

**IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF
RICHARD JEFFERIES
- A GUIDE TO COATE FARM**



Richard Jefferies was born at Coate Farm near Swindon on 6th of November 1848. The author spent his childhood exploring Coate Water and the local fields and woods, observing wildlife and nature with an enquiring eye. The area around his home at Coate has been known for years as “Jefferies Land”. It has become a place of pilgrimage for generations of readers.

Jefferies had a great exhilaration for life. His unique expression of his relationship to nature has won him a secure place in the hearts of imaginative people. He has been described as a “many sided genius”. Historians cite him as an authority on agriculture and rural life in Victorian England. Major studies of mysticism have anthologised his work and discussed his ideas. He wrote one of the great novels for boys, as well as several highly original novels for adult readers. He is recognised as one of the greatest nature writers in the language and he topped a *Guardian* 2005 poll for favourite country writers.



The old house at Coate started life as a rambling, thatched cottage built in the early 18th century. The small dairy farm came into the possession of the Jefferies family in the year 1800. Richard Jefferies' great grandfather, a baker and miller in Swindon, bought the freehold of the 36 acre farm for £1,100. The property was then known locally as Jefferies' Farm. Richard Jefferies would later change the name of the house to Coate Farm in his famous letters to *The Times* in 1872. The original Coate Farm, now demolished, was located further north-west.

In 1825 Jefferies' Farm was passed down to John Jefferies, Richard Jefferies' grandfather (Grandfather Iden in *Amaryllis at the Fair*) then working in London for a printer and publisher named Taylor. John reluctantly returned to Swindon with his wife in order to take over the running of the family milling and bakery business in The Square, Old Town, where his succulent specialities would earn him the nickname "Mr Lardy Cake". John's father, who had no faith in banks, left a hoard of spade guineas in his house in The Square. Some of this money might have been used by John Jefferies to build the larger, brick-built extension (the present day museum) on to the side of the old thatched farmhouse. In John Jefferies' day the extension was also thatched. Later, in 1886, in a letter to his father, Richard Jefferies mentions not having seen the new blue slates. Fanny Hall, daughter of Richard Jefferies' Aunt Martha, remembers: "Until the thatch was replaced by slate roofing, it was picturesque."

John Jefferies' eldest son, James Luckett, first ran the farm with his eldest sister Fanny from about the age of 15 to 21 years (1837) and then worked in America returning to Coate Farm in 1841. He married Elizabeth (Betsy) Gyde in 1844, described by her niece, Fanny Hall, as a "town-bred woman, with a beautiful face, and a pleasure-loving soul, kind and generous to a fault, but unsuited for a country life."

On 6th November 1848, the author (John) Richard Jefferies was born. He was the second of five children. In 1851, the first child, Ellen, was killed by a runaway horse when she was only 5½. A third child, Henry (“Harry”), was born in June 1852. The death of Ellen, the addition of Harry to the family and the probable stress on Jefferies’ mother might be why the young Richard Jefferies went to live with his mother’s sister, Ellen Gyde - of whom he would remain very fond - and her husband Thomas Harrild, in Sydenham from about the age of 4 years. He spent his summer holidays at Coate and returned permanently to the farm around the age of nine.



Richard Jefferies aged around 14, 23 and 30 years

Richard Jefferies’ sister Sarah was born in July 1853. Another brother, “Charlie”, followed in November 1858.

Richard Jefferies’ grandfather died in 1868. In the will, Jefferies’ father, James Lockett, inherited the farm he had worked for 24 years. However, the bequest came with a condition that legacies should be paid to his married sisters, Fanny Cox and Martha Hall totalling £1,300. James Lockett found this debt a great burden and had to mortgage the property to meet the terms of the will. As a consequence, financial troubles would force him to put his home up for sale in 1877.

James Lockett was as much a scholar as a farmer. As a lover of nature and the countryside, he spent time and money improving the garden - planting fruit trees and flowering shrubs and growing potatoes (Forty-folds were a favoured variety).

Richard Jefferies grew up to share his father’s passion for books, nature and the countryside, but he never had any interest in farming.

Richard Jefferies married Jessie Baden on 8 July 1874. Jessie lived at Day House Farm and for a brief period the couple lived in Victoria Road, Swindon. They moved to London to further Jefferies’ writing career and finally settled in Sussex in a house with sea views.

After a prolonged and painful illness, Jefferies died of tuberculosis on 14 August 1887, aged 38, at his final home at Goring-by-Sea, Worthing leaving a wife and two children.

After a succession of different owners, Swindon Corporation bought the property at Coate in 1926 for about £2000. It is now a Grade II listed building.

