

THE  
**JOURNAL**  
OF  
*THE KILVERT SOCIETY*



Number 49

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# 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

**www.thekilvertsociety.org.uk**

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The Treasurer would like to thank all who responded to his appeal to change their standing orders to the new subscription rates. There are still a few members yet to make the change.

Contributions to the *Journal* should be sent to the Hon Editor by post or email. Address above  
Deadlines: 1st January and 1st July

## *Forthcoming Events 2019/20*

**All teas and pub lunches must be pre-booked with the Secretary by post or email (jeanbrimson@hotmail.com)**

### Saturday 28 September 2019

Our bi-annual visit to Wiltshire includes Draycot Park, (the scene of the ice skating episodes on 29 December 1870 and New Year's Day 1871 Vol I, pp 288-291). Afternoon tea completes the day.

### Wednesday 11 March 2020

Visit to Worcester and the Cathedral.

### Friday 24 April 2020

Annual General Meeting at the Bishop's Palace, Hereford, 7pm.

### Saturday 25 April 2020

Morning Seminar 10.00 for 10.30am at The Pilgrim Hotel, Much Birch.

Annual dinner 6.30 for 7pm at the same venue.

### Saturday 27 June 2020

Visit to Aberystwyth and the National Library of Wales.

### Saturday 26 September 2020

Visit to Aber Edw, *the famous rocky wooded gorge, the Edw and the Wye and the meeting of the sweet waters* (Vol I, p60).

### Sunday 27 September 2020

Church Service at St Michaels and All Angels, Clyro at 11am, followed by an organ recital by Hilary Wetton, after which there will be a lunch in the parish hall.

If you are on email please help us to cut postage costs by sending your e-address to the Secretary at jeanbrimson@hotmail.com

**Front cover:** *Snodhill Castle*. Photo: Mike Rose

**Back cover:** *Members at the Snodhill Picnic*. Photo: Alan Brimson



## From the Editor

The photos that have been sent to me of the Kilvert Society Snodhill picnic include some of your editor looking solemn in a straw hat. I was having a lovely day, as were we all, and the seriousness could only come from the pressure of asking other people to do all the work – photographs, as mentioned, or Charles Weston's heroic agreement to write up the event at short notice.

On my way home on Monday, I decided to visit St Bartholemew's Church, Much Marcle which has some carvings I wanted to see. The first thing I spotted as I parked the car was the gravestone of a clergyman with the surname Money Kyrle. That rang a Kilvertian bell. Harriet Money Kyrle married the Revd Andrew Pope on 9 September 1874 and Kilvert acted as best man. John Wilks, in his article on Pope in *Journal* 38, confirmed that Harriet Money Kyrle's home was The Homme, Much Marcle, next to the church and now used, appropriately enough, as an exclusive wedding venue. Kilvert stayed at Much Marcle vicarage and wrote in the *Diary* that the church, which is a large one, was *thronged* for the wedding (Vol III, p77-8). He must have met some of the Money Kyrles who are now commemorated in plaques filling the walls in the Kyrle north chapel. There are also some fine tomb effigies, not mentioned by Kilvert, who instead noticed that *the village people had made the church lovely with flowers*.

Dorstone church was pretty with flowers on the end of each pew when we held our commemorative service there as our other event in a delightful Kilvert weekend.

## From the Chairman

On a recent visit to Llanigon churchyard, where I have been tending the Thomas family graves for some years, I was struck by a vague notion that something was not quite right. I had not visited the graveyard for a while, and it was not until I had been there for about ten minutes that, on looking up, I suddenly realised that the magnificent copper beech tree which had always overhung and shaded the graves was no longer there. All that remained was a tall bare stump. The tree's disappearance came as a complete shock. I am no expert at ageing trees, but judging by its girth I have always taken it to be at least two hundred years old. It must surely have been a mature tree at the time when Daisy Thomas was living at Llanthomas. To me it had always been a living link with the family, and seeing what remained of it put me in mind of the morbidity of all living things. "Tempus edax rerum," as the poet Ovid wrote: time the devourer of things. It is a statement as true for trees as for mankind. Admittedly, the tree was in the habit of dropping limbs of varying sizes onto the graves and the neighbouring barn, but it was sad to think that having stood there for so long it would never be seen again.

And yet, for all its sadness, my story has the smallest grain of optimism in its ending. For whilst continuing to clear the plots I chanced upon a tiny sapling bearing two small copper leaves. This I carefully dug up and replanted in a hidden corner of the churchyard beyond the reach of the gardener's lawn mower. At least I offered nature the chance to defy the great devourer. And who knows? Perhaps some two hundred years hence some other chairman might be writing in much the same terms as I am doing today. But just for the present, please, not a word of this to anyone!

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## *From the Secretary*

You will read all about the Victorian picnic at Snodhill Castle further in this *Journal*, recorded by our 21st century diarist Charles Weston. From my personal point of view, it was a terrific success.

It really started for me when I arrived at the car park to arrange the shuttle to Snodhill Castle. I was hopeful that at least the committee members would attend suitably attired, but was amazed when virtually everyone alighted from their vehicles in the most elaborate and authentic Victorian costumes imaginable. Immediately, I knew we were in for a great time, the sun was shining, truly Kilvert weather, everyone entered into the spirit of the occasion and made it into a grand celebratory event.

Of course this did not just happen. Garry Crook, Chairman of the Snodhill Castle Trust, proposed the idea after he addressed the Society at last year's AGM. Our thanks must go to the Trust for allowing us access to the site for the picnic. Our planning started in January with lists of equipment that would be needed. The four of us, Sue and Mike Rose, my wife Jean and I were the team that brought it all together. Luckily, Jean and Mike were able to borrow equipment through their respective connections with the Guides and Scouts. Then it was onto the food: it was decided to replicate as far as possible

the menu at the picnic of 21 June 1870 (Vol I, pp160-163), which Kilvert recorded so amusingly in his diary, ham, tongue, chicken, pies, salads, jam and gooseberry tarts, bread, cheese and *splendid strawberries*, along with *cup of various kinds*.

Then there was the problem of car parking and our team of four became five as Eva Morgan, our member from Peterchurch, joined us. Now, Eva knows everyone in the local community and I mean everyone. Eva arranged for us to park at Dorstone Court and Snodhill Court Farm and also booked the Dorstone village hall, just in case of bad weather. (Thankfully, we would only have to pay for it if it was needed, which of course it wasn't). So a big thank you to Eva.

The day came, the team worked tirelessly, Sue and Jean had spent the previous two days acquiring all the provisions and now laid up the overloaded table. Mike manfully carried up all the equipment, assembling the gazebos for shelter and, yes, even the toilet tent, all in good time for the arrival of our members, and so the party began.

Our thanks also to Richard Weston and Richard Lovett for providing the shuttle to and from the car park.

A big, big, thank you to the team and also those members attending, who entered into the spirit of the occasion and made it a truly memorable event. We left the site, as promised, as though we had never been there.

I now have a problem, how do we surpass that!!



*Val and Colin Dixon with their gifts acknowledging many years of service to the Kilvert Society. They have retired from the committee, but remain active in helping the Society. Colin is a fount of knowledge and keeper of the archive; Val provides photographs for the Journal and reads at the Annual Dinner, where she is adept at gently bringing out Kilvert's sense of humour.*

Photo: Ann Dean



## My personal thoughts about a possible photograph of Kilvert, c1876-77

*by John Price*

These high quality digital copies of pictures originally taken by D.J. Grant, Bulth Wells below were sent to me by noted professional genealogist, Richard Meredith who lives in Newbridge-on-Wye & Minnesota, USA. Richard is the son of local historian Sidney Meredith, who with Richard visited Mr & Mrs Price, Ashfield 30 plus years ago. The photos came into the Price family's possession when the late Mr Arthur Price's father John Price bought Ashfield, lock stock and barrel in 1926, after Mrs Margaret Davies died in 1923. Her husband Henry Davies, Land Surveyor and Civil Engineer had sadly died in his early thirties, in December 1876. Written on the back of a copy of the picture below (from an album donated to Powys Archives by Richard and Sydney Meredith) reads

'This picture appears in Jones the Pystol Album, Ashfield Album and Harry Rice's Album'. I have not been able to find any further information about these albums mentioned, from Powys Archives or Richard, although he believes these photos were all taken at Ashfield house.

Ashfield House is near to St Gwrthwl's Church, Llanwrthwl and St Marks Church, Nant Glas, where Kilvert attended the foundation stone ceremony for the 'Mission school Chapel' on 21 April, 1870 (Vol I, p105).

I have shown this photograph which includes a clergyman with a beard in a group of children to many people. They have given me responses ranging from "Definitely not Kilvert" to a 50-75% chance that this may be Kilvert. Now it's your turn to agree or disagree!



Although the photograph has deteriorated and is of poor quality when enlarged, I finally managed to upload it to the online 'Family Search' photo recognition software. This has

given me more positive results than the people I've asked. I begin with a very poor result for Timothy Davies who played Kilvert in the 1970's BBC TV series.



28%



Kilvert v Timothy Davies: 28%

**Comparing with known pictures of Kilvert gave much better results:**



82%



Ashfield photo v Kilvert 1872: 82%



74%



Ashfield photo v Kilvert 1865: 74%



87%



Ashfield photo v Kilvert 1878: 87%

**Now the known Kilvert photos compared:**



77%



Kilvert 1872 v Kilvert 1878: 77%



98%



Kilvert 1872 v Kilvert 1866: 98%



The question you are probably asking is; can we trust this 'Family Search' software?

Whatever your opinion, I hope you agree that these comparisons add another dimension to analysing the similarity of unnamed people in photos. I have also experimented with my wife's immediate family who have strong family similarities. However, some siblings only scored 25-40%. I think that the 'Family Search' software is more advanced than simply giving a high score for a man with a beard and eyes etc. against an unrelated similar photograph, as proved by the Timothy Davies 28% comparison result. Also in defence of the comparison software, the Ashfield photo attains a higher score compared to the 1878 photo than earlier photographs of Kilvert, giving a stronger case in my view for the Ashfield photo been from the lost 1876/77 period.

The Census Records for Ashfield have not yielded any more clues either:

1871 Census Ashfield:

William Davies-Head-Mar-72-Landowner and Farmer of 30 acres-Radnorshire Rhayader

Mary Davies-Wife-Mar-64-Manchester

Henry Davies-Son-Unm-26-Land Surveyor & S(C)ivil Engineer-Radnorshire Nantmel

Anne Bufton-Serv-Unm-33-Genral Serv-Unm-(Domestic)-Radnorshire Nantmel

John Bufton-Serv-Unm-26-Serv-Unm-Farm Serv-Radnorshire Nantmel

John Davies-Serv-Unm-15-Farm Serv-Radnorshire Cwmdauddwr

1881 Census Ashfield:

Margaret Davies-Head-W-37 Farmer of 40 Acres-Radnorshire Rhayader

James Davies-Nephew-Unm-21-Articled Clerk under att?-Radnorshire Rhayader

Elizabeth Mason-Serv-Unm-21-Domestic Servant-Radnorshire Nantmel

Edward Price-Serv-16-Farm Servant In door-Radnorshire Nantmel

In a letter dated 5 January 1871 the Rev T J Thirlwall announced that the mission house was completed and 'a great success', but it was not until 19 April that a 'building situate within the parish of Nantmel known by the name of St Mark's School church' was formally licensed for the holding of divine service.

Radnorshire Society Transactions, 2005, P 97

[https://radnorshire.society.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/49837\\_Radnorshire\\_2005\\_BOOK-1.pdf](https://radnorshire.society.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/49837_Radnorshire_2005_BOOK-1.pdf)

In another photograph from this batch, left of centre, in the middle row, a vicar with a black wide brimmed hat is sitting down in another group of children, possibly Thomas James Thirlwall, vicar of Nantmel and Nant Glas. The girl and boy to his left could be daughter Effie and son Edmond (62% match).

