

## ***Smugglers' Bay: You lose some....you win some***

Ray Ion

I have long since given up on having any success in trying to find a copy of the BBCs 1964 adaptation of *Moonfleet*, which went by the above name. Having accepted defeat on this, another thought entered my head – and that was: as *Smugglers' Bay* had been shown on the BBC then it would be listed in the *Radio Times*. So the search was now on to track down copies of the magazine and to see how (or if) they had previewed the screening of *Moonfleet* in disguise.

My first port of call – as has now become the norm when researching anything from 1785-1985, was *The Times* Digital Archive. After typing *Smugglers' Bay* into the Search Box, the results showed what I was hoping for – which was the T.V. listings for 1964. There were six episodes, commencing on Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> July and ending on Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> August. As it happened the search results also gave the dates in 1966 when these six episodes were repeated. All I needed now were these back copies of the *Radio Times*.

So how does one go about trying to find back copies of that magazine? Out of interest only, I Googled “*back copies Radio Times*” and also had a look on EBay. All twelve (six for 1964 and six for 1966) were available, one way or another. One could become the proud owner if you were prepared to pay as little as £20 and as much as £100 a copy. Thanks, but no thanks! I later discovered the reason for the high prices – it was because 1964 was one of the main years of the Beatles/Rolling Stones era and the front and inside pages often carried features about them. As everyone will recall, 1966 was the year of the World Cup and the *Radio Times* was overflowing with colour articles during the weeks of the screening of the six episodes of *Smugglers' Bay*.

My main hope was from the beginning pinned on the archives section of the Newcastle Library, where I have had quite a lot of success in the past in finding information about John Meade Falkner, and the Adye and Noble families. An additional advantage of this department (apart from having very keen, helpful and knowledgeable staff) is that the very accommodating ‘house rules’ allow you to

photograph 5% of any book, magazine or newspaper free of charge for research purposes.

I visited the Library and, within minutes of arriving and checking with staff, I was soon to learn that they did indeed have back copies of the *Radio Times*, but they were not in the huge “behind the scenes” collection of local material but on another floor which I had not visited before. Here were held special displays of old books and magazines, which are changed from time to time. Wonderful: there on the shelves, before my very eyes, were what I had come for – leather bound in individual years and, fortunately, including 1964 and 1966. I spent the next twenty minutes clicking away with my camera. The resulting quality was not great, as there are overhead lights everywhere and you are always in your own shadow. However, here I was doing what I had hoped for when I first thought of *Smugglers’ Bay* and the *Radio Times*.



As previously stated, the series started on Sunday, 12th July 1964; but first there was a brief mention, together with a photograph of John Phillips as Elzevir and Frazer Hines as John Trenchard in the Thursday, 2nd July issue (the *Radio Times* was published weekly on a Thursday for programmes Saturday to the following Friday) on the “what’s on next week” page. The following week there was a preview to open the six-part serialisation.



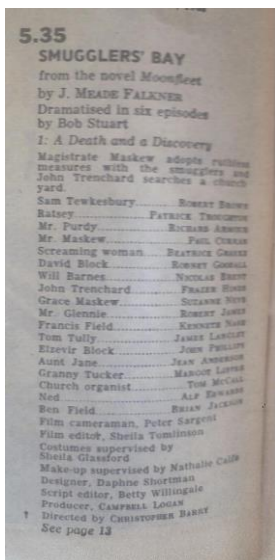
The preview ran as follows:

*The British seem to have a strangely soft spot for smuggling; even those who do not themselves practise it in a small way on returning from holiday frequently have a sneaking admiration for the feat of outwitting the excise men. One such secret and somewhat improbable sympathiser was **John Meade Falkner**, author of Moonfleet, the novel on which the new six-part serial Smugglers' Bay is based. He started life as a private tutor, but went on to become a senior executive in the armaments firm of Armstrong-Whitworth, a keen student of ecclesiastical affairs, a respected antiquary, and a writer of three popular romances. He published the present work in 1898.*

*The story is set in Dorset in the rumbustious eighteenth-century days when children were enjoined to 'watch the wall, my darling, while the gentlemen go by'. Its hero is John Trenchard, a young man who becomes involved in the hazardous world of 'free trading' when he finds in the vaults of Moonfleet church a locket with a mysterious inscription. Subsequently his adventures take him far away from his little Dorset village.*

*Trenchard is played by Frazer Hines, a familiar participant in Z Cars, Dr. Finlay's Casebook, and Compact. Elzevir Block, the local innkeeper who is his friend and ally, is played by another Z Cars veteran **John Phillips**; and Magistrate Maskew, the evil-tempered scourge of the smugglers, is **Paul Curran**.*

*The adapter, **Bob Stuart**, is a former actor and stage manager who has written serials for both Australian and American television, and the director is **Christopher Barry**.*



Page: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 [Back](#) | [Next](#)

Patrick Troughton (seated) guest-stars in 'A Death and a Discovery', the first episode of 'Smuggler's Bay', based on John Meade Falkner's novel 'Moonfleet'. The star of this series was Frazer Hines (standing, left), who joined Troughton on 'Doctor Who' two years later as his companion Jamie McCrimmon.

The other five episodes were entitled as follows:

2: **In the Vault** Blackbeard poses a riddle and the villagers are troubled by John Trenchard's disappearance.

3. **The Auction** Maskew plays a trump card and an informer intervenes.

4. **A Reward of Fifty Pounds** Elzevir plays a waiting game and with John Trenchard solves the secret of the locket.


5. **Found – And Lost Again** John and Elzevir travel far, only to fall into a trap.

6. **On the Beach** An unexpected stroke of fortune changes the life of John Trenchard and others.

To go with Episode 5 there was a small piece on a separate page:

**Smugglers' Bay**

**1** THERE is a tap on the window of the drawing-room where Grace is sewing: it is John Trenchard (**Frazer Hines**), who has come to say goodbye to Grace. He explains that he knows—or thinks he knows—the whereabouts of Black Beard's diamond. He believes it is in a well at Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight. He and Elzevir are going to look for it there. When they arrive they enlist the aid of the surly jailer Ephraim who leads them to the well at the castle. All the time Ephraim is behaving very suspiciously, and John refuses to allow Elzevir to go down the well—saying he will do it himself. . . .



All in all, the publicity for the serialisation appeared very positive. After it ended, the Sunday evening slot at 5.35 p.m. was used to screen six episodes of *The Children of the New Forest* (ed. I remember very clearly watching this!) based on Captain Marryat's book, published in 1847.

During the six episodes of *Smugglers' Bay*, a cast of forty were involved and included quite well-known names – Suzanne Neve as Grace; Patrick Troughton as Ratsey; Jean Anderson as Aunt Jane; and Colin Douglas as the Dutch jailer.

After both the 1964 and 1966 series had ended, I scoured the *Radio Times*' letter pages for several weeks for any viewers' comments or reaction...but there were none. There was no John Meade Falkner Society in those days.