The main front door and gate to the **Museum** are painted blue in honour of the “blue doors” described by Jefferies in *The Old House at Coate*.



Richard Jefferies drew on his experiences of farm-life, nature and of places he knew well to add detail to his essays and novels. There are many descriptions of the house in his work. They help to build up a picture of how the farm might have looked in his time.

Jefferies never mentioned places by name but it is clear from his descriptions that many of the local scenes portrayed in his writing were based on Coate and its environs. Books that reflect the area include *Wood Magic*, *Bevis – the Story of a Boy*, *The Amateur Poacher*, *Wildlife in a Southern County*, *Amaryllis at the Fair*, *Toilers in the Field*, *The Old House at Coate*, *Dewy Morn*, *Green Ferne Farm*, *The Story of my Heart*, *Life of the Fields*, *Open Air*, *Field and Hedgerow*, *After London*, *The Gamekeeper at Home* and *Round About a Great Estate..*

THE GROUND FLOOR

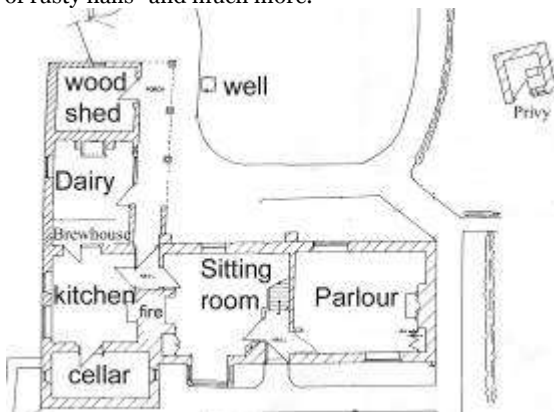
As you enter the Museum, the photographic collage of cottages in the entrance hall illustrates the Coate Jefferies wrote about in his essay “My Old Village”.

The **sitting room**, to the left of the front door, has the large **bay window** described in the novel *Amaryllis at the Fair*. Here Iden (based on Jefferies' father) sits, sipping his Goliath ale whilst waiting for his meal after working hard in the farm. His favoured meal was a plate of mutton, forty-fold potatoes and a hunk of bread followed by a baked apple - perhaps, a snooze in front of the fire in his broken arm-chair before he set out to work again.



A **bust** of Richard Jefferies now sits in the window (pictured left). Salisbury District Council lent it to the museum in November 2006. It is a replica of the marble bust sculpted by Margaret Thomas, unveiled in Salisbury Cathedral in 1892. It is believed that Miss Thomas made five plaster replicas. This unsigned copy of the cathedral bust appears to be the only one remaining. It belonged to Frederick Sutton, an Alderman and Mayor of Salisbury. In 1925 Mr Sutton presented the statue to Salisbury District Council where it stood in their Committee Room for over 80 years.

Between the door and bay window, there is a **corner cupboard** mentioned in the novel *Wood Magic*, where Bevis (essentially Jefferies as a young child) kept his **toys**. He lists “wooden bricks, ...his pocket-knife ... the tin box for the paste, or the worms in moss, when he went fishing ... the wheel of his old wheelbarrow ...the hammer-head made specially for him by the blacksmith down in the village ... a horse-shoe, and the iron catch of a gate ... a boxwood top, ... a brass cannon ... the lock of an ancient pistol ... some feathers from pheasants' tails, part of a mole-trap, an old brazen bugle, ... a wooden fig-box full of rusty nails” and much more.



Possible ground floor plan in Jefferies time

The sitting room also contains information about the house, the grounds and the Jefferies family along with people and places associated with Richard Jefferies.



Over the fireplace, once a large open inglenook feature, there is a reproduction of an engraving by W. Strang from a photograph of Jefferies taken by the London Stereoscopic Co. in 1879. There is also a photo of him, aged 23, along with one of his wife, Jessie Baden (pictured left). Jessie once lived at the neighbouring Day House Farm pictured at the bottom of the page. The photographs and pictures on other walls include Jefferies' final home at Goring-by-Sea, his gravestone at Worthing cemetery and a copy of an oil painting by Stephen Makepeace Wiens circa 1944.