Kilvert's signature is recorded in Nantmel parish register, August 7th 1877 baptising four children in the absence of Mr Thirlwall, thereby indicating some interaction between





them in this lost 1876-1877 time period when Kilvert was vicar of St. Harmon's. In the *Diary* entry; Saturday 22nd March 1873 (page 342, Vol 2) Kilvert mentioned *that the Bishop had offered the living of Clyro to Tom Thirlwall, who would probably be the new Vicar*. As we know, this did not happen!

For the record, this is the third photo of the set. Could it contain a clue that I've missed?



Thank you for looking at my comparison experiments with these pictures. A huge thank you to Richard Meredith, for making these photographs available.



## KILVERT IN PRINT AND ON RADIO

Two wonderful opportunities for promoting the *Diary* will appear this winter.

Publisher Penguin Random House has announced a reprint of the one volume diary for November.

BBC Radio 4 is planning a week of *Diary* based programmes during Christmas week. They will be 15 minute programmes, broadcast mid morning and repeated in the evening. Check the schedules for exact timings.



# EVENTS AND EXCURSIONS

## The visit to the Brunel Museum, Bristol

*Alan Brimson tells us about the March excursion*

In planning our winter visits, I am ever mindful of the possibilities of poor, wet or cold weather, so I try to find a venue that offers some shelter from the elements. For this reason, our winter visit was to the new Brunel Museum alongside the S.S. Great Britain in Bristol.



*SS Great Britain.*

Our member John Oliver asked me “what connection did Kilvert have with Brunel”? I must admit my immediate reply was “rather tenuous”, but was it? John’s question got me thinking. Kilvert does not mention Brunel by name in the published *Diary* and yet he was surrounded by, and used in his everyday life, the great Victorian engineer’s achievements.

At Langley Burrell, he lived alongside Brunel’s Great Western Railway. This opened up travel for Victorians; Kilvert took advantage and used the line extensively for his visits to London, Bristol and Bath. His visit to Cornwall for his holiday

with the Hockins was by G.W.R., crossing the Tamar by way of Brunel’s Royal Albert Bridge. The *Diary* entry (Vol I, p129) records his journey to Bath through Box Tunnel. It is said that the rising sun shines through the tunnel on Brunel’s birthday.

Chippenham railway station features some twenty-seven times in the *Diary* so Brunel’s railway was very important to Kilvert, even problematical when he caught the ‘Flying Dutchman’ in error from Bath and got himself taken direct to Swindon, much to the consternation of ticket collector Ironside (Vol III, p326). Brunel’s Clifton Suspension Bridge, Bristol is mentioned in the *Diary* on his visits to his cousin Addie Cholmeley and his sister Emmie, who on her return from India took up residence in Sion Hill. Even the S.S. Great Britain gets a disapproving mention (Vol II, p214). The ship had been built in Bristol in 1838-43 and was the first screw propelled ocean going ship, but when Kilvert saw her she was



*Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1806-1859).*

in a sorry state.

You can see that Brunel had a great influence indirectly on Kilvert's life and so we came to pay homage to the great Victorian engineer. Our party met outside the Hippodrome, on St. Augustine's Parade, Bristol, in the vicinity of the *Diary* entry for 4 June 1874 (Vol III, p31) which tells the story of the little girl and the bun; we were between the site of the Drawbridge and College Green. We then crossed over to the head of the waterway where we boarded the ferry for the trip through Bristol's revitalised harbour to land alongside the magnificently restored S.S. Great Britain, though our visit was primarily to visit the Brunel Museum that sits alongside the ship on the same site.

The museum is a celebration of all Brunel's achievements: the Thames Tunnel, Paddington station, the Great Western Railway, Maidenhead Viaduct, Box Tunnel, the steam ships, (Great Western, Great Britain and Great Eastern), the Clifton Suspension Bridge, the South Devon Atmospheric Railway, vacuum powered but a rare Brunel failure, the Royal Albert Bridge and the trestle viaducts of Cornwall. The museum is full of details of his many projects, his surveying instruments set in his drawing office recreated on its original dockyard setting. It tells of his many battles to convince his doubters, with some wonderful audio visual presentations. There were also many hands on exhibits and in drawers in the display cabinets were drawings and documents along with details of his controversial broad gauge railway for the opening of the

G.W.R., 7 foot ½ inch gauge. This was a battle that was lost eventually; the gauge was converted later to the standard gauge of 4 foot 8½ inches, but was Brunel correct all along? His original thinking for the broad gauge would have given a much lower centre of gravity with much higher speeds with stability: what would that mean today? Speaking of which, would Brunel have been so successful with today's bureaucratic meddling, procrastination and lack of will to enable projects to be achieved? He was a genius before his time, but his time was then, I doubt he would have been the great success he was in today's world.

Alongside the museum is the Brunel Institute, run in conjunction with the University of Bristol which has a vast holding of original documents and drawings of Brunel's projects.

Lunch was taken at the café on the site while some members took the opportunity to take a quick look over the ship, which the Society had previously visited. We returned by ferry, some to the city centre, others to Brunel's other masterpiece, Temple Meads Station, which Kilvert would have known well. It is unique in being served by the ferry service.

This visit was about the slight Kilvert connection with the great Victorian Engineer of railways, stations, tunnels, steamships and bridges, who died, it is said, from exhaustion at the age of fifty three.



*The March Excursion.*

Photo: Alan Brimson



# The 2019 AGM and Seminar

by Mary Steele



*The Pilgrim Hotel, Much Birch, venue for the 2019 AGM and seminar.*

The KS AGM and Seminar was this year held at the Pilgrim Hotel, Much Birch, with the AGM as usual at the Bishop's Palace, Hereford. It wasn't ideal Kilvert weather as Hurricane Hannah blew in during the Friday night, banging at the windows on the side of the hotel that, on a good day, has a lovely view westwards over the valley. Conservatory and patio were out of action and one chair had blown half way down the garden, but we could enjoy the outlook from the breakfast room. For the seminar and dinner, we took over the hotel's meeting room.

Some thoughts to ponder about the *Diary* and Kilvert's prose came to me during the weekend. The first thought about the *Diary* was the network of historical links to which it is attached. In the presentation after the AGM, we learned about Bishop Hurd, his precious collection of antiquarian books, and the role of Kilvert's great uncle, Richard Kilvert, Bishop Hurd's chaplain. This was 'A tale of two Richards', as told us by Christine Penney, librarian of the Hurd Library. An article by Christine based on her talk will appear in the Spring 2020 *Journal*.

In the Saturday morning seminar, Chris Barber introduced and played to us an audio-visual presentation originally prepared for the launch of his book *Exploring Kilvert Country* in 2003. The narrator, Andy Richards spoke, in his role as Kilvert, in an English accent, but a hint of the actor's own Welsh accent was underneath. I was struck by how well this suited Kilvert's words. He was surrounded by Welsh accents when he began his *Diary* and I wonder if this flowed into the rhythm of his prose. My third thought connects with this. Kilvert's *Diary* reads aloud wonderfully well, as we heard from Chris Barber's film

soundtrack and from the readings Val Dixon and Richard Weston gave us at the Annual Dinner. It wasn't written for that purpose, but as a private diary. But, of course, Kilvert was



*Our seminar speaker, Chris Barber, prepares his audio-visual presentation.*

Photo: Val Dixon



habitually writing for oral presentation: his sermons and cottage lectures. It was natural for him to write text that adapts readily to speech. We were lucky to hear his writing set against Chris Barber's evocative photographs of the landscape around Clyro.

The reader will have gathered that members who attended the AGM and seminar were able to appreciate a richness of connections with our hero. Christine Penney took us to the century before the *Diary* and the social and scholarly milieu of the prosperous Georgian clergy. Returning us to the nineteenth century, Chris Barber characterised the *Diary* as an 'intimate account of country life in Victorian times'. He described his own book, *Exploring Kilvert Country* as a guidebook to a landscape which had changed little since Kilvert's day, though roads have been tarmacked and some farms have gone. He suggested that Kilvert responded to the scenery and people of Clyro in a 'Wordsworthian' way. At a practical level, he wondered why Kilvert didn't use maps, though the Ordnance Survey first edition had been available for some time. He thought that some of Kilvert's spellings of place names came from hearing them pronounced rather than seeing them in writing. Chris's 'not many people know that' note was about Hay – it only became Hay-on-Wye in 1947 because the postmaster got fed up with delivery mix-ups between Hay and Hoy (which is in the Orkneys). Chris also told us that the surname of the *Diary*'s editor, Plomer, should

be pronounced 'Ploomer'. I certainly didn't know that. Chris reminisced about the launch of *Exploring Kilvert Country* which took place in the Baskerville Arms, but in the new part which Kilvert did not know, out of deference to Kilvert's objections to noisy events at the pub. Three of us, braving the gale on Saturday afternoon to make a very quick visit to Clyro churchyard, stopped off at the pub and found that it has new ownership – an excuse for another KS visit to support the management, perhaps.

As well as being entertained and informed, we were well fed during the weekend. Sue and Mike Rose provided their famous and very welcome buffet in the interval after the AGM business. The Pilgrim Hotel cooked full breakfasts for those of us who stayed there and also catered for our Annual Dinner, efficiently served by the hotel's hard working team and much enjoyed by the 37 members who attended. As well as the *Diary* readings mentioned earlier, we heard a history of Bredwardine bridge from Jeff Marshall, including relevant *Diary* entries, and a panegyric to cider read by Michael Sharp from a book of poetry celebrating Herefordshire. Kilvert tasted the churchwarden's home-made cider on New Year's Day, 1878 and drank their healths all round. At the end of the Dinner, we drank the healths of organisers Alan and Jean Brimson and chairman Rob Graves raised the traditional toast to the immortal memory of Francis Kilvert.



Chairman Rob Graves in animated conversation as members enjoy the Annual Dinner.

Photo: Val Dixon



# Snodhill Castle

*An overview of its history by Garry Crook, Chairman of Snodhill Castle Trust*

*This updates the article Garry wrote for Journal 43 and the talk he gave at the 2018 AGM*



*View from Snodhill Castle*

Photo: Mike Rose

There are several interesting theories as to what stood on Snodhill before the Normans arrived (hillfort, Saxon fort, pre Norman castle). Both Earl Harold Godwinson in 1055 and King Henry I in 1121 camped at a place called “Snowdown” or “Snawedon”, both places described as being west of the Stradel (Dore) valley.

The present castle was probably built in 1068 when William Fitz Osbern, Earl of Hereford was campaigning to assert Norman control along the Welsh Marches; he built all the major early Norman Castles from Chepstow through to Wigmore. Snodhill Castle is positioned to guard the north end of the fertile Stradel valley and is located midway between the Fitz Osbern refortified Ewyas Harold and his new foundation at Clifford Castle.

Before his death in 1071 William Fitz Osbern granted Snodhill Castle to Hugh l’Asne. Snodhill is not recorded as a

place in the Domesday Book but it is highly likely that the Domesday Book reference to “Wilmastune” is Snodhill as this Domesday village is recorded as having a mill and the modern location of the name “Wilmaston” (1 mile from Snodhill) has a very poor intermittent water supply insufficient to power a mill. Hugh L’Asne held the castle until his death in 1101 when the castle passed to Robert de Chandos I (who had married either a daughter of l’Asne’s or a niece). The first mention of the Chandos family holding land in the Stradel valley comes in 1132 and Snodhill Castle is first mentioned in 1142 when Roger de Chandos II signed a charter “From my Castle in Stradel”. It is possible that Snodhill Castle was involved in the struggles between King Stephen and Empress Matilda as Roger de Chandos III was a strong supporter of Matilda. King Stephen invaded Herefordshire in 1138 and Roger de Chandos III was at the Battle of Lincoln in 1141 with “19 Knights from the Honor of Snodhill”.



