

# Sabine Baring-Gould Appreciation Society

## Newsletter 1998-99

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## SBGAS Newsletter, No 28.

### Editorial

Dear Members

I hope you have been able to make the best of our strange summer weather and perhaps get away for a while to re-charge the batteries. If you can spare an extra day or so to attend the October 'meet' at East Mersea it would be nice to see you there to enjoy the programme and the fellowship.

In this newsletter I have given an update on what is happening on the Internet so far as SBG is concerned. I hope you may take up the invitation just to see what is going on, not only in our Society but also in other Societies affiliated to the Alliance of Literary Societies of which we are members.

Thanks for a variety of contributions to this newsletter including an article entitled "Buying a wife" by Shirley Frise. Please keep them coming. Member Martin Graebe continues to develop our knowledge of SBG's music and Harold Kirk-Smith has now had his recent Biography of SBG issued in paperback. Not to be left out, I take this opportunity to inform you that my own biographical version of SBG's life is progressing quite well. I am, of course particularly interested in any matters relating to SBG's and Grace's time here in Yorkshire.

In recent weeks there has been several requests for back numbers of the newsletter, including whole sets which is a healthy sign. However, now that most 'spares' have been exhausted there is a need to assess demand before embarking on an expensive and time-consuming exercise to re-produce and dispatch them. If you require any complete/part sets or individual copies, please let me have your

request by 1st November 1998 so they can be added to the list of those who have already ordered. At this stage it looks as though the cost of re-production will be around £2 per copy.

Should you have any items for the AGM on 17 October please send them to our Hon. Secretary Roger Bristow as soon as possible.

As I speak preparations are going ahead for our forthcoming visit to East Mersea where it will be nice meeting old and new members. A full report will be available for next issue in February.

In the meantime, Sylvia and myself send you our early seasonal greetings for Christmas and the New Year.

Keith Lister

## Watchdog

Ray Scott has kindly forwarded a copy of recent correspondence with the B. B.O following the Songs of Praise programme on Sunday 9 August. When Sir Harry Secombe introduced the hymn 'Onward Christian Soldiers' he said the words were written by Sir Arthur Sullivan which of course is incorrect. When this was drawn to the attention of the Programme Director the following reply was received:

"A correct graphic caption originally planned for the programme clearly stated that it was the music, not the words that Sir Arthur Sullivan was responsible for, but this was dropped in the last edit of the programme and unfortunately the slip-up in Sir Harry's script went unnoticed until transmission - a mistake which I can only apologise for and hope that it did not cause too much distress to your society members - particularly as the Rev Sabine Baring-Gould's words are in themselves so inspiring.

How interesting that the hymn was first sung at a children's Whit Sunday procession, and that it was originally set to a Haydn tune. I'm sure that the hymn is one which will make many future appearances on Songs of Praise as it continues to be one of the popular hymns most often requested by viewers - and hopefully we will make every endeavour to get the details correct in future.

Many thanks once again for taking the time and trouble to write to us and apologies once again for the slip up.

Yours faithfully Judith Gregory Songs of Praise".

Well done Ray.

## "The Web"

(Not to be confused with the newsletter of Red Spider Co)

I respect the fact that many of us are turned off by the mention of computers. Whether we like it or not it is a fact that all our lives are now daily affected by their use and the recent publication of the Starr report on the Internet illustrates the increasing importance of this form of communication.

Personally, I make much use of the e-mail facility which, to varying degrees has assisted me to assemble recent newsletters. So far as the World Wide Web (www) is concerned there appears to be no limit to its versatility and

an increasing number of our members now have access to it and indeed I hope we are soon to recruit our first member through its use!

If you do not have a computer why not ask your children/ grandchildren or perhaps your local library to access the following web sites to see what they have to offer concerning SBG and our Society;

- ◆ <http://www.btinternet.com/~greenjack/sbghome.html> (SBGAS member Martin Graebe)
- ◆ <http://www.Sndc.demon.co.uk> (Alliance of Literary Societies and look under B for Baring Gould. Also under Events)
- ◆ <http://www.beckysmith.demon.co.uk> (Member Becky Smith Praxis Books)
- ◆ Arthur Ransome pages at <http://arthur-ransome.org/AR> and under 'literary pages there is a reference to Mehalah with introduction and full text of the novel.... Have fun! Keith.

*Note 2018 – all these links are now out of date. Refer to the 'Links' page elsewhere on the SBGAS website. Haven't times moved on - MRG*

## Literary Matters

Harold Kirk-Smith's book "Now The Day is Over" The life and Times of Sabine Baring-Gould 1834-1924 is now available in paperback @£12.50p per copy from Richard Kay Publications 80, Sleaford Road, Boston, Lincs.

Shortly there is to be a re-print of 'A Garland of Country Songs' published by Llanerch Publishing of Lampeter. It will be available about the end of October at a cost of £12. More information from member Martin Graebe

Myths of the Middle Ages. A new edition of this title was seen in a remainder shop recently (£6.99). Ed. John Matthews -published Blandford (Cassell) 1996 - 2pp foreword by Cyril Tawney - 5pp intro by Editor + short introductory essay by him before each story (12 of the original 24 selected) - with specially commissioned colour paintings by Peter Komarnycky. At the end 3pp 'Further reading': 5 or 6 titles for each chapter - plain blue cloth covers in striking dustjacket... David Shacklock

A re-print of Mehalah will be available shortly and Member Becky Smith sends the following introduction:

Mehalah is a classic nineteenth-century novel, in the grand tradition of the Brontes, George Eliot and Charles Dickens. The strikingly strong echoes of Wuthering Heights and Jane Eyre at certain points in the story do nothing to detract from its merit - rather they enhance and enrich this piece of high emotional drama.

The storyline is a time-honoured one - a woman caught between the overwhelming and terrifying passion of one man - which repels and challenges her in its ruthless violence - and the safe but lukewarm love of a more ordinary individual. Like Catherine Earnshaw and Scarlett O'Hara before and since, she misguidedly takes the lesser man to her heart, and brings suffering upon herself accordingly.

Baring-Gould succeeds in conveying the force of male passion without ever once overtly hinting at any sexual element. Only the symbols and the veiled allusions reveal the power of Elijah's feelings. In an age before Freud, we have a dazzling array of Freudian situations. This is true from the first chapter, where Rebow voices a desire to pull off Mehalah's body- hugging guernsey, so as to wear it himself.

Interwoven into the dark melodrama of the story are several comic passages reminiscent not only of Dickens but of Rabelais and even Shakespeare. The cameo of the burdened Reverend Rabbit, with his fourteen children, is especially engaging, given that at the time of writing

Baring-Gould had a modest five or six children of his own -and then proceeded to emulate Mr Rabbit by bringing the total to an identical fourteen. There are many other pleasing diversions: the character of Charles Pettican, especially, conjures many a Dickensian forebear.

