



# Jane Austen *and Winchester* AN INTRODUCTION



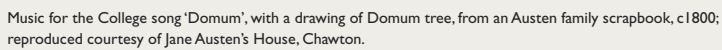
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Old Commoners Court at Winchester College, Richard Baigent, 1838.





# AN INTRODUCTION



Winchester Cathedral, James Cave, c1802.

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Winchester College Outer Gate, from R Ackermann's *A History of Winchester College*, 1816.

# Introduction

2025 will see the 250th anniversary of the birth of the novelist Jane Austen. Austen lies buried in the north aisle of Winchester Cathedral, having died on 18 July 1817, in a property now owned by the College and until recently used for staff accommodation.

Connections between the Austen family and Winchester College are numerous; but – at any rate for the College's part – neither greatly researched nor promulgated. As 2025 draws nearer, the College is seeking to redress this deficiency; and this small booklet represents an early attempt to find out more about Austen's relationship with the school and the city, as a preliminary to ensuring that by 2025 pupils of the College and members of the public visiting Winchester will have a memento offering further information.

This booklet contains three sections, each with three short essays. The first section deals with the city, the College, and Austen's views on both. The second section focuses on the novelist herself: her character, as seen through the lens of her letters; her novels; and, in particular, the unfinished *Sanditon*, which must have been still on her mind at the time of her death. The third section covers Austen's final days: the house at 8 College Street in which she died; her funeral; and in the last essay, by Canon Roland Riem, a wider consideration of Austen's final resting place and its enduring significance.

The contributors to this volume, with the exception of Canon Riem, are teachers at the College. Though none is a published Austen scholar, all are Austen enthusiasts. *Jane Austen and Winchester* has been expertly prepared for publication by Lucy Hambidge, with design by Lyn Shields,



8 College Street, Winchester.

photos by Jim Pascoe and particular scholarly assistance from College Archivist Suzanne Foster, and Professor Michael Wheeler. We all hope you enjoy this small pamphlet and will be happy to hear timely suggestions as to how it might be improved.

Timothy Hands  
July 2023





Winchester Scholar, from R Ackermann's *The History of Winchester College*, 1816.

## PART I: Winchester



# Winchester in the Age of Jane Austen

Adam Rattray

A street map of Winchester published in 1791 shows a city laid out on its Saxon grid plan, an arrangement which still mostly survives. The Winchester of the 1800s was admirably neat and ordered. Dominated at the top of the High Street by Sir Christopher Wren’s King’s House (turned into a barracks in 1796), the surviving city walls embraced the great medieval structures of Cathedral, College, and the ruins of Wolvesey Castle, as well as some fine seventeenth and early eighteenth-century buildings. The city constituted an important provincial centre with two members of parliament, a county court, and a newspaper (the *Hampshire Chronicle*). There were excellent transport links and daily postal services to London, Portsmouth, Chichester, and Southampton. Like many urban areas, Winchester had experienced something of a “renaissance” in the eighteenth century. A new hospital was built in 1758, followed by a theatre (1785) and county gaol (1788). St Peter’s Chapel (1792) was the first Catholic church consecrated in England since the Reformation.

Despite these splendours, a sense of lost greatness emerges in commentaries and histories of the period. The city no longer held

a central position in national affairs, as it had done in the middle ages. A city that in Saxon and Norman times had been a regional and national capital, a seat of government for Saxon kings with its own mint, treasury, and royal palace, was by the early nineteenth century home to only about 6,000 inhabitants mostly of the “middling sort”. Referring to centuries of decline after the death of Henry I in 1135, the writer Charles Ball despaired:

But Winchester had now arrived at the climax of its prosperity, and henceforth, it affords a melancholy illustration of the instability of human grandeur; since the almost interrupted task of the historian, from this period, will be to relate the gradations by which the city, although, for long time, one of the most considerate places in the kingdom, has sunk to its present state of comparative unimportance.

Dominated by the comings and goings of the local agricultural economy rather than affairs of state, some of Winchester’s farmer sons had become moderately successful bankers and corporation men, but the Industrial Revolution largely passed Winchester by, and in 1817 the city was a poor relation to the great trading centres of Manchester, Newcastle, Liverpool, and London. The important medieval fair of St Giles that once took place in early September on St Giles Hill in celebration of the saint was a shadow of its former greatness, and when Jane Austen arrived in search of a cure for her failing health, the city’s poor were additionally suffering the effects of the terrible harvest of 1816, “the year without a summer”. When Keats visited Winchester in 1819, he commented: “there is not one loom or anything like manufacturing beyond bread & butter in the whole city”, though he seems to have been unconscious of the silk mill, which employed several hundred people.



Watercolours by George Shepherd (1784–1862). From the top: St John’s House, The Square, and St Michael’s Church.

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Contents page of Charles Ball’s *An Historical Account of Winchester with Descriptive Walks*, 1818.

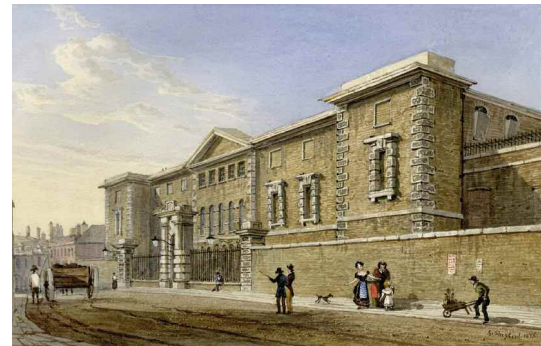




Winchester was also well-established as a destination for tourists. Numerous guidebooks described the city's links with the monarchy and the impressive remains of its medieval past. Ackermann's *A History of Winchester College* (1816) offers a celebrated compendium of the school's appearance. Milner's *A Short View of the History and*

*Antiquities of Winchester* (1799) supplies a near contemporary guide. But the most contemporaneous and complete of these is a walking guide written by Charles Ball and printed by James Robbins, a publisher and bookseller on College Street, *An Historical Account of Winchester with Descriptive Walks* (1818). After a breezy summary of the history of the city, Ball sets out six walks in which he describes, in engaging detail, the history of Winchester's principal buildings, many of which survive in more-or-less the condition Ball found them in.

A series of watercolours in the College Archives, by the artist George Shepherd (1784–1862) allows readers to see exactly what some of the buildings mentioned by Ball would have looked like in Austen's lifetime. Winchester's population (approximately 120,000) is about a twenty-times multiple of what it was during Jane's last days, but the city she knew has, despite expansion and some destruction, to a large extent survived. The glaring omission in Ball's guide is 8 College Street, the place of Jane's death – though this is of course an irony that the novelist would probably have enjoyed.



Clockwise from top left: St Maurice's Church, Buttercross, Old Gaol, and Guildhall, by George Shepherd.

# Winchester College in the Age of Jane Austen

## Richard Foster



Winchester College from the meadows, from R Ackermann's *A History of Winchester College*, 1816.

Winchester College was founded by William of Wykeham in 1382 and received its first pupils in 1394. By Jane Austen's day it was famous as the oldest of the English public schools and attracted boys from across the country and, occasionally, the colonies. Pupils were divided into two categories: seventy scholars who were financially supported by the foundation and lived in the medieval Chamber Court, and a varying number of fee-paying commoners who had separate accommodation on a neighbouring site. Scholars and commoners were entirely segregated except for their lessons, which took place in the seventeenth-century brick building known as School.

