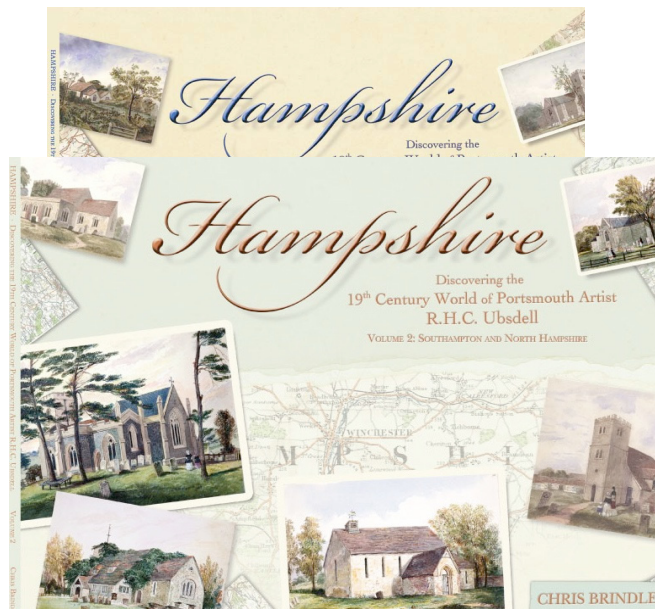




Anna Lefroy a portrait miniature in watercolour on ivory by Portsmouth Artist R.H.C. Ubsdell (1812-1887) Oct 1845



“Hampshire” The paintings of R.H.C. Ubsdell available in the theatre at the special price of £10 each

Sanditon

First Performance at the Headgate Theatre Colchester

Friday 27th June 2014

FIRST HALF

ACT 1 – THE DRAMATISED AUSTEN FRAGMENT

Scene 1 – Willenden (Friday 16th May 1817)	Tom, Mary, Mr Heywood, Charlotte,
Scene 2 – In the Coach (Friday 30th May)	Tom, Mary, Charlotte
Scene 3 – Trafalgar House, Sanditon (Friday)	Tom, Charlotte, Mary + Diana + Daisy
Scene 4- Trafalgar House, Sanditon (Friday)	Tom, Lady Denham, Clara, Charlotte, Daisy
Scene 5- The Terrace, Sanditon (Saturday)	Charlotte, Sir Edward, Tom, Lady Denham, Clara
Scene 6 – Trafalgar House, Sanditon (Tuesday)	Diana, Tom, Charlotte
Scene 7 - Trafalgar House, Sanditon (Thursday)	Arthur, Charlotte, Susan, Diana
Scene 8 - From The Terrace, Sanditon (Saturday)	Mary, Charlotte, Tom, Diana, Sidney

SECOND HALF

ACT 2 – ADAPTATION & COMPLETION OF THE LEFROY FRAGMENT

Scene 1 – Trafalgar House, Sanditon (Saturday)	Tom, Sidney, Mary/Lady Denham, Clara, Arthur, Charlotte, Daisy/Susan
Scene 2 – On the Cliffs (Monday)	(Lady Denham, Clara, Sir Edward) (Filmed Sequence + Letitia, Charlotte & Felicity) (+Sidney, George, Tom, Susan & Diana)
Scene 3 – Trafalgar House (Tuesday Night)	Tom, George, Sidney, Lady Denham, Charlotte, Diana, + Daisy
Scene 4 – Trafalgar House & Library (an hour later)	Sidney, George, + Tom
Scene 5 - On The Beach (Wednesday)	Sir Edward/Sidney, Tom, Arthur, Lady Denham, Charlotte, Clara, Felicity, Susan, Diana
Scene 6 - Trafalgar House (Thursday morning)	Tom, Sidney, Clara, Charlotte, Lady Denham, Jebb
Scene 7 - Trafalgar House (Friday morning)	Tom, Arthur, Clara, Charlotte, Sir Edward
Scene 8 - Sanditon Chain Link Pier Opening 10 years Later	Tom, Arthur, Sidney, Mary, Charlotte, Diana, Susan

Mr. Tom Parker – Vincent Webb
 Mrs. Mary Parker, Felicity Lambe & Jebb the shop-keeper – Bonnie Adair
 Mr Heywood & George Tracy – Adam Bone
 Charlotte Heywood – Amy Burrows
 Daisy the Maid & Susan Parker – Ruby O'Mara
 Lady Denham – Barbara (Babs) Rudall
 Clara Brereton – Lucy-Jane Quinlan
 Sir Edward Denham & Sidney Parker – Pete Ashmore
 Arthur Parker – Ricky Ketley-Prentice
 Diana Parker & Letitia Beaufort – Alice Osmanski

Sound & Lights - Mr Roger Mannion
 Front of House – Mrs Jill Brindle & Mrs Christine Mannion
 A.V. & Film - Steve Dorrington & Tristram Syrett of Colchester's Aura Films
 Theatre Advisers - Dave & Dawn King, Front Desk - Mandy Kerr

Written, Directed & Produced by Chris Brindle

Sanditon

At the beginning of 1817, Jane Austen, one of the greatest writers in the English language, was dying, and in the days before Morphine, in great pain. In her imagination she escaped to a magical seaside place, full of speculators, eccentrics, and hypochondriacs in search of a cure; and started writing *Sanditon*.

