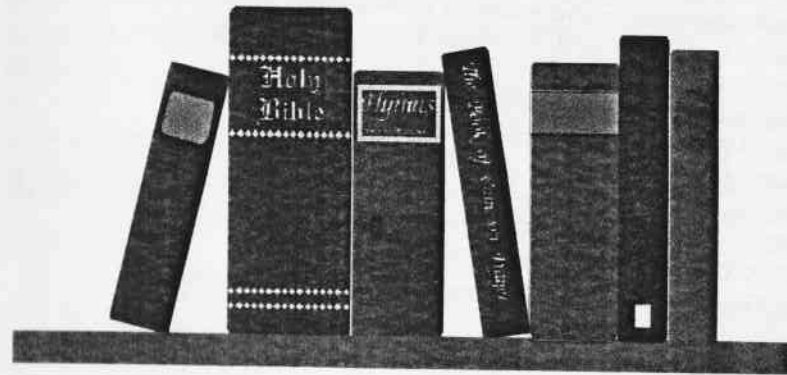


THE SABINE  
BARING-GOULD  
APPRECIATION  
SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER NUMBER 39

2002

## 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.

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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

From where I'm sitting, things have been very quiet since the last newsletter. Very little by way of contributions had arrived by early May, but some judicious prompting bore wondrous fruit, as you will see...

There are, however, plenty of activities to put in your diaries for the rest of this year - and next! The Gathering in October, the Wren Trust and Red Spider Company keeping busy, a possible trip to Iceland.... it all helps to keep SBG's name alive.

A sad piece of news is that Cedric Baring-Gould has died. Sabine's nephew, he was a much valued link with the past, as well as being a very nice man. Chris Waters has kindly written a very moving and personal piece for us about Cedric.

Finally, I have to announce that this is my last newsletter. I was astonished to discover that I've been doing it for over three years, and it's high time I stood down to leave space for someone else. A new voice, new ways of doing things, will always be revitalising, and I wish the new editor all success.

Please send material for the next newsletter to Roger Bristow, who is taking on the job of Editor.

*Becky Smith*

## Cedric Baring-Gould

I've been asked to report on the death of my mother Dora's brother Cedric-- David Henry Cedric Baring-Gould. Since I was born in the States and have spent most of my life there, I hope you will excuse any insufficiencies and errors.

Cedric was born 9th June 1911 and died 31st March, this Easter Sunday. What a fitting day for the thorough Christian he was, although I trust it's not sacrilegious to say that his goodness transcends Christianity! He helped and loved humanity, and was loved back fully. He was our genealogist too, firing off to us all a forest of family trees

His father was Arthur, Sabine's half-brother by their father Edward and Edward's second wife Lavinia Maitland Snow Marshall--"Granny Ardoch" is buried in the churchyard and it is said that her ghost still wanders at the former Ardoch Manor. Maud (Hill) and Rev. Arthur had, before Cedric, Irene and my mother Dora, both now deceased. Educated first at St. Edward's School in Oxford, Cedric then went on to Cambridge, where he was in third rowing eight. Then and in the following years he was a very much the world traveller and diarist--for example, recording sardonically his experiences in early-Hitler Germany. Close to this time, he felt two callings, one to marry his beloved Phyllis, two to the Anglican priesthood. When war came, he chose not to bear arms, becoming a conscientious objecter, and now a further calling brought him to the Church in Rome. Nowadays, married former Anglican priests may stay married and still become Roman Catholic priests, but such was not the case then.

Cedric and Phyllis's son David eventually emigrated to Australia, where he married Denise--"Denny", from New Zealand--and they had Cecily, followed by the twins Katherine and Matthew (Matthew hopes for a rowing career too and wants his grandfather's Cambridge oar!). Unfortunately, David died young, so Cedric and Phyl transferred all their joy to Denny and the grandchildren. Several years ago, Cedric and Phyl moved to Steyning, West Sussex, which they loved, and where, as Americans say, they did their thing, bestowing their affection and kindnesses all round them. And then, not so long ago, his dear Phyl died. May I mention Stephen Mattinson, who lived next door and who reflects, now and before this Easter Sunday, Cedric's ways, assisting neighbors and those further away. There's an inheritance here, for sure. Stephen was so good to Cedric and to us who were with him toward the end.

