

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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MARCH 1988.

Dear Member,

Owing to a very slow recovery from an operation, I regret that I do not feel able to write as fully as I would like to. For the record, I would state that the Aberedw service last September was as enjoyable as any in Kilvert's beloved Radnorshire, and we are very grateful to the Rector, Revd. J. Hambidge, the preacher, Revd. J. Williams and the parishioners. The sunshine could have been granted us the previous day for the Walk : instead low swirling clouds and rain caused it to be abandoned, much to the regret of the thirty members who had turned up.

A.G.M. - April 29th. 1988 - leaflet enclosed.

WALK - April 30th. 1988. Meet at Baskerville Arms, 12. 30 p.m.
Picnic lunch. Leaders Mr. and Mrs. R.I. Morgan.

Details of WALK, July 2nd. and service at Bredwardine, July 3rd. will appear in the next newsletter.

Clyro Weekend - September 23rd. - 25th. Programme included.

Yours sincerely,

E.J.C. West

Hon. Secretary.

OBITUARY. We regret to announce the death of the following members.

Mr. Melville Thomas (Brecon). A member since 1972, and the senior member of the Walton branch of the Thomas family, he read the lesson at the Llanigon service and was instrumental in arranging the service the following year at Brecon Cathedral - being for many years the Hon. Secretary of the Friends of that building. Badly crippled in his later years he nevertheless kept an interest in the Society.

Major Scott-Ashe (Langley Burrell). A vice-president of the Society, who with Mrs. Scott-Ashe always gave members at our services in Langley Burrell permission to inspect rooms in the house, and to walk around the garden.

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VISIT TO BRISTOL CATHEDRAL AND BRISLINGTON HOUSE - SATURDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 1987 by Elwyn Edwards.

Our day was heralded with cloud and rain, but by the time the coach left Hereford most of the clouds had blown away and blue skies and sunshine continued until we arrived at the Severn Bridge. We picked up members at Ross and also at Monmouth, where several members of the Monmouth Field and Antiquarian Society joined our party. We continued down the Wye Valley, which looked quite lovely after the early morning showers.

Torrential rain began as we neared the Severn Bridge and an almighty clap of thunder as we crossed, but once on the other side blue skies and sunshine reappeared and it remained so for the rest of the day. Mr. Hugh Dearlove, who had organized the tour was now on home ground and was able to point out to us many places of interest in and around the City of Bristol. We arrived at the Cathedral in time

for lunch, which was taken in the refectory. After lunch members were taken on a quick tour of the cathedral by Mr. Hipple, the head verger, who did his best in the time available to show us as many of the special features and carvings, etc., as time would allow. It was with regret that the tour had to be taken at a somewhat brisk pace due to our appointment at Brislington House later in the afternoon. Many members will, I am sure, be tempted to return to enjoy its architecture and wealth of mediaeval colours in one of the finest cathedral interiors in England and where people have worshipped for over eight hundred years. Also to admire the work of the great Victorian architect, George Edmund Street, who had the courage to continue the original mediaeval design on to the old stone vaulted hall. Its refectory should also be included on the list of places to visit, where excellent refreshments are served throughout the week.

Arriving at Brislington House, we were welcomed by Mrs. Baker, the new owner, who had returned from a cruise an hour earlier. Mrs. Baker and her manager gave members a picture of what life was like for Dr. Fox's patients during the period when Brislington House was under his ownership and until the establishment was taken over by the Health Service after the war, when it became a nurses home. The talk was given in the first floor ballroom, now restored and decorated to show off its earlier splendour. Tea was served in the adjoining room, which in Dr. Fox's day had been the billiard room.

Later the manager took members on a tour of the grounds which are also in the process of being returned to the style and period of the house. We were told that originally the house had 120 bedrooms for patients and their personal servants, but has now been re-arranged and altered to accommodate 204 patients. Returning to the house via the private chapel, Mr. Dearlove presented Mrs. Baker, on behalf of the Society, with a set of Kilvert's Diaries.

We returned home via Clifton Downs and made a stop at Blaize Castle Village, now in the ownership of the National Trust. Here another brisk tour was made of the unusual and attractive thatched cottages which formed part of the Blaize Estate.

Our grateful thanks to Mr. Hugh Dearlove for planning and leading a most interesting excursion!

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AFTERNOON STROLL ROUND BATH - 26TH. SEPTEMBER
by Mrs. C. Fleming.

Mellow September sunshine shone down on thirty or so enthusiasts who joined the Rev. John Day and Kenneth Clew for their afternoon stroll round the beautiful city of Bath.

