

Sabine Baring-Gould Appreciation Society

Newsletter 1989-90

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SBGAS Newsletter, No 1.

Another Society?

The wisdom of launching yet another society may well be questioned, The Alliance of Literary Societies, recently revived, already has at least 30 member societies, and there must be many others not formally associated with ALS. I note that its officers are themselves each linked with four or five societies apiece, so that booklovers and literary experts clearly like to have a range of interests. That, of course, is just what Sabine Baring-Gould provides: as archetypal Victorian, squarson, folklorist, biographer, novelist, topographer, hymn writer and collector of country songs he offers an unusual variety of theme for a single author; and that list does not include his pastoral and theological writings.

SBG's topographical and folklore books are especially collectable, and a few of his novels are still in demand. General opinion would be united in declining to put him in the forefront of literary merit, though nearly all his writing has a compelling charm about it.

For the SBGAS member I hope that one of the Society's chief attractions will prove to be its annual gatherings in the different parts of the country associated with his life. We plan to start in 1990 with Yorkshire, whence the bulk of the pre-launch support has emanated. However, I must also pay tribute to the good folk of East Mersea, whose splendid Flower Festival on the theme of Sabine Baring-Gould is reported on pages 3 and 14-16, and in particular Mr. James Sunnucks, the Society's first member, who has given much encouragement.

It was in May that I received the letter from SBG's grandson, Lt. Colonel Warwick Calmady-Hamlyn, giving the family's "go-ahead" which seemed so important to have. He wrote, 'I should be proud if you founded a Sabine Baring-Gould Appreciation Society and you certainly have my approval for so doing'. This letter, and my subsequent meeting with the Colonel, was the consequence of being introduced to his niece, Anna Jones, a Baring-Gould by birth, through the kindness of mutual friends.

My own interest in SBG was sparked off by Joanna Bogle in a short article written for a daily newspaper about six years ago. It would be good to hear from members how interest was kindled for them, and how their collections of his work have developed,

David Shacklock.

Books about SBG

Presumably SBG planned three volumes of autobiography, but only two saw the light of day: his Early Reminiscences 1834-1864 published in 1923 and Further Reminiscences 1864-1894 published posthumously in 1925. Since he had almost completed his third thirty years of age when he wrote the first two volumes, another to cover the years 1894-1924 must surely have been in mind - Late Reminiscences perhaps? The particularly tantalising aspect of this literary arrest is that a huge quantity of Baring-Gould papers is said to have been consigned to the bonfire some years ago when Lew Trenchard House ceased to be a family home and became a hotel, so that many fascinating facts and fancies may never be known concerning his later life. (But see footnote). However, these two volumes are substantial, charmingly written, fully illustrated with photographs, and well worth obtaining; £10-£15 should purchase a reasonable pair.

There are two biographies: Onward Christian Soldier by William Purcell was published by Longmans in 1957. Subtitled A Life of Sabine Baring-Could: Parson, Squire, Novelist, Antiquary 1834-1924, and with a two page introduction by John Betjeman, who hails him as 'that forgotten and despised character, the enthusiastic amateur', Purcell's book is warm to his subject while not blind to his faults and quirks. It is a pity that two thirds of the book take up the pre-Lew Trenchard part of his life.

SBG's grandson, Bickford Dickinson, redresses that imbalance in his Sabine Baring-Gould: Squarson, Writer and Folklorist, published by David and Charles in 1970. This is a much more difficult book to find, but well worth running to earth, as the author has been able to draw on the personal memories of the subject's family and acquaintances, as well as his own. As an incumbent of Lew Trenchard for six years himself, he had the advantage of breathing the same atmosphere. Not surprisingly, but appropriately, this later biography covers the Lew Trenchard period in the proportion of five to three. The text is interspersed with some excellent illustrations (three of which are also found in the earlier biography), and there is a clear list of his works by subject matter, as well as an index - the latter it must be admitted not as thorough as Purcell's.

footnote: however, a substantial number of his letters are still extant, and we plan to publish some facsimiles and transcripts in the Newsletter. A future article will deal with shorter items about SBG.

Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould: Life And Work

East Mersea Flower Festival 1989

As all organisers of the Flower Festival must find, it is very hard to think up a theme which is different. As Chairman of the West Mersea and District Flower Club, it has been up to me to do the thinking for the past three festivals. In 1987 "Gems of the Rainbow", 1988 first verse from hymn "Lord to you we bring our treasure" 495 A&M New Standard.

This year all my mind kept going back to was Baring-Gould. All I knew was he had written the novel, 'Mehalah', about Mersea and district, together with "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "Now the day is over". He was Rector at East Mersea for ten years, 1971 to 1881, and hated the place. Not much to go on. All my committee felt the same, but had no other suggestions. So this, it was decided, would be our theme.

I was then lent various books from a private collection. His two books of reminiscences, Troubadour Land, also the books by Dickinson, his grandson, and Purcell. I was not really looking forward to reading his books, but I found myself thoroughly enjoying them and read them all from cover to cover. In the end I decided he must have been quite a difficult man to have dealings with. He had a sense of humour and was able to laugh at himself. He had no patience for anyone who was uneducated, although he seemed to be very happy if they were willing to learn, as at Horbury Brig, where he mentions his students sat on his coat tails after class, until he told them a story. I should not think there were many teachers at that time you could do that to. He loved to travel. He wrote and published many books, sermons and hymns. He married a mill girl many years younger than himself and they had fifteen children. In his writings he does not mention Grace much, but one gathers she was a gentle, strong and willing helper to him, as on her death he said, "half my soul gone".

Now we had more to work on.

I should perhaps say East Mersea Church is very old - there has been a Church on the spot since Saxon times. It is dedicated to St. Edmund and is a Crown living . So it was, in fact, Gladstone who offered it to Baring-Gould. I felt we should cover all aspects of his life, so we finished up with, I think, a very effective festival. We had a list of dates printed for visitors to give them a little background about the man.

How do you describe a flower festival? I think my best idea is to take you around the Church as if you were a visitor. The Porch was decorated with pink flowers on one side along the seat, twice the length of the blue on the other side.

Ten girls, five boys. And across the door was an arrangement of dark foliage to represent Baring-Gould, and red and white for Grace, as her red scarf and white apron when she was a mill girl. As you go through the door, the font is in front of you. This was a mass of pink and blue. Spray carnations, monkshood, blue and pink gypsophila, and grey foliage (15 children). It is a very old, octagonal font with a list to one side. Turning to the left inside we had 'A memorial to Horatio Nelson', a biography. This was done in red, white and blue flowers, with a red ensign, telescope and a square rigged mast. The flowers included gladioli, carnations, gyp and monkshood. Across the aisle in the corner on top of the

bookcase, we had a photograph of Baring-Gould which was surrounded with pink and white spray and single carnations with senecio and jasmine foliage.

In front of the organ was a multicoloured pedestal which, among other things, included achillea, alstroemeria, carnations, chrysanthemums, dahlias, gaillardia, golden rod and lavatera. This represented 'Wagner', one of his favourite composers!

Next was a mauve arrangement with buddleia, heather and driftwood. This was 'Dartmoor - his favourite haunt'. Against the very old west door was our largest arrangement. This represented his writing room. One of the husbands had made a replica of a Victorian high writing desk. Baring-Gould always wrote standing up.

Other accessories were a screen covered with a tapestry, a chair and rug. There were two large arrangements, one being a pedestal, a couple of small ones, and the chair. All were done in white and blue with lilies and larkspur, carnations and chrysanthemums, iris, etc.

We now turn to face the Lady Chapel. There are three windows on the left.

First was 'Mehalah'. This included a blue and a red arrangement, and all the accessories that are important to the story: lamp, red cloth, cap, lantern, anchor, pistol, and in the background was a black and white painting by the arranger's husband showing the Church, House and Ray Island which were all part of the story.

Second, was 'The Tragedy of the Caesars'. With marble columns and white flowers, including roses and lilies, plus vine leaves and black and white grapes, another biography.

Third was 'Sowing and Reaping', a sermon. A harvest scene with horse and cart laden with stooks of corn, fruit and vegetables.

In front of the altar was a flower carpet to show the mosaic he found and excavated at Pau. This was done in four seed trays filled with oasis and just short pieces of foliage and heads of flowers. (It was amazing, at the end of the week, it looked as if it had just been done). The window behind the altar was an all white arrangement, laid out on polystyrene. This was 'Icelandic Scenes & Sagas', a guide book.

