

# *My Dear Cassandra.....*

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*When I think of Jane Austen I think of opulence and sophistication.  
- Beatrice Arthur*

## **November Meeting.....“All about Jane”**

Business :

- The Tea Committee will get their volunteers signed up ready for the tea
- Ticket sales for the Tea
- Call for Raffle items for the Tea
- music entertainment.

Program:

- Judith will walk us through our Web site and Randi will show us *Youtube Pride and Prejudice* with the lions, and then show us the *Republic of Pemberley* and the main *JASNA site*.

## **Edmonton Jane Austen Society**

At their meeting on September 26, members of the Edmonton Jane Austen Society enjoyed a selection of readings arranged by Bridget Toms on the seasonally appropriate theme “The Sweet Scenes of Autumn”. At the AGM on October 24, Bridget took over from Jeanne Worton as president of the Society and members were treated to Juliet McMaster’s film clips of *The Beautifull Cassandra*, the Ballet. The Edmonton club meets the fourth Saturday of each month from 2-4 pm in the Edmonton Room of the Stanley Milner Public Library and Calgary members visiting Edmonton are always most welcome to attend.. For details about the next meeting on November 28, please email Bridget at [twolegsgood@telus.net](mailto:twolegsgood@telus.net) .

## **Austen exhibit at the Morgan Library**

Thanks to JASNA Canada president Dr. Elaine Bander for alerting fellow Janeites to the fact that the Morgan Library and Museum is presenting a special exhibit on Jane Austen from November 6, 2009 to March 14, 2010. The website includes the following description of the exhibit:

Offering a close-up portrait of the iconic British author, whose popularity has surged over the last two decades with numerous motion picture and television adaptations of her work, the show provides tangible intimacy with Austen through the presentation of more than 100 works, including her manuscripts, personal letters, and related materials, many of which the Morgan has not exhibited in over a quarter century.

A Woman's Wit: Jane Austen's Life and Legacy also includes first and early illustrated editions of Austen's novels, as well as drawings and prints depicting people, places, and events of biographical significance. A highlight of the exhibition is a specially commissioned film by the noted Italian director Francesco Carrozzini, featuring interviews with artists and scholars such as Siri Hustvedt, Fran Lebowitz, Sandy Lerner, Colm Tóibín, Harriet Walter, and Cornel West.

"The greatness of Jane Austen's writing is seen in her continuing popularity today," said William M. Griswold, director of The Morgan Library & Museum. "Although she wrote about life and society in England two centuries ago, her witty, satirical approach to her subjects resonates with contemporary readers. The Morgan is fortunate to have such an outstanding collection of Austen material, and this exhibition provides a close, intimate look at the artist's life and work."

If you are planning to visit New York City this winter, you may wish to include the Morgan Library and Museum in your itinerary. For more details, see: <http://finebooksmagazine.com/issue/200910/austen-1.phtml>

A major Jane Austen exhibition, which has opened in New York, is creating a huge stir amongst fans and cultural commentators. Susan Spooner saw this story on the BBC News website and thought you should see it....Go to BBC News, then, top right corner for search, type in 'Jane Austen in New York' – the articles should be listed.

### **An Item From The University of Alberta Press.**

The University of Alberta Press is willing to publish a volume entitled "Jane Austen and Company: Essays by Bruce Stovel". Actually, Nora Stovel and Juliet McMaster will be contributing articles too, and there will be essays not only on "our particular Jane", but on D.H. Lawrence, Margaret Drabble and Margaret Laurence as well. The Press is asking that Nora try to raise \$14,000 in donations to offset publishing costs. Anyone who contributes at least \$50 will receive a copy of the book. Tax receipts will be issued for the donation amount less the cost of the book ( between \$30 and \$40, I would think). I will have forms to make a donation available at the November meeting. More information, and the address to which donations can be sent, is:  
University of Alberta Press, Ring House 2, Edmonton, AB T6G 2E1.

