DARTMOOR SOCIETY RESEARCH LECTURE
10 NOVEMBER 2017

On 10th November 2017 seventy-five attendees congregated at the Dolphin Hotel, Bovey Tracey. Tom Greeves introduced Martin and Shan Graebe who gave a masterly presentation of Martin's latest research on Sabine Baring-Gould's journeys across Dartmoor in search of songs, illustrated by fine images and songs sung by them both. A lively session of questions followed. In his warm thanks to Martin and Shan, Tom said that this highly significant lecture is a very fitting prelude to our Dartmoor Resonance Music Festival, to be held 16-24 June 2018. All present then tucked into a fine buffet.

SABINE BARING-GOULD AND HIS SEARCH FOR FOLK SONGS ON DARTMOOR

by Martin Graebe

'… That region I love best in the world'
Sabine Baring-Gould, A Book of Dartmoor (1890)

This evening I am going to take you on a ramble through Baring-Gould's Dartmoor, and introduce you to some of the people whom he met and who sang for him in the 1890s. It was the best part of a decade ago – in February 2008 – that I gave a talk about Baring-Gould to the Dartmoor Society at his former home at Lew Trenchard, on the opposite side of the moor. Looking back at that talk I can see that my research since then has added to the modest store of knowledge that I had at the time so, although there is a little necessary repetition, much of the material will be new to you.

Sabine Baring-Gould described Dartmoor in several of his books, most extensively in *A Book of Dartmoor*, published in 1890. That book was dedicated 'To the memory of my uncle, the late Thomas George Bond, one of the pioneers of Dartmoor Exploration'. He tells us that, in 1848, Bond had given him a copy of Rowe's *Perambulation of Dartmoor* as a birthday present. Baring-Gould says in the introduction to *A Book of Dartmoor*:

> *'It arrested my attention, engaged my imagination, and was to me almost as a Bible. When I obtained a holiday from my books, I*

mounted my pony and made for the moor. I rode over it, round it, put up at little inns, talked with the moormen, listened to their tales and songs in the evening, and during the day sketched and planned the relics.

I was also a teenager when I walked out across Dartmoor, though with only Shanks' pony. I took advantage of the fact that my cousin was living in Princetown to spend summer holidays there and either to walk out or to ride on the back of her husband's Lambretta to visit other parts of the moor. That was more than fifty years ago, but it was Dartmoor that brought me to live and work in Devon and, though I now live in the Cotswolds, I still feel the magnetic attraction of the moor.

And so, of course, did Sabine Baring-Gould. After he returned to live at Lew Trenchard in 1881 it became a place of re-creation for him in the most literal sense, since he believed that the moorland air eased his bronchitis and improved his general well being. When his children were poorly he placed them in the care of 'Doctor Dartmoor' (though they did not love it as much as he did). It was also where he came to pursue his archaeological interests and the setting for some of his most energetic expeditions in search of Devonshire folk song.

He had an unusual childhood. His father, Edward Baring-Gould, had been forced by injury to retire from his post as a lieutenant in a cavalry regiment of the East India Company and found himself unable to settle to life in the Devonshire countryside. He packed up his goods, his wife and his children, the oldest of whom, Sabine, was then 3 years old, and headed off to France. For the next fourteen years they travelled through Europe, returning home only for brief periods. Finally, in 1851, they came back to England for the last time. Even then, they could not move into the family home at Lew Trenchard as it had been let, so they took a place in Tavistock until it became vacant.

Sabine was now 17 years old and, as plans were laid for his future, he made the most of his first opportunity to explore Dartmoor alone, examining prehistoric sites and the relics of the old tin streamers, as well as the little moorland churches. A few of his sketches survive, but he wrote that, even in his lifetime, many of the fine carved pulpits and screens that he had seen had disappeared. He stayed at moorland inns and in the evenings he heard the men singing their songs.

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He later described an evening at the Oxenham Arms in South Zeal in an article that he wrote for the *English Illustrated Magazine* in 1892.

> *That day happened to have been pay day at a mine on the edge of the moor, and the miners had come to spend their money at the tavern. The room in which they caroused was the old hall of the mansion. The great fireplace had logs and peat burning in it, not that a fire was needed in summer, but because this room served also as kitchen. The rafters and old timber of roof and walls were black with smoke. One candle with long wick smoked and guttered near the fire. At the table and in the high-backed settle sat the men, smoking, talking, drinking. Conspicuous among them was one man with a high forehead, partly bald, who with upturned eyes sang ballads. I learned that he was given free entertainment at the inn, on condition that he sang as long as the tavern was open, for the amusement of the guests. He seemed to be inexhaustible in his store of songs and ballads; with the utmost readiness, whenever called on, he sang, and skilfully varied the character of his pieces – to grave succeeded gay, to a ballad a lyric. At the time I listened, amused, till I was tired, and then went to bed, leaving him singing.*

In 1888 he related this experience to a group of men around the dinner table of his friend, Daniel Radford, at Mount Tavy, his house on the outskirts of Tavistock. They had been lamenting the loss of the songs that they had heard when they were young and Radford suggested to Baring-Gould that he should start to make a collection of the old songs – so he did.

The first songs in his collection came from some of the men who had been round the table that evening, including Daniel Radford himself. Baring-Gould expanded the search by writing to the *Western Morning News*, asking people to send him songs. But, apart from several versions of 'Widdicombe Fair', he was not, as yet, getting the songs that he wanted. He identified a few singers near his home at Lew Trenchard and invited them to come to his house and sing for him.

