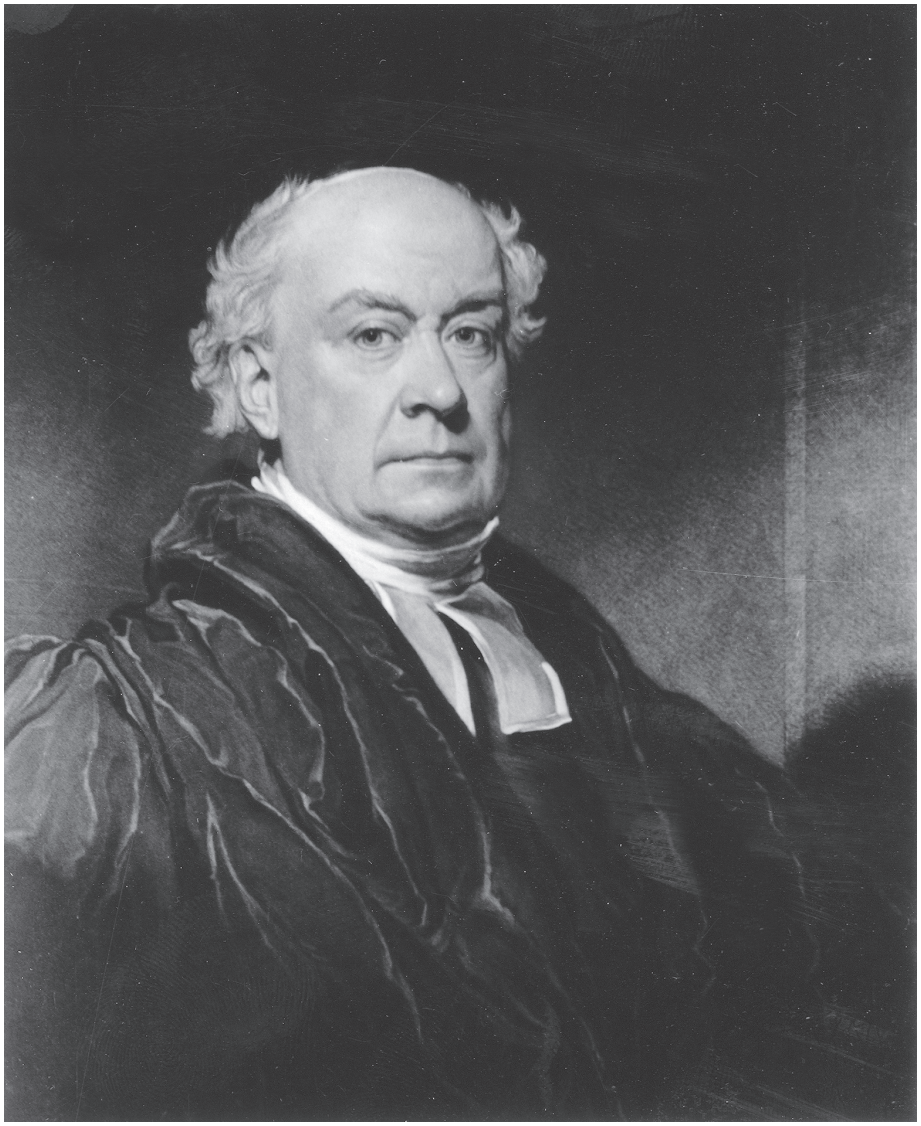

Frontispiece: ‘Old Belshazzar’. Dr Francis Randolph (1752–1831) vicar of Banwell from 1808 to his death, who took the initiative in exploring the Banwell bone cave (see pp. 1–10).

