

## TITLES AVAILABLE

Continued

“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 SB-G'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. 2000 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 OLS

*A Bibliography is available from the Hon. Secretary.*

# SABINE BARING-GOULD APPRECIATION SOCIETY



## Newsletter No. 40

## October 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. 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: Merrioll@home.com (That's Merriol followed by the number 1)

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

**Borders Representative:** *Becky Smith*, Crossways Cottage, Walterstone, Herefordshire HR2 0DX. E-mail: author@rebeccatope.fsnet.co.uk

**Newsletter Editor:** *Dr Ron Wawman*, Stable Cottage, Lewdown, Okehampton, Devon EX20 4DQ. E-mail: ronald.wawman@medix-uk.com

- **Sabine Baring-Gould** was born on 28<sup>th</sup> January 1834 in Exeter and died on 2<sup>nd</sup> 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

I little thought, when Becky was trawling for copy in May, that I would be doing the same in September. I need not have worried, the troops have rallied and I even have two items lined up for February. Apart from delaying the October issue so that news from the annual meeting can be reported, there are no plans to change the format - new brooms should take care not to sweep empty. This is your newsletter and not only are your contributions, great or small, welcome, but also any suggestions for other things you would like included. Like Becky, I am on line, e-mail address: ronald.wawman@medix-uk.com, but very happy to receive grist in any shape or form.

This issue includes a preview of Keith Lister's eagerly awaited book in the shape of the forward by David Shacklock.

In an article in issue 39 I omitted to mention the production by the Clacton ADS of the play 'Mehalah'. Uncannily, 3 major dramatisations of SB-G novels were staged during a period of 6 weeks in 2000.

*Ron Wawman*

## Cover Illustration: 'Old Country Life' p.283

## Deadline for Issue 41

Your contributions are very welcome at any time but it would be nice to have the luxury of a leisurely run-up to publication. You would make the editor a happy man if you could get things to him by 31 December 2002.

## The 2002 Annual Gathering, Ashburton, 5, 6, 7 October

### The Dartmoor Walks as recalled by Becky Smith:

The 2002 SBGAS Gathering was surely the most informative we have enjoyed to date – and that's saying something! The focus was perhaps significantly narrower than usual, which meant we had a really in-depth explication of Dartmoor tin mining. Literally deep, too, as we gazed down vertiginous mine shafts on the Sunday morning. Saturday morning was devoted to a glorious 5-mile walk to inspect the Yealm Steps blowing house, which SBG makes such good use of in *Guavas the Tinner*. We learned about smelting, crushing, ingot-making, as well as the realities of the tinner's lives. I was left with an abiding image of a tiny creature plodding back and forth across the endless expanses of Dartmoor, mainly solitary and surviving only by the force of habit. The tinner's were badly paid, and the sheer physical labour involved is probably beyond the ability of any of us to grasp. We had perfect weather and the walk was by no means strenuous. Moorland livestock, birds and trees all added to the joy of the morning. We even witnessed a stream running defiantly uphill.

On Sunday we began at Coombestone Tor, where we savoured majestic views of a Dartmoor that becomes, under Philip's expert tutelage, a patchwork of activities, stories, myths and magic. Areas that were once decidedly industrial with hundreds of men labouring to extract and transport the tin, are now silent grassy oases. Always positioned close to running water, they have become particularly delightful. Man has altered them, creating gashes in the landscape and leaving jumbled accumulations of granite blocks, but it is reassuring to observe how nature can reclaim and enhance such sites. We visited the Swincombe Valley and witnessed many obvious relics of the tinworking. I say obvious, but I know, to my shame, that unescorted, I would have totally failed to make sense of what was there to be seen.

We then drove to Fox Tor Mires, with an equally magnificent, but very different, landscape view across miles of moorland. After a generous 'free activity' time in Princetown, we finished

at Warren House Inn, then off – again in perfect weather – to the Vitifer Mine, which is where my thoughts on the balance of influence between man and nature began to take shape.

