

Muse & Musings

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

June 15th Meeting

Books & Berries

Aileen Hollifield (below) reviewed *Jane Austen at Home* by Lucy Worsley and *Jane Austen's Diet: Austen's Secrets to Food, Health, and Incandescent Happiness* by Bryan Kozlowski.



Keiko Parker reviewed *Victoria the Queen* by Julia Baird and *Catherine the Great* by Robert K. Massie.

Joan Reynolds reviewed *Jane Austen, the Secret Radical* by Helena Kelly.

Barbara Phillips reviewed *The Last Attachment: The Story of Byron and Teresa Guiccioli* by Iris Origo.

Lorraine Meltzer reviewed *Cassandra and Jane: A Jane Austen Novel*

by Jill Pitkeathley (full text below).

Nancy McLean reviewed *Caty: A Biography of Catherine Littlefield Greene* by John Stegeman and Janet Stegeman.

Jennifer Cothran and Julia Van Delft entertained with songs from the films *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma*.

— From notes by Lorraine Meltzer and Laureen McMahon

Review of Cassandra and Jane:

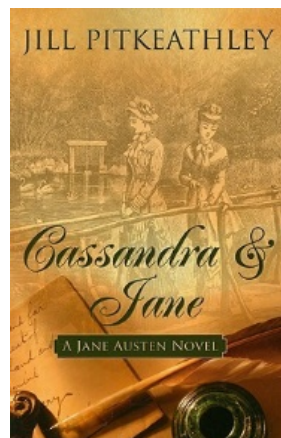
A Jane Austen Novel by Jill Pitkeathley

Let me begin by admitting that, unlike many of you, I have not read the compilation of the Jane/Cassandra letters. I do know that the sisters carried on a prodigious correspondence throughout Jane's lifetime. I also know that after Jane's death, Cassandra destroyed a large number of their letters. Austen scholars have debated the content of the letters and Cassandra's motive for doing so. Jill Pitkeathley offers her conjectures about both the what and the why of this Austen mystery, using Cassandra as the narrator.

Pitkeathley is, like many Austen aficionados, an Austen admirer rather than a scholar. Her background is not

academia but in social services. She brings her knowledge to bear in this novel by delving into the personalities of Jane and Cassandra and their sibling dynamics. I had to keep reminding myself that, unlike an academic, she based her conjectures upon incomplete evidence. When Pitkeathley quotes from the original correspondence, she sets the quotation apart from the rest of the text and uses dark font. The first three chapters, which cover the girls' early years, the family's theatricals and Jane's juvenilia, have no direct quotations from either sister.

The novel covers the period between 1799 and 1809 when Jane did very little original writing. Pitkeathley recounts a failed romance, the move to Bath, the proposal from Harris Bigg-Wither, the many moves within Bath and to other places such as Lyme-Regis and Southampton, the deaths of her father and her good friend, Madam Lefroy. However, there are very few quotations from Jane or Cassandra's letters in this section to support Pitkeathley's hypothesis that Jane Austen suffered from depression during this period, although the monumental changes she endured, make it likely.



The most important aspect of the novel is the relationship between the sisters and it is this that bothered me the most. Without any historical evidence, the novelist portrays Cassandra as feeling inadequate to her younger, brighter, more lively sister. At the same time she adores being a "little mother" to Jane, whom she feels is shunned by their mother. Cassandra reacts to Jane with a humility that seems like insecurity, which I found off-putting.

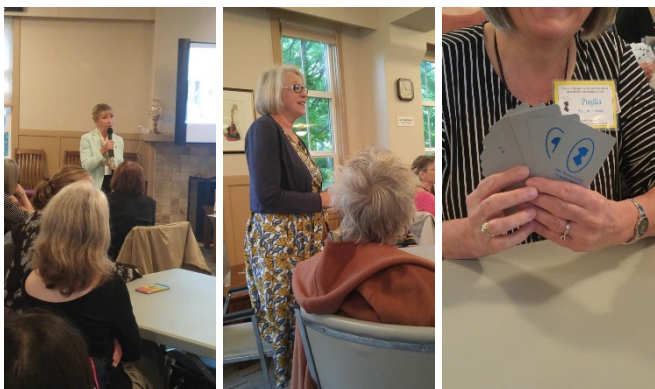
The novel presents theories about the events in Jane's life and how they impacted her writing as well her relationships with family members, especially Cassandra. While this novel tries to give the reader a glimpse into what Jane Austen's private thoughts might have been, it is important always to remember that these are Jill Pitkeathley's conjectures, unsubstantiated by any concrete evidence from Jane herself. I am now more likely to dip into the collection of the sisters' correspondence to determine if there is much correlation between the reality and the imagined.

