

THE NEW GLADSTONE REVIEW

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a quarterly e-journal

*Informal commentary, opinions, reviews, news, illustrations and poetry
for bookish people of philanthropic inclination*

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1. Introduction

This is the first issue of the successor to the Gladstone Review, the publication which was sent to subscribers as a PDF attachment to emails. With the move of Gladstone Books from Southwell to Lincoln, and some associated procedural changes, I have now decided to reduce the frequency of publication to approximately quarterly (instead of monthly), but to post new issues on the Gladstone Books website, so that it will be freely accessible to all who might be interested to read it. To mark these changes, it will be renamed the *The New Gladstone Review*. But I hope that the contents will continue to be interesting and thought-provoking – with the remit summarised in the text in *red* above

For the time being, I am also retaining free access to some articles published earlier in the Gladstone Review (click **D** on the main web page) for the benefit of readers new to this publication who might wish to sample more of the type of articles previously published. The first of those archived also gives a brief account of the short history of Gladstone Books, and why it is so-named.

I am most grateful to Penny Young, the guest contributor in this issue, whose typically engaging article on diaries and journals (No. 4 in the above list) reminds us of how much we have largely lost in an age in which communication is now, almost invariably, dominated by superficial and reactive ‘tweets.’

Anyone wishing to contribute to a future issue is invited to email me with an outline of the article.

Ben Mephram

2. Uphill Lincoln

This year Gladstone Books has moved back to Lincoln, to the antique centre where it was located about two years ago. It's in an area known to locals as 'uphill' – which has both physical and social connotations. For this is the name assigned to the historic centre of ancient Lincoln which was the site of a Roman legionary fortress after they conquered this part of Britain in AD 48, and subsequently of Lincoln Cathedral and Castle, as well as being the affluent part of the city - in contrast to the more workaday, industrial area 'downhill.' In relation to Gladstone Books, it's an area that is the main focus of interest to tourists – some of whom, on past experience, are attracted to old books as well as old buildings. With the recent closure of two long-standing bookshops on Steep Hill, the return of Gladstone Books may provide a measure of compensation.



The Roman Newport Arch: the country's only such structure under which traffic still passes

Book-dealers are a varied bunch, with, at one extreme, the *devotees*, much interested in the quality and content of the books, and whether they are appreciated by purchasers, while others' interests seem to focus on the profit they make (*dabblers*?). I firmly belong to the first group, being given to reflecting on the nature of the books sold – usually gratified when I know they have gone to 'good homes.' - but sometimes with a twinge of regret that they no longer grace the shelves!

For example, among my first month's sales in Lincoln, I was especially pleased to count the following. And this wasn't because they generated much profit (which is not my main concern), but because I find satisfaction in others' appreciation of such 'worthy books.' The list included:

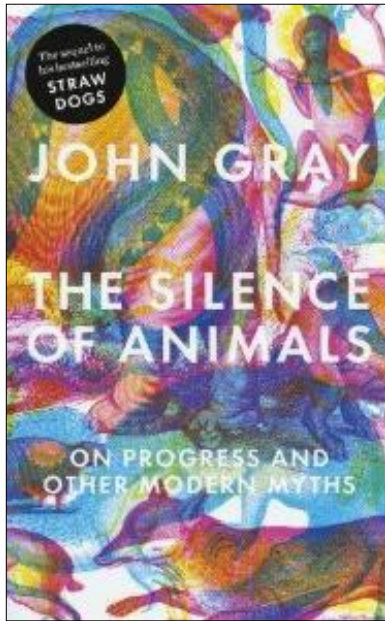
- Francis Bacon's *Wisdom of the Ancients and New Atlantis* (1886) in Cassell's 'National Library' series
- Two Primers on *Book-Keeping* of 1896
- An 1890 edition of Lamb's *'Essays of Elia,'* with 100 fine illustrations
- Knowles' *'Industrial and Commercial Revolutions* (1937)
- *'Authentic'* Chapman and Hall editions of Dickens' *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *Barnaby Rudge* (both published in 1901)
- A leather-bound copy de Quincy's *'Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1886)
- J B Priestley's *Angel Pavement* (1935), with a leather spine
- Taylor's *British Herbs and Vegetables* (1947) in Collins' superb 'Britain in Pictures' series
- Early editions (1930s to 40s) of Ward Lock's 'Red Guides' to the *Channel Islands*, *Cotswolds* and *Lake District*
- Rawnsley's *Highways and Byways of Lincolnshire* (1927)

N B There are plenty more in stock of the same quality.

