



THE
JOURNAL
OF
THE KILVERT SOCIETY



THE KILVERT SOCIETY

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

Registered Charity No. 1103815

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Number 23 June 2007

From the Editor:

The production of this issue has been rather disrupted by my desire to take a holiday; however, thanks to the efforts of Val Dixon and Jon Clucas that disruption was much less than I had feared. My very grateful thanks to them both therefore.

Val, it is, who types up the edited articles and puts them on a disk which I then take to the printers. Here, Jon 'my' typesetter prepares the text and illustrations for publication and produces the proofs, all the while patiently indulging my editorial whims and fancies and last-minute panics. They both went to a great deal of extra trouble, on this occasion, so that I could have a final proof ready in time to take away with me on holiday. Thus, I was able to enjoy (almost) some leisurely proofreading, sitting on a sunlit terrace, refreshment to hand, in ... Normandy. So, you see, an editor's lot, thanks to the efforts of others, can sometimes be all beer and skittles, or should that be all red wine and boules?

I have been reproached by one member for not supplying a translation of the Latin inscription on the Kilvert memorial, reproduced on page five of the March 2007 *Journal*, a task mostly beyond my O-level Latin (pass!) I am afraid. However, another member has written to tell me that he is dusting down his schoolboy Latin with a view to tackling his own translation. Yet another informs me that he too wishes to try even though he is concerned about some apparent errors in the inscription. So, I was about to announce the first-ever KS *Journal* competition with a modest prize for the most accurate and elegant translation (which would then be published to satisfy the original 'request') when, unfortunately, the old friend and fine Classical scholar, who had agreed to act as judge, jury and... if necessary executioner, told me that, given the number and nature of the errors in the inscription as printed, such an exercise would not be possible. Nevertheless I would still like to offer the competition once the accuracy of the original can be established – details in the September *Journal* perhaps.

Readers will have noticed the unusual tower of St James', Kinnorsley, in the cover photograph – such saddleback towers are characteristic of very many churches in Lower Normandy and in particular in the Cotentin and I have wondered, for some years now, whether there is any connection between this Herefordshire church and those of the Normandy peninsula. I would be grateful for any enlightenment.

By way of conclusion I thought that this time I might *not* mention... Gift Aid...!

From the Secretary:

Having just taken over the position of secretary I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to my predecessor, David Elvins, who did such a marvellous job in the post over the past four years. He has given me much of his time to ensure, we hope, a seamless transition of responsibilities to myself, for which I am most grateful. I am aware that he will be a hard act to follow.

Plans are well underway for the programme of events for 2008, our Diamond Jubilee Year. Details to follow in subsequent editions of the *Journal*.

Finally yet another plea to all members who are U.K. tax payers who have not yet sent in a signed Gift Aid form. PLEASE PLEASE DO SO NOW. All it needs is a signature, no other details are required, it costs you nothing, it has no consequences to you, but to the Society it means the taxman currently pays us 28p in the pound on your subscription, so a subscription of £12 means an additional £3.36 is returned to the Society from the Revenue. This is vital for your Society's finances. Forms are available from the membership secretary, Mrs S. Rose, whose address is on the inside of the cover of this *Journal*.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Events in 2007-08

June Weekend

Saturday 23 June

12 noon

Meet at Church Barn, Gladestry (home of Ann Dean).

Walk, four miles (hilly) to Colva and back. Suitable attire advised. Optional tea £4 per head, provided by ladies of Gladestry at Church Barn. (No sharp heeled shoes to be worn).

Sunday 24 June 3.00 pm Evensong at Colva Church. Optional tea provided by the Friends of Colva Church, no charge, but a **generous** donation to Church funds is suggested, on the day.

September Weekend

Saturday 22 September 12 noon Meet at Pen-y-Craig farm, OS map ref 108458. Walk, seven miles (hilly) to Llewelyn's Cave and the grave of Tom or Twm Tobacco. **(Some members may prefer to walk to the grave only as this is about three miles)**. Suitable attire advised. The afternoon will conclude with a visit to Erwood Craft Centre where refreshments may be purchased.



Tom Tobacco's grave. Note the inscription on the flat stone: Twm Tybach.



Kilvert Society group at Tom Tobacco's grave, September 1990.

Photos by John Hockin

Sunday 23 September 3.00 pm Evensong at Glaschw Church followed by optional tea at Erwood Craft Centre

Winter Event 2008

Wednesday 20 February Whole day visit to Chippenham. KS member the Revd John Day will lead the walk. Members will need to make their own arrangements for lunch. (Time and other details will be available later).

From the Chairman:

It is ten years this year since the Society last met at Kinnersley. As this will be my last year as Chairman, I hope very much that it will be possible for us to meet there again during the June weekend 2008.

I spoke at the AGM about the delights of Logaston Common and this is where I would like to lead the Saturday afternoon walk. Although Kilvert used Kinnersley railway station a great deal he only mentions one visit to the Rectory, on 11 July 1878, for tea and archery.

After Evensong at St James' Kinnersley on the Sunday, members of the Society have been invited to the Rectory for tea, archery and croquet! This is not to be missed and I look forward to seeing you all at Kinnersley next June.

THE WINTER VISIT TO SALISBURY AND BRITFORD

21 February 2007

by Richard Vine (Warminster)

The day started well. Emboldened with self-importance at being entrusted by your Editor with the task of reporting this outing, we swept into the Cathedral Close of Salisbury. I told the parking attendant (parking costs £6) that we had arrived for a meeting of *The Kilvert Society*. 'Where's that to then?' – 'The Cathedral', I replied. Whereupon I was told to park at the Cathedral School (the old Bishop's Palace – luckily it was the half-term holiday), which we duly did, for nothing!

Entering the Cathedral by the choristers' door (I promise we paid the voluntary entrance charge, Mr Elvins!) we found it devoid of Kilvertians who were already, sensibly, settling down in the Refectory!



Assembling at the Cathedral

RFK wrote that, *The vicar has in his house a fine collection of stuffed birds, among which are a pair of peregrine falcons which were shot, of all places in the world, on the spire of Salisbury Cathedral*. Being members of the Wiltshire Ornithological Society, we were saddened but not surprised at this. However, despite the efforts of the Morres brothers (I know they did not actually shoot the birds themselves) and DDT poisoning, readers will be pleased to know that peregrines again *haunt* the Cathedral and indeed the Wiltshire Bird Report for February 2006 records peregrines at the Cathedral and Britford! We had taken our binoculars in the hope of seeing one on the spire but, sadly did not, although we thought we heard its piercing cry when we were inside the Cathedral.

We then visited the charming little church of St Peter, cruciform, with a low crossing-tower, so close to Salisbury yet calm, with hardly a hum of traffic. Francis Kilvert records that the church had been beautifully restored by G.E. Street. John Day reminded us that Kilvert's generation was the first to take a great interest in their architectural heritage, unlike Woodforde who mentions nothing of his churches. We saw the two *very ancient round arches opposite each other on either side of the nave ... one is beautifully carved, in a way almost unique*. Indeed, Pevsner describes its decoration as 'unique in English pre-Conquest work'.

As always, John Day was a fund of fascinating detail. The churchyard contains the grave of a woman who was killed by having her ears boxed by another woman *and* the grave of the culprit who was hanged two weeks later!

In the chancel, in what appears to be the remains of an elaborate Easter Sepulchre, is the tomb of the Duke of Buckingham gruesomely *decapitatus apud Salisburi* in 1483.

In the sunny churchyard we looked at the imposing mausoleum of the Earls of Radnor whilst John Day read the *Diary* entry for 26

It was a beautiful spring day. We very much felt we were not only treading in the footsteps of RFK but also in those of the Reverend John Day and Barry Smith, who had led and reported on the last visit to Britford respectively, in 1992. (See *Journal* of September 2006). Here they were again, John as enthusiastic a leader as ever. Twenty-eight members followed him out of the south Harnham Gate, across the brimming River Avon and into the Britford Lane. This would have been a quiet stroll in RFK's day but we had to negotiate the dual carriageway ring road. John Day's skills at shepherding his flock saw us safely into the quieter track that leads across the water meadows to Britford.

The *Diary* records three visits to Britford, in July 1874 and May and August 1875. On the first, the object of his visits, the two Morres brothers, *soldier and priest**, met him in the water meadows and gave him a hearty welcome. Britford village has changed little since those days. We passed the fine Moat House with its Georgian Gothic ogee-headed windows and then the Old Vicarage, another warm red brick Georgian house.



The Moat House

* For more on The Morres Brothers, see page 11.

May 1875, which has a wonderful description of the rich water meads. *The golden laburnums drooped by the dark still glassy streams of the water carriages ... and high above all soared the glorious spire of the Cathedral.* Kilvert was keenly interested in birds and refers to the coots who uttered their wild melancholy cry and the moorhens fluttered in the reed beds and sedges. In August 1875 he and the vicar loitered down into the water meadows ... and almost immediately the graceful little falcon (a hobby) came sweeping with his long curved wings down from the wooded hill... No hobby of course, in February, for it is a summer migrant but I am sure it can be seen in those water meadows whilst the last gleams of the sunset flame down the long lines of the water carriages making them shine and glow like canals of molten gold. Barry Smith was prevailed upon to explain again the reference to *Ithuriel's Spear* in this entry.



St Peter's, Britford.

Photos by David Elvins

On this visit to Britford, Kilvert records his long walk to Stonehenge, *a solemn, awful place...I instinctively uncovered my head.*

There was also a south Wiltshire archery meeting at Britford. Among the company were Major Fisher, the champion archer of England and, more characteristically, *the prettiest archer Miss Edith Pinckney, a slight delicate girl of sixteen.* Did not Mr Harvey show us a charming picture of the Diarist's sister Dora in archery costume at an AGM talk some years ago?

So back we went in the sunshine to the Cathedral, at the end of another excellent winter event for which we must gratefully thank all those who organised it and especially our leader, John Day.

THE AGM WEEKEND **The Annual General Meeting**

Friday 20 April:

On a glorious spring evening the Chairman, Michael Sharp, welcomed 68 members to the AGM, which took place, as usual, in the Great Hall of the Bishop's Palace.

Chairman's Report

In his annual report the chairman began by reminding members that 2008 would mark the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the Kilvert Society and he indicated that the committee would be considering special events to celebrate this notable occasion.

Referring, as he did last year, to concerns about membership, which although not declining had remained static during 2006, he urged members to spread the word about Kilvert and the *Diary* and also, if possible, to offer to give talks thereon to literary societies, etc.

He went on to pay tribute to and thank the three loyal officers who had left the committee: John Wilks (vice-chairman), David Elvins (secretary) and Barry Smith (membership secretary). The latter had resigned last October, to be succeeded by Sue Rose, whose appointment was ratified during the evening. Presentations were made to all three whilst their ladies received splendid bouquets.

Michael then welcomed their successors, Alan Brimson our new secretary and Sue Rose, who had already taken up her membership duties last November.

