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The Austens and Portsmouth

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There are five British towns and cities which are familiar to us through the lives of the Austen family: Bath and Southampton, where they made their home in the 1800s; London, Henry's workplace, where he was visited by Cassandra and Jane; Winchester, where Jane spent her last illness, and was buried; and Portsmouth.

It hardly needs saying that the Austens' connection was with naval Portsmouth; and to some extent what I am going to say follows the track of *Jane Austen and the Navy* in tracing the early Portsmouth years of the sailor brothers, Francis and Charles. Equally interesting, however, is the period after JA's death. During the 1820s, both Francis and Charles came to settle at Gosport, a small companion town to Portsmouth, on the West side of the entrance to the Harbour; and it is these later years which I want to discuss in the second part of this lecture.

Initially, what provided the family's first link with Portsmouth was the Royal Naval Academy. This was the Navy's officer training school, situated just inside the Dockyard. Between 1786 and 1794 Francis was a student there for 2½ years, Charles for just over 3 years; and during JA's lifetime, the sailor brothers were the family's principal point of contact, since in later years, when they were officers, Portsmouth was their regular place of arrival or departure.

Although we have no documentary record of this, I am sure that Mr Austen made a visit to Portsmouth before Francis arrived at the Naval Academy in April 1785. My reason for thinking this is partly because the Academy had a questionable reputation and partly from our knowledge of Mr Austen as a conscientious father and a former teacher himself. In the first place, we should understand that the Academy was not a popular route; only a minute proportion of the Navy's officers, about 2% or 3%, entered the service in this way. The vast majority went directly to sea, as youngsters of ten or eleven, under the patronage of the ship's Captain. These youngsters were regarded as officer cadets, beginning their apprenticeship at sea, and serving six or seven years before coming up in front of an examining board of Captains assembled to judge whether or not these young men had learned enough of seamanship, the measurement of longitude, the handling of a vessel and so on and were fit to hold the rank of Lieutenant. Much of this knowledge was acquired at sea, by way of practical experience. In addition, there could be instruction from the Captain himself or from a Schoolmaster. But the quality of instruction varied from ship to ship, and depended on the Captain's conscientiousness and sense of responsibility.

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The Naval Academy at Portsmouth, Mr Austen's choice, provided an alternative route. It was established by the Admiralty in 1729 to provide a 2 to 3 year programme of nautical training and also wider education for boys of 12 to 15. Its purpose was to produce officers better educated than the old sea dogs. Following their time at the Academy, the boys then went to join a ship for a further 3 or 4 years to gain the working experience at sea needed for the Lieutenant's examination. Together with the youngsters who had gone directly to sea, the Academy students were regarded as 'young gentlemen' and shared the officers' privilege of walking the quarter-deck.

Both these routes had their pros and cons. While the Academy was lighter on practical seamanship, it provided a broader and better education, and there was a visible need to have officers of a higher standard. But not surprisingly, the Academy awakened resentment. This was not on account of its curriculum and school learning but because its students entered their period of ship service under Admiralty protection, so eroding the Captains' traditional right of patronage. This resentment ran to the Board of Admiralty itself, the Navy's highest level of command, and this is a factor which goes some way towards explaining the comparative lack of success which both Francis and Charles encountered in the first 12 or 15 years of their naval service. It was no help to be branded as an 'Academite' and for the sailor brothers promotion came slowly.

More than this, the Academy itself did not enjoy a good reputation. For many years, it was under-subscribed. Part of the problem was the disparaging views circulating at the very highest levels. In 1801, we find St Vincent, the First Lord, writing to the father of a prospective entrant that he regarded the place as a 'sink of vice and abomination' which should be abolished.[1] This damning view was echoed a few years later, when another First Lord, Lord Barham, advised Pitt, the Prime Minister, that the Academy was 'a nursery of vice and immorality.'[2] Certainly, the scholars were found guilty of many things – of idling, bullying, swearing, blasphemy, drinking at bawdy houses – and much else went unreported. Portsmouth was not an ideal location for a company of boys and young men. While the High Street was impressive, behind this polite and fashionable façade the back streets showed a squalid face. With its nightly turmoil of drunken sailors armed with pay and prize-money, its swarming prostitutes and ferocious press-gangs, naval Portsmouth presented an ugly scene. It is no surprise to hear of Mr Orchard, the disciplinarian on the Academy staff, flourishing his 'infernal horsewhip';[3] nor to read the Academy's list of culprits, their offences and expulsions, a punishment which disbarred offenders from ever serving in the Navy again.

