boarding houses by providing light refreshments, lectures and reading rooms, religious services and a savings bank as well as reputable accommodation.

One of the objectives of The American Seamen's Friend Society was the providing of libraries for seamen on ships and on shore and as early as 1837 loan libraries were placed by the Society on American ships sailing from New York and additionally from Boston in 1859. Each library consisted of forty books in a strong wooden case with a hinged door bearing the donor's name, often of the Society, individuals or Church Sunday Schools. An annual report published by the Society in 1930 records the number of libraries sent to sea since 1859 was 13,352.

In the January 1913 issue of the Society's monthly *The Sailors' Magazine* (one dollar annually) under the headline 'Loan Libraries: To Provide Knowledge and Power to Sailors on the Seven Seas' the contents of the latest library about to be sent to sea was published. Under various headings including Travel and Adventure; Fiction; Historical; Biography; Devotional and Science, forty books were listed. Science comprised of a copy of *The Life of the Fields* by Richard Jefferies, along with *Elements of Navigation* by W.J. Henderson and *How It Flies* by Richard Ferris. Other authors represented in the library were Charles Kingsley, Jack London, John Bunyan as well as authors no longer in vogue.

While it may appear odd that *The Life of the Fields* was categorized as Science, George Miller and Hugo Matthews writing about Jefferies' book in *Richard Jefferies: A Bibliographical Study* suggest that the classification was correct:

We find him here at his most scientific and analytical, and also at his most impressionistic and impassioned, and achieving in places a synthesis of these modes of perception which results in some of his most distinctive and memorable work.

First published in 1884 *The Life of the Fields* was a collection of twenty-three essays that had been published in ten periodicals. American editions were published in 1907 and 1908.

The sending of the books to sea was no empty gesture with the Society declaring in the magazine that ‘the loan libraries are not there to make prodigies of learning, but to produce character in the men of the forecastle.’ Such men showed their appreciation by writing to the Society and a number of letters appear in this issue of *The Sailors’ Magazine*. The engineer of the schooner *Hugh Kelly* wrote, ‘Much obliged for the books in the loan library placed on this vessel from years ago; all hands enjoyed reading them.’ The master of the schooner *Frederic A. Duggan* commented, ‘In looking over the books, I was surprised to see such a fine selection in a library of this kind, and expect to derive considerable pleasure to perusal of the same.’

After 1960 with the introduction of containerised shipping and a growing number of passengers choosing air transport for overseas travel, New York declined as a centre for maritime commerce and the American Sailors’ Friend Society was eventually disbanded in 1975.



An example of a loan library supplied by the American Seamen's Friend Society.

THE MANUSCRIPT FOR *THE STORY OF MY HEART*

Peter Robins came across a book auction catalogue for 21 May 1923 at the Anderson Galleries, New York, that was selling the original manuscript of *The Story of My Heart*. The description of the lot¹ is detailed and the first page of the MS is reproduced opposite. The auction included English Literature from the libraries of Mr. Francis R. Mayer of New York and Mr. J.H. Whitehouse of London. Whitehouse (1873-1955) was an MP, author, educationalist and interpreter and promoter of Ruskin's work. The catalogue does not identify the vendor of the Jefferies MS but also in the sale were 100 letters from Ruskin to George Allen which are attributed to Whitehouse and he may be more likely than Mayer. Somewhere along the line Whitehouse had acquired it. The manuscript is now in the British Library.²

It is likely that the manuscript originated from the publishers, Longmans, and that Charles Longman donated it to a good cause as he had done in April 1915 when Jefferies' manuscripts of 'The Coming of Summer' and 'The Spring of the Year' were auctioned by Messrs Christie, Manson & Woods on behalf of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in England³ 'to be sold for the Benefit of their Funds'.

¹ Lot 45 JEFFERIES (RICHARD). The original autograph manuscript of his Celebrated Masterpiece, *The Story of My Heart*. Written in ink, entirely in the author's handwriting, on 218 octavo sheets (one side of paper only), and bound in an octavo volume, full green crushed levant morocco, filleted gold borders on sides, gold-tooled panelled back and inside dentelle borders, by Riviere.

The MS. is in well-preserved condition, although the original printers' copy, with the names of the various compositors noted in pencil. It is evidently the author's first and only draft, as nearly every page bears his autograph corrections and elisions, of which some are lengthy. The sheets are guarded and hinged.

The Story of My Heart, which is unquestionably Jefferies' masterpiece, has not enjoyed in this country the popularity and high rank among nature books accorded it in England, where it occupied a position analogous to that of Thoreau's *Walden*, in America. Published in 1883, this work, which is in reality the author's Autobiography, or rather a self-revelation of his mind and moods, was recognized by the critics and the British reading public as one of the most beautifully written books in English literature.

'The pages throb with passionate vigour, and fall into dreamy contemplation. We feel, without being told, that the stirring thoughts have been forced from him by earnestness of heart, and they express his most serious convictions. It treats of the ideal in life, the laws of chance, the absence of time, the relentlessness in nature.'

² Samuel J Looker notes in his 1947 Constable edition: "The original holograph mss. 218 pp. 12mo. is listed by a New York book dealer in a recent catalogue at 750 dollars." George Miller recalls 'a conversation with (probably) the said N.Y. dealer who told me he had it in his possession for a long time before finding a buyer. My guess is Looker persuaded Harry Bradfer-Lawrence to buy it, hence, happily it ends up in the BL.'

³ From the auction catalogue: 'Presented by Charles Longman,' Esq. 'Jefferies (Richard) "The Coming of Summer," original autograph manuscript, 30pp. 8vo. Published in Longman's Magazine, Dec

Chapter I.

The story of my heart ^{eventually grows up.} commenced
in the glow of youth there, ^{then} ~~there~~
~~there was a time when I felt the missing of you~~
^{long now & then} turning then I felt the missing of you
strong inspiration of soul-thought.
My heart was dusty, parched for
bars of the flame of deep feelings; my
mind arid & dry ^{for} ~~it is in pain~~
There is a dust which settles on
the heart as well as that which falls
on a ledge. It is injurious to the
mind as well as to the body to be
clung in one place, & clung sur-
rounded by the same circumstances.
A species of their clothing slowly
grows about the mind, & grows
an cloak, with habits become

1891,' and 'Jefferies (Richard) "The Spring of the Year," original autograph manuscript, 31pp. with pencil signature Richard Jefferies in Mrs. Jefferies' handwriting. A characteristic essay describing the end of April and beginning of May, 1881.' The latter is now at the British Library.

A BLUE PLAQUE FOR COATE FARM

A Richard Jefferies blue plaque was unveiled on Sunday, 2 June 2019 at 3pm. At Coate Farm by Mike Pringle, pictured right. The Richard Jefferies Society applied for this recognition some ten years ago but, at that time, the blue plaque scheme was limited to London.

