

THE
JOURNAL
OF
THE KILVERT SOCIETY



Number 54

March 2022



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 Editor by post or email. Address above

Deadlines: 1st January and 1st July

Forthcoming Events 2022

Events are subject to change should this be required by current health regulations. Please help us to keep in touch with you by making sure that we have your contact details up to date including, if you have it, an email address. Send your details to the Secretary: jeanbrimson@hotmail.com

Wednesday 9 March 2022

A visit to Worcester. (Contact the Secretary if you wish to join this event and haven't previously notified him.)

Friday 22 and Saturday 23 April 2022

A.G.M, seminar, and annual dinner. (Forms enclosed.)

Saturday 25 June 2022

A visit to Aberystwyth. (Details to be confirmed. The date may change to a week day.)

Saturday 24 September 2022

Cae Mawr and Hay Castle. (To be confirmed)

In your next *Journal*:

Members attended the Harvest Festival and organ recital at Clyro Church in September last year. The Kilvert-related address by Paul Baker will be printed in the next *Journal*. We will also learn more about the Awdrys of Notton House, and begin a photographic visit to Kilvert's Isle of Wight. Contributions for future *Journals* are invited.

Front cover: *The River Edw at Aberedw*. Photo: David Smith

Back cover: *Stained glass at the church of St Michael and all Angels, Clyro*. Photo: Alan Brimson

From the Editor

Two Henry's feature in this edition, both from Wiltshire sections of the *Diary*, but their lives had very different outcomes. There is also a young Mr Venables: Richard Massil has uncovered some fascinating information about Venables and his university days, including a friend who was to become very well known. These contributions highlight previously unexplored corners of the surviving *Diary*, while Margaret Collins reconsiders a problem for Kilvert studies: who destroyed two sections of the *Diary* long before Percival Hastings received them and sent them to a publisher? Charles Weston visits Llowes and Eva Morgan connects a Welsh artist to Kilvert characters and to family history.

We also report on our first AGM weekend in two years. Our speakers included committee members Gillian and Colin Clarke, and I need to correct a mistake I made in my review in the last edition of their book *The Handkerchief Tree*. The front cover shows Fred Grice skating with Gillian.

I have been working on a revised edition of *Who's Who in Kilvert's Diary*, which is now nearly ready.

Inserts about the 2022 AGM weekend are included in this mailing.

From the Secretary

You will recall our campaign of last year to donate trees in the name of the Society for the replanting of Moccas Hill. We had an excellent response from members and the Society has forwarded £1,500 to Natural England which is the organisation carrying out the replanting. They have advised the Society that there is a delay in the manufacture of the cages used to protect the saplings and the planting may have to be carried out over two planning seasons. We are in regular contact with Natural England and will report further when the planting takes place.

The Society plans for this year are as follows:

- The AGM weekend returns to its usual schedule of April 22 and 23.
- In June we hope to visit Aberystwyth and the National Library of Wales which has an extensive collection relating to Francis Kilvert.
- In September our intention is to visit Cae Mawr at Clyro and Hay Castle.

Because of the continued uncertainty due to the Covid 19 epidemic, this is all subject to confirmation. It is ever more essential I have the contact details of members attending events if arrangements have to be amended at the last minute.

Details and booking forms for the AGM weekend are included in this edition. Please do join us for a very sociable and friendly weekend: you will be most welcome. I and the committee look forward to seeing you there.

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From the Chairman

Last November, along with Alan Brimson and Richard Weston, I visited the Radnorshire Museum at Llandrindod Wells, where we were shown an object described by Lorna Steele, the museum's curator, as 'Kilvert's toilet'. This indeed proved to be a toilet bowl, as fine a specimen of Victorian sanitary ware as you could hope to find, its inside decorated with striking blue floral images, and still retaining parts of its original flush system. It is, of course, most unlikely that Kilvert ever made use of this toilet, which is now kept in a side room next to the museum's Kilvert exhibits. However it did prompt me, since I must confess to harbouring, like all too many of us, a puerile fascination with all things lavatorial, to delve more deeply into the finer points of earlier sewage disposal systems, especially with regard to the period marking Kilvert's lifetime.

Most of us are well aware of the diseases such as cholera and typhoid fever which regularly afflicted a rapidly growing urban population during the Victorian period. These diseases were not caused, as was at first believed, by airborne 'miasmas', but above all in the enlarging towns and cities, by poor sanitation and ground water contaminated by the waste from street outflows, cesspools and privies. For a good part of the nineteenth century the streets of London were little more than open sewers, whilst the city's watercourses and rivers such as the Fleet and Tyburn channelled human waste directly into the Thames. Matters came to a head with the infamous 'Great Stink' of 1858 when, in an unusually hot summer, the stench of raw sewage rising from the river became so unbearable that members had to be moved out of those parts of the newly built Houses of Parliament which fronted it. The task of redressing this problem was given to Joseph Bazalgette, a civil engineer and head of London's Metropolitan Board of Works. Like Brunel, Bazalgette was of French extraction. He was also, like Brunel, a stickler for detail. In 1859, he began the construction of a pioneering sewerage system for London, involving the building of four pumping stations east of the city, elegant and ornate as only a Victorian engineer could make them, which would discharge London's sewage into the Thames on the outgoing tide. His system was fully complete by the mid eighteen-seventies.

Up to this point, anyone with the means to possess an inside toilet was obliged to employ a somewhat basic sewerage system. The waste would be collected in a cellar directly from the toilet above, the liquids being allowed to seep away through the floor, whilst the solids were left to be collected at regular intervals by night soil men (so-called because they were only permitted to work at night) and sold on to farmers to be used as fertilizer. This primitive form of recycling was also a long established means of waste disposal. Samuel Pepys, writing on 20 October 1660, refers to just such an arrangement, at the same time graphically illustrating one of its more disturbing perils: "going down into my cellar... I put my foot into a great heap of turds, by which I find that Mr Turners house of office is full and comes into my cellar, which doth trouble me."

Two hundred years on from Pepys, the invention by Thomas Crapper in 1861 of the flushing lavatory, of which 'Kilvert's toilet' is an example, merely led to further problems since the extra quantity of water produced by the flush (this was rainwater pumped by hand) slowed down the escape of liquids through the cellar floor, leading to an increase in foul smells rising to the household above. No doubt Bazalgette's sewers, when they

finally began operating, came as a very welcome relief to all those suffering from inconveniences of this sort. It was not until 1875, however, about the same time as Bazalgette's system became fully operational, that Disraeli's government introduced a Public Health Act whose purpose was to improve sanitation and living conditions through better housing, internal running water and a proper internal drainage system. The aim of the Act was to improve general health and prevent the diseases which had for so long affected urban populations. When criticised for not concentrating on more important issues he riposted wittily with the phrase: "Sanitas sanitatum, omnia sanitas". Victorian politicians may have had their faults, but they did not lack a classical education!

Disraeli's Act was advisory rather than mandatory. Its effectiveness varied throughout the country according to the speed with which it was implemented in different areas. In villages such as Clyro and Langley Burrell changes of this sort would have come only slowly. People would have continued to use time honoured methods of waste disposal far longer than the inhabitants of the great cities. Population density being so much less in country areas the risk of water-borne disease would have been lower but by no means non-existent. These villages too would have had their share of foul places and evil smells. "The past is another country" wrote L.P. Hartley in his novel 'The Go-Between'. Certainly, when compared with our own modern conditions, the result of the innovations of men like Bazalgette and Disraeli, it was a distinctly dirtier and smellier country, as Kilvert could well have attested.



Radnorshire Museum curator Lorna Steele showing us 'Kilvert's toilet'.
Photo: Richard Weston

The angel with the flaming sword

Reporting on our visit to Aberedw last summer, Rob Graves referred to the ‘puzzling reference’ of the angel who bars the entrance to Paradise (*Journal* 53, p 3). Richard Parker wrote to the editor about this comment noting that this is an allusion to Genesis 3:4 which reads, in the King James version that Kilvert used: ‘So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life’. Richard’s suggested interpretation is that the magic of Kilvert’s first, 1865, visit to Aberedw cannot be recaptured.

There is a link with Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Kilvert quotes from Book IV of this poem on 24 July 1870, an entry only available in the *Cornish Diary*. He also quotes from Milton’s ‘Lycidas’ as he leaves Clyro on 1 September 1872: *Tomorrow to fresh woods and pastures new*. Regretful departure and the words of Milton seem to be going together. Add to that his own poem, ‘The Rocks of Aberedw’, reprinted on page 28 of *Journal* 53: the first word of the poem, from which all his recollections of the place stem, is *Exiled*. He seems to be indicating that leaving Aberedw and the area is close to being exiled from Paradise.

‘Waved over by that flaming brand, the gate
With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms:
Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon;
The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and providence their guide:
They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way.

Paradise Lost, Book X11, lines 642-8



‘Adam and Eve expelled from Paradise’. A print by Gustav Doré. Kilvert visited the Doré gallery when he was in London.

Clyro School

This is a photograph of the watercolour painted by Kilvert’s sister Thersie of Clyro School. It is one of a set she made in 1865, the first year of Kilvert’s residence in Clyro. The signpost marked *Hay 1* was one of the pieces of evidence that Richard Parker considered in his article ‘Maps and Distances in the *Diary*’ (*Journal* 52). The photograph is reproduced by kind permission of Adrian Harvey.



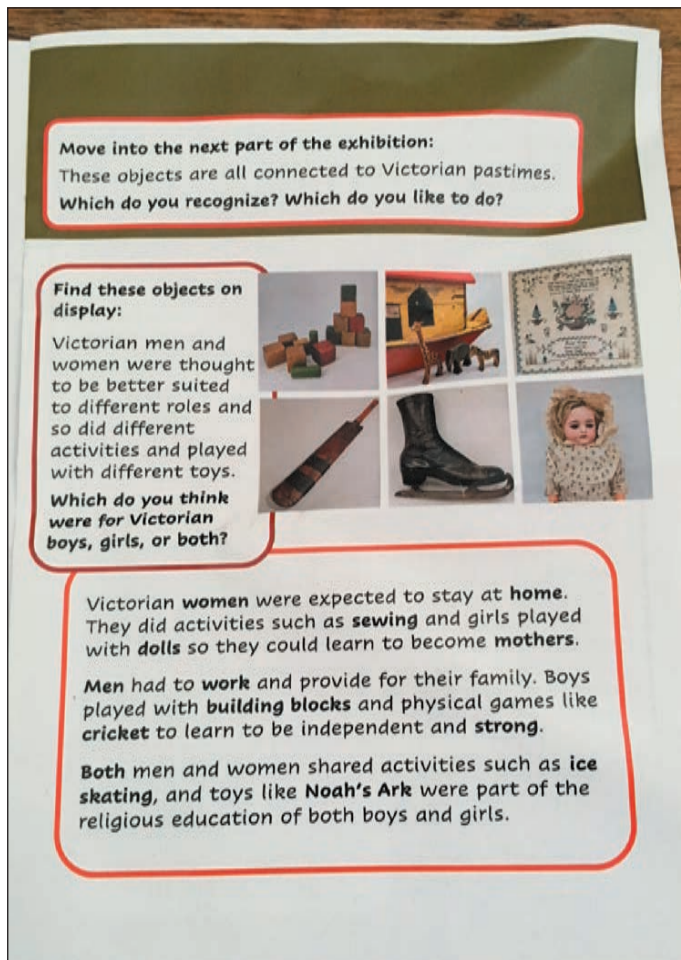
EVENTS AND EXCURSIONS

Kilvert's World: An exhibition at Chippenham Museum

Anyone walking to the top of the market place at Chippenham last summer was able to see a board with showing the Diarist's famous profile from his photograph, captioned 'Kilvert's World'. This was the title of Chippenham Museum's summer exhibition, originally scheduled for 2020, to mark the 150th anniversary of the first published *Diary* entry, but inevitably postponed. The exhibition's designer, Esme Booker, spent the lockdown researching Kilvert and came up with an exciting, imaginative layout which looked at different aspects of Victorian society through the prism of *Kilvert's Diary*. The light and dark side of this society were explored: clothes, games and pastimes being contrasted with a farm labourer's smock and information about child labour, all illustrated with quotes from the *Diary*. The Museum made extensive use of its own holding, including the Photo Album which it has on loan from the Society, and was also able to borrow the rarely seen notebooks owned by the National Library of Wales. As its special exhibition space was limited, and, as we know, *Kilvert's*

Diary is such a rich and wide ranging source of information about Victorian social life, the Museum also had Kilvert related displays in its permanent exhibition, for example, referring to the Kilvert family connection with India.

The Society has a good link with the Museum and is offered the use of its education room for occasional committee meetings. On September 1 2020, some members of the Society were able to join the committee at an introduction to the exhibition from curator Melissa Barnett and the team at the Museum, followed by lunch at a nearby pub. We talked about Lucy Ashe, one of whose watercolours was exhibited, and local committee member Jim Hall told us that he had seen her working at her painting when he was a boy and she was an old lady, who came back to Langley to escape the London blitz. Here was a direct link with a person in the *Diary*. The Museum also arranged, as part of its programme, an introductory talk, given by KS Secretary Alan Brimson, summer activities, and a walk around Langley Burrell as its Heritage Open Days activity. They were warmly congratulated by the committee.



The children's quiz – members obtained full marks, of course.
Photo: editor



A wall mounted display showing games and pastimes mentioned in the *Diary*.
Photo: editor



An exhibition display: the Kilvert Photo Album is on the middle shelf of the front case (shown in detail on the right).
Photo: Chippenham Museum



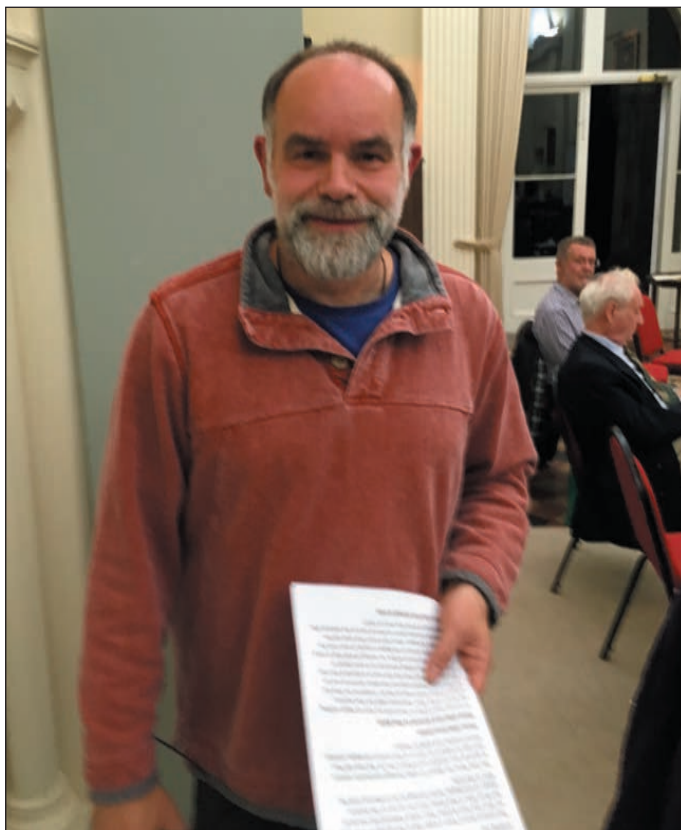
Two of the three surviving Kilvert notebooks being installed in the exhibition by Richard Edwards of the National Library of Wales. The other book in the display case is a parish register from Langley Burrell showing Kilvert's signature. Photo: Chippenham Museum

The 2021 Kilvert Seminar

The Editor describes our weekend together, after our long gap

Walking down the Wye

On our visit to Aberedw in June 2021, we were by the Edw river, a tributary of the Wye. In his talk to members after the October AGM, Mark Jickells told us how he has walked all the tributaries of the Wye, ten with his twin, Paul, and ten in Paul's memory. In 2022, he plans to walk all twenty tributaries as a fundraiser for a project that brings awareness of the mental and physical benefits of the open air and the country. Mark had read the *Diary* (and was recommended to join the Society by Richard Weston in his vote of thanks). He told us that a lot of the countryside is just the same as when Kilvert walked it, and his accompanying slide show showed us special moments Kilvert would have recorded, such as sunrise on Pumlumon Fawr (Plynlimon) shining on the source of the Wye after a night of rain, as well as revealing modern change, such as intensive farming. He was sure that Kilvert would have recognised the emotional power found in countryside walking, and also thought that Kilvert would have been fascinated by the scientific knowledge that now recognises the essential role that peat plays in acting as a carbon sink. (In the *Diary*, peat is a fuel for the poor.) He also wondered if Kilvert ever went wild camping. (Not in the published *Diary*, which describes day-long circular walks.) The talk included



Mark Jickells, our AGM evening speaker.

Photo: editor

some anecdotes about people Mark and his brother met on their walks, reminiscent of Kilvert's meetings with strangers that he recorded in his *Diary*. This illustrated talk concluded with some fascinating footage filmed underwater in the Wye.

