THE JOURNAL OF THE KILVERT SOCIETY

Number 58 March 2024

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 Journal ISSN 2633-9382; online ISSN 2633-9390

www.thekilvertsociety.org.uk

Chairman: Rob Graves
Glan yr Afon Barns, Castle Road, Llangynidr, Powys NP8 1NG. Tel: 01874 730535

Hon Secretary: Alan Brimson
30 Bromley Heath Avenue, Downend, Bristol BS16 6JP.
Tel: 0117 957 2030, mobile 07765 226329
email: kilvertsociety@gmail.com

Vice-Chairman: Vacant

Hon Treasurer: Richard Weston
35 Harold Street, Hereford HR1 2QU. Tel: 01432 378 018

Hon Membership Secretary: Mrs Sue Rose
8 Fairway, Calne, Wiltshire SN11 0LE
Email: sue.rose4@btinternet.com

Hon Archivist: Vacant

Hon Editor of the *Journal*: Mary Steele
1 Saffron Rise, Eaton Bray, Dunstable LU6 2AY.
Tel: 01525 221797. Email: mary.steele1@btinternet.com

Website: www.thekilvertsociety.org.uk

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 2024

Friday 26 April
The Annual General Meeting will be held at the Bishop's Palace, Hereford HR4 9BL at 7pm. Following a buffet supper, we will hear a talk about the history of Brecon Cathedral.

Saturday 27 April
At the Pilgrim Hotel, Much Birch HR2 8HJ

Morning: a talk about Kilvert by John Price.

Afternoon: a visit to Rhosgoch Mill and Llanshifr (to be confirmed).

Evening: 7 for 7:30: The Kilvert Society Dinner at the Pilgrim Hotel.

Saturday 29 June
A visit to Moccas.

Wednesday 25 September
A visit to Oxford, including Wadham College (to be confirmed).

If you are on email, please help us to cut postage costs by sending your email address to the Secretary at kilvertsociety@gmail.com

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Our cover photos commemorate the final Kilvert Pilgrimage, which took place in July 2023.

Front cover: *View from Newchurch Common*. Photo: John Price

Back cover: *Llandewi Fach candlelit for Evensong*. Photo: Editor

From the Editor

As we look forward to our 76th year as a Society, this edition shows that there is a wealth of research generated by *Kilvert's Diary* that sheds light on Victorian social history. Two features explore members of the Venables family, who were so important to Kilvert's world at Clyro but had a long reach geographically and culturally. Teresa Williams writes about Susan Catherine Venables and Stephen Massil has researched Richard Lister Venables' first wife, Mary Augusta.

We are used to seeing our Kilvert characters in the sober grey of monochrome photography. But Kilvert's lifetime saw the invention of synthetic aniline dyes which transformed dress colours, as demonstrated in an exhibition, 'Colour Revolution: Victorian art, fashion and design', which I visited last winter at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Vivid purple, magenta, scarlet, yellow and green became available, so brilliant as to be castigated as 'crude' and 'ferocious' by a critic. The idea that wearing green is unlucky was not far wrong – the dye contained arsenic. In 1856, William Henry Perkin, then a young chemistry student, discovered the first artificial dye by accident and called it 'mauvine', later changed to 'violet' or 'mauve'. Kilvert describes Mary Money Kyrle, the new Mrs Andrew Pope, wearing *a mauve silk travelling dress* after her wedding (Vol 3, p78). The *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* of March 1868 recommended that 'very bright tints' should be toned down with white, black or grey. Maybe that is why Fanny Kilvert wore *cerise silk under white muslin* when she was bridesmaid to Eliza Kilvert in September 1873; Kilvert added: *The bride wore purple silk*. (Vol 2, p374). In his and our first encounter with Ettie Meredith Brown on 6 September 1875, she was wearing crimson, toned down with grey, but brightened up with flowers in her hat and a rich gold necklace. Kilvert also describes her *dark Spanish brunette complexion which gave her cheeks the dusky bloom and flush of a ripe pomegranate*. It's a colourful picture.

Don't forget to check the inserts that come with this edition, and enjoy your *Journal*.

From the Secretary

As we approach another full season of Society activities, I am pleased to report that we have not been idle over the winter period. The policy of the committee is to maintain the various memorials associated with Francis Kilvert and his *Diary*. As part of this activity, the memorial gravestone to one of the Miss Newtons who lay each side of the grave of Francis Kilvert at Bredwardine, which had been unstable and likely to collapse, has been repaired and renovated by the Society.

Our season opener is the AGM weekend which will follow the traditional pattern.

Friday 26 April. The AGM will be held at The Bishop's Palace, Hereford at 7pm, followed by a buffet supper (£5 pay on the day), after which our speaker will give a talk on Brecon Cathedral and its Kilvert connection.

Saturday 27 April. We will meet at The Pilgrim Hotel, Much Birch at 10 am for 10.30 am. Following coffee, we will be addressed by Society member and local historian John Price.

In the afternoon, we hope to visit Rhos Goch Mill and Llanshifr, both of which feature in the *Diary*.

Contents

On the evening we return to The Pilgrim Hotel, 7pm for 7.30pm, for the Society's annual dinner interspersed with readings and poetry. This is always a delightful evening where the warmth of the Society is more than evident with a buzz around the dinning room, as old friends meet up.

If you have not previously attended, I would urge you to "come and join us" at the highlight of the year. Please find enclosed the AGM weekend booking form and please note that the annual dinner must be pre-booked.

Further dates for your diary:

Saturday 29 June, A visit to Moccas.

Wednesday 25 September, we visit Oxford and Wadham College, (to be confirmed).

I hope you will be able to support these events.

From the Chairman

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those members who donated their own money to sponsor tree planting at Moccas Hill Wood. The process has been an extraordinarily slow one, and I would also like to express my gratitude for your patience during this time. You will be relieved to learn that all the trees have now been planted. When my wife and I visited the site on a very wet day last August in the company of Tom Simpson of Natural England we were able to see some of the results of your contributions, although the weather prevented us from viewing the whole of the planting. Tom informed us that our sponsored trees were grown from seeds taken from the trees in the Deer Park, which is especially gratifying for members of the Society given Kilvert's description of those grey old men of Moccas, the oaks that *look as if they had been at the beginning and making of the world and will probably see its end* (Vol 3 pp264 & 265). If Kilvert's trees are in fact, as it now appears, sadly suffering from disease, it is something at least to know that their progeny is surviving with our help.

You will also be pleased to know that, unlike the situation applying in the Deer Park, there is open access for visitors to Moccas Hill Wood. Whereas groups wishing to visit the Deer Park must obtain an entry permit from Natural England, no such requirement exists for the wood. In Kilvert's day it was part of the park: the site was bought by the Forestry Commission in the 1950s and at later stage acquired by Natural England and the Woodland Trust. Designated as a National Nature Reserve, it was first opened to the public in 2016. Even in pouring rain it looked very beautiful, with extensive views over the surrounding countryside.

Should members wish to visit the wood in search of their own tree, the directions from Hay are as follows:

From Hay take the B4348 signposted Bredwardine. After two miles turn right at the sign for Peterchurch/Dorstone. Follow the road for five miles and then turn left, following the signs for Arthur's Stone. Continue on this road for a mile up the hill. As you come over the brow of the hill keep a close look-out for what looks like a field entrance with a cattle grid on the right. There are signs here for Moccas Park and Moccas Hill Wood. Turn right over the cattle grid, and simply follow the lane to its end. There is a car park on the right, close to the entrance to the wood.

A Place for Owls to dwell in

Llanlleonfel Church. Photo: Carol Bass

This was how Kilvert described Llanlleonfel Church, not far from Builth, when he visited on Wednesday 6 August 1873 (Vol 3, p 362-3). The church, built on an ancient sacred site, was then in ruins. *The window frames and seats were gone... I ascended the tall rickety pulpit and several white owls disturbed from their day sleep floated silently under the crazy Rood Loft on their broad downy wings and sauntered without sound through the frameless east and west windows to take refuge with a graceful sweep of their broad white pinions in the ancient yew that kept watch over the Church.*

The church was rebuilt in 1876. Members Charlie and Carol Bass visited last June and sent the *Journal* some information and photos. Charlie writes that the site is now quiet, peaceful and well maintained.

Kilvert included a story about the church which was commented upon by Dafydd Ifans of the National Library of Wales in an article he wrote for *Journal 23* (p 10).

'A search has been made in the Llanleonfel marriage register for the record of the intriguing story a man who remarried after his first wife's death, and the first wife's lace handkerchief was found on the altar rail during the second ceremony, the inference being that the church had not been used meanwhile. Unfortunately, two successive entries citing the same bridegroom have not been found to corroborate the story.'

Llanlleonfel interior. Photo: Carol Bass

The September Visit to Worcester

Diana Clutterbuck takes us on a tour of Worcester Cathedral and Deanery.

Severe winds during Storm Arwen in November 2021 caused one of the pinnacles from the tower at Worcester Cathedral to crash down and fall through the roof of north quire aisle. This also meant that the Kilvert Society visit arranged for March 2022 could not take place. The Society had not visited since March 2009 and we were glad and relieved to finally arrive at the cathedral on 30 September 2023.

Twenty members assembled at the heavily carved north porch and once inside half the number opted for an official tour. Our guides, Christine and Elizabeth, were very knowledgeable and showed us many things we might well have missed without them. They also made sure that some of the smaller areas were empty so we had room to move around or sit.

Starting with the west window, with Victorian glass showing scenes from the Creation and Jesus' life, we moved on to the north aisle. Here we saw the seated figure of Bishop Henry Philpott. Members will recall Francis Kilvert refers on Sunday 24 September1871 to a story told to him by Mr George Venables. Mr Venables *observed a child studying Bishop Philpott closely and when the Bishop left the room the child asked 'Is the Bishop a spirit?' 'No, the Bishop is a very good man, but he is not exactly a spirit yet. Why do you ask?' 'Because' said the child gravely 'his legs are so very thin, I thought no one but a spirit could have such very thin legs'*. As the finely carved marble figure of the elegant Bishop (by Worcester born sculptor Sir Thomas Brock) is in full ecclesiastical robes, we were unable to judge the effect of his legs in gaiters.

Close by is a plaque and a more modern window (1935 by A K Nicholson) commemorating Sir Edward Elgar and his major work "The Dream of Gerontius" composed for the Birmingham Music Festival in 1900. Below, a plate in the floor remembers Sir Ivor Atkins, organist and choirmaster and friend of Elgar, who dedicated the third of his Pomp and Circumstance marches to Atkins and was godfather to Atkins' son.

Further along we came upon the well preserved effigies atop the late 14th century Beauchamp tomb. It is thought they represent John de Beauchamp and his wife Joan. Joan's robe and headdress are beautifully carved and the dog at her feet is full of character. Passing the prayer candles, Christine pointed out a small area of wall which had escaped the extensive Victorian makeover. It certainly showed how the original sandstone had deteriorated. Most of it came from quarries in the Bewdley, Alveley and Bridgnorth area, – relatively nearby and able to be transported down the River Severn, obviously an important consideration. Opposite this, high on the wall was a small lamp lit window, originally part of the sacristan's house which abutted the Cathedral, from which he could keep an eye on the pilgrims coming to the shrines. Apparently now, the only access to replace light bulbs is by ladder from the aisle below.

A few steps away is the Jesus Chapel with a wonderful large carved reredos and altar which has the sort of fine detail normally seen in mediaeval carvings but was produced during the restoration in 1899.

Close by the entrance to the tower in the crossing, Christine showed us 'Miss Kilvert's clock', high on the wall. Society members will remember the Diarist quotes from a letter from his brother on Tuesday, 29 November 1870: *I see in the Illustrated London News that Miss Kilvert of Worcester had just given £300 to the clock and bells for the Cathedral*. The whole project was undertaken as part of the great Victorian restoration project between 1864 and 1874. The twelve sided clock, carillon and bells, cost £5,000 (according to the Guild of Bellringers at Worcester Cathedral) an enormous sum at the time and was largely funded by the Earl of Dudley, but other persons subscribed, including Francis Maria Kilvert.

The cathedral clock donated by Miss Kilvert. Photo: Ann Lovett

Up the steps into the north quire aisle, Christine explained this was the area which took the full force of the pinnacle crashing through the roof, damaging the vaulted ceiling. Apparently the following morning the particles in the area were almost like a fog. The amount of dust was phenomenal and was found to have filled the new Kenneth Tickell organ pipes (only installed in 2008) spanning both sides of the Quire. As part of the work to be done most of the over 3,500 pipes had to be removed and sent away for cleaning. The organ was finally operational again for a Gala recital on 21 January 2023.

Passing by the memorial to the 2nd Duke of Hamilton who died on 12 September 1651 in the Commandery from wounds during the last battle of the Civil War, we saw St George's Chapel commemorating Worcestershire men and women who gave their lives in the twentieth century and later. Here is a memorial to Rev Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, better known as "Woodbine Willie", who at the outbreak of World War One was vicar of St Paul's Worcester. He volunteered as chaplain to the army on the Western Front. In 1917 he won the Military Cross, running across no man's land at Messines Ridge to help the wounded.

Prince Arthur's Chantry on the right of the High Altar contains the remains of Arthur Tudor, eldest son of Henry VII, who died aged 15 in 1502 shortly after his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. There is no effigy, but carvings on the tomb chest, walls and ceiling of the canopy still to be seen include heraldic representations of the various noble and royal houses York, Lancaster, Beaufort and Catherine of Aragon's pomegranates. The ancient wooden door to the chantry still survives.

At the foot of the steps to the High Altar lies King John. The oldest royal effigy in England, it is thought to be an excellent representation of the real man at the time of his death in 1216, although not completed until 1232. It shows him wearing a crown, with an unsheathed sword at his side and between two small carvings of bishops. Apparently, John spent Christmas 2014 in Worcester and stipulated in his Will (still kept in the Cathedral Library) his wish to be buried there close to the shrines of Saints Oswald and Wulfstan, both Bishops of Worcester and builders of forerunners of the current cathedral.

