

THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT & AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2002-2003

REGISTERED CHARITY No. 1042838

TRUSTEES AND COUNCIL MEMBERS 2002-2003

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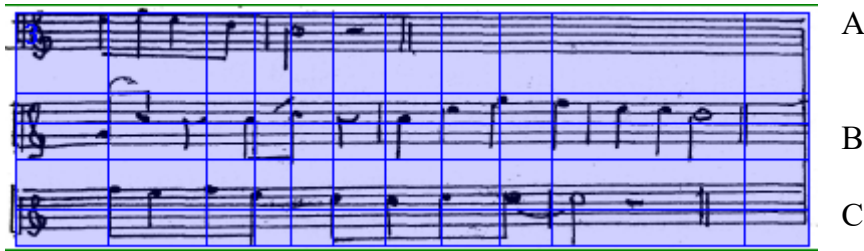
Patrick Dillon, Margaret Evans, Brian Fullagar, Len Grugeon, Geoff Hirst, Jeremy Hooker, Robert McCloy, Ray Morse, Helen Newman, John Price, John Savage, Richard Stewart, Phyllis Treitel, John Webb. Co-opted: Stan Hickerton, Eric Jones.

FROM THE CHAIR

Those who rejoice in the words of Richard Jefferies are not — or not necessarily — escapists willing the recapture of an English environment in the century before last. They are surely people of their presents, refreshed and entertained by Jefferies' genius, not sunk in nostalgia. They read the papers and listen to radio. They encounter images of war and peace through television and film. They are sensitive to the use of language as it creates in their minds a semblance of often overwhelming reality. They soak daily in showers of conflict, politics, religion and tidings of progress or regression. Their beautiful language is forced through a shredder of ignorance and vandalism to serve the needs of propaganda, technology, military theory and management communication. The results amount to cultural disaster.

Languages change even as we speak and write: attempts to halt the process, such as those of French academicians, are futile and pointless. But gratuitous creation of new (and usually uncouth) words or expressions is an affront, in particular when traditional usage has made them superfluous. Such linguistic crime is customarily traced to corporate or military America, but we cannot escape home-grown offenders. A recent bulletin of agricultural news produced "de-incentiveness" as part of a prescription to discourage gamekeepers from poisoning legally-protected birds of prey. Communications from the centre of warfare offer examples of linguistic as well as compassionate horror. Historic etymology demonstrates that word-creation has been with us since the creation of words, but in my recollection Richard Jefferies operated within the boundaries of an acceptable vocabulary, without recourse either to word-creating or word-mangling. The wonder is that his writings have not thereby been rendered antique. The 'good English' of Jefferies is demonstrably 'good English' today. Even so, the publishers of two major English dictionaries are currently in contention as one accuses the other of allowing too much of the demotic within its pages. The practice of good English does not preclude innovation: if a gap appears as we seek to express a meaning for which no word currently exists it is clearly legitimate to coin something neat and appropriate to fill it. Complaints arise when we suffer inventions to supplant what is already acceptable and useful. However, it is dangerous to pontificate, or even to hold tenaciously to an opinion in these

matters. A Sunday essayist recently wrote about "unitive" movements in the Anglican church, provoking my derision until I checked with the S.O.E.D. Yes, there it was, dated in usage from 1526 with a meaning correctly inferred in its journalistic context. One cannot be too careless. Confident that Jefferies did not invent words to meet his literary purpose, I offer a modest book token reward to the first reader able to discover such a manufacture in Jefferies, quoting an example to the Editor. I shall be accused of 'dumbing-down' (a phrase currently in vogue hereabouts); What next? A Quiz? Impossible! Let us have a musical round. Listen to these extracts from popular ditties:



You are asked to name each tune, to explain why one of them is unregimental and to identify the nineteenth-century author connected geographically with all three. No prizes for the answers, which may be found elsewhere in this issue.

Len Grugeon

PS At the happy gathering in June to celebrate the unveiling (or would you prefer "unveilation"?) of the Surbiton plaque there was reference to magpies. In *Nature near London* Jefferies noted the unusual sight often magpies in one field. Nowadays in Surrey they number almost ten to each garden, and I believe I know why. Motoring from Guildford on the A281 to catch an early plane from Gatwick, we constantly disturbed magpies feeding in the road. It is a trunk road, used sufficiently in the small hours to destroy rabbits and such but offering quiet intervals for the scavengers' banquets. Main roads and motor-cars now support the increased and increasing magpie population. L.G.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

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

Mr C Head, New Maiden, Surrey
 Mr B A Richards-Everett, Sidmouth, East Devon
 Mrs D Rocke, Kingston-Upon-Thames, Surrey
 Miss S R Noble, Lymington, Hampshire
 Mr I Ritchie, Ramsbury, Wiltshire
 Mr P A Taylor, Lindley Moor, Huddersfield, Yorkshire
 Mr & Mrs T Burke, Thornton Cleveleys, Lancashire
 Mr J Cooper, London
 Mr J G Pearson, Exeter, Devon
 Mrs J M McConn, Kingston-Upon-Thames, Surrey
 Ms D West, Leeds, Yorkshire
 Mr E D Franks, Gidea Park, Essex

The total membership during the 2002/03 subscription year numbered 286 being made up of 175 single, 36 (72) joint, 25 Life, 3 Joint Life, 3 Hon Life (1 Joint), and 4 Corporate memberships.

At the time of writing the 2003/04 membership is 279. This takes account of 5 members (1 joint) having resigned at the end of, 1 joint member becoming a single member due to the sad death of their spouse, and 2 paid-up members having sadly passed away (1 being a joint membership) during, the 2002/03 membership year, and 2 new members and a previous single becoming a joint member during the 2003/04 subscription year.

Although most members live in England, other countries are represented: Australia 5, Belgium 1, Canada 3 (1 Joint), the Channel Islands 1, Eire 2, Germany 2, Mexico 1, New Zealand 1, Northern Ireland 3 (1 joint), Scotland 9 (1 joint), Spain 1, the USA 4 (1 joint), Wales 9(1 joint).

At present 50 members (6 of whom are Joint) have not yet paid their 2003/04 subscriptions. Gentle reminders will accompany their mailing of the Annual Report in the hope that they will now bring their membership up-to-date. In anticipation, many thanks.

Margaret Evans

REPORTS OF WINTER MEETINGS

Green or Khaki Spaces?

2 December 2002

Conservation on a Wiltshire Military Training Area by Rachel Hirst

Salisbury Plain is largely, but not entirely, composed of chalk grassland; for this reason, it is of interest to any Jefferies lover, as the territory we tend to think of as his, ie the Wiltshire Downs, is also chalk grassland, and is as vulnerable as that of Salisbury Plain. The Army began to acquire land in 1897; the Salisbury Plain Training Area now covers 100,000 acres and is 10 miles wide, big enough for the movement of large vehicles such as tanks. Training areas in Continental Europe being no longer available, the SPTA is now essential to the Army.

At the same time, it is the largest area of chalk grassland in N W Europe, and Britain's only large area of unimproved grassland, that is no ploughing, no building, no chemicals. It is Britain's largest SSSI. It supports 20 species of rare plants and 70 species of rare invertebrates, many of which were shown to the audience on slides of great beauty. It requires no special skill to realise that this combination of roaring tanks and delicate plants, butterflies and grasses is fraught with danger. The Army has an obligation to preserve the SSSI, and employed Dr Hirst to examine the problem and make land management recommendations.

One complication is that some plants - viper's bugloss for example - actually thrive when the ground is disturbed. So does red hemp nettle, whose seeds are assisted by the churning of the ground. Some 'arable weeds' that used to thrive on crop margins have now vanished elsewhere but survive on the SPTA: venus' looking glass, fumitory, and four species of poppy. The stone curlew does well too. So do fairy shrimps! Rachel's instructions were to find out how well the land recovered from disturbance, and how soon. She also examined what happened to land leased to farmers, as not all the acreage is closed to civilians.

First, Rachel studied 6 examples of aerial photographs of the area, going back many years; these showed that track damage is increased by about 40 km every year, with more after 1980. Re-seeding damaged patches was useless; notices to tanks to keep off were equally useless. Spontaneous recovery was the only way to restore the land. How long would this take?

The answer was complicated by the fact that there were two types of grassland: chalk and mesotrophic. The latter was found to have finished changing back after 30 years; chalk was still changing after 50 years. Soil data added another 10. Even after 50 years the grassland was not quite the same as before. Rachel did tests with Land Rovers, trucks and Challenger tanks, and went back every year to see what had grown - examining the seedbank in the soil, seed 'rain' from the undamaged margin, and how soil compaction affects recovery. Numerous tank passes did most damage; tank 'slewing' did irreversible damage.

