



## Jane Austen Society of North America Vancouver Chapter

Newsletter No. 113  
June 2011

### Jane Austen Day 2011

When we assembled on April 16<sup>th</sup> the tables were decorated with daffodils, lamps and bright yellow placemats, all of which delighted the eye. Two distinguished scholars of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century literature, who are the husband-and-wife team of Dr. Rowland McMaster and Dr. Juliet McMaster, were the speakers.

In the morning Juliet gave her paper **Jane Austen's Children**. Drawing on her lifetime's study of the novels, minor works, juvenilia, and correspondence, Juliet drew a portrait of Jane Austen's warm affection for her family and the children in it. Nor does Juliet's study leave any doubt that Jane was aware of what a pleasure a contented child is, and what a misery an unhappy small person can be to everyone in proximity. This paper is available for viewing at [Persuasions On-Line](#). The Editor has a printed copy which can be brought to a meeting. Please call if you would like to read it.

Juliet is the founder of the Juvenilia Press, and she has contributed (to our humble little newsletter) a World Exclusive! Her history **Juliet on the Juvenilia Press** is published in its entirety following this report.



After a delicious lunch catered by "The Banqueting Table", we assembled for Rowland's presentation **Women Aboard War Ships**. Juliet read excerpts from *Persuasion* in which discussions on this subject take place between Frederick Wentworth, his sister Mrs. Sophia Croft, Admiral Croft, and Mrs. Musgrove. Captain Wentworth says (Chapman p69), "There can be no want of gallantry, Admiral, in rating the claims of women to every personal comfort high-and this is what I do. I hate to hear of women on board or to see them on board; and no ship, under my command, shall ever convey a family of ladies anywhere, if I can help it."

Mrs. Croft replies, "Oh, Frederick!..Women may be as comfortable on board, as in the best house in England... I know (of) nothing superior to the accommodations of a man of war... I speak, you know, of the higher rates. When you come to a frigate you are more confined. The happiest part of my life has been spent on board a ship." Mrs. Musgrove agrees with her, "There is nothing so bad as a separation."

Jane Austen's world was that of the naval gentry, and she would have known that there were six rates of war ships, with the top such as Nelson's **Victory** having 100 guns and 840 crew, while a sixth rate would carry only 100 crew. Frigates, such as Captain Wentworth's **Laconia**, were faster, often used for individual exploits and for accumulating prize money.

Two of Jane Austen's brothers became admirals. The Austens were related by marriage with First Commissioner of the Navy Samuel Gambier, and Admiral of the Fleet James Gambier, and this connection advanced their careers. Promotion was by merit, although social status had an influence on how high a rank could be attained. Charles Austen, a genial man, served on **North American** and **West Indies** stations. He took his wife and two children on board, and his elder daughter Cassandra suffered dreadfully from sea-sickness. Francis, who Jane Austen says had "insolence of spirit" as a child, became an admiral of the fleet. He was known as a reserved and private man, a devout Evangelical, amiable but a strict, sometimes harsh, disciplinarian. Gambier, known as dismal Jimmy, forbade women on board, and ran a "praying ship". Francis was Gambier's flag captain, a rule stickler, and somewhat resembled Gambier.

The officers of the Royal Navy disagreed among themselves as to whether women should be allowed on board, but Nelson said that captains will always do as they pleased, and HE certainly did! In early 1800, after the Battle of the Nile, Nelson took Emma Hamilton on a cruise, and his daughter Horatia was conceived on board HMS Foudroyant.

Very different from the world of the naval gentry was the lot of women below deck, although the wives of warrant officers of wardroom rank, such as the master, the purser, the chaplain, and the surgeon, shared their husbands' small canvas-sided cabins and they shared the wine and good food of the commissioned officers. Wives of seamen, however, were not "mustered" and therefore not on the ship's roster, so officially they did not exist. They had to share their husband's food ration, as did their children. They shared their husband's hammocks (slung 16" apart), had no place of their own, and worked for no pay. These women went to sea to be with their husbands, who served as carpenters, cooks, sail makers and such like. They cooked, cleaned, helped the surgeon on the orlop (lowest) desk, and during battle carried powder to the guns from the magazine. This task was otherwise assigned to boys called powder monkeys.

