

THE
Journal
OF
THE KILVERT SOCIETY



THE KILVERT SOCIETY

*Founded in 1948 to foster an interest in the Reverend Francis Kilvert,
his work, his Diary and the countryside he loved*

Registered Charity No. 1103815

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Please submit contributions for the March Journal – by post or email – by 15 January 2012

Website: www.thekilvertsociety.org.uk (for additions or corrections, please email the *Journal* Editor)

Dates for your diary

Saturday 24th September

12 noon. Meet at Langley Burrell Church before a pub lunch at the Langley Tap and then a walk in the Hardenhuish area.

2012

Wednesday March 7

Visit to Bath.

Friday April 27

AGM and talk at The Bishop's Palace, Hereford.

Saturday April 28

Seminar and Annual Dinner at the Radnorshire Arms Hotel Presteigne.

Saturday June 16 or 24

Sunday June 17 or 25 Weekend at Monnington

Date to be confirmed, details to follow in March 2012 *Journal*

Saturday September 29 and

Sunday September 30

Weekend at Clifford

Details to follow in March 2012 *Journal*

Front Cover Sam Cowper Coles was Francis Kilvert's pupil at Bredwardine in the months before his death. Sir Sherard, in his address to the Society at its annual meeting in April, recounted Sam's eventful life but ruefully admitted he turned out 'a bit of a rogue'. The photograph is from the Society's archives. Sir Sherard said he had never seen it before, but remarked on how like his nephew Sam looked.

Back cover The gleaming weathercock on Clyro Church as captured on the day of our Commemoration Service in June. Below, the happy band of Members being led by Peter Beddall from Dorstone to Snodhill in June. Peter (with assistance) had put in a couple of days' hard work to enable us to assail the castle in comparative ease – still tricky, but compared with the jungle he had had to tame to carve a path for us, it presented no real difficulty.

Three-Volume Diary, packed in slip case, available to members at £60 plus £9.50 p&cp.

Who's Who in Kilvert's Diary At last, a fully comprehensive Who's Who with over 400 biographies and 22 family trees. It took the late Tony O'Brien many years to compile this volume and it makes a fitting memorial to him. £13 including p&cp.

More Chapters from the Kilvert Saga (reprinted) Contents: The Memoirs of the Rev. Robert Kilvert (the Diarist's father) and Recollections of Emily Wyndowe (the Diarist's sister); also extracts from Augustus Hare's account of the school at Hardenhuish Rectory. £5.

Jubilee Praise. The Tom Palmer Memorial Booklet, compiled to celebrate the Society's Jubilee in June 1998. This new publication, edited by our former Chairman, Michael Sharp, is a selection of the best essays from the Newsletters of the last thirty years. £5.

Francis Kilvert Priest & Diarist, by Frederick Grice. This book is a reprint of the 1975 original. £5.

All My Days A selection of articles compiled as a tribute to our late Secretary, E.C.J. West. £5.

Collected Verse Contains the 55 poems of Francis Kilvert printed privately in 1881. £4.

The Frederick Grice Memorial Booklet Contents: The Missing Year – Kilvert & 'Kathleen Mavourneen' by Laurence Le Quesne; two hitherto unpublished articles on Kilvert by Frederick Grice; several articles, also by Frederick Grice, reprinted from various newsletters. £4.

Kilvert's 'Kathleen Mavourneen', by Eva Farmery and

R.B. Taylor. The publication records the painstaking research, extending over some 35 years, into the Heanley family of Croft, Lincolnshire, and the related Cholmeley family, who were related by marriage to the Kilvert Family. Particularly interesting is the section dealing with Katharine Heanley ('Kathleen Mavourneen'), her relationship with the Diarist and her tragic death. £4.

A Kilvert Symposium. Eight contributions from members who read papers at the Kilvert Conference held at Attingham Park in 1975. £4.

Kilvert and the Wordsworth Circle, by R.I. Morgan The author summarises his researches into the Wordsworth – Monkhouse – Dew connection, in which Kilvert was so interested. £4.

Looking Backwards. References to Kilvert's wife, their marriage and honeymoon; accounts of their homecoming to Bredwardine and of Kilvert's death and funeral; extracts from the diary of Hastings Smith (Kilvert's nephew) relating to his enquiries into his uncle's year at St. Harmon, etc. £4.

Miscellany Two: The Oswin Prosser Memorial Booklet. Contents: The Solitary of Llanbedr by the Rev. D Edmondes-Owen; Radnorshire Legends and Superstitions by Mrs. Essex Hope; Honeymoon Journal by Dora Pitcairn; The Venables Diaries by L. Le Quesne; Memories of the Monk by Ann Mallinson. £4.

Kilvert's Poetry: A Study, by Bernard Jones. £3.50.

Twenty-four Walks in the Kilvert Country, by M.M. Morgan. Preceded by a chapter on Kilvert's Clyro. 1980.

(In view of the time which has elapsed since this book was written walkers should be aware that some routes may now be overgrown.) £2.50.

David Nicholas Lockwood, President of the Kilvert Society 1999-2005, by Wilhelmina Mom Lockwood. Compiled as a tribute to our late President. £6 incl p&cp.

The Other Francis Kilvert. Francis Kilvert of Claverton (1803-1863), by Teresa Williams and Frederick Grice. The authors, after diligent research, have produced an extremely interesting account of the life and work of the Diarist's Uncle Francis. £2.

Francis Kilvert's River Wye (put together by our American members). As the title suggests this is a selection of Diary extracts in praise of Britain's most beautiful river. £2.

The Books Kilvert Read, by John Toman. £2

Index of Journal/Newsletters 1956-2000, by the late Revd Dr Nigel Rowe. £2.

The Bevan-Dew Extracts. Entries from the original Diary relating to the Bevan and Dew families which were omitted from the published Diary. £1.50.

Kilvert's Cornish Holiday. Contains the previously unpublished parts of the Diary which record Kilvert's three weeks' holiday in Cornwall. In conjunction with the three-volume edition of the Diary they provide an opportunity of reading a lengthy portion of the original Diary in extenso. £1.50.

Kilvert and the Visual Arts, by Rosalind Billingham. A transcript of the authoritative

lecture given by Miss Billingham at the 1979 Annual General Meeting. £1.50.

Christmas Cards. Eight cards (The Otters' Pool, Gospel Pass, A|Black Mountain Farm, The Rhydspnce Inn, Clyro last century, Wiltshire Kilvert Churches, Bredwardine Vicarage, Bredwardine churchyard). £1.50 the set, incl p&cp.

Newsletter/Journals. Back numbers of some Newsletters and Journals. £2.50.

The following list of books can be purchased at good booksellers or obtained via the internet or booksearch:

Francis Kilvert, by David Lockwood. Seren Books, 1990. ISBN 1-85411-033-0 paperback.

Kilvert The Victorian, by David Lockwood. Seren Books, 1992. ISBN 1-85411-077-2.

After Kilvert, by A.L. Le Quesne. OUP, 1978. ISBN 0-19-211748-3.

Francis Kilvert and His World, by Frederick Grice. Caliban Books, 1980. Hardback ISBN 0-904573-52-4; Paperback ISBN 0-904573-78-8.

Kilvert The Homeless Heart, by John Toman. Logaston Press, 2001. ISBN 1-873827-37-7.

Growing up in Kilvert Country, by Mona Morgan. Gomer, 1990. ISBN 0-86383-680-1.

Exploring Kilvert Country, by Chris Barber. Blorenge Books, 2003. ISBN 1-872730-24-8.

Moods of Kilvert Country, by Nick Jenkins and Kevin

Thomas. Halsgrove, 2006. ISBN 1-84114-525-4 / 978-1-84114-525-9.

Kilvert's Diary and Landscape, by John Toman. Paperback, 404 pages, illustrated, 2008. ISBN 9780718830953. £27.50. The Lutterworth Press, PO Box 60 Cambridge CB1 2NT. Tel 01223 350865, email publishing@lutterworth.com

The last three books are copies of Kilvert's original Diaries and are complete – the only surviving examples of his work.

The Diary of Francis Kilvert, April-June 1870 edited by Kathleen Hughes and Dafydd Ifans. National Library of Wales, 1982. ISBN 0-9077158-02-1.

The Diary of Francis Kilvert, June-July 1870 edited by Dafydd Ifans. National Library of Wales, 1989. ISBN 0-9077158-02-1.

Kilvert's Cornish Diary, edited by Richard Maber and Angela Tregoning. Alison Hodge (Cornwall), 1989. ISBN 0-906720-19-2.

Prices include UK postage and packing, unless noted. For overseas orders, please see end. If postage prices change, the price list may have to be amended. Remittances for publications (kept separate from subscriptions and donations etc.) should be made payable to The Kilvert Society and accompany orders.

Send orders to the Publications Manager, Colin Dixon, Tregothnan, Pentrosfa Crescent, Llandrindod Wells, Powys LD1 5NW (tel 01597 822062).

Overseas members kindly note most items can be sent by surface mail at printed paper rate for an additional charge of £6. For airmail rates please enquire from the Publications Manager. It is regretted that, owing to the prohibitive cost charged by British banks to convert foreign currencies, only drafts in sterling can be accepted.

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Subscriptions The current ordinary subscription is £12 (Joint membership £15), due on 1 January. Cheques, payable to The Kilvert Society, should be sent to: Mrs Sue Rose, Seend Park Farm, Semington, Trowbridge, Wiltshire BA14 6LH.

Email communications All email communications with the Society or its officers should be made via the dedicated website, www.communitate.co.uk/here.kilvertsociety.

Data Protection Act 1998 The names and addresses of members are held on a computerised list exclusively for the distribution of the *Journal* and other mailings about the Society to its members. If you would prefer not to have your details stored on computer, the Hon. Secretary will ask you to provide stamped self-addressed envelopes for your mailings.

From the Chairman

IT is with great pleasure and pride that I write as the new Chairman of our Society.

We had another very successful AGM in April including a memorable Saturday afternoon visit to the Radnorshire Museum at Llandrindod Wells. There was a good turnout and Members were able to speak to the archivists.

I do urge you who are able to visit Llandrindod to see the restored artefacts. There is nothing like the immediacy of directly viewing the objects.

As many of you are aware part of the project is a digitisation of the Kilvert Collection and those of you with internet access will soon be able to view on line and learn about individual items. I am sure that those of us who visited the Museum and examined the objects can appreciate the very specialised skills of the con-

servators and the hours of painstaking work involved in the task. We have been told by the museum that the work has ensured the preservation of the items for the next hundred years. It was certainly a wise decision by the Committee to give the task of preservation to the Museum staff and their associates.

It is my personal view that the project is the most important task ever undertaken by the Society and I would like to thank the Committee on your behalf for sanctioning the work.

Very special thanks must be given to our Secretary, Alan Brimson (and Jean Brimson) for his vision and leadership along with Michael Sharp, Richard Weston and Colin Dixon. Finally, you the individual members must be thanked for your contributions. The response to the appeal was astonishing and the whole project has been a tremendous team effort.

From the Secretary

I AM pleased to announce our new website is now up and running. The website address is: www.thekilvertsociety.org.uk.

At the moment it is lacking in content, but there is enormous capacity and potential to make this a great asset for the Society. Shortly, the Archive will be available to you all on line.

I am very aware that in today's world we have to be more than up to date, even a step ahead of modern developments if our Society is to thrive.

The website's design is inviting, easy to navigate and user friendly. I am sure it will serve the Society well in the future.

Talking of serving the Society well, I would like to take this opportunity to give praise and thanks to two of our members, Ann Dean, who some while ago set up our original website, and latterly Carol Smith, who took over as our website manager and

managed it so well – our thanks to you both for a job well done – you were there when the Society needed you.

Lastly our thanks to our *Journal* editor, Charles Boase, who has managed the relaunch of the website and will also look after the content and updates etc.

On the facing page you will find the calendar of forthcoming Society events, also a form to express an interest in our winter event at Bath on Wednesday March 7. Please return this form by January 31; details will then be mailed to you during the first week of February.

I hope as many of you as possible will meet at Langley Burrell on September 24. As usual, please pre-book your teas (if you have not already done so) as this helps our 'Catering Manager' enormously.

From the Editor

THE Society has been busy – and so have the members: I hope you will find plenty of interest in this edition of the *Journal*.

Pressure on space has meant a couple of items have had to be held over, in particular the discussion on the actual identity of the gentleman in the *Portrait of Smith* (is it Kilvert's brother-in-law, or is it someone from an earlier generation?), and the continuing debate about the identity of the clergyman in the picture seen at Croft and of the lady in the work by Catherine Lyons (see *Journal* 32). But perhaps that will allow more time for reflection and for other Members to join in the debate.

Readers may have noticed that in the last edition the pages were not numbered. Apologies for that. In this edition the numbering continues as if the last *Journal* had been sequentially numbered. I still have a lot to learn about using this editing program.

As Alan notes above, the Society's new website is finally up and running (www.thekilvertsociety.org.uk), though as it is new and thin on content it does not as yet rank very high on web searches and can take some finding. To remedy that, our web designer, Ceri Richmond, says we need to increase the amount of background content on the site and engage in updating the site frequently, perhaps with event reports. 'Content is king as far as Google is concerned so my feeling is we should develop some additional pages to bolster the site,' says Ceri. 'You need

to improve the number of other web sites (preferably ones that Google already likes) that link to you. This could be blogs, local tourism web sites, local news web sites etc. etc. The more the merrier.' Email me (address opposite) for the code to set up links.

The Society's committee has given this project its full backing and is putting funds behind it. We are still in the very early days, but it should become a valuable resource for members (and the public in general) and open a door for new members. Alan Brimson, in his June 2011 *Newsletter*, noted that the digitised collection at the Radnorshire Museum can be projected onto a screen; I hope it won't be long before it is available to members by way of the website.

I would like as ever to thank the many people who put the *Journal* together. It is always a delight to be surprised by what comes through the post or by email. Sometimes the sender may not even see an immediate use for the material: but, for example, where would I be without Ann Dean sending me a photo the other day of Mrs Kilvert's grave 'in case it comes in handy', when it was just what I needed to illustrate Margaret Collins's article on Kilvert at Bredwardine? All the correspondents and photographers have done us proud and can only guess at my gratitude.

My proofreader, Nicholas Green, deserves special thanks; but since he didn't see the last version, any errors are mine alone..



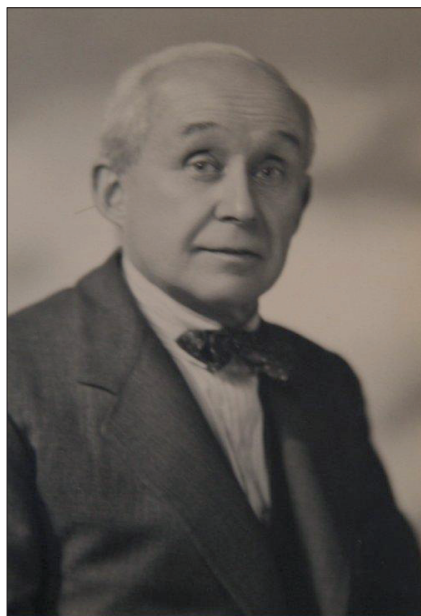
Kith, Kin and Kilvert

Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles entertained members of the Society after the annual meeting at the Bishop's Palace in Hereford with an account of his family's connection with Francis Kilvert. Here is an edited extract

MY FIRST awareness of Kilvert was when, during the General Election campaign of February 1974, I called at the house of a friend and contemporary, Lawrie Magnus, who was helping with the Liberal campaign in the Sevenoaks constituency in Kent. As Lawrie and I walked to my car outside his house in the pretty Kentish village of Leigh, Lawrie's father, Hilary Magnus QC, threw open the window and shouted at me "Cowper-Coles! Kilvert!" At the time I did not know what he meant, but I soon took steps to find out.

In the months and years that followed I discovered the delights of Francis Kilvert's diary. In many ways, the mid 70s were the apogee of Kilvert-ophilia. It was the era of the magnificent Andrew Davies television series on the BBC, and of the later

serialisation on the radio, still available today. I discovered that our neighbours in Kent belonged to the Kilvert Society, and used to talk to us about the land around Hay, and send out the Society's Christmas cards. In 1984 your distinguished former Secretary, Edward West, was kind enough to ask me to read the lesson at the Society's annual service in memory of a great priest and extraordinary observer of rural England in the middle of the



Sherard Osborn Cowper-Coles (1866-1936) (Sir Sherard's paternal grandfather). Sam was his uncle

19th century. In those years, I could quote by heart from the diary: Kilvert's description of the postcard as a "happy invention" was one which came often to mind. Now, more than 30 years later, I am delighted to have been asked to speak at your AGM. I cannot tell you what a pleasure and an honour it truly is.

