

**BARING-GOULD TITLES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE.**

**"Myths of the Middle Ages"** Edited by John Matthews. Hardback. Blandford 1996. New illustrations. £16.99

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

**"Lives of the British Saints"** Llanerch. 1990 onwards. Various volumes.

**"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

**"Guavas the Tinner"**. Paperback. Praxis Books. 2000. £7.50

**'Cheap Jack Zita'** Paperback Praxis Books. 2001. £8.00

**"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:**

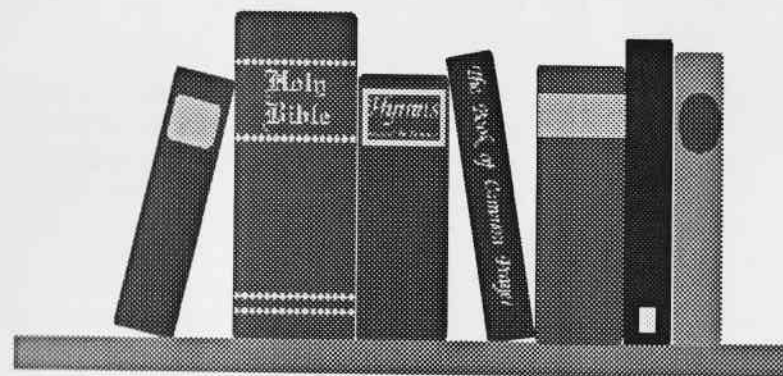
**"Now the Day is Over"** by Harold Kirk-Smith. Richard Kay. 1997

**Family History, centred 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

# THE SABINE BARING-GOULD APPRECIATION SOCIETY



*NEWSLETTER NUMBER 35*

**2001**

## 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

**President:** *Dr Merriol Almond*. E-mail: Merriol1@home.com (That's Merriol followed by the number 1)

**Chairman:** *David Shacklock*: Cheese Hill House, 27 High Street, Debenham, Stowmarket, Suffolk. IP14 6QN. E-mail: riley01@globalnet.co.uk

**Hon. Secretary:** *Dr Roger Bristow*. Davidsland, Brendon Hill, Copplestone, Devon. EX17 5NX. E-mail: rbristow@rbristow89.freemove.co.uk

**Hon. Treasurer:** *Mrs Sybil Tope*, Point, Lewdown, Okehampton, Devon. EX20 4ED. Tel 01837 861315

**East Anglian Representative** *Ray Scott*, 40 Duck Lane, Haddenham, Cambs. CB6 3UE

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**South-West Representatives:** *Martin Graebe*, 100 Cheltenham Rd, Gloucester. GL2 0LX E-mail: martin.graebe@btinternet.com

*Patrick Hutton*, Langore House, Langore, Launceston, Cornwall. PL15 8LD

**Liaison with Lewtrenchard Church:** *Mary Rolfe*, Foxcombe Cottage, Lewdown, Okehampton, Devon. EX20 4PM. Tel 01837 861510

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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.

## Editorial

A slightly belated Happy New Year to you all. SBGAS starts 2001 in a very healthy condition, with new members joining us every month, new ideas for activities, and the life and works of SBG attracting more and more interest, across the world.

An excellent new book has just been published - *The West Country as a Literary Invention* by Simon Trezise (reviewed on page 10) with a dazzlingly erudite and comprehensive chapter on Sabine. Our members are invited to buy it at a discount - I hope everyone will avail themselves of this generous offer. (Details on page 10)

The October Gathering at Lewtrenchard was wonderful. The following *two* years' programmes are currently being worked upon, as well as a proposed SBGAS trip to Iceland!

Praxis Books is working on overdrive just now, with a new surge of Baring-Gould reissues. *Cheap Jack Zita* should be available as you read this, and *Kitty Alone* will follow in April. There are fairly firm plans for *John Herring* and perhaps one other before the end of the year. Healthy sales of *CJZ* now will make future titles more likely.

Contributions have been continuing to flow, for which many thanks. Please do send me any material you think relevant. There is probably slightly too much from my own pen in this issue...

*Becky Smith*

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## St Peter's Church, Lewtrenchard

The Society has been approached by Churchwardens on behalf of Baring-Gould's church, with a concern about possible future expenses, arising from worm damage to the Rood Screen. This screen was one of Sabine's favourite artifacts in the church, and it goes without saying that none of us would like to see it fall into disrepair.

