

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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SEPTEMBER, 1998

Dear Members,

Here on the Welsh Border, practically every day for the last two months has had both sun and rain, and June 20th offered no change. This was the date fixed by Mr. John Wilks for a 14 mile walk from Cusop to Capel-y-finn. Of the 14 walkers, 6 were members. The steep gradient up Cusop Dingle was wet, but the sun shone on Hay Bluff. At Capel-y-finn a visit was made to Father Ignatius' monastery chapel. Those taking part expressed their appreciation of both the guide and the walk itself.

The big event of the year, the Jubilee weekend, is reported elsewhere in this issue. Suffice it to record here the pleasure afforded by the presence of 9 American members and also Miss E. Madigan, one of our New Zealand members; and to quote from one of the many letters of thanks addressed to our Hon. Secretary, the writer a North Wales member:

"I met so many friendly members (though I didn't know a soul before) and everyone said what a special feeling there was about the occasion. I have pondered on this 'specialness' and I think it derives from Kilvert and his works – when we have pinned down and analysed his countryside, friends, churchmanship, literary associations and so on *ad infinitum*, we are still left with something unaccounted for, and we resort to describing it as 'indefinable magic'; and I think you must have borrowed that 'indefinable magic' and ensured that it pervaded the Jubilee celebrations." (Be that as it may, tribute must be paid to our Hon. Secretary's untiring efforts in organising the weekend, and the Society's sincere thanks offered for so successful an outcome.)

THE SEPTEMBER WEEKEND:

Saturday, Sept. 26th:

Meet at Baskerville Arms, Clyro at 12.30 p.m. for walk to Tom Tobacco's grave. Picnic Lunch.

Sunday, Sept. 27th:

Commemoration Service at Llowes (by kind permission of Revd. M. Reed) at 3.00 p.m. Preacher – Revd. Jacki Morris. Tea at Glasbury Village Hall.

THE A.G.M. FRIDAY, APRIL 23RD 1999:

At the Bishop's Palace, Hereford – 7.00 p.m.

THE OLD VICARAGE CLYRO:

Our member, Mrs. S. Williams of The Old Vicarage, Clyro, has had converted the servants' quarters (in Revd. Venables' time) into a holiday cottage. She can be contacted by persons interested on (01497 820805.

Yours sincerely,
E.J.C. West

OBITUARY

We regret to record the deaths of the following members, and offer our sympathy to those bereaved.

Mr. R. Stokes (Vowchurch, Hereford), a member since 1994.
Mrs. Betty Hall (Romsey), a member since 1994.
Mrs. Christine Smith, (Hadlow, Tonbridge), a member since 1997.
Mrs. Pamela Talbot (Eastbourne), a life member since 1979.
Mr. D. Wood (Cleghonger, Herefordshire), a member since 1983
Mr. R. Marshall (Oxford), a member since 1996.

THANKS FROM CLYRO CHURCH

The following letter has been received from Miss D.C. Dempster, Treasurer of the Parochial Church Council, St. Michael and All Angels, Clyro: "The vicar and churchwardens of Clyro Church would like to thank everyone who gave donations in response to the appeal for "Kilvert's" Church. These have been greatly appreciated by members of the Church and we are very grateful for your continued support."

BOOK REVIEW

"JUBILEE PRAISE: THE TOM PALMER MEMORIAL BOOKLET"
Edited by Michael Sharp with a foreword by Revd. D.N. Lockwood

The booklet comprises an anthology of the best essays to have appeared in the newsletters of the last 20 years. They vary between the authoritative – as in Mr. R.I. Morgan's "Clascwm" and Revd. D. Tipper's "Clerk and his Carriage" – to the personal reminiscences of Mrs. Boake's "Irish Kilvertian" and Mr. Timothy Davis's "Making the T.V. Series". Together with 2 sketches done by Mr. Sharp, is a series of photographs, familiar and unfamiliar.

It was Mr. Sharp's intention to get the booklet on sale at the Jubilee weekend. With all his other commitments, it might be thought that the booklet was a rushed job. On the contrary, it is well edited and attractively produced. It will be of particular interest to new members, as well as to older members who may have mislaid those older issues containing these articles.

