

# 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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## June 1995

Dear Member

For the first "Kilvert-linked" event of the year I have to make a double apology; first, that the news came too late for me to evaluate among members, and second that I was unable to attend. Our Chairman has kindly supplied a report which appears later in this newsletter.

The A.G.M. was attended by some 80 members. Apologies were received from Mrs. M. Burchett, Mr. K. Clew, Mr. and Mrs. K. Finney, Mrs. U. Fitzgerald, Mr. and Mrs. Goldsworthy, Mr. and Mrs. J. Hockin, Mr. and Mrs. W. S. Jones, Mrs. M. Ottoway, Mrs. P. Talbot and Mr. M. West. It was a particular pleasure to meet again both Miss Kate Goodwin, who came by taxi from Bath, and Mrs. E. Eden (London) though confined to a wheelchair.

Welcomed by the Chairman, the company stood in silence remembering those who had died, in particular the Ven. O. J. Jones and Mrs. Nellie Jones. Favourable reports were given of both the year's activities and the state of the Society's finances. The Committee's wish to appoint Mr. M. Sharp as Hon. Secretary as my successor was ratified, and the other officers were re-elected en bloc (The Revd. Dr. J. N. Rowe was welcomed as the Society Archivist). Mr. Gordon Rogers was thanked for his work as Hon. Auditor, and he expressed willingness to continue in that office. Following the completion of business, members sampled the excellent Ascarri refreshments and enjoyed meeting again friends and fellow members.

"Kilvert and the Chapels" was the title of the talk given by the Revd. R. W. D. Fenn together with Mr. J. B. Sinclair, who have a high reputation in the Welsh Border County - and we were highly entertained and enlightened! Mr. Fenn made some amusing remarks regarding Kilvert's records of "dissenters", but then proceeded to a consideration of both the history and the architecture of Non-Conformist chapels mainly in Powys from the earliest pre-eighteenth century at Macsyronnen and Llandegley right through the nineteenth century to present. Here again, with all the learned information were flashes of humour, and Mr. R. Watts's vote of thanks was most warmly endorsed. (Members might like to know that the gentlemen have written a study of Radnorshire chapels, entitled "Marching to Zion" it is published by Cadoc Books, 9 Victoria Street, Kington, Herefordshire. It contains more than 150 photographs).

The walk the following day attracted nearly 40 members, led by Mr. and Mrs. Dixon, a fleet of cars made its way to the open moorland above Llysdinam, where the walk to Drum Du began. Visibility was poor, owing to low grey cloud, and became so much worse after the third ridge had been climbed that the party had to return to the cars, Mrs. Dixon read the passage from the diary - what could have been seen on a good day! Ponies and sheep, curlews and skylarks were left in peace! Our President had very kindly given permission for the party to visit the gardens at Llysdinam, and accompanied members on their tour. Though

it was too early to see the great herbaceous border in all its glory, the edges were colourful with polyanthus and aubretia. In the shrubbery were hellebore, solomon's seal, pulmonarias, broom, camassia in flower, and azaleas and rhododendrons in full bud. In the drive I noticed red rhododendrons in full bloom - a suggestion of what was to come. With our thanks to Lady Delia, members then went their different way. Our thanks to Mr. & Mrs. Dixon, who had organised the event.

Weekend of June 24-25. Arrangements for the Saturday walk have been made by our Committee member, Mr. Ron Watts, and appear at the end of this newsletter. The Commemoration service is at Peterchurch the following day, at 3.00 p.m. and the Rt. Revd. J. R. Oliver, Bishop of Hereford, has kindly consented to give the address. Peterchurch, 9 miles south of Hay, 12 miles west of Hereford, has a fine Norman church, visited by Kilvert in April 1876. One of the churchwardens, Mrs. E. Morgan of Hinton Grange, Peterchurch HR2 0SQ, can offer Bed and Breakfast, and also ploughman's lunch on the day.