The plaque from Historic England reads:

OLD HOUSE AT COATE

RICHARD JEFFERIES

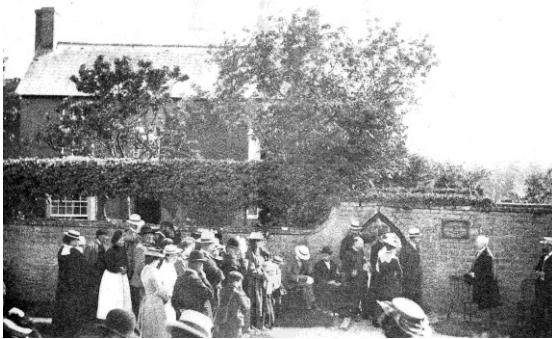
NATURE WRITER

1848-1887

BORN HERE

SWINDON HERITAGE

Some 116 years ago, on 6 June 1903, a tablet memorial was fixed on the wall by the gothic-shaped arched door, to remember Jefferies. The occasion is pictured below.



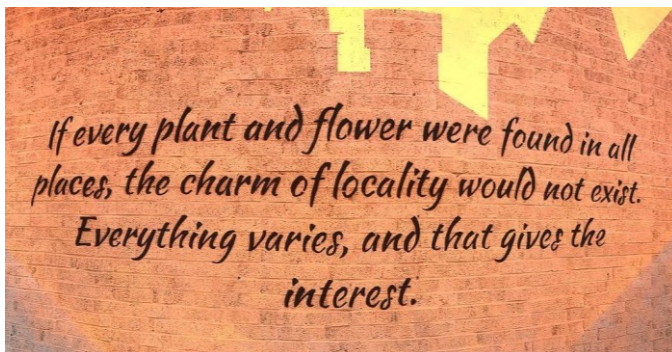
THE WRITING ON THE WALL

Ken White is well-known for having painted many murals in Swindon on gable end walls in the 1970s and 80s that depicted local scenes including the town's railway heritage and canal. Many were lost during the town's expansion programme. One mural, painted in 1979, featuring local citizens such as Richard Jefferies, Desmond Morris and Diana Dors, was removed when the house in Old Town was suffering from damp (see picture on next page). Now Richard Jefferies has been immortalised in a new mural completed recently by Martin Travers and Peter Crowdy that features a quote from Jefferies' essay 'Locality and Nature' (*Field and Hedgerow*), a great bustard to represent

Wiltshire along with the outline of buildings, and other birds. The mural stretches along a wall in Regent Close near the Wyvern Theatre and was paid for by the business community. The Jefferies' quote records: 'If every plant and [every] flower were found in all places, the charm of locality would not exist. Everything varies, and that gives the interest.' Unfortunately the author's name is not recorded.



'Swindon Personalities' by Ken White ©, with his kind permission.
Union Row, Prospect Place, Old Town, Swindon, 1980s



Regent Place, Swindon, July 2019

NEWS IN BRIEF

The Story of My Heart (*L'Histoire de mon coeur*) has been translated into French by Marie-France de Palacio and was published in paperback by Editions Arfuyen on 10 Jan 2019. ISBN: 978-2845902787. It is believed that this is the first time the work has been published in French. Roger Ebbatson has written a review of de Palacio's well-researched and informative introduction to the work. It will be published in the *RJS Journal* next year.

Jason Wilson had kind words to say about the Jefferies' grave at Broadwater Cemetery in *Living in the Sound of the Wind: A Personal Quest for W.H. Hudson, Naturalist and Writer from the River Plate* (London: Constable, 2015). He visited Hudson's grave and described it as 'unkempt by the roadside and a holly hedge.' He was disappointed that no daisies had been planted there contrary to Hudson's request. But Michael Parrott's valiant work had not gone unnoticed regarding the Jefferies' tombstone, that had been 'kept in good order by the Richard Jefferies Society'.

The Friends of Broadwater Cemetery are still awaiting an estimate for the restoration of Hudson's grave. Both the Henry Williamson Society and the RJS have offered support for the work should the Friends proceed.

In the meantime Pat and Michael Parrott have cleaned the marble and cleared undergrowth to let in more light and plan some planting too.

If you have access to the Internet, do look at the Society's website regularly to see what has been added. For example, Richard Jefferies' histories of Cirencester, Swindon and Malmesbury (typed up from the original newspaper articles by Janice Lingley) were added last month to the 'Talks and Articles' page as well as Janice Lingley's essay 'Edward Thomas's Sonnet "February Afternoon": The Dreamer and the Dream', that was published in the *Journal of the Friends of the Dymock Poets*, No 18, 2019, pp.90-100. Go to:

<http://www.richardjefferiessociety.org/p/articles.html>

In this digital age, for those of you who prefer to read on Kindle, the Society's newsletter and *Journal* can be made available in a format that Kindle can read (a MOBI file). If you would like to receive occasional news by email, contact the Hon. Sec. The Society has no Twitter page but there is a Facebook group that is overseen by Rebecca Welshman and John Shortland and can be read at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1015012952945538/>

If you haven't heard of American writer and naturalist Henry Beston (1888-1968) then you might be forgiven, but the situation will be remedied with a forthcoming article by the Henry Beston Society to be published in next year's *RJS Journal*. Best known as the author of *The Outermost House* (1928)—a Cape

Cod nature-writing classic—Beston mentions Jefferies in correspondence with fellow author Winfield Townley Scott. Scott suggested to Beston that *The Outermost House* should be compared with Thoreau's *Walden*. Beston replied: 'I suppose that I do link up with Thoreau, but I do not read him and have not been under his influence. He is not a naturalist. What interests him and stirs him most deeply are the principles governing the individual life when that life is enclosed in a gregarious society. If I tie with anybody, it is with Richard Jefferies. We are both of us scholars with a poetic joy in the visible world.' According to Beston's wife, writer Elizabeth Coatsworth, who introduced the Beston anthology *Epecially Maine*: 'Henry had a remarkable memory. By the time he came to the Cape it was well stocked on many subjects, including the writings of W.H. Hudson, Thoreau, Tomlinson, Conrad and Jefferies, whom I name last because it was his work that Henry most admired.' The Richard Jefferies Society is grateful to David Tolley for bringing Beston to our attention.

RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY RESEARCH BURSARY

The bursary is a sum of up to £2000 p.a. offered by the Society to support costs associated with ongoing, high-quality research projects which serve to promote new understanding of the writings of Richard Jefferies, or of the issues which relate to or arise from his work. This could, for example, take the form of new approaches to his life or his work, or a wider consideration of his place in late-19C agrarian and nature writing.

The bursary will be restricted to one award per project, and applications are invited from postgraduate students, tenured and independent scholars, and researchers. This year the Society's Executive Council agreed that members of the Richard Jefferies Society might also apply for a grant. The addition of Society members who might apply for the bursary was agreed by the Executive Council this year.