See the website www.wyexplorer.co.uk for a guide to the Wye catchment areas.

Saturday at Much Birch

'Looking forward to seeing you at last' said my email from the Pilgrim Hotel, Much Birch, when I contacted them to check my booking. After two postponements, we were very glad to be there. We had a busy Saturday morning, beginning with an entertaining session from Patrick Furley, who had also patiently



Patrick Furley and his gramophone.

Photo: Alan Brimson



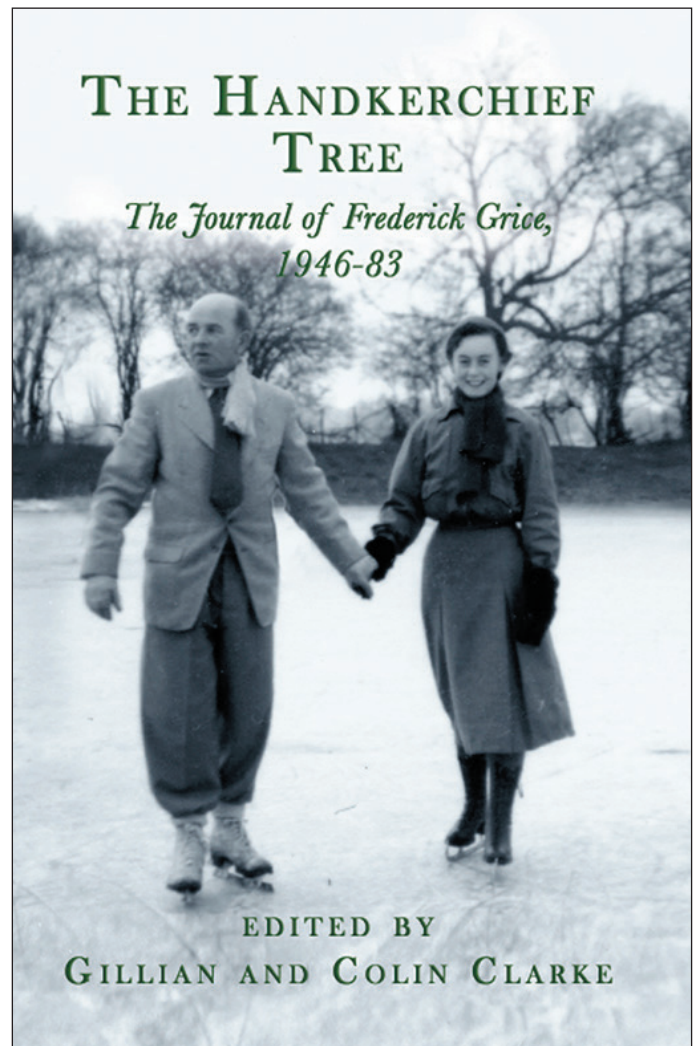
Antique magic lantern artefacts from Patrick Furley's collection.

Photo: Tim Lewis

rebooked us twice and, by the sound of it, added to his extensive collection of antique gramophone and magic lantern equipment in the interim. He had brought what he said was a small sample to show us, and then gave us a delightful Magic Lantern Show, using a projector that was adapted to mains electricity, rather than the highly flammable old projectors that worked on candlelight, paraffin, carbide, and limelight. Patrick told us that by 1889, ten years after Kilvert's death, there were six million plates in circulation through the first video rental libraries. He showed us plates that were hand painted in strips on thin glass, and dissolving views (see *Diary*, Vol 1, p22).

In our second morning session, Gillian and Colin Clarke introduced the book *The Handkerchief Tree*, the journal of Gillian's father, Frederick Grice, and a memoir of his life from 1946 – 1983, including his involvement with the Kilvert Society. In an absorbing and sometimes moving session, Gillian and Colin shared readings from the Journal with us, showing Fred's love of nature, his close observation of people, Kilvert events, and his translation of journal entries into poetry.

After a break for the afternoon, members met again in the evening for the Annual Dinner, our Secretary providing us with our original booking forms in case anyone had forgotten what they ordered for a meal originally scheduled for April 2020. The change of date, and season, produced what was, for me, a highspot of the weekend. 'This is the first time we've had an autumn dinner, isn't it?' asked Mike Reynolds, and proceeded to enthral us with a recitation from memory of Keats' 'Ode to Autumn', only consulting his book for the last few lines. There was a reading of Kilvert's poetry by Margaret Collins and of *Diary* entries by Alan Brimson. Some of us, lingering at our table talking about poetry, were treated to an encore by Mike Reynolds: 'Adlestrop', by Edward Thomas. He remembered it all, not just its famous first line. After the AGM, Mike was presented with an award to celebrate his 25 years of sterling service to the Society.



The Handkerchief Tree front cover Joint editor and seminar speaker Gillian Clarke skating with her father, Frederick Grice.

On the Road with Henry Estcourt Ferris

By Vicky Stewart

Due to isolation in central London during lockdown I enjoyed more than ever the countryside offered in literature. *Kilvert's Diary* had been on my bookshelf for years so now was the perfect time for this special read.

One episode, in particular, touched me, as it did Francis Kilvert, that of his meeting with Henry Estcourt Ferris, so I decided to investigate Henry's story and here are my discoveries.

The Story of Henry Estcourt Ferris

Thursday 11 March [1875]

It was a fine clear starry night and the young moon was shining brightly. Near the school I overtook a lad of eighteen walking slowly and wearily, who asked me how far it was to Sutton. He said he had walked down to-day from Broad Hinton, 7 miles the other side of Swindon. He was seeking work and could find none. He was very tired, he said, and he seemed downcast and out of spirits. He had just asked the Sutton baker to give him a lift in his trap, promising to give him a pint of beer, but the baker surlily bade him keep his beer to himself and refused to pull up and take the lad in, giving him leave however to hang on behind the trap from Broad Somerford to Seagry. He had tried to get a bed at Somerford but the inn was full of navvies who are making the new railroad to Malmesbury from Dauntsey.

There was no room for him in the inn. I thought it might encourage and cheer the lad up if I kept company along the road to Sutton so we walked together and I showed him the short cut across the fields. As we went we fell into talk and the lad began to be confidential and to tell me something of his story. It was a simple touching tale. 'I was born', said the lad, 'at a little village near here called Corston, but I have been knocking about the country looking for work. I have some aunts in Corston.' 'But have you no father or mother?' I asked. The simple chance question touched a heart still tender and bruised with a great sorrow and opened the flood-gates of his soul. The lad suddenly burst into years. 'My mother was buried to-day' he sobbed. I walked up to Broad Hinton yesterday, to try to get work, for my stepfather would not keep me any longer and I couldn't get no work in Corston. I would have stayed to follow my mother to the grave but I had no black clothes except a jacket and couldn't get any. She was the best friend I had in the world and the only one. I was with her when she died. She

said I had better die too along with her for I should only be knocked about in a hard world and there would be no one to care for me. And I've found her words true and thought upon them often enough already' added the poor boy bitterly with another burst of heart-broken tears.

'My name is Henry Estcourt Ferris the lad went on, in answer to some questions of mine. 'My father's name is Estcourt. He is a labouring man working in Wales as a boiler maker. He ran away from my Mother and forsook her six months before I was born My Mother's maiden name', said the poor boy with some hesitation, 'was Ellen Ferris.' Alas, the old, old story. Trust misplaced, promises broken, temptation, sin and sorrow, and the sins of the parents visited upon the children. When we got to Sutton we went to three places, two inns and a private lodging house, to try to get the lad a bed. A villager in the street told us of the lodging house, but everywhere the lad was refused a bed and from each house in succession he turned wearily and hopelessly away with a faint protest and remonstrance and a lingering request that the good people would please to try if they could not put him up, but in vain, and we plodded on again towards Chippenham where he knew he could get a bed at the Little George. The poor fellow was very humble and grateful. 'I shouldn't have been near so far along the road as this, if it hadn't been for you, Sir,' he said gratefully. 'You've kind of livened and ticed me along.' I cheered him up as well as I could and gave him a bit of good advice. He hoped to get a place at Chippenham Great Market to-morrow. The lights of Langley Fitzurse shone brightly through the dark night. ' 'Tis a long road' said the lad wearily. At the Hillocks stile we parted at length with a clasp of the hand and a kindly 'Goodbye' and I saw the last, for ever probably in this world, of the motherless boy.

Henry Estcourt Ferris

*'My name is Henry Estcourt Ferris,' the lad went on,
in answer to some questions of mine.*

Henry is portrayed as a frail-looking boy, possibly small and certainly not robust. Kilvert's heart went out to this tired, distraught lad because his fragile appearance and dejected demeanour rendered him unable to find work where physical strength and a hearty outlook were basic requirements. His mother had foreseen this, even suggesting it better he should die alongside her rather than suffer further for the rest of his life.

The villages described are in north Wiltshire, roughly between Chippenham – Malmesbury – Broad Hinton.

*'I was born', said the lad, 'at a little village near
here called Corston'.*

The Corston that Henry Estcourt Ferris was born into in 1857 was a tithing, about three miles south of Malmesbury and seven miles north of Kilvert's Langley Burrell. It centred around the church, All Saints, two inns, the Radnor Arms and the Plough, and the village green. The school, supported by local subscription, would have been full with 55 children aged 5-15 in the village in the 1871 census which recorded one boy aged 11 a labourer, another at 15 a scholar, the needs of the family and farming life dictating how long schooling years lasted.

There was a Zion Baptist Chapel, and the village had a strong Wesleyan tradition. John and Charles Wesley visited the village and Charles had preached under the Hanging Tree. Primitive Methodism, an offshoot of Wesleyan Methodism, concentrated on the rural poor, focussing attention on the role of

laypeople and stressing simplicity in their chapels and worship. In 1825, a house in Corston occupied by John May was licensed for Primitive Methodist meetings. Clack, near Dauntsey, had a Primitive Methodist Chapel and a Particular Baptist Chapel while Dauntsey had a Methodist Chapel.

The men of Corston worked mainly as agricultural labourers, some hired daily as 'day labourers'. A farmer with 600 acres employed 10 men, 3 boys, 6 women. There was a cattle dealer and two horse dealers, one from York 'licensed to sell horses'.

Kingway Toll Gate was lived in by the toll collector and his wife while two other toll collectors lived in the village. There was a Mill, the miller hiring a man who was also a 'publican, bar-house'. The Brick & Tile Works employed two men from the village, one as brick burner while another doubled as a 'beer seller'. The farm bailiff/steward lived at Bell Farm. He was from Tredegar, Wales (Henry's half-brothers later left Corston for Tredegar – was this their connection?). A farmer was also the village baker. Two silk workers were employed in the silk factory. There was a grocer, blacksmith, two carters, a house decorator, a mason and two carpenters. The shoemaker was a relative of the Ferris family. A retired staff commander, Royal Navy Reserved List, and his wife lived in the village.

There was one washerwoman. Unmarried women were mostly domestic servants. One woman lived on parish relief.

A nine-year-old boy was crippled from birth, two eight-year-old girls from different families were 'imbeciles' – one 'thro fright from birth' – and a labourer was 'deaf and dumb from a fit'.

There had been coal mines in the Corston area employing many villagers but they closed in 1840. There was also a quarry and lime burning but these were not mentioned in the 1871 census.



The old Corston Schools.

Photo: courtesy of Howard Webb collection

Henry Estcourt Ferris's Family

'My father's name is Estcourt. He is a labouring man working in Wales as a boiler maker. He ran away from my mother and forsook her six months before I was born...' Alas, the old, old story. Trust misplaced, promises broken, temptation, sin and sorrow, and the sins of the parents visited upon the children.

Henry's father is a mystery. Records do not confirm where he was born or what happened to him after leaving Corston early in 1857. There were Estcourts in Burton Hill and Melksham.

'My mother's maiden name', said the poor boy with some hesitation, 'was Ellen Ferris.'

Henry's mother, Ellen Ferris, baptised Helen Maria, was born in 1833 in Dauntsey, five miles east of Corston, the youngest of seven children of Henry Ferris & Ann Neate. Her family were deeply rooted in Dauntsey with her parents and grandparents born there.

Ellen's family were probably originally Methodist. Her eldest sister Harriet was baptised twice, firstly in Clack Primitive Methodist Chapel in 1822, then again, aged four, in 1826 in Dauntsey Church, along with other family children.

By the age of eight her parents and older siblings, Harriet, Elizabeth, Mark and Emma, had moved to Corston, their father an agricultural labourer. By eighteen, Ellen was a lacemaker, father then a brick kiln labourer. The brickworks were in Rodbourne,



Malmesbury lacemaker Louanna Alsop, born 1826. Ellen Ferris made lace in nearby Corston. Photo: courtesy of Jane Martin

a mile from Corston. At the 1861 census, Henry was aged three, Ellen and he living with her now elderly parents, father, 70, a carter. On the day of the census, Ellen was in the village visiting her sister Harriet and husband, also an agricultural labourer, and their family.

When Henry was 7 his mother, then 31, was married in the Parish Church, Malmesbury. Her husband was 30-year-old Thomas Pearce, an agricultural labourer born in Burton Hill. The marriage certificate says his 'father unknown'. The following year, 8-year-old Henry was baptised together with his baby half-brother Charles born in 1865. Ellen and Thomas went on to have twins, Mark and Riley, Riley dying in infancy. The 1871 census shows Henry at school with Charles and Mark. Grandmother had died but the boys and their parents, plus two young cousins, were still living with grandfather, Henry Ferris.

'I have some aunts in Corston.'

Aunts Harriet and Emma with their families lived in the village. In 1881, after their mother and grandfather had died, Henry's half-brother Charles lived at 'Zion Chapel' Corston with Aunt Harriet while half-brother Mark lived with Aunt Emma.

What happened later to Charles and Mark? They were soon to leave Corston for Wales. In Oct 1890 Charles, age 23 and 5'7" tall with brown hair, had been convicted of being drunk and disorderly and sentenced to 14 days at Northleach House of Remand. By the following spring, they were boarders in Tredegar. Charles gave his age as 28 but he was 25 and Mark was 18, both single and coal miners. They later married and remained in Tredegar working as coal hauliers.

'My mother was buried today', he sobbed. 'I would have stayed to follow my mother to the grave but I had no black clothes except a jacket and couldn't get any. She was the best friend I had and the only one. I was with her when she died'.

In 1875 Ellen died. She was 42. The burial records for Corston Church do not have her burial recorded but it is likely she died in Corston. Was she buried in a Methodist burial ground?

On the 11th March 1875, the day of his mother's burial, Henry Estcourt Ferris met Francis Kilvert on the road from Broad Hinton to Broad Somerford.

Near the school I overtook a lad of eighteen walking slowly and wearily, who asked me how far it was to Sutton. He said he had walked down to-day from Broad Hinton, 7 miles the other side of Swindon. He was seeking work and could find none. He was very tired, he said, and he seemed downcast and out of spirits.

Henry was still 17, not 18 until July. But he was looking for work so being 18 possibly gave him more opportunities, especially as he was no longer living at home.

'I walked up to Broad Hinton yesterday, to try to get work, for my stepfather would not keep me any longer and I couldn't get no work in Corston'.

It is no wonder Kilvert found Henry tearful and stressed after walking days in search of work and a bed. He had left the only place he had ever known and was grieving his mother's death, not even being able to attend her funeral from lack of appropriate clothes.



Corston Cottages.

Photo: courtesy of Corston Local History Society

He had tried to get a bed at Somerford but the inn was full of navvies who are making the new road to Malmesbury from Dauntsey.

When we got to Sutton we went to three places, two inns and a private lodging to try and get the lad a bed.

In Somerford, he would have tried at the Volunteer Inn, the other inn being further away from the railroad. In Sutton, he would have asked at the Bell House Hotel and the Wellesley Arms.

He hoped to get a place at Chippenham Great Market to-morrow.

This was a farmers market. Henry came from a family of agricultural labourers so would have been primarily focused on finding farm work. He had likely been hired for farm work after leaving school, perhaps as a day-labourer. However, Chippenham was a long way off and the market was only on Fridays.

The lights of Langley Fitzurse shone brightly through the dark night.

If Henry had left Kilvert at Langley Fitzurse (Kington Langley) and walked directly to the Little George in Chippenham it would have taken him about another hour.

'Tis a long road' said the lad wearily. At the Hillocks stile we parted at length with a clasp of the hand and a kindly 'Goodbye' and I saw the last, probably for ever in this world, of the motherless boy.

Henry Estcourt Ferris's route to find work and lodgings

Henry's mother would have died about three days before her burial, say Monday 9 March. Presuming he slept that night at home and left Corston next morning, he had two days before reaching Broad Hinton.

It is unlikely he walked the most direct route as that involved retracing steps before meeting Kilvert. It is more likely he walked in a northeasterly arc, first towards Malmesbury for about 3 miles, branching right for a further four miles to Thornhill and Burton Hill and on to Cleverton where he possibly slept overnight. Next day to Wootton Bassett, about 8 miles, then another five to spend Wednesday night in Broad Hinton. Diverting up farm tracks and wandering the villages searching for work and a bed added miles to his journey.