I would like to comment on Mrs. Burchett's article in this issue. It exemplifies the friendship which I have always thought to be a special feature of the Kilvert Society - and our New Zealand members are already looking forward to receive the next visitors from the Society! Here on the Welsh border, we received in March a visit from four Massachusetts members and three of their friends. They had organised the first ever Kilvert dinner at Harvard, and were delighted both to meet our Chairman and Mrs. Lockwood again and to enjoy hospitality at Llowes. Last month, I had the pleasure of escorting members from North Devon round some of the Kilvert sites, a pleasure intensified by their enthusiastic ascent of Snodhill castle on the rawest and wettest of days!

My secretarial stint now over, I would like to express my thanks to our Chairman and Committee for their ungrudging support, and to Mr. and Mrs. R. I. Morgan, Canon D. T. W. Price, Mr. J. E. Dunabin and Mr. G. A. Rogers, all of whom have given me valued advice and generous assistance.

Yours Sincerely,  
E.J.C. West

## OBITUARY

We regret to announce the death of The Ven. Owain Jones, a vice-president of the Society, sometime Archdeacon of Gower. Previously he had been the incumbent of both Builth and Newbridge, and had conducted Commemoration services of the Society at both churches.

Mr. H. Kilvert (St. Anne's, Lancs). A Life Member since 1981, though he had joined the Society in 1977. He and Mrs. Kilvert regularly attended events, until illness prevented his travelling.

Mr. William Cummings (San Diego, California). A Life Member since 1973. He had visited the Kilvert Country twice, maintained a casual pleasant correspondence with me, and was intending to visit the area again this month.

## FROM CORRESPONDENCE

I must apologise for an error in proof-reading the last newsletter. It occurred in the third paragraph of the Revd. Dr. J. N. Rowe's article on Canon W. E. T. Morgan. The passage should read, "Morgan once sought the hand of Charlotte, daughter of the Revd. William Jones-Thomas, one of his predecessors as Vicar of Llanigon, but was rejected as a suitor by her father on the same grounds as Kilvert was rejected".

The Shropshire and Hereford and Worcester branches of the British Driving Society have liaised to arrange a day in the Kilvert Country for a 16 mile charity drive on 9th July. The turnout is to be Victorian, as is the picnic at Moccas - "no pre-packed supermarket yoghurts, coco-cola, monster munch or take-away pizza", so the brochure sent by our member Mrs. Beth Corbett, informs me! The cavalcade is due to start from Monnington at 10.30 a.m., proceed via Monnington Walk to Bredwardine church, where a halt will be made. From Moccas it will proceed via Bridge Sollars, Garnons and the Portway Inn back to Monnington, arriving there at about 4.00 p.m. Spectator interest is welcomed. Donations will be made to the Mathieson Music School in Behala, a charity set up to teach classical western music to orphan Indian boys-honoured by a visit from H.M. the Queen. Further information from Mrs. Beth Corbett, 5, Bishopstone, Town Walls, Shrewsbury (Phone 01743 358007).

The annual Father Ignatius Pilgrimage will be held on Saturday, August 26th 1995. At 3.00 p.m. Solemn Evensong and sermon by The Revd. Dennis Monger at Capel-y-ffyn church, followed by Procession to the Abbey Church at The Monastery with stations at the Wayside Calvary and the statue of Our Lady of Llanthony.

From Mr. Andrew Gibson Watt comes the following:- "The Churchwardens and P.C.C. of Clyro church are glad that they can now say the repairs to the Church are completed as far as the outside work is concerned. Internal replastering and redecoration has had to be deferred till May to give the walls time to dry out, that work should be completed by midsummer. The necessary repairs have been, first, on the roof valley between the parts of the nave and, second, on the tower roof.

"The lead lining to the valley was worn out, and has been completely replaced, opportunity being also taken to replace slipped tiles and guttering; substantial work was also required on the stone "tables" at the top of certain walls, and this was in fact where most of the water was found to be entering. As a result, although we have had the wettest winter in living memory, for the first time for many years no water has entered the main body of the church.

"The tower roof was badly damaged by penetration of water, had to be taken off and relaid with felt; and other woodwork renewed before the tiles were replaced. A large metal downpipe had been refurbished and securely refixed. A fixed ladder has been installed to give internal access to the tower roof.