The men (and they were all men, at this stage) would be asked to join him by the fire in the hall. He would sit in his chair on one side of the fireplace and the singer would be placed on the settle, with a jug of watered wine or beer on a table beside him to help the singing along. For some singers, like James Parsons of Lewdown, this became a regular event, and enjoyed by both parties. This way

of collecting proved more successful, but restricted him to singers who lived nearby. He realised that he would have to get out and meet the singers in their own homes or in the pubs where they met to sing. He also needed to take a musician with him – luckily he had two volunteers.

The first of these was a man whom he had known when he was a curate in Yorkshire – Henry Fleetwood Sheppard, older than Baring-Gould, different in personality, and an enthusiast for plainsong; a passion that had led to some confrontations in Yorkshire, when he championed its use in church services. The other was Frederick Bussell, a dandy and a don at Oxford University, with the unusual hobby of buying up church livings – a form of simony that did not endear him to either the university or the church. Bussell's mother rented a cottage on Baring-Gould's estate and her son spent his holidays there, so he was available more frequently than Sheppard, who would have had to leave his parish in other hands while he ventured south. Their job was to note down the tunes, while Baring-Gould made a note of the words and encouraged the singer.

South Brent

One of his first expeditions was to South Brent at the invitation of Charles Spence Bate, a Plymouth dentist and marine biologist. Spence Bate had been involved in analysing some of the findings of the Challenger expedition and had corresponded with Darwin about the sex life of barnacles. He was a member of the Royal Society and a founder of the Devonshire Association.

At Spence Bate's holiday home, Rock House, Baring-Gould and Bussell met two old men, Robert Hard, who earned his parish dole by breaking stones on the road, and John Helmore, who operated Lydia Mill, just the other side of the bridge from Rock House. The two men sang for Baring-Gould in Spence Bate's kitchen, before an audience of local gentlefolk. Baring-Gould reported that, after a while, the subject matter of one of Robert Hard's songs caused a fluttering of the ladies' handkerchiefs and a significant reduction of the number of people in the room. But Baring-Gould was happy about the visit. He got more songs from the men the following day and on subsequent visits and Robert Hard proved to be one of his best and most prolific singers. He reported that Hard gave him more than 80 songs, though only 51 are documented in his manuscripts.

South Brent falls inside the boundary of the present day Dartmoor National Park, which is the geographical definition that I have adopted for my talk tonight, so we can label this as Baring-Gould's first attempt at song collecting on Dartmoor.

By 1894, when the pace of his collecting slowed, he had visited 23 other locations on and around Dartmoor, some of them several times. In these 24 places he met 65 singers who gave him 412 songs. (Fig 1)

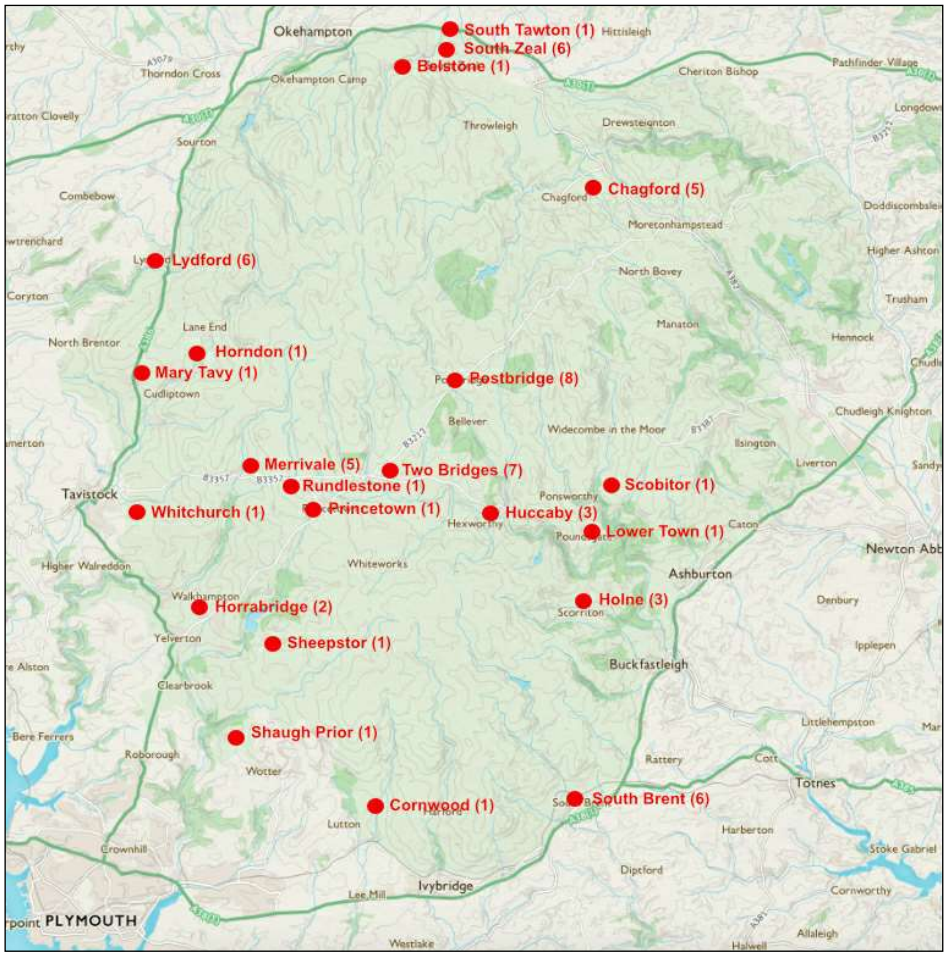


Fig 1 – Locations on Dartmoor where Baring-Gould met singers
(with number of singers in each place)

The Manuscript Record

Baring-Gould's first printed collection of folk songs was *Songs of the West*, published in four parts between 1889 and 1891 and then as a single volume. The opportunity to revise it was taken in 1905 when Cecil Sharp took over the role of musical editor following the death of Henry Fleetwood Sheppard.

