Luncheon

Sunday, February 9, 2014, Noon–3:00 pm

Panel Discussion
The A’s of Mansfield Park: Architecture, Acting and Abolition

Moderated by Diane Capitani, JASNA–GCR Education Outreach Director

Panelists: Marsha Huff, Past President of JASNA
Russell Clark, Roosevelt University
Jeff Nigro, JASNA–GCR Regional Coordinator

Parthenon Restaurant, 314 S. Halsted Street, Chicago, IL
(Free Valet Parking)

LUNCHEON REGISTRATION FORM

Members: $30; Guests: $40

Registration deadline: February 5, 2014

Member Name _____________________________

Guest(s) Name(s) ___________________________

Address _________________________________ City ______________ State _______ ZIP ____________

E-mail __________________________ Phone ______________ Amount enclosed $__________

You can register by

1. Going online to www.jasnachicago.org and pay using your Visa or MasterCard.

   or

2. Mailing your check—payable to JASNA-GCR—and this form to Cathy Feldman, 500 N. Lake Shore Drive,
   #1511, Chicago, IL 60611.
The Year of Mansfield Park

Another year, another Jane Austen bicentenary to celebrate! As 2013 was the year of Pride and Prejudice, so 2014 will be the year of Mansfield Park. Since its first appearance in 1814, Mansfield Park has been the Austen novel that is probably the least read, but it is arguably the most thought-provoking. Much of our JASNA-GCR programming this year is designed to shed new light on this complex work.

There are people (you may have met some of them) who grumble that Jane Austen just wrote the same novel six times, but Austen lovers know better. There could hardly be a greater contrast between the book we celebrated last year and the one that takes center stage this year. Pride and Prejudice is an easy book to love: it has a sparkling heroine, a principled but teachable hero, an array of delightful comedic characters, and happy endings for pretty much everyone. Mansfield Park, on the other hand, is more of a challenge. Its shrinking violet of a heroine and its somewhat priggish hero can be much harder to warm to than Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, and they certainly have not attained the cult status of their P&P counterparts (although you can buy t-shirts that say “My ♥ Belongs to Fanny” and “Mrs. Edmund Bertram” online). Most of the characters are flawed and not terribly sympathetic, and the two liveliest and most attractive individuals, Henry and Mary Crawford, are also among the most morally suspect characters Austen ever created. Pemberley is the model of a splendid, well-run stately estate; Mansfield, by contrast, is a site of inadequate
parenting, sibling rivalries and romantic complications.

Yet there are great rewards in reading and re-reading Mansfield Park. Austen famously described Pride and Prejudice as “rather too light and bright and sparkling”, and she told her sister that in her next book she would attempt “a complete change of subject—ordination”. Of course, there is much more to Mansfield Park than that. The book deals with a number of important issues: the nature of power, what we human beings really owe one another (the words “gratitude” and “ingratitude” appear frequently), and the moral ambiguity involved in “playing a role” both onstage and in “real life”. There is something appropriate about the fact that Shakespeare is a powerful presence at one point in the novel: Austen’s sensitivity to the ambiguities of her characters and their ethical dilemmas equals the Bard’s. Is Fanny Price the moral center of the novel, as she has often been described, or is she just passive-aggressive? A book that (as a character in another Austen novel puts it) takes “a fling at the slave trade” may not seem like something you would dip into for a good laugh, but it is full of some of Austen’s sharpest wit and satire.

Mansfield Park reminds us that Austen was more than capable of exploring the conflict between good and evil—a conflict within the characters as well as between them—as brilliantly as any critically acclaimed HBO series today. Who needs zombies or drug dealers when you’ve got Aunt Norris? Even those readers who don’t ♥ Fanny Price (and there are a few) can appreciate the artful way in which Austen allows Fanny’s unexpected inner strength to unfold. I hope that our 2014 programming will provide you with new insights as you reread this profound masterpiece of a novel.

JASNA–GCR’s Mansfield Park year begins at the Winter Meeting on February 9 with a panel discussion over our traditional hearty luncheon at the Parthenon Restaurant in Greektown, and will continue with our Gala on May 3. You can read more on pages 4–5 of this newsletter. See you there!

