

THE KILVERT SOCIETY

President

Hon. Treasurer

J.D. Worsey,  
Coghill,  
1 Harold Street,  
HEREFORD  
Phone 3833

Wynford Vaughan-Thomas, O.B.E., M.A.

Deputy President

Frederick Grice, B.A.  
91 Hallow Road, WORCESTER

Ass't. Hon. Treasurer

Mrs. E.G. Peters,  
18 Moor Farm Lane, HEREFORD  
Phone 67375

Hon. Secretary

C.T.O. Prosser,  
8 Prince Edward  
Road

Broomy Hill

HEREFORD  
Phone 2094

1st October 1974

Dear Member,

It is exactly a year ago since members were first told (on page 7 of the newsletter dated 1st October 1973) that the AUTUMN SERVICE of 1974 is to be at ILSTON in GOWER (WEST GLAMORGAN).....on SUNDAY the 13th OCTOBER at 3 O'CLOCK.

The Revd. Francis Kilvert was a quite frequent visitor to Ilston; staying at "dear hospitable Ilston Rectory" with the Westhorps; for Mrs Westhorp and Mrs Venables of Clyro were sisters, and they would have all got to know each other when the Westhorps visited Clyro.

KILVERT'S DIARY has many references to Ilston...in Volume 2 and Volume 3; unfortunately there is no mention of Ilston in the abridged edition. Members have from time to time suggested that if the whole of the Diary was available for us to peruse we should no doubt read that on more than one occasion Francis Kilvert preached in Ilston Church; and what is more likely?

This AUTUMN SERVICE AND COMMEMORATION OF THE REVD. FRANCIS KILVERT will be conducted by THE REVD. W.K. PRICE, M.A. RECTOR OF ILSTON AND PENNARD, who so kindly invited us to his church, following suggestions for such a service from H.H. Judge Rowe Harding.

The ADDRESS will be given by THE REVD. R.L. BROWN, M.A. who is Vicar in, and Rector designate of the Rectorial Parish of Glyncoirwg in West Glamorgan (Diocese of Llandaff). Mr. Brown has been a member of the Kilvert Society for many years and has written a number of articles on Kilvert in Gower etc. etc. One of these appears in this newsletter, under the title "MR. KILVERT, WALK SOFTLY"

The ACT OF REMEMBRANCE (AND PRAYERS) will be by THE REVD. D.T.W. PRICE M.A. of Lampeter, a Vice-President of the Society. Mr. Price has taken part in several previous such services.

The LESSONS will be read by HIS HONOUR JUDGE ROWE HARDING, D.L. LL.D. of The Old Rectory, a member of Ilston Church and of the Kilvert Society; and who is Chancellor of the Dioceses of St. David's and of Swansea & Brecon;-----and by our President - MR WYNFORD VAUGHAN-THOMAS O.B.E., M.A. who will be very much at home in his native Gower.

There is a note overleaf about the Society's gift to St. Illtyd's Church at Ilston.

TEA after the service will be at THE OLD RECTORY (by kind invitation of Judge and Mrs. Rowe-Harding), it is very near the church. TEA will be served from 4-15 p.m. onwards. Admission will be by TICKET ONLY and limited to a maximum of 150, and only this number of tickets have been printed, they are 30p each; please buy yours EARLY, so that our kind hosts can be notified beforehand how many to expect. They are on sale now; by post from the Hon. Secretary (please send a stamped envelope) ---also from Wyeval Ltd. in Hereford. I hear that Mrs. Rowe-Harding has collected a band of willing workers and that the tea money will all go to Ilston Church Funds.

After tea we are to be allowed to stay on at The Old Rectory for our usual gathering on such occasions, and with Mr Vaughan-Thomas, Mr. Frederick Grice and the Rev. William Price (and perhaps others) present we can look forward to a pleasant  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour or so.

A MOTOR-COACH will run from Hereford to Ilston, leaving the TOWN HALL in ST. OWEN STREET at 10 a.m. (PROMPT) and picking up en route. The fare will be £1 per person, please book at WYEVAL Ltd. Photographic Dealers, Bridge Street, Hereford; or with the Hon. Sec. as above. PAYMENT WHEN BOOKING GREATLY APPRECIATED.....AND PLEASE BOOK EARLY. EACH MEMBER SHOULD BRING THEIR PICNIC LUNCH - there is a note overleaf about the route, picnic spot, what we may see, and re the return journey and timings.....and a further note about the WALK arranged for Saturday the 12th October.

Yours sincerely,

*C. T. O. Prosser*



NOTES AND NEWS ... by the Hon. Secretary - with contributions from members

ANOTHER WALK ON SATURDAY 12th OCTOBER

Towards the end of the successful walk on 29th June (the day previous to the Llowes service) it was decided that we must have another on 12th October, the day before the service at Ilston; and all those who joined in the discussion agreed that it was time we once more did an old favourite - "ACROSS THE MOORS TO THE ROCKS OF ABEREDW". Arrangements are much the same as usual. Cars meet near the Baskerville Arms in Clyro at 11 a.m. Move off about 11.15 and proceed via Painscastle to the usual parking place near Pen-y-Graig Farm (beyond Llanbychllyn Lake). Picnic lunch before we start our walk (each should bring picnic lunch and tea) and then the walk through the bracken etc. to the top of the famous Rocks of Aberedw (overlooking the Wye)...an easy walk of little more than 2 miles, plenty of time so nobody need hurry and as we return by the same route any who don't get all the way have no cause to worry!!! If the weather is kind an hour among the rocks soon passes and the return walk seems quite different. An early tea under the rocks near the parked cars--and away for our respective homes. We turn up in Clyro at 11 a.m. whatever the weather, for if it is unkind there are always alternatives to walking. Those who have a copy of "Collected Verse" should read Kilvert's poem "The Rocks of Aberedw" --- it well describes this walk.