Even before the first part was published, Baring-Gould recognised that it would not be possible to print all of the songs exactly as he had heard them. He

committed himself to giving copies of his original manuscripts to Plymouth Library, which he did in 1900.

For many years the 202 songs contained in these manuscripts, as well as the notebooks of tunes compiled by Bussell and Sheppard were all that was known of the collection. Then, in 1992, Baring-Gould's own manuscripts were discovered at Killerton House, near Exeter. Study and indexing of these manuscripts and notebooks revealed that the collection was much larger than had been realised – close to 2000 separate versions of songs collected by Baring-Gould and his colleagues or sent to him by members of the public. It is second in size only to the collection made by Cecil Sharp. And the record is certainly not complete, as we know that not all of Baring-Gould's notebooks survived after his death. The majority of Baring-Gould's manuscripts are available for study as a result of the cooperative project between Wren Music and the English Folk Dance and Song Society that has created the collection of images that form part of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library Digital Database (www.vwml.org).

While Baring-Gould loved Dartmoor and welcomed the excuse to be out there, he also recognised that its isolated communities were exactly the sorts of place where the old songs were likely to have survived in the memories of the people who lived and worked in them.

There were two other men who had sought out the old singers on Dartmoor in the mid-nineteenth century – Thomas Cayzer and William Crossing – both of whom gave some of the songs that they had heard to Baring-Gould.

William Crossing

The name of William Crossing will be familiar to many of you as one of the most prolific writers about Dartmoor. As a young man he worked at his father's sailcloth mill in South Brent from where he was able to walk out onto the southern part of Dartmoor. His rambles took him all over the moor and he would often stay out overnight, keeping company with the moor-men in isolated pubs. Around the peat fire he would tell of his day's journey in improvised verse and play tunes on an old tin whistle. He wrote a number of magazine articles and books about his explorations of Dartmoor, but his health became a problem and he found it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. Baring-Gould was among those who contributed to a public subscription to help support him. After the death of his wife his situation became even more desperate and he had to resort

first to the workhouse in Tavistock and then to a nursing home in Plymouth where he died in 1928. Not long before his death the woman who cleaned for him came across a pile of mouse-eaten papers that could not, she thought, be of any value. The manuscript record of his life's work was consigned to the rubbish heap. What remains, however, are his books, which give us a remarkable picture of Dartmoor and its people in the late nineteenth century.

There are six songs in Baring-Gould's manuscripts that were noted by Crossing from unnamed singers on Dartmoor between 1857 and 1878 and sent from South Brent. The songs are all light-hearted or romantic, though two of them were a bit risqué. Baring-Gould liked the tune of Crossing's version of *Rosemary Lane*, but wrote 'The words are objectionable' and so he created a new set of words to go with the tune for publication in *Songs of the West*. While it is regrettable that Baring-Gould needed to rewrite the songs, he has left the words as originally collected in his manuscripts.

Crossing himself does not appear to have published any of the songs he collected. We have only one song in his hand among Baring-Gould's manuscripts, but we do have transcripts of the words of six songs noted down by him in one of Baring-Gould's notebooks. It is likely that Crossing had more songs but anything that was in his papers was probably among the material destroyed by his cleaning woman.

