

## Manningford Bruce Wiltshire

John Meade Falkner was born on Saturday, 8 May 1858, in the little village of Manningford Bruce, near Pewsey in Wiltshire. The family had acquired an interest in a small country estate there when his grandfather Robert, born in 1788, married Lucy Alexander in 1818. Three of their sons died at an early age, and Lucy herself died in 1827. Thomas Alexander, the surviving son, was brought up by his aunts [his father, Robert, died in 1833]. In 1837 he went up to St John's College, Oxford and returned to Wiltshire a gentle and scholarly man. He married the thirty-year old Elizabeth Grace Mead on 22 April 1852, in St Mary's Church, Weymouth.



In 1854 their first child, Robert Alexander, was born. Increased family expenditure forced Thomas to take Holy Orders [a gentlemanly option for a man of 36 with no professional training] in December 1855. He returned to Wiltshire as curate of North Newton, a mile to the west of his home at 'The Hold', Manningford Bruce. The Hold was converted from cottages in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is a brick building of three bays with modern additions and alterations. Mary Grace was born in 1856, but early in 1858 Robert Alexander died of croup. In the spring of the same year John Mead [he himself added the extra "e" later] was born. His father needed to find a more remunerative post and, in 1859, he accepted a curacy at Holy Trinity, Dorchester.



The church of St Peter's was restored under the supervision of J. L. Pearson in 1882. In the churchyard are the graves of members of the Falkner family, dating back to at least 1796. The two headstones in the photograph are, on the left that of Mary Falkner [1792 - 1876] and, on the right, that of Drusilla Falkner [1789 - 1869], John Meade Falkner's great-aunts.