



AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2022



Floral centenary tribute to Richard Jefferies in Queen's Park, Swindon, 1987

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Front Cover: A floral centenary tribute to Richard Jefferies, on the anniversary of his death, planted by the former Thamesdown Borough Council in Queen's Park, Swindon, 1987. The photograph is from the Sheila Povey collection. The Park, a former clay pit, was first planned by the Council in the 1940s and included a Garden of Remembrance that was opened by Princess Elizabeth on 15 November 1950 to commemorate those killed in the second world war. Landscape work continued in the western part that was formally opened on 30 May 1953 and the park was named after Queen Elizabeth to celebrate her coronation.

Back Cover: Poster for the Richard Jefferies Society Birthday Lecture that will take place by Zoom on 12 December 2022.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2022–2023

2022

Thu 20 October 2022, 6pm. Nicola Chester will talk about her prize-winning *On Gallows Down* at a presentation event for the Richard Jefferies Award at the White Horse Bookshop, High Street, Marlborough. Tickets can be obtained from the Bookshop online or by phoning 01672 512071.

Mon 14 November 2022, 7.30–9.00pm by Zoom. Share readings by or about Richard Jefferies on the theme of Spirituality, inner peace and mindfulness through nature. Hosted by Andrew Rossabi.

Mon 12 December 2022, 7.30–9.00pm by Zoom.

BIRTHDAY LECTURE: 'Coate Water and Colonial Visions: Islands and Lakes in *Bevis* and *After London*' by Dr. Mark Frost (Previously postponed. See next page and back cover).

2023

Mon 9 January 2023, 7.30–9.00pm by Zoom. Share readings on the theme of Jefferies and Women. Hosted by Colin Corkerton.

Sat 29 April 2023, 11.00am–4pm Annual General Meeting (morning) and Spring Lecture (Prof. Malcolm Andrews), Richard Jefferies Museum. More information in Spring 2023 newsletter.

Mon 13 November 2023, 7.30–9.00pm by Zoom.

BIRTHDAY LECTURE: Further information in the next newsletter.

Mon 11 Dec 2023, 7.30–9.00pm by Zoom. Share readings. Further information in the next newsletter.

MEMBERS WHO HAVE REGISTERED THEIR EMAIL ADDRESS WILL RECEIVE NOTICES AND LINKS TO ZOOM MEETINGS NEARER THE TIME AUTOMATICALLY.

NEWSLETTER: edited by Jean Saunders and Peter Robins who are also the authors of the unsigned articles. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Society. The deadline to submit material for the Spring 2023 Newsletter is **1 March 2023**. Please send your contributions, preferably by email, to the Hon. Secretary as below. The newsletter is also available on the Society's website as a free download. Every effort has been made to trace all copyright holders and to obtain their permission for the use of copyright material.

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FROM THE CHAIR

Barry Sloan

At the Society's Executive Council meeting held on 1 June, we were pleased to Appoint Colin Corkerton as Vice Chair for the Society and co-opted Lucille Kelleher, Richard Jefferies' great-granddaughter, to join our Zoom meetings. Since Lucille lives in Canada, this would have been impossible before. Her opinions and suggestions are most welcome to help manage the Society.

Nicola Chester and her publishers (Chelsea Green) couldn't have been more excited to win the Richard Jefferies Award for the best nature writing selected by the judges for books published in 2021. See report on pp.37-39. The event generated a considerable amount of publicity in the *BBC Wildlife Magazine*, *Newbury News*, *The Bookseller* and on social media, particularly Twitter. Nicola's award will be presented at a special event to be held at the White Horse Bookshop in Marlborough on Thursday 26 October at 6pm when she will talk about the book. You will need a ticket to attend. Do come along.

We are delighted that Dr. Mark Frost's lecture will go ahead on 12 December having been postponed during the first Covid isolation period. However this time it will be held via Zoom. Dr. Frost (University of Portsmouth), is a specialist on late nineteenth-century writing, and has a particular interest in apocalyptic fiction of the period. He introduced and edited an edition of *After London* for Edinburgh University Press, and this will be one of his key texts when he presents his talk. Please put the date in your diaries if you have not already done so.

Birthday Lecture



In this talk, Dr. Mark Frost will discuss the ways that two of Jefferies' fictional re-imaginings of his beloved childhood lake are tied up with late-Victorian engagements with the New World and Britain's global role. It will suggest that both books are ambivalently balanced between imperial desires and a critique of colonialism, *Bevis* through its increasingly complex exploration of the notion of savagery, and *After London* through its bleak vision of a divided and dystopian future nation.

NEWS IN BRIEF

In September 2022 Mark Barrett is giving a talk to the local RSPB Group at The Arts Centre, Salisbury, titled 'A Victorian Birder's Wiltshire'. He will include the Victorian naturalists who have a strong affiliation to the county and, he said, 'no talk on this subject can exclude Richard Jefferies'.

Following on from Janice Lingley's article 'Jefferies and a 19th-Century Wild Flower Guide' (*RJS Spring 2022 Newsletter*, pp.52-53), she had an article titled 'Labour's "Sweetest Dream" and a Jefferiesian Butterfly' published in the *Journal of the Friends of the Dymock Poets*, Number 21, 2022. The introductory opening refers to the piece on 'T.S. Eliot and Jefferies' in the *RJS Spring 2020 Newsletter*, and the exchange of emails between Janice, Andrew Rossabi and George Miller. The article suggests that Jefferies was as much an influence on Frost in the early stages of his career as he was on Edward Thomas.

The Society was delighted to learn about a previously unknown (to us) marble bust of Richard Jefferies. Mike Pringle was shown a picture of it by a visitor to the Museum. Currently on display at the Royal Hall theatre in Harrogate, it is a magnificent sculpture by William Webber that was commissioned by John Farrah in the early 1900s. There will be a full report about the sculptor and the commissioner of the bust in next year's spring newsletter. John Farrah was such a devoted Jefferies' follower that he named his newly-built house in Harrogate as 'Jefferies Coate'.

The Society was sad to learn about the death of one of our oldest members who joined in September 1975 and who had reached the grand age of about 95 years. Reverend (Anthony) John Rhodes was a vicar at Owston Ferry, Doncaster and ended his days in Leicester on 14 June 2022. He was ordained to the priesthood on 5 June 1955 and was the curate at Oakham parish church until 1960 when he took over as the priest at the Priory Church, South Queensbury (near Edinburgh). It is with regret that we know nothing more about him but in his Will he left the Society a legacy of £1,000 and his collection of books by and about Jefferies. The Society is most grateful for this very kind and generous gesture.

The Food Museum in Stowmarket, Suffolk is running a Hedgerow Exhibition over the next year. Mike Pringle has given them some appropriate quotes from Jefferies to accompany their displays.

At the time of going to press, Darren Scott, sculptor, is currently carving a statue of Richard Jefferies from a condemned tree in the Town Gardens in Swindon. There will be a report in the next newsletter.

‘AFTER THE CITY’ BY BIRD IN THE BELLY



Ben Webb (vocals), Laura Ward (vocals and flute), Adam Ronchetti (drums) and Tom Pryor (guitar)

Known for their folk revivalist folk songs of social relevance Bird in the Belly used Jefferies’ *After London* to inspire their latest album. The band constructed a backstory that might have led to the decay of London and then turned to Jefferies’ words to demonstrate the healing power of nature (see the lyrics of the last three songs on the album). A special folk concert was held at the Richard Jefferies Museum on 14 August (the 135th anniversary of Jefferies’ death), that was streamed live, and sponsored by the Society. On a blisteringly hot day, the haunting and beautiful melodies filled the air. Huge congratulations go to Mike Pringle and Museum volunteers for making the event a success. Through all the associated widespread publicity when ‘After the City’ was released, and through the popularity of the band’s music, Jefferies has been introduced to an entirely new audience in a unique way, for which the Society is very grateful.

After London

After London ended
Everything was green,
The meadows and the rising wheat
After London ended

The wheat, when it had ripened
With no one left to reap
Was eaten by the sparrows,
After London ended

Old men say
Their fathers in the grave
Saw change the day
That London ended

Footpaths were concealed,
And long grass grabbed the feet
Of those who tried to use them

After London ended

Barley, oats, and beans appeared
But with diminished force
And coarser plants did choke them.
After London ended

Old men say
Their fathers in the grave
Saw change the day
That London ended

Sites of all the empty towns
Concealed by the mud
The mighty towers had fallen
After London ended

Fields of over-ripe crops
Were property of mice.

As was the grain left in the barns
After London ended

Old men say
Their fathers in the grave
Saw change the day
That London ended

The mice provided food for cats
Abandoned in the towns,
Becoming wild and tameless
After London ended

The feral dogs destroyed the rats
Slew more than they could eat,
They left their bodies to decay.
After London ended

Their bodies fed the barren land
Till everything was green,
The meadows and the rising wheat
After London Ended

The old men say
Their fathers in the grave
Saw change

Lay Low Lay

The city of which such great things were
said

Was only ever made of bricks and lead
The ivy grew over,
And shoots sprang from underneath
The low-lying parts of the city became
swampland,

That exhale a vapour no man could
withstand

No beast nor man endures it
Black water bears an oozing skin

Lay low, lay low
Land below the lakes
Lay low, lay low
London won't wake
It won't wake

The wind, it collects miasma as a cloud
That hangs over marshes,
And suffocates the land.
The wildfowl left the towering reeds,
No fishes, eels, or herons.
All the decay of the last 1000 years
Rots below the water, with a million human
beings

Their flesh creates the vapour
That hides the sun at certain hours

Lay low, lay low
Land below the lakes
Lay low, lay low
London won't wake
It won't wake

The Ships

A beautiful sea she is today
Clear enough to drink
Abounds with fish of every kind
Adorned with islands green

On a calm evening, sun goes down
Across the level water
The eye can see a low and dark clouds
Rest the horizon's border

Sometimes she's blue, reflects the noon
Others she's white from the clouds
Storms come quick,
And the ships follow the trade route round

Sudden the storms and shifting winds
More dangerous than sea
Morning calm, and evening still
Between them dark and green

Concealed beneath the surface
Ancient cities and lost towns
Driven back, year by year
Then swept away and drowned

Sometimes she's blue, reflects the noon
Others she's white from the clouds
Storms come quick,
And the ships follow the trade route round

The sea at last has found her bounds
Last hundred years or more
Even in the wet season
No farther creeps the shore

Tonight we'll walk the empty beach
From rising grounds we'll gaze
Across the stretch of stormy sea
Reward the working day

Sometimes she's blue, reflects the noon
Others she's white from the clouds
Storms come quick,
And the ships follow the trade route round

GRAVE NEWS

Jennie Carpenter reported that a visit to Jessie Jefferies' grave on 13 March revealed that mice had eaten all the spring bulbs that she and Bryan had planted last autumn (see last newsletter). Fortunately mice aren't so keen on the daffodils planted in previous years, as the photograph illustrates. They will try again! In the meantime, Jennie added some colour to the planting in early July although, she reports, the ox-eye daisies were a picture in themselves.



Further work was undertaken on the Jefferies' family gravestones in Christ Church, Swindon. In May, the missing cross for the memorial to Ethel Mary Hall (who died aged 2 and the daughter of Richard Jefferies' first cousin John Hall) and Frederick Hall (Jefferies' first cousin who died aged 6) was re-cemented. It had been found in the churchyard earlier in the year when other Jefferies' family headstones were cleaned.