Priced at £4.50 (including postage) copies can be obtained from our Publications Manager, who also holds a stock of the Jubilee booklet produced by our American members, "The River Wye", at £6.50 (including postage).

THE KILVERT SOCIETY GOLDEN JUBILEE WEEKEND **Friday 26th June – Sunday 28th June 1998**

Friday 26th June

Rain had been forecast. It had rained on the Friday afternoon, so suitably clad and armed with umbrellas non-resident members began to arrive early at the Green Dragon Hotel. The weather was fine on arrival and the streets looked remarkably dry.

A very noticeable "air of expectancy" was evident as members and guests trickled into the lounge to be greeted by old friends from previous Kilvert occasions. There were many new faces and soon everyone was getting to know everyone else; tongues were wagging and heads nodding. It was obvious that everyone was enjoying the opportunity to socialise and start new friendships and rekindle old ones.

Time passed so quickly and when sherry was served it seemed no time at all before we were called to the table.

There were 110 diners. One table was reserved for the Chairman and his wife, his principal officers and special guests: Lady Delia Venables Llewellyn, Rt. Rev. John Oliver – Bishop of Hereford, V. Rev Robert Willis – Dean of Hereford, Mrs. Muriel Kilvert, Mr. Ronald Blythe, Mr. and Mrs. M. Sharp and Mr. Harley Dance.

Members were given the opportunity to sit where they pleased, so that old friends could sit together and new friends could be included naturally and informally. Each table was provided with two bottles of wine.

Everyone stood while Bishop Oliver said Grace. By the time soup was served every table was buzzing with conversation and quiet laughter and a wonderfully relaxed atmosphere prevailed. The meal, based on the Tithe Dinner at Bredwardine, was excellent and had appropriate variations for vegetarians.

When coffee was served The Chairman proposed 'The Loyal Toast' and Michael Sharp proposed 'The Immortal Memory'. When these formalities ended the Dean of Hereford gave the most delightful, knowledgeable and humorous address sprinkled with readings from Kilvert's Diary. It was received with tumultuous applause. He was thanked by Ron Watts.

So ended the first day of the festival and as non-resident members prepared to return home for the night new friends and old waved their good-byes, as if they had known each other for years. Everyone was so happy!

Saturday 27th June

Although there had been early morning rain Hereford was again dry on arrival. In the lounge, before the seminar began, new friendships were still being made as members moved around from group to group. Friendships made the previous evening became warmer as people got to know each other better.

The first speaker was Dr. Bernard Jones, Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Southampton. He presented a very interesting paper particularly concerned with the poetry of Barnes and Hardy, and how Kilvert related to both these poets. Michael Sharp thanked Dr. Jones for his paper. Coffee was taken in the lounge.

The second speaker was Ronald Blythe, a regular contributor to the Church Times, whose articles our chairman reads in each issue. Mr. Blythe's paper looked at Kilvert's approach to diary writing and he read appropriate entries to illustrate certain points. David Lockwood thanked Mr. Blythe.

The seminar ended a little late at 1.00 p.m. Members then dispersed to have lunch before the coach tours at 2.30 p.m. Two coaches, each carrying about 45 members, set off on time under a cloudy and threatening sky. Until we were approaching Bredwardine the weather remained dry, but just before we drew up at The Red Lion at Bredwardine the 'heaven's opened'. Everyone alighted from the coaches and suitably clad in macs and carrying umbrellas, made their way to the church. There was sufficient time to have a quick look round the church and churchyard, but by then it was pouring with rain. On the return journey the coaches stopped at Clyro so that members could visit the church and village where Kilvert began writing his diary, and where he was happiest.

The remainder of the tour was in continuous rain but was enjoyed, because of the informative running commentaries given by the couriers as the coaches passed through villages and towns with Kilvert associations. The coaches arrived back in Hereford in time for a very nice tea at the Hotel.

The evening session was very well attended for 'The Penny Reading', organised by Edward West. What a wonderful evening's entertainment he had in store for us. Edward acted as Master of Ceremonies and did a marvellous job – he even joined in the 'glees' with his rich basso profundo.

