



# Jane Austen Society of North America Vancouver Chapter

Newsletter No. 115  
April 2012

*In this issue of the Newsletter, we have limericks, we have doggerels,  
we have rhyming verses, and an Ode to Jane Austen.*

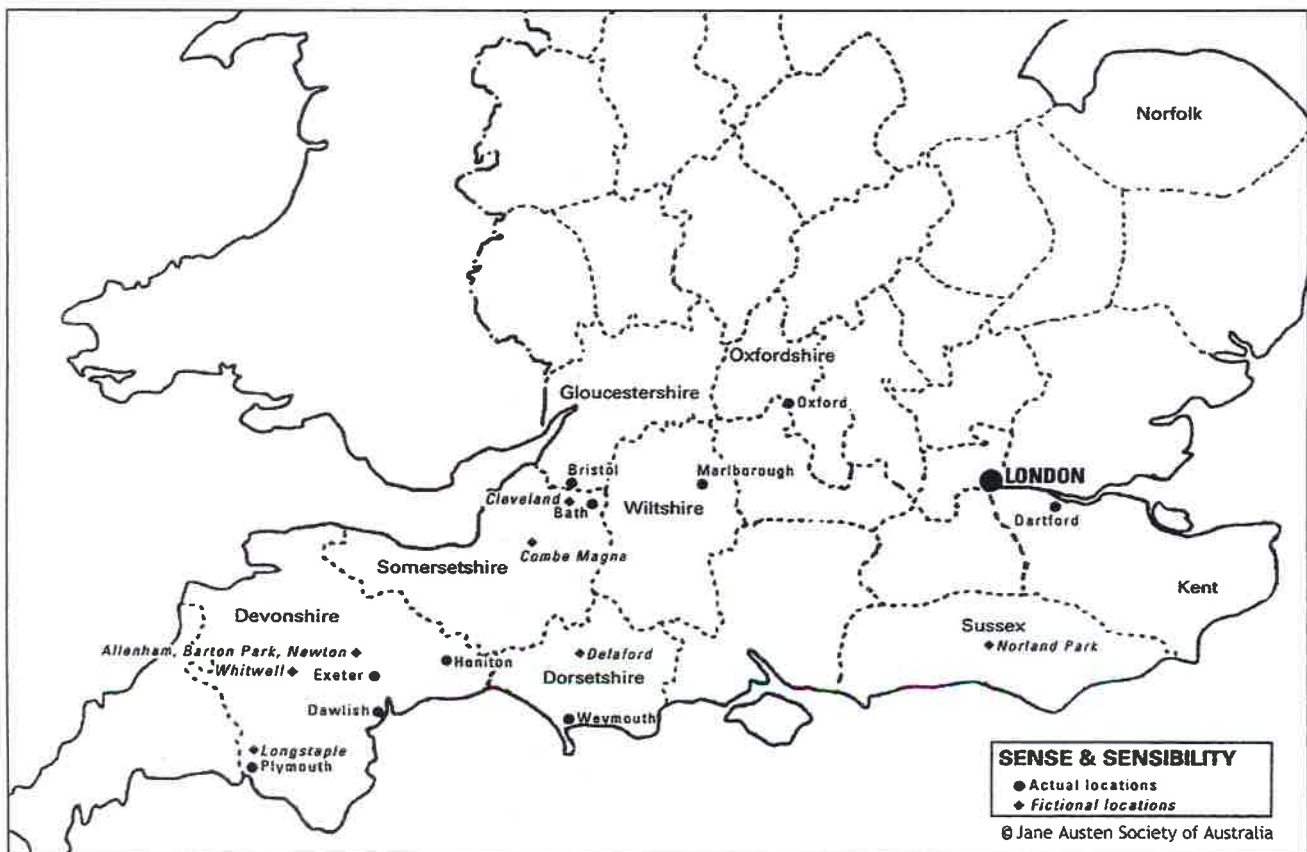
## Retrospective on the Fort Worth AGM at our November Gathering