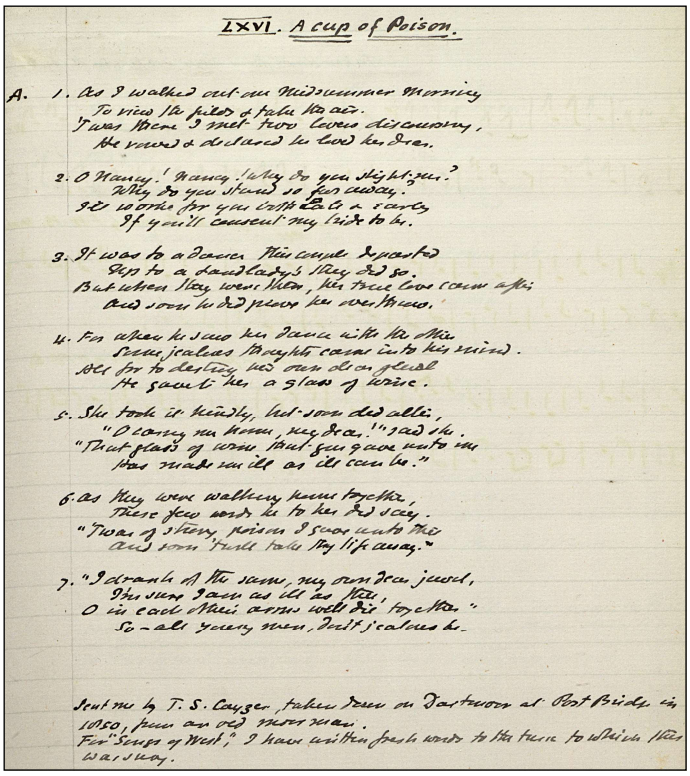
Thomas Cayzer

The second man, Thomas Stollery Cayzer, was a retired headmaster who was then living in Cambridgeshire. He was the son of a teacher, and much of Cayzer's childhood was spent in Plymouth where his father taught. He also went into the teaching profession and taught at Chudleigh Grammar School until he was offered the post of headmaster at Queen Elizabeth's Hospital School in Bristol in 1859. While he was teaching at Chudleigh, Cayzer spent his leisure time on Dartmoor. He enjoyed staying overnight in moorland inns and keeping company with the moor-men and described such an occasion to Baring-Gould in 1890:

> *The scene was a lonely one (I think Two Bridges, but it may have been Post Bridge). It had been raining all day. There was not a book in the house, nor musical instrument of any kind, except two hungry pigs and a baby that was being weaned. Towards nightfall there dropped in several miners and shepherds, and I w ell remember how the appearance of these Gentiles [sic] cheered us. We soon got up*

a glorious fire – such a fire as peat only can make, and drew the benches and settles round. By the friendly aid of sundry quarts of cyder I, before long, gained the confidence of the whole circle, and got a song from each in turn; and noted down two that were quite new to me: no easy matter, considering that they were performed in a strange mixture of double bass and falsetto. The action with which they accompanied the singing was extremely appropriate. They always sang standing.

Like Baring-Gould's description of singing in South Zeal, this is a valuable record of the way in which singers performed in the mid-nineteenth century. The mention of actions during the singing is not something I have seen elsewhere. Cayzer wrote to Baring-Gould in 1890, but only one letter has survived. Three of the songs that Cayzer sent can be seen in the manuscript collection.



LXVI. A cup of Poison.

A. 1. As I walked out on Midsummer Morning
To view the fields of fair Hooaker,
I was there I met two lovers discoursing,
He vowed & declared he loved her dear.

2. O Nancy! Nancy! why do you slight me?
Why do you stand so far away?
It would be for you I'd take a journey
If you'll consent my bride to be.

3. It was to a dance this couple repaired
Step to a damsel's they did go.
But when they were there, her true love came after
And soon he did prove her overthrow.

4. For when he saw her dance with the other
Some jealous thoughts came into his mind.
He got for to destroy her own dear jewel
He gave her a glass of wine.

5. She took it kindly, but soon did call,
"O carry me home, my dear!" said she.
"That glass of wine that you gave unto me
Has made me ill as ever can be."

6. As they were walking home together,
These few words he to her did say.
"I was my story, poison I gave unto thee
And soon shall take thy life away."

7. "I drank of the same, my own dear jewel,
The same I gave as ill as thee,
O in each other's arms we'll die together."
So all young men, don't you be false to

Sent me by T. S. Cayzer, taken down on Dartmoor at Post Bridge in 1850, from an old moorman.
For "Songs of West," I have written fresh words to the tune to which he sang it.

Fig 2 – Baring-Gould's manuscript record of *A Cup of Poison*, as heard by Thomas Cayzer *Courtesy of Wren Music*

One of these was *A Cup of Poison*, a version of the murder ballad *Oxford City*. Then, as now, stories of tragic love of this kind were very popular with the old singers. Versions of this song were collected widely across the country with various titles such as *Poison in a Glass of Wine*, *Oxford City*, or simply *Jealousy*. It was published by many broadside printers and the earliest sheets that have been identified so far were printed in the 1820s. Baring-Gould's large collection

of street literature included an example from the London printer, Such, which was from this time.

Following in Baring-Gould's Footsteps

The musicians' field notebooks, which Baring-Gould gave to Plymouth Library, and which are now known as the Rough Copy, are particularly useful when following Baring-Gould on some of his journeys through Devon and Cornwall as the tunes are often given in a chronological sequence, identifying a discrete set of tunes collected on one of his expeditions.

Fig. 3, for example, shows part of a sequence of songs from the expedition that he and Bussell made in the autumn of 1890. These are some of the songs that they heard sung at Chagford. He wrote about this expedition in his book *English Minstrelsie*, though he misreported the itinerary, saying that they went first to Chagford, then to Widdicombe, via Collihole and from there to Scobitor.

