

RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT & AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2000-2001

REGISTERED CHARITY No. 1042838

TRUSTEES AND COUNCIL MEMBERS 2000-2001

Hon. Sec. Lady Treitel, Eidsvoll, Bedwells Heath, Boars Hill, Oxford OX1 5JE Tel. 01865 735678 (Best before 7.00 pm or Saturdays)

Patrick Dillon, Margaret Evans, Brian Fullagar, Margaret Gould, Ethelwyn Gregory, Len Grugeon, Geoff Hirst, Jeremy Hooker, Robert McCloy, Ray Morse, Helen Newman, John Price, Phyllis Treitel, John Webb, Co-opted: Stan Hickerton

FROM THE CHAIR

On 23 June this year *The Independent* newspaper published a splendid photograph. It celebrated the initiative of the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust in rescuing for posterity a large area of unspoilt meadowland at Blakehill. This had been the wartime site of an R.A.F. flying field, not quite an aerodrome but a departure point for air-tugs and gliders bound for Arnhem. The impressive variety of colours in the picture was provided by wild flowers usefully listed in the accompanying text: buttercups, knapweed, burnet, stitchwort, vetch, ragged robin, ladies' bedstraw and oxeye daisies. Such profusion, you might suppose, left little space for grasses — but not so; there were also cockfoot, crested dogtail, false oatgrass, meadow barley, red fescus and 'Yorkshire fog'. These delights are now accessible by the public and, true enough, the photo showed a modern kind of bearded peasant trampling over the terrain. This would not have been to the liking of pre-War farmers. A child of those times, I remember strong warnings to "keep away from the mowing-grass". One child wandering across a field of long grasses left a guilty trail probably leading to punishment. Nowadays, farm machines deal satisfactorily with crops flattened by thunderstorms but earlier mechanical mowers welcomed upstanding stalks.

The Wiltshire Wildlife Trust has been fortunate to secure abundant acres accidentally preserved to give us a modern 'Meadowland Experience'. They will surely keep it fairly virginal, allowing perhaps a modest display; some maps to show the variety and distribution of plants, a panel of relevant illustrations and the brief history of grasslands in a leaflet. No little light buttons to press, no headphones to wear, no re-enactments to watch. The text alongside the picture contained a deal of semi-technical data which I would have quoted here but for the later appearance of a Letter to the Editor which designated the prior data as rubbish. I would not dare to take sides in such an argument; my purposes in referring to the matter are: first, to commend the WWL enterprise and wish it well; second, to dwell on the contributor's lament that hay had disappeared from the countryside. "When did you last see a haystack? When did newly-mown hay's sweet scent last creep by your nostrils?" he asks. He concludes that we cannot now know what it was like to work in the fields before the First World War. Reading this, I was resolved immediately to write to the Environment Editor,

thrusting the writings of Richard Jefferies to his attention. In 'The Field Play' Jefferies provides authentic Virtual Reality (his words being real beyond contrivance of computers) in which five men and eight women cross a field in echelon, turning the tufts of mown grass to foster the drying process. (The moisture content has to be reduced from 80 to 20 per cent for hay-making success.) As usual with Jefferies, the scene is vivid, with elation and tragedy lurking in the action.

Now we may all go to Blakehill to see a meadow, but we must turn to Jefferies to discover what it was like to work in one. He preserves for us the experience of bygone farming and the Wildlife Trust is providing the setting. Postscript: I confess to not having dashed off a letter to the Editor of *The Independent* but had I done so it would have been to point out a major error in the article. The airborne forces truly left Blakehill for Arnhem, but not on D-Day (as the text had maintained); the Arnhem project was mounted three months after the Normandy invasions. If media fog is beginning to obscure quite recent history then surely we desperately need the accurate observation and careful description of a successor 'Jefferies' if we are to conserve something like true historical perspective in the everyday story of country folk.

Len Grugeon

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

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

Mr G Baines, Dippin, Isle of Arran
Mr N Baker, Sough Downs, South Darenth, Kent
Dr A J Boakes & Miss S R H Bellhouse, Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxon
The Eltham Society, London
Professor G Evans, St Brelades, Jersey
Miss M G Fluck, Skipton, North Yorkshire
Mrs A L Gander, Wenhaston, Halesworth, Suffolk
Mr C Houghton, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire
Dr R Laudan, Guanajuato, Mexico
Mr M Parr, Cwmgwyn, Swansea, Wales
Mr A O Randall, Sevenoaks, Kent
Ms A M Richardson, London
Mr H G Singleton, Fairfield Park, Bath
Mr D K Sleep, Eltham, London
Mr & Mrs D Smith, Highworth, Wiltshire
Mr R M Wakeford, Bontnewydd, Gwynedd, Wales

The total membership during the 2000/1 subscription year numbered 292 being made up of: 186 single, 39 joint, 18 Life, 2 Joint Life, 2 Hon Life (1 Joint), and 3 Corporation memberships. 21 members (3 Joint), let their membership lapse and 1 resigned.

At the time of writing the 2001/02 membership is 286. This takes account of 3 member; (1 Joint) having resigned at the end of, and 5 paid-up members having sadly passed away during the 2000/1 membership year.

Although most members live in England, other countries are represented: Australia 4, Belgium 1, Canada 3 (1 Joint), the Channel Islands 1, Eire 1, Germany 1, Mexico 1, New Zealand 1, Northern Ireland 2, Scotland 9, Spain 1, the USA 3 (1 Joint) Wales 10 (2 Joint).

At present 49 members (7 of whom are Joint) have not yet paid their 2001/02 subscriptions. Gentle reminders will accompany their mailing of the Annual Report in the hope that they will bring their membership up-to-date. In anticipation, many thanks.

Margaret Evans

OBITUARY

Dick Bedwin : An Appreciation

During the inter-Wars years, the twenties and thirties of the twentieth century, you could telephone Swindon 2309 and place an order with W.J. Bedwin and Son. Not long afterwards Fred would arrive, a genial giant of a man who delivered Bedwins' High Class Groceries and Provisions to customers in the town and its surrounding villages. (Tesco's are just getting round to providing a similar service.) The Bedwin business motto was "to profit not alone in money but in goodwill of those with whom we deal". They followed this maxim well, resulting in great respect and affection for the family in Old Town and beyond.

The 'son' in their title was D.W. Bedwin. 'Our' Dick, a good looking young man much admired by the lady customers, had been visible at the Devizes Road premises but soon conceived distaste for the retail trade and took to banking. The Second World War released him from both pursuits: he served as an Army officer. Barclays Bank claimed him, nurtured him and finally established him as Manager of their branch at Witney. In those times the Manager of a country bank was a man (always a man) of power and influence in the community, one with squire and parson; the capital 'M' remains appropriate. Thus Dick came to the Richard Jefferies Society, bringing financial skills and great experience. He rebuilt our finances, explained and followed sound principles, created the structure of our reserves.

He was, of course, much more than a very competent Honorary Treasurer. On several occasions he came to meetings to talk with authority and affection about his beloved Evenlode Valley. Indeed for the Society he led both organised and informal walks in that sweet locality. We remember him as a generous spirit, informed by his Methodist faith in an obvious love for human-kind. At meetings his contributions were pertinent and always directed to the points at issue. His warm smile, his humour and the friendly greeting of his eyes are gratefully recalled by colleagues on the Society Council. His name and memory are cherished by us all.

Len Grugeon

REPORTS OF WINTER MEETINGS

Wildlife Projects in the Swindon Area: Dominic Lamb 4 December 2000

The speaker was to have given this talk last year but, because of illness, was prevented from coming: it was worth waiting for. Dominic Lamb is the Swindon Wildlife Officer of the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, and in charge of several projects designed to rescue, preserve, or enhance uncultivated (or unbuilt-upon) open spaces in and near the Borough.

He showed numerous excellent slides (which gave good opportunities for games of 'name the place') and at each site explained what was being achieved. At Rushey Platt, for example, there are orchids, dragon flies, and newts to be preserved. The River Ray runs through but the old railway embankment has

interfered with drainage. The public, especially children, are introduced to its delights through visits and information boards.

Hagbourne Copse, a small hazel coppice near J.16 of the M4, is also a bluebell wood. The Trust is clearing out rubbish left by, 'Travellers' and will make a circular path for visitors.

Clouts Wood, at Wroughton, has had to be fenced against the deer who eat the new coppice growth. Here are early purple orchis and Bath asparagus. Volunteers are making steps as this is a steep-sided valley.

