



June 2017 Newsletter



2017 AGM Registration Opens Wednesday, June 7!

Registration for the 2017 Annual General Meeting in Huntington Beach – being hosted by our own JASNA-Southwest – opens next week, on Wednesday, June 7 at 9 a.m. Pacific time. Registration often sells out quickly, so mark your calendar!

Here are a few tips to help ensure a smooth registration process:

- 1) Make sure you are a member in good standing of the national Jane Austen Society of North America. Visit the [JASNA membership](#) page for details. Dare to go digital! A couple of clicks will help you stay current on JASNA and AGM news, including notification of the exact moment registration opens. At [jasna.org](#), log in to the member portal in the upper right corner; go to "view/update my profile" and select "join the JASNA email list." Then select "JASNA email and AGM updates." To save valuable dollars, please indicate that you do not wish to receive a paper brochure.
- 2) Review the registration tips at the [AGM website](#), which includes information on the cost of registration as well as a sample registration form.
- 3) Familiarize yourself with the various tours, special events and workshops – and make your breakout choices in advance – by reviewing the [registration brochure](#). Note that all choices this year will be made on one registration form (rather than signing up for tours and special events on a separate form).
- 4) Don't be discouraged if registration is full. Sign up for the waiting list, as additional spaces often open up. But you must be on the waiting list!

5) If you have not yet made a [hotel reservation](#), a few spaces at the special AGM rate are still available. Additional rooms may be open at the hotel, but not at the conference rate. However, you may find that spaces at our conference rate will open up over the summer as people's plans change. It pays to check periodically!

Good luck! And we look forward to seeing you in October.



Recap *Downton Abbey to Jane Austen:* *Spring 2017 Meeting*



Dr. DiAnn Ellis

Members and guests were transported to the England of Jane Austen's Regency era as well as early 20th century Britain in an illustrated and illuminating presentation by DiAnn Ellis titled "Historical, Cultural and Social Links from Jane Austen to *Downton Abbey*." The event was held at a new venue for JASNA-Southwest, the University Club of Pasadena.

Board member Jan Fahey introduced Ellis, noting she has been a Jane Austen reader and fan since high school. Ellis retired from San Francisco State University after a 34-year career in literacy education. A passionate student of British history, Ellis has lived in London, Cambridge and the Cotswolds, as well as Paris and Geneva and numerous U.S. states. She now resides in Northern California and is active in her local JASNA chapter.

Her talk covered a wide range of topics and was punctuated by photos, music and videos, including a hilarious [YouTube recap of Downton Abbey](#) seasons one and two. She also presented numerous display boards featuring images of Highclere Castle (which stands in for Downton Abbey in the series) and nearby Chawton (Jane Austen's final home before seeking medical care in Winchester, where she died in 1817), as well as fashions from the early 20th century.

Ellis presented maps illustrating what the British empire looked like during Austen's time as well as the empire's zenith in 1919. She noted that "Of the world's 200+ countries, the British have invaded all but 22."

She offered the historical context for Austen's writing and Julian Fellowes' inspiration for *Downton Abbey*, whose name was a tribute to his great grandfather, president of Downton Agricultural College. She explained the evolution of the British aristocracy: "This is the equation – Land equals wealth equals status equals power. The land was inherited; the wealth came from farming; the status put people in the House of Lords; and the power came from their ability to make laws."

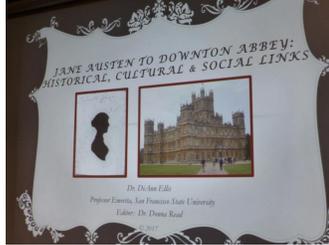
Ellis added that the aristocracy originated when kings rewarded the loyalty of warring chiefs with land and noble titles. "A strict hierarchy of class was formed over the centuries, and their wealth was phenomenal," she said, noting that 7,000 families owned four-fifths of the land in the British isles in the 1870s. Some 250 families owned estates of more than 30,000 acres each.

She detailed the six ranks of the peerage: duke (the next highest rank to the monarchy, with only 11 dukes in a nation of 53 million people today), marquis, earl, viscount, baron and knight. She noted that Lady Edith in *Downton Abbey* ultimately marries a marquis and thus outranks her father, the Earl of Grantham. She added that Mr. Darcy is the grandson of an earl, making Lady Catherine the daughter of an earl and thus outranking her late husband, Sir Lewis.