On either side of this window is a beautiful carved wooden statue, St. Mary, 'Virgin Saints and Martyrs'. This was white and blue, and St. Edmund, 'Lives of the Saints', was mostly red and included arrows, which is how he was killed. The window and pedestal to the left of the main altar was in the colours of Clare College where he was a classics student, gold, red and black. Gladioli, golden rod, carnations and bullrushes were used in these.

Turning our back now on the altar we pass through the choir, where all the candlesticks and the two large candlesticks before entering the nave were-all arranged with flowers from the marshes at East Mersea.

On the left behind the choir, the window was a Christmas nativity scene, with a white and red arrangement. Holly and ivy were the foliage and silk Christmas roses and poinsettias were used. 'Christmas, a pattern of worship', sermon.

We are very lucky to have a narrow stairway leading to an arched opening. This, of course, had to be 'Onward Christian Soldiers'. Red gladioli went up the stairs in ranks and in the arch was a cross of white and red carnations.

The old wooden pulpit comes next. This was originally reached by steps which were taken down some time ago, so the arranger either has a ladder or has been known to climb on the back of the chairs! Anyway, again this was a mainly white arrangement. It was done as a pedestal and the door into the pulpit was left open so you could see the small shelf seat inside. A trail of ivy was used for the bookmark in the old bible.

The final window had verses 1, 6 and 7 portrayed from 'Now the day is over'. This hymn, it is said, was written at Mersea together with the tune, for the West Mersea Church bells. It is played every Sunday night on these bells.

Those were the main arrangements. The Church has many nooks and crannies which are filled with flowers. We have a squint which still used oil lamps. Only around the organ and by the lectern are there electric lights. At least twelve oil lamps are attached to the pillars and a mainly foliage arrangement was hung under each of these.

We had 21 ladies and 1 gentleman making the Church as beautiful as we could. Needless to say, most of us were there for the full day, having taken a picnic lunch. We returned home weary but, on the Saturday morning after the final touches were made, I think we were all delighted with the finished look and had many words of approval from the visitors.

(Many thanks to Anne Deere of West Mersea for this article, Ed.)

An Interview With Sabine Baring-Gould

Turning in at the stone gateway, guarding the carriage-drive, I saw a tall, spare, ascetic-looking figure walking on the lawn, attended by a handsome collie with one of its legs bandaged. As he drew near I perceived it was the celebrity I had come to see, and mustering up my courage, I went to meet him, and in a few words introduced myself, and asked for the pleasure of a short interview. Mr. Baring-Gould gave me a most cordial welcome, and to my delight, said he had nothing particular to do for the afternoon. He at once led the way into the house.

What a quaint, old-world place Lew Trenchard Manor is, and how absolutely congenial it must be with Mr. Baring-Gould's antiquarian and literary tastes! We made our way to the dining hall where a huge wood fire blazed in an ancient, open fireplace, guarded by fire-dogs of antique pattern, The fire-place at the back of the chimney bore the date 1648, but the chimney itself was much older, The house was built in Henry II's reign, but has been altered and added to again and again. It is a wonderful museum of antiquities. Coffee was brought, and ensconced in two comfortable armchairs, we began to talk. My eyes roamed delightedly around the oak-panelled apartment, lined with oil portraits of ancestors and celebrities.

But the most interesting thing of all to me was the presence of the owner of the house. Before me sat the most voluminous and interesting writer the West country has ever produced, the author of 'Onward Christian Soldiers', and of works innumerable, dealing with a very wide range of topics, but all of them possessing some flavour of romance, Mr. Baring-Gould produced a big meerschaum pipe with a cherrywood stem nearly a yard long from the side of the fireplace (evidently an old and tried friend), filled it with reverent care, and as the blue smoke curled up towards the quaint-carved ceiling, we settled ourselves comfortably down to talk."

'Western Weekly Mercury' Saturday, 4th February, 1911

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.

Anne F. Fenner (nee Bruce)

SBGAS Newsletter, No 2.

The New Birth

It is with some trepidation that I give this issue's editorial such a title - since SBG's view of this very important topic and mine, spiritually speaking, would be somewhat divergent! However it seems an apt illustration of the emerging into life of a new society.

