

# THE KILVERT SOCIETY

Formed (in 1948) to foster an interest in the Rev. Francis Kilvert,  
his work, his diary and the countryside he loved.

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JUNE 1991

Dear Member,

I start this letter under some difficulty - I have two conflicting numbers of those present at the A.G.M. ! One authority claims there were 86 members present, another claims 87! But be that as it may, it was a pleasure to see many old friends, including our Senior Vice-President, the Rev. E. Jelfs.

Apologies were received from Mr. & Mrs. S. Ball, Mr. & Mrs. H. Buglass, Mrs. Burchett, Rev. D. Copeland, Mrs. D. Cross, Rev. & Mrs. J. Day, Mr. & Mrs. J. Hall, Mr. & Mrs. Hockin, Mr. & Mrs. Hooper, Mr. A.L. Le Quesne, Miss M. Mumford, Mrs. R. Payne, Mrs. P. Talbot, Mr. & Mrs. Tribe and Mrs. Teresa Williams.

The Chairman welcomed members, and asked for tribute to be paid to Mr. Godfrey Davies and Mrs. Eva Farmery who both died last autumn. The minutes of the last A.G.M. were approved and adopted, with no matters arising.

The Hon. Treasurer presented his report, pointing out that there were 3 items which were "non-recurring" - the purchase of the Family Bible and the donations to Radnorshire and Wiltshire Nature Trusts in commemoration of the 150th. anniversary of Kilvert's birth. Attention had been drawn to (i) the state of the concrete seat in Bredwardine churchyard, made by the Society's first president, Mr. Sid Wright, and (ii) a grave in Brinsop churchyard, erected by William Wordsworth and his wife in memory of their devoted servant who died suddenly while the poet was staying at nearby Brinsop Court. The Committee would discuss these matters. The financial account was approved, Mr. Dance and the Society's Hon. Auditor, Mr. Rogers, were warmly thanked for their work, and it was agreed that the annual subscriptions be raised to £5.

(Brinsop Church is one of the most delightful churches in Herefordshire, too small alas for a Society service! It has several Wordsworth associations. The poet and his sister Dorothy are mentioned frequently in the Diary and it will be remembered that the last entries deal with a visit to that village).

There followed the election of Officers. The Chairman spoke of some dissension regarding the process used at the last A.G.M. when the rules of the Constitution were not correctly followed. The matter was resolved. The Vice-Presidents and other officers were re-elected en bloc. Mr. Dearlove indicated that he would resign in 1992, and that I would not seek re-election in 1993 - assuming I was asked!

Honorary life members:- Mr. and Mrs. R. Morgan (who have been long-serving members of the Committee, have arranged many of the Walks and have each written Society publications); Mrs. Teresa Williams (whose researches into newspapers of Kilvert's time have been most valuable) and Canon S. Luff (who has been a most regular and valued contributor to the newsletters) - were all proposed, and all accepted save Canon Luff who preferred to decline. A great surprise to myself was that I was proposed too!

Mr. Dance reported that he now held the Society's slides, and that Mr. D. Howell had presented to the Society a set of slides of the Gower peninsula, Mr. Howell was warmly thanked for his gift.

The Chairman read a letter from Mrs. A. Bickmore, the Appeal Secretary for the restoration of Capel-y-ffin church, expressing appreciation of 50 members of the Society who had made contributions. (Frankly, I was disappointed with the number - her address is The Blaenau, Capel-y-ffin, Llanthony, Abergavenny, Gwent, NP7 7NP, and cheques are payable to "Capel-y-ffin Church Appeal"). He also spoke of the plaque, being made by Mr. Bolton for the Chapel of Wadham College. He had seen it, and was greatly impressed. Further, he had seen for sale at Kington two volumes of the works of "Uncle Francis Kilvert". One of them was the "Life of Bishop Hurd", the other of verse and prose. He felt that the Society should procure these works. He concluded his remarks with the reading from the Diary for the corresponding date of May 3rd, 1870 the memorable account of Whitehall and "Ten miles for a kiss".