The subject of our gathering on November 17<sup>th</sup> was JASNA's Annual General Meeting, held October 14-16, 2011, in Fort Worth, Texas. The theme of that conference was Sense & Sensibility: Celebrating 200 years of the Published Jane Austen. **Phyllis Bottomer** chaired a panel discussion by Vancouver members who went to Fort Worth; namely Phyllis, **Jennifer Bettiol**, **Elsbeth Flood**, **Joan Reynolds** and **Susan Spooner**. (Susan is the mother of Emma Spooner, who is reading for her Ph.D. at the Univ. of Calgary, and was a speaker at the AGM.)

In order to write this report, Joan Reynolds has kindly lent me the comprehensive binder she has compiled as a record and keepsake of the conference. There is so much information about the AGM on the Web and in JASNA News, that what follows here is, hopefully, information which one cannot easily find elsewhere. For instance, on the inside front cover of the conference's program was the following map, which is reprinted here through the courtesy of the Jane Austen Society of Australia.

### WHERE IN THE WORLD IS SENSE & SENSIBILITY?

This map is reproduced by kind permission of the Jane Austen Society of Australia from their publication, *Where's Where in Jane Austen...and What Happens There*, (2002) Patrick Wilson. A copy of this book, which has maps from all the novels, is available for purchase on JASA's website at [www.jasa.net.au/regfair/www.htm](http://www.jasa.net.au/regfair/www.htm)



In her introduction, Phyllis mentioned that the Western theme was prominent at Fort Worth, and many functions such as dance classes, 'whist for dummies' and a silhouette workshop were held on the day before the conference officially began.

Elspeth reported on the opening plenary lecture by Dr. Joan Ray, "Sense & Sensibility as Austen's Problem Novel." The former president of JASNA gave a humorous and scholarly analysis worthy of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the novel's initial publication. (Other reports by Elspeth are listed at [www.jasnancouver.ca](http://www.jasnancouver.ca))

Joan was very impressed by Dr. Sheryl Craig's paper "Wealth Has Much to Do With It: The Economics of Sense & Sensibility." Dr. Craig, who is editor of JASNA News, linked the very unsettled economics, politics and war of the times together to provide a context for the novel. When the journal *Persuasions* is published, this is one of the first articles Joan will turn to!

Jennifer and Joan attended a truly great breakout session: Bill Peirson and Chris Christensen co-hosted "Ports of the Period" which, as well as being informative, was a wine tasting with MANY bottles provided by the speakers. And these attorneys from Dallas provided not just port, but sherries, brandies and other libations. Everyone was VERY merry by the end of the session, which had been appropriately scheduled for the cocktail hour. One Janeite opined, "This is the best breakout session I've ever been to!"

Next to set us giggling was the report by Phyllis on William Phillips's "Meaner than a Texas Polecat: Present Day Perspectives on Austen's Largest Cast of 'Nasties'." (a Texas polecat is a skunk) *Sense and Sensibility* has the largest cast of nasty characters in all of Austen's fiction, and Phillips ranked them from least to most nasty: Lady Middleton, Robert Ferrars, John Willoughby, Fanny Dashwood, Mrs. Ferrars, John Dashwood (for the far-reaching economic effect of his neglect), and Lucy Steele as positively the worst, a nasty little scheming sociopath. (More from William Phillips follows at the end of this report.)

Jennifer attended the breakout session by Pat Michaelson entitled "How to Talk Like Mrs. Palmer (and other silly people.)" The vocabulary had been analyzed using a concordance and here are two helpful links: <http://victorian.lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/concordance/austen> <http://www.mollands.net/etexts/novels.html>