Jessie (Baden) Jefferies March 1879



Jefferies final resting place near Worthing

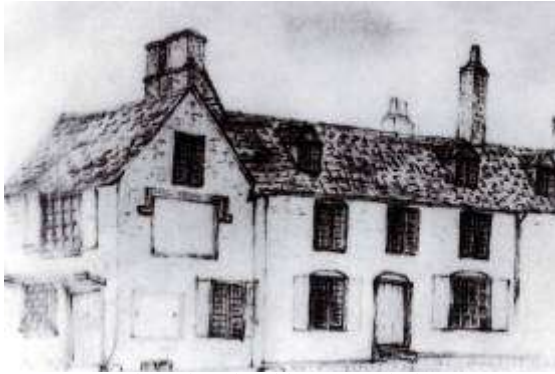
There is a map of Coate from 1884 and pictures of The Lawns, the Draycott Foliat Jefferies' family home, the Jefferies' Bakery in Old Town (pictured on the next page), Denis Bird's adaptations of sketches by John Lockett Jefferies (the author's uncle), Denis Bird's adaptations of sketches by John Lockett Jefferies (the author's uncle) and a copy of the same uncle's lithograph of Holy Rood church (pictured below right). The man in the picture peering over the wall is an earlier James Lockett Jefferies (this time the author's great uncle), a rather eccentric dresser who took delight at frightening children. All the aforementioned buildings have been demolished.



Day House Farm – home of the Baden family



Holy Rood Church by John Lockett Jefferies



The Bakery in Old Town, Swindon



Sketch of Draycott Foliat Farm by John Lockett Jefferies

The **Jefferies family tree** is surrounded by more photographs of the author's immediate family and there is a copy of his birth certificate, marriage certificate and that of his parents pictured below.



Richard Jefferies' father (James Lockett Jefferies) and mother (Elizabeth née Gyde)



Richard Jefferies' brothers Harry and Charlie and sister Sarah



CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF BIRTH



GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number: PAN 2069038

REGISTRATION DISTRICT 1848 BIRTH in the Sub-district of Swindon	Highworth and Swindon in the County of Wilt
--------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------

Column-	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No.	Wives and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, descriptive and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of Registrar	Name entered after registration

48	Sarah of Swindon 1848 Swindon Swindon		Boy	James Lucie Jefferies	Elizabeth Jefferies formerly James	German	Richard Jefferies Swindon Swindon Swindon	1848	Thomas Bennett Registrar	John Richard
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Richard Jefferies birth certificate

An added attraction to watch is a **video film** entitled *Jefferies Land* that runs for 20 minutes. It was produced by John Webb for the Richard Jefferies Society and the film visits local places dear to Jefferies that include Liddington Hill (pictured below), Coate Water, Hodson, Chiseldon and the Burderop Estate. There are appropriate quotations from the author's writing.



The study room contains reference books about the Jefferies' family, nature and Victorian ways of life.

Another door from the sitting room, now locked, led to the farm kitchen that shared the inglenook fireplace. There were three steps down from the kitchen into the **cellar** under the low-thatch that was described as Mark's prison in the novel *Bevis*. The author's father brewed "Goliath Ale" in the brewhouse between the kitchen and dairy that was stored in the cellar.

The sitting room and attic contain exhibits of **stuffed animals** in glass cases that were fashionable in Victorian homes. The exhibits include a fox, a kestrel, a great crested grebe, a weasel, stoat, mole and a hedgehog.

Jefferies' describes the "**parlour**" (to the right of the front door) with "the table, the old, old chair where I used to sit, as it stood by the southern window, watching for the first star over the mulberry tree." ... the "picture on the wall" and "the carpet has a pattern: it is woven; the threads can be discerned, and a little investigation shows beyond doubt that it was designed and made by a man. It is certainly pretty and ingenious." He recalls how the window frame in the room could be used as a sun-dial and how he could reach outside the window to pick the strawberries growing up the wall.



FIRST FLOOR

Up the narrow **staircase** and along the **passage**, oil paintings of local scenes adorn the walls. They were painted by Kate Tryon who lived in Massachusettes and died in 1952. She visited the area in 1912.

There is also a painting of “The Downs at Crowborough” by Cyril Wright (1909-1995) – a main stay of the Richard Jefferies Society for over twenty years. There is a plum tree planted in the garden as a memorial to him. There are old photographs and sketches of Coate farm on the walls along with an original painting of *Wood Magic* by H C Babington pictured right that was donated to the Museum in 1972.



A **bust** of the author, made by K. M. Harwood in 1948, sits on the window ledge. In the room on the first floor (originally a bedroom – the blocked off door led to another bedroom and to a third one in the old thatched cottage) there are display cabinets holding first and early editions of Richard Jefferies’ works. This book room is given an appropriate setting with photographs illustrating quotes from the author’s nature writing, assembled in 2005-6 by John Webb.



Many of the first editions on display came from Captain Comley Hawkes' collection. The Captain's grandfather's initials "R.H.", along with the year 1837, are cut into the **marker-stone** standing next to the main front door of the house, pictured right. The stone was once a landmark to denote ownership of Hawkes' fields, known as 'Great Axe' and 'Little Axe' - now Eldene housing estate. The stone was moved when the field was sold. The stone and books were donated by Capt Hawkes' wife, Gwendolyn, a former member of the Richard Jefferies Society in 1968.



