

# THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY

**SPRING NEWSLETTER 2010**



*Tom Saunders, 2009*

Devil's Den



## **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](http://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 the first, third and fourth Sundays of May to September from 2-5pm, plus 12<sup>th</sup> September 2010 (Heritage Day). 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 2010 Newsletter is **1st September 2010**. Please send your contributions to the Hon. Secretary preferably by e-mail ([info@richardjefferiessociety.co.uk](mailto: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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Illustration by Gwendolyn Raverat

## EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS 2009-2010

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Mr Hugoe Matthews 01398 331573	President Re-elected 2009-10	Lower Bowdens Farm, Bowdens Lane, Shillingford, Tiverton, Devon EX16 9BU
Miss Helen Newman 01214 232100	ALS rep Re-elected 2007-10	67 Higgins Lane, Quinton, Birmingham B32 1LJ
Dr Duncan Pepper 0117 9249088 dr.d.pepper@btinternet.com	Member Elected 2008-11	1 Nugent Hill, Bristol, BS6 5TD
Mr John Price 01672 515150 jtprice@waitrose.com	Chairman Re-elected 2007-10	Granham West, Granham Hill, Marlborough, Wilts SN8 4DN
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Mr Richard Stewart 01473 216518	Member Re-elected 2007-10	Valezina, 112 Westerfield Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 2XW
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Mr John Webb 01793 853171 WWWebbrass@aol.com	Librarian Re-elected 2008-11	Padbrook, Bincknoll Lane, Wootton Bassett, Wilts SN4 8QR
Stan Hickerton, Ray Morse & Rebecca Welshman (Student rep.) are co-opted Council Members.		



## FROM THE UP-SIDE DOWN CHAIR

I am writing these observations in the middle of a two-month tour of New Zealand, and today, January 3<sup>rd</sup>, I am at the Fox Glacier in South Island, experiencing a significant part of this area's annual 5 metres of precipitation. Although away from the day-to-day matters affecting the Society, I have had the opportunity of visiting some of the parts of North Island associated with James Cox, Richard Jefferies' cousin, who is now generally acknowledged to be Mark in *Bevis*, and Orion in *The Amateur Poacher*. He was, of course, also Richard Jefferies' companion in his unsuccessful attempts to walk to Moscow and sail to America.

Cox was born at Snodshill in October 1846, his mother being James Luckett Jefferies' sister. He remained at home and unmarried until his mother moved to London in 1880. Then, at the age of 34, he decided to emigrate to New Zealand. His career in the antipodes was remarkably unsuccessful, and he remained a jobbing agricultural labourer all his life until well into his seventies. He is, however, notable for one remarkable achievement: he kept a daily diary from 1888 until 1923, even under the most difficult and unlikely circumstances. His working life was spent mainly in the south-eastern corner of North Island, some in Foxton and Palmerston North, and later in the Wairarapa, an area to the east, separated from the Palmerston area by the Tararua Range, and from Wellington by the Rimutaka Range. I did not get to the Palmerston North area, but this is a thriving city of 75,000 inhabitants, and would be unrecognisable to Cox today. In recent years it has been made infamous by John Cleese being very rude about it; to which the civic response was to name the municipal rubbish tip after him!

I did drive down through the Wairarapa, however, and its principal towns of Masterton, Carterton, and Greytown; and these would certainly still be recognisable to Cox. Masterton is the largest town, and the de-facto capital of this archetypal sheep country; now best known for its annual 'Golden Shears' competition, effectively the Olympiad for all things woolly, held on four days in March.

Carterton is the town where Cox spent most of his final years, including probably his happiest New Zealand years during the period from 1918 to 1923 when he lived in the Carter Home, a charitable home established in 1900 for up to 13 elderly men. Amazingly, I found that the Carter Home still exists, rebuilt on its original site to house the elderly of both sexes, on a quiet side street in the town, and still funded by the Carter Charity. Many of the original Victorian buildings that would have been known to Cox still stand in the main street, and a majestic elm tree, still very healthy, stands at the town cross roads. This certainly would have been a prominent landmark in the early 1900s. Much more bizarrely (in a Wiltshire context), a full-scale replica of Stonehenge has been built outside the town, constructed of concrete and wood. For planning purposes it was designated as a garden ornament!

I finally visited Greytown, where Cox worked sometimes, died, and was buried. Despite its name (from liberal Governor George Grey, who allowed it to become the first inland settlement in New Zealand in 1854) Greytown is a

charming little town, and the main street has most of the buildings extant in Cox's time. A grove of English oaks planted in 1854 from English acorns, must have reminded Cox of home. The Cobblestones Early Settlers' Museum includes the re-sited first public hospital in the Wairarapa, in which Cox died, and many historic items of vintage farm machinery, some of which Cox could conceivably have worked with. Finally I visited the Cemetery in which he is buried. It lies one kilometre south of Greytown in a delightful setting. A shelter, built to celebrate the millennium, contains a plan of the layout, and an alphabetical list of all those buried there, and their plot number. Cox's name is duly recorded. The term 'pauper's grave' has many negative connotations, but although unmarked (and there may have been confusion over plot numbers), the well-maintained site and the magnificent setting is a worthy tribute to a man who was important in Richard Jefferies' life, and whose extra-ordinary diary-writing accomplishments mean that he did not vanish into obscurity. *Nearly out of Heart and Hope* by Miles Fairburn, is the book I used for planning these visits. It was reviewed by Mark Daniel in the *Society Journal* Number 5 in 1996.

Meanwhile, we note that 2010 marks the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the Richard Jefferies Society. An article has been included in this year's *Journal* to celebrate the occasion. Rebecca Welshman, as part of her PhD research, has discovered a number of signed and unsigned articles in several publications, including some not previously known for publishing Jefferies' work. These are important and exciting finds, and we are greatly indebted to Ms Welshman for her discoveries, and for sharing them with us at this stage.

There are also two special events this year. The first is being held in association with the Edward Thomas Fellowship. A weekend of activities will take place in Swindon on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> May. (see pages 11-12). It is essential that booking forms are returned for the Saturday Study Day, but there is no need to book for the guided walk on Sunday. We are most grateful to Martin Haggerty, who is a member of both literary societies, for organising the event.

The second event, based around Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> July, involves a visit to Richard Jefferies' Sussex (see pages 18-20). The main focus of the visit is to see the work that has been done in restoring Jefferies' grave, but Mrs. Paula Griffiths has also kindly invited us to view the outside of the Jefferies' house in Goring. I am organising the event on my return from down under, and am looking at the possibility of co-ordinating other visits to places with Jefferies associations on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> July for those willing to stay overnight. Please contact me if you are interested in this event, and also let me know if you would be willing to offer to share transport. I will circulate final details to those wishing to take part.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John T. Price', written in a cursive style.

John Price, January 2010

**Birthday Lecture 2009: 'Richard Jefferies' Hastings Adventure'**

The RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY  
ANNUAL BIRTHDAY LECTURE

**“RICHARD  
JEFFERIES'  
HASTINGS  
ADVENTURE”**

YACHT GAZELLE [OWNER SIR  
JOHN BURGOYNE] WITH THE  
EMPRESS EUGENIE ON BOARD  
APPROACHES THE ISLE OF  
WIGHT ON 8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 1870  
UNDER REDUCED CANVAS  
IN A THUNDERSTORM

**BY ANDREW ROSSABI**

2.30 pm Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2009  
THE VILLAGE HALL LIDDINGTON WILTS  
**VISITORS WELCOME ADMISSION FREE**

Poster by A S Hickerton

A sunny autumn day greeted the 34 members who attended the Birthday Lecture by Andrew Rossabi at Liddington Village Hall on 7 November, the closest to Jefferies' birthday for some years. During the lunch-hour several members visited All Saints church where Andrew pointed out a pair of recessed tombs in the north aisle, traditionally supposed to contain the remains of two Abbesses of Shaftesbury, whose Abbey once owned the manor.

The tombs with their Early English arches feature in *The Abbess of Shaftesbury*, a historical romance by Mrs May, wife of a former rector. The novel, subtitled 'Or, the Days of John of Gaunt', is set in and around the village. It was published anonymously in 1846 in London by Rivingtons and contains vignettes engraved by Baxter. Jefferies refers to the novel (and the tombs) in Chapter V ('The Faringdon Road') of his 'History of Swindon and

Antiquities of Its Environs.’ He may have taken the name of Andrew Fisher, the miserly nonagenarian miller of *Greene Ferne Farm*, whose heart is ‘harder than his nether millstone’, from that of a leading character in Mrs May’s novel, Sir Raymond de Fyscher. Warren House, where the miller lives, is thought to be based on Liddington Manor. The Society is grateful to Mrs Archer who opened the church for us and to Mark Gillingham who answered questions.

