

THE
JOURNAL



OF THE
KILVERT SOCIETY

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THE KILVERT SOCIETY

Formed (in 1948) to foster an interest in the Revd Francis Kilvert,
his work, his diary and the country he loved

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From the Editor

It is with great regret that I have to report the recent death of two distinguished Kilvertians and stalwarts of the Society.

Basil Butcher was one of the now very few remaining founder-members of the Kilvert Society and in addition to his interest in and work for the Society for over half a century he was a most distinguished Herefordian whose contribution to the life of his beloved city and county was duly recognised in a well-filled cathedral for his memorial service on 7 December 2002.

In the presence of the cathedral choir (of which Basil was a champion and devoted supporter through his work for the Choir School) the service was led by the Dean, the Very Revd Michael Tavinor. In his sermon Canon Paul Iles recalled how he would so often meet Basil in the Close on a Sunday morning because Basil very rarely missed the 10 o'clock Eucharist.

John Dunabin had been a member of the Society since 1966 and he too was a most loyal supporter of its activities. He was a lifelong friend of our distinguished former secretary and Newsletter editor, the late Edward West. They had been pupils together at the High School.

Like Basil, John was a great lover of Hereford and Herefordshire and another of its enthusiastic historians. He is perhaps best known for his studies of the county's transport system and many will be familiar with his books *The Hereford Bus* and *Primrose of Leominster*. The Society is very much the poorer for their passing.

Just after we went to press with the September 2002 issue of the *Journal* a Worcestershire member alerted the committee to the fact that there is a plan afoot to construct a wind farm on Vagar Hill overlooking the Golden Valley of Herefordshire. The 'farm' would dominate vast areas of the north-eastern slopes of the Black Mountains and the surrounding countryside as the proposal is for up to 50 wind-turbine propellers, each 270 feet tall (2½ times the height of Hereford Cathedral) spread along the ridge. These would be visible from over a radius of 20 miles or more; from Hay Bluff, from Merbach and Bredwardine hills, from the Abergavenny-Hereford road and indeed from as far away as the Malvern and the Radnorshire Hills, constituting a threat to this beautiful and, as yet, unspoiled area of Britain, including, of course, parts of the Kilvert Country. Public meetings have taken place (one in Peterchurch was packed, with standing room only) and an action committee has been formed to fight these proposals.

Two points however should be emphasised.

Firstly, no planning application has, as yet, been submitted although it is understood that local farmers have been approached about the sale of the necessary land and that a test propeller will be set up.

Secondly, the members of the action committee are not opposed to the search for alternative forms of energy merely to the insensitive choice of these hillsides above the Golden Valley.

If you feel you would like to make known *your* views you are urged to write, without delay and in the first instance to: Mr Tony Gray, Chairman of the Friends of the Golden Valley, Pike's Farm, Michaelchurch Escley, Hereford HR2 0LA.

Finally, there were one or two complaints about the length (severity!) of the walk in the Llandewi Fach area during the September weekend. The committee has therefore decided that, in future, full details of walks will be given in the *Journal* – timing, distance, nature of terrain etc. – so that potential followers will know what they are letting themselves in for (for what they are letting themselves in? – no better!) Watch these spaces!

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

AGM Weekend

<u>Friday 25 April</u>	7.00 p.m.	AGM at the Bishop's Palace, Hereford Buffet £4 per head. (Please pay on the day).
<u>Saturday 26 April</u>	10.30 a.m.	Our vice-president Laurence Le Quesne will speak on his time at Ashbrook House. Coffee at the Swan Hotel, Hay-on-Wye, followed by a seminar. Our member Dr Bernard Jones will speak on Kilvert and his Poetry * (Please see page 22)
	Afternoon	Free, enabling members to explore the bookshops of Hay or to visit nearby Kilvert locations.
	Evening	6.30 for 7.00 p.m. Dinner at the Swan hotel, Hay. (A booking form is enclosed).

Sunday 27 April 9.30 a.m. Communion Service at St Mary's, Hay-on-Wye.

June Weekend

Saturday 28 June Walk in Moccas Park with a visit to Moccas church followed by tea at Moccas Village hall (£4)
Meet at the entrance to Moccas Park at 2.00 p.m. There is adequate parking and someone will be there to greet you. Moccas lies on the B4352 just SE of Bredwardine.
The walk will last about one hour and is a gentle stroll on grass around the so-called Tree Circuit.
Sunday 29 June 3.00 p.m. Service at Moccas church

September Weekend

Saturday 27 September These arrangements are provisional and will be confirmed in the *June Journal*. Visit to Aberystwyth and the National Library of Wales.

Sunday 28 September 3.00pm Service at St Harmon (again to be confirmed).

Wednesday 28 May (During the Hay Literary Festival week)

Our member Karl Showler has offered to lead a walk around Hay taking in the Workhouse, the Masonic Lodge (the school in Kilvert's time) and the cemetery to view the Bevan Memorial. The walk will last about 1½ hours. Meet in St Mary's church at 2.30 p.m. when Mr Showler will give a brief introductory talk. There is no charge for the walk but participants may make a donation to St Mary's if they so wish. Refreshments will be available.

AGM 2003

ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE Bishop's Palace, Hereford, 7 p.m. Friday 25 April 2003

Our Chairman, Ann Dean and Secretary, Michael Sharp are to step down from their posts. The Committee proposes that Michael Sharp is elected as chairman and that David Elvins, currently a committee member, is elected as secretary. All other officers and members of the retiring committee are willing to offer themselves for re-election at the AGM.

The committee proposes that Ann Dean takes the place of David Elvins as an ordinary committee member.

Members are reminded that under article nine of our Constitution any two or more members may nominate one or more members (with their consent) as officers or ordinary members of committee. Nominations, in writing, must be received by the secretary on or before 27 March 2003.

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

Notice is given of an Extraordinary General Meeting to take place immediately before the Annual General Meeting in order to amend the Society's Constitution as follows:

Proposal – SECTION 5. MANAGEMENT – To delete 'and archivist' from line 4 and add 'the archivist' to line 5 following the words 'The Editor of the Society's Journal'. The purpose of the amendment is to make the post of archivist an ex-officio, rather than elected position.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

By Barry Smith (Membership Secretary)

All members who normally renew their subscriptions annually received a membership renewal form well in advance of 1 January 2003, the start of the new subscriptions year. Nearly sixty percent of those mailed responded by the due date. Such members are thanked for their promptness.

Around a dozen members switched to payments by standing order. Given the present size of the Society, with around 620 members **payment by standing order is a considerable help**. In fact, the number of members now paying by standing order is thought to be the highest in the Society's history.

It may interest members to learn that 34 new applications for membership were received in 2002. This should be set against a figure of 24 terminations of membership, although the latter figure could increase if members' deaths during the year are late in being notified to us.

For the first time ever, it is thought, members' subscription data is being held on computer file, using Microsoft software. A considerable advantage of this is that each new subscription can be logged as it comes in. Also, analysis of basic membership information can be easily undertaken e.g. postcode area of members, membership status, date of joining and payment method. It is hoped that a breakdown of information likely to interest members can be written up for the *Journal*.

Any members who have not so far renewed their subscription are asked to do this as rapidly as possible. The Membership Secretary is always happy to answer queries from members who are in doubt about their subscription position.

THE SEPTEMBER WEEKEND

Llanbedr to the Roundabout ... An Autumn Walk

By Carol Smith (Abergavenny)

Saturday 28 September was a perfect day for walking, quite grey but calm and not cold. Twenty-three Kilvert Society members plus two interested holidaymakers gathered outside the Baskerville Arms, Clyro at 12 noon. Ron Watts, our ex-chairman and his wife Joan, had also come to meet us though they were not able to join the walk.

It was unfortunate that the Baskerville Arms could not offer lunch. Those without a packed lunch had to make do with provisions from the village shop and filling station.

The Revd Dr Humphrey Fisher of Newchurch had very kindly agreed to lead the walk up across the Begwns to the Roundabout (the highest point at 1300 feet). Cars were left at Llanbedr church and we set off for the Roundabout which eventually could be seen on the horizon.

The church of Llandewi Fach was reached after a while and it was decided to visit it, before going up to the Roundabout and eating lunch. Llandewi is the end point of Dr Fisher's annual Kilvert pilgrimage.

At this point some people decided for various reasons to return to Llanbedr and their cars. The others pressed on to the Roundabout where lunch was taken at 3 o'clock. A delicious cake and drinks provided by Dr Fisher were gratefully consumed.



Up to the Roundabout!
Photograph by Ann Dean



Lunch at the Roundabout
Photograph by Ann Dean

The Roundabout today is a circular stone wall enclosing some pine trees and some semi-circular stone seating, which was rather welcome. The area had been renovated for the Millennium and is a marvellous vantage point. The original planting of trees was for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1887. An enclosing protective wall was added by the De-Wintons of Maesllwch, a family well known to Kilvert.

Thus restored, we began our descent to Llanbedr and we were interested to see bracken being harvested into round bales on the slopes of the Begwns. Is this a traditional or recent practice?*

The party returned to Llanbedr which was reached at 5.00 pm having had a very satisfying walk.

Humphrey Fisher was warmly thanked for organising and leading this excellent excursion.

* Our member Mona Morgan in her book *Growing up in Kilvert Country* makes frequent reference to the harvesting and use of bracken in the early twentieth century e.g. pp 46-47 'By now the hillside bracken was rusty-brown and men busied themselves in cutting and hauling it for winter bedding,' which suggests it is a traditional practice. (ed.)

