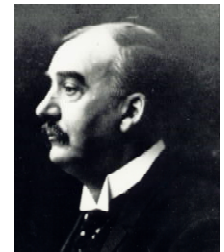


The John Meade Falkner Society

Founded 8th May 1999



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22 July 2021

2021 SUBSCRIPTIONS

I am again very grateful to those of you who added an 'extra' amount, some substantial. The Sub remains unchanged since 2012 - **only £10/\$15/€15.**; paid by **cash, cheque, BACS or Paypal.** **If either of the latter, please email me for further details.** I would greatly appreciate prompt payment by the few still outstanding. I have had an enquiry about Membership from Bosnia & Herzegovina.

NEW MEMBER

I am delighted to welcome a new member – **Roger Gill** from Cradley, Malvern. At my request, he sent me a few lines about himself.

With a career starting out in Iran (until the revolution) and Africa in the oil industry I went on to do many things, including working in the defence industry, currently run the UK end of a small US financial institution and am desperately trying to retire. In my spare time I have been researching some quattrocento frescoes in the Vatican and recently had a chapter on the subject published in a book about the Borgia family. Born in the former workhouse in Weymouth, I went to Weymouth Grammar School so share that with JMF. I now live in Herefordshire and also keep bees.

NEW BOOK



The Society is proud to publicise a book by yet another Member. *The First Shadows of Morning*, by **Timothy Noble** is a thriller recounting the story of a young British businessman sent to the Ukraine to help formulate a strategy for a company near Kyiv, which is owned by a London-based group he works for. He encounters corruption and gangs, and the effects of civil war in the east between government forces and Russian-backed militants, as well as falling in love. **Alexander McCall Smith** writes, *It is an unusual and interesting setting. Timothy Noble has penned a thoroughly satisfying and exciting read.* It is available from bookshops, Amazon and from the publishers.

Austin Macaulay Publishers

CGC-33-01, 25, Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5LQ

Paperback ISBN: 9781528989596 @ £10.95

e.book: ISBN: 9781528989602 @ £3.95

JMF A PAPIST?

I can't remember whether I alerted Members to an article, published by **Emma McVoy** as far back as March 2004, in the *Journal Literature & Theology* Vol. 18, No. 1 pp. 49-61

Entitled '*Really, though secretly a Papist: G. K. Chesterton and J. Meade Falkner's rewritings of the Gothic*', it considers the rewriting of those Gothic conventions which are most symptomatic of Gothic anti-Catholicism in the works of Catholic sympathising authors.

Chesterton, who converted to Roman Catholicism in 1922, "*creates a priest committed to divine rationality and exposes contemporary Protestant 'superstition'*". *J. Meade Falkner's Moonfleet, inspired by Gothic revivalism—a movement in many respects antithetical to the sentiments of the Gothic novel—rewrites the relations between father and son, past and present, individual and community*".

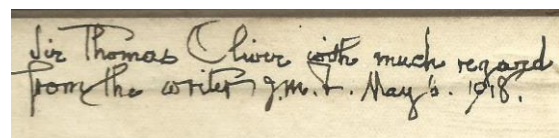
Not an easy read, but thought-provoking and worth the effort. <https://academic.oup.com/litthe/article-abstract/18/1/49/938038>

To purchase short term access, one can create an Oxford Academic account.

PUBLICATION OF JMF'S LETTERS

This is a project I want to address over the next couple of years. We have those which were written to **Edward Stone** (his friend from Dorchester) and **Rosemary Noble** (his god-daughter). Those to **Christopher Wordsworth** were kindly shown to us when we visited the Bodleian a few years back. There are one or two odd letters we know about as well as a large cache sent to **John Noble**. I will be contacting the various holders/owners of these letters to ask if they would be willing to have them copied. There are also the letters to **Lord Rendel** in Newcastle, but most of them deal with rather dry matters to do with Armstrongs at Elswick.

I have already had the offer from one member of help with editing and may well be needing more.



LE DIAMONT DE BARBENOIRE

John Meade Falkner's novels have been translated into several of the major western European languages in recent years but the first foreign translation, and a very good one, is *Moonfleet* in French.

