

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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FEBRUARY, 1998

DATA PROTECTION ACT 1984. The names and addresses of members are held on a computerised list exclusively for the distribution of Newsletters, and other information about the Society, to its members. If you object to this, please contact the Hon. Secretary. It has been decided that if any member objected, that member would have to provide a **stamped and addressed envelope** for dispatch of newsletters.

FEBRUARY, 1998

Dear Member,

Our final weekend for 1997 was based at Presteigne and organised by committee member, Mr. Michael Reynolds. For the Saturday walk he had engaged the services of Mr. Keith Parker, whose book on the town had been published earlier in the year. Mr. Parker spoke of the origin of the town – "the priests' watermeadow" – and then led the party to various sites in the town, buildings and remains of the various industries that had sustained the town through the centuries – a most enjoyable walk, as those present testified. Members then inspected the Judge's Lodgings, finely restored, and having an association with Revd. Venables.

The service at the parish church the following day, despite some setbacks, went very well. Our Chairman conducted the service, our Secretary led the act of remembrance and read one of the lessons, and Mr. John Wilks read the other. The very fine address, given by Revd. Dr. R.W.D. Fenn, is included in this issue. The Society is very grateful to Mr. Reynolds for the weekend organisation.

Clyro Church The Society has received an alarming report from the Churchwardens of Clyro Church. The financial situation is extremely precarious. Insurances and the Quota demand have risen, so that this year's expenditure has exceeded income by £1,200, and there is only £2,700 in the bank accounts. There is thus the distinct possibility of the church being shut down, and with it Bettws too. For those wishing to help the Church, the Churchwardens suggest three alternatives: by Covenant, by Bankers Order, or for Higher Rate Taxpayers, Gift Aid – a single payment of £250 or more whereby the church can reclaim the tax and the final cost to the giver of a donation of £250 is £207.50 and the church receives £328. Request forms can be obtained from Miss D. Dempster, The Treasurer, Clyro Church, 2, Begwyns Bluff, Clyro, via Hereford HR3 5SR.

April Weekend The Annual General Meeting will take place at The Bishop's Palace, Hereford, at 7.00 p.m. on Friday, 24th April, 1998. The video "Curate of This Parish" – Sir John Betjeman – will be shown following the meeting. Michael Sharp will lead the walk on Saturday, 25th and members should meet at Bredwardine church at noon. Stout footwear will be needed and for about 100 yards the going is very steep. The walk will be followed by tea at Burnt House and, because it is Jubilee year, said Evensong will be held in Bredwardine Church at 5 p.m. for those wishing to attend.

Walks The Walks Programme for 1998 for the Brecon Beacons National Park includes a Kilvert walk on Saturday, June 20th, to be led by our member Mr. John Wilks. It will start from Mr. Wilks's house (map reference SO 238412) at 9.30 a.m. and proceed to Capel-y-ffyn, returning by 5.30 p.m., a distance of

14 miles. (Mr. Wilks's address is Woodlands, Cusop, Hay-on-Wye). Also, on Saturday July 25th the Friends of Llandewi Fach are organising a pilgrimage walk from Newchurch to Llandewi Fach going via Bryngwyn and Llanbedr. They would welcome any Kilvert members who would care to join them. Further information from Michael Sharp, on [01544] 327426

Yours sincerely,
Edward West

OBITUARY

We regret to announce the death of the following members:

Canon H.V. Boake (Carlow, Ireland), a member since 1964. Poor health has prevented him and Mrs. Boake from attending events, but they maintained a lively interest in the Society.

Mr. K.R. Jones (Hertfordshire), a member since 1971.

SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER

From Lawrence Jackson, Subscriptions Treasurer

Members are reminded that subscriptions for 1998 became due on the 1st of January. The annual subscription is £5.00. The Society are hoping to encourage more members to pay their annual subscriptions by standing order. This will help us to save money and improve our cash flow. If you would like to adopt this method of payment, would you instruct your bank to pay on the 1st of January each year. Our bank is Lloyds Bank, Hereford Branch, Sort code 30-94-14, Account Number 0241904.