Typically the bursary might assist with costs incurred to:

- secure permissions to reproduce copyright material
- create an index
- visit an archive or other location to study key resources
- support the development of an output in print or other media (e.g. film, digital resource)

Other kinds of request will be considered, but will not include a bursary to provide IT equipment, to meet tuition fees or to cover conference costs.

An application form is available from the Hon. Sec. or can be downloaded at <http://www.richardjefferiessociety.org/p/bursary.html>

THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY AND WHITE HORSE BOOKSHOP LITERARY PRIZE 2018

The judges met on 16 May 2019 at the White Horse Bookshop, Marlborough and selected Isabella Tree's inspirational book *Wilding: The Return of Nature to a British Farm* (Picador, 2018) as the winner of the 2018 award. Ms Tree gave a talk about her book at the award presentation ceremony held at St. Mary's Church, Marlborough on 25 July 2019. See the Chair's report on p.5.

Richard Stewart provided the following report following on from the judges' meeting:

It was perhaps fortunate that this book was published a few years after the seminal *Feral-Rewilding the Land* by George Monbiot. With *Wilding* the emphasis was on a particular area, the Knepp Estate in West Sussex. This was a detailed account of how, after realisation that intensive farming on heavy clay soil wouldn't generate a profit, the author and her husband decided to let nature take over, hence the book's title. The result, within a few years, was an incredible wildlife recovery which made the estate a 'hotspot' for a wide variety of species including the endangered turtle dove, purple emperor butterflies, many species of bats, woodpeckers, nightingales, peregrine falcons and skylarks, to name just a few. Expert advice was taken, especially from a larger pioneering project in the Netherlands. Veteran tree expert Ted Green was consulted about the rich habitat oaks provide for a wide variety of species, with stress on the importance of declining oaks as host to rare species: 'The oak took on a beauty all of its own; a kind of sculptured metaphysical grandeur. Death became a different kind of living'. Hedgerows of native species were soon 'billowing out like a dowager liberated from her stays' and I particularly admired the challenges made to centuries old theories and traditions, particularly the challenge to the much supported importance of the close canopy of primeval forest whereas their belief was that 'emerging scrub is one of the richest natural habitats on the planet'. Similarly they rejected the RSPB's supplementary food programme for turtle doves, as it didn't fit in with Knepp's situation. The descriptions covered a wide range of positive relationships from the jay and acorn planting, beavers and flood defences, whether tree guards were beneficial or not and the need to concentrate on dynamic ecosystems rather than just the recovery of individual species.

Along the way there were many problems to overcome, including initial opposition from large conservation bodies awarding grants and subsidies, local hostility, whether to intervene or not when free-ranging animals were starving and keeping walkers on footpaths safe from large animals grazing nearby. Other chapters examined the economic, cultural and wellbeing benefits of wildlife,

with reference to the deletion of natural history words by the *Oxford Junior Dictionary* and the fact that forty per cent of children never play outside at all: 'Those who have no such experience tend to regard nature as hostile or irrelevant and are indifferent to its loss' and 'by expurgating nature from children's lives we are depriving the environment of its champions for the future'.

I found the style of writing engaging with chapters prefaced by literary quotes and a fine sense of just how much scientific data to impart before reverting to the practicalities of managing this ambitious programme.

The appeal of this book was summed up by one of the judges saying that it was a publication that Richard Jefferies himself would have strongly supported.

As a final general comment, we are trying to persuade Picador and other publishers of winning entries to add a sticker to their books to announce its success and to incorporate this publicity, for our society, the author and the publisher, in any future paperback versions or second editions. [See p.6]

ALL ABOUT BOOKS

Postal sales of the Society's publications are managed by the Hon. Secretary (see p.2 for contact details). The full list of books available appears in the Spring 2019 newsletter (pp.32-33). There is also an extensive stock of second-hand books held by John Price. Please ask if there is a book that you need.

A copy of *Edward Thomas Prose Writing Vol III, Biographies: Jefferies and Borrow* edited by Jem Poster (London OUP: 2018) was added to the RJS library. Andrew Rossabi wrote a critique of Jem Poster's introduction that was published in this year's *RJS Journal*.

An almost complete set of rebound first editions of Jefferies' books that once belonged to Harry Bradfer-Lawrence (who made Jefferies' archive material available to the British Library) sold at Keys auction house in Aylsham for £1,850 (hammer price) on 14 June. Quite a bargain. The books were sold when Ron Fiske, a Norfolk business man and bibliophile, died a couple of years ago.

BOOKS BY MEMBERS

The Last Pines (Reuben Books, August 2019) is the latest novel by Tom Saunders. It is a gripping page-tuner; something happened in the café on Marriott's fifty-second birthday that was impossible for any sane man to believe and it would change his life forever. Available in paperback for £10, pp.218, or as a MOBI file for £3.50. ISBN: 978-1-9993172-1-8. More information at <http://www.reubenbooks.org/p/the-last-pines.html> along with reviews.

A PECULIARLY ENGLISH GENIUS: OR A WILTSHIRE TAOIST

Volume II, the Years of Struggle 1867-1878. Andrew Rossabi is nearing completion of the first draft of Volume II, but it will take some time to edit, and to prepare a final index before publication. Copies of Volume I can be purchased for a special price of £30 from the Hon. Sec. Every member of the Society should own this invaluable record of Jefferies' early years.

RICHARD JEFFERIES: A MISCELLANY

To be published by Galileo on 10 October 2019, the best of Jefferies' nature writing has been selected and introduced by Andrew Rossabi in this new collection. ISBN: 9781912916054, paperback, £9.99.

AGRICULTURE AND THE LAND

Rebecca Welshman has collected and edited a new anthology, titled *Agriculture and the Land: Richard Jefferies' Essays and Letters*, published by the Edinburgh University Press, May 2019, (ISBN-13: 9781474440882, hardback, £75). Dr. Welshman introduces Jefferies' significant contribution to discussions about farming and the social and political changes taking place at that time. She points out that Jefferies' writings on agriculture comprise more than half of his total output as an author. The collection includes some unsigned articles Dr. Welshman identified through digital textual analysis of key words and phrases, and comparisons with other works. Of note is a letter discovered in *The Standard*, 23 May 1872, that is signed by Jefferies and dated 18 April 1872, from Coate Farm. Titled 'The Rating of Personal Property' Jefferies demonstrates that it is possible to place a tax on personal property and describes examples of how this has been implemented in the past. Also included are articles that others have attributed to Jefferies that W.J. Keith explored in *The Jefferies Canon* (Petton Books, 1995). For example 'The Cost of Agricultural Labour in 1875,' 'Joint Stock Agriculture,' and 'The Agricultural Labourer's Vote,' where Keith was confident that these were by Jefferies' hand. Other articles in this collection are similar to those that appeared in the *Live Stock Journal* where proof of authorship exists through payment slips. Dr Welshman has attributed some very early articles—for example, 'Drought and Water', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 28 June 1870, but it is surprising that Jefferies didn't boast about his success in his letters to Aunt Ellen around that time.

