

Burney Letter

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The Burney Society

Fall 2001

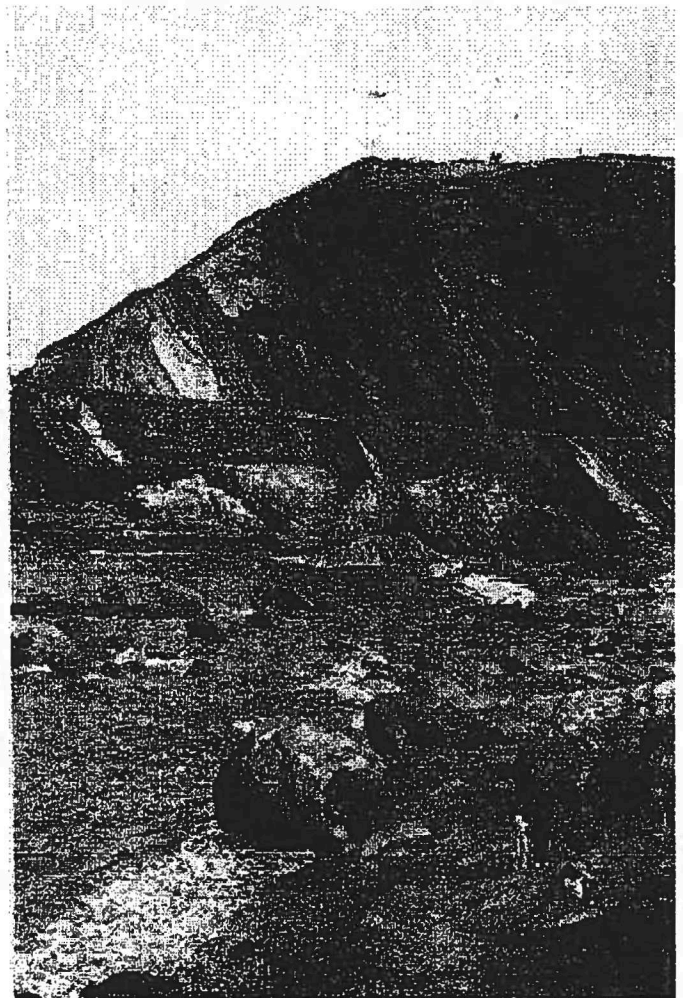
The Ilfracombe Adventure

By Hester Davenport

Staying in Ilfracombe, North Devon, last August, I took the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of Fanny's 1817 visit. This was when Alex joined a Cambridge reading party and Fanny tagged along to keep his nose in his books. The 1823 account of her great "adventure" while there has been questioned in Claire Harman's biography and I thought while there to do some on-the-spot investigation.

According to Fanny, the tide caught her on Wildersmouth Beach and she was marooned on a rock for seven hours with her dog Diane until found, long after nightfall, by Alex and his friend George Lefevre. A local seaman then climbed down the cliff and led her to safety up the rock-strewn beach. The story, if overwritten, is a gripping one, but doubt was first cast on it in 1912 by Lefevre's son, Baron Eversley. He recalled in a letter that his father described Madame d'Arblay's account as "greatly exaggerated." She had been found not as she claimed clinging to a rock but sitting on the sand, and had in any case never been in danger as the "sea had not come up to her." The dog's presence was invented and the two young men had rowed round from Ilfracombe harbour to pick her up. Harman is inclined to believe this letter and to see Fanny's 1823 narrative as literary embroidery with psychological meaning. Yet less than a month after her experience an outline account to Princess Elizabeth tallies with her later one.

Personally I had always believed her story, having known the North Devon and Cornish coasts all my life. My childhood holidays were spent in these parts so that my father, a marine biologist, could take advantage of the best spring tides; these expose the lowest levels of the shore and occur at the time of the full and new moon. Conveniently for shore biologists, and significantly for Fanny, on southwest coasts they reach their lowest marks around midday, and are at their highest in early evening (the small neap tides reverse these timings). The speed and power of spring tides demand respect, but every summer there are tales in the local press of unwary visitors who needed rescuing. So Fanny's adventure fits a pattern.



Wildersmouth Beach and Capstone Hill, with the 1840 promenade. The sheered-off remains of rock ridges which formed Fanny's 'recesses' can be seen.

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Her trail in Ilfracombe itself can easily be followed. The Britannia Inn where she and Alex were first set down is a popular spot for drinking and watching harbour life. Opposite is Lantern Hill where Alex joined locals with lights one stormy night to warn off two ships in danger of foundering on the rocks. The narrow main street zigzags up the hill to the parish church where they worshipped, and along its length can be found the house where they lodged with a shoemaker (now a sandwich bar). From there Fanny took walks with her dog Diane, while Alex studied--or not--often to nearby Wildersmouth and Capstone Hill towering above it: anyone doubting Fanny's fitness at sixty-five to climb a rock need only toil up its steep slopes to change their mind.

She set off for Wildersmouth again on 25 September, carrying a bag to fill with pebbles for her husband's rock collection, and reached the coast about one o'clock, where first she climbed Capstone. At the top, a tremendous gale was blowing she says, though the beach below proved windless with a calm, unmoving sea! This incompatibility probably results from muddling memories. At any rate, Fanny believed the tide to be safely out and was tempted to explore a cove which was the "last" of several such. This was where she became trapped, forced for her life to climb a free-standing rock whose grassy top showed that the sea never reached so high. There she remained, the waves beating at the base of her refuge, until the tide had reached its height and then ebbed again.