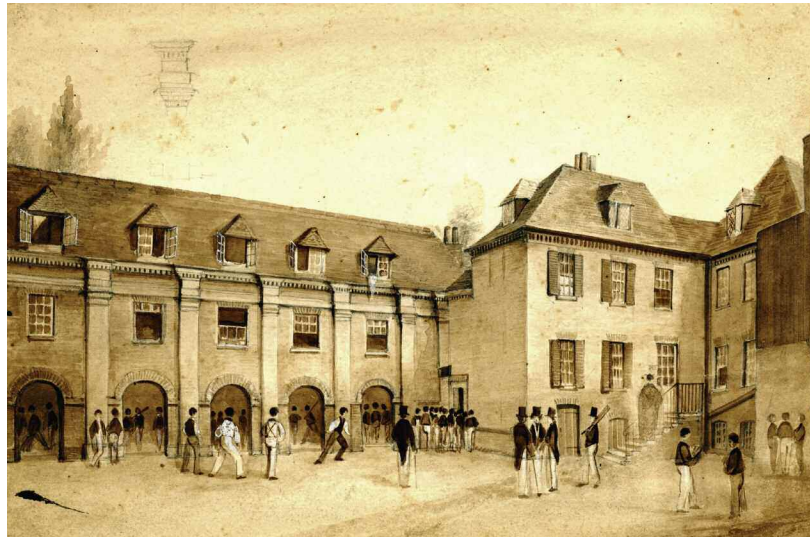


The lives of the scholars had remained largely unchanged for centuries. William Fearon (Headmaster 1884–1901) described being “plunged straight into the Middle Ages” when he first went to Winchester in 1852. The boys slept in unheated dormitories and rose at 5.30am, enduring chapel and lessons before breakfast at 10. Running water was introduced only in the 1830s and boys washed outside at an open conduit. The extensive powers of the prefects, and lack of adult supervision, led to systematic exploitation and brutality. Meals consisted mostly of boiled beef or mutton with bread and beer. There were frequent complaints about the quality of the food, the extensive menial chores undertaken by junior boys, and the stench of decomposing rats.

Commoners are referred to in the earliest copies of the College statutes, but their number soon grew larger than the founder intended. They paid fees directly to the Headmaster and so were encouraged as a useful supplement to his income. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the position of commoners changed considerably. In the 1730s, John Burton (Headmaster 1724–66) had raised the social standing of the school by attracting a number of aristocratic pupils. These boys lodged with him in rooms in Chamber Court, but in the

1740s he established separate accommodation for commoners on a site to the west of the College, where the medieval Suster Spital had once stood. This consisted of a long courtyard around which were arranged dormitories, a sick-room, and a dining hall, with a new house for the Headmaster at the northern end. The building, which became known as Old Commoners, was home to all eight of Austen’s nephews who attended Winchester between 1807 and 1830. One former pupil described it as “a strange, rambling, bizarre old place ... possessing no atom of architectural dignity or grace, and uncomfortable to an extent of which not even boys could be unaware”.

Despite the primitive accommodation, commoners lived more comfortably than the scholars. They enjoyed better food and could supplement their meals with supplies bought from two pastry cooks licensed to sell their wares at the gate onto College Street. There were three servants to attend to commoners and they were supervised by three tutors, who helped with work and maintained discipline. The number of commoners grew considerably in the years around 1800: from 45 in 1792 to 133 in 1817.



Old Commoners Court, Richard Baigent, 1837.

Commoners and scholars received the same education and proceeded through the school’s forms according to their academic performance. In Austen’s time the curriculum was almost entirely classical. A senior boy writing home in 1822 described working on Cicero, Horace, and Virgil, plus “a book of Homer every week”. Guides to Greek composition, and selected passages from classical authors, were published specifically for the use of pupils at Winchester. Aside from an occasional scientific lecture, the curriculum only began to diversify in the 1820s and 1830s when teachers in modern languages and mathematics were first appointed.

There was no formal teaching of English literature at Winchester in this period, but prizes for English speaking (recitation) and English verse were introduced in 1770 and 1782. Joseph Warton, Headmaster from 1766 to 1793, and one of the leading critics of his day, fostered a rich literary culture within the school, as demonstrated by hundreds of manuscript poems in the College archives and verse anthologies known as *Carmina Wicamica*. Among Warton’s pupils were the poet William Lisle Bowles and the essayist Sydney Smith, though there is little evidence that the Austen family had significant interest in what was for many Romantic poets, notably Wordsworth and Coleridge, an important literary style. The College enjoyed particularly strong literary connections again in the 1820s and 1830s when pupils included two of Wordsworth’s nephews (John and Christopher), Anthony Trollope and Thomas Adolphus Trollope, and Matthew Arnold.

Until the 1820s there were only two masters: the Headmaster and Second Master. As they were almost solely responsible for teaching around two hundred pupils, it is not surprising that the rest of the College’s affairs were closely supervised by its Governing Body, the Warden and Fellows.

George Isaac Huntingford, Warden from 1789 to 1832, was the dominant figure in the history of the school over the period. Through his close friendship with Henry Addington (Prime Minister 1801–04; Home Secretary 1812–22), a former pupil, he became Bishop of Gloucester (1802) and then Hereford (1815) but remained resident in the Warden’s Lodgings at Winchester and paid close attention to the running of the College. He was memorably described by one historian as “a lickspittle to the great and a bully to the young, a pedant, a liar and a cheat”.

Although modern scholarship has to some extent rehabilitated the reputation of Huntingford, it is clear that he and the Fellows of Winchester were determined to resist any substantial changes to the running of the College and their own comfortable existence. Huntingford’s own maxim was said to be “No Innovation”. This instinctive conservatism posed particular difficulties in an age of social transformation. The unchangingly severe and inflexible restrictions on the lives of boys, who were not even allowed into College Street or Kingsgate Street, must partly explain the strong current of pupil unrest that characterised Winchester in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Serious disorder in 1774 was followed by open rebellion in 1793 and 1818, with many minor incidents in between. Jane Austen’s nephew Charles Bridges Knight (Commoner, 1816–20) participated in the 1818 uprising, in which the boys seized the keys and took control of the College before they were eventually apprehended by soldiers with bayonets drawn. In the aftermath, Rear Admiral Charles Austen wrote to his nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh: “The same post brought a letter from your Uncle Henry giving an account of his visit to Winchester and its effects. Charles Knight he has with some difficulty convinced of the folly and impropriety of his behaviour and I believe the foolish boy will be quiet in future.”



A portrait, once thought to be the youthful Warden Huntingford, sometimes said to be by Gainsborough, but certainly showing a sunnier disposition and more modish style than evidenced by Huntingford in later life, when innovation had become objectionable.



# Jane Austen on Winchester College

Alex Latter and Suzanne Foster

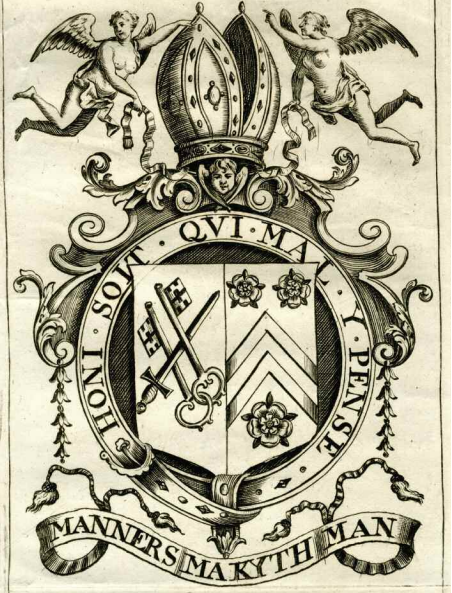
As she looked out of the bow window of 8 College Street in the summer of 1817, the comings-and-goings of College life fell under Jane Austen’s ironical gaze. Indeed, College life made it up to her sickbed in the form of her nephew Charles – a Commoner at the school from 1816 to 1820 and one of no fewer than eight of Austen’s nephews who were Wykehamists, six being the sons of her brother Edward Austen Knight. These (with years at the College in brackets) were Edward (1807–11), George (1808–12), Henry (1810–13), William (1813–14), Charles (1816–20), and Brook (1822–26). In addition, her brother Francis, later an admiral, sent his son George to the school from 1827–30, and her brother James sent James Edward from 1814–16. A tablet on the west wall of the Cloisters commemorates several of these family links.

The proximity of this family bond ensured that the College was not exempt from the asperities of her wit, as her correspondence records. Then, as now, the timing of pupils’ departures at the end of term could prove troublesome, and Austen took the school to task on this matter more than once. In her letters, the different attitudes of successive Headmasters – Dr Goddard and Dr Gabell – are dealt with in equivalent measures of disdain.