Prof. Eric Jones has written a review of the book that will be published in the *Society's Journal*, 2020.

CITINGS OF RICHARD JEFFERIES

Janice Lingley

Please email your citations to citings@richardjefferiessociety.org

An Index of the Citations published in the Society's *Newsletters* since 2006 is available online, formatted by date and alphabetically, and can be viewed at the Society's webpage: <http://www.richardjefferiessociety.org/p/articles.html>

The children's writer Amanda Swift provides an account of her experience of visiting 'Jefferies Land' on foot, via The Ridgeway, in an online audio series (No. 6 at the time of writing) titled 'Location and the Writer', hosted by the Royal Literary Fund in London. Her walk takes in Liddington Hill, the Museum at Coate, Coate Water and the Jefferies memorial on Burderop Down (pictured right). Ms Swift illustrates her talk with readings from the opening paragraphs of *The Story of My Heart*; with mention of E.H. Shepard's illustrations for the 1932 Jonathan Cape edition, an extract from Ch. IV of *Bevis* (in which the boys decide on 'a new sea altogether'); and the quotation of the poem 'The Mulberry Tree', or 'The Tree of Life', Jefferies' eulogy to the now venerable tree in the Museum garden, planted by his father James Luckett Jefferies. The poem was probably written in 1871, but did not appear in print until published in the *Scots Observer* on 8 November 1890. The first stanza was quoted:



Oh, mulberry tree, oh mulberry tree
Dear are thy spreading boughs to me.
Beneath their cool and friendly shade
My earliest childhood laughed and played.
Or, lips all stained with rich red fruit
Slept in the long grass at thy foot.

A brief description of the diversity of Jefferies-related events staged at the Coate Museum was also given.

Many thanks to Jean Saunders for this Citation.

Ben Smith, a poet and lecturer in creative writing at Plymouth University, who specialises in environmental literature concerned with oceans and climate change, makes an impressive and highly original debut as a novelist

with *Doggerland*. In starkly compelling prose, the book focuses speculatively and enigmatically on an extensive windfarm in a state of dissolution and decay, located in a virtually lifeless and heavily polluted North Sea—a scenario which, in brief interposed chapters, is given the perspective of the natural world processes of prehistoric time. In a review titled ‘A Watery Dystopia’, which appeared in *The Guardian* on 11 April, the award-winning Scottish novelist Alan Warner writes: ‘The novel belongs in a literary tradition of reflection on and solidarity with English nature, reaching back through Robert Macfarlane to Edward Thomas, Richard Jefferies and John Clare.’

We are grateful to Jean Saunders for this Citation.

In his book titled *Bringing in the Sheaves, Economy and Metaphor in the Roman World*, published in 2013, Brent Shaw, Professor of Classics at Princeton University, reviews the harvesting of grain in the ancient world—the immense labour this entailed and the thousands of men and women involved on a seasonal and global basis—and relates this to the experience of subsequent ages. In authoritative support of his account of the harsh conditions in which men worked for long hours with sickle or scythe under a hot summer sun, Professor Shaw quotes Jefferies’ essay ‘Walks in the Wheatfield’ (*Field and Hedgerow*):



The next day the village sent forth its army with their crooked weapons to cut and slay. It used to be an era, let me tell you, when the great farmer gave the signal to his reapers [. . .] The edge of the reap-hook had to be driven by force through the stout stalks like a sword, blow after blow, minute after minute, hour after hour; the back stooping, and the broad sun throwing his fiery rays from a full disc on head and neck [. . .]

In a subsequent chapter titled ‘The Grim Reapers’, and referring again to this quotation, Professor Shaw draws attention to Jefferies’ metaphorical use of bellicose language:

The metaphor works with what I would call a mirror-like replication that permitted a ready transition from one image and idea to the other and then back again: REAPING = WAR = REAPING. Not just peasants, but aristocratic elites, modern as well as ancient, were well acquainted with the metaphor and used it.

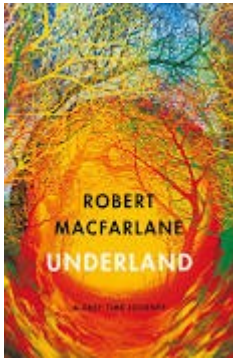
The Canadian-born academic goes on to cite the instances of a WW2 German general who named his strategy for cutting through France’s defences *Der Sickelschmitt*, the ‘Cut of the Sickle’, and the British WW1 soldier who,

observing the fall of his comrades as they advanced in a hail of bullets, likened the process to hay being mown down in a meadow. Professor Shaw also quotes Homer describing the force of an attack led by the Trojan Hector against the Greeks, in *The Iliad*:

And the men, like lines of reapers working for some great man
Who, facing each other, cut their way through swaths of wheat or barley, and the
cut sheaves fall in lines,
So the Trojans and Akhaians, driving in against one another,
Cut men down [. . .] (Book 11, lines 67-71)

One cannot help wondering whether Jefferies, who refers to fields of wheat as the ‘battlefields of the world’ had these lines in mind when he wrote his essay.

Robert Macfarlane’s new book *Underland: A Deep Time Journey*, ten years in the writing, has recently been published to much critical acclaim. Professor Eric Jones sent in a review titled ‘Hidden Depths’ by Nick Papadimitriou, which appeared in the *Financial Times*, 25 April 2019.



Underland, sparsely illustrated, charts the incredibly diverse structures of what lies globally beneath our feet. In instances of that which is geologically and prehistorically formed the book’s revelations are awesome; but the reader must also be prepared for the mind-numbing results of present-day human activity—a gigantic underground car dump, potash mines stretching far out under the sea to provide fertilizer for farming, deep chasms and caves used for mass wartime ‘executions’, an elaborately constructed cache for radioactive waste mined deep into the earth. The

ecological crisis is made all too evident when Macfarlane views the melting Greenland ice cap.

Papadimitriou, a British writer who has intensively explored and written about the topography of the London area, is mostly empathetic with Macfarlane’s reporting of what is in significant instances the results of his own intrepid explorations, but rather surprisingly, at the end of his article, invokes Jefferies, lover of the sky and ‘wild flower air’: ‘It’s a shame Macfarlane doesn’t follow the example of one of his heroes, the Victorian nature writer Richard Jefferies, and leave himself out of the frame a bit more.’ This begs some interesting questions—not the least of which is the function and effect of written language being used to convey subject matter impacting phenomenally upon the vision.

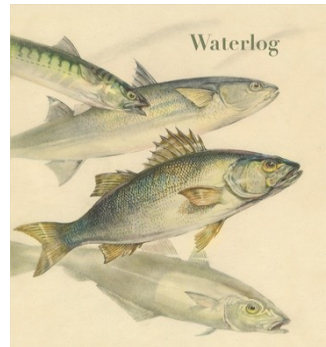
Valerie Haworth found a brief citing of Jefferies in a previous edition of the *Newsletter* of The Henry Williamson Society: ‘At the Meeting of the Henry Williamson Society at Redhill in November 2002, Richard Williamson, himself a prolific writer, delivered a talk on HW’s nature writings in which, it was reported, he said that Henry’s “early writings were uncluttered and simple, as in Richard Jefferies”.’