"Certain grants have been received to augment funds raised in the Parish, from official bodies as well as grant-making trusts. The assistance provided by the Kilvert Society, both from central funds and from individual members, some living in Canada and New Zealand, has been most generous and is most particularly appreciated".

## **CEREMONY AT THE LEYSTERS**

**by Our Chairman**

On the 22nd April, the Eve of St. George's Day, Shakespeare's Birthday and the anniversary of William Wordsworth's death, the Leyster's Forum held an afternoon in the poet's memory.

It was exceedingly unfortunate for everyone that the fine warm weather broke that day. It was cold and wet and the proceedings had to be reversed in order.

Some eighty people met in the church amongst them a fair representation of Kilvert Society members.

The first speaker, a local historian, linked his parish of Kimbolton with the Leysters, for an incumbent was a member of the Hutchinson family. Wordsworth was visiting the Hutchinsons, his wife's family when they were farming in the area.

Later the Revd. Graham Dowell gave an outline of Wordsworth's life and a keen appreciation of his love of liberty. It was much applauded.

The company then filed out of the church and gathered to watch the Morris Dancers. The onlookers envied not only the dancers' accurate agility but their movement that must have set the blood simmering, whilst they stood huddled in the wet wind.

Tea, an excellent tea, was provided in the Church Farm. Our hostess bore the muddy feet of the multitude unflinchingly. It was a true welcome.

Later, the weather having improved, Gordon Wordsworth, great, great, grandson of the poet led the way to the Poet's Stone, in fact two. These are inscribed with the initials W. W. and M. W. being those of William Wordsworth and Mary his wife.

Beside the stone a simple well lettered plaque explains the significance of the stone and the initials, where Wordsworth sat looking at the view of the Clee Hills. There is also a reference to Kilvert and his visit there in 1871.

The great great grandson, Gordon Wordsworth said he performed the unveiling with great pride and was honoured to have been asked.

It was interesting to note that the long face and long nose of the poet is a feature still in the family's physiognomy.

The Revd. F. E. Compton organiser of the occasion spoke warmly of the Kilvert Society and its generosity to the fund to raise the plaque twice.

In spite of the weather it was a very pleasing occasion also a very English occasion. Kilvert would have enjoyed it.



## **ALIVE AND EVEN BETTER, DOWN UNDER**

**by Margaret Burchett (Kent)**

In the September 1994 Newsletter, Lyndall Hancock of Dunedin, NZ, followed her interesting article regarding Archdeacon Henry Harper with a note recording the recent visit of American members Bill & Jackie Cummings to Dunedin and ended by saying "... - we hope they won't be the last!"

At that time, I was planning a holiday in New Zealand for February 1995 so smartly took up the challenge.

My travels down the West Coast of the South Island took me to Archdeacon Harper's town of Hokitika where I spent several hours. Sales of the local 'greenstone' (nephrite jade) are almost matched by sales of gold but I did not see signs of so many as the 80 Pubs of 1866!

The cloudless blue skies and blazing sun accompanied me to Invercargill where I was met at the bus terminus by one of our NZ members - Ivy Goodsir. Ivy first of all took me to the natural History Museum to see live specimens of the tuatara (rare and ancient species of a lizard-like reptile). We later travelled to the little port of Bluff to board the ferry for 2½ days on Stewart Island (the most southerly part of NZ) which Ivy had arranged to visit with me. Her companionship and intimate knowledge of the island, its flora and fauna, made our numerous walks a great joy. But time flew and we were soon at the airstrip to board the small Britten Norman Islander plane which flew us both back to Invercargill in 15 minutes. Beneath us there were 'white horses' on the sea and we were glad not to be on the ferry again. Next day I travelled by train from Invercargill through the flourishing farmland of the SE corner up to Dunedin and the affectionate welcome of Lyndall Hancock and Evelyn Madigan. During my two days there, never a moment was left unfilled! A lovely, scenic drive down the inlet and northwards up the coast to view the strange spherical boulders which fall to the Moeraki beach from the mudstone cliffs where they were formed was followed next day by a tour of the impressive city itself. The stone carving in St. Joseph's Cathedral being especially beautiful as was its carver's (L.M.M. Godfrey) more restrained decoration of the fine Presbyterian 'First Church'. Stained glass abounded and much of it German which surprised me in this city so obviously proud of its Scottish origins to which the street names and the schoolgirls' uniform tartan skirts bear witness.