CITINGS OF RICHARD JEFFERIES

Andrew Dawes stumbled across a mention of Jefferies last February in *Turning the Boat for Home: A life writing about nature*, by Richard Mabey. Mabey notes that Jefferies was the first nature writer he read.

Andrew Dawes came across a loose connection between Jefferies and the famous cellist Beatrice Harrison (1892–1965) in Richard Smythe’s *A Sweet Wild Note: What we hear when the birds sing* (Elliott & Thompson, 2017). (This book was on the short list for the 2017 Richard Jefferies Award.) In one of BBC radio’s earliest live outside broadcasts in May 1924 Harrison was recorded playing her cello in the garden of her house ‘Foyle Riding’ at Oxted, in a duet with nightingales that sang in the bluebell woods surrounding her home (albeit that in 2022 the BBC announced that the recording had been faked using a voice artist for the nightingale song). Jefferies listened and wrote about birds in the London suburbs, including visits to a farm known as the Waffrons in Surbiton. Forty years later the Harrisons rented this house, no longer a farm, where her friend Delius came to stay and composed works with a birdsong influence. A few years later the Harrisons moved away to Oxted, Surrey, where the famous broadcast took place.

Andrew Dawes likes to think that Beatrice Harrison might have rented Waffrons because she might have been influenced by Jefferies’ writing about the birdsong and wanted to hear it herself, along with Delius. We will never know, though it would make a good story.

Peter Robins came across a Jefferies apple in the USA. Evidently the variety arose as a chance seedling in the early 1830s on the farm of Isaac Jefferies at Newlin Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania. It is described as ‘Small to medium and round. The skin is thin and waxy with a base colour of yellow which is almost completely washed with a dark red flush and darker stripes. Russeted in the stem cavity. Becomes very greasy as it ripens. Flesh is yellowish. Fine grained, tender, crisp. Very juicy and sweet with a touch of sprightliness. Pear flavour. Aromatic.’

<https://pomiferous.com/applebyname/jefferies-id-2092>

Geographer and urbanist Matthew Gandy explores the fascinating history of spontaneous forms of urban nature in ‘City of Weeds: Tracing the Origins of the Urban Ecological Imaginary’. He wrote: ‘In 1893 the nature writer Richard Jefferies published a collection of essays entitled *Nature Near London*, in which he notes how his “preconceived ideas were overthrown by the presence of so much that was beautiful and interesting close to London”.’ The article is adapted from Gandy’s book *Natura Urbana: Ecological Constellations in Urban Space* (MIT Press, March 2022).

John Price found this article in *The Times*, 5 March 2022. Titled ‘On safari, in search of twinkling sky dancers’, Matthew Oates explores the beauty of the much-maligned rook that, mostly based on its black colour associated with evil, has the most wonderful iridescent plumage that ‘twinkle, star-black.’ He quotes Jefferies who saw rooks as being ‘clothed in shining light—as if the feathers were polished like a mirror’. (*Wild Life in a Southern County*, Ch.XIV)

Sally England found a quote about Jefferies in an article published back in 2008 in *Orion* described as ‘America’s finest environmental magazine’. Titled ‘Going to Ground: Britain’s Holloways’ it was written by Robert Macfarlane who pointed to many of the pioneer nature writers here and abroad. Richard Jefferies was special because he focused on studying and describing the rural southern counties on his doorstep that were ‘teeming with wildness,’ and not on the ‘American idea of wilderness on a grand scale’. ‘For Jefferies, wildness of an equal intensity existed in the spinneys and hills of England, and he wrote about those places with the same wonder that his contemporaries were expressing in their reports on the Amazon, the Pacific, the Rockies, and the Rub’ al-Khali. He found wildness joyful, but also minatory; the vigor of natural wildness was to him a reminder of the fragility of human tenure on the Earth.’

Madame Bodichon has been mentioned before in William Allingham’s *The Diaries* (see *RJS Autumn Newsletter* 2008, p.20). Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (1827–1891) was an educationalist, artist and women’s rights activist. In *Letters to William Allingham* (edited by Helen Allingham and E. Baumer Williams, 1911, p.89) she wrote a letter dated 7 February (year not stated), sent from Ravensbourne, Beckenham, where she thanks Allingham for lending her a copy of *The Gamekeeper at Home*. She said ‘I am very glad to have seen it, every one has praised it so much. I do not like it at all. It is too full of traps and guns and all kinds of ways of destroying innocent creatures. There is very little about Natural History one walk at Scalands would give you ten times the pleasure.’ Nonetheless Allingham notes in his *The Diary* (p.370) that she was ‘struck with the truth of his picture, or photograph, of women in the working class ... no one else took any notice’ (regarding a Jefferies’ article in *Fraser’s Magazine*). And she gave £2 to the Richard Jefferies Fund that J.W. North instigated on the death of his friend to help Jefferies’ family.

Sussex World ran an article by Neil Hulme titled ‘Knepp Wildland Foundation Column: Why we need to value hedgerows’ on 5 April 2022 and quoted Jefferies: ‘The hedges—yes, the hedges, the very synonym of Merry England—are yet there, and long may they remain. Without hedges England would not be England.’ (from ‘Notes on Landscape Painting’, *The Life of the Fields*).

In his article ‘Even I Love Paris in the Springtime’ published in the Spring 2022 issue of *The Oldie*, Giles Wood reported a trip to Paris with his family. ‘Why is it I feel civilised here—but oppressed in London,’ he mused.

Jefferies felt just the opposite and Wood quoted from his essay ‘The Plainest City in Europe’ (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 20 oct 1883; collected in *The Life of the Fields*): ‘Central Paris has no character. It is without individuality and expressionless.’ Haussmann’s interventions, Jefferies asserted, brought ‘unvarying rigidity’ to Paris, ‘It is made straight: it is idealised after Euclid; it is stiff, wearisome.’

Despite Jefferies’ condemnation, Wood enjoyed himself, ending his piece, ‘It turned out to be the best shot in the arm since my Covid booster jab.’

Richard Stewart, on reading the Jefferies’ reference to limekilns and workers rolling into them when asleep (*RJS Newsletter Spring 2022*, p.38), was reminded of a Henry Williamson episode in Chapter 30 of *The Beautiful Years*. Williamson would almost certainly have read the Jefferies’ reference and in his account Jim Holloman, the crow starver, ‘crept nearer the rim, which glowed with the reflection of the fires below’.

Soon he gets close to the lip of the crater and while he was warm and asleep ‘a mass of chalk, loosened by the wet, crashed to the floor of the quarry’. This was followed by ‘a hoarse cry that ended in a wild shriek and slowly died away’.

Richard included this in his talk ‘Henry Williamson’s Debt to Richard Jefferies’ which he gave to the Williamson Society on their Study Day, 21 February 2004 whilst the full text of the talk was published in their September 2005 *Journal* and in the *Richard Jefferies Society Journal*, No.14 (2005), pp.19–30.

John Bainbridge came across a *BBC Countryfile Magazine* podcast dating back to 14 April 2020 with a reading by Fergus Collins who was the editor of the magazine. He read a 15-minute extract from Jefferies that follows the life of the moucher, a gentle rogue roaming the byways of the countryside, who finds a living and communes with nature. Birds are described and a visit from a poorly hedgehog to the cottage door. There is a backdrop of birdsong.

George Miller was somewhat puzzled by a passage in Norman Wymer’s *Companion into Sussex*, revised ed. 1972, p.242:

When Richard Jefferies visited Burwash he found the people to be remarkably superstitious. As he tells in his *Field and Hedgerow*, no man ever put on new boots on a Saturday lest some disaster should befall him. Dandelion leaves, served between slices of toast, constituted a favourite dish, while the curative and health-giving properties of herbs were widely and wisely appreciated. Nor could any be convinced that a frog would die before sunset, whatever misfortune befell it.

This is an altered version of a passage in *The Country-Side, Sussex*, Longmans edition p.85, but Jefferies doesn't specify Burwash as the location. Wymer writes about Kipling's association with the village—he lived there between 1903 and his death in 1936. Perhaps Kipling somewhere attributes the recording of these superstitions to Jefferies, but this information has not come to light. The first verse of Kipling's poem 'Our Fathers of Old' in *Puck of Pook's Hill* is about the healing power of herbs. Possibly Wymer had visited Burwash when writing his book and picked up on local memories of Jefferies having been there and recorded some of the old beliefs. It is unlikely Wymer would have made such a claim without any basis.

Graham Carter wrote a short article about the present sounds of spring for the *Wiltshire Gazette & Herald* that was published on 2 May 2022. Headed 'Spring in 21st Century, when birdsong is drowned by the sound of mowers, trimmers and concrete mixers' in Swindon, Carter recalls Jefferies' poetic writings about this time of the year but that even Jefferies wrote about the noise: 'If you want a crowd, you must make a row. It really is wonderful how people do thoroughly and unaffectedly enjoy a fearful disturbance... Someone might make a profit by starting a fete announcing that a drum or a gong would be provided for every individual, to be beaten in a grand universal chorus.' (*Amaryllis at the Fair*, Ch.X.)

Matthew Oates visited Broadwater Cemetery on the centenary of Hudson's death (18 August 2022) for an article published in *The Times* soon after. The 'Nature Notebook', titled 'Two giants who would let the grass grow tall', referred to 'two of our greatest naturalists and nature writers': Hudson and Jefferies. Oates was delighted to see Gatekeeper butterflies fluttering in the long grass, and felt that the positive ecological improvement associated with reduced mowing in cemeteries was even more apt with Jefferies and Hudson buried there: 'Jefferies is arguably the springhead of spiritual nature writing. Hudson, who had Nature First values, wrote primarily to change attitudes.'

In Jim Dixon's 'Nature Notebook', published a few days earlier, he wrote: 'No scientific naturalist like the rural chroniclers of the southern counties Gilbert White and Richard Jefferies, [William] Morris nevertheless understood the natural world and took inspiration from it for writing and fabric design.'

Janice Lingley found three citations in *The Story of the Sampfords* (1981), by Gerald Curtis who describes the history of the Essex villages, Great and Little Sampford. A former Chairman of the Essex Farmers' Union, and a foundation member of the East Anglian Regional Committee of the National Trust, Curtis writes authoritatively. The section on agriculture in his chapter on 'Nineteenth-century Sampford' briefly reviews the households making a contribution to domestic employment. Noting that the average age of the girls employed as

household maids was fifteen (p.187), he includes the following quote from *Hodge and His Masters*, Ch.XXII ‘The Labourer’s Children—Cottage Girls’:

The farmer’s wife has the trouble and annoyance of teaching these girls the rudiments of household work, and then, the moment they are beginning to be useful, they leave, and almost invariably go to the towns.

In describing the wheatfields that were to decline in value Curtis writes about the good times of ‘the true field of the cloth of gold’ (*HM* Ch.XXIV) and ‘the wheat, the golden wheat is a great fact which seizes hold of the mind ... it represents wealth.’ (*HM* Ch.XXVI).

