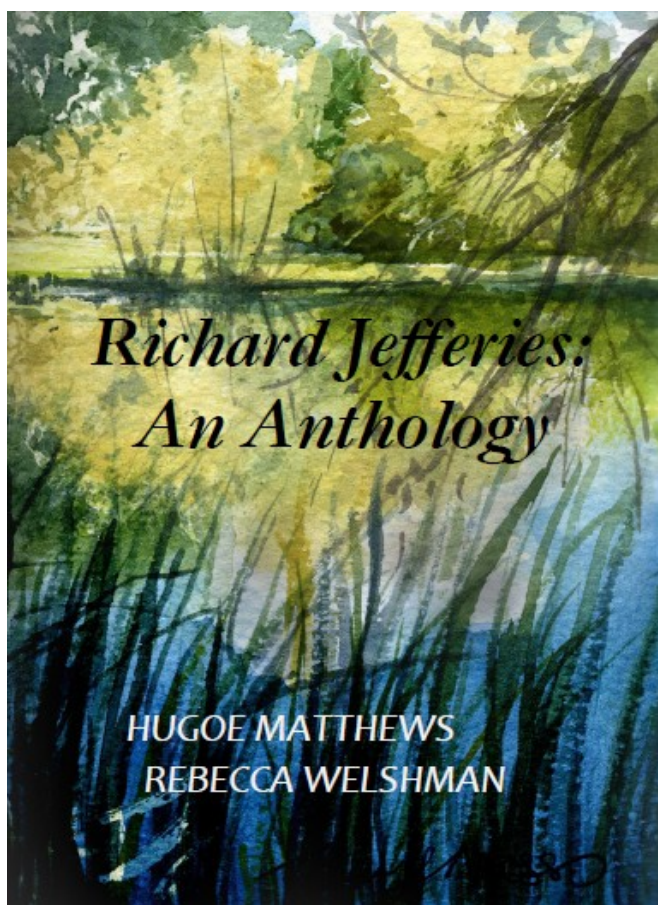
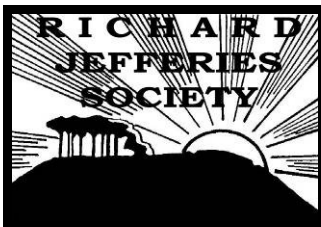


THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2011





THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY

The Richard Jefferies Society is a Registered Charity (No 1042838) and was founded in 1950 to promote appreciation and study of the writings of Richard Jefferies (1848-1887).

Membership is open to all on payment of the current annual subscription of £7 single or £8 couple. New overseas Members should add £1.50 towards additional postage costs. There is an online facility for Members to join using Paypal or credit/debit cards at richardjefferiessociety.co.uk (with an additional £1 supplement to cover charges incurred).

Members receive spring and autumn newsletters, an annual report and a *Journal* and can take advantage of the Society's extensive library. Activities include winter meetings, a study day, special outings, events, a Birthday Lecture and an Annual General Meeting.

THE RICHARD JEFFERIES MUSEUM, COATE FARM

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

NEWSLETTER

The spring newsletter has been edited by Jean Saunders, proof-read by Phyllis Treitel and despatched by Margaret Evans.

The deadline for submitting material for the Autumn 2011 Newsletter is **1st September 2011**. Please send your contributions to the Hon. Secretary preferably by e-mail (info@richardjefferiessociety.co.uk), or by post to Pear Tree Cottage, Longcot, Oxon SN7 7SS.

DATA PROTECTION ACT

Members' names and addresses are held on a computer data base. We are required by the Data Protection Act 1998 to inform Members that they have the right to object to information being held in this way.

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Correction:

On page 27 of the Society's Autumn Newsletter and Annual Report 2009-2010 it was recorded that Mr Mansbridge (who found the 1948 cine film made as a tribute to Jefferies) was not related to Albert Mansbridge, who founded the Swindon Branch of the Workers' Educational Association.

Eric Jones reports that the two Mansbridges are related and this points to Albert as the original source of the cine film.

Incidentally, no progress has been made at improving the film quality or adding a sound-track but should anyone wish a DVD copy in its current state, please contact the Hon. Secretary and send her £2 in postage stamps to cover costs.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS 2010-2011

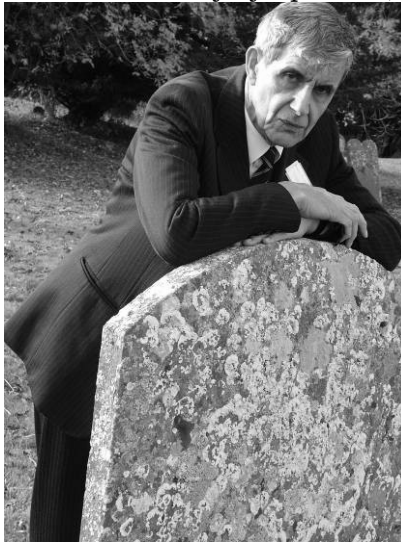
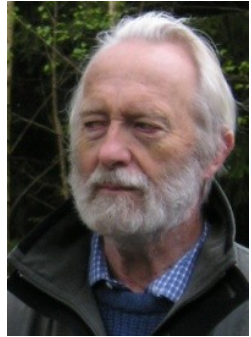
Mr Simon Coleman 01225 332367 ColemanS1@cardiff.ac.uk	Member Elected 2010-13	Flat 3, 49 King Street, Bath, Somerset BA1 2BN
Prof Roger Ebbatson 01684 567612 ebbatson@tiscali.co.uk	Member Elected 2010-13	157 Upper Welland Road, Malvern, Worcs WR14 4LB
Mrs Margaret Evans 01235 765360 evansme@ntlworld.com	Mem. Sec. Re-elected 2009-12	23 Hardwell Close, Grove, Nr Wantage, Oxon OX12 oBN
Mrs Norma Goodwin 01962 864684 Norma.goodwin@btinternet.com	Sales Re-elected 2009-12	'Wildings', 3a Momford Road, Oliver's Battery, Winchester, Hants SO22 4LE
Mr Geoff Hirst 01969 663553 geoff@vghirst.fsnet.co.uk	Treasurer Re-elected 2009-14	Scarr House, Thoraby, Leyburn, N Yorks DL8 3SU
Professor Eric Jones 01285 712657 el_sbjonas@hotmail.com	Member Re-elected 2008-11	6 Leafield Road, Fairford, Glos GL7 4LL
Miss Helen Newman 01214 232100	ALS rep Re-elected 2010-13	67 Higgins Lane, Quinton, Birmingham B32 1LJ
Dr Duncan Pepper 0117 9249088 dr.duncan.pepper@googlemail.com	Member Elected 2008-11	1 Nugent Hill, Bristol, BS6 5TD
Mr John Price 01672 515150 jtprice@waitrose.com	Chairman Re-elected 2010-13	Granham West, Granham Hill, Marlborough, Wilts SN8 4DN
Mr Andrew Rossabi 0208 347 5447	President Elected 2010-2015	1 Bloomfield Court, Bloomfield Road, Highgate, N6 4ES
Mrs Jean Saunders 01793 783040 jeanadsaunders@tiscali.co.uk	Secretary Elected 2010-15	Pear Tree Cottage, Longcot, Faringdon, Oxon SN7 7SS
Mr Richard Stewart 01473 216518	Member Re-elected 2010-13	Valezina, 112 Westerfield Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 2XW
Lady Phyllis Treitel 01865 735678	Vice-President Friends of Ridgeway	Eidsvoll, Bedwells Heath, Boars Hill, Oxford OX1 5JE
Mr John Webb 01793 853171 WWWebbrass@aol.com	Librarian Re-elected 2008-11	Padbrook, Bincknoll Lane, Wootton Bassett, Wilts SN4 8QR
Ms Rebecca Welshman 01460 75008 rw296@exeter.ac.uk	Elected 2010-2013 Student rep.	The Coach House, Mainscombe, Roundham, Crewkerne, Somerset TA18 7TL
Mr Ray Morse is a co-opted Council Member		

FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome and Farewell

At our AGM last November, it was unanimously agreed that Andrew Rossabi should be our new President. Andrew, is of course, well known to most members of the Society, having been involved for many years, giving talks to us on a variety of topics and, indeed, having served as President on a previous occasion.

Andrew's academic credentials are well known, but he has also worked as hard as anyone alive to further the cause of Richard Jefferies the author. Back in 1979 and 1980, he wrote new introductions to the Quartet editions of *Hodge and his Masters*, *The Story of My Heart*, and *Amaryllis at the Fair*. Also in 1980, he published his own selection of Jefferies' work in *The Pageant of Summer, and Other Essays*, again published by Quartet. In 1986, he composed the introduction to the Grafton edition of *Greene Ferne Farm* (only the fourth time this charming classic had been printed), and in 1987, he contributed to the Centenary symposium, *A Spirit Illumined*.



