

**THE
JOURNAL**



**OF THE
KILVERT SOCIETY**

Issue No. 2

June 2000

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:

I am pleased, and relieved, to say that the new *Journal* seems to have been generally well received; or rather, many who liked it have been kind enough to say so whereas any who did not have been kind enough perhaps to remain silent! There was particular praise for its appearance and layout. For this I have to thank Val Dixon who, as she prepares the *Journal* for printing, deciphers my handwriting, interprets my instructions and accepts my often contradictory and eccentric decisions without demur – mostly! As someone who is still using a pen (although not a quill) I am nothing less than amazed at her skill with the arcane techniques of computer, word-processor, scanner, floppy disk and so on. Thank you very much Val, I sit more comfortably in the editorial chair knowing that the technical help is reliably available.

The recent AGM weekend was a great success and it was especially pleasing this time to welcome our Wiltshire members. Ann Dean reports below on the festivities.

The Kilvert Society AGM is the only AGM I ever enjoy and this one was no exception. This year it was good to meet a number of members I had only previously spoken to on the 'phone; in particular Dennis Amos, a new American member who, it seems, came all the way from S. Carolina just for the occasion. That must be some sort of record. (Can our New Zealand members match that, I wonder). Such is his interest that he even 'phoned through a large book order very early on the morning of the meeting!

The weekend also always provides an excuse, if one were needed, for my wife and I to spend an extra day or two in the Kilvert Country, which is precisely what happened again this year.

After the delights of Friday evening and Saturday we were able to spend Sunday and Monday revisiting more Kilvert haunts. Sunday in particular was perfect. Radiant sunshine accompanied our wanderings along that glorious lane, bordered at this time with primroses, cowslips and incipient bluebells, which threads the Radnorshire hills between Walton and Erwood and which passes by or near so many of the churches mentioned in the *Diary*

So, there were visits to Old Radnor, where, alas, we were just too late to share in a rare morning service, Newchurch (*I preached in some discomfort ...*), Colva (*The echo was very clear, sharp and perfect ... It still is*), Glaschwim (*Come and see the Cathedral ...*), Llanbedr (*Hannah spoke of two extraordinary sermons she heard preached in Llanbedr church ...*), Bryngwyn (*Four little children of his [Tom Gore] lay side by side in Bryngwyn churchyard ...*), Llandewi Fach (*We stopped for lunch under the shelter of a hedge near the beautiful Cwm of Llandewi ...*), and Llandeilo Graban (*We found it was Llandeilo and we looked blankly at each other, having completely lost our way ...*). As a bonus there was the walk on and huge views from the Begwns (*Went up the Cwm this morning. Two young girls coming down arm in arm from Pen-yr-heol on the Begwns said there was a sharp frost there this morning ...*). Someone had been very busy because Peter Ralph-Bowman's *Ah-Yes* (see page 9) was well advertised in most of the churches. All about was that wonderful Radnorshire silence, except at Llanbedr where 'the hills were alive with the sound of' bleating. There was only one disappointment, on the Monday – Cascob church was locked.

See you at Disserth.

Jeff Marshall

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 17th June Walk led by our secretary, Mr. Michael Sharp. Meet at the Baskerville Arms, Clyro at 12 noon.

Sunday 18th June Service at St. Cewydd's church, Disserth; officiant and preacher the Rev. Andrew Loat, Rector of Llandrindod Wells, Cefnlllys and Disserth. Tea (£2.50 per head) will be provided afterwards at Holy Trinity Church, Llandrindod Wells.

Members will be pleased to note that our former president Lady Delia Venables Llewelyn has invited us to visit the gardens at Llysdyham after tea at Llandrindod.

Pilgrimage:

The third annual Llandewi Fach Pilgrimage will take place on Sunday 30th July. This is an all-day walk from Newchurch to the little church in the meadow at Llandewi Fach, via Bryngwyn and Painscastle. There will be stops along the way for worship and refreshment. If you would like to take part full details as to timings etc. are available from the Rev. Dr. Humphrey Fisher, Rose Cottage, Newchurch, Kington, Herefordshire HR5 3QF (Tel. 01544-370632).

September Service:

This will take place at Condover, Shropshire on Sunday 17th September at 3 p.m. The officiant will be the Rev. Prebendary Frank Rumble, Rector of Condover. The preacher is still to be arranged. Tea will be served after the service. There will be a charge for this.

A walk around this interesting village is planned for the morning, please bring a picnic lunch.

If there is sufficient demand a coach will run from Hereford to Condover, cost £7. If you wish to book a place on the coach please use the form at the back of the *Journal* on page 16. For details of the Condover connection see below.

THE CONDOVER CONNECTION

Condover was the home of Kilvert's Shropshire ancestors, in particular of his great-grandfather Thomas Kilvert, who from at least 1733 was steward to Mrs. Letitia Barnston, Lady of the Manor of Condover.

Thomas was married twice, firstly to Mary (Molly) Hall who took care of much of the housekeeping at Condover Hall and who died in 1753 (see tombstone in Condover churchyard) and secondly to Elizabeth Caint. The two children of the first marriage died in infancy; the second marriage produced three children, Richard (later Prebendary of Worcester Cathedral and father of Aunt Maria), Francis (the Diarist's grandfather) and Anna Maria (who later married a Richard Parsons and had a son baptised Kilvert Parsons!).

When Thomas died in 1782 (he is buried with his first wife at Condover) the family moved to Bath where his widow lived until her death. There too the Diarist's grandfather set up as a coachmaker. He died at the age of 50 leaving a widow and eight children – the seventh was, of course, Robert, the Diarist's father.

Condover lies five miles south of Shrewsbury and is an estate village the history of which is interwoven with that of the Hall. It is mentioned in the *Domesday Book* which records that 'Conendovre' had a church and priest in 1086.

It is a typical estate village that has been altered according to the whims of the various squires. The houses vary in style, size and age but all are well preserved. High sandstone walls and yew hedges are important features of the village.

The Hall, completed in 1598, is described as the best example of a stone Elizabethan manor in the county.

