'Moonfleet' Maritime Matters
Royd Whitlock

1.   **Introduction:**

1.1   It is probably true that most fluent readers infer the particular meaning of a word or phrase that is unfamiliar or used in a novel way from the context and their own knowledge of similar material. There will be, however, a point when the mental picture forming becomes a little too dependent on a succession of somewhat uncertain educated guesses. Readers might then feel compelled, albeit reluctantly, to consult a dictionary or glossary.

1.2   I found this was happening during a recent re-reading of *Moonfleet*, with regard to the number and frequency of occurrences of words with a nautical or maritime connotation, especially in the penultimate Chapter XVIII - *In The Bay*. Being a resolute landlubber, I was sometimes clutching at straws (or should that be very thin spars?) In the contextual flotsam and jetsam whilst trying to fully imagine the harrowing foundering of the *Aurungzebe*. My 1950's edition by Edward Arnold offers some help by way of Notes at the end of the book, but are not really adequate for my terra-firma-ed vocabulary. As examples consider:

p.223   *She was broached-to with her bows in the wind, but gradually paid off as the staysail filled, and so she headed straight for   shore.*
p.224   *But the wind would hold pinned in the south, and they would see sail after sail blown off her, and watch her wear and wear, and every time come nearer in…*

So, the idea of a Maritime Glossary, consisting of words and phrases with specific meanings related to nautical and maritime matters, hove into view.

1.3   This article outlines how a (probably incomplete) glossary of the nautical vocabulary (excluding smuggling) was compiled, along with a brief discussion of some of the issues raised. Simple lists of the words and phrases are provided in the Appendices, but to save paper it was thought that the full, illustrated glossary is best presented (in the future) separately - either in electronic form, such as a CD-Rom, or as a webpage.

1.4   The primary function of the Maritime Glossary (MG) is to assist readers in clearly understanding the text by forming an accurate mental (re)construction. It might be used also for the odd pub quiz. More ambitiously, I thought that to write, for example, a 'faithful' screenplay, a true visualisation of the maritime moments would be vital in the first instance.

2.   Procedures:

2.1   I first re-read the story, writing down each likely word on a 3" x 5" index card. Whether deliberate or merely an artefactual feature of English, the same word was used by JMF with two different meanings on a number of occasions - and this caused some momentary confusion (e.g. 'Keel' 'yard').
        Erring on the side of caution, all words were included which were used in any way that might have a nautical connotation - which is capable of objective assessment. This avoided introducing subjective assessments of the likely nautical reading vocabulary of readers. No judgement of the significance of a word or its use and of the degree of esotericism or/and archaism was made. By this means it is hoped the utility of the Glossary is decided by the reader's needs, rather than the compiler's biases.

2.2   Next the meaning of each word as it best seemed to fit the story was found and recorded, drawing on a variety of resources - books, the Internet, acquaintances etc.

        To try to find any words I might have missed, I then went through the Concordance for *Moonfleet* (produced by M. Matsuoka at Nagoya University, Japan [1]. And I did find more than a few more! Where more than one meaning was possible I was able to use the Gutenburg Project edition [2] of *Moonfleet* (along with my good helpmate, the possibly little known *Ctrl-F*) to find the word quickly and deduce the more likely meaning. A final re-reading of the book and the Concordance elicited a few more reluctant nautical candidates, but it is entirely likely that I still missed some.

3.   Findings:

3.1   A total of over 170 words and over 20 phrases were identified as suitable for inclusion in the MG. There were 25 names of real places and geographical features. Proper (non-geographical) names, both real and fictional, amount to 15. Out of a vocabulary of

over 7,000 different words [1], this does not seem an inordinately large proportion (3%). Of course, most are concentrated into a few chapters where the action is on or near the sea: Chapters VIII, XII, XVI, XVIII (especially) and XIX.

	'Real'	Fictitious (or unconfirmed)	TOTAL
Geographical Names	**25**	4	29
Non-geographical Names	6	9	15
Nautical Content Words	135	---	135
Nautical Phrases	24	---	24

The lists are shown in the Appendices.

