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Jane Austen and Winchester Cathedral

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It is entirely fitting that Jane Austen – one of our greatest writers, 'next to Shakespeare', as some admirers have said – should be buried in Winchester Cathedral. Born and bred in Hampshire the daughter of a Hampshire clergyman, and dying a mere stone's throw from the Cathedral, it seems wholly in the order of things that her last resting-place should be within the Cathedral itself, beneath a massive ledger-stone in the North aisle, nearby the beautiful chantry of William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, founder of Winchester College, Lord Privy Seal and twice Chancellor of England.[1] There was no exaggeration in the claim of a Winchester historian that 'Of all the interments in the Cathedral since the Reformation that of Jane Austen is the most celebrated' (Vaughan 175).

To this day, Winchester remains a place of pilgrimage, not least of literary pilgrimage, with Jane Austen's tomb as the holy-of-holies, the shrine to be visited. As Deirdre Le Faye tells us,

> By the 1850s enthusiasts had started to visit Winchester specifically to find Jane's grave; two of these were Lady Richardson and her elderly mother Mrs Elizabeth Fletcher, and the former wrote: 'we took a day at Winchester and visited the shrine of Jane Austen, with even more interest than that of William of Wickham. We talked over the happy days of reading aloud the delightful novels of Jane Austen, when the author was as little known as that of Waverley, and when some of our party gave our mother the name of Miss Bates, from the favourable view she took of all the human race and the events of the world.' Such pilgrims puzzled the Cathedral verger, who asked one visitor: 'Pray, sir, can you tell me whether there was anything particular about that lady; so many people want to know where she was buried?' (248)

The verger was ill-informed since Jane Austen's presence in the Cathedral, and the reasons for it, were by then well recorded. As early as 1817, the very year of Jane Austen's death, John Britton, the leading historical topographer of the day, had celebrated the fact fulsomely in his account of the Cathedral and its monuments:

> Amongst the interments in this pile, is one of a lady whose virtues, talents, and accomplishments entitle her not only to distinguished notice, but to the admiration of every person who has a heart to feel and a mind to appreciate female work and merit. The lady alluded to, Miss Jane Austen, who was buried here, July 1817, was author of four novels of considerable interest and value. In the last, a posthumous publication, entitled 'Northanger Abbey', is a sketch of a memoir of the amiable author.[2] (Britton 109)

Moreover, as recently as 1854 the Cathedral *Handbook* had listed the grave of 'Miss Jane Austen', 'the authoress', under the Cathedral's 'Chief Monuments' (Walcott 8). The verger's ignorance had no excuse.

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Very soon, the Winchester literary pilgrimage took on a distinctively American character. In the summer of 1856, Mrs Robert Waterston of a Founding Fathers family, the Quincys of Boston, travelled to England on such a visit. Ahead of her journey she had opened a correspondence with Francis, now Admiral Sir Francis Austen; and *en route* she advised him of her travels, placing Jane Austen first in the line of precedence: ‘To day we leave London, and go to Winchester, a pilgrimage to <u>her</u> resting place which has given more interest to me in the old Cathedral than all its buried Kings’ (*Yale Review* 328). Seven years later Mrs Waterston, with literary aspirations of her own, produced a pilgrimage essay for the *Atlantic Monthly.* It takes the reader on an informed and privileged tour of Austen territory – Bath, Box Hill, Netley Abbey, the ramparts at Portsmouth, beloved of Fanny Price, and, of course, ‘the old Cathedral of Winchester’, as she calls it, and the grave within (235-40).

Anyone who looks further in the pages of the *Atlantic Monthly, Scribners North American Review, The Nation, Harpers, Lippinett’s* and the host of other American reviews and magazines will find ‘pilgrimage’ essays in abundance, a voluminous genre, their hey-day across the half-century from 1860 to 1900. These devotees tell much the same story, with the seeking-out of the tomb’s black marble ledger-stone, noting its simplicity, obscurity and the general indifference with which it was regarded by other visitors to the Cathedral and those who came to pray. Added to this was just what Lady Richardson found: vergers, greatly surprised at these travellers from afar, and quite ignorant as to the identity of this ‘Jane Austen’, whose grave was so enquired about and contemplated with such awe.