Andrew’s lecture fell into two halves. In the first he reported on the progress of his biography. The need for a new life had long been felt. A century had elapsed since the publication of Edward Thomas’s biography, during which a mass of new material had come to light. Thomas’s *Richard Jefferies: His Life and Work* was rightly hailed as ‘a classic in critical biography’ by Q.D. Leavis; contained much excellent criticism; but was weighted in favour of the work over the life, particularly in the second half, where Thomas quoted copiously to justify the high claims he was making for his author. The paucity of biographical information became increasingly apparent and though the book told us all we probably needed to know about Jefferies the man modern literary biography demanded more detail than Thomas provided. Andrew hoped to present a fuller account of the external events of Jefferies’ life than any before while concentrating on what was essential, the inner life, which found such wonderful expression in the work of this most autobiographical of writers.

Unfortunately the money generously put up by the Society was insufficient for Andrew to down tools from his trade as a publisher’s reader and devote himself full-time to the writing of the biography; and therefore progress, while steady, had been slower than he, and doubtless members, would have liked. He had reached 1871, and Jefferies fist-fight in Badbury Wick Lane with Jessie’s half-brother Thomas Jenner Baden.

Andrew paid tribute to *The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies* by Hugoe Matthews and Phyllis Treitel. The Chronology contained all the known facts about Jefferies’ life conveniently arranged by year, month, and (where possible) day. Andrew found it indispensable: the research had already been done; all he had to do was put some flesh on the bones. He paid tribute also to the Bibliography by George Miller and Hugoe, which W.J. Keith had truly called ‘the most detailed biography of Jefferies as *writer*’ he knew. Hugoe had generously loaned Andrew the contents of his archive and also provided invaluable data on Jefferies’ illness. Andrew concluded the first half of his talk with a consideration of the vexed question of the possible link between TB and artistic genius. Did consumptive writers and poets have anything in common? Did they all burn with a hard gem-like flame? Or was their often fervid response to the beauty of the natural world simply a function of imminent death (said to concentrate the mind wonderfully)?

Andrew aimed to be eclectic rather than original, to present a readable but scholarly narrative that ordered the mass of material unearthed since Thomas’s day. He had been reading (or rereading) the early writings: ‘Chapters on Churches’; the histories of Malmesbury, Swindon and Environs, and Cirencester; the *North Wilts Herald* tales and satirical poems; various articles in the *Swindon Advertiser*; the juvenile fiction ‘Ben Tubbs Adventures’; and ‘A



True Tale of the Wiltshire Labourer', Jefferies' first venture into the quasi-fictional form of reportage he made peculiarly his own.

In the second half of his lecture Andrew read an extract from the work in progress, recounting the ten days Jefferies spent in Hastings in September 1870. He was employed at the time as chief reporter and Swindon correspondent of the *Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard*, in whose pages had appeared the first ten chapters of his 'History of Cirencester'. Illness may have been a factor in his decision to take a holiday in Brussels. The choice of that city was probably dictated by the Franco-Prussian War and the dangerous state of northern France. *En route* from Brighton to Dover, where he planned to cross by steamer to Ostend, Jefferies broke his journey at Hastings, because the Prince Imperial, 14-year-old son of the Emperor Napoleon III and his wife Eugénie, was staying at the Marine Hotel there.

The French army had been routed at Sedan, and the Emperor taken prisoner. The defeat was followed by the Fall of the Second Empire and declaration of the Third Republic. Fearful of suffering the fate of Marie Antoinette the Spanish-born Eugénie—nicknamed the Crinoline Empress because of the fashion she set—fled the hostile mob gathered outside the Tuileries Palace and in the company of the American court dentist Dr Evans reached Deauville, where they were taken across the Channel by Sir John Burgoyne in his cutter *La Gazelle*. During the crossing a fierce storm blew up, a scene vividly rendered in Stan Hickerton's poster. From Ryde Eugénie made her way to Hastings where she was reunited with her son. Crowds of curious royal watchers gathered outside the Marine Hotel, among them our reporter, perhaps scenting a story. Jefferies was staying at Green's Hotel in Havelock Road near the station. The hotel was demolished in 1965 to make way for a multi-storey office block. Jefferies described his adventures in a series of long, lively letters to his aunt Ellen. (The letters, which are the primary source for knowledge of Jefferies' life up to 1873, have been recently issued by the Society in paperback – see p.24 – thanks to the good offices of the Secretary, Jean Saunders.)

The letter dated 16 September reported 'adventures almost beyond credulity'. On the night of his arrival Jefferies had composed some verses on the Prince's exile which he posted to him. He received a note from an aide-de-camp thanking him for the verses, with which the prince had been much pleased. In fact, Jefferies was not the only *littérateur* who felt the call of the Muse over the Prince's plight. The local paper published 'Lines to the Prince Imperial,' a poem of eight stanzas by M.J. McLaughlin, who too had received a letter of thanks from the aide-de-camp, M. Lanné.

Jefferies was encouraged to write again to the Prince, 'communicating some rather important information which I had learnt whilst connected with the press'. The letter elicited a cordial reply from the Empress herself. Matters now took a further turn. 16 of Eugénie's equerries were abusing her behind her back and acting like Prussian spies according to Mme Arnould, the Frenchwoman whom they (and Jefferies) hired as interpreter. Jefferies advised Mme Arnould to inform the Empress and several of the equerries were dismissed as a result.

Other adventures included a 12-mile row with an ex-sailor along the coast to Fairlight Glen and back; an amusing encounter with Mr Chillingnett, a wine merchant who had mistakenly assumed Jefferies was the Empress's agent; and the annual Hastings regatta, some of which went into *The Scarlet Shawl*. Overexcitement seems to have brought on a recurrence of Jefferies' illness. Andrew concluded his lecture by citing Byron and Alexandra Dumas to show how consumption had become the romantic disease par excellence in bohemian circles and contrasted the fashionable image with the ugly, distinctly unglamorous, reality.

Having had a taste of what is in store for the new Jefferies' biography, we are all looking forward to reading it in a few years time. Andrew was congratulated and thanked for his in-depth knowledge on all matters related to our author.

## **Memorial for Richard Oliver Launcelot Jefferies**

The Eltham Society is proposing to erect a small memorial for baby Oliver who died aged only twenty months old whilst the Jefferies' family were living in Eltham. He is buried in St John's Churchyard in a grave once marked by a wooden cross. Harold Jefferies (Richard & Jessie's first born son) recounted the death as 'a terrible blow to father. His suffering, which was far greater than that of the child, prevented him from attending the funeral, and mother and I were, I believe, alone in the coach to Eltham church. The agonised expression on father's face, as he stood at the open door watching the little cortège slowly move away, haunted my mind for many years,' (Worthing Calvacade, *Richard Jefferies: My Father* by his son, 1944, p.19-20). The Eltham Society has consulted us about possible wording. The matter was discussed by Members at the last AGM. It was proposed that the Society should donate £100 towards the memorial and we suggested the following possible wording:

Richard Oliver Launcelot Jefferies  
18<sup>th</sup> July 1883 – 16<sup>th</sup> March 1885  
Beloved son of the author Richard Jefferies  
& his wife Jessie

We will keep you informed should the project go ahead.

## **Farewell to our longest member?**

Margaret Evans, our Membership Secretary, recently received a letter from Norman Lawton's daughter to say that her father died in November 2009. Mr Lawton lived in Lancashire and he was in his 94<sup>th</sup> year. The daughter said that her father had admired Richard Jefferies since he was 13 years old and, as far as she was aware, he was a Society Member from the year dot.

## **FIELDS OF VISION: AN INFORMAL STUDY-DAY DEVOTED TO RICHARD JEFFERIES AND EDWARD THOMAS**

An event jointly hosted by the Edward Thomas Fellowship and the Richard  
Jefferies Society

**SATURDAY 8 May 2010, LIDDINGTON VILLAGE HALL**

### **PROGRAMME**

- 10.30 Doors open and refreshments.
- 11.00 Welcome and introductions by Martin Haggerty, organiser of the event.
- 11.15 Keynote Lecture by Professor Jem Poster: 'First Known When Lost: Edward Thomas, Richard Jefferies and the Rural World.'
- 12.30-2.00 Lunch break. Bring packed lunch or eat at the Village Inn pub (01793 790314). ETF and RJS publications will be on sale as well as second-hand books. Liddington Church will be open for visitors.
- 2.00 A talk by Terry Lloyd: 'The Influence of "Jefferies Land" on the Writings of Richard Jefferies and Edward Thomas.'
- 2.45 A talk by Richard Emeny: 'Edward Thomas and Richard Jefferies: Brothers or Neighbours?'
- 3.30 Refreshments.
- 3.45 Open discussion facilitated by Jem Poster.
- 4.30 Depart .