The MOD now know what they must do to take care of the SPTA. This was a tough piece of research (some of the graphs and calculations proved that), and Rachel is a tough worker - dodging army firing, getting 'Bob' to check the soil for bombs, much time on hands and knees with quadrats for counting species. She gained her doctorate for this research and now advises the Ridgeway Heritage Project, while working for Land Use Consultants, London. The Society is grateful to Treasurer Geoff Hirst for introducing his daughter to us. We were also pleased to meet Mrs. Valerie Hirst and welcome her to the meeting.

Members' Evening jointly with The Friends of Alfred Williams 2003

3 March

The readers and their choice of text:

GRAEME FRANKLIN gave a cheerful start to the meeting by reading 'The Village Inn' by John Betjeman (from *Collected Poems*). Betjeman called it 'the heart of all', but admitted that it attracted the 'village bores'.

SHEILA POVEY had been given an early photograph of a coaching party; this prompted her to read the first four pages of 'The Gig and the Four-in-Hand' from *Hodge and His Masters*. Jefferies combined description of the road and what lies either side of it, with contrasting description of the two vehicles; he adds a note of social comment as the farmer and his wife in the 'ramshackle' gig give way to and are acknowledged by the gentry in the coach.

ROY BURTON read the poem 'In Sevenhampton Fields' by Alfred Williams, and then another - 'Then and Now' (*Poems in Wiltshire*. 1911). In the former, Williams follows a stream and lists the flowers at its margins, in rough order of flowering. 'Then and Now' is more philosophical, ending on a hymn-like note. Copies were supplied.

ERIC JONES referred to two brief extracts concerning gamekeepers: in *The Gamekeeper at Home* Jefferies had described Keeper Haylock - 'every inch a man', Kate Tryon, who visited Coate several times around 1910, met G K Jones, the then keeper, who informed her that he had a copy of Jefferies' 'poaching book'. That Mr Jones was Eric Jones's great great uncle.

RAY MORSE read from 'Cottage Ideas' (*Field and Hedgerow*) where Jefferies examines some curious convictions of cottage people about, for example, insurance, their unwillingness to do little jobs for money, and indeed the way they resent their poverty, instead of accepting it.

JO FISHER read one of her own poems - 'Open to Life'. She is a relation of Alfred Williams.

PHYLLIS TREITEL came across Jefferies' account of charcoal burning ('The Countryside: Sussex' in *Field and Hedgerow*) while looking for material for a talk. He describes, and has clearly 'interviewed', a prosperous charcoal burner. We are told about the uses of charcoal, what wood is best, and the tools; then

comparisons are made with earlier times - how similar it all is - the past and the present.

JOHN PRICE had found, in a book he bought, a copy of Queenie Leavis's *Scrutiny* article of 1938 - 'Lives and Works of Richard Jefferies' which he read. It is a justifiably famous article in which Mrs Leavis castigates Samuel Looker and Henry Williamson for their books, *Jefferies' England* and *Selections*. She throws in a similar comment about Arkell. She cannot tolerate their treatment of a writer she clearly regards highly. To make her point she cites 9 or 10 quotations from Jefferies (one of which was read earlier by Ray Morse) and suggests that Adrian Bell might be asked to do an anthology.

For this meeting, we were back in the newly renovated Arts Centre and were somewhat disoriented by both the new layout, and the comparative luxury of The Gallery, which in fact is used as a bar during theatre intervals and for lunches in the daytime.

Three Dramatic Sequences for Voices, 14 April 2003
based on Richard Jefferies' novels. Devised by Mark Daniel. Led by Roy Burton

As Roy explained to the assembled readers, as he handed out his 22-page text, the dramatic sequences had first been performed in a room at the Wyvern Theatre on 3 June 1974. No one present at this meeting had been present in 1974. Of those who had taken part in the original performance, only Mark himself was still alive, so far as is known.

The presentation in 1974 had been entitled 'An Evening with Richard Jefferies', and to complete it, Harold Adams and Cyril Wright had read prepared papers about Jefferies and about the Society; four people had read extracts from Jefferies' works, and slides by Norman Passant had been shown.

Roy included much of this in his handout, but there was not time for all of it to be read aloud. Some extracts from publications, also read out, contained inaccuracies.

The main attraction of the evening was the three small plays, based on Jefferies' own dialogue: the first was from *The Amateur Poacher*, Jefferies was the reporter in the justice-room of a small town and Oby Bottleton, caught poaching, was being tried. The second was the scene in *Bevis* where Bevis and Mark pretend to be lost, come upon an old woman sitting outside her cottage, and pretend she is a witch. The final one is the scene in *Amaryllis* where John (Jack) Duck comes to the Idens in the hope that he will be allowed to take Amaryllis to the fair in his dogtrap.

Bearing in mind that there had been nothing in the way of rehearsal, the plays went very well, some most convincing accents emerging. Mark Daniel's script has stood the test of time. Local papers have given the evening's programme unusual but welcome publicity, clearly not quite understanding what was afoot.

Stories in Stones by Sheila Povey 12 May 2003

Sheila Povey's talk was not, in fact, about masons' marks (Hon. Sec.'s error) but was about masons in Swindon, their work, and the clues they left behind. As we have come to expect from Sheila and John, the talk was illustrated at every stage by slides: of documents, buildings, carvings, people, and of places. We could have listened for twice as long without weariness. Before the coming of the railway, Swindon was little more than a village. Its main industry had been the quarrying

of the excellent Purbeck-like stone in the quarry where Town Gardens is now. The census of 1697 showed no fewer than 12 masons and stone cutters. What prompted Sheila's research was the mention, in Chapter 1 of William Morris's *Swindon, Reminiscences etc.* (1885, 1970), of an elaborately carved coat of arms on a mean cottage in Newport St in 1888. Morris assumed it was connected with the Freemasons. The stone with the coat of arms, rescued by the builder (and Freemason) James Powell, and now incorporated in the recently built Masonic Hall in The Planks, Swindon, is lozenge-shaped, has a shield with 3 'castles', a fourth castle above, and the lettering H R A 1704.

Morris had discovered that the premises in Newport St once belonged to a Savill. Sheila was intrigued and, by a series of researches too lengthy to relate here, traced the Savill family back, via a Scholastica Day whose tombstone is in Holy Rood, to a Jordan Hopkins. She then found a mason, Robert Hopkins, whose will showed that he had owned 2 houses in Newport St. He had a wife Alice. Sheila had been advised by the College of Arms that the letters probably referred to the inhabitants of the house - hence the H R A. The coat of arms had been granted to the Masons Company of London, a livery company or guild. There was never, therefore, a connection between the stone and the Freemasons but it is thanks to the Freemasons that the stone, unlike so much else of value in Swindon, has been preserved and cherished.

STUDY DAY, CffISELDON - 26 JULY 2003 Subject: Richard Jefferies and his Critics.

The topic for this summer's Study Day was chosen for two reasons: it attracted speakers who were able to talk knowledgeably about writers who were influenced by Jefferies; it gave the rest of us great scope for finding reviews and criticism of Jefferies' work, and these critics turned out to be anything but unanimous.

The day was mainly fine; there were 25 of us including some welcome visitors from the Edward Thomas Fellowship who had come from Gloucestershire. We were glad to have Len Grugeon back in the chair.

The Morning

1. Helen Newman read from *The History of 19th Century Literature* (1892) by George Saintsbury, who gave a measured overview of literature at the time of publication and Jefferies' place in it. As a brief postscript she added a quotation from a letter from William Morris to Mrs. Burne-Jones: he had just read *After London* and wrote 'I quite liked it.'

2. Stan Hickerton. Towards the end of Chapter XVIII of *Wildlife in a Southern County*, Jefferies discusses kingfishers, and claims to have shot them with ease. Mr Hickerton read out the offending passages. He then read a passage from W H Hudson's *Birds in Town and Village* where Jefferies is scolded for killing birds, thus obliging the philistines who stuff and display them.

In *Idle Days in Patagonia* Hudson, using a passage from *The Story of My Heart* about wielding the spear and the iron mace, comments on Jefferies' barbarian side.

3. Phyllis Treitel read a contemporary review of *Red Deer* (*Athenaeum*, 9 Feb. 1884, unsigned) which extols the new book and concludes: 'It is likely to live to be remembered when a score of such harmless, unnecessary exercises as *The Story of My Heart*, and others, are forgotten.'