A KILVERT WEEKEND

By Ann Dean (Hereford)

The AGM

On a very wet Friday evening, a good number of members and friends of the Society met at the Bishop's Palace, Hereford for the AGM. Following preliminary business, everyone stood in silent respect for those members who had died within the last year.

The meeting voted to re-elect the existing committee members for another year. Subscriptions treasurer, Lawrence Jackson, wishes to retire at the end of this membership year and nominations were invited from the floor to appoint his successor. Mr. Barry Smith was nominated and agreed to take on this office. Mr. Maurice White and Mrs. Molly Stewart had also both given notice of their wish to retire from the committee. Miss E. Wheeldon, Mrs. A. Dean and Mr. E.J. Hall were proposed and elected onto the committee to replace them. Mrs. Dean being responsible for publicity.

The meeting was followed by the usual sumptuous buffet and then an interesting account by Ronald Watts (not our Chairman) of the early life of William Plomer, editor of the *Diaries*.

Born in South Africa, Plomer began writing as a teenager and lived with his parents in a village store at Entumeni. His family eventually moved to this country where William was sent to Rugby school. His parents were informed that their son's eyesight was terrible and that he should be doing something practical. He was encouraged to go into farming, which was unsuccessful. In 1937 Plomer discovered the *Diaries*.

The meeting ended at around 10 p.m.

Saturday

The following day, about forty members gathered at the Baskerville Arms, Clyro, to await friends from Wiltshire. Because the coach was running late, the 'waiting party' had coffee and an introductory talk from Ron Watts, (Chairman).

The gathering then set off for a tour of the village with their guide, just as the Wiltshire contingent arrived, so, the walk was done in two phases.



Clyro – Ann Dean snaps members

The weather was dry but dull. Mr. Harley Dance read a short piece from the *Diary* outside the vicarage, one-time home of the Rev. and Mrs. Venables. Harley stood on one side of the road reading from the *Diary*, with his audience standing on the opposite side. Proceedings were halted from time to time to allow the precarious passage of vehicles between speaker and listeners on what was left of the narrow road. There were some rather bemused drivers, and some rather anxious listeners!



Harley reads from the *Diary* outside the Venables vicarage in Clyro.
Lawrence Jackson waits to collect his sub!

Following the walk, about 80 members and friends enjoyed an excellent lunch at the Baskerville Arms.

In the afternoon, members moved on to St. Andrew's Church, Bredwardine for Evensong and the Commemoration Service. Before gathering in the church, members wandered around the churchyard, by now bathed in warm sunshine, visiting Francis Kilvert's grave, the grave of his wife Elizabeth and the recently restored grave of little Davie of the Old Weston.



Little Davie's grave, newly restored

The Rev. Prebendary Paul Barnes Vicar of Bredwardine and member of the Kilvert Society, conducted the service assisted by the Rev. Peter Stutz. The Rev. Nigel Rowe led prayers and the Act of Remembrance. The Rev. David Lockwood preached the sermon. Harley Dance and the Rev. Dr. Gordon Edwards of Langley Burrell read the lessons (Isaiah 12 and St. John 20 i – xviii).



Tea at Bredwardine

After the service, everyone made their way to the village hall for a splendid tea where further short *Diary* passages were read. After much laughter, sharing and remembering, it was time to say farewell. Everyone agreed that it had been an excellent weekend; old friends had been reunited and new friendships formed, Kilvert would have been pleased!

THE SERMON

Preached by the President, the Rev. David Lockwood
to the Kilvert Society on 29th April 2000 at Bredwardine.

Being here on this occasion gives me a splendid opportunity to congratulate the Vicar, Paul Barnes, on his being made a Prebendary of Hereford Cathedral. I am very happy to do this both on the Society's behalf and my own. It is an exceedingly well-deserved honour.

My next duty, also a great pleasure, is to welcome the members from Langley Burrell. It is very good to have you here. For me it is a real felicity because Bredwardine and Langley Burrell are my two favourite churches connected with Kilvert. They are the oldest and both have historical connections. I hope, if you have not already done so that you will pay your respects to Sir Robert Vaughan whose tomb is on the south side of the altar. You must remember that he fell at the battle of Agincourt defending that most patriotic monarch, Henry V. This, though, is a living church with a strong sense of continuity, for as I sat in the choir stalls there before me in these wonderful hangings was Nelson Mandela.

My sermon is really a meandering meditation. It even has a title: *Brush of wings on the Soul*.

We are still in the first week of Easter, hence our service has had a very Paschal flavour. Easter was both a season and a festival that truly stirred the depths of the Diarist's being. We are all very familiar with his entry that shimmers with the light of spring known as the Easter Idyll. But I would like to remind you of the entry made on 14th October 1870. He had been talking to Hannah Whitney: she told him of people going on Easter Day to the Wild Duck Pool ... *to see the sun dance and play in the water and the angels who were at the Resurrection playing backwards and forwards before the sun*. It is, I think gladdening to think of angels enjoying themselves and for once not engaged in taking messages to the chosen few. I suspect that Kilvert had a healthy regard for angels, most Victorians did. There was the mystic in Kilvert and this gave another dimension, often, to his writing. He was able to combine love of place, with love of history, with love of people, with love of God and indeed the whole wonder of creation. Sometimes we miss this just because he was so good a writer, he made it seem so easy, which is always dangerous and we, the readers, race on and so miss out at times.

We know he pinned down his observations, hence the snapshots of nineteenth century life. But he was much more than a camera because we see not only with his eye, but hear with his voice. He noted, as a good writer does, the insignificant thing, usually relating to his subject, but not always – think of the white horse in the green field. And strangely I must tell you, as I wrote that a dog was barking loudly as the sun declined. Did the dog remind me of the horse, or was I just flowing? Well, that is permissible in a fairly unstructured piece like a diary, perhaps it is very reprehensible in a sermon!