Snodhill Castle was “stormed” by supporters of Roger Mortimer in 1321. This was during the ‘Despenser War’ when Marcher lords rebelled against Edward’s gift of the Gower to his favourite Hugh Despenser. Roger de Chandos was Sheriff of Hereford at the time and a supporter of King Edward II.

The castle was surveyed in 1355 after the death of Roger de Chandos V, and was “ruinous”, though this is possibly because of the Black Death that hit Herefordshire in 1349.

In the Calendar of Close Rolls for Henry IV dated 1402-05, Snodhill Castle is listed as defensible and John de Chandos was ordered to repair and garrison the castle against Owain Glyndwr in 1403. The fact that Snodhill Castle survived this time of crisis when other local castles (Clifford, Hay, Dorstone, Ewyas Harold etc.) did not is interesting.

After the death of John de Chandos in 1428 the castle passed to Richard de la Mare, Sheriff of Hereford. The castle appears to have been in a reasonable state of repair after the death of John de Chandos in 1428 but after the death of Richard de la Mare on 8 February 1436 the Castle is listed as “worth nothing” as is the estate’s watermill, warren and fishery. But a Steward was still in place and this depreciation could be the result of damage by Owain Glyndwr in 1406. The castle then passed to the Beauchamp Earls of Warwick and then to the Crown in 1483.

The castle is listed as “worth nothing” in 1439 and 1446 but John Thomas was appointed Constable on 12 December 1486 and remained in post until 1515. Chaplains of the castle’s chapel continued to be appointed until 1540 and the chapel is recorded as still actively in use in 1597. Historian John Leland visited Snodhill Castle around 1540 and described the castle as “somewhat a ruin”. Queen Elizabeth I granted the castle to Robert Dudley Earl of Leicester in 1564 and he held the castle until 1567 leasing it to Hugh ap Harry before finally selling it to William Vaughan in 1569. There are tantalizing suggestions that parts of the castle show 16th century modification (gatehouse turrets, modifications to the keep and SE bastion); they could date from the Earl of Leicester’s time.

It is uncertain what condition Snodhill Castle was in by the 17th century. It is also uncertain what part if any Snodhill Castle played in the English Civil War; tradition has it that the castle was besieged and destroyed by the Earl of Leven in 1645 (cannon balls have been found). The excavations in the castle’s SE bastion in 2016 appear to indicate that the tower was partially demolished to create a gun platform, a window crudely reshaped for use as a cannon port and a hole smashed into one of the large stone blocks to mount a culverin (a cannon that could fire round shot, i.e. cannonballs, a long distance). The keep also had one of its lower windows blocked up roughly with masonry. If Civil War activity can be confirmed it not only extends the castle’s active life into the 17th Century but also lends credence to the tradition of a fighting end to the castle. The discovery, in June 2019, of the keep’s spiral staircase, including evidence of deliberate damage, suggests that the castle could have been ‘slighted’, that is, rendered unusable, in the 1640s.

After the Civil War, the still substantially intact castle was demolished by William Prosser between 1649 and 1652 to provide materials to build nearby Snodhill Court and barns. The castle continued to deteriorate and become overgrown

with vegetation, completely concealing a site that was, in its heyday, the size of Windsor Castle.

## The story brought up to date: recent archaeological investigations

In 2016, after many years of negotiations, surveys and changes of ownership, Historic England was able to fund major repairs to the critically endangered castle. However, there was not enough money to completely repair the castle and a tough compromise was agreed on to prioritise the rescue of the unique 12 sided keep, north tower, SE bastion and wingwalls. Though this work secured the main parts of the castle in 2017, it left the 12th century south curtain wall supported precariously on wooden props and the enigmatic west fragment slowly decaying. In 2018, after a lot of hard work, the Snodhill Castle Trust has been successful in obtaining a large grant from the Garfield Weston foundation that will enable the complete repair of the south curtain wall and west fragment in 2019. An architect and contractors were appointed with the intention of starting repairs in July and completing in October.

The Trust has also been busy applying for other grants and obtaining donations from various sources and the success of this work has enabled the Trust to plan investigations of the castle’s keep entrance and the north tower. There are also plans to improve access, car parking and visitor information. All the archaeological investigations in 2019 will be carried out by Herefordshire Archaeology, led by Tim Hoverd.

The Kilvert Society visit on 22 June took place during a very interesting and active year for the Trust and castle.

## Call for old photos, drawings, sketches of Snodhill Castle

One of the ongoing mysteries about Snodhill Castle is that, despite its photogenic appearance and beautiful location, very few of the antiquarian illustrators and artists have drawn the castle.

In the last 100 years, the castle has lost major portions of walling and the traces on the ground of buildings have also faded. The ongoing archaeological investigations would be greatly helped if more pre 1997 (when a wall fell down) images were available. If you have any images from before 1997, please contact Garry Crook at [garrys.castle@virginmedia.com](mailto:garrys.castle@virginmedia.com)



## THE SNODHILL PICNIC

149 years and one day later... Saturday 22 June 2019

*Charles Weston, in plus fours and bowler, was our Diarist*

The day could so easily have been a washout but the sun shone and the day proved to be a resounding success!

We had been informed before the day itself that ...‘in the event of inclement weather Dorstone Village Hall would be available...’ A picnic in a village hall?? We need not have worried!

Assembly point for members was arranged for Dorstone Court Farm. No ...*breaks with pairs of brown horses...very roomy and comfortable...*(according to Francis Kilvert in his account of the day’s events) but an assortment of charabancs, all very 21st century. Our car park attendant and supremo in chief for the day – Alan Brimson – greeted us very much in the style of a genial hotel proprietor – chortling with pleasure as each chara discharged its party of Victorian wanabees. And what a motley but magnificent collection of gentlefolk gathered in that courtyard! But, alas, there was little time for social pleasantries. A shuttle service awaited to transport us up the hill to the picnic arranged in the castle grounds.

The photographs of the event convey the scene. As if by magic an area of the grassy knoll below the main castle mound had been transformed into a haven of food, frivolity and friendship. Canvas chairs and blankets proved to be the favoured seating arrangement; gazebos and even a portable lavatory were the essential accessories.

Alan welcomed the assembled gathering and read the appropriate entry from the *Diary*. Appropriately, he stood alongside a mock-up of the fire and famous cooking pot which had figured so large in the day’s events. The pot had collapsed into the fire with disastrous consequences for the boiled potatoes therein, causing confusion and recriminations amongst the guests. The reading then moved on to litany of foodstuffs and drink served on the day. These included claret, hock, cider, sherry and...champagne! ‘You’ll be lucky!’ said Alan.

Well, perhaps no champagne was forthcoming, (*though we found a champagne cork on the ground when we were clearing up. ed.*) but the picnic food and punch was well up to the mark. It was a credit to Alan and Jean and to Mike and Sue Rose that most of the variety of food and drink on offer at the original picnic was served up on the day for us. The sun shone, passing visitors to the site gazed on our gathering with amused interest and tongues were loosened by the copious amounts of liquid refreshment.

The afternoon ended on a high note with a conducted tour of the Snodhill Castle site by Garry Crook. Kilvert Society members last visited Snodhill in June 2011 and what a transformation since then! On that occasion, battle had had to be done by Peter Beddall in order to cut back the foliage and bracken to reach the castle keep and we did not have the luxury of a guide. Since that time, however, in 2017, thanks to the combined efforts of enthusiasts, volunteers and the funding of Historic England, Snodhill Castle has been rescued. Today, as a result of the work of the Snodhill Castle Preservation Trust, access (albeit somewhat perilous at times!) can be had by all. In 1870 Francis Kilvert wrote of his visit

*The first thing of course was to scale the castle mound and climb up the ruins of the Keep as far as might be. It was fearfully slippery and the ladies gallantly sprawled and struggled up and slithered down again...*

Little change then for our party on our final ascent to the Keep where the 1870 picnic was almost certainly held! Fortunately, everyone completed the ascent and descent without mishap, avoiding the dangers of the steep slopes and trip hazards. Garry’s informative and erudite guided tour was much appreciated.

The group photograph moment at the end of the day culminated in an unusual event of living history. Paul Townsend had arrived decked out in the outfit of a Victorian army Adjutant General. Not only had he acquired the full formal dress, but he had also adopted the character. He spoke at length of his alter ego’s existence, his lifestyle and of the promotion procedures which ruled military life at that time. His eloquent address was a fitting conclusion to the day’s events.

The Snodhill picnic proved to be one of the most unusual and enjoyable occasions to have been organised by the Kilvert Society in recent years. Once again bowlers off and bonnets raised to all those who helped organise the event.



*The steep slippery brown bare grass slopes. (Modern safety fencing stops us slipping any further while Garry Crook shows us the very latest archaeological discoveries about the keep). Photo: Tim Lewis*



# Snodhill photographic gallery

*This is a photographic diary of the Snodhill Picnics 1870 and 2019. Text is (mostly) from the 1870 Diary entry, so don't get confused and think people have changed their names!*



*The Haigh Allans drove up, then the Henry Dews and the party was complete. Photo: Val Dixon*



*Three sticks were propped together, meeting in a point, gipsy fashion, and from them was hung the pot, full of new young potatoes. Photo: Mike Rose*



*The gay dresses of the ladies, an unwonted sight to the dwellers in the Golden Valley. (Mrs Dixon has brought her maid, Mai Ellis). Photo: Alan Brimson*



*At length, the pot was settled upright on the embers. Photo: Mike Rose*



*The first thing of course was to scale the Castle mound and climb up the ruins of the Keep as far as might be. Photo: Val Dixon*



*The gentlemen stood round the fire staring at the pot. Photo: Tim Lewis*





*There was plenty of meat and drink, the usual things, cold chicken, ham and tongue, pies of different sorts, salads.*  
Photo: Mike Rose



*Henry Dew was the life of the party and kept the table in a roar.* Photo: Val Dixon



*Jam and gooseberry tarts, bread and cheese, splendid strawberries...* Photo: Val Dixon



*Mary Bevan and someone else had been trying to sketch the Keep.*

Photo:  
Sylvia Green



*People sprawled about in all attitudes and made a great noise.*  
Photo: Alan Brimson



*Everyone seized upon something to carry down the steep slippery grass slopes (including the Adjutant General).*  
Photo: Val Dixon



## The Kilvert Commemoration Service

On Sunday, we returned to Dorstone, to St Faith's Church in the village this time, and in very different weather. Rain started coming down heavily at midday, so twenty KS members walked to the church porch under umbrellas and exclaimed on our good luck at the picnic. The service of evensong celebrated the eve of the festival of St John Baptist and included the commemoration of Francis Kilvert. The service was led by the Reverend Luci Morriss, who has, since last August, been Rural Pioneer Priest and Priest in Charge for Borderlink Parishes including Bredwardine, Kilvert's parish and last resting place. She commented in her sermon that while clerical life may look simpler in Kilvert's time – no large groups of parishes to manage – it was a time of great turbulence scientifically and theologically, and a period of much alteration in church buildings, something that may have generated as much controversy now as alterations to church interiors can today. After a reading from the *Diary* and a final hymn, 'Guide Me O Thou Great Redeemer', we enjoyed afternoon tea at the back of the church, once again served by Sue Rose and Jean Brimson. Tea was served in mugs showing a church bell – a souvenir of a recent project at Dorstone to restore the ancient church bells.



*Eva Morgan and Colin Dixon (seated) discuss Eva's journal article...*



*... with the editor and members around the tea table at Dorstone church.*



## Kilvert's Clergy: the good, the bad and the frankly mad

*as identified by the Reverend Canon David Rogers*

*This article was originally given as a talk to the Friends of Hartlebury Castle in 2017*

The diary of the Revd Francis Kilvert covers just one decade in the mid-to-late nineteenth century and chronicles the life and times of a faithful country clergyman with an observant eye and a vivid style.