BY COACH TO ILSTON on SUNDAY 13th OCTOBER

This can be a somewhat leisurely journey because we leave Hereford at 10 a.m. The route will be via Whitecross, Clyro, Hay and Brecon (with a brief stop in Brecon) and we should be through Swansea soon after 12-30 p.m. (it is about 75 miles). Then around the curve of Swansea Bay to Mumbles (see p.187 in Vol.2 for Kilvert's description of this area as he saw it in 1872). Then to a nice spot for our picnic lunch...perhaps we shall hear the buoy bell moored off Mumbles as Kilvert heard it that day more than a hundred years ago? After lunch a short run along the Gower coast with halts to look down on some of the bays, Oxwich in particular (see p.185/6 in Vol.2. and 427/8 in Vol.3) and then to Ilston by 2-30 p.m. at latest. The return journey will start off from Ilston (probably around 6 o'clock) by the road which crosses the "fine high common" (Fairwood Common) across which Kilvert walked from Killay Station to Ilston that June day in 1878 when no-one met the train and he walked the 4 miles. Perhaps we can pause on the old railway bridge and look down on the derelict platforms which are all that remain of Killay Station----- then on through Sketty and Swansea, back to Brecon for another brief halt and on to Hereford by (we hope) something like 8-30 p.m. If the day is a nice one some fine scenery will have been enjoyed, en route and in Gower; perhaps the weather will favour us, for it will be in "the summer of St. Luke"---as Kilvert called that October week in 1878 when he visited Ilston for the last time (p.427 in Vol.3).

A RECOMMENDED BOOK....."GOWER" by OLIVE PHILLIPS (HALE) first published in 1956; among its many illustrations is one of some of the carving done by the Rev.J.D.Davies, who Kilvert met on one of his visits to Ilston (pp.183/4 in Vol.2)

POSTERS

Many of these newsletters will have one or more POSTERS included with them. PLEASE get them displayed as prominently as possible, wherever you live; they not only advertise the Ilston service but may also excite the curiosity of some of those who have not yet heard of KILVERT'S DIARY and cause them to read it; and this is just what we want to happen. These posters may also cause a few who already know the Diary to enquire about the Society; and although we do NOT want hordes of new members, many of them only superficially interested and soon to drop out, we are always ready to welcome anyone who is keenly interested and anxious to join. SENDING THESE POSTERS TO MEMBERS FAR AFIELD FROM THE ILSTON AREA IS THEREFORE NOT AS FOOLISH AS MIGHT AT FIRST SEEM!!!

THE SOCIETY'S GIFT TO ILSTON CHURCH.....AND AN APPEAL

In response to our offer of a tangible gift to St.Illtyd's Church at Ilston--to mark the occasion and also because of Kilvert's connections with the area 100 or so years ago-- it has been decided that we will provide a substantial part (if not all) of the cost of an OAK STAND for their pre-reformation bell which can no longer be rung and which they are having removed to stand in the nave of the church. It would be nice to think that the Society could pay the whole cost, we could then have a small plate on this stand--to state that it was given by the K.S. on 13th October 1974 etc.etc. The Committee has voted £10 for a gift to Ilston Church; this will be rather less than half the total cost. THERE ARE SURELY ENOUGH MEMBERS WILLING TO SUPPORT THIS IDEA WHO WILL BETWEEN THEM SUBSCRIBE ANOTHER £15 or SO? Any member who wishes to help should send their donation to the Hon.Secretary at 8 Prince Edward Road, Hereford.

THE REV.S.B.WESTHROP OF ILSTON After hearing that Judge Rowe Harding and some helpers came across the grave of the Rev.S.B.Westhrop some years ago and exposed it again after being covered with earth etc. for years I enquired about it and the Judge has very kindly given me the inscription which is on the cross. It reads...Rev.Sterling Browne Westhrop B.A. For 15 years Rector of this parish. Born January 4th 1830. Died November 1st 1885..it can be found beneath the East window and will be cleaned up for our visit on Oct.13th. After reading so much about the Rev.S.B.Westhrop in KILVERT'S DIARY there will no doubt be many who will appreciate this and go to see his grave. Mrs.Westhrop is not buried there.



#### THE LLOWES COMMEMORATION SERVICE---30th June

We were favoured with a fine, dry day...but somewhat misty and the mountains were not therefore as fully revealed as they might have been. Members and friends turned up from near and far (as usual) and the church was apparently full long before 3 o'clock. Still they kept coming, right up to the time of the service. All were seated, somehow or other--by packing one or two extra in each pew and then by bringing benches (that I suspect are seldom used) from the base of the tower and squeezing them in wherever possible, with the last few seated in the porch. Perhaps 250 all told, maybe even a few more than that, and from as far afield as usual. London members, and from the London area; from the South Coast, from Bristol and from Bath; from many areas of Wales, and a coach load of members and friends from Birmingham, got together by one of our V. Ps. Mr. E. F. Jelfs. The coach from Hereford was - as usual - full or almost so. Among those we were all specially pleased to see present was Mr Wynford Vaughan-Thomas and also one of our founder-members who comes whenever possible---Lord Watkins from Brecon, with Lady Watkins; other V. Ps. noticed were Mrs. E. Victor of Hereford; and Canon J. S. Leatherbarrow with Mrs. Leatherbarrow, from Malvern. After a welcome from the Vicar of Clyro--the Rev. D. E. Rees (who is also Vicar of Llowes) the service proceeded as usual, with popular hymns, the lessons read by the Rev. D. N. Lockwood (another V.P) and by our Deputy President, Mr. F. Grice of Worcester; and the Act of Remembrance by the Rev. D. B. James of Talybont-on-Usk a member of the Society, as is the Rev. T. Madoc Jones of Brecon who gave us a thoughtful address, different again from any that I can remember over all the years of these Commemoration Services; I will not quote from it, for it is now available at a modest price with the many others that have been duplicated and which many members have acquired from time to time. As the congregation poured out of church many were seen to pause to read the little plaque on the sundial beside the church path...put up in 1954 when the Rev. D. J. Lane Griffiths was Vicar of Llowes, and dedicated on a beautiful November day by the late Dr Glyn Simon, then Bishop of Swansea & Brecon, and afterwards Archbishop of Wales. It commemorates the Rev. Francis Kilvert's close connections with church and parish of Llowes during his 7 years as curate of nearby Clyro.