SOME VISITORS TO BANWELL BONE CAVE

DAVID BROMWICH

Presidential address given at Banwell 15 May 2010

We are still only two handshakes away from the 1820s. I myself, and I expect some of you, have shaken the hand of Sir Ian Stuart-Knill, a wonderful eccentric who lived in a Council house at Rookery Close, Edingworth, near East Brent, and devoted his life to tracing his descent from King Arthur. Sir Ian, as a child, was introduced to Alfred, Lord Tennyson, and Tennyson was already 13 years old when Christopher Greenwood published his map of Somerset in 1822. Yet what a different world it was. There were no railways, let alone motor cars, telephones, radio, television or computers. Weston-super-Mare had only just begun to grow from a fishing village with a population of 163 in the 1811 census. By 1821, according to *Somersetshire Delineated*, Greenwood's gazetteer to accompany his map (Greenwood 1822, 202), there were 84 families employed neither in agriculture or trade but 'residing here for the benefit of sea-bathing; this place having of late become a fashionable place of resort.' Then in 1823 William Buckland, the professor of geology at Oxford, was able, in all seriousness and with no fear of ridicule, to publish *Reliquiae Diluvianae*, claiming that bones found in caves at Hutton, just a few miles from Banwell, and in Bristol, Devon, Derbyshire, Yorkshire, Glamorgan, Hanover, Brunswick, Westphalia and Gibraltar, were all those of animals drowned in a single universal deluge which could be identified with Noah's flood (Buckland 1823). So it is no wonder that when another cave full of bones was found at Banwell in 1824, and proved to be accessible both in its proximity to Weston-super-Mare, and in being entered walking rather than crawling, as you have to do in so many of the Mendip caves, it became a major tourist attraction, and received several thousand visitors over the next four decades. Such a number, of course, is nothing to the hordes who later came to Weston on bank holiday excursion trains from Bristol, and in their cars down the motorway from Birmingham, but the word tourist had a different connotation in the early 19th century, and applied to the leisured classes, like the young noblemen who took their so-called grand tours on the continent. In 1788 Sir Richard Kaye, Dean of Lincoln, came on a tour to Somerset, and undertook it in such style that he engaged a professional artist, Samuel Hieronymus Grimm to accompany him and draw the places they visited. Our society now owns a collection of the drawings made on this tour.

I want to concentrate on introducing two or three dozen of the distinguished visitors who came to Banwell Bone Cave in its early years, but had better first give a brief summary of how the cave was discovered, and of what has happened there in its heyday, and since. The discovery was described in 1829 in John Rutter's *Delineations of North West Somerset*: a book that has just been reprinted with an introduction by Robert Dunning (Rutter 1829). Some of Rutter's details have been corrected in an article by Chris Richards and the late Dave Irwin, based on other contemporary sources, and showing that William Beard, whom we shall meet in due course, was not involved during the early stages as he liked it to be believed (Irwin and Richards 1996). The engraving in Rutter's book, executed by the Dorset poet William Barnes (Keen 1989), is nonetheless most helpful (Fig. 1). It shows, lower

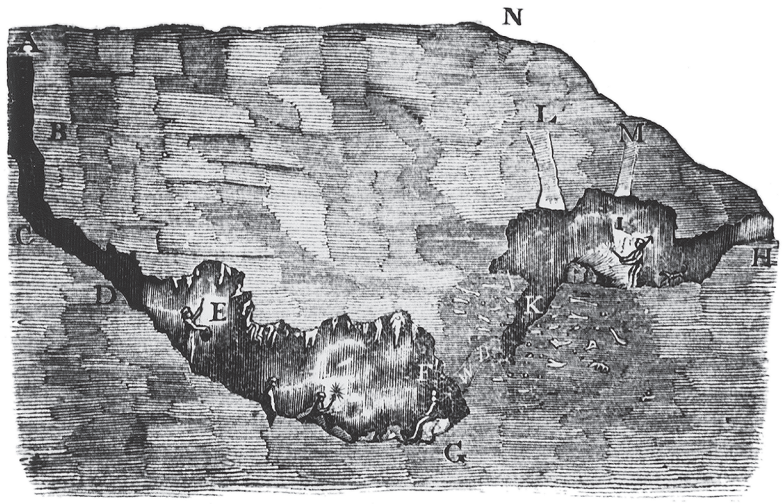

Fig. 1 Vertical section of Banwell Caverns, engraved by William Barnes, from Rutter's Delineations

left, what became known as the Stalactite Cave. This was discovered by accident by miners during the 18th century. It was then reopened deliberately in 1824, with a view to attracting paying visitors and raising funds for a parochial school, but it was, and still is, difficult of access, so an attempt was made to create a more convenient entrance. The attempt failed, but led instead to the discovery of the second cave, upper right on the engraving, which is known as the Bone Cave, as it was filled with mud containing vast numbers of animal bones. This became the main attraction for the many visitors, but was embellished by extensive landscaping and a collection of follies undertaken by Bishop Law. Rutter describes the usual programme for a visit in 1829, and a very similar experience of a Mr T. Clark in 1836 is set out in detail in the Banwell Society of Archaeology's journal in 1978 (Rendell 1978). Mr Clark's party started by admiring the view, and 'resting ourselves at each turn in the grottos, temples, alcoves and rustic seats which are judiciously placed in such situations as to present the varied prospects which the hill affords, each in its most favourable point of view.' They then visited the cottage, then the caves themselves, and finally received a very pressing invitation to walk over the hill to Mr Beard's home, which they declined. Rutter tells us that the routine there was to view his collection of bones, and then the book 'in which visitors generally enter their names, most of whom add a small gratuity, which has hitherto been expended in increasing the accommodations at the caves, and improving the access to them, the surplus will hereafter be appropriated to Banwell Charity School.' In fact most of the names are in the same handwriting rather than being individual signatures, but I expect most visitors were given the chance to see that their predecessors had given a shilling or more, and that it would look bad if they were to give less. The book in question survives, in the Banwell parish church deposit in the Somerset Record Office,[1] and yields the many recognisable names of visitors whom we shall be meeting in due course.

