

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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SEPTEMBER 1984.

Dear Member,

Once again I am happy to report that the June weekend was as enjoyable as its predecessors. It was with much pleasure that we met Canon and Mrs. Boake from Ireland and Rev.Dr. and Mrs. J.M. Rowe (Bradford) in addition to our loyal, more local members.

The Walk on June 23rd. was organised by our Hon. Auditor, Mr. G. Rogers, to include visits to the farms of Cefn-y-Blaen and Llanshiver, owned by his cousins, Mr. John and Mr. Robert Lloyd. At the former farm we were met by Mr. John Lloyd who, with his son Andrew, led us to the site of Holly House, high up on Clyro Hill. He told us that he intended to plant a tree or two at the spot, to be a refuge for birds (an intention which I warmly approved of) for there was a spring there which had not failed even in the great drought of 1976. We then proceeded downhill to Llanshiver. Mr. Robert Lloyd and his family were not at home, but Mr. John Lloyd took us into the house. He had been born there, so was able to point out all that was of interest to us - the old settle and table still in the kitchen, a room enlarged since Kilvert's day; and the sitting room with its huge fireplace, flagstone floor and low, heavily beamed ceiling. This, we felt, was basically very much as Kilvert knew it. Outside, Mr. Lloyd showed us where the moat had been filled in, and where the yew trees had been. There was still one left, and a stream was the only evidence for the wetness and dampness reported in the Diary. Earthworks still remained, bearing witness to the fact that the house had been fortified. Talking among members led to the conclusion that the house must have been a second line of defence to Painscastle, for it commanded the south side of Rhosgoch Bog. On our return to Cefn-y-Blaen Mrs. Lloyd surprised and delighted us with cups of tea and a batch of freshly baked currant buns. I am sure that the party will long cherish the memory of the afternoon, and the kindness and hospitality shown by Mr. & Mrs. Lloyd. Members then proceeded to Rhosgoch for a look at the Chapel, after which farewells were made, together with a warm thankyou to Mr. Rogers for having arranged the programme for such an enjoyable afternoon.

The service the following day was as usual well attended. Hardwick churchyard afforded in the bright sunshine wonderful views of hills associated with Kilvert. For the first time ever at a Commemoration service, prayer books were used, and the 1662 service was conducted by Mr. P. Stutz (Life Member). Our Chairman, Rev. D.T.W. Price, was the preacher. His text, the 1st. verse of Psalm 19, was related to the life and work of Rev. T.W. Webb, vicar of Hardwick and friend of Kilvert. Webb's researches into astronomy, and the great developments in kindred sciences did not undermine his faith, nor that of Kilvert. Afterwards a most lavish tea in the Parish Hall awaited us, dispensed with warm hospitality and friendliness by the ladies of the parish, led by Mrs. Stutz. I am delighted to report that including the Society's usual gift, the church has benefited by more than £200 from the afternoon. Needless to say, I have written to Mr. & Mrs. Stutz in appreciation of all that was done for the Society at Hardwick.

Now to the future, the weekend of September 22nd - 23rd next:-

THE WALK - September 22nd. Mr. Bentley-Taylor has been trying to locate the Chapel of the Three Yews (8th. December 1870) and has kindly offered to lead members for a walk in the area, indicating possible sites. Meet at the Baskerville Arms, Clyro, at midday, picnic lunch. It may be more convenient for some members to meet at Twyn-y-beddau at 12.30 p.m. for the walk will start near there after lunch.

THE SERVICE - September 23rd - (the 105th. anniversary of Kilvert's death) will be held at Bryngwyn by the kind permission of Rev. P. Ralph Bowman, Life Member of the Society, at 3 p.m. The preacher will be Rev. K. Partington, Vicar of Crosthwaite, Cumbria, also a Life Member, and the Act of Remembrance will be performed by Rev. B.F. Price, member of the Committee of the Kilvert Society. There is ample parking around the church and on the common just above it. The tea will be held at Painscastle Hall, some 2 miles west - it was our venue after the service at Llanbedr - as Bryngwyn Church Room is too small.

A coach will leave Hereford Town Hall at 1 p.m. for Bryngwyn, travelling via King's Acre, Staunton-on-Wye, Bredwardine, Hay and Clyro. Bookings to me, please.

For new members, the best approach from the South or West is via Clyro, taking the Painscastle road by the church, then forking right for Rhosgoch. Here turn right and within a mile a left fork will lead to Bryngwyn. Signposts are prominent. From the north and east the Kington-Gladestry-Newchurch road; It is better to ignore the first right marked Bryngwyn; instead the second right so marked should be taken.

Croft Church (Lincolnshire) Restoration Fund - Following in the steps of Kilvert, the Society has sent a donation of £50.

Art Exhibition at Treble Hill, Glasbury-on-Wye. Members will be aware that an annual Art Exhibition is organised by Mrs. Ursula Cooper at her home, Treble Hill. She tells me that since 1984 is the year of Historic Buildings in Wales, the exhibition will be on this theme, and the contributors will be artists living and working in Powys. It will start on Monday, August 6th. and continue till September 8th, open every day, save Sundays, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mrs. Cooper, herself a member of the Society, extends a warm welcome to other members, and adds that many of the buildings and places that Kilvert visited will be illustrated.

St. Harmon's Church - Rev. Graham Davies, priest-in-charge, has written to tell me of the debt of £6,500 for repairs, etc. incurred by the parish. The very small community would be most grateful for financial help, and as the K.S. Committee does not meet until the autumn, as a lead, I hope, I have sent a personal donation to him at Cwmdeuddwr Vicarage, Rhayader, Powys.