Colin Corkerton came across a review of *The Buildings of England: Wiltshire* by Julian Orbach, Nikolaus Pevsner and Bridget Cherry published by Yale in June 2021. In the *London Review of Books*, dated 6 January 2022. Jonathan Meades quotes from the introduction to the first edition where Nikolaus Pevsner ‘wrote with barely contained anger that’:

Wiltshire would be as wonderful as it must have been in Hardy’s, in Hudson’s and in Jefferies’s day, if the army and more recently the air force, had not got hold of it. As it is, the army is up in Salisbury Plain with towns of barracks and genteel soldiers’ housing and with all the mess of tin huts and tank tracks, and the air force is down in the northern plain with the mess of the airfields and the noise of the planes.

Jonathan Meades agrees and writes: ‘Things haven’t improved’.

Jack Watkins, writing about ‘The Lions of Trafalgar Square by Sir Edward Landseer’ for *Country Life* (10 June 2002) had to include this Jefferies’ quote about them published in *Toilers of the Field*:

The lions in Trafalgar Square are for me the centre of London... the only monument in this vast capital worthy of a second visit... Did such a work exist now in Venice, what immense folios would be issued about it!

Jefferies featured twice in *The Daily Telegraph* for Sat. 25 June 2022. ‘Jefferies’ was the answer to a General Knowledge Crossword clue (compiled by Kate Mephram): ‘9 Across: Naturalist noted for his depiction of rural life in works including *Bevis*, *The Open Air* and *Tarka the Otter* author Henry Williamson’s favourite book *The Story of My Heart* (9). Michael Sherwood came across Jefferies’ ‘eternity now’ quote in an article on p.29 by Christopher Rowse titled ‘What is mystical is that the world exists’ (a quote from Ludwig Wittgenstein) and was recounting a recent memorial service for Prof. Brian McGuinness (who died at the end of 2019 and a Wittgenstein scholar). McGuinness wrote ‘For Wittgenstein, the “man of good will accepts whatever may be the case, knowing that it cannot be meaningless or hostile”,’ and that an attitude of acceptance by the happy man does not mean he has no ethics.

John Halsall recently read John Cornwell's *Earth to Earth* which has its epigraph by Jefferies: 'The truth is, we are murdered by our ancestors. Their dead hands stretch forth from the tomb and drag us down,' (*The Story of My Heart*, Ch.IX). The book won the Gold Dagger award for non-fiction in 1982.

Tim Bowly reported that on Saturday 16 July 2022 on BBC Radio 3's 'Summer Record Review,' David Owen Norris was talking to Andrew McGregor on essential Elgar recordings. The third of five selections chosen by David was the violin sonata (played by Nigel Kennedy) which Lady Elgar said had wood magic. By coincidence David was recently in a bookshop opposite The British Museum where he saw a copy of *Wood Magic*. The Elgars were living in Sussex at the time of the sonata's composition. Whether Lady Elgar's reference referred directly to Jefferies was not stated.

Fiona Oakley came across two extensive quotes from Jefferies to illustrate Prof. Miles Richardson's online article (29 April 2022) titled 'Finding Nature'. He discusses research that he has been undertaking that shows that simply noticing nature is an essential step to improving nature connectedness and mental well-being. He points out that the most amount of time most people spend in urban green spaces is just 4 minutes and 36 seconds but if there is greenery around it prompts individuals 'to pause, notice and linger'. He writes: 'I love the nature writing of Richard Jefferies (1848–1887), it is clear from his wonderful accounts of time lingering by fields and hedgerows just how much wildlife there was 150 years ago... wouldn't it be wonderful to witness such scenes' and he quotes from *Nature Near London* to point out the wildflowers and birds that existed and about insects quoted in *Field and Hedgerow*.

Copies of *Jack Brass, Emperor of England* (1873) are now like hen's teeth these days. A piece in *Bazaar, the Exchange and Mart*, 17 Feb. 1892, claims that Jefferies' pamphlet

Jack Brass, sold by auction for £2. Now, *Jack Brass*, we venture to say, is not remarkable for its genius... and written before he became famous... and is worth quite its weight in gold.'

A year later, according to *The Athenaeum* dated 15 April 1893, the publishers of *Jack Brass*, T. Pettit and Co., discovered eleven copies of the satirical pamphlet in their warehouse twenty years after publication. They write: 'These copies are now on sale, and the proceeds we shall, of course, forward to Mrs. Jefferies.' Originally Jefferies offered the manuscript to Macmillan (letter dated 2 June 1873), that he was about to print, at his own expense, and 'for which I should like your name on the title page.' Jefferies described it as 'a satire politically and socially'. The text was reproduced in the Society's *Journal* No.8 (1999), pp.3–10).

Jack Brass is currently advertised for sale at around £1,200.

DOUBLE-CROSTIC

This puzzle (No. 223) was published in *The Saturday Review of Literature* (New York) on 2 July 1938 and the solution followed on 9 July 1938. It was compiled by Elizabeth Kingsley (who invented the double-croctic in 1934 for the *Review*) along with the following instructions that have been simplified. See if you can find the author, the quotation and the book it comes from. The answers will be published in the *Society's Spring Newsletter*, 2023. There is a clue that the puzzle is reproduced here!

To solve the puzzle, first enter your answers to the clues above the numbers in the ANSWERS column. Then enter the letter for the corresponding number on the main grid. When the grid is complete you will find a quotation from a famous author by reading from left to right (ignore up and down). The black squares indicate ends of words: therefore words do not necessarily end at the right side of the grid. The initial letter in the first column of answers spells the surname of the author and the title of the book from which the quotation has been taken. Authority for spelling and definitions is *Webster's New International Dictionary* (second edition). Good luck!

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115	116		117	118		119	120	121	122	123	124	125		126	127	128	
129	130	131	132	133		134	135		136	137	138	139	140	141		142	
143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150	151		152	153	154		155	156	157	158
159	160	161		162	163	164		165	166	167		168	169	170	171	172	173
174		175	176		177	178	179		180	181	182	183	184				

CLUES	ANSWERS									
Cowardly wild dog of the Old World (6)	44	162	10	55	93	137				
Phoenician princess carried to Crete by Zeus (6)	14	45	102	39	155	88				
Companion of Christian in <i>Pilgrim's Progress</i> (8)	143	9	56	126	122	180	130	51		
Represents as untrue (9)	40	136	85	99	147	176	76	132	38	
One instructed in a secret system (5)	43	80	67	30	177					
Novel by Bulwer-Lytton (6)	112	159	179	59	94	123				
Lifelessly (7)	31	7	104	170	121	86	113			
Epic poetry (6)	154	27	97	158	18	128				
Epic poem by Firdausi (9)	33	20	1/81	166	124	142	171	18	178	
Straightforward (10)	48	144	83	116	153	23	181	125	106	71
Unlawful intruder (10)	84	77	152	164	8	103	169	22	63	129
English cathedral (3)	6	34	47							
Trick fairy (Irish) (10)	131	167	29	108	21	100	127	139	79	89
Drivel (5)	37	5	114	117	92					
Strike with amazement (7)	73	161	90	28	115	173	52			
Fostered (8)	149	70	72	68	25	133	32	184		
Mary Queen of Scot's husband (7)	26	109	151	168	46	11	140			
Fabulous animal— half horse, half griffin (10)	42	87	157	64	60	78	145	134	98	118
Worked out with care (9)	150	110	172	82	66	4	101	53	62	
Piece of wood suitable for throwing (colloq. U.S.) (7)	111	74	96	148	69	54	41			
Caves (8)	58	65	35	105	12	156	182	75		
Alleviated (5)	146	3	135	50	61					
Novel by Scott (3, 3)	17	175	91	163	120	15				
Apparent (10)	95	174	19	107	119	141	49	2	183	160
American novelist (1862–1937) (7)	138	13	16	36	165	24	57			

SOME APRIL INSECTS

Colin Corkerton

In 'Some April Insects' (*Field and Hedgerow*) Richard Jefferies writes about a black humble-bee:

A black humble-bee came to the white hyacinths in the garden on the sunny April morning when the yellow tulip opened, and as she alighted on the flower there hovered a few inches in the rear an eager attendant, not quite so large, more grey, and hovering with the shrillest vibration close at hand.

He goes on to describe the behaviour of the bee and her attendant, the follower:

The black bee went round the other side of a bunch of hyacinths, and was hidden in the bell of a purple one. At thus temporarily losing sight of her, the follower, one might say, flew into a state of extreme excitement, and spun round and round in the air till he caught sight of her again and resumed his steady hovering. Then she went to the next bunch of hyacinths; he followed her, when, with a furious, shrill cry of swiftly beating wings, a second lover darted down, and then the two followed the lady in black velvet—buzz, buzz, buzz, pointing like hounds stationary in the air—buzz, buzz—while she without a moment's thought of them worked at the honey. By-and-by one rushed at her—a too eager caress, for she lost her balance and fell out of the flower on to the ground. Up she got and pursued him for a few angry circles, and then settled to work again. Presently the rivals darted at each other and whirled about, and in the midst of the battle off went the lady in velvet to another part of the garden, and the combatants immediately rushed after her.

Although Jefferies refers to it as a humble- (bumble)-bee, the description and behaviour show he was describing a solitary bee, the wonderfully named Hairy-footed Flower bee (*Anthophora plumipes*). *The Field Guide to Bees of Great Britain and Ireland* (Falk and Lewington 2015) says this bee emerges early, from late February in some years, with the males emerging first and the females two to three weeks later. The female is all black apart from some red hairs on its hind legs and the male is mostly buff-haired with a mainly yellow face. Jefferies describes the attendant as more grey and males of the Hairy-footed Flower bee fade greyish later in the season. The males fly into May and the females a month or so longer. In Falk and Lewington it says they frequently nest in walls. The buzz of the Hairy-footed Flower bee is very distinctive compared to that of bumble bees, being a higher, shriller sound and helps with identification. They feed on a variety of plants. In my Devon garden they are commonly seen on *Pulmonaria* (Lungwort).

Later in the essay Jefferies refers to the great bombus. This may have been the Large Garden Bumblebee (*Bombus ruderatus*) but more likely it was the

Great Yellow Bumblebee (*Bombus distinguendus*). In Jefferies time both were widespread but since then they have experienced serious declines.

This essay and many others by Jefferies give interesting information about the time when species were seen and the habitats used and can be a useful resource for exploring changes in our flora and fauna due to habitat loss and climate change. So, next spring look out and listen for the Hairy-footed Flower bee.

For those who wish to explore more, Steven Falk's Flickr page <https://www.flickr.com/photos/63075200@No7/sets/72157633009633307/> has many photos of the Hairy-footed Flower bee and is an excellent place to see photos of many other species.



Anthophora plumipes (male) by Steven Falk

SEMPERVIVUM

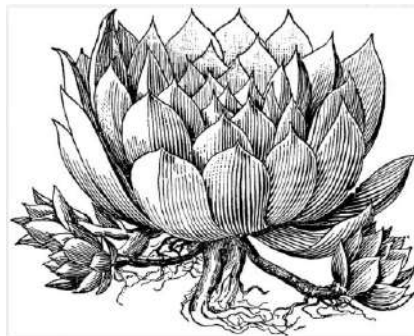
Peter Robins

A reader of *Hardwicke's Science-Gossip* (No. 338, 1893), a popular science monthly, was puzzled by a word Jefferies had used to describe a particular plant in 'The Labourer's Daily Life' first published in *Fraser's Magazine*, Nov 1874.

