

# The Female Spectator.

VOL.1 No.3, 2015



New and improved series

## Visiting Fellowships 2015-16 Announced

**W**HAT DOES THE theme of debt in Frances Burney's *Camilla* have to do with Hollywood and the Nazis on the eve of war? Answer: these are just two of the fascinating subjects being studied by our new Visiting Fellows in 2015 and 2016. This year we received more applications than ever before and we will be welcoming our first Visiting Fellows from Brazil and South Korea among other countries around the world. Our Executive Director and Chair of the selection committee, Dr Gillian Dow said, 'our task was tremendously difficult this year and sadly we had to reject some excellent applications. We hope these scholars will not be discouraged from applying in future. We would like to heartily congratulate those who were accepted and thank once again the literary societies and individuals who sponsored the named fellowships'.

The special new named fellowships are as follows:

✍ **Hester Davenport / Burney Society Fellowship**

Awarded to Jeni Buckley  
Independent Scholar

✍ **The Yablon Fellowship for Brontë Studies**

Awarded to Emma Butcher  
University of Hull

✍ **Vera Brittain/Society of Women Writers and Journalists Fellowship**

Awarded to Alexis Pogorelskin  
University of Minnesota Duluth

✍ **Jane Austen Society of Japan Fellowship**

Awarded to Hatsuyo Shimazaki  
University of Southampton

✍ **Marilyn Butler Fellowship**

Awarded to Suzanne Taylor  
University of Chicago

✍ **British Association for Romantic Studies Fellowship**

Awarded to Clara Tuite  
University of Melbourne



These two paintings by Henry Singleton (1766-1839) hanging in our Exhibition Room depict scenes from Frances Burney's *Camilla, or a Picture of Youth* (1796).

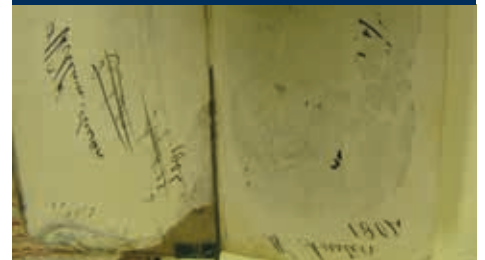
Above – Camilla Fainting in the Arms of Her Father  
Below – Camilla Recovering from Her Swoon



There are a further 32 Visiting Fellowships. Subjects range from women's tales of adventure and survival in the age of shipwrecks and castaways, the theme of debt in Frances Burney's *Camilla* (1796), Maria Edgeworth's botanical interests, religion around Mary Shelley, and the relationship between consumerism and slavery in literature of sensibility. A full list of the 2015-2016 Visiting Fellowships awarded is available on our website. ●

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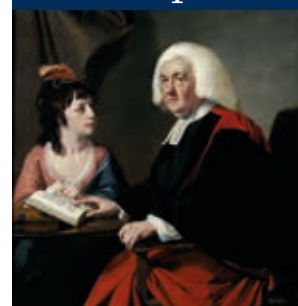


#### Founder's honorary OBE



*Recognition for cultural contribution to the UK*

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# Meet the International Visitor

The Jane Austen Society of North America (JASNA) runs an International Visitor Programme providing a JASNA member the opportunity to work on a creative or scholarly project in Chawton. This year, Professor Marilyn Francus, from West Virginia University, came to look for annotations and marginalia in the book collection of Edward Austen (later Knight).

Please tell me a bit about the research you've been doing at Chawton House Library

My work largely has to do with cultural circulation and engagement with literature. I am particularly interested in how we approach Austen today; how she has been continually appropriated and adapted. That research also generated questions about the ways Austen engaged with her culture, and the ways she interacted with literature. Through these interests, I was drawn to studying books in the Knight collection to look at marginalia, which are signs of literary engagement. The Grandison manuscript is particularly interesting to me as well [The manuscript is an adaptation of Samuel Richardson's novel *Sir Charles Grandison* into a play, written in Jane Austen's hand.] It is believed that this manuscript was a collaborative effort between Jane Austen and Anna Austen, later Lefroy, who was about seven at the time. It was looking at this fascinating manuscript, with its multiple edits and scribbles, that led me to think about marginalia, and to look for annotations and notes in margins. It becomes clear that the Austen clan are very active readers; in my imagination they are all sitting with pencil and pen in hand ready to write as they read.

Can you tell us an example of something interesting you have found?

The first thing I found was not a pen or pencil mark as you might expect. I was looking at Frances Burney's *The Wanderer; or Female Difficulties* (1814), her last novel, and I found a page that is partly cut out. It looks like it was done deliberately with a knife; it is not a rip. The part that has been removed is a section of a letter from Albert Harleigh to Elinor Joddrell (a proto-feminist who defies convention by professing her love for Harleigh) in which he tries to convince her that suicide is not the right path. I was so interested to see that someone had cut a chunk out of this letter and I'm intrigued: does this mean 'I like it, I want to carry it with me?' or 'I don't like his reasoning, I don't want others to read it'?

