

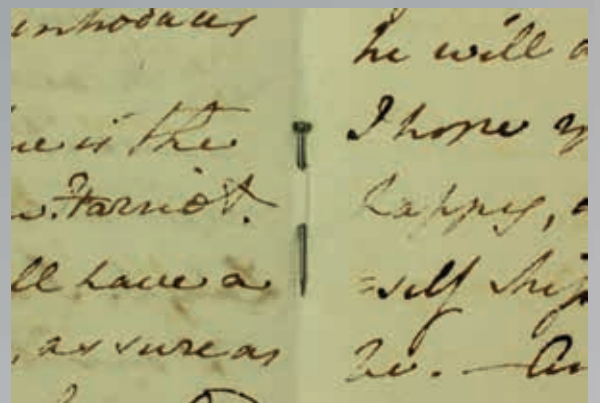
‘I do not care a pin about it myself’¹

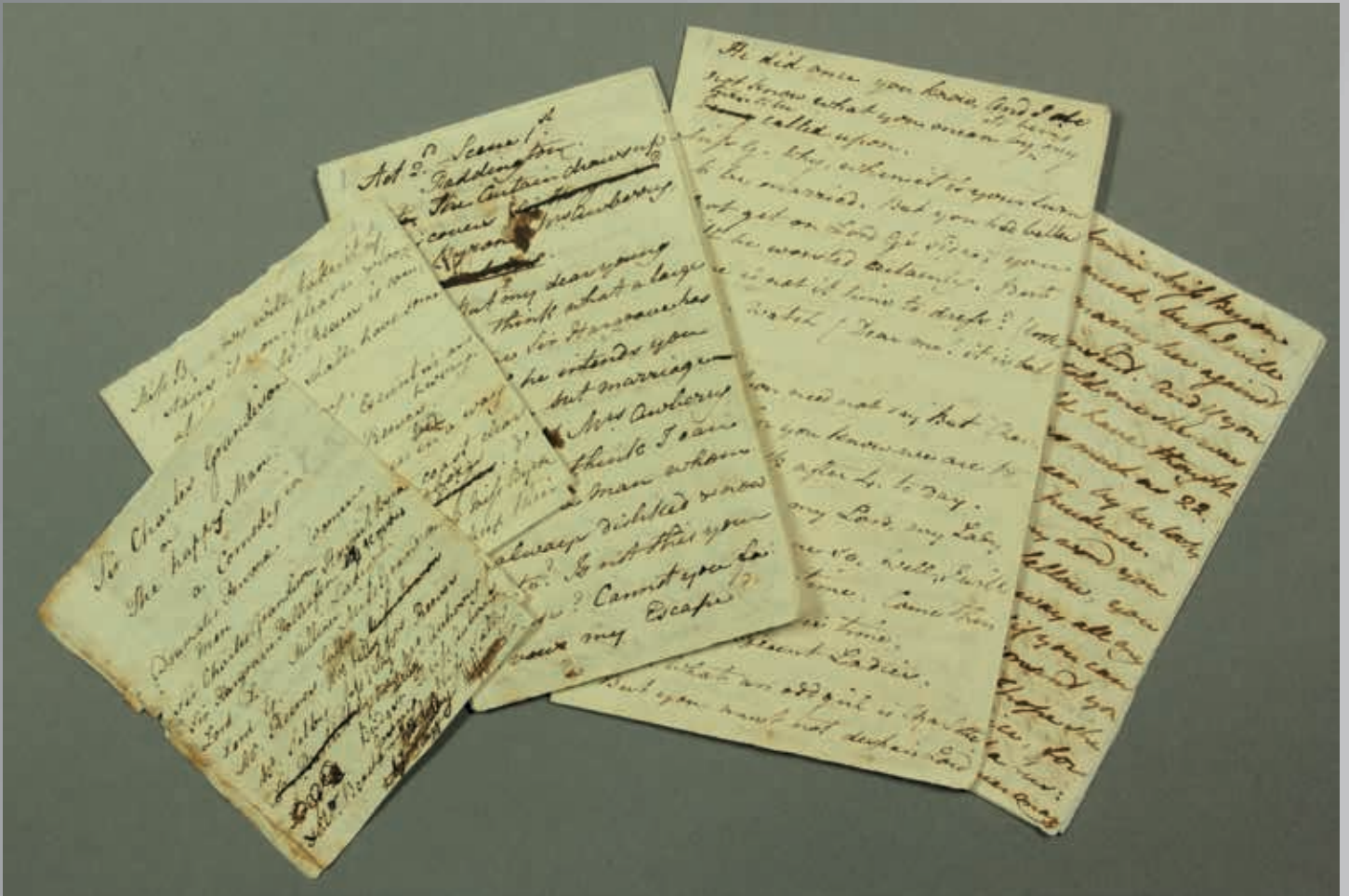
ANDREW HONEY, Book Conservator at the Bodleian, tells us of his excitement at discovering an original Jane Austen pin on our Sir Charles Grandison manuscript, and what this, and other pins, tell us about their use.