And so on. At Haydon Wick, at Stanton Park, orchids, newts, small mammals generally are being protected, and Swindon's many ponds preserved. Water voles are being counted - before they vanish altogether. Hedgerows are restored expertly to shelter birds and mammals.

We were given details of too many projects to list here, but left with great respect for the work of the Trust and its volunteers. It is a huge organisation with over 10,000 members and a mouth-watering programme of events to suit all kinds of enthusiast. Jefferies would be impressed. To take part ring 01793 526228.

Members Evening jointly with The Friends of Alfred Williams 5 March 2001 The readers and their choice of text:

PHYLLIS TREITEL began with a passage from Chapter II - 'Ancient Garrison of the Entrenchment' - of *Wild Life in a Southern County*, in which Jefferies speculates on how the hillfort might be defended in modern times. Then she read a recent article in *Wiltshire Heritage Studies* (WANHS) about Barbury Castle and the use made of it during WWII, parallels being drawn.

GRAEME FRANKLIN read a vivid description of Liddington and its surroundings, from Alfred Williams' *A Wiltshire Village*. Williams names such places as Callas Hill and Ermine Street, the plants, trees and shrubs that grow locally, and the public house, The Shepherd's Rest, with its shady chestnut tree. Finally, the views to north and south and the claim that seven counties are visible from the top, on a clear day.

JOHN WEBB had recently been on Liddington Hill, looking for the site of a mill, and had met an elderly man who had known Alfred Williams. John read from the very last page of 'A Wet Night in London' (*The Open Air*) describing the determination of street users - men, horses, cab drivers - to get along, regardless of the comfort of other users. Richard Jefferies in somewhat untypical territory.

KAY FRANKLIN read from *Life in a Railway Factory*, a chapter on Moods and Feelings. The working year had its shape, partly pivoted on 'trip' week, which was the annual week's stoppage - no work but also no pay. Not many could afford to go away but still it was looked forward to. From Christmas to Easter the men looked forward to the light. From Easter to trip in August there was a sense of ease and satisfaction, brief holidays, the garden, fresh produce. During the unbroken five months from August to Christmas, money could be saved for clothes and boots, or for getting out of debt.

Similarly, the week had its shape ending with pay-day on Friday, half a day on Saturday, and rest all day on Sunday.

ROY BURTON read a poem from a hard-to-find Williams book - *War Songs and Sonnets* (1916) entitled 'The Coming of Peace'. He also read reviews of an earlier book of poems, *Cor Cordium* (1913), all praising Williams' poetry, making it harder than ever to understand why the books did not sell.

RAY MORSE read from Chapter IX of *The Amateur Poacher*, about Luke, the rabbit contractor. The chapter opens with a plain description of the track to the 'Upper Woods' (assumed to be Hodson). It soon brings to our notice Old Luke. Ray's accent, as he read out Luke's tale of woe, was so realistic that the audience were soon rocking with laughter.

SHEILA POVEY had been investigating Coate characters, and in 'John Smith's Shanty' (*The Toilers of the Field*) had found a brief biography of John Smith, his work, his day, his lunch, and his companion Jim. The two men exchange comments and Jim's house and household are discussed: he had a two-roomed cottage where he and his wife had had 19 children, of whom 14 had lived to grow up. The 14 children rounded off the passage.

After these readings, a topic is often seized on, without pre-arrangement, and discussed. This time it was war-time Swindon: the bunker among the trees on Liddington Hill, the anti-aircraft guns on Barbury, the tanks being revved up outside Ray Morse's school, the unannounced influx of troops and weapons, the minute the area around the Works had emptied because of trip week, the hospital at Burderop. This subject may have been written up already; if not, it should be.

Jefferies Land - A discussion led by Roy Burton 2 April 2001

While everyone present was skimming through the 24-page handout that Roy had prepared, Roy himself was spreading out photographs on every level surface. In addition, he had placed 200 more photographs in two display books (one presented to this Society, one to the Friends of Alfred Williams) and all numbered in order to key in to the texts in the handout. So extensive had been his research - literally leg-work - that only half could be used on this occasion, and we are promised Part II next year.

Chairs were arranged in a circle, and each of those who wished to (not all did) read out an extract from *Jefferies Land*, and this was then discussed. We began with Grace Toplis's Introduction and then a paragraph about her taken from RJSAR 1978/9 p.9. Roy had also supplied prelims from the book and two maps of the area covered by Jefferies in the series of articles, published in the *North Wilts Herald* in 1867 and 1868 under the title 'History of Swindon'. These were gathered by Grace Toplis to form the book.

Roy had selected his items alphabetically, and so we read about Avebury, Bishopstone (discussion of Hocktide), Coate, Draycott Foliat, FASTERNE (where? 1 mile south of Wootton Bassett), Liddington and *The Abbess of Shaftesbury*, Nythe, and so on to High, Nether, and Even Swindon (the last better known as Rodbourne).

Bill Keith's poem 'Jefferies Land' (to be found in his book *Worshipper of Earth* but also published in *The Countryman* in 1987) was also read aloud.

A prodigious amount of careful work had gone into the preparation of this evening's study, and we are greatly in Roy's debt. The two hours we were able to give it was nothing like enough, but, thanks to his generosity, we have the texts and photographs to turn to.

Trees, Hoods, and Richard Jefferies by John Price 14 May 2001

Mr. Price had gone to most, not quite all, of Jefferies' books for references to trees and woods: the chief conclusion he came to, after considerable re-examination of the texts, was that trees were just as important to Jefferies as were the downs.

The speaker began by considering individual trees, and instanced the trees round the keeper's cottage, especially the edible chestnut; the Council Oak in *Bevis*; King's Oak in *Savernake*; the mulberry tree and the russet apple at Coate. Jefferies seems not to distinguish between firs and pines. Jefferies' discussions of woods were often used to indicate a change of season, as in 'A Summer Day in Savernake Forest' (1876), 'Marlborough Forest' in *Hills and Vale*, and 'A Leafy November' in *Chronicles of the Hedges*. He also gives evidence of the presence of Dutch Elm Disease.

Considerable knowledge of the uses to which trees are put are made plain in, for example, the nutting sequence in *Greene Ferne Farm*, pollarding and coppicing in *The Gamekeeper* (especially the ground-ash stick), also the use of elm roots as a smoking substitute, the shepherd's crook in *The Life of the Fields*, and oak beams in the roof of London Bridge station.

If we want ecology, Jefferies supplied it in *After London* where he deals with the effect on tree growth when grass is no longer grazed; in 'Buckhurst Park' where he deals with the evolution of landscape; the mention of 'forest days' in the thoughts about the man in the tumulus (*The Story of My Heart*); and in *Wild Life*, a reference to the higher rainfall which the microclimate of trees produces.

A zealous, if moderate, conservationist, Jefferies pleaded for the sorts of trees that birds like - not foreign imports - ('Trees About Town') and in *The Gamekeeper*, indicated how important for wild life are old dead trees.

Trees were a vital source of inspiration for Jefferies personally. In *After London* Felix rode through an 'oppressive' forest, but Jefferies himself went to an aspen in Tolworth, to numerous single trees or clumps around Coate - sometimes as 'thinking places', sometimes for concealment, and he found that gazing at the tips of tall trees gave him a direct link with heaven. Leaves were, for him, symbolic of fresh growth; the decay of leaves, a metaphor for the passing of the generations. John Price's attractive talk revealed the depth and extent of Jefferies' knowledge of and affection for trees. A different speaker could have found other examples in

similar profusion, so rich are Jefferies' texts. The rewards for such studies, both for speaker and audience, are great.

REPORT ON THE STUDY DAY AT ALDBOURNE 30 JUNE 2001

Morning coffee and tea were served by Sylvia and Ray Morse from 10.30 on, while tables and chairs were put out. The tables, and the stage, were soon covered with books and papers for sale, to take, or to peruse. Sheila Povey brought her research files.

Len Grugeon opened the proceedings; this was followed by our 12 speakers in alphabetical order.

