

JOHN LUCKETT JEFFERIES' ARTWORK

John Lockett Jefferies, the artist, was Richard Jefferies' uncle and the last of nine children to be born to John Jefferies, miller, baker and grocer and his wife Fanny née Ridger. Only John Lockett and his sister Sarah were born in Swindon—the other siblings started life in the Somers Town area of London before John Jefferies was summoned by his father to Swindon, around 1817, to take over the running of the family business—he was working for Taylors, the printers, at the time.

Fanny Catherine Hall wrote that her uncle John Lockett was:

a youth of rare promise—developed into an artist of no mean powers; architecture, music, and singing held great charms for him, and he excelled in all. Many are the choice little pencil sketches, fine-line drawings, and water-colours treasured by the family, together with his guitar, and many volumes of music copied with a skilful pen.¹

On the 1841 census, John, Fanny and their children John Lockett, Mary and Martha (Fanny Catherine Hall's mother) are recorded living at [35?] Newport Street, Swindon along with John's older brother, James Lockett (b. 1775), known in old Swindon as the 'ghoul of the old mill' who took delight in frightening children. This description of the strange uncle was in 'Reminiscences, Notes, and Relics of ye Old Wiltshire Towne,' (1885) by William Morris, founder of the *Swindon Advertiser*:

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

¹ 'Forbears of Richard Jefferies,' *Country Life*, March 14, 1908 by Jefferies Lockett (a pseudonym for Fanny Catherine Hall—Richard Jefferies' cousin). Also published in the *Richard Jefferies Society Journal* No. 34, pp.99-100.

John Luckett was born on 1st September 1824 and baptised at Holy Rood church on 30th September 1824 in a private ceremony and then publicly on 6th July 1828. He remained single and lived with his parents in the High Street bakery and shop, until his death on 3rd August 1856. His death certificate cites 'phthisis (certified)' as the cause of death, aged 31 years, and in the presence of Mary Jefferies (his sister). He was buried on 7th August 1856 at Christ Church, old Swindon—built in 1851, just a few years earlier.



John Luckett's grave, August 2004.² The inscription reads:
JOHN LUCKETT JEFFERIES/ AGED XXXI/DEPARTED III AUG. MDCCCLVL
Photograph courtesy of D & M Ball.

The 1851 census gives John Luckett's occupation as a grocer. His sister Eliza and her husband George Sewell took over the running of the shop (1861 census) after his death. Before that George Sewell was a tailor employing three men in Newport Street, Swindon. Little is known about the Jefferies' family grocery but by all accounts the business was located in the same High Street shop as the bakery next to the market square in old Swindon. There are two sketches of the shop and house by John Luckett that follow. The dwelling-house was described

² By October 2020 the grave was found to be in a grossly degraded state with most features crumbled away and no longer in situ.

as 6-roomed when offered for rent in April 1872 when the Sewell's wished to retire from the grocery business and move to Lansdown Road, Swindon.

John was said to be the model for Amadis Iden³ in *Amaryllis at the Fair*, although the sickly character, suffering from tuberculosis, is mainly autobiographical for Richard Jefferies himself. Richard was only seven years and nine months when his uncle died and this was during the time that Richard was still living with Aunt Ellen and Uncle Thomas Harrild in Sydenham and only returning to Coate for holidays.

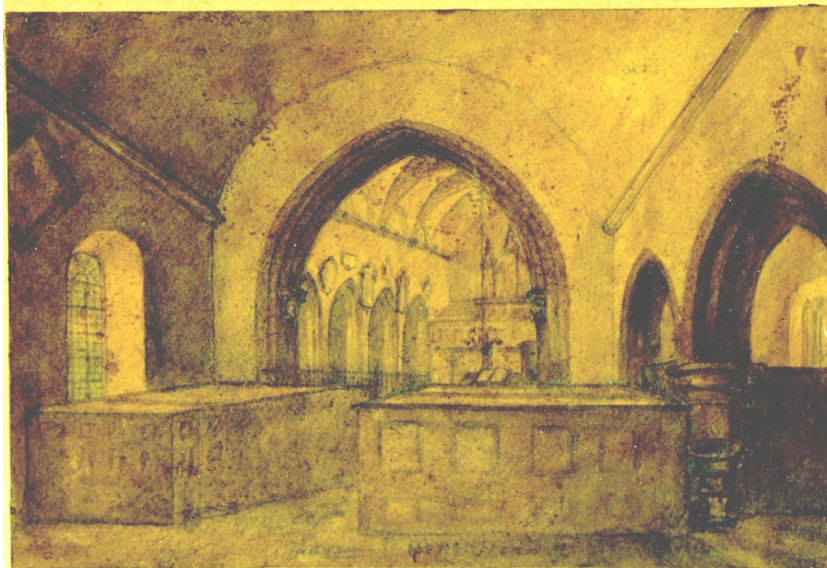
She [Amaryllis] had grown into a woman; Amadis Iden into a man.