As each of you in this audience will know better than I, my family links with Kilvert begin with the Rev Richard Venables's second wife, Agnes Minna Pearson. But they do not end there. They continue with Kilvert's holidays spent with my great grandmother, Mrs Cowper Phipps Coles, on the Isle of Wight, and end with Kilvert taking my great uncle, Sam Cowper-Coles, as his pupil.

My family are, in a sense, unlanded gentry. In about 1555 the Cowpers were given the estate of Ditcham Park, which nestles on the South Downs on the borders between Sussex and Hamp-

shire, between the much greater estates of Uppark and Stansted. For 300 years they lived and prospered there, before selling the estate in the 1860s. My great grandfather, Captain Cowper Phipps Coles was born there, and it is with the tragedy of the sinking of his ship, HMS Captain, that my family's mentions in the diaries begin.

Kilvert records with great feeling the sadness of Mrs Coles and of Agnes Minna Venables at the loss of the Captain. We see her and her children coping with the consequences of what was, in many ways, one of the greatest naval disasters of the 19th century. Nearly 500 men were drowned, and Britain's most modern battleship had gone to the bottom of the ocean on her first voyage with the home fleet.

Saturday, 10 September 1870

A wild tempestuous night, with lashing storms of rain and high wind. A new walk has been made at Llysdyndnam since I was last here. It is a great improvement to the place. We all left Newbridge for Clyro at 12.20. At Llechrhyd I saw Mary Bevan on the platform waiting to get into our train. She looked very pretty in her white feathered hat and red and black check cloak. An old gentleman had given her a Graphic, with some good pictures of the War. Mary of course got into our carriage. At Three Cocks she took Mr. Venables aside and told him that a dreadful calamity had happened. On Wednesday morning the turret ship Captain went down at sea with 500 men. Capt. Cowper Coles who constructed her was on board and went down with the rest. Mary Bevan thought Capt. Cowper Coles was Mr Venables' brother in law and very sensibly refrained from saying anything of what she had heard or seen in the Western Post of this morning until she could speak to Mr. Venables alone. He waited till they got home to break the news to Mrs. V. It is a terrible blow to her and all the family. Poor Mrs. Coles and her 9 children. And no one left to tell the tale, or why the ship went down. The Times of today confirms the sad news.

Thursday, 13 September

Mrs. Venables gave me a letter of Captain Chandos Stanhope to read and letters from Lily and Edmund Thomas with others from Southsea, all about the loss of the Captain. We have the gunner's account now. He says the ship turned suddenly bottom upwards in a squall and then went down so. He and some other men scrambled upon her hull and for a minute or two actually stood upon her bottom. What a sight. What a moment. And what a terrible [] for the 500 men entangled and surprised below deck. She was top heavy, had too much 'top hamper' and too low a free board, so that when she heeled over in the squall she had no high broadside to oppose to and press against the water, and so she turned upside down at once.

Wednesday, 14 September

I dined at the Vicarage. Poor Mrs. Venables terribly distressed by Capt.



A photograph remarkable for showing someone – Sherard Osborn Cowper-Coles ('Daddy') – who played on the beach at Ventnor with Francis Kilvert, and Peter, one of his two sons, who was still alive at the time Sir Sherard gave his address. Peter sadly died in June

Coles' death in the disaster of the Captain. She utterly broke down at dinner time and cried quietly and bitterly. I never saw her cry before.

Captain Coles's ten children were distributed among friends and family for their upbringing. My grandfather, Sherard, was brought up at Arundel Castle, with the family of the Duke of Norfolk. He went on to become a famous gentleman inventor. With his friends, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and Oliver Lodge, he established the *Spes Bona Club*, to pursue and photograph ghosts, in the spirit (excuse the pun) of the time.

Sherard established in the garden of his rambling Georgian house, at Sunbury-on-Thames, a workshop and eventually a museum. His greatest invention, still remembered and used today, was sherardising, the method of electro-deposition of zinc, which provides precision rust proofing the kind which galvanising does not deliver.

Aged 53, Sherard was persuaded by his two formidable sisters, Gussies (Lady Wake Walker) and Minna (Mrs Anson) to marry. And he did marry, his assistant, Constance Hamilton Watts, a distinguished graduate of Imperial College and the mother of my father and his two brothers.

Minna Cowper-Coles was a remarkable woman. She was married from here at Llysdyman, to Walter Anson of the Royal Navy, who had been at Dartmouth with the future King George V. She spent her last years from about 1911 to 1948, living at the Clayton Windmills, Jack and Jill, on the South Downs above Brighton. There she used to entertain the King. We still have

the visitors' book, signed George, and a silver handbag which the King gave Minna and which my uncle has kindly passed on to my own daughter, also Minna. It is deeply moving for me to see both Sherard and Minna mentioned in the diary as playing on the beach at Shanklin with the young Francis Kilvert.

Tuesday, 9 June 1879

And there were Gussie and Commerell to meet me and Mrs Cowper Coles outside the Station Gate in her wheel chair given her by the Duchess of Norfolk. So we went up to their house Newstead together and it was very pleasant seeing them all. Mrs Coles has got Newstead on a lease of 999 years. It is a pleasant well-arranged roomy airy house, very light and cheerful, near the edge of the Cliff with glimpses of the bright blue sea between the houses in front.

Wednesday, 10 June

Mrs Coles was taken in her wheel chair to the edge of the Cliff this morning and I sat with her there reading to her and talking and looking at the beautiful view, the long white chalk headland of Culver Cliff stretching far out into the bright blue sea, Sandown Bay and town and forts and Cliffs on our left, below us and on our right the village of Shanklin and the bright sandy bay busy with bathers and barelegged children paddling in the water or digging in the sand among the boats and machines, bounded on the right by Shanklin Chine and the Cliffs and Cape between Shanklin and Ventnor.

The photograph of Sherard with his children shows my uncle

Peter Lyons Cowper-Coles, his second son who at the time of this lecture is gravely ill, but living not far from here at Tenby, in Pembrokeshire. That photograph shows a living connection between my grandfather Sherard, who played with Kilvert on the beach, and someone still alive today. The final character who appears in the diary is Sam Cowper-Coles, sent to Kilvert to improve his Latin and Maths, in neither of which he excels. It is Sam Cowper-Coles who is with Kilvert to the very end, and who appears in the last entries in the diary.

Sam went on to marry Edith Bailey the daughter of Lord Glenusk, and to become the Duke of Beaufort's agent, I believe for his lands west of the Severn. It was Sam who was involved in some difficulty with the Legge-Bourke family, and whose bankruptcy led him to resign from the County Council, and move to Hampshire where he survived until the 1930s and also worked as a land agent. He loved cricket and the country but seems to have been something of a rogue.

Saturday, 11 January 1874

Took Sam for a walk up Bredwardine Hill in the afternoon. Carried Priscilla Price a pudding, etc. Went on to the Old House and saw Thomas Davies. Speaking of the necessity of renting land according to his capital the old farmer said, 'I couldn't cut rumps of beef out of mouse's legs'.

We called at James Meredith's. Jane took a great fancy to Sam. 'You are a beauty', she said. 'You are the prettiest young gentleman out. Don't you think so?' 'No', said Sam. 'I do', said Jane.

We found the snow very deep in places and almost impassable. The sky looked black, heavy and full of snow.

Monday 13 January

A rapid thaw set in in the night and the snow is melting fast. Calling at the Cottage after school I found the household in great confusion. The frost had burst a cistern pipe and there was a great rush of water and the pantry ceiling had fallen down. Bustle at the Cottage because the poor people would not all fetch their soup.

Began work with Sam Cowper Coles. He is very backward and strangely inaccurate, and knows almost nothing and can scarcely read two words consecutively, but he is very gentlemanly, quiet and obedient, and gives no trouble.

So there we have it: one thread of many, running through the diary. One slice of life in Victorian England. Kilvert knew them, but, more than that, he knew the realities of country life at that time: excitement and interest for the gentry newly liberated by the railways, but continuing suffering for the rural poor. As a young priest, Kilvert did much more than administer to the spiritual needs of his parishioners. He was a social worker, a builder of the kind of true community which makes human life so worthwhile.

I am delighted to have been able to speak to you this evening, and hope that the connection between Kilvert and the Cowper-Coles family can continue.



The arch erected for the marriage of Minna Cowper Coles at Llysdyham to Walter Anson of the Royal Navy. It was she and her sister who persuaded their bachelor brother Sherard Osborn to find a wife at the age of 53

The final character who appears in the diary is Sam Cowper-Coles, sent to Kilvert to improve his Latin and Maths, in neither of which he excels. It is Sam Cowper-Coles who is with Kilvert to the very end, and who appears in the last entries in the diary.



The Kilvert Seminar at the Radnorshire Arms Hotel

Charles Weston reports on a characteristically impressive display of research by John Toman into Francis Kilvert's deep interest in the astounding scientific and mechanical progress of his age. For those accustomed to think of the Diarist as purely a nature writer this came as something of a revelation

THERE was a moment at the start of John Toman's talk on 'Blessings on Science and Her Handmaid Steam: Kilvert and Railways', that the thought crossed my mind that we had all got on the wrong train and were heading towards 'a land of sheep and Sunday afternoons!' The destination was Alan Bennett and an excerpt from his literary fantasy about the Queen's rapacious desire for books – *The Uncommon Reader*. The humorous excerpt of the book proved to be just a starter for his talk, a deviation down a branch line that eventually put us back on track for his two main themes.

The first was an exploration of the way in which the background religious influences on the Kilvert family were far from hostile to science and industry. The second was the way in which literature of the Victorian era and the social networks around the Kilvert family created a positive view of industrial change in the young curate's psyche.

John Toman is of course no stranger at Kilvert Society events. A few years ago he gave an excellent talk on the influence of Quakerism on Kilvertian family life, and has written *Kilvert: The Homeless Heart*, which delves into the social history of the period.

His next book will dissect in part the impact of industrial and scientific change of both pre-Victorian and Victorian eras on the Kilvert family. The premise for the book is the obvious lack of detailed investigation which has been done into areas of Kilvert's life such as his schooling and university courses studied. How accurate he asked was William Plomer's assessment of Kilvert that he had no interest in Science? Plomer's Introduction to the *Diary* identifies the intrinsic value of his writing as being ... *in people ... in the beauty and associations with the countryside...* His interest in *the workings of machinery...* as given in his account of his visit to Liverpool in June 1872 was, according to Plomer, ... *aesthetic, not scientific and perhaps a little before his time...* A straw poll amongst the audience in The Radnorshire Arms on the morning of his talk indicated that we all shared Plomer's view, i.e. that our collective love of Kilvert came from the evocation of the countryside, its people and matters pastoral. Industry, science and technological innovation were non-starters!

Our speaker began with a book which we know Kilvert was reading shortly before his death in March 1878 and which offered a phrase which provided the inspiration for the title of his talk. Charles Mackay's book *Forty Years' of Recollections of Life, Literature and Public Affairs from 1830 to 1870* mirrored Kilvert's own life span. Mackay was an enthusiastic lover of the railways and had written a poem with the memorable lines:

*No poetry in Railways! Foolish thought
Of a dull brain.....
Blessings on Science and her handmaid Steam!
They make Utopia only half a dream.*

Did this poem excite Kilvert and reflect his own personal view of the impact of railways in the middle of the 19th century? He must certainly have been very much aware of the impact of the railways on his home area around Chippenham and conscious of them in relation to his own family roots which dated back to the coach building business of his grandfather Francis in Bath at the end of the 18th century.

The family's achievements at that time came at a period of rapid expansion in the road and canal systems across the country. The bankruptcy which hit the family in 1794 must still have rankled when grandson Francis was growing up some half century later. What would have made the failure of the family business even more bitter was the realisation that great financial gain could have been made had grandfather Francis remained a shareholder of the Sidney Gardens scheme when the Kennet and Avon Canal was built

behind his house in Widcombe in 1811. Had the bankruptcy which precipitated the bankruptcy not occurred then the Kilvert family

lifestyle might well not have been one of penury in Caroline Buildings but rather one of relative prosperity from the subsequent development.

By 1840, the year of the diarist's birth, coach building as an industry was very much in decline and the new technology of rail travel was fast impacting upon both coach and canal transportation. By 1850 a whole network of lines had been established across the country, *Bradshaw's Railway Guide* was well established and the Box Tunnel on the Great Western Railway, built only 6 miles from Hardenhuish, – Francis Kilvert's family home – was one of the wonders of the Victorian Age.

All of these factors put together could not have failed to have impacted upon the diarist's early years.

Perhaps most significant in the case for the Kilvert family's positive outlook on technological and social progress are the links in the social network surrounding the Kilvert family. The wife of Chippenham solicitor Alfred Keary, a visitor to the Kilvert home, had been born Lucy Mewburn. Her father, Francis



Val Dixon checks John Toman has everything he needs before his seminar address



Mewburn, was known as the 'First Railway Solicitor'. Such was the influence of Mewburn that, as an expert in the new legal practices and precedents, he worked alongside George Stephenson in lobbying Parliament to secure the passage of railway bills. His achievements must have been a talking point in family visits to or by the Kearys.

From family history John Toman moved on to the influence of literature. The wealth of literature from the Victorian age in his mind played a critical role in shaping Kilvert's view of the scientific world. George Stephenson's construction of the Manchester to Liverpool railway line was well documented and had been the wonder of the age. The events surrounding the 1829 Rainhill Trials of locomotives and the opening of the line in 1830 figured large in Charles Knight's *Old England*, a book much favoured by Kilvert in childhood. One chapter of it reviewed the discoveries and inventions responsible for the amazing social progress of the last hundred years. Other magazines published by Knight might well have contained the accounts by the actress Fanny Kemble (an ardent admirer of Stephenson) who described his prototype locomotive 'Rocket' as being a *snorting little animal* which *she felt rather inclined to pat*. Such playful use of language would no doubt have appealed to an adolescent Francis Kilvert in the 1850s. It was inconceivable that the achievements of Isambard Kingdom Brunel and the frenzied constructional activities of viaducts, bridges and ships in the middle of the century would have gone unnoticed by Kilvert.

And what of the diaries themselves? The *Cornish Diaries* are full of references to industrial development (tin mines, factories, etc.) and there are no fewer than 44 indexed references to 'Railways' in the main diaries. References to porters, station masters, electric telegraphs, station architecture, disasters, navvies, and crossing gates abound. Two railway disasters at Thorpe and Sittingbourne featured in separate sermons preached by Kilvert in 1874 and 1878. An obvious interest in the science of forces and motion appears in the diary entry of Thursday June 11th 1874. One of the carriages of his train had run off the line at Shanklin and with a screw jack – *a marvellous implement* – the carriage was lifted on to the line again. Kilvert was so in awe of this feat that he wrote, *It appears to me that if you had anywhere else to rest it*

a screw jack would lift the world. By this point John Toman had built up a full head of steam as he ran into his final stretch of his talk. He entered the salacious world of sexual arousal in the cramped railway carriages of the period (Freud attributed it to the isolation of the compartment and the irresistible motion of the carriages over the tracks) and the sometimes uncontrollable desire by Victorian gentlemen to accost ladies when travelling through tunnels with no carriage lighting available. Certainly Kilvert's experience when travelling through the Box tunnel on Wednesday May 18th 1870 on an excursion train was not a comfortable one: *Foul brimstone matches* were struck and passed down the carriage hand to hand. *Then a gentleman tore a lady's hand-*

kerchief in two, seized one fragment, blew his nose with it and put the rag in his pocket. The lady seized the man's hat in retaliation while another lady said *that the dogs of Wootton Bassett were much more sociable than the people!* Railway carriages obviously offered opportunities for social interaction that would not have occurred in the normal course of events and the most famous brief encounter of all in the diaries did not escape John Toman's scrutiny. Kilvert's encounter with Irish Mary, one of *two, merry, saucy Irish hawking girls* on Wednesday 19 June 1872 en route to Liverpool by train led to an infatuation that lasted. He wrote of his memories of *sweet Irish Mary* almost two years later on 31 March 1874.

John's talk concluded with a passage which on the face of it bore no relation to the world of Science and Industry. On Saturday 16 March 1872 Francis Kilvert was waiting impatiently for a lift in the Venables dog cart to Three Cocks Station. Charles the coachman had to cover the 5 miles in record time to catch the train.

As they arrived so the train glided up to the platform – dead on time.