3. The Silence of Animals; by John Gray. a review

(Published in London by Allen Lane, 2013 and in New York by Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2013)

Described as ‘*The most important living philosopher*’ (by Will Self) and ‘... *the closest thing we have to a window-smashing French intellectual*’ (by Andrew Marr), John Gray is an emeritus professor of



European Thought at London University – who, perhaps, has as many admirers as he has detractors. He begins this book (one of several addressing a similar theme) by cataloguing examples of ‘man’s inhumanity to man’ as the basis of his claim that moral progress is a *myth*, the flawed nature of which is constantly revealed in news reports of acts of terrorism, violence, ethnic cleansing and other forms of unmitigated depravity.

Despite the high ambition of aiming for moral perfection, a motive he blames on Plato’s enduring influence in Ancient Greece, which became institutionalised in the Christian religion, Gray considers the myth has since the Enlightenment, probably unwittingly, resulted in almost universal disillusionment. For, influenced by the philosopher Isaiah Berlin, he came to see that, in the process of ‘civilisation,’ human nature had become torn between the quest for moral perfection, on the one hand, and the intrinsic drives of our animal nature, on the other.’ Consequently, Gray argues, our lives

in human society involve a constant stream of ‘trade-offs’ between conflicting goods and evils, which we seek to reconcile – and, for some (although probably now only a small number of ‘believers’), find consolation in a form of eternal spiritual resurrection.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Gray disparages what he considers the mythology that is intrinsic to religious beliefs of all types. But he is equally critical of the ‘new atheism’ (of the type promoted e.g. by Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris), which he considers also adopts an indefensible mythology. For, in that ‘scientific’ knowledge is largely equated with increased understanding of the, supposedly objective, nature of the physical universe, Gray argues that the new atheism (based on disproportionate emphasis on the role of science, what is called *scientism*) seeks to achieve everlasting life – but on Earth rather than in Heaven. So, e.g., each new prospective medical advance is hailed as the ability of science to replace the discredited beliefs of organised religion, the prayerful pleas of which have evidently failed to compete with science in prolonging life.

For Gray, mankind is inevitably a myth-making animal. And that is evidently a product of the languages we have invented and the technology (at its simplest in the form of books) by which its concepts have been recorded as stories and explanations and, often grievously, become *prescriptive*. When the dogmas of certain ages and places became vested with incontestable authority – as in certain fundamentalist scripts - the ability to amend, revise or reject them in the light of deeper understanding means that the importance of the contexts in which they were first recorded is discounted. But for Gray, this criticism also applies to the new-atheists’ myth - that by purging society of religious mythology, and becoming committed to an optimistic ‘rationality,’ humanity will rescue itself from tragedy. Indeed, emphatically rejecting this claim, he writes:

If there is anything unique about the human animal it is that it has the ability to grow knowledge at an accelerating rate while being chronically incapable of learning from experience. Science and technology are cumulative, whereas ethics and politics deal with recurring dilemmas. Whatever they

are called, torture and slavery are universal evils, but these evils cannot be consigned to the past like redundant theories in science. They return under different names: torture as 'enhanced interrogation techniques,' slavery as 'human trafficking' (which, of course, are greatly facilitated by modern technology). Civilisation is natural for humans, but so is barbarism. (p.75)