The next morning the search would have continued starting with the area around Broad Hinton, then walking on to Broad Somerford (Great Somerford) where he hitched a lift to Seagry.

It was a fine clear starry night and the young moon was shining brightly.

By the time Henry met Kilvert, it was already dark. They walked on together to Sutton (Benger), enquired at lodgings, then to Langley Fitzurse where they parted company, Kilvert having an invitation at the vicarage, while Henry continued to Chippenham where, it not being an option for him to sleep under the stars that cold night, he hopefully found a bed at the Little George and work the following day at the farmer's market.

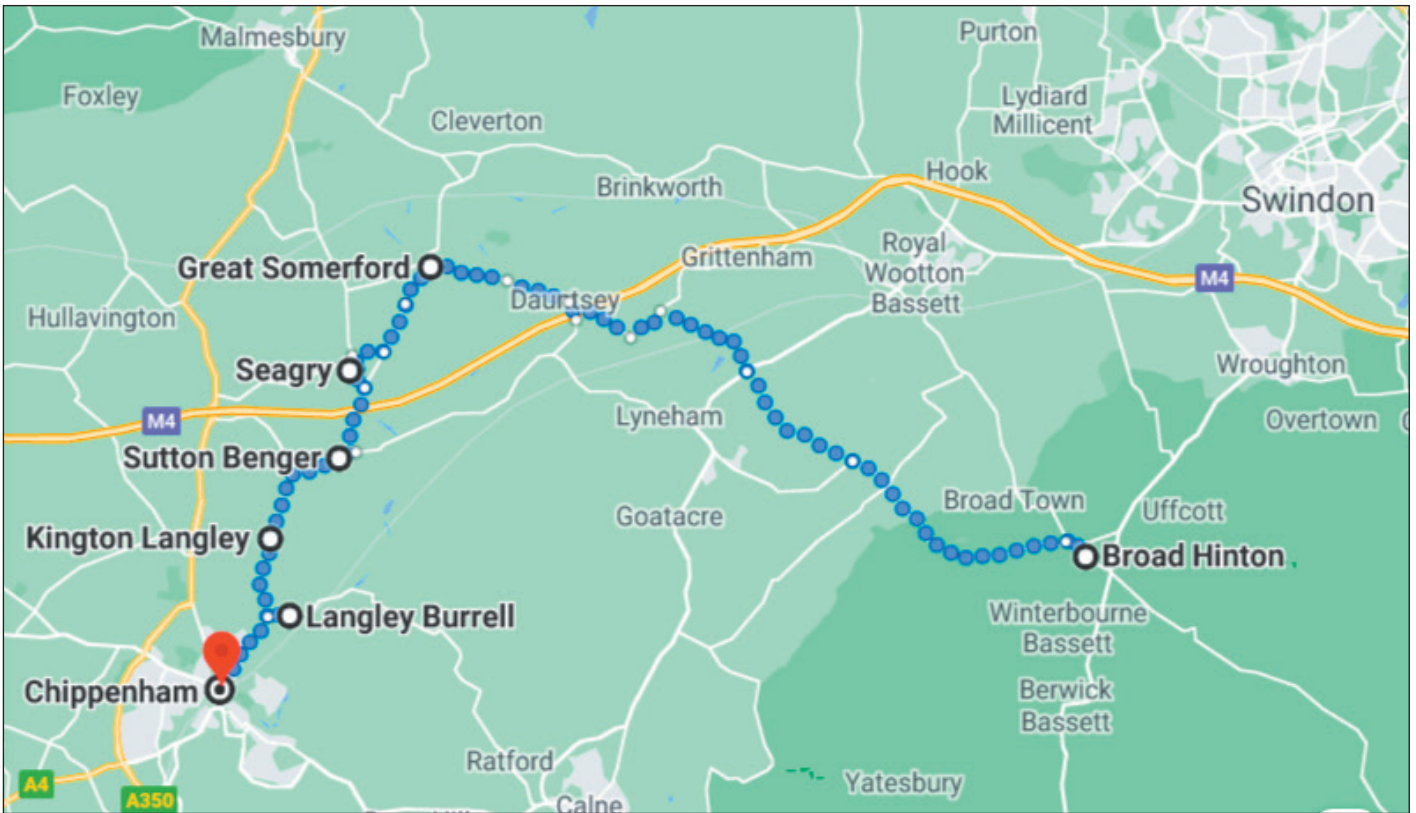
If Henry had walked this route directly, on modern roads without deviations, he would have covered 40 miles.

the poor boy bitterly with another burst of heart-broken tears.

'She said I had better die too along with her for I should only be knocked about in a hard world and there would be no one to care for me. And I've found her words true and thought about them often enough already' added

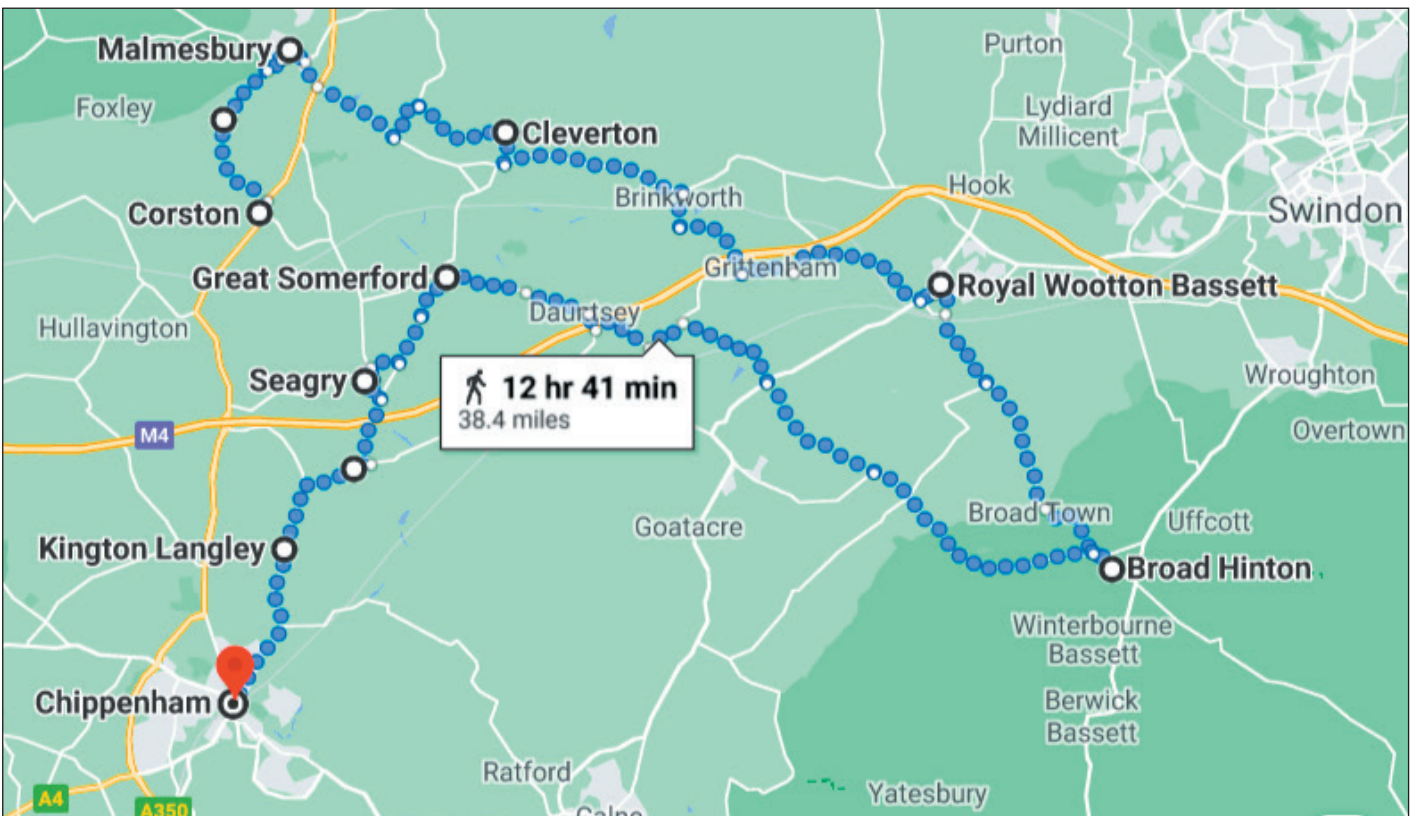
A year after meeting Francis Kilvert, between April & June 1876, Henry died. He was 18.

Henry Estcourt Ferris, 1857-1876, a short tragic life, immortalised by Robert Francis Kilvert.



'Tis a long road'. Henry Estcourt Ferris's walks, March 1875.

Photos: Google maps



Henry Heeremans of Langley Burrell

Teresa Williams uncovers the life of a Wiltshire parishioner of Kilvert, and takes us into the world of the Victorian horticultural show.

Wednesday 24 September 1873 was, Kilvert wrote, *Another glorious day added to this beautiful summer. As I walked before breakfast across the Common between the 'Lady's Gates' I met Herriman the porter returning through the lovely morning from his night work at the station, and I could not help thinking of the difference between my lot and his, and how much more enjoyment I have in my life than he has in his. How differently we both spent last night, but how much better he spent it than I did. He was doing extra duty that a fellow porter might enjoy a holiday, while I ---*

Herriman has only three days' holiday during the whole year, while to me every day is a holiday and delight.....Surely there will be compensation made for these things hereafter if not here. (Vol 2, p375)

Kilvert is speaking of Henry Heeremans whose family name was incorrectly spelled in the published *Diary*. He is mentioned just twice in the edited edition and his son, Frederick, once. Henry was employed as a railway porter by the Great Western Railway, based at Chippenham, where the Station Master was Jonathan Hornblower. Mr Hornblower has a single entry in the published *Diary* on Whit Monday 5 June 1876 (Vol 3, p326).

Henry's parents, John Peter Heeremans and Elizabeth (nee Simper) were married on 2 March 1834 at St Swithin's Church, Walcot, Bath. Henry Heeremans, the eldest of three sons, was born at Colerne in Wiltshire, situated some six miles from Bath. The Baptismal Register for the 13th century Colerne Parish Church, dedicated to St John the Baptist, records his baptism took place on 15 February 1835. His father's occupation is given as 'Gardener.' Two of Henry's younger brothers, John Peter junior and Frederick Francis, were baptised at the same church in May 1837 and April 1839, respectively.

In the 1841 Census, the family are shown as living at Lucknam, Colerne, with father John Peter recorded as born in 'Foreign Parts'

and his wife Elizabeth, 'not in Wiltshire.' The next Census in 1851 required more personal detail and John Peter's birth place is listed as 'Haarlem, Holland,' with his age 48 years, and his occupation, 'Florist and Gardener.' His wife Elizabeth's age was 37 years and her birthplace Thetford in Norfolk. It is not known exactly when John Peter Heeremans settled in England but there was a large family of Heeremans recorded living in Bristol by the 1830's. After their marriage in 1834, John Peter and Elizabeth moved to Colerne where he worked as a gardener for Andreas Christian Boode Esq., of Lucknam Park.



Haarlem, where Henry Heereman's father was born and where he traded bulbs.

Mr Boode was a Dutch planter with an estate in British Guiana, [now Guyana], named 'La Grande et La Petit Retraite' according to the *Essequibo & Demerary Royal Gazette*. Retiring to England in the 1820's with his wife, Phoebe, he became a naturalised British citizen, changing his first name to Andrew. He bought the Lucknam mansion in January 1827, a house erected in the early years of the 18th century. After the purchase Mr Boode carried out considerable modifications to the building adding a pillared portico front and two wings to the original house.

This was at a time when plantation owners such as Andrew Boode were being compensated for the loss of slave labour on their plantations following the Abolition of Slavery Act. An archive database reveals a claim registered by Andrew and his sister, Anna Catherina was settled in Court in 1835. He died in London during 1844 aged 81 years and was buried at Mary-le-bone, London. His son, John Christian Boode inherited Lucknam Park and appears to have resided there following his father's death. In 1847 John Christian Boode was involved in Court proceedings when the Lucknam Park estate was valued at between £50,000 and £60,000.

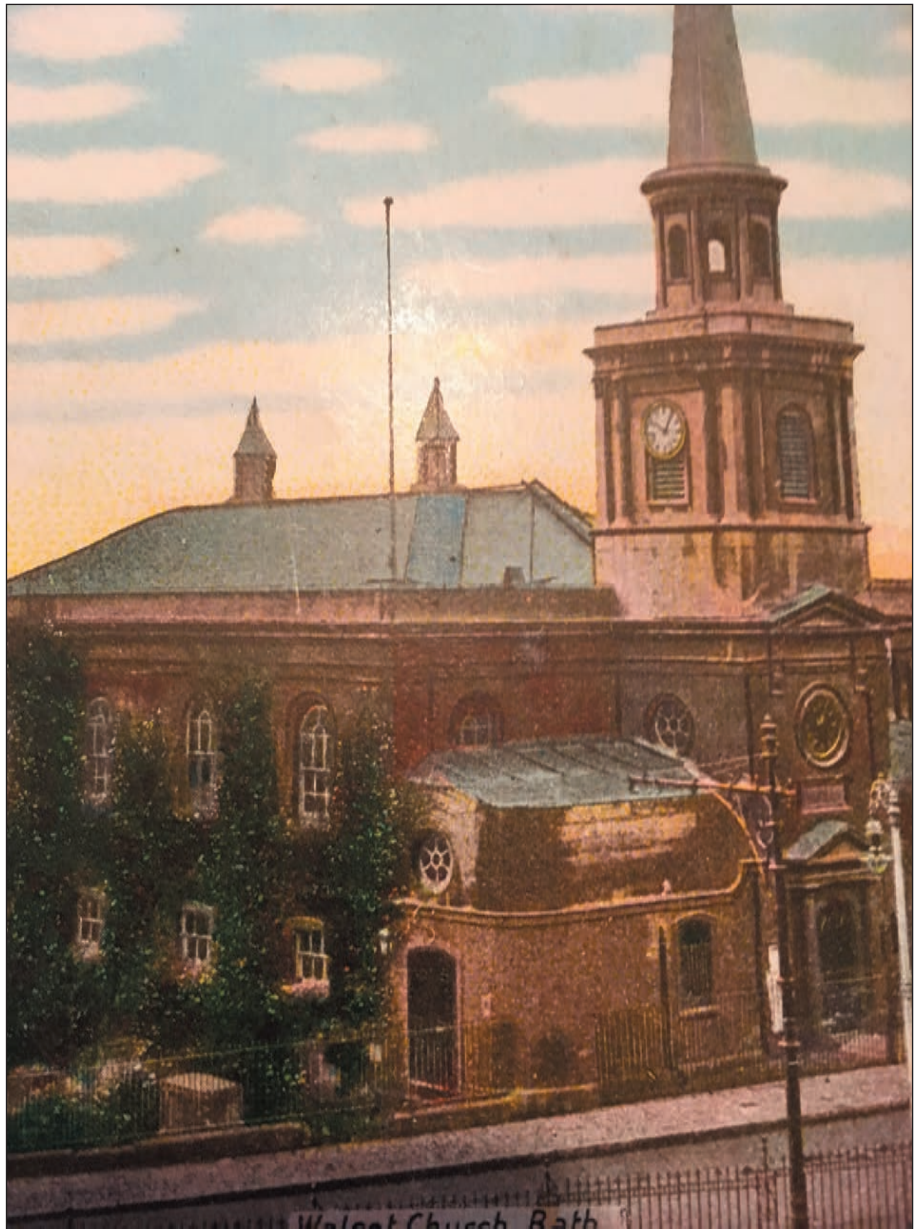
The 1851 Census records Henry Heeremans aged 16 and his brother John Peter junior, 14, both with the occupation of 'Gardener.' It is probably not surprising that Henry's first occupation followed that of his father's position as a gardener. John Peter's children would have grown up listening to their father's talk of his flower business with an emphasis on tulip growing and visits to Holland to bring back large quantities of bulbous roots and flowers for sale by auction.

Every year, until the late 1840's, John Peter travelled to Holland for a stay of a few months, usually leaving England in August and returning in November. He would advertise his "annual departure for Holland" in local newspapers informing potential customers that "the extensive Orders received now would be met on his return."

In November 1843, an edition of the *Bath Chronicle* published the following example of a notice advertising his return from an annual journey to Haarlem.

"To FLORISTS, AMATEURS and SEEDSMEN, and Others
J P HEEREMANS, Importer of DUTCH BULBS announces the Twelfth ANNUAL SALE of FLOWER ROOTS and BULBS of CROCUSES, HYACINTHS, TULIPS, NARCISSUS, IRIS and ANEMONIES, etc.

From Messrs HEEREMANS of HAARLEM, and
J P HEEREMANS, Florist, Lucknam, Colerne, Wiltshire."
 For Sale by Auction at the Spacious Premises of Messrs
 ALEXANDER & Son,
 Broad Street, Bristol, on Thursday 7th November 1843."