So on the one hand, as a man of learning, Mr Austen would have been attracted by the Academy. It offered his sons an educated start to their naval careers. However, Mr Austen was also a concerned parent, a man of conscience, and it is inconceivable that he would have entrusted his sons to such a 'sink' and 'nursery of vice' as the Academy was represented, without first visiting Portsmouth and satisfying himself on every count, on the Academy's moral tone and conduct as well as its standards of training and education. He would have known what to look out for, having been a successful Second Master at his old school, Tonbridge. At the Academy he would have been reassured on meeting William Bayly, Master for twenty years, from 1785 to 1806. Even longer-serving was the Second Master, who taught at the Academy for nearly 30 years, until his death in 1794. Moreover, the Academy was overseen by a Governor, the Dockyard Commissioner, literally overseen, as his house was next to the Academy buildings. We can be certain that Mr Austen would have taken every step to satisfy himself that he was right to entrust Francis to the Academy for as long as eleven months of the

year. And evidently he was so satisfied, because after first entering Francis, 5 years later he entered Charles as well.

Francis Austen left a 'Memoir' and there is nothing in this to suggest that his time was other than happy and successful. He was regarded by the Governor as an exemplary student and was pointed out to his fellow-students as a model of 'diligence, exertion and orderly behaviour' notwithstanding his 'lively and active disposition'.[4]

At some point during these years, we can guess that Mrs Austen and her daughters, accompanied by Mr Austen, or perhaps James, Edward, or Henry, made a journey to Portsmouth to pay a family visit to the Academy and, guided by one or other of the sailor brothers, took a boat out to view the Grand Fleet at Spithead. And the Dockyard itself was a famed tourist attraction.

The journey was no problem for the Austens. From Steventon to Portsmouth was a distance of about 40 miles, much of the way on good turnpike roads, and we can trace their route in contemporary guides.[5]

Steventon was about 8 miles South West of Basingstoke. From there, it was 2 miles to the Wheat Sheaf Inn, the stopping place for coaches on the Basingstoke-Winchester road. Broadly speaking, this followed the line of the old Roman road, today's A33. From the Wheat Sheaf, it was just over 12 miles to Winchester. From Winchester, the road went due South about 7 miles before branching off to Bishop's Waltham and Wickham: now the A333. Then due South (along the A32) to Fareham; then 5 miles due East (on the A27) to Cosham. This brought travellers to Port Creek and Port Bridge, marking the entry to Portsea Island. Here were The Hilsea Lines, the defensive outworks protecting Portsmouth from a northern land attack. From here, the coach would travel the 5 miles down Portsea Island, through the outskirts of Portsmouth Town proper – the present-day Landport – across the drawbridge, over the moat, past the barriers, bastions and ramparts, until it was securely inside the fortified garrison-town of Old Portsmouth itself.

The most likely time for such a visit would have been the Autumn of 1791, Charles having entered the Academy in July. My reason for making this guess is a letter from an elder cousin, Eliza de Feuillide, writing to her confidante, Philadelphia Walter. Amongst other family news and gossip, she refers to the Austens of Steventon.[6] Cassandra was then 18, Jane 15. The 'son of Neptune' would be a young naval officer and the 'aquatic excursions' trips across the Harbour and into the Solent to see the Fleet and perhaps visit the Isle of Wight. Although Charles would not have been in a position to arrange such 'excursions' himself, introductions may have been effected through the Academy's Master or the Governor, and we know that the young officers in port were only too eager to find an excuse for entertaining young ladies with outings of this kind and dances on board ship. These would be conducted with great elaboration, the guests arriving in eighteen-oared barges, colourfully decked out with flags and bunting. The guests would then have the thrill of being hoisted high up to the yard-arm before being lowered onto the deck of a man-of-war. There they would find the deck itself transformed into a pavilion with decorated awnings lined with ribbons and bunting.

Another occasion for a Portsmouth visit would have been in the Summer of 1794, when Henry Austen, then a Lieutenant in the Oxford Militia, was stationed nearby.