Our panel on November 17<sup>th</sup> reported on several other sessions at the AGM. Susan Spooner attended the silhouette workshop and made one of her daughter, Emma. She reported on Doug Burchill's talk "Au5t3n Journeys in the Jane Austen Pop Culture Underground". Both Elspeth and Susan attended the lecture by Emma Spooner, "Cultivating Sense from the Cult of Sensibility: The Influence of Frances Burney and Maria Edgeworth in Austen's Sense and Sensibility." The work of Jane Austen's literary antecedents was discussed, and Elspeth felt that Emma did a fine job and was very brave, considering that Elaine Bander, who is President of the Burney Society, was in the room! Joan had her vocabulary expanded at Tom Kelly's "Dads, Cads and Lads", and Jennifer attended James Nagle's "Coaches, Barouches and Gigs, O My: -- Land Transportation in Jane Austen's Time." One of the tidbits gleaned was that in the age of coaching, the mail was so unsafe that people cut bank notes in two and sent them by different posts.

Tucked into Joan Reynolds' binder is a booklet entitled "Such Things As Please My Own Appetite: Food and Drink in Jane Austen's Time", published by the Washington, DC Chapter of JASNA. The first article is "Dining at the Great House: Food and Drink in the Time of Jane Austen" penned by our own **Eileen Sutherland**, and printed in *Persuasions* No. 12, 1990. This is, it need hardly be said, a most informative paper, and Eileen says, "Mr. Watson, like Mr. Woodhouse, likes to have a basin of gruel before retiring to bed. Poor old dears, one pities them as victims of indigestion and insomnia. At least, I used to think of them like that until I came across recipes for gruel, which gave me second thoughts about these two elderly gentlemen. Most gruels in old cook-books – made from groats, sago or barley – call for almost as much wine as water, and are flavoured with sugar and cinnamon or nutmeg. One would certainly sleep like a baby after a bowlful."

William Phillips' Sense & Sensibility Doggerel (presented at the Fort Worth AGM)

*Many thanks to Mr. Phillips who has kindly given us permission to reprint his creation.*

**Prologue:** Two hundred years before 2011  
Jane Austen introduced fiction from heaven.  
She cobbled ironical turns of the phrase  
To a point where all the world rings with her praise.

Now comes this William, who is right on the verge  
Of verses so bad that we really should purge  
Them, since all they do is repulse and confuse,  
And reading them only gives Janeites the blues.

Enough of such drivel, here comes this year's verse,  
Which leaves even Elinor spewing a curse.  
Twitter your mate, 'n say, "OMG, Honey!  
What will he produce for Sex, Power and Money?"

*With enormous apologies to my beloved 'Sense and Sensibility', I offer for your amusement (and condemnation) yet another pathetic doggerel version of an Austen novel. I call this one*

**Avarice & Amiability**

Four poor Dashwood women the heroines are.  
They do not inherit, so must move quite far  
To Devonshire cottage, dumped by John – the scum  
Elinor, Marianne, Marg'ret and their mum.

A cast overflowing with people most rude  
Though quite a few sillies do lighten the mood.  
It is Mrs. F's clan who irritate most.  
To this cast of nasties I now raise a toast:

John Dashwood and Fanny – ungenerous jerks,  
And later on Lucy, who just for the perks  
Weds foppish Robert, number two Ferrars' son.  
(Sir Walter Elliot pales by comparison.)

Only Edward escapes the vileness of kin,  
With some weakness of mind and thickness of skin.  
That's too unkind, he's not as dim as all that,  
Education made him a virtual Pratt.

He attracts Elinor; she wants to win 'im,  
But Lucy's already got her hook in 'im.  
Edward had proposed to her some years before  
When still a dull teen who did not know the score.

Till Lucy drops Ed in one New York minute,  
She gloats over El, and rubs her nose in it.  
While all these plot twists you may find grating,  
You still must meet Brandon – geezer-in-waiting.

You see from the outset, he's been really hot  
For Marianne. But reciprocal, it's not  
'Cause there's one more nasty; John Willoughby's it,  
An improv'rish, libertine, narcissist git!

He woos Marianne. She brooks no other blokes.  
He dumps her; she languishes- damn nearly croaks  
Putrid infection! She barely recovers;  
In flannel waistcoat, old Brandon just hovers.