Andrew Rossabi, photographed by John Webb,
in Liddington churchyard, 6 November 2010

Much more recently, he has written quite new introductions to our reprints of the early novels, *World's End*, *The Scarlet Shawl*, and *Restless Human Hearts*.

In addition to these important contributions, Andrew is also working on a completely new Biography of Richard Jefferies, which will incorporate much new material.

It is, therefore, almost impossible to imagine a person more appropriate to be our new President; and we are most fortunate that he has happily and enthusiastically agreed to take on this role.

In welcoming Andrew, we are also losing another individual, who has worked tirelessly, in the face of declining health, in the role of President in recent years. Hugoe Matthews has been enormously generous, both in time, and in material terms to the Society, and to the cause of Jefferies lovers. His massively important works: *The Bibliography*, in conjunction with George Miller, *The Forward Life*, in partnership with Phyllis Treitel, and the very recently published *Anthology*, in co-operation with Rebecca Welshman, have meant that Richard Jefferies, his life, and his output are documented as well, or better, than any other significant 19th Century author. Hugoe has always impressed me greatly, because, as well as being an ideas man, analysing what should be, and what needs to be done; he then has got on and completed these tasks. In modern management jargon; he is the rare combination of 'Initiator' and 'Completer-Finisher'.

As a small tribute to Hugoe's years as President, he has been presented with a woodcut by David Jones, from the Golden Cockerel Edition of *Gulliver's Travels*.

It is also sad to report that we have lost forever a stalwart of the Society in Stan Hickerton, who died in January. Helen Newman has written a full tribute elsewhere in this Newsletter, but to many of us, Stan was the producer of those wonderful posters, that celebrated every one of our meetings, Study Days, and AGMs. Modest to the point of self-effacement, Stan also did much background research on behalf of member-speakers giving talks to the Society, and only recently, had been ferreting away (as he put it) in the Swindon Library, and had made several important discoveries. Stan's family have very generously offered Stan's collection of Jefferies books to the Society, and I collected over 150 from his flat at the end of January. These will be for sale in the Museum, but will first be available to members to buy at a reduced price at our meeting on 2 April, which will include a session of tributes to Stan.

We are exceptionally fortunate that our Secretary, Jean Saunders, is so familiar with, and equally important, up-to-date with, current

Planning Legislation. She has been following the tortuous progress of the planning applications for the Coate (aka 'Commonhead') site, and at the same time, keeping abreast of the national changes in planning law. We are, I am aware, primarily a Literary Society, but we do have a very strong interest in the future, not only of the Jefferies Birthplace, but also the immediate surrounding countryside. I would exhort all members, wherever you live, to follow Jean's advice and information closely, and to write, or email your objections to the latest plans to Swindon Borough Council as guided by Jean's information. Unfortunately, Swindon's Officers and Members now have probably less interest in its only notable author than has ever been the case previously, and in the current financial situation, the threats are very serious indeed.

Finally, as you will read elsewhere, we are planning this year to open every Sunday during the summer months from May to September inclusive, and we also have a very interesting programme of events scheduled for the coming year. I do hope, therefore that it will be possible to welcome more of our members to Coate in 2011.



John Price, 7 February 2011



Back garden at Coate Farm
Illustration by Robert Lemerrier
in the Hachette edition of *Bevis*, 1939

STAN HICKERTON (1930-2011) – a tribute



Stan Hickerton, September 2000

I first met Stan in 1995 at an RJS Birthday Lecture in Aldbourne. It was Sheila Povey who introduced us. From the outset, it was clear that Stan was a man with as keen an interest in literature, especially 19th century literature, as I was. I remember our initial conversation revolved around Thomas Hardy. This mutual interest certainly helped to establish a friendship that lasted for fifteen years. Stan was not only shy but quite reticent and it would be some time before I could really say I knew him well. Even now, as I think his family will agree, there are aspects to Stan's nature which he never did reveal, but doubtless that could be said of each of us. I was staying with John and Sheila Povey at the time and that evening after the birthday lecture Stan called at the house with some books he thought I might like. John brought in the books, but Stan had already left, not unusual as I would soon discover. Naturally wishing to thank him, Sheila gave me his address, and when I returned home I promptly wrote a letter, never suspecting that this was to initiate an ongoing correspondence that would last throughout the whole of our friendship. In this age of emails and texts, it is said that the art of letter writing is virtually dead, but Stan was the rare exception. Letters were a kind of lifeblood to Stan. And he did enjoy writing them, not only to me but to countless other people, his family of course, and his many friends within the Richard Jefferies Society. My father used to say that Stan must have kept the Royal Mail in profit by virtue of his letter writing skills alone. I still have hundreds of them written in his own unique

style.

Alec Stanley Hickerton (always known as Stan to distinguish him from his father Alec) was born in 1930, the eldest of three boys. Most of his young life was spent in and around Trowbridge and, according to his brother Philip they enjoyed quite an idyllic childhood in what was then mostly farmland which provided a perfect playground for two adventurous lads. They walked to school, quite a trek, or hitched a ride on the milkman's cart, then pulled by horse. Stan attended Trowbridge Grammar School and also joined the Scouts. Their father was an engineer and the boys shared the same interest. Stan was apprenticed to Vickers Armstrong at the age of 16 and was to remain with the company for most of his working life. But he had other interests too, both literary and artistic. In talking to Philip it became clear that Stan was an exceptionally clever and intelligent man. In Philip's words he acquired knowledge effortlessly and, more importantly, retained it, which enabled him to pass all his exams, some with distinction. He was also a member of the Royal Aeronautical Society.

National Service intervened for two years, when Stan joined the Royal Navy and was promoted to the rank of petty officer. He must have shown excellent potential as he was offered a commission, but declined it, returning to Vickers as a draughtsman. Because of his job he moved to Swindon in his 20s. In his spare time he continued to indulge his love of books and art and attended classes on book binding. He also took up water colour painting, as evidenced by the many lovely sketches he left. Collecting was a passion with Stan, not only books but anything that took his fancy or that he thought he might find a use for. This resulted in his lodgings becoming somewhat cluttered, but Stan used to say that as long as his books were comfortable that was all that mattered. In this age of consumerism and instant gratification, he was the least materialistic person I have ever met or am likely to meet; he never owned a TV or a telephone and mainly relied on a kettle and toaster for cooking. When he retired from Vickers he worked as a science technician at Dorcan School, which I know he enjoyed. He bound a book for me called Dorcan Science which is filled with idiosyncratic quotations and drawings. He also bound one of my books before it was published.

We all know how rewarding he found his membership of the Richard Jefferies Society. The work he did freely and unstintingly on behalf of the Society is something for which we will be forever grateful. His posters advertising the Society's events are almost collectors items, so distinctive that they are instantly recognisable. He was also an avid

researcher, constantly finding out previously unknown knowledge about Richard Jefferies, his family and environs. He also designed the logo. As well as the posters, he would make little illustrated books of RJ's quotations, and whenever he attended his Book Circle in Swindon he would invariably take literary extracts or cuttings, all done at his own expense; he was always using the photocopier.

On our many outings together he would amaze me with his knowledge of the places we visited. I recall our visit to a windmill, where it became clear that he knew more of the mechanics involved than the actual guide. The same thing would happen when we visited historic places or buildings, particularly churches and cathedrals; he would often question the guides to test out the extent of their knowledge. This could be both amusing and embarrassing at times.

We rarely argued, if ever, but we did like to mull over the merits of the north versus the south. I have a great pull towards the north, whereas Stan was happiest in the south, or the 'cushy south' as he liked to call it. One other thing that occasionally caused a tiff was his generosity; when he visited our house at Christmas he would bring huge cardboard boxes of gifts as if to justify his being invited. This was something that was hard to discourage. He got on very well with my father, who came from a railway family going back to great granddad who originally came from Westbury, Wilts; they were quite happy talking trains and recalling the great days of steam and God's Wonderful Railway, i.e. the GWR. He loved our cats too and always sent them birthday and Christmas cards.

I have referred to Stan as a modest and unassuming man, a man with an extensive knowledge of most things, but more than this he was a gentleman in both senses of the word. In losing Stan, I have lost a close and dear friend, and I know his friends within the Society will share my sense of loss.

Helen D Newman



Stan's sketch of Christ Church, Swindon

MOREDON FARMHOUSE

The house where Richard Jefferies' grandfather was born

Reproduced below is the text of a letter published in the *Swindon Advertiser* in May 1947 from J B Jones – a Swindon schoolmaster and scholar. It is to him we owe thanks for the Memorials to Richard Jefferies and Alfred Williams on Liddington Hill and Burderop Down. This letter could have been written today about the many gripes with Swindon Council and their programme of destroying Swindon's historic buildings and natural assets. However, the letter also provides evidence that Jefferies' grand-father was born at Moredon Farm. Despite Jones' protestations, the house was demolished.