Tea was in the Parish Hall at Glasbury-on-Wye; two miles or so further on; a firm of caterers from Kington (Herefordshire) put on an excellent tea for us, and as we had the hall for an hour after tea we had talks and readings from President and Deputy President, followed by some interesting sidelights from several members present...all most enjoyable, and the hour passing quickly away. Many were very interested in the work of one of Mr. Jelf's party from Birmingham which was on show---a comprehensive study of Kilvert and the Diary, with maps, pictures, extracts etc. etc. All done by a schoolgirl of 15. I think I am correct in saying that it is a project which will gain her admission to a college; it is beautifully done and a great credit to her. The President gave her words of congratulation and encouragement from the platform.

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THE PREVIOUS DAY - AN ENJOYABLE WALK For several years past a walk has been arranged for the Saturday prior to the Sunday's service; both in June and in October--for it is realised that often there are distant members in the area for the weekend (or longer) and such walks are an opportunity for them to see some "Kilvert Country" without having to find their own way or to study maps etc. etc. Other members come from a wide area around and usually anything up to 20 or so cars meet at Clyro on the Saturday morning (see p.2 for details of the walk arranged for Saturday 12th Oct...the day prior to the Ilston service; this gives precise details of the usual arrangements).

The walk on 29th June this year (the day prior to the Llowes service) was most enjoyable; and the weather left nothing to be desired. The usual number of cars turned up at Clyro at 11 a.m. with members and friends from near and far, perhaps Swansea and Birmingham the furthest? No, some from Eastbourne, from Barnet and from Bristol. Arrangements had been left in the hands of our three local committee members..Miss Powell & Miss Mantle of Clyro, and Mrs. Mathers of Hay; and they had not only planned an excellent day on the hills, but had also plans for a wet day--fortunately not needed. After a short car run to Llowes Common we all set out on foot to a vantage point from which we looked down on the Wye up to Glasbury Bridge and beyond, with the Black Mountains spread out in front of us--and in the opposite direction across a dip to the Upper Noyadde, the "mountain farm" of the Hills in Kilvert's day...see the numerous references in vol.3, but especially those on pages 279 & 285. Then back to the cars and over the hills to Painscastle and then by Llanbedr Church and on up the steep hill to Penlan Farm (where we had permission to park and picnic). After lunch came a long uphill walk to the site of the "cabin" of the "Solitary" (led by Mr. R. I. Morgan, who has been there several times). The site is perfectly recognisable from Kilvert's description of the visit that he and "Tom Williams of Llowes" made to the old hermit-vicar, the Rev. John Price on 3rd July 1872 in his "sunny green little cwm, secluded steep among the steep green hills". The "little grey hut" is gone, a few stones remain, but one is in no doubt that this IS the spot where it stood, and one can well imagine the scene and the meetings, so vividly described in vol. 2.

Some climbed the hill to where the ganbo was being loaded with mawn for the "Solitary's" fire; others went by a less arduous route; but all met at the site of another abode of the old hermit; the little farmhouse of Pen Cwm, under the famous rocks of the same name, a heap of stones and a few old beams mark its site...in this beautiful corner among the hills. All were ready for the picnic tea by the time we got back to the parked cars; and so ended what some were heard to call "a grand day", no doubt many went home marvelling



at the remoteness of the various abodes of the Rev. John Price...and the distances that they were from his church at Llanbedr.

#### MR KILVERT. WALK SOFTLY

This is the title of a contribution sent to me several years ago by the Rev. R. L. Brown; put on one side because there was not room for it at the time and subsequently mislaid. It has come to light just at the right time, for it deals with Kilvert's visit to Ilston and to much of the area around Ilston and his excellent descriptions of the Gower coast; and Mr. Brown is to give the address at Ilston on October 13th!!! Incidentally this contribution was published (under the same title) in the magazine of THE GOWER SOCIETY fairly recently.

Had you been there you might have seen him. A figure tall with clerical dignity, and a beard that would have done justice to any Fenian in disguise. And on this Whitsun Monday over ninety years ago he might have been seen striding busily but observingly along the four mile route between Killay Station and Ilston Rectory. Of this journey he wrote that same evening that he had walked "over the fine high common through the screaming of peewits and a strong wind blowing from the sea". On this occasion he might well have wondered what was wrong, for on previous occasions when he had visited Ilston his friend Westhorp would meet the train, rich in Victorian colour and rural luxury, from footwarmers in best Birmingham brass to guards in uniforms ablaze with courtesy and timetable lore, and then Westhorp would take him in his "pretty new wagonette" and convey him to the Rectory. But not to worry, Sir, for your host has only misunderstood your postcard of the previous day and has met the wrong train.

Here then, busily walking along the dry lanes and the high paths of Gower on that June day was the Revd. Francis Kilvert, at that time Vicar of Bredwardine in Herefordshire, although for many previous years he had been curate to Mr. Venables at Clyro in Radnorshire. Indeed so long was he there that a later writer could describe him as the "gentle curate of Clyro". His claim to fame rests upon his Diary, in which Dr William Plomer, its editor, notes his ability "to seize upon the essentials and convey a sense of life" so that his writings "afford a detailed and objective picture of life in the country" during the Victorian period. To this Humphrey House's remark must also be added "his great virtue is the power of conveying the physical quality of everything he describes".

