



# The Jane Austen Society of North America

JASNA Vancouver

NEWSLETTER NO. 57

FEBRUARY 1997

## *Soups* - Eileen Sutherland.

In the Spring, your fancy may "lightly turn to thoughts of love", but this time of year, it is more likely to turn to thoughts of delicious hot soup.

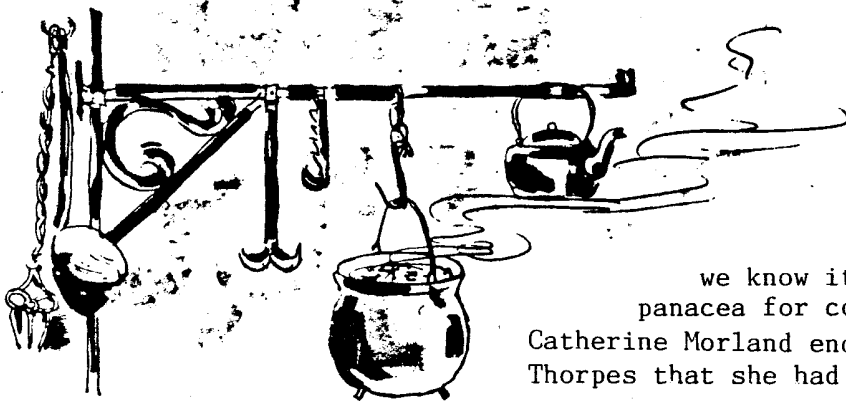
Except among the very poor, where fuel to keep a fire going was a prohibitive expense, almost every kitchen in Jane Austen's time would have had a pot simmering at the back of the fire, scraps of meat or vegetables added at random, always ready. This was what Emma had offered to the poor family she visited with Harriet, and the young women were overtaken *by a child from the cottage, setting out, according to orders, with her pitcher, to fetch broth from Hartfield.*

Soup was not served as a separate course at dinner, but was one of the variety of dishes placed on the table for the first course, à la française. It was often "removed" (and replaced) with a fish dish. When Tom Bertram has left home, Mary Crawford expects to miss him very much; dinner at Mansfield would be flat and melancholy: *The soup would be sent round in a most spiritless manner.* Mrs. Bennet congratulates herself on the dinner she has served to Bingley and Darcy: *The soup was fifty times better than what we had at the Lucas's last week.* When Cassandra was away from home, Jane took over her household duties. She mentions in a letter one dinner she planned: *We had some pease soup, a spare-rib, and a pudding* - nothing to be ashamed of when unexpected company dropped in at dinner time.

Soup seemed especially connected to balls - served sometimes as soon as the guests arrived, on other occasions just before they left. It was a sensible custom either way, considering the cold of a long, slow carriage journey, or the drafts encountered in inns or home corridors or damp rooms. It is the custom of the Edwards (in The Watsons) to serve some "comfortable" and "welcome" soup as soon as they arrived home after the ball. Miss Bates mentions it with her usual gratitude and delight when she is one of the first served at the Westons' ball at the Crown Inn. Fanny is sent off to bed at the end of the Mansfield ball, *feverish with hopes and fears, soup and negus.*

The "supper" served at an intermission in the dancing, almost always included soup. "White soup", made with veal and ground almonds, was a staple at balls. Mr. Bingley gives in to Lydia's importunate requests for a ball and promises one at Netherfield *as soon as*

*Nicholls has made white soup enough. ("White soup" was contemporary slang for the powder used for footmen's hair; but there is no need to interpret Bingley's reference in this way - many cookbooks include recipes for "White soup".*



Before the ubiquity of coffee as we know it today, hot soup was the common panacea for cold, hungry, tired travellers. When Catherine Morland enquired about the trip with the Thorpes that she had missed, she found that *they had*

*driven directly to the York Hotel, ate some soup, and bespoke an early dinner. When Sir Thomas Bertram arrived home from Antigua, Mrs. Norris officiously tried to get him some refreshment: Sure...a basin of soup would be a much better thing for you than tea.*

In a letter to Cassandra in 1798, Jane Austen reports on travelling with their mother: *She bore her journey better than I had expected, and at Basingstoke, where we stopped more than half an hour, received much comfort from a mess of broth.*

Soup, no matter how thin and watery, is considered a food not a beverage, and thus one eats it rather than drinks it. It is interesting that Jane Austen still uses the term "mess" as "a portion of liquid or pulpy food" (OED), which is most commonly known today from the Biblical phrase "a mess of pottage". Captain Cook used the term in 1790 in his journal of his voyages around the world: *several messes of porpois broth preparing.* and Byron used it in 1819 in Don Juan, writing of the sailors: *the distress/ Was also great with which they had to cope/ For want of water, and their solid mess/ was scant enough.* It was still in common usage well into Victorian times.