Once Lucy snares Robert, Ed rushes to Devon –  
Wins hand of Elinor; they're both in heaven.  
Ed's mum reluctantly forks over some bread.  
Ma Jennings comes visiting, just like she said.

Willoughby fares better – when wife's not crabby,  
Mrs. Smith forgives – finances not shabby.  
Gets credit for attitude – showing some heart  
That Marianne's beauty's still top of the chart.

John, Fanny and Ferrarses hang out in town  
With Lucy in charge now – it's hard to choke down.  
Zero affection – minimal conjunction –  
Setting new records for family dysfunction.

In Delaford, there's one more wedding to bless.  
It's Marianne's – to whom is not hard to guess.  
Brandon waited 'til Willoughby was o'erset.  
Sisters and hubbies live happ'ly in Dorset.

**Epilogue:** Should doggerel lovers be tempted to rave,  
Please pity poor Jane as she spins in her grave

*-Report compiled and written by the Editor*

### [Austen's Proposals - September 2011 Meeting](#)

Our meeting in September 2011 was entitled "Austen's Proposals: Heard and Unheard" and members were invited to participate with their ideas on marriage proposals in Jane Austen's world, whether real or imagined. To "spark" their creativity, it was suggested that, among other things, they give a reading of their favourite proposal, join with others to create and perform a skit, or pen a limerick.

The treasurer, **Jennifer Bettiol**, welcomed everyone to the meeting, reported on our satisfactory financial status, and we attended to some brief matters of business. We then proceeded to what may be described as a "potpourri" of entertainment offers by JASNA Vancouver members. Regional Coordinator, **Phyllis Bottomer**, had prepared "A Marriage Proposal Quiz" and we gave our highly accurate answers with gusto. **Mary Atkins** had googled clever proposal ideas and we had a good laugh. A member suggested Kim Wilson's new book, "In the Garden with Jane Austen".

After that, many limericks were recited, but the first one was not about proposals of marriage. It marked a thrilling event: the Chair of our program committee, **Pam Ottridge**, has become the grandmother of triplets! Phyllis Bottomer wrote:

*Polly, Marley, and Thea are here,  
For them we do give a big cheer!  
As they bring Pam triple fun  
Tho' Austen name they bear none,  
Soon her novels they'll enjoy -- never fear.*

(The back story to this was that Phyllis had suggested they be named Elizabeth, Emma and Elinor. Be that as it may, we consider the production of a "job lot" of tiny future Janeites to be highly satisfactory.)

#### From Jane Austen Society - UK

*There was a young Wentworth called Fred  
Who wanted Anne Elliot to wed.  
But the dutiful Anne  
Renounced this fine man,  
Though he finally got her to bed.*

#### From Vancouver member, Elizabeth Walker

*Dear reader, do you suppose  
Robert got down on his knees to propose?  
And did Harriet weighing cons  
Of Emma's various dons  
Quickly assent – in a manner verbose?*

#### From JASA:

*Dear Edward had chosen his wife,  
Yet soon was embroiled in strife,  
Though pledged to Miss Steele,  
Our reluctant heel  
At last found the love of his life.*

#### From the U.K. website:

*Henry Crawford put forth his best  
For the hand of Miss Price (his quest),  
William's promotion  
Was his love potion –  
He's refused, as you might have guessed.*

#### From Vancouver member, Joan Reynolds:

*Forget ghosts and gothic illusion,  
Instead one should place one's effusion  
On Mr. Tilney's appeal  
(now he's the real deal)  
And you'll love this novel's conclusion.*

#### From Joan Reynolds:

*Poor Anne Elliot has mislaid her bloom,  
Her family's a pain, all is gloom,  
But Wentworth still pines,  
So he jots down some lines,  
And Anne's thrilled for their love to resume.*

Taking up the challenge, **Irene Howard** gave us the main event of the morning, a biography of Jane Austen's aunt, Philadelphia Austen Hancock. Irene incorporated a skit which was acted with flair by **Jennifer Bettiol** and **Michelle Siu**. The following is excerpted from Irene's presentation, as well as George Tucker's chronicle of the Austen family, *A Goodly Heritage*, and Claire Tomalin's *Jane Austen: A Life*.

