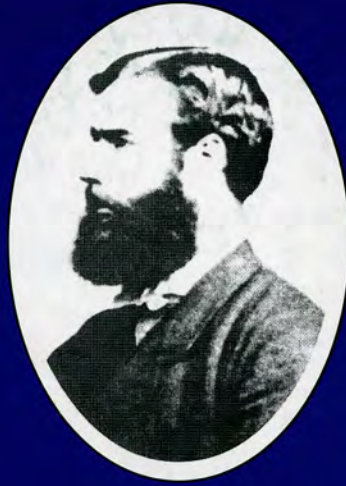




THE
JOURNAL
OF
THE KILVERT SOCIETY



Number 12

September 2003

THE KILVERT SOCIETY

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

President:

The Reverend D.N. Lockwood M.A.

<i>Chairman</i>	Mr M.G. Sharp, The Old Forge, Kinnersley, Herefordshire HR3 6QB Tel: (01544) 327426
<i>Vice-Chairman</i>	Miss D.A. Wheeldon, 25 Penn Grove Road, Hereford HR1 1BH
<i>Secretary</i>	Mr D.J. Elvins, Sandalwood, North End, Steeple Claydon, Buckingham MK18 2PG Tel: (01296) 730498 or 07799 800990
<i>Treasurer</i>	Mr J.H.C. Wilks, Woodlands, Cusop, Hay-on-Wye HR3 5RQ
<i>Membership Secretary</i>	Mr B. Smith, 25 Prospect Road, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire NP7 5DU Tel: (01873) 857520
<i>Publications Manager and Archivist</i>	Mr C.B. Dixon, Tregothnan, Pentrosfa Crescent, Llandrindod Wells, Powys LD1 5NW Tel: (01597) 822062

Editor:

**C.J. MARSHALL,
169 Upper Holly Walk,
Leamington Spa,
Warwickshire,
CV32 4JY**

Tel: 01926 420437

To whom all contributions for the *Journal* should be sent.

Front cover photograph: The Wye from Brobury Scar, looking towards Bredwardine.

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From the Editor

In the concluding paragraph of my remarks in the June edition I mentioned that our treasurer, John Wilks, might well have something to say before long about subscriptions, given, in part, the cost of the redesigned *Journal*, which, I am pleased to say, has been very favourably received.

It is as I suspected and I urge you now to read and consider carefully his statement below and to let him have your views thereon, so that these can be taken into account to help decide both the future form of the *Journal* and the level of subscription. As you will see we have been here before, notably in 1971, when there was considerable debate about raising the annual subscription from 5 shillings to 10 shillings! Happy days indeed!

Those of you who missed the AGM and consequently Laurence Le Quesne's excellent talk on Kilvert and Woodforde will no doubt be pleased to know that you can now read it, beginning on page 5. I am very grateful to Mr Le Quesne for so quickly preparing a redraft for publication.

Following the success of the Dulwich visit and the AGM weekend there was another gratifyingly large turnout for the June weekend; about 70 members arrived for the visit to Moccas Court, Park and church and the latter was full on the Sunday when 40 or so worshippers attended evensong. I suppose the weather helped, glorious sunshine on both days (what the old Newsletters used to refer to as 'Kilvert weather' at the time when KS excursions *never* seemed to be rained on – or off!) but nevertheless the committee is delighted with the increasing support that Society events are now attracting. So we look forward to seeing just as many of you at Aberystwyth at the end of the month and in Bath next February.

Book early to avoid disappointment!

From the Treasurer

Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen nineteen six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six, result misery. (Mr Micawber)

Right at the start I must warn you that this article is not very interesting, however it is important for the future of the Kilvert Society and so please, resist the temptation to turn the page and stay with me for a while.

It is often said that 'history repeats itself' and, to illustrate how true this is, I begin with an extract from a 1971 Newsletter. The extract mirrors our present situation and also records the origin of, in my opinion, a potential problem for future progress, namely Life Membership. Here is the extract:

The increased costs of printing, duplicating and now postage(s) has forced the committee to the decision that the subscription must be raised to 50p. (10/-) per annum, ... A lower subscription would be possible by cutting down the number of times newsletters are produced and sent out; but so many members write such enthusiastic letters of thanks, many telling of how they read their newsletter over and over again, that it is obvious that present standards must be maintained as far as is possible.

The committee also decided that anyone can become a LIFE MEMBER on payment of TEN POUNDS thus eliminating any further worries about annual payments or subscription rises.

The Society has three separate, yet linked, issues to consider. First the future format of the *Journal*, second the levels of subscription and last, but by no means least, the rules governing life membership.

Consider first these broad statistics:

- Cost, including postage etc of the 'new' (June 2003) *Journal*, approximately £3,500 for three issues.
- Compare this with the cost of the 'old' *Journal*, approximately £2,500 for three issues.
- Print run per issue: 550 copies.
- Membership – 641 made up of 324 subscriptions (single and joint), 197 life members.

Then two facts:

- Last year income and expenditure were roughly equal – without donations we would have made a loss of about £1,000.
- During the year nothing was spent on Kilvert monuments or special publications.

If costs rise by £1 per member then subscriptions must rise by £1.45 as subscribing members must bear all of the costs of life members as well as their own.

Lastly one assumption:

- If subscription rates rise then donations will fall so that a rise of £1 in subscription may not generate £1 x 324 of extra income.

Journal options:

- Go back to the old Newsletter – surely not, but we could maintain our present subscription.
- Stick with the style of *Journal* prior to June – requires a subscription increase of at least £2.
- Move on to the June style of *Journal* – requires a subscription increase of at least £5

One further option:

- Reduce the number of *Journals* to two per year plus a newsletter giving a programme of events for the year. This would reduce the need for increased subscription by about £2.

A fair deal for all:

As pointed out above a £1 increase in costs per member means a £1.45 increase in subscription. As a life member myself, I believe this to be unfair and I would like to suggest that the Society acts to dramatically reduce the number of life members as follows:

- All life members who have enjoyed ten years or more of life membership should be asked to relinquish their life membership and take up a subscription. Those who have enjoyed less than ten years should be asked to relinquish life membership on completion of ten years. Whilst it would be unethical to insist on this, I believe that with suitable explanation most, if not all, life members would recognise the fairness of this approach.

This action might generate about £1,000 of extra subscription income, though it would probably greatly reduce income from donations. Nevertheless it would produce a fair apportionment of cost across the whole membership and provide a sound financial basis for future activity by the Society.

I must add that these ideas are my own and do not represent the views of the committee. Please let us know your opinions on all of these issues, they will have to be decided on at the 2004 Annual General Meeting and as many members as possible should be involved in the debate before final decisions are taken.

This matter has now been passed to a sub-committee whose recommendations will appear in the March 2004 *Journal*. See also Barry Smith's membership overview on page 17. (ed.)

FORTHCOMING EVENT

Next year's winter event will take place on Wednesday 25 February 2004 in Bath. Our committee member, the Revd John Day, will lead a walk around 'Kilvert's Bath'. The day will start at 11 am and will consist of two walking sessions separated by a break for lunch which, it is hoped, can be taken at the Pump Room. Intending participants will be informed of the detailed arrangements nearer the time. However the organisers need to have numbers for this event well in advance and **it is therefore essential** that all those wishing to attend return the enclosed booking form to the secretary, David Elvins **by 31 October at the latest**.

SUMMER EVENT

VISIT TO MOCCAS COURT AND PARK

By Sue Sharp (Kinnersley)

A splendid summer's day! The sun shone and the Herefordshire countryside was glorious; a perfect day for a visit to Moccas Court and Park, organised by Ann Dean, and what a wonderful turnout! When she and Michael were discussing numbers they thought about 35 would attend; imagine the surprise and delight when nearly twice as many members gathered on the front drive of Moccas Court at 2 pm on the Saturday. We were so numerous that we had to be divided into three groups to tour the house, with Ivor Saunders as our very knowledgeable guide.

Moccas Court is a beautiful Georgian house, although the estate has been in existence since the end of the thirteenth century it has been owned by only four families: the de Fresnes, Vaughans, Cornewalls and now the Chester-Masters. The estate was inherited by the Chester-Masters from their cousin Sir William Cornwall in 1962. The present house was built in 1775 for the Cornewalls, after an original design by Robert Adam.

We were guided through the music room, the library, the circular drawing-room and the dining-room, all with beautiful and different views of the surrounding gardens and countryside. Finally we were taken into the oval hall with its magnificent cantilevered staircase, curving up to the first floor. Ivor Saunders left us feeling we had merely caught a glimpse of the great days of Moccas Court.

At this point some members chose to stay in the gardens, whilst the rest of us set off to follow our able treasurer, John Wilks, for a guided walk through Moccas Deer Park.

The Park is considered to be one of the three most important primaevael parklands in Britain. The home, in particular of many, many varieties of beetle (was it 900 John?) and the only place a previously unknown beetle was discovered and named the Moccas beetle. It is also English Nature's first parkland National Nature Reserve. (See p.9 *Journal* No. 3 – ed.)



One of the 'grey old men of Moccas' and... John Wilks.



The cantilevered staircase in the oval hall.

We were guided from tree to tree through this glorious park with birds singing and the sun shining, we did not 'tumble and plunge down the steep hillside' as Kilvert did (it was too hot!) but we absorbed the atmosphere as he had.

