

# Doing Research in the Real Austenland

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## I. Chawton House Library Visiting Fellowships 2015-16: Jane Austen Society of Japan Fellowship

Chawton House Library: The Centre for the Study of Early Women's Writing 1600-1830 (hereafter CHL) is an internationally renowned research and learning centre in Chawton, a small village in the south of England known for its intimate connection with Jane Austen. Since CHL opened in 2003 as a registered charity in the UK, it has contributed to areas of scholarly research, education, and life learning. A great number of people around the world have visited this centre in order to attend conferences, seminars, or music recitals, in addition to using the library's collection, containing rare books and manuscripts.

Launched in autumn 2007, the visiting fellowship programme has provided researchers with the opportunity to access the library collection and support the various projects. In the academic year 2015-2016, the scheme was extended to introduce named fellowships by affiliating with international literary societies (see [http://www.chawtonhouse.org/?page\\_id=58541](http://www.chawtonhouse.org/?page_id=58541)). One of them is the Jane Austen Society of Japan [hereafter JASJ]. I had the honour of becoming its first visiting fellow and stayed on the premises of CHL in October 2015. In the following paragraph, I will discuss the fellowship and report on my delightful experiences.



Jane Austen's House on Chawton High Street (left) and Chawton House Library (right)

## II. Chawton Great House and Jane Austen

On the day of my arrival at CHL, there was a house tour by volunteer staff. One of them was a descendant of Jane Austen's third eldest brother, Edward (Austen) Knight, who was once the owner of 'Chawton Great House', currently CHL. However, how was this Elizabethan manor related to Jane? When did it become a special collections library?



**Chawton Great House, currently Chawton House Library**

For people who are familiar with this prominent writer's biography, it may be unnecessary to explain that Jane lived in a cottage in Chawton from 1809 to 1817, until near to her death, with her mother, her sister, and Martha Lloyd, a close friend of the Austens. The cottage was provided by Edward, who inherited Chawton Great House and its large surrounding estate from his adoptive parent, Thomas Knight, a wealthy relative with no children.

According to family records, Edward always welcomed the Austens to stay at their main house, Godmersham Park. However, when the last tenant of Chawton Great House left in 1813, the Knights came down to spend several months and Jane started to visit the house regularly. It was the year *Pride and Prejudice* was published, and she entertained the family by reading it aloud.<sup>(1)</sup>

In 1914, when the late owner, Montagu Knight, passed away, inheritance taxes and increased running costs caused a period of decline. In 1993, Dr Sandy Lerner, American entrepreneur and philanthropist paid for a long lease and ten years later, after restorations of the house, CHL was opened.<sup>(2)</sup>

### **III. The Collection: Early Women's Writings and the Knight Collection**

On the second day of my fellowship, the fellows were assembled to 'the Old Kitchen', which is currently used as a dining room to serve refreshments to visitors. Dr Gillian Dow, the executive director of CHL, explained about the fellowship scheme and introduced us to her colleagues.



**The Old Kitchen**

The librarian, Dr Darren Bevin, then took us to one of the reading rooms, which is the visiting fellows' main study space. CHL holds a collection of over 15,000 books and they are kept separately in the reading rooms and in storage. The strength of the collection is in works of women writers in English from 1600 to 1830, ranging widely from novels to poetry, drama, published letters and memoirs. It also covers subjects such as history, travel, medicine, botany, and cookery. While the primary focus is on women writers, holdings include male authors' works, such as biographies and conduct books. The full titles can be searched online at <http://chawtn.cirqahosting.com/>.

CHL is also entrusted with the management of the Knight family collection. These books were kept at the family's main house, Godmersham Park. As I have stated, Jane Austen occasionally visited the family there. Therefore, we can assume that she must have read some of them. The access to their catalogues gives insight into our understanding of the literary market of the period: Dictionaries, philosophical writings, official reports, maps, world geography, or sports writings. Recently, I had opportunities to visit Blenheim Palace in Oxford and Wimpole Hall in Cambridge and found out that there were similarities to their collections and the Knight collection regarding genres of books. Most books in the Knight Collection are not catalogued yet, but its full list is on the CHL website: [http://www.chawtonhouse.org/?page\\_id=43822](http://www.chawtonhouse.org/?page_id=43822). The access to the Knight Collection will give options for researchers who are not necessarily working on women writers.

Finally, one of the most important items of CHL is the unique manuscript of Jane Austen's *Sir Charles Grandison*. It is an adaptation inspired by Samuel Richardson's masterpiece of the same title and is kept in storage. I had permission to take photos when Darren opened it to us. Looking at Jane's handwriting, of course, thrilled me greatly.