It was not unusual for childbirth to occur during battle, as the chaos brought on labour. Suzanne Stark says, in Female Tars, "Remarkably, in all the instances I have found of births during battle, both mother and newborn survived." Stark continues, "Births often took place on one of the tables between two guns on the lower deck...(and) from this situation comes the phrase 'son of a gun'..."

In June, 1812, the sloop Swallow was in an engagement fought off Minorca. Mrs. Phelan, wife of Seaman Joseph Phelan, was assisting the surgeon, in spite of having given birth three weeks earlier to a son, Tommy. When she heard her husband had been injured, she left the orlop deck, but when she took her husband in her arms, her head was shot off. He died shortly after. The officers provided a goat to suckle Tommy, and when last heard of, he was thriving. Women were also on the ships of the French navy. At the Battle of Trafalgar, the battleship Achilles exploded, and an English crew rescued two women, one of whom, Jeanette, had been burned by molten lead. As Rowland summarized, the women who were on war ships at sea were brave and committed. Actually when Nelson semaphored his famous command, "England expects every man will do his duty," he ignored the female portion of the fighting force.

When the ships were in port, seamen's wives and prostitutes went on board. For centuries, the Admiralty had turned a blind eye to prostitution. Because a large proportion of the crews had been pressed into naval service by gangs, they were kept on ships offshore when at anchor, so that they could not go ashore and desert. There had been many mutinies, including one in 1797, and the prostitutes in vast numbers were therefore allowed on board. For a fee, the officers would contract with watermen in the ports to row the girls, sometimes children as young as 12, out to the ships. Seaman William Robinson wrote, after his ship arrived in Portsmouth, "These young creatures are taken to market like cattle, and whilst this system is observed, it cannot with truth be said that the slave trade is abolished in England."

Equally as bad, or worse, was the plight of women slaves on the sugar islands of the West Indies. The plantation owners and overseers would contract with the ships' captains of the Royal Navy to send their slaves onto the ships to service the crew. This continued even after slavery was abolished.

Ships would come into British ports for provisions or repairs, but because the crew was paid in port, there were always a lot of shore boats surrounding a ship, and there were at least one thousand prostitutes in Portsmouth. Since wives were legitimately allowed on board, an industry sprang up to provide women with false marriage certificates. In 1806, Princess Caroline, the estranged wife of the Prince Regent, visited the Caesar as a guest of Admiral Richard Strong, and hundreds of women were sent below. But Caroline saw these women and requested that they be released onto the upper deck. Jane Austen said of Princess Caroline, "I shall support her as long as I can because she is a woman and because I hate her husband."

In 1821 Admiral Edward Hawker described immoral practices in the Navy: “It has become practice to invite on board as many prostitutes as the men and officers may choose to entertain. The tendency is to render a ship a continual scene of riot and disorder, of obscenity and blasphemy, of drunkenness, lewdness, and debauchery.” He pointed out the hypocrisy which permitted practices that converted ships of war into brothels of the very worst description, but his views went unheeded for many years.

Lastly, Dr. McMaster told us that there are more than twenty accounts of women who served disguised as seamen from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and some served for years before being discovered. Some were following the man they loved, while others relished a life free of restraints. Suzanne Stark says, “During the Napoleonic Wars, a black woman known as William Brown served in the navy for a dozen years, perhaps more.” She became a captain of the foretop, a position needing the most nerve, skill and agility. She claimed to be a married woman who went back to sea because of a quarrel with her husband who wanted all her prize money. When she rejoined her old ship, she was appointed captain of the forecastle, which was a less physically demanding job.



Some women left memoirs including Hannah Snell, who became the Royal Marine James Grey, and when she returned to civilian life, became popular on the stage. Mary Anne Talbot claimed to be a sailor, but her autobiography was spurious. Mary Lacy, however, ran away to sea in 1759, took the name of William Chandler, became a qualified shipwright in 1770, and was granted a pension by the Royal Navy in 1772.

There are a number of theories as to how these women managed to conceal their sex, given the lack of privacy. People rarely bathed, women could be alone when using the head, and the crews tended to keep a psychological distance from each other. Nevertheless, these women seem to have served bravely in battle. Catherine Cochrane was the wife of Admiral Cochrane, who inspired Patrick O’Brian’s character Jack Aubrey. She was on deck when the gunners were firing on a Spanish treasure ship, and thinking that one of them was slow to act because she was present, she stepped forward and fired the gun herself. Then she yielded to her feminine nature and fainted....well, REALLY!