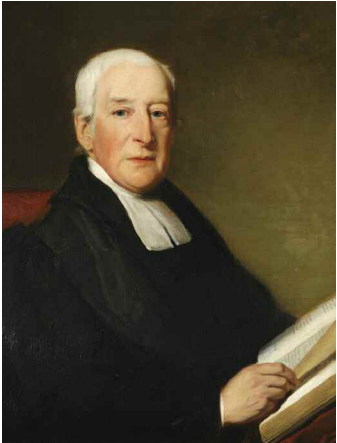


George Isaac Huntingford, Warden 1789–1832, Sir Thomas Lawrence, 1804.

The College Long Roll (an annually published list of those in school) for 1811. Warden Huntingford heads the list. Fellows (i.e. members of the Governing Body) include William Howley, a future Archbishop of Canterbury. Gabell, custodian of the garden which Austen admired, is Headmaster. Pupils include Henry Barne Trollope (the novelist himself did not arrive at the school until 1827); and three Austen nephews: Edward Austen, 1807–11; George Thomas Austen, 1808–12; Henry Austen Knight, 1810–12.



Dom: Ep: Gloucestrensis, Custos.	
Mr. Heathcote, V: C:	
D: Gabell, Informator.	
D: Berkeley, Mr. Williams, Mr. Lear, Mr. Daubeny, Mr. Oglander, Mr. Lee, D: Howley, Mr. Sifsmore, Mr. Blackstone Socii	
Mr. Williams, Hostiarius.	
Mr. Westcombe Mr. Hopkins Mr. Westcombe Junr. Mr. Chard Org.	Mr. Drughart Mr. Westcombe Junr. Mr. Harrison Mr. Kinsey
Sub- Cap. -præ- -cep- -tores	
Nomina Scholar: Chorist: et Com:	
Sexta	Clafsis.
6 Trollope Aulæ Pr:	Howley.....Co: Pr:
3 Blackstone Ollæ Pr:	Drughart.....Co: Pr:
2 Lipscomb Capellæ Pr:	Dom. Howley.....Co: Pr:
5 Lyon sen: Scholæ Pr:	Wall.....C: F:
Austen sen: Co: Pr: 1	Cypre.....
Howley.....Co: Pr: 2	Torrey.....
1 Ormerod Senior	Woodley.....
Quammore Co: Pr: 7	Howson.....
4 Erbe.....	London.....
7 Lockyer.....	Lee Senior.....C: F:
7 Quarrier.....Co: Pr: 6	Saunders Senior
7 Tennant Capellæ Pr:	4 Fearon.....
6 Mills.....Co: Pr: 6	Jeans.....
Quintæ Clafsis. Senior Pars.	
Lyon Junr: Quam Ford Barne Sheridan Maltby sen: Barnes Wallace Wallace	Bramston Austen 2dus 5 Ridding Thomson Cypre Junr: Roberts sen: Barnes Austen Senior Hollis Senior Hollis Junior



William Goddard, HM 1793–1809, John Lucas, 1832.

depart two weeks before the end of term “for fear they should overstudy themselves”: “Really it is a piece of dishonourable accommodation to the Master”, she opined to her brother Francis.



Henry Gabell, HM 1810-23, unknown artist.

Nor was it simply the College’s customs – flexible though they appear to have been – that met with her disapprobation. The reputation of Wykehamists themselves came under scrutiny. Watching a “countless number of post-chaises” full of boys pass by Chawton as they made their way back to London at the beginning of their summer holidays in 1816, she described them as “future heroes, legislators, fools and villains”. In the wake of the rebellion of 1818 in which Charles Bridges Knight had been a participant, no fewer than thirty pupils were expelled, though several went on to distinction in public life, not least William Page Wood, who became Lord Chancellor. Wood thus proved himself at school both hero and villain, but then also future legislator into the bargain. Austen had spoken truer than she knew.



Austen’s own negative impression of the place may have owed something in particular to the experiences of her favourite nephew, James Edward. Writing to him in December 1816, she congratulated him on “having left Winchester”:

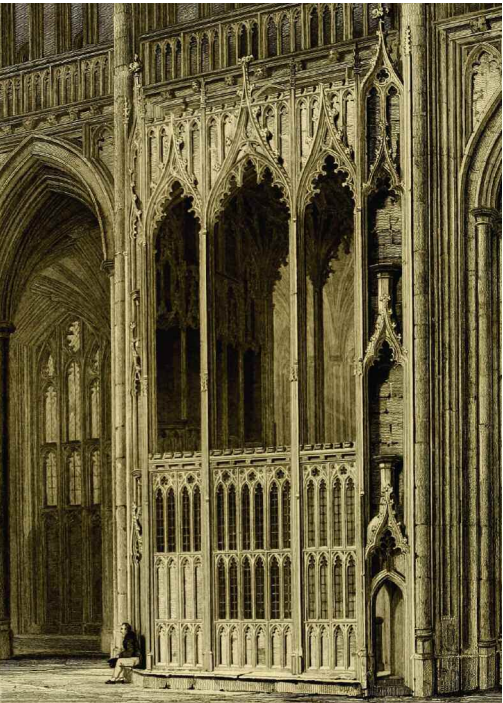
Now you may own how miserable you were there; now it will gradually all come out – your crimes and your miseries – how often you went up by the Mail to London and threw away fifty Guineas at a tavern, and how often you were on the point of hanging yourself – restrained only, as some ill-natured aspersion upon poor old Winton has it, by the want of a tree within some miles of the city.

How sincerely this is offered – and it is possible to read these lines as sending-up a young man’s overheated sensibility – they are enough to suggest at least that the picture he had painted his aunt of life at the College was not a happy one. Her reference is to the mythical story of a pupil, who, finding himself left alone at the school, took his own life by hanging himself on the so-called Domum tree (see inside front cover).

For his own part James Edward discovered at Winchester – to his surprise and delight – that his aunt was the author of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*, two novels that he had read with much enjoyment. He even went so far as to compose a youthful poem about the experience:

No words can express, my dear Aunt, my surprise ( ... )  
When I heard for the very first time in my life  
That I had the honour to have a relation  
Whose works were dispersed throughout the whole of the nation.

Much later in life, the same admiration led him to write *Memoirs of Jane Austen* (1869), a biography that drew on his own memories as well as those of other living relatives who had known her, to create an affectionate – if not rather saccharine – impression of his aunt.



Wykeham's Chantry, Winchester Cathedral, from John Britton's *Cathedral Antiquities*, 1814.

Venta! within thy sacred fane  
Rests many a chief in battle slain;  
And many a Statesman great & wise  
Beneath thy hallowed pavement lies:  
Tracing thy venerable pile,  
Thy Gothic choir and Pillared Aisle;  
Frequent we tread the vaulted grave  
Where sleep the learned & the Brave.  
High on the Screen on either hand  
Old Saxons Monarchs Coffins stand.  
Below beneath his sable Stone  
Lies the Conquerors haughty Son;  
Immured within the Chapels wall  
Sleep Mitred Priest and Cardinal.  
And honoured Wickham lies reclined  
In Gothic tracery enshrined.

