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Creating Paradise: The Building of the English Country House: 1660-1880.
Richard Wilson and Alan Macley.

The authors look at the building activities of a great range of country house builders - from the wealthy and powerful, to the country squires with small estates and incomes, who could barely afford a new house. Architects, craftsmen and labourers turned their visions into reality.

"Travel within the British Isles had become very popular by the end of the eighteenth century. It was underwritten by improvements in roads and inns, as well as by increasing numbers of people enjoying the means, education and leisure to undertake excursions in the footsteps of those early travel writers. Country houses along the route were popular diversions. Letters and diaries reveal that the majority of the grandest country houses were open to 'genteel' visitors on a regular basis by the late eighteenth century.

Visitors were inevitably presentable ('polite' in contemporary usage), and prepared to tip generously the servants who showed them round. Costs of pictures, furniture and chimney-pieces were readily, we might think vulgarly, disclosed. Providing the family was not in residence, and sometimes when it was, visitors were shown everywhere, taken through state rooms and bedrooms alike, into stables, kitchen gardens and hot-houses, offered light refreshments and allowed to drive around the park. Visitors - by 1800 including many of the urban elite as well as droves of clergy - loved the experience, their natural nosiness often outdistancing their pursuit of culture.

Houghton Hall, Norfolk

In the 17th and 18th centuries, large landowners prospered, dominating local and national government alike. They were the chief beneficiaries of the prolonged expansion of the British economy at this time, growth based upon agricultural and industrial progress. Their outlook was one of unbroken confidence. Both their optimism and the power that they shared were above all expressed in the country house. This book is about their builders and building.

Contemporaries made a clear distinction between the true country house and the house in the country. They recognized that a *country house* required a sufficient landed estate to pay for its upkeep, and must possess tenanted land indicating an intention to use the house as a source of influence in the local community.

The growth of the large estates and the increasing wealth of their owners was abundantly evident by the 18th century. Three principal causes appear to have worked together to produce the right conditions: the use of the strict settlement or entail allowing estates to be passed from one generation to another largely intact; the negotiation of advantageous marriage settlements between landed families and sometimes with the richest bourgeoisie; and the increased reliance upon mortgages to fund territorial expansion, family settlements and estate debt generally. The majority of the nobility engaged in profitable pursuits – investing in their estates, improving their tenanted farms, providing leadership in agrarian progress, planting trees for posterity and future gain. Some landowners had the opportunity to exploit either urban expansion or mineral resources on their estates. Many were involved in developing river navigations, turnpike roads and canals. The upper echelons of the gentry followed similar practices, gaining from building leases, mineral royalties, or from parliamentary enclosure and exceptional agricultural improvements.

The decision to build was a personal one, influenced by several factors. Estate owners, as tenants-for-life bound by strict settlements, were often land-rich but cash-poor. Living to the limit of, or beyond their incomes, making provision for their families, and investing in estate improvement, their ability to indulge in house-building depended upon an additional boost - marriage, inheritance, the proceeds of office, or access to non-landed sources of income in the form of mineral rights or urban rents. Only a small minority of heads of landed families ever built a completely new house in the two centuries after 1600. They might build slowly out of rents, but the usual strategy was to remodel and extend existing houses to meet a family's needs.

In the following pages, the authors examine the numbers and wealth of landowners as potential country house builders under three heads: the peerage, the landed gentry, and newcomers to the latter; and the influences which motivated the builders – the pressures of a highly emulative and consumer-driven society, the impact of the Grand Tour, the constant peer-group appraisal of houses in England, and the increasing tendency for them to spend long periods in London.

The country house became an architectural embodiment of authority. At first the grandest peers employed an extravagant court style, as at Chatsworth, Castle Howard, and Blenheim. They were enormously expensive, way beyond the pockets of the gentry. Besides, crowded with dressing-rooms, state beds, ante-rooms, corridors and cabinets to form an axis of honour, they were not particularly convenient. Eventually a new smaller-scale house came to be adopted with more emphasis on interior arrangements and decoration as perfected by Robert Adam. This 'villa' form of the country house found more favour. They had other purposes besides the proclamation of power.

