

# THE KILVERT SOCIETY

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

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**The Lady Delia Venables-Llewelyn**

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## FEBRUARY 1994

Dear Member,

It was a matter of regret that I was not able to give wide circulation of the invitation to the Society to participate in the At Home Day organised by residents of the village of Leysters, which Kilvert records visiting on two occasions. Nor was I able to go myself, but members Mr. and Mrs. M. Sharp attended and told me of the enjoyable walk to the Poet's Stone and their attempts to play croquet on the very lawn that Kilvert did.

Later in September came the Autumn weekend. The walk was led by our Chairman, the party numbering 25. From Clyro Church the route lay via the Dingle and Jacob's Ladder across meadows to the Little Lloyney, or to Great Gwernfythen and Pemplar, back to the Baskerville Arms. With halts for opposite readings, the Walk was termed as one of the most enjoyable ever we are very grateful to Revd. Lockwood for organising and leading the Walk.

Our venue for the following day's service St. Harmon, where by kind permission of the Vicar, Revd. D.T. Hurley the Autumn Commemoration was held. He conducted the service, the lessons were read by Committee members Mr. C.J. Marshall and Mr. R.O. Watts. The Act of Remembrance was made by Revd. Canon D.T.W. Price (a Vice-President of the Society), and the address given by the Right Revd. D.M. Bridges (Lord Bishop of Swansea and Brecon). He spoke of 1993 as a special year of commemoration for the Church in Wales. It had seen the Jubilee of the Diocese of Swansea and Brecon, whose first bishop was the Teddy Bevan of the Diary, and St. Harmon was the most northerly parish of that large diocese. Kilvert was but one of the hosts of witnesses to the faith in the Principality, among whom the Bishop referred to George Herbert and Henry Vaughan, the 17th C. poets. It was with Vaughan's poem "My Soul, there is a country" that the address was concluded, and I was struck by the parallel to Kilvert's favourite hymn, "There is a land of pure delight".

Members adjourned to Pantydwr village hall for tea. A delicious spread, convivial company - what more to be said, save our most grateful thanks to the Vicar, the Bishop, church officials and the ladies of the parish!

## 1994 PROGRAMME

The A.G.M. will be held at the Bishop's Palace, Hereford on Friday April 29th at 7.00 p.m., by the kind permission of Mrs. Oliver. The guest speaker will be Mr. J. Powell Ward, general editor of the Seren Press, which has published not only our Chairman's "Kilvert", but also very interesting studies of such borderland figures as Samuel Sebastian Wesley, Eric Gill at Capel y Ffin, and the novelist Mary Webb. Whereas in time past a bowl was put out for contributions towards the expenses of the evening, the Committee has decided that in future the sum of £2 will be levied for the refreshments, the catering being done by Café Ascari as usual. A reminder too, that parking in the grounds of the Bishop's Palace is forbidden!

Instead of the walk the following day, Saturday, April 30th, there will be a visit to Brinsop Court, arranged by our Committee member, Mr. R.O. Watts. He reports that we are indeed fortunate to be

invited to the home of Mr. and Mrs. T.N. Bailey. Mrs. Bailey's father, Mr. B. Aggas, is a member of the Society and will take us on a short tour of Brinsop Church followed by a visit to the Great Hall of the Court where he will entertain us with an account of the Wordsworth family and their connection with the house. Members are to meet at Credenhill Church, some 5 miles west of Hereford on the A480 Kington road at 12.30 p.m., where after a picnic lunch, Mr. Watts will outline the afternoon's arrangements. (The Diary reference is the very last for 1879). The turning for the church is on the right, and is signposted.

Preliminary notice: the Summer Commemoration service is on June 26th and will be held at Fordington Church, near Dorchester (Dorset) by kind permission of the Vicar, Canon D. Letcher. Full details in the next newsletter.

This issues obituary contains very sad losses for the Society. At the same time there is cause for deep gratitude for their example of loyalty to the memory of Kilvert.

Yours Sincerely

S.J.C. West (Hon. Sec.)

## OBITUARY

We regret to announce the deaths of the following members, and would extend our sympathy to those bereaved:-

Mr. J.W. Lewis (Milton-under-Wychwood) a membership since 1961.