SILLGREEN — The late Richard Jefferies, in one of the chapters in the recently-published volume, *Toilers of the Field*, speaks of a plant called 'Sillgreen.' The name is unknown to me, and I cannot find the word in the *Encyclopædia Dictionary*. It is, probably, provincial and local. Can any of your readers enlighten me as to the plant referred to? The passage in which the name occurs is as follows: 'The dull tint of the thatch is relieved here and there by great patches of sillgreen, which is religiously preserved as a good herb, though the exact ailments for which it is "good" for are often forgotten.' The common house-leek may be intended, and 'sillgreen' may be a corruption of 'seagreen' by which name it is sometimes known. But as no botanical authority with which I am acquainted gives the former, I should be glad of fuller information on the point.

J. Halsey

In Geoffrey Grigson's *The Englishman's Flora* (Phoenix House, 1958) he gives a number of dialect words for the houseleek (*Sempervivum tectorum*) including: 'SILGREEN, Dev, Dor, Som, Wilts, Glos, Oxf, War, Heref, Worc.' suggesting wide use in the West Country. The herb was commonly used for stings and insect bites. Linnaeus had claimed it preserved thatching materials and was encouraged to grow on roofs.



Engraving of *Sempervivum tectorum*

BURDEROP RACECOURSE

Jean Saunders

Richard Jefferies wrote about the Burderop race-course in his history of Swindon (*North Wilts Herald*, 9 November 1867):

Leaving Draycott Folliatt, the Ridgeway—now broad, and only shown to be a road by the wagon tracks on the turf—runs under Barbury Castle. Here in days gone by was Burderop race-course. Silver cups which were won upon this springy

turf are still preserved here and there about the country. Burderop Races were celebrated in former days. Now the greater portion of the course is ploughed up, and the remainder occupied by furze.

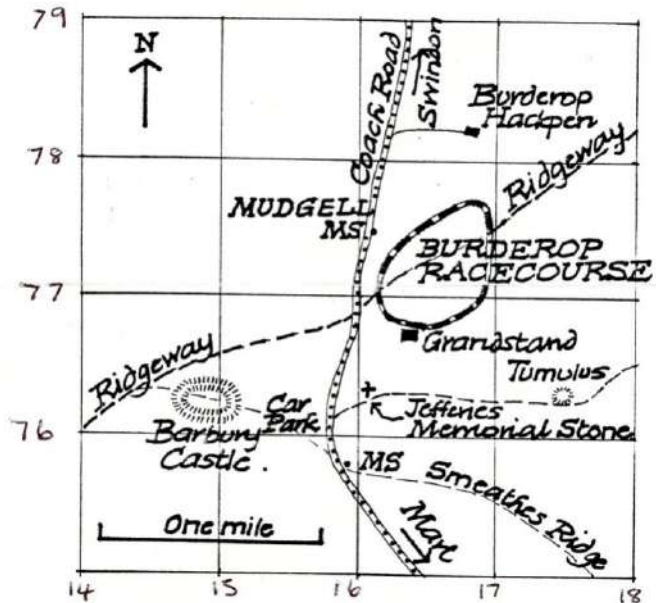
and again in *World's End*(1877):

Yet World's End was not altogether to be despised. In this out-of-the-way place there was perhaps the finest natural race course in England, to which the uneven uphill course at Epsom, made famous by the Derby, was but an exercise ground.

A level stretch of sweet, elastic turf, half a mile wide, ran in a line something like half a horse-shoe, under the steep Downs, for a distance of two miles, unimpeded by hedge, ditch, or enclosed field, and obstructed only in a few spots by thick bushes of furze and a few scattered hawthorn trees.

A spectator standing upon the Downs had the whole of this Plain, as it was called, at once under his eye; could see a horse start and watch it gallop to the goal. From an ancient earth-work camp or 'castle,' this Down was known as Berbury Hill, and the level plain was often called Berbury race-course.

For from time immemorial rustic sports, and local races between the horses of the neighbouring farmers, had taken place twice a year under the Berbury Hill. The sports were held in the early spring; the races proper, according to custom, came



off in October. They were of the most primitive character, as may be judged from the following poster, which the kindness of a printer and bookbinder at Barnham—the nearest town—enables us to present to the reader. He had preserved a copy of it, having returned the original to the committee, who sat at the Shepherd's Bush Inn upon the Downs: 'Take Notiss. The Public is hereby Invite to the Grand open and Hurdle Rases and Steple-Chaces at Wurdel's End which is to come off on Wensday after old Michelmuss Day. All particlars of the Stewards which is Martin Brown, William Smith, Philip Lewis, Ted Pontin. Illegul Beting is stoped.'

Ken Watts noted that the racecourse stood a little east of the turnpike road from Swindon to Marlborough at Mudgell, opposite the 'Swindon 5 Marlborough 6' milestone (NGR 160 775). Mudgell has now been corrupted by the Ordnance Survey on their latest maps to 'Midge Hall'. Neither name appears on the Andrews and Dury 'Map of Wiltshire, 1773' nor on the first edition Ordnance Survey, but it was 'Mudgell' on the one Inch and 2½ Inch Series, and was known as such by Edward Thomas when he wrote in *Richard Jefferies* (1909):

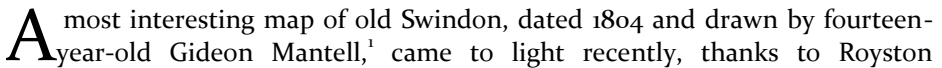
The road traverses the plain, and begins to rise beyond Mudgell, crossing the Ridgeway close to the disused Burderop Racecourse.

Richard Jefferies would have known this racecourse from about 1860, and his memorial stone stands on Burderop Down (at 163 764) overlooking it. Burderop Racecourse does not appear on Andrews and Dury (1773), and it seems that it may have replaced the 'Marlborough Race' shown on that map a little south of Four Mile Clump (166 746), again immediately east of the turnpike. The course at Mudgell is distinctly plotted on Greenwood's map of 1820 and the first edition Ordnance Survey of c.1820.

Records reveal that race meetings were held at Burderop Down under the auspices of Thomas Galley of Burderop Park—situated one and a half miles north—from 1811 to 1831. There was a small timber grandstand (at 164 768) only 15 feet long which was later moved to Burderop Farm and used as a farm building (*Victoria County History*).

Andrew Rossabi came across '*Burderop Races. Described in an Account from Swindon, Wilts, dated Sept. 10, 1812*' in *The Sporting Magazine*, which reported that the meeting lasted from 7–9 September. The correspondent had no idea 'so much elegance and fashion resided in this neighborhood' and that the course was 'one of the best in the kingdom, on a level of two miles at the foot of a hill, on which the spectators assembled, and which commanded an uninterrupted view of the whole course, together with the elegant, gay, and happy, as well as happily diversified, concourse of spectators'.

Jean Saunders



Dr. Mantell was known best as a geologist and paleontologist who pioneered the scientific study of dinosaurs. He is most famous for his discovery of the fossil teeth of the iguanodon in a sand quarry in Cuckfield, Sussex. From 1833-37 he lived with his family at 20 Old Steyne, Brighton that was captured in a pencil and watercolour drawing by his daughter Ellen Maria Parker (1818-1892). See p.23. William Morris (the founder and editor of the *Swindon Advertiser*) believed Mantell's interest in geology was sparked by the abundance of fossils in the limestone quarries on Swindon hill towards Westlecott. When he moved to Brighton, he devoted more time to geology than to his medical practice. From Brighton he moved to Clapham Common where he continued his medical practice and interest in fossils. Severely crippled in a carriage accident in 1841, it didn't stop his interest and he published a number of scientific books and papers and received the Royal Medal for

Cartwright.²

The map is held in the archives of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand³ and reveals new information linked to the Jefferies' family. The most exciting of all is that there is a building marked 'Mr. Jefferies' that might be the location of the original bakery bought by Richard Jefferies' great-grandfather (also named Richard [1738–1825]) purchased around the same time as the farm at Coate (1800) and renting the mill on the Goddard estate. His son, John, born in Rodbourne in 1784, was working for Taylors, the printing company in London, when the map was drawn.⁴ But it is well known that John was called back to Swindon by his father around 1816 to take over the bakery and milling business from his inept brother James Luckett (known as the ghoul of the old mill and for frightening local children⁵).

On the 1841 census, John Jefferies, his brother James Luckett (both listed as bakers), his wife and some of John's children were living in Newport Street (formerly Queen Street) in the 1841 census. From there, it would have been a short walk to the bakery and mill located nearby, whilst Richard Jefferies' father (also named James Luckett) was running the family farm at Coate with his sister Sarah. The family didn't move to the dwelling and shop on the corner of the

his important contributions to the advancement of Natural Knowledge. In constant pain from his spinal injury, on 10 November 1852, he took an overdose of opium that killed him. He was buried in West Norwood Cemetery on 16 November.

² Royston is an old Swindonian who, in the 1960s, worked for Brown and Plummers—a wine merchant based in the former Town Hall/Corn Exchange.

³ The papers and books of Gideon Mantell and those of his children, Reginald and Ellen, were inherited by his older son, Walter Baldock Durrant Mantell after Gideon's death in 1852. His own son, Walter Godfrey Mantell, was a manuscripts and book collector in his own right and added further papers. After Walter Godfrey Mantell's death in 1927, his widow donated her late husband's collection to the Alexander Turnbull Library. The map is in the 'Memoir of the Mantells' collection, reference: fMS-Papers-0083-122.

⁴ John Jefferies' name is first mentioned in Taylor's Cash Books on 17 June 1803.

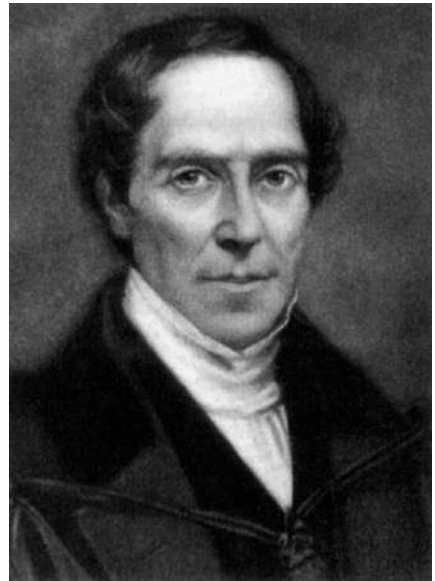
⁵ This description of James Luckett Jefferies in 'Reminiscences, Notes, and Relics of ye Old Wiltshire Towne,' (1885) by William Morris, founder of the *Swindon Advertiser*:

He was rather above the middle height, and rather stout and heavy built. He used to wear just about the same articles of dress as other people, but he wore them different from most people. For instance, he wore heavy hobnailed boots, which were never laced up, and the tongues of which were always lopping about on the fronts; he wore thick worsted stockings, but they were always down about his ankles; he wore breeches without braces, open at the knees, and which were saved from dropping down by a regular and persistent 'hitching up.' His coat and waistcoat were never buttoned up, while his shirt was always unfastened and open, leaving in full view his hair-covered breast, which appeared to be a continuation of his grizzly beard, which was surmounted by such a shaggy head of hair as was but seldom to be seen. His favourite position and occupation was, after he had got his mill going, to rest his elbows on the bottom half of the mill-door, at the point where he could command a view of the lane, and of any children who might venture to enter it from the road end. With his elbow resting on his clenched fist, he would be content to wait for hours, like a cat watching for a mouse, in the hope of meeting with some children, on whom he might scowl, and frighten out of their lives.