- Elizabeth Marshall

### **Austen Christmas Cards**

Thanks to Dr. Bander for this tip as well. With Christmas fast approaching, you may have discovered the convenience of catalogue shopping and on-line gift purchases but if you haven't yet found the British Library's on-line shop you are in for a treat. In addition to beautiful cards based on illustrations from "A Christmas Carol", the Library is offering two different "Jane Austen Cards" with illustrations based on James Edward Austen-Leigh's silhouettes which were reproduced in Freydis Welland's book published by the

British Library, Life in the Country. The cards include quotes by Jane Austen ("I wish you joy" from *Pride and Prejudice* and "...rejoicing, deep and silent..." from *Persuasion*). Have a look at:

[http://shop.bl.uk/mall/productpage.cfm/BritishLibrary/ChristmasCards\\_JaneAusten/297885](http://shop.bl.uk/mall/productpage.cfm/BritishLibrary/ChristmasCards_JaneAusten/297885)

## **Servants of early nineteenth century households**

A formidable array of domestics in even the smallest of fashionable dwellings served milord and his lady during their sojourn in Town. The grandest residences had a literal army of men and women to do the onerous chores of early nineteenth century households.

Males dominated the top of the servant hierarchy in a gentleman's establishment. Because landed noblemen had many residences scattered throughout the country, each house usually had its own house steward to oversee everything. He was responsible for the entire staff, household accounts, hiring new staff, and paying wages. Serving as his master's personal secretary, the steward kept abreast of his business and paid all the household accounts. This position was particularly suitable for educated young men who had their way to make in the world such as sons of clerics and professional men. The most superior of the house servant clan were addressed as the *Major Domo* or *maître d'hôtel*.

Next in rank came the valet, the butler, and the groom of the chambers. Only in gigantic households would there be four male servants in the upper levels of domestic service. More frequently the valet and butler combined the duties entailed in their own jobs plus the responsibilities of the house steward and groom of the chamber.

The valet was very important to the household and among the servants because of his proximity to the master. His interests should be inseparable from his employer's needs and desires. This closeness bred a need for valets to present to the world a picture of a true gentleman's gentleman. The wise, fashionable valet cultivated an all knowing manner and dropped a French phrase here and there. His duties included overseeing his master's stylish wardrobe of superfine coats and inexpressibles, barbering, and everything else related to grooming and personal needs. Compliments on his master's snowy white cravat folded in the most exquisite design reflected great credit upon his prowess as an artist in the dressing-room.

The butler oversaw everything that pertained to the serving of food and drink. Under his guardianship rested the sanctity of the wine cellar. He not only protected the delicate spirits from spoilage, but guarded against pilfering servants. The safety, cleaning, and inventory of all the dinnerware, glassware, and plate were also his domain. He ruled imperiously over the footmen who served at the table and was expected to present a sterling example to the male servants that he commanded. The best butler was known by the ease and elegance of service at milord's dinner table. Often a butler's commanding authority spilled over into other areas of household management, particularly where he ranked as the highest servant. He often performed the managerial duties of the house steward, groom of the chambers, and clerk of the kitchen.

In large households, the next in rank was the groom of the chambers. His duties

included meeting visitors, taking charge of their visiting cards, and announcing them to the household or declaring that no one was "at home." In conjunction with these duties, he was to make sure all was kept immaculate for receiving guests. Lighting had to be maintained. Fires must be laid and fed. Writing desks must be stocked with ink, quill, and paper. He physically opened up the house and closed it down each day as he properly extinguished candles, lamps, and fires.

These four grades of upper male servants were set apart from the lower ranks by their status and prestige. They wore no livery unlike the lower servants. They also kept their meals in a room, separate from the servant's hall.

Footmen resplendent in dazzling livery were the backbone of the household. Inside the townhouse, they diligently waited at the table under the steely eye of the stern butler, served tea, relieved the groom of the chambers at the door, and generally made themselves useful

whenever their assistance was needed. Often their master's friends borrowed footmen to assist at large entertainments. Outside, in the threatening streets of Regency London, footmen escorted their employers as they shopped, paid calls, and trotted from one amusement to another. Footmen gave one the proper cachet. A fashionable lady must have someone to scurry ahead and knock on doors!