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE KILVERT SOCIETY

The arrangements for the celebration of the Society's Golden Jubilee are as follows:

Friday, June 26th 1998 Formal Dinner at The Green Dragon Hotel, Hereford. This will be at 7.00 for 7.30 p.m. and will cost £15.00 per head, plus orders for wine, etc. The menu is based on that for the Tithe Dinner at Bredwardine on Tuesday, February 5th, 1878, with vegetarian alternatives. (Lounge suits)

Saturday, June 27th At 10 a.m. at The Green Dragon there will be a Seminar with two guest speakers – Mr. Bernard Jones, Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Southampton, and Mr. Ronald Blythe, who contributes the *Wormingford Diary* to the Church Times.

On the Saturday afternoon, a coach tour of the Kilvert country of the Welsh Border will take place, with stops at places of particular interest. The coach will leave Hereford Town Hall at 2.30 p.m.

For the evening, a Penny Reading is being arranged, and this too will be at The Green Dragon at 7.30 p.m.

Sunday, June 28th Festal Evensong at Hereford Cathedral at 3 p.m.

Accommodation The Green Dragon Hotel have offered Bed and Breakfast accommodation at £35.00 per head, per night. Members should book this direct with the Hotel. Telephone Number 01432 272506. Please state that you are a member of the Kilvert Society.

Bookings Please note that advance bookings and a deposit of £5.00 per person are required for each of the following two events – (i) The Formal Dinner and (ii) The Coach Trip. A separate booking form is enclosed with this Newsletter.

THE REVD. DR. R.W.D. FENN'S ADDRESS AT PRESTEIGNE – 28.9.97

I feel, in addressing this august assembly, like the unfortunate curate who, Kilvert tells us, was so nervous when attending the assize service in this church that he forgot to take his hat off, even though he was sitting next to the judge. So here we are giving thanks to God for the good we have derived from the life and writing of the Revd. Francis Kilvert, MA. His diaries, as you will all well know, cover the years 1870–79, during which great social changes took place which all resulted in the diminution of the privileged position of the Church of England as the Established Church.

The process, of course, had started half a century earlier in the 1820s and 30s with the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, the achievement of Catholic Emancipation, and the extension of the franchise by the first Reform Act. This latter process was extended by the second Reform Act of 1867. Anglican privilege was further reduced by the abolition of the compulsory Church Rate in 1868 and by Gladstone's disestablishment of the Irish Church in 1869 which many saw as the precursor of what would happen to the Church of England, at least in Wales. And they were right, of course. Then in 1870 came the Clerical Disabilities Act which allowed clergymen, whose faith had been shaken by the geology of Lyell and the zoology of Darwin from without, and the liberal theology of the clerical authors of *Essays and Reviews*, from within, to renounce their orders and resume the life of a layman. The same year saw the declaration of Papal Infallibility in matters of faith and morals, the publication of Darwin's *Descent of Man* and Forster's Education Act which relaxed the Established Church's hold over elementary education. Then the University Tests Act of 1871 did the same thing at Oxford and Cambridge by giving Nonconformists access for the first time to the degrees of these universities. Then, in 1872, the introduction of the secret ballot enabled one to vote, if qualified to vote, freely and without fear of reprisal from employer, landlord, or rector. That same year saw the Scottish Presbyterians sanctioning the use of organs, would you believe, in church worship and that son of Herefordshire, John Vaughan of Courtfield, become the first Roman Catholic Bishop of Salford. In 1873 the first Sankey and Moody revivalist tour took place and the lower middle class began singing such revivalist choruses as *Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin*, and *Rescue the perishing and care for the dying*. In 1874 the Public Worship Regulation Act was passed to reassure a public alarmed by the growth of ritualism within the Church of England and then in 1875 the Pope created Henry Edward Manning a Cardinal and did the same for John Henry Newman in 1879. Meanwhile, the introduction of compulsory elementary education in 1876 weakened still further Anglican influence. The Salvation Army was formally established in 1878 and the decade ends with Non-Anglican services being permitted at burials in the graveyards of Anglican parish churches.

