

# **THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY**

## **SPRING NEWSLETTER 2015**



See Crowborough Station Project, p.27.



**THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY** (Registered Charity No 1042838) was founded in 1950 to promote appreciation and study of the writings of Richard Jefferies (1848-1887).

The annual subscription runs from 1 July and costs £12 for individuals (UK students: £8) and £14 for a couple. The latter receive one copy of the Society's publications. Corporate membership rates is £50; public bodies/organisations – £14. Life membership, for those aged 60 or over, is set at ten times the annual rate. Overseas members should add £1.50 towards additional postal costs for surface mail or £5.00 for airmail. There is a facility to join online using our Paypal account that accepts credit/debit cards at richardjefferiessociety.co.uk. There is an additional £1 supplement to cover Paypal charges incurred.

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

### **NEWSLETTER**

The deadline for submitting material for the autumn 2015 Newsletter is **September 1<sup>st</sup> 2015**. Please send your contributions to the Hon. Secretary preferably by e-mail (see contact details on p.3).

### **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.

### **BRANDED GOODS**

Following on from our trial run of branded hats bearing the Society logo (as above) – please see autumn newsletter 2014, p. 42 – Peter Bainbridge is willing to extend the offer to other items. The embroiderer charges £4.20 to add the logo and Peter is happy to deal with any enquiries on your behalf. See p.4 for his contact details.

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For more information contact:

The Richard Jefferies Society

Hon. Secretary

The Old Mill

Mill Drive

Foulsham

Dereham

Norfolk NR20 5RB.

Tel: 01362 683210

Email: [info@richardjefferiessociety.co.uk](mailto:info@richardjefferiessociety.co.uk)

Website: [richardjefferiessociety.co.uk](http://richardjefferiessociety.co.uk)

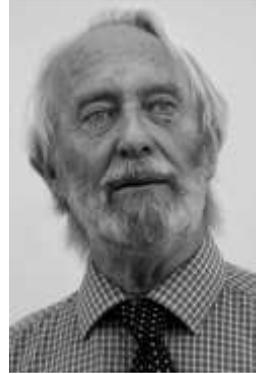
## EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS 2014-2015

|                                                                     |                                            |                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mr Peter Bainbridge<br>treasurer@richardjefferiessociety.co.uk      | Treasurer<br>Elected<br>2014-19            | 95 Hamfield, Wantage, Oxon OX12<br>9EG                            |
| Mr Simon Coleman<br>simoncoleman007@btinternet.com                  | Member<br>Re-elected<br>2013-16            | Flat 1, 28 Cambridge Rd., Hove, Sussex<br>BN3 1DF                 |
| Prof Roger Ebbatson<br>01684 567612<br>ebbatson@tiscali.co.uk       | Member<br>Re-elected<br>2013-16            | 157 Upper Welland Road, Malvern,<br>Worcs WR14 4LB                |
| Professor Eric Jones<br>01285 712657<br>el_sbjonas@hotmail.com      | Vice-Chairman<br>Re-elected<br>2014-17     | 6 Leafield Road, Fairford, Glos<br>GL7 4LL                        |
| Mr Raymond Morse<br>01793 530520<br>raymond.morse@homecall.co.uk    | Vice<br>President<br>Elected 2014          | 28 Tismeads Crescent, Swindon SN1<br>4DR                          |
| Dr Duncan Pepper<br>0777 1656047<br>dr.duncan.pepper@googlemail.com | Member<br>Re-elected<br>2014-17            | Chew Cottage, Norton Lane, Chew<br>Magna, N. Somerset BS40 8RW    |
| Mrs Sheila Povey                                                    | Vice<br>President<br>Elected 2014          | 20 Farleigh Cres., Swindon SN3 1JY                                |
| Mr John Price<br>01672 515150<br>jtprice@waitrose.com               | Chairman<br>Re-elected<br>2013-15          | Granham West, Granham Hill,<br>Marlborough, Wilts SN8 4DN         |
| Mr Andrew Rossabi<br>0208 347 5447<br>awrossabi@gmail.com           | President<br>Elected<br>2010-2015          | 1 Bloomfield Court, Bloomfield Road,<br>Highgate, N6 4ES          |
| Mrs Jean Saunders<br>01362 683210<br>jeanadsaunders@tiscali.co.uk   | Secretary<br>Re-elected<br>2010-15         | The Old Mill, Mill Drive, Foulsham,<br>Dereham, Norfolk NR20 5RB. |
| Mr Richard Stewart<br>01473 216518<br>rgsvalezina@hotmail.co.uk     | Member<br>Re-elected<br>2013-15            | Valezina, 112 Westerfield Road,<br>Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 2XW       |
| Lady Phyllis Treitel<br>01865 735678                                | Vice-President<br>& Friends of<br>Ridgeway | Eidsvoll, Bedwells Heath, Boars Hill,<br>Oxford OX1 5JE           |
| Dr Rebecca Welshman<br>bex_4@hotmail.co.uk                          | Member<br>Re-elected<br>2013-2016          | Glen haven, Lower Hayne, Roadwater,<br>Watchet TA23 0RL           |
| Mrs Margaret Hunt and Prof Patrick Dillon are co-opted members      |                                            |                                                                   |

After ten years in office, Jean Saunders will be standing down as **Hon. Sec.** at the next AGM on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2015 but can continue as Membership Secretary and help with publications. The Society is extremely grateful that Margaret Hunt is helping at the Swindon end undertaking secretarial duties. An opportunity will arise to appoint a new Secretary for a 5 year term of office from November. Please contact John Price if you are interested.

## FROM THE CHAIR

**A**t the beginning of January this year, a tectonic shift occurred that will have a major effect on the day-to-day operation of our Society. Our indefatigable Secretary, Jean Saunders, moved from the Vale of the White Horse to the flatlands of Norfolk, where she is now ensconced with husband Tom and her livestock in a converted and extended windmill. Some local Executive Council members had a very pleasant “Bon Voyage” lunch with Jean and Tom a few days before their departure, on which occasion we gave them two books about Norfolk windmills; each book containing an illustration of their new residence. These books were researched and purchased by our new Treasurer, Peter Bainbridge, who as well as being an enthusiast for Country Writers, is also an expert on Windmills.



I am delighted to report that Jean will continue to act as Secretary of the Society as far as most members requirements are concerned, until her term of office ends this year, but the minuting of meetings in the Swindon area will be carried out by Margaret Hunt, who is the daughter of Cyril Wright, a previous Secretary whom many will fondly remember.

Our Society is asked, from time to time, to take up the cudgels on behalf of a current environmental campaign. I am always cautious about this, as I am a scientist, and sometimes issues are not as clear-cut as they should be before campaigns are launched. Some issues are also very tangentially related to Richard Jefferies, and to argue that “our author would have been shocked/ appalled/horrified” by this or that is arguable to say the least. One issue, however, about which I am personally very alarmed, is the most recent changes made by the editors of the Oxford Junior Dictionary, which is aimed at 7 to 9 year-olds. Members may remember that in 2007 there was an outcry, because some “natural” words had been removed from this dictionary, as well as many words describing the structure and contents of churches. The rationale was that they had to be removed to make room for new words in common current usage. This argument has again been deployed, in order to accommodate such words as: “MP3 Player”, “Chat-room” and “Voicemail”.

The words newly omitted include: “Acorn, adder, beech, blackberry, bluebell, bramble, brook, buttercup, catkin, clover, conker, cowslip, cygnet, dandelion, fern, fungus, gorse, hazel, hazelnut, heather, heron, holly, horse chestnut, ivy, kingfisher, lark, magpie, minnow, newt, otter, pansy, pasture, poppy, porpoise, primrose, raven, starling, stoat, stork, sycamore, thrush, weasel, violet, willow, wren.”

Given that a dictionary is normally used by a child to look up words encountered in their day-to-day reading, I cannot imagine that the newly included words are found often in stories read by 7 to 9 year olds, but the range of wonderful children's literature available in the English language commonly includes the newly omitted words. As for *Wood Magic* and *Bevis*.....

Letters have been written to OUP by a host of eminent people, but my heartfelt cry would be; "Do not under any circumstances buy this dictionary for your children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren!"

As always, you will find much to inform, elucidate, or amuse in this copy of our Newsletter. I particularly like Bill Keith's anecdote about *Suez-cide*. It illustrates beautifully the narrowness of some research, and (to me), the strong-mindedness required in focussing on the immediately relevant, without becoming distracted by following sidelines.

