
Contents:

The Growth of Religious Convictions by Ron Wawman
Some Baring-Gould Mysteries by Becky Smith
Baring-Gould and European Romanticism by Bob Mann
Lewtrenchard: A Faraway Place Close to Our Hearts by Merriol Almond
Sabine Baring-Gould’s Library – past, present, and future by Martin Graebe
The Transactions of the Sabine Baring-Gould Appreciation Society
Volume 13 (2013)

Contents:

Introduction

Papers from the annual meeting, 2012

The Growth of Religious Convictions (Ron Wawman)

Some Baring-Gould Mysteries (Becky Smith)

Baring-Gould and European Romanticism (Bob Mann)

Lewtrenchard: A Faraway Place Close to Our Hearts (Merriol Almond)

Sabine Baring-Gould’s Library – past, present, and future (Martin Graebe)

Notes on the contributors
The Transactions
of the
Sabine Baring-Gould Appreciation Society

The original talks from which the articles in this journal are drawn were presented at the annual gathering of the Sabine Baring-Gould Appreciation Society held at the Lewtrenchard Manor Hotel, Devon, 12 – 14 October 2012.

The copyright for the articles appearing in this publication rests with the original author
Copyright © 2013

Published for SBGAS by Greenjack Publications, 100, Cheltenham Road, Gloucester, GL2 0LX

Transactions Editor: Martin Graebe
e-mail: martin.graebe@btinternet.com Phone: 01452 523861

Articles for publication are welcomed. The main categories of material published in this journal are:
• Papers presented at the SBGAS Annual Meeting
• Original essays on aspects of the life and work of Sabine Baring-Gould
• Reprints or transcripts of hard-to-find published material and manuscripts written by or about Sabine Baring-Gould

If you wish to offer an article for publication, please submit a brief description by e-mail to the Editor at the address above.

Articles should be submitted as electronic documents that can be read in Microsoft Word. Please do not format the articles beyond the use of bold for headings and italics for quotations. Illustrations should be sent as separate files. See previous issues for a guide to layout or request a style guide from the Editor. It is the responsibility of authors to ensure that copyright permission has been obtained (in writing) for the use of any text or illustrations used in the article, other than short extracts quoted within the scope of ‘fair use’ provisions.
Introduction

The articles in this year’s SBGAS Transactions were all presented at the 2012 Annual Meeting of the society which was held at Sabine Baring-Gould’s former home, Lewtrenchard Manor.

Dr. Ron Wawman has provided a revised and enlarged version of the talk that he gave at the meeting about the unpublished book *The Growth of Religious Convictions*. This was Baring-Gould’s last project and remained uncompleted at his death in 1924. Ron’s insightful article describes the book and its contents and makes comparisons with his other writing in the same vein, notably his *The Origin and Development of Religious Belief*, published more than fifty years earlier.

Becky Smith delighted the meeting with her ramble through some of the mysteries that she had encountered in her biographical fishing expeditions. In her presentation we heard about five characters who were important in their connections with Baring-Gould, but who have proved to be hard to find out about. In her article more (but by no means all!) is revealed.

Bob Mann took on the challenge of putting Baring-Gould and his work into the context of the Romantic Movement in Europe and to present him as a man of Europe. This is not something easily done in a short paper and Bob has managed to present his case succinctly and with clarity. This is an area that will merit further study.

Our President, Merriol Almond, took part in a live interview with Martin Graebe during the meeting. While it is not possible to publish a transcript of that interview, she has provided a copy of a talk that she gave to a women’s group in the USA which covers much of the same ground. It is a fascinating insight into the background to her stewardship of the Lewtrenchard estate since she became responsible for it forty years ago.

The books that make up the Baring-Gould family library have been acquired over several generations, but the most acquisitive member of the family was Sabine Baring-Gould. Martin Graebe talked about the history of the library and the use that Sabine Baring-Gould made of it for research on a wide range of topics. The greater portion of the books has been kept for many years at Killerton House, near Exeter, but they have recently been moved to Exeter University, creating new opportunities for future students of Baring-Gould’s work.
The Growth of Religious Convictions

Ron Wawman

I have long been aware that, in the Baring-Gould archive at the Devon Record Office, there are typescript chapters of a book entitled The Growth of Religious Convictions. However it was not until I was transcribing and researching Sabine’s correspondence with Evelyn Healey that I realised from a reference to the chapter on Paulinism in a letter to her dated 12 October 1923, that this was the book Sabine was working on during the last year of his life.

Sabine, in the process of amending and correcting the chapters of the book, presumably in preparation for publication, had grumbled in a letter to Evelyn, dated 27 September 1923, about the quality of the typing services available to him. She, having recently learned to type, offered her services to him. On 12 October, after some hesitation, Sabine finally accepted her offer, but only on the understanding that she allowed him to pay her for her work. Sadly after just a few short weeks of collaboration during which, much to his satisfaction, Evelyn retyped the chapter on Paulinism, Sabine’s health declined sharply. By 1 November his correspondence was, for the first time, marked by forgetfulness and an element of confusion. Then on 26 November he wrote to say that he was failing altogether and asked her to return all the chapters he had sent her. Just five weeks later, on 2 January 1924, he was dead. What happened to the book after that is not known, but somehow the title page, an introduction and ten chapters were preserved and are now held at the Devon Record office, where, apart from the important business of cataloguing, no significant notice seems to have been taken of them.

As I worked on the letters to Evelyn Healey, I became increasingly troubled to think that after all Sabine’s labours this last book had never been published. I also wondered why Sabine had embarked on such an ambitious scholastic project in the ninetieth year of his life and whether his mind was agile enough to cope with such a task. Inevitably I soon found myself at the Devon Record Office browsing through a couple of chapters. There I rapidly come to the conclusion that the whole book was the outcome of a vast amount of work and that it ought to see the light of day. And so it was, that with the help of Merriol Almond, I was able to take the document home on a long term loan and there transcribe it.

1Wawman R. www.nevercompletelysubmerged.co.uk The Last Thirty Years of the Life of Sabine Baring-Gould: Part II Sabine’s Correspondence with Evelyn Healey.
Each of the typescript chapters was neatly bound in a dark green, artificial leather cover. The covers were somewhat insubstantial and each chapter was held together by nothing more than two or three paper fasteners. The quality of paper and the layout of Chapter III on Paulinism are slightly different from that in all the other chapters. From this, it can be concluded that this was the chapter retyped by Evelyn Healey.

Many of the chapters included retyped pages. Frequently pages had also been re-ordered and renumbered. In addition there were numerous manuscript additions, amendments and corrections to each of the chapters. The overall impression is that the whole book had been drafted and typed, then amended and retyped a number of times. How far Sabine was from being ready to send the book to publishers is not clear, nor is it known whether a publisher had already been approached. However it is evident from Sabine’s comments in the letter to Evelyn Healey dated 1 November saying I send chapters here and there to friends for advice, that by then he was looking for editorial advice and moving in the direction of publication.

My question, ‘Why?’ received an answer in Sabine’s Introduction to The Growth of Religious Convictions, where he wrote:

‘I venture as an old man in my ninetieth year to take a retrospect over the formation and development of my religious opinions, and to consider in what manner and to what degree they have been modified in some instances, and accentuated in others.’

Sabine further expanded on this in the opening paragraphs of Chapter II, where he added:

‘I venture again to introduce my cogitations.

A man’s life consists of his thoughts as well as his acts, of his convictions as well as his experiences.

The moulding of his mind and the consolidation of his principles are matters of the highest importance; for it is these convictions that form the motive power within him that govern his actions.

They may at times need overhauling and the flywheel be assured action to regulate his thought, and his manner of life.’

Sabine was clearly writing about his own convictions and his own perceived need to overhaul them and he went on to write:

‘I have already related [in Chapter I] how that I worked out in my mind the question of the Church, its origins and its constitution.’
It seems probable, from comments in chapter II, on ‘Miracles’, and from the air of finality in chapter X, entitled ‘Present and Future’, as well as from Sabine’s own description of the book as this little work, that Sabine had meant to write a comparatively short book of ten chapters.

But for whom was Sabine writing? In some areas the book takes on the form of a profound, but only partially referenced, ecclesiastical historical study. In others Sabine could have be addressing a general clerical audience, elsewhere classical scholars and yet again, occasionally, a lay readership. The overriding impression however is that Sabine was primarily writing to and for himself.

I came to the conclusion that without a considerable amount of rewriting together with the expansion of many sections and the addition of far more explanatory notes, Sabine would have faced some difficulty persuading a publisher that this was a viable proposition.

I found studying this book very different from researching Sabine’s diaries, notebooks and letters. Indeed at times I felt that, with my inadequate grounding in theology, philosophy and ecclesiastical history, I was out on a limb.

What kept my nose to the grindstone was the feeling that what I was researching was, in many ways, a re-examination and re-affirmation by Sabine of some of his own beliefs and opinions and that knowledge of this might assist my own understanding of the man.

Thus the following two extracts from chapter II, would, I contend, accurately reflect the challenges faced by Sabine throughout his life as well as the guiding principles that drove him:

*Divine Discontent*

*Lodged in every [my?] human breast, is a sense more or less acute of what has been termed “Divine Discontent,” a desire for that which is, perhaps, unattainable, but which serves as a goad to endeavour. It is a consciousness of innate powers, of ability, of appreciation, of desire for the exercise of activities now beyond reach. This is the source of all the restlessness of the present age, of longing for amelioration of the conditions of life. With some it takes the form of aggression against social order as at present constituted; in others, [including myself?] determination to fight against adverse circumstances and by resolution and perseverance to overcome them. One sulks, the other strives.*

*The Joy of Believing.*

*There is that in the Christian Faith producing results, which the Unbelieving are slow to recognise. This is the inner joy that it affords [me?], the serenity of soul*
that it produces, in such as have endured disappointed affection, encountered humiliating slights, who have been foiled in life’s aims and expectations, the occasions in so many of tendency to sourness of disposition, to resentment against Providence, to prostration in discouragement, and loss of interest in all effort. In the confidence that the Gospel inspires, all discouragements are put aside, and in the [my?] heart leaps up a fountain of joy in expectation that all the aspirations that have failed in accomplishment here will be fully, overflowingly satisfied in the life to come.

As will be seen, Sabine returned to theme of the life to come in a later chapter.

If Sabine was, at least to some extent, writing for himself this would explain why, although he provided no less than 111 footnotes and sometimes developed and explained his views on a particular subject, there were many, many occasions when he referred to people, historical events, sects, philosophies etc. without any explanation of who or what he was writing about. That certainly made parts of the book frustrating to read and Sabine’s thinking at times hard to follow and understand. I had no other option but to refer very frequently to either a dictionary or to other sources of information for definitions and explanations. As a result of these collateral researches I have put together another 265 explanatory notes. These are by no means exhaustive but they sufficed to allow me, a layman, to just about follow the thrust of Sabine’s arguments. I hope it will do the same for those who follow in my footsteps.

Throughout the book numerous biblical texts are quoted. Most often Sabine provided the reference, but, occasionally, he neglected to do so. In the editing process I have added the missing references in italics and square brackets. I also made a point of reading the Biblical passages to which he referred. Usually reference and passage tallied but on what was, for me, one particularly satisfying occasion, I discovered that his claim that a passage in 1 Kings referred to the Babylonian Captivity when in fact it referred to the exile in Egypt, a much earlier event, had led him to draw an emphatic but totally erroneous conclusion about the authenticity of a particular biblical document.

There were several, often extensive, quotations in Latin, Greek, German and French. Sabine rarely provided a translation. These omissions have now been rectified.

In my transcription I have incorporated all the amendments, both manuscript and typed, and all the corrections that were included by Sabine in the typescript chapters. Sometimes errors by either Sabine or his typists were not corrected by him; these I have left uncorrected but have denoted thus: [sic]. Occasionally Sabine used obscure words. For the reader’s convenience I have included a brief definition within the text in italics and square brackets.
As I read the book it soon became clear to me that the contents did not really match the title.

The book would be more appropriately titled *Aspects of Some of My Religious Beliefs and how these have developed in recent years*.

I was struck by the similarity between the title of this book, *The Growth of Religious Convictions*, and that of the book Sabine had published more than fifty years previously, entitled *The Origin and Development of Religious Belief*.² Apart from the omission of the words Origin and they are virtually identical. That is: *The Growth of Religious Convictions* and *The Development of Religious Belief*.

Although Sabine did not refer directly to any of his earlier theological studies he nevertheless seemed to be revisiting certain aspects of *The Origin and Development of Religious Belief*. This would go some way to explaining why the titles are so alike. It also helps to explain why the later, much shorter book – just over 190 pages in my transcription – did not begin to attempt the comprehensive analysis and synthesis that was a characteristic of his earlier work.

It is possible that his later studies, particularly of research published during the early part of the 20th century and indeed during the last year of his life, had led him to revisit only those aspects of his original thesis that he now felt needed either modification or a different approach. What he produced was a work which drew on scholarship and the revisiting and modifying of past thoughts, but which also responded to topical developments within and around the Church. Not infrequently he wrote with passion. One aspect that made *The Growth of Religious Convictions* difficult to follow was the absence of a clear unifying theme. This contrasts with *The Origin and Development of Religious Belief*, in which Sabine sought, throughout, to prove, and tenaciously hold on to, the implications of the Incarnation.

I concluded that to better understand the later work it was necessary to compare not only the contents of the two works but also the circumstances in which they were written.

**The Origin and Development of Religious Belief**

At the time Sabine wrote *The Origin and Development of Religious Belief* he was in his mid-thirties and making his way in life as a young permanent curate in the parish of Dalton, near Thirsk, Yorkshire. He had moved to Dalton from Horbury in January

---

1867. Prior to the move he had become engaged to Grace Taylor and she was to join him at Dalton after their marriage in May 1868.