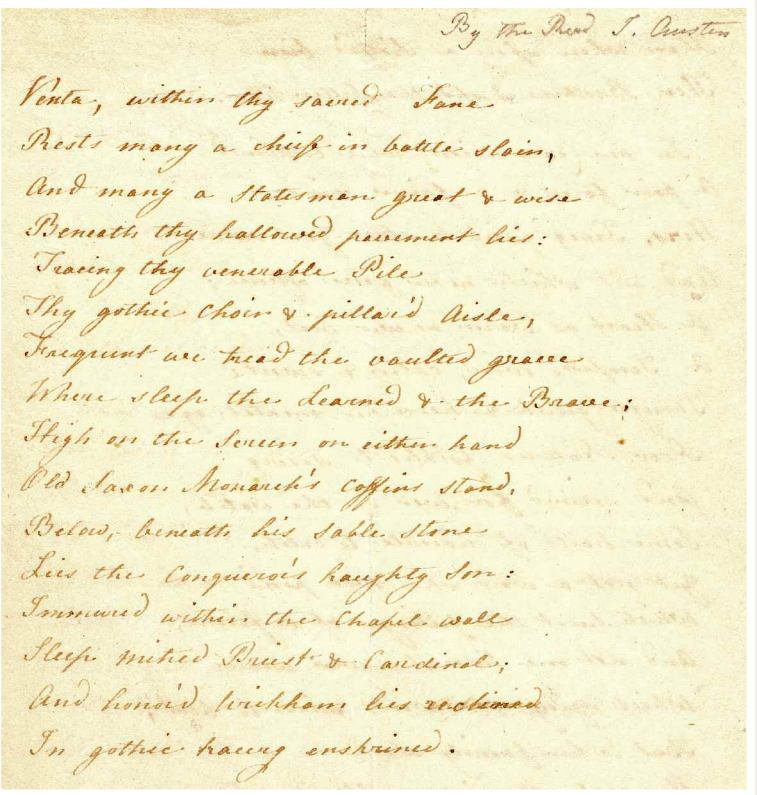
But sure since Williams purer taste  
Old Walkelyn's heavier style effaced  
Ore the plain roof the fret work spread  
And formed the Arch with lancet head;  
Neer did this venerable fane  
More Beauty, Sense & worth contain  
Than when upon a Sister's bier  
Her Brothers dropt the bitter tear.

In her (rare union) were combined  
A fair form and a fairer mind  
Hers, Fancy quick, and clear good sense  
And wit which never gave offence:  
A Heart as warm as ever beat,  
A Temper even calm and sweet:  
Though quick and keen her mental eye  
Poor natures foibles to descry  
And seemed for ever on the watch  
Some traits of ridicule to catch.  
Yet not a word she ever pen'd  
Which hurt the feelings of a friend  
And not a line she ever wrote  
" Which dying, she would wish to blot."  
But to her family alone  
Her real & genuine worth was known:  
Yes! They whose lot it was to prove  
Her Sisterly, her Filial love,  
They saw her ready still to share

The labours of domestic care  
As if their prejudice to shame;  
Who jealous of fair female fame  
Maintain, that literary taste  
In womans mind is much displaced;  
Inflames their vanity and pride,  
And draws from useful works aside.

Such wert Thou, Sister! whilst below  
In this mixt scene of joy and woe,  
To have thee with us it was given  
A special kind behest of Heaven.  
What now thou art! we cannot tell:  
Nor where, the just made perfect dwell  
Know we as yet: to us denied  
To draw that parting veil aside,

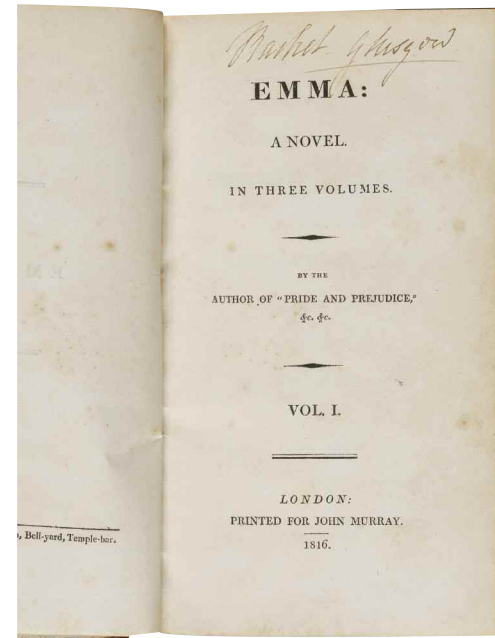
Which twixt two different worlds outspread  
Divides the Living from the Dead.  
But yet with all humility,  
The change, we trust was (fair) for thee.  
For oh! If so much genuine worth  
In its imperfect state on Earth  
So fair and so attractive proved  
By all around admired and loved:  
Who then the Change dare calculate  
Attendant on that happy state,  
When by the body unconfined  
All Sense, Intelligence and mind  
By Seraphs born through realms of light  
(While Angles gladden at the sight)  
The Atherial Spirit wings its way  
To regions of attendant day. –



'Venta! within thy sacred fane ...' The College owns two copies of this poem, one believed to be in James Edward's hand, the other known to be in the autograph of his father (Jane's brother); Winchester College Fellows' Library.



Jane. Austen



Title page of 1st edition of *Emma*, 1816; Winchester College Fellows' Library.

## PART II: Jane Austen



# Jane Austen's Character – from her Letters

## Lucia Quinault

“I am very much flattered by your commendation of my last letter, for I write only for fame, and without any view to pecuniary emolument”, wrote Jane Austen to her sister Cassandra on 14 January 1796.

What now follows is not a brief biography, but a portrait of Jane Austen's character as seen through the lens of her surviving letters. It is not a problem that the collection only begins when she is already twenty, because we have her permission to neglect childhood: “One does not care for girls until they are grown up”, she remarks to Anna Austen in September 1814.

This is not to say that she takes no pleasure in the company of the children of her family. There is a particularly touching reference to looking after the sons of Edward and Elizabeth Austen in 1808, after Elizabeth's premature death. Both boys were by this stage at Winchester College, to which their aunt proposed returning them late:

George is almost a new acquaintance to me, and I find him in a different way as engaging as Edward.

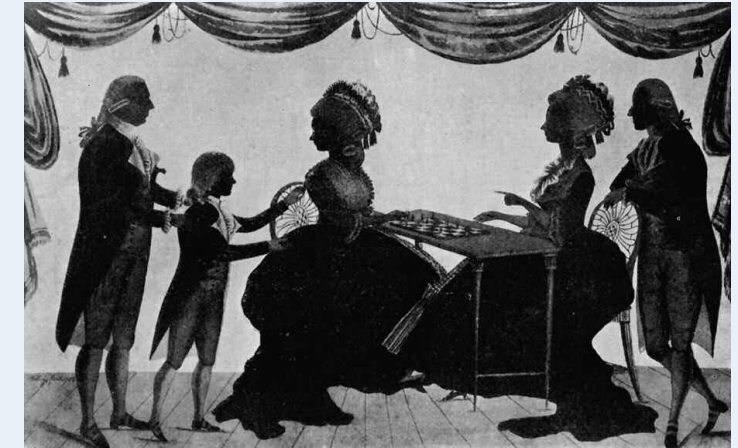
We do not want amusement: billcatch, at which George is indefatigable, spillikins, paper ships, riddles, conundrums, and cards, with watching the flow and ebb of the river, and now and then a stroll out, keep us well employed; and we mean to avail ourselves of our kind papa's consideration, by not returning to Winchester till quite the evening of Wednesday.



Jane Austen by Cassandra Austen, c1810; © National Portrait Gallery, London.

Perhaps because of this experience, Austen is always aware of the risks which attend motherhood. The letters are full of references to women who die in childbirth, or who are worn out by repeated pregnancies before they are thirty, though not always with the greatest reverence. It would be difficult to claim that either motherhood or marriage was regarded with any particular sympathy, for example, by the person who can write, aged twenty-two: “Mrs Hall, of Sherborne, was brought to bed yesterday of a dead child, some weeks before she expected, owing to a fright. I suppose she happened unawares to look at her husband.”

In her own words, of course, her novels are her children, and she uses the metaphor without self-consciousness, writing of *Sense and Sensibility*, “I can no more forget it, than a mother can forget her sucking child”, and of *Pride and Prejudice*, “I have got my darling child from London”. The famous passage in defence of novels in *Northanger Abbey* is reinforced in her letters, where she describes her family as “great Novel-readers & not ashamed of being so”, and she offers careful advice to her younger relations not on their childrearing techniques, but on their writing.



Reverend George Austen presenting his son Edward to Mr and Mrs Thomas Knight of Godmersham, late 18th/early 19th century.