Whatever we call it, on cold, rainy winter days, we can wholeheartedly echo Miss Bates: *Soup...It smells most excellent, and I cannot help beginning.* But remember what Beethoven once said: *Only the pure of heart can make good soup.*

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"In [Virginia] Woolf's dream of a Day of Judgment, "the Almighty will turn to Peter and will say, not without a certain envy when He sees us coming with our books under our arms, 'Look, these need no reward - we have nothing to give them. They have loved reading'." [Reported in NYT Review of Books, Nov. 17, 1996]

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#### HAVE BOOKS, WILL TRAVEL

Abdul Kassem Ismael, Grand Vizier of Persia in the 10th century (reports Alberto Manguel in A History of Reading) 'in order not to part with his collection of 117,000 volumes when traveling, had them carried by a caravan of 400 camels trained to walk in alphabetical order.' [NYT Review of Books Nov.17, 1996]

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#### EVIL AND UNBELIEVABLE - Leila Vennewitz

I did not think I would ever find it impossible to read a Jane Austen work. But so it is with Lady Susan. Perhaps one should regard it as a youthful effort, but the unalleviated depiction of that horrible woman's character is too much for me. But worse than that: I find Lady Susan completely unbelievable.

However, Jane Austen's letters to Cassandra have been accompanying me recently, and I find them infinitely consoling and re- and re-readable.

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#### SEQUELS

Sequels to Austen novels are "like trading in the heirloom sterling for plastic spoons." - Nancy Pater, in Letter From Chicago.

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CHARLIE'S NOT MY DARLING, or, JANE WAS NO JACOBITE: Kathleen Glancy.

This year is the 250th anniversary of the Battle of Culloden, and the commemorative ceremonies have set me thinking. We know Jane Austen cherished a romantic admiration for Mary Queen of Scots - why then does she ignore the other tartan icon from the Stuart dynasty, Bonnie Prince Charlie?

Let me just, before developing this theme, knock a few of the myths that cling to the last battle on British soil, and indeed to the 1745 Rebellion which it ended, on the head. Even Eileen, in an editorial note on one of my earlier articles, described the '45 as a rebellion "against the English". It wasn't, it was against the Hanoverian dynasty - who were German - and began in the hope that the English would join it. A few did. Not all Scots did. At Culloden, if you had done a survey of the two armies you would have found that there were actually more Scots in Cumberland's army than in Charles Edward's. The rebel forces included French, Irish and a small English contingent and mainly consisted of some, but by no means all, Highland clans. The Government forces included other clans who had chosen to fight for the Hanoverian side - still others remained neutral - and a large contingent of professional soldiers who were Lowland Scots as well as English, Welsh and Irish professional soldiers. The Lowlands of Scotland had never been Jacobite (the name comes from the Latin for James, Jacobus. Charles Edward's grandfather, who was ousted from the throne for being Catholic, and the father whom he sought to place back on it were both called James). Another myth is that Charles Edward cared about Scotland. He didn't, save as a means to the end of becoming Prince of Wales and living in London off the revenues of the Duchy of Cornwall.

Charles Edward was, indeed, hardly Scottish at all. His mother was Polish. His father's mother was Italian, her husband's mother was French and his paternal grandmother Danish. James VI and I, the husband of Anne of Denmark, was the son of Mary Queen of Scots and her cousin and husband Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley. Mary's mother was French, and both she and Darnley were grandchildren of the Welsh/English Margaret Tudor. Charles Edward was born and bred in Italy, spoke English with a marked accent and spoke Gaelic not at all. Perhaps I've answered my own question - Jane was partial to the Scots, and he could hardly be described as one. But no, she admired half-French, a quarter Welsh/English Mary.