1. Roy Burton held up his copy of Edwin Way Teale's book *Springtime in Britain* because it had been his introduction to Jefferies. He then read from the Richard Jefferies section of Richard Ingram's handsome book on *The Ridgeway*.
2. Carolyn Clarke was unable to come but had sent a cutting from the 1936 *Radio Times* which she found inside a copy of Besant's *Eulogy*. The Hon. Sec. had looked up the relevant RT, from which it appeared that Reginald Arkell had read out, on the radio, passages from Jefferies' works on 6 and 8 November. She read one of the programme summaries. The writer of the brief article in the cutting was Gerald Abraham (see Miller & Matthews - *Bibliography* p.761).
3. Mark Daniel's 'find' (he was unable to be present) was a small page of nature notes in Jefferies' hand, pasted inside a copy of Besant's *Eulogy*. Mark has donated the manuscript to the Society. A short article in *Field & Farm* (p.152) seems to make use of the material in the notes. The interesting question is 'who placed the manuscript inside the book?', since its original owner seems to have been Slack's Circulating Library, Durham!
4. Norma Goodwin had found, inside a copy of *The Jefferies Companion*, a leaflet issued by the Country Book Club Ltd. It contained a photograph of S.J. Looker and an article by him entitled 'My Jefferies Quest'. Mrs. Goodwin read out the article and gave a photocopy of it for the archives.
5. Margaret Gould, as the Society's librarian, had brought, for members to see, a few interesting items from the library. She spoke briefly about each one, including Arthur Thorn's book, parts of which she disliked.
6. Len Grugeon brought along his notes for a serious study of *The Dewy Morn*. A copy of the book, flagged up, lay on the table as he listed the important points he wished to raise. Lists were distributed and members were urged to study the book in time for Professor Ebbatson's Birthday Lecture.
7. Stan Hickerton had found a cutting from a newspaper dated 9.2.34 (DH or DM?). It was an article by Tom Stephenson entitled 'In Wiltshire with Jefferies' in a series: Tramping with the Authors. Readers were invited to address any queries to "Hiking".
8. Helen Newman read a cutting by James Meldrun from the *Western Morning News* marking the centenary of Jefferies' death. He regarded Jefferies as the finest writer on rural life that this nation has ever produced, but lamented the fact that this gift did not extend to the characters in his novels, instancing Thomas Hardy as an example.
9. Sheila Povey, during a Sunday afternoon on duty at the Museum, had met Mrs. Audrey Fussell who was interested in the life of Edward Snell,* a man well known in Swindon in the mid-19th century in connection with The Works. An album of

his contained two drawings by Jefferies' uncle, John Luckett Jefferies, and Sheila explained their importance.

*For further information about Snell, see: *Swindon: Legacy of a Railway Town*; John Cattell, Keith Falconer.

10. Andrew Rossabi, as part of his research for the Jefferies entry in the new DNB, had been to Goring and to Worthing. He showed the leaflet of the church and churchyard at Goring that had so dismayed Jefferies but which was now light and cheerful. Jefferies' grave at Broadwater Cemetery, however, had been vandalised and was hard to find. (See item at p.15 about the grave.)

11. Phyllis Treitel's contribution was a copy of the book *Birds of Marlborough* (1870) that had prompted Jefferies to write his article 'Birds of Swindon'. The book, by Everard Im Thurn, a schoolboy at Marlborough College, contained many references to Swindon Reservoir and Chiseldon, and the names of numerous helpful gamekeepers.

12. John Webb's copy of Besant's *Eulogy* contained not only newspaper cuttings and the bookplate of its owner, George Buckston Browne, but a letter pasted in between pages 346 and 347 about Jefferies' 'conversion', signed J. Kidd. Research done since the Study Day has confirmed that this was the Dr. Kidd who treated Jefferies.

In the end, a little over an hour was taken for these 12 most instructive items. The pooling of research has always been a feature of the Society, and has led to exciting discoveries. We hope to continue. Only one of us got to Upper Upham.

Afternoon: Collecting Richard Jefferies

Or, as John Price, in his Study Day Lecture, insisted, collecting the works (books and papers) of Richard Jefferies. On the table, in front of him, were 20 or so books, many opened to show book plates, inscriptions, paste-ins, and other additions that may, or may not, increase a book's value.

Having begun by saying that collecting can be a good thing, teaching sorting and classifying skills, he then defined what identifies a collector, as distinct from a mere amasser of books. It can be someone who wants one of everything, or only favoured items, or only first editions. John has tried to own one of everything by Jefferies but still lacks several scarce titles. He began buying from Davies's and has their bookmark to prove it.

In addition he collects other editions (e.g. with illustrations), anthologies (only RJ or including RJ), books about Jefferies, and books with special interest. He also likes to have originals of newspapers and magazines in which Jefferies' work appeared.

He drew attention to the Miller & Matthews *Bibliography* (1994) saying what a great difference this work has made to collecting, and then listed the incentives that drive the collector: the thrill of the hunt, the satisfaction of the bargain, the pleasure of seeing a handsome row of books on the shelf.

Where does the collector look, apart from this Society's meetings? Bookshops (now fewer), catalogues (especially Hugoe Matthews and Clearwater Books), collectors' magazines, auctions (Bloomsbury, Dominic Winter and local auctions), book fairs, public library sales, charity shops and jumble sales, private purchases, remainder shops, and finally, the Internet.

What special features should one look for, apart from first editions? Dust jackets; special or original bindings; illustrated editions; signed, dedicated, or

presentation copies; association copies (from the library of a well known person); foreign editions; even proof copies.

John brought his fascinating lecture to an end by assessing the value of books with 'inclusions', which can be of great interest to Jefferies enthusiasts: old newspaper cuttings, dealers' price slips, a letter (see above), even (see above) a scrap of manuscript in Jefferies' hand.

A start is being made in assembling a data base of cuttings found in books by or about Jefferies. They may be scanned or copied so that anything new or important is on record. If you have an item of interest please forward details (not the book) to the Hon. Sec.

This was a thoroughly enjoyable day for those who came. Perhaps there would have been more participants had the date not coincided with several rival attractions. We are grateful to Stan Hickerton, the late Mrs. Marjorie Leigh, Hugoe Matthews, and Helen Newman, for donations of books. Margaret Gould was able to add nearly £60 to the Society's coffers from sales of books, cards, etc. We shall all take a fresh look at our copy of *The Eulogy*.

MUSEUM REPORT

When the new Swindon hospital was in the planning stage, this Society joined with those objecting to its siting on a green field at Commonhead. The hospital has been built (it is not yet treating patients) and looks just as ugly and intrusive as we predicted. Now the patients, and the staff, and the ambulances have to get from Swindon to the hospital. Huge roadworks on the dual carriageway are taking place, and the roundabout at Coate is being doubled in size. A new track is being laid just outside Jefferies' birthplace; we are told, with straight faces, that this is to be a cycle track to the hospital. Mr. Dickinson, the Senior Curator, has done his very best to protect the garden wall and gates. Alas, he was unable to prevent passers-by from shying road rubble through the upper windows.

Inevitably there have been fewer visitors than usual, but changes are taking place: the thatch on the oldest part of the house is to be renewed in September; come the spring we hope a new tenant will be living in the occupied part; then we can go ahead with various minor improvements agreed with the curator and, we hope, install the bench.

Note: When Mark Daniel removed the old, original, russet apple tree and replaced it with a young one, he kept substantial portions of the old trunk. If anyone would like a souvenir piece, perhaps enough to make a small bowl, they should write to Mark at 268 Eastern Road, Brighton BN2 5TA.

REPORT ON THE AGM OF THE ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES HELD IN LEDBURY ON 28TH APRIL 2001

For the first time in its history the AGM of the ALS was held outside Birmingham, a trend which looks set to continue. It was a perfect spring day, the kind of day when to quote Jefferies, it would have been good to get over a stile.

Burgage Hall, where we gathered, is situated along Church Lane, a picture postcard cobbled street of black and white buildings with a Norman church at one end and a Market House at the other. A brief introduction to Ledbury assured us of its rich literary heritage. Lying between Hereford and Malvern, with May Hill to the south, it has played host to many writers, past and present. The birthplace of John Masefield in 1878, he was to immortalise it in his poem *Everlasting Mercy* in

1913. 'Hope End', a sham gothic house (now demolished) was once the home of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and her family and she always retained fond memories of her time there. The surrounding district also spawned numerous writers and poets, from as far back as the 14th century when William Langland wrote his elegiac vision of Piers *Plowman* under the lea of the Malvern Hills and into the 20th with the Dymock Poets and the birth of Barbara Cartland at Red Marley. This is a red earth land noted for its fruit growing, hops and cider, the very place in which a writer might find inspiration.