#### Real and Imagined: Some Scenes from the Life and Loves of Jane Austen's Aunt Philadelphia

For Philadelphia Hancock's place in the Austen family tree, it is useful to go back a generation. William Austen was a man of Kent, and he and his wife had four children. The eldest daughter, Hampson, died young. The other children were Philadelphia (b1730), George (b1731) and Leonora. Their mother died in 1732, and when their father died in 1737 they became wards of William's elder brother, Francis, a lawyer. The fate of Leonora is lost to history, but George was educated at Tonbridge School, then at St. John's College, Oxford. He was ordained a clergyman in 1755, and he and his wife became parents of Jane in 1775. Jane was the seventh of eight children, born in the Hampshire village of Steventon.

Philadelphia, who was a spirited young woman without a fortune, decided to improve her prospects by going to India to find a husband. Having received the permission of officials in the British East India Company, she boarded the Bombay Castle in 1752 for the six month's journey to Madras. She arrived in February 1753, and six months later married Tysoe Saul Hancock, a surgeon and trader in the employ of the B.E.I.C. Mission successful! True, he was forty-two years old, almost twice her age, but he was a good man, considerate, sensible and certainly practical.

It is likely that Philadelphia did not arrive in India unannounced. Claire Tomalin conjectures that Hancock may have asked his English lawyer, Francis Austen, for assistance in finding a suitably marriageable young lady. When she arrived in Madras they were introduced, a courtship was commenced and (Irene imagines) "after six months of walking the park and making dutiful appearances at company tea parties and garden fêtes with this charming young lady on his arm, Tysoe proposed." Ah, but how?

Irene confesses she "lifted" the following scene straight out of Oscar Wilde's *"The Importance of Being Earnest"*. Only the names have been changed. Michelle and Jennifer took centre stage.

(beginning of skit)

Tysoe: Philadelphia, I must get christened at once – I mean, we must get married at once.

Phila: Married, Mr. Hancock?

Tysoe: (astounded) Well...surely. You know that I love you and you led me to believe, Miss Austen, that you were not absolutely indifferent to me.

Phila: I adore you. But you haven't proposed to me yet. Nothing has been said at all about marriage. The subject has not even been touched on.

Tysoe: Well, may I propose to you now?

Phila: I think it would be an admirable opportunity. And to spare you any possible disappointment, Mr. Hancock, I think it only fair to tell you frankly beforehand that I am fully determined to accept you.

Tysoe: Philadelphia!

Phila: Yes, Mr. Hancock, what have you got to say to me?

Tysoe: You know what I have got to say to you.

Phila: Yes, but you don't say it.

Tysoe: Philadelphia, will you marry me? (goes on his knees)

Phila: Of course I will, darling. How long you have been about it. I am afraid you have very little experience on how to propose.

(end of skit) Bows, curtses, much applause. The players exit.

But now, back to real life. In 1759 the Hancock's moved north to Bengal and met Warren Hastings. Claire Tomalin calls Hastings "the biggest meritocrat of them all", on the way to becoming governor of Bengal, and then governor-general of India. Powerful, wealthy and arrogant, he was also a bereaved young widower whose baby daughter Elizabeth had died. The men had become business partners and they were all warm friends when Philadelphia had her first child, a daughter christened Elizabeth, in 1761. Hastings became godfather, and immediately tongues began to wag. Claire Tomalin asks "Was she Hancock's child, or Hastings?" Nevertheless, Tysoe welcomed the child and, she says, "conducted himself thereafter as a devoted father."