4. Andrew Rossabi read a portion of George Gissing's book on Charles Dickens, in which he complains of Jefferies' 'ear' and gives as an instance a passage in 'Beauty in the Country' (*The Open Air*) where, towards the end of part I, Jefferies, though writing prose, becomes metrical (as in *Hiawatha*). Mr Rossabi's second contribution was a passage from Edward Thomas's biography of Jefferies where Thomas states that, with maturity (and also illness) Jefferies' style improves, and he becomes more successful at creating pictures for his readers.
5. John Webb read parts of Malcolm Elwin's introduction to his 1948 anthology - *The Essential Richard Jefferies*. Elwin used phrases such as 'poverty of reading', 'taint of naivety'; he referred to his 'incompetent' early novels, Jefferies' 'morbid depression', and said that he was reduced to writing 'imaginary conversations with birds and flowers' because he was 'lacking in the creative faculty'. Many of Elwin's comments were insightful but the overall effect was destructive, provoked angry rebuttal from Samuel Looker and others, and was at odds with the contents of the anthology which contained chapters of *Amaryllis* and the whole of *The Story of My Heart*.
6. Margaret Gould read another contemporary review from the *Athenaeum* (8 December 1883) - perhaps the same reviewer as in 3 above. He shows himself familiar with Jefferies' earlier works but is somewhat dubious, without being condemnatory of *The Story of My Heart* which, he says, is 'interesting in its way and — well told', 'well worth having for its qualities of diction and style.' In a review written when Freud was only 27, it is interesting to read such terms as 'consciousness and the ego' and 'a good deal of earnest introspection and self-analysis'.
7. John Price was forgiven for straying over his 5 minutes as he examined Queenie Leavis's article in *Scrutiny* (March 1938, vol. 4 435-46) entitled 'Life and Works of Richard Jefferies'. In the course of reviewing three new editions of works by Jefferies edited by Looker or Williamson, she gave her own opinion of Jefferies as 'many-sided', 'a comprehensive genius', 'better than Hudson'. She rebuked Williamson for being possessive and found Looker dull; on the other hand she praised Edward Thomas's biography - so heavily plundered by later writers, and also Garnett's approval of *Amaryllis*. Mrs Leavis's article should be read by every Jefferies lover.
8. Mr Hickerton had found a review by H J Massingham tucked into a book. It bore no date of publication but dealt with some of the same books as number 7 above. The Hon. Sec. read the review. Of *Hodge* Mr Massingham stated '{the essays} are diffuse, inelegant, and quite insensitive to the value of precision and point in statement'. He refers to Jefferies' 'striking myopia' about labourers' agitations', to Jefferies' 'lonely detachment from his own people' which 'in his last disease-tormented years' was to 'develop into a kind of spiritual arrogance'. He relents near the end, finding in *Wild Life in a Southern County* some 'exquisite observation' and 'poetic sensibility' but sums up 'it is always a drifting prose, not one that hovers and then strikes the heart of the mystery'.
9. Len Grugeon read, from the book by A Quiller-Couch, *Adventures in Criticism* (1896), an article originally published in *Speaker* in 1893 - The Country as "Copy". Q, as he liked to be called, protested: 'there are few things more pitiable than the transports of your cockney critic over Richard Jefferies'. Q quotes a passage from *Wildlife in a Southern County*. He cannot understand why anyone would want to read the typical Jefferies description - of a hedgerow for example. To

show how ridiculous it is, he makes up a similar description of the Old Brompton Road. It is in fact longer than Jefferies' passage. The irony is, as Mr Grugeon pointed out, that Q's description of a London street in 1893 is just as fascinating to us now as Jefferies' descriptions were to non-country people in the 1890s.

The Afternoon

Mr Richard Emeny is the editor of the *Newsletter* of the Edward Thomas Fellowship and, until recently, he was the Fellowship's Hon. Secretary. He has written about Jefferies' book *Red Deer*, appropriately since he lives in Somerset, and is familiar with Wiltshire since he frequently visits Myfanwy Thomas in the Lambourne valley. He was able to bring us her good wishes and to tell us that she celebrates her 93rd birthday in August; she continues to be a prolific letter-writer and to take a lively interest in literary affairs.

We are most grateful to Richard for preparing and delivering this absorbing talk and for coming to join our Study Day.

'Edward Thomas's View of Richard Jefferies and Thomas's contribution to our knowledge of Jefferies'

Jefferies and Thomas tend to get bracketed together but should not be: alike in both being full-time writers and in tenaciously adhering to that occupation, they were very different, Thomas essentially 20th century while Jefferies was 19th, Thomas, at his best poet and critic, Jefferies a poetically descriptive prose writer and philosopher.

It is easy to see why Thomas may have briefly emulated Jefferies (a pity in the eyes of some) since he was familiar with his Swindon haunts, envied the (apparently) free outdoor life, and was impressed by his later writing.

If (IF) Thomas owed any debt to Jefferies it was repaid and is still being repaid in his biography of Jefferies. Mrs Leavis praised it 30 years after it was published; it is still not only the best biography of Jefferies, defying all but the boldest to attempt to better it, it remains one of the best biographies of any writer. It was thorough, detailed, and honest, to a degree then unusual, helped by Thomas's knowledge of the ground and the people; in it, every bit of Jefferies' writing (then known), the good, the bad, and the rest, were discussed and assessed with devastating insight; the whole was, and is, a garland, thrown at the feet of someone revered and admired.

No precis does justice to Mr Emeny's talk; he has given us his text and we hope to make it available in full.

Henry Williamson's debt to Richard Jefferies

A talk by Richard Stewart, who was kind enough to provide his own precis. The first part of the talk concentrated on how the young Williamson, traumatised and disillusioned by his experience in the First World War, was motivated to become a writer after finding *The Story of My Heart* in a second-hand bookshop. Williamson and his family already knew the works of Richard Jefferies but this book was a revelation of total truth and quotations were used from early works to show Williamson's close affinity to Jefferies in style, expression and content. Those particularly mentioned were *The Lone Swallows* and the four-book *Flax of Dream*.

However Williamson was a disciple not a slave and reference to later works revealed less reliance on Jefferies. The speaker suggested that the two writers had

many differences which helped to decrease Williamson's early dependence on Jefferies: longevity of life, physical energy, war experience, financial success as a writer and more time to edit and revise work were part of the list covered. Williamson's espousal of Fascism was also a very different stance to the political mind of Jefferies. However, Henry Williamson still continued to promote the work of the man he called 'the English genius', in his position as President of the Richard Jefferies Society from 1965 to his death in 1975. The speaker also gave many quotations from Henry Williamson to show that he understood the unique skills of Richard Jefferies as a writer, including quotations from the introductions to several of his works and Williamson's own affectionate 'labour of love' in his 1937 selection from Jefferies' works.

Finally, members of the audience were invited to read six short extracts and try to decide if they were from Richard Jefferies or the early work of Henry Williamson; members acquitted themselves well.

COATE MUSEUM REPORT

The good news is that attendance numbers, this summer, are definitely 'up', or, as one pair of volunteers said 'We were run off our feet'. This is almost certainly thanks to the increase in publicity - quantity and quality. *Central Outlook* for June, a community newspaper, gave the museum a whole page write-up (including Society details), and the Borough's leaflet of summer events advertised the Sunday openings, watercolour sessions for adults, and a painting session for children - at the museum. The leaflet's cover carried the Jefferies portrait. In addition to the usual 10 openings we are also opening for Heritage Day.

There is still no resident caretaker but funds have now been allocated for essential upgrading of the cottage to enable a tenant to be installed. Following the breaking of ground-floor windows last year, unbreakable plastic overwindows have been fitted (once permission was obtained) and these are virtually invisible. Marauders are still a problem, one lot causing damage to the new thatch, but the curator is far from complacent. With luck, it should be a better story this time next year.

Volunteer ranks have been depleted by illness; please join us, if you can, for a Sunday afternoon. And the new russet apple tree had 12 apples at last count.

REPORT ON ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES 26TH/27TH APRIL AT THE DYLAN THOMAS CENTRE, SWANSEA

This year sees the 50th anniversary of the death of Dylan Thomas, in commemoration of which we were kindly invited by the Dylan Thomas Society to hold our AGM in Swansea, the birthplace of the poet on 27 October 1914. The Dylan Thomas Centre is dedicated to the life and work of Dylan Thomas, containing an exhibition area, bookshop and cafe.