In the last few weeks I have been reading, in snatches, Alain de Botton's tongue-in-cheek book *How Proust can change your Life*. I had always thought how similar in some respects these two writers, Kilvert and Proust, were, but a profound chasm of sophistication gaped between them. They were though boon comrades in one important aspect – they were keen to pin down the moment and describe it accurately. Neither of them was ever lazy in this respect. They took arduous pains. You see, they are affecting me, I nearly said 'infinite pains' and Proust especially would have pounced and accused me of indolence – using the easy ready-made phrase. For he had a friend who coming away from a Beethoven concert said to him how beautiful it was and then hummed 'De, de, de der, De de de der! Proust replied, 'You are moved by great music and all you can do is De de de der. Why don't you describe it and use your mind?' Our Diarist used his mind, rejecting ready-made phrases and he sought out the right word. Do you remember how he wanted to capture the flutter of a poplar leaf in the sunlight? *For some time I have been trying to find the right word for the shimmering, glancing, twinkling movement of the poplar leaves in the sun and wind. It was 'dazzle'. The dazzle of the poplars*.

This appreciation of the moment, of life with its constant mutability might have been, unknown to him, a realization in his soul that he had not a long web to weave. So he savoured the fleeting moment and gave us an acute rendering of his feeling and his time. It is more magical than a fly in amber though that be thousands of years old, or a fossil hundreds of thousands of years old, engaging and awesome though they be.

Why are we not more like him? The too easy answer is 'we lead much busier lives'. We really mean we have much more to distract us, we live on the surface and we do not look deep. He could claim that his modern world was just as demanding. He rushed too, he loved the country, but a trip to Bath, London or Bristol by train was very tempting. However, the solitary in him could still be alone in a great crowd. This leads me to his beliefs.

Without being a fundamentalist, his was an unquestioning faith. We are by no means sure of his doubts, if any. But we must ask also, did William Plomer expunge them? was editing a diary into a saleable book and doubts do not grab the average reader usually. I, in fact, rely on Plomer's judgement and we can see that Kilvert was not an intellectual. He was an inheritor of the Romantic age and philosophy. Feeling tended to matter more than thought. But it was a restrained

emotion. His guide was Wordsworth, who only slowly achieved Christianity and eventually became a churchman. Like Wordsworth he found an empathy, an alliance in the force of natural religion, the hills, the stones, the winds and the magnificence of mountains transformed by snow. To praise God and rejoice in the earth came very easily to him and does it matter if he slipped into paganism now and then? I love that mysterious remark the 'angel-satyr'.

He had, of course, an innocence which in the last century, the twentieth, was lost, most of it in the climactic watershed of the First World War. The faith of so many was too simple and died in the trenches. It would have shaken the patriotic Kilvert. For we can well imagine him, like so many stirred, at first, by pride which crumbled as horror and pity took over. Of course he would never have seen war at first hand, after all in 1914 he would have been seventy-four. I am glad he escaped knowledge of it all. He would, though, never have lost his faith. His ability to live in the physical world and the spiritual was deeply etched in him and he could always see beyond the suffering and death, Resurrection. That was why Easter and burgeoning life moved him so. He loved this festival which began in the Garden of Gethsemane. He would gladly concur with Mary Magdalen's happy but ironic aberration when she mistook the Risen Christ for a gardener. What better mistake to make, the carer and succourer of all souls being taken for the patient gardener nurturing and cherishing seeds and plants.

I have in these random, almost wild, words been trying to find a way of joining two worlds, finding links and trails. Blake said it so succinctly:

*To see the world in a grain of sand,
And heaven in a wild flower;
To hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.*

There is the essence, yet I want to return to those Easter angels at the Wild Duck Pool. Ruth Bidgood, the contemporary poet living in Powys writes:

*They were not troubling the waters
To bring healing. They were serving
No purpose. After the watch at the tomb
The giving of good news, they were at play.
To and fro went the wings, to and fro
Over the water, playing before the sun.*

*Stolid-seeming villagers stood
Enchanted, watching sun dance and play,
Light slivers splinter water's dark.
In dazzle they half-sway
Great shining shapes swoop frolicking
To and fro, to and fro.*

*This much was shared,
Expected; day and place had their
Appropriateness, their certainties.
The people had no words to tell
The astonishment, the individual bounty –
For each his own dance in the veins,
Brush of wings on the soul.*

Let us walk in life so that we feel

The brush of wings on the soul.

OUR PRESIDENT ON THE WIRELESS!

BBC's Hereford and Worcester roving reporter Kate Smith recently met David Lockwood and Ann Dean (our new committee member) at Clyro to talk about Francis Kilvert and his *Diaries*.

The interview lasting 25 minutes, was recorded on Thursday 23rd March 2000 and went on air on the following Monday afternoon 27th March. Excerpts were read from the *Diary* and David gave listeners a pen-picture of what life was like for Kilvert living in the 1870s in beautiful Clyro.



David with Kate Smith – they look cheerful enough but it was, apparently, pouring with rain at the time!

WINTERING AT KILVERT'S SWAN

By Barry Smith, (Abergavenny)

During 1999, the committee of the Kilvert Society had been considering the desirability and feasibility of a winter event as a new departure for the Society.

Some members had complained of the long gap between the traditional autumn event in September and the customary AGM weekend in April. The idea had been mooted of a winter social event which would chase away the winter blues and help members to keep in touch with each other. The Committee, therefore, decided upon a limited winter event to 'test the waters' and this took place on 15th February.

The Swan inn of *Kilvert's Diary*, in Clyro now the *Baskerville Arms*, seemed to offer a suitably Kilvertian venue and, with the kind co-operation of mine hosts, Jan and Stuart Burke, fifteen committee members and ten partners and companions foregathered there in mid-February.

Noblesse oblige, alas, and committee members first had to transact committee business, whilst the others reclined or otherwise relaxed on the premises. Then followed an excellent round-table lunch, all paid for by participants, one should hasten to add! The President, the Rev. David Lockwood, opened the proceedings with a well-known grace of Robbie Burns.

