

Family ties



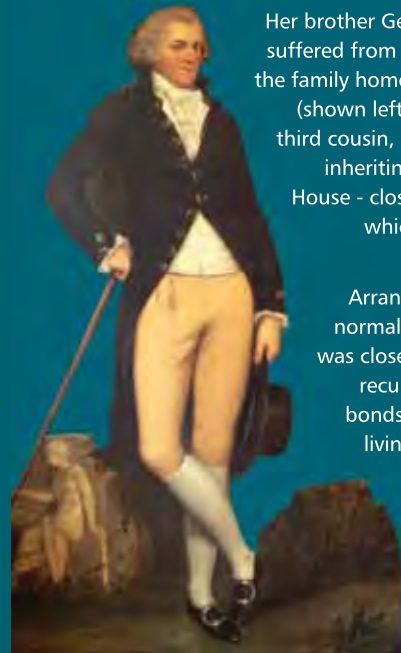
Jane's father, George Austen, (1731-1805), was the rector of St Nicholas Church in the parish of Steventon. Reverend Austen took in boys to tutor.



His wife Cassandra (née Leigh) (1739-1827) was a sociable, witty woman whom George had met while studying in Oxford. Cassandra was visiting her uncle, Theophilus Leigh, Master of Balliol College. When Cassandra left the city, George followed her to Bath and continued to court her until they got married on 26 April 1764, at the church of St Swithun in Bath.

Although a close knit family, by today's standards the household was subject to somewhat fluid arrangements regarding the care of offspring. As was customary for the gentry at the time, Jane's parents sent her as an infant to be cared for by a farming neighbour, Elizabeth Littlewood.

Her brother George, who is thought to have suffered from epilepsy, also lived away from the family home. And the third child, Edward (shown left), was adopted by his father's third cousin, Mr Thomas Knight, eventually inheriting Godmersham and Chawton House - close to the house in Chawton to which Jane and Cassandra moved with their mother.



Arrangements like these were normal for the time the family was close and affectionate and recurring themes of family bonds and respectable rural living would play a strong part in Jane's writing.



The Austen family: what to see

The most extensive collection of memorabilia relating to the Austen family is showcased at Jane Austen's House, Chawton, now sensitively refurbished. See overleaf to find out more...

Steventon and beyond: education and early influences

Jane Austen was born on 16 December 1775 at Steventon Rectory in north Hampshire, where her parents had moved a year previously with three of Jane's older siblings. Henry was born before Jane, then a further three children arrived, meaning that the Austen brood numbered eight in all.

George Austen, known as 'the handsome proctor' at Balliol College, was a reflective, literary man, who took pride in his children's education.

Most unusually for the period, he owned more than 500 books and was forward thinking in encouraging his daughters to read widely.

Again unusually, when Jane's only sister, Cassandra, left for school in 1782, she was accompanied by Jane, aged just seven. Their mother wrote of their bond, 'If Cassandra's head had been going to be cut off, Jane would have hers cut off too'.

The two sisters attended schools in Oxford, Southampton and Reading. In Southampton the girls (and their cousin Jane Cooper) left the school when they caught a fever brought to the city by troops returning from abroad. Their cousin's mother died and Jane also contracted the illness, becoming very unwell but, luckily for literary posterity, survived.

The girls' brief schooling was finally curtailed due to constraints upon the family's finances. Jane returned to the rectory in 1787 to begin writing a collection of poems, plays and short stories which she dedicated to friends and family. This, her *Juvenilia*, encompassed her early writings.

A History of England, perhaps the most celebrated of these early works, can be viewed online at the British Library website (www.bl.uk/onlinegallery). Even in this, one of Austen's earliest texts, the reader glimpses the wit that was to come. The prose is peppered with phrases illustrating her flair for detached, literary anticlimax: 'Lord Cobham was burnt alive, but I forget what for.'

'Give a girl an education and introduce her properly into the world, and ten to one but she has the means of settling well.'

Jane Austen

Winchester



In 1817, suffering from a kidney disorder, Jane Austen came to Winchester to be close to her physician. Jane only lived a few weeks in the house in College Street but continued to write, pencilling the short poem *Winchester at the Races* to honour St Swithun.

She died - only 41 years old - on 18 July 1817 and was laid to rest in the 'long old solemnly grey and lovely shape of the cathedral'. As a woman, the heartbroken Cassandra was not able to attend the funeral, despite losing a sister she described as 'the sun of my life'.

