

This important anniversary year for "Pride and Prejudice" is also the 50 anniversary year of the release of The Merseybeats' first hit, "It's love that really counts". In Spencer Leigh's information – packed book, "The Cavern: the most famous club in the world", one reads that The Merseybeats appeared on stage, at the club, on Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> August 1963, two days before the release of the record.

The anniversaries of Jane Austen's book and The Merseybeats' single are entwined in the sense that they both honour love, divorced from the taint of materialism. Jane would surely have approved of the sentiments expressed in the song. She never married: maybe she was too much of a romantic. She wrote happy-ever-after endings for herself in her novels, though, and became the great writer whose work we cherish. Maybe Tom Lefroy, in abandoning her, did her a favour. Would she have written those novels had she married?

It's not known how Jane felt about Tom Lefroy as she became older. One might imagine a woman in her position thinking of him in a more detached way, but still with a tinge of regret, given her earlier romantic yearnings. In the 1930s, an Austrian author wrote novelle about women who, early in life, had become infatuated with men who had appeared to be enormously exciting, glamorous and charming. Decades later, the women encountered the men again and perceived them more realistically through adult eyes. In different ways, though, the women wanted to pay homage to the past and to the men who had inspired them and had made life magical, however briefly.

You may agree with the underlying message conveyed by these novelle: that it is important to honour the past and the people who were once agents of change and inspiration. If that is the case, 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1963 could be an important anniversary date for you- or for us, I should say- because it was in August 1963 that The Merseybeats threw open for us the doors to the numinous, in a way never to be forgotten.

(Note: Spencer Leigh's book "The Cavern : the most famous club in the world" was published by SAF Publishing Ltd. in 2008. Jane Austen's astrological chart can be found on numerous web sites and in publications by the AFA)