When the table had been cleared, a half-dozen or so of the diners, plus the chairman himself, Ronald Watts, responded to his own call to give some of their favourite readings. These were mainly from Kilvert's own writings, ranging from his sermon at the opening of the Radnorshire Summer Assizes in 1868 through various passages of the *Diary*. The secretary, Michael Sharp, revealed a 'muse hidden under a bushel' by reading some of his own poems of Kilvertian inspiration.

The chairman whimsically ended the lunch with readings from the *Diary* for October 1870, where Kilvert writes of revelries at *The Swan*, which, of course, stood opposite his lodgings in Clyro – '*I have a dim recollection of hearing someone say or sing in the small hours, 'I won't go home till morning,' but I was unconscious when the party broke up.*'

However, this particular party broke up, fully conscious, in mid-afternoon with tea and biscuits and general thanks to the secretary for arranging such a pleasant and successful occasion. During the course of the year, the committee will be reflecting on the lessons and pleasures of this particular winter event in Clyro and considering, for next winter, an event which would be open to all members and might become a regular feature of the Society's annual calendar.

THE COWPER COLES AIRCRAFT COMPANY LTD.

The following article came via our members H.L. Brooking of Shepperton and Colin Dixon of Llandrindod Wells. Mr. Brooking is also a member of the Sunbury and Shepperton Local History Society which has kindly allowed us to reproduce this piece of research by three more of their members. (George Claxton, Jack Didsbury and Kenneth Heselton)

During a recording made by the Society some years ago of the reminiscences of Bob Posthumus, a former Sunbury resident, he mentioned that when he first started work in 1929, he was employed as a junior draughtsman by the Cowper Coles Research Laboratory at Rossall House in Thames Street. Also housed there were a number of companies, all the brainchildren of Cowper Coles, who was a prolific inventor. The names of the companies show his versatility: Home Recorders Ltd. – Electrolytic Deposition Company – Sherardising Company – Boracic Glass Ltd. – One Way Glass Ltd. – Precision Metals and Recovery – Spray Sherardising – Lattice Glass and many others. However, what interested us in the transcript of the interview with Mr. Posthumus, was the following paragraph.

'He started during the 1914-1918 War, obviously became involved in the war effort and began to build aircraft components. He did have a go at manufacturing some fighter aircraft to his own design. He had a museum ... and in this were pictures and various components of this particular aircraft. It was a biplane with a completely enclosed fuselage ... it wasn't an open cockpit. It was a beautiful looking little thing, all streamlined ... As far as I can remember the performance, it had a 250 h.p. six-cylinder in-line water-cooled engine. The prop. was rather small and I think the idea was to get a higher pitch, higher speed propeller to keep the guns clear without synchronising mechanism. It had a claimed maximum speed of 180 mph and as far as I can understand only two were made. I saw the bits and pieces in the museum. Whether they ever flew or did any combat work or not, I don't know.'

Matters could not be allowed to rest there and so we determined to find out what we could about Cowper Coles and his aircraft.

Sherard Osborn Cowper Coles was born in Ventnor, I.O.W. in 1867, the son of a celebrated father, Captain Cowper Phipps Coles, R.N. Captain Coles was responsible for the introduction of the revolving gun turret on British naval warships. The principle was known to the Greeks, so it was not really an invention of his, but he can be credited with its modern application. Its first practical application was when one was fitted to a small gunboat called the 'Lady Nancy' in 1855. It successfully bombarded Russian coastal batteries in the Crimea with a 32-pounder gun. Later a 68-pounder was substituted, but the Crimean War came to an end before the trials were completed. He continued to urge the general adoption of the gun turret, enlisting the aid of the national press and ultimately of Prince Albert himself. Eventually the Admiralty was persuaded to build a ship incorporating four gun turrets. This was named *H.M.S. Prince Albert* and was, in fact, one of the prototypes for the later Dreadnoughts. However, as the field of fire was restricted by the masts and rigging of those days, a later ship, *H.M.S. Captain* was provided with a 'Flying' deck to take the rigging, and the turrets were mounted on a deck underneath. This led to a disaster. It lowered the freeboard and on September 7th 1870, during a gale in the Bay of Biscay, it apparently shipped water, capsized and sank. Captain Coles went down with the ship.

When Sherard Osborn Cowper Coles left school, he studied at the Crystal Palace School of Engineering and afterwards worked in research laboratories in London. Obviously his father had private means because in 1888 Sherard Cowper Coles was able to go into business on his own account as a mechanical engineer at the age of 21. Two years later he became manager of the London Metallurgical Co., a post which he held for three years until, in 1893 he again set up on his own. His main interest seems to have been the electro deposition of metal. In particular he was the inventor of the process named after him – sherardising. This is a process for putting a zinc coating on iron and steel by electrolysis, so rendering those metals rust-proof.

He won the Bessemer Premium in 1898 for research on protective coatings and the Grand Prize for electro-chemistry at the British Exhibition in 1908. He was awarded many other prizes for his work. He was a Fellow of the Royal Institution, a Member of the Institute of Electrical Engineers and of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers and an Associate of the Institute of Civil Engineers. He was also one of the founders of the Faraday Society.

As Mr. Posthumus' list of companies reveals, he was a prolific inventor. Among other things he developed an early aircraft sound detector and experimented with a form of television. He probably formed his first company in 1907. Certainly he had come to Sunbury by 1912 and had opened his own works.

It would look as though, when war came in 1914, either Cowper Coles offered the use of his factory for war work or was requested by the Government to do so. In any event he started to make aircraft components.

The Cowper Coles Aircraft Co. Ltd. with registered offices at No. 1 French Street, as mentioned before, was formed in June 1917 under the provisions of the Munitions of War Act 1915, to manufacture and sell aircraft, with a capital of £6,000. The first Chairman and director was Sherard O. Cowper Coles. The capital was afterwards increased to £16,000. If not initially, there were by January 1918 five directors. An article in an issue of *Flight* dated 23rd August 1917, reported that the business was 'in the process of establishment'.

