

# The John Meade Falkner Society

Founded 8th May 1999

## Newsletter No. 80

### 2026 SUBSCRIPTIONS

It is time again to renew your 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 – ‘every little helps’! I hope all of you want to remain members of our select Society. I am always grateful and mindful of your continuing support. May I wish you all a very healthy and fulfilling 2026.

### THE OLD RECTORY NEWS

**Dianne Gardner** sent me a further update on the position regarding the Old Rectory in St. Thomas Street, Weymouth. It comes from an article in the *Dorset Echo* of 11<sup>th</sup> September. *A new vision has been unveiled to turn a historic building in Weymouth town centre into a visitor and cultural centre. The Rectory building in St. Thomas Street could see new life breathed into it under new proposals to create a dynamic hub for local cultural groups, artists, historians, schools, and visitors, offering a year-round programme of exhibitions, performances, workshops, and community events.*

*A bid to turn the building into a Jurassic Coast Museum failed last year due to a lack of funding. However, the Weymouth Area Development Trust, alongside partners Dorset County Council and Weymouth Town Council are taking the project forward under a new guise.*

*South Dorset M.P. Lloyd Hatton said: “Let’s crack on and rejuvenate this unique building”.*

Well, I hope everyone has ‘cracked on’ and 2026 will see a successful outcome for all concerned.

### KEN WARREN’S WIFE’S DEATH



Ken's Book signing at Cragside

(l to r): Ray Ion, Jean Warren, Ken Warren, George Robson.

Jean's son sent **George Robson** the following email: *Mum passed away peacefully on the morning of 16th August. This followed a period of three years at the Birchams Grange care home near Ledbury, during which she was very well looked after, though*

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*increasingly immobile. After the shock of losing Dad in 2018, she showed her usual resilience and determination to make the most of her life. She was 95 at her last birthday in June. There will be a thanksgiving service for Mum at the Hereford Crematorium at 11:15 on Tuesday 9th September.*

**Ken Warren** was the 8<sup>th</sup> Member to join the Society – on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1999 – and supported us over the next nineteen years in more ways than one – in his articles and his presence (usually with Jean) at several of our weekends in Dorset, Oxfordshire and the North-East. Just four of the original seventeen members from 1999 are still with us – **Christopher Hawtree, Edward Wilson, Hamish Guthrie** and myself. The other three deserve long-service medals!

### THE FRIENDS OF BURFORD CHURCH Newsletter Issue 33 November 2025

Included in the Message from the Vicar, **Tom Putt**, is the following: *The Friends, too, provide an essential lifeline, supporting the upkeep and preservation of the church so that it—and its stories—can be handed on to future generations. The guide continues to be widely appreciated, and the new information screen in the south aisle has been a great success. I am deeply grateful to all who worked so carefully and patiently to bring this project to fruition the information touchscreen has now been installed in the South Transept, enabling visitors to appreciate more fully the detail and history of the **Whall window**, together with facts about other items of interest in that part of the church. Gordon Elliot was instrumental in the eventual completion of this project, and our thanks are due to him for the considerable time he gave to it.*

### MOONFLEET MANOR



Every so often, **EBay** throws up another JMF-related ‘find’. This time, it is an atmospheric postcard of the **Moonfleet Manor Hotel**, which some of us visited on one of our early JMF Society outings. I like to think of John Trenchard, his wife Grace, and little Grace, little John and little Elzevir, lying in their beds in their Manor House, listening to the eternal sea...when it is lashed to madness in the autumn gale, and [hearing] the grinding roar and churn of the pebbles like a great organ playing all the night.

## THE NEBULY COAT

Christopher Hawtree sent me information about a copy of the edition published by Penguin Books in 1943 (not the rarer Forces Book Club issue). It is/was on the Internet at £650 + £4.50 shipping. The seller is the esteemed Addyman Books of Hay-on-Wye, who are well known for their collection of detective fiction. Good as the novel is, the price seems a bit steep!

Christopher also mentioned that the BBC had recently broadcast a one-and-a-half hour version of *The Lost Stradivarius*, which he thought was well done in the time available. I wonder how many other members tuned in – unfortunately, I missed the programme.