A warm welcome was extended by Mrs. Eryl Jenkins, Chairman of the Dylan Thomas Society, who introduced our first speaker, Dr. James A. Davies. He began by paying tribute to Gilbert Bennett, Founder of the Dylan Thomas Society, who had sadly died earlier in the year. Dr. Davies's wide knowledge and insight into the life and work of Dylan Thomas, a man he so obviously admires, despite his human frailties, made for a delightful half hour. Spoiled by his mother who adored him and taking advantage of his father's position at the local Grammar School, Dylan appeared to spend more time away from school than actually in it, but from an

early age he was fascinated by the beauty and power of words and boasted that he was going to be a great poet, as good as Keats or even better. On leaving school he briefly became a reluctant reporter on the South Wales Daily Post; disorganised and unenthusiastic, his reporting often owed more to invention than fact. Literary acclaim came at the tender age of 20 with the publication of his first book of poems and he moved to live in London, though Wales would always draw him back. It was regrettable if inevitable, Dr. Davies concluded, that the accent on Thomas's excesses has tended to detract from the poetic genius of the man himself, but there was no escaping the fact that Dylan Thomas, Bohemian, charismatic, drinker extraordinaire, did more than enough to ensure his own iconic status. He was, after all, a legend in his own lifetime. That a certain Robert Allen Zimmerman of Minnesota has gone on to achieve similar cult status by changing his name to Bob Dylan in tribute to the Welsh poet, lends its own kind of interest. John Lennon was similarly admiring, which is why Dylan pops up on the cover of the Beatles "Sergeant Pepper" album, happily rubbing shoulders with Marlon Brando, Marilyn Monroe, Oscar Wilde and Lawrence of Arabia.

Following this absorbing half hour, reports were given by various members of the ALS. Nicholas Reed, Chairman, said that it had been an excellent year for the Society. The write-up in the *Book & Magazine Collector* by our Publicity Officer, Robin Healey, had stimulated further interest, and as always Rosemary Culley, Secretary, was to be congratulated on her management of the Website. She was able to report on the addition of several new societies, including Samuel Pepys and Warwick Deeping. Julie Shorland, Treasurer, reported that £50 had been granted to the Christopher Marlowe Society towards the dedication of a pane of glass to Marlowe in Poets Corner. Thelma Thompson, Editor of "The Open Book" (the ALS Journal) would like to include short stories with a view to encouraging new talent.

Since this was the 30th anniversary of the formation of the ALS, at the conclusion of the meeting a presentation was made to its founder, Mrs. Kathleen Adams, in recognition of her years of hard work and dedication.

At the close of the AGM we had time to chat and browse before taking lunch and boarding the coach for a visit to Laugharne. But first a few words about Dylan's "lovely ugly" town of Swansea, or Swansea City as it now is. Heavily bombed during the war, it was much changed from how Dylan remembered it in his youth when to him it was a kind of dingy paradise of overcrowded houses, narrow alleyways and pubs. It was a change he regretted, the rebuilding that followed never quite recapturing the old flavour of the place.

Like many cities similarly bombed, it is now a synthesis of past and present; the remains of the castle overlook a modern square, and the newly restored marina, a fine example of redevelopment, leads on to the promenade giving views across Swansea bay to the Mumbles lighthouse.

It was still looking decidedly overcast and showery as we boarded the coach for Laugharne, but the heavier rain of the morning soon began to give way to increasing intervals of brilliant sunshine. Eryl Jenkins proved an invaluable guide, pointing out places that Dylan would have known when he travelled out into the Carmarthenshire countryside he so loved and celebrated in his poems. In the distance we could see Fern Hill, the farm where he spent many happy childhood holidays which are fondly recalled in his poem of the same name when he "was young and easy under the apple boughs". This was my first visit to Laugharne, although I had heard much of the Boat House and its romantic setting. Not

everything deemed idyllic lives up to the description, but in the case of Laugharne it is more than appropriate. There is nothing of "ugly" in Laugharne, only "lovely". Situated on the Taf estuary and overlooked by its Norman castle, its main street owns to no particular period, but is a quaint mishmash of periods, including the white painted tower of the Town Hall, the clock of which, according to Dylan, made time go backwards. Dylan's love of the town prompted him to bring his new bride, Caitlin, to Laugharne just prior to the Second World War. They set up home in Gosport Street, moving with the birth of their first child into a large 3 storey house called "Sea View" adjacent to the castle. At the time the castle was rented by the writer Richard Hughes who became a firm friend of the Thomas's. It was at "Sea View" that Dylan completed *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog*, writing much of it in the gazebo of the castle leant to him by Hughes for the purpose; it is said that this was one of the happiest time for Dylan and Caitlin, but Dylan was always beset by money problems, and "Sea View" was vacated amidst mounting debts.

Declared unfit for military service, during the Second World War Dylan found himself working in London on propaganda films to promote the war effort, but his thoughts must often have wandered to the lost idyll of Laugharne. After the war he was determined to go back. Having struck up a friendship with Margaret Taylor, wife of the historian A J P Taylor, he wrote to her frequently about his longing to return to Laugharne, particularly as he had begun writing a play for voices based on the town and its inhabitants. Dylan was not lacking in charm, as all his friends and acquaintances testify. Dr. Davies had told us that Dylan was probably the "best sponger" in history; sponging is one thing, but to do it with such apparent ease is another. Margaret was susceptible and bought the Thomas's the Boat House; not only this, she had water and electricity installed for their further comfort. It could not have come at a better time for Caitlin who was pregnant with their third child. Dylan was also able to arrange for his parents to live at a cottage in Laugharne called "The Pelican" which was conveniently situated across the road from his favourite drinking establishment "Brown's Hotel".

Returning to our visit, we briefly viewed the exterior of "Sea View", now sadly neglected, and approached what is now known affectionately as "Dylan's Walk", a wall edged road leading down to the Boat House and giving wonderful views across the estuary to St. John's Hill. Lilac, laburnum, valerian and all kinds of flowers cling to the wall, just as the Boat House precariously clings to the rocks below; over the years it has suffered from constant erosion, but thanks to a charity trust is now more or less stable and beautifully maintained. It was much more basic when the Thomas's were in residence, but no dwelling on earth could be more romantically situated. We were told that the children used to love to run along the wall bordering the estuary, a somewhat dangerous occupation but one which they obviously enjoyed. At the rear the former tiny harbour has now been filled in to make a pleasant kind of patio giving lovely views out to sea. The interior is modestly furnished with various memorabilia belonging to Dylan; upstairs is an exhibition area and the obligatory video, but it is the view from the house that one seems to remember most vividly, so tranquil, so extraordinarily peaceful in a world so beset by noise. But it was not in the Boat House that Dylan did most of his writing, but in the so called garage built by a previous tenant. Little more than a dilapidated shack when the Thomas's arrived, it was a ready-made bolt hole for a writer like Dylan who needed absolute quiet in which to perfect his poetry, much of which he wrote over and over again, discarding endless bits of paper in the

process. He would spend up to 5 hours a day in what he called his "water and tree room on the cliff", and it was here that he completed his play for voices, his very special tribute to the people and village of Laugharne, *Under Milk Wood* becoming one of his most popular works. Happy for much of the time, Laugharne was to see one of his most productive periods, resulting in numerous poems and broadcasts for radio; he had the most wonderful speaking voice. But having gained his paradise, he was in danger of losing it. The Inland Revenue were on his tracks, and to keep the wolf at bay he went to America to give readings of his work in a similar way to his hero Dickens, but these took their toll, as they did on Dickens. When he undertook his last visit to New York in 1953, he was already on medication for blackouts which, combined with his extraordinary intake of alcohol, led to him lapsing into a coma from which he never regained consciousness. He died on 9th November 1953. He had once said that he did not expect to live beyond the age of 40. His body was brought back to be buried in his beloved Laugharne. Shortly afterwards Caitlin vacated the Boat House and took the children to Italy. But Laugharne and the Boat House will forever be associated with Dylan Thomas.

The day was concluded by dinner at the Dylan Thomas Centre followed by entertainment. We were pleased to welcome Dylan Thomas's daughter, Aeronwy, President of the Dylan Thomas Society, who has done so much to promote interest in her father's life and work. Aeronwy also writes and has had her own poetry and prose published. She remembers the Boat House when it was simply her family home and loves it accordingly.

The following day she joined us on a coach trip to Rhossili on the Gower peninsula, another favourite haunt of her father's and understandably so, for this is yet another glimpse of his kind of Eden, wild and free, its lovely curve of land embracing the sea. Those of us fit enough walked out to its furthest point, Worms Head, which does actually bear some resemblance to its name. The sight of a perfectly black sheep made us all dart for our cameras. Could it have been Dylan in disguise? I wondered.