The Norman crypt, dating from the time of St Wulfstan, has reassuringly solid columns and vaulting. An explanatory display shows a remarkable find in 1987. During excavations at the base of the south tower, the remains of a 15th century pilgrim were unearthed. As was the custom at the time, he was interred with his staff and cockleshell which suggests he had been to the shrine of St Iago (Jesus' disciple St James) in Northern Spain. His bones were reburied in 1999, but his remarkably preserved long walking boots, staff and shell remain.

Entering the cloisters from the nave, we passed down the steps (now covered by a ramp) up which the men carrying Miss Kilvert's coffin staggered and swayed on their way from the College Green entrance. Christine pointed out the remains of the monks' lavatorium (washing place) situated near their refectory and the present café. The 12th century circular Chapter House was where a chapter of the Benedictine Rule was read to the monks each day, and where we finished our day with readings from the *Diary*.

The Cloister Garth is a restful place with flowers and herbs, and includes the last resting place of Frances Maria Kilvert and her parents Richard and Maria (née Green, daughter of a Greenwich physician) with a large flat inscribed slab. Prebendary Richard Kilvert was the uncle of Robert Kilvert (our Diarist's father) and a distant relative of Bishop Richard Hurd.

The old bells in the cloister. Miss Kilvert contributed to new bells. Photo: Editor

Worcester Cathedral deanery. The central block is a post 1870 extension. Photo: Tim Lewis

Richard Kilvert, in addition to his Cathedral duties was for some time rector of Hartlebury and shared his patron's interest in books. There are at least twelve known to have been given by him to Hurd's newly built library at the bishop's home there. During the Society's visit in 2018, we were able to see two beautiful large volumes (printed 1777-98) of *Flora Londoniensis* by William Curtis, describing plants in the environs of London with full-page hand painted botanical drawings, annotated on the flyleaf in Richard Hurd's own hand 'This fine copy of Flora Londoniensis in 2 vols. folio was given to me by Rev Richard Kilvert M.A. Prebendary of Worcester August 24 1802. R.W.' (Richard Worcester).

With thanks to our guides, we hastened across the road to the French restaurant where we enjoyed lunch with the rest of our group.

The Deanery

After lunch, we walked round the north east side of the Cathedral, along College Precincts, a short street of 18th and 19th century houses (where Maria Green was living before her marriage to Richard Kilvert), under the arch of Edgar Tower into College Green, where we admired the façade of No 15 (the Old Deanery) on the north side, which abuts onto the remains of the old monastic Guesten Hall.

Here we were met by Society committee member Richard Lovett's daughter-in-law Fiona Keith-Lucas, the Cathedral Archaeologist at Worcester, who had the keys to Miss Kilvert's home.

On the right hand side of the Green is a gap between the houses, where the Hospitaller's lodging once stood backing on the Cathedral and Chapter House. In 1541, it became the house of the 4th Prebend and was occupied by Richard Kilvert and his family when they were in Worcester from 1786 to his death. It was demolished in 1841. After his death at Hartlebury Rectory in 1817, Frances Maria and her mother had to vacate both houses and find somewhere else to live. In an 1800 drawing of College Green (see page 8), the 4th Prebend House is on the right, with a man and woman bowing to a bishop, probably Richard Hurd, who died in 1808. The railings shown in the watercolour were in place when Kilvert visited Worcester in 1870, but perhaps were utilised for the War Effort in WW2.

In the left hand corner of the Green, near the Watergate, is No 10, currently the Deanery, set back with its own small green in front of it. It is red brick, with sash windows with stone sills, plain tile roof and tall brick chimney stacks. The former dean had retired very recently and the dean elect was living elsewhere, so the house was virtually empty apart from a piano and some small items of furniture and we had the run of house and garden. The home occupied by the Kilvert ladies was only the double fronted right hand portion of the property, the larger uglier addition on the left (No 10a) was built later and is used as office accommodation.

Documents in the Cathedral Library show prior to 1796 the land the house then known as 'The Ovens' stood on had been part of the bake house of the medieval monastery and later part of the Castle and its grounds. In 1821 the property was leased to Henry Grape and three years later the Dean and Chapter purchased

The route of Miss Kilvert's funeral

The procession started from the front of the deanery.

The cloister arch.

The narrow dark passage, known as the Slype.

More narrow steps from cloister to cathedral.

The cathedral chancel, where the service was held.

The Kilvert grave, seen from the cloister.

The grave of Frances Maria Kilvert and her parents.

Photos: Nicholas Green and Editor

that part of the garden owned by the Crown and 'inclosed it into Mr Grape's garden'. In 1825 Henry Grape received a new lease for 40 years, with the option to sublet 'to Frances Maria Kilvert of Whistones, Spinster' (Whistones was a Tything of recently built smart townhouses then about two miles north of Worcester Cathedral). Miss Kilvert and her mother seem to have been living in College Green before 1836 and her lease was renewed in November 1850.

As we know, Frances Maria and her mother remained at 'The Ovens' for the rest of their lives. After Miss Kilvert died the house was leased to the Revd Alfred Barry, the principal of Kings College in the Strand, London. He was the son of Sir Charles Barry, the renowned architect of the Houses of Parliament. Married in 1851, ordained in 1853, by 1871 he was busy renovating No 10 and enlarging his new home for his growing family. Barry was appointed to the 9th Canonry in January 1872 and documents in Worcestershire Archives show architect Abraham Edward Perkins, who had been involved in the restoration of the Cathedral, drew up plans and specifications for a large extension as well as important improvements such as 'damp course, bells in all rooms, new Kitchen range, WC, proper machinery, drainage'. It also says 'part of the extension was not built.'

Barry and his family appear in the 1881 Census at No10 but he was appointed that year to a similar position at Westminster Abbey. In 1883, he was translated to be the third Bishop of Sydney, Australia. He returned to England in 1889, assisting other bishops, lecturing and in his last years as a Canon of Windsor. He must have had fond memories of his time at Worcester, as he was buried in1910 in the Cloister Garth beside his only daughter Maria Louisa (d 1880). No 10 College Green remains in the hands of the Dean and Chapter.

The original part of the house has a stone flagged central hall and staircase with barley twist balusters between ground and first floors. Two well-proportioned ground floor rooms facing the Green, that on the right with marble fireplace and cast iron Victorian grate and two at the rear overlooking the garden. On the first floor, again four rooms were much the same size.

Writing about his stay in Worcester, the Diarist mentions the library (probably on the ground floor) which looked out on *the strip of garden, then onto the low flat mud banks* of the River Severn, but said that the drawing room was upstairs. It seems likely that the dining room was on the ground floor. He also thought Miss Kilvert's bedroom was *a small room very plainly furnished*, although he does not reveal its location on the first floor. Society members speculated whether her bedroom would have been at the rear or the front of the house As Miss Kilvert was a recluse for the latter years of her life, if in the front, it would have been a good vantage point to keep an eye on events in College Green, if in the rear, there is a good view over the garden and River Severn to the north end of the Malvern Hills. This would have been a lovely outlook, since the trees would not have been as high or dense as today.

The Run of the Cloth or a College Walk, c 1800 by Maria Caroline Temple. Ink and watercolour.
Photo: Copyright The British Museum, reproduced with permission under Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

The top floor comprised spacious attic bedrooms, with large windows so the maids who lived in would have had a view too.

We were able to see modern bathrooms etc in the newer part of the house, and then downstairs again. The back door led to a narrow terrace, which had formed part of a 5-bay blind arcade of coursed stone said to be part of Worcester Castle, as the ground falls away very sharply at the rear of the house. The wooden steps from it were unsafe so we went down through the cellars to access the two gardens, still separated by a fence as No 10 and 10a had been for years. What we saw of the cellars was very old, with ancient wooden doors and carved door frames. Although 10a's garden is very overgrown, it was good to see there were still roses blooming in Miss Kilvert's garden. In her will, Miss Kilvert left her rose trees to Kilvert's father.

Canon John Ryle Wood, who conducted Miss Kilvert's funeral, was her closest neighbour, occupying the house by the Watergate (now No12). The Diarist records he *read the lesson well and impressively in a sonorous voice* and afterwards *floated down College Green to his own house next to Miss Kilvert's.*

Another College Green resident

Kilvert Society members may be interested to know that Sir Gilbert Frankland Lewis, of Harpton Court, Radnor, Rector of Monnington-on-Wye 1832-64 had the use of a house in College Green, adjoining the cloisters and College Hall only a few steps from No 10. The Diarist mentions him at dinner with the Venables on Tuesday 20 December 1870, when he related the indiscreet conversation of Emperor Louis Napoleon. The following morning Kilvert met him *pacing round the gravel walk round the lawn* to get warm before returning to Harpton. Sir Gilbert also had memories of his neighbour Miss Kilvert during the 15 years he was a canon of Worcester.

Another reference to Sir Gilbert is on Tuesday 6 April 1875, when Mr James the churchwarden at Monnington recalled *that in the great flood of February 6 1852, he and Sir Gilbert of Harpton (then Rector of Monnington) punted in a flat bottomed boat across the Court garden, in at the Church door and up the nave and into the Chancel.*

I see from a memoir of Rev Richard Lister Venables which appeared in *Journal* 30, March 2010, p11, Sir Gilbert Lewis was the officiating minister at Venables' second marriage on 1 August 1867 to Agnes Pearson.

NOTES AND SOURCES

Special thanks for our Worcester day go to organisers Richard and Ann Lovett, Cathedral Archaeologist Fiona Keith-Lucas, to Cathedral staff and to our tour guides.

Sources

Worcester Cathedral Library

Worcester Archives (The Hive)

Nicholas Pevsner's Worcestershire

British Listed Buildings Register (website)

Joan M Howells 'College Green 1800-1900' Worcester Cathedral Publications 1995

Pat Hughes & Annette Leech 'The Story of Worcester' Logaston Press 2011

Diana Clutterbuck wrote about Frances Maria Kilvert in Journal 41, p371-2, and Christine Penney wrote about Bishop Hurd in Journal 50, p8-12.

See Diana's tribute to Christine on p28 of this edition.

Jarvis, Kilvert and the Bredwardine Journey

This article by Huw Rees was first given as a presentation after the 2023 AGM.

My theme is how attitudes to poverty changed over the course of the 19th Century, illustrated through what we know about two men, one who started from and the other whose life ended in Bredwardine.

The first is George Jarvis, whose life is a Hogarthian tale of hard work, money, class, sex and mortality. His legacy, left for the benefit of the poor of the Herefordshire villages of Bredwardine, Staunton and Letton was periodically controversial for over a century after his death.

I will refer to Hogarth frequently. His most well-known engraving, 'Gin Lane', showing the evils of excessive drinking of spirits, is still in print today, and with its companion, 'Beer Street', is frequently parodied. Hogarth's other works included series of prints and paintings on subjects such as courtship, marriage, industry and idleness, the rake's progress and the times of day. All of them, with their wealth of detail, satirising all sections of society, tell us much about the Georgian attitudes to health, wealth and morality and provide a storyboard to Jarvis's life and times in Georgian London.

The second is, of course, Francis Kilvert. As the incumbent at Bredwardine, he was a trustee of Jarvis's charity and would have direct experience of the politics that went with the legacy. From his *Diary* we know a lot about his multiple acts of Christian charity but they say little about how effective he thought the Jarvis legacy was, let alone how he felt about the underlying causes of poverty.

For this reason it would have been great to eavesdrop on his conversation on Friday 7 April 1876 with the white hatted parish physician Dr Jay in Langley Burrell when, the day's entry records, that they *had a long talk about pauperism, disease, workhouse matters & c.* (Vol 3, p252).

But let's start with Jarvis. George Jarvis was born in 1704 into a Herefordshire yeoman family. When he was about 13 he left his Bredwardine home in the company of drovers to seek his fortune in London, following the footsteps of his brother Joseph, who made the same journey six years earlier.

Droving of animals from the uplands to London was a well-established trade that created a network of routes that avoided, where possible, towns, toll roads and cranky magistrates who prosecuted those droving on the Sabbath. Traces of the drovers still exist in green lanes, two or three Scots pines on hilltops and hamlets named Smithfield, Piccadilly and Little London, which were the equivalent of service stations where animals could be grazed and shod, dogs fed, men watered and money and market information exchanged. Droving was a recognised trade – for over 200 years, until 1772, a head drover needed a licence which required him to be over 30 years old, a householder and married.[1] Drovers were also messengers and couriers – in the 17th Century they carried Ship Money to the Exchequer in London. A predecessor bank to Lloyds Bank, the Black Ox Bank, was founded in Llandovery to finance the trade.[2]

In Jarvis's time 30,000 cattle were driven every year through Herefordshire,[3] many of them on tracks passing through either Staunton and Bredwardine. There was, and still is, a cluster of houses called Little London just to west of Staunton which reportedly had an alehouse and a prison. As farmers, the Jarvis's would be familiar with drovers. So walking with the drovers was not the 18th century equivalent of running away to join the circus but more like catching the train, albeit a slow one, to the big City.

Gin Lane, drawn by William Hogarth. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Porter[4], records that in Georgian times London consumed 100,000 oxen, 700,000 sheep and 238,000 pigs annually. Most of these animals, after being fattened outside London, were sold and slaughtered at Smithfield Market.