The original memorial stone over Jane's tomb (see above right) makes no reference to her literary achievements, so a brass plaque was added in 1872 to redress this. In 1900 a stained glass memorial window, funded by public subscription, was erected in her memory. The library in the cathedral occasionally showcases a silhouette of Jane Austen (above) with the unauthenticated inscription, *Jane Austin [sic] by herself*.

Winchester: what to see

Winchester's official tourist guides provide walking tours of Jane Austen's Winchester and cathedral tours are also available. Visit www.winchestertouristguides.com or www.winchester-cathedral.org.uk for more information. Entry into the City Museum is free, it opens April to October: Mon - Sat 10am to 5pm, Sun 12pm to 5pm. November to March: Tue - Sat 10am to 4pm, Sun 12pm to 4pm, tel. 01962 863 064.

To speak to someone about any of the above call Winchester Tourist Information Centre, on 01962 840 500. Further information about visiting Winchester including accommodation listings and where to eat is at www.visitwinchester.co.uk

Please note: The College Street residence is now a private house.

Steventon: what to see.

Other than a towering lime tree, offspring of one planted by Jane's brother James, and a clump of nettles that marks the spot where the family well used to stand, nothing remains at the site of the rectory other than the rural tranquillity that was perhaps as central an element of Austen's creativity as the society of her day.

At St Nicholas Church there is a bronze plaque dedicated to the writer and you can see her elder brother's grave, along with those of other relatives.

The 1000-year old yew, which used to house the key in the time of the Austens, still yields berries - its secret, central hollow intact. Further details about St Nicholas Church can be obtained from the present rector by emailing him at michael.kenning@telorcoed.co.uk

The Wheatsheaf Inn in North Waltham, where Jane used to walk to collect the post, serves food to passers by and features open fires and cosy seating. tel: 01256 398 282 Post Code: RG25 2BB.

www.winchesteraustrail.co.uk

If you would like this leaflet in a larger format please contact the tourist information centre on 01962 840 500 or e-mail tourism@winchester.gov.uk



Jane Austen's ledger stone © John Crook 2009



The house in College Street © John Crook 2009

Today, the City Museum in Winchester displays a small collection of Austen memorabilia, including a handwritten poem entitled, *I've a pain in my head* (see cover), written around 1811.

The College Street residence is now a private house but Winchester's tourist guides link all the Austen landmarks in the city together in their fascinating tour, and informative cathedral tours are also available.

Winchester's final connection to Jane Austen's legacy is a more modern one. Colin Firth (see above left), whose portrayal of Mr Darcy in the 1995 BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* brought him widespread attention, went to school here. His performance in the role was given further renown when he took on the role of Mark Darcy in the 2001 Miramax film adaptation of *Bridget Jones' Diary*. The film touches on Austen's famous novel with plot and characterisation - meaning that Firth's casting lent an ironic, modern twist on the persona of the Austen anti-hero who came good. Another box office success came with Joe Wright's 2005 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* starring Keira Knightly (see left and overleaf). The regional première of this film was screened in Winchester.



Winchester City Council's tourism service would like to thank the following individuals and organisations for their help in producing this leaflet: Elizabeth Proudman, official Winchester tourist guide and Chair of the Jane Austen Society for her knowledge and input; Joe Low, photographer, for the images taken at Jane Austen's House, Chawton; Madelaine Smith and Louise West at Jane Austen's House, Chawton for their guidance and the images of her family featured in the **Family ties** section of this leaflet; Dr John Crook for the image of the original draft of *I've a pain in my head* on the front cover, and of Jane Austen's ledger stone, the house in College Street and the unauthenticated silhouette featured in the **Winchester** section of this leaflet; Revd. Michael Kenning, rector of Steventon Church for his help and advice throughout all stages of this project; Phil Howe at Hidden Britain Tours for his invaluable advice at the outset of the project; www.mollands.net for their kind permission to use featured illustrations from their online Austen archive; BBC Photo Library and Universal Pictures for their co-operation regarding the use of stills from two adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*. © Winchester City Council July 2009 Ref No. CUS0127-6763 .

AUSTEN

Landmarks of the author's life in Hampshire



'Jane lies in Winchester - blessed be her shade! Praise the Lord for making her, and her for all she made!'

