

## Sabine Baring-Gould Appreciation Society Newsletter 1997-98

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## SBGAS Newsletter, No 25.

### President's Appreciation

I would like to express my very heartfelt appreciation for David Shacklock's inspiring leadership of the SBGAS through the years since he founded it, and especially for his editorship of the Newsletter. I am thankful that David's labors have helped span the chasm, for me and for others, between the troubling times we live in and part of the world as it was before the outbreak of the First World War.

In his recently published book, *Drawing Life*, the computer scientist David Gelernter notes that prior to the 1960's the word "judgmental" was not used as a pejorative, whereas "now it is rarely used in any other way". Perhaps Sabine and his world are refreshing to us partly because Sabine does not hesitate to be judgmental (and of course some of his judgments were very wrong). Overall, however, Sabine's voice is one of rationality and common sense mixed with appreciation for the wonderful range of human oddities he knew so well. Had it not been for David Shacklock and the SBGAS, many of us might not have come to savor this.

Thank you, David for founding the SBGAS and especially for your editorship of the Newsletter for these many years! You are handing the Newsletter on in excellent shape, and we are confident Keith will do a splendid job as your successor as Editor. However, please do remain very closely involved. It wouldn't be at all the same without you.

Merriol Baring-Gould Almond. President, SBGAS

### Editorial

Hello,

Thank you Merriol and David for your kind comments on my taking over as Newsletter Editor. I hope to maintain the high standard already set by David and with the help of members of the society help to build upon the firm foundation already laid.

I have already met a good number of the membership of SBGAS, both here and overseas and look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at future events, or here in Horbury if you are passing through. In the meantime I enclose a photograph so you may see with whom you are dealing!

My membership of SBGAS commenced in March 1992 after accidentally wandering into Hutton's bookshop in Launceston - (thanks Patrick and Felicity) and when David recently handed over a complete set of newsletters I thought it would be a useful exercise to look back to the origins of our Society. I eagerly read David's first 'Editorial' dated 1989 (reproduced on p.10) which names James Sunnucks as the first member and refers to Lt. Colonel Warwick CalmadyHamlyn giving family approval for SBGAS to 'go ahead'.

Since those early days Merriol has kindly taken over as President and the regular newsletter, combined A.G.M and 'Meet' have clearly proved such a wonderful and enjoyable way of discovering previously unknown information about SBG, his family and his influence.

To add to the many valuable contributions from members which have featured in the newsletter, we now have Harold Kirk-Smith's "Now The Day is Over - The Life and Times of Sabine Baring-Gould." This work is also reviewed by David Shacklock in this issue.

There is also Becky Smith's reprint of Sabine's first Yorkshire based novel "Through Flood and Flame" which along with other titles has been added to the publication list inside the back cover. These activities combined with an ever increasing membership bodes well for the society's future and places us in a good position to leap into the next millennium. Any ideas to celebrate this event in true SBG style would, I am sure, be most welcome.

As I prepare this newsletter, the AGM and Meet will soon be here, and for those of us able to be in Devon on the 25th October there will be the benefit of the "Red Spider" experience organised by our Treasurer Sybil and Secretary, Roger. A full report of events will appear in the next edition.

I am fortunate to have access to a computer, printer and scanner to assist me in my editorial duties. Of course learning to use them correctly is one thing but another is the certainty that as a deadline nears, things start to go wrong! Having said that, there will be only three

deadlines a year so, if I can manage that, perhaps you would help by inundating me with contributions. (Thanks for those received so far)

I hope no one will feel offended by the introduction of a little light entertainment in the form of an SBG based crossword, which my wife Sylvia has helped me formulate. There are no prizes but we hope you will find it entertaining and the answers will be published in the next issue. Should anyone else feel the urge to 'have a go' please let me have your contribution.

Finally, while looking down our expanding mailing list it suddenly strikes me that to do my job properly I should perhaps use more mid-Atlantic expressions and spellings. On that note, we recently met a guy from the center of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, who confidently told us that Bill Gates (owner of Microsoft Computers) will gradually convert the quirky English language to U.S. standards. I suppose that remains to be seen, but some computer spell checkers do leave much to be desired and while older generations recognise and alter the variations in spelling, will our young people react to it? I wonder what Sabine's opinion would have been about this?

Keith Lister.