Closer to home, *The Spectator* read the modesty of the inscription as a native virtue, an island quirkiness to be treasured:

> With truly English reticence, the flat stone under which she lies bears no record of her life’s work. For all the information which the passing stranger can gather from the inscription which marks her grave, Jane Austen might have been the most commonplace spinster that ever tended dogs and canary birds under the shadow of an English cathedral. (23)

Mockery aside, this was fair comment. Within the Cathedral, ‘reticence’ was the order of the day. On the ledger-stone, Jane Austen is simply styled ‘youngest daughter of the late Revd George Austen’. No mention of the novels. The only hint of her achievement as a writer is carried in a veiled and oblique - the reference to ‘the extraordinary endowments of her mind’. Composed by Henry Austen, this memorial inscription tells us nothing of his sister’s self-elected vocation and her lifetime’s achievement. This silence may seem strange to us. However, as Michael Wheeler points out, in times past ‘it was perfectly normal to make no reference to a writer’s calling on memorial stones’, Swift, George Herbert and Dickens being cases in point. However, outside the Cathedral, no such convention prevailed. Seven of the obituary notices in Kent and Hampshire newspapers, and, beyond these counties, in the *London Chronicle*, the *Courier*, the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, the *Monthly Magazine* and the *New Monthly Magazine,* mentioned her authorship; and Henry – as the author of the ‘Biographical Notice’ which heads *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, and for so long the family’s man of affairs – was surely responsible for the wording of these notices and for their insertion.[3]

But despite this wave of announcements, Jane Austen’s name seems not to have registered in the public mind, to the disappointment of some. The historian Thomas Babington Macaulay – an admirer who placed her next to Shakespeare – wanted to spread the word, recording in his Journal, ‘If I could get materials, I really would write a short life of that wonderful woman and raise a little money to put up a monument to her Winchester Cathedral’. But this was in 1858, a year before his death. Time was too short. Understandably, no ‘materials’ came his way; the

‘short life’ was unwritten and the ‘monument’ unraised. However, there were soon stirrings amongst the Austens themselves. Jane’s nephew, James Edward Austen-Leigh, began to gather recollections of his Aunt from around the family and these he assembled in the first biography, his *Memoir of Jane Austen,* published in 1870. Widely and influentially reviewed, the *Memoir* put Jane Austen firmly on the map. The first edition was soon exhausted and a second, enlarged, edition followed a year later. Out of the profits of the first edition, Austen-Leigh was able to complete Macaulay’s frustrated ambition: first, the ‘short life’ and then, in 1872, the ‘monument’, an imposing brass plaque set in the Cathedral’s North wall, close to the writer’s tomb. Recording that Jane Austen ‘was known to many by her writings’, the plaque was a first step towards setting the Cathedral record straight; and with a clergyman’s knowledge of the scriptures, Austen-Leigh was able to choose the very quotation from Proverbs with which to end the inscription, a quotation which neatly combined his Aunt’s authorship and her devout Christianity: ‘She openeth her mouth with wisdom and in her tongue is the law of kindness’.

Nonetheless, neither *Memoir* nor monument of brass could clear the Cathedral fog. When Clement Shorter, Editor of the *Illustrated London News*, visited the Cathedral in the summer of 1893, he was assured by ‘the man who received the customary fee … that there was no tomb inscribed with that name’; nor, Shorter observed, was Jane Austen mentioned in a recent guide book by the Cathedral’s Dean himself. Shorter protested to his readers: ‘Yet Jane Austen has been pronounced second only to Shakespeare … We no longer attempt to justify our love for Jane Austen’s writings. They have become part of the accepted literary creed of all intelligent men and women.’ He concluded his column remarking on ‘the inherent fitness’ of Jane Austen’s burial in the Cathedral, ‘as the dust of England’s modest queen of letters was made to mingle with that of her Kings and prelates’ (130). To match this ringing endorsement and illustrate his column, Shorter gave the wording of the inscription alongside photographs of both the tomb and the memorial brass.

At this time, the other eminent champion of Jane Austen’s cause was a Bostonian, Oscar Fay Adams. He wrote with a special authority. His biography – *The Story of Jane Austen’s Life* (Chicago, 1891) – is of particular value since Adams had visited England in the summer of 1889, toured all the Austen localities and made contact with key members of the family, including Lord Brabourne (editor of the two-volume *Letters of Jane Austen*, 1883), Augustus Austen-Leigh (Provost of King’s College, Cambridge), the Rev J Morland Rice (owner of the Zoffany portrait, as it was then called) and Montague Knight of Chawton House – all of them grandnephews of Jane Austen and in the mainstream of family lore and recollections of the author. Two years later, Adams followed up his book with a very intimate and personal account, an essay in the *New England Magazine* entitled ‘In the Footsteps of Jane Austen’. He concludes with the same long and resounding perspective as Clement Shorter:

> Beyond the choir is crowded with the buried dust of haughty prelates and of queens and kings; but to some of us the slab in the south transept floor that covers the grave of Izaak Walton, and this other in the north aisle above the grave of Jane Austen, are more than all the long cathedral’s spires and carven chantry tombs of mighty wearers of the mitre, than all its treasured dust of Kings. (608)

Very soon, the indignation at Jane Austen’s neglect, as it was seen, came to a head. Three Hampshire worthies – the Lord Lieutenant of the County, Lord Northbrook, together with Lord Selborne and a Hampshire Member of Parliament, Mr Hicks-Beach – joined with Montague Knight in despatching a letter to *The Times*. Duly printed on 21st February 1898, it pointed out that the author was celebrated in the Cathedral only by her gravestone and Austen-Leigh’s plaque.. To rectify the situation, the letter invited subscriptions ‘to enable us to fill one of the

windows in the cathedral with painted glass in her memory'. A month later, this letter was reprinted in *The Critic*, a New York weekly *Review of Literature and the Arts*, with a covering letter from Adams, explaining that 'Mr Knight, who is a grand-nephew of Jane Austen, is personally known to me, and it is at his request that I have undertaken to bring this matter to the knowledge of American admirers of Jane Austen's genius' (218). So it came about that the placing of the memorial window - a suitably grand affair, a composition of six large windows and three smaller ones - was a Transatlantic achievement, born out of a determination that Jane Austen's personal modesty, together with the Cathedral's seeming indifference, should not stand in the way of creating a visible and dignified shrine: here, literary pilgrims could feel their sense of devotion satisfied and Jane Austen celebrated to the full. They could also share in a delightful joke, a clever pun, perpetrated by C.E.Kempe, the window's designer. At its top is the name 'St Austin', not a beatification of Jane, as the pilgrim from afar might suppose, but the standard abbreviation for St Augustine of Hippo, a saint famed for his prolific writings.

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So while devotees today have no grounds for complaint, for <u>historians</u>, not <u>literary</u> historians but historians pure and simple, there remains a puzzle. And it may be a puzzle too for ordinary visitors. How was it that a modest countrywoman, no more than a vicar's daughter, unmarried and of no social distinction or name, how was it that such a person, outside her family a nonentity, should find her last resting-place in a Cathedral, Winchester Cathedral, no less, a Cathedral of Saints and Saxon Kings? And under a ledger-stone so large and so prominently placed, as if, in some curious way, in anticipation of the pilgrims to come? As hers were novels 'By a Lady', the customary polite concealment, her authorship was unknown. And anyway, unless you were Sir Walter Scott, to be a novelist in Regency times was no great recommendation. Respectability was the province of poets, playwrights and essayists, writers of sermons and works of theology. Notwithstanding spirited claims for the novel, such as Jane Austen's own in chapter five of *Northanger Abbey*, fiction was seen as a largely female pastime, a frivolity, and novelists were regarded as little more than common entertainers. Scott, of course, was the exception. But he first won his spurs as a poet, historian and antiquarian; his novels, which came later, belonged to the respectable genre of national historical fiction; and, wholly different from Jane Austen, he enjoyed a prominent role in public life, both in England and Scotland.

How was it, then, that Jane Austen came to rest alongside the tombs of lords spiritual and temporal in the historic majesty of this great Cathedral? Who was it that persuaded the Cathedral's Dean and Chapter that she was to be so honoured? What arguments were deployed? Was it James, her elder brother, the incumbent of Steventon? Or Captain Francis or Captain Charles? Or Edward Knight from Godmersham, a High Sheriff of Kent? Was it Henry, recently examined for Holy Orders by the Bishop of Winchester, and now Curate of Chawton?

I understand from the Cathedral Office that the presence of Jane Austen's grave is in fact the question most frequently asked by visitors; and that the answer they give is that it was probably Henry, by now the recently-ordained Rev Henry Austen, curate of Chawton, who made the request, supported by others living in the Cathedral Close. These would include Elizabeth Bigg, a lifelong friend of Jane and Cassandra. As the widow of the Rev William Heathcote, sometime Vice-Dean and Prebendary (Canon) of Winchester, a position to which he was appointed by the Dean and Chapter, hers was an influential voice. Through her late