Yours sincerely,

E.J.C. West

Hon. Secretary.

O B I T U A R Y

We regret to announce the death of the following members:-

Miss Imogen Holst, the daughter of Gustav Holst and Member of the Board of Directors of the Aldeburgh Festival, a life member of the Kilvert Society since 1961. I am told that when Miss Holst appeared on "Desert Island Discs" her choice of book was Kilvert's Diary.

Rev. H.T. Watts (Brimfield, Berks), the Society's oldest Vice-President, who was vicar of Bredwardine at the time that the Society was founded, and who conducted the first commemoration service, held at that church in 1948.

Mr. B. Smith (Kidderminster) a Life Member since 1967.

Dr. G.E.A. Bramley (Swansea) a member since 1974.

I understand that some ten or twelve years ago Sir John Betjeman gave a memorable talk on Kilvert on Radio 4, and that as a result of this he was invited by our then secretary, Mr. C.T.O. Prosser, to become a Vice-President of the Society, and warmly accepted the invitation. Sir John was the narrator in the BBC2 production of "Vicar of this Parish" in 1976. A "still" from this was used to feature the tribute to Sir John in June last. I wonder how many recognised the scene - it was of Sir John sitting on the wall of Bredwardine churchyard.

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R E V I E W S

Glasbury and Llowes Group of Parishes, Powys. A brief guide by K.R. Clew, Hardwick, Herefordshire.

Mr. Clew remains as indefatigable as ever! Nor is there any trace of a decline from the standards set by his earlier mini-guides. Glasbury and Llowes were parishes much referred to in the Diary - "Dear Glasbury", he wrote, while recording a train journey to Brecon. Mr. Clew gives brief accounts of the churches in the group, though Cwmbach was not then built. The de Winton family of Maesllwch Castle, Tom Williams of Llowes and Alford, curate of Glasbury - all featured in the Diary - are mentioned in his account. I was particularly pleased that Mr. Clew included Maesyronen Chapel, for it is well worth a visit, even though "absent" from the Diary.

The Hardwick guide pleasingly appeared in time for the June service at the Church. Mr. Clew draws attention to the fact that the churchyard affords views of Merbach, Little Mountain and Cusop Hill, and is thus in a way the heart of the Kilvert country. He writes of the formation of the parish, gives a description of the church and its fittings and refers to the Rev. T.W. Webb, vicar of the parish, a friend of Kilvert and an astronomer of repute.

Both guides have a route map and illustrations of the churches described, and as with the previous issues, all profits from the guides go to church funds.

The Glasbury and Llowes Group guide can be obtained from Mrs. P.R. Cooper, Treble Hill, Glasbury-on-Wye, Hereford. HR3 5NT; the Hardwick guide from Mr. P. Stutz, The Burnt House, Middlewood, Clifford, Hereford. Each costs 20p and if ordered by post a stamped addressed envelope at least 9" by 4" should be included.

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JOHN ASHLEY KILVERT by Maurice W. White (Birmingham)

A recent BBC2 television Time Watch programme dealing with the survivors of the Charge of the Light Brigade, gave mention to a JOHN ASHLEY KILVERT and stated (by the old soldier interviewed) that this John was related to Kilvert the Diarist.

The television programme was inaccurate on two points, one the date of John Ashley Kilvert's death and the other, his place of burial,

His tombstone in Woodgreen Cemetery, Walsall Road, Wednesbury, reads:-

Elizabeth Aston
wife of
John Ashley Kilvert
Aged 68 years
who died August 31 1900

also

George Astley Kilvert
who died December 16 1902
Aged 43 years

also

John Ashley Kilvert
who died October 17th 1920

(I do not know where George Astley Kilvert fits in - he is probably not a son since JAK married EA in 1861)

Enquiries at Wednesbury Library have unearthed the following:-

John Ashley Kilvert, son of George Kilvert (farmer) of High Ercall (Shropshire - near Shrewsbury), was born September 29th. 1833 and was educated at High Ercall Grammar School. At the age of 14 he went into a commercial business career with a wine and spirits merchant in Birmingham, but tired of business life and joined the 11th. Hussars aged 17 years (1850) accepting the Queen's Shilling in Nottingham. He stated in a newspaper interview in about 1910, that one of his uncles had fought under Wellington at Waterloo.

In September 1854 the Regiment (formerly Prince Albert's own) was sent to the Crimea and in the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava, John was severely wounded in the leg (a musket ball through the calf of the right leg) and by a sabre cut on the head. His horse got him back to safety, but it had to be destroyed. John was nursed by Florence Nightingale and subsequently returned to

England receiving a medal for service in the Crimea from Queen Victoria on May 24th. 1855; also he was awarded the Turkish medal and 3 bars. In 1857 Corporal Kilvert was appointed Troop Sergeant Major and he resigned from the army in 1861.

(Of 110 mounted men only 25 returned and only 198 of the Brigade escaped destruction and of his 15 tent comrades only one other survived).

John Ashley Kilvert settled in Wednesbury (Staffordshire) in 1861 in which year he had married Elizabeth (nee Hayes) and he would appear to have entered the trade of a Pawn Broker at No. 1. Union Street (a chemist shop today).