The family move to Bath in May 1801 would have taken the Austens further from Portsmouth; and there is only a single recorded visit during the Bath years: this was in August 1802, when Mr and Mrs Austen, together with James and his wife Mary, made the journey from Steventon. This was to visit Francis who was then Flag-Captain in HMS *Neptune*. It would have been a memorable occasion, for the *Neptune* was a giant of a ship, a three-decker, carrying 98 guns, with a crew of over 700, and the Captain's family would have been piped on board with due deference and ceremony.

Four-and-a-half years later, in March 1807, the widowed Mrs Austen, together with Cassandra and Jane, came to Southampton to join Francis, who had taken lodgings there five months earlier. This opened the possibility of further visits, either with Francis or with naval friends. For with Portsmouth only 20 odd miles away, Southampton and its neighbourhood attracted a distinct naval settlement. Hence, the Austens' Southampton acquaintance included Rear-Admiral Albemarle Bertie (a distant relation by marriage); the local commander of the sea fencibles; and, most important of all, Charles's patron, Rear-Admiral Sir Thomas Williams, a cousin by marriage, who resided nearby at Brookwood.

One thing we know for sure is that Jane Austen was keeping a close eye on Portsmouth events at this time, most notably on the Court Martial of Captain Sir Home Riggs Popham in March 1807. Popham was charged with removing his Squadron from the Cape of Good Hope, leaving the Colony unprotected, and then leading a military expedition to Buenos Aires with the aim of liberating the surrounding South American provinces from Spanish rule – all this done on his own initiative, without orders from the Admiralty. It was a famous trial, widely-reported, for Popham was a popular figure. In the event, he was found guilty. Remarkably, JA's sympathies lay with Popham. I say remarkably, because JA knew full well from her brothers that the first obligation of any naval officer was the observance of his orders, the very rule that Popham had breached. But far from supporting the Court's verdict, Jane Austen set down her absolute rejection in a ferocious little squib, a terse and epigrammatic poem much in the style of Pope or Swift, in which Popham stands as the hero, acclaimed as the 'Gallant Commander', while the Government of the day is is despised as 'pitiful, angry, mean'.[7]

However, apart from this literary excursion, there is nothing to suggest that Jane Austen actually made a Portsmouth visit – that is, until we look at the evidence of *Mansfield Park*. This fourth novel was begun in February 1811. By that time the Austens were well settled in at Chawton. Now the journey from Chawton to Portsmouth was just as straightforward as that from Steventon – easier in fact, since the Portsmouth and Gosport road branched off at Chawton village, just beyond the Cottage. To the right was the road to Winchester; straight ahead, the Gosport road. It ran past the drive to Chawton House; and, before it was blocked, continued roughly in the direction of the modern A32, through West Meon and Wickham; then broadly along the A333 to Cosham, Portsea Island, and on to Portsmouth Town, a journey precisely measured at 29¾ miles. So, as far as travelling was concerned, it was easy for the Chawton household to make a Portsmouth visit.

But did they ever do so? And if they did, which one of the Austen brothers would have conducted the ladies along the journey? It could have been either one of the sailor brothers; or perhaps Edward, staying at Chawton House, and combining a visit to Winchester, where, successively, his six sons were educated… Or possibly Henry, extending one of his business calls to Austen, Grey and Vincent, his Alton bank at No.10 the High Street. Henry, as well as being an Army Agent, ran a Navy Agency, looking after officers' financial affairs. So a

Portsmouth visit, with his mother and sisters, might have suited Henry very well, combining business with pleasure.

What convinces me above all that JA visited Portsmouth during her adult life is the imaginative power with which the town is described in *Mansfield Park*. I realise that this is an argument open to attack. Much of *Mansfield Park* is set in Northamptonshire, a county she never visited. Equally, Pemberley is set in Derbyshire, another part of England to which JA was a total stranger; just as I can suppose that Highbury, for all its precise detail and vitality of population is, like Sanditon, a creation of the artist, wholly fictional.