Le Diamant De Barbenoire (par) John Meade Falkner was published in the 'Collection Flammarion' in 1952. The colophon at the end, which all French books have, to record their printing history, states that it was printed in October 1952 and granted copyright in the 4th quarter of the year. The very accurate translation is by Denise Meunier and the book has ten full-page illustrations by 'GOOR'. These are accomplished pen sketches, reproduced in monochrome, and show a careful reading and understanding of the text on the part of the artist. There is also a full page map, crucial for potentially puzzled French readers, showing the position of Dorset and the Isle of Wight relative to the coast of Normandy, and a colour-printed dust wrapper depicting the rescue of John Trenchard by Elzevir Block.

The scenes depicted are: Moonfleet Churchyard, John in the Crypt, Maskew and Mr. Glennie, the Auction, the Death of Maskew, the Sea-cave, Grace and John, the Well, John climbs in to Aldobrand's house, John with Grace and their Children.

Gaston Goor (1902-1977) made no secret of being a gay man, though this is not reflected in his Moonfleet illustrations which add considerably to the appeal of the edition. However, much of his other art could not have been exhibited publicly in this country in his lifetime, though the French were less inhibited. Personally, I prefer his drawings to those in other illustrated 'Moonfleets', and particularly the gloomy images in the Folio Society reprint of 2010. I bought my copy of the Flammarion edition direct from France from a seller whose printed packing note states that he has enclosed a breath of Breton sea air in the parcel! Evidently, Ernest Flammarion struggled somewhat in rendering *Moonfleet* into French, and *Flotte de Lune* or similar would probably have been less commercially appealing than 'Blackbeard's Diamond'.

To give a flavour of the quality of Denise Meunier's translation here are the verses on David Block's tombstone:

Privé de la vie par une main criminelle,
Poussiere, je suis retourné a la poussiere,
Je compte sur la miséricorde de Dieu
Pour me sauver au jour de Jugement.
Toi aussi, homme cruel,tu seras jugé;
Repens-toi avant qu'il soit trop tard
Ou, sinon, crains une terrible sentence,
Car Dieu ne laissera pas ma mort impunie.

which I think compare well with

Of life bereft (by fell design),
I mingle with my fellow clay.
On God's protection I recline
To save me in the Judgment Day.
There too must you, cruel man, appear,
Repent ere it be all too late;
Or else a dreadful sentence fear,
For God will sure revenge my fate.

though the English rhymes when the French does not!

Barbenoire is a pleasant little hardback in a light yellow canvas binding, though the esparto based paper is of a lower quality than a British Penguin Book of the same period. As the edition is surely out of copyright, I assume we will not be troubled by the gendarmes if we reproduce Goor's sketch of the scene in Moonfleet churchyard which forms the frontispiece to the first foreign translation of one of the works of John Meade Falkner.

John Gretton

HUMPHREY BASKERVILLE

After I published **Charles Nugent's** plea for information about Humphrey Baskerville in the March Newsletter, **Richard Davenport-Hines** kindly send the following:

Humphrey Baskerville was born 1879, educated at Wellington and at Oriel, Oxford (BA 1902; MA 1905). He was ordained deacon 1905 and priest 1908; curate of Wantage 1905-6, of S. John's, East Dulwich 1906-9, & of Chislehurst 1909-10. He was second son of John Baskerville, of Crowsley Park, near Shiplake/ Henley-on-Thames, Oxon (1839-1927). His elder brother Geoffrey (1870-1944) got first-class honours in Modern History at Christ Church Oxon, become a Fellow of Keble, but had to resign his Fellowship in 1914 because he had grown too friendly with male undergraduates. Geoffrey wrote a wonderful book, "English Monks & the Suppression of the Monasteries" (1937), which I enjoyed reading years ago. Humphrey inherited Crowsley on Geoffrey's death in 1944: neither brother married. The family have a not particularly informative entry in Burke's Landed Gentry, 1952 edition.

MOONFLEET NAMES

Some members may recall a few years ago that I was trying to discover which translation of the Psalms was used for Colonel John Mohune's coded message as to the whereabouts of the diamond, as the verses are not from Psalms in the back of the Book of Common Prayer. I am still searching – and will reveal the answer, if I ever find it!

