

THE
Journal
OF
THE KILVERT SOCIETY



THE KILVERT SOCIETY

*Founded in 1948 to foster an interest in the Reverend Francis Kilvert,
his work, his Diary and the countryside he loved*

Registered Charity No. 1103815

www.thekilvertsociety.org.uk

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The Treasurer would like to thank all who responded to his appeal to change their standing orders to the new subscription rates. There are still a few members yet to make the change.

Contributions to the *Journal* should be sent to the Hon Secretary by post or email. Address above
Deadlines: 1st January and 1st July

Dates for your diary

All teas and pub lunches must be pre-booked with the Secretary by post or email (jeanbrimson@hotmail.com)

Saturday 24 September

Meet at 12 noon at St Andrew's, Bredwardine.
Bring a picnic lunch and then an easy walk from the village. Tea will be provided by the parishioners @ £4.50 per head, pay on the day.

Sunday 25 September

3pm St Andrew's, Bredwardine.
Commemorative Evensong service.
Tea will be provided by the parishioners @ £4.50 per head, pay on the day.

Wednesday 8 March 2017

Visit to Malmesbury, Wiltshire.
Please return the expression of interest form. Details will be sent in January 2017.

Friday 21 April 7pm

AGM at The Bishop's Palace, Hereford.
Speaker to be confirmed.

Saturday 22 April

10.00 for 10.30 seminar at Hedley Lodge, Belmont Abbey, Hereford.
Speakers to be confirmed.
6.30 for 7pm same venue Kilvert Society annual dinner.

Saturday 24 June

Visit to Peterchurch and the Golden Valley.
Lunch will be available. Confirmation and details to follow in the March *Journal*.

Saturday 23 September

Visit to Hartlebury Castle. Details and confirmation of this visit will follow in the March *Journal*.

Sunday 24 September

Commemorative Service.
Venue and details to follow in the March *Journal*.

If you are on email please help us to cut postage costs by sending your e-address to the Secretary at jeanbrimson@hotmail.com

Front cover: 'The Service at St Barnabas was at 8 o'clock and the evening light was setting behind the lofty Campanile as we entered.' (Diary iii 318) Photo: Alan Brimson

Back cover: Near The Roundabout, a KS 'extra' excursion, August 2013. Black Mountains in the background. Recognise anyone? Photo: Alan Brimson

From the Chairman

In March, 2014 I wrote to you concerning the venue for the Saturday of the AGM weekend and explained the reasons for choosing the *Radnorshire Arms* at Presteigne. However, we have been very aware of the inconvenience to some members of getting to Presteigne and Alan Brimson and Richard Weston have been investigating other possible establishments and reporting back to the committee. We have now decided that for next year (2017) we will change the Saturday venue to: Hedley Lodge, Belmont Abbey, Hereford, HR2 9RZ. Belmont Abbey lies on the Abergavenny road, a couple of miles south of the city.

The Abbey also offers bed and breakfast at a reasonable cost and has agreed the following prices for next year only, providing the booking is made this year: £50 single room per night, £75 double room per night and £99 family room per night, breakfast included. Please mention the Kilvert Society when making a booking. Do not delay! (Tel. 01432 374747).

Saturday 22 April 2017 – hire of room for morning seminars with tea or coffee – the cost of which will be borne by the Society.

Saturday evening: three-course dinner at £25 per head.

The Friday evening AGM will be at the Bishop's Palace as usual.

It is hoped that as many members as possible will attend these events and thus show their support for the new arrangements.

From the Secretary

As our Chairman, David Elvins, has explained the committee has made the decision to hold the seminars and annual dinner at Hedley Lodge, so the whole weekend will be based in Hereford on 22-23 April 2017. This is in the hope that those members who attend the AGM on the Friday evening will stay over to support the events on the Saturday.

With the Society's events in mind I have been aware that some members are unable now to take part in walks so I have tried to arrange a pub lunch prior to the walks and I am very pleased that this initiative is being supported by some of our less mobile members.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ann and Howard Dean, who have painstakingly cleaned the graves and headstones of both Francis and Elizabeth Kilvert at Bredwardine. It's always an ongoing task to keep the graves in good condition and we are most grateful for their initiative and efforts.

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EVENTS AND EXCURSIONS

A Wet and Windy Wednesday in Oxford

Mary Steele reviews the morning of the Society's winter excursion.

When I got home from the Society's highly enjoyable and informative trip to Oxford, my first thought was to look up the readings we had heard.

Holy Thursday, 25 May 1876

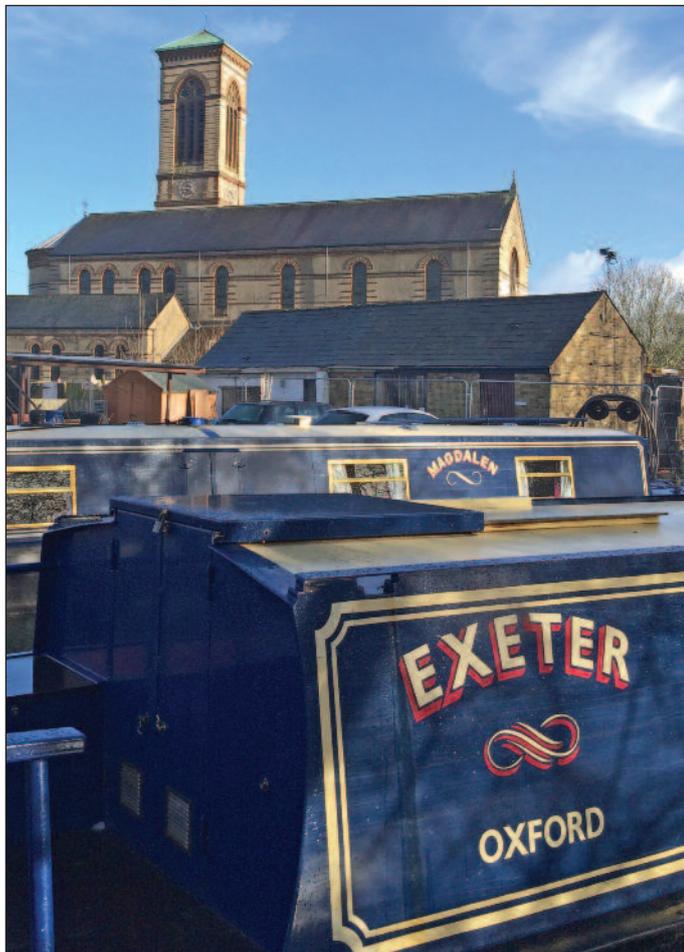
The soft green sunny air was filled with the cooing of doves and the chiming of innumerable bells

Soft green sunny air didn't quite describe what we had experienced. I turned back to the dates nearest our visit, 2 March.

Ash Wednesday, March 1, 1876

March came in like a lion with wild wind and rain and hail

Yes, that was more like it. We had plenty of wild wind and rain and some hail. We leaned against walls, huddled in college porches and braced ourselves with the story of Kilvert going to chapel at Bettws and arriving with his beard frozen to his mackintosh (13 Feb 1870). This, too, was Kilvert weather. Later,



'Waterborne Colleges' and St Barnabas from the canal

Photo: Ann Dean



An abandoned Kilvertian? (Jean Brimson, apparently!)

Photo: Alan Brimson

as consolation, we were safely inside St Barnabas church appreciating tea and cake and the underfloor heating when the hailstorm hit, and we were rewarded at the end of the afternoon by a pleasant walk along the canal towpath, exactly as advertised by the organisers.

But back, in our imaginations, to Ascension Day 1876 *reposing in the silence and beauty and retirement of the shady happy garden*. Kilvert is describing Merton College gardens which is one of the stops he and his friend Anthony Lawson Mayhew made on their day taking in Ascension services and customs in Oxford.

Thus it was on Wednesday 2 March that around 25 members met in the entrance of Wadham College, where Kilvert and Mayhew were undergraduates. The plan was to retrace the route of the *Diary* entries for the visit Kilvert made between 22 and 27 May. Kilvert travelled, as usual, by train and was met by Mayhew with whom he was staying in St Margaret's, Bradmore Road. Mayhew had come from a lecture on the Slavonic languages but "as the lecturer had a severe cold and a 'Slavonic cough' and spoke in a very low voice Mayhew was none the wiser". The lecture was held in the Taylor Buildings – part of the Ashmolean Museum, with 'Taylor Institution' carved above the entrance. Jumping forward, Kilvert and Mayhew visited the Taylor Galleries, to see Turner's watercolours of Oxford, on the last day of his visit. Rather touchingly, he got into a conversation with a keeper, a survivor of the Charge of the Light Brigade who could not afford the fare to London to look at pictures of the Charge and *started a little subscription to make up 15/- to send the old soldier to London*.

But we just looked at the front of the Ashmolean and had the way to Bradmore Road pointed out to us. Like Kilvert and Mayhew, we dodged showers and walked: they towards St



The hardy excursionists outside the Botanical Gardens

Photo: Alan Brimson

Margaret's, meeting the Warden of Wadham and the Dean of Keble and arriving very late for dinner and we towards Magdalen Chapel to pick up the events of the afternoon when Kilvert and Mayhew watched boat races from Merton Meadows, adjacent to Christchurch. There, we were shown pictures of the Victorian scene.

Then we moved to the events of Holy Thursday (Ascension Day). It began at Magdalen Chapel, but Kilvert and Mayhew arrived too late for the morning service – they had attended the 10 am service on Tuesday 23rd, but on a feast day it started at 9.30. So they *loitered through the Botanical Gardens and up the Broad Walk*. We followed their footsteps, loitering for a reading and then proceeded to Merton College. We could only look from the outside at Merton Gardens and the famous Terrace Walk, but we copied the Diarist and his companion's walk along Deadman's Walk, named after old Jewish funeral processions and sheltered by the City Wall, then went up the steps and through the same iron gate that they did. There we stopped to hear about the ceremony of beating the bounds, an Ascension Day custom that is still carried out.

We walked on to Corpus Christi, where the boys who were beating the bounds had been regaled with bread, cheese and ale and splashed with water. Then to Oriel, which was the college of Kilvert's father. Here the boys played football with top hats and had hot coins tossed at them. It was all getting very lively *filled with uproar, scramble, and general licence and confusion* so Kilvert and Mayhew decided to leave them at this point.

In the afternoon of 25 May, Kilvert and Mayhew returned to thoughts of the Holy Day and attended the Evensong of the Ascension at New College Chapel.

We stopped outside the college gate to hear about the *grey and hoary and venerable* cloisters inside. As our last reading of the morning we heard about the two friends watching a Bump race from the Oriel Barge. It was explained to us to us that the Bumps is a rowing race in which a number of boats chase each other in single file, each with a crew attempting to catch and

bump the boat in front without being caught by the boat behind. More scramble and uproar, by the sound of it.

We proceeded to the town centre. We were not like Mayhew forgetting his dinner. We broke up for lunch in plenty of time to enjoy the hospitality Oxford eating places can offer.



Our Secretary prepares to read. How can he look so cheerful in such weather?

Photo: Ann Dean

St Barnabas Beyond Kilvert

David Elvins discusses the interior of St Barnabas Church.

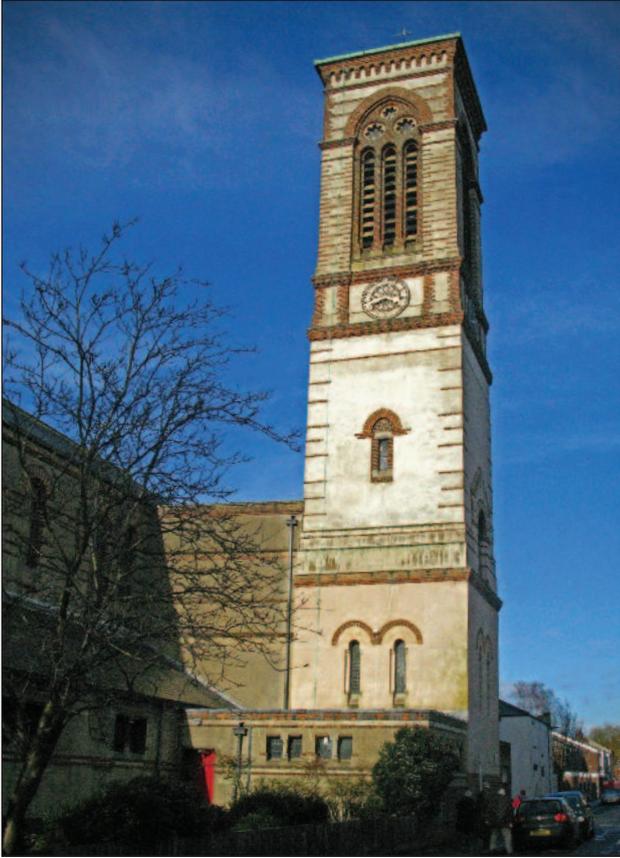


Photo: Alan Brimson

St Barnabas Church is a fifteen-minute walk from the centre of Oxford. This area of the city was developed between 1860 and 1870.

John Betjeman, a frequent visitor in his student days, bemoans the loss of the low-lying meadow, on which the Church is built, in a short poem called *St Barnabas Oxford* (1)

*How long was the peril, how breathless the day,
In topaz and beryl, the sun dies away,
His rays lying static, at quarter to six,
On polychromatical lacing of bricks,
Good lord, as the angelus floats down the road,
Byzantine St Barnabas, be Thine Abode.*

*Where once the fritillaries hung in the grass,
A baldachin pillar is guarding the Mass.
Farewell to blue meadows we loved not enough
And elms in whose shadows were Glanville and Clough.
Not poets but clergymen hastened to meet
Thy redder'd remorselessness, Cardigan Street.*

In 1978 (2) Jan Morris wrote regarding Worcester College Gardens:

'It adjoins however, the dismal old canal and railway lines, and looks across the College playing fields to the drear tower of St Barnabas, the parish church of Jericho.'

A canal and boatyard together with railway shunting yards adjoin the church. The first Morse novel *The Dead of Jericho* is set here. There are controversial plans for redeveloping the land between the church and the canal. The Oxford University Press relocated here in 1828. The old water meadow was given by Oxford ironmonger George Ward as a site for a new church to serve the newly developing Jericho.