*Rowland then answered a lively question period and provided a substantial bibliography, which includes B.Southam’s Jane Austen and the Navy, and S.Stark’s Female Tars. The complete list is on our local website.*

*April meeting report by the Editor, with notes from JASNA Vancouver Member, **Helen Spencer***

寛大

### *Fund Raiser for Victims of the Japanese Tsunami*

Keiko’s son Jamie Parker, who is the pianist with the Gryphon Trio, has donated a prize-winning CD as a means of raising funds for victims of the multi-faceted disaster in Japan. Keiko provided these for sale at Jane Austen Day, and was very pleased, and also touched, to be able to report that our members contributed over \$600 to be forwarded to the Consul General of Japan for disaster relief.



## Juliet on the Juvenilia Press

*First, I must thank you all in the Vancouver Region for your hospitality to me and Rowland on our visit to Vancouver on April 16. It was a treat! Thanks to members, too, for buying a number of the Juvenilia Press volumes. The Juvenilia Press was my Baby, born officially in 1994, but conceived somewhat earlier.*

From the beginning the Juvenilia Press was a classroom enterprise. In illustrating Austen's early tale *The Beautifull Cassandra*, I had learned that if you look very closely at a childhood work, it provides a fascinating window on that author's development. So in a course on Jane Austen, I offered (as one topic among many) the chance of "editing" Jane Austen's funny tale *Jack and Alice*, written when she was about thirteen. Two students took it on, and since they made a nice job of an introduction and annotation, I proposed to print up a small saddle-stitched volume as a souvenir for class members; and several of us had a go at providing illustrations. At the last minute, I thought it looked rather nice, and with the students' permission I printed up 200 copies. All members of the class got a copy; and the extra volumes I proceeded to sell at \$1.50 each, to recover my expenses. To my embarrassment I made a profit! - which I donated to Jane Austen's church at Steventon.

In a course the next year on the Brontes, I also got the students to work on a volume of Charlotte Bronte's, *The Twelve Adventurers*. The student editors told me that the only version worth using as a copy text was that of Christine Alexander, of the University of New South Wales. So we contacted her for permission to use her work. That was the beginning of a beautiful friendship! When my colleague and friend Isobel Grundy proposed that I should print up a similar edition of an early unpublished manuscript by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (or Lady Mary Pierrepont, as she was then), I jumped at the notion. Here was an unpublished work, *Indamora to Lindamira*, by a major author in her youth, to be edited by a major scholar! I was to do the illustrations, Isobel was to edit the text and write the Introduction, and a graduate student, Susan Hillabold, was to do the annotation. That was when I got the inspiration to create the Juvenilia Press: a press devoted to producing scholarly editions of early work by known authors, always with student involvement in the editing process.

I called a meeting of sympathetic colleagues, including Isobel and the Chair of our Department, and put forward the idea. They snapped it up. The Juvenilia Press was born, and - since Isobel had been given some chocolates for her birthday that day - we celebrated the event with truffles all round. The Press was to produce little books, with attractive illustrations, and a full critical consideration of the youthful texts, the biographical conditions surrounding them, and annotation. For the copy text, where possible we go to manuscript versions, because that allows students to get the most experience in the decisions involved in textual editing. Most people, if they consider childhood works at all, consider them vertically, in relation to the adult work of the same author. We can do that too. But we also consider juvenilia horizontally, in relation to each other. And we pay serious critical attention to these youthful works, and to the evolution of genius.

Further volumes followed, always with an experienced scholar as senior editor, and one or more students contributing in whatever capacity the team decides. Louisa May Alcott was our next author, and a class on children's literature edited *Norna*, or the *Witch's Curse*, a play Alcott wrote at about fifteen, which inspired a funny episode in *Little Women*. I grew bold, and asked Margaret Atwood if she'd let us edit some early work of hers and she generously let us have two early stories and a poem from her teenage years. That put us on the map!