Richard Williamson is one of Henry Williamson’s sons, and President of the Society, which was formed in Barnstaple, North Devon, in 1980.

[Note: copyright for the above quotation rests with the author.]

George Miller has written to advise:

Jon and Rose Warn-Allen of Medlar Press, Ellesmere, have regrettably decided to stop publishing their angling journal ‘Waterlog’. It is beautifully produced and illustrated. The last issue, no. 100, for Summer 2017, has a lovely photo of a trout lurking in shadowy waters, brown on brown, accompanying a reprint of ‘A London Trout’.



The essay first appeared in *Nature Near London* (1883), and features Jefferies’ walks by the Hogsmill river in Surbiton, and the ‘wonderful fish, wary and quick’ he sees under a bridge and pleurably observes over a long period.

George Miller also recalled a conversation he had with Christopher Wordsworth in which the journalist, a keen angler, spoke of the essay as a great favourite. Wordsworth, who died in 1998, was a regular contributor to *The Observer* and *The Guardian* newspapers for several decades up to the 1990s. He was described, in an obituary by Geoffrey Nicholson for *The Independent*, as ‘a distinguished and versatile critic’ as well as an ‘expert fly-fisher’.

Henry Williamson, author of the classic *Tarka the Otter* (1927) and a former President of The Richard Jefferies Society, referred to *The Story of My Heart* in a radio broadcast he made on 15 May 1936, titled ‘Out of Doors’; the talk was subsequently published on 27 May 1936 in *The Listener*:

Do you see this little flower growing out of the heather by my elbow? It is like a blue fly, or strange little bird with wings half-open for flight, perching on a stalk. It was a flower that Hudson loved, and Jefferies before him. It is called milkwort.

Williamson ends his talk by referring to, and quoting *The Story of My Heart*.

Have you read that strange spiritual autobiography by Jefferies, called *The Story of My Heart*? Jefferies comes to mind strangely in this solitary place, where all sounds seem as though heard in a dream. This is the kind of sunshine that he remembered

and lived himself back into when, a poor invalid, he wrote with such fervour and with such intense feeling of the past.

The talk, retitled 'The Deserted Shore', is collected in *Spring Days in Devon and Other Broadcasts* (1992), published by The Henry Williamson Society, which holds the copyright of Williamson's writings.

Thanks to Valerie Haworth for this Citation.

The journal editor, journalist and former war correspondent George Albemarle Bertie Dewar (1862-1934) was the author of a number of titles on angling and the rural world, among them *This Realm, This England* published by Chatto and Windus in 1913; the title of course taking its cue from John of Gaunt's famous speech in Shakespeare's *Richard II* (II.i). The second section of Dewar's book, on 'English Worthies', comprises a gallery of 'Hodge' in divers guises, as well as other rural characters.

The chapter on 'Giles Chawbacon' includes a reference to Jefferies' portrayal of John Brown in 'My Old Village' (*FH*), as an exemplar of the great strength and endurance of the farm labourer:

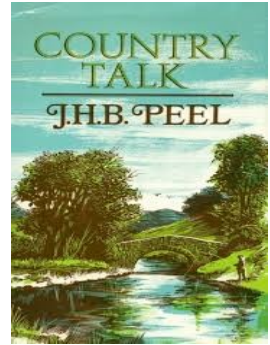


Richard Jefferies' story of John Brown the mower who stumbled one day and ended at the lintel of his cottage is perhaps the most moving thing in modern print about this field-work. It is finely felt and true and alive, but it is only a few lines touching one phase. John Brown the mower stumbled and fell just in time, for soon afterwards the scythe ended, and before the Eighties were out it had ceased to be one of the symbols of immense physical labour in the field. Today, of course, it is hardly more significant than the flail or reaping-hook. It is fast degrading into a picturesque thing. One is glad to be able to recall great fields of swishing corn going down before the rhythm of mowers. I recall a particular field of wheat going down in the swinking heat: one can realize somewhat the force and weight of the work in that field on the hillside after so many years. (pp. 156-157)

This citation was provided by Professor Eric Jones, whose interest in this author stems from the fact that the author's family were the Dewars of Doles Wood, near Andover, where the Professor grew up; Dewar's books sometimes include information on the area.

[Note: The epithet 'Giles Chawbacon' originates in a burlesque story by Paul Pindar titled 'Giles Chawbacon, or, The Adventures of a Moon-raker' published in the literary magazine *Bentley's Miscellany* (1836-1868), vol. 10. The painting, titled 'The Mowers,' is by the English artist George Clausen (1852-1944) and was used to illustrate the cover of *Landscape with Figures: an Anthology of Richard Jefferies' Prose*, introduced and selected by Richard Mabey (Penguin, 1983).]

We are grateful to Valerie Haworth for bringing the country writer John Hugh Brignal Peel (1913-1983) to our attention. Peel was a British journalist, essayist, broadcaster, novelist and poet, whose fortnightly articles in the series titled 'Country Talk' appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* from 1967 and were subsequently collected in book form. The first of these, *Country Talk*, published in 1970 with illustrations by Balint Stephen Biro (1921-2014), contains references to, and quotations of, Jefferies. The first essay 'Down to Earth' discusses the appeal of nature writing, referring especially to mystical writing as exemplified by, for example, Wordsworth. Jefferies' article 'My Old Village' (*Field and Hedgerow*) expresses the matter 'very poignantly', says Peel:



No one else seems to have seen the sparkle at the brook, or heard the music at the hatch, or to have felt back through the centuries. No one seems to understand how I get food from the clouds, and, when I try to describe these things to them, they stare at me with stolid incredulity.

Peel goes on to observe:

Many people do not share and cannot easily imagine Jefferies' communion with the countryside. To them he appears a figure of fun. Yet if a writer is to do more than pass the time of day, he must on occasion speak the language Jefferies spoke, albeit differently because in his own tone of voice.

The article concludes:

The average countryman, being no fool, does not reject the mystics. He accepts them *cum grano* according to the perceptivity of his palate, for he knows that his own domain lies at the foothills of mystery and that the heights above it are profound.

In an article titled "‘Divine Arithmetic’: Rural Sound as Event", published in the 2019 issue of the *Journal of the Friends of the Dymock Poets*, the writer, poet and broadcaster Seán Street, discusses how sound was listened to, and understood, in rural communities up to and including the time of the Dymock Poets. The article makes reference to and quotes a number of writers and poets: Edward Thomas, John Berger, Lascelles Abercrombie, Benjamin Myers, Henry David Thoreau, and Alain Corbin, for example. Jefferies' introduction to the 1887 edition of Gilbert White's *The Natural History of Selborne* is quoted. In



the following passage the importance of the quality of stillness in gaining an enhanced experience of one's environs is emphasised:

Anyone who desires to see some of the things that this man saw [. . .] cannot do better than fix himself in some pleasant spot, and work there in absolute quietness for as many days as possible. For it is in this quietness that the invisible becomes visible. The vacant field gradually grows full of living things. In the hedges unsuspected birds come to the surface of the green leaf to take breath. Over the pond brilliantly coloured insects float to and fro, and the fish that never seem to move from the dark depths do move and do come up in sight.