Evensong and Commemoration Service **By Ann Dean (Hereford)**

On the Sunday St Mary's, Newchurch, was the venue for Evensong and the Commemoration service. The weather was glorious, sunny and hot and the little church was full with about fifty Kilvert Society members.

The hymns were: *Breathe On Me Breath of God, O Happy Band of Pilgrims, To Thee O Lord Our Hearts We Raise and Glory to Thee My God This Night*. Readings were from Deuteronomy iv 1-10 read by Howard Dean and Ephesians iv 1-6 read by Ann Dean. Prayers and the Act of Remembrance were led by Michael Sharp. The Revd Dr Humphrey Fisher NSM (non-stipendiary minister) of Newchurch and member of the Kilvert Society, preached with particular reference to thirteen-year-old Emmeline Vaughan, daughter of the Vicar of Newchurch who was a friend of Francis Kilvert. Dr Fisher contrasted the youngster's condition of 130 years ago with those enjoyed by today's children with regard to advances in medical science, better education and so on.

He said: 'Although we have made things much better for those who have followed Emmeline, there are still an infinite number of 'Emmelines' in the world today.

Harpist Felicity Jones delighted the congregation with *Sonatina No 4* by F J Naderman.



Felicity Jones at Newchurch
Photograph by Ann Dean

Following the service members of the congregation collected a posy. Gathering in the churchyard around Emmeline's grave, they laid the flowers on the grass in the shape of a cross as Kilvert himself had done, so many years ago.

14 March 1873:

When we rose this morning, the ground was white with snow. Today I went over to Newchurch to see the Vaughans again and took with me in a little basket all the primroses the children had gathered for me to flower Emmeline's grave. The air was raw and cold but good for walking. ...I gathered some ferns in the lane and as I came in sight of the little church spire, snow began again to fall heavily in large flakes. The little village was very quiet. The Rectory was apparently deserted. ... I was alone in the churchyard and no one was in sight. As I stooped over the green grave by the churchyard

gate, placing the primrose bunches in a cross upon the turf, the large flakes of snow still fell thickly upon us, but melted as they fell and the great yew tree overhead bent weeping upon the grave.

Sadly, the yew tree blew down some years ago but three cuttings have been taken from it and when strong enough, they will be planted near Emmeline's grave to replace their 'mother' tree. In the meantime, a copper beech has been put there.

After the service, we gathered at Rhosgoch golf club for tea. Chairman, Mrs Ann Dean, thanked the Revd Dr Humphrey Fisher for leading the previous day's walk and for preaching. Thanks were also expressed to the ladies of the golf club for providing the refreshments.

The chairman read a piece from the *Diary* dated Wednesday 4 October 1871, where Kilvert reports on an uncomfortable sermon he preached from Newchurch pulpit.

I preached in some discomfort for although the Vicar had assured me the pulpit would be almost up to my chin it was scarcely above my waist and in order to see to read my sermon I was obliged to crouch down in it and lie on one side on the ledge and stick one leg out behind.

I preached the old harvest sermon on Ruth and Boaz which has now done duty four times The collection for Educational purposes was a better one than they had ever had at Newchurch before. Vaughan said I had drawn water out of stony rocks and had hit the Newchurch farmers as hard as Moses hit the rock. Emmeline's grave by the churchyard gate was dressed with white flowers. How short a time it seems since on a happier Harvest Festival I saw the lovely fair-haired child come smiling out of the porch of the little church and walk down the churchyard path to the gate beside which her grave now grows green.

After tea we said farewell to old friends and new against the backdrop of a beautiful sunset, a fitting conclusion to our Kilvert weekend.

IN CHARGE OF THE PARISH

By John Toman (Bristol)

In the unabridged edition of *Kilvert's Diary*, published by the National Library of Wales, covering the period of 27 April – 18 July 1870, my eye was caught by the entry for 30 April that begins: *Venables started ... from Clyro for London for his two months' absence at 10.15.* I have drawn attention in my book to Venables' frequent absences and to Kilvert's resentment of them but had not examined this one and had made no reference to it in *The Homeless Heart*. I decided to see whether Kilvert's response to it, especially because it was such a long absence, corresponded with his response in the episodes I had dealt with. The endeavour also provided the opportunity of comparing a lengthy unabridged passage with an abridged one and of seeing how far the reader could be misled about the real significance of the events portrayed when large portions of the original had been cut. The passage in question has a satisfying completeness as well as a particular significance, supplying as it does a continuous, detailed picture of affairs in Clyro parish at a time of special difficulty, instead of the series of brief and often disconnected snapshots that we have in Plomer's three-volume edition and in the even more disconnected single volume of selections.

Knowing that in the National Library of Wales edition we have all that Kilvert originally wrote (assuming Mrs Kilvert did not cut anything), we can be much more confident that we can see his purposes and emphases. It is, therefore, of some importance that Kilvert somewhat oddly makes no reference in the 30 April entry to the reason for his vicar's absence. Even more odd is the fact that it is not until the 29 May entry that we learn that Mrs Venables had gone to London for the birth of her baby, expected around that date. It was felt that only London doctors could be trusted with the Venables' confinement. (It is true that first babies posed a particularly serious threat to the health of mothers in Victorian times). It is noticeable that Kilvert underlines that Venables' absence was to be a two months' one.

It soon becomes clear that the only arrangement that had been made to cover the parish duties during this time was that Mr Welby would take some of the services at Clyro Church. Kilvert was very aware that other arrangements were necessary and as soon as Venables had gone, he went to see his friend Morrell to request him to teach in the Sunday School the following day. Kilvert read the prayers at the morning service at Clyro and Welby preached. Kilvert walked to Bettws Chapel in the afternoon to take the services there and also took the Clyro evening service. The first Sunday of Venables' absence had been satisfactorily covered but in the weeks that followed, Kilvert was to seek the help of many others in order to lighten the load of duties with which he had been left. The arrangement with Mr Welby clearly was not as firm as it might have been because a few days later (4 May) Kilvert felt he had to seek out Welby to obtain from him *a decided answer about his plans*. Welby immediately informed Kilvert that he was unable to cover 29 May at Clyro Church, and it was evident that he undertook to cover only until 15 May. This meant that on 29 May, Kilvert would have to take both morning and evening services at Clyro. He immediately wrote to the Rev Vaughan of Newchurch asking him to take the Bettws duty in the afternoon.

Kilvert's attempts to cover the parish duties were thrown into further confusion on 6 May when he received a letter from Venables *urging* him to postpone for a week his planned visit to Langley Burrell, *that I may meet Perch* (his brother)

there. Kilvert had planned to go home on 9 May for an event – the reunion with his sister Emily (just arrived from India on 2 May with her children) – of considerable importance to him because he had not seen her for five years. Nevertheless, he acquiesced to Venables' request. Kilvert intended to be at home for twelve days which meant that, by leaving on 16 May instead of 9 May, he would not be in Clyro on Sunday 22 May, and new arrangements would have to be made to cover that day's services. His irritation is clear in the 6 May entry *So I had to set off for Newchurch again, my second visit there this week*. The round trip to that village was eleven miles. It was agreed on the 6 May visit that Rev Vaughan, whom Kilvert pointedly dubbed *the good parson*, would take the Bettws duty on 22 May and *until further notice*.

In order to understand Venables' request that Kilvert postpone his visit to Langley Burrell, it needs to be pointed out that Kilvert's brother Perch began his six weeks' holiday from work on 21 May, as Venables doubtless knew. Thus, by delaying his return home for a week, Kilvert would be certain of seeing his brother there for several days, whereas if he went on 9 May, he would be leaving the day Perch arrived. It is clear that the dominant impression Kilvert had of Venables' letter was not of his vicar's thoughtfulness in *urging* him to delay his holiday. While he did get to see Perch for a few extra days, he managed to see Emily, whom he had not seen for years, for only seven days whereas if he had left Clyro on his intended date he would have seen her for twelve. Furthermore, Perch was to come and stay with Kilvert in Clyro on 11 June. Plomer's abridgement of the *Diaries* in this period blurs these patterns and makes the degree of inconvenience and irritation experienced by Kilvert less clear. It omits, for example, his attempt on 4 May to pin Welby down as to precisely which dates he would do the Clyro Church duty. It also omits from the account of Kilvert's enforced second visit to Newchurch the rearrangements he had to make with Vaughan over church duties on 22 May. Venables' request that his curate postponed his home visit makes better sense when we recognise first the somewhat uncertain arrangements that he had made with Welby to cover the Clyro duties, and secondly that Venables was in reality attempting to ensure that Kilvert was still in Clyro at least until Sunday 15 May when Welby fulfilled what proved to be his last duty at the church there. Welby took the morning service that day and Kilvert then said goodbye to him because he intended to leave Clyro after he had taken the afternoon service, at which time Kilvert was up at Bettws. Kilvert was in Langley Burrell from 16 May until 28 May. We know that Vaughan covered Bettws on Sunday 22 May, it is not clear whether anyone covered Clyro and it seems likely that both services had to be cancelled, which would not have pleased Kilvert.