We are delighted to announce the new "Writers' Prize", which will be awarded in memory of John Webb; our Librarian for many years. Details are given in this newsletter, but we are relying on nominations from members to draw our attention to likely candidates. I would certainly have nominated *On Silbury Hill*, by Adam Thorpe, had the award been in place for the past year. His style and content beguile, and his prose is often reminiscent of aspects of Jefferies' writing. In order to be shortlisted, I would suggest that the books should contain at least some of the words omitted from the latest edition of the Oxford Junior Dictionary!

My article on Richard Jefferies for "British Wildlife" duly appeared before Christmas and I have received positive feedback from several sources. It remains to be seen whether it has produced any new members.

The Society is a member of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, and as a benefit of membership we have always been provided with a membership ticket allowing three people to visit the museums in Devizes and Salisbury free. We have our renewal ticket for 2015, but the rules have been changed, and now only one member qualifies for a free visit on each occasion. As usual, I have the ticket, and will pass it to any member wishing to take advantage of the (now limited) benefit.

Finally, in an exciting development, we are having a Society meeting in London this year. Details are in the Newsletter, but it will provide the opportunity for members to attend, who find the Swindon venues difficult to reach, and we look forward to seeing some new faces.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John T. Price". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" and the last name "Price" clearly legible.

John Price  
3<sup>rd</sup> February 2015

## BIRTHDAY LECTURE 2014

*“The Presence of the Past: Richard Jefferies, the Middle Ridgeway and landscape change” by Patrick Dillon.  
25 October 2014, Liddington Village Hall*

An audience of over 50 people listened to Patrick Dillon describe a life-time project. He has known the Middle Ridgeway since childhood and has lived in various villages along its route. The Middle Ridgeway, that Patrick described, extends from the Goring Gap to Avebury cutting through the Vale of the White Horse – a rich and historic landscape. Patrick is a cultural ecologist, studying how the behaviour of people affects the environments in which they live and how, in turn, the environments reflect the behaviour. He named Richard Jefferies as the first cultural ecologist, who used his own subjective first-hand experience to write about man’s activities and how they had altered the surrounding landscape and wildlife.

Along with co-writer Eric Jones, Patrick is in the process of getting a book published entitled “The Middle Ridgeway and Its Environment”. The book is illustrated with the stunning art work of his daughter Anna. In this talk, Patrick focussed on some elements drawn from the book. He used his daughter’s paintings along with other pictures to enhance the lecture.

Firstly he listed the writers who are considered part of the rural tradition and gave some idea of what the environment was like in their time. He mentioned briefly Gilbert White, William Cobbett, Jefferies, W H Hudson, Edward Thomas, Massingham, and Williamson. Despite the fact that there was only a population of about 33 million people in Britain in 1881 (half the population compared to now), the countryside was alive with people going about their daily work. Patrick quoted from Richard Fitter<sup>1</sup> who wrote: “In many ways the world of Richard Jefferies is more remote from late twentieth century England than it was from that of the Saxons who first settled in North Wiltshire more than a thousand years before.” Patrick also included Swindon writer Alfred Williams (1877-1930) and quoted from his *Villages of the White Horse* where Williams described how the local stone was hewn and left to frost attack so that the friable material would drop off and leave good stone for house-building, whilst Jefferies liked to describe the houses where people lived: the winding passages, the different levels of the floors in rooms, the quirks – the individuality that he admired. Patrick also read one of his favourite passages from *Field and*

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<sup>1</sup> Introduction to the OUP edition of *The Gamekeeper at Home* and *The Amateur Poacher*.

*Hedgerow* where Jefferies goes into extraordinary detail about the colour of the dandelion and how it was at its richest when the flowers blanketed entire fields in May.

Patrick then moved on to talk about the influence of the London market – how the production and transport of produce affected the nature of the towns and villages that supported the City's needs. He showed a slide of the turnpikes, canals and railways around Swindon that enabled goods to be moved over greater distances and a map of 1809 of the Swindon area that revealed how small Swindon once was. The Ridgeway and similar green paths were used as a conduit for livestock movement to London. Patrick recounted how one old lady remembered her father talking about thousands of sheep being driven along the Ridgeway and on to London. Once the drovers arrived at their destination, they would send their dogs home as far away as Wales, unaccompanied. Inn-keepers *en route* would leave out mash and gruel for the dogs, paid for in advance by the drovers. As farming grew to support the London market, so did the subsidiary crafts grow in the countryside to serve the farming economy.

The relationship between ploughland and grassland: Patrick believed that it was highly unlikely that there are fields on the Downs that had never been ploughed, contrary to popular belief. He suggested that downlands were brought in an out of production even in fields where the thin poor topsoil created a very low-yielding crop and had to be abandoned soon after. Richard Jefferies describes the short-term practice of paring and burning grasslands in *Wild Life in a Southern County*. Between 1800 and 1900 the price of crops like wheat, barley and oats fluctuated enormously and influenced whether farmers ploughed up more land for crops or let it “tumble back to grass”.

Jefferies had the benefit of exploring a wide variety of ecosystems – he had the uplands of the chalk and the neutral soils of the Vale on which to observe nature and farming practice. According to Edna Manning, Richard Jefferies didn't like the changes taking place in farming where businessmen were managing industrialised farms. There was a rise in the number of land agents who collected rents associated with high farming but as much as anything these agents tried to persuade other farmers to improve their farming methods. New ideas included the practice of improved crop rotations and growing a green manure crop to bring back fertility to the spent soil whilst mixed farming made the best use of animal manure to fertilise the ground. Better drainage and ridge and furrow farming led to changing patterns in the landscape and evidence of this type of farming can still be seen

in the Vale. This changing land-use attracted different wildlife and birds. Farmers who spent more money on labour, artificial manures, supplementing the diet of livestock and keeping their farms in good order were likely to be rewarded with significantly higher returns. An example was quoted of two farms in south Wiltshire in 1868 where one resulted in an income of 76p an acre whilst the other was spending more on farming inputs but had a net income of £3.78 an acre. This was so called “High Farming”.

Another study reported in 1982<sup>2</sup> showed that open grazed farming was not good for birds apart from the skylark and a few others. During the agricultural depression when fields were abandoned, bird populations grew with increasing amounts of scrubland.

Land-holding and countryside sports: the Principal estates across the Middle Ridgeway were at Lockinge near Wantage, built up in the nineteenth century from a collection of manors and small properties; Craven estate dating from the seventeenth century, with its hunting lodge at Ashdown Park; Burderop, south of Swindon (Richard Jefferies’ “Great Estate”); and the Meux estate encompassing parts of the Marlborough Downs at the western end. Hare-coursing was a major sport at Ashdown and vast numbers of hares were there in Jefferies’ time. Partridge shooting was extremely popular too. Old photographs reveal that Barbury Castle (pictured below) was a very open landscape with far fewer trees than now whilst the Ridgeway was much wider and more earthworks are evident.



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<sup>2</sup> *Bird Habitats in Britain* by R.J Fuller



Smeath's Ridge near Barbary Castle by Anna Dillon

Every field had a name and people were aware of why the field was so called. Game-keeping was a craft. Whilst Barn owls were encouraged as a means of pest control, other birds of prey were destroyed unmercifully.

Richard Jefferies was the first to recognise the importance of old hedgerows that often demarked parish boundaries. He called them the “highway hedges”, and noted that they were far more rich in species than the modern hedgerows that were being planted at the time as part of the field enclosures scheme.

The Wildlife Legacy: birds. There were a few writers who described bird life in the middle Ridgeway area; taken together they offer a detailed picture. Richard Jefferies painted an impressionist view of bird life. He did not give specific detail and often gave the birds his own name. For example he describes the activities of “cave-swallows”, “ruddy-throated chimney-swallows” and “eave-swallows” in *Field and Hedgerow*. He recorded changes in populations of birds – no doubt related to different land-use and also climatic conditions. Rev A.C. Smith wrote his *Birds of Wiltshire* in 1887. Another contemporary of Jefferies, E.H. Goddard recorded bird populations but lived to his nineties. One wonders how much material Jefferies could have recorded about bird activity had he lived longer.

Richard Jefferies noted “Machinery has not altered the earth, but it has altered the condition of men’s lives.”<sup>3</sup> And what would Jefferies think of the Ridgeway now? Apart from the walkers and leisure activities, there is no life in the fields besides the Ridgeway now – they are empty of people, albeit that there are far more trees.

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<sup>3</sup> *Field and Hedgerow*, p.143

## RIDGEWAY

**H**igh in the hills, where the wind passes  
through the forest of the grasses,  
the bearded, plumed and tufted ones  
that gently wave their delicate fronds,  
and one and all together bend  
and flow with the prevailing wind –  
never for a moment still  
in rippling waves along the hill.

This wind that breathes like breath divine  
carries me away from time,  
riffing the grass as through the pages  
of the stories of the ages –  
of all who passed this way before  
in trade or travel, work or war,  
backwards to the dawn of years  
when bearded tribesmen waved their spears.