Rev. Canon R.W. Kilvert (Petersfield), the great-nephew of the Diarist and a Vice-President of the Society, he had been an active member, taking part in several commemoration services, until the recent years of old age and illness.

Mrs. Jessie Bentley-Taylor (Malvern), a member since 1979, when after a lifetime of missionary work in China and Malaysia she and her husband, Mr. David Bentley-Taylor retired to live in Herefordshire. His contribution to the Society was memorable, as was her constant and loyal support.

Rev. Brynmor Price (Hereford), a member since 1981, the Kilvert Society Archivist. His career bore several similarities to that of Mrs. Bentley-Taylor, and on his retirement to Hereford he was introduced to the Society by Mr. Godfrey Davies, the then Archivist, and undertook the post on Mr. Davies's death. He had been born in China, and right to the end of his life had helped the China Church study group to keep in touch with events in the Church in China by faithfully spending long hours translating articles from Chinese Christian magazines. In addition he remained active in the Baptist ministry and in local commercial affairs. Typical of the esteem and affection in which he was held was that at the funeral service I met an ex-pupil of mine and his wife. They had travelled from the Carmarthen Vans in order to pay their respects to the minister who had officiated at their wedding and had become, they said, their very good friend. Which he was, to all those Kilvert Society members who knew him!

## BOOK REVIEWS

### GEORGE JARVIS (1704 - 1793) AND HIS NOTORIOUS CHARITY

By Richard Pantall, M.M.

1993 is the 200th anniversary of the death of George Jarvis, an occasion which has been well commemorated by the publication of Mr. Richard Pantall's excellent book. The thoroughness and depth of the author's research is impressive, and the story is well complemented by many fascinating photographs, illustrations and document facsimiles from many sources.

As the story unfolds we learn of Jarvis's early life in Staunton-on-Wye and Bredwardine and of his walk to London at the age of 13. There he served a seven year apprenticeship and in 1725 was Admitted to the Freedom of the Worshipful Company of Curriers. His subsequent life in London, his marriages and accumulation of wealth are all very well described. By 1758 his success in business had enabled him to purchase a "fine gentleman's residence and farm" at Thames Ditton in Surrey, where he lived until his death.

It is not now possible to be certain of the reason for the disinheritance of his family, but the dissipated life-style of his titled grandson must have caused Jarvis great sadness. What is certain is that sometime during the last few years of his life, he decided to leave his fortune to found a Charity to benefit the three village parishes of Staunton-on-Wye, Bredwardine and Letton. The story of the inception of this Charity, with all the subsequent problems, is told in meticulous detail, whilst the lives of some of the parishioners are vividly represented in the extracts from the Trustees' Minute Books.

This book is of special interest to Kilvert Society members, for not only is George Jarvis buried at Bredwardine where Kilvert was Vicar, but the Diarist was also a Trustee of the Jarvis Charity in 1878-79. Many of the names and places in the book are also in the published Diary, and 'out-of-town' Society members will find much valuable background information about an area with which Kilvert was so familiar.

In the Introduction to his book, Mr. Pantall says that he has always wanted to find out the true facts of George Jarvis and the founding of the Charity which bears his name, and to record a true history for posterity. This he has now done and he has done it in splendid style.

Teresa Williams

*The book is available from Mr. Richard Pantall of Upper House, Staunton-on-Wye, Herefordshire, HR4 7LW. The price is £7.95 plus £1.55 postage plus 50 pence for a signed copy, a total of £10.*

### **Eglwys Oen Duw: Church and Parish**

A 48 page guide by Ruth Bidgood. Available from the Revd. Brian Bessant, the Vicarage, Llanwrtyd Wells, Powys, LD5 4SA at £2.50 (post paid).

The 1993 summer service was held at Eglwys Oen Duw (Church of the Lamb of God), the Parish Church of Beulah. This was built through the generosity of Miss Clara Thomas of nearby Llwynmadoc and opened for divine worship on 8 November 1866. It was a church known to Francis Kilvert, who preached at its Harvest Festival service in 1871 on Ruth and Boaz.

Ruth Bidgood's book covers far more than the history of its delightful parish church. There is a chapter devoted to its delightful parish church. There is a chapter devoted to Beulah's two estates - Aberanell and Llwynmadoc, the latter eventually absorbing a part of the former. Others cover changes in farming, the records of a 19th century local historian and reminiscences of parishioners.

