The John Meade Falkner Society

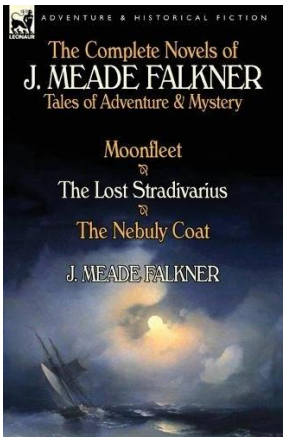
Founded 8th May 1999

Newsletter No. 81 **8th May 2026**

2026 SUBSCRIPTIONS

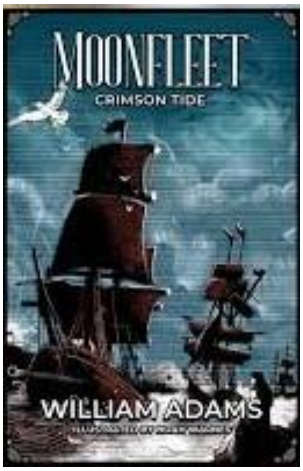
I'm afraid it's my usual plea for the few (just 8) to renew their Subscription to the Society. A reminder that it is still **£10** for UK members; **€20** for those in Europe; and **USA $20** for the Rest of the World. I am only able to keep it at these official levels thanks to the generosity of some of you. Thank you all.

A MEADE FALKNER OMNIBUS



George Robson reminds me of the existence of the above book, published as long ago as 2013, by Leonaur Ltd. The three novels have been packed into 560 pages. ISBN-13 : 978-1782822493. Could be a good present for anyone you are devoted to!

ANOTHER *MOONFLEET*!



Melanie Davy has kindly alerted me to a much more recent publication. There have been spin-offs of many famous novels – e.g. Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë – now it appears to be *Moonfleet's* turn. The author says *It's a musical story book for 8-14 year olds, crammed with action, adventure, history and songs*. Up your street?

Publisher : Magic Moon Publishing
Publication date : 2 Mar. 2026 144 pages
ISBN-10 : 1917956274
ISBN-13 : 978-1917956277
Moonfleet, Dorset. 1791.
The publisher's blurb is as follows:

Set to the sound of the crashing waves and the crying gulls, an adventure begins.

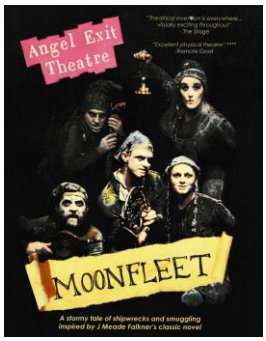
When thirteen-year-old John Treverton is drawn into Moonfleet's hidden world of Smugglers, Poachers and a Pirate's cursed diamond, his childhood is swept away overnight. Forced to flee across the sea, John embarks on a perilous journey of storms, secrets, and survival - while the love he leaves behind reaches out to him across the sea and through the clouds of war. Atmospheric and rich with coastal folklore, Moonfleet Crimson Tide *is a beautifully produced, interactive novel. QR codes woven throughout the story allow readers to scan and listen to original songs as the adventure unfolds - bringing history, myth, and music together in a truly cinematic reading experience.*

ANGEL EXIT THEATRE

Those of you who were at our Society weekend based in **Dorchester** in **July 2011** (was it really 15 years ago?) may remember the visit of the delightful young group of theatrical artists to our Hotel. **Angel Exit** is still going strong, with their own website.**Tamsin Fessey**, co-artistic diurector, emailed me in March:

I'm contacting you as I'm about to start directing another production of Moonfleet, this time with third year students at Arts University Bournemouth. The script is based on the one we created for Angel Exit's production (many years ago!) modified to fit this group of 10 students and with a new framing. the storytellers this time are the Mohunes, rising from the family vault. Anyway, I just checked to see if the society was still going because I remember how supportive you all were last time, and I see that you are, which is great news, so I thought I'd pass on the details in case any of your members want to come to the Palace Court Theatre in Bournemouth to see the show in May.

Dates: 14–16 May 2026.
Location: Palace Court Theatre, Bournemouth



The Mohune family has risen from its watery grave to tell this tale of greed, adventure, and shipwrecks in 18th century Dorset. Follow John Trenchard as he tries to find Blackbeard's lost diamond. Why is there a banging noise coming from the vaults?