The survival of the diary is something of a miracle. Kilvert had been married no more than a month when he died suddenly at the age of 38. His wife, out of grief or delicacy, destroyed all references to their relationship. When, years

later, the hand-written notebooks were inherited by a niece, an aspiring but not very inspired novelist, she made presents of three notebooks only, and perhaps in pique or jealousy, threw the rest away.

But before they came to her, the notebooks had been sent by her brother to a literary editor who recognised their worth, transcribed them, and published three volumes of extracts just before World War Two. The Luftwaffe then destroyed the transcripts in a bombing raid on London, so all we have left is a tenth of the original, plus William Plomer's selection of the best of Kilvert's daily observations.

In them, Kilvert reveals himself, in Plomer's words, '...as an essentially modest, innocent, truthful and unwordly young man, sociable, and with a strong love of life and of landscape, with a sense of drama and a good vein of humour.'

Francis Kilvert represents the very best in a Victorian clergyman, equally at ease among landowners and labourers. Plomer says of him: 'His good nature and good manners, his vitality, his love of children, and his practical sympathy with the unfortunate won him much affection.'

So, having introduced him to you, let me introduce some of the other priests who peopled his world, in a talk I've titled, 'Kilvert's clergy – the good, the bad, and the frankly mad.'

There had been Francis Kilverts in his family for generations and it was a family in which clergymen recur frequently. I have Mary Arden Davies to thank for tracing the connection between the diarist and Bishop Hurd, the Bishop of Worcester, whose library is the jewel in Hartlebury Castle's crown. Hurd's chaplain was the Revd Richard Kilvert; his nephew was the Revd

*The Revd Robert Kilvert*



Photo: National Library of Wales

Robert Kilvert, and Robert's son was the Revd Francis Kilvert, the diarist.

They were not a moneyed family and Francis Kilvert's life was strongly affected by what used to be called 'lack of prospects'. He would be well into his thirties before he was given a living of his own.

But he had the good fortune to serve as curate to two priests whom he loved and who loved him, in two places which have become 'Kilvert Country'. In rural Wiltshire, after ordination, he acted as curate to his father, the Revd Robert Kilvert, and returned there for a further four years after the seven years he spent in the Welsh Border country serving as curate to the Revd Richard Venables, Vicar of Clyro. Kilvert was close to his own parents and found in Mr and Mrs Venables a second father and mother and at Clyro vicarage another welcoming family home.

Father and son working together in ministry would be unheard of today, and could have been fraught, but every time *my Father* appears in the diary the reference is warmly affectionate, from the first moment Francis has travelled by train to Chippenham, set off to walk to his family home by lanes and field paths and, *My Father came across the Common to the black gate, waiting for me by that way, then came over the field to meet me.* (Vol I, p136)

In late November 1870, (Vol I, pp 265-76) Francis Kilvert joined his parents at the house at College Green, Worcester, where his maiden aunt, Maria Kilvert, had died. They got a cool reception from Aunt Maria's haughty servants, there was a funeral in the Cathedral at which the Kilverts were upstaged as chief mourners, and the reading of a contentious will, with another link to Hartlebury: *...a most iniquitous will*, wrote Kilvert, *not a shilling left to any of the Francis Kilverts, the old grudge and malice against Uncle Francis for writing Bishop Hurd's life ruling strong in death.*

This snub by his aunt had far-reaching consequences. By September 1871, Francis had fallen in love with Daisy Thomas and wished to approach her father to ask for her hand in marriage. On the 14th, *I wrote to my father to tell him of my attachment and ask what my prospects were as far as he knew.* On the 17th: *I had today very kind letters from my Father and Mother about my attachment to Daisy. They say if they had inherited their natural share of the Worcester money they might have retired from Langley in my favour, but now that is impossible. They cannot afford it.* (Vol II p34, 35-6).

While this news would have sad implications for Francis, his relationship with his father would always be warm and easy. Father and son holidayed together one summer in Wales. They walked and fished together and the last glimpse the one volume *Diary* gives us of my Father is on 18 July 1878 at Llangorse Lake, pulling out perch *as fast as we could put the lines in.* Even a disagreement about Francis's literary hopes hadn't spoiled their affection. On May Day 1874, the diarist wrote: *...(discussed) with him the advisability of publishing a book of my own poems. I wish to do so. He rather discourages the idea.* (Vol II, p444).

Robert Kilvert is the first of the good clergy in Francis's life. The second is Richard Venables, a second father figure whose Vicarage at Clyro was a second home. Vicar and curate first appear together in February 1870 walking to Hay

to use the communion alms to buy bedding for the poor against the cold. Francis is a regular visitor for dinner at the Vicarage and when his family visit him in June 1870, Mr Venables kindly puts the Vicarage at their disposal and offers the use of the dog-cart. On Boxing Day, when Francis has travelled from Clyro to Chippenham to join his family, he wrote: *After dinner, we opened a hamper of game sent by the Venables and found in it a pheasant, a hare, a brace of rabbits, a brace of woodcocks and a turkey.* He comments: *Just like them, and their constant kindness.* (Vol I, p287). Never was this kindness more needed and given than at the time of Kilvert's attachment to Daisy Thomas. You remember that on 17 September 1871, Francis's father had written, regretting that he could not afford to retire and pass on his living to his son. Events then move fast. (Vol II, pp35-43)

18 September: *I went to the Vicarage with Mrs Venables and had a talk with Mr Venables about my prospects. He most kindly promised to write to the Bishop to ask him for a living for me.*

Two days later: *As I was coming down the steps, he tapped his window and came out onto the lawn to have a talk. He said he thought he ought to caution me not to think my prospects better than they were and not to do anything precipitate.*

After another two days: *After lunch, walked with Mrs Venables to attend the Harvest Thanksgiving Service. By the way we had a long nice talk about Daisy. I don't know what I should do without Mrs Venables. She encourages me and does so comfort and help me at this time.*

The next day, the blow fell: *'A letter came from Mr Thomas kindly expressed and cordial, but bidding me give up all thoughts and hopes of Daisy.'*

Six months later (Vol II, pp152 & 157): *After dinner, Mr Venables...asked me what I should do if the living of Clyro were offered to me. "I should refuse it," I said. "Then you would me mad", he said. But I don't want the living of Clyro, I don't want to be vicar of Clyro... and we get an inkling why a week later...*

*I had a very long talk with Mrs Venables this morning about my prospects. She thinks I am quite right in wishing to decline the living of Clyro if it is offered to me. I devoutly hope it will not be. She says what is quite true, that I could scarcely keep the poor old vicarage in repair. Carpenters and masons are almost always there now to prevent its falling down.*

Blighted by lack of money from gaining a wife or gaining a position in society which might qualify him as a suitor, Kilvert resigned his curacy and returned to work alongside his father. When he was about to leave Clyro, he returned to his house and found on my table a red leather case, containing a beautiful gold watch and chain with two most kind letters from Mr and Mrs Venables saying in the nicest way that the watch was from him, the chain from her and the little chain supporting the key from the baby. I went immediately to the Vicarage to thank them as well as I could, for my heart was full. (Vol II, p216)

In the years to come, Richard Venables continued to have his former curate's good at heart, one year inviting him back to Clyro to look after the parish while the Venables were in



London, and the last reference to him is in November 1878, when Mr Venables wrote proposing Francis take on a mutual acquaintance as a pupil – at £80 a year, a small boost to that still inadequate income.

Francis Kilvert, his father Robert, and Richard Venables were all in their own ways good men and good priests. What about the other kind – the bad, and the frankly mad? The Church in the nineteenth century had no panels of assessors to advise Bishops about the suitability of candidates for holy orders. Bishops ordained whoever they had a mind to ordain. Kilvert's Diary is peppered with examples of the consequences of a system without checks and balances.

Take Parson Williams of Llanbedr, whose nickname – unexplained – is 'Parson Button'. Kilvert hears of him when he makes a pastoral visit.

*Before I settled down for the evening, I went into old Hannah Whitney's and sat awhile with her. She spoke of the two extraordinary sermons she heard preached in Llanbedr Church by 'Parson Button', Parson Williams of Llanbedr. 'He was a very good Churchman, but he was a very drunken man'. 'How then being a very drunken man could he be a good churchman?' 'Oh, he read the Lessons very loud and he was a capital preacher. He used to say to the people in his*

*sermons, "My brethren", says he, "don't you do as I do, but you do as I say"'. He was a very quarrelsome, fighting man and frequently fought at Clyro on his way home from Hay. One night he got fighting at Clyro and was badly beaten and mauled. The next Sunday he came to Llanbedr Church bruised black and blue, with his head broken and swollen nose and two black eyes. However, he faced his people and in his sermon glorified himself and his prowess and gave a false account of the battle at Clyro in which he was worsted, but in which he represented himself as having proved victorious. The text was from Nehemiah xiii:25. 'And I contended with them and cursed them and smote certain of them and plucked off their hair, and made them swear to God.' Another time he was to preach a funeral sermon for a farmer with whom he had quarrelled. He chose this text. Isaiah xiv:9 'Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming.' (Vol II, p134)*

Dining at Whitney Rectory, Kilvert hears about the sermons which old Mr Thomas, Vicar of Disserth, used to preach.

*He would get up in the pulpit without an idea about what he was going to say, and would begin thus. 'Ha, yes, here we are. And it is a fine day. I congratulate you on the fine day,*



*He (the Solitary) walked further over the hill with us to show us the famous rocks of Pencwm (Vol II, p228).*

Photo: Val Dixon



and glad to see so many of you here. Yes indeed. Ha, yes, very well. Now then I shall take for my text so and so. Yes. Let me see. You are all sinners and so am I. Yes indeed.' Sometimes he would preach about 'Mr Noe'. 'Mr Noe, he did go on with the ark, thump, thump, thump. And the wicked fellows did come and say to him "Now Mr Noe, don't go on there, thump, thump, thump, come and have a pint of ale at the Red Lion. There is capital ale at the Red Lion, Mr Noe.' For Mr Noe was situated just as we are here, there was the Red Lion close by the ark, just round the corner. Yes indeed. But Mr Noe, he would not hearken to them and he went on, thump, thump, thump. Then another idle fellow would say, 'Come Mr Noe – the hounds are running capital, yes indeed. Don't go on there, thump, thump, thump.' But Mr Noe he did never heed them, he just went on with his ark, thump, thump, thump. (Vol I, p376)

And from the Vicar of Fordington, Kilvert hears of the state of the Church in that parish before the current vicar's time:

*No man had ever been known to receive the Holy Communion except the parson, the clerk and the sexton. There were 16 women communicants and most of them went away when he refused to pay them for coming... One day there was a christening, and no water in the font. 'Water, Sir!', said the clerk, in astonishment. 'The last parson never used no water. He (just) spit into (the palm of) his hand.'* (Vol III, p423)

From the bad to the frankly mad...well, that's an unfair description. They were perhaps no more than eccentrics who could survive in a church of low expectations.

One was a Revd John Price who lived as a hermit but was nevertheless Vicar of Llanbedr Painscastle. Kilvert called him 'The Solitary'. On 3 July 1872, he wrote: 'Tom Williams...and I had long been talking of going up to Llanbedr Hill to pay a visit to the eccentric solitary, the Vicar, and we arranged to go this morning. The full account is in Vol II, pp225-31. Kilvert gives a lyrical description of the location of the Solitary's setting:

*In this green cwm stood a little grey hut. It was built of*

*rough dry stone without mortar and the thatch was thin and broken. At one end of the cabin a little garden had been enclosed and fenced in from the waste... Then what was my relief when I knocked upon the door to hear a strange, deep voice from within saying, 'Ho! Ho!' There was a slight stir within and then the cabin door opened and a strange figure came out. The figure of a man rather below the middle height, about 60 years of age, his head covered with a luxuriant growth of light brown or chestnut hair and his face made remarkable by a mild thoughtful melancholy blue eye and red moustache and white beard."*... "The Solitary came forward and greeted us with the most perfect courtesy and the natural simplicity of the highest breeding.