# Confessions



Sabine's terse replies to this questionnaire are, from the top; 'Manliness', 'Womanliness', 'Reading', 'Prehistoric research', 'Summer', 'Gentian', 'Quercy', 'Shakespeare', 'None in particula'r, and 'None'. He does not appear to give much away about himself, or does he? (source unknown).

## Press Article – Sabine the Writer

Extract from *The Sketch* 10 October 1894



## **Book Review - Now The Day Is Over**

Author: Harold Kirk-Smith Publisher: Richard Kay, Boston, Lincs Subtitle: The Life and Times of Sabine Baring-Gould 1834-1924 Price £20

Issued in a plain blue cloth with gilt lettering on the spine and a charmingly idiosyncratic dustwrapper, and clearly printed on heavy art paper, this biography is no mere repetition or update of its two predecessors. Dr. Kirk-Smith has invested a great deal of scholarly research into his work, drawing extensively on the reviews and articles contemporary with his subject as well as Baring-Gould's own writings. He has skillfully brought to life the characters and events he describes, and puts them helpfully into their historical and social context.

Following an absorbing if somewhat biased overview of the 19th century church history - Lord Shaftesbury is presented as 'a bigoted Evangelical' for instance -the author steers a balanced and interesting course through the intricacies of the family history, with enough detail to add substantially to the knowledge and understanding of those familiar with Purcell and Dickinson. This is especially the case with the earlier part of Baring-Gould's life, enhanced by the skilful intermingling of quotations from the autobiographical novel THROUGH FLOOD & FLAME. Perusal of the relevant correspondence had added to our understanding of THE VICAR OF MORWENSTOW controversy, and of Baring Gould's social life. There is a well rounded chapter on life at Lew Trenchard with insight into details about the main houses in the story, and Sabine's life as a JP; chapter 10.

'The Archaeologist and Collector of Folk Songs' is likewise really interesting and informative. Many of the novels are clearly summarized, with assessments and comments from contemporary critics.

Your reviewer would want to suggest that a book presumably intended for the general reader is not perhaps the place for a partisan estimation of Baring-Gould's theological views - though surely brave to attempt something! Similarly the rather heavy emphasis on the blessings of 'high churchmanship' might not be to every reader's taste.

There are some lapses which more careful sub-editing could have avoided. ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS was published in THE CHURCH TIMES (back cover blurb); the year of Charles I's execution was 1649 (p18); Clare College was known as Clare Hall in SBG's time (p52); 'synodically' is likewise anachronistic (p121); 'Peace, perfect peace' is the only hymn of Edward Bickersteth's to survive in Hymns Ancient & Modern, The English Hymnal and Hymns for Today's Church, but the Anglican Hymnbook, still widely used, contains five of his hymns (as it does also of SBG's); Grace died in 1916, so there is a discrepancy in the dating of the heating system (p214); the editor of THOUGHTS FROM S. BARING-GOULD does acknowledge 'kind permission of Methuen, Cassell and the author - so perhaps there was a lapse of SBG's memory, or on the part of the postman (p238).

It is not clear that the appendices add much of value to the book, except A - the family tree.

The notes and references are well laid out, although the blanks could have been sorted out at the proof-reading stage; the index is certainly enhanced by the helpful identifications in brackets. Quite a serious irritant for the reader is the unduly large number of printing errors, and especially the inconsistent and quirky punctuation. Not at all troubled by these,

but for the cover price of a book in which the few modest illustrations all appear at the beginning, a higher standard should have been obtained.

David Shacklock

### **More Printed References**

Victorian London - Priscilla Metcalf. Cassell 1972 p.143.

Vanity Fair (American Edition) Sept 1996. Onward Christiane Amanpour 1

Stately Homes 1997 - David Young. p26.

Methodist Hymnbook Illustrated p.302/3, 380 & 423.

Abide With Me. The World of Victorian Hymns - Ian Bradley SCM Press 1997. 13 refs.

The Genealogist's Guide - Geoffrey B. Barrow. Research Publishing Co. 1977 p10.

The Anglican Church p.70 - ref. 1887 Jubilee book of specially commissioned hymns incl.SBG. Fellowship Hymn Book - ref. A&M 1904.