Dickens, in *Oliver Twist*, published in 1836, describes Smithfield. 'The ground was covered, nearly ankle-deep, with filth and mire; a thick steam, perpetually rising from the reeking bodies of the cattle hung heavily above. Countrymen, butchers, drovers, hawkers, boys, thieves, idlers and vagabonds of every low grade were mingled together in a mass. The whistling of the drovers, the barking of dogs, the bellowing and plunging of beasts, the bleating of sheep and the grunting and squealing of pigs; the cries of hawkers, the shouts, the oaths and the quarrelling on all sides, the ringing of bells, and the roar of voices that issued from every public house, the hideous and discordant din resounded from every corner of the market, rendered it a stunning and bewildering scene, which quite confounded the senses.'[5]

Smithfield was at the top of the supply chain, providing meat but also feeding numerous trades, each governed by its guild: butchers and skinners, tanners and curriers, glovers, cordwainers, saddlers, girdlers and finally tallow chandlers all worked in the teeming city of London.

London, in Defoe's words, was a great and monstrous thing. Its population was 575,000 in 1700, 675,000 in 1750 and by 1801, it had grown to 1 million.[6] Manchester, then Britain' second largest city, was distant second with 80,000 inhabitants. By Georgian times, London had spread far beyond the footprint of the mediaeval city, merging with Westminster and swallowing outlying villages. Despite some attempts at town planning, it was largely an overcrowded and disease ridden metropolis where people lived and worked cheek by jawbone with the corpses in overflowing graveyards.

London certainly had a death problem. In the 1750's the parish of St Martin's in the Fields reported infant mortality of 40%, for most of years from 1750 to 1820, burials exceeded the baptisms[7]. Reading across London as a whole it is clear that the importing of a large number of young healthy adults was needed just to maintain the population, let alone fuel its rapid growth through the 18th century. George Jarvis and his brother, like Hogarth's fictional characters, Tom Rakewell, Francis Goodchild, Tom Idle, Viscount Squanderfield and Molly Hackabout, joined many thousands of young people who came to London to make a living, or at least avoid premature death, in Europe's largest city.

Jarvis was apprenticed as a currier -a trade that took tanned hides and by dressing, stretching, burnishing and dyeing them produced leather that would be used by glovers, boot and shoe makers and bookbinders. It was centred at Snowhill – a district of London between the slaughter houses of Smithfield and the open sewer which was once the Fleet River.

What is known about Jarvis's life is documented in Richard Pantall's book[8]. Completing his apprenticeship he set up his own business in partnership with two other curriers, eventually becoming successful enough to be elected by his peers to be Master of the Currier Guild. Jarvis for some reason declined this honour, paying a fine to the guild. Apart from we know very little about his business. From parish records we know a little more about his private life.

In 1728, he married Sarah Strange who died within the year. He married again to Rebecca Blakeley in 1731 and they had three children: only one, Mary, born in 1733, survived more than a month. Rebecca died in 1741 and he married for a third time to Frances Harvey in 1745. In 1758 the Jarvis's left London for a country estate in Thames Ditton, where they lived and died – Frances in 1765 aged 62 and George nearly 30 years later in 1793.

In 1758, Mary, his sole surviving child, then 25, married Sir William, 6th Baronet Twysden, aged 52, of East Peckham in Kent. We don't know the circumstances of the marriage, but it would be tempting to see it in the context of a series of prints by Hogarth entitled 'Marriage a la Mode' in which a rich merchant and a spendthrift nobleman arrange a marriage of convenience. The 6th Baronet, in his spending habits at least, resembles the Hogarthian caricature of Viscount Squanderfield. Mary's dowry of £8,000 was used to redeem a mortgage on the estate. This didn't stop the Baronet's extravagance and by the time of his death, on his 10th wedding anniversary, the estate was again mortgaged. Despite pleas, Jarvis refused Mary any financial assistance.

Mary managed what was left of the estate until the eldest son, another William, came of age and became the 7th Baronet. William junior was a chip off the old block; he too lived beyond his means, was frequently in debt, eloped in 1784 with a 15 year-old heiress to a £10,000 East Indian fortune and later fled to France to escape his creditors. The resourceful Mary, perhaps learning from her experience with her late husband, had the foresight to obtain a £500 annuity from the estate, which insulated her from her son's profligacy.

This was not the end of the Jarvis family scandals. Frances, his only granddaughter having risen in status by marrying in 1781 Archibald, 11th earl of Eglinton, was divorced in 1788 following a long affair with the Duke of Hamilton, who may have been the father of her younger daughter.

It is perhaps understandable that Jarvis's last will, finalised one year before his death in 1793, was not exactly generous to his family. Mary his daughter received an annuity of £200, the same as Jarvis's housekeeper Mrs Bird. After other bequests, mostly to friends and servants, the residuary, £76,000 was to be left to be distributed to the poor of Staunton-on-Wye, Letton and Bredwardine in the proportions of 13 to 11 to 6. Jarvis wrote in his will "my mind is made up; this money must not be spent on buildings".

What was the value of £76,000 in 1793? To put it in context, in capital terms, in 1763 £28,000 would have bought you a property in London, which after being extensively done up over decades would emerge as Buckingham Palace.[9] Princes and prime ministers, even in Georgian times, ran up debts. Jarvis's £76,000 would cover an eighth of the Prince Regent's £630,000 debt in 1795 but would have easily covered the £40,000 owed by the estate of the late Prime Minister William Pitt in 1806. In income terms, £76,000 invested in consols, a long term government debt, would earn interest of £2,200. This is nowhere near the £10,000 a year that Mr Darcy, of *Pride and Prejudice*, published in 1813, was reportedly worth, but it would pay the salary of a senior civil servant or ten doctors or the wages of 75 farm labourers. As all of these comparisons have their limitations, let's settle for a consensus view that the Jarvis legacy was worth around £5,000,000 in today's terms.[10]

The redoubtable Mary made four unsuccessful attempts over five years to overturn the will before the Lord Chancellor ruled that the legacy should be spent as intended by Jarvis to

provide money to poor long term residents of the three villages, who were not receiving poor relief. The legacy was given to the church to administer by means of a paid clerk, overseen by a board of the local gentry and the Bishop of Hereford. As the will stipulated that no buildings were to be built the income from was spent on initially on food, fuel, apprenticeships and clothing, with schooling added in 1815 and a doctor appointed in 1835.

At the time of Jarvis's death the poor relief system, which dated back to the medieval period, helping people in need was the responsibility of the parish, carrying on the centuries old tradition of community solidarity. Local taxes were distributed by the vicar and the vestry to support the 'deserving poor', enabling families to stay in their homes in difficult times. The Jarvis legacy thus worked with an existing, well-established system, which was effective in a mostly rural economy with low labour mobility.

In 1834, the Poor Law Amendment Act, introduced in response to rapid urbanisation, created local boards of commissioners who operated separately from the church. It was perhaps with this more secular approach in mind that, in 1836, the administration of Jarvis's legacy was moved from the three parishes to being under direct control of the trustees, with enhanced roles for the doctor, schoolmaster and clerk. Whatever the reason, the new arrangement, by cutting into the traditional role of the church, was not welcomed. This came to a head in 1841 when the vicar of Staunton, Charles Webber, put together a record of alleged misdeeds by the doctor, Kidley, which reads like it comes from the first draft of a Barsetshire novel by Anthony Trollope.

- Taken improper liberties with Anne Jenkins, Eliza Brown and Sarah Preece
- Encouraged people of bad behaviour to be recipients of the charity
- Neglected the sick
- Used indecent and unbecoming language-expressing infidel and irregular opinions in 1838, 1839, 1840 and 1841
- Paid a bill to Thomas Preece, wheelwright, on the Sabbath
- Misappropriated charity funds and had charity property delivered to his home
- After drinking at Mr Matty's (schoolmaster at Staunton) fell off his horse losing his cane and spectacles

An enquiry was held at the request of the Bishop of Hereford and, despite a petition signed by many villagers, Kidley and Matty were dismissed and the vicars of the three parishes were added as trustees, re-aligning the administration of the bequest with their parochial responsibilities.

This didn't resolve all of the charity's issues. In 1852, permission was granted by parliament that, notwithstanding the terms of the will, capital could be spent on buildings. By 1860, an infant school, a boarding school, alms houses, store rooms and houses and offices for a doctor and a clerk were completed. Unfortunately, the boarding school was too large for the eligible population: it was never fully occupied and maintenance costs of this and the other buildings reduced the money that could be given to the poor.

Kilvert was aware of the problems with the charity. He noted on 26 January 1878 that many parishioners believed the lack of money for the poor was caused by trustees drawing £100 each from the charity (Vol 3, p363). He also records a visit by Walter Skirrow, Secretary to the Charity Commission on 16 July 1878 where there was disagreement between the Trustees on the upkeep problem. The trustees were split in two factions. On one side Kilvert and his fellow churchmen, with the exception of the vicar of Staunton, against the gentry on the other side (Vol 3, p404).

Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward, Luke Fildes, 1874, oil on canvas. Photo: courtesy of Royal Holloway, University of London

The Jarvis Charity School building in 2014. Photo: Philip Pankhurst under Creative Commons licence

Conflict rumbled on well past Kilvert's incumbency, with a full-blown inquiry in 1888 and directive from the Charity Commission in 1894 to split the charity into two separate organisations. This was overturned by appeal to Parliament in 1895, but by 1904 the Charity Commission prevailed.

Although Jarvis's charity was well intentioned, as long as you weren't his family, its structure and its size relative to the population of the villages that it intended to benefit was disproportionate and the specified allocation of resources was over restrictive. It was designed for a time when the church was the centre of the community and the population, particularly in the lower income groups, rarely moved from their native villages. Although steps were taken to correct this, some of the decisions made by the trustees and regulators were flawed. However, it did support the poor of the three parishes and it still exists today, as The Jarvis Educational Foundation, providing support for the education of children in the three villages.

That is the Jarvis story. The theme of this piece is how attitudes to poverty changed from Jarvis's time to that of Kilvert so it's worth reminding ourselves how Britain changed over the course of the 19th Century.

- The population grew from 11 million to 32 million.
- The enclosures and the mechanisation of agriculture created a surplus of labourers who drifted to the cities to find work.
- Urban population increased from around 2 million to over 20 million
- Britain became the top trading nation, exporting half the global manufactured goods and increasing its imports of commodities and food stuffs.
- On the legislation front, three laws were passed which had long lasting effects on society; the 1832 Great Reform act which started the slow process of universal suffrage; the 1834 Poor Law Amendment act and the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846.

Of these three laws, the most far reaching in the short term was the Poor Law Amendment. The changes in British society as it transformed from a pastoral to an industrial society, exacerbated by the booms and busts of the Napoleonic wars, undermined the community solidarity which was the cornerstone of the medieval poor laws. By 1803, one million people received poor relief and its cost had risen fivefold since 1760.[12]

The Reverend Thomas Malthus developed the theory that, left unchecked, population growth would outstrip food supply and argued that, in the absence of restraint, ie abstinence by the poor, starvation and disease, mandated by Providence, would result. At the same time, the utilitarianism philosophy of John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham stated that poverty was to a large extent due to fecklessness and therefore the solution was not handouts, as this depressed wages of those able or willing to work, but punishment.

These influences contributed to the 1834 Act. This act did not invent the workhouse but made it central to how poverty was to be dealt with. Outdoor relief, paid to people living in their own homes, was largely abolished and replaced with indoor relief, effectively incarceration in the workhouses built in every town in which families were separated with mothers only permitted to see their infant children on Sundays.

Inmates were required to work at menial tasks – stonebreaking for men and boys and oakum picking by women and girls. As one commentator, the Reverend HH Milman, put it 'the workhouses should be a place of hardship, of coarse fare, of degradation and humility; it should be administered to be as repulsive as it is consistent with humanity.'[13]

Dickens drew attention to the squalor of the workhouse, notably in *Oliver Twist*, as did journalists such as John Walter in the *Times* and Henry Mayhew in the *Morning Chronicle* in the 1840's but although the resulting public concern did modify conditions in some workhouses, they continued to be at best unpleasant and were frequently punitive. Dickens' description of

the workhouse food sums up the regime. 'The room in which the boys were fed was a large, stone hall, with a copper at one end, out of which the master, dressed in an apron for the purpose, and assisted by one or two women, ladled the gruel at meal-times; of which each boy had one porringer [bowl], and no more – except on festive occasions when he had two ounces and a quarter of bread besides. The bowls never wanted washing-the boys polished them with their spoons, til they shone again and when they performed this operation they would sit staring at the copper with such eager eyes as if they could devour the very bricks of which it was composed. Oliver Twist and his companions suffered the tortures of slow starvation for three months.'

The Hay-on-Wye Poor Law Union workhouse, serving the town and surrounding parishes including Clyro and Bredwardine, with a total population of around 11,000, was built in 1837 with beds for 110 inmates. It was extended in 1866 and 1897.

Curiously, Kilvert only mentions this or, indeed any workhouse once – recording his visit to the Hay Union workhouse on Good Friday 1870 when he was curate at Clyro. He mentions no inmate by name, although later in the same entry he does record the names of the five widows in his parish to whom he brought *cross buns* (Vol 1, p89).

Although the effects of enclosure and the mechanisation of farming in Radnorshire, Herefordshire and surrounding counties, were not as radical as they were in grain growing areas in the south and east of England, by the 1870's life for the farmer in the Marches was becoming increasingly precarious. As well as the usual vagaries of the weather and disease, the repeal of the Corn Laws meant that there was gradual but inexorable increase of imports from North America and Australia which depressed grain prices – for example, the price of wheat in Britain more than halved from an average of 56*s* a quarter in 1867–71 to 27*s* 3*d* in 1894. Other agricultural commodities suffered similar price deflation as imports soared in the last 25 years of the 19th Century.[14]

Although riots were mostly an urban activity, rural areas did periodically revolt in response to food shortages, taxation, land grabs and unemployment. Kilvert was not born at the time but he would have heard about the Swing Riots which erupted across Southern England in the 1830. In Wiltshire alone, around 100 threshing machines were destroyed and 20 ricks were burnt. As a result around 1,000 people were transported and 252 sentenced to death.[15]

Kilvert was not unaware of the pressures farmers were under. While at Clyro he noted that in May 1870 farmers were *ploughing up their wheat* (Vol 1, p144) and in October of the same year he wrote that there was no market for poor cattle, which farmers were desperate to sell to reduce their purchase of hay for the winter. *Where are the rents to come from?* he asked (Vol 1, p239).