At Dalton, having left the bustle of his beloved Mission, in the industrial Yorkshire town of Horbury behind him, Sabine found himself in a quiet and in some ways uncomfortable and frustrating backwater. So it was that, particularly during the 17 months or so before Grace joined him, he had both the inclination and the time to withdraw and immerse himself in scholastic study. He spent his time reading, writing poetry and, in particular, indulging his love of ecclesiastical history. The book that he laboured on, *The Origin and Development of Religious Belief*, was a remarkable scholastic achievement comprising a comprehensive, in depth study of his subject in two substantial volumes.

The twenty chapters of the first volume of this early book present an extraordinarily wide-ranging review of anthropological studies of the development of mythological and religious concepts in primitive societies around the world. Sabine went on to discuss polytheism, pantheism and monotheism; the significance of asceticism, mysticism, idolatry and sacrifice. He looked in some depth at many schools of philosophy including Chinese, Indian, Buddhist, but in particular he looked at Greek and Modern schools of philosophy. He looked favourably on Plato, but was particularly drawn to the views of the 18th century German Philosopher, Georg Hegel, on the conciliation of opposites. These views were further developed in his second volume as the logical explanation for the necessity of the existence of God and of the Incarnation. Sabine saw the Incarnation as the essential conciliation of the finite with the infinite, i.e. man, with the infinite, i.e. God.

Volume II consisted of a further twenty chapters and dealt with the origin and development of Christianity, but in particular the inevitability of the Incarnation. Along the way Sabine firmly asserted that neither Church nor biblical texts were infallible. He made much of equality, freedom, the rights and duties of man in the development of human nature, both in the Church and in social organisation. There was thus a political overtone and his attitudes strike chords with some of our own preoccupations today. He looked in some depth at adverse developments in both society and the Church, which he related to the development of autocracies, theocracy and the abuse of human rights that inevitably resulted from them. He was particularly firm in his insistence that the Anglican Church must throw off its domination by, and connection with, the State. This attitude reflected his early experiences within the Church and such events as the Gorham Judgement of 1850.

But there was, nevertheless, a sense of buoyancy and optimism throughout this work and his attitude to the waywardness of Church and Society was on the whole balanced. The waywardness was seen as an inevitable, but also remediable, result of
human frailty, as society and Church evolved. Nevertheless his criticisms were firmly stated. Thus he wrote:

*Mediaeval temporal autocracy was a mighty wrong. The governed were the chattels of their sovereign, to be imprisoned, driven to war, impoverished, sold, made to believe or disbelieve at the caprice of the monarch.... Its existence, linked as it was to the Church, forced into life another wrong, – the Papacy, set up as a counterpoise to the temporal power. Then indeed the bondage of man was complete, the State violated the right of man to personal independence, and the Church turned the key on his right to intellectual freedom. The work obligatory on every man sent into the world could not be done; he was not free in body, in mind, and in soul, to accomplish his destiny...*

And so on.

*The Origin and Development of Religious Belief* received a mixed reception that was in some ways predictable. Thus while the *Church Times*, the *Church Quarterly Review* and *The Guardian* were enthusiastic, Sabine reported in a footnote to the preface to Volume II that:

‘The Roman Catholic World, the high Anglican Church Review and the extreme Protestant Press and S. James’ Chronicle have agreed to denounce me as gross materialist, a thorough rationalist, and an undisguised infidel.’

Sabine was never one to enjoy adverse critical reviews of this work, but it is safe to assume that he was proud of this particular furious reception. It demonstrated that he had done what he had set out to do – stir things up!

Importantly for Sabine the Prime Minister at the time, Mr Gladstone, also read the book and was sufficiently impressed by it to offer Sabine the living at East Mersea. This enabled Sabine to escape from what, had he not been able to fill his time with study, would have been a stultifying position at Dalton.

Purcell in his biography, gave some thought as to how Sabine researched this early book and concluded that, isolated as he was in the middle of rural Yorkshire and with very little access to books, most of the research must have been carried out during his years at Hurstpierpoint and that when he came to write the book he ‘relied almost entirely on his prodigious memory.’ ³ My own view is that Purcell overestimated Sabine’s powers of memory, underestimated his resourcefulness and took no account of the great speed at which Sabine worked. This latter was a more likely cause of the textual mistakes criticised by Purcell than a reliance on memory.

As is well known, Sabine was a magpie from an early age and it is evident that among the many things he collected from youth was a vast collection of books. What

³ Purcell W E. *Onward Christian Soldier*, (London: Longmans, Green,& Co. 1957) p. 91-95
he could not buy, he borrowed, even, on at least one occasion during this time, from a London bookseller who knew him well. Apart from that, Sabine was also a resourceful traveller. In the penultimate chapter of The Growth of Religious Convictions he lamented:

‘of recent years I have not been much in town, but I was there often in the sixties and seventies,’

The eighteen sixties and seventies was just the time when he would have been researching and writing this early book. Furthermore Sabine was officially recognised as a frequent user of the Reading room of the British Museum. Add to that the reality that Dalton was not as isolated as it might seem; it is some 6 miles from Thirsk, a busy market town on the main railway line through York to London. In the book Sabine actually described watching the trains pass by his window at Dalton while he was writing! It is also evident that many of the poems Sabine was writing in his Diary notebook during his 18 months at Dalton were often based on the ancient religious texts that he was reading at the time. Some of these poems were eventually published in The Silver Store. Apart from not infrequent trips to London, I am convinced that Sabine would also have made extensive use of the facilities of York Minster. Finally anyone who has actually read The Origin and Development of Religious Belief cannot fail to be aware that not only was that book well referenced, but it included a huge number of lengthy quotations from many of the works to which Sabine referred. It would have been impossible for these to be furnished from memory.

I have to say that I did not find this earlier work any easier to read than his last book and while struggling to understand it I was not sure whether I was encouraged or disheartened by Sabine’s own comment, that when trying to follow the thoughts of modern German Philosophers:

\[The \text{ difficulty of arresting them and reducing them to a clear and easily intelligible system is extreme; the moment when one fancies that a thought is assuming precision and outline, it throws out a cloud of ink like sepia, and leaves the pursuer bewildered and in the dark.}\]

Apart from that, Purcell also thought the book was ‘not easy reading.’ So I was not on my own. Somehow, however, I found that, having read the earlier work, from cover to cover, I must have absorbed something, for when I returned to his last book,

---

It began to make more sense to me. Here Sabine was indeed revisiting and to some extent revising some of the thinking in his earlier book.

**The Growth of Religious Convictions.**

Why did Sabine decide, in the very last years of life, to revisit certain aspects of his religious convictions? Was it solely because his views on some things had changed and he felt the need to revisit them in this arduous and time-consuming way or could he have been driven in other ways?

It may help to reflect on Sabine’s circumstances in 1923. It soon became apparent to me that when writing *The Growth of Religious Convictions* Sabine was able to read and quote authoritatively on the current work of other authors and amend his views accordingly. I am confident that he must have been fully alert mentally to be able to do this. Despite his great age, Sabine remained the master of a fine turn of phrase and made use of numerous similes, metaphors, anecdotes and even parables, to make his points. These are important conclusions to draw. For one thing they cast doubt on Dickinson’s use of the adjective feeble when otherwise astutely describing Sabine’s anger of old age in his excellent biography.\(^7\) It is patently clear that, despite his great old age, Sabine’s mind was sufficiently agile to ensure that his anger was still capable of being devastating.

We know from correspondence with others and from other comments in Dickinson’s biography that, at this time, Sabine was the victim, not of mental feebleness, but of extreme physical feebleness. This was a major factor contributing both to his social isolation and to the frustration of his normally energetic and purposeful life. Surely here was one source of his anger. In his relatively isolated manor house at Lew Trenchard in the 1920s he had to endure an even more lonely existence than during his time at Dalton. In both situations Sabine had much time on his hands. But his state of mind in his last years was very different. At Dalton he was buoyant and optimistic. By contrast there is much to suggest that, since the death of his wife, Grace, seven years previously, the spark had gone out in his life and indeed for much of this time he may well have been depressed. This was another source of anger.

Sabine’s unhappy mood state had probably also been aggravated by family anxieties associated with the Great War and further adversely affected by the highly unsatisfactory relationship that developed between himself and his eldest son, Edward, and daughter-in-law, Marian, after they had taken over management of the

here another source of anger. Sadly it is apparent from Sabine’s correspondence with others, that much of this anger was projected onto Marian.

Correspondence also suggested a yearning in his last few years to leave this world and meet his maker. This yearning was touched on in chapter VII, ‘Eschatology, of The Growth of Religious Convictions’. As will be seen, this is, in some ways, the most interesting chapter in the book, presenting, as it mostly did, Sabine’s personal views on the afterlife.

Driven, as Sabine was throughout his life, to intense intellectual activity, he may have been compelled to this last great mental exercise as much to keep his mind occupied and so keep dark thoughts at bay, as anything else. Certainly a more effective and acceptable way of calming himself down than resorting to alcohol, as family tradition suggests he had done prior to Edward and Marian moving into Lew House.

In the same way that Sabine’s buoyancy and optimism is reflected in the content of The Origin and Development of Religious Belief, so his anger and bitterness come through in many, but not all, parts of The Growth of Religious Convictions. Whereas the earlier book is notable for its compassionate understanding of human waywardness, and his attitudes towards individuals, although often critical were more inclined to be expressed in shades of grey; his last book tended to be intolerant of waywardness in others and his attitudes towards them were inclined to be starkly black or white.

Let us now look more closely at the individual chapters in Sabine’s last book.

Introduction

In addition to telling us what his aims were in writing this last great theological work, the introduction is invaluable for the extent to which Sabine added significantly to what he wrote elsewhere about the development of his attitudes to the Church in 1851 at the age of 17 years. He wrote as follows:

Until I reached the age of seventeen such religion as I entertained was unenquiring. I was conscious of certain dislikes, but not of any particular likings; with adolescence, however, I saw that religion was too serious a matter to be treated with indifference….Of the English Church, all that I knew by practical experience was what I had seen at home, but mainly in the Continental Chaplaincies. Anglican worship was not at that time stimulating, and Anglican teaching was indefinite. Such as it was, this teaching was accepted much as at

---

dinner one accepts cabbage. It was taken because everyone else took it. My father insisted that cabbage purified the blood – but it needed cooking to make it appetising, and the clergy at that period were sorry cooks in dealing with Christian doctrine.

Chapter I: The Church

The earlier paragraphs in this chapter further develop Sabine’s thoughts in the Introduction

In 1851 I had reached a period in my life in which opinions began to shape themselves into convictions, and wavering lines of thought began to straighten out.

Hitherto I had not possessed other than a vague acquaintance with the English Church, its doctrines, its Constitution, and its Services. I knew the Catechism, the Psalms and the Collects, some of the former and all the latter my mother had made me learn by heart, and the Sermon on the Mount, on which my father had insisted as the guide of life. I could respond Amen to the prayers, but I detested Sermons……At this time, when issuing out of boyhood into manhood, the boy not yet shaken off, and the man not yet put on, I began to think out religious and ecclesiastical questions for myself. The first of these was as to the origin and constitution of the Church. I did not then concern myself about dogmas, disputed or undisputed, but tried to find out the principle of the life and organisation of the Church itself. To me, at this time, it seemed that the primary question to be answered was: - what is the Church?

Throughout this chapter Sabine looked in some depth at the Apostolic and Subapostolic Churches. In the process he developed his own theory that the Laws of Darwinian Evolution, which he had also picked up in 1851, are God’s Laws and, as such, are also applicable to the evolution of the Church. He equated the period of the earliest Church to the biological period of gestation. This explained the chaos of the Apostolic Church and the embryonic obscurity of the Subapostolic Church. It also seemed to explain to Sabine the apparently sudden emergence of the Church as a complete and well organised society in the Second Century.

We must assuredly look on the Church growing from its early age much as we look on the world as brought to perfection out of chaos; once disorder, subsequently order, once confusion, now discipline.

Sabine viewed the emergence of sects and dubious practices as, at best, examples of arrested development or, at worst, as in Antinomianism, retrogression. Of particular interest is Sabine’s praise and approval of the actions of St. Paul in his struggles to create order out of chaos. He wrote: I both pity and admire him. As the reader will
see this judgement contrasts sharply with Sabine’s comments on the Apostle in Chapter III.

**Chapter II: Miracles**

In his earlier book, *The Origin and Development of Religious Belief*, miracles are mentioned briefly in the chapter on ‘Evidence for the Incarnation’, only to be dismissed as unreliable as evidence. Indeed in that chapter Sabine was inclined to dismiss the need for such evidence, instead stating that the truth of the Incarnation was an essential conclusion to be drawn from Hegelian philosophy. Now in his last work, he made no mention of Hegel but devoted a whole chapter to ‘Miracles’. Although Darwin’s theory of Evolution had been published several years before Sabine’s earlier book there is no indication that Sabine had taken this into consideration in Origin and Development, and although, throughout the book, he purported to use Science to support his views, his understanding and use of science was flawed.

Now in his last book he made the statement that: ‘Darwin has established the Law of Evolution in an impregnable position.’ In this day and age when a sharp conflict between the theories of Evolution and Creationism is being promoted in some quarters, it is of interest to note the easy way in which Sabine saw no such conflict. Unfortunately his interpretation of Evolution as evidence for the natural basis for miracles indicates an inadequate understanding of the science. Furthermore he also went on to say: ‘But there is another fact that should not be disregarded, the effect of arrest.’

