

THE KILVERT SOCIETY

Formed (in 1948) to foster an interest in the Rev. Francis Kilvert,
his work, his diary and the countryside he loved.

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FEBRUARY 1983

Dear Member,

Over the years the phrase "Kilvert weather" has come to be used in describing the fine climatic conditions so often prevailing at Society events. It was entirely unapplicable for our last event in 1982, the service at Glaschwmm! There were torrential rains, strong winds and the occasional rumble of thunder. The beauty of the remote valley was completely obscured by thick clouds; yet members who attended were full of praise for what they assured me was a really memorable event! Our thanks are due in the first place to the Archdeacon of Brecon (Ven. Owen Jones of Newbridge) who not only arranged the service for us but also, in the course of a day of many engagements, was present at the church; to the volunteer organist, Mr. Lockhart of Birmingham; and to our two Committee members, Rev. G.W.E. Rooke and Rev. D.T.W. Price who respectively conducted the service and preached the sermon. Mr. Price has given the Society many an admirable sermon, but this address, based on the Glaschwmm entry in the Diary and expanded into a survey of the village's social and religious history, was regarded by many as his finest yet. The church was packed (extra seating had to be brought in) and the singing hearty. Then out of this hallowed spot - for the Archdeacon had told the congregation that here in the 10th. century there was a "clas", a monastery and centre of learning - into the rain and wind, down to the Village Hall! Here yet again was the warm Radnorshire hospitality Kilvert recorded, and it was touching that the parishioners took delight in that for once there would be services on two successive Sundays; and even more that I was asked by several people when the Society would come again! The Society's appreciation has been conveyed to the churchwarden and the ladies of the parish.

The walk the previous day had been favoured by better weather. A party including members from Cornwall, Devon, the London area and Cheshire, and led again by Mr. R.I. Morgan, proceeded to Penycraig on the high ground between Llanbedr and Llandeilo Graban and thence walked over the hills to above Llanbwehllyn Pool. Conditions underfoot were wet but those properly shod, professed enjoyment of the walk. After a picnic lunch the party proceeded to Aberedw, where a heavy shower necessitated shelter in the church.

Looking back over 1982, I cannot but think it has been a successful year; 35 new members, including 3 from the U.S.A. and 2 from Australasia, the meetings were well attended, and interesting developments arising from the Fanny Kilvert letter to Mrs. Venables and Mrs. Teresa Williams's discovery of the report of Kilvert's leaving Langley Burrell. With regard to this latter, the full report is published in this newsletter, as is Mrs. Fleming's letter (briefly mentioned in our last issue) - in that these have aroused so much interest among members, that I have been asked if they could be reproduced. At this point I am reminded that I have had very many letters thanking me for the quality and interest of our newsletters. The thanks are directed to the wrong person, so here I would thank publicly and very gratefully those members who have taken the time and trouble to write articles!

Our 1983 programme is as follows:-

Friday, April 29th.

A.G.M. and Social Evening at Hereford Shire Hall at 7 p.m. Our member, Rev. W.L. Paterson (vicar of Madley and Blakemere) will show slides of the Border Country. Mr. Paterson has a great reputation as a photographer.

Saturday, April 30th.

Walk. Meet at Baskerville Arms, Clyro, at 12 noon.
Picnic lunch (and tea if desired). Stout walking gear.

Saturday, May 21st.

Coach excursion to Oxford and neighbourhood. Leave Hereford Town Hall at 9.30 a.m. Route will be via Ledbury, Tewkesbury and Chipping Norton. Brief visits to Wootton-by-Woodstock, Holly Bank and Church Handborough. Picnic lunch at Oxford Roundabout. Afternoon - St. Barnabas Church, by coach to Bradmore Road (home of Mayhew). Then to be dropped near Wadham. Members to make their own arrangements for tea. The cost will be approximately £4.50. Those wishing to participate can let me know at the A.G.M. or by phone. It would be possible to arrange to pick up members en route; and other members might like to join us - and would of course be welcomed - at some of the stopping places. We shall, as we always do, hire a coach from Yeomans Canyon Travel, Hereford - a bright yellow with lettering in green and black.

Sunday, July 10th.

3 p.m. Service at St. John's Roman Catholic Church, Bath, by kind permission of Canon James J. Kelly.

Saturday, August 20th.

Motorcade.

Saturday, September 24th.

Walk.

Sunday, September 25th.

3 p.m. Service at Colva Church (Radnorshire) by kind permission of Rev. G.N. Rees.

There will, of course, be fuller details concerning the events of the second half of the year in our June and September newsletters.

The Committee and I naturally hope that we may meet our members at one or more of these events.

Yours sincerely,

E.J.C. West

Hon. Secretary.

The above letter had been written before the sad news of Mr. Grice's death. The eloquent tribute to him by his old friend, Rev. D.N. Lockwood, sums up his career and character, but I would add a few sentences to acknowledge the very great contribution he made not only as Chairman of the Committee but also to the compilation of the newsletters. As Chairman, his easy yoke made burdens light, and his enthusiasm was infectious. For many years, the fruits of his researches into the Diary have regularly been published in the Society's newsletters. Indeed, since 1977, he contributed to every issue, including this present one, both as reviewer and researcher. Further, those present at our functions will recall his easy, affable manner in conducting affairs. The Society has suffered a great loss, but has cause for deep gratitude for all his work in promoting interest in Kilvert.