*George Miller, 2013.*

### **Friends of the Ridgeway**

Society Member, Ian Ritchie is retiring as Chairman of Friends of the Ridgeway this year after 15 years in office. Ian took on the role at a time when the Friends were struggling to counter the increasing and devastating impact on the Ridgeway of abuse by the off-roaders, resulting in many stretches of the Trail becoming a sea of mud impassable by walkers or any other users. Mr Ritchie ably led a successful campaign to counter this and to achieve legal protection for the Ridgeway and other green lanes. He has also taken charge of a more recent project to establish The Great Stones Way. He will be missed.

## OL' BLUE EYES

The recent republication by the Richard Jefferies Society of some of Jefferies' early journalism, *A Natural System of National Defence*, which first appeared over three parts in the *Swindon Advertiser* in June/July 1871, reveals some shortcomings in his style. His exuberance prompted statements for which he had no supporting evidence. In his analysis of the recently-fought Franco-Prussian war he is overtly prejudiced against the French and raises the Germans to "a powerful race of men...sturdy, and strong built with light hair, and grey or blue eyes." He damns the French as "much slighter men, neither so tall or thickset...their hair and eyes are dark." In reality, the average height for French and German soldiers in the 1870s was almost equal at 5' 3" – 5' 5" and 5' 4 – 5' 5" respectively.

Jefferies' bias, however, did indeed reflect Britons' dislike of the French and their pro-German sympathies and Britain remained neutral during the conflict. Britain's insular position meant relative safety from invasion and in diplomatic terms, the government preferred Napoleon III and Bismarck to "red" republics.

To Jefferies, the physical characteristics of combatants were the deciding factors in the outcome of the war whereas, in truth, the French forces were outnumbered two to one and German strategy superior. Jefferies expands his observations on eye colour in the following passage,

They [the French] fire rapidly and without much aim. It has been observed at English shooting matches, and generally among sportsmen, that the best shots usually have grey or blue eyes. The fact is undoubted, and obvious to any one who will take the trouble to observe. In all shooting, with rifle or gun, when the competitors are fairly matched, the blue or grey eye is sometimes almost marvellous. This is fact to be taken into account, the French are dark eyed, the German light, and the French certainly shot the worst in the great campaign. The English eye is usually light, blue or grey, and our shooting has ever been of the best, down from the days of the yew-bow and cloth-yard arrow.

"The fact is undoubted" deserves a challenge. Can a specific eye colour confer superior shooting skills? I put this extract to Hans Eiberg, Associate Professor, Department of Cellular and Molecular Medicine, at the University of Copenhagen. "There is no data showing significant results," was his response. In 2008 Hans Eiberg and his colleagues discovered that everyone with blue eyes has descended from the same ancestor who lived in the Black Sea area 6,000 to 10,000 years ago, when man was in the hunter-gatherer stage of

development.

This particular individual had a genetic mutation to the OCA2 gene which turned off the mechanism that produces melanin in the iris of the eye. Without melanin to give eyes their natural brown colour, they became blue. Whilst most genetic mutations pose a disadvantage and die out, the blue eye mutation thrived and proliferated. One theory is that cold weather and dark skies helped the colour change become widespread. Blue eyes also filter out less light so can see a little better in weaker sunshine. The lack of melanin also made people's skin lighter and fair skin is better at making vitamin D, vital in northern climes as there is less sunlight, which the body needs to produce the vitamin.

Today, blue or light-coloured eyes predominate parts of Northern Europe. In Estonia 99% of people have blue eyes, in Denmark 89%, Germany 75% and France 50%. In the UK, the highest concentration of those with blue eyes is in Southeast Scotland with 57%, the lowest in Southwest England at only 35%, with other regions variable between the two extremes.

Jefferies' assertion appears to be based on his own observations but he may have read a reference to it. Ambrose Bierce, the American short-story writer and journalist, fought in the Civil War and later wrote many tales based on his experiences. In his "An Occurrence at Owl Creek" (1890), a story of a Confederate sympathiser condemned to death, he wrote,

The man in the water saw the eye of the man on the bridge gazing into his own through the sights of the rifle. He observed that it was a grey eye and remembered having read that grey eyes were the keenest, and that all famous marksmen had them.

Jefferies was very interested in America and its history and may also have read, as Bierce did, of light-eyed marksmen.

In post-Civil War America, it is apparent in the myths and legends of the "Old West", that gunfighters, in fact or fiction were invariably depicted with blue, grey or green eyes, and a cold stare. Their fates, however, were determined by being quick on the draw rather than marksmanship. The Uintah County Heritage Museum in Utah claims in its website, without qualification, that "95% of all gunslingers were blue-eyed". In the latter part of the nineteenth century 57.4% of the white population of the US had blue eyes.

An American thread runs through this romance and the closest we can get to "scientific data" is to be found in a Californian newspaper item in the *Sausalito News* of 17 August 1918. A report filed from Fort Worth, headlined, "Men Having Gray Eyes Have Proved to be Best

Marksmen”, described an eight-month trial at the US army’s Camp Bowie to test proficiency in marksmanship. It recorded the eye colour of the best shots in descending order:

Gray: best shots

Gray/blue: next

Blue: third

Hazel: fourth

Brown: fifth

Black: sixth

The report continued, “Soldiers with light brown to black eyes cannot shoot with accuracy at a distance greater than 500 yards and at 800 miss the target.” These results probably don’t meet Hans Eiberg’s threshold for reliable scientific data but appear to be a convincing, unbiased experiment. Sadly, however, the last sentences of the newspaper report put it in doubt, as it ends, “Even with different nations the color of the eyes has determined shooting ability. Nearly every Mexican has brown or black eyes and they --- well, they are the poorest shots in the world.” This apparent libel reflects the long history of conflict between Texas and Mexico and US interventions in Mexico between 1914-17, and smacks of propaganda. It is also a striking echo of Jefferies’ calumny of the French. Had there been any universal recognition of the Camp Bowie experiment, would not the military or police have positively recruited the light-eyed for their forces?

In the absence of comparable data for today, I approximated military marksmen to competitors in the rifle shooting in the 2012 Olympics.

The medalists in the 50m. three positions, final were:

Gold: Niccolo Campriani (Italy) light-coloured eyes

Silver: Kim Jong-Hyun (S. Korea) brown eyes

Silver: Matthew Emmons (USA) blue eyes

The overall Gold medal table for shooting showed S. Korea and the US with three each, followed by Italy and China with two each. In these countries’ populations, brown eyes are dominant.

There may be little interest in today’s media about the eye colour of opposing forces or competing shooters, but the myth of blue-eyed superiority lives on and has recently re-emerged in America’s National Football League. In a web magazine, “The Sports Column”, for 15 January 2104, Benjamin Barrett of Santa Barbara, California, explored the prevalence of blue eyes among the top NFL quarterbacks (the player between the linemen and the halfbacks, who directs the attacking play of the team). Barrett’s research revealed that 80% of

Superbowls have been won by quarterbacks with blue eyes. Also, of the twenty-three modern era quarterbacks in the NFL Hall of Fame, twenty-one have light-coloured eyes (90%). In Caucasian Americans today, blue eyes are found in only 34% (blue eye incidence has declined since the start of the twentieth century – see statistic above – due to the changing demographics of the US, and continues to fall). Barratt believes that there is a testable, statistically supported difference between light- and dark-coloured eyes, which apparently tends to have a profound effect on the performance of an NFL quarterback. He goes on to suggest that any NFL coach should not be overlooking this trend.

Anecdotal evidence for the blue-eye legend has evolved from the US Civil War through to war by other means. Jefferies, in all his later writings on guns and shooting, didn't mention blue eyes again.

*Peter Robins*  
December 2014

### **SUEZ-CIDE!! – A HUMOROUS ANECDOTE**

**B**ack in the early to mid 1960s, I was teaching at McMaster University near Hamilton, Ontario. Early one academic year, I was introduced to a young new lecturer in Economics of Pakistani origin. One day we met at a bus stop and got into a conversation that continued on the ride down to Hamilton town-centre. When he heard that I specialized in nineteenth-century English Literature, he asked me about my thesis topic. Naturally, I didn't expect him to have heard of Jefferies, but the first mention of his name elicited this excited and astonishing response: "You don't mean the author of 'Suez-Cide?'" It turned out that he had written *his* thesis on the economic background to the building of the Canal. And, yes, that was the only Jefferies title he knew!

*Bill Keith*  
October 2014

**The Eltham Society** celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year. John Kennett, Richard Jefferies Society Member, conceived the idea back in 1965 in order that Eltham's history and people associated with it (including Richard Jefferies who lived there for a year from the summer of 1884) would be celebrated and remembered. The Society has a membership of nearly 500 people, who receive four newsletters a year and there is an impressive dairy of events. Long may they thrive.

