THE SABINE BARING-GOULD APPRECIATION SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 32

2000

AIMS OF THE SOCIETY

To enable those interested in the man and his work to share their enthusiasm and spread the interest among others. This is to be achieved by means of three Newsletters per annum (October, February and June), a membership list and an Annual Gathering at venues with some association with Sabine Baring-Gould.

A Bibliography is available from the Hon. Secretary.

The annual subscription is £6.00. Members joining during the year will receive back copies of the Newsletter for the current year, which is deemed to start with the October issue, when subscriptions are due.

THE COMMITTEE

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- Sabine Baring-Gould was born on 28th January 1834 in Exeter and died on 2nd January 1924 at Lewtrenchard
- He was a hugely influential collector of folksongs at a time when such songs were being rapidly forgotten.
- Folklorist. Magpie collector of anecdotes, practices, beliefs.
- Archaeologist. Pioneer of over 60 excavations on Dartmoor.
- Loved and respected pastor to a widespread Devonshire community
- Reconstructor of buildings - he made enormous changes to both house and church at Lewtrenchard
- As well as 'Onward Christian Soldiers' he wrote other perennial hymns - 'Now the Day is Over' and 'Through the Night of Doubt and Sorrow' for example.

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Editorial

Not so much a Newsletter - more a Magazine?
It strikes me that this publication has always been a mixture of newsletter and magazine. The former, I suppose, deals primarily with the activities of the Society, the Committee, its AGM, events and membership. A magazine, on the other hand, devotes its attention to the writings, endeavours, opinions and achievements of the man around whom the Society has been formed. Although there is obviously a need for both, my inclination is to nudge the balance towards magazinehood - and the contents of this issue will show you what I mean.

The Annual Gathering, on the 13th and 14th November 1999 was a genuinely rich and varied experience. These events get better year by year, as the multifarious aspects of Sabine's life and times are investigated. A brief report of the highlights appears on Page 9.

It was a pleasure and an education to meet Philip Weller at the November Gathering. Philip is a leading light in a much bigger and more active Society than ours, which exists to promote the life and works of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. They conduct annual tours, very often on the Continent, lasting a week or more, and make optimum use of the Internet to indulge their interests. Although we can never aspire to quite such heights, it is salutary to exchange notes with other societies of a similar nature to our own.

There are more events for your diary this year than ever before in this Society. We have five new members since the last Newsletter. Everything is looking very positive indeed, and I look forward to including many more reports, plans, suggestions and commentaries in future issues.

Becky Smith

Forthcoming Events

9th, 10th, 11th March.
The Red Spider Company is staging a Show, featuring, among other things, **Margery of Quether** ***as a shadow puppet play,*** This is an original idea of Ron Wawman's and definitely merits the attendance of as many Members as possible. The programme also includes 'Songs from the Red Spider Singers' and a two-act play entitled**Grand National Day.** It will be held in Bratton Clovelly (the village in which the novel *Red Spider* is set) and tickets can be obtained from Lew Trenchard Primary School or Bratton Clovelly Post Office. If anyone from outside the area is interested, tickets can be obtained through Ron Wawman, telephone 01566 781459.

10th and 11th June. The Horbury Baring-Gould March is on the afternoon of Sunday 11th. The March will be prior to and around a full blown reproduction of the Whitsuntide Walk which first featured Sabine's *Onward Christian Soldiers* in 1865. The event will be led by the Bishop of Wakefield and the programme is well advanced.
There will be an opportunity for members to attend services at Horbury Brig Church, see the Mission that Sabine built and walk/ride the route the children took to St Peter's Church Horbury etc. It is hoped that there will also be some folk-music input with a Devon flavour.
Full information can be obtained from Keith Lister (address, etc inside front cover). Also, please let Keith know as soon as possible if you wish to attend.

The AGM will probably be held at the same time as the Baring-Gould Festival in Lewtrenchard on 19-21 October 2000. The Festival features a community production of BG's novel *Kitty Alone.* This promises to be an exciting and enjoyable event, and there is every probabilitiy that additional activities will be provided for the enlightenment and entertainment of those Members attending. Further details in the next Newsletter.