However, on a completely different track (but still with a biblical theme) I stumbled upon a possible connection with two names in *Moonfleet* – which may interest members.

For a Bible Study Group in my Parish, I was researching the reasons why the longer 'ending' of the Lord's Prayer in the Gospel according to Matthew, i.e. "*For thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.*" * does not appear in some translations of the Bible? The simple answer is that those words do not appear in the earliest Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, and most scholars conclude that the words were added a bit later to make the prayer more Liturgical for use in Church worship.

I agree, but still wanted to find out more. So, I started digging and found that in the first few centuries after

Christ, Biblical copyists were not particularly discerning as to when the manuscript they were copying was written. Eventually, after Erasmus had published the first printed Greek Testament in 1516, the text started to become standardized. Then the first people to use the Latin title *Textus Receptus* ("the Received Text") for the Greek New Testament in 1633 were a firm of printers in Leiden in the Netherlands. The names of the printers were: Bonaventura and Abraham Elzevir!

I must confess to being quite excited, as I couldn't believe that this was pure coincidence, and wondered whether this was where JMF got the names for the smugglers' ship and the landlord of the Why Not? The names sprang out of the page of the textual commentary that I was reading and, if I may quote from *Moonfleet*, when John was down the well,

"... but as I moved my eyes downward they were brought up by a mark scratched on a brick, close to the hanging plummet-line.

Now, however lightly a man may glance through a book, yet if his own name, or even only one like it, should be printed on the page, his eyes will instantly be stopped by it; so too, if his name be mentioned by others in their speech, though it should be whispered never so low, his ears will catch it. Thus it was with this mark, for though it was very slight, so that I think not one in a thousand would ever have noticed it at all, yet it stopped my eyes and brought up my thoughts suddenly, because I knew by instinct that it had something to do with me and what I sought." **
And, of course, it was the letter 'Y'!

Now there may be others who have made this discovery previously – and I do apologize if I am going over old ground – but I was inspired to think the JMF used real names of real people to include in his wonderful story!

Rev. Simon Law

(Rector of Pitsea St. Gabriel with Nevendon St. Peter in Basildon, Essex)

* *The Book of Common Prayer: Evening Prayer* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1662) p. 51.

** J. Meade Falkner – *Moonfleet* (Arnold's English Literature Series edition) (London, Edward Arnold, n.d.) pp. 173-4.

THE LOST THE LOST STRADIVARIUS

Strange but true. Falkner once appeared on the cover of TV Times. That is to say, in January 1966 the magazine sported a still of Jeremy Brett in front of a portrait while playing a violin. Of course, years later, he would take to the instrument again – in his celebrated performances as Sherlock Holmes which rival those of Basil Rathbone. As for 1966, Brett appeared at gone ten on Saturday evening of January 29th as Sir John Maltravers in a version of *The Lost Stradivarius* written by Owen Holder and directed by Bill Bain.

The TV Times encapsulated this as "he fills me with such horror – as if his face is the face of wickedness itself".

A point well made, and there is much to be written about paintings as a force in terror: not only Wilde but *The Nebuly Coat*. Why write about this now? Well, after ten

one recent evening, I broached a box of four DVDs, issued by the resourceful firm Network, called *Mystery and Imagination*. I lighted upon a 1970 version of *Sweeney Todd*, but this soon lacked the diverse attractions of the Stephen Sondheim and Tod Slaughter incarnations (especially with those involved in Victorian scenes sporting Seventies haircuts). And so I turned with one eye upon the substantial booklet lodged between the lugs of the plastic box.

And I leapt out a scream to rival any of those upon the barber's chair. What?

I saw two pages about the 1966 television production of *The Lost Stradivarius*. My heart leapt. Had this been waiting all the while in the boxed set? Alas, no. Roughly speaking, the series had sprung from one called Armchair Theatre, produced by ABC television. This firm was about to be taken over by one called Rediffusion, itself swiftly merging with the capital's Thames.