One of the display cabinets contains the map of the Bill of Sale of the Coate Farm Freehold estate in 1877, when the Jefferies family sold up. There is also a rough coloured plan of Jefferies' Farm, dated 16th February 1923, commissioned by the then owner, a Mr Herring, possibly as a survey for fire insurance purposes plus a contract of insurance between Royal Exchange Assurance and James Luckett Jefferies (the author's father) for properties at Pitchcombe, Gloucester, dated 24th June 1872. It is likely to relate to houses belonging to the Gydes, who came from that area. These documents were donated by Hugo Matthews in 2006.

Pictured right is a line drawing of "**Richard Jefferies House at Coate**" by R. Muntz, dated 1896, given by Prof George Clarkson of Ithica, New York in August 1990. The old farm is sketched from across Day House Lane and shows the thatched cow-sheds to the right and the rick shed to the left. The cottage and rick shed are longer in the drawing than other evidence suggests. Presumably, the trees in the middle-ground have been lost through Dutch Elm disease. The hump in the foreground is a Bronze Age burial mound, now a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Jefferies appears to have been unaware of this feature, as he does not mention it in his writing. It would have excited him a great deal had he known. He was the first person to note the neolithic Stone Circle opposite Day House farm. This is also listed as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.



An original drawing by Ernest Shepherd (illustrator of A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* books), entitled "**The fight by the quarry**", was presented to the Museum by Mrs McClintock in 1965. It comes from the 1932 edition of *Bevis* (Chap XVIII, Ted and Bevis are the boys). All of the illustrations in the book are delightful. Interestingly, "Christopher Robin" Milne (A. A. Milne's son) selected *Bevis* as his "Desert Island" book, revealing he had carried Jefferies' works with him throughout his army service in World War II. He later became a member of the Richard Jefferies Society.

On the wall, over the fire-place, there are **photographs** of Jefferies' festivals in 1911 and 1913 coupled with photos of agricultural workers. There is also a photo of gamekeeper Haylock, his family and the Gamekeeper's Cottage at Hodson. The book *The Gamekeeper at Home* was based on Haylock.

Included in the **central display cabinet** is a small **portrait** (pictured right) of Jefferies' mother, Elizabeth Gyde, painted on ivory by the author's cousin, Margaret Gyde. The portrait was taken from the **daguerreotype** also on display. These were gifted to the Museum by Christine Billing, Jefferies' niece.



The silver “pap” **spoon**, which belonged to the author's grandfather, was presented to the Museum by Mrs Mildred Besant Jefferies Weaver of Texas (daughter of Richard Jefferies' younger brother, Harry). John Jefferies impressed his initials “J.J.” on the spoon with his own

stamping iron, made by the local blacksmith.

The original **manuscripts** of the children's fable *Wood Magic* and the essay ‘The True Tale of the Wiltshire Labourer’ are displayed along with a **Bible** of 1715 that belonged to the Cox family of neighbouring Snodshill Farm. It contains entries relating to the Cox, Abbey and Jefferies families.

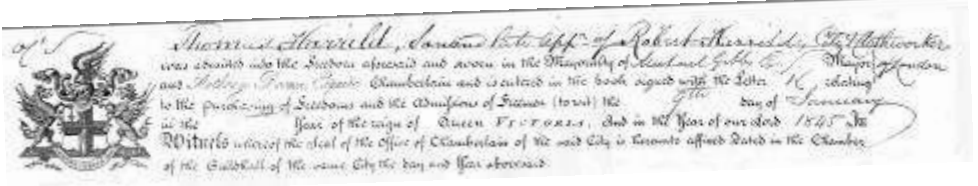


The gold-plated **locket** contains two coloured portraits of the author that he gave to his cousin, Lizzie Cox, when they became engaged. Her silk dress is also kept at the Museum. (Both items were donated by May Abbey, Lizzie's daughter). The engagement did not have the approval of the family and Lizzie ended it when Jefferies' affections turned to Jessie Baden.

The **lock of hair** belonged to Jefferies' first child, Richard Harold, known as “Toby”, born in Swindon in 1875. The hair was wrapped in the paper labelled “Toby - December 8th. 1881”. (Donated by Hugoe Matthews in 2006.)



Another glass cabinet contains further gifts from Hugoe Matthews, purchased from the Jefferies' family. These include a **Bible in 4 volumes**, inscribed by the author's mother to his brother – “Charlie Jefferies / From his Mother / November 25th 1880” and a small **wooden cylinder**, labelled “Copy of Freedom / City of London”, containing two scrolls confirming the admission of Thomas Harrild (Jefferies' uncle) on 9th January 1845, and Robert Thomas Billing (Jefferies' brother-in-law) on 7th June 1910.