The following weekend, **27-29 October,** sees a Folk Festival, organised by the Wren Trust, which features many of the songs collected by Baring-Gould.

It may also interest Members to know that there is a well-established annual Michaelmas Walk, generally on the last Saturday in September, around the Lewtrenchard estate, including pauses for appropriate songs, nature games for children, a tea, and dramatic sketches illustrating events from SBG's life. This is a truly impressive and exciting development, involving many local people. It is a gratifying illustration of the way in which SBG has been 'rediscovered' in the area in recent times, and seems set to expand and develop in the coming years.

Things to Buy

Tapes and CDs produced by the Wren Trust. The latest is *Dead Maid's Land*, a comprehensive and toe-tapping collection of folksongs, all from the Baring-Gould Collection. Tapes are £7.00 and CDs are £13. Available from The Wren Trust, 1 St James Street, Okehampton, Devon. EX20 1DW.
We have been given a Memoir of SBG, written by his half-brother Arthur Baring-Gould. Arthur's son, Cedric, passed it to the Society, and it is now available, either on floppy disk or printed out on loose sheets. The disk version can be had for free - just send a blank disk to Becky Smith (You'll get it in MS Word format). The sheets cost £2.50, to cover paper and postage. Cheques payable R. Smith.

Back copies of this newsletter. Singly or in sets. £1.50 each or £46 for the entire collection, from 1989. Apply to Becky Smith. Cheques payable SBGAS.

Books as listed inside the back cover. Some of the older issues cited could now be out of print.

An Extract from Arthur's memoir

CHAPTER XV

Before I made the attempt to paint a portrait of my half-brother, I was warned by one who was in a position to judge, that I was attempting an impossible task. There were no contemporaries to tell me of his earlier life, his last few friends all died before him, his two bulky books of autobiography gave few personal incidents to help one, and I do not think that he ever wrote what you might call personal letters, such as his mother or his aunts were continually writing.

And if there were such difficulties in the way of writing about his life before he came home to Lew, the difficulty of writing about these forty years that he spent there are greater still, for there, one day seemed like another. Every day he drove forth about the parish, and for the rest of the day, till bed-time, apart from meals, he stood at his desk, continually writing books, and that went on till he could stand no longer. In and out, he would dash off to the Continent, one winter he spent in Rome, and no

oubt he travelled about the country to a certain extent, but of anything hat would interest us, of adventures or experiences, he tells us nothing.

At Lew, his life was lived within a triple framework, his parish, his hurch and his house. At sixteen, he had made a resolve, that if it were ossible, he would try to raise his people to a high level, to restore his hurch, and to make his own house a thing of beauty and comfort. It ay not be uninteresting, if I may be permitted to dwell for a little on ach of these, and it may be that we shall have glimpses of Sabine, as he arries out each point of that early resolution.

Lew Trenchard is a parish with a population of about 300 souls. Its hurch is on the western edge of the parish - the population, such as are ot living on the farms, are clustered on Lew Down, a high ridge where he high road linking Cornwall with the rest of the world runs, forming oughly its northern boundary.

I do not think the parish has, except in one respect, changed much in he last half century. The old farms are there still, just as they were for enturies before. I do not think that there are any fresh cottages for abourers, but Sabine made, after becoming squire, profound changes in he cottages that he found there. In the old days, when the manganese ines were in full work and the cottages were grossly overcrowded and nsanitary, he made two cottages into one, and reconditioned and mproved them all. I knew all the cottages intimately, when I was his urate, and I believe there were none that would have failed to pass the tandards of the present day.

Sabine was one who loved, almost above anything, to dabble in ricks and mortar, and he had excellent taste as an architect. Real rchitects he abhorred. He held them responsible for the injury they had one to many an old and beautiful church. Of course, the restoration of he Manor House was his magnum opus, but of that, more anon.

Scattered about the parish are instances of his taste.