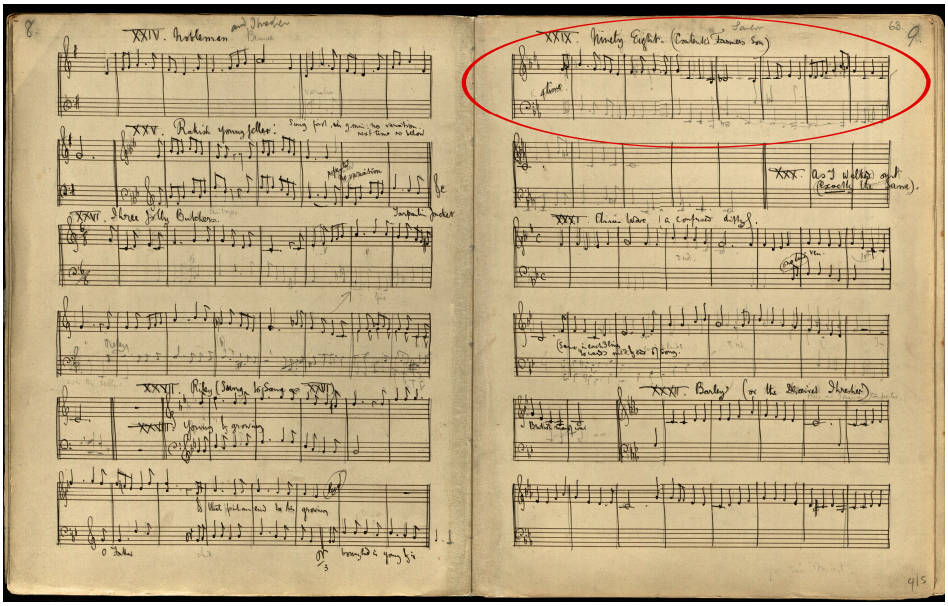


Fig 3 – Rough Copy manuscript, Vol.4, p. 8-9 *Courtesy of Wren Music*

If we look at the chronology of the songs in the Rough Copy manuscript we can see that, in fact, they stopped first at Merrivale where they met the quarryman, William Nankivell, known as 'Old Capel', who sang eight songs for them. Nankivell lived at Shillapark, to the north of Merrivale, with his wife Jane, who was also a singer and provided a couple of songs on another visit. On this occasion it seems

likely that they met Nankivell in the Dartmoor Inn as the Landlord, George Pursey, is shown as having sung a version of *The Little Dun Mare* to Baring-Gould after Nankivell sang his songs.

The next two songs in the sequence are attributed to a Mrs White, with no location given. I think that this is probably Mary White, the wife of Matthew White who farmed Lower Merripit at the time. She had given Baring-Gould a song a week earlier, and it seems likely that he dropped in on his way past to see whether she had thought of any more.

We don't have many photographs of Baring-Gould's singers but there is an image, taken at Lower Merripit by Robert Burnard, in which we can see Mary White with her husband, Matthew, and three children, Bessie, Henry and Herbert.

Fig 4 – Lower Merripit (by Robert Burnard) *Courtesy of Dartmoor Trust*

They stayed overnight in Postbridge before heading down to Scobitor, South of Widdicombe where they met another farmer's wife, Anne Roberts. He wrote:

> *We had heard of a farmer's wife at a place called Scobbetor, who could sing old ballads, so to her we went, and dropped in on her without premonition. She was greatly taken aback, and for some time would not open her lips.*

Baring-Gould notes that he had been told that Anne Roberts had previously lived in Postbridge. Was it Mary White who recommended her to Baring-Gould as a good singer? Did he make a 'spur of the moment' diversion from their original plan? The rather strange route (see Fig. 5) suggests that this might be the case and I think they were originally intending to go straight to Chagford from Postbridge. If so, it was a good decision. Anne Roberts sang four songs for Baring-Gould, one of which was *The Loyal Lover*, which he says she sang with perfect precision, and always the same.

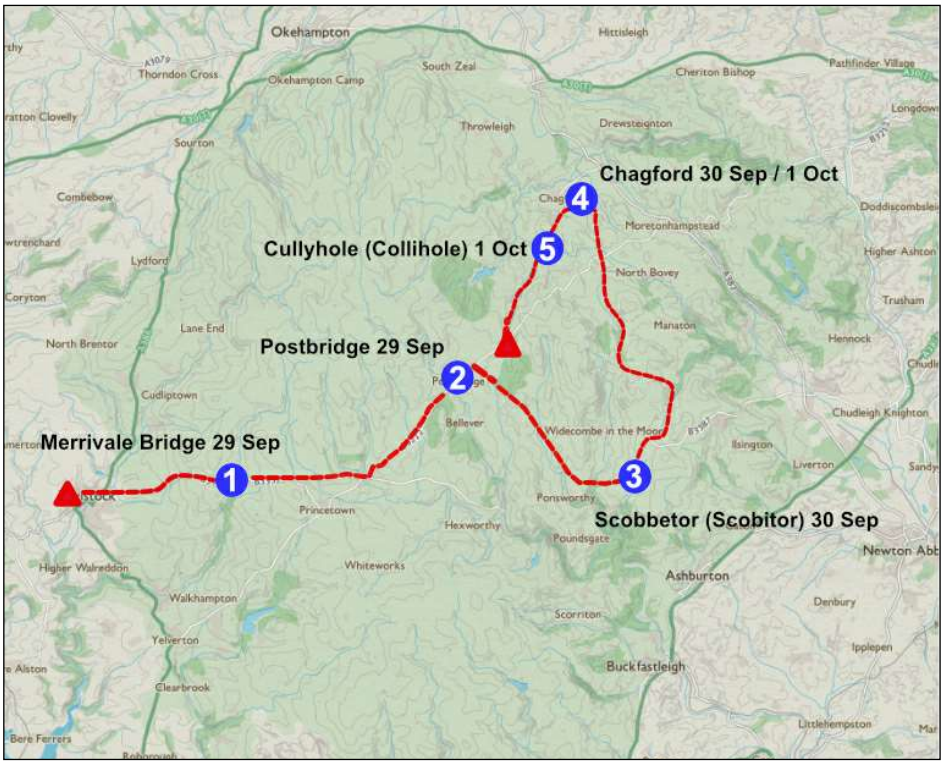


Fig 5 – Route of Baring-Gould's Expedition 29 Sep to 1 Oct 1890

From Scobitor they drove up to Chagford where they stayed with the Perrot family who were well-known as guides to the moor and had helped Baring-Gould in the past. In the evening they organised a singing party with a bowl of punch to help the songs flow. Those present included George Hurrell, the blind organist at Chagford church, together with a number of labourers, a lame barber, and an old soldier who disappointed because he only sang modern songs. The best singers present were William Aggett, a crippled labourer, and John Bennett, another labourer. These two met up with Baring-Gould again the following