Mention was made of the very successful Society events held during 2006 and in particular of the visit to the Old Weston.

Concluding, the chairman expressed his pleasure that our President, Dr Ronald Blythe, had been able to join us and that he would address us after the buffet on the *The Diarist's Art*.

Treasurer's Report:

The treasurer, Richard Weston, in his report acknowledged his debt (no pun intended) to our former honorary auditor, Gordon Rogers, not least for tracking down the missing five pence! It appeared that Richard had spent several hours attempting to trace this trifling and tiresome sum which had prevented him from balancing the Society's accounts for 2006. Indeed, he had even enlisted the help of his wife in the search, but alas, to no avail! So, it seemed, there was nothing to be done but throw himself on Gordon's mercy and confess. It took our hon. auditor's practised accountant's eye all of five minutes to spot the mathematical error ...! Accounts duly balanced!

Apart from that there was little to report; encouragingly, subscription income was slightly increased but overall, income was down owing to the purchase of the three-volume sets of the *Diary* and the absence, this year, of any legacies.

The treasurer concluded by, once again, stressing the importance of GIFT AID, from which, unfortunately, income is bound to fall in the future – blame Mr Brown's last Budget for that! (Can there still be any tax-paying member who has NOT YET filled in the appropriate gift aid form? – obtainable from Sue Rose (ed.)).

The accounts were adopted and a summary appears below.

THE KILVERT SOCIETY – Registered Charity No 1103815

Income and expenditure account for the year ending 31 December 2006

Expenditure		Income	
Grants and subscriptions	£155.00	Subscriptions	£4,409.39
Running Costs	£376.65	Donations	£437.00
Publication printing	£3,296.00	Gift aid	£1,056.00
Journal printing & distribution	£4,072.29	Publication sales	£277.98
Insurance	£150.00	Special Events	£104.55
Annual General Meeting	£81.55	Interest	£288.01
	<u>£8,131.49</u>		<u>£6,572.93</u>

Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2006

Accumulated Fund		Assets	
Balance as at 31 December 2005	£12,200.03	Lloyds, Hereford	£803.55
Less excess of expenditure over income	£1,558.56	Nat. West., Hay	£1,435.80
Portman Building Society	<u>£8,402.12</u>		
	<u>£10,641.47</u>		<u>£10,641.47</u>

The main points to note this year have been the big increase in publication printing – chiefly the investment in fifty sets of three-volume Diaries reprinted by O'Donoghue Books – which will sell over the next few years at a very competitive £60 per set. We have also had reprinted leaflets which have proved very popular in the Kilvert Trail churches. Another difference is the fact that we received last year very generous donations of £3,000, which we have not received this year.

Note also the increase in Gift Aid reclamation, up from £893 last year to £1,056 – this figure could be still a lot higher if more tax-paying members complete their Gift Aid declaration form.

As these are my first accounts I would very much like to thank John Wilks, the outgoing treasurer, for all his help and support.

Richard Weston, Honorary Treasurer

Election of Officers:

Except for the changes noted above the present committee was re-elected *en bloc*. The post of vice-chairman remains vacant, John Wilks has had to resign from the committee as he now replaces Gordon Rogers as our hon. auditor. Peter Beddall was elected to fill one of the vacancies on the committee and we welcome him.

The chairman has indicated that this will be his final year in the chair.

Thus ended the business part of the evening and the company adjourned to sample the excellent buffet, which is such an agreeable feature of the AGM. This was prepared for us, once again, by Sue Rose. Our grateful thanks to her and her helpers. After the interval our president addressed us on the *Diarist's Art*, an extract from which follows below.

Editor

Saturday 21 April:

At the Radnorshire Arms, Presteigne

Another beautiful spring day and members assembled in the hotel for coffee and biscuits before settling down to listen to our member John Toman speak on *The Quaker Influence on Kilvert*.

It was hoped to reprint John's talk in this issue but this has had to be postponed and it will appear in the September Journal.

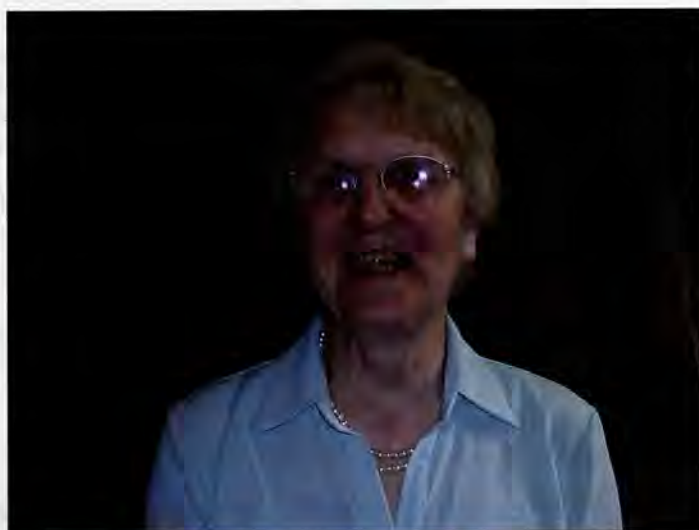
After a brief interval we resumed our seats for:

THE FILM

The concluding session of the Society's April gathering in Presteigne was a gentle nod in the direction of modern technology – a showing of an early Kilvert Society promotional cin  film (circa 1948-50) lovingly transferred on to DVD. The film, in a washed-out early Technicolor, was introduced by Richard Weston who sketched out its background and purpose. Its creators, Sid Wright and Godfrey Davies, legendary business figures in Hereford at that time, wanted to spread the Kilvertian gospel in those post-war years when interest in the *Diary* was more intense than it is today. It was, after all, only a few years since its publication and in communities such as Clyro, Francis Kilvert (or his reputation) would probably still have lived on in the minds of some of the older members of the community. One such Clyro resident present at the screening was Heulwen Hardman who, as a young child had lived in Clyro in the 1940s and whose comments on some of the footage in the film brought alive some of the individuals and events.

The film, suitably accompanied by music (Elgar), captivated those members present. It showed familiar scenes of Kilvert Country, mostly in the Clyro and Bredwardine areas but also some of the Wiltshire sites. Godfrey Davies, the cinematographer, had obviously been a 'fine weather' man for the shots of the landscape were almost exclusively taken in gloriously sunny weather! From time to time written prompts appeared on the screen, giving background details about key moments in Kilvert's life or describing scenes of an English and Welsh countryside which has remained remarkably unchanged over the years. The shots of a Clyro (in its pre-bypass days) were of a sleepy village whose houses with Kilvertian associations looked very much then as they do today. Ashbrook House, Hannah Whitney's cottage, Bettws Chapel and Clyro Court were followed by an abundance of shots of other houses and churches in the surrounding countryside. Only occasionally did scenes look very different, Rhosgoch Mill being an example. The water wheel (still turning in the 1940s) and its duck-pond are evocative reminders of a bygone age. However, as Heulwen Hardman pointed out, the same family, the Powells is still living there so ... *rien ne change!*

Each of us will have seen the film through different eyes. In my own case, as someone born in 1943, I have my own fond memories of visiting Hay-on-Wye in the early 1950s and of ambling along its traffic-free streets. These memories are confirmed by Godfrey Davies' images of a deserted Broad Street, possibly taken on early-closing day ... but then again, maybe not! The shots of the countryside were evocative but it was the social and church occasions, which caused the biggest response and excited murmurings from the audience. In essence this was because the film captured the rituals and habits of an age not so long ago when deference and churchgoing were keystones of social life. Two of the final scenes show village gatherings at Bredwardine and Clyro churches respectively. In the first the congregation follows the Dean of Hereford, Hedley Burrows, down the pathway for the dedication in July 1948 of a stone seat to Kilvert's memory. The congregation is respectfully walking in pairs, gentlemen in suits, ladies in hats and mostly wearing gloves. A similar scene occurs in the second gathering, the unveiling of a plaque in Kilvert's memory in July 1949, the procession this time accompanied by the village policeman in full-dress uniform and a clergyman in frock coat and gaiters!



Heulwen Hardman

Heulwen Hardman answered questions from the audience at the end of the screening and made mention of the fact that Kilvert was and, still is, held in great respect by the community at large in Clyro. The local residents can hardly fail to notice the physical reminders of his previous residence in the village. Ashbrook House, the Church and the old Vicarage all have their commemorative plaques. She also made mention of the local primary school which has from time to time brought him in as an integral part of project work on village life in Victorian Britain. We were glad that Heulwen was able to be with us as she provided a living link with Kilvert and the places that he loved.

Charles Weston (Thornton-le-Dale)

THE ANNUAL DINNER

The annual dinner – the event of the year! This year it was held at the *Radnorshire Arms* hotel in Presteigne, a first for us, and indeed this marvellous ancient building was looking spruce and gleaming with its oak panels polished and welcoming fires lit. To be honest it was a bit of a crush as thirsty Kilvertians pressed into the bar, over 50 members had booked for this evening and we looked forward to something special.

The *Radnorshire Arms* has been taken over recently by new owners and the managers, Deborah and Stuart, were obviously very keen to make a good impression.

Howard Dean said Grace and the meal commenced.



An excellent dinner was served promptly and like Edward Evans *we were very thankful for the wine*. The cosiness of the crowded dining room helped to accentuate the camaraderie that is always felt on this special annual occasion. The room filled with happy conversation as new members were introduced and old friends were reunited.

I feel sure that Kilvert would have thoroughly approved of the convivial atmosphere of these occasions as the common bond of interest provides a *raison d'être* for these happy gatherings.

As the meal drew to a close Michael Sharp proposed the traditional toasts and read from the *Diary* the three references to Presteigne, with the 'frog woman' of Presteigne being a particularly memorable image.

Once again a night to remember, KS members enjoying themselves – as ever!

Apéritif time

Photos by Ann Dean

Richard Weston (Hereford)

THE DIARIST'S ART

by Dr Ronald Blythe

Some extracts from the President's lecture to the Kilvert Society, 20 April 2007 at the Bishop's Palace, Hereford.

The one helper which every great diarist must have is the right editor. Pepys has Robert Latham, Boswell has Frederick Pottle and Parson Woodforde has John Beresford, masters all of the task of extracting the diarist from the welter of his daily entries. Long ago I used to glimpse at the Aldeburgh Festival a tall, diffident figure who was at that time writing the librettos for Benjamin Britten's *Church Parables*, and I used to say to myself, 'that is the man who edited Kilvert!' He was a brilliant South African writer, one of a trio which included R.N. Currey and Laurens van der Post and his name was William Plomer. He describes how Francis Kilvert and he 'met'. As it is a matter of great moment which tells of such a meeting, I will let Plomer speak for himself. He does it in a collection of essays called *At Home* (Jonathan Cape, 1958), one of my favourite autobiographies. The essay is called *The Curate of Clyro*. It begins:

'The word was not always typewritten ... To receive one morning from a man in Dorset a couple of old notebooks which he said were specimens of his uncle's diary was not in itself therefore to feel pressure on the trigger of expectation: it was only when I began to read them that the pressure was perceptible.