Here then is Francis Kilvert, walking to Ilston, and hungry with delight he paints Gower in verbal tones and impressionist colours, full of the sea lyrics and the rambling songs of the countryside. The leisurely stroll of the Victorian, peaceful in the midst of an imperial destiny shines forth in his pages, as does the image of the age when the country parsonage was a place of refinement, leisured by the holy riches of godly living. At Ilston they played croquet on the Rectory lawn and entertained vast numbers of guests for meals, although they only seemed to have possessed one indoor servant, Louisa Sheldon, who was a "capital girl, housemaid, parlourmaid, butler, footman, valet and the mainstay of the family".

The sea so close at hand was inevitably used for enjoyment as well as the droll cultural amusements of their day. At Pwll Du Bay Kilvert bathed but he observed his time with more profit at Langland where he collected specimens of seaweed, which the Westhorp children set "beautifully in paper, they turned out to be lovely specimens". There was time too for the pursuits of the antiquary, as when they visited the "graves of the unknown" between Penmaen and Kilvrough, where he found a cowslip of such beauty that it remained pressed intact in his Diary; or again when they visited Penrice Park to admire its pictures. But from time to time the world, with the solemnity of the daily Times editorial, intruded, as when there was a mine disaster at Killay in which three men were killed. It received the characteristic but detailed entry in his Diary when he noted that it would take three weeks before the water would subside and the bodies be discovered. But these interruptions were soon forgotten.

There were endless days of picnics, wine-drinking, with seagulls scouring overhead. At Langland they had "luncheon among the rocks, the ladies drinking wine out of shells as the cups had been forgotten". This was in October, in days which Kilvert called "the summer of St. Luke". Two days later another luncheon is described by the churchgate at Oxwich, when "an East wind was blowing fresh and strong, the sea was rolling in great and yeasty, and in a splendid sunburst the winter seagulls were running and feeding on the yellow sands. A wild, merry, happy day", marked by "great fun and famous laughing".

His seagull-speckled picture of Gower emerges ripe with all the forcefulness of his amazing prose. He was bound captive by Gower, which he found to be "the cleanest coast I ever saw - no seaweed, no pebbles, hardly a shell - not a speck for miles along the shiny sand, and scarcely even any scent of the sea. But the rocks were covered with millions of barnacles, mussels, limpets and sea snails and there were sea anemones in the little pools along the rocks". And in this Gower the weather always appeared to be superb, even in that October already mentioned, the occasion of his last Gower visit "We walked down the Cwms to Three Cleeves Bay. The morning was perfectly glorious, a brilliant cloudless blue sky, a tender blue haze hung over the green and golden woods like a gauzy veil, and the gossamers shot and twinkled into green and gold in the grass which in the shade of the woods was still hoary with the night's frost".

Oxwich was a favourite haunt "as we lay on the high cliff moor above Oxwich Bay sheltered by some gorse bushes there was no sound except the light surges of the sea beneath us and



the sighing of the wind through the gorse and dry heather. 'They had heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day'. The white gulls were flying about among the low black rocks. Some of them sat on the rocks around the Three Cleeves and some were floating tranquilly upon the sea, rising and falling with the waves."

Only a countryman would observe such detail, but his obvious delight in both coast and country is made explicit in Kilvert's account of Whitsun Tuesday in 1878.

"Barnabay Bright, but the weather wild, cold and wet and stormy. Walked with Westthorp to Penmaen. We went down by the Three Cleeves (Cliffs) Bay through the foxgloves and the fern, among which the white fantail pigeons were walking. The fern and the foxgloves clothe the hillside down to the sandhills. The storm at Penmaen high on the hillside looking seawards was tremendous. We sat on the rocks as the tide came in and watched the wild grey sea and the waves breaking white with foam and the surf dashing high against the black cliffs and falling back in showers of spray while a solitary deserted boat with a bare mast tossed at anchor in the bay".

It was a delight that owed much to grandeur that had its origin of primeval beauty and the impressiveness of its terror in Kilvert's appreciation of the Garden of Eden.

Mumbles had still to be visited, and so in the Rectory wagonette, equipped with various friends, they travelled through "lovely Sketty" which while possessing a nice Church also laid claim to a lychgate "desecrated by the names of all the snobs of Swansea", and they noted the Tramway "upon which ply railway carriages drawn by horses". Finally they reached Oystermouth which Kilvert considered to be almost an Arcadian landscape as depicted by Claud Lorrain, only partially despoiled by the Victorian agency of progress. In his description one almost wonders what has happened to Pan and his pipes.....!

"The lurid copper smoke hung in a dense cloud over Swansea, and the great fleet of oyster boats under the cliff was heaving in the greenest sea I ever saw. We had luncheon upon the cliffs overlooking the white lighthouse tower upon the most seaward of the Mumbles. A shepherd was holloing and driving the sheep of the pasture furiously down a steep place into the sea, and a school of boys came running down the steep green slope, one of them playing "Rosalie the Prairie Flower" on an accordeon as he ran. A steam tug shot out of Swansea Harbour to meet a heavily laden schooner under full press of canvas in the bay, and towed her into port, and the great fleet of oyster boats which had been dredging was coming round the lighthouse point with every shade of white and amber sails gay in the afternoon sun as they ran each other into their moorings under the shelter of the great harbour cliff. As we went along the narrow cliff path among the gorse towards Langland and Caswell Bay, a flock of strange and beautiful black and white birds flew along the rock faces below us towards the lighthouse piping mournfully. They were I suppose a small kind of seagull, but they seemed to me like the spirits of the shipwrecked folk seeking and mourning for their bodies. Among the sighing of the gorse came upon a lift of the wind a faint and solemn tolling of the bell buoy moored off the Mumbles, a solemn awful sound, for the bell seemed to be tolling for the souls of those who had gone down at sea and warning the living of their graves. When we came down from the Cliff and were going through the town to our inn a furious whirlwind of dust arose and everything was hidden in the dense white cloud. People were obliged to grope for the walls of houses and cry out to carriages which they could hear but not see not to drive over them".

