

The John Meade Falkner Society

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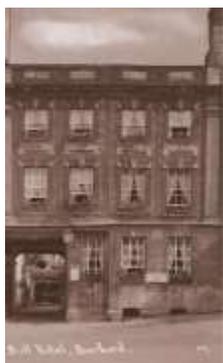
22 July 2013



BURFORD-OXFORD WEEKEND

Friday 12th – Sunday 14th July

On the hottest weekend end of the year, so far, a small group of intrepid Society members decamped in the lovely Cotswold town of Burford. Our main base was to be the *Bull at Burford*, where JMF stayed on several occasions. Alas, the billiard room had been converted into a luxury bedroom.



The Bull's Head
between the Wars



The Bull at Burford
in July 2013

We met up, as planned, in Burford churchyard. Once again poor Evelyn's "slab" was covered in lichen and turf – soon to be cleared. The evening was spent renewing old friendships and starting new ones.



(l to r): George Woodman; Kenneth Hillier; Roger Norris;
Robin Davies; Celia Grover; George Robson; Ray Ion.

Saturday was a scorcher and Oxford was not really the place to be, being crammed with foreign teenagers who appeared to hunt in packs. We used the eminently sensible Park & Ride from the north-west and arrived punctually for our meeting at the Bodleian with Chris Fletcher (Keeper of Special Collections) and Larisa Roberts (Special Collections Support Librarian). After a truly atmospheric tour of the famous Duke Humphrey's Library (Silence, please!) we decamped to the Clarendon building to view the small, but interesting, collection of JMF material. This included the letters from JMF to Canon Christopher Wordsworth and JMF's topographical Notes for his forays in Oxfordshire and Berkshire.



Ray Ion peruses the *Topographical Notes*

We owe thanks to the two curators for giving up their Saturday morning to show us around. The Society gave that section of the Bodleian a cheque for £100 towards future purchases. Another short spell in the heat, dodging cameras and mobile phones, led us to the *East Gate Hotel*. Here we had an excellent lunch, made all the more memorable by the presence of Jon Whiteley – erstwhile child star of Fritz Lang's 1955 *Moonfleet*, but now a much-respected Senior Assistant Keeper in the Department of Western Art, at the Ashmolean Museum. I do hope he enjoyed our company as much as we did his! Jon was presented with an original lobby card of the film, a DVD of the BBC's version of *Moonfleet*, and a photograph of South Street, Durham, where the novel was composed. He has promised me an article for next year's *Journal*, once he retires at the end of the year. I am hopeful that he will join the Society, too.



Jon Whiteley is second left.

Then it was back out into the heat and off to Hertford College. Here, a very helpful porter, David, directed us to the chapel. This had been described by Falkner in 1894 as "the mean little chapel". However, it was soon established that the present building was constructed in 1908. One member with eagle eyes, spotted JMF's name plate (with his friend's Charles Lynam below) on one of the Stalls.





Hertford College

JMF commented that Hertford had taken “*an honoured position among the older colleges, but the buildings unfortunately possess nothing of the slightest interest*”. Having looked around the quadrangle and visited the Dining Hall, we were minded to regard this as unfair.

Then, wilting in the heat, we made the return journey to the Park & Ride and Burford.

The Society has been a “Friend” of Burford Church (and *vice versa*) for some years. It was, therefore, apposite that our evening talk should be in the Guild or Lady Chapel, where the Nebuly Coat was emblazoned both in stone and stained glass.

Ken Warren gave a talk on “Belief, work and war: some paradoxes in the life of John Meade Falkner”. His thoughtful insights were much appreciated and occasioned several questions. The projector, by chance, beamed a portrait of JMF on to the front of Ken’s lectern throughout! A short PowerPoint presentation followed – to suggest ideas for a *Gazetteer*. Our next project!