The narrow coves, which she calls "recesses," are a feature of this coast, created by fierce seas which probe weaknesses in the cliffs. Their high walls cut off sight and sound of the sea--indeed a beach nearby has a notice warning visitors of the dangers. Through erosion and following the 1840 construction of a promenade right round the base of Capstone Hill, there is only one such recess now at Wildersmouth and that is near the top of the beach so cannot be Fanny's. Even so, the view from within matched her description very closely; moreover, I noted a flight of steps at the back leading to the promenade wall and presumably intended as an escape route for any modern-day Fannys.

The evidence suggested that Fanny had been caught by a spring tide, but for confirmation I afterwards wrote to the Hydrographic Office of the United Kingdom. It proved that 25 September 1817 was a day of full moon with a tide 9.4 metres in height. Low water was at 11.55 GMT, high at 18.15.* Thus when Fanny reached Wildersmouth the tide was already coming in but still looked some way out. It was gathering pace however (if she had really gone to the water's edge as she says in 1823 she must have noticed), and while she beachcombed, it covered the mouth of the cove and cut her off. This must have been around the mid-tide mark. High tide was about three hours later, virtually coinciding with sunset. Fanny, still stuck on her rock, watched as the sky clouded over and it began to drizzle. Even after the sea

had receded from the base she says she remained on her perch, fearful of climbing down in the dark and wet, and planning to stay where she was till daylight--by which time the morning tide would have engulfed her again!

With a tide of this size the whole beach would have been flooded and there is no possibility that Fanny could have sat it out on Wildersmouth's dark sands: if Lefevre truly said that Madame d'Arblay had never been in danger, he showed an ignorance of tides as great as hers. As for the suggestion that he and Alex rowed round from Ilfracombe harbour to pick her up--that must be Baron Eversley's faulty memory. Fanny says that the young men proposed it but to her relief were dissuaded by the seaman: apart from being unnecessary, to have attempted to row (could Alex row?) along that wave-torn and rock-infested coast, in the dark and on a falling tide, would have been lunacy.

Both tides and topography therefore confirm Fanny's story. Memory is fallible and tales improve in the telling, but in most particulars her account suggests vivid recall of real, not imagined, experience.

* For 24th September Fanny has in her diary "Adventure terrific on A Rock at Ilfracomb!", on 25th, "Abandonné on the Rock at Ilfracomb!!!!". The second date is more likely as "All go to view the spot!" on 26th, but if 24th was the day the tides would have been half an hour earlier, and 9.2 metres.

Hester Davenport lives in England near Windsor, and became interested in Burney and her court life when writing a local history book, Writers in Windsor. With a BA in English and an MA in Victorian poetry, she taught Literature for many years at East Berkshire College. She has published a book for children, Fifty Unsolved Mysteries, and more recently, Faithful Handmaid: Fanny Burney at the Court of King George III (see Review, p. 9).

Burney Letter

The semi-annual newsletter of the Burney Society, which includes members in Canada, Great Britain, the United States and elsewhere.

President: Paula L. Stepankowsky

Editor: Lorna J. Clark

Address correspondence regarding newsletter articles to Dr. Lorna Clark, 2111 Fairbanks Ave., Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1H 5Z2.

Membership in The Burney Society is available for \$15 (US) annually in the United States and Canada, and £9 annually in Great Britain. To request membership information, or to notify the society of a change of address, write in the United States and Canada to: **Lucy Magruder**, P.O. Box 1267, Tubac, AZ, USA 85646 (or lucy@magruder.org). In Great Britain, write **Jean Bowden**, Primrose Cottage, Gracious Street, Selborne, Alton, Hampshire, England, GU34 3JB.

NOMINATIONS OPEN

Nominations are open for the Board of Directors of the Burney Society. Elected every two years, it consists of a President, Vice-Presidents for Canada and the UK, Past President/Advisor, Secretary/Treasurer and two Members-at-Large. Elections will be held at the annual Burney Society Dinner and Meeting, 5 October 2001. Nominations for these positions should be sent to the Secretary, Lucy Magruder, lucy@magruder.org to be forwarded to the nominating committee.

Meeting of the British Branch of the Burney Society, June 10th 2001

By Jean Bowden

Twenty-nine members and four guests attended the seventh annual general meeting of the British Branch, which was held in the lovely Templeton Room at Juniper Hall. Our President, Paula Stepankowsky, had sent us a letter with her best wishes for a good meeting, and this was read out. The Secretary, Jean Bowden, greeted everyone, and welcomed Dr Peter Sabor who was once again in England and able to be with us. She then introduced our speaker, Ian Kelly, whom many members already knew for his playing of the part of Frank Cleveland in the recent West End production of Fanny Burney's play, *A Busy Day*. Ian was also the co-producer, and he gave us a fascinating talk about the background to this production, with all the trials and tribulations, as well as the tremendous enjoyment of the cast and the rapturous reception they were given. Karin Fernald gave the Vote of Thanks.