Swindon Evening Advertiser

Moredon Farm House

Sir,—Richard Jefferies, great-grandfather of the famous Coate naturalist, lived at Moredon Farm where his son John Jefferies, the grandfather Iden of *Amaryllis at the Fair* was born in 1784. This John Jefferies was the one who built Coate house about 1820.

Swindon acquired that property, together with Coate Reservoir, in 1914, and has since converted half of the once beautiful lake into a fetid swamp. Now the Corporation buys a building-site at Moredon and promptly sets to work to destroy Iden's residence there!

The Moredon farmhouse apart from its Jefferies associations, is a most interesting old structure dating, as an inscribed stone shows, to 1623. It will be a crime to pull it down. It could, and should, be incorporated in Swindon's new housing estate as the chief feature of attraction. It would make a delightful breach in the monotonous continuity of any line of standardised houses and an architect, if he had his way, would be glad of an opportunity to depart from the samely norm of Swindon streets and conceptions.

That grand holm oak shading the house is, I hate to think it, doomed to the same fate as its faithful companion through three centuries. Much as I should deplore the passing of so fine an old building, I believe I would, of the two, save the ilex. To cut this down would indeed be a sin against the Holy Ghost.

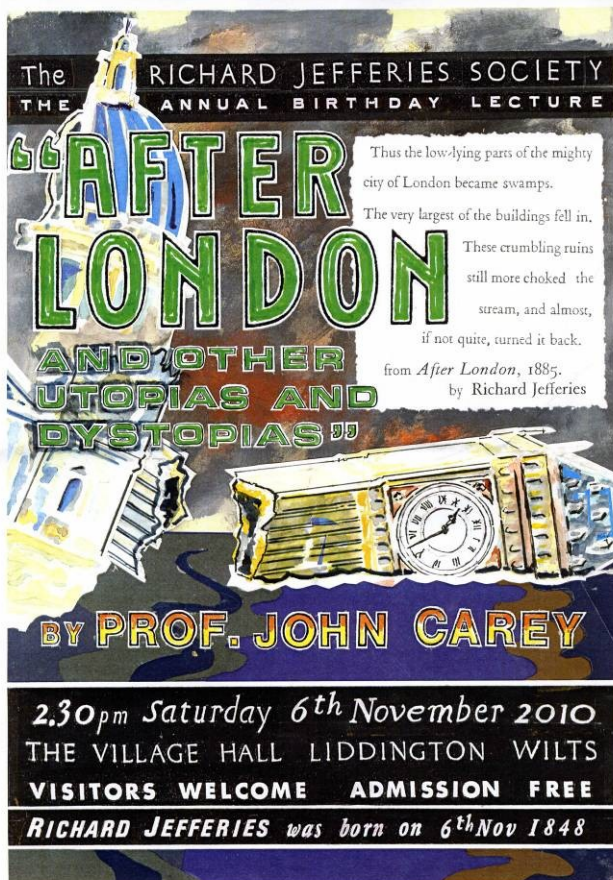
After Coate's devastating error, comes Moredon's. Not of such consequence the latter, certainly: yet both alike indicate a failure of comprehension as ominous as characteristic. With all our insistent professions of culture, there is that unconscious revelation now and again of our hopeless misunderstanding of its first principles.—

Yours etc.,

J. B. JONES.

18. St. Margaret's-road, Swindon, 8, May, 1947.

BIRTHDAY LECTURE 2010 REPORT
‘After London and other Utopias and Dystopias’



Poster by A S Hickerton

A sunny autumn day greeted the 34 members who attended the Birthday Lecture at Liddington Village Hall on 6 November, the first to coincide with Jefferies' birthday.

Professor Carey (pictured below) gave the Birthday lecture on the subject of utopias and dystopias, discussing Jefferies' *After London*. He effectively illuminated the realism behind Jefferies' futuristic vision, and compared him to other authors of utopian works, including H.G Wells. Jefferies' power lay in his ability to combine elements of the unimaginable with the ordinary. Professor Carey referred to the flight of birds away from poisonous vapours in *After London*, and the unstoppable spread of foliage if nature is left untended, illustrating Jefferies' startling perception that the natural world needs man in order to look beautiful and cared for. Professor Carey also



Photograph by John Webb

discussed Jefferies' descriptions of the site of destroyed London, highlighting similarities between the silhouettes of the dead and scenes depicted from Hiroshima. Professor Carey shed new light on the dramatic effect of Jefferies' science fiction writing, suggesting that it influenced T.S Eliot's epic poem *The Wasteland*. Jefferies' understanding of nature imbued his literary imagination with unique power and insight, allowing him to successfully portray a radically altered landscape in a way that surpassed many other fiction writers of the time.

Rebecca Welshman

NEWS IN BRIEF

Alfred Williams Heritage Festival

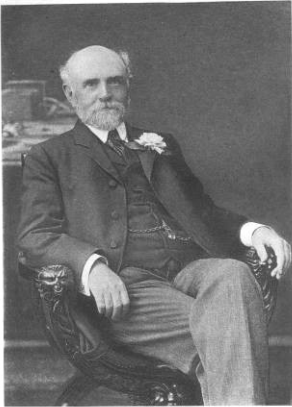
The Society was invited to run a Jefferies' information stall at this festival held at the STEAM museum on 13 November 2010. The event was organised to promote Alfred Williams and bring together Swindon's heritage groups. It was a most uplifting day and well attended by the general public. There were readings, talks, folk songs and folk music to lighten the day and, in the evening, a musical event was held to highlight the life and work of Alfred Williams. The Alfred Williams Heritage Group worked extremely hard to make the day a success and they certainly succeeded in their goal.

Samuel Looker papers

Mrs Jakes, of Doncaster, contacted the Society for advice about a major collection of Samuel Looker's papers stored in her friend's loft. The friend turned out to be the widow of Looker's grandson. John

Price and George Miller have been invited to go through the material to assess what Jefferies-related papers might go to the Society or to the Wiltshire History archives.

Joseph Shaylor



J. Shaylor

In early October 2010 the Society was contacted by Linda Hares who wrote: 'I have enjoyed reading the extracts from *Jefferies Land* in the Swindon Advertiser. To my great surprise, I have recently discovered that *Jefferies Land* was published by Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co and that my Great Great Uncle was a managing director of this publishing house at the time. My ancestor joined Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co in 1864 as a junior assistant and rose to become managing director in 1894 until he retired in 1917.

My ancestors name was Joseph Shaylor ... he wrote [a book] titled *The Fascination of Books* published in 1912. He was very much aware of Richard Jefferies, as he wrote a few lines about his work in the book. Shaylor became a well known bookman on the London literary scene. Joseph Shaylor was a boy from the country himself. He came from a small village near Stroud, Gloucestershire. The village lay near two commons where he used to play and walk in.' John Price bought a copy of the book and found the short reference to Jefferies is merely given as an example of how much the value of first edition books can escalate after an author's death. He quoted the original price of 'Suez-cide' that cost 3d when first published and that 'excessive sums of £3-4' are now paid!

Kate Tryon

Peter Robins supplied further information about Kate Tryon. According to a brochure for an art exhibition held in 1982, some of her paintings are in collections at Colby College, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Middlebury College. However a large collection of her paintings were donated to Westbrook College, Portland, Maine (where Kate Tryon lived) in 1972 and these include twenty two of her *Jefferies' Land* works. The remaining Kate Tryon oil-paintings held at Swindon Museum and Art Gallery are about to be moved to the *Jefferies' Museum*. There are still some copies of the

limited edition of Kate Tryon's *Adventures and Walks in Jefferies Land* available (see order form and RJS Autumn Newsletter 2010, p.26).

Swindon History Forum

The Society has been invited to join a new Swindon History Forum. One of our new Members, Andy Binks – who is active in the Swindon Society – has agreed to represent us at future meetings. Andy Binks has also been making himself extremely useful at the Museum doing odd jobs that Swindon Borough Council can't be bothered to do.

Gravestone for Oliver Jefferies

John Kennet, from the Eltham Society, has been asked further questions by the local diocese before permission will be allowed to erect an appropriate memorial to Richard & Jessie Jefferies' baby son, albeit that the Church Commission were happy with the proposal. We have written support from surviving members of Richard Jefferies' son, Harold, who moved to Canada. They have added their agreement to placing a headstone in memory of their Great Uncle.

'Jefferies Land' Film

Thanks to the volunteers who run the Swindon Viewpoint web-site, the Society's film, produced by John Webb, can now be watched on the Internet on our website.

