

into the service of the Prince Regent – and retired to East End House, Alresford. This little town lies at the lower point of a small triangle completed by Steventon and Chawton, both of Jane Austen relevance. (See ordinance map at p 523 of Chapman's edition of the *Letters*.) The constant visiting among the Austen kin which is so noticeable a feature of Jane's correspondence continued after her death, and Cooke recalls many day-long journeys into Kent or Sussex, travelling with the 'large family coach with box seat and rumble behind, which held six and eight people, a Barouche holding six, and the pony chaise', to stay at Kippington, or Danny, or Chevening. He preferred the Hampshire Austens to his own branch, however. 'The Austens of Sevenoaks and Kent generally are an eminently disagreeable and consequential race', he wrote, making an exception only of 'our kindest and favourite relatives, uncle and Mrs George Austen of Sevenoaks'. This view is confirmed by the critical tone of Jane Austen's references to the Motley Austens and her 'connections in West Kent'.⁵

Mrs George Lennard Austen, the favourite aunt, born Harriett Hughes, was doubly related to John George Cooke, for she was the niece of Louisa Hardy, who had married John George's uncle the heroic Captain John Cooke. She was, moreover, doubly linked to the Austens, not only through her husband, but through her brother, George William Hughes, later (1808) Hughes-d'Aeth, who in 1816 married Harriet Knatchbull. When in 1820 Harriett's brother Sir Edward Knatchbull, 9th Baronet, married Fanny, Jane's most loved niece, and daughter of Edward (Austen) Knight, a pretty tangle of cross connections was set up. (See Tables).

To clarify the Austen record, we must at this point distinguish two families called Cooke, both cousins of Jane's parents. Our John George Cooke's family claimed cousinship with Jane's father; but Jane's mother had a cousin Cassandra Leigh, who married the Reverend Samuel Cooke. He and his children Theophilus, George and Mary often appear in Jane's letters. Jane does not mention the Cookes on her father's side, but notes other members of that family, Francis Motley Austen and his wife, and Harriett Lennard Austen their cousin, Colonel Thomas Austen and his first wife, the Reverend John Austen of Chevening, and young Frances Austen, whose marriage to Captain Holcroft in 1808 provoked the comment already quoted.

Among other relations whom Cooke mentions in boyhood are his cousins William, Heathcote, and George Campion, William Holcroft, Edward Bridges Rice (grandson of Edward Knight), and Captain George Dixon, the last connected through his father's first marriage. New Zealand interest attaches to his friends the Greenwoods of nearby Bramdean, for one of the brothers, Robert, ultimately emigrated to Taranaki in 1850,⁶ and a sister, Emily, had married the Cookes' great