Square and High Street until about 1846 where they continued the bakery and grocery business.

Richard Jefferies Snr.'s Will gives no indication where the original bakery business was located. Might this map indicate the whereabouts?

Also there are other interesting features of note on the map. Even in 1804 there were buildings on the corner of the Square and High Street that eventually gave rise to Grandfather John's bakery and home (See *RJS Spring Newsletter*, 2022). Queen Street was renamed Newport Street. The Goddard Arms, where Richard attended many meetings as a reporter, was then called Crown Inn. The Masons Arms was The Lamb, that Jefferies' recalls in *Amaryllis at the Fair*. Mr Strange had a drapery shop opposite the Bell Inn and just up the road he opened Swindon's first Bank.⁶ No doubt it was here that James Lockett Jefferies took out his loan to pay off his two sisters the legacies of £1,300 that he encumbered on inheriting the farm at Coate, that led to his bankruptcy.



Pencil and watercolour drawing of Dr. Mantell's home in Brighton by his daughter Ellen Maria Parker (1818-1892) with Dr. Gideon Algernon Mantell pictured right.

⁶ The Strange family were drapers, farmers and coal and salt merchants before they turned their hand to banking. William Morris wrote: 'In due course the bank was removed from its old position, adjoining the drapery shop of Mr Thomas Strange, to new premises which had been specially erected on the site of an old house which had been in the occupation of Mr Joseph Gay, Surgeon ... I have watched new bank after new bank arise in Swindon, each one apparently striving to be more grand and imposing than the last.'

FURTHER TALES FROM THE STAVE

Peter Robins

In the *RJS Spring Newsletter 2019* we published details of composers who had set Jefferies' prose to music, these being Frank Bridge, Ivy Frances Klein and Julian Anderson.¹ A recent discovery in the columns of *The Standard* now adds a further name to the list, Hubert Bath.

On 11 November 1908 a recital was given at London's Bechstein Hall² by the American contralto Fielding Roselle, reported by *The Standard* 12 November. The programme consisted of Roselle singing the Agnus Dei from Mozart's First Mass, a group of Lieder by Schumann, some Hebridean folk songs and six new songs by Hubert Bath. One of these was inspired by an extract from *The Story of My Heart* and titled 'Aspiration, a Sea Study'.

The main part of *The Standard's* report detailed Bath's contribution:

Six new songs by Mr. Hubert Bath³, who accompanied, contained settings of striking words by Fiona Macleod,⁴ such as "Flame on the Wind—a Celtic Love Song," in which the music very cleverly suggests, by means of a melodic scheme based mainly on whole tones and also by bold harmonies, the breadth and peculiar colouring of the nature music depicted by the words. "Hushing Song" is of another type, and quite charming in its delicacy and tenderness, the repetition of the final phrases, which gradually sank to a pianissimo, and the strange little passage at the close, out of the key, suggestive of a sigh, are both very effective. Mr. Bath has also essayed what we believe no other composer has attempted, namely, the setting of prose to music. His three examples of this kind given yesterday: "Aspiration, a Sea Study," by Richard Jefferies, and "Evoe, a Sea Sketch," by Fiona Macleod, and "The Sea Shell" by the same author, are original in idea, picturesque in treatment and skilful in construction.

The extract from Richard Jefferies's "Story of My Heart" is so complete in itself, and so rich in the glow and music of its words, that the musical scheme which attempts to illustrate them, clever as it is, seems superfluous. "The Sea Shell," a passage from Fiona Macleod's "The Silence of Amor," has been admirably treated by Mr. Bath, as the accompaniment suggests so pleasantly the ripple and murmur of the tide, while the melody reflects the beauty of the words. These songs, in their distinctive treatment, considerably increase the reputation of this young gifted composer.

¹ 'Tales From the Stave' pp. 21–23.

² Renamed Wigmore Hall from 1917.

³ A report of this recital in *Musical America* 28 November 1908 added Bath's songs 'were sung for the first time and some written specially for Miss Roselle and dedicated to her.'

⁴ Pseudonym of William Sharp. Sharp sent a copy of his second book of poems *Earth's Voices* and an appreciative letter to Jefferies in June 1884. In response Jefferies sent him an inscribed copy of *The Life of the Fields*. See 'Jefferies, Whitman and Sharp' by George Miller *RJS Journal* No.33 2018.

Composers had traditionally set poetry to music as it was easier with its metre and rhyme but setting prose was more difficult because of irregular stresses and phrases of irregular length. *The Standard's* assumption that Bath was the first to set prose to music hasn't been substantiated and the song and the passage text from *The Story of My Heart* have not been traced.

Hubert Bath and Frank Bridge both entered the Royal College of Music in 1899. Bath was a piano and organ student but turned to composition under Frederick Corder. Bridge, a violinist who switched to viola, was taught composition by Charles Villiers Stanford. It is tempting to suspect that Bath and Bridge influenced each other and shared a respect for Jefferies but Bath's song using text from *The Story of My Heart* predated Bridge's *Two Poems* by seven years.

Bath was an accompanist and a conductor of popular orchestral and choral concerts, directing his attention to composing film music from the 1929 *Under the Greenwood Tree* to *Love Story* of 1944, from which his best known piano composition 'Cornish Rhapsody' is remembered. Bridge played viola in the English String Quartet, conducted and his most popular and successful orchestral work is 'The Sea' of 1911. From 1922 he enjoyed the patronage of the American patroness of the arts Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge who sponsored a series of concerts for Bridge in New England the following year. After that his work here was underappreciated and underplayed due to its darker themes and was abstract and experimental. But since the 1970s it has regained some popularity after Benjamin Britten, a pupil of Bridge, was greatly influential in rehabilitating some of Frank Bridge's music.



Frank Bridge



Hubert Bath

MORE DISCOVERIES

In going through a large pile of Jefferies' books, bought at a local auction a few years ago, John Price discovered a gem. In a copy of the 1900 edition of *The Dewy Morn*, were four pages of notes in Jefferies' hand about the novel with the fourth page glued to the front free endpaper of the book. The notes on 5" x 8" pages were held together with a 'split-pin' fastener. The provenance is unclear, as the volume was part of a house clearance via a third party somewhere in the Vale of Pewsey about 5 years ago.

The notes do not add anything of great interest. The handwriting is extremely difficult to read. The first page merely notes 'Novel Jan 4th 1880'. Dewy Morn is mentioned on page 2 along with 'Les Miser'¹/Dewy Morn Scarce had the sun./Descent of house/Strong central interest./Hard work & the little use it has been./ Shakespeare one heroine comedies./ Dialogue/& so introduce all the characters/ Brow of the Hill—the picnic campfire on the Downs/Love making in the rickyard/The hamlet beauty: Ten years. Lost an eye through brutal husband.²

On the third page: 'Don't mind being asked to do something—all this exactly opposed to what they mean, both hate, & each if he talked to himself would praise him to himself/ both know they hate yet praise & to each other'. Jefferies then lists some characters including the name Lucy³ and describes the novel as a 'drama of men. A study of an idiot, yet not an idiot. —an existence, perfect, yet without the one thing'. He describes two farmers: 'a capital chap' and another who 'seems to say what he means'. Jefferies plans to get key characters all married.

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Peter Robins recently explored the online catalogue of the New York Public Library, which holds 53 million items over 92 locations. Subsequent correspondence with extremely helpful and efficient curators produced three previously unseen letters in Jefferies' hand. The first, in the Berg Collection, from Surbiton dated Oct. 21<sup>st</sup> was addressed to Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co, his publisher, and enclosed a copy of *Cope's Tobacco Plant*, a monthly periodical. Although Jefferies omitted the year on his letter further research found that the October 1879 issue of *Cope's Tobacco Plant* contained a favourable review of

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<sup>1</sup> Possibly short for *Les Miserables*.

<sup>2</sup> The incident was not used in *The Dewy Morn* but Dolly has her eye put out by Big Mat in 'Uptill-a-Thorn' (first published as Part I of 'The Field-Play' in *Time* in December 1883 and collected in *The Life of the Fields*).

<sup>3</sup> Lucy is not used as a character name in *The Dewy Morn*, perhaps because Jefferies had used it earlier in 'The Midsummer Hum' published in *The Graphic* on 15 July 1876.

both *The Gamekeeper at Home* and *Wild Life in a Southern County*. We plan to publish this article in next year's *Journal*.

2 Woodside/Surbiton/Oct 21<sup>st</sup> [1879]

Gentlemen,/ I have just received the enclosed 'Cope's Tobacco Plant' from a friend, & should like you to see it, if you will kindly excuse the discoloured state of its paper—doubtless from passing hand to hand in smoking rooms. After you have done with it, will you please return to me.

I remain, Gentlemen/Faithfully yours

Richard Jefferies

Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co.

Two letters were discovered in The Carl Pforzheimer Collection, as follows, one to J. Hamer Esq. [editor of *Live Stock Journal*] dated May 20<sup>th</sup> but with the year omitted, attributed by us from the text as 1878 and the other to G. Smith Esq. [of Smith, Elder & Co.] dated Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup> 1880, sent from Eastbourne where Jefferies was enjoying a seven-week holiday.

2 Woodside/Surbiton/Surrey/May 20<sup>th</sup> [1878]

Dear Sir,

I return the proofs, & have inserted headlines above every column. I think the type might be broken up more into paragraphs than at present with advantage—it looks very heavy & solid. It is set so close that in some lines words all run together almost nothing or lead between. This & the absence of paragraphs makes it hard reading to look at.

Do you recollect whether Lord Spencer has retired from the Pytchley hounds? Was there a notice to this effect in Live Stock Journal a short time since. I have added it to the proof as my memory seems clear but I cannot find the paragraph, & therefore call your attention.<sup>4</sup>

I have added two folios of fresh copy to Proof 2. giving the statistics for 1877 (which of course were not available when the work was done last summer.) I would suggest you read these two fresh folios carefully—the decrease in stock is so large: I could scarcely credit it, & therefore went over the figures twice, you no doubt have the returns in the office. One tenth is an enormous decrease in three years.

I remain,/Faithfully yours,

Richard Jefferies

J. Hamer Esq.

We have been unable to trace the contribution for which this copy was intended.

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<sup>4</sup> Hamer, or another, has added a pencilled 'Yes' at this point in the letter. Lord Spencer retired from the Pytchley in 1878.

The next letter, with envelope, to George Smith, was addressed to ‘Messrs. Smith, Elder, & Co. 15 Waterloo Place, London’, postmarked Eastbourne SP2 with a one penny stamp. Jefferies was spending a seven-week holiday in the Sussex resort.

28 Devonshire Place/Eastbourne/Sept 2<sup>nd</sup> [1880]

Dear Sir,

I am very much obliged by your immediate attention—I have followed your advice rephrased in the terms you suggested to this insulting communication. I was very anxious for your advice knowing that you have a lengthened experience of the world. He says he has addressed another letter to the Editor of the Pall Mall Gazette, I should rather like to see it. Should any further correspondence arrive I will send it to you, & will in future address to ‘Smith, Elder & Co.’ as you point out that there might be a delay.