Henry Heereman's parents were married at Walcot Church, Bath.

In 1845, John Peter left his gardening post at Lucknam Manor and is advertising himself as "Late Gardener to A. C. Boode, Esq," and "Importer of Dutch Bulbs." He appears to have prospered with premises at New Bond Street in Bath, and at Marshfield and Colerne, Wiltshire.

Comparable advertisements appeared in the years up to and including 1848 but then ceased giving no indication of whether John Peter made any more of his annual visits to Holland. Uncertainty on the Continent for travellers with the Austrian/Italian War and later the Crimean War may have been the reason for the cessation of visits or perhaps he suffered a change in health or personal circumstances. Notices of Auctions at Bristol still appeared in the press but he was not mentioned nor has he been found in any records in the years between the Census of 1851 and 1861. He is listed in the latter Census living at Bedminster, Somerset, with Elizabeth his wife and sons, John Peter jnr and Frederick Francis.

In 1856, at the age of 21 years, Henry Heeremans changed his occupation from gardener and joined the Great Western Railway Company. His name appears in the UK Railway Employment Records (1839-1915), on the 'Register of Uniformed Staff of

the Great Western Railway Company' as a railway porter. His place of residence at that time was given as Bedminster. The 1861 Census listed him lodging in the home of Henry and Maris Jones and their ten year old daughter Mary Anne. Mr Jones's occupation was shown as 'Mariner.' In addition to his lodger Henry Heeremans, who was now aged 26 years and who gave his occupation as a railway porter, Mr Jones recorded there were three other young boarders, all of whom were employed by the Great Western Railway.

On 30 December 1861 Henry married Elizabeth Ritchens at Langley Burrell Church, after the calling of banns. His bride was the daughter of James Ritchens, a resident of Langley Burrell. The wedding certificate showed Henry's occupation as 'Coach-man' and his father John Peter, gave his as 'Gardener.' The officiating minister was not the Reverend Robert Kilvert but the Rector of St Paul's Church, Chippenham, the Reverend Augustus Strong, M.A. Henry and Elizabeth first set up home in Chippenham, parish baptismal records showing Elizabeth giving birth to four sons, John, Henry, Frederick and William Joseph during the years 1862 to 1868.

In February the following year Henry's father died, the event being noticed in the *Bath Chronicle* for 25 February 1869, as follows:

"Died on the 16th February at Ivy Cottage, North Street, Bedminster, Somerset, suddenly, Mr John P Heeremans, late of Bath, aged 66 years."

Later that year Henry and Elizabeth moved from Chippenham to the parish of Langley Burrell where records reveal a daughter Katherine was born and baptised on 1 May 1869. Tragically, the burial register for Langley Burrell in 1876 records her death at six years of age.

A new annual event which would gain great importance during Henry's life occurred in late August 1871. The *Devizes & Wiltshire Gazette* for 7 September 1871 reported on the reintroduction of the Chippenham District Horticultural Show, following a pause of some 25 years. That year it was to be a Floral Show held at Monkton Park "by the kindness of Mr West Awdry in placing his beautiful Park at the disposal of the Society." The report continued, "The town responded by decorating itself with arches, Chinese lanterns, garlands, flags and mottoes." The Show was a huge success, some "5,000 people, including many of the families of local gentry and clergy attended." Three tents held the exhibits of flowers and vegetables while two bands "played enlivening strains of music and 'Professor Oliver' performed wonderful tricks."

Prizes were awarded in different classes at the Show with prize winners including names from many of the villages mentioned by Kilvert. In the section open to 'Cottagers' at the Show, John Knight, John Couzens and John Eatwell all won prizes for their exhibits. Kilvert had called upon the latter *at the Folly* on Saturday 11 March 1876, describing him as *one of my few remaining Harnish cottage friends*. The diarist remarked that *He seemed much pleased to see one of the old family again*. (Vol 3, p240).



Lucknam House, where the Heeremans, father and son, worked as gardeners.

In 1872, the weeks before the Show were enlivened by two events. Great interest was shown in them by the local inhabitants, as for many it was a pleasant interlude in their lives of unremitting hard work. On 9 July at Chippenham Parish Church, “the marriage took place of Thomas, the eldest surviving son of Sir John Awdry, Knight, of Notton and Mary Olivier, third daughter of West Awdry, Esq., of Monkton House.” Spectators saw the arrival of the bridegroom with his gentlemen supporters followed by “a wedding party of twenty-three couples who were all conveyed to Church in numerous carriages drawn by grey horses.” The bride was attended by “ten bridesmaids, nine of whom had the surname of ‘Awdry,’ the tenth being a Miss Lowder. All were attired in dresses of mauve with white polonnaises and trimmed bonnets.” A very detailed account of the day’s happenings was reported in the *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*.

The second event which was of interest in the neighbourhood was a cricket match on 15 August, held at Chippenham between the local team and a team of eleven gentlemen each named ‘Awdry.’ The spectators saw “the local team beaten comprehensively by the Awdry’s team in one innings with three runs to spare.”

The 1872 Chippenham Show was again held at Monkton Park and was the first at which the Reverend R M Ashe competed. He began a long ‘run’ of winning prizes at each annual Show with the help of John Couzens, his gardener, who was himself also a prizewinner with exhibits of flowers and vegetables. The Show was a success despite the amount of rain affecting the growing season.

In 1873, the number of entries in the ‘Cottagers’ section exceeded 200 necessitating the erection of four large tents to adequately display all the classes of exhibits. John Couzens excelled himself, winning prizes for Squire Ashe in the ‘All England Class.’ The Reverend Robert Kilvert also entered an exhibit, a ‘Bouquet of Flowers’ and was, no doubt, delighted to be awarded the 1st prize.

The published *Diary* next mentions Henry Heeremans on Monday, Candlemas Day, 2 February 1874 when Kilvert wrote about the Chippenham Borough Election. Mr Goldney had for years been returned in the Borough elections as an uncontested candidate but on this occasion another candidate Mr Handel Cossham of the Radical Party had opposed him. Kilvert said:

At 8.30 while I was at the night school, Herriman came to the door to tell Miss Bland that Goldney had been returned by a majority of 227. Three cheers. This was the first election by ballot ever held in Chippenham. The Radicals have had a fair field and been beaten.
(Vol 2, p408-9)

In August 1874, the ‘Fourth Grand Annual Exhibition,’ as it was styled by the *Wiltshire Independent* for 3 September 1874, was held. It rained heavily in the morning but brilliant sunshine after midday dried the ground and the Chippenham Show was well attended. Takings were up by £20 on 1873, a total of £145 being realised on the day.

The newspaper explained that contributors from the 29 parishes which made up the Chippenham Union could compete for prizes, the amount of which ranged from two shillings to two pounds. ‘Best’ Gardens and Allotments were competed for and produce was shown in Classes named ‘Open to All England,’

‘Gentlemen Gardeners,’ ‘Amateurs,’ ‘Cottagers’ and ‘Children.’ So popular was the ‘Cottagers’ Class that some entered their exhibits in as many as 33 different sections. The tent for that Class in 1874 was 90 foot long but completely insufficient to hold all the entries. Unfortunately some had to be left outside in the morning’s heavy rain resulting in damage to the produce.

Two Langley Burrell children won prizes: Hannah Williams with her ‘Nosegay of Wild Flowers’ and George Couzens with ‘A Plate of Mushrooms.’ A prolific adult winner was ‘Amateur Gardener’ Mr James Gane, Master of Chippenham Workhouse, while his wife, Mrs Gane, exhibited a ‘Model Device’ consisting of a “Flower garden with fountain and fish pond in which live fish swam. It was much admired and the judges awarded her a First Prize.” An anonymous adult exhibitor showed a “Coleous of that year’s growth, which measured four feet across.”

A third and final mention of the Heeremans family in the *Diary* occurred on Friday 15 January 1875, when Kilvert wrote:

Speaking to the children at the School (in Langley Burrell) about the Collect for the second Sunday after the Epiphany and God’s peace and I asked them what beautiful image and picture of peace we have in the xxii Psalm, ‘The Good Shepherd,’ said I, leading His sheep to the -----?’
‘To the Slaughter,’ said Frederick Herriman promptly.

The published *Diary* makes no mention of the 1875 Chippenham Show which took place on Tuesday 31 August, due to a mini-gap in *Diary* entries from 29 August to 4 September. Kilvert’s sister Dora had entered a “Hand Bouquet” in the “Amateurs’ Cut Flowers and Roses” class for which she won 1st prize, Miss Georgiana Awdry being awarded the second prize. The Reverend R M Ashe took eleven prizes, seven of which were 1st, again with the help of John Couzens, his gardener. The weather was brilliant and the Band of the Grenadier Guards played during the afternoon to a very large attendance of spectators, many of whom had travelled a distance to Monkton Park taking advantage of cheap railway excursion tickets. In the evening dancing took place on a specially constructed floor and the day finished with a display of fireworks.

The *Swindon Advertiser* of Saturday 2 September 1876 published only a short report of the 6th Chippenham Show, remarking that “The prize list is too long to give in its entirety.” Fortunately, *The Trowbridge Advertiser*, for the same date, produced the details in full. This was the first time that the Heeremans’ name appeared in the prize list. He and many other exhibitors must have felt apprehensive on the eve of the Show following “a day of continuously heavy rain.” The next day, however, dawned bright with the weather ‘set fair’ and by the afternoon “heavy contingents of spectators arrived.”

Henry Heeremans began his prize winning at Chippenham Shows modestly, taking second and third awards in 1876 for vegetables and salad items, but his success was down to his own labour and this must have given him real satisfaction. As usual there were some prolific winners, Mr James Gane, the Workhouse Master, “swept the board in the class of ‘Cut Flowers and Roses’ and Mr Daniel Dix from Chippenham, has made the first prize for Greengages, almost his own, taking all classes for the Sixth Time!” Music that day came from the “bands of the 2nd Life Guards, the Chippenham Volunteer Corps and the Union Workhouse.”



St John the Baptist, Colerne, where Henry Heeremans was baptised.

The weather during several years of the 1870's was extreme, with excessive rainfall recorded. Harvests were delayed or poor and twice the Archbishop of Canterbury issued a letter detailing special prayers for "harvests to be safely gathered in," to be said at Sunday services. On the actual day of the Show in late August 1877, the weather was reasonably fine and "thousands of spectators entered the beautiful grounds of Monkton Park, so kindly lent, once again, by Mr West Awdry." The *Bath Chronicle* said, "The standard of some of the exhibits in the 'Cottagers' Class' called forth the unfeigned admiration of the professional nurserymen." That year, Henry Heeremans won the second prize for 'Best Garden in Langley Burrell,' beaten only by John Couzens, the famed gardener to the Reverend R M Ashe of Langley House.

In the 1878 Show, the *Bath Chronicle* reported Henry took home two 1st prizes, for "40 pods of Peas" and "Best Six of one variety of Cooking Apple," with a lesser prize for "24 pods of Broad Beans." Ann Grimshaw of Langley Burrell won 1st prize in the "Best Loaf of Home-made Bread class. The Band of the Royal Marines discoursed an excellent programme of music during the afternoon, and in the evening, a firework display by Mr Randle of London took place in the Park." The Show was again rated to have been a great success as the day was fine despite heavy rain on the previous day.

1879, however, proved to be a year of relentless wet weather in England. The rain was heavy and often continued all day. Rivers overflowed their banks, saturating fields and causing

floods in towns and villages. Special prayers were again said in churches for 'gathering in the harvests' and for the first time, the Show suffered from very bad weather. According to a report in the *Chippenham Chronicle* for Friday 29 August 1879 on the weather for previous Shows:-

"On eight successive Shows the Society were fortunate enough to have fine weather but on this occasion their luck changed: a flower show was never held under more adverse circumstances. On Monday and Tuesday, heavy rain fell, but on Wednesday morning, the Show day, it rained in torrents, and continued more or less throughout the whole day. The ground on which the Exhibition was held was in consequence little better than a pool of mud and slush.

Despite the rain and mud several hundred people attended. The *Wiltshire Times* described the day as "one with a gale of wind which rendered any umbrella useless. But when the Chippenham Rifle Band provided dance music, the lads and lasses actually essayed to polka!" As usual the townspeople decorated their premises; "Mr Griffiths of the George Hotel creating an arch to span the road, illuminated at the centre by a Gas Star." This hazardous means of decoration was in vogue that year and used by several other residents.

Henry Heeremans again won awards including 1st prizes for 'Cooking Apples and Roses' in the section for 'Amateur Gardeners' which was open to everybody. Henry must also have been very pleased at seeing William Joseph, his fourth son, aged ten years, take the top prize for a 'Selection of British Wild

Ferns' in the 'Children under 14 years' section.' Another child, William Kelson aged 12 years came second. He was the son of Wm Kelson, another G.W.R. Railway Porter at Chippenham.

In 1883, Miss Emily Ashe and Miss Lucy Ashe won 1st and 2nd prize for their collections of wild flowers. Henry Heeremans, junr, took the 3rd prize. That year the Reverend Mr Ashe, again with the help of John Couzens, senior, scooped ten awards, many of them first class. Mr Ashe continued to compete until his death in 1885 following which Miss Ashe sent in exhibits each year.

Each Chippenham Show had featured music by three bands as well as music for dancing and the event always finished with a firework display. Extra to the shows were 'special acts' such as performing dogs, magicians and in 1881, the "Four daughters of Dr Jay, who gave an aquatic display, which was much applauded." Fairground swings, roundabouts, switchback rides and booths requiring shooting or throwing expertise were situated at a distance outside Monkton Park, but people visiting the Shows wanted these entertainments in the Park itself. However, Mr West Awdry could not agree so this led to a change of venue for the Shows and in 1890, "By the kindness of Mr E H Clutterbuck, the 20th Show was held in Hardenhuish Park."

In the years 1880 to 1890, Henry Heeremans consistently won awards for his entries. According to online research into the contemporary newspapers which survived destruction when the Newspaper Library was bombed in WW2, 1890 appears to have been the last year Henry competed. He was very successful that year winning top prizes for roses, dahlias and several classes of vegetables and fruit, several in the higher classes of the competition. The new venue attracted an increased number of visitors including many names known to us through the Diary: Prodgers, Headley, Coleman, Clutterbuck, Strong, Daniells, Neeld, Goldney, etc. Despite a chilly breeze and dull skies, the day was judged to have been successful. Several new competitions had been introduced during that decade: bee-keeping, largest honey-comb and the most complete wasp's nest shown.

There were only a few more sightings of Henry in the 1890's. In March the *Devizes & Wiltshire Gazette* reported on a Dinner at the George Hotel, Chippenham given by the Hearts of Oak Friendly Society. Among the many toasts given was one for 'The Visitors' to which Henry was one of the responders. The following year saw Henry listed in the 1891 Census with his wife Elizabeth and two younger sons, Henry (junior), whose occupation was 'Gardener' and William Joseph, occupation given as 'Postman's Messenger.'

William Joseph also entered prize-winning produce at the Chippenham Shows in the 1880's and 1890's eventually becoming a show committee member. However, his main interest was as a racing pigeon and poultry breeder as well as an exhibitor of fox terriers and cocker spaniels. He travelled widely throughout the country and shared his expertise with many fellow breeders saying his success was due to his father's encouragement. William also had an enduring interest in flora and fauna. In 1933, during an interview with a reporter of the *Wiltshire Times*, who wrote under the name of 'Peter Gurney,' William described how his father Henry would take him out on excursions and he remembered especially searching for morels, a rare edible form of fungus found growing locally on banks under hedgerows.

The final mention of Henry in extant newspapers in online archives is in December 1894 when the *Wiltshire Times* published

the names of successful candidates in Parish Council elections. The parish of 'Langley Without' had nine seats, headed by Miss Ashe. Henry was a candidate but failed by one vote to be eligible for the second round of the election. The 1901 Census records show him living still in the same house with Elizabeth and William Joseph. Also in the household is widowed Ann Hacker, Elizabeth's younger sister, who was a witness at Henry and Elizabeth's marriage in December 1861.

Henry died at Langley Burrell in 1907 aged 72 years and was buried there on 10th August. Elizabeth, his wife of 45 years, died the following year and was buried next to Henry on 18th May. There were no notices or funeral reports, but Henry Heeremans has a unique and lasting memorial: he is mentioned in *Kilvert's Diary*.

Editor's note:

Teresa Williams has generously donated a collection of old postcards of Kilvert places to the Society archive. The photographs for this article come from that collection.