We stopped by the tree that may be 2000 years old, but as to how much it measured round the trunk we shall never know. There was much discussion as to whether its girth should be calculated in feet or centimetres! In the end six, seven or was it eight stalwart members stretched their arms around the tree. I don't think we were much wiser when we moved on. (The measurements should definitely be imperial however).

John read to us as we stood surrounded by all God's beauty.

Saturday 22 April 1876

I fear those grey old men of Moccas, those grey, gnarled, low-browed,

knock-kneed, bowed, bent, huge, strange, long armed, deformed, hunchbacked misshapen oak men that stand waiting and watching century after century biding God's time with both feet in the grave and yet tiring down and seeing out generation after generation, with such tales to tell, as when they whisper them to each other in the midsummer nights, make the silver birches weep and the poplars and aspens shiver and the long ears of the hares and rabbits stand on end. No human hand set those oaks. They are 'the trees which the Lord hath planted'. They look as if they had been at the beginning and making of the world and they will probably see its end. (vol. III page 263)



KS members stroll in the grounds of Moccas Court. Gordon Rogers chats with David Howell (centre).

Did I overhear someone say they thought John was talking about Society members? Surely not!

After a wonderful and very informative guided walk, John told us the glad news that tea was waiting for us at Moccas Village Hall. The WI had catered for 35 yet there was more than enough for 70! So all was well.

Our president, David Lockwood, said a few words after tea, and summed up the walk by saying that as a result of John's explanations Beetlemania came to mind!

Votes of thanks were given to Ann Dean for all her hard work and organisation and to John Wilks for an excellent circular walk of the Park.

On the Sunday members met at Moccas Church, a Norman church, where the Revd Sir George Cornwall was Rector for over forty years.

Tuesday 26 February 1878

When Moccas Church was restored and reopened Lord Saye and Sele preached in the afternoon and told the people that Moccas was so called from 'the badgers which came down to the river to eat the fish.' It is supposed he meant otters, and that he had in some strange, confused way mixed up together otters, badgers and pigs, for Moccas is so called from the swine (Welsh moch) which used to feed on the acorns in the great oak forest. (vol. III page 375).

Our service was led by the Revd Marion Morgan of the Cusop group of parishes and she also preached. She spoke of Kilvert and her sermon was well researched and sensitive. The prayers and Act of Remembrance were led by the Revd John Day.

A lovely service and the hymns brought to a close a wonderful weekend. Our thanks to all those who worked so hard to make it possible.



The Woolhope Oak, first measured by the Woolhope Society in feet and now by the Kilvert Society in arms.

KILVERT AND WOODFORDE – THE DIARISTS COMPARED

By Laurence Le Quesne (Shrewsbury)

I am going to stick my neck out, and say that there are only two great English clerical diarists – Kilvert and Woodforde. In a sense it is a bold claim, because the number of clerical diarists is legion, especially between about 1750 and 1900 – I think this is because the Anglican clergy in this period were mainly recruited from the body of Oxford and Cambridge graduates, by definition a highly literate class – and a good many of them have been published, though usually only in an abbreviated form. When I say that Kilvert and Woodforde are the only two *great* ones, what do I mean?

I mean, essentially, that only they have achieved acceptance into the canon of English literature, to the degree that anybody with a literary education would be expected to have heard of them, if not actually to have read them. A corollary of this is that you would expect them (not always rightly, alas) to be constantly in print, and also that you would expect the texts of their diaries, so far as the manuscripts survive, to have been published in full. I might add, though I doubt if it deserves inclusion in the definition of a great diarist, that so far as I know, they are the only two clerical diarists to have active societies dedicated to the study of the diaries and the lives of their authors, to the publication of material about them, and to the wider popularising of them. You may note that I am not, therefore, claiming that Kilvert and Woodforde stand out from other clerical diarists in terms of the quality of their diaries, at least not directly. This is because I am not sure they *do* stand out from *all* their competitors in this way: one or two of these, I think, might *deserve* to be as well known as Kilvert and Woodforde are (I am thinking especially of two early nineteenth century Somerset parsons, John Skinner and William Holland – why do all the best clerical diarists have strong links with this part of England?).

But in the respects I have listed, Kilvert and Woodforde *do* stand alone; and it is therefore natural to attempt a comparison between them. It is especially natural for me because, having lived with Kilvert since I first picked up a copy of the *Diary* in a second-hand bookshop in Adelaide in 1958, lived in his house in Clyro for three years, and written a book about him, I have recently become deeply interested in Woodforde too. It is perhaps a little strange that I had been aware of Woodforde during all those years, had a copy of his *Diary* at least since 1970, and had read it, yet it's only in the last couple of years that I've come to read him closely; and all the stranger since Norfolk, the county with which he is always primarily associated (as Kilvert is with the Welsh border), is a county which I know and love, having often visited it since my schooldays. What finally brought Woodforde into the foreground of my thinking was presenting him to an adult education class in Ludlow two or three years ago. We followed that up by a coach trip to Weston Longville, Woodforde's village – his equivalent of Kilvert's Clyro, if you like – a year ago, and by then I was well and truly hooked, and all the obvious questions about the parallels and the differences between the two men began to start out of the ground.

The parallels *and* the differences, for there are many of both, and a study of both can help to give us a sharper appreciation of the qualities of both diarists. Let us then, start with some of the similarities, and in particular with one fact that is a coincidence rather than a similarity, the fact that they were born exactly a hundred years apart, Woodforde in 1740, Kilvert in 1840. A hundred years is a long time, and I shall be arguing later that this is in fact one of the most significant *differences* between them; but it is also a very tidy period, and it does make them very convenient landmarks for drawing comparisons between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But the parallels go much farther than that. Both men were the sons of country parsons, and both became country parsons themselves (the Church was a very hereditary profession in the 18th and 19th centuries). Both were born in Wessex, in places only about forty miles apart – Woodforde at Ansford, near Castle Cary in Somerset, Kilvert at Hardenhuish near Chippenham in Wiltshire. Both had deep family roots in this profoundly rural area of England, and both regularly returned there throughout their lives, at roughly annual intervals, for holidays and family visits. Both were members of fairly large families. Both became closely associated with other country parishes in even remoter parts of England, Norfolk and the Welsh border. Both studied at Oxford: admittedly Woodforde had a much more distinguished academic record than Kilvert on the face of it, for he was a scholar of Winchester and a scholar and fellow of New College, whereas Kilvert was only a commoner of Wadham, and took a very undistinguished degree. However, this is misleading: Woodforde's honours came to him in an age when such things were distributed on the basis of influence and private patronage, not academic distinction, of which neither man's diary gives any indication at all. They studied different subjects, but Woodforde's *Diary* is as unmarked by classical references as Kilvert's is by references to history and jurisprudence. Indeed, it is one of the close similarities between them that both apparently had almost completely unacademic minds (though Kilvert's unpublished studies of Radnorshire folklore might require some qualification of this judgement). Moreover, both had completely undistinguished clerical careers in obscure country parishes: Woodforde spent the last twenty-seven years of his life in his parish of Weston Longville, while Kilvert had only three years in his successive livings of St Harmon and Bredwardine (though there are his eleven years as a curate at Langley Burrell and Clyro to add to this), but at the time of their deaths there was no reason whatever to think that posterity would remember them, or that either of them had left behind anything worthy of remembrance. Even their villages are roughly similar in size and social structure (though Clyro felt the impact of the twentieth century a good deal more severely than Weston Longville, and has grown much more in consequence, no doubt as a result of the misfortune of its position on a trunk road). Both too can be considered as about equidistant from their nearest sizeable town: true, Clyro is farther from Hereford than Weston Longville from Norwich, but Kilvert was living in the age of the railway, and in terms of time, which for most purposes is much the more meaningful measure, there is very little difference. Finally, it is also true that there is a close similarity between the circumstances in which their diaries were eventually published, Woodforde's in 1924-31 and Kilvert's in 1938-40, and the remarkable popularity which they both quickly achieved: it is hard not to think that William Plomer and Jonathan Cape, in making their decision to publish Kilvert, must have been influenced by the success that Oxford University Press had so recently had with Woodforde.

So the resemblances between Kilvert and Woodforde are striking; but there is a case for saying that they are largely differences of chance and outward circumstances, and that the differences between them are more striking and go deeper. To begin with what is perhaps the most important, Woodforde lived a full life (he died at 62, but that *was* a full life for the eighteenth century), whereas Kilvert, as we all know, died a tragically premature death at 38, just as he seemed to be on the threshold of a modest personal fulfilment which had been long delayed, only three years after being appointed to his first living (after eleven years of curacies) and only a month after his wedding (the marriage he had so much longed for, after three broken romances). Woodforde, by contrast, having once been jilted in his thirties – an experience which seems to have involved none of the romantic agonies of Kilvert's courtship of Daisy Thomas – seems never to have contemplated matrimony again, but settled readily enough into a lifelong bachelorhood, softened by the presence of his niece Betsy to run the rectory at Weston Longville for him.