'The house' was a sight when once seen never to be forgotten. I sat in amazement taking mental notes of the strangest interior I ever saw. Inside the hut there was a wild



Father Ignatius. Photo: KS Archive



confusion of litter and rubbish almost choking and filling up all available space...

After offering some black mixture which he called *I suppose port...The Solitary* ...then showed us the way down the lanes towards the Church. And the people who met him touched their hats to his reverence with great respect. They recognised him as a very holy man....

Kilvert's other eccentric, the Revd J L Lyne, had taken as his name Father Ignatius, and in a bid to revive monasticism at a time when it would have been regarded with suspicion as 'popish', had founded a community. High above Hay in a valley close to the ruins of Llanthony Priory, they had begun to build a monastery at Capel-y-Ffin.

The first time Kilvert visited, Father Ignatius was away from the site, but on a later visit Kilvert met him. (Vol I, pp219-25)

*He struck me as being a man of gentle simple kind manners, excitable, and entirely possessed by the one idea. ... His head and brow are very fine, the forehead beautifully rounded and highly imaginative. The face is a very saintly one and the eyes extremely beautiful, earnest and expressive, a dark soft brown.... He wears the Greek or early British tonsure all round the temples, leaving the hair of the crown untouched. His manner gave you the impression of great earnestness and single-mindedness."*...

*After luncheon we went up to the monastery...and.. I laid a stone at the particular request of Father Ignatius. The building that the masons are at work on now is the west cloister which is to be fitted up temporarily for the accommodation of the monks. This work was begun in March and ought to have been finished long ago. But there was no one to look after the workmen and they did as much or as little as they pleased. Father Ignatius thinks every one is as good as himself and is perfectly unworldly, innocent and unsuspicious. He gave the contractor £500 at first, took no receipt from him. And so on. The consequence is that he has been imposed upon, cheated and robbed left and right....*

*I stood in the lane near the Honddu bridge for some time talking with Father Ignatius. I asked him if he would not find an ordinary dress more convenient and practical and less open to insult and objection. But he scouted the idea of abandoning his distinctive monastic dress. He said he had once given it up for a few days, but he felt like a deserter and traitor until he took to the habit again.... We shook hands and departed. 'Good-bye, Father', he said with an earnest kindly look, 'and thank you for your good wish.*

So there you have them, the good, the bad and the eccentric: Kilvert's clergy.

To end, from 3 November 1874, a moment of introspection from this good man and good priest, the diarist, Francis Kilvert:

*Why do I keep this voluminous journal? I can hardly tell. Partly because life appears to me such a curious and wonderful thing that it seems almost a pity that even such a humble and uneventful life as mine should pass altogether away without some such record as this, and partly too because I think the record may amuse and interest some who come after me.*

The editor is grateful to Dr David Mair for making this talk

available to us and for the biographical note and photograph of David Rogers. David Mair notes that the Revd Canon Rogers adopted different accents for the speech of the characters whose words he reported. Readers are encouraged to do the same, including the full description of the hovel inhabited by the Solitary, a section here curtailed for space reasons.

## AFTERWORD

The Reverend Canon David Rogers was born in Birmingham in 1948 and, after studying at Bangor University and Westcott House, Cambridge, worked all his professional life as a priest in the Worcester diocese. He greatly enjoyed Kilvert's *Diary* and used extracts from it on several occasions in sermons or when leading quiet days. Kilvert's sensitive use of words, his appreciative descriptions of everyday life and his gentle spirituality echoed David's own life, as did his shared love of nature and people. David died in 2017 after a short illness, not long after giving this talk to the Friends of Hartlebury Castle.



Reverend Canon David Rogers

Photo: Dr David Mair

# The Stokes Family Story

*A family with a Kilvert connection is investigated by Eva Morgan*

*All addresses are in Herefordshire unless given otherwise*

In 1841 Keziah Lilwall, aged 25, who had been born in the ancient village of Pembridge a few miles from Leominster, was living with her father, 65 year old Thomas Lilwall at Wooton Almeley a few miles away. There was a Herefordshire born servant, Susan Powell living in the house too, so Thomas must have been a man of some means.

Meanwhile, in 1841 Thomas Stokes aged 35 and his wife Elizabeth, aged 40 were living at Brilley at Sunnybank with their three children, 20 year old Elizabeth and her brothers William, 15, and Thomas, 7. Only Thomas had been born in Herefordshire. The Census just asks, born in this county, yes or no, so we don't know more unless they are found later as has happened with this family and it becomes clear.

Twenty years later in the 1861 census the family, still living at Brilley, at Norway Bank (maybe that's a change of name or just unclear writing for Sunnybank) were Thomas Stokes, aged 65 born at Brilley and his wife, 67 year old Elizabeth who had been born at Lionshall, parents of Thomas, aged 27, who was with his brother William at Upper House, Almeley (see next paragraph) in 1851 and their daughter now married and listed as Elizabeth Havard, aged 41. All were born at Brilley. Also living with them were Ellen Lilwall 58, listed as sister-in-law (presumably of William, can she be Keziah's sister?), Ellen Bengough, aged 15 a servant from Brilley, Charles Prosser, aged 19 a carter, (working with and caring for the work horses) and William Power, aged 73 from Almeley, still working as there were no retirement pensions to rely on in those days!

Back now to 1851, when Keziah was aged 37 and married to 37 year old William Stokes, who I couldn't trace in 1841 unless there had been an age muddle, but who must have been born at Brilley in about 1812. Their home was at Upper House, Almeley where William was farming 211 acres and employing two labourers. William and Keziah had probably married in about 1848 and by 1851 had a daughter, Sarah Ellen, aged 2 and a 1 year old son, Thomas Lilwall, taking his mother's surname as his second Christian name (a habit which seems to have passed down through the family) both born at Almeley. Also living with them were William's 17 year old brother Thomas, a servant who was born at Brilley around 1832 and his 8 year old nephew Thomas, a scholar who had been born at Kington. Times must have been good and the house large as also living with them were Jane Farr, a 36 year old house servant from Allensmore, Elizabeth Jenkins, a 14 year old nurse from Eardisley, Frances Bengough, aged 25, from Brilley, George Abberley, aged 18 from Bishopstone and 16 year old John Heath from Almeley, all said to be farm servants. Elizabeth would have helped with the care of the young children and Jane and Frances with the huge amount of cooking and washing involved in a household of that size,

maybe with some daily help too.

In 1871 William's widow, 58 year old Keziah Lilwall Stokes was living at The Cottage, Cusop as a retired farmer's wife. With her were her two unmarried daughters, Sarah Ellen, aged 22 and 19 year old Emily Jane, both born at Almeley. Now to the story of the involvement in the Stokes family history of Kilvert's friend the Revd Pope, curate of Cusop. In the *Diary*, (Vol I, p73-4), on April Eve 1870 Kilvert tells how he met Dewing, a friend, in Hadley's shop in Hay who told of the misfortune which had befallen Pope, at the previous day's confirmation at Whitney-on-Wye. The Miss Stokes involved must be one of these sisters, daughters of Keziah and the late William Stokes, probably Emily Jane, the younger of the two. Kilvert writes that Pope *had one candidate, a farmer's daughter and they went together by train*. There follows the famous story of Pope's second confirmation. Did Miss Stokes realise the embarrassment caused to Pope? Bishop Atlay seems to have been made of sterner stuff!

By 1871, Keziah had probably moved to Cusop to live, as her nephew who was with her family at Upper House in 1851, Thomas Lilwall Stokes, aged 59, born at Pembridge, was farming at Llydadyway, Cusop, (he was also using her maiden surname as a middle name) as a farmer and landowner of 632 acres, employing 9 labourers and 1 shepherd. Hannah Lilwall Stokes, his 49 year old wife had been born in Manchester, Lancashire in about 1822. Their son was Charles Jones Lilwall, aged 17 who was born at Liverpool in 1854 so Thomas had wandered somewhat not having always farmed locally. Also at Llydadyway were Keziah's son Thomas Lilwall Stokes aged 21, nephew and namesake of his uncle and born at Almeley in 1850. There, too, were Mary Price a 30 year old cook from Clifford, Catharine Hill, aged 17 a housemaid and George Daniels a 15 year old farm servant.

An 1881 census return with very difficult to decipher handwriting shows Hannah Lilwall Stokes a 58 year old widow, an accountant living with her son, Charles, aged 27 both being born in Lancashire. He was head of the household and a Farmer of 640 acres and employer of 9 men, at what could be (in hard-to-decipher writing) Llydadyway, Cusop. Henrietta Holmes, aged 42, an assistant accountant from Middlesex is a visitor and there are 4 servants. I didn't find Hannah or Charles again.

By 1881, 31 year old Thomas Lilwall Stokes, the son of William and Keziah was established as a farmer on his own account at Old Court, Bredwardine. Living with him were his mother, Keziah (beginning with an H not a Z maybe acquired during transcribing) now aged 69 and his 29 year old sister Emily Jane, as are 27 year old Frances Hancorn from Old Radnor and Henry Holder, an 18 year old from Letton, both





*Kilvert's friend, the Reverend Andrew Pope*

servants. In the *Diary* (Vol III, p382), for Tuesday 26 March 1878, Kilvert wrote *Called for the first time on the Stokes who have lately moved from Huntley Court, in the parish of Preston-on-Wye to the Old Court of Bredwardine. They seem a nice family a widowed mother with a son and daughter, both unmarried. Miss Stokes was sitting at work in the pleasant bay window looking upon the bridge. They received me very kindly and seemed pleased with the place, the farmhouse, the Church and the services.* I wonder, did he connect Emily Jane and the family to the farce of eight years previously at Whitney-on-Wye and his friend Pope? But life goes on and in 1891 we find Emily Jane, aged 33 at Poole Farm, Much Dewchurch as the wife of 40 year old Richard Farr, a farmer born at Much Dewchurch. Her young sons were 1 year old Richard and Reginald a baby of 3 months. Also resident were Emily Jane's Mother, Keziah Stokes, by now a 78 year old widow and Richard's mother-in-law, a servant of 19, a nurse aged 14 and a waggoner's boy also aged 14.

On 10 November 1878 (Vol III, p429) Kilvert reported *Heavy rain in the night, thaw on the hills, snow melting and river rising fast. People busy all day saving cattle and sheep in low river meadows.* Nothing changes: this could have been the winter of 2017/18! On his way home from Brobury at 7.30 the flood had risen and he speaks of Mr Stoke's *[sic] people going about with a lantern in his orchard saving and fencing round some heaps of cider apples.*" On the next day (p430) Kilvert wrote that this was the second greatest flood of that century. *Mr Stokes kindly rode down from the Old Court to see if they (the Jenkins family at Bridge Cottage) were safe;* the water was then up to his horse's girths. Colts and horses and a bullock were seen to pass under Bredwardine bridge in the moonlight with fears that they would be drowned. *Mr W Clarke of the Staunton Store room told me that the iron Whitney Railway Bridge was carried away last night and 2 miles of rail seriously damaged. No trains can run for 3 months.*

Then on page 442, on Christmas Eve 1878, Kilvert told he had met Little Davie's father, the shepherd at The Weston, to choose the grave space for the little boy who had died on the previous day, *On the road I met Miss Stokes and went into the Old Court with her but before Kate could come and speak to me my nose began to bleed and I was obliged to fly* Who was Kate? Writing on Tuesday 4 February 1879 Kilvert mentions that Stokes was among his 10 farmer guests *At 7pm the farmers came to dine at the Vicarage* eating a meal which was *very nice.* What a feast it was too! I leave you to read it up in Vol III, p452. The *Diary* ends only a month later on 13 March 1879.

By 1891 Thomas L Stokes, a 41 year old Farmer, born at Almeley in 1850 had married Alice, aged 29 who was born at Bronllys, Brecknock, and they were at Hainston Villa, Preston-on-Wye, probably still on the Moccas estate of the Cornwall family. With them were their two sons, Tom L, aged 4 and Richard, 3 both born at Bredwardine. In 1901 they had moved again and were nearby at Woodlands House, Blakemere. Tom is 51, Alice 39 and the boys are 14 and 13.