The diary entry reads: *Well done, old Rocket*. Needless to say Kilvert was not referring to the locomotive for its punctuality but to the horse – so named after his namesake, the mechanical steed, which first conveyed passengers on the Liverpool to Manchester line some 42 years previously! Proof, if any was needed, of the glorification of the scientific and industrial age even in deepest rural Radnorshire.



*Scenes from the
Society's gathering
at the Radnorshire
Arms Hotel,
Presteigne,
16 April 2011*



*Michael Reynolds, above, and Jeff
Marshall, right, give readings
to the guests at the dinner (Val
Dixon also did a reading), while,
top right, Alan Brimson, proposes
the toast to the immortal memory
of Francis Kilvert*



The Kilvert Society Collection at the Radnorshire Museum

The official inauguration of the Society's restored collection took place after the Seminar on 16 April. The Society has raised more than £30,000 (including promised donations still to be received) to rescue its collection of books, pictures and other artefacts from the ravages of time and to have the collection professionally conserved and displayed in purposely-made cabinets in admirable surroundings at the Museum in Llandrindod Wells. The Society is grateful to the Museum and Powys County Council for their appreciation of Kilvert's place in the history and culture of Radnorshire and their willingness to display the treasures the Society has accumulated over more than fifty years. We hope it will bring many visitors to the Museum.



Kate Newton, above, was on hand to answer questions about how she and the other conservators, Jenny Williamson and Julian Thomas, had gone about preserving the collection





Weston-super-Mare works its spell

Who better to give us an account of the Society's visit to the Bristol Channel resort than Jeff Marshall, whose nostalgia for his childhood visits there suggest he might have only just missed the Diarist

'MEET' at the entrance to the Grand Pier at 11am' – thus the instruction for the KS Winter Visit of 2011. Yet, at 10.56 when Pam and I arrived at the rendezvous we were confronted by a completely deserted, wide-open and yawning entrance to the pier (burnt down 2008, restored 2010) with not a loiterer in sight let alone any obvious Kilvertians. But, wait a minute! What's that over there on the beach, surely not, at this season, a meeting of seaside evangelists? Well sort of, except that these evangelists were intent upon promoting and spreading knowledge of a different good book.

As usual at Weston-super-Mare (or Weston-super-Maré as some say, according to John Betjeman) the tide was well and truly out – I always think that Weston-prope-Mare would be a more suitable title – so that the group of 25 or so Society members looked even smaller against the huge expanse of seashore beyond. Once again, however, Frank was looking after his own for it was a gloriously sunny morning with, albeit, a very cool breeze which called for appropriately warm garments.

Punctually at 11 our secretary began the day's events and as ever he had done his homework. 'In 1801,' he announced, 'Weston hardly existed, a population of perhaps 100 eked out an existence in cottages set amidst sand dunes and Weston was but an outlying part of Worle, now itself a suburb of Weston.' Within 100 years, however, we learned, the population had swollen to 18,000, the coming of the railway in 1840 provoking a huge growth, greater mobility enabling more and more visitors, especially from Bristol, 20 miles away, to enjoy the new fashion for sea air and sea bathing (with or without 'drawers'). In that, Weston was no different from many of our resorts, both coastal and inland. That growth would seem to be continuing too, judging by the number of housing estates, supermarkets and other new commercial premises lining the A371, the dual carriageway link with the M5.

After a relevant reading from the *Diary* (Kilvert records his visit in September 1872 on pages 259-267, Vol ii) Alan led his flock away from the beach, across the prom, and the park behind the Winter Gardens to our first



John Toman, flanked by Alan Brimson and Michael Tod, about to mesmerise us with his account of the kind of show Mr Hume would have put on for the Kilverts at the Assembly Rooms that once stood across the street



stop outside the Playhouse theatre. Here we were invited to view the unprepossessing and empty building opposite, which stands on the site of the former Assembly Rooms where Kilvert and his mother witnessed the astounding display by the craniologist and mesmerist Mr Hume. John Toman, who had spoken about mesmerism after the AGM of 2008, was now called forward to enlarge upon the background to this Victorian craze.

By now it was 11.40 and (unbelievably?!) Alan announced it was time for lunch. That's what is so comforting about most Society excursions: usually not too many physical demands are made upon participants before a pause for refreshments is decreed.

With instructions to reconvene on the same street corner at 1pm the majority of members sneaked off – no that's wrong, they

strode off purposefully – towards a nearby fish and chip restaurant, which suggested some foreknowledge. Those with less hearty appetites (or more refined tastes) dispersed in search of classier fare,

some even ending up in a Patisserie Viennoise, which despite the pretensions of its title had no idea how to make a decent cup of coffee, although the cakes were good. Then it was back to the spacious promenade for a saunter towards our next stop, Holy Trinity Church, where Kilvert attended morning service on 4 September 1872 and heard Mr Hunt preach. The



spire had beckoned us from afar as we walked and we had not then appreciated its relevance to our tour. On the way we paused to stare at 1 Prince's Buildings with its sea view where Kilvert, his mother and Dora stayed and at nearby 14 Manilla Crescent, the holiday home of Katie, Thersie, Florence and the 'Monk'.





This later became Cairo Lodge and later still, about 1920, the Cairo Hotel, no doubt in memory of a former resident Thomas Roblyn, a naval surgeon who had been present at the Battle of the Nile. Fittingly, as Alan told us, its Arts Deco doors are engraved with scenes featuring camels and pyramids. This was something we were unable to verify because by now our leader was in Grand-Old-Duke-of-York mode and he marched us up a pretty fierce slope to Holy Trinity Church. Unfortunately it was closed, whether temporarily or permanently it was hard to tell. A freshly-painted notice-board with an artful modern logo thereon (but no notices or service times) did, however, suggest the former. The houses, mansions even, and terraces around the church indicated that this had once been a very smart and fashionable area, the stonework and architecture recalling that of Bath, but some neglect and evidence of multi-occupancy did nothing for the external appearance of some buildings, nor did the litter-strewn streets. What a pity!



Back on the prom, we straggled towards Birnbeck Island with its ancient pier (built 1867 and then known as the New Pier) that connects the island to the shore once providing moorings for pleasure-steamers. What another pity that it has been allowed to fall into desuetude (I've always wanted to use that word) so here again entrance was impossible.

The view here was particularly evocative for the present writer who had, once upon a time, arrived at Birnbeck pier by sea, on a ship of the White Funnel Fleet formerly operated in the Bristol Channel by P&A Campbell Ltd. ('The Steamers are especially adapted and designed to give the utmost comfort.') My father and I had arrived on the paddle-steamer P.S. Ravenswood. We had sailed from up river at Newport passing beneath the famous Transporter Bridge near the mouth of the Usk (the bridge is still operating, one of the very few surviving in the world and it is well worth a visit.) I remember being a little disappointed that our ship was the Ravenswood because this was a steamer with a single funnel (white!) and therefore rather smaller and less grand than one of the fleet's twin-funnelled vessels on which I had hoped to voyage.

Now it was time to retrace our steps but the leisurely mood of the day was retained and soon none could resist the temptation of the Cove Café which we passed on our way out. A further pause

for refreshment was felt to be desirable and, note this, sheltered from the offshore wind we were able to sit outside on the café terrace, in early March, to enjoy afternoon tea. Coats, mufflers and gloves were shed as Kilvertians basked in what could have been summer sunshine. Some even wondered whether anyone would be tempted to emulate RFK and indulge in a little sea bathing, with or without.... If so, nearby Anchor Head would have been the ideal spot for the ladies at least, because here Betty Muggleworth once presided over a ladies' bathing place concealed behind strategically positioned old ships' sails on the rocks round about.

A pleasant stroll along a rather cleverly constructed walkway, a sort of causeway between the sea and the Marine Lake, brought us to our last stop on Knightstone Island, once the site of a theatre, medicinal baths and an indoor swimming pool. More nostalgia for your correspondent, for here he remembers, in days long ago, swimming a few gentle lengths, or was it widths? No such opportunity now, however, for all that is gone and the buildings appear to be part of a development of chic apartments.

So that was the end of yet another excellent, sunlit Kilvert day out and our huge thanks go to Alan for his initiative, customary efficient planning and relaxed and genial leadership – although I have to tell him that some naughty boys and girls often to be found at the back of the group were not always paying full attention to their guide.

As we turned to leave – an amazing sight and something I have never seen before at Weston – the tide was coming in and was three quarters of the way up the beach.





Alan Brimson reads from the Diary in the room at the Old Rectory traditionally thought to be the one used for the dance after the picnic at Snodhill. But recent research has found the room was not built at the time – see page 110



Snodhill and Dorstone without the carriages

While black clouds lowered in the neighbourhood, the sun shone on a large party of members as they walked to revisit the scene of one of the funniest episodes in the Diary before adjourning for a tea at the Old Rectory that was outstanding even by Kilvert Society standards. Michael Tod takes up the story

Today we went for a picnic to Snodhill castle.... (Diary, Vol i. 160, Tuesday, 21 June 1870).

Some one hundred and forty-one years later, thirty-five members and guests met at The Pandy Inn, Dorstone, at the head of Herefordshire's Golden Valley.

Before leaving to walk to the castle and climb its steep slopes, we enjoyed an excellent meal at the inn. This was served by two young Polish ladies and I couldn't help reflecting how our dear Francis would have appreciated their pretty smiling faces and fresh young figures.

The weather was such as we have come to expect on recent walks, sunny and warm with a gentle breeze, and we set off in a gaggle along the lanes, chatting with old friends and making new ones as we walked.

We passed through between an ancient farmhouse and its buildings across the lane, noting the architecture of these and

the unusual mounting block on the side of the house reached by a long slab of stone from the front door.

Our guide for the day, Peter Beddall, had, we were told, spent a considerable amount of time and energy prior to our visit, clearing the way up the castle mound which had become very overgrown with brambles and nettles as well as with branches of the bushes along the path. (Thank you for that, Peter, it was much appreciated!)

The path got steeper and then became a scrambling challenge to reach the remains of the keep. *It was fearfully slippery and the ladies gallantly sprawled and struggled up and slithered down again.*

Those of us who had succeeded in reaching the place where his party had lit two rival fires to boil the potatoes that they had brought, heard a reading from the diary.

... Bridge choosing a hole in the ruins and Powell preferring a hollow in the ground. Powell, however, wisely possessed himself of the pot

and potatoes so that though the other fire was lighted first it was of no use and the divided party reunited and concentrated their minds and energies upon the fire in the hollow. Three sticks were propped together, meeting in a point, gipsy fashion and from them was hung the pot, full of new young potatoes just covered with water.

Disaster followed when the sticks burned through and the pot tipped all the contents into the ashes. Eventually the potatoes were handed round the table cloth, everyone being most assiduous and urgent in recommending and passing them to his neighbour. There was plenty of meat and drink, the usual things, cold chicken, ham and tongue, pies of different sorts, salads, jam and gooseberry tarts, bread and cheese. Splendid strawberries from Clifford Priory brought by the Haigh Allens. Cup of various kinds went round, claret and hock, champagne, cider and sherry, and people sprawled about in all attitudes and made a great noise – Henry Dew was the life of the party and kept the table in a roar. After luncheon the gentlemen entrenched themselves upon a fragment of the Castle wall to smoke and talk local news and politics and the ladies wandered away by themselves. At last we all met upon the mound where Mary Bevan and someone else had been trying to sketch the Keep, and sat in a great circle whilst the remains of the cup, wine and soda water were handed round.

After this Kilvert and his friends went by carriage to the Rectory at Dorstone where we strolled about the garden. Dinner was announced, quite unnecessarily as far as I was concerned, for I wanted nothing.

There were no coaches waiting at the foot of Snodhill for our party and we strolled back along the lanes to gather on the village green before being escorted to a delightful house that had been the Rectory in Kilvert's day.

The owners, Dr Michael Hession and his wife Mary, most kindly showed us the drawing room, the room traditionally thought to be the one which F.K. had recorded as *steaming hot*.

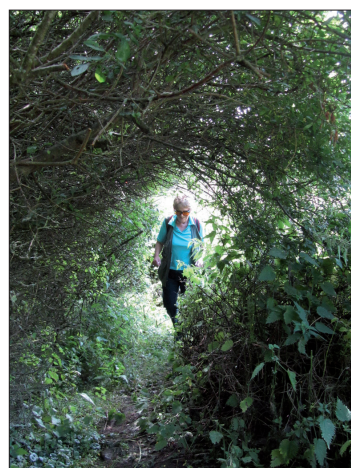
After dinner the carpet was taken up in the drawing-room and there was a dance on the slippery dark oak floor which was sadly scratched and scored by the nailed boots of the gentlemen and some of the ladies. Tom Powell slipped and fell. Tom Brown, dancing a waltz with his nephew Arthur Oswald, came down with a crash that shook the house and was immediately seized head and heels by Henry Dew and Mr Allen and carried about the room. We danced the Lancers, and finished with Jim Rufen but it was almost too hot. Then the carriages were ordered and we came away.

As Kilvert's party had done, we strolled around the delightful and well-maintained garden and were then invited to a wonderful spread of sandwiches, cakes and tea prepared for us by Mrs. Hession.

Before thanking our hosts and drifting away, some of us had noted a plaque on a side wall marking the burial place of a one-time owner of the property who had been one of the knights who had slaughtered Thomas Becket at Canterbury in 1170. After the knight had returned to Dorstone he is said to have endowed the local church and then hanged himself in a barn. His body had reputedly been entombed, standing up, in the wall of the house but had later been buried in the ground below.

Kilvert wrote: *The drive home in the cool of the evening was almost the pleasantest part of the day.*

Our day had been so enjoyable with the fine weather, splendid company, good food and interesting and evocative sights and experiences I, for once, could not echo his words.



A merry dance

The grand room at the Old Rectory in Dorstone has for so long been known as the Ballroom that it is easy to imagine Kilvert and his boisterous companions there dancing wildly. That is, until Sheila Jones undertook some research. Here are her findings

LIKE other members attending the June visit to the Golden Valley, I was impressed, not to say awed, at being shown the actual drawing-room in the former rectory where Kilvert and his friends held an impromptu dance. I mentally assessed how many dancers the room would hold and visualised the pianist's nimble fingers playing for the dancers at the piano placed on the slight dais to one side.

Like others too, I looked at the 19th century photograph of the rectory placed just inside the front door, showing the carriage sweep at the front of the house, with access straight to the church across the now busy B-road. The rectory was at this stage a double-fronted house with bay windows and an elegant conservatory to the side.

I was interested to find out what the gardens looked like at the time of Kilvert's visit, for which the best source would be the 25in 1st edition Ordnance Survey map, normally dated to around the 1880s, which I expected would show them with some degree of accuracy. Unfortunately neither The National Library of Wales nor Hereford Archives had one, only the 2nd edition of 1908, revised in 1928, which was much too late for my purpose. Luckily the Sites and Monuments Records (SMR) in Hereford, (SMR), part of Herefordshire Archaeology, were able to send me a download of the relevant section of the 1st edition 6in OS map, survey date 1886, published in 1891, from which it was possible to make out the line of the carriage

drive as shown in the photograph but no extension to the west, the site of the drawing-room we had seen, only extensions to the rear. If accurate, this strongly suggested the drawing-room, now used as a music-room, was built later than Kilvert's visit by some years.

An internet search under the name "Dorstone Rectory" gave the text of an unpublished typescript by Michael Speak entitled "Parsonage Houses in Herefordshire", dated 2001, which he deposited at the SMR. He states that there are fragments of building dating probably to the 12th century, with much rebuilding and modification, but externally appears to be mid to late 19th century. His view is that the bay windows at the front may date to around 1870, possibly the work of Thomas Edgar Williams, who did restoration work at

Peterchurch and Turnastone churches for the Rev. Thomas Powell. He adds that when Thomas Prosser Powell took over as rector from his father in 1886, he had Dorstone Church rebuilt to the designs of Thomas Nicholson and "at the same time" a west wing was added to the rectory. The date given is 1890, 20 years later than Kilvert's visit.

The next question was whether Michael Speak was considered by the SMR as a sound source of information, and I have been assured that, though not employed by the SMR, he is. He did



a great deal of research into his chosen topic, visited the Anglican church archives in London, and worked carefully and thoroughly in producing his report. He doesn't unfortunately give his sources in the text but the SMR have a record that it was based on his own examination of the building style and materials, and also Dr Hession, the current owner.

I wondered whether I could confirm the date of the extension in any additional way but Herefordshire Archives has

no sources about the Rectory that are relevant to the date of the west extension, nor has Access to Archives, the National Archives website.