It is thus a very great difference between them that the bulk of Woodforde's Diary – the period of his residence at Weston Longville – is written from the perspective of a householder in easy circumstances, whereas it is only of the relatively small Bredwardine section of its last volume that the same can be said with equal truth of Kilvert's Diary. All the rest of it is written from the perspective of a penurious curate, living either as Mrs Chaloner's lodger at Clyro or in his parents' home at Langley Burrell, not as the head of his own household, with all the liberties and all the responsibilities that that carried with it. It is a fair point, and one worth making, that if Kilvert had lived twenty years longer, as a married man and a country vicar, his diary might have become a good deal more similar to Woodforde's: certainly the circumstances of their lives would have been much more alike.

As it is, the differences between their diaries are a good deal more striking than the similarities. Woodforde started keeping his diary at 18, and kept it up for the rest of his life, and practically the entire manuscript has been preserved. Kilvert seems not to have started his till he was 29, with less than ten years to live as it turned out. It is a much fuller diary than Woodforde's, but much of it has been lost. But the differences go deeper than this, as any reader of the two diaries will soon appreciate. They go back above all to the differences between the ages in which they were written, and the temperaments of the two men who wrote them; and much of the differences of temperament can themselves be traced to the differences between the ages in which they were written.

I once described *Kilvert's Diary* as 'a major document of Victorian rural life and a minor but moving work of literature': the former description, substituting 'Georgian' for 'Victorian', could be applied with at least equal force to Woodforde: the latter never could. Woodforde's Diary is not a work of literature because it has no imagination, the defining quality of literature. It is written in black and white, while Kilvert's is coloured: Woodforde is no more capable of the sudden shaft of inspiration such as: *An angel-satyr walks these hills*, which occasionally lights up Kilvert's prose, than he is of writing *Hamlet*.

Woodforde's Diary is an unusually pure example of what is perhaps the basic diarist's instinct, the instinct to *record* – above all, to record what has happened and what he has done each day. I keep a diary myself, and I am conscious of the same instinct. When I realise that I have left something out, that there is a gap in my record of what I have done, it worries me, and I suspect it would have worried Woodforde too. It is extremely significant that Woodforde's Diary actually started as an account book, a record of his daily receipts and expenditures: narrative creeps in by little and little, but it always remains an account book as well, a perfect example of the most practical kind of record (and much more practical then, when virtually all financial transactions took the form of cash, than now). Kilvert almost never mentions individual items of expenditure, still less of receipt – in fact it is remarkable how rarely he mentions actual prices, or money transactions, at all. I think this is largely because most of the money transactions of the households in which he lives do not pass through his hands, since he is not the head of the household: they pass through Mrs Chaloner's, or his parents': but it is also because Kilvert does not see the sheer recording of facts or events as a main purpose of his diary. In the early volumes of his diary especially, Kilvert is a sensitive and naïve young man, on the tiptoe of emotional and imaginative experience, and his diary is for him the means by which he explores these areas of experience and finds the words to express them. He is much less concerned to record than to describe, and it is typical of the two men that Woodforde is sparse in his use of adjectives, while Kilvert is exuberant with them.

The popular image of *Kilvert's Diary* is based essentially on the Clyro years, when Kilvert was a young man and his sensibilities were at their sharpest, whereas the popular image of Woodforde is based on his years at Weston Longville, the years of middle and old age. So it is hardly surprising that Kilvert's diary is imaginative and romantic, where Woodforde's is mundane and practical. They were men of very different temperaments, but we exaggerate the differences by comparing Kilvert at Clyro with Woodforde at Weston Longville. And above and beyond both these, there is another very major cause of difference – the fact that they were written a hundred years apart, and that those particular hundred years witnessed some of the most radical and far-reaching social, intellectual, and psychological changes of recent history, changes concentrated specially in the fifty years between 1790 and 1840, in other words during the gap between Woodforde's death in 1803 and Kilvert's birth in 1840.

There were four areas in particular in which these were years of momentous change. They were the years of the French Revolution and of the first Industrial Revolution, and of the far-reaching political and economic consequences that flowed from them. As it happens, though, the two diaries show surprisingly little sign of the impact of either. The French Revolution rumbles ominously offstage in the later years of Woodforde's Diary, and the threat of French invasion and the military preparations hastily improvised to meet it disturb even the rural peace of Weston Longville and arouse memories of 1940; but nothing comes of it, and the even profounder peace of Kilvert's Clyro is barely touched at all by distant rumours of the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune in the winter of 1870-71. As for the Industrial Revolution, you would not expect that to have much

impact on rural Norfolk before the nineteenth century: in fact the only reference of any sort that I can think of in Woodforde to the epoch-making technological changes then in their earliest stages is to a balloon ascent at Norwich in 1785. What is very much more surprising is that the Clyro portion of *Kilvert's Diary*, written a generation after the Great Exhibition, when the whirlwind of technical change which it symbolised was at its height, shows little more trace of it than does Woodforde's. To that there is one great, and obvious, exception: the railway, which by 1870 virtually monopolised all medium and long-distance land travel, and conditioned Kilvert's life constantly. But apart from that, life at Clyro seems virtually unaltered since Woodforde's time. Gas and electricity have not yet arrived, though lamp-lighting may have been encroaching upon candlelight here and there. Agriculture and the craft industries of the countryside had scarcely been touched by mechanisation, particularly in a pastoral area like Clyro. All the traffic in the village street was drawn by two legs or four, or on wheels drawn by them. You can read page after page of the *Diary* without coming across a mention of any activity which has changed in any significant way since James Watt invented the steam engine.

But it was the other two areas of change that are of much greater relevance to our two diarists, and both are changes of mind and heart rather than of outward events. Between Woodforde and Kilvert, there occurred one of the great seismic shifts of the English religious consciousness – the change which, in its best-known form, is often described as the coming of Evangelicalism. Woodforde and Kilvert were both country clergymen, and conscientious and respectable ones by the standards of their times; but nobody can read their diaries without swiftly becoming aware that they viewed their calling in very different ways. In fact I should not have used the word 'calling' here, because it is itself the point at issue. Kilvert would have been perfectly happy with it, but Woodforde (I suspect) would not, because he did not regard the life of an ordained minister of the Church of England as a vocation, in our sense of the word, but rather as a profession. The difference is crucial. It goes back to Christ's calling of his disciples in the New Testament: inherent in it is the idea of a summons from God to set yourself apart from the ordinary life of the world and to dedicate your time and talents to the proclamation of the Gospel by a life of holiness, distinct from the life of the secular world around it, by a more exacting morality, a stricter code of self-denial, and sometimes by differences of dress and habits of speech. This is the Victorian notion of the clerical calling, and it is the one we associate with Kilvert. Kilvert, it is true, was not an extreme case. He was not an enthusiast or a fanatic, and he did not set himself sharply apart from the style of life of those around him: he was constrained more by poverty than by asceticism. There is nothing to suggest that he had ever undergone anything like a 'conversion experience' arguably the chief defining characteristic of Evangelicalism, nor any similarly dramatic moment of vocation to the priesthood: to all appearances his ordination, like Woodforde's, was a natural following in his father's footsteps, taken for granted by all concerned. But the difference between him and Woodforde is still wide. Kilvert's faith is much more self-conscious than Woodforde's – more self-conscious, and less instinctive. He is conscious of it as something outside himself, setting standards and imposing obligations that he would not otherwise feel. His reaction to the offer of the living of St Harmon is typical – *I have not sought this or any other preferment. Indeed I have rather shrunk from it. And as it has so come to me without my wish or seeking of my own it seems as if the Finger of God were in it and as if I were but following the calling of His Voice and the beckoning, guiding and leading of His Hand*'. There is a self-consciousness here that is painful – look at all those capitalised initial letters! – and it is typical of the way that the new Evangelicalism has forced belief out from the instinctive into the conscious mind: whether for the better or for the worse it is not easy to say.

There is none of this in Woodforde. For him, Christianity is something taken wholly for granted, with no apparent sense of distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the life of the ordained clergyman and the life of the small country gentleman and between the obligations of each. Take his reaction to a child's accidental death – *a sad misfortune indeed, but I hope the poor Lad is much happier than if he had stayed longer here* – the after-life is as real and as natural and as taken for granted as next week (and no burden of self-conscious piety on the initial capital either!). The other side of this, of course, is that considerations of the mundane and the prudential are allowed to operate in fields where to us they seem quite improper – most strikingly in Woodforde's attitude to his career in the Church, where Woodforde is in no doubt at all that his acquisition of the living of Weston Longville owes nothing to the Finger of God, and everything to seniority and string-pulling, and sees nothing wrong with that at all. The living of Weston Longville is to him much more a piece of property or an inheritance than anything that we would describe as a vocation: it carries with it certain assets and an income, together with certain public responsibilities, notably the duty to provide regular services in the parish church, baptisms, and burials, but the emphasis falls rather on the assets and the income than on the responsibilities, as was the case with most public appointments in the 18th century – an order of priorities that was to be sharply reversed by the time Kilvert came to consider the living of St Harmon. Woodforde would have been startled to be informed that he bore a responsibility for the souls of his parishioners: he performed a function in his society as other men did, and that was the end of it.

