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Christmas Past. E.Sutherland.

When we consider our hectic, commercialized Christmas preparations, we are apt to think with nostalgia of the "good old days", when families gathered for simple, homely pleasures with hearty appetites and much hilarity around the "festive board." But these images are mostly drawn from Dickens' time - Bob Cratchit's Christmas goose, and Mr. Pickwick's Christmas at Dingley Dell - with Victorian emphasis on the importance of the family.

Jane Austen's novels give a mixed picture of Christmas festivities. In *Mansfield Park*, although Mrs. Norris suggests that there would have been a ball if Maria and Julia had been at home, the Bertrams actually spent Christmas very quietly. William Price and Henry Crawford had left on the 23rd for Portsmouth; Edmund had also gone that day to a friend to spend the Christmas week, when they were both to be ordained; Julia was with Maria, and neither returned for Christmas. Later Mary Crawford wonders if Edmund is delayed by "Christmas gaieties", but they had none at Mansfield Park.

In spite of being part of a large family, I imagine Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey* usually spent a rather quiet Christmas - the previous year her favourite brother James was away for much of the holiday, and her great-aunt read her a lecture on the subject of frivolous dress.

In *Sense and Sensibility*, Elinor and Marianne are invited to spend Christmas with the Palmers at Cleveland (leaving Mrs. Dashwood and Margaret alone). If they stay at Barton, they may expect a repetition of the previous Christmas when "at a little hop at the Park, [Willoughby] danced from 8 o'clock till 4." The Steele sisters remained "to assist in the due celebration of that festival which requires a more than ordinary share of private balls and large dinners to proclaim its importance."

Mrs. Bennet, in *Pride and Prejudice*, likes that kind of Christmas. Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner (without their children) "came as usual, to spend the Christmas at Longbourn". Mrs. Gardiner distributed presents, but no mention is made of any reciprocal gifts - these may have been gifts brought from London to her hostess and family in the country. During the Gardiners' week at Longbourn, "there was not a day without its engagement . . . they did not once sit down to a family dinner."

Christmas with Mr. Woodhouse, in *Emma*, was very different. The family gathered, to be sure: his daughter, Isabella, her husband and children came to spend a week. But no gaieties were planned as a special celebration, and the implication is that there should be less, not more, parties than usual. "One complete dinner engagement, and out



of the house, too, there was no avoiding, though at Christmas - (for it was a very great event that Mr. Woodhouse should dine out on the 24th of December)." The weather turned bad. "Christmas day [Emma] could not go to church." Nothing more is mentioned of any activities during the Christmas week, although Mr. Elton says, "This is quite the season indeed for friendly meetings. At Christmas every body invites their friends about them . . ." However, we are never encouraged to accept Mr. Elton as an arbiter of good taste or judgement.

Only in *Persuasion* do we get a hint of the large family spending Christmas in ways to delight the children. Lady Russell considered it too noisy and confusing for her, and Mary Musgrove found it very dull - she wrote to Anne, "not one dinner-party all the holidays." But the description is a forerunner of Dickens and the Victorians: "On one side was a table occupied by some chattering girls, cutting up silk and gold paper; and on the other were tressels and trays, bending under the weight of brawn and cold pies, where riotous boys were holding high revel, the whole completed by a roaring Christmas fire, which seemed determined to be heard in spite of all the noise of the others" - what Mrs. Musgrove called "a little quiet and cheerfulness at home."

Jane Austen's letters mention no such family togetherness or festivities. Cassandra often was with their brother Edward at Godmersham in Kent, and Jane was home with their parents. In 1796, Jane wrote to Cassandra on December 25th: "I was to have dined at Deane [friends in a nearby parish] today," but she was kept at home by threat of snow. However, the next day she continued the letter: "I did go to Deane yesterday." (No mention is made of Mr. and Mrs. Austen going).