Michael Daniel, who had been so helpful in arranging the East Gate and Hertford College sections, now distributed one of his lovely cards (25 copies only printed on his *Atlantis Press*), with JMF’s poem *Second Ballade of Burford*. It was greatly appreciated by all; as were the refreshments kindly provided by **Fenella** and **Peter**, of the Friends. Again, a cheque for £100 was handed over on behalf of the Society and those present also gave their own donations.

Then, for some of us, it was back to the *Bull* for another bar meal and more erudite gossip.

Sunday dawned bright and hot. A group of us travelled to **Minster Lovell** to explore the lovely little church and the ruins of the Lovell family Hall. The river Windrush looked remarkably tempting, but it was already populated by several ball-chasing dogs.



Minster Lovell Hall and Church

The short walk back down the village to the *Swan* meant that we were all refreshed when we finally said our goodbyes.

All in all, an excellent weekend, marred only by an unfortunate accident to **George Woodman** who, we hope, is on the way to a full recovery. We were all grateful to **George Robson** for looking after his first-namesake throughout Saturday.

It was agreed that the sixth meeting, in 2015, would be held in the North-East; probably based around Newcastle rather than Durham. I do hope some of you unable to come to Burford will be able to join us – a gathering of fun and friendship. (P.S. thanks to **Ray** and **Michael** for some of the photos)

Second Ballade of Burford

Michael Daniell kindly handed on to me the extra copies of his special printing of this JMF poem. Only 25 copies have been printed – a collector’s piece. If you want one, please send a 50p stamp (in UK) and I will pass it on to you.

Bristol Old Vic Theatre School

Ray Ion passed on information about the **Bristol Old Vic Theatre School** production of *Moonfleet* – touring (only) the West Country. It appears to have had very good reviews. All grist for the publicity mill.

Book of Hours

Ray also picked up that at Christie’s Valuable Printed Books and Manuscripts on 12th June, a Book of Hours, Use of Sarum, in Latin, Illuminated Manuscript on Vellum was up for sale at the estimate price of £4,000-£600. In fact, it made **£8,125**.

It was once owned by JMF and was sold at Sotheby’s, 12-14 December 1932, lot 211; being bought by H.R. Creswick (the Librarian of the Bodleian) for **£14**. This time it was sold by the Nevada Museum of Art.

Falkner’s Farm

Thanks to a discussion about Falkner’s Farm - a small holding near JMF’s birthplace in Wiltshire – between the group at Burford, we have been able to build on **Ray Ion’s** initial findings on the Internet. **Celia Grover** went home, consulted her ‘archives’ and has kindly send me the original Sale Catalogue from 1976. I feel an article coming on for the 2014 July **Journal**.

Element Pictures’ Moonfleet coming soon

“An epic 18th century sea-faring adventure - commissioned by Sky 1 HD - starring Ray Winstone as a smuggler and the hunt for a lost diamond will start filming in locations in Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow this June and July. *Moonfleet*, in association with Element Pictures, will take in such locations as Howth, Drimnagh Castle, parts of central Dublin, including the Kings Inns and Celbridge - with Wicklow’s Silver Strand confirmed as ‘Moonfleet Bay’ for the story’s sea-faring smugglers.”

The series, produced by Company Pictures, will consist of two 60 minute episodes and started filming on Monday 17th June for airing on Sky 1 HD later this year.

I will do a round-robin email when I know the screen dates.

Linked to **January’s Newsletter** will be another JMF related **Crossword** courtesy of **George Robson**. A post-Christmas challenge for you all!

Also, there will be more information about the BBC TV 1964 “**Smugglers’ Bay**” version of *Moonfleet*, with Frazer Hines cast as John ‘Trenchard’. Apparently the BBC also had a show on called *Moonstrike*, all about a Lysander air crew working with the French Resistance. Hence the change of name.

Your **Journals** have been posted by normal mail; thank you to all those who recently provided me with their email addresses for sending out the **Newsletters**. I now only have to post three within the UK and one abroad. A great saving for the Society.

Best Wishes,

Kenneth Hillier

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