morning to sing a few more songs before the collector and his companion set off on foot, heading southwest to Collihole. Baring-Gould wrote:

> *Another day I was in a cottage where were two very old men: a little thatched cottage, in a dell overshadowed by trees, the hazels growing as tall as the cottage, with their nuts browning and ready to fall. Above the woods towered granite crested sides – the spurs of the moor. The cottage was beautifully clean, though very spare of furniture. One old fellow was childish, the other, his brother-in-law, was nearly blind. They had a pot over the glowing turves, in which their potatoes and a little bacon were boiling, and were pleased, as we were hungry, to give us a bite out of their dinner. These two aged men lived in the cottage together. They were brothers-in-law: the wife or wives were dead, and they had no children to care for them. The parish allowed each half-a-crown a week, and on this they subsisted.*

The men were Thomas Jerred and John Stoneman. They gave Baring-Gould ten songs between them. The description is interesting because it demonstrates the way that Baring-Gould used his real-life encounters in his fiction. The two old men in their cottage are re-imagined in his short story *Goosie Fair*, which was included in his book *Dartmoor Idylls*.

They also illustrate the reality of old age and poverty in Victorian times. These men were fortunate enough to receive a small sum from the guardians. Robert Hard earned his dole by breaking stones for the roads and, when Baring-Gould gave him some of the proceeds from a concert in South Brent featuring songs that he had sung, the guardians threatened to stop paying him.

If, like Richard Mortimore of Princetown, you owned your own house and became too ill to work then you could receive no money from the parish. His pride would not allow him to sell and so he relied on the little money that his wife could earn by charring.

Charles Arscott, from South Zeal also owned his own house. He could no longer work as a carpenter and so he earned a little money through farm work. At the age of 87 it all became too much, and he killed himself rather than carry on. Throughout their difficulties these men clung to their lovely old songs, which

could not be taken from them. None of Baring-Gould's singers had an easy life, and we should value all the more the riches in song that they have left us.

After leaving the two old men Baring-Gould and Bussell walked on across the moor.

> *From Culley Hole we made an attempt to get across the moor into the high road from Moreton to Tavistock, and lost our way, got into bogs, and were overtaken by a furious hail storm. We did not reach our inn in the middle of the moor till night, and wet and chilled to the marrow.*

I think we can assume that his carriage, driven by his coachman, Charlie Dustan, would have met them at a pre-arranged spot on the Moretonhampstead Road – most likely the Warren House Inn. They might have stayed out another night before venturing home, but no more songs were collected for a few days.

That trip is typical of the expeditions that Baring-Gould and Bussell made together in search of song on Dartmoor. He described it as a good haul – 43 songs in three days. Some of the singers he had met before, others were new to him.

Songs collected 29 Sep to 1 Oct 1890			
Date	Place	Singer	No of songs
29 Sept	Merrivale	William Nankivell	8
..	..	J Persey	1
..	..	Mrs White	2
30 Sept	Scobbetor..	Anne Roberts	4
..	Chagford	William Aggett	6
..	..	John Bennett	3
1 Oct	..	William Aggett	4
..	..	John Bennett	4
..	..	George Hurrell	1
..	Culley Hole	Thomas Jerred	7
..	..	John Stoneman	3
		Total =	43

Fig 6 – Songs collected on expedition of 29 Sep to 1 Oct 1890

The Dartmoor Singers

Fig. 7 lists the singers that Baring-Gould met on Dartmoor. The number of songs that were obtained from each singer is given beside their name. There are two singers, Robert Hard and Samuel Fone, who are way ahead of the rest, with 51 and 104 songs respectively. In fact, the seven singers whose total reached double figures account for more than half of all of the songs collected on Dartmoor.