The road from Tavistock joins the great highway from Okehampton o Launceton in Lew Down, but before reaching it it forks off, and one, he right hand fork, leads to the school, and the left to the village itself, he school being about half a mile from the village. At the apex, abine built two semi-detached cottages that perfectly suit the spot, ith a grove of trees behind them; and in front, they command the most erfect view in the parish, looking down on the Coryton valley, with its oods on either side, and Brentor, with its little church on the

summit, seen five miles away. Sabine used to say they would do for his two elder daughters when they were old maids. They never became that, both were married.

Another little building had great charm. It is a Swiss chalet, built on the ramps that border what was once a large lime-stone quarry. The quarry extends some 300 yards, and is backed by the sheer rock face, rising some 200 feet. It used to be my delight, when I was a little boy, to watch the trollies hauled up by hydraulic power up the steep incline, full of useless stone, to be cast down over the ramps, and to watch the trollies on their return journey, rattling down to the bottom of the quarry. The quarry was quite close to Lew House, but screened from it by a belt of Scotch pines.

Whether it was that the quarry was considered to be too near the house, or whether the lime stone was worked out, I do not know, but Sabine had it closed. It might have remained a desolate and ugly gash, but it gave Sabine his opportunity. He turned a stream into it, which filled it till it was some 60 feet deep, planted the sides and the surface of the ramps with larch and fir trees, built a little red-roofed boathouse, and the Swiss chalet just gave the finishing touch to the picture. The love of beauty went deep into Sabine's character, but it is not given to every lover of beauty to be able to turn that which is ugly into something beautiful. That was, however, what happened to the lime stone quarry, and its still, slate-coloured surface, with the rich vegetation, looks as if it had always been there - a lovely little natural lake.

Of course, the great proof of Sabine's power of turning a building that, if not ugly, was certainly plain, is his treatment of Lew House itself, but of that we shall be speaking later.

The village, which consisted of a small cluster of cottages, managed, in spite of its apparent insignificance, to supply most of our needs. I am, of course, speaking of the village as it was in Sabine's time and my own, which, at any rate, goes back 60 years. Then, there were no buses or motor cars. Tavistock, our market town, could only be reached by those who had something to drive, for the little wayside station of Coryton, two and a half miles off, was of little use, - or by the weekly carrier. There was one general shop, one blacksmith's forge, one butcher, one post office and one public house. Now you can drive into Tavistock and Launceston in little more than half an hour

Yet we managed well enough. It was wonderful how many things the little general shop was stocked with, and each cottage has its garden, and very gay were the cottage garden flowers.

The inn is called "The Blue Lion", and the signboard depicts the rampant beast that is the Gould family crest. Sabine's hand has been busy with the inn, and has embellished it with mullioned windows, and an attractive service room.

I should doubt if there could have been a happier little community than that which dwelt within the parish. There was a very strong bond between us all, whether we were rich or poor. If there were sickness, and the invalid was ordered into the cottage hospital at Tavistock, it was quite natural for the cottager to come up to one of the three more substantial houses, and ask that the patient might be taken into Tavistock. The three houses were the Manor House, Combe Trenchard, where our friends the Sperlings lived, and my mother's house. If the doctor had ordered a bottle of port, and it was known in any one of the three, the bottle of port would be sent as a matter of course, and so with any other need that could be satisfied. It never occurred to anyone that this was anything else but natural. It was just as natural as a child running to its mother if it had had a tumble and hurt itself. It was innate courtesy for a man or lad to touch his hat, and for a little girl, maybe, to drop a curtsey. That was just good manners. There was no patronage on the one side, or servility on the other. That so much of what you might call 'family feeling' was about, such an atmosphere of kindness and goodwill, I think was largely due to Sabine, for day by day he was about the parish with his kindly and helpful ways. He was bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh.

I wonder whether that same harmony and good will still exists. In these days, every village had become more or less disintegrated. Buses and cars carry the inhabitants to the nearest towns, the big houses are shut up, or have become hospitals or institutions of some sort, children are undisciplined, the Church is neglected, everything seems to be different. The old kindly feudalism is gone, and can never return. But the villagers are not so happy as they used to be.