After a break for one of Juniper Hall's famous teas, we all reassembled for the business meeting, with Charles Burney in the Chair. Apologies for absence, and the best wishes of the absentees were read out. The Minutes of the last meeting, held on 11 June 2000, were accepted as a true record, proposed by Doris Ker and seconded by William Fraser. The accounts for the year 8 June 2000 to 7 June 2001, of which members all had a copy, were explained by Jean Bowden. All expenses for the production of the *Burney Letter* and the *Burney Journal* were retained in the British Bank Account, so that we would not need to pay exchange fees into US Dollars and back into Sterling when the money was needed for the memorial window and the London conference. This money, together with members' donations, came to £1,542. We also had assets of £762 for expenses to be incurred by the British Branch for this coming year. The accounts were accepted, proposed by Karin Fernald and seconded by Jean Freeman.

So far this year, we have about 50 paid-up members, and maybe a few more when reminders are sent out.

Jean Bowden then gave the meeting an update on the London conference 2002, and the final decision that had been taken regarding the wording on the Burney memorial. In line with other similar memorials in the Poets' Corner stained glass window, it will have her name--Frances Burney--and the dates of her birth and death. It was obvious to Paula Stepankowsky, Elizabeth Burney Parker and Jean Bowden, who went to the Abbey to meet the Dean and the Surveyor of the Fabric of the Abbey, that all those commemorated in Poets' Corner had been writers, and so the word "Writer" seemed unnecessary. Eliminating this word meant that the author's name could be larger and more easily seen. Jean also reported that they were shown a suite of two rooms in the Abbey complex, known as the Cheney Gates Suite; these are mediæval rooms which have been beautifully restored and furnished with all the equipment necessary for a conference. They could be hired for the whole day on 13 June 2002, to be used both for the conference, and for the reception and buffet after the service of dedication. (The Cheney Gates Suite and the Abbey's own caterers have since been booked for the occasion.) Members were told that the National Portrait Gallery has confirmed that we may have free use of their lecture theatre on the following day, provided that members of the public may attend--they suggest that we charge them a small fee. A survey of British members of the society shows that 24 definitely aim to come, 13 may be attending, and 2 definitely will not.

Elizabeth Burney Parker then described various options for accommodating those attending the conference--at a moderate price and reasonably close to Westminster. There are several quite feasible possibilities, but before anything more definite can be organised, we need to know how many plan to attend from North America.

Karin Fernald said that local people in Mickleham were still prepared to stage a Flower Festival in honour of the occasion in Mickleham church, where Fanny was married; of course, though, they would appreciate some financial

assistance. Susan McCartan had been going to organise a trip out to Juniper Hall and environs for the Saturday, but due to family circumstances, she will be unable to do so. However, it will still be possible to have this tour.

Charles Burney commented that if we wanted to attract University academics and young students, a date such as 6 January would be more suitable for an academic type of Conference, and maybe this could be acted on another time. June is of course a difficult month for students and for those of us on holiday; however, this conference has been set up in honour of Fanny Burney's 250th birthday on 13 June 2002. It was mentioned that the Jane Austen Society of North America is coming to England for its conference in October 2003, but Jean Bowden thought that plans for the JASNA meeting in Winchester were already far advanced, and that it would not be practical at this stage to try to have a combined literary meeting.

Hester Davenport then told us about a previously unknown illustration by Edward Burney for *Evelina*. (Her talk has since been published in the *Burney Journal*, Volume Four.)

Peter Sabor told us about the new Penguin edition of the journals and letters for which he and Lars Troide had made the selections. Members were able to buy copies which he had brought along to the meeting.

Ian Kelly gave a progress report on the situation at the Walcot Street burial sites.

Jean Bowden then informed the meeting that she intended to stand down as Secretary/Treasurer to the British Branch after the London conference in June. A note about this post is published elsewhere in this newsletter. She asked members present to consider if they could possibly take on this post, as she would not be able to continue after that time, due to various health problems.

There being no other business, members were thanked for coming, and wished a safe journey home.

A Busy Day Premieres in the U.S.A.

By Marie E. McAllister

Readers of the *Burney Letter* will be pleased to learn that *A Busy Day* received its North American premiere on April 6-8, 2001. A troupe of excited young actors in Spotsylvania County, Virginia, had audiences laughing along happily two hundred years after Burney wrote her delightful comedy.

The script for the Virginia production was substantially cut from Burney's three-hours-plus playing time. Director Stuart Gelzer, a former filmmaker and the head of Chancellor High School's drama department, wanted a total running time closer to two hours, with two kinds of cuts: changes to simplify Burney's often unwieldy stage direction, and editing to make the more dated parts of her script accessible to a modern audience. He and I started with Tara Ghoshal Wallace's scholarly edition, and spent January hammering out a performance script that would be true to both the words and the spirit of Burney's play. My background in eighteenth-century literature and his theatrical expertise turned out to complement each other well, though our final draft remained very challenging for students aged 15-18, some of whom were still working through their first-ever Shakespeare plays in English class. As far as we know, Burney never had a chance to hear her play read by actors. We tried to imagine the cuts and changes she might have made with the benefit of an extended rehearsal period, and kept our focus on creating good theatre rather than period history.

Rehearsals started in February. The students were thrilled at the idea of making history but had a lot to learn: for starters, the British class system was a mystery to these supposedly classless Americans. The new-money Wattses clicked when one student announced: "They're the Beverly Hillbillies." Meantime the cast was working hard on eighteenth-century body language and begging for costumes just like the ones in the books Stuart was bringing in.