What I saw made me send for the rest of the diary. It was contained in twenty-two notebooks closely written, as if for economy, in a cramped, angular hand characteristic of the period, which was the mid-Victorian, and was the work of a country clergyman who had died before he was forty. Like most diaries it was largely trivial and of ephemeral significance, but unlike most diaries it was the work of a writer of character and sensibility. I believed that if it were winnowed it might be made into a book of more than ordinary interest and of some importance. I undertook to edit it myself, and the process took up much of my time for three years. *Kilvert's Diary* was published by Jonathan Cape in three volumes during the years 1938, 1939 and 1940, and soon became famous. If it had been published as it stood it would have filled nine stoutish volumes, running to well over a million words. Not one of those words went unweighed by me. I do not think this unique manuscript could easily have fallen into more interested hands.'

Last week before coming to Hereford I read it all again, and for the first time since my youth. Now it had to compete, as it were, with all my studies of rural life, and of the literature of the Church of England, and with the geniuses of the English countryside, Thomas Hardy, Richard Jefferies and Gilbert White, etc. But all I can say, having turned the last page, is that *Kilvert's Diary* is richer, more beautiful, more strange, more impressive and more challenging than I could have imagined it to be. It has remained wonderfully fresh and complex, and of course, wonderfully edited by someone who had been the same age as the Diarist when he undertook this work.

Published diaries are apt to be puddings from which the reader pulls out the plums, though not this one. I now believe that Francis Kilvert saw his Diary as a work of art, and not as the usual collection of daily recordings, and that he created it as a 'writer' and not as daily jottings. While outwardly at home in the little world he inhabited, and being un-shy and extrovert, like all artists and writers, he was essentially enthralled by the inner life when it came to his daily encounters with the page.

Why do I keep this voluminous journal? he asked himself. *I can hardly tell. Partly because life appears to me such a curious and wonderful thing that it almost seems a pity that even such a humble and uneventful life as mine should altogether pass away without some such record as this...* It was the autumn of 1874 and he had come in from one of his long tramps. It had been for him full of sounds, the hoarse belling of a deer, the nervous fluttering of a coot, the wild cry of swans – and the clicking of the reels of two fishermen. Distantly he had listened to the *merry voices of the Marquis's children at play*.

The following day, Wednesday 4 November, Kilvert summed-up the passing year in a talk at the village school. He spoke of the funeral of David Livingstone, the visit of the Czar, of shipwrecks and bombings. And I was reminded of a story of my father's – born in 1898 in which the village schoolmaster, Mr Spurgeon, would read from the newspaper to the unlettered Suffolk farm workers

every Saturday morning. Kilvert's account of a visit to William Barnes, the Dorset poet, suggests to us the kind of literary/clerical life he might have had were it not for his father's discouragement. *Walking up and down the terrace with my father telling him about the poet Barnes and discussing with him the advisability of publishing a book of my own poems. I wish to do so.* (my underlining). *He rather discouraged the idea.* He would have more than discouraged his son's Diary, had he known of its existence, one realises. Thus we have to read what happened at the Reverend Robert Kilvert's school at Langley in Augustus Hare's disturbing *Memorials of a Quiet Life*. Francis read this book whilst seated under a linden tree one burning hot day. *As I sat there my mind went through a fierce struggle. Right or wrong? The conquered, the sin was repented and put away and the rustle of the wind and the melodious murmur of innumerable bees in the hives overhead suddenly seemed to me to take the sound of distant music, organs. Looking up, as I sat reading under the lime I pitied the poor haymakers toiling in the burning Common where it seemed to be raining fire.*

Kilvert's Diary, like that of Dorothy Wordsworth (which he would not have read as it remained unpublished in his lifetime) does far more than record events. It places all his sensitivity and emotion, and self-knowledge, within the daily framework of the humdrum. While he was visiting William Barnes in Dorset no one told him that another writer in his early thirties lived just down the lane, Thomas Hardy. He would edit his own Diary eventually, burning what in old age he saw as youthful indiscretions. If only the whole journal had fallen into the hands of a William Plomer.

Socially, the *Diary* could not be richer. When Kilvert goes 'villaging' as he calls it, the country people adore him. It is *Mr Kilvert ... Mr Kilvert ...* all the way. It is two distinct worlds, one of leisure, one of toil, and we are apt to believe that we know them via novels and social historians. But then we read the *Diary* and it is as though we were clambering about on the Welsh border and being drawn into the squalor and the tennis parties, into the very weather of the 1870s. Kilvert, though no early socialist, as many of the clergy were, wonders why a neighbour should have three days holiday a year, and he, most days off. Unknown to him, the great agricultural depression has arrived and will not go away until the Second World War.

Strangely, *Kilvert's Diary* is among the most read books of World War Two and due to its bulk had to be turned into a single volume for soldiers' small packs. William Plomer reduced the masterpiece without lessening it in any way and his further selection was published in 1944. It shared its autobiographical power with another journal, that of Denton Welch. Everyone read Kilvert while the war was on, and Denton Welch when it ended. Both diarists were in their thirties, Kilvert strong and healthy, Welch an invalid. William Plomer was thirty-four when those little volumes arrived and he began his 'winnowing' of their contents. Kilvert's nephew told him that his uncle was 'sleek and glossy and gentle, rather like a nice Newfoundland dog' and that he had 'a curious power of attracting' and 'a strange and terrible gift of exciting love'.

Most diarists question why they do it. They sense perhaps that some kind of apology to themselves is due and wonder about their self-centredness. Strong guilt builds up if a day or a week is missed. Diaries have been called a kind of looking-glass, which at first reflects the writer but ends up by reflecting the reader. Some diaries declare that they exist for posterity and are a true history of a particular time and place as seen by the writer. Some are all about the pleasures of secrecy. Some record the inner life. Some, it has been said, have taken the place of the confessional – or in our day the psychiatrist's couch. All contain the magic of the frozen moment, like a photograph. One of the reasons why diaries are spellbinding, even when they only deal with the everyday and commonplace, is that they admit us, not to the past but to seemingly endless variations of the present. The diarist is an interventionist, the solitary transmuter of what would in the ordinary way have been perishable. Without diaries almost everything we do or say or think or feel, especially the latter, would slide into oblivion.

It has been a great privilege to come to Hereford as President of the Kilvert Society, to see the beautiful new windows to Thomas Traherne in the Cathedral and to walk briefly in the Welsh hills.

KILVERT AND WALES

By Dafydd Ifans (National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth)*

PART III (Conclusion)

For Part I, see Journal No 21, September 2006 and for Part II see No 22, March 2007.

Kilvert's interest in Welsh folklore, traditions and customs

Frederick Grice has discussed Kilvert's interest in Radnorshire folklore in his book *Francis Kilvert and his World*⁷⁵ where he quotes a few examples of references to Kilvert having gathered a great deal of information on Radnorshire folklore.⁷⁶ The resultant manuscript was later published by Mrs Essex Hope, the diarist's niece, in *The Occult Review* for September 1921. She later admitted to having destroyed this collection of folklore as well as most of the diary. It is difficult to see what justification she had for destroying Kilvert's notes on folklore as they would not have been private or sensitive in any way. Many of the traditions which she lists are referred to in the diary, e.g. the kneeling of the oxen on old Christmas Eve, or the offering of money on the grave shovel to the officiating parson, but there are also references to customs which are not mentioned in the diary. One such item is a description of the Mari Lwyd ritual which was not present in the unedited diaries according to a personal assurance given by William Plomer to Frederick Grice. This is the account of the Mari Lwyd ritual which Kilvert witnessed at Clyro:

It was between the Christmases, and at eight o'clock I was sitting with some other people around the fire, when we heard tramping outside, and a loud knocking on the door, which was locked. There was the sound of a flute a moment later, and a man began singing – I could not distinguish the words – then a few minutes later another man, inside the room, went to the

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door and sang what was apparently an answer to the song without. Then the door was thrown open, and in walked about a dozen people, headed by a most extraordinary apparition, an animal covered with a flowing sheet, and surmounted by a horse's skull to which a bridle was attached. This apparition, I saw a moment later, was really a man covered with a sheet; his head was bowed down and a skull had been fastened on to it. The people sang, collected some money and then went off...⁷⁷

Another contemporary list of local customs and sayings was kept by Edith Burham Thomas of Llanthomas, Llanigon parish, the sister of Daisy Thomas, one of the young ladies who won the heart and attentions of Francis Kilvert for a while. Edith Thomas's list has survived, and it was also published in the journal *Folk Lore* in December 1913 and contains information which is very similar to that recorded by the diarist.

One of the most interesting references to folk customs is something Hannah Whitney mentioned to Kilvert about her youth: 'When she lived by Whitney's brook three Cardiganshire women used to pass by the house every March walking to London to weed gardens.'⁷⁸ This is a reference to the seasonal migration of female labour from rural Wales during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to seek employment in the parks and gardens of London. They were called '*Merched y Gerddi*' in Welsh (The Garden Girls) and most of them came from the Tregaron area of mid-Cardiganshire. There was a great deal of poverty in rural Wales at the time with many surplus workers whose labours were better deployed elsewhere. Tregaron was a focal point of the cattle-droving industry, and as such was a centre for the exchange of news concerning London. It is, therefore, likely that this seasonal migration began as a result of the drovers bringing news of the need for summer workers in the market gardens around London to collect fruit and vegetables and to convey them to market in the city, as well as weeding the gardens of large houses and public parks. These women would walk over two hundred miles to London on foot, taking a week to get there, and would be joined by others *en route* from parts of north Brecknockshire, places such as Builth Wells, Llanwrtyd Wells and Abergwesyn. They would then follow the drovers' routes through Radnorshire, and this is why they would have passed Hannah Whitney's home. This practice is discussed in detail by John Williams-Davies in the journal *Folk Life*, and again in Welsh in the journal *Ceredigion*.⁷⁹

Among other Welsh practices and rituals recorded by Kilvert is the collecting of *Calennig* on New Year's Day. This is a form of wassailing which still survives today. On the first of January, children would tour the neighbourhood wishing everyone a 'Happy New Year' in song with appropriate verses. This would originally have been a fertility custom by which the increase of crops, animals and the well-being of the farmer's family was wished for, and for which a gift of food, or later money, would be given to the carollers. We are told of the death of Hannah Whitney's mother which followed the visit of two girls to the house before noon on New Year's Day. It was considered lucky to see boys or men, especially those with dark hair, on New Year's Day before noon, but very unlucky to see girls, and it appears that Hannah Whitney's mother took to her bed and died within a fortnight of this incident.⁸⁰