I next emailed the Secretary of the Dorstone Local History Group in the hope that someone had referred to or made a drawing of the rectory in a tour of the Golden Valley – a somewhat forlorn hope. My email was, however, passed to Dr Hession, who replied to me direct.

To summarise his reasons for believing that the western extension was the room Kilvert and his friends danced in: it was described in the sale description when he and his wife bought the house in 1977 as the 'ballroom' (the name attached to the extension may well be by virtue of the fact that the Rev. George Powell, the last rector from the Prosser Powell family, was a 'hunting parson' who kept his own pack of hounds and gave Hunt balls); the other two main ground-floor rooms are not big enough for what would seem to be some vigorous dancing; the concern expressed in the *Diary* about damage done to the oak floor by the boots of the dancers suggests that it was newly installed and therefore, in a newly-built room. These reasons could be described as subjective, but his remaining reason was not: that he had been told that it was built at the same time as the restoration of the church and that the style of the stonework of the extension and the church is identical.

The three-volume *Diary* entry for 21 June, the day of the picnic at Snodhill and the dance that evening (vol i, 160-163) has some significant omissions from the full version, which has been published by The National Library of Wales, which owns two of the three surviving volumes of the *Diary* out of the original twenty-two that William Plomer had transcribed. After the stroll around the garden and before the dance, quoted in Michael Tod's report, there was a stroll around the garden and then a visit to the church with some of the ladies. There follows a description of the church: *The present church is red Church-warden's Gothic and was restored barbarously by the village carpenter and mason who put the East window in all crooked, pulled down the beautiful oak carven screen, and made it a gallery at the West end. The only old bits in the church beside seem to be a sedile canopied with a pointed arch and a large piscina on the north side of the altar.* Dr Hession is absolutely clear this is not the current church.

If the reader agrees that the room we were shown in the Old Rectory was not in fact the room where the dance was held, the



Michael Hession answers questions as he welcomes us to the Old Rectory

question arises as to where it was held.

Dr Hession has told me that the two ground-floor rooms in the main house are the current dining-room and sitting-room. The sitting-room has a dark stained pine floor and the dining-room a dark oak floor, so it must have been held in the now dining-room, despite the fact that is smaller than the music-room. The impression is given in the *Diary* of a crowd of people at the picnic and the dance but I believe the entry has been shaped, as Kilvert often did, particularly in early entries,

to bring out the humour and oddities of human behaviour. These are at the picnic: in the 'break' (*very roomy and comfortable.....with a pair of brown horses*), Mrs Oswald, Captain and Mrs Bridge, Tom Brown, Arthur Oswald, Kilvert and his brother; the Haigh Allens in their own carriage and, probably, their two daughters; the Henry Dews also in their own carriage and, probably, five of their many children; the Rev. Powell driving a wagonette with, probably his wife and their guest, Miss Fanny Green Price. Mary Bevan is mentioned as being at the picnic; she may have come with the Dew family as Mr Dew was her uncle. I make that a total of twenty-two people at the most.

We must imagine the heavy furniture being pushed back, the portable furniture being taken into the hall and the then dining-room, once it had been cleared after dinner, and the carpet being *taken up*, and then the dancing began.

The Lancers is danced in sets of four couples, so either eight or sixteen could have been dancing at one time. Dr Hession believes that eight couples could have fitted into the room, provided the non-dancers sat in the hall. After a very hot day, much of it out in the sun, I can well believe that some of the married ladies in their corsets would prefer to sit out and chat rather than engage in boisterous dancing where *Tom Brown, dancing a waltz ... came down with a crash that shook the house and was immediately seized head and heels by Henry Dew and Mr. Allen and carried about the room.* The odd words "Jim Rufen" in the three-volume *Diary* is a mistranscription for "Sir Roger" [de Coverley] which was normally the last dance of the evening as it was very sociable and lively, involving a minimum of three couples in a set, up to six. Everyone must surely have been flagging by then!

The day ended for Kilvert, after ten o'clock, by a walk home after being set down at the lodge of Pontvaen, on the Hay to Clifford Road, where the Bridges lived. *I stopped in Hay to get my hair cut and after crossing Hay Bridge at 10.30 it was still so light that Perch [his brother] thought he could have seen to read. There was no dark.*

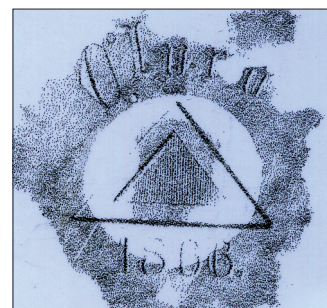
The writer wishes to record her most sincere thanks to Dr Hession for his sharing of his personal knowledge and his willingness to discard his previous beliefs about the room the dance was held in in the interests of establishing the truth.

The Journal is grateful to Sites and Monuments Records, Herefordshire Archaeology for supplying the map.



1866 and all that

For our June Commemoration Service we returned home, so to speak, to Clyro for the first time in a decade. There was fine singing and an excellent sermon but, for Richard Weston, it was the plate that took the biscuit



AFTER such a glorious day for the Saturday walk to Snodhill could it be as good again on the Sunday? Yes, it was!

Another sunny and very warm day of Kilvert weather greeted us as we assembled at Clyro for Evensong and the Commemoration at St. Michael and All Angels' church, where Kilvert was curate from 1865 until 1872.

The original medieval church of St Michael and All Angels was built in the twelfth century and partially rebuilt in the fifteenth but today all that remains of the earlier church is the lower section of the tower. Some of the stone and timbers were, however, apparently used in the construction of Ashbrook House.

Further work was carried out in the early part of the nineteenth century: the chancel and two windows were rebuilt and a porch added. However, the most important work was carried out after a decision made in 1851, when Richard Lister Venables presided as vicar over a meeting to discuss major remedial work. An estimate of £1,320 was submitted for the church to be rebuilt and enlarged (apart from the original tower).

The work was carried out during 1851 and 1852 and finally completed in the spring of 1853 with the Opening Ceremony on 6th July attended by 800 people.

The architect was Thomas Nicholson of Hereford and the builders were William Jones of Brecon. The encaustic floor tiles by the famous Hereford company of Godwin were laid in the familiar red and buff chequer design.

It has been a long gap of ten years since the Society celebrated in what is after all one of the most important Kilvertian churches but we were all delighted to be back and to be so warmly welcomed by Churchwarden Robert Tapp and the Vicar, the Revd. David Thomas, right.

We commenced with *Bright the Vision* and the strong singing was led by David's rich tenor voice. This was followed by prayers and then lessons from *Exodus* and *St. Luke*. We enjoyed *Dear Lord and Father of Mankind* and *Come Down Love Divine* and looked forward to David's sermon.

He did not disappoint us with his



novel subject: the contrast between Kilvert's disparaging view of the tourist at Llanthony (5th April 1870) – *Of all noxious animals too the most noxious is a tourist. And of all tourists the most vulgar, illbred, offensive and loathsome is the British tourist* – and the vital importance of tourism today to the national economy of Wales. David gave illuminating figures showing how tourism has grown from the minority appeal of the few in Kilvert's nineteenth century to today's massive numbers visiting Wales's churches, museums and sites of natural beauty. "What a paradox," David ended by saying; and despite Kilvert's jaundiced view of his fellow tourists the numbers continue to grow and we hope many will be encouraged to visit particularly Kilvert country.

The service ended with a rousing rendering of that great favourite *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah* to Cwm Rhondda, once again led by organist Joy Jones and David and this was followed by the Blessing.

As we all relaxed over the delicious tea with copious sandwiches and cakes supplied by the ladies of the church I noticed the collection plate (so well used that the silverplating of the central design had worn smooth) was inscribed "Clyro 1866". So this was the very plate that Kilvert would himself have handled each week during his curacy at Clyro!

This service brought a most enjoyable weekend to a close, once again a source of pleasurable memories of being a member of the Kilvert Society!





Kilvert and the Print Revolution: 'A World of Wonders'

Mid-Victorian England was fizzing with ideas of 'the new', seeing itself as a world away from the benighted 18th century. John Toman, who is working on a new book on the topic, sees the Kilvert family and especially Francis as caught up in the excitement of the gathering pace of scientific progress

*'Between 1841 and 1851, 845 magazines, reviews and weekly publications, aside from newspapers, were issued in London and its suburbs – a total which would be still larger with the addition of similar publications in the provinces.'*¹

THIS is an article on the much neglected, much misconceived issue of Kilvert's reading. I referred in my Kilvert Seminar talk on 'Kilvert and Railways' to the fact that his reading had remained unexplored for fifty years. Almost all commentators have dismissed it as shallow and indiscriminating, casual and random. The exact opposite is true, as appears when one takes the trouble to examine it. I wish here to tackle the particular charge that it was 'random' and to show, in relation to a few works, that it is actually marked by clear connections. These connections underpin one of the main themes of my April talk: that Kilvert and his family were excited by industrial, scientific, technological innovations and progress.

In my talk I quoted a poem by Charles Mackay (the lines appear in Charles Weston's article in this *Journal* issue), in which he exalted the steam power that made railways possible. Mackay (1814-1889) was one author read by Kilvert. The latter chose to read the former's very recently published autobiography *Forty Years' Recollections of Life, Literature and Public Affairs from 1830 to 1870* on 6 March 1878 when he was so ill that he thought he was dying. It was a significant choice for three reasons. Firstly, it covered a large part of the period through which he himself had lived. Secondly, it reflected his interests. Thirdly, it was by the kind of man he admired. Mackay sought, as Kilvert did, a career as a writer. In his *Recollections*, he described his education as 'miscellaneous' yet he could speak four languages. He also stated that he was 'an omnivorous reader'.² His 1835 volume of poems caught the attention of John Black, editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, a Liberal, progressive paper, on the staff of which was Charles Dickens when Mackay joined it. By 1844, Mackay had become the paper's assistant editor.

Wordsworth published in 1844 a letter protesting against the proposed Kendal-Windermere Railway. Mackay, who admired the poet, thought that his opposition to it was misguided because he (Mackay) supported the expansion of working people's horizons. One chapter of his *Recollections* is entitled 'The Education of the People'. He believed that 'the working man could educate himself in the fine fruits of human intellect and the wonders of God's universe as revealed by science'.³ This was the man whose life-story, a story of achievement and progress, Kilvert found comforting when he thought his own life was ending.

The fact that he bought Mackay's book so soon after its publication suggests that he was familiar with the man and his writings.

Another significant figure in the Kilvert family's reading, and a similar figure to Mackay, was John Britton (1771-1857), a local hero for the Kilverts in that he was born in Kingston St Michael, home of Mrs Kilvert's Coleman forebears. Kilvert's uncle Francis praised Britton in a poem as 'the father of British archaeology'. Britton was another from humble origins who educated himself. He was the author of *The Beauties of England and Wales* (BEW), much enjoyed by Kilvert's father at his grandmother's house from the age of five.⁵ Britton was involved in the explosion in the 1840s of popular printed material resulting from technical improvements in printing which made books and periodicals much cheaper. He wrote articles on such topics as Stonehenge, Avebury, and 'Tumulus' for the *Penny Cyclopaedia*, edited by Charles Knight for the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK). Some of Kilvert's interest in these topics probably



John Britton (1771-1857), in a portrait by John Wood

stemmed from Britton's articles, as well as from his BEW. Britton wrote of his frustration over his incompetent teachers who 'were completely ignorant of science, of literature, of manners' and failed to provide 'useful and practical information'.⁶ His backing of education and progress is seen in the lectures he gave in December 1832 and January 1833 to the Bath Literary and Scientific Institution (where he would have encountered uncle Francis Kilvert) and his lecture in favour of the proposed Great Western Railway at the Bristol Scientific Institution in 1833.

In his autobiography, Britton paid tribute to Charles Knight, his 'much esteemed friend ... who has written ... many liter-

John Britton, a local hero for the Kilverts, wrote of his frustration over his incompetent teachers who 'were completely ignorant of science, of literature, of manners' and failed to provide 'useful and practical information'

ary works of nationality utility and influence'. At the end of the autobiography there is a list of subscribers to the Britton Testimonial, each of whom received a copy of the book. The list includes, *inter alia*, the names of Charles Knight, Brunel, Wilkie Collins, Dickens, and Charles Mackay. One of Knight's useful and influential literary works, *Old England*, containing a vision of (particularly British) scientific and industrial progress, figured prominently in the reading experience of Kilvert and his siblings, as Emily Kilvert recorded: 'The volumes of "Old England" were a never failing source of pleasure'. She added that her brother Edward (Perch) still had them.⁷

She was referring to the work by Charles Knight, first published in 1844, the full title of which is *Old England: A Pictorial Museum of Regal, Ecclesiastical, Municipal, Baronial and Popular Antiquities*.⁸ It was in two volumes, each containing four books, with three chapters in each book, and it surveyed English history from before the Norman Conquest to the present. As soon as one opens it, it is immediately apparent that Kilvert has passed this way. In Knight's description of Stonehenge we find a phrase echoed in Kilvert's account of his visit there. Knight said that the 'real character' of the monument was that it represented 'the Chorea Gigantum – the Choir of Giants'. Kilvert likened the stones to 'ancient giants' who formed 'a true "Chorea Gigantum"'.⁹ The marks of

Kilvert's footprints are visible too at many of the other locations in the journey through *Old England*. The tone of the latter's account of Malmesbury – 'honoured be the memory of the good Abbot of Malmesbury' – recalls the tone of Kilvert's account of the place. Both Knight and Kilvert highlighted Cornwall's logan stones, of which the former wrote: 'ancient writers seem to have been impressed with a due sense of the wonder which attached to these curiosities'.¹⁰ It is not hard to see why the Kilvert children would have enjoyed *Old England*, though even for Victorian children brought up to be 'serious', it still represents a formidable read. However, its 800 double-columned pages of small print, packed with factual information, are relieved by a number of stylistic features. Accounts of places, people and periods are liberally furnished with literary quotations and actual words spoken by historical personages. There is a wealth of anecdote and informal, personal details. Another reason for its appeal is that there are over 2,500 steel engravings so that every other turn of a page brings more pictures; in addition, there are 40 pages of 'illuminated engravings' – full-page colour pictures.

Charles Knight (1791–1873) was himself of lower-class origins, the son and apprentice of a printer. Ambitious to be a journalist and publisher, he began a journal, *Knight's Quarterly Magazine*, in the 1820s. The venture failed after six issues but his determination to be involved in the education of the people is signalled by his becoming the superintendent of the publications of Lord Brougham's SDUK. He still yearned to be his own publisher and in 1832 and 1833 started *The Penny Magazine* and *The Penny Cyclopaedia*.¹¹ Altick paid tribute to Knight as a man: '[he was] an attractive person, energetic, idealistic, resilient ...