## THE LUCKETT FAMILY

Writing about Richard Jefferies' great grandfather (also Richard) in his biography of the writer, Edward Thomas wrote:

Richard, in 1772, married Fanny Luckett at Lechlade, in Gloucestershire. This pair lived for some time at Rodbourne Cheney, near Swindon; and there, in or about 1780, was born their eldest son, James Luckett, and, in 1784, John, the grandfather of our Richard Jefferies. Fanny Jefferies died in 1805,<sup>4</sup> and a descendant writes of her that she "must have been a woman not only of parts, but of means and refinement, her many journeys to Bath being noted at a time when only the wealthy and high-born frequented that 'city of waters'."<sup>5</sup> Her husband, Richard, who survived until 1822, purchased Coate Farm in 1800, together with a mill and bakery at Swindon. It is on record that<sup>6</sup> he was a stiff man, who twice stood out against the sum demanded by the Vicar of Chisledon, as tithes; his son John did the same after that in 1832 and 1833.

Alain Delattre, who researched the Jefferies' ancestral line, states that Richard Jefferies was left £250 by his father in 1768, and £100 more by his uncle Thomas in 1772, the year he married Fanny Luckett. Delattre observed that £350 was the equivalent of 26 years of an agricultural labourer's wages and added: "What, if anything, the bride brought is not known," (p.85, *The Jefferies Saga*). Delattre states that information received from the County Record Office, Shire Hall, Gloucester "suggests that the Lucketts, though freeholders in the small town of Lechlade, were not particularly prominent or wealthy."

Recent information received from Luckett' ancestors, living in Australia and the USA<sup>7</sup>, suggests that Richard's father-in-law may well have been a greater source of funds that helped the Jefferies' family maintain Coate Farm, the bakery and the mill and that, perhaps, Richard Jefferies was not so much the great entrepreneur that history dictates. Fanny's baptism record names James Luckett of Lechlade as her father, not Richard Luckett who is recorded in the Society's records as such. Perhaps Delattre was looking at the wrong ancestral line and that the family was far better off than he imagined. A copy of James Luckett's will, supplied by living relations of his brother Simon, reveal that James also owned a property in Kelmscott and "estates in Swindon" (possibly three houses). These provided incomes for James'

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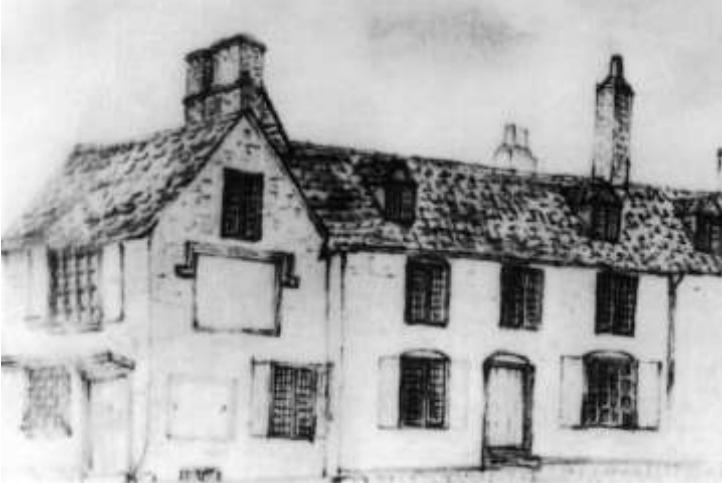
<sup>4</sup> 'Forbears of Richard Jefferies' by Jefferies Luckett, *Country Life*, March 14, 1908.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Roger Weaver of Troy, Michigan, USA and Judith Lydeamore of Adelaide Hills, South Australia have been researching their ancestry – their 5 times great grandfather was Simon Luckett of Lechlade.

beneficiaries (his brother Simon, two daughters [Fanny and Winifred] and Fanny's children). And as his daughters died in their fifties not long after their father's death, James Luckett's grandson (James Luckett Jefferies) was given legal responsibility to administer the estate. James Luckett Jefferies ran the mill and was known as the "ghoul" – more about him later.



From a pencil drawing of the bakery by John Luckett Jefferies



From a watercolour of the mill by John Luckett Jefferies  
Holyrood Church in the background

The name Luckett lived on through four generations of the Jefferies' family: as already mentioned Fanny and Richard named their eldest son, James Luckett (1775-1850). The father of Jefferies the writer was also named James Luckett (1816-1896), whilst his artistic uncle was John Luckett (1824-1856) who is responsible for the two illustrations above. One of the writer's cousins wrote under the name of Jefferies Luckett (her real name was Fanny Catherine Hall – her mother Martha was the sister of Richard's father) whilst Bevis Luckett Jefferies (1909-1985) was the son of Richard & Jessie Jefferies' son Harold, who emigrated to Canada. Our writer also used the name "Luckett's Place" as a fictional name for his own home at Coate in *Round About a Great Estate*. Whilst in *Amaryllis at the Fair*, there is the passage where Iden describes how the daffodil was Richard's "favourite flower" and that he brought them

down from Luckett's; every one in the garden came from there. He was always reading poetry, and writing, and sketching, and yet he was such a capital man of business; no one could understand that. He built the mill, and saved heaps of money; he bought back the old place at Luckett's, which belonged to us before Queen Elizabeth's days; indeed, he very nearly made up the fortunes Nicholas and the rest of them got rid of. He was, indeed, a man. And now it is all going again--faster than he made it.

James Luckett's will was written just a few months before he died in 1795 aged 80. He outlived his wife Martha who died on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1774 aged 56. She is buried in the churchyard of St Lawrence Church, Lechlade where their children were baptised and later buried along with James' parents, Thomas and Martha. James and Martha had two children: Frances (always known as Fanny: 1748-26<sup>th</sup> May 1805) and Winifred (1750-1<sup>st</sup> November 1804). In common with their mother, they died in their fifties. Winifred remained unmarried but sister Fanny married Richard Jefferies of Draycot Foliat (the writer's great grand-father) at St. Lawrence Church, Lechlade on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1772. Richard and Fanny lived for some time at Rodbourne Cheney, Swindon where three children were born: Fanny (1773-1835), James Luckett ("The Ghoul", 1775-1850) followed by John (1784-1868: the grandfather of Richard Jefferies, the writer).

James mentions just one brother in the will – Simon (1727-Oct 1808), a carpenter in Lechlade. He leaves an annuity to him for the rest of his life, and the proceeds from his estates to his two daughters: Fanny & Winifred and to Fanny's children should she die before her husband (i.e. Richard Jefferies). There is mention of a Trust to be run by Rev. Edmund Goodenough of Swindon and Daniel Matthews, a yeoman in Buscot, whereby income from his estates would support his

beneficiaries. There is an outstanding debt of £100 recorded that Fanny borrowed from her father. James wants his daughter to pay this back to her daughter (also named Fanny). So did Fanny, the mother, use the £100 loan from her father to help her husband buy the bakehouse, mill or the farm at Coate?

James appoints his daughter, Winifred as executor of his will. But she died 9 years after her father followed by her sister 6 months later. As such, Fanny's eldest son – James Luckett Jefferies – is appointed to take over as executor on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1805 and he is also the named executor of Winifred's will. It seems that James Luckett Jefferies aka "The Ghoul" was more capable than the stories about him indicated. It was said by Edward Thomas that John Jefferies was called back from London in 1816 (where he worked at Taylors, the printers) to run the bakery by his father "to make up for his [James Luckett Jefferies] shortcomings". Richard, their father, would have been nearly 80 by then. This description of "The Ghoul" by Edward Thomas:

John Jefferies' elder brother, James Luckett, never married. His oddities were put down to something like madness. He had a great distaste for braces, and preferred an old clock-chain wound about his waist; when his brother's wife stitched the braces to his breeches, he allowed them to hang unused, and still wore the chain, which clanked terribly on the footpaths at night. He would often walk thus from Swindon to Coate with a kettlefull of crumbs over his shoulders for his nephew and namesake's fowls. It is said that he once pulled up a number of fruit-trees which the nephew, Richard's father, had not planted rightly, and that it was this interference which drove the young man to America.

James Luckett was described thus in "Reminiscences, Notes, and Relics of ye Old Wiltshire Towne," by William Morris of the *Swindon Advertiser*, 1885 pp.275-6.

But there was another character whose aversion to children was as great as was that of Nanny Kernel's, and whom the children held in quite some dread. He was the ghoul of the old mill, in Mill Lane. 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.

