

The John Meade Falkner Society

Founded 8th May 1999



Newsletter No. 40

22 July 2012

July 1932 - July 2012

Eighty years have gone by since JMF died. This Society was formed to promote the appreciation and study of his life, times and works. We are now into our thirteenth year, and I give warm thanks to all of you who have contributed towards the **Journals** (13), **Newsletters** (40), the **Website** and the **Events** we have staged at Fleet, Dorchester, Burford and Durham since 1999.

NEW MEMBER

We welcome John-Lloyd Hagger to our Society. He lives at the splendidly named "Toad House" in North Somerset and is the commissioning editor at ZigZag Education (a publisher of teaching resources for UK secondary schools). John's father is also a "keen advocate of Falkner's work". I am in discussion with him over the possibility of producing a Kindle edition of JMF's Poetry. One must move with the times.

OVERDUE SUBS

There are just **seven** members who have not renewed their subscriptions. This is a final plea for them. I will send the **Journal** out once I have received the sub.

MOONFLEET SMUGGLING TOUR

I replicate a piece from the Web, to show *Moonfleet* is alive and well. So get your wellies on!



This walking tour of the Fleet Lagoon and surrounding countryside takes you on a journey back 300 years to the 18th Century to discover the Smuggling History of the area.

Pre-booking advisable, details at wegottickets.com/pikeandshot

When: 26 July - 25 Sep 2012

11:00 - 15:30 every Tuesday

Where: East Fleet Farm Touring Park East Fleet Farm
Touring Park, Fleet Lane, Chickereil, Weymouth, Dorset,
DT3 4DW Weymouth DT3 4DW

Tel: [07771824495/01305855817](tel:07771824495/01305855817)

Email: tours@paste.org.uk

Price: £7.50 Adult, £5 Child under 16 yrs

Age: Not recommended for under 8 yrs due to distance

THE MOONFLEET SMUGGLING FESTIVAL

Society Member Dianne Gardner, who is lucky enough to live in Butter Street, Fleet (what a pity the Why Not? has gone!), kindly sent me a photocopy from the *Dorset Echo* about the *Moonfleet* Smuggling Festival, held on the Spring Bank Holiday at Bagwell Farm near Abbotsbury. Two days of living history smuggling events were followed by a full day of re-enactment at the harbour side. A mock battle took place when the Revenue men turned up to apprehend the tea smugglers. More than 100 actors took part, some coming all the way from Scotland. "The smugglers were looting contraband with a conscience, as the festival raised more than £500 for the RNLI".

MOONFLEET AND "DEEP POCKETS"

Society Member **Javier Marías** sent me an extract from Paul Rassam's Catalogue recently. Admittedly *Moonfleet* is very difficult to find in First Edition (unlike *The Lost Stradivarius*), and to find an inscribed one is special. This copy states "E.L.D. Boyle, from the author in grateful acknowledgement of valuable Services rendered on the High Seas. Nov. 1898." It was priced at **£5,000**. Boyle had served in the Egyptian War and the Sudan Campaign. In a covert operation in 1904, he had been responsible for sailing two armoured cruisers from Genoa to Yokosuka just in time for them to be used in the Russo-Japanese War, in recognition of which he was presented with a pair of silver vases as a gift from the Emperor of Japan. One assumes the link with JMF was an earlier Armstrong's involvement; JMF's eyes would have feasted on the silverware. A first edition of *The Lost Stradivarius* in the same catalogue was a mere £950.

GOOGLE IMAGING

Recently, I happened to **Google Image** my address for other purposes. Amongst photos of the main village buildings (which included public houses but not my house), could be found the front cover of **Michael Daniell's** *The Three Pories*; the *Nebuly Coat* armorial bearings; **Giselle Panero** holding her framed tapestry at Durham; and the JMF portrait which graces the top of our Newsletters. "Big Brother" is alive and well.

JMF AND THE GWR

Regular readers of these Newsletters will know by now that I regularly search the Internet, and particularly EBay, for anything relating to JMF. Recently I purchased two Memoranda on Great Western Railway headed notepaper. I print one below.