Sabine meant the arrest of development. Without explaining exactly how, he put this forward as the explanation for the ‘Fall of Man’. He seemed to imply that both ongoing development (i.e. evolution) and arrest were, for man, somehow an act of will. Thus it comes across that his understanding of the evolution of man was along scientifically discredited Lamarckian rather than Darwinian lines. He concluded that such development could lead to someone, like Jesus, who is free from sin evolving to the superior state of Superman. He wrote:

*One who has not partaken of fallen human nature is not subject to the checks by which sinful human nature is held in restraint. He occupies another category of human being... making him capable, as man, of performing acts beyond the scope of the possible as he is now. By that he meant miracles.*

This does not tally with my understanding of the scientific theories of evolution. In his critique of *Origin and Development*, Purcell was also not impressed by Sabine’s knowledge of science. Now, in this final work, Sabine’s understanding of this and
several other areas of science is again found wanting. He had a knack of developing a pseudo-scientific argument through the almost unconscious insertion of dubious assumptions that enabled him to believe what he wanted to believe. He is, of course, by no means alone in this trait. To be fair, in his introduction, Sabine acknowledged the limitations of his knowledge:

*I am aware that I owe an apology to my readers. I possess but a smattering of knowledge in the several branches of philosophy, science, history and theology; and I have had to employ such mediocre faculties as I did possess and such scraps of knowledge as I could acquire to solve problems that presented themselves to me and insisted on solution.*

**Chapter III: Paulinism**

The third chapter presented the transcriber with another complication. Paulinism was a subject not dealt with at all in *The Origin and Development of Religious Belief*. Moreover, the next two chapters, IV and V, go on to look at the influence of some of Paul’s earlier thinking on wayward developments in the mediaeval and post-mediaeval Church and on the emergence of Lutheranism and Calvinism. To understand the significance of these three chapters it has been necessary to refer to yet another of Sabine’s books, one written in 1897, some 25 years before his death and at a time when he was probably at the height of his powers. This, of course, was his *Study of St Paul*.¹⁰ I was, however, much encouraged by the preface to this book in which Sabine described how he had adopted the approach of a novelist rather than an ecclesiastical historian when writing it. He wrote:

*The line I have adopted is that of a man of the world, of a novelist with some experience of life, and some acquaintance with the springs of conduct that actuate mankind. A novelist, it will be objected, with a shrug, is the last man who should treat such a subject….But this is due to a misconception of what a novelist is or really should be. He is not properly an enchanter calling up fantastic visions, a creator of startling situations, and an elaborator of ingenious plots…. he is rather one who seeks to sound the depths of human nature, to probe the very heart of man, to stand patiently at his side with finger on pulse…This then is the point of view adopted by me. I treat the great Apostle as a man.*

The result, for me, was a very readable book. In the style of a novelist, Sabine set the scenes brilliantly and his descriptions of places like Ephesus, Athens and Corinth, and the people in them, brought them to life delightfully. Significantly he treated his subjects with great compassion and understanding. Thus, while conceding that Paul,

---

on the one hand, and Peter and James, on the other, made many mistakes and did not always gel together, he emphasised that they were labouring under very different but equally difficult and, at times, dangerous circumstances. Given their different backgrounds and abilities, they could not have done better and the outcome, in the long run, was the successful launch of Christianity. Nor did Sabine express any difficulty believing in Paul’s revelations. Indeed he made the following comment:

_I suppose there are few men not in the whirl of business or tangle of social frippery, that have not their moments of elevation into commune with God, when sudden visions of truth, not to be accounted for by any apparent causes, burst upon the mind; their moments when God is present and very real to them in a manner quite unutterable by words._

I think we can deduce from this that Sabine had at some time, or times, in his life had such experiences, so why should he not believe Paul’s revelations.

Returning again to Chapter III of The Growth of Religious Convictions, here Sabine gave a potted history of St Paul, somehow reducing the 460 pages of A Study of St Paul to just 45. But this was a very different and on the whole highly critical and sceptical account in which he went out of his way to emphasise Paul’s inadequate knowledge of Christ’s life and his stubborn refusal for many years to meet with or take note of the other Apostles.

Thus Sabine wrote:

_We will now take a brief glance at the early history of Paul, in order to see whence he did derive what he was pleased to entitle “his Gospel.” That he knew next to nothing of the real teaching of Christ is certain. It also appears that he took no trouble to acquire it. Consequently we must look elsewhere for the sources of his Gospel, and these Sources are apparent in the Apocryphal literature of the Palestinian school as well as in that of the Alexandrian Writers._

Similarly:

_The Apostle would appear to have been impatient of contradiction or correction, and to have been ready to dismiss from his memory every record and report that did not agree with his preconceived theories, and comport with his “Gospel.”_

Sabine was critical of Paul’s reliance on the Apostolic Apocrypha as the basis of his doctrine and for the disastrous long term effects of his preaching against the Jewish Law and apparently in favour of Justification by faith alone. Paul, Sabine conceded, did not appreciate that the Gentile would have difficulty distinguishing between the ceremonial and the moral Law.

At times Sabine came close to doubting Paul’s status as an Apostle, at one point using the phrase self-esteemed Apostle. Despite all the negative comment, Sabine,
nevertheless, concluded that, although Paul was in some ways an unattractive personality, he was used by the Holy Spirit to make a huge contribution to the development of the early Church. Somehow Sabine felt able, or possibly compelled, to acknowledge:

*The Church owes a great debt to Paul. Although his arguments may be of small value, ... yet his writings abound in glittering passages, on which the reader eagerly fastens. His epistles resemble boxes of many coloured beads; the string on which they were threaded is hopelessly tangled, so that critics contend to deduce something logical from his writings, but must put into them first of all their own ideas; and each critic finds a different solution. The sparkles sprinkled over the text are like salt dredged over food, and conserve to the text its nutritive character, and neutralise what is unwholesome.*

That paragraph makes use of a delightful simile. A similarly delightful passage compares the gospels of St John and St Paul:

*The calm and systematically theological character of the doctrine of the Fourth Evangelist is totally unlike that of the Apostle to the Gentiles. S. John’s writings remind me of a placid lake over which play the soft breezes of Spring, without producing a ruffle, whereas those of S. Paul are like a chopping sea, answering to every bluster of passion, subject to cross currents, recoils, tides; casting up much wreckage, but constructing little that is complete, enduring and coherent, only supplying abundant material for anyone who liked to build up out of his words the most opposed moral and doctrinal systems. The effect of the Apostle John upon that versatile and impulsive soul may have been sedative, soothing and regulative. The subapostolic Church became Johannine, not Pauline.*

Nevertheless Sabine ended up writing:

*Out of all this confusion, and these variances, S. Paul was able to produce unity. His great work was the conciliation of scattered truths, and the satisfaction of various cravings.... Paul was the conciliator, and conciliation was his achievement.*

**Chapter IV: Paulinism and Calvinism, Chapter V: Paulinism and Lutheranism**

In these two chapters Sabine expounded on what he put forward as misinterpretations of Paulinism during the 15th and 16th centuries by Luther and Calvin. This also gave him the opportunity to deliver harsh criticisms of Protestantism generally, along with the concepts of Justification by Faith Alone and the Abrogation of the Law. Along the way he laid about him in attacking Gnosticism, Marcionism, Valentinianism and,
in later years, Pseudo-Paulinism, and even Wesleyanism. I was left with the feeling that Sabine was inclined to tar all Protestantism with the same brush that he used to discredit such wayward sects as the Muckers of Germany, and the Free Love Perfectionists and Bible Communists of America.

**Chapter VI: The Atonement**

Chapter VI, entitled ‘The Atonement revisited the chapters on Sacrifice and on the Dogma of the Atonement’ in *The Origin and Development of Religious Belief*. Much of the material and arguments are similar, although the later work is perhaps more to the point and easier to read. Sabine looked at the origin of evil, the duality of man and the evolution of sacrifice before turning to the concept of atonement. He wrote that the concept of atonement was not significantly developed in the early Church but, as Sabine wrote, was eventually accepted as: ‘The reconciliation of man with a loving Father. This is clearly shown in the parable of the Prodigal son.’

In his earlier work Sabine had laid the blame for the eventual distortion of the dogma of atonement at the door of the Reformers of the 15th century who, he wrote: ‘... taught that the Almighty had laid down a law that punishment must be the penalty of sin. He then went on to criticize the way in which the Protestant Church had associated with it the dogma of Justification by Faith Alone and wrote: ‘Luther lays down the revolting doctrine that fornication, adultery, theft, and murder, committed by the justified are no more sinful.’

Now in *The Growth of Religious Convictions*, his more recent studies had led him to lay the blame for this view of Atonement on Archbishop St Anselm of Canterbury who, in the 12th century, argued that: ‘The Justice of God could not be allayed till due penalty had been paid. This led Anselm to the conclusion that the death of Christ upon the Cross was vicarious. Other scholars, including Abelard, repudiated Anselm’s theory but, according to Sabine, the damage was done and it was this that led to the Protestant adoption of the early Pauline idea of justification by faith alone. He wrote:

*Calvin, ...., laid hold of it, and of it constituted one of the foundations of his newly invented religion. As such, in its crudest and most repulsive form, it was preached in ten thousand Presbyterian pulpits and even found its way into hymnody.*

It also, he wrote, fostered corruption within the Church of Rome through the widespread sale of Papal Absolutions, Dispensations and Indulgences.

Nevertheless, whether justifiably or not, Sabine appeared to have a need to end the chapter on a positive note with the claim:
We have stepped out of the Wood of error, doubts and disputations, with its rare flickering lights, leaving behind only the few errant and stumbling Calvinists, to emerge into the broad, clear, and certain sunlight of divine Revelation, and to bask in all-pervading Love.

As will be seen, bursts of bewildering optimism like this re-emerge in the final chapter, but, for now, we turn to Chapter VII, Eschatology.

Chapter VII: Eschatology:

Apart from a section on the fulfilment of the prophetic sayings of Christ, Chapter VII, ‘Eschatology, the study of Last Things’. dealt with the Afterlife and, as such, equated with a chapter in The Origin and Development of Religious Belief entitled ‘Immortality’. In the early book, after giving a somewhat longwinded review of attitudes to the afterlife in pre-Christian times, Sabine accepted the existence of an afterlife as proven by the reality of the Resurrection. In his description of the nature of the afterlife there are both similarities and differences between the two books. The most notable similarity is his use of poetry to illustrate his thought. The most notable difference was Sabine’s conception in the early book that the afterlife, although full of happiness, would be graduated. That is, those whose attainments and aspirations in this life were limited would have less to look forward to in the next. Thus He did not think much of the prospects awaiting the Wiltshire rustic!

The chapter on Eschatology in his last book was notable for having very few references to the work of others and, more than anywhere else in the book, seemed to consist predominantly of Sabine’s personal thoughts. Thus he wrote:

I make no pretence to dogmatise on any of these points. I speak of them simply as I have worked them out in my own mind. Every truth has many aspects, and it is but a single one of these that the ordinary man can see. I make no claim to learning, scientific or theological, solely to a certain measure of common-sense applied to the solution of problems profoundly influencing life and its prospects of futurity.

While most of chapter VII, along with all the other chapters in the book, was separately fastened and bound, the pages of the third section of the chapter, entitled Aspirations, were stapled together and inserted loosely into the bound chapter VII. This suggests that the content of this section was in the nature of an afterthought added to the chapter at a later date. Certainly this section contained none of the forbidding thoughts on the afterlife that pervaded the previous section, entitled Rewards and Punishments, in which he had written that immediately on death a
person becomes aware and remains aware, not only of every single transgression throughout his life, but the accumulated effects of these on other people throughout eternity. Sabine offered the theory that electro-magnetic waves possibly had a role in this transmission of information in the spiritual world, but in the process again demonstrated his inadequate understanding of elementary physics.

By contrast the section on ‘Aspirations’ inserted later, contained some delightful poetry and is full of an optimism that seemed to suggest that, at the time he wrote it, Sabine was ready to leave his life on earth and calmly awaiting unending joy and the fulfilment of every one of his mortal aspirations, in the afterlife.

This theme was particularly well developed in a subsection subtitled The Indian Summer and was expressed in a German peasant song from which he quoted and which translates as follows:

Now I buy myself five ladders  
Tie them one to the other  
And whenever I don’t like it any more down here  
I’ll climb up there.

However, underneath this verse Sabine added his own further thought: ‘The craving is ever present to reach and to ascend the sixth and subsequent ladders.’

Sabine’s mental state was probably by no means as tranquil as he was trying to persuade himself it was. Nevertheless the chapter closed with a delightful poem entitled Life’s Renewal. He introduced the poem with the words: ‘I will express my feelings in a couple of stanzas.’

The last stanza was as follows:

All hail to the leaf that is wrinkled and sere,  
When the bud behind it swells;  
Youth leaps from decay, and the short’ned day  
Of the coming spring–tide tells.  
And the ploughshare gleams, and the furrow steams  
When the Earth has dealt her spoil,  
And the winter’s rain falls never in vain,  
It blesses the farmer’s toil.

Oh! the wheel of life will turn, will turn,  
And what though fate seem cruel?  
The Sun that is shorn, will again be born,  
For in Death is Life’s renewal.
Chapter VIII: Papalism

After that, Chapter VIII brings the reader back to earth with a bump. In The Origin and Development of Religious Belief, Papalism was covered under the heading of Theocracy in a chapter entitled The Incarnation and Authority. Although very critical of the Papacy, Sabine’s mood there was one of sadness rather than the anger which characterised the ferocious manner in which he attacked the Papacy in chapter VIII of his last book. Here he vilified one Pope after another, commenting on such things as corruption, simony, wholesale falsification of documents, persecution and massacres. He wrote:

The chair of Peter was besmirched with cruelty, licentiousness, turpitude of every description, down to the Renascence and the life of that climax of wickedness, Alexander VI.

