

Henry Barnes – The architect who designed John Meade Falkner's boyhood home.

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Henry Barnes was the architect and original owner of West Walks House, where John Meade Falkner lived with his family from 1859 to 1870.



The design for the house includes a small crest above the balcony, bearing the initials HB and the date 1851. This was the date that the house was built and the 1851 census shows the house with no occupants.



At the time the house was built, West Walks faced undeveloped agricultural land but by 1857 this had been developed into a house and Nursery Plant Garden belonging to S R Harris, and an area for a



cattle market. S R Harris' house still stands in the Borough Gardens and is used by staff and by the community.



Henry Barnes was born in 1822 at Stour Provost, Dorset. On 25th September 1850, he married Theresa Mary Gilbert Garland. The marriage records for Holy Trinity Church, Dorchester, say that 'Henry Barnes was of full age, a widower, an architect and resident of St Peters Parish, Dorchester.' His father, John Barnes, is listed as a surveyor. Theresa Mary Gilbert Garland is described as 'a minor, a spinster, no occupation given, and resident of Holy Trinity Parish, Dorchester.' Her father, Thomas Gilbert Garland, is listed as a Gentleman.

Henry Barnes was a widower at this time having previously married Jane Joyce, aged 18. The burial records say that 'Jane Joyce Barnes was buried on 4th May 1843; aged 20 years.' It is likely that she died in childbirth as records show that Henry and Jane had a son, Walter Henry Barnes, christened 21st April 1843. He lived with his paternal grandfather.

The 1851 census shows that at the time West Walks House was being built, Henry and Theresa were living at 15 High West Street, Dorchester (now Domvs Estate Agents). They were living with Theresa's parents, Thomas Garland, age 75, occupation – Proprietor of Houses and Fundholder, and Susan Garland, age 55. This census gives Henry's age as 31 and Theresa's as 21. Henry's occupation is given as Architect and Surveyor.

On 27th November 1851, baptismal records for Holy Trinity Church show that Henry and Theresa had their first child, a son, Thomas John Garland Barnes. The family are listed as still living at High West Street.



Baptismal records for Holy Trinity Church show that Henry and Theresa went on to have four more children; three daughters and one son. These children were Mary Cicely Barnes, baptised 18th April 1855, Theresa Mary Barnes, baptised 5th November 1856, Kathleen Marian Barnes, baptised 9th May 1862 and William Henry Arthur Barnes, baptised 6th December 1865.

All four children have West Walks as their listed address, but it is known that the Barnes family did not live in West Walks House during this time. It is possible that in 1855 the house was rented for a few years to Rev. James Fisher, rector of Holy Trinity Church, but by 1861 the house was rented to Thomas Alexander Falkner and his family. Records show that he started renting the house in September 1859. One account reads that 'in Spring 1859, it was rumoured that Mr Fisher, Rector of Holy Trinity, Dorchester, was looking for a curate for the autumn.' It goes on to say that 'the engagement was effected, and on enquiry a very pleasant house and garden were found in the West Walks, and rented for perhaps

September, giving time for renovations and decorations.’ Thomas Alexander Falkner was curate at Holy Trinity Church and continued to rent the house until towards the end of 1870.



An account by John Meade Falkner, author and son of Thomas Falkner, says that ‘Mr Barnes had built the house for his own use, but afterwards finding it larger than he required, moved higher up in the same Walks and let it to my father.’ However, the 1861 census does not show the Barnes family listed in West Walks but shows them resident at 38 South Street, Dorchester. They are listed as Henry Barnes, Theresa M. G. Barnes, their three children from this time, Henry’s mother-in-law, Susan Garland and two servants.

By 1871, the census shows that Henry Barnes and his family had at last moved into West Walks House. This census gives the information that living in West Walks House were Henry, now age 49 and listed as a Civil Engineer and Architect, Theresa, now age 39, Cicely, now age 16 and Theresa, now age 14. There is also Kathleen M, age 9, daughter and William H A, age 5, son. Also living in the house were Susan Garland, age 75, and three servants. The eldest son, Thomas John Garland Barnes, had left home and is listed in the 1871 census as living in Bath, age 20, occupation Schoolmaster.

From 1871 to 1876 was a period of sad times for the Barnes family. On 27th November 1871, Theresa dies, age only 40, and is buried in Dorchester Cemetery. In her plot is also buried Philip William Gilbert Barnes, so it is likely that she dies in childbirth. The following year her mother, Susan Garland, dies in June 1872 and is

buried in Holy Trinity Church. On 4th January 1876, Henry dies and is buried in a plot next to Theresa.

After these events the three daughters moved to Melcombe Regis, Weymouth, and the younger son became a ward, living in Dorchester. By 1881 the house has been bought by Frederic Bazley Fisher, a surgeon, who was a doctor for the author, Thomas Hardy.

John Meade Falkner wrote about his experiences of living in West Walks House and one thing of interest is that he writes that 'Mr Barnes, besides being an architect, was a painter, and two large canvasses of his were left in the dining-room as landlord fittings. They were on a very large scale (6 or 7 feet long) in heavy gilt frames. One represented a 'Smugglers Cave' at night with the full moon seen from the interior rising over the sea, the smugglers in the foreground engaged in lighting fires, examining kegs and similar habitual occupations. The other picture was the same cave at dawn, when the smugglers were dressing for their day's work.'

Was this, possibly, early inspiration for John Meade Falkner's famous novel '*Moonfleet*'?.