The building was financed by Thomas Combe, Printer to the University, and his wife Martha.* They were both supporters of the Oxford Movement. This was a reaction to the perceived laxity and liberalism in the 19th Century Church of England. Their ideal was to return to the ceremony, practices and teaching of the pre-Reformation Church. The Combes were also patrons of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Their influence can be seen in some of the paintings and decoration of the church.

The architect was Sir Arthur Blomfield (also responsible for St Luke's Chapel at the nearby Radcliffe Infirmary). Both Combes and the architect were keen to produce an Italianate-type basilica in Jericho. The subsequent church is said to be based on Torcello in the Venetian Lagoon and/or the church of St Clemente in Rome.

Combe was quite specific in his instructions to the architect. He wanted a simple, strong structure that could hold up to a thousand people. He specified the external decoration was to be kept to a minimum. The bell tower (campanile) was begun in 1869 and completed in 1872. It has ten tubular bells. The original campanile roof was removed in 1965 and replaced by a new copper roof with a lower pitch which reduced the height of the tower from 130 to 115 feet. A.N. Wilson describes the tower as 'the most impressive architectural monument in sight' in *The Healing Art*. (5)

The total cost of the church was £6,492.7.8 and the project was completed on 19 October 1869. Thomas Hardy was, as a young man, apprenticed to Sir Arthur Blomfield and worked on the church. He later used the church for the scene in *Jude the Obscure* where he describes the 'levitating cross' which seems to be suspended in mid-air by wires swaying gently and beneath which lies the body of Sue Bridehead. It was here also that P.D. James imagined the bodies in *A Taste for Death* although she transposes the church to London in the book.

Upon entering the church from the baptistry, the size and proportions are impressive. The original floor was hard Portland cement with a few decorative black and red tiles. Under the surface was an early form of underfloor heating. This arrangement caused smoke and fumes so later, wooden blocks were laid over the floor and hot water pipes and radiators were installed. After several years the foundations of the floor began to collapse. Consequently, at the beginning of this century, the floor was rebuilt and underfloor central heating installed.

The church originally had wooden removable chairs which have gradually been replaced with more modern designs. When Kilvert visited the church there was a black pulpit but this was replaced by the present decorated walnut pulpit.

The original roof is of sawn timber and much of the original paintwork still remains. The wrought-iron lectern is also original. The church's first permanent organ was installed in 1872 and the present organ in 1975.

*See picture on page 6

Near the Baptistry there are carved portraits of Samuel Wilberforce (Bishop of Oxford), the Rev Alfred Hackman (vicar), Father Montague Noel (first vicar of St Barnabas), Arthur Blomfield and Thomas Combe and his dog (on the corners of the Lady Chapel). Another unusual feature is the cut-glass frieze patterned above the clerestory on the north side of the church. Underneath are the words of the *Te Deum*. At the time the church was constructed this, a hymn to the creator, would have been sung at Matins.



'The levitating cross' and the High Altar Photo: Alan Brimson

Probably the most unusual feature of the church is the high altar. It is nine steps above the nave and has a decorated canopy (Baldachin). Another striking feature is the colourful murals on the east of the north wall.

On Kilvert's visit the high altar, baldachin and the symbols of the four Evangelists were all present but in 1893 further detailing and gilding were added.

Kilvert made one visit to St Barnabas on Holy Thursday 1876. The church was packed and it must have been difficult for Kilvert and Mayhew to view the interior detail of St Barnabas. Kilvert 'inflamed' by the incense and what he perceived to be the theatricality of the service, makes no mention of the building except to say:

...the evening light was setting behind the lofty campanile as we entered (Vol III p318)

Colin Clarke (Society member) has provided me with a copy of a short piece by the late Fred Grice, a distinguished former member of the Society (see the following article). Fred Grice suggests that architecture may have been 'one of Kilvert's blind spots.' He points out that the unique style of Hardenhuish Church or the medieval detail of Bredwardine and Langley Burrell churches are not mentioned in the *Diary*. Perhaps Kilvert was a painter of natural landscapes rather than an observer of the man-made. But certainly, for most members who visited the Church in March of this year, St Barnabas was most impressive. They liked the feeling of space and balance and the amount of natural light that was cleverly centred on the altar. The decorative details are beautiful and the modern feel gives an atmosphere of airiness and space. A friendly, welcoming building, on a par with the welcome we received.

REFERENCES

1. St Barnabas Oxford Collected Poems of John Betjeman, Murray
2. *Oxford*, Jan Morris, OUP 1978
3. A short unpublished essay by Fred Grice with notes by Colin Clarke
4. *The Healing Art* A.N. Wilson, Penguin Books

OTHER READING

St Barnabas Oxford. A Short History and Guide, Richard Whitlock 2008
 Jericho Matters, The Parish Magazine 2015

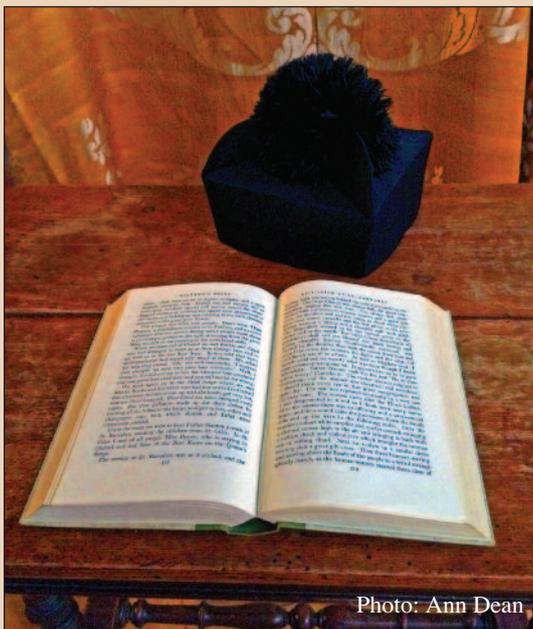


Photo: Ann Dean

A display arranged by our kindly host at St Barnabas, Father Andrew Greany. Behind his copy of the *Diary*, open at the appropriate page, is the biretta and the golden chasuble referred to by Kilvert:

Holy Thursday, 25 May 1876

The service at St Barnabas was at 8 o'clock and the evening light was setting behind the lofty Campanile as we entered. The large Church was almost full, the great congregation singing like one man. The clergy and choir entered with a procession, incense bearers and a great gilt cross, the thurifers and acolytes being in short white surplices over scarlet cassocks and the last priest in the procession wearing a biretta and a chasuble stiff with gold. The Magnificat seemed to be the central point in the service and at the words 'For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed' the black biretta and golden chasuble (named Shuttleworth) advanced, was 'censed' by the thurifer, then took the censer from him and censed the cross, the banners, the lights and the altar till the church was all in a fume. At least so Mayhew said. I myself could not see exactly what was done though I knew some ceremony was going on. It appeared to me to be pure Mariolatry.

Kilvert and the Church of St Barnabas, Oxford

by Fred Grice, sometime Deputy-President of the Kilvert Society

Note: Kilvert went with his friend Mayhew to a service in the Church of St Barnabas, Oxford, on Holy Thursday 25 May 1876. His account of the service can be found in Vol. 3 of the *Diary* (1960, 318-20), in the one-volume selection (1971, 316-7) and in an unpublished letter to Marion Vaughan.

St Barnabas, Cardigan Street, off Walton Street, Oxford, is still very much as it was when Kilvert visited it for the first (and apparently last) time in 1876. It is a surprising church to find in this rather dingy corner of Oxford, distinctly un-English both externally and internally. It is very much an Oxford Movement (Tractarian) church. Its founders were Thomas Combe and his wife, both zealous patrons of the Arts, devotees of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, and sincere Christians. Combe, who became Manager¹ of the Oxford University Press (still in Walton Street) was concerned for the spiritual welfare of the increasing population growing up around the Press buildings, and it was primarily for them that he built St Barnabas.

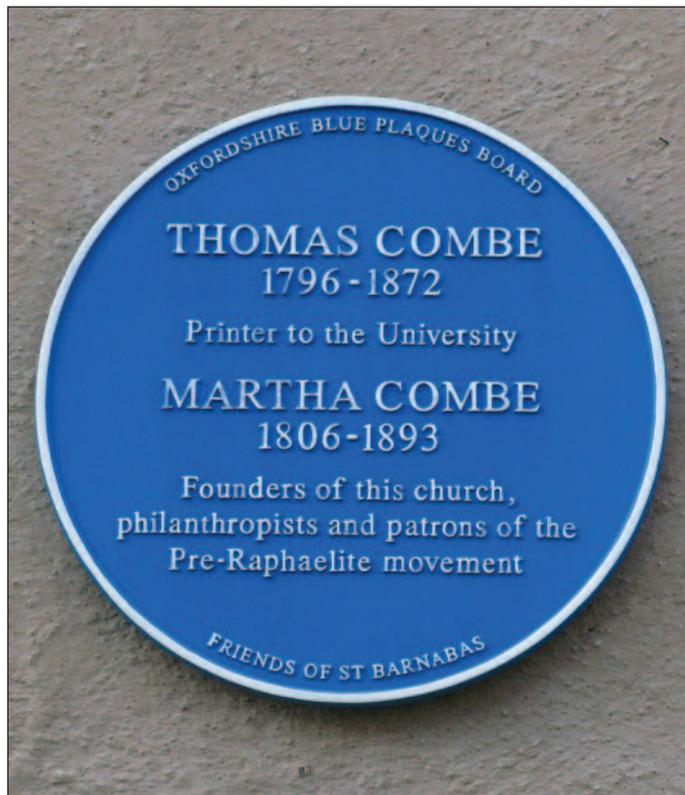


Photo: Alan Brimson

He meant it, from the beginning, to be an explicitly Tractarian building – plain on the outside but lavishly decorated on the inside; and his architect Sir Arthur Blomfield gave him a spacious church in the style of a Roman basilica, with an ornate and gilded sanctuary, a high altar, flanked with symbols of the four gospel-writers, canopied with a gilt baldachino, and partly screened by a large metal cross suspended from the painted ceiling. The choir, which is curiously constructed, is several feet above the floor of the main body of the church, and the high altar is reached by five or more steps. The seven lamps hanging before

the altar may have been there in 1876,² but it is possible that they and the ornate pulpit were added later.³

St Barnabas is still an Anglo-Catholic church, and as soon as one enters the building one is aware of the incense that Kilvert disliked. But what is surprising is that the Diarist does not seem to have been at all impressed by the beauty of the church. Even though it seems unfinished – only the north arcade wall is decorated – it is a remarkably handsome and impressive church, and in 1876, only seven years after it had been consecrated, it must have glowed with colour.⁴ Was architecture one of Kilvert's blind spots? I am always surprised that he makes no mention of the unique architectural style of Hardenhuish, or the fascinating medieval detail of Bredwardine and Langley Burrell. He seems at times to be more impressed by Victorian restorations than with the genuine article. But perhaps in this case his dislike of the attitudinising of Father Stanton prevented him from appreciating the visual beauties of St Barnabas, and even from commenting on those human touches that usually drew admiring notice from him – the little portraits of Bishop Wilberforce (who consecrated the church), Mr Noel, the first vicar, and his pet dog Jessie, all carved on the stone pilasters and pedestals of the nave columns.

Visitors will find the church locked, but the keys are available at the nearby vicarage.

¹ Thomas Combe was, technically, Printer to the University, Richard Whitlock, *St Barnabas, Oxford: A Short History and Guide*, 2008, 1.

² The seven hanging sanctuary lamps were donated in 1874-5 by the then Duke of Newcastle and some of his undergraduate contemporaries, Richard Whitlock, *op. cit.*, 11.

³ The original black pulpit Kilvert would have seen was replaced in 1887 by the beautifully decorated walnut pulpit, designed by Blomfield, Whitlock, *op. cit.*, 7.

⁴ The striking aspect of the church as seen by Kilvert would have been the high altar, baldachino, and symbols of the four evangelists. However, recent research shows that 'in 1893 an extensive "makeover" saw some further detailing and extensive areas of gilding added and this is the scheme that largely remains today,' Whitlock, *op. cit.*, 11. To the glowing east end were added between 1905 and 1911 the fine, colourful murals on the north wall of the nave, all of which were witnessed by the Kilvert Society during its visit to St Barnabas on 2 March 2016. Except for the more rudimentary east end, none of this was in existence at the time of Kilvert's attendance at the Holy Thursday service in 1876, so he should not be criticised for failing to be impressed by it. It should be added that the incense that so troubled Kilvert went undetected during our sightseeing.

(Footnotes added by Colin Clarke after the Kilvert Society visit to Oxford on 2 March 2016)

See also the book review on page 22

AGM Weekend

Jeff Marshall describes the junketings at the AGM weekend in April.

Forty-two members turned up for this year's AGM at the Bishop's Palace on 22 April and were duly welcomed by the Chairman before getting down to the business part of the evening. This was very swiftly dealt with, indeed a mere 26 minutes sufficed. This is another pleasing aspect of the way the Society runs its affairs. The present officers and committee were re-elected en bloc plus five new members: (bringing it up to full strength!) Jean Brimson, Marjorie Elvins, Charles Boase, Rob Graves and David Lermon.

Then followed what some might consider the main business of the evening – the buffet – as sumptuous as ever, prepared and served by Sue Rose, loyally supported by her husband Mike. As the tea and coffee flowed so did the conversation. There was the usual opportunity too to browse the extensive, tempting display of the Society's publications. A roaring trade, Col?

After the interval Tim Bridges, Church Buildings Support Officer for the Diocese spoke about his work of maintaining and improving the churches of Herefordshire and indeed of some beyond, in Powys and Worcestershire, which fall within the Diocese. Some of his slides, those of remote Black Mountains' churches for example, well illustrated the immense nature of his task. A particularly striking example of the work of his group was that which has been carried out at Bridge Sollers church which stands alone and somewhat aloof beside the main Brecon road a few miles west of the city. Here the church has been adapted and refurbished for spiritual and social use and the nave now doubles as the village hall, with space for drama and other communal activities – an enterprising idea. We were pleased too that many of the Kilvert churches got a mention.