We can only assume that, in these commercial transactions, great assets were junked (just as the BBC thought that it wiser to re-use videotape rather than keep, for example, The Beatles' appearance on Juke Box Jury). The booklet cites Jeremy Brett's own penchant for Evil's manifestations: he told a contemporary interviewer that when a props man painted a cross on his front and set up the black-magic ritual, he was, "for a moment, good and scared". Which had an effect upon viewers, including one in Liverpool, who wrote to the magazine's letters column to say, "I haven't been able to do a thing with my hair since *The Lost Stradivarius*. What a hair-raising, spine chiller. My thanks to Jeremy Brett for a wonderful performance."



And so, three decades after his death, Falkner had an effect upon the beehives which, one suspects, would have startled even as resolute an imagination as his (what did he make of Twenties flappers?). What documentation is there about the rights in that mid-Sixties film? While looking through the Edward Arnold archives, I found a huge correspondence between the Public Trustee and the Hollywood producers of the mid-Fifties Hollywood film of *Moonfleet*.

Could a copy of the film survive somewhere? The firm Network is known for seeking out such things. Even so... Somebody, somewhere could have kept a copy, just as a

listener taped off the radio The Beatles' version of Little Eva's "Keep Your Hands Off My Baby". The quest for a missing videotape could become as much a horror tale as somebody on the trail of Falkner's fugitive fourth novel. Such is the way that mind turns as ten o'clock becomes midnight.

And, with the light of day, the sound of a violin brings a revelation: high time that *The Lost Stradivarius* were filmed again.

Christopher Hawtree

'BY FELL DESIGN'

Like many, I came to JMF through *Moonfleet*. That opening scene of 15 year-old John Trenchard holding the lantern while Ratsey, the sexton, carves the gravestone of 15 year of David Block grabs you for what is going to be a gripping tale. For me the scene had an extra piquancy. I used to cycle past that gravestone on the way to school every morning.



All Saints, Wyke Regis

Well, not the gravestone of David Block, but of William Lewis on which it is based, and not in Moonfleet churchyard but in the churchyard of All Saints, Wyke Regis. That carving of the schooner bearing down on the sloop, as well as the lettering, was worn but readable fifty years ago. Now it is barely decipherable. Fifty years of acidic atmosphere have done far more damage to the Portland stone than the previous 150.



c. 1910 i.e. 111 years ago

I think that this gravestone is worth preserving, not only for JMF fans, but for children, for visitors, for everyone to remind them that smuggling was very much part of the local livelihood two hundred years ago. Before the lockdown I started discussions with the vice chair of All Saints' Parochial Church Council. My idea would be to remove the gravestone and re-erect it within the church. At least there it will be out of the acidic rain that has been causing the damage. Readers of the May Newsletter and the story of the Evelyn Meade Falkner ledger stone will appreciate that the simple task I am aiming to achieve is one worthy of Hercules, for it means engaging with the Church of England Byzantine bureaucracy

At some point I might call for support, not financial, but a bit more than merely moral, perhaps in forms such supporting letters. So, mark down in your diary 22nd April 2022 as a day when it would be appropriate perhaps for some of us to meet in Wyke Regis and give some publicity to our cause. Why that date? It will be the 200th anniversary of the day that William Lewis died, "killed by a shot from the Pigmy schooner. Of life bereft (by fell design)..."

Roger Gill

STOP PRESS

I have just had the Sub come in from our friend in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He is **Zoran Vujačić** and he lives in **Tuzla**. I must admit, I had recourse to the dreaded Wikipedia to find out where Tuzla was. It is the economic, cultural, educational, health and tourist centre of northeast Bosnia. It is home to two universities. It is also the main industrial machine and one of the leading economic strongholds of Bosnia with a wide and varied industrial sector including an expanding service sector thanks to its salt-lake tourism. The city of Tuzla is home to Europe's only salt lake as part of its central park and has more than 350,000 people visiting its shores every year. The history of the city goes back to the 9th century; modern Tuzla dates back to 1510 when it became an important garrison town in the Ottoman Empire.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tuzla is also regarded as one of the most multicultural cities in the country and has managed to keep the pluralist character of the city throughout the Bosnian War and after, with Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats and a small minority of Bosnian Jews residing in the city. So, now you know as much as I do. A warm welcome to Zoran.

Best Wishes and keep safe, well, and positive!

Kenneth Hillier nebuly6@gmail.com