Thanks to Philip Weller and Jane Marchand, I now know about a thousand times as much as I did before about Dartmoor tin mining. And the true extent and intensity of SBG's passion for Dartmoor and its history made enormous sense to me, as we traced his footsteps and saw through his eyes the physical legacies of these ancient activities.

**The Meeting at Dartmoor Lodge Hotel.** *Ron Wawman writes:* The Chair-bound bit of the Annual Meeting was not quite as exciting, but those of us who did not feel physically up to the delectable moorland treks described by Becky were, to some extent, able to make up for this through the splendid illustrated talks on Guavas and moorland tinner's generally, given by Philip Weller and Jane Marchand. No less erudite and absorbing was Martin Graebe's 'When We Went A-gypsying', a talk all about the Dartmoor singers from whom SB-G collected so many of his folk songs. O, when will Martin have completed his fascinating study of these singers and treat us to the definitive book? Those who did not join us for a delightful Indian Summer weekend based on The Dartmoor Lodge, will have to wait until Philip Weller brings out the next issue of the transactions to discover what they missed. At the AGM earlier in the afternoon Philip had presented his first issue of the 'Transactions of the Sabine Baring-Gould Appreciation Society' and pointed out that as a bonus it also includes the illustrated short story '6d Only'. No-one can fail to be impressed by the quality of Philip's work and it was good to hear that copies of the first issue are still available from Philip at the modest price of £5.00. The meeting did not reach a firm decision on the location of the 2003 annual meeting and anyone with bright ideas should contact Roger Bristow. Other issues discussed are reported elsewhere in the newsletter. Our thanks must go to Jane and Philip Weller for all their work in planning and running this superb meeting.

## WREN TRUST

*Wren's 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Baring-Gould Folk Festival* 1 - 3 November, in and around the West Devon villages of Bratton Clovelly and Lewdown. Concerts and workshops will be held in the local village halls and churches with a special event at Lewtrenchard Manor. The festival begins on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> with a welcome folk club; Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> contains a series of workshops and an evening "Feast". The Festival culminates in another series of workshops and a farewell concert on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup>. Artists appearing include, among many others, Frankie Armstrong; Coope, Boyes and Simpson; Tim Laycock; Vic Legg; George Withers; and, of course, Marilyn Tucker and Paul Wilson.

*The Baring-Gould Study Day*, Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> October: A special day of musical activities, talks and walks through the West Devon countryside. Songs and music from the county of Cornwall provide this year's theme with entertaining and expert speakers. Martin Graebe presents a session on Sabine Baring-Gould's folk song collecting trips to Cornwall. Fiddler Mike O'Connor will 'say and play' listeners through the earliest known Cornish tune collection, the John Giddy Collection dating from around 1740. Doc Rowe presents slides, anecdotes and fun, starting in the Cornwall of Baring-Gould's day and finishing with his very own perspective. The Day runs from 10.30 am till 4pm and, including lunch, will cost £27/£20 concessions.

**Merchandise:** Much is heavily influenced by Baring-Gould and by the area in which he lived and worked. **"Songs of the West":** A concert of songs and readings from the Baring-Gould collection performed by Paul Wilson, Marilyn Tucker and Martin Graebe, now available on CD priced £10. Early next year sees the release of a CD of a selection of tunes from the **William Andrews tune book**, collected by Baring-Gould from a fiddler at Sheepstor, performed by Nick Wyke and Paul Wilson.

**For more information about Wren events or merchandise, please phone Wren on 01837 53754 or e-mail at [wrentrust@eclipse.co.uk](mailto:wrentrust@eclipse.co.uk)**

## "To Half My Life.

### **The story of Sabine Baring-Gould and Grace"**

Keith Lister's book is at the typesetting stage and should be out by Christmas. Keith has kindly allowed us a preview of David Shacklock's mouth-watering foreword. Keith is happy to receive any inquiries and orders at his address, which you will find inside the newsletter's cover. Price: Paperback: £12.99; Hardback: £20.00; both plus £1.60 p&p.