husband, Mrs Heathcote had established Cathedral connections. Moreover, since 1814 she had lived in the Cathedral Close, was well known to the Dean, the Very Reverend Thomas Rennell, and had copies of all Jane Austen's novels on her shelves. The house Mrs Heathcote occupied, No.12 (now No.11), was rented to her by the Rev Dr Philip Williams, a Cathedral Prebendary since 1797. His daughters, too, were friends of the Austen sisters and Mrs Heathcote would have had little difficulty in gaining his support. Earlier in the Summer, she had already been active on her friend's behalf, engaging the lodgings at 8 College Street where Jane Austen died. And only six months before that Jane had travelled to Winchester to stay with her for a week over the New Year. Doubtless, on that visit Jane would have met many of Mrs Heathcote's acquaintance in the circle of Cathedral society. These would have included her old music teacher at Steventon, now the Cathedral Organist, George William Chard. Twenty years earlier, when he was Assistant Organist and a lay clerk at the Cathedral, Jane had joked about him to Cassandra as her pining lover. Another familiar face was Prebendary George Nott, an acquaintance of James since their years together at Oxford.

From his time as Rector of Alton in the1780's, Dr Rennell would certainly have known the Austen family. In particular, he would have remembered Jane's father, George Austen, for forty years Rector of Steventon and almost thirty years Rector of Deane, both of them parishes in the Winchester diocese. He would also know James, the eldest son, a Hampshire clergyman since 1788 and now Rector of Steventon, his father's old parish. Famed as a 'great preacher', and hailed by Pitt as 'the Demosthenes of the pulpit' (*DNB* xlviii, 16-17)., Dr Rennell was a widely-read scholar and divine, someone likely to have been persuaded by arguments of literary greatness, remembering that in 1816 Scott had already hailed the 'nameless author' of *Emma* as a masterful exponent of 'the modern novel' (188-201). The same is true of the Bishop of Winchester at this time, a man who would have appreciated Jane Austen's 'bon vivant', the worldly Dr Grant (MP 469). For the occupant of the episcopal throne in 1817 was Brownlow North, notably worldly himself. A Bishop at only thirty, he had held the sees of Lichfield and Coventry, and Worcester, before coming to Winchester, where he had been placed in office, in a blatant act of nepotism, thirty-six years earlier, by his half-brother, the then Prime Minister, Lord North. A notorious absentee, Bishop North had ample time for reading Jane Austen in his beloved Italian villa or recovering his energies at Bath. Dare we suppose that by some turn of fate their paths crossed; that one day in the Pump-room, in Milsom or in Pulteney Street, or up at Walcot Church, the Bishop and the novelist were introduced and got on together, as well they might have. The Bishop was approachable, according to a contemporary biographer, another Henry Tilney: 'of an amiable, generous and yielding temper, and of a most kind and attractive disposition' (Cassan 2.279); and, in the words of the *DNB*, he was 'said to have been generous to literary men.' (xli, 147) Perhaps, then, in 1817 he was ready to add his voice in urging the Dean – who had the decision in these matters - to grant Jane Austen a place of rest in the Cathedral, especially if he had known (as we learn from Cassandra) that it was 'a building she admired so much'. (*Letters* 20 July 1817). Perhaps there was further support too from the Rev Thomas Watkins, Preceptor of the Cathedral, who was to conduct the funeral service. In his office as Chaplain of Winchester College, he would certainly have known Jane Austen's connection with her nephews, the Knight boys at the College, and their father Edward may have added his voice as well.

This is to conjure with ghosts. But there are circumstances to stiffen our speculation. We know that Jane Austen came to Winchester for the saddest of all reasons, driven by illness, to be under the care of Giles Lyford, Surgeon at the County Hospital, when William Curtis, the apothecary at Alton, admitted that she was beyond his help. So it was in the last week of May

1817 that Jane and Cassandra made the short journey from Chawton, attended by their brother Henry and their young nephew, William Knight. They arrived at No. 8 College Street, a small private lodging-house close to the Cathedral. It stood next to the entrance to Winchester College, and its bow window on the first floor overlooked the Headmaster's garden.

Three days later, on 27 May, Jane Austen wrote to her nephew, James Edward, a former pupil of the College and then newly an undergraduate at Oxford. It was a letter that must have cost her much in spirit and determination. From the very beginning, she strove to put up a brave front of optimism and hope, when in truth she already knew that her end was approaching.