Fancy costumes, alas, were not in the budget. Stuart designed a simple, stylized set and wheedled loans of period furniture from local antique shops. His student crew did everything from set construction to lighting design, while two parent volunteers took charge of rounding up costumes and props. (The only weak link was the student publicity director: our largest audience was just over a hundred.) The rehearsal process itself led to a series of lively directorial choices. Despite his actors' pleas to be allowed to try out their pseudo-British accents, Stuart insisted on an American production: instead of Burney's cockney accents, the Wattses spoke in broad Southern drawls. The selfish and dictatorial Sir Marmaduke Tynley cruised the stage in a wheelchair, bumping the legs of his fellow actors at will. Peggy Watts, her mother, and their impoverished but undaunted cousin Joel Tibbs filled scenes with the sort of broad physical comedy that readers of *Evelina* know from Captain Mirvan and Madame Duval, while Lady Wilhelmina spent the play coldly trying to "stare him" (everyone!) "into a statue." Burney's dreary ending paean to the City, which had already disappeared from the script, was replaced by a final frozen tableau following Lady Wilhelmina's declaration that if Cleveland marries a Watts, "I shall die!" The unfeeling Sir Marmaduke proclaims "That's your affair, Lady Wil," and Lord John, casting himself languidly onto a sofa for the dozenth time, gets the final word: "Die? O, the devil!"

To help audience members unfamiliar with eighteenth-century drama, the program opened with a page of "things to know before the play begins": the backstory explaining how Eliza Watts came to be raised in a world very different from her parents, why she

and Cleveland face opposition from both families, and who the audience might want to watch: "Into this already complicated picture wanders Cleveland's younger brother Frank, a ne'er-do-well gambler and playboy. To him, Eliza looks like a very pretty way to find eighty thousand pounds to pay off his gambling debts . . ." We also told the audience a little about Burney's life and career, hoping to get them interested in reading more of her work. One elderly viewer accosted Stuart during intermission to protest against his choice: "It says here that she influenced Jane Austen. Everyone knows that Austen is boring, so I can't see why you're making these young people do all this work!" Fortunately most of the audience (and the entire cast) was a great deal more receptive to Burney. The students worked smoothly as an ensemble and proved to have a quite extraordinary sense of comic timing. They were eager to discuss the period and their characters with me after rehearsals, and when Tara Ghoshal Wallace made it to opening night, they practically swooned with happiness.

Our version differed from the London production (which I was lucky enough to catch in previews last summer) in several ways that might be helpful for other non-professional companies to know about. Besides the shorter production script, we tried for a more intimate scale and a brisker pace. *A Busy Day* touches on some grand themes: class conflict, prejudice, emotional abandonment, self-love, greed, empire. At the same time, it is an intimate drama about family (mostly difficult), friendships (mostly peculiar), and how best to find satisfaction in life. Eliza and Cleveland must work their way through a set of rather artificial difficulties, their trust overcoming their temporary estrangement. The comic characters likewise pursue satisfaction in their own ways: marrying for revenge, drawing attention to a new dress, triumphing in a title, or merely escaping the boredom of yet another night at the opera. A modern audience can laugh at, or with, all these things, especially once obsolete phrases are updated ("play the old maid" for "wear the willow") and the serious characters have their drawn-out speeches deftly trimmed. The stage action is also terrific once a director figures out ways of working around Burney's difficulty in getting characters on and off stage. And as lovers of Burney might predict, the dialogue of *A Busy Day* is as funny as anything she wrote: "One has no chance with a young girl till her family are all against one."

Chancellor High School's drama program is not unusual for a large American high school: many students take a course in drama, some participate extensively in community or church theatre, and a few regularly attend productions at nearby colleges or in Washington, D.C. These very talented young actors were exceptional only in their eagerness to live up to their teacher's expectation that even a teenager, if properly guided, can perform Burney. The actors struggled during rehearsals and put in many hours of hard work, but the production was a rousing success. Certainly, college, community, and professional troupes looking for interesting repertoire would find the edited *Busy Day* highly playable. We can thus hope to see many more productions of this and Burney's other comedies in years to come.

Marie E. McAllister teaches eighteenth-century literature at Mary Washington College, a state-supported liberal arts college in Virginia. She has published on Richardson, Piozzi, women's travel writing, and eighteenth-century medicine. Her current interests include Austen, Burney, and venereal disease in the early modern period.

A Student's View

By Kate Brown

When Mr. Gelzer, announced in January that our spring play would be *A Busy Day* by Frances Burney, he got more than a few blank stares. Our drama club was used to productions like *Grease* and *Fiddler on the Roof*, not eighteenth-century British comedies. A week later, dozens of dumfounded students stumbled over the script during cold reading auditions. Early read-throughs with the cast took hours, full of questions about the complicated plot and what exactly "confounded" and "pho" meant. But as we practiced more and more (and more--two hours every weekday and four hours every Sunday), things began to come together. Act III quickly became our favourite and was always the smoothest, save frequent outbursts of laughter, while Act IV never seemed to come out right. Amidst all of this, Mr. Gelzer announced that our production would be the North American premiere of the play. Suddenly ours was not just another high school play, it was history in the making, and the excited cast and crew had to make the most of the little time we had before opening night.



Act III. Eliza watches in distress as her relations try to solve Miss Percival's "fit." (L to R: Joel Tibbs, Miss Percival, Mr. Watts, Peggy, Mrs. Watts, Eliza setted)

As we buckled down and became more comfortable with the blocking and plot, we also learned to love the language and characters. Words like "ignominious" flowed off our tongues and we even began to use "Oh, the devil!" and "La, ma!" in everyday conversation. The whole cast really got into their characters, and Lady Wilhelmina and Sir Marmaduke got snobbier, as Joel Tibbs and the Watts family got more vulgar with each rehearsal.