And again:

If we sought to know ..... how the Papacy has dealt with the lives of the flock, whether as a shepherd or as a butcher, we have but to turn over the pages of history, to be confronted with a continuous and sickening record of massacres, tortures, burnings at the stake, and hecatombs of desolate cities and blazing churches. The history is too lengthy, too monotonous in its account of callousness to justice and mercy to be dealt with here.

He wrote at length on the Pornocracy, a period in the 10th century when the appointment of an entire series of eleven Popes was in the gift of two notorious women. Sabine also gave special attention to the monk, Hildebrand, later Pope Gregory VII, who revolutionised the Papacy by initiating the unilateral assumption by it of supreme jurisdiction and infallibility. Hildebrand also eliminated the popular element of the election to the Papal Throne. Sabine wrote:

The carrying out of Hildebrand’s scheme rent the Universal Church asunder, and prepared the way for the alienation from the Catholic Church of the Kingdoms of Northern Europe.

Sabine also made such acid comments as:

I might fill pages with their wrong doings, of the butchery and the burnings not merely countenanced but instigated by them.

Sabine added a scornful account of the ceremony of enthronement of a new Pope, which he claimed to be an invention by Hildebrand at a time when he was no more than a deacon. He claimed, therefore, that the ceremony had no sacramental validity. Sabine dwelt at some length on the Porphyry closed stool used in the ceremony, the sedes stercoraria, which translates as a ‘dung seat.’
He ended the chapter with the simple but again, acidic statement: ‘The resemblance of his successors in Rome to Peter is not conspicuous. I fail to perceive a family likeness.’

Despite these condemnations of the Papacy, Sabine’s attitude to the Church of Rome was otherwise surprisingly benign. Thus he wrote:

\[
\text{The vitality, the strength and persistence of the Roman Catholic Church have been due to this, that it has upheld the Catholic faith and Catholic worship. But so also has the Holy Eastern Church in all its branches, with consistency, and so, at times hesitatingly, has the Anglican Church.}
\]

Chapter IX: Modernism

Having disposed of the Papacy, in chapter IX Sabine turned his guns on Modernism, the tendency to adjust Christian dogma to accord with scientific findings and criticism. He also attacked broad churchmen of the 19th century such as Dean Stanley and his mentor, Thomas Arnold, who he saw as the precursors of the 20th century Modernists.

The chapter opened with an amusing personal reminiscence:

\[
\text{When I was a boy I had on me a temporary fit of taxidermy. The preparation of frogs was simple and efficient. No knife was required in the operation, there was no schism made in the skin. The whole interior with its vital organs was turned inside out through the mouth, like the inversion of a glove. Then the skin was reinverted, inflated, and, when dried, was varnished with copal. This, set up, although destitute of lungs, liver, heart and brain, bore a pleasing but delusive semblance of the living amphibian.}
\]

\[
\text{Such was the treatment to which the disciples of Arnold and Stanley wished to reduce the Church of England, and some such also is the treatment to which the Modernist school of the present day would subject her. Let there be internal emptiness, windy inflation, and external varnish.}
\]

\[
\text{It probably did not occur to the earlier school, nor does it to the Taxidermist School of the present day, that there exist large numbers of persons of every class in life, and of every age, who value the substance of Christianity, and are comparatively indifferent as to its exterior expression.}
\]

Sabine deplored the fact that since the Gorham judgement it was possible for clergy to deny such fundamental beliefs as the Resurrection, yet still remain in the Church. He then went on to reaffirm his belief in the genuineness of the four Gospels.
Those readers who have been intrigued by Sabine’s life-long love of the campanula\textsuperscript{11} will be delighted by the parable which he provided:

\begin{quote}
Of all the wild flowers strewn by the hand of God upon mountain and moor, none have so appealed to my heart as has the common harebell. And yet for long it makes no display; it shows nothing but a slim stalk fine as a horsehair; and is leafless, swaying, stooping at every transient puff of air, unresisting, unpromising. But eventually, a little bud appears at the apex of the poor vegetable fibrous thread, and this speedily uncloses into an admirable blue, pendulous bell.
\end{quote}

It has struck me, perhaps in a review of my own life, but also in consideration of a thousand other lives, that seem to be commonplace, and unproductive, that they may, and in many cases will, resemble the campanula. Far away, out of sight, is the beginning of the career – the root upon which the future depends, nourished in childhood, at the mother’s side, with all that conduces to health, physical, mental, moral, and spiritual; with a sense of the true, the just, the beautiful; and with spiritual aspiration after God encouraged. ….. woe to the parents that do not sow the seeds of faith and love of God in the susceptible hearts of their children, smother early stirrings of the soul, and encourage indifference to the duty of worship; who leave their offspring to pick and choose in after life, (when the spiritual faculty has been left uncultivated) any religion that commends itself to their taste.

This is one of the many blights that have been wafted to us across the Atlantic, and which is sapping the life-blood, and deforming the aspect of traditional English culture.

This is one of three disapproving comments about the adverse effects on the English of importations from America. I am inclined to think that these attitudes to America and Americans, which are not to be found in Sabine’s earlier writing, reflect nothing more than the difficult relationship he is known to have had with his American daughter-in-law, Marian. This particular reference suggests that Marian may have been a freethinker who was prepared to stand up to her father-in-law’s dogmatic attitude to the religious instruction of her three children, who would have been 13, 14 and 17 years of age when they moved into Lew House with their parents.

Sabine ended this chapter with another parable neatly summing up his thoughts on the threats of Modernism to the Church:

\begin{quote}
A man once buried his treasure in a field, and visited it every day. This having been observed, a servant stole it, and did not trouble to refill the excavation. The
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{11} Baring-Gould S. *Early Reminiscences*, (London, Bodley Head, 1923), pp 293-4
\textsuperscript{12} Baring-Gould S. in Wawman R. www.nevercompletelysubmerged.co.uk *Adolescent Notebook*, p. 72
owner, in distress, wrung his hands and loudly bewailed his loss. A neighbour enquired into the cause of his trouble, and was informed. “Never mind,” observed the neighbour. “You have the hole where your treasure lay, and that will suffice for your consolation.”

*It is much like this with the Treasure of Gospel Truth, extracted and taken away by the Modernist. The hole is left, and the man who once believed in Christ as his Saviour, his present treasure, and final reward, is left to console himself with – a Void.*

**Chapter X: Present and Future.**

The final chapter, Present and Future opens with a review of the battles between the Tractarian and Evangelical Parties that dominated the early years of Sabine’s life in the Church and his own involvement in the riots at St Georges-in-the-East. Now he was able to conclude:

... the original Tractarians were a very small knot of earnest unworldly men, while the hosts whom they dared to confront, and to whom they threw the gauntlet down, were overwhelming in numbers, overpowering in influence, and inexpugnable [impregnable] in prejudice. And to think that I have lived to see the change, which has been a privilege denied to so many whom I knew, and who fought at my side!

Sabine’s vivid description of the unscrupulous way in which he felt the Evangelicals had tried to defend their position is worth repeating. He likened their behaviour to that of the women of Lemnos:

*The women of Lemnos having been afflicted by Venus with an evil smell, were deserted by their mates. Enfuriated [sic] at this abandonment, and not for one moment attributing the cause to themselves, these women fell upon and massacred their husbands. The Evangelicals, finding that their savour was no longer relished, fell upon the Tractarians with the knives of the Privy Council, the Law Courts, Episcopal denunciations, the Press, Parliamentary legislation, the Prime Minister, and the Rabble, in fact with every available weapon on which they could lay their angry hands, with intent utterly to exterminate them.*

*But their success was not anything like as complete as that of the women of Lemnos, and they have been forced to retreat in bad odour to the churches of which the Simeonite Trustees, the Church Association, and other partisan societies hold the advowson.*

Indeed Sabine concluded that the Evangelical Party was now undergoing dissolution or change and that practically Calvinism and Lutheranism had been discarded. He saw the Evangelicals, broad churchmen and latitudinarians as largely rejected and
only surviving through the patronage of politicians, advowsons and the existence of many Trusts. He made the comment:

*These Trusts act towards the Church of England as do intestinal worms upon the human body, lowering the vitality, producing lassitude, a pallid complexion, vacuous look, and a staggering gait.*

Similarly he dismissed the Romanist party within the Anglican Church with the comment:

*There has sprung up among us a party of extremists that frankly hopes the time will come when will ensue union between our Church and that of Rome. No more impracticable and chimerical dream could be entertained. That England will ever re-submit to the papal yoke is an idea fit only for an inmate of Bedlam.*

This final chapter is notable for the benign and unduly optimistic views expressed concerning the current and future development of European society in general and the Anglican Church in particular. Inevitably however Sabine removed his rose coloured spectacles for occasional sideswipes. These included adverse comments on ‘the monied classes.’ Thus:

*We cannot alter, we cannot expect to alter, the Godlessness of our Monied Class.*

and

*Whereas the well-to-do and the professionals are motoring the country, playing at Bridge on the drawing-room table, wiping their lips after a morning snack of pale Sherry, whilst the bells of the church have sounded over their heads, unheeded, the poor and lowly are kneeling in the village church. He, before Whom the disciples spread their garments, and waved branches, knows that now as of old...“not many wise men after the flesh, not many noble”.... hold their peace, the scullery-maid, the typist girl, the whistling plough-boy, the shop-assistant, the lawyer’s clerk, the factory-hand, will be found, not perhaps in great numbers, but much in sincerity, to give Glory to God in the highest.*

Elsewhere he made an interesting prediction of one future development in politics:

*The great work to be achieved is .......to educate Labour – our future Master, to love and serve God in integrity and truth; to cleave to the Church, His Kingdom...*

Sabine’s description of the 1922 Christmas Day service in Exeter Cathedral, which it is known from correspondence he attended accompanied by his equally frail aunt, Kate Bond, who was a couple of years older than him, is particularly moving. It

---

13 Wawman R. www.nevercompletelysubmerged.co.uk *The Last Thirty Years of the Life of Sabine Baring-Gould: Part II Sabine’s Correspondence with Evelyn Healey*, p 60.
also summed up his benign thoughts on the current state of the Anglican Church at that time. As such it is an appropriate way to conclude this introduction:

Last Christmas Day, 1922, I was in Exeter. At the Holy Communion the lights burned on the altar, the officiating clergy, celebrant, deacon and subdeacon, were in cope of gold brocade, the whole service in plain-song was sung, for the entire choir was present, and there were numerous communicants. …… In the evening, the nave of the cathedral was crowded by a reverend congregation, and there was not merely choral vespers, but a solemn procession as well headed by the great golden cross of the Cathedral, and with banners waving……It was more than I could bear; thinking of the past, and considering how mighty was the transformation…..

It was not, however, the externals that so affected me, but the altered spirit of the congregation that was so impressive – In that vast crowd filling the nave, before the service began, there was a hush that none dreamt of disturbing, whereas formerly folk walked about and chatted whilst divine service was in progress. Men and women knelt, whereas formerly such as secured a seat, lounged. The atmosphere was charged with spiritual fervour, and hearts were linked to hearts with a common devotion. Where of old had been a savour of mildew was now a fragrance as of incense.

Acknowledgements

As always I am especially grateful to Dr Merriol Almond for her enthusiastic encouragement of my researches into the highways and byways of Sabine’s unpublished work. I am also indebted to Margaret for her assistance in ensuring the accuracy of my transcription of the amended typescript abandoned by Sabine before his untimely death. I am deeply grateful to John Hunwicke for the translations from Latin and Greek, Alan Payne from the French and Nicol-Kirstin Baur from the German.

14 Wawman R, www.nevercompletelysubmerged.co.uk The Last Thirty Years of the Life of Sabine Baring-Gould: Part I. Sabine’s Correspondence with his daughter, Mary Dickinson, p 132
When I rashly suggested this topic for a talk, I originally had a list of questions that had largely been raised by Ron Wawman. Over the months, they focused down onto four individual people who had strong links with Sabine at various points in his life. Three of them are women.

Margaret Ellen (Cissie) Baring-Gould

Sabine’s relationships with women are intriguing, and at times mysterious. We only have a few pieces of direct evidence as to how he felt about his mother, but it appears to be reasonably straightforward. He patronises her, but takes the trouble to argue quite thoughtfully with her. But the most consistent female figure in his early life must have been his sister, Margaret Ellen.

Born in March 1935, she was fourteen months younger than Sabine, and two when the family set off for their first travels in Southern France. She rode on the top of the carriage at one point, because it was too crowded inside.

We then hear virtually nothing of her until she was married in 1857, aged 22. We have no idea how she met Theo Marsh, a Norfolk vicar. So Cissie married young, and went to live far away on the other side of the country. Her early letters home sound reasonably cheerful, on the face of it, and she was still with Theo a decade years later, enjoying a visit from her Aunt Emily. In an undated letter written to her parents she wrote: ‘Henry Bulwer is also here again and has been here a fortnight. Theo likes his companionship and he likes to be here where he feels more at home than at North Walsham where his mother and sister live.’

Henry Bulwer was the nephew of the very famous novelist Edward Bulwer Lytton. He was also nephew to the Lord of the Manor, near Cawston, where the Marshes lived. Theo Marsh bred new plant varieties. He was friendly with the Bulwer Lytttons until at least the 1890s.

But ten years on from there, when Cissie was in her mid-40s, her youngest brother, Edward Drake, wrote to Sabine.

