

MEMORIES OF MY SCHOOL DAYS

Firstly, I must say that for showing a bias towards the village of Lewdown in the Parish of 'Lew', I make no apologies. As a native of this village, I recall with the fondest of memories, attending Lewdown County Primary School under the Headmaster, Mr. Millward. At the time I did not realize the profound interest to which I have become accustomed.

With regard to the family of Sabine Baring-Could, I can recall attending the Church of St. Peter of Lew Trenchard with my school, and at the time a sense of foreboding, as I walked from the Church gate through the dark avenue of lime trees into the small church, - something I will never forget. The memories of singing Christmas carols in this church and the damp smell is easily remembered as part of my primary years.

I did not realize that my interest was to gain further, more historical channels. Lew House, or better known to me as Lew Trenchard, was the setting of all our school pantomimes. Of course the school children were not allowed in the house itself, but were quite content to perform our pantomimes in the barn nearby.

Now when I think of what has happened in the past and the historical events which have taken place and the barn itself, I sometimes wonder if Sabine Baring-Gould has a sense of fulfilment, when the youth of the parish used these premises for which Sabine would have been justly proud.

When I married, twentyone years ago, and moved away to Wiltshire, by coincidence I saw a book which was a biography of Sabine Baring-Gould, 'Onward Christian Soldier' in a bookcase of an elderly couple. The name sprang to life, and as a result was the first book that I ever purchased relating to Sabine Baring-Gould. I gave this book to my late father, Mr. Harry George James Bruce of 'The Chalet', Lewdown, and because my father showed such a great interest in this book, I in turn, obtained a copy.

My father, being a local electrician, provided music for dances on occasions at Lew Trenchard House and I accompanied him once or twice or when I was allowed as a child, and I remember how grand this house was, with its beautiful carved fireplaces and lovely paintings.

Since my interest has grown, I have established a collection of some thirtytwo of his works, and I can visualize many of his thoughts and reminiscences of the local area.

With regard to the novel, 'The Red Spider', the village of Bratton Clovelly holds a tremendous interest to me, since the nearby newly-constructed 'Roadford Valley Reservoir' will soon be filled, and many of Sabine's memories will be erased.

On a recent visit to St. Peter's Church with my husband, we discovered the graves of the original family, together with Sabine's, and on this visit I was surprised that the dark avenue of trees no longer existed, nor was there a damp musty smell inside the Church.

It was beautifully kept, so clean and tidy and very peaceful, and having visited the remainder of the Lew Trenchard parish it is not surprising that Sabine Baring-Gould found such an affection for Lew parish.

After reading several of his books and having followed many of the paths and roads that he must have travelled, you cannot feel unmoved to think that you are following such an historical figure. Perhaps more people who become acquainted with his works would feel the same.

Whenever I hear the hymn, 'Now the Day is Over', I cannot fail to remember every day I spent at my primary school, because at the conclusion of each day we stood and sang this hymn before going home.

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