In 1808, Edward's wife Elizabeth had died in October, and Jane Austen wrote to Cassandra on December 9th: "I am glad you are to have Henry with you again; with him and the boys, you cannot but have a cheerful, and at times even a merry Christmas." Of her own Christmas that year, Jane wrote "Our house was cleared by half-past eleven Saturday [Dec. 24th] and we had the satisfaction of hearing yesterday [Dec. 26th] that the party [probably her brother James and his wife] reached home in safety." They had had an evening party on the 22nd which "produced nothing . . . remarkable . . . from 7 o'clock till half after eleven," and spent the evening of the 23rd "with our friends," - nothing about Christmas gaieties on the 25th.

One letter to Cassandra lists the charities given to the poor on Christmas, and to Martha Lloyd at the end of November in 1812. Jane Austen wrote "We are just beginning to be engaged in another Christmas Duty, and next to eating Turkies, a very pleasant one, laying out Edward's money for the Poor." This was always an important responsibility of the "gentry".

The decorated and candle-lit Christmas tree was a German custom brought to England after Jane Austen's time, and popularized by Prince Albert and Queen Victoria. Cards and Christmas crackers were other later Victorian customs. The earliest Christmas pudding was "plum porridge," originally not sweet but made with meat, wine, spices and fruit. In the 18th century it was made stiffer, into a pudding, and by the 19th century meat was dropped from the recipe.

Many of our popular Christmas carols would not have been known to Jane Austen - "O Little Town of Bethlehem", "Good King Wenceslas" and "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear", for example, were all composed in the late 19th century. Some she might have known are the old ones, the "Boar's Head Carol", "The Holly and the Ivy", "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night" and "O Come All Ye Faithful."

In many parts of rural England, houses were decorated with a "kissing bough", a spherical framework bound with box, rosemary or some other evergreen, inside of which red apples dangled from coloured ribbons. Fixed to the strip of metal or osier forming the circumference of the sphere were coloured candles. The whole thing was then hung up in a prominent place and mistletoe was tied beneath it.

Mumming - going from house to house dressed as stock characters which varied from district to district - was an early and long-lasting Christmas tradition in many parts of England. At Andover, Hampshire, not far from Jane Austen's home, the play was known to be over 800 years old, and was performed until 1963. In Kent, also, where Jane Austen and her sister often visited their brother Edward, a form of mumming called "Hoodening" was once very common all through Kent east of Godmersham. Some writers believe the custom to be as ancient as Woden-worship. The mummers' character of Father Christmas - red nose, flushed face and holly-crowned - merged with the image of St. Nicholas, and gradually was modified, mainly in America, into the Santa Claus we know today.



"Some Poetic Glimpses Into a Troubled Time" - René Goldman. September Meeting.

Jane Austen's letters and her novels depict a serene, stable, "ordinary" life with age-old values. Excerpts from near-contemporary French poets, read and translated by René Goldman, reveal a very different aspect of the life of the time. René told about years of torment and tragedy across Europe, and even in parts of Britain.

Neither unaware nor uncaring, Jane Austen chose not to examine this dark shadow in her life-time. With two brothers in the Royal Navy abroad, one in the Militia at home, and her cousin Eliza's husband, the *comte* de Feuillide, guillotined in France, she certainly knew what was going on during these years as the new Age of Liberty and Brotherhood became the Age of Terror. But it was a time when women did not show an interest in politics.

To provide a continental perspective, René gave his original translations of French poets, and then read excerpts from their works. *André Chénier* (1762-1794) was one of many who were condemned to death without trial during the Reign of Terror. He wrote his greatest work *Les Iambes* in prison during his last days. His poems were remarkable for their beautiful moving musical quality. He wrote of being "too young to die, far from the end of life's beautiful journey;" he had "barely begun the banquet of life", he "wanted to see the harbour after the perils of the sea," and a refrain: "Go away Death!"

