

Jane Austen and the Georgian Social Whirl of Bath



Reference: 2022-BATH

Supervisors	National Trust: Tatjana LeBoff, Project Curator, Bath Assembly Rooms Nicola Thwaite, Assistant National Curator (Libraries) British Library: Lucy Evans, Curator, Printed Heritage Collections
Start date/Timeframe	Start Date: Late October – December 2022 and to be completed by February/March 2023
Duration	3 months, full time / 4-6 months, part time
Location(s)	<i>Primarily working remotely or at National Trust Offices (London/Heelis/Regional Hubs), with access to the British Library's site when for working with collections, and to Trust properties as required.</i>

Context for fellowship project

Jane Austen and the Georgian Social Whirl of Bath: Understanding the importance of Provincial Assembly Rooms and Public Social Entertainments in Georgian Literature

In 2025 it will be the 250th anniversary of Jane Austen's birth, and Bath was an important place in her life and writings. Austen lived at various times of her life in Bath (visiting the Bath Assembly Rooms) and took her characters there in *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*.

Using the British Library's and the National Trust's collections, this project will explore Austen's writings through the lens of Bath's public social entertainments, in particular the assembly rooms, looking at balls and dancing, concerts and music which feature throughout Jane Austen's novels and personal correspondence.

This project will consider what the literature and written culture of the era tells us about Bath's social life and how these accounts compare with Austen's own. The materials will encompass works by other authors, including novels, travel journals and guidebooks, alongside personal writings, diaries and correspondence, and other materials.

This project will delve into British Library and National Trust collections to consider the role and importance of Bath's assembly rooms, and other entertainment spaces played within Georgian public life, asking how writings and paper-based culture of the era reflected, disseminated, cemented and influenced society, assembly rooms and entertainments.

Expected tasks and outcomes

This project will contribute to the existing understanding of Jane Austen's writings and life, as well as Georgian culture through targeted research to understand Bath's Georgian public social life and the literature and printed culture which supported it. This project will take place in two parts, the first looking at the collections themselves and the distribution of materials, and the second looking at the content of the materials to answer key research questions.

A detailed work and research plan will be agreed with the successful candidate on appointment and adjusted throughout the fellowship period as required.

Activities will include some or all of the following:

- Exploration into British Library and National Trust library collections relating to Austen and Bath to consider how Austen's work was disseminated, and the reach of Bath through literature. This may require travel to National Trust properties once key properties have been identified.
- Identification of additional sources in both collections for further study
- Research using both collections to answer key research questions, written up into a report:
 - What do Austen's writings and other Georgian literature and paper-based culture tell us about Bath's public social life; public activities and entertainments; and the lived experience of these?
 - What role do public entertainment, public entertainment spaces/places and Bath play within Georgian fictional writing? How does this role compare in the works of Austen and her contemporaries? And does the fictional correspond to the factual?
 - How do Austen's writings and other Georgian literature reflect, perpetuate and disseminate Bath as a social place?
- Write at least one blog post for the British Library
- Potential to publish an article in the 'National Trust Cultural Heritage Magazine'
- Staff talk for the British Library and National Trust
- Potential for additional talks to internal colleagues or externally

Training and development opportunities

Doctoral Fellows are welcome to access internal workshops, talks and training at both organisations.

The placement student will have the opportunity to gain training and experience of working directly with archival and printed heritage material – including handling

They will also gain experience managing a short-term project with regular and defined outcomes and learn to liaise with different audiences and stakeholders within and outside the institution, through meetings, presentations, blogs, and other publications.

In shaping and undertaking the placement project, the student will benefit from the support and expertise of an expert team of supervisors both at the British Library and the National Trust.

In addition, this placement project offers an opportunity for a PhD student to gain valuable insight into how research is used beyond academia and within cultural heritage at the National Trust to produce exhibitions and interpretation.

Required knowledge and skills

Please ensure that you are aware of the general expectations for all applicants, as detailed in the Application Guidelines on the British Library website.

- An interest and basic knowledge of Georgian/Regency British social history, with a focus on literature and Jane Austen (essential)
- Ability to clearly collate information for communication and future use by colleagues (essential)
- Experience of handling rare books and special collections (desirable)

Additional information:

- This is a training and development opportunity open to current PhD students only. It is not intended to lead to a permanent post at the National Trust or the British Library.
- Applicants must obtain the support of their PhD supervisors in advance and consult their HEI and (if applicable) doctoral training grant provider to ascertain any regulations for interrupting PhD research to take up this professional development opportunity.

Application deadline: 18 September 2022.