More likely, then, that he was simply too close in time. Now, he is a romantic legend and even then the tale of his escape after Culloden must have stirred even English blood. (I have to concede that the proud boast that despite a huge reward not a single one of the poor people of the Highlands betrayed him is rather undermined if you consider that the overwhelming majority of them had no idea whatsoever where he was and couldn't therefore betray him had they wanted to. The people who did know were extremely brave and loyal - rather more than he deserved). Jane Austen was born less than 30 years after Culloden. Her parents would have been too young to worry much about the '45, but older family members and friends would recall the very real fear of invasion which gripped London and the surrounding counties. There were contingency plans for shipping the Hanoverian royals abroad.

Jane was 13 when Charles Edward Stuart died, a lively and intelligent child in a liberally-minded family which encouraged her to learn and express herself. She must have heard people talk about him then, and it wasn't a mealy-mouthed age. She might therefore have heard about his life after Flora Macdonald waved goodbye to him - how he degenerated into an alcoholic wife-beater. They might not have mentioned that his wife was driven to leave him and instead live with, serially an



Italian poet and a French musician, while he was cared for by his natural daughter who had several illegitimate children by a high-ranking Catholic cleric, but then again they might. Easier far to romanticise Queen Mary. She had flaws, too, but there wasn't anyone around who had seen her at her worst, as British visitors on the Grand Tour had seen Charles.

In some ways it's a pity. I'd like to have known how Darcy's grandfather reacted when the rebel forces were on his doorstep (they reached Derby before realising there wasn't going to be mass English support), and Mrs. Reynolds could easily have included that information in her spiel for visitors. I'd like to know where the grandparents of the Scottish-named Crawfords, Rosses and Frasers from MP were in the '45. Mr. Campbell the surgeon from MP and Jane Fairfax's guardian Col. Campbell I do know to be descended from the principal Hanoverian-supporting clan, but were the ladies who then bore the Dalrymple and Stornoway titles among those who insisted that their reluctant Hanoverian-sympathising lords must take them to Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh to see if the Prince, who had captured it and was holding court there (the Castle held firm, though) was as bonnie as everyone said? If only Jane had been interested in Charles Edward Stuart, I might have known.

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### CONTROVERSIES

The most recent Puget Sound Newsletter presented these comments, which could set off a good lively discussion:

*Edward Ferrars and Willoughby do not differ fundamentally in their treatment of women, but only in the degree of their irresponsibility. Whereas Willoughby seduces and abandons Eliza II, Edward allows himself to attach Elinor and then is prepared to abandon her in order to marry Lucy Steele. In other words, they differ in degree, not in kind.*

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*Is it coincidental that "Ferrars" sounds like "ferret", and that "Willoughby" is reminiscent of a certain tree known to bend with the wind? (It is also no coincidence that Frank Churchill is not frank at all and that "Wickham" sounds like "wicked".)*

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*Is John Dashwood really so contemptible? After all, he is loyal to his wife and son and wants only the best for them. Is this not the essence of virtue? of traditional family values?*

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*With the possible exception of Elinor, are there any characters in Sense and Sensibility unworthy of our contempt?*

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"We can put a book down when we like without offending it; and it will never phone... It allows us to interact with others while keeping them safely out of the house. It's an intense, private cocooning with someone articulate, perhaps intelligent, probably flawed; in the course of the book, we get to know the author - the limits of his or her intelligence, wit, wisdom, his or her virtues and vices - better than we know many of our friends...

It is the reader who supplies meaning to the words presented by the writer: that is the alchemy that lies at the heart of reading's addictiveness. A writer says: 'It was a dark and stormy night.' We provide the running clouds, the driving rain, the swaying trees, the ribbon of road, the disappearing car."

- "Pull up a Chair, Crack Open a Book": Max Wyman, Sun, October 19, 1996.