The initial rush of visitors was dwindling to a trickle by the time of William Beard's death in 1868, but occasional visits continued, and our own society made one as part of its three-day annual meeting in January 1905.[2] The Axbridge Caving Group and Archaeological Society resumed digging in the 1950s, discovered extensions to both caves, and added some wee beasties to the species previously identified in the bone deposits (Currant 1999). The gardens and follies have been rescued from a generation of neglect by the present owners since 1978, much restoration work has been undertaken, and studies have been published by Michael Cousins and by Mike Chapman (Cousins 1991; Chapman 1999).

In his old age, William Beard approached the Revd William Arthur Jones, one of our society's secretaries, about the fate of his collection of bones (Rabson 2010). This resulted in a proposal to the

annual meeting in Wells on 9 September 1863 to raise a subscription for their purchase.[3] It was successful. One hundred names of subscribers, of amounts from ten shillings to seven pounds, are listed in the Proceedings,[4] and the collection was initially one of the society's most treasured possessions. Eventually, though, it fell under sad neglect, from which it was retrieved by Dennis Parsons in the early 1990s. He enlisted the help of Andrew Currant, the late Roger Jacobi and others from the Natural History Museum, and they have studied the collection in great detail. We are now looking forward to seeing it restored to a position of prominence in the new Museum of Somerset. The detailed examination has restored the distinction already recognised in the nineteenth century between the bison, reindeer, bears and wolves which occur at Banwell, and the hyaenas and other species found elsewhere on Mendip, and has led to the formal designation as the Banwell Bone Cave mammal assemblage-zone of the whole stage, sometime between 50,000 and 80,000 years ago, when the species represented here were dominant in Britain (Currant, 1999; Currant and Jacobi, 2001).

I should now like to turn to my main theme of introducing individual people, starting with the few most closely linked with the discovery and exploitation of the cave.

George Henry Law (1761-1838)[5] was bishop of Bath and Wells from 1824 until his death (Fig. 2). The bishops had held the manor of Banwell, with a brief interruption, since before the time of Domesday, along with one of their favourite residences which was called Banwell Court in the early 19th century, but has since had a Gothick makeover and is now called Banwell Abbey. By Law's time the house and land had been let out on long leases, and the first page of the visitors' book speaks of a cavern in Banwell hill the property of John Blackburrow, Esq. of Banwell Court, who was the tenant. Rutter tells us that Bishop Law personally bought back the leases on the property over and adjoining the caves so that, unlike the manor, which descended to his successor and then to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, The Caves passed down his own family. When my father became vicar of Banwell in 1949 there was still living memory of the bishop's grandson, Major James Law, driving down from The Caves in a coach and four on Sunday mornings to attend service in Banwell Church, where he occupied the chancel and treated it as virtually a family pew. Most of the stained glass there still commemorates members of the family.

Bishop Law indulged his antiquarian and landscaping tastes at the palace in Wells, where Pat Robinson and Michael Poole have described, amongst other things, his demolition of two sides of Bishop Burnell's great hall in order 'to make a more picturesque ruin' and his formation of a museum of mineralogy and fossils in the undercroft (Robinson 1994; Poole 2002), as well as here at Banwell, where the features included his cottage, progressively extended, with summerhouse or grotto behind it, Osteoikon or bone house, cromlech and stone circle, and eventually tower (Fig. 3).

Fig. 2 George Henry Law. Bishop of Bath and Wells, lithograph by J. Draper, from the society's collection

We move on to Dr Francis Randolph (1752–1831), vicar of Banwell from 1808 to his death, who took the initiative in having the caves explored, but appears to have had little to do with their subsequent exploitation (*see* frontispiece). He, in those pluralist days, combined the vicarage with a residentiary canonry at Bristol Cathedral, and the rectory of the fashionable West End church of St Paul's, Covent Garden. He attracted the pen of The Church-Goer, the pseudonymous writer of a series of articles in the *Bristol Times* weekly newspaper in 1843, 1844 and 1845, which proved hugely popular and has been reprinted several times in book form, most recently