Sadly, indeed, he had altered. Looking at him, she could scarce believe he was the same; so pale, so thin, so drooping, and fireless—the spark of life sunk into the very ashes. He sat at the dinner-table that morning like a ghost. He was convalescent from low fever: that dread disease which has taken the place of ague in the country. At one time it was ague; in these times it is low fever.

At Coombe Oaks they had heard of his illness in a far-off way, but had received no distinct particulars, for the news came in a roundabout way by word of mouth, country-folk never write. The distance between the two houses was less than ten miles, and might as well have been five hundred for all the communication. So that the ghastly paleness of his face came upon her as a spectre in daylight. You could see at a glance what was wrong—the vital energy had been sapped; as a tree fades without a branch broken, or bark scored, fades and withers from the lack of the mysterious force which brings forth fresh leaves, so he drooped in his chair. The body—the tree—was there, but the life was not in it. (Ch. XXVI)

John Lockett's watercolours belong in family collections along with his sketch book of pencil drawings that are all on display at the Richard Jefferies Museum. Unfortunately the watercolours are all faded and the richness of the colours is now lost.

³ *Richard Jefferies: His Life and Work* by Edward Thomas (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1909) p. 264.



Watercolour of the inside of Holy Rood Church. In the right hand margin, 'Jefferies pew' is indicated in pencil.



Watercolour of Jefferies' mill with Holy Rood church in the background. This photograph of the painting was taken by John Povey before the colours faded.



Watercolour of Jefferies' mill.



Watercolour of an island on Coate Water.



Watercolour by John Lockett Jefferies.



Watercolour of Holy Cross church, Chiseldon.



Watercolours of Holy Rood Church. The man peering over the mill-pond wall is reputed to be John's uncle, James Luckett Jefferies—'the ghoul'. This painting was used as the basis of a lithograph that Edward Thomas describes in his biography of Richard Jefferies.



The following pencil drawings and one watercolour are from John Luckett Jefferies' sketch-book. The date inscription reads 1840 but some were drawn after this time. The identity of some of the places is not obvious.





Place des Arms Gheretio

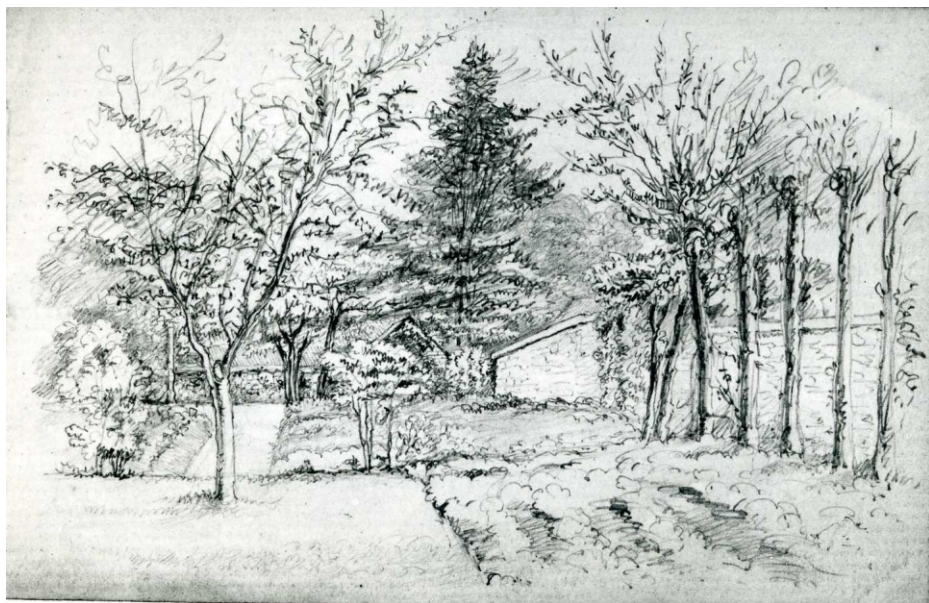




John Brown's cottage, Beasant's Hill, Coate Road.