As a child, Jane Austen had been told the story of her Aunt Philadelphia, so she knew of her early life, and sympathized. In Jane's unfinished story, *Catherine (or The Bower)*, Catherine's friend Camilla remarks that an orphan, Miss Wynne, was very lucky to have been sent out to India to be married. Catherine replies, "Do you call it lucky, for a Girl of Genius and Feeling, to be sent in quest of a Husband to Bengal, to be married there to a Man of whose Disposition she has no opportunity of judging till her Judgement is of no use to her, who may be a tyrant, or a Fool or both for what she knows to the Contrary. Do you call that *fortunate*?" (Chapman Minor Works, Volume 3, p 205)

Both Hastings and the Hancocks left India for England in 1765, and Hastings took a house in London just a few streets away from Tysoe, Phila and little Betsy. The gossip continued, and Lord Clive, later governor-general of India, wrote to his wife, who was in England:

"In no circumstances whatever keep company with Mrs. Hancock for it is beyond a doubt that she abandoned herself to Mr. Hastings, indeed I would rather you had no acquaintance with the ladies who have been in India, they stand in such little esteem in England that their company cannot be of credit to Lady Clive."

Finding that his savings were inadequate to support his family, Tysoe returned to India in 1768. His wife continued her life in the fashionable London street, and little Eliza, as she was now called, learned "to ride, to sing, to play the harp and the pianoforte, to dance, do arithmetic and write a good hand." Claire Tomlin further reports that she studied French, was taken to the theatre and wore beautiful clothes. Life was certainly expensive, and over time Hastings made settlements on Eliza totalling £10,000. About these gifts Tysoe warned Phila not to talk to anyone:

"Let me caution you not to acquaint even the dearest friend you have with this circumstance. Tell Betsy only that her godfather has made her a great present...."

Then, In 1774, Warren Hastings re-married in India, and Phila wanted to return also, perhaps so that she and her daughter would not lose their place in his affections. Tysoe wrote to England, absolutely forbidding such a step, fearful of many perils which might befall them both. Tysoe Hancock died in India in 1775.

For financial reasons, and perhaps also because of the ambiguity of their social position in England, Philadelphia took Eliza to the continent. They travelled to Germany, Brussels and France, and Eliza's letters to her English cousins described a world as splendid as the Arabian nights. "Marie Antoinette is described in Turkish dress at a ball, covered in diamonds, feathers, flowers, silver gauze and jewels of all kinds."

Eliza was introduced to Jean François Capot de Feuillide, an enterprising young Frenchman, and they married in 1781. Her highly-coloured life, one of triumph and tragedy, is chronicled in Tomalin, Tucker, and a biography by Deirdre Le Faye. It might be described as the polar opposite of the life of her cousin, Jane Austen. Capot de Feuillide perished in the Terror in 1794, and in 1797 Eliza married Jane's brother Henry. He had been smitten with her since his teens.

Philadelphia ultimately settled in England, and was very much a part of the Austen's family circle. She helped care for Eliza's handicapped little boy, Hastings, and died in 1792. She was nursed through her long illness by her loving daughter.

#### References:

Claire Tomalin, Jane Austen: A Life, Penguin PB 1998

George Holbert Tucker, A Goodly Heritage: A History of Jane Austen's Family, Carcanet New Press 1983

R.W. Chapman, The Oxford Illustrated Works of Jane Austen, Minor Works, Oxford University Press 1988

*-Report compiled and written by the Editor*

### Featuring Diversions of Dress and Dance – December 2012 Meeting

We celebrated Jane Austen's birthday on December 17, which marked 236 years and one day since she was born in the little Hampshire village of Steventon in 1775. **Phyllis Bottomer** greeted us and passed on thanks from the Consul General of Japan for contributions the Vancouver Chapter of JASNA made towards tsunami relief. We were also informed that a former member, **Margaret Libbert**, has donated a beautifully illustrated annotated edition of *Pride and Prejudice* to our library.