To the Flower Show on the Train

Wednesday 18 May [1870] *Went down to the Bath Flower Show in Sydney College Gardens...Found the first train going down was an Excursion train and took a ticket for it. The carriage was nearly full. In the Box tunnel, as there was no lamp, the people began to strike foul brimstone matches and hand them to each other all down the carriage... The carriage was chock-full of brimstone fumes, the windows both nearly shut, and by the time we got out of the tunnel I was almost suffocated.* (Vol 1, p139)

You can compare Kilvert's experience with the 'Song of an Exhibitor' depicted in verse by Dean Hole

I've been to all the flower shows, north south and east,
and west,
By rails and roads, with huge van loads of plants I love
the best;
From dusk to dawn, through night to morn, I've dozed
'mid clank and din
And woke with cramp on both my legs, and bristles on
my chin,
I'm a poor, used up, exhibitor,
Knocked out of present time.

Samuel Reynolds Hole, (1819-1904), Dean of Rochester, was a keen horticulturalist, much in demand as a judge at shows. In his poem the exhibitor, having won a prize, is 'a fine, revived exhibitor'.

Kilvert complained that the 1870 Bath show was so crowded *One saw everything but the flowers* but he had some success. *The heaths, roses and azaleas were beautiful and the vegetables and strawberries fine.*

Ref: Elizabeth Drury and Philippa Lewis *The Victorian Garden Album* Collins and Brown, 1993, p 41

“...*Let not thy bitter wrath endure until the sun be set;
Forgive, as God forgiveth thee; as He forgets, forget...*”

‘Forgive and Forget’ – A Poem Revisited

By Margaret Collins

While I was sorting through my collection of Kilvert Society booklets and journals in an attempt to do some bookshelf tidying, I began to read *Journal 16* (March 2005) revisiting the first article I had ever written. The subject was ‘Forgive and Forget’, a poem from *Musings in Verse*, a small volume published by Kilvert’s family in 1882 as a memorial and tribute following his untimely death in 1879 at the age of 38. The poem puzzled me then and it still does.

There are two gaps in *Kilvert’s Diary*. The first is from September 1875 to March 1876 and includes Kilvert’s developing friendship with Ettie Meredith Brown, which ended following pressure from her family. Kilvert first met the stylish and beautiful Ettie when she and her sister were invited to tea and croquet at Langley Burrell rectory on 5 September 1875 (Vol 3, p229). Kilvert’s enraptured description of this meeting earns an appearance in the *New Oxford Book of English Prose*.

The second, longer gap is from June 1876 to December 1877 and covers Kilvert’s time as vicar of St Harmon and his engagement to Katharine Heanley, whose family home was Croft Grange in Lincolnshire. It is thought the engagement was broken off by Katharine. By the time Elizabeth Rowland came on the scene as Kilvert’s fiancée, in the spring of 1879, these unhappy episodes were in the past, but would have cast a long shadow.

The accepted view is that Kilvert’s widow was responsible for destroying the missing *Diary* notebooks. Back in 2005, I wondered just how carefully Mrs Kilvert had read the *Diary*, for she had clearly missed several nostalgic references to Kilvert’s relationship with Ettie Meredith Brown. If Mrs Kilvert’s motive had been to remove all references to this episode, why are there so many allusions to it after the *Diary* resumes in March 1876? ‘Forgive and Forget’ stands out among the more conventional Victorian verses in the *Collected Verse*. It is a heartfelt cry from a man who begs forgiveness following betrayal of his beloved with another woman. The poem is in two sections each of four verses, entitled *He* and *She*. Here is no studied attempt at sentimental poesy; the tone of the poem is direct, its anguish clear. *He* speaks:-

*Since passion’s tempest drowned the gleam of love’s pure
guiding star;
My footsteps truant from thy side have wandered wild and far;
Now humbly to thy heart’s wide door I turn with keen regret;
Oh, canst thou still forgive, dear love? and canst thou e’er
forget?*

The rest of the section is a similarly urgent appeal:- *...How I
have suffered for my sin, – my shame, – my agony... My sun
hath dipped beneath the wave – the star of hope hath set, If*

thou refuse now to forgive. If thou wilt not forget. In the second section *She* replies offering forgiveness of a sort, qualified by acknowledgement of the pain she has endured: *When thou wast erring from my side, on many a bitter day,/One comfort still was left, and that one comfort was – to pray:/For thee I prayed; and canst thou then, whilst still these eyes are wet,/Fear lest thou shouldst not be forgiven, lest I should not forget?* In the last verse we learn that *She* has sought solace in prayer and the poem ends as she says: *I should deserve that on my soul the sun of love should set,/If I would never more forgive, and never more forget.* The poem comes across as a desperate lament to which there can be no glib pious ending. *He* implores forgiveness, yet we suspect that such an outcome is by no means certain.

The *Diary* resumes on 1 March 1876 after a gap of almost six months, but further vividly descriptive memories of Ettie remain. On 20 April 1876, Kilvert received a long sad sweet loving letter from my darling Ettie, a tender beautiful letter of farewell. Downcast and heartbroken, he walked around the garden at Monnington rectory, home of his sister Thersie, recalling Ettie’s last letter and all the wild sweet sorrowful past as the swaying branches of the birches remind him with a strange sweet thrill of Ettie’s hair. Two days later he was again in the rectory garden watching the waving of the birch tresses, listening to the sighing of the firs in the great solemn avenue... and reading Robert Browning’s ‘In a Gondola’ and thinking of dear Ettie. Browning’s poem tells of two star-crossed lovers and takes the form of a drama with *He* and *She* speaking the verses: *He sings. I send my heart up to thee, all my heart/In this my singing. For the stars help me and the sea bears part; the very night is clinging/Closer to Venice’ streets to leave one space/Above me, whence thy face/May light my joyous heart to thee its dwelling place...* There are many impassioned and ardent verses, and the poem ends as *She* says: *Heart to heart/And lips to lips! Yet once more, ere we part,/clasp me and make me thine, as mine thou art!...He is surprised and stabbed:- It was ordained to be so, sweet!...and best/Comes now, beneath thine eyes, upon thy breast. Still kiss me! Care not for the cowards! Care/Only to put aside thy beauteous hair.....but I have lived indeed, and so – (yet one more kiss) can die!*

My bemused response on first reading Browning’s poem was ‘One can only wonder if poor Mrs Kilvert looked it up!’

The most notable of the several remaining retrospective references to Ettie is the extraordinary sermon Kilvert preached twice on Sunday 14 May 1876 first at Langley Burrell and later at Kington, while his parents were away visiting his sister Emmie and her husband Sam in Norwood. His text is from (St John’s) Gospel for the day, xvi.7 ‘Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away.’ Kilvert goes

into much detail of *how those words came to me as a token in Salisbury Cathedral on that dark sorrowful winter's Day, the 7th of last December, the day I parted from and saw the last of my darling Ettie*. He tells how on a midwinter day a *broken-hearted, broken-spirited man* had come to the Cathedral after wandering the snowy streets, having just parted from his *dearest friend* and recalling the *last long clinging embrace and passionate kiss and latest imploring look and beseeching word 'Don't forget'*. The description of desolation goes on at length but Kilvert omitted to tell his hearers that this was his personal story and that he *was speaking of one of the great sorrows of my life*. Surely there were a few raised eyebrows among Kilvert's hearers as they wondered who he was talking about? It is telling that Kilvert first ensured that his parents were safely out of the way in south London on that particular Sunday!

On 19 June 1876, Kilvert records a reverie in the Happy Valley: *To me this was all enchanted ground for Ettie's dear sake...I seemed to see the white frocks of three girls sitting on the grass...amongst them shone the one pair of dark eyes that once were all the world to me, and again I saw that rare sweet smile provoked by love's caresses...* On 21 June, Kilvert recalls how he plucked up courage to visit Ettie's former home, *Nonsuch*. He goes to the church where, seated in the porch, he

relived his memories of *all the sweet strange sad story...All the Bournemouth memories of last December came back upon me, and those wild sad sweet trysts in the snow and under the pine trees, among the sand hills on the East Cliffe and in Boscombe Chine...*

In 2005 I had mused on 'Forgive and Forget', its dramatic format so reminiscent of the poem by Browning, wondering if maybe it related to Ettie Meredith Brown or to Katharine Heanley. It was at this time I received a letter from Mr R B (Ray) Taylor, author with Eva Farmery, of KS booklet *Kilvert's Kathleen Mavourneen*. Ray asked if I knew the date of the poem, which could help pinpoint the time of the breaking of Kilvert's engagement to Katharine Heanley but I could find nothing about its date. When an original copy of *Musings in Verse* belonging to Kilvert's sister Thermuthis briefly came into my possession in 2015 (*Journal 41*) there was no note about 'Forgive and Forget' as I had hoped there might be, just a small pencilled cross at its start as with several other poems at the beginning of the collection. Ray and I continued to correspond over the years and he sent me many 'snippets' from old KS Newsletters, lending me books and generally encouraging me as a new member of the Society. Sadly, Ray passed away in August 2017. ('A Kilvertian Pen-friendship', *Journal 47*).

*Thermuthis Kilvert
from
Niece Lizzy -
1882 -*



Musings in Verse.

BY

ROBERT FRANCIS KILVERT, M.A.,
Late Vicar of Bredwardine, Herefordshire.

[NOT PUBLISHED.]

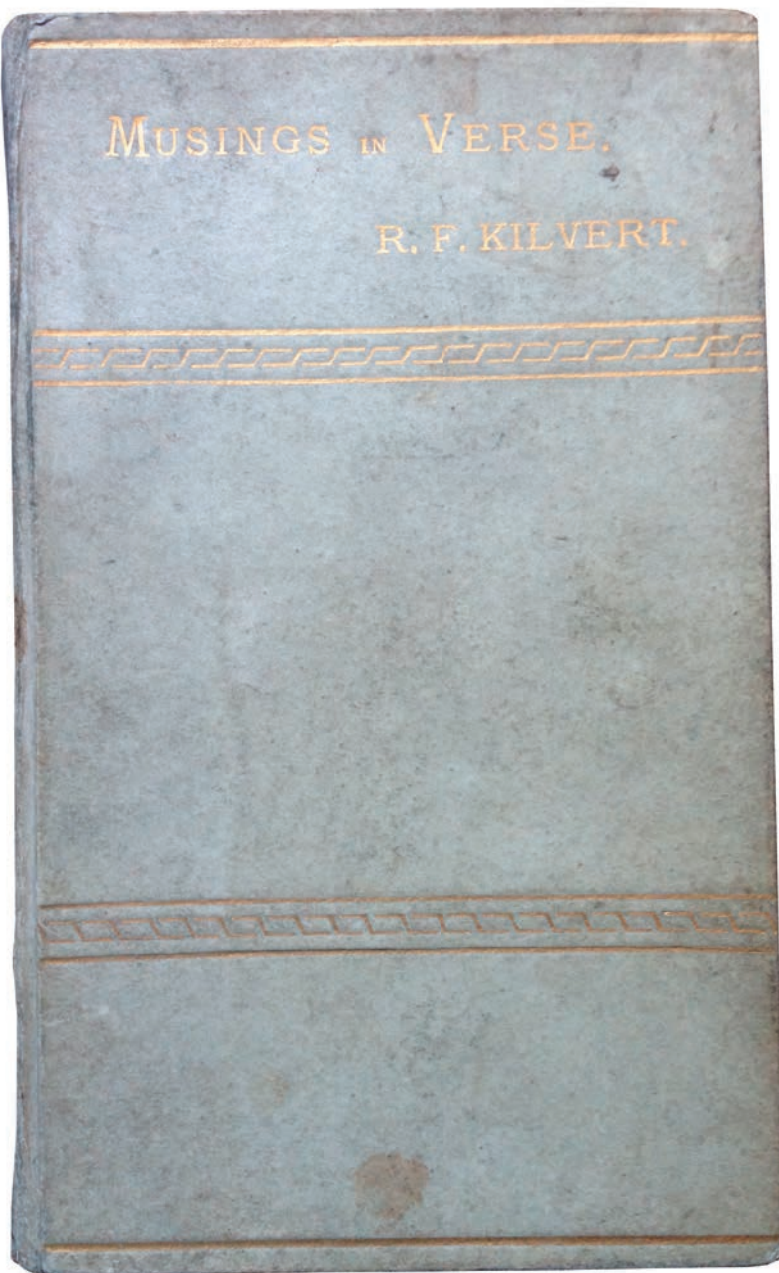
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EDWARD C. ALDEN, 35 CORN-MARKET STREET.
MDCCCLXXXII.

Kilvert's poem 'Forgive and Forget' may have been prompted by something else entirely or may simply have been a poetical exercise with no basis in fact. The quality of Kilvert's writing means that the *Diary* itself can sometimes provide us with clues, as does such 'outside evidence' as we are able to glean. However, it is beyond our grasp to know the full story and at best we can only venture an interpretation in the light of the facts that we have.

It is possible that 'Forgive and Forget' was indeed addressed to Katharine Heanley. The poem's religious tone and worthy aspirations, together with the strong emphasis on prayer, would have appealed to Katharine. The *Diary* references tell of a serious-minded and devout young woman, who began a Mutual Improvement Society which Kilvert joined. Her letters to Kilvert via his cousin Adelaide are deeply religious in tone. She enclosed some hymns for Kilvert, along with references to *In Memoriam*. Kilvert duly copies out her spiritual interpretations of the colours of a Lincolnshire sunset. He also remarks rather bleakly that *her sweet pure thoughts...show me only still more clearly what I have often thought before, how much nobler and holier her thoughts are than mine...and how much higher up the hill she has climbed than I have done...* (Vol 3, p94). We remember that Katharine's favourite poem was Tennyson's *In Memoriam* which she and Kilvert discussed when they first met and which quickly became *our*

favourite In Memoriam. A sombre choice for a young woman of 23.

We know that Kilvert first met and fell in love with Katharine Heanley at the Findon wedding of *little Addie Cholmeley* to Charles Heanley, which took place on 11 August 1874 (Vol 3, p63-68). Addie and her mother Adelaide also lived at Croft. They were hoping that Katharine's meeting with Kilvert, a clergyman, might help her recover from the shock of the sudden marriage in Scotland of the vicar of Croft, Revd Evelyn Monson. Katharine was certainly beautiful, and there was much expectation locally that she and the vicar would become engaged. *Kilvert's Kathleen Mavourneen* tells of a letter written by Katharine's mother in December 1870 to her sister-in-law Adelaide giving news of 'our Vicar...He can flirt as well as

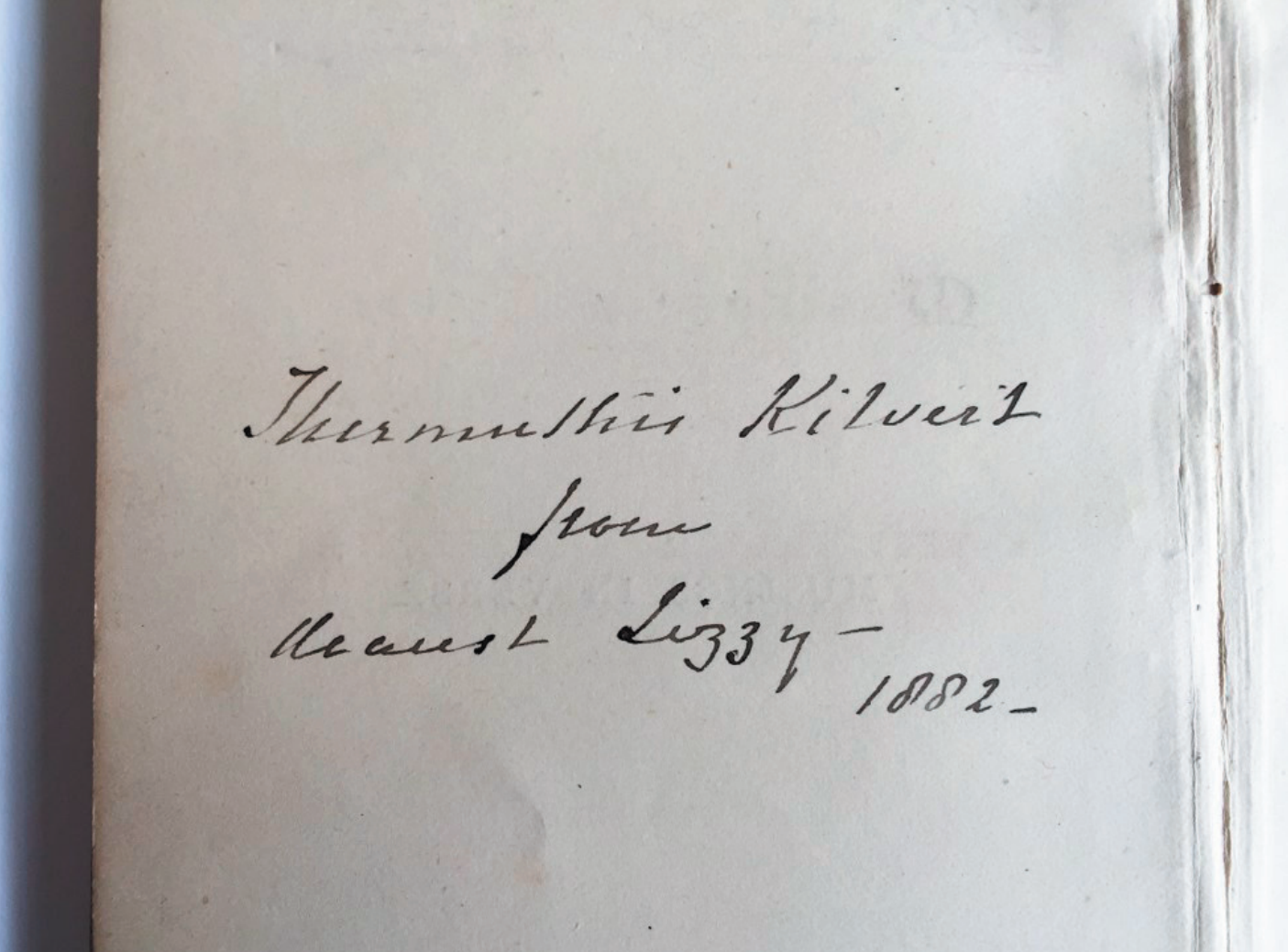


ever...but it is rather a comfort to me it is carried on with the two now. It will do less mischief than with the one...' Much later, in 1882 there is a report in the Parish Magazine of an Entertainment where 'Mr Monson's reading of *Mrs B's Alarms* was most entertaining and provoked many a hearty laugh....' These are but passing glimpses, yet they suggest that Monson was a different personality from Kilvert, being confident, charming and amusing in a way that could well have appealed to the earnest Katharine.