But for Jane Austen's Portsmouth I have to enter a special plea. Portsmouth is an actual place, well-known to Jane Austen's readers. A town much visited, its detail was verifiable. Not only were the *Victory* and other famous ships on display, by virtue of its shipbuilding, Portsmouth was also a showplace for the most recent developments in modern technology.[8] Amongst its mechanical marvels were the steam engines driving the saw- and metal-mills and the greatest wonder of all, the massive engineering equipment in the Block Mills. These were capable of producing no less than 130,000 blocks a year for the pulleys and tackle needed on board ship for handling cables, anchors and the larger sails. Another great attraction was the sight of vessels under construction and repair, and it is just here, precisely 'on board' a ship under repair, that Henry Crawford, Fanny and Susan Price take their rest during their tour of the Dockyard led by Mr Price.

Then there were the Ramparts, the defensive works around Portsmouth. These provided a terrace-walk a mile and a quarter long, with views both inland and out to sea. Along this very route Henry Crawford takes the Price sisters for a 'two hours saunter' in the fresh air and 'bright sun'; and Jane Austen gives us a swift and fleeting seascape, 'the effects of the shadows pursuing each other on the ships at Spithead and the island beyond'.[9] For me these Portsmouth scenes carry the same stamp of reality observed as the Bath of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*. I am convinced that these are scenes familiar to the novelist, authentically drawn, and offered to her readers for the joy of recognition. In the case of *Mansfield Park*, we have the confirmation of a naval witness; no less than the Second-in-Command at Portsmouth, Admiral Sir Edward Foote, who told Jane Austen of his surprise that she had 'the power of drawing the Portsmouth Scenes so well`, a tribute that she treasured and copied out.[10]

I want to turn now to the Portsmouth connection, following Jane Austen's death. This leads me to someone new to the Austen story. This is one Robert Cruickshank. To those of you who know something of the history of Gosport, his name will be familiar. An early nineteenth-century developer and speculator, Cruickshank first arrived at Gosport in 1806 at the age of nineteen. He established himself there as a lawyer and set himself to the rebuilding of parts of the old town. Looking further afield, his speculative eye fell upon the nearby village of Alverstoke and, beyond it, the magnificent sweep of Stoke Bay, with its fine, open views across the Solent and out to the Isle of Wight. With a visionary eye, he conjured up a rival to Brighton, Hastings, St Leonards, Worthing, and all those other seaside watering-places mushrooming along the South Coast. But Cruickshank was more than a visionary. Very soon he formed a company, and found a Patron, no less than the Marquess of Anglesey, hero of the battlefields of Waterloo. Thus was the new resort of 'Angleseyville' conceived and brought to light. Roads were laid and building began. The new watering place and spa, with its gardens, Reading Room and Bath Houses, sprang to life. It is described by Pevsner 'as a piece of grand urban planning of the early C19 … unsurpassed in Hampshire'. Its centrepiece and crowning glory was to be The Crescent, a magnificent Regency terrace, commanding views out to the Solent, a minor

masterpiece – in Pevsner's words, 'Alverstoke's architectural *tour de force'*.[11] But, sadly, when The Crescent was only half completed, Cruickshank ran out of money – and this architectural wonder remains, now splendidly restored, but uncompleted to this day.

It is, of course, a striking case of life copying art. Readers of JA will recognise Mr Cruickshank at once. He is none other than a living copy of Mr Parker, the excitable promoter of Sanditon; Mr Parker, a strange and electrifying figure that JA brought to life in the early months of 1817, and immortalised in his promotional patter:

> —but Sanditon itself—everybody has heard of Sanditon,—the favourite—for a young & rising Bathing-place, certainly the favourite spot of all that are to be found along the coast of Sussex;—the most favoured by Nature, & promising to be the most chosen by Man.[12]

Immortalised, too, in JA's unforgettable commentary:

> —Liberal, gentleman-like, easy to please ;—of a sanguine turn of mind, with more Imagination than Judgement.[13]

Returning from *Sanditon* to real life, it was in the 1820s and 30s that the paths of the sailor brothers were to lead both of them into the speculative schemes of Mr Cruickshank. In a way, this was hardly surprising. The towns and villages along the Solent were much favoured by naval and military men, naval men in particular for the sight and sound of the sea, and the proximity to Portsmouth and the Grand Fleet. In the early 1820s, Francis settled in Gosport; and a few years later, by 1826 - his coastguard service in the West Country completed - Charles, too, had moved into the Gosport neighbourhood, settling a mile-and-a-half away, at Alverstoke.