Lew Trenchard has been greatly blessed in that one of the three substantial houses remains open and welcoming. Our friends, the Sperlings, love and are loved by all. They employ extensive labour, and their garden is much more beautiful than any for a very long way round. It has been one of their chief enjoyments, the laying-out of this

garden. Like the writer, they are old now. All their life, they have been a blessing to the parish and beyond. Mr. Sperling at one time was Master of both the Lamerton Hounds, and of the Harriers.

If you wish to see Lew Trenchard at its best, and enjoying itself to the utmost, you would have had to watch her keeping her Harvest Festival. It was no mere Service in Church. The Service in Church was the culmination, and a worthy one. Before that, the tea tables were laid out under the tall trees of the Drive that swerves its way to Lew House. At the tables, Grace and the farmers' wives presided, their shining copper tea-urns before them. The tables were laden with good things, 'cut rounds', richly overspread with Devonshire cream and jam ('thunder and lightning', we called them), golden saffron buns, plum cake, and everyone so happy, with Sabine there to say Grace, and to lay himself out to make the people, young and old, happy and gay. Then, when tea was over, the boys and girls would be scampering over the meadow, running their races and playing their games, till the bells began to crash from the belfry, and away we trooped to the little grey church. It meant something very real to us. The farmers had "ploughed the fields and scattered the good seed o'er the land", we had watched it grow, "first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear", and now it was "all safely gathered in". And the hymns rang out in good broad Devonshire, for the Lew people were lusty singers.

I said at the beginning of this chapter that there were few changes, at any rate in the appearance of the parish in all these years, with one exception, that is the great high way, what you might call the London Road.

This last year (1947) I paid a visit to the parish, and we took our tea at my mother's old house, which has now become a Guest House. It is on the high road, though it turns its back on it. My visit was in late July at the very peak of the holiday season. After tea, I went to the gateway of the drive, and watched the traffic. The cars were tearing by at forty miles an hour at intervals of 15 seconds. It was an almost diabolical sight. It would have been far less dangerous in London to cross Oxford Street or the Strand, for there there are traffic lights. This particular part of the road lies straight as an arrow, so that the motorist can see at least a quarter of a mile ahead, and he invariably accelerates. A pedestrian, to cross the road, has to wait and watch. What a change! In those old days, perhaps in a whole hour, scarcely half a dozen vehicles would pass, perhaps a carriage and pair, or a couple of farmer's gigs on

donkey cart, a bunch of cows going to be milked, or a hay cart. These tourists rush through Lew Trenchard. It is their road now. One can scarcely cross it.

Introducing New Members

Since our last Newsletter we have had five new members. Two are direct descendenats of Sabine: **Charmiene and Jonathan Maxwell-Batten** are the grandchildren of Diana Ameila, Sabine's ninth child. Their father is Julian Maxwell-Batten, who lives in the Exeter area. Charmiene lives in Seattle, and works as a palm and tarot reader, having travelled extensively. She is also a herbalist and naturopath and a writer.

Jonathan lives in Topsham, Devon. He was responsible for the impressively comprehensive family tree, tracing the Baring-Goulds back to Edward III, which features in *The Mana of Lew*. He is a child psychologist, and has won trophies for althletics in his younger days.

Trevor Beer *is* well known is Devon as a journalist and naturalist. He writes a daily 'Nature Watch' column in *The Western Morning News* and is also a wildlife and country artist. He has won the Gavin Maxwell Award for conservation of otters, and the Euro Architectural Heritage Award for his Nature Trails in North Devon. He has helped to promote the life and works of SBG and takes considerable interest in the many local activites focusing on Sabine. We are priviledged to count him amongst our membership.

Mrs Chrstine Cudworth is a local historian resident in Horbury, Yorkshire.

Mrs P. Brown is a friend of Merriol, and accompanied her on our guided tour of Dartmoor archaeological sites in November.

Featuring one of our Members

Mrs Beatrice Brown was born at Down House Farm at Lewtrenchard in 1903. She knew the Baring-Gould family quite well, was christened by Sabine, and saw some of his daughters married at Lew. Her father was farm manager, and provided all the produce for Lew House. She remembers Sabine and his wife as wonderfully kind people.