He entered public life as a member of the then existing Local Board and was elevated to the Aldermen's bench in 1886 (when Wednesbury obtained Borough status). A member of the Wednesbury School Board for 17 years and 38 years member of Wednesbury Building Society of which he was Vice President from 1898; Vice President of the Wednesbury Literary Association, member of the Art Gallery and of the Technical School Institute Committees and Chairman of the Burial Board - all these were clearly sound reasons for his final accolade, Mayor of Wednesbury 1905/1906. His wife having died some five years earlier, he chose as his Lady Mayoress his niece, Mrs. H.R. Harris, the daughter of Captain Charles Kilvert of Shrewsbury (John's brother). Contemporary newspaper articles describe him as a tall, commanding figure; and a former Mayor of Wednesbury, a Mr. David Chadwick Jackson, a spritely 88 year old, remembers him by his dignified presence at functions. Two photographs, one in 1905 in his Mayoral Robes shows a portly gentleman with a large forehead, receding hair, full white side whiskers and moustache (no beard), reminding me very much of Jimmy Edwards - comedian. The other, twenty years earlier when he was about 52 years of age, differs only in the colour of the whiskers.

A novel ancestral trace talks of his pedigree back to 993AD, to a Yorkshire Thane, Kilvert son of Lilf, his mother being Sigen.

The Parish Church of St. Bartholomew, at which alderman John Ashley Kilvert was churchwarden (1894-1895-1896) proudly displays a carved panel to his memory. A Kilvert Road is named after him in the town.

He lived in a large house aptly named Balaclava in Pritchard Street close to the town centre and though a walk up (and down) the street failed to find the house, a resident misdirected me to the adjacent house which she called Kilvert House. The resident was the aforementioned Mr. Jackson who recalled the building of Balaclava House and its former years of glory.

Mr. Jackson has kindly offered to make contacts for me at the Wednesbury Museum and Art Gallery where John Ashley Kilvert's Balaclava uniform, sword and medals are supposedly kept, with a view of possibly tracing Kilvert's ancestry back to Shropshire. I have been in contact with Kilverts from the Wednesbury directory, none of whom knows any direct line through to Wednesbury's Kilvert and it is interesting to note that Mr. Jackson himself had never heard of Francis Kilvert the Diarist.

Having got thus far, I shall however, press on, since I feel that somehow, it is possible that there is a connection with FK's great grandfather, Thomas, (of Conover, an adjacent parish not too far from High Ercall).

We are told in Kilvert's Shropshire Ancestry - by Marian Halford ("A Kilvert Symposium"), that generations back Kilverts were yeomen in Astley (4½ miles NNE of Shrewsbury also only about 4 miles from High Ercall - my comment), and that Thomas of Conover had three sons, Richard, Thomas and John (and three sisters). Of these, the second son, Thomas, is Francis's Great Grandfather upon whose death, in 1782 his widow, Elizabeth and family moved to Bath. This Thomas's younger brother John we hear farmed in Berrington, again not far from High Ercall and died in 1786.

I reason, therefore, that Richard and John are the Kilverts remaining in this part of Shropshire at the end of the eighteenth century.

From the known facts John Ashley Kilvert, born 1833, had a brother Richard and a father George, who would probably be in his twenties when his sons were born and would himself then have been born in the first decade of the nineteenth century. The gap lies then in George's father who should appear at about the time the Bath branch departed.

Could it possibly be that the link comes with Kilvert's father's Great Uncle John of Berrington?

I find it interesting to note that the only reference to the Crimean War comes from Emily Wyndowe in her Rambling Recollections (page 95) when she refers to "Captain Hugh Clutterbuck" at Harnish House "who had been wounded in the Charge at

Balaclava was there wheeling himself about in a self-propelling chair..."

Clearly this branch of the family was in no way in contact with the Shropshire branch. This could suggest that any connection is very weak.

KILVERT AND HARDY by Ivor Lewis.

Hardy was born a few months before Kilvert and was alive within the lifetime of not a few of us. That he was so closely Kilvert's contemporary has been mentioned before and should not in itself be an excuse for coupling Kilvert's name in an essay title with yet another great man, if the purpose were no more than to seek a little reflected glory. However, this bracketing may do rather more than that in, possibly, shedding a little light on Kilvert and, it may be, even on Hardy himself.

More important than the coincidence of birth, a certain kinship of spirit was detected by William Plomer in the very early days of writing about Kilvert. In an essay which he contributed to 'Horizon' in 1940, Plomer spoke of the Hardyesque quality in Kilvert's description of and reflections upon the deserted remains of Whitehall, that scene of former rural merry-making which captured Kilvert's imagination as it so easily might have done Hardy's too. As with Hardy, it was the bitter-sweet contrast between then and now which especially affected him, and if it is suggested that this is no more than the sentimentality of the age which the two men, as Victorians, naturally shared, it may prove possible to define their similarity more narrowly.

For this reason I pass over such generalities as love of Nature, feeling for beauty, keenness of observation, an eye for character, things of that sort, which many have possessed or been flattered with the glib claim that they did. Rather less nebulous is the taste for history, not in academic form, but in the direct speech of what old men - and women - have not forgotten. Kilvert's sessions with Hannah Whitney and John Morgan, the Peninsular veteran, almost certainly had their equivalents in the experience of the author who brought out 'The Trumpet Major' in the year after Kilvert's death. But an entry from the Diary which might have come even nearer to his own outlook is one which Kilvert made during a stay at Langley (3.1.71):

"I went to see old Isaac Giles.....He told me he was nearly 80 and remembered seeing the Scots Greys passing through Chippenham on their way to Waterloo. They looked very much down, he said, for they knew where they were going".

Tale and anecdote fascinated both men. For Hardy there was the choice between hugely expanding some incident of powerful interest into the proportions of a novel or confining it to something like its original size in poem or prose short-story. Many of his lyrics are in fact novels in potted form, with his characteristic ingredients of pathos, humour, and irony. It suited the diarist to be as crisp as possible and this was a lucky requirement of his medium. But the matter which Kilvert recorded, ranging from old wives' tales to the current parish gossip often bears a curious resemblance to the raw material of Hardy's narratives in prose and verse - desertions, suicides, tyrannical behaviour, drunkenness, early death, superstitious beliefs, etc. Here again it might be argued that this is simply the stock-in-trade of Victorian melodrama, the theatrical offerings of the '70s, both on the stage and off. But it is not every diarist who would have made the following entry:

"While the athletic sports were going on I wandered away by myself into congenial solitude for a visit to the ruined Church of Llanlionfel....