Car-share visit to the Thomas window at Eastbury Church planned. See p.14.

We are privileged to have as keynote speaker the distinguished poet, novelist and literary scholar Jem Poster, who is currently preparing a new edition of *Richard Jefferies: His Life and Work* by Edward Thomas for Oxford University Press. Richard Emeny is a former Honorary Secretary of the Edward Thomas Fellowship. Terry Lloyd is a Swindonian and most of his family worked for the GWR during the first half of the twentieth century. As a boy he was a keen scout and roamed over the same downlands as Richard Jefferies. He has been a member of the ETF for over twenty years.

See next page for directions to Liddington Village Hall.

Places at the study-day, costing £15 (including refreshments but not lunch), must be booked before 1st May. Please use the booking form. There are some concessions available at £5 for students and unemployed people.

Go to [www.edward-thomas-fellowship.org.uk](http://www.edward-thomas-fellowship.org.uk) for more information nearer the time.

## IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF RICHARD JEFFERIES

SUNDAY 9 May 2010

Assemble at the Richard Jefferies Museum 10.00-10.30am

A guided walk (with readings, led by Andrew Rossabi) is being organised from the Richard Jefferies Museum along the east side of Coate Water, over Cicely's Bridge, to the Gamekeeper's Cottage at Hodson where participants will have an opportunity to walk around the garden and view the old thatched cottage and the blue-bells in Hodson Woods. We shall return by the west side of Coate Water for lunch (bring a picnic or lunch at the Sun Inn). The Museum will be open until 4.30pm to explore the Old House at Coate, watch the Society's film *Jefferies Land* and share readings from Edward Thomas's biography of Richard Jefferies.

Assemble at the Richard Jefferies Museum (see directions on the back page and see map overleaf) at 10am to depart by 10.30am (luggage can be left at the Museum).

### Directions to Liddington Village Hall (see map overleaf)

Liddington Village Hall is next to Liddington Church, Church Road, just off the main B4192 road from Commonhead Roundabout, at Swindon (the Aldbourne road). There is ample parking space at the hall.

Liddington can be approached by road from the A419 trunk and M4 motorway Junction 15. Follow the signs to the Great Western Hospital that is next to Commonhead Roundabout. From the roundabout, take the B4192 to Liddington. Progress up the hill passing a staggered cross-roads. Church Road is a few yards further up the hill on the right hand side.

**Buses** (Routes 46 to Hungerford & 48 to Marlborough) run between Swindon Bus station (Bay 9? but watch out for changes) and through Liddington village. There is only one bus available that is of use to members on Saturday morning: **the 48 service to Marlborough leaves Swindon Bus Station at 10.35am and arrives at Liddington at 10.52am. If possible, ask to get off at the Liddington Turn before the bus goes through the village past the Village Inn pub.**

Regular and frequent buses run from Fleming Way in Swindon town centre to the Great Western Hospital (including numbers 11 and 16). For the brave and fit, there is a stiff 2km walk from the hospital up the hill to Liddington. We could arrange to collect people from the hospital bus stop by prior arrangement: contact the Hon. Sec if you think that you might need help.

Return buses from Liddington (near the Village Inn) to Swindon Bus Station:

Bus Service	<b>48</b>	<b>46</b>
Departs Liddington (Spinney Close)	16.12	17.17
Arrives Swindon Bus Station	16.30	17.35

**In an emergency, on the day, contact Jean Saunders on mobile phone number 07709 524787.**



## LAURENCE WHISTLER WINDOW, Eastbury, Berkshire



Tom Saunders, 2009

For those of you able to attend the joint Study Day with the Edward Thomas Fellowship in May, there should be another opportunity to visit the above pictured window in the Church of St. James the Greater, Eastbury. The church is of a simple design and was built in 1853 of flint and Bath-stone. The window, installed in 1971, celebrates the lives of Edward Thomas and his wife Helen (who lived in Eastbury for the last twelve years of her life and is buried in the grave-yard). It was engraved by Sir Laurence Whistler. Through it, trees and the lines of the Berkshire Downs may be seen: chalk country beloved by them both and walked over while Edward was writing *Richard Jefferies: His Life and Work* (published 1909). The window shows a symbolic landscape framed by two trees, and includes the Gamekeeper's cottage at Hodson Bottom with the 'thrice-scalloped thatch,' and beyond, the mountains of the poet's Welsh inheritance. Across the landscape, seemingly at random, are lines from his poems written as if they were his thoughts or as if jotted down in a notebook. For example:

*There I find my rest, and through the dusk air  
Flies what yet lives in me. Beauty is there.*

*Perhaps I may love other hills yet more than this:  
But the moment unveiled something unwilling to die  
And I had what I most desired.*

## **DEVIL'S Den – the dolmen that inspired *Greene Ferne Farm*?**

The Devil's Den on Fyfield Down, near Marlborough, is pictured on the front cover of this newsletter. The dolmen was first brought to my attention by Roger Vlitos in his 'Richard Jefferies: Spirit Country' Birthday Lecture given to the Society in October 2008, albeit that the reference related to Thomas Hardy. Mr Vlitos told us that Hardy featured the dolmen in one of his stories: 'A Tale of Four Moonlit Nights.' Hardy described it as 'a Druidical trilithon, consisting of three oblong stones in the form of a doorway, two on end, and one across as a lintel ... the blocks looked shapely and little the worse for wear, so beautifully were they silvered over by the light of the moon.'

I was inspired to visit the place with my husband and, after taking several wrong turns, we found the large sarsens in a field covered in red poppies – a magical place, in a beautiful setting. At the time, I had just finished working on the new imprint of *Greene Ferne Farm*. Jefferies had written to George Bentley on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1878 to reassure the publisher that much of the content of the manuscript for an earlier version of the novel was based on experience. He said that 'the ancient dolmen which plays a part in the story actually exists'; it provided a cave where Margaret Estcourt took refuge overnight whilst lost on the Downs. Her suitor Geoffrey Newton, who was lost with her, spent the night outside in the cold!

Edward Thomas wrote in his Jefferies' biography:

it was over these hills that Margaret, in *Greene Ferne Farm*, wandered with Geoffrey, and at night found rest only in the Devil's Den, near Fyfield, or the kistvaen, on Manton Down, near Rockley.<sup>1</sup>

However, L V Grinsell wrote<sup>2</sup> that Thomas,

is in error in identifying it with the Devil's Den or the chambered long barrow on Manton Down... The monument in question is almost certainly Wayland's Smithy, which is in a beech copse among which were formerly a few firs. The bramble was cleared away some twenty or thirty years ago.

Grinsell based his evidence on Jefferies' description from the following lines in *Greene Ferne Farm* (Ch. VI):

They reached some low underwood—nut-tree and hawthorn and thick bramble, overtopped by some stunted beeches, with but two or three firs among them. Passing round the small copse they came to an opening, and in the dimness saw some large grey stones inside...

"There is a dolmen under the trees," he said.

"These are Grey Wethers," she said in a low tone. "And no doubt what you call the dolmen is the Cave."

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<sup>1</sup> *Richard Jefferies: His Life and Work* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1909), pp.7-8.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Archaeological Contribution of Richard Jefferies', Mr L V Grinsell ('The Transactions of the Newbury and District Field Club', Vol VIII, 1940), p.221.

Grinsell assumed that the 'castle' and 'Moonlight Firs' referred to in *GFF*, that Margaret knew well as land-marks, were located at Liddington Hill. He guessed that the couple were lost in this area which might have taken them to Wayland's Smithy, albeit that the Ridgeway Path runs from Liddington Hill and along-side Wayland's Smithy – the fictitious pair could not have failed to stumble across the Ridgeway! Not only that, in the novel, after the couple awake the following morning and start off on their search for home, 'Margaret could not recognise any of the hills. Geoffrey decided to ride direct east, towards the sun, thinking that if they kept in one direction they must cross a road presently' (Ch VII). If Wayland's Smithy was the 'dolmen' in *GFF*, Margaret would have known that if they travelled further east they would be travelling even further away from their destination.

