

# The John Meade Falkner Society

Founded 8th May 1999



Newsletter No. 64

22 July 2020

## 2020 SUBSCRIPTIONS

Thank you to all who have already paid their 2020 Sub. I am particularly grateful to those of you have added an 'extra' amount, some substantial. A gentle reminder to those who have not yet renewed, just **six** now, (**only £10/\$15/€15** – unchanged since 2012), by cash, cheque, BACS or Paypal. I would greatly appreciate prompt payment. Once I get the Sub, I will send the Journal.

## JOHN WHITELEY

Many of you will have read of the death of Jon Whiteley on 16 May 2020. Seven years earlier, Jon was kind enough to accept an invitation to lunch when a few of our members visited Oxford. Inevitably, we wanted to talk about the filming of *Moonfleet* when, aged ten, he played the role of John Mohune (aka John Trenchard, one of the many changes from book to film)



Jon Whiteley, (1<sup>st</sup> left) with Society members, at lunch in the East Gate Hotel, Oxford 13 July 2013

He was born on 19 February 1945 in Monymusk, Scotland and won first prize for verse-speaking at the Aberdeen Music Festival when he was only six. This led to a film debut in 1952 with the suspense *Hunted*, co-starring as a young runaway abducted and subsequently befriended by fugitive Dirk Bogarde. His performance as Harry in his second film *The Kidnappers* (1953) so enthused critics that he was awarded an honorary miniature "Juvenile Oscar" at the Academy Awards ceremony of 1954.



He played John Mohune in the Fritz Lang 'version' of *Moonfleet* in 1955 opposite Stewart Granger (one of several cast with no reference to the book!).

He appeared in only two more films

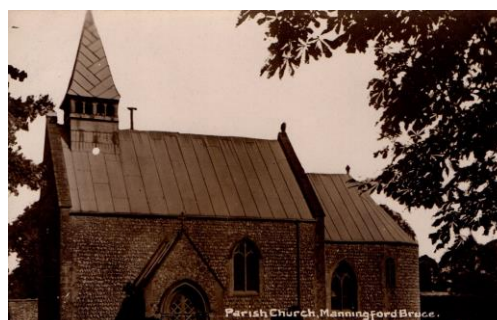
– *The Spanish Gardener*, again with Dirk Bogarde, and *The Weapon* (both in 1956); and single episodes on television with *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1957) and *Jericho* (1966). It is pleasing that he named *Moonfleet* as his favourite out of the five movies he acted in.

However, he was better known as a highly respected art historian at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, where he became Assistant Keeper in the Department of Western Art. He wrote his doctorate on the revival of painting of themes inspired by antiquity in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century France and later catalogued the museum's French drawings. He was the author, or co-author, on artists such as Claud Lorrain, Puvis de Chavannes and Ingres and put together handbooks such as *Oxford and the PreRaphaelites*. He was married to the art historian Linda Whiteley and they had two children. In May 2009, he was made a chevalier of the French Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

Jon can be seen guiding the viewer around the museum's collection of still life in the BBC documentary *Apples, Pears and Paint* (5 January 2014). At our meeting in 2013, I presented him with a cinema Lobby Card of *Moonfleet* and he kindly signed one or two of mine.

## TWO ORIGINAL POSTCARDS

I regularly check EBay and other online sources for anything related to Meade Falkner and, quite often, postcards come up for sale. This year I was able to purchase the two below – an atmospheric colour one of the lane leading down to Fleet Old Church; and one of the church where he was christened and where several Falkners lie in the churchyard.



## DURHAM WEEKEND JULY 2021

Our intrepid members based in the North-East are hoping to host the biennial weekend in 2021 based in Durham. I have already had discussions with them as to a possible time-table. The actual weekend has not yet been decided upon and, of course, everything depends on the situation with regards to this wretched pandemic. Below is a first stab at an itinerary.

### Friday

Arrive and check in.

Walk along river bank up to Abbey View (and perhaps a visit to No. 42 where JMF lodged). Return to hotel via city centre. Then socialising/eat in the bar. View any material members might bring.

### Saturday

Look around the Cathedral and the Cathedral Library with, hopefully, JMF material on view. Then, after refreshments in the Cathedral, a conducted tour of *The Divinity House*.