____________________________

15 Letter in the Devon Heritage Centre
'It has cut me to the heart to hear of M’s madness; for one can call it nothing less; has she no respect or love left for any of the family, to behave in the manner she is doing, and to connect herself with such a low blackguard? If such a thing had happened here or in the States, it would soon be settled. Should I return at any time to England and chance to come across the scoundrel, I will take the law into my own hands whatever the consequences. Do you think if I were to write a note (under cover to you) to her, it would do any good?'

This is a strong clue that Cissie had run away with a ‘blackguard’ who had then behaved churlishly towards her, leaving her life and reputation in ruins.

Drakey (as the family always knew him) goes on to blame Cissie’s husband directly for her trouble. In the same letter he says he had been saying for years that Marsh’s attitude of suspicion was sure to drive his wife away. There is no trace of compassion towards her from Sabine – rather the implication is that the family had closed ranks against her, on account of her shameful actions, and left no hard evidence as to what had happened. Drakey’s boyish threat to tackle the ‘scoundrel’ directly is quite endearing in the circumstances. He was never to return to England. Much of his life remains quite mysterious, too. The best source of information is a long letter from a superior named James Woodhouse, expressing great concern about his drinking. The man clearly feels affection for the dissolute young man far from home. Edward Drake Baring Gould died on the 13 August 1887 in 'Settle, Washington' a bachelor and engineer. He was thirty-seven. ('Settle’ is a mis-spelling for Seattle.)

Ten years on again, Cissie is in Essex. The 1891 census has her, then aged 54, living in Earl’s Colne in Essex, at 100 Holt Street, with eight other women aged between 33 and 64, as well as a Mr and Mrs Pudney, two younger Pudney women and two servants. Cissie and the others all lived on their own means. Given other clues, it seems reasonable to guess that this was some sort of home for women in difficulties. Addiction seems the most likely explanation.

It is evidently a sad story, seldom openly referred to. Aunt Kate, Sophy’s youngest sister, living in the grand house in Colleton Crescent, Exeter, acted as a regular safety net for troubled Baring-Goulds. She was present at Cissie’s death in Colchester in December 1903. The fact that Aunt Kate tended Cissie demonstrates that Sabine’s errant sister was by no means estranged from the family, but there is an impression that he made no efforts to see her or assist her in her final years. But this might be wrong.

---

16 Letter in the Devon Heritage Centre (No further reference supplied)
17 Letter in the Devon Heritage Centre (No further reference supplied)
Miss Angell

Two or three years after Sophy’s death, Sabine met the girl who was to become his wife, and at about the time of their marriage, he also became friendly with a woman named Mary Ann Angell, who was in her early sixties.

She was born in 1806 in the Tower of London – something slightly mysterious in itself. By the age of 65 she was living at the Parsonage in Dalton, where we can assume Sabine had met and befriended her from his arrival there a few years earlier. The census records her as an ‘annuitant’ in 1871 and 1881. (Not assistant, as I initially lazily interpreted the word).

On his honeymoon trip in 1868, Sabine wrote long letters to Miss Angell describing many scenes in vivid detail, and referring to Grace in a tone suggestive of one adult speaking to another about a child. Miss Angell was three years older than Sophy, Sabine’s mother, would have been, and did perhaps fill the gap left by Sophy’s death. She lived with Miss Biggs, and a number of others, at the Dalton parsonage. We have no idea what she had done for a living, if anything, throughout her life. We have no idea what she thought about Sabine, or anything else. Why did he write to her at such length?

Further letters written in 1873, when the BGs had moved to Mersea, imply that Miss Angell was also in Essex. Miss Biggs, aged 25 in 1871, became the governess to the BG children at about this point, and it would appear that the two women stayed together.

In 1881, less than a year after the BGs moved permanently to Lew, Miss Angell was in Bishops Tawton near Barnstaple. She died there in the early months of 1882. The mystery is – did Sabine arrange for her move? Was she following him, Grace, Miss Biggs, or none of them? In 1881, on the day the census was taken, she had a visitor, Maria Bloyd – aged 49 and a tantalisingly fleeting individual.

Aimee Beringer

In 1883, a female author published a novel entitled Beloved of the Gods. It was based on a Danish work, and was written by Mrs Oscar Beringer, as she habitually named herself. Her own name was Aimée, and she specialised in adapting original works. In the early 1880s, she came across Baring-Gould’s Mehalah, and by 1885 had written her own dramatic version of the novel, which she called Glory or When I Hold, I Hold Fast. Copies were printed and bound, but not published. She changed the

---

18 This collection of letters is among the Baring-Gould Papers, Devon Heritage Centre, 5203 M, Box 33
ending, and greatly shortened and simplified the story. She also informed Sabine of what she had done. There ensued another of his relationships with clever creative women.

At the time, she was living with her husband and five young children, in London. She had been born in America, named Amy Daniell. She was nineteen when she married Oscar Beringer, a Professor of Music eight years her senior. They appear to have been reasonably affluent, mixing in musical and theatrical circles.

The mystery is – what did Sabine think of her? We have letters both ways, though not direct replies to each other. She sounds surprisingly frank and friendly in many of hers. In the 1880s, she urged him repeatedly to allow her to adapt Mehalah as a stage play, and her Glory was intended as the basis for this project. For many years, this plan was debated, coming tantalising close to fruition. In 1886, a version of Mehalah was in fact staged, but appears not to have been the Beringer script. Five years later, she wrote again to Sabine to ask permission for a second time to ‘dramatise the work’. She respectfully cites her experience and standing in ‘dramatic circles’ and assures him that such a play could succeed artistically, despite the improbability of it making any money: ‘it is too far above the heads of the play-going public,’ she says.

It is unclear whether Sabine had read Glory, when it first appeared, and if so, whether he expressed any opinion of it. The ending is drastically altered from that of the novel, and the atmosphere and passion of the novel greatly diluted. It is also not known what his response was to this approach, but nothing came of it.

In the 1890s, a closer association developed between them when she worked on the libretto for the operetta of ‘Red Spider’. This entailed a regular correspondence, quite businesslike and detailed. This partnership lasted for several years, but then seems to have lapsed, until she reappears in 1905.

Lyceum Club, 128 Piccadilly.
May 22nd 1905

Dear Mr Baring Gould

The whirligig of time has once more brought a possibility of my being able to place well and suitably my version of Mehalah ‘Red Hall’.

The dramatist who came after me evidently did not succeed in his endeavour to make a play out of your wonderful book.

19 Baring-Gould Papers, Devon Heritage Centre, 5203 M, Box 33
If you are not bound in any way may I ask you to revert to our old agreement and to give me another chance of getting your work a dramatic hearing?

I hope all is well with you and yours. I have just returned from Russia, where I spent the winter.

With kind regards

Believe me,

 Truly yours,

Aimee Beringer

(Mrs Oscar Beringer)

PS I may say that if theatrical success eventually crowns our efforts, I have never lost hope and confidence in the effect likely to be produced by Mehalah, granting that the right medium be secured. 20

Sabine sent her to see a performance of Mehalah produced by Matheson Lang. She did as requested and reported back very frankly. By this time, she was separated from Oscar, and her youngest child was an adult. She persists in wanting to produce her play, now entitled ‘Red Hall’, twenty years after her first enthusiasm for Mehalah. Her feelings seem genuine to me. But exactly what Sabine made of her remains a mystery.

Bligh Bond

Finally, there is Sabine’s relationship with his cousin Frederick Bligh Bond. Known as Bligh, and born in 1864, he was the third son of Uncle Fred, (there were six sons and a daughter in total, it seems) Sophie’s brother, who was Head of Marlborough School, where Sabine was urged to go and teach after finishing at Cambridge. He was only two years older than Sabine’s half-brother Arthur, and perhaps more likely to be his friend than Sabine’s. At the age of 25, Bligh appealed for permission to marry Daisy [Margaret,] then aged 19, Sabine’s second daughter, but was told to wait three years. This does not appear to have damaged the friendship between the cousins and the matter apparently did not arise again. Bligh married in 1893 and had an only son who was killed in World War One.

20 Letter of Aimée Beringer to S. Baring-Gould, dated 22 May 1905, Baring-Gould Papers, Devon Heritage Centre, 5203 M, Box 33
Why did this particular friendship spring up? Bligh was 30 years younger than Sabine. At what point did they pal up? Bligh was obviously at Lew quite a lot, for the romance with Daisy to develop. Officially living with his parents in Somerset until at least 1891, studying in Bristol, he evidently travelled the substantial distance down to west Devon on a number of occasions. His involvement in the restoration of Staverton Church, as well as Sabine’s own church began when he was still only in his mid-20s and Sabine was well over fifty.

Bligh became a successful architect, designing schools and colleges, as well as domestic dwellings and the Shirehampton Public Hall and the Cossham Memorial Hospital. By the age of forty he was an authority on church architecture – presumably in large part thanks to Sabine.

But a mystery lies in what Sabine thought of Bligh’s other interests. As a very young man he joined the Freemasons, probably because of his architecture work, and his knowledge of the city of Bath. (It was Bligh, incidentally, who furnished Sabine with the detailed layout of Bath, as seen in the novel Winefred – a small mystery solved). At the age of thirty-one, Bligh also joined the Theosophical Society, followed by the Society for Psychical Research in 1902, the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia in 1909 and the Ghost Club in 1925. As early as 1899 Bligh Bond had expressed his belief that the dimensions of the buildings at Glastonbury Abbey were based on gematria. 21

Sabine was closely involved with Bligh at this period, and must surely have been aware of these activities. Where the older man was making much of a very few ghostly experiences, making sure he never gave them any great credence or endorsement, his young cousin was getting more and more deeply into the supernatural. The Theosophical Society in particular was very popular at the time and Sabine would be unlikely to have any rooted objections to it. As far as I can recall, he expressed little or no opinion publicly of that or the Masons – or Psychical Research. But Bligh did become a well-known figure in the world of ‘psychic archaeology’ when he discovered lost ruins at Glastonbury Abbey. He wrote books on the subject, and is now at least as well remembered as Sabine, for this aspect of his career.

The Church was initially quite happy about his work at Glastonbury, appointing him as Director of excavations in 1908 but became less enamoured when he claimed to have contacted dead monks and the supposed builder of the Edgar Chapel at Glastonbury who he said advised him where to excavate, enabling him to locate two chapels. In 1919 he published The Gates of Remembrance, which revealed that he had employed psychical methods to guide his excavation of the Glastonbury ruins,

---

21 Dictionary definition – ‘A cabbalistic method of interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures by interchanging words whose letters have the same numerical value when added. (1901)
using first Captain John Allan Bartlett (‘John Alleyne’) as a medium, and later others. As a consequence of these revelations his relations with his employers, who strongly disapproved of spiritualism, deteriorated, and he was sacked in 1921.

From 1921 to 1926 he was editor of *Psychic Science*.

So there are obvious parallels to Sabine – in writing, researching, immersing himself in a project. Sabine’s friendships with other men generally revolved around active projects, and much of his association with Bligh comes under this same heading. There is also a hint that they shared a healthy disrespect for church authority.

Bligh was dismissed in 1921, having produced a number of books on the Cabala, Gnosticism, the Gematria, etc - and emigrated to America in 1926. There he was a prominent member of the American Society for Psychical Research, and became ordained in 1933 as a Bishop of the Old Catholic Church. He came back to England in 1936 and died in 1945.
Baring-Gould and European Romanticism

Bob Mann

Despite the rather academic title (especially for a Sunday morning), this is not an academic paper, because I am not an academic. I am a writer, and my response to Sabine Baring-Gould is that of a fellow writer, one who feels a strong affinity with the man and his work, in particular his love for his native Devon and its traditional culture, and for anything old, odd or out-of-the-way, as well as his rambling style and fondness for going off at tangents, and into anecdotes and digressions. I have also noticed that when I talk or write about him, I tend to fall into doing this myself, no doubt in homage to his influence.

My original idea was merely to show how looking at Baring-Gould against the background of European Romanticism helps us to understand his approach to the collecting of folksongs, the aspect of his work which I probably know best, having for many years been part of a show performing songs and readings throughout Devon and Cornwall, telling the story of his encounters with his village song men and women. I did this with well-known folk musicians Mick Bramich and Les Noden, sometimes joined by others.

But, as I researched the subject, re-reading whatever I had about Baring-Gould, including the three main biographies, I realised that putting him against a wider European background also helps us to see him more fully and accurately, and to appreciate more deeply his achievements. So often he is presented as a rather eccentric figure, the English parson-antiquary with the magpie mind; even those who admire him tend to be a little apologetic on his behalf, admitting that he wrote too much too quickly, and relied too much on memory. Then there are those who chide him for precisely those characteristics that make him special, the approach that says ‘what a pity he didn’t have a proper education’ (i.e. at an English public school), or ‘what a shame he didn’t concentrate on just doing one thing really well’ (though it is true that he himself rather regretted not having had a more normal education). But in seeing him as a European figure, rather than a purely English one, this slightly patronising image falls away, and that deadly word ‘eccentric,’ reached for so automatically in England when faced with anyone not easily pigeon-holed, is revealed as just a lazy refusal to engage with his complexity.

So much about him, after all, was not typically English for the time anyway, despite his impeccably landed family background, not least his proficiency in languages
(between six and nine, according to the source you are reading). So thinking of him in a wider, European context, helps to rescue him from the persistent, if not exactly ‘enormous,’ ‘condescension of posterity,’ to use the famous phrase of E P Thompson. I am certain, anyway, that had he received a more usual education for one of his class, or focussed on just one or two fields of endeavour, he would probably today be just another almost forgotten Victorian, and certainly would not have a society to perpetuate his name, meeting every year to raise a glass and celebrate his life and work (except, perhaps, purely as a family gathering).