In order to keep us abreast of this and other developments, Mary Rolfe has been appointed to our Committee, and will supply regular information to us via this Newsletter.

Meanwhile, of course, individual members are obviously free to make their own contributions to the upkeep of the church, in any way they see fit. Anybody wishing to do so should contact Mary, at the address inside the front cover.

### Research Co-ordinator

The very observant amongst you will perhaps have noticed that Keith Lister has a new job description, as of this Newsletter. He has agreed to act as Research Co-ordinator for the Society. This means that anybody engaged on specific areas of research into the life or works of Sabine Baring-Gould is asked to 'register' this interest with Keith, so he can keep an ongoing list of such enterprises. As a result, anybody thinking of embarking on research might find assistance from others similarly engaged - as well as possibly discovering that he or she is duplicating effort, and might be better advised to combine with another researcher.

### The October Gathering

The weekend of the 21st-22nd October saw our Annual Gathering at Lewtrenchard House. After an Introduction from Roger Bristow, we enjoyed a slide show and talk from Philip Weller as background to *Kitty Alone*. Philip had taken the photographs himself, very recently, showing the places where the novel is set. Historical background, too, was included, most notably the astonishing Atmospheric Railway which was run as a short-lived experiment in South Devon in the 19th century. This unreliable form of public transport features in the novel.

Secondly, Keith Lister also presented a picture show, this time of drawings and paintings by Baring-Gould himself. This was a very illuminating talk, full of little-known material. It need hardly be added

that B-G was a more than competent artist.

After tea, David Shacklock treated us to a short account of Baring-Gould's claim to be a theologian. This, it seems, is in a certain amount of doubt. Churchman, yes; parson, writer of religious works, sermoniser - yes, yes, yes - but only infrequently was he said to be a theologian. Nonetheless, David found a number of instances of B-G's theological standpoint and his talk was very much enjoyed.

The AGM followed, with admirable brevity, and then members dispersed to prepare themselves for the evening performance of 'Kitty Alone'.

The Red Spider Company is going from strength to strength, and 2000 saw a largescale production of Baring-Gould's novel, *Kitty Alone*. SBGAS members were in the audience on Saturday 21st, and were greatly impressed. For those who had not read the book, Philip Weller's presentation of the afternoon was invaluable. The characters of Kitty, Pasco, Zerah, John Pooke, and the schoolteacher Walter Bramber, as well as many others, were all portrayed brilliantly by the cast, with fluency and humour. The accompanying music, led by Paul Wilson, enriched the experience tremendously.

On Sunday 22nd, members assembled at St Clether, in Cornwall, and were led by Patrick Hutton to see the magical Holy Well and Chapel, hidden away in a glorious valley. Baring-Gould was instrumental in the reclamation of this ancient religious site, incorporating the original altarstone, and recreating a sacred spot that still retains a wonderful atmosphere of stillness and reverence. David Shacklock conducted a short service inside the chapel, and the owner of the site came along to meet us.

Calling in at Altarnun Church - known as the Cathedral of the Westcountry, but with no direct connection to Baring-Gould - we walked down to a nearby pond where antisocial individuals were dunked, in the hope of curing their badness or madness.

Lunch at a small nearby hostelry rounded off the Gathering very nicely.

The arrangements went extremely smoothly, thanks to the hard work of Roger, Sybil and Patrick. It was a good team effort, but overall control was in Roger's hands, and our appreciation is hereby recorded. Thanks are also due to James and Sue Murray for making Lewtrenchard available to us. I for one derived great pleasure from a long overdue revisit.

Becky Smith



### The Future

In September 2001, we plan to hold the Annual Gathering in Cambridgeshire. Ray Scott is devising a programme, involving visits and talks based on the novel *Cheap Jack Zita*. Accommodation will probably be available at Clare College, Cambridge, where SBG took his degree.

### 2002

Two projects are in the planning stage for next year. In the summer - probably August - it is proposed that we form a group and visit Iceland, in the footsteps of Sabine. His visit to that country made a permanent impression on him - the sagas, the topography, and everything about it, fascinated him. If you would be interested in participating in this adventure, please inform Martin Graebe or Roger Bristow.