This is an excellent local history of church and parish, written in a very readable style, and giving a good insight into life in Kilvert's time and the changes that have since taken place. A minor disappointment is the lack of maps or photographs to illustrate the text, though the book is still well worth its purchase price.

An 8 page guide to the church has also been published for those who do not require the full parish history. This costs 20p plus a stamped addressed envelope at least 9" x 6", and can be obtained from the Vicar (address shown above).

### **Llanlleonfel Church Guide**

A 12 page guide, available at 20p plus a stamped addressed envelope at least 9" x 6", from the Revd Jonathan Smith, The Rectory, Maes Glas, Llangammarch Wells, Powys LD4 4EE.

Not far from Eglwys Oen Duw, Llanlleonfel is another church mentioned in Kilvert's Diary. Though in ruins at the time of his visit in August 1873, it was sympathetically restored three years later. The church has associations with the Methodist hymn writer Charles Wesley, who was married there in 1749 to Sarah Gwynne of Garth House by his preacher brother John. The guide mentions both events and also covers the history of this simple yet beautiful building which is a haven of peace. An extremely effective modern addition is the stained glass memorial window in the south wall, which casts a warm red glow over the sanctuary. Do buy the guide and visit the church.

### **Aspects of Aberedw by Alan Charters**

A 24 page booklet available from the Revd Alan Charters, The Rectory, Aberedw, Builth Wells, Powys, LD2 3UW at £2.50 (post paid).

Modestly described by the author as 'a brief account of the story of Aberedw', it offers very much more. Contents include local folklore, Aberedw Castle, Prince Llewelyn's betrayal and death, the history of and a guide to St Cewydd's Church, some events of parish history and a short extract from Kilvert's Diary. This publication is very welcome, providing an interesting and informative account of a village and church that are well worth a visit. The text is complemented by a number of photographs, including one of the Aberedw poachers at the turn of century.

K.R. Clew

## **Past People in Wiltshire and Gloucestershire by Countess Badeni**

Members acquainted with Mr. Frederick Grice's "Who's Who in Kilvert" will know that Countess Badeni's "Wiltshire Forefathers" was a valuable source of information for that booklet. Her further researches have resulted in this new book.

Seventeen manors in Wiltshire and nine in Gloucestershire form the chapters of the book, all illustrated by photographs including the few that have been demolished. The families who occupied them are recalled by use of wills, contemporary accounts and letters written by members of the families under consideration, while Langley Burrell and Kington Langley will be of the greatest interest to members, other chapters cannot fail to hold the reader - the stories of skulduggery and villainy at Burton Hall and of the Creswell family at Pinkney, are the very stuff of historical novels. (But truth is stranger than fiction!)

The chapter on Kington Langley contains fascinating items from the account book kept to Sarah Coleman in the mid 18th Century, much as "For ye 1741 paid Land Tax and Window Tax £4-12-4½" and "Paid 7 shillings and tenpence halfpenny for Green Tea". (It was she whom Kilvert records being shot at.) In the course of this very interesting chapter. Countess Badeni establishes a new link between the Coleman and the Wyndowe families.

Langley Burrell receives equal attention. A family tree of the Ashes is given and history of the descendants of Sam Ashe who acquired the manor in 1660. The author, establishes who was responsible for the rebuilding of the house, and there is interesting comment on Kilvert's Squire Ashe.

The book (a most interesting piece of social history) can be obtained at £16.25 including postage from The Countess Badeni, Norton Manor, Malmesbury, Wilts at £16.25 post free.

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Mrs. Ruth Bigwood, author of the Eglwys Oen Duw guide, read some of her poems at the tea following the service at the church. She has very kindly allowed the Society to print two of those poems. We are correspondingly very grateful and express acknowledgments to the Seren Press for the use of "Resurrection Angels".

### **Resurrection Angels**

(Kilvert was told that the people used to come to the Wild Duck Pool on Easter morning 'to see the sun dance and play in the water and the angels who were at the Resurrection playing backwards and forwards before the sun'.)

These were not troubling the waters  
to bring healing. They were serving  
no purpose. After the watch at the tomb,  
the giving of good news, they were at play.  
To and fro went the wings, to and fro  
over the water, playing before the sun.