With the weekend drawing to a close, we had one further treat in store, a visit to Dylan's birthplace in the middle class suburb of Uplands, Swansea at Cwmdonkin Drive. From Cwmdonkin Drive Dylan had lovely views down to the bay of his ugly, lovely town. Though the house is not generally open to the public, we were allowed to view the parlour which features in many of his stories where the aunts and uncles used to gather at Christmas. Fortunately, many of the original features have been retained, including the original fireplaces. We were shown the room in which he was born and his bedroom at the rear of the house. Nearby to the birthplace is Cwmdonkin Park, his childhood playground of adventure, which often features in his stories and in one poem in particular, "The Hunchback in the Park"; the fountain basin where this memorable and pathetic character drank can still be seen, as can the simple stone memorial to the poet himself. It says, "Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means, time held me green and dying though I sang in my chains like the sea." So what, if any, similarities could I find between the introvert Richard Jefferies and the extrovert Dylan Thomas. The obvious one is that they both began their literary careers as reporters on their respective local newspapers; Thomas felt its shackles more keenly than Jefferies, and soon threw them off to concentrate on his love and play of words to translate mere moments of time into expressions of

extraordinary intensity. Drink was the stimulus to poetic creation as well as the pointer to early demise. The defiance of the decree comes out most strongly in those unforgettable poems "Do not go gently into that last goodnight" and "Death shall have no Dominion". Thomas knew that his life would be short.

Jefferies was never to achieve the acclaim of Thomas, either during his lifetime or after it, neither did he ever entirely free himself from the role of the reporter. As far as we know Jefferies never resorted to stimulants to achieve higher awareness. Nature itself was the drug. He drew on it, seeing beyond it to something divine, his visionary experience communicated to us in prose of poetic dimensions. Jefferies had cause to resent his early death. He had done nothing to deserve it. What nature had given him was a gift beyond that of most mortals, but it could not cure him.

Dylan Thomas was 39 when he died, Richard Jefferies 38. They both had 3 children, two boys and a girl. Life for them was bound to run no ordinary course. The exaltation they felt in mere living itself made it somehow inevitable that both should die young.

Helen D Newman

THE 'JEFFERIES LAND'⁵ VIDEO

VHS cassettes of the film are now available from John Webb, Padbrook, Bincknoll Lane, Wootton Bassett, Wilts. SN4 8QR. Tel: 01793 853171. Fax: 01793 848498. Email: wwwwebbrass@aol.com The price is £10, which includes post and packing. Cheques payable to John Webb.

Over a dozen members of the Society were involved in the shooting, both on the soundtrack and on screen. Our purpose was to capture those places in north Wilts, that Jefferies wrote most memorably about and would still be recognised by him: Coate Farmhouse and the mulberry tree, Coate Water and Cicely's Bridge, Liddington Hill and Copse, Hodson and the Gamekeeper's Cottage, the milestone, the hatch, the tumuli, Barbury Castle, Savernake, Holy Rood and Chiseldon churches, Burderop and Swindon Old Town, plus the areas of countryside close to Coate now under threat from development.

The film, we hope, will find a place on the shelves of everyone's Jefferies library. And, as a gift to friends at Christmas, could play a welcome part in our drive for new members.

John Webb

HOW I DISCOVERED RICHARD JEFFERIES

Sheila Noble (Lymington) I first heard about Richard Jefferies in Margaret Drabble's *A Writer's Britain* in 1979, and in *A Literary Pilgrim in England* by Edward Thomas, which appeared in 1980. About that time, several of Jefferies' books were reprinted, and I have some of these, which, as I am quite ancient, I intend to hand over to the Society, if acceptable, later on.

Recently, I have been given a second-hand copy, in good condition, of *The Pageant of Summer*, selected by Andrew Rossabi. This selection contains several of my favourite essays, for they contain such superb passages of poetic prose.

Thinking of Jefferies, Hudson, Hardy, John Clare, it seems that Butler's words apply: 'But meet we shall, and part, and meet again, where dead men meet, on lips of living men.' Long may this be so.

I have only a hazy recollection of hearing about the Society, some months ago, in an article about conservation, but I cannot remember the details.

Tony Taylor (Huddersfield) Already an avid reader, starting at the local Grammar School in Halifax, in 1962, gave me a whole new library to peruse. Not only did it contain a wealth of books but it was also the best room in an otherwise antiquated building.

I was already a fan of books about the countryside but evocative titles such as *The Life of the Fields*, *The Open Air*, and *Wild Life in a Southern County* attracted me to Jefferies for the first time.

Looking back I think my favourite book then was a little volume which included both *The Gamekeeper at Home* and *The Amateur Poacher*.

Some of the activities described in *The Amateur Poacher* provided my elder brother and me with a text book for some of our country pursuits, particularly ferreting. I know the book became a firm favourite of his also and - like me - he has continued to read many more of Jefferies' works.

I think *The Amateur Poacher* also sticks in my mind because I used the passage about snaring jacks from Chapter 3 in a descriptive English essay in the third year (almost verbatim) that the teacher thought 'very well written' and was 'very pleased!' The teacher was obviously not familiar with Jefferies - a risk I took.

Since then I have been a fan of Jefferies continuously over and above any other writer. He's not the greatest of all writers but it's always a pleasure to go back to him. Browsing in second-hand bookshops over the years I've always gone first to Countryside, then Jefferies, and have collected a number of his works - nothing valuable though!

I first heard of The Richard Jefferies Society several years ago, through an advertisement in *The Countryman* magazine, I think. I don't know why I did nothing about it then. Seeing the website last year reminded me and so at last I did join and look forward to many years as a member.

Deirdre West (Leeds) I first came across the work of Richard Jefferies from a book review in, I believe, the *Permaculture Magazine* (or it may have been in *Resurgence*) leading me to buy the recently republished *The Story of My Heart* from Green Books, then *At Home on the Earth* from Green Books also. I then began to investigate second-hand bookshops and acquired old copies of *After London*, *Bevis*, *Amaryllis*, *Field and Hedgerow*, *Wild Life in a Southern County* and *The Open Air*.

This led on to fascinating reading about and by Edward Thomas, Henry Williamson, Dymock Poets etc. I was already a William Morris and H.G. Wells fan. It seems difficult to find much in libraries but there is the odd good find in second-hand bookshops, although they are diminishing in number round here; I feel I should try to make trips to places like Hay-on-Wye but currently don't travel much. I am an avid book collector of 19th and early 20th century stuff.

I decided to look for a copy of *After London* on the Internet, and found the complete text via Simon Coleman (www.bath.ac.uk/~lissmc/rjeffs.htm) and that led me to both other websites and the Richard Jefferies Society.

OUTING TO FAIRFORD, 28 JUNE 2003

Richard Jefferies mentions Fairford briefly in one of the articles that formed the book *Jefferies' Land* but one cannot tell from the text whether he ever went there. It is in Gloucestershire. Whether or not, we made this our excuse to visit a most beautiful, historic, interesting town.

We chose a fine warm day, and avoided the financial uncertainties of coach-hiring by some admirable car-sharing. Professor Eric Jones and his daughter Deborah were our hosts, so that we were 17 altogether. We were especially pleased to be joined by Professor Patrick Dillon.

Visiting bell-ringers, though making a most cheerful sound, drove us onto the playing field for our introductory talk. Then non-walkers stayed close to the market place while the rest viewed what can be seen of Morgan Hall where Edwin Abbey, John Singer Sargent and other famous artists stayed and, nearby, the home of John Keble (1792-1866). The Arkell family also lived here.

St. Mary's, the far-famed church, was our main object (once the bells had gone silent) with its long history, well-preserved installations, and unsurpassed stained glass. The church was built in the 1490s by John Tame, who made his money from the wool trade.

We were unable to see Fairford Park, now owned by the Ernest Cook Trust as it is not now generally open to the public.

After a welcome tea in the hall adjacent to the church, and a chance to study Eric Jones's special handout, we strolled down to the site of the mill and to the river Coin, an enchanting spot with a picnic table near what were once cattle stalls for the droving trade.

Professor Jones and Deborah were the perfect guides and hosts, and we are most grateful to them.

CITINGS OF JEFFERIES

Francis Brett Young in *The Dark Tower* is analysing the feelings of Alaric, the hero: 'He heard the fine note of the wind moving through millions of tufts of grass and bushes of heather. It reminded him of Richard Jefferies... some phrase ... was it "the exquisite undertone of the earth in summer".' Carolyn Clarke, who sent the extract, has not yet been able to identify the phrase and would welcome help.