Later in the same year, we will have the usual Annual Gathering, on the southern edge of Dartmoor. Philip Weller has agreed to arrange this,

including accommodation at the Dartmoor Lodge on the outskirts of Ashburton - a treat in itself. The 'theme' of the weekend will broadly be *Guavas the Tinner*, but Baring-Gould had extensive links with the whole of Dartmoor, and we are sure to range widely. There are several drives and walks in the Princetown/Cornwood/Yealm area, which Philip is eager to lead. As a very experienced and popular organiser of this sort of event, we are certain to have an unforgettable time. The date is likely to be late October. Advance booking will be necessary, ideally with 6-9 months' notice. We hope that firm dates will be given in the June 2001 Newsletter, and members are requested to indicate their intentions by the 2001 AGM in September, if possible.

### 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.
- ☐ Back copies of this newsletter Singly or in sets. £1.50 each or £46 for the entire collection, from 1989. Apply to Sqn Ldr Philip Weller, 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants PO14 3RU
- ☐ Books as listed inside the back cover. Some of the older issues cited could now be out of print. Note the new additions, including *Guavas the Tinner*, one of SBG's Dartmoor-based novels. Published in July 2000 by Praxis Books.

### DEADLINE FOR NUMBER 36

Please let me have material for the next Newsletter by 15th May 2001 at the very latest. Earlier would be much appreciated. E-mailed text with attached illustrations usually works - but I'm happy to have contributions in any form - handwritten included.

*Becky Smith*

## Performance of Mehalah

Member Gillian Ashby writes to inform us that she happened to see an advertisement for a run of five performances of 'Mehalah' (based on the novel by S. Baring-Gould) by the Clacton Amateur Dramatic Society, last November. If any of our Essex or Suffolk members saw this production, a review would be much appreciated.

Incidentally, the Praxis reissue of *Mehalah* is again sold out. For various reasons, there will be some delay before more are produced, but it will happen one of these days.

## The Website

Martin Graebe is working on a separate Sabine Baring-Gould Website, which will feature SBGAS, and very probably increase our membership, and requests for information. Any member with a website of his or her own might like to be linked to this new site. Contact Martin for more information: martin.graebe@btinternet.com

## To the Deserts of France with SBG

by Eric Cudworth

'Eric who?' I hear you ask. 'Who is this unknown upstart who presumed to write about our hero?'

Believe me, readers, I am just as surprised as you are. A few years ago, I was happily going about my business totally unaware of the man. In fact, to be honest, I thought, 'Sabine Baring-Gould' was something to do with female slaves bearing tribute to Rome. But not any more! I've been infected, I've got the bug. A serious case of the dreaded SBG Syndrome and I blame it all on Keith Lister.

Now don't get me wrong; I've nothing against Keith. In fact, we're

the best of friends and, I hope, will remain so even after he has read this. But the thing is that I've always felt it advisable to avoid enthusiasts and Keith, as you know, is an enthusiast. Enthusiasm tends to be infectious and can commandeer a lot of one's time and energy. Over the years I have developed some considerable skill in deterring enthusiasts, by adopting an attitude that could be described as either passive resistance or downright apathy. But, in spite of my best endeavours, Keith has managed to break through my defences.

It all began one Sunday morning when my wife Christine and I were invited to the Listers' for coffee. No sooner had we mentioned that we were going to France for our summer holiay, than Keith leapt up and was out of the room in a flash, only to reappear a few minutes later with an armful of books by You Know Who, detailing the great man's travels in every conceivable corner of that country.

Now, if there's one thing I am a sucker for, it's books and one in particular caught my attention: *The Deserts of Southern France, Vol II*, published in 1894. This seemed to cover much of the area we intended to visit, and, when Keith offered to lend it to me, I readily accepted.

On returning home, I was soon totally engrossed in SBG's absorbing narrative of the life and times of King Henry II, his scheming wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine and their treacherous sons, whose sole purpose in life seemed to be fighting, often among themselves. This was a period of history that school had taught me little about. Frequently, when in France, we had visited areas previously ruled over by the Plantagenet kings of England, but my knowledge of the times and circumstances was vague and confused. Here all was explained clearly and in an interesting way. After reading this, I just had to see the tombs of Henry, Eleanor and Richard Coeur de Lion at Fontevraud Abbey, near Saumur, so we added this to our itinerary.

I was fascinated, too, to read about the fortified towns or bastides, of which there were many in the Perigord region and determined to visit some of those mentioned by SBG, especially Montpazier, which he described as the best preserved of all. We found this to be an accurate judgment, and were lucky to visit on a day when we had the town almost to ourselves, most of its population having gone to watch the Tour de France cyclists pass by.

