

Muse & Musings

"The company of clever, well-informed people, who have a great deal of conversation"

October 21st Meeting

Jane in Paradise: the AGM in Huntington Beach



Among those who attended the AGM at Huntington Beach, California (aka Surf City, USA) Aileen Hollifield, Pam Ottridge, Joan Reynolds, Michelle Siu, Carol Sutherland, Elaine Wong and I presented on some of the memorable experiences of the event. The AGM was held in the sprawling HB Hyatt, so large that it took fully fifteen minutes to walk from the room to the conference centre.

Pre-conference events on the Thursday included the Huntington Library tour and the Regency Tea and Fashion Show.

At the Regency Tea and Fashion Show there were presentations from the Costume and Textiles Collection of the LA Museum of Fine Arts on fashions in Jane Austen's lifetime and on fashions inspired by that period. Items in the museum's collection may only be displayed once every ten years to preserve them from deterioration from exposure to light and air.

I missed the tea as I chose the all-day Huntington Library Tour, in San Marino. We got off to a late start as the bus ride took longer than allowed for. We heard lectures (along with lunch) on representations of the rural poor in 18th century art and on the portraiture collection. After lunch we had time on our own, including some optional tours.

I chose a tour of the portrait gallery, specializing in 18th-century English portraiture. The tour concentrated on

several paintings in the collection that Jane Austen would have seen in 1813. After this there was free time. The main highlights of the collection are Gainsborough's Blue Boy and Lawrence's Pinkie. Unfortunately, Blue Boy is undergoing conservation and not on display. There was not enough time to see more than a small selection of the many treasures in the Library. The bus ride back took even longer, so that I missed one of the evening events I had been looking forward to.

The **Opening Plenary** was given by Gillian Dow, Executive Director of Chawton House Library. She read Kipling's verse about Jane being welcomed to paradise, but provided a new version with women authors in place of all the male ones.

Chawton House has recently lost 60% of operating funds with the withdrawal of Sandy Lerner's funding. As a result, the International Scholarship Program has ended. The stable quarters where the scholars had been accommodated are now earning their way as B&B accommodations.



Keiko Parker on the beach; Gillian Dow

Another **highlight** was a screening of the film *Love & Friendship*, preceded by an onstage interview with Whit Stillman, producer/director of the film. This turned out to be less than stellar, but the film, based on Jane Austen's epistolary novella *Lady Susan* proved well worth repeated viewings.

At the **Second Plenary**, Devoney Looser, Professor of English at Arizona State University and roller derby skater known as Stone Cold Jane, spoke on "After Jane Austen." Her talk covered several distinct heads including the plaque to JA in Westminster Abbey; a tribute to Joan

Austen-Leigh; various iterations of P&P; and finally “The Missing Pump at Steventon.” The pump, for many years all that remained of the demolished rectory, was stolen in 1973. The story was written up in *The Times* and the theft attributed to a “mad American Janeite.” A few weeks later the story was revived under the heading “The Plot Thins” when it was disclosed that the pump stolen (presumably) by a souvenir hunter was in fact a replica of the original pump.



Devoney Looser and Elaine Bander

Elaine Bander, president of JASNA Canada and a retired college teacher, gave a **breakout session** on “JASNA and the Academy” about how the world of academia regards JASNA. Academics don’t approve of amateurs who read for enjoyment, who have fun and who sometimes dress up. Dr. Bander dressed in full Regency dress (including an apron, because she was working) for the occasion.

She commented that the difference between presenting to Janeites and to either scholars at an academic conference or to students is that the Janeites have done the reading. And not only that, but many of us know the work as well as the presenter, and there will be lots of questions and discussion. Surprisingly, even academics will not have read outside their own little area of specialty.

Because JASNA is an organization of amateurs, universities do not cover the costs of attending JASNA events, and presenting is not credited towards tenure or promotion. Therefore many academics, especially junior ones don’t attend AGMs.

