

Chawton
House



a Hidden Gem

ANNUAL REVIEW

2018

'The Art of Freezing the Blood': Northanger Abbey, Frankenstein, & the Female Gothic



2018 was a year of major change at Chawton House, in which it built on the increased awareness and interest driven by the 2017 bicentenary and welcomed a record number of visitors, ending the year as an award winner; being declared Visit England's *Hidden Gem*.

Chawton House aims to inspire people as it inspired Jane Austen. It was a place that influenced her work; where she walked and enjoyed the beauty of the landscape; where she spent time with family; where they dined, read stories and put on plays. The Library at Godmersham Park, removed to Chawton House by Jane's nephew, influenced her writing; and they now join a remarkable collection of works by fellow early women writers.

In 2018, Chawton House opened up to a much larger audience than ever before to begin to tell the stories of the estate, Knight family, Jane Austen and the extraordinary, and sometimes lesser-known, women represented in the collections.

Chawton House cannot – and should not – do this alone. We work with others to bring fresh perspectives and ideas, and enable the collection, House and estate to be brought to life in ways we would not otherwise be able to do. Chawton House has a local, national and international reach, and the activities of 2018 reflected that.

The major exhibition in 2018, *The Art of Freezing the Blood*, marked 200 years since Mary Shelley's publication of *Frankenstein* and Jane Austen's posthumous mock-Gothic *Northanger Abbey*, and explored the Female Gothic through rare editions of both works alongside less familiar contemporaries.

The special exhibition contributed to a record number of visitors. Nearly 15,000 people visited Chawton House, many for the first time. Sell-out events, like the Hallowe'en Gothic tour and the inaugural Christmas Fayre, brought Chawton House to the attention of people who previously did not know we existed.

It is not only onsite that Chawton House developed public programming. Four works by Elizabeth Hervey were lent to Beckford Tower and Museum in Bath, and thousands engaged with our social media content. Chawton House Press published *The Diary of Louisa Lushington* from a manuscript in the collection. After three years of transcribing, editing and contextualising, the journal of a woman who met Jane Austen's brother Edward and his family at Godmersham Park became available for purchase.





Academic research continues, and with greater public engagement. A sell-out day of talks – *Jane Austen and Southampton Spa* - explored Regency Southampton. There were 170 uses of the collection for research and 40 researchers came to Chawton House to use the Reading Room, including Hannah Moss and Frances Kavanagh who were sponsored by the British Association of Romanticism Studies, and Masae Kawatsu sponsored by the Jane Austen Society of Japan.

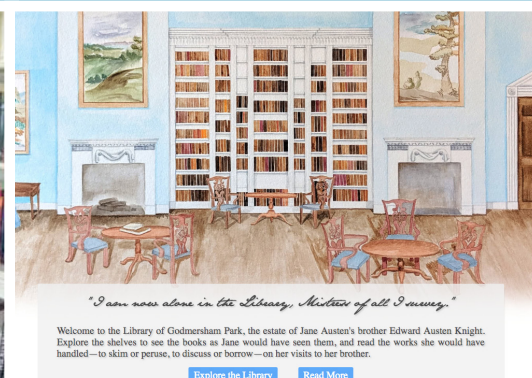
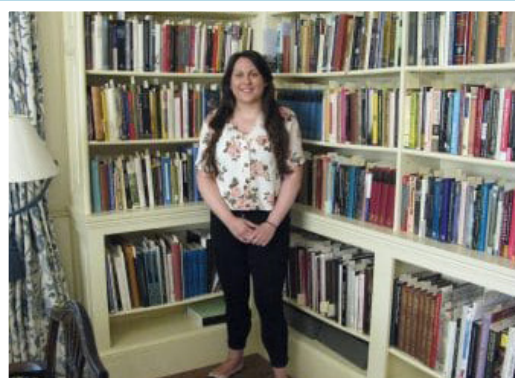
In October, Professor Peter Sabor from McGill University, Toronto, completed the project to digitally recreate the library at Godmersham Park as recorded in the 1818 catalogue. Chawton House volunteers photographed works held at Chawton House, and the project led to the creation of GLOSS – the *Godmersham Lost Sheep Society* – who seek to identify and return the “Lost Sheep” that have disappeared from the Library back to Chawton House.

Chawton House could not operate without the generosity of supporters. The staff team are supported by a multi-talented volunteer team of more than 60 who give thousands of hours of their time to steward rooms, lead tours, conserve the collections and help with events.

The collection continues to grow. In 2018, Sandra Clark donated early editions of works, and Isabel Grundy donated 100 works to Chawton House’s reference collection. We are profoundly grateful for a large donation of books, artworks and kitchen copperware from Deirdre Le Faye, which will transform how we present stories to the public. We are looking forward to finding new ways to bring these works to public and academic attention.

The North American Friends of Chawton House continue to provide critical support. In the Autumn, the North American Friends sold twenty viewpoint markers which will create a new innovation for the gardens in 2019: the Jane Austen Garden Trail. We remain profoundly grateful for the support of dozens of individual donors, including those who participated in the Buy a Brick campaign, and this support has made the evolution of Chawton House possible.

The organisation is evolving to become more financially self-sustaining. To help with the transition, Chawton House was successful in securing grant funding from the Garfield Weston Foundation, and salary relief for seconded staff from the University of Southampton from the Bosack Kruger Foundation.





The Old Kitchen Tearoom and Chawton House retail developed markedly in 2018. Tea Room income increased by 62%, and retail income almost doubled after the shop was relocated and new lines added. Private tours, private hire and weddings are all ventures that were continued in 2018 and will be further developed in years to come.

Chawton House appointed a new Chief Executive in November. Having steered Chawton House successfully through a period of uncertainty, Dr Gillian Dow decided to return to the University of Southampton, from where she was on secondment. Gillian was previously Chawton House's Academic Director, and her list of achievements is numerous. She was the architect of the Visiting Fellows programme, convened numerous conferences, and pioneered opening Chawton House up to the public. The impact of her time at Chawton House will be felt for many years to come. Her replacement, Katie Childs will take up her post in early 2019, marking the next chapter in the transformation of Chawton House.

At the end of the year, Chawton House won Visit England's prestigious Hidden Gem Award celebrating the excellent visitor experience we provide. 2019 sees the introduction of two new exhibitions and a much extended programme of tours, talks and events in the House and grounds. In 2018 we were a Hidden Gem, but in 2019 we intend to be hidden no more.

The purpose of this report is to summarise some of the highlights and key achievements at Chawton House during 2018. It sits alongside the formal published Annual Report and Accounts for the year which are submitted to the Charity Commission and can be viewed here.

Chawton House, Chawton, Alton,
Hampshire, GU34 1SJ
01420 541 010

www.chawtonhouse.org

Chawton House Library is an independent charity registered in
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