The company consisted of Edward's friends, colleagues and past pupils, who entertained us with glees, solos, duets, trios, piano solos, piano duets, and readings of Hardy's verses by our chairman. This was an excellent evening to end an almost perfect day.

Sunday 28th July

This was the final day when everyone was looking forward to the Choral Evensong. By 3.15 p.m. members of the society, and other visitors had filled the nave. At 3.30 p.m. the congregation stood while the dignitaries and choir processed in. The Dean welcomed the people and announced the first hymn, "My Song is love unknown". The singing of the choir was a joy to hear, and the Versicles, Psalm,

Magnificat, Nunc Dimittus, the Anthem and the Collects, which congregations invariably find difficult, were sung solely by the choir. It was very uplifting.

Our Secretary read the first lesson (Micah 4, 1 – 5) and The Rev. Carl Seaburg, the American Representative, read the second lesson (James 1, 19 – the end). After the anthem the Prayers were led by the Dean and The Act of Remembrance was made by Rev. David Lockwood, our Chairman. The hymn, "Blest are the pure in heart" followed the Act of Remembrance. The address was given by The Rt. Revd. Rowan Williams, Bishop of Monmouth, a member of the Kilvert Society, who gave an interesting comparison between Francis Kilvert and other literary priests who preceded him. The final hymn was, "Through the night of doubt and sorrow". After the Blessing an organ voluntary, Sonata in C sharp minor (First Movement) by Basil Harwood 1859 – 1949, ended a wonderful Festal Evensong. (Basil Harwood visited The Cottage [Bredwardine] and Kilvert and his Mother heard him playing a duet with Lady Cornwall – Vol 3 p.399, also p.404)

A splendid tea was served after the service in the College Hall. After tea the Chairman thanked everyone who helped to organise the weekend for making it such a huge success and we all said our good-byes until our next social occasion.

So ended a very memorable weekend when new friendships were formed and old ones renewed, all because those people shared a common interest in Kilvert's Diary and The Kilvert Society. How Kilvert himself would have enjoyed the time – I wonder what he would have written about it in his Diary?

"WORD FROM WORMINGFORD

(Ronald Blythe, in Hereford, finds much that is curious and wonderful)

To Hereford, to speak at the 50th anniversary of the Kilvert Society. The heart of the little city is pedestrianised and quiet, and I have purposely arrived a few hours early to have it to myself. Rain clouds bank up over the cathedral, but with spaces for the sun, and it is alternately chilly and hot. An elderly violinist plays Scarlatti outside Marks and Spencer's to shopping throngs, and the town-crier appears in full fig. Hundreds of young families in white clothes.

The bench on which I am resting cannot be far from where Traherne observed: 'The city (Hereford) seemed to stand in Eden, or to be built in heaven. The streets were mine, the Temple was mine, the people were mine, their clothes and gold and silver was mine, as much as their sparkling eyes, fair skins and ruddy faces. The skies were mine, and so were the sun and moon and stars, and all the world was mine, and I the only spectator and enjoyer of it.' This is a proprietorial attitude I have long cultivated, especially when travelling in strange towns.

And so into the Temple to see the Mappa Mundi. There it is, a bumpy atlas in a darkened room, as much theological as geographical, and fascinating. I can imagine a medieval Welsh pilgrim in Paris stopping a passer-by with: 'Please can you tell me the way to Jerusalem?' I am delighted to find Colchester on it, the first English town to have its name written down – by Tacitus.

From the Mappa to the chained library – more than 1000 volumes in irons. Other seats of learning may have set their books free, but not Hereford. The chains are fixed so as not to incommode the reader, but how scholarship must have clinked and rattled in those days. One of the many mysteries of the world is how books seemingly the most fragile of artefacts, have survived the centuries in their many thousands.