Over the years I have thought and written much about Elizabeth Kilvert, whose tragic story took her from fiancée to bride to widow during those few short months between the spring and autumn of 1879. Elizabeth's traditionally perceived role as destroyer of the missing sections of the *Diary* has continued to mystify me. The view that Elizabeth excised the two sections is due to letters sent to the Kilvert Society by her niece Miss M Rowland, who as a little girl was bridesmaid with her sister at her aunt's wedding to Kilvert on 20 August 1879. In the KS booklet *Looking Backwards* Miss Rowland recalls her kind and gentle aunt, and in a letter to the Kilvert Society from 1948 we learn that Kilvert and Elizabeth 'met during a tour to Paris – with a mutual friend, the Rev. A.L. Mayhew' (chaplain of Wadham College Oxford). It is thought Mayhew arranged this trip to help Kilvert get over his engagement. We remember that Elizabeth too lived in

Oxfordshire and was closely associated with the parish church at Wootton where she and Kilvert subsequently married.

Elizabeth's niece stated 'I well remember her saying that she should give Uncle Frank's *Diary* to his nephew Percy Smith but that she should take out that part of it that alluded to herself.' This would seem to refer to one part, not two years' worth of *Diary* entries. As far as the content of the first missing section goes, it is debatable whether it included references to Elizabeth anyway. It is still more puzzling that so many references to Kilvert's passionate relationship with the beguiling Ettie Meredith Brown remain. To me this suggests that the removal of this section was done by a male hand. Women have an eye for detail and any wife intent on removing references to her late husband's former lover, would have made jolly sure that any



Thermostis Kilvert
from
Heanley Lizzy -
1882 -

lingering details of *wild trysts in the snow* – not to mention the content of the ‘Salisbury sermon’ – were excised!

In March 1879 Kilvert’s sister Dora, his housekeeper and companion at Bredwardine, received a letter containing a proposal of marriage from James Pitcairn. The prospect of Dora marrying, leaving him on his own at the beck and call of Miss Julia Newton who owned the living, doubtless appalled Kilvert and concentrated his mind on finding a wife and helpmate. Still smarting from the humiliation of the breaking of their engagement by Katharine Heanley, and probably with the help of his good friend Mayhew, Kilvert rekindled an acquaintance with Elizabeth Rowland. This would quite reasonably account for the fact that the *Diary* ends abruptly two days after Dora’s receipt of James’s letter. It is understandable that Elizabeth would have removed this last section as any subsequent *Diary* entries would record their courtship and engagement, which Elizabeth would have felt too personal for others to read.

In *Journal 40*, March 2015, Teresa Williams wrote a marvellous article ‘Filling the ‘Long Gap’ in Kilvert’s *Diary*’ in which she catalogued all ‘mentions’ relating to Kilvert from her assiduous research into contemporary newspapers and other sources for this period. What emerges from this meticulous and comprehensive study are matters of which we would otherwise have known nothing; in particular, the local newspaper report of a presentation to Kilvert on 15 August 1876 as he was about to leave Langley Burrell to take up his post as vicar of St Harmon. In his speech of thanks Kilvert refers to one ‘who was dearer to him than his own life...one whom he hoped would shortly

halve his troubles and double his joys’ (*Newsletter*, February 1983). This was a major discovery which shone a light on this hitherto unknown yet vital piece of information, confirming Kilvert’s engagement to Katharine Heanley.

In her introduction Teresa Williams wrote of the two gaps in the *Diary*: ‘We do not know for certain why, or by whom, the volumes covering these periods were destroyed, and many thoughts and opinions have been expressed on the subject...We do know, however, that we have been greatly deprived.’

David Gouldstone’s recent article ‘Kilvert: One Hundred and Fifty Years on’ (*Journal 51*) was a very good introduction to the *Diary*. Of this expanded blog, the Editor wrote ‘New insights on Kilvert are valuable to us all’. Towards the end of the article David referred to the vexed and depressing question of the missing notebooks and suggested ‘Possibly some had been destroyed by Kilvert himself’. This idea was first proposed to me in a short document written by Ray Taylor many years ago, long before our correspondence began. The theory is at odds with the accepted view of the destruction of the notebooks, but at the same time it does seem plausible.

Frederick Grice’s book *Francis Kilvert and his World* has a chapter ‘The Fate of the *Diary*’ which contains the text of a letter from Percival (Percy) Smith, of whom Miss Rowland recalled her aunt Elizabeth Kilvert speaking in relation to the passing on of the 22 notebooks. Revd T. Percival Smith was the son of Kilvert’s sister Thersie. In this letter Percival, who eventually sent two notebooks to publishers Jonathan Cape, detailed their history: ‘After my uncle’s death in ’79 the Diaries (MSS)

remained in the possession of his widow. She, at her death, left them to the Diarist's sister (the Dora of the Diaries) with instructions that on the latter's death they were all to be burned. She, however, having a great affection for the diaries (she used to read from one or other of them regularly at bedtime to the end of her life) was very unwilling that they should be so destroyed, and in this she was joined by her two surviving sisters, who held that the Diarist's widow had no right to decree their destruction. However, Dora did wish that the MS book should never fall into careless or unknowing hands, that, if there should be any danger of this, it were better that they should be burned. With this stipulation she left them all to my two sisters (viz Florence and Essex Smith), who, after holding them for a while, sent them about 17 years ago all to me at King Stag.' They stayed with Percival for a long time and he sent two of the notebooks to the publishers where they were read by William Plomer. Eventually the *Diary* was transcribed and a selection made and published in three volumes. Interestingly, in his introduction to Volume 3, William Plomer says of Elizabeth Rowland: 'I have no information about this lady, the circumstances of their meeting, their married life, or her subsequent career'.

Originally, at some point there must have been at least 30 notebooks which included the two missing sections. It appears that there were only ever 22 notebooks within the family. In the KS booklet *Looking Backwards* we read that Percival's brother, Hastings Smith, had, much later, visited St. Harmon in order to search for information about Kilvert's time there: 'it seemed possible that there I might find some trace of the missing manuscript. This hope, however, was not fulfilled'.

From the newspaper account of Kilvert's funeral (Vol 3 introduction, p9-12) we learn that Dora and Elizabeth were united in grief and moved together among the groups of mourners offering words of comfort. In her letter to Mrs Venables following Kilvert's death, Fanny Kilvert speaks of her affection for 'poor Lizzie...I like and love her more than I can say'... This affection between Elizabeth and her sisters-in-law is borne out by the copy of 'Musings in Verse' belonging to Thersie which, as mentioned earlier, briefly came into my possession. (*Journal 41*) Thersie had written on the flyleaf: 'Thermuthis Kilvert/ from dearest Lizzy -/1882'. Elizabeth Kilvert died in 1911 and her will shows that she remained on good terms with Dora and the Kilvert family throughout her life and they are remembered with bequests. Her will makes no reference to the diaries but there would have been a clear understanding about them within the family.

The traditional view has always been that Elizabeth Kilvert destroyed the two sections of the *Diary*, perhaps out of bitterness that she was her husband's last choice after his two failed serious love affairs. For Elizabeth to destroy some of the notebooks, a unique and intimate remembrance of a beloved brother, son and husband, would surely have been out of character. She was a kind and caring young woman, only two years older than Dora. There would understandably have been reservations about the diaries being read by *careless* strangers in the future, hence the mention of their possible destruction *in extremis*. Decades later this suggestion was taken up, in a way that the family could never have foreseen, by Percival's sister Mrs Essex Hope. She it was who had possession of the diaries following Percival's death and is thought to have destroyed them, probably by burning. Essex Hope's motives are unclear and in conversations with her, William Plomer found her to be evasive and unreliable. In a letter to the Kilvert Society from

1958 Plomer reports 'She said she had a confession to make and told me that she has in fact done away with most of the *Diary*.' Three notebooks did remain which she produced at various intervals, as it suited her, donating one to William Plomer, and giving the other two to Jeremy Sandford and to Charles Harvey.

My thought is that rather than bitterness, Elizabeth would have felt proud and honoured to have been the woman whom Kilvert finally married. Alas, they were married for only five weeks *after a short gleam of happiness*, as Kilvert wrote of the death aged 23 of the young bride, Mrs Dewing (Vol 1,p118). Elizabeth's niece stated 'she and Uncle Frank were devoted to each other. His sudden and unexpected illness and death was a shock from which I think she never fully recovered. Her whole life was spent in the unselfish care and thought for others.'

It seems that Kilvert and Elizabeth really did fall in love and Kilvert decided to put the unhappy love affairs of his past behind him. Unfortunately, the broken engagement is so closely bound up with Kilvert's time as vicar of St Harmon that we have lost those *Diary* entries too. Katharine Heanley's reasons for breaking their engagement can never be entirely clear, but maybe a contributory factor was her fiancé's *Diary*. We know that Kilvert showed his *Diary* to his close friend Mayhew (Vol 3, p213) and, as far as we know, he never showed it to anyone else. Kilvert's other most intimate relationship of trust would surely have been with his fiancée, with whom he would doubtless have shared his account of their first meeting at the Findon wedding. If at some point during their engagement Katharine had sight of the *Diary*, she could have read details of Kilvert's intimate and passionate affair with the winsome Ettie Meredith Brown, which began shortly after her own chaste friendship with Kilvert had dwindled and ebbed away. Did the fallout from this discovery maybe cause Kilvert to write the poem '*Forgive and Forget*'?

It was Kilvert's chance meeting with Katharine at Chippenham Station on 17 June 1876 which revived this friendship, soon leading to an engagement. Sadly, this was broken off by the lady herself in the spring of 1877.

Ray Taylor's suggestion is a point to ponder... 'I think it likely that Kilvert decided, partly as an earnest to his new wife, to remove from the diary those parts which had left him emotionally scarred'.

The mystery will remain, yet my thought is that Elizabeth is an unlikely 'villain of the piece' in the sorry saga of the lost sections of *Kilvert's Diary*. Far from wanting to destroy her husband's record of his earlier life, Elizabeth would surely have wished to preserve everything in order to know, understand and love him the more, drawing bittersweet comfort from knowing that it was she alone who had finally brought him happiness.

Photos: Geoff Collins

RELATED READING

Collected Verse by The Reverend Francis Kilvert (Kilvert Society)

Kilvert's Kathleen Mavourneen, Eva Farmery and R B Taylor (Kilvert Society)

Looking Backwards (Kilvert Society)

Frederick Grice *Francis Kilvert and his World*, (Caliban, 1980)

The ‘Russian Countess’ in Charles Darwin’s Cambridge Letters

Stephen Massil finds references to Richard Lister Venables and his first wife in the correspondence of the great naturalist.

In 1833, Mary Augusta Dalrymple Adam was in mourning; there had been news from Russia that her younger brother, Konstantin, fairly recently married, had died, leaving a young widow and infant daughter. Mrs Adam and her aunt Mrs Pollen made a summer tour to Great Malvern to visit the Countess of Haddington¹ before going on to the Whittakers of Newcastle Court, Radnorshire. (Mrs Whittaker was Mary Garbett (1775-1846), their cousin, a daughter of Francis Garbett (1743-1800) whose sister Mary married Charles Gascoigne of the Carron Works at Falkirk in 1759).

The details of her encounter with the Revd Richard Lister Venables and his subsequent marriage and career derive from the memoir that he prepared for the family of his second wife in the 1870s. His dates are 1809-1895, important in the context for his year of birth, and not just for the obvious fact that Mary Augusta, born in 1794, would be likely to pre-decease him (as she in fact did, in 1865). He had been a student at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and on completing his studies he had taken clerical orders as a Curate at Newbridge-on-Wye, under his father’s ministrations, who was Rector of Clyro and at Llysdinam at the border with Herefordshire.

That summer in 1833 he made what appears to have been a social visit to Newcastle Court, at Presteigne, a ride of some twenty-five miles from Newbridge, easy to repeat over several days. Certainly, it seems that the Revd Venables soon came a-wooing. He was visiting Mrs Adam at Richmond [Sheen Lodge] by November 1833; they became engaged and then married there, in February 1834, the ceremony conducted by the Revd Lord Thomas Hay (1801-1890), a friend of Mrs Adam from North Berwick.

In a general way it would be sensible to notice that Venables was fifteen years younger than Mrs Adam, and became thus stepfather to a boy of 14 presented to him at the time, just ten years younger than himself, Willie Adam, who eventually struck a figure (‘Captain Adam’) in *Kilvert’s Diary*.

In the specific detail, it is the rumour of Venables’s marriage in 1834 that is the subject of references in the letters of Darwin’s former Cambridge friends, and carries the interest of these notes augmenting my account of ‘Mary Augusta Poltoratskaya, ‘a lady of Scottish connections’.²

‘I have long intended writing’

Charles Darwin, aboard *The Beagle*, received letters along the stations of the voyage – at great intervals of time – to which he replied and took up threads across the oceans.³ His Cambridge friends gave him news from England, of themselves and of others – progress in their careers, deaths in families, marriages, one by one, in the aftermath of studies and their moving away from the university – taking their own directions – several into the Church, but not all. In the letters to Darwin his friends tell him how well he is remembered in the company they are still in touch with; in Darwin’s letters no stinting of the geology and botanising and the company of Captain Fitzroy, but also occasional personal musings (specifically in the letters to his closest friends), recollections, and anticipations of futurity. He refers to Raphael, and to Titian’s *Venus* at the Fitzwilliam, but also to any chance of music and operas, to hearing Beethoven especially. He quotes from Jane Austen.

He wrote to Charles Thomas Whitley (St. John’s), July 23, 1834 – Valparaiso⁴:

‘I have long intended writing just to put you in mind that there is a certain hunter of beetles & pounder of rocks, still in existence:

Why I have not done so before, I know not; but it will serve me right, if you have quite forgotten me.— It is a very long time, since I have heard any Cambridge news ...

... I do hope you will write to me. (“H.M.S. Beagle, S. American Station” will find me); ... I should much like to hear in what state you are, both in body & mind.— ‘Quien sabe’ as the people say here (& God knows they well may, for they do know little enough) if you are not a married man, & may be nursing, as Miss Austen says, little olive branches, little pledges of mutual affection.— Eheu Eheu, this puts me in mind, of former visions, of glimpses into futurity, where I fancied I saw, retirement, green cottages & white petticoats.— ...

When I return to England, you must take me in hand with respect to the fine arts. I yet recollect there was a man called Raffaele Sanctus. How delightful it will be once again to see, in the Fitzwilliam, Titian’s Venus. How much more then delightful to go to some good concert or fine opera ... These recollections will not do. I shall not be able tomorrow to pick



A portrait of Charles Darwin in 1840 by George Richmond (Darwin Museum). Photo: Wikimedia Commons

out the entrails of some small animal, with half my usual gusto.— Pray tell me some news about Cameron, Watkins, Marindin The two Thompsons of Trin: Lowe, Heaviside, Matthews Herbert I have heard from: How is Henslow getting on? & all other good friends of dear Cambridge. Often & often do I think over those past hours so many of which have been passed in your company. Such can never return; but their recollection shall never die away’.

‘A Russian countess...and a living’

At this point Darwin (of Christ’s) does not enquire after Venables (Emmanuel), Richard Lister Venables, of Clyro and the Welsh marches, where his father was incumbent; he had entered the church at Newbridge-on-Wye. It is Whitley, a year later, who gives Darwin the news of the marriage:

Letter of February 5, 1835 - Durham – referring to Frederick Watkins (Christ’s, and Emmanuel) and to Venables, in sequence⁵:

... Watkins is now in orders, he has got the curacy of Clyro in South Wales. It is the living of which Venables’ Father is incumbent. Venables himself is married to a Russian countess & has got a living in Herefordshire.’