Welcome New Members
Barbara Andrews   Martha Miles
Devra Densmore    Heather Refetoff
Jean Goldman      Illeane Schwartz
Mary Marshall     Gerri Zaccone
William McHugh

Thank You to Our Generous Donors
Enid Golinkin     Betty Stork

Correction:
In the previous issue of Letter from Chicago, Kirstin Olsen’s name was misspelled. We apologize to Kirstin.
What a lovely day we had for our Annual Birthday Tea! For once, there was no snow, and thanks to our JASNA-GCR member Jane Hunt, we were welcomed once more to the beautiful Fortnightly, decked in its holiday finery. Jeffrey Nigro, our Regional Coordinator, welcomed all, and our new JASNA-GCR Board Member at Large, Laura Whitlock, gave a charming and eloquent introduction of our speaker William Phillips. William enlightened and entertained with his exposé of the card games played and mentioned in Jane Austen’s letters and novels, and the insight they give us into the characters who play them. But the day was not all PowerPoint images and lecture, oh no! Laura Whitlock has a full report of the December Tea on the following pages.

The snow is falling as I write this, and as this IS Illinois, it is probably falling as you read it. I can’t help but think of the Winter Solstice—a shift from dark toward light, the New Year, 2014, and our shift from the “light & bright & sparkling” Pride and Prejudice to Mansfield Park. My new year’s resolution is to take a fresh look at Mansfield Park, with no preconceptions. I resolve to start with an attitude as clean and unprejudiced as the snow, and to read it again with the understanding that—as William Phillips reminded us at the December Tea—nothing in Jane Austen’s novels is accidental. I cannot think of a better way to start that new look at Mansfield Park than by expanding my knowledge of the world in which it was written.

JASNA-GCR will begin the bicentenary celebration of Mansfield Park on Sunday, February 9 at The Parthenon Restaurant with a luncheon and panel discussion entitled “The A’s of Mansfield Park: Architecture, Acting and Abolition.” Diane Capitani, our JASNA-GCR Education Outreach Director and JASNA Traveling Lecturer for the Central Region, will guide us into the world of the novel, and the real world of Jane Austen. Her panelists will lend their expertise on each of the three “A’s” of the program’s subtitle. We will explore how the opinions toward and the issues confronted in these three fields reflect the volatility of the era in which the novel was written.

Joining Diane will be Marsha Huff, Past President of JASNA, who will give us a better understanding of the shifting views toward slavery in the British colonies and the consequences of abolitionism for the whole of the British Empire. Russell Clark, GCR member, former Executive Director of ESL Programs at Ohio State University, and newly returned to Chicago as Director of the International Study Center at Roosevelt University, will tackle the world of theatre and the “German Play” Lover’s Vows. On the subject of architecture, we will hear from Jeffrey Nigro, our Regional Coordinator, Adjunct Lecturer at the Art Institute and Instructor for Adult Education Seminars at the Newberry Library, who will illustrate how the changing times are reflected in the homes of this period and the effect of “improvements” on the countryside and the people who made their living from it. With these four knowledgeable guides, I know I will reread Mansfield Park with a greater appreciation and heightened awareness of the clues the author gives us as to her characters and her view of the world in which she lived.

I hope you will join us on what promises to be an exciting, informative (but let’s hope not snowy!) day. All the details are listed within the newsletter and I encourage you to register soon, especially if you plan to bring a guest, because this event always sells out.

Beyond the snow lies spring and with it comes our annual Gala, which will be held at the Woman’s Athletic Club of Chicago on
May 3rd. Our speakers will be Dr. Cheryl Kinney, who will join us from Texas, Dr. Sheryl Craig of the University of Central Missouri, and our own Diane Capitani. We hope to see our old friends from Jane Austen Books and Jeanne Steen of Figaro Parisian Interiors, and some new friends as well.

I do not think there will be a live reading of Mansfield Park in 2014, but do continue to look to the newsletters and of course our JASNA-GCR website and Facebook page for upcoming events to celebrate the 200th anniversary of its publication.