But all this passes Kilvert, the country parson, by, with barely a mention of any of it. Instead, we read of clergymen serving their parishes who are still sons of the gentry, like Mr. Venables, the rector of Clyro, whom Kilvert so admired and whose stylish equipage driven by himself with two servants behind, could dash past the small humble turn-out of the Squire, and thereby rather reverse, to Kilvert's delight, the normal order of things. Other clergymen, like David Vaughan, the much loved parson of Newchurch who caused Kilvert some consternation by allowing his daughters to assist him in the castration of the lambs, were of humble origin and little preferment came their way. But, whatever their social status, the country clergyman was a law unto himself. When Kilvert goes to see the vicar of Glascwm, remote and with a small population, the vicar tells him: "I am bishop here" and then, fetching the church key, he added "come and see the cathedral." And bishop he was, you will recollect, leaning out of his bedroom window to shout at the revellers at the then nearby public house, and they, at his voice, flew, we are told, like the wind.

Church services were immensely long. When Kilvert attended morning prayer one weekday at Worcester cathedral, the service began at 10.15 and because it was a litany day, did not finish until 1.30. Not surprisingly, attendance was poor. These services were also dull and could lack dignity. The sense of liturgical propriety which we now take so much for granted was only just emerging in the country church of the 1870s: there were those who recollect how at the old unrestored parish church of Boughrood the choir sat upon the altar and one of their number played a drum. At Bredwardine on Good Friday a well meaning parish clerk wishing to drape the Communion Table with black on Good Friday and having no black drapery suitable for the purpose was misguided enough to put over the Table the old filthy parish pall.

The buildings themselves were often sadly out of repair, though it was the age of the church restoration. You will remember how on Tuesday 26th February 1878: "At 10 am [Kilvert] went on the box of Miss Newton's brougham to the reopening of Mansell Gamage Church after a good restoration. More than 25 clergy in surplices. The Bishop preached in the morning, the Archdeacon, Lord Saye and Sele, in the afternoon. It was difficult to say which was the worst sermon."

Sermons certainly tended to be long: Kilvert himself felt he could not do justice to himself in less than half an hour if he was preaching extempore. The Victorian country church also kept its own liturgical year. On Christmas Eve beef, pudding, and beer were given to the poor and the church was decorated with evergreens. On New Year's Eve Kilvert would sit up to watch the old year out and the new year in. He wrote a sermon for Ash Wednesday and preached every Wednesday morning in Lent (but who, one may ask, would come to such a service?) and in his diary he keeps besides Mothering Sunday, Brothering Monday and Sistering Tuesday as well, for the Victorians had a great sense of family. But the great liturgical occasion of the year was Harvest Thanksgiving, an innovation of the age. Kept on a weekday and accompanied by football, games and feasting, both the energy which went into decorating the church for the service, and the complexity and clutter of floral arrangements were equally spectacular. It was still the hay

day of the Sunday School which continued its original function of teaching its pupils to read and write, and the Sunday School outing was a great occasion.

On the whole, however, church attendance was surprisingly thin; take Monnington on Wye, for example:

"The three bells ... began to chime quickly from the Church Tower ... We stroll down the lane over the pitched pavement. Along the larches which line the old slanting mouldering lych-gate sit four or five boys. The bells stop, the clerk, French, appears standing bare-headed in the churchyard, ... looking to see if anyone is coming to church. An old man and two or three women heave in sight coming along the high walk by the side of the low osier bed now gay with the golden clumps of marsh marigolds. The Priest's bell strikes up, we enter the church and robe in the vestry, the chief farmer ... comes in his grey coat, followed by his wife. Thersie plays the harmonium and the service begins ..."

Kilvert knows nothing about the white wedding which every girl esteems today as an ancient tradition, and when he describes a country wedding the bride wore purple silk and the bridesmaid cerise silk under white muslin. Similarly he is spared the horrors of Wagner's Bridal March and the brides of his day enter the church to the singing of a hymn. He shows, too, that Wales had yet to establish its reputation as a singing nation so that when the new church at Llandrindod Wells was consecrated, a choir suitable to the occasion, had ignominiously, to be borrowed from Hereford, and pandemonium ensued when it had to leave the service prematurely to catch the return train.

