The world of the English gentry that Jane Austen so brilliantly and delightfully depicted has fascinated generations of readers. In this series, we will look at the history behind the fiction. How have historians thought about the world of the “Long Eighteenth Century” (1750-1850) in England? How have Austen’s novels shaped our perceptions? What did they omit? And how do the many film adaptations of her work contribute to our ideas? No knowledge of Austen’s work is necessary, and the lectures/discussions will approach the subject from the viewpoint of an historian, not that of a literary specialist.

September 10: Miss Austen, Pre- and Posthumously
A brief introduction to Jane Austen, her writing, and the life that she and her works have taken on in subsequent generations. We will look at the relationship between her novels, the screen adaptations, and our ideas about English history that they have generated.

September 17: Two In-laws and Two Revolutions
Jane Austen’s sisters-in-law Eliza and Anne had direct connections to the two great revolutions of the 18th century, bringing the wider world of desperate politics into the quiet life of the parsonage. Revolution changed England in profound and unexpected ways.

September 24: Brothers Frank, Charles, and the Problem of Empire
Two of Jane Austen’s brothers were officers in the Royal Navy; their careers illustrate the growing place of England in the wider world and the debates that accompanied the emergence of an empire.

October 1: Brother James and Religious Anxieties
The Reverend James Austen provides us with a starting point for an exploration of the great upheavals in religion and philosophy that swirled around the Austens and the British.

October 8: Brother George and the Lives of the Less Fortunate
The Austens faced a terrible choice because of a handicapped son. What did the British think about illness, poverty, and the obligations of Christians to deal with social problems?

October 15: Sister Cassandra and the Place for Women
We will conclude with an examination of the place of women, the role of the family, and the emerging debate about both.
Some suggestions for further reading:


N.A.M. Roger, *The Wooden World* (various editions and reprints). Everything you ever wanted to know about the Royal Navy in Georgian times (and a few things you had no idea that you wanted to know).


Some interesting websites:


University of London podcasts on the Long Eighteenth Century: [https://www.history.ac.uk/podcasts/british-history-long-18th-century](https://www.history.ac.uk/podcasts/british-history-long-18th-century)

British History On-line (an extensive digital library of primary and secondary sources): [https://www.british-history.ac.uk/](https://www.british-history.ac.uk/)

History Today (UK’s leading periodical of history for a general audience). While subscriptions are required for full access, there is a considerable amount available for free, and the illustrations are fun, too: [https://www.historytoday.com/](https://www.historytoday.com/)