But perhaps the other great transition of the period between 1790 and 1840, the coming of Romanticism, marks an even more important difference between the two diarists. I have remarked already that it is Kilvert's imagination that gives his diary the quality of literature, and it is to the revolution in the literary consciousness that we call Romanticism that he owes it. Appropriately enough, it was from Wordsworth, the founding father of English literary Romanticism, that he seems to have learned it, to judge from the warmth and frequency of his references to him. It was Wordsworth who taught him the acute romantic sensibility to nature that made his first coming to the Wye valley and his first seeing of the rocks of Aberedw the profound emotional experiences that they clearly were to him, and that enabled him to record so memorably his confronting with the old oaks of Moccas Park. It is as though it enables him to see landscapes in colour, where Woodforde sees them in black and white (this is almost literally true: Kilvert uses adjectives of colour with wonderful economy and vividness – *in the garden there are red roses, and blue hills beyond* – whereas Woodforde uses none at all, at any rate with reference to landscape) – or indeed does not see them, for Woodforde does not see them at all in the sense in which Wordsworth taught those who came after him

to see with the eyes of the imagination, and to engage their feelings in the task of sight. It is because Kilvert does that that he possesses in such a remarkable degree the gift of making them visible to us too, of enabling us to see them through his eyes, of casting into words what another great master of the Romantic imagination, Thomas Carlyle, called 'the bodily concrete coloured presence of things' so that they start out of the past living and bright – like the roses in Ashbrook garden.

Of course it is not everybody since Wordsworth who has inherited that gift, it is only a fortunate minority – we may remember Kilvert overwhelmed by the spectacle of the Black Mountains under snow, but too nervous to call the attention of a man riding by on a cart-horse to it, fearing that the man would think him mad – and it may well be that, even if Woodforde had been born a century later, he would still have been as unable as the man on the cart-horse to see the Mountains as Kilvert saw them. But in Woodforde's own time it had not been possible for *anyone* to see it, and now it was possible, and, since Kilvert was one of the lucky few, through his eyes we can see and feel it too.

I hope I have not given the impression that, just because he lived a century after Woodforde, Kilvert was a better-endowed diarist than Woodforde was, and therefore a better one. It is not as simple as that. Some of the changes that lay between them may have been changes for the worse – I think I have made it plain that I am not at all sure that the change in religious consciousness was altogether a change for the good. And, anyway, the chief value of a good diary is (I think) to give us who come after a notion of what it was like to be living then; and if, to re-use a metaphor I have already made use of, people in the past saw in black and white, not in colour (remember, this is only a metaphor), then that is the way we should see it too. Woodforde is a splendidly accurate recorder of what it was like to be a country parson in Norfolk in the eighteenth century. And, let me add, in some important ways a decidedly *better* one than Kilvert. Take, say, his careful, day-by-day listing of prices and expenses. Few things can be more valuable to a social historian, yet there is almost nothing of it in Kilvert; and again and again, when what you want is a practical account of how a household was run or a piece of business transacted, you will get far better value out of Woodforde than you ever will out of Kilvert. This does not necessarily reflect real differences between the two men, though it may. A good deal of it, as I have already suggested, is due to the fact that most of the surviving part of Kilvert's diary is confined to his bachelor days, when he was not a householder and was not responsible for running most of the practical side of his own life. It gave him the time to wander the Radnorshire countryside, to look at the landscape with the eyes of a post-Wordsworthian Romantic, and to ponder over the right word to capture the 'dazzle' of light and wind in the leaves of the poplars opposite Ashbrook. But it was a restriction, nevertheless.

I doubt if it is one that many Kilvertians will regret: though it would have been interesting to see, if he had lived out a full life as the incumbent of a country living, as a householder, and the father of a family, what he would have made of it, and what effect it would have had on his diary. As it is, one gets only very occasional glimpses, of occasions when circumstances forced him into the position of having to make management decisions, such as the famous occasion at Clyro when he found himself having to tend Mr Venables' ailing horse: an episode which did not show him up to much advantage, but which did give him the opportunity to write his matchless description of the dawn chorus coming into full song on a midsummer morning.

KILVERT AND VENABLES – A Reassessment Reassessed

By Rosalind Bolton (Wellesbourne)

When I first read the *Diary*, one of the impressions that stayed with me was the harmonious, friendly relationship between Kilvert and his vicar: innumerable dinners at the Vicarage; loans of the carriage; the surprise present of a travelling clock (24 October 1870); the jocular: *Well, you are an adventurous young man!* (6 May 1876) – all happily recorded. Now Mr Toman tells us at some length (in *Kilvert – The Homeless Heart* and in *In charge of the Parish* in the last two *Journals*) that we are seeing only a veneer; beneath it Kilvert resented Mr Venables' absences from the parish; 'no doubt' recognised and deplored his faults as a pastor; and felt ambivalent towards him to such an extent that it comes as no surprise that in a dream soon after he left Clyro his subconscious rose up and murdered his former vicar. Meanwhile Mr Venables, for his part, did not in fact care very much for the curate with whom he worked for seven years, giving his departure from the parish and then his early death only a few chilly words in his diary.

Hard evidence is not of course available, or we should all have been thinking in this way for some time, and Mr Toman has had to read between a lot of lines, and entirely avoid the historian's standard caveats: 'perhaps', 'possibly', 'it might be the case that ...'

Mr Toman says Kilvert had good reasons for being critical of his vicar. He lays stress on Mr Venables' absences from the parish, during which the curate had to cope alone. There were certainly a fair number, but it is questionable how far Kilvert resented or was surprised by them. The main reason for spending some of the vicarial income on a curate in the nineteenth century was not, as today, to share a large burden of work between two clergy, but to allow the vicar to go away or take on other responsibilities, like Mr Venables with his work as a magistrate. In Wellesbourne in Warwickshire, for example, the aristocratic vicar in office between 1830 and 1870, Lord Charles Paulet, always had a curate, and took long breaks from his parish; it is therefore nearly always the curate's signature which appears in the registers. Kilvert was not being placed in an unusual position.

The vicar's two-month absence when Katherine Venables was born in 1870 is looked at particularly askance by Mr Toman, who

claims that Kilvert felt the same. He is prepared to grant that a Victorian husband might be anxious enough about a first confinement to seek London doctors (in fact Mrs Venables had had a previous miscarriage, too) but does not accept that Mrs Venables' recovery and the child's christening should have kept him away from parish duties for the second month. Kilvert did indeed have a lot to cope with, the unforeseeable illness of Mr Venables' horse as well as the parish work, although his social life did not quite disappear – he was lunching at Clyro Court and playing bowls on 10 May, hurrying away only to post his mother's birthday present; and attending a concert at Llowes on the 13 May with a local singer to take under his wing at refreshment time. And of course he had a twelve-day break in Wiltshire. Mr Toman believes he senses that Kilvert resented the changing of the dates for this, but it is surely remarkable and kindly that Mr Venables let him go at all at this time.

Mr Venables was therefore not the only clergyman to be away from the parish, and this point never enters Mr Toman's arguments. Kilvert had ample holidays. In 1870-71, to take a random year, he spent almost a month's post-Christmas holidays at home and in London, a near-fortnight at home in early May, most of August at home and in Dorset, and a fortnight in October at St David's. He left the school and his parish visiting with no obvious compunction, and reasonably, he had earned his breaks. Back in Clyro Mr Venables, who did not take on extra help, was in his turn single-handed, his diary regularly recording: *Clyro Ch. a.m. and p.m.* In August 1871 he also (like Kilvert the previous year) had a school inspection to contend with, and (unlike Kilvert) an archdeacon's visitation. Extraordinarily, that year (was it to make up for the trials of May-June?) Kilvert was allowed to be at home for the busy Christmas period. His holiday began on 18 December. Since Christmas Eve fell on a Sunday, Mr Venables took four services in two days; in a less familiar role he read the concluding section of *Richard III* (all the parts?) at a penny reading on 22 December. It could well be argued that Kilvert's conditions of employment were fair and reasonable; certainly the Wellesbourne curates did not enjoy such long spells away from work.

Mr Toman also sees Kilvert as having reason to be critical of the vicar's limited pastoral care: *failing to feed adequately the lambs who were his parishioners* (*Homeless Heart* p. 147). Again one has to say that leaving parish visiting, work at the school and so on to the curate was nothing unusual in the mid-nineteenth century. Mr Toman feels the most telling example of what was to Kilvert Venables' 'unclean heart' (*op.cit.* p.147) was his sale for profit to the grasping Mr Baskerville of the Vicar's Hill, losing the tenants their useful right to cut fern there (though Kilvert does not altogether support the fern-cutting, showing some sympathy with the point that it had an adverse effect on the quality of the grazing). This seems to be based on a misunderstanding of the legal situation. Vicar's Hill was part of the Clyro glebe lands, and the profits from the sale therefore went, not to Mr Venables at all, but to the Church Commissioners. It is worth noting that Kilvert places the blame for the tenants' problems clearly on the new owner: the phrase is: *Now Mr Baskerville has bought ...* (13 October 1871) not 'Now Mr Venables has sold.' He is happy to record later on a Llysynam tenant's warm feeling for the Venables family who: *do let their land in small farms so that the people may have a living* (15 April 1875).