Rudyard Kipling

As the film and television industry continues to delight us with exquisitely shot Jane Austen adaptations, the question of who the woman behind the novels actually was becomes ever more intriguing.

Maybe that's why each year thousands of visitors continue to flock to the landmarks of her life in Winchester and Hampshire's surrounding countryside to get closer to the 'real' Jane Austen.

Find out why visiting the area is leaving so many Austen readers with a lasting sense of history, place and person...



www.winchesteraustrail.co.uk

Travel information

The map opposite traces Jane Austen's life in Hampshire chronologically but you can plan the itinerary that best suits you. You might like to tie your visit in with our other mapped trails that overlap. Our cricket trail, for example, has link points at Alresford, Southampton and Winchester. For more details call 01962 840 500 or see www.cricketingwinchester.co.uk. Tips for getting to the various highlighted destinations on the map are shown below.

1-7 Getting to Steventon

To reach Steventon Rectory from Winchester, leave Winchester following signs to The Midlands, M3. Leave the M3 at Junction 7 and take the first exit to the A30 (signposted Basingstoke). At traffic lights turn left (A30) then turn right to North Waltham and follow signs to Steventon.

Hidden Britain Tours runs a 'Dancing Years' experience encompassing the site of the old rectory, St Nicholas Church and the grand houses Jane and Cassandra Austen visited socially. Call 01256 814 222 or visit www.hiddenbritaintours.co.uk

Alternatively, contact Winchester Tourist Information Centre on 01962 840 500 or visit www.winchestertouristguides.com to find out about taking a tour in the company of one of the district's official tourist guides.

8-9 Getting to Portsmouth

Direct trains leave Winchester station hourly for Portsmouth, journey duration one hour. Trains depart from London Waterloo every 15 minutes, journey duration around 2 hours. For more information and directions contact Portsmouth Visitor Information Centre, tel: 023 9282 6722.

www.winchesteraustrail.co.uk

10-15 Getting to Southampton

Trains leave Winchester every 15 minutes and take between 15 and 25 minutes to reach Southampton Central. Trains depart from London Waterloo every 25 minutes and take between 1 hour 15 minutes and 1 hour 40 minutes.

For directions by car, call Southampton Tourist Information Centre, tel: 023 8083 3333 or visit www.southampton.gov.uk

16-17 Getting to Chawton

Chawton, near Alton, lies 17 miles east of Winchester. 64 and X64 buses leave from stop J at Winchester Bus Station (opposite the tourist information centre) and reach Chawton roundabout in 30 minutes, a ten minute walk to the centre of Chawton.

Travel by train from Winchester Station to Alton, changing at Basingstoke then Hook - a 1 hour 25 minutes journey. Trains leave London Waterloo for Alton hourly. Visit www.nationalrail.co.uk or call 08457 484 950.

It's also possible to reach Alton by steam train using the Watercress Line from Alresford, journey duration 40 minutes. Visit www.watercressonline.co.uk for details or call 01962 733 810. A taxi from Alton Station to Chawton House costs approximately £7. Booking advised, tel: Chawton Cabs 01420 564 448 or Wilson's Taxis on 01420 877 77.

To visit from Winchester by car, follow signs to the A31 then to Chawton. To visit from London by car: from M25 Junction 12, M3 to Junction 5, B3349 to Odiham and Alton, follow signs for Chawton.

18 Getting to Winchester

Winchester is just under an hour by direct train from London Waterloo and between 15 and 25 minutes from Southampton Central. Drivers approaching Winchester from the north should exit at Junction 9 on the M3. From the South Coast use the M27 and M3; West Country A303, A34 and M3 and South East M20, M25 and M3 or A272.

For more information on planning your visit call Winchester Tourist Information Centre on 01962 840 500 or see www.visitwinchester.co.uk

JANE AUSTEN'S HAMPSHIRE



Sisterly love

It was Jane's older sister, Cassandra, who sketched the only first - hand likeness of the author - shown on the upper left of the map above. The tiny portrait, painted in 1810, bears lasting

witness to the description of her by Sir Egerton Brydges who had visited Steventon: 'Her hair was dark brown and curled naturally, her large dark eyes were widely opened and



expressive. She had clear brown skin and blushed so brightly and so readily.'