Following this brief but very interesting introduction, the AGM was officially opened by Peter Barton, Chairman. Our Secretary, Rosemary Culley, was pleased to announce the addition of 7 new societies, including the Oscar Wilde, the Walter Savage Landor, The Wordsworth Trust, The Dubliners and the Somerset Maugham. Thelma Thompson, Editor of *The Open Book*, the newly established magazine of the ALS, reported a favourable response to the first issue and trusted that the second would be similarly well received. Unlike its predecessor, *Chapter One*, *The Open Book* is not so readily available to members, and ways of making it so are under discussion. Robin Healey, Publicity Officer, is hoping to raise the profile of the ALS by placing advertisements in the PBFA and the Book and Magazine Collector. All the committee members were re-elected. Gabriel Woolf, retiring President, has been succeeded by Susan Hill, and Peter Barton, retiring Chairman, by Nicholas Reid.

After lunch our hosts for the afternoon were The Friends of the Dymock Poets Society. Linda Hart, Secretary of the Society, led the lecture and Gabriel Woolf gave readings from the poetry. What exactly brought six poets to Dymock, four of them to make it their home? The six in question were Lascelles Abercrombie (1881-1938), Wilfrid Wilson Gibson (1878-1962), John Drinkwater (1882-1937), Rupert Brooke (1887-1915), Robert Frost (1874-1963) and Edward Thomas (1878-1917). Over a period of time, roughly 1908 to 1912, a common interest in a new and more natural form of poetry was to bring them together. Young and enthusiastic, they saw themselves as the instigators of a new Georgian age, altogether divorced from the Tennysonian one of Victoria. Two men played a significant part in this collaboration, Harold Munro and Edward Marsh. Harold Munro was the proprietor of The Poetry Bookshop, a meeting place for aspiring poets and, in 1912, brought out a *Georgian Anthology* under the editorship of Edward Marsh, in which all six were featured. In 1914 Abercrombie, Gibson, Brooke and Drinkwater began their own magazine called *New Numbers*. But what of Dymock? Abercrombie had always had a longing to move to the country and in 1911 this was made possible through his sister, a friend of Lord Beauchamp, who rented Abercrombie and his wife a cottage in Dymock known as The Gallows. Abercrombie invited his fellow poets and gradually the colony began to grow, Gibson taking over a cottage called The Old Nailshop with his young wife. In turn Gibson was an admirer of the American poet Robert Frost, having reviewed his early work, and in 1914 a house, Little Iddens, was found for Frost and his family only a short distance from Gibson. Neither Brooke nor Drinkwater lived at Dymock, but were frequent visitors, spending many happy hours in the company of the others. Drinkwater, the most versatile of the six, was instrumental in setting up the Birmingham Repertory Theatre with Sir Barry Jackson.

Frost and Thomas forged a very close friendship and Frost is often credited; with persuading Thomas to abandon prose in favour of poetry. The two of them

would walk and talk together way into the small hours; one of Frost's best loved poems 'The Road Not Taken' owes its genesis to Thomas, who, presented with a choice of two paths, could never decide which one to take; the road not taken always left him with a feeling of disappointment and regret.

These days in Dymock were truly golden ones, both metaphorically and literally, for Dymock was noted for its fields of wild daffodils, lovingly recounted in various of the poems. Most of the poetry written at this time reflects a deep love of the countryside, recording simple pleasures and the joy of sympathetic friendship. Gibson's 'The Golden Room' recounts an occasion, the only verifiable one, when five of the six poets were together on a summer evening: "We sat in the lamplight, while the day died from rose-latticed casements, and the plovers called over the low meads ... Twas in the July of nineteen-fourteen that we sat and talked, then August brought the war and scattered us."

And thus the idyll was brought to a close, irrevocably for Brooke and Thomas who died before reaching their full potential. Frost returned to America, devastated by the death of Edward Thomas in 1917. Both Abercrombie and Gibson left Dymock after war. But the days of Dymock live on in the poetry. Once again, Wilfried Gibson: "Dymock and daffodils and days of song before the war had scattered us apart ... I'm singing dreams of dancing gold, in days of old before the world went wrong."

Helen D. Newman

ELTHAM'S WRITERS - 5 & 6 MAY 2001

Why did Richard Jefferies choose to move to Eltham in 1884? Where did his ten-year old son Harold go to school? Did Jessie have a servant? How did Jefferies get from his house in what is now Footscray Road to the railway station; did he use the horse drawn bus? And to which London station did he travel?

John Kennett, as an active member of the Eltham Society, organised the two-day event to celebrate and publicise the remarkable tally of well-known Eltham writers. In addition, he was responsible for the excellent Jefferies exhibit. No doubt his efforts to find material for it led him to ask himself the questions that open this report.

That Jefferies did use the train from Eltham to London we know from the essay '[Red] Roofs of London' (*Open Air*) which appeared in the *St. James's Gazette* on 2 Aug 1884. In it he comments on the fascinating sights that greet the train traveller as he rides into London. There was already a National School, to which Harold might have gone, only a few minutes away from the shop belonging to Mr. Rathbone where the Jefferies lodged until they were able to move into 59 Footscray Road. According to the advertisement that John has found, Mr. Rathbone also ran a servants' agency. He has also found the rates return which not only shows the amount Jefferies had to pay but also the exact date when he moved in to what was then 14 Victoria Road. We look forward to hearing John's answers to the questions he posed.

Needless to say, the whole event was most enjoyable and interesting, and was very well patronised by local people, including one of our own members. Many could recognise the places shown in the old photographs from John Kennett's collection. Phyllis Treitel was on hand on the Saturday to sell cards and leaflets and answer questions about Jefferies. As a complete contrast, the adjacent display

to the Jefferies one was of books by and about Bob Hope - a hugely generous donor to the Eltham amateur theatre.

The Eltham Society has kindly donated to this Society three new publications: *Richard Jefferies in Eltham*, *Eltham's Writers* (27 of them), and *Eltham, This Mazing Place* (verses by Peter Middleton).*

On Sunday 6 May, John led a literary walk, beginning at St. John's Church, where Jefferies' baby son Oliver Lancelot was buried. This too was well attended and much enjoyed by participants; one of them, our vice-chairman John Price, found the tour fascinating, and Eltham itself attractive and welcoming.

*Copies can be obtained, at a special rate for members of the RJS, from: John Kennett, 26 Strongbow Road, Eltham SE9 1DT.

Richard Jefferies in Eltham £2.00

Eltham's Writers £3.00

Eltham This Amazing Place £3.00 (poems, (one entitled
'Richard Jefferies')

Please add £1.00 for postage.



59 Footscray Road

HOW I DISCOVERED RICHARD JEFFERIES

Nick Baker (who lives in Kent) "I have to say that my knowledge of Richard Jefferies is almost an accident. One day, in 1987, (it must have been the hundredth anniversary of his death) I wanted to record a radio programme. I set the timer and went to work. I came home in the evening and found that I had set the clock incorrectly. What I did have was a feature on the life of RJ. The actor playing the part was the one who used to play Nelson Gabriel of *The Archers*. I was impressed. A year or so later I saw a paperback copy of *The Story of My Heart*. I knew that he was saying something profound but, for me, the book was ahead of its time.

I got involved in some Jungian studies (which have continued) and also Paul Tillich, Teilhard de Chardin etc. I was looking for a more workable theology than the fundamentalism of my church experience. In 1995, I re-read *The Story of My Heart*. This time, I understood a whole lot more of what he was saying. But there had been a problem. I had read a reprint of an old book by Dr. R. Bucke, *Cosmic Consciousness*. In it he affirms that Jefferies, for all his seeking, had not achieved this state. Bucke had made a detailed study of aspects of mystical experiences through recorded history. Bucke had been riding home from a session of poetry reading when he was suddenly enveloped in a 'flame-coloured cloud, and fire seemed to burn inside him'. He thus seemed to judge mystical experience by this degree of intensity. Because of this, RJ does not even get into Bucke's league table. The experience that Bucke had appears to be not as uncommon as one would suppose, but maybe it should be said that, while more than one man may have seen the bush that was afire but not consumed, others may have had experiences which were less spectacular but had similar lasting effects - experiences which may have accumulated across tens of years, rather than in an instant.

