

A DAY WITH RED SPIDER

As Sylvia and I left home for Devon I recalled how much pleasure it had given us arranging a similar week-end here in Horbury in June 94 and looked forward again to meeting members and friends, this time in deepest SBG country. I had intended re-reading Red Spider to get full benefit of the event but only managed a quick perusal of places on the itinerary, so I was delighted to find that Roger had thoughtfully arranged for extracts to be read from the book at appropriate points.

We met in the hall at Bratton Clovelly which was also being jointly used by members of the Devon Association with whom we shared the benefit of the expert historical knowledge of Simon Timms, Devon County Archaeologist. He guided us around the interior of St. Mary's Church where Sabine had preached while blissfully unaware that beneath the colour washed walls were unique biblical wall paintings which have now been revealed. In the churchyard we saw where the church had been modified over the centuries and the wonderful backdrop formed by open fields leading to Dartmoor with Bren Tor marking the horizon.

Taking to our cars we headed off toward places described in SBG'S Red Spider which, for me, was very much like a treasure hunt where success was gained by matching Sabine's description of places and people to an actual place or event. As usual Sabine was very accurate with his descriptions making it almost impossible to identify the seamless joints between 'fact' and 'fiction', a matter which for me is a major attraction of his work.

We walked down the steep hill in Bratton Clovelly to the stream where, as a baby, Sabine was said to have been dropped as he was carried across the bridge to Palm Court, (Later re-named Eversfield House?). At Red Spider Cottage our enthusiastic and cheery group posed for a photograph and I read an extract from the book which described the cottage to a 'T'. At Chimsworthy Farm David set the scene with a further extract before Alan and Chris Oram, kindly allowed our large party into their home to view the original beams. As former residents of the property Sybil and daughter Becky were able to recall several events relating to the buildings and the old well.

While assembled in the farmyard examining a stone trough we were almost deafened by the cacophony of hundreds of starlings in a nearby tree, which suddenly dispersed, leaving an eerie silence in which you could have heard a pin drop. (A hawk closeby perhaps?)

After Broadbury Ridge we visited Wellon's Cairn where the murderer was hanged and left to rot and Martin heightened the atmosphere with his dramatic rendition of the Broadbury Gibbet Song. Our final visit was to Langworthy House, which in the late afternoon appeared somewhat austere in its lofty and desolate setting.

Back at the Hall we enjoyed the warm hospitality of the W.I. who had prepared a delicious tea during which our booksellers did a brisk trade in SBG'S books. This was followed by the AGM.

At 7.30pm we took our places in the Victory Hall Lewdown, for the Wren Trust Production of

Red Spider dramatised by Tim Laycock. The event was excellent and really consolidated the day's events by bringing to life the characters of Honor Luxmore, Larry and [Hilary Nanspian and Taverner Langford (Ronald Wawman). Martin and Merriol also introduced Paul Wilson and Marilyn Tucker who have done so much to promote Sabine's work.

Thanks for organising such a superb event.

Keith

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