"It is long since the Church has been used, though weddings were celebrated in it after it was disused for other services. There is a curious story of a gentleman who was married here. Some years after his marriage his wife died, and it happened that he brought his second bride to the same Church. Upon the altar rails she found hanging the lace handkerchief which her predecessor had dropped at the former wedding.

"The Church had never been used nor the handkerchief disturbed in the interval of years between the two weddings".

The story and the entry are still more curious when we discover that Kilvert set it down in August, 1873, a date by which Hardy had been working on 'Far from the Madding Crowd' for about a month. But, indeed, coincidence and second wives are

a recurring feature of Hardy's fiction; as is the irony of fate.

We know little of Kilvert's earlier years in Clyro (1865-70), but it seems unlikely that 'Daisy' Thomas was the first girl for him to see as a potential mate or the first for him to discover as unattainable. What we do know is that Hardy's first novel, written in 1867-68 was called 'The Poor Man and the Lady'. As a wooer, Hardy was technically the more successful as he married, in 1874, a bride with clerical relations (her father being a struggling solicitor), despite the handicap of lowlier origins than Kilvert's. However, class considerations weighed with him greatly, both - as we see - before his marriage and later. They did so in his personal life and in his writings. Kilvert, on the other hand, was both more tractable and less analytical - there are few signs of strong resentment in the Diary or of sustained self-pity. In these matters, then, their experience overlapped without a significant similarity.

The paths of Kilvert and Hardy came nearest to crossing on April 30th. 1874, when Kilvert made a special journey by train from Chippenham to Dorchester to call upon the Dorset poet, William Barnes, whose work he admired greatly. It isn't certain that Hardy was at home on that day - he may have been in London seeing the 'Cornhill' editor, Leslie Stephen - but Brockhampton, his birthplace, was definitely his base at this time as he continued to work on 'Far from the Madding Crowd'. Like Kilvert, Hardy was fond of Barnes's poetry, though without sharing his approach to the local dialect as a literary medium. Moreover, he was intimately acquainted with Henry Moule, the Vicar of Fordington (just outside Dorchester on Hardy's side of the town), who was in effect Kilvert's host and guide throughout the visit. It was only a matter of months since the suicide at a Cambridge college of one of the Vicar's sons, a close friend of and literary mentor to Hardy. That death was epoch-making in Hardy's career. As Robert Gittins puts it, "From this moment, the tragic and defeated hero arrives for good in all Hardy's works". Naturally, it made no extraordinary impact upon Kilvert, but we should note the sentiments and interests which brought the two men into the best chance of proximity in their lives. Kilvert's affection for Barnes brings out the greater catholicity of his literary taste than might have been expected in a lover of Tennyson and Wordsworth - it is linked with that interest he had in folk songs and ballads, as distinct from what may be called 'art' poetry, an interest which drew him into field work in the task of collecting, as on the trip to Colva in Feb. 1870. No doubt his activities on this front were spasmodic (opportunities may have been infrequent), but clearly - if in the manner of an amateur - he shared with Hardy a wish to discover the authentic voice of poetry - or its range of voices.

Hardy is often compared with celebrated Victorians such as George Eliot or even weightier figures from the past such as Shakespeare or Sophocles. I must say that I am not always comfortable when I find him in this sort of company; as, I suspect, Hardy might have been himself, though doubtless keeping his mouth shut like a shrewd countryman in the mart, allowing his value to rise if it would. It seems possible, however, that the more unassuming juxtaposition which has been briefly attempted here may give some indication of what was unique in Hardy and what was shared with sensitive if less gifted contemporaries like Kilvert.

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DR. CLOUSTON by Godfrey Davies (Hon. Archivist)

Mr. Frederick Grice in his admirable book published shortly before his death mentions Dr. Clouston, that he was a contributor to medical publications on the subject of the treatment of rheumatism with Salicylates.

We are still using a very familiar salicylate in the form of Aspirin, something evolved from Salicin which occurs naturally in the common willow, *Salix Alba*, and other members of the family. Salicin also occurs in the common Meadowsweet (*Filipendula Ulmaria*) and many other plants.

Sodium Salicylate is the form in which Salicin was used, and held first place until Baeyer of Germany introduced Salicylic Acid which was later called Aspirin.

The importation of the German product ended in 1914 and two British manufacturers worked hard to supply a substitute. They found great difficulties and it was some time before a satisfactory product was available. Eventually difficulties were overcome, and Aspirin is now probably the most used chemical medicine.

Dr. Clouston is mentioned fifteen times in Kilvert's Diary and may have lived in Hay. In March 1870 F.K. reported the doctor riding on a cream coloured pony at Cae Mawr. In April Dr. Clouston told about a post mortem on Matthew Lewis and he later described the findings. The doctor was also mentioned when he thought that John Watkins was a case for the Asylum. Dr. Clouston seems to have been a member of the district society and on Friday, May 13th. he attended a concert which was also attended by many of the gentry. Dr. Clouston offered to drive Kilvert back to Clyro after the concert. He attended him professionally a week later for treatment of a boil and refused to let him go to church until fully recovered. On June 25th. Kilvert assisted the doctor in an operation on Annie Corfield's arm.