So here we have a portrait of an eccentric man who was trusted, at the age of 30, to execute his grandfather's and his aunt's will. Perhaps James Luckett Jefferies was more capable than Edward Thomas led us to believe or perhaps he just became more eccentric with the years. His father, Richard, died in 1825 leaving everything to his children and a brother (who had died before him). James Luckett died in 1850 aged 74, his sister Fanny never married either and she died in 1835 aged 61. His younger brother, John (the writer's grandfather), ended up inheriting all and he lived until 1868 aged nearly 84. It was John who used some of the inheritance to build the new farmhouse at Coate Farm that now houses the Richard Jefferies Museum. So perhaps, in part, we can thank the Luckett family for providing the means to do this.

*Jean Saunders*  
January 2015.

## **THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY WRITERS' PRIZE – in memory of John Webb**

Please do not forget to nominate worthy writings for “The Richard Jefferies Society Writers’ Prize” starting with any length or format of writing on themes or topics broadly consistent with the work of Richard Jefferies published for the first time in 2015. Nominations may be made by anyone. Society Members are eligible for the award (excluding Members of the Executive Council). Decisions about the annual prize of £500 will be made by the Society’s Executive Council and will be final. Richard Stewart will sift through nominations and the Exec. Council will short-list their choices at their February meeting (in 2016 for the 2015 award) whilst the winner would be agreed at their June meeting. The right not to make an award in a given year is reserved.

Please help us find suitable candidates by sending nominations to Richard Stewart (see p.4).

## **RICHARD JEFFERIES MUSEUM TRUST**

**A**t the start of the New Year, the Richard Jefferies Museum Trust is planning for renewed activity at the Museum throughout the year. Whilst the Museum has been closed to the public for the winter, work has been going on to re-decorate the Sitting Room, prepare new exhibition material and leaflets, to begin to prepare the garden for the spring and complete our renewed application for Museum Accreditation.

In the Sitting Room, we were excited by the discovery of layers of Victorian wall-paper behind recent low grade panelling, which has been removed and which sealed the under stairs cupboard. A visit by a wall-paper Conservator confirmed that amongst the five layers of paper, at least one was from Richard Jefferies' boyhood. Using careful archaeological conservation techniques the layers of paper will be separated and carefully removed enabling further research to be carried out. This will be the beginning of a wonderful reference collection for the early decoration of the house and a new addition to the interpretation and display of at least one room. It may also be possible to reprint some or all of the wall-papers, and her report and conservation work will help to confirm this possibility. At the same time, early wood-grained paint has been revealed on the under stairs cupboard door and original painted shutters have been discovered in the sitting room bay window. These will be carefully conserved as the redecoration is completed.

Although the house has been closed to the public a number of events have already taken place this year, including both literary and musical activities. A growing programme of events is developing, and will happen throughout the year. The calendar of events is on the web site. The Museum will be open to the public again at the beginning of May (Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup>), with the usual Sunday and Wednesday opening arrangements for the summer. In addition, we intend to open for activities on Mondays and for volunteer activities on Thursdays. Details of Museum opening arrangements will be posted on the web site in the near future. Further details of additional opening will also be posted as they evolve. For further information about activities behind the scenes visit the blog at <http://www.richardjefferies.org/>

In addition to the practicalities of preparing new display and interpretive material, the process of redoing the Museum's Accreditation for Arts Council is a high priority, and will be completed by April. As part of this we are drafting new loan agreements and will be in contact with both the Society and with individual members who have made loans to formalise these arrangements in the very near

future. As always we look forward to working closely with the Society as the year unfolds.

*David Thackray*  
4 February 2015

Saturday, 8 November 2014: Thames Water works wonders



Yesterday, nearly thirty volunteers from Thames Water descended on the museum, armed with waterproofs, biscuits and bucket-loads of enthusiasm. After the obligatory cup of tea, the group divided into teams and set to work: clearing soil from the cowshed area; clearing brush and timber around the firepit; raking out the dirt between the cobbles of the main barn; removing concrete and rubble from the rear foyer; and, painting the tearoom. By the time the pizza delivery man turned up with lunch, the place had been transformed. Not only had yards of new cobbles been discovered in the yard, but the original flagstones had been revealed in the rear foyer too – a major result since we were just about to lay new terracotta tiles over the offensive concrete that was hiding them. Inside, the main cottage room, which is to be named the Mulberry Tearoom, had shifted from magnolia to a subtle shade of violet, plus a not so subtle “feature wall” in glorious Mulberry Burst!

Having cleared the firepit and moved tons of stuff to the compost bins, the team decided to get a fire going and, despite the rain, spent the next few hours making steady progress in burning the pile of brambles stacked up in the copse. On top of this, the volunteers separated our enormous pile of rubbish into hard-core, metal, wood and general waste; cleared all the weeds and junk from the pigsty, revealing the brick floor again; shifted the “bug hotel” into the children’s area; cut away dead branches and ivy; and, overall, had a good time! At the end of the afternoon, one of the team told me they had to fill in evaluation sheets: What was the best thing about the day? Everything. What could have been improved? Nothing. Well, from our point of view, he was absolutely right.

## MAIL ORDER BOOKS: SPECIAL OFFER

Postal sales of Society publications, including back copies of the *Journal*, are distributed by the Hon. Secretary (see p.3 for contact details). The Society is offering its Members an half-price reduction on the advertised book prices below for a limited period. Orders must be received by May 31<sup>st</sup> 2015. Cheques should be made payable to the Richard Jefferies Society. Overseas enquiries are welcome but please be warned that postage costs are prohibitive

|                                                                                                                 |                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| “Essay on Instinct” – Richard Jefferies, 2012 (pamphlet)                                                        | £2.50<br>(incl. Postage) |
| “A Natural System of Natural Defence” – Richard Jefferies, 2014 (pamphlet)                                      | £3.00<br>(incl. Postage) |
| <i>Richard Jefferies’ letters to Aunt Ellen</i> , 2009 (softback)                                               | £ 4.50                   |
| <i>Amaryllis at the Fair</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2009. Introduction by Carolyn Clarke (softback)               | £ 6.00                   |
| <i>Greene Ferne Farm</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2009. Introduction by George Miller (softback)                    | £ 5.00                   |
| <i>The Interpreter: a biography of Richard Jefferies</i> – Audrey Smith, 2008 (softback)                        | £ 5.00                   |
| <i>The Scarlet Shawl</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2009. Introduction by Andrew Rossabi (softback)                   | £ 5.99                   |
| <i>The Dewy Morn</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2009. Introduction by Rebecca Welshman (softback)                     | £ 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 £1.50 extra per copy)

|                                                                                                                                    |                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Restless Human Hearts</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2008. Introduction by Andrew Rossabi, 2008 (hardback; £20) (Softback version £8) | £20.00<br>-----<br>£ 8.00 |
| <i>Richard Jefferies: An Index</i> – Matthews & Treitel, 2008 (hardback)                                                           | £15.00                    |
| <i>The Forward Life of Richard Jefferies</i> – Matthews & Treitel, 1994 (hardback)                                                 | £12.00                    |
| <i>World’s End</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2008. Introduction by Andrew Rossabi (softback)                                            | £ 7.99                    |
| <i>Richard Jefferies: An Anthology</i> – Matthews & Welshman, 2010 (hardback)                                                      | £20.00                    |
| <i>The Rise of Maximin</i> – Richard Jefferies, 2012 (hardback – limited edition of 60 copies)                                     | £20.00                    |

(Add UK postage & packing £2.75 extra per copy)

# STUDY DAY

## Richard Jefferies' London

SATURDAY 27th June 2015  
London

### PROGRAMME

“It is by no means so generally realized how great a part London plays in his [Jefferies] writings,” writes Samuel Looker in his introduction to *Richard Jefferies London* [London: Lutterworth Press, 1944].

Simon Coleman has been invited to discuss Jefferies' London in the morning and Members will be invited to select and read relevant passages.

The managers of St Pancras Parish Church Hall double-booked us for the first hour of our meeting, so the vicar has allowed us to meet in the Church for the first hour. We hope to visit the British Library in the afternoon to look at some of the Jefferies' archives. Registering for day passes on the day may be slow. You need to bring **proof of identity** (passport, driving licence, bank card, credit card, **bearing signature**) and **proof of address** (utility bill less than three months old, Council Tax Bill or TV licence issued for the current year). The initial registration can be done online at <https://register.bl.uk/RegReader.aspx?ServiceId=1>

10.00 Meet at St Pancras Parish Church, Euston Rd, London NW1 2BA opposite Euston Station (see map on next page). Readings from the floor – select a relevant piece of Jefferies' writing by or about Jefferies (5 minutes long) on the subject of London to read to others.