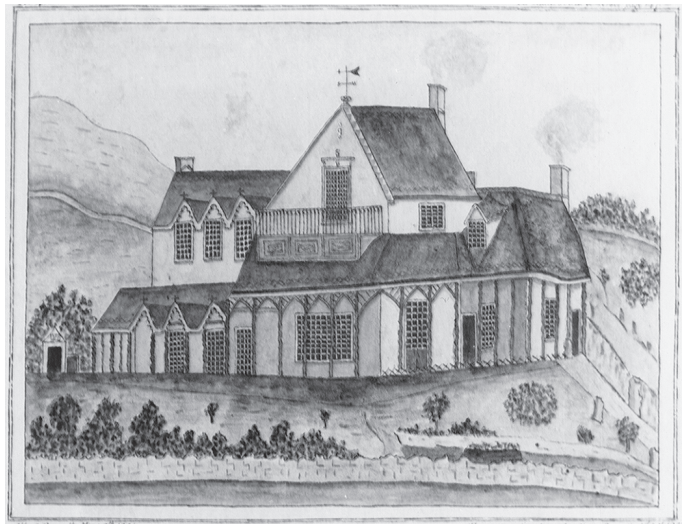

Fig. 3 North-west view of the Bishop's Cottage on Banwell Hill, as it appeared after the alterations made thereon in 1833, by Alfred Bennett after Clara Bennett, for their extra-illustrated copy of Rutter's Delineations *(SRO, DD\SAS/G1740/2/1/4)*

in 1982. In a retrospective 'second chapter on an old Chapter' (Leech 1888, 174–82) the Church-Goer tells us that Canon Randolph had been a courtier patronised by the Prince Regent, but had fallen from favour and developed a grudge against him. When the prince was crowned as King George IV, Randolph preached in Bristol Cathedral on the coronation, and more specifically on the grand banquet in Westminster Hall which followed it, starting with the text 'Belshazzar, the king, made a great feast' and drawing the most unflattering comparisons between the two occasions. The sermon caused a sensation, and earned the preacher the name of 'Old Belshazzar' for the rest of his life.

Another clergyman to attract the sharp side of the Church-Goer's pen was David Williams (1792–1850), another pluralist as incumbent of both Bleadon and Kingston Seymour. The Church-Goer attended a service at Bleadon and found the atmosphere cold and uninspiring (Leech 1850, 87–95), though with the matter of the sermon 'I have no complaint to make, and I am not the less disposed to be pleased with it because I think I heard it before .... The language was good and the sentences well turned, and whether it was made in London or Bleadon, composed by the Revd David Williams or sold by Burns, it still taught a solemn ... lesson.' After criticising shortcomings in educational and pastoral care of the parish, the writer concludes that he would be glad to look him in the face and 'tell him that ministers were not ordained merely to carry out the Tithe Commutation Act, and to live in a good house, enjoy themselves six days, and have two short services on the seventh.'

In fact David Williams spent many of his weekdays on geology and cave exploration He is shown in William Beard's book sharing in the rediscovery of Hutton Cavern in 1828, and in the first exploration of Goatchurch the following year, as well as being a frequent visitor at Banwell. He formed a valuable collection of bones and fossils, and wrote up extensive notebooks, and both were purchased by the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, like the Beard collection from the proceeds of a special appeal, but in this case at the earlier date of 1852.[6]

This brings us to William Beard (1772-1868) himself (Fig. 4). His background was as what his class-conscious times called a 'respectable' farmer, and once he had let his land to a neighbour and taken up his duties as manager and guide at the caves, he described himself in the census as 'independent' meaning of independent means. We have already glimpsed the regime when visitors came to the caves, and we shall find a few more instances in due course. Just one example of many curious miscellaneous entries in the visitors' book is: 'This is to certify that I sent two oak planks to make my coffin to Sam.l

Fig. 4 William Beard, lithograph inserted in Rutter's Delineations *at a cost of £10, paid from subscriptions by Bishop Law, J.H. Smyth-Pigott, Rutter himself and Mrs Beard, and from donations made by visitors to the caves*

Laney of Banwell (long before I was dead) and he is to cover it with lime and make it complete without delay. W. Beard. Sep. 24, 1860.' A sketch of Beard's life by W.T. Edginton appeared in the *Weston-super-Mare Gazette* on 6 February 1886, and was reprinted by J.W. Hunt in the Axbridge Caving Group journal (Hunt 1968). It concludes that 'Mr Beard is still remembered by the villagers. He was quaint and singular in his manner, quiet and reserved, and a good friend to the poor. He was highly thought of in his immediate neighbourhood, and he thought not a little of himself.'