Business over, the company withdrew to the Committee Room for refreshments, (supplied as usual by Cafe Ascari, and of excellent quality as usual) and for renewing friendships. Mr. & Mrs. Marshall presented for sale the Society's publications, Mr. Dearlove sat at the seat for subscriptions. Canon Luff had brought the travel notebooks he had referred to in our newsletter for last August. I was very sorry not to have been able to give further attention to them.

Our speaker for the evening was very special, for it was the first time (as far as I can remember) that a lady occupied that position - Mrs. M. Morgan read extracts from her delightful book "Growing Up in the Kilvert country". The warm and sustained applause expressed at the end of her readings indicated that she had given very much pleasure to those present. She was warmly thanked by the Chairman.

The Walk the following day drew 40 members (no dispute about this number). Mr. and Mrs. Morgan took us up to Cold Blow, and how appropriate that was regarding the weather! The party walked the lanes surrounding the hill and at appropriate places Mr. Morgan read relevant extracts from the Diary. 14 different wild flowers were recorded and most of the party had a very enjoyable tea, as usual, at the Burnt House. I feel that the 2 days might well be termed a "Morgan weekend" - so much are we indebted to Mr. and Mrs. Morgan!

Information regarding our forthcoming events will be found later in this issue.

Yours sincerely,  
E.J.C. West  
Hon. Secretary.

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#### OBITUARY

We regret to announce the death of Mr. N. Jones (Leominster)  
a member since 1968.

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#### KILVERT IN DORSET

The Kilvert Society invites you to join them in an afternoon exploration of some of the places associated with the Reverends Robert Francis Kilvert, Henry Moule of Fordington and William Barnes (the Dorset Poet) of Winterbourne Came.

Meet at the entrance to Dorchester South Station at 1.00 p.m. on Saturday, 7th. September, for a gentle stroll of about 4 miles. It will include some field and footpath walking, so please wear sensible shoes. If wet, an alternative programme will be arranged to meet the same objectives. Please note that there is ample car parking near Dorchester South Station.

For more information about this event contact the Reverend John Day on 0258-72531. We plan to finish the exploration at about 4.30 p.m. in Dorchester where there are ample opportunities for refreshment.

THE GRAVES OF "THE TWO LITTLE CHILDREN"

MORE THOUGHTS ON HARDENHUISH

by Mrs. T. Williams (North Wembley)

In the Society's Newsletter for August 1990, Mr. Sidney Ball of Swindon wrote about Kilvert's birth-place at Hardenhuish in Wiltshire, and quoted the mysterious Diary entry for Saturday, 15th. April, 1876, (Vol.3.p.256) when Kilvert walked over to Harnish and "laid the primrose crosses upon the 4 graves, of my grandmother, my dear nurse Abodie, and the two little children".

Several years ago in an attempt to solve this mystery of who these 'two little children' could be, I visited St. Catherine's House in London, and made a thorough search of the General Registration quarterly Birth index volumes. The index volumes give the quarter of the year in which any birth is registered, the name of the local registration office or district, the surname of the child and any given names when registered. Members of the public are unable to see more than this information unless they apply for and purchase a copy certificate. There is no sign in the index volumes of any previously unknown child being born to the Reverend Robert Kilvert and his wife, Thermuthis (nee Coleman), nor is there any entry in the Death index volumes for a Kilvert child whose death was registered at Chippenham. This does not, however, mean that a previously unknown child was not born to the Kilverts, as until the 1870's there was no absolute legal obligation to register births, and to illustrate this, there is no sign of the Kilvert's eldest child, Thermuthis Mary, born in September 1839 having her birth registered. The other five children of the Kilverts are duly registered and appear in the index volumes with a 'Chippenham' reference. Civil Registration for Births, Marriages and Deaths in England and Wales did not commence until July 1837, and in the early days many people considered that the baptism of a child in church was equally legal. A penalty of seven shillings and sixpence could be imposed on parents who failed to register a birth within 42 days, but as yet, I have found no evidence that Robert Kilvert was ~~no~~ fined.