Elijah Rebow's character, however, is the central element in the book. The fact that he is named after the greatest of the Old Testament prophets must surely be significant. He is as single-mindedly sure of his own destiny, as outspoken and as feared in his small Essex community as his

namesake was on a wider Biblical stage. But despite the changes that take place in the novel, the reader never forgets the casual cruelty with which Rebow gets his own way, and the breathtaking enormity of his selfishness. Mehalah's courage in standing up to him ensures her a place in the canon of strong women in fiction, but her position remains essentially that of a victim.

The book was published in 1880, after three publishers had rejected it. Controversy raged from the first. Baring-Gould was compared not only to Emily and Charlotte Bronte, but to Thomas Hardy and R.D.Blackmore. Public opinion was divided, but sales were substantial. Mehalah has always been regarded as Baring-Gould's greatest novel. It is a sustained work of imagination and high drama. The pace is hectic, and the central relationship between the two main figures is shown in fearless detail.

There is as much to enjoy in it today as there was 120 years ago.

Becky Smith

## Buying a Wife

(From *Devon Family History Society Magazine* August 1998.)

After reading the article by Mr J.R. Millman (Aug. 1996), I discovered that the story of wife-sales originated in a book by Rev. Baring-Gould entitled "Devonshire Characters and Strange Events". He recalls that when he was a boy living in Lewtrenchard there was a tall thin man called Henry Frise who had bought his wife, Ann, from Okehampton Market for half-a-crown (12 1/2p.). He had led her home, a distance of twelve miles, by the halter, he holding it in his hand and she with the loop around her neck. He did not remove it until she was inside his house and the door had been closed behind them.

The Rev. Baring-Gould's grandfather, the Squire, and his uncle, the Rector of the parish, attempted to convince Henry that this was not a legal marriage in the eyes of the Church or State, but without success. As he lived in a cottage that was on 'lives', the Squire was unable to bring any more pressure to bear on him.

In the 1841 Census, for Lew Down, the family appear as Henry Frise (40), Ann Frise (35) Elizabeth (3) and Henry (6 weeks). There is a record in Thrushelton Parish Register of the baptism of young Henry on 20th March 1841, the son of Henry and Ann Frieze of Lew Trenchard (phonetic spelling by Clerk)

By 1851 the family are living at Frises Cottage, Lew Down. By this time Henry is 50 and a widower, his son Henry is 19 years old and there is also a daughter Ann, aged 7. Sadly Ann, the wife and mother, died in the summer of 1846. The Rector of the parish of Lewtrenchard refused to enter her as Ann Frise in the burial register for, in his opinion, that was not her legal name. Henry was so angry that he carried her remains off to another parish for burial, where the circumstances of their cohabitation were unknown.

Henry Frise died in Lew Down in August 1860 aged 60 years. Baptised on the 28th September 1800 in Thrushelton, he was the eleventh child of William Frise and his wife Elizabeth (nee Down).

He was also the village poet. Whenever a special event took place in the parish, he would compose some verses. The Rev. Baring-Gould recalled that on the marriage of the Squire's daughter Henry went down to the manor house with one of his compositions and was given his dinner and a crown (25p). It says something of the scale of values that a poem was worth twice the price of a wife! Unfortunately he is remembered more for buying a wife than his literary achievement.

Shirley Frise Bygrave.

## More Thoughts from SBG

Compiled by N.B. Elliott 1916.

- Many a man worships himself whom others don't think much of.
- Bank notes won't plaster sore consciences.
- Luck is not nailed to one point of the compass... Luck veers as the wind.
- It is bad to wear no drag on the tongue, but let it run downhill to smash.

## Shared Thoughts

Our latest member David Smithies has kindly agreed to allow publication of extracts from a recent communication to David Shacklock;

"My only tenuous connection with Sabine Baring Gould is that he recorded for posterity five of the songs of my x 3 great uncle Roger Luxton, 'The Song Man'. (A pity that SBG, judging some of Roger's lyrics indelicate, bowdlerized them somewhat, but I believe the originals are deposited in Plymouth Library).

I have also sung 'Onward Christian Soldiers' with gusto amidst vast and enthusiastic congregations in West Africa and in India and I am sure that the great man would have been pleased with the zeal with which we bombarded the gates of Heaven!

So, through discovering *Songs of the West* and with Sybil's encouragement, I have begun to appreciate the true worth - indeed, the genius, of Baring Gould and am the more entranced as I am able to extend my reading.

...I have been hugging myself with delight this morning as I have riffled through the two volumes you have sent.

"As I drove along, I chanced on an umbrella maker, trudging through the snow..." (page 132 of *Strange Survivals*). Schubert or Mendelssohn, reading that line, would have seized upon it to swell their cornucopias of *Leider* - SBG, high in a gig, sheltering under his scarlet tyrolese umbrella; the trudging artisan, dropping his pedestrian gamps in astonishment.

Then again, in *Village Preaching* (page 30) expounding

John 1: 22: "What sayest thou of thyself," he writes; "If you were to ask this question of almost everyone, and to accept 'their own estimates of themselves, you would form the opinion that the world was full of the most estimable fellows possible..."

There are jewels on every page. All this and 15 children, too. It makes one proud to be British.

Thanks David(s).

## **SBG References in Print**

Folk Tales of Devon - V Day Sharman - Nelson/Teaching of English series no.253 1912 - cont. Lady Howard's Coach (ch.9) & the Ringers of Torrington (ch.44) - source acknowledged on publisher's page. (Devonshire Characters & Strange Events)

West Country Christmas (A) - Chris Smith - Alan Sutton pbk 1989 - cont. Christmas 1862 (p.44f) from Further Reminiscences (p.109f)

Discovering English Folk Dance- Hugh Rippon - Shire 1975 (no.209 in Discovering series) - ref. P.58 (& thus see Country Dance Book 1 1909)

All Over Britain - JHB Peel Hale 1978 - ch.8 The Squarson: Devonshire (p.48-54) - note p.49 - 'Grace Poppleton' & 'Through Flood & Fire'!!

Countryside Companion (the) - comp. Sam Elder - O'Mara 1989 - ch.3 The Village Bard (p.101-8) - excerpts from Old Country Life ch.11 (not 'Ways' as note p.233)

Countryside of Britain (the) - James Turner - Ward Lock 1977 - ref.p.8 in Ronald Blythe's introduction.

Twentieth Century Dictionary of Christian Biography - Pasternoster/Baker 1995 - 13 line entry: not a good summary.

David Shacklock.

## SBGAS Newsletter, No 29.

### Editorial

Dear Members

There has been a host of activities since the last newsletter representing a lot of hard work both by members of SBGAS and other interest groups.

By the time you received the last newsletter, several energetic members of SBGAS had already participated in the very successful 3rd Annual Michaelmas Walk. This was followed by a musical evening/barbecue in the Dower House with entertainment by the Wren Trust and members of Red Spider Company.