Marceline Desbordes-Valmore (1787-1859), is no longer well-known, but deserves more appreciation. She had a sorrowful, poverty-stricken life, married to an unsuccessful actor, losing four of her five children, never getting away from the horrific events in France and the grinding poverty of her personal life. She was a natural poet, following no rules of versification; she was passionate, genuine, "tormented by love, deserted by love", a child-like soul. Her poetry did not sell, but she was befriended by Sainte-Beuve, praised by Victor Hugo and Alfred de Vigny.

Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869) was a writer, historian and statesman. He witnessed the turbulence and violence in Lyon: the poverty, the troops shooting women and children clamouring for bread. He wrote of his simple feelings of compassion towards the victims of war and political upheavals. He came to envy flowers who "lived only one glorious season, before they died." Lamartine retired in obscurity and penury. His poetry bemoans the flight of time. In a long poem, "*Le Lac*": "O time, suspend thy flight, take away care which devours us . . . the boat flies over the waters . . . man has no port, time has no shore." His tenderly pathetic verse was widely read, and influenced the development of romanticism.

René didn't try to give a full panorama of French poetry; he zeroed in on the most significant aspects of writing in these times of torment. He considers translation a difficult task: to be a good translator requires a touch of genius. In spite of his modest assessment of his work, as he read his well-phrased translations, turning the melodic rhythms of the original French into beautiful English, we felt he showed a generous portion of that gift himself.



The Lydia-Wickham Marriage Church. - Adele Shaak.

Recent issues of JASNA News have featured an ongoing series of speculations on exactly which church Lydia and Wickham were married in. We know from Lydia's account of her wedding that the church is named St. Clement's and they were married there because Wickham's lodgings were in that parish. But which St. Clement's?

"Fashionable and popular?"

In the most recent JASNA News the letter-writer ruled out St. Clement Danes because it was, according to the correspondent, a fashionable and popular church where Darcy might easily run into an acquaintance strolling down the Strand. That comment sent me running to my books to try to decide just how fashionable this neighbourhood was during the 1796-1813 period. 1796 is the year in which the first draft was written, while 1813 was the year it was published, and I do not know exactly when the reference to St. Clement's was fixed, so I decided to consider the entire time.

I soon discovered most books on life in Georgian London cheerfully lump together accounts from the 1740s through the 1820s, with no reference to the year of the events. Narrowing it down to a 17-year period of interest was not going to be easy. Nonetheless, after a lot of hunting I now believe that St. Clement Danes cannot have been in a fashionable neighbourhood.

Let's consider its neighbours. A thousand years ago and more, The Strand was a bridle path running along the north shore of the Thames from Hammersmith to the walled City of London. In medieval and Renaissance times noble and wealthy families built riverside palaces from Temple Bar (the western edge of the lands controlled by the Knights Templar) to the west. St. Clement Danes was just west of Temple Bar, and the earliest palaces were built just on the other side of the Strand from the church. But, even by Elizabethan times, the river pollution and stench was driving out these wealthy residents, and the increasing size of the city meant that by the later 1600s a good profit could be made from redeveloping the lands.

Immediately south of St. Clement Danes, Essex House had a long history until in 1672 it was sold to a speculative builder, Nicholas Barbon, who quickly tore most of it down because Charles II had his eye on it as a present for a servant. The remainder was used for various purposes and finally torn down in 1777. The next palace, Arundel House, was demolished in 1678 and several roads built where it stood. The story is the same all along the Strand. Some lands were redeveloped with much smaller buildings, some were used as garrisons, some burnt and were still not re-built by 1796-1813. Some were rebuilt - on the site of Somerset House, demolished in 1755, what is now the North Wing had been built and was the site of various government offices. The Royal Academy and the Royal Society met there. By 1796 the north wing was still not complete, and the east and west wings were not added until the 1830s.

In the area to the north-west of St. Clement Danes was its burying ground and to the north-east, a number of small buildings. Historically, the Bell Inn stood here (from which was written the only extant letter to William Shakespeare), in Carter Lane. But when a decision was made to build the Law Courts (to the north-east of the church) in 1865, the area was described as "an insalubrious slum".