Kilvert's Diary gives multiple examples of Kilvert's generosity to the poor, whether they were his parishioners or not, but what is missing is his view on the causes of poverty and how it can be alleviated. The substance of the conversation between Kilvert and Dr Jay, on that warm spring evening in 1876 has not survived, leaving one to guess at Kilvert's views.

The tomb of John Jarvis. Since this photo was taken the tomb has been flattened by a falling tree. Photo: KS Archive

One clue could be in Kilvert's taste in paintings. In Victorian times, paintings were the Instagrams of the day. They covered a range of styles – Classical, Romanticism, Fantasy, Pre-Raphaelite and Pre-Impressionism, and covered a wide range of topics: religion, history, war, landscape, portraits and social scenes. So perhaps Kilvert's choice of paintings would help answer the question. Like many of the leisured classes, he was great consumer of art; he visited The National Portrait Gallery, The Doré, Dulwich and South Kensington Galleries and the Royal Academy, particularly for the Summer Exhibitions which he visited every year from 1872 to 1875. The summer exhibitions at the RA were very popular - in 1874 a third of million visitors, twice that of visitors to exhibitions in recent times, crowded the galleries to see 1624 works of art.[16,17] Two paintings, both set in mid-winter: 'Calling the Roll' – a Crimean post battle scene and 'Admission to the Casual Ward' – the destitute queuing for the workhouse, were so popular they had to roped-off and policemen were stationed in the two galleries to move the crowds through quickly.[16,17]

It is perhaps not surprising to read that Kilvert's favourite paintings were those of children and young women- he praises works on these subjects by Murillo, Millais, Le Jeune, Zurbaran and Frith. He sought out religious themes, which lead to an embarrassing encounter in January 1871 in a shop in the Burlington Arcade (Vol 1, p292). He also liked classical painters such as Rembrandt, Ruebens, Cuyp and Vandyke.

Strangely he mentions only one of the blockbuster paintings of the RA 1874 summer exhibition and then he dismisses it with the comment, *it is a striking picture, but I had heard so much about that I was a little disappointed* (Vol3, p43). This was in reference to the painting by Elizabeth Thompson, showing a scene from the Crimean War. The painting that he doesn't mention at all is the one by Luke Fildes, in his time the renowned recorder of London's hungry, cold and sick. Now hanging in the Royal Holloway College, the picture which shows the nightly queue of homeless desperate to be given a bed for the night at the St Martin's in the Fields workhouse. It was controversial picture - condemned by the *Saturday Review* which opined that it was 'too revolting for an art which should seek to please, refine and elevate'[18] but clearly popular with others; it was praised by Dickens and thousands of people, including Van Gogh, purchased prints .

If this piece was a tabloid newspaper article, this would be a gotcha moment. A hugely popular painting, measuring 8 feet by 4 feet, depicting the full range of the deserving and undeserving poor including a disabled soldier, a single woman, possibly a widow with a baby in her arms and child clutching at her skirt, a family of six without coats and a drunkard all waiting in the chill and filth of a London street for a bed in the workhouse and the Reverend Francis Kilvert, who visited the Exhibition twice doesn't even mention it? Proof positive that Kilvert was indifferent to the cause and effect of poverty. Game, set and match; Kilvert was a member of same club as his laissez-faire predecessors of 50 years earlier – the Reverends Malthus and Milman. But this misses the point. We have been to, say, the Louvre and not looked at the Mona Lisa. We may have been to Uffizi and somehow missed Botticelli's masterpiece.

Kilvert was of his time. In the Victorian era, Liberals like Cobden and Bright, kindly they may have been, were fierce opponents of the Factory Acts, thinking that they would undermine society and pave the way to socialism. Ruskin, the inspirer of socialism, described himself as "a violent Tory of the old school". We are of our time. We have, perhaps, donated to Ukraine but not to the Yemen. We are, in all likelihood, blissfully unaware of the famine in the Horn of Africa. We give to foodbanks but compartmentalise our compassion, by using the expression of food poverty, rather calling it for what it is – poverty. How different is our attitude to poverty that that of Kilvert's?

Diaries kept for personal pleasure such as those of Kilvert or Pepys are wonderful windows into history, but they are not the whole story. We can speculate and infer all we want, but we cannot be certain. We do know that Kilvert did effect change in the most effective way he could, by constant engagement and sympathy with his congregation and with broader society.

As Kilvert's journey ended in Bredwardine, it seems appropriate to quote his epitaph, 'He being dead yet speaketh' But it should be taken only in the context of what he wrote most passionately about – nature and religion. It is up to us to have our own meaningful conversation about poverty with the contemporary equivalent of Doctor Jay.

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Susan Catherine Venables

Teresa Williams continues her account of the life of 'Mrs Henry Venables' of the Diary. *Here, events coincide with Kilvert's time as curate of Clyro.*

In September 1866, Susan Catherine Venables was widowed after just 14 months of marriage when her husband, Joseph Henry Venables, died at the age of 52 years. Henry, as he preferred to be called, died at Llysdinam Hall, Breconshire, the house and estate having been acquired by his family during the 18th century. His private funeral took place at Clyro church on 20 September 1866, the Burial Register recording Kilvert as the 'Officiating Minister.'

Susan was now in the sad situation of being without a permanent home as Llysdinam Hall had not been owned solely by Henry. His legal chambers in London, from which he conducted his business as a Parliamentary barrister, were not suitable as a permanent future residence for Susan. It was perhaps inevitable that she made the sensible decision to move back to her family home at High Park End, to live with her widowed mother, Bridget Ridley. The tone of the archived correspondence in the 'Venables Collection' at the National Library of Wales, (which gives researchers a one or two sentence summary of each letter's content), shows no pressure was exerted on Susan to leave Llysdinam Hall following Henry's death. She was, however, at her mother's house when she wrote on 30 October 1866 to her brother-in-law, the Reverend Richard Lister Venables at Clyro, that "she hopes he will visit them at High Park End, very soon."[1] As a newly widowed lady, Susan would have lived quietly for the next few months, observing a period of mourning, not going to public events, but welcoming family visits, attending church and writing letters.

Susan's brother, John Matthew Ridley, who lived at Walwick Hall, Humshaugh, within a reasonably easy visiting distance of High Park End, had written a month earlier to Lister Venables, about "the difficulty of finding a suitable house for Susan near to her family."[2] It is fortunate for Susan that John Matthew recognised the need for Susan to have her own household, in or near Simonburn. The subject of housing would, no doubt, have been discussed in November 1866 when Lister travelled to Walwick Hall for the first time.[3] Ten days later on 26 November, he was at High Park End at the invitation of Bridget Ridley.[4] Whilst in Northumberland, Lister wrote twice to his brother, George Stovin, but gave no personal detail about his two visits, merely commenting, "Susan cheerful" and that there were "very hard frosts." After leaving the Ridley family, Lister travelled on to Bridgnorth dealing with family affairs, returning to Clyro in early December 1866.[5]

Part 1 of this article referred to the death of Richard Lister Venables' first wife, Mary Augusta (*Journal 57*, p24). Lister, into a similar fashion to his brother Henry when widowed, spent much of 1866 and the first half of 1867 travelling around to relatives and friends, evidently confident in Kilvert's ability to cope in his absence. On a visit to the home of Charles Evan Thomas at Cranmers, Mitcham, he spent time with Charles' sister-in-law, Agnes Minna Pearson, whom he had previously met in 1852. He proposed marriage, Agnes accepted and their wedding took place at Mitcham on 1 August 1867, the honeymoon being spent touring northern England and Scotland. Details of the wedding day were described by George Stovin in one of his regular letters to Susan for which she thanked him in a letter dated 5 August 1867. Writing from her mother's house, she mentioned "her own happy memories and her sister Mary's illness."[6]

According to an archived letter dated 27 August 1867, Lister and Agnes visited the Ridleys on their journey south after the honeymoon. Lister wrote to George Stovin from High Park End describing events and places he and Agnes had seen in Scotland. Lister thought "Susan better in spirits, but looks wretchedly ill." This may have been due to the approaching first anniversary of Henry's death coupled with the strain of her sister's illness: fortunately, Mary did recover.[7] Lister and Agnes then travelled on to Llysdinam Hall before returning to Clyro on 14 September 1867.[8]

An article by Laurence Le Quesne, reprinted in the Kilvert Society's *Oswin Prosser Memorial Booklet* published in 1978, provides two sightings of Susan during the year 1868. Mr Le Quesne had researched the Day-books and Diaries of the Reverend Richard Lister Venables for the years 1866 to 1872 (which are held at the National Library of Wales), extracting all references to Kilvert.

Lister, however, was no diarist, merely making short notes in his Day-book for 1866, "Kilvert dined" or "Kilvert went home" with a few mentions of other names. No Venables Diary exists for that year, or for the previous year of 1865. There were, however, Diaries extant for 1867 to 1872 covering the time of Kilvert's curacy at Clyro, which give more detail. Dates and names of other visitors dining at Clyro Vicarage are listed together with mention of Lister's walks with Kilvert, villages they visited together for religious services, social purposes or simply sightseeing.

On 6 April 1868, Lister wrote,

> *"Drove with Agnes and Susan through Glasbury and home by Tregoyd – Kilvert went with us."*[9]

Later that month on the 21st another entry reads:

> *"Drove Susan through Glasbury along Builth road, and home by Boughrood. Kilvert went with us."*[10]

Susan appears to have been staying at Clyro Vicarage with Lister and Agnes during April 1868. Two months later she returned to Clyro, an archived letter written by Agnes on 14 June explaining the reason.[11] On a visit away from home, Agnes had suffered the traumatic experience of a miscarriage. She was convalescing at Bolton Lodge, Edgbaston, the home of her sister, Augusta Howman, wife of Knightley Howman. Whilst writing, Agnes speaks of letters and gifts of fruit she has received, and presents of plants from relatives at Arundel. The latter had been "sent to Clyro, where Susan was planting them." She, no doubt, would have had many opportunities to obtain horticultural knowledge from Anthony Hall, the gardener at High Park End who also acted

as one of the experienced judges each year for the Simonburn Show. However, it is to be hoped that the plants survived since the summer of 1868 was extremely hot and dry. Records show England and Wales suffered a drought from May to August combined with temperatures of over 30 degrees Celsius during nine succeeding days in July. For many years it was regarded as a record until the drought and heat of 1976.[12]

On 9 December 1868, Sophia Venables, the mother of Lister, the late Henry and George Stovin, died at Clyro aged 83 years. She had lived quietly, with the help of a devoted lady's maid, Caroline Weaver and domestic servants. In a letter to Lister in May that year, she wrote,

> *"I never see anybody, except at Church on Sundays which is no grief to me. Mr Kilvert comes to give me his arm to go to Church, I could not walk alone."*[13]

Various archived letters show that Lister cared for her wellbeing, arranging carriage drives out, paying increased subscriptions for extra books from the postal library and making sure that her domestic staff was adequate for her needs.

Sophia's funeral took place privately at Clyro on 14 December with Kilvert officiating. There is no report of the event in any newspaper, merely a simple notice of her death. Towards the end of 1868 or the beginning of 1869, Lister sent Susan a ring which had belonged to his late mother, to keep as a memento. In her letter thanking him, dated 11 January 1869, Susan confirmed that she had at last moved into her own house, Low Park End, which was conveniently near to her family. This was to be her residence for the next twenty years where she could entertain her friends and relatives and become increasingly active again on the social and village scene.[14]

Agnes Venables was a prolific letter writer and the Venables Collection shows she regularly wrote to George Stovin. On 22 July 1869 he was "staying at Park End with Susan." Whether this was Susan's house or her mother's, is not clear. Agnes regaled him all her latest activities, including a description of a Ball at Maesllwch, the home of the de Winton family.[16] George stayed on in Northumberland visiting Susan's brother, John Matthew Ridley at Walwick Hall in August. From there he wrote to Agnes describing "dinner parties, etc," arranged for his visit. The following week, he told Agnes, he "sails for Gibraltar and goes sight-seeing in Spain."[17] George Stovin visited the Ridley family at their various houses many times in the future, evidently finding their hospitality much to his liking.

Susan, in a letter dated 6 April 1870 to either Lister or George Stovin, wrote of her brother John Matthew and his son John Hilton attending the Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race.[18] Cambridge won by a length and a quarter after a run of nine straight defeats. The race took place on a day when "the weather was simple perfection." According to newspaper reports, "thousands lined both banks of the Thames for a full five miles. Oxford won the toss, selecting the Surrey side, but despite this advantage, the race was over by the time they reached Chiswick." A long account in the *Leeds Mercury*, reprinted in many other newspapers, was particularly detailed, giving a very good word picture of the event.

