

John Meade Falkner and Murray's Buckinghamshire
John R. Gretton

We must add John Murray's *Handbook for Buckinghamshire* of 1903 to John Meade Falkner's bibliography, as he was a reviser of the work. The evidence for his involvement is this:

When my friend Bill Lister and myself were researching the Murray series of *Handbooks for Travellers* as a whole for our Bibliography, which I published in 1993, we had very kind help from Mrs. Virginia Murray, the company archivist, with photocopies of relevant documents and permission to quote from them. The archive was then held at Murray's London office on Albermarle Street but has subsequently been transferred to The National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh.

One document is the legal Agreement of April 1901, whereby Murray sold the Handbooks to Edward Stanford for £2,000. In addition to the copyrights, the sale included all the stock of books, bound in cloth, or unbound in sheets, and the printing blocks for the maps and plans. The vast majority of the Handbooks were sold to Stanford, who was principally an agency map seller whose London shop is still visited by the serious traveler. The only Handbooks reserved from the sale were those for India and Japan, which were co-published by Thacker, Spink in Calcutta or Kelly & Walsh in the Far East. The final edition of Murray's 'India' was last reprinted in 1982. Apparently, Stanford lived somewhat to regret his purchase as sales were disappointing and the outbreak of the Great War killed the old guidebooks stone dead.

In 1901, the *Handbooks for Berkshire* and *Buckinghamshire* were among only a handful of titles still at the production stage. 'Berks.'

was in printed proofs awaiting Falkner's final corrections before printing. 'Bucks.' had been set in type ready for revision from the corrected galley proofs held at Albemarle Street. The printer in both cases was Hazell, Watson & Viney and Stanford was to put them into production after his purchase of the series as a whole.

The schedule gives the number of copies of each Handbook Stanford was buying, whether bound or (mostly) unbound in 'quires', and notes the few cases where the editor was still due payment for work done. In the case of 'Oxfordshire', the figures were 656 copies unbound, 65 in boards and 4 with selling agents, total 725. No outstanding payment was due to Falkner in this case, and we know from John Murray's letter to him of 22nd August 1890 that he was paid £52. 10s. for his work (i.e. 'fifty guineas when the work goes to press'). This was half the sum (100 guineas) Augustus Hare was paid for the original work in 1860. Falkner seems already to have been paid an unspecified sum for 'Berkshire'.

The case of 'Buckinghamshire' is different. In the column for 'Name of Special Editor' we have 'Rev. G. N. Godwin, revised by J. Meade Falkner', and in the column 'Due for editorial work done', their names are bracketed together to share the sum of £18. 18s. Eighteen guineas would indicate a fair amount of work, as it is over a quarter of the sum Falkner had for revising 'Oxfordshire', a book over twice as long. The Rev. George Nelson Godwin (1846-1907), an army chaplain for many years, was principally an authority on Hampshire and received 5 guineas for assisting with Murray's revision of that county in 1898. Unfortunately, in the Murray bibliography the Buckinghamshire entry in the legal agreement was confused as a continuation of the entry for Berkshire, but the entry listing Godwin and Falkner and £18. 18s. is clearly written in the column for Buckinghamshire.

But, there is more. Murray's (now Stanford's) 'Buckinghamshire' was finally revised by the Rev. Peter Hampson Ditchfield (1854-1930), the Rector of Barkham, Berkshire, and Grand Chaplain of the Freemasons in England. It was published in 1903, and in his Preface he prints unattributed Latin verses, which are in fact from Horace's '*De Arte Poetica*', and may be paraphrased as '*everything that is not well corrected is condemned as imperfect*'. He then writes "*When this book was placed in my hands it had already been revised; but it was felt that many alterations were still necessary, and that much remained to be done in order to render it complete and perfectly accurate*". We now know that the initial revisers were Godwin and Falkner.