Before retiring in 2011, Seán Street was Professor of Radio, and Director of the Centre for the History of Broadcasting Research. His new book *Sound at the Edge of Perception: The Aural Minutiae of Sand and Other Worldly Murmurings* was published this year by Palgrave Macmillan.

Professor William Baker of the Department of English at the Northern Illinois University, a Victorian scholar specialising in descriptive bibliographies, authors' libraries and literary discovery, summarily reviews newly published books by Jefferies, and Jefferies-related publications, for the year 2016 in *The Year's Work in English Studies*, Vol. 97, Issue 1, October 2018.

In the first section of Ch. XIV 'The Victorian Period', the year 2016, writes Professor Baker, 'witnessed a flurry of publications by and about Richard Jefferies.' Particular attention is paid to Andrew Rossabi's edition of Jefferies' juvenile novel *Ben Tubbs Adventures* and the collection titled *The Farmer's World: Richard Jefferies' Agricultural Journalism in the Late 1870s*, introduced by Eric Jones, and described as 'another nicely produced Patton Press [sic] Jefferies production', of 'remarkable value'. The review also records that Roger Ebbatson devotes a chapter titled 'Seeking the Beyond: Sacralising / Desacralising Nature in Richard Jefferies', in his *Landscapes of Eternal Return: Tennyson to Hardy* (pp.105–18), which is more fully reviewed in part 3 of the chapter. Tim Copeland's article 'William Cobbett, Richard Jefferies and Edward Thomas: Landscape Archaeologists?', in the *Journal of the Friends of the Dymock Poets* 15 (2016), pp.69–82, is included in the review. Details are also given of articles in the RJS 2016 *Newsletters*, and the *Society's Journal*.

The Year's Work in English Studies is published by the Oxford University Press on behalf of the English Association.

Thanks to Professor Eric Jones for this citation.

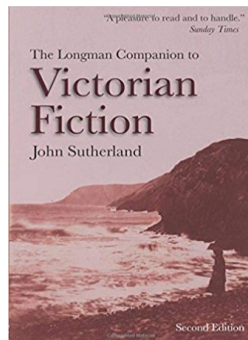
There is a brief mention of Jefferies in an article titled 'John Light Describes the Joy of Coming Home' which appeared in the *Wilts & Gloucestershire Standard* on 3 March 2019. The article charts a journey by car from Gatwick:

By now we are driving through the gentle contour of the Berkshire/Wiltshire Downs and the large shape of Liddington Hill is on the left.

This chalk landscape was much loved by Richard Jefferies who as well as being a reporter on the *Wilts and Glos Standard* was a successful author.

The article is presented by the newspaper's assistant editor, Tamash Lal. Journalist John Light contributes to the *Standard* on a regular basis.

John Sutherland, Professor of Literature at University College, London, Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and chairman of the 2005 Man-Booker Prize panel, specialises in nineteenth-century fiction. In his *Longman's Companion to Victorian Fiction* (1988) the Professor provides an interesting summary of Jefferies' life and work, with individual entries for *Bevis*, *After London* and *Amaryllis at the Fair*.



'It's still rare,' writes George Miller, 'for Jefferies to be taken seriously as an original novelist, quite apart from his better known nature writings and country books. A more recent work of Sutherland's, *Love, Sex, Death and Words: Surprising Tales from a Year in Literature* (2010), co-authored with an American academic Stephen Fender, consists of a literary anecdote for every day of the year. The section for August 20 is about Jefferies, under the heading: "England's finest naturalist-novelist is buried".'

The country writer and conservationist John Moore (1907- 1967) was not generally appreciative of Jefferies' writings, but in his *Portrait of Elmbury* (1945) he implies how well the Wiltshire-born writer expresses the appeal for the young of his generation in hunting, shooting and fishing. In the Chapter titled 'Country Prep School', Moore writes:

I explored the rivers and the brooks, the field-paths and the woodlands; discovered one by one the villages and hamlets; made friends of poachers and foes of keepers; and enjoyed a kind of Richard Jefferies boyhood in which holidays coincided with season and each season had its special delights.

Elmbury was the first of Moore's partly fictionalised autobiographical 'Brensham Trilogy', continued by *Brensham Village* and *The Blue Field*.

Thanks to Tom Saunders for this Citation.

[Note: Copyright is held by The John Moore Society.]

A substantial quotation of 'The Pigeons at the British Museum' (correctly titled, but wrongly attributed to another of Jefferies' essays, 'The Pageant of Summer') appears as one of the items in Rosemary Gray's diverse compilation

London, An Illustrated Literary Companion, published in 2015, in Macmillan's *Collector's Library* series. Gray, a writer and editor, is described by her publisher as 'a life-long London enthusiast'. Jefferies' essay first appeared in 1884 in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and is collected in *The Life of the Fields*, published the same year.

Thanks to Michael Sherwood for this citation.

Richard Mabey's book *A Brush with Nature: Reflections on the Natural World* (2010) comprises a selection of the articles published since 1984 in his column for *BBC Wildlife* magazine. The initial article titled 'Turning Over a New Leaf', dated 1984, appearing in the first section 'Roots', is a review of nature writing, and a critique of the contemporary scene. 'Looking', says Mabey, 'objectively at the state of nature writing, at its losses and gains and sense of direction the overriding impression each time was that just as the increasing sophistication of close-up photography and colour printing brings the workings of the natural world ever closer, so the vision of its possible meanings for us gets narrower.' He continues:



What is there beyond the repetitive, anonymous guidebooks and austere scientific texts? A handful of writers who have managed to combine real scholarship with a gift for imaginative and accessible prose, but maybe no more than a couple of works of real literature—and this from an area of concern that has been part of the central core of English writing, indeed of our whole culture. Who is writing a body of intelligent fiction rooted in the rural experience that can compare with that of John Moore or H E Bates or the Powys brothers? Where are the essayists who can move between the worlds of nature and the arts as easily as W H Hudson, Edward Thomas and Richard Jefferies? (pp.2-3)

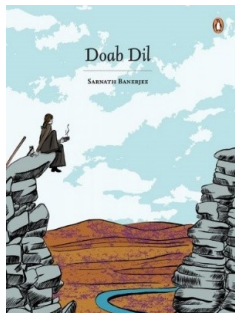
There is a further reference to Jefferies in comparison with Hudson and the poet John Clare (p.38); also comment from Mabey on Jefferies as 'an outstanding nature writer of the 19th century, (pp.114 and 116).

Thanks to Michael Sherwood for bringing the Mabey title to our attention.