The shepherd is walking along Coate Lane by the gothic-gate doorway to Jefferies' farm house. The sign of the Sun Inn and part of the inn building is at the end of the Jefferies' wall. The spire of Christ Church built in 1851 is visible in the distance. The undulation in the landscape is clear and the valley chosen to create Coate Reservoir is obvious.



The orchard and lime trees inside the garden wall of Jefferies' Coate farm.



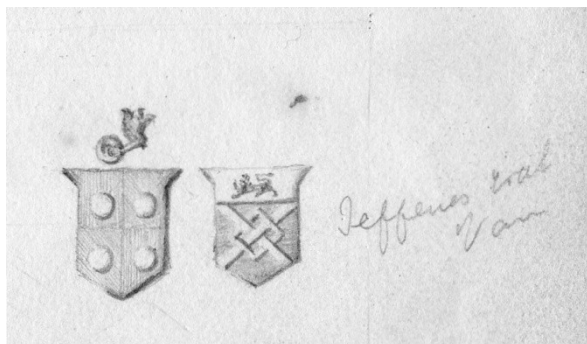
'Back of the old Sun Inn. House at Coate near Swindon'. This view would have been drawn from the orchard of Jefferies' farm.



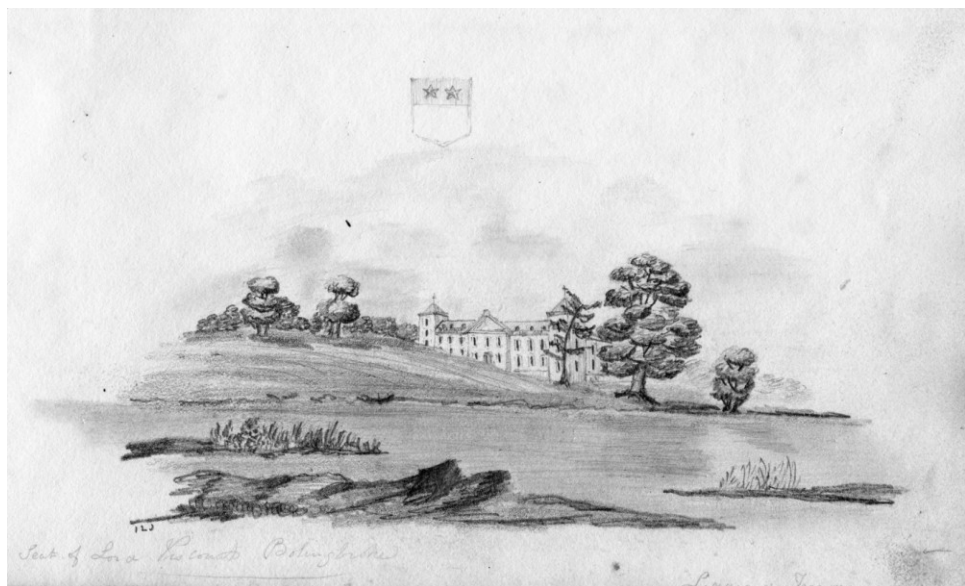
'Corner of old Jefferies house, Swindon.'



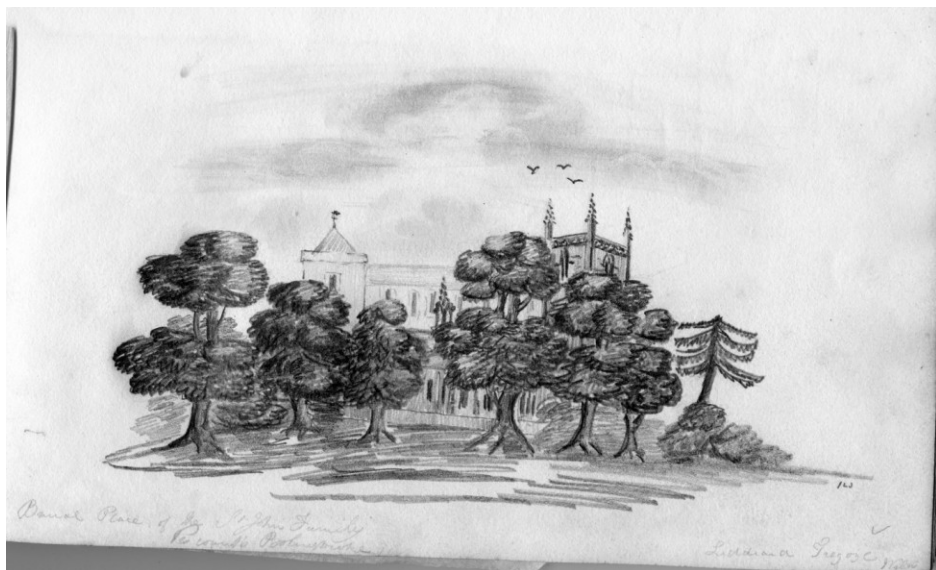
The Jefferies' bakery and grocer's shop, High Street, old Swindon.