Our main event was the Mehalah weekend Meet/AGM on 17/ 18 October arranged by Roger Bristow and Jim Sunnocks in conjunction with Marianne Jones and her team of cheerful volunteers who worked extremely hard to make the weekend such an outstanding success. Thanks to all concerned, including our host Jennie Pyle. Please see graphic reports from members Ray Scott, David Shacklock, Sybil Tope and AGM minutes by Roger Bristow.

In November the Wren Trust organised an S.B-G Celebration Day that opened with a concert at Lew Trenchard Manor, when President Merriol was presented with a microfiche of songs collected by her Great Grandfather. A Folk Service followed at St Peter's Church led by Rev Geoffrey Ball and the evening concluded with a sing-song at The Royal Exchange.

On the last two Saturdays in January, the Red Spider Company organised a Ceilidh at Bratton Clovelly & Lewdown. The event featured six dramatic sketches of Sabine collecting West Country Folk Songs and enjoyed a full house at both venues.

Looking to the future Roger Bristow has already prepared a very interesting outline programme for 13/14 November 1999 (details within)

Millennium Celebrations are also planned here in Horbury on Sunday 11 June 2000. Members of St.Peter's Church are to reproduce the 1865 Whitsuntide Parade from Horbury Brig featuring Sabine's Onward Christian Soldiers. Watch this space...

Keith Lister.

## **Some impressions of the East Mersea Meet.**

This being my first visit to Mersea Island I had no idea what to expect. My only two perceptions of Mersea being the Sabine Baring-Gould descriptions of both places and people, and in my road atlas this area of land reached by a causeway from the mainland. The island has been described as a place where the wind constantly blows, Mersea did not disappoint, and then wind was accompanied by driving rain! This was not going to dampen my enthusiasm for here was the location of Mehalah, the novel which resulted in Sabine Baring-Gould being compared with such as the Brontes and Thomas Hardy.

On arrival at East Mersea Village Hall it was good to be meeting other members again. After a welcoming coffee and an assurance from the locals that the inclement weather would clear we drove to the 'Old City' at West Mersea.

With "The Company Shed" protecting us from the wind we were given a brief family history, complete with photographs, by Heather Howard. The whole flavour of Mehalah was inside this shed, the smell of the salt marshes, the fruits of the sea (would Mrs De Witt be in for smelt, shrimps, dabs and eels to retail?), generations of seafaring people battling against the elements. I could imagine Mehalah giving a similar presentation.

On leaving the shed Heather conducted a tour of the Old City pointing out relevant buildings and streets. Heather gave us a real flavour of the area, people, and even the fish which everyone enjoyed at lunchtime. Thanks Heather.

Our next port of call was Virley Church, where Mehalah was married to Elijah Rebow. Although only a ruin there is sufficient to relate to the description given in the story - "Virley Church is not bigger than a stable that consists of two stalls and a loose box, where of the loose box represents the chancel." It is hoped that Colchester Borough Council through the Millennium Project will renovate these ruins and thus preserve this landmark with Mehalah Country.

Whilst lunching back at the Village Hall Mrs Penny Burns told us of her family's connection, through four generations, with the Rose Public House at Peldon (in the novel, Jane the landlady, was based on Penny Burn's grandmother). Penny had some very interesting old photographs to accompany this presentation. "A more desolate region can scarce be conceived, and yet it is not without beauty, gulls were screaming and curlew uttered their mournful cry." - Nothing could better confirm this description than a walk to Ray Island. David Nicholls who as National Trust Warden was able to give a very informative and enjoyable tour of the island led this walk.

Once more we return to the Village Hall, this time for tea, buying and selling of S.B-G books, and the AGM.

East Mersea Church was our early evening venue. The evening was begun with everyone singing 'Onward Christian Soldiers', we were then treated to readings by Marianne Jones and Jim Sunnocks, a brief history of S.B-G by Keith Lister and musical presentations by both Kathy Knight and Martin Graebe. The day was rounded off by a social visit to the Peldon Rose.

On Sunday morning a large number of members attended Parish Communion in East Mersea Church and I found it very interesting to hear our own David Shacklock preach.

After our `practice' singing of Onward Christian Soldiers on Saturday evening it was good to hear members in fine voice again on Sunday morning. There can be no better finish to an Annual Gathering.

We were so lucky over the weekend to have so many local people involved. By them being unable to hide the unbridled pride and enthusiasm they have in holding on to the legend of Mehalah, and of her creator Sabine Baring-Gould having been such a part of their history I am reminded of the inscription at Red Hall:- 'When I hold, I hold fast.'

Many thanks to all those involved in the organisation of this very enjoyable weekend.

Ray Scott

oo0oo

The rain cleared - the sun shone, the wind blew-Many of us miles from home, were spending a day in which fact and fiction were woven together in an Essex - Baring-Gould tapestry. No- one would have been surprised to see Sabine & Mehalah walking hand in hand in the wind to join us.

Truly a day to remember with grateful thanks to all involved in arranging it.

Sybil Tope.

oo0oo

#### Another View

Foul weather clearing & becoming superb... the buzzing and expectant crowd gathering in the Village Hall...meeting old friends and new...the warm welcome and efficient arrangements for a full and thoroughly enjoyable day (thank you Marianne)...the enthusiasm for Mehalah as a 'real' person...Heather's fascinating and 'fragrant' oyster shop and conducted tour of the City...the walk to the Ray: no scenario quite like it...baby B-J taking all in...busy book buying... the informal but multi-talented evening in speech and song at the church (thank you Keith, Kathy, Martin and Jim)...the social cum supper at the Peldon Rose...the chat and hospitality of the Rectory (thank you Robin and Jane)...the gathering at Church and afterwards on Sunday morning...the beautiful drive home...a great weekend, with Roger Bristow, Keith Lister, Marianne Jones, Heather Howard, David Nicholls, Penny Burr, Kathy Knight, Jim Sunnucks, Robin Elphick, and the ghost of old Sabine and all...and the ghost of old Sabine and all.

David Shacklock.

## **SBGAS Annual General Meeting, 17 October 1998**

Members and spouses attending were in alphabetical order): Roger and Pam Bristow, Nick and Christine Burgess-Jones, Felicity and Chris Craigan, Martin Graebe, Keith and Sylvia Lister, Lesley Moores, David Nicholls, Bill Rothern, Ray and Shirley Scott, David and Gillian Shacklock, Becky Smith, Jim Sunnucks, and Sybil Tope. Celia Westlake sent her apologies for not being able to attend.

The minutes of the last AGM (Oct. 25th 1997 at Bratton Clovelly) were read. After rectifying a serious omission from that meeting by inserting a belated thank you to David Shacklock for his sterling work as the Editor for the first eight years of the Society, the minutes were accepted as a true record of the 1997 AGM.