His youthful travels, in France, Germany, Italy, and beyond, cannot be overestimated in the making of his mind and character. His vast knowledge of the byways of history, folklore and tradition, as revealed in his travel books and guides, and in such collections as Curious Myths of the Middle Ages, Curiosities of Olden Time, Strange Survivals and A Book of Folklore, are literally continent-wide, and owe much to these boyhood journeys, as does his understanding of landscape and geology and their effects on the cultures built upon them. From this came, amongst other things, his keen perception of the differences between Catholic and Protestant societies, the contemplation of which helped to lead him to his own high Anglican position, which he felt was the best compromise possible.

Then there is his profound knowledge of architecture. It is often said that Pevsner was the first to put English architecture into a European context, but S B-G was doing it, in his guides and topographical works, at least fifty years earlier. When he looked at the landscape of his beloved Dartmoor, he had knowledge of terrains from the Alps to Iceland with which to compare it. Likewise when one of his village labourers taught him a song or scrap of local belief, he could immediately place it in relation to similar examples from myriad sources. His love of the gothic and medieval, his fascination for tales of ghosts, vampires, werewolves and the like, are equally European in scale.

‘Romanticism,’ as anyone who has sought to find a manageable definition of the term will know, is notoriously difficult to pin down, and the next few paragraphs will be simplistic in the extreme, but it is generally agreed to have originated amongst a number of German writers and philosophers during the 18th century. According to Isaiah Berlin’s influential series of lectures, given in Washington in 1965, and finally published in book form in 1999 as The Roots of Romanticism, it was a reaction amongst certain German intellectuals, still living in small duchies, principalities and other diverse but mainly insignificant and provincial places, against the cultural threat posed by strong, centralised nation-states like France and Britain, with their glittering courts, cosmopolitan capitals and increasingly scientific, rationalist philosophies.\(^22\)

Rather than try to emulate these countries, they decided to celebrate instead the very opposite to what they saw happening in them. They would value the old and settled, the traditional, the regional and local. They would go inwards, as with the Pietist movement within Lutheranism, rather than outwards to explore and assert power over nature and the environment, as the English, in particular, were starting to do.

This tendency is especially noticeable in the work of the philosopher Herder, whose role is particularly important, as he was the first to propose the idea of the Volksgeist, the folk soul or spirit that embodied the essence of a people, and probably of the place where they had traditionally lived, the soil in which they were rooted.

The whole Romantic love of folklore, folk music and dance, the love of what we now call ‘local distinctiveness,’ started here, over two centuries ago. It grew throughout the 19th century and into the 20th, and became a large element of the political nationalism that was one of the main historical phenomena of the period. Small countries, nations and peoples began to assert themselves against the huge multi-national, multi-racial empires in which they had been subsumed. Foundation myths and folk heroes were rediscovered, national epics composed, languages revived and traditions of all kinds sought out. In many parts of the world this process continues, as of course do the conflicts and stalemates so often engendered by it.

A basic assumption behind the folk soul myth, as it developed and hardened, was that it was remote, rare and in imminent danger of being lost. You wouldn’t find the true essence of the people in courts or capitals, or amongst the bourgeoisie or urban masses. You had to go to the peasants, the ‘real’ people, living in timeless unity with their land, passing down their tales and traditions unchanged from the immemorial past. The oldest and most remote songs, stories and customs were the purest. They were wholesome and healing, as opposed to the cynical, commercial products of industrialism and the cities. Poets, musicians and artists, in returning to this pure source of inspiration, would create work that forged anew the soul of their race.

If I may indulge in a Baring-Gould-like digression for a moment: I remember, as a child, puzzling over the illustrations of children in various picture books, who were dressed in something called ‘national costume.’ There would be an English boy and girl in 1950s school uniform, but the others were in what I later came to realise were highly stylised peasant clothing, dating from the 19th century. If, I wondered, I went to any of these countries, would my contemporaries really be dressed in these weird costumes in the playground? I couldn’t quite accept the likelihood, somehow. These ‘national costumes,’ like so much else, were invented traditions inspired by the Romantic Nationalist assumption that each people had its unique, essential nature, and that this was expressed in everyday culture. The English don’t have a national costume dating from that time, for the simple reason that we did not need to assert
ourselves against a huge multi-national empire. We were the huge multi-national empire, though we allowed the Scots and Welsh, now they were safely under control, to indulge themselves in some equally invented traditions, only loosely based on real historical precedents (the tall Welsh hat, and the modern kilt and the supposed clan tartans, all date from the mid 19th century).

What the English did have, though, was a strong sense of the regional and local, particularly based on loyalty to the ancient counties. This deep awareness and pride in county identity, and the often marked individuality of each one, goes back centuries; it was especially prominent in the Tudor period, at exactly the time when a real sense of an English nation state was in the process of forming. So it is not surprising that, in the 19th century, when scholars started looking enthusiastically for folk traditions, customs, songs and tunes, they inevitably took a county, or a couple of adjacent counties, as their natural unit of study.

When Baring-Gould turned his attention to collecting the old songs of Devon and Cornwall, he was steeped in all these Romantic assumptions, as anyone, taking an interest in such things, would inevitably have been.

He therefore deliberately looked for the oldest, remotest rural singers, preferably illiterate, as they would be untainted by commercial or ‘art’ music. He asked for their oldest songs. He decided that the words, very often similar to those of a printed broadside ballad, were modern, and less important than the tunes, which he felt (with no actual evidence) must be genuinely old, and indigenous to the area. In *A Book of the West: Devon* he states:

> ‘In folk-song, then, we may expect to see reflected the characteristics of the race from which it has sprung, and, as in the counties of Devon and Cornwall on one side and Somersetshire on the other, we are brought into contact with two, at least, races – the British and the Saxon – we do find two types of melody very distinct. Of course, as with their dialects, so with their melodies, the distinctions are sometimes marked, and sometimes merged in each other. The Devonshire melodies have some affinity with those of Ireland, whilst the Somersetshire tunes exhibit a stubborn individuality – a roughness, indeed, which is all their own.’

So, Celtic/British good, Saxon not quite so good.

He goes on to refer to the ‘exceeding grace and innate refinement’ of the Devonshire tunes, and speculate as to where and when they originated, suggesting that many of them may have been written by some local church musician.

So maybe not so old, but very local.

Though he does not mention it in this particular book, in other places, such as *Old Country Life*, S B-G also puts forward another theory, slightly at odds with his conviction that all the tunes are ancient and local, that many of his old singers, for whom singing was a family tradition, could be descended from some of the itinerant musicians who, in the Middle Ages and Tudor period, had journeyed from one castle or large noble household to another, until all who were not in the employ of a particular lord were forbidden to wander by an Act of 1597, which classified them as ‘vagrants and sturdy beggars.’ They had thus had to settle on the land, keeping their music only for church or community functions, and three centuries later he was collecting the remnants of this once courtly music from their peasant descendants. His descriptions of many of the singers, like Robert Hard or James Parsons, often emphasise the intelligence and refinement in their faces, clearly suggesting the possible sophistication of their ancestry.

In the show which I mentioned earlier, which was, admittedly, an entertainment rather than an academic exposition, we used to illustrate this theory with the song ‘Go From My Window.’ Many 16th century composers made lute variations on it. Baring-Gould collected a version, complete with a story, from the matchlessly named Ginger Jack Woodrich of Thrushelton, who had heard it from a tramp in a Bideford pub. One of our musicians, Mick Bramich, would play a version on the lute, then I’d tell the story, exaggerating my very mild Devon intonation, and we’d do the song. But does it prove the theory? Maybe it was already a folk melody before the lute composers got hold of it? In this case it’s old, but not so local. Clearly the discussion could run and run.

The folklore myth was surprisingly durable. It was accepted as a given truth by the early collectors that in seeking out the oldest, remotest informers, they would get as close as possible to the essential, timeless folk soul. It was behind the use of folk material in all Nationalist schools in classical music and in the various 20th century folk ‘revivals.’ It was still believable in the 1970s and 80s, although many of its assumptions were finally beginning to be questioned. In recent decades, careful scholars like Georgina Boyes in *The Imagined Village* and Ronald Hutton in *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain* have taken it apart to reveal the agendas and fantasies behind it. Also, it had long been apparent that the fact that a song had been heard and written down in Devon did not make it a ‘Devon folksong,’ as it could well have also been collected and published as a ‘Norfolk folksong’ or a ‘Sussex folksong.’ It was pointed out that the very people who often carried the songs were the ones who

---

moved about the most, the drovers, sailors, gypsies and pedlars. Even apparently location-specific songs such as ‘Widecombe Fair’ were shown to be part of a common stock of fair songs, each with a different list of names (though it is true that only Widecombe has completely identified itself with its song). The actual idioms of the music from many parts of the country, far from being uniquely ‘of’ that one place, were fairly similar, from Yorkshire to Cornwall.

My choice of this subject came about through a conversation in the pub with Sam Richards, who collected folklore and songs in the Westcountry throughout the 1970s and early 80s, and I acknowledge his paper in the 2000 Devonshire Association Transactions, entitled ‘Devon Music in Time and Place,’ as a valuable starting point. In it he writes:

‘I am still often asked about Westcountry, or Devon, music, especially the traditional music. And the agenda behind the questions, which I often feel as a pressure, is for me to confirm that there was, indeed, at one time, a Westcountry style of music, or at least something distinctive, and that it continues in remote, esoteric pockets which no one except someone who has done my amount of research would know about.’

(I remember asking Sam this very question, back in the late 1980s, and how he carefully sidestepped giving a direct answer – many conversations since then have shown me why it was the wrong question, and I apologise for any pressure he may have felt!).

He continues: ‘Either this, or an equally acceptable answer would be that there was indeed a Westcountry (or Devon) music, but that the 20th century, popular culture and the Devil’s work eroded it to nothingness. The answer which is least welcome, but the only honest one I know, is that there is little evidence for regional styles of folk, popular or religious music, and nor is there much evidence elsewhere in the country for exclusively regional music.’

None of this, of course, is intended to denigrate Baring-Gould or his contemporaries. They were of their time, just as we are. Looking clearly at the assumptions he brought to his work, which may no longer stand up, does nothing to diminish the actual collection of songs that he made, or the effort he put into preserving them, or his respect and affection for his singers, which were ahead of his time, and compares well with the attitudes towards their informants of better known and more influential collectors. Like everything else he did, the song collecting reveals the man, in all his contradictory greatness.
Lewtrenchard: A Faraway Place Close to Our Hearts

Merriol Almond

This is the lightly edited text of a talk prepared by Merriol Almond for presentation to the Thursday Club in West Hartford, Connecticut. It was sent to Martin Graebe, who found it very useful in preparing to interview Merriol during the 2012 meeting at Lewtrenchard. In the absence of a transcription of that interview, this article provides a very personal and interesting history of Merriol’s stewardship to date of the Lewtrenchard Estate.

Madam Chairman, ladies of the Thursday Club, the ‘faraway place’ I will speak about is the Lewtrenchard Estate, a small agricultural estate in southwest England which was purchased in 1626 by Henry Gould, an ancestor of mine. It would be a mistake to think of the Goulds as a Downton Abbey sort of family. The Goulds were not nobility or socially prominent, but “typical of those small landowning families who exercised so much influence on English history during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and from whose ranks were drawn almost exclusively the members of the House of Commons, the officers of the armed forces of the Crown, the clergy of the established Church, and the lawyers, magistrates and judges who administered the law” (Dickinson, 1970.)

There was, however, at least one real miscreant in our family. In 1769 a Captain Edward Gould inherited the family properties and according to Dickinson ‘succeeded in dissipating most of the family wealth by gambling.’ Captain Gould fortunately did not have the legal right to dispose of Lew House and it was saved, together with a remnant of the estate, “by the energy of his mother, a redoubtable old lady usually referred to as ‘Old Madam Gould.’” Old Madam Gould’s grandson, William, combined his mother's and his father's family names and became known as William Baring-Gould. William was my great great great grandfather, and the Lewtrenchard estate passed from him down the first born male Baring-Gould line to my grandfather, Edward Baring-Gould. When my father, Sabine Linton Baring-Gould, 26

The Thursday Club (originally The Thirteen Club) was founded in October 1883 at the home of Miss Emily Morgan, 108 Farmington Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut. It was then a gathering of thirteen young women just out of school and had as its objective "mental advancement through the presentation of papers by members." An early meeting also included a reading by Mark Twain at his home in Hartford from his book, "The Prince and the Pauper." The practice of members presenting papers at least loosely connected to an annual topic selected by the club membership has continued to the present. The topic in 2012 was "Faraway Places."
died in 1972, the Lewtrenchard estate and some associated investments passed to me, because my father had no sons and I am the elder of his two daughters. I was 35 at the time, had always lived in the United States, and although I had visited Lewtrenchard very briefly several times, I was almost totally unfamiliar with it. Thus, almost exactly 40 years ago, my involvement with this particular faraway place began.

To return to 1972 when I inherited Lewtrenchard, the first issue, at least in theory, was whether to try to hold on to it and manage it from a distance, or to sell it. I don't remember that my husband Doug and I actually considered selling it. To us both, the obvious thing was to try to hang on to it and manage it, so long as we could do so without having to infuse our own limited financial resources into it. It was a challenge we would have been ashamed to pass up. Our first task was to pay off very onerous death duties, assessed on date of death values. This was difficult to do. It involved sale of the securities I had inherited with Lewtrenchard and several Lewtrenchard properties, including The Blue Lion, the pub/small hotel in Lewdown, two cottages, some paintings and furniture, and a small 80 acre farm with beautiful views across the Lew Valley to Dartmoor. During this stage we had serious concerns about the manner in which our family home, Lew House, was being run as a hotel, and about the very dilapidated condition of many of the properties. Our children were very young. At the time I inherited Lewtrenchard our 4 children ranged in age from 4 years and 8 months to 10 months old, and I had only just started working two mornings a week in an employees' clinic for the City of Hartford. Also, nearly complete ignorance of a property approximately 3500 miles away that one is responsible for is emphatically not a good place to start from! So the rest of this paper will be about how we got on with our new responsibility and how we got to where we are today.