– Lorraine Meltzer

September 14th Meeting

Summer Encounters and Regency Card Games

The topic of our first meeting since June was Regency card games. But first Joan Reynolds gave a presentation by on her summer trip to Chawton for the English JA Society AGM; at the AGM, Joan encountered our member Sheila Armstrong-Jones, who was on the JASNA tour of England. (See Joan's story following.)



Joan (left) and Sheila talk about summer in England. Whist!

Sheila then gave us an impromptu account of her experiences on the tour, which the tour guide said was the smoothest in memory. After a brief YouTube description of how to play whist, we all sat down to play several very noisy hands of whist before digging into our usual potluck lunch.

– Elspeth Flood

In Memoriam

Elizabeth Walker: 1921 – 2019

Our member Elizabeth Walker died on September 17th at the astonishing age of 98. A memorial tea was held on October 6th at the Vancouver Public Library, and those of us who attended learned a great deal about our very quiet member. After briefly trying teaching, Elizabeth served in the RCAF Women's Division and then as a librarian at Vancouver Public Library for 33 years, helping them to build their local history collection.

Elizabeth loved hiking, reading, travel and meeting people. She was a long-standing member of the Alpine Club, the Jane Austen Society, the Vancouver Historical

Society (65 years and past president), and the Civic Assets (Street) Naming Committee, all of which were represented at the memorial. Following her time with the Street Naming Committee, Elizabeth published a book detailing the origins of many street names in Vancouver, which she enjoyed sharing.



Attendees at the memorial included family members, members of her book club, members of the Vancouver Historical Society and representatives of the VPL. Sandy Lundy gave a tribute on behalf of JASNA. All attested to her being active up until the very end.

– Elspeth Flood

Irene Howard sent us the following note:

Elizabeth Walker was a very dear friend of mine, and I remember her most affectionately. She and her sister were living in an apartment just off Granville Street on that hill that leads down to Broadway. I was a UBC student, very much alone in the world, except for my older brothers working in mining camps near the border with Alaska.

I used to cycle to their apartment, where I was always welcomed with tea and home-baked cookies. It was here I could try out my interpretation of a poem, or of plot and character in a novel. Now in old age I was still keeping in touch with her, and I am one many who will miss her, discovering that my world without Elizabeth is not quite the same.

– Irene Howard

A July day with Jane Austen

“...a sweet view – sweet to the eye and the mind.

**English verdure, English culture, English comfort,
seen under a sun bright, without being oppressive”**

This past July I attended the annual general meeting of the UK Jane Austen Society, which is held every July in the grounds at Chawton House (CH). This is a very pleasant day-long event in the most quintessentially English of villages. As we arrived the sun was out, and the church bells were ringing. The grounds were already quite full of attendees from all over Britain and beyond. We were a bit early, so we went for a coffee and snack in the stone courtyard at CH. Seated at the next table were Richard Knight, Society Vice-President (descendant of Jane's

brother Edward), fellow Vice-President Patrick Stokes (descendant of Jane's brother Charles) – both plenary speakers at past JASNA AGMs – and President Sir Sherard Cowper Coles, former diplomat, businessman and life-long Janeite.



Richard Knight, Patrick Stokes, and Sir Sherard Cowper Coles.

There was just enough time to browse the many stalls of JA wares being sold by Society branches, Alton Museum and others. I decided to make a quick trip into CH's much expanded gift shop where I exercised great self-control and bought only three books, saving myself for my later pop down to the Jane Austen House Museum (JAHM) gift shop at the end of the day. I also located Sheila and Hugh Kindred (speakers at our March 2019 meeting), and we had a great catch-up chat. Sheila has been touring the UK with her book on Fanny Palmer, Charles Austen's wife and Jane's sister-in-law.

On my way into the large marquee for the AGM, I picked up my copy of the Society's annual journal, which is full of Branch reports and articles by a number of Austen scholars, and is well worth the annual Society membership. Reproduced on the back cover was a portrait of Jane Austen's niece (Edward Knight's youngest daughter) Cassandra Jane Knight, Lady George Hill. She would have been around 11 when Jane died. Surprisingly, this turned out to be a miniature painted by one of my very own distant relatives, my great-great-great Uncle Hugh Ross, from a copy of the original painting by his elder brother, the more famous Sir William Campbell Ross, favourite miniaturist of Queen Victoria.

The morning section of the AGM is solely for members and is the more formal part of the meeting. It was opened by the Chair, Professor Richard Jenkyns (whose two middle names I have since discovered are Henry Austen) – and it turns out he is also a descendant of the Austen family. He acknowledged with a smile that Jane Austen had now “reached world domination with Agents everywhere.” There was a recap of the past year's highlights – including that Maureen Stiller, Society Secretary, had been invited to visit the set of Andrew Davies's *Sanditon* during filming.