The last week saw the first real run-throughs of the entire play, and although the first one required lots of prompting and almost five hours, we were on the home stretch. When we were not onstage, we were huddled over pizza, Chinese food, and scripts, trying to nail down cues and tough bits of dialogue until ten or eleven o'clock each evening. Even the final dress rehearsal on Thursday night was not perfect, but we were proud of what we had done and ready for opening night. After hours of hair and make-up and costuming, the curtain opened on the American premiere. The butterflies disappeared the first time we heard the audience laugh and did not come back. From the time we stepped onstage that first night until Lord John Dervis plopped onto Miss Percival's couch for the last time to close Act V, we had a blast. The costumes had come together beautifully and so had the characters and set. But most importantly, a group of young actors had come together to bring a two-hundred-year-old script to life, and walked away with an experience we will never forget.

Kate Brown (Jemima Cleveland) is a senior and President of the Drama Club at Chancellor High School. Kate writes regularly for her school and local newspapers.



ACT I: Deborah reveals Eliza's fortune to Lord John and Frank (L to R: Lord John, Deborah, Frank Cleveland)

Secretary/Treasurer for the British Branch of the Burney Society is Sought

Jean Bowden will be giving up the position of Secretary/Treasurer after the London conference of the Burney Society in June 2002. Basically, it involves sending out the *Burney Letter* to members twice a year, and the *Burney Journal* once a year. Jean has always taken on the task of photocopying the *Burney Letter* from a master copy sent from the editor in Canada, but it is possible that they could all be produced in North America and mailed from there, though this would certainly mean an increase in our membership fees. Each year membership fees are collected and banked, and reminders usually have to be sent out to our more forgetful members. Use of a computer is invaluable for this work, and e-mail is a great help, too.

Please contact Jean Bowden, by post, phone or e-mail, if you would like more details.

Jean Bowden, Primrose Cottage, Gracious Street, Selborne, Alton, Hampshire GU34 3JB,

Tel. 01420-511432 e-mail JeanKBowden@care4free.net

Celebration of Burney in 2002 Planned

By Paula Stepankowsky

A world renowned panel of scholars, a landmark birthday, an historic Mediaeval setting, and the dedication of a memorial in Westminster Abbey to the first 18th-century woman writer to be so honoured will draw Burney Society members from all over the world to London on June 13 and 14, 2002.

After six years of work and planning, a memorial window to Frances Burney will be unveiled on June 13 in a ceremony in Poet's Corner, the site of memorials to such literary luminaries as Samuel Johnson, Jane Austen, Alexander Pope, Oscar Wilde and the Brontës.

The memorial will be dedicated on the evening of her 250th birthday following a full day of presentations on all aspects of her life and works.

Thanks to Abbey officials, the conference itself will be held in a suite of rooms in another part of the Abbey. The rooms, called the Cheyne Gates Rooms, are in the oldest part of the Abbey, complete with a large Gothic window and tapestries.

Following the presentations, conference attendees will go down to the Abbey at 5:15 for the traditional Evensong service. After a 15-minute break, participants will move to Poet's Corner, where chairs and a podium will

be set up, for the dedication ceremony.

This will be followed by a buffet reception, which will include readings and other festivities, in the Cheyne Gates Rooms.

The following day, conference participants will reconvene in the new auditorium at the National Portrait Gallery in London, for additional programs, including, we hope, a presentation of a selection from the West End production of Burney's *A Busy Day*, as well as selections from music written by Dr. Charles Burney. We are discussing with gallery officials the possibility of placing a floral tribute beneath Burney's portrait in the gallery itself to mark her 250th birthday.

The conference organization committee, including Jean Bowden, Elizabeth Burney-Parker, Kate Chisholm and Karin Fernald, are taking care of all the arrangements for the physical aspects of the conference, including meals and venues. They are also exploring accommodation options in and around London.

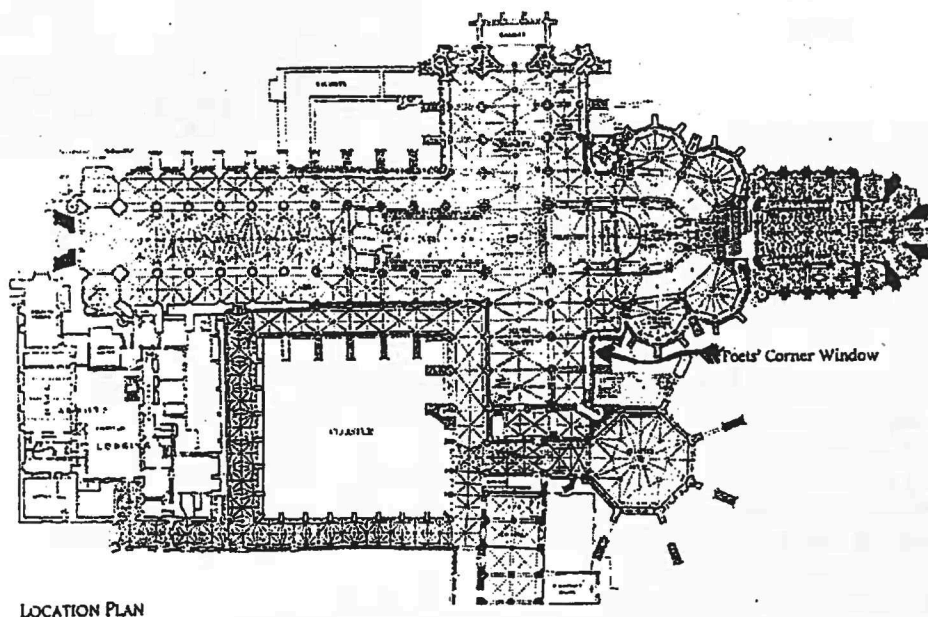
The papers committee, chaired by Dr. Stewart Cooke, assisted by Dr. Lorna Clark, Dr. John Wiltshire and Kate Chisholm, is working hard on a slate of speakers that will do justice to Burney and to the great occasion the conference