It is now time to meet the Kilvert Society at a grand dinner in the ballroom of the Green Dragon. The young curate from Clyro would have surveyed the great gathering with amazement. But this is what comes of writing diaries. They are called books of the self, but even he, the most private of men where this daily task was concerned, once wrote 'Why do I keep this voluminous journal? I can hardly tell. Partly because life appears to me such a curious and wonderful thing that it almost seems a pity that even such a humble and uneventful life as mine should pass altogether away without some such record as this, and partly because I think the record may amuse and interest some who come after me.'

Sitting between Miss Kilvert, the diarist's great-niece and the Bishop of Hereford, and staring round at the assembly, I give silent thanks for all those, writers usually, who left proof of life's being such a curious and wonderful thing. Francis Kilvert died at 38, Thomas Traherne at 36, so it was a vision of young life that they found so enchanting.

To my despair, I find that the marvellous complete edition of *Kilvert's Diary* has been out of print for 20 years. This, one of the finest country books in the language!"

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PERAMBULATIONS IN KILVERT COUNTRY Contd.

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

The alpine excursion last related (as printed in February 1998 Newsletter) took place some ten or fifteen years ago. Another, less perilous outing, though not without incident, takes us back to Good King Oswin's Glorious Days, on the occasion almost thirty years ago when he led a party of us to the site of the ruins of Ty-y-deol, 'the House of Vengeance'.

For the benefit of members who have not perused their Diary lately I had better remind them that the aforesaid Ty-y-deol (more correctly Ty-y-dial), which our Diarist alludes to in Volume I pages 76-77 and 279-280, is the house where, according to his informant, some distinctly queer and supernatural incidents took place, including a voice coming out of the sky. Kilvert, who like a good Victorian lapped up tales of horror and mystery with great relish, seemed disposed to believe this, and he refers to the afflicted dwelling as 'the accursed House'.

On the afternoon in question we had driven up the mountains to a spot just past Hay Bluff, from where we started to walk through the Gospel Pass. I was walking with Mr. Harold Butcher of Hereford, a very active and prominent member in those days; and for the benefit of newer members I could perhaps explain that Harold is a founder member, which means he has been a member for fifty years and was, I believe, Chairman of the Committee at one time. Now well into his tenth decade, he lives in Bournemouth.

Now, at the time of which I am writing Harold was a great walker, and it was not long before we had outstripped the rest of the procession by a good distance. At last, as we were walking along part of the lane where it runs between hedges, I said I thought we should stop and wait for the others to catch us up in case we were going wrong, which with some impatience Harold agreed to do, to be told sternly by Oswin when he caught us up that we had gone past a turning we should have taken and that we should all have to go back quite some way. It was decided, since we were opposite an opening in the hedge, that we should leave the lane, in order to get out of the way of the occasional vehicle, and walk back via the fields on the other side of the hedge.

All went well until we came up against a chain link fence effectively barring our path, which meant, so far as we could see, our retracing our steps all the way back to the opening where we had left the lane. Then up came the resourceful Mr. B. - he of the rope at Craig-pwll-du - and proceeded in a masterly fashion to disconnect the fence from its terminal post where it joined the hedge, thus permitting our passage through to the field beyond!

At this juncture, just as Mr. B. was starting to re-connect the fence to the post, the approach was perceived, from the direction of a flock of sheep on our new side of the fence, of a woman dressed in a man's dirty old overcoat, obviously the farmer upon whose pastures we were now trespassing, and equally obvious from her purposeful tread, grim expression and generally aggressive demeanour that one might be excused for anticipating some sort of imminent unpleasantness. One would not have been mistaken. What, she demanded of us, did we think we were up to, dismantling her fences? The onus of responding to this was not unreasonable enquiry, naturally fell upon Oswin, our leader, and while he was pondering a suitable rejoinder, she was kind enough to make us privy to her sentiments regarding what she thought about louts trespassing on her land and damaging her fences. Oswin, stung into instant response by this unwarranted aspersion, assured her that we were all respectable and law-abiding citizens. We were, in fact well, we were THE KILVERT SOCIETY! Our fair farming friend appeared singularly unimpressed by this disclosure, obviously never having heard of this august institution.