Charlie Jefferies' 4-bible set and autograph albums of Helen Billing and Dorothy Jefferies.

The **locks of hair** belong to Richard and Dorothy (children of Charlie Jefferies, the author's brother). The **sprig of pressed heather**, is from Dorothy's wedding bouquet. She was married in August 1919. Dorothy's **autograph album**, dated May the 10th, 1904 has various entries to 1910. Another album belonged to Christine Billing and contains signatures of eminent figures. A third was owned by Helen Billing (daughter of Jefferies' sister, Sarah). Finally, this cabinet includes books owned or published by the author's relatives: *The Book of Common Prayer* presented to Frederick Gyde (Jefferies' maternal uncle) on the 4th of May 1838, *Half Hours of English History* signed by Christine Emily Billing (second daughter of Sarah and Robert Billing), *British Birds' Eggs and Nests* prize awarded to Master R Billing, *The Natural History of Selborne* printed by Thomas Harrild (husband of Jefferies' maternal aunt Ellen) and *Cinderella* also printed by Harrild.



The Jefferies family's **christening cloak** was presented to the Richard Jefferies Society in the 1950s. The author's mother gave the scarlet cloak to Mrs Bathe who lived in a cottage opposite Coate Farm, presumably after her own children had been christened in it. Mrs Bathe lived to 93 years of age and had 16 children, all of whom were christened wearing the

Jefferies' gown. The robe was then passed on to Mrs Bathe's daughter, the youngest of the 16 children, who lived in Newport Street, Swindon. Her two children (Arthur and Norman) were also christened wearing the cloak. The garment was added to the Museum display in May 2006 after having "disappeared" for 50 years.



The exhibited **frock smock** and **sun bonnet** were made by Sheila Povey. She donated them to the museum in 2006. They illustrate a time when the working clothes of rural men and women differed greatly from those worn by town dwellers.



The green **silk dress**, with bustle, was worn by the author's first cousin, Fanny Eliza Cox, known as "Lizzie", who later married William Abbey. Their daughter (May Abbey) is pictured on the next page right wearing it. Now about 150 years old, the front of the dress, has suffered damage from light exposure and needs to be kept covered. The left-hand photo shows the back of the dress and bustle.



Lizzie Cox's silk dress with her daughter pictured wearing it.

THE ATTIC ROOMS



Typical examples of lumber stored in the attic.

Continue up the narrow staircase to the **attic rooms**. These rooms are described in several novels and essays:

“A large, unfurnished room at the top of the house, which Amaryllis had made her study, her thinking room, her private chapel and praying room....Two great rooms running the length of the house. No carpet, bare boards, walls and ceiling white. The first, a lumber room, only lit by a window on the level of the floor. The second her special cell.” *Amaryllis at the Fair*

The room was also used for storing **apples** from the orchard, each kept separate from the next on a bed of straw.

The **four-poster bed** represents one described by Jefferies that hadn't been slept in for over 100 years. The **canopy** belonged to the author's aunt Martha (Jefferies) Hall. The **patchwork bedspread** was donated by Wendy Gilford in 2006. Jefferies also mentions a rope swing suspended from the beams where the children would play. **Quoits** was another favourite game played in *Bevis* whilst the **fishing rod** represents a favourite Jefferies' pass-time.

Cheeses, similar to those on the shelves to the right of the four-poster bed, were made in the dairy adjoining the house and originally stored under the thatch in the dairy's cheese loft.



On the walls are copies of **early letters** Jefferies sent to Ellen Harrild, his mother's sister. The author lived with his aunt and her husband on and off as a young child.

The **sampler** (illustrated right) was worked by aunt Ellen at the age of 8. It was presented to the Museum by Christine Billing, Jefferies' niece.