Dr. Clouston dined with Kilvert, Tom Williams and Pope at Clyro and Mrs. Venables sent some of the menu for the meal. In December they met in Hay and discussed the lecture when the doctor said he had been roasted by the stove.

During the following February Kilvert was mistaken by a lady for Dr. Clouston, who in July again attended him for a mouth abscess. The last mention of the doctor is September, 1879, when he was asked to go to Llanthomas to break the news to Mrs. Thomas of the death of Lechmere Thomas in Colombo. Mrs. Thomas was ill at the time and no doubt it was thought advisable that the doctor should be there.

I found in "The Folklore of Herefordshire" written and published by Mrs. Ella Leather of Weobley in 1912 the following item:-

"I am informed by Mr. G.H. Phillott that the late vicar of Bredwardine the Rev. R.F. Kilvert used to say that some of his parishioners whipped their children on Holy Innocent's Day.

G.H. Phillott was the son of Canon Phillott of Staunton on Wye".

G.C.D.

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ROSEWARNE, THE PARKERS AND THE LEWISES -
Insanity, Imbecility and Inter-relationships in a Victorian Family
by Barry Smith (Truro)

In the summer of 1870, Francis Kilvert, priest and diarist, visited Cornwall, staying with friends the Hockins, of Tullimaar, near Truro. During his stay, many contacts and excursions were arranged for him. The manuscript notebook in which he recorded his impressions is one of the two now extant from the twenty-two originals and is deposited in the Library of the University of Durham. Those sections of the "Cornish holiday" which did not appear in the published "Diary", later appeared in a typescript form produced by the Kilvert Society.

Amongst the entries for 27th. July, 1870, Kilvert records:- "To the Land's End.... Capt. and Mrs. Parker and Miss Lewis got in at Camborne from Rosewarne to join the picnic". On the way by road from Penzance station to Land's End, "Capt. Parker was the life of the party and kept the waggonette in a roar .." Then "after dinner", Kilvert records, "Capt. P. took Miss Lewis and me down to the Land's End..." The stay at Land's End was not without its adventures. Encountering a "noisy rabble of tourists", Capt. Parker "suggested that a kicking might tend to mind their manners", whilst he "also killed a snake or viper with his stick, ripped it open with his knife and found three young mice inside".

On 29th. July, 1870, "A most delightful expedition and picnic at Gurnards Head. We drove to Camborne in the pony carriage and got to Rosewarne at 11. A large omnibus and pair was waiting to drive us on with the Parker's party". En route for Zennor, "'What's the row?' called Capt. Parker from the top of the omnibus, craning down to see what was the matter inside. 'The sherrys' flying all about', was the reply. 'Miss Lewis has upset every drop of hers'. A roar of inextinguishable laughter, sherry all round 'None of your larks', said Capt. Parker occasionally and reprovngly to the people inside. But he was the most larky of the party".

Later that day, "We reached Camborne soon after 11 and sat down to dinner or supper at midnight at Rosewarne, that hospitable house, after depositing some of the party at their own houses in the town. Mrs. Parker is an admirable hostess. I took her in to supper and had some talk with her about Wales and Monmouthshire where she used to live. She tells me her brother has lately taken Bronllys Castle

in Breconshire. The dining room at Rosewarne is beautifully hung round with horns, antelope, stag, gnu, buffalo, etc., etc. We left the hospitable house at 1..."

On 5th. August, 1870, "We called at Camborne (Rosewarne) to leave an Inverness cloak which Capt. Parker lent me to drive home in last Friday, and the kind hospitable people made us promise to call on our return and have supper or something...we drove back to Camborne reaching Rosewarne at 7. We walked round the pretty flower gardens and fine kitchen garden and visited the ferns and fruit houses. Dinner at 8 and a most admirable conger eel. I had no idea conger was so good, or good at all. The 'infant' Clare, and the two beautiful white cats. As we drove away the church clock struck ten and the granite pillars sparkled in the moonlight".

"Kilvert's Diary" never mentions these people again and little interest seems to have been shown in them by those who have sought to elucidate the Diary. It is assumed that Capt. Parker was some jovial, old, "character", with a competent wife, who for whatever reason resided at Rosewarne, whilst Miss Lewis seemed a nondescript spinster, good for a laugh, about whom no more was ever likely to be known. Why Kilvert should have met them remained unexplained, the general assumption being that they must all have been friends of Kilvert's Truro hosts, the Hockins.

That little interest has been shown in these characters has stemmed, no doubt, from the scanty descriptions which Kilvert has left for us. Nowhere does he so much as hint at the bizarre menage and the complex, extended family, of which these persons were a part. Either he knew, but did not choose to record or was unaware and left us in almost total ignorance.

Mrs. Parker's Welsh connections alone provide a clue to a familial maze and a story of some fascination.

The Hartleys and the Harrises.

Mary Harris of Rosewarne was born in Camborne in 1794. She was daughter and heiress of a wealthy and influential father, a man with land and mining interests. In 1819, at the British Embassy in Paris, she married Winchcombe Henry Hartley of Bucklebury, Berkshire, a barrister and eventual Judge of the Vice-Admiralty Court, Cape of Good Hope, South Africa. Like her father, Hartley was a man of standing and influence, but her family did not consent to the marriage.

This was not Hartley's first marriage. In 1798, he had married at Sandbeck, Yorkshire, Lady Louisa, second daughter of Richard, 4th Earl of Scarborough, of the Lumley Family, who later took the additional name of Savile. There were five children of this union, including Louisa Arabella Hartley and Georgiana Hartley. Their significance to the Rosewarne story will become apparent later. Mary Harris's marriage to Winchcombe Henry Hartley ended in failure and unhappiness.