Two days after Mr. Grice's death, news was received of the death of Mr. Josiah Wragg of Glasbury-on-Wye. A member of many year's standing, he was a regular attendant at our events, in the company of his wife, to whom we express our deep sympathy.

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FREDERICK GRICE

1910 - 1983

It is with a sense of personal loss that I write this small tribute to our Deputy President whose sudden death has stunned us all.

Frederick Grice had many interests and was a man of great culture. Besides the Kilvert Society he was also President of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society and in both he played a prominent role.

Mr. and Mrs. Grice came to the Midlands when he was appointed Head of the English Department at the Worcester College of Education. His lectures were appreciated by a far wider audience than just the students: he was much in demand at Evening Courses. Indeed, that is how I met him more than twenty years ago. In fact, it was during a discussion at the close of a lecture that Canon J.S. Leatherbarrow and I introduced Fred to Francis Kilvert: he soon outstripped us far in his knowledge. As a lecturer he was noted for his clarity of thought, he never wandered off the point and one realized that what appeared to come so easily was the fruit of considerable preparation. Every lecture was neat in form and original in thought. He had a wonderful gift for opening up an author's mind to his audience: he was very perceptive. He was never, never dull.

The name Frederick Grice is well-known to anyone who has dealings with children and literature. He wrote many excellent books for young people, including "Bonny Pit Laddie", "The Black Hand Gang" and "The Oak and the Ash", all published by the Oxford University Press. Several have been televised as serials, the most recent being "The Courage of Andy Robson". He was awarded the Other Award in 1977 for his contribution to fiction for children and characteristically he was very modest about it.

He was also a very good poet and displayed those same qualities of neatness of form and clarity of expression that he displayed in his lecturing.

For all interested in Francis Kilvert his work, published this year, "Francis Kilvert and his World" will ever be a mine of the information that Fred so painstakingly discovered and compiled. We shall ever be grateful to him for this.

Gwen Grice was always a superb support to her husband and the combined charm and humour of them both made them an admirable and fascinating pair who brought sparkle and laughter into any gathering.

I shall always consider that Fred brought together the great assets of a keen mind and true tolerance. Some people with his particular gifts and intellect might have become merely pedantic, but Fred's patience, understanding and concern made him kind. He had an immense joy in life, he lived it with real vigour and zest to the very last.

He will be missed by so many people.

D.N. Lockwood,

BOOK REVIEWS

1. KILVERT'S DIARY - APRIL-JUNE 1870, THE SANDFORD NOTEBOOK.

The National Library of Wales. Aberystwyth, 1982. £10. 00.

This volume, excellently edited and presented (except perhaps for an erratically spaced passage on p.49) contains the whole of the contents of one of the two Kilvert notebooks still in existence - that given to Jeremy Sandford by Mrs. Essex Hope. It is a poignant reminder of what we have lost by the destruction by Mrs. Hope of the remaining nineteen diaries. It contains, for instance, one of the most beautiful passages Kilvert ever wrote - the description of the Dawn Chorus that he heard as he was walking home in the early morning after his vigil over Mr. Venables's mare. It is difficult to understand how William Plomer came to omit this passage; but there are others, such as the picture of the Whitney orchards in bloom which are also of high quality; and the episode of the death of Gipsy (which some may remember the editor criticising as far too tedious) seems to me of real value as a valuable insight into the benighted state of veterinary science in the nineteenth century.

But this volume is invaluable not merely because it gives us what no reader of the three volume edition can find. It points the way for any future Kilvert editor. As we are beginning to be only too clearly aware the Plomer version of Kilvert's Diary is full of errors which the publishers tend to perpetuate from issue to issue. Dafydd Ifans and Kathleen Hughes have approached their task with greater care; and not only have they provided a more accurate text, they have illuminated certain incomprehensibilities with a series of timely notes. What we really need now is an annotated Kilvert, a volume with numerous notes clearing up the many ambiguities that occur in the text - explaining, for instance, what Kilvert is doing at Mitcham in the opening pages, who his hosts were, and how he had come to know them; and, later, why he refers to Squire Ashe as 'an elderly clergyman', and what exactly he meant when he felt aggrieved that all the Francis Kilverts had been excluded from Maria Kilvert's will, etc. It would be a big task, but by no means beyond the combined wisdom and knowledge of the Kilvert Society. In the meanwhile we must be grateful to Mr. Ifans and Mrs. Hughes for showing us how to present Kilvert with the care he deserves.

F. Grice.

2. FRANCIS KILVERT AND HIS WORLD by Frederick Grice (Published by Caliban Books)

When Kilvert's Diary was first published, some forty-five years ago, remarkably little was known about the Diarist's early life and background. Its editor, William Plomer, had been able to elicit a certain amount of information, mainly from Kilvert's nephew, Perceval Smith, who had brought the manuscript of the Diary to his attention, and from enquiries made in the places where Kilvert had lived; but the total sum thus gleaned was scanty in comparison with the body of information which has subsequently been uncovered. This, in the early days of the Society by Oswin Prosser, mainly, and over the last decade by our Deputy President, Mr. Grice, whose new book, Francis Kilvert and his World, has recently been published, and which must surely confirm its author as the foremost authority on the Diary.