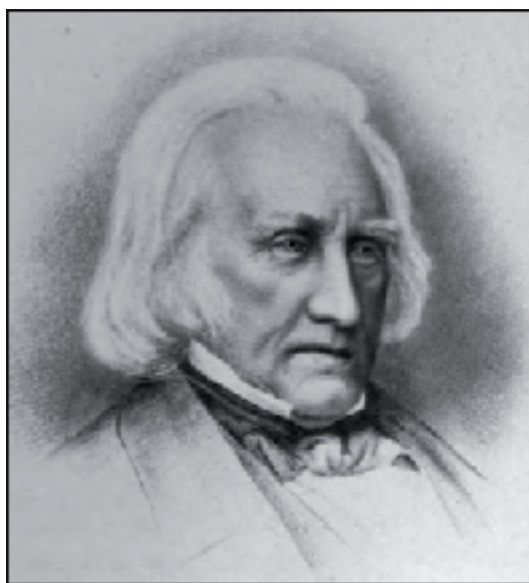
and thoroughly in love with life'; and to his cultural significance: 'he wished simply to make the printed page the agent of peace, justice and pleasure ... Among the pioneers of cheap books in the first half of the nineteenth century, Knight was held in perhaps highest respect'.¹²

The slight but steady favouring of Protestantism in *Old England* would have made it more acceptable in the Kilvert household. Protestantism demanded that the individual thought for himself, pursued his own salvation and moral, spiritual, educational improvement, which naturally implied the improvement of society. It led naturally therefore to Knight's *Old England* and its

vision of 'Discovery and Invention' – the title of chapter one of Book VIII, which examines 'The Progress of Society for the Last Hundred Years'. This chapter told its readers that 'we live in a world of wonders' and contrasted the 18th century with the 19th: 'We have no longer the same modes of life, the same habits of thought and sympathy, and the same bigoted adherence to old and established customs which characterised them'. Modern society was 'more efficient in the arts of living ... because of the increase in various branches of industry that sustain life ... Science, arts, manufactures, inventions and discovery, have all made prodigious strides'. Knight then glanced at the key inventions that had facilitated progress towards 'complete civilisation'. Foremost was the steam-engine,

the 'vital principle of our machinery and manufactures'. Next came the railways, which had resulted in 'a general diffusion of ... information and knowledge' and contributed to the sweeping away of 'old prejudices'.¹³

That Knight not only knew Britton but recognised him as a co-worker in the cause of progress and self-improvement is clear from the tribute he paid to him: 'the indefatigable, good-tempered, self-satisfied, pushing and puffing John Britton'. ('Self-satisfied' here means not complacent but self-sufficient.) That tribute appears in Knight's autobiography, which also contains other reflections on the importance of steam power. Writing of 1824 (i.e. *before* railways), he enthused over the exciting prospects for popular education that would follow when steam was applied to printing: 'There was now some chance that the steam-engine would accomplish for printing what it was accomplishing for navigation' (he meant steam-ships). He was looking forward to a print revolution in 1818 when, he said, 'I panted for improvement as ardently as ever. I was aspiring to become a popular educator'. He envisaged a new *reading* age, built on books and magazines of useful education not then available to the poor.¹⁴ Further confirmation that the Kilvert family subscribed to this vision of scientific, technological and educational progress exists in its attending in 1851 both the Great Exhibition and the London Polytechnic, the home of popular science lectures. Emily Kilvert described the latter as 'one of the most delightful places'. *Kilvert's Diary* begins with a London visit during which he was delighted to show the Thomas boys the wonders of the Polytechnic, in an entry that shows his familiarity with the place. Of the family visit to the Exhibition, Emily wrote that it was 'a wonder-



Charles Knight (1791–1873)

ful event in our childhood'.¹⁵ She and her siblings would have been able to see there 'Applegarth's vertical printing machine, capable of turning out 10,000 sheets of the *Illustrated London News* (*ILN*) each hour before the eyes of astonished spectators'.¹⁶ Illustrations, especially coloured ones, were one of the wonders of the age.



The Kilverts showed a particular relish for the *ILN*. Kilvert recorded (29 November 1870) that his brother Edward read it. The *Diary* entry for 29 November 1871 is revealing about Kilvert's interest in illustrated papers. It shows Daisy Thomas bringing him the *ILN* as though she knew it was a favourite of his. The paper was founded in 1842 with Mark Lemon, editor of *Punch*, as its chief adviser. The *ILN* was the world's first illustrated paper.¹⁷ Kilvert would have known that Charles Mackay became one of its reporters in 1848 and its editor in 1852. Daisy also bought Kilvert the *Graphic*, a more expensive (than its rival the *ILN*) illustrated weekly, founded in 1869 by William Luson Thomas (1830-1900), a successful wood-engineer, artist and social reformer. He was appalled at the *ILN*'s unsympathetic attitude to artists and aimed to reproduce their work in his magazine in illustrations of high quality on high quality paper. The magazine had articles on news, art, literature and science, and contributors to it included George Eliot, Hardy and Trollope. Such artists as Luke Fildes (illustrator of Dickens's novels) and Millais also contributed. This magazine was one of several, regularly read by Kilvert,¹⁸ that covered intellectual topics, including science, in depth, a fact that contradicts those commentators who maintain that he was completely unintellectual and read rubbish. Two other points should be noted here. Firstly, Kilvert always sent his father, as a birthday gift, a copy of the *Illustrated London Almanac*, which covered natural history and science and was published by the *ILN* from 1845.¹⁹ Secondly, other writers important to the Kilverts – William and Mary Howitt – were also involved in the movement to instruct and entertain the growing reading public via cheap magazines. William became editor and part-owner of the *People's Journal*, designed, he said, 'to teach and enlighten the working classes'.²⁰ He and Mary founded their own magazine, *Howitt's Journal*, in 1847.

This article has sought to show that, although *Kilvert's Diary* is largely an account of rural communities and of its author's love of Nature, it also reflects his considerable excitement over the industrial, scientific, technological and educational aspects of the rapidly changing Victorian society. Plomer dismissed Kilvert's 'delight in the workings of machinery' as 'aesthetic and not scientific'.²¹ This is misguided. There is an aesthetic dimension to Kilvert's description of lathes cutting steel in the entry (his visit – significant in itself – to a Liverpool shipyard), but he was also delighted at what lathes could actually do. We see the same enthusiasm in this entry where an employee of a Derbyshire iron works told Kilvert of 'a new invention, iron paper, as thin as the thinnest tissue paper ... rolled so thin that 3,000 sheets together are only an inch thick'.²² On 11 March 1870, Kilvert was pro-

posing to the Venables a three-day tour which included visiting 'the iron works of Glamorgan'. Examples abound in the *Diary* of his interest in hydraulic jacks, railways, the electric telegraph, photography, steam-ships, viaducts, balloons, canals, quarries, mines, telescopes, microscopes, and – of supreme importance – 'Professor Tyndall's discoveries in science and sound'.²³ We have seen here how his reading and background shaped this interest.

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- 3 *Dictionary of National Biography*: entry on Mackay.
- 4 Its full title is: *The Beauties of England and Wales: or, Delineations Topographical, Historical and Descriptive of Each County*, London, various publishers (1801-1818).
- 5 'Memoirs of the Rev. Robert Kilvert', in *More Chapters from the Kilvert Saga*, p.18, Leamington Spa, Kilvert Society, no date. It may be assumed that Britton's volumes became part of the Kilvert family library.
- 6 *The Autobiography of John Britton, FSA*, Wiltshire Topographical Society, 1849, vol.I, p.35. It seems that Kilvert knew this work because of close similarities of wording in, for example, his contrast of Bath and Bristol (v.II.282) and Britton's (v.I.176) and in his description of Old Sarum (v.III.226) and Britton's (v.II.88).
- 7 'Rambling Recollections', in *More Chapters from the Kilvert Saga*, p.89.
- 8 New York, Portland House, 1987.
- 9 *Ibid.*, vol.I, p.3. *Kilvert's Diary*, vol.III, p.223.
- 10 KNIGHT, *op. cit.*, vol.I, p.59.
- 11 *Old England* contains several passages that appeared originally in these journals.
- 12 RICHARD ALTICK, *The English Common Reader. A social history of the mass reading public 1800-1900*, Chicago University Press, 1957, pp.282-3.
- 13 *Op. cit.*, vol.II, p.351 and p.358.
- 14 All Knight quotations in this paragraph come from his *Passages of a Working Life during half a century. A Prelude of Early Reminiscences*, London, Bradbury and Evans, 1864, vol.I, pp.31, 163, 225.
- 15 *Op. cit.*, pp.104-5.
- 16 DODDS, *op. cit.*, p.462.
- 17 DODDS (*ibid.*, p.107) called it 'the most phenomenally successful paper of its time'. By 1851 it had 100,000 readers.
- 18 He referred (10 September 1870) to the *Graphic*'s 'good pictures of the [Franco-Prussian] War'. The *Saturday Review*, the *Cornhill Magazine*, and *Macmillan's Magazine* were regularly seen by Kilvert as the *Diary* confirms.
- 19 *Kilvert's Diary*, 24 February 1871, 26 February 1870.
- 20 Quoted in Amice Lee, *Laurels and Rosemary. The life of William and Mary Howitt*, London, Oxford University Press, 1955, p.167.
- 21 Introduction to vol.II, p.10.
- 22 *Kilvert's Diary*, vol.II, pp.100-1.
- 23 *Ibid.*, vol.III, p.183.

There is an aesthetic dimension to Kilvert's description of lathes cutting steel (his visit – significant in itself – to a Liverpool shipyard), but he was also delighted at what lathes could actually do



Some thoughts on losses and crosses at Bredwardine

Francis Kilvert had been reluctant to take on a living, perhaps because he knew his limitations, and when he did, at Bredwardine, he ran into poor health and other difficulties we can only guess at. Margaret Collins takes the extraordinary burial arrangements for him and his wife in the churchyard as a metaphor and explores his predicament

Priscilla explained what she meant by saying the other day that I had had more losses and crosses than any other Clergyman who had come to Bredwardine

(Diary, 13 July 1878)

AS I stood amidst the quiet stillness of Bredwardine churchyard last autumn I recalled this cryptic *Diary* entry which refers to a conversation between Kilvert and the devout elderly parishioner Priscilla Price. Kilvert had been in his new post for just eight months and it is one of those mystifying entries with no context, about which we should like to know more, and to which William Plomer's editing provides no clues. The original conversation is not recorded, the last mention of Priscilla Price being on June 1.

Kilvert enjoyed talking with Priscilla and hearing her reminiscences and it would seem from this entry that he had confided some of his problems to her. Priscilla's life experience and strong Christian faith made her a source of wisdom which Kilvert doubtless found helpful. When he first arrives in the parish she speaks with him about the longstanding difficulties with the Jarvis charity which *interferes with people and does them harm* but she tells Kilvert he should not fret and worry about it. However, this reference to *losses and crosses* infers that six months later they had discussed other matters.

Although the Bredwardine section gives a vivid picture of Kilvert's daily life, its tone is less lyrical and more subdued than the earlier *Diary*. In his introduction to Vol iii William Plomer says 'the necessary abbreviation of the *Diary* has prevented a just impression being given of his constant devotion to parochial duties'. Kilvert was working at full stretch and we can only assess his time there by what we have in the published *Diary*. Plomer infers that what was omitted was a record of parish duties. Even so, it would have been intriguing to read the Bredwardine *Diary* in its entirety.

In her letter to Mrs Venables following Kilvert's death his sister Fanny in her overwhelming grief speaks of *his terrible sorrow. It just crushed him. I did so hope that his marriage would have cheered him and broken off all those sad remembrances...but his health was quite broken up...it is terrible to think of the sad cause of it all. I hope she will never know what she did.* (Francis Kilvert by David Lockwood p.161)

This letter was printed in full in one of the Society's *Newsletters*. With heartbreaking poignancy Fanny describes her final leave-taking of her dead brother as he lies in his room and she places a posy of wild flowers on his heart.

Understandably, following such a sudden and untimely death causes are sought and Fanny cites Frank's *terrible sorrow*, placing the blame for his poor health and implicitly his death on what we now know to have been the breaking of their engagement by Katharine Heanley in the spring of 1877. Yet the newspaper report quoted by Plomer states the cause of death to have been due to complications of appendicitis, a random condition, inoperable in 1879. The breaking of the engagement must have been a severe blow for Kilvert, yet his letter to *My Dear Mr Venables* written on 21 May 1877 from the French town of Vénables has a jaunty tone. He is in good spirits, enthusiastically describing his holiday – *I have enjoyed my expedition and visit here extremely...* (*Newsletter*, September 1987).

However, anyone reading the Bredwardine *Diary* cannot but agree with Fanny that Kilvert's *health was quite broken up*. It is my view that he began to sink under the burden of responsibility which came with being in sole charge of the parish. This caused him to become 'run down' and vulnerable to the catalogue of symptoms which beset him during this time.

Although we have no record of the spring and summer of 1879 as the *Diary* ends abruptly in March, those months would surely have been a time of renewed happiness for Kilvert who became engaged to Elizabeth Rowland, marrying her on 20 August. The report in the *Hereford Times* of the newlyweds' return to Bredwardine captures the joyfulness of the occasion with the whole village turning out to welcome their vicar and his bride. Elizabeth was a pleasant and kind young woman much liked by those who knew her, including Fanny and Dora.

The gap of 18 months prior to the Bredwardine part of the *Diary* covers Kilvert's ministry at St Harmon and his sudden departure following the breaking of the engagement. By New Year 1878 he is established as vicar of Bredwardine. It was the wealthy Miss Julia Louisa Newton, then aged 67, who owned the living and offered it to Kilvert, following the sudden death of Rev. John Houseman in September 1877.

The living should have passed to Miss Newton's nephew Arthur on his coming of age but this did not happen. In his book, *Francis Kilvert and His World*, Frederick Grice asks *did he die or simply decline to enter Holy Orders?* It is interesting to speculate whether, if Arthur did in fact become ordained, the prospect of an incumbency under the watchful eye of Aunt Julia and her sister did not appeal to him. Of Kilvert, Grice says: *It is probable that Miss Newton felt more than friendship for her vicar...who was it that arranged that she and her sister should be buried on either*

Fanny in her overwhelming grief speaks of 'his terrible sorrow.

It just crushed him. I did so hope that his marriage would have cheered him and broken off all those sad remembrances'



The grave of Francis Kilvert at Bredwardine, sandwiched between those of the two Newton sisters, who died seven and seventeen years respectively after him

side of him...? Speaking of the Misses Newton in his biography, David Lockwood too mentions (p.159) *mild rumours of their having been in love with Kilvert*. I am reminded of the fluttering parish ladies in the novels of Barbara Pym, or the vicar's 'fan club' in Alan Bennett's 'Talking Heads' episode 'Bed among the Lentils'. The librettist W S Gilbert, with characteristic wit, pins down this phenomenon in a ballad sung by Dr Daly an elderly bachelor vicar in the G & S operetta 'The Sorcerer' (1877). Dr Daly wistfully recalls his youth when as a curate he was the focus of female adoration. The second verse runs:-

*Had I a headache? sighed the maids assembled;
Had I a cold? welled forth the silent tear;
Did I look pale? Then half a parish trembled;
And when I coughed all thought the end was near!
I had no care, no jealous doubts hung o'er me –
For I was loved beyond all other men.
Fled gilded dukes and belted earls before me –
Ah me, I was a pale young curate then!*

If Miss Newton's enthusiasm for Kilvert could lead her to have no regard for the final resting place of his widow, whose grave is in the far corner of the churchyard annexe, then a

mere nephew's claim to the living could easily be swept aside.

It seems that Miss Newton was used to getting her own way. The behaviour of Miss Catherine Newton was even more reprehensible. She died in 1896, ten years after Julia, and both sisters must have been well aware that the widowed Elizabeth made a pilgrimage to Bredwardine every Easter to flower Kilvert's grave with primroses. Yet Catherine Newton arranged, despite Elizabeth's request that the space be reserved for herself, that she would be buried on the other side of Kilvert. If she justified this as a wish to be buried near her sister, she could surely have chosen a plot near by. Elizabeth's niece speaks of her aunt's 'great grief' at this (*Looking Backwards*, KS Publications, p.25). The pain felt by Elizabeth can only be guessed at; with hindsight she must have wondered bitterly just how much those elaborate 'Welcome Home' decorations, overseen by the Misses Newton for the returning honeymooners, had truly been for the bride.

Whatever the Misses Newtons' feelings for their vicar – 'a fine figure of a man', to quote Frederick Grice – it is astonishing that nearly seven years after Kilvert's death Julia Newton still felt strongly enough to be buried close up next to him and that Catherine, not to be outdone, followed some seventeen long

years after his death. It is accepted that to be buried close to someone makes a strong statement about the intimacy of the relationship. Katharine Heanley's grave at Croft is surrounded by those of her father and other relatives. The poet Matthew Arnold shares a headstone in Laleham churchyard with his beloved wife 'Flu' (Fanny Lucy) in the family grave. Cardinal Newman wished to be buried in the same grave as his great friend Ambrose St John. Such burials are a testament to strong familial bonds, to enduring love and to deep affection.

The Misses Newtons' treatment of Elizabeth Kilvert was calous in the extreme. The sisters' burial arrangements were surely the subject of much local comment, outrage and also amusement. Nevertheless, over a period of seventeen years they were not deflected from their wish to be buried as close as possible to their former vicar. The first we hear of Miss Newton in the *Diary* is April 1872 when the unfortunate Rev. Houseman draped the Communion table with the *old filthy parish pall... it is the talk of the country and Miss Newton is up in arms*. While at Clyro Kilvert had been known to Miss Newton, attending her gipsy picnic at Moccas to which she invited several well-to-do locals. Kilvert also travelled in Miss Newton's carriage to a minstrel concert, returning to the Cottage for tea. On another occasion he called on Miss Newton and admired the newly purchased organ which she played to him.