Gilbert H. Doble - S.Carantoc: A Cornish Saint - King's Stone Press 1932(2nd) (no.14 in Cornish Saints series) - p.11 parenthesis & ref. Skene, Zimmer & Bury: Life of St. Patrick p.314; p.13 SBG/Fisher

## SBGAS Newsletter, No 26.

### Editorial

The last newsletter just preceded the Meet and "Red Spider" experience which was our major event of the year, so there is much to catch-up on. This extravaganza of Baring-Gould activity was extremely well organised by Roger and Sybil who had clearly undertaken a tremendous amount of work researching and organising a full and very interesting programme - Well done!

There are two impressions of the weekend, one by Becky Smith and another by yours truly. Twenty two people attended including President Merriol and all our officials, who later attended the AGM chaired by Roger in Bratton Clovelly Hall - minutes reproduced in this issue.

Thanks to Becky and Martin for their substantial contributions to this newsletter and also to Hazel Harvey who I hope will not be offended by her article being carried over to June.

Thanks also to many others who have supplied tasty snippets of information to fill those awkward little spaces. Please keep them coming.

Talking about snippets of information you will recall in the last issue there was a Page of Confessions (page 6) where Sabine identified his favourite holiday resort as Quercy. Well, while touring the back lanes of Devon last summer, Sylvia and I accidentally stumbled across the hamlet of Quercy close to Lew Trenchard. I thought it odd that Sabine should name it as his favourite holiday resort but thought no more of it until recently, when old friends who spend much time in France, spoke of the historic district of Quercy (Land of Oaks) which they happen to know fairly well! Having reached for copies of Deserts of Southern France and Cliff Castles and Cave Dwellings, I suddenly realised that Sabine's favourite resort was Quercy in France and not his native Devon! Has anyone any knowledge\tales of either Quercy?

Keith Lister

## **The Red Spider Walk**

Well, it was actually a drive, in convoy, but some walking did happen. For me, from the start, this day was a delicious mixture of nostalgia and new information. Standing outside the church porch at Bratton Clovelly, listening to the very erudite Simon Timms of the Devonshire Association, I could not see only my father's grave but also my long-time friend George, pottering in the garden of Court Barton Cottage.

Baring-Gould frequently took services in Bratton, and as a very tiny child he lived in the grandest house in the village - now known as Eversfield. He is known to have paid visits to virtually all the homes in the parish at some point in his long life, and developed his own quirky impressions of many of them. One of the aspects of this complex man that I most relish is his intelligence and clear-sightedness. Where, most people, then and now, exist in a kind of unperceiving fog, SBG had a quality of attention and vision which resonates in his writings to this day. The short passages from Red Spider which Roger Bristow had arranged to be read out at points of the journey amply illustrated this.

At Chimsworthy I was transported with personal delight at the opportunity to revisit my one-time home. Rather too much so for the occasion, perhaps. The Baring-Gould connection, always slightly tenuous, was temporarily lost, I fear. However, there are many features in existence now which have changed hardly at all since Red Spider was written. The beams in the shippon end of the house date back to 1305 (how very accurate!), and are just as SBG describes them.

The perennially fruitless search for the Look-Out Stone from the book was re-enacted with much theorizing as to whether it had ever existed and if so where. Then to Wellon's Cairn, where the historical facts of the hanged murderer were reasonably well established. I had never been entirely clear as to where this cairn was, until now.

Finally to Langworthy Farm, which gave rise to some divisions of opinion as to its atmosphere. Essentially, to me, the back of the house is dour, Gormenghast-like, with unusual lead-coloured cladding over the roofs and upper walls, while the front has a run down Colonial air, with long grass and untended corners where brambles prevail. It was very easy to imagine Taverner Longford and Mrs Veale living there in unhealthy isolation. The enjoyment of the day was greatly enhanced by the company. It is always a treat to be amongst interested informed people, and this was a five-star example. I was thrilled to meet Merriol at last, as well as Roger and other SBGAS members. It was also gratifying to sell so many Praxis titles over tea, after the 'walk'

I hope to be part of many future events and meetings of this kind. There is every sign that Baring-Gould and his writings are firmly on the map in Devon now, for which I think we might all congratulate ourselves.

Becky Smith.

## **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 close by 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 Lister

### **Annual General Meeting At Bratton Clovelly 25 Oct 1997.**

Members and spouses present; Merriol Almond, Roger & Pam Bristow, Celia Eastlake, Martin Graebe, Patrick Hutton, Keith & Sylvia Lister, Harold & Mildred Kirk-Smith, Mary Rolfe, Davis Shacklock, Ray & Shirley Scott, Rebecca Smith & Sybil Tope.