Stolid-seeming villagers stared  
enchanted, watching sun dance and play,  
light-slivers splinter water's dark.  
In dazzle they half-saw  
great shining shapes swoop frolicking  
to and fro, to and fro.

This much was shared,  
expected; day and place had their  
appropriateness, their certainties.  
The people had no words to tell  
the astonishment, the individual bounty-  
for each his own dance in the veins,  
brush of wings on the soul.



### **The Swift**

There were prayers about famine.  
Then, lowering hymnbooks, children laughed,  
their wildness released by a swift  
that came dipping through the door,  
sweeping to and fro, low over pews,  
from font to altar and back.  
For adults, dark rhythms of flight heightened,  
not hid, pictures lodged in reluctant minds.

Up, up flew the swift. it would stay  
for days unreachable, fall starved. Silhouetted,  
clinging to the east window's topmost pane,  
it drooped black angled wings symmetrically  
over glories of suffering and triumph,  
seeming to offer mutely, in doomed grace,  
blackest of shadows for images of shelter.

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### **VIVID GLIMPSES OF AN EMINENT BISHOP** (by John Hodkin, Cumbria)

The fame of Mrs. Cecil Frances Alexander as a writer of hymns has tended to relegate her husband William to the background. Yet William Alexander, who was Bishop of Derry, then Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland, was a very notable figure in the Victorian church, and appears twice in Kilvert. Ironically, his wife does not appear at all!

The first occasion is on Tuesday, 7th October 1873, when Kilvert attended the Church Congress service at Bath Abbey, where Dr. Alexander preached "an admirable sermon nearly an hour long". Kilvert records that three things in the sermon struck him particularly, that "the papacy is the ghost of the Roman Empire sitting crowned upon its grave", that "earth is strewn with the wrecks of heaven's ideals", and that "natural laws are not chains bound about the living God, but threads which He holds in His hands".

The other appearance of Bishop Alexander in the diary is three years later on Monday, 22nd May 1876, when Kilvert was on a visit to Oxford.

Kilvert records that while in the Parks and accompanied by Mayhew he met "a short stout gentleman with a double chin and large umbrella, a kindly face and a merry eye, who buttonholed Mayhew and began to inveigh in an aggrieved tone against the folly, perversity and bad taste of the University residents and visitors in rushing in crowds of 1,200 to hear the Bishop of Derry (Alexander) give an ornamental rhetorical flourish by way of a Bampton lecture in the morning and leaving himself (Professor Pritchard, Professor of Astronomy and Select Preacher) to hold forth to empty benches in the afternoon". Pritchard fulminated against the Bishop's Bampton Lectures, saying they were "an insult to the understanding of the University".

This incident culminates with a misunderstanding told in Kilvert's best humorous style. Pritchard says he had a letter from a Manchester cotton gentleman who said he had heard in the University Church what he would never forget as long as he lived. Pritchard smiled broadly, so Kilvert quite naturally thought it referred to Alexander's lecture and laughed loud and long. However, Pritchard made it clear that the Manchester gentleman's letter applied not to the Bishop's Bampton lecture but to Professor Pritchard's own select sermon which had touched the cotton lord to the heart and done him much spiritual good!

The Dictionary of National Biography has such a full and excellent article on William Alexander that it suffices to say here that he was born in Derry in 1824, the son of a clergyman, became Bishop of Derry in 1867 and Primate of all Ireland in 1893. He retired in January 1911, and died in September the same year at Torquay.

He married Cecil Frances Humphreys (1818-95, six years his senior) in 1850 and they had two sons and two daughters. Her best known hymns are "All Things Bright and Beautiful", "Once in Royal David's City" and "There is a Green Hill Far Away".

The career of Professor Charles Pritchard (1808-1893) is also well covered in the Dictionary of National Biography, so I will just say that he was appointed Savilian professor of astronomy in the University of Oxford in 1870, and made many important contributions to the science. He was ordained in 1834 and preached so many times before the British Association that he became known as its "chaplain".

In the May 1980 newsletter Frederick Grice observed that Pritchard was Mayhew's schoolmaster. This would have been at Clapham Grammar School where Pritchard was headmaster from 1834 to 1862.

