

Our January Open Meeting was a great success. Over 100 people came to see Jim Causley sing and tell us about the folk songs of Devon. It was great to see so many people there. Sadly, my write-up just can't do justice to the event. The picture on the left shows me with Jim.

We could do with some extra volunteers to help put out chairs at Open Meetings. You don't have to do it every time but if you feel up to the job, we would be very grateful for the help. Please let us know by replying to this email or contacting one of the committee at the meeting.



We hope to run more special interest groups this year so I'm sending out a brief survey to all members to see what you would like to see happen. You can complete the survey using email or filling in a form at one of our Open Meetings. Meanwhile, I have news of a proposed new group called 'Art Appreciation'. It will take place on the 4th Thursday of the month at The Bookery on Crediton High Street from 2.00 p.m. till 3.45 p.m. There will be a £2 charge to cover donations to the Bookery and refreshments. The first meeting will be on Thursday 27th March. If you're interested, you can sign up at the Open Meeting or reply to this email.

Liz Ouldrige (Chair)

Important dates

February 18th Coffee morning for all at 'The Hayloft' Mole Avon Country Store from 10:30am.

February 19th Open meeting at the Boniface Centre: Brian Short – 'Rome: Foundation to Empir' Refreshments from 9:30am. The talk starts at 10:20.

March 18th Coffee morning for all at 'The Hayloft' Mole Avon Country Store from 10:30am.

March 19th Open meeting at the Boniface Centre: Richard Haigh – 'Italian Cooking from the Middle Ages'

January's talk: Jim Causley, singer & author, 'Traditional Folk Songs of Devon'.

Jim told us that every region of Britain had its own tradition of folk music. Over time, the oral tradition of singing started to die out and much of the music was lost. In Devon, a local vicar and author, Sabine Baring-Gould made a prolific collection of folk music from around the country but particularly in Devon. For a time, he lived outside of Devon, but on the death of his father, he returned to live at the family manor at Lew Trenchard, near Okehampton. He was one of the founders of the movement to collect folk music during the late 19th century and inspired such people as Vaughn Williams. Baring-Gould obtained the songs by advertising in local papers. Some people sent songs to him; others sang to him while he noted them down.

Jim sang five different local songs for us, telling us a bit about each one. The first song was called 'Jack of all Trades.' This linked towns and villages in Devon with particular jobs and was really a long list. The song was sent to Baring-Gould in 1908 by a lady living at Cowley Bridge.

Baring-Gould sometimes sanitised the songs. Many folk songs are quite saucy. As an example, Jim sang 'The Mower'. This song was collected from Robert Hard, a stone breaker from South Brent. The song is about a mower and a young lady whose meadow had never been mown. You can imagine the rest!

The songs could be very old. 'Childe the Hunter' probably dated back to 7th Century. This song was about the death of a young lord (childe) on Dartmoor and collected by Baring-Gould collected from the Dartmoor poet Jonas Coaker of Postbridge.

Sabine Gould died in 1924 but not before he had published over 1200 works including fiction, collections of folk tale and folk songs. Today his best known creation is 'Onward Christian Soldiers'.

Jim finished his performance with a rousing rendition of 'Widdicombe Fair' with considerable audience participation.