The Treasurer's report included some Society history: over the decades many Austen-related artefacts have been donated to the Society, which originally managed the cottage that is now JAHM. Donated items were kept there and JAHM always assumed responsibility for them, although legal ownership remained with the Society. For the 70th anniversary of JAHM this year and the 80th anniversary of the Society next year, the Society will transfer ownership to JAHM. All original donors must be advised of the plan, which is very difficult after all these years. Anyone who is or knows of a donor is asked to contact the Society at hq@jasoc.org.uk.

For lunch, I joined the Kindreds and their friends in the lovely CH gardens. After lunch, the members of the 2019 JASNA UK tour arrived, and a chance conversation alerted me to another Canadian in attendance – JASNA Vancouver member Sheila Armstrong-Jones who was on this year's tour – a very pleasant and unexpected surprise.

The first speaker of the afternoon was the President, Sir Sherard Cowper Cole, who greeted the assembled group with: “Lords, Ladies, Gentlemen, Descendants and Disciples.” This was very apt as there were a couple of Lords and at least two Austen family descendants present.



Left to right: Society Chair, Professor Richard Jenkyns, President, Sir Sherard Cowper Cole, and keynote speaker, Dr. Gillian Dow.

As a former diplomat Cowper Coles was an engaging and amusing speaker. He mentioned the increasing popularity of Austen, “who was now the most popular writer in the world” as evidenced by the growth of so many societies dedicated to her (Brazil, Pakistan, Japan among others) including the largest of all, JASNA. He welcomed individual Society members from Japan, Beijing and South Africa.

Present from Ireland was author Sophia Hillan (who researched the story of Jane's nieces in Ireland), and Irish-Israeli resident Karen Ievers, who recently discovered the Knight family photo albums featuring photographs from the mid-19th century. In this album were photos of the very nieces that were the subject of Sophia's book, and one of a mature Fanny Knight (Jane Austen's favourite niece). Sophia and Karen are currently collaborating to piece together more facts about those Knight nieces that lived and are buried in Ireland.

There were reports from Mary Guyatt, of JAHM, Katy Childs, the recently appointed Executive Director of CH who reported that it was no longer a question of “rescuing CH, but transforming CH.”

The keynote speech, given by Dr. Gillian Dow, Professor of English at Southampton University, was “We must allow for difference of taste: Jane Austen, 19th century publishing and 19th century readers,” in which she examined the French influences in JA’s life and work.



Swag: Joan's souvenir haul

After Gillian’s talk, the AGM formally closed, there was some more mingling, and I was able to have a quick word with Sophia Hillan – so passionate about her research. Back outside into the sunshine and a final leisurely stroll through the grounds and down the road to JAHM with the garden at its summer peak. – Joan Reynolds

Member Profile

Wilma Cook



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

My husband and I came to Canada from Scotland to join my family in 1969. We have lived in Vancouver and on the Sunshine Coast since then.

2. When did you join JASNA?

My friend Aileen invited me to a meeting five years ago.

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

I won a copy of *Northanger Abbey* as a prize in High School.

4. What do you like about JASNA?

Being a member of JASNA has been both enlightening and entertaining. Learning about the manners, mores and social history of Austen’s era has made me appreciate her works so much more. I particularly enjoyed the lectures on costume, books and music of the period.

5. Has JASNA given you any special memories? New friends? Inspiration to new experiences?

It has been a pleasure to meet others with a common interest.

Library Corner

The Jane Austen Handbook: Proper Life Skills from Regency England by Margaret C. Sullivan

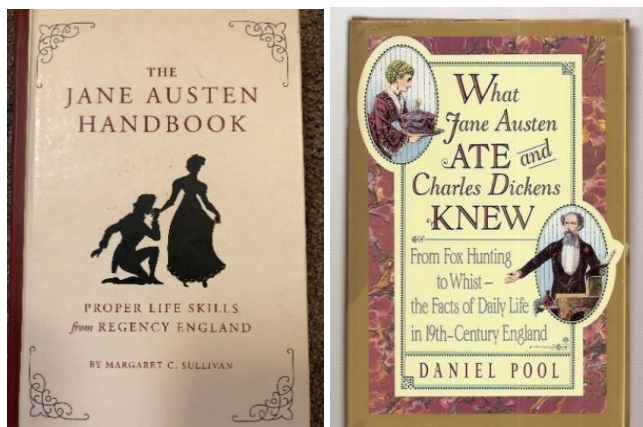
This month’s featured book, by Margaret C. Sullivan, published in 2007 was recently donated to the library. It is a lighthearted, playful catalogue of knowledge necessary for early 19th century landed gentry in England. The book is divided into four sections plus an Appendix, which includes a short biography of Jane Austen, a description of her novels and a glossary of terms.