But Jane Austen has been our major stand-by, and JASNA a major patron. In some cases, the AGM has commissioned a volume, for distribution as part of the conference package. Lesley Castle, edited by Jan Fergus, became the conference volume for the AGM in Quebec City in 1998; and they asked me, as the illustrator, to autograph all 500 volumes before I shipped them! Lady Susan, edited by Christine Alexander and David Owen, became the volume for the 2005 conference in Milwaukee. For that occasion we were invited to perform a reading as part of the conference program, and I had a good old time as Lady Susan herself, vamping poor Reginald! Other volumes, such as *Catharine and Love and Freindship*, have also led to dramatic performances for local JASNA chapters. In the case of *Three Mini-Dramas*, Lesley Peterson directed a full production, with her student co-editors, of Austen's play "The Visit" for a super-regional conference on the juvenilia in Toronto in 2006 - a world premiere as we believed.



Midshipman Francis Austen, from Juliet's illustrations to *Jane Austen's Men*.

I have lamented that not enough Austen readers spend enough time with her juvenilia; and I maintain that if you don't know where Jane came from, you can't really claim to know Jane! The juvenilia may seem hasty and forgettable, as they come homogenized in collected editions such as Chapman's *Minor Works*. What the Juvenilia Press has done for them, I like to claim, is to give each one its own individual identity: its own critical introduction, textual examination, attentive explanatory notes, and illustrations. Our little volumes of *Catharine*, or *The Three Sisters*, or *Love and Friendship* stand out as separate works with their own themes and characters and tone. The recent volume of *The History of England* and *Cassandra's Portraits*, edited by Christine Alexander and Annette Upfal, breaks major new ground in making a convincing case that Cassandra's portraits of the monarchs are in fact likenesses of Austen family members, including Jane herself as the heroine Mary Queen of Scots, and Mrs. Austen as the villainess, Queen Elizabeth. Exciting claims!

But we have many other authors too: Charlotte and Branwell Bronte, George Eliot, Lewis Carroll, Philip Larkin, Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood. Dickens is in the pipeline. Since I have moved towards art history, the 1840 diary of the Punch graphic artist Richard Doyle, with his own wonderful illustrations, has joined the list. Editors work with students all over the world: in Australia, Canada, the US, England, and New Zealand. We have volumes in many periods from early modern to post-modern, in genres including fiction, verse, drama, journals, and polemics. Our one restriction is that our authors must be young. For us, twenty is over the hill.

The Press and Pedagogy - Student involvement in the editing has always been an essential part of the project. There is in fact no other context in which a graduate student in English, for instance, can get the sort of hands-on professional experience that editing a Juvenilia Press book can provide. Students in English are always studying other people's editions, and they can come to believe that a text is God-given, or at least comes straight and direct from the pen of the author with no other intervention. But here they can discover that turning handwriting into print, for instance, involves editorial decisions at every turn; and they can become highly excited about such issues as whether or not to turn "&" into "and", or underlining into italics. That makes them better readers of other editions. Then there's the research to be done for the introduction; the technique to be learned for writing a note that is at once informative, relevant, concise, and if possible elegant; the challenge, for some, of creating illustrations. At the end of it, the student editor gets to claim a publication, too. And then there's the unique pleasure of creating that beautiful object, a book.



A Coach & Four, from Juliet's illustrations to the Juvenilia Press edition of *Jane Austen's Men*

The Juvenilia Press in the 21st Century - Soon after I retired from teaching in 2000, Christine Alexander took over the general editorship of the Press at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, and under her leadership the Press has grown and become more distinguished and more professional. In 2006 she and I co-edited a collection of essays for Cambridge University Press, *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf*. It received a front-page review in TLS. Recognizing "the quiet work of the Juvenilia Press" Dinah Birch wrote that the collection, "deceptively modest in tone, ... is in fact a determinedly ambitious book. The larger intention is nothing less than the definition of a new genre within the literary academy, with a theoretical framework and distinctive identity" (Times Literary Supplement, 10 February 2006, p. 3). Yes, we do feel as though we have discovered and presented a whole new genre. It's good to receive this kind of recognition.

Where does the money come from? Well, as you've seen, the sales of extant books help to finance the production of new ones. But we get grants and donations where we can. It's a non-profit organization, and the editors, academic and student, volunteer their skills. But we have to pay our designer and printer, and the shipping costs are high. Sales opportunities are limited, and bookshops that take our books on consignment often return them damaged and unsalable. So Christine and I haul a lot of books around to conferences, and we hope for orders through the Press's web site. It is a boon when one or more of our books is assigned on a university course, as sometimes happens. If I were still teaching, you can bet I'd be giving courses on juvenilia, that hitherto neglected genre which, thanks to the Juvenilia Press, is now bursting in all its glory on the astonished world.