I remain,/Dear Sir,/Faithfully yours

Richard Jefferies

G. Smith Esq.

This letter fills a gap in a sequence of letters of this time, 1-9 September 1880, recorded in *The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies*<sup>5</sup> concerning the offensive communication. A letter of 1<sup>st</sup> September from Henry Leslie, *Pall Mall Gazette* office, to Smith, Elder, marked ‘Copy’<sup>6</sup> was sent to Jefferies:

With reference to my letter to you of yesterday’s date. I beg now to inform you that the matter therein referred to has now been duly laid before Mr. Morley. He is of the opinion that Mr. Rutherford’s letter respecting a work written by Mr. Jeffries (*sic*) is of a very unwise character and should not have been forwarded to the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. To prevent any unpleasantness arising he has therefore thought it better to destroy the letter.

Nothing further is known of Rutherford or the subject of his letter or letters.

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<sup>5</sup> Hugoe Matthews & Phyllis Treitel, *The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies*, (Oxford: Petton Books, 1994) p.136.

<sup>6</sup> BL 58822

## ‘JOHN BROWN IS DEAD’

The news of John Brown’s death is the starting point of Jefferies’ final, and poignant, essay ‘My Old Village’ (First published in *Longman’s Magazine*, Oct. 1887 and collected in *Field and Hedgerow*):

‘John Brown is dead’, said an aged friend and visitor in answer to my inquiry for the strong labourer.

‘Is he really dead?’ I asked, for it seemed impossible.

‘He is. He came home from his work in the evening as usual, and seemed to catch his foot in the threshold and fell forward on the floor. When they picked him up he was dead.’

I remember the doorway; a raised piece of wood ran across it, as is commonly the case in country cottages, such as one might easily catch one’s foot against if one did not notice it; but he knew that bit of wood well.

Jefferies goes on to marvel at John’s fortitude and his admiration for the man who was just 18 years older than himself. Jefferies’ father recorded that John ‘was my milker and workman for eighteen or twenty years, and was the first man my son could remember.’<sup>1</sup> John Brown died on Tuesday 23 December 1884. The death was announced in the *Swindon Advertiser* as:

SUDDEN DEATH—On Tuesday morning, as a man named John Brown, aged 54, was proceeding from his home at Coate to his work he ruptured a blood vessel, and died almost immediately.

‘Rupture of a blood vessel’ was certified by Dr J.C. Maclean on the death certificate that states that Mary Jane Brown, his daughter, was present at the death, Coate, Swindon. A slightly different story, but nonetheless sad.



Photograph of John Brown’s house with his wife, Amelia, at the gate.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Jefferies by Edward Thomas (Hutchinson, 1909), p.308.

## THE COATE RESERVOIR SYSTEM

*J.B. Jones*

J.B. Jones reported in his November 1944 pamphlet, titled 'The Coate Reservoir System,' (Swindon Press Ltd.) that 'the reservoir is evacuated, when desired, by the main sluice near the turnstiles. Here also is the keystone bearing the date of opening, 1822.' On the 200th anniversary of laying the keystone, the text of the article follows. It should be noted that Richard Jefferies' great grandfather (also Richard) sold land and the rights to extract water from the Dorcan Brook to the canal company for £275 that is recorded in a legal document dated 12 October 1821.

**T**he River Cole, or Dorcan, born of the union of springs rising in Chisledon village and Burderop Park, passes underneath Coate Reservoir which its own waters create, flows past the Roman Ermin Street station whose lost name may be disguised in modern Covingham, and joins the Thames just below Lechlade. An insignificant stream to boast associations historical, literary and engineering! [Richard] Jefferies had its windings by heart, and thought of it mournfully as he lay dying in distant Sussex—'I have not forgotten the brook, but the brook has forgotten me.' What it meant to the poet [Alfred] Williams is well-known to readers.

Curious that Williams, passing strange that Jefferies, should have slighted so striking a name as Dorcan for the stream they both loved. At least neither ever mentions it, nor even its charming alternative Doreen, which I have heard used quite recently in Coate lower fields by a man mending barbed-wire fences. For Jefferies, it is just the 'brook' and once the 'Roman Brook.' Yet the old terminology was there; has remained alive in that quiet countryside from Anglo-Saxon times till now. Beside Doreen, I have also heard During; both this year. Other variants for it are as numerous as odd, Dorca, Dorcyn, Dorterne, Dorceri, but these occur in old charters only; a source, it may be remarked, which gives Lidd and Lynt as Cole's Liddington and Bishopstone tributaries.

Coate Reservoir was originally intended to supply the neighbouring Wilts and Berks Canal, now long disused. Communication was not by pipe-line, but by a long open ditch in the Walcot fields, east of Swindon. Straight segments follow one another disjointedly across the two-mile stretch of low meadowland between Coate and the canal, and midway, at Partridge's Farm, through which the 'cut' passes, describe a formidable double bend as a motorist would say. If the Great Western killed the canal before the latter could get into its traffic stride—a dated keystone on the reservoir lower dam is inscribed 1822, and the railway reached Swindon by 1840—yet Coate could supply the Stratton powder

A detailed hand-drawn map of the Liddington area in Norfolk, showing the River Cole and its tributaries, including the Nyrthe Brook and Lidd Brook. The map features various landmarks such as Stratten Park, Stratten Park St, G.W.R. (Great Western Railway), and the Liddington F. (Liddington Farm). It also shows the Liddington F. (Liddington Farm) and the Liddington F. (Liddington Farm). The map includes a scale bar indicating 40 miles to London and 10 miles to Norwich. The map is oriented with North at the top.

An open brick conduit, some 10 feet high and 130 yards long, carried the reservoir water over the intervening Church Farm rivulet, or Nythe brook, which here bends east close to the canal to join the Cole at Lotmead Farm. I recently stood on this bijou aqueduct garishly reconstructed in concrete in 1915, and watched it still contributing a trickle from distant Coate. As I tracked the lowly feeder from its mock-grandiose termination on the derelict canal to its commencement at the big hatch in the Cole under Upper Snodshill Farm, there was the same spell, if in almost unrecognisable miniature, as had accompanied me along many miles of Wiltshire's deserted Fosse Way. What is this fascination? How could such be possible near Swindon? Skill had traced, sweat had dug this hedge-darkened slit. Were these the human factors whose memory yet lingers in that lush grassland? Will both, plentiful on the site of the Swindon Railway Works, exhale a like aura when the factory is long dead and gone?

A last word on Walcot. The bridges across its deep trough have been replaced by thick shapeless slabs of concrete, dumped down on the decayed piers. "Rocks" they are termed locally; you may hear yourself directed to "cross the feeder by that rock yonder." Irrigation trenches and sluices abound, and an auxiliary feeder (?) leaves the Cole behind Prince's Cottages at Coate to enter the main where this comes westward from Upper Snodshill hatch. Happily the big wet ditch is without history. But had some brutal Wilts and Berks foreman been liquidated here by an avenging shovel, the gloomy tradition would haunt today the booby-traps of outrageously twisting Dorcan. But it is time to cross the Marlborough Road and look at the southern and far more important member of the Coate Reservoir system.

Two miles from Chisledon<sup>1</sup> in the course of the Cole is Greenhill hatch. From here starts Day House loop which, missing the Reservoir and dawdling through Coate hamlet, links up with Cole at Lower Snodshill in time for Walcot. A quarter of a mile below Greenhill is the chief sluice of all, which, until now nameless, may with justice be called Lawrence's. At this critical point the Cole is split; one part is allowed to follow its natural runway; the other, destined to fill the reservoir half a mile still lower down, has had a bed made for it. The two lead roughly parallel courses not far apart, but the gradient for the new 'brook,' as Jefferies always poetises this feeder, is constructed so that the supplanter arrives at the reservoir at a higher level than the true Cole close by. All the way from Lawrence's hatch, the 'cut' can be recognised by its Walcot-like straight lines, by its banked-up sides at first, and by more or less fragmentary brick bridges and tunnels. Cicely's Bridge, which is in fair preservation, is the one nearest the reservoir.

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<sup>1</sup> Later corrected by J.B. Jones to 'one mile' from Chisledon.



Two earthen embankments, with trees on their ridges and outer slopes, enclose the impounded Cole water. The lower, or northern dam, near the Swindon Road, hinders the stream from flowing Thamesward; the farther one, about one mile to the south, prevents the imprisoned water flooding back up the valley in the direction of Chisledon. Broom Manor Lane, by the Bird Sanctuary, may be looked on as forming a third embankment. Altogether the lake had an area of nearly 80 acres.

Riparian rights, the authentic though wizened Cole, and presence of a small but persistent spring thrown out by the limestone bastion against which the Day House end of the Upper dam abuts, provided the reservoir builders with some pretty complications of an already stiff problem. They handled them ingeniously, the last two items uniquely. A civil engineer of wide reputation says he has not met with the like during the whole of his long experience.

To provide a single underwater passage for both spring and Cole, a brick culvert of circular section, 44 inches in diameter, was built along the bottom of the reservoir site, following for the most part the old river bed. The Swindon Corporation boundary fence descending steeply from high ground at the Upper dam indicates precisely the position of both source and culvert-inlet. Here the low-lying Cole is seen to be deflected from its head-on approach to the dam by a short artificial willow-lined channel which hugs the foot of the dyke to join the spring. The fate of the latter is odd. It emerges from a rocky cave whose size would admit a bigish dog, then after no more than a few seconds of daylight, is engulfed with the Cole in the black darkness of the culvert. A sluice-box standing gauntly on the dam points out the tragic spot; a similar box on the main embankment marks the culvert's end. Jefferies must have suffered from claustrophobia or he would have made his Bevis seek adventure in this tunnel. There is a legend that someone tried to crawl through, but lost his life as the result. An iron grating at the inlet, framed pleasingly by masonry, keeps out floating rubbish. The lower end is left plain: Jefferies has seen coots and moorhens enter here.

This brick tube has cracked more than once. Closing the hole or holes is a troublesome matter; on an early occasion, bales of hay were used by water-bailiff Lawrence, and used successfully it appears; on another, in 1931, bags of cement. The culvert is generally leaking, but it must be remembered that it is

considerably over 100 years old, and so may be regarded as having worn well. With the thorough-going restoration of the main embankment due by 1948, centenary of Jefferies' birth, the engineer must include the question of the culvert, essential feature of the Coate system.

The reservoir is evacuated, when desired, by the main sluice near the turnstiles. Here also is the keystone bearing the date of opening, 1822. Silting is an unusually great nuisance, for the feeder from Lawrence's hatch runs over a stratum of gault, and splays the black mud as sediment upon the bed of the lake. At this end of Coate Water, the filth is 5 or 6 feet thick; should it happen to be exposed, it cakes over deceitfully, but never dries up. Cows breaking through the hard crust have had to be dragged out by horses or lorries. A man attempting to make a short cut in front of the Upper dam was halfway across when he promptly sank in up to his knees. Fortunately he threw himself at once on his face, and by distributing his weight, just managed to crawl to firm ground. As he pulled his legs out to start, the ooze let them go with a sickening pf...ew! All these cases occurred as late as 1944.