So, although I had discovered Richard Jefferies, the connection was still not fully made. A little magazine called *The Countryman* carried an advertisement for the Richard Jefferies Society and so, with Jung leaning on my shoulder and even with the negative judgements of Bucke on my mind, I enquired further. One of the problems was that Jung seemed to be too far removed from nature, but then in a letter to a colleague, Jung says, 'Yet is so much that fills me, plants, animals, clouds, day and night, and the eternal in man. The more uncertain I have become about myself, the deeper kinship I feel with these things'. Jung goes on to regret that modern society had repressed its relationship with nature, with possibly disastrous results. (Heoller -*The Gnostic Jung*). So, Jung and Jefferies may not be so far apart in their relationship with nature.

And so it was that I found myself reading the article by Jeremy Hooker. He comments on the apparent lack of colour found in *The Story of My Heart*, compared with RJ's other works. I'm reminded of a comment made by Alan Watts in *The Supreme Identity*, where he says 'the truly religious do not need to talk of it'. The truly religious do not need to explain what is behind their words or actions - not when life is one seamless whole. So, perhaps RJ did not need to write of this but it would seem that not a few pearls were found and many readers are thankful that he did write. Perhaps, for me, the error was in reading only *The Story of My Heart* and not looking further.

There is a second aspect for me in that I am not really a naturalist in the sense that I am not an ornithologist or botanist etc. I am a 'connoisseur of landscape'. So, my exploration of RJ is based on that aspect and at the moment I am very much in an exploratory stage."

Michael Buck (who lives in Barcelona). Mr. Buck writes that he first became acquainted with the work of Jefferies through his interest in Edward Thomas. He visited Swindon (where his sister lives) last summer and found out about the Society.

Simon Coleman (who lives in Bath) "I discovered Richard Jefferies in December 1997 when I was working as a junior curator in the Department of Manuscripts at

the British Library (then in the British Museum building). One morning my boss came in to tell me that a colleague was becoming overburdened with cataloguing and I would have to do one of his collections: the Richard Jefferies manuscripts. I must have looked blankly at her, for the name meant absolutely nothing to me. I remember my curiosity as I began to assemble the little coloured boxes, inscribed with the titles of the books, which contained the manuscripts. After getting some of Jefferies' works from the Printed Books Department for reference I read a number of the essays in *The Hills and the Vale* and *Field and Hedgerow*. I was immediately struck by the freshness of thought and power of expression contained in 'The Dawn', 'On the Downs', 'Nature and Books', 'Hours of Spring' and others. He seemed to be expressing thoughts very similar to ones I had often had, though mine were less clearly defined and always suppressed by more immediate concerns. He was right. I could find more thought in the sunlight, whether on the hills of my native Exmoor or in the busy street outside, than in all the books and manuscripts in that great library.

I found a few of Jefferies' books in London and soon tracked down many more in bookshops in the south-west of England. *The Story of My Heart* remains my favourite - a truly inspirational work. The others I particularly admire are *Round About a Great Estate*, *The Old House at Coate* and *Red Deer*, while of the novels I have read I most enjoyed *The Dewy Morn*. Of his many abilities as a writer I think that his greatest skill was in capturing that timeless summer moment - the scene is so vividly portrayed that it draws you into it and seems to become imprinted in the mind.

I have created a website on Jefferies consisting of several pages of excerpts from his books, biographical details, bibliography and links.

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

Rachel Landan "I have always known about Richard Jefferies. I grew up on a farm in South Wiltshire, was given *Bevis* as soon as I could read, bought *The Old House at Coate* with money for my tenth birthday, absorbed *Wild Life in a Southern County* and *The Gamekeeper at Home*. I learnt about the Society from my uncle, Alex Thatcher." Mrs. Landan lives in Mexico.

Andrew Randall (lives at Sevenoaks) "The first Jefferies book I read was *Bevis*, at age 16, in the school library while revising for A-levels. 30 years later, I started re-reading and collecting Henry Williamson books and noted the references to Jefferies as a source of inspiration. 3 years ago, I bought my first Jefferies volume *The Life of the Fields* for £1.00 in a Sevenoaks charity shop, and have enjoyed scouring secondhand bookshops to build my collection ever since.

I joined the Henry Williamson Society in 1998 but did not attend my first meeting until November 2000. One of the other members mentioned the Richard Jefferies Society and referred me to Brian Fullagar for the address."

H.G. Singleton (who lives in Bath) wrote this delightful account of his youth and discovery of Jefferies: "I was born and brought up in Weymouth where my father was a police officer. Our house backed on to the water meadows and vast reed beds of the hinterland of the Swannery, now an R.S.P.B. Bird Sanctuary. Through this area flowed the River Wey, a clear chalk stream well stocked with trout. The river is dammed in the town of Weymouth to form the large lagoon familiar to

visitors as the Swannery; but it was the back areas of reed beds and water meadows that interested us youngsters.

A school friend and myself were 12 years old - the year was 1941 - the Swanherd was away at the war. We considered ourselves as fully fledged poachers and the spoils were there for the taking (unbeknown to my father of course but aided by a little secrecy on my mother's part). After all, mallards, moorhens, coots and even swans' eggs, when cooked as omelettes, were hardly distinguishable from hens' eggs - only a bit richer! These and an occasional trout, caught with a worm on the hook, supplemented the wartime diet of those days.

In winter the area was teeming with widgeon, teal, mallard and snipe, although we did not have a lot of success bringing down any of these with a worn out air rifle.

It was at this time, browsing in a junk shop in a Weymouth back street, that I bought a book titled *The Amateur Poacher* by a man I had never heard of called Richard Jefferies for the princely sum of sixpence (two weeks' pocket money). Any author will always strive to commence a book with an eye-catching first line, or first paragraph, on the first page to ensure his or her reader is instantly captivated and more than ever likely to read the whole book - to paraphrase "Mastermind" - I have started and you will finish and Jefferies was no exception.

The first line in *The Amateur Poacher*: "They burned the old gun that used to stand in the dark corner of the garret..." gave me an instant empathy with the writer. I knew exactly how he and his friend Orion felt. Only a few days before buying the book, "they", in the guise of my father, had confiscated my newest, and most lethal, catapult! Still smarting from such an injustice I retired to my room to devour my new acquisition. What a book of incomparable freshness and interest, with unsurpassed powers of observation and sympathy with natural objects.

The portraits of the country characters in the book are superbly painted and spring to life straight off the page. Molly the dairymaid, the old shepherd, Ikey the blacksmith, Dickon the landlady's son with his greyhound, the gamekeeper and Oby the poacher, the Moucher, Luke the rabbit contractor and old Farmer Willum. Even in my young days characters such as these could be seen on any Wednesday of the year at Dorchester Market.

I now know that *The Amateur Poacher* was the second country book by Jefferies published first in 1879 and fortunately my edition is dated 1914. Fortunate because on the flyleaf are listed four other books by the author; 2726 *Gamekeeper at Home* (very evocative title for my interests at that time), *Wild Life in a Southern County*, *Greene Ferne Farm* and *Hodge and his Masters*. I must know more! Who was this man? Where did he live? Where was Greene Ferne Farm? And where was this Southern County?

With no antiquarian bookseller in Weymouth and no copies in the local library I had to be content with the one book for a long time. If, like Helene Hanff in New York, I had known of Marks & Co. at "84 Charing Cross Road" I would have fared much better.

In the meantime at age 13 I transferred to the South Dorset Technical College, built looking out over the same reed beds of the Swannery, guaranteed to instill day dreaming during the more boring lessons, especially in the warm days of summer. The course was for 2 years in the engineering department. On the first day we were given a list of 12 books, specifically chosen for their descriptive prose, which we were told to read sometime during the 2 years we were at the college.

Checks would be made at intervals to ensure we read these books as ordered. The reason given was that Engineers were "notoriously narrow minded" in that "they only read technical journals and as a consequence their command of English, and descriptive powers, are limited!"

Among the list were 2 books by a man named Henry Williamson. They were *Tarka the Otter* and *Salar the Salmon* and when I read them my first thoughts were - Goshi this man writes just like Richard Jefferies. Little did I realise, until many years later, the influence that Jefferies had on Williamson, his way of life and his writings.