The November Gathering

On 13th and 14th November last year, the Annual Baring-Gould Gathering was held at Killerton House at Broadcyst in East Devon. It was well attended and the programme was extremely rich and varied. I'm sure we all learned a great deal about SBG that we hadn't known before. Whatever our own personal 'angle' on him, we were all delighted to discover just how many facets this extraordinary man possessed.

Four speakers shared their expert knowledge with us on the Saturday afternoon. John Draisey is the county archivist, based at the Devon Record Office. They have in their possession thirty boxes of manuscript material and books which were all amongst Sabine's effects. There are letters, notebooks and some unusual items. A further ten boxes contain family and estate material dating back to the 16th century. There are maps, official papers, legal documents, sermon notes. These are on 'temporary deposit'. It is good to know that such resources are in safekeeping. Any would-be biographers of SBG should be aware that this collection exists!

Secondly, our Committee Member Martin Graeber gave us a comprehensive exposition on the Folksong Collection, and the way in which it was compiled. The sheer phenomenal energy and determination with which this project was pursued is completely breathtaking. Sabine was in his mid-fifties at the time, and he went out indefeatigably to seek out his 'old singing men' in order to record their songs before it was too late. We were treated to a privileged sight of one of the manuscript volumes that Sabine compiled, with fascinating detail and completeness. Each individual song is accompanied by variations, notes as to when and where it was collected, and any other relevant information. It is a huge accomplishment, which can't fail to impress and excite anybody. If he had never done anything else, this alone would be more than enough for him to lay claim to a place in history.

Thirdly, Bob Mann, Folklore Recorder for the Devonshire Association, made an impassioned case for Baring-Gould as a genuine pioneer in the study of folklore. Unlike his predecessors,

who relied entirely on material in books, Sabine went out to the people and listened to their own telling of their own beliefs and practices. Although he was constrained by the intellectual context of his times, whereby all cultures were assumed to be evolving towards the superior model manifested by white European society, he did a great deal to assist the study of folklore. He helped to detach it from anthropology and to give it a more local focus, finding amazing customs and beliefs within yards of his own home. He is still regarded as a lively source of vivid stories.

Finally, and for me, most instructively of all, archaeologist, Jane Marchard gave a talk and slide show overflowing with yet further evidence of what an original and indefatigable man Sabine was. In late middle age, he took up his boyhood passion for excavations with a renewed zeal, making numerous important finds on Dartmoor which are still regarded with great respect. He dug 200 hut circles, and excavated a medieval site on Bodmin Moor, and much more besides. One of his finds included a very rare 'beaker' from early times.

Jane showed us some delightful slides, depicting the group formed by Sabine on windy Dartmoor sites. When we accompanied her next morning to some of these very sites, it was possible to identify the exact rock or stone beside which he had been standing in some of these pictures. Our 'hands on' guided tour was another great delight, full of new information. Several of us commented on the immense difference it makes to have a knowledgable expert to show us what we're seeing. The richness of Dartmoor is uncontrovertible, and Baring-Gould's intimate connection with it is yet another deeply absorbing facet of his character.

The Gathering included two substantial pub meals, which the entire assembled Membership enjoyed tremendously. The Red Lion at Broadcylst on the Saturday evening did us proud and juggled all our orders magnificently. Similarly, the Oxenham Arms at South Zeal - a very ancient and interesting pub in itself - gave us a superb Sunday lunch.

Becky Smith

In the *Guardian* on 4th January 2000, there is an account of a BBC project just starting, in which 36 people will be put onto an uninhabited Hebridean island for a year, to see how they get on.

One couple involved are called Sheila and Peter Towers. They decided to take part now that their daughters are at university. The daughters are MEHALAH (23), Jessie (21) and Henrietta (19). Peter grew up on a smallholding on the Island of Mersea in Essex.

Hazel Harvey

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Victorian Essex. Essex Record Office Pubn No 40 1968 (2nd edition)

Renowned "Passion" Hawker of Morwenstowe (The), H.R. Smallcombe, pamphlet, 1963 (rpt). Preface, pp 4, 6, 12

Hero, The, Lord Raglan. Methuen 1936, p. 41, 134ff, n.