“You are now collecting your people delightfully, getting them exactly into such a spot as is the delight of my life”, she writes of Anna Austen Lefroy's novel, for example, and the phrase emphasises another crucial feature of her life: the interchangeability of real people and people on paper. One gallery is combed for pictures of “Mrs Bingley” and, unsuccessfully, of “Mrs Darcy”, while of another two she notes, “I had some amusement at each, tho' my preference for Men & Women, always inclines me to attend more to the company than the sight.”

She certainly does not attend to them uncritically, however. The quickfire factual exchange of the letters is punctuated by devastating observation and commentary: “Mrs Powlett was at once expensively and nakedly dressed...”; “Mrs John Lyford is so much pleased with the state of widowhood as to be going to put in for being a widow again”; “Mrs Blount was the only one much admired. She appeared exactly as she did in September, with the same broad face, diamond bandeau, white shoes, pink husband, and fat neck.”

The glory of that list rests on her delight in detail, her refusal to find anything too trivial to be noticed or enjoyed. There is a buoyant confidence in her self-ironising which transforms the quotidian: “At Oakley Hall



we did a great deal – eat some sandwiches all over mustard, admired Mr Bramston’s Porter & Mrs Bramston’s transparencies, & gained a promise from the latter of two roots of heartsease, one all yellow and the other all purple...”

No wonder that even the ponderous and well-meant suggestions of the Librarian of the Prince Regent, James Stanier Clarke – “any historical romance, illustrative of the history of the august House of Coburg, would just now be very interesting” – could not lure her to write any other kind of novel. As she says herself, “if it were indispensable for me to keep it up and never relax into laughing at myself or other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter.”

Alas, Jane Austen’s last chapter was to be written in Winchester, with a relative of Mrs John Lyford in medical attendance.



Jane Austen by Cassandra Austen, 1804.

# The Works of Jane Austen

## Hester Jones

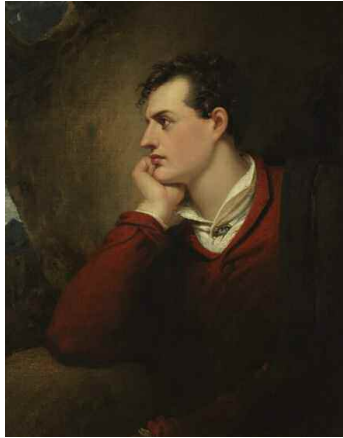
Austen’s six major novels were published across a relatively short period, after initial rejection of the first: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1815), *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* (posthumously published in 1817). ‘Juvenilia’ and an unfinished novel, *Sanditon*, were also published subsequently. *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey* were drafted in the 1790s, then substantially revised before publication; the remaining three drew on material from this earlier period but covered new ground too.

Shortly before her death in Winchester, Austen dictated ‘Venta’, a comic anapaestic tetrameter quatrain-poem, using alternate rhymes. Its perspective is that of St Swithun, the city’s patron saint, who testily sends rain on his annual day to douse the horse-races, and in



Shrine of St Swithun, Winchester Cathedral. By kind permission of the Dean and Chapter.

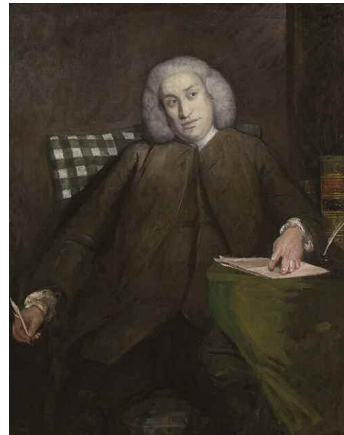




Lord Byron, Richard Westall, 1813;  
© National Portrait Gallery, London.



Samuel Richardson, Joseph Highmore, 1750;  
© National Portrait Gallery, London.



Samuel Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, c.1756;  
© National Portrait Gallery, London.

disapproval of the “dissolute” inhabitants. Lord Byron, two years earlier in 1815, had published in *Hebrew Melodies*, ‘The Destruction of Sennacherib’, also comprising six tetrameter quatrains, also lamenting the transience of earthly glory, and representing the approach of the “angel of death” in anapaestic meter, suggesting the gallop of the horses of the Assyrian army, in rhyming couplets. Austen’s more jolting, comically awkward alternate rhymes, hold tradition more lightly than Byron. Indeed, she had somewhat dismissively invoked Byronic sensibility and romanticism in *Persuasion*; but the blend of witty, brilliant satire and passionate, powerful feeling, that becomes Byron’s aesthetic in his later work, can also be seen in germ here in Austen’s voice.

Those doubts raised by some subsequent readers around Austen’s literary stature, on account of the restriction of her art’s compass to a few parochial lives in a small country village, may thus be offset by an indication of some of Austen’s exceptional artistic achievements. These include the economy and sparseness of style, its multi-vocal quality, conveyed through refined and polished dialogue in *Pride and Prejudice*, drawing on forms of epistolary fiction that predominated in the eighteenth century in writers such as Samuel Richardson. Appropriate to the belated, retrospective character of the last novel *Persuasion*, its romantic conclusion is indeed achieved through the writing and the reading of a letter of passion from the hero, Captain Wentworth, to the focal protagonist, Anne Elliot.

One might point furthermore to the superb narrative complexity of *Emma*, whose strong-willed, clever match-maker protagonist alienates and absorbs the reader in equal measure, controlling her kingdom of memorable and lovable cameos, and finally realising the folly of her illusion of power, revealed from the start through the critical yet affectionate commentary of Mr Knightley, her lifetime friend, moral advisor and, finally, romantic partner.

One might also indicate the depth and psychological truth of *Persuasion*, whose complex “free indirect” narrative mainly inhabits Anne’s perspective, neglected by her self-absorbed, vain family, and repudiates emphasis on rank, but endorses the self-reliance and professionalism of Captain Wentworth, whose decent individualism seems the path of the future of the country.

Critics have rightly linked Austen’s complex development of this free indirect narrative to narrative styles of later novelists such as Baudelaire and Henry James. *Northanger Abbey*, though seemingly imagined in the earlier phase of work, also shows considerable sophistication, probing fashionable imitations of gothic horror, while also suggesting that reading romance fiction may nonetheless alert its audience to real threats, whether of marital violence, poverty, or the consequences of war and empire. Austen is fully aware of the dangers of such literary warning. A character such as Mary in *Pride and Prejudice*, with her tiresome sermonising, comically indicates the limitations of didactic and moralised writing in terms of effecting change for good in such a world; and even Anne Elliot is aware of the vulnerability of moral exhortation in the face of romantic attachment. Dr Johnson’s story of *Rasselas*, addressed to those who “listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy”, is quoted in



Distant male voices of distant male wars: two of Jane’s brothers, Sir Francis William Austen (1774–1865), Admiral of the Fleet; Rear Admiral Charles John Austen (1779–1852).



*Mansfield Park*, and *Persuasion* further explores its conclusion that “in making the choice of life, you neglect to live”. Anne, in the autumn of her life, having been earlier advised to reject Captain Wentworth on account of his lower “rank”, must learn how to “live”, the hard way, on her own pulses. Nonetheless, Austen remains committed to the possibility of art’s shaping human understanding and forming human character, underpinned as it is by strong if often implicit Christian principles.

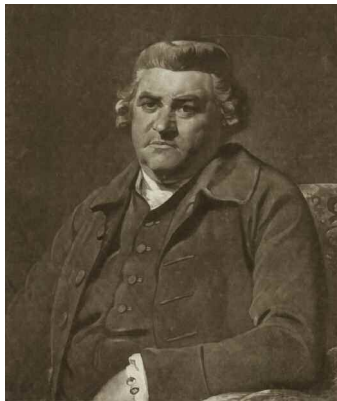
As the figure of St Swithin in ‘Venta’, then, affirms his “command” and his “powers”, surveying the ruins of the palace in Winchester and its dissolute people, Austen might indeed also dare to envisage her own precarious but elevated place in British literature, in a time and society that were shaken by war.