What the letter summary doesn't tell us is that John Hilton Ridley (Jesus College) rowed for Cambridge in the 1870 Boat Race occupying seat two at a weight of 11 stone 9.5 lb. It was his second outing for Cambridge, having been one of the defeated crew in 1869. Hilton, as he was always called, was a Rowing 'blue,' 1969 and 1870, also an Athletics 'blue,' in 1966-7, 1867 and 1868 for the 'Quarter Mile' and '100 yards.'[19]

In April 1870, Susan was active again on the social scene acting as one of the Lady Patronesses of a Bazaar raising funds for a new organ at St Mary's Church, Whickham. The village was five miles south west of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and the rector, the Rev. Henry Carr, who had assisted at Susan's marriage, was a family friend of the Ridley families. Other patronesses included several titled ladies together with Susan's mother, sisters Jane and Mary and sister-in-law at Walwick Hall. This was just one of many occasions when Susan lent her name and contributed towards funds for church additions or repairs. The Bazaar, held over two days at Whitsuntide, was a complete success, paying off the organ debt and leaving money in hand to supply the parish poor with much needed clothing.[20]

Susan would have been delighted with the news of the birth of Katharine Minna Venables in London on 31 May 1870, having been aware of the sad event in 1868. Although she would have no children of her own, Susan appears to have had a great interest in the school at Newbridge-on-Wye. A report in the *Kington Gazette* in October 1870 confirms this.

"On Saturday last, October 22nd the children attending the National Schools in this village received their annual treat of tea and plum-cake which is so kindly given to them, year after year, by the widow of the late J H Venables Esq., of Llysdinam Hall. After the little ones had feasted to their hearts' content, an appropriate address was given by the worthy Vicar, the Reverend J J EVANS. They then marched to the playground where three hearty cheers were given for Mrs Henry Venables and Mrs Lister Venables of Clyro, who were present and had rendered their assistance. From the playground the children were marched to a field kindly lent by Mr E POWELL, treasurer of the school, where they indulged in various sporting events and games until the shades of night warned them it was time to wend their way to their different homes: before doing so there were three lusty cheers for the popular vicar, the respected curate, the Reverend T H BEAVAN and the masters. Thus ended a happy day."[21]

A month later the Managers of the school received a report from the Committee of Council on Education, stating, "This School is in an exceedingly satisfactory condition, reflecting great credit on the acting teacher and managers. 67 children were presented for examination with eleven under six years of age. Of the 67 presented, all passed in Reading and Writing and 66 in Arithmetic. The School received a Grant amounting to £46."

The published *Diary* first mentions Susan on Monday 24 October 1870. On Sunday evening Kilvert went to the vicarage to dine with the Venables and *just as I entered the drawing room a small strange clock struck seven. Mr V. said it was a clock he was taking charge of for Mrs H. Venables. After dinner he showed it to me. It was a beautiful little travelling clock in its leather case, brass and glass, showing the works, and striking the hours and half hours on a soft sweet bell. 'There is an inscription on it,' said he, 'if you can read it.' On the foot of the clock, I saw inscribed as I held it up to the candle, 'R.F. Kilvert from S.C. Venables'. How kind. What a beautiful and unexpected present. How little I thought when I heard the small strange clock strike and asked whose it was, that it was mine. The clock is from Nathan's at Birmingham, chosen by Mr Knightly Howman, and I fear must have been very expensive. I carried my treasure home took it up into my bedroom and heard the sweet low soft bell striking in the night.*[22]

There is no obvious reason why Susan should have given Kilvert the clock, an action which was evidently approved of by Lister, but I believe it was simple kindnesses on Kilvert's part which she appreciated. He had, of course, officiated at the funeral

Newbridge-on-Wye schools. Photo: Teresa Williams collection

of her late husband in September 1866, and would have met her when she was visiting Clyro and Llysdinam during the years before the diary began. She no doubt heard of how at Easter 1870 he arranged for extra primroses to be obtained to dress Henry's grave and had asked the Clyro wheelwright, Henry Anthony to provide strips of wood for crosses. Kilvert then arranged for them to be dressed in moss by Mrs Josiah Evans of Clyro School.[23]

The April 1871 Census showed Susan at Low Park End living on income derived from "Railway Shares and Mortgages." A family named Coulson and a Miss Bell were visiting but the four female servants, lady's maid and a coachman listed in the schedule would have maintained the household quite comfortably. Susan's mother, Bridget was shown living at nearby High Park End with daughter, Mary, son Thomas as 'Head' of the household and five servants including a butler.

Susan's annual 'Treat' for the children of Newbridge School took place on Monday 7 November 1871.[24] The day was occupied with the usual tea of plum-cake etc, with sports and games following. The newspaper reported: "Among those present were Mrs Henry Venables, Mrs (Agnes) Venables, Mrs Charles THOMAS, the Reverend R Lister Venables, Miss GIBBINS, the Reverend J J EVANS, Vicar and the Reverend W E T MORGAN, curate. Appropriate speeches were given by the Reverend R Lister Venables and Reverend J J Evans. The children gave three hearty cheers for the Venables family who were so kind and thoughtful in their interest of the welfare of the little ones."

Newbridge-on-Wye School had opened in 1868 but it appears that not until 1871 was a headmaster appointed on a permanent basis. Mr George Roche Smith, together with his wife as headmistress, would serve the school for 36 years until their retirement in August 1907. In a ceremony held at Llysdinam in September 1907, the presentation of a signed address, gold watch and a silver teapot to the Roche Smith's, was attended by seven members of the Venables family.[25]

The second mention of Susan by Kilvert was on Sunday 12 November 1871 when Agnes Venables visited him at Ashbrook House. *She came in, put her feet up on the fender, and we had a long cosy talk together about Daisy [Thomas] and Gibbins' love affairs.* Kilvert had received a letter from Agnes on 1 November asking him to find out the situation between young Lewis, a tailor living at Hay, and Fanny (Frances) Gibbins. In the Census earlier that year, she is aged 24 years and employed at Clyro Vicarage as a lady's maid to Agnes Venables. It seems that Agnes had sought Susan's opinion, in letters on the subject. Kilvert also wrote letters, consulted Josiah Evans, the Clyro schoolmaster, and even visited Mrs Bevan at Hay Castle asking her advice. Eventually, Frances Gibbins married Lewis and Kilvert visited her and her little boy at her home in Hay on 1 May 1876.[26]

Kilvert mentions Susan on two occasions in his 1872 diary. On Wednesday 3 April, he said*; I found Mrs Henry Venables in the drawing room at the Vicarage this morning and had a long talk with her about the sad break-up at Clyro and our all going away.* Kilvert had just four months before he left Clyro, and the Venables moved to their new permanent home at Llysdinam Hall. Later that month, on Sunday 21st *a day of wild driving snow* he is overcome with a feeling of failure preaching to just three or four people in the congregation, including Susan and Agnes Venables.[27]

The safe delivery of a second daughter to Agnes and Lister in London on Christmas Day 1872 was the cause of much rejoicing at Clyro and Llysdinam. Kilvert wrote, *How the sweet joy bells of Clyro will be ringing this lovely morning across the beautiful valley.*[28]

In May 1873, the Reverend Meyrick Beebee, rector of Simonburn died, having been the incumbent for 32 years. The living was in the patronage of the Governors of Greenwich Hospital and none but navy chaplains were eligible for the living. A new rector, the Reverend Percy Rogers, M.A, was instituted to Simonburn in August 1873. Latterly chaplain of Devonport Dockyard, his extensive career had included the chaplaincy of the Naval Brigade in 1858 at the capture of Canton during the second China War.[29] One of his first actions as rector was to set up a subscription list raising funds for a restoration of the church. Some years later he spoke of his reaction when entering St Mungo's Church for the first time: "My heart sank within me."[30] His words are an echo of Kilvert's when he first entered St Harmon's Church on 4 May 1876. Both churches were dark and looked neglected.

The year 1874 was a joyous one for Agnes and Lister, the birth of a son and heir, who was baptised Henry George Lister. The child was born in London at Warwick Square on Monday 27 April. Two months later Kilvert is in London with his brother Teddy when he calls on the family and sees the new baby. Staying at the house also was Susan, another clear indication of her continuing welcomed inclusion within the Venables family.[31]

In November 1874, Kilvert is collecting subscriptions towards a harmonium for Langley Burrell Church. He mentions Susan who is staying at Llysdinam Hall with Agnes and Lister. The published *Diary* for Thursday 12th says: *This evening in reply to my letter to Llysdinam. I got a most kind letter from Mrs [Agnes] Venables enclosing £2 2s. 0d. for our harmonium, £1 from herself, 10/- from Mrs Henry Venables, 6/- from dear little Katie, and Mr Venables, who got the P.O.O. made the money even.*[32]

The rector of Simonburn would have been very busy in 1875 appealing for grants and subscriptions towards the church restoration about to begin. Mr Rogers would also have been seeking promises for gifts of all types of new church furniture and vestments from his well-to-do parishioners. A grant of an undisclosed sum was given by 'The Incorporated Society for the Enlargement and Re-building of Churches and Chapels,' no doubt very welcome towards the estimated £2,700 restoration cost.[33]

The beginning of 1876 was a tragic time for Agnes and Lister. Their little son, Henry George Lister Venables died at Llysdinam Hall on 11 January aged one year and eight months, the cause of death certified as 'Infantile Debility, Bronchitis, 24 hours,' by Hugh Bennett, Surgeon.[34] Susan would have been greatly saddened for Agnes and Lister and offered emotional support as she had in 1868.

Agnes suffered another bereavement that day, her sister, Emily Cowper Coles dying aged 46 years. Emily's death took place at Newstead, Shanklin, Isle of Wight. Unfortunately, we cannot know what Kilvert might have written about that day as his notebooks for that period were destroyed. The *Diary* is silent from Friday 10 September 1875 until Ash Wednesday 1 March 1876.

On Sunday 7 May 1876, Kilvert, who was staying at Llysdinam Hall, records in the published *Diary* that he *preached twice in the beautiful little Iron Church* at Newbridge-on-Wye, and each time included *a little word for Mrs Venables on the loss of her baby*,[35] at the request of Miss Frances Higginson, who had, at Lister's request, travelled to Bolton Lodge, Edgbaston in June 1868 to nurse Agnes during her convalescence from the miscarriage.[36] Miss Higginson was also with Agnes at the birth in London of Katherine Minna in May 1870.

In Northumberland, after 18 months' work, Simonburn Church was re-opened for worship, the occasion being celebrated on Tuesday 4 September 1877. The event was widely reported, the *Hexham Courant* for 8 September giving details of the Church's history, the edifice dedicated to St Mungo having been built circa 1230. Among special features in the Church, the account said, was "the very long chancel enriched by a beautiful priest's door and a leper window of elaborate workmanship, and a curious double piscina in good preservation." The restoration had included the laying of marble flooring, (given by Susan), a new font in white Caen stone, "elaborately carved with ferns and lilies and inscribed, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' Surrounding the font was a new floor of encaustic tiles." A heating system utilising hot water had been installed. These necessary improvements had been funded principally by Susan. Her sister Mary of High Park End House, the Ridley family of Walwick Hall and the Allgood family at Nunwick House, were also donors.

Susan was a member of the Ladies' Committee formed to organise "the entertainment of the Lord Bishop of the diocese, (who would deliver a sermon at the reopening ceremony), the Archdeacon, principal subscribers and clergy at a Luncheon to be held in the Schoolroom." An afternoon "Public Tea on the village green," was advertised, purchasers of tickets being admitted to the grounds of Nunwick House, High Park End House and Simonburn Rectory." In a speech following Luncheon, the Rector, the Reverend Canon Rogers said, "We must not omit to drink the health of our friend, Mrs Henry Venables to whom this Church owes so much, and who rejoices with us today." He then mentioned the marble flooring laid as a "memorial given in remembrance of relatives of hers, and the gift of a superb frontal altar cloth of Utrecht velvet and gold lace."[37]

The Iron Church at Newbridge on Wye; a photo taken by GS Venables in 1875.
Photo: courtesy of Richard Meredith

Susan travelled to Scotland in August 1878, visiting the ruined 12th century Augustinian Abbey at Jedburgh, Roxburghshire, some ten miles from

Cranmers, Mitcham, as Kilvert would have seen it.
Photo: KS Archive courtesy of Sidney Ball

the border with England. A published list of visitors included 'Mrs Henry Venables and Party', her name coupled with that of the Lady Harriette Elliot, (1835-1913) sixth daughter of the first Earl of Ravenworth, wife of Admiral of the Fleet, the Hon. Sir Charles G J B Elliot, K.C.B. Presumably Susan was a guest at their home at Kirklands.[38] Some years later Lady Harriette and her husband were guests of Susan at Low Park End.

On 24 December 1878, the rector of Simonburn held a Christmas Eve service for the first time, hoping he said, "to infuse a new element into the Christmas rejoicings." Despite the severity of the weather "a good congregation showed by their presence their appreciated approval. The Church had been tastefully decorated for the sacred season by Mrs Henry Venables and Mrs and Miss Rogers from the Rectory, aided by many willing little hands among the school children. The choir sang a number of Christmas carols with great sweetness including the old favourites, '*When Joseph was A'walking*,' and '*Ore ever I laid me down to sleep*.' These were supplemented by a number of songs from Chope's 'Carols for Churches' amongst which was the beautiful '*Carol*, *sweetly carol*.'"[39]

In February 1879, Lister had to cancel a visit to Susan as he had caught whooping cough from his children, they having been ill for several weeks. It is from archived letters at that time we learn Kilvert is to be married. His *Diary* had, of course, ended abruptly on Thursday 13 March 1879, due, we now know, to the destruction of his notebooks. However, on 12 March, he records that Dora, who had been acting as his hostess at Bredwardine, had shown him a letter from James Pitcairn proposing marriage to her, which proposal Kilvert is sure she will accept. He then must have realised that one solution in replacing Dora would be to find a wife for himself.

During May 1879 George Stovin had been at Low Park End on one of his regular visits to Susan. Later he wrote "Delightful place and a warm welcome." Agnes and Lister eventually arrived for their visit on 30 May 1879. During her stay, Agnes writes to George Stovin about a suitable wedding present for Kilvert and mentions that her sister, Etta (Henrietta) wife of the Reverend Sterling Westhorp, vicar of Ilston, "is staying at Bredwardine Vicarage with Mr Kilvert who seems very happy in his prospects. We are going to give him a Clock but she says furnt., (sic) is sadly wanted, writing table, sofas, etc."[40]

On 24 June 1879, Lister writes in his Journal:-

"Sent Kilvert as a wedding present £10, viz., £5 each. George gives him £10 and Susan £5, in all £25 – he wishes to apply this to the purchase of a piano which he has picked up at that price."