As would be expected with such an uncommon name, there were very few Kilvert entries in the Births or Deaths index volumes. Apart from 15 entries for Shropshire, (it will be remembered that the Kilvert family came from that county in the late 1700's), and some entries for Lancashire, the only other entries in the Birth index during the years 1837-1850, were the five Chippenham references to the Kilvert children, and three Bath references. These latter entries referred to the three last known children born to an older brother of Robert Kilvert, namely, John Kilvert, surgeon, (1797-1861) and his wife, Mary Anne, nee Beck, (1800-1878), who lived in Bath and whose memorial tablets are at St. Mary's Church, Bathwick. One of the three Bath references is for a girl, Editha, whose birth and death were both registered during the June 1841 quarter. Another child of John and Mary Anne's, John, who was born in 1836, also died young, his death being registered at Bath in the June quarter for 1842. In all the other years searched, there was only one other Kilvert death registered which is of interest, that of Anna Kilvert, (nee Parsons), who died at Lacock Vicarage on 12th. December, 1847. She was the mother of Robert Kilvert and the grandmother of the Diarist, upon whose grave at Hardenhuish he laid the primrose cross in 1876.

Having failed to find any sign of any 'extra' births in the index at St. Catherine's House, London, I looked again at the birth dates for the six Kilvert children, and decided to thoroughly search contemporary Wiltshire newspapers for any Birth notices. A study of the dates soon revealed that it would have been quite possible for Mrs. Robert Kilvert to have given birth to another child in the 22 months between the Diarist's birth on 3rd. December, 1840, and that of his sister, Emily, on 8th. October, 1842. After Emily's birth there is an even longer period until Frances Henrietta (Fanny) was born on 19th. February, 1846 - three and a quarter years. There was also about two and a quarter years between the birth of Sarah Dorothea Anne (Dora) on 28th. July, 1847, and that of the youngest child, Edward Newton (Perch or Teddy) who was born on 9th. November, 1849.

During numerous visits to the Newspaper Library at Colindale, I looked at Bath and Wiltshire newspapers starting at September 1839 for the birth of the Kilvert's first child, Thermuthis, through to 1849 for Birth notices for the other five Kilvert children. I then searched the months during the 'gaps' previously mentioned and found the undermentioned Birth announcements for a previously unknown child born to Thermuthis and Robert Kilvert at The Rectory, at Hardenhuish, in 1844.

From: THE WILTSHIRE INDEPENDENT, Thursday, 29th. February 1844

"BIRTH: At the Rectory at Hardenhuish, the lady of the Rev. Robert KILVERT, an Infant, still-born".

From: THE DEVIZES & WILTSHIRE GAZETTE, Thursday, 29th February 1844

"BIRTH: On Sunday, 25th. February at Harnish Rectory, Mrs. Robert KILVERT of a Son which (sic) survived but a short time".

From: THE WILTSHIRE & GLOS'sh. STANDARD, Tuesday, 5th. March 1844

"BIRTH: On February 25th. at Hardenhuish Rectory, Mrs. R. KILVERT of a Son who survived but a short time".

This then, I believe, possibly solves part of the mystery, and although obviously I cannot be sure that Mrs. Kilvert did not conceive further children of whom she could have miscarried, or who did not survive their birth(s), I am almost certain that such births were not recorded in any Wiltshire newspapers. So far as I can trace, the next child born was Fanny, almost two years later on February 19th. 1846, whose birth was duly noticed in the Wiltshire newspapers, as were the births of her brothers and sisters.

Unfortunately, the finding of the Birth notice for the previously unknown child, does not solve the puzzle of the second child's grave at Hardenhuish, nor the mystery of Kilvert's published Diary entry on Tuesday, 24th. December, 1878, when he visited the bereaved mother of 'Little Davie', and kissed the dead child's forehead. Kilvert said, "I had not touched death for more than 30 years, and it brought back the sudden shock that I felt when as a child I was taken into a room at Hardenhuish Rectory where our little sister lay dead and was told to touch her hand". (see Volume 3, page 441/2).

As mentioned previously, my searches at St. Catherine's House in London in the Deaths Index failed to show any obvious Kilvert death which fitted in with the known facts and dates. If the child born to Mrs. Kilvert in February 1844 was a son, then this could hardly be the 'little sister' to whom Kilvert refers in his Diary. It hardly seems possible that both Kilvert and two of the three newspapers noticing the 1844 birth could have got the sex of the child wrong. Kilvert's age at the end of February 1844 would have been almost three years and three months, so it is possible that 'a shock', such as he records, could have been greatly impressed in his memory.

