

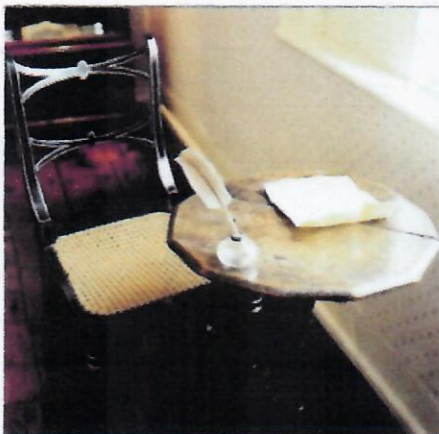
## JANE AUSTEN

1775 -1817



Jane was born on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1775 in Winchester. She was one of 6 children – 4 boys and 2 girls. She was very close to her sister Cassandra, in fact they went to boarding school together. In 1786 they left as the fees were too high and were tutored at home. The family lived in what was described as “an open, amused, easily intellectual atmosphere.” She grew up to be one of the most accomplished internationally known British authors whose novels have been translated into a number of foreign languages, not to mention the films and TV adaptations which seem to appeal to all ages.

Most of her novels comment on the life of the British gentry at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and explore the dependence of women on marriage. Her novels are rarely out of print even today but they brought her very little fame in her life time. She had two proposals of marriage but withdrew her acceptance saying, “anything is to be preferred or endured rather than marrying without affection.” The family moved to Bath in 1800 where Jane became very depressed and didn’t want to write any more.



Jane’s writing desk and pen

But in 1809 she moved to Chawton, Hampshire where she was much happier and became productive as a writer once more. Most of her novels are not set in real places except “Persuasion” which is set in both Lyme Regis and Bath. “Pride and Prejudice” is her most highly praised novel, an opening line in this book says “a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.”



In 1803 and 1804 Jane visited Lyme Regis and grew to love the place. In one of her letters to her sister she writes that she had been "walking on the Cobb, dancing in the Assembly Rooms, bathing (from a bathing machine) and rather over doing it." Later she said "A very strange stranger it must be, who does not see the charms in the immediate environs of Lyme, to make him wish to know it better."

Jane wrote poems as well as several novels but many of her early manuscripts have been lost. "Pride and Prejudice" was her second novel published in 1813. However it was in Lyme Regis that she wrote "Persuasion" which was published in 1819 after her death.

"Persuasion" is said to be the most autobiographical of all her novels. Set during the Napoleonic Wars, the two lovers meet again to enjoy a dramatic trip to Lyme Regis where they are re-united forever. In the novel she describes Lyme thus, "the principal street almost hurrying into the water, the walk to the Cobb, skirting round the pleasant little bay."



Extract from "Persuasion"

"There was too much wind to make the high part of the Cobb pleasant for Ladies, and they agreed to get down the steps to the lower. Louisa must be jumped down them by Captain Wentworth..... The sensation was delightful to her."

In "Persuasion" Jane writes that "Coming to Lyme for a month did him more good than all the medicine he took."

Jane died on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1817 aged 41, her final resting place being Winchester Cathedral, leaving behind one of her best quotes, "The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not had the pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid."

Some objects relating to Jane can be seen in Lyme Regis Museum and look out for the following in Lyme Regis itself with a Jane Austen connection –

1. England's oldest mailbox – just a hole in the wall of the Old Lyme Guest House in Coombe Street where Jane posted her letters.
2. Pyne House on Broad Street where she wrote "Persuasion".
3. Plaque in the Jane Austen Garden.
4. The Marine Parade known as The Walk in Jane Austen's day.

Interesting to note that in 2010 a pheromone found in mouse urine was named after Mr Darcy (Pride and Prejudice) because it strongly attracted the females!!!