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LIBRARY CORNER - Dianne Kerr.Audios

1. University of Wisconsin, The Courage to Write: Jane Austen, Janeites and JASNA. 1996. Donated by Eileen Sutherland. (A delightful survey - Joan Austn-Leigh had her brains picked for over an hour by Emily Auerbach, but then the latter unfortunately only included a few brief snatches of the former; our own Eileen Sutherland is also included among the Interviewees, and expresses herself, though briefly, beautifully).
2. University of Wisconsin, The Courage to Write: 1991 series. Not new, never catalogued. Jane Austen, Emily Bronte, George Sand, Mary Shelley, Charlotte Bronte, and George Eliot.
3. CBC Interview of UK Janeites by Eleanor Wachtel. 1996. Faye Weldon (Letters to Alice); Claire Tomlin & Marilyn Butler. Donated by Mary Atkins. (Much thanks - both this, and the tape donated by Eileen, are informed and witty listenings).

Compact Disc

The Movie Soundtrack of Sense and Sensibility. 1995.

Videos

1. Sense and Sensibility, the 1995 movie starring Emma Thompson. (Thanks to Diana Bodnar for finding this).
2. Clueless, 1995 movie based on Emma starring Alicia Silverstone. Astonishingly faithful parody; deliciously absurd. (Thanks to Mary Atkins for finding both these gems "on special").

Books and Booklets

1. Persuasions: JASNA Journals #1-16 (1979-1994); missing #4, 13 & 15. Donated by Eileen Sutherland (generous gift -- one of our Regions raffled a set off for a tidy sum in 1996). #16 has an Index of all articles previous.
2. A Family Performance of Austen's "Sir Charles Grandison"; playlet presented at the Richmond Conference, 1996. Austen has two roles: Jane 1 as she would have appeared in the 1790s and Jane 2 as she might comment today. Donated by Eileen Sutherland.
3. French, Judith: My Solitary Elegance. Edinburgh Festival Play Booklet. 1996. Donated by Jean Brown.
4. Carson, Victoria M.: Teaching J.A. -- A transdisciplinary Concept Model. 1996. Donated by Frances Wanamaker.
5. Mansfield Park Gazette. Single Sheet. Madison Conference. 1995. Donated by Eileen Sutherland.
6. Barron, Stephanie: Jane Austen and the Unpleasantness at Scargrave Manor. 1996. Donated by Viviane McClelland.
7. Rogers, Pat: Sposi in Surrey -- Links between Jane Austen and Fanny Burney. 1996. Donated by Eileen Sutherland.

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TO KISS OR NOT TO KISS.

From the newsletter of The Jane Austen Society's Annual General Meeting of July 20, 1996, held at Chawton House...Chairman Brian Southam explained that though he is frequently asked to give the Society's views on recent film and TV productions of Jane Austen's novels, by those whose job it is to comment in the media on events of the day, he invariably explains that the Society has no collective view. However, he believes all to be united in deploring Captain Wentworth's kiss in Bath's main thoroughfare, and Mr. Darcy's in an open carriage after the wedding - each singularly inappropriate endings for Jane Austen's work. [Quoted in The Writing Desk, JASNA Toronto Newsletter, Nov. 1996]

THE TOWER MENAGERIE - E.Sutherland.

*I should like to see Miss Burdett very well, but that I am rather frightened by hearing that she wishes to be introduced to me. - If I am a wild Beast, I cannot help it. It is not my own fault. - Letters, May 24, 1813.*

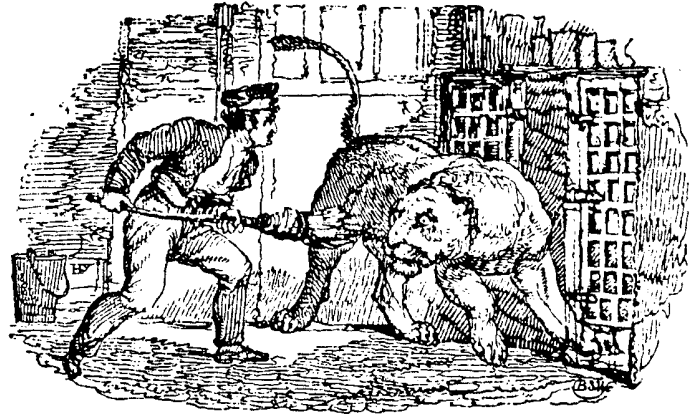
The "wild beasts" Jane Austen was thinking of were probably those kept at the Tower Menagerie, an object of curiosity to Londoners and visitors alike.