celebrates.

A registration packet, including all conference prices and details, will be sent to all members in the spring. Organizers are hoping to keep the registration fee reasonable, as well as encourage students to attend. As a result, organizers are appealing for donations to help underwrite the conference. (See the coupon on page 7)



A suggested layout for the memorial pane in the stained-glass window in Poets' Corner



LOCATION PLAN

The floor plan of Westminster Abbey, with an arrow showing the location of Poets' Corner.

Call for Papers: Celebrating Burney

On June 13, 2002, the 150th anniversary of her birth, a window commemorating Frances Burney (1752-1840), will be dedicated in Westminster Abbey. A two-day conference (June 13-14, 2002), sponsored by the Burney Society, will be held in London to celebrate this occasion, and contributions to this event are now invited. Speakers at the conference will include, among others, Lars Troide, editor of Burney's *Early Journals and Letters*.

Papers may focus on any aspect of Burney's life or work--her diaries, journals, novels, or plays--but should be addressed to a mixed academic and non-academic audience and be no more than twenty minutes in length. Abstracts of proposed papers should be sent to Professor Stewart Cooke by e-mail (StewartCooke@netscape.net) before December 31, 2001, or by mail (Dawson College, Dept. of English, Room 3D.14, 3040 Sherbrooke St. W., Westmount, PQ, Canada H3Z 1A4) to arrive before that date.

Expression of Interest

Mounting an international conference marking the Westminster Abbey dedication of the Frances Burney memorial is a large task. To help plan, the committee would like to know how many members are coming, or thinking of coming, to the dedication and conference in London June 13-14, 2002. If you have not already done so, please fill out the form below to give us some idea of numbers.

The committee would also like to gauge how much money will be available to spend producing the conference, booking the rooms, paying for meals, programs and other expenses. Such a landmark conference may require financial assistance beyond the registration fee, if the fee is to be kept reasonable. It is hoped that it might be possible to offer a student discount to encourage young people to attend and participate. The committee is asking members to consider making a donation to the society specifically to help underwrite the conference. All donors will be thanked in the conference program. Society members who may not have contributed to the memorial window itself may like to consider a contribution to underwrite the conference.

If you have not already done so, please fill in this form and mail it to Jean Bowden, Primrose Cottage, Gracious Street, Selborne, Alton, Hampshire, GU34 3JB, England; or to Lucy Magruder, P.O.Box 1267, Tubac, AZ 85646, USA.

Name: _____

I am definitely planning to attend _____ Maybe _____ Definitely not coming _____

I would like to help underwrite the conference _____ Here is my donation of _____

(All donations in the U.S. are tax deductible) Many Thanks!

Burney Society AGM in Seattle

By Paula Stepankowsky

Members of the Burney Society are scheduled to gather in Seattle on Friday, Oct. 5, at 10 a.m. in the West Coast Grand Hotel downtown for the eighth annual meeting of the society in North America.

The main speaker for the meeting is Dr. Michael Wheeler, professor of English Literature at the University of Southampton and director of Chawton House Library, the Centre for the Study of Early English Women Writers, including Frances Burney and Jane Austen. The library will be housed inside Chawton House, an Elizabethan manor owned at one time by Jane Austen's brother, Edward. It is held on a long-term lease by the foundation that owns the library, which includes first editions of novels,

manuscripts and other items from a period stretching from the late 17th century into the early 19th century.

The meeting is being held at the same time as the annual general meeting of the Jane Austen Society of North America. To ensure that there is no conflict between JASNA's scheduled activities and the Burney Society meeting, the Burney Society is having a brunch meeting on Friday for the first time.

Dr. Wheeler, who will talk on the topic "Beginning With Frances Burney" holds a master's degree from Cambridge University and a doctorate from the University of London. He is currently the joint general editor of the Cambridge University press's 10-volume edition of the *Works of Jane Austen*.

He is the author of a number of books, including *The Art of Allusion in*

Victorian Fiction; English Fiction of the Victorian Period, 1830-1890; Ruskin's God, and Death and the Future Life in Victorian Literature and Theology. He is also the vice chairman of the Ruskin Society, a trustee of St. Deiniol's Library at Hawarden and a visiting lecturer around the world.

Following Dr. Wheeler's talk, a short business meeting will be held.

Registration for the brunch and meeting is \$27 U.S. per person. Separate registration letters have been sent to all members, who are asked to return registrations to Lucy Magruder, Burney Society treasurer, by Sept. 27. For more information, please e-mail Lucy at lucy@magruder.org, or call Paula Stepankowsky at 360-636-3763.