Many of the customs recorded by Kilvert are discussed by Trefor M. Owen, in his *Welsh Folk Customs* (Cardiff, 1959). He mentions the tradition of dressing graves with flowers at Easter. In Clyro, this was done on Easter Eve, while in Welsh-speaking Wales it was more common on Palm Sunday (*Sul y Blodau*, Flowering Sunday). A description of the custom in the Vale of Glamorgan on Easter Eve is given in Mr Owen's book:

All the village was there, engaged, after the old custom, in trimming and adorning the graves of their deceased relatives. Some were raising the sides with fresh turf, and putting fresh earth upon the surface; and others whitewashed the stones at the ends; while the women planted rosemary and rue, and the girls brought baskets of spring flowers, crocuses, daffodils, and primroses, which were placed in somewhat fantastic figures upon all the graves.⁸¹

Kilvert describes the graves in Clyro churchyard being decorated on Easter Eve with the local children scouring the neighbouring countryside for primroses.⁸²

Mr Owen also discusses the practice of visiting farmhouses to gather foodstuffs, and Kilvert refers to the tradition of gathering milk for making puddings and pancakes against Bryngwyn and Clyro Feasts between the two feasts of Michaelmass (*sic*). We read that:

The old custom is still kept up in Bryngwyn and at some hill farms in Clyro, but it is honoured at comparatively few houses now, and scarcely anywhere in Clyro Vale. Wern Vawr is one of the best houses to go to, a hospitable old-fashioned house where they keep up the old customs.⁸³

Kilvert refers to '*Nos Calan Gaeaf*', the Welsh Halloween, and describes one of the ways the young girls would attempt to discover who their future boyfriends would be: 'A wild wet night for the girls to go out to sow the hemp seed and pitch dark. They can hardly see their phantom lovers mowing after them tonight.'⁸⁴ Trefor Owen lists several examples of various ways in which these predictions concerning marriage were sought at Halloween. Reference is also made in the diary to the '*Gŵyl Nos*' or Feast Night which was held in the home of a deceased person before the burial of the body. These meetings which contained fairly light-hearted singing and bantering during the eighteenth century with reports of the corpse being dragged around the house and even up the chimney, took a more respectable form following the impact of the Methodist Revival.

The schoolmaster tells me that in Wales they have a custom of holding what is called '*Gŵyl Nos*' (Night Feast or Feast Night) in the house of the dead the night before the burial. The relations, friends and neighbours assemble and pass the night alternately in prayer and reading the Bible. It is in fact a Wake – but how different from the Irish Wake.⁸⁵

The diarist was obviously conversant with some of the old Welsh legends; for example, he says at one point: 'A yellow and white greyhound came to meet us like Gelert with a bloody mouth,'⁸⁶ being a reference to Prince Llywelyn's dog, Gelert, who was found with blood on its mouth and an upturned cradle containing the prince's son – the story, of course, which is connected with the village of Beddgelert in Snowdonia.

Welsh records and sources relating to the diary

At the National Library of Wales are preserved parish registers for most of the Radnorshire parishes and bishops' transcripts for every parish except those in Hereford diocese. These records furnish us with details of christenings, marriages and burials, and often corroborate the facts given by Francis Kilvert in his diary. Mention has already been made to the death of Hannah Whitney's mother who was seized suddenly with putrid fever one New Year's Day. That happened in 1805 as the Bryngwyn bishops' transcripts show, and it appears to have been an exceptionally cruel winter for the family as four members died of the fever before April was out:

27 January	Jane Whitney	spinster	50 years old	fever
10 February	Walter Whitney	labourer	83 years old	fever
22 February	Hannah Whitney	spinster	48 years old	fever
18 April	Samuel Whitney	lunatic	12 years old	fever

In the Bryngwyn records also is a christening record on the 27 January 1784 of Hannah, illegitimate daughter of Hannah Whitney – this child being the Hannah Whitney known to Kilvert, who was eighty-six years old when the diary begins. A search has been undertaken in the Llanlleonfel marriage register for a record of the intriguing story about a man who remarried after his first wife's death, and the first wife's lace handkerchief was found on the altar rail during the second ceremony, the inference being that the church had not been used meanwhile. Unfortunately, two successive entries citing the same bridegroom have not been found to corroborate the story.⁸⁷

In the Sandford diary we have a reference to the diarist visiting one of the houses in Bird's Nest on 15 May 1870, where he found: 'Emily Evans ... in bed and in violent indignation because the neighbours had said she was in the family way and growing large.'⁸⁸ As it happens, the neighbours were proved right, because on 14 August of that year in the Clyro parish register there is a baptismal entry relating to Henry, son of Emily Evans, a single woman. Later in the diary, on 26 September the same year, there is a reference to a paternity suit concerning the same birth which was dismissed, because the girl's mother had allowed her daughter to stay up late with the young man in question after the parents had retired to bed.⁸⁹

The diocesan records for St Davids, which are also kept at Aberystwyth in the Church in Wales archives, include a rich array of documents concerning the administration of ecclesiastical matters. One example is a Visitation Call Book for 1870 which has come down to us. Kilvert, in the Sandford diary, tells of a journey to Brecon to attend a Visitation. The relevant call book has survived in the Church in Wales collection and lists the clergymen who were present and those who were absent.⁹⁰ Visitation records also provide us with additional testimony to the ruinous state of some of the church buildings noted in the diary. Two such ruins recorded in the Harvey diary are Bryngwyn and Llanbedr Painscastle churches, and the churchwardens' returns among the queries and answers for 1869 in the St Davids diocesan records endorse what Francis Kilvert and his brother had witnessed.⁹¹

Other corroborative sources which are held at Aberystwyth include wills, local newspapers and printed electoral registers for the area. Then there is the rich Llysdyman collection with its information concerning the Venables family, a member of which was the Revd Richard Lister Venables, Kilvert's vicar and mentor at Clyro.

Conclusion

The Revd David Lockwood in his concise biography of Francis Kilvert writes thus of him:

[Kilvert] loved Wales with a passion that made him think that he had Welsh blood in his veins; and so he did, but it was very distant. Perhaps to be Welsh is not only a matter of birth, or even language, but also a certain temperament; and attunement with mountains and the accountable but also unaccountable mystery of the lonely valleys. All this Kilvert conveys with that particular quality which can hamper an artist and writer: English charm.⁹²

Whatever his aims in keeping a diary, Francis Kilvert succeeded in producing a minor classic, 'one of the jewels of English literature and a unique cameo of a life that has vanished,' as one critic described it.⁹³ William Plomer saw Kilvert's achievement as a gift for noting the ordinary things of life:

Everyday life did not seem to him ordinary or humdrum; even what he called the humble and uneventful seemed to him 'curious and wonderful', therefore enjoyable. His responses to it were evidently more alert and sensitive than those of the people around him. ...This was the impulse of the artist.⁹⁴

Part of this alertness and sensitivity was the diarist's appreciation of the Welsh character and way of life which surrounded him, although he was stationed, as it were, at the border outpost of Clyro. That is why he is extolled in the *Oxford Companion to the Literature of Wales* as an accepted Welsh author writing in the English language; it is also the reason for his inclusion in the Cymmrodorion Society's *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* as an important adopted son of Wales who wrote English prose of the highest order.

References

⁷⁵ Frederick Grice, *op. cit.*, 159-62 and 212-16.

⁷⁶ e.g. Plomer II, 252-3 and 328.

⁷⁷ Frederick Grice, *op. cit.*, 161-2.

⁷⁸ Plomer II, 78.

⁷⁹ John Williams-Davies, *Merched y Gerddi: a Seasonal Migration of Female Labour from rural Wales*, *Folk Life* 15 (1977), 12-23; and *idem*, 'Merched y Gerddi' – mudwyr tymhorol o Geredigion', *Ceredigion* VIII (1978), 291-303.

⁸⁰ Plomer I, 252-3.

⁸¹ Trefor M. Owen, *Welsh Folk Customs* (Cardiff, 1959), 81.

- ⁸² Plomer I, 90-4.
⁸³ Plomer I, 246.
⁸⁴ Plomer II, 77.
⁸⁵ Plomer I, 350.
⁸⁶ Plomer III, 144. Another reference to Gelert is found in the Harvey diary, Aberystwyth II, 8, where Mr Jones of Wern Vawr 'brought in two more dogs at tea-time, a rough, whity-brown, half sheep-dog, half terrier, and a noble yellow greyhound named Smoker, nearly as high as the table, worthy to be a descendant of Gelert.'
⁸⁷ Plomer II, 363. Another example in Aberystwyth II, 21, tells of Kilvert being called to Penrheol to christen a sick child: 'I could see nothing particular the matter with the child, but the old woman said it was ill, so I baptized it by the name George. Then I took a note of the names and particulars, wished the funny little old woman "Goodbye", and left the old grey lonely farmhouse...' The Clyro baptismal register carries an entry for George Thomas, son of William and Mary Thomas of Penrheol, labourer, on 20 June 1870. Baby George was flourishing at nine months old by the time of the census in 1871.
⁸⁸ Aberystwyth I, 50.
⁸⁹ Plomer I, 233.
⁹⁰ NLW Church in Wales Records SD/VC/79
⁹¹ Bryngwyn Church: 'As the Church is altogether out of repair the Churchwarden considers it useless to try to answer such questions until it has been repaired. James Williams,' NLW Church in Wales Records SD/QA/225, 421; Llanbedr Painscastle Church: 'Church stands in great need of been Restord.' NLW Church in Wales Records SD/QA/225, 556.
⁹² David Lockwood, *Border Lines – Francis Kilvert* (Bridgend, 1990), 16.
⁹³ J.M. Brereton, 'Curate of Clyro', *Blackwood's Magazine*, September 1977, 233.
⁹⁴ William Plomer, *Electric Delights* (London, 1978), 133.

THE MORRES BROTHERS

By Dave Hepworth (Bakewell)

I should begin by stating that this piece is entirely speculative and obsessional – my wife's view – but I believe that it casts a small light on a very dim corner of the Diary. It definitely identifies the Morres brothers, the Hill sisters whom they married, Edward Hill and 'Francis' Hill and locates them firmly from census records and provides information on their families.

Further, it raises some issues about transcription, both Plomer's and census enumerators', and alerts us to the potential of computers to conduct complex searches with amazing ease.

It was the urge to research my family history which led me into using the computer to help, and I was struck by the awesome power of modern technology to search records at a rate which would have been unthinkable even five years ago. Census information, records of births, marriages and deaths, and now even phone books – all are available online. Searching has never been easier, cheaper, or quicker – and it is getting better all the time.

Barry Smith's 1992 piece 'A Walk to Britford', reprinted in the Journal in September, mentions the Morres brothers, 'soldier and priest' who married the Hill sisters of Britford Vicarage. Looking in the Journals, I could not find anything on the Morres brothers, and my Kilvert Who's Who was silent, so I thought I might use the computer to see what I could find.