Charles then went to sea again, as Captain of HMS *Aurora*, returning to England at the end of 1828, and rejoined his family at Alverstoke. By this time, the building of The Crescent was far advanced. Charles was full of admiration and in his diary for 1829 we can follow the frequency of his visits to 'Anglesea' and the evening strolls he took with his dinner guests. He made enquiries about houses to let, and by early June had decided to take a lease on no.2, The Crescent. This was a semi-detached villa, only a year old, standing at the western end of the Crescent proper. The family move was completed towards the end of September, and a few days later, on the 29th, Charles attended a dinner given at the Anglesey Hotel in honour of Cruickshank. As it was reported in the *Hampshire Telegraph*: the dinner was 'a mark of respect to him for the public spirit he has displayed in the formation of that beautiful watering place'.' In his reply, Cruickshank thanked his architect –Thomas Ellis Owen - referred to the 'families of the highest respectability' in occupation, and looked forward to the completion of The Crescent by 1831. Amongst the toasts, and I quote, was one to 'The health of Captain Austen … who has taken one of the principal houses at Anglesey … His reply was just what the reply of an English sailor always is – simple, ardent, and feelingly eloquent.' Here, Charles spoke of Anglesea as a 'neighbourhood where so much of good and generous feeling exists'. As he was about to take command of HMS *Winchester*, for service in the West Indies, he was happy to express his 'gratification' at being able to leave 'those who are dear to me' in a 'neighbourhood where 'their happiness and comfort' would be so cared for.[14]

Whether or not Francis was tempted to join his brother at Anglesea, we don't know. But when he did leave his Gosport lodgings in 1830, it was for a permanent home, Portsdown Lodge, on Portsdown Hill, five miles north of Portsmouth. (Its location now a suburban street, Greenlea Close, on the Boundary Oak Estate, just within the City boundary). This was to be his family house for the next 35 years, until his death in 1865. The Lodge, so-called, was a house

of some size, standing in grounds of 35 acres. It was the perfect anchorage for a sailor away from the sea. Overlooking Portsmouth Town and the Harbour and Dockyard, the Lodge commanded more distant views out across the Solent to the Fleet anchored at Spithead and St Helen's. It was a famous patriotic view. Fifty years earlier the same prospect had fired William Cobbett. From Portsdown Hill, he had his first sight of the sea and 'the Grand Fleet … riding at anchor at Spithead'; 'and no sooner did I behold it than I wished to be a sailor … My heart was inflated with national pride'.[15]

Francis set to work with characteristic energy and purpose. He enlarged the buildings to provide 14 bedrooms and accommodation for six indoor servants. With ten children, some still at home, others frequently returning as visitors, he looked to have attractions outside the house, renovated the grounds with gardens, shrubberies, and paddocks, with lawns for archery and cricket… A perfectionist in everything, Francis supervised the workmen in person, involving himself down to the very last detail.

At this point Robert Cruickshank re-enters the scene. He was not short of bright ideas. Nor, despite the financial collapse of Angleseyville, was he deterred from seeking out fresh investors. His next project was for a toll-bridge across Haslar Creek. This considerably shortened the journey from Gosport to the Royal Naval Hospital, a vast establishment located a mile or so away at Haslar. To finance this project, Cruiskhank set up the Haslar Toll Bridge Company; and to give it credibility, he looked round for a local man of unimpeachable repute. His eye fell upon Francis Austen, now Rear-Admiral Austen. Cruickshank was persuasive, Francis possibly a trifle gullible, and he duly consented to become the Company's first Chairman for the opening of the Bridge in 1835. He may have had his regrets, however, since there was some outrage at the time at what seemed to be an exploitation of sick and wounded sailors and their families.

One idea, however, attracted no such opprobrium. This was for a vehicle-carrying ferry between Gosport and Portsmouth Point. The distance between the shores was less than one-third of a mile and there was no shortage of boatmen ready to take passengers across. But there was no way across for carts, carriages and heavy loads. These had to trundle a sixteen-mile journey by road, a matter of two or three hours. Locally, it was called 'Going round the Victory'. The reason for this was twofold. The currents and tides in and out of the harbour were quite rapid, which made for sometimes difficult handling for a vessel travelling across the flow. There was also the problem of loading and unloading, of setting the vehicles on and off the boat, especially if they were fully loaded.