In addition to Clyro parish, Venables had left his curate in charge of his old grey mare Gipsy and in the afternoon of Venables' departure, Kilvert took the horse for a ride because he had been told that he could exercise her. It was Venables' oblique way of telling Kilvert that he was responsible for Gipsy because normally her care would have fallen to Venables' coachman, Charles Lacy. (Another thing that distorts the 27 April – 18 July 1870 part of the *Diary* in a major way is Plomer's omission of the entire story of Gipsy's illness and of Kilvert's involvement in it). We do not know when Lacy developed some problem with his leg but it was severe enough for him to spend some time in Hereford hospital. He returned from there on 15 May. It is likely that he was off sick when Venables went away on 30 April. Lacy's absence was going to mean much to Kilvert, because Gipsy's illness increased ten-fold the stress that he was to experience in his single-handed stewardship of the parish and was to bring him to exhaustion and, to use his own word, utter *distraction*.

Gipsy became ill enough on 5 May for the Hay vet to be called and at this news Kilvert immediately went to the stable. He was told that she had become sleepy, giddy and inclined to sudden collapses. (Kilvert referred to her condition as *the stomach staggers*). On the first night of her illness, Kilvert was up till midnight and she seemed better in the morning. However, later that day she relapsed and he sat up all night with her in the company of the Hay vet and others. All kinds of harsh treatments, including blistering of the animal's sides and head, bleeding, and doses of ammonia were tried. In the morning Kilvert was advised that the Hay vet was *an ignorant quack* and that the Hereford vet should be called. Kilvert went to Hay station at 8 a.m. and telegraphed him.

Kilvert was exhausted the whole of the next day (Saturday 7 May) but had to face a full day of duties on Sunday. Incredibly, the Rev Bevan, who must have known that Venables was away, had asked Kilvert to deputise for him at Hay Church that Sunday. Perhaps he knew that Welby was at Clyro. Welby certainly took the Clyro evening service, Kilvert says nothing of the morning one. He did emphasise the extent of the Hay duty by noting that the service was extended by an Offertory and a Churching. He also did the workhouse duty prior to it. Then he had a four-mile journey to take the Bettws service. In the evening, he attended the Clyro service and heard Welby preach. Kilvert's friend Pope read the prayers. Since Gipsy had become ill, Kilvert had, in addition to these duties been advising his vicar of her progress by *daily bulletins* and had a note from him that Sunday saying *he was sure everything right was being done for her* and another the following Tuesday spoke of his appreciation of *our exertions*.

Many people to date had exerted themselves in coping with the church duties: Welby, Vaughan and Pope had helped with services, Morrell had taken a Sunday School. On Tuesday 10 May, Mrs Welby offered to take the next Sunday School. Kilvert was still burdened by the sick horse that day (he was so preoccupied that he had completely forgotten the day before that it was women's club day), especially as the Hereford vet told him that the treatments carried out so far were all misguided. Kilvert now found himself in the middle of a feud between the two vets: some Clyro folk backed the Hereford one, some the Hay one. (Kilvert was even accused by Mr Partridge, who backed the Hereford vet, of neglecting the horse). Heartily sick of all this pressure on top of his already onerous duties, Kilvert gave vent to his frustration on 11 May: *I wish Mr. Venables and Charles Lacy were here with all my heart. And I wish that people would not come to me as to one in authority when I have no authority at all ...* Kilvert clearly believed that Venables should have made a return

visit to Clyro (only three hours away by train from London) to check on the condition of his faithful old horse. Mrs Venables' baby was not expected for almost three weeks, after all.

From 4 May, Kilvert had also been seriously concerned at the illness of one of his human parishioners, Cooper the gardener at Clyro Court. He had what Kilvert referred to as *stoppage* of the bowels and he visited Cooper on the 5, 7, 10, 11, 13 and 15 May. On 12 May, Gipsy seemed better and Kilvert telegraphed the Hereford vet that no further visits were needed. Kilvert was worried about the cost of his fees in addition to those of the local man but he had decided that a second opinion was necessary and that he would risk *incurring Mr Venables' disapproval*. That evening Kilvert visited Gipsy and was appalled at the effect of the vets' treatment: *The skin and flesh of her cheeks, neck, jaws and shoulders is peeling off ... and coming away in great flakes*. He was so concerned he visited again just before he went to bed and when he went again next morning he expected to find her dead but to his surprise she seemed better.

At a concert at Llowes the next night (13 May), he buttonholed Lloyd the Llowes curate to read prayers at Clyro Church on Ascension Day, 26 May, when he himself would be at Langley Burrell. He had the help not only of Mrs Welby at Sunday School on 15 May, but also of Morrell (Evans, the Clyro Schoolmaster, who usually helped, was on a week's holiday). Mr. Welby took the morning service at Clyro, as has been noted. That night, Kilvert was delighted to find that the groom, Charles Lacy, had returned from Hereford and that he had set to work at once to see what he could do for Gipsy but it was in vain because she died at 7.45 on the morning that Kilvert left for Langley Burrell. Thus he went with her suffering and death on his conscience and one feels that he had Venables' human servants partly in mind when he wrote: *A good many memories go with this faithful old servant*.

Kilvert took his share of church services when he was at home, taking the morning one on 22 May and the Ascension Day one on 26 May. (Lloyd of Llowes read prayers at Clyro on this latter date but preached no sermon). Kilvert pitched in to his Clyro duties on the Sunday after his return on 28 May, taking both church services and visiting old and sick parishioners as he had done frequently during Venables' absence. On Monday morning, he was in School, visited a sick villager, and did some church paper work. On Tuesday, he deputised for Venables at the Archdeacon's Visitation in Brecon. Wednesday brought news of the birth of Mrs Venables' baby that had occurred the day before (31 May). She had had a bad confinement, in labour for twenty hours and was *very ill*. *Everybody is delighted, rejoicing and full of sympathy*, wrote Kilvert but the entry lacks any expression of happiness on his own part, a contrast with the entry for 28 April 1874 when Venables' son was born. Kilvert would have rejoiced more that a son and heir was born but his reaction on 1 June 1870 was muted because he felt demoralised and resentful.

He faced the prospect of having to cover for his vicar for another whole month and must have wished that now the baby was born, Venables could return to Clyro and his duties in a few days when Mrs Venables had recovered a little. Kilvert's immediate problem was that somehow he had to deputise not only for his vicar but also for Rev Bevan again. He had tried in vain when he was at Llanthomas, home of Rev Thomas, in company with Rev Tom Williams of Llowes, to secure the help of Lloyd, Williams' curate, to cover for Bevan but Lloyd was doing the duty at Llangorse. Again, no reason is given for Bevan calling on Kilvert's help a second time while Venables was away. Kilvert did not appeal for help to Rev Thomas, who was unwell that afternoon, though having been requested to baptise a sick child a mile away, he insisted on going in spite of the offers of both Tom Williams and Kilvert to go in his place. In this entry, Kilvert stressed how a really conscientious clergyman behaved. Kilvert spent the whole of Saturday morning writing one of the sermons he would need for the next day. That Sunday he took the Clyro morning service and the Hay one for Bevan. How galling it must have been for the grossly over-burdened Clyro curate to hear that day from Venables of how Mrs Venables was *getting on very well* was consuming on doctor's orders *chicken and claret* and was looking forward to leaving her bed for a sofa the following Wednesday. Kilvert acknowledged that in the same letter Venables *very kindly* placed his Vicarage at the disposal of Kilvert's family from 20 June to 1 July. However, he also broke the news that he not only had no intention of returning to Clyro before the end of June, but would go straight from London to stay with friends in Presteign where he would chair the Radnorshire Quarter Sessions. He had made it clear years before in his book on Russia that his chief interest, as far as rural life was concerned, lay in the prestigious positions that went with ownership of a large country house. The burden of Clyro parish was going to rest on his curate's shoulders for a few more days yet.

.....to be continued.

THE OLD WESTON

By Ann Dean (Hereford)

One of my favourite excerpts from the *Diary* is Kilvert's account of the burial of little Davie Davies, son of a shepherd at Bredwardine. Francis describes the burial of the eight-year-old on Christmas Day 1878. He tells of appalling weather on the day of the funeral.

Tuesday 24 December, Christmas Eve:

Very hard frost. Brilliant sunshine on sparkling snow. After breakfast I went to the Old Weston to see the poor Davieses and comfort them concerning their child. On the road I met David Davies the father the shepherd at the Weston on his way to the village to order the coffin and to the Churchyard to mark out the ground for the grave. He told me it was not

Andrew as I had been informed and supposed, but little Davie who was dead. The father seemed greatly distressed and indignant because he thought the child's life had been thrown away by some mistake of the doctor. I went on to the house of mourning. Margaret Davies seemed very glad to see me and her humble gratitude for my visit was most touching. She took me upstairs into the room where the dead child was lying on the bed ... I never saw death look so beautiful I could hardly believe he was dead. Leaving the face still uncovered the poor mother knelt with me by the little bedside while I prayed for them all ...

Wednesday. Christmas Day

Very hard frost last night ... Last night is said to have been the coldest night for 100 years. The windows of the house and Church were so thick with frost rime that we could not see out. Snow lay on the ground and the day was dark and gloomy with a murky sky ... Immediately after dinner I had to go back to the church for the funeral of little Davie of the Old Weston who died on Monday was fixed for 2.15. The weather was dreadful, the snow driving in blinding clouds and the walking tiresome. Yet the funeral was only 20 minutes late ... The snow fell thickly all through the funeral service.