Memorial bench at Broadwater Cemetery

After a most enjoyable event held at Broadwater Cemetery reported in the last newsletter, it was regretted that the bench in the Jefferies/Hudon Memorial garden had been stolen. Now that security has been improved at the cemetery, the Society voted at the AGM to make £500 available to the Friends of Broadwater Cemetery to purchase a replacement bench and memorial plaque. Michael Parrott, who is a member of both organisations, has been given the task of finding an appropriate bench and has found a traditional village blacksmith who will provide a hand-made two-seater that will be ready for the Spring launch of the 'Friends' open days.

Richard Jefferies Society publications for your local public library

Carolyn Clarke asked her local library to order a copy of the Society's edition of *Amaryllis at the Fair* and they were happy to do so. Ms Clarke suggests others might ask their public library to do the same.

'Myth, Mysticism, and Nationalism'

This interdisciplinary conference held in Tremough, Cornwall last summer was represented by poets, artists, historians, archaeologists and geographers. Rebecca Welshman gave a paper that drew on Jefferies thoughts about timelessness in *The Story of my Heart*. The paper entitled 'Dreams of Celtic Kings: Victorian Prehistory and the Notion of Celtic' has been accepted for publication in a forthcoming edited collection. The reference to Jefferies is as follows:

After researching the prehistoric archaeology of his local area in the early 1870s Jefferies went on to use archaeological sites in his work as settings where the mind was free to imagine back through time, and into the future. In this passage the spirit of the prehistoric ancestor is as alive to the author as the natural landscape which surrounds him. Although physically separated by death, the conceptual distinction between the warrior and the author is bridged through their inhabiting the same landscape. The identity of the interred warrior – what Jefferies conceives of as 'the abstract personality of the dead' – is known to him through the swaying grasses which grow on the same soil as thousands of years before, the warmth of the same sun, and the singing of the same generations of larks, all of which transcend ordinary time to connect the living with the dead. This late-Victorian thought echoes ideas from the older Celtic paganism, which believed in spirits existing in natural objects such as trees and rocks, but seeks to inhabit a new form. The courage of the warrior interred in the tumulus echoes the Celtic 'daring' and what was recognised as the Celtic 'indifference to death', fortifying the imagination to conceive of otherworldly states which transcend life and death.

Electronic News

If you would like to be better informed about the Society's activities or you would like to share information with other Members, you can subscribe to a free e-mail group. Contact the Hon. Sec. for details or send your e-mail address to info@RichardJefferiesSociety.co.uk. There is also a forum that you can join through our website and it is now possible to download Society Journals as well as some of our leaflets:

<http://www.Richardjefferiessociety.co.uk>

The Gamekeeper at Home – audio book by Librivox

The people who undertook the audio recording of *After London* a couple of years ago have now completed *The Gamekeeper at Home*. The listening book can be downloaded free at <http://librivox.org/the-gamekeeper-at-home-by-richard-jefferies/>).

Malmesbury Philosophy Town

Some interesting plans are afoot to make the Wiltshire town of Malmesbury Britain's first 'philosophy town'. The market town is associated with English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) and it is proposed that the town be a regular host to various philosophy-themed festivals. John Price has been invited to give a talk about Richard Jefferies at one such event to be held on 9-10 July 2011. 'Ideas of Nature and Countryside' will explore green issues and ethics, design of gardens and landscapes, history and philosophy of walking, natural history writers, countryside policies and issues. John will be speaking on the Sunday but further details can be found at www.philosophytown.co.uk nearer the time.

Swindon Public Library Reading

At a date to be arranged, Roger Trayhurn, at Swindon Central Public Library, will be organising an early evening event when readers will select extracts from Jefferies' writing for a general public audience. We understand that Mr Trayhurn will be retiring soon (he took up his post in the 1960s) and will be much missed by the people of Swindon.



SAVE COATE CAMPAIGN

A common ploy used by developers is to submit the most awful planning application imaginable and then twiddle and revise the proposals to grind down the opposition and make it acceptable to the local council. After a staggering statement that the current plans for Coate were the best he has seen, Councillor Peter Greenhalgh, Swindon Borough Council's Cabinet Member for planning, revealed that the Council seem to be on the same side as the developers. Redrow Homes and Persimmon Homes submitted a revised planning application for the land formerly known as Coate (Swindon Borough Council insist on referring to it as 'Commonhead' – a road junction on the A419) on Christmas Eve (another ploy used by developers, submitting plans when they are less likely to be noticed). Largely to satisfy concerns raised by Natural England, the new plans are now for 890 houses, a 15 hectare business area, a school and shops. Natural England had been highly critical of the likely impact of the development on views from Liddington Hill and the Downs; they had concerns about the height of buildings, loss of mature trees, and the lack of information in the June 2010 planning application as to what the development would look like. Least of all, Richard Jefferies was mentioned: 'The significance of cultural associations with Richard Jefferies are under-estimated; it was the landscape in the vicinity that prompted much of his work, and much of that work was related to envisioning a future, changing environment (notably *After London*).' The developers made a feeble attempt to look again at the impact on Jefferies Land and concluded that the development would have a 'neutral effect'!

The submission of the revised planning application was closely followed by the news that Swindon Borough Council was bringing forward a new planning policy for the area that made it even easier for the developers to get planning permission for Coate. It was also apparent that Swindon Council is trying to play down the concerns raised by over 52,000 citizens who signed the Save Coate! petition. They claim it doesn't count any more.

Despite another approach to the Hortons, who own Day House Farm, the family is still not interested in selling farmland to the Jefferies Land Conservation Trust, thus proving that the house-builders will eventually get their way and spread their estate to the fields around Coate Water.

The Society has written letters of objection to the Swindon planners, Cabinet Members and the councillors on the planning committee. It is likely that the planning application will be decided on 8 March 2011 and every indicator shows that planning permission will be granted. There is a possibility of a legal challenge if this is the case. Swindon Council has failed in its duty to consider Jefferies Land as a Heritage Asset that might be subject to certain protective planning considerations.

THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY

Publications Order Form April 2011



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<i>The Interpreter: a biography of Richard Jefferies</i> – Audrey Smith, 2008 (softback – 279g.)	£ 5.00	
<i>The Scarlet Shawl</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2009. Introduction by Andrew Rossabi. (softback – 294g.)	£ 5.99	
<i>The Dewy Morn</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2009. Introduction by Rebecca Welshman (softback – 442g.)	£ 7.00	
<i>Adventures in the Vale of the White Horse: Jefferies Land</i> – Kate Tryon, 2010 (limited edition soft-back)	£12.00	

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

<i>Restless Human Hearts</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2008. Introduction by Andrew Rossabi, 2008. (hardback; £20 – 776g.) (Softback version £8 – 711g.)	£20.00 ----- £ 8.00	-----
<i>Richard Jefferies: An Index</i> – Matthews & Treitel, 2008 (hardback – 558g.)	£15.00	
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Second hand books by and about Richard Jefferies are also available from the Society. Do ask if there is a Jefferies' book that you need.

STUDY DAY

RICHARD JEFFERIES AND SPORT

SATURDAY 30 July 2011, JEFFERIES' MUSEUM, COATE

PROGRAMME

The day will seek to draw together some of Jefferies' responses to sport and identify key common themes between them.

10.30 Doors open and refreshments.

11.00 Welcome and introductions.

11.15 Select a relevant piece of Jefferies' writing or about Jefferies on the subject of sport to read to others. See notes*

1.00-2.30 Lunch break. Bring packed lunch or eat at the Sun Inn nextdoor. RJS publications and second-hand books on sale. Opportunity to look around the Museum.

2.30 Keynote Lecture by Rebecca Welshman: 'Give me an iron mace that I may crush the savage beast and hammer him down': the primitive and the ideal in Jefferies' perception of Sport'

3.45 Refreshments.

4.15 Depart .

*** Notes**

Extracts should be no more than 5 minutes long. The choice of topic is optional, but sports to consider might include skating, shooting, fishing, hunting, swimming, rowing, and horse riding. The following texts might be helpful:

'The Gamekeeper at Home' (1878)

The Amateur Poacher (1879)

'Shooting a Rabbit' (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 1880. Collected in *Chronicles of the Hedges*)

Bevis (1882)

'The Defence of Sport' (*National Review*, 1883) (Collected in two parts: as 'Sport and Science' in *Life of the Fields* and 'A Defence of Sport' *Chronicles of the Hedges*)

The Story of My Heart (1883)

'Skating', in *Hills and the Vale*

Red Deer (1884)

'The Bathing Season' (1884) in *The Open Air*

The Dewy Morn (1884)

'Field Sports in Art – the Mammoth Hunter' (1885) in *Field and Hedgerow*

Brian Morris' *Richard Jefferies and the Ecological Vision*

IN THE FOOTPRINTS OF RICHARD JEFFERIES

By [Philip] Edward Thomas

This article first appeared in the New Age on 2 April 1896. It is the first essay on Jefferies that Edward Thomas published. The footnotes have been added. The article was also reproduced in the Swindon Advertiser on 4 February 2011 as a fillip to bolster the Save Coate campaign.