Mr Toman sees Kilvert's habitual restraint when writing about his superiors break down at intervals, letting his actual resentment of his treatment and of Mr Venables' pastoral limitations slip out. It is difficult not to feel that he can only assert this by twisting the evidence beyond what it will bear. For example, the encomium of Mrs Venables which he regards as a sarcastic comment on the rarity of her parish visiting leads straight on from: *We had a pleasant little talk together and I was much comforted, cheered and encouraged* (9 May 1872) which makes it more likely that Kilvert, in any case not, I think, a man for sarcasm, was enthusiastic about her kindness to himself; it was only a couple of weeks since their long discussion of his: *love affairs, plans and prospects* and nothing had improved for him since then. His entry on the news of Katherine Venables' birth, supposedly disenchanted, in fact begins: *Three Cheers*, before going on to describe, in a tone which seems to me approving, the reaction in Clyro: *Everyone is delighted, rejoicing, and full of sympathy* (1 June 1870). Again, to see his comment on Mrs Venables' first letter to him since Katherine's birth (8 July 1870) as disillusioned is an odd interpretation; he might just as well have been pleased at her renewed interest in parish events and her readiness to spend her own money on the girls' confirmation caps, showing a Kilvertian concern that the poorer girls should not be embarrassed by not being able to afford the same outfit as the others. To suppose that he writes resentfully when he mentions Mrs Venables' progress to being allowed *chicken and claret* (5 June 1870) or is half-thinking of himself when he calls the departed horse *this faithful old servant* is to assume, entirely unproveably, much more than is written.

Wilder still are Mr Toman's readings of some of Kilvert's sermon texts as coded messages, summing up his resentment and disapproval of Mr Venables and once of Mr Kilvert senior. The *old Clyro sermon* he preached (18 April 1875) while covering for his father was evidently not specially composed for the occasion and there is room to doubt whether he would in any case have objected to his father's absence, since he and Mrs Kilvert had gone to Southampton for good family reasons – to meet Emmie on one of her home visits from India. The St Barnabas sermon (July 1870) was surely more plausibly written, as Kilvert himself suggests, because it was St Barnabas' day, rather than to unload anti-Venables emotions. The text from Hebrews used on 26 November 1872 was actually from the lesson for the day in the lectionary then in use and therefore less likely to have been conceived as an attack on the vicar. On 16 April 1871 his boil may have led him to see a link with Job, who featured in his morning sermon from St James' Epistle, but his brief mention of his texts for that Sunday does not suggest he saw any deeper parallels (and Mr Toman's guess that he was also noting the verses about the misdoings of the rich which preceded his text has nothing to back it up). Incidentally, the outing with Mrs Venables which Mr Toman (*op.cit.* p.146) places on the previous day, was actually three days earlier, exempting Mr Venables from Mr Toman's charge that he let Kilvert do a full day's work when he knew he was afflicted. On the busy and voice-straining 22 October 1871 the text which it is claimed: *must have helped Kilvert through a difficult day and enabled him to make peace in his heart with his brother clergyman* (*op.cit.* p.142) is again briskly mentioned with no suggestion of lurking deeper meanings; in fact, since it was his first Sunday back at work since his Welsh

holiday, he may well not have felt he was being unreasonably treated. The Transfiguration sermon (3 July 1870) when he focussed, as he explains, on the clouds as images of earthly troubles and of sin, is pressed rather awkwardly into service by suggesting that he, despite this, was primarily thinking of **an earlier verse in a different Gospel's account**. Everything is of course possible.

It is difficult to know what Mr Venables thought of his curate. No doubt Mr Le Quesne is right to suggest that Kilvert played a smaller part in his busy world than he did in Kilvert's. However, his diary is not very useful evidence when it comes to emotions. To quote Mr Le Quesne again: *There is ... no sign that he was a man of much imagination or sensibility.* (*The Venables Diaries* in the Oswin Prosser Memorial Booklet).

In some ways the most heartfelt comments are those about the weather: *Dry – I have never seen such sterility in my life* (2 July 1870). His accounts of the births of his children are factual and short: *Sat in the dressing-room till 1.15 a.m. when I was told the child was born – a girl. Wrote several letters for the early post. Saw Agnes for a few minutes. Doctor went about 2 a.m. Soon afterwards everyone went to bed. Agnes comfortable.* (31 May 1870). The saddest event of the period, the death as a toddler of his only son, brings a much longer entry than usual, but the emotion is underlying rather than obvious: *Our baby had never been strong or vigorous – he was a backward child ... The face very beautiful – far more so than in life. The nose which had always been depressed rose to its proper place* (11 and 14 January 1876). Having recorded the death he gives the key events of the life: *Henry George Lister Venables born at 62 Warwick Square London 27 September 1874, died at Llysdynam 11 January 1876*. In just the same way he gives the key dates of Kilvert's career after the fact of his death, in what Mr Toman calls a *terribly matter-of-fact entry* (*op. cit.* P.159). So it cannot be assumed that the brief diary entries when Kilvert left Clyro, and later died, give the whole story of how Mr Venables regarded his curate or make it possible to say with certainty as Mr Toman does: *the evidence does not suggest that he (Kilvert) meant all that much (to Mr Venables)* (*op. cit.* P.158). He certainly felt warmly enough about him to get up for the 7 am train on 27 September 1879 and take the funeral at Bredwardine, where he records talking to Kilvert's widow and his family, and he did of course write the letter whose contents can only be deduced from Kilvert's father's reply. The words: *Very precious to us to learn by many testimonies that the sketch you give of his life and work is not only a friendly but a true one* suggests that the enthusiastic comments which we know were made about him were reflected in what Mr Venables said as well.

Mr Toman would obviously not have wanted to be Mr Venables' curate but I don't think we have the hard evidence to make us believe that Kilvert did not.

The Venables Diaries are in the Llysdynam Collection at the National Library of Wales.

Number II in the new series.

DISCOVERING KILVERT

By the Chairman

Although I was not to discover Kilvert until I was well over forty, the antecedents of my pursuit of the Diarist are rooted in the earlier, even the earliest, years of my life, and they number three.

Firstly, the beginnings of a deep love for the Anglican Church stirred my soul before the age of ten, but really burst into flame during my mid-teens. I have to say that like any love affair, as my spirituality developed and grew, there were times when the Church of England drove me to despair! But I came to recognise it as part of the Universal Church and, in one respect, only the fallible, human manifestation of the Kingdom of God. I am sure there were times when Kilvert had the same thoughts.

The second strand was a love of the countryside and things rural which also goes back to my earliest days and was inculcated mainly by my mother and her father and by my school chum Eric (we're still friends nearly sixty years later). This was interpreted largely through the beauty of Sussex and the South Downs and later Wiltshire and Berkshire during my army days. This beauty aroused within me a romantic, almost mystical relationship with the Sussex landscape —liberally fed with large doses of Hilaire Belloc's *The Four Men*. I am sure this kind of relationship is what inspired Kilvert in so much of his descriptive writing about the countryside. For myself, some of that magic has evaporated as the south-east of England has been sacrificed to bricks and mortar, motorised transport and, let's face it, the satisfaction of human greed.

However, a spell at Sennybridge with the Army awakened me to the indescribable beauty and almost totally unspoilt nature of the Brecon Beacons, the Mynydd Epynt and the Black Mountains and this is where the third stage of knowing Kilvert started.

It was not many years before we started taking holidays in mid-Wales, firstly at Cwmdru in the Rhiangoll valley, in a friend's caravan, then at a cottage at Garth, a mile east of Llanlleonfel church and Garth House, where Kilvert reported on the Flower Show.

In the midst of all this delight at discovering 'Paradise', or 'Shangri-la', and just at the optimum moment the BBC broadcast the eighteen-part series on Kilvert for the first time. Unfortunately, circumstances dictated that I saw less than half of them, but then in 1979 they were shown again and I determined to see them all and was enthralled.

I borrowed the three-volume set from the library and got an address for the Society. During our holidays in Wales we now took days out to Clyro, Hay, Llanthony etc., not always to our children's liking!

Then we met Edward West (although he and I had crossed paths in 1953). We could never get to any Society events, because they were always during school-term time, but Edward more than made up for this by the many outings we had with him to Kilvert 'references' as he called them. His infinite kindness, (and his patience in answering all my endless questions) is something we, as a family, will never forget. To me, for those early years, he *was* the Kilvert Society. I never dreamed (although I had daydreamed about it!) that, many years later, he and David Lockwood would conspire to make me Secretary!

*Oh! May once more these pilgrim feet
Tread those dear hills, these eyes still greet
Love-yearning those twin valleys sweet
Within whose breast the waters meet
By the Rocks of Aber Edw*

Francis Kilvert, Langley Burrell Rectory, September 1879.

ST HARMON 1950

The forthcoming visit to St Harmon recalls a Kilvert Commemoration Service there on 2 July 1950 which is described in a report by a 'special correspondent' in a cutting from an unknown journal under the title 'Pilgrims tribute to Kilvert'. The cutting was among the many bits and pieces sent to me by the late Jack Burrell of Bristol. What follows is an edited version of that account of a notable Kilvert occasion. (ed.)

This was, apparently, the fourth Kilvert Commemoration service and the special correspondent begins: 'The service like all its predecessors [was] blessed with brilliant weather and attended by more people than the church could hold and loudspeakers in the churchyard aided those who could not obtain seats. Pilgrims included those from as far away as Coventry and other parts of the Midlands and South Wales(!)

A very large congregation then, but the church must have already been well filled by clergy and choir – the list is impressive. In the presence of the Dean of Hereford, the Very Revd Hedley Burrows, Evensong was conducted by the vicar, the Revd D.A.E. Jones assisted by the Revd Canon Thornley Jones of Cwmdauddwr, the Revd Perrott of Rhayader, the Revd D.V. Evans of Abbeycwmhir and the lessons were read by the Revd D. McIntyre, Baptist minister of Nantgwyn and Mr Jonathan Pugh, Y Beth. Then there was the choir, provided by the churches of Rhayader and Cwmdauddwr, some thirty voices with Miss Worthington at the organ: '[they] gave a fine musical setting to the service;' continues our correspondent.