But what does the Victorian Church in the rural border counties of Hereford and Radnor, as described by Kilvert, have to tell us for today? First, he has something to say to the committee and novelty ridden contemporary parson; for Kilvert visited and knew his flock at a time when the lack of personal hygiene and sanitation made many of their crowded and earthen floored cottages less than congenial. He read and prayed with the sick and the dying and brought peace to the insane. Consider, for example, poor Mrs. Watkins of Lower Cwmgwannon: He " ...was led up the broad oak staircase into a fetid room darkened. The window was blocked up with stools and chairs to prevent the poor mad creature from throwing herself out. She had broken all the window glass and all the crockery. There was nothing in the room but her bed and a chair. She lay with the blanket over her head. When her son turned the blanket down I was almost frightened. It was a mad skeleton with such a wild scared animal's face as I never saw before. Her dark hair was tossed weird and unkempt, and she stared at me like a wild beast. But she began directly to talk rationally, though her mind wandered at moments ... I repeated the Lord's Prayer and the old familiar words seemed to come back to her by degrees until she could say it alone. When I went away she besought me earnestly to come again. 'You'll promise to come again now. You'll promise,' she said eagerly."

And what does the poor woman hold on to in her misery? The old familiar words of the Lord's Prayer. How many of the children of the Welfare State have we sold short by not teaching them the familiar words of the Lord's Prayer or the Twenty-third Psalm? We send them empty handed through death's dark vale where they should fear no ill. It was a great day at Langely Burrell parish church for the Kilverts when, after much opposition from the clerical squire, the new harmonium was installed to accompany the singing.

The hymns they sang came no doubt from a new hymn book, published in 1861, supplemented in 1868, and revised in 1875 and many times since. It was, of course, the ever popular *Hymns Ancient and Modern* from which so many generations of Church people have become familiarised with the fundamentals of Anglican doctrine and practice. Its original promoter and compiler was Sir Henry Baker, bt, MA, 1821-1877, the wealthy son of an Admiral, who came to the parish of Monkland, near Leominster, as its vicar in 1851 and remained there until his death. Kilvert must surely have known him. At that time Monkland had only 44 houses and a population of 179, most of whom were farm workers, so the new priest's parochial duties were not exactly strenuous. But Baker was a devoted high churchman who rebuilt the parish church at his own expense and provided it with an organ, too. He was also a very gifted hymn writer, and with the needs of his parishioners in mind, he combined simplicity of expression with smoothness of rhythm, to give them such masterpieces as *The King of Love my Shepherd is* and *Lord, thy Word abideth*.

But again hymn singing has fallen into disuse in our schools and has lost its quality in some of our churches, and by sending our children off into the world without the words and tunes in their knapsacks such as were written by Baker and his friends, they are once more sold short. At Langely Burrell when the new harmonium was played for the first time in Church on Sunday, 22nd November 1874, the singing of the Choir and the Congregation in the Old Hundredth Psalm and the Trinity Hymn was especially good and hearty.

Kilvert, as we know, regularly visited the village school, which was of course, a Church school, and there are perhaps not only some teachers here in church today, but also some school governors and managers.

Comparative religion, of course, in a multi-racial, multi-faith society is obviously important. But so too is the religion which is the basis and inspiration of our national Christian culture and one would like to see, for the enrichment of their inner spiritual lives, our children enjoying the same familiarity with those three books, the bible, the prayer book, and the hymn book, as did the children of Clyro and Langley Burrell in Kilvert's day.