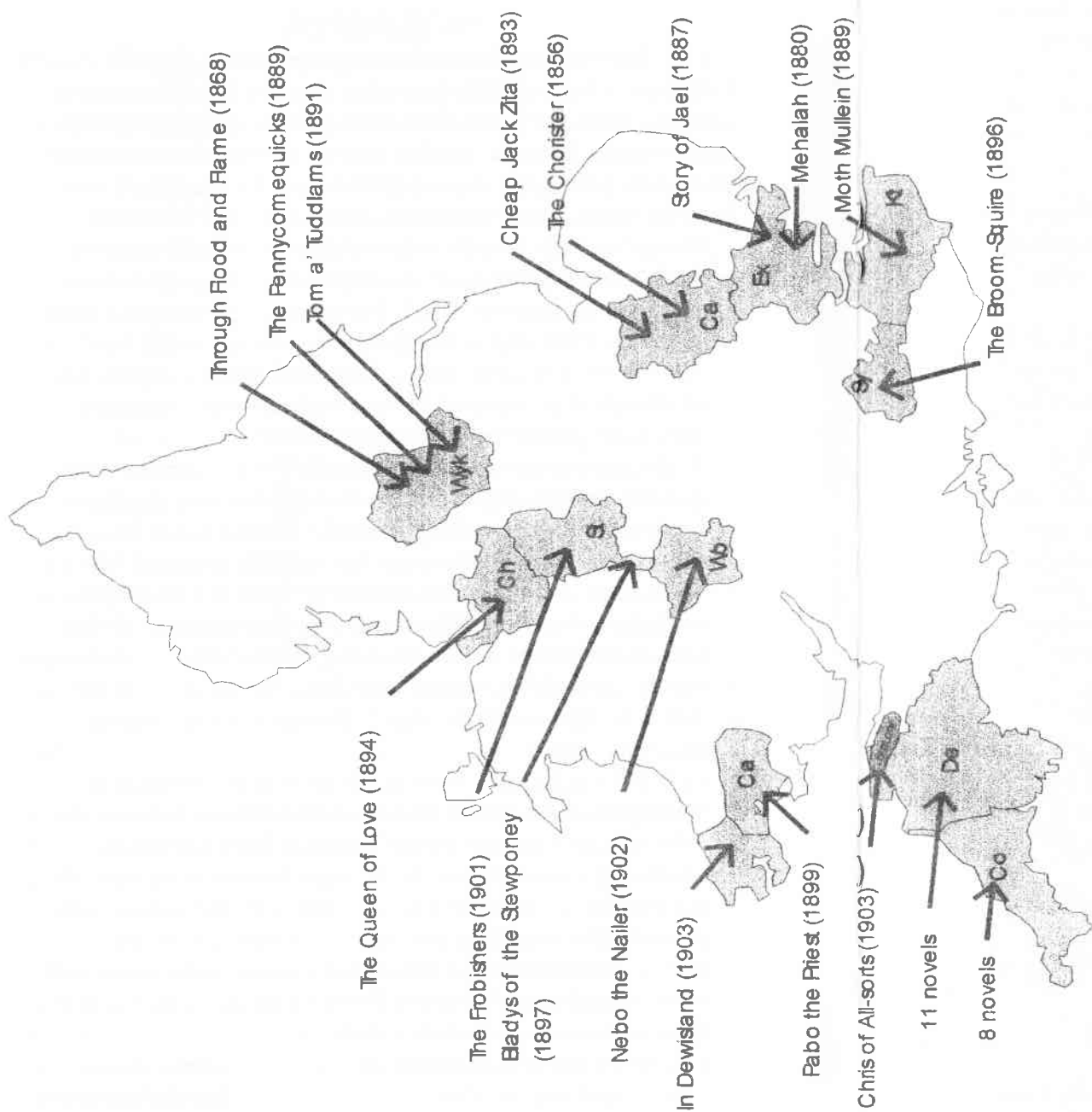
*Baring-Gould has been the subject of three previous biographies, published 45, 30 and 5 years ago respectively. The question has to be asked: 'Why another?'; and 'Why so soon?' The specific answer in relation to the latter is that this one was already well in hand when Harold Kirk-Smith's book was printed. Indeed the queue has not shortened: the writer of this note has heard in recent months that a major publisher is planning yet another!*