The majority of the gentry wanted a house, elegant and new furnished, in which they could raise their families. Above all, they wanted homes from which they dispensed generous hospitality to their extended families, to tenants and employees, and to the wider country community. They also wished to house - the most evident feature of Georgian country house planning - their growing libraries, as literature on every subject which interested them mushroomed; and rooms in which they could display their wealth in the forms of London-purchased furniture, an expanding array of family portraits and often such pictures and mementoes as they had picked up abroad or in the metropolis. The extended villa with its 'parade' of rooms was ideal for these forms of entertainment and show. Their precise demands usually ran to three or four sizeable 'public' rooms, at least half a dozen commodious bedrooms, and accommodation for the dozen or so servants and horses which were essential elements in country house life.

Much thought and planning went into choosing the ideal location for a house. The prospective owners wanted it built on a good site commanding their park, and if possible, a fine vista. However, competent architects and builders considered the most important factor in choosing the ideal location for a house was accessibility to a navigable waterway. Movement by road of bulky, low-value building materials - brick, stone, slate and timber - was both difficult and expensive. Mules could carry only two to three hundred-weight ; wagons, drawn by oxen, were limited to use in the summer months by the condition of the roads, and loads restricted by weight. Heavy rain could make even the summer movement of building materials difficult. On the other hand, a single horse could tow a loaded boat of up to thirty tons along a river or as much as fifty tons along a well-constructed canal towpath. In the early eighteenth century the cost of waterborne carriage might be as low as 1d per ton per mile, whereas transport by road was around five times higher at 1s.

Waterborne transport therefore offered advantages throughout the period. Stone from Yorkshire, Dorset, and the south west, slate from Wales and the north west, and timber imported from north-west Europe and north America, was moved around the British Isles by coaster, and far inland by river navigation and canal, to build the English country house.

Stone and bricks made similar journeys around the country by wherry and barge. Slate was an expensive but much favoured roofing material. Synchronizing deliveries with the availability of slaters on site, and the forwardness of the building, were continual problems. Lime was made wherever limestone or chalk suitable for burning was available.

Timber was usually the single most expensive material employed in house-building. An estate might furnish much of the material itself, but the use of imported hardwoods and softwoods was common. The greater suitability of foreign wood for specific purposes, its cheapness and accessibility, mean that imports rose steadily throughout the 18th century. Deals (pieces of sawn fir or pine wood of standard size) from the Baltic states, oak from Flanders, and exotic woods from the Americas, flooded onto English building sites. The quantities needed for one project might justify the engagement of an overseas agent and the delivery of complete shiploads to the nearest port. Also imported were Flanders oak for doors and window shutters, Virginian walnut for the first staircase, and American cedar for the later 'best' staircase. It was more usual for timber supplies to be arranged by the estate clerk of the works, selecting, felling and transporting timber from the estate's woods or yards, or buying from a dealer located at a port or on navigable water inland.

The building of these country houses provided a boost to employment in the countryside. Post-Restoration society has been represented as one hooked on conspicuous spending, an addiction fuelled by the growing wealth of the upper and middling ranks of society, by the concept of 'politeness' with its constant emphasis upon public social display, and by a fast-growing literature of printed books and newspapers. Nowhere was 'conspicuous consumption' taken further to extremes than in the building and furnishing of the country house. It became a prime cultural focus for the lesser gentry and the expanding, aspiring, commercial and professional classes. As the means of transport improved, they visited country houses in droves to look, to envy - and to copy. When they were in London, in Bath, and in every major provincial centre, they eagerly acquired cut-price versions of what they had seen. This provided a wonderful fillip for shopkeepers, struggling artists, furniture makers and skilled workers of every description. Secondly, country house building sustained the superb craft culture that remained as much a feature of the English economy as the progress of agricultural improvement, or as the slow advance to machine production brought by industrialization."

The country houses today remain a focus for visitors from all over the world.

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Letter Writing.

In the 18th century, letter writing was an art with its own set of accepted rules. Entire families would read one's letters. The letter would be passed to friends in order to relay news. Any personal information would be written on a separate insert to be removed by its intended party for no one else's eyes. Writers had to reveal their personalities, entertain, display intelligence, and offer information to create well-written letters.

A person was not considered well read if she couldn't write a letter with skill. This was a requirement especially important to young ladies because it was often the woman's role to communicate for the family - as the husband would be preoccupied with business.