I had often wondered what the *Old Weston* was like and determined to see it, one day. Howard and I just happened to be in the area recently and asked the farmer from a nearby farm about it. He explained that the property was owned by 'Jake' (whose name I think might actually be Jacques) and told us how to get to it. We walked down a long, rough track, the weather perverse, changing from shower to warm sunshine. The cottage was completely hidden by trees and I tried to imagine the grieving family and friends of little Davie having to escort the tiny coffin down the track, about half a mile long, in deep snow and then walk another mile to the church at Bredwardine. The mourners were cold and Kilvert invited them to go into the vicarage to warm themselves but they would not, choosing to stay in the church for afternoon service. A sad, cheerless day. Little Davie lies very near Kilvert's grave in Bredwardine churchyard.

We eventually came to a bend in the track and saw a small cottage, unmistakably the *Old Weston*. I recognised it from the picture in the *Diary*. Its roof clinging stubbornly, if unevenly, to the old walls. It stood, mellowed with the years, in the now very warm sunshine.



The Old Weston
Photograph by Ann Dean

We introduced ourselves and 'Jake', who was working on a car, stopped and chatted to us. He was a very pleasant man and told us how he came to own the *Old Weston*. It was originally the property of the Moccas Estate but had fallen into disrepair. When the last tenant left, the door of the cottage was not shut properly and some inquisitive cattle had found their way in. The farmer, missing four of his herd, decided to investigate. His search led him to the vicinity of the *Old Weston*. Hearing running water, he went inside. Mayhem greeted him. He discovered the bovine squatters who had pulled out water pipes and generally ruined the interior. Because the cottage was in a bad state of repair, the Estate sold it to Jake and his wife for £5,500; this was in 1977. Water comes from a borehole and there is electricity but, at the moment, there is no toilet. Jake had been offered a grant by the council to replace the roof, but there is a shortfall of £7000! The listed building also needs new windows and other essential work. The grounds are lovely, mostly grass and trees but the cottage is tucked away in an idyllic fairy-tale woodland setting. (One could almost imagine a little girl in red visiting her grandmother!).

Jake allowed me to take photographs of the property and I noticed he had the lights on inside. It seemed very gloomy, but then the windows are so small. Jake told Howard that there was a nice 'feel' to the place, which is good to know. I suppose the little cottage has experienced happy times as well as sad ones over the years.

We left the *Old Weston* basking, contentedly, in the summer sunshine, tucked away in the folds of nature's skirts, with its leaky roof and worn window frames and a host of memories.

SOME RANDOM REFLECTIONS ON KILVERT

By C J Williams (Wrexham)

When I joined the Society recently, I mentioned to the membership secretary that I had once lived in a house that Kilvert had visited. This information he passed on to the editor of this journal, who asked me to write an article to enlarge on it. Initially I was reluctant, not seeing how doing so would advance Kilvert studies, but he was very persistent, and the following is the result.

In the 1950s, when I was a teenager, my father was the rector of Letton, Willersley and Staunton-on-Wye (the neighbouring parishes to Kilvert's Bredwardine), having moved to the area in 1954 so that my brother and I could go to school in Hereford. My father was also responsible for Monnington for a time. We lived in Letton Rectory, a substantial Victorian red-brick house on the road from Letton to Kinnersley. Kilvert walked there from Bredwardine to have lunch with Whitley, the rector, and his family, on 12 December 1878. There is a brief reference to this in the *Diary*, although unfortunately without any more details, except that it was a day of hard frost, so hard that the Wye had frozen partly over. Kilvert would have passed Letton Rectory whenever he walked to Kinnersley, his nearest station from Bredwardine, a distance of nearly four miles. I am one of the diminishing band of those who, like Kilvert, caught the train at Kinnersley to travel to Hereford; the line was closed in the Beeching cuts of 1962. Letton Rectory was an enormous house, purpose-built for a Victorian clergyman who would have had sufficient servants to run it. It had nine bedrooms, although some of the smaller ones were probably intended as dressing-rooms for the rector and his wife. Like every house that I lived in with my parents, it had a wine cellar, as in fact every rectory built at that time had to have if it was to get a grant from the Incorporated Church Building Society, although there was never any wine in the cellar in our time. The rectory had a room still referred to grandly as the butler's pantry, although there was no butler to make use of it. Nor did the house have electric light until the end of the 1950s. It has long since ceased to be the rectory; it was sold off by the church soon after my parents left, and is now a residential home.

I do not think that my parents found Letton a very congenial parish. It was said that the Jarvis charity, to which there are many references in *Kilvert's Diary*, had attracted all sorts of undesirable people to the parishes of Letton, Staunton and Bredwardine, and this reputation still lingered in our time. My father was, like Kilvert, a trustee of the charity. It was with a relief, I think, that my parents left Letton in 1962, the year in which I went to university, for the parish east of Hereford where they were happier.

In the late 1950s we would go to swim at Bredwardine Bridge. By this time the county council had strengthened the foundations, making the river scour out a deep pool, which made a good place to dive in. One day my mother pointed out Bredwardine vicarage to me, and mentioned that Kilvert the diarist had lived there. It was, I think, still the vicarage, for I believe that it was sold by the church in 1959. I was a voracious reader at that time (we didn't have a television until a year or so later), and I soon found William Plomer's one-volume selection from the *Diary*. I still have a paperback copy, bought in Hereford in 1966 for 13s 6d, which I now keep in the car in case I am unexpectedly caught without anything to read. In 1977 the illustrated three-volume edition in a slipcase was published, and I bought a set for £25. I worked for most of my career as an archivist in north-east Wales, and in the early 1980s began work as co-editor of a book listing the parish registers and bishop's transcripts of Wales, published in 1986 as *The Parish Registers of Wales*. We looked for illustrations to provide examples of every type of register, and it was at my suggestion that we included a page from the Clyro baptismal register of 1866-7, with entries in the hand of Kilvert and his vicar, Mr Venables. On one of my regular visits to the National Library of Wales in April 1981 Daniel Huws, the then Keeper of Manuscripts, showed me the first volume of the *Diary* that he had purchased, for April-June 1870, and told me the sad story of how Mrs Essex Hope had destroyed nearly all of the original volumes. I bought the volume edited by Dafydd Ifans when it was published, and spent most of the Christmas holiday of 1982 marking it with pencilled square brackets to show the passages that Plomer had omitted, a fascinating and rewarding task that I later carried out on the second NLW volume for June-July 1870. As most people seem to agree, I concluded that Plomer carried out a good selection from the original, omitting only a few good descriptive sections such as the justly celebrated 'dawn chorus' passage of 7 May. Any Kilvert enthusiast owes an immense debt to Plomer, for without him next to nothing of the *Diary* would have come down to us. But I have always felt that by modern standards the three-volume edition is unsatisfactory, failing as it does to identify most of the people and places mentioned in it. In our time, the diaries of such diverse men as Pepys, Gladstone and Harold Nicolson have been well-served by editors who have devoted themselves to providing countless footnotes to instruct and entertain the reader. If the three-volume edition remains out of print, I wonder whether it would be possible for Kilvert to be as well-served in a new edition. Certainly the Kilvert Society's publications, and the availability of so many new manuscript sources, both at national level (the census returns) and local (newspapers, parish registers, etc) have made this possible for the first time. I should add that I claim no expert knowledge of Kilvert, and am certainly not putting myself forward for the task!

Everyone who lives in a village, from Flora Thompson to A. L. Rowse and Laurie Lee, seem to believe that the village life they knew ended on the day that they left. I suppose that I can say that I saw the end of an era. By the 1950s the life of a clergyman on the Welsh border was very different from that of Kilvert eighty years before. Parishes were being merged and vicarages sold off as the church came to terms with the long migration of labour from the land to the cities, especially as agriculture became more mechanized and efficient after the Second World War. I remember reading at that time that the population of one or two big London parishes could be greater than that of the entire diocese of Hereford. The railway

service to Hereford from the west, as already mentioned, ended in 1962, and every rectory and vicarage that we lived in has been sold, and every primary school that we attended has since closed. There was still a Mrs Dew at Letton Court, the biggest house in the parish, but she died in our time, and the house and estate passed to a new owner. On 6 September 1878 Kilvert described how he sat outside Bredwardine vicarage, reading and listening to the birds and the children playing on the Brobury side of the river. Over the fields he heard the dressing bell ring at Letton Court. It has long since ceased to ring!

Plomer, Fleming and James Bond

It was only recently that I learnt that *Kilvert's Diary* was not William Plomer's greatest coup for Jonathan Cape. The article on him in the *Dictionary of National Biography 1971-80* by Alan Bell points out that it was he who brought Ian Fleming's James Bond novels to Cape. During the war Plomer worked in the Admiralty as a temporary civilian officer in the Naval Intelligence Division, providing current affairs briefings for naval staff. It was there that he met Ian Fleming, who held a key position in the division as personal assistant to the Director of Naval Intelligence. Fleming rose to the rank of Commander in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, the same rank that James Bond held in the books. The first Bond novel, *Casino Royale*, was published by Cape in 1953, and Fleming produced one every year until the last, *Octopussy*, appeared in 1966, two years after his death. According to the article on Fleming by Kingsley Amis in the *DNB*, their success was immediate, but not overwhelming until the publication of *Dr No* in 1958. This was the first Bond book to be filmed, with Sean Connery as Bond, in 1962. It is difficult to think of a world more different from that of Kilvert than that of the Bond novels, with their background of violence, luxury and sex, but they must have made Cape much greater profits than *Kilvert's Diary* ever did. William Plomer provided his recollections of Fleming in an article in *Encounter* magazine in January 1965. This is available, together with the text of Plomer's address at Ian Fleming's memorial service in 1964, and a biographical article on Plomer, on an American website devoted to Bond.* There is a very perceptive chapter on Ian Fleming and the Bond novels in David Cannadine's *In Churchill's Shadow: Confronting the Past in Modern Britain* (2002).