In 1911 the Stokes family were at what is still the family home at Monnington Court, Vowchurch, then probably on the Guy's Hospital Estate now owned by the Duchy of Cornwall. Maybe Tom's health was not good as Alice 49 is listed in the

first place as "farming" with Tom 69 being "on farm". Both sons, aged 24 and 23 were at home working on the farm with Emily Ann Griffith, indoor and Allan Earnest Bethell, outdoor servants aged 18 and 19 both living in the farmhouse.

Young Tom Lilwall Stokes eventually took over at Monnington Court and married Gwenllian Mary Prosser of Breconshire, having 2 sons, Richard and Tom known as Tim, and a daughter Gwenda. Richard (known to me as Dick) continued to farm at Monnington Court with his wife, Olive Davies from Norton Canon until they retired to a bungalow they had built nearby. Their elder son, also Richard, married Brenda Hobby of Colva, Radnorshire and they are still farming Monnington Court with their son Kevin. Their daughter has married and lives at Old Radnor. Richard's younger brother, Roger, became a land agent marrying Margaret Lewis of Peterchurch. They too had a son and a daughter and now have grandchildren.

### Editor's note:

I asked Eva about discrepancies in ages between census records for the same person. She replied that it could be mistranscription, but people also moved into a different census area for the night to confuse the record!

I was also amazed to see two women listed as 'accountant' and 'assistant accountant'. Typing 'accountants, 1881 census' into a search engine produced an article 'Accountants in the British Census' by John R Edwards and Stephen P Walker, both of Cardiff University, an article published in *The Accounting Historians' Journal* (no date given). They explain that the 1883 report on the census acknowledged the problem with the tabulation of occupational data, including the same name being used for totally different occupations. 'It was recognised that many [women] assisted in the businesses of male relatives, but wives and other women engaged in domestic duties were to be listed as "unoccupied"'. [!] There were also mistakes in transcription including 'accoucheuse' (midwife), 'accoutrement maker' (military clothing), 'annuitant' (persons living on annuities), 'assistants' (various), plus wives of accountants.



# Kilvert and Gossip

## Mary Steele wonders at Kilvert's enjoyment of rumours and scandals

*'To squeeze your ears against your head and say nothing' means to be discreetly silent and cautiously reticent.*

Kilvert recorded this saying after a visit to the Sackville Thomas home on 17 February 1870 (Vol I, p36). No doubt he often had to be careful what he said, or preserve confidentiality. But in the privacy of his diary, he relaxed and recorded his enjoyment of anecdotes, chit-chat and even scandal.

There was a lot of clerical gossip, of course. The famous story of his friend Pope's inadvertent second confirmation falls into that category (Vol I, pp73-4). On 30 March 1870, Kilvert was *In Hadley's shop [when] I met Dewing who told me of a most extraordinary misfortune...* We have to hope that Dewing spoke quietly or took Kilvert out of the shop; the *Diary* entry shows that he went into a good deal of detail, guaranteed to get the story spreading all around Hay.

We also read the first mention of Houseman, Kilvert's predecessor at Bredwardine, who used the *old filthy parish pall* on 21 April 1872 to drape the altar for Good Friday (Vol II, p189). *It is the talk of the country and Miss Newton is up in arms.* The Diarist was fond of stories of old clergy and eccentric services; stories which were appreciated by *Journal* contributor David Rogers, whose article appears elsewhere in this issue. It was Kilvert's mother who told him the story of the Rector of Presteign putting his pocket knife into the church collection (Vol III, p116), so perhaps his enjoyment of gossip was a family trait as well as a clerical one. Once, on 6 June 1870, he commented *The story is probably untrue* but this might be sour grapes, the story in question being about a lady being carried out of Hay church fainting under the influence of a sermon from Mr Welby (Vol I, p155).

Kilvert was someone people felt they could talk to, including the vicarage servants. On 28 May 1870, the scandal concerning the baby born to a former vicarage kitchenmaid was told to him by the coachman driving him to the station (Vol I, p144). It was his ease in conversation that encouraged parishioners to share with him what he called *parish tragedies* (Vol II, p158). These included some of the gruesome tales of violent death that are in the *Diary*. Kilvert's interest in folklore may have led him to record gossip such as Sarah Whitney's tale from 1 February 1871, about Mr and Mrs Jones baking a live toad in clay (Vol I, p301), adding the comment *It is almost incredible*, or the story on 22 July 1871 of the poor woman frog (Vol I, pp380-1).

Kilvert shows a gossip column reader's delight in society scandal. So, it seems, did Plomer, who ignored the restrictions of space in the published *Diary* to give us half a page of explanation of the Mordaunt Warwickshire Scandal Case (Vol I, p40). *Horrible disclosures of the depravity of the best London society* wrote Kilvert with relish on 24 February, 1870. (See endnote)

One Society scandal, which Kilvert wrote about more than once, is that of the marriage in 1812 of Catherine Tylney Long to William Wellesley Pole. She was the richest heiress in England and owner of Draycot House, not far from Langley Burrell. He was the nephew of the Duke of Wellington. In

December, 1873, Kilvert recorded in detail the story of Miss Long's coming of age party (Vol II, p393) and, in further entries, added details from Mrs Knight and old John Bryant. These stories are about the ox roasted whole in the park.

*When the ox was cut down half of it was burnt and charred and the other half was raw.* Thousands of people turned up and most got nothing to eat. John Bryant came off best, having purloined the entire ox tongue (Vol II, p405).

Alice Banks talked about the courtship, which was carried on *clandestinely* against Lady Long's wishes. *She was infatuated and would not listen to those friends who said he was a villain and only wanted her*



Catherine Tylney Long



William Wellesley Pole

*money... As he left Church with his bride after the wedding he was tapped on the shoulder for £20,000.* Kilvert's disapproval of secret courtship, here and elsewhere in the *Diary* is sad and ironic when we think about his clandestine relationship, from 1875-6, with Ettie Meredith Brown. He linked the Long Wellesley gossip to his family in two ways.

Wellesley used to drive his tilbury down to the Langley Brewery, leave it there, and come and hide himself in the sunk fence in front of this house, what is now Langley Rectory (Vol II, p394.) He goes on 'And my mother remembers the wretched wife, not long afterwards coming up to Langley Fitzurse, to my grandfather's, to borrow money, for the bailiffs were in Draycot House and her scamp of a husband had left her destitute. She was a mean-looking little woman, as weak as water.'

Memories of this marriage, sixty years before, seem to have been revived by another wedding in the Wellesley family on 15 December 1873 with the honeymoon spent at Draycot. The 'golden couple' of Catherine Tylney Long and William Wellesley Pole was the subject of much gossip at the time. After the wedding on 14 March 1812, Wellesley Pole changed his surname to Long Wellesley in order to emphasise his kinship with Arthur Wellesley, Lord Wellington, hero of the Peninsula War. Catherine even makes an appearance in a Georgette Heyer novel<sup>1</sup> drawing upon contemporary source material which dubbed her 'The Pocket Venus' and talks about her being proposed to by the Duke of Clarence. In a history of the couple published in 2015, Geraldine Roberts confirmed the rumours of the royal proposal. The book reproduces a cartoon of the Duke on his knee before Catherine, with sketch map of her estates beside her indicating the popular view of his motivation. Had



Charles Williams "The Disconsolate Sailor", 1811 – another cartoon about Catherine's choice between the Duke of Clarence and William Wellesley Pole.

she married him, Catherine could have become Queen of England in 1830, when the Duke succeeded as William IV. But she chose 'love rather than status'.<sup>2</sup>

The title of Geraldine Roberts's book is 'The Angel and the Cad', and her conviction that Catherine was an angel provides us with a different picture from that which Kilvert gave us. She was, according to Roberts, beautiful, witty, generous and strong-minded. Catherine's white wedding attire made 'the white wedding dress desirable at all levels of society'.<sup>3</sup> (This trend setting has also been attributed to Queen Victoria, married in 1840, for example by historian Lucy Worsley in a 2018 television programme). The Long Wellesley wedding, at St James, Piccadilly, was hugely expensive. Roberts did not report

the story of Wellesley being *tapped on the shoulder* (arrested by bailiffs) for £20,000, but noted that he bought, but did not pay for, £50,000 worth of jewellery for his bride. This did not include a wedding ring, which he forgot.

However, the *mean-looking little woman* Kilvert's mother remembered may not have been Catherine. The Long Wellesley's home after their marriage was Wanstead House in Essex, described as a 'princely mansion' in the catalogue of the sale, forced by debt, in 1822.<sup>4</sup> When arrest for bankruptcy threatened Wellesley, the family (there were three children) fled abroad. Draycot was being lived in by Catherine's two sisters, who were deprived of their fortunes by Wellesley's greed, and it may have been one of them who came begging to Kilvert's grandfather. Kilvert's mother, who told the tale, was very young when this incident occurred; she was born in 1808 and was seven years old when financial problems at Draycot became obvious in 1815.

Poor Catherine died in 1825, young and sad, and was buried at Draycot. She may or may not have been an angel, but there seems no dispute that Wellesley was a cad. As Kilvert records, he stood for election for Wiltshire in 1818, when, as well as apparently insulting his wife (Vol II, p395), he traded shamelessly on his distinguished uncle. The Duke of Wellington had, in fact, dismissed his nephew from the army in Spain after a military career lasting three months. After Wellesley ran away from his second wife, leaving her destitute, she begged on the streets and was rescued by the Duke from the Wanstead workhouse.

Wellesley died in 1857, aged 70, and was remembered damningly in the *Morning Chronicle* as 'redeemed by no single virtue – adorned by no single grace'.<sup>5</sup> Kilvert's informants didn't waste words over him. *We were remembering that Long Wellesley was not buried at Draycot. 'No', said Mary decidedly, 'he wasn't worth carriage'* (Vol II, p405).

The Long Wellesley saga is a glimpse into a glamorous and reckless Regency world, which Kilvert's family became marginally involved with, and whose location near Langley Burrell made it a subject of gossip in the family and neighbourhood, interesting enough to the Diarist for him to record in some detail. It's about as far away from the chat of the Clyro cottagers as it's possible to get.

Draycot Park will be visited during our KS excursion on September 28.

**Note:** the Mordaunt Divorce Case: Poor Lady Mordaunt. In her distress when it was discovered that her baby was blind, she decided she was being punished for committing adultery. Her husband sued for divorce on the basis of her confessions. She was ruled insane and spent the rest of her life, from the age of 28, in an asylum.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> Georgette Heyer, *Regency Buck* (Heinemann, 1935)
- <sup>2</sup> Geraldine Roberts, *The Angel and the Cad* (Macmillan, 2015), p51
- <sup>3</sup> Roberts, p72
- <sup>4</sup> The mansion was demolished and sold in bits for building materials. The full story appears in the January 2019 posting of the Friends of Wanstead Parklands, which includes a link to James Dugdale *The New British Traveller of 1819* describing Wanstead House in its grandeur. [www.wansteadpark.org.uk](http://www.wansteadpark.org.uk)
- <sup>5</sup> Tony O'Brien *Who's Who in Kilvert's Diary* (Kilvert Society, 2010)



# A Moravian Link with Rhosgoch

*discovered by John Price*

Kilvert took an interest in the Moravians of East Tytherton, near Langley Burrell, and knew that his mother attended a Moravian school.