It was Mr. Grice, in fact, who first undertook to integrate and assess all that had been written about the Diary and its author in the Society's newsletters and its various publications, supplemented by his own researches, in his first publication on the subject, Francis Kilvert, Priest and Diarist, which enjoyed considerable success. This was written almost ten years ago, and by the time it had gone out of print the results of his continuing researches had accumulated to an extent where it was obvious that only a considerably amplified and more ambitious volume would do justice to his subject. This, in Francis Kilvert and his World, has now appeared, and all ardent Kilvertians who read it will appreciate what a debt of gratitude its author has placed us under for the dedicated research and reflection, over many years, which has gone into its compilation.

The task of such an undertaking was not eased by the fact that only six letters of the many hundreds Kilvert must have written have so far come to light; and of the five journals and memoirs written by his family and acquaintances (those of his father, sisters Emily and Dora, Mr. Venables and Mary Bevan) none contains more than a brief and passing reference to him. Just as surprisingly, the log-book of Clyro School, which he so assiduously attended, fails to mention him at all. Consequently, Mr. Grice's task in assembling his material, has been more than usually arduous.

Of course, the picture, even now, is far from complete, and may never be finished, but the fact that there are still enigmas to be solved only adds, perhaps, to the Diary's fascination.

As its title implies, Francis Kilvert and his World is not concerned merely with biography and facts. Its author engages his considerable knowledge of mid-Victorian social history to set the Diary in its contemporary context, besides exercising shrewd and considered judgement upon the personality of the Diarist himself.

Wisely, he avoids setting Kilvert, as a person, upon a pedestal, as so many are inclined to do. In viewing the character of the Diarist with a detached and unbiased eye he does not, for instance, flinch from discussing what William Plomer succinctly termed "certain peculiarities in his (Kilvert's) character", and in particular his adoration of young girls, a subject which has engrossed the critical faculties of several writers. If the present writer of this notice may be permitted to add his own humble thoughts on this sensitive topic it would be to say that in recording his acts and emotions in such a self-revelatory fashion Kilvert has perhaps made himself the victim of his own honesty and frankness. After all, is not anyone somewhat exceptional who can fairly claim not to have "certain peculiarities", of one sort or another, in his personality? The only difference between most people and Kilvert is that very few would be so artless and candid as to admit them, even to a diary.

Francis Kilvert and his World is well illustrated, with some twenty full-page photos of the personalia and places of the Diary, many of which may be new to Members, and there is an excellent supplementary chapter, entitled "Francis Kilvert as a Clergyman", contributed by our committee-member, the Reverend D.T.W. Price.

It is to be hoped that the devotion, skill and energy, which has gone into the writing of this important book, will be rewarded by as wide a readership as possible, not least among the members of our Society.

R.I.M.

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Copies of Francis Kilvert and his World can be obtained from: The Hon. Publications Secretary, The Kilvert Society, Heulwen, Castle Gardens, Hay-on-Wye, via Hereford. Cheques and remittances should be made payable to 'The Kilvert Society' and accompany all orders. It is hoped, also, that copies may be available at the forthcoming A.G.M. (All profits from sales will go to the Society's funds). Prices: Hardback, £10. 94. including postage; paperback, £5. 62. including postage

3. MAUD HEATH'S CAUSEWAY, CHIPPENHAM, WILTS - A BRIEF GUIDE BY K.R. CLEW.

(Obtainable from Mr. J. Payne, Old Brewery House, Langley Burrell, Chippenham, Wilts. at 20p. A stamped addressed envelope of at least 9" x 5" to be included).

The index to the Diary gives merely 4 references to "Maud Heath", and to members lacking knowledge of Wiltshire it may seem that Mr. Clew's latest mini-guide may not have much to offer. Yet a glance at the map provided will prove otherwise, for the causeway passes through Kellaways and East Tytherton, spots very frequently mentioned, and it becomes immediately apparent that the causeway was far more familiar to him than the route from Clyro to Hay. Thus it is that Mr. Clew is able to provide yet another valuable leaflet for all interested in the Diary.

He gives, in clear and concise prose, the historical background to the causeway and traces the route from St. Paul's, Chippenham, via Kellaways and East Tytherton (with special reference to the Moravian settlement there) to Wick Hill, where the scene on August 21st. 1873, inspired Kilvert to one of his most memorable descriptions of landscape. Of incidental interest to poetry-lovers is the mention of Rev. W.L. Bowles, Vicar of Bremhill, some of whose sonnets are to be found in anthologies.

Mr. Clew displays a new talent in this guide, for two of the line drawings (of the best preserved part of the causeway, and of St. Giles, Kellaway) are his - and with the drawing of St. Paul's, Chippenham by Carolanne Johnson they add to the interest.

Indeed, I find this the most interesting of Mr. Clew's many guides, for I am one of those members referred to in the opening sentence, and am most grateful to him. The profits on the leaflet are for the restoration fund of Langley Burrell church, and here gratitude comes in again, not only for Kilvert Society publicity, but also for Mr. Clew's unceasing devotion to Kilvert and the churches associated with him.

E.J.C.W.

4. "LOST HOUSES OF BRITAIN" BY ANNA SPROULE (David and Charles £12. 95).

In this book are featured fifty houses, ranging from palaces and large town residences to country manors and small rural properties, about each of which the author has created a chapter evoking either a single incident or a series of incidents occurring there. (While the majority is drawn from the four corners of England, Scotland and Wales are also featured). The range of the characters involved in these incidents is equally wide - kings and queens, extravagant and eccentric nobles, men of action and literary figures.