The experience of examining these books has been like being on a treasure hunt. Other interesting finds include the inside cover of Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), which features drawings of men's heads. There are also comments scribbled in various places within Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* (1811) such as 'stupid'! We know Jane Austen read this book as she wrote about its flaws in her letters. These are just some of the examples which show that these books were not just for display but part of the Austen family's lives.

I suppose helping a work to be published by subscription was a way to engage further with works of literature in this time.

Yes, those were the only times Austen's name was in print, when she was listed as a subscriber to others' author's works, including as a subscriber to Frances Burney's *Camilla* (1796). She did not even publish her own works using her name! In 1801, she gave her niece Anna two books, *Elegant Extracts* [a popular anthology of prose writings by well-known authors, collected by Vicesimus Knox and first published in 1783] and Ann Murry's *Mentoria; or the Young Ladies' Instructor* (1780). 1801 was the year they moved from Steventon to Bath. Anna, by all accounts a precocious child, would have just been turning eight. The relationship between Aunt and niece was close, and Anna stayed with her aunts in the 1790s, when her mother passed away and before her father remarried. Legend has it that at age three, Anna was talking about Jane and Elizabeth, the characters from *First Impressions* (later *Pride and Prejudice*). You can imagine the mayhem that could have been caused by a child going round saying things like 'Jane's in love with Mr Bingley!' and everyone wondering who Mr Bingley was!

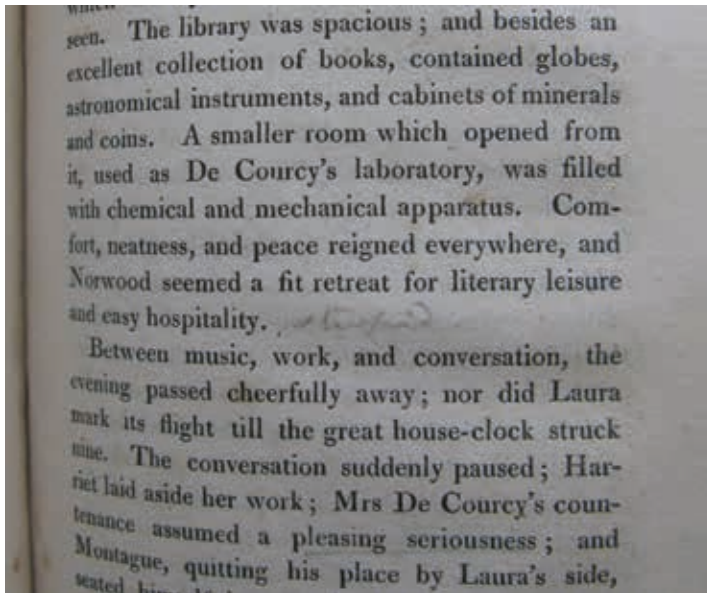
The giving of books was part of this close relationship. There were notes in *Elegant Extracts* written by Jane Austen about Queen Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots,

signalling that she liked Mary and intensely disliked Elizabeth. She also appears to have been training her niece to be a writer – and Anna Lefroy, née Austen, did go on to write fiction, which she asked her aunt to read and comment on. There are many pencil markings in *Elegant Extracts* – which may or may not have been by Austen – on passages about writing and rhetoric. Edward Austen, later Knight, also gave a copy of *Elegant Extracts* to his son. These are all intriguing examples of how we interact with texts – the books that we choose to give others and the way we hope that they will interact with them.

Can you tell me more about your other research, for example your book *Monstrous Motherhood: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Ideology of Domesticity*?

*Monstrous Motherhood* came out of a research question. It is commonplace in eighteenth-century studies to look at the long eighteenth-century as the period that sees the rise of the domestic woman. There are lots of documents that present the ideology of the domestic woman, and so this made me pose the question: where is the text where you actually see the archetypal domestic woman, the mother? Where is her story? In fact, what I found in literature of the time is that most 'good' mothers were absent or dead, which does not fit this domestic agenda. So the idea of women's domesticity was all around in theory, but in practice it was incredibly difficult – as it continues to be to this day. It isn't that mothers were not at home being domestic, but that their stories were displaced from literature and culture, and my analysis worked to recover those stories. This concept of the ideal mother was aspirational and highly problematic – and mothers failed to be the ideal, and were often considered to be monstrous. Etymologically, the word 'monstrous' is connected to 'demonstrate' through the Latin 'monstrare', which means 'to show'. So the monster, or in this case, the 'monstrous' mother, makes evident things





Above left  
Comment 'stupid', along with the underlining of 'pleasing seriousness' can be seen in Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* (1811). Jane Austen referred to this book a number of times in her letters, writing in 1813 'I am looking over *Self-Control* again, & my opinion is confirmed of its' being an excellently-meant, elegantly-written Work, without anything of Nature or Probability in it.'