Retrospective

Sara Okey

It’s always nice to put life in perspective this time of year. Normally, I reflect on all the happy events of my life and make a list of all my goals for the following year, hoping that at least a few would come to fruition. I hope the following comparison of facts helps give you a unique perspective of life then and now.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>1814</th>
<th>2014</th>
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<td>Bryan Donkin first invented and marketed canned meat products in 1814.</td>
<td>Spam and other canned meats continue to thrive as a viable and edible product. In fact, Spam’s parent company Hormel has grossed over a billion dollars in sales in 2013.</td>
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<td>Plastic surgery was first performed.</td>
<td>Plastic surgery continues to be a mainstream medical procedure. In 2012, over 14.6 million operations were performed.</td>
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<td>No postage stamps existed yet. So, as long as you had two feet and were willing to walk to your friend’s home, it was free.</td>
<td>Postage stamps will increase in cost to $0.49 in America.</td>
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<td>A loaf of bread would have cost approximately 2 pence, approximately 15% of a regular working class person’s salary.</td>
<td>As of November 2013, a loaf of bread cost $2.20, approximately less than half a percent of a full time minimum wage employee.</td>
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<td>Jane Austen published Mansfield Park, Lord Byron published “The Corsair,” and Sir Walter Scott published Waverley.</td>
<td>The bestselling book published in 2013 was Strength Finders 2.0 by Tom Rath, a book devoted to helping people find their hidden talents and avoid a cubicle existence.</td>
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<td>Francis Scott Key wrote “The Star Spangled Banner.” The song went on to become the United States of America’s National Anthem.</td>
<td>The top song of 2013 was “Get Lucky” by Daft Punk and Pharrell Williams. The title phrase is repeated no less than 43 times in the song.</td>
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<td>King George III was entering his fifty-fourth year of being king. Meanwhile in America, James Madison, the fourth President of the United States, was halfway through his second term as the fourth president.</td>
<td>Queen Elizabeth II will be entering her sixty-second year of her reign. Meanwhile in America, Barack Obama, the forty-fourth President of the United States, will be halfway through his second term as president.</td>
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<td>The metronome was invented by Johann Nepomuk Mälzel.</td>
<td>The Argus II Retinal Prosthesis System helps people see. It is a bionic retina for people suffering from retinitis pigmentosa. Some patients do attain some vision restoration.</td>
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<td>The United Kingdom’s flag was the “Union Jack,” the same as today. The United States of America had a fifteen star, fifteen striped flag.</td>
<td>America has a fifty star, thirteen striped flag. The stripes represent the original colonies and the stars represent each of the states.</td>
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On December 7, an intrepid crowd of devoted Janeites and guests braved the Arctic weather to gather at the Fortnightly of Chicago for JASNA-GCR’s annual Jane Austen Birthday Tea.

Regional Coordinator Jeff Nigro welcomed the crowd, gathered in the ballroom, which was beautifully decorated for the holidays. He quipped that we had beaten the climatic odds in at least one respect, as so many years we have snow on the day of the Tea. Jeff thanked JASNA member Jane Hunt, who sponsored our gathering at The Fortnightly, and Member at Large on the GCR board and venue coordinator Georgia Cibul, who made the necessary arrangements for the event. Jeff spoke of 2014 as another exciting bicentenary year, marking the anniversary of the publication of Mansfield Park. He introduced Program Director Debra Ann Miller to announce JASNA-CGR’s slate of upcoming events.

Debra discussed the exciting program for our Winter Meeting to be held in February at The Parthenon Restaurant. She also announced the speakers for our Spring Gala, which will take place this year at the lovely Women’s Athletic Club.

GCR member Lori Davis invited attendees to an evening of English country dancing on December 16 at the 19th Century Club in Oak Park. I had the delightful, but surprisingly challenging, task of introducing our speaker, JASNA-GCR Deputy Regional Coordinator, William Phillips. William graciously participated in my scheme to say something new about such a beloved, veteran JASNA speaker by providing little-known information about himself for my introduction, “Seven Things You Didn’t Know about William Phillips.”