## THE NEBULY COAT (again)

Ray Ion, well-known for his indefatigable searching of the Internet, came across the fact that the National Library of Australia had copies of the Penguin edition of *The Nebuly Coat* – both the green cover and the Forces Book Club versions. He also tracked down a letter from ‘**Armorial**’, based in Caulfield, a suburb of Melbourne in Victoria. ‘**Armorial**’ had written to the Editor of the newspaper *Australasian*:

*Sir. – As interest has been evinced in connection with the word “nebuly” in recent issues of “The Australasian”, I venture to submit a sketch of the Nebuly Coat (sketch included), with a few remarks. Happening to have a copy of the novel “The Nebuly Coat” (by John Meade Falkner), I am able to point to the special feature of interest therein in connection with the derivation of the heraldic term “nebuly”. The novel – *inter alia* – treats of restoration work at a great church, called St. Sepulchre, and an apt description of an eleven-light transept window of Perpendicular date. It is stated that “at the top of each light, under the cusping, was a coat-of-arms. The head of the middle division formed the centre of the whole scheme, and seemed to represent a shield of silver-white crossed by waving sea green bars”. The architect in charge, being attracted by the unusual colouring, turned to ask whose arms were thus represented, and was told: “That is the coat of the Blandamers – barry nebuly of six, argent and vert”. “The Australasian” has pointed out that the word “nebuly” – in heraldry – is derived from the word “nebulæ”, signifying “little clouds”, and these – in astronomical works – “may be properly divided into two distinct classes – the green and the white”. So, the tinctures as given in the novel are remarkably correct.*

## ONE HUNDRED YEARS’ AGO

JMF corresponded irregularly with **Canon Christopher Wordsworth**, another liturgical scholar (In one of his letters he wrote: *To come sometimes, in the evening, to these fields of quiet research, and to the acquiring of knowledge that can never be put to purposes of commercial profit, is an unadulterated pleasure.*) In his biography of Falkner, **Richard Davenport-Hines** remarks that although their correspondence ‘is loaded with heavy scholarship that is too abstruse to penetrate...Falkner is sometimes as candid and revealing as in his letters to Edward Stone. Probably

*Falkner’s letters to Wordsworth and Stone are the least mannered of his life...*’

Here is JMF, writing from *The Divinity House* to Wordsworth, on **15<sup>th</sup> January 1926**.

*My dear Friend,*

*...I almost blush to tell you that I am again writing from my bed, to which I have been confined for the last 10 weeks. I was growing a little stronger after a very serious illness in last spring and summer, when a severe attack of bronchitis fell upon me in my weakened state and this, coinciding with unusually cold and changeable weather in November and December, has precluded my yet going out, although I can now get down stairs after lunch. It is the first time that I have ever suffered from bronchitis, or indeed any affection of that nature, so that I have found it very trying; and it sounds as if I were in a very bad way; but I hope that by God’s mercy, I am on the mend, and may be able to go to Italy in a not very far-off date which doctors very strongly urge. Meanwhile I beg you to remember me in your prayers.*

*I am in my own house this time, instead of a nursing home; on the whole I think that this is to be preferred, though there are obviously pros and cons: at any rate, I am surrounded by devoted attention and affection which always must count for much. In any case I shall not be able to go straight abroad but must first get a little acclimatised by, say, 3 weeks at Bournemouth or Weymouth, or some equivalent.*

*It was, as you may suppose, a great trial to miss all the Christmas services, to which I am so much attached; the more so because we are so very close to the Cathedral, and so I heard all the bells going for the services without being able to move out of my room.*

*[includes coloured postcard] the house on the extreme left is *The Divinity House*, though it is not exactly as it appears now, because I put some large, mullioned, old-fashioned windows in the west gable which looks sheer down over the river.*

*I am affectionately yours,*

*JMF*

*(There were a further five pages on Breviaries!)*

## JULY JOURNAL 27

I have one article already to hand and the promises (fingers crossed!) of possibly three more. If they are forthcoming, we might be nearly there. At least one more would be a bonus. Each year gets a little harder. To have published **124 articles** so far (plus a few of Falkner’s poems) is no mean achievements 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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