Gray's implicit inclination (although there is nothing prescriptive about the way he advances the view) is that grand schemes that are motivated by the quest for utopian society, or even personal 'salvation,' are both inconceivable and unrealisable. In short, human progress is an illusory myth. Appealing to the writings of people like Leigh Fermor, William Empson, Wallace Stevens, J A Baker and Llewellyn Powis (poets and/or close observers of the natural world), he suggests that, what he calls, a *godless mysticism* may provide for many people a sounder basis for a meaningful life than any of the prescriptions advanced in religious dogmas or by the 'new atheists.' The neologism needs more examination than can be attempted here, but it is revealing that his concept of this particular myth considers that '*godless mysticism* cannot escape the finality of tragedy, or make beauty eternal. It does not dissolve inner conflict into the quietude of oceanic calm. All it offers is mere being. There is no redemption from being human. But no redemption is needed.' (p. 208) There seems to be something of both the stoic and the visionary in this perspective.

Unsurprisingly, his views have attracted much criticism from people who class him along with other pessimistic philosophers, like Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, as 'prophets of gloom.' But, while contesting several of his assertions and sceptical that 'godless' is a unambiguous term, I take the view that those seeking to address 'the predicament of mankind' – the situation in which, without requesting it, we find ourselves – might do well to consider all views that 'strike an inner chord.'

Perhaps the most original, and challenging aspect of Gray's thesis is the claim that we can learn from the 'silence of animals' – an attitude implicit in the writings of a number of the authors cited above. Despite Darwin's inescapable conclusion that the emergence of humans was an integral element of biological evolution, the traditional (largely theologically-endorsed) belief that we are intrinsically distinct, has long persisted. It is still widely believed that animals were *created for human's use* – as sources of food, beasts of burden, guards and playthings. And yet, surely for a modern Western generation exposed in TV programmes to the often subtle wisdom of animal behaviours, it is clear we have much to learn from them. Perhaps, a new attitude to life might emerge that, like the innocence of animals, finds fulfilment in the 'present' – and is not driven by an unquestioned belief in 'growth,' that is fuelled by egocentricity and competition.

One of many chords these ideas struck for me is epitomised by my recollection of the following lines from Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself*.

*I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contain'd,
I stand and look at them long and long.
They do not sweat and whine about their condition,
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of owning things,
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago,
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth*

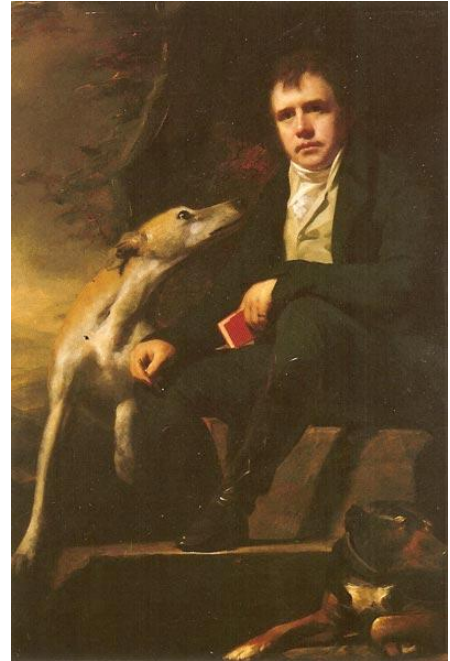
Myth-makers are wary of literal assertions; but surely they should be open to the transformative potential of evocative metaphor. For in reading there is a dialogue between the written word and each reader's interpretation – which is itself a product of the varieties of experience. B M

4. “I am enamoured of my journal”: Walter Scott (1825)

Sir Walter Scott, as well as being a prolific poet and novelist, began keeping a journal at the age of 54. He was by then a prominent member of Edinburgh society, and his journal is full of life and action – meetings with other prominent figures, comments and views on just about every person he met or topics close to his heart (and there were many); people and fashions, culture and customs, the social, commercial and judicial life of the city, and politics of city, church and state. One could reconstruct early 19th-century Edinburgh life from his pages. Scott’s diary has all the flair and liveliness, the colour and movement, of scenes from one of his novels.