The Spring edition of the Gwent Wildlife Trust's magazine *Welsh Wildlife / Natur Cymreig* featured an article titled 'Creature Comforts' focusing on the career of the Trust's Vice-President Dr. Stephanie Tyler, a British ornithologist, zoologist, conservationist and author. She is reported as stating that Richard Jefferies and Henry Williamson were 'my heroes' as a child and an inspiration to her. The comment is illustrated with the 1879 portrait photograph of Jefferies, inscribed with 'Faithfully Yours' and his signature. Dr. Tyler told Margaret

Hunt, who kindly sent the citation, that: ‘I was lucky as a child as my father had many of Richard Jefferies’ books.’

A new graphic novel titled *Doab Dil* by Sarnath Banerjee, an artist, filmmaker and co-founder of a comics publishing company, almost entirely consists of the author’s graphic illustrations. Jefferies is invoked in the brief text introducing the first chapter ‘Garden: A Place of Enquiry’: ‘According to the



author Richard Jefferies, gardens restore the ancient knowledge of monks and witches’, a quotation which evidently refers to the essay ‘Herbs’ in *Nature Near London* (1883). The assertion, in Chapter III ‘Beyond the Outer Ring’, that ‘Richard Jefferies is remembered for his lifelong walk through the “edgelands” of London’ is misleading. The reader and viewer of the cartoon-style artwork, who does not know of the nineteenth-century writer, might be given the impression that Jefferies is a contemporary author who paces bleakly modern

industrialised city streets in a casual shirt and baseball-style cap! Furthermore, the citing of Jefferies gives the impression that the author, having read Robert Macfarlane’s very informed introduction to the genre of ‘edgeland’ writings in the Collins 2012 edition of *Nature Near London*, conflates Jefferies with the contemporary scene that Macfarlane reviews, and submerges Jefferies, the Victorian pioneer of this type of literature, without actually reading what Jefferies wrote. The comment on Jefferies could have been taken directly from the essay on ‘Herbs’, but coincidentally Macfarlane also quotes this.

Thanks to Jean Saunders, who sent a copy of a review of *Doab Dil* by Sheila Kuma, which appeared in the *Sunday Herald* on 28 April 2019.

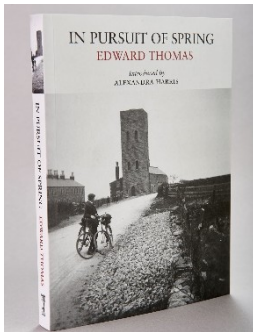
The prize-winning British writer Jay Griffiths quotes Jefferies in her effusively percipient article on ‘The Play of Light on Britain’s Countryside’ for the 27 May 2019 edition of *Country Life*. ‘This,’ says the author, ‘is the light Debussy knew in *Clair de Lune*, the light that lets the poetry through.’ The article is beautifully illustrated with photographs of landscape which fully do justice to the text. The citation of Jefferies’ essay ‘Nuttty Autumn’ in *Nature Near London* (1883) occurs in a context which empathises well with Jefferies’ own perception of light, a recurring theme in his writings:

Virgil is said to have ‘discovered evening’ as Keats rediscovered autumn, creating the atmosphere of the turning points of the day and year. Autumn feeds us with its honeylight, the nut-brown months, the auburn light of harvest time, full and heavy with plenty. ‘The tawnniness is indistinct,’ wrote Richard Jefferies, ‘it haunts the sunshine, and is not to be fixed.’

Jefferies is referring to ‘an immaterial mist across the fields’ which ‘looks like a cloud of light hovering on the stubble: the light itself made visible.’

Thanks to Jean Saunders for this citation.

A line from the penultimate stanza of Jefferies’ poem ‘My Chaffinch’ (*Field and Hedgerow*, pp.330-331) features in Edward Thomas’s *In Pursuit of Spring* (1914), an account of a cycling tour westward from London to arrive on 28 March 1914, on the north side of Cothelstone Hill in north Devon. Here, Thomas discovered a child’s posy of bluebells and cowslips by the side of ‘a glorious sunlit road’: ‘I had found Winter’s grave,’ he declares, ‘I had found Spring [. . .].’



The citation of Jefferies’ poem marks the first phase of Thomas’s journey, from Clapham, in the south-west of the capital city, to Guildford. On this, the first day of his trip, it is raining:

Rather than be soaked thus early, I took the shelter offered by a bird-shop on the left hand. This was not a cheerful or a pretty place. Overhead hung a row of cages containing chaffinches—battered ones at a shilling, a better one at eighteen-pence—that sang ever now and then:

‘My life and soul,’ as if he were a Greek.

One of these caged birds is purchased and released by another cyclist sheltering at the shop, who subsequently reappears at intervals, during Thomas’s account of his journey, as a rather enigmatic ‘Other Man’.

[Note: Members may like to refer to Rebecca Welshman’s blog ‘*Richard Jefferies: Visionary Author and Naturalist (1848-1887)*’ which includes a discussion of ‘My Chaffinch’.]

Edward Hutton (1875-1969), Italophile, reviewer and travel writer speaks warmly of Jefferies in his book *Highways and Byways in Wiltshire*, published in 1917, and reprinted in 1919 and 1924, with a second edition appearing in 1939. In his chapter on ‘Swindon and Round About’, Hutton, referring to Jefferies’ Swindon History, comments that a sketch of the town’s history appears among his ‘beautiful and famous writings’, and goes on to recommend Edward Thomas’s 1909 biography:

The traveller who lingers in these parts cannot do better than buy Mr. Edward Thomas’s book, which is not only a sympathetic biography but a work full of insight and clairvoyance. Certainly we want here no other work unless it be Jefferies’ own, ‘The Amateur Poacher,’ and ‘The Gamekeeper at Home,’ in which all this country shines gently transfigured by love.

Thanks to Michael Sherwood for this citation.

NEWS FROM OTHER SOCIETIES

AGM of the Alliance of Literary Societies, Nuneaton, 17-19 May 2019. Hosted by the George Eliot Fellowship, in celebration of Eliot's bi-centenary.

Helen D Newman

The venue for the meeting was the very imposing Town Hall with its fluted columns and fine wooden panelling, where we were greeted by members of The George Eliot Fellowship. After coffee we had time to browse the Society stalls before gathering in the meeting room where the main business of the day was conducted amid the grandeur of a civic setting. Claire Harman, our President, officially welcomed everyone and spoke of the need to save local libraries from the ever increasing threat of closure.