This family was much troubled by spelling – other people's! Morris or Morres? Francis or Frances? Elliot or Eliot? Enumerators were often inaccurate in recording information, and across the years the family appears with either spelling, as Frances ducks in and out of sight in both male and female forms, and Eliots are allotted different numbers of consonants. Even Kilvert – or was it William Plomer? – does it. On 27 August 1875, Kilvert began his memorable walk to Stonehenge with Morris, and later that day Major Fisher invited Morres and myself to come to his hawking lodge.

This slight confusion makes searching tricky but exciting. Here goes.

The Morres Brothers

The two Morres brothers were Arthur Phillip and Elliot J Morres, sons of Beatrice and Eliot Morres, who appears in the census with one 'L', while his son has two. Eliot senior was born around 1795, and enjoyed a military career. He is described in the 1871 census as a Commander in the Royal Navy.

Born in Reading in 1832, Elliot J was the soldier. Elliot J was an Oxford graduate, and was, like his father, a military man. The rather blurred page of the 1881 census notes that he had formerly been a Lieutenant of the 47th Regiment.

Arthur Phillip was born in 1836 in Wokingham. He was the priest and Morres minor. In 1861, aged 25, he was boarding with the schoolmaster in Bishops Lydeard where he himself was curate. More of him later.



Portrait in Britford Church

The Hill sisters of Britford Vicarage

Richard Hill was born in 1801, and appears in the first census (1841) as 'Clerk Curate' of Britford. Richard had married Mary Barton (born 1811) and by 1841 their family was already growing. Mary's mother, also called Mary Barton (born 1786), lived with the family.

The Hill family was large by today's standards, and eventually eleven children are recorded in the census records. The first child, John, was born in 1828. The second was Susan P. Hill, born in 1830, followed by her sister Mary Ann in 1835. They were followed by Robert (1837), Walter (1839), Jane B. (1841), William (1843), Frances J. (1845), Geoffrey (1847), Alfred (1849) and Arthur (1851). The regularity of the dates between the children's births suggests that there may have been an additional child somewhere between Susan's birth in 1830, and Mary Ann's in 1835, and that this child died in infancy.



Tablet in Britford Church

By 1851, Richard Hill was Vicar of Britford. His mother-in-law was still a member of the household, but, with his youngest son aged just ten months, there is no sign of his wife, though his marital status was recorded as 'married', rather than 'widower'. Where was his wife? Had she fallen ill following the birth of their latest child? Or had she perhaps already died, and for some reason Richard's marital status on the census was inaccurate? None of the above.

Mary Ann Hill, described as 'Clergyman's wife', is living with her three daughters in Bournemouth. Both she and her husband each employed two servants one of whom, Eliza Bugg, remained with the family for at least the twenty years between 1841 and 1861.

By 1861 Richard is described as a widower and the family was reunited at Britford. His daughter Mary Ann, aged 26, is described as 'B.A. Oxford'. By 1871, Richard disappears from the census, and his son-in-law, Arthur Phillip Morres, had succeeded him as vicar of Britford.

Marriages

When such research was more arduous than it is now, the indefatigable Teresa Williams discovered the 1862 marriage of Mary Ann Hill and Arthur Phillip Morres.

Elliot J Morres had already married her sister, Susan P Hill, and in 1881 they were living at Raglan Villas in Bath, with daughters Mary Ann (aged 22) and Susan E (aged 20). Also living with them was Frances Hill, who is described as 'wife's sister'.

The two families were united exactly as Kilvert describes: two brothers marrying two sisters.

Francis Hill

On 26 May 1875 (Vol. 3 p192) Kilvert finds *the Morreses at dinner and Francis Hill with them*. Francis was Frances J. Hill, the younger sister of Susan and Mary Ann. Alone of her siblings, she was born at Coombe Bissett in 1845. Dogged by her final syllable, Frances wanders through the census records, appearing in 1851, living with her mother and sisters in Bournemouth. Ten years later, she is still at home, as might be expected at age sixteen. By 1871, she is living with Arthur Phillip and his wife, and in 1881 changes teams, living this time with Elliot and Susan Morres, with whom she remained until at least 1891, when, aged 46 and unmarried, she is described as 'living on own means'. In 1901 she is living with her brother Walter in Oxfordshire, where he was a 'Clergyman of the Church of England'.

Soldiers and Priests

It seems likely that Elliot and Arthur Morres were not the first brothers in the family to be soldier and priest. Eliot Morres senior had been born in Isleworth. A Thomas Morres was also born in Isleworth in 1796. They may well have been brothers. Thomas was Chaplain of Lucas' Hospital and Perpetual Curate of Wokingham in 1851, and by 1871 is described as Rector of Wokingham and Master of Lucas' Hospital.

Missing Link

Let's go back to Kilvert's Stonehenge expedition with 'Morris'. It is 1875, and Kilvert is staying at Britford with 'the Morreses'. The Morreses in this case were not the brothers, but Arthur Phillip and Mary Ann Morres. Arthur Phillip had been vicar at Britford since at least 1871. As they walked through the meadows towards Salisbury, Arthur Phillip told stories of Edward Hill hunting grizzly bears. The Revd Edward Hill was Rector



Britford: John Day addresses the group.
(February 2007)

Photos by Val Dixon

of Ashurst in Sussex between at least 1871 and 1891. In 1871 he is living at the Rectory with his brother, Alfred Briscoe Hill. Born in 1833, Edward fills the gap between his sisters Susan (1830) and Mary (1835) that the census information threw up. So why was he missing in 1851? A quick check shows him at Magdalen College, Oxford, aged nineteen.

The army, the navy, the church and the stage. The Morres family had links with the first three. If any of them were actors, I have not tracked them down yet. And I have no clue as to when Edward was shooting grizzly bears. Even computer technology has its limits.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

GLEANINGS FROM GLASCWM

By R.I. Morgan (Hay-on-Wye)

The following is part of an article which appeared in the KS Newsletter of February 1980. It is reprinted here as an 'appetiser' for the Society's visit to Glascwm on 23 September next.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the village of Clyro, over the past century, has changed more in the last ten years than in the previous ninety. Had Kilvert returned there in 1969 most of what he saw would have been familiar to him. Were he to return today he would have some difficulty in recognising it as the place he had known. A good deal of the surrounding countryside, too, has changed, and though not so dramatically as Clyro itself, it is changing nevertheless: roads are being widened, bridges rebuilt, hedges are gradually giving way to wire fences, more and more bungalows are replacing the old worn-out farmhouses, and caravan-sites begin to obtrude themselves.

Some of this work, especially that carried out by the local authorities, is being done in a heedless and brutal manner, as for instance at Newchurch, where the County Council, in widening (for no apparent reason) the old stone bridge over the River Arrow, has completely destroyed what was formerly a charming and picturesque corner of the village.

Further on into the Radnorshire hinterland there are fortunately places which have been relatively untouched, and one such of these is the tiny village of Glascwm, which lies some ten or eleven miles from Clyro and about five from Newchurch. Along the approach to Glascwm from Newchurch the road for the last few hundred yards is level and runs between high hedges, affording little intimation of what lies ahead. Suddenly the hedges end and the road plunges downwards. At the same time the view opens wide and there, in its deep, broad valley, some half-mile ahead and nearly three hundred feet below, lies the village of Glascwm. (See photo in *Journal* No 11, page 14).

It is a tiny place; in fact, were it not for its church it could hardly be called a village at all. On the left, as you enter, is the old school, closed as such in 1945 and now a youth hostel. Just beyond is the old vicarage, where Kilvert's 'Mr Marsden' lived. To the right is the main group of cottages, hardly numbering more than half-a-dozen. Some distance farther on, to the right, is the church, with its large circular graveyard, while still farther on, this time on the other side of the road, is the Yat, a dwelling of modest dimensions and of some considerable antiquity. The name Yat, or Yatt as it was also spelt in olden times, probably derives from the Welsh word 'iet', which means 'gate'; there is also an old English word, 'yate', also signifying 'gate'. At all events the Yat stands appropriately at the western approach to the village.

Nearly all the buildings in the village are built of the local Silurian shale, most of the walls now being whitewashed. Probably in Kilvert's time the roofs would have been covered with stone tiles; now, less picturesquely, most are slated. There is now a recently erected house amongst the old cottages, which though of modern materials is so coloured as to fit in more sympathetically with its neighbours than the only other modern building, the staring red-brick village hall, which was built just before the last war. The only real and painful blemish, however, architectural or otherwise, is a hideous erection on the tiny village green, where an old stone-built shed of some sort has been converted, with the aid of raw concrete blocks, into a pair of garages.

Apart from this miserable edifice, the new house and the village hall, the scene can have changed very little since Kilvert walked there from Clyro in May 1871. A good many, even, of the sycamores he mentions as lining the roadway are still there. How enchanted he must have been, after striding down that long steep hill, to find himself in this tiny and remote village, some one thousand feet above sea level, and yet dwarfed on all sides by the green swelling hills rising up another six or seven hundred feet above it. Even to him it must have seemed a timeless place; even more so does it seem to us today.

Glascwm was for many centuries a place of some importance, a fact belied by its present somnolence. In the fourteenth century a licence was granted to hold a market there. It was on an important drovers' road, and at various times there have been no fewer than four public houses there – there is none of course today, though there was one there when Kilvert made his visit and for some time afterwards. In 1847 the population of the parish (as distinct from the village itself) was 561.

Kilvert's visit provides one of the best and longest passages in the *Diary*. Mr Marsden, the vicar, whom he met that day, emerges from Kilvert's pen as a jolly, yet forceful character. [He] died in 1883, aged 79; a red granite cross in the churchyard marks his grave.

Kilvert mentions the Yat: *Squire Beavan's House or as the Squire tries to call it, Glascwm Court*. He also mentions a small cemetery, which lies across the road from the churchyard, not far from the entrance to the Yat: ... *the Beavan family have a private burial ground, unconsecrated, where a number of them are buried*.

[In this cemetery] there is one grave set apart from the rest. It is the last resting place of someone else who appears in the pages of

Kilvert's Diary: John Beavan Vaughan, who died in 1916. He was the son of David Vaughan, Vicar of Newchurch, and in Kilvert's time farmed Llwyngwillim in Clyro parish. How did John Vaughan, son of an Anglican clergyman, brother of Kilvert's Emmeline, come to be buried in the Baptist burial-ground of the Lewises and Beavans at Glascwm? ... [It] is a mystery.

It is said that when he was buried the vicar who was conducting the funeral read the burial service from the churchyard on the other side of the road. John's wife, Lucretia (of the family of Dyke of Cabalva), is buried not with her husband but in the churchyard across the way, together with two of her daughters. She died in 1934, aged about 87. She had at least five children, two sons and three daughters, of whom one, Mrs Armstrong, inherited the estate, or what was left of it, when Lucretia died. As related by my wife,* one of Lucretia's sons, John Dyke Vaughan, acted as bailiff to his sister, Mrs Armstrong. John Dyke Vaughan also figures in *Kilvert's Diary*, being in fact christened by Kilvert on St Valentine's Eve (13 February), 1870, at Bettws Chapel: *The baby was baptised in ice, which was broken and swimming about in the font.*

John Dyke Vaughan lived on to a ripe old age at the Yat until he was taken ill and died in Talgarth Mental Hospital in 1959. Mrs Armstrong, who lived at Winforton Court, Herefordshire, survived him by several years.