> I know no better way my dearest Edward, of thanking you for your most affectionate concern for me during my illness, than by telling you myself as soon as possible that I continue to get better.– I will not boast of my handwriting; neither that, nor my face have yet recovered their proper beauty, but in other respects I am gaining strength very fast … I eat my meals with Aunt Cass: in a rational way, & can employ myself, & walk from one room to another. – Mr Lyford says he will cure me, & if he fails I shall draw up a Memorial & lay it before the Dean & Chapter, & have no doubt of redress from that Pious, Learned & disinterested Body. (*Letters* 342)

Where does this idea of a 'Memorial' come from? A 'Memorial' is a petition or formal application, the very document to place before the Dean and Chapter in seeking the privilege of burial *within* the Cathedral rather than in the burial ground outside. Was it merely a playful figment of Jane Austen's imagination? Or had she overheard talk of such an application, either back at Chawton or here at College Street? And was her burial in the Cathedral the outcome of such a Memorial being presented and favourably received? There was ample time for such an approach to be made. It was early in June that Mr Lyford told the family 'candidly' that 'her case is desperate' and that 'our poor invalid … is well aware of her situation' (Tucker 111). Indeed, she seems to have been resigned to death at the end of April. To quote Deirdre Le Faye, it was then that Jane Austen 'quietly made her brief Will, leaving it unwitnessed in order to spare her family the additional distress of knowing she had now taken this step towards winding up the affairs of life …'. (223)

Given this sequence of events, Jane Austen's death in July was far from unexpected and there would have been ample opportunity for a formal application to be made to the Cathedral authorities and for the Dean and Chapter to have conveyed their consent to the family. As it was, Mrs Austen's message sent to a niece a few days before the funeral – 'Dear Jane is to be buried in the Cathedral, I believe on Thursday' – conveys no sense that this, as a last resting place, was at all a matter for remark, although truly remarkable it was. XXX (Austen-Leigh 198).[4]

Quite how remarkable is recorded for us in the testimony of her brother James, in the verses that he composed soon after his sister's death. Addressed to 'Venta' (the Roman name for Winchester), it begins as a description of the Cathedral, and soon takes shape as an elegiac poem, not only mourning Jane Austen for her personal qualities, but rejoicing at the writer's genius, and wondering, as we do to this day, that a sister unknown to the world and 'ready still to share / The labours of domestic care' should be laid amongst 'Monarchs', 'Statesmen', prelates and 'the Learned & the Brave'.

> Venta! within thy sacred fane
> Rests many a chief in battle slain;
> And many a Statesman great & wise
> Beneath thy hallowed pavement lies:
> Tracing thy venerable pile,

Thy Gothic choir & Pillared Aisle;
Frequent we tread the vaulted grave
Where sleep the learned & the Brave.
High on the Screen on either hand
Old Saxon Monarchs, Coffins stand.
Below, beneath his sable Stone
Lies the Conquerors haughty Son:
Immured within the Chapels wall
Sleep Mitred Priest and Cardinal.
And honoured Wickham lies reclined
In Gothic tracery enshrined.

But sure since Williams purer taste
Old Walkelyn's heavier style effaced
Ore the plain roof the fret work spread
And formed the Arch with lancet head;
Neer did this venerable fane
More Beauty, Sense & worth contain
Than when upon a Sister's bier
Her Brothers dropt the bitter tear.

In her (rare union) were combined
A fair form and a fairer mind
Hers, Fancy quick, and clear good sense
And wit which never gave offence:
A Heart as warm as ever beat,
A Temper even calm and sweet:
Though quick and keen her mental eye
Poor natures foibles to descry
And seemed for ever on the watch
Some traits of ridicule to catch.
Yet not a word she ever pen'd
Which hurt the feelings of a friend
And not one line she ever wrote
'Which dying, she would wish to blot.'
But to her family alone
Her real & genuine worth was known:
Yes! They whose lot it was to prove
Her Sisterly, her Filial love,
They saw her ready still to share
The labours of domestic care,
As if their prejudice to shame;
Who jealous of fair female fame
Maintain, that literary taste
In womans mind is much displaced;
Inflames their vanity and pride,
And draws from useful works aside.

Such wert Thou, Sister! whilst below
In this mixt scene of joy and woe,
To have thee with us it was given,
A special kind behest of Heaven.

What *now* thou art! we cannot tell:
Nor where, the just made perfect dwell
Know we as yet: to us denied
To draw that parting veil aside,
Which twixt two different worlds outspread
Divides the Living from the Dead.