Finally, there are other possible solutions to the identity of the 'two little children', whose graves Kilvert decorated in April 1876. When the death of an unbaptised or un-named child was registered, the entry in the Death index at St. Catherine's House is entered at the end of quarter's listings, as simply 'female or male' (as applicable) with the Registration district then listed, e.g. 'Chippenham'. This can be further complicated by the fact that the Birth may not have been registered until the end of the 42 days, thus possibly putting the entries into the next Quarter's index. I cannot now be certain that I also searched after any 'Z' listings in the following Death index for a Kilvert entry.

It could also be argued that the editing of Kilvert's Diary entry has changed the sense of the entry. Perhaps Kilvert was referring not to a sibling of his, but to a female cousin or other child who died at Hardenhuish Rectory, or even a child brought to Hardenhuish for burial? Did Kilvert in 1878, speaking as a clergyman use the word 'sister' in its wider definition? Conjecture, maybe, but I also find it puzzling that Kilvert identifies two of the four graves as being 'of my grandmother, my dear nurse Abodie', but does not identify 'the two little children'.

We are, therefore, left to assume that they were the son born in February 1844 who did not survive, and the little 'sister' mentioned by Kilvert on 24th. December 1878, as having died more than 30 years previously.

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KILVERT'S WADHAM COLLEGE  
by Sidney Ball (Swindon)

How fitting that the Society is having a Service at Wadham College! The Diary shows Francis Kilvert's affection for Wadham, his 'alma Mater' from Midsummer 1859



to Michaelmas 1862. On 21st. May, 1874, "the fabric of the College was unchanged, the grey chapel walls still rose fair and peaceful from the green turf". (Vol.3.p.23).

Wadham, unique among the original Oxford Colleges in being built all at one go, was the gift of a rich and charitable couple, Nicholas Wadham and his wife Dorothy. In their moated house, near Ilminster in Somerset, 'Merifield', they thought out their grand scheme. Nicholas Wadham founded the College before he died, aged 77, in 1609; his widow carried out his wishes and the buildings were completed in 1613. Dorothy died in 1618 aged 84. There is a memorial to the Wadhams in Ilminster Church, but their real memorial in Wadham College.

Dorothy Wadham was the daughter of Sir William Petre of Ingatestone in Essex. Thomas Fuller in the 17th. century wrote that Dorothy was true to the meaning of her name "the gift of God" for she encouraged her husband in all his acts of bounty and charity. Dorothy's brother, Sir John Petre, was created Baron Petre in 1603. There is still a Lord Petre today, the 18th. Baron.

Some members have seen Wadham College; others will see it for the first time at the July service. They will see what Sir John Betjeman called 'The high, hospitable Wadham Quad' with fine buildings ranged round its sides; they will find in the Chapel a treasure house of splendid woodcarving and grand stained glass windows, all witness to the skill of 17th. century craftsmen.

A 17th. century undergrad of Wadham was, like Kilvert, born in Wiltshire - Sir Christopher Wren. Among his architectural achievements were the Sheldonian Theatre and the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford.

There is a reminder of Wadham at Hawkhurst, Devon, where Francis Kilvert went to stay at times with Uncle Will and Aunt Augusta. Francis must have seen in Hawkhurst Church a memorial to Dr. Robert Smith, who died in 1694, "late of Wadham College in Oxford and by his will a generous benefactor to it". Surely Kilvert wrote of this in his Diary, but it is not included in the published version.

We know little of Kilvert's life at Wadham. We do know, from the Diary, that he was very interested in watching boat races of all kinds. He would have watched the foremost oarsmen training, including 3 Wadham 'blues' of his time - H.E. Medlicott, W. Robertson and C.R. Carr. The last named rowed for Oxford in the 1862 Boat Race, the other two in the previous year.