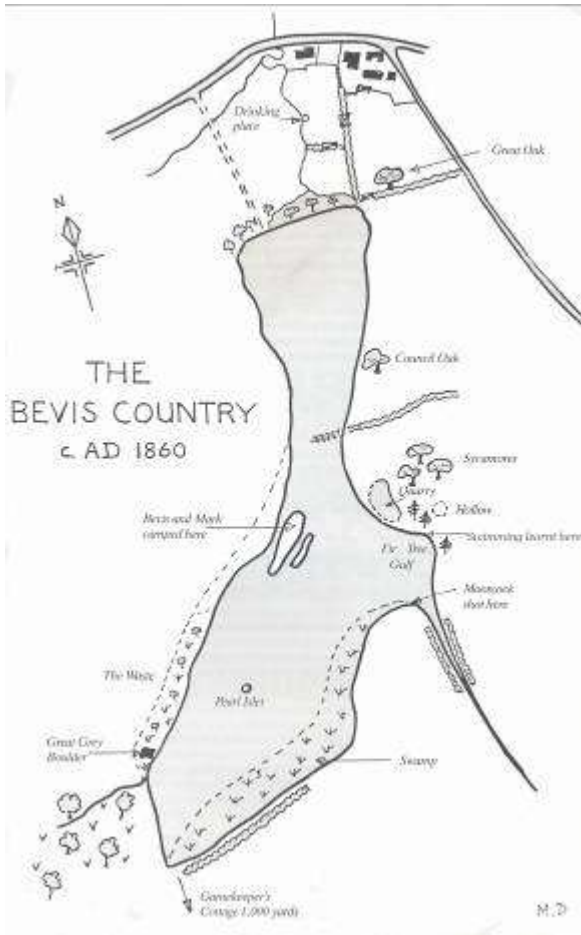
As a boy, the author often lay on the floor to look out of the main attic **windows**. From the back window, he could see out into the meadows leading to Coate Water and watch the southern stars. From the front windows, he could see, beyond the lime trees, the fields leading to Snodshill Farm, home of the Cox family - land now occupied by a garage and hotel.



“Sometimes she went into the next room – the lumber room – only lighted by a window on a level with the floor, a window which had no glass, but only a wire network. Sitting on the floor there, she could see him (her father) at the stile across the road, his hands behind his back, gossiping now with another farmer or two, now with a labourer, now with an old woman carrying home a yoke of water from the brook”.

Amaryllis at the Fair

On the desk, is a map of “**Bevis Country**” produced by Mark Daniel. It details the features in and around Coate Water mentioned in *Bevis*, many of them still visible today. One such feature is the “Council Oak”, pictured below in 2006.



The “Council Oak”, next to Coate Water, is where Bevis and his friends met to hold their council of war that took place in the nearby fields of Day House farm named the “Battlefield of Pharsalia”. In *Bevis* the tree was chosen as the meeting place because all the boys knew it and it was far enough away from the ears of parents who might try to stop their battle.

JEFFERIES' STUDY



The author's writing desk overlooking the orchard



There are only a few authenticated Jefferies' items on show. The **gate-leg table** (below) belonged to the author's parents. They gave the table to John and Amelia Brown of Coate when the house and contents were sold. It is on loan from the late Mr L Baker. The **writing table** by the window (pictured left) and the **oak chest** (pictured on the next page), where Jefferies kept his papers, were taken to Perranporth by his widow after his death. The oak chest's contents were dispersed and sold before the chest and writing table were presented to the Museum by Christine Billing, the author's niece. The contents of the chest included the manuscript of Jefferies' earliest schoolboy adventure story – *Ben Tubb's Adventures*,

written at the age of 17, are now in the British Library, London.

The remaining items in the room are described in the author's novel *The Amateur Poacher*. These include a **cannon ball**, a tall-back **oak chair**, an oak **linen-press** used as bookcase, a **stuffed fox "grinning fiercely"**, a long-case **clock**, **cutlass**, **guns** and **skates**. There is also a sweet **violet** in a tumbler of water, Jefferies' favourite wild flower.





The author's oak chest and the fox "grinning fiercely"

A replica of a **Matchlock gun** hangs on the wall. It was made by Mark Daniel to the specifications given in *Bevis*.



The **bookcase** contains books by writers read by Jefferies in late childhood or as a young man. The writers include Shakespeare, Scott, Addison, Chaucer, Byron, Voltaire, Rabelais, Goethe and Cervantes. Also in the bookcase are translations from Greek and Latin classics and a Calendar of Astrology.



The **display case** in the attic contains **shoes** handmade for Emma Jane Baden in the 1820s. Emma was Jessie Baden's (the author's wife) much older half-sister.

Also in the display case, is a **brick** from the old farmhouse wall, first noticed by Mark Daniel in 1974. Unaware of the wall's consequence, Swindon Borough Council pulled it down in 1988 and rebuilt it. Fortunately, Mr Daniel raised the alarm and the brick was found. It is carved with the letters "RJ" and, more faintly, "HJ", the initials of the author's young brother, Harry. Alongside the brick are other items from the garden. They include **clay pipes** and **beads** that perhaps date back to Jefferies' childhood. One of the pipes has been dated as 1850-1910. Jefferies mentions Alere Flamma smoking his long churchwarden pipe in the Summer house (*Amaryllis at the Fair*). The **books** on display are open at the pages describing the attic. **The toy chest-of-drawers** was made by Jefferies as a boy. It was his first piece of woodwork. The words "TOY BOX" have been impressed into the front of the top drawer. It was donated by Nancie Jefferies Cator, the author's great-niece whose father Charlie (Jefferies brother) had owned it for many years. It was given to Nancie for her dolls' house.