But yet with all humility,
The change, we trust was [fair] for thee.
For oh! If so much genuine worth
In its imperfect state on Earth
So fair and so attractive proved
By all around admired and loved:
Who then the Change dare calculate
Attendant on that happy state,
When by the body unconfined
All Sense, Intelligence and mind
By Seraphs born through realms of light
(While Angles gladden at the sight)
The Atherial Spirit wings its way
To regions of attendant day.–[5]
(Selwyn 48-50)

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To end on a different note. One of Jane Austen's finest early critics was the novelist William Dean Howells. Effusive and exuberant in his devotion, Howells could also stand at a distance and share Jane Austen's sense of fun and her vein of mockery. All this is beautifully displayed in the closing paragraphs of Howells' account (written from the Editor's chair of *Harper's Magazine*) of his visit to Winchester one Sunday in the summer of 1913 with a band of his fellow-countrymen, 'pilgrims' he calls them, with his reflections, both inspiring and deflating, amused and self-amused, on Jane Austen's immortality and his part in the chorus of praise. Up to this point in his account, Howells has been retailing the succession of trials and tribulations the pilgrims have endured before they eventually succeed in gaining entry to the Cathedral, which, they were told, was open only to worshippers on this day.

> Perhaps the pilgrims were not just to the other claims of the cathedral on an enlightened transatlantic interest, in the supreme affection for the memory of her who reposed at their feet and was assured to them by the inscription in the wall. She was more to them than all kings and princes, saints and prelates, though she would have been prompt, no doubt, to rebuke their preference. As it was, keeping it tacitly from her, they seemed aware of a sympathetic irony or ironical sympathy in the haunting presence which quietly smiled at the difficulties and disappointments of their arrival; and feeling this, they would not have had it different. It was richly enough to have her imagining what they had gone through and phrasing it with her matchless demureness. Their little moment with her was all they could have wished, and they could not have wished Winchester, or its cathedral, or its fast-locked ruins, and hot, dull streets other than they had found, or failed to find them. They hurried from the haunting presence lest the verger should come and bid them not linger, leaving no signs of defeat behind but subtly followed by its smiling intelligence.
>
> In the persistent default of public conveyances, they asked and found their way to the station on foot – a long way – and then in their places in the belated train they resumed the argument of their wonder and gladness at that immortality which they had been sensible of even in the place where all that was mortal of their beloved author's life remained. Why was she so persistently, so increasingly, so, next after Shakespeare, Shakespeareanly alive? One held, and the other more and more conceded, the point that it was because as the world civilized and enlightened to her level, so far above the average of her own time, the world must hold her in ever-widening appreciation and affection. With every succeeding generation she must be more read, and with her to be more read was to be more

> loved, so that at last all her readers must be as elect as her editors and biographers. Of this select companionship the pilgrims distinctly felt themselves, as they whirred on up to London in the soft early evening light, and looked out on the reversal of the morning landscape from the windows of the first-class carriage where they had been forced to take places in default of those third-class seats which their tickets entitled them (European Edition 66.961).

Notes

1 I would like to thank John Hardacre, Cathedral Archivist, for his advice in the preparation of this essay.

2 Northanger Abbey and Persuasion, prefaced by Henry Austen's 'Memoir', were published together as a four-volume set late in December 1817. Britton must have been advised of the 'Memoir' in advance, possibly by Henry Austen himself, possibly by the publisher, John Murray, whom Britton knew well. In his Autobiography (1850), Britton leaves a copious record of his 'Bibliomania' (i. 328) and of his contact with the 'popular, successful, and much respected' Murray, who 'honoured' him with his books 'as presents' (i. 291). These could have included Mansfield Park, Emma, Northanger Abbey and Persuasion, the four Jane Austen titles published by Murray. This would explain Britton's otherwise puzzling reference to Jane Austen's 'four' rather than six novels.

3 The wording and full bibliographical details of these notices are provided in David Gilson, A Bibliography of Jane Austen (1982), pp. 480-81.

4 I am advised that as the parish in which Jane Austen died, St Swithun-upon-Kingsgate, had no burial ground of its own, parishioners would be buried as of right either in the Cathedral Graveyard (then situated to the North of the Cathedral) or in the Cathedral itself. The graveyard was closed in the 1860's in accordance with the Burial Act of 1853 for the closure of parish graveyards for reasons of public health. Cleared in the 1880's, the grass plot remains to this day.

5 The poem is reprinted here by kind permission of the Dean and Chapter of Winchester Cathedral, owners of the manuscript; and the text follows the version printed in the edition by David Selwyn, Jane Austen : Collected Poems and Verse of the Austen Family (1996), pp. 48-50.

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