To my three kind hostesses, my profound thanks for their generous hospitality and the unstinted care they took to make my visits interesting and memorable. There is hope that we shall see two of them over here this summer and perhaps the third may be able to follow soon afterwards.

The benevolent influence of Francis Kilvert has indeed travelled farther than he could have possibly expected. Long may the Society and his Diaries flourish!

## **COULD THERE BE A LINK?**

**by John Hodkin (Cumbria)**

Francis Kilvert and James Woodforde were obscure country clergymen who both left immortal diaries - but there the resemblance ends except that their fathers were also clergymen.

Kilvert had to watch the pennies, whereas Woodforde, who is generally known as Parson Woodforde, was a man of means.

Kilvert's diary, like that of Pepys, only covers one decade, whereas Woodforde's stretches from 1758 to 1802.

Kilvert is well known for his poetic and vivid descriptions he gives of scenery and people, whereas the fascination of Woodforde's vast diary lies in the meticulous recording of everyday mundane events.

Kilvert was no great shakes at card games. On 20th April 1870 he writes: "After dinner Mrs. Evans tried to teach me Bezique, but I was very dull as I always am at learning or playing any card game."

Contrast this with Woodforde who rarely let a day go by without playing cribbage, whist, loo, commerce or quadrille. (The last three card games have gone out of fashion.)

Kilvert's handwriting is extremely difficult to read. Woodforde's is neat and legible.

One of the most striking differences between the two men is the dental treatment available to them.

If Kilvert had problems with his teeth he caught a train to Bath and saw Charles Gaine, a leading dentist of the day, who wrote many papers on a wide range of subjects, among them his innovatory method (mentioned by Kilvert) of easing sensitive nerves. This information comes from "Who's Who in Kilvert" compiled by Frederick Grice.

What happened when Woodforde needed dental attention? Well, on 3rd June 1776, when he had just taken over as Rector of Weston Longeville, Norfolk, he writes "Very bad all day in the toothache. The tooth is faulty." Things were no better the next day so a little after five in the morning poor Woodforde sent for an old man called Reeves who drew teeth in the parish. "About seven he came and drew my tooth, but shockingly bad indeed, he broke away a great piece of my gum and broke one of the fangs of the tooth, it gave me exquisite pain all the day after, and my Face was swelled prodigiously in the evening and much pain. Very bad and in much pain the whole day long. Gave the old man that drew it however 0. 2. 6. He is too old, I think, to draw teeth, can't see very well." Many of us, I think, would exchange the wealth of Woodforde for the comparative poverty of Kilvert just to avoid that horrifying experience!

These then, are just some of the differences between the circumstances of the two clergymen, but could there be a link?

On 23rd March 1774, Woodforde writes: "I met Harry Rodbard this evening at the White Lion at Bath, and we supped and spent the evening together. There was a gentleman by name Pitcairn, with Harry, a Wiltshire clergyman, but he did not sup with us."

No further details and infuriatingly no Christian name, but could he have been an ancestor of James and Nellie Pitcairn who married Kilvert's sister Dora and his brother Edward "Perch"?

As far as I know Pitcairn is not a very common surname so it is possible that there is a connection after all between Kilvert and Woodforde.

How piquant it would be if there was!

## **THE TOP OF THE POPS**

**by E.J.C. West**

In the course of a letter to me last year, an overseas member asked which extracts from the Diary had most frequently appeared in the various selections and in anthologies and essays - my immediate response was "Easter Eve 1870", "The Solitary" and "Father Ignatius". Since then I have given some further attention to the question. I feel the results may be of interest to members.

The source of all extracts is the 3 volume edition (1938-40) but in fact those dealing with Father Ignatius appeared anonymously in Donald Attwater's biography of that cleric three years earlier. The list of acknowledgments makes it clear that the "agent" was Mrs. Essex Hope. In 1944 Plomer's one volume selection appeared, and this has been the basis for the Penguin paperback and the Century edition, though this latter is somewhat shortened, as indicated in Mr. Barry Smith's article in the June newsletter of 1986. The most recent edition our Chairman's "Kilvert the Victorian" is based on the original 3 volume edition. All of these selections include the 3 extracts mentioned in my first paragraph.