In the *Telegraph Magazine* for 21 June 2003, Mary Killen rounds off her Town and Country column with the final sentence of Jefferies' *The Amateur Poacher*. She was giving an account of the funeral of Jeremy Sandford and thought that Jefferies' words would serve well as Jeremy's epitaph: 'Let us get out of these indoor, narrow modern days, whose 12 hours somehow have become shortened, into the sunlight and the pure wind. A something that the ancients called divine can be found and felt there still.'

Christopher Somerville, who writes the 'Walker's Diary' for *Country Living* (May 2003) got up early this year to catch the dawn, in the Chilterns. He ended his article with the following quotation from Richard Jefferies - that 'sublime Victorian rural writer, a greater walker in his youth': 'It is sweet on awakening in the early morn to listen to the small bird singing on the tree ... The bird upon the tree utters the meaning of the wind - a voice of the grass and wild flower, words of the green leaf; they speak through the slender tone. Sweetness of dew and rifts of sunshine, the dark hawthorn touched with breadths of open bud, the odour of the air, the colour of the daffodil - all that is delicious and beloved of spring-time are expressed in his song.' 'Hours of Spring' in *Field and Hedgerow*. Both these from Margaret Bathe.

The Hon. Sec. found an unexpected reference in *Mungo's Dream* by J.I.M. Stewart. Two Oxford undergraduates were unpacking their books; one of them

pulled out 'a battered copy of Richard Jefferies's *Bevis*. This made Mungo ... suddenly feel he was going to like Ian Cardower very much.'

Later, Mungo meets Ian's father, who says 'But then *Bevis* is so very good a book. Wouldn't you say? ... But the marvellous thing about Richard Jefferies's book is that, even in their idyll, *Bevis* and Mark can quarrel.'

And finally, an inexplicable error (sent in by Peter Robins), in Chapter 10, Breckland, of *Literary Norfolk* by Earwaker and Becker. The writers, discussing Virginia Woolf's visit to Bio' Norton, say that she went to Kenninghall Cemetery, 'following in the footsteps of nineteenth-century nature writer and novelist Richard Jefferies ...'.

BOOK REVIEW

Welsh Journal: Jeremy Hooker. Seren.2001. ISBN 1-85411-301-1. £7.95

Jeremy Hooker, the Society's President, lectured in the English Department at the University College at Aberystwyth from 1969 until 1980. *Welsh Journal* is based on extracts from his personal journal during those years, but also incorporates selected poems written during that period.

The book is a very honest and frank account of the author's personal development during that period, reflecting on his personal life with his then wife in a cottage about nine miles from Aberystwyth on the slopes of Mynydd Bach; the academic life, both in the University and elsewhere; the problems for an author of persuading publishers to accept works; the influence of earlier writers on his own development; his depression; his deep interest in John Cowper Powys; and the difficulties of becoming accepted and absorbed into the Welsh-speaking community.

The contrast between his isolated life in the cottage in Wales, and the lively, (and usually alcoholic), literary seminars, poetry readings, and media interviews, led me to conclude that the regular "escapes" into the outside literary world were essential to Hooker's existence at that time, as were the other visits to his native Hampshire, and to Dorset, where the phallocentricity of the Cerne Giant was a dominant theme early on in the book.

One of the most poignant episodes describes the author's inability to attend the funeral of a neighbour in Wales who had been wonderfully friendly from the time the Hookers arrived at their cottage, Brynbeidog. "Our presence at the funeral would have been appreciated and may have been missed, but it would have been an embarrassment, to us if no one else, at a Welsh service and a Welsh gathering. It takes something like this to remind me what strangers we are here - often muddled by conflict between the human response and awareness of our ignorance of custom."

I was immediately struck when I first started to read the book by the similarity between some of the paragraphs, and Richard Jefferies' notebooks. For example, the May 1970 entry starts, "Yesterday it was as though spring broke on us in one sudden impulse, winter was over, summer close at hand. A yellowhammer crossing the garden was a flash of colour, and birds sang lustily all round. One sycamore in leaf. The sky was blue all day, the grass intensely green. Towards evening, the cuckoo was calling; without it spring would have no heart."

Jefferies is directly referred to several times throughout the book, and towards the end, the author writes a challenging paragraph about him, recognising how much he owes to Jefferies' ways of writing and seeing, but also

suggesting that his "mysticism" resulted from Jefferies asking the wrong questions and looking in the wrong place.

Edward Thomas is also referred to many times throughout the text, again not entirely uncritically, and F.R. Leavis's influence on the author is acknowledged, although I revelled in the unsparing description of the critic's self-indulgent performance at a seminar in Aberystwyth in 1969. This is the first honest description I have read of Leavis as I remember him in the 60's and 70's.

This is a very difficult book to categorise. It was valuable and enjoyable to me to read, because of the author's disarming honesty about his feelings, because of the eloquent descriptions of the countryside, both in Wales and elsewhere, and because of its reflections on the human condition. To others, the literary reflections and analysis may be far more important - or indeed the poetry, on which I feel unqualified to pronounce, but which forms an integral part of the construction of the Journal.

It is also true that it is a book that can be dipped into. Although the full narrative describes the whole journey over the years, the individual sections can be read as freestanding passages in most cases, and are particularly stimulating where they relate the universal and the particular, especially when set against the background of historical events that we can all remember.

John Price

OBITUARIES

Annie Berta Lawrence

The following has kindly been supplied by Berta's son John. She will be remembered especially by this Society for her article 'Richard Jefferies' Exmoor Summer' (*Exmoor Review* 1987); also for other articles and research relating to Jefferies' time in Somerset, and his friendship with J.W. North.

'The Somerset writer Berta Lawrence died on 21 June 2003 aged 97. The youngest of three daughters of a Buckinghamshire farmer, she gained a place at Aylesbury Grammar School and was the first female to win a County Major Scholarship. Berta read English and French at Reading, then part of the University of London, being awarded First Class Honours before obtaining a Diploma in Education. She moved to France in order to lecture in English Language and Literature at the University of Clermont Ferrand. She also taught English in three French schools. In France in 1930 she met her husband to be, Jack Lawrence, who was also teaching there. They married in 1932 and moved to the village of Wembdon just outside Bridgwater where Jack Lawrence taught history at Dr. Morgan's Grammar School for Boys. At times Berta also taught French at the Girls' Grammar School, as well as English at the French Convent in Langport and, as occasion demanded, at other local schools. Wembdon was their home for the whole of their married lives.

Berta Lawrence wrote some verse whilst still at Grammar School, but her serious writing commenced when her two children were young by contributing children's stories and verses to *Child Education* for over twenty years - they published over one hundred of her verses. During the 1940s she also wrote for the BBC radio programme Children's Hour. She followed this by writing short stories for radio and magazines such as *Chambers' Journal* and *Good Housekeeping* as well as a variety of articles on literary, topographical and historical subjects for publications such as *The Lady*, *Guardian*, *The Countryman*, *Western Morning*

News, *South West Catholic History*, *Somerset and West*, and *Dorset Life*. She also wrote for the journals of the Charles Lamb Society and the Thomas Hardy Society and between 1967 and 1987 contributed no less than twelve poems and as many articles to the *Exmoor Review*.

Berta Lawrence has written eight books two of which are novels: *The Bond of Green Withy* (1954), a Country Book Club Choice, and *The Nightingale in the Branches* (1955), both published by Werner Laurie; two books about the Quantocks - *Quantock Country* (Westaway 1952) and *Discovering the Quantocks* (Shire 1974). Two self-explanatory titles: *Coleridge and Wordsworth in Somerset* (1970) and *Somerset Legends* (1973) were published by David & Charles. Her first book was *A Somerset Journal* (Westaway 1951), and her last, *Exmoor Villages* (Exmoor Press 1984).

Her ashes were buried in the Parish Church of St. George, Wembdom, alongside those of her husband who died in 1996. She is survived by her son and daughter, five grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

Gladys Kember

Michael Parrott writes: 'On 14 January 2003 my Mother, Gladys Kember, died at the age of 95 after many months of ill health. Her cremation was one week later, with the ceremony led by a member of the British Humanist Association. The works of Richard Jefferies meant a lot to Mother, she said it put into words her wonder and love of the English countryside, therefore two quotes were made in the ceremony, one from *The Story of My Heart*, the other by my request, was the last paragraph from the essay 'On the Downs' (*The Hills and the Vale*).

She always took a great interest in RJS newsletters and journals, and told her many friends how great a writer Jefferies was.

Incidentally the lady from the British Humanist Association had not read any Richard Jefferies; I gave her a copy of *The Story of My Heart* which she found very much to her liking.'