He begins, on Sunday 20 November, 1825: ‘I have all my life regretted that I did not keep a regular journal. I have myself lost recollection of much that was interesting . . .’ It was setting eyes on some volumes of notes by Lord Byron that gave him the idea of keeping ‘such a memorandum-book by throwing aside all pretence to regularity and order and marking down events just as they occurred to recollection. I will try this plan . . .’

Monday 21 November, 1825: ‘I am enamoured of my journal,’ he writes after only one day. And he remained enamoured for the rest of his life, until his death just seven years later.



Sir Walter Scott by Sir H Raeburn

Needless to say, one doesn’t need to be a Walter Scott, a Samuel Pepys, a John Evelyn or an Alan Bennett (to name but a very few famous diarists) in order to keep a journal. The writing of diaries – along with letters (now, sadly, almost extinct) – is the most democratic of writing genres. As a literary form it has no bounds – and no rules.

From very earliest times diaries have been written by the known and unknown, the educated or uneducated. One writes, of course, to oneself and for oneself (unless one is a politician or other celebrity), and there need be no tempering of the self for a reading public. Though having said that, there is the case of the supposedly happily-married woman who died leaving years’ worth of notebooks, whose husband discovered, devastatingly, exactly how much she had hated him. To avoid this possible scenario, or something similar, many a lifetime’s diary-writings have been destroyed: one thinks of publisher John Murray consigning Lord Byron’s to the flames – a heart-stopping case – and the fate of Francis Kilvert’s diary, large parts of it destroyed by his wife, and only three out of the remaining 22 notebooks surviving the depredations of a niece upon inheriting them.

Keeping a diary seems to be something people have had an urge to do ever since the world began: it certainly predates the invention of paper – by the Chinese Ts’ai Lun in AD105. And the reasons for doing so are almost endless: recording everyday events – a reminder of ‘what we did this time last year’; analysing and trying to sort out one’s feelings, a means of self-reflection (‘mapping the inner life’) and moral or spiritual improvement (à la Bridget Jones or Adrian Mole); as a social or literary commentary (Fanny Burney, Leo Tolstoy, Virginia Woolf), or a travel log (Captain Cook, Darwin, Scott of the Antarctic).

It was during the Middle Ages that journal-keeping really took off, with the middle-class culture of accounting; making a natural move ‘from finance to conscience’, and receiving extra impetus from the rise of individual consciousness and freedom of thought in the Renaissance, as well as freedom of conscience through the Reformation – as Alexandra Johnson tells us in *A Brief History of Diaries* (published by Hesperus Press, 2011), which is full of fascinating details of people’s lives and experiences down the ages, both at home and in exotic places, with extracts from some choice writers. She includes graphic descriptions of public executions, and a particularly gruesome form of torture

that I can guarantee you won’t forget in a hurry. We have Samuel Pepys on the Plague, John Evelyn on the Great Fire, and the example of James Boswell determining to keep a journal as it ‘will give me a habit of application and improve me in expression’. (What better reasons?)

It was the growth of pilgrimage in the 11th/12th centuries that gave rise to travel writing (though probably not in Moleskine notebooks). European Christians and Arab Muslims were criss-crossing the world on foot, on camel, on board ship, in extremes of temperature, in luxurious or disgusting conditions. Their diaries give us a glimpse into magical and fearful worlds, and the tribulations they faced in body and soul.

From looking at early explorers, Johnson moves on to 19th/20th century writers – Tolstoy, Kafka, Katherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, Dorothy Wordsworth – showing how thin and elastic can be the line between diary-writing and ‘creative’ writing.

Before her last chapter on blogging and the infinite possibilities of being creative online, Johnson looks at war diaries, beginning with the American Mary Chestnut, whose detailed 800-page diary covered the years of slavery in the USA and the American Civil War. When eventually published in 1981, it won the Pulitzer Prize. For us, perhaps the best-known war diaries are those of Anne Frank, who famously used her diary as an apprenticeship in the process of becoming a writer; and Etty Hillesum, also in Amsterdam, whose diary, 1941-43, shows clearly her growth to maturity in increasingly harrowing circumstances.