One of the more surprising literary relics held by the Bodleian Library, Oxford is a humble pin. It arrived in 2011 when the Library, with generous help from National Heritage Memorial Fund, Friends of the Bodleian, Friends of the National Libraries, and the Jane Austen Memorial Trust managed to acquire the manuscript of Jane Austen’s *The Watsons*, her last fiction manuscript to remain in private hands.² The pin had been removed from the manuscript in 1924 by no less a person than the noted Austen editor R. W. Chapman. He carefully pinned it with two others into a new piece of paper, noting that: ‘These three pins were removed by me for the purpose of transcribing. I suggest that they be not put back in their places, where they must sooner or later corrode the paper’. Austen had used the pins to add three lengthy insertions on paper patches into the manuscript by pinning them at their relevant places. Unfortunately, in the years after Chapman two of the pins were lost and only one arrived at the Bodleian with the manuscript. It has been possible to identify exactly how the patches were attached to the underlying manuscript leaves by matching the holes and corrosion marks left in the patches with those in the leaves, though it has not been possible to identify which of the three patches the remaining pin belonged to.

A pin used by Jane Austen to fasten the leaves of *Sir Charles Grandison* (Chawton House Library, S1 MS AUS, booklet 5, pp. 12-13).

The remaining pin which was used to attach a paper patch to the manuscript of *The Watsons* (The Bodleian Libraries, The University of Oxford, MS. Eng. e. 3764, fol. iii)





Having seen Chapman's note and the surviving pin, it was with rising excitement then that I surveyed the manuscript of *Sir Charles Grandison* at Chawton House Library last year.³ I was not expecting pins – or more excitingly pins still in place; the purpose of my visit to the Library was to record the watermarks found in the paper for an appendix on Jane Austen's papers in the forthcoming edition of her fiction manuscripts.⁴ While this isn't the place to discuss the literary merits of the work which Kathryn Sutherland has noted 'might be evidence of Austen encouraging a young niece in the rudiments of the craft of writing', more importantly she notes it is 'of interest for the material clues it offers for Austen's habits of composition'.⁵ *Sir Charles Grandison* is the only Austen fiction manuscript that has not been conserved or altered, and the only one to remain as Austen would have known it. In structure, the manuscript is a series of five short booklets with three of the thickest booklets held together by pins pushed through their centrefolds (see left).

This use of pins is different to the pinned insertions of *The Watsons*, but shows the author's repeated use of pins and allows us to compare the four known Austen pins. All four are handmade two-piece tinned brass common straight pins with applied wound wire heads, of a type in use from the sixteenth century until the 1830s when Lemuel W. Wright's patented pin-making machine came into use. Pins were often used as *ad hoc* fastenings for papers and documents before the invention of the paper clip or staple, and the Bodleian has a collection of dated and dateable pins removed from manuscripts in the late nineteenth century.

It is easy to assume that they are sewing pins but the size of the Austen pins might point to another use. All of the four pins are $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long, shorter than the 1 to 3 inch pins that Mary Beaudry defines as sewing pins in her recent book on the material culture of needlework.⁶ Their

short length might indicate that they were dress pins, pins that were used for fastening clothes, head wear and apron bibs until fasteners became mass produced and thus cheaper. Could these be Austen's own dress pins, similar to the one that she uses for comic effect in *Sense and Sensibility*? Austen uses a dress pin to draw attention to the distracted nature of Lady Middleton – 'unfortunately in bestowing these embraces, a pin in her ladyship's head dress slightly scratching the child's neck, produced from this pattern of gentleness such violent screams'.⁷ These four pins, common domestic objects of the time and unimportant in themselves, not only allow us to imagine Jane Austen in the process of composition, but to also see her in the physical process of manufacturing booklets from materials close at hand. ●

Our *Sir Charles Grandison* manuscript is travelling to the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington this year for the exhibition *Will & Jane: Shakespeare, Austen, and the Cult of Celebrity* from 6 August to 6 November 2016. It will also be loaned to the Bodleian Library in Oxford for a Jane Austen exhibition in 2017.

¹ Jane Austen, *Volume the Third* (London, British Library, Add. MS. 65381, fol. 50r).

² The manuscript is now Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Eng. e. 3764, and the pin is fol. iii.

³ Jane Austen, *Sir Charles Grandison or the happy man, a comedy in 6 acts* (Hampshire, Chawton House Library, S1 MS AUS).

⁴ Andrew Honey, 'The papers used by Jane Austen', in *The Fiction Manuscripts of Jane Austen*, ed. by Kathryn Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

⁵ Kathryn Sutherland, 'Sir Charles Grandison', in *The Fiction Manuscripts of Jane Austen*, ed. by Kathryn Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

⁶ Mary Beaudry, *Findings: the material culture of needlework and sewing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 24.

⁷ *Sense and Sensibility*, Volume I, Chapter XXI.