Francis Hall

Francis, Director of Brightwater Systems, was a friend and neighbour of John Webb, near Wootton Bassett. John undertook to make the Society's video, and Francis, not a member of this Society, helped generously with time and expertise. Those of us who saw the first showing of the video at last year's AGM will have been aware of Francis operating the machine.

It is with great sadness that we must report his death on 27 June 2003 at the age of 46.

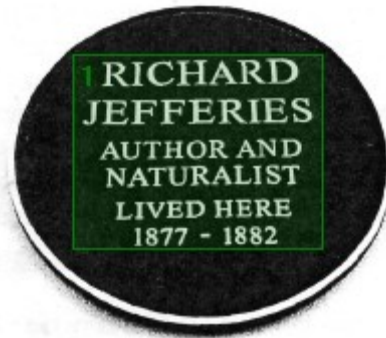
He particularly asked for a page from 'My Old Village' to be read at his funeral, and John Webb carried out his wish. Francis's two children appear in the film, and he himself is briefly glimpsed.

TOLWORTH PLAQUE 22 MAY 2003

The 'unveiling' ceremony took place as planned on Thursday 22 May at 296 Ewell Road (formerly 2 Woodside); except that the actual 'veil' came off early, so that the press photographer could take her pictures (see below).

The plaque looks good (see picture above by Len Grugeon) and can be read from the pavement in front of the premises of the owners of number 296, Messrs. Stack and Bonner, Estate Agents. They not only gave us permission to place the

plaque on their wall, but generously paid for the fixing, and allowed us to 'party' on their premises for nearly two hours.



Eleven members of the Society were there, joined by representatives from the Kingston Tour Guides, the Surbiton Historical Society, the Surbiton and District Birdwatchers, and by two other friends. We were especially pleased to meet new Kingston member - Mr Saw.

There were light-hearted speeches by Vice-President Robert McCloy, Chairman Len Grugeon, and Vice-Chairman John Price; we have to thank John for the ordering of the plaque and the negotiations for its installation, and Robert and Margaret McCloy for the most welcome, generous, refreshments. We were also allowed a quick look at the rest of the house, and the garden, much changed, of course. This plaque now completes the tally of houses lived in by Richard Jefferies and bearing a plaque.

Copies of Peter Robins' article 'Richard Jefferies at Tolworth' were handed out; these, plus the plaque, plus our Surbiton leaflet, should make Jefferies better known to those who now live or work in Surbiton. The memorial plaque in Surbiton Library is still in place, near the entrance.

A copy of *Nature Near London* was formally presented, on behalf of the Society, to Mr Slawson of Stack and Bonner. He said it would be placed where the clients could study it.



Picture by kind permission of *Kingston Guardian* and Deadlinepix.

BOOK NEWS

Understanding Cottages

John Constable, whose book *Understanding Cottages*, was reviewed in the Spring Newsletter, has answered the question 'Where does he keep his miniatures?' - In the garden. There, the cottages, historically correct, in a miniature landscape setting, form a new form of art and, as Prince Charles has called it - 'a miniature building museum'. Mr Constable lives at Langport.

Green Books Catalogue

We have the Summer 2003 catalogue. It lists our President's two recent books as well as books on Wild Flowers, Organic Food, Green Lanes, Green living, the Solar House, the Straw House, and other works that would have intrigued Jefferies.

The Wessex Landscape of Richard Jefferies

Sir Anthony Clare Lees, whose wonderful colour photographs adorn this Jefferies anthology, has sent us 10 copies, to be sold in aid of the Society. These will be on sale at the AGM (hardback, 21x25cm, 79 pages) at £10.00 each, and later at the Museum and at meetings. We cannot undertake to post them.

Dialect in Wiltshire

Professor Coates' Birthday Lecture after the AGM will set us all thinking about Jefferies' use of words and names. Professor Patrick Dillon is now Professor of Telematics in Education at the University of Exeter but was many things before that.

In 1987, with Malcolm Jones, he wrote a fascinating (and at times hilarious) book about the dialects of Wiltshire and the neighbouring counties. How these words take one's mind back to the 30s and 40s! He has presented the Society with a copy which will be available for study or loan at the AGM.

OTHER SOCIETIES

Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society

This Society, of which the Richard Jefferies' Society is a Corporate member, is based in Devizes. They have a splendid library and museum. They are very anxious, for the usual reasons, to increase visitor numbers and you are urged to go.

To make this easier, we have 3 entry cards (which this year entitle the holder, also, to a free entry to Stonehenge); anyone who would like to use a ticket should ring the Hon. Sec. 01865735678.

WANHS has an excellent Journal, a newsletter, and a fascinating programme of meetings and activities. If you would like to be our rep., please get in touch.

The Friends of the Ridgeway

Ian Ritchie, the Chairman of the Friends, is a tireless publiciser of the aims of its members (of which we are one) viz. to preserve this ancient track. In his latest Newsletter he claims that Wiltshire and Oxfordshire County Councils have joined West Berkshire Council in banning all recreational motor vehicles on the Ridgeway. This is wonderful, but it may be too late in spite of a speech by Lord Bradshaw in the House of Lords and a belated recognition of the seriousness of the situation by Alun Michael (Minister for Rural Affairs). Readers of Swindon

papers will know that local authorities now have to spend thousands, removing burnt-out cars from the Ridgeway.

Readers of the *Daily Telegraph* may have seen Ian pictured with his feet in a 2-foot rut. 'The Countryside Agency is on notice' - Tony McNully.

Surbiton and District Bird Watching Society

The Society will be 50 years old next year and are inviting members to choose a new logo to celebrate. On the banks of the Hogsmill, the following were observed in May/June: a hobby, a male peregrine, a whimbrel, a redshank, and a lesser spotted woodpecker. A buzzard was seen at New Maiden, and a cuckoo (!) at Ashted Common.

The William Morris Society

This year we have been sent the Society's Annual Report for 2002 and a model of a report it is. How wonderful to have nearly 1000 members, 42 of whom attended the AGM. In 2 years' time the Society will be celebrating its 50th anniversary and a volunteer is sought to write its history.

A beautiful bookcase, with glazed doors, has been bought in memory of Nicholas Salmon; the Red House has been open to the public since 16 July; the National Trust is carrying out essential work there at the same time. A lecture 'William Morris in Paris' (he went at least 12 times) which took place on 22 March, sounds fascinating.

To come, on 7 November at 6 Queen Square, Bloomsbury, will be the Kelmscott Lecture - 'Dreaming London: The Future City in Morris and Others'. *After London* will form part of the survey; 6.30 pm; £7 for non-members including wine and canapes; Lecturer: Peter Preston, University of Nottingham.

The Newsletter carries a list of other events, exhibitions, and publications. On pages 8 to 10 is an article entitled 'Eating with Morris' by Madeleine Parkyn. Now, there's an idea.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ ON PAGE 2

1. A. 'Sussex by the Sea'; B. 'The Vloibeonthetermut'; C. 'Widecombe Fair'.
2. C was never a regimental march.
3. Richard Jefferies (Sussex, Wiltshire and Devon).

RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE

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

Postcards:	now 25p or any 3 for	65p
1.	Watercolour of Liddington Hill & quotation	
2.	Wild flowers and quotation	
3.	Portrait of Richard Jefferies	
Richard Jefferies & Old Town (guided walk)		25p
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.

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. Helen Newman has done the typing. Printing and despatch by Margaret Evans and Phyllis Treitel. Website : www.bath.ac.uk/~lissmc/rjeffs.htm

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND BIRTHDAY LECTURE

SATURDAY. 18 OCTOBER 2003 AT MEMORIAL HALL. ALDBOURNE, WILTSHIRE **PROGRAMME**

10.30 Reception and Refreshments AGM (members only)

11.00 AGM

1.00 Break for lunch.

2.30 The Birthday Lecture (visitors welcome)

Speaker. Professor Richard Coates, Professor of Linguistics,
University of Sussex.

Subject: 'Word Life in a Southern County'. Refreshments.

4.00

Directions The village of Aldbourne is about 8 miles from Swindon on the Hungerford Road. There are memorials to the Goddard family in the handsome old church, visited by Jefferies on several occasions, and Upper Upham is a few miles away.

Parking On street.

Meals Several pubs and a handy shop.

Books There will be a bookstall.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SATURDAY 18 OCTOBER 2003 AT THE MEMORIAL HALL, ALDBOURNE

AGENDA

1. Chairman's introductory remarks.
2. Apologies.
3. Minutes of the last AGM 12 October 2003.
4. Matters arising:
The Museum at Coate
The Archives
5. Annual Report.
6. Treasurer's Report.
7. Election of Examiners of Accounts.