Turning from residents to visitors proper, let us start with a clutch of distinguished geologists. First is William Buckland (1784–1856), a repeated visitor to Banwell, usually in the company of David Williams. We have already met him as the author of *Reliquiae Diluvianae*. He spent most of his career at Oxford, and acquired a considerable reputation for his research and for his flamboyant lectures. We are told that he fed ox bones to captive hyaenas to confirm that they splintered them in the same way as the ancient bones from Kirkdale Cave in Yorkshire, and that he woke his wife in the night to make dough so that he could compare his pet tortoise's footprints in the dough with ones surviving from antiquity. He moved on in due course from his belief in the universality of Noah's flood, and came to accept the concept of glaciations. In 1845 he was appointed Dean of Westminster, and on 26 September 1849 he was the principal speaker at the inaugural meeting of our own society.[7]

Sir Roderick Murchison (1792–1871) was another early visitor to Banwell Cave. Like Captain Joseph Giles, whom we shall meet later, he was on an army captain's half-pay, as well as being a landed gentleman and pursuing an energetic and distinguished career as director-general of the Geological Survey and president of the Royal Geographical Society. He did much to promote British exploration throughout the empire and the world, and has more than 20 geographical features named after him.

Sir Richard Owen (1804-1892), came on 19 October 1850, when he was Hunterian Professor of Comparative Anatomy and Physiology at the Royal College of Surgeons. He afterwards became superintendent of the natural history departments of the British Museum, and was largely responsible for the establishment of the separate Natural History Museum at South Kensington. William Beard described his visit in some detail, beginning: 'This is to certify that my friend Mr Cooper of Towerhead in the parish of Banwell went to Banwell Station (which in 1850 meant what later became Puxton and Worle Station on the main Bristol and Exeter line at St George's) to meet my scientific and worthy friend Professor Owen and brought him to my cottage after their dinner ... and staid with me looking over the specimens of old bones from six different caverns in six different parishes and not more than 6 miles from my own bone cottage.' The next day they visited Hutton and Bleadon, and then spent a third day on further examination of the bones.

Two more geologists came together in 1836. John Phillips (1800–1874), nephew of William Smith the 'father of English geology' had been recently appointed Professor of Geology at King's College, London, and was also assistant secretary of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. His companion, William Sanders (1799–1875) was proprietor of a family seed and hop merchant's business in Bristol, but already devoting much of his time to a detailed geological survey of the region,

published as A Geological Atlas of the Bristol Coalfield, at 4 inches to the mile, in 1862. A copy, measuring 28 inches tall, is one of the largest books in our society's library (Sanders 1862).

Leaving the geologists, let us turn to 'the nobility, gentry and clergy,' the categories regularly addressed by advertisers of books and other such expensive commodities in the newspapers of the period.

Our first nobleman is John Russell, sixth Duke of Bedford (1766–1839), who came in 1826 with two of his daughters. He was spending heavily at this time on development of a holiday complex at Endsleigh, on the Tavistock estate, and this included a cottage ornée, as well as gardens designed by Humphry Repton, and may have given him a particular interest in what Bishop Law was doing at Banwell. He may also have been making a social call at the vicarage, as it was his elder brother Francis, the fifth Duke, who had presented Canon Randolph to the rectory of St Paul's, Covent Garden. The Duke is listed as a subscriber to two copies of the most expensive 'proofs on India paper' version of Rutter's *Delineations*, presumably one for his town house in London, or for Endsleigh, and the other for Woburn Abbey.

A second noble visitor was Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, third Marquess of Lansdowne (1780–1863), who enjoyed a long and distinguished career as a Whig politician including a couple of years, before he inherited the title and went to the Lords, as MP for the Duke of Bedford's pocket constituency of Camelford.

A third nobleman was Edmund Boyle, eighth Earl of Cork and Orrery (1767–1856), who had by this time completed a successful military career and settled as a magistrate and landed proprietor at Marston House, Marston Bigot, near Frome, where he too was engaged in making improvements to the house and grounds with an eye to the same fashions as the ones being followed at Banwell (McGarvie 1987). He had not long before employed the same architect, Sir Jeffry Wyattville, as the Duke of Bedford had done at Endsleigh. His grandson, who succeeded him as the ninth Earl, was to be president of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society in 1875.

Thomas Denman, first Baron Denman (1779–1854) was Lord Chief Justice of England at the time of his visit on 16 August 1834. He was known for his strong liberal views, had as Attorney-General been heavily involved in drafting and promoting the Reform Bill, and was a passionate opponent of slavery. Like Canon Randolph, he had once famously insulted King George IV, when defending Queen Caroline, by comparing her to Octavia, the wronged wife of the Roman emperor Nero.