The Treasurer gave statement of the Society's finances. Basically, the funds stood at £409.63 as at Sept. 30th, a reduction of £96 from the preceding year (£505.87). However, it was pointed out that the true state of the finances was difficult to present accurately, as some members had paid in advance, whilst, more seriously, several members were in arrears. The Treasurer felt that although the balance had fallen in the year (largely due to increased costs (£356) of the Newsletter), there was probably no need to raise the subscription for the forthcoming financial year. However, the situation would probably need to be reviewed in one year's time. Leading on from this was the question of membership fee for overseas members. Currently, they pay £7.50 to reflect the extra postage to send the Newsletter abroad, and also to cover the currency conversion charge that banks impose (in practice a totally inadequate sum as the conversion charge is often equal to, or more, than the total cheque). This latter problem has now been resolved as our President, Dr Merriol Almond, has agreed to accept dollar cheques from American members and to reimburse the Society with a sterling cheque.

The question of members in arrears and how to deal with the problem was briefly discussed, but not resolved. After a short discussion, it was decided unanimously that the annual membership should coincide with the Society's financial year (Oct. 1st to Sept 30th) (Proposed by Ray Scott and seconded by Felicity Craigan). What was not decided at the meeting, but which was left to the Committee to deliberate) was how to treat existing members whose membership would normally fall due at differing times throughout the year, and new members who joined part way through the financial year. After some discussion, two options emerged; firstly, those members whose current membership was 3 months or less (or new members joining within 3 months of the end of the financial year) would have their membership extended to the end of the following financial year; secondly, members joining part way through a financial year would pay the full membership (currently £6), but receive the relevant number of back issues of the Newsletter for that year. It was agreed at the meeting to let the Committee discuss the options and decide which one to adopt.

Keith Lister raised the question of selling back numbers of the Newsletter - was it Society policy, and if so, how much do we charge? It was agreed that there is no problem in selling backnumbers. As for the cost, in the past Newsletters with coloured covers have been sold at £2 each, but it was thought that £1.50 was more appropriate for those with photocopied covers. The question of discount for complete runs was discussed, but decided against.

The question was then raised about building up a stock of backnumbers (no copies of most of

the earlier Newsletters exist) and how many should be produced at a time (the total cost of photocopying has to be balanced against the convenience of being able to produce several copies at a time, rather than print-on-demand). Keith would obtain a quotation for the cost of producing a complete run and then calculate how much of the Society's funds it would be appropriate to lock up in say 5, 10 or 15 full sets. Part of the difficulty is in estimating the number of copies that will be needed for new members (slowly rising at present) coupled with future sales of back numbers.

The AGM is the traditional time for members to elect a new Committee. No new names or volunteers for the Committee had been received. For the three principal posts (Secretary, Treasurer and Editor), the present holders had indicated that they were prepared to stand for re-election, but Keith Lister stated that this would be his last year as Editor. Jim Sunnucks proposed that the Committee be re-elected en bloc. This was seconded by Becky Smith and carried unanimously.

The question of the next Annual gathering was discussed. There were two principal suggestions. The first, was that we could have another meeting on the lines of Mehalah and Red Spider. In the Roar of the Sea was suggested as a possibility. Whilst an attractive idea, the logistics of organising a meeting in an area where we have no local contact is difficult. It was also felt that we had now had two consecutive meetings based on novels and, although both were very successful, the next meeting ought to have a different emphasis. 10

The second suggestion was for a meeting at Killerton House, Devon. This would have a strong emphasis on folk songs (much important SBG folksong material is held at Killerton). Examples of some of his manuscript and annotated songs could be seen and discussed. It was hoped to involve the Wren Trust to perform some of the songs. Martin would approach the Wren Trust to see if they were agreeable and if so, would then approach the National Trust at Killerton. If we go ahead with this meeting, a day in November is likely [November 13th].

The Secretary had received from one of our members, Cedric Baring-Gould, the typescript of his father's (Arthur) biography of Sabine Baring-Gould (Arthur was Sabine's half brother). It was not clear how much new material was contained in the typescript and so a sub-committee consisting of Keith Lister, Becky Smith and Roger Bristow was formed to assess its worth for publication.

Keith asked whether the Mehalah meeting had been notified to the press. It was thought that this had been done by Marianne Jones. He also raised the question of having a Society Press Officer, but no decision was taken.

David Shacklock informed the meeting that one of our members, Richard Dalby, was reprinting Margery of Quether and hoped that it would be published in time for Christmas.

Martin Graebe announced the launch of the microfiche of Baring-Gould folksong material at Killerton House earlier in the autumn.

Any further discussion was prevented by the Society having to vacate the Village Hall. The Secretary closed the meeting at 6.15pm.

## References In Print

- Penzance & W. Cornwall - Ward Lock Red Guide 8th ed.rev. & re-illustrated -p.xxvi 'a Devonian of Devonians' + Book of the West/II.
- Walking in Cornwall - JRA Hockin - Methuen 1949 4th ed - fwd AL Rowse - p.130 Vicar of Morwenstow.
- Cornwall & Its People - Dent 1946 (rpt) - p55n Cornish Curiosities; p.70 qu.+note: ditto Short History of The Parish
- Churches of East Mersea & West Mersea Essex (A) - 1968 (pamphlet) - p.15 'Mehalah first issued anonymously.'
  - Hidden Places of Devon & Cornwall (The) - M&M pbk 9in print £4.95) - ref.p.185.
  - Victorian Essex - Essex Record Office Publ.no.40 1968 2nd ed. pamphlet) - reflintro.
  - Renowned "Passon" Hawker of Morwenstow (The) - HR Smallcombe 1963 (rpt) - with notes from The Vicar of Morwenstow - refs. preface,p.4,6,12.
- In Search of Essex - SM Jarvis & CT Harrison - Essex Countryside - p.188 re Mehalah ' the Lorna Doone of Essex 12
- Rivers and Streams of England (The) - AG Bradley -Bracken 1985 (orig.Black 1909) - p.184 SBG 'that venerable oracle of Devonian Lore, that "Vates Sacer" of the West'
- Seasons of Change - Sadie Ward - Allen & Unwin/BCA 1982 - p.167-9, 182 re collecting songs.
- Surrey of One Hundred Years Ago - Aylwin Guilmant -Alan Sutton 1997 (rpt) (rem.L7.99) - p.86 section with illustrations re broom-squires.
- Christmas Carols & Their Stories - Christopher Idle - Lion/ Sandy Lane 1995 (orig.1988) - Sing Lullaby + lively pen portrait of SBG p.74f.

## SBGAS Newsletter, No 30.

### Editorial

Dear Members

As we approach the longest day of the year it doesn't seem twelve months since Sylvia and I were preparing for our journey to North Cape. I wonder where the last year has gone!!

The main article in this issue is a very interesting contribution from our Secretary Roger Bristow who has prepared a series of literary reviews of SBG's John Herring published anonymously in 1883. These critiques are very enlightening since they give us a valuable independent glimpse into Sabine's generally well-hidden strengths and weaknesses. There was also just sufficient space for a short article of my own which

I hope readers may find thought provoking. We also have more selected quotes from "Thoughts of S. Baring-Gould" supplied by Sybil Tope.

Some of you may also be pleased to know that the question of the provision of back numbers of our Newsletters has now been satisfactorily resolved. Our member Philip Weller has been supplied with original newsletters from which he has kindly volunteered to supply single or multiple copies upon request - please see details elsewhere.