Intrigued by SBG's account, we visited the Chateau de Fenelon, situated between Sarlat and Souillac and found it to be just as attractive

as he described it, commanding 'a magnificent view over the Dordogne valley.' To reach the door, the circuit of the walls still 'has to be made thrice; that is to say, one has to pass in a spiral three times round the height on which the castle itself stands...'

SBG devotes much of his chapter on castles to Castelnau le Bretenoux and no wonder! It is a gem. Approaching it by car, I was struck by the accuracy of his description:

The castle occupies a natural elevation, a bunch of rock that rises out of the plain formed by the junction of the rivers. The rock is a spur to a ridge that projects, but is naturally cleft and isolated. The entire summit is crowned with towers, and walls like a diadem, and these towers and walls belong to all periods, from the twelfth century to the sixteenth.

But it was not his description of the site that attracted me so much as his account of the existence, beneath the donjon, of an oubliette, into which, he surmised, 'the seigneur dropped such prisoners as he desired to get rid of speedily'. He describes how four skeletons had been discovered there a few years earlier and covered over with earth. The intrepid squire, however, just had to see for himself and arranged with a local farmer to be lowered down on the end of a rope. From this firsthand knowledge, he describes and sketches the oubliette in detail.

Naturally I was keen to see this, though preferably not from the end of a rope! However, we were disappointed to find that, not only was there no sign of the oubliette, but also the guide seemed to know nothing about it.

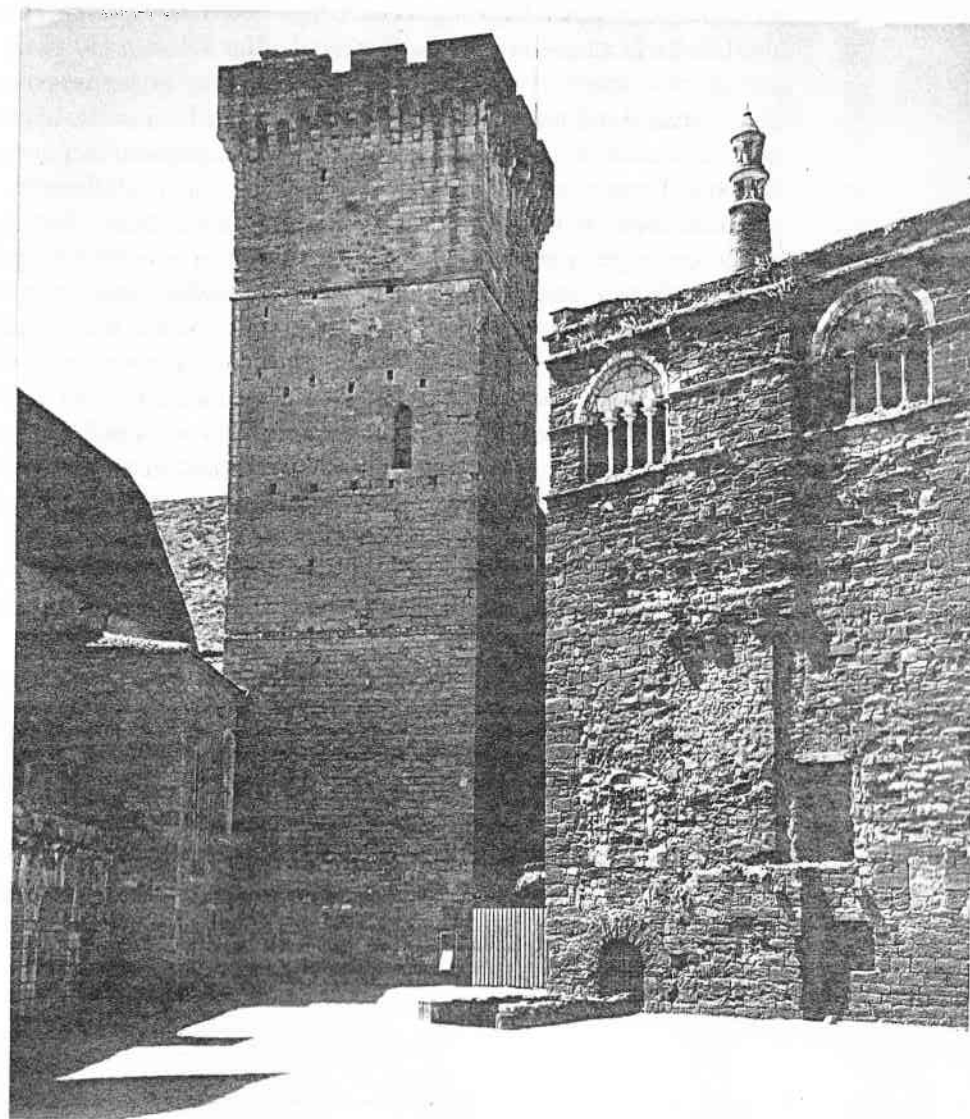
Though in need of renovation, the church below the castle is also still much as SBG described it, with its 'exquisitely carved stalls for the canons.' We could not, however, find the window he describes, depicting 'St Louis learning to read at the knee of his mother, Blanche de Castille.' There was a small wooden panel depicting such a scene, although the child seemed to be a girl, and we wondered whether SBG had made a mistake. Perhaps he had seen such a window somewhere else.

