

Notes from Local Interest Group Thursday March 28th 2019.

Present: Maureen Lloyd (ML), Ann & Howard Dean, Joan Hughes, Sue Farmer, Chris Rose, Tim Francis, Avryl & Roy Lloyd, John & Margaret Price, Joan Lloyd, Edwina Griffiths, Sylvia Illingsworth, Richard Thomas, Grace Davies

Apologies: Wendy & Dainis Ozols, Peter & Pauline Spode, Jenny Francis, Carole Gibbs, Richard Harris & Cherry Williams.

ML welcomed everyone to the meeting. Our speaker for the evening was Ann Dean from Gladestry who was going to talk about Rev Francis Kilvert.

Ann began by saying how pleased she was to be talking about Kilvert. She read some of the diary entry from Tuesday 3rd November 1874, "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 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 too because I think the record may amuse and interest some who come after me". Ann felt that was certainly true.

The Kilvert Society was founded in 1948 to foster an interest in the Reverend Francis Kilvert, his diary and the countryside he loved. He was born 3rd December 1840 in a small village outside Chippenham called Hardenhuish, the second son of Rev Robert and Thermuthis Kilvert. He was educated privately and then went to Wadham College, Oxford, where he studied law. He came to Clyro in 1865 when he was 25 years old, but the diaries do not begin until 1870. He was a curate in Clyro and wrote the diaries in his spare time. He was a very caring man; he walked miles visiting the sick, baptising babies and generally doing anything that was needed. He was married on 20th August 1879 to Elizabeth Anne Rowland who came from Wooton in Oxfordshire. Sadly, he died four weeks after his marriage. His wife survived him for 32 years and, after Francis died, she returned to Wooton and served in the church there. He was curate to Rev R L Venables at Clyro, who was a magistrate and a very busy man and so Kilvert did most of the visiting, etc.

Ann picked several pieces from the diaries, including the story of a visit to Bettws church to baptise a baby; it was so cold that Kilvert's beard was frozen to his coat and he had to baptise the baby in ice! In 1872 he went back to Langley Burrell to help his father who was Rector there. He was then offered the living of St Harmon, near Rhayader, where he served for a year, but we have nothing recorded in the diaries of his time there. In 1876, he became Vicar of Bredwardine and Rector of Brobury.

The diaries filled 29 notebooks but, unfortunately, his wife destroyed several because they mentioned her. On her death in 1911, twenty-two notebooks were passed to Dora Pitcairn who was Francis Kilvert's sister. On her death they were passed to her niece, Mrs Essex Hope, who loaned them to her brother, Percival Smith. In 1937, Percival took them to the publisher Jonathan Cape. Their reader, William Plomer, saw the potential and edited the diaries and a wonderful window into the life of rural Britain in the nineteenth century became available to all. The notebooks were eventually returned to Mrs Essex Hope who by then had also destroyed some of them as they included 'private family matters.'

Kilvert had one brother and four sisters. His sister, Thersie, was married to Rev R W Smith, the vicar of Monnington. When Kilvert came to Clyro he lodged at Ty Dulas, now Ashbrook House, and at one time the Society kept their memorabilia there; however, the collection has now

moved to the Llandrindod Museum.

Ann read a humorous piece about a friend of Kilvert's, Andrew Pope, who was curate of Cusop. He had an unfortunate experience when the Bishop of Hereford mistook him for a confirmation candidate. The next reading was about a shoemaker near Painscastle. Francis was a frequent visitor to Hay Castle, home of Hay Rector, Rev R L Bevan, and a good friend to Kilvert. He was quite a respected man, a devoted educationalist and, under his guidance, the Hay National School became one of the finest in Wales. He also had other involvements of local and national importance and interestingly he was friends with Dr Livingstone.

Kilvert fell in love a few times and Ann went on to talk about Daisy (also referred to as Fanny), who was his first love. She lived at Llanthomas and her father (in 1856) was vicar of Gladestry. As well as parents, the family comprised 5 girls and 6 boys. None of the girls and only two of the boys ever married.

Kilvert writes, 'At 2 o'clock I walked to Llanthomas' - this was for a small social occasion and he explains that some of the guests played croquet and some archery but he played croquet with Daisy; she was just home from school for good. He tells her about a sick child and she gives him two bunches of grapes to take for the child. He says, "Today I fell in love with Fanny Thomas". Francis visits Daisy's father to declare his attachment to her but, because he is only a poor curate and does not really have any prospects, the father forbids him from seeing her and Kilvert is very distressed.

Ann then read a piece about the mother of the Rector of Whitney on Wye. Henry Dew was Rector from 1843 to 1901. His wife was related to William and Dorothy Wordsworth and Kilvert was a great admirer of the Wordsworths. Henry and his mother were on a visit to Hereford, which Kilvert describes in an amusing anecdote of mishaps.

Francis Kilvert was very fond of children and Ann read a sad piece about the funeral service of a young boy, Little Davie, son of a shepherd, which took place on Christmas Day, 1878 at St Andrew's Church, Bredwardine.

Ann then showed an old film which was originally produced in 1948. The film had been put onto a DVD for the 70th anniversary of the Kilvert Society. It showed many places mentioned in the diaries, the villages and homesteads surrounding Langley Burrell, Clyro and Bredwardine.

As usual the evening ended with refreshments kindly made by Avryl Lloyd and Edwina Griffiths. This also allowed people to look at the memorabilia, the diaries, other books, leaflets and scrapbooks which Ann had brought with her.