There were no apologies for absence.

The Secretary explained that this was the first AGM in three years (the last held at Horbury, Yorks) and in that time there had only been one Committee Meeting on Nov 15 1996 when David Shacklock expressed his wish to stand down after 8 years as Editor of the Newsletter. He wished to carry on as an ex-officio Committee Member and Sybil Tope and Roger Bristow both said that they were prepared to carry on as Treasurer and Secretary, respectively.

The AGM is the traditional time for the membership at large to elect a new Committee. The Secretary, however, pointed out that as Keith Lister had only just taken over as Editor, it was appropriate that he should continue in that post until at least the next AGM. The posts of Treasurer and Secretary were open for re-election, but in the absence of volunteers for these posts, Sybil and Roger agreed to continue.

The Secretary appealed to those present for volunteers as ex-officio Committee Members. The following names were put forward: Patrick Mutton (proposed by Keith Lister, seconded by Sybil Tope), Ray Scott (prop. David Shacklock, sec. by Patrick Mutton) and Martin Graebe (prop. by Keith Lister, sec. by Merriol Almond). They were duly elected unopposed.

The question of the form of the next Annual Meeting was discussed. One proposal was that we should do a walk (on the lines of Red Spider) based upon Mehalah, in Essex. David Shacklock would contact Jim Sunnocks to sound out the feasibility of this walk. Martin Graebe had a friend who might be prepared to help.

Martin said that there would probably be a conference of Folk Singers in Devon in May 1998, with a special emphasis on the work of Baring-Gould. Possibly there could be a gathering to coincide with this. Keith Lister appealed for ideas to mark the Millennium and the meeting closed at 6pm.

Roger Bristow.

### **Devonshire Fiddling 100 years ago**

Devonshire and fiddle music are relative strangers to each other. This becomes rapidly obvious whenever folk musicians in the County gather for a session. They love their squeeze-boxes and the memory of Bob Cann still drives the rhythm forward. The free reed instrument, though, is a relative newcomer and the Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould, collector of folk songs and many other unconsidered historical trifles tells us a little about Devonshire fiddlers of the 1890s when he was actively collecting folk songs.

Baring-Gould knew at least two fiddlers. Peter Isaacs was introduced to him by Miss Bertha Bidder of Stoke Fleming. Isaacs earned his living by repairing saddles and harness on the farms of South Devon. Though lame he lived on the road, sheltering in farm outbuildings as he made his rounds and picked up songs and tunes as he travelled.

Baring-Gould paid Isaacs a small wage to collect tunes for him but the arrangement does not appear to have been particularly successful since Baring-Gould's manuscripts only record two tunes as having been provided by Isaacs; a version of 'General Wolfe' and 'Follow my Love'.

The other, and even more interesting fiddler was William Andrews of Sheepstor. Baring-Gould first visited Andrews in 1890 with his musician colleague Henry Fleetwood Sheppard. On this occasion they were not very successful in obtaining anything of interest from him. Baring-Gould went back, though, in 1892 with his other collaborator Frederick Bussell. This time the magic worked and Baring-Gould writes: 'his shyness was broken down and we spent two hours with him, noting down his old airs. We might have got more but the Rector kindly came in and insisted on our going to tea with him. We could not refuse and then had to hasten to catch our train to return and, as we passed, more than an hour after having left the old man, we heard him still fiddling'.

Baring-Gould recognised that the old man had a valuable store of old tunes. Andrews explained how, when he had played for dances in the farm houses of the area, all the young folk sang as they danced and the 'burden' or refrain served to mark the turns in the dance. Baring-Gould was therefore puzzled that he wasn't able to remember more than a few lines of any song. Andrews supplied the explanation saying that he 'minded his viddle more than them zingers' and so never really listened to the words of the songs that he was playing along to - a sentiment with which many present day folk musicians would be sympathetic.