Another memorable **breakout** (and in the same time slot as Elaine Bander) was on obituaries in Regency England given by Tim Bullamore, editor of *Jane Austen’s Regency World*, who writes obituaries for classical musicians. Jane Austen’s obituaries were published in 14 newspapers and journals. Most referred to her father – “daughter of...” – with only four references to her as author. *The Times* didn’t publish an obit of JA until 2017, at which time they apologized. When George IV’s daughter, Princess Charlotte, died in childbirth in 1814, public mourning reached a fervour likened to Princess Diana.

The **Closing Plenary** was given by Richard Knight, “The Austen’s Knight in Shining Armour.” Mr. Knight is the descendant of Edward Austen Knight who is the freehold owner of Chawton House, which he inherited in 1987, at which time he was told he would need to put £1 million into it just to keep the weather out.

Mr. Knight started his talk by saying he had never in his life stayed in as big hotel as the Huntington Beach Hyatt. He quoted Jane’s niece Fanny Knight who found Chawton House full of unexpected passages and of finding oneself somewhere completely unexpected – “rather like this hotel!” He explained how entails, adoptions and name changes have kept the property in the Knight family down through the centuries.

– by Elspeth Flood with help from Lorraine Meltzer and Joan Reynolds

November 18th Meeting

Curating Ever Austen: A Celebration of JA’s Bicentennial Legacy at UBC Library

In November we heard from Chelsea Shriver, Librarian at UBC Library’s Rare Books & Special Collections (RSBC); and from Karol Pasciano and Kathryn Ney, two of the three Ks who curated the “Ever Austen” exhibit earlier this year.

First Chelsea told us a bit about the RBSC at UBC Library, which focuses on materials with a BC connection, with high research value or donated by UBC alumni. It includes an *Alice in Wonderland* collection; archival collections of Douglas Coupland, Malcolm Lowry and Ethel Wilson; as well as maps, and ephemera such as theatre broadsides.



Karol Pasciano Chelsea Shriver and Kathryn Ney

She explained the inspiration for the “Ever Austen” Exhibit, in conjunction with the acquisition for £4,000 of a first edition of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, which sold for 30 shillings immediately after JA’s death. She also explained how she came to ask Karol Pasciano, who had won our Essay Contest two years ago, to curate the exhibition. Karol explained how she came to bring her

two friends Kathryn Ney and Karen Ng (who wasn't available for our meeting) to help her put together on a short deadline. The two Ks described their process and experiences in showing various items to best advantage. The show included the just-acquired first edition, other first editions, satirical cartoons; illustrated editions of JA works from various eras; some Regency clothing from Ivan Sayers's collection and other delights.

Chelsea also disclosed that RBSC has a tour (a hands-on show-and-tell) every Wednesday at 11 a.m. There is also a drop-in tour of the Chung Collection room every Thursday at 10 a.m. — by *Elspeth Flood*

From Eileen's Archive On Umbrellas February 1984

I would like to make a regular feature of stories from Eileen Sutherland's newsletters: Newsletters #1 (February 1983) to #110 (June 2010). What an amazing accomplishment! The following is an abridged version of a piece on the history of umbrellas is from Newsletter #5. With Vancouver's Umbrella Shop closing after more than 80 years in business, it seems a timely moment to revisit this topic. — *Elspeth Flood*

“... a driving rain set full in their face”
(from *Sense and Sensibility*)

Sometime [before] 1705, the waterproof umbrella became available in England, carried mainly by women. These first umbrellas were kept in coffee houses and used to shelter customers walking from the door to their carriages. These early models had heavy whalebone ribs, not hinged but strung on a piece of wire, constantly getting out of order. If the ribs got very wet they lost their elasticity, and if they were dried carelessly they cracked. The cotton cover quickly became saturated and leaked. The umbrella was far too heavy for convenient use, and when folded it had to be carried under the arm or over the shoulder.



Jonas Hanway with his umbrella

Manufacturers in France tried to overcome these deficiencies, and the umbrella became popular there. Our James Wolfe (Plains of Abraham) wrote home from Paris

in 1752, wondering why the people of England didn't follow this custom, so useful in England's climate.