*All this points to a couple of undoubted facts – one, that there is a revival in the man and his multi-faceted life; the other, that just as his own two-volume autobiography left a third waiting to be published, so no biographer since has been able to unmask 'the whole man'. Certainly the prime collector of the old 'songs of the west', the writer of one of the church's best-known hymns, the last rated bearer of G M Trevelyan's descriptive soubriquet 'squarson', and the successful re-inventor of the Yorkshire mill girl to be the 'half of his life' and his 'fair lady' – Baring-Gould has remained remarkably elusive.*

*Keith Lister, a former policeman, has taken up the challenge of running his man to ground, and as a Yorkshireman who knows the value of 'a good woman' (as the Dedication bears witness) has sought to give Grace Taylor the place she deserves in the story. He has brought his investigative skills to bear, with thoroughness and persistence, in unearthing new evidence, clarifying some old puzzles, and presenting his materials, documentary and visual, with a fresh impact and a light touch. This work has the added bonus of being a breakaway from clerical authorship.*

*I therefore warmly commend this volume to family, friends, 'fans' – and critics, alike.*

**David Shacklock**



The Queen of Love (1894)

The Frofishers (1901)  
Bady of the Stewpony (1897)

Nebo the Nailor (1902)

In Dewisland (1903)

Pabo the Priest (1899)

Chris of All-sorts (1903)

11 novels

8 novels

Through Flood and Flame (1868)

The Fennycomequicks (1889)

Tom a' Tuddlams (1891)

Cheap Jack Zita (1893)

The Chorister (1856)

Story of Jael (1887)

Mehalah (1880)

Moth Mullein (1889)

The Boom-Squire (1896)

### The setting of Sabine Baring-Gould's novels by County

Roger Bristow

Sabine Baring-Gould wrote about 40 novels and longer 'short' stories, but it is difficult to be exact and to decide when a 'short' story becomes a novel. Of the novels, about 35 can be placed geographically to County level at least, within England and Wales (see map). In some (*Mehalah*, *Red Spider*, *Winefred* are very good examples), the geographical detail is such that most, if not all, the localities mentioned in the text can be located on the ground and clearly reflect SBG's local knowledge. In some (*Richard Cable*, *Miss Quillet*), Sabine seems to have been a bit coy in the detailed location of the novels, although the general part of the country can be determined. In the latter novel, can anyone pinpoint 'Westport, a rapidly growing watering place'? In a few of the novels (e.g. *Chris of All-sorts*, *Richard Cable*), the settings cover more than one area.

If any member can identify the settings of *Richard Cable*, *Miss Quillet* and any novel outside Devon and Cornwall not shown on the accompanying map, I will be pleased to hear from them.

## Some Notes from 'Cheap Jack Zita' Land

By Ray Scott

*"Breathes there a man with soul so dead  
Who never to himself hath said,  
This is my own, my native land"*

SCOTT

In the very first chapter of a book entitled 'History of Wicken' by M Knowles, published 1902, the author takes issue with Sabine Baring-Gould (Wicken is a small village in the Fens, 7 miles from Ely):

*And here must come a somewhat divergent remark. The Rev. S. Baring-Gould, who is both a pleasant and prolific writer, has, however, had one or two words to say, about which we must take exception. In an article which appeared in Chambers's Magazine a few years ago on the Isle of Ely Fenland, he describes the natives as being very morose, and in consequence of the lack of good drinking water, he says people are driven to the public-houses for other beverages. This is news indeed to the writer, whose knowledge of the Fens has extended from the twenties to the nineties, whose ancestors belonged to the Isle of Ely, and who has never heard such an imputation cast upon its waters before. And, if a fact, how is it that the Blue Ribbon Army has flourished for so many years under such conditions, and what could the medical profession be about not to warn us poor Fenlanders of the prevailing danger? Why are we not in the insanitary position which characterised Maidstone a few years ago?*