4. Discussion:

4.1 Unlike Thomas Hardy, JMF didn't create (nor presumably set out to create) an alter-world. But he has created a number of fictional place-names alongside his use of the real ones. A vocabulary of over 7,000 words in a running total of 84,250 words [1] perhaps doesn't allow enough background context to aid their identification unequivocally. Again, is there any evidence that JMF was concerned to do so?

The Geographical Names List contains place names of coastal features such as ports and harbours as well as those of natural geomorphological ones. What is slightly surprising is the fact that most places are given their actual names but a few have fictitious ones. Thus Anvil Point and St. Alban's Head are prominent headlands on the Dorset coast. *The Snout* is inferred pretty easily from the context (and from the humorous literary re-baptism) to be Portland Bill (Hardy's name was *The Beal* - one meaning of which is boil, pustule [OED]). *Hoar Head* has been identified by Kenneth Warren [3] as White Nothe, roughly 15 miles east of Weymouth. If this is accurate it is another one of JMF's little literary levities.

4.2 Over half the Non-Geographical Names refer to sailing vessels. Which of these are names of real or fictitious ships has been hard to confirm either way.

4.3   The 'nautical content' words are words that are not proper nouns but have been used with a nautical connotation. Some of these words have a number of meanings in fact - yard, boom, bows, cutter, smack. Others are more specifically nautical - ketch, couper, mariner, sternboard.

4.4.   The twenty-odd 'nautical phrases' identified present a greater challenge for a 'landsman' such as myself to fathom. Some have become part of everyday language and perhaps have taken on meaning somewhat different from the original. The help of 'experts' was sought. An ex-trawler man, Nautical dictionaries, the Internet etc. were consulted.

4.5   One question that intruded early on in this project was what was the source of JMF's knowledge of boats, sailing and seamanship? It might seem a surprising addition to his other passions noted by Kenneth Hillier [4]. As I have not come across any negative comments on this aspect of the novel, this would seem to vouch for authenticity. Kenneth Warren's biography [5] mentions a sailor son of neighbours (the Cowdrells), who told the young John exciting tales. Would reference books alone produce what seems to be the use of a period-appropriate vocabulary to produce thoroughly valid descriptions? Would just talking to seamen and fishermen also produce the same verisimilitude? Whilst working on this task I read JMF's *The Lost Stradivarius*, which also briefly alludes to sailing. The central character's family 'keep a yacht in their "little harbour of Encombe" which they use to sail to Weymouth and Lyme Regis [6]. So did JMF experience sailing first had as a child? It is tantalising to speculate on the likelihood of that. Did JMF sail at all at any later time? Whilst living in digs in Durham (1896-1899), did he sail, did he have access to suitable reference books or knowledgeable and/or experienced 'sea dogs'? Is Charles "Skipper" Lynam and activities such as the Thames trip, mentioned by Christopher Hawtree [7], the source of some of Falkner's knowledge? Did he make notes some time before he began writing the story in 1897, or was it the result of a long, long gestation? Kenneth Warren [8] points to the 'early experience of the seaside, of the life of coastal towns and of those Channel landscapes which were to become deeply ingrained in both memory and affection'.

4.6 In a letter [9] JMF mentions *Moonfleet* as 'to some extent a boys' and girls' book'. What level of knowledge of maritime matters is to be inferred amongst late Victorian/early Edwardian youth - if anything at all? Andrew Stibbs states that the 'language is difficult (it was published in 1898) but, if it seems pompous sometimes, it is vivid often. When it matters, there is a striking descriptive accuracy and particularity' [10]. From what we know of JMF's characteristic attention to detail this surely applies to matters maritime! One tentative conclusion that might be drawn is that amongst the intended readership familiarity with all things to do with the sea and sailing would be more extensive than in, for instance, today's youngsters. And that presumably applies to adults as well. JMF's attention to detail about sailing might be thought to be lost on many a modern reader without an 'extra' effort. Hence, back to the original impetus for this project.

4.7 As ever, because of the usual restrictions in writing such an article, there are unexplored paths. Does JMF's poetry provide any insights into his knowledge of boats and sailing, for example? Being a desktop effort means that original sources have not been consulted. And Time imposes its own inexorable limits. The author would welcome reader' comments, questions and suggestions that might add to this article.