A letter received by Darwin only by October 1835, this note in its brevity along with fuller details of other men (with a mention of ‘Miss Holland’ in Newcastle) might carry a butterfly’s span for attention. There is no further information about Venables’s new life and I find no comment arising in any replies at the time; Darwin’s next surviving letter to Whitley, when he had been back in England some three weeks only, is dated London, October 24, [1836] – in response to the news of Whitley’s marriage to his cousin, Frances⁶:

I most heartily congratulate you. Long may you live in your now perfect state. We poor bachelors are only half men,—creeping like caterpillars through the world, without fulfilling our destination. ...

Amongst them were old Heaviside & Matthews, & when I return, we are to have a quiet little dinner. How I wish you were there to join us—but you, you lucky man, are enjoying far more cosy meals. ...

If you can muster time, do write to me and direct Shrewsbury (if in a fortnight’s time, or 43 Great Marlborough St. if earlier)⁷

‘As for a wife’

There are two further bachelor letters from Darwin to Whitley of 1838 submerging between them his private reflections on career and marriage in jotted notes on ‘options’ (career or marriage) on a stray leaf dated 7th April 1838⁸ and the meditation resumed a few weeks later, sometime in July.⁹

Tuesday night [8 May 1838] – 36 Great Marlborough St., London¹⁰:

‘... You could not have written to a worse man than myself for news; for I live out of nearly all society & see none of our old friends, although I shall ever treasure up recollections of them.— I scarcely ever see even the best of good fellows, old Herbert, as I have my hands so full of work, Of course you have heard of J. Cameron marriage, ... I should much like to hear some tidings of Frederic Watkins; there never was a man, who made his conceit so loveable. In the midst of this great smoky city I very often catch myself thinking of my

country walks at Cambridge with you, and with Watkins and Venables by moonlight.— ...

... Of the future I know nothing I never look further ahead than two or three Chapters—for my life is now measured by volume, chapters & sheets & has little to do with the sun— As for a wife, that most interesting specimen in the whole series of vertebrate animals, Providence only know whether I shall ever capture one or be able to feed her if caught. All such considerations are hidden far in futurity, but at the end of a distant view, I sometimes see a cottage & some white object like a petticoat, which always drives granite & trap out of my head in the most unphilosophical manner.— ...’

and: November, 23 [1838] – Athenaeum¹¹

‘I have been very long in answering your kind letter: but now I have some news to tell you, which, I am sure will please you, as holding out to me, the best chance of happiness, mortal man can boast of in this world.—

It can be nothing else, but that I am going to be married. The lady is my cousin Miss Emma Wedgwood.— you will approve of marrying a cousin: & if you knew what a good dear little wife, the lady will surely make, you would approve still more, & congratulate me, heartily, on my good fortune.—

We are to be married in the end of January, & intend living in London, at least for some years, until I have wearied the geological public with my newly acquired cacoethes scribendi.— I have a busy, & therefore a happy life before me, with a comfortable, though rather humble, fireside to spend my evenings, & the evening of my life by the side of, that is, if I have the luck to live so long.— My future wife is a very good musician, so that I m[ea]n to acquire first rate taste in music, & nothing less than symphonies of Beethoven shall go down.—’

There is an earlier reference to the ‘petticoats’, in a letter of 1835 – at Lima ¹²:

To William Darwin Fox (Christ’s; a second cousin of Darwin), [9–12 August] 1835 – Lima

As for an English lady, I have almost forgotten what she is.— something very angelic & good. As for the women in these countries they wear Caps & petticoats & a very few have pretty faces & then all is said’

‘Jack Venables’

At an eleven-month interval there are two early references to Venables – one from Watkins in a letter congratulating Darwin on his appointment to the expedition, a few weeks prior to his departure:

September 18, 1831 – Barnborough Rectory¹³:

‘What a reunion of good & excellent fellows we might have he & you & Jack Venables &c &c. alas, alas we know not what is in ye womb of time. But at least, old fellow, ye worst fortune in ye world cannot deprive us of many pleasant & sacred recollections (n.b. []) ye note of ye nightingale & ye voice of ye cherubim, ye moonlight walk & ye social glass (query, bottle?) ye roll of ye organ & ye clash of knives & forks, with small-talk, arguments, billiard-balls & beetle hunting enough to furnish ye most unfurnished head in Cambridge with ideas— ... believe me there is no one, I look forward to spending happy hours with, more sincerely than yourself —

Our friends are scattering fast. Whitley prognosticates change in his vital barometer, Jem Turner & Jack Venab. are both preparing for orders & Curacies, Cavendish off next month to Malta for 3 or 4 years, Duncan dubbed a Viscount & of course on ye wing, Grey looking out for something diplomati[qu]e, all that is good in Emmanuel Colbeck, Clutton & Co. rustivating, worthy old Smith, ye only feather left in ye wing. Its a heavy draft on ye mental bank, & not cashed so easily. I dont think I shall return to Cambridge; this next week we are to be at Doncaster of course, Balls, Races, dinners & dissipation, but cares & blue-devils spoil all these & I'd rather be with you on those soft still evenings listening to ye cries of strange birds, & admiring those wonderful forests'

From the earliest of Darwin's references to Venables, if not any 'petticoat' it is the moonlight that catches Darwin's musing, on the outward journey, and his response to Watkins accepts his reference to "Jack" Venables:

To Frederick Watkins¹⁴: August 18, 1832:¹⁵

'... We sail in the course of a day or two, to survey the Coast of Patagonia as it is entirely unknown I expect a good deal of interest.— But already do I perceive the grievous difference between sailing on these seas and the Equinoctial ocean— In the "Ladies Gulf" as the Spaniards call it, it is so luxurious to sit on deck and enjoy the coolness of the night & admire the new constellations of the south— As for the old moon, she, nightingales, Jack Venables, & your jolly old self, form so pleasant a train of ideas that I never could want something to think about. I wonder where we shall ever meet again, be it when it may; few things will give me greater pleasure than to see you again and talk over the long time we have passed together.

If you were to meet me at present I certainly should be looked at like a wild beast, a great grisly beard and flushing jacket would disguise an angel.—'

The Editors of the *Darwin Project* are studiously correct in their wish to identify 'Jack Venables' from the *Cambridge alumni* but not finding that name, they fall, satisfactorily, back on Richard Lister Venables as the man. They are intent on scholarship and correct detail; the writer of 'biography' has to adhere to circumstantial detail but can also think through the letter-writer's words, their empathy with the person referred, their own sense of sensitivities and personalities, the correlation of impressions taken and impressions given. Darwin reminds Watkins that he was the 'jolly' one - the "J" is indicative - "jolly" and "Jack."

Butterflies in the Andes

From the skein of their Cambridge colleges it is possible to put together the braiding of Darwin's own references in 1832 and again in 1838, 'the country walks' and allusions to those 'soft still evenings', the 'old moon and nightingales', the 'white petticoats' and 'green cottages', the 'little pledges of mutual affection' and 'retirement', and the wife as 'specimen'.

Watkins, Whitley, and Venables, in particular, are bathed for Darwin in these recollections - shared nowhere else in his correspondence - against his admiration of the 'new constellations of the south', and the 'cries of strange birds.' The figure of Mrs Venables announced to him as a 'Russian countess' may convey the impression of a white butterfly in the gloaming of the Andes.

Darwin reminds his correspondent that he is a 'certain hunter of beetles', but he was also keen to send his friends specimens of fine butterflies. Darwin seems to have indulged a flirtation with a young woman, not a cousin, during the Cambridge years before *The Beagle*. A Shropshire lass, Fanny Mostyn Owen of Woodhouse, Shropshire, to whom he had sent a specimen from the Cambridge fenland in 1828, responded to him in her letter of 26 October 1828, her sense of fun making use of Edward Lear's language.¹⁶



The Charles Darwin room at Christ's College, Cambridge.

Photo: courtesy of Jorge Royan under Creative Commons

'...very much oblig'd to you I was for the Books, and also the Swallow tail which has absolutely astounded my weak mind, there is something in it so werry pecoolier...'

The swallowtail is one of the rarest and most spectacular of British butterflies. Fanny signed off all her letters to Darwin with the admonition to “burn them” – but he retained them all his life, so they have survived for inclusion in the Project.

I take up his notion of a ‘wife, that most interesting specimen’ envisioning the ‘Russian Countess’ for him as a butterfly rather than the identification that his pros and cons make – that a wife will ‘afford comfort ... better than a dog’. (But does he mean the Beagle?) My ‘white’ catches from Darwin’s velleities the allure of ‘the white petticoat’.

Mary Augusta

What Whitley and Watkins probably did not know was that as the daughter of an English mother and a Russian father, born in St. Petersburg in 1794, she was hardly ‘Russian’ having been brought up from infancy as a Protestant in Scotland. She had been adopted on her mother’s death in 1795 by her aunts (of Beanston and Haddington, North Berwick). The elder aunt was Anne, Countess of Haddington (subsequently wife to a Captain John Dalrymple of Stairs) – and ‘the countess’ of Whitley’s letter, may actually be an elision of hearsay in the account of her reported to him. The second aunt was Elizabeth Primrose (Mrs Pollen) who had made her own marriage – to an Englishman - in St. Petersburg in 1803.

Following the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Mary, accompanied by Mrs Pollen had travelled in Europe, in Germany and to Russia. After their visit in 1831, Mary Augusta’s younger brother Konstantin wrote to apologise for having joshed Aunt Primrose too much. It would appear that whatever else attractive in her quiver, the ‘Russian countess’ carried energy, boisterousness, challenge (out riding), and enthusiasm in abundance. Something conveyed also in her aunt Mrs Pollen’s life (early, at least) and the whirlwind engagement that she and her husband enjoyed in St. Petersburg in 1803; the wayward life, considered in hindsight, of Mary Augusta’s son ‘Captain Adam’ as he became. Even, for a sense of Venables himself, recognition that if his first wife was ‘Russian’, when made a widower, he was married soon to Agnes Minna Pearson (some twenty-five years his junior), who had been born in France. Some reflection on Mary Augusta’s looks and personality may be had by realising that there are glamorous portraits of the Poltoratskaya ladies widely admired from the time, and at least two of her Russian cousins were the objects of famous love poems of Pushkin who knew the family well, frequenting the inn at Torzhok where he enjoyed his favourite dish in the neighbourhood of her father’s estate at Gruzino.

Watkins, himself regarded as ‘jolly’ by his companions – may not have realised about ‘Jack’ Venables (and for all her seniority) that he was taken by a lively woman, and her companionship sustained his jolly spirits. She, as singer, linguist, artist, traveller, and horse-woman fulfilled his expectations over a relatively brief acquaintance – a good twelve-month before Whitley reported this detail to Darwin. Venables, in Russia, in 1837-38 when he took Mary Augusta on an extended tour to meet her family in St. Petersburg and Moscow, and on their estates, found himself at the centre of excitements, boating with his wife’s step-sisters and occupying a place at the centre of their gatherings. Another matter of reflection concerns the contrast of Venables’s venture

with those of the ‘caterpillars’ Whitley and Darwin, neither of them venturing beyond their respective family circles, settling for marriage with a cousin – and what does that do for ‘natural selection’? Without going into these things very far, Darwin’s long absence in Patagonia and the Pacific will have lost him chances with Fanny Owen of Woodhouse¹⁷ and other young ladies of her circle of fun. But he did not settle for a clerical career as presaged by the allusion to Mr Collins [of *Pride and Prejudice* by ‘Miss Austen’] and ‘pledges of mutual affection’ – such a phrase and its source to come to mind in a fastness of the Andes!

Mary Augusta Venables was previously Mrs Adam, wife of Francis James Adam, who had died at sea on a return from business at Demerara in 1821 and she carried some stature from that connection. Her son, the young Willie Adam, under the tutelage of his Adam uncles and grandfather, secured her place at Blair Adam and Edinburgh, and also in London, where his grandfather, of Great Russell Street, had a country retreat at Richmond: Mary Augusta and Mrs Pollen had here made their own convenient home. None of this came to Darwin, even as bemusement, or rumour, under Whitley’s glamorous phrase ‘a Russian countess’ – inspired at third hand by Watkins’ new connections as curate at Clyro and an interchange with Venables senior, sometime after the marriage of his son.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to thank Rosemary Clarkson of the Darwin Correspondence Project Team for her assistance.

Extracts from the ‘Correspondence’ have been included courtesy of the Darwin Correspondence Project and Cambridge University Press.

www.darwinproject.ac.uk

F Burkhardt *et al*, eds, *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin* (Cambridge University Press, 1985-)

REFERENCES

- ¹ Anne Dalrymple, elder sister of Elizabeth Primrose Pollen and of Mary, the mother of Mary Augusta.
- ² S.W.Massil ‘Mary Augusta Poltoratskaya, a “lady of Scottish connections” and her families’ *Journal* 37, p232-236.
- ³ The Voyage lasted from 27 December 1831 to 2 October 1836
- ⁴ DCP-LETT-250
- ⁵ DCP-LETT-267
- ⁶ DCP-LETT-314
- ⁷ The address of Darwin’s brother E A Darwin, with whom he stayed while first back in London.
- ⁸ DCP-LETT-409
- ⁹ CUL DAR 210.8:2
- ¹⁰ DCP-LETT-411A
- ¹¹ DCP-LETT-443
- ¹² DCP-LETT-282
- ¹³ DCP-LETT-130
- ¹⁴ The friendship extends back to school days at Shrewsbury, before their college life of Cambridge.
- ¹⁵ DCP-LETT-181
- ¹⁶ ‘Woodhouse is to me a paradise, about which I am always thinking’ – and encounters Fanny there amongst the ‘black-eyed Houris ... of real substantial flesh & blood’: to William Darwin Fox, October, 1828 [DCP-LETT-48]. He also refers to her as ‘la belle Fanny’: to Fox [DCP-LETT-70, August 1829]

The Llowes sundial

Charles Weston made an unexpected discovery during the course of his Wye Valley Walk last summer.

John Price's article on the Revd Tom Williams of Llowes and his relationship with Francis Kilvert (*Journal 50*) gave a wide ranging and comprehensive account of the developing relationship between the two men. From that first occasion when they were known to have attended (or sang at?) a Hay Choral Society Concert in 1866 a close friendship developed which lasted until Kilvert's death in September 1879. There are references to Tom Williams and Llowes no fewer than 27 times in the *Diary* and indeed one of the final entries in the *Diary* in October 1878 records Kilvert's farewell sermon at Llowes prior to his move to Bredwardine (Vol3, p426). Within less than a year of that farewell sermon Francis Kilvert was dead. Tom Williams, by contrast, remained as vicar at Llowes until 1914, having served there for 55 years in total and finally dying in 1915. He had outlived his old friend by some 35 years!

Intriguing questions that sprang to mind whilst reading John Price's article concerned the blossoming relationship between the two men. What drew them together in friendship? Was it that they were both single men of similar ages who came from ecclesiastical backgrounds? Did their Oxford University experiences in the 1850's and their theological studies give them a common bond upon which their friendship flourished? These are questions which will hopefully be answered in a future edition of the *Journal*.

The article was very much on my mind as I entered the village last August en route to Hay-on-Wye at the end of a hard day's walking on the Wye Valley Walk. Predictably, access to

the church was not possible due to the coronavirus regulations in force at the time. However, the churchyard revealed Tom Williams' fine Celtic cross grave and directly opposite it I was surprised to see a sundial set on a stone plinth. The sundial intrigued me – not so much the object itself but more so the inscription on it brass plate on the plinth.

IN MEMORY OF
THE DIARIST
REV. FRANCIS KILVERT M.A.

THIS SUNDIAL WAS ERECTED BY THE
KILVERT SOCIETY AND THE PARISHIONERS
OF LLOWES AND DEDICATED BY THE
LORD BISHOP OF SWANSEA AND BRECON
ON 7TH NOVEMBER 1954 TO COMMEMORATE
THE DIARIST'S CLOSE CONNECTION WITH
THE PARISH DURING THE YEARS
1865 TO 1879

The placing of such a memorial in 1954 establishes the fact that, almost 75 years after Francis Kilvert's death he was still remembered with affection by the community of Llowes. It would have been highly unlikely that any of the parishioners present at the event would have remembered him but there almost certainly would have been those who would have remembered Tom Williams from their childhood days. Undoubtedly stories of friendship between the two would have been passed on as a kind of folklore over the years with the publication and success of *Kilvert's Diary* creating additional interest in the post war years.

So, how was the event of the dedication reported in the local press? It appears that it was in the afternoon that the sundial was 'unveiled' by the Bishop of Swansea and Brecon. He stayed on to conduct the evening service, the sermon being based 'on the words of The Holy Catholic Church.' It was the *Montgomery Express and Radnor Times* which gave five star coverage to the afternoon event in their edition of 13 November 1954. Alas, there was no indication given as regards numbers present at the ceremony but it must have been quite a good turnout, with two coach loads of Kilvert Society members from Hereford joining local church members and other worthies who included the local MP from Brecon and Radnor. As is the continuing custom to this day, when Kilvert Society services are held in parish churches afternoon tea was (and is) served and it was presumably during the tea break that Mrs Sid Wright of the Society offered her thoughts on the event.