For Kilvert it was a time of meeting his clerical contemporaries. Parson Bonley of Sketty was an old friend of the Ilston Rectory, to which he and his sister would walk and stay the night. Then they "sat up till one o'clock disputing about the Athanasian Creed. Bonley taking the High Church ground and Westthorp and I the liberal view. Of course we left off exactly where we began, and no one was convinced. I hate arguing".

But one of the most delightful clerical recipients of Kilvert's pen is undoubtedly the Antiquarian and Anglo-Catholic Rector of Llanmadoc, J.D.Davies. To his Rectory they travelled over high commons and then through pretty lanes, catching glimpses every so often of the Carmarthenshire coast. They found the Rectory like a 'bare unfurnished ugly barrack', while Mr Davies looked like a Roman priest, close shaven and shorn, dressed in seedy black, a long coat and broad shovel hat. He took us into the Churchyard, but let us find our own way into the Church, which was beautifully furnished and adorned but fitted up in the high ritualistic style. The Vicar said that when he came to the place the Church was meaner than the meanest hovel in the village.....

The Vicar invited us to join him at his luncheon to which we added the contents of our own picnic basket. He had a very good pie to which we did justice for we were all very hungry with the sea air. We were waited on by a tall, clean old woman with a severe cap border who waits on Mr Davies and is so clean that she washes the kitchen floor four times a day. She used to wash her master's bedroom floor as often till he caught a cold which frightened her and she desisted.

"We suggested that she might be of Flemish blood which would account for her cleanliness. The idea had never occurred to Mr.Davies and he was much struck by it. The house was thoroughly untidy and bachelorlike and full of quaint odds and ends. The rigging of a boat stood in the Hall, for the Vicar is a great sailor and sails Carmarthen Bay in a boat built by himself. A quantity of pretty wood



fretwork and carved work also stood about in the Hall and the rooms, and miniature bookcases and cabinets for drawing room tables made by himself and sold for the benefit of Cheriton Church Restoration Fund. He is very clever and can turn his hand to anything. Besides which he seemed to me to be an uncommonly good fellow, a truly simple-minded, single-hearted man".

"The Vicar showed us what he called his newest toy - a machine almost exactly like a sewing machine - for sawing out the pattern in his wood carving. He promised to make me a little 10/- bookcase".

Kilvert was to die the year after his last visit to Gower in 1878, but for the moment let us leave him walking. Walking through those summerlike dust-stirring Gower lanes awaiting those seemingly endless picnics in places always adorned with the crying of the gulls overhead and the swell of the breakers underneath.

Walk Softly, Mr. Kilvert, for your day is short.

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#### PILGRIMAGE TO CAPEL-Y-FFIN

The June newsletter (page 5) suggested that as many as possible of our members might join the pilgrimage to the tomb of Father Ignatius on Saturday the 31st August this year... and further suggested that maybe some may like to walk over the mountain from the Olchon Valley and offered to put any such intending walkers in touch with each other. Here is an account of what happened.

The day started dull and overcast, promising rain. Nevertheless several turned up at the rendezvous in the Olchon Valley in the hope that the weather would clear and that they could walk over; but it would not have been wise to start, for the top is more than 2,000 feet and was shrouded in mist. It was disappointing, for some were from Hereford, some from Malvern and one from Bristol. So instead of a walk of not more than 3 miles "over the top" they came round by car, nearly 25 miles-down one valley and back up the other!!! By now it was mid-day and a suggestion of clearing skies; so an early picnic lunch was rewarded by the rain ceasing and the sun appearing. Members from the Forest of Dean arrived and a party set off to walk to a higher spot in order to enjoy the beautiful prospect of mountains dotted with sheep and crystal clear-all bathed in sunshine. Coming back we called at the little church (Kilvert's "little owl"...p.76 in Vol.1) and looked in at the Baptist Chapel nearby. By now the car park (a damp meadow) was filling up and more cars arriving every minute. Before 2 o'clock a very large concourse of people had assembled near the farmhouse where Kilvert saw the blue eyed girl washing at a tub by the brookside (p.219 in Vol.1)...the clergy were robing in the little church and the Abergavenny Town Band was getting into position to head the procession. Members of our Society had indeed turned up in force; 20 at least, maybe nearer 30; and one of the robed clergy was our V.P. the Rev. William Price of Lampeter, another being-of course- the Rev. Ivor Davies of Hay-on-Wye, for he is in charge of Capel-y-ffin. Then we moved off, clergy and band at the head and surely 200 or more following up the narrow road to the Monastery, some half mile or so away, all joining in the long hymn which lasted all the way. The roofless Monastery Church with the tomb of Father Ignatius in the centre was full, many outside heard the relayed service through loudspeakers. The highlight was a splendid sermon by Bishop Partridge (Assistant Bishop of Hereford) who was deputising for our new Bishop who is temporarily indisposed; in it he referred to Kilvert's visits to the Monastery when it was being built and to his meetings with Father Ignatius. The weather had been kind and the views through the glassless windows strikingly beautiful-when it all changed into a short sharp storm just as the service was drawing to a close, and a sea of umbrellas went up. Then a quick dash into the Monastery itself, for tea and to view the many books, pictures and other items connected with Ignatius that were displayed. By the time these had been inspected and many friends greeted and chatted with the sun had come out again and everything was bright and clear once more; this persisted for the run up the valley, over the Gospel Pass, down to Hay---and home.