By a stroke of luck, I was able to find an exact plan of St. Clement Danes and its immediate neighbours in 1796. This plan was drawn up pursuant to a scheme to widen the Strand, which at that time was fairly narrow and prone to traffic bottlenecks between the Church and Temple Bar to the east. "A wedge-shaped block of ancient buildings obstructed traffic which had to go north along Butcher's Row or south through a narrow part of the Strand. Both passages,

skirting St. Clement Danes' Church, consisted of overhanging medieval buildings, the former virtually a slum full of meat shops, the latter only slightly better favoured."

Buildings existed right in the churchyard, to the west of the church itself, and through a narrow gap to the north-west one could reach two other streets, Wych Street and Holywell Street. Holywell Street eventually became the centre of London's printed pornography trade. The plan to tear down all these buildings, widen the street, and put up new office blocks, was eventually undertaken, but not until the end of the Napoleonic Wars, when it was possible to raise the money.

In the meantime, I think it apparent that St. Clement Danes was not someplace where you would be likely to find Mr. Darcy and his friends out for a stroll.

Where Did They Marry?

We were married, you know, at St. Clement's, because Wickham's lodgings were in that parish.

I believe the church was St. Clement Danes, which at that time was in a very questionable neighbourhood - just the place Wickham would find lodgings. Remember, too, that Lydia wanted her aunt and uncle to take her out, "To be sure, London was rather thin; but however the little Theatre was open", she tells Elizabeth. She would have been much more likely to have known that if they were staying near the theatre district, which is about a quarter-mile north-west of St. Clement Danes, than if she had been lodging in the parish of St. Clement's Eastcheap or further out of town in any of the other candidate churches.

Also, St. Clement's Eastcheap is just around the corner from Gracechurch Street. Is it likely Wickham would take lodgings so close to Lydia's relatives? Recall also that Lydia says "Wickham's lodgings were in *that* parish". The use of the word "that" distances the parish in question from the parish in which she was residing with her aunt and uncle when the marriage took place, so I doubt that St. Clement's Eastcheap, which was very close to the Gardiner's, would have been the church referred to.

I think Wickham, turned away from Mrs. Younge's, would look for lodgings in a location where his irregular relationship would go unremarked - and the theatre district was the place where Fanny Hill found herself so well accommodated by such an understanding landlady. If you wanted to be sure of finding lodgings where nobody was concerned that you had no intention to marry the woman you lived with, the theatre district would be just the place.

Jane Austen, a respectable lady living in the country, had to come by her knowledge of London's seamier side secondhand. It is logical to assume that she or her brother or her father, would have heard of the proposed redevelopment scheme for the area around St. Clement Danes. The scheme was a project devised as favoured by the Lord Mayor of London, Mr. Pickett, and would have been mentioned in the newspapers just at the time (1796) when Jane was writing *First Impressions*.

For all these reasons, I think St. Clement Danes is the church referred to. The only caveat I have to acknowledge is the time it would have taken to get there. Lydia says they breakfasted at 10, then Mr. Gardiner was called away for 10 minutes, and then they got in the carriage and went to the church. St. Clement Danes is over a mile west of Gracechurch Street, and given that they would have had less than a half hour, I think, to make it to the church on time, I wonder if the trip was possible in the crowded streets of the City.

[I like these interesting controversies - does anyone else want to jump into the fray? - in a "nice", genteel, decorous manner, of course. Please send your comments to the editor. E.S.]

Carriages in Jane Austen's World: Joan Reynolds, Roslyn Hansen and Marg Savery.

