**Jane Austen: Chilham Castle**

Regular visitor at Chilham Castle between 1796 and 1813.

Jane Austen regularly visited Chilham Castle, the seventeenth-century home built on the site of a medieval castle, whenever she was staying nearby with her brother [Edward Austen Knight](LINK TO GODMERSHAM) between 1796 and 1813. Dinner parties and evening balls at Chilham Castle offered opportunities for seeing old friends and meeting new people, for eating and drinking, for dancing and listening to music. Social events at Chilham Castle were therefore noteworthy, and Jane often exchanged letters with her sister about them. In 1801, Cassandra attended dinner and then a ball at Chilham Castle, and relayed the details about it to her sister who was back in Steventon. In response, Jane Austen jokes with her sister:

It gives us great pleasure to know that the Chilham ball was so agreeable, and that you danced four dances with Mr. Kemble. Desirable, however, as the latter circumstance was, I cannot help wondering at its taking place. Why did you dance four dances with so stupid a man? Why not rather dance two of them with some elegant brother officer who was struck with your appearance as soon as you entered the room?[[1]](#footnote-1)

On another occasion, Jane went to Chilham without Cassandra, and accordingly filled her in on the evening:

We met only the Bretons at Chilham Castle, besides a Mr. and Mrs. Osborne and a Miss Lee staying in the house, and were only fourteen altogether. My brother and Fanny thought it the pleasantest party that had ever known there, and I was very well entertained […] By-the-bye, as I must leave off being young, I find many \_*douceurs\_* in being a sort of \_*chaperon\_*, for I am put on the sofa near the fire, and can drink as much wine as I like.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The parties at Chilham tended to be large and lively, and the Austens write of them fondly.

1. To Cassandra Austen, 14 January 1801. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. To Cassandra Austen, 6 November 1813. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)