It was generally agreed, at the end of the evening, that this had been another agreeable Kilvert occasion, although some expressed disquiet about the low, declining even, attendance at this most important event in the Society's calendar – see below



Tim Bridges begins his talk

Photo: Val Dixon

for an exhortation!

The following morning we gathered in the bar of the ancient, picturesque, half-timbered *Radnorshire Arms* in Presteigne for coffee and biscuits and yet more conversation, before ascending to the lounge where we installed ourselves comfortably to listen to our two speakers.

Our new member and Clyro resident, Oliver Balch, was first on and he spoke to us about his new book *Under the Tump; Sketches of Real Life on the Welsh Borders* which was shortly to be published by Faber and Faber on 19 May. Alas, he had not been able to bring any copies with him, otherwise business would have been brisk and a sell-out, no doubt.

He spoke too about the immense changes in his family life, brought about by the move from Buenos Aires to Clyro (!) and how they were all adapting to such a transformation. In an article in *The Guardian* of 9 April he had already provided a foretaste of some of his impressions plus the newly-discovered links with our hero!

In this article entitled *You lead the way*, Reverend Oliver had followed one of RFK's favourite walks, a six-mile hike over to Painscastle, passing via the Roundabout, where, 'over the wall is a wide semicircular stone bench ideal for picnicking or late night stargazing. Sensing Kilvert's presence I stop for another breather, my back against the stone.' Those members who trekked up there at the end of June will know all about that

He continues on to Painscastle having also passed en route Lower Lloyney and Lower Cwmgwannon. Journeys end brings him to 'the welcome sight of *The Roast Ox*.' 'Kilvert never made it across the threshold though;' writes Oliver [but] 'there is still no better guide to this stunning corner of the Welsh Marches than Clyro's erstwhile curate. Just this once, however, I ignore his lead in favour of a pint.'

After a short interval Oliver was followed by an old friend of the Society, David Harrison, who entertained us with his customary energy and humour, his subject was 'The Zulu Wars' illustrated with documents, maps and handouts.

We then dispersed for lunch and afternoon activities, according to choice, walking, sightseeing or repose, until it was time to return to *The Radnorshire Arms* at 6.30 for the aperitif before the Annual Dinner. Quite a cosy occasion this when but 28 diners (again that worry about falling attendance) were (I was going to say squashed) closely seated in the breakfast room of the hotel, the dining-room being closed for repairs. Nevertheless it was a most pleasant occasion and, as usual, the gaps between the courses were enlivened by readings.

Now, the exhortation: Next year the morning seminars and annual dinner will be held at Belmont Abbey, two or three miles south of Hereford on the road to Abergavenny, where members can also take advantage of reasonably priced accommodation. It is very much hoped therefore that this experiment will bring about a huge increase in the number of members supporting this main weekend of the Kilvert year. Those who were perhaps reluctant to attend on account of the present double venue and deterred by the journey (although undeniably beautiful) out to Presteigne may be encouraged to join in, now that the events are all in and close to Hereford. We look forward to seeing YOU!

Clyro and the Begwns

Our Secretary reports on the June event

Saturday 25 June

The morning presented us with some extremely heavy and frequent showers. The prospects for the afternoon did not look good, as some 34 members gathered at the Baskerville Arms, Clyro, for a pub lunch. As always on these occasions there was much chatter and bonhomie as we all tucked into our meal. I, constantly keeping an eye on the weather, wondered what was I going to do with everyone if this weather kept up. The church had a wedding and the village hall was in use.



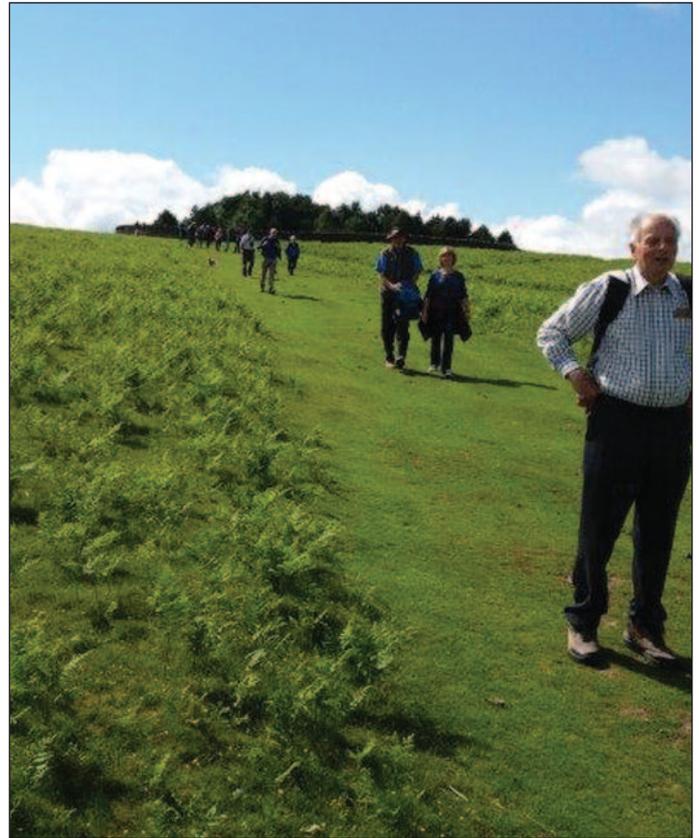
At lunch in the Baskerville Arms

Photo: Val Dixon

After lunch we crossed the road and assembled outside Ashbrook House as arranged at 2pm. It had stopped raining but dark clouds, windblown, scudded across the sky. The 25 of us who were going on the walk drove up on the road to Painscastle, high above Clyro, to our rendezvous by the cattle grid where we were able to park the cars. At this point the clouds had blown through and the sun came out to give us a glorious afternoon to walk high up on the Begwns to the Roundabout, a stone-walled ring with a semicircular line of stone seats sheltered by trees within. Here our party sat exchanging banter, as we took advantage of our viewpoint, to the east, deep in the Wye Valley, lay Hay, under the Black Mountains. To the south the majestic Brecon Beacons, to the west far down in another valley lay Painscastle and to the north, in the far distance, the Wrekin, in the next county of Shropshire, hovered on the horizon.

We retraced our steps on wide grassy tracks through the ferns

and heather, all the while enjoying the tremendous views in glorious weather, Uncle Francis had looked after his own once again. Then it was back to the Baskerville Arms for a most welcome cup of tea.



Descending from The Roundabout

Photo: Val Dixon



'Who are these people?'

Photo: Alan Brimson

In conclusion I must own up to a most unfortunate misunderstanding, we did not have a reading prepared, I had left it to Colin Dixon who had organised the walk (many thanks Colin) and he had, alas, left it to me! But we did get the weather right, just!

FEATURES

Our President writes a

Word from Wormingford



Ronald Blythe re-reads a diary that is suited to all times of life

Soft summery rain. Blue tits nesting by the brick gate-post. Shrubs heavy with rain, having fallen across the path. Drenched roses. The stream and the guttering in competition as the water dispels. Gentle gray light. Giant weeds. Friends look a little ascant. Red kites reeling around. Sometimes they have flown before us to Newmarket.

I estimate how long it will take me to do some substantial weeding. But not today, my turn to take matins. I read the banns for the young strangers sitting below me and think of the rural dramas such duties used to create. “If you know any just cause or impediment why these two people may not be joined together in holy matrimony, you are to declare it.”

How Thomas Hardy revelled in such language. His wonderful poems caught the rhythm of the Book of Common Prayer. He liked to spend Whitsun in Suffolk in a houseful of agnostics in Aldeburgh who accused him of being a humbug, because he would now and then enter a church to pray. He never explained, and perhaps he couldn’t.

Benjamin Britten, who set Hardy’s poems to music, would have refused the sacraments on his deathbed, were it not to hurt the feelings of his friend, the Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich. We all do so many things out of convention and politeness rather than out of belief. But there are moments of great faith and illumination. Now is comfort itself to be denied. “I would be your Comforter.”

I am re-reading Francis Kilvert’s *Diary*. The picnics in it remind me of the flower shows that used Constable tombs as tables, laying tablecloths and places, but standing up to eat because of their height. Kilvert was the youthful priest of St Harmon’s, in Radnorshire and Bredwardine, in Herefordshire, during the late 19th century. Also a remarkable writer. His *Diary*

unselfconsciously reveals the soul of rural Anglicanism.

Would anyone read it, he asked himself. His clergyman-father would have taken great care that he did not. But when William Plomer encountered it just before the Second World War, he knew he had met with a masterpiece. Plomer and my friend Ralph Currey were South Africans who had won Oxford scholarships and I always wished I had asked Ralph about Kilvert’s diary. But Miss Kilvert, the diarist’s niece, live near me in Suffolk, and I always felt that I was touching, as it were, a huge stretch of Anglican time.

One of my favourite stories in this wonderful diary is about a youthful curate who brought a lad to church to be confirmed – and was himself confirmed by the bishop. Kilvert was somewhat overwhelmed by pretty girls, before he married. His death was sudden and not a little Shakespearian; for he died after only a few days after his wedding, and his coffin passed under the bridal arch. Peritonitis.

Although his diary does not hesitate to reveal the horrors of Victorian rural life, it is essentially beautiful and enchanting, a book to re-read for all one’s life. Also one to accompany the lectionary, the parish magazine, and, for myself at this moment, the great business of putting lavatories in the church – although never once have I been asked for one. But you never know.

At the moment, the horse chestnuts, which a young clergyman selflessly set in the 1890s, are reaching for the sky, and their conkers will soon descend on graves, bouncing about on almost obscured names and dates. And rivulets will find their way to the tarmac and thus to their old journey to the River Stour.

From the *Church Times* 17 June 2016 and reproduced by kind permission.

Some Further Thoughts on the Harvey Notebook

I was interested to learn about the late David Bentley-Taylor in the March *Journal* and read two of his articles from the KS archives. The first is entitled 'The Diarist or Priest and Diarist?' and gives a thoughtful assessment of Kilvert's churchmanship. The second, from 1989, is entitled 'The Last of Kilvert A Personal Reaction' and is a review of the 'The Diary of Francis Kilvert June-July 1870 Edited by Dafydd Ifans'. This is the Harvey notebook, given to Mr Charles Harvey by Kilvert's niece Mrs Essex Hope. Mr Bentley-Taylor gives a very good description and summary of this 'thrilling' find.

Having recently re-read the Harvey notebook I was particularly pleased to see this review. Like Mr Bentley-Taylor, I too had gone through the book marking the passages which Plomer does not include in the three volumes. The detailed notes at the back are excellent as are the comparisons between Plomer's transcript and the original text.

The fascination of the *Diary* is that it encompasses so much of Kilvert's experience, transporting the reader to his world. This volume adds more detail and so paints an even more vibrant picture of the events and people that Kilvert brings to life within its pages. Mr Bentley-Taylor particularly commends the narrative passages: six pages describing the walk to Aberedw, seven pages for the visit to Llanthony.

In his view 'the greatest prize is the ten-page description of the fishing trip to Llangorse Lake' which Plomer reduced to a mere one and a half pages thereby 'missing many marvellous things'. Certainly Plomer, with an eye to publication, had of necessity to edit the notebooks and it is only too true that much we would love to have read has been lost. Mr Bentley-Taylor's final sentence states that we have been 'robbed of many more treasures like this volume' due to the reported eventual destruction of the notebooks at the hands of Kilvert's niece Essex Hope whose photograph, somewhat ironically, occupies a full page in this volume.

Mr Bentley-Taylor cites what he perceives to be the book's 'defects – too much of the superficial social round towards the end, too much archery and croquet – but these forced me to

recognise how much we owe to Plomer for weeding out what was banal'. Similarly he states 'Six more pages are given to the outing to Snodhill Castle and Dorstone, preserved by Plomer but with the omission of ten passages of no particular interest'. I have to disagree with this assessment for it is in the interactions

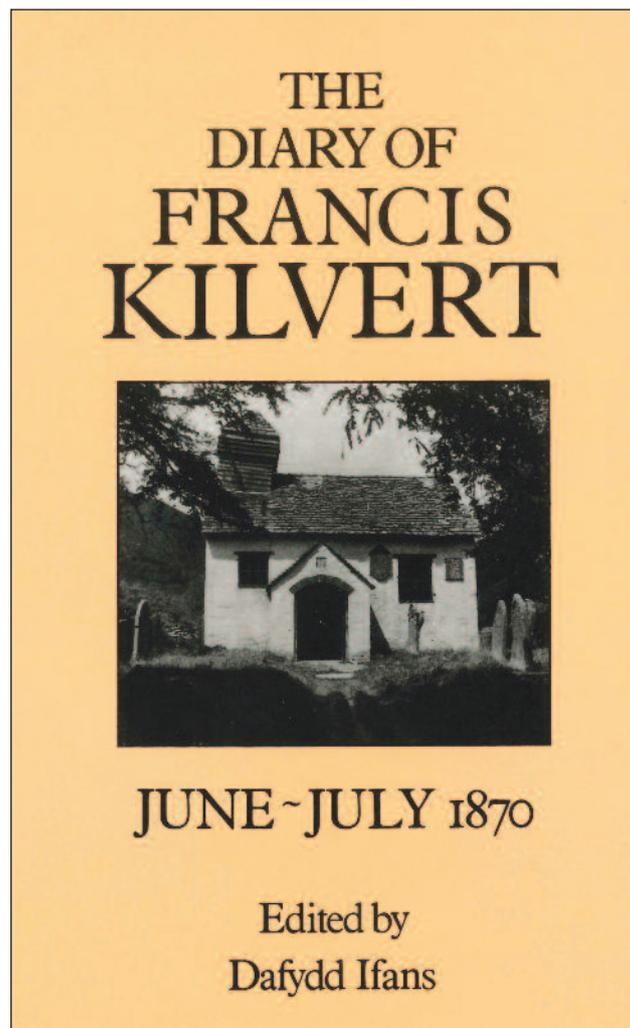
of the people in the *Diary* that we see both them and the Diarist a little more clearly. There are many instances where the notebook provides additional detail and brings a sharper focus to the events included by Plomer.