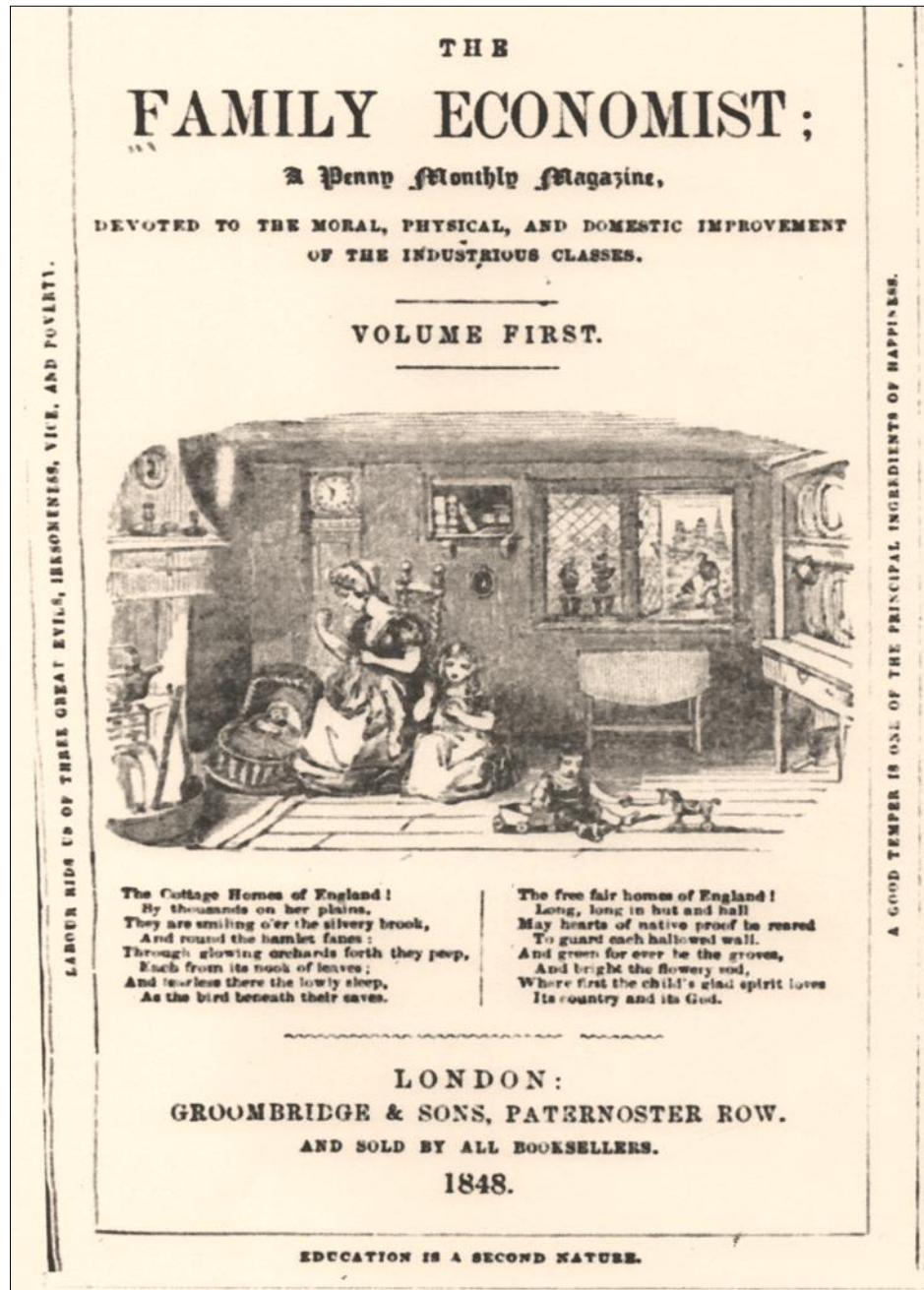
Diaries can offer a window – into our own selves, and into the age in which we live – the ‘I’ becoming the ‘eye’. And, perhaps more than any other form of literature, they exemplify E. M. Forster’s injunction to ‘only connect’: with our inner selves and with the world around us. Writing a diary can be, in Kafka’s words, ‘the axe that breaks the frozen sea within’.