Part of what one could, perhaps, call the Kilvert experience is the enjoyment of the landscape which he so richly described, be it the Wye Valley in all its length and variety, or the rolling acres and beech woods of Wiltshire. And for these pleasures you have, as it were, to pay your rent. That you do so corporately and materially as a Society is well known and there are many churches and other buildings connected with Kilvert which have every reason to be grateful to the Society's generosity. But there is too the private, personal, moral rent which has been made. There are just as many poor, sick, and lonely people, comparatively speaking, in our day and age as there were in Kilvert's. And there is too a moral vacuum which was unknown in Kilvert's time, in which the young, and not so young, float around as in space with little sense of direction. We enjoy Kilvert's accounts of country life as he knew it, and we are touched by his account of saying the Lord's Prayer with poor Mrs. Watkins of Lower Cwmgwannon, giving her thereby a brief grasp of sanity and reality. But you can not leave it at that. Each of us has to decide on our personal moral response to these situations in our times, and there is no shortage of them, and there is a lot of rent to be paid, and I am sure that as Kilvert poured his compassion on Mrs. Watkins, he remembered the Lord's words: Inasmuch as you did it to one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it unto me.

MORE ON KILVERT'S OLD SOLDIER

By Mr. C. Dixon (Llandrindod Wells)

After reading Mr. O'Brien's very interesting article on John Morgan in the last newsletter (March 1997), I thought members would be interested in a few more bits of information from my own research.

From correspondence with Major L.D. Brown, curator of The Dorsetshire Regimental Museum, I learned that John almost certainly went to Canada in June 1814 with the rest of his regiment (the 39th Foot). They were sent there because of the threat from the United States. However they must have thought better of it when John arrived and there were no further incursions. There are two possible reasons why this exciting adventure was not mentioned in the Diary. One, the most likely option, is that William Plomer, the Editor, under pressure to keep costs down, just left it out, along with lots of other interesting material. The second is that since Francis Kilvert arrived in Clyro early in 1865, five years before he started his diary, he would have met John and heard his stories almost from the start of his residence there and probably the Canada story was forgotten. The exciting stories of the Peninsular war were of far more interest to Kilvert. He always commented on wars and shipwrecks. But as the original diary is thought to have been destroyed, we will probably never know for sure.

Mr. O'Brien states that according to army pensions records John Morgan was born in Brilley and was aged 78 in 1871. That would put his birth date at **1793**. John was not very consistent with his age. In the 1861 census he was listed as 74, making his birthdate **1787**. In 1871 his age was given as 84 again making his birth date **1787**. The Vicar, Mr. Venables, however, entered his age at 96 in the burial register, making his birth date **1783**. On the 11th September 1878 John told Kilvert that he was 97, making his birthdate **1781**.

I wanted to find out his real age so I went to Powys Archives to look at the registers for Michaelchurch. John had given Michaelchurch as his place of birth on all the census years. No John Morgan was to be found on the baptism register within the likely dates. Only two Johns were listed – one base son of Elizabeth Griffiths, March 1792 and one base son of Ann Meredith, November 1796. I thought they were both possibilities and that perhaps he had adopted the name Morgan.

John's army pension record stated that he was born in Brilley, so I then went to the Hereford Record Office. There I found four Johns, all base sons of various ladies, but no John Morgan. I then went back to Powys Archives to search other parishes and there at Bryngwyn where John was married, was a John Morgan, Christened 30th June 1793, son of John Morgan by his wife? (I could not read her name). Could this be our John? Was it possible that the army clerk writing down John's particulars misheard or misunderstood his place of birth and wrote down Brilley instead of Bryngwyn? Mistakes have been made many times with people's names due to local accents, why not a place of birth? This of course does not explain why John gave his place of birth as Michaelchurch on the 1841, 1851, 1861 and 1871 census. He must have been convinced in his own mind about that because the fine for giving false information to the census enumerator was £4. minimum, many weeks' wages for an agricultural labourer in those days. Perhaps he had moved to Michaelchurch when very young and assumed that he was born there.

John Morgan died on 23rd September 1879 (YES, the same day as Francis Kilvert). The Doctor put Senile Decay as the cause of death. Mary, his wife, was the informant and gave his age as 96. He was buried at Clyro on Friday 26th September. Kilvert was buried on the next day, Saturday 27th.

Mr. Venables wrote after John's burial entry – Waterloo Medal Quatre Bras. Major Brown suspects that the Vicar must have thought that any Napoleonic war medal must have been for Waterloo. But why did he add Quatre Bras?