A good example of this relates to Elizabeth Jones (aged 9) a pupil at the village school who Kilvert refers to as *Gipsy Lizzie*. Plomer has only two references to her during this period, whereas the notebook contains a further six. For example, on 7 July there are just over four lines telling us that Kilvert was at the school where *no child in the reading class knew the meaning of the word 'tresses'*. To demonstrate, he drew the class's attention to Elizabeth by lifting her dark curls saying *These pretty things*. The final sentence: *She will never forget what tresses are now* suggests to me that there was a reaction from Lizzie's classmates to her understandable embarrassment at being singled out. We do not hear her voice or that of the other children. However, from our own experience of primary school we know very well that there would have been suppressed giggling at

her discomfiture and doubtless ongoing teasing long after the event.

The social round with its archery, croquet and outings is worth looking at more closely in the light of the further information provided by this notebook.

The picnic at Snodhill Castle on Tuesday 21 June is also well documented by Plomer but here we learn a little more: *At Hardwick Parsonage...the house was empty as the Webbs and Wyatt girls started this morning for Stratford-on-Avon where Mr Webb is to give a lecture on Switzerland*. Switzerland had become a fashionable tourist destination with tours run by the firm of Thomas Cook. Clearly Mrs Wyatt was a great enthusiast, for Plomer also relates how during a dinner at Clifford Priory on 7 July Kilvert tells how she dominated the conversation by



The 'Harvey' Notebook

talking Switzerland so that he was unable to chat to Lucy Allen from whom he had been forcibly separated.

The picnic itself, with the disastrous attempt to boil potatoes, is well documented by Plomer. So vivid is Kilvert's account that we can visualize ourselves as bystanders looking on as the food is passed around: *people sprawled about in all attitudes and made a great noise. Henry Dew was the life of the party and kept the table in a roar.*

Back at Dorstone Rectory Kilvert and others again visit the pretty, merry, good-tempered little fox cub that they had seen earlier chained to his kennel, who *looked very hot and panted heavily*. In the late afternoon before dinner Kilvert went with a group to see the church, which he describes. Plomer also records the dance after dinner where there were high-jinks, again with Henry Dew to the fore: *Tom Brown, dancing a waltz with his nephew Arthur Oswald, came down with a crash that shook the house and was immediately seized head and heels by Henry Dew and Mr Allen and carried about the room*. It seems that Revd Henry Dew (1819-1901) was good company. The notebook tells us that during Kilvert's carriage ride home the merry mood continues: *The Haigh Allens were just before us all the way and turned down the Clifford Priory lane as we drove past the mouth of it. Shouts of 'Good Night' exchanged as we drove on alone*. Plomer too records people telling ghost stories *till Mrs Oswald was almost frightened out of the carriage*. We can imagine the hilarity. The notes at the end of the book tell us that Mrs Ann Oswald, a widow aged 49, lived with her daughter Margaret and her son Arthur at the The Moor, home of her widowed cousin.

On Friday 8 July the notebook tells of another social event at Clyro Court *the usual thing croquet and archery, and much the same party as at Wye Cliff on Wednesday, except the Bridges, between whom and the Baskervilles there has arisen an unfortunate misunderstanding, which I much regret*. There is no account of what caused this bad feeling but the fact that Kilvert regretted it may, or may not, relate to the fact that as scorekeeper on 6 July he had made a mistake and recorded the scores incorrectly: *However we calculated and recovered the right number*. Or maybe it related to the cricket match in the adjoining field where *Baskerville's voice might now and then be heard above the rest*. In any event, Kilvert carried on recording the scores until he felt obliged to leave at 7.30 to *keep my Mother company, turning down Crichton's invitation to go up to the house and have a scramble dinner*.

The notebook entry for Monday 11 July records: *At 1.15 Mr Venables drove me to Oakfield to luncheon and to see the gathering and parade of the Foresters*. Kilvert records the good humorous speech quite *impromptu* made by Mr Venables after luncheon. From his seat Mr Venables began to propose a toast to Mr Allen at the request of the ladies. This turned into a speech after *Henry Dew told him to stand up* and the good humour escalated: *There was a titter, then a roar of laughter... Altogether the speech was a very happy one*.

The children's choir dinner at Hardwick Parsonage on Thursday 14 July takes up five pages in the notebook but is entirely omitted by Plomer. After the children have had their dinner around a large table on the lawn, there is a concert accompanied on the piano by Mr Hallingshed the blind organist about whom Kilvert writes movingly. After this interlude fire balloons were sent up to great excitement. Then it was time for all the choir to receive prizes from a display on a little table. A child chooses a microscope and shows Kilvert an ant she had placed on the glass. Kilvert took this to show Margaret Oswald

(aged 19) who made a great fuss, saying *the ant had got into her eye and knocked it off the object glass*. Undeterred, when no-one was looking Kilvert *stole a prize, a photograph frame, and offered it first to Margaret Oswald and then to Lucy Allen as a token (of) my regard and esteem*. However they both declined it. It would seem that Margaret and Lucy (aged 17) were unamused by Kilvert's attempts at humour. Given that Kilvert was their senior by well over ten years, they doubtless found it childish behaviour from a clergyman whom they regarded as an adult.

There is much gaiety during a hilarious game of croquet played on rough ground in a field: *Capital fun it was, screaming fun*. Kilvert continues in high spirits when he sits with Mrs Oswald at high-tea: *we laughed so much that we spilt the salt. We were told that we could not be allowed to sit together again*. It appears that Mrs Oswald eggs Kilvert on: *Mrs Oswald is superstitious and made me throw salt over my shoulder. Mrs Allen said that next time we should both sit below the salt*.

More croquet follows with even *Wilder games than before* and then Mr Webb the vicar of Hardwick, a Fellow of the Astronomical Society, conducts the viewing of the night sky and planets in the Observatory. More attempts at fire balloons ensue and then Kilvert travels in the Oswalds' roomy carriage as far as the Moor, their home. The events of the evening were surely a topic of light-hearted conversation on the journey.

Two days later, during the afternoon of Saturday 16 July, Kilvert sets off across the fields for another social gathering at Pont Vaen, home of Captain and Mrs Bridge, where Allens, Oswalds and Trumplers are gathered for yet another social event with croquet and archery. They are soon joined by the Henry Dews and Andrew Pope.

It was not a good day for Kilvert. Plomer records it too but leaves out several lines in the middle which are included in the notebook. First, both accounts record how Kilvert put his head through the railings to retrieve a croquet ball and Margaret Oswald impudently told him that his *head looked so tempting she felt greatly inclined to shoot at it*. Kilvert reflects that she was such a poor shot she would have missed but he did not say this to her. After the episode with the ant on the microscope and the unwelcome silliness with the picture frame it would seem that Margaret Oswald has little time for Kilvert and is cheeky to him.

Things got worse, as Plomer also records: *At tea I sat between Miss and Mrs Oswald and opposite a tongue. May I never sit opposite a tongue again, at least if I have to carve it with a new round-headed small knife as blunt as a fruit knife. I heaved and hacked away at the tongue, cut it up into small bits, and made a complete ruin of it. The more the knife would not cut and the less tongue there was to give, the more people seemed to want it and asked me to send them some*.

The following five lines which Plomer omits are very telling. Once again Henry Dew is to the fore: *Henry Dew said he didn't want the tip which I had sent him, but the fat and the kernel, so I had to turn the tongue over, and cut it into worse and more disgraceful fragments than ever in the effort to find the kernel. Eventually I sent him some morsels of fat and some of the paper frill*.

Kilvert seems oblivious to the fact that all this appears to have become something of a joke at his expense. He doesn't seem to realize, simply saying that he was unable to keep up with the seemingly endless requests for slices of tongue. That it was a cause of much merriment is made clear by Henry Dew

complaining about his portion and sending it back with a specific request for the fat and the kernel, knowing very well that the flustered Kilvert was making a complete hash of it. Why did no-one take pity on Kilvert and give him a proper carving-knife or, more to the point, why did he not call for one himself?

The fact that Kilvert was sitting between Margaret and Mrs Oswald and opposite the tongue, so that he was obliged to carve it with the unsuitable knife provided, also makes me wonder if he was the victim of a practical joke that mother and daughter devised, maybe as they went in to take their places at the table. We remember Kilvert's attempts at humour with Margaret Oswald and Lucy Allen at the Hardwick choir celebrations on 14 July which fell completely flat, followed by the laughing and larking about with the salt as he sat next to Mrs Oswald at high-tea, which was noticed and commented upon by Mrs Allen.

Henry Dew is obviously a jovial character and appears as Master of the Revels in these passages, more than once *setting the table in a roar*. Plomer records his amusing description of his mother's shopping trip to Hereford in August 1872 (ii 246) where the poor old lady lurches from one mishap to another. Henry was clearly a good raconteur and humourist, for Kilvert records all the details of the story and we can almost hear Henry as he entertainingly relates the events of that famous occasion.

The third misfortune to befall Kilvert on this day at Pont Vaen, also recorded by Plomer, occurred after the meal when Mrs Bridge took people into the garden and showed them the beehives. A *miserable bee* stung Kilvert between the eyes and lodged in his beard. Although his eyes were streaming he said nothing, not wanting to draw attention to himself. Plomer also records the *wild, nonsensical game of croquet in the dark* with much screaming laughter, after which Kilvert must have been glad to climb into the Oswalds' carriage for the drive home.

The Harvey Notebook ends after two short entries for Sunday 17 and Monday 18 July after which Cornwall beckons,

for on Tuesday 19 July Kilvert sets off for his memorable holiday with Mr and Mrs Hockin at their home *Tullimaar*.

The Harvey Notebook provides a fascinating addition to Plomer's edited version of the text. From its pages we are able to tease out brightly coloured threads to enhance the glowing tapestry we already have. To read between the lines of those descriptions of archery and croquet parties tells us a little more about Kilvert and the well-to-do folk with whom he mixed socially during that long-ago summer of 1870 and of whom he said *we meet almost like brothers and sisters*. All have long passed from living memory, yet we meet them laughing and enjoying themselves as we read the pages of the young curate's notebook. Kilvert immortalised these friends in a way that they could not have imagined and that they would never know.

Inspired by Margaret Collins' article on her sighting of *Musings in Verse* in *Journal* No 41 (Sept. 2015) our member Bob Leonard has written about his own copy and how he was thus encouraged to carry out further research. The result will appear in the March 2017 *Journal* but here is the opening paragraph to whet your appetite...

About ten years ago I acquired a copy of Kilvert's Musings in Verse from a Bristol bookseller. Unlike the de luxe edition described by Margaret Collins... my copy has a darker cover, white endpapers and the edges are plain not gilt. On the flyleaf there is an inscription: 'A.M.C. & A.S.K. To Mr Griffin, in memory of their dear sister Mrs J.L. Anderson June 20th 1899'. When I first got the book I was unable to work out the meaning of the inscription. However...



New Zealand member Evelyn Madigan at tea with Edward West and Ron Watts. Date and location unknown
Archive photo

Elizabeth Kilvert

Part II of the article by Teresa Williams (For Part I see Journal No. 42)

In 1882 Elizabeth was able to arrange for the publication of *Musings in Verse*, a collection of her husband's poetry which was published privately by Edward C. Allen of Oxford. The Kilvert Society's *Journal* for September 2015, contains a delightfully enthusiastic article by Margaret Collins recounting the story of how she was able to borrow an original copy of this book for a short time. Margaret's detection work into the book's dedication to Thersie by 'dearest Lizzie,' makes fascinating reading and poses the question of who else, apart from the family, might have received a copy.

Frederick Grice in his book entitled *Francis Kilvert and his World* (pp 228-9) included the text of an undated letter to William Plomer (with an annotation by Plomer later dated with the year 1948), from a Mrs M. Amey (or Amery) of Cusop. Speaking of Kilvert, she said: 'We always attended his grave for years till we left the parish, his wife used to visit us every year till she died I have the photo of both Mr and Mrs Kilvert and a book of poems.' It would seem to be quite feasible that Elizabeth gave them a copy of *Musings in Verse* in gratitude for their great kindness. The family must have kept the photograph and the book of poems as prized possessions.

On page 23 of *Looking Backwards* we learn that Elizabeth visited Bredwardine at Eastertide for 'as long as her health permitted.' Miss Rowland, her niece, said 'I well remember going on the pilgrimage with her on one occasion.' We have no information of where Elizabeth Kilvert might have stayed during her Easter visits to Bredwardine, but Thersie lived conveniently close by at Monnington-on-Wye until 1889, the year her husband, the Reverend William Robins Smith, died.

The painfully sad episode of the Misses Newton of The Cottage, Bredwardine, usurping a burial plot on either side of Kilvert's grave has been explored in great detail by Margaret Collins in her excellent articles in the Kilvert Society *Journals*,

Nos. 33, 34 and 36. I agree with Margaret that their actions must have caused much pain to Elizabeth as cruelly calculated acts, showing a complete disregard for her grief.

Elizabeth, we are told by her niece, was 'fond of gardening and knew much about flowers.' This interest might have been inherited from her father. *The Oxford Journal* for year after year regularly reported John Rowland's success at winning top prizes for flowers and vegetables at horticultural shows in Oxfordshire. In his younger days whilst farming at Islip, John Rowland had

been an eminent breeder of Down Cotswold sheep, his animals attracting top prices at the sales held at Bicester, but in later years it was his prowess in gardening which the paper reported.

Until 1877, the village of Wootton had no horticultural show of its own, but *The Oxford Journal* for 29 September 1877, published a report on the inaugural event. The Rector of Wootton (later to become William Creek Rowland's brother-in-law), 'willingly granted the use of the extensive and picturesque Rectory gardens.' The local gentry attended the event, the Lady Louisa Spencer, heading the list of guests. The show, 'being favoured with delightful weather and the attendance of the Blenheim Brass Band, the afternoon was spent most pleasantly.' The Rowland family, Mr, Mrs and the Misses were named among the guests, John Rowland exhibiting a 'choice collection of Ferns together with models of miniature rock and pleasure gardens.'