Kilvert's chief Tutor at Wadham was the Revd. W.W. Shirley, to whom Francis referred Mr. Venables for a reference in November 1864; by then Mr. Shirley had become a Canon of Christ Church. The present Earl Ferrers, a Government spokesman in the House of Lords, is a great grandson of Kilvert's Canon Shirley. Kilvert's special college chum was Anthony Lawson Mayhew; they remained friends for life. Monday, 22nd. May, 1876, "To Oxford to pay a visit to my dear old College friend, Anthony Lawson Mayhew". (Vol.3.p.308). Kilvert stayed a week with Mayhew and his family. On the Tuesday evening an old ambition was realised when "Mayhew and I dined at the High Table at Wadham with the Fellows". (Vol.3.p.313).

Members going to Wadham College on July 7th. may not emulate Kilvert by dining with the Fellows. But our Honorary Secretary, who puts in so much effort in arranging our meetings, will ensure that it will be a day to enjoy and to remember.

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#### SISTER FANNY

by Mrs. A. Doggett (Lincoln)

One of the pleasures of reading Kilvert's Diary is that it gives us a picture of a really happy, united family. But if such a family could be said to have a Cinderella figure, it was surely Frances Henrietta, known as Fanny, fourth child and third daughter.

Born in 1846, she was about four years younger than the third child, Emily. It seems likely that this space was originally occupied by the little sister whom Kilvert remembered seeing in her coffin. If so, this sad death may have had the effect of bringing Fanny and her parents especially close. At any rate, she seems to have wanted to be helpful to them from an early age.

Mr. Kilvert, in his fragment of autobiographical novel, described the 'Trevellyk' parents and children preparing for a journey and says, 'Miss F. has brought down a heavy carpet bag by herself ... under which she lies pinned to the

ground'. 'Fanny was the general warming pan of our establishment', observed Emily many years later in her 'Rambling Recollections'. She meant that Fanny used to sleep in empty beds in order to keep them aired, a forgotten problem in these centrally-heated times.

Apart from this, Emily makes little mention of Fanny and they certainly seem to have been the two Kilvert sisters with the least in common - Lively Emmy who married well and sailed away to an exciting life in India and quiet Fanny who stayed at home, helping her parents with parish and household duties. She also helped to look after Emily's two little daughters when, for health reasons, they lived for a time with their grandparents. She gave a helping hand too in the household of eldest sister, Thersie.

Some of the funny sayings and doings of all these nieces and nephews found their way into the Diary via Fanny, so she obviously had a sense of humour. We know she was also a church organist, drove the family pony-trap and sometimes played tennis with visiting younger brother, Teddy. Such a capable young woman would have made an ideal vicar's wife but there is no hint of any romance for Fanny.

Was she sometimes depressed by the monotony of her life? Certainly she seems to have had fewer holidays and excursions than other members of the family. When Francis at last achieved his own vicarage at Bredwardine, it was youngest sister, Dora, who had the pleasure of going with him as housekeeper, hostess and companion. Less than two years later she was married and Fanny is to be seen in the wedding photograph, a slim, serious-looking young woman with, typically, a small niece or nephew on her lap.

All too soon after this happy day, Francis was dead and Fanny felt the loss of her brother very deeply. Two weeks after the funeral she wrote to Mrs. Venables, that sympathetic friend of all the Kilvert family, and blamed a certain un-named woman for Francis' death. She had caused him 'terrible sorrow', Fanny said, which 'just crushed him' and led to a general breakdown in his health. Mrs. Venables would have known that Fanny referred to Katharine Heanly who had broken off her engagement to Francis a couple of years earlier.

Fanny goes on to apologise for her hurried letter, saying, 'My head is so tired. I have not sat down quietly for an hour for many months now'. Not surprising, poor Fanny, with two weddings in the family, a sudden death and a house removal, all in quick succession. She writes from the house in Bath to which she and her parents went after Mr. Kilvert's retirement. He died three years later and presumably Fanny and her mother stayed on there until the latter's death in 1889.

In 1892, at the age of 46, Fanny entered the Community of St. John Baptist, Clewer, near Windsor, and became Sister Frances Harriet. The Community had been formed forty years earlier to tackle the work of rescuing and reforming 'fallen' women, including those who had turned to petty crime and drink. By the eighteen-nineties, the Clewer Sisters were also running orphanages, schools and hospitals and had opened branches in distant parts of the world. Fanny certainly did not join in the hope of a quiet, secluded life. She was evidently well thought of in the community because from 1905-1909 she was in charge of a branch house in Westminster. She died in 1929.

