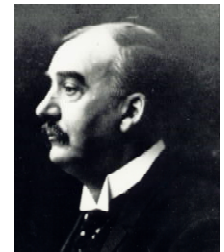


# The John Meade Falkner Society

Founded 8th May 1999



Newsletter No. 75

8 May 2024

## Our 75<sup>th</sup> NEWSLETTER!

Congratulations to all of us. Without your contributions over the years, we would have really struggled to produce such an interesting and varied fare. Thank you.

## 2024 SUBSCRIPTIONS

A gentle reminder to those tardy members who have yet to send their annual Sub – there are still eleven of you ‘Black Spotters’. It is £10 for UK members; €15 for European members; and USA\$15 for the rest of the world. You can pay by cash, securely wrapped; cheques (to “The John Meade Falkner Society”); BACS or PayPal. If either of the latter, I have provided the details in the accompanying email. PLEASE renew as soon as possible. I don’t want to have to chase up a recalcitrant few in Summer. I am always grateful and mindful of your continuing support.

## RESPONSE TO NEWSLETTER 73 REVIEW OF MY ARTICLE

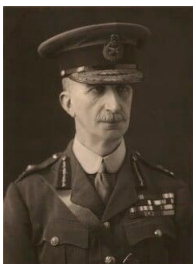
Not a murder? Well! Manslaughter at best.

My summary of the plot of *Moonfleet* was derived from the Davenport-Hines book page 163, not the ridiculous film with its glamorous gypsy dancing a flamenco in a Dorset pub. It is correct that he wrote: ‘By mischance the turnkey falls head first into the well’s abyss.’

Whether a judge or magistrate would agree that a violent death followed by the purloining of a diamond was worthy of a lesser sentence than that for murder is probably academic - did they have manslaughter in the eighteenth century? Anyway, very sensibly the perpetrators did not stay to find out.

**Robin Davies**

## MAJOR-GENERAL SIR JOHN ADYE’S NOVELS



Sir John Adye CB, KCMG (1857-1930) was born a year before JMF and died two years before the latter. He served in the Afghan War of 1879; as ADC to Sir Garnet Wolseley in the Egyptian campaigns of 1882 and 1884-5; and in the South African War as ADC of Colonial Forces at H.Q.

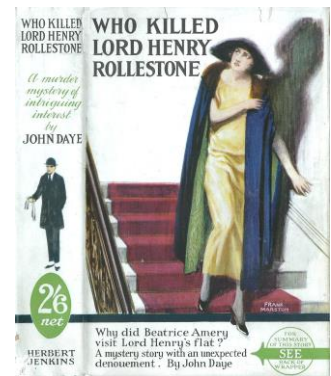
He also held several important posts during the Great War. Perhaps of more relevance and interest to our Society, his sister was Evelyn Violet, who married John Meade Falkner.

In 1925 he composed his *Reminiscences* – ‘*Soldiers I have Known*’ - and illustrated them with charming sketches. That year, he also tried his hand at a mystery

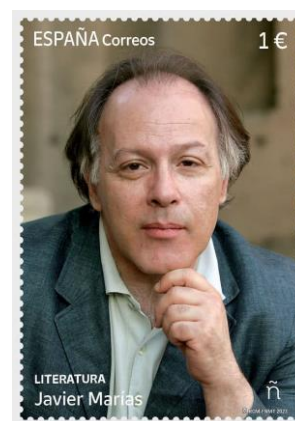
story – ‘*At the House of the Priest*’

– and followed this up with ‘*The Golden Scarab*’ in 1926 and ‘*A Flash of Lightning*’ in 1927. It is alleged that JMF helped him with some of the descriptive scenes in the first novel. If true, it was a fine example of brotherly-in-law love!

I have all three novels, as well as a fourth, most interesting one – ‘*Who Killed Lord Henry Rolleston?*’ This time he wrote under a pseudonym – which he effected by simply changing the order of the letters in his surname. Why he did this is anyone’s guess. There is only one copy of the book on the Internet for sale and it is described as ‘rare’.



At present, there are also just single copies of ‘*At the House of the Priest*’ and ‘*The Golden Scarab*’ and none of ‘*A Flash of Lightning*’. They must be ‘rare’ too! Adye’s work is worth looking out for as they are better than mere pot-boilers. I enjoyed reading them.



## JAVIER MARIAS ON A SPANISH STAMP

Javier, whose untimely death was reported in a previous Newsletter, has recently been honoured by the Spanish postal service. He appears on a 1 Euro stamp “showing his intense gaze and half smile, so characteristic of the author”.

Javier was a long-time and loyal member of our Society.

Thanks are due to **John Gretton** for pointing the stamp out to me.