### **Juliet McMaster, FRSC**

Distinguished University Professor Emeritus, Department of English and Film Studies  
University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada T6G 2E5.

Home address: 7815 - 119 Street, Edmonton, Canada T6G 1W5. Phone 780 436-5284

*Editor's note: If the reader has access to any of Jane Austen's juvenilia, either in Chapman's Minor Works, the Juvenilia Press, or any other source, you will encounter the truth of what Florence Kane, writing in Vogue magazine, said, "The stories are charming glimpses into the wit, comedic talent and uncanny understanding of society that Austen possessed, even as a teen." So many of Jane's novellas and productions must have been written to entertain her family in the evening, that one can just imagine her big brothers and perhaps her parents, chuckling at lines such as*

*"(Alice)....has many rare and charming qualities, but Sobriety is not one of them." – in Jack and Alice, Chapman Minor Works p21,*

*"How often I have wished that I possessed as little personal Beauty as you do..." – Margaret Lesley writing to Charlotte Lutterell in Lesley Castle, Chapman p135.*

## **Medical Care in the Time of Jane Austen**

*At the JASNA Vancouver meeting on February 19<sup>th</sup> the speaker was Dr. Andrew MacNab, a professor of paediatrics, an administrator and a distinguished scholar in the UBC Faculty of Medicine. Dr. MacNab's presentation drew on his background as a physician and as a student of medical history. The subtitle for his presentation was "The best of times/the worst of times". The presentation was a feast for the eyes with Dr. MacNab's use of images of paintings of the era to illustrate key concepts.*

To lay out the 'worst of times', Dr. MacNab provided a backdrop of the social conditions in which to situate medical care. He reminded us that most people lived in squalid conditions; water and food were tainted, hygiene was extremely bad. Most people worked on the land; workplace accidents were common and included chemical poisonings, mine accidents, and people mangled in machines. The Napoleonic threat hung over all.



The chief medical ‘complaints’ (read, causes of death) were injury and infectious disease. Only one quarter of infants survived to adulthood with half dying in the first year of life. About 60% of the population had smallpox, of which one-third died. Belief in the four humours (blood, phlegm, black bile, yellow bile) served as the foundation of medical treatment with bleedings, enemas, and purgatives administered in efforts to bring balance to the humours. These treatments themselves often hastened death. There was limited knowledge of anatomy and physiology, and no knowledge of diagnosis or the practice of medicine as we know it today. Medical examinations chiefly involved examining the colour and quantity of stool and urine. Physical examination as we know it (that which actually involves touching people and assessing aspects of body systems such as respiration, and cardiac, digestive or urinary function), did not exist. Instruments such as the stethoscope had yet to be invented.

Dr. MacNab then reviewed the ‘cast of characters’ who provided various types of medical care. These were:

- *physicians* (who treated medical conditions);
- *surgeons* (who performed operative procedures);
- *apothecaries* (who had knowledge of the pharmacologic uses of plants);
- *midwives* (who delivered babies – most midwives during this period were men);
- *nurses* (these were wise women who provided bedside care for the sick and served as undertakers’ assistants. The profession of nursing, as we know it, did not yet exist amongst the laity);
- *quacks* (the unscrupulous who preyed on fears and sold compounds that were of questionable value, if not downright dangerous).

The allied health professions (dietitians, speech language pathologists, physiotherapists, etc.) did not yet exist, these being inventions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Dr. MacNab’s statement that the most desirable quality for a surgeon was the ability to amputate quickly (as anaesthetic did not yet exist) served as a sobering reminder of just how brutal and rudimentary medical care was at the time.

In reality, there was little available to treat illness except pain control using laudanum (an opium derivative), and prescribing tonics (a practitioner’s own concoction of herbs and extracts). Practitioners did their own dispensing; there were no standardized pharmacologic compounds. Simply put - being ill in JA’s time was risky business! A third type of therapy, for those with means to afford it, was the ‘taking of the waters’ at bathing places such as Bristol, Bath, and Leamington Spa. [Of note, when I visited a former bathing place in Leamington during July 2010, the guide suggested that perhaps the greatest contribution to better health for those who attended spas was that they *finally, actually bathed* and thus had a chance to recover from or prevent further infection....ewwww!].