There was certainly a period of gestation before the happy event, not to mention some labour pains. The 'confinement' was attended with much tender loving care and encouragement. The announcement was made in several journals. The new baby was welcomed and congratulations received from far and wide, from old friends and new, from near relations and 'long lost cousins'. Several most kind and generous gifts have been received. Hope for the future seems well founded.

Now there lies to hand the various practical adjustments and experiments that need to be made to ensure the nurture and growth of this little life. To apply the analogy - nurture requires the contributions of the family, the Society's members. These have been excellent so far, but they need to keep coming; they are welcome at any time, not just when the next 'deadline' arrives. Growth means two things: growth in scope, so that the Society's appeal isn't limited to the bibliophile or the local historian or the antiquarian, but covers a wide range of interest and activity; and growth in enlarging the family - discovering those who are already interested in SBG and recruiting them into active membership, and also gaining the interest of others with whom we may have influence.

As we say in another context, membership means commitment;

the measure we give will be the measure we get. So keep those articles, photocopies, letters, sales and wants lists, comments – and new members – coming in.

David Shacklock

Printed sources of information about SBG

In 1987 Tabb House reprinted Joy Lakeman's rendering of the reminiscences of Joan Bellan, whose parents were in service at Lew Trenchard House at the turn of the century. THEM DAYS (first published in 1982) contains some delightful memories of 'the squarson' (pp,2-8,69), and can now be purchased from the publisher at 11 Church Street, Padstow, Cornwall PL28 8BG. (£3.95 + p&p), The bibliography mentions S. Gordon Monk's pamphlet 'Lew Trenchard - The Manor House, the Church and Baring-Gould' published in 1961.

A.B. Andrews has a chapter on SBG in BORN IN EXETER, published in 1950 by A. Wheaton & Co. for the Historical Society of Hele's School.

References to SBG may be found - chiefly with regard to his 'rushed' biography of Stephen Hawker, the Vicar of Morwenstow, - in THE COASTS OF CORNWALL by S.H. Burton (Werner Laurie 1955)

Shirley Toulson makes extensive use of his topographical researches and commentaries in her Hutchinson publication EXPLORING THE ANCIENT TRACKS OF DARTMOOR BODMIN & PENWITH (No.2 in the series The Moors of the South West) 1984, and illustrated by Oliver Caldecott. She approvingly quotes his description of the longest stone row running south of the Plym as 'a procession of cricketers in flannels stalking over the moor'.

VICTORIAN COUNTRY PARSONS by Brenda Colloms (Constable & Book Club Associates 1977) devotes a chapter to SBG, dubbing him in racy style 'a populariser and entertainer', and in terms of output 'A factory rather than a man'; a very readable summary of his life and work.

Before either of the full length biographies by Purcell and Dickinson were published, William Addison produced THE ENGLISH COUNTRY PARSON (Dent 1947, reprinted 1948 by the Religious Book Club), also containing a chapter on SBG. Here, the author, in his acknowledgments, credits as his prime source of information the Revd. F.G.S. Nicolle, the subject's friend and collector of his books, to whom both biographers note their debt also.

The most recent anthology of clerical vignettes is probably Thomas Hinde's A FIELD GUIDE TO THE ENGLISH COUNTRY PARSON (Phoebe Phillips Heinemann 1983). In keeping with the style of the book as a whole, the Baring-Gould entry emphasises his quirkiness.

newly-discovered relations – Mrs. Turrall's niece, the daughter of her eldest sister, Honor, named after "The Red Spider"s heroine and Frederick Luxmoore of Lapford.

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The Saint Kitts Connection

Miss Kathleen Lightowler of Powys contributes this item:

'My sister and I went on a Geest Banana Boat to the Windward Islands in May/June this year - (1988) - and our first port of call on Friday, 3rd June was at St. Kitts (actually a Leeward Island). We were in the centre of Basseterre (the capital) in a shop, when we heard a steel band playing "Onward Christian Soldiers". We immediately came out into the square and saw the steel band on a lorry, followed by a huge procession of pre-school children, accompanied by their teachers and helpers, marching behind the lorry, singing. They were dressed up with flowers, bows etc. and some carried banners. We were told it was an annual gathering of all the pre-school groups on the island, and they were going to a park for the rest of the day.