One cannot leave this subject without reference to the Genius of the Place, Richard Jefferies, not however to repeat the facts of his life, nor to extol again his inimitable literary achievements. Jefferies was a poet, not a Dryasdust. In his early, hastily-written history of Swindon he suggests that the spring behind the Upper dam was the only reason for the Coate culvert, and seems quite to forget that the River Cole, shrunken though it was, was the main item to be considered. His carelessness here had unfortunate results for Alfred Williams. Writing of the Reservoir, Williams pokes gentle fun at the local folk for imagining that an actual stream ran under the Tezzievoy, as some of them called it, and 'kept its waters unmixed with those of the lake.' Yet they were entirely correct and the poet of South Marston was the one in the wrong. Had he supplemented Jefferies' incomplete description by the use of his own feet and eyes as was his wont, he would not have opened Chapter II as he has done in his *Wiltshire Village*.

Edward Thomas, Richard Jefferies' biographer, looks on the reservoir 'cut' below Lawrence's hatch as an ordinary rivulet. Certainly, frequent impenetrable hedges like those often shrouding the Walcot feeder may mask its real character. None the less, Thomas' misplaced lyricism is amusing where he dilates on 'the brook that enters the reservoir; its bed is of the narrowest, and is among willow-herb and calthropped sedge, and under the overhanging briar and thorn which the delicate white bryony climbs over.' Jefferies, of course, could distinguish between the two Coles, but failing to do so in the printed word, misled Thomas who consequently took the 'brook' of 'Sport and Science' and of *Round About a Great Estate*, as a child of Nature.

A few geological facts may be assembled here. Walcot: is entirely Kimmeridge Clay. The reservoir area belongs to Kimmeridge, Portland, and Greensand strata, the two former much eroded, with the latter overlying them unconformably. From this red capping, lumps of black carstone are often kicked out by rabbits. The Portland limestone forming the lakeshore cliffs rests on Swindon Clay, thus causing the spring behind the Upper dam. 'Kimmeridge "doggers"'<sup>2</sup> are plentiful on the south and west margins of the mere. Except for a brief band of Greensand by the rear gate, the course of both Coles (real and feeder) is over Gault: molehills, red to black in quick succession, give the facts away. The geological section at the 'precipices'—Jefferies' term—is of such scientific value that no 'development' should be permitted to obscure it. It must remain rough.

The future of Coate Water has engaged considerable attention of late. The Reservoir became the property of the Swindon Borough in 1914. When the main dam was reported by Government inspectors to need reconstruction, the Corporation's remedy, instead of rebuilding, was to allow a large amount of water in the lake to run permanently to waste. By this lowering of the level, Coate Pond, or better, Jefferies' Pool, soon became a fetid swamp for half its area, and Swindon lost an important source of water supply in case of drought. It goes without saying that owing to the lip let into the dyke, the Reservoir can never fill again until the gap is sealed.

After many years of this, a movement for the restoration of Coate Water to its former status of beauty spot began in 1944; and 1948, *terminus ad quern* of the thrice repeated Government ultimatum on the subject, should see the completion of this indispensable work. According to official assurance, July 1944, 'there is no insuperable obstacle, legal or engineering, to prevent the restoration of the original water level in Coate Reservoir, and in due course the Town Council will give full and sympathetic consideration to the carrying out of the requisite works to bring about this restoration.'

In other words, we may soon see Swindon's charter of hope to the Longpond translated into fact. The whole Guild of Friends of Coate Water must watch and work to speed this fruition. How heartening to behold again the old Reservoir as Richard Jefferies saw it when he wrote:

It is a beautiful sheet of water, approaching a mile in length, and has so much the appearance of being natural that it is difficult even upon examination to consider it the work of man. The illusion is kept up by the numerous trees and the romantic scenery around.

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<sup>2</sup> J.B. Jones later updated this to 'Lower Greensand sarsens'. It wasn't until 1947 that these blocks were authoritatively related to their proper formation, the Lower Greensand.

## FOUND POEMS IN JEFFERIES' WORKS

Colin Blundell

'By the Sea' is gathered from *The Story of My Heart* (Longmans ed., 1907, pp.115-7). 'Odour of Tar' is 'found' in Jefferies' 'Sunny Brighton'. The poems were published in *Some Spirit Land* by Colin Blundell, (Hub Editions, 1987).

### odour of tar

mastheads stand up  
against the sky;  
a loose rope swings  
as the breeze strikes it;  
a veer of the wind  
brings a puff of smoke  
from the funnel of a cabin  
where some one is cooking;  
shingle rattles shovelled for ballast:  
sound of labour makes me  
more comfortably lazy—  
they are not in a hurry  
the tides rise and fall  
slowly and they work  
in correspondence: no infernal  
fidget and fuss (I wonder  
how long it would take me  
to pitch a pebble to lodge on  
that large brown pebble there—  
I try) as the swell of the sea  
carries up the pebbles  
so the drifting of the clouds  
and the touch of the wind  
the sound of the surge arrange  
the molecules of the mind  
in still layers—a dream fills it  
and the odour of tar

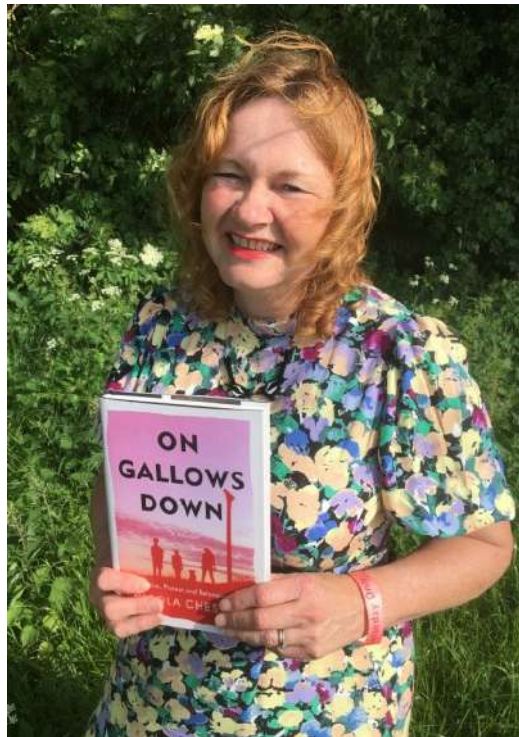
### by the sea

aware of the sun overhead  
I feel there is nothing  
between me & space—  
the verge of a gulf..  
a tangent from my feet  
goes straight unchecked  
into the unknown;  
the edge of an abyss  
as if the earth were cut away  
in a sheer fall  
of eight thousand miles  
to the sky beneath  
thence a hollow to the stars  
mysterious nameless hollow—  
I am the mystery itself  
equal to the entire cosmos  
  
no thought I have ever had  
has satisfied my soul

## THE RICHARD JEFFERIES AWARD 2021

### Winner of 2021 Richard Jefferies Award for Nature Writing

‘This Award means the absolute world to me’, was the response of Nicola Chester on hearing that her book, *On Gallows Down* (Chelsea Green, 2021), had been chosen as the winner of the 2021 Richard Jefferies Award. ‘Richard Jefferies has long been a companion of mine: from books lent to me by my Grandad in childhood, to walking a close, worked, peopled and atmospheric wild landscape, just a few hills over from his, populated by white chalk horses’, she added.



The book is strongly rooted in the author's background and formative years in the Newbury area—a period that included the Greenham Common Peace Camp and Newbury bypass protests—, followed by her own family life in cottages on two large estates in Berkshire and Hampshire. The judges were particularly struck by *On Gallows Down*'s seamless blend of memoir and natural and social history which creates a vivid sense of the impact and influence specific places and landscapes have had on the writer. “Belonging” should not be about wherever we are from,’ Nicola comments ‘but how we engage with a place and how its story becomes part of ours (and our story, its). I like to think Jefferies would recognise that to be more important than ever now. The urgency to stem the loss of our wildlife is increasing at a similar rate to that with which we are realising the depth, power and joy in connecting with it—the *necessity* of it.’

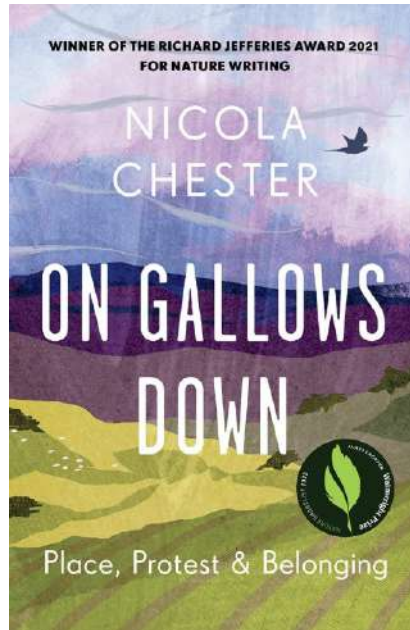
After witnessing the disruption and destruction of the environment and its wildlife for military and road-building purposes, the author's own early interest in the natural world grew into a deep-seated commitment to learning and understanding more about it. In some of the most vivid and personal sections of the book, she tells of her isolated life as the mother of young children, exploring the Highclere estate with them, immersing herself in the local landscape with its long history of great wealth and rural poverty, and delighting in her observations of badgers, foxes and deer.

*On Gallows Down* is not only an eloquent celebration of nature and landscape and of their indispensable value for human mental and emotional health and well-being; it is also unsentimental and alert to the dangers that threaten wildlife and the open countryside, and shows the author's own experiences of resistance to suggestions for more environmentally friendly land management. The combination of this personal narrative enriched by thoughtful reflections on the challenges facing the natural world gives it a broad appeal.

The other shortlisted books for this year's award included: James Aldred, *Goshawk Summer*; Cal Flynn, *Islands of Abandonment*; Steven Lovatt, *Birdsong in a Time of Silence*; Adam Nicolson, *The Sea is Not Made of Water*; Jemma Wadham, *Ice Rivers*.

Nicola has agreed to give a reading and talk about *On Gallows Down* at the White Horse Bookshop, Marlborough on Thursday 20 October at 6 pm. when she will be presented with her prize. Tickets are available from the bookshop@ Tel: 01672 512071.

Nicola's excitement at winning the award was compounded in July this year when the title was announced for the short list of books selected for the Wainwright nature writing award for 2021-2022. This was around the time that the paperback edition of the book was published.



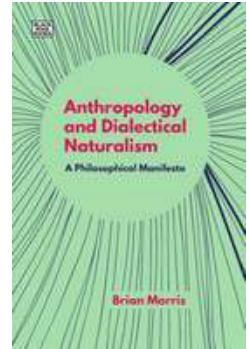
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Many thanks to the judges: Barry Sloan (Chair), Rebecca Welshman, John Price, Debby Guest (White Horse Bookshop), Roger Ebbatson, Pete Bainbridge and Patrick Dillon. Special thanks go to Rebecca and John who have the lengthy task of sifting through all the initial nominations. There were 34 nominations for 2021 publications.

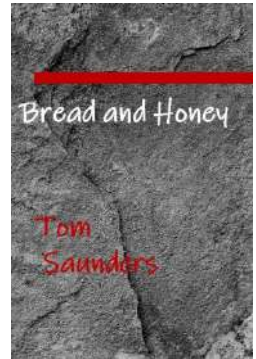
Nominations for this year's publications should be sent to the Hon. Secretary well before 1 December 2022. Nominations from the public and members are far more likely to lead to the finding of a gem of a book than those that the publishers nominate. So many have no relevance to Richard Jefferies' writing but may be perfectly good in their own right. This, in particular, is the case of the many worthy travelogue books that have been nominated.