The firm had started its war work by making ammunition boxes and even in 1917 was probably just supplying a sub-contractor with aircraft components. The sub-contractor would then assemble the complete airframe. There were several in the S. W. London area, but the Cowper Coles Company is not mentioned among the 80 or so sub-contractors at this period. However, according to a Mr. Edge, the firm actually made aircraft, at least everything but the engines. They made five aeroplanes a week. These were loaded on to a train in the siding running into the works and taken by rail to Hendon aerodrome where they had the engines put in and were rigged. The aircraft made were the AVRO 504K, Sopwith Snipe, the De Havilland DH9, a reconnaissance aircraft and the DH9A, a day-bomber conversion of the former. Despite Mr. Edge's statement, it is unlikely as we stated above, that Cowper Coles supplied more than wings and tail units to a sub-contractor.

The surviving records appear to indicate that though Cowper Coles was a brilliant inventor, he may have been no businessman and he soon had trouble with the aircraft company. There are indications that the company or Cowper Coles or both, ran into financial difficulties. In January 1918 the company ie, the other directors primarily, was granted an injunction in the High Court restraining Cowper Coles from purporting to act as director, from interfering with the management of the company, from entering its premises or giving orders to the employees. The company also issued a writ against Cowper Coles for £3,000 and a bank also obtained a judgement for £1,300. The outcome of the legal actions are unknown, but everything must have eventually been solved satisfactorily, because as we have seen, Cowper Coles was still operating from Rossall House with a multiplicity of companies in the late 1920s. Nothing further is, however, heard about the aircraft company.

Cowper Coles did not marry until he was aged 52. In 1919 he married Constance Hamilton Watt, by whom he had three sons, one of whom died at an early age. He himself died at Rossall House on September 9th 1936 at the age of 69 and is buried in Sunbury New Cemetery just to the right of the main gate.

There are many questions unresolved about the Cowper Coles Aircraft Company and the two mysterious aircraft alleged to have been manufactured. It is hoped that in time further research will make all clear.

Note: Sherard Cowper Coles was one of the nine children (5 boys, 4 girls) of Capt. Cowper Coles who went down with his ship *HMS Captain*. He was the brother-in-law of Mrs. Venables (see Diary entry for 16th September 1870). Sherard was the eighth child and two years younger than the seventh child, Sam, who was briefly Kilvert's pupil at Bredwardine in 1878 (Diary entry 27th November 1878 et seq.) For a comprehensive account of Sam's fortunes see Colin Dixon's article in the June 1999 Newsletter. – ed.

BOOK REVIEWS

**Our secretary, Michael Sharp, persuasively reviews
some excellent additions for the Kilvertian's bookshelf.**

***The Rev. Francis Kilvert* by Eileen Elias.**

Those of us who were fortunate enough to participate in the Langley Burrell Day last May will recall with pleasure meeting Eileen Elias. She is, of course, none other than our Cambridge member Mrs. Eileen Davies. Members may also recall her extraordinary feat of selling eight copies of the book here reviewed in half as many minutes!

I have since read the book and very much enjoyed doing so. I have to say that I learnt nothing new from it, but then I don't believe that was Mrs. Davies's intention. What it really is, is part biography of Francis Kilvert and part a précis of the *Diaries*.

Her style appealed to me immensely. She moves easily from statement of fact to quotation and from quotation to comment. It is a 'user-friendly' style, very readable and one skips lightly through the pages so that it is a job to put it down.

However, I feel its real value, because of its attractive style and because it contains the 'essential Kilvert', is as a primer for the Kilvert novice. In sixty-two pages one discovers who Kilvert was, what he did and something of the world he lived in. I would thoroughly recommend it to anyone who likes a good read, but most particularly to those new to Kilvert and who want to get a well-rounded foundation for the future development of their Kilvert interest.

The book is only available from Mrs. E. Davies at 47 Priory Road, Cambridge CB5 8HT. (Tel: 01223-512052)
Price £4.50 including postage.

***Ah – Yes. An Introspective Retrospect* by the late Peter Ralph-Bowman.**

Members with more seniority than I, remember and continue to speak with affection of Peter Ralph-Bowman, best remembered for his ministry (in retirement) as priest-in-charge of the Painscastle group of parishes – Bryngwyn, Llanbedr-

Painscastle, Newchurch and Llandewi Fach, in the Diocese of Swansea and Brecon. This ministry lasted from 1978 until 1992 when he retired for a second time to a bungalow in Salisbury. He died on January 13th 1997 aged 83.

This is but the tip of the iceberg and occupies but the last twenty-five pages of a 183-page book. It is a remarkable book by and about a remarkable man. The son of a Baptist pastor in Newport, Monmouthshire, he was ordained an Anglican priest in 1937. Apart from feeling a certain kinship with him as a fellow Anglo-Catholic, I can, as I never met him, write entirely objectively.

He appears as a man not endeared to bureaucracy or humbug, but who was always there, always available for those whom he had pledged, in God's name, to serve. His theology, philosophy and thought are highly original yet always embody the Gospel, full-strength. He must have been a man of considerable and sometimes unusual humour, and this occasionally ruffled those in authority.

The book is Peter's autobiography, compiled largely from his vast amount of commonplace books and his diaries. Whilst the style is easy to read, it jumps from one theme to another in a way that seems to lack continuity and I found myself re-reading sections as I felt I must have missed an essential link. The delightful drawings are by Dominic Poelsma of Newchurch.

But I do warmly commend the book, particularly to those who knew Peter. They will, I am sure, instantly recognise a dear friend.

Just a final thought – who knows what Kilvert might have written after retirement if *he* had lived to be 83!

This book is available from Pemberton's Bookshop in Hay, from Gracewing, (the Publishers), 2 Southern Avenue, Leominster HR6 0QF, but best of all, why not send to the Revd. Dr. Humphrey Fisher (who with his wife Helga edited the book) at Rose Cottage, Newchurch, Kington HR5 3QF – and you will be helping financially the Painscastle group of churches.

Price £7.50 (plus £1.25 p. and p.)

THE BELLS! THE BELLS!