In consideration of the ‘best of times’, Dr. MacNab described how there were, as at all times, clever people who advanced knowledge of the human body, and the nature and treatment of illness. This was the time of the advances in the development and use of the scientific method and rational inquiry that yielded huge leaps in understanding in anatomy, physiology, pathophysiology, pharmacology, and surgical procedure. The chief difference between then and now was that these explorations were usually done privately in a home laboratory at a practitioner’s own expense; there was no orderly system of funded medical research or dissemination of knowledge. The growth in understanding of the human body, its function, and malfunctions during times of illness, paved the way for advances of knowledge into the 19<sup>th</sup> century and beyond. It was not, however, always an easy path. Efforts to budge medical practice from the firmly rooted centuries of belief in the four humours were fraught with challenges; change did not come quickly or easily. Thankfully, there were courageous people who persevered in advancing understanding of the human body at all stages of life, in sickness and in health, and who explored the influence of the social determinants of health (e.g., safe food, water, air, sufficient income) on morbidity and mortality. These efforts eventually contributed to improved living conditions, public health standards, and standardized health care and treatment. We continue to benefit from this early use of the scientific method to enhance understanding of health and public health.

Contributed by JASNA Vancouver Member **Catherine Morley, PhD, RD, FDC** [catherine.morley@gmail.com](mailto:catherine.morley@gmail.com)

## Heroes and Villains of Science in the Georgian Era

What follows are reviews of four recently published popular histories and biographies. The first is an almost encyclopedic overview of science and art. It runs to 554 illustrated pages.

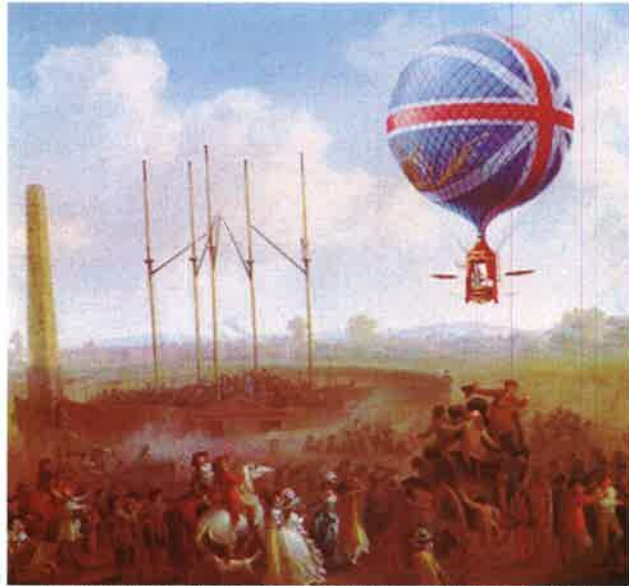
### *The Age of Wonder: How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science* by Richard Holmes (UK General Books, 2009)

The author of this book is a celebrated biographer of Coleridge and Shelley. This book covers scientific activity in Britain from about 1760 to 1830. It starts with an expedition to the South Seas by Joseph Banks (1743-1820) in the 'Endeavour' captained by James Cook. Banks brought back samples of flora and fauna and was instrumental in starting Kew Gardens. He also became President of the Royal Society and mentored many of the most famous scientists of the time.

The book drags a bit when describing the scientific experiments but the author always manages to regain attention with anecdotes about the lives of the scientists he is featuring. He claims this was the age of the second scientific revolution, a romantic revolution, where the solitary scientist, 'reckless for knowledge', works toward a Eureka moment. The romantic poets like Wordsworth and Coleridge celebrated these scientists in their poetry and the author gives us many examples of poetry describing scientific achievements.

Two scientists are featured prominently in the book. The first, William Herschel (1738-1822), came to England from Germany and with the help of his sister, Caroline, made several important astronomical discoveries including the planet Uranus. On her own, Caroline discovered several comets. The other was Humphrey Davy (1778-1829) who came from a humble background but rose to renown making important discoveries in chemistry and inventing a lamp that didn't cause explosions, for use in mines. In addition to these scientists many others are mentioned with interesting biographical information and information on what was happening in the scientific community in these years of Jane Austen's life.

The author devotes one chapter to ballooning, with many interesting and entertaining stories about the exploits of the pioneers in this field. In 1785, the first female aeronaut went up in a balloon, Mrs. Sage, an actress with a Junoesque figure. Another balloonist was a baker, James Sadler, who had some financial difficulties and to whom Dr. Johnson left, in his will, a barometer, worth 200 pounds.