Cruickshank's brainwave was to have what he called a floating bridge, otherwise known as a chain ferry. This was a flat-bottomed boat, like a platform, which pulled itself along, using two parallel chains strung underwater between Gosport and Portsmouth Point. These chains were threaded through the boat's engine. By this means the ferry was able to keep an unchanging course, however rapid the tide or fluctuating the currents. And because the ferry was flat-bottomed, it was able to run right up to the shore line and simply use ramps for loading and unloading. As the service developed, it could provide a fifteen-minute service, carrying up to 500 passengers and 40 carts or carriages, charging an old ha'penny for foot-passengers, 1½d for cyclists and cycles and so on, on a rising scale.

In practical terms, the floating bridge proved to be a long-term success. It commenced operation in May 1840 with the *Victoria*, to which a second vessel, the *Albert*, was soon added; and the service lasted until 1959, when the *Alexandra* sank. What made it uneconomic to

continue was the cost of patching up the now-antiquated vessels and the competition now provided by road transport.

The floating bridge was authorised in 1838 and Cruickshank followed his established procedure, setting up a company to raise the necessary capital. Once again, he turned to Francis, since 1837, Rear-Admiral *Sir* Francis Austen. Francis saw the sense of the scheme, allowed himself to be persuaded, and entered office. But it was not a financial success. The original scheme was to cost £16,000. However, by the end of 1842 the costs had risen to £50,000, and Francis must have rued the day that he persuaded other members of the family, including his sister, Cassandra and his niece Caroline, to invest in it. When Caroline sold her 3 shares in 1860, they realized £75, representing a loss of £12 since their original purchase in 1838.

Francis became even more heavily involved in a further Cruickshank scheme. This was the Gosport Pier Company. Again, like the Floating Bridge, this was a wholly practical and seemingly profitable idea.

In the mid-1830s, with the earliest railways in development, Cruickshank learned that the London and Southampton Railway was planning to build a line, not to Portsmouth, but to Gosport, leaving Portsmouth with no railway connection whatsoever. On the face of it, this seems puzzling, since Gosport was much the smaller town, really only a satellite of Portsmouth. But Portsmouth Corporation had already rejected a proposal from the London & Southampton Railway on the grounds that they would be getting a branch line from Southampton, involving extra mileage, whereas they claimed the right to a direct line to London. Behind this objection stood a long-standing local rivalry between the two towns. It was beneath the dignity of the City Fathers of Portsmouth to be seen sitting on a branch line while Southampton could boast of a main-line terminus; and it was in part-recognition of these sensibilities that the London and Southampton Company changed its name in 1839 to the London and South Western Railway.

The Company's new plan was to construct a junction at Bishopstoke (modern Eastleigh), from which a branch line would then run to a terminus at Gosport, a plan which gained commercial credibility with the imminence of the Floating Bridge, which was authorised in 1838, and meant that there would now be passenger and goods access to Portsmouth via the Gosport Branch.

Cruickshank also spotted that the arrival of a branch railway (which was in operation from 1842 onwards) created the potential for goods and passenger traffic from London to pass through Gosport and be carried by sea onwards to Poole, the Isle of Wight and beyond, as far as France. To meet these new possibilities Cruickshank set up the Pier Company, to provide the necessary embarkation and loading facility.

All this was costly and once again Cruickshank came to Francis for investment. In total, Francis put up over £4,000 (£4,277.50), lent at 5% interest, and also leased land and buildings to the Company. All this proved to be an unhappy arrangement. Large sums became due to him in rent, which fell into 'considerable arrears',[16] and interest remained unpaid. These matters rankled and were still on his mind twenty years later, when Francis drew up his will in 1857, four years after Cruickshank's death in 1853.

So as we can see, this commercial chapter in the Austen-Portsmouth connection did not come to a happy ending.

As for the family, the Portsmouth connection continued. It was particularly precious for Cassandra, the sailor brothers' remaining sister. Now living alone at Chawton, she enjoyed her stays with Charles at Anglesea and with Francis at Portsdown Lodge, and it was on such a visit that she died in March 1845.