Throughout our holiday, it was impossible to escape from the spirit of SBG. At Loches we found the words 'Sabine et Cyril' engraved with other graffiti on the castle wall. This, we thought, could provide us with much amusement. If only we could persuade Keith to swallow the bait, we might set him off on years of research. Who was Cyril? What

exactly was his relationship with Sabine? Was this a skeleton in *his* cupboard? On producing our photo of this afterwards, we nearly succeeded. Ultimately I broke down under interrogation and our intended hoax was soon rumbled because of my inability to keep a straight face.

So, thanks to my new-found interest (dare I call it enthusiasm?) we had a holiday full of enjoyment and I can strongly recommend others to follow the trail.

As for me, I'm off to borrow another book.





### Book Review

*The West Country as a Literary Invention.* Putting Fiction in its Place. Simon Trezise. University of Exeter Press.

Hardback £42.50. Paperback £13.99 (but see note at the end of the review) ISBN 0 8598953 8 6. (Paperback)

This book contains eight meaty chapters, six of them dealing in exhaustive detail with a west country writer. It is Chapter Six to which most of us will first turn - 'Sabine Baring-Gould's Territory: Where the Squarson Meets the Labourers' - and here we find a tour de force of scholarly research. Opening with the hamlet of Lew - church, House and Dower House - he goes on to describe the White Lady ghost at considerable length. He makes a point of stressing how passionately SBG cared about getting the local detail right in his novels, because regional identity is crucial to a story. The topography in effect *creates* the story. People from different places think and behave differently.

Trezise takes *Winefred* as a prime example of his theme. Although he acknowledges it as a book with strong characters, it is the setting, he believes, that makes it worth reading. The storyline and the social comment are secondary to the drama of the coastline and the Landslip.

The second half of the chapter concentrates on Dartmoor, and B-G's love of it. He cites several novels set on or around the Moor - *John Herring*, *Urith*, *Gauvas the Tinner*, *Court Royal*, *Royal Georgie*, *Marjery of Quether*. We are given the historical background, whereby in Victorian times, Dartmoor was not held in high esteem at all. By collecting its folk songs, excavating its remains, meeting its people, as well as writing so many vivid stories about it, Baring-Gould did a very great deal to kindle the present day enthusiasm for the Moor as a place to treasure.

Other writers equally fully discussed in this book are: Parson R.S.Hawker, Charles Kingsley, R.D. Blackmore, Thomas Hardy and Virginia Woolf (with reference to *To The Lighthouse*).

*I do seriously recommend this book. SBGAS members can buy it for £10.00 plus £2.00 postage and packing. Cheques should be payable to University of Exeter, and sent to Genevieve Davey, University of Exeter Press, Reed Hall, Streatham Drive, EXETER, Devon. EX4 4QR.*

### More About Books

*A Dartmoor Christmas Anthology* compiled by Simon Butler. Contains 'writings, diaries and observations by Crossing, Baring-Gould, Eliza Bray and others'. It really does look quite nice, apart from 'uninspired' photographs (according to local press review). Published by Halsgrove. £14.95

#### **Reissuing Cheap Jack Zita.**

Having missed the opportunity of publishing a new edition of *Kitty Alone* for the October 2000 Gathering, I am currently in the final stages of arranging for a reissue of the wonderful *Cheap Jack Zita*. The story covers a few weeks in a Cambridgeshire winter, and centres upon workers' riots which in fact took place in May 1816. Zita is the daughter of a Cheap Jack (how many people have believed it to concern a man called Jack Zita who was cheap? Well, I did, anyway, until I'd read the first few pages.) There are strong echoes of *Mehalah* in the setting and the agonies of frustrated passion suffered by the central male character. The sexual undertones are even more powerful in this book, in my opinion.