We gathered in the grounds of the Holburne Museum, once in its chequered past taken over by Sydney College where Thersie's husband, the Rev. William Robins Smith, taught from 1860 - 1874. The sunshine, tall trees and grass, reminded us of RFK's vivid description of the crowded Flower Show here in May 1870. Walking round the corner to 9, Darlington Street, we saw the tall Georgian terraced home of RFK's Uncle John and Aunt Marianne. There is a memorial tablet to them in St. Mary's Church, Bathwick, which stands diagonally across the road. Many changes have taken place in this handsome, Gothic style Church since RFK officiated at the wedding of his cousin, Eliza, to Francis John Robert Russell, on a cold, dark, winter's morning (31st. December 1874). Whilst in the Church we were reminded of the Lenten visit of Father Ignatius amusingly described by Dora Kilvert in her letter to RKF (31st. March 1872).

A few minutes walk from St. Mary's Church stands Thersie and William Smith's home, 13 Raby Place. It is a charming Georgian house but one can well understand how the proximity of the railway disturbed Thersie following the birth of her elder son, Hastings, who was later to show his interest in, and appreciation of, his Uncle's diary. A quieter "neighbour" than the railway was the Avon and Kennet Canal and we took a delightful short cut along its towpath to our next port of call.

This was Caroline Buildings, home to the Kilvert and Falkner families. The Rev. Robert Kilvert's memoirs came vividly to mind as we stood by No. 7. Here once lived the seven lively Kilvert boys who miraculously survived their childhood betwixt the River Avon and the Canal without drowning. The Rev. Robert Kilvert tells us that, clad in a smart dark blue brass-buttoned jacket, he carried his grandmother's prayerbook to Church. We now followed his footsteps up Widcombe Hill to the delightful 15th. Century Church of St. Thomas a Becket. Across the narrow lane from the Church stands the handsome Georgian Widcombe House, once home of the

Clutterbuck family. The Clutterbuck's pew was next to that of the Kilvert family. No doubt Thomas Clutterbuck, later of Hardenhuish Park, remembered the young Robert Kilvert for, in 1835, he offered him the living of St. Nicholas Church, Hardenhuish.

We made our way through the churchyard pausing at the tomb of Francis Kilvert, the antiquarian and his formidable wife. Down the hill we trooped catching glimpses through the trees of Prior Park where RFK wandered with his Gwatkin cousins one murky January afternoon in 1874. We then made our way across busy roads to the Widcombe Halfpenny Bridge, scene of a tragic disaster during RFK's lifetime when it collapsed during the Agricultural Show week.

Time, alas, was pressing and we could only pause briefly outside St. John's Roman Catholic Church which RFK visited on another sunny September afternoon 112 years earlier and, afterwards, noted his ecumenical thoughts and prayers in his Diary.

Warmest thanks and congratulations to Kenneth Clew and John Day for involving us all in such an interesting afternoon, and particularly to those of us who did not know Bath well, this expedition has added greatly to our enjoyment of both the Rev. Robert Kilvert's Memoirs and the Bath references in the Diary.

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THE POEM "WELCOME HOME"

Mrs. Teresa Williams has written to tell me of a most interesting discovery. At the Kilvert-Father Ignatius Symposium last autumn she met a Mrs. Evered, who told her she had in her possession an original poem by Kilvert. Mrs. Evered's husband used, when a small boy, to stay at Worthing in a house next door to that occupied by Mrs. Essex Hope and her sister Florence, and developed a friendship with Essex which lasted till her death. Mr. Evered had been offered her books, but had refused them. He must, however, have received one, a book of Coleridge's poems inscribed from Kilvert to Thersie, and the poem, "Welcome Home" was found between the pages. Mrs. Evered very kindly sent Mrs. Williams a photostat. The handwriting is Kilvert's, and extra proof is afforded by the words at the end - "Bredwardine Vicarage. For the burial of John Harper of Bredwardine February 1878".

Mrs. Williams has found in "The Hereford Times" for Feb. 16th. 1878 the following notice:-

Death : HARPER - On Tuesday, 11th. February at Bredwardine, JOHN, aged 36, relict of SARAH HARPER, late of Dilwyn and eldest son of Mr. Charles Harper of Shobdon, leaving four young orphans.

Obviously Kilvert was much moved by the death of the young man, so close to his own age, and the poem "Welcome Home" was inspired by the sad event.

The Society is most grateful to both Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Evered.