"So, what are you supposed to be doing up here, anyway?" she demanded. Oswin replied that we were on our way to look at Ty-yr-deol, which obviously again, judging by her blank expression, was something she had never heard of either. 'THE HOUSE OF VENGEANCE!' said Oswin by way of enlightenment, to which, by way of good measure, he added: 'THE ACCURSED HOUSE!'

Now, as those who remember Oswin may remember, his eye, like that of Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, was inclined to glitter in a curious way sometimes, and this was such an occasion. The good woman edged nervously away, evidently certain now that we were a pack of escapees from the local lunatic asylum; and Mr. B. having now restored her fence to its original condition and no harm having been done, she left us to our own devices and returned to her ovine duties.

We pressed on and eventually came to a pile of old stones in the middle of a field, which Oswin assured us were the ruins of Ty-yr-deol, the House of Vengeance. As we stood gazing in awe at this heap I could not help thinking that it differed precious little from any other heap of stones that denoted an ancient dwelling demolished or ruined, perhaps centuries ago, of which there were numerous examples up in these mountains. And there was no sign of the 'great dreadful dingle' that had excited Kilvert. True, there was a sort of recess in part of the mountain rising up at the back of the field, but of a dingle, which by definition is a deep, shady, tree-lined dell, there was no sign.

No one, of course, dared to question the veracity of Oswin's pronouncement, but then, no-one was particularly bothered. We had all had an entertaining afternoon's walk, despite our unfortunate encounter with the lady farmer, and that was all that mattered.

I have had occasion already to mention our intrepid and resourceful Mr. B., and I am reminded of yet another example of his invaluable assistance.

It happened one day when a convoy of members on their way to Painscastle, on the Radnorshire side of the Wye, came face to face in a narrow part of the lane, with a herd of cattle being driven towards it by two men, aided by two dogs. The convoy of necessity halted abruptly. So did the leading cows, who stood irresolute for a few moments, alarmed by this unprecedented automotive incursion into their quiet neighbourhood. They tried to back away, but the rearmost animals, unable to see what was going on, barged forward. They won the day and the herd pressed forward, a surging, lurching, jostling mass of frightened bovinity, perilously close to the offsidcs of our frail tin boxes. The men driving them, and even the dogs, looked as frightened as the cattle. I, near the front of the convoy, had quite resigned myself to the loss of my no-claims car insurance bonus for that year, when in my rear-view mirror I caught sight of a car door being opened some way further back. From this stepped forth Mr. B. With a stick in his hand he walked, arms waving in the approved manner, towards the advancing cows, who, as if sensing that they were now in the hands of a master cow-keeper, all turned round (forty turning as one, to adapt a well-known Wordsworthian line) and began meekly to retreat along the lane, where their relieved attendants opened a convenient field gate and drove them into a field, where they stayed until we had driven past.

My final recollection is of the time when the Kilvert Society, or at least a significant part of it, got lost in the wilds of the Radnorshire moors. We had driven to a place called Pen-y-graig, above the Wye Valley, some miles west of Painscastle, our object being to walk from this spot across the moors, more or less in the footsteps of Kilvert and Morrell of Cae Mawr, to Aberedw, and then to return to Pen-y-graig by the same route. We reached Aberedw without incident, and then on our return decided to deviate and to visit Prince Llewelin's Cave, again in the Master's footsteps. It was after we left the cave and sought our return track that it became apparent that we were lost, the track we were now following having petered out. We stopped walking and considered our position.

Now, it is a fact that people lost in a trackless, landmarkless wilderness on a sunless day, which this was, unless they have something to guide them, will keep walking round in circles. Now it so happened that I had in my pocket something that would serve as a guide – a compass in fact. I suggested to Oswin that since we could not yet have deviated very far from our correct course and knew more or less the direction in which Pen-y-graig lay, it would be best to continue on the appropriate compass bearing, and that even if it did not bring us to Pen-y-graig, at least we were bound to reach the road on which it was situated. Oswin had another idea, namely to retrace our footsteps to a place where he thought we had taken a wrong turning and there regain the right track.