Above  
The Upper Reading Room, where our Visiting Fellows spend much of their time, is particularly special to Marilyn.

Left  
At the beginning of Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), E. Austen has been crossed out and replaced with William Austen and a couple of drawings of a man's head can be seen.

that you might not want to see; my work recuperates stories of mothers that might have been erased and to show that the prevailing domestic ideologies weren't working. When you think about it, it's simplistic to think that because people were reading conduct manuals, that meant that they were behaving according to those manuals – or indeed that they were reading them at all and not just putting them on the shelf. This prompts us to re-envision this part of social and cultural history and open up platforms to re-examine these assumptions.

As a follow-up to that book, I'm doing some further research into women writers who were mothers, looking at how they navigated being working mothers. In our culture today, we see what has been dubbed in North America as the

'Mommy Wars': competing models of what it is to be a good mother. This is problematic for all women; for example, mothers who stay at home feel they are looked down on for not doing paid work, and mothers who are doing paid work feel guilty about not being at home with their children. I did some research on this subject here in 2012, starting with Frances Burney, Frances Sheridan and Mary Wollstonecraft, because they present three different models of how one engages with being a writer and mother. Sheridan had four children before she published her first novel, which was a blockbuster hit. In contrast, Frances Burney was an established writer when she had her first child at 42 years old. And Mary Wollstonecraft, who defied convention completely by having children out of wedlock, wrote before and after her first child

was born. I'm also thinking about including Charlotte Smith, who wrote about her children in the prefaces to her novels, and Mary Robinson, whose daughter became her literary collaborator, in this study. What we can learn from these eighteenth-century women is that there are lots of ways to be a woman involved in a profession and involved in a family. I suspect that we will find the origins of these 'mommy wars', in the eighteenth century because these opportunities didn't exist before then; the rise of the middle class led to options that were accompanied with these stresses. This is when women first started grappling with 'work/life balance'. It is all very relevant to issues women face today.

What made you decide to study English Literature in your early career?

I have always been a reader. I have always loved narrative. I actually double majored in Biology and English, and for a while I thought about combining them to do something like science writing, but the call of literature was too strong. I never had an epiphany, but literature has always been part of who I am. I don't know what I would do if I didn't engage with books and I think as humans we are drawn to narrative.

Can you tell me about a favourite item, place or room at Chawton House Library?

I have been fortunate to have been here a number of times; I have been here for conferences, I was a Visiting Fellow in 2012, and now I am here as a JASNA fellow. I think in all that time, the thing I would single out as particularly special is when the painting conservator was here doing conservation work on the paintings, and she found the Mary Jane Austen graffiti on the Mellichamp painting. Chawton House

Library is like that; you never know what you are going to find. I love to imagine little Mary Jane Austen quietly writing her name on this big painting while no-one was looking. Chawton House Library is not a static artefact; it is a living, breathing place, where you can always find interesting new things.

What does Chawton House Library mean to you?

It is a space to think and read and do; it gives

## 'Give my love to Mary Jane': the story behind the Austen graffiti



On close examination of a corner of the painting of Chawton House by Mellichamp (c.1740), one can just make out the scribbled words 'Mary Jane Austen 1819'. When a painting conservator did a conservation survey, scrutinising the painting in detail, she discovered this remarkable bit of graffiti. So who was Mary Jane Austen? Mary Jane was the daughter of Sir Francis William Austen, Jane Austen's brother and a successful officer in the Royal Navy who rose through the ranks to become Commander-in-Chief, North America and West Indies Station. He married Mary Gibson in 1806 and Mary Jane was their first child, born in Southampton on 27th April 1807. One of Mary Jane's cousins, Fanny Catherine Knight, wrote to a friend at the time 'Since my last, Mrs Frank Austen has got a fine little girl, named Mary Jane, & called by both names; she has been most alarmingly ill,

but now gains strength very fast.' The difficult birth was also referred to in a poem Jane Austen wrote to her brother when his second child, a boy was born:

'My dearest Frank, I wish you Joy  
Of Mary's safety with a boy,  
Whose birth has given little pain,  
Compared with that of Mary Jane'

Not much is known or written about Mary Jane but thankfully references to her, as with many of Jane Austen's nieces and nephews are dotted throughout Jane Austen's letters, often in the postscript as 'give my love to Mary Jane' when addressing an older cousin. These references give glimpses of the family and their close ties as they continually visited and communicated with each other. These familial relationships are illustrated in this excerpt from a letter to Caroline Austen, another of Mary Jane's cousins, written in 1816 when

Mary would have been nine years old: 'I had an early opportunity of conveying your letter to Mary Jane, having only to throw it out of [the] window at her as she was romping with your Brother in the Back Court. -She thanks you for it-& answers your questions through me. -I am to tell you that she has passed her time at Chawton very pleasantly indeed...'