Mistress of the Elgin Marbles – Susan Nagel.

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In Memorium Janet Bell — Keiko Parker

Janet Bell, Regional Coordinator for Victoria, passed away on September 6. My relationship with Janet stems mainly from the time I assumed in 2003 the responsibilities of Conference Coordinator for the 2007 JASNA AGM . One of our original plans was to ask the Victoria members as well as our own Vancouver members to act as host/hostess at the Saturday Night Banquet at the AGM.

Janet was most enthusiastic about this plan, and went about recruiting Victoria members for the task. Every time she found someone for the "honour," she would write to me regular post in her impeccable handwriting the names, addresses, and phone numbers. I grew up in Japan where calligraphy is a serious art form, and really admired her for taking the time to write by hand so beautifully.

Although the dinner hostess plan could not be put into practice for various reasons, I finally met Janet at our AGM last October. Just as I imagined, she was a graceful and gracious lady. I send my sincere sympathy to Janet's family and the members of JASNA Victoria.

"The primary theme in an Austen novel is social being and social becoming, with a particular focus on the potential for human maturity and the consequence of human immaturity."

Jane Austen and Religion. Michael Giffin (2002) p.7.

Stilton Cheese.

Interestingly, Jane Austen only mentions "cheese" in the novels in *Mansfield Park*, where the word is used seven times as Mrs. Norris explains how she cadged a cream cheese from the Rushworth housekeeper (p.104), and in *Emma*, when Mr. Elton was describing a dinner party of the previous evening: "the Stilton cheese, the north Wiltshire, the butter, the cellery, the beet-root and all the dessert." (p.889).

Stilton cheese was first produced around 1740-1800. One of the servants of Lady Beaumont, of Quanby Hall in Leicester, took some blue cheese to the Bell Inn in Stilton village, a famous stop-over for coaches on the Great North Road from London. A large clientele was built up, and by the 1800's Stilton could be found on tables of most of the Great Houses of Britain and abroad.

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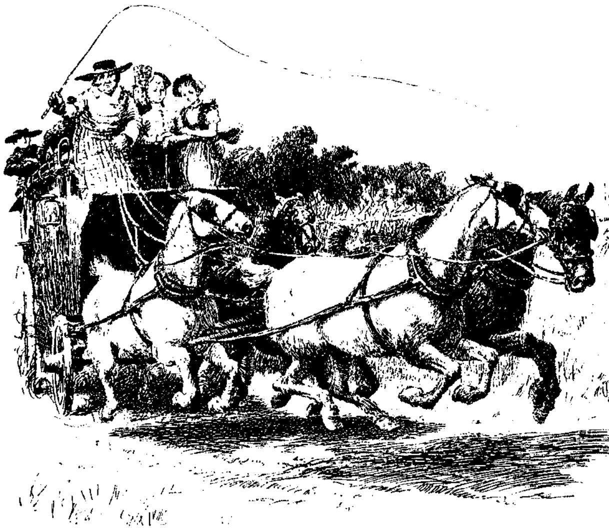
Stage Coach Travel. Inside.

"Crammed full of passengers - three fat fusty old men - a young Mother and sick child - a cross old maid - a poll parrot - a bag of red herrings - doubled-barrelled gun (which you are afraid is loaded) - and a snarling lap dog in addition to yourself.



"Springing 'em."

Awake out of a sound nap with the cramp in one leg and the other in a lady's bandbox - pay the damage (four or five shillings) for gallantry's sake - getting out in the dark at the half-way house, in the hurry stepping into the return coach and finding yourself next morning at the very spot you had started from the evening before - not a breath of air - asthmatic old woman and child with the measles - window closed in consequence - unpleasant smell - shoes filled with warm water - look up and find it's the child - obliged to bear it - no appeal - shut your eyes and scold the dog - pretend sleep and pinch the child - mistake - pinch the dog and get bit. - Execrate the child in return - black looks - no gentleman - pay the Coachman and drop a piece of gold in the straw - not to be found - fell through a crevice. Coachman says 'He'll find it.' Can't - get out yourself - gone - picked up by the Ostler - no time for blowing up - Coach off for next stage - lose your money - get in - lose your seat - stuck in the middle - get laughed at - lose your temper - turn sulky - and turned over in a horse-pond. From: *Coaching Days and Coaching Ways:* W. Outram Tristram, 1903.