Turning from nobility to gentry, we will start with Sir Richard Colt Hoare (1758-1838), who came with the Revd John Skinner, whom we shall meet later, in 1829, and again with Thomas Hasell in 1832 (Fig. 5). He was the owner, though not the creator, of the country house and magnificent landscape garden at Stourhead, a noted antiquary and opener of barrows, and author of two sumptuous volumes on ancient Wiltshire, and of several more on the modern county. We have copies of both the former, and the first of the latter, in our society's library. Like Sir Richard Kaye in the previous century, he travelled with an artist in tow, sometimes Skinner, sometimes Philip Crocker of Frome, and sometimes even both (Woodbridge 1970). He also commissioned the London artists, John and John Chessell Buckler, to draw the churches and antiquities of Wiltshire, and the resulting collection is now held by the Wiltshire Natural History and Archaeological Society in Devizes.

Exactly the same thing was done for Somerset by our next visitor to the caves, John Hugh Smyth-Pigott (*c*. 1792–1853). He was an illegitimate son of Sir Hugh Smyth of Long Ashton, and his wife Ann was heiress of substantial Pigott family estates, which passed to them in 1823. They included the Grove House, now the town council offices in Grove Park, Weston-super-Mare, and Brockley Hall in the country (Anon. 1980). Like the Duke of Bedford, he subscribed for two copies of Rutter's *Delineations*, presumably one for each establishment. He was also one of the contributors to the cost of William Beard's portrait in that book. The collection of drawings which he commissioned from the Bucklers was bequeathed to the county on his death in 1853, was placed by the Court of Quarter Sessions under a body of ex-officio trustees, was put by them in the care of our own society, and has remained with us ever since. Banwell has more than the usual share of drawings in the collection, including ones which show the bishop's cottage before and after enlargement, an obelisk on the top of the hill, and the tower which replaced it.

Another visitor was William Edward Surtees (1811–1889), a country gentleman and lawyer from Durham and Northumberland who in 1853 married the widow of Sir Stephen Chapman of Tainfield in Kingston St Mary parish just north of Taunton. He

Fig. 5 Sir Richard Colt Hoare, engraved from a painting by H. Edridge, from the society's collection

became a member of our society and a major benefactor, subscribed to the purchase of Beard's bone collection, was one of the principal fund-raisers for the purchase of Taunton Castle, where he himself paid for the neo-Norman doorway from the courtyard into the Gray Room, and on his death his widow, at his wish, presented his library of 3,000 books to the society.[8] You can still see their bookplates on many of them.

We turn next to the clergy, and begin with a name which is entered in the visitors' book as H. Lich. & Cov. Dean of Wells. This was Henry Ryder (1777–1836), who was indeed at the time of his visit both Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry and Dean of Wells, having previously combined the bishopric of Gloucester with the deanery. This may not look good to modern eyes, but he earned a reputation as a hardworking and conscientious clergyman and bishop. He was succeeded in the deanery by Edwin Goodenough, who visited Banwell Cave in 1832, and he in turn was followed in 1845 by Richard Jenkyns (1782? –1855), who was master of Balliol College, Oxford, at the time of his visits to Banwell, one of them on 20 August 1830, in company with his cousin Henry Hobhouse. He was also prebendary and incumbent of Dinder, just outside Wells, and was at the time building a parsonage for himself there, for his visits in the university Easter and summer vacations, in the cottage ornée style adopted by Bishop Law at Banwell, and the Duke of Bedford's at Endsleigh. When the deanery fell vacant in 1845 he was able to call on his cousin Henry Hobhouse, who was by then a member of Sir Robert Peel's government. He in turn had a word in the ear of the prime minister, and it duly pleased Her Majesty to nominate Jenkyns to the deanery. He wrote himself that the Balliol College statutes 'are very liberal and indulgent with regard to the holding of preferment. A deanery even with the eight months residence now required could legally be held with the mastership of the college.' So he retained both for the rest of his life but, he went on, 'I think it right that I should at a convenient time resign Dinder,' and he did so in favour of his curate (West 1977).

The Revd John Skinner (1772–1839) made several visits to Banwell, in company with Sir Richard Colt Hoare, with William Phelps, and with William Lisle Bowles (we shall meet both shortly), and on his own. He is well known from *The Journal of a Somerset rector ... parochial affairs of the parish of Camerton*, published in 1930 and reprinted several times since, where he portrays himself as something of a misery, always complaining about his family, his servants and his parishioners, and where we are told that he finally took his own life. This published journal is only a selection from voluminous surviving manuscripts, most of them now in the British Library, which are largely devoted to his antiquarian travels and observations. These have been extensively consulted by two of my predecessors, Leslie Grinsell and William Wedlake, and most recently by the Charterhouse Environs Research Team, but would still benefit from further attention. They include accounts of some of his visits to Banwell. One, from the published journal for 6 August 1828 (Skinner 1930, 188), starts with a characteristic complaint. 'I slept but little.' This was in the palace at Wells. 'It was mentioned before I went to bed that we were to visit Banwell Cave, and spend the day there. As it blew hard during the night I received no very pleasing anticipation regarding the weather and when I looked out of the window I perceived the rain falling fast ... . However, as it cleared a little after breakfast, we proceeded in the Bishop's coach and four, his Lordship, Bowles, Messrs Cassan, Broaderip and myself being inside, and Warner with the footman on the box ... . We drove to a cottage the Bishop has erected on the hill contiguous to the