Penny Young was until recently the editor of the *Southwell Folio* arts magazine (whose demise she sincerely regrets), and is an avid reader and collector of books. In a former life was, among other things, an English teacher and writer/ghost writer; and she remains fascinated by people and their lives.



5. Gender Equality 170 Years Ago?

A fascinating volume in my personal library is a leather-bound copy of this magazine for 1848, bought long ago for a few pence, the editors of which obviously had a mission to encourage the adoption of a moral lifestyle among the poorer sections ('industrious classes') of society. It gives an insightful glimpse of life in the Victorian era that complements the official histories of the period.



As the article reproduced below indicates, ideas on gender equality are clearly not as recent as might be imagined from current debates.

BM

HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

How often is it said in the present day that men and women are falsely placed with regard to each other. According to one party men are too strong, and women too weak, and they demand that women's prerogative be forthwith greatly increased—they would make men of them at once. Others consider that by a different course of education, which should direct their minds to great objects, women would quietly assume a position equal to that of men, without any more active interference. A third, and large party assert that, so far from men being the stronger, they have always been the victims of the other sex.

There is perhaps some truth in each of these propositions ; but when we consider that men have always been the law-makers there may be a suspicion of their having, secured to themselves an undue portion of the powers and privileges of social life. It is so easy to make a law in favour of one's-self, that we think there is a chance of the suspicion being well founded. On the other hand, the small amount of truth which we have supposed to exist in the propositions above stated, is completely swamped by the presence of a load of injustice.

The destiny of man and woman, husband and wife, is the same: each has

certain duties to perform which, of themselves, combine for the mutual advantage, as truly and beautifully as the ingrafting of two trees will produce one excellent kind of fruit. If men and women, when brought together by marriage, and who have to live together for the whole of their lives, would make up their minds to be as charitable to each other's failings, as much disposed to mutual forbearance, and considerateness towards each other's feelings in private, as they appear to be when in presence of their friends, we should hear much less about injustice, and false position.

To use a common expression, what is fair for one is fair for the other: in the married state there should be the strictest equality. The husband must come down from the position of master, not that his place may be taken by the woman,—

For woman is not undeveloped man."

but that she may be the sharer of his pleasures, hopes, and joys, as she has ever been the partaker of his pains, fears, and sorrows. There is nothing more beautiful than friendship; and the friendship of husband and wife insures the highest earthly happiness.

Many married men consider themselves fully justified in passing most of their evenings away from home, among their companions. If this be fair for the man,

it is equally fair for the woman to go out and visit her friends also. If it be essential that the woman have always a smile ready to greet her husband when he enters, it is equally essential that he should bring good-humour and a pleasant countenance with him. True, he may be troubled and annoyed with business cares; but, is she not troubled and annoyed, often to a greater degree, with family and household cares, with the difference that, while she is always amongst hers, the man by his more active out-door life does, in some measure modify his. If it be fair for the husband to keep the purse, it is fair that the wife should know how much or how little there may be in it. There must be no secrets on either side; what the man knows the woman ought to know. In cases of difficulty woman's *feeling* will often suggest a better remedy than man's *reason*.

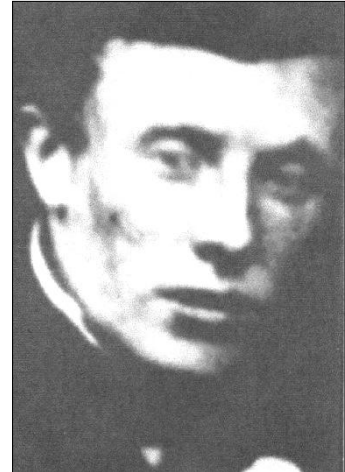
The case might be met by the mutual recognition of one common purpose, and object, combined with respect for differing views regarding its attainment. Generally speaking, it may be said that there wants for man, more of sympathy, for woman, more of discretion:—

"The kindest and the happiest pair
Will find occasion to forbear;
And something every day they live
To pity, and perhaps forgive."