Brother Harry appears in the guise of "Mark" in *Bevis*. Bevis and Mark and their faithful spaniel, "Pan", have many adventures around Coate. The extract from the Shepherd illustration, left, shows them "discovering" Coate Water, or the "New Sea" as they call it.

THE GARDENS AND OUT-BUILDINGS

The **gardens** are in the process of being restored. The plan is to return them to the way they looked in Jefferies' time. He describes many features still discernible today in his writings: the **ha-ha wall** with its unusual **square drain** (a shelter for various animals according to the author), the **slated barn**, **hay-loft, workshop and the twin-arched pig-sties**. Jefferies' father built the pig-sties, the ha-ha wall and the main garden wall. He also planted many of the trees.



Pig-sties built by Jefferies' father



The square drain in the ha-ha wall

Nothing remains of the pretty circular thatched **summer house** that once stood behind the famous **mulberry tree**.



The thatched **rick shed** to the right of the barn in the picture below (circa 1900) has also disappeared. The once thatched building to the left of the pig-sties may have been used as the cart-house.



Picture taken from Home Field circa 1900

The **pump** by the **trough** has gone (pictured on page 1) but a **well** remains, albeit covered over by a modern drain cover.



The floors of the **cow-sheds** are still visible here and there. The standing walls are original. The cow-sheds were thatched and wooden posts supported the roofs at the front, leaving the sheds open to a central yard (pictured left, circa 1900). Some of the stones used to raise the feet of the wooden posts off the ground and stop them rotting from the damp have survived.

It is believed that the original thatched cottage once included the **dairy** building. The porch and new entrance to the thatched cottage are a recent 20th century addition. There was no glass in the dairy windows and the door opened out on to the covered veranda. Cheeses were stored high in the roof. During butter-making, rhymes were sometimes recited as the handle of the churn was rotated:

*Milk the milk in a wooden pail,
Come, butter, come,
Take care the cow don't dip her tail,
Come butter come.*



The **fruit trees** in the orchard (illustrated left in 1893), in the gardens and on the front lawn have become depleted over the years, but they are now being replaced. This includes the **espalier pear tree** growing up the west face of the house. The original **hand-made pins** used to train the tree are still embedded in the wall, reaching up as far as the attic window.

There is a huge **holm oak** (evergreen) by the end of the ha-ha wall. The famous **Russet apple tree** that Jefferies loved to sit under grew nearby, a tree lost some years ago, but not before Mark Daniel had successfully grown a cutting in his garden in Brighton. This cutting now produces fruit. More cuttings have been taken from this tree and new grafted saplings were planted in the museum

orchard in 2006. It is hoped to relocate the Brighton tree near the original site and to register the variety as the 'Richard Jefferies' Russet'. Some of the original apple trees pictured below in 2006 still bear good fruits.



The over-flow car-park for Coate Water Country Park, **Brook Field**, was once one of the farm's meadows. It runs down to Jefferies' favourite brook, described as the "Mississippi" in *Bevis*. The wooden building in the field used to be the agricultural museum, home to a display of Victorian farming equipment. It was closed down in the 1980s by Swindon Borough Council, who own it. The **Sun Inn** was an old thatched building in the author's time. Its grounds now extend into what was once part of the Jefferies' farm. **Home Field**, where dairy cows grazed in Jefferies' youth, has been planted with trees by Swindon Council to provide an undisturbed habitat for wildlife.

The **ash** at the other end of the ha-ha wall was planted by the author's father. Beyond the ha-ha, there is an **ancient hedgerow** that runs between Home Field and Brook Field. This is where Jefferies learnt most of what he knew about nature. The hedge continues on down to Coate Water, where he and his brothers spent many hours swimming, fishing, rowing and ice skating when the lake froze over in the winter.

The **mulberry tree** (pictured on page 21) was also planted by the author's father and it still bears good fruit. The holm oak, the copper beech behind the mulberry tree, the ash and the yews are all massive trees now.

It is believed Iden (Jefferies' father as depicted in *Amaryllis at the Fair*) planted his favourite **forty-fold potato** and other vegetables to the left of the path pictured below. The bed has now been planted up inappropriately with privet and shrubs. Strawberries were also grown in the front garden. There was a cherry tree in front of the sitting room window.