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#### THE ST. HARMON CHURCH ORGAN

The April (1974) newsletter had on p.6 an appeal to members so inclined to send something towards the £1,000 required for the restoration of this organ. Many members responded, some very generously-so that with the sum voted from our funds added to these donations nearly £30 was sent to Mr. J.M. Williams (churchwarden) at Lingen Farm, St. Harmon. A few weeks ago Mr. Williams wrote, thanking us again for our help and asking that their grateful thanks be sent (per this newsletter) to all who subscribed; he gave the good news that the £1,000 had now been raised and this organ which was there in Kilvert's time is now fully restored...they now look forward to the next visit of the Society to St. Harmon; those who were at that splendid service on that wonderful October day in 1973 (and afterwards in the Hall at Pantydwyr) no doubt look forward to it also!!!

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IN MEMORY OF WILLIAM PLOMER A nice gesture by one of our Radnorshire members must not pass unrecorded; he has planted a Copper Beech "in memory of our late President, a living Memorial". This hard working young farmer tells me that he plants a good many trees and keep a register of them. He farms in Mid-Radnorshire, not far from Llandrindod Wells; yet manages to get to most of our Commemoration Services, and came with us to Langley Burrell and to Wootton-by-Woodstock. Dr. Plomer got to know him and I saw them having a few words together on more than one occasion.

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#### A KILVERT CONFERENCE

(8)

Some little time ago I heard that Mr Frederick Grice and Mr Laurence Le Quesne were thinking about organising a CONFERENCE on Francis Kilvert and that they hoped that they could arrange for it to be held at Attingham Park, the Shropshire adult educational college. They now tell me that arrangements have been completed and that it will be from the 6th to the 8th of January next year and that all who are interested are asked to write to Mr.A.L.Le Quesne at 22 St.John's Hill, Shrewsbury for details. It seems as if numbers will have to be limited to about 30 so early application is advisable; even so, some will probably be too late by reason of the restricted number who can attend. Attingham Park is a fine 18th century mansion three miles outside Shrewsbury, owned by The National Trust and used as stated above. Mr Le Quesne says..."The conference arises out of our awareness of the increasing public interest in Kilvert, and especially out of the common conviction that it is high time that something was done to establish Kilvert studies on a proper academic basis. Thirty-five years after the original publication of the Diary, and in spite of the widespread recognition of it as a considerable piece of Victorian prose writing and a major Victorian social document, no proper critical analysis of it has ever been attempted, and there has been no systematic study of the diarist himself, his family background, or his social setting, nor yet of the history of the manuscript. The recent death of William Plomer further emphasises the urgent need for action before other valuable sources of information are lost. The conference has been launched with the knowledge and goodwill of the Society".

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#### CHIPPENHAM TOWN HALL---A KILVERT LECTURE

This is advance notice of a LECTURE by Mr Frederick Grice at The Town Hall, Chippenham, on Saturday 25th January 1975.....under the auspices of Chippenham and District Society of Arts. It will be billed as---THE DIARY OF FRANCIS KILVERT, A Study (with illustrations) of Kilvert's pictures of Radnorshire and Wiltshire in the late 19th century. It will be at 7-30 p.m. and the charge for admission is likely to be 25p (the usual for such events). Tickets can be obtained from the Secretary (S.C.Western Esq. O.B.E. 31a, Rowden Hill, Chippenham) from Committee members, or from Leonards (Electrical) Limited, 20 The Bridge, Chippenham. There will be seating for 200 and everyone will be welcome. It is likely that refreshments will be available.

Here is an opportunity to spread knowledge about Kilvert and the Diary; our members in the Chippenham area are asked to do their best to make this lecture known as widely as possible; so that Chippenham Town Hall will be FULL.

(Ample car parking available)

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#### CHRISTMAS CARDS

The June newsletter contained a short item about the 1974 Christmas Card (THE GOSPEL PASS) ... but this is the time to remind members about cards in general.

There are now NINE different cards available - all with the same simple greeting ..... "With Best Wishes for Christmas and the New Year".

They are (briefly)...Bredwardine Vicarage; Bredwardine Church; Clyro Church 1865; Clyro Village about 1890; Hardenhuish Church and Langley Burrell Church; Broad Street, Hay, about 1908; A Black Mountains farm fifty years ago; The Otters Pool on the Wye near Clyro; and now The Gospel Pass in the Black Mountains.

Packets of 5 of any 1 kind are 22½p plus 5½p postage. Postage on two packets is 7p. on three packets 9p; on four packets 11p.

Special Offer 5 "Gospel Pass" cards and one each of the other 8 cards for 56p - plus 9p postage.

ALL PRICES INCLUDE ENVELOPES AND POSTAGES ARE THOSE CURRENT NOW --- WE ARE PROMISED A FURTHER RISE IN POSTAGE RATES IN THE NEAR FUTURE---SO ORDER EARLY, ...from the Hon. Secretary, 8 Prince Edward Road, Hereford.

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#### A FORTHCOMING PUBLICATION---WANTED, A NAME FOR IT

Work is proceeding towards getting together the contents of the Society's next publication; although it will not be out in 1974 after all. Early 1975 is now the hope. It will be a "bumper" booklet; bigger than anything previously. Much more costly, of course; even so, cheaper than if the contents were split up into several slimmer booklets. It will contain re-prints of "THE SOLITARY OF LLANBEDR plus RADNORSHIRE LEGENDS and SUPERSTITIONS" and of the "IGNATIUS THE MONK" booklet issued some years ago as well as such new items as "THE HONEYMOON DIARY OF DORA KILVERT" and "EXTRACTS FROM THE DIARIES OF THE REV.R.L.VENABLES" with other items such as one with a WILTSHIRE theme and another with references to the "BALL AT CLIFFORD PRIORY".

SUGGESTIONS FOR A NAME for THIS MAMMOTH BOOKLET ARE SOLICITED. We have had a "KILVERT MISCELLANEA" and we have had "THE KILVERT SAGA" (MORE CHAPTERS FROM)

Please send your suggestion in---to the Hon.Sec. soon as possible.