In her novels, Jane Austen used various carriages and their drivers to depict character, exemplify social customs and further some aspects of the plot. The pretentious Mrs. Elton boasts of her relations: "They will have their barouche-landau, of course, which holds four perfectly." John Thorpe talks to a mystified Catherine about his gig: "curricle-hung, you see; seat, trunk, sword-case, splashing board, lamps, silver moulding, all you see complete." General Tilney overawes Catherine, travelling to Northanger with "the fashionable chaise-and-four - postilions handsomely liveried, rising so regularly in their stirrups, and numerous out-riders properly mounted." We recognize Mr. Knightley's thoughtfulness and generosity when he gives a ride to the Bates ladies, "he would not have had a pair of horses for himself." For casual country-side driving, on the other hand, Mrs. Gardiner expects to drive around Pemberley in the near future in "a low phaeton, with a nice little pair of ponies."

At the October meeting, three of our members gave an excellent presentation entitled **Carriages in Jane Austen's World**. To begin, **Joan Reynolds** gave a short account of the 18th century history of travel. In the early 1700s, most people travelled on foot or on horseback, to avoid the very poor country roads, impassible in bad weather, and often dangerous and uncomfortable at their best. By the early 1800s, however, travelling was revolutionized by the improvements in road building and repair, and the technological inventions which made a tremendous increase in the safety and comfort of various types of travelling carriages. Turnpike Trusts - very unpopular - collected tolls on the main roads, and local districts were responsible for maintenance. Milestones were an important new factor, to tell a driver where he was, and how far he had still to go to his destination.

A system of public stage-coaches, with fresh horses every few miles, travelling certain routes on rigid schedules, made a journey less hazardous. Coaching inns, where horses were available for hire, and where passengers could buy a meal, or stay overnight, catered to those travelling on business or pleasure. Coaches had rubber tires instead of iron wheels, and cobbled streets had often been replaced by Macadam's newly-developed paving methods. Even so, Jane Austen could write of Elizabeth's boredom in the coach going to visit Charlotte, when "Sir William Lucas . . . was listened to with about as much delight as the rattle of the chaise."

In spite of the improvements, with no lighting except the lamps on either side of the carriage, night travel was dark and dangerous, and most people stayed home except to go to parties arranged for the nights of the full moon. Speed was important for commercial stages, and faster, lighter coaches took advantage of new technical advances. Private carriages were much slower, but also much smoother. The life of a commercial coach horse pulling hard as fast as it could be driven, was about three years. After that period, they were often sold to farmers, for easier work. The arrival of the railways put an eventual end to commercial coach travel.

Private carriages remained in use for many more generations - for pleasure tours, business trips, travel to destinations not on the railway lines, and, of course, for taking guests and family members to and from the railway station. The advent of fairly inexpensive automobiles, and commercial bus lines, brought the coaching era to an end.



Roslyn Hansen described the main different kinds of carriages in use in Jane Austen's time, passing around handouts with pictures of many of them. One of the earliest and most popular was the Phaeton, a two- or four-wheeled carriage, of many different types, built specifically for an individual client. The early models were built very high. They were rakish, fast, eye-catching, but unstable and inclined to tip (Mrs. Gardiner specifies a "low" phaeton). The Curricule was the "sports car" of the Regency. It was light and speedy, well balanced and well sprung, usually driven with two horses abreast. At the back was a seat for a groom or "tiger". The Cabriolet was also built for speed and dash, but had one horse only, and a ledge at the back instead of a proper seat for the tiger.

The Gig was popular in the country. It was light, two-wheeled, for one or two persons. It was a popular carriage for the local doctor, or an elderly squire. The Dog-cart was a two-wheeled, general purpose, country vehicle, with a box under the seat for carrying dogs to the hunt. A Town-coach, drawn by two, four or six horses, and carrying two or four passengers, with armorial bearings on the doors, was especially chosen by illustrious persons. The Barouche and Barouche-landau had more style. Two inside seats faced each other, and a hood could be raised to cover part of the inside. They were driven by a coachman, and were especially used for afternoon excursions in the park, or similar pleasure rides.