A constant theme that I have picked up as Editor is the dismay, shock and yes, even horror at what has been done in the name of the hymn Onward Christian Soldiers which is now no longer protected by copyright. To say the least the latest version,

entitled Onward Christian Pilgrims by Michael Forster in New Anglican Edition of Hymns Old and New, is rather limp compared to the original. Before it is eroded even further I wonder if there might be a case for some proactive publicity in support for Sabine's original words?

Your response (or lack of it) is eagerly awaited.

Finally the next issue will be my last after which I shall be handing over to Rebecca Smith\* who is to produce a new cover to take us into the Millennium. If you have any articles for the October issue, please send them to my home address or via my new e-mail address: keith@listerk.freemove.co.uk Don't worry about inundating me with items since any excess items will give Becky a good start in February!

Keith Lister

## **Lew Trenchard Post-Box**

While mailing postcards in the letterbox around the corner from Lew Trenchard Church I happened to notice the V R (Victoria Regina) logo on the front which set my mind thinking about the history of the box and its use over the years.

Some time later I consulted the Post Office Archives in London to discover that the wall-mounted box is a type 'C' (small), manufactured by W.T. Allen & Co., during the period 1881-1904. This silent servant has therefore been in use for around a hundred years and by the Millennium will have served as a mail depository during three centuries.

During its lifetime the box must have safeguarded literally tons of local mail as it awaited collection before onward delivery to addressees across the nation and beyond. Outgoing letters and cards conveying good news and bad. Loquacious hand-written Victorian missives in which people painstakingly expressed fascinating and confidential aspects of their private lives to confidants. Announcements of births and marriages and the dreaded black edged cards conveying news of the loss of loved ones. News connected with two Great Wars, postcards from rural holidays in Devon, the payment of bills for goods and services and the dispatch of those small securely wrapped packages that so excite an eager recipient.

While SBG'S early detailed letters to relatives and friends followed the traditional Victorian trend, by the time he moved to Lew Trenchard in 1881 he seems to have fallen into the habit of penning brief, business-like notelets. By then his energy was already directed toward writing a succession of novels, which in-turn, generated correspondence with a growing readership, publishers and very occasionally his critics. In reality he probably had little time available for the former luxury of recreational writing.

Some of SBG'S mail would have been weighty hand-written manuscripts relating to John Herring, Court Royal, the Gaverocks and Red Spider that had to be carefully squeezed through the small aperture of the box to avoid them being damaged! He also regularly dispatched urgent letters to London and Exeter in the confident expectation that they would be delivered the next day! All this was well over 75 years ago.

Although many similar post-boxes have now been ignominiously consigned to the scrap heap, wouldn't it be rather nice when this particular box is replaced if it could be preserved in some way? After all it is part of the heritage of the area and a shiny new model would somehow not just be the same!

Perhaps someone can recall a story connected the history of this post-box?

Keith Lister

## **John Herring - What the Reviewers Thought**

I recently acquired Vol. 3 only of the first edition of John Herring. Partial compensation for the lack of volumes 1 & 2 was the number of press reviews pasted inside the cover. They provide an interesting and varied insight into how this book was received.

John Herring was published anonymously (by the author of 'Mehalah') late in 1883. The following are extracts from the full reviews.

The first review that I have is by E. Purcell in the Academy of November 17th 1883. Clearly, Purcell was not impressed:

*'The opening of John Herring is wonderful, most picturesque, dramatic and mysterious. It is easy to see at a glance that this West-country story is inspired by Mr Blackmore's Maid of Sker, but the first few chapters gave promise of something even better than the model. The interest so thoroughly aroused, is fairly sustained though the first volume, after which it falls off, the workmanship deteriorates and the whole thing remains an ambitious but unmis- takable failure. Why, we cannot guess; for the author never regains, even at intervals, the high ground he has once lost. Probably he is somewhat young, at least in writing, muddled by too much recent reading of the Science of Savagery ... Yet he shows much ability, the "all round" culture of the scholar and gentleman, singular power and freshness of dramatic presentation, and above all a thorough command of the pen. His characters - at least, the leading ones - are well defined and sympathetically drawn ...*

*Well as he begins, he has hardly succeeded in his Dartmoor savage and his daughter, this sketch degenerates into an academic illustration of the popular theories of barbarism. The plot dwindles down into sordid intrigues and villainies ... We will not divulge the story; for disappointing failure as it is, and, to speak plainly, an anachronism in three volumes ... still it is far, very far, above the level of ordinary novels.'*

The second, much more favourable review appeared in the Scotsman on November 30th 1883:

*'When the novel "Mehalah" was published, it was seen at once that a writer of fiction had come before the public of far more than ordinary power. Therefore, when it was seen that a new story by the same author was about to be published, there was rejoicing among all who wish that the fiction of the period should be good. ... the reader will not fail to notice how fine as a work of art is the road by which the conclusion is reached. ... We are not inclined to quarrel with any single feature of the story. It seems to us that the author has carefully studied every incident and every person he describes, and that there is nothing but what is in strict keeping with human nature in all that is done. It is true, some call is made upon our imagination For our part, we would have wished that the story had ended differently; yet it must be admitted that in its conclusion there is, perhaps as much as in any part of it, shown the hand of the true artist. It is a deeply interesting novel, which rightly read, will not merely amuse and interest for the time, but which will be found to have the material for a great deal of useful thought.'*

The third review, in the Court Journal of December 8th, occupies well over a page. The reviewer starts with a glowing account of Mehalah and then says that:

*"The most trying situation in literature is that of a writer whose first work has been received with striking favour by the public. So much is expected of him in his second venture ... The rich and powerful imagination displayed in Mehalah made us welcome with avidity the present novel by the same author. But, alas! The writer of John Herring has been evidently compelled to abandon the route traced out by his own particular talent and follow that suggested by the public. He is concerned no longer to please himself and do honour to the*

*glorious gift bestowed on him by nature, but to please the caterers for the amusement most in request by the town. The consequence is mournfully apparent in this new work. ... To give a fair review of a work which combine so many contrasting qualities is a difficult task. It would by many critics be pronounced excellent were not Mehalah so much better. The charm of the writer lies in the depth of feeling expressed by his characters ... but as they disappear to give place to others we are struck with a want of reality which pervades them all. Not one of the personages is true to nature, not one is consistently drawn or made to act in a natural manner. We hope to meet the author of John Herring again ere long, prepared to give us his two volumes without the padding needed for fulfilment of the inexorable sentence of a middle volume pronounced by the circulating libraries and adhered to under compulsion by the publishers. So shall we be enabled to congratulate ourselves upon having at last amongst us a writer of genuine romance, who avoids the tea-drinking and the small talk of the modern novel, but awakes the imagination of the reader to curiosity and interest."*

The fourth review appeared in the Manchester Guardian on December 14th 1883 (wrongly quoting the novel as published in two volumes).