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On the other hand:

"It is better to travel one mile than to read a thousand books." - Confucius.

THE TWELVE DAYS OF MR. WOODHOUSE. Kathleen Glancy.

The letter below was found in the family archives of Truelove House near Highbury, Surrey. The current owner has released it for publication, since he believes it to have been written to his ancestor (who was with his wife the founder of the estate's celebrated poultry and dairy farms, pear orchard, bird sanctuary and annual jewelry exhibitions, athletics competitions, gymkhanas and festivals of music and dance) by an elderly and somewhat nervous neighbour soon after the Truelove family took up their present residence in the early 19th Century. This gentleman's own family history, especially the events leading to the marriage of his younger daughter, has been the subject of considerable public attention and because of that the present Mr. Truelove hopes this letter will be of interest.

15th December 18**, Hartfield.

Dear Mr. Truelove,

Let me first welcome you to your new home, and apologize that my health did not permit me to attend the dinner party which you gave last Friday. My daughter Emma will have explained that I seldom venture out of doors at night at this season. You will also pardon me, I hope, if I mention a somewhat delicate matter.

Your generosity at this festive time of year, dear sir, is almost legendary, especially in respect of the wide and interesting variety of gifts you offered to the young lady who is now Mrs. Truelove over the Twelve Days of Christmas several years ago. I must beg of you, however, that you will think very carefully indeed before doing anything of the kind in this area.

My dear Emma, my poor Isabella, her husband Mr. John Knightley and my beloved grandchildren, Mr. Knightley, poor Miss Taylor, Mr. Weston - what a pity he has taken Miss Taylor away to be Mrs. Weston – my respected friends Mrs. and Miss Bates and Mrs. Goddard, Emma's friend little Miss Smith, Mr. Elton, Mr. and Mrs. Cole and Mr. and Mrs. Perry may all be likely recipients of your kindness, as I understand they all attended your party. At least the adults did, the dear children joining the young Trueloves and the little Perrys in the nursery for some merry games and what Perry has assured me, on the testimony of his offspring, were very wholesome refreshments. I know your intentions towards my family and friends would be entirely amiable, but I am concerned for their health. They all show an alarming disposition to eat solid food and will not be persuaded to take gruel instead - well, poor Isabella can be persuaded to take gruel but Mr. John Knightley will insist she varies her diet and she always obeys him.

I entreat you, dear Mr. Truelove, do not give any of them Partridges. Partridges are very gamy birds. I suppose a pear baked three times would not be unwholesome, but they might try to eat one raw so please no Pear Trees either. No French Hens (I am not sure if their eggs would be as small or as wholesome, if very soft-boiled, as those of English hens, especially our own at Hartfield) or Geese a-Laying. I find goose indigestible and have doubts about goose eggs. As for Swans a-Swimming, it is all very well while they are on the water looking pretty but that might encourage people to go out of doors to look at them and those people might not wrap up properly and if they are going near water they could get their feet wet and not change their stockings. In addition, I am sure it is illegal to eat swans unless you are the King or have his permission - I must ask Mr. Knightley, he is a magistrate and will know, and now I come to

think of it so will Mr. John Knightley, who is a barrister - and again I have some doubts as to the wholesomeness of swans, as His Majesty does not keep good health from what I hear.

Most of my dear ones keep no cows, so only Mr. Knightley might have a use for the services of Maids a-Milking, though please ask first as he may not require quite so many of them as you provided to Mrs. Truelove in her maiden days.

As for Ladies Dancing, Pipers Piping and Drummers Drumming, that sounds as if there were to be a Ball with Scottish country dances and a lot of noise, and I do not think it would be a good idea. Balls are dangerous - I have heard that people will open windows, and risk taking a chill if they have been overheated in the dance, and Scottish dancing is particularly energetic so it is all too likely they would be overheated. And the noise - though the Crown, which is where Highbury Balls have been held in the past, is some distance from Hartfield, the sound of bagpipes is said to carry a very long distance and I still might hear them.

