

# *The Jane Austen Times*

The Jane Austen Society of North America  
Puget Sound Region

*Imagination is  
everything—  
Miss Jane Austen.*

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## *A THANK YOU FROM JEANNE TACKITT (and I'm certain many others)*

Recently a group of our chapter members took the time to help KCTS, Channel 9 with a local fundraiser. As a person who works 5 days a week, I know that giving up a Saturday or Sunday to work, even for a good cause, can be difficult if not down-right exhausting. I was a slacker and unable to participate in the hard work and fun, but I've heard wonderful tales about the two teas held April 12th and 13th in Seattle.

I was told by attendees that Charlene Kern sang beautifully and that Agnes Gawne and Loveday Conquest gave color commentary for a fashion show. Actually I've heard that the fashion show was a last-minute addition by the KCTS planner but that Agnes and Loveday took up the task like pros and did a wonderful job. (Agnes even volunteered to show up early and help fit models to various costumes AND do their hair.) Other chapter members dressed up in costume, charmed and conversed with attendees who had donated at least \$100 each for KCTS, and promoted our chapter. Each of the chapter members who gave up a Saturday and Sunday to volunteer for this event represented OUR chapter and I believe they did a wonderful job and should be thanked. This was a great chance for chapter members to tell others about our group and to invite them to attend a meeting.

Such events allow us a chance for free advertising and to increase our membership. The following chapter members volunteered for the event: Julie Arnold, Christina Boyd, Celia Clarke, Marie Cooley, Agnes Gawne, Marian LaBeck, Susan Pasco, and Janet Worley. I hope that you will join me in thanking these chapter members for giving up their free time to promote the Jane Austen Society of the Puget Sound.

--Jeanne Tackitt



## **NEXT MEETING:**

**June 8, 2PM@  
Henry Art Gallery  
University of Washington**

**See you there!!**

### **Directions to the Henry Art Gallery**

The Henry Art Gallery is located on the western edge of the University of Washington campus at 15th Avenue NE and NE 41st Street.

By car take I-5 to the NE 45th Street exit and drive east to 15th Avenue NE. Turn south on 15th Avenue NE. The Gallery is on the left between NE 41st Street and Campus Parkway. Parking is often available in the underground Central Parking garage at NE 41st Street. On Sundays, parking is usually available for no fee.

The Henry Art Gallery can be reached by over twenty bus routes. Visit [Metro Online](#) or call Metro at 206.553.3300 or Community Transit at 425.778.2185 for additional information

## *Who Knew! Austen and Vermeer -- Soul Mates?*

The June 8, 2008 JASNA PS meeting will be exceptional. Our speaker on "Viewing Austen Through Vermeer's Camera Obscura," will be JASNA national president Marsha E. Huff and our venue will be the pleasing Henry Art Gallery on the University of Washington campus. Huff, a tax lawyer specializing in non-profits, has been described by her Milwaukee hometown newspaper as a "major keeper of the Austen flame," who took over JASNA reins in 2007.

So, why a JASNA talk in an art gallery?

Huff will stretch our understanding of Austen by comparing her novels with the art of Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675), who captured domestic interior scenes of ordinary life with fine precision. Vermeer brought light to life's ordinary scenes ... and deftly used light to highlight faces in particular. Vermeer's "Girl with a Pearl Earring," has been likened to the "Mona Lisa."

During the talk, Puget Sound members will read excerpts from the novels to illustrate the comparisons. (Rumor has it, Huff will show our beloved Mr. Darcy, also known as Colin Firth, in scenes from his portrayal of the artist in "Girl with a Pearl Earring," the movie.)

Although he died a century before Jane was born, Vermeer's limited work was only acknowledged in the latter 19th Century (according to Wikipedia.org) including famous works such as "The Milkmaid," "The Girl with a Wine Glass," and "The Little Street."

The precision and positioning in the paintings has caused some historians and art experts to speculate that Vermeer used a camera obscura technique (basically a pinhole camera used for drawing and precursor to Kodaks) to attain the precise positioning and composition of his art – thus the light and perspective. Not everyone agrees, Wikipedia adds.

JASNA Puget Sound members, contestants for our scholarship, and honorable guests and friends will be able to decide for themselves in the course of Huff's talk. The Puget Sound chapter is grateful for funding of the president's visit provided by the North American Austen society, and to member Kimberly Brangwin for hosting Huff's stay here. Program co-chair Jim Nagle commandeered the museum arrangements.

This lively meeting is Sunday, June 8, 2 p.m. on the University of Washington campus at the Henry Art Gallery, near 15th Ave. N.E. and Campus Parkway (directions and nearby parking follow.) It's a chance to invite your friends and associates to a special Jane event. A tea and cake reception for Huff and our scholarship winners follows in the museum's Baci Court, for a nominal charge. For the talk itself, the museum waives regular admission for the JASNA attendees.