Joyce Hemlow (1906-2001)

By Lars Troide

The Burney community will be saddened to hear of the passing of one of its founding members. Greenshields Professor Emerita of English Joyce Hemlow died in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, on 3 September 2001, at the age of 95. A service was held for her there on 6 Sept., followed by cremation and the interment of her ashes in the family plot in Liscomb, Nova Scotia.

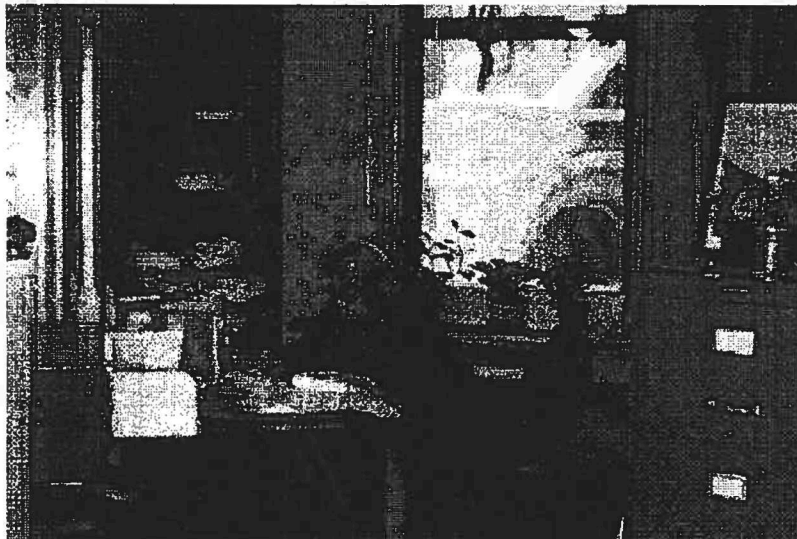
A native of Nova Scotia, born on 20 July, 1906, Joyce Hemlow began teaching at age 15 in a small one-room school in Necum Teuch. She graduated from Sydney Academy and then taught in rural schools for a number of years. She attended Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, earning her B.A. (1941) and M.A. (1942). She then attended Radcliffe College in Cambridge, Mass. (A.M. 1944; Ph.D. 1948), where, under the tutelage of the noted 18th-century scholar George Sherburn, she wrote her doctoral dissertation on the novels of the British author Frances (Fanny) Burney (1752-1840). This began her lifelong devotion to the study of Fanny Burney. Coming to McGill in 1948, she devoted the next decade to tracking down the voluminous manuscript journals and letters of Burney and other members of her family, and writing a definitive life of Burney based on these materials. Her biography, *The History of Fanny Burney*, was published by the Clarendon Press of Oxford University in 1958. Hailed as a masterpiece, it received the Governor General's Award for Academic Non-Fiction; the Rosemary Crawshay Prize; and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for the best biography in Britain.

In 1960, Professor Hemlow founded the McGill Burney Papers Project, dedicated to the publication of complete, definitive scholarly editions of Burney's journals and letters. She was twice awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship to support her work, and also won other fellowships and awards. Aided by a team of scholars at McGill and elsewhere, she published the 12-volume edition of *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame d'Arblay) 1789-1840* (Clarendon Press, 1972-84). This edition was

acclaimed by notable figures such as C.P. Snow and Malcolm Muggeridge. Other publications included *A Catalogue of the Burney Family Correspondence 1749-1878* (1971); the *Selected Letters and Journals* (1986), which came out in paperback the following year, and various articles about the Burneys. After the completion of her monumental edition, Professor Hemlow retired to her family estate in Liscomb, spending the winters in Halifax and conducting genealogical research on her Nova Scotian forebears.

In retirement, Professor Hemlow continued her lively interest in Burney matters. She stayed in touch with the Burney Project at McGill, where Professor Lars Troide succeeded her as Director. In 1995 she became a Founding Patron of the new international Burney Society, devoted to the life and writings of Fanny Burney. This Society was instrumental in convincing the Dean of Westminster, the Very Reverend Wesley Carr, to consent to the installment of a memorial to Burney in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey. This installation, with Prof. Troide as a principal speaker, will take place in the Abbey on 13 June 2002, the 250th anniversary of Burney's birth. Fortunately, Professor Hemlow lived long enough to know of this long-overdue tribute to a novelist, diarist and playwright whose importance to English literature is finally receiving proper acknowledgment. Professor Hemlow has long been renowned as the architect of modern Burney studies, and it is her seminal work which has led to this development.

A memorial service is planned for Professor Hemlow in the McGill University Chapel. Colleagues will remember not only a great scholar, teacher, and McGillian, but also a humorous, warm and vibrant human being whose enthusiasms included the Montreal Canadiens and the music of Richard Wagner. Her legacy at McGill will live on in the Burney Project, for which the university has designated a Canada Research Chair to attract its next Director. McGill will thus continue to be, as it has been since Professor Hemlow's days, the world centre of Burney studies.



Joyce Hemlow at work in the Burney Project at McGill University, Montreal.