Cedric the genealogist and holy loving person, sent regular birthday wishes to all nieces and nephews and their children. To me across the Ocean, he dispensed much gardening advice. We all loved him so.

En route from America to the Sorbonne in 1950, I stopped off in Haverfordwest, Pembs. to visit my grandparents. Grandpa had been a Vicar there for a half-century. While I was there, Grandma suffered her final stroke. I made the phone calls, sent the cablegrammes, and met Irene and Cedric on

their trains, and still see their tragic faces when they learned they were too late. This March, Dora and I spent a fortnight in Paris. While at the end she had to return to work, I got off the plane in London in order to spend a week with Cedric. The original flight had been cancelled, but there was Stephen, Cedric's spiritual heir, who'd guessed which following one I'd be on! Sadly, he said that that very morning Cedric had suffered another stroke, a very serious one. He'd had the last in July. As in 1950, I made the calls to Jo--"Catherine" in her religious order--and Paula, Irene's children. Their brother John was incommunicado, being on a barge trip, and they took on giving the news to their sister Mary--"Mimi"--in New Zealand and Denny and the grandchildren in Australia. I fear I'm the family's Angel of Death.

Jo, Paula and Paula's husband David, arrived the next day. We visited Cedric daily. He was lucid and full of his good humour. He instructed me on where my next walk on the South Downs should take me, laughed at the ball of wool I'd removed from its fences, and happily grasped the heart-shaped flintstone that the Downs had also given me. Our call from the hospital came in the small hours of Easter Sunday. We were just too late. I closed Cedric's right eye and Jo closed the other. That he was buried in the simplest of coffins (on 8th April) must have been a great joy for Cedric.

*Chris Waters*

## Iceland Update

My plans to travel to Iceland this year are hardening rapidly - I have changed my travel time to August, rather than June, because the passes SBG travelled are as firmly closed at that time of year now as they were then. I am taking a more wide ranging tour but will cover about 70% of the trail Sabine followed.

The tour company I am using is interested in helping us organise a tailored tour next year and I hope to meet with local operators of four-wheel drive excursions while I am out there. I am thinking of a 5 - 7 day itinerary but will have a better idea once I have seen the lay-out. I will also have a better idea of how good they are!

I am also hoping to meet our friends from 'Embla' again and get their advice. Though them I hope to find an expert on the Sagas who can talk to us about them.

I would re-emphasise that this is not going to be a cheap tour but I will establish what the options are and lay them before you at the AGM. August is going to be the best time of year to go.

Though there are cheap tours available, most of the packages are based on Reykjavik and that would not take us into many of the the areas that SBG enthused about.

*Martin Graebe*

## Putting Sabine on the Stage

by Ron Wawman

Not until I found myself playing the delicious part of the power-hungry Taverner Langford in Tim Laycock's wonderful community play 'Red Spider' did I give any thought to Sabine Baring-Gould as a novelist. I have no penchant for Victorian novels. Much too wordy for me. Let's get on with the plot, I say. But 'Red Spider' was such fun, the dialogue so brilliant and the characters so vividly portrayed that the interest aroused in me was only surpassed by my enthusiasm for setting up a drama group based on that bit of Devon associated with the man and that particular novel. The rest is local history. Amongst the aims of Red Spider Company is a commitment to promoting the life and work of Sabine-Baring Gould through drama.

As far as I am aware Sabine never wrote a play. He did, of course write the libretto for the operatic version of 'Red Spider' which was first produced in London in 1898. This was an undoubted success and Bickford Dickinson went so far as to describe the opera as the forerunner of a number of 'truly English ballad operas' and surmised that with a composer other than Learmont Drysdale it might still be popular today. We know that he involved himself in amateur dramatics during his days as a schoolmaster at Hurstpierpoint. We also know that one of the barns at Lewtrenchard Manor was used by the family as a theatre, but I do not know to what extent he was involved. The dialogue in many of his novels is so brilliant that I am convinced some of them must have been dramatised during his life but I have seen no references to anything other than the silent movie made from 'Bladys and the Stewponey' which was shot in and around the village

of Kinver in Staffordshire in 1919.