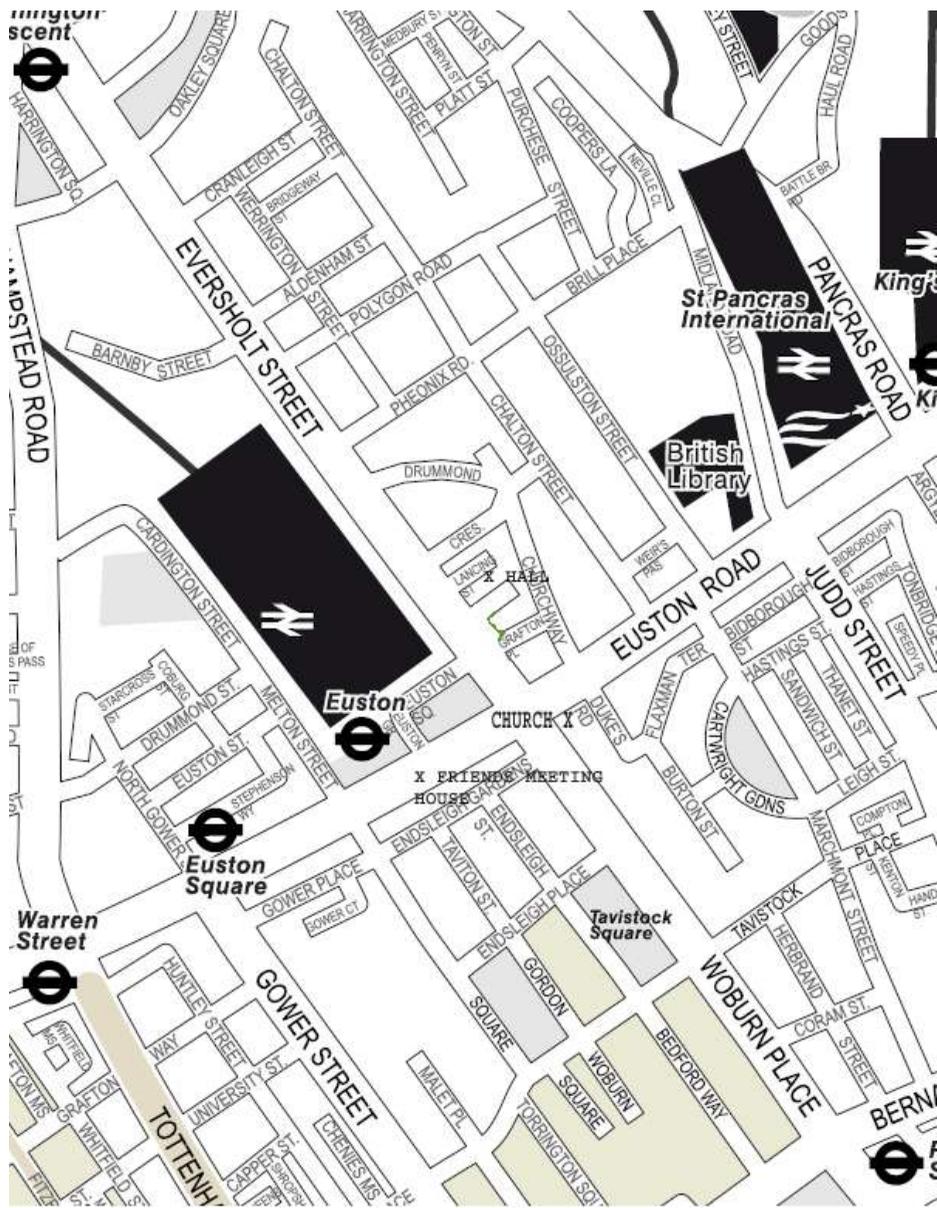
11.00 Relocate to St Pancras Parish Church Hall (in Lancing Street) for refreshments and a talk on Jefferies' London by Simon Coleman. Followed by more readings from the floor.

1.00-2.30 Lunch break at the Friends Meeting House on the Euston Road – there is a café and restaurant or you can eat your packed lunch in the garden.

2.30 Visit to Manuscripts Room British Library – see above.

4.00 Depart

Please let the Hon. Sec know by early June if you are able to attend.



St Pancras Parish Church, Euston Road, London NW1 2BA. The Church Hall is in the Church House, Lancing Street close by. The hall has a kitchen. Access is by staircase only, but there is a stairlift available. The lavatories are on the ground floor. There is meter controlled car parking operating locally.

## CITINGS OF RICHARD JEFFERIES

The Society has been informed that the literary effects of former late Member, **Roger Frith**, who did so much to promote Richard Jefferies on BBC Radio 4 in the 1980s, are housed in the Special Collections of the Museum of Rural Life at the University of Reading.

Rebecca Welshman presented a paper, entitled “Haunted by Ghosts of White Marble”: Bloomsbury in Crisis, at the French Society of Modernist Studies, **“Modernist Communities” Conference**, April 24-26, 2014, held at the Sorbonne Nouvelle University. She spoke about Jefferies and some of the modernists, including Virginia Woolf and her sister, the artist Vanessa Bell. Here is the abstract:

In 1863 Adam Storey Farrar recognised the Victorian age to be in a condition of “crisis in belief”, caused by the challenges of modern thought. This condition encouraged a reassessment of the spiritual relationship with nature and beauty; what became the focus of Richard Jefferies’ autobiography *The Story of My Heart* (1883). In the book Jefferies envisaged a community of individuals who appreciated the subtle connections between the mind and the natural world, and who would seek to develop these ideals through the arts. Jefferies’ premature death in 1887 precipitated a sudden and unusual demand for his works – including his autobiography, which was reprinted sixteen times between 1891 and 1922, and a Pocket Richard Jefferies (1905). The works of Richard Jefferies and Virginia Woolf share the idea of a fragmented human condition; one that for both authors was echoed by the broken Greek and Turkish statuary on display at the British Museum. Notably, these exhibitions influenced Jefferies’ *The Story of My Heart* and Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room* (1922). Jefferies became the greatest influence on the writing of Vanessa Bell’s son Julian, and Angelica Bell became daughter-in-law to Edward Garnett – the chief proponent of Jefferies during the early twentieth century. Leon Edel once wrote that “Bloomsbury” was a “particular group that denied it was a group”. The paper will consider how Bloomsbury was often consonant with emotional distance and isolation; the antithesis to the community which it ostensibly sought to create. In her memoir, *Deceived with Kindness*, Angelica Bell – daughter of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant – alludes to the “cold centre” and “sterility” at the heart of family life, and her “lack of emotional growth”. The paper will examine paintings by Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, and provide close readings from the fiction of Virginia Woolf. The paper will conclude that the shared denial of Bloomsbury as a group was intrinsically linked to a prevailing sense of fragmentation and emotional loss amongst its members, which had been inherited from their late-Victorian predecessors.

Crowborough Arts ran a **Crowborough Station Project** last September when local artists had their paintings recreated and displayed as 1920's style railway posters. Mary H Harris, whose mother was an avid Jefferies' reader, submitted a painting of a local scene known as Jefferies Oak at Cooks Corner, Crowborough, just down the road from the stone cottage where Jefferies lived for a short time. The poster was displayed at the Station with the caption "Home of Richard Jefferies naturalist and author 1885-1886" and was also sold in postcard form. Both can be purchased from Crowborough Arts (A1 poster £20 +p&p, postcards 80p + p&p). Ms Harris kindly gave the Society permission to reproduce her art-work on the front cover of this newsletter.

Rebecca Welshman gave a lecture about Jefferies as part of a half-day conference on ecologically inspired literature at the **Havant Literary Festival** on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2014.

Adam Thorpe's **On Silbury Hill** (Dorset: Little Toller Books, 2014) reflects the writer's time at Marlborough College, that was quite brutal at times, on the draw of Silbury Hill and Avebury as a place of solitude and on his personal reflections: "There is no such thing as the past. The hill lives and generations live within it." He mentions Charles Sorley, Hudson, Edward Thomas and Richard Jefferies quoting from Jefferies (p.90) "On the Downs" (*The Hills and the Vale*):

From the blue hill lines, from the dark cospes on the ridges, the shadows in the combes, from the apple-sweet wind and rising grasses, from the leaf issuing out of the bud to question the sun—there comes from all of these an influence which forces the heart to lift itself in earnest and purest desire.

Thorpe remarks that many people wrote about this Neolithic landscape but might not be aware that Jefferies wrote about Silbury Hill and Avebury in *Jefferies Land*.

For those of you with Internet access, Rebecca Welshman has set up a blog to be used to publish short articles and quotes about Jefferies at **<http://richardjefferies.wordpress.com/>**. If anyone would like to contribute an article or piece of original creative writing then email her on [bex\\_4@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:bex_4@hotmail.co.uk).