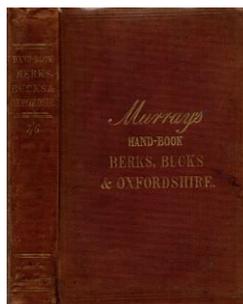
It is possible that Falkner decided not to take 'Bucks.' further because he felt the likely fee from Murray wouldn't justify the time he would have to spend on the work. He had 50 guineas for 'Oxfordshire', but 'Berkshire' is only half the length at 156 pages, and Buckinghamshire even shorter at 125 pages, including the Introduction and Index. They would have been costed by Murray accordingly, as his established practice, normal in Victorian publishing, was to buy the copyrights of commissioned works for fixed fees on an estimate of the work initially involved, and there were no subsequent royalty payments calculated on sales. The most important consideration for Falkner, however, would have been that 1900-1901 was a time of uncertainty at the Elswick armament works with the death of Lord Armstrong late in 1900 and the illness of Sir Andrew Noble in 1901. It was not the time to be cycling around Buckinghamshire at the behest of John Murray.

The principal reason for the sale of the Handbooks to Stanfords was that by 1900 the 'foreign' Handbooks were being comprehensively overtaken by Baedeker, both for detail and accuracy. Most

Baedekers now had English-language editions, greatly outselling the now 'outdated' Murray Handbooks. Even the British Handbooks had powerful rivals: Queen Victoria, in her 'Highland Journal', wrote: "*We had with us several guide books, of which we find Black's far the best*". The Edinburgh based firm of Adam & Charles Black published a long series of attractively produced guides, very well illustrated with steel and wood engravings, and with individually designed gold-blocked bindings. Murray's 'Scotland' looked dull by comparison.

If we compare Murray's payment for 'Oxfordshire', which works out at four shillings per printed page, with the eighteen guinea fee for 'Buckinghamshire', it works out at three shillings a page for a book of 125 pages. So, Godwin and Falkner shared a fee only a quarter less per page than the latter got for revising the whole of 'Oxfordshire'; in other words, their work was not insubstantial in the context. The core text of 'Buckinghamshire', excluding the Introduction and Index, was expanded from 65 pages in 1882 to 91 in the 1903 edition.

Murray's *'Handbook for Travellers in Berks, Bucks and Oxfordshire'* (first edition, 1860, with two further editions in 1872 and 1882), the book Falkner was revising and partially rewriting, was written by Augustus J. C. Hare, the prolific Victorian author of guides and travel works. Falkner may not have known this, as Hare's book was published anonymously under the Murray imprint, as was usual at the time. He was, however, impressed when Murray told him that Dean Arthur Stanley, whom he had always admired, had contributed to the book.



It must be stressed that Falkner was not the 'author' of the Handbooks he revised. He was, in fact, the third writer to revise the original book by Augustus Hare, which covers the three counties in one volume. Even so, a great deal of Hare's text survives into the fourth editions of the texts revised by Falkner. Even in Falkner's 'Oxfordshire' the descriptions, for instance, of the University buildings in central Oxford, including the Radcliffe Camera, Old Schools and Bodleian Library, are reprinted directly from the first edition of 1860, as is Hare's description of Blenheim Palace. Therefore, in ascribing work in Falkner's revisions directly to him, there is a need to check that the text is not already in the 1860, 1872 or 1882 Handbooks covering the three counties. Unfortunately, in published biographical work on Falkner, text has often been highlighted and commented on which is not his writing at all. A bibliography of the four editions of Berks, Bucks & Oxon is given at the end of this article.

Here are some notes on Falkner's probable additional text for Murray's 'Buckinghamshire':

The Introduction has been updated e.g. with the Census figures for 1891 and 1901 and with a much improved type lay-out with clear headings. The section on railways is updated with the new lines. 'Botany' is greatly expanded, and the section on Manufactures improved with the history of lace making in the county. The religious history of Buckinghamshire is expanded, including a good new section on church bells. There is a new section on 'Sport' in the old sense of hunting, including Lord Rothschild's stag-hounds at Ascot and the local badger and otter clubs. There is a lengthy new 'Architectural and Technical Glossary' e.g. '*Wyvern...a flying serpent or dragon*'. For Eton College, the descriptions of the buildings are usefully expanded, while Stoke Poges has a typical comment from

Falkner, a keen cyclist: “...some armorial windows, one of which has the earliest known representation of a man mounted upon a velocipede, or rather dandy-horse.” The entry for Hughenden and Disraeli has been revised by Falkner, a lifelong Conservative. The numerous other country houses have their entries expanded as they became slightly more accessible to tourists, including Dropmore, Cliveden, Hartwell (where Louis XVIII lived in exile prior to Waterloo), Chequers and Stowe (with a much expanded description of the interior). There is a nice Falknerian touch added to the entry for Bletchley: “*Browne Willis...this eccentric antiquary was in the habit of driving about the country in a strange chariot, something like a mourning coach, and he himself was always clothed in patched clothes and boots*”.