Coate is a name which has probably little significance for the mass of Englishmen; yet it may well be conjectured that this little hamlet will one day attain the celebrity, not to say sanctity, now enjoyed by the Hampshire village of Selborne. For Coate is the birthplace of Richard Jefferies.

We set out on a pilgrimage, beginning with a journey by rail to Swindon Junction—where the traveller has no longer to wait for the ‘ten minutes,’ familiar but not dear in the days of old.¹ From the railway station we go up the steep hill leading to the ‘Old Town,’ passing on the way a stone-built house in Victoria-street, where Jefferies lived for some time after his marriage.² We are here surrounded by many associations connected with the writer, who had to die in order to give life to his works. His friend Mr. William Morris, mentioned, in Besant’s *Eulogy*, a former editor of the *Swindon Advertiser*, had his offices in the same street; and close at hand is the office of the *North Wilts Herald*, on which Jefferies served his apprenticeship as a reporter.

Leaving the town, we first take to the fields by a narrow stile near ‘The Lawn,’ the residence of ‘Squire Goddard.’ The footpath, often trod by Jefferies himself, winds pleasantly athwart broad undulating fields of pasture and mowing grass, through stiles and gateways, past dense hedges with their ash trees and pollard willows, and after a few minutes’ walk the place of our pilgrimage comes in sight. The path rejoins the main road, and almost immediately opposite is Coate Farm, where Jefferies first saw the light. By no means a striking farmstead, it is almost hidden by a high brick wall and a thick screen of pollarded limes, though actually facing the highway leading from Swindon to Marlborough. The gateway, low and arched, is guarded by lilac and laburnum, and near at hand are the trees of the orchard. The old-fashioned, appearance of the house is somewhat impaired by the

¹ From 1842 to 1895 all trains had to make a compulsory ten minutes refreshment stop at Swindon station. Under the terms of leasing the Swindon Junction Hotel and Refreshment Rooms, the lessees had secured this arrangement that was to run for 99 years. In 1895 the GWR bought out the hotel company for £100,000 and dropped the 10 minute break.

² Jefferies only lived in Old Town for a year from late April 1875.

slated roof, but the 'skilling' and cluster of farm-buildings are thatched and moss grown, with ivy clinging to their weather-stained walls. Under the eaves, as of old, martins have placed their mud nests, and all through the village they are visible almost at every turn.

Coate itself, lying at the foot of the Liddington Hills, is a straggling little place with quaint old cottages, a modernised inn, called the 'Sun,' and farmhouses standing some way back from the road. By the roadside is the narrow brooklet in which Jefferies was delighted to note an especial charm of glitter, and where great yellow marigolds grew in May amid the flags at the water-side.

At the back of the Farm, and hidden by close-growing ash and chestnut, lies the Reservoir, styled more poetically by Jefferies 'the mere,' embosomed among swelling meadows and shadowing trees. Here in the 'old punt' the youthful Jefferies loved to wander, searching for 'Calypso's cave ... and the Immortals ... hiding somewhere still in the woods.'³ One recognises the place in the passage where he describes the voyage in the rickety boat with 'Orion' the shepherd.⁴

Past the low but steep bluff of sand, rising sheer out of the water, drilled with sand martins' holes and topped by a sapling oak in the midst of a great furze bush. ... Past the barley that came down to the willows by the shore, ripe and white under the bright sunshine, but yonder beneath the shadow of the elms with a pale tint of amber. Past broad rising meadows, where under the oaks on the upper ground the cattle were idly lying out of the sultry heat. Then the barren islands strewn with stones and mussel-shells glistening in the sunshine. ... till presently she floated into the bay beneath the firs. There a dark shadow hung over the black water—still and silent; so still that even the aspens rested from their rustling.⁵

These words are charmingly true to the life as we float upon the broad bosom of the lake with its osier islets and dense beds of lofty iris. Round about the waterside is many a nook where the youthful nature-lover often dreamed and pondered, shadowed by a leaf-woven canopy, and with the fragrance of woodbine drifting in through the hawthorns. Or again, along the rushy bank, where the greensward stretches to the water's edge, decked with cuckoo flowers and forget-me-nots, he was wont to loiter, watching the wavelets lapping the low marge or the pennon willow leaves flashing in the sun.

³ *The Amateur Poacher* by Richard Jefferies, 1879, Ch 2.

⁴ Orion was not a shepherd but a travelling companion in *The Amateur Poacher*, Ch1: 'I call him Orion because he was a hunter and had a famous dog.'

⁵ *The Amateur Poacher*, Ch 2.

Away on the southern horizon the ridge of Liddington Hills is clearly outlined, marked by a clump of storm-driven beeches, known as a landmark for miles around. Every year the bird-nesters search the 'Plain' (or plateau) for lapwings' eggs, and it was here and in the immediate neighbourhood, lying on the slopes of the ancient tumuli, that Jefferies meditated the thoughts expressed in *The Story of My Heart*. After the exhilarating ascent, he says:

There was an intrenchment on the summit, and going down into the fosse, I walked round it slowly to recover breath. On the south-western side there was a spot where the outer bank had partially slipped, leaving a gap. There the view was over a broad plain beautiful with wheat, and inclosed by a perfect amphitheatre of green hills. ... Woods hid the scattered hamlets, so that I was quite alone.⁶

There, then, and close at hand, Jefferies lived some of the most exalted moments of his life.

In another direction lies Burderop Wood, where the keepers were doubtless intimate acquaintances of Jefferies and his unconscious models. A narrow footway leads to a hillside cluster of cottages, and on every hand Spring scatters her daintiest gifts. Pale wind anemones spangle the slopes and hedgemounds, and the violet hides amid the herbage growing about the stately ash and far-spreading oaks. In June, about the open glades grown with sweet turf and bracken, we have seen the ghostly nightjar wheel, and the kestrel hover in his mid-day course. On the opposite side of Burderop, and well known to all the country-side, is Ladder Hill, with its steep primrose-dappled inclines and grass carpets pranked with exquisite bird's-foot lotus, whose beauties Jefferies so eloquently celebrates. The huge time-stained boulders that are met with here and there form convenient resting-places after the climb, and all around at midsummer the briar hedges are flushed with sweet wild roses.

Nestling on the sides of the downs are hill villages whither Jefferies wandered in his endless walks. Such are Chiseldon and Wroughton. About the thyme-scented hill-tops overlooking these hamlets are lanes and field-paths that lead the wanderer on many a delightful ramble. Here among the trees, stirring from the breath of the roving wind, and beneath the hot sun-glow, we may fitly remember the words and spirit of *The Amateur Poacher*: 'A something that the ancients called divine may be found and felt there.'⁷

⁶ *The Story of My Heart* by Richard Jefferies, 1883.

⁷ The final sentence from *The Amateur Poacher*.

COATE FARM AND MUSEUM REPORT

About 1000 people visited the Museum in 2010. Improvements are being made all the time to the house and gardens thanks to the help of volunteers. In January, Joan James of Wroughton kindly donated a 1920s oak bookcase-bureau in memory of her husband Edwin who was a regular visitor to the Museum and a Member of the Society. A farmhouse chair was purchased by the Society in January. This has been placed in the Parlour by the window that looks out onto the back garden and it is where Jefferies would spend hours watching the southern sky and the wildlife in the garden.

The saga about what may or may not happen to the Richard Jefferies Museum at Coate continues. Swindon Borough Council still wants to be shot of it and the new development trust is still in a formative stage. Mike Pringle of Forward Swindon is heading up this group that has been given the go ahead by Swindon Borough Council to prepare for the management of the Museum whilst the Council retain ownership of it until such time as a sustainable project and programme might be agreed.

It is hoped that an annual Jefferies Festival might be resurrected in the grounds of the Museum.

The Museum has been granted a provisional accreditation that can be converted to a full accreditation if certain required actions are taken within six months. The work is now virtually complete and Barbara Dixon, based at Swindon Museum and Art Gallery will submit the necessary paperwork to the MLA by the end of March. Some funding has been awarded by the MLA, assisted by a donation from the Society, to purchase a dehumidifier, accession book and temperature/humidity monitors.

Museum Open Days 2011

From the beginning of May to the end of September, the Museum will be open every Sunday from 2-5pm as well as the usual second Wednesday of the month from 10am-4pm throughout the year. Volunteers are always needed to help with Museum duties or for gardening work. Please contact the Hon. Sec. if you can offer support.

The gardens

The fruit trees are all doing very well including the Jefferies Russet Apple that Mark Daniel moved last year. Mike Pringle hopes to lay a new path from the garden to Coate Water that will run alongside Jefferies' Great Hedge.