The Web site for the Henry Gallery is <http://www.henryart.org/>.

## *April Meeting Minutes*

At our Sunday, April 13 meeting at the Redmond Public Library, we had an excellent presentation by Phyllis Ferguson Bottomer, the Regional Coordinator for the Vancouver BC Chapter. Phyllis is the author of "So Odd a Mixture: Along the Autistic Spectrum in 'Pride and Prejudice'". The title comes from a phrase Jane Austen used to describe Mr. Bennet.

She began her talk by explaining that most people think of autism, as an "either you have it or you don't," black or white situation. She emphasized that now experts view autism as a spectrum on which many people who function perfectly well in society might exhibit some autistic tendencies in particular circumstances.

Phyllis provided handouts including a worksheet that the attendees could fill out. To avoid having people falling into the "black or white" trap, she did not ask us to put check marks in the different categories, but dots which would vary in size depending on the severity of the problem. If you believed someone exhibited a very small amount of a particular problem, physical awkwardness for example, it would be a very tiny dot. For someone like Mr. Collins, it would be a much larger dot.

She projected clinical descriptions and the audience quickly identified characters to which the descriptions applied. While it is easy to identify extreme characteristics in such people as Anne deBourg or Mr. Woodhouse, we were surprised how many of the clinical diagnoses applied to Mr. Collins, Lady Catherine, Lydia, Mary, and even to some extent, Mr. Darcy and his social reluctance. Her talk was especially enlightening regarding Mr. Bennet and the impacts his autistic spectrum tendencies had on the plot. Because he does not like crowds, he had never taken the family to London, even though, with five daughters, they would have experienced not merely a wonderful vacation, but a wonderful place for them to meet people and expand their horizons and the list of eligible beaux.

As Phyllis explained, very often after these talks, people come up to her and state that the talk has helped her to understand, not merely people in the novel, but people with whom they work or in their own family.

As always, the food and tea were outstanding, thanks to our very generous and hard working hosts. All in all, a wonderful meeting.

--submitted by James Nagle



## *Concerning the e-mail list*

Years and Years Ago, when I was the RC, we had a last-minute change in the program and we needed to contact members as soon as possible. I sent an email to everyone with an email address and then I, and other volunteers, called all the remaining members. Since I had spent a good deal of time creating the email list, I thought I would maintain it so that a group of us could share information on Jane Sightings, movies, books, articles, etc. So far it has worked beautifully and I think everyone has enjoyed sharing information.

I do want to point some things out, though, because there has been some confusion on this matter: My email distribution list is NOT an official list for the chapter. It should not be considered a complete list of our members, since not all members have computers or

want to receive the emails. Keeping that in mind here are some points I need everyone to be aware of:

1. OUR NEWSLETTER is the official, and best, way to communicate information that needs to reach all current chapter members.
2. Any time you are tired of receiving the shared emails from the group, don't hesitate to let me know and I'll quickly remove your name from the list.
3. If you ever have something you want to share with the email distribution list and get into the newsletter, don't hesitate to send it to me.
4. I realize that there are chapter members who cannot open all the attachments I send out. I have a MAC computer and there are a billion firewalls out there--blame Bill Gates and hackers for the problem :) However, please know that all the articles I send out are added to our website or will appear in our newsletter.
5. Janet Worley and I know there are a number of our members who do not have computers and so we try very hard to get as much of the info into our newsletter.
6. If a chapter member tells me they only want emails on Subject A but they don't want emails on Subject B, and only sometimes items on Subject C, I just delete their name from the list. Yes, that's mean but I don't have the time to create/maintain sub-group emails distribution lists. (Life is too short, I'm getting old and I don't get paid for this job.)
7. I will not forward any negative/nasty emails (this isn't a problem, but just in case). If you want nasty emails, join the Bronte Society. (Just joking!)
8. I will not forward marketing/sales items (that's for Ebay).
9. I will only forward emails that are fun and informative for those who WANT to be on the list, being on this list is not mandatory.

Thanks!  
Jeanne

## *Jane Sightings*

I know many Janeites were not happy with the recent Masterpiece adaptations of Jane's novels, but if we lived on Peter F. Hamilton's Earth of 2380 as described in his book Pandora's Star (2004, Del Rey Press), probably we would be even less happy.

"Wilson spent several days immersed in a sumptuous production of *Mansfield Park*. He'd read the novel in his first life, and was interested in the societal structure of the era that it conjured up (intriguing parallel with present-day Earth, he felt), though he was fairly sure

there hadn't been quite so many lesbian love scenes in the original book."

