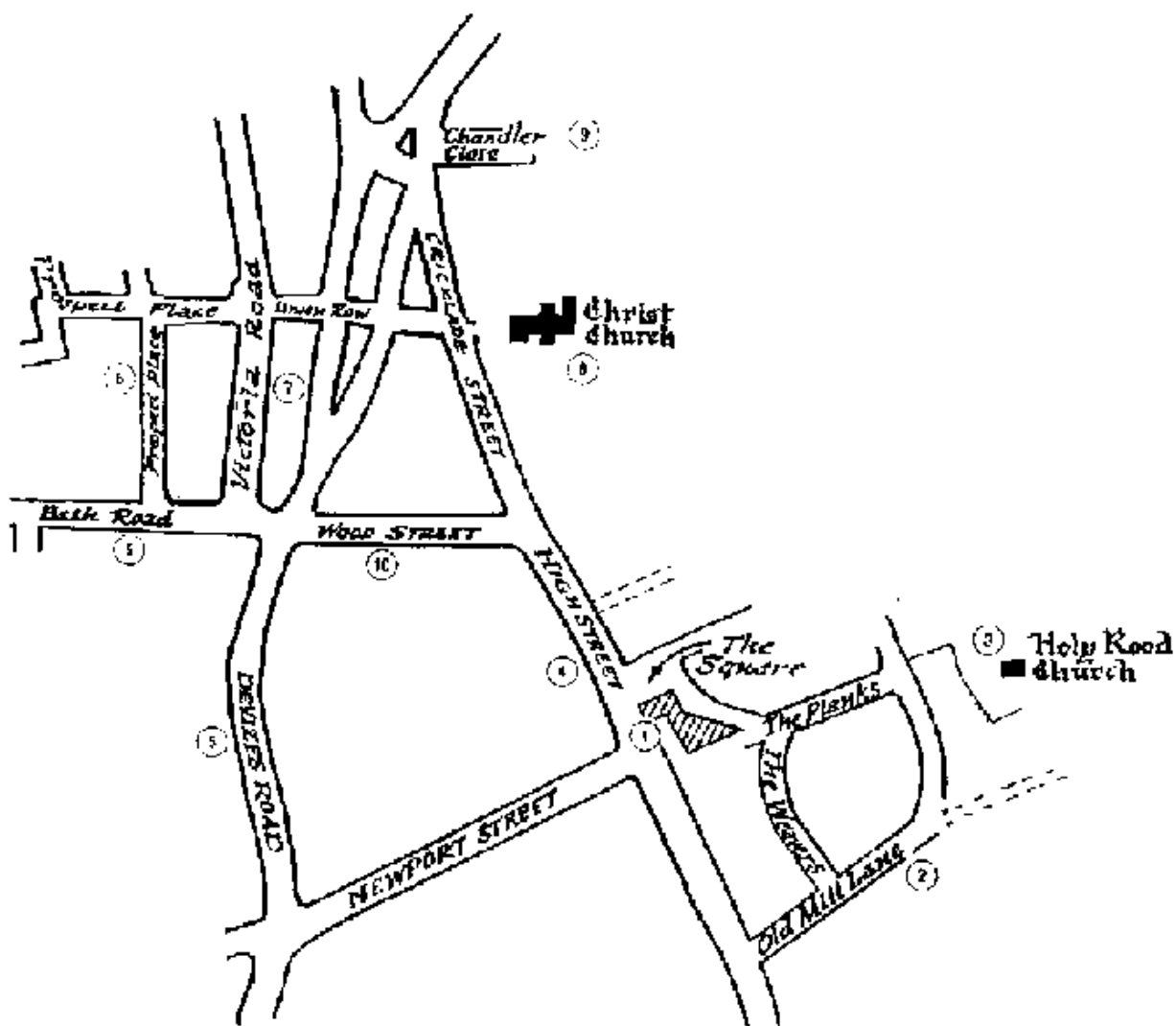


## A Richard Jefferies trail around Old Swindon

### **Richard Jefferies:**

Born at Coate, Wiltshire 1848

Died in Sussex 1887



**The Walk begins at The Square, Old Tow - numbers refer to places on the map.**

1. The bakehouse and shop belonging to Richard Jefferies' grandfather, John Jefferies (1784-1868), stood to the right of the Corn Exchange building, fronting the road. When a child, Richard would have been a frequent visitor to the long since demolished shop. His aunts, Eliza (Sewell), Mary, and Sarah would have been there.