Gillian Bromhead reported that **Charles Hamilton Sorley's** poem about Richard Jefferies featured in the winter 2014 edition of the Friends of Swindon Museum and Art Gallery's journal. It was

accompanied by an illustration by Ray Ward. If you don't know the Sorley poem, here it follows:

**Richard Jefferies**

By Charles Hamilton Sorley (19<sup>th</sup> September 1913)  
(LIDDINGTON CASTLE)

I see the vision of the Vale  
Rise teeming to the rampart Down,  
The fields and, far below, the pale  
Red-roofedness of Swindon town.

But though I see all things remote,  
I cannot see them with the eyes  
With which ere now the man from Coate  
Looked down and wondered and was wise.

He knew the healing balm of night,  
The strong and sweeping joy of day,  
The sensible and dear delight  
Of life, the pity of decay.

And many wondrous words he wrote,  
And something good to man he showed,  
About the entering in of Coate,  
There, on the dusty Swindon road.

In an article in the **Outlook** magazine published (in India) 12 January 2015, Ruskin Bond wrote about the books he has loved and returns to again and again. He notes that those which 'exert their spell over me' are "those which have been written with passion and intensity, rather than literary finesse."

I still have my copy of the *The Story of My Heart* by Richard Jefferies, which I bought second-hand in 1956. It's the Penguin Illustrated Classic published twenty years earlier, with beautiful wood engravings by Gertrude Hermes. Although I have read it several times, it is still in fairly good condition as I keep repairing it with glue sticks and sellotape.

Jefferies, naturalist and gamekeeper, died young, but not before he had paid lasting tribute to the world of nature that surrounded him. A true pagan, he responded in the most sensual way to every breath of wind, blade of grass, leaf-bud, raindrop, sunbeam or creature of the wild. It is a record not just of the natural world, but of his spiritual development. Across the years, he speaks to me: "Give me life strong and full as the brimming ocean; give me thoughts wide as its plain; give me a

soul beyond these...sweet is the bitter sea, and the clear green in which the gaze seeks the soul, looking through the glass into itself. The sea thinks for me as I listen and ponder; the sea thinks, and every boom of the wave repeats my prayer.”

Jefferies wrote *The Story of My Heart* in 1883, in the heightened consciousness that sometimes comes to consumptives. It was a period in his life of poetic and mystic vision, and he wrote in great poverty until the end came. A deeply spiritual person, he was considered an atheist by his contemporaries because he believed in a life-force greater than a deity.

Miles Richardson’s research paper “**One thousand good things in nature**: Aspects of nearby nature associated with improved connection to nature” was accepted for publication in *Environmental Values* in the Autumn. It cites Jefferies. A full pre-print is currently available online: <http://www.ericademon.co.uk/EV/papers/Richardson.pdf>

Rosamond Richardson gave a lecture on “**Richard Jefferies and the Metaphysics of Wild Flowers**” as part of the “New Networks for Nature” annual symposium held in Stamford, Lincolnshire on 13-15<sup>th</sup> November 2014. The organisation brings together distinguished professionals and enthusiasts in the world of natural history ([www.newnetworksfornature.org.uk](http://www.newnetworksfornature.org.uk)). The lecture will appear as an article in the 2015 summer edition of the Society’s *Journal*.

A review by Richard Williamson of *A Woodman’s Lot*, by Michael Boxall, (Brown Dog Books) in the ***Bognor Regis Observer*** dated 25 January 2015, compared Boxall’s description of trees, flowers, mammals and birds, and the forest work that provides habitats for wildlife as “good writing – as detailed as Richard Jefferies or WH Hudson”.

Peter Robins reminds us that in Ludovic Kennedy’s book ***All in the Mind: A Farewell to God*** (Hodder & Stoughton, 1999) he quotes two passages from *The Story of My Heart* in the chapter “Touching the Transcendent”.

***The Story of my Heart*** (Torrey House Press) as rediscovered by Brooke Williams and Terry Tempest Williams. An American couple, who came to the UK in February 2013 in order to visit Jefferies’ haunts (including Coate Farm), has been working on a new volume of *The Story* that includes a new introduction by them. Terry is the author of fourteen books and has won many awards. Brooke has spent thirty years advocating for wildness, most recently with the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance. He has written four books. The new edition of *The Story* was launched in November 2014 and achieved a major

level of publicity. Within one month, all copies had been sold – 2,000 more people have been introduced to Jefferies.



Jean Saunders & Terry Williams 23 Feb 2013 at Coate Farm

The Afterword in the book by Scott Slovic says:

I am now captivated by Richard Jefferies' plainspoken stories of simple contact with the earth, his effort to capture private emotional responses to such contact, and his struggle to find words to match the intensity of his experience. I would now classify this book as a volume of "natural prayers." *The Story of My Heart* is so rich that I can hardly bear to read more than a few lines in one sitting. In fact, I feel slightly embarrassed to peruse Jefferies' candid lines, as if I am eavesdropping on the author's private whisperings. When I encounter these stories, I find myself not drawn into language, but driven out in the world, newly attentive, my own inner monologue stilled and then restarted.

Peter Bainbridge cited ***Meadows: A History and Natural History*** by John Feltwell 1992 Alan Sutton. This, to quote the jacket, "A highly readable and absorbing exploration of the history and natural history of meadows" has several Jefferies mentions. Dr Feltwell uses a quote from *Wild Life in a Southern County* Chapter 3 to open the chapter on cornfields.

The pink pimpernel hides on the very verges of the corn, which presently will be strewn with the beautiful "bluebottle" flower, than whose exquisite hue there is nothing more lovely in our fields

He mentions that "Many a vignette about the birds of the cornfields during the nineteenth century can be read in the meanderings of Richard Jefferies..."

Peter Bainbridge found ***By the Light of the Glow-Worm Lamp*** subtitled *Three Centuries of Reflections on Nature*, edited by Alberto Mantuel Plenum Press 1998, in a charity shop. This American anthology “represents the best of the nature-writing genre in over three dozen works from the past three centuries”, including Charles Darwin, Henry Thoreau to modern writers Annie Dillard and Rachel Carson. Jefferies chapter “The Crows” from *Nature Near London* is quoted in full.

Margaret Hunt sent in the following from the Penguin Books biography of William Cobbett, written by William Baring Pemberton and first published in 1949. On pages 146 and 147, a quite lengthy paragraph is quoted, in which Cobbett describes the Spring countryside, making reference to trees coming into leaf, seasonal wild flowers appearing and to the sounds of the songs of such birds as pheasant, blackbird, thrush and lark. The biography author's comment is: “But such descriptions are rare, Cobbett was no prose poet; and though a country-lover, he lacked the imagination of a Thoreau or a Richard Jefferies.”

## **BOOKS BY MEMBERS**

Brian Morris's latest book ***Anthropology and the Human Subject*** was published in April 2014 by Trafford Publishing. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant famously defined anthropology as the study of what it means to be a human being. Following in his footsteps *Anthropology and the Human Subject* provides a critical, comprehensive and wide-ranging investigation of conceptions of the human subject within the Western intellectual tradition, focusing specifically on the secular trends of the twentieth century. Encyclopaedic in scope, lucidly and engagingly written, the book covers the man and varied currents of thought within this tradition. Each chapter deals with a specific intellectual paradigm, ranging from Marx's historical materialism and Darwin's evolutionary naturalism, and their various off shoots, through to those currents of thought that were prominent in the late twentieth century, such as, for example, existentialism, hermeneutics, phenomenology and poststructuralism. With respect to each current of thought a focus is placed on their main exemplars, outlining their biographical context, their mode of social analysis, and the “ontology of the subject” that emerges from their key texts. The book will appeal not only to anthropologists but to students and scholars within the human sciences and philosophy, as well as to

any person interested in the question: What does it mean to be human? “Ambitions in scope and encyclopaedic in execution...his style is always lucid. He makes difficult work accessible. His prose conveys the unmistakable impression of a superb and meticulous lecturer at work.” Anthony P Cohen Journal Royal Anthropological Institute “There is a very little I can add to the outstanding criticism Brian Morris levels at deep ecology...Insightful as well as incisive...I have found his writings an educational experience.” Murray Bookchin Institute of Social Ecology.