Our morning speaker was **Jessica Kalan**, who graduates this year from Capilano University's program for stage and screen costume design. During two years in this program, the students learn the practicalities of costume construction, as well as design and fashion history. Jessica was introduced by Phyllis, who had struck up a conversation when she spotted Jessica's eye-catching license plate cover which read:

*I'd rather be at Pemberley*

I  Jane Austen

#### Costuming in Sense and Sensibilities:

#### Mourning garments, managing on a reduced income, and more

Jessica began her talk by introducing her mannequin, which has been constructed to her own dimensions. "Marianne" (as she had been christened for the occasion) was modestly attired in a chemise. Over that came the corset which had a pocket into which is inserted the BUSK, a long, thin flat wooden stick with rounded ends. Ladies wore this device to create the "up and separate" look desired for the high empire waist and long, lithe lines of the columnar silhouette. Some of the styles in this era are called round gowns. The busk would certainly have forced the wearer into an erect posture and, if she could bend at all, it would have been at the hip. The corset was closed with a single lace at the back, so the Dashwood sisters would have helped dress each other in the absence of a maid. Believe it or not, this is known as a soft corset, because it is corded, not boned.

Over the corset came the petticoat, and usually only one was worn during the late Georgian era. It was used for modesty, warmth, and to give body to the skirts. Nevertheless, at this time many ladies would sprinkle the petticoat with water so that it would cling to their legs and the practice resulted in much illness and death. A dress with long sleeves was worn during the day, and long trained gowns were in fashion around 1800-07, but after that, trains were only worn at night. The particular dress Jessica showed us “is a bib or drop-front gown, in which the front ‘drops’ exposing a panel that comes across and is pinned or buttoned closed, then the top is pinned to the dress.” The wearer was protected from the pins by many layers. Then ties came around the back in a pretty bow, sometimes in contrasting ribbon. Usually a kerchief or chemisette was tucked into the neckline during the daytime.

Finally, a Spencer jacket could be donned for outside wear. This style was copied from Earl Spencer, who wore a short jacket in his military campaigns against Napoleon. It became all the fashion with ladies who felt they were being patriotic. Shoes, stockings, gloves and a smart bonnet were essential, and in the 1995 film *Sense and Sensibility*, Marianne Dashwood is seen wearing a CAPOTE, a long, shell-like style.



Next Jessica turned to mourning garments and managing a bereavement wardrobe on a reduced income. Georgian England set the stage for the much more rigid mourning of Victoria etiquette. Children and relatives were not required to mourn quite as deeply as the widow, whose period was traditionally expected to be one year plus a day. For the wealthy, a new wardrobe with gowns and cloaks made up in black crape, bombazeen, gauze and other matte fabrics was “de riguer”. Locketts and rings containing a lock of hair of the departed were favoured, and hats and hair were trimmed with ribbons and white feathers. Said Jessica, “Thus sombrely outfitted there could be no questioning one’s sorrow. All the same, you could attire yourself to look fabulous!”.

For those with smaller means, however, a letter from Jane Austen detailing preparations following the death of her sister-in-law in October 1808 indicates how a few select pieces might be altered. (A pelisse is a woman’s loose, light-weight coat.)

“My mother is preparing for mourning Mrs. Edward Knight. She has picked her old Silk Pelisse to pieces and means to have it dyed black for a gown...I am to be in bombazeen and crape, according to what we are told is universal here, and which agrees with Martha’s previous observation. My mourning will not impoverish me, for by having my velvet pelisse fresh lined and made up, I am sure I shall have no occasion this winter for anything new of that sort. One miss Baker makes my gown and the other my bonnet, which is to be silk covered with crape.”





All clothing was made by hand and fabric, which was made commercially, was by far the most expensive component. Hence, by refurbishing old pieces, the ladies were able to spend the money to order new accessories such as the bonnet Jane refers to.

White was a highly fashionable colour, being reminiscent of the columns of Greek temples, but white is also a colour of mourning. Jessica showed us illustrations of such day dresses, not especially ornate, which she said Elinor and Marianne would have found suitable for mourning their father. When complemented with black, grey, or lavender ribbon, they would have looked very acceptable. One of the dresses was shown with a cashmere shawl. “You had to have a shawl” said Jessica. She directed the sartorially-inclined amongst us to [Kannik’s Korner](#) and [Farmhouse Fabrics](#) as sources for Swiss muslin, patterns and other supplies. We were also shown a picture of a French evening gown, very low cut and heavily embroidered with gold. Jessica concluded her talk by pointing out that ladies (we use the term loosely here) went to the Paris Opera House equipped with scissors, so that they could snip their neighbour’s dresses, and pull out the gold threads. Can you beat that?