Zita is sparky, outspoken, very funny and very skilfully created. This is BG writing at the height of his powers.

Needless to say, anybody intending to come along to the Gathering this year will be expected to have read the book. Get your copy now!

Available from Praxis Books, Corssways Cottage, Walterstone, Herefordshire. HR2 0DX.

Price £8.00. Post free. ISBN 0 9528420 7 6

And, to make up for being so remiss, *Kitty Alone* is scheduled for April. A bigger book (some might accuse it of using a little 'padding' here and there...), with a more complex plot and more numerous characters, we have fires and floods, once more, and a central female figure in the mainstream of BG's canon.

ISBN 0 9528420 8 4. Price £9.00.

**Special offer - both books for £ 15.**

*And perhaps you'd like to know that Becky Smith, your Editor, is also Rebecca Tope, crime writer. To date, four novels have been published, by Piatkus Books, London. No direct SBG connections, so far... see website, [www.rebeccatope.com](http://www.rebeccatope.com). Praxis is also there.*

## SBG at Christmas

Just in case we needed any reminder that Sabine's works are still in the mainstream, enjoyed and acknowledged by all areas of society, we might take note that the famous King's College, Cambridge Christmas Eve *Nine Lessons and Carols* featured the Baring-Gould carol - 'The angel Gabriel from heaven came.'

And on the offchance that some members are a little hazy as to the exact words, here they are...

The angel Gabriel from heaven came,  
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes of flame;  
'All hail,' said he, 'thou lowly maiden Mary,  
*Most highly favoured lady, Gloria!*

'For know a blessed Mother thou shalt be,  
All generations laud and honour thee,  
Thy Son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold.'  
*Most highly favoured lady, Gloria!*

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,  
'To me be as it pleaseth God,' she said,  
'My soul shall laud and magnify his Holy Name.'  
*Most highly favoured lady, Gloria!*

Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ, was born  
In Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,  
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say  
*Most highly favoured lady, Gloria!*

*Undeniably a skilled and touching Carol, despite the almost irresistible schoolchild habit of singing 'most highly flavoured lady...'*

## The Story of Onward Christian Soldiers.

*By John Turner*

Few people are aware of the historical background of this famous hymn and how it became so well known in the Church as well as homes throughout the world. This was to some extent due to technological wonders of the period when the words to the hymn were written - the Music Box, hand-wound paper roll operated Organettes, etc, which enabled music to be played and enjoyed in the home, prior to the invention of sound recording and broadcasting.

On the evening prior to the Horbury annual walk (by Sunday School children), the new curate, the Revd Baring-Gould, heard a good marching tune well known to the children at the time. Number 359 in the Hymnal Companion, where it is called 'St Alban' and Number 622 in Church Hymns, title 'Haydn'. He...wrote his own now familiar words, little realising that these would become known worldwide...

With my interest in mechanical music, I was given an Edison Phonograph Cylinder which played 'Onward Christian Soldiers', discovering it was the first ever recording of this hymn. ...I recorded a number of different compositions and arrangements, played on a variety of machines, resulting in this first historical record of sounds from the past, played on various Victorian mechanical musical instruments as heard by our forefathers a century ago.

*This abridged article reprinted by kind permission of 'Music Box' magazine.*

**Keith Lister has copies of this historic collection on audiotape. A bargain at £5.00, post free. £1 of this will be donated to SBGAS funds. Please send your cheque to Keith Lister, 13 Grove Road, Horbury, Wakefield, West Yorkshire. WF4 6AG.**

## References in Print

*\*Westcountry Mysteries.* Introduction by Colin Wilson. Bossiney Books 1985. Paperback. P.14, re Lady Mary Howard. p. 74. Re Cruel Coppinger.

*Ghosts of Devon.* Peter Underwood. Bossiney 1982. pp 65-9. Lewtrenchard & Madam. 2 full page photos. SBG and LT Church. p. 79 re Lady Howard.