The upshot was that the party then split up, half accompanying me and my compass, the other half choosing to entrust themselves to our usually infallible leader. The only drawback to marching on a compass bearing, in contrast to walking on tracks, is of course that you have to take what comes and to endure some pretty unfriendly terrain; up hill and down dale in this case, and through heather and bracken and bilberry plants, the latter known locally as 'wimberry wires', and we seemed to be going on for ever. I was on the point of resigning myself to humiliating failure, when someone exclaimed: 'Oh look, there are the cars!' By a piece of good luck we had found the exact spot we were seeking.

But so prolonged was our march that I quite expected that Oswin and his party would already be impatiently standing by the cars awaiting our return. But no, there was no one there, except the one or two members who had remained behind with the cars. Eventually, after some considerable time, the absentees were sighted in the distance, wearily making their way towards us, Oswin at their head. I could not help noticing how stony-faced he looked when he saw us, like a defeated general marching into captivity at the head of his troops. He passed me without a word of acknowledgement, and never afterwards referred to the matter.

Even then there were a few people missing. They had somehow got separated from Oswin's contingent and found themselves right down in the Wye Valley, where they had been obliged to engage a taxi to get them back to Pen-y-graig.

But the lesson was not lost upon Oswin. Next time we ventured out on the moors we found he had ingeniously brought along a number of long canes surmounted by white flags, which we had to carry and successively plant in the ground at salient points on our route and collect on our return. We never got lost again.

NOT A COMPETITOR

By Mr. John Hodkin, (Cumbria)

Kilvert was very much devoid of the competitive instinct. This was the conclusion drawn in an interesting article "Sport in Kilvert's Life" in the August 1985 Newsletter. This piece dealt, apart from a passing reference to card games, with outdoor sports such as croquet and riding and showed he was no expert, possibly because of some awkwardness of movement. Let us look at how Kilvert got on at the card table and at other indoor sports which also demonstrate that he was not an aggressive player.

On Thursday, 27th January, 1870, we find him playing chess on his visit to London with Mr. Crichton. As a piece in the Newsletter for February 1982 tells us, this was the Rev. William John Crichton, father of Arthur William Crichton, of Broadward Hall, Salop, and Henry Benyon Crichton of Wye Cliffe. "I played infamously and he slumbered between the moves", Kilvert records. No mention of who won, which indicates a certain detachment on his part.

We now jump forward to Wednesday, 20th April. Kilvert was staying at Llwynbarried with his friend Mr. Edward Evans, and after dinner Mrs. Evans tried to teach him bezique – an excellent card game now quite out of fashion – " ... but I was very dull as I always am at learning or playing any card game". On Tuesday, 11th October, Kilvert visits Pont Vaen and plays chess with Bridge. No details as to how many games were played and who won.

We now turn to volume 2 for the next mention of an indoor game. On Wednesday, 13th September, 1871, he feels himself unable to join in the bezique at Cae Mawr after his disappointing interview with Mr. Thomas. The following Wednesday bezique is mentioned once more but again Kilvert does not take part. Those playing were Daisy and her inseparable friend Fanny Bevan who played all evening.

My edition of the diary has no mention of whist in the index, but it is in fact mentioned twice. The first is on Tuesday, 24th October, when Kilvert dined at Bockleton Court. Whist was played after dinner, but Kilvert did not take part.

On Friday the same week Kilvert played chess with his friend the Rev. Richard Mence. This time Kilvert tells us how the struggle went. Mence won two games and Kilvert one. On the same day Captain Decie, Mence and Mrs. Spring Rice played billiards.

Bagatelle makes its first appearance on Monday, 12th February, 1872 at a children's party when the children play it and the Race Game. Here again Kilvert was a spectator, not a player. Later that year on Monday, 14th October, Kilvert visited Bath and bought a nice second-hand bagatelle board, 9ft long at Becket's in Quiet Street for £5, which Kilvert thought a bargain as it cost £7.10s. new. He played the first game on it that evening, but does not say who else was playing.

Now to 1873 and we find Kilvert getting home at half past twelve at night on Friday, February Eve. Dora, who greeted him, had been playing chess with their father. Had Kilvert been a chess enthusiast he would surely have asked her who won and what kind of games they were. But no, they spent a few minutes warming themselves, then a shower of sweet kisses and Kilvert sent her to bed.