After two visits in early 1973 to start to familiarize ourselves with the property, on the advice of my father's Trustees, Norman Pooler and Robin Reiss, we commissioned a report on the Lewtrenchard Estate from Strutt and Parker, a well established firm of Land and Estate Agents. Beyond the basic introductory material, Strutt and Parker reported on Properties and Activities, Present Management and Financial Position, Town and Country Planning considerations, and the Estate Duty position and made recommendations for the future. I have not recently read through the details of their recommendations, but most of their major recommendations were implemented. Myrtle Cottage, The Blue Lion Hotel, The Old Reading Room, some of the contents of Lew House, the securities, and eventually Cross Roads Farm, were all sold, providing enough money to pay Death Duties off over a period of
approximately 6 years (fortunately at low interest rates) as well as legal costs on both sides of the Atlantic and other administrative costs.

We started right away on a program of two visits to the property each year, initially for about a week each time, bringing two of our children with us to reduce the babysitting burden back home. Each trip initially involved an overnight flight to Heathrow, a several hour conference with one of my father's lawyer trustees on Cannon Street in London, and an overnight stay at a rather seedy London hotel followed by a 5 hour drive to Lewtrenchard. The trustees, Mr. Pooler and Mr. Reiss, remained in the picture until the death duties were fully paid off. I was "the decider," but the trustees were sympathetic and supportive, although they remained in London and only on rare occasions travelled to Devon to attempt to deal with something first hand — in one memorable instance with reports in a national newspaper of striptease acts and other scandalous behaviour at the Hotel.

Here, according to Strutt and Parker's 1973 Report, is what we started with in 1972:

"Lewtrenchard is] a typical example of a small agricultural estate which has remained in the ownership of the same family over a long period. The property has been kept unspoilt, and the tenants have a strong sense of belonging to a unit whose owners they respect and whose shortcomings as landlords they tolerate in a way unthinkable if the owner was an outsider. The Lewtrenchard Estate is situated in mid Devon, approximately 9 miles north of Tavistock, in and near the village of Lewdown, through which runs one of the main routes to the west, the A.30 trunk road from Exeter to Cornwall. The estate lies in an extremely beautiful and unspoilt valley of the river Lew, a tributary of the Tamar, between 300 and 650 feet above sea level. The property extends to approximately 820 acres...The individual units include Lew Trenchard, the seventeenth century family home now let as a hotel, two let houses, five cottages, six farms, an inn, five acres of accommodation land, woodlands and sporting rights. The managing agents are Messrs. Ward and Chowen, Church Lane, Tavistock."

Among our first tasks were to get to know the properties and especially the tenants, and to have the tenants get to know us and our children. My father had attempted to make a clean break between his life growing up in England and his life from his early 20's on in the United States. He depended to some extent on the limited income the estate provided to supplement his salary working for Bendix Aviation in Teterboro, New Jersey helping to design early aircraft instrument navigation systems as well as the "automatic pilot" that could land airplanes in conditions of limited visibility. World War II was in progress and his father, Edward Baring-Gould, remained in London throughout the Blitz. My father's engineering work was his contribution to the war effort, and Lewtrenchard was, seemingly, mostly off his map. He never sought to re-establish his connection with it although on some level I think he
continued to feel deeply about it, and he chose to have his ashes buried in the churchyard at Lewtrenchard. A friend from when they were at Cambridge University together, and his stepmother, Maud, managed necessary details, normally without leaving London. So after a gap of over 40 years we had relations with Lewtrenchard and its tenants to re-establish, which over time we did.

Financially and physically, there was great deal to be done. Russell Woolcock, the managing agent, was enormously helpful in our getting to know the tenants. In addition to collecting rents and arranging for repairs, Mr. Woolcock was a local auctioneer in Tavistock and had friendly relationships with many of the tenants in part through his role as a cattle auctioneer. Over time, as much as we liked him and appreciated his help and support and knowledge of Lewtrenchard, we felt we needed greater expertise in agricultural land management than Mr. Woolcock and his firm could provide. After much deliberation we chose the firm of Stratton and Holborow which had been highly recommended to us as being young and dynamic. It was an unbelievably fortunate choice, and first Tim Key, and later John Hastings, became very important people our lives contributing immeasurably to the welfare of Lewtrenchard and our own greater security in a challenging situation. (Our "secret weapon," compared to other landowners, I sometimes felt, was that we largely took our advisors' advice.) It also seemed that virtually everyone valued our attempting to retain and strengthen the family connection and was glad that Lewtrenchard had not been sold off, although initially there must have been doubts about how we could possibly handle the situation adequately from so far away.

After the striptease acts had been dealt by Mr. Reiss, and with the death duties paid off, a major issue was the very poor physical condition of many of the properties. The hotel had become largely a restaurant and venue for mid-market weddings and large parties. The decor seemed mostly speckles and swirls. The houses and cottages were damp and lacked central heating or proper drainage systems; there were no smoke detectors and the properties were generally in poor repair. The tenants tended not to complain because they preferred having things as they were to having their rents go up. (The entire rental income for 1971-72, before the death duty sales, was reported by Ward and Chowen to be £4511, equivalent to roughly $61,000 today. The cash surplus was very roughly the equivalent of the $29,000 today. There was room to manoeuvre, but not much. Improvements had to be gradual. I did not want the rents to be a hardship for the tenants we started with, or for similar tenants we found to replace them once they left or died. We wanted to continue to have mostly local people, mainly working people in the cottages and farms and somewhat better off people in the houses, as had been the pattern in the past. We did not want the farms to
become hobby farms for rich people, and we did not want the houses and cottages to be second homes for well off people working and living elsewhere.

And so we proceeded, bit by bit, to make repairs and improvements as we could manage them financially. There were disasters, one major one. My father's first cousin, Cicely ("Image") Briggs took on the long term lease of the hotel. It was a full repairing lease, and she vastly underestimated the amount of repairs that would be necessary. Image borrowed money from a close friend, worked desperately with her family to restore the house and make the hotel and restaurant business work financially, and went bust. This was horrible. At our cottage, Tim Key, unprecedentedly, asked me for glass of whisky and suggested that I consider selling the Dower House. I decided NOT to sell the Dower House and to buy the lease back from Mrs. Briggs for about the amount she owed in back taxes and see what we could do to re let the Hotel. As you can imagine these were terrible times for Image and her friends and family and also for me and my family. My Uncle Teddy, whom I admired and loved, was deeply disturbed that I had not intervened to salvage the situation. Eventually good relationships were mostly restored though understandably there is lasting deep hurt.

A succession of Hotel leaseholders succeeded Image, all of them arriving full of enthusiasm and leaving crestfallen a few years later having been unable to make the business successful. At times I felt like the Spider welcoming the Fly into my web. Several things were different when Sue and James Murray took on the lease in 1992. The drive from London and other population centres to the north and east had become much easier with the completion of improved major roads reaching within about 6 miles of the Hotel. The leaseholders preceding the Murrays, Mary Ellen Keys and Greg Shriver, had had the means and the foresight to join a hotel consortium called Pride of Britain which helped with much needed advertising and also mutual advice and support. The Murrays had some capital to start with. And above all Sue and James had the taste, style, ability, flair and genuine liking for their guests needed to bring it off. They were, and are, charming and attractive hosts in a by now very attractive setting. Now, after an eventful seven year hiatus there isn't space to tell you about, Sue and James Murray are back, with their son Duncan and Duncan’s wife Jo, out of retirement, running the Hotel again.

In the meantime, we had gradually managed to improve the other properties. With the Dower House, the oldest house on the estate, we were able to restore only the basic structure and then let it to Mark and Nancy Cullen who restored and improved the rest. By the time the other house, The Ramps, got a very thoroughgoing restoration, the financial situation had improved. The Ramps, built by my great grandfather by the side of an eerily lovely quarry lake, is now in excellent shape and beautifully
cared for and appreciated by Michael and Pat Coxson, who also run charity events such as fashion shows at the Hotel for their favourite cause, The Children's Hospice Southwest. The farms have been amalgamated into two farms, Wooda Farm and East Raddon. Both are in good hands and well managed. We kept aside a lovely little thatched cottage for our own use and for the use of family and friends and we stay there when we visit and we love it. (The rest of the year it is rented by holiday makers through an excellent holiday cottage letting company called Helpful Holidays. Early in our first year with Helpful Holidays Lew Quarry Cottage even appeared on the front of a glossy magazine! The cottage is completely charming, and a great joy to us.)

We hope the next generation will not have quite the trials and tribulations that we did, but who knows for sure. At least our children grew up thoroughly familiar with the property and even attended the local school for a while. Our grandchildren also enjoy their visits. The estate is now formally owned by a Delaware Corporation called the Baring-Gould Corporation, of which I am president and up to now have been chief shareholder. Aliquots of shares have been placed year by year into a Lew Trenchard Preservation Trust, the purpose of which is to greatly reduce inheritance taxes and other costs when we die. Our children, one of whom as Baring-Gould Trustee will be "the decider" in my place, fortunately take a lively interest in the property and its well being and the well being of the tenants. (I have always seen landlord and tenants as being like conjoined twins - the wellbeing of the one is very important to the wellbeing of the other.)

In 2002 our daughter Betsy and son in law Doug McGregor were married by special license in the small church at Lew Trenchard, of which Betsy's great great grandfather was Rector. The McGregors had their wedding reception at Lewtrenchard Manor. Our son Christopher was christened there, in 1971. Christopher also was godfather to his niece Abigail when she was baptized there. Doug and Lena's daughter Charlotte was baptized there with friends Trevor and Ruth Dawe as her godparents. (Doug and Charlotte made a special visit to the Dawes just recently.) Much improved access by road, cheap phone call via Skype and e mail have made keeping in touch with people and events vastly easier and more efficient. We are joyful that we have many friends there now, and they help to keep us in close touch. In fact, it's not even very unusual for us to learn about significant events before the managing agents in Exeter do because of rapid, first hand communication and our usually being accessible on holidays, nights and weekends. It's been helpful too that for 40 years we've followed local news by means of an airmail subscription to the local weekly newspaper, *The Tavistock Times.*
Several decades ago, we developed a set of goals for Lewtrenchard. They have guided us and worked well for us. Our most serious difficulties have been on the infrequent occasions when the goals have been in conflict. Here are the first three goals:

1. Preserve its beauty and special character now and in the future.
2. Preserve it as a focus for all generations of the Baring-Gould family. Increase family connections to Lewtrenchard. Increase family cohesiveness and enjoyment of associations with one another.
3. Promote welfare of tenants, both material and benefits of access to owner.

I think we have been very fortunate. Being the one in charge and responsible has been time consuming, and at times distressing. Fortunately my husband Doug has been incredibly wise and patient and supportive. (At a very young age Betsy asked her father if he would have married me "even if he knew about Lewtrenchard.") Other family members, especially my first cousin John Reboul, have also been extremely supportive and helpful. My Uncle Teddy Baring-Gould was a wonderful source of firsthand knowledge and advice up to the time of his death in 1994. However it was Doug Senior particularly who helped things get started by being interested and especially by believing it could be made to work.

My thanks to Doug Senior, John Reboul, our children Catherine, Betsy, Christopher and Doug Junior, their spouses John, Doug and Lena, my sister Connie Baring-Gould, Russell Woolcock, Tim Key, John Hastings, Peter Thomas and all those who love Lewtrenchard and want to help it survive, especially those who make or have made it their home. Lewtrenchard is a faraway place that became very close to our hearts.

Sources:


Sabine Baring-Gould’s Library – past, present, and future

Martin Graebe

Introduction

As a Society, we are very interested in the books that Sabine Baring-Gould wrote. We have, though, spent less time thinking about the books that he owned and read. The importance of his library is twofold. Firstly, it is his research library, containing books that he consulted when he was writing his own books. Secondly, the books contain a number of personal records such as notes written into books by him, and the manuscripts and ephemeral printed material. We are fortunate that so much of his personal library still exists, though now on separate sites. The greater part of that library is now on the move again after more than 30 years and it seems appropriate to look at it in a little more detail. Over the next 20 minutes, I will talk about the history of his library, about its contents and about its future location at the University of Exeter.

Description and History

Though I have headed my talk ‘Sabine Baring-Gould’s Library’, we are not, actually, talking about a library that was solely his creation. It contains books purchased by his Father and Grandfather – and some, in all probability, by earlier ancestors. He tells us, for example, that his grandfather made a good collection of French and German literature which, when he was a teenager, was a favourite refuge. It also contains some books that were the property of his children and grand-children – hence the inclusion, for example, of H. G. Wells’ novels and of Enid Blyton’s ‘Happy Hours Story Book’. Thus we have in it books dating from the 16th Century through to the 1930s.