*"All who have read 'Mehalah' will open this book with feelings of curiosity and interest. That strange and powerful story was recognised as the work of no literary novice, though possibly of one new to fiction, and its high promise encouraged the hope that a second essay on the same lines might give us something of quite the first class. The essay has been made, and the results impresses us, we must confess, with a feeling of some disappointment. John Herring is a remarkable story, a novel of high order, but not the highest. There is no advance on Mehalah ... and although the work is more compact and the interest more evenly maintained, no such heights of passion and intensity are attained or attempted ... the book is not saturated with the local colour, as was Mehalah. ... The plot is ingenious and elaborate, working up to a tragic ending through a long series of unusual incidents. Unfortunately, the author seems compelled to make continual demands on the reader's faith. Not once or twice the progress of the story depends on a succession of improbable coincidences; and at two points, at least, the entire plot turns on the maintenance of a state of things so contrary to reason the common sense as seriously to impair the artistic value of the whole work."*

The second half of the review is so different that you wonder if it was written by the same reviewer!

*"We have already indicated implicitly the good points of John Herring. They are neither few nor unimportant. The book is no tale of tea parties, no "society" chronicle of small talk; but is full of vigour and originality. The author does not fear to portray strong emotion, to depict unusual incident and unconventional character. The dramatic instinct is strong in him, and the book abounds in striking scenes and situations. The characters are well and boldly drawn,*

*their individuality strongly marked and well maintained. The dialogue is concise and pointed. There is absolutely no padding, and not a dull page. The story is worked out with elaborate ingenuity and unflinching effect; it is difficult to recall a single incident that is not*

*necessary to the due evolution of the plot. John Herring is a remarkable novel and far indeed above the level of contemporary fiction."*

The sixth review, a favourable one, was in the Graphic on December 15th 1883:

*"None who read "Mehalah" are likely to forget that strangely powerful tragedy, resembling a transfer of the scene of "Wuthering Heights" from the Yorkshire Moors to the Essex Salt Marshes. "John Herring" ... is at least equally fascinating, equally powerful, and far more agreeable to read. Since the author chooses to conceal his name, it is not for us to attempt openly to speculate upon the identity of one who, by these two singular works, has established a claim to be regarded as amongst the strongest and most original of living writers of fiction. At the same time, it is not particularly difficult, even from internal evidence, to form an opinion The story itself is romantic and interesting to the highest degree, apart from its purpose and its extraordinary wealth in novel and original portraiture. From all the ordinary fiction of the day it stands out with absolute grandeur; and no sort of justice can be done to it in a short review."*

A seventh review occupied one page in the January 5th issue of the Saturday Review. It starts ....

*"It is not enough that a novelist should conceive a powerful situation. Whether he succeeds or not in approaching the perfect type must, in a great measure, depend on the means by which his characters are developed and the chain of events that lead up to the situation put together. If the means he uses are such as to violate probability, or to make us feel out of sympathy with those of his creation ... then the story, however good the situation, fails as a whole. ... This seems the fault of John Herring, otherwise a very well told story.*

*The main situation is excellent, the style is rapid and vigorous throughout, while the reflections and comments are full of shrewdness and humour; but the failure in the development of the story is pronounced and cannot be completely condoned by any of the other virtues which the book possess in so high a degree. Our sympathy of comprehension is forfeited in both hero and heroine. ... But before we attempt to justify such a view, let us express our thanks to the author of John Herring for so pleasant a book. Those who agree with the view stated above, and wish the book better, cannot but at the same time be delighted with the wit of the comments, the reality and charm of the dialogue, and the correctness of the descriptions. No one who takes up John Herring will be likely to lay it aside unread, and even the most inveterate skipper will find in it a spell to chain his wandering eyes.*

*... It is needless to wish John Herring success, for that is secured to any work by the author of Mehalah. Still we do so, and wish further that it may not be long before he gives to the world another West of England Romance."*

Roger Bristow

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ROMANCE OF ESSEX INNS (THEO - LPL 1963 - ch.1X 'Mehalah Country' (Final 'h' omitted in page headings)

IN SEARCH OF ESSEX SM Jarvis & CT Harrison - Essex Countryside - p. P88 Mehalah ' the Lorna Doone of Essex

## Kate Winslett Is Mehalah?!

Praxis Books have been approached by a Mr Stephen Rice of West Mersea, who has sent his screenplay taken from the novel 'Mehalah' to Dallas Smith -Kate Winslett's Manager. Mr Rice believes that the book would make a viable film, and la Winslett would 'energise' such a film.

Personally I have profound reservations as to whether 'Mehalah' could ever be rendered successfully on the screen. The scope for cringe-making over-the-top simplification is just too great. The quasi-religious proclamations made by Rebow, the moments of supreme melodrama and the downbeat ending all risk making it merely risible - but I suppose I might very well be proved entirely wrong... watch this space.

Becky Smith

## SBGAS Newsletter, No 31.

### Editorial

Dear Members

There has been an exciting development concerning Sabine's trusty Dog-cart which has recently been auctioned. There was a real danger that Sabine's trusty and re-furbished personal transport may have gone to other serious bidders but fortunately local support was quick off the mark and a bold decision by President Mario! enabled Sue Murray to make a successful bid for the item on behalf of the Baring-Gould Corporation. Grateful thanks to all concerned.

This issue features another article by Martin Graebe, who once again shares with us his considerable knowledge of Sabine's musical interests this time with an article on Sabine's co-collector Frederick Bussell. David Shacklock has also been busy promoting Sabine's work in an important literary publication and Sybil Tope reviews Margery of Quether. Christine Wrigglesworth also updates us on the development of computer links between junior schools Devon & Yorkshire.

From the one and only (positive) response to my comments in the last editorial concerning the future of hymn Onward Christian Soldiers I reluctantly accept that most members are satisfied to leave the future of the hymn to posterity.

The time has now come for me to say farewell as Editor and pass you over into the talented hands of Becky Smith whom I introduced in the previous issue. Before doing so I must pay tribute to my predecessor David Shacklock who carried the standard for an amazing eight years and really made it so very easy for me to follow. Thanks David. Also to our officials Sybil Tope, Roger Bristow, Martin Graebe, Ray Scott and others who kept me up to date with relevant information and articles of their own. Thanks also to those who submitted occasional articles and interesting tit-bits without which no editor can survive - please keep them coming, and of course to all who support SBGAS and really make the production of the Newsletter so worthwhile.

My final thanks goes to Sylvia for keeping me plied with coffee while sitting at my computer and we both look forward to renewing old friendships and making new ones at next month's AGM

Farewell. Keith Lister.

From your next Editor:

Might I just add a note to say that this issue of the Newsletter is a joint effort between Keith and me. I look forward to the challenge of following Keith's impressive productions, and shall of course be importuning the Membership for material to fill future pages. Please post all contributions, to the address on the facing page, by 24th January 2000. My e-mail address is for enquiries, suggestions, etc. Actual copy should arrive by snail, please - or the Royal Mail if you prefer.