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FOLLOWING IN KILVERT'S FOOTSTEPS

The Kilvert Society invites you to join them on Saturday, 23rd. April, for an afternoon exploration of some of the places known to the Rev. Robert Francis Kilvert, the Victorian diarist. Meet at 2. 00 p.m. at St. Nicholas' Church, Hardenhuish, whether wet or fine! The afternoon starts with a tour of the church, followed by a walk in the Langley Burrell area or, if wet, by an alternative programme. It will end about 5. 00 p.m. with tea and biscuits at Langley Burrell.

Please note that parking is difficult at Hardenhuish, so arrive in good time to find a safe place to park. Remember to wear sensible walking shoes!

A small charge of 50p per person will be made to cover expenses, and any surplus will go to St. Peter's, Langley Burrell, Church Funds.

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THE KILVERT GALLERY (CLYRO) - Mrs. Organ informs me that an Easter Exhibition will be held at Ashbrook House opening on March 27th. Included in the exhibition will be a set of the woodcuts made by Miss van Niekirk for the Gregynog Press edition of the Diary, and Kilvert Country landscapes, together with a mixture of various media to represent as much as possible of Clyro and its related interests.

ACCOMMODATION - Mr. J.L. Phillips of Magdalene, Brobury, Hereford. HR3 6DX informs me that extensions to the former Brobury Chancel (owned by him and his wife) enable him to provide accommodation for paying guests.

ACCOMMODATION Mrs. W. Boddy of Llwynbarried Hall, Nantmel, Llandrindod Wells, Powys, LS1 6EW informs me that a wing of the Hall, centrally heated, with new bathroom and kitchen, one ground floor bedroom and two upstairs, is fully equipped for self catering holidays. Further details to anyone interested. (Telephone: Rhayader 810584).

3 VOLUME SET OF THE DIARY - As new, for sale at £20. 45. post free. Please apply to Mr. J. Atherton, 31, Heyville Road, Bebington, Wirral, Merseyside. L63 2ZH.

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CHRISTMAS EVE AND TWELVE OF THE CLOCK
by D.E. Howell (St. Albans)

Thomas Hardy's lovely poem "The Oxen" which tells of the oxen kneeling down in their strawy pen, on "Christmas Eve and twelve of the clock", recalls the account in Kilvert's diary dated January 5th. 1878. He recounts the story that Priscilla Price tells of old James Meredith when in reply to her questioning, describes how he saw the oxen kneel at Staunton-on-Wye on old Christmas Eve at 12 o'clock.

Hardy illustrates this delightful scene in poetic form: Kilvert in prose. But the impact upon the reader is no less strong in one than in the other.

Both literary forms complement the other and give strength to Wordsworth's remarks in his "Preface to Lyrical Ballads", 'that the best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose when prose is well written' and that 'the language of Prose may well be adapted to Poetry'. No wonder Wordsworth was Kilvert's favourite poet and ever an inspiration to him.

Somehow the denial by old James, whom Priscilla considered a truthful man, that it was not at the Weston that he saw the oxen kneel, seems totally honest. It seems to lend emphasis to his affirmation that it was at Hinton at Staunton-on-Wye that he witnessed the tremendous happening.

Words in the hands of Hardy and Kilvert in whatever form they are written have the same dramatic intensity.

Hardy's : Christmas Eve and twelve of the Clock.

"Now they are on their knees....."

and Kilvert's :

"I was watching them on old Christmas Eve and at 12 o'clock the oxen that were standing, knelt down upon their knees and those that were lying down rose up on their knees and there they stayed kneeling and moaning, the tears running down their faces"

conjure up a scene no less poignant than that of the shepherds and the kings paying homage to the new born king.

Both accounts are an enrichment to our literary heritage.

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BRIEFLY MENTIONED, BUT VERY INTERESTING
by Sidney Ball (Swindon)

Members know so well the people Francis Kilvert wrote about frequently. But the host of people mentioned briefly in our published Diary are also full of interest.

ANNIE KEARY

Francis Kilvert knew how to charm the ladies! When Mrs. Keary brought Annie Keary, the authoress, to luncheon with the Kilverts, Francis told Miss Keary how much he liked her story "Castle Daly". Then "her face flushed with pleasure and she blushed like a girl". (Vol. 3. p. 128).

Annie Keary was then 49. Born at Bilton Hall, near Wetherby, Yorks, her father was Rector of Bilton and her mother a Plumer from Bilton Hall. Miss Keary wrote children's stories, travel books and novels. "Castle Daly" was her most successful book; its setting was Ireland, a country Annie only knew from relatives and friends. She did most of her writing at Pegasus, near Cannes. She died at Eastbourne in 1879.

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