The full and most interesting introduction, not only offers reasons for the disappearance of houses but also tells the "strong fascination attached to the hunt for lost houses", and the effect on the emotions of the scanty remnants of such buildings. Society members will immediately think of Kilvert's descriptions of Whitehall above Clyro and Easton Marston in Wiltshire - and Ms Sproule quotes this latter.

But Kilvert has a fuller place in this book, for included in her selection is Llanthomas. A brief introduction of the setting and appearance of the house is followed by an account, most sympathetically and skilfully done, of the unhappy love affair with Daisy. The other houses will offer stranger and more stirring episodes, but Llanthomas moves the reader by reason of its simple, unhappy tale.

All who are interested in our past will enjoy this beautifully produced book with its many photographs; and Ms Sproule has a delightful style. For me, a sentence in the introduction sums it all up - but I hope I may first be allowed a personal note. Having sat at the side-table in the dining room, stood in the bay window and walked along the shrubbery walk, I find it poignant indeed that all that remains of Llanthomas is a tangled growth of vegetation which was once a shrubbery - yet, as Ms Sproule writes, all these lost houses "represent a fragment of an invisible heritage that still excites the imagination".

E.J.C.W.

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THE DEPARTURE FROM LANGLEY BURRELL

(Extracted from THE CHIPPENHAM CHRONICLE, Saturday, August 19th. 1876)

PRESENTATION TO THE REV. F. KILVERT

On Tuesday evening last (August 15th. 1876) there was held in the school room here a meeting which will not be readily effaced from the memory, the occasion being the departure of this gentleman from the parish. The room was well filled by parishioners, who had assembled for the purpose of taking a farewell of their much loved and esteemed curate, the Rev. F. Kilvert, and also to take part in the presentation of some valuable and handsome gifts subscribed for by the inhabitants generally. For the past four years Mr. Kilvert has been the curate of his father, the Rev. R. Kilvert, the Rector of this parish, and during that time and on a previous occasion when he held the same office for about a year, he became much attached to the whole of his parishioners by his exceeding kind, amiable, and unostentatious manner, combined with a thorough Christian spirit. Farewell sermons were preached by the rev. gentleman on Sunday last (August 13th) to large congregations, the feelings of whom, as well as the preacher, were at times quite overcome, and many were the tears that slowly trickled down not only the furrowed cheeks of those who had known him from his childhood, but from younger members of the congregation, and also the school children who on many occasions had received good and kind advice for their spiritual and wordly welfare. The text in the morning was taken from the 20th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles and three last verses, "And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him. Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And : they accompanied him unto the ship". And in the afternoon from the 31st chapter of the Book of Genesis, 48th and 49th verses, "And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee this day, Therefore was the name of it called Galeed; And Mizpah for he said The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another".

The great respect in which Mr. Kilvert was held by his parishioners is fully confirmed by the fact that in so small a parish the sum of thirteen guineas was quickly and cheerfully subscribed, representing donations from the farmers and others to the humblest labourer in the village, with which was purchased a handsome plated tea and coffee service, supplied by Mr. Collings, of Milsom Street, Bath. In addition to this the village choir subscribed three guineas and purchased an elegant cruet stand of Payne and Co. Old Bond St. Bath: the servants of Langley House gave a beautiful fish slice and fork; and last, but not least,

the school children contributed 9 s., with which was purchased a book slide. The collection of the larger subscriptions was taken in hand by the churchwardens, Mr. Jacob Knight and Mr. John Bryant, both of whom attended at the Rectory on Monday morning and made the presentation of the tea and coffee service on behalf of the parishioners, Mr. Bryant being too unwell to undergo the fatigue and excitement of attending the meeting. All the articles above named were on view at the school and were much admired by those whose pleasure it was to attend the meeting, at which ladies predominated, the sterner sex being busily employed in the harvest field. In addressing the assembly, the Rev. gentleman said a look at the table would give the reason why they and he had met that night. Some of those bright and beautiful articles he had previously seen, others he had not until then, and after explaining why the presentation of the tea and coffee service took place on the previous day, said he was there that night to thank all for the very warm kindness they had evinced towards him. He had heard there was some little stir being made in the parish to acknowledge him in some slight way, but he had been taken entirely by surprise at the handsome and beautiful presents. It was not until after much anxious thought that he had decided to leave, and then he thought he should go quietly away, for in the parish he had not made much stir, and outside it he was little known. He should look upon the present with pride and satisfaction and value it highly because it came as a spontaneous and willing offering of them all, and as such he received it, and thanked them, and should with much pleasure show it to those friends whose acquaintance he should have to make elsewhere. His heart was too full to fully express his feelings towards them, and therefore he hoped they would not measure his feelings towards them by the poor and weak words by which he was trying to state them. He felt that he had been remiss and neglectful in many things, and might have done more, but let the precious opportunity slip.

