

The John Meade Falkner Society

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SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

Even I am becoming amazed at the fact that I can keep subscriptions at £5.00 - for the eleventh year. This is thanks to another generous donation of stamps (and not just any old stamps!) by the same person; and to other members giving 'extra'. Only three did not renew last year, so we now number 54 - twenty-four of whom have been members for a decade. If you do **NOT** have a **renewal form** with this Newsletter, you are at least a year in hand.

A NEW PUBLICATION

Kenneth Warren has marked the 200th anniversary of the birth of **William Armstrong** with a full-length biography of that outstanding engineer, who was not only chairman of what was probably the biggest industrial firm in late Victorian Britain, but also creator of the wonderful house and estate of Cragside in Northumberland. It has been published by AuthorHouse in paperback at £8.60 [ISBN: 9781452065281] and is entitled *Armstrong: The Life and Mind of an Armaments Maker*.

Ken's book on JMF - *John Meade Falkner 1858-1932: A Paradoxical Life* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1995) is still the only full length biography

"TEN OF THE BEST"

Edward Wilson kindly sent me a cutting from *The Guardian* for Saturday, 10th July, under the sub-heading "Caves". Linked with *The Odyssey*, *The Fairie Queene*, *A Passage to India* and *Endymion* was *Moonfleet* by J. Meade Falkner (sic). A brief description followed: "*In the village of Moonfleet, John Trenchard joins up with friends who are smugglers. Wounded and on the run from the excisemen, he hides in a sea cave invisible from the land, where "when the wind blows fresh, each roller smites the cliff like a thunder-clap, till even the living rock trembles again"*".

MOONFLEET LIVES ON

This is not the first time I have drawn attention to the theatre company **Angel Exit** and its production of *Moonfleet*. The group of five young thespians (with the ever vital back-up team) have performed a great service for JMF, bringing his most famous novel to hundreds of people who may never have heard of him. Nearly 4,000 watched the show, including over 500 students in Burnley. They hope to have a DVD of the production in the New Year and watching it is one of the ideas for our 'Moonfleet' weekend in July. I know some of our members saw the production - my wife and I thoroughly enjoyed the evening at Buxton in mid October. George Robson and a friend went to the performance in



Washington. Here he is with the five members of the cast after the show. He kindly allowed Henry Douthwaite (right) to peruse his first edition of *Moonfleet*!

Near the end of the tour, I sent a further £100 from Society funds, which paid for the printing costs of their programmes and postcards. We wish all the cast well for the future - they may tackle *Weymouth Sands* by **John Cowper Powys** next.

EX LIBRIS....

Ian Jackson, our member in Berkeley, California, sent me a photocopy of part of the catalogue produced by Bernard Quaritch of Cosmo Alexander Gordon's Library. Although the latter, a great collector of liturgical manuscripts, died in 1965 the major part of his collection of books was only put up for sale in 2010 - after the death of his daughter the previous year. Included was **MISSAL, Use of the Carthusian Order** (Paris, 1541), once in JMF's collection (No. 357 in the third day of the Sotheby's Sale in 1932) and one of possibly only five extant copies. The asking price in 2010 was £2,500.

ANNE LOUISE FALKNER

Dr. Pamela Gerrish Nunn, from Christchurch, New Zealand, is researching JMF's sister Annie, who was no mean artist. One of her paintings was on sale at Abbot and Holder's Gallery in London in 2007 - for £1,750. Starting with the painting that Southampton City Art Gallery owns, Dr. Nunn has already drafted a 2,500 word article on Annie. She is looking for any photographs of Annie or any leads to where her work might be on display, or in private hands. She has searched the Record Offices of both Dorset and Cornwall and has been in correspondence with the V & A and the British Museum, which hold examples of her work. Any help would be gratefully received - I will pass it on to her. I have hopes of an article from her for next year's **Journal**.

PHILIP LARKIN AND JMF

Philip Larkin's love life was sufficiently complicated to leave him plenty of time for reading, and this is a distinct strand of his recently-published *Letters to Monica*.

At Christmas 1959 he wrote to tell her that he was enjoying John Betjeman's recent anthology of Church of England verses, *Altar and Pew*. "I think there are some very pleasant things in *Altar & Pew* - would you credit John Meade Falkner with the skilled anticipation of Betjeman on p.42? Verse 3 & 4 seem to me almost better than Betjeman - and the idea is such a nice one, almost like Hardy - he used to have feelings about the Christian year just like these".