John Burton, Chairman of the George Eliot Fellowship in his talk 'George Eliot: Centenary to Bi-centenary' contrasted the difference between the first centenary and that of the second, e.g. there were huge celebrations in 1919 with a pageant on a massive scale including all the local children. Local newspapers carried articles on all aspects of Eliot's life and work, as well as publishing guides and booklets. Postcards showing places associated with Eliot were also printed in great numbers and proved very collectable, especially those depicting her likeness, although Eliot hated having her portrait painted or photographed. (Henry James said she looked like a horse.) Paintings of the area were also very popular. There were also big celebrations in Coventry including a huge book of photographs which has proved invaluable in determining the then and now of both Coventry and Nuneaton. The Nuneaton poet Edward Arnold Shute, having formed the Nuneaton Dramatic Society in 1889, adapted George Eliot for the stage, ensuring that he always took the leading role; from his photograph you could tell that there was something of the autocrat about Mr. Shute. As for the bi-centenary, John Burton admitted that it was very different, but no less enjoyable, e.g. postcards/leaflets were printed at the expense of the George Eliot Fellowship; even now not everyone knows who she was, despite the handsome statue in the market place. 'Who is "he"?' is a not uncommon response. The George Eliot Fellowship was founded in 1930.

Kathryn Hughes followed John Burton with a talk intriguingly titled 'You can take the girl out of Nuneaton ... George Eliot, literary superstar and expert dairymaid'. Tradition has it that George Eliot was brilliant at the milk churn, so much so that her right hand was bigger than her left through overexertion, a skill she shared with her mother. Eliot came from a rural background, her father Robert serving as land agent to the Newdigates of Arbury Hall. Hers was very much a two-way education, as a young girl learning not only ladylike pursuits at school but also Greek and Latin, after which she would return home to start churning. When her mother died in 1835 George Eliot took over the entire

running of the dairy. But fame painted a very different story. Her nephew the Rev. Frederic Evans in a talk he gave emphatically maintained that his aunt had never made butter/cheese and that her right hand was no bigger than her left. In an effort to resolve the mystery Kathryn Hughes enrolled on a dairy course which she found was physically very hard, extremely smelly and reddened the hands; also dairy maids were thought to be morally questionable, albeit often pretty. Take, for instance, Hetty Sorrel, in *Adam Bede* who is seduced by the squire and subsequently murders her illegitimate baby. Tess, also a dairy maid, in Hardy's great novel is again seduced and faces an even worse fate. Small wonder that the Rev. Frederic Evans did everything he could to keep his aunt out of the dairy. Recently a glove said to have been worn by George Eliot has come to light (right handed) which Kathryn showed us, but this looked to be quite a dainty glove and nothing like we expected. The talk provoked a lot of humour, and it is still open to question whether George Eliot's right hand was indeed bigger than her left.

The young Mary Ann Evans before she became renowned author George Eliot was deeply religious and very close to her brother Isaac, but when she set up home with George Henry Lewes, a married man, Isaac disowned her. It was only on the death of Lewes over 20 years later and her marriage to John Walter Cross that the two became reconciled.

After lunch Emma Claire Sweeney gave a talk on her new book *Secret Sisterhood: The Female Literary Friendships of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot and Virginia Woolf* which she had co-authored with her friend Emily Midorikawa. Jane Austen's best friend is usually perceived to be her sister Cassandra, but Jane was also very close to the amateur playwright Anne Sharp who was governess to Austen's niece. Anne is often unacknowledged, mainly because of her lowly status, but Jane valued her criticism, and the last letter she ever wrote was addressed to 'Dearest Anne'.

Charlotte Brontë's friendship with Mary Taylor is well known. They met at school when Mary told Charlotte she was ugly! That aside, they became great friends although Mary came from a radical background and Charlotte from a Tory. It was Mary who encouraged Charlotte to go to Brussels to further her education. Mary would go to New Zealand to set up a general store before returning home, by which time Charlotte had died. Her book *Miss Miles* is definitely feminist in tone, urging women to become independent and work for their living.

Harriet Beecher Stowe was a writer George Eliot greatly admired and the two often corresponded. Harriet thought that Eliot's early work was better than her latter and Eliot agreed. One thing that separated them was religion. By this time Eliot was more of an agnostic than a believer, whereas Harriet was a spiritualist and was convinced that she had spoken with Charlotte Brontë.

The last friendship mentioned, if it can be termed such, was that between Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf, two titans of their age who were continually at loggerheads and often vitriolic in their criticism of one another's work, but it is said that when Katherine died Virginia was inconsolable.

During the break we enjoyed a splendid buffet and were allowed into the Mayor's Parlour to see a George Eliot exhibition of paintings/photographs.

After a short interval Beverley Rilett, Assistant Research Professor and Lecturer at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln updated us on the newly launched George Eliot archive. A huge task, it is intended to digitise everything Eliot wrote. We wish her well in this enterprise.

It is well over 40 years since the ALS was formed, largely through the vision of Kathleen Adams and her husband Bill. Both now deceased, we owe them a huge debt of gratitude. The Adams were also representatives of the George Eliot Fellowship and in recognition of this the Fellowship were presented with a framed photograph of the couple as a lasting memorial of the bi-centenary.

In 2020 the AGM of the ALS will be hosted by the Leo Walmsley Society in Robin Hood's Bay, Whitby from 12-14 June 2020.

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The Alliance of Literary Societies produces an annual journal on a specific theme. Electronic copies are available from the Hon. Sec. of the Richard Jefferies Society that can be emailed to members at no cost along with news.

#### Devizes and Salisbury Museums

The Richard Jefferies Society is a long-standing member of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society. We have a free ticket that will admit just one member to the Wiltshire Heritage Museum, 41 Long Street, Devizes and to the Salisbury Museum. Please contact the Society should you wish to borrow it.

#### Henry Williamson Society

Paul McGlone wrote a charming article for the HWS newsletter, March 2019, reporting on their 2018 spring meeting based around Richard Jefferies and his home at Coate. There were plenty of photographs of the occasion too. The one of most fun shows a few participants joining hands around the 'Council Oak' in an attempt to measure its circumference and work out its age, albeit no age is put forward.

In the HWS *Journal*, No.55, September 2019, Anne Williamson (Henry Williamson's daughter-in-law) wrote about Williamson's interest in *The Story of My Heart*—the book he chose to take away for *Desert Island Discs* (18 October 1969). The article includes extracts and pictures from Williamson's journal, recording his thoughts and observations about Richard Jefferies: 'The Master'.

## Richard Jefferies Museum Trust

To keep up-to-date with news about activities at the Richard Jefferies Museum, please go to the Trust's website: <http://richardjefferies.org/>. There are also Facebook and Twitter pages. If you don't have access to the Internet, telephone Mike Pringle: 07768 917466. There has been much going on lately with a programme full of events.

### GENERAL OPENING TIMES

10:30 - 12:30 Tuesdays and Thursdays

10:00 - 16:00 Second Wednesday of each month

13:00 - 17:00 Every Sunday (from beginning of May to end of Sept)

The Trust has revealed a model of a potential design for the building that might be built in the old cow-shed area that would be used for meetings and events. See picture below.





Watercolours of Holy Rood church by John Luckett Jefferies. The man peering over the mill-pond wall above is reputed to be John's uncle, James Luckett Jefferies—'the ghoul'. See pp.13-17.