Elizabeth's quiet life at

Wootton probably followed an annual pattern with her Easter visits to Bredwardine, helping at church events, visiting the poor and sick in the village and taking a Sunday school class of older girls. As a widowed lady, she had some freedom of how to occupy her days, to travel and to conduct her own financial affairs. Her name is in the list of non-monetary donations to the Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford, which appeared in *Jackson's Oxford Journal* on Saturday 6 October 1883.



ELIZABETH ANNE KILVERT
10 April 1846 – 16 January 1911



'Hollybank'. Society visit 2004

Photo: Julia Yeardye

This donation may have been the result of a visit by Elizabeth to the Children's Ward at the Infirmary or she may have known of a local child who was, or had been, a patient there. The newspaper recorded that 'Mrs Kilvert of Wootton, had provided a Scrapbook for the Children's Ward.' It would have been interesting to know what subject the pictures in the book depicted. The compilation of scrapbooks had become a popular hobby for ladies, some of the volumes being highly decorative with embroidered covers. Elizabeth may have included pictures of Bible stories but the children in the ward (listed in the paper as numbering 12) probably appreciated any variation to the strict and rather bleak hospital routine. The Infirmary relied heavily on weekly donations of food and materials to feed an average number of ninety adult patients and had just received the fruit and vegetables used as decorations for some Harvest Festivals in local churches. Also welcomed at the Infirmary that week were baskets of potatoes and apples, a supply of fish and some flannel.

In November 1883, Elizabeth might have read in an edition of *The Western Gazette* how her brother, the Reverend William Creek Rowland, visited Woolavington, where once he had been

curate, to lead the formal 'Welcome Home' celebrations on the return from America of the Vicar, the Reverend W.W. Aldridge. In typically Victorian-style newspaper reporting, the villagers' noisy exuberance is well described:

'Flags and banners were suspended from the Church tower to poles in the street. When the Vicar's carriage came into sight, the villagers detached the horses from their shafts and triumphantly drew the carriage along the village street. The anvils commenced firing with deafening roars, whilst the choir sang "Welcome Home". Emotional speeches were greeted with rousing cheers and the day ended with a grand display of fireworks in the Vicarage garden.' [cf. Kilvert's 'Homecoming' to Bredwardine after his honeymoon]

I am sure that Elizabeth took part in many local Oxfordshire events during the 1880s, but her name is not listed in newspaper reports. John Rowland continued to exhibit at local horticultural shows and his daughters may well have accompanied him or helped. John Edmund, born in 1852, possessed a fine baritone voice and sang at many concerts in neighbouring villages to Wootton, the concerts raising money for various causes. John Rowland had already been bereaved in 1871 of his eldest son, Thomas John, at the early age of 30 years. Now in the New Year of 1888, John and Anne Rowland's second son died. *The Oxford Journal* for Saturday 28 January 1888 carried the following short obituary, but there was no report of the funeral:

'We regret to record on 24 instant the death of Mr John Rowland of Hollybank at the early age of 36 years. Quite a gloom has spread over the village and neighbourhood by his unexpected decease. His stalwart figure was so well known at every meet and cricket ground, and his genial presence will be greatly missed, but not more than in the Choir of the village Church, to the efficiency of which he has greatly



The Rowland Memorial Plaques in Wootton Church

Photo: Julia Yeardye

contributed. Sometime ago, Mr Rowland sprained his ankle, and an abscess appears to have formed, from which blood poisoning proceeded. Mr Hemingway of Steeple Aston, was called in on Saturday, and was unable to hold out much hope of a recovery. A second and more favourable opinion was obtained but Mr Rowland sank very rapidly; and he died on Tuesday last. The funeral took place at Wootton on Friday.'

The loss of John must have brought back intensely sad memories for Elizabeth of Kilvert's premature death at a similar age. The deterioration in their condition over a period of days was painfully similar, as was the inability of the doctors to find a cure for either Kilvert or John.

In the following year of 1889, two deaths occurred in the Kilvert family. On 14 April, (Palm Sunday), Thersie's husband, the Reverend William Robins Smith, died in London where he had gone for the sake of his health. Thersie was left with four children, the youngest, (Essex, of later infamous behaviour) being just nine years old. Elizabeth's Eastertide visit to Bredwardine must have been more than usually sad knowing that Thersie would have to leave Monnington. If Elizabeth had stayed there with Thersie during these annual visits, this would no longer be possible. At Bredwardine the sight of Julia Newton's grave would again cause Kilvert's widow unnecessary grief in the year which marked the tenth anniversary of his death.

The second Kilvert family death in 1889 was that of Mrs Robert Kilvert, (née Thermuthis Coleman) on 4 July, at 81 years. She died at Beaufort buildings in Bath where she had resided with Fanny since Robert Kilvert's death in May 1882. She was buried at Langley Burrell. *The Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette* of Thursday 11 July 1889 reported: 'On Saturday afternoon last, 6th July, the remains of Thermuthis Kilvert, aged 81 years, aunt to W T Coleman Esq., of Langley Fitzurse, and widow of the late Reverend R Kilvert, who for many years was rector of Langley

Burrell, were interred in the churchyard, beside that of her late husband. The deceased was highly respected in Langley and neighbourhood, and the large number of parishioners present at the funeral testified that the many good deeds performed by her during her connection with the parish had not been forgotten. The burial service, which was most impressive, was conducted by the Reverend C Awdry and the Reverend Mr Minchin of Castle Combe.' It is not known whether Elizabeth attended the funeral of her mother-in-law, but it is known that she was not among the mourners at the 1882 funeral of her father-in-law, Robert.

In 1891 a Census was taken of the night of Sunday 5 April. The household at Hollybank consisted of John and Anne, now each aged 75 years, their three unmarried daughters, aged 46, 43 and 41 years and two grand-daughters, aged 21 and 20. Three female servants, a cook, housemaid and parlour-maid were employed to care for the Rowland family. The necessary omission of John Edmund's name in this Census must have been a painful reminder of his early death in 1888.

An organisation named 'Cottage Benefit Nursing Association,' which aimed to provide trained nurses to assist in the care of poor people in their own homes for a very small payment had recently been founded. The scheme was first started in the county of Surrey by a Miss Broadwood and had become very popular. The Hon. Mrs Edwin Ponsonby of Woodleys, near Woodstock, hosted a meeting at her home on Tuesday 5 April 1892, to discuss forming a team of nurses for the Woodstock area. Among the nine ladies invited to the meeting was Elizabeth Kilvert. The meeting ended by proposing to hold another meeting in a month to finalise details. Unfortunately, no further meeting was reported in *The Oxford Journal*. Elizabeth must have been well able to discuss the subject at the meeting through her experience of visiting poor families resident in Wootton.

Later that year, Elizabeth was helping to raise money for structural repairs which had become necessary at Wootton Parish Church, and the sum of £50 was raised at a Sale of Work held in the Schoolroom on 27 July 1892. *The Oxford Journal* reported that from 2.30 until 9pm, 'the prettily decorated room was crowded with customers from the village and neighbourhood. Stalls were kept by Mrs (Elizabeth) Kilvert and the Misses Rowland, etc., together with many other willing helpers. 'Mrs Jarley's Waxworks' by the schoolchildren, under the direction of Mrs Tyler as "Mrs Jarley" and Mr Howells as "her Man, John" were much praised and in great request, no fewer than seven performances being demanded.' There was 'music in the evening with two ladies and Mr Barker of Woodstock School taking part in duets and songs which were much appreciated. Tea was provided at a moderate charge (all the materials having been given).' The day ended with the Rector, (the Reverend T.J. Hearn) congratulating and warmly thanking all who had contributed to the success of the event.

NOTE: 'Mrs Jarley's Waxworks' was a very popular entertainment at that time, the idea being explained in chapter 27 of Charles Dickens's book, *The Old Curiosity Shop*. "Mrs Jarley" would have "her Man John", introduce characters such as Mary, Queen of Scots and her Executioner, the Princes in the tower, Queen Eleanor, Fair Rosamund, a Wicked Uncle, Jack Sprat, etc. Apparently, the 'stolid countenances' of the characters at all times, caused much amusement to spectators.



'Roselands' Eastbourne – home of the widowed Elizabeth Kilvert.

Photo Alan Brimson

Teresa Williams is presently working on Part III of this article which will appear in the March 2017 Journal.

Kilvert and the Black Mountains

by David Bentley-Taylor

In this second example of the writings of David Bentley-Taylor, recently donated to the Society's archives, we reprint an article which first appeared in the Newsletter of June 1984. Our more energetic members, once they have read these extracts, may now be tempted to follow in Kilvert's – and David's – footsteps.

The Black Mountains, whose northern flank soars above the Wye as it breaks out of Radnorshire into Herefordshire and whose eastern flank forms the boundary between England and Wales, comprise a group of rather flat-topped parallel ridges. Running north to south for ten miles at a height of around 2000 feet, they are divided by narrow valleys but joined at their northern end like the fingers of a man's hand. Seen from Hereford they appear as a distant rampart, dropping dramatically at Hay Bluff. Seen from Clyro, however, they tower up so close that every detail is revealed in the varying moods induced by changing seasons and the weather. *This morning*, wrote Kilvert on 29 November 1871, *there was a break in the clouds after sunrise and a dazzling fretwork of golden cloud low upon the blue mountain* (ii 90). He was perfectly placed to record the drama daily enacted before him, *the slight mist of an early afternoon hanging over the gorgeous landscape* (20 September 1870 i 231).

Throughout the Clyro part of the Diary *the mountain* or *the mountains* always means the Black Mountains, whether or not the name is given in full. One has only to go there to see that this is true, *a glorious sight, the sun setting with a rosy light upon the great slopes of snow* (6 December 1871 ii 94). Staying at the Vicarage on his first return to Clyro, he was thrilled *to see the morning spread upon the mountains* once more (4 March 1873 ii 330). There are about fifty of these brief allusions, all of them charming. Some of the most memorable describe the scene in winter when the range was *streaked and striped and ribbed with snow* (i 313), *looking like a dead giant lying in state* (ii 96), *bathed in a pink and then a deep purple glow* (i 48), *looming ghostly through the rain clouds and the thick dark mist* (ii 125), or *covered with snow and glittering in the afternoon sun* (ii 95). But his summer snapshots are just as delightful, when *all the furrows and water-courses were clear and brilliant* (i 40) and the Mountain rose grandly into the sunshine *at the head of the long straight still river reach* (i 334) by Cabalva, *flushed red and purple* (ii 181) or *burning blue and hazy in the heat* (ii 177) behind the roses, through the trees, *veiled in a tender gauze of green mist* (ii 98), *reflected in the river like Mont Blanc in the Lake of Geneva* (i 56). On May Day 1876 Kilvert revelled in the walk from Whitney to Clyro, out of England into Wales, *above the shining river and in the glorious presence of the mountains* (iii 282), as one may still experience it to this day.

The printed Diary records seven occasions on which he went into the Black Mountains.

i. April 1866 (i 76, 80-81)

A year after moving to Clyro and several years before he began to write his Diary, Kilvert walked over the Gospel Pass and saw Capel y Ffin for the first time. In miserable weather he went on down the Vale of Ewyas *till as dusk*

came on the dreary melancholy deserted track looked dark and savage as the Valley of Desolation and Llanthony Abbey *seemed in mourning*. This strongly suggests that he spent the night at the inn there. Twelve years later he said he once got lost on the Black Mountains and had been *obliged to eat dock leaves* (iii 359), which may have been on this occasion.

ii. 9 March 1870 (i 50-52)

Along with Morrell, Kilvert walked to Hay and *turned up Dishpool Lane* – the sharp left turn off the Brecon road – following the present mountain road almost as far as New Forest Farm. They ate their picnic lunch by a gate where Kilvert upset some of his sandwiches into the mud, then crossed a swampy meadow *to the Jack*. This is a misreading of his handwriting. It should be *to the Tack*, the Lower Tack Cottage on the edge of Tack Wood. The gate can be clearly identified, the last on the right before the farm, leading into a large, steep, marshy field with the ruins of the cottage in sight at the top. Its roof and upper floor have fallen in. Its broken walls enclose only chaotic heaps of the large stones of which they were constructed. The farm buildings are in the same state of total desolation. On beyond, the route the two men took can be easily traced. They *crossed a little wood and dingle* to reach the open mountain and grave mound of Twyn y Beddau. They then walked right to the top of Hay Bluff and straight on across the flat tableland, still the rather unpleasant region of *tumps, tufts, treacherous holes and pools of black peat waters* which Kilvert described. They plunged down the far side into the Vale of Ewyas and reached Park Cottage at the junction of the streams which form the headwaters of the Honddu River. This is today in the same state as Tack Cottage, the people long gone, the site littered with stones, the chain which once held the pot over the fire still hanging in the broken chimney. The ruins can be seen far down to the left soon after driving over the Gospel Pass. It had taken them 2½ hours to get there from Clyro. Then they retraced their steps, but decided that the shortest route back to Hay was to the left of Tack Wood, past Cadwgan Farm and Upper Dan y Fforest

iii. 5 April 1870 (i 75-81)

Accompanied by Morrell and Bridge, Kilvert went by carriage to Llanigon. They walked past the church, up the Dgedi Brook to its junction with the Cilonw and then on up the latter – *foaming over pretty cascades* as it still does – to Cilonw Farm just below the open mountain. The editor has omitted the next part of Kilvert's account, so the reader has to understand that the the paragraph beginning *Just where the lane* the trio had already gone down into the Vale of Ewyas. They met *the wandering people*, noticed the ruins

of Ty yr deol (the house washed away in a flash flood), and reached Capel y Ffin and its church surrounded by seven yews – nowadays eight. Kilvert makes an error in referring to *the Great Honddu brook crossing the road* where today there is a bridge. This is not the Honddu but the Nant y bwch flowing out of the side valley. The Honddu is behind the church, between it and the Baptist Chapel, which he seems not to have noticed. The two streams meet in the field on the left. They went up to where the monastery was being built, but Father Ignatius was away and they did not speak to the two monks working there. Then they walked on to Llanthony Abbey and got some food at the inn before beginning the *long pull up* to the Gospel Pass. It was a round trip of 25 miles.