DISCOVERIES VII: 'BY THE AUTHOR OF *THE GAMEKEEPER AT HOME*'

George Miller

The habit of former owners of books to place or paste relevant cuttings or letters inside the endpapers often results in some interesting finds. A copy of *The Gamekeeper at Home*, first impression 1878, signed 'Geo. King Harrison | Oct 78.', has a tipped in letter from Jefferies to H.J. Moule Esq., headed '2 Woodside | Surbiton | Surrey | Jan 28th.' Jefferies expresses pleasure and interest in Moule's observation on rooks and a tame partridge, and thanks Moule for kind remarks about his book, probably *Wild Life in a Southern County*. He mentions his illness as the reason for his delayed reply.

Henry Joseph Moule (1825-1904) was the eldest of the eight sons of the Reverend Henry and Mary Moule. Henry senior became well known as an evangelical reformer at Fordington in Dorset, where he pursued an active programme of social and sanitary improvements among the rural poor. One son died in infancy and one, Horace, a close friend of Thomas Hardy, committed suicide. The others were high achievers, becoming bishops and academics, while Henry Joseph gained distinction as a prolific watercolourist who left a detailed record of Dorset life and scenery.* Between 1856 and 1860 he taught Hardy to sketch in watercolours.



Henry Joseph Moule at the easel
of his own making

Geo. King Harrison was a Staffordshire mine owner and JP with no known connection to Jefferies or Moule.

Another copy, the illustrated edition of 1880, has the name stamp of R.S. Chambers, probably Robert (Secundus) Chambers (1832-1888) editor of *Chambers's Journal*, with a loosely inserted letter from Jefferies to Chambers addressed Savernake, Lorna Road, West Brighton, Jan 25th, with a pencil annotation 'Nature around London'. The letter acknowledges Chambers' kindness in proposing to review his book (*Nature Near London*) in the *Journal* and thanks him for a postal order. The review came out on 12th April 1884 and is also headed 'Nature Around London'. The book was published in April 1883, and Jefferies was approached by Robert Chambers for contributions on country topics to the *Journal* on June 8 1883. It would appear from this that Chambers' interest in Jefferies was

stimulated by *Nature Near London* rather than *The Gamekeeper at Home*. However in a previously unnoticed letter in the National Library of Scotland, dated 22 March (no year, probably 1884 but possibly 1883, i.e. before the appearance of *Nature Near London*) Chambers asks Jefferies for a story along the lines of *The Gamekeeper at Home* but ‘containing a plot’ (underlined) with a postscript saying ‘politics and religious controversy debarred’. No such work materialised but it is noteworthy that his first contribution to the *Journal* was ‘A King of Acres’ in three parts, a study of rural characters and problems in the manner of his later fiction. Chambers is possibly unique among Jefferies’ editors, publishers and literary advisers in having encouraged him to produce a work of fiction.

The Gamekeeper is a particularly good source of such discoveries as it was his most successful and best known work throughout his short life. Every subsequent life-time book named *The Gamekeeper* first of Jefferies’ other works listed on the title pages, and *The Amateur Poacher*, *Wild Life* and the first issue of *Bevis* had ‘by the author of *The Gamekeeper at Home*’ on the spine. In purely numerical terms its success would be the envy of a relatively unknown writer even today. Between June 1878 and 1881 Smith, Elder & Co. produced 9750 copies in a series of separate printings.** It was widely reviewed in the regions and Scotland as well as in London journals and newspapers. We can get a good idea of the impact made by these ‘sketches of natural history and rural life’ from an account by the novelist, critic and biographer Coulson Kernahan (1858-1943) of coming across one of them in the *Pall Mall Gazette*:



Coulson Kernahan

It so quivered with poignantly passionate if somewhat pagan love of Nature and of Art, it revealed so beauty-haunted and beauty-athirst a personality, that my attention was instantly riveted. I read it not once but many times. In fact I cut it out, to preserve, and have it to this day.

He goes on to say that the later Jefferies became for him, as for other contemporaries, too ‘feverish’; and Jefferies’ failure to realise that the beauties of nature were ‘manifestations of God’ was problematic. ‘None the less’, he concludes, ‘Jefferies, so newly awakened, almost re-created the nature wonder and nature-worship spirit within us that today there are scores of nature-writers when in his time there were few.’

This was written in 1925, but the boom in nature and country

writing began quite rapidly after the appearance of *The Gamekeeper at Home*. Up to that point it could be said to have been largely the preserve of the more highly educated or socially advantaged classes, scientists, sportsmen, antiquarians, specimen collecting clergymen – the names of Gilbert White, Charles Kingsley, Charles Waterton, J.G. Wood, Frank Buckland and Philip Gosse come to mind. With Jefferies' success came the realisation that any writer with a country upbringing could turn what for him was common knowledge into saleable literary copy. A good example might be Denham Jordan writing as 'a Son of the Marshes', whose notes and observations were edited by J.A. Owen in a series of books of Jefferies-like content and titles: *Woodland, Moor and Stream; Within an Hour of London; Forest Field and Fell; On Surrey Hills*. He writes in the latter:

As a fellow field-naturalist, I would pay my tribute of praise, and express my perfect appreciation of the work of one of the most minute and truthful observers that England has ever seen... I feel competent, as one of nature's children, to give an opinion as to the value of the work of my lamented fellow naturalist, Richard Jefferies.

In 'Rustic Naturalists', a chapter in *Wild England of To-day*, another successor, C.J.C. Cornish, links Jefferies with Thomas Bewick and William Cobbett as one of few such writers to actually have a background of farming or farm labour. 'There are', however, 'numbers of men employed in sedentary occupations in villages and small country towns, who find in the pursuit of natural history the same change and excitement which the London artisan does in his favourite hobby of angling in the well-fished waters of the Thames and Lea.' Undoubtedly many obscure authors and journalists in the '80s and '90s took a leaf or two out of Jefferies' books, as well as others, not quite forgotten, with a clear or acknowledged debt. It was perhaps a trend that would have taken place in any case, with the spread of education and urbanisation, but the author of *The Gamekeeper at Home* was certainly a catalyst.

A number of commentators on literary developments at the end of the nineteenth century also credit Jefferies with a key role in the emergence of the regional novel:

His works were the boon companions of men and women 'commencing novelist', and it was the fascination of his treatment of the total resources of a couple of counties that awoke a new interest in regional writing. Again and again in letters Mary Webb expresses her indebtedness to Jefferies and in this she is typical of most if not all her contemporaries... It is the totality of presentation that occupies the novelist today ... It gives

his work that note of credibility which can alone secure survival in literature as a transcript of life.

This from 'bookman and collector' T.J. Hardy in 1934, but a more eminent critic had earlier regarded the same phenomenon with a sharper eye. In 'Externals', a chapter in *Adventures in Criticism* (based on an article in *The Speaker*: 'A Literary Causerie: the Countryside as Copy'), Arthur Quiller-Couch writes:



Arthur Quiller-Couch

The works of Richard Jefferies form a considerable museum of externals of one particular kind: and this is possibly the reason why the Cockney novelist waxes eloquent over Richard Jefferies. He can now import the breath of the hay-field into his works at no greater expense of time and trouble than taking down *The Gamekeeper at Home* from his club bookshelf... And to my mind it is a small but significant sign of a rather lamentable movement – of none other, indeed, than the 'Rural Exodus' as the political economists call it – that each and every novelist of my acquaintance, while assuming as a matter of course that his readers are tolerably familiar with the London

Directory, should, equally as a matter of course, assume them to be ignorant of the commonest features of open-air life.

He proceeds to parody a passage from *Wild Life* with a description of the Brompton Road in the same manner, a witty and effective demonstration of a cataloguing tendency in the genre which Orwell also despised, and to which Jefferies was not immune.

It is a reasonable supposition that the expansion of all kinds of writing about the countryside affected Jefferies' career adversely, at least from a commercial standpoint. The supply of genial and informed gossip on rural matters exceeded the demand. In the mid '80s his sales plummeted: *The Gamekeeper* sales were down to 143 in 1885 and only a single copy of *Round About a Great Estate* sold in the same year. Smith Elder in fact had enough stock of all their Jefferies titles by 1881 to last the rest of his lifetime, and only had to reprint after his death and the revival of interest generated by Besant's biography. Besant regarded Jefferies' change to another publisher as a career mistake, but it was almost certainly Smith Elder who abandoned Jefferies. He received £100 for the copyright of *The Gamekeeper* but in 1885 Chatto could only offer £40 for *The Open Air*, 'in the present very

depressed state of the market.’ And yet this rift with the publisher of *The Gamekeeper* and its successors may well have been a factor in directing Jefferies into more original and adventurous forms of creativity, which have weathered the harshest criticism.

NOTES

* For an illustrated catalogue of H.J. Moule’s work see *A Victorian’s View of Dorset*, by Gwen Yarker, Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, 1997.