What if we now picture the 'castle' mentioned in *Greene Ferne Farm* as Barbury Castle, not Liddington, the topography described in the novel starts to make sense. There are still plenty of fir trees to be found on these downs, along with an abundance of 'Grey-Wethers'. If the couple spent the night at the 'Devils Den', travelling east would have taken them to a road that would have led them to an easy route home.

I have also discussed the two ancient monuments with local archaeologists who assure me that Wayland's Smithy was in ruin in Jefferies' time albeit that it was known as the Cave, not a 'dolmen'. Devil's Den could have provided shelter and it is a dolmen. I was sent the earliest known photograph of Wayland Smith's Cave (see below); many of the support stones had been felled.

It is easy to get carried away and to interpret fact for fiction, but who can be sure which 'dolmen' Jefferies had in mind? Perhaps it was a combination of the two. However, if you get an opportunity to visit the Marlborough area, the Devil's Den is well-worth a visit. It is close to historic Avebury, but tucked away in a remote field, rarely visited by people.



*Jean Saunders*



# THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY

## Publications Order Form

April 2010



The Richard Jefferies Society publishes books, pamphlets, leaflets, a *Journal*, postcards, an autumn and spring newsletter and an annual report. There is also a DVD and video film available of 'Jefferies Land' centred around Coate.

If you would like any of the following, please indicate your order in the boxes below. Some of the publications can be bought on the Internet at [richardjefferiessociety.co.uk](http://richardjefferiessociety.co.uk).

All sales help support the charity and its objectives.

**Postcards** 25p each or any 3 for 65p

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Watercolour of Liddington Hill & quotation		£
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Set of 5 cards Jefferies' birthplace at Coate circa 1910 @ £1    £ **Leaflets**

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Richard Jefferies Farmhouse and Museum	free		
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**Booklets**

No.

Tour of Jefferies Land (North Wilts & Oxon)	50p		£
Richard Jefferies in Eltham (published by The Eltham Society)	£1.00		£
Richard Jefferies House & Museum Guide at Coate	£1.00		£
<i>Richard Jefferies: A Spirit Illumined</i>	£1.00		£
<i>The Jefferies Canon</i> by W J Keith	£1.00		£
Back numbers of the <i>Journal</i>	£1.00		£
<i>Coate and Richard Jefferies</i> by John Chandler	£1.00		£
<i>The Cunning Spider</i> by Hilda Sheehan (an extract from <i>Wood Magic</i> ) – cartoon format for children.	£1.00		£

**UK Postage rates for postcards, leaflets & booklets**

Second class: add 32p for orders up to £1; add 81p for orders up to £2; add £1.11 for orders £2 and over (not including book orders).

## Books

<i>Richard Jefferies' letters to Aunt Ellen</i> (softback - 155g)	£ 4.50	
<i>Amaryllis at the Fair</i> – Richard Jefferies (softback – 295g.) Introduction by Carolyn Clarke	£ 6.00	
<i>Greene Ferne Farm</i> – Richard Jefferies (softback – 207g.) Introduction by George Miller	£ 5.00	
<i>The Interpreter: a biography of Richard Jefferies</i> – Audrey Smith, 2008 (softback – 279g.)	£ 5.00	
<i>The Scarlet Shawl</i> – Richard Jefferies, Introduction by Andrew Rossabi, 2009. (softback – 294g.)	£ 5.99	
<i>The Dewy Morn</i> – Richard Jefferies. Introduction by Rebecca Welshman (softback – 442g.)	£ 7.00	

**(Add UK postage & packing £1.11 extra per copy)**

<i>Restless Human Hearts</i> – Richard Jefferies (hardback; £20 – 776g.) Introduction by Andrew Rossabi, 2008. (Softback version £8 – 711g.)	£20.00 ----- £ 8.00	-----
<i>Richard Jefferies: An Index</i> – Matthews & Treitel, 2008 (hardback – 558g.)	£15.00	
<i>The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies</i> – Matthews & Treitel, 1994 (hardback – 561g.)	£12.00	
<i>World's End</i> – Richard Jefferies, (softback – 576g.) Introduction by Andrew Rossabi, 2008	£ 7.99	

**(Add UK postage & packing £2.36 extra per copy)**

## DVD or video

'Jefferies Land' – 25 minute film that shows places in the Coate area associated with the writer.

£10 including postage.    DVD     Video

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Please note that we do not seek to make a profit out of postal charges and we use recycled packaging where possible. Please ensure that you include sufficient funding to cover postal costs. Weights of some of the publications are provided in grams to help you estimate the postal charges for multiple orders.

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.

## **COATE FARM AND MUSEUM REPORT**

There is little news to report since the autumn newsletter. The Museum has been closed for all this time. A repair job that was forecast to take six weeks took three times as long. Mike Pringle, the Director of the Swindon Cultural Partnership, in consultation with the Society, has been taking forward ideas to present to Swindon Borough Council as part of a potential take-over bid for the property on behalf of a Trust. He is exploring the Community Asset Grant that allows publicly owned buildings to be refurbished and transferred to an appropriate body for community ownership and has identified a PR agency, a solicitor, a fund-raiser and a teacher to take ideas forward. He hopes to organise a high-profile event at the Museum that might attract national publicity and has put together a web-site to assist the project at [www.richardjefferies.org](http://www.richardjefferies.org). Mr Pringle is independent of Swindon Borough Council and has the full backing of Cllr. Rod Bluh (the Leader of the Council) and Cllr. Phil Young (Cabinet Member for Culture) to look for viable options that would keep the Museum alive and not put the Society's future in jeopardy. The outlook for the Museum is looking favourable and we are extremely grateful to Mr Pringle for taking an active interest.

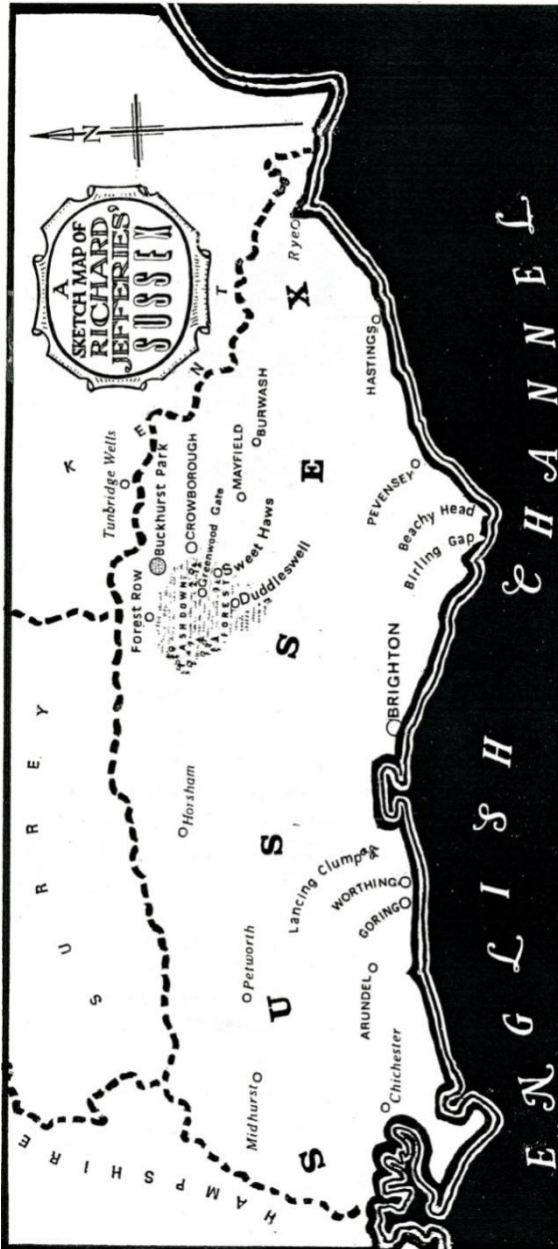
### **Museum Open Days 2010**

The Museum will be open on the following Sundays from 2-5pm: May 2, 16 & 23; June 6, 20 & 27; July 4, 18 & 25; Aug 1, 15 & 22; Sept 5, 12, 19 & 26 and Wednesdays from 10am-4pm: Feb 10, Mar 10, Apr 14, May 12, June 9, July 14, Aug 11, Sep 8, Oct 13, Nov 10 & Dec 8. It is open on other dates by appointment. Volunteers are always needed to help with Museum duties or for gardening work. Please contact the Hon. Sec. if you can offer support.