As mentioned in the interview with Marilyn Francus, the Austen family often lent books to each other and discussed them, and Mary Jane was another niece who benefitted from her aunt's literary interests. Jane Austen wrote to Caroline Austen in 1816 'I have just lent your Aunt Frank the 1st vol. of *Les Veillées du Chateau*, for Mary Jane to read.'

Another reference to Mary Jane in Jane Austen's letters was in March 1817 in another



me a sense of literary adventure. It's a wonderful place to do work—a writer's retreat stocked with fascinating texts, objects and artefacts. I particularly love working in the Upper Reading Room; every book I need is always right there on the shelf – I don't need to worry that it is out on loan! Every time I've been here I've had a wonderful time. The staff team are fabulous – friendly, knowledgeable and well informed. It is also a wonderful place to be because of the opportunities to meet other visiting fellows and

benefit from a vast intellectual network. For academics, the space, the quiet and the resources here are invaluable. While creative writers have retreats, most academic writers don't; it is a real gift. I'm so thankful to Sandy Lerner for having that vision. I'd also like to thank Chawton House Library and especially the JASNA International Visitor programme for enabling me to be here and pursue my research. ●



letter to Caroline in which she remarks: 'Do you know that Mary Jane went to town with her Papa? They were there last week from Monday to Saturday & she was as happy as possible...' Mary Jane must have enjoyed limited time with her father who would often have been away at sea. She herself went on to marry a Naval officer, George Thomas Maitland Purvis, with whom she had five children. Records show that they were married at Chawton, with her cousin, James Edward-Austen Leigh, performing the ceremony, and her father and her cousin, Edward Knight Junior, acting as witnesses.

In 1819, two year's after her aunt Jane's death, Mary Jane and her family moved into the 'Great House' at Chawton. Her mother would have spent much of that year pregnant with her ninth child, who would be born in January

1820. One can imagine this precocious 12 year old exploring the 'Great House', perhaps lordling it over her younger siblings, and at some point making this daring graffiti (with others watching or in secret? Was she caught? Did she get in trouble? It's unlikely we will ever know).

Intriguingly, despite Frank's illustrious rise through the Navy ranks, it appears he was a rebellious child. Jane Austen's verse to commemorate the birth of his first son refers to his 'insolence of spirit' and his 'saucy words & fiery ways', exclaiming: 'May he revive thy Nursery sin, Peeping as daringly within...Fearless of danger, braving pain, And Threaten'd very oft in vain...' It seems as though perhaps it was his first daughter, and not his first son, who inherited his youthful insubordinate spirit.

## BREAKING NEWS

AS THE FEMALE SPECTATOR went to press, we were delighted to hear news that John Bowstead is generously donating Stuart Curran's 14-volume definitive edition of Charlotte Smith's work to the Library. John's wife, Diana, wrote one of four pioneering dissertations on Smith in the late 70s. When Diana retired, John gave her the entire edition as a gift, knowing that she had more to say. Sadly, Diana passed away in 2011, but John would like the complete edition – now out of print – to be available to the next generation of scholars. Our Librarian, Dr Darren Bevin, on hearing this news remarked: 'It's wonderful that we will be able to share Diana's retirement gift with the Smith scholars of the future – a fitting tribute to her memory as one of the pioneers. We have no dedicated acquisitions budget, so we depend on the generosity of our supporters to enhance our collection.' We are extremely grateful for this – and the other donations that we receive. ●

## More Praise for the New Visitor Route

WE CONTINUE TO receive glowing reviews on TripAdvisor, in our comments book, and on our feedback forms from people enjoying the opportunity to visit Chawton House Library. A small selection are shown here.

- 'How wonderful. Thank you. Truly a vindication of the rights of women!' C.M. Napier, New Zealand
- 'Much more beautiful than we had imagined and looked forward to!' D & L.F. Vienna, Austria
- 'Fabulous, fantastic visit. Amazing hospitality on all levels' R & S.S, New York, USA
- 'Delightful...Made so welcome by all we met and look forward to visiting again – a real gem to enjoy getting to know.' S.G. Reading, England
- 'Really lovely place, with beautiful grounds, fascinating history and a wonderful collection of literature. Highly recommend a visit.' C.A. Portsmouth, England
- 'Breathtaking...' V.L. Tennessee, USA

# Hearing the Intricacy of Charlotte Smith's *Beachy Head*: A Collaboration

ONE OF THE most fruitful outcomes of our Visiting Fellowship programme is the varied and multidisciplinary collaborations that can result of different scholars having time together in an inspiring environment away from their usual lives. The musical interpretation of Charlotte Smith's poem *Beachy Head* is one such collaboration. Elizabeth A. Dolan, Associate Professor of English at Lehigh University, tells us more.