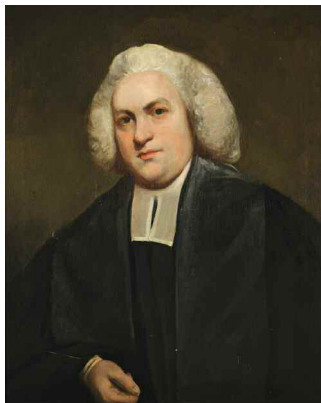
# Jane Austen's *Sanditon*

## James Methven

An overturned carriage. A sprained ankle. A garrulous promoter of a seaside resort. These are the starting points for Jane Austen's final, uncompleted novel, *Sanditon*, which she wrote at Chawton in the early months of 1817, before setting her pen aside after a sparklingly silly twelve chapters to journey to Winchester to be closer to a consulting doctor and the available facilities of medical support in the city. She wrote *Sanditon* at a time when her own health was significantly failing; that it contains a biting satire on the fads of wellness and hypochondria of her day speaks to her clear-sighted wit about life.



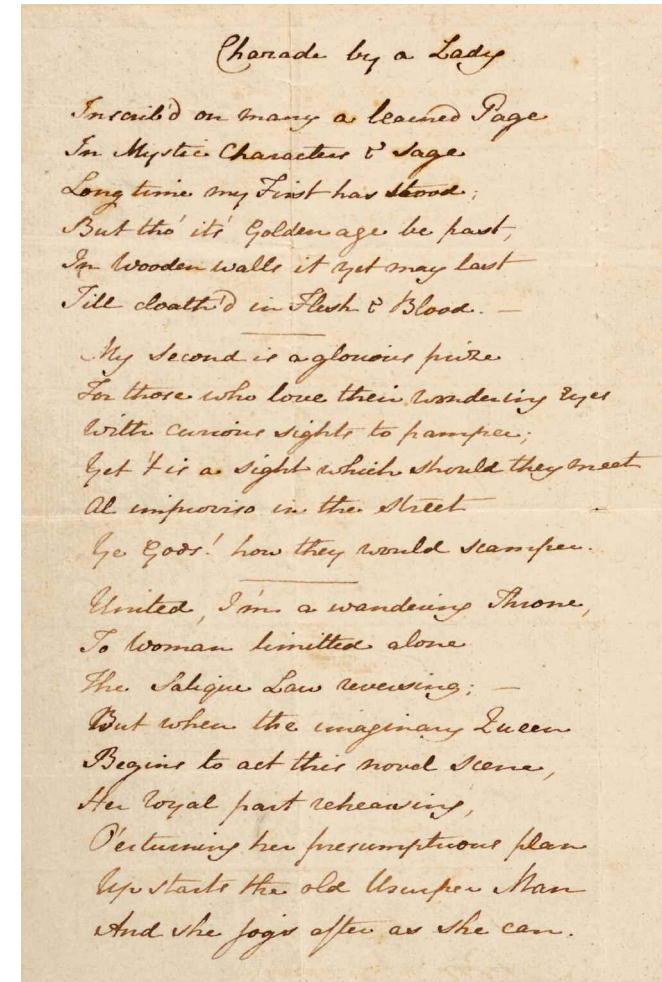
Thomas Warton the Younger, Charles Howard Hodges, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1786; © National Portrait Gallery, London.



Joseph Warton, studio of Sir Joshua Reynolds, late 18th century.

In seeking a surgeon to add to the lustre of the rising seaside resort of Sanditon, Mr Parker injures himself. Austen was no stranger to the contingent slapstick of accident in her plotting. Her juvenilia are riotously packed with it, while *Persuasion*, a mature work, written in 1816, contains a sequence in which two young ladies are robustly presumed “dead” by the ironic narrative voice – one of whom has fallen some eight to ten feet off the Cobb in Lyme Regis, and the other has fainted at the sight. Both recover. Having taken a wrong turn and come to the wrong village, a village that lacks a surgeon, Mr Parker has, ironically, no surgeon to turn to for aid. As his calm rescuer, Mr Heywood, points out, there is no need for such elevated medical intervention: “We are always well stocked (...) with all the common remedies for sprains and bruises.” Plain language and plain common sense. Parker wants to return home to the health-bestowing Sanditon as soon as possible; an ascending tricolon of posturing language signals the glee with which Austen skewers this character: “A little of our own bracing sea air will soon set me on my feet again. – Depend upon it my dear, it is exactly a case for the sea. Saline air and immersion will be the very thing.” The precise calibration of the dial of language is always a central feature of Austen's skills.

And so we travel to Sanditon, to witness the entrepreneurial busyness of the speculators who wish to see their resort wrest the laurels from such established towns as Brighton. Sanditon is any sandy town on the coast where professional hypochondriacs can gather, where pretend invalids can hope to make a financial killing in promoting a sleepy fishing village as a health resort. Mr Parker is a fadmonger of the contemporary, naming his newbuild accommodation with a



'Charade by a Lady' by Catherine Maria Fanshawe, copied by Jane Austen; Winchester College Fellows' Library.

sea view “Trafalgar House”, but suffers anxiety that this name isn't up-to-date enough: “– which by the bye, I almost wish I had not named Trafalgar – for Waterloo is more the thing now”. Soon we meet the rest of the Parker family, one of whom has taken “six leeches a day for ten days together”, and when this fails “has accordingly had three teeth drawn, and is decidedly better, but her nerves are a good deal deranged”. If her brother attempts to “suppress a cough”, she faints.

Into this mix, Austen introduces further comedy with “Miss Lambe, a young West Indian of large fortune in delicate health” upon whose fortune and health the Parkers and the Sanditon regulars intend to descend like vultures, and a clear-eyed young heroine, Charlotte Heywood, who observes the faux behaviour of the Parkers, their aristocratic patron, Lady Denham, and her nephew, whose moral flaw is to fancy himself the rakish anti-hero of a modern novel: “Sir Edward's great object in life was to be seductive. (...) he regarded it as his duty. He felt that he was formed to be a dangerous man, quite in the line of the Lovelaces.” Revisiting her satirical deconstruction of Gothic fiction in *Northanger Abbey*, in *Sanditon* Austen sets her sights on “sentimental novels (...) the impassioned and most exceptionable parts of Richardson's, and such authors as had since appeared to tread in Richardson's steps”. To position oneself as Lovelace, the villain of Richardson's epistolary *Clarissa* (1748), is to position oneself as a rapist. Aspiring rapist, Denham is a pale imitation of the fictional model he imagines himself to be; how this plotting would have developed is left for us to speculate.

Denham has another serious moral flaw: he thinks he knows his literature, and he doesn't. He thinks to impress Charlotte by asserting that he loves Sir Walter Scott's “beautiful lines on the sea”. Charlotte is intrigued: she has read Scott's poetry and no such lines exist she reckons. Found out, Denham plumps for the one line of Scott's he does know – “Oh! Woman in our hours of ease” (from *Marmion*, 1808) – and repeats it, as if repetition were intellectual development. He claims a knowledge of Wordsworth, Burns, Montgomery, and Campbell (again, he knows one line of Campbell he can quote), but there is little evidence in his conduct of the effect of having read any of the works of these poets, unless it be the raunchier elements of Burns. Lovelace-wannabe that he is, Denham is no match for Charlotte's wit. Austen makes a further development in the mechanisms of her irony: the interior voice immediately undermines and contradicts the outward performance of a character's dialogue. Charlotte may make bland social noises to Lady Denham and her nephew, but Austen's prose reveals exactly what she thinks of her interlocutors.

*Sanditon* stops short on an image of contrasting portraits in Lady Denham's sitting room, a further joke about social niceties and how a two-times widow displays the pictures of her two dead husbands. Tantalisingly, teasingly, there is a brilliant novel here, a novel of sunshine gaiety, frivolity, and silliness.





The sun sets over Winchester Cathedral, the novelist's burial place, George Shepherd, 1827.

### PART III: From College Street to Cathedral



# About 8 College Street

*Timothy Hands*

Jane Austen arrived at 8 College Street on 24 May 1817 by her brother's carriage from Chawton, there to spend the last eight weeks of her life. "I am going to Winchester ... for some weeks to see what Mr Lyford can do farther towards re-establishing me in tolerable health", she had told Anne Sharp two days previously.