The Community still flourishes at Clewer, though much reduced in size. Their records show that when Fanny first entered the sisterhood she gave her next-of-kin as:- Edward Kilvert, Mrs. Jardine Wyndowe and Mrs. Pitcairn, who were, of course, Teddy, Emily and Dora. Fanny evidently outlived them all, because their names are followed by those of Major Kilvert (Teddy's son), Commander Pitcairn (Dora's son) and Mrs. Phillips (Emily's daughter). There is no mention of Thersie or her children. Did she perhaps disapprove of her sister's decision to become a nun? In late Victorian England there was still prejudice against the High Church movement and religious communities. Back in the eighteen-seventies, Francis himself had been critical of such things but it is difficult to believe that, had he lived, he would not have respected his sister's vocation.

As for Fanny herself, it seems characteristic that, having spent the first part of her life in service to her family, she decided to give the rest to God.

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"NOT BY VERDI"

by John Hodkin, Cumbria.

The London visit of January 1870 with which Kilvert's diary opens is, in my opinion, one of the most fascinating sections of the entire work. Kilvert's remarkable powers of observation are at full stretch throughout. Like Haydn on his London visits nearly 80 years previously he noticed everything and forgot nothing.

Nearly every entry on this visit contains treasure for the historian. Take, for example, the closing paragraph for Saturday, January 22nd. "Mrs. Pearson and I went to a good concert at Exeter Hall and heard Sims Reeves, Santley, Mdle. Sinico and a young German who played a violin solo exquisitely (Desdemona's Prayer from Othello) making his violin almost speak. It was the first time I had heard Sims Reeves, and he was delightful. A grand orchestra, but the instrumental music too severe and classical for me".

A simple enough passage, but there is a trap - assuming that Desdemona's Prayer was from that titanic masterpiece of Verdi's old age, "Otello". This, however, was not first performed until 1887, eight years after Kilvert's death.

If not by Verdi, then who was the composer? It is possible that it was from a very programmatic orchestral piece, but much more likely, I think, that it was from an opera, and the only other opera on the subject of Shakespeare's tragedy is by Rossini.

This was first performed in 1816 when the precocious composer was only 24, it being his 19th. opera.

In his excellent book on the composer, James Harding writes that it was very popular in its time, but has long since been overshadowed by Verdi's opera on the same subject. "There is some lovely music in it, Mr. Harding says, but it is hampered by a silly plot. English people familiar with Shakespeare's tragedy find the libretto Rossini used quite absurd".

Overshadowed the opera certainly is. In more than 40 years of listening to classical music on the radio, I cannot recall hearing any extracts from it, let alone a complete performance.

Exeter Hall where this concert took place, was situated in the Strand on a site now occupied by the Strand Palace Hotel. It was opened in 1831 for meetings of religious and charitable institutions. In 1834 the Sacred Harmonic Society gave concerts in the smaller of its two halls. The society's religious affiliations induced the managers to allow the use of the larger hall, which held 3,000 people, for performances of oratorios which sometimes involved almost 700 performers.

Mendelssohn heard his "St. Paul" there in 1837 and received a silver snuff box from the society as a memento, and in 1847 conducted four performances of "Elijah" there. In 1840 an organ was built in it. Popular Wednesday concerts were held from 1840 to 1850. The New Philharmonic Society, founded in 1852, gave its first concerts there, and the hall's big auditorium enabled it to hold popular concerts at cheap prices. In 1882 the building, which had ceased to be profitable as a concert hall, was sold to the YMCA and in 1907 demolished.

On another visit to London four years later, on Friday, June 26th. 1874, Kilvert heard John Sims Reeves and Charles Santley, whom he had heard at the Exeter Hall concert, sing at a Handel festival at the Crystal Palace, with some other singers.

He records that some of the solos were almost inaudible, and all sounded like faint voices coming out of a vast empty distance.