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### **REFLECTIONS ON KILVERT AND HARDY** (by R. Marriott, Sutton Coldfield)

Having an interest in the Victorian period in general and being a member both of the Thomas Hardy Society and the Kilvert Society, I often find myself noting the considerable number of coincidences connecting the two men. Both were born in 1840, Hardy in June, Kilvert in December. However their lives were very different, as were their attitudes and beliefs. I must say that I can't help but think that Kilvert would probably have been in agreement with the almost universal condemnation of "Jude" and Tess had he lived a little longer.

The first of these coincidences relates to Findon. On 20th May 1866 Hardy visited the village, sketching the church, nestling in the trees, seen from the hills above. Eight years later Kilvert arrived at Worthing and on 11th August attended Addie Cholmeleys wedding, meeting his "Kathleen Mavourneen" his visit having a romantic impact on him, equal perhaps, to Hardys arrival at St. Juliot rectory in Cornwall.

In 1863, Hardy during his sojourn in London, moved to Westbourne Park Villas, (to number 16) in the parish of St. Steven, where he regularly attended church. Apparently he remained at this address until July 1867 when he returned to Dorset. In 1872 on 27th May Kilvert tells us "Put up at Perch's rooms 68, Westbourne Park Villas. As the Diary does not begin until 1870, it may well be that Perch was there for some years. If he was there as early as 1867, Francis would have no doubt visited him at some point and the two brothers would almost certainly have attended the local church together. In the same congregation as Hardy?

While in Dorset, it is known Hardy was sent to do architectural work at the vicarage at Hawkchurch in east Devon, the house Kilvert visited at least twice while staying with his Uncle Will.

A fourth coincidence is Kilverts journey to Dorchester at the end of April 1874. Here he met the poet William Barnes, introduced by Henry Moule, vicar of Fordington. Hardy described Barnes as "an aged clergyman quaintly attired in caped cloak, knee breeches and buckled shoes. Kilvert described him as follows "He is an old man, over seventy, rather bowed with age, but apparently hale and strong." "He wore a dark grey loose gown girt round the waist with a black cord and tassel, black knee breeches, black silk stockings and gold buckled shoes. It seems he was little changed from Hardys first introduction in the late 1850's until Kilverts meeting in the 1870's. Hardy was back at Buckhampton at the time finishing "Far from the Madding Crowd".

Finally it is interesting to note that Kilverts return from his famous Cornish holiday took place on Saturday 6th August 1870. He took the train from Truro, obviously via Plymouth and Exeter back to Wiltshire. On this very day, Hardy travelled from London by train via Plymouth and Launceston to St. Juliot for his second meeting with his future wife Emma Gifford. As Kilvert missed the first train from Truro, and had to catch the 11:05, he would quite likely have passed Hardy's train at Plymouth. I find it fascinating to reflect that the two could have stared at each other from the windows of their adjacent stationary trains at Plymouth or Exeter, little guessing that this day should be recorded for posterity by both of them.

## FROM CORRESPONDENCE

A new Society, the Friends of the Dymock Poets, is being formed this year. Dymock is the Gloucestershire village on the border of Herefordshire which from 1912 to 1916 became the focus for the emerging talents of poets such as Edward Thomas, Robert Frost, Lascelles Abercrombie and Wilfrid Gibbon, and others, such as Rupert Brooke and W.H. Davies visited them. A brochure indicates that in aim it will much resemble Kilvert Society. Sadly, its inaugural weekend will clash with ours in June. A leaflet about the Friends of the Dymock Poets, as well as further information, can be obtained from Mrs. B.E. Davis, 333 Ryton, Dymock, Glos., GL18 2DJ.

"Victorian Vicar's Weekend" is a weekend devised to introduce people to the places mentioned in Kilvert's diary, ranging from Moccas Deer Park and Bredwardine right across to Aberedw and Llanbedr Painscastle. I understand that accommodation is in recognised good quality B and B's and meals provided in pubs and farmhouses. The all-in price is £120 per person. Further information from Mr. David Gorvatt, The Cruck House, Eardisley, Hereford HR3 6PQ.

The serialisation of "Middlemarch" on BBC2 has raised a query - "Why does Kilvert make no reference to George Eliot's novels? I think that Plomer in his edition of the Diary would not have omitted any reference to her, and it is probable that Kilvert was not able to buy the monthly periodicals in which "Middlemarch" was serialised. Of her best known novels "Adam Bede", "Silas Marner" and "The Mill on the Floss" were all written prior to the commencement of the Diary. The novels of both Hardy and Dickens were serialised too, and they also are not referred to in the Diary.