cave but the rain fell without intermission. Bowles was to be in requisition to write a poem on the occasion, myself composing some lines on the subject and contenting myself with sketching a view of two of the cottage and the interior of the cave.' The unpublished journals record another visit to Banwell, but not this time to the cave, on 19 June 1832.[9] It starts with another bad night. 'I slept but slightly, for by three o'clock I heard noises inimical to soft slumbers, made by persons in the street; and shortly after the doors of the Inn were assailed by a loud knocking, which not being attended to the Band of the Club struck up, and the inmates of the house soon began to bestir themselves; so that within doors and without doors there was a constant crash and clamour, I never closed my eyes till five o'clock, when I arose and dressed myself.' William Beard then joined him for breakfast and took him to see the Roman remains at Winthill. On a third visit, on 10 July 1833,[10] Skinner writes: 'we drove after luncheon to Banwell cave where the Bishop has made a considerable addition to the Cottage, but in my humble opinion the same convenience might have been obtained for less money & with more taste.' On yet another occasion, on 3 October 1835,[11] 'it was the Bishop's feast to the Tenantry, who occupy his Potatoe grounds.' There were 180 of them at long tables in the garden, 'beef mutton veal & plum-puddin in profusion and they emptied a Hogshead of Cider,' but to Skinner's disgust some of the women were 'purloining some of the provisions, which they slipped into small bags provided for the purpose to carry home with them.' Even the presence of a Bishop, he wrote, does not keep the hands of the lower orders 'from pecking & stealing and their tongues from evil speaking lying and slandering.'

One of the fellow-passengers inside the bishop's coach was William Lisle Bowles (1762–1850), vicar of Bremhill in Wiltshire from 1804 till his death, a magistrate, chaplain to the Prince Regent in 1818, residentiary canon of Salisbury from 1828 and author, amongst much else, of two editions of an interminable poem on Banwell Hill (Bowles 1828) (Fig. 6).

Consigned to the outside seat of the bishop's coach was Richard Warner (1763–1857), a man the same age as Bowles and ten years older than Skinner. His clerical appointments included a curacy under William Gilpin, the writer on the picturesque, and a lengthy spell from 1795 to 1817 at St James's, Bath. He was a prolific writer whose books included a history of Bath (Warner 1801), history of Glastonbury (Warner 1826) and accounts of various walks in search of antiquities through Wales and the western counties of England.

Fig. 6 The Revd William Lisle Bowles, engraved from a painting by Mullar, from the society's collection

Accompanying Skinner on another of his visits was William Phelps (*c*. 1776-1856), vicar of Meare and Bicknoller and, like John Hugh Smyth-Pigott and Dean Richard Jenkyns, one of the early members of our own society. He wrote on botany and foreign travel, but his principal work was an unfinished History and Antiquities of Somerset, published in parts between 1835 and 1839, and made up into two substantial volumes (Phelps 1839).

A more prolific writer, and a repeat visitor to Banwell, was Dr John Allen Giles (1808–1884). Most of his books were editions and translations of classical and historical texts, and numerous school books, but he courted controversy with *Hebrew Records: an historical enquiry concerning the age, authorship, and authenticity of the Old Testament* (Giles, 1850), and *Christian Records* (Giles, 1854) on the New Testament. The church, and specifically Samuel Wilberforce, his diocesan bishop in Oxford, was not ready for such challenges to traditional belief, and both books were suppressed until they reappeared as *Hebrew and Christian Records* a generation later (Giles 1877). Dr Giles describes in his diary for 19 May 1860 a visit to an old family retainer, Thomas Whiting, at Uphill (Giles 2000, 350). His host 'drove me to see old Mr Beard,

commonly called Professor. He had taken great interest in Banwell Cave, where so many bones of animals were found, and it was to his care that the preservation of any bones at all was due. He was allowed to act as guardian of the cave, and was now 88 years old. I had not been there for 30 years, and the old man gave me a specimen of his hand-writing, for which I gave him half-a-crown towards defraying the costs of maintaining the cave. It seems he kept these little mementoes ready for use. That which he gave me is dated more than a month back.' Another early visitor was John Allen's uncle, Captain Joseph Giles (1792–1879), a magistrate and manager of Stuckey's Bank at Wells. We are told (Giles 2000, 18) that he 'was an officer in the militia, & when the Government offered a Captain's commission to any Militia officer who would at his own expense bring 100 recruits to the Headquarters at Canterbury or Dover (I forget which) he went to Ireland, enlisted 100 men, whom we brought safely to the place appointed, and was immediately gazetted Captain in His Majesty's 9th regiment of foot. All this cost him £500; but peace was proclaimed immediately afterwards, and he was put on half-pay: this was 63 years ago, and the whole of that time he has received £150 a year without doing any service whatever in return!'