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### KILVERT'S DIARY ---- THE THREE VOLUMES

It is now several years since the publishers allowed the Society to become stockists of the three volumes etc...and only then because of the mass of complaints from members and friends that they just could not buy sets of three volumes from bookshops in so very many towns. They didn't stock them, neither were they prepared to order them for a particular customer---in many cases saying that they were "out of print", "unobtainable" or something like that. It took us some time to persuade the publishers to put the Society on the list of stockists, but eventually we convinced them with the many letters of complaint and enquiry that we had received from would-be buyers of the set of three volumes. In the last few years a really staggering number of sets has been sold (the Society often buys a dozen sets at a time, never less than six sets) and has sent them all over G.B. and some overseas. Very recently sets have been posted to the University of South Mississippi and to the University of Copenhagen; and in one week no less than 8 sets were posted to addresses all over G.B. (from Perth to South Devon and from Lancashire to Kent; and even one set to Oxford---to a lady who said she wouldn't bother her local shop again, the last time she wanted a set of the three volumes for a present it took them half-an-hour to find their one and only set!!!) THE MESSAGE THEREFORE IS.. ..IF YOU EVER HEAR ANYONE SAYING THAT THEY HAVE DIFFICULTY IN BUYING A SET OF KILVERT'S DIARY: ESPECIALLY IF THEY HAVE BEEN TOLD THEY ARE NOT OBTAINABLE: PLEASE TELL THEM THAT THEY CAN BE OBTAINED IMMEDIATELY FROM THE HON.SEC. OF THE KILVERT SOCIETY IN HEREFORD.

AT PRESENT THE PRICE IS £12 THE SET: AND AT PRESENT THE POSTAGE IS 36p. How much longer will these prices hold? We know that postage rates are going up again in the near future, but I can only guess that the present edition of the three volumes must be beginning to run low. When it has sold out my guess is that it might be a considerable time before the next edition appears---and when it does at what price? Certainly not at £12 the set. How much more? Your guess is as good as mine.

The present handsome set (one buyer wrote back to say that they are the most handsome books on his shelves) are, of course, exactly the same as the very first edition, back in 1938/39 and 40; even the contents of each and every page is exactly the same now as then. Only the binding, the forewords, and the index is different...and nowadays there are nice dust-covers with photographs of some of the folk of the Diary.

Also stocked...the abridged edition(paperback) at 95p; plus 17p postage; or in hardback (a handsome volume) at £2.50 plus 22½p postage.

William Plomer's children's book "The Butterfly Ball and the Grasshoppers Feast" (beautifully illustrated) at £1.95 plus 22½p.

and William Plomer's selection of poems - "Celebrations" in paperback at 65p (packing and postage included)

(PROFITS ALL GO TO THE SOCIETY'S FUNDS---THE MORE THE MERRIER---AND THEN ONE DAY PERHAPS THE LONG HOPED FOR MUSEUM WILL BECOME A REALITY: AND WE SHALL WANT ALL THE MONEY WE CAN MAKE...AND MORE).

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### PRIVATE CHRONICLES

This is the title of a book by R.A.Fothergill which is reviewed by Geoffrey Grigson in the issue of "Country Life" for 27th June 1974; an extract from this review will no doubt interest many members. Geoffrey Grigson says that Professor Fothergill made him unhappy when he said of Kilvert---"having learned to feel in matters a presence that disturbs him with the joy of elevated thoughts this 19th Century diarist registers its influence in many pages of descriptive effusion".

To this Geoffrey Grigson says "No. Kilvert does not effuse, he presents. I believe that the best diarists present things, bare of the expressions of elevated thoughts, as in more or less degree numinous. That seems to me as true of Pepys as of Kilvert or of Dorothy Wordsworth."

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### THE OLD CONTEMPTIBLES

In July and August what was probably the last parade of the dwindling survivors of the British Army who fought in the early days of the 1914-1918 war took place in London and elsewhere for "tis sixty years since" ----- the very words which Kilvert used in 1875 (Friday 18th June) when he recalled that it was then sixty years since the Battle of Waterloo and that "the veterans who meet at the yearly banquet must be growing very few and feeble. It must be a small gathering now, and soon will be fewer and then there will be none".

(Vol.3 page 198 ---- page 288 in the abridged edition)



## KILVERT AND THE 1974 SALISBURY FESTIVAL

This was the heading to an item in the June newsletter (page 7) — when I expressed the hope that some Hampshire or Wiltshire member who was present at Wilton House on Sunday, the 14th of July would let me know what sort of a performance Alan Bennett put on when he "did" Kilvert for an audience which included Princess Alexandra.

All I have had so far is a very brief report from Miss Muriel Kilvert...who said that "it was a very pleasant and distinguished evening" and that "A.B. is likely to repeat the performance in Bath or Bristol. There was a restrained innuendo from time to time."

Another member sent me cuttings from Hampshire newspapers; I will now give extracts from them without comment (none is needed!!)

The Salisbury Times says — "though not just a run-of-the-mill curate, Kilvert, as presented by Mr Bennett was a man with worldly instincts and a fondness for certain women and little girls". The 'Echo' says "Last night Princess Alexandra stayed at Wilton House, the home of Lord and Lady Pembroke. She also saw Patrick Garland's presentation of the light comedy 'Francis Kilvert and his Diary'."

Will Bath and Bristol members watch for any announcement of a repeat performance? and afterwards send me reports of it?

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## IN LLANDAFF CATHEDRAL

Readers of Kilvert's Diary will know how often the Thomas family crop up in it; not only the many members of that branch who lived at Llanthomas but there is also mention of Thomas's of Welfield, of Brecon, of Llwyn Madoc, of Pencerrig and of London. On the very first page of Volume one Francis Kilvert is staying with some of the Thomas family at Mitcham (at a house known as Cranmers) where he went riding with Llewellyn and Owen, and with them visited the Crystal Palace. This was in January 1870; next month Kilvert was back in Clyro and at a dinner party where he met "Miss Thomas of Llwyn Madoc" and talked with her "about Cranmers, Llewellyn, Owen, Hugh etc."