Communications from Hay-on-Wye members report on the proposed building of a theatre in that town, the location of which would be on the North (i.e. Clyro) side of the Wye. It is this site that has caused very strong feelings. Members who know the delightful view of the town from that side will appreciate that any development would be an eyesore. A group called Friends of the North Bank has been formed, based at West House, Broad Street, Hay-on-Wye HR3 5DB.

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## CLYRO CHURCH

### Introduction

The Church of St. Michael and All Angels at Clyro, Radnorshire, is in need of substantial repairs which must be done soon if substantial deterioration to the fabric is to be avoided.

The Church is well-known because the famous Victorian diarist, the Reverend Francis Kilvert, was Curate there for some years in the 1870's.

Clyro is designated as a "Conservation Area". The Church was largely rebuilt in the Victorian era, but most of the tower is of original Norman construction.

### Work Necessary

The main item is the 60-foot long lead-lined valley, running from West to East, between the two principal roofs of the Church. The lead is worn out and must be replaced: the valley has been leaking over some years and this has led to damage to the internal plastering and decoration. When the outside work has been done, partial replastering and virtually complete redecoration must be done inside.

Rotting has also clearly affected the valley boards beneath the lead, and possibly some of the roof timbers as well. Until the lead has been stripped off, the extent of such damage cannot be ascertained, but it seems prudent to assume that it will be found to be extensive, especially after the exceptionally wet 1993-94 winter.

The roof is tiled and is mainly in good condition, but a number of slipped tiles must be replaced, also cracked copings.

Further problems recently came to light during minor repairs to the tower. The tower roof was found to have been leaking with consequent rotting to internal roof timbers. A substantial iron downpipe was found to be doubtfully safely affixed to the tower wall and will need to be replaced or refixed. The top storey of the tower stonework needs repointing. All this work will necessitate the erection of scaffolding. Inside the tower, the final stages of access to the roof are precarious and a permanent stair-ladder should be installed.

Finally, the electrical switchboard needs a complete overhaul to eliminate dead switches, and some of the wiring also needs renewing.

### **Likely Cost**

Estimation of total costs is difficult because of the major uncertainty of what will be found when the valley lead is removed. The Churchwardens feel that a sum of **£15,000** should be raised to be certain that all this necessary work can be done to the highest standard, and to ensure that the Church is safe from further deterioration for a good number of years.

Clyro is now a substantial village, but there are unfortunately very few regular churchgoers, although good attendances are secured at festivals. The fund-raising capacity of the community is likely to be restricted in the near future because the Church Hall is in the process of becoming a true Village Hall operated by and for the benefit of the whole community under its own management committee. Like most such structures, it needs upgrading to comply with modern regulations and fund-raising to achieve this will inevitably cut into the amount of money the Clyro community will be able to put up for Church repairs. Very little assistance is to be expected from Diocesan sources owing to financial stringency there.

We have a duty to preserve this historic Church, which is important to admirers of the Kilvert tradition and to many others outside Clyro, as a place of worship. We submit that the funding of these immediately necessary works, which will put the future of these immediately necessary works, which will put the future of the Church beyond doubt for many years, is a fit and proper cause for outside assistance.

### **The Churchwardens**

Mrs Nancy Walker,  
17 Castle Estate,  
Clyro,  
via Hereford HR3 5ST  
(People's Warden)

Andrew Gibson-Watt,  
Wyecliffe,  
Hay-on-Wye,  
via Hereford HR3 5RS  
(Vicar's Warden)

If any member of the Society would like to contribute to the Fund, that would be warmly welcomed by the Vicar and Churchwardens. Contributions should be sent to the Vicar's Warden (address above) and cheques made out in favour of "Clyro Church".

### **1994 SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Following the change in the subscription year, all subscriptions for 1994 became due on the 1st January 1994.

Many have already kindly paid their subscriptions for the year.

Under Rule 8, members have until the 30th of June 1994 to pay.  
This will enable those who normally pay their subscriptions at the AGM,  
to continue to do so.

Lawrence Jackson  
Subscriptions Treasurer