Section I, entitled “Jane Austen’s World & Welcome To It,” covers some of the logistical considerations for the gentry of this time, such as: “How to Become an Accomplished Lady” and “How to Identify Quality” (i.e. how to determine a stranger’s “rank” in order to determine if this is someone with whom you wish to cultivate a “friendship”). To do so, one must determine: Who is their family? Do they have a title? Do they own an estate or large house? Do they work for a living (oh no!)? Do they act in a genteel manner? Are they rich? – possibly the most important consideration.

In “How to Write a Letter,” instructions are provided on how to keep one’s correspondence, no matter how long, to one page, including how to fold it as an envelope. As the letter’s recipient was required to pay the postage, which was based on its weight and how far it travelled, it would be rude to expect them to pay for extra pages, so one should squeeze everything on to a single sheet.

Section II, “A Quick Succession of Busy Nothings, or Everyday Activities,” outlines how to spend one’s day in a time where having a job was frowned upon and households employed help to do the chores. What was a lady to do! “How to Keep House” (i.e. how to oversee the servants), “How to Dress” (both men and women), “How

a Lady Might Spend Her Leisure Time” or “How to Improve Your Estate” are topics addressed here.



Section III, is on “Making Love,” and Section IV, “The Best Company Or, Social Gatherings.”

All the book’s “How-to’s” are one to two sentences long, and are listed in bullet form for quick, easy reference. As well, many are written tongue in cheek to provide the reader with both a smile and a note of thanks that we are no longer bound by such a stringent social order. I thoroughly enjoyed it and I recommend it to both readers well versed in the Regency times, and those looking for a quick introduction. For the latter who are looking for more detailed information on this subject, I recommend you then read *What Jane Austen Ate and What Charles Dickens Knew* by Daniel Pool, which is also in our library.

I would like to welcome our new library co-chair, Jennifer Cothran, who will be introduced at our November meeting. And thank you to our retiring library co-chair, Carol Sutherland, who has joined the Planning Committee and also assists in the kitchen with the luncheon preparation. Thanks Carol, you do a lot for our Jane Austen group.

– Cathleen Boyle

Ed. Note: Maggie Sullivan writes a hilarious blog entitled *Austenblog* <https://austenblog.com/> in which she refers to herself as “the Editrix.” The editor of this publication has restrained herself from copying Maggie.

RC’s Corner: Michelle Siu



This year we mark the 40th anniversary of JASNA. Our region was already having meetings in the earliest years, and we lay claim to being close to the home of Joan Austen-Leigh, one of the founders. Some of that history of JASNA’s founding was shared by Damaris Brix, daughter of Joan and descendant of Jane Austen’s brother James.

And to mark that occasion of 40 years, I’d like to invite our members to submit their best memories of their experience with JASNA. In this way I hope for many of us to contribute to our capsule documenting our own history locally. Please submit to our editor. They will be collected for future meetings and to be printed in our newsletter.

How you can contribute

All members are invited to make a contribution by sharing their ideas with the Programming Committee. This can be done by speaking to any of our committee members at a meeting: Phyllis Bottomer, Barbara Elliott, Elspeth Flood, Susan Kaufman, Janice Mallison, Barbara Phillips and Carol Sutherland.

Allow me to thank the Programming Committee for their work in putting together our wonderful programming. They are the reason that I have heard frequent kudos and applause for our enjoyable meetings these past few years. If you would like to join this remarkable and distinguished group who choose the great activities for our meetings, please ask myself about our meeting schedule. We would love to have your addition to our fun group.

If you have programming suggestions, please approach me at our meetings or email me at:

JASNAvancouverRC@gmail.com



Fall and winter 2019 meeting dates

Mark your calendar!

- November 16** Dr. Sheldon Goldfarb, member of Vancouver’s Sherlock Holmes Society, Stormy Petrels of British Columbia, will speak on “Conan Doyle is no Jane Austen”
- December 14** Birthday tribute and Christmas celebration: Justin Newell will speak on British artists who were contemporary to JA: John Constable, Sir Thomas Lawrence, J.M.W. Turner and, as a contrast, William Blake.

February 15 Program to be announced

March 21 Program to be announced

Spring dates coming soon!

Please see the program of events on our website for more up-to-date information (thanks to webmaster Lauren McMahon): [JASNA-Vancouver program](#)



June Books and Berries (left to right): New members Jennifer Cothran and Julia Van Delft sang songs from the films *Sense and Sensibility* and *Emma*. Janice Mallison chairs the meeting. Linda Peteherych (in a delightful bonnet) does the JA reading. Linda's trifle was star of the show at lunch.



Left: Cynthia Nagy won the Bountiful Basket at the June meeting. **Centre:** Whist was enjoyed by all at the September meeting. **Right:** Phyllis had an unexpected summer encounter while touring the Orkneys: Captain Cook's dinnerware. "I have been at the site in Hawaii where he died and now I have seen where his crockery came to rest!"

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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