## **Internet Link shrinks distance between Lew and Horbury**

by Christine Wigglesworth

Year 3 children of St Peter's Junior School Horbury have now established an Email link with the children of Lew Trenchard Primary School. This has been an interesting and meaningful way of obtaining I.T. skills. Each child in all the classes involved have established contact with 'a friend' and have exchanged questions and answers about their family, pets and hobbies. Imogen Burrage and myself are the two teachers involved and we have told the children about the common link with Sabine Baring Gould. Items of interest such as the BBC tape of the programme recorded in Horbury re Onward Christian Soldiers and a recording of some of the Folk Devon Songs have been exchanged and we hope that the link will develop in the coming year. I also hope to visit Lew School in October, when I attend the annual meeting of the S.B.G. Appreciation Society.

Anyone with internet access may visit the Lew Trenchard web site. It is something they are very proud of and rightly so. It contains many interesting facts about the village history and much about Baring Gould. <http://www.devon-cc.gov.uk/eal/sehools/lewt/> The Horbury St Peter's School Website is due for completion this coming term.

### **Publicity**

Congratulations to David Shacklock on his comprehensive thirteen page article in the *Book and Magazine Collector* No.186 Sept.99. It is good to see SBG's much under-rated work illustrated in such a popular magazine which, incidentally, has already generated interest from a David Mathews who recalls that Sabine's book *Bladys* was subject of a film in 1919 directed by LC MacBean financed by Ben Priest, a Black Country businessman. Do any members have knowledge of this?

After studying David's bibliography section those of you with comprehensive book collections may well wish to review your insurance cover!

A Footnote from David who would like to add an apology for a small error in this article. He mistakenly refers to Bickford Dickinson as SBG's son-in-law, when he was in fact the son of the son-in-law.

## **Book Review - Margery of Quether & Other Weird Tales**

Edited by our member, Richard Dalby, this reprint of Margery of Quether and six other Weird Tales is a book to add to one's Baring-Gould collection. The weird tales are new to most readers - as they were initially printed in the "Hurst-Johnian", "Hurst Echoes" & "Story-Teller" magazines and therefore not generally available to the public. To find them now in this collection fills the gap.

The book is extremely well produced by the Sarob Press with plenty of relevant information and illustrations by Paul Lowe and Harry Furniss.

The book was originally published in 1891 in a volume with four other stories and fully deserves this reprint in a modern style. Hurry though, this is a limited edition!

Sybil M Tope.

## **Nothing is Sacred**

Between July 15 and 19th last a valuable bronze statue of St. Francis of Assisi was stolen from the sunken garden of Lewtrenchard Manor. The two foot statue weighing 20-30 lbs is valued at £2000 and stood on a granite plinth under an arch-way to the entrance of the holy well and depicts St. Francis with his arms above his head releasing doves into the sky.

Hotel Proprietor James Murray reports that the statue was a replacement of the original stolen 25 years ago and was cast by a member of the Baring-Gould Family in the United States. Any information please to the Police at Tavistock on 0990-77744.

Extracted from article in *Okehampton Times* 3 August 1999.

## **Items from the Press**

From James A. Simpson's column "Wit & Wisdom" in the Presbyterian Herald Jul/Aug 1996.

A Mrs [Joyce] Rawstorne who worships with us, is the grand-daughter of the famous hymn writer Sabine Baring-Gould. She tells how at the time of her wedding, her mother expressed her disappointment that she was not willing to have one of her grandfather's hymns. "But mother," she said, "Onward Christian Soldiers, marching as to war is not a suitable wedding hymn. Nor is Through the Night of Doubt and Sorrow, Onward goes the pilgrim band; Singing Songs of expectation, Marching to the promised land. And I am certainly not having Now the Day is Over, Night is Drawing Nigh". Her mother reluctantly agreed.

David Shacklock

## **Thoughts of S. Baring-Gould.**

Giants are not necessarily great men, nor are mighty men always big in size. A man is not to be measured by the number of stones he weighs, and the number of feet and inches he stands.

There is one truth I have learned from experience, burnt into my heart and mind, and that truth is, to be very slow in forming a judgement, even acts which men condemn as crimes. It is likely enough that they may be mercifully judged elsewhere, where motives are read in clear light.

I fancy that life be much like one o' them bran pies at a bazaar. Some pulls out a pair of braces as don't wear trousers, and others pull out garters as wears nothin' but socks.

Truth when naked is unpresentable. The public are squeamish and turn aside from it as improper.

Sybil Tope

## A Note on Frederick Bussell

One of Baring-Gould's frustrations as a collector of folk songs was that he was not a good enough musician reliably to note down tunes in the field. He could manage when working with a piano, as when he invited singers to visit him in his home at Lewtrenchard or when in the homes of some of his friends. To overcome this difficulty he enlisted the help of two capable musicians, Henry Fleetwood-Sheppard and Frederick Bussell, to go with him when he visited the old singers in their homes or at their work. Baring-Gould would then write down the words while Sheppard or Bussell 'pricked down' the tune. Baring-Gould describes one of these occasions as follows:

*"One wild and stormy day, Mr Bussell and I visited Huccaby to interview old Sally Satterly, who knew a number of songs. Her father was a notable singer and his old daughter, now a grandmother, remembered some of his songs. But old Sally could not sit down and sing. We found that the sole way in which we could extract the ballads from her was by following her about as she did her usual work. Accordingly we went after her when she fed the pigs, or got sticks from the firewood rick or filled a pail from the spring, pencil and notebook in hand, dotting down words and melody. Finally she did sit to peel some potatoes, when Mr Bussell with a manuscript music-book in hand, seated himself on the copper. This position he maintained as she sang the ballad of "Lord Thomas and the Fair Eleanor", till her daughter applied fire under the cauldron and Mr Bussell was forced to skip from his perch."*

Frederick Bussell was the more colourful of Baring-Gould's two collaborators and spent more time out collecting with him than Fleetwood-Sheppard. Baring-Gould describes him as follows:

*'I had built a pretty cottage ... on the Lime Quarry Ramps, and this I let to a Mrs. Bussell, whose son, FW Bussell, was at the time at Magdalen College, Oxford; but having passed a brilliant examination for his degree he was elected fellow of Brasenose, the fellows of Magdalen rather despising him for his eccentricities. When congratulated on his success he dryly remarked: "Either the fellows of Magdalen or those of Brasenose have made a great mistake."*

*Bussell was a dandy, wore very showy ties, and had hot-house flowers sent him from London of the same colour as his ties to wear in his button-hole. He sang falsetto, and was quite unconscious of the amusement he provoked when singing "Dinah-do." At a concert the audience was convulsed with laughter, and his mother would look about her with glances of fury at those who dared to feel amusement at "Freddy's" squawks.*

*He had taken his Mus. Bac. and was an accomplished musician; but he said to me, "A good melody affords me no pleasure. What I love is a fugue or an intricate piece of harmony; it gives me as much gratification as working out a mathematical problem does a mathematician." He was of enormous advantage to me in collecting the folk-airs of Devon, and was ever good natured, obliging and ready to help in the matter.'*