During the service a carved oak litany desk (provided by the people of the district supported by a donation from the Kilvert Society) was unveiled by Lady Venables-Llewelyn and dedicated by the Dean. A plate and the front page of an accompanying litany book bore the inscription: 'To the memory of the Rev Francis Kilvert MA, the Diarist, Vicar of this parish 1876-77. A beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord. St Harmon 2nd July 1950.'

Looking back now at that event it is astonishing to think that the then Lady Venables-Llewelyn was she whose birth was recorded by Kilvert in June 1870!

June Day, Wednesday

Going out to the School at 10 found Mary Brooks, the vicarage housemaid at the door just going to ring. She had run down breathless with an open letter, just received, in her hand to announce that Mrs Venables was confined of a nice little girl at 1.5 a.m. yesterday. Three cheers ... The news flew through the village like wildfire ... The bells ringing at intervals all day. Mrs Price of the Swan sent the ringers a gallon of beer. I sent them another gallon, and went to the belfry to see them ringing.

The Dean in his address apologised for the absence of the Bishop of Swansea and Brecon through illness and explained that he was acting as his deputy.

Speaking from a text commencing: 'Herein is love' and giving his audience a brief description of Kilvert's writings, the Dean paid tribute to Mr Plomer their editor and Mrs Wright of Hereford 'whose enthusiasm and flair for propaganda had brought about the Society's existence and the subsequent services at which this litany desk was the third tribute to the Diarist's memory.'

The Dean went on to deal with Kilvert's various ministries and said he thought that his short sojourn at St Harmon was due, not

to the fact that he did not like the place, but that he foresaw his health failing and was unable to cope with the scattered nature of the parish. Kilvert's writings recorded the fact that he thought the church ugly (see *Diary* entry for 4 May 1876) but he (the Dean) had no great opinion of Kilvert as a judge of architecture for he never once mentioned Hereford Cathedral, which he must have visited!

What, he asked, in the writings had stirred the hearts of men all over the world? He thought it was the power and magnetism of love.

All the arrangements for the service at the St Harmon end were made by Mr Llewelyn Jones of Rhayader and at the Hereford end by Mr W.H. Ellis the Society's secretary and Mrs S. Wright the new president. Tea was provided by the local WI who were thanked by Mr Prosser. The report concludes with a note about the alterations to the church since Kilvert's day. A bell-tower at the west end had disappeared and the present altar and chancel had been added. The east window depicting the Last Supper had been given in 1908 by Edward Vaughan in memory of his family.



(l to r) The Revd D.A. Evans, the Very Revd Hedley Burrows, Mrs S. Wright, Mr L. Jones (local secretary) and Mr W.H. Ellis (general secretary of the Society).



Lady Venables-Llewelyn unveils the Litany Desk to the memory of Robert Francis Kilvert.

THE CHURCH OF ST DAVID, LLANDDEWI FACH

This tiny church, set out in the fields, was entirely rebuilt in 1860 although on an older site. Its main glory is its isolated setting – it lies across two fields from the nearest farm lane and is still lighted by oil lamps and heated by an open fire. The small belfry has two bells, neither of which is ancient and the porch step is formed from the tombstone of Lewis Griffith, who died in 1691.

Inside the tiny nave around the font are two seventeenth century benches and in the north wall the domestic type fireplace; the harmonium came from Bryngwyn church. The chancel and communion rails are dated 1712 and there is a chalice of 1624 owned by the church (although not kept there for security reasons) and inscribed: 'This is the Common Cupp of the Parish of Glandue Vach'. The church registers date mainly from 1775. The church is used regularly for worship with usually a service each month on the fourth Sunday at 3pm but it is advisable to check to avoid possible disappointment.

The church and parish both feature in the *Diary* and the entry for Good Friday, 29 March 1872, records that the vicar, the Revd Thomas Williams *used to hold a little school every Sunday before service*. In the same extract Emma Williams tells Kilvert how she was attacked and nearly killed by a bull at Vron Ddu (see vol. II p.162 *et seq.*)

Kilvert Society members will know too that Llandewi church is the objective of the annual Kilvert Pilgrimage which starts from Newchurch and which is led by the Revd Humphrey Fisher. The Pilgrimage always takes place on the Sunday immediately following the Royal Welsh Show – this year 27 July. The church is very remote and not that easy to find. It lies in the shadow of the Begwns to the south-west of Painscastle. To reach it take the road south off the B4594 in the village and then take the first right at the bottom of the hill, the church is signposted. But be warned the road peters out at a stream in a farmyard and there is not much, if any, parking space!



The above is an adapted version of an article entitled *Focus on Llandewifach, St David's* which appeared in issue No. 9 of *Yr Eryr*, the Swansea and Brecon Diocesan News. It is reproduced by kind permission of its editor.

From the Archives



An early KS occasion at Bredwardine. Can any member put a date to it or identify any of those present?
(From a photograph in the possession of Mrs Jessie Humphries, a neighbour of our chairman)



KS members at tea in Wadham College gardens after the unveiling and dedication of the Kilvert plaque in the College chapel, July 1991

Locations



Cae Mawr



An unusual view of Hardenhuish Church

Photos by John Hockin

SPHAIRISTIKE

By the Editor

Kilvert's Diary, Tuesday 28 July 1874

This morning Teddy set up the net and poles in the field just opposite the dining room windows and we began to play 'Sphairistike' or lawn tennis, a capital game, but rather too hot for a summer's day.

Radnorshire and Wiltshire in the 1870s may well have been rural backwaters but the society in which Kilvert moved was evidently well in touch with the latest fashionable recreational activities as the above and other *Diary* references (all in vol. III) reveal.

Sphairistike, a forerunner of lawn tennis was the invention of a certain Major Clopton Wingfield, who had served in India where he had become an enthusiastic and expert badminton and racquets player.

His new game was based on the latter and he called it Sphairistike, a Greek word for a game played with a ball. On 23 February 1874 he patented 'A New and Improved Portable Court for playing the Ancient Game of Tennis' and he began to sell boxed sets of Sphairistike at five guineas (£5.25, for our younger readers). 'Before 1874 was out,' says Lance Tingay in his book *100 Years of Wimbledon* 'the new game was known across the lawns of Britain; croquet went 'out' and the new-fangled "sticky" or "lawn tennis" was 'in'.'

But was Wingfield really the first to come up with the idea of lawn tennis, for, during the 1870s he had been engaged in a long public correspondence with another major, Major Harry Gem of Leamington Spa, who although he did not claim to be the inventor of Lawn Tennis, stated that he and his friend Augurio Perera had been playing the game for 15 years!

Indeed, in 1859, Gem, conscious of the fact that Real or Royal Tennis and Racquets (a forerunner of squash) were available only to the privileged few and on an elaborate court, in a special building, conceived the idea that a form of tennis which could be played in the open air (and without complicated facilities) by both sexes and all ages would have enormous appeal.

It was in the summer of 1859 that Gem and Perera, both then living in Edgbaston, experimented with 'tennis' on the lawn behind Perera's house and it was thus that the game as it is now known made its first appearance in 1860. The two friends called it pelota, as a compliment to Perera's Spanish origins.

In 1872 the two moved to Leamington, Gem to Hamilton Terrace, just down Holly Walk from my home. His house, since demolished, stood near where the present Police Station is situated. A plaque, now concealed in the undergrowth, indicates the site.*



The plaque in Holly Walk



*Site of the first courts adjacent to the Manor House Hotel.
Manor Court in the background*

Gem and Perera became friends with two local doctors and the four teamed up to form a Lawn Tennis Club, the world's first, in the summer of 1872. The game, now a developed form of pelota, was called lawn rackets.

Play was on the lawns of the Manor House hotel in Avenue Road, almost opposite Perera's home at No 33. The hotel still stands but the site of the early playing area is now occupied by a block of flats, Manor Court.

Rules were drawn up, and Gem became the first president of the new Leamington Lawn Tennis Club in 1874.

However, Gem and his friends were, apparently, not especially interested in promoting the game nationally and it is thought that without Wingfield's interest and commercial acumen, the marketing of the boxed sets of his Sphairistike mentioned above, the new game might have disappeared.

At one point the MCC attempted to draw up a set of rules but nothing came of this and another, successful, attempt was made by the All England Croquet Club in Wimbledon! So, by 1875 the Croquet Club, formed in 1864, had extended its activities to encompass the new game of lawn tennis, swallowing up the invention of the two majors, Gem and Wingfield. Interestingly the new rules specified that the court should be rectangular (Wingfield's had been hourglass shaped) and of a similar size to Gem's specification. Another important influence in the development of the game was the invention of the lawn-mower – greatly improved grass surfaces led to a much higher standard of play.

One final Leamington (and Holly Walk!) connection is through two of the earliest lawn tennis stars, the twins William and Ernest Renshaw, who were born in January 1861 at Brandon Lodge; the house No 60 Holly Walk, is still there.

* That undergrowth has now been cleared and a 'prestige' office block is being constructed on the site.