In his cottage at Sheepstor the old man had a rack in the ceiling that was full of music including a number of ancient church music manuscripts as well as secular tunes. Luckily, he lent one of his manuscript tune books to Baring-Gould and from this 21 tunes were copied. These can now be found in volume 14 of the Rough Manuscript that Baring-Gould donated to Plymouth Library. This small collection is the only known record of traditional fiddle playing in Devonshire at the end of the last century. One of Andrews' tunes, though, was given new life by Baring-Gould who reconstructed a set of words from the old man's telling of what the song had been about, remembered from when he had played along to it years before. This song was 'Old Adam the Poacher' which can be found in the 1905 edition of 'Songs of the West'. This is a strange little tune of unusual construction. As Baring Gould wrote 'One would like to know what was the dance performed to it'. No matter - it is a beautiful little tune and a wonderful memory of the man who was one of the last of the traditional fiddlers of Devonshire.

Martin Graebe

### **Book Review - Church Times 16 January 1998**

*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. Article reproduced by courtesy of Church Times.

## **More Thoughts from S. Baring-Gould**

Compiled by H.B. Elliott.

I call it a gross outrage when you have been admitted to man's intimacy, to get possession of his secrets and walk off with them. If I had taken your spoons to a Jew and sold them, I should be less of a thief and scoundrel than the man who uses his association with a man to lay hold of all the private and discreditable passages of his life, and then hawk them for money.

Certain persons are mentally incapable of understanding a simile; a good many are morally unwilling to apply one to themselves.

What a fortunate thing for us, if we could see the consequences of our acts before they took place. Then we should never wish to do, certainly never do foolish things.

## **Music & Drama Group**

Our new member Dr Ron Wawman sends members information about the activities of the Music and Drama Group who entertained us so well at the Red Spider Event.

If members have any suggestions or wish to help, please contact Ron direct. Letter from: Red Spider Company Music and Drama Group Stable Cottage Lewdown, Okehampton, Devon EX20 4DQ

To: The Editor Newsletter Sabine Baring-Gould Appreciation Society

Dear Keith

Following the hugely successful Wren Trust Production in Lewdown of a brilliant dramatic adaptation by Tim Laycock of "Red Spider", members will want to know about further developments.

In response to popular demand February saw a rerun of the play at Bratton Clovelly where of course the action takes place and incidentally where several members of our Company live some in houses mentioned in the novel. We again played to full houses and everyone had a great time.

Perhaps more exciting we have harnessed the local enthusiasm for this project by forming an amateur dramatic and music group based on the villages of Lewdown and Bratton Clovelly and called "Red Spider Company". Members will be pleased to learn that an important aim of the Company is the celebration and promotion of the works of Sabine Baring-Gould. The annual subscription for adult membership is £6, with a rate of £10 for

families. There is also a tier of membership known as "Friends of Red Spider Company" who we hope will support us through donations and who will be kept informed of all our activities including our social events which they are welcome to attend.

One of the things we hope to do is to commission further dramatic adaptations of Sabine's novels and produce them locally. We have avidly read several of the Devon based books to find out which would best lend themselves to the sort of production we could put on. We could well be working on a short story suitable for Xmas 99 followed by a full length production along the lines of "Red Spider" in 2000. Watch this space.

This year however we are looking to commission a short series of sketches with linking narrative featuring episodes from the life and work of the great man. No doubt we will be turning to members of the Appreciation Society, particularly those who live locally for help in the necessary research. The guidance and support of the Society over the next few years will be much appreciated.

We realise we are being ambitious but we will be working closely with wren and will do our best.

Yours sincerely

Ron Wawman

Secretary Red Spider Company.

## SBGAS Newsletter, No 27.

### **Editorial**

As I assemble this Newsletter it is good to see the wide range of events arranged in the near future by SBGAS, the Red Spider Company and Wren Trust, details of which are enclosed.

Many thanks to the following members for their valuable contributions to this edition: John Reboul who shares a rare picture of a thoughtful SBG and Dan Woodley who has kindly dug out long forgotten letters sent by SBG to his Great-Grand-father Rev Irvine Kempt Anderson. The centre page is given over to Hazel Harvey who raises an interesting issue about Sabine's birthplace and Martin Graebe provides us with a comprehensive review of The Moor by Laurie King.