The Dartmoor Singers

Aggett, William: Ag labourer, Chagford. **(10)**
Agus, William: Sailor (RN Rtd), Horrabridge**. (5)**
Andrew, William: Farmer, Sheepstor. **(4)**
Arscott, Charles: Carpenter, South Zeal. **(5)**
Bennett, John: Ag labourer, Chagford. **(4)**
Bickle, Richard: (Unknown), Two Bridges. **(1)**
Bickle, William: (Unknown), Lydford. **(1)**
Cann, William: Ag labourer, South Tawton. **(1)**
Cleave, Moses: Ag labourer, Huckaby Bridge. **(1)**
Cleave, Richard: Innkeeper, Huckaby Bridge. **(1)**
Coaker, Jonas: Retired farmer, Postbridge. **(3)**
Cole, George: Quarryman, Rundlestone. **(2)**
Davis, J: Licensed victualler, South Brent. **(1)**
Dearing, William: Coachman, South Zeal. **(1)**
Dodd, Richard: Coachman, Cornwood. **(1)**
Easterbrook, F: Carpenter/Builder, Holne. **(2)**
Fewins, William (Lucky): Labourer, South Zeal. **(4)**
Fone, Samuel: Mason, Mary Tavy. (104)
Free, W: (Unknown) Lydford. **(3)**
Friend, William: Quarryman, Lydford. **(4)**
Fry, Edmund: Thatcher, Lydford. **(16)**
Glanville, James: Mason, South Zeal. **(2)**
Glover, (?): (Unknown), Postbridge. **(1)**
Gregory, Richard: Water Bailiff, Two Bridges. **(4)**
Hannaford, Roger: Ag labourer, Lower Town. **(9)**
Hard, Robert: General labourer, South Brent. (51)
Helmore, John: Miller, South Brent. **(13)**
Hext, James: Ag labourer, Postbridge **(1)**
Hext, John: Shepherd, Postbridge. **(7)**
Hext, William: (unknown), Two Bridges. **(1)**
Hingston, T: (Unknown), South Brent. **(1)**
Horn, John: Innkeeper, Lydford. **(1)**
Hoskins, J: General labourer, South Brent. **(5)**
Huggins, Roger: Mason, Lydford. **(2)**
Huggins, William: Mason, Lydford. **(7)**
Hurrell, George: Organist, Chagford. **(1)**
Jerred, Thomas: Ag labourer, Chagford. **(7)**
Kerswell, William: Farmer, Two Bridges. **(4)**
Lillicrap, J: (Unknown), Shaugh Prior. **(1)**
Matthews, T: Farmer, South Brent. **(1)**
Mortimore, James: Farmer, Two Bridges. **(3)**
Mortimore, Richard: Mason, Princetown. **(2)**
Nankivell, Jane: Housewife, Merrivale. **(2)**
Nankivell, William: Quarryman, Merrivale. **(9)**
Nichols, William: Sawyer, Whitchurch. **(12)**
Pascoe, J, (Unknown): Two Bridges. **(1)**
Pursey, George: Innkeeper, Merrivale. **(1)**
Potter, John: Farmer, Postbridge. **(4)**
Radmore, John: Ag labourer, South Zeal. **(3)**
Rich, John: Farmer, Horndon. **(2)**
Roberts, Anne: Housewife, Scobitor. **(5)**
Rook, James: Mason, Merrivale. **(1)**
Satterley, Sarah: Nurse, Huckaby Bridge. **(9)**
Setters, William: Labourer, Two Bridges. **(7)**
Smith, Henry: Farmer, Two Bridges. **(4)**
Stoneman, John: Ag labourer, Chagford. **(2)**
Taylor, John: (Unknown), Postbridge. **(1)**
Townsend, James: Carpenter, Holne. **(2)**
Webb, John: Mine captain, Postbridge. **(1)**
Westaway, Harry: Farmer, Belstone. **(18)**
Westaway, Samuel: Bootmaker, South Zeal. **(1)**
White, Mary: Housewife, Postbridge. (3)
Unknown: Servant girl, Horrabridge**. (1)**
Unknown: (?), South Brent **(1)**
Unknown Woman, (?), South Brent **(1)**

Fig 7 – The Dartmoor Singers (number of songs discovered in Baring-Gould's manuscripts given in brackets)

I should, perhaps, add that the numbers are still changing as I get better data. I am resigned to the fact that the charts in my book are going to become more and more inaccurate.

Samuel Fone

I talked about Robert Hard earlier; so let's have a look at Sam Fone, who gave more songs to Baring-Gould than any other singer.

Samuel John Wilkins Fone was born in Exeter in 1837, the son of a baker. As a lad he worked as an errand boy for his uncle, who was also a baker, before becoming a mason in Devonport dockyard. When that job finished he became a stoker on HMS *Indus*, the Plymouth Guardship. He worked as a navvy when the line to Princetown was built and eventually settled in Mary Tavy, where he was employed as a mason in the mines there. He and his wife, Elizabeth, had seven children of whom three died, two on the same day in 1878.

Baring-Gould met him in October 1892, by which time *Songs of the West* had been published. The manuscripts identify fifteen occasions on which songs were noted, but we know that Baring-Gould visited Sam at his home on Black Down on other occasions, particularly when he was ill. Though there are 104 songs listed as having been sung by Fone, this is certainly an underestimate as Baring-Gould describes him as having sung more than 200 songs.

The range of songs that he sang is wide, from 18th-century bucolic romances to the songs of the early music hall, but he also had a number of the traditional ballads and the songs that have come to be seen as the classic English folk song of the nineteenth century. When he was a boy Sam carried milk every day for an old widow. She couldn't afford to give him money, so she paid him with songs. Fone was 55 years old when Baring-Gould met him, so if we say he was carrying the old woman's milk at the age of 9 that would be in about 1846. If the old woman he learned songs from was then, say, seventy-five years old, then she would have been born in 1771 and would probably have learned her songs in the 1780s when the bucolic ballad was at the height of its popularity in the London pleasure gardens and theatres.

One of Sam Fone's songs was *One Night at Ten O'clock*. We can date the song quite closely since it mentions the success of Admiral Rodney, whose greatest victory was the Battle of the Saintes in 1782. It may well be one of the songs that Sam Fone earned by carrying milk.

