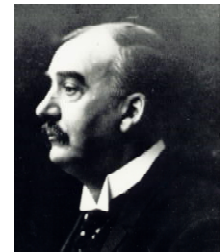


The John Meade Falkner Society

Founded 8th May 1999



Newsletter No. 77

3 January 2025

2025 SUBSCRIPTIONS

A plea for members to send the **Annual Sub** as soon as possible. It does preclude me having to chase recalcitrants up – a task I always find mildly embarrassing. It is still **£10** for UK members; but I have had to increase it to **€20** for European members; and **USA\$20** for the rest of the world, due to the horrific rise in overseas postal costs for sending out the July Journal. If the price of stamps continues to rise for UK mail, I may have to look at an increase there as well. You can pay by cash, securely wrapped; cheques (to “*The John Meade Falkner Society*”); BACS or PayPal. If either of the latter, I have provided the details in the accompanying email. I hope that you will all want to remain members of our select Society. I am always grateful and mindful of your continuing support and particularly of the extra amounts many of you provide.

THE BULL AT BURFORD (again!)

The Mail on Sunday for 21st July 2024, discussed the rivals **Jeremy Clarkson** will be facing when he re-opens his converted village pub, *The Windmill* in Asthall. Two from Burford were featured, one of them being JMF’s favourite, *The Bull*. Apparently, the latter has been described as ‘50 shades of cosmopolitan luxury with Zen, zip and zaniness’. It refers to Burford as the ‘Gateway to the Cotswolds’ but also as the ‘*Chi-chi town*’. Hmm.

The price for a night’s stay in The Drunk Tank suite – with a super size king bed, rainfall shower and ‘wonky’ floor – is a mere £210. There are four restaurants, including the Hiro with its 14-course tasting menu and a £90-a-head outdoor barbecue. Moreover, you can enjoy the hotel’s Flash Toys – a poker table donated by Luther actor Idris Elba; a techno DJ in the garden on Sundays; a bright blue padel court for lovers of the mini-tennis game; and works of art by famous artists, such as Andy Warhol, Banksy, Salvador Dali, Damien Hirst and Francis Bacon. What’s not to like?!



Thanks to **Michael Daniell** for this update.

THE OLD RECTORY, WEYMOUTH (again!)

The Dorset Echo has featured the Old Rectory in Weymouth on more than one occasion in 2024. Its issue of 9th September, featured not only a photograph of the front of the building, but an Inset of JMF, no

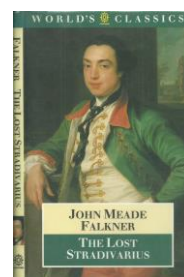
less. Most of the lengthy article made reference to Falkner and his family, including the fact of his mother’s death from typhoid. Mickey Jones, the CEO of DJ Property, who are restoring the building, said: ‘*Learning that J. Meade Falkner, the author of Moonfleet, spent his formative years in The Rectory adds a rich layer of history to this already magnificent building. We are dedicated to honouring and preserving the architectural history of this magnificent building for future generations to appreciate.*’

In his unpublished memories of his time in Weymouth, JMF highlighted the blend of Victorian and Georgian elements within the house, with one of the most striking features being the grand circular staircase, dimly lit by a distant skylight in the roof. Local historian Graham Perry advised the property developers of Falkner’s account of his childhood there.

Thanks to **Dianne Gardner** for this information.

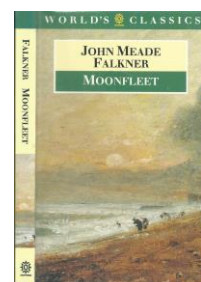
GOOD NEWS FROM THE O.U.P.

Nicholas Daly, MRIA, Professor of Modern English and American Literature, University College Dublin – who kindly let me reproduce his article on *The Lost Stradivarius* in the July 2024 **Journal** – emails me to say that the Oxford University Press will be publishing (again) *The Lost Stradivarius* and *Moonfleet* in a joint volume in their World’s Classics series. Nicholas will be the editor and will provide Introductory Notes for both novels.



The Lost Stradivarius was published in the World’s Classics in 1991, and edited with an Introduction by **Edward Wilson**, one of the Founder members of our Society back in April 1999. Edward has also written several articles for the Society in past Journals.

Moonfleet was published in the World’s Classics in 1993, and was edited with an Introduction by **Brian Alderson**. There were also Explanatory Notes after the text in both volumes. It will be interesting to compare these with the editorial in the new publication.



Nicholas tells me that contracts have been signed and that the combined volume will appear sometime in 2026. He will also try and get Oxford to republish *The Nebuly Coat*. Fingers are crossed.

A TRIP ABOARD THE TALLSHIP *MOONFLEET*



It was a lovely September day for our trip around Weymouth Bay on the Tallship *Moonfleet*, named after John Meade Falkner's well-known book of the same title.



Moonfleet is a steel hulled gaff-rigged Cutter/Ketch, a 1930's tall ship, robustly built by the great seafaring people of Holland, with a top speed of 9 knots. During her early working life, she would take cargo from Amsterdam to her neighbouring countries on The North Sea. The links with John Trenchard and Elzevir Block travelling to Holland on a Dutch sailing ship are great. This quote describes some of their journey: *"there was now lying at Cowes, and ready to sail that night, a Dutch couper that had run a cargo of Hollands on the other side of the island, and was going back to Scheveningen freighted with wool We found the couper ready to make sail, and waiting only for the tide to set out. Her name was the Gouden Droom."*

Around the turn of the century the Cutter was given a major refit in Urk, Holland, where she was converted to be a Sail Training Vessel. In 2015, following a minor refit in Cornwall, the ship was renamed as *Moonfleet* and is now based in Portland Marina, where she travels along Dorset's beautiful Jurassic Coast, the setting for many adventures in John Meade Falkner's story.