According to *Amaryllis at the Fair*, the **lavender hedge** was a favourite of the author's parents and little bags of lavender filled drawers throughout the house. Jefferies favoured the **damask rose** bush. It only blooms once in a season, but it has the most fragrant and abundant blooms. A damask rose was planted in 2006 to thank Sheila and John Povey for their years of dedication to Richard Jefferies and the museum.



The **main front wall** along the Marlborough Road was moved for road widening purposes. The **Lime trees** along the pavement were once part of the front garden.



Garden path – potatoes possibly grown to the left of the path.

Outline of the Restoration Project

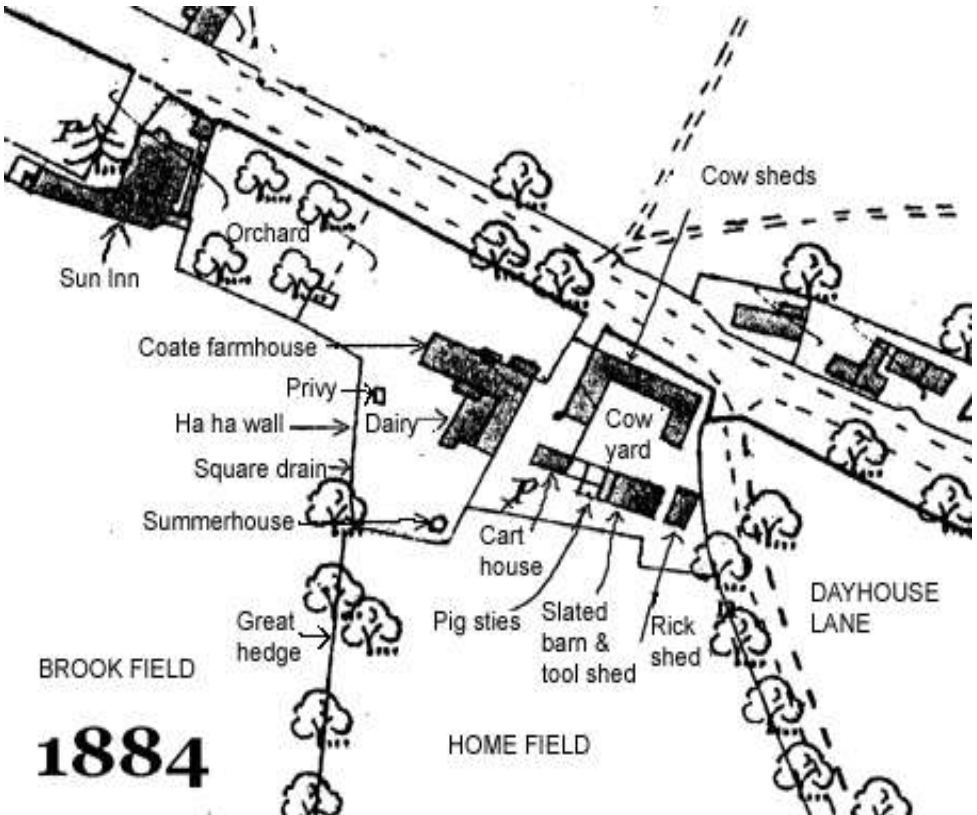
Assuming that funding is forthcoming, out-buildings will be renovated to display agricultural equipment that would have been used in Victorian times.

The gardens are being replanted with the herbs, shrubs, bulbs and wild-flowers mentioned in Jefferies' writing. The orchard and fruit garden are being restocked with old English varieties of fruit trees. The Jefferies Land Conservation Trust has been instrumental in transforming the gardens.

Part of the ha-ha wall has been exposed to reveal its purpose in allowing uninterrupted views across the meadow (Brook Field) and preventing cattle from straying into the garden. In the author's day, a large ash stood at the end of a small box-hedge running along this section of the ha-ha. This hedge stretches down to Coate Water. The lake and the brook at the bottom of the field were both favourite haunts of Jefferies.

The author spent hours lying on the grass in the entrance to the orchard, watching the clouds by day and the stars at night.

The map below from 1884 illustrates the main features around Coate Farm in the author's time.



Map of the proposed restoration areas



The Richard Jefferies Society trust that you have enjoyed this glimpse into the life of one of Britain's greatest nature writers - a man closely associated with Coate, its nature and farm life.

Please return and watch the progress as the Museum and grounds take shape.



THE RICHARD JEFFERIES SOCIETY

The **Richard Jefferies Society** (Registered Charity No 1042838) was founded in 1950 to promote the appreciation and study of the writings of Richard Jefferies.

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 Society also provides the volunteers who open the Jefferies' museum on the first and third Sundays of May to September inclusive from 2-5pm and on the second Wednesday of the month from 10am to 4pm throughout the year.

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