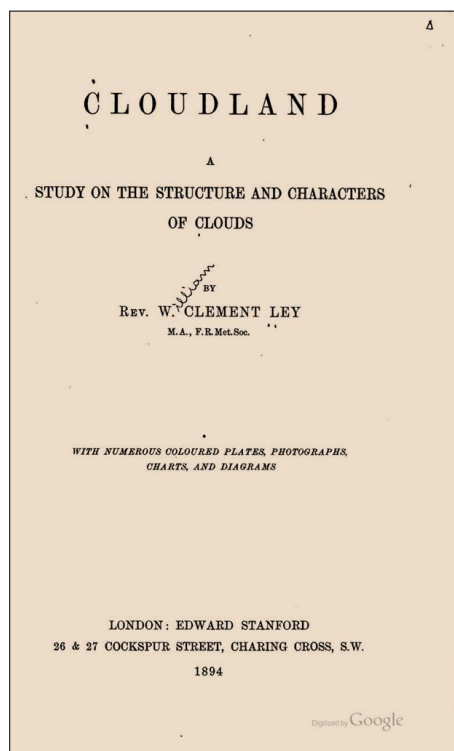
6. Rev William Clement Ley (1840-1896): distinguished meteorologist of Ashby Parva, Leicestershire

In recent weeks the disruption to our orderly existence by extreme weather has reminded us that, however technologically-smart weather forecasting has become, we can't rely on even high-tech procedures to avoid the worst effects. In an unanticipated twist, from the tedious repetitive litany that follows the now usually-riveting *news*, the weather itself has recently dominated the headlines.

My understanding of meteorology is decidedly slight, but recent events seem to provide a highly suitable opportunity to advertise a little-known aspect of East Midlands' local history that surely deserves wider recognition. It concerns the achievements of a Victorian parson whose skilful observations led to discoveries that, had they been more widely recognised in his lifetime, could have improved weather forecasting to a level of precision only achieved almost half a century later.



William C Ley, was a son of the Headmaster of Hereford Cathedral School. Born in 1840, at 17 he entered Magdalene College Oxford, from where he graduated in classics in 1862, along the way becoming vice-president of the University Meteorological Society. He was ordained in 1863, and in 1874 became Rector of Ashby Parva, a few miles from Lutterworth in Leicestershire, having been elected a Fellow of the (later 'Royal') Meteorological Society in 1878. It's clear that he looked to the heavens for more than spiritual inspiration! And with a parish of only 147 souls by 1931, it seems unlikely that in his time there pastoral duties provided too great an impediment to his scientific studies. But domestic life must have been full because he and his wife had eight children.



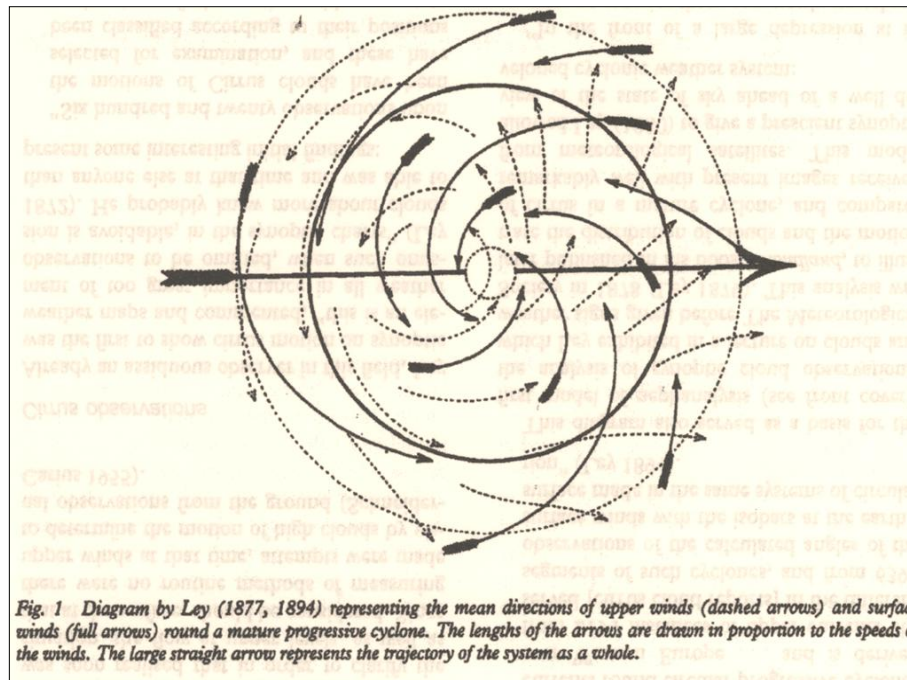
In a lecture to the Meteorological Society in 1848 he referred to his life-long interest in sky-watching, admitting that, to that day *he had spent a twelfth of his waking existence in that occupation*. He proceeded: *My own earliest recollections are those of looking at the clouds, and forming infantine speculations as to the causes of their forms and movements, and of being reprehended for exposing myself to all states of weather for this purpose.*

