

# *My Dear Cassandra.....*

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*Jane Austen is not an opera, she's a string trio or quartet – clear  
and direct and uncompromising  
- Nancy, Pannier*

## **May Meeting**

Saturday, May 10. Same time (2-4 pm) and place (Sunalta Community Centre, 10<sup>th</sup> Ave and 16th St SW). Our speaker will be Dr. David Oakleaf, Associate Professor in the English Department at the University of Calgary. Dr. Oakleaf's areas of research interest include Literature in English, 1660-1800, Fiction in English and by Women, 1680s-1810s, and Jane Austen so his talk should be very informative and interesting. Please extend an invitation to anyone you think might enjoy attending the meeting.

## **The Program Committee**

will be having a planning meeting on June 21 at 2 PM at Steeps in Mt Royal Village :  
the address is G12a 880 16 Avenue SW to plan for the Sept 2008 - May 2009 year.

All members interested in being part of the Program Committee are very welcome to come -we are looking for ideas for speakers and offers from members to give a presentation.... large or small.

In my experience, preparing an item of interest or an activity for the meetings is really a labour of love and amusement. It involves fooling about on the net, in books and watching movies ... and particularly fun if done with other Janeites. Do you have something large or small you would like to play with and then share with your fellow enthusiasts? if so please come to the Program committee afternoon of chit chat ... or if you can't make it, please email me [crichton\\_margaret@hotmail.com](mailto:crichton_margaret@hotmail.com) or call me at 284 4649. Perhaps it is time to do something about the absolute proliferation of spin off books about Jane and about her characters... anyone for a panel to sort the wheat from the chaff?

I just read a very interesting blog about whether Jane sometimes got it (gasp!) wrong! and some of her characters were sometimes out of character... what on earth was with Mrs Smith in Persuasion? not telling Anne her dear friend about the evil side of Mr Elliot anyway...? would puzzling "errors" like that be a topic?

If we have a gala in 2009, should we try a bonnet trimming or craft type of activity as part of the event? any ideas????

Looking forward to seeing "as many as will" in Steeps for tea , 2 pm June 21.

## Miss Austen Regrets,

**the film biography** shown on *Masterpiece*, was thoughtfully shaped by screenwriter Gwyneth Hughes, who explains her working method in this way: "The script is very tightly based on Austen's surviving letters to her sister and to her young niece, Fanny. So I must share the credit for quite a lot of the dialogue with Miss Austen herself!"

In the movie, 38-year-old Jane Austen is portrayed by Olivia Williams. The Rev. Brook Edward Bridges (called Edward), played by Hugh Bonneville, is a central figure in the story. He was the brother-in-law of Edward Austen, Jane Austen's brother, who had been adopted as a teenager by wealthy relatives, the Knights. Austen's brother married Elizabeth Bridges in 1791, when Austen was 16 and Edward Bridges was 12. Like other younger sons in the Bridges family, Edward became a clergyman, though his father was a baronet.

By the time Edward was 26, he was taking pains to recommend himself to Jane Austen. In 1805 during a visit to Godmersham, Edward Austen's estate in Kent, Austen wrote to her sister Cassandra: "[W]e could not begin dinner till six. We were agreeably surprised by Edward Bridges's company to it. . . . It is impossible to do justice to the hospitality of his attentions towards me; he made a point of ordering toasted cheese for supper entirely on my account" (27 August 1805).

A few years later Austen wrote to Cassandra from Godmersham: "Lady Bridges looked very well, & would have been very agreeable, I am sure, had there been time enough for her to talk to me . . . . Her son Edward was also looking very well, & with manners as unaltered as hers" (30 June 1808). A letter written later that year to Cassandra, who was visiting Godmersham, includes an important emphasis: "I wish you may be able to accept Lady Bridges's invitation, though I could not her son Edward's; she is a nice Woman, & honours me by her remembrance" (7 October 1808). Citing this letter, Deirdre Le Faye, in *Jane Austen: A Family Record*, says, "it seems possible that Edward Bridges proposed or attempted to propose to [Austen during her visit in 1808], . . . a proposal which she had no difficulty in politely rejecting."

While Cassandra was at Godmersham in 1808, she sent news that Edward Bridges had become engaged to Harriet Foote, his sister-in-law. Austen expressed surprise and concern: "Your news of Edw: Bridges was *quite* news . . . . I wish him happy with all my heart, & hope his choice may turn out according to his own expectations, & beyond those of his Family—And I dare say it will. Marriage is a great Improver—& in a similar situation Harriet may be as amiable as Eleanor [Harriet's sister, first wife of Brook William Bridges].—As to Money, that will come You may be sure, because they cannot do without it.—When you see him again, pray give him our Congratulations & best wishes" (20 November 1808). The letter ends, "Martha [Lloyd] sends her best Love, & thanks you for admitting her to the knowledge of the pros and cons about Harriet Foote." The references to Harriet's personality flaws did not bode well for Edward.