NOTES:

JMF	John Meade Falkner
OED	Oxford English Dictionary (online)
JMFS	The John Meade Falkner Society

REFERENCES:

[1]   http://victorian.lang.nagoya-u-ac.jp/cgi-bin/conc.cgi?WORD=&HEAD=30 &TAIL=50&LOCALE=C&TEXT=C%3A%2Fusr%2Flocal%2Fetexts%2F falkner%2Fworks%2Fmoonfleet.txt&TITLE=Moonfleet&AUTHORNAME =Falkner%2C+J.+M
[2]   htttp://www.gutenberg.org/files/10743/10743-8.txt
[3]   Warren, K. - John Meade Falkner: A Paradoxical Life (Edwin Mellen Press, 1995) p.121
[4]   Hillier, K. - JMFS Journal Vol. 1 No. 6 (July 2005) p.35

[5]   *op.cit.* Warren p.9
[6]   Davey, P. - JMFS Journal Vol. 1 No. 1 (July 2000) p.7
[7]   Hawtree, C. JMFS Journal Vol. 1 No. 6 (July 2005) p.23
[8]   *op.cit.* Warren p.11
[9]   *ibid*. P.122
[10]   Stibbs, A. - JMFS Journal Vol. 1 No. 2 (July 2001) p.5

APPENDICES:

I.   GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES:

Anvil Point - Bay of Biscay - Bridport - Channel [The English] -
Channel Islands - Cowes - Gad Cliff - *Hoar Head* - Holland - Indies
- Isle of Wight - Java - Low Countries - Lyme Regis - *Moonfleet* -
Moonfleet Bay - Newport - Peveril Point - Poole - Purbeck -
Scheveningen - *Snout , The* - Solent - Southampton - St. Alban's
Head [St. Aldhelm's Head] - St. Mâlo - Start [Point] - Ushant -
Weymouth

II.   NON-GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES:

Aurungebe - Bataviaman - Bonaventura - Darius - East Indiaman -
Elector - Excise [Customs &] - Excisemen - *Florida - Gouden
Droom* -Gulder - *Marnhull* - Revenue [The] - *Royal Sophy* - Trinity

III.   NAUTICAL CONTENT WORDS:

aft - amidships - anchor
baffling - bay/s - beach/ed - beaching - beachmen - berth - bluff -
boat/s - booms - bows - breaker/s - brig - boroached-to - broadside -
bulwark/s - buoy/s - burthen
calm - canvas - cliff/s - combing - couper - craft -cutter
deck-house
eddies - eddy - Embayed
fathom/s - fishing-smack - flotsam - floundered - fore - forechains -
founder/ing/ed - free board
galley/s - gig - grummet - guillemot/s - gunwale/s
hatch/es - hatchway - haven - head - headed - helm - high-water
island
jolly-boat
keel - ketch - kicking-wheel

lagoon - lander/s - landsman/men - larboard - lee - lighthouse - lipper - loadstone - lugger

main deck - maintop - mariner - mate/s - moored/ings

offshore - oilskins - orlop - overboard

packet - passage/s - pilot-coat - pinnace - pipe/ing/ed - pitch/ing - pooped - privateer/s

quay/s

rack - reefing - reefing-hands - reefing jackets - rigging

sail/ed/ing - schooner - sea - sea-room - seaward - seawood - shippers - silver-sand - skipper/s - smack - sousing - sou-westers - spar - spindrift - springtide - spyglass - starboard - staysail - storm-staysail - stern - sternboard - strake - strand - stranding - surf - surge - swell

tack - tail - thwarts - timbers - transported - trawler - truck

undertow

vessel/s

waist - wavelets - wearing - westering - westerly - westers - wheel - wind-bound - windward - wrack

yard/s

IV.   PHRASES WITH NAUTICAL CONNECTIONS:

A heavy head sea-running	fell off to larboard
gradually paid off	her bows in the windinstead of
the plunging of a tack	laden deep
laying head to sea	lying on a lee shore
never a bit of canvas left	put the helm up
put the helm hard up	put the wheel over a bit
ready to make sail	run her dead for the beach
the sea was running very high	the tide to set out
this sea is too short for the bay	to cast anchor
wallowing when we went around	waves swept her fore and aft
weather The Snout	we made bad weather of it
when the ship went about	wind drawing to east