In 1235, the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II presented King Henry III with three leopards. This was the beginning of the custom of keeping exotic beasts at the Tower, a tradition which remained unbroken until 1834.

At first, the animals were kept for the amusement of the king and courtiers only, but by the 16th century the Tower Menagerie had become a tourist attraction, with lions and lionesses, tiger, lynx, wolf, camels and an elephant. Samuel Johnson's constant question to visiting Scotsmen was: "Have you seen the lions?" A guide-book of 1799 noted that "the first thing a stranger usually goes to see, whose curiosity leads him to view the rarities in this place, is the wild beasts." For nine pence a visitor could "be shown such a noble collection of wild creatures as is no-where else to be seen in Great Britain."

The animals were kept in dens or cages, and could be watched safely through large iron grates. Some of the animals displayed resentment, and any umbrellas, hats, canes or parasols carelessly put in reach were snatched, clawed up and destroyed. But lion cubs were frequently allowed to wander loose among the crowds of visitors.

The birth of animals in the menagerie was a matter of great popular interest, as were the infrequent deaths - an ostrich died after ingesting 80 nails, and a "Secretary bird, having incautiously introduced its long neck into the den of the hyena, was deprived of it and of its head at one bite."



During the last years of the reign of George III, the menagerie collections had dwindled to a grizzly bear, an elephant and a few birds; but later were built up again to almost 300 animals, birds and reptiles. In 1834, in the reign of William IV, the collection was moved to become the nucleus of the London Zoo at Regent's Park, and the only exotic creatures that remain at the Tower are the famous ravens.

[Information from History Today, August 1996: "The Tower of London's Royal Menagerie", by Phillip Drennon Thomas]

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HONG KONG DROPS JANE AUSTEN

Among the momentous events taking place in Hong Kong this year, perhaps it is worth noting that the British Council Library there has discarded from its shelves 20,000 volumes of Western classical literary works, including Shakespeare, Chaucer and Jane Austen. According to the newspaper report in January, records show no one had borrowed these books in the past year. They will be replaced by video and computer terminals for surfing the Internet.

*Too often, alas, it is so. (Mansfield Park)*

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The August 1996 Newsletter printed excerpts from the chapter "The Humiliation of Elizabeth Bennet", from Susan Fraiman's book Becoming Women. British Writers and the Novel of Development. Among other things, Fraiman wrote:

*What may surprise and sadden us, however...is that a heroine who began so competent to judge should end up so critically disabled, so reliant for judgment on somebody else.*

and: *[Darcy's] judgment of Jane is just as mistaken - and, though he denies it, as partial - as Elizabeth's view of Wickham...Yet Darcy's credibility remains intact.*

and: *The psychological drama of a heroine 'awakening' to her true identity is brought into conflict with the social drama of an outspoken girl entering a world whose voices drown out her own.*

Now, Barbara Hellering of New York comments:

I do agree with the author. Something has bothered me vaguely for a long time and this exposes it - in a way Elizabeth sells herself out - she will accommodate herself more to Darcy than he to her. But that seems to be the way of the world.

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### NECK AND NECKABILITY

In a light and frivolous review of the film Emma, entitled "The Great Neck Show", in a recent Spectator Magazine, Mark Steyn writes:

"The neck in question belongs to Gwyneth Paltrow, and, in Douglas McGrath's adaptation, it's the star of the show, lovingly lingered on from every conceivable camera angle. It is, unquestionably, a great neck and a shoo-in at next year's Oscars for Best Neck in a Supporting Role. This is a neck you'd want to go neckin' with, an elegant curve of alabaster atop girlishly bony shoulders. But Miss Paltrow's minders have still felt it necessary to take no chances and to surround her with actresses apparently selected principally on the grounds of their comparative necklessness. Sophie Thompson, so good as Anne Elliot's sister in Persuasion, is far too young for the part of Miss Bates, but neck-wise, she's no threat to Miss Paltrow; Toni Colette...reduces Emma's friend Miss Smith to a beefy clod, but she doesn't get in the way of Miss Paltrow's neck. Everyone else looks goofy or lumpy or wedged into an awkward frock; even Greta Scacchi comes off badly, squeezed into a get-up that makes her look as if her nose is missing...