## **SAVE COATE CAMPAIGN**

Given that the Secretary of State did not rule out development of the Coate/Badbury Wick area last year, Swindon Borough Council is taking forward the Swindon Core Strategy policy for 'Commonhead' that will include provision for 750 dwellings, 15 ha of employment land, 5.5 ha for hospital expansion, a school and shops, on countryside mainly to the east of Day House Lane. Natural England is drawing up a management plan for the proposed buffer land next to Coate Water and has identified land to the east and south of Coate Water Country Park that should be included in the Park's designation. However there are no guarantees that this buffer land will be safe-guarded for conservation in the future. Of course, Redrow Homes and Persimmon Homes have not gone away – the national house-builders are about to submit a new planning application for the area outlined in the Core Strategy but with 960 new houses on offer. The house-builders have legal options in place on nearly all the land west (and east) of Day House Lane. As such it is highly likely that if they get planning permission for their latest plans, they will eventually try to creep across Day House Lane and target the proposed 'buffer' land for housing. The future for Jefferies Land is still bleak.

## RICHARD JEFFERIES IN SUSSEX EVENT



'But the glory of these glorious Downs is the breeze... Discover some excuse to be up there always...this is the land of health.'

The Breeze on Beachy Head'

The Society outing to Sussex is planned for Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> July. John Price is organising the event. Members should contact him for final details and to co-ordinate car-sharing (tel: 01672 515150 e-mail: jtprice@waitrose.com).

The Saturday event will take in a visit to Broadwater Cemetery, Worthing (meet there at 11am – see p.20) with readings. Mrs Paula Griffiths, who lives at Jefferies' final home at 'Sea View', Goring has been kind enough to allow us to look at the outside of the house once again and has offered to make us tea and biscuits in the afternoon.

A Friday outing is also proposed and is likely to include a visit to Pevensey Castle and Beachy Head.

Ellen Harrild, Richard's favourite aunt with whom he lived as a young boy, took him on delightful visits to Hastings, St. Leonards and other Sussex resorts. The county's attraction for him never faded. In 1882 he moved to Brighton. Apart from a brief spell in Eltham, he lived in Sussex until the end of his life. Ill health led him to move to Brighton where he could be near the

sea and the Downs — he set great store by nature's cures. Yet he could still

reach London by train. Books published whilst in Sussex: *Nature Near London* and *The Story of My Heart* (1883); *Red Deer*, *The Life of the Fields*, *The Dewy Morn* and *After London* (1884); *The Open Air* (1885) and *Amaryllis at the Fair* (1887).

While in Brighton he lived at 3 Lorna Road; later at a house in Lorna Road called 'Savernake'; the house now bears a plaque. Apart from a sad spell at Eltham where Oliver (his baby son) died, he returned to Sussex, living briefly at Rotherfield and Jarvis Brook, and longer at 'The Downs', Crowborough, where he could enjoy Ashdown Forest.

By 1886, suffering greatly with TB, he moved to 'Sea View' (now 'Jefferies House'), Goring. In spite of physical weakness he continued writing to support his wife and two children, but died on the 14<sup>th</sup> August 1887. At his request, he was buried at Broadwater Cemetery, Worthing.

**A selection of Jefferies' essays with a Sussex setting:**

*Nature Near London*

To Brighton

The Southdown Shepherd

The Breeze on Beachy Head

*Chronicles of the Hedges*

A February Day in Stanmer Park

*The Hills and the Vale*

On the Downs

*The Life of the Fields*

Nature Near Brighton

Clematis Lane

Sea, Sky and Down

January in the Sussex Woods

*The Open Air*

Sunny Brighton

The Bathing Season

*Field and Hedgerow*

Buckhurst Park

The Country Sunday

The Country-side: Sussex

Winds of Heaven



'Savernake', Brighton.



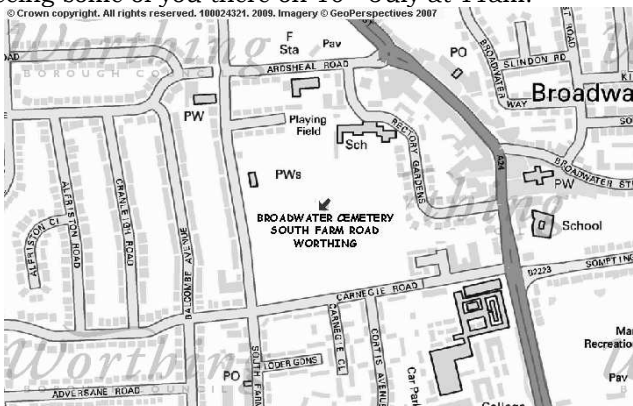
'Sea View', Goring.

## Richard Jefferies Grave

The commissioned work, to restore Jefferies' gravestone at Broadwater Cemetery, was completed at the end of November 2009. Paul Binstead, the stone-mason employed, has made a splendid job of the restoration and our Member Michael Parrott succeeded in planting some spring bulbs between the heavy downpours in the same month. We are also indebted to Mr Parrott for contacting the Henry Williamson Literary Estate Society to gain their permission to allow us to reproduce two photographs of Henry Williamson seated next to Jefferies' grave (see below).



We are most grateful to the Eltham Society, to Mark Daniel and our Members who added to the contributions towards the grave restoration fund. We look forward to seeing some of you there on 10<sup>th</sup> July at 11am.





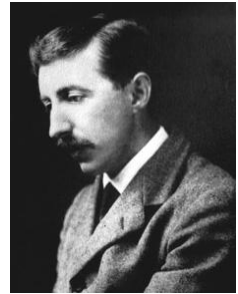
## DISCOVERIES V: Among the Greats

George Miller

Perhaps one characteristic of great writers is that they influence others. Professor Ebbatson found striking correlations of thought and phrase between the Marabar caves episode in Forster's *A Passage to India* and chapter VI of *The Story of My Heart*, the 'something of Richard Jefferies', he argues, that a character in *Howard's End* refers to. There is a resonance of the same work in the following:-



He felt above him the vast indifferent dome and the calm processes of the heavenly bodies; and the earth beneath him, the earth that had borne him, had taken him to her breast. He closed his eyes in the languor of sleep. His eyelids trembled as if they felt the vast cyclic movement of the earth and her watchers, trembled as if they felt the strange light of some new world.



This is James Joyce in *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Did Joyce read *The Story of My Heart*? Apparently he did. A Joyce scholar, Harold Beck, researching the dense web of allusions in *Ulysses*, finally traced two references back to Jefferies' autobiography. In the library episode Stephen recalls the phrase 'painted chambers loaded with tilebooks' which comes from the same unnerving sequence outside the Royal Exchange, where Jefferies contemplates the agitated chaos of the human mass, and the futility of all systems and civilizations, which so disturbed Forster. The other reference to the 'mesial groove' of a Greek Statue Beck links to the National Gallery passage in chapter V.



Henry Williamson and D.H. Lawrence shared Jefferies heightened awareness of the natural world. A debt in Williamson's case is abundantly acknowledged, but Lawrence says little about Jefferies, though Q.D. Leavis and other critics have seen him as Lawrence's literary precursor. His declaration 'I do not like *The Story of My Heart*' might seem definitive but the context shows it in another light. He is comparing it with Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir* and his own novel, *The Trespasser*, as a work that, on reflection, the author might feel to be too self-revealing. *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* could be considered in the same category. Lawrence is commenting on his own ambivalent

feelings about writing beyond the bounds of convention.

Elsewhere Ebbatson quotes a passage from *The Story* as a likely source for

Lawrence's best known poem 'Snake', and in a more detailed essay traces remarkable concurrences of imagery in two famous poems by G.M Hopkins and passages in Jefferies' prose. In this case, he concedes, there can be no question of influence, as neither would have read the other's works:



Rather, analogous temperaments, utterly different by education and career, have attained a similar vision of the natural world. Indeed, Jefferies occasionally discloses a sacramental view of nature which is identical to that of Hopkins's nature poems... *Hodge and His Masters* (1880) might be read as a gloss on *Harry Ploughman*; and the lament for John Brown in Jefferies last essay 'My Old Village', possesses just the sweet gravity of *Felix Randall*. Finally, it might be justly claimed for Jefferies that the reader of the notebooks comes into contact with a strenuous and latterly anguished sensibility which has many points of contact with the Hopkins of the journals and the terrible sonnets.