This is an extract from the Moravian Church website. "The Moravian Church in East Tytherton owes its existence to John Cennick, an eighteenth century evangelical preacher who worked for a while alongside John Wesley and George Whitefield in Bristol and was probably John Wesley's first local preacher. Afterward he concentrated on the Wiltshire area with George Whitefield and Howell Harris".<sup>1</sup>

Howell Harris set up a community at Trefecca, Talgarth which still functions today as a training centre.<sup>2</sup>

On Friday 5 February 1875 Kilvert tells us in his diary about his Mother's education:

*Afterwards my Mother went to the Moravian school at East Tytherton daily on a donkey which she urged forward by rattling a bunch of keys in his ear. (Vol III, p146)*

Over 100 years earlier in 1750:

*Tuesday July 24th. Rhosgoch. I preached here at 11 to about 500 and I felt somewhat inexpressible, and was overjoyed to see how eager and well the welsh hearts rec'd the simple preaching of the Cross. They took leave of us with many tears here, and about 12 accompanied us 8 miles further over the mountains of (Builth); the whole way Br. Caries and I had an opportunity to speak to some dear people with our hearts leaping for joy.<sup>3</sup>*

Francis Kilvert knew Rhosgoch well and passed through there many times on his 'villaging' tours around the locality. Did Kilvert know that John Cennick had preached to 500 people there on July 24th 1750? If he did, would he have approved of such a thing in the domain of dissenter the Revd John Griffiths (Vol I, p68), especially as John Cennick had founded the school where his Mother was educated? A possible answer is in a *Diary* entry for Tuesday 16 July, 1872.

*Miss Large told us a great deal about the Moravians who have a settlement at East Tytherton and showed us a book of their Prayers, Litanies and Hymns all bound up together. She also showed us a copy of some verses found in the pocket of John Cennick, a Methodist preacher who flourished 140 years ago, and joined the Moravians. Once when he was preaching at Lyneham about the Blood of Christ the miserable ignorant barbarous people syringed him with blood. (Vol II, p238).*

This suggests that Kilvert would have been sympathetic if Cennick was being persecuted. His attitude was different if he

## EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNALS OF JOHN CENNICK: MORAVIAN EVANGELIST.



Edited by  
J.H.Cooper.

thought that a preacher was taking away his own congregation. (Vol I, p53).

**Note:** Thomas Griffiths, Farmer, Bringwyn (Rhosgoch) was buried at Leominster July 5th 1764 as recorded in Leominster Moravian Church Book, stored at the Moravian Church Archive. Was this Thomas Griffiths related to Rev. John Griffiths? Work in progress!

### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.moravian.org.uk/index.php/uk-congregations-list-for-the-moravian-church/western-district/tytherton>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.methodistheritage.org.uk/howellharrismuseum.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Extract from the Journals of John Cennick; Moravian Evangelist, p41

Thanks to the Moravian Church Archive, Muswell Hill, London.

## *A Deep Sense of the Uses of Money*

Reviewed by Dennis Wienk

**A Deep Sense of the Uses of Money: the story of two eighteenth-century brothers-in-law**  
**John Toman, 2018. £15 inc p&p**

Nabobs and bankrupts were popular objects of scorn at the end of the 18th century. In his inimitable parodies of these two stock characters on the London stage in 1772 and 1773, Samuel Foote had seen to that. Both plays had short lives, but roles were ones that the subjects of the present study were to play in real life.

John Toman's most recent addition to the still modest trove of Kilvert secondary works, *A Deep Sense of the Uses of Money*, as its half-title indicates, tells back-to-back the tales of the diarist's grandfather Francis Kilvert and of the elder brother of his wife Anna, née Parsons, with as much detail as his sources allow. The title itself is Toman's ironical repetition of a phrase used by Parsons's biographer to puff her subject.

Francis Kilvert was a coachbuilder in Bath, whose business failed for reasons beyond his control, and William Parsons an employee of the East India Company, who engaged in lucrative trading on the side as most of his colleagues did. Toman's interest in these two men is both to explore their influence on the diarist and his family and to set the record straight in each case, insofar as that is possible.

None of the Kilvert family memoirists – the diarist himself, his father, his uncle, or his sister – made reference to the bankruptcy of the diarist's grandfather Francis Kilvert, but of course they all had to have known the story, the diarist's father and uncle at first hand. Toman repairs their omission with the support of over 50 outside sources, as he explores the probable reason for their silence. Social stigma and moral judgment attach to bankruptcy in many quarters even today.

Drawing from another 70 outside sources, the author tells the story of Kilvert's brother-in-law William Parsons, "The Nabob," as he was known in his family, and the author's careful reassessment of the sources relating to this colourful, if not altogether upright, character. Money can buy a certain amount of favourable publicity and shield a man's reputation for just so long. Someone is bound to come along and shatter the mask.

And so we have the story of two men related by marriage, nearly exact contemporaries, born of the same stock, whose situations as the 19th century dawned could hardly have differed more. The one was extremely poor, the other very rich. Why did the rich man stand idly by while his sister's family suffered? Why was the story of such suffering suppressed? And how did the other story come to be told falsely? The diarist certainly knew about his grandfather's

business troubles and about the wealth of his grandmother's brother and how it was acquired. Were they cautionary tales governing his own conduct?

All this and more Toman sets out in masterful detail and draws his conclusions accordingly. He explores broadly the social, economic, political, and religious environment in which his subjects lived and moved and had their being. And he ends up telling a good story. With 17 pages of mainly coloured illustrations and a complete index of persons, places, and subjects, this book should be in the hands of all admirers of Kilvert.

*The Revd Dennis Wienk is a priest of the Diocese of Rochester of the American Episcopal Church and has been a member of the Society for several decades.*



## *True Heirs to Israel*

Reviewed by David Leese

**True Heirs to Israel: Kilvert and religion**  
**John Toman, 2018. Free as a pdf.**

Whilst Kilvert is so poetic and fulsome in his descriptions of people, places and incidents, to many readers of his journal, there remains a central unresolved issue. For my own part, having first read the journal as a schoolboy in the 1960's and then in later life as a member of the same profession as Kilvert, there is an obvious unanswered question. This is why was it that Kilvert wrote so rarely about his relationship with his immediate professional colleague? In many ways it is a 'white space' against which much of the remainder of the journal sparkles. The contrast is striking, and in *'True Heirs to Israel'* John Toman explores how we may understand this 'white space.' It is an exploration in part to understand what is not said, and why that is so.

The author seeks to demonstrate that the academic, social class, churchmanship and theological assumptions of the two men are not just different, but significantly different, and that the premise taken by some that Kilvert was a moderate Anglican does him, and our understanding of him a disservice.



It is Toman's contention that we need to recognise that he was an Evangelical, (who considered they were themselves the 'True Heirs of Israel'). So for example he loved church music, extempore preaching, cottage lectures, and pastoral visiting – all putting into sharp relief his own conduct with that of his vicar.

There is therefore a careful and meticulous exploration of the known sermon texts, and the theological influences upon Kilvert, and most helpfully the prioritisation of what they encouraged as important to an ordained priest. The priorities of Kilvert are shown to be manifestly not just different from, but a world away from the priorities of Mr. Venables. Kilvert's identification with the poor and his working for social cohesion is strikingly apparent as with his Crafta Webb ministry. It is the opposite of Mr. Venables. Therefore we should not be surprised when Mr. Venables omitted to endorse Kilvert's ministry on his leaving Clyro in 1872, and on three occasions.

Step by step this exploration leads on to an examination of Kilvert's Horrible Dream of 13 October 1872. Kilvert himself thought this dream significant, and so ought we. The previous outlining of conflict and tension between the two men is the context of the dream, which transforms our understanding of it from an eccentric anomaly into a transparent manifestation of the psychological stresses Kilvert experienced. The book probes open the personal, social and theological tensions behind the dream. When considered alongside Kilvert's poem 'The Prodigal Son' the poem and

the dream are seen to mutually inform each other.

The references to contemporary literature are particularly revealing. As one illustration Toman refers to Charles Kingsley's novel 'Alton Locke,' read and admired by Kilvert in March 1873. The character Eleanor in the novel observes 'the clergy are the class which God has appointed to unite all others, which if it fulfils its calling is above or below all rank.' This is patently not true for Mr. Venables, but surely this is the Kilvert of the diary.

The book presents Kilvert and Venables superficially as colleagues, but in reality (polite) adversaries. It convinced me, and having read *True Heirs to Israel*, I for one can now read the journal in a fuller and more coherent way.

*The Revd David Leese is a member living in Ashbourne, Derbyshire.*

**Both publications** are available directly from John Toman. John writes: Because of an error in the email address given for me in the March *Journal*, members were unable to request copies of my booklet *True Heirs to Israel*. Members can obtain it free of charge from me by letting me have their email addresses. I will then send it to them as a pdf. Members without email can obtain it by sending their postal address to me at 27 Beauchamp Road, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 8LQ. My email: [john\\_toman@dymond.force9.co.uk](mailto:john_toman@dymond.force9.co.uk)

## LETTER

### *Wiltshire Discussion Group*

In the coming months, we are hoping to form a discussion group which will meet at regular intervals to discuss the life and times of Francis Kilvert and any related matters. If any members in the Chippenham and Calne area would like to join us they can do so by getting in touch with me on 01249 321816 (please note area code) or email [olwenstoker@gmail.com](mailto:olwenstoker@gmail.com).

**Olwen Stoker**, Wiltshire

## IN THE MEDIA

### *Another Diarist (or two)*

Charlie Bass sent the *Journal* a press cutting from the *Brecon and Radnor Express* headlined 'Talk about five-volume diary'. This was reporting on a donation to Hay Library of a diary kept by Huw Davies since he moved to Clyro in September 2013. The diarist said 'I feel very pleased to be continuing the tradition of diary writing in the way that Francis Kilvert, Anne Hughes and many other obscure diarists have done in the past'.

Francis Kilvert we know, but who was Anne Hughes? 'The Diary of an 18th century Farmer's Wife 1796-1797' was first published as a magazine serial in 1937. No original manuscript is extant and efforts to authenticate the diary have continued until recently. There is a website, but the last 'Latest News' is dated 2012.

*History Today*, with perfect timing for our Snodhill picnic,

gave us **the history of picnics** in its July 2019 edition.<sup>1</sup> Picnics started off in the 18th century as indoor, aristocratic, and French. Arriving in England with refugees from the French Revolution, London picnics became 'less refined and more raucous', particularly in the hands of the PicNic Society, founded in 1801. Picnics moved outside, and became respectable, when taken up by the emergent middle classes. The Victorians invented specialist picnic baskets and the contents became more standardised. The menu of the Snodhill Castle picnic is not very different from the contents of Ratty's picnic basket in 'The Wind in the Willows' (1908), including cold chicken, cold tongue, cold ham, salad, French rolls, lemonade and soda water. Globalisation has changed the menu, suggested the article's author.

<sup>1</sup> *Picnic: from high life to country living* by Alexander Lee. *History Today*, July 2019, pp83-6.

# OBITUARIES

## *The Revd Dr Humphrey Fisher* Founder of the Kilvert Pilgrimage

*The Reverend Humphrey John Fisher, born Dunedin, New Zealand 20 September 1933, died Leominster 20 May 2019. His funeral was at St Mary's Newchurch on 31 May. The Kilvert Society was represented by Val and Colin Dixon and Ann Dean. This is an edited version of the address given by his youngest son, Thomas.*

The Revd Dr Humphrey Fisher set up the Kilvert pilgrimage, which for 20 years now has brought people locally and from all over the country together for the 8½ mile walk, or even horse ride, across the hills, holding services, often with the help of a range of musicians, in each of the four churches of the Painscastle Group, starting at Emmeline's grave at St. Mary's, Newchurch. Like Kilvert, who wandered these hills in the 19th century, Humphrey himself loved walking across the local hills, and would often do so in his cassock, to take services in the local churches or on the Kilvert pilgrimages themselves. Humphrey also put together the book *Ah Yes*, the chronicles of another clergyman, Peter Ralph-Bowman, the vicar at the time that Humphrey and his wife Helga moved to Rose Cottage, Newchurch in 1986. It was Peter who encouraged Humphrey to become ordained so that he could serve the small rural churches in the local area.

