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Jane Austen's England

Karin Quint

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Introduction

I first became acquainted with Jane Austen in the 1990s, when I bought a well-thumbed copy of *De Gezusters Bennet (The Bennet Sisters)* at a flea market for just ten cents. At that time I didn't know I had just purchased one of the best-loved novels in English literature – *Pride and Prejudice*. I read the book in one go.

From that moment, I was hooked and became a true “Janeite” – as Jane Austen's most fanatic fans are called. In search of others who shared my passion, I started JaneAusten.nl in 2009. Through this website, I got to know many Austen lovers from The Netherlands, Belgium and further abroad.

Over the years, I was increasingly asked for advice about making Jane Austen tours. I discovered that a guidebook containing all locations related to Austen and her work was nowhere to be found. While on vacation in Lyme Regis, I decided to write one myself.

In *Jane Austen's England*, you'll find all of the places that were of importance to Jane Austen: where she lived, visited family and friends, went on holiday, and more. The book also includes film locations used in recent television and cinema adaptations. It starts with the region that she knew and probably loved the best: Hampshire.

6 Kent, Surrey and surroundings



16TH-CENTURY TUDOR HOUSES ON THE ICONIC SQUARE OF CHILHAM.

Goodnestone Park Gardens

"We have also found time to visit all the principal walks of this place, except the walk around the top of the park, which we shall accomplish probably to-day." – Jane to Cassandra from Goodnestone Farm, August 30, 1805

When the BBC was planning the well-known 1995 TV adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice*, they considered using Goodnestone as Rosings Park – the residence of Lady Catherine de Bourgh. They eventually decided it wasn't grand enough, which is a shame. Goodnestone is a perfect example of the stateliest types of country homes that Jane actually visited and was familiar with, and may very well have been what she had in mind when describing Rosings.

Goodnestone was the home of the Baronet Sir Brook Bridges and his family – the in-laws of Jane's older brother Edward. In 1791, Edward married Elizabeth Bridges in a double ceremony in which her sister Sophia was also wed to William Deedes. Could this, perhaps, have inspired the double wedding in *Pride and Prejudice* in which Mrs. Bennet also "got rid of her two most deserving daughters" in one day?

Edward and Elizabeth went to live at Rowling, a spacious home less than a mile away that also belonged to the Bridges family. Jane and Cassandra visited Rowling regularly and, when they did, were regular guests at the 'Great House'. *"We dined at Goodnestone & in the Evening danced two Country Dances & the Boulangeries. I opened the Ball with Edward Bridges,"* Jane wrote to Cassandra on September 1, 1796.

Edward Bridges (officially, Brook-Edward), one of the younger sons of Baronet Sir Brook Bridges, may well have had a weak spot for Jane. In August 1805, during a visit to Goodnestone, Jane described his very attentive manner towards her in a letter to Cassandra. *"It's impossible to do justice to the hospitality of his attentions towards me; he made a point of ordering toasted cheese for supper entirely on my account."* It's not clear if Edward



JANE WAS A REGULAR GUEST AT THE BRIDGES FAMILY OF GOODNESTONE PARK.

ever proposed. Many of Jane's letters from this period were destroyed by Cassandra.

After the death of Sir Brook Bridges, his widow moved to nearby Goodnestone Farm. It is still called the Dower House. Jane accompanied Harriot, one of Elizabeth's sisters, on long walks in the Park, the Gardens and to Rowling.

Goodnestone was built in 1704 and expanded in 1791 by Sir Brook Bridges. Today, the house is much the same as it was when Jane knew it, although it was 'turned' in Victorian times. What is the rear of the house today, used to be the front. The terrace you now see was not there at the time. You could step out the front door directly into the park and the long driveway that led through it to the house. Jane danced with Edward in the room on the right side of the former main entrance.

Around 1840, the 5th baronet added the enormous pillared porch to the rear of the house, which became the new main entrance. He also built a new driveway and he erected the terraces and steps in the garden.

To this day, Goodnestone remains the property of the Brook Bridge descendants, although at a certain point – when there was no direct masculine descendant – the house went to the baronet's sister and her husband, a member of the Plumptre family. In the 20th century, the Plumptre family inherited the FitzWalter baronetcy.