The Penguin paperback for children, edited by Elizabeth Divine and illustrated by Edward Andizzone contains "Easter Eve" and "The Solitary" but not "Father Ignatius". Instead, very aptly, "The Snodhill Picnic" and "The ascent of Cader Idris" are included.

The Gregynog edition, edited by Meic Stephens with woodcuts by Miss Sarah van Nierkirk is limited to 14 extracts. In his admirable introduction Mr. Stephens stresses Kilvert's response to landscape and people, especially the Clyro community going about its work and pleasure according to the season. Parts of "Easter Eve" and "The Solitary" are included, but not "Father Ignatius". (I much enjoyed his choice and Miss van Nierkirk's illustration of 8 Feb, 1872:- "At Newgate an urchin 3 feet high was swinging a gate. 'Well,' said I, 'and how are you?' 'Pretty well, thank you', shouted the urchin, 'How's yourself?'").

There remains "The Curate of Clyro", published by the Folio Society. It is many years since a friend loaned me his copy, and my recollections are vague. I feel certain that both "Easter Eve" and "The Solitary" are included. Perhaps some member may enlighten me regarding "Father Ignatius".

The Diary is a rich source for anthologies of a single theme. "The Faber Book of Church and Clergy" edited by A.N. Wilson contains a dozen passages. While many of these deal with eccentricity or laxity in church matters, such as Mr. Marsden's account of his curate's

difficulties with the Welsh language and the strange altar cloth at Bredwardine in pre-Kilvert days, he uses "Easter Eve" and "Father Ignatius" - not surprising, since that cleric is featured in his novel "Gentlemen in England", "The Solitary" is not included.

Similarly, Kilvert's observations and reactions to the natural scene are to be found in "The English Year". The editor, Geoffrey Grigson, states that writers in the last two centuries have left "immediate records of something seen, felt and enjoyed in the country around them day after day through the year". From these writings he has made a composite journal of the English year. Next to Gilbert White and Dorothy Wordsworth in the number of entries comes Kilvert, although the editor faults him for occasional excesses of description. Very largely, the quotations consist of single sentences - "At Crossfoot the frogs were croaking, snoring and bubbling in the pond under the full moon", and "The young rooks cried out from their nests, lightly veiled in the fresh tender green of the elms around the Manor Farm". Three longer extracts are chosen; "The Great Storm of 1872", "Tintern Abbey" and "Kynance Cove". No "Father Ignatius", "Solitary" nor yet "Easter Eve" - although parts of it might have been used.

Somewhat similar (so reviews inform me) is "The Oxford Book of Nature Writing", edited by Richard Mabey and published a few months ago. His choice is 6 September 1875, when after a night of drenching fog spiders' webs assume the effect of gossamer.

*(To be continued)*

## **WALK AT BREDWARDINE 24TH JUNE 1995**

Meet at Bredwardine Church at 12 noon for a picnic lunch. The 1881 Census, together with the diary, will be our guide during a leisurely walk around the village.

It is planned to visit as many houses, and sites of cottages, that time permits. Some of the walk will be on steep uphill lanes, but the pace will be gentle in keeping with the climbs.

Diary readings about some of the families, and their homes, will be given at appropriate places.

The final treat will be a visit to Bredwardine Vicarage. This is now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Vane - Percy. Mrs Vane - Percy, who does not normally supply teas to the general public, has kindly agreed to provide cream teas for Kilvert Society members, at a cost of £3 each. Any members wishing to visit the Vicarage MUST order their teas by 17th June, by post or telephone via Mr. R.O. Watts at:

Dial Cottage,  
Bridstow,  
Ross-on-Wye,  
Herefordshire HR9 6AJ.  
Tel. No. 01989 562657

## **OFFICERS 1995 - 6**

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**STOP PRESS - AUTUMN SERVICE WILL BE AT GLASCWM ON SEPTEMBER 24th**