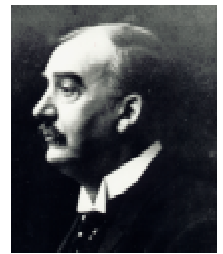


# The John Meade Falkner Society

Founded 8th May 1999



Newsletter No. 44

3 January 2014

## SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

Subscription Rates remain the same. In 2012, after eleven years, I raised them from £5 to £10. Thanks to using email attachments, instead of postings to most of you, I certainly hope to keep rates at the same level for some time to come. I think we are one of the “cheapest” Literary Societies in the UK, but I hope the quality is still of a high standard. If you have not got a Renewal Form also attached, then you have already paid for at least the year to come.

## NEW MEMBERS

I am delighted to announce that, since our last Newsletter in July, we have gained three new members. **Susan Rands** (West Pennard, Somerset); **David Duke** (Jarrow, Tyne and Wear); and **Frank Kibblewhite** (Sherborne, Dorset). **Susan's** interest began “with picking up a copy of *Moonfleet* in a charity shop in Glastonbury”, and was not only captured by the gripping story but immediately ordered from her local library, *The Nebuly Coat* and *The Lost Stradivarius*. **David** first became aware of JMF whilst an undergraduate at Oxford, when he read the poem *After Trinity*, “which I loved then, and still love now”. One time resident of Durham, he has lived in the North-East since the late 1960s. **Frank** runs *The Sundial Press*, “a small independent publishing house dedicated to introducing original and distinctive literature to an astute readership. Our primary focus is to rescue works long out of print from an undeserved oblivion”. I urge you all to have a look at <http://www.sundialpress.co.uk> – its publications list is compelling, with a great section on the Supernatural.

A very warm welcome is extended to all three.

## THE POWYS SOCIETY

*The Sundial Press* has reissued works of several of the Powys family: a uniquely precocious family, one of the most significant in the cultural history of Britain, of whom the writers John Cowper Powys, T. F. Powys and Llewelyn Powys are the most famous. But they also included Littleton Charles Powys, teacher and naturalist; the architect and conservationist A. R. Powys; the artist Gertrude Powys; the lace maker Marian Powys; and the poet and novelist Philippa Powys.

I mention this because they, too, have a Society. In October I received a letter from their Hon. Secretary, **Chris Thomas**, inviting me to give a talk about the life and career of JMF. It will be held in the Library of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society at Dorset County Museum, on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> July, starting at 10.30. After lunch, it is planned to visit not only Dorchester but Weymouth and Fleet.

## OXFORD THINKING

No, that is not an oxymoron, but the title used by the Campaign for the University of Oxford. Thanks to our small donation to the Bodleian's Keeper's Fund back in July, I have received not only a thank-you letter from its Head of Development, **Amy Trotter**, but several emails subsequently, extolling the university's virtues and mentioning other donations of many thousands of pounds. We must save up for our next visit in 2019.

## THE FRIENDS OF BURFORD CHURCH

Issue 21 of the Friends' Newsletters was sent to me in October. It includes a laudatory couple of paragraphs by **Fenella Pearson** about our Society's visit in July. We are proud to be supporters of the church that JMF loved and where his ashes are buried. We wish the Friends and the church authorities well in their plans for the development of a Prayer Space in the North Transept and with the ambitious Warwick Hall scheme.

## LOST STRADIVARIUS?

No – one has been found. A 1696 Stradivarius, worth more than £1.2 million, was stolen from the internationally acclaimed violinist Min-Jin Kym by a gang at Euston station in November 2010. Police recovered it in the Midlands in July 2013. Min-Yin said, “I've now gone from devastation to the other end of the scale – an incredible feeling of elation that hasn't left me. I'm still feeling the butterflies in my stomach and am on cloud nine”. If Miss Kym wants more butterflies, she could do worse than read JMF's masterpiece.

## KINDLE VERSION OF *THE COLLECTED POEMS*



Format: Kindle Edition  
File Size: 259 KB  
Print Length: 144 pages  
Publisher: Toad House Press (3 Sep 2013)  
Sold by: Amazon Media EU S.à r.l.  
Language: English  
ASIN: B00EYXJ1OU

Price: £8.23 includes VAT & free wireless delivery via Amazon Whispernet.