[Thanks to Jean Scott for sending this]

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The philosopher Gilbert Ryde was once asked if he ever read novels. "Oh, yes", he replied. "All six of them, every year." [New Yorker]

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### THE FILM "EMMA"

This is the end of a review of the recent film Emma, by Lindsay Duguid, in the Times Literary Supplement, September 27, 1996:

"Regency England, with its curricles and pelisses, its comfortable country seats and its roaming strangers, has long been the place for romance. Frances Burney invented it, Georgette Heyer capitalized on it, now Hollywood is exploiting it. That Jane Austen was doing something altogether different seems not to matter to the filmmakers. Emma has found a new low in adaptations of her work."

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THE SMALL BAND OF TRUE FRIENDS

Inside a local church in the little town of Allington, Salisbury, is a framed copy of a marriage certificate.

*Thomas Williams, of the parish of Newchurch, Upper Ryde, Isle of Wight, and Jane Cooper, spinster of the parish of Sunning, Berkshire, were married by licence this eleventh day of December in the year of Our Lord One Thousand Seven hundred and ninety two in this Church (Steventon) by me.  
Thomas Fowle, Clerk.*

*This marriage was solemnised between us Thomas Williams and Jane Cooper in the presence of:*

*Edward Cooper  
Cassandra Austen  
Jane Austen*

No doubt, "the wishes, the hopes, the confidence, the predictions of the small band of true friends who witnessed the ceremony were fully answered in the perfect happiness of the union." [Emma]

The names are familiar to us. Thomas Williams was Captain of the Unicorn on which Charles Austen served as midshipman in 1796. Jane Cooper was a cousin, daughter of Mrs. Austen's sister, and often a visitor at the Austen family home at Steventon. Mrs. Cooper had died of a "putrid fever", caught at the school in Southampton which her daughter Jane and the two Austen girls attended for a year or so around 1783. The fact that her mother had died was probably the reason for Jane Cooper's marriage at Steventon, and being married outside her own parish would be the reason for the special licence.

The witnesses were Jane Cooper's brother Edward, and her two Austen cousins. The "clerk" was Thomas Fowle, a former pupil of Mr. Austen at Steventon, and rector of Allington 1793-97, during which period he became engaged to marry Cassandra.

Alas! the "perfect happiness" did not last long. Thomas Fowle took a position as chaplain to the regiment of his cousin Lord Craven, sailing to the West Indies. There he was struck down and died of yellow fever. The bride, Jane Cooper Williams was killed in a carriage accident in 1798.

[Thanks to Anthea Proffitt, Amelia, VA, for information about this marriage certificate]

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NEW MEMBERS

We extend a sincere welcome to new members who have joined in recent months:

Vi Bennet (New Westminster); Susan Blake (Vancouver); Sheila Calvert (Vancouver); Sandy Lundy (Vancouver); Alice Whiting (Vancouver); Roxanna Yelf (West Vancouver).

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THANK YOU FOR CONTRIBUTIONS:

I want to thank those of you who have given me articles and clippings concerning Jane Austen - most of them have been from publications which I normally do not see, and I appreciate getting them very much indeed. Again, thank you.

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WINTER AS SEEN BY JANE AUSTEN'S FAVOURITE POET

O Winter...  
 I love thee, all unlovely as thou seem'st,  
 And dreaded as thou art. Thou hold'st the sun  
 A prisoner in the yet undawning east,  
 Shortening his journey between morn and noon  
 And hurrying him, impatient of his stay,  
 Down to the rosy west; but kindly still  
 Compensating his loss with added hours  
 Of social converse and instructive ease,  
 And gathering, at short notice, in one group  
 The family dispersed, and fixing thought,  
 Not less dispersed by daylight and its cares.  
 I crown thee King of intimate delights,  
 Fireside enjoyments, homeborn happiness,  
 And all the comforts that the lowly roof  
 Of undisturb'd retirement, and the hours  
 Of long uninterrupted evening know.

- The Task: The Winter Evening: William Cowper (p.89)

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Swallows: "The hirundines are a most inoffensive, harmless, entertaining, social and useful tribe of birds; they touch no fruit in our gardens; delight, all except one species, in attaching themselves to our houses; amuse us with their migration, songs and marvellous ability, and clear the air of gnats and other troublesome insects which would otherwise much annoy or incommode us."