For members interested in John Morgan's General Service Medal, (for his service in the Peninsular War) it is now in the collection of The Dorsetshire Regimental Museum, at The Keep, Bridport Road, Dorchester.

In February, 1996 my wife and I went to revisit the site where John lived. It was a beautiful day, the views were glorious and John's old garden had been cleared of brambles and was a mass of snowdrops – it was a wonderful sight. I could almost see Kilvert hoeing potatoes while the Old Soldier told more of his adventures in Spain. (However, last year the brambles were back again!)

PERAMBULATIONS IN THE KILVERT COUNTRY

By R.I. Morgan (Hay-on-Wye)

When our esteemed Editor invited me to write some reminiscences of past walks in the Kilvert Country I must confess that I had mixed feelings. On the one hand I felt pleased to be one of those invited to contribute; on the other I was painfully reminded, looking back, of how many of those who were prominent members in former days are no longer with us. My own membership extends to only thirty-two years of the Society's fifty years of existence, but the thinning of the ranks from my early days is now all too apparent.

The great man in those days was our honorary secretary, Mr. C.T.O. Prosser, whose name is deservedly engraved deep in the annals of the Society. To most of us he was known as Oswin, though his first name was Charles, a fact he did not divulge to everyone; and it is a timely reminder of the inexorable march of time that most members I meet nowadays, though they may have heard of him, never actually knew him, they having joined since his death.

It must have been some time in the fifties that Oswin became Secretary and began the process of making the Society what it is today, especially in terms of extent of membership. He put his stamp upon every aspect of the Society and fulfilled all the executive functions apart from the treasurership. It was he who edited the newsletters, writing a good part of each of them himself, in characteristically autobiographical style; it was he who collected the subscriptions, initiated, edited, advertised and sold the publications, organised the walks, services and excursions and dominated the A.G.M's, the Chairman of those days seemingly quite content to leave everything to him. In addition to all this and the usual duties of Secretary, he acted as our publicist, never failing to report the Society's activities to the Hereford Times. No one could have been more single-minded and dedicated.

All of us who were close to him were saddened in 1977 when we began to suspect from his appearance that he was suffering from cancer. I remember his coming with his son to see my wife and me in September of that year, to finalise arrangements for handing over the Society's publications, which we had agreed to take off his hands; as we waved him goodbye we knew we would never see him again. He went into hospital a few days later, taking the unfinished forthcoming newsletter with him, which he then completed in his hospital bed, before dying a few days afterwards. Characteristically, he had never mentioned that there was anything seriously wrong with him, though some of us had drawn our own conclusions.

So far as walks were concerned, looking back over thirty-odd years, one of the most memorable, I think, was to Craig-pwll-du, though it was more in the nature of an expedition than a walk. Craig-pwll-du ('rock of the black pool') is a miniature ravine on the Bach Howey, a tributary of the Wye, west of Painscastle, where the stream plunges down into a deep gorge; and the ostensible reason for Oswin's having planned this excursion was, of course, that our Diarist, accompanied by Morrell of Cae Mawr, had visited it on the 2nd May, 1870, his account of which was omitted from the three-volume edition, but appears in one of the supplementary volumes published by the National Library of Wales.

Having parked our cars in the vicinity of Penisarplwyf Farm we made our way along a green lane to the ravine, a distance of perhaps half a mile. Those at the back of the procession were intrigued, not to say slightly startled, to note that accompanying Oswin at the head was Mr. B., a retired farmer, who was carrying a heavy coil of rope over his shoulder. As we all stood looking down into the ravine, which we were given to understand we had to descend in order to view the waterfall, Oswin said, 'Now, everybody, this is a very dangerous place. People have been killed here or broken their arms or legs, but' – with a glance at Dr. N.,

who happened to be a psychiatrist – 'fortunately we have a doctor with us in case of accidents.' Our doctor member hurriedly assured us that he was 'Not that kind of doctor.'