The events in the final weeks of Kilvert's life are recorded in parish registers, newspaper reports, notices, Kilvert Society Newsletters and Journals and the 1969 booklet, *Looking Backwards*. On 24 September Lister wrote in his daily Journal, "Heard by telegram that Kilvert died yesterday." Three days later on Saturday, 27 September 1879 his Journal records,

"I went by the 7 a.m. train to breakfast at Whitney Rectory. H Dew drove me to Bredwardine where I read the service at Kilvert's funeral. I saw his widow afterwards and his father, brother and sisters."[41]

It is worthy of note that Lister's Journal is completely blank in the week of Monday 29 September to Saturday 4 October 1879, apparently an unprecedented occurrence.

Part 3 of this account of the life of Susan Catherine Venables will follow in September 2024's Journal.

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Mary Augusta Poltoratskaya (1794-1865) – Artist manquée?

Stephen Massil looks further at the life of the first Mrs Venables, taking us to St Petersburg and Paris, and to a misleading memoir.

I introduced the first Mrs Venables and her son 'Captain Willie Adam' in *Journal 37*[1]; she was a figure for Charles Darwin and his former Cambridge colleagues in the time of his voyage of the *Beagle*, which I wrote up in *Journal 54*[2] This is some more material about Mary Augusta which carry reflections on her life as Mrs Venables at Clyro. In my first piece we ventured to the fringe of Pushkin studies, this time to the frontiers of art historical matters and the Paris Salon of 1848. A matter of underlying interest concerns errors of fact in historical and biographical narrative.

RUSSIAN CONNECTIONS

First, though, I should comment on a late finding of a possible fourth Gascoigne sister in the circle of Mary Augusta's mother in St. Petersburg[3]. The name of Margaret Gascoigne (1780-1855) and family appears in the records of the British Chaplaincy at St. Petersburg showing a marriage to Edward Row, possibly a businessman of the English Club, in 1805 and the baptisms of numerous children following, and marriages amongst them down to 1872. As yet, nothing apart from the name 'Gascoigne', suggests any connection with the family of Charles Gascoigne and Mary Augusta's aunts Lady Haddington and Mrs Pollen. Corroboration of Elizabeth Primrose Gascoigne's marriage to George Augustus Pollen at St. Petersburg in 1803 (apparently a whirlwind romance) appears in the memoirs of Mary Kynnersley, baroness de Bode (1775-1812), in exile in Russia during the Napoleonic Wars, whose daughter was their bridesmaid, with other references (from 1795) to the Gascoigne homes and talents along the way[4]. The witnesses at this marriage of 1803 are 'Anne Hadinton, James Dalrymple (her husband) and James Cavanaugh'; whereas at the marriage of Margaret Gascoigne and Edward Row in October 1805 the names of the witnesses do not include any Gascoigne family members (only William Hale, and Joseph Wilson). Edward Row and his wife, clearly long-settled members of the English circle of St. Petersburg, do not make any show in memoirs of the period.

What I did know at the last time of writing was that Charles Gascoigne and Mary Garbett parents of Anne, Mary and Elizabeth Primrose Gascoigne also had a son, Charles, born in 1765, baptised at Larbert; but there are no further references to him and my surmise was that he had died in infancy so probably had no chance to be with the family in Russia; he does not figure as heir to Charles Gascoigne's (Russian) titles, and, again, was not at hand when Lady Haddington was sorting out their father's financial affairs.

The Pollens figure in lively fashion in several accounts of the time, notably in a biography of Bishop Heber (Bishop of Calcutta), Heber having made a visit to Russia in 1805-6 ('Pollen's house is one of the most splendid in Petersburg, and we have received great civility from him')[5]; and in a life of Philip Yorke ('… Back … at Petersburg he found his friends Colonel and Mrs Pollen with whom he had lived in habits of the closest intimacy ever since his first arrival in Russia')[6]. Pollen's death along with that of Philip Yorke, Lord Royston (1784-1808) in the Baltic off Memel in 1808 is widely reported and deplored in memoirs and newspapers.

I have been exercised to trace any visit to England by General Poltoratsky to corroborate his memories of an association with the Adam family prior to the engagement of Mary Augusta with Francis James Adam. I have found a reference to a visit by him as 'Colonel A.M. Poltoratsky' to Matthew Boulton at the Soho Works in Birmingham presumably sometime in the late 1780s, one of quite a few Russians to beat that path before and after the turn of the century but at a date prior to his marriage to Mary Gascoigne – so there is still room for a later visit when he would have had a father's interest in his daughter's progress with Lady Haddington.[7]

VISITS TO RUSSIA AND FAMILY CONNECTIONS

What I have also discovered since publication in *Journal 54,* and by close reading of the Llysdinam papers at the National Library of Wales, are a few details to elaborate Mary Augusta's story: that she probably made a visit to her father and brothers in Russia after correspondence in December 1814; that she was certainly in Germany prior to her marriage to Francis James Adam (1817) in 1816 and again in the late 1820s, and again to Russia around 1830 – when she will have met the Princess Sophia Borisovna Galtzina (1796-1871) who married her uncle General Konstantin Markovich Poltoratsky (1782-1858) in 1818. It was Aunt Sophie who met the Venables' in the street on their arrival in Petersburg in July 1837. The early visits to Russia and continental travel in general were in the company of Mrs Pollen, whose nephews – Aleksandr and Konstantin – seemed to have good-humouredly put up with her behaviours and ill-health. Konstantin, whose death Venables recorded in the 'Family Memoir' of 1878, in 1833, had written to his sister, wistful to find a wife for himself 'like her' (writing in 1830), and had eventually made a brief marriage before his death to Nadine Ogilvie, the daughter of a Scotsman in the Russian marine, Admiral Alexander Ogilvie (1765-1847), recruited there as a midshipman in 1782 , and with a family in Russia whose details I have not been able to trace apart from his first wife, who was Anastasia Aleksandrovna Sturm (1780-1831). Their daughter Nadine bore Konstantin a daughter Anastasie who is recorded as a double orphan (aged only 16) by Catherine (Ekaterina Poltoratskaya, Aleksandr's wife) writing to Mary Augusta Venables in 1849. Although there

are only two letters from her in the file, it would appear that the family correspondence in the later years subsisted only in letters between Mrs Venables and her sister-in-law Ekaterina. Venables in a letter of December 1855 refers to Mary's receipt of a letter earlier in the year notifying her of the death of her brother Aleksandr (in the shadow of the Crimean War). Ekaterina's letter of 1842 gives an echo of Mary Augusta's pleasure in the return of her son Willie Adam from service in Africa sometime before the end of 1841 and the Poltoratskys urge her to have him visit Russia to see them. Even on parting after their visit to General Konstantin Markovich in 1838 it was said that he and Sophia were hoping to visit England – but it does not appear that this visit took place.

It is a pleasure of such research to be able to corroborate at second hand a finding in a letter from Russia that William Adam and his Regiment the 72nd Highlanders had been brought back from the Cape to service at Portsmouth (1840) and then at Windsor (1841-42) which a personal reference confirms in a memoir of a connection of the Adam family, James Anstruther-Thomson in his *Reminiscences* (1904). The *Windsor and Eton Press* wrote up in great detail its record of the christening of the Prince of Wales in January 1842 when the 72nd did the military and musical honours, and on the day following received new colours at the hands of the Duke of Wellington. Anstruther-Thomson records that William Adam laid on a lunch that day for his friends at the Barracks.[8] These 'reminiscences' by the by include details of Willie Adam's earliest schooldays at Putney and weekend visits to his Scots grandfather at Richmond when he was but six or seven.

I do not as yet find William Adam meeting up with Amelia Helen Dyer, née Robertson, but with the 72nd returned from Africa his presence back in England is recorded well before the arrival of Amelia's firstborn son Stanhope in December 1842. (Captain Adam was involved with Mrs Dyer from the 1840s and eventually married her in 1860 after her divorce).

FRANCE

Further material about Mary Augusta can be sifted out of another Russian chronicle which exemplifies perforce the hazards of the genre and the elusiveness (garbling, I call it) of memory over several generations. This is in another literary work, nurtured in the Welsh marches since its author was long-resident at Frogmore (Upper Magna) in Shropshire. Edith Martha Almedingen (1898-

Quatre Heures au Salon, by Francois-Auguste Biard. This is the 1847 Salon: Stephen Massil notes that the 1848 Salon was even more crowded.
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

1971), born Marta Aleksandrovna Almedingen in St Petersburg, was a grand daughter of Serge Poltoratsky. She became a well-known children's author and also wrote family memoirs. She is buried at Ashwick in Somerset and left her cottage there to the Royal Society of Literature; she appears not to have literary executors to face the challenge of my corrections.

Miss Almedingen's book is: *Life of many colours. The story of grandmother Ellen* (1958).[9] Further biographical traces can be seen in her more personal memoir of her mother Olga Almedingen (1857-1919), her travels and travail: *Tomorrow will come* (1941).[10]

Miss Almedingen, writing her chronicles in the 1950s about her grandmother of more than a hundred years before conveying *her* family reminiscences of fifty years prior, is quite unreliable where facts I have checked separately are concerned. But the requisite printed sources that I quote are confirmation enough.

Ellen Sarah Poltoratzkaya (1819-1908) née Southee, from Canterbury (her father being also active in St. Petersburg like Gascoigne and Row) was the second wife of Serge Dmitrievich Poltoratzky (1803-1884), the literary scholar and landowner of an estate at Avchurino. His father was Dmitri Markovich Poltoratsky (1761-1818) one of the older brothers (Miss Almedingen states 'youngest'). Thus Serge was a nephew of General Aleksandr Markovich Poltoratsky (1766-1839).

Mary Augusta Venables, née Poltoratskaya (1794-1865) was his cousin, but Miss Almedingen's narrative splits her into two people referring first to the 'lovely Miss Dalrymple' after whom 'uncle' Aleksandr was in pursuit in 1814 in England, and as a result of his marriage to her was exiled from Russia (with sequestration of his estates); and then much later in her narrative when Miss Almedingen noting that 'they' had both died reintroduces her as their daughter Maria Venables living in Pembrokeshire where she was the wife of the clergyman 'the Reverend Leicester Venables' a man much older than herself. Amidst this farrago one can go so far as to point out that while Mary Augusta, as we have established, was Richard Lister Venables's senior by fifteen years (and he was, a reminder, step-father to her son Willie Adam who was only ten years his junior), Serge Poltoratsky at the age of 41 had married Ellen Sarah Southee when she was only 24. As to the age difference in question it is perhaps curious that Serge was sixteen years older than Ellen while Mary Augusta was fifteen years older than Venables so the memory of the *tenor* of her utterance has been caught – but the wrong way round.

It is not necessarily Miss Almedingen who is at fault since she is quoting from Ellen's memoirs and the words are apparently quotations from Serge himself. The specific instance concerns a date at the very end of 1861 when Serge and Ellen are ensconced – in exile – in Paris and having lodged their children with Southee relations in England, Ellen goes to the Gare du Nord to meet the children coming to Paris for the Christmas holidays.

> *Sarah [Cork] wrote that [the children] would be brought to Paris by their father's cousin, Maria Venables, and Sarah mentioned the name as though she supposed Ellen to know Maria. Ellen had never heard of her.*
> *'Oh, yes,' Serge told her, 'she is my first cousin. She was born in England.'* [Almedingen (1), p. 167]

Nineteenth century St Petersburg from a drawing by Joseph-Maria Charlemagne-Baudet (1824-1870). Photo: Wikimedia Commons

But she was not. She was 'Miss Dalrymple' and was born in Russia (at the iron works at Petrozavodsk) in 1794, though, of course, she was indeed his cousin: née Mary Augusta Poltoratskaya

> *'How dreadful that we should have been there all those months and never taken any notice of her! I shan't know what apologies to make. Oh Serge you should have told me before!'*
> *'But I didn't know her address.'*
> *'Who was her father?'*
> *'My Uncle Alexander. He was equerry-in-chief to the Emperor Alexander, and came with him to England in [June] 1814. Just before they were due to return to Paris my uncle begged for leave, and he stayed on in London. The grave internal disorder proved to be an exceedingly beautiful Miss Dalrymple. They got married, but of course, my uncle was a deserter. All his estates in the Poltava Province were sequestrated. I can't tell you what they lived on. Mary Dalrymple wasn't an heiress. They're both dead now. Maria is married to a clergyman. She used to draw and paint quite well. She exhibited her work here once or twice. She's supposed to be rather odd.' ...*

In other words, Serge was not properly aware of his uncle Aleksandr's marriage and family from 1791, not then also cognisant of Alexandr's second marriage (1797) to Tatiana Bakunina (1774-1858) and his second family by her; not aware of the adoption of his daughter Mary Augusta by her aunt Anne Lady Haddington, = Dalrymple by *her* second marriage. Whether or not it was Serge's uncle Aleksandr Markovich or cousin Aleksandr Aleksandrovich (Mary's elder brother) who was Equerry to the Emperor in 1814 (a reference to scrutinise in *other* places of this research!), either way he might have wished to spend time with Mary Augusta Dalrymple in London (by this aged just 20) after the state visit. Leaving aside Mary Augusta's marriage to Francis James Adam in 1817 (a marriage approved by Aleksandr Poltoratsky as we have seen) and a son born to them, her character as Mary Augusta Venables, married to the Rev. Richard Lister Venables in 1834 ought to have been part of Poltoratsky family lore in that as we have seen, Venables published an account of their extensive visit to Russia over 1837-38 in 1839 and this records extensive and numerous family gatherings on several of the Poltoratsky family estates during that time which Serge might have remembered more clearly even though the Venables' do not appear to have visited his estates at Avchurino.