Coastal jaunts

Portsmouth

It was whilst Jane was visiting her brothers Charles and Frank, both serving officers in the Royal Navy in Portsmouth, that she was influenced to write *Mansfield Park*. In the novel she portrays the old city convincingly, touching on the squalor of its poverty. The naval dockyard she describes in *Mansfield Park* is now a sports field in neighbouring Portsea but the city still features the Georgian architecture which marks its development as a suburb serving the naval personnel who guarded the once heavy coastal fortifications.

Southampton

Jane, her mother and sister Cassandra moved to Southampton after the death of her father in 1805. Jane found living in a city a challenge after her country childhood. We know that the women spent much time out of doors, promenading along the city walls and taking excursions to the River Itchen and the ruins of Netley Abbey. Surviving correspondence also tells us that the three women travelled up the Beaulieu River, passing Buckler's Hard, an 18th century shipbuilding village, and Beaulieu Abbey. Jane also danced at the Dolphin Hotel.

Coastal Hampshire and the New Forest: what to see

Today's visitors can gain insight into Portsmouth's naval history by visiting:

- Portsmouth Historic Dockyard tel: 023 9283 766, web: www.historicdockyard.co.uk PO1 3LJ
- The Royal Armouries at Fort Nelson tel: 01329 233 734, PO17 6AN web: www.royalarmouries.org/visit-us/fort-nelson

For directions by car, details about Jane Austen Blue Badge Guide walks and the City of Southampton Society's Jane Austen Heritage Trail please call Southampton Tourist Information Centre, tel: 023 8083 3333 or visit www.southampton.gov.uk Other attractions:

- Netley Abbey, visit www.netleyabbey.info SO31 5GA
- Beaulieu River, contact New Forest Museum and Visitor Centre, tel: 023 8028 4404
- Buckler's Hard, tel: 01590 616 203 or visit www.bucklershard.co.uk SO42 7XB
- Beaulieu Abbey (within the grounds of Beaulieu National Motor Museum), tel: 01590 612 345 or visit www.beaulieu.co.uk SO42 7ZN

Jane Austen's House, Chawton

From 1809 until 1817 Jane lived in Chawton village near Alton with her mother, sister and their friend Martha Lloyd. Restored to the rural Hampshire she loved, Jane turned again to writing and it was here that she produced her greatest works, revising all previous drafts and writing *Mansfield Park*, *Emma* and *Persuasion* in their entirety.

Remarkably, even now the approach to Chawton is not so changed by progress as to be unrecognisable from what it was in Jane Austen's day, with thatched cottages remaining. The risk of flooding was a fact of life in eighteenth century Hampshire too, as Jane bemoans in March 1816: 'Our pond is brim full and our roads are dirty and our walls are damp, and we sit wishing every bad day may be the last.'

A museum to Jane's life, the house in which Jane lived so happily, now showcases Austen family portraits and touching memorabilia such as the handkerchief she embroidered for her sister, original manuscripts and a bookcase containing first editions of her novels.

Visitors can stand behind the modest occasional table at which Austen wrote, to admire the peaceful garden cultivated to feature 18th century plants.

Chawton: what to see

For the latest information about Jane Austen's house in Chawton visit: www.jane-austens-house-museum.org.uk or call 01420 832 62. Admission price: £6 per adult, concessions apply. Visit www.chawton.org for information about Edward's House, now Chawton House Library or call 01420 541 010. Guided tour price: £6 per adult, concessions apply. Postcode: GU34 1SJ.

Although there were adequate bedrooms for the sisters to have their own rooms, Jane and Cassandra chose to share a room, as they had done at Steventon. Jane rose early and practised the piano and made breakfast. We know that she was personally in charge of the sugar, tea and wine stores.

From 2009, work has been underway to mark the bicentenary of Jane Austen's arrival at the house in Chawton. Visitors can see the Austen family kitchen, renovated to reflect a typical Georgian layout; learn more about the life and times of Jane Austen in the Learning Centre and browse the well-stocked shop for the perfect Austen souvenir.

Also in the village is Jane's brother Edward's home - now Chawton House Library. The collection of women's writing from 1600 to 1830 stored here is accessible to visitors by prior arrangement.

'Our Chawton House how much we find already in it to our mind, and how convinced that when complete it will all other houses beat.'

Jane Austen

www.winchesteraustrail.co.uk