Golden Riviera, The, Roderick Cameron. Weidenfeld & Nicholson 1975. pp 120, 200

Great Encyclopaedia of Universal Knowledge, The, Odhams. p.105 (8-line entry).

Journey Through Cornwall, L.T. Stanley. Methuen 1958. p. 212f. qu Daddy Tregellas

King Arthur Country in Cornwall. Brenda Duxbury & Michael Williams

Search for the Real Arthur, The, Colin Wilson. Bossiney 1979. p.32

Barrie:The Story of a Genius, J.A. Hammerton. S. Low 1929, p.152. re crit of SBG's novels in *The Contemporary*, Feb. 1890

Christmas Carols and Their Stories, compiled Christopher Idle. Lion/Sandy Lane 1995 (1st 1988), p. 74 Sing Lullaby and lively pen portrait of SBG.

Reminiscences of an Old Westcountry Clergyman (see No 21, p.2), 2nd series, add p.74, anecdote about a farmer attending a water lecture; p. 161 on prehistoric chronology and p. 184, SBG described by this clerical author as 'a marvellous man'!

SBG as Poet

Some of you may be aware of the volume *The Silver Store*. The subtitl runs, 'collected from Medieval, Christian and Jewish Mines', and the firs edition appeared in 1868. The intention was as follows: '...in the hope that the drudgery and routine of nineteeth century life may not hav dulled the keenness of public perception of the beautiful and pure an true'. In the Preface to the second edition, 'the author entirely disclaim to be a poet; he has done nothing more than versify sundry legends an anecdotes that he has come across in his reading...' One wonders whethe this was a response to a strongly critical reaction to what indeed ca hardly be labelled as poetry. A brief example will illustrate the point:

The Little Scholar

There was a little scholar
With slow and lagging feet
Towards the great church portal
That opened on the street

Without, the sun was shining;
Within, the air was dim;
He caught a whiff of incense,
A dying note of hymn.

He drew the crimson curtain,
And cast a look inside,
To where the sunbeam lightened
The form of Him who died,
Between Saint John and Mary
On roodloft crucified.

Fourteen more verses follow. This is one of my favourites (despite the absence of a verb in the first main clause) - you can feel the fun Sabine had in 'versifying' stories he came across. A typical young man's enterprise, it is also characteristic of a man who embarked on great projects, for no better reason than that he knew he'd enjoy them.

BARING-GOULD TITLES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE.

"A Book of the West" Volume I. Anthony Mott. Paperback. 1983.

"A Book of the West" Volume II. Wildwood House. Paperback. 1981. Introduction by Charles Causley.

"A Book of Dartmoor". Wildwood House. Paperback 1982

"Curious Myths of the Middle Ages" New Orchard Editions, 1987

"Yorkshire Oddities, Incidents and Strange Events" Smith Settle. Paperback. 1987

"Lives of the British Saints" Llanerch. 1990

"The Book of Werewolves" Senate 1995. Introduction by Nigel Suckling. Paperback

"A Book of Folklore" Paperback. Praxis Books 1993. £5.00

"Through Flood and Flame" Paperback.Praxis Books, 1997 £8.50

"Winefred". Paperback. Praxis Books 1994 £6.50

"Red Spider" Paperback. Praxis Books 1993 £5.00

"Mehalah" Paperback. Praxis Books 1998 £8.50

"The Broom Squire" Paperback. Blackdown Press. 1996. £9.99

"Margery of Quether and Other Weird Tales" Edited Richard Dalby. Illustrated. Sarob Press. 1999. Limited edition. £18 or $32.

Biography:

"Now the Day is Over" by Harold Kirk-Smith. Richard Kay. 1997

Family History, cented on Lew House:

"The Mana of Lew" by Cicely Briggs. Praxis Books. 1994. £5.00 Available from Sallie Briggs, Whispering Winds, Brentor, Tavistock, Devon. PL19 0LS