One night at ten o'clock
As I from my dream awoke
Letters of love I'd received from my dear
When someone at the door
As a jackey-tar did roar
It drove my poor senses I cannot tell where

By in by, the door unlocked
Amazing was I shocked
I saw what I never before did behold
With britches white as snow
And buckles at the toe
A cockade in his hat that was all laced with gold

Then with no more ado
Into his arms he me drew
And then into my lap he cast handfuls of gold
Saying, will you object
To wear gold on your neck
O I have been sailing with Rodney the bold

Now let each lad and lass
Come and drink off a glass
Drink the health of the lads that would sail the salt sea
And pray they may come
All safe to their home
What a joy and a comfort to maidens it would be

Baring-Gould's legacy

I have tried to show you the effort that Sabine Baring-Gould put into documenting the songs that the ordinary people living on Dartmoor sang at the end of the nineteenth century. It was a part, but an important one, of the greater project of collecting together the songs of Devon and Cornwall. And you can find out a lot more about that project in my book, *As I Walked Out, Sabine Baring-Gould and the Search for the Folk Songs of Devon and Cornwall* (Signal Books, 2017).

Baring Gould's love of Dartmoor was demonstrated in many other ways, most obviously in his enormous written output, within which Dartmoor features

frequently. His *Book of Dartmoor* is a strange mixture of fact and folklore with a bit of archaeology and some history, disguised as a travelogue. It is a delightful book in which you come to pardon the writer's frequent deviations from his intended path for the quality and humour of the writing.

Several of his novels and short stories are set on Dartmoor and in many of those he puts songs that he has heard into the mouths of his characters. Some of the characters in his novels are recognisable portraits of people and places that he has met in his travels.

The song collecting and archaeology gave him the excuse, as if he needed one, to head out for Dartmoor and to walk out in its fresh air and fine scenery. Henry Fleetwood Sheppard wrote to him saying:

> *I shall always have a pride in, and look back with pleasure to the days when we 'went a gipsying' & collecting material; & when from time to time you led my weary old limbs long tramps of 6 or 8 miles, so beguiling the way with springy Dartmoor turf & springy Dartmoor air, & your own springy companionship that I knew neither fatigue nor satiety. For they were pleasant days it is pleasant to look back upon them.*

Towards the end of his life it was a great sadness to him that he was not able to get out there as he used to. But the work he carried out on Dartmoor and the passion with which he promoted it has enduring value and we are in his debt, probably more than we realise, for the way in which Dartmoor is seen today in its legends, its history and its songs.

One of Sabine Baring-Gould's first songmen was Harry Westaway who he met in the company of the Okehampton solicitor, John Dunning Prickman late in 1888. He wrote:

> *At Belstone, as I learned from J. D. Prickman, Esq., of Okehampton, lived an old yeoman, with stalwart sons, all notable singers. Mr. Sheppard and I met this old man. Belstone is a small village under the rocks of Belstone Tor, on the edge of Dartmoor, a wild and lonesome spot. From this yeoman we acquired more songs. But his sons sang none of their father's: they knew and appreciated only Christy Minstrel and Music Hall pieces; void of merit or interest to us. They despised, and did not care to learn, the old ballads and songs that had come down as an heirloom from their tuneful ancestors.*

In 1950 the folk song collector Peter Kennedy visited Belstone and met two of Harry Westaway's 'stalwart sons,' Bill and Harry (junior) and collected songs from them. Despite their earlier disdain, they still knew and sang a few of their father's songs. Kennedy revisited Belstone in 1953 with Alan Lomax, Jean Ritchie and George Pickow. They were on their way to Padstow to record and film the May Day celebrations there and stopped off in Belstone to film Bill Westaway, then 79 years old, singing the version of Widdicombe Fair that he had learned from his father over 75 years earlier.

It is now 127 years since Baring-Gould crossed Dartmoor on the expedition I described earlier and much has changed, even on Dartmoor. But there is still a place for the old customs and beliefs in the hearts of the ordinary people of Dartmoor and the surrounding area. Folk song, folk dance and folklore are not solely the interest of so-called 'folkies'. Folk-life is still found in the village hall concerts, with local entertainers who can pack the room as well as any television star. People like Bob Cann took their enthusiasm for music and dance to the people around him, as well as to the folk clubs. The Dartmoor Folk Festival is popular with folkies from around the country, but its values are those of the locals who organise it and who form the majority of the audience. Bill Murray has stalked the characters of the moor, picking up songs and stories that he recounts in his own inimitable style. My friends at Wren Music have over three decades brought the joy of singing to the people of Devon, and the Baring-Gould Folk Weekend and Song School continue to bring the songs that he discovered to new audiences. With all this and more we are extremely fortunate that this deep affection for the old ways still lies at the heart of the moor and its people.

And Baring-Gould himself stated his own feelings very clearly in *A Book of Dartmoor*:

> *I have wandered over Europe, have rambled to Iceland, climbed the Alps, been for some years lodged among the marshes of Essex - yet nothing that I have seen has quenched in me the longing after the fresh air, and love of the wild scenery of Dartmoor*

R**esources for further study:**

- Sabine Baring-Gould's manuscripts can be viewed in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library's Digital Archive www.vwml.org
- You can see and download Baring-Gould's *A Book of Dartmoor* from the Internet Archive www.archive.org
- The author's website, www.sbgsongs, contains further information and songs from Baring-Gould's collection