With regard to my quest to find out more about Richard Jefferies I had a sudden break through in the 1950s, the result of a day trip to Salisbury. Visiting the Cathedral I discovered the memorial plaque and bust of Jefferies high up on one of the walls. Also in the main street leading up to the Cathedral Close I found several antiquarian bookshops and, surprise surprise, one had two whole shelves full of Jefferies' books! I could not believe my eyes and with the help of an assistant I bought several straight off: *The Gamekeeper at Home* (1st illustrated edition by Whympers), *Wild Life in a Southern County*, *Round About a Great Estate*, *The Open Air* and the *Life of the Fields*, the last two being first editions. But one important purchase at the same time was Reginald Arkell's *Richard Jefferies and his Countryside*. With this book everything suddenly fell into place; the man, the books and most important for me, the countryside portrayed in the books. No matter who reads RJ's books, in one's mind one can identify the countryside he describes with the personal experiences of one's own. Yes, we have been down lanes exactly like that; yes, we have walked through the fir plantations just like that; yes, that lake must be the one a couple of miles from here. The big estate is just over the hill from us and the Downs, well we can see them on our skyline and one day soon we must explore them and find the coombe where the stream rises and follow it down to where it becomes a river and eventually maybe a lake.

But on the frontispiece and in the end papers of Arkell's book was a complete map of the Jefferies country at a scale of 1 mile to the inch. What more could I want? By now living in Bath - Jefferies country began just 30 miles up the road!

After that it was a case of "take your pick". A run through the villages of Jefferies country; a visit to the house itself; a picnic at Coate Water!

I was made aware that there was a Richard Jefferies Society in existence but declined joining because a) attending any function would be difficult due to family commitments and b) having built up a picture over the years of the books and the man in my mind, I wished to keep any illusions intact. I am not an academic, just a reader who loves Jefferies writings and do not wish to criticise him in any way. This may be naive on my part but you know the sort of preamble to discussions of this sort. One mentions a particular point and the reply begins "Yes! that's all very well - but in the light of present scientific facts etc. ..."

I remember in the mid-50s on television a very eminent ornithologist named Fisher, . contemporary of Peter Scott, was asked "had he ever read Richard Jefferies"; "Yes" he replied, "but only as a boy, I soon grew out of that sort of thing!" Such a disparaging remark I considered unnecessary and I immediately threw out my copies of his bird books and never again watched any programme in which he appeared.

Anyway I did eventually join the Henry Williamson Society after having collected all his books and made the obligatory pilgrimage to Georgeham and Ox's Cross in North Devon, where fortunately I met his son Richard, and my wife and I shared a cream tea and an hour's chat with him after having a personally conducted tour of Williamson's field and writing hut. By the time I realised that Henry was a one time president of the Jefferies Society he had died. My daughter enrolled me in the Jefferies Society after surfing the internet for details of RJ's books. Also as two further Christmas presents she enrolled me in the Thomas Hardy and John Betjeman societies as well, so my literary interests are now well catered for.

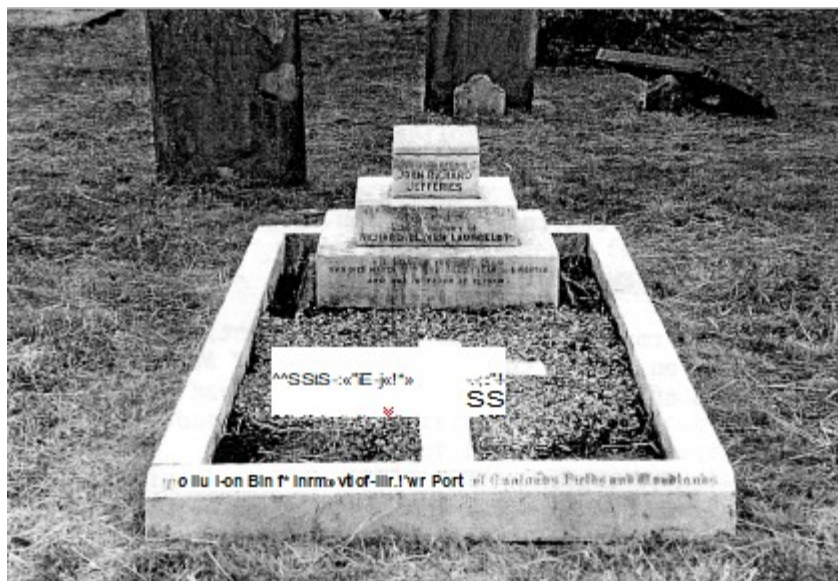
But I still owe a huge debt to Richard Jefferies for opening my eyes to the English countryside and to quote Reginald Arkell again:-
'Jefferies might fairly have added that the English countryside should be under some small debt of gratitude to himself - one of the very few men who have been competent to carry its message into the hearts of the people.

And what of our debt? In days when man is being beaten by the machine and is frightened by the robots of his own creation; when, finding no security anywhere, we seek vainly for a way of escape, is it so small a thing to hold the key to a sanctuary where happiness may be found? But there is comfort to be found in the knowledge that while one single essay of Richard Jefferies remains, future generations will not lack a fitting memorial to the glories of England's already vanishing countryside'.

I believe that says it all!"

RICHARD JEFFERIES' GRAVE AT WORTHING

In August 2000 Mr. Rolfe Green, an admirer of W.H. Hudson, wrote to the Hon. Sec. to say that Jefferies' grave in Broadwater Cemetery had been vandalised. Mark Daniel, who lives in Brighton, discussed the continuing problem of damage to graves with the administrators of the cemetery and outlined the choices for us. At last year's AGM members indicated that though they would agree to the marble cross no longer being upright, they did not want it removed altogether. One solution was that the cross should be laid horizontal within the marble border of the grave.



Under Mark Daniel's careful supervision this has now been done. (See photograph) and the new much lower top has been engraved with Jefferies' name and dates. There are more photographs to show what has been done. The cost was £230 of which the Society has paid about half, the cemetery authority the other half.

The grave has never been easy to find unless you know where to look. It will be even harder to find, now that the prominent white cross is no longer there. An added complication arises because Hudson's grave is now close to the wall along Carnegie Road and visitors expect Jefferies' grave to be nearby. If you are visiting the grave, enter the cemetery from South Farm Road and go to the Mortuary Chapels. Jefferies' grave is some 75 yards into the cemetery, roughly in line with the far right-hand wall of the Mortuary Chapels. It is the only white one visible. This work is all very recent. The rose bush that adorned the grave has gone. We hope to make a formal visit to the repaired grave and decide what, if anything, should be added.

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

This has been an unhappy year for those whose livelihoods depend on the countryside. Most of the Ridgeway was out of bounds, as was Savernake Forest.

We hope to make our visit to the forest in 2002. It is both beautiful and interesting and Jefferies loved it and wrote about it.

For those whose RJS records go back far enough, there was a brief mention of foot and mouth in the 1958 Annual Report.

FRIENDS OF THE RIDGEWAY

First the good news: foot and mouth disease restrictions have kept traffic off the Ridgeway for several months, and given it a chance to recover from mis-use. Although the Friends' Chairman, Nicholas Thomas, is leaving the area, and had to resign, Mr. Ian Ritchie of Ramsbury, near Marlborough, has taken his place. He is a dedicated walker and means business. He has set out, once again, the prime aims of this 20-year-old organisation to remove recreational vehicles from the Ridgeway.

And now the rest of the news, or as much as is bearable. What with ozone layers and global warming, one would have thought that the 4 WD brigade would be ashamed to show their number plates. Alas, the reverse is the case: LARA, the body representing them is claiming greater access to the Ridgeway. Government ministers with responsibility for protection of ancient tracks declare themselves happy with things as they are.

Meanwhile, the National Trust is planning sweeping changes to car parking at Avebury, i.e. more of it. The Friends are pressing for continuing the ancient track Pewsey - where there is a railway station.

Phyllis Treitel Ridgeway Representative

SWINDON OLD TOWN FESTIVAL

The Festival took place this year in the first week in July. This Society was asked to hold its Jefferies walk on Monday 2 July and was able to advertise it in the local parish magazine. The walk, taking in Holy Rood Church which was specially unlocked for us, the site of the mill and the baker's shop, the house in Victoria Road, the premises where Jefferies went to school and finally Christ Church and the

churchyard, took about 1½ hours. There were 10 of us altogether, two of whom joined the Society.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY - POETS' CORNER

Prompted by a mention on the BBC of the memorial to John Clare in Poets' Corner (1989) Roger Frith wrote to the Dean of Westminster, asking how one went about proposing Jefferies for this honour. The Dean replied, setting out the procedure. At the most recent Council meeting the matter was discussed, but not everyone was in favour of launching a campaign. If you have strong views, one way or the other, or advice, please write to the Chairman or the Hon. Sec.