I have ploughed two fascinating furrows researching for ~~Red~~ Spider Company. On the one hand the life of such an extraordinary man lent itself to dramatisation; on the other, ~~Red Spider~~ was such a success, what about dramatising some more novels? And so it was that I joined SBGAS and, even more importantly, was privileged to be allowed to work my way through many of the books in the library of my good friend, Sybil Tope. She ~~was~~ quite relieved when I started to build my own collection.

The first priority was the dramatisation of aspects of Sabine's life. Red Spider Company's plan was to commission ~~Tim~~ Laycock to write a series of biographical sketches with linking narrative. A particular emphasis would be on the way he went about collecting folk songs. So at the same time as the Company sought funding to pay for the adaptation I set about doing the basic research to make Tim Laycock's job easier. In various bits of Sabine's writing, but particularly 'Early Reminiscences', 'Further Reminiscences' and 'Old Country Life', I found wonderfully vivid accounts of the process of folk song collecting and of the men and women he collected from. His description of the same event and the individuals involved varied somewhat in different publications and this reinforced what I already knew; that he was not above a little poetic license when it came to writing a good story. As far as I was concerned the good stories and the colourful dialogues made dramatisation that much easier. This was fortunate because when funding could not be found to pay Tim Laycock I found myself lumbered with the job of writing the sketches! We had a great time performing them and singing the songs in the context of a ceilidh.

Dramatising other aspects of Sabine's life was not quite so easy. My aim was to use particular events in his life to highlight his personality; how it developed; and what he achieved. Writing sketches based on events was easy enough but looking more closely at what made the man tick has been more difficult so

that although several of my sketches from his life have been performed in isolation at various times, they have yet to be seen in the context to which I aspired. I gleaned much from the two *Reminiscences* and from the three published biographies, supplemented by various snippets appearing in the SBGAS newsletter, but it soon became clear to me as it had to others before, that the *Reminiscences* were stuffed full of social and historical comment, but precious little of any depth about family relationships or about himself. I found it particularly difficult to reconcile the critical comments of his granddaughter, Cicely Briggs – said to reflect the views of her mother – with the warm descriptions of family relationships at Lewtrenchard Manor given by such people as Bickford Dickinson and Irene Widdecombe.

I hoped to learn more about the man from the brief biography written by his half-brother, Arthur, but found this hopelessly anodyne. Arthur's life of Sabine avoids any controversy and dodges critical analysis with such comments as "I always had the feeling it was not within one's power to understand his character, and I doubt if anyone did, with one exception, and that was Grace his wife." Grace. Could she be the key? And so I wait with baited breath to see what new light Keith Lister's new book might bring throw on the personality of Grace and, through her, Sabine.

But what about dramatising the novels? My other task was to read through as many of the Devon based novels as I could. It soon became clear to me that several would lend themselves to being staged. I was particularly attracted by 'Court Royal', although unsure how to deal with the anti-Semitic aspects. 'Urith' is fairly local to Lewdown and has a marvellously ironic ending in which the villain is mistakenly hanged instead of the hero. 'John Herring' is very local indeed and has some delightful characters. It would translate to the stage very well except for the fact that the 'hero' is just about as wet as you can get! It would be tempting to rewrite his character, but I know at least one person who would never forgive that! 'Kitty Alone' is not so local but has everything needed for a community play. Like 'Red Spider'

it is full of humour. It has highly dramatic sequences, children, a fairground scene etc. Tim Laycock agreed and the rest is history. What I especially discovered was that all the novels have dialogue which lives and is easily adapted. We are not the only ones to realise how well suited Baring-Gould's novels are for the stage. While we were staging 'Kitty Alone', over in Surrey, John Owen-Smith was putting on a very different but equally successful production of the grim melodrama 'The Broomshire'.