The issue of their marriage was William Henry Harris Hartley, apparently born in 1823. Mrs. Hartley separated herself and her son from her husband by a deed of 1824. The husband and wife were never to meet again. Mary Hartley returned to the mansion of Rosewarne, with her son, in late 1824, after an absence of some nine years.

Her troubles were not at an end. A melancholia, precipitated originally by an earlier broken engagement, continued to affect her mind. A special jury in London in December, 1843, found that she had been incapable of managing herself or her affairs since October, 1834, whilst at the same time the "imbecility" of her son was established. At periods she described herself as Duchess of Cornwall! Yet over the years, her fortune had grown apace. She inherited considerable estates in various parts of Cornwall on the demise of her father, her mother and her uncle, including Trelille near Helston and Rosteaue on the Roseland Peninsula. A weighty issue now lay in the hands of the Lunacy Commissioners and the Court of Chancery.

The nature of the Rosewarne household thenceforward is summed up by the "Royal Cornwall Gazette" in 1895:- "Upon the finding of the Lunacy Commissioners, the management of the estates was entrusted to certain relatives of the husband, who acted in that capacity from 1843 to the death of the son last year". Various family members were appointed as "Committees" by the Court of Chancery, both to care for Mary Hartley and her son but also to see to the management of the large estates. A "committee", per the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, is "a person to whom the charge of a lunatic or idiot is committed". (The modern equivalent would be a receiver, appointed by the Court of Protection. The Court usually appoints as receiver a close relative of the patient and it is his duty to collect the patient's income and administer his property and affairs).

The Lewises

Within a short time of the certification of Mary Hartley's insanity and her son's imbecility, the first "committees" appeared on the scene, to wit, the Lewises.

William Price Lewis Junior was born on January 11th. 1812, the son of William Lewis, Clergyman, and Mary Lewis, of Cheltenham. He was baptised in the church of St. Philip, Birmingham, in 1815. His name next appears in the Llandaff ordination papers for 1838 and he seems to have been appointed assistant curate at Llanvair Kilgeddin, County Monmouth (now Gwent), some 5½ miles South East of Abergavenny. The rector of this parish was Rev. Francis Lewis, who had been admitted as incumbent in 1831 and was also Vicar of Holme Lacy in Herefordshire.

By 1843, the Reverend William Price Lewis Junior, as he came to be called, had become curate of Llantrisant in Monmouthshire. This lay not far from his previous abode, some 2½ miles South East of Usk.

By this time, significantly, he had married Louisa Arabella Hartley, the aforementioned step-daughter of Mary Hartley of Rosewarne. That she should have been in this part of Wales will become clearer later. Louisa Arabella gave birth to two children in Llantrisant - Louisa, born around 1842 and Mary Augusta, born around 1844.

In October, 1845, the name of the Reverend William Price Lewis Junior appears as the first entry in the "List of Strange Preachers" in Camborne Parish Church. The Lewises had clearly "arrived" - in more senses than one! On April 28th. 1846, their third child, born in Camborne - Illtyd James Savile - was baptised by his father in the same parish church. The couple's joys were shortlived, for on October 5th. of the same year, Louisa Arabella Lewis died.

Her plaque may still be seen on the chancel wall of Camborne Church. A contemporary newspaper account tells us that:- "Her loss will be deeply felt by the poor of this town and neighbourhood. She was buried in the Hartley family vault. The funeral was attended by many clergymen and other gentlemen; and by at least two thousand persons from the neighbourhood".

Bereavement notwithstanding, in November of the following year, Rev. William Price Lewis Junior took to himself a second wife, Cecilia Basset Rogers, daughter of Hugh Rogers, Rector of Camborne. Like his first wife, she was also a lady of substance. Her grandmother had been sister of Lord de Dunstanville, a famous, wealthy and influential Cornish worthy. A witness to the marriage was James Little, of Abergavenny, a significant geographical and familial connection.

In the 1851 Census for "Rosewarne Mansion", William Price Lewis Junior appears as "Head of Family". By "rank", he is "Chaplain at Rosewarne: Committee to Mr. W.H. Hartley". Hartley, by then 27 years of age, and his insane widowed mother, then 61, were recorded each as "Lunatic. Ward in Chancery", whilst by the rank they were "landed proprietors".

Death, too, soon awaited William Price Lewis Junior, and two years later, in 1853, he passed away. He is buried alone in Camborne Churchyard, close to the remains of his second wife's relatives. The grave inscription is in Latin. It tells us that he was "olim de Newhouse, nuper de Rosewarne", that is "formerly of Newhouse, recently of Rosewarne". The Lewis family of Newhouse were, in fact, a well established County family of Glamorgan. The uncle of William Price Lewis Junior seems to have been Wyndham Lewis, M.P., whose widow later married Disraeli!

The Lewis name remained on the Camborne scene. In the Census of 1861, Cecilia Basset Lewis, widow, aged 41, now appeared as "committee in lunacy" at Rosewarne House, as also did Francis Rogers, solicitor. The three children continued to reside with her, although Illtyd and Louisa Lewis were both to die young and unmarried. In the Camborne Church restoration fund of 1861, Mrs. Lewis and Miss A. Lewis appear as donors, whilst Mrs. Lewis also donates for Mr. James Little of Abergavenny.

The Parkers and the Littles

By the time of the 1871 Census, a new name had appeared on the Rosewarne scene, that of Frederick Townley Parker. He was born on 6th. February, 1832, and, according to the Census, in Florence. He was the fifth son of Robert Townley-Parker of Cuerden Hall, Preston and Astley Hall, Chorley (both in Lancashire), who was Member of Parliament for Preston for twenty years and High Sheriff in 1817.