MEMBERSHIP – AN OVERVIEW

By Barry Smith (Abergavenny) – Membership Secretary

Introduction

In the Society's *Journal* for March, 2003, I mentioned that members' subscription data was now being held on computer file and that it was hoped that a breakdown of information from this, of likely interest to members, could be offered. This article now distils some findings.

The question most frequently asked of a membership secretary is 'How many members have we?' as if a simple headcount were in question. In reality, the position is slightly more complicated. For one thing, since 1 January 2002, a new category of 'joint membership' has come into being.

Secondly, some 'fuzziness' exists about life membership concerning couples, usually, husband and wife. For whatever reason, a practice appears to have developed over time of regarding both as life members, even though only one may originally have been so. (This may have followed the analogy that couples living at one address and receiving one newsletter/*Journal* used only to pay one ordinary subscription).

As the Society's records are basic and not always precise enough to disentangle ambiguity, a category of 'joint life membership' is used here. It should be stressed that this is not a category recognized in the Society's constitution but is a 'working category' used to make the Society's membership position more transparent. (Further investigation may, in any case, resolve some ambiguities).

For the reasons given above, it seems more helpful to analyse 'memberships' rather than concentrating on members. In any case a computation of the maximum number of members can be arrived at by multiplying the 'joint' and 'joint life' memberships by a factor of two.

It should be noted that the membership as analysed records the position at 8 July, 2003. Apart from this being a committee date, the beginning of July is an ideal time for a 'snapshot' of the Society's membership. All subscriptions that are being renewed have been received by then. Members who have failed to renew by 30 June, the last possible date, have had their memberships terminated.

Memberships by Category:

Ordinary	=	239
Joint	=	74
Life	=	154
Joint Life	=	42
TOTAL	=	509

Payment Method:

Two hundred and seven memberships involve a payment by annual standing order, a method encouraged to assist the Society. Forty such payments (that is, almost one fifth) relate to life memberships where life members have chosen to make a voluntary – and welcome – annual donation.

Given that 313 memberships in all are renewed annually, those now renewed by standing order exceed one half (53.4% - for the first time ever, it is thought).

Membership Distribution:

All memberships are now analysable by postcode. In the case of overseas members, a code has been devised to designate their country of residence.

(a) Membership ‘Scatter’

It is sometimes thought that membership of the Kilvert Society is mainly confined to Kilvert Country or adjacent areas. Whilst the following table gives some support to that contention, it should be pointed out that membership is scattered across one hundred and two coded areas. Disregarding overseas, memberships are scattered across no less than ninety-one United Kingdom postcode areas.

Areas where 10 or more memberships are located

Hereford (HR)	=	70	Bristol (BS)	=	14
Llandrindod Wells (LD)	=	20	Cardiff (CF)	=	12
Shrewsbury (SY)	=	18	Newport (NP)	=	12
Gloucester (GL)	=	17	Worcester (WR)	=	11
Birmingham (B)	=	16	Coventry (CV)	=	10
United States (US)	=	16	Tonbridge (TN)	=	10
Swindon (SN)	=	15			

Comments on Table (b)

- (a) The predominance of Hereford (HR) codes is evident from this table. Analysis shows that HR3 codes predominate within the overall category, representing over a third of the (HR) total. Membership addresses bearing the HR3 code are in the well-known ‘Kilvert localities’ of Bredwardine, Clifford, Clyro, Cusop, Glasbury, Hardwick, Hay-on-Wye, Llowes and Whitney.
- (b) The lack of memberships in some of our cities is perhaps predictable, if regrettable. Sheffield has 3, Liverpool 2, whilst Manchester, Newcastle, Plymouth, Portsmouth and Wolverhampton can muster only 1 each. (Contrast this, surprisingly, with Leeds, which has 8!) ‘Pockets’ of memberships occur in certain areas, perhaps suggesting individuals who enthuse friends and family about *Kilvert’s Diary*.

London is a special case amongst cities. Whilst it has 24 memberships, it does not figure in Table (b) as none of its postcoded areas contain 10 or more memberships. However, 17 of its memberships are in South London – London South West (SW) having nine and London South East (SE) having eight.

(c) Overseas Membership (Including Europe)

United States	=	16
Australia	=	7
Canada	=	6
New Zealand	=	4
Netherlands	=	2

Chile, Eire, France, Kenya, Libya and the West Indies have one membership each.

Total overseas memberships stand at 41. Nearly two-thirds (63.4%) of such memberships involve life memberships, a form of membership which proved very convenient to overseas members in the past.

Footnote

It is hoped that members have found this analysis instructive and helpful. Inevitably, any breakdown may be subject to error of fact or interpretation. Any reader having comment is most welcome to communicate with the writer.

NEW BOOKS

John Wilks (Cusop) reviews:

Exploring Kilvert Country by Chris Barber.

Published by Blorenge Books. ISBN 1-872730-24-8. Price £12.00

Chris Barber’s book is different from most of the Kilvert literature in that the emphasis is on ‘Kilvert Country’ rather than on Kilvert himself. The excellent photographs, on almost every page, are in themselves a reason to recommend this book as an essential addition to your Kilvert library. I doubt that the book was intended to illustrate the *Diary*, but it can certainly be used in this way and I found myself continually wanting to place Kilvert’s words alongside Chris’s photographs.

The text of the book is mainly divided between nine walks and seven car tours, each with a map, route description and commentary. The commentary does not restrict itself to the Kilvert theme and covers linked information on history and folklore thus extending the range of reader appeal.

When one is recommending a product it is only right to point out the faults and there are a few. The maps I found confusing, mainly because all roads are given equal prominence, the route descriptions are however very clear so, follow the advice on page 8 and take the OS map with you. The use of grid references is odd as they are almost entirely restricted to churches; why give a grid reference for Hay Church but not for Snodhill Castle I wonder?

Mistakes? Well we all make them and so I will mention only three. Was the Kilvert Society formed in 1947 (page 9) or 1948 (page 247)? Page 19 is confused between the number of sheep and the number of people per square mile in Radnorshire (139 sheep not persons). On page 28 the text gives Kilvert's stay in Clyro as from 1856 rather than 1865 as evidenced in the photograph of the plaque in Clyro Church immediately above the text. However, these, and other minor errors, do not detract from this most attractive and informative work and I have no hesitation in recommending it to you all.

My Homeward Road – The Family life of the Dorset Poet 1801–1886 by Douglas Ashdown.

William Barnes was born, bred and died in Dorset, rarely moving out of Wessex during his long life. He was a self-taught genius with deep religious convictions and a passion for education. But his achievements as a priest, teacher and antiquarian are overshadowed by his wider renown as one of the nineteenth century's greatest poets, whether in Dorset dialect or national English.

This is the first full biography of the family life of William Barnes which recounts the history and activities of his grandparents, parents, brothers and sister, his wife and their children. It is not a review of his poetry or prose, but offers a comprehensive examination of the everyday experiences of individual members of the family, their opinions and relationships with each other, and with Barnes.

The last biography of William Barnes was published some seventeen years ago. During the past years Douglas Ashdown has researched this subject in depth. Much new material has come to light and 'hearsay and myth' become fact. Virtually nothing has ever been written about his wife, his beloved Julia, and this essay has attempted to remedy that omission.

His earlier book *An Introduction to William Barnes, (1996 and 1999)*, was written particularly for the layman and to be used in schools. In this biography, Douglas Ashdown, a founder member of the William Barnes Society, hopes to give readers, particularly those new to the work of Barnes, a comprehensive survey of Barnes's life and work.

This paperback – 222 pages, A5, 20 illustrations, 2 coloured – is available at all good bookshops.

Signed copies direct from the author.

Douglas Ashdown, 6 Lime Close, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 2HQ

Email: Theashdowns@dorch6.freemove.co.uk

(There are a number of references to Barnes in the *Diary* – see in particular the entries for 27 April and May Eve 1874 in vol. II pp 436 – 442 – ed.)

Parochial Lives by Canon Roger Brown.

Canon Roger Brown has recently published another collection of his historical studies of the church in Wales. *Parochial Lives* is a study of the lives of eight Victorian clergymen. The studies give a wonderful insight into church life in nineteenth century Wales. Three of them relate to clergy in parishes in the Diocese of Swansea and Brecon, although, of course, at that time they were still under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of St David's. Of particular interest to KS members is the study of Archdeacon William Latham Bevan, vicar of Hay in Kilvert's time, and his important role in the Disestablishment debate, which began in 1870.

The book costs £6.75 and copies may be obtained from Canon Roger Brown, The Vicarage, Church Street, Welshpool, Powys SY21 7DF (Tel: 01938 553164).

Our member Mr Peter Bolton of Wellesbourne, Warwickshire has recently published the first volume of his work on ***The Lost Architectural Landscapes of Warwickshire***. The book records the many changes to the Warwickshire landscape since 1918.

Mr Bolton has been researching the background of this book for many years, seeking out the sites of buildings which have disappeared, looking at those which have survived, yet often been changed for the worse and talking to people who remember them as they once were. He has taken many of his own photographs to complement those which he has unearthed from the county archives and elsewhere.

The book is published by Landmark Publishing at £19.95.

