

Book Review

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Now The Day is Over: The Life and Times of Sabine Baring-Gould - By Harold Kirk-Smith.
Pub by Richard Kay £20.

This penetrating survey reveals the wide-ranging interests and pursuits of a remarkably industrious 19th-century country parson who, during his 90 years, wrote 17 volumes on The Lives of the Saints, embraced biographies of Napoleon and Nelson, and investigated in some depth antiquities, archaeological sites and monuments.

Additionally, he wrote many novels for which in his time he was renowned and for which, we are told, he was ranked on a par with Dickens and Hardy.

At Lew Trenchard, where he was squire and rector of its glorious church, he collected folk songs, preserving for posterity "The Twelve Days of Christmas" and "Widdecombe Fair"; while, as a not inconsiderable theologian, he was greatly influenced by John Mason Neale and the Oxford Movement.

Because of the wealth of material, Kirk-Smith has, not surprisingly, come up with a fascinating and well researched record of this widely gifted person who, over a period of more than 60 years, wrote at least one book annually. At the end one is left wondering why his sole claim to fame today seems to rest on his being author of three hymns, in particular "Onward Christian Soldiers".

The book is available from the publisher at 80 Sleaford Road, Boston PE21 8EU.

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