Glascwm: The Way to the Church

THE KILVERT PILGRIMAGE

By Janet and Mark Robinson (Hay-on-Wye)

30 July 2006

The eighth Kilvert Pilgrimage no less. Was it really eight years ago that the Revd Humphrey Fisher, with imaginative inspiration, first instituted this day of refreshment in the Radnorshire Hills?



'Take me to your leader!'

We, ourselves, were unable to go on the 'Wet Pilgrimage' of 2005 which has accumulated so much folklore it might be compared with the 'Frozen Messiah' at Hereford Cathedral long ago but not forgotten. Having heard the tales of the sopping boots, the rain down necks, the ruined umbrellas, we were grateful that the 30 July was dry save for a showery reminder after Morning Prayer at Newchurch. That service was sober yet joyful and was dedicated to Peggy Tuely, a parishioner who had died two weeks before.

After coffee we emerged for the graveside remembrance for Emmeline Vaughan, the pretty child beloved by Kilvert and a reminder of those many children who died young, their lives unfulfilled. Yet it seemed almost an indulgence to lay our posies on the quiet turf surrounded by peaceful fields and hills when, even as we prayed, we knew that in Lebanon and many other lands, children's lives were being fractured or snuffed out. Perhaps Emmeline should be regarded as a poignant symbol for today as well as yesterday.

Musing on these things we strode up the lane and over the hills towards St Michael's, Bryngwyn. Humphrey had offered the opportunity for a silent pilgrimage but most of us opted more for the camaraderie of the *Canterbury Tales* than a Silent Way of Perfection. No, that is an exaggeration. There was nothing as bawdy as Chaucer but a genuine pleasure in meeting strangers, in the ebb and flow of talk, the exchanges of thought and personal histories so that by the end of the day there were no strangers. We had the good fortune this time to meet Sara with whom we had a church and neighbourly past in

common, though it was separated by almost thirty years in time. Sara did not tell us but her concern for Nepalese street children had taken her on a sponsored climb of Everest and who, soon after our pilgrimage, was the only woman amongst a band of cyclists riding from Land's End to John O' Groats to raise money for earthquake relief. (Good thing the Pilgrimage was not a race!)

* See KS Newsletter for September 1975.

The old tag *solvitur ambulando* fits this pilgrimage. Perhaps *solvitur*: 'working out, finding out, unknotting, freeing' applied to many of us. A patch of harebells, the mew of buzzards, the nervous joy of the bounding collie who had never before been off the farm all added to the immediacy, to the concentration of the mind upon the walk and allowed us to forget other preoccupations.

In the cool damp of St Michael's we gathered for a devotional service of music, readings and silence. The rippling sunlit warm flow of the harp music performed so beautifully by Felicity Jones floated up amongst the lyre-shaped wood supports for the rough beams of the nave and the complicated structure of the chancel roof. (Felicity is now a first-year undergraduate at Christchurch College, Oxford. Will she be free to play for us again in 2007?). The readings were apt, for Humphrey's selection of poems, hymns and prayers for the day is full of good things on which to ponder. The silence though did not settle gently like silk. Being Friends and used to silence, we still find the 'steeple people' unaccustomed to manage for long without words. After the service we went into the parish hall to have our packed lunches and were given hot drinks and a warm welcome.

Rested and relaxed we set out for St Peter's, Llanbedr. Soon the pilgrims were strung out over about half a mile like knotted string lying on the contours of the hills. Some wandered, a few were temporarily lost – perhaps a human sheepdog should be nominated to round up the wayward. Eventually we formed up and strode down to the church set in its circular churchyard, and once the cure of David Price, the Solitary. There we enjoyed the exuberance of the children taking part, and the generous Radnorshire tea provided by the parishioners, which we shared sitting among the tombstones.

Last lap. We marched sturdily along the lane and down through the fields to the quiet and solitary Llanddewifach set humbly beneath the Begwns. We said Evensong together and appreciated the address by Meriel Oliver who likened our day of pilgrimage to that of our pilgrimage in life; reminding us that we travel hopefully and illustrating her theme from Kilvert. She took us on his visit to Bristol where another little girl had charmed him. She was *barefooted and hungry* and Kilvert gave her a bun which she received with a *happy grateful smile*. But it was not that which had caught Meriel's attention. It was Kilvert's confidence in the hope of the life hereafter in that he commented, having not caught the child's name: *Never mind. I shall know some day*. She suggested that Kilvert's intense, acute and truthful observation of people and of nature prepares him and us for the *everlasting Spring and the birds and flowers of Paradise*. And we thought again of all unknown children whose snapped-off lives may yet find fulfilment.

Perhaps the true climax of our day of pilgrimage was standing in the little churchyard of Llanddewifach with its partial circle of ancient yews, and contemplating that, though the church itself was completely rebuilt in 1860, it was:

'almost certainly built on the site where a Celtic hermit once lived, probably in the seventh century and where later his shrine became venerated as a place of pilgrimage and worship' (this taken from the church notice board).

We had walked in holy ground all day – in the gentle and remote beauty of the Radnorshire Hills – but perhaps none more holy than that churchyard where we could stand embraced in the silence of God.

THE PILGRIMAGE SERMON By Meriel Oliver (Glascwm)

*God be in my head and in my understanding
God be in our mouths and in our speaking
God be in our hearts and in our thinking*

A pilgrimage is always, in a way, a life in miniature, a picture, an enactment of our life's journey in manageable time. It is a time of looking back: we commemorated Emmeline at the beginning of today's pilgrimage; a time of paying attention as we travel, and a time of looking forward to our ultimate destination. I am struck, in this connection, particularly by the poems of Edwin Muir and Christina Rossetti that we read this morning with their curious ambiguity and mixture of foreboding and reassurance. There is a note of panic in the line: 'Back, I must travel back' and of stern inexorability in 'None goes there, none'. There are comparable notes in Christina Rossetti's: 'Then must I knock or call when just in sight? They will not keep you waiting at that door'. Because I know both Edwin Muir and Christina Rossetti to have been devout Christians I can find reassurance in their poems and hold it in tension with the foreboding which is certainly present in those lines.

All this set me thinking, as I sat in Glascwm where Francis Kilvert visited in May 1871, thinking about Kilvert's approach to death



A pause on the Pilgrims' Way, not to Santiago but to Llanddewi!
Photos by Mark Robinson

and his understanding of the Christian hope, the Christian attitude to death. There does not appear to be a great deal about the Christian hope in the *Diary* though there are very many entries about death.

It is clear that Kilvert took his obligation, as a parish clergyman, to prepare and assist people in dying, very seriously. There are several entries in which he records that he has read to sick people, prayed with them and made sure they could say the Lord's Prayer, and there is that sad entry which shows his lovely courageous honesty: the entry of Wednesday, 16 March, 1870:

I never pass the house without thinking of that afternoon when after neglecting Margaret Thomas's dying son for a long time I went to call, and was inexpressibly shocked to find he had died only ten minutes before.

But there is not much that I can find in his *Diary*, which is explicitly about the Christian hope – of life after death, of Resurrection. An exception to this is the entry, which deals with the unfairness of life:

Wednesday, 24 September, 1873

.... I met Herriman the porter returning through the lovely morning from his night work at the station and I could not help thinking of the difference between my lot and his, and how much more enjoyment I have in my life than he has in his. How differently we both spent last night, but how much better he spent it than I did. He was doing extra night duty that a fellow porter might enjoy a holiday while I Herriman has only three days holiday a year while to me every day is a holiday and delight. And for no desert of mine. Surely there will be compensation made for these things hereafter if not here....

I think probably the references to 'the life of the world to come' are as understated, sometimes oblique, as they are in the *Diary* because Kilvert, and most of the people with whom he had to do, took it entirely for granted. In this connection I recall the entry about the poor child in Bristol to whom he gave a bun, an episode which ends: *I asked her name and she told me, but amidst the roar of the street and the bustle of the crowded pavement I could not catch the accents of the childish voice. Never mind. I shall know some day.* (4 June, 1874). 'Never mind. I shall know some day....'

An explicit statement of the final direction of life's journey is given on Sunday, St Valentine's Day 1875. He writes: *Shortly after noon today – at the time the folk were coming out of morning church, the village Patriarch, old John Bryant quietly ended his earthly pilgrimage and passed away from amongst us. We hope and trust to a better country.* And Kilvert reflects on his own death as he is recovering from being ill:

After how many illnesses such as this have I taken my first convalescent walk on the sunny terrace and always at this time of year, when the honeysuckle leaves were shooting green and the apricot blossoms were dawning and the daffodils in blow. But some day will come the last illness from which there is no convalescence.... May I then be prepared to enter into the everlasting Spring and to walk among the birds and flowers of Paradise. (9 March, 1878).

Actually, I think Kilvert, through his *Diary*, written with an awareness of mortality and of eternity, unconsciously helps us, his readers, to prepare ourselves to enter this 'Spring and walk in Paradise'. He does this by conveying to us his intense and sensitive, acute and truthful observation, appreciation and love of this life; of courage and goodness, of humour and absurdity, and of the great beauty of human beings and of the earth:

The Black Mountains were invisible being wrapped in clouds, and I saw one very white brilliant dazzling cloud where the mountains ought to have been. This cloud grew more white and more dazzling every moment, till a cleaner burst of sunlight scattered the mists and revealed the truth: this brilliant white cloud that I had been looking and wondering at was the mountain in snow. The last cloud and mist rolled away over the mountain tops and the mountains stood up in the clear blue heaven, a long rampart line of dazzling, glittering snow so as no fuller on earth can white them.... One's first involuntary thought in the presence of these magnificent sights is to lift up the heart to God and humbly thank him for having made the earth so beautiful. (Tuesday 14 March, 1871).

I would like to end with a passage from a more recent Christian writer, from Rose Macaulay. It comes at the end of *The Towers of Trebizond*. The speaker is the main character, Laurie, who has lost her faith in God, partly through her own wrong choices, partly through tragedy, but she has not lost the proper love for this world, founded for Rose Macaulay as it was for Francis Kilvert on their faith in the final goodness of God's creation:

'After all, life, for all its agonies of despair and loss and guilt, is exciting and beautiful, amusing, artful and endearing, full of liking and of love, at times a poem and a high adventure, at times noble and at times very gay; and whatever (if anything) is to come after it, we shall not have this life again'.

And from our second lesson: 'Do not our hearts burn within us as He talks with us in the way?'

*God be in our eyes and in our looking
God be at our end and at our departing.*

This year's Pilgrimage will take place on Sunday 29 July, as always it is on the Sunday immediately following the Royal Welsh Show. Further information from: The Revd Dr Humphrey Fisher (01544 370632); the Rector of Aberedw, the Revd Tim Williams (01982 560359) or Cdr Aylmer Alexander (01497 851295).

