

## Hertford College Oxfordshire

John Meade Falkner went up to Oxford University in the autumn of 1878, as an undergraduate at Hertford College. He had left Marlborough College in March 1877, but there is no record of how he spent the intervening period. He later referred to the city as if in a magic land “amidst palatial colleges with gothic halls and chapels. Some with towers, others with spires whose delicate pinnacles stand out brightly against the skies, while the grey masses below are broken by the brilliant green trees or luxuriant gardens”.



Falkner was proud of Hertford’s ‘honoured place’ among the older colleges, but concluded that its buildings ‘possess nothing of the slightest interest’ and that it had ‘a mean little chapel’. A few years after graduating, Falkner wrote: “That it is the most beautiful city in the United Kingdom few unbiased persons will be found to deny – many will say that it is the most beautiful in Europe – and when to its beauty are added its intellectual facilities, its easy distance from London and the pleasant associations of young and healthy life which have, on most constitutions, of themselves a rejuvenating influence, the great increase in its residential population is easily accounted for”.

He spent many a day with friends visiting churches and antiquities around the city – on ‘high’ bicycles or tricycles or occasionally on foot. Little is known about his academic work and achievements. He matriculated on 12 October 1878, two days after taking up residence in Hertford. In Michaelmas 1880 he sat and passed the Classics examination. The following autumn he was successful in Divinity. He then started the Modern History course for which he was awarded a Third Class. He took his BA degree at a ceremony on Saturday, 8 July 1882.

Hertford was used as the setting for Falkner’s first book – *The Lost Stradivarius* – as Magdalen Hall, which Sir John Maltravers attended, had transferred from its Magdalen College site to that of Hertford College which had been dissolved in 1805. Magdalen Hall was in turn dissolved when Hertford was re-founded in 1874.



Falkner was made an Honorary Fellow of his old college in 1927.