Miles Richardson's ***A Blackbird's Year: Mind in Nature*** – was published on 22 Sep 2014 by FeedaRead.com. ISBN: 978-1785101281, Paperback 158pp £6.99. The publicity says that the book “was written on foot while reading nature's story. Through rich and intense imagery, the writer dissolves into the local landscape, with the writing itself shaping a creative consideration of mind in nature. Bounded by the blackbird's song, this is a story of unearthing a unity of life, mind and nature. For a journey of discovery is not just to wild landscapes, but finding wilderness in simple places close to home.” Dr Rebecca Welshman, who wrote the foreword writes: “*A Blackbird's Year* is significant as a new experiment in creative thought and for furthering our understanding of contemporary nature connection. The book explores how mind and nature inhabit one another - how experiencing nature illuminates the subtle nature of being and the processes of mind. Guided by the philosophy of the Victorian naturalist and philosopher Richard Jefferies, this atmospheric and unique account takes time to consider the reality of individual trees, birds, and other natural phenomena.” Miles Richardson submitted the following thoughts for the newsletter:

The current concern about our connection to nature has a long history. The Victorian nature writer Richard Jefferies founded a form of naturalism that recognised an increasing divide between people and nature, and his writing also explored the relationship between mind and nature.

The long tradition of writing about nature is a reflection on how the mind sees nature and itself, it's about understanding our relationship with nature. Some have argued that nature writing tests the boundaries of self against nature and is therefore a route to understanding of our place in the natural world. This stance fits the dominant Cartesian tradition of modernity with the subject being separate from object. However, an alternative viewpoint on mind and

nature is the phenomenological perspective offered by Merleau-Ponty that suggests a shared place in nature.

Early and classic nature writers such as Henry Thoreau in the 1850s, considered the impact of nature upon mind, but there was little deep thought into the nature of mind. In the 1836 essay, *Nature*, Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote of the flow of nature into mind and its impact, but again tends not to consider the nature of mind beyond writing “the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind”. I found that it was Richard Jefferies who explored that landscape of mind and nature more fully.

With relevance to today’s urban living, Jefferies found joy and intensity in everyday nature. Then his awareness stepped beyond that of the seen and heard with an explosion of reference to mind from late 1882. In the article *The Sun and the Brook*, Jefferies’ lyrical writing extended the flesh into the landscape and, like Nan Shepherd, showed a thinking that has similarities to the mid-twentieth century philosophy of Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty wrote of “the Flesh” as a collective term for the flesh of the human body and the flesh of the world and highlighted the interconnection between the perceived and perceiver – we are embedded in the landscape.

The grass sways and fans the reposing mind; the leaves sway and stroke it, till it can feel beyond itself and with them, using each grass blade, each leaf, to abstract life from earth and ether. These then become new organs, fresh nerves and veins running afar out into the field, along the winding brook, up through the leaves, bringing a larger existence. The arms of the mind open wide to the broad sky.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout work published in 1883 Jefferies considered mind with great regularity. He contemplated the interaction of mind and nature, the need of mind for nature and extended the mind into the landscape. He discussed the elusive mind, free of laws that rule matter, the power of mind, and the untapped mind that no thought has sailed. Although, in *The Story of My Heart*, Jefferies still appears to view nature as separate, referring to the repellent toad, creatures that shock the mind such that by no reasoning can nature be fitted to mind. Yet, repeated journeys through the local landscape, noting nature and writing on foot can reveal the unity of mind and nature. By 1884 Jefferies writes of the “sweet accordance” of mind and nature, how it is “absorbed by beauty”; a choice of words that suggests an interconnectedness. And as his mind wandered “deeper and farther into the dreamy mystery of the azure sky”, Jefferies wrote of unknown

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Jefferies, ‘The Sun and the Brook’

grand thoughts “hovering as a swallow above”. Finally, in *Nature and Eternity*, published posthumously in May 1895, Jefferies writes: “We are of the great community of living beings, indissolubly connected with them from the lowest to the highest by a thousand ties.”

This development of thinking through repeatedly walking the local pathways continues into his final works such as *The Open Air*, where in 1885, he considered mind being made happy by unconscious visceral experience of nature, rather than reflection – an idea with similarities to more recent thinking on the different levels of brain mechanism, pre-reflective processing and perceptual fluency. Richard Jefferies was of nature and before his time.

**Permission** a book of poetry by George Miller, published by The Silver Birch Press, (12 Leachway, Irby, Wirral, CH61 4XJ). A limited edition of 60 copies, printed by Kenneth Burnley on a Vandercook proofing press, on Stockwell cartridge in 12 pt Bodoni, bound in quarter maroon art vellum blocked in grey and silver with cover design by Bob Guy. 8 ½ x 6“, 80 pp. text. Price: £25 + £3.50 postage (Cheques payable to Kenneth Burnley).

War Poetry is usually regarded as a separate category of verse, defined by subject matter rather than style or period. The war poet is typically a soldier, writing from first hand experience about the horrors of modern warfare and the hardships suffered by fighting men. War has changed profoundly since 1914. In statistical terms the ratio of one civilian to eight military casualties has been more than reversed. The 20<sup>th</sup> century’s non-combatant war related deaths are estimated at over a hundred million, and in the present century new patterns of mass killing, both across and within national boundaries, have extended this process.

Literature and journalism have barely kept pace with or reflected these developments. The old romantic/militaristic notions and clichés are endlessly recycled, patriotic myths and mantras constantly revived. It is a field of human activity in which language itself has become deadlocked.

The poems here were written over four decades in response to episodes, lives and deaths involved in this developing situation. In 2001 I joined the peace movement, attended marches, vigils, wrote letters to the press and politicians, and did all I could to dissociate myself from the new wave of political violence and propaganda. Some of these poems are undeniable “grim”, but I wouldn’t be a poet if I didn’t possess the imagination and empathy that makes it at times impossible to separate myself from the suffering of others. Whatever

mental screens or barriers we can put in place the reality is what it is, and diminishes us all. I publish these now in the belief that they might strike a chord with others, powerless except by thought and word, who have kept watch in anger and pity, and a despair that yet never quite loses sight of hope.

Roger Ebbatson has recently published a chapter entitled “Seeking the Beyond: Desacralising/Resacralising Nature in Richard Jefferies” in a new book: ***Dynamics of Desacralisation***, ed. P. Partenza, V & R Unipress, 2015, pp. 91-102.

## **NEWS FROM OTHER SOCIETIES**

### **Alliance of Literary Societies**

The ALS Literary Weekend 2015 will take place in York on the weekend of 30/31 May. This will be organised and hosted by the Trollope Society and will consist of a weekend of talks, tours and conversation about books and writers.

Contact Helen Newman should you require further information (0121 4232100) or use the Alliance’s website at:

<http://www.allianceofliterarysocieties.org.uk/>.

### **Henry Williamson Society**

There are, of course, plenty of references to Richard Jefferies when it comes to Henry Williamson. It was reading *The Story of my Heart* in 1919 that convinced Williamson to further a career in writing. He kept a large folio-sized volume that he called his “RJ Journal” where he kept his thoughts and ideas for work in the early days. In the Society’s Journal No 50 (September 2014), Anne Williamson writes “Some thoughts on *The Beautiful Years*” (pp.58-72). This was Williamson’s first book and she mentions Jim Holloman – a main character – who was a portrait of Richard Jefferies. On Christmas day 1920, Williamson wrote in his “RJ Journal”: “Jim Holloman was meant to be me. The description of him is verbatim one of Richard Jefferies by Walter Besant in his *Eulogy...*”.

### **Devizes and Salisbury Museums**

The Richard Jefferies Society is a long-standing member of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society. We have a ticket that will admit just one member (recently reduced from three) to the Wiltshire Heritage Museum, 41 Long Street, Devizes Museum. The ticket is also valid at Salisbury Museum. Please contact our Chairman if you would like to borrow it (see p.4).

## PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2015

- Sat 7 March Joint meeting with the Friends of Alfred Williams.  
Venue: Richard Jefferies Museum, Marlborough Road, Swindon, Coate SN3 6AA. Time: 2-4.30pm.  
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 or just come along to listen.
- Sat 27 June A Study Day.  
Venue: London  
Time: 10.00am-4.30pm.  
Theme: Richard Jefferies' London.  
More information – see pp. 24-25.
- Sat 7 Nov AGM and Birthday Lecture  
(more information in next newsletter).  
Venue: Liddington Village Hall. Time: 10.30am-4.30pm  
Birthday Lecture: "History & Rural Affairs with reference to Richard Jefferies". Speaker: Prof. Barry Sloan.

Meetings are open to the public and free to attend.



The Richard Jefferies Museum is managed by the Richard Jefferies Museum Trust and is open to the public on Sunday afternoons (2-5pm) and the second Wednesday of the month from May to September inclusive. Please check details at [richardjefferies.org](http://richardjefferies.org). Park free at Coate Water, 5 minutes walk away. From Swindon town centre (Fleming Way), there are several bus services that stop next to Coate Water roundabout. These include: Monday to Saturday - daytime: Numbers 13, 14, and 20.