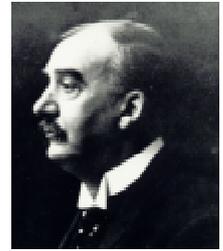


The John Meade Falkner Society

Founded 8th May 1999

Newsletter No. 55

22 July 2017



2017 SUBSCRIPTIONS AND MEMBERSHIP

Only three members have still not paid this year's subs; I am most grateful to all the others for paying up since the last Newsletter. A reminder it is only £10.

DORSET WEEKEND: 7th – 9th JULY

I enjoyed another weekend with Society members. This time there were only six of us, and I hope more of you are able to come to Burford in 2019.

The Wessex Royale Hotel had been spruced up since our last visit, although the car parking was as difficult as ever. Friday evening was spent reminiscing and enjoying a meal at the hotel. Poor George W's plane was delayed from Belfast and he did not get to Dorchester until after 11p.m.

On Saturday, we drove to Stinsford to view Thomas Hardy's grave (do not get George R. to tell you the story about Hardy's heart and the cat) and the church.



Outside Old Fleet Church

We all then went round to No.8 West Walks, where we were met by Melanie Davy, a Society member, and her husband, and kindly given refreshments.



West Walks

We also wandered along the pathway made famous in Under the Greenwood Tree, before driving to Hardy's birthplace in Upper Bockhampton. The walk through the woods to the wonderfully atmospheric cottage, now run by the National Trust was very rewarding.

Then it was back to the cars for the short drive to the other side of Dorchester. The walk up to the ramparts of Maiden Castle perhaps showed up our ages, but it was worth it for the fantastic view at the top.

We took a circuitous route to Fleet, as the main road to Weymouth had very heavy traffic. Michael's map-reading skills were second to none. Fleet Church is, of course, one of our 'pilgrimage' sites and it was a pleasure to see it being so looked after. There was even a sheet on one of the walls detailing our Society. We also walked the short distance to the edge of the lagoon – all in wonderfully warm weather.

Some revisited the newer Fleet Church, while others returned to Dorchester.

The evening was again spent at the Hotel, where we were able to peruse some of the archives of the Society.

On Sunday, the three intrepid North-easterners drove to Weymouth to see the Falkner home, now renamed 'The Clipper' and journeyed to Fleet and the Moonfleet Manor Hotel; whilst the other three either visited Salisbury or Marlborough or looked round Dorchester.



The Falkner family home in Weymouth

PALACE GREEN DISCOVERY

The Society's July 2014 Newsletter (number 46) highlighted the development of Durham University's library which saw the disappearance of the last remaining vestige of open space to the north of The Divinity House, JMF's home on Palace Green from 1899 until his death in 1932, and which had formed part of his gardens. The development is in the form of a patio extension to the library's coffee shop.

During construction, the remains of 28 individuals were uncovered in two separate burial pits. They have been identified as Scottish soldiers who had faced one terrible ordeal after another before meeting their death within the curtilage of Durham cathedral.

In 1650 men were conscripted into a Scottish army to fight the English at Dunbar. The disciplined English, led by Oliver Cromwell, made short work of the Scottish force and of those who survived the slaughter 4,000 were taken prisoner and herded together to be marched south to Durham in what would be their second ordeal. Around 1,000 died on the way from hunger, exhaustion and dysentery.

The remaining 3,000 were imprisoned in Durham's cathedral and the adjacent castle with around 1,700 of them soon dying in the abject conditions. Of these the remains of 28 were uncovered during the work that had taken place in the summer of 2013.

The survivors from these ordeals had more misery to come. They were loaded on board the ship *Unity* and suffered the six-week perilous journey to the New England regions of America to be sold as seven-year indenture servants.



On May 12th (2017), a public lecture at the Palace Green University Library was delivered by Dr. Pam Green from the University's Archaeology Department entitled *Lost Lives, New Voices*. This was part of a day of remembrance of the Scottish soldiers imprisoned at Durham and during which a commemorative plaque was unveiled. The stone from the plaque had been hewn from a quarry at the site of the Battle of Dunbar, linking the two locations. The wording reads:

In memory of the Scottish soldiers captured at the Battle of Dunbar and imprisoned in Durham and who died and were buried here in the autumn of 1650.

It is intended that the excavated remains will be reburied towards the end of 2017 at Elvet Hill Road Cemetery in Durham City, less than a mile from where they were discovered.

Unaware that 28 corpses lay under his home, we might wonder what JMF would have made of all this!

OVER THE BRIDGES: The Church and Community Magazine for Upper Coquetdale

In their June 2017 issue, the magazine had this article:

The Local 'Moonfleet' Connection

'Over the Bridges' is grateful to reader and historian **George Robson**, who has donated to us a fascinating cache of papers relating to the Noble and Armstrong families and their connections with Craggside, Lorbottle Hall and other Northumbrian country houses. George drew my attention to John Meade Falkner (1858-1932), recruited as tutor for Sir Andrew Noble's son John and serving in that capacity for several years with the family's other children, who became a family friend and work colleague of Sir Andrew Noble. Many of you will have seen the BBC's most recent serialisation in 2013 of John Meade Falkner's famous novel 'Moonfleet', an exciting tale of adventure and smuggling starring Ray Winstone, Sophie Cookson and Aneurin Barnard. Falkner was to become the author of three novels, various travel guides and poems, and wrote a charming poem, 'Farewell to Lorbottle Hall', on the occasion of his last stay there with the Noble family in 1883. When Falkner's tutoring role ended, he joined Sir Andrew Noble at Armstrong's Elswick works as his private secretary, rising swiftly through the company's ranks to become Company Secretary and Director. Falkner's command of foreign languages, which allowed him to negotiate for the company directly with foreign governments as well as follow military reports from around the world, made him an invaluable member of the firm; so much so that, in 1915, at the height of WWI, he was elected Chairman of the Board of Armstrong Whitworth Co., an unusual position for a novelist, poet and aesthete, in a world-class armaments company that was a major player in Britain's war effort. But Falkner held this post until 1920 and remained a Director until finally retiring in 1926. He lived at The Divinity House on Durham City's lovely Palace Green (now the Music School) and on his retirement served as Librarian of the Durham Cathedral library. You can read more about Falkner in '*John Meade Falkner 1858-1932: A Paradoxical Life*', by Kenneth Warren (published by The Edwin Mellen Press Ltd., 1995). The John Meade Falkner Society, devoted to studying his life and work, meets annually and publishes an annual Journal. In 2015 the JMF Society visited the north east and called at Lorbottle Hall, presenting a framed copy of 'Farewell to Lorbottle Hall' to the current owners, Mr. & Mrs. Hoskins.

Louise Kirkwood

(Thank you, George, for spreading the word!)

Best Wishes,
Kenneth Hillier

nebuly@hotmail.co.uk

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