On Friday, 14th March, Kilvert played five games of draughts with Janet Vaughan. The winner? A complete mystery!

Another card game, commerce, is mentioned on Wednesday, 19th March, the only time it is played in the diary. Kilvert was staying at Llan Thomas and during the evening Daisy taught him to play. "We played commerce till after midnight and the girls did not leave the drawing room till nearly one o'clock, though one or other of them or Mr. Thomas kept on leaving the room to stay with Mrs. Thomas (who was very ill) or to see how she was."

Volume three only mentions indoor games twice. The first is on Monday, 5th October, 1874, when whist is mentioned for the second and final time in the diary, Kilvert's father telling how he saw George Crabbe, the poet, playing it round about 1830.

Finally on Friday, 26th February, 1875, the birthday of Kilvert's father, they all had a game of his favourite bagatelle. "We often play in the winter evenings when his eyes are tired of reading."

So, we can conclude from all this that Kilvert was no dab hand at indoor games. I find it particularly surprising that he did not take his chess more seriously. We know that his father and Dora played and possibly other members of the family did. I would have thought this might have spurred him on to improve his game. It might be to our advantage, however, that he did not become a chess fanatic. If he had he might not have been so observant of what was going on around him.

FRANCIS KILVERT AND THE ANCIENT ORDER OF FORESTERS

By Karl Showler (Hay-on-Wye)

Part 1 – Who are the Foresters?

"Mr. Allen asked me to luncheon at Oakfield on Monday when the Foresters are coming to his house". (The 'Plomer' diary entry for Thursday, 7th July, 1870).

'The Foresters' are mentioned three times in William Plomer's abridgement of the 'Diary of Francis Kilvert' and once in Dafydd Ifans' transcription of the complete diary entries for June/July 1870. In the latter there is a very detailed description of the Foresters' Fete at Hay, to which Kilvert was invited by Mr. Allen, an event we see largely omitted by Plomer, although the latter included instead 'the walk' that was held in Chippenham at Whitsun, May 1872.

In this contribution to the proceedings of the Kilvert Society I will be discussing who were 'the Foresters', their organisation in the Hay and Moccas areas as recorded in the Order's archives, Walter Cooper's history of the Order, in the Hereford Times, the Foresters' Directory, and the AOF Primer.

The Friendly Society Movement in the 19th Century

Kilvert's diary reveals the high incidence of debilitating and crippling illness experienced by his parishioners. The backfiles of the Hereford Times contain reports of many preventable accidents that show how industrialisation was far from risk-free to its managers and operatives.

The middle classes in Georgian and Victorian England were, on the whole, possessed of property so they could survive the illness of the breadwinner, even if this led to impoverishment and, only in extreme cases, destitution. However, for small businessmen, junior managers, office workers and artisans, most of whom did not possess property, even short term illness threatened destitution, followed by parish 'out-relief' or the workhouse which might also lead to enforced return to one's place of birth.

Without good health it was difficult to reverse the downward spiral of impoverishment that led to loss of freedom with the separation of family members in that most-feared institution, the Work or Poor House. The final ignominy came with burial in an unmarked pauper's grave or in large towns and cities the communal burial pit.

Fear of parish poor relief induced a preoccupation with respectable independence. A member of a respectable family, however poor, had self-esteem, and a standing in the surrounding community. As industrialisation developed in the 18th century, there grew up 'Friendly Societies' where men grouped together, each contributing a given sum weekly to a common fund. From this fund contributors could draw support in times of need; the better organised societies often would meet the cost of medical attention and ultimately the cost of a 'respectable' if humble burial.

At first these Friendly Societies were frail local associations meeting in the only public rooms available in inns and larger public houses. By the end of the 18th century the number of Friendly Societies had reached a point where action by Parliament was deemed necessary, so in 1793 an Act was passed for 'The Relief and Encouragement of Friendly Societies'. This Act gave legal protection to societies registered with local magistrates but excluded the unregistered societies and 'Orders'.

(to be continued next time)