Marg Savery's share of the presentation was a discussion of how and where Jane Austen used these vehicles in her novels, with well-chosen readings to illustrate special points. At the beginning of *Sanditon*, a carriage is overturned. The narrator brings in the grumpy driver, the toiling horses, the poor state of the lane, and the terror and anxiety of the passengers. In *Persuasion*, the excursion to Lyme points out the obstacles to any such trip - the possibility of bad weather, the time of day, and shortness of daylight at this season. Willoughby's dash to see Marianne when she is reported to be dying, also indicates the difficulties to be overcome on a long journey. Financial circumstances could provide hardships - in *Pride and Prejudice*, the carriage is unavailable because the horses "are wanted on the farm", and Jane must ride and Elizabeth walk to Netherfield. In *Mansfield Park*, Mary Crawford cannot get a farm cart to move her harp at harvest time - it was "out of their power to spare a horse." The trip to Box Hill in *Emma*, has to be delayed because one of the carriage horses is lame.

This was one of the best meetings we have had. Our three speakers gave us lots of information in an informal, witty format, which was very enjoyable. The handout material made it even more interesting. The three speakers worked very hard on their research and presentation, and we'll be thinking and talking about their talks for a long time to come. Thank you, Joan, Roslyn and Marg, for the superb results of your efforts.

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Top of the Poll.

Oxford World's Classics produces a small magazine called, simply, *The Magazine*. The Spring/Summer 2003 issue contained articles on "the effect of context on our understanding of literature"; the "difficulty of editing texts with a history of corruption and re-writing" (e.g. Shelley's *Laon and Cythna*, re-named *The Revolt of Islam*); the hundred-year history of the *World's Classics* series; and a readers' poll of the "top ten classic works of fiction." Here are the results: 1. *Pride and Prejudice* (Jane Austen). 2. *Wuthering Heights* (Emily Bronte). 3. *Jane Eyre* (Charlotte Bronte). 4. *Middlemarch* (George Eliot). 5. *Vanity Fair* (William Thackeray). 6. *Wives and Daughters* (Elizabeth Gaskell). 7. *Moby Dick* (Herman Melville). 8. *Villette* (Charlotte Bronte). 9. *Anna Karenina* (Leo Tolstoy). 10. *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (Anne Bronte).

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More Literary Delights.

[At the **Books and Berries** meeting in June, Sandy Lundy gave a spirited account of the "Letterbook of Eliza Lucas Pinckney (1739-1762)", published in *Southern Women's Writings*, Mary Louise Weakes and Carolyn Perry, eds. Eliza Pinckney managed three plantations in South Carolina in the absence of her father, and kept up a voluminous correspondence with friends in England. At the meeting, we ran out of time, and Sandy couldn't read as many excerpts as we would have liked. Here are some parts of letters with Sandy's own comments.]

S.L. Though the Letterbook was written many years before Jane Austen's birth, Eliza lived in a country neighbourhood of exactly the sort which Miss Austen might have approved:

To my good friend Mrs. Boddicott. I flatter myself it will be a satisfaction to you to hear I like this part of the world, as my lott has fallen here - which I really do. We have a very good acquaintance from whom we have received much friendship and Civility. Charles Town, the principal one in this province, is a polite, agreeable place. The people live very Gentile and very much in the English taste. . . . My Papa and Mama's great indulgence to me leaves it to me to chose our place of residence either in town or Country, but I think it more prudent as well as most agreeable to my Mama and self to be in the Country during my Father's absence. We are 17 mile by land and 6 by water from Charles Town - where we have about 6 agreeable families around us with whom we live in great harmony.