Mr. John Knight, on behalf of the choir, then presented the cruet stand, remarking that it was a present subscribed for by the choir of Langley Burrell as a token of their gratitude and love. They heartily wished him every success in his new undertaking, and sincerely hoped that his kindness would be appreciated in such a manner as one so good and noble as he (Mr. Kilvert) deserved. In acknowledging the gift, the Rev. gentleman again and again thanked them for their kindness, and alluding to the present from Langley House, said he received it at a happy time when a friend of his who was dearer to him than his own life, was staying at Langley, and one whom he hoped would shortly halve his troubles and double his joys. He should now be able to write and tell of that evening's proceedings, which would afford her much pleasure in knowing that he had lived among such kind friends. The next feature in the proceedings was the presentation of the book-slide by the children, who came forward to the table in a body and presented it, together with a list of the subscribers' names. On receiving it, Mr. Kilvert said he should often think of the dear children of Langley whom he had so often taught in the school, and he hoped they would try to remember some of the lessons he had taught them, so that when he had passed away and they had grown up they would be able to give to their children the same good advice he had given them.

The place to which Mr. Kilvert is about to remove is known by the name of St. Harman's (sic) near Rhayader, in South Wales, and having given a brief description of the place and the church, concluded by earnestly hoping that his friends whom he was about to leave would not forget to pray for him; that by God's help he should be able to bring some of the poor sheep wandering over the mountains to the fold of Christ. For their great love and kindness to him, and also to the one dearer to him than his own life, he heartily thanked them, wished them good-night and goodbye, if he did not see them again, and with all seriousness and solemnity hoped God would bless them.

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MRS. FLEMING'S LETTER

On the last page of the August 1982 newsletter Mr. Grice mentioned a letter he had received from our member, Mrs. C. Fleming of Broadway. She had heard him speak at the A.G.M. of Fanny Kilvert's letter to Mrs. Venables, and wrote to him suggesting that the unknown woman who had caused so much grief to Kilvert was Katharine Heanley. Many members were intrigued, and I wrote to Mrs. Fleming to ask if her letter might be reproduced. For her consent I am most grateful and am sure it will be of great interest. E.J.C.W.

"Tuesday, 4th. May, 1982.

Broadway, Worcestershire.

Dear Mr. Grice,

At the recent most enjoyable meeting of the Kilvert Society I was so interested to hear about the newly discovered letter from Fanny Kilvert to Mrs. Venables. You asked members of the K.S. who the mysterious "she" might be who

caused Kilvert such great sorrow. I only joined the Society 2 years ago and despite some encouraging prods from my husband felt too diffident to speak at the time! However, after much thought and a good deal of reading during the weekend, I am writing to suggest that the unknown "she" in Fanny Kilvert's letter, might be Kate Heanley.

I understand that you feel the sorrow was caused by a female relative of Ettie Meredith Brown, who interfered to prevent their marriage. In reading about Kilvert's two great loves - Daisy and Ettie - I am struck by the following point - Kilvert constantly speaks of Daisy and marriage. He feels, probably rightly, that theirs would have been an ideal marriage and confides his hopes to her father, his parents and Mrs. Venables. It is a very honest and open love. However, Kilvert never mentioned Ettie and marriage. The impression we get is one of a clandestine and hopeless love. They evidently met secretly (and no doubt uncomfortably!) out in the snow (Vol.III p.246) Kilvert reads Ettie's poems carefully by himself in Hardenhuish Churchyard - he forestalls the postman who may be bringing Ettie's letter by meeting him on the Common and he remarks that "Meredith Brown looked very pleasant and friendly but little did he suspect who made the beautiful sermon case which I carried in my pocket". Furthermore, Kilvert waits until his parents were safely in Norwood before he preaches about "one of the great sorrows of my life".

A secret love, therefore - He does not seem to have discussed it with the members of his family or with Mrs. Venables. If I heard you correctly Fanny Kilvert's letter implies that Mrs. Venables knows all about Kilvert's great sorrow.

Perhaps Kilvert never believed he could marry Ettie. After his initial distress he seems to recover remarkably quickly from her farewell letter. He fell in love with Daisy in September 1871 and is still writing "I think continually of Daisy" in July 1873 - a long time for Kilvert! Only 5 days after receiving Ettie's last letter he writes with much enthusiasm of his walk to Peterchurch and remarks "Gathered cowslips and bluebells and was as happy as a child" (Vol.III p.267). He was evidently hungry too! The subsequent entries are happy ones too - he enjoys meeting old friends - rejoices in Florence Hill's beauty and seems interested in the idea of becoming Vicar of St. Harmon. Kilvert's life at Langley Burrell continues much as before when he returns there and he writes of his visit to Oxford with humour and enjoyment. It is not until the diary resumes at Bredwardine some 18 months later that the diary seems changed - subdued. Can this be explained by the fact that he is older and wiser and a Vicar now? Or did something very traumatic happen whilst Kilvert was at St. Harmon? Was the traumatic event the reason for the destruction of the St. Harmon diaries and for Kilvert's extremely short stay there?

As I have already mentioned Kilvert's diary during the early summer of 1876 seems surprisingly happy despite his recent disappointment and towards the end of June he twice mentions seeing "dear Katie Heanley". Eva Farmery's booklet "Kilvert's Kathleen Mavourneen" suggests that their romance may have been rekindled. We know from Croft School registers that Kilvert visited the village in March 1877. A cousin, Norman Cholmeley also remembers Kilvert visiting Croft in the summertime. Another cousin took the trouble to insert a note about Katharine in a pamphlet concerning the Heanley family. "This is the Kathleen of the Rev. Kilvert's diary. He was engaged to her, but she broke it off". Could the breaking of a formal engagement - a serious matter in Victorian England - be the great sorrow which Kilvert suffered whilst at St. Harmon? Katharine was a connection by marriage so it is likely that all the Kilvert family would know about the courtship and engagement. Is it not probable too that Kilvert, living in Rhayader, would have confided in Mrs. Venables living only a few miles away at Llysdymanor? He might well have asked Mr. Venables to find him a living more suitable for a married man - only to find himself humiliatingly still a bachelor when he finally moved to Bredwardine.