It was a most moving sight, and tears rolled down my face!

The whole incident stays so vividly in my memory that I thought you might be interested. The hymn sounded quite wonderful played by the steel band'.

and from an earlier letter:

'My late mother, Helen Lightowler (nee Audsley), inherited a pair of framed round daguerrotypes (about 7" across), one of her maternal grandmother and the other of Sabine Baring-Gould. They were both of very handsome people, and my sister and I still treasure, and admire the one of our great-grandmother.

We never knew her, but as children we used to visit our great-aunts in Horbury (Misses Polly and Kate Nettleton) and Miss Alice Brooke, and of course we heard of Sabine Baring-Gould. My mother's mother died before we were born.

My late mother felt that as she had never known SBG and he was no relation (but had obviously been a friend of the Nettletons), she would give the daguerrotype to some group who would value it. As far as I can remember, it would be between 1967 and 1972 that she sent it, either to the Parish Church in Horbury or to the House of Mercy - alas, I do not remember which. I was not living in Yorkshire at that time'.

(Ed: can anyone shed light on the whereabouts of this, or any similar item?)

At Hurstpierpoint

From 'Victorian Public School' by Martin Williams.

With the name Baring-Gould we come to a member of the Hurst staff whose reputation was ultimately to be of the highest in the world of fiction and imagination. Like Pennell, BaringGould was of good Devon stock, A Cambridge man, he was noted for his piety and devotion. Having been in charge of the choir school at S Barnabas, Pimlico, he was recommended to Woodard by Lowder, the senior curate there. He had already been in contact with Woodard in September 1853, expressing his desire to be ordained. He tells us in his Reminiscences how he taught for ten days at Woodard's 'first-grade' school at Lancing, and how because his Latin was not really of a high enough standard he moved to Hurst, where he was to stay for about eight years (1858-66), Initially he was paid £25 a year - "and was pretty hard worked for that payment".

At Hurst he was responsible for several subjects, especially languages and science. But he was more renowned for the stories which he would tell, often completely impromptu, to groups of boys in his room. Such stories were frequently printed in the Hurst Johnian to which he was a regular contributor while at Hurst. Some of them, like 'The Fireman' and 'The Dead Trumpeter of Hurst Castle', are still well worth reading. He enjoyed going on country walks with his boys, too, and on one Sunday afternoon in 1861 one of them reported meeting the first survivors of the Clayton tunnel railway disaster, when a signalling error had resulted in the loss of 23 lives on two trains. Baring-Gould did not seem to have been too concerned about 'bounds' for his walks, but no-one appeared to mind.

He was also involved in much early art work at Hurst. He painted scenes for the Boys' Library, designed the ironwork for the brackets and bookshelves, and helped with the sets for the early plays. On the walls of his study still exists a fresco of S Nicolas which he painted. On his revisiting Hurst in 1894 he was to look at that picture again and murmur, so we are told, "Crude, crude!"

He also acted in some of the plays, especially in the farces that were put on after the main performance - possibly because of his admitted inability to remember any speech of more than two or three lines. One pupil with great delight remembered years later his portrayal of Annie Babbecombe - "a wig of long curls under a broad-brimmed sun-hat, a pink silk dress, short petticoat, white stockings, and sandled shoes".

As already mentioned, one of his holidays away from Hurst was spent in Iceland, and this of course stimulated his great interest in the Norse sagas. He returned with a little pony called 'Bottlebrush', whom the boys would ride whenever the opportunity arose, legally or otherwise. It was on the return journey from Iceland, so he tells us, that the dim light on board the little ship 'Arcturus', and the small print of Rob Roy which he was trying to read, together combined to ruin his eyesight.

Stories associated with Baring-Gould are legion. The most famous is probably linked with his work for Macbeth. To make the witches' cauldron especially effective he positioned himself carefully inside it and thence could light a whole series of explosive substances to suggest a steaming witches' brew. Unfortunately, everything seems to have been set alight at once, and it was with some difficulty that he extricated himself, slightly burnt and considerably dishevelled - and without his trousers!

On another occasion he let a bag full of insects and crawling creatures fall open in a railway compartment, and it was some time before the compartment was cleaned up sufficiently to let an elderly couple enter.