Congratulations to **John-Lloyd Hagger**, a member of the Society, for seeing the above through to completion.

## Product Description

The complete collection of John Meade Falkner's published poems, including one from his novel *Moonfleet*. Those who have read John Meade Falkner's novels and dipped into his poetry find themselves returning to them with pleasure, welcoming them as old, familiar friends.

The perceptive reader will find and enjoy in Falkner's poetry and novels a warmth and a strong sense of kinship with his fellow human beings, particularly those of days gone by. His sensitivity towards the people and events of the past, often brought to life through ancient buildings or particular locations, is a quality which Falkner shares with both Hardy and the Brontës. In Falkner's case, in contrast to much of Hardy's writing, there is an overriding sense of optimism and acceptance, even as he describes and identifies with the trials and tribulations of his fellow beings. There is also but little of the extreme and amoral passion of *Wuthering Heights*; Falkner's tendency to balance good and bad within people, and the persistent idea that redemption is possible even in those of significantly evil persuasion, is much closer in this respect to the pervading moral atmosphere of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and of *Jane Eyre*.

## OLD FLEET AND ITS CHURCH



Some interesting information has been sent by **Dianne Gardner**, our lucky member who lives next to *Moonfleet* church.

"In March 2012, an information board mounted on a stone plinth was erected just inside the entrance gate to the churchyard. It is a coloured and illustrated with local scenes connected to *Moonfleet*. It also has a script outlining the history of the village with reference to a possible tunnel. The production of the board was funded by DEFRA and Dorset Countryside and the plinth generously built by a local company. Visitors do seem to find it very informative.

I was most interested in the section in the last *Journal* about Harry Patch and his brother – I had heard about the discovery of the passage near the tombstone but thought it was in the 20s or 30s. As always with these stories – if I am asked, I always reply that personally I have no knowledge to confirm or deny such things, but am willing to believe there could be tunnels in the churchyard; but as for their purpose, well I prefer to leave it to the imagination. It all adds to the mystery! The Old Church is visited by many people from all over the world and still seems to hold some allure."

## JESMOND DENE

**John Cochrane**, another member writes:

"Just a brief note to say how even more interesting than usual I found the JMF Society *Newsletter* and *Journal*, particularly, of course, **George Robson's** article on the underground passages at Jesmond Dene House. I never knew of their existence. The suggestion that they could have given JMF the idea for the ones at Fleet sounds quite probable.

When I was a small boy we lived in Newcastle, near Jesmond, and we used to go there a lot, to various parties etc. I remember my great grandmother's [Margery, Lady Noble] 100th birthday party in 1928, with 50 candles along each side of a long table. By then she was almost completely blind and I used to lead her round the house, feeling very virtuous.

It is nice to see it now renovated into a smart hotel. I had a very good reception when I called in there a few years ago."

## MOONFLEET on SKY

*Moonfleet* was shown on SKY1 on Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> December.



I have copied out below Sky's publicity blurb, entitled **Head to the Seas with Moonfleet**:

*Ray Winstone leads a gang of smugglers in our brand new family drama, Moonfleet.*

*Written by Ashley Pharoah (Life on Mars, Ashes to Ashes), this two-part adaptation of the much-loved John Meade Falkner novel is set in the small Dorset village of Moonfleet.*

*In the story, young John Trenchard (Aneurin Barnard - The Truth About Emanuel, The White Queen) is desperate to join the local band of smugglers led by Elzevir Block (Winstone - The Departed, Hugo, Snow White And The Huntsman). Together they embark on an adventure full of action, friendship, and humour, and hunt for a fabled lost diamond. Their journey takes them from 18th Century Dorset, to the jewellery quarter of The Hague, and on to a gripping, final sea voyage.*

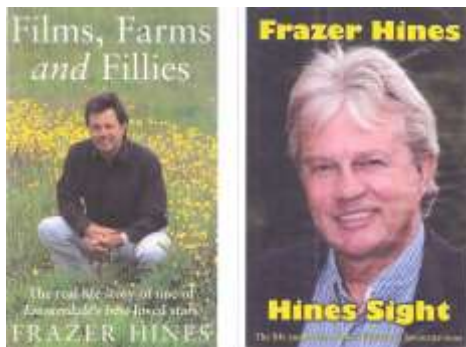
*Newcomer Sophie Cookson joins the cast as John's first love, Grace, who is also the daughter of Moonfleet's anti-smuggling magistrate, Mohune, played by Ben Chaplin (Mad Dogs, Dorian Gray). Omid Djalili (Gladiator) will appear as a diamond merchant, Aldobrand, and Martin Trenaman (The Inbetweeners) as the Turnkey. Lorcan Cranitch (Silent Witness, Cracker) and Anthony Ofoegbu (Spooks, The Bill) play Elzevir's fellow smugglers, Meech and Loder.*