RICHARD JEFFERIES IN THE NEW DNB

Members will be pleased to know that our past president, Andrew Rossabi, has been asked to write the Jefferies entry for the new *Dictionary of National Biography*. Simultaneous print and online editions are due in 2004.

OTHER SOCIETIES

The Eltham Society

The Chairman of the Eltham Society devoted half of his opening Report (Newsletter No. 145) to Jefferies with a well-loved quotation from 'The Pageant of Summer'. The Society plans to re-affiliate with the Richard Jefferies Society.

The Henry Williamson Society

Their 2001 Newsletter contains much that is familiar to us: a new DNB entry; the threat of development at Batt's Meadow, on the outskirts of Braunton; a Study Day - but theirs was tougher than ours with 5 lectures. But there are differences too - their meetings include WWI battlefields; and they have local groups. Journal No. 37 came just too late for inclusion. It is a lavish issue and an appreciation will appear in the Spring Newsletter.

WANHS

It would be quite impossible to summarise the contents of their annual report or their Newsletter *Trilithon*, but a few items may be selected. Stonehenge: the decision about how to widen the A303 without harming Stonehenge has still not been taken, nor the route from Visitor Centre to stones; WANHS Stonehenge Committee is involved. The library is flourishing. Improvements to the premises at 41 Long Street, Devizes (the charming building we all know) are held up while the Trustees decide whether the Society can stay there (bursting at the seams) or must acquire new premises. Would one of our members like to take over as our Reporter?

THE WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY

The Spring Newsletter contained a letter from Morris (aged 14) to his eldest sister. Written from Marlborough College in 1849, the letter describes 2 visits to Abury on 2 consecutive days (Jefferies also called it Abury) and in particular Silbury Hill, the stones, the entrenchment and the church: 'I brought away a little white snail skull as a memento of the place and have got it in my pocket book. I came back at half past 5: the distance was altogether about 14 miles. I had been out 3½ hours.'

The Summer Newsletter gives details of the following: 'Rural England through a Victorian Lens' Canon Photography Gallery, V & A until 27 August; 'The Arts & Crafts Movement', Swindon National Monuments Record Centre, 13 Oct. to 13 Jan. 2002; 21 Nov. at 7.00 pm, also at the NMRC, a lecture 'Art as a Fulfilment of Life' by Peter Cormack (free).

BOOK NEWS

The Story of My Heart (see under 'Publications for Sale')

These have proved very popular; we shall try to keep a few so that future customers may not be disappointed.

Red Deer

Halsgrove Country Classics have published a lavish new hardback edition of *Red Deer* (256 pp) with a new introduction by an old friend of this Society - Victor Bonham Carter. 16 illustrations. Price £14.95 post free from: Halsgrove Direct, Halsgrove House, Lower Moor Way, Tiverton, Devon EX16 6SS. Cheques to Halsgrove. Hon. Sec. has leaflet.

Eltham Writers (see page 10) Ex Libris Press

It is still possible to buy *The Old House at Coate* for £2.95 and *Round About a Great Estate* for £5.50 (post free) from Ex Libris Press, 1 The Shambles, Bradford-on-Avon, Wilts. BA15 US.

RICHARD JEFFERIES AND THE WELSH CONGREGATIONALISTS

In the Society's Journal for 2001 there was a newspaper article by Jefferies about visits he had made to services of the Welsh Congregationalists in Swindon. He stated that one of their meeting places was 'a room in the rear of the Greyhound'. John and Sheila Povey have found an 1886 map of Swindon which shows that the public house was in Cambria Place but fronting on Faringdon Road (No. 117). Sheila has also photocopied the Welsh Baptist Chapel in Cambria Place. Of the Greyhound, she writes: "This probably opened in 1847 when John Young was licensee. It was leased to Reed's the Marlborough brewers from March 1848. It seems that deliveries were not always what they should have been as in 1858 the then licensee William Robinson was fetching his own beer from Marlborough by horse and cart. It was a noted meeting place, in fact the first Roman Catholic services were held there, and in 1855 there was a lecture to expound the perils of Mormonism. It had its share of notoriety too: on Easter Monday 1854 a six hour battle took place outside with men fighting in relays. *The Swindon Advertiser* commented on the total absence of police. With the closure of Reed's brewery their pubs were taken over by the Spencers who in turn were taken over by Ushers in 1920."

RECENT CITINGS OF JEFFERIES

John Price is a good source of well-known writers who quote or refer to Jefferies. Jeremy Paxman, in his *The English: A Portrait of a People* (p.160) names *The Gamekeeper at Home*, *Wild Life in a Southern County*, and *After London* as examples of 'The delightful books of Richard Jefferies ...' Peter Ackroyd in *London: The Biography* (p.447) selects a passage from *After London*, Jefferies' descriptions of the gradations of light experienced in London.

On the other hand Jonathan Meades, in a *Times* article about eating out in Swindon, claims not to have shared his father's devotion to Jefferies, *Bevis*, and Coate Water. Has he, we wonder, tried 'Fortyfolds'.

RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE

If you would like any of the following, please write to Ethelwyn Gregory, 40 Stratton Road, Princes Risborough, Bucks. HP27 9AX.

The Story of My Heart (paperback Quartet edition)	£2.00
Picture postcard (watercolour of Liddington Hill) & quotation from <i>The Story of My Heart</i>	20p
Picture postcard (quotation & photograph)	20p or 3 for 50p
Richard Jefferies & Old Town (guided walk)	20p
Richard Jefferies in Eltham	25p
Richard Jefferies in Surbiton	50p
Richard Jefferies & Coate Water (guided walk)	50p
A Jefferies Land itinerary	20p
Back numbers of the Journal	£1.00

Postage Add 20p for orders up to £1, 40p for orders up to £2 and 60p for orders over £2. Very small orders can be paid in postage stamps.

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2001-2002

(All meetings are open to visitors - no charge)

Saturday 13 October 2001 Monday 3 December 2001 AGM at Chiseldon/Birthday Lecture

Thursday 7 March 2002 Roy Burton will lead a Discussion of *Jefferies' Land*: Part II

Monday 8 April 2002 Members' Evening jointly with The Friends of Alfred Williams. The Friends will be the hosts NB. THURSDAY

Monday 13 May 2002 Mrs. Isobel Thompson, Museum Curator, Swindon Borough, will give a talk: 'Plans for the Coate Museum?'

Saturday

(date to be decided) Simon Coleman, archivist, University of Bath, will give a talk: 'Past, Present, and Future in Jefferies¹ Thought'
Outing in Savernake Forest

Saturday

(date to be decided)

Study Day: 'Richard Jefferies in the World of Art'. The programme will be similar to the 2001 Study Day: a display of pictures of all kinds illustrating Jefferies' work, his people, his places. Please bring your favourites. Please also volunteer (the sooner the better) to talk for 5 minutes or so about the picture of your choice. We may open the Museum briefly and show pictures there, before lunch.

Then two short lectures:

Andrew Rossabi: 'Could Richard Jefferies have been an Artist, instead of a writer?'

Phyllis Treitel: 'Would Richard Jefferies have made a more successful art critic than an expert on rural life?'

All the evening meetings will be at the Arts Centre, Devizes Road, Swindon. Please note: the entrance to the car park, next to the Arts Centre, will no longer be in Devizes Road. Go to Newport Street and turn into Hoopers Place (garage on the corner). It will still be possible to walk from the car park into Devizes Road.

DATA PROTECTION ACT

Members' names and addresses are held on a computer data base. We are required by the Data Protection Act 1984 to inform members that they have the right to object to information being held in this way.

The Newsletter has been compiled and edited by Phyllis Treitel, Robert McCloy and Andrew Rossabi. To save paper (and postage) the cover has been replaced by a banner heading; this has been designed by Arthur Stafford. The drawing on page 10 is by Arthur Penny; the photograph of the grave is by Mark Daniel. Helen Newman has, as usual, typed the whole thing. Printing and despatch has been undertaken by Margaret Evans and Phyllis Treitel

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Richard Jefferies Society held at the Church Hall, Chiseldon, Wiltshire on 21 October 2000.

PRESENT: Margaret Bathe. Jean Bone, Marie Chesham, David Chesham, Margaret Evans, Margaret Gould, Lisl Grugeon, Len Grugeon, Stan Hickerton, Geoff Hirst, Andrew Lewis, Ray Morse. Michael Ponting. Sheila Povey. John Povey, John Price, Andrew Rossabi, John Savage, Phyllis Treitel, Eileen Voce, Alan Voce, John Webb.