Below the footmen in the servant hierarchy were ushers. They were the servants who waited on the servants! They' tended the servant's hall and the upper servants quarters.

Lowest among the low within the servants group were the footboys, also known as provision boys. These eight and nine-year-olds were used in every part of the household for odd jobs and were considered footmen in training. Pages were special footboys distinguished by their birth or a physical oddity. More than one fashionable lady kept an amusing little Negro boy as her page and dressed him in costly and luxurious livery.

On the distaff side of the domestic staff only two women enjoyed the distinction of being upper servants: milady's personal maid and the housekeeper. A lady's maid enjoyed the same benefits of the valet, the master's body servant. Her closeness to the mistress of the house made her very important in the servant's hall. Harriette Wilson kept a maid of fashionable French origin. If one couldn't have the real thing, at the very least, milady's maid should have a suitable repertoire of French phrases.

A housekeeper had direct control over all the other women servants. If the household boasted a steward, she served as his assistant. Her managerial authority increased greatly if she shared the house steward's responsibilities with the butler. She might be entrusted with household accounts, hiring servants through a registry office, and buying innumerable provisions to feed the large household. Typical everyday duties included supervising the repair of household linen and replenishing diminished food stuffs. Before the family returned to Town after a visit to their country estates or a sojourn in Brighton, she oversaw the cleaning and airing of the chambers. It was an important part of her job to make sure the house remained in a state of readiness to receive her employers.

The cook ranked next in importance to the housekeeper. Most prosperous households preferred a man cook or, at least, a woman cook who had trained beneath a male. Women cooks were given much lower wages though their duties and

responsibilities were the same. All cooks in fashionable' households were expected to be familiar with French ways of preparing food, organizing a menu, and judging the quality and quantity of provisions. In a very social household, a variety of food preparation specialists assisted the cook or chef.

Chambermaids ranked highest among the lower female servants. Their sphere was properly in the bedrooms: dusting, straightening, cleaning, swatting insects in summer,. laying fires and warming beds in winter, sweeping, closing windows, and turning down bedclothes the last thing at night.

Next came the hardworking housemaids and maids of all work. They toiled from dawn to dusk: scrubbing, dusting, polishing, and scouring every surface in the house. Then came the red-handed laundry-maid who labored among the dirty linens. The lowest among their number were the scullery maids. Assigned to the kitchen and pantry, they washed dishes and scoured pots from the servants' hall in addition to those from milord's table.

Domestic servants had many other benefits beyond their meager wages. The master granted them shelter, board, and clothing. The quality of these benefits varied with the enlightenment of their masters. Lower servants usually lived in cramped, crowded quarters in either the attic, which was suffocating in the summer, or the basement which was dank, dreary, and cold in the winter. Rooms were often unheated and crawling with unwelcome pests. Food was generally plentiful and good, but upper servants had been known to severely ration lower servants and keep the majority of the food stuffs to sell for their benefit.

*“The Regency Companion” by Sharon Lauder milk and Teresa L. Hamlin  
(pages 157-61)*

### **A new section of our newsletter .....MEMBERS' CORNER**

Bernice Lockert is now in the Colonel Belcher Care Centre, 1939 Veterans Way, N.W. Bernice would love to have some visitors. She is keeping abreast with all our club news.

Rita Dempsey has moved to Victoria. Best wishes from all of us.

If you have any news about our members that may be of interest to the club members please let Alicia Morgan know....403-241-0963

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

Regional Coordinator : Jennifer Hamblin ~ 282-4065

Program Coordinator : Margaret Crichton ~ 284-4649

Dance Group: Sprigged Muslin – Randi Lind 284-4059

Website: [www.jasnacalgary.ca](http://www.jasnacalgary.ca)

Meeting place: Sunalta Community Centre, 10<sup>th</sup> Ave and 16th St SW

**Our next Meeting: January 16, 2009.**

Not “just” a meeting”. . . . . this is “**The Tea**”

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Change of address / email and any articles for this newsletter,  
please contact me ..... Ann Craig [ancraig@shaw.ca](mailto:ancraig@shaw.ca)