Is the diary entry for Friday, 7th. June 1878 a very significant one? "It was too sad to talk and we were both heavy hearted". This suggests there had indeed been a great sorrow - known to Fanny and possibly revived by Perch's happy marriage 3 days previously.

William Plomer says the diaries end abruptly on 13th March 1879. It is a coincidence that Kilvert's cousin Addie Heanley died at Croft on 15th March 1879? Could the news of her early death, coupled with Dora Kilvert's unexpected engagement, have made Kilvert feel that he must forget his sad ties with Croft and take practical steps to find a good wife and housekeeper?

Poor Katharine Heanley was clearly very conscious of her mother's ill health as early as August 1874 and the Victorians put pressure on the only unmarried daughter to stay at home and care for ageing parents. From Eva Farmery's booklet it seems quite possible that Katharine did commit suicide, like her father. If that were so, one wonders if she included the breaking of her engagement - if

engagement there really was - in her final note "my own crass stupidity is alone to blame.....".

Please forgive this long letter. As a comparatively new member of the Society I am glad to have a chance to respond to your ideas about the queries raised by Fanny Kilvert's letter. I look forward eagerly to reading the letter in full. All the K.S. Newsletters are so welcome and interesting. Has the Committee ever thought of combining such excellent articles as the recent one on A.L. Mayhew and putting them out in a booklet? I long to know if such articles have been written in the past on Kilvert's sisters, Daisy and Ettie?

I shall be very interested to hear your comments on the theory put forward in this letter.

Yours sincerely,

C.E. Fleming.

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HANNAH WHITNEY

Kilvert's friendship with Hannah Whitney and the many charming conversations he has recorded with her while demonstrating once again his genuine affection and concern for his older and less privileged charges also gives us several glimpses of a very interesting old character of the time.

Although Kilvert describes her as a widow he must have realised this could not be so for he recounts some of Hannah's reminiscences in his entry for Friday, October 14th. 1870.

"I turned in to old Hannah's and sat with her an hour talking over old times and listening to her reminiscences and tales of the dear old times, the simple kindly primitive times 'in the Bryngwyn' nearly 90 years ago".

"She remembers how, when she was a very little girl she lived with her grandfather, old Walter Whitney (who was about 90) and his wife". Clearly her name as a child was Whitney.

Again to the entry for Monday December 4th. 1871 "Called on Hannah Whitney. I told her of the tomb of Walter Whitney. She had never seen the tomb and did not know of it, but she said she thought it must be the tomb of her grandfather's cousin. 'You are of a better family than many of the gentlemen round here I said' ". Kilvert obviously referring to the Whitney family.

To trace Hannah's beginnings we must turn to the Parish records of Bryngwyn in Radnorshire where we find in December 1750 Walter Whitney of Clyro married Sybil Williams of Bryngwyn and later in October 1767 the record of baptism of Hannah daughter of Walter and Sybil Whitney. (There are other children of this couple also recorded).

Then in June 1785 there is a record of the baptism of Hannah, base daughter of Hannah Whitney and this I believe is the baptism of Kilvert's Hannah. In 1870 when Kilvert believed her age to be 90 she was in fact 85 a close enough statistic in those inexact times.

In his entry for October 20th. 1870 Kilvert sets down Hannah's story of the death of her mother when two girls came to her mother's door on the morning of New Years Day to ask for some horseradish.

" - 'Name of goodness Jenny said her old father (Hannah's grandfather) what ails thee to make such a to-do about the girls coming to the door to ask for a bit of horseradish?' The woman got up and heaped mawn on the fire. Her father asked if she were going to roast a bit of meat for dinner. 'No' she said. She could not keep herself warm. She went to bed and died in a fortnight, then her father caught it and then her sister. They all died. Hannah had it too -".

Comparing this narrative with the Bryngwyn burial records we find the following:-

- 27-1-1805 Jane Whitney, spinster, aged 40 - fever.
- 10-2-1805 Walter Whitney, labourer, aged 83 - fever.
- 22-2-1805 Hannah Whitney, spinster, aged 43 - fever.

These entries clearly record the tragic fever which struck the family at this time as recalled by Hannah but there are some curious differences.

Hannah's grandfather (old Walter Whitney) refers to Hannah's mother in the narrative as Jenny which is almost certainly a diminutive of Jane and who was

buried first 6 days before her father Walter who was followed 12 days later by another daughter Hannah.

Either Hannah in her old age had her facts wrong or Kilvert in setting down the story transposed the names, for the Parish records quoted here are quite explicit.

Bryngwyn Parish records also tell of the Christening of Margaret, base child of Hannah Whitney on 10 September 1812, then on May 11th. 1824 was christened John, base child of Hannah Whitney. John shows in the 1841 census as living with Hannah at Rhosgoch but there is no mention of Margaret.