Lunardi's 1784 balloon created 'in tribute to everything British'

The book is filled with these interesting anecdotes. In 1798, Joseph Haydn visited the astronomer Herschel (who by that time had a 40 foot telescope) and claimed that what he saw inspired him to write his oratorio, *The Creation*. As a young man, Humphrey Davy worked on experiments with laughing gas (nitrous oxide) in Bristol, with a Dr. Beddoes. The wife of Dr. Beddoes was a half-sister to the novelist, Maria Edgeworth. Many people came to Bristol to inhale the gas, including a certain Dr. Peter Roget. Ironically, since Roget later was the author of the Thesaurus, he couldn't find words to describe the experience.

In the early 1800s, the backlash against science began. There had been experiments to try to bring corpses back to life using electrical currents. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was probably influenced by these experiments. A book by Penelope Hughes-Hallet called *The Immortal Dinner* describes a dinner given in 1817 by an artist, Benjamin Haydon, and attended by Wordsworth, Keats and Charles Lamb among others. At this dinner, science was mocked and religion celebrated. However, Holmes believes that if Coleridge and Shelley had been there the argument would have taken a different turn. I thoroughly enjoyed this book - it added to my picture of Jane Austen's world.

Contributed by JASNA Vancouver Member **Jacqueline Johnson**



***Longitude: The True Story of a Lone Genius Who Solved the Greatest Scientific Problem of His Time*** by Dava Sobel

and

***The Map That Changed the World: William Smith and the Birth of Modern Geology***

by Simon Winchester

The heroes referred to in the title of this section are John Harrison, who invented the maritime chronometer, and William Smith, who founded the science of modern geology. Early in her narrative, Sobel refers to the wreck of four British warships in 1707, due to inaccurate navigation, which resulted in Parliament creating the £20,000 Longitude Prize. The folly and incompetence of Admiral Shovell had kill 2,000 sailors, including himself, and another whom he had hanged for mutiny. This latter soul had kept his own reckoning and risked his neck, which he lost, by pointing out the error of his superiors. This illustrates the absolute power of life and death which an 18<sup>th</sup> century magnate had over his inferiors however incompetent he may have been. It is a theme throughout these two books of men of simple birth and intelligence battling the jealousy, greed, ignorance, snobbishness and villainy of rivals. Harrison's nemesis was the astronomer royal, Nevil Maskelyne, who wanted the prize for himself, and believed that astronomical observations alone provided a reliable method of determining longitude. William Smith's nemesis was a rich dandy and M.P., who fancied himself a geologist, named George Bellas Greenough, and whose treachery drove Smith into bankruptcy and debtor's prison. Both Winchester's book, as well as Sobel's, read like novels and their protagonists ultimately triumph, to the benefit of humankind. Both are solidly researched. Simon Winchester is a trained geologist, so his account is a useful introduction to the lay reader, and an entertaining yarn for the knowledgeable. Something I learned, which surprised me, is that debtor's prisons were not filled with the utterly destitute; no, the unfortunate inmates were more likely to be middle class, on whom a lender had been prepared to risk over-extending credit. Smith did escape the terrible walls of Fleet Prison in 1819, and fled London for Yorkshire...which leads to the last biography to be sketched here, of a Yorkshireman who was fascinated by flights, whether helicopters, parachutes, balloons, or airplanes.

Reviewed by the Editor

***The Man Who Discovered Flight: George Cayley and the First Airplane*** by Richard Dee

The subject of this biography is neither a hero nor a villain in the mold of the two books above, but a Baronet, a Member of Parliament, a landowner, and head of a large family. Which is not to say there were not shadows across his life, such as an insane wife, a misfortune he shared with William Smith. Cayley was one of the founders of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society, whose secretary was John Phillips. Phillips was William Smith's nephew, and later became professor of geology at Oxford.