One story that particularly attracted me was 'Margery of Quether'. Elsewhere I have seen it described as a vampire story – but that is incidental. It is a very witty short story which cleverly and compassionately looks at a range of human weaknesses in a manner which remains fresh to this day. I could not wait to adapt it but there was a snag. In one scene a character has to age rapidly while another grows young. Fine on television but difficult on stage. My solution was a shadow puppet play for children which I like to think was successful. What surprised me however was the realisation, once the story had been stripped down to dialogue, movement and emotion, that sexual innuendo underlay some of the dialogue. Not at all what I had come to expect of Baring-Gould. I wonder what other surprises await me as I plough this furrow?

\*\*\*\*

**From: 'Clare Through the Twentieth Century'  
by Tim Brown**

*The following is taken from the chapter entitled 'Music at Clare' and refers to SBG and Cecil Sharp, at Clare College, Cambridge.*

"Over the centuries, Cambridge alumni, especially composers, exercised a substantial influence within the national music scene. In Clare, however, music appears to have had little prominence until the beginning of the twentieth century, when the activities of two former students, Sabine Baring-Gould and Cecil Sharp, and the coincidental succession of musically active undergradu-

ates. gave Clare music a sufficiently high profile to earn it an enthusiastic mention in the 1926 history of Clare College...

A history of Clare music through the twentieth century must surely begin with a mention of Sabine Baring-Gould and Cecil Sharp, though their names nowadays may evoke scant recognition and their national importance in the history of British music be now known to only a few. Baring-Gould, a cleric and hymn writer, was the author of the well-known 'Onward Christian Soldiers' and 'Through the night of doubt and sorrow'. Of more significance, perhaps, was his hobby, folk music; he was amongst the first to collect traditional English tunes. Cecil Sharp, twenty-five years younger than Baring-Gould, nonetheless became the older man's collaborator in a seminal publication, *English Folk Songs for Schools*, published in 1905. Thereafter Sharp, who took a degree in Mathematics at Clare, became an ardent collector of folk tunes himself...

Baring-Gould and Sharp were, at Clare at least, musical amateurs. There was no music don - indeed, there was no music tripos. ...The arrival of Nicholas Temperley created a coincidental link with Sabine Baring-Gould. Temperley possessed a rare zeal to restore some credibility to nineteenth century English music, especially Victorian hymnody; the subject in due course of a major publication on the subject. A by-product of his interest in this period of English music was the revival in 1966 at the Arts Theatre, of Edward Loder's opera, *Raymond and Agnes*. ..."

*Thanks to Ray Scott, who supplied this chapter...*

### 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 folk-songs, 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, Farnham, Hants PO14 5RU  
☐The 'Onward Christian Soldiers' tape as described in Newsletter number 35 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.

### TRANSACTIONS

Those who have attended the AGM each year will know that a great deal of important research goes into the production of the talks which accompany the main meeting. Sadly, this material has usually not been made available to those who were unable to attend the meetings, and there has been no permanent record of that material within the Society. It was proposed at the AGM last year that a file should be created from these talks, and from any other extended essays which might be too long for publication in the *SBGAS Newsletter*. As a trial, the three talks which were presented at the AGM in 2000 have been produced in a collection entitled *Transactions of the Sabine Baring-Gould Appreciation Society No 1*. These articles are: 'SBG - Theologist', by David Shacklock; 'SBG - Artist', by Keith Lister; and 'The Background to *Kitty Alone*', by Philip Weller. In addition, we have the first republishing of 'Sixpence Only!', a short, moralistic melodrama by SBG about an escaped convict, a grockle and an innocent Dartmoor maiden, located in a cottage at Fernworthy, which comes with annotations on the text. *Transactions No 1* has been produced in A4 format (210 x 297 mm), punched for filing in a standard 2 or 4-ring A4 binder. It has card covers, and contains 40 pages, including illustrations. This is being offered to members, at cost price, plus postage (air mail overseas), as follows: At Meetings - £3. By Post in UK - £4. By Post in Rest of Europe - £5 or Euro 8. By Post Rest of World - £6 or US\$10. Cheques in British Pounds should be made payable to "Sherlock Publications". In order to save non-UK members the expense of paying for a UK bank draft, or

the high cost of having a non-UK cheque changed, we can accept payments in Euro or US Dollar notes (cash), as indicated. If there is support for this trial publication, then we will be publishing the talks from the 2001 AGM in the Autumn, those from 2002 in the Winter, and we could also produce a special binder to hold copies of *Transactions*. Please send your orders and payment by the end of June (so that we can get the bulk photocopying discount included in the low price quoted) to:

Philip Weller, 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, PO14  
3RU, England

If you have copies of talks from previous AGMs, or if you have other extended articles on SBG which might be suitable for publication in future issues of *Transactions*, please contact Philip at this address or at <p.weller@btinternet.com>

### Practical joking at Hurstpierpoint

I recently found the following extract in the Baring-Gould Papers in the Devon Record Office (Box 16) which gives some further evidence for Baring-Gould's propensity for practical jokes.

"My predecessor (at Hurstpierpoint) was Sabine Baring Gould, still alive and still writing most interesting books. Gould played all manner of practical jokes on Gorham" (the Senior Mathematical Master), "who had a considerable museum of skeletons and fossils.

Once by the assistance of a big boy he placed in Gorham's bed the skeleton of a huge ichthyosaurus when the latter had not returned from his geological expedition as Gould was going to bed; and it was said that Gorham had to call for help to remove it.

I am not sure I did not owe my post to one of Baring Gould's practical jokes which were very many and some of them very

amusing indeed. The Masters took their turn - each for a week - of calling over the School before going to the seven o'clock Morning Chapel. It was Gould's turn and, like many people who sit up late at night to read, Gould did not find it very easy to be punctual in the early morning. The school had to go to Chapel before the Masters, but had to be called over first, and Gould was not down to do it. The Headmaster, Dr Lowe, who was a born disciplinarian, insisted upon everybody doing his own work, and did not mind either the trouble or the risk of showing him up if he failed to do so. The Prefect of the week in a formal manner was sent up with a message "Tell Mr Gould that we have been waiting here for some time for him to take 'Call Over'". Boy comes back - "Please Sir, Mr Gould says he is coming immediately". Another space of five or six minutes passed, and another and more explosive message was sent from the Doctor: "Tell Mr Gould that the Headmaster and the Masters have been waiting for him for more than a quarter of an hour". This time the messenger returns with Mr Gould's night-shirt under his arm with "Please, Sir, Mr Gould sends his night-shirt as a proof that he is out of bed".

Mr Gould at the end of the term parted with the doctor as the best of friends and not under compulsion, but it is not certain that the interview after the above scene may not have had something to say to it."

*Extract from the 'Reminiscences of the Rev D Edwardes' (Headmaster of Denstone College, 1879 - 1903) pp 31 -32. Pub Wilding and Son, Shrewsbury)*

Martin Graebe

May 2002

## Trevor Beer

Congratulations to our member, Trevor Beer, who received an MBE in the New Year's Honours List this year, for his services to journalism and the environment.

### References in Print

*Angela's Ashes* Frank McCourt. page 352 of the Flamingo edition. Frank is in the Library, reading Baring-Gould's *Lives of the Saints*.  
*Holsworthy Post*. April 2002. Reference to Baring-Gould's addition of the chancel screen to Lewtrenchard Church in April 1912.  
*Virago Book of Ghosts* ed Jenny Uglow. p 390. Mentions *A Book of Folklore*  
*Essex Survivals*. Fred Roe. Methuen 1929. p.17 *Mehalah* is cited in connection with smugglers. Also pp 23-35, which compares *Mehalah* with Blackmore, Hardy, Benham and Morrison

### BARING-GOULD TITLES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

*This list is constantly expanding, and older titles are gradually being left out, to save space. There are, however, almost certainly some omissions. Bossiney Books and Llanerch are regularly producing books by or including SBG. If anyone is aware of additional titles, please let the Editor know.*

"**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

"**Kitty Alone**" Paperback. Praxis Books. 2001. £9.00

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

"**Five Devon Seafarers**". Taken from SBG's *Devonshire Characters*. Bossiney Books. 2000. £2.99

#### Biography:

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

#### Literary Criticism:

"**The West Country as Literary Invention**" Simon Trezise. University of Exeter Press. £13.99

#### 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