WORKING IN THE WELSH BORDER COUNTRY

or

THE TRIALS, TRIBULATIONS and PLEASURES of a RURAL ACCOUNTANT

by Gordon Rogers (Ross-on-Wye)

Gordon Rogers, our honorary auditor for more than 30 years, recently retired (see *Journal* No. 20) and handed on the auditing of the Society's accounts to our former treasurer, John Wilks. During a long career in accountancy Gordon travelled frequently to Hay to deal with the financial affairs of local farmers and businessmen. He has written a short and entertaining account (pun not intended) of those days from which the following is an extract. It is published here to mark Gordon's retirement as our auditor.

Having retired officially but not completely, several years ago, I have decided that it might be interesting were I to look back over the past and recall some memories connected with my Hay-on-Wye office. This I used to attend virtually every Thursday (market day) in order to deal with my various clients in that area. Hay being a small market town in Breconshire just over the Welsh border from Herefordshire, and with Radnorshire only a stone's throw away on the opposite bank of the river Wye, it was certainly a rural practice. Needless to say farmers made up a large proportion of the clientele, though several other walks of life were represented too. Many of course, coming from a closely-knit area like this knew each other, while several were related. They were all interesting in some way or another and several were quite characters. You took them as you found them and treated them as individuals, which they appreciated. It was quite different from the formal atmosphere of a large town or city business, as I think will be judged from my account and as I discovered after working in London.

In order to set down some sort of record of life in these circumstances, I propose to give a description of a typical day working in Hay. To do this I have selected some of the clients with the necessary personal characteristics or captivating 'little ways' to make the story more interesting, because of the different types of people introduced as they passed through my office on this imaginary day; I say imaginary in as much as the possibility of those selected conveniently following each other in this order might be somewhat remote. However there is nothing imaginary in anything recorded as I can well remember the various individuals and have not sought to alter them in any way so as to 'improve' the storyline (after all I am not a journalist!). The bare facts are there and will speak for themselves – truth can be stranger than fiction as you may agree from my ruminations.

And so to one of my busy days in Hay. I arrive at Hay on the morning of a beautiful June day and leave the car in the car park at the top of the town as usual. When this was constructed, a good many years ago on the site of what had been an orchard, it seemed massive for the size of the town. However, with the increased traffic on the roads since then, and also Hay's continuing attraction as a tourist centre, it is now inadequate at certain busy times. At its top where it slopes down from Oxford Road there is one of the best views available from the town. The level Caemawr meadows proceed from its lower end with the foothills of the Black Mountains beyond and farmsteads dotted about here and there. Hay Bluff (2219ft) the north-eastern bastion of this range, peers out above. To the left runs the lofty Cusop hill (1310ft) just over the border in Herefordshire, the national boundary being marked by the fast flowing Dulas Brook making its rapid progress down to join the Wye at the edge of Hay.

However, no time to study the view here today as I have more pressing problems; I always live in hope of reaching the office, which is situated conveniently in the town centre opposite the town clock, before any clients arrive; often unlikely! Indeed, they are sometimes waiting to waylay me in the car park!

[Gordon has a busy day dealing with a variety of clients]

[Eventually] there arrives a client who I sincerely hope will be the last for today. Fortunately he is one I know will cause me no problems, a small builder named Frank Thomas who has built houses or bungalows in the past for a few of my clients, and for others too; also a new community hall for the small town of Talgarth a few miles south-west of Hay. He now lives in Hay, having previously lived at a few places in the surrounding countryside including Bredwardine, some eight miles over the border into Herefordshire. Not only is Frank a good client to deal with in as much as he endeavours to keep his records as well as he can, even though he does not understand much about the true nature of accounts, but he has an even greater quality in my view; though not a member of the Kilvert Society he is very interested in Kilvert, having the three volumes of the Diary which he enjoys reading. He is always game for some talk about Kilvert when he calls. Also he is quite knowledgeable about Bredwardine and district, the village on the river Wye where Kilvert was the parson for a short time before his untimely death in 1879; thus he is able to fill me in should I require some information in order to expand my knowledge of, and interest in, the area. So an ostensibly business interview with him is never entirely business!

Today it is only a matter of giving him his copy of his latest annual accounts and getting him to sign a few forms. I offer as usual to have a quick run through the accounts with him, but soon a somewhat puzzled and quizzical look overshadows his countenance, and when I get to the item known as 'Work-in-progress' it is clear he can stand no more of this, as he bursts out: 'When can we finish with these old accounts and start talking about Kilvert?' Only too willing to oblige (after all the customer is always right...) I speedily bring our business to a close, and we get down to the much more interesting occupation of discussing Kilvert, the Kilvert country and similar interesting things. All too soon another half-hour has passed and it is time for him to go, and for me to consider whether I can now safely close and make my own getaway, as it has now turned 6.30 p.m. After all the best part of the day is still to come as I hope to fill the remaining hours of this present long June day with a walk somewhere in the vicinity before making for home...

[Gordon is delayed by the late arrival of another client]

By now it is 7.30 p.m. and I really must get away before anyone else turns up or I shall miss my walk. Fortunately there are still a few more hours of dry, sunny, warm weather to come; also the visibility looks very good too, ideal for taking the view from some hill or mountain. Now the big question is where to go as there are so many choices; shall I go to Glasbury and walk up past Maesyronnen to Ffynnon Gynydd, across the common and back down by Cwmbach; or shall I go to Erwood and walk up the Twmpath; or to Llowes and across Bryn-rhŷdd common, or even as far as the Begwns? No, I think this evening I will have another climb up Mynydd Troed and, as the atmosphere is nice and clear, enjoy the view from the top. This little mountain just to the north-west of the main Black Mountains range always gives me the impression of a separate little bit that has somehow become detached from the main massif itself. The valley between the two is occupied by the little Afon Rhiangoll and also the main road between Talgarth and Abergavenny. Mynydd Troed is quite a distinctive landmark with its steep north-western face rising to 1997 feet, then sloping gently down in a long south-eastwards sweep.

The next step is to hasten to the car park and head the car towards Talgarth, a small town some seven or eight miles to the south-west of Hay. From here the road twists and climbs to the minute hamlet of Pengenffordd, its highest point before it begins to descend southwards down the Rhiangoll valley. Parking the car in a little lay-by opposite the tiny Moriah chapel, I cross the road and on to the open moorland behind the chapel, with the steep face of the mountain not far away. This reached, there begins the long pull up, initially along the sheep tracks through the fern, then bare short mountain grass but with an increasing amount of the little ground-hugging whinberry bushes, these at least assist in maintaining a foothold as the going becomes steeper. It is by now necessary to weave about a bit in order to reduce the gradient. Passing just above a large rocky outcrop I know the summit is not far off and shortly after it is reached, by the OS pillar at 1997 feet above sea level.

By now the sun is beginning to move down towards the horizon, so I must not be too long in view of the shortly approaching dusk. However at this time of the year it will be some time before it gets properly dark, by which time I will be down the bottom again. I will now once again take in the marvellous view from the top as it embraces so many features. Way below is little Pengenffordd with its chapel, Castle Inn and the old school; I can even see my car, looking more like a little toy from here. To the west lie the Brecon Beacons, that great massif with its three adjacent peaks – Cribyn (2608 ft), Pen-y-fan (2906 ft) and Corn-du (2863 ft), the second being the highest point in South Wales. The whole of Llangorse Lake (Llyn Syfaddan), the largest natural lake in South Wales, can be seen, together with some of the little villages and hamlets in the area. To the north Talgarth is not far off, while beyond can be seen the line of the south Radnorshire hills, including the Begwns. Looking south there runs the western escarpment of the Black Mountains rising up from the Rhiangoll valley, and part of the northern escarpment can also be seen.

Loath to leave I walk around the summit for a while until the sun has just about set and the orange streetlights of Talgarth and the little villages around have begun to appear. Well before now all thoughts of any problems of the day have vanished, and I am left pondering how fortunate I am to be working in such a delightful part of the country, and to be able to combine business with pleasure in this way. As I have a last look out across the well-known scenery now slowly disappearing into the twilight I am reminded of Sir Edward Elgar's reference on one occasion to 'that sweet borderland where I have made my home', and I know how he must have felt.

Now follows a scramble down the north-east shoulder of the mountain, my usual route for descending but less suitable for an ascent. It has some tricky points where you have to exercise care, but on reaching the fern line the going is easy, and I am then soon back to the road. It is now virtually dark and an odd star or two can be detected though the sky still has a lightish tinge – it never gets completely dark on a bright day this time of year, when the sun is never far below the horizon. It is now almost 11.00 p.m. as I set off for home, still just able to make out the outline of the mountains on the left as the road descends gently down the valley. On through Cwm-du, Tretower and Crickhowell to Abergavenny and ultimately Ross. Well it was not such a bad day; I met some interesting people, had a chat about Kilvert and saw a bit more of the local countryside, so perhaps I should consider that whatever its frustrations, the rigours of rural accountancy is not such a bad life after all.

DISCOVERING KILVERT

By The Editor

Staunton-on-Wye* in the early 1970s, scene of blissful family holidays that never lasted long enough; these were breaks free of the cares of work, with cycle rides along the surrounding lanes, to Brobury and Bredwardine, with walks by the Wye (the Scar, Monnington, Byford) on the Begwns and in the Black Mountains, and, as a bonus, views of the hills above Bredwardine and of Hay Bluff from the sitting room window of our holiday home, on loan from very old friends who were lucky enough to live there. So, for an occasional week or two within a few years we were surrounded by and enveloped in the tranquil beauty of the Kilvert Country ... except that, in the beginning, I did not know that this was the Kilvert Country; I had never heard of Frank Kilvert or of his *Diary*!

In my desire to learn more about this wondrous stretch of the middle Wye between Builth and Hereford I began to collect and read topographical books (the closeness of Hay was very useful in this respect) which referred to this Paradise.

One such was *Roaming Down the Wye* by W.H. Potts (Hodder and Stoughton, 1949) which is not to be confused with the well known, but less readable, in my opinion, *Coming Down the Wye* by Robert Gibbings† (Dent, 1942). I bought them both second-hand in Hay, and, how about this for an amazing coincidence, the latter once belonged to C.T.O. Prosser, whose name and address (then Geoffrey Avenue in Hereford) are inscribed inside the front cover; but I did not know of him then either.

* There are numerous references to Staunton-on-Wye in the *Diary*. It is the home of the Jarvis Charity of which Kilvert was a trustee.

† Gibbings mentions Kilvert only briefly, in chapter 17, referring to the cattle kneeling at Staunton-on-Wye, (*Diary* entry for 5 January 1878) and to the Solitary of Llanbedr.