Ebbatson is right to see the differences of belief and circumstance between these two inspirational writers as superficial. A Catholic theologian who similarly regarded Jefferies' rejection of conventional faith as insignificant in the light of his spiritual vision was Edward Ingram Watkin, author of *The Philosophy of Mysticism*, in which he devotes many pages 'to point out the reality, depth and value of the truth... learnt and taught by Jefferies.' But the mystical revelations are not the whole story:

Jefferies, however, has another if quite secondary title to our study and affection, his incomparable insight into nature, not merely as an external knowledge of natural objects – though he is indeed an observer of unrivalled diligence and accuracy – but a sympathetic understanding of the inner life of nature and the spiritual values therein expressed.

Quoting at length from 'The Pageant of Summer' he makes a remarkable comparison:

The poetry of Homer is thus steeped in the sympathetic intuition of nature. His nature similes are cameos glowing with the colour of the object described, whose essence is revealed in some epithet which brings it before the reader in its living reality... The very style has taken his Homeric colouring, almost the Homeric rhythm. In the midst of the nineteenth century Jefferies has recaptured the unsophisticated freshness of the world's youth.

It is a comparison which would certainly have delighted the author.

In February 1880 the publisher George Smith of Smith Elder and Co introduced Jefferies to Thomas Hardy and Henry James, major novelists who had already produced some of their finest work. The author of *The Scarlet Shawl* was hardly in the same league, though his first country books had been well received, and his first entirely rural, and Hardy-esque, novel, *Greene Ferne Farm*, had just appeared. If Smith had hoped some friendly guidance from

more experienced writers might have ensued he must have been disappointed, and by the end of the year he was no longer accepting new work by Jefferies. In Hardy's case one might have expected some engagement, but what little notice he took of the younger writer on themes so close to his own indicates a certain reserve.



Henry James, cosmopolitan, sophisticated, the supreme novelist of manners and master of 'the art of fiction', can hardly be expected to have taken an interest in a provincial naturalist, however gifted. He owned a copy of *Wild Life in a Southern County*, but didn't acquire it until 1899. However his brother, William James, equally eminent as a philosopher and psychologist, certainly took note of *The Story of My Heart*, describing it as a 'wonderful mystical rhapsody' in his most important work, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, and elsewhere as a 'remarkable autobiographical document'. Like Watkin he responded to Jefferies as a writer, not just as a useful case study, and refers to the same essay, using the same central term, in a letter to Henry written in 1906:

I have just been reading in the volume by Richard Jefferies called "Life of the Fields" a wonderful rhapsody, "The Pageant of Summer." It needs to be read twice over and very attentively, being nothing but an enumeration of all the details visible in the corner of an old field with a hedge and a ditch. But rightly taken in, it is probably the highest flight of human genius in the direction of nature-worship. I don't see why it should not count as an immortal thing... Imperishable freshness!

Geoffrey Grigson remarked 'Jefferies has always captured the second rate.' If anyone deserves so belittling a term it is perhaps those critics who fail to see beyond his surface faults and follies to the inner strengths and significance of his vision.

### References

- J.R. Ebbatson. Richard Jefferies Society. Talks and Articles nos. 7, 30 and 34. James Joyce Broadsheet, number 61, February 2002.  
Edward Ingram Watkin, *The Philosophy of Mysticism* (London: Grant Richards, 1920).  
The Letters of William James (London: Longmans, 1926).



## NEW PUBLICATIONS



As promised in the last newsletter (p.23) new editions of *Amaryllis at the Fair* and *The Dewy Morn* were available in time for the Society's AGM. Indeed, the paperbacks were published on the anniversary of Jefferies' birth – 6 November. The only significant alteration to the description provided previously is the cover picture used for *Amaryllis* – it is the F D Bedford illustration from the Duckworth edition of the book (as illustrated). Thanks to George Miller, we can now attribute the name of the illustrator (see p.15, RJS newsletter, autumn 2009).

Also on 6 November 2009, the Society published *Richard Jefferies' Letters to Aunt Ellen* in soft-back (Faringdon: Petton Books, ISBN: 978-0-9563751-0-0, 116pp with illustrations, £4.50). Edward Thomas quoted from Richard Jefferies' letters to his aunt and uncle in *Richard Jefferies: His Life and Work* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1909) whilst Samuel J. Looker reproduced large extracts in *Richard Jefferies: A Man of the Fields* (London: John Baker Publishers Ltd., 1965) as did Walter Besant in *The Eulogy of Richard Jefferies* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1888). Information from Jefferies' letters was used in chronological order for *The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies* by Hugoe Matthews and Phyllis Treitel (Oxford: Petton Books, 1994). It is thanks to the painstaking work of Phyllis Treitel, Vice-President of the Society, that these letters are now reproduced in full. Lady Treitel spent many hours at the British Library copying the letters by hand in the early 1990s and typing them up. We thank the British Library for allowing these letters in the Jefferies' archives to be published and for waiving their normal fee. The first two letters in this book are owned by the Society and are on display at the Richard Jefferies Museum at Coate. Some of the letters, or extracts from them, mentioned in earlier publications are not in the public domain. They may be in private hands or might have been destroyed. Just one, the last in this book dated 7<sup>th</sup> May 1873 – highlighted by Walter Besant – is included in this collection. Otherwise, the text of the letters has not been altered in the new publication. Additions to text have been included in square brackets for clarification along with an introduction, foot-notes, illustrations and old photographs. The cover illustration is taken from the oil-painting of Coate Farm by Kate Tryon (see last newsletter, p.23).

In the last year or so the Richard Jefferies Society has published nine new volumes of works under the Petton Books imprint (including *The Interpreter*, published by Blue Gate Books). The new volumes can be purchased using the Society's mail-order system, or at the Jefferies' Museum, or online at richardjefferiessociety.co.uk or ordered through your local book-store. Jean Saunders, who has been responsible for scanning the original works (apart from *Richard Jefferies: An Index*), type-setting and formatting the books as well as dealing with the printers, is going to take a well-earned break from the publishing world.

## CITINGS OF RICHARD JEFFERIES

Eric Jones bought a copy of Julian Tennyson's *Suffolk Scene* (Bury St. Edmunds: Alastair Press, 1987 edition). The book is an essay of love for the Suffolk topography. Tennyson (the great grandson of Lord Tennyson) was killed in Burma in 1945 at the age of thirty. He had taken to war books by George Borrow, Richard Jefferies, de Quincy and Robert Nichols and a MS copy of 'In Memoriam'. When he was stationed in India his brother wrote saying Julian should drop his English attitudes and try to understand India instead. Julian replied, 'that he was fully taken up with thinking and reading about the things he loved at home, that he had no interest whatever in the East and did not want to go any further East than East Anglia in the future.'

Brian Burrows reported that the September 2009 issue of the **Wiltshire Ramblers Association** newsletter included a reference to Richard Jefferies by the editor, Joan Crosbee. In a piece headed 'Walking Fact', she included the much quoted lines: 'They only know a country who are acquainted with its footpaths. By the roads, indeed, the outside may be seen, but the footpaths go through the heart of the land', (*The Amateur Poacher*, Ch. VI).

Stan Hickerton came across a copy of *The Vagabond in Literature* by Arthur Rickett (London: J M Dent & Co., 1906) that selects six writers who have these characteristics. 'Vagabond' is not deemed a derogatory term in the book but is used to describe those who do not conform to the norm. There are chapters about William Hazlitt, Thomas de Quincy, George Borrow, Henry Thoreau, Robert Louis Stevenson, Richard Jefferies and Walt Whitman. Rickett describes Jefferies as having 'the sensitive quivering nerves of the neurotic which respond to the slightest stimulus. Of all the "Children of the Open Air" Jefferies was the most sensitive.'

On 29<sup>th</sup> October, Jack Watkins wrote a piece for the *Daily Telegraph* entitled 'Devil's Dyke is not for the faint-hearted walker.' Stories of Satan stalking Devil's Dyke in the Sussex Downs abound, but Jack Watkins established that it is not a scary place to walk and wrote:

The great Victorian nature writer Richard Jefferies wrote of the Wiltshire Downs - akin to the South Downs in their array of barrows and other remains from the Bronze and Iron Ages - as being 'alive with the dead'. He did not mean it in a ghostly way. Prehistoric man peopled the high ground much as we fill the lowlands today. These now-deserted Downland pathways were their highways, and on each hill top was a mini-town. Perhaps this obsession with 'atmospheres' on lonely windblown summits is a modern indulgence.