--submitted by Mary Laney

## *Book Review*

### **Books, books, books**

Last month I attended the annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt and lugged home a handful of books of interest to my husband and I hope, Austen readers too. What has Egypt to do with Austen? If you recall, Francis Austen took command of the Canopus as a direct result of the Battle of the Nile. The most scholarly of the works is Napoleon's Egypt: invading the Middle East, by Juan Cole (Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), which details the political, military and cultural importance of Napoleon's invasion of Egypt and particularly denotes the folly of a lack of comprehension of the complexities of Islam (still true today, I fear). The Discovery of Egypt: Vivant Denon's travels with Napoleon's army, by Terence M. Russell (Sutton, 2005) is a very readable and profusely illustrated account of the expedition and people and places in Egypt as recorded by Denon, the chief scientist among the savants accompanying Napoleon. A somewhat esoteric title is Napoleon's proconsul in Egypt: the life and times of Bernardino Drovelli, by Ronald T. Ridley (Rubicon Press, 2---?) giving us a glimpse into the astonishing way Europe, through Drovelli, guided and manipulated Egyptian affairs for 20 years following the French invasion. Lastly, for those of us who like gossipy, somewhat fictionalized, history "light", there is The linguist and the emperor:

Napoleon and Champollion's quest to decipher the Rosetta Stone, by Daniel Meyerson (Ballantine Books, 2004) which treats us to the parallel lives of the men, each important in their own way.

Elaine Weeks

### *December Meeting by the Fireside*

In a variation on meeting places, the December meeting and Jane Austen birthday celebration will be in the Fireside Room at Magnolia Lutheran Church (in Seattle's Magnolia neighborhood.)

Member Kimberly Brangwin has generously donated the church space for December 14, as an alternative to our typical in-home holiday meeting place. The group met there in October, 2006, and found the space and facilities delightful. Thank you Kimberly.

More details in the November newsletter.

## Jane Austen: In the novelist's footsteps

**Adrian Woodford**

Last updated: 4:41 PM BST 06/05/2008

**Adrian Woodford finds inspiration and enchantment on a journey from Bath to Winchester, through significant locations in the life of the great novelist.**

In the spring of 1801, Jane Austen left her childhood home in rural Hampshire, and set off for Bath in a hackney chaise. Two centuries later, we followed her in a Ford Focus, copies of her collected letters and two of her novels on the back seat.

In Jane's day, Bath had fallen a little out of fashion, and was adjusting to its role as glamorous retirement home and last-chance salon for superannuated females. But it still had a formidable social scene, and the Pump Room was its centre.

On arrival in the city, you were expected to write your name, address and the length of your stay in "The Register". Everything "Society" needed to know about you could be gleaned from these bare facts. The Pump Room today has a slightly apologetic Visitor's Book, and modern entries commenting on the splendid cakes don't have the same resonance.

But it's still a glorious place. When we arrived it was flooded with light and filled with teatime chatter. A musical trio played in one corner, much as their forebears must have done when the heroine of Northanger Abbey, Catherine Morland, first walked in, open-mouthed in wonder, her eyes "here, there, and everywhere".

We weaved towards the four-headed pump spouting its warm, sulphurous waters. From the window, we caught a glimpse of the Roman Baths below. For once we had the advantage over Austen, as the great watery Temple was only properly excavated in 1897, 80 years after the author's death.

After a anachronistic "Minerva Smoothie", we headed outside, just in time to join a tiny band of Janeites on the Austen Centre's Tour of Bath. The streets surrounding the Abbey were stuffed with stories: a rich aunt falsely accused of shoplifting, a column of geese marched up and down Bath Street for a scene in a recent film of Persuasion.

I would bet that most of our little group's mental pictures of Austen's characters came courtesy of the BBC Costume Department, but a reading from Northanger Abbey briefly rescued the novel from the film-makers. We huddled in Union Passage, imagining Catherine Morland in the same spot, waiting for a gap between the

barouches and sedan chairs that fought for space in Cheap Street.

The tour finished at the Jane Austen Centre on Gay Street, where we enjoyed a breathless survey of Austen's five years in Bath, her six novels and the seven other Austen children, before taking a quick peek at the museum downstairs.

Heads full of muslin and lace, we spooled out of the front door and crunched up Gravel Walk. This was where Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth in *Persuasion* finally agree to marry. The Gravel Walk retains its whispered intimacy, but at its top end, Georgian Bath comes crashing into the scene. No matter how many times you see the Royal Crescent, the staggering boldness of its curve never ceases to amaze.

We spent the night in a hotel just off Great Pulteney Street. We had chosen the Kennard on the strength of a photo of its breakfast room, all heavy fabrics and Regency greens.

Following a lesson in English breakfasts from the hotel's Italian owner, we turned back to the beginning of the story, to Steventon, where Jane Austen spent the first 25 years of her life.

We plotted our route from a backwards reading of Austen's account of her journey to Bath, taking coffee (rather than asparagus and lobster) in The Black Swan at Devizes, before veering south to Andover.