The tone of Kilvert's references to Miss Newton is detached to the point of coolness. On 23 March 1878 he reports being met at the station by the brougham which Miss Newton *kindly* sent but such acknowledgements are rare. *By Miss Newton's special desire* is the lukewarm phrase he uses when invited with Dora to Christmas dinner at the Cottage. *By Miss Newton's special wish* he dutifully returns in the evening for supper and carols sung by the vicarage and Cottage servants after their tea party. Miss Newton certainly tried hard! Even allowing for the fact that Kilvert had had a tiring day which included Little Davie's funeral, one senses his lack of enthusiasm. Miss Newton is never 'Dear Miss Newton'. The impression is that Kilvert was rather in awe of Miss Newton and did not greatly like her. Her controlling style in church matters must have made him nervous. We can be sure that the hapless Rev. Houseman got a thorough dressing-down over the incident of the parish pall.

The sisters' burial arrangements, which would certainly have astounded Kilvert, bear witness to a most unusual degree of fondness which may well have passed him by. There was al-

ways a certain naivety about Kilvert. However Dora, as a young woman, would certainly have picked up on any such 'vibes' and probably gently teased her brother. If, as has been suggested by Grice, Miss Newton 'felt more than friendship for her vicar' what would have been the reaction of this Victorian maiden lady on receiving from the hands of the poetic young clergyman a copy of a published anthology containing some of his poetry? She surely felt singled out and special, particularly as Kilvert only had five copies of the book. He must have had something of a reputation locally as a poet as at least two of his poems appeared in newspapers while he was at Bredwardine.

Despite her importance in Kilvert's life at this time Julia Newton remains a shadowy figure. We have no record of any of the conversations that took place between them and there must have been many. Kilvert leaves much unsaid.

The Kilvert of Bredwardine is older and perhaps wiser and sadder but the entries for the beginning of his ministry have a cheerful bustling tone. Dora is his capable housekeeper and also a sisterly companion, providing a feminine dimension to what would otherwise have been a solitary bachelor existence. His supportive parents come to stay and are delighted to see his large vicarage and garden. His married sister Thersie is nearby at Monnington. There are descriptions of holidays and trips away to Langley Burrell, to the Venables at Llysdyham, to Clyro and to St Harmon. The Mayhews come to stay and he stays with the Popes and with the Bevans at Hay.

Inferences are that Kilvert's time at St Harmon was happy. His wistful poem 'The Shepherd's Farewell' written while at Bredwardine, seems to refer to his time at St Harmon rather than Clyro as the picture it paints is very much of a mountain landscape with 'mountain sheep' whose Shepherd now dwells in a 'far vale'. The St Harmon parishioners are similar to the folk of Clyro and it seems there is no obvious social hierarchy in this remote scattered parish and no-one in authority is looking over Kilvert's shoulder. Most importantly, Mr and Mrs Venables are at nearby Llysdyham. Kilvert returns to officiate at a wedding, to the delighted surprise of the bride, and unsurprisingly there are girls who seem to have liked him and miss him; Annette Lewis is sent a *portrait* and *dear little Mary Pitchford* who Kilvert returns to visit twice, speaks of the *rose you have planted in my heart...* which suggests a romantic attachment – at least on her part.

Strangely, there is no reference to the broken engagement in these chapters. One would have thought the fallout from this



A picture from the Society's archives captioned as being of a school feast 'near' Bredwardine (Moccas Park?) in 1869. Could this be a tantalising glimpse of the Newton sisters in full distribution-of-largesse-to-the-poor mode?



The grave of Mrs Kilvert, née Elizabeth Anne Rowland. Its gleaming restoration cannot disguise the fact that it is to be found about as far from her husband's grave as it is possible to go and over by what is in effect the graveyard rubbish dump

event would have had some reverberations in the *Diary*, but no. The only hint is the oblique reference to Fanny, Kilvert and Mrs Hilton *being too sad to speak* as they walk to Faversham station following Perch's wedding. With Daisy and with Ettie there are scattered references after the romances had finished. Not so with Katharine. There is just one observation relating to the paraphrase of the 23rd Psalm in the *Sunday at Home* which evokes no more than a passing comment that it was a *strange coincidence* that Kilvert should have seen this item sent in by *Kate Heanley* – no longer is she *Kathleen Mavourneen*. Had he maybe put this episode firmly behind him and moved on or was the memory just too painful, not lending itself to the romantic nostalgia with which he reflects on Daisy and Ettie?

Accepting the incumbency of Bredwardine must have been a big step for Kilvert. We know that he had not wanted to become vicar of Clyro and although this was partly because he could not afford it, it was in all likelihood because he would have been in charge of the parish. Kilvert knew his limitations. His initial wavering over the St Harmon appointment – *I have not sought this or any other preferment. Indeed I have rather shrunk from it* – is typical. It was the same with the vacancy at Disserseth. In all these cases he was encouraged by the Venables, who pretty well 'set him up' for the post at St Harmon. That having his own parish could improve his chances of marriage does not seem a priority. Later, the prospect of the Cannes chaplaincy brings much *perplexity* and a flurry of opinion-seeking and letter-writing. Kilvert was at his happiest when not taking full responsibility. His years as curate to the widowed Mr Venables, whose kindly second wife became a wise friend and confidante, were very happy indeed, as was his time as curate to his father where he had the support of his family.

In the Sandford notebook we recall Kilvert's heartfelt cry when Mr Venables is away and he is left to cope with the two rival vets vying to treat Gipsy the mare: *I wish Mr Venables and Charles Lacy were here with all my heart. And I wish that people would not come to me as one in authority when I have no authority at all... I am distracted and torn several ways at once*. An episode at the Clyro Penny Reading also comes to mind. Young Charlie Powell disrupts the concert by catcalling and *romping* after Kilvert has forbidden him from singing a ribald song. Kilvert sits in growing discomfort on the platform but does not take charge of the situation when he could so easily have done so. It is left to someone else to send for the policeman who throws Charlie out.

Family and friends would have encouraged Kilvert to take the living of Bredwardine with its spacious vicarage. It seemed a golden opportunity. The future for the family at Langley Burrell was uncertain and Kilvert himself did not want to remain a curate into middle age. His parents were doubtless concerned for their son, knowing that with his diffident nature he would find it a challenge being in sole charge. They supported him by coming to stay and his father helped with church services.

To be fair, Miss Newton does much to assist Kilvert. He and his family are invited to dine at the Cottage on several occasions and Miss Newton's fleet of carriages are available for his and his family's use, with Miss Newton herself sometimes doing the driving. Yet this would all have to be arranged with Miss Newton, which surely made Kilvert feel beholden and that he had no privacy.

On 4th January 1878 Kilvert encounters Miss Newton's sister-in-law Mrs William Newton at the Cottage. It appears that they had met several years ago and Kilvert notes that she reminds him

of Mrs Augustus Hare (whose photograph accompanies John Toman's interesting article in the March *Journal*). This good lady had not visited her late husband's parish or, it seems, her sisters-in-law for four years but she was keen to meet the new incumbent and give him the benefit of her advice. Sure enough, the very next day she and Miss Newton call at the vicarage and on the 9th Kilvert visits the Cottage where Mrs William Newton speaks with him. It would have been interesting to eavesdrop on this conversation as the two of them walked up and down the drive. *She told me it had become a difficult parish to manage and would require much care and judgement and tact* which surely added to any misgivings Kilvert already had about his ability to cope. Kilvert says it was good kind advice so maybe it was just that. Whether the role of Miss Newton in church affairs was touched upon we cannot know. The inference is that Bredwardine was something of a 'problem parish'. Whether this was wholly or only partly due to the Jarvis charity is not fully explained.

(A reminiscence in *Looking Backwards* p.23, tells us that Rev. William Newton who died in 1862 was not liked: *One day he fell in the river and a man pulled him out. 'How can I thank you?' said Mr Newton. 'Don't tell anyone that I did it' said the man.* Presumably Mrs William Newton did not impart this gem to Kilvert – or perhaps her husband kept quiet about it!)

Soon enough Kilvert is faced with a difficulty on 19th January when we have the saga of the swan shot fired through Miss Catherine Newton's bedroom window the previous night. Miss Newton asks Kilvert's advice; it seems her authority is not limited to the ownership of the living, there is a sense of ownership of the vicar too. This puts poor Kilvert in a spin. Young Algy Bates confesses. Kilvert having spoken to the policeman on the matter, then stops a letter he had written to Mr Haigh Allen for advice. On 23rd Kilvert is summoned to see Miss Newton, boys having fired catapults through her hedge. On 24th we learn that the offending catapults have been confiscated. The entry does not suggest that Kilvert took this decisive action, it was more likely Miss Newton's staff or the policeman. On 29th Algy Bates denies shooting the bullet and says he has an alibi. How Kilvert must have hated being at the centre of all this. It is telling that he wrote a letter seeking Mr Haigh Allen's advice on such a trivial matter.

Kilvert has not been in post long before the strain begins to show. On 10th and 11th February he develops a sore throat and cough. On 13th he chooses the plot for his grave. Was he, as incumbent, obliged to do this or did he feel so low that he chose to? It comes as shock to the reader. Between Friday 15th and Saturday 16th he consumes a whole bottle of cough mixture and more is sent for. Kilvert does not seem able to shake off this cold and on 4th March Miss Newton's cart takes him to the station as he returns home to be looked after by his concerned family. He is very unwell, his chest is tight and he *could hardly draw breath*. The doctor calls again next day and a couple of days later we have Kilvert's sombre reflection on *the last illness from which there will be no convalescence*. Kilvert returns to Bredwardine but by Saturday 30th March he complains of a headache, cold and a tight chest. At the beginning of April Lady Cornwall sends cough syrup. He appears to get better and on 22nd visits Mary Pitch-

ford at Rhayader, yet on 24th he is coughing again and unable to sleep due to neuralgia. However from May, following a stay with the Venables, his health picks up with the warmer weather and there is his brother Perch's wedding. (n.b. Perch was Edward Newton Kilvert but there seems to be no link to the Newtons of Bredwardine.)

In early June there is a holiday with the Westthorps at Ilston. Kilvert has to take a *two gallon stoneware jar to get it filled with sea water for Miss Newton's aquarium*. This was an imposition for it must have been very heavy. How Kilvert regarded the request is unrecorded but he was hardly in a position to refuse.

The summer is free from illness for there is a happy family holiday at Aberystwyth about which Kilvert writes two poems 'To Some Little Friends at Aberystwyth', and 'The Tanybwllch Beach'. In October there is another stay at Ilston where he is beguiled by *sweet Annie Mitchell and her lovely innocent trustful blue eyes*. Unlike the earlier parts of the *Diary* there are few references to the eyes of pretty girls. There is a picnic with *great fun and famous laughing... A wild merry happy day*. Away from Bredwardine and its responsibilities Kilvert is free to have fun and enjoy himself as in the old days.

This was not to last. Dora is ill and goes home at the end October and by mid November Kilvert has problems with his eyes. He is also in great pain from *emerods* and confined to the sofa for a week, attended by Thersie and kindly Mrs Hilton, during which time he has an *attack in the head by a dreadful Power*.

There are more colds, dreadful sore throats and in December Kilvert experiences nose bleeds. By now he has Sam Cowper Coles as a resident pupil. The boy is much admired by the parishioners for his blond good looks. Kilvert paints an engaging but brief picture of Sam which is a contrast to the much fuller descriptions of the characters of the earlier *Diary*.

The winter is cold, walking in the snow is *laborious and fatiguing*, the water in the bath is frozen and the *Church bitterly cold*. A thaw means burst pipes bringing down the pantry ceiling at the Cottage; whether Kilvert was enlisted to help he does not say! Tellingly, Miss Newton is put out because the poor people have not all come to collect their soup – *the despised soup* Kilvert calls it. The implication is that Miss Newton's largesse to the poor has been rejected because it was inferior and not very nice. What a contrast to the *sumptuous luncheon* enjoyed by the sisters' chosen guests on the day of the Moccas picnic.

It is interesting that on 18th February 1879, when Kilvert's parents leave after visiting him, he fervently wishes they could stay on but they plan *to come again in June and go to Aberystwyth if all is well*. This refers to the annual family holiday and at this point there is no suggestion that Kilvert is to marry that summer. Dora too would be married at the end of July.

On 12th March comes the greatest blow. Dora receives a letter from James Pitcairn asking her to marry him. Kilvert is taken *entirely by surprise, but I foresee that she will do so*. It is odd that he had no inkling of the attachment between the couple who presumably met at Perch's wedding. Was Kilvert so bound up with his own problems that he did not know what was going on in his sister's life? Or did Dora not speak of it in view of her brother's broken engagement and knowing that it would



Mrs Kilvert. She died in 1911

upset him to know that she may one day leave Bredwardine?

We can only wonder how things would have been had Kilvert lived. How would the Misses Newton have regarded Elizabeth? Kilvert would surely have rejoiced in his status as a married man with a loving wife and helpmeet by his side, his self-confidence increasing with the contentment and security of his own family unit. The birth of children would have completed the couple's happiness. That they were robbed of a bright future together is a tragic end to their story.

Miss Julia Newton's obituary in the *Hereford Journal* of 5th June 1886 is most interesting. I am indebted to KS life member and researcher Mrs Teresa Williams who sent it to me, for it is the only 'outside evidence' we have:

'Kind, affectionate and generous, she was loved by all, poor and rich. In all that belonged to the welfare of the church she took a warm interest. When the restoration of the parish church was commenced some ten years ago, Miss Newton did much to help on the work and mainly through her exertions a new organ was provided. The help she gave to the S.P.G. G.F.S., will be greatly missed. The deceased lady was a skilful artist, a good botanist, energetic and wonderfully painstaking in every work she undertook.'

Presumably this information was provided by Miss Newton's brother Sir Charles and her sister Catherine.

A report of the 'quiet' funeral continues:

'The coffin was covered with many beautiful wreaths and crosses and the grave was most tastefully lined with mosses and ferns. When the body was laid in its last resting place and the last look had been taken, most gathered round felt that a good neighbour, a kind and true friend was for ever lost to them on earth'.

So what are we to make of this? We have no other description of Miss Newton and there is no photograph to ponder. We cannot truly know how Kilvert related to her but it is likely that Miss Newton's managing and 'energetic' style and her 'warm interest' in 'the welfare of the church' proved problematic for the mild-mannered Kilvert and added to any underlying stress he felt at being in charge of the parish.

As for the sisters' fondness for their vicar, did they harbour the romantic notions of a love affair, or did they love Kilvert as the son they never had?

Priscilla Price's puzzling remark about Kilvert's *losses and crosses*, which she made quite early on in his Bredwardine ministry, hints at tensions that were already apparent at that time. Their exact nature remains unexplained. This may in part be due to Plomer's editing but it is also possible that Kilvert may never have committed these thoughts to paper. As ever, he leaves a mystery and we can only draw our own conclusions from what we know of him and from what he chooses to disclose in the pages of the published *Diary*.

And so we take our leave of Julia and Catherine Newton as they lie in the tranquillity of Bredwardine churchyard where, usurping his widow, they have staked their claim alongside Kilvert for the past 120 years and for eternity. The nature of their devotion to Kilvert lies buried with them. What he would have had to say about this extraordinary arrangement can only be imagined.

RELATED READING

Looking Backwards, KS Publications

Francis Kilvert and His World by FREDERICK GRICE

Francis Kilvert by DAVID LOCKWOOD

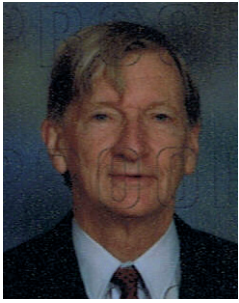
'Discovering Kilvert...and Kathleen Mavourneen' by RAY TAYLOR *Journal* 22
Kilvert's Collected Verse, KS Publications



Bredwardine Vicarage seen from the bridge over the Wye, below



*The interior of the Church of St Andrew's at Bredwardine.
Pictures are from the Society's archives*



Hearts in Hiding: two Victorian priests

Contemporary fame eluded two of the giants of Victorian writing, but there are many more parallels to be drawn between Francis Kilvert and Gerard Manley Hopkins, writes the noted Hopkins scholar Gerald Roberts. Could they even have rubbed shoulders at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition?

*My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird, the achieve of, the mastery of the thing*
(Hopkins, *The Windhover*)

I BEGIN with two passages of Nature-writing:

There is a beauty in the trees peculiar to winter, when their fair delicate slender tracery unveiled by leaves and showing clearly against the sky rises bending with a lofty arch or sweeps gracefully drooping. The crossing and interlacing of the limbs, the smaller boughs and tender twigs make an exquisitely fine network.

And

Beeches seen from behind the house scatter their tops in charming tufted sheep-hooks drooping towards each other and every way. Layers or shelves of the middle cedar not level but in waved lips like silver plate. Soft vermillion leather just-budded leaves on the purple beech, and the upper sprays ruddy in the sunlight; whole effect rich, the leaves too being crisply pinched like little fingered papers.