William’s presentation, “You Must Follow Suit If You Can: Card Games in Austen’s Life and Fiction,” was as informative as it was entertaining. He began by highlighting the importance and frequent mention of card games in Jane Austen’s novels and personal correspondence. He delineated which games were mentioned or played in her writings and which games she enjoyed personally.

In perhaps the most illuminating part of his presentation, William spoke of how a character’s preference was as informative as it was entertaining. He began by highlighting the importance and frequent mention of card games in Jane Austen’s novels and personal correspondence. He delineated which games were mentioned or played in her writings and which games she enjoyed personally.
of card game was an important clue to his or her age, socioeconomic status and personality. We learned how Jane Austen embedded layers of meaning into the fact that one had a predilection for, say, Quadrille. We learned that, perhaps, Quadrille was a pastime best not to be associated with.

William discussed the basics of game play for some of the more frequently mentioned card games. He spoke of the popular game “Loo,” and how its popularity led to endless double entendre, as players spoke of being “looed.” He illustrated his presentation with charming images of Regency period face cards (oh, those little feet!) and carved mother-of-pearl fish, which were used as counters, much as poker chips are used today. William concluded his presentation by inviting guests to participate in card play during tea service.

Once guests had helped themselves to the Fortnightly’s ever-delicious array of petite sandwiches and desserts, many did settle into tables to work out the particulars of game play. Tables were set up for players to choose “Loo” or “Speculation.” Peals of laughter and groans of feigned disgust were heard throughout the room as JASNA members and guests became better acquainted with the rules of the games as well as with each other. Many felt that sitting down together over a Regency card game allowed for delightful interaction. This convivial atmosphere led several members to suggest that JASNA-GCR should start a Jane Austen card club.

Debra Ann Miller returned to the podium to cap off the afternoon’s festivities with the annual champagne toast. She read the epigram from Rudyard Kipling’s *The Janeites*, and invited everyone to join as she repeated the final line, “Glory, Love, and Honour unto England’s Jane!”
From Chicago to Chawton:  
*Jane Austen and the Arts: Elegance, Propriety, and Harmony*

Dear Chicago Austenites,

I am writing this article on the day I heard from Amazon that *Jane Austen and the Arts: Elegance, Propriety, and Harmony*, co-edited by Dr. Natasha Duquette and myself, and released on December 6, 2013, is backordered only a few days after its publication. (This is welcome news, but I am sure that by the time you read these lines, the book will be available again.) I have a feeling that many of the copies, which sold so quickly, were shipped to the Chicago area, and I want to begin by thanking all you Midwestern shoppers and readers for your support!

To put it in a nutshell, *Jane Austen and the Arts: Elegance, Propriety, and Harmony* would not have been possible without JASNA and JASNA-GCR, Chicago friends and colleagues. Here is why:

- I met my esteemed co-editor at the 2008 Chicago AGM.
- Some of the finest essays in the collection were authored by Chicago Region Janeites and scholars who were invited to speak at JASNA-GCR functions.
- I could never have completed the work on the book, had it not been for the encouragement I received from my fellow Chicago members and students.

So, kudos to you all! You had a share in making this book happen.

So what is *Jane Austen and the Arts: Elegance, Propriety, and Harmony* about?

Simply put, Natasha and I created this book because we felt that whereas “Jane Austen the Woman” has received ample attention in the scholarly and popular press, “Jane Austen the Artist” remains an elusive entity—and this despite the fact that readers regard her as a dedicated and highly disciplined writer.

Natasha and I agreed that a woman as intelligent as Jane Austen must surely have reflected upon her occupation, her talent, and the medium she selected for her expressiveness—the novel. We based our thesis on the famous “defense of the novel” Jane Austen wrote in *Northanger Abbey*, which showed her to be passionate about her genre and well informed about the artistic debates of her time.

In all of her novels, Austen depicts artistic pursuits and touches on aesthetic debates, and readers can learn much about late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century tastes and fashions from her books. She also poses highly pertinent questions about the intersections between beauty and goodness, art and morality, and she proves her modernity when she illustrates that “refinement” can be used to mask both a flawed personality and a society in turmoil.