Book Review

Hester Davenport, *Faithful Handmaid: Fanny Burney at the Court of King George III*. Sutton Publishing, 2000.
ISBN 050918810

By Maggie Lane

To get one thing out of the way first. All of us who write about Fanny Burney, whether in book or review, have to decide what to call her. In her introduction, Hester Davenport writes, "In the 1980s there was a movement to 'restore' Fanny to her formal name Frances, in the belief that 'Fanny' was somehow belittling. A counter movement among biographers has re-established Fanny, and that name is my choice too. To call her Fanny, the name by which she was known by those who loved her, seems more appropriate to the relationship, warm but not uncritical, which a biographer inevitably develops for her subject."

The long and eventful life of Fanny Burney affords rich material not only to the full-scale biographer, but to the author attracted to certain episodes or aspects. I have experienced this twice myself, once with "fathers and daughters," once with

the city of Bath. Now Hester Davenport has taken the five years at Court and, despite the tedium that Fanny herself experienced there, has written a 240-page book remarkably full of interest.

This is partly because, with so few years to cover, she can allow herself the luxury of elaboration, and partly because she has not stinted on research. So we learn, for example, of the order in which the Queen's garments would be put on. No drawers; and all that whalebone--stays and hoop--must have been so uncomfortable, especially for a woman who was pregnant for more than eleven years of her life! It is certainly more interesting to read about than it would be to live, either as dressed or dresser. Fanny's role in dressing the Queen began only after the stays, but even so she claimed to live in terror of "giving the gown before the hoop, and the fan before the neckerchief." Poor Fanny was never interested in finery.

But it is on the personalities that the book's in-depth treatment impresses most. The full examination of Fanny's doomed relationship with Stephen Digby is interesting in itself and brings out the pattern in all her failed romantic attachments before Alexandre d'Arbly. (How greatly, if secretly, she must have

dreaded the same thing happening with him! No wonder that by not letting her down he earned her determination to stick to him as well as her lifelong gratitude and devotion.) There is not as much of the tiresome Mrs. Schwollenberg as I'd feared, but plenty of two much nicer characters, Mrs. Delaney and the Queen herself. I quite warmed to Queen Charlotte, and wondered why there has been no modern biography of her.

Altogether the book left me feeling that Fanny was not so wholly miserable for five years as I'd previously thought; she had interesting experiences and met interesting people who would not have come her way otherwise. And then--a point not made by Hester Davenport--five years' labour earned her a half-pay pension for fifty years: not a bad bargain!

Maggie Lane, the well-known author of several books on Jane Austen and other women writers, lives in Bristol. Recently, she wrote about Fanny Burney's association with Bath, in A City of Palaces (1999) and was the speaker at both the June and October meetings of our society in 1998. She serves as Vice President of the Burney Society for Great Britain.

Members' News

By Lorna Clark

📖 Robin Monche in New Zealand reports on an interesting website she has discovered and which she advises members to visit: burney.xoasis.com. This is apparently a site operated by Joseph Grau, author of a bibliography of Burney, and includes the results of his research, as well as a picture gallery. Of course, the Burney Society operates its own website at: www.dawsoncollege.qc.ca/text/burney/home.htm

📖 Michael Kassler sends word from Australia that his book,

co-authored with Philip Olleson, on *Samuel Wesley, 1766-1837: A Source book* has been published by Ashgate Press in the UK. Samuel Wesley, one of England's finest organists, is known today for his musical compositions and for his promotion of the music of J.S. Bach. The book includes an annotated calendar of more than 1,000 letters; among Wesley's correspondents figures Dr. Charles Burney, Frances Burney's father. The source-book gives invaluable details of London musical life in the era from Boyce to Mendelssohn, in which both Wesley and Burney played a part.

Editor Welcomes Members' Contributions

The *Burney Letter* welcomes the submission of news or other announcements of interest to the membership. Tell us about your recent publications, send a note or query, suggest a topic for an article, or write one yourself. All contributions should be sent to the editor, Lorna Clark, 2111 Fairbanks Ave., Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1H 5Z2; or by e-mail to lclarklj@aol.com

The Burney Society Annual Meeting

Join us for our Celebration Brunch
Michael Wheeler, PhD on "Getting Started with Frances Burney"
Professor Wheeler is Executive Director of the Chawton House Library
and Professor of English Literature at the University of Southampton

Friday, October 5, 2001
WestCoast Grand Hotel
1415 Fifth Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98101
10 AM to 12 noon

We will again meet in the same location as the annual Jane Austen Conference, for members' convenience. We are having a Brunch this year, so that our meeting will not conflict with the Jane Austen Conference concert, Friday evening. Please make out your check to The Burney Society for twenty-seven dollars (US\$27) per person and send it and the form below to the Secretary/Treasurer. **The meeting registration name and address (below) are different for this mailing only.**

In addition, if you have not yet renewed your membership, you are welcome to do so on the form below. Annual dues are fifteen dollars (US\$15) or nine pounds sterling (£9).

The Burney Society continues planning for Dedication Conference of the Burney memorial window, Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey, June 13, 2002. We will have a separate mailing on this, our first, conference, soon.

Thank you,
Lucy Magruder, Secretary/Treasurer, *The Burney Society*
c/o Patricia M. Sullivan,
20925 NW Nolana CT
Portland, OR 97229 U.S.A.

The Burney Society Annual Meeting & Membership for 2001 - 2002

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State/Province _____ Zip/Postal Code _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Annual Meeting amount enclosed _____ Guest(s) _____

Donation to 6/02 Conference Fund _____ Number Planning to Attend _____

Membership amount enclosed _____ Gift Membership(s) amount enclosed _____

Recipient(s) _____