* www.007forever.com. Click on Literary Intrigues/Investigative Reports.

THE LLANTHOMAS COACH

By the Editor

The Llanthomas coach pictured in the September 2002 *Journal* was donated by the Thomas family to the Museum of Welsh Life at St Fagan's, Cardiff (or the Welsh Folk Museum as it was then known) in 1926.

Unfortunately, the coach, which now stands in the coachyard of St Fagan's castle is not, at the moment, on view to the public. It has been withdrawn from exhibition and awaits further restoration.

However, the circumstances and correspondence surrounding its original donation to the Museum are most interesting and I am greatly indebted to Mr Gareth Beech, Assistant Curator Rural Collections at St Fagan's for letting me have copies of the accession card and of the correspondence that passed between the Museum and Miss Charlotte Thomas (Daisy's sister) and others.

The accession card reads:

TRAVELLING CARRIAGE

26.409

Early 19th century

Wood, metal, glass, leather, silk

Large family coach driven by postillions riding the horses; woodwork, part of body, wheels & springs all painted yellow with some black lining. Brass wheel hubs stamped COLLINGES PATENT. Leather-covered luggage boxes on roof in front, between C springs; double seat at rear for footmen, between C springs, with rounded compartment? swordcase. Two candle lamps, 2 windows in front panel & window in each door, all raise & lower by means of fringed pulls; mahogany framed shutters for windows. Brass door handles (one broken off); door panels painted with lozenge containing the arms of Mrs Anne Jones, widow of Archdeacon Jones of Hereford. Interior upholstered with buttoned beige ribbed silk, with brocaded pocket flaps. Length 395 cm; width (front axle) 185 cm; height (overall) 256 cm.

Locality: Llanthomas, Hay-on-Wye.

Donors: The Misses Jones Thomas

The coach was first offered to the Museum by Charlotte Thomas in a handwritten letter dated 14 July 1926. She wrote:

TELEPHONE 27
STATION &
TELEGRAMS



LLANTHOMAS,
HAY, HEREFORD.

July 14th 1926.

Dear Sir,

I write to enquire whether the Cardiff Museum would care to accept a yellow travelling chariot of the very early 19th century. This is now in the possession of the Misses Jones Thomas of Llanthomas, Hay, B. & is the property of their maternal grandfather Mr. Jones (nee Datedhall of

Moremore Court, Hereford). The arms of the Jones & Datedhall families are painted on the panel, and the chariot has its complement of Imperials, and a place for four arms in the rumble at the back. It is in bad repair, but might possibly be refitted with dummy parts for purpose of exhibition. The main structure being intact.

Y^{rs} faithfully,
Charlotte A. Thomas

The Secretary to the Museum replied on behalf of the Director on 30 July expressing interest but adding that for the moment the Museum lacked the space either to exhibit the coach or anywhere to store it until such exhibition space became available. He went on to enquire whether '[Miss Thomas] would consider the possibility of presenting the door [of the coach] on which the Family Arms are painted [which] we should like to exhibit in conjunction with a really first-rate photograph of the whole coach.' The letter concluded with an offer 'to run up and see you in regard to this matter.'

The correspondence continued throughout early August, Charlotte readily accepting the proposals and the Museum agreed to make arrangements for the photograph. On 11 August Charlotte wrote suggesting dates for a visit to Llanthomas by the Museum's officials and inviting them to 'luncheon.' She also advised that the door of the coach was locked, the key missing and that, although the coach was generally in excellent repair, the wheels were so stiff that they would not turn!

The Secretary replied by return accepting the invitation to visit Llanthomas, adding: 'Mr Nash-Williams of our Archaeological Department will be with me and as we shall be coming up by road I doubt whether we shall reach Llanthomas in time for lunch.' This visit by Nash-Williams was crucial in the Museum's ultimate change of heart about accepting the coach, for, on 18 August the Secretary wrote to the Director of the National Museum of Wales, Dr Cyril Fox in the following terms:

Nash-Williams and I went over to Hay yesterday and saw the stage coach. It is associated with a Welsh family and almost complete. In my view it would be a thousand pities to dismantle it, as the whole thing is well worth exhibiting. The woodwork and leather work are in quite good condition. The upholstering inside the coach is certainly much the worse for wear and somewhat moth-eaten. The whole thing, however, could be turned into a really first-rate museum specimen. My great concern, however, is where it could be exhibited. Nash-Williams is writing a short report which I will enclose.

The report read:

Yesterday I visited Hay, Herefordshire in company with the Secretary, and inspected the coach offered to the National Museum of Wales by the Misses Thomas of Llanthomas, and at present in their possession at Llanthomas. The coach is a small four-wheeled vehicle intended for the conveyance of two persons. It is of early 19th century date, and in excellent state of preservation. The body is complete with shuttered doors painted yellow, on each of which is emblazoned the family coat of arms. The external appointments include the full number of outside travelling trunks, one carriage lamp, and an ostler's lamp (?). The pole, two lamp brackets, and one carriage lamp, are wanting. The interior of the coach is heavily upholstered, and fitted with folding steps for mounting. The upholstery is of exquisite workmanship, but now sadly ravaged by the

moth. It is not, however, too far gone for preservation, and should be amenable to expert treatment. The whole vehicle is a most interesting relic of the first quarter of the 19th century, and should, I think, if at all possible, be acquired and preserved complete.

(Signed) V.E. Nash-Williams,
Assistant Keeper

Meanwhile the question of the photograph, mentioned above, remained unresolved as it was discovered by the Museum authorities that: 'Moxon of Hay,' whom they had engaged, 'no longer does any photography,' causing the secretary to enquire of Charlotte: 'if you possess a camera I should be grateful to receive a small snapshot of the vehicle.' Charlotte quickly obliged with the photo (below) of what she called the 'Old Chariot.'



The receipt of this photograph was another key factor in the favourable outcome of this project, because on 9 September Dr Fox himself wrote to Charlotte:

My Dear Madam,

Correspondence which has passed between yourself and the Secretary of the National Museum respecting the coach which you have so generously offered to us has been placed before me, and I have received a report on the coach written by Mr. Nash-Williams whom you have met.

I had provisionally and reluctantly come to the conclusion that in the present incomplete state of the Museum we could hardly accept and house so bulky an object, and had suggested that we might preserve the doors with their armorial bearings. The photograph, however, which you have so kindly sent, confirms the enthusiastic report as to the interest and importance to students of the Social History of Wales, of the coach and I feel that it would be a thousand pities to dismantle it. In reporting to my Committee next week I shall therefore urge acceptance of your generous offer, and I hope that when the builders have handed over to us the dome and western hall we may be able to exhibit it in a worthy manner.

I will write to you again after the Committee has met.

Believe me, Madam,
Yours faithfully,
Director

Unfortunately, as you can see, the 'snapshot' is not clear enough to show the Arms on the door about which, in the meantime, Dr Fox had sought the opinion of Sir Joseph Bradney, a noted armorial expert, who lived at Tal-y-coed between Monmouth and Abergavenny. Bradney replied with a lengthy description of the lozenge 'borne by Mrs Anne Jones, widow of the Ven James Jones DD, archdeacon of Hereford and mother of Ann Elizabeth Jones married to the Rev. William Jones-Thomas vicar of Llanigon Parents of the ladies who have offered the coach to the National Museum!' He mentions Mrs Jones' connections with the Pateshall family of Allensmore and with the Lechmeres of Fownhope and concludes: 'this [the lozenge] seems to have been done by a good artist with a real knowledge of heraldry ... As archdeacon Jones died in 1823 the painting is ... probably very shortly after that date, for on becoming a widow she would naturally, at once, have the panel repainted to suit her style as a widow. The coach may be much older.'

The Secretary wrote to Sir Joseph on 16 September thanking him for his report and informed him that: 'The Council has been recommended to accept the coach, which we feel sure will prove to be an exhibit of much interest to the public.' On the same day he wrote to Charlotte with the good news:

I have much pleasure in informing you that at a meeting of my Committee held yesterday the Council of the Museum was recommended to accept the Stage Coach which you have so kindly offered to this Museum.

I think we may take it that the Council on the 24th instant will confirm the Committee's decision. I hope at an early date to make arrangements for the removal of the coach to Cardiff.

In the meantime, I wonder whether steps would be taken, at our expense, to get the wheels of the coach to turn? If this could be done we could arrange for the coach to be wheeled to Hay station and it could then travel by rail. If the wheels cannot be made to move then I am afraid that it will be necessary to send a motor lorry to Llanthomas. I feel quite sure that the most economical means of transport will be by rail, consequently I hope that it may be possible to get the wheels to function.

I am afraid that we are giving you a lot of trouble in this matter.

Believe me,
Yours very faithfully,
Secretary

Thus a happy outcome was reached and the last word must rest with Charlotte who wrote to Cardiff on 1 October:

I am glad to say that the coach left this house today about 11.30 for Hay Station to be put on a truck there for Cardiff. I hope it will arrive safe and properly packed.