Nearly all the arts make an appearance in Austen’s novels. Her women (and men)
While Erin and Jeffrey can be found in the first part of the book entitled “The Fine Arts in Austen’s World: Music, Dance and Portraiture,” the second section is devoted to “Austen and Romanticism: Female Genius, Gothicism, and Romanticism” and includes Wheaton scholar Christine Colón’s “Exploring Literature’s Transformative Power: Jane Austen, Johanna Baillie, and the Aesthetics of Moral Development,” and my “Portrait of a Lady (Artist): Persuasion and Corinne.” “Augustinian Aesthetics in Jane Austen’s World” by Diane Capitani is one of the highlights of the third and final part of the collection, “Austen in Political, Social and Theological Context.”

In addition to these fine Chicago-area based authors, Austen scholars and connoisseurs from around the world have graciously shared their research in Jane Austen and the Arts: Elegance, Propriety, and Harmony. Natasha Duquette and I are grateful to them all.

Jane Austen and the Arts: Elegance, Propriety, and Harmony begins with a preface by Vivasvan Soni, Professor of English at Northwestern University, who thoughtfully debates “Jane Austen’s critique of aesthetic judgment,” using the example of Marianne Dashwood in Sense and Sensibility. The next contribution from Chicago is by Jeffrey Nigro, who discusses Cassandra Austen as “the sister artist.” His essay follows “Miss Bingley’s Walk: The Aesthetics of Movement” by Erin Smith, who presented a wonderful talk on Austen and the Ballet to JASNA-GCR several years ago.

Wisconsin Tea

In Defense of Mr. Collins

Every JASNA region is required to have some kind of event in December to celebrate Jane Austen’s birthday. It’s a good thing that Janeites are a hearty and devoted lot, since the time of year can make for some weather-related challenges. This past December, for example, the JASNA North Texas Region had to reschedule its Birthday Luncheon because of an unusual and dangerous ice storm that hit the Dallas-Fort Worth area. For the GCR Tea, the day was frigid but mercifully precipitation-free (see page 6–7). And on December 14 a snowstorm made driving a little treacherous for those who headed to the Red Circle Inn in Nashotah for JASNA–Wisconsin’s Birthday Luncheon.

Needless to say, it was worth the trip! It’s always a delight to see our JASNA–WI friends, and since so many of them are also GCR members who frequently travel south to attend our programs, it’s only fair to return the visit “in due form.” Besides myself, other Chicago area JASNA members who made their...
way through the snow included Russell Clark, Cathy Feldman, William Phillips, and Elizabeth Roob Ireland. Liz was there with her mother Joan Roob, a member of the Wisconsin region who often accompanies Liz to GCR events (and whose own birthday it was).

To top it all off, the speaker was GCR's own Diane Capitani, who gave a version of the breakout session she co-presented at the AGM in Minneapolis in September, entitled “A New View of Mr. Collins or: You Have Used Him Abominably Ill”. It was a treat for all present, and a particular pleasure for me: I was unable to attend Diane’s session in Minneapolis because my own talk was scheduled at the same time (one of the perils of trying to cram almost thirty breakout sessions into four time slots).

Diane’s thesis was that most readers have formed an unfair picture of Mr. Collins. She argued that we find him appalling primarily because Elizabeth Bennet does so, and we see him mostly from Elizabeth’s point of view. Elizabeth eventually corrects her “first impressions” of the other men in her life, but she never changes her mind about her (admittedly pompous) cousin. This dislike of Mr. Collins has been exacerbated by the film adaptations, which tend to exaggerate both his physical repulsiveness and his unctuousness.

As a faculty member at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary at Northwestern University, Diane has some sympathy for the struggles of clergymen in Jane Austen’s day. She reminded us that Mr. Collins deserves some credit for rising above his relatively lowly social status and faulty upbringing. Even his gardening is a sign of his industriousness; clergymen were often expected to supplement their incomes by selling their produce.