*The Guardian* (8<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2009). Julian Glover, the paper's chief leader-writer, wrote an article entitled 'This bulldozing of nimbys must not become colonial' and he raised concern about a new planning body that puts the national interest ahead of local concerns. He writes:

'It became green everywhere in the first spring, after London ended, so that all the country looked alike,' wrote Richard Jefferies at the start of his entrancing but rarely read novel *After London*. He was a Victorian farmer's son who died young, after dreaming his vision of a post-industrial England drowned by noxious floods and strangled by forests. He predicted environmental apocalypse as modern

climate scientists do: but in his world some undescribed calamity had ended urban civilisation and nature had overcome the cities. Today the fear is the reverse: that the cities will overcome nature

Jefferies wrote of brambles and briars, oxeye daisies and charlock. He described long mounds over which, it was said, 'machines worked by fire' had passed. They traversed the land swift as the swallow glides through the sky, but of these things not a relic remains to us.' His future was dystopian, with the few hungry survivors of disaster bound to their masters as serfs. But his dismay would surely have been greater had he known, a century on, how much of the rural land he loved was to disappear... the changes since Jefferies's time have been immense... England's ruination, foreseen by Richard Jefferies 120 years ago, has been avoided so far thanks to luck, and to planners. Now is not the moment to surrender to concrete and calamity.

*After London* is also cited again in the *Guardian* book blog on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2010 and by D J Palladino (***Our Magazine***, 21<sup>st</sup> Nov. 09) in an article entitled 'Apocalypse, Wow: Western filmgoers increasingly like to see it all come down as apocalypse become hot box office.' He writes: '*After London* (1885) by Richard Jefferies offers the schematic that most of the genre novels followed, shifting for yourself post-debacle.'

An idea has been put forward by Barry Andrews of Swindon-grown band **XTC** (a very popular and successful 1980s band), to create an installation which, through sound, music and large computer-generated images that will evoke the atmosphere of *After London*. Fragments of Jefferies' text will be sampled and played as part of the soundtrack, with the installation joining a long tradition of meditations upon devastated landscapes. Barry and co-band member, Andy Partridge, believe that this unique attempt to highlight Jefferies' work and the use of digital modern technology will make the stranger aspects of this visionary writer more accessible to a modern audience. They have been discussing their ideas with Mike Pringle.

Geoff Hirst noticed a mention of Jefferies in the 19<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2009 edition (Vol. 31 No. 22) of the ***London Review of Books***. The citing is in a book review by Stefan Collini of a reissuing of J B Priestley's *English Journey*. Collini writes:

In the closing decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were several related attempts, by writers such as Richard Jefferies and Edward Thomas, to identify 'England' with 'the countryside' (*largely for an urban readership*), while the interwar decades tended to throw up more quizzical searches for 'the real England', assumed to have been submerged by the shoddy detritus of 'progress', and requiring the skills of the then fashionable figure, the anthropologist, for its proper identification and recovery.

Heather Hawkins came across a reference to Richard Jefferies in an article entitled 'Darwin and the uses of extinction' by Gillian Beer in ***Victorian Studies*** (Vol 51, No2, Winter 2009, pp 321-333). Ms Beer writes:

Extinction is mortality writ large and human beings in current secular societies have – paradoxically – very contracted life spans compared with Victorian believers... In *The Story of My Heart* (1883) Richard Jefferies observes 'Only by the strongest effort of the mind could I understand the idea of extinction; that was supernatural, requiring a miracle; the immortality of the soul natural, like the

earth'. Far fewer could now share Jefferies's assurance of the naturalness of the immortal soul, though he well pinpoints the fundamental resistance of the living being to imagining extinction.

The **Swindon Advertiser** (9<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2009) highlighted the story that Mike Pringle, Director of the Swindon Cultural partnership, had written to President Obama requesting that the US government might pay for a new plaque to be erected on Liddington Hill to replace the one that was riddled with bullet-shot when used for target practice in WWII. The damaged plaque is on display at the Coate Museum and the article was intended as publicity for the Museum. Unfortunately the newspaper failed to mention that the plaque was on display at the Museum (See RJS Annual Report 2006-7, p.18).

Jean Saunders was given a copy of **Betjeman's England** (London: John Murray, 2009) for Christmas. Stephen Games has edited over sixty television scripts presented by Betjeman mainly in the 1950s and 1960s that deal with England's architecture and topography. On 17<sup>th</sup> September 1962, Betjeman introduces viewers to Swindon and says 'People may call Swindon ugly; I've come to love it because of its people.' His criticism of the new housing estates is not favourable – 'there are not enough playing fields ... for the children ... everything looks impersonal' but 'here on the top of the hill is Wiltshire again; the distant downs, the smell of the earth, the irregular shapes of the trees, the Wiltshire that Richard Jefferies knew and the country way of life.' Other extracts from programmes cover more places dear to Richard Jefferies that include Malmesbury and Fairford Church with its glorious windows.

Rebecca Welshman relates this extract from the latest **Thomas Hardy Journal** (Autumn 2009, vol.XXV): 'Andrew Radford has a chapter of his latest book on Hardy and archaeology, in which he mentions a following chapter about Jefferies and prehistory. He writes: "In the next chapter, I address Richard Jefferies's imaginative enterprise to grapple with the complex problems of layered organic continuity. His abiding preoccupation with the ruins of time is evidenced by his need to uncover a framework of inclusive relatedness that could function as a rite of reconciliation with his Wiltshire homeland," (p.68).'

Hugoe Matthews reports that **The Children's Book** by A S Byatt (London: Chatto & Windus, 2009) contains many references to Jefferies. The book is a portrait of childhood at the end of the Victorian era – when children were starting to be treated as adults – and a study of the growth in children's literature that took place at this time. Tom, one of the main characters in the book, learns much from literature:

He practised approaching rabbits and hares as Richard Jefferies recommended, putting his feet down softly and steadily, without a two-legged rhythm, keeping his arms close to his sides – human arms, Jefferies believed, alarmed wild creatures as teeth and claws and scent did in other predators (p.234).

Tom 'read perpetually... but he only read two types of writings. He read books

by naturalists – particularly Jefferies, whose very rooted mild English mysticism about the English soil seemed to Tom to be part of his own body’ (p.234).

On page 394 Byatt describes *Wood Magic* and writes:

Bevis is a small child who could speak the languages of the woodland creatures. He can speak their language, but his vision is schoolboy and lordly, unlike the more subtle forest child Mowgli. He knows spiders are male, and the thrushes he converses with kindly allow him to collect one egg, as long as he leaves one, and tells no other boys.

In *Bevis* Byatt recalls him making ‘a raft and a camp, and [he] plays at being an explorer in the deserts and jungles of the Empire. He plays at making stockades, like Jim in *Treasure Island* and Robinson Crusoe, and goes home for tea and bread and honey’ (p.394).

**Crow Country** by Mark Cocker (Jonathan Cape, 2007) was mentioned as a citing in our 2006-2007 Annual Report (p.24) in a review of the book. However, Eric Jones has found that Cocker also quotes Jefferies in the book. Prof Jones writes that there are ‘three quotes from *Wild Life in a Southern County*. They show how very, very acute Jefferies’ observations were. *Crow Country* is simply elegiac, the best bird book I’ve read for years.’

Stan Hickerton came across a copy of ***Journeyman: Through Western England with Clive Gunnell*** (Alan Sutton, 1994) which is based on a record of a televised walk from Faringdon to Lyme Regis in 1993 for HTV. Mr Gunnell’s third day (Ch.3) took him along the Ridgeway towards Liddington Castle. He describes it as ‘a breathtaking walk with unlimited visual splendour’ much beloved by Jefferies. He mentions the memorial for Jefferies and Alfred Williams and reflects that Jefferies was expressing ‘green’ values long before the ‘Greens’. He quotes (pp.19-20) from *Round About a Great Estate* (Ch I) whereby Jefferies accuses farmers of destroying precious flower-rich countryside and hedgerows in the name of profit in order to grow more of ‘the wicked turnip.’

## TALKS

Rebecca Welshman gave a short talk on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2009 on the benefits of getting involved in literary societies to a group of twenty one PhD and MA students at Exeter. She mentioned her involvement with the Richard Jefferies Society. In March, as part of the Postgraduate Research Training Programme at Exeter, Prof. Eric Jones will be joining Rebecca to enlighten students further about Richard Jefferies and the role of the Society.