Those of us who visit Llandaff Cathedral will therefore be interested in a monument which is to be found (at floor level almost) against the north wall of the main body of the Cathedral. It reads: "In Memory of Henry Thomas of Llwyn Madoc in Brecknockshire Esq. for 18 years Chairman and Deputy Chairman of Quarter Sessions for this county. This monument is erected by the Magistrates in his courts and many private friends in grateful acknowledgement of his public services and in sorrowful recollection of his many social qualities; He was the eldest son of Evan Thomas of Llwyn Madoc-Esq. who filled for many years the same honorable office. Born in London 16th January 1808. Educated at Westminster and St. John's Cambridge. He died suddenly at Dover 24th December 1863".

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## KILVERT AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE

There are a number of references to the Crystal Palace in Kilvert's Diary some in each of the three volumes; indeed, volume one starts with just such a visit. Perhaps it is the account on pages 43 and 44 of volume three which is the most striking, this is the account of Kilvert's visit on 26th June 1874 for the Handel Festival. It is this particular entry which has prompted a new member (Mr.K.F.Day) of Banstead (Surrey) to send me the following very interesting item concerning it:-

The Fifth Triennial Festival was held under the same direction as those which had preceded it — on the 22nd, 24th and 26th June 1874; when "Messiah" and "Israel in Egypt" were given on the first and third days and a selection from Handel's other works was performed on the second day. An alteration was, on this occasion, made in the form of the selection programme by confining the first part to sacred music only, and the second part to secular music only, instead of performing the two interspersedly as on former occasions. The works drawn upon for the first part were the "Occasional Oratorio", "Saul", "Samson", "Jephthah", "Susanna", "Theodora" and the "Jubilate Deo"; and the second part comprised the "Fourth Organ Concerto" (played by Mr.W.T.Best), and extracts from "Acis and Galatea", Dryden's "Ode", "Alcina", "Semele", "Alexander's Feast" and "Joshua". The band remained as before; while the chorus was somewhat increased in number. The principal vocalists were Mademoiselle Titians, Madame Sinico, Madam Otto Alvesleben, Madame Lemmens-Sherrington, Madame Trebelli-Bettini and Madam Patey, Mr Sins Reeves, Mr Cummings, Mr Edward Lloyd, Mr Kerr-Gedge, Mr Vernon Rigby, Signor Foli, Signor Agnesi and Mr Santley. Sir Michael Costa was the Conductor.

From the "Illustrated Souvenir" of the GREAT TRIENNIAL HANDEL FESTIVAL —  
Crystal Palace, June 1926.  
(The 23rd Handel Festival—the last ever held)

I took part in the above Festival — when "Israel in Egypt" was performed on 10th June 1926.....K.F.Day



### KILVERT'S HOST IN OXFORD

Mr Grice has just sent in the following very interesting contribution on Mr Charles Symonds, with whom Kilvert stayed when he went to Oxford in May 1874 (Volume 3 pp.21-24). Mr Grice says that the information came from the Oxford County Librarian. Interesting associations arise out of it, these will perhaps be of greatest interest to our Wiltshire members, especially those of the Chippenham area; comments will be found in my footnote to this valued contribution. (Hon.Sec.)

Mr Charles Symonds apparently began his career in a humble capacity as the driver of the Oxford-London coach, but eventually he set up as a horse-dealer and stable-keeper in Oxford, and made a considerable amount of money in the days before boating and cricket overtook riding as the undergraduate sport. The Prince of Wales was his best patron, and the days when the future Edward the Seventh and his brother were in residence in Oxford brought him a kind of Indian summer of prosperity. When Kilvert went to stay with him in 1874 he had no less than 250 horses in his stables in Holywell Street. Towards the end of his life, however, presumably after Kilvert's visit and before his death in 1888, he incurred serious losses, and his obituary notice in the Oxford Magazine (15 Feb. 1888) mentions a remarkable subscription list (which the Prince headed), started to put him on his feet. Perhaps it was the kind Charles Symonds who was partly responsible for the excessive regard that Kilvert always seems to have had for the Prince of Wales.

Those who turn up the relevant pages in Volume 3 will see that Kilvert "went to Oxford to stay with the kind hospitable Charles Symonds in Holywell St., Mrs. Robert Dallin's father and mother." But those of us who like to probe deeper (and there are many of us) will look up Dallins in the Index and see that they have many mentions in Volumes 2 and 3 and that some of the family came to live at Langley Lodge in 1872 (following other of Kilvert's friends--the Hockins) and that they were soon dining at Langley House, entertaining the Hussars when they came through; entertaining Kilvert at Langley Lodge, going to spend Christmas at Oxford, and then in July 1874 having a sale and moving away-----maybe because Capt.Dallin was a military man?

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### FROM THE PAST. . . . . (a poem by a Cheltenham member)

We feel his presence follow still,  
On those sweet slopes of Clyro hill,  
Or wandering near the limpid Wye  
We catch the echo of a sigh,

Borne on the warm and western wind,  
Was it a trick of teasing mind?  
Or does his happy spirit yet  
Linger where love and duty met?

At Brobury in the rustling beech  
Beside the winding river reach,  
Woodwarblers sang, a joyful sound,  
As they have sung each Summer round,

Since on his ear their music fell,  
And on his spirit cast a spell;  
As all in nature's generous care  
Moved him to love and grateful prayer.

Surely such love as he has shown,  
For mountains grand, or snowdrop lone,  
For cottage hearth or farmhouse friend,  
Is love which knows no finite end.

..... Gwendoline Calderbank