Jonas Hanway, a wealthy philanthropist in London in the 1780s, never went outside without the protection of an umbrella in rain or hot sun. He created a sensation and was the butt of insults, and worse, from street urchins, probably egged on by coachmen who saw their livelihood threatened by this new method of shelter. He was also criticized by the Quakers for defying the heavenly purpose of rain which was obviously meant to fall equally on the just and the unjust. . . .



Brock illustrations for Mansfield Park and Emma.

How does all this refer to Jane Austen? In the early novels, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, no umbrellas are mentioned, although Marianne and her sister, and Elizabeth Bennet go for walks in weather when they could well have used them. *Northanger Abbey* was written early, but may have been revised much later. In Bath, Catherine Morland, hoping the weather will be fine enough for a walk with Henry Tilney and his sister, looks out the window and says, “There are four umbrellas up already. How I hate the sight of an umbrella!”

In *Mansfield Park*, Fanny was “overtaken by a heavy shower” near the Parsonage, and was finally persuaded to take shelter there “when Dr. Grant himself went out with an umbrella.” In *Emma*, there are three references. Emma recalls that when she and Miss Taylor were caught in the rain while out walking one day, Mr. Weston “darted away with so much gallantry and borrowed two umbrellas for us from Farmer Mitchell’s.” Robert Martin did not notice Harriet at first in Ford’s shop, “he was busy with the umbrella.” At the ball at the Crown, when the Bates were heard arriving, Frank Churchill put himself forward, “I will see that there are umbrellas, sir,” and rushed out. Jane Fairfax, and Emma and Harriet, all go out in the rain, but do not seem to carry umbrellas – were they commonly used only by farmers, and in public houses, at this time?

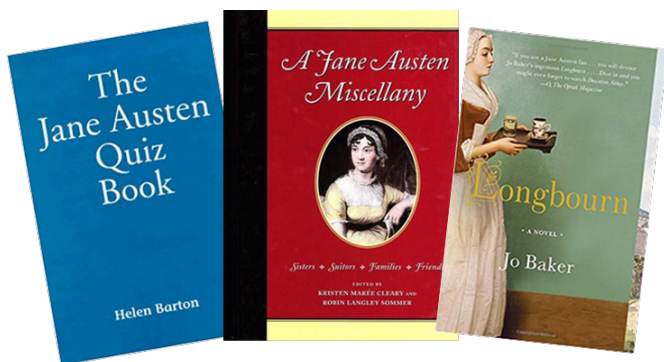
Captain Wentworth, in *Persuasion*, meets Anne in Bath, when it had begun to rain. He has a new umbrella, bought only that day, and offers it to her. I have always been unhappy about this. I would prefer that he had “offered to fetch” her an umbrella. After his experiences at sea, I would not expect him to bother about a little rain. Admiral Croft (and his wife!) would not have bothered to carry an umbrella. (He would have been just as scornful to see umbrellas in Sir Walter Elliot’s closets as he was about the mirrors in his dressing room.)

– by Eileen Sutherland

All of Eileen’s newsletters will soon be on our website at:
<http://www.jasnancouver.ca/newsletters/>

From our Library

We hope to have a regular feature showcasing a few titles from our library each issue. If readers want to submit the titles of books they have read and enjoyed from our Library, we will mention these in future issues. These books were recommended by our librarian.



- *Longbourn* by Jo Baker: My favourite of all the contemporary Austen-based novels that I have read. I liked the author’s satirical style. Our heroines, Jane and Elizabeth, are lovely, kind young women, but just like the other young women of their class and time, they live a very self-absorbed life. When their (Jane and Lizzie’s) servants are with them they are kind and attentive to them (they even give them their hand-me-down dresses), but otherwise they don’t think of them at all and are quite oblivious to their existence. In one scene the Bennett girls come home very excited because Bingley is going to throw a ball. While they chatter on in high spirits among themselves, all the housekeeper can think about is how much work it will be to get these girls ready for the evening event.
- *Emma, A Modern Retelling* by Alexander McCall Smith:
- *Jane Austen in Style* by Susan Walker: Has chapters on household, garden, architectural and clothing fashion of Jane’s time. Lots of nice photos and drawings and interesting text.