The Black Mountains from Maesyronnen Chapel; Hay Bluff with the Gospel Pass to its right

Archive photo

- iv. 24 June 1870 (i 165-166)
Kilvert walked from Clyro to Llanthony and back with his brother Perch and a certain Captain Johnson. No account of their route either way has been preserved but only his rather unfavourable view of Mr Landor's tenants gathered at the inn on rent day. They managed to get a good lunch at *the Abbey Tavern* themselves.
- v. 2 September 1870 (i 219-225)
This time Kilvert went alone, evidently determined to meet Father Ignatius at the monastery site near Capel y Ffin. Again nothing is said about his route. He achieved his purpose, also meeting Ignatius' parents and brother, as well as other monks. At Ignatius' special request he climbed a ladder to lay a stone in the wall. They then stood talking *in the lane near the Honddu bridge* – that is, the bridge over the Nant y bwch at Capel y Ffin.
- vi. 29 May 1871 (i 349-350)
Again he was alone for this, the shortest but by no means the least significant of his visits. He went to see the tumulus Twyn y Beddau which had been opened up for inspection. To his delight he found himself entirely alone, apart from the sheep. *There is no company like the grand solemn beautiful hills*, he said, with Hay Bluff towering above him. *They fascinate and grow upon us and one had a feeling and a love for them which one has for nothing else. I don't wonder that our Saviour went out into a mountain to pray and continued all night in praying to God there.* He had gone to see the tumulus, but he met the Mountains too.
- vii. 10 July 1872 (ii 235-237)
This is Kilvert's last recorded visit, on which he was accompanied by Andrew Pope and Arthur Jones. They went by train through Hereford to Abergavenny and then *walked back to Hay over the Black Mountain*. Unfortunately the editor has preserved nothing about this long hike up the Vale of Ewyas apart from one incident which took place at what was then the English-Welsh

border, dividing Monmouthshire from Breconshire – in modern terms, Gwent from Powys. The spot is easily identified a few hundred yards south of Capel y Ffin where a little stream comes from the west to plunge steeply down into the Honddu. The modern road has obliterated the stone on which the three men were sitting when a young monk came from the monastery and chatted with them. As Kilvert dipped his tin cup into the stream, the force of the water snatched it away. Then they *pressed up the mountain into Wales through the Gospel Pass*.

The Diary also records two conversations Kilvert had with old people who had known the Mountains for many years. David Price, lying in bed in his hovel 8 December 1870 (i 279-281), told him about *the Church of the Three Yews* near Twyn y Beddau and the legend that *when St Paul visited Britain he crossed the Black Mountains and preached in this Church*. He said *some rude stones and the stump of one of the yews* was all that was left of it. And Mrs Jenkins at Bredwardine Bridge 31 December 1877 (iii 343-344), whose husband *had kept school in the Baptist Chapel at Capel y Ffin*, told him she had walked home over the Gospel Pass one starlit night after working late at the Park Cottage *on the southern side of the Mountain, down in the dingle*.

In the final section of the Diary the slope of Bredwardine Hill cut Kilvert off from the views he had had at Clyro, but on 17 December 1878 (iii 439), just before the death of Little Davey, he reached the top to see the sun set behind the long *level snowy blue-white line of the Black Mountains*. And on the last day for which his thoughts are preserved 13 March 1879 (iii 456), as he went to Brinsop, he got *lovely views of the Black Mountains with snow patches*. But the greatest of all his descriptions of the range, surely the finest account of the Mountains in English literature, must be the 46 lines he wrote on 14 March 1871 (i 308-309), *I never saw anything to equal it I think, even among the high Alps. I could have cried with the excitement of the overwhelming spectacle*. He thanked God for *having made the earth so beautiful*.

Kilvert in the Media – well, in the Press anyway

Jeff Marshall reviews some recent coverage.

Kilvert and the Kilvert Country have enjoyed some interesting, and free, publicity in the national press this year. Oliver Balch's piece in *The Guardian* of 9 April has already been mentioned (see page 7). Under the heading *You lead the way, Reverend*, Oliver followed Kilvert over the hills from Clyro to Painscastle. That article, almost a full page, was accompanied by a large handsome photograph – a distant view of the Roundabout. A footnote refers to local accommodation at the Baskerville Hall hotel which formed part of another full-page feature in *The Times*, on Saturday 19 March, entitled 'A weekend in Clyro.' This invitation to a short break begins at the hotel itself and extols the virtues of the numerous delightful excursions to be enjoyed in the neighbourhood. Kilvertians know all about those! This is a wide-ranging article and initially makes much of the Conan Doyle – *Hound of the Baskervilles* link. In this connection too even one of the Society's resorts, the Baskerville Arms, gets a mention: 'the only pub in the village, where a sculpture of a black dog with pointy ears sits above the entrance as though keeping evil spirits at bay', says the author Tom Chessyre. In his opening paragraph he reveals that he was evidently as much affected by the view of the snow-covered Black Mountains from Clyro as was Kilvert in the famous *Diary* entry of 14 March 1871. He writes: 'The snow-sprinkled slopes of the Black Mountains are gorgeous, looking like icebergs sliding along the ridge beneath a crisp, blue sky ...' 'This is prime walking country', he continues, 'with footpaths, hills, ridges and moorland aplenty', before referring to Kilvert and 'his sharp-eyed humorous diaries ... visitors of any sort are advised to pick up a copy to pinpoint spots described by Kilvert.' Three cheers for that piece of advertising, thank you Tom.

After inspecting the church and the Baskerville graves the author and his brother 'set forth into the green-gleaming landscape' towards Painscastle, (by coincidence taking the same walk over the hills as Oliver Balch), 'with a diversion into the Begwyn [sic] Hills' and even, also finishing up at the Roast Ox. Naturally enough, I suppose, in the end, all roads seem to lead to Hay, 'the big reason to visit Clyro', (would Kilvertians agree with that?), 'it's impossible for the bookish not to be stopped in their tracks'.

This partly literary journey comes full circle in the conclusion, one locally inspired fictitious tale of murder gives way to the real thing – the notorious and creepy Armstrong case of 1921 in Hay – if such is your taste you can read all about this in Robin Odell's *Exhumation of a Murder* (Souvenir Press 1988).

Again, footnotes to the article provide advice for local eating, drinking and sleeping – Baskerville Hall Hotel or Baskerville Arms, the choice of Baskerville host is yours. 'Just don't forget your walking boots,' concludes Tom Chessyre.

Saturday 29 May, it's Oliver Balch again, this time in *The Daily Telegraph* ... in the property section. Beneath a family photo of Oliver, his wife Emma and their two sons, Bo and Seth, perched in a tree (the sons, that is) in the garden of their home,



Pottery Cottage

Pottery Cottage, is a piece entitled: 'I craved soft turf under my feet and fresh air.' What better place therefore to seek all that, other than in the Radnorshire Kilvert Country?

The search returns to one of the themes already examined in Oliver's talk to the Society at the seminar in April – the move, after seven years in Buenos Aires, to Clyro and, since this feature appears in the property pages it begins with the problem of house-hunting from 7000 miles away!

Perhaps some sort of atavistic longing was at work here because Oliver refers to Welsh grand-parents and childhood holidays in the Ithon valley. The craving for 'soft turf' (*cf.* Kilvert's 'elastic' variety) and so on was not just for him and his wife however because he also sought 'space' for his boys. Pottery Cottage required the best part of a year to make ready, during which time the family lived in a rented cabin on the crest of a hill with wonderful views over the Wye valley and the ever-present Black Mountains (who else was it who once wrote about such views?). During those months they were able to get to know the local characters and the farmers, the latter often referred to by the names of their farms – names very familiar to readers of the *Diary*. Eventually they move into part of the cottage, and, continue to adapt, because 'it turned out that it wasn't just a house we had purchased; we had bought into a community too.' Improvements to the cottage and its garden continue, for example, a garden shed becomes an office and Oliver's daily journey to work amounts 'to all of 25 yards.' He concludes: 'there I sit, at my desk in the lee of the Black Mountains, a world away from Buenos Aires.'

By the way, B&B is available at Pottery Cottage and accompanying snippets within this article offer advice to those who might be contemplating a similar change of scene: 'Five steps on the road from town to country.'

Let us hope that readers of the above reviews have been tempted to purchase the *Diary* – and then, in the end, be drawn towards membership of the Kilvert Society...

A Walk Through Clyro

Here Oliver Balch muses on the extent to which Clyro is still the village of Kilvert's writings. It is taken from the website caughtbytheriver.net and is reproduced with his kind permission.



Digitised postcard image of Clyro. Ashbrook House, home of Kilvert 1865-1872, Judges Ltd. From the Peter Davis Collection at Parks and Gardens UK.

“In the afternoon Mrs Bevan, Mary and I drove to Clyro. As we passed along the old familiar road that I have journeyed over so many times a thousand memories swept over me. Every foot of Clyro ground is classical and sacred and has its story.” – Kilvert’s Diary, 23 March 1874.

The village tour* leaves from the steps of the pub in Clyro. We number about twenty in total, an even split between women and men. Most of the women are wearing dark glasses against the glare of the Saturday afternoon sun. The men are dressed uniformly in plain, long-sleeved cotton shirts, staples of their working wardrobes now redeployed for retirement. White-haired and stiff-gaited, the members of the Kilvert Society are feeling energised today. And with good reason. For all around them, in the cloudless steel blue sky, through the village’s rustling trees, the spirit of the Reverend Francis Kilvert can be felt.

A long-bearded, warm-hearted cleric from Wiltshire, Kilvert moved to this rural corner of the Welsh borders in 1865 to take up the post of curate. He stayed for seven years, a period widely described as the happiest in his life. It was during these halcyon days in Wales, nestled in the lee of the Black Mountains, a stone’s throw from the sylvan River Wye, that he began his eponymous diaries. It would take six decades for them to find their way into print and when they did – in 1938 – the world had changed dramatically. Europe teetering on the brink of war. The British Empire crumbling. Life’s certainties smashed. Little wonder that this lyrical account of village life, set within a bucolic backdrop of sheep-strewn hills and a seemingly timeless social order, should prove an instant hit. Kilvert’s Clyro played into a vision of rural Britain as an ageless, untainted Arcadia – the village as mythical ideal, as a ‘montage of memories’, as the historian E.P. Thompson puts it.

Today, as with most days, the wiggly main street that runs through Clyro is quiet and traffic-free. A soft-spoken archivist from Llandrindod [guess who!] acts as our guide for the day. He ambles along the road’s dotted dividing line and we follow his

lead. The material transformation of the village quickly reveals itself through his liberal use of the conditional perfect. ‘There *would have been* an orchard here.’ ‘The blacksmith *would have* worked there.’ New-builds have supplanted these architectural ghosts. Three mini estates now encircle the village, their cement foundations sunk deep into soil once covered by buttercupped meadows. Nowhere can the imprint of change be seen more clearly than in the village’s bifurcating bypass, its splicing of present and past played out to a perpetual faint backing track of droning engines.

Not all is new, by any means. Were Kilvert to miraculously resurrect and wade up the Wye from his resting place in nearby Bredwardine, much would remain familiar to him. The old parish church, most obviously. Stationed there in the heart of the village, its squat stone-tower unmoved and unmovable, the heavy entrance door still hanging on its hinges, the same hill – grassy-backed and slagheap-steep – still guarding its back. The churchyard is fuller, for sure, but Kilvert’s “sleeping friends” rest there still. Nor has time altered the bank of low-ceilinged stone cottages that huddle around the churchyard wall. So too with the Vicarage, where the young curate frequently dined with his vicar boss, Richard Venables, Kilvert’s proxy father in his Welsh home-from-home.

His view of life framed by a romantic nostalgia, Kilvert was as content reflecting on the past as he was inhabiting the present. Often he’d find Old Hannah Whitney knitting on her doorstep, her bonnet pulled down over her ‘grey-bearded nutcracker face’. Beside her he’d sit and listen to her tell of the ‘kindly primitive times’ – times of magic and myth, when Goblin Lanterns blew bright and fairy rings lured in the unwitting. Or up in Cwmythog cottage, where he’d wile away whole afternoons chatting with old soldier Morgan, a veteran of the Peninsula Wars, hearing his tales of marauding Spanish wolves and whispering French sentries.

Yet Kilvert could not evade the present, nor ignore its pace of change. He’d still insist on calling the village pub The Swan, despite a newly minted sign re-christening it The Baskerville

*KS Walk, March 2015

Arms (as it remains today). He dismissed Non-conformists as rabble-rousers and ‘barbarians’, but their hand was all too evident in his thinning congregation. Still, the Welsh borders staved off the full impact of Chartism, political bureaucracy and other radicalisms washing over the nation. Clyro society was still essentially feudal in Kilvert’s day. The landed elite remained landed. Mechanised agriculture was still but a pipedream. Society stood fixed, barely a fissure in its strictly stratified layers.