Was the Mr. Falkner enquiring about the past history of the railway line around Weymouth JMF? By a strange coincidence, **Ray Ion** sent me the latest batch of his researches and, included amongst them was a list of Great Western Railway Shareholders. John Meade Falkner occurs in 1901, 1903, 1904, 1921, 1925, and 1930. Although these do not prove that the two Falkners are one and the same (the former could be another Falkner – e.g. nephew Tom), the odds are in his favour. He was still at *The Divinity House*, Durham in June-July 1931 “having been, and continuing, very indisposed”.

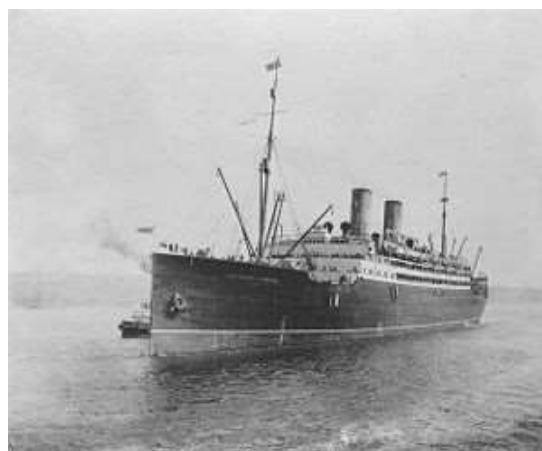
Many years ago, in 1994, George Ramsden (a Society member) of Stone Trough Books had for sale a handwritten pocket book entitled “*In this Booke are writte ye engines seen by J M Falkner on the South Western Railway and classed by ye same*”. It was dated “Weymouth Oct. 17. 1874”, when JMF would have been sixteen. The book, of some 170 pages and bound in limp brown watered silk, was on sale for £1200. I made reference to it in the Society Newsletter No. 3 (8 May, 2000) * Throughout his adult life, JMF travelled by train, and many of his letters start with “In the Train”. All in all, I like to think that JMF in the last year of his life was preparing for another literary offering – a poem or short story which included a train journey. Lord Blandamer might have helped with the times of trains from Cullerne Road and the history of the branch line to Cullerne at the very least.

* A reminder that all 40 Newsletters can be read on our website www.johnmeadefalknersociety.co.uk

THE EMPRESS OF IRELAND

On her first trip of the summer of 1914 the *Empress of Ireland* sailed from her berth in Quebec Harbour bound across the North Atlantic for Liverpool. Fate, however, had disaster in store. In a veiling fog the collier, *Storstad*, was to pierce her hull and send her to the bottom of the St. Lawrence River. The *Empress of Ireland* took all but 462 of the 1477 souls on board with her.

In 2005 a Canadian TV film, *The Last Voyage of the Empress*, investigated the sinking with historical reference, model re-enactment, and underwater investigation. Last week I watched the programme on the TV Channel “Yesterday” and something struck a memory chord. Surely, not another, however tenuous, link to JMF?



The Empress of Ireland

Sure enough – he had written a poem about the tragedy, entitled *John Vincent and Clara, his Wife*. The couple were from Weymouth and actively associated with St. Mary's Church (JMF's father had been curate there in the 1870s) and All Saints, Wyke Regis, which Society members visited a year ago. You can find the poem in *The Collected Poems*, published by the Society, but here are a couple of stanzas.

They walked before us all their life
In work or leisure day by day,
John Vincent and his sweet-faced wife,
His steadfast helpmate on the way.

And in that night of outer doom,
When this world sank beneath their feet,
We doubt not that they faced the gloom
Like Vincents of St. Mary Street.

Not great poetry, but a sincere tribute to a contemporary of JMF's at Weymouth College (he was only 56 when he died), and his devoted wife.

JANUARY 2013 NEWSLETTER

I am delighted to say I already have two interesting contributions for the next Newsletter, due in January. **Celia Grover** wrote to me in May, letting me know that her mother Ruth Falkner had died at the grand old age of 102½. Ruth had married John Sandes Falkner, the second son of Charles Gaskell Falkner (1864-1932), the younger brother of JMF. Whilst sorting her mother's effects, Celia came across a typed letter from JMF to his nephew, dated “Valentine's Day. 1931” in which the former gives some fascinating avuncular advice.

Mark Valentine pens an equally compelling review of “Mr. Falkner's last tales – The West Door & Other Stories (Arnold)”. All will be revealed in January

Best Wishes,

Kenneth Hillier

nebuly@hotmail.co.uk

Greenmantle, Main Street, Kings Newton, Melbourne,
Derbyshire DE73 8BX