We were very sorry that before the Arms were photographed we did not think of rubbing them over with a piece of white wool (sic) and a little oil, which as you know would have brought out the colours of the different parts.

Yours very truly
C.A. Thomas

One feature which struck me particularly as I read through this extensive correspondence of 1926 was the contrast with what might have occurred today. The choice of vocabulary and the phraseology, although occasionally quaint perhaps to our 'modern' eyes, were apposite and elegant and the tone unfailingly considerate and courteous. What is more there was only one spelling mistake and that was the Secretary's (or perhaps his secretary's!).

NOT A STUDY IN STONE

By Alan Bull (Leominster)

The Christian Church is made up of two distinct elements that are separate but inextricably linked, physical and spiritual. Firstly, the church is the *physical* building with its fittings made up of stone, brick, mortar, wood and metal and secondly, the *spiritual* that is embodied in and inspired by the life and example of Christ. The link between them is the people. Craftsmen and labourers constructed the building and people of succeeding generations, by their faith, service and witness ensure the continuance of the building and the spiritual welfare of the body. On entering a church the sensitive person can recognise the spiritual position of the community worshipping there, the atmosphere varying from the warm and welcoming to the cold and depressing.

Kilvert was a man who cared passionately for the spiritual aspect of the individual and the Church. Unlike many autocratic, austere, authoritarian Victorians that he met, the Revd William Thomas and Squire Ashe for example, Kilvert cared about the physical and spiritual well-being of the poor people he served and admired the way they struggled to survive. He lived in an age preoccupied by class conflict, an obsession with rank and property, but an age that was inexorably changing and he was caught up in it. He grew up in a socially changing Europe where the peasant classes were becoming discontented with their lot, threatening and even carrying out revolution. The Church had to stand firm against such disorders that threatened the social order and the dignity and authority of the clergy. Reading his diary one becomes aware of his loneliness and his struggle to come to terms with his own personal world and the fundamental changes taking place in the outside world that seemed to threaten the very fabric of society. Kilvert's position was of a gentleman fighting to retain authority and respect but he had a keen humanitarian spirit towards those less fortunate. His own spirituality was developed, renewed and enhanced by communion with nature. He felt safe in the world of nature, remote in the hills on lonely walks. Why else would he have accepted the living at St Harmon if it had not been for the countryside around? Perhaps it reminded him of Clyro. In the *Diary* entry of 8 May, 1876 Kilvert reviews a visit to St Harmon where he was shown around the church and found it *simply hideous*, yet a month later he is the vicar! Entries from the days around this time record in great detail the joy he found in the surrounding countryside and its people.

Kilvert was a deeply spiritual man but it surprises me that he records little detail of the architectural features of the churches in the areas where he ministered. He had an artist's eye for the minutest detail in the world of nature and the character of people but seemed heedless toward the beauty of the church as a building. The only mention of Bredwardine church, apart from services, is a record that indicates that his father admired the Norman work, particularly the south and north doorways. An entry of 3 March 1878 extols the beauty of the churchyard but not the church. The same is true at Langley Burrell (7 May 1871 and 27 October 1872) and Clyro (Easter Eve, 16 April 1870 and 24 March 1871). He walked to Kingston St Michael on 24 September 1874 and records simply that since he had last visited the church *the roof of the Chancel has been raised and a new decorated east window has replaced the early English one*. On a visit to Moccas in March 1875, when he is on one of his frequent holiday visits to the area, he was shown around the church by the rector, the Revd Bishop. His summing up is of a *beautiful little Norman Church with its apse and stone altar*. The rest of the entry of about half a page is of *what interests me most*, the tomb of a crusader who might have been an ancestor! He visits Abbey Cwm Hir and writes in great detail about the new house the Phillips were having built but of the abbey ruins nearby not a mention. In a holiday to the south-west in August, 1871 Kilvert writes at great length about the days' walks but only an odd sentence about the churches that were visited. The *Diary* records four visits to Eardisley church but no comment on the font. He must have known of the existence of Kilpeck church but does not make mention of this breathtaking church, or the atmospheric ruins of Abbey Dore that must have appealed to his artistic nature. He visited acquaintances near Leominster, travelling by train but never mentions the beautiful priory church. He eulogises about Harden Ewyas (Hardenhuish) in general but not the church. The churches were familiar to him and as he did not realise that his diary might one day be read and enjoyed by millions world-wide, perhaps he saw no need to write in detail about them. Primarily he was writing for himself. There is a short description of Llanidloes church in a brief visit of 6 May, 1876 before he had to rush off to catch the train but the only entry of note that I can find concerns Malmesbury Abbey. On 12 October 1874 he walked from Langley Burrell to Malmesbury taking three hours in the heat (global warming?!). He visited the abbey and writes: *I went into the Abbey Church, through the grandest Norman doorway in the world, arch within arch sculptured richly with pictured medallions of the history of the Bible. The mitred Abbot was sitting in state high up on the South wall, ready to bless the people and the monks walked aloft in solemn silence round the church by the triforium, appearing and disappearing through the narrow arches*. He took only two and a half hours to return to Langley in the cooler evening.

I wish Kilvert had recorded more of his impressions of the architecture of churches he served and visited. Perhaps he preferred the works designed by the hand of God rather than those created by mere men. But who has gifted creative flair to His people? One of my favourite churches is the aforementioned Kilpeck. I would love to read a Kilvert description of this magnificent building. His outstanding gift with words would, like an artist's brush, create a perfect image of reality.

You may wonder why I express disappointment at Kilvert's apparent disdain of human achievement. My lifelong hobby, indeed passionate pastime, is church architecture. Since, as an eleven-year-old cycling the highways and byways of north Buckinghamshire with a 'box brownie' recording the architectural details of the local churches, I have been excited by the subject. It was safe to cycle in the early fifties, long before Milton Keynes was a twinkle in a planner's eye. The real Milton Keynes – the village name that was chosen for the new town – was one of the churches I visited. Since retiring from the teaching profession I have been able to put that passion for architecture and history to good use.

Our member, Alan Bull, is a registered Herefordshire guide and a particular specialist in church and secular architecture from Saxon times to the present. Other interests include the history, sights and sites of Herefordshire and the Marches and of his home town Leominster. He has a huge collection of relevant slides and would be happy to give presentations to any organisation to which Kilvert Society members belong. If you are interested please contact him at home: 01568-615390 (ed.)

BOOK REVIEWS

David Hepworth (Bakewell) reviews:

***The Victorians* by A.N. Wilson (Hutchinson £25, pp 735)**

Deciphering gravestones can be frustrating. Weather, time and vandalism combine to wear away vital text, and spalled stone leaves tantalising hints of what was so carefully carved. The reader is left to fill in the gaps as well as he or she can, reconstructing the text as satisfactorily as his or her knowledge allows. Reading Kilvert is similarly frustrating, the more so because so much of the damage has been deliberate, leaving tantalising lacunae which add to the mystery of Kilvert.

The text is infuriatingly incomplete, and reading the *Diary* feels sometimes like peeping at a lost world through a small keyhole. The view is restricted and things pass fuzzily across the view, while much is simply out of sight altogether.

If the *Diaries* were our only source of information on the Victorian age, we should have a very odd picture indeed of this most dynamic century. In some respects Kilvert liked to be at the forefront of change: from railways to postcards Kilvert was an enthusiastic participant in Victorian invention. In other ways, his diaries are oddly silent. Larger events do not

seem to touch him greatly and, apart from conventional conservative views about the Royal family and passing alarm at Trades Unions, his diaries are not those of someone who was politically involved.

A.N. Wilson's huge book provides the detailed background to the vignette of Kilvert's too short life in a time of rapid and unprecedented change. His scope is impressive as he guides us through the century, considering politics, education, literary and scientific developments, all of which changed the world, but which seemed to pass Kilvert by. A.N. Wilson writes with superb clarity. His narrative is cogent and he has both wry humour and penetrating insight into his subject.

Kilvert has a very small personal appearance in the book, which feels fitting. The appearance is significant, however, and Wilson is clearly sympathetic to the smaller world which was Kilvert's, explaining that he would choose, if given the choice, 'to be born in the 1830s, the son of a parson with the genetic inheritance of strong teeth'. The chapter on *Country Parishes – Kilvert – Barnes – Hardy* is all too short, but revealing and insightful nonetheless.

A.N. Wilson illustrates large events with the small but telling detail of individuals' lives, and projects on occasion a very intimate view of the century as seen through the eyes of ordinary people and extraordinary events. Kilvert, one feels, would have enjoyed this book, skipping perhaps the politics and science, but lingering on the arts and the personal stories which would have made the book come alive for him.

The Victorians is indispensable for readers of the *Diaries*. It fills in the missing background. It sets the context for Kilvert's life, work and writing. It throws light on Kilvert not only by providing detail, but also by illuminating something of Kilvert's shadow side: the events and changes which he did not mention and which seem to have little or no impact on his life.

The Victorians is enriched with a range of evocative photography and Victorian paintings. It is an absorbing read, and is written with unobtrusive scholarship in elegant and mellifluous language. A.N. Wilson is a master craftsman, and this is truly a masterpiece.

David Lockwood reviews:

***Tales from the Wye and other Stories* by Karl Showler**

A former Mayor of Hay and a past President of the British Beekeepers Association, Karl Showler, is a prolific writer: his researches on Francis Kilvert and the Ancient Order of Foresters is already known to many of our readers. There will be, in time, writings on Bishop Atlay, the commanding figure who subdued poor Pope into a second confirmation.