Lords a-Leaping sounds even more hazardous, very unsafe indeed, whether they are leaping on foot or horseback or indeed both, and what should we do with them if they were to suffer injury while they were doing it? I am afraid that peers of the realm would require some more prominent medical attendant than Perry, though I am sure they would never find a better one, and as for poor Isabella's suggestion that we could always send for Mr. Wingfield, I doubt that he would be grand enough either and Perry might be offended, which I would not wish to happen for all the world.

However, Turtle Doves and Colley* Birds may do no harm (I cannot suppose that my dear family and friends would attempt to eat doves - ordinary pigeons possibly, but not doves, and certainly not blackbirds) and the ladies may like Gold Rings - but then I am afraid they might be wedding rings and I have an aversion to these, or at least to the marriage of ladies who could just as well stay in their homes and look after their fathers or employers. Unfortunately poor Isabella and poor Miss Taylor, that is to say Mrs. Weston, have not heeded my pleas on this point and already have one wedding ring each. My dear Emma, who was always very good at arithmetic, say that this is not likely to impress you greatly, since depending on whether any of the Gold Rings you gave the future Mrs. Truelove during your courtship were wedding rings, and if so how many in each batch of five, and bearing in mind that you would require a new one for the ceremony itself, Mrs. Truelove could have anything between one and one-and-forty wedding rings but was certainly only wearing one at the dinner party.

I thank you for your patience in reading my concerns, sir, and pray convey my best respects to Mrs. Truelove. I hope to call on you both one afternoon, when the weather permits.
Yours sincerely,. Henry Woodhouse.

[*Though modern versions of the Twelve Days of Christmas say Calling Birds the original is Colley, which probably is a corruption of "coaly" and refers to blackbirds.]

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"Our weather must not always be judged by the Calendar. We may sometimes take greater liberties in November than in May." (MP p.212).

Poems About Autumn

Keiko Parker

In response to the question asked about the poems on autumn that Jane Austen may have read, I would like to mention several names that come to mind. The first is **Alexander Pope** (1688 - 1744). "Autumn, the Third Pastoral" from his *Pastorals* has these lines:

Ye Flow'rs that droop, forsaken by the Spring,
Ye Birds, that left by Summer, cease to sing,
Ye Trees that fade when Autumn-heats remove.

James Thomson (1700 - 48), a Scottish-born English poet was, next to Pope, the most celebrated poet in the first half of the 18th century, and is known as the forerunner of the Romantic poets. One of his best-known work is *The Seasons*, consisting of four long poems. "Autumn" alone is approximately 1,400 lines long, and therefore I will quote just a few lines which describe not only the typical autumn activity of harvesting but also the youths helping their beloved lasses.

Soon as the morning trembles o'er the sky,
And, unperceived, unfolds the spreading day,
Before the ripen'd field the reapers stand,
In fair array; each by the lass he loves,
To bear the rougher part, and mitigate
By nameless gentle offices her toil.

Oliver Goldsmith (1731 - 74) was a poet as well as a novelist, essayist and dramatist. His novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* is mentioned in *Emma* (29). His poem *The Deserted village* begins with these lines:

Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain
Where health and plenty cheer'd the labouring swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's lingering blooms delay'd.

Goldsmith mourns the destruction of a village by industrial revolution. The words "parting summer" is my excuse for including this poem here.

Jane Austen read **William Cowper** (1731 - 1800) as her letter to Cassandra of Feb. 8, 1807 attests. Discussing the plans for the garden in Southampton, Jane writes she "could not do without a Syringa, for the sake of Cowper's Line." Unfortunately for us in the present instance, the this quotation is better suited to spring than to autumn. In *Emma* Jane Austen quotes a line from Cowper: "Myself creating what I saw" (344). This is from *The Task, Book IV*, "Winter Evening." I do not have a book of Cowper's poems and could not put my hand on any line of his on autumn, but my guess is that he must have written enough on the subject.

Last but not least is **George Crabbe** (1754 - 1832), poet and novelist. In *Mansfield Park* Edmund mentions "Crabbe's Tales" (156). It is well-known that the heroine's name in Crabbe's poem *The Parish Register* was Fanny Price. Need I say Jane Austen read Crabbe with enthusiasm? From his *The Village, Book I*, describing the plight of the village poor, I culled these lines:

I, like yon wither'd leaf, remain behind,
Nipp'd by the frost, and shivering in the wind.