** The bibliography is complex as title page statements do not match the publisher’s register. The following guide to identification is suggested after close comparison of copies:

- June 1878. First impression of first edition. No edition statement on title page. 1878.
- Oct. 1878. First edition second impression. Title page has *SECOND EDITION* 1878.
- Nov. 1878. First edition third impression. Title *THIRD EDITION* 1878, 2 in signature M² superior.
- Jan. 1879. First edition fourth impression. Title *THIRD EDITION* 1878, 2 in signature M2 normal.
- Jan. 1879. American issue of above. Title *THIRD EDITION* 1879, 2 in signature M2 normal.
- July 1879. First edition fifth impression. Title *THIRD EDITION* 1879, signature ‘F’ signed ‘*F’.
- Dec. 1879. Second edition, illustrated. Title no edition statement, 1880.
- Dec. 1879. American issue of second (illustrated) edition. No edition statement, 1880.
- Feb. 1880. First edition sixth impression. Title states *THIRD EDITION* 1879, F signed normally.
- 1881. First edition seventh impression. Title page states *NEW EDITION*, 1881.

Sources:

- ❖ Coulson Kernahan, *The Reading Girl*, London, George G. Harrap & Co., 1925.
- ❖ ‘A Son of the Marshes’ [Denham Jordan], ed. J.A. Owen, *On Surrey Hills*, fourth edition, Edinburgh and London, William Blackwood and Sons, 1893.
- ❖ C.J. Cornish, *Wild England of To-Day*, London, Seeley and Co., 1895.
- ❖ T.J. Hardy, *Books on the Shelf*, London, Philip Allan, 1934.
- ❖ A.T. Quiller-Couch, *Adventures in Criticism*, London, Cassel and Company, 1896.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Richard Jefferies: An Anthology by Hugoe Matthews & Rebecca Welshman (Longcot: Petton Books, 2010).

ISBN 978-0-9563751-2-4, stitched hardback, 266 pp, 11 illustrations and photographs. UK Price £20 plus UK postage £2.50.

Available from the Society through Norma Goodwin (use order form with this newsletter) or through our Website.

As mentioned in the last newsletter the new anthology of Richard Jefferies was published on 6 November 2010. The book cover is reproduced on the front of the newsletter, albeit that black and white reproduction does not do justice to the colourful watercolour of Coate Water that was skilfully painted by Geoff Moss, a long-standing Society member.

This is the first anthology of Jefferies work that considers the full range of the author's work, from 1866-1887. The selections are chronological and show a shift in the emphasis of his early work, which focused largely on practical subjects such as farming and rural life, to his later work of increased sensitivity and perception of the natural world. The book seeks to reveal the organic continuity and calm objectivity of Jefferies' writing, which was present from his teens and addressed a diversity of subjects during an extraordinary era of change, illuminating both the man behind the words, and the times in which he lived.

In a recent review of the book in *Countryside Tales*, the Editor writes:

Books about Jefferies are not uncommon but this compilation of excerpts from his writing is one of the best I've seen, with plenty of vivid descriptions:

'When the sedge-reedling returns with the nightingale, he will find the willow stoles bare.'

'Imagine the child's delight – the fields to roam in – liberty – the great dog. No matter how fortunate their circumstances, children in cities never know the joyousness of the country.'

For any lover of the English countryside, Richard Jefferies is essential reading. This book is highly recommended. D.H.

There is a masterly review by Simon Coleman of the *Anthology* in the latest *RJS Journal* No 20, 2011.

***Wild Life in a Southern County* by Richard Jefferies.**

Little Toller Books, a small publishing company, has brought out a small number of quality paperbacks on the theme of nature. These include new editions of well-known books by Edward Thomas, Henry Williamson, Gavin Maxwell, Adrian Bell, Richard Mabey and W H Hudson.

It seems that, through Robert Macfarlane, the publishers have succeeded in getting some of their books on the curriculum of some colleges whilst Waterstones have been persuaded to stock them.

The publishers are bringing out a new edition of *Wild Life in a Southern County* in May with an introduction by Richard Mabey, cover illustration by David Inshaw (the painting of goldfinches inspired by Jefferies' essay) and Tunnick drawings. The book can be bought for £10 through Little Toller Books: Tel. 01258 840549, www.dovecotpress.com.

Books by Members

I, Susannah by Helen D Newman, (Faringdon: Reuben Books, November 2010). ISBN 978-0-9562828-3-5, soft-back, 243pp. UK Price £6 (plus pp £1.50).

Helen Newman's novel was inspired by Haden Hill Estate and the Haden family. Haden Hill Hall and Haden Hill House are little known jewels that have survived their very chequered history located in the heart of the Black Country. Ever since she was a child Helen enjoyed her visits to the surrounding park. For many years the buildings were sadly neglected and in need of extensive restoration, but due to generous funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other benefactors they now stand resplendent and proud once again.

All proceeds from the sale of the book will go to The Friends of Haden Hill.

Copies of the book can be purchased direct from Helen (contact details on page 4).



CITINGS OF RICHARD JEFFERIES

Jean Saunders found this article in *The Daily Gleaner*, published in Kingston, Jamaica on 8 September 1937. It is an unsigned article, essentially, arguing against sterilising 'unfit' people and included this alarming extract:

Very few people in Jamaica, for instance, have heard or read of Richard Jefferies, a nature lover and one of the really fine writers of the last century. But those who have read of him knew that Jefferies was regarded as 'loony,' lazy, incapable by all the people amongst whom he grew up and for many years lived. If there had been sterilization at that time and in that part of England, there would have been a universal vote for sterilising Richard Jefferies. It was not recognised that he was a genius of frail physical physique, so the word for him in his part of the world was 'unfit.'

Eric Jones came across a picture of Coate Farmhouse and Museum on Panoramia (an Internet site for photographs). A Russian subscriber, after reading a little more about Richard Jefferies, added a link to information about Mikhail Lermontov (1814–1841), a Russian romantic writer, poet and painter; sometimes called 'the poet of the Caucasus'. It states that he was regarded as the most important Russian poet after Alexander Pushkin's death. His influence on later Russian literature is still felt in modern times, not only through his poetry, but also by his prose.

John Kennet informed the Society about an exhibition at Greenwich University entitled '*After London* destruction of London across the Thames from the Old Naval College' that runs from 3 March to 2 April 2011 and organised by John Timberlake and Joy Sleeman. Evidently inspired by Jefferies' novel, this exhibition will visualise Greenwich in a variety of imagined fates. Just as the novel portrays London as a contaminated and forbidden zone, and reminiscent of Tarkovsky's film 'Stalker,' or the 1986 Chernobyl disaster, the exhibition plays with visions of alternative historical events shaping Greenwich. The exhibition will be held in The Stephen Lawrence Gallery, Queen Anne Court, University of Greenwich, Old Royal Naval College, London, SE10 9LS.

Brian Burrows discovered references to Jefferies and *The Story of my Heart* in R A Gilbert's *The Elements of Mysticism* (Shaftesbury: Element, 1991). Gilbert writes about the difficulties of describing the experience felt by a nature mystic in words that are not trite: 'Great poets such as Wordsworth can overcome this difficulty, as can lyrical prose writers of the calibre of Richard Jefferies: but for the average man or woman the sense of oneness with nature, if they experience it,

will render them inarticulate and it must inevitably remain incommunicable.’ (p.8) Gilbert quotes from passages of *The Story* on pages 49 and 50.

Sheila Povey found an extract about Jefferies in Rob Young’s *Electric Eden: Unearthing Britain’s Visionary Music* (London: Faber & Faber, 2010 – ISBN 9780571237524). In Chapter 2, there is mention of Utopian writers such as William Morris and Edward Bellamy also mentioned by Prof John Carey in his Birthday Lecture to us. Young discusses Jefferies on pages 52-53, citing *After London* where in ‘the opening chapters [he] unconsciously portrays Paradise restored.’ There is also mention of *The Life of the Fields* and *The Story of my Heart* that Young uses as an example of Jefferies’ observant chronicle of nature, wildlife and pre-mechanical agriculture.

Michael Parrott donated a copy of ‘Antibodies: Life, death and resistance in the psyche of the organism’; a 2010 booklet by Paul Cudenec that records a personal polemic backed up by some quotes and references to free-thinkers that include Richard Jefferies.

The *Guardian* ran a comment on 11 November 2010 in praise of Richard Mabey and his new book entitled *Weeds*. ‘Mabey stands with just a few other writers – Roger Deakin, Richard Jefferies and John Clare among them – as someone who not just sees beauty in nature but understands and enhances it.’ Mabey refers to Jefferies on several pages of the book and mainly in relation to *After London*.

Roger Ebbatson reported that *Mapping the Wessex Novel Landscape, History and the Parochial in British Literature, 1870-1940* by Andrew Radford published in 2010 has a section on Richard Jefferies. The Society has attempted to obtain a review copy but without success.