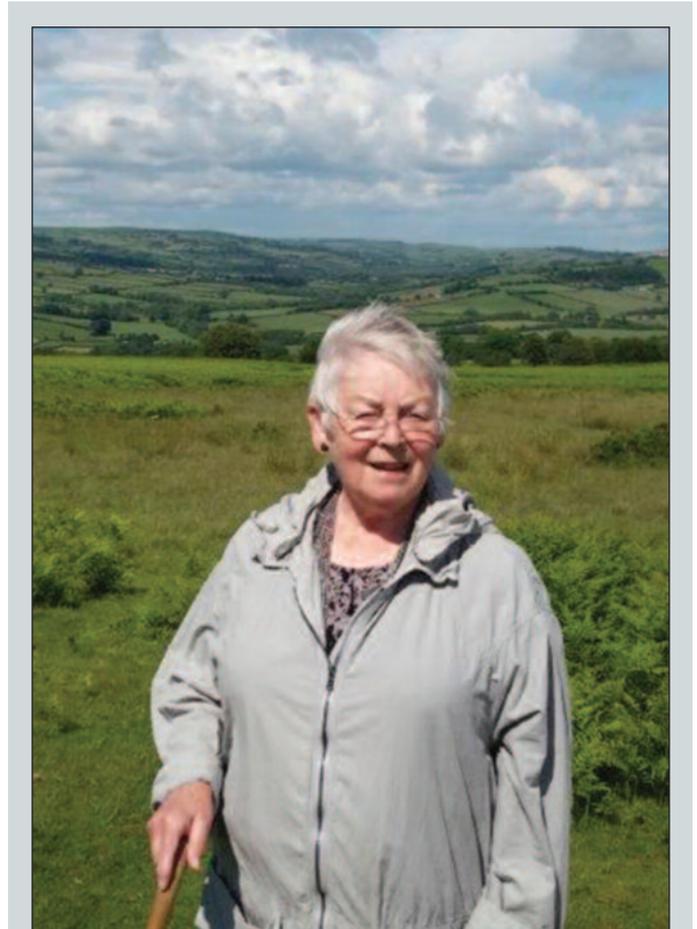
Arriving in Clyro, a century-and-a-half after Kilvert, I can discern the village of the diary, but only distantly. Its casual glimpses I catch, and no more: an outline lurking in the shadows, hiding from the electric glare of the street lamps. He’s here for sure, though, Clyro’s erstwhile curate. A trail of tiny clues announce him. The chime of the church bells. The scent of freshly-ploughed earth. The morning mist up the dingle. Every foot of ground carrying its own story. And not just Kilvert’s. Old Hannah Whitney’s, old soldier Morgan’s, Hope Morrell’s, William Meredith’s: their stories too. It’s to this lengthy library of lives that I now humbly add my own account: a chapter grounded in the present, but ever mindful of Clyro’s persistent past.



The author

Photo: Billy Charity Photography

Attuned to his audience’s interest, the archivist turns his attention to what remains, not what’s missing. So it is that we find ourselves standing in front of Ashbrook House, where Kilvert lodged and penned his diaries. And from there to Cae Mawr, home to his hiking friend Hope Morrell; to the old primary school, where Kilvert taught the catechism and mocked the schoolmaster’s fiddle-playing; to the Castle Tump, where William Meredith once lay dying on his curtained bed, his eyes rolling wildly in the darkness as a “tempest shook the old house and roared in the roof”.



Among those present at the June Excursion (see page 8) was Gillian Clarke, daughter of the Society’s late Deputy-President, Fred Grice

Photo: Val Dixon

SPECIAL OFFER

for a limited period only

Now is your chance to purchase a three-volume edition of *The Diary* for £45. Usual price £60.

See inside back cover.

Snodhill Castle Needs Friends

Snodhill Castle, scene of the famous picnic of 21 June 1870 as recorded in the *Diary*, urgently needs friends. The standing remains, neglected for over 300 years, contain unique features, which are critically at risk of imminent collapse.

In 2016 the Snodhill Castle Preservation Trust was formed by enthusiasts and local people to come together to save this remarkable site.

Emergency works to stabilise the Castle began in April 2016 and are now being carried out by Historic England (formerly English Heritage) to preserve this remarkable ancient monument.

Snodhill Castle deserves friends who will care for its future.

Garry Crook, chairman of the Snodhill Castle Trust, summarises its history:

The impressive ruins and extensive earthworks crown a steep-sided hill about 1¾ miles north-west of Peterchurch.

The Castle's origins are intriguing; possibly there was an Iron Age hill fort on the 'Snod Hill' (Snow? Hill) before the Normans arrived and there is a theory that Snodhill is a very rare pre-Norman castle built around 1050 to guard the fertile north end of the Golden Valley and its prosperous Saxon villages such as Dorstone and Peterchurch.

Whatever was existing on the hill before the Normans arrived

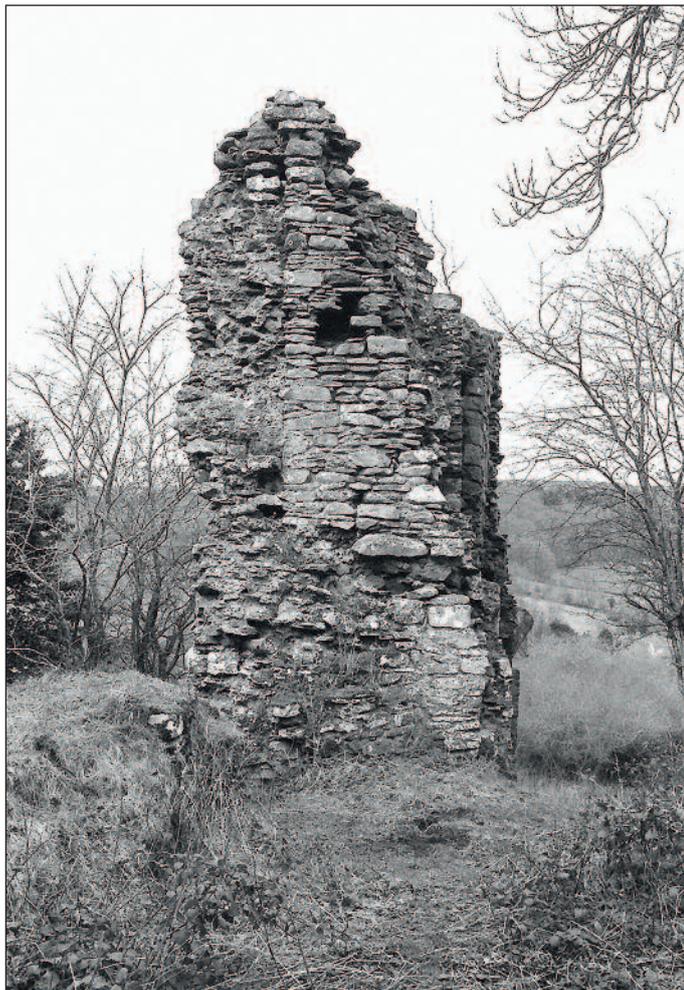


Photo: Carl Davies

it is most likely the castle was built in 1068-1071, when William Fitz Osbern, Earl of Hereford, was campaigning to assert Norman control along the Welsh Marches. William Fitz Osbern then granted Snodhill Castle to his loyal knight Hugh l'Asne who held the castle until his death in 1101 when it passed to Robert de Chandos.

The first mention of Snodhill Castle was in 1142 when Roger de Chandos signed a charter 'From my Castle in Stradel' (Stradel being the old Saxon name for the Golden Valley).

The De Chandos family held Snodhill Castle in a more or less unbroken line for 328 years until 1428 when John de Chandos died. The castle then passed to his grandson Giles de Bruges and later through the Beauchamp, Neville, Dudley, Vaughan and Prosser families.

It is uncertain what part Snodhill Castle played in the English Civil War; tradition has it that the castle was besieged and destroyed by the Earl of Leven in 1645 (cannon balls have been found) but is more likely that the castle was 'slighted' in 1647 to prevent further military use.

The castle was then partially demolished by William Prosser between 1649 and 1652 to provide materials to build nearby Snodhill Court* and barns.

The intervening centuries are not well documented, but one event of note was the visit by Francis Kilvert and friends to the site for a picnic on 21 June 1870.

Today Snodhill Castle's remains include substantial portions of its unique twelve-sided tower keep with novel twin-turreted entrance; while below in the inner bailey, various towers, walls and buried features abound, indicating that the castle had unusually elaborate defences and extensive high-status accommodation and all surrounded by the extensive hilltop earthworks.

Snodhill Castle Preservation Trust (SCPT) is a registered charity set up this year to rescue this fascinating historic building which urgently needs 'Friends' who will help fund and care for its future. You can email: info@snodhillcastle.org or browse their Facebook page. You can also contact Mark Dixon, Secretary, the Snodhill Castle Preservation Trust, The Green, Snodhill, Herefordshire HR3 6BG.

* Eva Morgan, our local member, writes: Snodhill Court was the home of my late husband and now that of one of his older brothers and his family. His maternal grandfather moved to the farm in 1908.

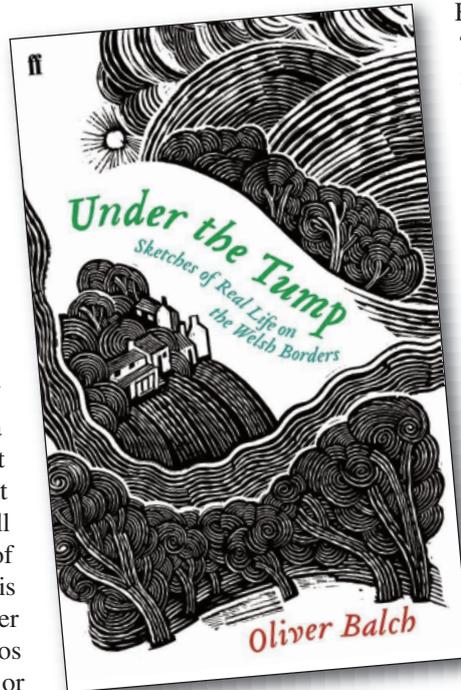
Under the Tump

Marjorie Elvins reviews a new book by our member Oliver Balch

Under the Tump: Sketches of Real Life on the Welsh Borders, by Oliver Balch, Faber and Faber £14.99.

The book was staring at me in an accusing manner. Whatever I did I was conscious of it drawing my attention. Yes, I had agreed to review it only yesterday and I intended to – when I had the time. Next week perhaps? The week after? It was still sitting there. Perhaps if I read the blurb just to see what it was about? The Introduction? All right the first chapter then. I actually finished it after breakfast the next morning. As with all good reads I was sorry I had finished it. It left lots of questions buzzing round my head and a desire to know what happened next. What sort of book is it? Part biography, part social science, part philosophy but above all a vivid, racy, funny, gossipy picture of Clyro and Hay. Entwined and interlinked is the life and *Diary* of Francis Kilvert. Oliver Balch has moved his family from Buenos Aires to Clyro and he muses how, when or even if newcomers, like himself and Kilvert, ever become members of the community. When are they accepted and when does it feel like home? Like all of us who live in small villages Oliver finds a huge Venn Diagram of people who converge and separate, operating at different levels and intensities, in different ways and at different times. How to find your way in?

It must have been different for Kilvert. He came to an area where incomers were rare but he came with an established status.



He was the curate. Venables would give him an ‘in’ in certain social circles and his job would introduce him to others. Welcome in some places, less so in others, but probably an object of some curiosity to many. But how well did Kilvert fit in? Is he an unreliable narrator? He gives the impression of warm friendships with people who, as we know from other evidence, barely acknowledge his existence. For all the social activities he seems lonely (hence the *Diary*?). Living in lodgings and longing for a family and, perhaps with no intimate to share ideas and thoughts with, perhaps Kilvert saw himself as much more integrated than he actually was.

It has been very different, of course, for Oliver. He has been one of many incomers to the area over the last 30 years. He has a wife and a family and a home to which he can invite neighbours. He meets (and introduces us to) people at the school gate, in the pub, at the market, at the Festival, in the coffee shops. He joins a running club and the Kilvert Society. He is much more confident than Kilvert ever appeared to be and freer of social restrictions. He gradually gets to know the wheelers and dealers, the movers and shakers of Hay and Clyro. He is ‘knit’ as he calls it.

This book is a must for anyone interested in Kilvert, in the area or just in how groups within a community interact, change and flourish.

Frederick Grice, *War’s Nomads: A Mobile Radar Unit in Pursuit of Rommel during the Western Desert Campaign, 1942-43*, edited by Gillian and Colin Clarke. Oxford and Philadelphia: Casemate, 2015, xviii+214 pages, price £19.99.

In the 1970s and early 1980s Fred Grice was one of the key figures in the Kilvert Society, and Deputy-President from 1973 until his death a decade later. During this period he researched and published his ground-breaking *Francis Kilvert and His World* (1982), and he and his wife, Gwen, participated in the full round of the Society’s annual activities. Although Fred’s sympathetic appreciation of Kilvert as a diarist was widely acknowledged, few people beyond his immediate family knew that Fred himself kept a journal from 1937 to 1983, in which he recorded his travel, friendships, encounters, reading and thoughts while working in the English Department at the Worcester College of Education (now University of Worcester) – and later

in retirement.

Two of his earliest journals dealing with his wartime experiences, transcribed and edited by his daughter Gillian Clarke and son-in-law Colin Clarke, have recently been published by Casemate. They reveal Fred’s great sensitivity to the other British and Empire servicemen with whom he served in the UK and Africa in 1942-3, his delight in the desert landscapes of North Africa under changeable weather conditions, and his fascination for their inhabitants, military and civilian, European and Arab. Although these wartime journals were kept more than 30 years before Fred seriously engaged with Kilvert, *War’s Nomads* demonstrates a decidedly Kilvertian bent.

A budding professional writer and grammar school master, Fred Grice had a naturally keen eye for detail and ear for language which he assiduously employed after he was called up in 1941, keeping the two accounts of his experiences which together make up *War's Nomads*. The first, 'On Draft' deals with waiting to embark after initial training, with the journey to the battle zone, and the privations of a low-ranking Aircraftsman. Daily life on board ship is vividly brought to life with details of the routine, the cramped conditions, the banter and games used to pass the time by the troops, and the, by contrast, luxurious existence of the officers.

The second and longer journal, 'Erk in the Desert' gives a detailed account of the activities of Unit 606, a radar crew that follows just behind the battlefront. Unit 606 provides radio-detection for the advanced landing grounds being used by RAF fighter-bomber squadrons, because these landing strips, in turn, are the target of the German Luftwaffe and Italian Air force attacks. It was a tiny unit, never more than 10 men, often acting

for protracted periods in comparative isolation. Fred's memoir vividly and lyrically evokes the landscape and the often tense and dangerous environment in which they operated.