The present baron is the 22th baron FitzWalter. He does not reside at Goodnestone. However his mother, the Dowager Baroness, did live there for 59 years. She moved to a cottage in the nearby village in 2012. The house is not open to the public. De baron has plans to turn it into a location for special events and short-term holidays in the near future.

A walk in the gardens

Goodnestone's magnificent gardens are open to the public for most of the year. It's not difficult to follow Jane's footsteps. Go around the house to the romantic Walled garden. From there you can see the back of erstwhile Goodnestone Farm, where Jane stayed with Harriot Bridges and her mother.

Leaving the Walled Garden at the same spot where you came in, follow the pebbled path to your right. It will lead you to the Holly Walk. This path is partly concealed by high shrubs, and takes you to **Holy Cross Church**, where Elizabeth Bridges and Edward Knight were married. Unfortunately, the church that Jane was familiar with was completely rebuilt in 1839.

> **GOODNESTONE PARK GARDENS, near Wingham, Canterbury, CT3 1PL, tel. 01304 840107, www.goodnestoneparkgardens.co.uk. Opened: Easter-sept. tue.-fri. 11-17, sun. 12-17, mar. and oct. 12-16.**



A LOT OF HIKING ROUTES ARE SET OUT ON AND AROUND BOX HILL.

Rowling, the house where Edward and Elizabeth spent the first years of their marriage and where their first four children were born, is also not open to the public. You can, however, see it from the road. When you leave Goodnestone, turn right at the T-junction. Follow this road and cross two intersections. If you keep left at the next junction, you will see the house on your left.

Box Hill

They had a very fine day for Box Hill; and all the other outward circumstances of arrangement, accommodation, and punctuality, were in favour of a pleasant party. – Emma

What should have been a pleasant outing, turned into disaster. Box Hill is the site of one of the most important passages from Emma. There, the handsome, clever and rich Emma Woodhouse is scolded by Mr. Knightley, after she thoughtlessly humiliates poor Miss Bates.

Today, Box Hill is still a perfect place for a picnic. At the top of the hill, the National Trust has established a visitor's center including a car park, shop and café. Nearby, there is a 19th century fort that was once part of the city of London defense fortifications. There are various walks originating at the summit that will take you all around Box hill, ranging from easy (The Hill Top Stroll) to demanding (Box Hill Hike). There is also a special children's trail with lots of opportunities for climbing.

The Stepping Stones trail (1.9 miles, approximately 1.5 hours) leads you past Burford Spur, the rolling slopes of Box Hill. This is the area where Emma's



LEITH HILL FIGURED AS BOX HILL IN *EMMA* (2009).

picnic took place. The directions for the different trails are available for free at the visitor centre.

- **BOX HILL, Box Hill Road, Tadworth. Opened throughout the year.**
Opening times of the visitor centre: nationaltrust.org.uk/box-hill.

Leith Hill

The Box Hill scene from the BBC's 2009 version of *Emma* wasn't actually shot at Box Hill, but at nearby Leith Hill. On top of this hill – the highest point of South-East England – you will find Leith Hill Tower. You can climb this 'folly' (the old English term for a decorative structure) that was erected by the owners of Leith Hill Place, which offers magnificent views of the surrounding Surrey countryside.

The spot where Mr. Knightley (Johnny Lee Miller) scolds Emma (Romola Garai) in the 2009 BBC mini-series is easy to find: look for a cut-down tree trunk next to a tree. Unlike Box Hill, there are no parking spaces on the top of Leith Hill, although there are several around the foot. The one nearest to the top is Windy Gap. Bear in mind that from there it is quite a steep climb to the top.

- **LEITH HILL, near Coldharbour, Dorink, Surrey. Opened throughout the year.**
Opening times Leith Hill Tower: nationaltrust.org.uk/leith-hill.



7 Bath, Salisbury and surroundings



They arrived at Bath. Catherine was all eager delight—her eyes were here, there, everywhere, as they approached its fine and striking environs, and afterwards drove through those streets which conducted them to the hotel. She was come to be happy, and she felt happy already. – Northanger Abbey
Jane Austen both loved and hated Bath. During her first visits she was very enthusiastic. But years later, after she had lived there, all she wanted was to leave the Georgian city as soon as possible.