"Yet the duet 'The Lord is My Strength' between the two sopranos, Madame Otto Alvsleben and Madame Lemmens-Sherrington was lovely, and the duet between the two basses Santley and Signor Fali 'The Lord is a Man of War' was grand, and Sims Reeves sang 'The Enemy Said' as splendidly as ever. Madame Lemmens' voice pierced like lightning".

Groves Dictionary of Music gives such a full account of the careers of John Sims Reeves (1818-1900) and Charles Santley (1834-1922) that I will just give some brief details.

Reeves made his debut as a baritone in 1838 at Newcastle-upon-Tyne in "Guy Mannering". His voice later changed to tenor and in February 1848 he sang Faust in the first performance in England of Berlioz's "The Damnation of Faust" under the



composer. From 1848 he appeared regularly at choral festivals and was particularly admired in Handel oratorios and for his performance of the Evangelist in Bach's St. Matthew Passion.

Charles Santley, a baritone (Kilvert calls him a bass) made his first professional English appearance at St. Martin's Hall, London, in 1857 in Haydn's "Creation". Two years later he made his English stage debut as Hoël in Meyerbeer's "Dinorah" with the Pyne-Harrison company at Covent Garden. In 1863 he sang Valentine with such success in the first performance of "Faust" in England that Gounod wrote "Even Bravest Heart" especially for him and for the production in England the following year. Groves says that it was generally agreed that although not possessing a naturally-beautiful voice he sang with great expression and was an especially dramatic actor. He was knighted in 1907. His most famous pupil was probably Peter Dawson.

The two sopranos Kilvert heard in this 1874 concert, Madame Otto Alvsleben and Madame Lemmens-Sherrington, also feature in Groves.

Melitta Otto (nee Alvsleben) was born in Dresden in 1842 and died there in 1893 aged only 50. She sang in the Beethoven centenary celebrations at Bonn and made her London debut three years later in 1873 at a Clara Schumann concert at St. James's Hall. She stayed in England for two years and sang at the Albert Hall, the Crystal Palace and in many provincial towns. She retired in 1883.

Helen Lemmens-Sherrington was born Helen Sherrington at Preston in 1834 and died at Brussels in 1906. She married Jaak Nikolaas Lemmens, a Belgian organist, teacher and composer, in 1857. She became the leading English soprano of her day both in sacred and secular music. During the 1870's she formed part of the vocal quartet most in demand at festivals with Janet Patey, Sims Reeves and Charles Santley.

It can be seen from the foregoing, therefore, that even the most straightforward of Kilvert's entries can have immense ramifications. From these accounts of two concerts he attended we can, with a little research, bring vast tracts of the Victorian musical scene to life.

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EXTRACTED FROM: THE DEVIZES & WILTS. GAZETTE

THURSDAY, 3RD. SEPTEMBER, 1868

HARDENHUISH CHURCH RESTORATION

by Mrs. T. Williams (North Wembley)

"The very beautifully situated church of this parish, one of the very few churches erected in North Wiltshire during the last century (it was built by Wood of Bath in 1779), and pronounced by Mr. Scarth, "a very correct specimen of Greek Architecture", has been recently much repaired and improved.

The fabric has been put in perfect order; the stone of the interior (it is built of blocks of Box stone), has been dressed; and the seats (open benches) and all the woodwork repaired and restored. The old communion rails of very heavy make and nearly three feet high, have been removed and a light rail, supported by low iron standards, has been put in its place. The new communion cloth, with a plain monogram, new communion books, carpet and communicants' cushions, obtained from Messrs. Cox & Son, Southampton Street, Strand, London, are much approved.

The old-fashioned high reading desk, reached by steps, has been reduced to a reading pew, and the pulpit has also been lowered; so that this House of God is now much more convenient for Divine Worship. In this good work, the Rector has been greatly assisted by the Churchwarden, Mr. Pike. Different members of the Clutterbuck family, owners of the principal part of the parish, have subscribed handsomely and equally so have Mr. and Mrs. Winthrop and family, the present occupiers of Hardenhuish Park. Two smaller owners also assisted, and the farmers of the parish gave liberally; as did a few non-parishioners and friends who heard of the proposed improvements.