1. THE CHAIR

Mr Len Grugeon, the Society's Chairman, presided and welcomed those present.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were given in respect of Chris Bowles, Nancie Cator, Mark Daniel, Howard Kensett, George Kelly, Mr and Mrs Gregory, Sylvia Morse, Helen Newman, Gordon Stowe, Pam Smith.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 1999 were approved and signed.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Public Liability Insurance: the Hon. Sec. reported that the Society was paying £35 per annum to the Medical Insurance Agency for Public Liability Insurance. The scheme was a joint one arranged by the Alliance of Literary Societies.

5. ANNUAL REPORT

The Report was accepted unanimously. Mr Morse, asked about the item on work to be done at Liddington Hill as part of a scheme for Ridgeway antiquities. Mr Webb reported that, on a recent visit to the hill, he had encountered the team carrying out the work, costing £150,000. of reinforcing the embankment. The Hon. Sec. promised to write to the Ridgeway Officer for the latest information.

6. TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr Hirst had no comments on this, his first set of accounts, except to say that the Examiner of Accounts had expressed a wish to see annual comparisons, and this he would do next year. He explained the item of Petty Cash marked CR. A form would be sent out with the Spring Newsletter about Gift Aid, to be completed by any member who paid tax. To a question about covenants he explained that these can still run. Mrs Gould asked why there were no pence in the accounts; the Treasurer said that in the full accounts the pence were shown but, for the sake of compactness, they were not shown in the published version.

7. ELECTION OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER OF ACCOUNTS

Mr Hirst explained that although, at the last AGM, it had been agreed that Mrs Rosemary Brock should be invited to serve again as examiner, he had preferred to ask a Chartered Accountant Mr Tom McGing. Retrospective approval was proposed by Andrew Lewis, seconded by Ray Morse, and agreed nem. con.

8. ELECTIONS

Mr Geoff Hirst was elected to serve as Treasurer from 1999 to 2004. He was proposed by Dick Bedwin and seconded by Phyllis Treitel.

Lady Treitel was re-elected to serve as Hon. Secretary from 2000 to 2005. She was proposed by Helen Newman and seconded by Sheila Povey.

Mrs Margaret Evans, Mr Len Grugeon, and Mr Ray Morse were proposed and seconded by Council to be re-elected to Council for three years from 2000 to 2003. Mrs Evans had very kindly agreed to continue as Membership Secretary.

Mr John Price was elected to Council for three years - 2000 to 2003. He was proposed by Ray Morse and seconded by John Webb.

9. LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Under the present rule, members may become life members after the age of 50 by paying ten times the annual subscription. Occasionally, someone well over the age of 50 years wishes to become a life member, and Council had informally agreed that a reduced sum might qualify. Members present agreed to the idea in principle but thought that the new age level should be 70 years not 80 years. This amendment was carried, and then the main proposal, that on payment of five times the annual subscription, life membership could be obtained, was carried. After some discussion about the rule for a life membership rate for couples, it was decided to refer the matter back to Council for guidance.

10. WINDING-UP

The Treasurer proposed that if the Society was wound up, life members could claim a refund. Section 15 of the Society's constitution states that 'any assets remaining after the satisfaction of all debts shall be given to a charitable organisation having objects similar to those of the Society.' Several speakers were of the opinion that life members regarded their payment as a gift and would not expect to see any of it again. It was thought that they would approve of section 15 quoted above and would not wish the proposal to be agreed. The proposal was withdrawn.

11. MEMORIAL TO HAROLD ADAMS

The Treasurer announced that the sum of £1,000 had been bequeathed to the Society by Harold Adams, its founder. The Hon. Sec. stated that several members had offered to contribute to a collection for a memorial to Harold and suggestions were invited as to its form. Suggestions so far received were for a seat to be installed in the garden at Coate, provided its security could be safeguarded, a tree, a replacement for the Council Oak, an essay competition for local children. The

majority of those present favoured a seat (possible metal) and the Hon. Sec. would seek prices and permissions; the planting of a tree, as well, was not ruled out.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Page 19 of the Annual Report gave news of vandalism, yet again, to the grave of Richard Jefferies at Broadwater Cemetery, Worthing. The Borough have suggested that the cross should not, perhaps, be put back. Instead, it should be removed and the plinths, which bear the inscriptions, should be given a new top. The final decision probably needs to come from the Jefferies family, but the feeling of the meeting was that though the cross might not be re-erected, it should not be removed. It could lie flat within the kerb, and if that interfered with the cutting of the grass, perhaps the grass could be replaced with gravel.

The Hon. Sec. agreed to seek the wishes of the Jefferies family and discuss the matter further with the Borough and with Mark Daniel, who has dealt with this difficult problem on previous occasions.

The meeting ended at 12.45

Phyllis Treitel, Hon. Sec. October 2000.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING SATURDAY 13 OCTOBER 2001 AT 11.00 AT THE CHURCH HALL, CHISELDON, WILTSHIRE

AGENDA

Chairman's introductory remarks.

Apologies

Minutes of the last AGM 21 October 2000 (already circulated)

Matters arising: Memorial to Harold Adams

Annual Report 2000-2001

Treasurer's Report for the year ending 30 June 2001

Election of Auditor (Examiner of accounts).

Elections to Council:

Mrs. Ethelwyn Gregory does not wish to stand for re-election to Council.

She proposes Richard Stewart to serve for 3 years (2001-2004);

Mrs. Margaret Gould seconds the proposal.

Miss Helen Newman is willing to stand for re-election (2001-2004).

Life Membership

Proposed by John Price, seconded by Margaret Evans.

(a) that, for the time being, the qualifying age for life membership should remain at 50;

(b) if a couple applied for life membership, both members would need to be 50 or over;

(c) on the death of one member of the couple, the survivor would revert to single life membership without further payment.

Any Other Business Date of next AGM

A copy of the minutes of the 2000 AGM is circulated with this Agenda and should be brought to the AGM. Any motions or resolutions for debate should be sent to the Hon. Sec. (Phyllis Treitel) before 6 October, as should nominations for Council members. Both should be proposed and seconded. Nominations are not limited to those listed above.

RJS Published Accounts

The Richard Jefferies Society

Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 30 June 2001

2000	Receipts	2001	2000	Payments	2001
	Balances brought down		1058	Publications	1238
			144	Marketing	118
400	Bank 1198		203	Rents	107
25	Petty Cash 23		38	Subs	38
6093	Cov. B/Soc 5738		30	Lecture fees	40
		6913	60	Donations	
1831	Subs	1686	475	Administration	525
78	Donations	110	65	Miscellaneous	170
90	Sales:Mus 97				
128	Other 204			Balances carried forward	
		301		Petty cash	42
18	Tax Reclaim			Bank	1199
245	Interest: B/Soc 296			Cov. B/Soc	6934
2	Bank 4				8175
		300			
314	Jubilee Recpt				
-270	Payts				
44	Surplus				
	Miscellaneous				
	H Adams seat 100				
	H A bequest 1000				
		10410			10410

This is the first year that we have supplied comparative figures with the previous year and you will see that subscriptions continue to fall. Nevertheless, even discounting the Adams bequest, the cash balances are around £250 up on last year. This is a result of good housekeeping, lower room rentals and increased sales. Since the end of the financial year a further £600 has been placed with the building society. The first Gift Aid tax reclaim will be made in the current year. As is customary, the interest received has been allocated proportionally between the General Fund and the Coate Farm Restoration Fund, and these balances stand at £5286 and £541 respectively.

G.W.Hirst Honorary Treasurer

I certify that I have examined the books of the society and am satisfied that on the information supplied to me, the accounts for the year ended 30 June 2001 show a true and correct record.



T.P. McGing Chartered Accountant

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND BIRTHDAY LECTURE SATURDAY 13 OCTOBER
2001

AT CHISELDON HOLY CROSS CHURCH HALL

PROGRAMME

10.30 Reception and refreshments 11.00 AGM

1.00 Break for lunch. Time to look at Chiseldon Church and Village. 2.30 The Birthday Lecture (visitors welcome)

Speaker: Professor Roger Ebbatson

Professor Ebbatson is Professor of English Studies in the Department of English and Drama at University College, Worcester, His numerous articles on Jefferies in the last 30 years have made his name a familiar one to Society members.

Subject: 'The Dewy Morn: Symbolism and History'¹ 4.00

Refreshments

Meals: Lunch can be obtained at The Elm Tree and The Patriots Arms.