The Rev. Dr. Gordon Edwards has written with
news of the new bells at St. Peter's, Langley Burrell.

Members of the Society will be interested to learn that the original four bells which were rung at St. Peter's Church when Francis Kilvert was curate, have been augmented to a ring of six.

The original bells are hung in a timber frame dated 1630 and the bells are dated:

1. 1628
2. 1618
3. 1628
4. 1607 – with an inscription 'Alleluya – Come at my Call'

The bells were mentioned by Kilvert in his diary for 1870-1879, notably an entry for Tuesday, New Year's Eve, 1872: *My mother says the old Langley people always used to say that the Langley Burrell bells rang with these words 'my cow's tail's long, my cow's tail's long.'*

The new treble bell was cast by Whitechapel Foundry and has been donated in memory of a 9-year-old girl, Isobel Frusher, who died in 1998.

The other additional bell is an existing bell purchased from the Kelteck Trust; this bell was originally hung at Stratford-sub-Castle, Salisbury, and was cast by Robt. Wells in 1767.

The augmented ring of bells greatly enhances the repertoire for ringing; the extent of changes is now 720 compared with the original 24.

It is hoped to ring the bells on a future Kilvert's Day at Langley Burrell.

OF CANDLES MICE, AND ROBINS

By Karl Showler, (Hay-on-Wye)

There is in *Kilvert's Diary* (volume 3 pages 365-6) an interesting reference to the robins at Brobury Church. Plomer's index however gives this under both candles and mice but not under robins who were key characters in a little entry that gives a neat pen-picture of a rural church at that time.

On Sunday 3rd February 1878 Francis Kilvert walked over the bridge from his home at Bredwardine to Brobury Church where he was also rector, on the way he came upon the churchwarden Mr. Williams with his wife and Mr. Lane the bailiff in deep consultation. The churchwarden asked Kilvert if he had brought any candles with him, to which he said he had not as he had left a supply of candles in the church the previous Sunday.

To Kilvert's surprise the churchwarden replied that the mice had eaten the candles.

Mrs. Williams then ran across the fields to fetch some candles from her house, Mr. Lane going with her. They returned with the candles in good time for the service.

After the service old Kitty Price remarked that it was not mice making away with the candles but the robins. The robins pulled the candles out of their sockets by their wicks and threw them on the ground so then the mice carried them away to eat them.

The robins got into the church by a hole in the roof, some of them nested in the altar and some under the reading desk. Other birds came in too!

Kilvert then noted *Yea, the robin hath found her an house, even Thy altars, O Lord of Hosts.*

Looking up in Cruden's Concordance to the King James Version I saw there are no references to robins in the Bible. So Kilvert was engaging in word play on the text from Psalm 84 verse 3. *Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King, and my God.*

But why were the robins and the mice interested in the candles which by the middle of the 19th century could be made of either hard paraffin wax, beeswax or tallow.

Nearly all modern candles are made from hard paraffin or similar processed waxes, mice will nibble them but they are not mice-attractive.

The beeswax candle was expensive and although mice may nibble them I doubt if robins would fancy their wicks.

So, we are left with the tallow candles made from cattle fat, far softer and more 'nibbleable' than either paraffin or beeswax and certainly attractive to mice. Indeed starving people have eaten them. Their wicks would have had a strong fatty smell and would have been very attractive to nesting robins.

I suggest we are thus safe to assume that Brobury church was still using tallow candles. But there is one more element to this, tallow came in three grades, the cheapest came from low grade fat that on burning had a strong horrid smell as Samuel Pepys noted in his Diary, when he could afford beeswax candles. The best quality tallow was made from the fat of grass-fed beasts, those fed on oilseeds and cake being softer and of the lower quality. In a rural area no doubt the local people made their own tallow candles from whatever fat was to hand.

So, looking at the evidence, I suggest that Kilvert's robins were in effect treating the fatty tallow wicks as worms, seeking to get them out of the candles and so causing the candles to fall to the ground for the benefit of the church mice.

AN INTRODUCTION TO KILVERT'S DIARY

**A London member, John Jones of East Sheen, has been researching his family tree
and has unearthed some interesting Kilvert Country connections.**

Aware of the existence of *Kilvert's Diary* for many years, I owe my introduction and actually reading it, to a conversation I had with the proprietor of the Hastings Bookshop in East Sussex.

I was browsing in the shop one day and chatting about books, when he brought up the subject of the *Diary*. Clearly a Kilvert fan, he suddenly dashed upstairs telling me he might still have a copy of Plomer's original three volumes but came down empty-handed. I was half relieved, as not having read any of the *Diary*, I was rather anxious as to what the cost of these three volumes would be. He then suggested I read Plomer's one volume abridgement.

My surprise and delight at the contents was enhanced by the discovery that Kilvert was writing about the area around Hay. Being interested in family history, I had discovered my father's family had lived in that very area.

My great-great-grandfather, William Worthington, had lived on a farm, 'Cwmbutwell', near Llanbedr. One of his many children, Ellen, married James Jones, at Glasbury Parish Church in 1851. This was my great-grandfather.

When Ellen died at the age of 38, my grandfather, Thomas Jones, had gone to live with his uncle, James Worthington at Cwmbutwell.

James Worthington (1840-1926) is buried alongside his wife, Ann, and a grandson, in the churchyard of the Adullam Chapel at Painscastle. On a visit to Painscastle, my son and I found their gravestones as soon as we entered the churchyard.

In 1998, with the help of a Tithe map of 1847, my son and I found Cwmbutwell farm which is now derelict but the large barn is still in use. We had a fascinating afternoon in the company of Mr. Morris, the farmer, whose family now own the land (including Cwmbutwell) and live at the adjoining Llaneast Farm.

There are still bits and pieces of the Worthington/Jones jigsaw to discover. Only recently I tracked down in *The Brecon County Times*, an account of an inquest held on 7th November 1901 into the death of my great-grandfather, James Jones.