At the end of a gloriously sunny July 2015 fellowship month, the JASNA international fellow, composer Amanda Jacobs invited me to collaborate with her in setting some of Charlotte Smith's poetry to music. Charlotte Smith shaped Romantic-era poetry by initiating the sonnet revival, celebrating subjective experience as a legitimate poetic topic, and boldly experimenting with poetic form. Her 731-line poem *Beachy Head* (1807) depicts the landmass of the same name on the eastern coast of the British Isles, the coastline that was once joined to France. Writing the poem during England's long war with France, Smith poignantly articulates themes of separation and continuity in the very spot the British expected an invasion. But the poem's exploration extends well beyond Smith's immediate historical moment to investigate the geographical, paleontological, botanical, commercial, and martial histories of this iconic landform. Solitary figures wander in the landscape, including a shepherd, a smuggler, a heartbroken poet, and a hermit who recovers bodies from shipwrecks to bury them in the chalky coastal cliff. We felt that *Beachy Head*'s formal variety, thematic complexity, and range of voices would lend themselves to a song cycle. At least one of Smith's short poems has been set to music, yet no one has attempted *Beachy Head*. Indeed, very few Romantic-era women's poems have been set to music, although poems by Blake, Byron, and other male poets have long been celebrated in this way. Amanda and I hope that our collaborative project will offer additional insight into Smith's impressive contribution to the British poetic canon.

Although I teach *Beachy Head* regularly, this magisterial and capacious poem became more vivid to me in July when I visited the 'stupendous summit . . . o'er the channel' that

inspired the poem (ll. 1-2). The sun-drenched white cliffs of the 'projecting head-land' came alive through Smith's lines (ll. 12). The air was filled with the 'shrill harsh cry' of 'terns, and gulls, and tarrocks,' punctuated by the *vocalise* of the 'bleating flock' (ll. 21, 23, 28). Even today, the sheep farms seem to run up to the edge of the cliff, so that one feels the peril of 'the little careless sheep/ On the brink grazing' (ll. 684-85). Watching the 'changing colours of the sea,' one imagines Smith's hermit on a stormier day scanning the water for bodies to recover (ll. 693). *Beachy Head* calls one to these cliffs and these cliffs invite one more deeply into Smith's poem.

As Amanda and I read *Beachy Head* aloud to each other via Skype, we began to hear the poem's intricate structure. Although they are not explicitly marked, discrete thematic cycles in *Beachy Head* emerged, which we are translating into song cycles. We have identified and named both the cycles and the individual songs. The 'Beachy Head Cycle' contains a prologue and 4 songs (ll. 1-117); a long, single song interlude, 'Historical Contemplation,' follows (ll. 117-166). Next Smith takes up 'Happiness' in a 5-song cycle (ll. 167-309), and then begins the 7-song 'Nature Cycle,' which includes lines that speak back to 'Historical Contemplation' (ll. 309-505). Five songs make up the 'Stranger's Cycle,' one of which harkens back to the 'Happiness Cycle' (ll. 506-671). Finally, three songs comprise the 'Hermit's Cycle' (ll. 671-731). In all we identified 5 song cycles containing a total of 26 songs, a major undertaking for Amanda to set. With this framework in mind, we worked through the poem again, examining each line to extract lyrics for the songs. In order to preserve the integrity of the poem, we did not add, but only took away Smith's words. As Amanda has

taught me, the music can fill in for words so that nothing is truly lost, just translated.

With a draft of the lyrics in hand, Amanda began to compose. Amanda first sketches the melody and chord progression, and then formally sets the song with the full piano accompaniment. Smith's words speak in a new way when set to Amanda's beautiful music. Quite different from anything literary critics might write, the musical setting offers insights based more in feeling and the senses than in analysis. For example, in the song 'Afternoon,' the line 'The sloop, her angular canvas shifting still catches the light and variable airs' begins in Amanda's setting with a whole note, then moves to a two beat triplet voicing the word 'angular,' then ascends a half step, goes down a whole step, and up a half step through 'canvas shifting still.' The rhythm and intervals together capture the visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic sensory experience, including the angular shape and small movements of the sail. The piano accompaniment flows beneath these lines with the repeated oscillation of eighth note intervals.





As she was composing, Amanda noticed a thematic rupture in the lines we had identified as 'Evening.' The magic of the collaborative, cross-disciplinary process lies in moments like these. Amanda's observation that the lines about commerce and slavery did not fit with the emerging sunset clarified another aspect of Smith's structure: in the 'Beachy Head Cycle' Smith alternates evocations of the landscape at progressive times of day with recreations of the activity or industry in that landscape. To be specific:

✿ 'Prologue: Fancy's Day' (the titles are ours) locates the poet on the 'stupendous summit,' then depicts the work of 'the Omnipotent' rending England from the continent (ll. 1, 6). First Smith describes place and then work.

✿ 'Morning' lifts the 'glorious sun,' to illuminate the daily labour of the chattering birds, who 'seek their food,' as well as that of the 'lone shepherd, and his baying dog,' who, together, 'drive to the turfy crest his bleating flock' (ll. 16, 23, 27-28). The beautiful light reveals the noisy industry of the birds, shepherd, and sheepdog.