Before our delicious Christmas lunch, with main course catered by **Pam Ottridge** and **Barbara Phillips**, Phyllis read David Gallop’s *A Toast to the Memory of Jane Austen* and we sipped our red and white wine, served as always by the gallant **Ron Sutherland**.

For the afternoon program, **June Harman** came to talk and teach us about English country dance. She was wearing an early, dark Morris dancer costume with a wonderful feathered headdress. She told us that the formalized, hierarchical dances such as those in the Elizabeth, Restoration, and early Georgian courts were meant to be watched. They gave way to the more democratic dances of the late Georgian and Regency periods when the new mercantile classes and even the “pseudo-gentry” could buy memberships in the assembly rooms. Then demonstrations of the dances were given in the gym, and the Janeites were invited to participate. Contacts: 604-325-0703 Website: [juneharmon.com/e cd](http://juneharmon.com/e cd) email [june@juneharman.com](mailto:june@juneharman.com) We were reliably informed that her classes are great fun.

-Meeting report by the Editor

## *A Toast to the Memory of Jane Austen*

Jane Austen, were you here today  
You might find quite a lot to say.  
Some aspects of our present ways  
Would not receive your highest praise:  
You would not be the least impressed  
To see how younger people dressed;  
And if their gabbled speech you heard,  
You'd hardly understand a word.  
You'd wonder why they seek their joys  
In listening to ear-splitting noise,  
And probably you'd look askance  
At mindless modern modes of dance.  
You'd count amongst your chief dislikes  
Hell's Angels and their motor-bikes;  
Certain it is you wouldn't share  
Our passion for polluted air,  
Nor relish raw, unsightly views  
Of violence on the nightly news.

That you should be the current rage,  
Might, in itself, your pen engage.  
You'd feel, perhaps, a little sad  
To be a fashionable fad,  
And might request that light be shone  
On where your royalties have gone.

You might suggest the time is ripe  
To call a halt to all the hype  
That dares to desecrate your name,  
And brazenly exploits your fame –  
In novelettes, in DVD,  
In movies from the BBC,  
And worst of all (let's not forget),  
In chat-rooms on the Internet.

You might derive some gentle mirth  
From those who swoon at Colin Firth,  
And fear their throbbing hearts will break,  
As he climbs dripping from the lake.  
Besotted by his virile looks  
Why need they bother with your books?  
Good luck to them, if they get kissed,  
But – what a lot of fun they've missed!

They've missed the magic of your art,  
Your matchless merriment of heart,  
The shafts of dry, ironic wit,  
That through your stories lightly flit;  
The sweet, seductive ebbs and flows  
And cadences of graceful prose,  
Whose subtle power to attract  
Makes fiction seem more real than fact.  
And so it is, if time's the test,  
For still you rank among the best.  
The ancient sages wisely taught  
That art is long while life is not,  
And those whose works are truly great  
Are never, ever, out of date.

Should we one day be set afloat,  
And cast upon some shore remote,  
Far above Dickens, James or Joyce  
You'd be our "desert island" choice.  
Abide with us where'er we walk  
Eternal as Miss Bates's talk,  
And hold us spell-bound in your thrall.  
Prostrated at your feet we'd fall,  
But you've endowed us with such wealth,  
Let's stand instead and drink your health.

*Meetings*    *May 26: Jane Austen Day (Reservations-Michelle 604-616-3588)*  
*June 16: Susan Olsen "Samuel Johnson"*

**This Newsletter**, the publication of the Vancouver Region of the Jane Austen Society of North America, is issued periodically. All submissions on the subject of Jane Austen; her life, her works and her times, are welcome.

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