

# *My Dear Cassandra.....*

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There are those who think Jane Austen tea-tablsh, as there are those who think that Mozart tinkles. - *Louis Kronenberger (American critic and author)*

**2** is the magic number for this newsletter

There are **two** incredible important items in this newsletter – **two** items that you should not forget. - **two** items that will change your life – **two** items that will make you a better person – yes – **two** items, not one, **two**.

***This is the first item - a reminder about the  
Jane Austen Tea.***

**Jane Austen's birthday celebration to be held  
January 19, 2008. 2pm – 4pm  
Good Companion Activity Centre  
2609 – 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.W.  
Calgary**

**We are asking all those that wish to celebrate Jane's birthday in grand style to wear  
their very best hat.**

(Of course if you don't have a very best hat, any hat will do and if you don't have a hat – well – okay, you can still come.)

**A few other reminders....should you have any  
Raffle items – please call Elvee Fenning 281-5289**

And, if you are to bring TEA items, if you could bring them at 1:459m – it would be helpful. Thank you.

***Hang on! The second item is coming later.....***

## **November meeting**

At our meeting on November 17, 2007, we enjoyed an interesting slide tour of Derbyshire presented by our very own Tom Barton. Tom discussed Jane Austen's familiarity with the area and speculated about her possible use of Chatsworth as a model for Darcy's Pemberley. Randie Lind then invited members who had attended the JASNA AGM in Vancouver in October to share some of their most memorable highlights. Lots of great memories, but the costume ball emerged as a decided favourite!

## **New executive for 2008**

Many thanks go to Randie Lind for her very capable leadership over the past two years. Wearing three hats simultaneously as our Regional Coordinator, Program Coordinator and Newsletter Coordinator, Randie will be a hard act to follow! Susan Spooner is also resigning from her post as Treasurer; thanks for your work, Susan! Thanks also to Elizabeth Marshall and Elvee Fenning, who are both stepping down from the programme committee after many years of service. And, finally, thank you to those who are continuing on the executive and a warm welcome to some new faces:

Regional Coordinator : Jennifer Hamblin

Program Coordinator : Margaret Crichton

Treasurer: Ann Marie Barnhill

Programme committee: Margaret Crichton, Jennifer Hamblin, Rita Dempsey,  
Susan Spooner, Ann Marie Barnhill, Helen Gardner

Advertising and publicity: Elizabeth Marshall

Newsletter coordinator: Randie Lind

Newsletter assembly and mail-out: Ann Craig

Poster mail-out: Isobel Temple

Meeting refreshments coordinator: Catherine Gardner

Library: Alicia Morgan

## **Renewal Time!**

It's that time of year again – time to renew your membership in the Calgary chapter of JASNA. The price is the same as last year - \$15.00 – and it covers our meeting expenses (room rental, if necessary, refreshments, fees and gifts for speakers, etc.) as well as the mailing and production costs associated with our local newsletter. Ann Marie will be renewing memberships at the tea on January 19 so please remember to bring along your cheque book or \$15.00 cash!

## ***And now we have - the second item:***

### **Meeting location to change.**

JASNA Calgary has been meeting at the W.R. Castell Library ever since its inception in 2000. It's a great location in some respects - centrally located and handy to the C-train – but for many members, there are also a few drawbacks: downtown traffic congestion, parking problems and encounters with occasionally scary street people. As most of you probably know, the Calgary Public Library charges a fee for the use of its meeting rooms and covering that fee has always been the biggest single expense faced by our chapter. A proposal to raise membership fees that was discussed (and defeated) at the November meeting prompted Ann Marie Barnhill to offer the **Sunalta Community Centre at 1627 10<sup>th</sup> Ave. S.W. for our meetings.**

Several executive members toured the facility with Ann Marie in early December and were very pleased with its potential. It's out of the downtown core but still central enough to be easily accessible from north or south. The regular meeting room is cozy but quite adequate, wheelchair accessible and has plenty of free parking nearby. We would have access to a modern kitchen and might be able to book a much larger adjoining room for our annual teas and galas. Best of all, thanks to Ann Marie, it would be ours free of charge!