'Jefferies Coat of Arms'



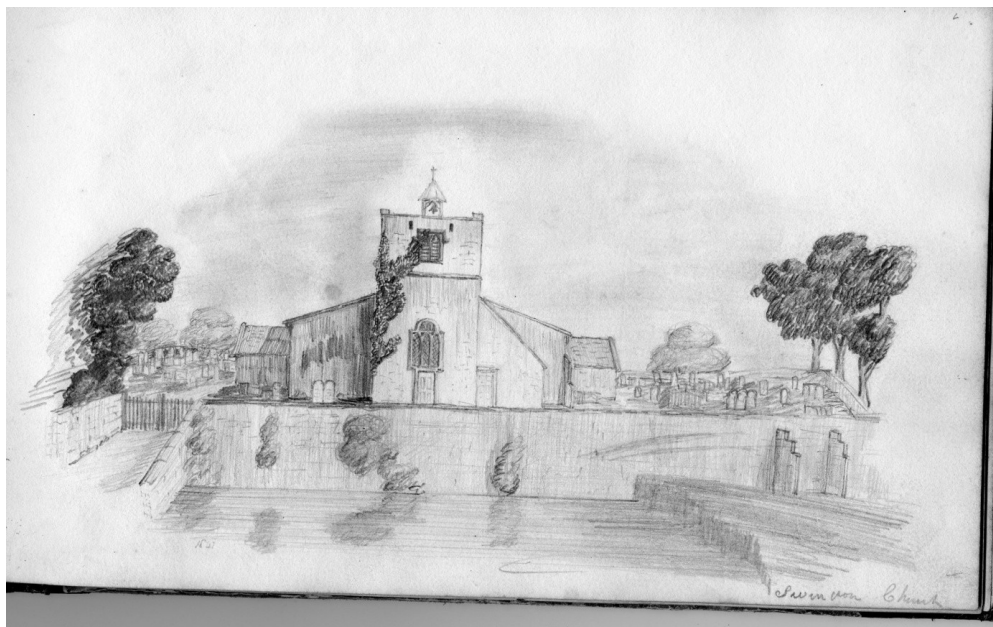
'Seat of Lord Viscounts Bolingbroke. Lydiard Tregoze.'



St Mary's Church, Lydiard Tregoze. 'Burial Place of the St John Family, Viscounts Bolingbroke'.



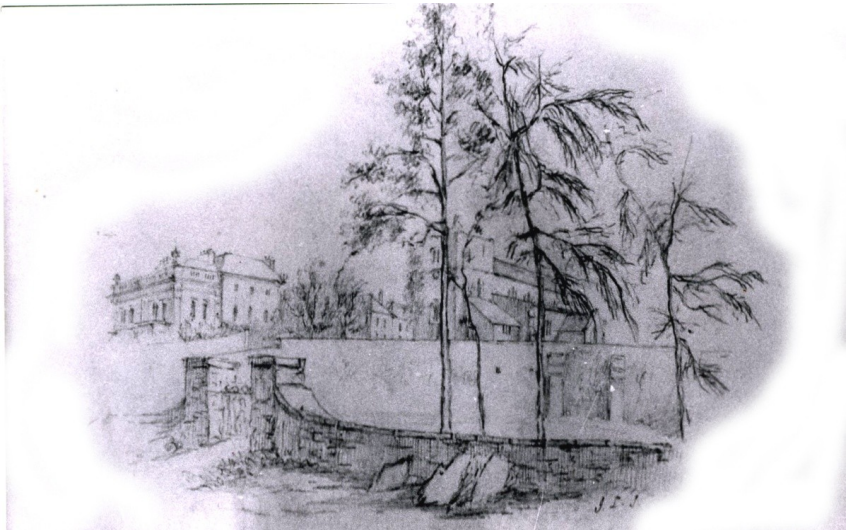
Jefferies' farmhouse at Draycot Folliat, inscribed 'House of Mr and Mrs Hedges'. Farmer William and Jemima Hedges were John Lockett's aunt and uncle. On the 1841 census John's sister Eliza Jefferies is recorded at the farm.



Holy Rood church, Swindon



Watercolour sketch of Holy Rood



The Lawn, home of the Goddard family, and Holy Rood church



Swindon junction station



The sketch of Liddington Manor is dated 15 September 1846.