S.L. Mrs. Pinckney and her husband returned to South Carolina in 1758 after a stay in England of 5 years, leaving her two sons at school there. Charles Pinckney died within a few weeks. The following year, when the youngest, Tommy, was 9 years old, she gets this humourous report of him, which enables her to laugh through her tears:

To Mrs. Chatfield. It was very good of you to take my dear little creature [Thomas] to Bath. He gives a proof how well he knows his Mama when he says she will not be angry with you for giving him pleasure. The greatest I could enjoy is to know it was principally in order to [do] that and not want of health in any great degree .But tell the dear Saucy boy one scrip of a penn from his hand would have given his mama more joy than all the pleasures of Bath could him - great as they were.

S.L. The third excerpt documents her extreme frustration, when all her correspondents in England are assuming that she has had reports of the King's marriage and coronation, either from the newspapers or someone else:

To Mrs. King. How, dear Madam, could you think of this remote spott in the midsts of the splendour of Royal Weddings, Coronations, Gay courts and the attendant cheerfulness that must follow in their train long after. [She is referring to the wedding of George III and Charlotte Sophia of Mecklenburg on September 8, 1761, and their coronation two weeks later, occasions of great celebration in London]. You cant think how many people you have gratified by your obliging me with so particular a discription of the Queen. We had no picture of her Majesty nor discription that could be depended upon till I received your favour. And what was excisively provoking, the few friends that wrote to me did not doubt but I had a description of the Queen and coronation from others and therefore was most mortifyingly silent. If, Madam, you have ever been witness to the impatience of the people of England about a hundred mile from London to be made acquainted with what passes there, you may guess a little at what our impatience is here when I inform you that the curiosity increases with the distance from the Center of affairs; and our impatience is not to be equaled with any peoples within four thousand mile.

S.L. Thus, this great Lady and Mother of Revolutionaries was as human as the rest of us!

Hot Springs Eternal

It hasn't been possible to "take the waters" in the hot springs at Bath since 1978, when a death from meningitis was traced to the pipes of the municipal pool. That will all be changed in the near future.

A Dutch firm is preparing to open the Thermae Bath Spa in a four-storey glass-and-stone cube that will be the most striking new building in Bath in more than a century. Expected to be finished last March, the complex suffered construction delays caused by winter gales that stopped the use of cranes, and an archeological survey of the site that went on for almost a year longer than intended and postponed the opening. The archeological material found included jewellery and thousands of coins, but no major discovery. "Thank God they didn't find another temple," exclaimed one of the company officials, "or they'd never have let us build."

The new spa will not be inexpensive - "admission will be about \$40 Canadian for a two-hour session, but will include the use of the baths, whirlpools, steam rooms and rooftop pool, plus access to the spa-users-only restaurant. There will also be a choice of some 40 treatments, from massages to hot-hay wraps."

Bath's hot springs had been known and used since pre-historic times, but it was the Roman invaders who erected buildings housing the King's, Cross and Hetling baths and the temple to the Celtic-Roman goddess Sulis Minerva. These Roman baths lasted for more than three centuries, until the empire began to crumble, and barbarians attacked Roman Britain. By about 400 AD, the Romans had left, "the roofs of the temple and bath complex caved in, the clever Roman plumbing ceased to function and the site reverted to bog."

The warm and healing waters continued to flow through the Dark Ages, and in 1090 the King's Bath was built over the ruins of the Sacred Spring. "There followed a raucous medieval period - when bathing was mixed and nude and the rabble threw animals and each other in the water - before the town emerged into its prim Georgian heyday."

Even without the baths, Bath has always been one of the most visited spots in England thanks to its cultural history and architectural richness. "Compact and eminently walkable, Bath - on a sunny day - is a golden city, especially at dawn and dusk, when the light glows on the oolithic limestone, called Bath stone, that by law fronts the city's buildings, many of them dating from the 18th century," and leading to Bath becoming a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In 1702, the newly crowned Queen Anne came to take the waters; the titled and the rich followed, and Bath became the favourite resort of the British nobility. The architects, John Wood and his son, John Wood, the Younger, remade the town, designing some of its finest neo-classical Palladian monuments, including Queen Square, the Circus and the Royal Crescent. "Its streets today would be easily recognized by such past visitors as Dickens, Gainsborough, Handel, Sir Walter Scott and Jane Austen, two of whose novels, *Persuasion*, and *Northanger Abbey*, are partially set here."