This work is fiction, or partly fiction. The author from a wide reading of local history weaves folk-lore and legend into his strange and imaginative tales. A favourite character of his is Moll Wallbee, the giantess who flung the stone of St Meilig's Cross from Hay to Llowes. She appears in many of the stories and in various centuries.

To Kilvertians the story of interest is *Moll Wallbee and the Bowler*. The key character is the tramp, such as Kilvert frequently encountered on the road. He acquires a magic bowler hat and the Bevan girls of Hay Castle become involved and their mother, who tries on the hat, is immediately transported to Ashbrook House where she takes tea with the curate.

Karl Showler's knowledge is very wide indeed, but I would point out that Bishop Atlay and Bishop Philpot would almost certainly never have worn a mitre, or even owned one. The Church of England at their time was considerably more Protestant than it was later in the reign of Queen Victoria

This is a curious little collection and one finds oneself considering it very thoughtfully because like its author it is unique.

**Copies can be obtained from K. Showler, Riverside, Newport Street, Hay-on-Wye, HR3 5BG.
Price £10 including postage and packing.**

EXPLORING KILVERT COUNTRY

A new book by our member Chris Barber (author of 21 books), entitled *Exploring Kilvert Country* will be published by Bloreng Books in April 2003. Richly illustrated, it will contain several car tours and walks, centred on Clyro, Hay-on-Wye and Bredwardine, thus helping visitors to gain a greater understanding of the area now known as 'Kilvert Country'.

It will include numerous extracts from the *Diary*, legends and historical details of the many churches, villages, castles etc. to be found in the area. The descriptions are mainly based on car tours but about eight short walks are also included for those who wish to stretch their legs and gain an intimate understanding of locations mentioned by Kilvert.

Chris Barber is also planning a further book which will be entitled *Walks in Kilvert Country* and will contain about 20 routes of varying length and aimed at the more energetic walker. This will possibly be published in 2004.

KILVERT AND DOSTOEVSKY

By John Hodkin (Cumbria)

The world of Kilvert may seem a small one, but its tentacles spread exceedingly far.

Take, for instance, the Society's Golden Jubilee weekend held at Hereford in June 1998. One of the speakers at the dinner on the Friday was Robert Willis, Dean of Hereford, and the preacher at Choral Evensong at the Cathedral on Sunday, attended by members of the Society, was the Bishop of Monmouth, Rowan Williams.

Since then the Dean has become the Dean of Canterbury, and now, as we all know, Rowan Williams is the Archbishop of Canterbury. Plenty of chances for some good Kilvertian chats there!

The sermon Dr Williams preached on that day was a very striking one, as one would expect. One observation which really made me sit up was when he mentioned a man whom he said could not have been more different to Kilvert – Fyodor Dostoevsky.

What a marvellous comparison, which makes one think anew about both of them. The nightmarish, tempestuous world inhabited by the Karamazovs and Prince Myshkin is aeons away from that of the Venables and Dews. The only thing they have in common is their immense readability.

The question that arises is – would Kilvert have been able to read Dostoevsky, who died only two years after Kilvert?

His complete works were not translated into English until 1912 onwards. Before then only *Crime and Punishment* and *Poor Folk* had been familiar to English readers.

There is no mention in Kilvert of Dostoevsky, and I am sure that Plomer would have included any entry of Kilvert curled up with *Crime and Punishment* if there had been one. It would have appealed to his sense of the piquant.

A SHADY EXPERIENCE

By John Caldwell (Upminster)

Early one September morning on holiday in Hay-on-Wye, while photographing the elegant shop front of Elanbach's (where Kilvert used to order books through Horden's) I got into conversation with a gentleman who had been gazing in the window.

Discovering my link with the Kilvert Society, he offered to show me what is believed to be the original desk used for the Savings Bank, which Kilvert ran (14 April 1870).



The Desk

Photograph by John Caldwell

After being carefully conducted to the Old Mill around the corner, I was taken into a large, low-ceilinged, workshop-cum-store in semi-darkness, where I picked my way carefully through, around and across various obstacles towards a glimmer of daylight. I must confess that in these eerie circumstances I was wondering whether I was to become a victim of a real-life Hitchcock thriller, so I was very relieved to see the dim outlines of the desk in question.

Photography in these circumstances had every aspect of a lottery; there was not enough light even to select the camera settings, but hoping it was still in the fully automatic flash mode, I 'pointed and pressed' and hoped for the best!

Amazingly, the results were excellent, considering the circumstances. The fully-restored desk with all its fittings (including the brass-edged coin-slots in the top surface) was revealed as a really handsome relic of the Reverend Francis Kilvert and an example of his very practical help to those less fortunate than himself.

The 'icing on the cake' of this little story is that the gentleman who so kindly invited me to this private viewing was Mr Bernard Grant, a member of the family which took over the business from Horden's and who still maintains a keen interest in Hay.

In conclusion I should perhaps add, that I understand from Mr Grant that, although there is no absolute proof of the origin of the desk, it had been in the family's possession for generations and was always referred to by his grandfather as 'Kilvert's Desk'.

FROM RECENT CORRESPONDENCE

i) Lyndall Hancock writes from Dunedin, New Zealand:

Every time the *Journal* comes there are a dozen things I could comment on, but time goes by ... I was amazed to see myself in colour in the June *Journal* and the photos of Maud Heath's Causeway in September brought back memories of mud and drizzle and just the odd bit of sun when I managed to get those photos that morning.

Llandewifach, I am always envious of KS outings in that area, it was such a dear little church and so remote. I told Edward (West) that I thought it was like the other churches in the Painscastle group, so very kempt – Edward laughed and said that was the Revd Peter Ralph-Bowman's influence.

I've known FK's *Spanish Flower Girl* at the Dulwich Gallery since childhood, for we had an oil copy of it at home, done by a Shetland artist, John Irvine, and given to my granny as a wedding present in 1879.

The article about Langley Burrell (Sept) interested me because I stayed overnight with Mrs Renée Payne who had a bed and breakfast. She borrowed the keys of all the local FK churches and drove me round them with a marvellous commentary all the way. Langley Burrell had a lovely altar carpet of blended colours, she said she had given it in memory of her husband and that it had been specially woven to go with all the seasons of the church year, and very thick to cover uneven stone slabs. I was amazed at Hardenhuish church; it hardly looked like a church ...

At the Kington Langley church I asked Renée about the window with Mrs Prodggers, the lady who managed to get herself and children into stained glass. So she pointed her out, the children are round about and Jesus is looking straight down at Mrs P, naturally. Just so there's no favouritism, Renée said, there's an unidentified lady in the group too.

ii) Mary Dewey (Bristol) and David Lermom (Cardiff) have written drawing attention to a most interesting recent publication: *Echoing Voices: More Memories of a Country House Snooper* by John Harris (published by John Murray). Chapter 18 of this book is devoted to David Vicary, the eccentric owner of Langley Burrell Rectory, whom Pamela Cranston met on her visit there in the autumn of 1994 (See *Journal* No. 9, Sept. 2002).

Mary Dewey writes:

The chapter entitled *Madame Vicaire* (a nickname of the unfortunate gentleman) provides some fascinating detail (and two photographs) of his occupation of the Rectory from 1964 until his terrible death in 1995. As he deteriorated from eccentricity into madness the house fell into greater and greater dilapidation and he slept in his car wrapped in newspapers. Pages 95-100 of John Harris's book describe in detail both the owner's and the Rectory's deterioration and should be of interest to all Kilvertians. In some ways David Vicary's life at Langley Burrell resembled that of that other recluse – the Solitary of Llanbedr. I am sure Kilvert would have found David Vicary fascinating as a character, though he would have deplored the damage to his beloved parents' home. What a miracle that the house has been saved from such terrible decay and neglect and restored.

David Lermom, an obvious enthusiast for John Harris' works adds:

The book (and its predecessor: *No Voice from the Hall: Early Memories of a Country House Snooper*) are very readable indeed, especially for lovers of architecture.

iii) **R.B. Taylor writes from Skegness:**

Nearly 25 years ago when I was collaborating with the late Eva Farmery on the *Kathleen Mavourneen* booklet, she and I were given the opportunity of access to Croft Grange, the home of Katharine Heanley, the true name of 'Kathleen Mavourneen'. Croft Grange occupies an isolated position to the south of my home in Skegness. At that time the house stood empty and seemed doomed to dereliction and possible demolition. However, a few weeks ago I received a telephone call from the present owner who was interested to learn more about the Kilvert connection, and he invited me to visit... I was delighted to find that the house has been beautifully renovated and decorated and is once more a lived-in home, whilst the external appearance is virtually unchanged. The present owner has kindly indicated to me that if any members are in the area he will be happy to meet them.

I enclose a photograph of Croft Grange which I took in September 2002. RFK certainly visited in 1877 when the *Diary* is silent and when he was briefly engaged to Katharine.



Croft Grange

iv) **Dick Best, Ickenham, writes:**

I enclose a photo taken recently of Horden's bookshop previously owned by three generations of Grants and now a boutique – due to the very sad early deaths of John Grant and his wife Anne – both from cancer within two weeks of each other about two years ago. Anne ran the sweet shop next door (with the awning), now it is an art shop. The bunting is part of the decorations for the Hay Festival. Sorry about the cars, but what can you do!