Andrew Rossabi has provided details of *Nature Tales* (Elliott and Thompson Ltd., 2010) compiled by Michael Allen and Sonya Patel Ellis, with a Foreword by Sir David Attenborough. It is an anthology of nature writing which includes two pieces by Richard Jefferies: excerpts from *The Gamekeeper at Home* and ‘The Pine Wood’ (collected in *The Open Air*). Other authors include past president Richard Mabey (‘On the Anger of Hornets’), John Aubrey, Gilbert White, Dorothy Wordsworth, William Cobbett, Darwin (‘The Formation of Vegetable Mould through the Action of Worms’), Gerard Manley Hopkins, W H Hudson, Edward Thomas (two extracts from *The South Country*), Henry Williamson, Geoffrey Grigson (on shells), Gavin Maxwell and Bill Oddie.

On the Oxford University Press news blog for January 2011 (<http://blog.oup.com/2011/01/lark-rise/>) there is information about their new edition of *Lark Rise to Candleford* with a review that includes the following:

Unlike many of her contemporaries, Thompson has little to say of Nature with a capital 'N'. It is the detail of the natural world, the more or less minute, which preoccupies her... Each hedgerow has its speciality: 'honeysuckle, crab apples, misty purple sloes, or long trails of white bryony berries through which the sun shone crimson as it did through the window at church'. But that resonant last phrase is not the prelude to a mystical communion with Nature on the grand scale, as in W. H. Hudson's *Hampshire Days* (1903), or Richard Jefferies' *The Story of My Heart* (1883): 'I hid my face in the grass . . . I felt down deep into the earth under, and high above into the sky, and farther still to the sun and stars. Still farther beyond the stars into the hollow of space, and losing thus my separateness of being came to seem like a part of the whole.'

Geoff Hirst reports that *The Guardian Book of the Countryside* published in 2008 consists of separate articles gleaned from the Guardian since 1840. In the introduction to Part 2 of the book 'Coming of Age 1920 – 1939' there is a brief article on C P Scott who was editor from 1872 to 1929. Apparently he pioneered the then Manchester Guardian's move into a more involved interest in the countryside. It reads: 'He [CPS] encouraged by W.T. Arnold, recruited the great Victorian writer on the countryside, Richard Jefferies, to write for the paper. He [RJ] brought to its columns a marvellous ability to transform the British rural doorstep into wonderland. As Walter Besant wrote on first reading Jefferies: "Why, we must have been blind all our lives; here were the most wonderful things possible going on under our very noses, but we saw them not"'. The editors of the book are Ruth Petrie and Martin Wainwright, and it is the latter who is likely to have written the introduction. At the time of publication he was (and still is) the northern editor of the newspaper and has edited four editions of 'Country Diaries.'

Roger Ebbatson came across an interesting book entitled *Post Modern Wetlands* by Rod Giblett, (Edinburgh Univ Press, 1996) which in one chapter compares *After London* with J G Ballard's *The Drowned World*.

John Webb is still providing the *Swindon Advertiser* with monthly extracts from Jefferies' writing along with appropriate photographs. The more recent articles have featured Purton, Liddington Hill, Burderop Park and Wroughton.

HOW DID YOU FIRST DISCOVER RICHARD JEFFERIES AND THE SOCIETY?

David Wadey of Cheddar writes:

I had first come across Richard Jefferies during my degree studies, but only as a footnote in literary history. I never read any of his work because there were too many other, 'greater', writers demanding time and attention.

I was in my early thirties when I came across him again in a way that, it is no exaggeration to say, would affect the rest of my life. It was through another writer, who also had a profound affect on my reading habits. His less well known works were recommended to me by a friend. I had read *Tarka the Otter* and *Salar the Salmon*, of course, but Henry Williamson's four Willie Maddison books *The Flax of Dream* were a revelation, and it was in *The Dream of Fair Women* that various books by Jefferies are given equal importance on Willie's book shelf in Rat's Castle, as those by Thomas Hardy, Conrad, Blake and Masfield. I determined there and then to find out why ... not so easy forty years ago, before Amazon and the Internet. There were none in the local library, or, surprisingly, on the list of books that they could obtain centrally. The only hope was a second hand book shop, and they were scarce in those days as well, even in Bristol where I then lived. I could find nothing by Jefferies anywhere. He was then, before he became something of a cult figure, a genuinely forgotten writer.

I used to fish the Bristol Avon at Avoncliffe near Bradford on Avon, and I was driving through the latter one day when I noticed, for the first time, over a small shop the words 'Antiquarian Books.' By then I was looking for second hand bookshops everywhere. I parked outside and entered with little hope of success. To my disbelief, the man sitting in an armchair behind the desk knew exactly who Richard Jefferies was and produced from a shelf an 1881 New Edition of *Wild Life in a Southern County*, published by Smith Elder. Also to my disbelief, he wanted ten pounds for it... for a book by a forgotten author, which was not even a first edition?? He met my stare of disbelief with a wall eyed 'take or leave it.' I think he must have seen the gleam in my eye. I had no choice but to hand him the money and take it. I still have the book, and am still reading it. I also gave him my name and telephone number, and about a month later he rang to say that he had just acquired a copy of *The Story of my Heart*, for which he only wanted five pounds. I still have that book as well, and over the

years I have acquired everything that Jefferies wrote, more than one copy in many instances.

I understand the criticism of 'limited', in the literary sense, that is levelled against him, but I regularly go to him. He is the one writer that I could not imagine being without. My own background? Because I can identify with his particular sensibility? I don't know why, and I don't particularly care. I just love reading him (although not some of his novels, I must admit).

I came across the Society when I moved to Swindon and visited his house at Coate. I also fished Coate Water regularly at that time (large bream and roach in those days; and no ice cream or pitch and putt). It had changed little, if at all, since the days of Bevis. I haven't been back for ten years, since moving to Cheddar, but I will do so now that I have joined the Society. Thank you for keeping him alive

NEWS FROM OTHER SOCIETIES

Alliance of Literary Societies



The ALS AGM weekend, which is being hosted by the Johnson Society in Lichfield, is scheduled for 21-22 May 2011. The AGM itself will take place in the beautiful Victorian Guildhall in the heart of Lichfield. There will be ample space for displays by societies, a bookstall, the raffle and a buffet lunch. Introductory talks about Samuel Johnson will be followed by a City walking tour, emphasising the rich literary and historical associations in and around the City, Cathedral and Close. It is hoped to end the afternoon with the production of a short play about Johnson, staged in the Birthplace Museum. The evening will be taken up with the usual festivities in a city centre restaurant.

On Sunday there will be a number of tours arranged, or people can simply enjoy Lichfield on their own: the Birthplace Museum, Erasmus Darwin House, the Cathedral, the Close and the Heritage Centre.

Contact Helen Newman should you require further information (see contact details on p.4).

Wiltshire Heritage Museum 41 Long Street, Devizes

Hardy Landscapes: 28 May-29 August, an art exhibition bringing together works by Robert Pountney, David Gunning and David Inshaw that reflect landscapes featured in Hardy's Wessex.

Mon-Sat 10am-5pm; Sundays 12noon-4pm (free entry on Sundays).

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2011

- Sat 5 March* Joint meeting with the Friends of Alfred Williams. This year it is the Society's turn to host the gathering. Select a short extract to read to others by or about Richard Jefferies or Alfred Williams (no longer than 5 minutes, please) or just come along to listen.
- Sat 2 April* In two parts: John Price will reveal the content of a letter from Longman to Richard Jefferies about an article Jefferies had written, followed by memories of Stan Hickerton – your opportunity to share reminiscences of this extraordinary follower of Richard Jefferies. Please bring along any photos of Stan (some of his posters and other art work will be on display). His books will be available at a discount on the day to members. We hope that his brothers and their wives will also be there to meet members of the Society who were unable to attend the funeral.
- Sat 7 May* 'Richard Jefferies' visit to Paris – 1883,' a talk by Phyllis Treitel.
- Sat 30 July A Study Day on the theme of 'Richard Jefferies and Sport.' The key speaker will be Rebecca Welshman who has studied this subject as part of her PhD thesis. See page 23 for more information. Venue: Jefferies' Museum; 10.30am - 4.30pm.
- Sat 5 Nov AGM and Birthday Lecture (more information in the Autumn Newsletter)

* Meetings begin at 2.00pm in the Jefferies Museum, Marlborough Road, Coate, Swindon. Doors open at 1.00pm. Park free at Coate Water, only 5 minutes walk away. Those with a disability can park at the Museum; space is limited but when the ground is firm there is plenty of room. Parking is also available in Day House Lane and at the Sun Inn. Meetings are open to the public and free to attend.

From Swindon town centre (Fleming Way), there are several bus services that stop next to Coate roundabout. These include: Monday to Saturday - daytime: Numbers 2, 13, 14 and 21. Monday to Saturday - evenings: Numbers 12, 13 and 14.

For more information contact:

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