I am confident that we can now add Murray’s ‘Buckinghamshire’ to the John Meade Falkner canon, as the evidence for his involvement in the revision is clear from the 1901 deed of sale between John Murray and Edward Stanford.

Bibliography

The Bibliography of the four editions of Murray’s ‘*Handbook for Berks, Bucks and Oxfordshire*’ is as follows:

1. **First edition.** A HANDBOOK FOR TRAVELLERS IN BERKS, BUCKS, AND OXFORDSHIRE. INCLUDING A PARTICULAR DESCRIPTION OF THE UNIVERSITY AND CITY OF OXFORD, AND THE DESCENT OF THE THAMES TO MAIDENHEAD AND WINDSOR. WITH A TRAVELLING MAP AND PLANS. LONDON: JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET. 1860. pp. vi, 244. Folding map of the three counties at rear of text. **MURRAY’S ENGLISH HANDBOOK ADVERTISER**, 1860, 24 pp. on blue paper at end.

2. **Second edition.** Title as above. 1872. pp. iv. 296. Plans of Windsor Castle and Oxford in text and folding map in rear pocket. A.J.C. Hare was paid £42 and W.E. Flaherty was paid £69. 16s. for corrections. Published at 7s. 6d.

3. **Third edition.** Title as above. 1882. pp. iv. 312. Plans and maps as above. Edited by G.F. Rodwell for 50 guineas. Published at 9s.

4. **Fourth edition** in three volumes:

4a. HANDBOOK FOR TRAVELLERS IN OXFORDSHIRE. **WITH MAPS AND PLANS.** LONDON: JOHN MURRAY, ALBERMARLE STREET. 1894. pp. viii, (14), 242. 13 plans in text and folding map of Oxford(shire) in rear pocket. Edited by John Meade Falkner for 50 guineas. Published at 6s. Issues bound after April 1901 have (in italic gilt lettering) 'London. / Stanford' at the foot of the spine.

4b. HANDBOOK FOR BERKSHIRE... LONDON: EDWARD STANFORD, 12, 13, & 14, LONG ACRE, W.C. 1902. pp. (vi), xii, 144. 2 plans in text and 3 maps in front and rear pockets. Revised for an unknown sum by John Meade Falkner, who dates the Preface *June*, 1902. Published at 6s.

4c. HANDBOOK FOR BUCKINGHAMSHIRE...LONDON: EDWARD STANFORD, 12, 13 & 14, LONG ACRE, W.C. 1903. pp. (x), xxii, 104. 2 maps in front and rear pockets. Revised by Rev. G.N. Godwin and J. Meade Falkner for 18 guineas; and then further revised by Rev. P.H. Ditchfield, whose Preface is dated *August*, 1903. Published at 6s.

Note: The Handbooks were bound up in batches as required, with the latest (dated) 'Handbook Advertiser' at the end. This is not bibliographically significant to the core text of the book in question.

For further reading:

Lister, W.B.C.: *A Bibliography of Murray's Handbooks for Travellers.* With Introduction by **John R. Gretton.** Dereham Books, 1993. Out of print, but held by copyright libraries.

Carpenter, Humphrey: *The Seven Lives of John Murray, the story of a publishing dynasty.* John Murray, 2008. Paperback edition, 2009.

Michael Daniell: '*Oxfordshire, Berks but not Bucks: John Meade Falkner's correspondence with his publisher*'. *Journal of The John Meade Falkner Society*, No. 9, July 2008 pp. 21-28. See especially footnote 9 on p. 28 where it is now clear that the work John Meade Falkner objected to was Godwin's and not Ditchfield's, when he looked over the initial revision of 'Buckinghamshire'.