✿ 'Afternoon' stretches out lazily at first, the ocean 'murmur[ing] low . . . upon the level sands' (ll. 31-32). Yet the eye is drawn to the distant 'ship of commerce' that carries the pearls and adamantine collected by slaves' 'perilous and breathless toil' (ll. 42, 53). With this juxtaposition, Smith suggests that the leisure evoked by the quiet afternoon is made possible by the violation of 'The sacred freedom' of 'fellow man' (ll. 59).

✿ 'Evening' bursts open, shifting from the underwater darkness where slaves dive for pearls to the jewel tones of the sunset, whose 'transparent gold / Mingles with ruby tints, and sapphire gleams' and the rise of the early moon, who throws 'Her pearly brilliance on the trembling tide' (ll. 81-82, 99).

✿ 'Night' shifts from the sunset scene to labour, bringing not the expected quiet of night, but instead the return of fisherman from the sea, unloading their boat 'with loud clamours' (ll. 108). Amanda has brilliantly set this final song in the cycle as a sailor's song to capture the feeling of camaraderie and industry.

Together the song cycles illuminate the deep structure of Smith's posthumously published *Beachy Head*. An advertisement for the volume



in which *Beachy Head* was published, probably written by Smith's sister Catherine Dorset, asserts that the poem was 'not completed according to the original design' (215). Stuart Curran observes that 'it is unlikely... that we will ever be able to determine whether her masterpiece *Beachy Head* was as unfinished as the introductory note to the volume assumes it to be' (xxvii). Nonetheless, Curran argues 'a work that begins atop a massive feature of the landscape and ends immured within it bears a remarkable coherence' (xxvii). And, indeed, Amanda and I are excavating an intricate internal coherence that reveals *Beachy Head* as a complete and refined work of art.

We were delighted to perform excerpts from the song cycle as a lecture recital at the Romantic Studies Association of Australasia's July 2015 meeting, with Amanda playing piano, mezzo-soprano Jeannie Marsh singing, and me

introducing the song cycles with short lectures. We also presented the the song cycles at Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, on September 11, 2015 with Kathryn Cowdrick, a mezzo-soprano at the Eastman School of Music, singing with us. ●

### Works Cited

Smith, Charlotte. *Beachy Head*. *The Poems of Charlotte Smith*. Ed. Stuart Curran. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. 214-47.  
Curran, Stuart. 'Introduction.' *The Poems of Charlotte Smith*. Ed. Stuart Curran. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. xix-xxix.

There will be a conference on Charlotte Smith's work at Chawton House Library in 2016 organised by Profs Elizabeth A. Dolan and Jacqueline Labbe. Details will be added to our website as they become available.



## Bidding a Fond Farewell to Ray

**M**ANY OF OUR long-term supporters will be familiar with Ray Moseley, whose smiley face and ever helpful attitude have been a welcome and much-valued part of the Chawton House Library experience. Ray has been with us for nearly a decade. Having started helping out as a volunteer, then taken a part-time administrative role, his job has gradually expanded over that time to cover a wide range of activities, from making sure events run smoothly to fixing IT problems, taking photos, and running the gift shop! Ray was formerly a police officer and now has the exciting opportunity to combine the skills he acquired in the police force with the IT skills he has developed here to work for a national policing unit with responsibility for functions related to criminal records management. It is a wonderful opportunity but we will be very sad to see him go. We are sure many of you will join us in wishing Ray all the best for his new venture and thanking him for all his hard work and dedication over the years. ●

**A**s you climb the Jacobean hanging staircase here at Chawton House Library you will see an oil on canvas by Enoch Seeman the younger (1694-1744), entitled 'Portrait of a Lady in a Riding Habit'. The identity of the lady remains a mystery, but we can observe that she was a rider and that the dress she wears is a garment specially designed for riding side saddle. This year's horse Fun Ride gives us a unique insight into this aspect of our unknown young woman's life with a special side saddle gala by the Side Saddle Association (SSA). Here, Angela Wells, Chair of the Side Saddle Association's area eight, tells us about the gala, the history of Side Saddle and why the SSA has sought to revive this once dying art...

*What can you tell us about the history of side saddle? Why did women start to ride in this way?*

Riding side saddle developed as a way for women in skirts to ride a horse whilst maintaining their modesty. It was considered unbecoming for a woman to straddle a horse and the fashion of long skirts also would have made it awkward and impractical. The earliest records of women riding side saddle in England begin around 1400 when women were led by a groom sat on something more like a chair with a foot and backrest. Then, around 1600-1700 this design progressed so that women could be more in control of the horse rather than mere passengers. Saddles with a pronounced pommel (fixed head) were developed so that women could hook their right leg around it for stability. In early 1800 the lower pommel came into existence and this really had a revolutionary impact as the extra stability and control allowed women to gallop, jump and hunt.