The sundial has a place of honour opposite Tom Williams' grave. It stands as a tribute to the vicar of Llowes in 1954 – the Rev. D.J. Lane Griffiths – that he seized the opportunity with the (then newly established) Kilvert Society to forge links which remain to this day. As for the sundial itself its removal to the churchyard from the vestry where it had been unable to fulfil its original purpose since 1812 (when it had been gifted by a previous incumbent) helped create a lasting memorial to two men much loved and respected in the local community.



The sundial in Llowes churchyard.

Photo: Charles Weston

The Watkins Family of Trefonnen in the County of Radnor

By Eva Morgan

Did some of you watch in March 2021 on BBC4 TV or on BBC Wales, the wonderful programme, ‘The Story of Welsh Art’? If you did you will know of the famous Welsh artist, Thomas Jones of Pencerrig, who was born at Trefonnen (or Trevonnen), in the county of Radnor, on 26 September 1742, the second of sixteen children of the landowner Thomas Jones of Trefonnen and his wife, Hannah. So what, you may ask, has he to do with Kilvert apart from the fact that many of his paintings depict the Radnorshire that Kilvert came to know and love something over 100 years later? Thomas Jones is referred to as Thomas Jones of Pencerrig to differentiate him from others of the same name. When he was young Thomas Jones’ father inherited the Pencerrig estate, so the family moved there from Trefonnen and Thomas grew up on that estate, near Builth Wells. After training in London and some years living and painting in Italy, by the spring of 1787 his elder brother had died and in 1789 Thomas Jones moved back to Wales and Pencerrig to manage the family estate and become an important member of Radnorshire society. He died on 29 April 1803 and was buried in the family vault at Caebach Chapel, Llandrindod Wells. The Jones family were important Dissenters, having built and administered that small chapel where the family memorials are to be found.

The first record of my maternal grandmother’s family living at Trefonnen comes on a family tree which was taken to Australia in 1857 by the widow, son and daughter of John Watkins, who was born in 1799 at Trefonnen. His gravestone inscription states that he was for many years a clerk in the Bank of England but he died in 1838, being buried at Erwood Baptist Chapel leaving a widow and five young children. The tree says that his grandfather, John Watkins was born in 1728 and married Mary Griffiths who was born in 1730, he dying in 1812 and she in 1802. It says that John Watkins “came from Ciel Vawr in Pembrokeshire to reside at Trefonnen Llandrindod Wells where all their children were born“, as incidentally were all the next generation too, the children of their son, Benjamin and his wife Ann née Jones. Sadly, it seems to be impossible to locate Ciel Fawr in 2021.

I was told by a friend, a member of an old Radnorshire family, that the Watkins family must have been of the Baptist faith, or at least Dissenters, or they wouldn’t have been acceptable tenants to the estate owners. At Rock Chapel, Fron, near Llandrindod Wells is the grave of Ann, the wife of Benjamin

Watkins, who died at Trefonnen in 1816 aged 39. They are my 3x great-grandparents. Benjamin married again to Martha Parry and had 2 more children. I wonder when they left Trefonnen as he is buried with his second wife who survived him by 34 years at Measyberllan Chapel, Talachddu, near Brecon. But his gravestone gives him as Benjamin Watkins of Trevannon, parish of Cefillys, co. Radnor who died 19 May 1833 aged 58.



Thomas Jones 1742-1803.

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Their son, Benjamin married a Cregrina girl, Elizabeth Morgan, and farmed at Llandilo Graban and then at Llwyn, Cregrina during the years that Kilvert was the curate at Clyro when he got to know and admire the Edw Valley well. Would he have chatted to the farming families known to be Chapel goers if he met them en route, I wonder? Their son, another Benjamin, married Margaret Samuel from Llanelwed near Builth Wells in 1863 and farmed across the valley at Gilfauch, Rhulen so their family was growing up in that area in Kilvert’s Clyro days too. But with their, by now, three children, they soon started a move down from the hills to Brynrydd, Llowes where another sister and my maternal grandmother were born in 1875 and 1878. Then after a few years at Sychnant, Llanellieu, near Talgarth, where Ada and Albert were added to the brood, they were at Pentrecoyd, Brilley by 1891. But after Margaret, their daughter had married Thomas Boore Prosser in 1895 the family moved on down into England to New Farm, Bredwardine by 1901 leaving

Margaret & Tom as tenants of Penrecoyd. Why leave those lovely hills, you may ask? The land “down Country” would be more productive and the weather less harsh. Maybe the farm would be larger too. This of course, was some years after the death of Kilvert, who had become vicar of Bredwardine. He had buried *Little Davy* who had been born at their new home, New Farm in 1870 and of whose death and burial aged only 8, Kilvert wrote so movingly on Christmas Day 1878, such a short time before his own early death and one of the last entries in the version of the *Diary* that we have.

The Watkins family’s neighbour at Brilley, William Morgan of Upper Bridge Court, had been widowed in 1892 and had also moved down to Bredwardine with his small daughter, Gladys, to the adjoining Old House. In 1894, he had remarried a Bredwardine farmer’s daughter, Sarah Abberley, whom Kilvert had written of meeting 16 years earlier, on September 6 1878 *when I came down by the Upper Cwm & had a long, pleasant talk with nice Sarah Abberley, who was neatly dressed, waiting*

in a neat, bright, tidy kitchen to give her father his tea when he came in. (Vol 3, p416) She reminded him that *it would be 1 year on the morrow, September 8th, since the death of his predecessor Revd John Houseman*. Sarah would have been aged about 17 at that time. Sadly Sarah and her step-daughter, Gladys died aged only 46 and 16 within 6 months of each other in 1905 and 1906. They are buried together only a few feet from the grave

of Kilvert himself. The story is completed when Mary Ann Watkins, the daughter, in her early 30s, of William's neighbour of many years both at Brilley and Bredwardine, Benjamin Watkins of New Farm, was married to William Morgan, now aged in his early 50s, at Bredwardine Church in 1909. My mother, Margaret Annie Morgan, born in September 1911, was the second daughter of their family of three girls.



The Pencerrig Estate near Builth Wells.

Photo: courtesy NLW via Creative Commons

Rain, storms and overflows

The Chairman's remarks about Victorian plumbing in his column in this *Journal* (page 2) reminded the editor of the domestic incident recorded by Kilvert at Langley Burrell Rectory on 19 July 1875.

At 7 o'clock came on another terrible storm of rain much worse than the one in the afternoon. I don't think I ever saw it rain so hard. I was in my room reading when I heard Fanny screaming to me from the top of the house. Rushing up the back stairs I found that the cistern was overflowing and deluging the water closet, the tank room, and the bathroom and kitchen. The first notice Fanny had of the catastrophe was that being in the kitchen she saw the water dripping through the ceiling. Presently a child's boat could have floated in the kitchen. I was obliged to put on a mackintosh and stand in the water closet holding up the handle to relieve the cistern while the water ran down upon my head like a shower bath.

On the subject of rain, Nicholas Green messaged the *Journal*

'As a keen amateur meteorologist taking my own daily readings and accessing the daily Met Office UK extremes, I noticed Llysdynam was the wettest place in the UK on 8 December with 52mm of rainfall (2" in old money).'

Llysdynam was Mr Venables' house, where he was building a huge extension during the period of the *Diary*. The Victorian wing has since been demolished, but the gardens are occasionally open for the National Gardens Scheme and contain a plaque commemorating its long history as an observing station.

The Watercress Sellers

Vicky Stewart's poignant article about Henry Estcourt Ferris in this Journal reminds us of Kilvert's gift for compassionate evocative writing about the poorest of the poor.

Every morning Summerflower brings splendid watercresses from Kellaways mill. Last Tuesday morning I was out early before breakfast, walking along the Common on Maud Heath between the may hedges. Just as I heard the breakfast bell ring across the Common from the Rectory and turned in at the black gate a man crossed the stile carrying a basket. He said his name was Summerflower, that he had fasted since yesterday morning and that he could buy no breakfast before he had got watercresses to sell (Vol 1, p142-3).

It appears that Kilvert had arranged for a regular delivery to Langley Burrell Rectory as a way of assisting the poor watercress seller.

Twenty years before Kilvert began his *Diary*, Henry Mayhew (1812-87) met a watercress seller in London. At this time, they were usually young girls, some very young. Mayhew was a journalist and social investigator who interviewed hundreds of people for a series that was published as *London Labour and the London Poor*. He is described by one editor as having ‘an ability to reconcile objectivity with compassion’; he was moved to silence when he met the watercress seller.

‘I go about the streets with with water-creases crying “Four bunches a penny, water-creases”. I am just eight years old – that’s all ...On and off, I’ve been very nearly twelvemonth in the streets’.

She had to buy her watercresses. (Summerflower probably picked his in the millstream at Kellaways.) ‘I have to be down at Farringdon market between four and five...One day I took 1s 6d and the creases cost 6d, but it isn’t often I get such luck as that. I oftener makes 3d or 4d than 1s; and then I’m at work, crying,

“Creases, four bunches a penny, creases!” from six in the morning to about ten...I don’t have no dinner...it’s like a child to care for sugar-sticks and not like one whose got a living and vittals to earn.’

Mayhew commented wonderingly ‘There was something cruelly pathetic in hearing this infant, so young that her features had scarcely formed themselves, talking of the bitterest struggles of life, with the calm earnestness of one who had endured them all. I did not know how to talk with her’.

Back in Wiltshire, on 9 January 1872, Kilvert met a boy named George Wells. *He was going to beg a bit of bread from a woman who lived at the corner of the Common under the Three Firs. He said he did not know the name of the woman but she knew his mother and often gave him a bit of bread when he was hungry. His mother was a cripple and had no parish relief, sold cabbage nets and had nothing to give him for dinner. The boy’s face looked pale, pinched and hungry (Vol 2, p112).*

Mayhew also came across cabbage-net sellers, who, he said, made their nets in the street, along with others he classified as textile workers, such as stocking weavers, night-cap knitters and doll-dress knitters. Mayhew’s systematic statistical analysis of mid 19th century London is on a different scale from the Diarist’s anecdotes set in a Wiltshire village, but their sympathetic observation of individuals are comparable.

REFERENCE

- ¹ Robert Douglas-Fairhurst introducing the Oxford World’s Classics selection of *London Life and the London Poor*. Various selections are available in print and the whole work is available online via Project Gutenberg.

‘All shod with steel, we hiss’d along the polish’d ice’

Kilvert enjoyed skating; so did Frederick Grice (see photo page 7). A short feature on Radio 3 on 9 January, presented by Sean Williams, explored the history of lake skating, as depicted by Tolstoy in a chapter of *Anna Karenina*, by Peter Breughel in art, and by Emile Waldteufel in music in ‘The Skater’s Waltz’. The programme described the ‘literary skater’, not mentioning Kilvert, alas, (see the *Diary* entries for 27 and 29 December 1870 and 1 January 1871), but referring to Kilvert’s poet hero Wordsworth, who devoted a section of his great poem ‘The Prelude’ to skating. Wordsworth’s friend Thomas de Quincy joked that a good skater would be a superficial poet; we cannot say much about Kilvert’s ability to skate, but Wordsworth’s was apparently poor, ‘a cow on ice’. The pleasure of skating disappears unless it is immortalised in words, pictures or music suggested the presenter. Skating has also been successfully choreographed for pointe shoes and the stage in Frederick Ashton’s ballet ‘Les Patineurs’. Another attraction of the pastime, one of the Radio 3 speakers pointed out, was that, in the 19th century, skating and flirting went together as women would wear slightly shorter dresses and glimpses of a lady’s ankle could be seen.

The headline quote is from Book 1 of ‘The Prelude’.



‘Les Patineurs’.

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

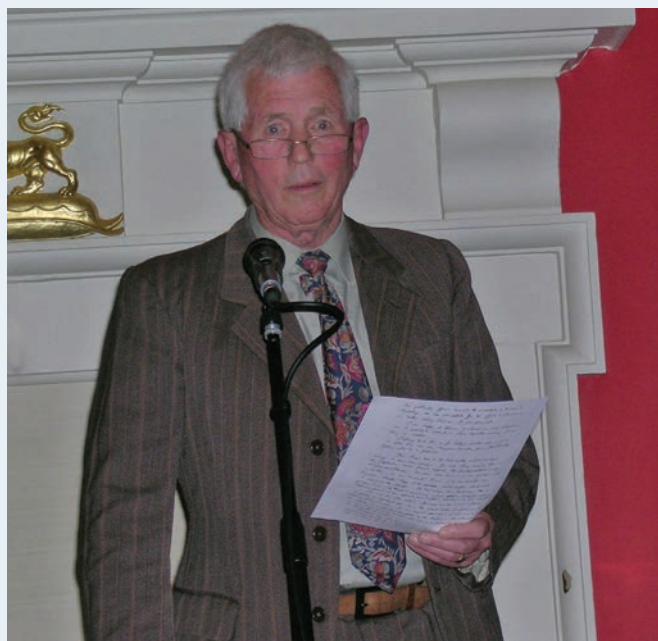
WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

We hope you enjoy your membership in 2022 and beyond.

OBITUARIES

Mr Michael George SHARP

1935-2021



Michael Sharp at the 2009 AGM.

Photo: Val Dixon

Michael was an extraordinary man, much respected and trusted with a strong moral compass. He was always smartly dressed with a military bearing. Michael served in the Royal Engineers in Egypt and Cyprus during the EOKA emergency. After his National Service he became very involved with the Army Cadet Force in his native Sussex, where he lived with his wife Sue and children Victoria, Richard, and Emma, at Ringmer.

Sue and Michael became Life Members of the Kilvert Society in 1980 and in 1993 they upped sticks to move to Kilvert Country settling at the Old Forge, Kinnersley. Here they quickly became involved with the local community. Michael, an affirmed Churchman, served for many years as church warden at the Church of St James, Kinnersley. Amongst his other interests were singing in the Talgarth Male Voice Choir and he had a passion for books, literature, and maps. An avid gardener, he grew all the family's vegetables.

I will remember him as a fellow railway enthusiast, though we differed in our loyalties, Michael being a "Southern" man whilst I, being a West countryman, favoured the "Great Western". At home at the Old Forge, he had the space for an extensive model railway system that over the years he continued to develop.

I spent many a happy hour sitting at Sue and Michael's kitchen table discussing not only railways, of which he had a great knowledge, but also sharing his enthusiasm for Francis Kilvert and the Kilvert Society.

The Society's former Secretary Edward West wished to retire after some 17 years' service and proposed Michael as his successor and in 1995 Michael took on the mantle of Hon. Secretary and diligently managed Society affairs. In 2003 he became Chairman and was responsible for driving the Society on. He talked Jeff Marshall into becoming the Newsletter editor and subsequently supported and encouraged Jeff to produce the full colour *Journal* we have today.

Michael Sharp served the Society as a member 1980 – 1995 and 2019-21,

Hon. Secretary 1995 – 2003

Chairman 2003 – 2009

Vice-Chairman 2009 – 2017

and served as a member of the committee until 2018.

Michael, a great friend, a true gentleman and Kilvertian. The Kilvert Society that he served so well, are indebted for his endeavours in promoting the Society's aims.

Alan Brimson



Mr Geoffrey ATHERTON

Mr Geoffrey Atherton of Gower, Swansea died in November 2021. He had been a member since July 2009.



Mr John and Mrs Beryl JONES

Mr John and Mrs Beryl Jones of East Sheen, London, had been members since October 1998. Their son notified the Society in September 2021 that Mr and Mrs Jones were both, sadly, deceased.



Mrs Veronica POWELL

Mrs Veronica Powell of Tavistock died in February 2021. She had been a joint life member since 1957.

SPECIAL OFFER**Three-Volume Diary,**

packed in slip case, available to members at £60 plus £12.98 p&p (or can be collected post free)

Kilvert Society DVD

A film depicting the early days of the Society. £15 + £2 p&p.

East End: West End. Alone

in London, by John Toman. The history of Victorian clergyman George Trousdale and his wife, Bee Smallcombe, who was known by Kilvert. (Vol III, pp184,186). Their lives are explored in comparison with the *Diary*. £15 inc p&p.

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.

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 Edmondson-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. £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.

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.

Kilvert's Diary and Landscape (978-071883-0953) and **Kilvert's World of Wonders – growing up in Victorian England** (978-071889-3019). Both by John Toman. Lutterworth Press.

A Deep Sense of the Uses of Money: Kilvert's forebears in Bath and India.
True Heirs to Israel: Kilvert's theology.
The Lost Photo Album (2nd edition). All available directly from John Toman johntoman@dymond.force9.co.uk

The Handkerchief Tree: the Journal of Frederick Grice 1946-83 edited by Gillian and Colin Clarke. Mount Orleans Press, 2021. ISBN 978-1-912945-28-3

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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