At Llanvair Kilgeddin, on 9th. November, 1854, Frederick - by rank or profession "esquire" - married Louisa Elizabeth Katherine Little, born around 1833 in Bath. She was the daughter of the union of Mary Rogers of Rainscombe, Wiltshire and William Hunter Little of Llanvair Grange, County Monmouth, High Sheriff in 1852.

Both Frederick and Louisa resided at the Grange at the time of their marriage. Llanvair Grange, it should be noted, lay in the parish of Llanvair Kilgeddin in which the Reverend William Price Lewis Junior had served as assistant curate! Also a witness at the 1854 wedding was James Little, barrister-at-law and uncle to the bride. He it was who had witnessed the second marriage of the Reverend William Price Lewis Junior in Camborne Church and donated to the Church Restoration Fund!

The connection of the Littles of Gwent with Camborne in Cornwall is not, however, far to seek. The mother of Louisa Parker (nee Little), died when she was a baby. The widowed William Hunter Little took to his second wife, in May, 1836, the aforementioned Georgiana Hartley, step-daughter of Mary Hartley of Rosewarne and sister of Louisa Arabella, first wife of the Reverend William Price Lewis Junior. Thus, Louisa Elizabeth Katherine Parker became, in a manner of speaking, step-step-granddaughter of the insane Mary Hartley!

The Parkers' only child, Clare Europa, was born shortly after their marriage, in "Gibraltar, Spain", according to the Census. She was taken with them when they moved to Rosewarne. The date of this move was around 1864. Several factors suggest this. Parker became a staunch member of Camborne Parish Church and his subscriptions to the Church first appear in the Churchwardens' Accounts for the year Easter 1864 to Easter, 1865.

A more significant "dating event" was the death of Mary Hartley in October, 1868, who was found with her clothes in flames. The report of the inquest runs:- "The following evidence was adduced. Captain Frederick Townley Parker said: 'I have managed Mrs. Hartley's establishment between four and five years, having been appointed by the Court of Chancery. Mrs. Hartley had been of unsound mind more than thirty years ... I was not at home when the accident happened'. The verdict of the inquest was: "That the deceased died from having accidentally set herself on fire, and that no blame is attached to any of her attendants".

It may also not be coincidental that Parker's father-in-law, William Hunter Little of Llanvair Grange, died on 10th. December, 1864. One might conjecture that Parker was appointed "committee", subsequent to this event. If so, he was still relatively young. At the time of the 1871 Census - the year after the meeting with Kilvert, Frederick Parker, a "land owner's agent" was aged 39; Louisa the "agent's wife" was 37, and their daughter, Clare, a "scholar", was 15 years old.

Frederick and Louisa Parker were to reside at Rosewarne for many a year after that and over the next twenty years, their names appear regularly in the Churchwardens' Accounts as subscribers to the funds of Camborne Parish Church. Yet in this period, the Little family connection did not disappear either. At the Bodmin Summer Assizes in 1883, the case of Vivian v. Little was heard. This was an action for trespass involving the right to a piece of land near Truro. The defendant was the Reverend G.S. Lumley Little, step-brother to Mrs. Parker, whom a contemporary newspaper describes as "committee of the estate of William Henry Harris Hartley, a lunatic". (In 1877, Little had become vicar of Honyngnam, Diocese of Worcester).

The name of the Reverend Little was to appear again in accounts of the death of Parker a few years later. Parker died on 15th. July, 1892, aged 60 years, from a severe attack of pneumonia, after a short illness. A death notice describes him as "committee for the Rosewarne estate under the Court of Chancery for Mr. Hartley of Rosewarne....." and says that he "had resided at Rosewarne, Camborne, managing all affairs in connection with the Hartley estate for 28 years....". Ironically, he was not to be buried in the churchyard of his beloved Camborne Church, but in that of Tuckingmill, 2 or 3 miles away. His funeral notice in the "Camborne Post and Mining News" explains why:-

"The mortal remains of the late Captain F. Townley Parker were interred on Tuesday in All Saints' Churchyard, Tuckingmill. The deceased gentleman was a staunch Churchman, being a devoted member of Camborne Parish Church where he was a very active sidesman. He took a great interest in Church education and was for many years treasurer of the National Schools at Camborne. The Churchyard at Camborne being full and the new cemetery not being consecrated, the interment took place as already stated at All Saints', it, of course, having been the wish of the deceased to be buried in consecrated ground. A large number of the leading inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood were present to testify their respect for the deceased".

Amongst the mourners were "Mr. Townley Parker, of Cuerden Hall, Lancashire; Canon Parker, rector of Burnley; Rev. George and Major Hunter Little, Colonel Morris, Major Braddon and others". The first two mentioned were Parker's brothers. The Littles were Mrs. Parker's step-brothers (the Reverend George Little being mentioned in the 1883 law suit); Morris and Braddon were husbands of Mrs. Parker's step-sisters. Georgina Little had died the previous year.

Parker is buried alone in a grave, marked by a granite cross, still readily visible in Tuckingmill Churchyard. The inscription simply reads:- "Frederick Townley Parker. Born February 6th. 1832. Died July 15th. 1892. 'Thy will be done'". Louisa his wife, was not buried with him, nor apparently, was she buried in Camborne. Her only child, Clare Europa, married Ernest Egremont Heathcote, curate of Camborne from 1881-1890, and later Rector of Silverton, Devon. It is known that Louisa Parker was still in Camborne for two or three years after her husband's death but then perhaps moved away to live with her daughter. Clare died on 14th. October, 1941, aged 86 years and her remains lie, with those of her husband, in Silverton Churchyard.