Horden's

You may be interested in a new book *Nobody has heard of Hay*, published by the Logaston Press. It was compiled from interviews with Hay people and contains an interesting history of the town. Local people investigated it for the Millennium. Well worth having at £9.95 – paperback – ISBN 1873827 12 1.

We subscribe to *Borderlines* a monthly news review of Hay and District and also receive a monthly copy of *The Link*, from a Hay friend. This covers news of about six parishes (Cusop, Clifford, Blakemere, Preston, Moccas and Hardwick), which share the same vicar, and other church people.

If you mention you have *The Link* to the landlord of the Red Lion at Bredwardine, he makes a donation of a percentage of the cost of your meal to the church!

v) **Carole Green writes from Feniton in Devon:**

As a member of the Kilvert Society I should like to say how much I look forward to and enjoy the *Journal*. I have twice stayed with Mark and Janet Robinson and I can recommend other members to enjoy a holiday at Hardwick with them. They would get a warm welcome, comfortable rooms, delicious food and there is an interesting library.

The last time I came, the countryside was deep into the foot and mouth crisis so I did not see as much as I wanted to, but I hope to visit again next year.

I enjoyed the article about Mrs Kilvert's life after her husband's death. I wondered if it would be possible for more of those items, for example, what happened to the lives of Kilvert's other brother and sisters and indeed their children. In this *Journal* I see there are a few details of the family. What happened to the Wyndowe family, life in India must have been interesting and are there any descendants? Likewise what about an article on the Clewer sisters and possibly some photographs?

vi) **Professor Meic Stephens writes from the University of Glamorgan:**

I should like to draw the attention of Society members to the fact that copies of *The Curate of Clyro* which I edited for Gwasg Gregynog in 1983 are now selling for prices much higher than the original price of £40. A copy was recently sold at auction by Bonhams for £160.

The book was published in a limited edition of 250 copies, with an additional fifteen copies in a special binding. It is illustrated with twelve wood engravings by Sarah van Niekerk and contains fourteen short extracts from *Kilvert's Diary* and an introduction.

The book sold out within a few months of publication and soon became a collector's item.

OBITUARIES

Basil Butcher



Photograph by Derek Foxton

It is with great regret that we have to inform members of the death of Basil Butcher on 4 October 2002.

Basil was one of the few remaining founder-members of the Society, joining in 1948 when he was 36 years old. He was always an active member and served on the committee for countless years and only decided to give up committee work at the end of 2001, when he reached his ninetieth birthday.

Basil was one of Herefordshire's most knowledgeable historians and a man of many interests and gave illustrated lectures, on the many aspects of country life. In addition to his membership of the Society Basil was a member of Hereford Local History Society, the Woolhope Club and a founder member of the Hereford Photographic Society.

Basil had direct links with the Victorian era through his father and the family garage (James Fryer) in Widemarsh Street, now the site of Do-It-All. His father is credited with building, in 1899, a three-wheeled car which may well have been Herefordshire's first motorised vehicle.

Basil was a true gentleman, a great conversationalist and well liked by his very many friends.

Members will wish to join me in sending our sincere condolences to his widow Norah.

Ron Watts

Basil was an eminent Kilvertian and had a huge store of archives, documents and knowledge relating to RFK and Kilvert country. Hardly a month went by without a letter from Basil containing some fascinating snippet culled from that vast collection. I shall very much miss those regular letters with Basil's memories of city and county and especially of the early years of the Society. (ed.)

Mervyn Bourdillon

Mervyn Bourdillon, a member of the Society since 1971, and a descendent of the Evan Thomas family through his mother, died on 11 September 2002.

Mr Bourdillon was a clergyman's son who in 1953 inherited the Llwyn Madoc Estate in Breconshire, which he ran for almost 50 years.

He was born in Shropshire and lived in Canada until 1932 when his family returned to Britain. He was educated at Haileybury where he showed talent as a cricketer. His distinguished career included war service as an officer in the RNVR. After the war he worked for a shipping company until he inherited the Estate. He served on Breconshire County Council, was a JP and for 27 years was president of the Red Cross for mid and west Wales. As High Sheriff of Breconshire he was present at the last Assizes in Brecon in 1970. He was Lord Lieutenant of Powys 1986-98.

He was also very much involved in local affairs in his home village of Beulah, with the Young Farmers' Club there and as a churchwarden of Eglwys Oen Duw for 26 years. The year 2002 was his fiftieth as president of the Beulah Show.

Mr and Mrs Bourdillon invited the Kilvert Society to take refreshments at Llwyn Madoc following the September 1993 service at Eglwys Oen Duw and members were shown portraits, photographs and other memorabilia concerned with the family. Edward West said that he particularly admired the portrait of Miss Clara Thomas herself, *very pretty*, as Kilvert noted. An overseas visitor was heard to exclaim on leaving for the coach 'What a wonderful afternoon!' and Edward agreed that it was definitely one of the best and most memorable.

We offer our sympathy to Mrs Bourdillon and to the family.

It is with regret that we also have to record the death of Dr Isaacson of Stoke-on-Trent, a life member since 1961 who died in 1997. We offer our belated sympathy to his family and friends.

FLOWER FESTIVAL AT BREDWARDINE

At the end of the Hay Literary Festival week there will be a Flower Festival with a literary theme at St Andrew's church, Bredwardine. The Revd Francis Kilvert will be among the writers florally represented. The Festival will be open on Saturday 31 May and Sunday 1 June between 10.30 a.m. and 4.30 p.m. To complete the pleasure there will be home-made refreshments, a plant and produce and various local craft stalls.

All the proceeds of the Festival will go towards restoration works at St Andrew's and towards a new village hall.

PHOTOGRAPHIC FEATURE

1. LOCATIONS

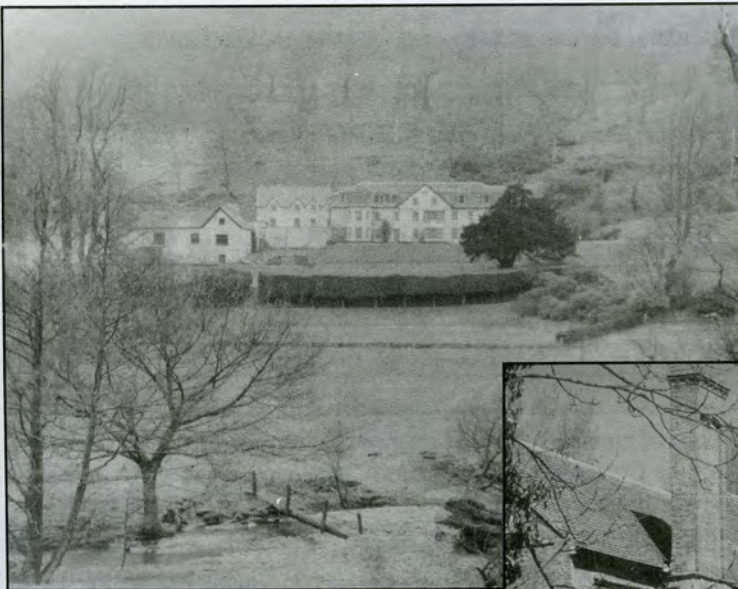


Llandewi Fach Church



Arthur's Stone

2. FROM THE ARCHIVES



Llwyn Madoc, Beulah



Kilvert Society at Brinsop

WANTED

Three-volume edition of the *Diary* (with index). Please contact the publications manager.

FOR SALE

A second-hand hardback copy of *Kilvert's Diary* (*Selections by William Plomer*) produced in 1978 by Book Club Associates by arrangement with Jonathan Cape Ltd. It has a white dust cover trimmed in black. The cover is somewhat foxed as is the top of the book's pages, but the dark blue hard cover is clean. Please contact the publications manager with offers.

CHOIR

It has been suggested that a small ad hoc choir might be formed to lead the singing at Kilvert services. If you would be interested in taking part please inform Michael Sharp.

* FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 26th April

As we went to press we learned that Dr Bernard Jones is ill and unlikely to be well enough to give his lecture. In his place the editor of the *Journal* will give an illustrated talk using some of the large collection of slides bequeathed to the Society by the late Kenneth Clew. Ken, who died in June 2001, was a notable Kilvertian perhaps best known for his series of mini-guides to churches with Kilvert connections. His slide collection abundantly illustrates twenty five years of interest in locations mentioned in the *Diary*.

PLEASE NOTE

Owing to shortage of space a number of articles have had to be held over. These will appear in the June 2003 issue. The editor apologises to any disappointed contributors.

Contributions for the June 2003 edition of the *Journal* should reach the editor not later than 19 April 2003.

Members are reminded that ALL e-mail communications with the Society or its officers should be made via the dedicated website: communicate.co.uk/here/kilvertsociety.

The current ordinary subscription is £6.00 (Joint membership £9.00 w.e.f. 1.1.02) and is due on 1 January of each year. Cheques payable to The Kilvert Society should be sent to: Barry Smith, Membership Secretary, 25 Prospect Road, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, NP7 5DU.

DATA PROTECTION ACT 1984: The names and addresses of members are held on a computerised list exclusively for the distribution of the *Journal* and other information about the Society, to its members. If you object to this, please contact the Hon. Secretary. It has been decided that if any member objected, that member would have to provide **stamped addressed envelopes** for the dispatch of their Journals.