Fast forward to 1813 and the opening of *Miss Austen Regrets*, which is solidly based on events reported in Jane Austen's letters. Just after she arrived at Godmersham for an extended stay that autumn, Austen wrote: "[T]his morning we had Edwd Bridges unexpectedly to breakfast with us, in his way from Ramsgate [a seaside spa] where is his wife, to Lenham where is his Church—& tomorrow he dines & sleeps here on his return.—They have been all the summer at Ramsgate, for *her* health, she is a poor Honey—the sort of woman who gives me the idea of being determined never to be well—& who likes her spasms & nervousness & the consequence they give her, better than anything else" (25 September 1813). Austen's astute understanding of Harriet Bridges is echoed in the characters of Mary Musgrove in *Persuasion* and Susan Parker in *Sanditon*.

During the same visit Austen wrote: "We are certain of some visitors tomorrow; Edward Bridges comes for two nights in his way from Lenham to Ramsgate & brings a friend" (11 October 1813). And a few days later: "Edward Bridges & his friend did not forget to arrive. The friend is a Mr Wigram . . . . The history of his coming here, is that intending to go from Ramsgate to Brighton, Edw: B. persuaded him to take Lenham in his way, which gave him the convenience of Mr W.'s gig & the comfort of not being alone there; but probably thinking a few days of Gm [Godmersham] would be the cheapest & pleasantest way of entertaining his friend & himself, offered a visit here, & here they stay till tomorrow" (14 October 1813).

Within two weeks Edward was back at Godmersham: "We have had another of Edward Bridges' Sunday visits.—I think the pleasantest part of his married Life, must be the Dinners & Breakfasts & Luncheons & Billiards that he gets in this way at Gm. Poor Wretch! He is quite the Dregs of the Family as to Luck" (26 October 1813). And at the end of Austen's stay, she reported: "We are to have Edwd B. tomorrow, to pay us another Sunday's visit—the last, for more reasons than one; they all come home on the same day that we go" (6 November 1813). This was probably the last time Jane Austen saw Edward Bridges.

Austen died at the age of 41 in 1817. Edward Bridges died in 1825, aged 46. In spite of her many health complaints, his wife outlived him by almost 40 years. They had a large family.

By Elizabeth Philosophos Cooper

### **An Edmonton reminder**

Sheila Dechant would like to remind Calgary members who are planning to attend the Edmonton gala that the (flexible) deadline for submissions for the "Cads and Heroes" session is April 26<sup>th</sup> so those involved can have time to plan. At that time, she just needs to know which character you intend to champion (or expose!) and an indication of how you plan to spend your time (up to 5 minutes maximum): a short talk, readings, short video clip(s), etc. So far, Mr Darcy, Mr Collins, Wickham, Frank Churchill and Edward Ferrars have been chosen. Apparently, a few Edmonton members have opted to wait and discuss some of the characters that no one else chooses. Sheila's e-mail address is: [dslsheila@shaw.ca](mailto:dslsheila@shaw.ca).

# FINALLY.....WE ARE OF THE WORLD

## Jane Austen in Calgary

JASNA Calgary has joined the rich virtual world of Jane Austen fans around the world. Our new website can be found at [www.jasnacalgary.ca](http://www.jasnacalgary.ca) . Right now you can discover our meeting location, read newsletters from the past several years, check out whom to contact for what, and admire some of our photos. In the future, we will have a membership list accessible for all members but kept secure from spammers and casual visitors.

This is our site, so your contributions are key to having a lively, relevant site. Never fear that your ideas are not welcome, but be warned that the editor is a beginner and some things may take a while to appear on the site! Use the contact email on the site or send ideas to [jasnacalgary@jasnacalgary.ca](mailto:jasnacalgary@jasnacalgary.ca) .

You can send photos and your favourite websites for posting on the site. You can fill in the survey and encourage your friends around the world to visit our site.

### **Jewelry of Regency England (1811-1820)**

Many portraits with the simpler gowns of the first decade of the century depicted necks and arms bare of jewelry. As the dresses became more elaborate, the uses of jewelry also increased. Necklaces, bracelets, and family tiaras placed in classically inspired hairdoes were very much in vogue. Other jewelry to be seen were crosses on neck chains. The large shawls and wraps of different sorts ushered in the use of wrought gold and jeweled clasps. Cameos, too, were very popular for a time, especially at the French Imperial court. Suspended by a gold chain from the neck, small watches adorned the bosoms of more adventuresome ladies.

~The Regency Companion. Sharon Laudermilk and Teresa L. Hamlin (Page 45)

### **Don't forget**

- we have 80 books in our own Jane Austen library.
  - you can get an electronic copy of this list.
- to get a copy just email Ann at [ancraig@shaw.ca](mailto:ancraig@shaw.ca)

### **Jane Austen Calgary Contacts:**

Regional Coordinator : Jennifer Hamblin ~ 282-4065

Program Coordinator : Margaret Crichton ~ 284-4649

**Mark your calendar for our next Meeting : Saturday September 20, 2008**

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