Such observations, and his theories on their movements were to culminate, shortly before his death in 1896, in the publication of *Cloudland: a study on the structure and characters of clouds*, which apparently contained some of the most original proposals on clouds presented for almost 100 years.

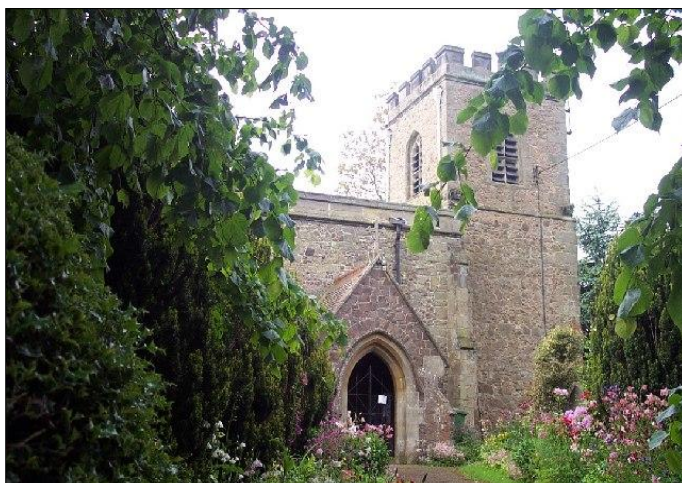
In fact, he made it his life's work to predict the weather, and to this end constructed an instrument for measuring the altitude, direction and velocity of clouds (called a *nephoscope*). With this, he was able to study how cloud

formations were related to the weather and examine their value in weather forecasting. Moreover, it is likely that he was among the first to examine upper air circulations and their relation to air flow in lower altitudes (see figure below). And in studying cirrus drifts he was probably a pioneer in identifying what we now call *jet streams*.* It is now known that cirrus clouds often form in advance of a warm front where the air masses meet at high levels, indicating an imminent change in weather.

But his reputation as a meteorologist was not confined to academic circles, for during harvest time he posted his forecasts on the Rectory gates at Ashby Parva for the benefit of farmers, many of whom would travel from miles around to read them and judge the best time to harvest their crops!



In 1959 an expert assessment was made that if Ley's ideas had been pursued wholeheartedly by others, a fuller understanding of weather systems could probably have been reached well before 1900, leading to the construction of networks of upper-air stations in 1905, rather than 1945. The author lamented that the lack of support must have been a great disappointment to Ley in his later years, when illness prevented him from completing *Cloudland* – the preface to which was signed not by William, but by a relative. (His wife pre-deceased him in 1894.)



Photograph of St Peter's church was taken by Mr Geoff Pick.

Most of the information presented here was derived from an article by John Kingdon of the University of East Anglia, published in *Weather* 54, 6 (1999) and from the *Wikipedia* website

* Up-to-date information on the jet stream is available on the official website: <https://www.weather.gov/jetstream/jet>

Ben Mephram