- *Jane Austen Quiz Book* by H Barton: This is a new Austen quiz book for our library, as we already had The Jane Austen Quiz and Puzzle Book. A fun little book to pick up and quiz yourself on a few items.
- *A Jane Austen Miscellany* edited by KH Cleary and RL Sommer. Another little book to keep by the bedside and read a few passages at night.

– by Cathleen Boyle

A snippet from a novel

Submitted by Lorraine Meltzer

This is from a novel titled *The Readers of Broken Wheel Recommend* by Katrina Bivald. The premise of the novel is that Sara, an insecure woman from Sweden, has been a penpal with Amy, a woman who lives in Broken Wheel, Iowa. In their letters they share a love of books. Amy also writes about the characters who live in her town. She invites Sara to come to stay with her for a lengthy visit. Sara steps outside her comfort zone and agrees. When she arrives, however, she finds that Amy has died in the meantime and that Broken Wheel is not what she expected. During her stay in Broken Wheel, Sara is changed and the townspeople find a new approach to life. The novel is a joy for book lovers because of the numerous references, both stated and implied to many famous (and some not-so-famous) books and authors.

Here is the section in which Sara contemplates JA:

“Do you think writing books makes you happier or unhappier?” she asked as she placed the Jane Austen biography on the shelf.

She hoped the authors had been happier. She had always hoped that Jane could have looked out over her surroundings and thought, “I can create a better world than this,” or “You’re much too unbearably boring, and perhaps I can’t say anything about it without being impolite, but you are going to be absolutely wonderful in my next book. I need another ridiculous minister.” Still, Sara couldn’t help but wonder what life must be like if you couldn’t daydream about Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy (how had she decided on that name? One of literary history’s most inexplicable mysteries), because you yourself had created him.

She had first read *Pride and Prejudice* when she was fourteen, and for a long time, it had almost ruined Jane Austen’s other works for her. Other books in general, in actual fact, not to mention real men. It was such a perfectly formed world that it had been a disappointment to be forced to leave it. The best women ended up with the richest, most interesting men; the next best got the next richest, and so on. After that experience, Edward Ferrars was no longer rich enough, and also, Sara thought,

even though she shouldn't have been judging anyone, he was a touch too feeble. *Mansfield Park* was certainly intoxicating and sharply written, but Sara had trouble forgiving Edmund Bertram for not falling for kind Fanny Price until much too late in the book, and then only in a vague, absent-minded way. She could enjoy them all now and thought that *Persuasion*, with its gentle melancholy, was almost as good as *Pride and Prejudice*, but it had needed years of work. She hadn't even the good taste to be upset by *Sanditon*, Jane Austen's last, unfinished work. Secretly, though, she enjoyed both the first fifty pages – written by Jane herself – and the rest of the book, which was wildly and not particularly faithfully written by “Another Lady.”

“Do you think Jane had stopped dreaming by that point?” she asked Amy.

Amy didn't answer, and Sara picked up the novel about the Brontë sisters.

Member Profile

Joan Reynolds

1. Tell us a bit about yourself and your life to-date.

I was born in the UK and immigrated to Canada in 1969 to join my fiancé. I worked initially with Canada Customs, and then progressed to being a Legal Interpretations Manager with Excise. I then moved to a multi-national forestry company as their Commodity Tax Manager and then having tired of tax complexities and compliance after 20 years, completely changed careers to work with the Western Economic Diversification Agency and their Community Economic network specialising in international trade training and small business development.

2. When did you join JASNA?

I think it was March of 1996. I found out through a friend of a friend. Marg Savery had been a member, and agreed to bring us along to a meeting. I found it fascinating and daunting at the same time – everyone knew so much about Jane Austen – I felt so ignorant. I am much better now!