After Andover, we left the main road to join the River Bourne as it carved an easy path through the Hampshire Highlands, passing country houses familiar from Austen's letters – Ithorpe, Deane and Ashe –and finally taking an easily missed sign off the B3400 towards Steventon.

The rectory where she was born – and wrote most of *Pride and Prejudice* – is, alas, long gone. We parked by the empty plot of land where it once stood, a solitary lime tree the last physical survivor.

In Bath, Austen's characters had been everywhere, flitting in and out of shops on Milsom Street or dancing in the Assembly Rooms. In Steventon, I could only picture Austen's family, walking up the hill to the church of St Nicholas, where her father was rector.

It's a beautifully simple setting. A yew tree, a mere 700-year-old stripling when Austen worshipped here, spreads over the entrance, its branches threatening to obscure the carved medieval faces flanking the door.

It was with a feeling of familiarity that we read the epitaphs inside the church: beside nieces and great-nephews there was a touchingly sincere dedication to

Jane's eldest brother James, honoured inside and buried outside.

From Steventon we headed deeper into Hampshire. Austen herself left Bath in 1806, dreaming of a permanent home where she could revive the literary career that had reached an unwanted full stop. After a short stay in Southampton, living in a square long since ground beneath the developer's heel, the Austen family, or at least the female part of it, came to its final rest in Chawton.

In this pretty Hampshire village, their pretty, unassuming house has changed little in 200 years. We ducked through the front door, passing cabinets of curios and first editions. In the dining room I caught my first fleeting glimpse of Austen the writer. Her modest desk, where she wrote the majority of her novels, stood by the window, looking out onto the road to Winchester. A creaking door, left deliberately unopened so Austen had time to hide her manuscripts from prying eyes, was now wedged open. In the churchyard a few hundred yards away stand two tall tombstones side by side: Jane's mother and her beloved sister Cassandra.

There was still a final chapter. In 1817, Austen travelled to Winchester in a doomed search for health. From descriptions in her letters, it is thought she died of Addison's Disease, but the diagnosis came a century too late. We found her final lodgings in College Street, a plaque marking the house where she died.

A two-minute stroll took us to Austen's final resting place inside Winchester cathedral. Light poured through the dazzling west window, but we had our eyes to the ground, searching out the modest black slab marking her grave.

There was more of Austen's life to see: Lyme Regis, Stoneleigh Abbey, the busy streets around Piccadilly's Burlington Arcade. But standing over her grave, we had reached an appropriate ending.

Fifty years after her death, the first trickle of pilgrims came looking for her final resting place. Since her grave made no mention of her novels, a puzzled verger waylaid one of these visitors, "Pray, Sir, can you tell me whether there was anything particular about that lady? So many people want to know where she was buried."

Story from Telegraph Travel:  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/europe/uk/1922788/Jane-Austen-In-the-novelist%27s-footsteps.html>



## 2008 Survey

Members of local JASNA chapters must be members of the national organization. Beyond this requirement, each Region sets its own procedures for conducting meetings, funding activities, finding meeting space, presenting programs, and so on. In the Puget Sound Region, we have traditionally charged yearly dues to cover the costs of our newsletter, The Jane Austen Times, our web page, and other routine operating expenses. We have relied on members to volunteer their homes or identify free locations, and to provide refreshments, knowledge and skills for the meetings.

Only rarely do we charge for exceptional facilities or presentations. Other Regions follow different systems. Is it time for us to change?

Your answers to these questions will help decide the future of the Puget Sound Region.

1. How should our activities be funded?

- Regular dues
- Appeal for donations
- Use up our accumulated funds
- Sale of merchandise
- Charge for programs

2. If we continue to charge yearly dues, what is a reasonable sum?

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

3. Should there be provisions to assist potential members unable to afford the dues?

- No
- Yes - How? \_\_\_\_\_

4. We now meet every second month. Is this- \_\_\_\_\_ About right?

\_\_\_\_\_ Not right - How often should we meet? \_\_\_\_\_

5. What programs would you like to see presented at our meetings?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What programs would you like to be involved in presenting?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Would you like to see photos of our activities in The Jane Austen Times?

- No
- Yes - Can you take photos for this purpose?
- Yes

8. Would you like to see minutes of our meetings in The Jane Austen Times?

- No
- Yes - Will you volunteer to do this when you attend?

9. Have you encountered difficulties or inconveniences in attending our meetings?

- No
- Yes - What are they?

\_\_\_\_\_

10. How can our meetings or organization be improved?

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for helping us evaluate our activities.

Please add any other comments to improve our group.

\_\_\_\_\_

This survey may be dropped off at our June meeting or mailed to: Judith Fielder 1250 NW 126th Street Seattle, WA 98177