But it is true to say that the majority of the books were purchased by Sabine Baring-Gould either because he needed them for his research, or simply because he was an inveterate collector from childhood. He has described how his father would search the family coach when they left on another leg of their seemingly endless European tours, and eject the precious items that the boy had hidden beneath the cushions, after acquiring them during an all too brief pause in their travels. So there are books that he acquired simply because he wanted to own them – whether he really needed them or not. This is evidenced by a number of books that he has bought, had bound and then never read – which we know because the pages are still uncut. With all the other calls
on his income for maintaining his family and his home, he couldn’t always afford to buy the books he needed, let alone those he coveted. We don’t really know what Grace made of this, though Cecily Briggs suggests that she often despaired of his extravagance.²⁷

I have not seen any photographs of the library as it was during Sabine Baring-Gould’s life-time, though we know that, at the time of his death, it occupied the room on the ground floor of the East wing, as well as the extension leading from it. It is likely, though, that there were books in other locations around the house. We also know that a lot of his papers were destroyed after he died and, while this is regrettable, it was probably inevitable given the quantity that there must have been. That the process went too far, however, is suggested by the subsequent commission given to Francis Nicolle by Sabine’s heir, Edward, to make as complete a collection as possible of the articles written by his father,

After the death of his first wife, Marion, in 1931 Edward chose not to live at Lew and only visited it rarely. In January 1937 there was a sale at Lewtrenchard of surplus furniture and books. The books, many of them having the Baring-Gould book-plate, were sold as a single lot of 2,000 for just £8.²⁸ The house was let as a private

²⁸ ‘Sale of Books, Etc., At Lew Trenchard House’, Exeter and Plymouth Gazette, Fri 22 Jan 1937, p. 14, Col. 2. The article says that the sale, by Ward and Chowen of Okehampton, took place on the previous Wednesday (i.e., 20 Jan.) It also states that ‘None of the articles offered on Wednesday had any special connection with the Rev. Baring-Gould.’
residence and later became a hotel. The residue of the books and papers remained in place and it seems that a number of items disappeared during this period.

Merriol Almond took over responsibility for the Lewtrenchard Estate following the death of her father in 1972. As she got to grips with the complex problems affecting the Estate, the library must have seemed like the least of her difficulties. A few years later, however, it was recognised that the storage of the books at Lewtrenchard had become another problem that needed to be dealt with since, apart from the risk of ‘pilfering’ by hotel guests, a number had become damaged by water ingress into some of the storage locations. It was decided that it was necessary to reduce the number of books at Lew House and to move the most important and valuable to safety. Luckily, there was an opportunity to place a significant proportion of the collection in the empty library at Killerton House, near Broadclyst.

Sir Richard Acland had given Killerton to the National Trust in 1944. He continued to live there for some years but when he moved out in the 1970s he took his books with him and an arrangement was concluded with the Trust to fill the shelves with a selection of books from Lewtrenchard. The selection was made by the then Librarian at Plymouth, Bill Best-Harris, working with Tim Key, the managing agent at that time. They succeeded in creating a library at Killerton that was visually stunning, while serving as a safe haven for about 3,000 volumes (c. 2000 separate titles).

Visitors to the house were not allowed to handle the books in the Library and there were nylon wires placed to prevent them from being removed from the shelves. Access to the books was by prior arrangement and needed the permission of both the
National Trust and the Baring-Gould Corporation. There were no study facilities at Killerton, so the books could only be looked at when the house was closed to visitors. Not many people took on the challenge and no-one looked in depth at the content of the library.

This situation changed dramatically in the Spring of 1992, when I was involved in a show with Paul Wilson and Marilyn Tucker of Wren Music, which had been put together to celebrate the centenary of the publication of Baring-Gould’s book *Songs of the West*. We wanted to do a live recording of the show and were offered the chance to do it in the library at Killerton. In a hiatus between the two performances we did that day, Denise Melhuish showed us the vellum bound manuscript volumes that we now know to be Sabine Baring-Gould’s Personal Copy of the songs that he had collected.

Nervously, I started the process of getting permission to look at the manuscripts and the other material in the Library. I had met Merriol Almond, Sabine Baring-Gould’s great-grand-daughter at Lew House several years earlier, but I was by no means certain that permission would be given. After a wait of several weeks I received the go-ahead, given in very positive terms. Since then Merriol’s interest, support and encouragement has been unflagging and has been an important buttress for the work that has been done to bring her great grandfather’s work on folk song to a wider audience.

So I made the first of many visits to Killerton to study the material in the library – often in the depths of winter when the house was closed and sometimes wearing gloves because the heating was off. After I had been going there for a while Denise asked me if she had mentioned the boxes in the basement. These turned out to be 32 large boxes which contained, among some damaged books and other detritus from Baring-Gould’s collection, a number of notebooks (including more folk songs), albums, letters, printers’ proofs and other papers. They also contained the articles by Baring-Gould culled from the original journals by Francis Nicolle at Edward Baring-Gould’s instigation. These, and most of the other manuscript material, are now in the Devon Record Office, where they have proved a delight to a wider range of Baring-Gould researchers and enthusiasts in the years since.

**Lew House**

Let me return, for a while, to Lew House. Even after the greater part of the collection had been moved to Killerton, there were nearly 2,000 books remaining at Lew. They were, for many years, regarded as the poor relations of those at Killerton and they remained vulnerable to the predation and carelessness of hotel guests. A few years
ago I spent some time looking through what was here and found that there were, in fact, many interesting and valuable books. After I shared my findings with Merriol, she asked Ian and Jill Maxted to compile a complete list of the books in Lew House and to re-organise them. As a result of this the most valuable are now safely enclosed in glass-fronted shelves.

**The Content**

We know that there are, when you add the numbers of books at Killerton and Lew together, something like 5,000 books still remaining in the collection and we know that there were at least 2,000 more which were sold in 1937. We also know that he bequeathed all his books on Cornish saints to the Bishop Philpotts Library in Truro and that there may have been other books legitimately passed on to other libraries, or taken as keepsakes by friends and family members.

Taking all of this into account, we can see that it was a very large library. But what was in it? The full answer to that question is one that will occupy some future researcher for some time – it might even be the subject of a PhD. But let me give you an idea of what the library contains, based on my notes and on the lists for Killerton and Lewtrenchard.

Firstly, and of, perhaps, the greatest interest to SBGAS members, are more than 200 books written by Sabine Baring-Gould himself. Many of these are first editions and include some rare items, though there are not copies of every book that he wrote. What makes these particularly interesting is that he has tucked into them letters, notes, artists proofs, and cuttings about the book – as well as some reviews, not all of them positive. Here is an example of a succinct put-down for ‘Richard Cable’

> *We are sorry to be able not to say anything good about ‘Richard Cable, The Lightshipman’ (Smith & Elder), the latest story of the author of Mehalah.’*

*The World* (n.d.)

Then there are a number of groups of books – though they are not actually co-located – that relate to different subjects that he studied and wrote about throughout his career. There are, for example, several books on Iceland, in a number of languages, which he bought when he was preparing for his visit to Iceland and for writing his book *Iceland: It’s Scenes and Sagas*.

Of greater importance are the Icelandic Sagas in the library. Some of these have extra blank pages bound into them that he used for notes and translations. It is interesting to see how much smaller his writing is compared with his hand later in life – and that it is much clearer.
Sagas are a branch of folklore, but Baring-Gould expanded his studies to include the full range of European folklore and also some tales from further away. The books that he studied are in German and French as well as English and enabled him to write about the development of folk tales as they moved across the world.

From a period at the other end of his life are the books related to his work on folk song. There are two sub-groups. Firstly the works of reference that he used to find out more about the songs he was hearing. These included 17th Century ballad operas, 18th Century Stage Shows and collections of songs from across the years, including some lovely little 18th Century songsters.

Then there are the books presented to him by other song collectors, several with inscriptions by the author, as well as collections that made use of songs that he had published or had given advice for, such as Cecil Sharp’s ‘English Folk Songs: Some Conclusions’ which was dedicated to Baring-Gould.

I won’t go on in detail – and assigning the books to categories is, as I said earlier, a job for another time (and for someone else). Some of the other groups of books include:

- Architecture
- Archaeology
- Biography
- Church History
- Classics
- Fairy Tales
- Folklore
- Folk Song and Ballads
- History
- Local History
- Natural History
- Novels (English, French and German)
- Poetry
- Philology
- Street Literature
- Theology
- Topography
- Travel
Upheaval

So, Baring-Gould’s books have sat peacefully at Killerton since the 1970s. Then, in June 2011, Merriol Almond received a letter from the National Trust saying that, in line with the Trust’s policy of making more active use of their resources, they wished to create a library that reflected the history of Killerton house and of the Acland family which could be used by visitors. As a result, they asked that the Baring-Gould book collection should be removed to make way for it. After all that time this came as quite a shock and the prospect of finding a new home for over 3,000 volumes was daunting. For a while, it was feared that the library would have to be split up. A small group got together to try to find a solution to the problem and contacted a number of organisations, but none of them were in a position to take the collection in its entirety. An approach to Professor Nick Groom at The University of Exeter proved more fruitful, however. Nick (whose wife, Joanne Parker, gave a talk to us here in 2009) is an enthusiast and recognised the potential value of the library for English studies at the University. A meeting was arranged by Nick at the University in October last year so that Merriol could meet him, his colleague, Regenia Gagnier, Professor of English at Exeter, and Dr Christine Faunch, Head of Heritage Collections at the University.

It was obvious from the start that this was a good fit and Nick and Regenia believe that there will be opportunities for many students to work on PhD’s using the material over the coming years. It took some months for an agreement to be worked out that covered the long-term loan of the books to the University, but, in August, this was completed and the first tranche of books was transferred to the University Library. The remainder will be moved over the coming year. Once the books have been catalogued, they will be available for study in the University library.

They will be housed in the Special Collections section of the University’s Research Commons facility. There the collection will be alongside the papers and books of Henry Williamson, Daphne du Maurier, Eden Philpotts, R. D. Blackmore, Ted Hughes and Agatha Christie – to name only a few of the famous authors who are already represented in Special Collections at Exeter.

The facilities that they will be in are of a very high standard, and a major refurbishment of the Research Commons was completed in May this year. The books will not, of course, be on open shelving and so there will not be the same sort of beautiful display as had been created in the library at Killerton. This is more than made up for, however, by the improved facilities for study and by the thorough, digital cataloguing that will be taking place in the next year or so, which will make it much easier to find items in the collection.
Though the move was forced by circumstance, it is an excellent solution to the problem. While the Killerton facility was very attractive, there were a number of practical difficulties in accessing it and no proper facilities for study of this important collection. Exeter University are delighted to be receiving the books and it will be a great asset for students at the University and for the general public – meaning ourselves.

Conclusion

And that brings my story to a close, for the time being. There is more that could yet be done. One of the possibilities that is on the cards is to look at the books remaining here at Lew House and see whether there are any of them that would be better placed with the collection at Exeter University. And, as well as the work to be done on categorising the subjects covered by the library, there is a job for someone to study the contents of Baring-Gould’s library as a whole and to analyse and comment on it. What has been achieved is that Merriol, through reaching the agreements that she has with The University and with the Devon Record Office, has ensured that the papers and books that belonged to Sabine Baring-Gould are now all available, with free access for study, in Devon – the County of his birth. When taken with the collections in the West Devon Record Office and the Nicolle Collection at Plymouth Library we now have a solid base for the study of Baring-Gould’s life and work in the county. It also creates the possibility for the secure placement of further materials from private collections in the future – something that SBGAS members might like to think about as they consider the future of their own collections.

It has been an interesting exercise and I look forward to seeing the new facilities coming into use over the next two years – and to the possibility of research without mittens!
Notes on the Contributors

**Becky Smith** is a professional author, whose detective novels delight readers the world over. She grew up in Devon and has been interested in Baring-Gould’s life and work for more years than she cares to think about. This deep interest and her informal style has made her a familiar and popular presenter at the annual meetings of SBGAS. She now lives in rural Herefordshire, from where she emerges from time to time to research her novels and to attend crime writing events around the world. Her imprint, Praxis Books, has republished a number of Baring-Gould’s books.

**Dr. Ron Wawman** is another familiar figure to SBGAS members and has devoted his energies over recent years to digging out and interpreting information that has increased our knowledge about Baring-Gould’s life considerably. His transcription of Baring-Gould’s diary, entitled *Never Completely Submerged, The Diary of Sabine-Baring-Gould* was published in 2009 and is now accompanied by a website www.nevercompletelysubmerged.co.uk where he is building a collection of information and transcriptions of material related to Sabine Baring-Gould.

**Bob Mann** has always been interested in Sabine Baring-Gould, but has felt especially close since writing a guide to Devon and Cornwall for an inexperienced and impatient publisher. Frequently having to work all night, he turned gratefully to Baring-Gould’s local books in search of strange facts and colourful stories. In 2008 he founded the Longmarsh Press to publish old and new Devon books, and is preparing a new edition of *Dartmoor Idylls*. See www.longmarshpress.co.uk

**Dr. Merriol Almond** is the great granddaughter of Sabine Baring-Gould and has the responsibility, in the current generation, for the Lewtrenchard estate. She lives in West Hartford, Connecticut, but makes twice-yearly trips to Devon to attend to the affairs of the estate. She qualified as a doctor but, having retired, enjoys travelling – particularly to spend time with her family, who are scattered across the USA.

**Martin Graebe** has been interested in Sabine Baring-Gould and his folk song collection for over forty years. He has written extensively on the subject as well as giving public presentations. Martin and Shan Graebe sing together to audiences around the world, taking Baring-Gould’s songs with them. Discover more on Martin’s websites - www.sbgsongs.org and www.martinandshan.net, where you can find copies of a number of articles as well as songs from Baring-Gould’s collection.
A letter, from the London *Daily Telegraph* many years ago, quoted in *The New Yorker*:

"The hymn, 'Onward Christian Soldiers’, sung to the right tune and in a not-too-brisk tempo, makes a very good egg timer. If you put the egg into boiling water and sing all five verses and chorus, the egg will be just right when you come to 'Amen’ "

From Merriol Almond