The mystery of the rope was then revealed. Mr. B., with the assistance of another intrepid member, tied the rope around the trunk of a tree growing near the edge of the ravine, and both of them, grasping it, walked backwards down to the stream at the bottom. Having returned safely to the top again they invited us all to emulate them in turn; whereupon very few, I must say, seemed very anxious to avail themselves of this kind invitation. I, being about the youngest member present – a mere forty-six or forty-seven (very youthful for a K.S. member) – thought I had better set an example, so I successfully descended into the depths; not that there was very much to be seen, there being very little water coming over the fall, so I quickly re-ascended, not wishing to deprive other members of making use of the rope. Very few, I must admit, seemed inclined to follow my example.

Then some members, including myself, just to show willing, ventured, unroped, a short way down the upper part of the ravine, where it was only sloping at an angle of about sixty degrees to the horizontal and uneasily sat down. It was like sitting on the slope of a steeply pitched roof, and slippery at that.

The person sitting next to me began to slide down and would have tobogganed down into the Bach Howey had I not been able to grasp his arm and dig my heels into the turf. Other people were having difficulty in maintaining their positions whilst seated, yet just above me an elderly, almost blind sister of Mrs. Prosser was standing up and beginning to move about, trying to maintain her balance, quite oblivious of her perilous situation. And our ever-genial member, Mr. J., was also on his feet, putting on a display of tomfoolery. He could be something of a buffoon at times and on more than one occasion in the past had had to be rebuked by Oswin for larking about when the latter was reading out apposite passages from the Diary, which to him was as Holy Writ. Why Mrs. Prosser's sister and Mr. J. didn't end up in the Bach Howey I shall never know. Eventually, having had our fill of Craig-pwll-du, we precariously crawled and clawed our way back to the top and safety, after which we had a pleasant walk through the woods on that side of the stream, without imminent peril to our necks.

Another occasion when an element of danger was involved happened during an excursion organised many years later by my wife and myself, we having taken over responsibility for the walks after Oswin's death.

The intention was to drive up to Capel-y-ffin in the Black Mountains, where we had arranged with the warden of the self-styled Father Ignatius's monastery to show us over it, and then to walk up to the promontory known as Lord Hereford's Knob, alias The Tumpa, which overlooks the Gospel Pass and commands views of the Brecon Beacons, the Wye Valley, the Malvern Hills, and even, on clear days affords glimpses of far-off Cader Idris. The first part of this excursion passed off without incident, despite the difficulty of travelling in convoy along the single-track lane from Hay to Capel-y-ffin, on which, on a Saturday, which this was, being the day after that year's A.G.M., one can usually encounter traffic coming down. The number of cars had of course been reduced as far as possible by some of the members leaving their cars in Hay and travelling as passengers in other cars, but even so, with a convoy of a dozen or so vehicles we were lucky to arrive at the monastery free of untoward incident. It was afterwards, having been conducted over the ruins of the church that Kilvert had seen being built, and the present monastery buildings, that the unexpected happened.

After leaving the monastery we had driven a little way along Nant-y-bwch, where we parked our cars on a convenient plot of turf before continuing on foot up the nant, which is a wild and isolated valley of great beauty. (Nant-y-bwch in English means valley of the buck, and it was in these mountains in the twelfth century that Giraldus Cambrensis saw wild deer roaming). It was early in May, as I say, so I was surprised, some time after leaving the cars, when it began to snow quite heavily. When I could see that it was not just a passing shower I told everyone that we should have to turn back, an injunction several members received with dismay and objection, whereupon I was obliged to tell them that upon an open mountain at well over two thousand feet elevation, which we then were, it would be no light matter to be caught in a blizzard and that we might very well be unable to get back to Hay if we delayed turning back.

Arrived back again at the cars, by which time the snow had really set in, I advised the drivers to keep well up with the car in front and not to lag behind, as the sooner we were all back down to the safety of Hay the better.