Ellis also outlined what a family could afford during Austen's time, depending on their income. A family, like Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters, who had only 400 pounds a year, could employ two maids, a horse and groom. "With 1,000 pounds, a family could blossom out into an establishment of three female servants, a coachman and a footman, a chariot or coach, a phaeton or other four-wheeled carriage and a pair of horses. On 5,000 pounds a year, the establishment grew to 13 male and female servants, 10 horses, a coach, curricle and chaise," she said. Ellis estimated Mr. Darcy's 10,000 pounds a year at 1 million pounds in today's equivalency.

Her talk also covered how the aristocracy became land poor beginning in the 1880s, when death taxes were levied for the first time on inherited property. This led to titled but impoverished Englishmen marrying wealthy and ambitious American heiresses, such as Lady Cora in *Downton Abbey* and real-life "buccaneers" such as Mary Leiter Curzon, Consuelo Vanderbilt and Jennie Jerome Churchill, Winston Churchill's mother, who was an heiress to a New York developer father when she married Lord Randolph Churchill.

Other topics covered were the entail, the Industrial Revolution, the suffragette movement and much more. We also learned that Kate Middleton is an 11th cousin of Jane Austen, six times removed, and that actress Anna Chancellor (Caroline Bingley in the 1995 mini series) descends from Austen's brother Edward.



The talk provided historical, cultural and social links between Austen and *Downton Abbey*.



The displays on hand included fashions from the early 20th century.



Volunteer coordinator Laura Bartak and AGM coordinator Nancy Gallagher gave a brief talk on the upcoming AGM.



Reading Groups



At the spring meeting, JASNA-Southwest Regional Coordinator Cheryl Cole bid a fond farewell on behalf of the region to longtime member and Long Beach Reading Group leader Gerda Kilgore, who is moving to Portugal this summer. Gerda, you will be missed!

Sunday, June 4, 12:30 p.m.

Orange County Reading Group

Eligible: A Modern Retelling of Pride and Prejudice by Curtis Sittenfeld

Location: home of Jennifer Garcia, La Mirada

For more information, contact [Viki Barie](#), 714-309-6702.

Sunday, June 4, 6 p.m.

Santa Monica Reading Group

The Poets' Daughters, Dora Wordsworth and Sara Coleridge by Katie Waldegrave

Location: home of Diana Birchall

For more information, contact [Diana Birchall](#), 310-394-2196

Sunday, June 11, 1:30-4:30 p.m.

West Los Angeles Reading Group

Daniel Deronda by George Eliot

This group is at capacity and cannot accept new members. Current members may contact [Clara Browda](#), 310-278-8759.

Saturday, June 17, 11:30 a.m.

Ventura Reading Group

Founding Mothers, the Women Who Raised Our Nation by Cokie Roberts

Location: E.P. Forster Library, Ventura

For more information, contact [Linda Terry](#), 805-302-0855.

Saturday, June 24, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

San Gabriel Valley Reading Group

"Evelyn," part of Jane Austen's Juvenilia

Location: Hill Street Library, Pasadena

For more information, contact [Kelly Duir](#), 909-967-6630.

Sunday, July 9

Pasadena Area Reading Group

The Belle's Stratagem by Hannah Cowley

This group is at capacity and cannot accept new members. Current members may contact [Susan Ridgeway](#), 626-357-1397.

Saturday, July 15, 11:30 a.m.

Ventura Reading Group *Cranford* by Elizabeth Gaskell

Location: E.P. Forster Library, Ventura

For more information, contact [Linda Terry](#), 805-302-0855.

Saturday, July 15, 1 p.m.

Westside/405 Reading Group

The Grand Sophy by Georgette Heyer

Location: home of Syrie James

For more information, contact [Karen Berk](#), 310-477-6753.

Sunday, July 16, 1 p.m.

Riverside Reading Group

Persuasion by Jane Austen

Location: home of Amy Sausser

For more information, contact [Cristi Hendry](#).

Sunday, July 16, 2 p.m.

San Fernando Valley Reading Group

The Duke's Children by Anthony Trollope

For more information, contact [Cheryl Cole](#), 310-422-5475.

July 23, 2 p.m.

South Bay Reading Group

Emma: A Modern Retelling by Alexander McCall Smith

For more information, contact [Jeanine Holguin](#), 805-444-8999.

San Diego Region

Although San Diego is a separate JASNA region, many JASNA-Southwest members are interested in San Diego JASNA events and vice versa. For information on upcoming San Diego JASNA meetings, contact [Jeanne Talbot](#), 808-342-0666.



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