Hardenhuish Church after being closed for three months, was re-opened on Sunday last, 30th. August, and a special sermon preached in which the Reverend A. Headley stated that, as usual, the expenses had somewhat exceeded the sum raised, but that he still hoped for some additional subscriptions".

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Extracted from: THE CHIPPENHAM CHRONICLE, Saturday, 27th. May, 1876.

"HARDENHUIISH CHURCH -

A new Organ of sufficient power and of much sweetness of tone has recently been placed in the prettily situated little church of this parish. It was given chiefly by owners and renters of property in Hardenhuish, and was built by Mr. Sweetland of Bath at a cost of £75. "

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"THE MID-WALES RAILWAY"

- Mr. J.F. Burrell (Bristol)

A recent book on "The Mid-Wales Railway" (The Oakwood Press, P.O. Box 123, Headington, Oxford, at £7. 95) has some interesting diary connections. Regarding the Three Cocks Junction, Kilvert is mentioned as a "noted Victorian who lived locally and was constantly urging on his pony and trap in case the train was on time". Alas, inaccurate! Inaccurate, too, the statement that St. Harmon's station was opened in 1879. Readers of the diary will know that it was well established in 1876.

The Diary entry for February 27th. 1871 mentions "an old magistrate, Mr. Bold, came in late and in long riding leggings, very dirty, for he had ridden from Boughrood. He amused himself during a dull part of the proceedings (Clyro Petty Sessions) by combing his grey hair with a pocket comb". This would seem to be the Revd. Hugh Bold of Boughrood Castle and vicar of Llanvihangel Talyllyn. He had considerable interest in the line, and stations were "arranged" at both places. In the book he is mentioned as attending the Committee room of the House of Lords and obtaining consent from Lord Powys, Sir Watkin Williams-Wyn, General Wood and others.

On December 21st. 1870, Sir Gilbert Lewis, Canon of Worcester, entertained Kilvert with "the little games that go on in cathedrals". There was, however, a serious side. His seat was near New Radnor and it was proposed to extend the railway from that place to the Mid-Wales line at Rhayader. Sir Gilbert produced £1,000 for the project but made certain conditions, which were not met and he refused to take railway shares thereafter.

Despite inaccuracies about Kilvert, the book gives a good background to Kilvert's journeys on the line. All the stations are illustrated, and one can, for example, picture the incident at Rhayader where the Bishop of St. Davids, in a heavy downpour "picked up his legs and ran like a greyhound".

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FROM CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Kenneth Clew tells me of a new Sunday bus service termed the "Kilvert Connection" run by Messrs. Yeomans bus company. It starts from Hereford Railway Station at 9. 45 a.m. and proceeds by way of Clehonger, Kingstone, Madley, Bredwardine, Hay and Clyro to Brecon. For example, it is possible to spend something like 7 hours at the "special" Kilvert sites. The return fares are very reasonable, e.g. to Hay the cost is £2. 00 from Hereford, and the time of return to Hereford is 19. 05. I would be pleased to give further information.

Mr. C. Evelyn White of The Old Inn, 2, Silver Street, Wiveliscombe, Somerset, (a member of the Society) offers B & B at £12 per person. He could meet rail travellers at Taunton station and depending on volume of work could arrange car and trips to Exmoor and other nearby beauty spots. (And of course there are Kilvert associations with the county!).

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COMMEMORATION SERVICE AT WADHAM COLLEGE CHAPEL. This is on July 7th. at 3. 0 p.m. The preacher will be Canon I. Jones, a member of the Society. A coach will leave Hereford, opposite the Town Hall, at 10. 30 a.m., travelling via Ross-on-Wye and Over (the outskirts of Gloucester). Bookings to me, please. Either picnic lunch or meal in Oxford.

There will be no Walk on July 6th.

AUTUMN COMMEMORATION SERVICE. This will be held at Cusop Church on Sunday, 22nd. September, by kind permission of Rev. P. Barnes. Further details in the next newsletter.

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PLEASE NOTE THAT ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION IS NOW £5. IS YOURS DUE ?

NOTE: THE DATE OF THE DORSET WALK REFERRED TO ON PAGE 2

HAS BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL SEPTEMBER 28TH. 1991.