*Why does the SSA think it is important to maintain this riding style today?*

Side saddle fell into decline after the Second World War and so when Valerie Dunmore-Francis and Janet Macdonald founded the SSA in 1974 they were reviving an art that really was dying out. They wanted to recapture and preserve this tradition from an age when riding was all about elegance and style as well as horsemanship and courage. The SSA is now thriving all over the country with worldwide links. We have paraded at all sorts of marvellous locations including Highclere Castle, Goodwood and now Chawton House Library.

*Can you give us a flavour of what the side saddle gala at Chawton House Library will be like?*

We will be recreating Rotten Row in Hyde Park. This bridleway was extremely popular with the London elite in the 1840s-60s, with very wealthy people riding there to show off just how rich and important they were. Ladies and gentlemen rode with great decorum on beautiful saddles and wearing beautiful costumes. Women who had aspirations to marry well would go to the Row and try to catch the eye of a wealthy bachelor. The early nineteenth-century actress Lillie Langtry famously promenaded publicly on the Row as the mistress of the future Edward VII. On Sunday 20 September the SSA will be re-enacting the era, dressed up in period costumes and riding beautifully turned-out horses. It will be a judged competition with the most elegant horse and rider awarded a cup.





## What are the Origins of Rotten Row?

Rotten Row in Hyde Park was an extremely popular place for fashionable society – the *beau monde* – to promenade on horseback in Regency London. The bridlemway, which is still maintained today, dates back to 1689 when William III acquired Kensington Palace. He ordered the construction of a new road to take him directly there from his London Palace of St. James, safe from the thieves and highwaymen that threatened other routes. For added security, King William had lanterns placed along the road to illuminate his path. This was the first recorded use of street lighting in London.

There are two competing explanations for how the Row got its name: many say it is a corruption of the French name for Kings Road 'Route du Roi', but others claim the word comes from the mix of gravel and tan that was used to surface the route. This soft covering was laid for the delicate legs of horses and old English meanings of the word rotten include 'soft' or 'yielding'.

Our Fun Ride featuring the Side Saddle Gala takes place on 20th September. Visit our website and Facebook page to see photos and news from the day.

## What makes Chawton House Library an ideal location for you and your members to hold a gala?

It is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate women's writing - one of our founders Valerie Dunmore-Francis is also vice-president of the Society of Women Writers and Journalists, which has strong links to the Library. We are also delighted to be holding a gala on an estate with such a long history of riding; I bet that if you look at old photographs of hunts and hacks at Chawton House Library with a magnifying glass, you will see ladies riding side saddle •



As Angela Wells suggests, if you look carefully at this photo (kindly loaned to us by Jeremy Knight), you can just make out a lady riding side saddle.







# Founder and Chairwoman Receives Honorary OBE

**A**S DETAILED IN THE special *Breaking News* piece we sent out to supporters recently, our Founder and Chairwoman, Dr Sandy Lerner, was delighted to be presented with an honorary OBE in May this year by the Queen's Representative

in Hampshire, the Lord-Lieutenant, Nigel Atkinson. The award by Her Majesty the Queen recognises the significance of Sandy's cultural contribution to the UK and Sandy was granted special permission to receive the award at the Library itself (awards for foreign nationals

are usually presented at the British Embassy in the country of residence).

George V introduced the OBE in 1917 during the First World War in response to the need for an honour that could be awarded more widely to civilians who were helping the war effort in diverse ways. It was the first time that women were included in the order of chivalry.

Speaking at the presentation, the Lord-Lieutenant said 'Sandy's vision was to change the literary landscape to include early women writers, neglected for far too long.' He added, 'the books in the Chawton House Library collection were entirely neglected by establishment institutions. Sandy rescued them from prejudice







# Collaborative project sheds new light on women's involvement in literature during the Middle Ages

**P**ROFESSOR DIANNE WATT, Head of English at the University of Surrey and Network Lead for this newly established project tells us more...

and oblivion and has given them a fitting, prestigious and permanent home'. Sandy gave a short speech in which she remembered with amazement the dire condition of the house when she first bought it, and thanked the people who were involved from the start, both staff and Trustees, for their commitment, with particular thanks to Len Bosack for his patience and unstinting support. Our Executive Director, Dr Gillian Dow, closed her speech with a special thank you: 'On behalf of the women writers we care for on our walls and on our library shelves – thank you from them. They wanted a room of their own – you gave them an entire estate.' ●

Chawton House Library proved to be the ideal location for the inaugural event in July 2015 of a newly-founded international network, funded by the Leverhulme Trust. The project, entitled 'Women's Literary Culture and the Medieval English Canon', brings together leading researchers of gender and medieval writing from England, Wales, Norway, Switzerland and the USA. Its purpose is to explore ways in which recent research into women's literary culture in the Middle Ages might better inform our understanding of the work of Chaucer and his contemporaries. The event was structured around formal presentations and interactive workshops. Visiting speakers included Clare A. Lees and Kathryn Maude, from King's College London, and Marion Wynne-Davies, from the University of Surrey.