*Lastly, in what hands could the Rev. S. Baring-Gould have fallen when he made his investigations? However, he does justice to the exquisite flora which is found more particularly in the un-drained portions of the Fenland.*

The author goes on to quote from an article in the 'Daily Graphic' a copy of which I have not:

*The Rev. S. Baring-Gould has, in another article on the Fens*

*(which appeared some time ago in the Daily Graphic), mentioned the cultivation of the white poppy as having greatly prevailed in our midst, not as a floral decoration, but as a commodity for domestic use. The heads were dried and the seeds made into tea, which mothers were in the habit of giving to their infants for sleeping purposes, and frequently to keep them quiet during their own absence at field work. For women do work a good deal in the fields at Wicken and in the neighbourhood, where they get a shilling or more a day for hoeing and weeding, which they refer to housework and washing and charing.*

It is interesting to compare these articles with certain chapters of 'Cheap Jack Zita'

Chapter 12:

*The tavern is an institution in the Fens more frequented than elsewhere, and frequented without scruple, not by men only, but by women as well. There is a reason for this. The fen-water is undrinkable. There are no springs in the Fens. Those who live near the rivers derive thence their tea water; river water is potable and harmless when boiled, that which is drawn from the peat is neither. Consequently the inhabitants of the Fens are compelled to drink something other than water, and instinctively seek that something at the public houses.*

Chapter 16:

*In the Fens, almost every cottage grows its crop of white poppy in the small garden. Of the poppy heads a tea is brewed. The mothers are accustomed to work in the fields, hoeing between the ranks of wheat. The rich soil that produces the corn produces also weeds that have to be kept under. That the babe may not interfere with the mother earning a small wage, it is given poppy tea, and that sends it to sleep for the day. But the drops of opium thus administered in infancy affect the tender brains, bewilder them, and subject the child to nervous pains. As it grows up to man or womanhood, it has recourse to the drug to which it was brought up in infancy.*

Ray Scott continued

*A large business in laudanum is done in the Fens, and much of the distraught mind and tortured nerve is due to this cause. The poppy tea dispels trouble as surely as whisky, and opium dulls pain at a cheaper and surer rate than the surgeon who boggles over its removal.*

Next comes the real sting in the tail as the author then quotes a description used by Charles Kingsley:

*"Such was the Fenland, hard yet cheerful, rearing a race of hard and cheerful men, showing their power in old times in valiant fighting, and for many a century since in that valiant industry which has drained and embanked the land of the Girvii till it has become a very 'garden of the Lord.'"*

*This the testimony of Charles Kingsley, whose work will live when many another writer's has been relegated to the cellar or the furnace.*

I wonder which SB-G would have chosen, cellar or the furnace? The offending paragraph from his article 'The Ely Fen-land' which appeared in Chamber's Journal, Saturday May 20 1893, is as follows:

*Unhappily, a great deal of opium is taken in the Fens, and the children are given poppy-tea to keep them asleep when their mothers go out to weed in the fields. Every cottage garden has in it a bed of white poppy and the consequence is that nervous disorders abound The use of alcoholic drinks is also extensive in the Fens, and this is to a large extent explicable and excusable, for the Fen water is not potable, and there are no springs in the land. The Fen water is not only unpleasant in the taste and to the smell, but is also unwholesome. The Fen folk are obliged to have recourse to the river water or canal water, which is to an extent derived from their own dikes and drains. There is no other to be had. Consequently, men and women and even children, frequent the public-houses in a way not common in other parts of Great Britain.*

Did our man stir the natives or did he stir the natives!

### News from the Membership

**New Members:** We welcome **Gillian Linscott**, author of the Nell Bray 'whodunnits'; **Kati Va'nos**, Assistant Local Studies Librarian, Exeter; **Peter Murgatroyd** and **Nicholas Fridd** whose interests are poetry and the Devon connection.