**With the Librarian and the Manuscript of Jane Austen's *Sir Charles Grandison***

#### **IV. My Research as a Visiting Fellow**

I will now briefly explain about the research I conducted during my fellowship. The research title was 'the Emergence of Free Indirect Discourse in the Presentation of Speech and the Standardization of Quotation Marks in Eighteenth-Century Fiction'. The topic derives from a part of my PhD thesis submitted to the University of Southampton, and it is an on-going project. It focuses on reported speech and the mode of representation in eighteenth-century fiction. The novel was still evolving as a genre in the eighteenth century, and different ways of punctuation marks were experimented with until the modern quotation marks became dominant. My empirical survey on selected eighteenth-century fiction has identified the four stages in the standardization of quotation marks, through the process of which I claim that Free Indirect Speech emerged. [Presented at a BSECS annual

conference 6/1/16.] I am further collecting data and used Sarah Fielding's works held at CHL for case studies.

Sarah Fielding is an ideal author to work on in this respect as she was prolific and wrote in various genres. She was active in the 1740s-50s, which corresponds to careers of major novelists, such as Henry Fielding, Samuel Richardson, and Laurence Sterne, who explored how to narrate. I can compare the use of punctuation marks in her works with these innovative writers'.

Here is a list of her works I read at CHL:

*The Adventures of David Simple*, 1st edn. (1744).

*Familiar Letters between the Principal Characters in 'David Simple'*, 1st edn. With a Preface by Henry Fielding (1747).

*The Governess; or, the Little Female Academy*, 6th edn. (1749; 1781).

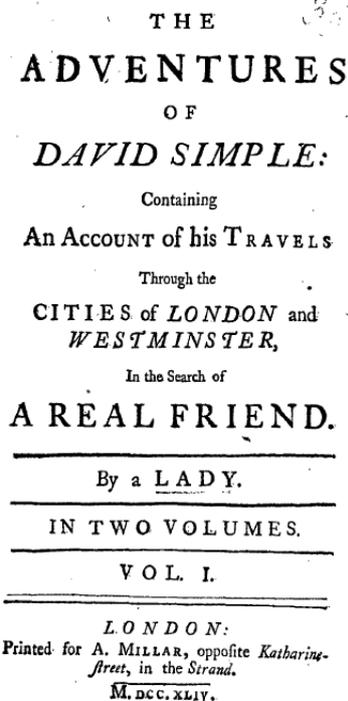
*The Cry: A New Dramatic Fable*. 1st edn. Co-authored with Jane Collier (1754).

*The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia*, 1st edn. (1757).

*The History of the Countess of Dellwyn*, 1st edn. (1759).

*Xenophon's Memoirs of Socrates. With the Defence of Socrates, before His Judges. Translated from the Original Greek*, 1st edn. (1762).

Among these, *The Adventures of David Simple* was remarkably popular with her contemporaries, and Sarah wrote sequels. The novel was also translated in French and continued to be published in the next few decades. CHL holds the French translation published in 1784, and I analysed it to understand the influence of typesetting to/from the continent.



Sarah Fielding, *The Adventures of David Simple*, 1st edn. (London: A. Millar, 1744).

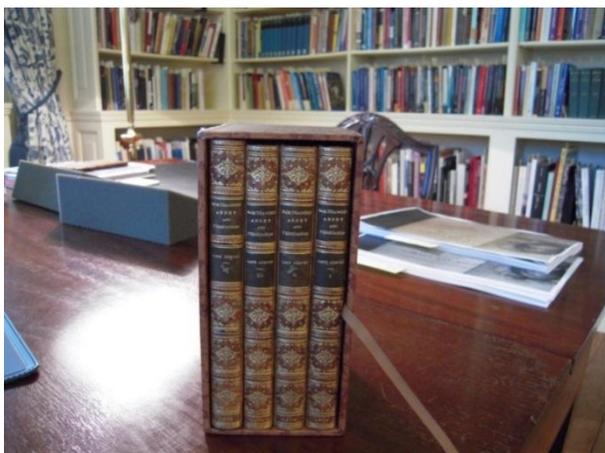


Sarah Fielding, *David Simple, Ou, le Véritable Ami* (Reims: Chez Cazin, Libraire, 1784).