**We are planning to hold our next regular meeting (March 15) at the Sunalta location** so that members can see the facility for themselves and provide feedback to the committee about its suitability on a long-term basis. We hope that members with transportation concerns will let a member of the executive know well in advance of the March meeting so that car-pooling can be arranged if necessary.

## **For and Against Circulating Libraries 1800 – 1850**

Circulating libraries, in which Jane Austen's novels were to be found, made reading possible at a time when books were costly. Readers paid for subscriptions to circulating libraries that entitled them to check out a certain number of books. Each of Jane Austen's novels mentions a circulating library and their dual attractions as social gathering places and places to procure books. The libraries catered to the demands for books by people who could not afford to buy them. As Lee Erickson remarks in his 1996 study of *The Economy of Literary Form: English Literature and the Industrialization of Publishing, 1800—1850*,

Books were not only luxuries but also rising in price so that to have an extensive library was a sign of great wealth. The average three-volume novel cost a guinea in 1815, or based on the current worth of a guinea's gold content, roughly the equivalent of \$100 today; and that does not take into account how much lower the standard of living of the average person was then and so how many fewer people could afford to buy books.

In a lengthy philippic in his *Biographia Literaria (1817)* Samuel Taylor Coleridge fulminates against

the devotees of the circulating libraries, I dare not compliment their pass-time, or rather kill-time, with the name of reading. Call it rather a sort of beggarly day-dreaming, during which the mind of the dreamer furnishes for itself nothing but laziness and a little mawkish sensibility..... We should transfer this species of amusement. . . from the genus, reading, to. . . indulgence of sloth, and hatred of vacancy.

Nevertheless, the circulating libraries, in spite of their pretensions and the bibelot they sold, contributed enormously to the growth of a reading public and to the egalitarianism of literature and literacy. Certainly Jane Austen and her heroines relied on these institutions. In *Northanger Abbey*, especially, Austen instructs readers on how to separate literary wheat from sub literary chaff.

- *Friendly Jane Austen* by Natalie Tyler (pages 222-4)

And now for something completely different.....

## Jane Austen's Toes by Rob Hardy

"There is, for instance, no mention of toes in any of her work. . . . Nor are there any hips, thighs, shins, buttocks, kidneys, intestines, wombs, or navels. . . ."

—Carol Shields, *Jane Austen* (2001)

Jane Austen never mentions toes, although she must sometimes have thought about her own—blistered, perhaps, and sore from walking in pattens with wooden soles, especially (one would guess) under the ball of her big toe, just where the arch of the foot begins—though such details are absent from her books.

I'm not surprised she never mentions intestines or kidneys. I myself prefer to let them do their work unimagined. And somehow the absence of a womb in her work is unsurprising. We are left to imagine, if we must, Mr. Darcy discovering Elizabeth's toes, along with her hips and thighs, her nipples and navel, and all the other parts the author never mentions—the body beginning where the novel ends.

We can infer from letters that she herself possessed a body—she mentions stockings, shoes, shawls, shifts, and stays ("not made to force the bosom up at all"), the soft sibilant shuffle of silks—though even clothing can become tiresome. "I hate describing such things," she says of a bonnet.

Her women are embodied mostly in words, in the delicacy and daring of language. Even Fanny, for most of the novel nothing but silence and scruples, begins to materialize— not when men start to notice her looks, but when she finds her voice.

It's the voice we think of, not the body or even the face in Cassandra's watercolor that we want to think of as pretty. Standing at the foot of her grave, we find it hard to imagine a body lies there at all. The stone mentions only her soul, her character, and her intellect, but is silent on the subject of her bones.

**Don't forget: Next meeting March 15, 2008 at  
Sunalta Community Centre, 1627 10<sup>th</sup> Ave. S.W.**

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