*The show is directed by Andy de Emmony (The Bletchley Circle) and produced by Dan McCulloch (Endeavour).*

**N.B.** A reminder that DVDs of BBC's 1984 *Moonfleet* can be purchased for £8 + p&p from **George Robson**. Any member wanting a copy, please contact me and I will pass the request on to George.

**N.B.** There was a useful article in the *North East Journal* on 23<sup>rd</sup> December, by **David Whetstone**, relating to the above programme.

## SMUGGLERS' BAY



After my article in Journal No. 13 (July 2012), I decided to continue researching the BBC TV series *Smugglers' Bay*. After some probing, I became aware of an autobiography written by Frazer Hines in 1996, wittily entitled *Films, Farms and Fillies*. A second autobiography, published thirteen years' later, named *Hines Sight* (what humour), proved to be a re-working of the previous effort.

The reason for this pursuit? Frazer's involvement in one film, or TV serial, in particular: the 1964 *Smugglers' Bay* (really *Moonfleet*). The section in his book[s] dealing with the filming makes interesting reading.

When he returned from Hamburg in 1964, he was invited to play the part of John Trenchard in *Moonfleet*. Due to the BBC also having a show on called *Moonstrike* – about a Lysander air crew working with the French resistance – the name was changed to *Smugglers' Bay*. “It was set in the seventeenth [sic] century, so I had long hair with a P J Proby bow at the back, breeches, a waist coat, frock coat and buckle shoes.” Filming was to commence at Ealing Studios and then go to a beautiful spot at Lulworth Cove in Dorset.

Four days before filming was to start, Fraser put his right hand through a pane of glass in a friend's kitchen door. “There was blood everywhere.... My middle finger was hanging by a strip of skin.... A doctor put me back together again. He stitched my three fingers up. He fed my middle finger back onto the bone and stitched round it. He had saved my finger, but it now had three huge bandages, great finger stalls like I had a bunch of bananas for a hand.”

Inevitably, when he turned up for his first day's shooting, the crew had a minor crisis to deal with. Painting over the gleaming white bandages was a non-starter as there might be toxins in the paint that could infect the bloodstream. A prop man came up with the best idea – he had a ‘packet’ in his pocket; so Fraser played his first scenes with three prophylactics on his fingers.

Decorum prevailed eventually, when the wardrobe mistress cut the fingers of some heavy duty gloves and taped them over Fraser's hand. So, if you ever manage to track down a recording of *Smugglers' Bay*, watch the scene in the crypt with additional interest. The actor spent two days carrying a lantern, exploring the graves and coffins. “The character became left handed of necessity, and the offending right hand was held down out of sight at his side.”



Playing John Trenchard in *Smugglers' Bay* for the BBC, 1964; outside the thick fingers on my right hand!

**Ray Ion**

## FALKNER, THE GREAT WAR AND GEORGE V

As we approach the centenary of the outbreak of the Great War, articles relating to JMF's involvement in the conflict may appear in the next few **Journals**.

On 16<sup>th</sup> December 1915, Falkner was elected to the chairmanship of Armstrong Whitworth – a huge task, coming as it did in the midst of the greatest conflict in history. One of his roles was to welcome and host visits of VIPs. He had already escorted Prime Minister Asquith, and his daughter Violet, around Elswick that April. Before the year was out, it was Lloyd George's turn, as Minister of Munitions, to inspect the firm's contribution to the war.



**JMF (2<sup>nd</sup> left) and George V (3<sup>rd</sup> left)  
(at the Walker Naval Yard) \***

Royal visits were frequently paid during the war to important factories and workshops at munitions centres, as well as to shipbuilding yards, hospitals and other institutions engaged in war-work. George V's inspections of provincial industrial establishments



included visits to Glasgow and the Clyde (May 1915), Coventry and Birmingham (July 1915), Leeds and Sheffield (Sept. 1915), Nottingham (Dec. 1916), Liverpool, Manchester, Barrow and Gretna (May 1917), Newcastle-on-Tyne, Hull and Rosyth (June 1917), Glasgow for a third time (Sept. 1917), Bristol for a second time (Nov. 1917), Bradford, Huddersfield and Leeds (May 1918).