Although the chief reason for the move to Winchester was proximity to the best possible medical help, the city, for a visitor whose days were known to be numbered, had a number of other recommendations in terms of climate, sentiment, and family connections.

Winchester, then as now, has a certain soothing aspect. When Keats stayed in the city in 1819, he would describe its ecclesiastical atmosphere as "abbotine", and its air as "worth sixpence a pint". He composed his ode 'To Autumn' on 19 September following his daily walk, which took him along College Street and beside the Itchen to the Hospital of St Cross.

Winchester was also familiar ground. The city was well known to the Austen family, and, according to Cassandra, favoured by Jane. Nearby to College Street, in the Cathedral Close, were several properties already known to the family. Jane and Cassandra had stayed in the house renumbered 11 for a week's visit at the end of 1814, and the novelist may well have stayed at two others houses whilst visiting Elizabeth Heathcote, a



College Street, Winchester, wood engraving after a drawing by FJ Baigent, 1838.

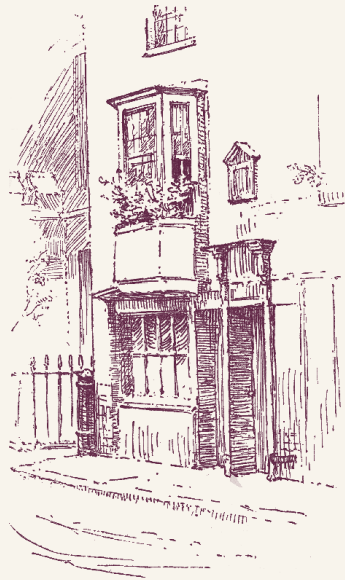
friend from Steventon days who had married a Cathedral prebendary. These were Number 10 (currently the Education Centre), and Number 2, once the home of Thomas Ken but demolished in 1856.

The Kingsgate quarter, containing College Street, was a district dominated by learning. Here was the College, founded by William of Wykeham; and here also was John Burdon's bookshop where Austen's father held an account, still trading today under the name P&G Wells. "Our lodgings are very comfortable", Jane wrote on 27 May. "We have a neat little drawing-room with bow window overlooking Dr Gabell's garden." The reference is to Henry Dison Gabell, a distinguished classical scholar, appointed Second Master in 1790, and Headmaster from 1810–23. James Austen remembered preparing his son James Edward for entrance:

Let you and me, meantime my boy,  
In books at home our time employ,  
And learn that we are able;  
At Winton else you'll roughly fare,  
When you are placed beneath the care  
Of Dr Henry Gabell.



The parlour in 8 College Street, EG Hill, early 20th century.



8 College Street, EG Hill, early 20th century.

James Edward was but one of the eight nephews who attended the College, though only one, Charles, was in residence at this time. Also resident in Winchester was Jane's former piano teacher, George William Chard, who had many years previously travelled to give her lessons in Steventon. Now Cathedral organist, but also organist at the College, he may well have been spotted in transit, though by this time his failing energy and diversity of interests (in particular hunting and later the Mayoralty) had led to a decline in his reputation: "you will do us a special service if you will stimulate the organist", the Warden of the College was to instruct the Sub Warden in 1818. Chard lived until 1849 and is buried along with his wife Amelia in the College Cloisters (plaque on the nearest north side, first buttress from the west).



Memorial to George and Amelia Chard, Old Cloister.



In 1891, TF Kirby, the College's Bursar and historian, first fixed a plaque to the wall of 8 College Street. Despite unsubstantiated challenges since, there is no doubt of the authenticity of its claim. Jane gave her address as "Mrs David's, College Street, Winton" – the property was indeed in Mrs David's possession at this time. James Edward Austen, who attended his aunt's funeral, recalled that the house was "the corner house at the entrance to Commoners", Commoners being the boarding house in which he had himself resided until but one year previously. Although the boarding house no longer exists, the ground plan and rights of way remain.

Number 8 College Street is largely of eighteenth-century construction. Like many of the properties in the area it has undergone significant alterations over time, often incompletely recorded. Jane and Cassandra had taken all of the first floor, accessed through the front door and a no longer existent staircase. The room at the back of the house is thought to have been Jane's bedroom. The bow window remains, and tradition emboldened by common sense places Jane's final days on a sofa on the opposite wall, next to the fireplace. Dr Gabell's garden has lost its wall but retains its gate pillars and is maintained by the College as space open to the public.



The Headmaster's House, College Street, Winchester, George Pyne, c1852. The house replaced an earlier structure. The right of way between the Headmaster's House and 8 College Street, with its bow window, remains through the far right arch, down towards the previous Commoners.



View from the room where Jane Austen died in 1817.



# Jane Austen's Last Journey

## Richard Foster

Jane Austen died at 8 College Street early on the morning of 18 July 1817, eight weeks after her arrival in Winchester. The seriousness of her condition had been apparent for some time. On 12 June, James Austen wrote to his son at Oxford: "I grieve to write what you will grieve to read; but I must tell you that we can no longer flatter ourselves with the least hope of having your dear valuable Aunt Jane restored to us." Her gradual decline was interrupted by brief periods of improved health: on the morning of 15 July, three days before her death, Austen was able to dictate to Cassandra twenty-four lines of verse on the annual Winchester races, but that evening there was a sudden deterioration. Cassandra wrote: "she was more asleep than awake. Her looks altered & she fell away... & tho' I was then hopeless of a recovery I had no suspicion how rapidly my loss was approaching." Late in the afternoon on 17 July, Austen suffered a seizure and fell unconscious. She died, her head on a pillow on Cassandra's lap, just before sunrise the following day. Mary Austen's diary records: "Jane breathed her last ½ after four in the Morn. Only Cass & I were with her. Henry came."

It seems to have been Henry Austen who made the arrangements for his sister's funeral, which was to take place on 24 July, a Thursday. In the meantime, Jane's body lay in an open coffin in College Street as members of the family assembled. Her death in the parish of St Swithin automatically entitled Austen to burial in the Cathedral precinct, but it was her family's social standing, and connections with the

Dean and Chapter, that secured a place within the building itself. A range of fees applied: 50 guineas for burial in the choir, 20 guineas for burial near the choir and above the steps, 10 guineas for burial in the aisles. This included the cost of digging the grave, payments to the precentor and vergers, and making good the ground. A further 6 shillings and 8 pence was due for the tolling of the bell.

Austen's funeral must have taken place quite early in the morning, before the first of the daily Cathedral services began at ten o'clock. In College Street a lid was placed on the coffin, and a pall hung over it, before it was wheeled away on the undertaker's cart. Just four mourners accompanied Austen on her final journey: three of her brothers (Edward, Henry, and Francis), and her nephew James Edward. As was usual in this period, no women were in attendance. Cassandra's view of events, recalled in a letter to Fanny, was from 8 College Street.

Every thing was conducted with the greatest tranquillity, & but that I was determined I would see the last & therefore was upon the listen, I should not have known when they left the House. I watched the little mournful procession the length of the Street & when it turned from my sight & I had lost her for ever – even then I was not overpowered, nor so much agitated as I am now in writing of it. – Never was human being more sincerely mourned by those who attended her remains than was this dear creature.

Having reached the end of the street, the procession turned right through the arch of Kingsgate with the church of St Swithin above, and then into the Cathedral Close. The route remains very similar in appearance today, only significantly altered by the demolition of properties on the north side of College Street and immediately to the south of Kingsgate.



Gate to the Cathedral Close, George Shepherd, 1828.



Nave of Winchester Cathedral, from R Ackermann's A History of Winchester College, 1816.

Austen was interred in the north aisle of the Cathedral, near to the west end. The service was conducted by the Reverend Thomas Watkins, Precentor of the Cathedral. It would have been a modest affair, lasting no more than thirty minutes. Some weeks or months later the flagstones covering Austen's grave were replaced with a ledger stone of black limestone. The words were composed by Henry Austen and there is a manuscript draft in his hand in the Fellows' Library at Winchester College. Another memorial, also preserved in the College's collections, is a poem by James Austen on his sister's death. 'Venta' begins with reference to the illustrious figures buried in Winchester Cathedral, from William II to William of Wykeham, but concludes: "Neer did this venerable fane/More Beauty, Sense & worth contain/Than when upon a Sister's bier/Her Brothers dropt the bitter tear."