Keith Lister

## Photograph Of SBG

John Reboul believes this photograph of SBG belonged to a Miss Molly L. Barnes, an American and talented amateur photographer who lived in Andover, Massachusetts. John's mother, Adele (Baring-Gould) Reboul, said that Miss Barnes met her mother, Marion Baring- Gould, (the wife of Edward S. Baring Gould, the eldest son of Sabine Baring-Gould) on a transatlantic trip between England and the United states. Miss Barnes and John's grand- mother became close friends and Miss Barnes frequently visited Lew both before and after World War I and became known to his mother and to John as "Aunt" Molly. His mother maintained the friendship when she went to New York and he remembers visiting Aunt Molly several times in Andover. Based on the age of Adele, her two brothers in photographs on other pages of the album and pictures of London dated August 9 1914, John guesses that the picture was taken during the summer of 1914.



## Old Family letters

Dan Woodley was recently sorting through family papers when he came across some bits from his Great Grandfather, Reverend Irvine Kempt Anderson which will be of interest to others. IKA was Rector of Mary Tavy (or Tavy St Mary) from the 1890's until he died in 1923 and thus was a near neighbour of SBG and knew him well.

Dan's mother knew her Grandparents well (died in 1936) as she lost her own mother in her early 'teens and lived in school holidays at Mary Tavy Rectory for five or six years. It was his mother who told him how close her Grandfather was to SBG and that both were on the Dartmoor Exploration Committee and in the Devonshire Association. They spent many happy days on the Moor together mapping hut circles etc. and Dan owns various maps "surveyed by IKA"

However, what may prove more widely interesting are three letters written by SBG to Dan's Great Grandmother;

The first, dated 1896, may be thought a leg-pull by a modern Vicar like David Shacklock as it announces that he is going abroad for three or four years to get his children educated! It also mentions meeting "the Kellys" which is a major coincidence as Dan's mother and father took rooms in Kelly House, near Lifton, immediately after he was demobbed from the War and where he spent a few school holidays before joining the Navy. (Dan thinks there was but one Kelly around then, John Kelly whom he thinks, lived somewhere quite close but not in the big house). Can anyone help with this?

The second offers his Great-Grandmother condolences on the death of her mother. (whom he remembers well and who after vacating the Rectory lived in a house in Mary Tavy called Tavy Dale close to the Church)

The third is a very chatty and friendly letter, written before his Great-Grandfather's death. Dan makes the observation that SBG'S character shines right out of the letters. (Supplied but unfortunately not published due to poor reproduction)

## The house where Sabine was born?

'I was born on January 28th 1834, in a corner house, still standing, in Dix's Field, Exeter'.  
SBG Early Reminiscences 1834-64 (1923) p3.

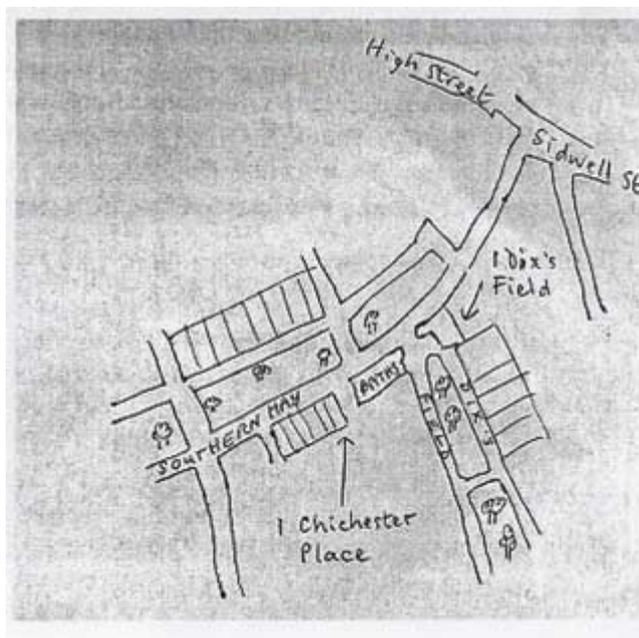
The birth certificate and parish register tell a slightly different story:

'Place of Birth: 1 Chichester Place'.