Anyway, Potts' book, which opens at the Dyffryn Castell Inn near Ponterwyd on the lower slopes of Plynlimon and ends, of course, at Chepstow, contains a chapter, chapter eight, entitled 'Mirror to Yesterday' and it was here that I met Francis Kilvert.

'A few years ago,' writes Potts, 'some diaries came to light written by a country vicar ... it was a fortunate thing that these diaries were brought to the notice of someone with literary taste ... [they] were subsequently edited and,' declares Potts erroneously, 'published in four volumes.' I was beginning to become interested.

Even more so, as I read on: 'Kilvert was a very unassuming character ... and although he did nothing to alter the shape of things to come, he held up a mirror to yesterday ... almost every day he scribbled something in his diary, something of what he had done or seen or heard and how the countryfolk around him were spending their lives. It is this bundle of almost *priceless documents* (my italics) which was brought to light a few years ago... . *To those who have not yet made acquaintance with Kilvert's part of the country, the Diaries are delightful in themselves* (again my italics). To those who have, there is quite a thrill in recognising inns, churches, farms and country houses where Kilvert visited and in hearing of the people he met there...'



The Wye near Bredwardine

That was it. I simply had to read these diaries. Enquiries revealed that the three volumes were *readily* available at, I think, eleven guineas, rather more than I could afford then, which seems ridiculous now when even the humblest, throw-away paperback can cost close to a tanner. So, I bought the abridged version; some may remember the handsome Cape edition with its stylish black and white dust jacket (quite pricey also, I think) and borrowed the three volumes from our public library, again readily available on the shelves!

But to return to Potts for a moment; he very skilfully mingles accounts of incidents from the *Diary* with perceptive comments about the changes which had taken place in society in the intervening seventy or so years ('Historically speaking, Kilvert's ink is scarcely dry,' he says) and, remember he is writing in the late forties. How much more ammunition would he have now at the beginning of the twenty-first century, were he to make the same comparisons.

What about this, for example? 'As we watch the procession of people and places that Kilvert draws across our vision day by day, perhaps the most pervading feeling that impresses us is that of security. In all those fifteen (*sic*) years of diaries [1870-79] there is no word of foreboding about the future of Britain, no cares about what the government of the day might do next. The rumblings in the far-off Satanic mills of Lancashire are inaudible in Clyro, the thundering of guns and the shouting of captains in Europe are still at a comfortable distance and war is a luxury that foolish humanity thought it could afford. What a contrast the apparent security of those times make (*sic*) with the present, when doubt lurks everywhere, where even the survival of civilisation is questioned!'



Hay Bluff

There is more, before Potts concludes thus: 'Kilvert's diaries ceased, as far as is known, on Thursday 13th March 1879 ... there may have been a subsequent diary which has not been discovered. In his last entry... he speaks of a lovely and cloudless day, and views of the Black Mountains with their snow patches. He walks home to Bredwardine from Kinnersley and concludes, *A sharp frost and the north-west wind bitterly cold*. Then silence'.



The Black Mountains from the Begwns

Photos by the Editor

Is it any wonder that I could not resist a closer acquaintance with all this? So, thank you Mr Potts for introducing me to Kilvert...

Shortly afterwards, wishing to share my discovery, I was speaking of it to a then colleague, Peter Bolton, who, as a historian, I assumed, would be interested. I was right, yet even so I found myself very surprised indeed by his response. Not only did he know all about RFK and the *Diary* but he also revealed to me the existence of... a Kilvert Society, of which he and his wife were members, and still are. He encouraged me to join (not much encouragement needed) alluding to the AGM and Social Evening, held in those days in the Shire Hall, the accompanying grand buffet and to the remarkable Newsletters which appeared three times a year. Indeed, these *were* remarkable; C.T.O. Prosser's Newsletters have to be viewed to be believed; important items are entirely capitalised and often

underlined too for good measure and exclamation marks are copiously scattered throughout the text. What is more, there are the quirky opinions therein and the enticing mention of the Society's then 'elastic' subscription, i.e. pay what you like but preferably not less than five shillings (25p, for younger readers), pitched at that sum 'so that no one interested would be prevented from becoming a member through lack of funds.'

This sounded very much like my sort of Society so I joined and thank you Mr Bolton for introducing me to the KS...

Some years later I volunteered to become the Society's publications' manager in succession to Reg Morgan and thus I became a member of THE COMMITTEE! Now I find myself editing the Society's *Journal*. How on earth did that come about?

The editor invites contributions for this series.

HMS CAPTAIN

The Society gratefully acknowledges the gift of a book on the above from our member Mr Tony O'Brien of Newchurch.

The book entitled *Black Night off Finisterre* by Arthur Hawkey is an authoritative account of the sinking of HMS *Captain*, of the long controversy, in Parliament and the Press which preceded its construction and of the subsequent court martial of the survivors of the disaster which occurred during the night of 6 September 1870.

The construction of HMS *Captain* marked a major advance in the great development of warships that reached its culmination in the years before World War One, the so-called Dreadnought race. The *Captain*, an early ironclad, was the first sea-going warship to be designed specifically as a turret ship with the revolving turrets, placed, in this ship, on the main deck below a flying or hurricane deck, from which the sails could be worked.

The book tells of the lengthy dispute between Captain Cowper Phipps Coles RN, inventor of the turntable turret and in part designer of the ship, and the Admiralty Constructor, Edward Reed, who regarded the revolutionary design of the vessel as potentially dangerous. Indeed he was right, for, during the night of 6 September 1870 only four months after being commissioned, the new ship capsized in a gale off the Spanish coast near Cape Finisterre and sank immediately. There were only 18 survivors out of a crew of approximately 500, a death toll of British seamen greater than that at the Battle of Trafalgar.

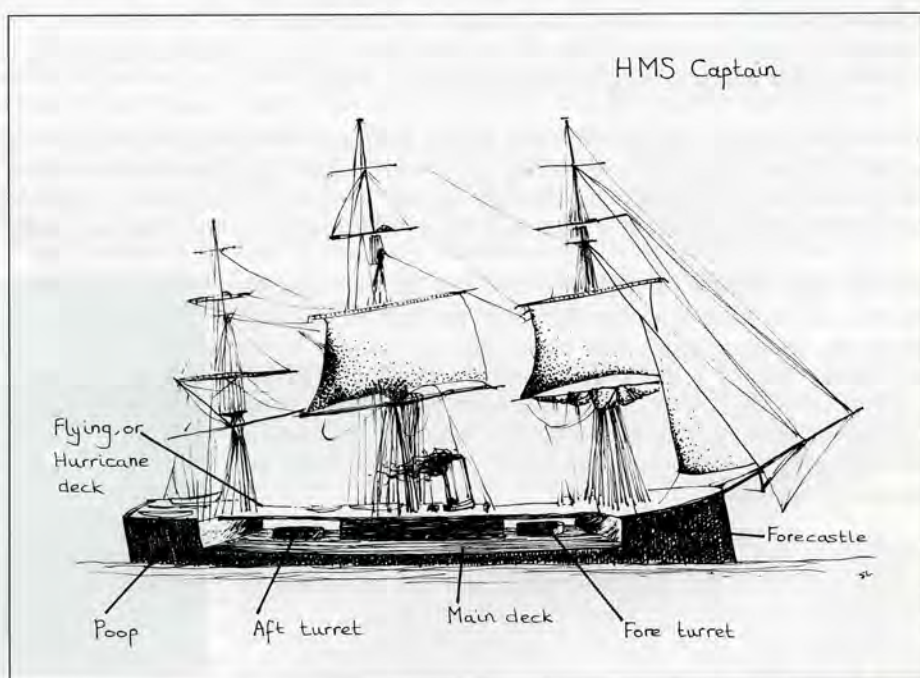
Kilvert's account of the cause of the disaster in the *Diary* entry for 13 September 1870 seems accurate enough and was no doubt culled from *The Times* of 10 September. (See also *Diary* entries for 10 and 14 September 1870 and 5 and 6 July 1875.)

The author, Arthur Hawkey, while working as a journalist for the *London Evening Standard*, was moved to research this 'hitherto forgotten naval disaster' by the sight of two brass plaques in St Paul's Cathedral which commemorate the loss of the *Captain*. It is a fascinating story and the author has unearthed previously unknown information relating to the loss of the ship, information which appears to have been suppressed at the Court Martial of the survivors.

***Black Night Off Finisterre (The Tragic Tale of an Early British Ironclad)* by Arthur Hawkey, published 1999 by Afterlife Publishing Ltd., 101 Longden Road, Shrewsbury SY3 9EB at £19.99, 192 pages with half-tones and index, ISBN 1 84037 095 5. The book has been placed in the Society's Archives.**

Notes:

- One of Captain Cowper Coles' ten children was Sam, Kilvert's pupil at Bredwardine.
- Another son was Sherard (named after Captain Sherard Osborn, a friend of Cowper Coles) who invented a method of galvanizing metal known as Sherardizing.
- Mrs Cowper Coles was the sister of Mrs Venables.
- A descendant, Sir Sherard Cowper Cowles, is presently HM Ambassador to Afghanistan.



Sketch by Sue Lay

Editor

OBITUARIES

It is with great regret that we record the death of the following members:

Mrs R. Dew of Eastbourne died in April 2006. She had been a member since 1983

Mr E.A.V. (Tony) Thrower of Southampton died in 2006. He had been a member since 2002.

We offer our sincere condolences to the family and friends of the deceased.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Society gratefully acknowledges the gift of a first edition of RFK's favourite book, *Stepping Heavenward*, by Elizabeth Prentiss.

The book was presented to the Society by Mrs Olive Knight at the Annual Dinner in April 2007. (See from Recent Correspondence (iv) on page 17 of *Journal* No. 22, March 2007). It has been placed in the Society's Archives.

THE CD OF KILVERT'S DIARY

The CD may be ordered from: Griffin & Co Ltd, 24 Church Lane, East Peckham, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 5JH.
Tel: 01622 812101. Their email is: sales@griffinrecords.co.uk.

NEWSLETTERS AND JOURNALS

Back numbers of the Society's Newsletters and *Journals* are available from the Publications Manager, priced at £2.50 each, including postage. Limited availability.

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

Contributions for the September 2007 edition of the *Journal* should reach the editor **not later than 14 July**. It would be helpful if contributors having access to a computer could put their article on disc (in Word for Windows) and send it to Val Dixon (same address as the Publications Manager on the inside cover) and at the same time send a paper copy direct to the editor, thank you. **It would also help if any photographs included could be placed in a separate file on the disc.**

The copyright of an article in the *Journal* rests with the contributor.

Opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Kilvert Society or of the editor of the *Journal*.

The current ordinary subscription is £12.00 (Joint membership £15.00) and is due on 1 January of each year. Cheques payable to The Kilvert Society should be sent to: Mrs Sue Rose, 18 York Close, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN14 0QB.

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Printed by:
Warwick Printing Company Limited
Caswell Road, Leamington Spa CV31 1QD.
Tel: (01926) 883355 Fax: (01926) 883575