Like Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*, Jane probably was all eyes when she first visited Bath in 1797. She entered a brand new city with wide streets and rows upon rows of beautiful honey-colored houses – very modern for their time. She stayed with her uncle and aunt Leigh-Perrot at their house on The Paragon, a busy access road. Letters from that period have not survived.

In 1799 she visited Bath again, together with her brother Edward and his family. The letters she wrote then to Cassandra were enthusiastic, full of stories about shopping trips and concerts in Sydney Gardens. But visiting a city is very different from living there, as she would soon find out.

The move to Bath

In 1800, Jane's parents decided to move to Bath. They had fond memories of the city. They had married there, in St. Swithin's Church, and also had family and friends there.

The Austens perhaps also hoped their two unmarried daughters would find husbands in Bath. The city wasn't just a spa for rich people, but also something of a marriage market. In *Emma*, after the snobbish Mr. Elton is rejected by Emma, he quickly scurries off to Bath – and with good results: he soon returns to Highbury a married man.

But Jane and Cassandra didn't find marital bliss in Bath. To the contrary: In a letter dating from 1808, Jane writes to her sister: *'It will be two years tomorrow since we left Bath for Clifton, with what happy feelings of Escape!'*

Writing

City life seems to have had a bad influence on Jane's creativity. It's generally understood that she was not happy in Bath. We know that she only worked on one book while she was there: *The Watsons*. The unfinished story, about four motherless and destitute sisters, lacks the verve of her completed work, and she abandoned it after writing only five chapters.

However, Bath did end up being a major source of information and inspiration for Jane. The city plays a very important role in *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*. They're called 'the Bath novels' for a very good reason.



BATH, SALISBURY AND SURROUNDINGS

Not very much is known about Jane's life in Bath. Only ten letters survive from the whole period that she lived there. Some of those are to her brothers, relating the sad news and details of their father's demise. After Mr. Austen's death, the circumstances of his wife and daughters were greatly reduced, and they had to relocate several times within Bath for economic reasons. In 1806, they finally left town for good, moving on to Clifton and Addlestone before finally settling in Southampton.

In *Persuasion*, it seems very likely that Jane is projecting her own negative feelings about Bath on Anne Elliot, the novel's main character: *"She persisted in a very determined, though very silent disinclination for Bath; caught the first dim view of the extensive buildings, smoking in rain, without any wish of seeing them better."*

Bath: the city

But don't let Anne Elliot's dim view of Bath influence yours. With its beautiful houses made of honey-colored stone and beautifully nestled in rolling green hills, Bath is a joy to behold ...



THE MAGNIFICENT STOURHEAD GARDEN FIGURES AS ROSINGS' PARK IN *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE* (2005).

Stourhead Garden

This English landscape garden features as Rosings Park in the movie *Pride and Prejudice* (2005). On one of her walks Elizabeth Bennet (Keira Knightley) is caught in the rain. She runs across the Palladian Bridge and, wet to the bone, takes shelter in the Apollo Temple. There she meets an also soaked Mr. Darcy who rather bluntly asks her to marry him.

The day this scene was shot the skies were clear. Not a single raincloud was to be seen. The filmcrew had to employ rainmachines and after only a few takes, the huge amounts of water they produced washed away the grass.

The wealthy banker Henry Hoare II laid out the garden between 1741 and 1783 around his stately home Stourhead House. Around the artificial lake he laid out walks, built temples and created surprising vistas. In his garden he tried to mimic the idealized version of nature found in the Italian Paintings by Claude and Poussin. Hoare succeeded: Stourhead Garden is generally considered to be one of the most stunning landscape gardens in England.

When visiting you are not allowed to cross the Palladian Bridge like Keira Knightley did. It's closed to the public. You can however visit the Apollo temple and many of the other follies in the vast garden.

Although Stourhead House is not featured in the movie, it is well worth a visit. It is one of the first Palladian style stately homes in England. It has an impressive library dating from the Regency period with 5000 books.

> **STOURHEAD**, near Mere, Wiltshire, BA12 6QC, tel. 01747 841152, nationaltrust.org.uk/stourhead. Opened: garden daily apr.-sep. 9-19, oct.-mar. 9-17. Opening times house: website.

Wilton House

'Wilton – the home to the Earl of Pembroke – is our location for the interiors of the ballroom sequence where Willoughby encounters Marianne and makes clear that their relationship is over. It's a breathtaking place' – Emma Thompson in her *Sense and Sensibility*-diary.

