

The John Meade Falkner Society

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2016 SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE

I look forward to your subs as soon as possible (I hate reminders!) – still only £10 p.a. for the U.K. and the equivalent of £15 for abroad. Please find attached the pro forma. No form? – you are up to date! Thank you in anticipation.

FROM GISELLE IN ARGENTINA

I sent our Argentinian member, Giselle, an email which congratulated her on her recent marriage. She replied:

My husband's name is Daniel d'Almeida. He is an editor and advertising copywriter, I think that is the translation in English. He works for an advertising agency. We met in Kindergarten and we spent two years together there. We were very good friends. But the following year he changed to another primary school and we didn't see each other for thirty years. As I don't have face-book, it was tough for him to find me throughout these years but he finally did through Linked-in. So after a number of e-mails and chats, we met, started dating and eventually got married. Life is full of surprises for us to discover and God has guided us to them. I will send you some pictures soon.

All my best wishes to all of you and thank you very much for the greetings!! Giselle

PS Last year for Christmas, among the presents I gave him was a copy of 'Moonfleet', of course! I bought that copy a long time ago and had kept it to give it to somebody as a present. Well, now it has an owner!! I hope to start reading it with him when my holidays come, it will be a pleasure to read it once again, and it will bring back lots of memories as well!

SOCIETY WEEKEND IN THE NORTH EAST



For those of you who visited Armstrong's Banqueting Hall in the Summer. If you had timed it to be a little earlier, you may have well witnessed scenes like this!

AND - A CLARIFICATION

During July's Society weekend in Northumberland there was a visit to Chillingham church. We now know that the notable Grey Tomb which dates from c. 1450 has a vault below which was last viewed and reported on in 1853.

There are steps leading down from the floor of the south chapel to an ante-chamber and from which there is a door into a burial chamber. The chamber contains the remains of at least twelve individuals in the last stages of

decomposition. Amongst these is the first 'occupant', Sir Ralph Grey. The effigies above the chamber are of Sir Ralph Grey and his wife Elizabeth, daughter of Henry Fitzhugh who was chamberlain to Henry V.

George Robson



DIG THIS!

During part of my working life I had a room looking over a small garden to the back of Divinity House, now the Music School. It has been absorbed into a cafe. Archaeologists recovered mass graves with a number of bodies, thought to have been Scottish soldiers defeated at the battle of Dunbar, 1650. There are now proposals that these too should be re-buried (like Richard III). A discussion about this took place in Dunbar recently.

The garden was JMF's, and he can hardly have known about them. However, he seems to have been inspired to hang a Della Robbia ceramic representation of the Annunciation there. It is now in our Cathedral's North transept.

Brian Cheesman

(Resident of South Street, a few yards uphill of no. 42-3, where JMF lived before moving to *The Divinity House*).

OLD FLEET CHURCH

Just thought you would like to know that the Chesil Bank Parish Council has been awarded £10,000 to repair the Fleet Old Church perimeter wall. The funding is from the Coastal Revival Fund. The application was submitted by the Parish Council clerk and my husband Ian drafted the description of the work needed. He described the JMF and *Moonfleet* connection and the number of visitors throughout the year who come to visit the church. I proof read the draft and made sure **Falkner** was spelt correctly.

We are all rather surprised to have received the total amount requested as the fund was heavily over-subscribed. This does mean that we can probably get other parts of the outer wall repaired as well thus securing its safety and longevity. We hope to get the work completed before the end of March 2016.

Dianne Gardner

MOONFLEET MUSINGS AND WHY NOT?

Reading Jonathan Brough's essay in the July 2015 journal contrasting *Moonfleet* and *Diamond Boy* and the emphasis on the **Y** symbol featured in both novels prompted me to recall a conversation from long ago. I first came to live in Fleet in 1979 and was obviously interested in my local surroundings as I am lucky enough to live right next door to the Old Fleet Church. I sought knowledge from a local vicar who boasted of being something of a local historian. His views on the **Y** symbol featured in "Moonfleet" were quite plain. He considered that the symbol is simply the inversion of the three-legged finial representing the Holy Trinity (after whom the church is dedicated) that appears at each end of the central external ridge on the roof of the church as it still stands today. The vicar made it pretty obvious that he did not approve of the sacred religious symbol being used (especially in inversion) to further literary ambition or fame.



However the finials are different in appearance in that the one over the east window consists of a group of four symbols taking on the appearance of rather primeval figures with small heads and arms and legs distinctly akimbo. The figures are arranged facing towards the points of the compass North, South, East and West. They flank a short stone column topped with a cross bar but the vertical continuing stone to complete a cross is missing. The other end of the roof ridge over the door facing the west also has a **Y** group of four facing North, South, East and West. This group is simpler in design with just the four symbols around a central column topped by a rather crude squared cross. The upside down **Y** is also repeated in stone at the top of small alcoves flanking the door.

Given that the door and alcoves were added to tidy up the front of the church after the Great Flood of 1824 when the nave was washed away it is possible that the western roof finial was added at the same time. Therefore the eastern finial could be the medieval group representing an early representation of the Holy Trinity and the western finial a later addition echoing the original. A drawing of Fleet church purportedly by Samuel Hieronymus Grimm dated 1790 does show the church with chancel, nave, bell tower and a small porch facing the south. The inverted **Y** symbols are also shown on the roof ridge with the figures over the eastern window the simpler examples in the middle and the incomplete cross over the bell tower. So it could just have well been that after the flood these stone portions were saved and relocated on the church consisting now of just the chancel.

The church itself was built by Maximilian Mohune as a memorial to his parents Robert and Margaret (nee Hyde) so they were a real family who owned the lands around Fleet and also Fleet House (now Moonfleet Manor Hotel). As noble landowners they had their own heraldic shield as depicted on the brass plaques inside the church. The shield never did have a **Y** cross-pall – the enduring symbol is an arm with ermine sleeve and the hand holding a fleur-de-lys and a crescent moon in the background. As students of heraldry will know, this is somewhat complicated in the case of Margaret since her personal shield also incorporated elements from her father's shield as well of those from her husband's family. I find Jonathan's theory that the **Y** represents opportunity and choice very compelling but I do wonder if JMF merely thought to create a bit of mischief in using what is essentially a religious symbol to expand his novel.



As a postscript I would just like to point out that the **Y** symbol inside a shield has been incorporated into glass portion of the door of our cottage (*Why Not Inn Cottage*) really just as a bit of whimsy and to amuse passing visitors who have been known to take photographs of themselves in front of the door.

Dianne Gardner



JMF MSS

In Sotheby's (New York) Robert Pirie sale, 2nd-4th December, lot 661, this collection of prayers begun by a Catholic in or c.1584, was lot 85 in the JMF 1932 Sale. It commences with a calendar with marginal notes on English monarchs and with each month concluding with a quatrain of medical advice: ("In May rise earlie and walke in the fieldes.")

and with dates of Easter from 1584 to 1607.

Thanks to **Ian Jackson** for spotting this.

HAUNTED BY BOOKS by Mark Valentine

Mark, a member of our Society, discusses "*the marginal and minor, the eccentric and elusive, the obscure and outré, in [his] wanderings in the further reaches of English literature. Discover lost poets, dreaming mystics, books so rare they were never written, books whose authors were not what they appeared, unknown masterpieces and near-misses, decadents, fantasists and the dwellers on the edges.*"

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Best Wishes,

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