A reworking of Angel Exit's 2009 rip-roaring dramatisation of Falkner's classic novel, set at the time of legendary smuggling adventures, with songs, puppetry and movement.

'BULL BURFORD'

This watering hole for the gilded Cotswold set is finally finding its groove. *Bull Burford*, a 16th-century coaching inn, has been renovated by entrepreneur and public relations guru Matthew Freud. There are 18 bedrooms and three restaurants at *Bull Burford*. There's fun to be had with the word "bull", but one thing you must not do in the ever-starry Cotswolds, especially if you are a *media power broker, is to put the normally inoffensive* word "the" in front of it. Even if the bull in question is a coaching inn that has been *The Bull Hotel* since 1610.

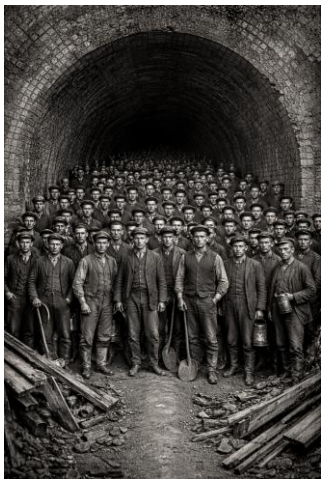
It's interesting how a definite article, or lack thereof, can have such a profound effect: *Bull Burford*, as current owner Matthew Freud has called the old inn, set my teeth on edge. Here we go, I thought: a watering hole for the gilded, rapidly expanding Cotswold set, but not for me in my Skoda Fabia and my Skechers slip-ins. Said lack of the definite article does, however, help (somewhat) to differentiate it from another watering hole for the gilded, rapidly expanding Cotswold set, just 20 minutes away – *The Bull*, Charlbury.

After prolonged renovation by Matthew Freud, who lives in Burford Priory with Sheherazade Goldsmith, *Bull* opened in late 2023. Sometime in 2024, I found myself driving along Burford's High Street, with its confection of mediaeval, Tudor and Georgian façades and so I parked and popped in (*Bull* Burford itself has a lovely 1690 brick façade). Apart from a leggy blonde woman in a leopard-print coat and her fractious children sprawled in the bar, there was no one else, including staff. It was a dark, strange warren and I couldn't find *Bull's* pulse. I'd read that Freud's reimagined "curious coaching inn" was to be a meeting of minds and a hive of talks, events and workshops; instead, I just wanted to leave. What a load of b***, I thought. Fast forward to 2026 and I decided I should give *Bull* another go, having heard good things. This time, I felt a distinct heartbeat and an energy, much of it provided by new general manager Jack Forbes. Hotels are like people: to survive they must adapt. Jack, who cut his teeth for eight years at the terrific Peligoni Club in Greece followed by Jeremy Clarkson's Farmer's Dog pub, serving hundreds of people a day, is busy making sure that Bull appeals to all (really).

Bull, I thought, as I did so, is finding its groove and who cares about the presence or not of a definite article? At that point, I certainly didn't.

Doubles from £270, including breakfast. 105 High Street, Burford, OX18 4RG (01993 822220; bullburford.com)

The above is from an admiring journalist. Not me! But it brought back memories of our Society weekends in 2013 and 2019, when **The Bull** was our base..



No, not an early group of JMF Society members, but a photo of the stalwarts who built the overflow tunnel at **Catcleugh Reservoir** in 1898.

George Robson (who sent this), was there quite recently, following in the footsteps of JMF, who was a Director of the **Newcastle and Gateshead Water Board** from 1915 until his death in 1932. Catcleugh, the Company's showpiece, was one of six to be built in north Northumberland in the late 19th century. It was completed in 1905. JMF would join the other directors for the annual June/July Board meeting and tour the reservoir's grounds.

JULY JOURNAL 27

This July's ***Journal*** is ready for printing. I have five articles 'bedded down': **John Coulter's** *Falkner's A History of Oxfordshire*; **Ray Ion's** *Long Legs and Silly Points Part I*; **Hamish Guthrie's** *Notes towards an Interpretation of The Nebuly Coat*; **my** *Two Friends – Hensley Henson and Meade Falkner,* and **Robin Davies'** *JMF and Naples***.**

Each year gets a little harder. To have published **124 articles** so far (plus a few of Falkner's poems) is no mean achievement and owes so much to Society members, past and present. The march of *Anno Domini* means there will probably be no more weekend meet-ups, so the Newsletters and the Journals are the vital links in our Fellowship. Long may they continue!

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