Off we started, myself leading, back to the monastery, there joining the road down through the pass to Hay, a distance of some nine miles. By this time the road surface had a thick covering of snow, and where it emerged on to the open mountainside it was indistinguishable from the ground on either side of it, beyond which, a short distance at one side of it were unfenced precipices. Moreover, visibility was getting worse,

and I knew from my wartime experiences of convoy driving in similar circumstances that should I drive off the road all the cars behind me would follow my tyre marks. I had a fleeting vision of a dozen cars plunging over into the abyss and had to strain every nerve, peering through the driving snow, to ensure I stayed on the road.

Which effort was not helped by the two women members on the back seat who were chattering away like two magpies all the time discussing some trivial domestic matter, sublimely oblivious of the danger we were all in. How I wished they would shut up! Fortunately, we met not a single vehicle coming the other way, and as we reached lower ground the snow began to ease off.

It was a relief, needless to say, when we halted just outside Hay, only to find that one car was missing. Here was a dilemma indeed! I could hardly leave the members in question stranded up in the mountains: on the other hand, to attempt to drive back up there would almost certainly result in my being stranded as well. Fortunately, a few minutes later the errant people turned up and all was well. **(To be continued**)

"FRANCIS KILVERT'S RIVER WYE"

Comments by Revd. David N. Lockwood, (Llowes)

This is an attractively produced and well assembled collection of excerpts from Kilvert's diary relating to the River Wye. My first reaction was, I must confess one of arrogance, I said to myself surely it is not necessary to lift these entries from the diary. As I read my attitude changed for I was charmed and found myself appreciating these pictures of the Wye. I was savouring each entry, I was reading in a much more leisurely but also more concentrated fashion. It was akin to reading an anthology of verse, here were gems that I had missed in the three volumes, but unlike an anthology by one man.

Because Kilvert is so visual a writer my mind, then, moved from the anthology analogy to pondering on exhibitions of pictures. We have these days a fondness for gathering the works of one painter, Renoir, Turner, Cezanne, to name only a few. These teach one a great deal and as they are usually arranged chronologically one sees the painter's progress. However, I have since found out that when I come across a single item of an artist, especially if I had not expected it, I have seen and appreciated it much more. Because it was in isolation I understood better – this is almost impossible in a vast one-man exhibition which swirls one along. This is how I feel about this lovingly gathered small volume confined to the Wye.

The brothers Alan and Carl Seaburg have made me view the, to me very familiar, river anew. As I write this and lift my eyes up from my desk and look out I can see a three mile stretch where the river is and today the water is visible because it is in flood. My American friends have taught me that when I look up my eye usually skips across the valley and ranges over the foothills and on up to the Black Mountains, Hay Bluff, The Gospel Pass, Lord Hereford's Knob and on towards Llangorse. The brothers, through Kilvert, have made me look again.

I am also aware, now, that Kilvert describes weather so well: "Rain was coming but before it shrouded the hills in a white driving mist, they could be seen far away in the interior of Radnorshire." Nor had I given Kilvert the credit of describing the practice of netting salmon so well. He gets the "technology" of the undertaking right. He must have made significant little notes in his pocket book. The diarist also, as ever, puts in those little asides that make the scenes so alive. He describes his father fishing and "Three men lay on the opposite bank watching us." Another occasion is when young Elwes Drew, a bit trigger happy, shot at the starling and then more reprehensibly a sand-piper, Kilvert adds " ... happily, however, he missed it."

The book is divided into the sections, the four seasons. This is a very effective way of splitting it up. My only cavil is that June 5th is included in spring. I have an Englishman's optimism that June is summer!

Edward West, until very recently the Secretary of the Kilvert Society, has written a very graceful foreword which in its transatlantic crossings has become Foreward. In it he shows his three loves, the diarist, the composer Elgar and the Border country. This generous offering from our American friends is valuable and teaches, at least to me, the oft-repeated truth that the eye of a comparative stranger sees so much more of a place than the one who lives in it and is corrupted into taking it all for granted. Thank you, Alan and Carl.

(This booklet can be obtained via Edward West price £6.31, post free)

CONSTITUTION

Many members will not have received a copy of the Society's Constitution. It was therefore agreed that the document should be considered again at the AGM in April, following which a copy of the document will be circulated to each member with the June newsletter.