Cayley had been intrigued by the phenomenon of all kinds of flight, but especially the goal of human flight, from his youth, until old age, and promoted science, engineering, transportation safety, improved agricultural yields, universal education, and drainage and canal building, amongst many other interests. All very earnest and worthwhile, but then it is revealed that in old age Cayley plagiarized, and tut tut, he prevaricated. He did, however, achieve manned flight of a heavier-than-air craft, which carried a young boy, and there is an account of another flight, which is related by Cayley's granddaughter:

*"I have scratched my memory as to the date of his flying machine, which I saw fly across the dale. It was 1852 or 1853. Of course, everyone was out on the high east side and saw the start from close to. The coachman went in the machine and landed on the west side at about the same level. I think it came down rather a shorter distance than expected. The coachman got himself clear, and when the watchers had got across he shouted "Please Sir George, I wish to give notice. I was hired to drive and not to fly" (of course in broad Yorkshire). That's all I recollect. The machine was put away in the barn, and I used to sit and hide in it (from Governess) when I was so inspired."*

Alas, the author, Richard Dee, has concluded, upon examination, that this incident is a legend. Darn! It OUGHT to be true!! At least, Dr. Dee believes that the pilot was Sir George Cayley's favourite grandson George John Cayley. This young man travelled widely, and wrote up an account of a tour across Spain by horseback. Dee says, "The contribution Bridle Roads can make is that we get an idea of what kind of man George John was. We discover he lies somewhere between the classic English eccentric and an out-and-out

fruit loop.” Dr. Dee is a neuroscientist who works in aeronautics. He concludes his entertaining biography with reviews of a number of the books he has consulted. Some reviews are scathing, some are complimentary. For instance, he says of Dava Sobel’s book above, “...(a) shockingly well-written book...” and is equally complimentary about Simon Winchester’s biography of scientific achievement. For those readers who might want to venture into Victorian times, he reports that the Long Riders’ Guild Press reprinted Bridle Roads of Spain...1852 by George (John) Cayley, in 2004.

Reviewed by the Editor

## *UBC Prize Winner Speaks At March Meeting*

Our March meeting featured Jenna-Lee Shepherd, the 2010 winner of the Jane Austen Vancouver Region bursary for her essay “**The Smooth Talker: Austen’s Use of the Masculine Voice in Pride and Prejudice**”. In her introduction, Shepherd pointed out that Austen is often either praised for writing from a purely feminine voice, or condemned for exactly the same reason. She advocates abandoning this stifling debate and moving on to scholarship that examines the canon for itself alone.

In her prize-winning essay, Shepherd looks at masculine communication in Austen’s works, with a particular emphasis on Darcy and Wickham. In Shepherd’s view, Austen shows powerful control of voice as she uses masculine communication styles to reinforce and reveal the plot. Elizabeth’s misjudgment of both Wickham and Darcy stems from her inability to decode male discourse. The first three times she meets Mr. Darcy he fails to live up to what was expected of a gentleman in society – that he demonstrate social ease, produce witty conversation, and be well spoken of by others. But Mr. Wickham’s superb ability to manipulate words and stories causes Elizabeth, and the reader, to readily accept him, and to fall for his lies. Furthermore, Darcy’s gentlemanly refusal to respond to questioning and allegations makes it easy for Wickham to gain dominance in social opinion. As Elizabeth later said to Jane, “There certainly was some great mismanagement in the education of those two young men. One has got all the goodness, and the other all the appearance of it.”

However, the tides turn when written communication is involved. Darcy’s pivotal letter is written in his own hand and signed with his full first and last names, and it cannot be refuted. Shepherd likens it to a formal contract – a reference to business and power that is exclusively male in that society. It is not Darcy’s conversation, but his actions – as stated in the letter, and as witnessed by Elizabeth, that proves his goodness. As soon as Elizabeth reflects on whether what Wickham says is backed up by what he does, Wickham’s true nature is revealed.

Shepherd’s presentation style does her credit – her reading was lively and varied, and she coped well with the questions and comments that flowed readily after her reading was finished. As so often happens at our meetings, I saw new things in the novel after this presentation, and I am anxious to read the essay in its entirety when it goes up on our website.

Contributed by JASNA Vancouver Member **Adele Shaak**

## *Our 2011 Meeting Schedule*

September 10     ~     October TBA     ~     November 19     ~     December 17

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

Mail to the **Editor**: Sandy Lundy, Ste 803, 4620 West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue,  
Vancouver BC V6R 2J5 (604-228-1944)

or email to the **Production Coordinator**: Susan Olsen, [olsen@telus.net](mailto:olsen@telus.net)

Subscription (non-members) \$10 per year - JASNA Vancouver

Website: [www.jasnavancouver.ca](http://www.jasnavancouver.ca)