Prof. Roger Ebbatson presented a paper entitled, ‘Landscape and Machine: Hardy and Richard Jefferies’ at a conference held in the Netherlands in January 2010. He also has an article on Jefferies and the American Transcendentalists due out in a collection from Holland later this year.



## HOW DID YOU FIRST DISCOVER RICHARD JEFFERIES AND THE SOCIETY?

**Heather Hawkins** is 'local' to Swindon (Wroughton), so she has read about Richard Jefferies and the Society in the press over the years, but more specifically of later times she has taken a greater interest in his work because of her MA and PhD research. Heather is researching the use of dialect in Thomas Hardy and other west country writers. She is very grateful for the information that she has received from Mark Daniel on the subject and she decided to join the Society, as a result.

Writing from Australia **Mary Beal** said that when she was considering a topic for her PhD thesis, Thomas Hardy and his special interest in the world of nature appealed to her. Her supervisor reminded her that Hardy had been researched by many students and suggested that she sought other authors with similar interests. 'Henry Williamson became my author of choice; however, my supervisor, Dr Alan Dilnot, recommended that I read Jefferies's works... Dr Dilnot told me that there was a Richard Jefferies Society. I have now read a few works by Jefferies, and especially liked *After London*.'

**Ted Wood**, who lives in the Bristol area, recounts the following experience:

In 1947, as a young subaltern in the Gloucestershire Regiment, I was attached for a while to the Wiltshire Regiment. In billets at Wilton House (alas not in the House but in a Nissan hut in the grounds!), I travelled around the County as a member of an Army 'Method of Instruction' Team. Salisbury Plain and the Wiltshire Downs with their silhouetted skylines had a particular fascination for me; the earth laid bare gave rise to deeper thoughts of peace, tranquillity and wonderment. In my late teens I had become somewhat romantically drawn to philosophy and its various exponents and sought to develop my own power of thought. I was searching for the 'meaning of life' and still am to this day!

On an afternoon visit to Salisbury later that year, I discovered Beach's bookshop and what a bookshop that was! There I bought a 1946 edition of *The Story of my Heart* published by Staples with the evocative dust wrapper design. I have it now; it is signed Edwin S. Wood. Its narrative had an immediate appeal to me; its simplicity and obscurity fascinated me. I dipped into this book: I read it all but not at one sitting; one does not over-eat! Later on in civilian life, I lent this copy to a friend who kept it for over 15 years, eventually returning it with apologies saying that she could not bear to part with it.

Years later, I took up a dormant interest in Henry Williamson. I had chosen his book *The Flax of Dream* when awarded a prize in 1943. I started to collect his writings. Imagine my surprise when I read that he had discovered Richard Jefferies (for him a mind-changing experience) when he bought a copy of *The Story of my Heart* in a Folkestone bookshop while awaiting demobilization in 1919.

In recent years, with 'Miller & Matthews' at my side I started seriously to collect and read the works of Richard Jefferies and this was recently deepened following a marvellous visit to Coate and the R. J. Museum arranged and

accompanied by Mrs. Jean Saunders who most generously gave her time, enthusiasm and knowledge... I joined the R.J. Society.

We all have our favourite passages. One of mine is the opening chapter of *Greene Ferne Farm* and my favourite in all literature is written in 'My Old Village' where Richard Jefferies recalls his boyhood down at the hatch and states "the sun shone there for a very long time and the water rippled and sang". Interestingly, I spotted later on that Henry Williamson had reproduced these lines at the start of his first book entitled *The Beautiful Years* written in 1921.

After Wilton House I returned to the Glosters at Bulford Camp and in 1948 I was demobilized at Chiseldon Demobilisation Centre where in a week I was introduced to the marvel of Beethoven, the mysteries of T.S.Eliot's 'The Waste Land' and how to appreciate the beauty of Art. A fitting preparation for civilian life!

**Peter Bainbridge** of Wantage become interested in Richard Jefferies as he is a 'fan of Edward Thomas,' and after the biography of Jefferies, was inspired to look for Jefferies' books. He writes, 'My collection is steadily growing of works by or about Richard Jefferies. My main interest is in his nature and non-fiction, as I'm not a very big fiction reader.'

## NEWS FROM OTHER SOCIETIES

### Alliance of Literary Societies

The ALS annual gathering this year will be hosted by the Gaskell Society and held on 15-16<sup>th</sup> May. Contact Helen Newman should you require further information (see contact details on p.4).

### Friends of the Ridgeway

In the last Newsletter, I mentioned The Great Stones Way, which would link our (and Jefferies') Ridgeway with Stonehenge. Since then, the ever-resourceful Ian Ritchie has gone into the matter of developing such a path.

Before this can happen, a feasibility study is needed, and the funds to pay for such a study. The North Wessex Downs AONB had tentatively offered £5,000; thanks to interest from Wiltshire Council's Rights of Way Dept, another £1,000 has been offered, and more from Plain Action (Plain being Salisbury Plain).

It is expected that such a path will bring lots of extra visitors to Wiltshire; we shall be ready to welcome them at Coate.

*Phyllis Treitel*

### Friends of Alfred Williams

Local interest in Alfred Williams is growing. A new group (the Alfred Williams Heritage Society) has been established in Swindon that is working closely with the Friends. Their main aim is to obtain grants in order to better publicise Williams' work and they are planning an event with readings and folk songs in the spring. More information at [alfredwilliams.org.uk](http://alfredwilliams.org.uk).

**Jefferies Land Conservation Trust.** The Trust will be holding its AGM at the Jefferies Museum on 27<sup>th</sup> March at 2pm – the Land Fund and the Save Coate campaign will be on the agenda along with an update on the Richard Jefferies Museum. A new web-site has been set up at [jefferieslandtrust.org.uk](http://jefferieslandtrust.org.uk).

## E-NEWS

### **Electronic mailing group.**

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 run by Yahoo. Contact the Hon. Sec. for details or send your e-mail address to [info@RichardJefferiesSociety.co.uk](mailto:info@RichardJefferiesSociety.co.uk).

### **Richardjefferiessociety.co.uk**

For those of you on the Internet, many facilities are now available through our web-site that include a forum for discussion, various photographs of people and places associated with Jefferies and the Society, information about the Museum and a selection of talks and favourite quotes from his works. We have also added links to the web-pages that Steve Milton kindly set up for us and these are used to put up electronic versions of our newsletters, the *RJS Journal* and some of Jefferies' works. Simon Coleman has lost the use of the web pages dedicated to Jefferies on the University of Bath's web-site (the contents of it have been copied to our web-site). We are extremely grateful to Simon for this free publicity for so many years. It is also possible to buy most of our publications and renew your annual membership on the web-site.

Our web-site has generated much interest and is invaluable these days for promoting the Society and Richard Jefferies. However, some of the external facilities are also open to abuse. We were forced to set up a new discussion forum – losing all the previous information on the initial forum – as the original was taken over illegally for the display of pornographic images. Fortunately the postings were discovered quickly and the site shut down on Christmas Eve. The new Forum will now require building up again, but the registration process is now under the strict control of the Society.



Agnes Miller Parker engraving

## PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2010

- Saturday 6 March\* Joint meeting with the Friends of Alfred Williams. Select a short extract to read by or about Richard Jefferies or just come along and listen.
- Saturday 10 April\* 'Richard Jefferies; footnote or central character in the West Country's cultural history?' A lecture by John Payne (author of *The West Country: a cultural partnership*, Oxford: Signal Books 2009 – see review in *RJS Journal* 2010 pp.43-44). In particular John will explore why Jefferies' is treated as a 'footnote' compared with other west country writers, and whether this is justified. He believes not.
- Saturday 8 May Joint Study Day with the Edward Thomas Fellowship Liddington Village Hall (10.30-4.30). See pp. 11-12.
- Sunday 9 May Joint Study Day event: Guided walk from Coate Farm to Gamekeepers Cottage. Assemble at Richard Jefferies Museum by 10.30. See p.12.
- Saturday 10 July (plus Fri. 9 July?) Sussex outing. Meet at Broadwater Cemetery, South Farm Road, Worthing at 11am. See p.18 for more information and contact John Price for final arrangements (car-sharing and programme).
- Saturday 6 November AGM and Birthday Lecture, Liddington Village Hall.

\*Meetings begin at 2.00pm in the Jefferies Museum, Marlborough Road, Coate, Swindon. Doors open at 1.00pm. See map on page 13. 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 13, 14, 16, 19 and 24. Monday to Saturday – evenings: Numbers 13 and 14.

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