At Hurst he also kept a bat, which generally hung by his fireplace (except when it came into class with him, perched on his shoulder!). One day when the maid came in to stoke up the fire she accidentally trod on it and killed it.

He obviously had a boyish sense of humour, which perhaps made him especially popular. He enjoyed teasing his colleague John Gorham, whose study was opposite his, and he even placed a huge ammonite fossil in his bed one day (Gorham's reply was to set a series of clocks off in Baring-Gould's room at differing times). His humour could get him into trouble though - as when he was late for roll-call on the day he was on duty, and then, when a prefect had been twice sent by the Headmaster to announce that the whole School was in Chapel awaiting his appearance, he sent down his nightshirt as a token of the fact that he was at last getting up!

He shared with a friend an extravagant taste in clothes. He tells us how, under the influence of Ruskin, they went round "dressed aesthetically in knee-breeches and stockings and brown or claret-coloured velvet coats frogged with braid, and with a tie to match the ecclesiastical season". He was cured of this foppishness when he went to a local squire's for dinner and had to wear a green tie with his dinner jacket - he had forgotten to pack his black one.

Stories such as these are recorded in his Reminiscences which throw considerable light on some of the personalities connected with Hurst, or of visitors there, and also on the organisation and ceremonies of the school. He also reports that at Hurst he saw some really beautiful sunsets from the terrace in front of the main buildings.

It would not seem possible that Baring-Gould would remain at Hurst. In August 1859, he suggested to Woodard that he might be apprenticed to the Architect, and then eventually become Clerk of the Works. This suggestion was made a few months after his father had made the unpopular recommendation that he should join the staff of the Public Records Office. And in late 1860 he confessed to Woodard "the whole desire of my heart is to take Holy Orders and work at Hurst".

Ultimately he was ordained: presumably his father, who had expressed opposition to this in 1853 "on the grounds of my religious opinions, and of not seeing in me any signs of my preferring the things of Christ to those of the World", was now agreeable. Perhaps the death of his mother in December 1863, hastened his decision. He went as curate to Horbury Brig among the coal miners of the West Riding for a time. He came back to Hurst to preach on behalf of his missionary parish, describing his work there, and also in 1894 (by which time he had become Squire and Rector of Lew Trenchard, the family seat), on the occasion of the dedication of the Chapel panelling.

SBGAS Newsletter, No 3.

A Challenge

The enterprise culture, of which SBG would surely have approved, and of which in his way he was certainly a doughty exponent, presents opportunities, risks, crises, confrontations, wounds, successes and rewards. And so, as with the London Marathon, there are plenty of starters - new businesses, new fashions, new institutions, new publications - but not all last the course. Our Society too is an enterprise facing a challenge.

There is the 'editorial' challenge. Thrice yearly deadlines; will the contributions keep coming? Will there be adequate material to sustain an interesting publication?

Then there is the 'collector's' challenge. One of our recently joined members claims to have all but half a dozen of SBG's hardback output - about 150 titles. But there are pamphlets, letters, ephemera and associated items; is any collection ever complete?

That leads on to the 'bibliographical' challenge: discovering hitherto unrecorded material (such as newspaper articles etc.), describing accurately the original issues of the books, differentiating later issues, and offering a publishing history.

Isn't there a 'scholarly' challenge too? There must be 'out there' those who have studied SBG's topographical works or his folklore or song collections or biographies or theology or the background to his novels, and could provide an up to date assessment, with maps, photographs, charts and contemporary material.

May I then reiterate the 'geographical' challenge to members in the four SBG 'regions' - north (Yorkshire), south (London & Sussex), east (Mersea) and west (Devon) - to put on a day's programme once a year in rotation. I am more than happy to act in a consultative capacity, but the initiative needs to be local I am sure.

Finally, there is the challenge of SBG himself – to care for people and to care for our surroundings, and to live as full and creative a life as it is given to us to do.

David Shacklock

More Printed Sources of Information

Emily Clay's 1986 'Extraordinary Parsons of Devon & Cornwall' (Devon Books paperback, 74 pages, £3.95) contains a number of passing references to SBG, as well as more detailed summaries of his work of furnishing and restoring Lew Trenchard Church, and a two page outline of his life. Six of his books appear in the bibliography. This small book also contains a photograph of Lew House and of SBG as a young man - not at that stage Rector of Lew Trenchard, despite the caption.