A visitor entered as the Rev. J. Keble junr came on 20 September 1833. This must be John Keble (1792–1866), as his father, also the Revd John Keble, was still living till the following year. Our visitor was a country clergyman and professor of poetry at Oxford, well-known for his bestselling book *The Christian Year*, opening with the morning hymn 'New every morning is the love,' and for his preaching, just two months before his visit to Banwell, the Assize Sermon which is traditionally regarded as having launched the Oxford Movement or Tractarianism.

Our final clerical visitor is shown as Mr H.J. Prince, as Henry James Prince (1811–1899) was only ordained seven years after his visit here in May 1832. That was the month he was appointed medical officer to the General Hospital in Bath. Afterwards he became a revivalist preacher with increasingly extravagant claims and in 1846 established the Agapemone or Abode of Love at Spaxton where he and his disciples settled in community and attracted notoriety for a series of blasphemous, financial and sexual scandals.

We will conclude, in sharp contrast, with a handful of more sober and upright visitors, all members of the Society of Friends. The Quakers have long been numerous in this part of Somerset, so much so that Canon Randolph's successor as vicar of Banwell, Professor Samuel Lee, was provoked into publishing two editions of *A brief enquiry into the question whether a Christian can conscientiously object to the payment of tithes, addressed in a letter to a member of the Society of Friends* (Lee 1832). The Quakers had, and still have, a school at Sidcot, in the adjacent parish of Winscombe, and at least two parties of pupils were early visitors to the caves. It may or not be true that their influence was responsible for Winscombe, like Street, having had less than its expected share of licensed premises in the 19th and early 20th centuries. John Rutter was a Quaker, as was his daughter-in-law, Hannah Player Tanner, very likely a relative of the Mrs Tanner who was the very first named visitor to the cave. There were Tanners at Sidcot, and others who were next-door neighbours to William Beard at Winthill.

Joseph Storrs Fry (1756–1835) was the eponymous owner, though not the original founder, of J.S. Fry & Co., the chocolate and cocoa manufacturers, first in the centre of Bristol, and then at Somerdale at Keynsham, taken over in due course by another Quaker family firm, Cadbury, and recently and controversially by the multi-national Kraft.

James Clark (1811–1906) was likewise, with his brother Cyrus, the eponymous founder of C. & J. Clark, the shoe manufacturers at Street (Anon. 1950). He came on his own in 1830 and again with his wife shortly after they were married in 1835. He and J.S. Fry have it in common that at least three members of each of their families have served as president of our own society: Mr Fry's grandson, Sir Edward Fry, in 1899, another grandson, Francis Fry, in 1903, and a great-great-granddaughter, Mrs Cosmo Rawlins, in 1964; James Clark's grandson's wife, Mrs John Bright Clark, in 1956, his great-granddaughter's husband, Henry Scott Stokes, in 1965, and his great-grandson Stephen Morland in 1973.

That prompts me to leave you with a question. Why, with all this interest in early remains from the 1820s, did we have to wait till 1849 for the formation of our society? Was it just that the arrival of the railways made widely attended meetings possible, as it enabled the long-established Bath and West of England Agricultural Society to start holding annual shows just three years later in 1852 (Hudson 1976), or was it more a matter of waiting for a wider dissemination of the curiosity about the past of which the visits to Banwell Cave were an early manifestation?

ENDNOTES

1 Somerset Record Office D\P\ban/23/25.
2 SANHS *Proceedings* 51 (for 1905), 62–65
3 SANHS *Proceedings* 12 (for 1863/4), 30.
4 SANHS *Proceedings* 12 (for 1863/4), 71.
5 Birth and death dates and biographies throughout, unless otherwise stated, from *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
6 SANHS *Proceedings* 3 (for 1852), 2, 5–8.
7 SANHS *Proceedings* 1 (for 1849/50), 9–20.
8 SANHS *Proceedings* 35 (for 1889), 138–40.
9 British Library Add MS 33,726, folio 203.
10 British Library Egerton MS 3100, folio 333.
11 British Library Egerton MS 3115, folio 143.

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