On board the ship, the crew provide a hands-on opportunity to try different activities, from hoisting the mainsail to taking the helm. We sailed from Portland Marina, around Portland Sea Forts, Nothe Fort and into Weymouth Bay. The sun was shining, the wind gently

blowing and we could immerse ourselves in the feeling that John Trenchard would have experienced when he set off on some of his adventures with Elzevir Block (but no smuggling was involved in our trip!)



If any members are visiting Dorset, then a trip on TS *Moonfleet* would add to their JMF experience!

Melanie Davy

A TRIBUTE FROM JOHN SPARROW

John Sparrow was the Warden of the all-graduate college of All Souls, Oxford, and in 1963 he published 'Independent Essays', including a chapter on the poetry of his friend John Betjeman. Reading this the other day, I found a charming tribute to the subject of our Society. Sparrow turns to Betjeman's Church of England verses. He quotes

'I acknowledge my transgressions'
The well-known phrases rolled
With thunder sailing over
From the heavily clouded wold.
'And my sin is ever before me'
There in the lighted East
He stood in that lowering sunlight,
An Indian Christian Priest.

"Has the very note of the English Church ever been so surely seized and so clearly reproduced? Only by one earlier poet:"

He then switches without further comment to

We have done with dogma and divinity
Easter and Whitsun past,
The long, long Sundays after Trinity
Are with us at last;
The passionless Sundays after Trinity,
Neither feast-day nor fast....

(followed by the second stanza)

"Could anything be purer Betjeman than those stanzas? Well, perhaps the following:" He then prints

On the fly-leaves of these old prayer-books
The childish writings fade,
Which show that once they were their books
In the days when prayer was made
For other Kings and princesses
William and Adelaide

(again followed by the second stanza)

“There is no need to suppose that Mr. Betjeman ever saw the privately printed little book of Mead (sic) Falkner’s verses from which these are taken. Even if he was familiar with it, the resemblance may be accounted for simply by affinity - the Church of England note echoing with identical cadences and rhyme-tricks, in two kindred and receptive consciousnesses.”

Writing in 1963, John Sparrow apparently hadn’t seen Betjeman’s little ‘Pocket Poets’ anthology ALTAR & PEW of 1959 which includes AFTER TRINITY ascribed to ‘Poems, c.1924’.

John Gretton

WEST WALKS HOUSE, DORCHESTER ARTICLE

Richard Smith was in email correspondence with me in October, asking permission to use a postcard of West Walks House which was featured on our website. It was for an article he was writing, with the valuable help of one of our members, **Melanie Davy**. Some of you will recall the warm welcome Melanie and her husband gave a small group of us, when we looked round their home, which was once the Falkner family’s.

Richard’s article, which you can find on the free-to-use **Dorset OPC website** (Dorchester page: History of West Walks House) uses Census returns and passages from JMF’s reminiscences to construct a quite detailed account of the property from its first construction in 1851.

He charts the ownership of West Walks House from Henry Barnes (whose initials H.B. are on the stonework over the balcony at the front), through Rev. James Fisher and the Falkners to Henry Barnes again. Richard’s researches continue through the later 19th century up until 1969, when plans were lodged (completed in 1971) for the house to be divided into two properties, with No. 7 at the rear and No. 8 at the front. In addition, at the rear of the main house, the old stables block was converted into another house – now ‘The Old Stables’, no. 9.

Richard’s article is well worth reading.



West Walks House c. 1880

100 YEARS’ AGO: A MEADE FALKNER LETTER

To his great ‘liturgical’ friend, Canon Wordsworth, from a Nursing Home bed in Newcastle.

Dominca Bonus Pastor (27 April) 1925

My dear Chancellor and Friend,

My wife, with a sure prescience of what would please me, was careful to bring me, when she came to see me the same day that it arrived, your kind letter. I was unwell when I saw you last at Salisbury, and have been unwell ever since. I tried Bath for a month last January and February, but it did me no good; and now I have been strictly confined to bed in a nursing home, 19, Victoria Square, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, for the last 5 weeks. I came here because the complaint needs closer supervision than is possible at Durham. They call it pancreatitis, and it has now induced an acute attack of jaundice, from which I cannot hope to be free for some little time yet...

...God has been very good to me, and, up until now, I have managed to ‘carry on’ quite cheerfully. I have rigged up a typing-machine on the blankets, and time passes fast enough in reading and writing.

I am interested to hear about your son’s verses. All verse does interest me, for I too versiculos feci...speaking generally. I am inclined to think that it is a mistake to print this class of verse, even for ‘private circulation’. Man’s mood changes so quickly...

All my liturgical friends are gone, except you...your Breviary is constantly in my hands: and (besides all that) is not Salisbury itself more than the Mecca of Wiltshiremen? It is their very Jerusalem, on which all our eyes wait, and on the spire of which, I hope that the peregrines are building this year.

Yours Affectionately
JMF

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Last year, I was delighted to have so many articles for the **Journal**. However, so far this time, I have just two. Hence, a plea for contributors to send in material, short or long, relating to JMF and his times. I would need submissions by the end of April at the latest.

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