[The Natural History of Selborne: Gilbert White, 1788]

KIPLING AND JANE AUSTEN

Kipling was a great admirer of Jane Austen. His Masonic-type story in Debts and Credits, "The Janeites", tells about a group of soldiers who use Jane Austen's name as a sort of talisman, a recognition symbol; and his poem "Jane's Marriage" describes her arrival in Heaven, in the company of Sir Walter Scott, Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, Cervantes and Shakespeare.

In an article in the Kipling Journal, September 1991, Audrey Ashley wondered "Why Did He Admire Her so?" Her conclusion was that it was their mutual love of good craftsmanship, and she quoted Kipling's poem "L'Envoi to 'The Seven Seas'":

When Earth's last picture is painted and the tubes are twisted and dried,  
 When the oldest colours have faded and the youngest critic has died,  
 We shall rest, and, faith, we shall need it - lie down for an æon or two,  
 Till the Master of All Good Workmen shall put us to work anew....

And only the Master shall praise us, and only the Master shall blame;  
 And no one shall work for money, and no one shall work for fame,  
 But each for the joy of the working, and each, in his separate star,  
 Shall draw the Thing as he sees It for the God of Things as They are.

W.L.Renwick ("Re-reading Kipling", 1964) wrote that Kipling's "trade was not soldiering or engineering, but story-telling. He was interested in the making of things because he was a maker himself, a talesmith, a technician. It is through that unity of spirit that in spite of his masculinity he could appreciate Jane Austen."

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THE MITE-Y BRITISH NAVY

A common complaint of seamen everywhere was that there were "beasties" in their ship's biscuits. Hardtack was the staff of life on the old sailing ships. The biscuits were baked dense and hard in hot ovens and packed in barrels, designed to last for voyages of two or three years. They did keep, but after years at sea only threatened starvation could make them "fit to eat".

One sailor kept his biscuit as a souvenir of the horrors at sea. Recently it was analyzed by an electron microscan at the Fort Vancouver National Historic Museum in Washington. The complaining seamen have at last been justified: the biscuit was filled with scores of dead flour mites, invisible to the naked eye.

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*Your mother says, my little Venus,  
There's something not correct between us,  
And you'r in fault as much as I:-  
Now, on my soul, my little Venus,  
I think 'twould not be right, between us,-  
To let your mother tell a lie!*

Epigram: Thomas Moore (1801)

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READERS

*The Casual Readers of today have perhaps a more tentative outline than Virginia Woolf's happy flyaway Common Reader. The majority of them are old or middle-aged, but there are sixth-formers and undergraduates in their ranks. They probably have not read the whole of Proust or Joyce, but nor are their needs met by the Aga-sagas and horror fiction on the airport bookstalls. They read book reviews and make lists of titles that interest them; they buy the most tempting ones, and demand the rest from any library to which they have access. They mostly read fiction, biography, history and travel books; thousand-page studies written by academics for academics, and too heavy to hold when reading in bed, daunt them; but they are not to be fobbed off with sound-bite sociology, coffee-table volumes of happy snaps for tourists, or "true stories" about royalty. They often have a special interest in some subject or period - rock gardens, say, or wind-surfing, or the First World War - but a quotation or a footnote may sidetrack them into exploring elsewhere, as may a leisurely browse along library or bookshop shelves. They do not make new books into bestsellers, and are therefore of little interest to many publishers today, but they are the only real guarantee that printed books will survive outside the academic world. Alethea Hayter, TLS Feb.23, 1996.*

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LADIES?

"Jane Austen's books are about Life with the Lid On, and personally I think the recent films of P&P and S&S take that lid off - too much. Even in my youth I was taught to be 'ladylike', and most of the women in those films are certainly not..."

[Barbara Peacock, from Comox, B.C.]

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*This Newsletter, the publication of the Vancouver Region of the Jane Austen Society of North America, comes out four times a year: February, May, August and November. All submissions on the subject of Jane Austen, her life, her works and her times, are welcome. Mail to the Editor: Eileen Sutherland, 4169 Lions Avenue, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada, V7R 3S2. Price to non-members: \$4.00 per year.*