War's Nomads was nominated as a 'Book of the Year' for 2015 in *History Today*. David Lowenthal's recommendation reads: Aircraftsman Grice's diaries and notebooks yield a vivid account of life and landscape in North Africa during the British 8th Army's advance from El Alamein to Tunisia. Schoolmaster, acclaimed folklorist, and writer of children's fiction, Grice brilliantly combines the gritty feel of the Second World War army life as daily experience – its commingling privations and miseries, fears and follies, camaraderie and boredom – with stunning depictions of the Maghreb's deserts and dwellings, oases and occupants. For this reviewer, a western front former infantryman, Grice's superb prose reanimates the war's quotidian realities, grim and sanguine alike, with matchless immediacy.

Colin and Gillian Clarke

FORTHCOMING NEW KILVERT BOOK: *EAST END: WEST END. THE STORY OF A VICTORIAN COUPLE* by John Toman

John Toman writes...

A few months after completing 'The Lost Photo Album' (TLPA), my thoughts turned to Bee Smallcombe who was cited in that book as an example of a young woman very keen to marry. Kilvert was worried about her health in the *Diary* entries (one is in the National Library of Wales edition) that mention her. He had known her for some years because her family used to attend Harnish Church, as Emily Kilvert recorded.

Originally, I set out to write an article about her and the man she married in October 1879, in order mainly to learn about her family and to see how her marriage turned out. Once my research began, I realised that the couple's story was complex and interesting enough to require full treatment.

Bee's clergyman husband, George Trousdale, became a missionary in poor parishes in London and she worked alongside him. They also spent time in country parishes like Kilvert's own. Bee was one amongst many upper class women who devoted themselves in the 1880s and 1890s to the service of London's most needy – the poor of the East End. Her story is traced in the light of Victorian women's struggle to obtain for themselves some kind of worthwhile and personally rewarding activity at a time when upper class ones could hope for little more than marriage and motherhood. The book also explores contemporary attitudes to the East End poor, including those of the Church, and towards the linked issue of slavery. Bee Smallcombe's family owned slave plantations in the West Indies.

In many ways, the book is about Kilvert and the world of the *Diary*. The values and preoccupations of Bee and George were largely those of the Kilvert family. The life that Kilvert might have lived with Elizabeth Rowland could so easily have been like that of Bee and George. Their married lives began simultaneously. The book is filled with references to and passages from the *Diary*, exploring parallels, characters, and events. A great deal is said about the diarist's reading, especially on the subject of women, poverty, overseas and home missions. His ministry is compared and contrasted with George's.

East End: West End will be about 220 pages in length, fully illustrated, and produced by Charles Boase to the same high standards as 'TLPA'. The book represents another Kilvert Society endeavour and deserves the support of members.

East End: West End still awaits publication and as we go to press, price and publication date are not available. We will endeavour to circulate details to members as soon as they are known.

Bits and Pieces

- Our member Julia Yeardye has written to Colin Dixon, KS publications manager, wondering whether the collection of Kilvert books assembled by her late husband, Tony, can be sold for the benefit of the Society. Indeed they can.

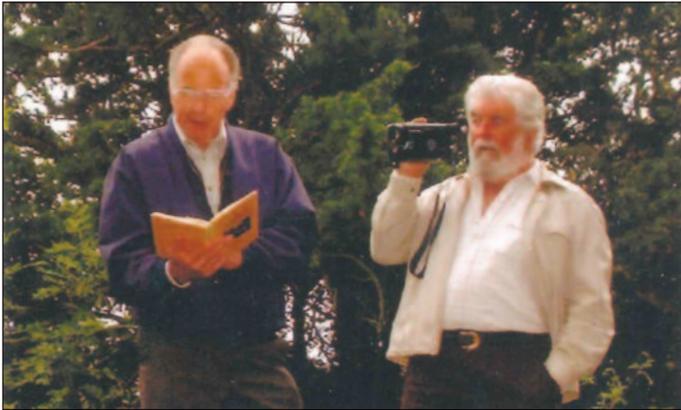
The collection contains a number of unusual items, for example: *Ah-Yes* by Peter Ralph Bowman (edited by Helga and Humphrey Fisher) another priest and diarist and once the vicar of the Painscastle group of parishes; also a booklet on Maud Heath's Causeway published by Chippenham Borough Council. These books

will be on sale at next year's AGM weekend unless sold before then, please contact Colin Dixon if you are interested. Tel: 01597 822062.

Julia also has for sale a three-volume edition of the *Diary* in a slipcase at £35 plus £10 postage. Please contact her direct at 15 Wykeridge Close, Great Hivings, Chesham, Buckinghamshire HP5 2LJ. Tel: 01494 786839

Julia enclosed some photographs with her letter and a mention of the publication of a book she recently completed. She writes: 'my wartime book *Trial and Circumstance* at last came to publication',

and she goes on to say that she has sold almost half of a short print run. The book is priced at £17.50 plus £2.50 postage. Again, please contact Julia direct.



KS visit to Snodhill – a long time ago. Colin Dixon reads, filmed by Tony Yeardye.



KS visit to Wootton, 2004.

Photos: Julia Yeardye

- The article on page 18 refers to numerous examples of publicity which RfK, the *Diary* and the Kilvert Country have enjoyed this year in the national press. There have been lesser examples too:

The latest version of the leaflet advertising the Judge's Lodging in Presteigne might well tempt visitors to sample the *Diary* because listed among the attractions of that visit is one entitled: 'Voices from the Past.' Here, 'Visitors are accompanied by an eavesdropping audio tour' enabling them to listen to 'their tale from Mary, the hardworking maid, to Reverend Richard Lister Venables, Chairman of the Magistrates and employer[sic] of the famous Victorian diarist Francis Kilvert, portrayed by Robert Hardy. Mr Venables reminisces about the changes he has seen in his life'

- The winter 2015-2016 edition of *Natur Cymru* carried an article entitled 'The Llysdinam Legacy' by Dr Fred Slater, who for 36 years was director of the Llysdinam Field Centre. There is no mention of Kilvert here but the article is a salute to the Venables family and in particular to the late Sir Michael Dillwyn Venables Llewelyn, whose wish it was that a Field Centre 'should sit within land owned by the Llysdinam Charitable Trust.' The Centre was administered from 1970 until 2010, when it closed, by Cardiff University and others. Its establishment in rural mid-Wales was entirely due to Sir Michael, 'custodian of his family's long interest in science and natural history. This ranged from the nineteenth century botanist and conchologist Lewis Iveston Dillwyn FRS, through connections with such as Faraday, Wheatstone and Fox Talbot to his own father Sir Charles.'

Today the Llysdinam legacy lives on 'in the expertise gained by the generations of students' who studied and worked there. Various photos accompany the text, there is one of Dr Fred, while others show some of the work being carried out around the estate and there is a fine one of Llysdinam Hall in the snow.

- An interesting article in the 2016 Annual Report of the Friends of Brecon Cathedral on the Havard Chapel there has some, albeit tenuous, links with the *Diary* and the Society. The fourteenth century Havard Chapel was originally erected as a chantry chapel by the Havards of Pontwylim and was once the Lady Chapel of the Priory church.

Its present military role as the Regimental Chapel of the South Wales Borderers (formerly the 24th Regiment of Foot) dates back to 1873. It was the First World War however which brought about its creation as a permanent memorial to the officers and men of the South Wales Borderers who perished in that conflict. So it was that on 25 May 1922 the Havard Chapel became the Regimental Memorial Chapel. The Bishop of Swansea and Brecon, the Right Reverend E.L. Bevan, officiated at the ceremony and the Colonel of the Regiment, Lieutenant-General Sir Alexander Cobbe VC unveiled the memorial tablet on the north wall.



The Chapel

And the tenuous connection here? If you have not guessed it already, is, of course, the Right Rev. E.L. Bevan, Teddy Bevan, first bishop of the newly formed diocese of Swansea and Brecon and son of the Rev William Latham Bevan, Vicar of Hay for 56 years. This is also a reminder of the fascinating talk we enjoyed given by Bill Cainan, Curator of the Regimental museum at Brecon, at the AGM evening in April 2012.

- Lyndall Hancock has written again from New Zealand (see pictures in *Journal* 42) and it's good to know that she continues to fly the flag for the Society there. Talking of flags she writes: 'Things have been happening fast in little old NZ lately – flurry about a new flag is well in the past, no resounding defeat, but enough of a majority against.' So the present NZ flag with the Union flag in the corner, the cause of the call for change, is retained and this after a campaign which apparently cost millions of dollars!

She also mentions the then forthcoming All Blacks v Wales match in Dunedin last June: 'Will open the window (maybe) to hear the roar from across the harbour.' I wonder if she did – perhaps her next letter will have the answer!



Lyndall

List of Kilvert publications

Three-Volume Diary, packed in slip case, available to members at £60 plus £10.50 p&p. But see Special Offer panel on p20.

The Lost Photo Album: A Kilvert Family Story, by John Toman (SECOND EDITION, expanded). Copies from the Publications Manager (address below)

Who's Who in Kilvert's Diary A fully comprehensive Who's Who with over 400 biographies and 22 family trees, compiled by the late Tony O'Brien. £13 including p&p.

More Chapters from the Kilvert Saga (reprinted) Contents: The Memoirs of the Rev Robert Kilvert (the Diarist's father) and Recollections of Emily Wyndowe (the Diarist's sister); also extracts from Augustus Hare's account of the school at Hardenhuish Rectory. £5.

Jubilee Praise. The Tom Palmer Memorial Booklet, compiled to celebrate the Society's Jubilee in June 1998. This new publication, edited by our former Chairman, Michael Sharp, is a selection from the Newsletters of the last thirty years. £5.50.

Francis Kilvert Priest & Diarist, by Frederick Grice. A reprint of the 1975 original. £5.50.

Collected Verse. Contains the 55 poems of Francis Kilvert printed privately in 1881. £4.50.

The Frederick Grice Memorial Booklet Contents: The Missing Year – Kilvert & 'Kathleen Mavourneen' by Laurence

Le Quesne; two hitherto unpublished articles on Kilvert by Frederick Grice; several articles, also by Frederick Grice, reprinted from various newsletters. £5.

Kilvert's 'Kathleen Mavourneen', by Eva Farmery and R B Taylor. The publication records the painstaking research, extending over some 35 years, into the Heanley family of Croft, Lincolnshire, and the related Cholmeley family, who were related by marriage to the Kilvert Family. Particularly interesting is the section dealing with Katharine Heanley ('Kathleen Mavourneen'), her relationship with the Diarist and her tragic death. £5.

A Kilvert Symposium Eight contributions from members who read papers at the Kilvert Conference held at Attingham Park in 1975. £4.50.

Kilvert and the Wordsworth Circle, by R I Morgan The author summarises his researches into the Wordsworth – Monkhouse – Dew connection, in which Kilvert was so interested. £4.50.

Looking Backwards References to Kilvert's wife, their marriage and honeymoon; accounts of their home-coming to Bredwardine and of Kilvert's death and funeral; extracts from the diary of Hastings Smith (Kilvert's nephew) relating to his enquiries into his uncle's year at St Harmon, etc. £4.50.

Miscellany Two: The Oswin Prosser Memorial Booklet. Contents: The Solitary of Llanbedr by the Rev D Edmond-Owen; Radnorshire Legends and Superstitions by Mrs Essex Hope; Honeymoon Journal by Dora Pitcairn; The Venables Diaries by A L Le Quesne; Memories of the Monk by Ann Mallinson. £4.50.

Kilvert's Poetry: A Study, by Bernard Jones. £4.

The Other Francis Kilvert Francis Kilvert of Claverton (1803-1863), by Teresa Williams and Frederick Grice. The authors, after diligent research, have produced an extremely interesting account of the life and work of the Diarist's Uncle Francis. £2.

The Books Kilvert Read, by John Toman. £2.

Index of Journal Newsletters 1956-2000, by the late Rev Dr Nigel Rowe. £2.

The Bevan-Dew Extracts Entries from the original Diary relating to the Bevan and Dew families which were omitted from the published Diary. £2.

Kilvert and the Visual Arts, by Rosalind Billingham. A transcript of the authoritative lecture given by Miss Billingham at the 1979 Annual General Meeting. £1.50.

Vicar of this Parish, by John Betjeman. £2.

Children of the Rectory, by Essex Hope. £1.50.

Newsletter/Journals Back numbers of some Newsletters and Journals. £2.50.

The following books can be purchased from booksellers or on the internet:

Francis Kilvert, by David Lockwood. Seren Books, 1990. ISBN 1-85411-033-0 paperback.

Kilvert The Victorian, by David Lockwood. Seren Books, 1992. ISBN 1-85411-077-2.

After Kilvert, by A L Le Quesne. OUP, 1978. ISBN 0-19-211748-3.

Francis Kilvert and His World, by Frederick Grice. Caliban Books, 1980. Hardback ISBN 0-904573-52-4; Paperback ISBN 0-904573-78-8.

Kilvert The Homeless Heart, by John Toman. Logaston Press, 2001. ISBN 1-873827-37-7.

Growing up in Kilvert Country, by Mona Morgan. Gomer, 1990. ISBN 0-86383-680-1.

Exploring Kilvert Country, by Chris Barber. Blorenge Books, 2003. ISBN 1-872730-24-8.

Moods of Kilvert Country, by Nick Jenkins and Kevin Thomas. Halsgrove, 2006. ISBN 1-84114-525-4 / 978-1-84114-525-9.

John Toman's **Kilvert's Diary and Landscape**, £27.50, and **Kilvert's World of Wonders – Growing up in mid-Victorian England**, £25, both published by The Lutterworth Press, PO Box 60 Cambridge CB1 2NT. Tel: 01223 350865, email: publishing@lutterworth.com

The three books below are copies of Kilvert's original Diaries and are complete – the only surviving examples of his work.

The Diary of Francis Kilvert, April-June 1870 edited by Kathleen Hughes and Dafydd Ifans. National Library of Wales, 1982. ISBN 0-9077158-02-1.

The Diary of Francis Kilvert, June-July 1870 edited by Dafydd Ifans. National Library of Wales, 1989. ISBN 0-907158-02-1.

Kilvert's Cornish Diary, edited by Richard Maber and Angela Tregoning. Alison Hodge (Cornwall), 1989. ISBN 0-906720-19-2.

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Prices include UK postage and packing, unless noted. For overseas orders, please see below. If postage prices change, the price list may have to be amended.

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