Diane certainly gave us fresh perspectives on a much-maligned character, but as you can imagine, a lively discussion ensued. To cite just one example: there was a debate over how the reader is expected to interpret the letter Mr. Collins writes to Mr. Bennet after Lydia’s elopement. Like many others, I had long assumed that Austen wants us to see this letter as just plain nasty, but Diane noted that Mr. Collins is simply reacting to Lydia’s “false step” as any clergyman of his time would have been expected to react, and we should try not to judge him by twenty-first century standards.

Apparently, Garrett owns numerous letters from eighteenth and nineteenth century clergymen expressing similar sentiments, or worse.

Of course, these controversies couldn’t dim the luster of the festive holiday decorations at the Red Circle Inn, any more than they could detract from the delectable three-course lunch. A good debate over Austen’s characters is just what Janeites call a good time!
A Page on Pugs

Who Let the Dog Out? Celebrating the Pug

Every holiday brings the opportunity to be surrounded by loved ones, to celebrate the occasion, and to honor family traditions. More recently, my favorite holiday tradition is watching the nationally broadcasted dog shows. Not only do I get to learn more about dog breeds, but also I become mesmerized by the parade of adorable puppies posing and prancing around an arena, wishing I could have them all.

My last family gathering led me to think more of Lady Bertram and her pug. Scholars have examined Lady Bertram’s pug for its symbolism of character relationships, class structure, and the colonialist enterprise in Mansfield Park. I choose to appreciate the dog for itself: an adorable ball of fluff that might be right for me.

I must not be alone in this line of thought, so I have created a list that will help determine if a pug is right for you. Consider getting a pug if any or all the following apply:

1. You wish to be rich. Pugs are associated with the aristocracy. So hire a manservant, drink tea with your pinky finger up, and enjoy petting your pug.

2. You wish to stay young. No matter your age, the pug will have more wrinkles.

3. You wish to clean your home. Pugs shed a massive amount of short hair. Having a pug will be your physical reminder that it’s time to clean your home.

4. You wish to communicate with your spouse. Josephine, wife of Napoleon, used her Pug “Fortune” to carry secret messages under his collar to her husband while she was imprisoned at Les Carmes. So if you or your spouse is in prison, a pug could be your solution for your communication needs.

5. You wish to continue a literary legacy. Literary lovers love to get dogs and name them after the literature they appreciate. If you get a pug and name it Pug, you can pretend to be like Lady Bertram and have countless experiences with your dog instead of people.

6. You wish to be fashion forward. Pugs do not adjust well to extreme temperatures, so apparel is a must. Not only will you enjoy dressing up dog for weather reasons, but your dog will be the envy of every canine fashionista on the block.

7. You wish to translate a primitive language. Pugs grunt, snore, chortle, and wheeze. If you decipher this language, you will make history.

8. You wish to be more global. Every time you look at your pug, you can image yourself in Tibet praying with Buddhist monks. If you want to be more European, you can pretend to be Dutch like William of Orange who made the pug his official dog. Owning a pug is your passport to the world.

Pug owners are in essence pug addicts. Pugs almost have a cult following. They are not the kind of dogs that will be in the background: they will be the reason for your existence. They are delightful, delicate, majestic, funny little dogs and may be the best experiences of your life.
**Winter Meeting**
Sunday, February 9

**Calendar**

**February 9**

**GCR Winter Meeting.** “The A’s of Mansfield Park: Architecture, Acting and Abolition”. Panel discussion moderated by **Diane Capitani**. The Parthenon Restaurant, 314 S. Halsted Street, Chicago.

**May 3**

**Spring Gala.** Woman’s Athletic Club of Chicago, 626 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago. Speakers include **Dr. Diane Capitani** on "Keeping Up With the Crawfords", **Dr. Sheryl Craig** on "The Economics of Mansfield Park, or 'How to make money'", and **Dr. Cheryl Kinney** on "What’s the Matter with Lady Bertram?". Continental Breakfast and Luncheon, Regency Emporium by **Figaro Parisian Interiors** and table from **Jane Austen Books**. Plus some special surprises!

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For more events and programs that will be of interest, visit our website at [jasnachicago.org](http://jasnachicago.org), and click on Events>Austen-Related Events.