During the mid-June 1917 visit, The King and Queen visited five shipyards on the Tyne and had lunch at Armstrong's Walker Naval Yard. JMF had also shown the royal couple around the Openshaw works in Manchester a month before.

Perhaps, typically, of the three letters I have copies of in our Society archives for mid-June, none relate to such a momentous visit. Rather they detail a request from Edward Arnold, the publisher, to put *Moonfleet* in their cheap novel series (with a royalty of 1d. in the shilling) and acceptance by JMF; a long letter from JMF to his god-daughter, Rosemary Noble, describing the links between the Svastika, Homer and Troy, as well as St. John's Eve, [bon]fires and paganism; and, finally, another long letter from JMF to his friend Canon Wordsworth, totally on the subject of rare books.

(\* thanks to **Roger Norris** for finding the photo/film)

## ELSWICK PRESENTATION TO NEWCASTLE WAR HOSPITAL



A portable X-ray apparatus, subscribed for by the workmen of Elswick and Scotswood, was formally handed over to the Northumberland War Hospital\* by John Meade Falkner, as chairman of the directors of Messrs Armstrong, Whitworth, and Co. The ceremony took place in the hospital's theatre, which was crowded with wounded soldiers. Thanks to the generosity of JMF, the soldiers were liberally supplied with tobacco and cigarettes, while each man also received a packet of chocolate.

Falkner then gave a speech. Extracts from a local newspaper's report are printed below:

*The heart must be very cold which did not feel moved by the spectacle which was before their eyes that night. He thought people dwelt too much on the horrors of war, which were sufficiently obvious; they dwelt too much on the dark side; they dwelt, perhaps, too much on the terrible loss of life and the terrible material loss. He*

*could not help thinking that war on the scale of the present conflict probably did more to purify and ennoble than anything else in the world could do. The war had its good as well as its evil points. It taught them that there were objects worth more than wealth, pleasure, and their work, and probably the most inspiring feature was the millions of men who have come forward to sacrifice their lives for an ideal – for their country. They raised their hats to the brave fellows who sat in front of them that night. The war also preached the idea of unity, and he did not think anything except war could have made the feeling of unity which appeared to him to be in the air at present. The political unity, he hoped, would last long; the feeling of industrial unity, in which we was especially interested – the feeling of unity between employers and employed – he hoped it would long endure. It was difficult to believe that splendid feeling of unity would finish with the victorious termination of this war.*

One wonders what the audience made of some of his remarks.

\* Built as the Newcastle Borough Lunatic Asylum in 1869, the hospital served as The Northumberland No. 1 War Hospital between 1914 and 1921. It reverted to its role as a lunatic asylum in 1921, to become a General Hospital in 1948. It was nearly all demolished in 1996.

(Thanks are due to **Ray Ion**, for unearthing the article.)

## JOURNAL NO. 15 – JULY 2014

Once again, I am sending out a request for articles for the forthcoming *Journal*. I am delighted to say I already have Ken Warren's talk at Burford - *Belief, Work and War: some of the puzzles in the life of John Meade Falkner* – transcribed and 'put to bed'. I am promised one on the Adye family – JMF's in-laws; and am working with Ray Ion on another on JMF as a minor landowner in Wiltshire, provisionally entitled *Falkner's Farm*. I am also expecting one more. I would like to think we could add two additional ones to this total of four. Pens or keyboards at the ready, please.

## SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE

We have now sold 200 copies of the original print run of 300 of *The Collected Poems*. I am now slashing the price from **£15 to £10** – a veritable bargain. (p&p still £2.00). I also have just three copies left of *The Three Priorities* @ **£7.50** (free postage). Contact me first about the latter, to check I still have any. First come, first served.

## CROSSWORD ALSO ATTACHED

Thanks to George Robson's skills again, a second crossword has been compiled for your delectation. Do have a go at it. First correct completion returned to me will earn the sender a free copy of *The Collected Poems*.

Best Wishes for 2014,

**Kenneth Hillier**

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