Frederick William Bussell was born in 1862 in Buckinghamshire to a father of the same name who was vicar of Great Marlow. After gaining his degree at Magdalen College he became a fellow of Brasenose College in 1886. From the above passage we can infer that Baring-Gould knew Bussell when, as an undergraduate, he stayed with his Mother at the Ramps. Their acquaintance thus began some time before they started to collect songs

together. Bussell became Vice-Principal of Brasenose in 1896, a post he held until 1913. His resignation came shortly after a marriage that, according to a letter written by John Buchan, who was an undergraduate at Brasenose at the time, surprised everyone. In 1917 Bussell left Oxford and accepted the Brasenose College living of Northolt in Middlesex. This living he resigned in 1925, being no longer able to survive financially in a parish where the expenses exceeded the income. After a short period as Rector in his own living at North Tuddenham in Norfolk he made over all his property to Brasenose in exchange for an annuity and retired to Worthing where he died in 1944

It is not, perhaps, a surprise that he was accounted as much of a 'character' in Oxford as he was in Devon. He had an unusual hobby - he collected church livings. This hobby was frowned on by the authorities of both Church and University, leading at one stage to a period of exile in France. His papers show, however, that this was a modestly profitable enterprise. Having, for example, bought Exbourne Manor and its living for £4,000 he sold it a few years later for £6,200. He appears to have owned some twenty different livings during his life.

The archive at Brasenose College holds a large collection of Bussell's papers, part of which was discovered in the attic of the coach house at North Tuddenham Rectory. Among these papers is a hand-written biography. Though he records his acquaintanceship with Baring-Gould in kindly terms his connection with the collection of folk song is dealt with in one sentence:

*"We had very pleasant times together, collecting songs all over Devon and Cornwall, the credit of which was annexed by a Mr Cecil Sharpe who rearranged them to very tame settings indeed."*

I am grateful to Mrs Elizabeth Boardman, the Archivist at Brasenose College (and folk enthusiast) for allowing me access to Dr Bussell's papers, for first showing me the quotation above and for copies of a number of articles on him. The copy of the Rothenstein portrait from which a detail is given above is part of the Brasenose archive. I would also like to record my gratitude to Mike Heaney who introduced me to Mrs Boardman.

Martin Graebe

## More SBG References

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SBG 'that venerable oracle of Deonian lore, that "Vates Sacer" of the West'!

Seasons of Change - Saidie Ward - BCA 1982 (orig.GAU 1982) - p. 167-9,182 on song  
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1968 - p.15

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David Shacklock

## The 1999 Annual Meeting and AGM

The meeting is spread over Saturday November 13th and Sunday 14th. It commences  
with an indoor meeting on the Saturday afternoon at Killerton House, Devon (Regional  
Headquarters of the National Trust), followed by a trip to Dartmoor on the Sunday morning  
to look at some of the archaeological remains with which Baring-Gould was associated.

Timetable of Events: Saturday November 13th

1.30pm. Meet at Killerton House - go to the main entrance. (Light lunches are available in  
the cafe at Killerton House; an alternative venue for lunch is the Red Lion, Broadclyst).

For those of you coming straight to the meeting, park in the Staff car park (easier to get to  
in the dark at the end of the meeting). For those members who want to eat in the Cafe first,  
it is suggested that you park in the public car park to start with, then transfer your vehicle  
to the Staff car park

2.00pm. Welcome, followed by a short introduction on SBG by Roger Bristow

2.15pm. Introduction by John Draisey to the SBG holdings in the Devon Record Office

2.30pm. The SBG Folksong Collection by Martin Graebe.

3.10pm. SBG as a folklorist by Bob Mann (Folklore Recorder for the Devonshire  
Association).

3.50pm. Tea (compulsory! The National Trust will probably let us have the use of their  
rooms free, providing that we buy a tea from them).

4.30pm. SBG, the Archaeologist by Jane Marchand. 5.15pm. AGM

6.15pm. Sale of secondhand books

7.00pm. Short concert of folksongs collected by SBG and performed by the Wren Trust.

8.00pm. The Red Lion, Broadclyst for evening meal and chat.

Sunday November 14th

10.0am. Meet on Dartmoor (location to be decided) to visit various archaeological sites, led by Jane Marchand.

1.00pm. Lunch at the Oxenham Arms, South Zeal. This is one of the inns in which SBG gathered some of his folksongs

(see Among the Western Song-men, English Illustrated Magazine, Vol. 9, pp. 468-477, including illustrations of the Oxenham Arms).

Martin Graebe will give a short presentation on the SBG connection in this inn.

## **An Interesting Find**

Mr Sabine Dickinson, great grandson of SBG, has sent photocopies of a very intriguing pair of letters, found bound into a copy of The Vicar of Morwenstow. The first letter is from John Lane, the publisher, on headed notepaper, addressed to Mrs Dickinson, Sabine's eldest daughter Mary. The text of the letter runs as follows:

*November 14th 1905.*

*Dear Mrs Dickinson,*

*I am sure you must think me very negligent not to have returned your book before; I am not surprised that you are growing impatient. The fact is, however, that I have had a serious eye trouble for two months. All the illustrations of the three Hawker books have been looked out in triplicate, as I am illustrating your copy, Lord Rosebety's and my own, but my eye affliction has prevented me from placing them in the volumes. I am, however, writing to Mr Byles for his assistance, so that the whole thing may be done, and the book returned to you by Christmas.*

*With my kind regards to you all,*

*Yours very truly,*

*John Lane.*

(We must assume that the book was eventually returned and the letter kept inside it. It has 86 illustrations!)

Secondly, a letter from Hawker, vicar of Morwenstow, to his sister Caroline Dunham, which runs:

March 10th 1872.

My dear Caroline,

I send you some potatoes. I want you to do something for me and answer by Bensor. Send for Beer or some other joiner and give him the inclosed questions about a chest of drawers and get the answers to each on the same paper. We want them if at all by the 21 of April. No time to lose. If you like to ask C. about it without mentioning my name you may

do so. You promised the children dolls. They make me mazed with inquiries. Pauline asks if you have not got them where they can be had. She thinks you said Holsworthy. We will send. You must be quick about getting Beer's answers, or any other you like. Or two if you think best.

Where or how could we get a good Beefsteak or a few lbs of Sirloin (not Scawens) now and then. Money, no bill. Is Charlotte down. If so where is the parcel. What news in Bude. I got f1-5-0 in Offertory for Exeter Cathedral. Our schoolmaster rather better. We had a Committee here last night. Thynne, Jacques, Capt Warren are going to build the House for the Master at once. Pauline is gone to bed knocked up.

Her love and mine,

Yrs affectionately,

R.J.Hawker.

(Apologies for any errors in transcribing this Victorian handwriting and many thanks to Mr Dickinson for letting us see these truly fascinating documents -Ed.)