'Devon Curiosities' by Jane Langton (Bossiney Books paperback 1989, 9 pages, £2.95) also quotes and mentions SBG as a founder member of the Dartmoor Preservation Society and as the recorder of Sally Satterley's folk songs. Included is an 1894 photograph of him looking like Father Brown, taken on Grimspound, which he excavated two years later.

Sally Satterley is depicted in Lady Sayer's 'The Outline of Dartmoor's Story' (Devon Books paperback, reprinted 1987, 52 pages, £2.95), where the above-mentioned incident is quoted. A 17th century book concerning Dartmoor outlaws quoted by SBG is repeated here.

The Exeter Library holds a copy of H.R. Smallcombe's 'Notes and Impressions of Lew Trenchard Church etc' (1961).

Finally, mention must be made of Bickford Dickinson's pamphlet (1st impression 1964, reprinted 1968 & 1972) entitled 'St. Peter Lew Trenchard & The Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould'. This too contains some fascinating snippets of information and commentary on SBG's work. He sums him up as 'a man of tremendous physical and mental energy and astounding industry; of unusual tastes and strong, even violent prejudices'.

Grettir The Outlaw

A Story of Iceland - published by Blackie 1890 - with 6 full page illustrations by M. Zeno Diemar.

Produced in the format well known to collectors of G.A. Henty's books, with its 384 pages, this title was offered to the author's 'young readers' as a free translation of the Saga of Grettir the Strong, which he had first begun to read thirty years earlier as a schoolmaster learning Danish, in order to use an Icelandic grammar and dictionary. He had tried it out on his pupils, one of whom had recently reminded him, with the suggestion that he might publish it as a story for boys.

Baring-Could visited Iceland in 1861 and 1862, on holiday from Hurstpierpoint, the immediate literary result being *Iceland - Its Scenes and Sagas*, published in 1863,

The 'freedom' of the translation enabled SBG to reject some of the more fanciful and superstitious elements in the Saga, which he regarded as real but embellished history, and also to include a number of items of general interest to the English reader. Thus we learn that the Icelanders were descended from Norse nobles; that their country is one third larger than Ireland, though its population is entirely coastal, inhabiting one sixth of the total area, the remainder consisting of desert, icefields and volcanoes; and that Christianity was sanctioned by law in the year 1000 AD, shortly after Grettir's birth. The Saga of Grettir was written in the 13th century. A later account by two Icelandic clergymen of their investigation of some of the events in the Saga is held in the British Museum, and a translation of it is contained in SBG's *Curiosities of Olden Times* (see the chapter 'A Mysterious Vale'). Unlike Henty's sterling young heroes, with their qualities of integrity and honour, we learn that Grettir, though undoubtedly courageous, was 'a headstrong, wilful fellow'; and that 'these qualities, untamed in him, wrecked his whole life, and it may be said brought ruin and extinction on his family'. When he left home his father refused to give him a weapon, saying that 'it would be better he went without till he had learned to control his temper and keep a check on his hand'. This he never did, and his ventures and exploits increased in violence during the fifteen years of his exile, until his own death from axe wounds in 1031 in his early thirties.

The book is found in either green or red cloth. The cover picture is in green, buff and white (or red, pink and white) with white lettering for the title and author. The lettering on the spine is in gold. My reprint is undated, but inscribed 1903-4 on the flyleaf; the advertisements imply a date of issue of 1903. It was then published at three shillings (15p). Another Blackie format is red cloth with blind stamped decorated boards, and gilt lettering on the spine. It contains four attractive coloured illustrations by M. Mackinlay. Strangely, that called for in the list of illustrations for page 200 is found opposite page 192, though according to the plate itself destined for page 196; similarly, that called for page 168 is found opposite page 160, while the actual plate claims its place at page 174.

The short chapters and basic language, with plenty of action and little verbiage make it readily available to youngsters with modest reading skills. But -the blurb which describes it as 'irresistible ... a narrative of adventure of the most romantic kind', which 'no boy will be able to withstand ... ' goes a bit over the top!