Chatsworth House gets all the credit for featuring as Pemberley in the movie *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), but some of the interior shots were filmed at Wilton House, near Salisbury. The breathtaking Double Cube Room is not just used as Mr. Darcy's 'living room'. It's also the scene of the Ball in *Sense and Sensibility* (1995).

For 4.5 centuries Wilton House has been the country seat of the Earls of Pembroke (the Herbert family). The house is built on the remains of a Benedictine abbey that was dissolved during the Dissolution of the Monasteries. This explains the square shape of the house. The estate was presented to William Herbert, the first Earl of Pembroke by King Henry VIII.

The Wilton House you see today is the result of centuries of building and rebuilding. Some parts, like the eastern façade, date to Tudor times. Others date to the 17th century or later.

The 5th Earl built the state rooms, so he could receive Charles I in style. But the king lost his head before the work was complete. The rooms were designed by the famous architects Inigo Jones and John Webb and look almost exactly like they did in the 17th century. Only in Georgian times some small alterations were undertaken.

Two centuries later the family hired the well-known architect James Wyatt because they wanted to make the house more practical to live in. He botched the job and was fired. The countess took matters into her own hands. Apparently she was a very competent lady. Wilton House hasn't changed much since.

Without a doubt the absolute highlight of the house is the **Double Cube Room**. It owes its name to its proportions. It is 18 meters long, 9 meters wide en 9 meters high: a perfect double cube. The room is decorated with gilded woodcarvings and an imposing mantel. The real eye catchers however are the paintings. They're all by the Flemish painter Anthony van Dyck or his studio. The huge family portrait of the 4th Earl and his family is the showpiece. It's the largest portrait ever made by Van Dyck in England.

The *Sense and Sensibility* movie features most of the staterooms. The Dashwoods enter through the **King's Closet** and subsequently walk to the **King's Dressing Room**. In the **King's Bed Chamber** (or Colonnade) they meet Robert Ferrars, Edwards younger brother. He leads Elinor through the **Great Ante Room**, where the musicians are playing, to the **Double Cube Room**. Willoughby and his fiancée are talking to friends in the **Single Cube Room**.



THE DOUBLE CUBE ROOM IN WILTON HOUSE THANKS ITS NAME TO ITS PROPORTIONS.

Because the house was open to the public during the day – it was summer – filming started at 5 pm and ended at 5 am. It was a huge undertaking. Lighting was hidden in fake pillars and in the paper lanterns hanging from the ceiling. All the props had to be removed before the house opened again in the morning. For the filming of *Pride and Prejudice*, also in summer, the house closed but the gardens remained open. Members of the public could sometimes glimpse the actors. While Keira Knightley was often shielded from the public, Matthew Macfadyen was sometimes seen chatting to onlookers.

Three rooms were used in the movie: the great Ante Room, the Double Cube Room and the Single Cube Room. Elizabeth Bennet starts exploring in the Great Ante Room. She then walks to the Double Cube Room where she admires some knickknacks on display on the table. She also looks outside (where we see the ornamental pond at Chatsworth). When she hears someone playing the piano she peeks through the open door into the Single Cube Room. There, in the reflection of the mirror, she spots Georgiana Darcy at the piano.

When Elizabeth and the Gardiners return for dinner the next day the piano stands in the Double Cube Room.

For one scene the film crew temporarily replaced the windows in this room with French doors. The scene didn't make the cut. The carpet is a remnant of another movie that was filmed in Wilton House: *The Young Victoria*.

> **WILTON HOUSE, Wilton, near Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP2 0BJ, tel. 01722 746700, wiltonhouse.co.uk. Opened: may-aug. sun.-thu. 11.30-17.**

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In *Jane Austen's England*, you'll find all of the places that were of importance to Jane Austen: where she lived, visited family and friends, went on holiday, and more. The book also includes film locations used in recent television and cinema adaptations.

For die-hard Austen fans – or “Janeites” – it's the perfect companion for planning and enjoying a Jane Austen pilgrimage. But even if you aren't a dedicated fan, and simply just love the English culture and countryside, this book is for you. Get to know more about the life and works of one of England's “national treasures” as *Jane Austen's England* guides you to some of the most beautiful and surprising places in the country.

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