Evidently united in their love of Nature, the writers of these two diary entries are nevertheless distinctive in their presentation. The first, which is of course by Kilvert (12 Dec 1874), is elegant and finished in its syntax, meticulous and polished in its choice of words, and gracefully literary in its imagery. The second passage, by Hopkins (6 July 1866), written eight years earlier, is more clipped in style ('whole effect rich'), alive with colour (silver, vermillion, purple), and more esoteric in its imagery (tufted sheep-hooks, waved lips, little fingered papers).

The first is a beautifully honed passage which would surely appeal to the educated Victorian reader (had he had the opportunity to read it), the second has a more original flavour more challenging to contemporary tastes, but ironically of course no more available to the general reader until well on into the twentieth century.

Kilvert asked himself the question why he wrote a diary and answered: *I can hardly tell. Partly because life appears to me such a curious and wonderful thing that it almost seems a pity that even such a humble and uneventful life as mine should pass altogether away without some such record as this* (3 Nov 1874). Still, diary-keeping was a recommended occupation for Victorian clergymen, and Kilvert's explanation takes no account of a born writer's need to express himself, for if he was a disappointed poet, he was surely a prose-writer of skill and sensitivity.

Hopkins's Journal peters out in the mid-1870s when poetry (and much letter-writing) took over. His poems, with insignificant exceptions, never appeared in his life-time, a situation with which he, ambiguously, expressed himself content. He had been a poet since his schooldays at Highgate and, after the years of silence of the novitiate, resumed writing with 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' (duly rejected by the baffled Jesuit editor of *The Month*) and continued his verse to the end of his life. That life was, in the end, a tragic one, that promised much, but in secular

terms seems characterised by disappointment. His contemporary Kilvert, fated like him to an early death, surely achieved a sort of fulfilment in his life which has brought him an admiring posterity.

We know Kilvert was the son of the rector of Hardenhuish near Chippenham, that he was privately tutored and finally went up to Wadham College at Oxford where he took a fourth in history and jurisprudence in 1862. So far, so unsurprising. There was no great wealth or aristocratic connections in his family, which some luckier clergy could boast. But the evidence that his family life was happy and stable is perhaps to be seen in the continued regular intercourse that he had with its members after he became curate of Clyro in 1865 when he was 24.

The Hopkins way was chequered with high and low. Born in 1844, his family was solidly conservative middle-class, his father a professional in the insurance business, and their home in the exceedingly pleasant Hampstead-Highgate area of London. Their religion was piously Anglican and that was how their son (there were six children) was raised.

Educated at the strictly-run Highgate School, where Gerard had the character to face down a strong-minded Headmaster, he won a significant scholarship in classics to the most academic of Oxford colleges, Balliol in 1863. Too late to brush past the young Kilvert in an Oxford street, and perhaps too far removed from him in material means and academic interests. But we know both loved their Oxford, nostalgically recalled by Kilvert in an 1876 visit as those *dear old streets* and still later by Hopkins in 1880 when he declared that 'Not to love my University would be to undo the very buttons of my being' (*Further Letters*, p.244).

Kilvert's plunge into the rural life was made all the easier by the sympathetic rector of Clyro Richard Venables who, together with his wife, were generous in their support of the newcomer. This was a period of growth and expansion for the Anglican Church, and Kilvert reaped the natural benefits of a respected place in the community. His diaries reflect the multi-faceted role of the local priest: active interest in the school, maintenance of the law, distribution of charity, adult education sessions, and as much as he loved and enjoyed the humble rural characters, he could always expect to mingle without question with the local aristocracy.

Taking his family background into account, Kilvert was a natural recruit to the Anglican Church. By contrast, Hopkins made a series of hard decisions. The first, in the summer of 1866 to become a Catholic, not on a whim, or on the wave of conversion which made itself felt in English society in those years, but after reflection and discussion with others (including Newman who finally received him), and sadly aware of the distress this would bring his family:

You ask me (he wrote to his father) if I have had no thought of the estrangement. I have had months to think of everything (*Further Letters*, p.94).

And much more on the same note in the painful letters between himself and his parents. Particularly, I am struck by what he said to his father: *I am most anxious that you shd. not think of my future. It is likely that the positions you wd. like to see me in wd. have no attraction for me.*

Hopkins, in all the idealism of youth, had already chosen the hard way. His discussion of Christian doctrine in his letters at this time reflect a depth of knowledge and concern which is particularly notable.

What did a religious minded youth in the 1860s, who had struck out for himself as a Catholic, look to for his future? In the course of the next year he worked his way to an answer, although we now cannot follow the processes of his thinking. Invited to spend a term or two teaching at Newman's school in Birmingham, he went to an Easter retreat conducted by Fr. Henry Coleridge, a distinguished member of the Society of Jesus, and ultimately wrote in his Journal in May 1868, *Home, after having decided to be a priest and religious but still doubtful between St Benedict and St Ignatius.* The final choice was soon made. In a pugnacious letter to an ex-Oxford colleague, now a priest in the Church of England, he declared:

When I return [from a holiday in Switzerland] I shall be admitted at once to the Jesuit novitiate at Roehampton. It is enough to say that the sanctity has not departed fr. the order to have a reason for joining it. Since I made up my mind to this I have enjoyed the first complete peace of mind I have ever had (Further Letters, p. 51).

We know this was a flourishing period for the growth of Catholicism and the Society of Jesus in particular (not necessarily intellectually-based, but much indebted to the influx of Irish immigrants into England and Scotland). In Francis Edwards's *History of the Jesuits* (Burns and Oates, 1985) we learn that a vast deal of building of schools and churches was going on in the 60s and 70s, and that in 1868, when Hopkins joined the Society, the number of 40 novices was a record. Numbers of course are no proof of suitability and quality, but the Provincial and his colleagues who accepted Hopkins can hardly have thought twice about so qualified and idealistic a candidate. Newman, when he heard the news of Hopkins's choice remarked: *Don't call 'the Jesuit discipline hard', it will bring you to heaven. The Benedictines would not have suited you* (Further Letters, p.408).

There are arguments to this day about the wisdom of Hopkins's choice, whereas I doubt (with the exception of one notorious area) we debate the suitability of Kilvert's gifts for a country parish. Curate in Clyro for seven years, helping his father for another four, then vicar of Bredwardine late in 1877, he was a hands-on priest from the very beginning. Contrast his contemporary Hopkins who from the date he entered the novitiate at Roehampton would remain essentially a student until his ordination at St Beuno's in North Wales in 1877. Of course, there were brief periods of contacts outside the college community and stays with his parents, but study, as Hopkins admitted, was hard,

and the surroundings, as perhaps is obvious, were always male-dominated.

Keeping a diary was certainly an accepted practice for an Anglican clergyman - though you wonder whether filling 22 notebooks in nine years was quite what Kilvert's superiors would have expected - and Hopkins's own practice would certainly have had his rector's approval. But the poetry stopped. We cannot say we certainly know he was told

it was inappropriate for a postulant, but his natural scrupulosity and sense of loyalty to his superiors would have determined this sacrifice.

So while Kilvert attended to his parishioners and glorified Nature in his diaries, Hopkins revealed himself and the life around him in his Journal. Kilvert's writing is full of people and incident, Hopkins is a miscellany of so much, but marked all through by the individuality and expressiveness of the writer:

At the end of the month hard frosts. Wonderful downpour of leaf: when the morning sun began to melt the frost they fell at one touch and in a few minutes a whole tree was flung of them; they lay masking and papering the ground at the foot. Then the tree seems to be looking down on its cast self as blue sky on snow after a long fall, its losing, its doing (Journal, p.239).

Such writing reflects Hopkins's talent for art that found expression in drawings to be seen in his collected works, a shared ability that he had with Kilvert, and that he indulged with occasional visits to the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, where, at least in 1874 he might have stood with Kilvert and admired Holman Hunt's *Shadow of Death*, to which both refer. Kilvert, too, liked music, but Hopkins did more than like it: he composed, and although none of his contemporaries thought too much of what he wrote, there again in his collected works is the evidence of his multi-faceted personality.

When Kilvert died a tragically early death in 1879, Hopkins was a mere two years into the priesthood and was already into the extraordinary roundabout of his parochial postings: six months at Mount St Mary's school, near Sheffield; a few months teaching at Stonyhurst; another short period preaching at Farm Street Church in Mayfair (the Society's headquarters); a year on the parish in Oxford; and then a step-change into the North, where he moved from one parish to another in Manchester, Liverpool, and Glasgow.

Contrast (inevitably) the limited movements of his Anglican counterpart with all the advantages of stability and growth of relationships, but reflect as Hopkins did that the Society of Jesus was established in expectation of its members being frequently moved from one post to another and that its members paid total obedience to the needs of their superiors. When Hopkins finally finished moving, it was to spend the last five years of his life teaching classics and marking exam papers in the University of Dublin, a post he had neither sought nor found fulfilling



Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-89)

I am most anxious that you shd. not think of my future. It is likely that the positions you wd. like to see me in wd. have no attraction for me.

(although he would have rejected the last word as irrelevant to God's purpose for him).

That he was a difficult person to place, is an inevitable conclusion from all these peregrinations (other Jesuits incidentally *did* spend many years in one position), and of them all the one where he seemed happiest was a few months at Bedford Leigh in industrial South Manchester where he found the congregation 'heartly' and regaled them with the sort of plain-speaking sermons that he found liberating to deliver.

Another rather longer posting was to St Francis Xavier's church in the centre of Liverpool, where poverty and drunkenness went hand in hand and where he wrote feelingly to a friend of his: *I am brought face to face with the deepest poverty and misery in my district* (*Further Letters*, p.245). Historians of the city confirm the truth of this observation. When Kilvert stayed with the Gwatkins in Liverpool in June 1872 his verdict was less damning, but then he was being entertained by his hosts: *Enormous wealth and squalid poverty & bustling pushing vulgar men, pretty women and lovely children* (21 June 1872).

Would Hopkins have enjoyed a permanent parish posting? A good question, and were it asked of Kilvert, the answer is obvious, but the temperament and personality of his Jesuit contemporary was in many respects so original that, dare one say it, no placing might have suited him, and that is not a criticism of either him or his Order. His Journals and letters (which are plentiful after his Journal came to an end in 1876) are full of literary, historical and theological allusion and discussion, and the subject of poetry, both his own and that of his poetic friends, Robert Bridges, Canon Dixon, Coventry Patmore, was always high on the agenda of subject matter. In these respects he is a very different man from Kilvert who I think remains unequalled in his recounting of day to day events, yet was never a scholar.

Yet they shared so much. The sensitivity to Nature, affection for common folk, love of walking – distances they covered in a day were phenomenal – lovers of Wales, for if Kilvert wrote *I always feel so happy and natural and at home amongst the Welsh* (edited Plomer, vol II, p 167) his contemporary said *I have always looked on myself as half Welsh and so I warm to them* (*Further Letters*, p.127) – and they loved the Dorset poetry of William Barnes, for Kilvert *the great idyllic Poet of England* (30 April 1874), while for Hopkins *it is his naturalness that strikes me most* (p.370).

Perhaps we can linger a little on this last shared love. Kilvert actually paid Barnes a visit in April 1874 not far from Dorchester and spends several pages on hero-worship of the man he admiringly refers to as 'the Poet', who for Kilvert can do no wrong. Hopkins never met Barnes, and his enthusiasm is tempered by a critical assessment which weighs up both his virtues and his defects. It is a distinction that underlies an important contrast between the two men, which put simply is that of their intellectual life. For if Hopkins discusses matters philosophical, theological, and literary, Kilvert is happy with the status quo, the appearance

of things, the common sense solution, with things as they are – and this, of course, is one of the secrets of his general appeal. If we sometimes wonder – and we sometimes do – how would the two have enjoyed each other's company, we can be fairly certain that their different faith allegiances would have been the least of obstacles. One of Hopkins's greatest friends was the poet and historian Canon Richard Dixon whom he had first met teaching at Highgate but with whom he began a long correspondence in 1878 which lasted for the last 11 years of his life. Canon Dixon who was the vicar of Warkworth in remote Northumberland (the two seemed to have met only once in that time) toiled over a multi-volume History of the English Church and produced poetry praised by Hopkins, even if the modern reader will hardly be moved by it.

Hopkins often revealed the sadness of his own unfulfilled life to Dixon, whose concern and sympathy are deeply felt:

My Dear, Dear Friend, Your letter touches and moves me more than I can say. I ought not in your present circumstances to tease you with the regret that much of it gives me: to hear of your having destroyed poems, and feeling that you have a vocation in comparison of which poetry and the fame that might assuredly be yours is nothing. I could say much, for my heart bleeds... (LD, p.89).

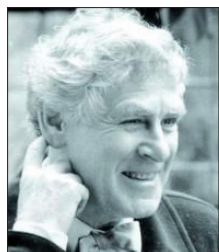
Kilvert, like Hopkins, was no friend of the High Anglican tendency in his Church, nor of dissenters, gentle though he was in his meetings with Fr. Ignatius, the quasi-monk who was striving to establish a monastery near Llanthony. Characteristically, it was the innocence of the man which appealed to him, whereas when on holiday in the South-West he uncharitably described a clergyman as *playing at Mass*, and listening to an Ascension Day sermon delivered at the grand High Anglican St Barnabas in Oxford he was repelled by what he described as the *pure Mariolatry* (25 May 1876). He turned with relief outside to the *poor humble Roman Church hard by* [which was] *quite plain, simple and Low Church in its ritual*.

Oddly enough there is an indirect connection between Kilvert and Hopkins. Near the end of his life Kilvert wrote up an anecdote reported to him by his father: *He remembers Newman well at Oriel. He told me that some years after he had left Oxford, Uncle Francis, who had letters of introduction to Newman, called upon him when he was Vicar of St Mary's. He spoke to Newman about my father. 'I remember him well,' said Newman, 'he left a fragrant memory behind him in Oriel.'*

'Fragrant' is not perhaps a favourite word these days, but it hardly diminishes the happy coincidence that links the name of the man who received Hopkins into the Catholic Church with the diarist who wrote so feelingly of the Natural World that Hopkins also loved, *hearts in hiding* that stirred for the love of Creation.

A note on the Hopkins references: All Hopkins's prose can be found in the volumes published by Oxford University Press. There are many selections from his verse and prose also available.

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Eminently a Victorian

Lucky Members will recall James Roose-Evans' electrifying readings from the Diary at Hay church in our jubilee year. For a dozen or more years he has had a show celebrating the life of Augustus Hare, whose stepmother was godmother to the Kilvert children (see Journal 32). Now he has put his love of Hare into essay form

'TO tell the truth,' wrote Augustus Hare, 'had my books not been published, had *The Story of My Life*, and *Memorials of a Quiet Life* never seen the light of day, I should have missed even the most abusive things people say. One critic wrote, "What is Augustus Hare? He is neither anybody nor nobody, neither male nor female. Mr Hare's paragraphs plump like drops of concentrated venom on the printed page."

Augustus Hare was the author of nineteen travel books as well as several biographies; but it was above all *Memorials of a Quiet Life* – the story of his adoptive mother, Maria Hare – and his six-volume autobiography, published between 1896 and 1900 (the longest in the English language, running to 3,000 pages), which brought him the greatest fame. This last was especially popular in America, which resulted in a constant stream of Americans seeking him out at his home in Sussex – 'my pilgrims' as he called them.

Hare was born in Rome in 1834, a most unwelcome addition to an already large family. His godmother, Maria Hare, after whose lately deceased husband he was christened, wrote to Augustus's mother asking if she might adopt the child, and received the prompt reply: 'My dear Maria, yes, certainly the baby shall be sent to you as soon as it is weaned. And if anyone else would like one, would you kindly recollect that we have others?' And so Augustus came to live at Lime, in Herstmontceux in Sussex. From then on, until the end of his life, he looked upon Maria Hare as 'my real, only mother'.

The other dominant figure in his childhood was his uncle Julius, rector of Herstmontceux, who was always sent for to whip him when he was naughty. At the age of 5, after breakfast, Augustus was made to study reading, writing, drawing, arithmetic, geography and the architecture of the Temple at Jerusalem; after lunch – almost always mutton followed by rice pudding – he would have to read aloud from Josephus and Froissart's *Chronicles*.

When Julius married an Esther Maurice, she made the young Augustus's life a misery, with Maria Hare capitulating, believing it was for the child's good to break his will.