BOOKS BY MEMBERS

Brian Morris's *Anthropology and Dialectical Naturalism: A Political Manifesto* was published by Black Rose Books in 2022. Morris critiques broad swathes of recent theory as he seeks to reclaim anthropology as a historical social science. First, he critically assesses the main forms of dialectical naturalism, including Darwin's evolutionary theory, Marx's historical materialism, and the hylo-realism of the philosopher-scientist Mario Bunge. Second, he offers a strong plea to retain the dual heritage of anthropology as a historical science that combines both humanism and naturalism.



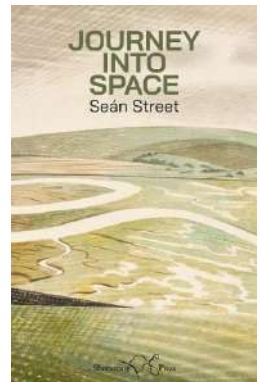
Tom Saunders' latest novel is titled *Bread and Honey*. Published in August this year by Reuben Books, it is a novel about money and sex. It is also about love and family, ambition and greed and the improbable joys of solitude and strong Cheddar. It takes place in three very different countries and at two very different times. If there's a message in the telling of the tale the author has yet to figure out what it is. Henry Hapwood is in hiding, silence his only means of defence. He is at war with his false wife Stephanie and her awful son Oliver. Henry will not give in and Stephanie and Oliver will not give up. ISBN: 978-1-9993172-6-3. £10



Seán Street's new collection of poems, *Journey Into Space* (Beeston: Shoestring Press), references the famous BBC sci-fi series of the 1950s, but it is also about journeying into other types of space too including poems about childhood, Ireland and the Mersey. The book will be published at the end of September with a lovely wrap-around image of Cuckmere Haven by Eric Ravilious on the cover. ISBN: 978-1-912524-87-7, £10.

Distributed by Central Books Limited, Freshwater Road Dagenham, RM8 1RX

Tel: 0845 458 9911 Email: orders@centralbooks.com



SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

A full list of bargain books and pamphlets published by the Richard Jefferies Society can be found in the *RJS Spring Newsletter*, 2022, p.30.

Andrew Rossabi has completed the main text for Vol III of *A Peculiarly English Genius: A Biography of Richard Jefferies* that covers the years of 1876–83, ‘The Years of Success’. Once the Index is completed, the work should be published and be available by the end of the year and will match the layout, size and production of Vol II. The book (list price £60) will be available at a subsidised rate to Members for £30 (including postage). Pre-orders can be sent to the Hon. Sec. and will be posted out when printed. An electronic version, in pdf format, will be available by email for £10. Here is an extract from the Preface:

Volume III treats Jefferies’ years of success, which coincide with the five years he lived at Tolworth near Surbiton in North Surrey, where he moved in 1877 for more convenient access to his editors in London, while still retaining a foothold in the country. Tolworth was then still largely rural, consisting of farmland, wood, and commons. Here, under the prestigious imprint of Smith, Elder & Co., he published the books that made his name as a fresh and original writer of scenes from nature and rural life. *The Gamekeeper at Home* and its successors received what today would be termed rave notices. The reviewers hailed Jefferies as the natural successor to Gilbert White, and reading their eulogies one has the impression that a new planet had swum into their ken: the phrase from Keats’s ‘On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer’ comes irresistibly to mind. At this date it is hard to appreciate how great was the reputation Jefferies once enjoyed.... The six titles published by Smith, Elder form a special group within his oeuvre: *The Gamekeeper at Home*, *Wild Life in a Southern County*, *The Amateur Poacher*, *Greene Ferne Farm*, *Hodge and His Masters*, and *Round About a Great Estate*. Each has a different colouring, but together they form a homogeneous whole. In them several streams from Jefferies’ early career meet and coalesce: the provincial reporter of farmers’ club meetings and police court proceedings; the amateur archaeologist, antiquary, and local historian; the aspirant but commercially unsuccessful novelist; the satirical pamphleteer and versifier; the singularly well informed and often uncannily prescient agricultural journalist; the field naturalist blessed with senses of an acuity and powers of observation far above the norm; and the mystic alive to the presence of a timeless, unchanging world beyond the threshold of the senses.

The five Surbiton years were a quinquennium of literary success, good health, and domestic happiness. With the birth of his daughter Phyllis in 1880 Jefferies

became the father of a pigeon pair and in Surbiton he wrote two children's books which have become classics: *Wood Magic* and *Bevis*. The seeds of Jefferies' mysticism can be traced back to his boyhood and in these two books he sounded the themes of nature and eternity at length for the first time. They look forward to the cornerstone of his work, the spiritual autobiography *The Story of My Heart*.

Jefferies wrote all the early country books, *The Gamekeeper* and its companions, out of memory ... Jefferies himself wrote: 'no one can ever be far from the place where he was born: distance is not separation.' In memory and imagination he continued to return to Coate and the surrounding country for the rest of his life.

It was not until 1880, when he came to write the series of articles first published in the *Standard* newspaper and later collected under the title *Nature Near London*, that Jefferies turned for material to his immediate surroundings in Surbiton. He had been astonished at the wealth of wild life, particularly bird life, to be found in relatively close proximity to the capital. ...

Two of the six country books stand out as slightly different. *Hodge and His Masters* represents the culmination of Jefferies' agricultural papers: through a series of rapid, richly incisive tableaux, many cast in the aforesaid semi-fictional form, Jefferies gives a magnificent overview of rural society in central southern England during the early years of what came to be known as the Great Agricultural Depression, while *Greene Ferne Farm* is the best of the early novels and stands in the same relation to the rest of Jefferies' fiction as *Under the Greenwood Tree* to Hardy's.

Jefferies' health was never strong, and the intense creativity of the five Surbiton years took its toll. In December 1881 he was diagnosed with an anal fistula that was almost certainly tubercular in origin and signalled a reactivation of the disease that had intermittently plagued his adolescence and that was to kill him within six years. He underwent four operations. The pain was excruciating, 'like lightning through the brain', and it was some time before the wounds were properly healed. He moved to West Brighton in the hope that the sea air would help him to convalesce. The presence of the sea and recovery of a chalk grassland landscape like that of his native Wiltshire, as well as the intimations of mortality brought on by his illness, inspired him finally to put on paper a record of his experiences since 'an inner and esoteric meaning' had come to him 'from all the visible universe', and to write the autobiography that heralded the last phase of his career, which we will treat in the final volume...

BOOK REVIEW

Wild Life edited by Mike Pringle

A survey of the many books I possess written by or about Richard Jefferies reveals that most have no illustrations and those which do are largely in black and white. One example is E.H. Shepard's illustrations for *Bevis*. The only use of colour throughout in my Jefferies collection is *The Wessex Landscape of Richard Jefferies* by Antony Clare Lees and this has just seventy-nine pages almost all being devoted to his nature writing. What Mike Pringle has successfully achieved in the 243 pages of *Wild Life* is to extend the literature about Jefferies by taking full advantage of recent printing developments enabling extensive and high quality use of colour illustrations. The structure of the book is a study of Jefferies through childhood, adult life, early novels then longer sections mainly covering agriculture, people and the natural world. There is a final and important section about his legacy and relevance today. On many double pages Mike has managed to include an impressive array of words and images: pages 178-9 include two family photos, a blue plaque and house drawing about his stay at Eltham, the centenary edition front cover and written note of *The Dewy Morn* plus a short quote from *The Story of My Heart* and a short essay on 'Beautiful Human Life'.

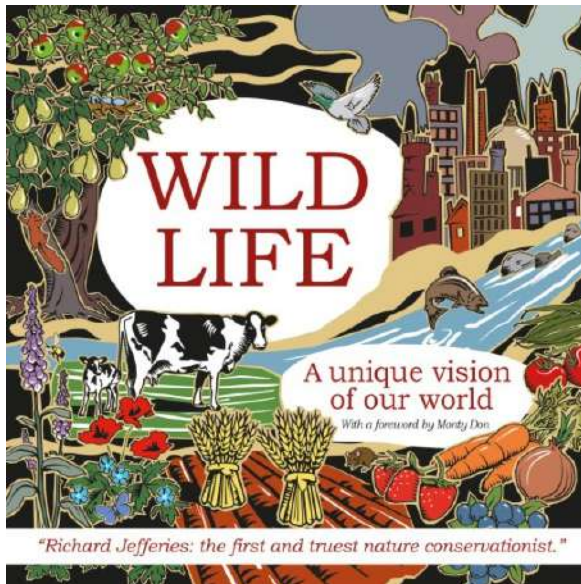
So often in this book the written extracts are put into context by related illustrations—such as the two pages 78-79 about 'Victorian London' accompanied by an illustration showing the trial journey on the first part of London's Underground. There are also memorable illustrations accompanying 'Victorian Tuberculosis' on pages 194-5 and 'Victorian Poverty' pages 174-5, both relevant to the last years of Jefferies' life. In contrast pages 114-5 feature three short passages about butterflies with three photos of the relevant species. This linking of text and photos or drawings is imaginatively extended to underline the importance of Jefferies to our present generation—on pages 172-3 two homeless people are featured with a passage from *The Story of My Heart* where Jefferies states that 'Food and drink, roof and clothes, are the inalienable right of every child born into the light'.

Coate farmhouse, where Jefferies was born, features prominently, including animals, working Victorian tools, old but still working machines and a vibrant double page on 226-7 showing the varied activities now taking place there. Look carefully at the photo on apple crushing on page 135 and see how Mike, in one image, has managed to cover almost all of the processes involved in the conversion to drink. Also included is a relevant passage from *Amaryllis at the Fair*.

Many copies of this book have been sent to prominent naturalists and conservationists, hopefully not just to increase their interest in Jefferies' writings but also to possibly include extracts in their future publications. Current interest is strong and the Citations section of the *RJS Spring 2022 Newsletter* now runs to twelve pages. With its comprehensive coverage, attractive format and varied selection of written passages, plus a two-page bibliography this book should encourage a new audience to explore 'A unique vision of our world'(Matthew Oates) and understand what Monty Don OBE concluded in his foreword: 'We are learning that we need that(natural world) in all its sublime complexity much more than it needs us. This was Jefferies' subject and it has never been more pertinent to the way that we live'.

I have only two peripheral reservations—first I would have preferred all captions to closely accompany illustrations rather than constantly having to turn to the list at the back. Second, given the amount of research, text selection and page planning involved, I would have liked to see Mike's name more prominently displayed. Details about how to order the book are on page 24 of the *RJS Spring 2022 Newsletter*.

Richard Stewart
April 2022



Available from the Richard Jefferies Museum Trust
<https://www.richardjefferies.org/our-new-book>

RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY BIRTHDAY LECTURE

Monday 12 December 2022, 7.30–9.00pm

Zoom meeting (email richardjefferiessociety@btinternet.com to register)



Coate Water and Colonial Visions: Islands and Lakes in *Bevis* and *After London*

Mark Frost



Coate Water, watercolour by John Luckett Jefferies c.1840



In this talk, Dr. Mark Frost (senior lecturer in English Literature at the University of Portsmouth) will discuss the ways that two of Jefferies' fictional re-imaginings of his beloved childhood lake are tied up with late-Victorian engagements with the New World and Britain's global role. It will suggest that both books are ambivalently balanced between imperial desires and a critique of colonialism, *Bevis* through its increasingly complex exploration of the notion of savagery, and *After London* through its bleak vision of a divided and dystopian future nation.