One key theme to emerge in the course of the event included the importance of understanding that medieval women engaged in literary culture in a wide variety of ways, not only as writers and readers, but also as patrons, translators, compilers, scribes, and possibly even as performers of early dramatic texts.



Medieval women as readers are particularly associated with religious texts, such as visionary works, Marian literature, devotional treatises, Books of Hours, and collections of prayers, but one important finding that emerged was that some of the more didactic works by Chaucer are also to be found in the convents, indicating that medieval nuns had wider interests than has previously been assumed.

While the collections at Chawton House Library focus on English women's writing from the period 1600-1800, the network members were very grateful for the opportunity to meet and work together in an environment where women's writing is given the attention it deserves. Further events are planned over the next two years, including one at Boston University in the USA, and a final conference at the University of Bergen in Norway. ●

# Did You Know?

**A** CHARMING PAINTING in the Dining Room at Chawton House Library by Joseph Wright of Derby depicts an elderly man and a girl with a book. The book is a history of England by the brilliant eighteenth-century republican historian Catharine Macaulay. The man is Macaulay's ardent supporter, the Reverend Thomas Wilson, and the girl is Macaulay's daughter, Catherine Sophia.

Catharine Macaulay was born Catherine Sawbridge in 1731, the second daughter of John, a landowner in Kent. Her mother Elizabeth (née Wanley) died when Macaulay was only two, and the young child was educated at home with her brother John. This 'education' seems to have been little more than being let loose in their father's library, where she and John read many works, including Roman history. This early reading may have sown the love of history in the young Catharine, and encouraged her commitment to republican values. She certainly managed, despite her inauspicious beginning and lack of a formal education, to become the leading radical historian of her age, immortalized in Richard Samuel's 1778 painting *Portraits in the Characters of the Muses in the Temple of Apollo* as one of the nine living muses.

In 1760, Catharine married Dr George Macaulay, publishing the first volume of her *History of England* just three years later. This was a hugely ambitious project; the first republican account of British history, and its ringing condemnation of the monarchy was much admired by political radicals in Britain and revolutionaries in France and the United States. George Macaulay died in 1766, shortly after the publication of volume two of the *History*, leaving Catharine with a daughter, and comfortably off. She placed herself at the centre of radical London, holding a salon in her home, and working on the next volumes of what was to become her eight-volume *History*. During this time she also became England's first female pamphleteer, issuing several tracts condemning the royalist Tory views of contemporaries like Thomas Hobbes and David Hume. In the 1770s, she lived for two years or so in the house of Reverend Wilson in Bath and this arrangement led to much speculation and criticism.

It is a sad indictment of the inequalities facing women at the time that Catharine Macaulay's reputation, already tarnished, was utterly destroyed when at 47 she chose to marry William Graham, a medical apprentice more than twenty years her junior. While men regularly married women half their age with no social repercussions, this move by a woman, presumably because it revealed some sexual desire on her part, was met with public condemnation and lampooning in cartoons. Her political rivals seized upon this 'scandal' to smear her reputation and even old friends, including Dr Wilson, renounced their friendship. Nonetheless, the marriage seems to have been a happy one. In 1791, Macaulay published *Letters on Education, with Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects*, an early feminist work, which challenged the dominant belief that women were naturally inferior to men, and argued that through equal education women could obtain equal status to men. Macaulay was a major influence on Mary Wollstonecraft who built on the ideas put forward by Macaulay in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). George Washington, the first President of the United States, wanted Macaulay to write a history of the American Revolution. This was prevented by illness in her later years but their correspondence continued until her death in 1791. A memorial plaque, erected by her second husband in their local church in Binfield, remains there today. ●



The original *Female Spectator* made a bold statement in its day. © Chawton House Library

## Paying tribute to pioneering women

*The Female Spectator* is named after Eliza Haywood's publication of the same name, which was published from April 1744 to May 1746. Haywood's journal – which was a direct play on the existing *Spectator*, written by and for men – was the first magazine by and for women, and was widely read. Haywood was familiar with the challenges of life for women within a patriarchal system, and she wrote pragmatic advice on what kind of education women should seek, and on common difficulties such as how to avoid disastrous marriages and deal with wandering husbands.

The journal featured romantic and satiric fiction, moral essays and social and political commentary, covering everything from the craze for tea drinking and the problem of gambling, to politics, war and diplomacy, and the importance of science and natural history. ●

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*Home to early English women's writing*

**Chawton House Library**  
Chawton, Alton  
Hampshire  
GU34 1SJ

T: 01420 541010  
E: [info@chawtonhousethlibrary.org](mailto:info@chawtonhousethlibrary.org)  
W: [www.chawtonhousethlibrary.org](http://www.chawtonhousethlibrary.org)

**North American Friends of Chawton House Library**  
7230 N San Blas Dr, Tucson,  
AZ 85704-3135, USA

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