No certain record of where Hannah lived at Rhosgoch has been found nor are we certain where her grandfather lived. However, the 1840 tithe map for the Bryngwyn parish shows Walter Whitney occupying a cottage and garden of 2 acres 2 roods and 23 perches and shown on some O.S. maps as 'White House' at Rhosgoch. This Walter was Hannah's uncle and since he was succeeded in the same cottage by one of his sons David until his death in 1912 it is possible that 'White House' was Hannah's home as a girl. Unfortunately 'White House' was destroyed by fire within the last 10 years and all that remains now is a pile of stones.

Hannah is recorded as having died at Clyro on October 2nd. 1876 aged 97 years and Kilvert in his visit to Clyro from Bredwardine on August 28th. 1878 notes that Hannah's cottage "is alas pulled down". Happily for us Hannah lives on in her cottage as do all our Kilvert characters. It seems somehow appropriate that this most humble 'descendant of a line of squires' is remembered long after the memory of most of her illustrious forebears has gone.

R.W. Wood (Albany, W. Australia).

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KILVERT AND LONDON

Between 1870 and 1879 Kilvert paid at least ten visits to London, most of them, understandably, when he was living at Langley Burrell. The journey from Clyro to London was not easy, although many, including Mr. Venables, were not put off by the inconvenience, and the journey from Bredwardine was just as complicated; but Chippenham was, as it still is, on the main Bristol - Paddington line, and the journey took little more than two hours. On one occasion Kilvert left Chippenham at midday and was at Gloucester Crescent, near Regent's Park by 3 p.m. and on another he records leaving London at 2 p.m. and visiting the sick by 7 p.m. in Langley Burrell.

He often expresses his dislike of London, but the metropolis had a great deal to offer him. He enjoyed the theatre, and went to the Haymarket (twice), Drury Lane, and the Lyceum. He enjoyed, too, the spectacles in the Polytechnic (wherever that was), made the rounds of many London churches, heard cases in the Divorce Courts, saw the Royal Mews, and went to exhibitions in the British Museum and the South Kensington Museum (it had not yet become the V. and A) and the displays in the Horticultural Gardens. But his main interest was in Art, especially Painting. He went as frequently as he could to the Royal Academy, visited Dore's Gallery in Bond Street, went twice to the Dulwich Gallery, made a point of inspecting the Wallace Collection, the International Exhibition, the pictures in the National Portrait Gallery, and those in the museum at Bethnal Green and at Claremont.

His stays in London were made all the easier by his friends, especially Mrs. Venables (it is note-worthy that he made use of a hotel on one occasion only, when he stayed at the Norfolk near Paddington). Normally he stayed with relations or friends. One of the houses where he called, and was probably entertained, during his first recorded visit, was 11 Eaton Place, the home of a Mr. Crichton, who was clearly related to the Crichtons of Wye Cliff. He stayed with his sister Emily and her husband in Claygate and later at their houses in Gloucester Crescent and Upper Norwood, and with his brother Edward in 16 Westbourne Park Villas (ironically very close to the house Hardy had lived in a few years earlier). Other friends, the Smallcombes,* lived at Pelham Place not far from the present site of the V. and A.; and Frank Russells in Lupus Street. In 1870 he stayed at Cranmers, in Mitcham, at the home of Mrs. Evan Thomas, eldest sister of Mrs. Venables; and it was in all likelihood Mrs. Vanables who secured him a welcome at many other London houses. The Venables themselves holidayed in 1873 in 35 Eaton Square, (he joined them there for a few days), and in 1874 in 62 Warwick Square, where he again visited them. Not far away from Eaton Square was Eaton Place, where, in the same street as the Mr. Crichton with whom he went to Westminster, there lived a Miss Denham with whom he was apparently friendly, but of whom we know nothing except that she lived in No. 14, almost opposite Mr. Crichton. Mrs. Venables's parents, the Pearsons,

lived close by, at 3, Hobart Place, almost up against the wall of Buckingham Palace; and also in Belgravia was 9, Wilton Crescent, where Lady Frances Higginson and Miss Higginson lived. According to W. Plomer, (K.S. Newsletter 6 April 1976) Lady Frances was the second daughter of the Earl of Kilmorey and wife of General Sir George Higginson. Was Miss Higginson the Fanny Higginson Mrs. Venables thought Kilvert had fallen in love with? (Vol.1.263). Probably not, since the christian name was generally used only for the younger daughters of a family. Most of these houses are within walking distance of Belgrave Square, and they are very impressive residences, Georgian, stucco'd and cream or white-painted (except for 9 Wilton Crescent which is faced with fine stone), still in very good order and much sought-after. Apparently Kilvert's prejudice against Georgian styles of architecture (remember his comments on St. Harmon's when he first saw it) did not operate when it came to domestic building. Not very far from Belgrave Square he must have seen the squalid slums that moved the Misses Monk to commission Street to build for them the 'missionary' church of St. James the Less; but Pelham Place, Hobart Place, Eaton Square, Eaton Place and Wilton Crescent must have been in the 1870's very desirable residences, and decidedly a cut above Ashbrook House with its filthy carpet and noisy neighbours. Was one of the attractions of London for Kilvert the opportunity to mix with more elevated company in more luxurious homes than most of those he knew in Langley Burrell and Clyro? How modest even the Clyro vicarage seems in comparison with the elegant house Mr. Venables took when he went to London.