His aunt's sadistic behaviour reached a climax when she hanged Augustus's favourite cat. From that moment on he loathed her, but what he was forced to endure in the name of religion is worthy of a Gothic horror story. No wonder these passages in the autobiography 'plump like drops of concentrated venom on the printed page'!

Although destined for the Church, he finally found his métier when John Murray suggested he write a travel book about Sussex. He went on to write eighteen more, including books on Venice, Florence, Rome and the cities of North, South and Central Italy. His industry was indeed formidable, driven in part by the need to earn, for Maria kept him on a tight shoe-string, even when he was up at Oxford. And whenever his attentions were in danger of slackening she would fall ill.

It was because of her ill health, whether real or psychosomatic (one suspects the latter) that they were forced to spend their winters abroad, chiefly in Rome. And it was here that Augustus



became popular, both as a water-colourist and as a lecturer on the city. Three times a week he would escort a party of 40 ladies and their butlers (the latter carrying the luncheon baskets and camp stools) to various parts of Rome, to paint and draw. His advice on sightseeing is as sound today as it was when he wrote it: 'One should never try to see too much, never try to "do" Rome. Better far to leave half the ruins and nine-tenths of the churches unseen and to see well the rest, to see them not once but again and again, till they have become a part of one's life.'

Victorians loved death-bed scenes and Maria appears to have played many before her final death. But when that comes, as the first snowflakes of winter fall, Augustus writes most movingly of this, the most powerful emotional relationship in his life. In the months of desolation following her loss, although deeply grieving, he was able to quote the Chinese proverb: 'You cannot prevent the birds of sadness from flying over you, but you may prevent them from building nests in your hair.' He set to work to write her story, *Memorials of a Quiet Life*, which sold out in the first three days and was rushed into a second edition. Thomas Carlyle, on meeting Augustus, said of it, 'I do not often cry, and am not much given to weeping, but your book is most profoundly touching.'

After Maria's death he used the home he had shared with her not only for writing, but also to entertain many less well-off people who needed a rest or a retreat.

There was also a series of young men, to whom he was platonically attracted, whom he tried to help, but almost all of them proved a bitter disappointment. Only the young Somerset Maugham, whom he took under his wing, repaid his hospitality by writing what is the best portrait we have of him, outside of his own writings, as Selina Hastings observes in her recent biography of Maugham.

Mornings would begin with the guests and servants assembled in the dining-room as Augustus read prayers. Once, reading the prayer: 'O Lord, our Heavenly Father, High and Mighty, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, the only Ruler of Princes, Who dost from Thy Throne, behold all the dwellers on earth ...' he suddenly broke off, saying, 'I am going to cross all that out of the Book of Common Prayer. I think all that fulsome adulation must be highly offensive to God. He is certainly a gentleman, and no gentleman cares to be praised to his face. It is tactless, impertinent and vulgar!'

A snob, a genteel, old-maidish bachelor, a frequenter of house parties, he loved hobnobbing with the gentry. Well-travelled, widely read, he was a good conversationalist and a fine water-colourist, all of which made him especially popular with the ladies. Not surprisingly the *Daily Telegraph*, in reviewing his autobiography, wrote, 'Mr Hare introduces us to the best of good company and tells many excellent witty stories.' Indeed, among the guests at one house party was Sir Henry Irving, who was so impressed by Augustus's storytelling that he urged him to rent the Egyptian Hall in London on a nightly basis to tell his

stories, guaranteeing that he could thereby earn as much as £8,000 a year.

In his later years, however, Augustus would often complain that, compared with his childhood, 'when there were many people who knew how to converse, not merely to utter ... nowadays everyone wants to talk and no one to listen! And what funny things people would say at dinner. A very great lady once said to me, "I can assure you that the consciousness of being well-dressed gives me an inward peace which religion could never bestow!"'

He loved telling ghost stories and stories with a slightly macabre flavour. One such story is of a French officer with a wooden leg who, on coming to the shrine at Lourdes, as he lowered his legs into the holy water of the Grotto, prayed, 'O Lord, make both my legs the same.' And when he took them out they were both wooden.

His two most celebrated books convey a vivid portrait of certain strata of Victorian upper-class life, and the writer and diplomat Shane Leslie described the autobiography as 'the best of bedside books'. Although inevitably there are longueurs, Hare is capable of rising to remarkable passages of writing:

Every morning when I am in London I work at the Athenaeum. There is no place where Death makes a stranger impression. You become so accustomed to many men you do not know, to their comings and goings, that they become almost part of your daily life. You watch them growing older: the dapper young man becomes grizzled, first too careful and then too neglectful of his dress; you see his face become furrowed, his hair grow grey and then white, and at last he is lame and bent. You become worried by his coughs and hems and little peculiarities. And suddenly you are aware that he is not there. For a time you miss him; he never comes. He will cough no more; no longer creak across the floor. He has passed into the unseen; gradually he is forgotten. His place knows him no more. But the wheel goes on turning; it is for others; it is for oneself; perhaps, who is waning away.

He died, quite suddenly, in 1903, of a heart attack. His life covered almost exactly the reign of Queen Victoria and, while not an Eminent Victorian, he was, as the critic Hugo Dyson observed, eminently a Victorian.

This essay first appeared in the spring 2011 edition of Slightly Foxed, the Real Reader's Quarterly. We are grateful for permission to reprint it.

www.foxedquarterly.com 020 7549 2121

The photograph of James Roose-Evans is courtesy of the Hereford Times

James Roose-Evans' Opening Doors and Windows: A Memoir in Four Acts was reviewed by our President in Journal 31. It is now available in paperback. He gives readings of his play Eminently a Victorian, the story of Augustus Hare

Notes, reviews, obituaries

Frank admissions

Giles Harris Evans finds his belief he had a family connection with the Diary turns out to be true

MY first acquaintance with Kilvert came through an invitation to read a passage from the *Diaries* for a Christmas entertainment at Holy Trinity, Clapham where I was curate; this was probably in 1972. The result was that I went out and bought a copy of the shorter edition and devoured it with delight.

I became interested again when I arrived in Petersfield as vicar in 1999 and discovered Mrs Marguerite Kilvert was a member of the congregation. When I visited her she told me of her connection through her husband the Rev. Robert Kilvert, who was FK's great nephew. She showed me various items of memorabilia and encouraged me to join the Society. My interest being rekindled I

bought the three volumes this time and read them with growing fascination.

There had been a hint that my family had a connection with Kilvert in some way and I discovered this to be true in that my great grandfather was Frank Evans who is mentioned a couple of times in the third volume.

Kilvert visited him on New Year's Day 1878: *At nine o'clock after breakfast I went to the Old Court to see Mr. Evans, the Churchwarden, on parish business. He had not finished breakfast. 'We were up rather late last night Christmassing,' he said with a smile.* Frank is also mentioned along with other tenant



Frank Evans

farmers on 4 Feb 1879 when he was among ten farmers entertained at the vicarage. *The dinner was very nice. White soup, roast beef, boiled chickens and ham, curried rabbit, stewed woodpigeons, beef-steak pie, potatoes and stewed celery, plum pudding, custard, plum tart, mincepies, apricot jam tart.* What a feast.

When Francis Kilvert returned to Bredwardine with his new wife there was a great welcome. According to the account of this event in the *Hereford Times* a committee of farmers collected certain moneys and purchased six silver dessert spoons and forks and a caddy spoon. The article goes on to say, 'Mr Frank Evans, of The Weston [he had obviously recently moved to another local farm], the churchwarden, came forward with the presentation of the tenant farmers and others and read an address printed in gold, with a floriate border in which are expressed congratulations and felicitations on their marriage. He ends with these words: "Allow us to express a hope that God will bless you and yours with a prolonged and useful existence, health and happiness, and crown your Christian labours with their well deserved reward".' How soon such joy and happiness would turn to mourning and sadness.

Frank Evans went on to serve the community as a county councillor and JP. He died in 1912 and is buried not ten metres away from FK in Bredwardine churchyard.

Welcome

The Society would like to extend a very warm welcome to the following new members:

Mrs Marilyn Price, of Sarn, Powys;

Mr Andrew and Mrs Clare McElhayer, of Westhope,
Herefordshire;

Mr and Mrs Michael Hamilton, of Dulverton, Somerset;

Mr John Dixon and Ms Clare Davison, of Malvern,
Worcestershire; and

Mr and Mrs Raymond Green-Jones, of Westmoor,
Herefordshire.



OUR President, in his weekly column in the *Church Times* (spot-
ted and sent to the *Journal* by Margaret Collins), wrote in May
how for him 'some writers are as attached to the seasons as certain
plants'. Henry James spelt summer afternoon and Barbara Pym
autumn in north Oxford, but Kilvert meant spring, 'although
why this is I cannot quite explain, as he is, in his Welsh-border
way, a man for all seasons. But spring becomes him. His life was
brief and fresh, bright and dark by turn, and suddenly gone. I see
him opening up like the chestnut blossom in our churchyard at
this moment, then no more.'

Ronald Blythe recalls, 'I used to stay near Clyro with an artist
friend. Her house had been a manse attached to a Nonconform-
ist chapel in which the services still took place; so on the Sabbath
we sang along with the hymns on the other side of the wall.'

'Young Kilvert walked every day of the year, and through all
seasons. But his May Day walks were damp and luscious. He
was tall and strong and sociable, and in his mid-thirties. And,
like all the great diarists, a chronic recorder. Fragments of telling
talk were tucked away in his head until he got back to his study.'

Mr Blythe concludes, 'The Kilvert Society, of which I am
president, will be tramping in Francis's footsteps this May, but I
cannot be with them. It is a tidy step from the Stour to the Wye.'

For the record, our President will be 89 on November 6.



RETIREMENT has brought no let-up for Sir Sherard
Cowper-Coles. In addition to finding time to give the talk at our
annual meeting in April, Her Majesty's former Ambassador to
Afghanistan was also publishing his memoirs, *Cables from Kabul:
The Inside Story of the West's Afghanistan Campaign*. With such a
topical subject, he seemed hardly ever to be off the airwaves. But
it was nice to hear that his Kilvert Society date was the one he
cleared his diary for. We were well rewarded.



ONE of the stranger outings of the Society took place in Sep-
tember 2008 to Llwynbarried Hall, not far from Rhayader, which
Kilvert had visited on 20 April 1870.

As Peter Beddall reported at the time, 'Colin Dixon, who had
organised the visit, was very apologetic, stating that there ap-
peared to be nobody at home and that the house seemed totally
deserted.... I was glad I was with company as it was very isolated
and not a place to visit on a dark stormy night on your own!'

Pevsner records the house as a *circa* sixteenth-century house of
good standing. At the time of our visit a new set of gas cylinders
had been fitted, so it evidently was occupied.

The reason for the dilapidated state of the house became clear
last June, when *The Daily Telegraph* carried the obituary of the
owner, Bill Boddy, who had died at the impressive age of 98 (a
cutting kindly sent to the *Journal* by Val Dixon).

Mr Boddy and his wife had been members of the Society
many years ago. The *Telegraph* described him as the country's
longest-serving journalist. Motor sports was his line. He enjoyed
his first 100mph ride at the age of 14 in a Mercedes 36/220.

No doubt the house will pass into new hands and will be
brought back to a fine condition, like the Parsonage at Langley
Burrell, and perhaps we can look forward to another visit, this
time to see the interior as well.

As Peter wrote in 2008, 'It was a pity we could not gain access
as I am certain that the interior of the house would have been
both atmospheric and interesting. The house [though altered in
the 1870s] is still stuccoed and the garden still has the oak trees,
all as described by Kilvert.'



A SECOND leader in *The Daily Telegraph* (drawn to our atten-
tion by Jeff Marshall) warns us against 'falling once more into
the trap of taking books [on holiday] we think we ought to read'.
Lamenting the ordeal facing the Booker prize judges of having
to read 138 books, making a shortlist heavy on violence, suicide
and Nazism, the writer says, 'As with a good recipe, personal rec-
ommendation works. There's a holiday in itself in first reading
Francis Kilvert's *Diary* or Daisy Ashford's *The Young Visitors*. The
years are the best jury of all. So, to avoid despair at the airport
bookshop, find an hour, while there's time, to rummage second-
hand.' Do we again detect in that friendly reference the hand of
Christopher Howse (see the Notes in *Journal* 32)?



THE *Diary* made another appearance in the *Telegraph*, in the
obituary of the Very Rev. Oliver Twistleton-Wykeham-Fiennes
(Oliver Fiennes), aged 85, who was the reforming Dean in the
viper's pit that was Lincoln Cathedral in the 1970s and '80s (a
report kindly sent to the *Journal* by Colin Dixon, with *Diary*
references).

It was Fiennes's great-great-grandfather, the seventeenth Lord
Saye and Sele, the Archdeacon of Hereford, who earned a men-
tion in the *Diary* for preaching a sermon described as a *rigmarole*.
But at least, Kilvert muses, it was *more appropriate and more to the
purpose* than the Bishop's *screed* that morning. *It was hard to say
which was the worse sermon*.

The noble lord, preaching at the reopening of Moccas Church
on 26 February 1878, gets no mercy from Kilvert for his confu-
sion of otters, badgers and pigs; and the last reference in the
Diary (May Day, 1878) has Kilvert excusing himself from the
Archdeacon's Visitation. A subsequent engagement perhaps.



John Toman has written an article, 'Francis Kilvert and Charles
Pritchard: Clapham Connections', which is available online for
free, published by The Clapham Society. It appears on the web-
site of The Clapham Society Local History Series and is article 8.

The article is about Kilvert's interest in astronomy, particularly
his knowledge of the Oxford Professor of Astronomy, Charles
Pritchard, whom he met on 22 May 1876.

The Kilvert Memorial Seat at Bredwardine

Jeff Marshall writes: It was in *Journal* No 27 of September 2008 that I first mentioned an idea I had had for a small, yet appropriate task as part of the commemoration of the Society's Diamond Jubilee – notably to restore the stone bench in Bredwardine churchyard to its original appearance. With that in mind I thought it would make a very fitting cover for the final *Journal* of Jubilee Year, to show the seat in its full glory, as built and carved by the Society's first president, Sid Wright.

It was then, in the caption to that cover, that I blundered ... badly. I wrote: 'The supports of the seat were vandalised [that is debatable, I gather] some time ago and clumsily replaced by solid brickwork.' In the first place the 'brickwork' of my memory was, when I went back to look, quite elegant and harmonious stonework, albeit still in a solid block. Worse, it was subsequently revealed to me that the repair had been carried out by our member Graham Middleton, who lives near by at Crafta Webb. Well, I ate a very large slice of a well-known and not very tasty pie and wrote a letter of apology to Graham. There was no reply, so perhaps I am forgiven or, more likely, he is still smouldering. So, I apologise again, publicly now – sorry, Graham and thank you for taking that initiative at that time.

Anyway, the committee acceded to my request for the restoration and thanks to the efforts of our committee member (and builder) Peter Beddall, a local stonemason Hugh Peachey was found and he was willing and able to carve new supports for the

bench, modelling them as closely as possible on the originals. (By the way, it is extremely useful to have a builder on our committee and members will recall that it was through Peter's resourcefulness that the ruins of the Old Soldier's Cottage at the Bronydd were made safe.) Peter and I met Hugh at Bredwardine on a wet Tuesday in March 2010 to discuss the project and the result of his skill can now be admired in the accompanying photo taken in February this year, the first time I had had the opportunity to look at the completed work.

The new supports which were put in position by Peter (working mostly on his own) are themselves cunningly supported so that the seat can now no longer be pushed over sideways, which is thought to be what happened when it was 'vandalised'. Now the top needs cleaning and the inscription re-carving, work which is to be carried out before long.

I am, of course, very pleased that my idea came to fruition and I am grateful to all those involved – the committee, Peter (in particular), Hugh and Richard Weston, our treasurer, for releasing the cash.

The next project at Bredwardine is to restore the Kilvert memorial gates at the entrance to the churchyard; they need re-hanging and varnishing at the very least and the dedicatory plaque needs attention too.

For an account of the 1948 Commemoration Service when the seat was consecrated, see page seven of *Journal* No 26 (June 2008), the back cover of which has picture of Sid Wright and his handiwork.



The restored Kilvert Memorial Bench at Bredwardine passes a critical test

Obituaries

It is with regret that we record the deaths of the following Members

Mr A.E.G. Wright, of Melrose Avenue, Brent, London.

Mr Wright had been a Member since 1978 and was a Life Member.

Mr Charles Henry Newbery, of Bodmin Road, Truro, Cornwall.

Mr Newbery had been a Member since January 1982.