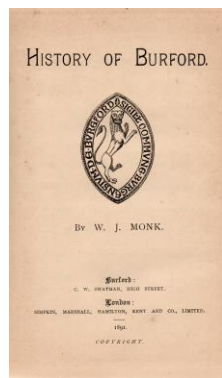
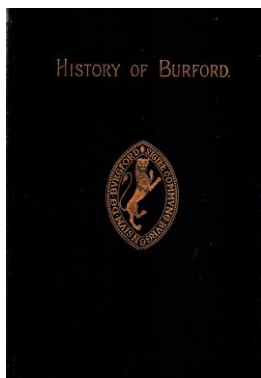
Late afternoon - free time to look around city centre (outdoor and indoor markets)

Evening - a meal together either at the hotel or in a restaurant.

### Sunday

Pack up at the hotel and then visit to Finchale Abbey. There is a small cafe there. Members then to disperse from the Abbey to their various destinations.

## MONK'S HISTORY OF BURFORD



I have been looking, admittedly rather half-heartedly, for a copy of W. J. Monk's 1891 *History of Burford* and finally found one for a decent price. It is useful, not only for the chapters on the general history of the town but also on its comments on the church prior to the Meade Falkner/Noble gifts and additions. He is mainly prosaic in approach but occasionally rises (?) to some 'purple passages: *Year after year the Tower has seen man after man, woman after woman, child after child borne to their long rest to the sound of the purling Windrush and its own tolling bell; and still to-day, as in old Norman times, the words which tell of life eternal are said within its walls, and still the people are gathered to their fathers in the quiet Churchyard, and still the little Windrush hurries to join its Father Thames.*

Since then, Mary Sturge Gretton (*Burford Past and Present*, 1929/1945) and, more importantly, our Society members, Raymond and Joan Moody with their excellent books and booklets, have updated the story of this delightful town which Meade Falkner loved, gave so much to and where he is buried by his younger brother, William, and his wife Evelyn.

## ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

We will not know exactly when Meade Falkner decided to retire as Chairman of Armstrong, Whitworth. In May 1920, he celebrated his 62<sup>nd</sup> birthday. Never in robust health (and never shy of telling friends this), throughout that February he had been in Bath *trying some electric arm-baths to see if I could do anything for my neuritis. But they have been quite unsuccessful, and, unfortunately, have had a very nasty effect upon my heart which causes me great discomfort.* Short visits to Downside Abbey, where he *spent many hours in their library...where they have valuable liturgical books, both printed and in manuscript; and Oxford, spending the whole day in the Bodleian, and going through manuscript Processionals;* followed by longer stays in Rome (he was there from mid-March and, possibly, for a full year), where he spent mornings with *the indescribable delight of the Manuscript Room in the Vatican*, where he was comparing the early Roman Manuals with the Manuals of the Sarum and York Uses. A letter to Saxton Noble, dated 19 November, sent from Rome, made it clear of his intent to resign: *I write to you in continuation of a private letter which I wrote to you before I left England about my wish to be relieved of the Chairmanship...* He now intimated that, once the Board accepted his offer, *I suppose I should write an official letter of resignation...*

On 18 November 1920, a meeting of the Board accepted his resignation with effect from 31 December. Meade Falkner had twelve more years to live – mostly 'in the past'. He wrote to Rosemary Noble in June 1921: *Everything seems changed since the War, and most of the pleasure I get is in memories of the past.*

Later that year, in October, he wrote to his friend Canon Wordsworth: *When I freed myself from the chairmanship of what was certainly the largest commercial undertaking in England and possibly elsewhere, I looked forward to limitless leisure but in fact I seem to have less leisure than ever. That is due, no doubt, to my 'wasting' more time on my own pursuits.* He then spent a further nine pages discussing medieval Missals etc.! One wonders what Evelyn's retirement hopes had been?

## PAST JOURNALS

can be read online apart from last year's and Nos 1-7. These early ones were on the old-fashioned 'floppy' discs, which can't be used on the newer computers and I really don't want to have to type them out again. Most years can be had from me at **£1.00 each plus postage**. I have **no** spare copies of Nos. **1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 10**; and **very few** of Nos. **2, 9, 11, 12, 13 and 19**. I much prefer the actual booklets to reading them online.

## MY E-MAIL ADDRESS CHANGE

For the last few months, I have been experiencing difficulties with my emails. On several occasions, people have replied to my messages and they have not been getting through to me (these are only the ones I 'know' about). PLEASE NOTE MY NEW ADDRESS BELOW.

Best Wishes

Kenneth Hillier

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