The above is a rather cursory survey of what autumn verses Jane Austen may have read, and is by no means exhaustive. I was struck by the fact that all of these poets were eloquent in praising the beauty of nature and the countryside, and are, to the last one, pro-village and anti-city.

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No Portrait of Mrs. Darcy. Eileen Sutherland.

Writing to Cassandra from London in May 1813, Jane Austen mentioned visits to art galleries where she facetiously looked for portraits of Jane and Elizabeth Bennet in their married roles. "Henry & I went to the Exhibition in Spring Gardens . . . I was very well pleased . . . with a small portrait of Mrs. Bingley, excessively like her. I went in hopes of seeing one of her Sister, but there was no Mrs. Darcy." [*Letters* p.309]

Later in the same letter she wrote: "We have been both to the Exhibition & Sir J. Reynolds', - and I am disappointed, for there was nothing like Mrs. D. at either. I can only imagine that Mr. D. prizes any Picture of her too much to like it should be exposed to the public eye.- I can imagine he w^{d} have that sort of feeling - that mixture of Love, Pride & Delicacy." [*Letters* p.312]

Jane Austen's guess as to the reason for no public display of Mrs. Darcy's picture is echoed in a book I have been reading recently. In *The Georgians. Eighteenth-Century Portraiture & Society*, the author Desmond Shawe-Taylor discusses the theories and practices of portraiture throughout the century, as well as the changing tastes of the public.

"The whole thrust of serious portraiture, especially in the second half of the century, is to suggest both these qualities [i.e. beauty and virtue], even to the extent that a purely beautiful portrait, if at all ostentatious or flashy, is sometimes regarded as compromising its own and its sitter's virtue." He quotes Hoppner, speaking of Sir Thomas Lawrence: "The ladies of Lawrence show a gaudy dissoluteness of taste, and sometimes trespass on moral as well as professional chastity." Another contemporary remarked: "Phillips [Thomas Phillips, 1770-1845] shall paint my wife, and Lawrence my mistress." Shawe-Taylor explains: "The reason a brilliantly painted and glamorous portrait might be considered suitable only for a kept woman is that the principal female virtue of the age was modesty."

The Restoration Court had been noted for its moral and sexual laxity. Even before the beginning of the 18th century, a backlash of outrage at this licentiousness was growing, and continued steadily throughout the century. By 1770, "society had something approaching a 'Victorian' attitude to feminine chastity. Jane Austen reflects this in *Mansfield Park* in the reaction to Maria's elopement: 'too horrible a confusion of guilt, too gross a complication of evil, for human nature . . . to be capable of.' "

In 1760, Gainsborough's painting of Mrs. Philip Thicknesse, a novelist as well as a gifted amateur musician, "may have crossed the shadowy line between the modest and the ostentatious. Some contemporaries found in it something too obtrusively French, something flashy or indelicate - more Mary Crawford and her harp, than Anne Elliot and her piano. Mrs. Delany wrote of the painting at the time that it was, 'a most extraordinary figure, handsome and bold; but I should be sorry to have any one I loved set forth in such a manner'." Darcy obviously agreed.

*

Don't You wish . . . ?

"Her tone of calm languor, for she never took the trouble of raising her voice, was always heard and attended to." [Lady Bertram, *MP* p.218]

The attainment of supreme satisfaction in life!

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English Landed Society in the 18th Century. G.E. Mingay.
Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1963.

(Excerpt only)

Three large categories of:

(1) Great landowners - great house, London residence, at least £5,000 a year, and about 10,000 – 20,000 acres. (Darcy)

(2) Lesser landowners -
  a. wealthy gentry (£3,000 to £5,000 per annum)
  b. squires (£1,000 to £3,000)
  c. gentlemen (£300 to £1,000)

(3) Freeholders.

John Dashwood	£5,000-6,000 per annum
Mrs. Dashwood	£500 p.a.
Darcy	£10,000 p.a.
Emma	£30,000 capital
Mary Crawford	£20,000 capital
Henry Crawford	£4,000 p.a.
Rushworth	£12,000 p.a. (richest character in all the novels)
Willoughby	£600 p.a.
Bennett family	£2,000 p.a.
Bennett mother and girls (when father dies)	£250 p.a.

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