Leaving aside the errors of deep memory and detail, Miss Almedingen is valuable for her more proximate memories and the mentions of Mary Augusta Venables from her grandmother's own accounts. Initially fussing over the children on first meeting them just arrived at the Gare du Nord after her difficult journey in the Parisian traffic …

> '[*she*] … *turned and found herself facing a tall elegant woman in mourning [for Prince Albert]. Ellen would have known her anywhere: Maria Venables might have been Serge's twin – the same remarkable grey eyes and the same smile …*' [Almedingen (1), p. 168]

The reminder that gentlewomen of England joined Queen Victoria in the first phase of her widow's mourning is worth a mention, and we also pick up that Mrs Venables was good with the children – which might help us reflect how she might have been with the children of her son Captain Adam and Mrs Dyer.

Some details resurface in the second book:

> *'… Mark [Mark Fedorovich Poltoratsky (1729-1795)] had several sons. One of them Alexander, followed the Emperor Alexander I to Paris in 1814, and there married a Scots girl. Their daughter, rejoicing in the extremely Slavonic name of Maria Augusta Dalrymple de Poltoratzky, was born in England and never left it. In the late thirties she married a parson in Pembrokeshire, one Leicester Venables'.* [Almedingen (2), p. 45]

which rather puts the kybosh on the credibility of anything she has to say. The 'Leicester', for Lister however, is good!

Of the visit to Paris over Christmas 1861, grandmother Ellen's memoir serves further:

> '*In January 1862 Maria Venables left them. 'We may not see each other for a long time,' she told Ellen. 'Please write to me when you can. I'm so glad Serge's got you. You're right for him in every way ... I rather envy you. My own husband's much older than I am, and it isn't always possible for me to leave the parsonage, and Pembrokeshire is very beautiful but lonely.'*
> *Ellen promised to write. She kept her promise, but Maria, having begged for letters, did not answer them'* [Almedingen (1), p. 170]

But Mary Augusta Venables was rather <u>older</u> than her clergyman husband (by fifteen years) and his stepson William Adam was only ten years younger than him, and they lived at Clyro on the Herefordshire borders and not so far west in Pembrokeshire. Thus the words put into Maria Venables's mouth are quite untrue though they sound appropriately 'novelettish' for the story unfolding – [And in 1869]:

> *'At the end of 1869 they heard of Maria Venables' death in Pembrokeshire. Maria, having begged for letters, had written precisely two untidy little notes in eight years …*' [Almedingen (1), p. 179]

Mary Augusta Venables died in October 1865 at Clyro. Miss Almedingen does not notice that by 1869 they had not also noted that Venables had made his second marriage. To the end the memories given to Serge suggest only that he had made a two-headed hydra of his cousin Mary Augusta in her different persons as 'Miss Dalrymple' and 'Maria Venables'.

Of course none of these matters spoils Miss Almedingen's plain story, the chronicle of her grandmother and the diversity of its events and appeal and it's a question whether the reader finds the palpable 'errors' galling, or pedantry to wade through – and whether they expose the 'reliability' of the rest. (I have not examined the references to the Southee family, of Kent – connected, she suggests to the Poet Laureate, Robert Southey, from Somerset – for their veracity.)

She used to draw and paint quite well. She exhibited her work here once or twice.

The grave of Mary Augusta Venables at Clyro. Photo: Stephen Massil

Leaving that aside, the detail that justifies the inclusion of these matters in the *Journal* concerns Maria Venables as artist in Paris in 1848 and it makes finally a pearl of Serge's memories amidst the grains of dubiety.

Serge continues his memorial:

> *'Une femme manquée,' said Serge. 'She was so accomplished, and she never achieved anything. I'm afraid that her marriage to that very elderly clergyman was a mistake.' 'She was friendly enough,' Ellen remembered,'and so generous to the children. But she never seemed to wish to meet us again.' She knew she would remember Maria as a lovable stranger and no more. Soon after Ellen went to England*. [Almedingen (1), p. 179]

Significantly here, there was a matter relating to the French editor J.M. Quérard, one of Serge's earliest supporters on settling into exile in Paris:

> *'... Serge never mentions him these days.'*
> *'It was such a stupid misunderstanding,' Maria went on, 'and so dreadfully shabby of M. Quérard. ... You know what happened?' ... M. Quérard wrote a long article about Serge in the France littéraire, and I was mentioned as Serge's wife. It happened about 1854. Serge insisted on the mistake being corrected, ...* ***It was all about a drawing of mine which was exhibited at the Louvre in 1848 and later engraved. You see I worked in Paris under my maiden name****. ...'* [Almedingen (1)]

However reliable the refraction of Ellen's memory transmitted by Miss Almedingen, Quérard can also be cited:

> '*… Pour justifier ce que nous avons dit au commencement de cet article, du gout de la famille Poltoratzky pour les letters et les arts, nous terminerons par dire: que la lecture du "Cinq-Mars" de M. Alfred de Vigny,* ***a inspiré à Mme Marie Poltoratzky, femme du bibliophile qui fit l'objet de cette notice, un grand et beau dessin, qui, lors de l'exposition du Louvre, en 1848, a*** été ***remarqué des connaisseurs. Ce dessin a*** été ***gravé depuis par un de nos habile artistes M. Himly.*** *Le sujet est tiré du chapitre XVII du livre de M. de Vigny, qui porte le titre "La toilette". Les principaux personages sont: MM. Cinq-Mars et de Thou au moment ils discutent les moyens de débarrasser Louis XIII du joug que Richelieu lui fait porter; les autres personages sont: le duc de Bouillon, Gaston d'Orléans, la reine Anne d'Autriche, le Dauphin, enfant (Louis XIV) et Marie de Montoue.*' [11]

The work by Alfred de Vigny is: **Cinq-Mars**[12] and the scene for the illustration is: Chap. XVII.—La Toilette. I can find no references to the whereabouts of the original drawing. (Sources in Paris i.e the Louvre for French art down to 1848; the Musée d'Orsay for French art from 1848 – deny knowledge of the work.) I cannot identify any illustrated edition of Alfred de Vigny carrying engravings by Sigismond Himely (1801-1872), or any collection of Himely's engravings as such.

The 'quarrel' with Serge is referred to in biographies.[13] '... His unfortunate disagreement with Poltoratzky' (p. 36) and 'Querard's quarrel with Poltoratzky is one of the things most to be regretted in his career but he does not seem to have had that valuable quality of making friends.' But the detail that Marie refers is not mentioned as such.

There is apparently no copy of Alfred de Vigny in the library at Llysdinam that Mary Augusta might have read at home for her inspiration, nor apparently any portfolio of her drawings amongst papers surviving from her time.

We are left to speculate how the Rector and his wife had absented themselves from clerical duties at Clyro and for Mary Augusta to disport herself in the Parisian art world as a Russian lady in the wake of the revolutionary wave of 23 February 1848 – the prompting of a European 'Year of Revolutions' that in France ran until the election of Louis Napoleon as President of the Second Republic in December.

THE 'SALON DÉTESTABLE' OF 1848

The reference suggests that Mary Augusta exhibited works on more than one occasion. The conundrum of the Salon of 1848 is sufficient wonder for the moment. The Salon was notorious in the *durée* in that for the first time since the Salon of 1791 it was an 'open' Salon – one not managed by a Jury in the selection and hanging of works submitted. The process for vetting had in fact begun on 20th February under the usual regulations of a Jury but the outbreak of the Revolution on the 23rd brought this process to a halt and the dismissal of the Jury by the 'provisional' regime was not followed by the installation of any new Jury; and while the time restriction on submissions prevailed all those works submitted by the due date were accepted for exhibition – to the extent of a huge, crammed, and precarious hang of more than 5,000 works (sculpture included), much of a mediocrity, as opposed to just over 3,000 under a Jury in 1847. The exhibition was a logistical disaster with too many works jammed into inadequate spaces. The large numbers of mediocre works only made things worse. So the contention also arose as to the quality of the works amidst the jockeying of the (rival) established artists and the new artists involved. While Mary Augusta's drawing is numbered '3747' in the catalogue, it is, in Quérard's account, shown to have garnered commendation, and while the drawing was probably ignored by the serious critics (such as Théophile Gautier) the reference to Himely's engraving suggests that the art world took some notice of her achievement.

We should reflect that Mary Augusta's choice of subject fits a 'Scottish' lady's recourse to the work of Alfred de Vigny whose original 'Cinq-mars' of 1826 was a product of the first wave of Walter Scott's sustaining influence on the continent (on both French and Russian spirits of the age). She may have first read the book in her early widowhood and at Blair Adam where a copy was listed in the library catalogue sale in 1883.[14]

Quite what Mary Augusta's work and persistence might have been cannot yet be discerned; that her work was exhibited from an address (rue du Dauphin) around the corner from a famous hotel – *Le Meurice* – on the rue de Rivoli, suggests that Mrs Venables was 'at home' to some extent in Paris. In the correspondence at Aberystwyth, the sole reference to this time appears to be a letter from George Stovin Venables to his brother reporting that during his tour to Paris he was introduced to Lamartine, making no mention of Mary Augusta's drawing when he made a brief visit to the Salon; Lamartine having played a leading role in the first phase of the Revolution, certainly a prominent Republican speaker at the time, being a contender for the Presidency; his wife, Marianne de Lamartine née Maria Anna Eliza Birch (1795-1863) of English origin, being the only lady of the 'Provisional' government to maintain a salon (at the rue de l'Université) that spring; she was herself an artist and sculptor – but whether anything more personal can be made of this in Mary Augusta's case remains to be seen.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should acknowledge some details from D.G. Fedosov (Moscow); and from Professor James Kearns (Exeter) in respect of a very recent Ph.D. thesis of Harriett Griffiths: '*The Jury of the Paris Fine Art Salon, 1831-1852'*, University of Exeter, 2013, and his own work: '*Théophile Gautier, orator to the artists : art journalism in the Second Republic*', Legenda, 2007.

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9 Edith Martha Almedingen (1) *Life of many colours. The story of grandmother Ellen* (London: Hutchinson, 1958). A biography of Ellen S Poltoratzky.

10 Edith Martha Almedingen (2) *Tomorrow will come* (London: Bodley Head, 1941).

11 JM Querard *La France littéraire, tome 11* (Paris 1854-57), p 484.

12 Alfred de Vigny *Cinq-Mars, ou une conjuration sous Louis XIII*: par M le comte Alfred de Vigny (Paris: Urb. Canel), 1826.

13 Ralph Thomas *A martyr to bibliography: a notice of the life and works of JM Quérard,* (Edmund Netherclift, 1867). It carries a dedication to Antonio Panizzi, Director of the British Museum.

14 *Catalogue of Blair-Adam Library* (London, 1883).

“Give my love to the Kilvert Society”

In this tribute, Charles Boase remembers a visit to Ronald Blythe

Funny as it may sound, coming as it did from our late president, but our Society might have had its day. “It’s quite normal, I think, for literary societies to reach a point when you ask what else can you say about this particular writer?” Ronald Blythe told me at the end of an enchanting visit I paid as editor of the society’s *Journal* to the then 90-year-old at Bottengoms, the traditional yeoman’s house tucked away on the Essex-Suffolk border that was his home for more than forty years. It was a farewell line, followed quickly by, “I’m sorry I can’t be with you more. Give my love to the Kilvert Society!”

A year after the sudden death in March 2005 of our president David Lockwood, Blythe was elected to take his place. The author and editor, best known for his heart wrenching description of the hardness of agricultural life before the war (a life he had experienced) in *Akenfield: Portrait of an English Village* had been a guest speaker at the seminar held at The Green Dragon to mark the Society’s Golden Jubilee in 1998. Although he may not have been a member he clearly loved Kilvert. The Diarist featured largely in *The Penguin Book of Diaries* (1991) he edited (his favourite was Virginia Woolf’s), and also occasionally in ‘Word from Wormingford’, the weekly column he wrote for the *Church Times*.

But despite his evident credentials for the office, Blythe proved to be a somewhat distant president. Indeed, one member of the committee was heard to grumble more than once about our “absentee” president. Perhaps we shouldn’t be surprised that a man in his eighties wouldn’t want to toil across England at its widest to take part in our activities, if that wasn’t belied by the knowledge that once a year or so he would go to stay with his old friend Edward Storey just outside Presteigne. The poet of the Fenland, who had moved to Wales in 1999, restored the medieval church at Discoed “with his poetry”, said Blythe, who went there a few times to give readings. “I also went to the wonderful music festival in St Andrew’s church in Presteigne, where I had to give a lecture,” he recalled. Blythe had another reason for heading west, as a patron of the Thomas Traherne Association, dedicated to the mid-16th-century poet and rector of Credenhill, Hereford.

Ronald Blythe at the door of Bottengoms Farmhouse.
Photo: Charles Boase

The mention of Storey (who died in 2018) hints at where Blythe’s real love lay, in the John Clare Society, which he founded with Storey in 1981. Now it has 550 or so members spread across the world. The National Lottery helped them raise more than a million pounds to buy Clare’s cottage. They have only one annual event – a festival held over the weekend nearest his birthday, 13 July, at Helpston, his birthplace near Peterborough. “I give the annual lecture,” Blythe told me. “This year is the thirty-second, can you believe it? I’ve got a friend who belongs to it and we drive over together. It’s a long way from here, ninety miles, but I always enjoy it.”

Then, as if suddenly remembering why I’m there, Blythe says: “But I do love Kilvert.” Speaking in a curious, jumpy way, he continues: “I think he was a wonderful guy. I went to see his grave. He died at a very young age from peritonitis. The arches for his wedding path to the church were the same ones under which his coffin passed a few days later. A terrible, poetic tragedy. I tell people about him. That famous photo of him, in profile, he is such a strong-looking young man. You couldn’t imagine him being carried off so easily in his late thirties.