Still working as a labourer at the age of 74 on the Gwernfyed Estate, his body was found on the evening of the 4th November 1901 near Box Bush cottages. It lay on the path beside the railway line between Three Cocks and Boughrood Stations. A verdict of 'accidentally killed' was recorded. There is an extensive account in *The Brecon County Times* under the heading 'STRANGE DEATH AT THREE COCKS'.

For me, *Kilvert's Diary* has given an invaluable and fascinating dimension to research into my family history. It was with some anxiety that I gave Plomer's book to my wife to read. Anxiety, because I would have been so disappointed if she too had not been thrilled with it. I need not have worried, with her love of poetry and the countryside, she found the same delight in it that I had.

FOUR ANECDOTES By Basil Butcher, (Hereford)

Basil Butcher, native of Hereford, committee member and very senior Kilvertian has memories of the *Diary* and its contents which go back almost to the time of its publication.

I I was born in Belmont Road, Hereford (leaving to go to Bodenham Road when I was 9 years old). Little did I know that in the large house opposite in Belmont Road was something which Kilvert had known.

My first knowledge of Kilvert was during the war, 1942. I was then collecting books on Herefordshire, and stationed in Chester. I used to look at the books withdrawn from Boots library. There I saw the three volumes of *Kilvert's Diary*. Fortunately I looked at them and found they were about Radnorshire and Herefordshire. They were priced at 4/- each, and looked as if they had never been read, what a find! This, of course, got me interested in Kilvert, and when Oswin Prosser proposed we should form a Society I went to the first meeting by invitation and still have the card, which I got signed by Plomer – 17th July 1948.

So, what was this item in the house opposite my birth-place? It was the Chamber Organ, built by Bevingtons, and formerly in Hay Castle.

Vol. 1, page 46: *Luncheon at 12, walked to Hay in rain and got to Savings Bank soon after one. At 2. Went to the Castle. The four girls singing 'Pilgrims of the Night' round the organ in the hall, Mary playing.*

The organ remained at Hay Castle until 1901, when Archdeacon W.L. Bevan retired and went to live at Brecon. It probably went into store. After 1907 it went to 'Poole House', Hereford, the home of Mrs. S. Mumford, granddaughter of Archdeacon Bevan. It stayed there, in the hall, until 1923 when she moved to Weymouth. This was when the Priory Church at Brecon became the Cathedral. The first Bishop was Edward Latham Bevan, son of Archdeacon Bevan, once the little boy, Teddy Bevan of the *Diary*.

The organ then went to Brecon Cathedral, and is still there having been rebuilt in 1971 and fitted with an electric blower.

II My firm were the county distributors for the Morris Group, James Fryer Ltd. One day I had an enquiry from a Mrs. Thomas, and sold her a Wolseley car, she introduced me to her son, Mr. Sandys Thomas of Llanthomas, so you can imagine how pleased I was to go into that house! He bought a Wolseley 14 h.p., this was just before he packed up and went abroad. I did not see the ghost of Daisy!!

III Soon after Dean Burrows came to Hereford Cathedral, he was asked to preach at a Kilvert Service at St. Harmon's. I offered to drive him there as he did not know the area. I will never forget his excitement at seeing the countryside between New Radnor and Penybont, it was one of those lovely clear, sunny days.

When we got back to the car after the service, he asked if his sermon was all right. 'Excellent', I told him. 'Good' he said, 'as I took the wrong notes to the pulpit. They were the notes for my Sunday Service!'

IV The Kilvert Society Committee meets in comfort in the Board Room of the Conservative Club, Hereford. This came about as follows:

We used to meet at No. 20 Church Street, in those days the wonderful 14th century hall had not been discovered in No. 20, and rooms had been made by partition boards. One day we had been double-booked, so we were out in Church Street wondering what to do. So I suggested I would go to the 'Con. Club' to see if they would help. The manager had gone to lunch, they got him on the 'phone, and after I had explained what had happened, he said we could use the Board Room, and we have been there ever since!

MORE RAILWAY CONNECTIONS

By Jack Burrell, (Bristol)

On a day in May 1948 I alighted from the 10.32 a.m. ex-Brecon at Whitney-on-Wye, went across the toll bridge and met a man driving a flock of sheep. I do not know how much the toll was. By then the 10.32 a.m. from Brecon had reached Eardisley and the Brecon to Hereford freight passed without stopping. Like the passenger train it was hauled by an L-Y (Lancs. and Yorkshire) 0-6-0 (redundant because of decline in the cotton industry and moved to other parts of the LMS).

Soon after that I spotted on the horizon the Golden Valley freight hauled by a 58xx O-4-2T with about ten wagons. Three trains in a few minutes at this remote place was truly remarkable. The decline was soon to start, however, on the return trip there were only three wagons and Green's siding was passed without calling. In just over 18 months the freight became increasingly conditional and by the end of 1949 had ceased to run beyond Dorstone.

Notes:

- i) The Golden Valley extension to Hay was not opened until after Kilvert's death but Sir George Cornwall cut the first sod.
- ii) The crew of the Brecon – Hereford freight were soon back at Whitney as they changed footplates at Eardisley with the crew of a Hereford – Brecon freight.
- iii) The unfortunate confirmation incident (*Diary*, April Eve 1870) was caused by the train from Brecon being late. I am puzzled that the senior clergy, like Dew and Palmer did not intervene to prevent such a farce taking place.
- iv) Kilvert travelled many times between Hay and Whitney and on one occasion missed the train at Whitney and had to walk home past the Rhydspence Inn. (*Diary* 3rd October 1871).

SNAPSHOT OF A DIARIST

In the February *Journal* our member, Eileen Grey of Bolton, mentioned that she had had an article on Kilvert published in the *Hereford Times* in September 1979. As promised I followed this up.

The article appeared in the edition of September 21st under the title: *Snapshot of a Diarist – Unforgettable Legacy of a Country Parson*. The piece has a central position at the top of the page and spreads across four columns, surrounding the usual portrait of Kilvert seated in profile, which is captioned the Rev. Francis Kilvert, parson, teacher and diarist. In the article Eileen Grey stresses particularly Kilvert's role as a teacher which she illustrates with an extensive quotation from the Diary entry for 8th August 1875 – the 'green drawing-room' episode.