## OLD CHURCH AT FLEET

Was it really twenty-three years ago that our infant Society unveiled this? The metal plaque above was (is) badly corroded and very hard to decipher. One day we hope to return.



## FALKNER'S HOME IN WEYMOUTH TO BE RESTORED IN MULTI-MILLION PROJECT



The St Thomas Street building, known as 'The Rectory', is being restored after years of standing derelict. The Rectory building was a centrepiece in the former Weymouth town centre redevelopment and used to be a popular pub/restaurant at the heart of the local night time economy. Formerly known as 'The Old Rectory', 'Barracuda' and, more recently, 'The Clipper', the Grade II listed building has stood empty since 2013, when the Bramwell Pub group went into administration.

The Chief Executive of the purchasing Company said: "This Georgian gem holds immense potential, and we look forward to revitalising it to its former grandeur while preserving its unique architectural heritage. There are exciting plans to make this building the centre of the community, providing employment opportunities, whilst respectfully restoring its former glory."

The property went up for sale in 2020 when offers in excess £1.25 million were being invited - although the figure for this sale has not been disclosed.

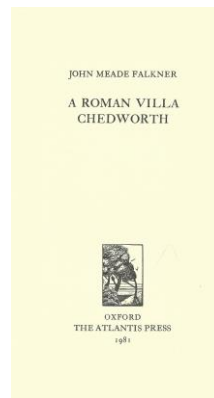
When the Falkner family lived there, the building was divided into two houses – Nos 81 and 82 St Thomas Street. The Falkners occupied No. 82 and the 1871 census records Rev Falkner with six children and three servants. Census returns are usually in April and Mrs Falkner had died in March 1871 following the 'rat in the water jug' incident. No 81 was inhabited by the Crickmay family and there were 11 of them, plus one servant!

One of the latest ideas is to turn the building into a Jurassic Coast centre and museum. Thanks are due to Member **Dianne Gardner** for the above information.

### JMF AND CHEDWORTH ROMAN VILLA

**Andrew Walker**, a fellow member of the John Buchan Society and Volunteer at the Chedworth Roman Villa approached me last year for information about Meade Falkner's poem; he wanted to include it in a Bibliography he was constructing for the benefit of other National Trust volunteers. It would then appear in their colourful Newsletter. The poem, 22 stanzas long and printed in *The Spectator* on 26 October 1895, was later published by a long-standing member of our Society, Michael Daniell in 1981. Michael only printed 100 copies in his *The Atlantis Press* but, if you can track one down, it is a lovely edition to add to your JMF library.

*The first appearance of Chedworth Villa in what might be called literature was in an edition of The Spectator in 1895, when a poem by JM Falkner entitled "A Roman Villa (Chedworth)" was published. Falkner lived from 1858 to 1932 and is probably best remembered for having written "Moonfleet", a Stephensonian swash-buckling adventure involving smugglers in Dorset. He attended Marlborough School and then went as a student to Oxford, graduating in 1882. Ever since his days at Marlborough he had been writing poetry. Among his other works were a History of Oxfordshire and in the Preface he said that every place in it had been visited by him and it may well have been the case that he had also researched neighbouring Gloucestershire as well. Certainly, some of the descriptions of places in the poems would seem to indicate there had been a personal visit by him. In 1883, he moved north to work for Armstrong the arms manufacturer and he remained there until he died and was buried at Burford. The poem was subsequently included in an edition of his collected poems published by the Westminster Press in 1933. A flavour of the poem can be given by the first stanza:*



*One evening when his ferret strayed  
The keeper turned about,  
And fetched a lantern and a spade  
To dig the truant out*

**Andrew Walker**

### 100 YEARS' AGO: JMF TO CANON WORDSWORTH

*The Divinity House Annunciatum 1924*  
*My dear Friend,*  
*I greatly enjoyed by visit to Salisbury, and to you who are now my Sarum. On coming back to the North, I reproached myself with not coming oftener to Salisbury, because the journey was so very easy. I left Salisbury at 12.23, had 3 hours in London for some business in which I was interested, and was actually in my house before 10.35. It seems very quick, does it not? Then I had to keep in bed for some days, and have been fit for nothing at all every since. I have got up, and about, several times but then have had to go back to bed, and seem to make no progress... Hyperactivity to hypochondria?*

I, too, am now off with my wife to Salisbury for a few days. The city of Septimus Harding, of Obadiah Slope and Eleanor Bold, of Archdeacon Grantly and the redoubtable Mrs. Proudie. I have packed a copy of *The Warden*, to read yet again.

### JOURNAL NO. 25

July's **Journal** will shortly be going to the Printer in Ashby de la Zouch – the same one I have used ever since Number 1 in July 2000.

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