**Merriol and Douglas Almond's** daughter, Betsy was married to Doug McGregor in St Peter's Church, Lewtrenchard on 15 June. We send our President and family our very best wishes.

**Becky Smith**, aka Rebecca Tope, my predecessor in the editor's hot seat, had a new novel out last month. Entitled 'The Sting of Death' it had a big launch party in London and is selling well.

**Shirley Scott Writes:** A big thank you for my get well card. Ray and I were very sorry to miss the annual gathering. I am recuperating at home and hope to be fairly well by Christmas. Our first grandchild, Sophie Grace was born on September 26<sup>th</sup>. As Ray pointed out to our daughter Helen the name Grace was also SBG's wife's name. Sophie will no doubt be made 'aware' of this as soon as possible!!!!

### Subscriptions

Members are reminded that subscriptions are now due. Once again they have been held at a very modest £6.00 by the AGM. Despite Becky's plaintive cry in the newsletter 12 months ago 40% of subscriptions for the year just ended are still outstanding. Reminders take time and money and should not be necessary. Free lunches are hard to come by! If you value the Association it is worth pondering on the cost of printing and postage for the newsletter, for a start. Give the treasurer a shock. Put your hand in your pocket and send your sub to Sybil now. American members are reminded that if they are unable to arrange payment in sterling, then a \$10 bill is the only other acceptable method of payment.

**Send your payment to the treasurer: Sybil Tope, Point, Lewdown, Okehampton, Devon, EX20 4ED**

### References in Print

*The Folklore of Devon* by Ralph Whitlock, published by Batsford 1977 – contains 30 references throughout the book..

*The Giant Book of the Supernatural*, edited by Colin Wilson and published by Magpie 1994, includes references in p.207-9 to Baring-Gould's Story of Lille (Cornhill 1890s) & Mrs. Pennyman's corrections.

*The Penguin Book of English Folk Songs*, edited by R Vaughan Williams & AL Lloyd 1959. p.7: work culminating in the Folk-Song Society 1898; with notes on p.119, 120,122,124

*The Friendship Book 2002*, by Francis Gay, which includes a reading for every day of the year: Quotes, in the entry for 23 August, Baring-Gould's comments (?from Purcell's Onward Christian Soldier 1957) on reading his own obituary!

*The Methodist Hymn Book, Illustrated*, 1906: Comments under 'Hymn 455. Onward Christian Soldiers' on SB-G's prowess and productivity as a writer, and the origins and popularity of the hymn.

### Christmas is Coming: A Man For All Seasons

*"We should not be content with Christmas Carols, we should use Carols for all the seasons. The country people have no quarrel with the food the Church offers them, but they do not like the cooking. The meat is excellent, but it is too leathery in the way it is served. The bane of the Church of England has been her stiffness. She is infinitely the most formal of Churches; and it is this stiffness, this formality, which the poor dislike. They are not at ease in her courts, no more than they would be at a dinner party at the squire's."* From an absorbing Foreword by SB-G to **Carols for Use in Church** compiled 1894 by Rev R R Chope MA, contains 3 carols by SB-G and 4 others translated by him.

### Website: [www.sbgas.fsnet.co.uk](http://www.sbgas.fsnet.co.uk)

Computer literate? Then visit the SBGAS website for even more information and news as compiled and updated by Martin Graebe. Send him your news at [martin.graebe@btinternet.com](mailto:martin.graebe@btinternet.com)

### Iceland 2003

After hearing the feedback at the AGM from Martin Graebe's exciting holiday, sorry feasibility study, in Iceland, 10 members immediately expressed an interest in the proposed 7 day trip, around August 2003, to follow in the 1863 Icelandic footsteps of SB-G. See enclosed flyer for details. Martin needs to know how many members might be interested ASAP so, if you are, please contact him. Estimated cost per person: £1220.

### 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