Mrs. Parker was certainly still in Camborne on the death of William Henry Harris Hartley in June 1894 since a newspaper account says: "Mrs. Townley Parker, widow of the late Mr. F. Townley Parker, is also connected with the Hartley Family. Her relative, Mr. Little, was appointed by the commissioners-in-lunacy to manage the estate". Speculation was rife about possible inheritance to the substantial Hartley estates and Mrs. Parker's name was mentioned in that connection.

Parker, it could be argued, had been a good steward to the feeble-minded Hartley and his mother. When the estates were finally disposed of in 1920, they were nearly 4000 acres in extent - hardly less than when William Harris died over a century before - and this after 50 years of mental 'derangement' in the family.

How compos mentis Hartley was, before and during Parker's stewardship, is a matter of conjecture. It has been discovered that he learned Latin and music at the age of 11 years! An obituary notice, too, gives a not unsympathetic picture:- "Deceased used, for many years, to be driven around in an open carriage and his tall, glossy, cream-silk hat and portly frame attracted attention. The failure of his intellect was said by some to have been due to a fever; and by others to his having been excluded from the companionship of other boys, and jealously guarded by his mother, whose mind also failed. He had a great fondness for music, and used to attend most of the good concerts held at Camborne, besides having several hand-organs and musical boxes at home, with which he amused himself....."

Speculation was rife as to the value of the estates on Hartley's death. Estimates ranged from half a million pounds to two and a half millions, as reported in the local paper. Hartley died intestate and a distant relative, Lucien Stanislaw Leon Van Grutten, took possession of the estates! A celebrated law suit followed, in which many claimants to the estates appeared. After the law suit, the estates were retained by Van Grutten, whose family resided at Rosewarne for many years. In 1911, Rosewarne house passed into the hands of the Holmans, well known Camborne industrialists. It is now the Gladys Holman Home for Spastics.

The Light on "Kilvert's Diary"

This necessarily long and involved account, whilst revealing in itself, has "Kilvert's (Cornish) Diary" as its raison d'être. It is therefore interesting to see what light it sheds upon it.

It remains unclear why Kilvert met the Parkers and the Lewises. There is yet no evidence of their connection with his Cornish hosts, the Hockins. It is more significant that the family connections of both the Lewises and of Mrs. Parker were in Monmouthshire, not a great distance from Clyro where Kilvert served as curate under his well known vicar and mentor, the Reverend Vanables.

It is well attested that many of the interesting and influential contacts which Kilvert made, came to him via the Venables. It is possible that the Lewis or Little families were known to the Venables and that the latter had suggested introductions in Cornwall for Kilvert.

Research dispels the notion of Parker as merely a local "character" of rough and jocular humour, whose world was confined to Rosewarne. He was young, seemingly well-travelled and a man with a social conscience. He was born into the gentry and married into further gentry. Over a long period of years, he appears to have acquitted himself with distinction in the management of a complex estate, as well as a bizarre menage.

"Miss Lewis" emerges as more than the flippant and somewhat "anonymous" spinster suggested by the Diary. Whether Miss Louisa or Miss Mary Augusta - probably the latter - her father was the Chaplain to Rosewarne, her mother was the daughter of Lady Louisa Lumley, her distant forbears had connections with Disraeli, and she grew up in a well-known Cornish mansion!

Mrs. Parker's "brother who has lately taken the Bronllys Castle in Breconshire" emerges in a new light. For one thing, she had no brother! The 1871 Census indicates that the tenant of Bronllys was William Clode Braddon. He was the

husband of Mrs. Parker's step-sister, Barbara Elizabeth Maria Little. He was an adjutant in the Brecon volunteers and the eldest son of W. Clode Braddon of Skisdon Lodge, St. Kew, Cornwall!!! Either Kilvert misconstrued the facts as Mrs. Parker told them or she simplified the story to avoid the ramifications of her family history. Could the Cornish antecedents of the tenant of Bronllys be another reason why Kilvert had the Cornish contacts which he did?

The cryptic line:- "The 'infant' Clare and the two white cats" takes on a meaning which was not suspected before. This must be Clare Europa Parker, whom Kilvert met at Rosewarne. But at the time of their meeting, she was rather more than an infant - around 14 years old, in fact! Kilvert's romantic musings are well-known and could more be read into the phrase than meets the eye? Did he know she was born in "Gibraltar, Spain" and could he have mused on her as an "infanta"?

More pointedly, we know that Kilvert, in his infatuation with Emma Hockin, his host's wife, mused upon her as that sister of Francis of Assissi, St. Clare - "He saw many faces, but there was no St. Clare", the Diary tells us, as Kilvert left Cornwall in his 'wretchedness'. Quite in keeping, Emma Hockin had two pet toads in a tree stump and a pair of doves in her kitchen. But Kilvert's leanings towards young girls are also well-known. Could it then be that the Parker's daughter, with her two beautiful white cats and the name of Clare, appealed to him as a "junior version" of Emma Hockin, a "St. Clare" in the making, so to speak?

Finally, a whimsical note on which to end. It is said that the mounted heads and other sporting trophies mentioned by Kilvert as adorning the walls of Rosewarne, ended up in an attic at Holman Brothers' old works in Trelewarren Street, Camborne. No trace of them now seems to remain!!!

Notes:-

1. Many people have provided assistance in unravelling this story and it is impossible to acknowledge them all individually. However, special thanks are due to David Thomas of Camborne, whose expert knowledge of its church and parish has been absolutely invaluable and to John Hockin of Swanage for his stalwart interest and help.
2. The writer would be pleased to hear from anyone who could shed further light on any of the families or localities which figure in this article:-

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