As with all her stories she imbued it with her life experience:- in this case, illness, the search for a cure, travelling on visits; and the financial world of men she had experienced staying in London with brother Henry to finalise *Emma* and *Mansfield Park* for publication.

By 1817 Austen had devoted her life to writing, and to inspiring a growing number of nieces and nephews. In this period before death she was thinking about her Legacy to them, which she would ask sister Cassandra to guard.

First in line to inherit the Austen Legacy would be the children of James, Jane's eldest brother:- first born Anna (who married Ben Lefroy), and the children of James's second wife; James-Edward, and Caroline. All very interested, in their own way, in claiming their inheritance.

The winner in the first instance from the will of Cassandra in March 1845 was Anna, who by the publication of a number of short stories in 1841 and 1842 had shown herself to be the most serious writer. She inherited the major literary inheritance:- the manuscript of Jane's last unfinished novel *Sanditon*.

This was the moment Anna had been waiting for, possession of the manuscript gave the moral authority to complete it. Anna had been brought up with Jane in the rectory at Steventon, and after marriage had moved close to Chawton to be near her idol in the closing months of her life. Daring to write is a difficult task at the best of times; to compose something, which in the first place, satisfies yourself; and in the second, you feel prepared to expose to the ridicule and criticism of others. In Anna's case she would have to write something of the quality of the Austen original, and deal with the reactions of Jane's surviving siblings; and her own half brother and sister, who had their own ideas on how their late Aunt should be memorialised. Widowed young and left with six daughters and a son; Anna was in a precarious financial position, dependent on support, chiefly from her half-brother, who she couldn't risk antagonising.

There was also the problem of the plot. Jane Austen had provided a wonderful setting and a wonderful cast of characters, and their basic motivations, but there was no plot. Did Jane talk to Anna about *Sanditon*? They met at the time of the writing, so the answer is very obviously Yes! Did Jane tell Anna how it was going to end? Well, if you read the Austen straight through to the Lefroy Continuation, I think the answer is also Yes! *Sanditon* would struggle financially, but in the end the Parker brothers would work

together to rescue the situation. But how? If that is the ending, how do you get there? Bearing in mind the financial disgrace of Uncle Henry's bank collapse, could Anna dare to write that into the plot? I think not. Could Jane have done so? Oh Yes, she made use of every other inspiration she found around her!

Ultimately Anna's Continuation was to remain unfinished, until today, and it was Anna's rich half-brother James-Edward, the vicar of Bray, who, with a contribution from Anna, won the race to commemorate their Aunt by publishing the first biography in 1869, and thus create the 'Legend that is Jane Austen'.

For me, this is a fantastic story, illustrated in just two paintings by my great great grandfather R.H.C. Ubsdell (1812-1887). The first is his 'Sermon at St. Lawrence' of April 1842 where he depicts Anna seeking the guidance of the Bishop of Winchester. The second is a miniature of Anna in October 1845 posed as an author at her writing desk, surely intended to form a frontispiece to Anna's proposed *Sanditon* completion.

So did Anna fail? Absolutely not! Taken together the Austen and Lefroy fragments get us two thirds of the way through the *Sanditon* story. Taking the dialogue out from both, and putting it in a play format, frees us from the confines of having to follow any particular prose style. We are also not obliged to carry on creating incidents to fill some 300 pages of novel; instead we are compelled to distil the action into a performance span of a little over 2 hours. But above all in the hands of six experienced professional, and four highly talented amateur actors, the characters come alive, and we see what *Sanditon* is, Austen's greatest work, a glorious romp and celebration of life.

The first half of the play is purely an adaptation of the Austen, and you might like to consider in the interval, how *you* would have continued the story? The first three scenes of the second half are Lefroy, with sufficient plot spliced-in to be able to continue, with much of the rest tying-in plot elements started by Lefroy. The end of the second half combines contemporary events with historical precedents, and shows that, in two centuries nothing has really changed.

Tonight is a unique event. It is a never performed piece of Austen and virtually unknown piece by her niece presented for the first time. As such it is still "a work in progress" that I hope can go on to bigger and better things. It is also a first work by an unknown writer, presented without the support of any professional or amateur theatre company:- just highly talented individuals, squeezing this into their busy schedules, fascinated by the project as much as I am.

Chris Brindle June 27th 2014

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www.sanditon.info

www.ubsdell.com