This was Falkner's *After Trinity*, of which Larkin commented to her three years later, "what a lovely poem that is!" And, more controversially, "the only good one in the book, I'm thankful to say, since the book is ungettable". Larkin, however, had a general enthusiasm for Falkner, and marvelled that one colleague, a professor of Botany, had often seen Hardy walking and was about to tour *Moonfleet* country.

Come 1973, Larkin had included the poem in his anthology of twentieth-century English verse.

(Thanks to Christopher Hawtree for the above piece)

JMF AND ITALY

I had a letter from **Franco Esposito-Soekardi**, our enthusiastic Italian member, in mid August. He was delighted to have tracked down Ken Warren's biography of JMF - through an international library loan from Germany! He is also slowly forging ahead with the translation of *Moonfleet*, which he hopes one day to publish through his publishing house *fuorilinea*.

He has the imaginative idea of holding a Society meeting in Italy, which he would love to organise and make it the occasion when the first ever full translation of *Moonfleet* in Italian was presented. What do you all think?

Franco was delighted to receive the copy of the Noble family (and JMF!) cricket team with a previous Newsletter being an avid cricket lover himself - "who also happens to be a former player of the Roman Cricket Club (playing in the Italian 1st division) and a former international umpire". The Society may be small, but what talent lurks therein.

JMF JOURNAL 2011

I have already got in the pipeline two articles for next summer's **Journal**. **Lorbottle Hall** in Northumberland was the subject of a poem written by JMF in the autumn of 1885, entitled *Old Memories Prosit!* The story of the Hall and its JMF's links will now feature in a full length, illustrated article.

Society members who were at our last meeting in Durham will remember viewing in the cathedral Library the collection of medals awarded to JMF by Japan, Turkey and the Pope. An illustrated article will provide the background to this impressive set.

Another topic featured may well be the various obituaries published in local and national newspapers after JMF's death. It is interesting to note what his contemporaries felt were his main achievements.

If Dr Nunn's article materialises for us, then we are on our way to another bumper edition! However, I am still keen to receive further articles from any other Society members or from their acquaintances.

SOCIETY MEETING IN JULY 2011

Members will remember from the last Newsletter that there are plans to hold our next meeting in the Fleet-Dorchester area over the weekend of **8th/9th July**. We have reached the stage where I need to have an idea of how many members (and spouses) are thinking of coming along. Once I have a general idea of numbers, I can enquire about hotels (moderate prices!) in the area. It would be helpful to have a room where we could view DVDs, for instance (the Angel Exit performance; the BBC version of February-March 1984; and even extracts from the Fritz Lang 1955 movie). I will also bring along my collection of film posters and other *Moonfleet* memorabilia, including the many editions of the book.

The timetable will probably include a visit to the Museum in Dorchester, to see the small Falkner display, and, of course, time at Fleet Old Church. For the braver, a brisk stroll along Chesil Beach or a look over the cliffs may well be on the cards.

So, please let me know if you are intending to come. It doesn't commit you - I will need that by the May Newsletter - but it means I can send out further information to relevant members.

FOUR MEN IN THE WILDS

Recent pictures on the national news of Rothbury under several inches of snow, reminded me of a fulfilling couple of days spent in rural Northumberland. On Saturday, 30th October - in glorious autumnal sunshine - I met up with three other intrepid JMF Society members in the car park next to the Ridley Arms, just off the A1. Roger Norris, George Robson and Ray Ion combined their local knowledge and enthusiasm to give me a fascinating tour of JMF (and Noble and Cochrane families') haunts. George drove us to Rothbury, where we wandered round the graves of the Armstrong and Adye families (JMF married Evelyn Adye) before we enjoyed a refreshment pit stop.

From then on it was pell mell! We took in Cartington and Lorbottle (at least its front gates), Wooperton and Chillingham - both the lovely little church and the rather austere castle - to end up at Old Bewick Church. There we visited the Cochrane graves and wondered at the marvellous little secluded church.

For a southerner, living in the Midlands, the whole trip was an eye-opener. I could understand JMF - surely on occasions pining for Dorset - soaking up the wonderful scenery around, for instance, Lorbottle. The following morning, I joined George at Finchale Priory. Even the proximity of a hard-standing caravan site did not mar the atmosphere around one of JMF's favourite religious houses. There are one or two photographs of him, clad in his usual Homburg, walking around the ruins. I sat in the same position as he did while George took another picture, some 80 years or so later. I will not burden your eyes with a copy in this Newsletter!

I do hope 2011 proves a satisfying year for you all - one expects pockets will have to be that much deeper for much of it. The July meeting should cheer some of us up.

Best wishes

Kenneth Hillier

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