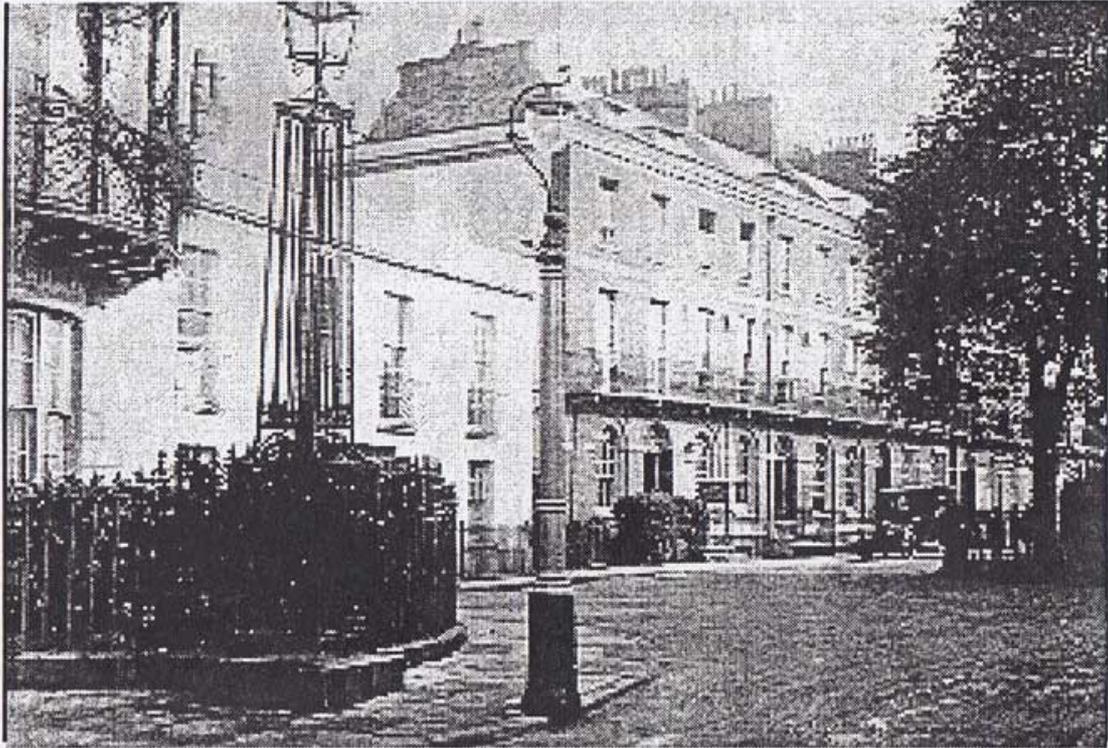
Chichester Place is a stucco'd terrace in classical style, separated from the corner of Dix's Field only (now) by Southernhay United Reformed Church and (then) by the Hot and Cold Baths. Sabine may have named Dix's Field rather than Southernhay East (of which Chichester Place is one block) to indicate precisely the section of Southernhay in which he first saw the light. Both Dix's Field and this part of Southernhay are in the parish of St. Sidwell, the church where he was baptised, and his parents had been married.

The Valuation of Exeter 1838 lists the occupiers, owners and rates due for each dwelling. Sarah Hill was at 1 Dix's Field, John Jackson at 1 Chichester Place.

If we put a plaque to SBG'S birthplace, should it be on Chichester Place (still standing, very elegant) or on the traffic island where 1 Dix's Field stood until the blitz of 1942?



Map of Exeter, Showing Dix's Field and Chichester Place



Entrance to Dix's Field showing part of the Regency House where SBG was born in 1834.

From Aspects of Exeter - P. Thomas & J. Warren



Chichester Place (Now Terrace) Southernhay East.

From 18th Century Exeter, Robert Newton

## **Book Reviews:**

### **The Moor by Laurie R King**

When first I heard about this novel the notion of Sherlock Holmes having married the much younger woman who has replaced an elderly Watson as his assistant seemed unlikely. I could almost hear the sound of the Sherlockians revolving gently in their comfy chairs. To have Baring- Gould introduced as Sherlock's Godfather and life-long friend seemed likewise destined to cause heart murmurs among the readership of this magazine. Relax Ladies and Gentlemen - it works!

The Moor is a harsh mistress and a fickle friend - but she can be a delightful companion. Like Sabine Baring-Gould I fell in love with her as a teenager and, during school holidays, explored her alone and on foot. She was the reason I went to work in Devon and, now I've moved away, I return to her as often as possible. Dartmoor is, without doubt, one of the most strongly drawn characters in this book. It is a great achievement that Laurie King has captured her brooding personality as successfully as Baring-Gould did in his writing and to a degree that Conan Doyle never managed in 'Hound of the Baskervilles'.