Nine years later, in 1854 at the outbreak of the Crimean War, Francis, now a full Admiral, was offered the supreme naval appointment at Portsmouth, that of Port Admiral, with the right to fly his flag at the mainmast of the *Victory*. To one of Nelson's Captains, as Francis was, this was a tempting offer. But at the age of 80, Francis recognised that the post would be no sinecure; and since he felt himself unable to carry out its duties to his own exacting standards, he declined his last naval command.

Eleven years later, in August 1865, Francis died at Portsdown. Aged 91, he was the highest ranking naval officer in the United Kingdom, the Senior Admiral of the Fleet.

In the world outside, due respect was given. The obituaries were fulsome and respectful. The Admiralty proposed an elaborate Service Funeral, befitting his rank. But Francis, careful to the last, had left precise instructions in his will. There was to be no pomp and ceremony. So the three surviving sons followed their father's wishes and declined the suggestion of a full-scale Naval funeral, arranging instead for a modest burial nearby, at St Peter and St Paul, the little parish church of Wymering, on the slopes of Portsdown Hill, where Francis and his family had worshipped and where he had served as churchwarden, and where he was now laid to rest. The instructions set out in his will were specific. The funeral was to be 'conducted with the least possible exposure and display consistent with decency' and his body was to be 'placed without a leaden coffin in the same grave with that of my late wife'.[17] This was Martha Lloyd, his second wife, who had died in 1843.

For the Austens it was a moment of history, the passing of a generation. His niece, Caroline, noted his death in her family record, awarding her Uncle Francis his rightful place: 'The last survivor of six brothers and two sisters – several of whom had lived to old age, but none so old as himself.'[18]

Acknowledgements

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Notes and References

For the later lives of the sailor brothers I am indebted to *Jane Austen's Family Through Five Generations* (1984) by Maggie Lane. To this day it remains our fullest guide to the family after Jane Austen's death.

[1] Quoted in Christopher Lloyd, *The Naval Miscellany, IV* (1952), p.472.

[2] Quoted in John Knox Laughton ed., *Letters and Papers of Charles, Lord Barham* (1907), iii.298.

[3] Quoted in Lloyd, 'The Royal Naval College at Portsmouth and Greenwich', *Mariners Mirror* (1966), 52.146.

[4] 'Memoir' of Francis Austen, quoted by Maggie Lane, *Jane Austen's Family* (1984), p.89; National Maritime Museum, MS AUS/14.

[5] One of these was the *Topographical Survey* [of the] *Western Circuit* by William Tunnicliffe, published in 1791. Mr Austen had a copy in his library. In fact, on page 43 the 'Rev. George Austin [sic] B.D.' of *Steventon'* is listed as a subscriber and the Austen coat-of-arms is illustrated, amongst others, in the Addendum, under the heading 'Nobility of Hampshire' (Addendum, p.4). The volume includes 'A New Map of Hampshire' at about 2½ miles to an inch

[6] Letter dated 14 November 1791 (ed. R.A. Austen-Leigh, *Austen Papers, 1784-1856* (1942), p.144.

[7] 'On Sir Home Popham's sentence – April 1807', ed. David Selwyn, *Jane Austen: Collected Poems and Verse of the Austen Family* (1996), p.7

[8] A point well made by Kathryn Sutherland in the Introduction to her excellent Penguin Classics edition of *Mansfield Park* (1996), p.xxii.

[9] *Mansfield Park* (1923), ed. R.W. Chapman, p.409.

[10] 'Opinions of *Mansfield Park*', *Minor Works* (1954), ed. R.W. Chapman, p.435.

[11] Niklaus Pevsner & David Lloyd, *Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* (Buildings of England) (1967), pp.256-57.

[12] *Minor Works* (1954), ed. R.W. Chapman, p.368.

[13] Ibid., p.372.

[14] *Hampshire Telegraph*, 5 October 1829, p.4.

[15] William Cobbett, *The Life and Adventures of Peter Porcupine* (Philadelphia, 1796), pp.16-17.

[16] Will of Francis Austen, dated 26 October 1857, para 11.

[17] Will of Francis Austen, para 12.

[18] Caroline Austen, *Reminiscences* (1986), p.67.