**\*It's not entirely clear where this bakehouse and shop were as this description isn't clear on which angle of the Corn Exchange (Locarno) it referred to.**

2. Take the lane leading out of The Square along The Weavers and continue left into Old Mill Lane. On your right is an old 'squeeze-belly' stile. The path beyond it leads to Coate. Richard would have used this path to walk to and from Coate.

Continue along Old Mill Lane and look for the buttresses in the churchyard wall. Close to this spot stood the mill, once run by Richard's great-uncle James. The Goddard family mansion, *Lawn*, stood a few yards further on.

3. On the right, behind locked gates, stands the remains of the Holy Rood Church. If you can get the key (\*\*\*) you may see the box tomb of Richard's great grandfather Richard (1738-1825). Richard was baptised here.

**\*\*\* I don't know where one gets the key from**

4. Return via The Planks to The Square and go into High Street. Notice the Bell Inn, sometimes visited by Richard where, as a young reporter, he would talk with Sir Daniel Gooch and other leading citizens. Cross High Street and walk to Newport Street. The National School, now pulled down, stood in Newport Street. A Mr Jenkins ran the school, and Richard attended in the evenings when in his teens.

5. Turn right into Devizes Road. Richard went to two schools here: Fentimans at Springhill and the Misses Cowell at Clarendon House (corner of Phillips Lane).

Continue along Devizes Road and turn left into Bath Road. Number 19 was, in 1866, the premises of the North Wilts Herald. Under its editor, Mr Piper, the 17-year-old Richard began his career as a journalist.

6. Cross Bath Road and enter Prospect Place. Only a few houses remain dating from the 1850s. In Prospect Villas (now a car park) the Misses Cowell had a school which Richard attended in 1861.

7. Enter Union Street and cut through to Victoria Road. There is now a plaque on number 93. Here Richard went to live with his bride, Jessie Baden, in 1875, and here their first child, Harold, was born. They left for London in 1877. At what is now the offices of The Star were the offices of The Swindon Advertiser owned by William Morris (not Morris of Kelmscott). He was a friend to Richard and published some of his works.

Cut through Union Row to Christ Church (1831) having crossed Cricklade Street. This is the burial place of Richard's grandfather, John.

Walk into the churchyard; having reached the far end of the church, look right. There is a row of Jefferies graves with round-topped headstones.

**NB: When I did this walk I was not able to find a row of Jefferies' graves though I found one or two. Also of interest in that graveyard is the memorial of the Morris\*\* family – founders of the Swindon Advertiser newspaper.**

**OPTIONAL.** A few yards below Christ Church is Chandler Close and Holy Rood School. In the grounds are three blocks of stone engraved (1989) with quotations from Jefferies by sculptor Caroline Webb. There are also some seats.

Return along Cricklade Street to The Square but don't leave without a brief visit to Wood Street. Richard knew it well. Here, in rooms over 'Lay's Tearooms' (once the the Cross Keys pub), he and Jessie stayed for a short while before moving into 22 Victoria Street - now 93 Victoria Road.

In Wood Street were shop properties owned by John Jefferies and bequeathed to Richard's aunts Fanny and Martha. Martha Hall's school was next to the King's Arms. The Victoria Bookshop usually stocks books by Jefferies.

**\*\*The Cross Keys is now Baker Street – a pub/bar on Wood Street.**

**The Richard Jefferies Museum - <http://www.richardjefferies.org>**

For more information about Richard Jefferies, his life and his works a great thing to do is visit the museum at Coate.

**Richard Jefferies Museum, Marlborough Road, Coate Water, Swindon SN3 6AA**

**Tele: 07768 917466 [info@richardjefferies.org](mailto:info@richardjefferies.org)**

**Opening Times**

Sundays, 1.30pm to 5.00pm

Second Wednesday of each month, from 10.30am to 4pm

**The museum also puts on lots of special events and activities – it's best to check the website for information.**

Check out too the Richard Jefferies Society:  
<http://www.richardjefferiessociety.co.uk>