The Kilvert Pilgrimages emerged from two key aspects of Humphrey's life, his own many wanderings and his deep commitment to the local communities along the Welsh borders when, on settling in Newchurch, he discovered his true home and wandered no more.

One of Humphrey's favourite poems had life's journey at its very core. *The Road not Taken* by Robert Frost ends:

*I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*



The less travelled road started from the beginning of Humphrey's life, driven by circumstance. His childhood was lived in five different countries: born in New Zealand in 1933, to Australia as a baby, then to Britain before the war, shipped to Canada with his sister Kate during the war, back to Britain, then to the US after the war where he attended Sidwell Friends, a Quaker school in Washington DC.

Then Humphrey started to make his own choices to take ways less travelled by, going to a small junior college and cattle ranch, Deep Springs in the Californian desert. Next to Harvard, then a PhD at Oxford, where he met Helga (the au pair of his Professor's family), with Helga to Nigeria, where their first son was born, then to Jordan, where the second son was born, and they drove all the way back from Jordan to Oxford with a toddler and a baby in a van. After the birth of the fourth son, the family spent a year living in Sierra Leone, before settling finally for a life-time career at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London.

Humphrey became particularly attuned to those who were forced to wander. As a child, Humphrey was himself an evacuee from Britain in the face of a possible Nazi invasion. As he was crossing the Atlantic westwards, his future wife Helga was a German refugee child travelling eastwards from Peru, where she was born, via the US, back to Germany in a Swedish Red Cross boat.

Humphrey left Deep Springs College after two years, in protest at discrimination against Jewish students and members of faculty. Still only 18, he led the college students in challenging such discrimination. His powerful letters received



sarcastic responses from members of the board, but a wonderful letter from the parents of the Jewish student concerned:

“Stephen has apprised us of the facts of the controversy now going on at Deep Springs. He also enclosed the letter that you had sent to the Trustees. When we received the first letter from Stephen our faith in humankind was shattered, but it was fully restored upon reading your courageous letter. May you never stop being true to your ideals.”

Humphrey married Helga, an economic migrant to Britain. Together they went to live in Nigeria where he did his PhD research on a peaceful sect of Islam, the Ahmadiyyah, who have often been forced to wander in the face of persecution, often violent, by other Muslims. In Jordan Humphrey managed a farm for Palestinian refugees displaced from their home in Palestine.

At SOAS Humphrey taught students from all different parts of the world. Here is a tribute from one student. “His lectures and seminars relating to the voice of the vanquished have impacted on my career in ways that I would never have anticipated at the time. My work in participatory community development internationally ... and now in Birmingham has in many ways been built on this foundation stone – of the importance of seeking those whose voice are not heard, the vanquished of the modern world!”

In Leviticus it says, ‘When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt.’ (19:33-34). Just like the Israelites, Humphrey knew what it was like to be a stranger in a foreign land, and showed great love and kindness to other wanderers.

Humphrey made significant academic contributions. His most celebrated case was that of the 1076 conquest of Ghana, a key event in West African history. A careful study of the primary sources convinced Humphrey that the conquest had never happened, that this particular warlike journey by the Almoravids from Morocco had not taken place!

Humphrey was passionate about primary sources, which would never become dated – that is one reason he loved Kilvert’s *Diary* so much, and Peter Ralph-Bowman’s memoirs. With his own father, Humphrey translated the meticulous account by Gustav Nachtigal, a German explorer, who had wandered some 10,000 km in the Sahara and Sudan over five and a half years. It is one of the most significant primary historical sources on 19th century Africa, of far greater historical value than most of the accounts of famous British explorers. Humphrey was particularly pleased that it was now possible for many more Africans to access their own history.

However, Humphrey was best known at SOAS for his devotion to students at the School. He helped numerous applicants to come to SOAS who were from unusual backgrounds and often without standard qualifications, including many mature students, students from ethnic minorities within Britain wanting to learn about their own heritage, and many from Africa and elsewhere. If any applicant was struggling to apply to SOAS, the admissions secretary would send them to Humphrey, regardless of what

subject they wanted to study, as the member of staff who would most try to help them pursue their aspirations at SOAS. Humphrey also helped countless students to complete their studies once at SOAS and to launch their academic careers by writing joint articles with them.

Later, when living in Newchurch, Humphrey helped various young people in the local community to secure university places for themselves.

Religion was often at the centre of Humphrey’s life. He first engaged with Quakers at Sidwell Friends, organised a monthly Quaker meeting at SOAS, and attended Almeley meeting across the border in Herefordshire. In Hampton near London, where Humphrey and Helga’s four sons grew up, he became a lay reader in the Anglican Church. When he and Helga moved to Newchurch as their primary home he became ordained in the Church in Wales to better serve the small rural churches here. But he chose the Catholic college in London to do his pastoral training. He often helped out at the Ebenezer chapel opposite Rose Cottage when they were without a preacher. And throughout his professional career, he was teaching about Islam and its history, including to many Muslims.

At SOAS he created the extraordinary Religious Studies programme drawing together courses on religion and related subjects from all different departments. It became one of the most popular courses at the School, and was pioneering in breaking down barriers between different subjects.

So, an Anglican priest who for long organised Quaker meetings, studied at a Catholic college, preached at Welsh Presbyterian services, taught Islam and drew together teachers and students of many different religions. He did not waver from his own Christian faith, he did not feel any tension or contradiction within this amazing diversity. His view was that we were all going up the same mountain in our journey or pilgrimage towards God, just on different sides of the mountain.

It was through his ministry that Humphrey had the greatest impact locally. At local services in the four churches visited on the Kilvert pilgrimage, and other neighbouring churches, Humphrey would hand out large sections of the liturgy and prayers on laminated sheets for members of the congregation to say. In prayers he would never refer to the congregation as “you”, but always as “us” – he never considered himself apart. And Humphrey especially welcomed and always involved children in the services. With Helga, he also visited many of the sick and elderly. As a result he was held in great affection, and there are many couples and families who asked Humphrey especially to marry them, baptise their children, or bury their very dearest ones.

Humphrey was also passionate about sustaining the church buildings and getting them used. He was instrumental in setting up the Friends of Llanddewi Fach, to preserve and sustain that beautiful church in the fields; with Adrian Chambers in getting the two bells in St. Mary’s Newchurch restored (they date from 1350, the oldest in Wales); and in replanting the ancient yew tree, estimated to have been 1100 years old, after it blew over at the entrance to the churchyard in Newchurch, just near to where Humphrey was laid to rest on 31 May. Humphrey loved the fact that the new yew tree

will long outlive anyone currently alive, however young.

In the window of St. Mary's opposite the door you come in, Humphrey commissioned a stained glass window, made by a highly skilled local craftsman from Gladestry, with the words from Matthew's gospel, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?". This window has in fact welcomed thousands of wanderers and pilgrims, of different faiths and none, who have entered this church for so many years as friends, thanks to Humphrey. He instituted the custom of providing facilities for walkers and others along Offa's Dyke Path to make themselves tea and coffee in the church. The numerous comments in the visitors' book warmly acknowledge the welcome this simple act of kindness has offered to thousands of walkers.

From refugees and migrants to pilgrims. It was Humphrey who put up the beautiful poem about pilgrims by RS Thomas at the back of St. Mary's in Newchurch. If you don't know it, go to St. Mary's to have a look, and you will find plenty of information about Kilvert and other local history, too, all thanks to Humphrey.

In his later years Humphrey suffered from dementia, but his mind continued to dwell on his favourite themes of refugees, ethnic minorities, Quakers, and his children/grandchildren.

Humphrey was an utterly devoted father. In structuring his work life around his family, often putting family first, he was a pioneering father, and inspired his son Duncan to devote much of his own career to promoting the role of Dads within families (for which Duncan received an OBE).

Humphrey was also an utterly devoted Grandad, behaving to his grandchildren as he had to his children. Humphrey had such fun with his grandchildren, and with so many others. It is striking how many people, in their tributes following his

death, specifically mention the fun they had with Humphrey. [There were ten grandchildren and a first great grandchild was born on 1 June]

One friend summarised his life: "What a uniquely multi-faceted person Humphrey was, a formidable intellect, a wonderfully humorous and affectionate friend, deeply spiritual and wise – and sometimes eccentric!"

In the address at his funeral, Humphrey's youngest son, Thomas, said Humphrey's "contributions came from deep within, from his heart and soul, from his deep humanity, even when he was not aware of that himself...In reflecting on Dad's life, I have come to the conclusion that he was a true Quaker, a true Friend. The founder of the Quaker movement, George Fox, spoke of the inward light, the presence of Christ within. I think this was the source of Dad's kindness, generosity and humanity, the inward light within him, and his response to the inward light in all those he met.

...He loved conversation, and I suspect what he would most want from us all, is to continue conversations that open up opportunities for sharing our humanity across any boundaries that divide us. In the meantime, and for eternity, as my wife Julie says, he now has the opportunity to converse happily with so many new people in heaven!"

*Jeff Marshall sent the Journal a tribute to the hospitality of Humphrey and Helga Fisher and reminds us that Humphrey occasionally wrote for the Journal and preached the sermon for the KS commemorative service in 2010. Helga died in 2012; an obituary appeared in Journal 35.*

*Thanks to Adrian Chambers for sending us this tribute and to Richard Weston for liaison.*

## Pamela Jackson

Pam Jackson died on 3 June 2019. She joined the Society in 1990 with her husband, Lawrence. Lawrie was the Society's membership and subscriptions secretary during the 1990s. Lawrie died in November, 2017.

*Pam and Lawrie Jackson at a  
Kilvert Society event.*





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**Three-Volume Diary**, packed in slip case, available to members at £60 plus £12.98 p&p (or can be collected post free)

#### **Kilvert Society DVD**

A film depicting the early days of the Society. £15 + £2 p&p.

#### **East End: West End. Alone in London**

by John Toman  
The history of Victorian clergyman George Trousdale and his wife, Bee Smallcombe, who was known by Kilvert. (Vol III, pp184,186). Their lives are explored in comparison with the *Diary*. £15 inc p&p.

#### **Who's Who in Kilvert's Diary**

A fully comprehensive Who's Who with over 400 biographies and 22 family trees, compiled by the late Tony O'Brien. £13 including p&p.

#### **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 from the Newsletters of the last thirty years. £5.50.

**Francis Kilvert Priest & Diarist**, by Frederick Grice. A reprint of the 1975 original. £5.50.

**Collected Verse.** Contains the 55 poems of Francis Kilvert printed privately in 1881. £4.50.

#### **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. £5.

#### **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. £5.

#### **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. £4.50.

#### **Looking Backwards**

References to Kilvert's wife, their marriage and honeymoon; accounts of their home-coming 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. £4.50.

**Miscellany Two: The Oswin Prosser Memorial Booklet.** Contents: The Solitary of Llanbedr by the Rev D Edmondson-Owen; Radnorshire Legends and Superstitions by Mrs Essex Hope; Honeymoon Journal by Dora Pitcairn; The Venables Diaries by A L Le Quesne; Memories of the Monk by Ann Mallinson. £4.50.

**Kilvert's Poetry: A Study**, by Bernard Jones. £4.

**The Other Francis Kilvert** Francis Kilvert of Claverton (1803-1863), by Teresa Williams and Frederick Grice. £2.

**Index of Journal/ Newsletters 1956-2000**, by the late Rev 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. £2.

**Vicar of this Parish**, by John Betjeman. £2.

**Children of the Rectory**, by Essex Hope. £1.50.

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

*The following books can be purchased from booksellers or on the internet:*

**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** (978-071883-0953) and **Kilvert's World of Wonders – growing up in Victorian England** (978-071889-3019). Both by John Toman. Lutterworth Press.

**A Deep Sense of the Uses of Money:** Kilvert's forebears in Bath and India.  
**True Heirs to Israel:** Kilvert's theology.  
**The Lost Photo Album** (2nd edition). All available directly from John Toman johntoman@dymond.force9.co.uk

The three books below 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 0-907158-02-1.

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

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