* The Smallcombes are mentioned only once in the Plomer diary, but there is further mention of them in the Sandford Notebook, published by the National Library of Wales.

F. Grice.

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FROM THE SECRETARY'S CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. C.A.C. Davies (Marlborough) very kindly sent a copy of an article in the "Times Literary Supplement" written by the famous theatre critic, Harold Hobson. Mr. Hobson had attended a performance by Timothy Davies at the National Theatre of "Francis Kilvert, Victorian". (Mr. C.A.C. Davies is the father of the actor, and this performance must have been at least the third). Mr. Hobson writes with warm appreciation of the actor's rendering of "Kilvert's simple, even religious, sense of wonder at the loveliness of hills and meadows"; and of the "purifying culminating moment of the performance when Mr. Davies utters a cry of anguish" (the extract for 7 July 1875).

That particular extract mentions the Cowper-Coles family, and when Mr. Sherard Cowper-Coles came to Newbridge he brought a photograph album and book of newspaper cuttings belonging to his mother. The album was compiled by Alice - she is mentioned in the extract - and the book belonged to Sam, whom Kilvert tutored at Bredwardine. There is much of interest in both, and I am most grateful to Mrs. Dorothy Cowper-Coles for the loan of these family records.

Among the performances at the Cheltenham Festival of Literature last October was Timothy Davies's "Francis Kilvert". Several members were able to attend, and much enjoyed the skill of Mr. Davies's portrayal. I noticed that the stocks of the Penguin edition at the bookstall were sold out minutes after the performance finished!

Mrs. Fraser Harris, a one time member of the Society writes to tell me that her book "Visitors to Cornwall" contains a chapter on Kilvert. Published by Cornish Publications of Trewolsta, Trewirgia, Redruth, Cornwall, the hardback is £5. 95. and the paperback £3. 50.

Mr. Richard Thomas has written to tell me of his intention to write a history of the Thomas family, which reached its zenith in the last century - and of course which features so largely in the Diary. His cousin, our member Mr. Melville Thomas, (whose geneological research had been referred to in an earlier newsletter) is co-operating with him. I understand rare and interesting old photographs (including some of the Llanthomas family) have come to light, and will be reproduced in the booklet.

Our New York member, Mr. Peter Turgeon, is willing to make his flat there available for an exchange in London in either July or August next. He has a two-bedroomed apartment located in midtown Manhattan, with a lobbydesk providing 24 hour security. In exchange he and Mrs. Turgeon would simply require a one bedroomed flat.

Our London member, Mr. John Ridley, has for sale the small upright Broadwood piano that Rev. Andrew and Mrs. Pope received as a wedding present in 1874. It has been cared for, is a handsome instrument and pleasant of tone - as Kilvert may have observed on his visits to Preston-on-Wye! Enquiry and offers in the first instance to Mr. Ridley at 4, Morden Road, London. SE3 0AA.

In November last the Radnor District Council published the Clyro Conservation Plan, and organised an exhibition in the Village Hall. Mr. R.I. Morgan very kindly looked after the Society's interests, and following his report, the Society gave the Plan its full backing.

Mr. Derek Trimby, producer of "Vicar of this Parish", a T.V. portrait of Kilvert introduced by Sir John Betjeman, tells me that portions of it will appear on March 27th. on B.B.C.2. in the series "Time with Betjeman".

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A HEREFORDSHIRE SUPERSTITION

Mrs. Teresa Williams has sent the following extract from "A Veteran looks Back" by G.H.P. (one-time vicar of Dorstone. Herefordshire Diocesan Messenger Nov.1948).

There was a very ancient tradition that on All Hallows' Eve, at midnight, a ghost mounted the pulpit of the church and gave out the names of those who would die in the ensuing year. One such night, two cronies, returning from their nightly carousal at the village inn, passing through the Churchyard, one of them said, 'This is the night for the ghost in the pulpit'

'That be rubbish. You won't go and listen at the keyhole?'

'Indeed and why not?' With that he puts his ear to the keyhole, but shortly gave a dreadful groan and staggered out of the porch.

'What be up?' says Thomas.

'The first name he gave out was my own'.

Somehow Thomas managed to drag George home.

The sequel - George took to his bed and presently died, the doctor said, of some cardiac disease, but in Common language, we would have given the cause as 'Fright'.

(This superstition is mentioned by Kilvert Vol. 2, 334).

This was obviously written by Rev. G.H. Powell, last of the squarsons of Dorstone, and in all probably the son of the Rev. Powell who provided the evening entertainment for the Snodhill picnic party on Midsummer Day in 1870.

[illegible]

OUR NEW CHAIRMAN

The Rev. D.T.W. Price, M.A., of St. David's College, Lampeter, is to succeed to Mr. F. Grice's position as chairman of the Committee. For many years Mr. Price has arranged our services and has taken part in practically all of them. He has contributed a chapter to Mr. Grice's newly published book on Kilvert. His devotion to the memory of the diarist and his unceasing work for the Society make him a most worthy successor to Mr. Grice.

I M P O R T A N T - PLEASE NOTE THAT THE EXCURSION TO OXFORD
WILL NOW TAKE PLACE ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 20TH. THE MOTORCADE
IN THE BUILTH AREA ARRANGED FOR THAT DATE WILL NOW TAKE PLACE
ON SATURDAY, MAY 21ST.