“Sometimes I find a passage when I’m giving the address in the church (I’m a canon of St Edmundsbury and I take matins and evensong here at Wormingford).” He said he liked to read up what had happened on that day. “His writing is full of harshness and illness, terrible really. It’s a dreadful world in some ways. The other side of it was this comfortable middle class world of the clergy and dinners and servants and that sort of thing.”

Blythe certainly knew his Kilvert, probably better than most. “I just wish [members of my congregation] would read more. They don’t read at all, really, a lot of these people. They watch a lot of television. Quite well off, a lot of them. Have foreign holidays and have big cars and that sort of thing. They don’t have a great passion for these great writers who kept journals and wrote novels and poems and diaries...” And then, in a pensive reflection, he adds, “Kilvert’s father was so horrid to him at times. And unfortunately this woman who got hold of the *Diary* in the Twenties and destroyed a lot of it. She was shocked by the girls, I think.”

I thanked him for always being friendly towards me as editor of the *Journal*, sending me postcards of encouragement. “Well it’s a lovely magazine, it really is lovely, it’s very beautiful I always think.” Asked what he would like to see in it he replied: “Well, I think it’s marvellous to have gone on to this degree really about Kilvert, isn’t it? People write about all sorts of his connections. I find it fascinating, quite honestly. [long pause] I think if I lived near you I would have gone on some of the excursions and things in his countryside.”

Our conversation is easily sidetracked into stories from his long life. He recalls seeing, as a boy, sugar beet being harvested by hand. Like Kilvert, he felt a tremendous empathy with the view from below. "Terrible work," he said. "Men had bits of uniform from the First World War and sacks over their shoulders, terrible work. Pea picking by piecework. Pubs used to have signs outside saying 'No pea-pickers, no gypsies.' It's another world. Things have changed incredibly, you don't realise it really."

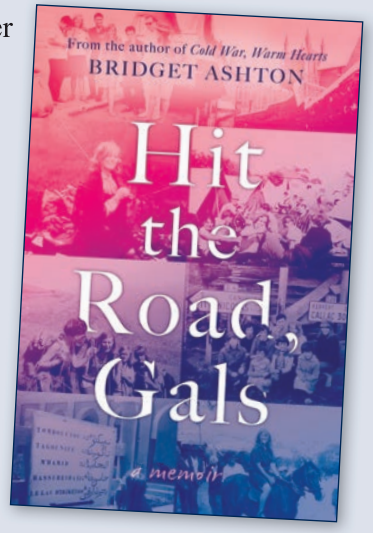
When Peter Hall asked if he could make a film of *Akenfield* Blythe refused because he thought it would be impossible, but changed his mind when he saw Pasolini's 'The Gospel According to St Matthew' in which all the parts were played by local people. That was how *Akenfield* was filmed. Again, that Kilvertish loyalty to the common man.

He said a big influence on him had been George Ewart Evans (*Ask the Fellows who Cut the Hay* and other books) who had moved from the Cynon valley to East Anglia. Another strand in his education (he left school at fourteen) was working for Benjamin Britten on his festival at Aldeburgh. Most life-changing of all was the company of artists, intellectuals and other fascinating people he met at Benton End, Cedric Morris's residence. That was not far from Bottengoms Farm, where John and Christine Nash lived and where Blythe spent every Christmas and much other time. They left the house to Blythe. After our chat and tea he gave my wife and me a tour. Marvellous works of art were hung in an ordinary, matter-of-fact way in every room, very like Kettle's Yard in Cambridge. Still totally unmodernised (the water comes from its own well), it felt as if the old yeoman had only just left.

As we came to leave, he returned to musing about how the Kilvert Society is shrinking. "They do, these literary societies," he said. "They are started out in a great . . . a very common thing seems to happen, in fact. Membership begins to run away. Often people who came to it are not very young, because they've got the leisure to do this kind of thing, and they become quite social. I think the Kilvert Society [here he chuckled], I always envied you because you would have nice meals and visits and things like that. We don't do that at the John Clare Society, where it's only a one day a year thing... It's quite normal, I think, for literary societies to reach a point when, what else can you say about this particular writer?"

Perhaps one day there will be a Ronald Blythe Society, blazing for a time its own arc of interest. There's plenty of scope: this extraordinary man who said he was at heart just a listener and a watcher was plugged in to the mains of the twentieth century.

LAUNCH OF NEW PUBLICATION



Kilvert Society member Bridget Ashton is launching her new book during the 2024 Hay festival, and she informally calls it a "Hay Book Festival Fringe Event". The diary-based book recounts the audacious activities of girl students at Hereford College of Education 1963 – 66, as they found their way out into the world.

Bridget's new book is the third of her memoirs, ***The Hay Girl Trilogy***. It follows ***Cold War, Warm Hearts 2023*** and ***Hay Before the Bookshops or The Beeman's Family 2022*** which was reviewed in the Society's *Journal* March 2023.The event will be friendly, informal and free to all, with refreshments available.

Hit the Road, Gals – at the Royal British Legion Hub, 8 Market Street, Hay-on-Wye, 29 May 2024 at 1pm.

IN THE MEDIA

Radnorshire Museum featured in a *Daily Mail* column 'Down Memory Lane' last year. Michael Howard wrote about Llandrindod Wells and noted "The charming Radnorshire Museum is worth a visit...the centrepiece, to my mind, was the collection of exhibits relating to the celebrated 19th century diarist Francis Kilvert, who was a parson in Radnorshire. The exhibits included his writing slope, desk and his family bible."

Also in the media, Aberedw was the subject of a *Guardian* Country Diary by Jim Perrin in August 2023. The Golden Valley Pilgrimage Route was described in travel news, also in the *Guardian* in September 2023 including visits to Hereford Cathedral, Ewyas Harold church, St Faith's church, Dorstone, Brobury Gardens (once Kilvert's kitchen garden) and Snodhill Castle. Snodhill Castle was also visited in BBC2s *Digging for Britain* describing the 2023 excavation of the royal chapel.

Kilvert's desk and writing slope. Photo: Val Dixon

OBITUARIES

Miss Christine Leslie PENNEY

Christine Penney died on Sunday 19 November, aged 81. Her scholarship illuminated the Worcester connection in *Kilvert's Diary*.

Diana Clutterbuck writes:
Members of the Kilvert Society who visited Hartlebury Castle on 4 April 2018 will remember the Hurd Librarian who had prepared items of interest. These included a book of early hand tinted county maps, open at Herefordshire and the Welsh border, showing places Francis Kilvert knew. Chris Penney also gave a talk entitled "The two Richards" for our AGM at Hereford in 2019 and provided a follow up article. Our Hartlebury visit was described in *Journal 47* and Chris's article appeared in *Journal 50*.

After a degree in English from Bristol University in 1965, Chris spent a year working at Warwick County Library before gaining a Librarianship Diploma at University College London, 1966-7. Whilst at UCL, she had a placement at the Shakespeare Centre Library (part of the Birthplace Trust), and subsequently worked there as Assistant Librarian until 1971 when she was offered a post in the Rare Books Department at Birmingham University. Chris spent most of her working life with rare books but built up knowledge of the University Archives which had attracted little interest before she started a catalogue. She became Head of Special Collections at the University Archives, mentoring many trainees and advising other regional archives.

Retiring in 2005, she was appointed Foundation Fellow of the University of Birmingham in 2006 and life member of its Court of Governors. Chris catalogued rare books at Baddesley Clinton for the National Trust and served as Treasurer to the Historic Libraries Forum and the Religious Archives Group. She was a member of Hereford Cathedral Library Committee and honorary consultant for the staff at Worcester and Lichfield Cathedral Libraries.

Chris became Hon. Librarian of the Hurd Library in 2009. Tributes from her colleagues at Hartlebury Castle, describe her role not as a job, but a labour of love in her knowledge, commitment and passion in caring for Bishop Hurd's legacy. I was grateful for her help when I was researching Richard Kilvert's connection with Hurd and Hartlebury, and found a contemporary watercolour of the Rectory where Kilvert and his family lived painted by one of the Bishop's great nieces and obtained permission for me to use it in my article (*Journal 41*, Sept 2015).

Thanks to Birmingham University Intranet for information.

The Society has been notified of the death of the following members:

Mr John NUNN

Mr Nunn had been a life member since 1982.

Mrs P REVELL

Mrs Revell had been a member since July 2017.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Welcome to new members. Please keep in touch, by joining us on visits and/or writing for the *Journal*.

POSTSCRIPT: BLUEBELLS

I never saw bluebells more beautiful. They grew tall and stately, singly or in groups and sometimes in such a crowd that they filled the hollow places and deep shadows with...tender azure mist among the young bright fern. (Vol 3, p 303). Kilvert was in Wiltshire. These bluebells were photographed in May 2023 at the NT Ashridge Estate on the Bucks/Herts border.

Photo: Editor

List of Kilvert publications

FOR SALE FROM THE KILVERT SOCIETY

Three-Volume Diary, packed in slip case
Members price £60 post free in UK (£15 postage for non members). Overseas postal rate will vary and will be notified to enquirers. Enquiries and orders to the Secretary, 30 Bromley Heath Avenue, Downend, Bristol BS16 6JP. Email: kilvertsociety@gmail.com

Who's Who in Kilvert's Diary, 2nd edition, fully revised. A companion to the Diary. 450 entries; 7 Kilvert family trees. A4 format, 99 pages. £10+£4 p&p (£8 overseas) Cheque with order to the Journal Editor, 1 Saffron Rise, Eaton Bray, Dunstable LU6 2AY

Kilvert Society DVD A film depicting the early days of the Society £15+£2 p&p (overseas postal rate will vary). Orders to the Secretary (details above).

Overseas members please note that all drafts must be in sterling.

SOCIETY PAMPHLETS ON LOAN

The following pamphlets are now available as loan copies from the Secretary.

Collected Verse by the Reverend Francis Kilvert.

Kilvert's Poetry A study by Bernard Jones.

The Bevan-Dew Extracts Entries omitted from the published Diary.

Francis Kilvert Priest and Diarist by Frederick Grice.

More Chapters from the Kilvert Saga: memoirs of the Rev. Robert Kilvert (father of the Diarist): The School at Hardenhuish Rectory by Augustus Hare; The 'Rambling Recollections of the Diarist's Sister Emily (Mrs S J Wyndowe).

Kilvert's 'Kathleen Mavourneen' by Eve Farmery and RB Taylor.

Looking backwards... a Kilvert miscellanea. The Early Days of the Society; On Mrs Kilvert; On Kilvert at St Harmon; On the Homecoming to Bredwardine after the wedding; On the Death and Funeral of Francis Kilvert.

Kilvert and the Wordsworth Circle by R I Morgan.

The Other Francis Kilvert: Francis Kilvert of Claverton 1793-1863 by Teresa Williams and Frederick Grice.

The Oswin Prosser Memorial Booklet The Solitary of Llanbedr by Rev D Edmondes-Owen; Radnorshire Legands and Superstitions by Mrs Essex Hope (Kilvert's's niece); Honeymoon Journal by Dora Pitcairn (Kilvert's sister); The Venables Diaries by Laurence Le Quesne; Memories of the Monk (Kilvert's niece) by Ann Mallinson.

The Frederick Grice Memorial Booklet Grice Articles by Frederick Grice including 'An Anglo-Welsh community in the 1860s; The Missing Year; Kilvert and 'Kathleen Mavourneen' by Laurence Le Quesne.

Jubilee Praise: the Tom Palmer Memorial Booklet. Articles from newsletters: The Poems of Francis Kilvert; Making the television series; Kilvert and Bettws; Gleanings from Glascwm; Some reflections of an Irish Rectory Kilvertian; The Clerk and his Carriage; Kilvert- a neglected genius.

A Kilvert Symposium including Kilvert's Shropshire Ancestry, The Diary as Literature; The Manuscript of *Kilvert's Diary*.

BOOKS ABOUT KILVERT

East End, West End by John Toman: the story of Bee Smallcombe. Kilvert Society, 2016. £15 inc p&p. Available from the Secretary.

The following books are available from booksellers or online.

Francis Kilvert by David Lockwood. Seren Books 1990.

Kilvert the Victorian by David Lockwood. Seren Books 1992.

After Kilvert by A L Le Quesne. OUP 1978.

Francis Kilvert and his world by Frederick Grice. Caliban Books 1980

Kilvert The Homeless Heart by John Toman. Logaston Press 2001.

Kilvert's Diary and Landscape by John Toman. Lutterworth Press 2009.

Kilvert's World of Wonders – growing up in Victorian England by John Toman. Lutterworth Press 2013

Growing Up in Kilvert Country by Mona Morgan. Gomer Press 1990

Exploring Kilvert Country by Chris Barber. Blorenge Books 2003.

Moods of Kilvert Country by Nick Jenkins and Kevin Thomas. Halsgrove 2006

Missions, Medicine and Military Men: Kilvert connections with India. 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 from John Toman: johntoman79@gmail.com

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 the only surviving examples of complete notebooks from the original Diary.

The Diary of Francis Kilvert April-June 1870 edited by Kathleen Hughes and Dafydd Ifans. National Library of Wales 1982 ISBN 0-907158-020-1

The Diary of Francis Kilvert June-July 1870 edited by Dafydd Ifans, 1989 ISBN 0-907158-0201

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

Opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of The Kilvert Society nor of the Editor of the *Journal*.

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Cheques, payable to The Kilvert Society, should be sent to:
Mrs Sue Rose, 8 Fairway, Calne, Wiltshire, SN11 OLE
Email: sue.rose4@btinternet.com

Design and print: fcmltd141@gmail.com