*In memory of  
Jane Austen  
youngest daughter of the late Revd George Austen  
formerly Precentor of Steventon in this County.  
She departed this life on the 18 July 1817 aged 41  
after a long illness supported with the patience  
& the hopes of a Christian.*

*The benevolence of her heart the sweetness  
of her temper & the extraordinary endowment  
of her mind obtained the regard of all who  
knew her & the warmest love of her  
intimate connections.*

*Their grief is in proportion to their affection,  
they know their loss to be irreparable  
but in their deepest affliction they are consoled  
by a firm the humble hope that her charity,  
devotion, faith & purity have rendered her  
soul acceptable in the sight of her  
Predecessor.*

Henry Austen's manuscript draft of the text for Jane Austen's ledger stone, 1817; Winchester College Fellows' Library.





The West Front of Winchester Cathedral, from *Isle of Wight* sketchbook, JMW Turner, 1795; © Tate.

# Jane Austen and Winchester Cathedral

## *Roland Riem*

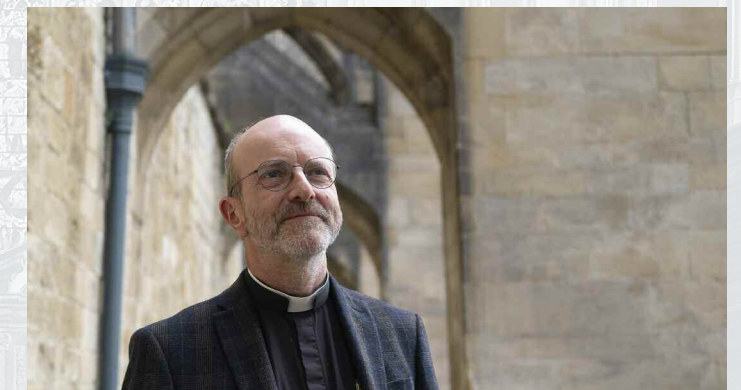
Jane Austen is arguably the most important woman in Winchester Cathedral.

The claim may seem contentious, especially when compared to those depicted in late nineteenth-century statuary on the Great Screen: the Virgin Mary at the foot of the central cross is joined by queens and saints from across the ages, such as Ealswith, Emma, Matilda and Victoria. Here is a church rich in recognised sanctity and extensive in empire, and just a bit remote from people on the ground.

While only Austen among these is buried in the Cathedral, her claim to importance lies more in her abiding connection to contemporary sensibilities. Her male counterpart would be William Walker the diver, who “saved the Cathedral with his own hands”, whose labours to reinforce the building’s foundations in cold and murky waters we can still feel today. When visitors come upon Jane in her humble spot in the nave, on the peripheral route they ordinarily take, they can likewise feel a point of connection with a woman whose work impinges on their own common, continuing struggles and aspirations. Here is a woman who knows what adults must do – and the virtues that they need – to succeed in happiness.

The Cathedral, along with other partners, is beginning to reinterpret Austen’s legacy from a feminist perspective, emphasising her distinct contribution to society and culture as a woman. Our particular contribution will be to emphasise her spirituality. Not enough has been made of the subtle ways in which a sincere Christian faith informed her approach to morality, including her pungent critique of clerical hypocrisy, and which more generally lent her confidence in the triumph of the good. The better her personal faith is understood, the more intriguing her story becomes to others. Austen defies forbidding religious stereotypes and presents instead an appealing mix of canny human insight and spiritual enlightenment.

The best way of marking the 250th anniversary of this great writer’s birth, whether in Winchester, Hampshire or further afield, is by encouraging a kaleidoscope of new insights into her enduring and ever-engaging literary legacy.



Canon Roland Riem in Curle’s Passage, Winchester Cathedral, through which Austen’s coffin must have passed.



# About the Contributors

**Richard Foster** read History at Oxford and Art History at the Courtauld Institute. His doctorate was on the Church of England in the 1640s and 1650s. Since 2014 he has been Keeper of Collections and Fellows’ Librarian at Winchester College, where he teaches History and Art History and is Head of Division in the middle school. He is the author of several publications on the history of the book, the history of collecting, and Winchester College.

**Suzanne Foster** has been College Archivist since 2005. She joined Winchester as Deputy Archivist in 1999, having previously worked at Hampshire Record Office. She studied History at the University of Nottingham and Archive Administration at the University of Liverpool.

**Timothy Hands** read English at King’s College London, of which he is now a Fellow, before undertaking graduate study at Oxford where he became Stipendiary Lecturer at Oriel College. He was Headmaster of Portsmouth Grammar School and then Magdalen College School, Oxford, before becoming Headmaster of Winchester in 2016. He is the author of four books and many articles on authors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as writing frequently on educational issues.

**Hester Jones** read English at the University of Cambridge where she also completed her doctorate. She has taught in several universities, most recently Bristol, where she was Senior Lecturer. She combines the teaching of English with her work as a priest of the Church of England and is Dean of Winchester College. Her specialities include works by female authors and literature of faith.

**Alex Latter** is the Master in College and Eccles Librarian at Winchester College. Prior to joining Winchester, he taught at the King’s School, Canterbury, where he was Head of English, at Magdalen College School, Oxford, and at Birkbeck College. He

studied English at the University of Cambridge and the University of London; he continues to research and publish on modernist poetry.

**James Methven** studied Classics and English at Brasenose College, Oxford. After a doctorate on medical science in Victorian literature, he was Dean of Oriel College, Oxford, and Lecturer in English, specialising in Gothic literature and modern drama. He moved from university teaching, first to Magdalen College School, then Uppingham, and now is Head of English at Winchester. His prize-winning collection of translations of Catullus, *Precious Asses*, is available from Seren Press.

**Lucia Quinault** read English at Merton College, Oxford, and has taught at Winchester since 1999. She has a particular interest in the long eighteenth century and has written several articles and conference papers on the circulation of manuscript poetry in the period. She is also a librettist: her carols *The Waiting Sky* and *The Wise Men and the Star*, written for composer Oliver Tarney, are published by OUP.

**Adam Rattray** read History and History of Art at the University of Bristol and Cambridge. He worked in the commercial art world for the fine art dealers Wartski and Christie’s Auctioneers, and then taught at RBCS and Wellington College before joining Winchester where he is Head of Art History and Director of the Friends.

**Roland Riem** has been a Canon Residentiary at Winchester Cathedral since 2005 and Vice-Dean since 2013, before which he was involved in ministerial training and university chaplaincy. His interests include using visual art, symbol, and poetry to explore questions of faith and value. Roland has been involved with many events and initiatives to raise the profile of Winchester and to attract visitors to it.



From left to right: Hester Jones, Adam Rattray, Lucia Quinault, Timothy Hands, Richard Foster, James Methven, Alex Latter.



Other Recent Publications by  
Winchester College

Richard Foster:

*50 Treasures from Winchester College*

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*Formidable: An Eighteenth Century Ship Model*

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*Bards of a Feather*

*A Winchester A-Z*

*The Winchester Year*

Adam Rattray:

*A Winchester Walk*

Michael Wallis:

*The Architecture of War Cloister*

Justin White:

*Sermons to Wykehamists*

Peter Galliver:

*The Portsmouth Link*

In Memory of  
JANE AUSTEN,  
youngest daughter of the late  
Rev<sup>d</sup> GEORGE AUSTEN,  
formerly Rector of Steventon in this County  
he departed this Life on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July 1817  
aged 41, after a long illness supported with  
the patience and the hopes of a Christian.

The benevolence of her heart,  
the sweetness of her temper, and  
the extraordinary endowments of her mind  
obtained the regard of all who knew her, and  
the warmest love of her intimate connections.  
Their grief is in proportion to their affection,  
they know their loss to be irreparable  
and in their deepest affliction they are con-