Forthcoming New Book:

Kilvert Country – Photographic Landscapes by Kevin Thomas and Nick Jenkins

Earlier this year Kevin Thomas proposed the idea of producing a book seeking to capture, in photographs, the stunning rural landscapes around the parishes frequented by Kilvert; Clyro, St Harmon and Bredwardine. The idea of the book would be to portray the countryside that was so familiar to, and loved by, Kilvert, both as he would have seen it, and as it is now. Of course, nothing stands still, not least the countryside, and inevitably some of the places visited by Kilvert are today either non-existent or reduced to ruins.

They write:

We started by exploring Clyro and the surrounding countryside, separately and together, and soon came to appreciate the parish and environs where Kilvert carried out his work visiting parishioners. Luckily, and due directly to his love of the countryside around him, the *Diary* is full of references and vivid descriptions of what he observed, giving us both plenty of inspiration and food for thought! We discovered narrow country roads, old and disused green lanes and open moorland, each with their own peculiar rugged charm. We came across little churches, including Llandewi Fach, with no lane to it, access being across a field! (see p.14 – ed.), ancient farms and views across the Wye Valley that were simply beautiful. On one of our 'sorties' we were accompanied by Howard and Ann Dean, who provided us with yet another list of good locations and ideas. Indeed, a good discovery for us was what today remains of Cwmpelved Green, together with the nearby views down across the River Wye and the Otter's Pool (thank you both for a lovely lunch at the Sun Inn, at Winforton).

A project this rich and diverse is not to be rushed and, as I write, we are still exploring, researching, gathering our images and carrying out some ruthless editing! Our current outline plan is to aim for publication by the autumn of 2004. The project is not only proving to be tremendous fun, but has inspired us both to such an extent that we are now both fully paid-up members of the Society!

As the project moves towards completion date we would love to hear from any of you who have any little thoughts or secrets you would be happy to share on Kilvert's country and, indeed, if you would like to express an interest in securing a signed copy of the book on its release next year. If you are interested in watching our progress, just drop us an e-mail at the addresses below. Wish us luck!

Kevin Thomas – kevin.thomas@mango-media.net

Nick Jenkins – nick@freespiritimages.com (WWW.freespiritimages.com)

A SAMPLE OF WHAT IS TO COME



A view of Hay



Whitney Church

FROM RECENT CORRESPONDENCE

i) **Sidney Ball writes from Swindon:**

Members may be unaware that the school in East Tytherton which Kilvert's mother attended is still functioning. The school ceased as a Moravian establishment in 1947 when Wiltshire County Council assumed control. It then became a state school for pupils aged 4 to 11.

Now about 75 boys and girls from Bremhill, East Tytherton and Langley Burrell are taught at this, the now delightfully named Maud Heath School. But most pupils are conveyed by bus – none have to ride a donkey as did Kilvert's mother!

ii) **Richard Camp writes from Sennybridge lamenting the fact that KS members missed seeing another work of art during the Dulwich visit in February.**

The programme for the afternoon walk promised to include a visit to the College Chapel which is adjacent to the Gallery. Within, is the masterpiece of the Arts and Crafts architect W.D. Caroe, a magnificent reredos, depicting the Epiphany. On either side of this central panel, are two schoolboys wearing costumes worn by the first scholars in the early 17th century. One of them carries a model of the College; the other a cornflower, a symbol of the foundation of the College. The highly decorative gilt frame of the reredos was also the design of Caroe.

The inaccessibility of the Chapel is no fault of the Kilvert Society. I went inside the Office of the Dulwich foundation to ask for the key, claiming that I had come from mid-Wales to see the Chapel. I was told flatly that the key was 'unavailable' and that the Chapel was never open.

Kilvert could not have seen the reredos which was erected in 1911; however, he would most likely have visited the 17th century Chapel, and admired the 18th century James Gibbs' font. The Dulwich Foundation could surely have spared a member of staff for ten minutes to let us into the Chapel and ensure that the Kilvert Society did not vandalise it!

It is particularly ironical that a Society devoted to the memory of a great Anglican priest was thus debarred from an inspiring Anglican place of worship; one would, in any case, have liked to give thanks for all the wondrous paintings we had seen that day. Thanks in any case are due to the members of the Kilvert Society who organised the day; I hope very much that other such winter events can be arranged – perhaps a visit to Bath, well-known to Kilvert; Bath is best seen out of the tourist season. (*Your wish is our command, Mr Camp! See page 2 – ed.*)

iii) **Muriel Kilvert, Perch's granddaughter and grand-niece of RFK writes from Woodbridge:**

She sends greetings to the members of the Society and expresses her regret that, so far, she has missed this year's events but she hopes to be able to join the Aberystwyth visit.

She is very busy at the moment writing the account of her eighteen-month journey around the world in 1972-73 in a fire tender!! The book entitled *Around the World in a Green Goddess* is dedicated to her Uncle Frank and opens with a quotation from the *Diary* (vol. III 16 May 1874). She hopes the book will be ready for publication at Christmas.

Whilst in Canada, on her circumnavigation, she stayed with the Bleakneys (Kilvert Society members at the time) at Wolfville, near Halifax.

JEREMY SANDFORD

Jeremy Sandford, the author, farmer and composer died in May at the age of 71.

Mr Sandford, a flamboyant character, was well known for his enthusiasm for New Age Culture, for his general sympathy for outsiders and, in the Sixties, for his study of homelessness in the documentary-style drama *Cathy Come Home*, which set the tone for what has now become a standard television genre.

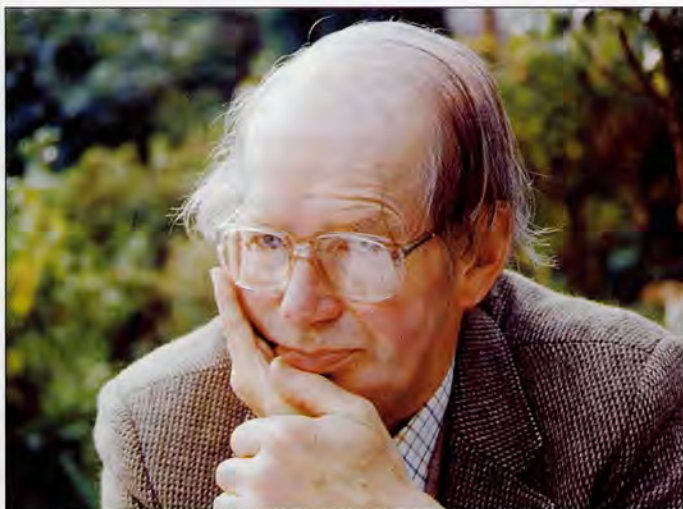
He will be better known to KS members however as the former owner of one of the three surviving Kilvert notebooks (April-June 1870). This had been presented to him by Mrs Essex Hope as a 'reward' for two radio talks about Kilvert which he had given in 1954 and for his subsequent play based on the *Diary* broadcast on the BBC Third Programme in 1956. These had evidently pleased Mrs Hope and in a letter dated 19 July 1981 Sandford recounts the circumstances of the presentation. The text of this letter is given on page xii of the introduction to the published version of the notebook.

I still have in my possession a postcard from Edward West dated 25 July 1979, Edward wrote: 'Have just been up to Sotheby's to see the FK notebook sold in two minutes flat for £10,500. I am intending to find out the purchaser!'

We very soon knew, of course, who that purchaser was – the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth, where the Sandford notebook now reposes, in company with the one for June-July 1870 (published 1989) formerly owned by Charles Harvey and a later purchase by the Library.

The published version of the Sandford notebook edited by Kathleen Hughes and Dafydd Ifans appeared under the Library's imprint in 1982.

Editor.



The Revd Dr Nigel Rowe in reflective mood.

Unfortunately this photograph of Nigel, our late archivist, arrived too late to be published with his obituary in the June *Journal*. It is nonetheless fitting that it should appear.

OBITUARIES

It is with regret that we have to record the deaths of the following members. We offer our sympathy to their families and friends.

Mr R.D. Birch of Lichfield, a member since 1974 and a life member since 1985, who died earlier this year.

Mr Ernest Edgar Dover of Bournemouth, a member since 1970, who died 6 May 2003.

Mrs Kathleen Wood of Churchdown, Glos., a member since 1983, who died on 12 July 2003.

1662 SERVICES AT NEWCHURCH

On the first Sunday in each month, there are two 1662 services at St Mary's Newchurch, following the liturgy which Kilvert himself would have used: at 9 a.m., a brief Communion service without sermon or hymns, and at 10.30 a full-length Morning Prayer, followed by refreshments at Rose Cottage, next door to the church. Any interested members of the Society would be very welcome indeed.

PUBLICATIONS

SPECIAL OFFER

Sale of Society Christmas Cards: Set of eight cards with envelopes for £1 plus 50p post and packing. They include – Clyro Village, Bredwardine Vicarage, Otters Pool, Gospel Pass, Black Mountain Farm, Rhydspence Inn, Langley & Harnish Churches, Bredwardine Churchyard. (Usually 25p each).

INDEX TO NEWSLETTERS/JOURNALS

A new index covering Newsletters and *Journals* from 1956 to 2000, compiled by the late Revd Dr Nigel Rowe, is now available (A5 size). Copies can be obtained by post from Colin Dixon for £1.50 (which includes postage and packing).

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

Contributions for the March 2004 edition of the *Journal* should reach the editor not later than 17th January 2004.

The current ordinary subscription is £6.00 (Joint membership £9.00) 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.