In 'The Moor' Laurie King has achieved a dynamic balance between three leading characters. Firstly her heroine, Mary Russell, young wife of Sherlock Holmes, a tall, bespectacled Oxford academic in her twenties. Secondly the character of Dartmoor herself and finally Sabine Baring- Gould. I omit Sherlock Holmes from this list because he never quite comes to life as the others do and does not grow far beyond the constraints that Conan Doyle placed on him.

The plot is simple and well constructed. Sherlock has been called to Devon by Baring-Gould to investigate a haunting and suspicious death involving the appearance of Lady Howard and a spectral hound. This was the story of the song 'My Lady's Coach', that Sabine's nurse, Mary Bickell sang to him and which can be found in 'Songs of the West'. Mary Russell is summoned by Holmes to help and to enable him to disappear from the narrative for long periods on an errand for Mycroft. Russell is thus freed to get to grips with the mystery while finding out at the same time about Baring-Gould and about Dartmoor and learning to appreciate both. Needless to say there is a crime involved and unexpected links to the earlier dog mystery. The climax brings the forces of good to a satisfying confrontation with the villains and Russell, of course, saves Holmes' life. An interesting mechanic of the storytelling is the use of Baring-Gould's own books as a way to introduce key elements of the plot, as well as for the chapter headings.

For me the plot was secondary to my interest in the characterisation. The picture of Baring-Gould that emerges is well drawn. King has done her homework and, like her heroine, has taken the time to soak up the atmosphere of Lewtrenchard and of Dartmoor. The novel is set in the closing months of 1923, a few weeks before Baring-Gould's death. The picture of the man that emerges is very credible and fits both with my knowledge and preconceptions. The descriptions of Lew Manor and its surroundings are good and, of course, one of the corpses makes its debut in the Quarry - It would have been a struggle to resist its appeal as a location for dark deeds.

The thanks given at the beginning of the book record that Laurie King sought the help of a number of members of the Society and its friends, including our President. It is obvious that she visited the area and took the time to read a number of the appropriate books written by Baring-Gould and to talk to people about him. This is obvious from the level of

detail that emerges and I would have to say that I felt that, having read the book, I had got a better understanding of the man. There were a number of anecdotes that were new to me. There is also the underlying apocryphal belief that Conan Doyle visited Baring-Gould at Lewtrenchard and conceived 'Hound of the Baskervilles' during that visit.

So! Did I enjoy the book? Yes, though the second reading was necessary to overcome the basic unease that I started with. Would I read another book by Laurie King? Yes, I would like, some time, to try the other books in this series, 'A Letter to Mary', 'A Monstrous Regiment of Women' and 'The Beekeeper's Apprentice'. Would I recommend members of the Society to read them? Yes! Beg, borrow or buy a copy. Is it great literature? No, but then neither was most of What SBG wrote and like his books in their time it's excellent entertainment. Now, how about that legend of Baring-Gould, George Bernard Shaw and 'Pygmalion' - but that's another story!

Martin Graebe

'The Moor' by Laurie R King is published by St Martin's Press, New York at \$23.95. It is not anticipated that it will be published in the UK for some time but you can buy it on the Internet through Amazon Books( [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)) at a discounted price that will trade off the cost of having it sent by air from the USA. For those who do not have Internet access you might try 'Murder One' on Charing Cross Road who have imported some copies for sale to discerning readers. I learnt this from an Internet site devoted to Mary Russell - 'The Beekeeper's Holmes Page' which can be found at [www.goldennet/~rebeccaj/beekeepr.html](http://www.goldennet/~rebeccaj/beekeepr.html)

### **Through Flood & Flame**

Very readable. Some superb caricatures. Of particular interest to members of the DA (Devonshire Association) as it is to a large extent autobiographical. I read it at one (long) sitting. Strongly recommended.

David Pugsley

### **More Thoughts from S. Baring-Gould**

Compiled by H.B. Elliott.

I call it a gross outrage when you have been admitted to man's intimacy, to get possession of his secrets and walk off with them. If I had taken your spoons to a Jew and sold them, I should be less of a thief and scoundrel than the man who uses his association with a man to lay hold of all the private and discreditable passages of his life, and then hawk them for money.

Certain persons are mentally incapable of understanding a simile; a good many are morally unwilling to apply one to themselves.

What a fortunate thing for us, if we could see the consequences of our acts before they took place. Then we should never wish to do, certainly never do foolish things.