3. How did you first get started with Jane Austen?

When I was ten years old, the BBC showed a wonderful six-part dramatization of *Pride and Prejudice* starring Alan Badel as Darcy and Jane Downs as Lizzie. I was captivated and had found my literary hero and heroine. A few years later for my English literature GCE exam, we studied *Pride and Prejudice* in detail – it was wonderful to delve into the text behind that earlier dramatization. I also liked that it took place in my home county of Hertfordshire. I owe a lot to my English teacher, Miss Towle, for bringing this novel to life and initiating a life-long love of Jane Austen. (I am still in touch – she is now

in her late 80s, and we met up last year after not having seen each other since 1964.)



Left: Jane Downs and Alan Badel, BBC 1958. **Right:** Joan Reynolds and Joan Towle, June 2017.

4. What do you like about JASNA?

First and foremost having met so many wonderful people from many diverse backgrounds, who all share this common interest. I also enjoy getting to grips with the subtleties of Jane Austen's writing, as well as learning about the context of her life: the social mores, customs and pursuits of the period whether it be fashion, English country dancing, the arts etc. I have also enjoyed the experience of the AGMs – seeing new cities, meeting a wide variety of people, enjoying the international camaraderie, the lectures, and the dressing up!

5. Has JASNA given you any special memories?

I have really enjoyed my time on the Program Committee, a great team of people who never cease to pull together meetings with great speakers and covering diverse topics. They have also let me have free rein creating the special meeting décor, information materials and being our Facebook page administrator. I have over time broadened my memberships to include the UK Jane Austen Society who provide similar wonderful newsletters and journals as JASNA, and I am currently a North American Friend of Chawton House Library. Visiting Chawton (twice now) has been another special memory. I have also been an English Country Dancer and am a current member of SMOC, where Ivan Sayers lectures regularly – all this because of JASNA-Vancouver.

Regional Coordinator's Corner

This past year has seen great programs put on by our committee, and I would like to reprise our 2017 activities here. Joan Reynolds gave a fine presentation on carriages and then did a shortened redux for our first event in collaboration with Vancouver Public Library. At this event, I was amazed by the artistic talent within our group, including those who assembled endless yards of bunting! A talk on gothic influences and *Northanger Abbey* by Scott Mackenzie brought better understanding to the novel of Jane's that I consider like the quiet child who sits alone and sometimes forgotten.

JASNA Travelling Lecturer, Tim Erwin, prompted us to look again at *Northanger Abbey* at how appearances,



caricature, and the faculties of vision illuminates character. Our own faculties of vision were delighted by Jessa O'Connor's examples of Canadian art in the 18th century. In the fall, boisterous conversation was had at our meeting discussing Jane's last years including her notable friendship with Anne Sharpe. A trip to the California coast

for the AGM was a welcome respite from Vancouver's cool weather.

Warmest wishes to you and your families this season. May you enjoy each other's company, with a great deal of good conversation. And as the chill creeps lower and lower, may you find great comfort in staying at home, just as Jane would. I look forward to what the new year brings.

If you have programming ideas, please speak with me or send me an email: jasnavancouverRC@gmail.com

– by Michelle Siu

Spring 2018 meeting dates

Mark your calendar!

February 17	Lindsey Seatter, recent Chawton Library visiting fellow
March 17	UBC professor Miranda Burgess on Mary Shelley's <i>Frankenstein</i> , after 200 years (published January 1818)
April 21	Jane Austen Day with Elaine Bander, JASNA Canada President + TBA
May 12	TBA
June 16	Books and Berries

For more up-to-date information, please see the program of events on our website: [JASNA-Vancouver program](#)



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!

This Newsletter, the publication of the Vancouver Region of the Jane Austen Society of North America, is distributed to members by email and posted on our website. Members who so request may receive a hard copy either at a meeting or in the mail. All submissions and book reviews on the subject of Jane Austen, her life, her works and her times, are welcome.

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