8. Elections to Council:

The following are due to retire. All are willing to stand for re-election.

Margaret Evans Len Grugeon Ray Morse John Price

All four are proposed for re-election by Council 2003-2006.

Professor Patrick Dillon, re-elected in 2002, now wishes, because of his duties in Exeter, to step down.

Professor Eric Jones is proposed for the 2 remaining years of Patrick Dillon's 3 years. Proposed by Len Grugeon, seconded by Ray Morse. Professor Jones, who was co-opted to Council in 2002, would therefore serve until 2005.

9. Any Other Business.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Richard Jefferies Society held at
Lawn Community Centre, Swindon on 12 October 2002

PRESENT: Margaret Bathe, Jean Bone, Marie Chesham, David Chesham, Mark Daniel, Margaret Evans, Margaret Gould, Ethelwyn Gregory, Nigel Gregory, Lisl Grugeon, Len Grugeon, Stan Hickerton, Geoff Hirst, Eric Jones, Andrew Lewis, Sylvia Morse, Ray Morse, Helen Newman, Sheila Povey, John Povey, John Price, Andrew Rossabi, John Savage, Pam Smith, Gordon Stoxv, Phyllis Treitel, John Webb.

1. THE CHAIR

Mr Grugeon welcomed those present, and said that in his (Swindon) childhood, the word 'lawn' had meant a patch of ground near the station and now brought back memories of train journeys.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were given in respect of Nancie Cator and Chris Bowles.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2001 were approved and signed.

4. MATTERS ARISING

(a) Memorial to Harold Adams. The Hon. Sec. reported that vandalism at Coate Museum in May had dictated the postponement of the installation of the bench; no suitable metal benches had been discovered. Swindon Borough Council were actively looking for a tenant. Members were alarmed at the account of the damage done to the windows of the house and were concerned for the safety of the Jefferies MSS in the Museum. Facsimiles might be substituted. The Chairman would put this suggestion to Council members at their next meeting.

(b) Memorial to Jefferies in Poets' Corner. The Hon. Sec. gave details of recent memorials to John Clare and Christopher Marlowe. Mr Stewart had obtained information from the Abbey and learned that there was no longer room for plaques; only engravings on glass were now allowed. Even if the Abbey agreed to a memorial to Jefferies, it would cost the Society at least £4,000 and Council had decided not to proceed.

Efforts by Council members to get a plaque to Jefferies installed on 296 Ewell Road, Tolworth, seemed to be meeting with success. John Price would be seeing the owners again shortly.

5. ANNUAL REPORT

The Chairman's 'letter' and Helen Newman's Alliance of Literary Societies report were praised by Andrew Rossabi. The Hon. Sec. explained that photographs were included by request; though they added to length and slightly increased cost they seemed popular. She drew attention to an alteration to the winter programme: the Arts Centre in Devizes Road would not be ready for use by December; Dr Rachel Hirst's lecture on 2 December would therefore be held elsewhere, probably in the church hall opposite.

Mr Hirst proposed the adoption of the Report; Mr Savage seconded the proposal. It was carried.

6. TREASURER'S REPORT

There were no questions on the accounts. Mr Hirst commented as follows: subscriptions were up due to a life membership (provided there were only 2 or 3 a year these did not distort the accounts); tax reclaim was good; interest rates down but it was not worth switching banks; 'miscellaneous' covered repairs to the grave and insurance. He will take another look at 'General Fund'. Ray Morse proposed acceptance of the accounts, John Price seconded the proposal. It was carried.

7. ELECTION OF EXAMINER OF ACCOUNTS

Mr Tom McGing CA, who had examined the accounts for 3 years, would not be able to do it in future. Mr Hirst had not had time to find a successor to Mr McGing. The Chairman proposed that the executive be authorised to appoint a new examiner of accounts; Mark Daniel seconded the proposal. It was carried.

8. ELECTIONS

Although Mrs Gould did not wish to remain on the Council, she had agreed to members' request that she be available from time to time to advise. She would remain as librarian. Mr Grugeon thanked her for her long service to the Society which had included being Treasurer and Membership Secretary.

Patrick Dillon and John Webb were re-elected unanimously for the years 2002-2005. John Savage was elected for the years 2002-2005. The Hon. Sec. reminded members that Margaret Evans was still looking for a successor as Membership Secretary.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Restless Human Hearts. Having put the text of The Scarlet Shawl on to his website, Professor Wright now wished to put Restless Human Hearts, but the Society does not own a copy. In the event, of our being unable to locate a copy of the book, in order to photocopy it, Mrs Sheila Povey volunteered to photocopy the copy in Swindon Public Library. This offer was gratefully received.

(b) Manuscripts and Archives. Some years ago, Mark Daniel had donated a MS leaf in Jefferies' hand; he asked whether it could be displayed. The Hon. Sec., who has the MS at home, stated that the storage and making available of the Society's archives and treasures was a problem that the Council had not, so far, been able to solve. The Society owns no premises. Its archives could be offered to:

Swindon; Devizes Museum; the County Record Office at Trowbridge; or to a university. The last named is the preferred choice but would need a Jefferies lover to make the introduction. It would also need to be within reach of Swindon.

Mr Simon Coleman, a member of the Society and an archivist at the University of Bath, had already offered to give advice. Professor Eric Jones (at the meeting) also offered to help. The Hon. Sec. looks forward to finding a safe, accessible, permanent home for the now rather voluminous archive.

The meeting ended at 12.30.

*Phyllis Treitel, Hon. Sec.
October 2002.*

The Richard Jefferies Society					
Receipts and Payments account for the year ending 30 June 2003					
2002	Receipts	2003	2002	Payments	2003
	Balances brought down		723	Publications	776
			21	Marketing	
1199	Bank	603	167	Rents	103
42	Petty Cash	45	38	Subs	34
6934	Cov. B/Soc	8366	20	Lecture fees	66
				Donations	
1814	Subs		565	Administration	597
68	Donations		230	Miscellaneous	328
19	Sales:Mus	68			
283	Other	67	44	Summer Outing	
	Books	219			
165	Tax Reclaim				
231	Interest: B/Soc	194			
1	Bank	4			
		198			
				Bank	1068
10	Miscellaneous	33		Petty Cash	67
				Cov. B/Soc	8860
55	H Adams seat				9SS4
		11897			11897

Treasurer's report to the Richard Jefferies Society 2002-3

There is a refreshing increase in subscriptions this year which has allowed our excess of income over expenditure to equate very closely with 2001/2, thereby increasing our reserves by over £900. Out tax reclaim is up by £40, and any tax-paying member who has not yet signed the relevant Gift Aid form should consider it.

Housekeeping has been very satisfactory, but you should note two items included in the "Miscellaneous" expenditure: the Surbiton plaque cost £166 and our limited liability insurance premium in 2002 was £128 (2001-£52). It will rise

steeply again in 2003 and your executive is examining possible alternatives which appear few.

We have reviewed how we might analyse our funds as historically the treasurer's report has borne little reality to our actual reserves. To balance with the accounts we have broken these down as follows:-

General Funds (excluding petty cash)	£2000
Coate	£585
Harold Adams	£155
General Reserve	<u>£7187</u>
	£9927

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 2003 show a true and correct record.

THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2003-4

2003

Saturday 4 October Wiltshire Writers. All-day programme. Tickets £5. 2.00 at New Baptist Church, Sheep Street, Devizes. Mr John Price. 'Richard Jefferies, Reporter, Writer, and - Mystic?'

Saturday 18 October 11.00 AGM at Memorial Hall, Aldbourne, Wilts. 2.30 Birthday Lecture. Professor Richard Coates (Professor of Linguistics, University of Sussex): 'Word Life in a Southern County'. Refreshments.

*Monday 1 December Mr Steve Milton: 'The Painter J W North: Friend to Jefferies' (with slides). Mr Milton is a direct descendant of J W North and an authority on his life and work.

2004

*Thursday 4 March Joint meeting with The Friends of Alfred Williams; readings of works by Williams and Jefferies.

*Monday 5 April Mr Neil Pullen of Wiltshire Wildlife: 'The Wild Life of the Barbury Castle area, past, present and future'. (Slides)

*Monday 10 May Mrs Margaret Evans, B.A. (Hons), M.A.: 'Women in Richard Jefferies' Novels and Essays'.

Saturday 2 October AGM. Place to be decided.
Birthday Lecture: Professor Eric Jones, D.Litt. (Oxon)
'The Land that Jefferies Inherited'.

*Meetings begin at 7.30 pm at the Arts Centre, Devizes Road, Swindon. Visitors welcome - no charge.