On the last day of my fellowship, an afternoon seminar was held for the visiting fellows to present our research. I talked about how quotation marks became dominant for punctuating speech in the 1740s and 1750s and exemplified the different conventions between the continent and the UK. The French translator was not faithful to Sarah's original and the compositor applied typographical convention then used on the Continent rather than representing texts by using the same punctuation marks in the English original. As a result, in some scenes, the focus is changed from the narrator's moralistic voice in Sarah's original to the dramatic dialogue between characters in the French version.

Other books were consulted for another project of mine on Southampton as a growing resort city in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries. I used books on tourism, history, and country houses.

I also examined the first editions of Jane Austen's novels, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, which were beautifully leather bound and in an excellent condition.



Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, 1st edn. (London; John Murray: 1818).

## V. The Stables and the Fellows' Life

One of the treats for visiting fellows is the opportunity to stay at 'the Elizabethan Stables'. They are now used as accommodation for the fellows but originally built as stables for horses! Most houses in

Chawton village are small and thatched-roofed. By contrast, the Elizabethan Stables are grand and made of stone, the same material with the Great House. It means that the horses at the manor were kept in a more luxurious state than the villagers'. The Stables were designed to flaunt the owner's wealth by locating them in front of the main house.



**The Elizabethan Stables**

The interiors of the Stables are now opulent as they were drastically refurbished when Sandy Lerner bought the lease of Chawton estate. The wooden floors, stairs, and doors are beautifully varnished. There are seven bedrooms with a spacious kitchen and a conservatory; a dining room; a drawing room; a study; and a laundry. I was pleased to stay in 'the green room' with en-suite bathroom. From the window's seat, I was able to see a small back garden, which was lovely.



**The Kitchen (left) and 'the Green Room' (right)**

The main garden of CHL is designed in a style that became popular in the late eighteenth century when 'Capability' Brown improved the landscape of estates. Austen's familiarity with the formula of the English garden is well known through her descriptions of Sotherton Court in *Mansfield Park*: Enclosure, the Avenue, the (artificial) Wilderness, and the Ha-ha [sunken fence to avoid the cattle approaching the house]. Walking in the garden certainly made us understand the depth of eighteenth-century aesthetics.



**The Avenue (left) and the Ha-ha (right)**

The fellows can thus savour the rich nature of Chawton and its kaleidoscopic change. During my stay in October, leaves on the trees made a stunning transformation to red. I also came across beautiful mists in the early morning walk. Apples on the trees became more and more ripe and I had the pleasure of making 'Chawton apple jam'.

## **VI. Merit and Afterwards**

I conclude this report by pointing out some merits for becoming a visiting fellow at CHL. The programme offers good opportunities for networking. Living together with other fellows will give us plenty of time to discuss our research. I had a wonderful company: Alexis Pogorelskin on Vera Brittain/Society of Women Writers and Journalists Fellowship; Jeni Buckley on Hester Davenport/Burney Society Fellowship; and Thomas Tyrrell studying John Milton and romantic poetry. We shared information about books and conferences, as well as watching a BBC programme on the novel and print culture.



**The Visiting Fellows, October 2015**

Secondly, the visiting fellows will be granted access to resources available at the University of Southampton Library, thanks to the partnership of CHL with the University's Faculty of Humanities. This is extraordinary useful for researchers of the seventeenth and 'long' eighteenth centuries who do not belong to research higher institutes in the UK or North America. It allows us to access online databases of historical texts as well as abundant journal articles.

Finally, I would like to show my gratitude to the CHL staff and JASJ committee. Situated in a beautiful countryside, Chawton gave me inspiration for my research. The reading room was spacious for a small group of people to work in and the books I requested were instantly provided. Such an experience of being surrounded by eighteenth-century collections, while enjoying the relaxing nature with nice company and the modern technology, *is* a rare opportunity. As the list of the previous visiting fellows on the CHL website shows, opportunities have been given to researchers at any stage of their careers, from PhD students to senior researchers, many of whom are internationally distinguished scholars. Having the generous support of JASJ, I was able to extend my expertise. With my sincere thanks, I wish the scheme success and hope the Japanese researchers discover the dynamics of eighteenth-century studies in the place where the authors' spirit resides.

(23/3/2016)

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<sup>(1)</sup> Deirdre Le Faye, 'Fanny Knight's Diaries: Jane Austen through her Niece's Eyes' in *Persuasions Occasional Papers No. 2* (1986), pp. 5-26; p. 17.

<sup>(2)</sup> Chawton House Library, *Chawton House Library* (Jarrold Publishing, 2005), p. 1.