

The John Meade Falkner Society

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SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

After eleven years, I have had to raise the subscriptions. Rather than having to repeat this in a couple of years' time, I have gone for a 100% increase! This still means it is only £10 – for three Newsletters and a Journal. I do hope this does not mean any loss in membership, but it is the ever increasing cost of postage that forces the decision on me. I am mindful, and extremely grateful, for the 'extras' some of you send. These have been invaluable each year. If you do **NOT** have a **renewal form** with this Newsletter, you are at least a year in hand.

THE JULY WEEKEND AND NEW MEMBERS

It was gratifying to hear from so many of you about your enjoyment of the weekend in Dorchester. I had a very helpful email from Stuart Tyler, of the **Dorset History Centre**, not only thanking me for sending a cheque for £25 for their funds, but giving information about future copying of the JMF material deposited there. We also sent a £25 donation to the **Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society** and had a very nice letter back from the Director, Jon Murden, confirming it would be earmarked for the Museum Library's use. **Mark Forrest** and **Eliza Oxley**, who showed us round the respective collections, deserved our thanks and praise.

In addition, as a result of the weekend, we gained two more members, both living in Falknerian related buildings! **Melanie Davy's** address is 8, West Walks, Dorchester, where the Falkners lived between 1859 and 1870.



No 8, West Walks over 100 Years ago

Dianne Gardner lives in Butter Street, Fleet, in the row that survived the great storm of 1824 and which once contained *Moonfleet's* *Why Not* inn. She kindly ensured the church was open when we visited it in July.

We extend a very warm welcome to both.

All this has certainly encouraged me to plan for a similar jaunt – to Burford and Oxford in 2013.



The Why Not, Fleet

ANNE LOUISE FALKNER

You may remember, in last January's Newsletter, that I referred to **Dr. Pamela Gerrish Nunn**, from Christchurch, New Zealand, and her plans to write about JMF's sister, Annie Falkner. In October, I received a one and a half thousand word article on Annie, followed up by two photographs of her. I am delighted to say it will feature in July's **Journal** and I am most grateful to Pamela for sharing her thoughts with us. She, too, visited the Dorset Museum Library, to view Annie's paintings, and also made contact with **Ken Warren**, who has a drawing by Annie.

THE LOST STRADIVARIUS ON THE SCREEN?

In September, David Perry, the Managing Director of **Perryscope Productions** of Montgomery, Powys, contacted me. He is keen to adapt the book as a screenplay for a feature film. 2012 sees JMF's works come out of copyright, and David wants to produce "a reflective film about the power of music and dark spirituality". I put him in touch with the Society of Authors and told him about the Jeremy Brett 1966 TV production, which was part of the "Mystery and Imagination" series that year. Brett played John Maltravers. It was also produced as a radio play, in Saturday Playhouse in October 1996, with Paul Rhys as Maltravers and Joanna David as Mrs. Temple.

THE FRIENDS OF BURFORD CHURCH

The friends sent me their October Newsletter, which was full of positive news about an institution JMF dearly loved. He could be regarded as a very great Friend, regularly turning up at the then vicar's door with gifts or supporting fabric repairs – always conservation not modernization! Our Society was able to donate £100 a few years ago, when the church was affected by flooding. It is good to see the names of Peter Harris, Fenella Pearson and Penelope Leaf still involved. And we hope to renew our acquaintance with them in 2013.

JMF'S TRAVELLING WRITING BOX

Some of you may remember seeing, and even touching!, the writing box JMF used to take on his travels. I brought it to the Durham meeting in 2009. It featured in the Radio 4 programme "A Box of Paradoxes", produced by member Philip Titcombe. Over the years, the leather covering attached to the wooden outer surface of the box has become very acidic and brittle, leading to severe flaking and, in some areas, actual loss. It is being conserved by Oxfordshire's Museum Resource Centre at Standlake, near Witney. The total cost will be £185 + VAT, and I am hoping to pick it up in mid-February.

CHICKERELL REMEMBERS MOONFLEET

Thanks to eagle-eyed George Robson, we can celebrate Chickerell's homage to a well-loved novel, set in neighbouring Fleet.



Glennie Way leads off the B3157 Chickerell Road, into a housing estate replete with *Moonfleet* connections: you can turn left into *Whynot Way*, then branch left to *Elzivir* (sic) *Close* or right for *Aldobrand Close*. If one continued on *Glennie Way*, one would pass *Trenchard Way* on the right, which leads in turn to *Mohune Way*. Finally, there is a *Maskew Close*, rightly tucked away from the others and down a "dead end".



Whether JMF would have approved of the buildings is quite another matter.

COMPANION INTO DORSET

by Dorothy Gardner (Methuen, 1937)

I wonder how many of you have dipped into this guide book, so redolent of the 1930s? She devotes several pages to the story of *Moonfleet* and then continues: "The owners of Fleet House naturally have every page of *Moonfleet* by heart: it is their own story. Imagine then their exultation when some diggings in the old churchyard disclosed an unexpected passage or underground tunnel. Surely it could not actually be Trenchard's passage; were not that and the stone-bound chamber brilliant inventions of his creator's? Or could he have dreamt of the originals in some moment of supernatural insight? At least the passage must immediately be explored. So one summer's day all the inmates of Fleet House, old and young, almost like a procession of brass Mohuns — they all assembled at the square mouth of a very small hole in the churchyard. A ladder descended into the aperture, but not to the bottom, owing to some protruding root or stone. After three or four rungs the searcher's head must duck and a leap taken backwards into the dark interior. Oh, I know well the whole procedure; was I not the second gallant soul to make the plunge and crouching ankle-deep in muddy water totter some steps along the stone-roofed tunnel? The stone lining was most neatly placed but alas! The passage did not lead many yards underground before it ended in a block of earth, its secrets for ever shut away. Might not we too have reached a cavern of kegs and coffins; who can tell? But be assured the tail of the procession, that least adventurer who crept down slim and small in bare limbs and bathing kit fared best under the dome of mystery."



One hundred and sixteen years ago, probably in his 'digs' at 42, South Street, Durham, JMF composed this poem. Finishing this *Newsletter* in my book-lined study, wondering what man will do to the world in 2012, I take comfort from it!

What matter though my room be small,
Though the red lamp-light looks
On nothing but a papered wall,
And some few rows of books?

For in my hand I hold a key
That opens golden doors,
At whose resistless sesame,
A tide of sunlight pours....

So when the world is all awry,
When life is out of chime,
I take the golden key and fly
To that serener clime...

Best Wishes and a Happy New Year to you all.

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