The whole is a most useful background summary of Kilvert's life and work and it concludes with a mention of the Society and the Centenary events which were proceeding that weekend at Hereford, Clyro and Bredwardine.

Editor

OBITUARY

We are sorry to report the deaths of Dr. H.A. Feisenberger of London, (vice-president and member since 1954), Rev. J. Venus of Hambledon, Godalming (life member since 1974), and Miss P. Hesketh-Williams of Oxford (life member since 1979). We offer our sympathy to their families and friends.

TWO DIARY ENTRIES

Kilvert visits Crafta Webb

Tuesday, New Year's Day 1878

At ten a.m. I went up the hill to Crafta Webb. The sound of the joy bells ringing at Bredwardine Church for New Year's morning floated sweetly up the hillside from the blue valley. I visited Kitty Arrowsmith and went down a beautiful wild dingle to the cottage of Ellen Lewis in Lower Fine Street. In the cottage gardens the monthly pink roses and the gilly flowers were blooming sweetly. Kitty Arrowsmith told me that Crafta Webb was variously nicknamed Hyde Park Corner, New Town and Poverty Street.

The editor and his wife visit Crafta Webb

Saturday 11th March 2000

After lunch drove up the steep lane behind the Red Lion to Arthur's Stone. Along the lane and in the cottage gardens early daffodils glowing golden in the brilliant afternoon sun, primroses blooming in the banks. View from the summit of the Stone dazzling; below, the Golden Valley and in the distance the Black Mountains stood up, sharp-edged and clear. The spring sunshine very warm indeed but only in shelter out of the brisk north wind which still had a wintry bite.

Later, we started down the hill and stopped at Crafta Webb, at the Glebe Cottage to enquire about accommodation. The old homestead, so recently a complete ruin, has been lovingly restored by its owners Graham and Wendy Middleton. We were hospitably received in their absence by Andrew Pearce who soon bore in a tray of refreshments – producing the best china service for the occasion! We drank our tea sitting, we were told, exactly where once, RFK had presided over his cottage lectures. Talk of Andrew's past as a pupil and colleague of Edward West and the discovery of mutual acquaintances.

In a while Wendy Middleton returned and showed us the well-appointed guest room, dominated by a large, comfortable-looking four-poster bed. Grand views from the windows, over the garden along the shoulder of Merbach Hill on the one side and, on the other, down the hill towards Bredwardine and out over the blue valley of the Wye. A most agreeable visit. (No one fainted!).



Glebe Cottage

Footnote: Bed and Breakfast: Wendy has two double, en-suite bedrooms available for guests. Please write to her for details at Glebe Cottage, Crafta Webb, Bredwardine, Hereford HR3 6BZ Tel: 01981-500635

PUBLICATIONS NEWS

Kilvert: The Homeless Heart by John Toman.

Please study carefully the insert from the Logaston Press which hopes to publish shortly this new work on Kilvert.

As the book will probably carry a cover price of £12.95 the offer price to members of £10 including postage and packing is a distinctly advantageous one. What is more, you will be helping this new work see the light of day.

Francis Kilvert: Priest and Diarist.

The reprint of this excellent monograph by Fred Grice, former Deputy President of the Society is now available from the publications manager, price £5 including postage.

Francis Kilvert

Our President's excellent biography of Kilvert has recently been re-issued and now carries an index. It is available from David himself at Church Row, Llowes, HR3 5JB (Tel: 01497-047664) or from the publications manager.

Please Note: An amended publications list will appear soon in which most prices will show an increase, to take account of the recent rise in postal charges. So, why not order now at the old prices?

AN APPEAL

The Secretary has received the following letter from Mrs. Jane Woodman, on behalf of the Roof Appeal Committee of St. Nicholas church, Hardenhuish. We commend this appeal to members.

St. Nicholas Church, Hardenhuish Roof Appeal

Dear Mr. Sharp,

The Kilvert Society has connections with St. Nicholas Church and your members visit from time to time. This grade 2* listed building is now undergoing major roof repairs. These essential repairs will cost at least £34,000, but they will ensure the soundness of the building for generations to come. This is a large sum for a small church which can accommodate only one hundred, and that at a very tight squeeze! An appeal for funds was started in January and we have raised just over £15,000, including a grant of £2,000 from Wiltshire Historic Churches Trust.

I am writing to ask whether the Kilvert Society, or any of its members, might consider a donation towards our roof appeal. Specifically, would you help us by suggesting a donation at your next meeting and/or giving some publicity to our appeal amongst your members.

For individuals we suggest that donations can be made:

- Buy a Tile: Each stone tile or Welsh slate costs £5. We need 2000. For each tile bought we will enter the name you choose on our roof grid which will be displayed in church.
- Gift Aid: After 5th April a single donation of any amount from a taxpayer can be certified to enable the church to recover tax of 28p for each £1 given, increasing the gift considerably.
- Donation: Any amount, however small, would be gratefully received.

Gifts will be acknowledged in a record to be kept permanently in the church. Donations should be sent to me at **Highlands, 12 Ridings Mead, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 1PG Tel: 01249-657532.** I can provide more information about Gift Aid, and the certificate to claim tax relief, should you need it.

Thank you, Yours sincerely,

Signed Jane M. Woodman (On behalf of Hardenhuish Roof Appeal Committee)

Contributions for the September edition of the Journal should reach the editor as soon as possible and certainly, because of holidays, no later than August 5th 2000.

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.

Detach

COACH TO CONDOVER

I/We wish to book place(s) on the coach to Condover on Sunday, 17th September 2000. **I enclose the fee of £7. per person.**

(Please note that the fee is non-refundable except in the event of there being insufficient demand to justify the hire of a coach).

Signed Date

Please return to: **Mr. Michael Sharp, The Old Forge, Kinnersley, Herefordshire HR3 6QB by Saturday 26th August at the latest.**

If you do not wish to cut your *Journal*, please send your booking on a sheet of paper.