In the 18th and 19th centuries, "a visitor's typical day might begin with being taken by sedan chair to the baths for a dip, followed by a good gossip session over lunch in the elegant Pump Room (sipping the recommended three medicinal glasses of hot-spring water, containing 43 minerals and ever-so-slightly radioactive), then an afternoon promenade with look-ins at the shops of Milsom Street, concluding in an evening of dancing, gambling or attending a play or musical recital. In Bath, as Boswell said, one 'may enjoy its society and its walks without effort or fatigue'."

- John Masters, *North Shore News*, April 27, 2003

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"How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book?" Henry Thoreau.

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“To see oursels as ithers see us!” (Robert Burns) - Eileen Sutherland.

Speaking at the Scottish Cultural Centre last November, Sharon Alker, in “Marketing Caledonia: Scottish Culture in Eighteenth Century London”, discussed “Scottishness.” From the beginning to the end of the century, an Englishman’s view of Scottish culture changed tremendously, from looking at a Scot as a caricature to a marketable fashion icon. London book-sellers and publishers welcomed books with a Scottish slant: even in books with English themes, Scottish heroes, Scottish characters and Scottish travel stories were common.

There were lots of nasty thoughts against the Scots, but also many expressions of good feeling, trying to view Scottishness in more complex, positive terms than in previous eras, as in Shakespeare’s depiction of Macbeth, for example.

The change began in the early 18th century, with the passage of the Act of Union. Cheap pamphlets were put out aimed at ordinary people, which stressed equality between the two peoples, using the language of reason. In Scotland there was great discontent with the Union: armed uprisings were put down, and political and military clashes broke out in many parts of the country. In London, the people were curious about the Scots. Writers of “True Histories” and “Romances” used Scottish characters, as in “The Agreeable Caledonian” by Eliza Haywood. The nationality of the characters, however, didn’t influence the plot or affect the interpretation.

Certain attributes were commonly given to Scottish characters: they had supernatural powers; they were intelligent and honourable, noted for courage and loyalty, and for a roguish good-heartedness - Rob Roy, an outlaw and cattle raider, came to be considered as a kind of Robin Hood. The characters in the books were not realistic, but showed a multi-complexity. Readers, however, generally had to look hard to find much Scottishness in publications at this time. James Thomson’s popular poem, *Seasons*, (1793), had brief references to Scotland: “the craggy cliff ... on utmost Kilda’s shore”; “the Atlantic surge pours in among the stormy Hebrides”; and “Caledonia[’s] airy mountains, ... fertile vales ... , nurse of a people, ... a manly race, of unsubmitting spirit, wise and brave.”

As the century wore on, the language used in England about the Scots moderated. There was continuing dissension and painful tensions, but pamphlets were published looking at the good side, too, favourable to the Scots. Smollett’s *Roderick Random* was a very popular work; the hero was representative of Scots in England. It seemed possible to have a positive relationship between England and Scotland - there was really no difference between them.

In the last decades of the century, there were allegations that Scottish political figures were trying to take over the British Parliament, but overwhelmingly the attitude to Scots was truly positive. The Anglo-Scottish relationship was only one of several issues being challenged: class, feminism, slavery, etc. In a host of novels published between 1780-1790, English-, Irish- and Scottishness were considered as part of the present, not the past; the relationship was used to persuade readers of the author’s political views. Robert Bage’s Scottish hero in *Mount Henneth* is an intelligent, humourous professional man. Maria Edgeworth’s *Moral Tales*, has Scottish middle-class characters who are cultivated, civilized, intelligent and courteous. It is interesting to see English writers considering Scots as virtuous, intelligent arbiters of civilization.

-- Sharon’s talk was interesting, lively and packed with information.

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