



JANE AUSTEN 250

Southampton 2025

The actress Sarah Siddons was Jane Austen's favourite actor. The Sarah Siddons Fan Club Theatre was named in her honour and is delighted to be supporting a range of heritage events that are being organised to celebrate Jane Austen's 250th Birthday!



Jane Austen visited Southampton as a seven-year-old schoolgirl, as a seventeen-year-old teenager and moved to the town in 1806 as a mature woman on the cusp of becoming a well-known author.

The Southampton year-long programme will reflect on Jane's life in the town, and the influences the town and its inhabitants had on her writing.

Enjoy creative walks, talks,
concerts, theatre and a cruise
all inspired by Austen



PERFORMANCES, CONCERTS, EVENTS

Thursday 5th June

Jane Austen's Show Tunes:

A Musical Journey through the songs of Charles Dibdin

Doors 7pm, 7.30pm Concert

St Michael's Church,
Bugle Street, Southampton.

*"Without Music, Life
would be a blank to me"*

Emma



2025 is the 280th birthday of son of Southampton Charles Dibdin, as well as the 250th birthday of the town's most famous resident, Jane Austen. Austen hired a piano whilst she lived in Southampton on which to play the tunes of one of her favourite composers, Charles Dibdin.

This performance celebrates Austen's Dibdin with a performance of his popular songs, which Austen loved and sang, brought to life by talented local folk musician Jeff Henry. Accompanying Jeff will be historian Nicola Pritchard-Pink, who shares insights into Austen's song collection, revealing what performing Dibdin's lively show songs at home might have been like for this famous author.

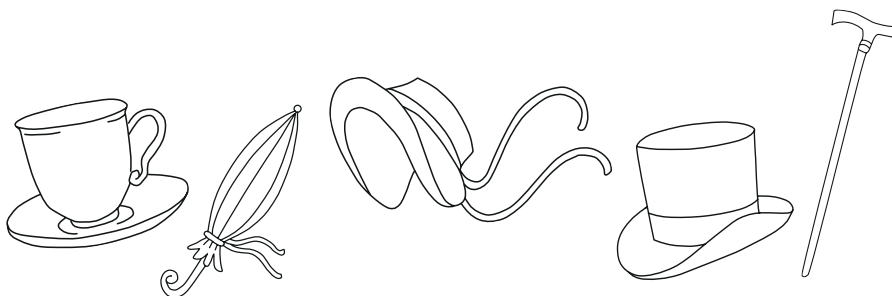


The setting for this concert is the historic medieval church of St Michaels, the oldest building within the old town dating from 1070 and well-known for its musical output and concerts. Guides will be on hand to highlight the history of the church.



Tickets £10

www.wegotickets.com/sarahsiddonsfanclub



24th - 26th June

'The Stinking Fish of Southampton'

Street theatre perambulation with the Sarah Siddons Fan Club Theatre

7.30pm

Starting from Holy Rood church,
High Street, Southampton.

*"Beware of the insipid vanities and
idle dissipations of the metropolis of
England; Beware of the unmeaning
luxuries of Bath and of the stinking
fish of Southampton"*

Love & Freindship (sic), 1790.

Jane Austen



A whole new production, reflecting on the social circle of Jane Austen.

Join Mrs Austen as she introduces you to her friends, neighbours, acquaintances and potential husbands for her unmarried daughters and visit the site of the Austens' home, the assembly rooms & bathing establishment and meet wealthy merchants, Army deserters, famous actors, debtors and dashing Naval officers.

Tickets £10

www.wegotickets.com/sarahsiddonsfanclub



Saturday 28th June

"Tea & Austen's Women"

2pm

October Books, Portswood

The Georgians invented the Coffee House; a place to go and discuss the important issues of the day, but for women it was the tea room, so join us for tea (or coffee!) and find out about the lives of women who lived in Southampton alongside Jane Austen. Their lives were often restricted, but new opportunities did occur to make a living, such as the writing of novels.

Alongside the growth in the popularity of tea, bookshops that were also circulating libraries were also a new phenomenon. What better place then to have a discussion than a bookshop!

Join Dr Cheryl Butler author of *"Jane Austen & Southampton Spa"* and *"First Impressions: Jane Austen's Southampton Circle 1780-1820"* at October Books.

Tickets £5

<https://octoberbooks.org/pages/events>

"But indeed I would rather have nothing but tea"

Mansfield Park



Saturday 12th July

The Friendship of Jane Austen & Martha

2pm

Tudor House, Bugle Street

A dramatic monologue with the actor Jane Glennie, about the lifelong friendship between Jane Austen and Martha Lloyd, who came to live with the family when they moved to Southampton.

Tickets £12

<https://southamptonmuseumsandgallery.co.uk/events/friendship-jane-austen-and-martha/>



Sunday 20th July

Tea & Scandal!!

2-4pm

Townhill Park House (aka The Gregg School)

Join us for a dish of tea, cakes and gossip, in the company of writer & historian Dr Cheryl Butler, in the beautiful Walnut Room, of Townhill Park House.



"This is a sad story about Mrs Powlett. I should not have suspected her of such a thing."

Jane Austen to her Sister Cassandra,
Southampton 1808

Hear about the scandals of the day that so enthralled and entangled the Austen Family: an aunt on trial, the Hastings Conspiracy, bankruptcy and the Powlett Affair! Not to mention the transgressions of Memory Middleton and his wife, the Jamaican Plantation heiress Anne Morse, owners of Townhill Park House: events that inspired plots in *Pride & Prejudice* and *Sanditon*!

Booking information: events@thegreggschool.org

Sunday 31st August

All at Sea with Jane Austen

11:30am – 6pm

Cruise, SS Shieldhall

"I can safely say, that the happiest part of my life has been spent on board a ship"

Persuasion



A maritime cruise on the Shieldhall. Water parties and yachting were favourite pastimes during Jane's time in Southampton and she took trips to Hythe and Netley. Her landlord, the marquis of Lansdowne, almost drowned when his catamaran capsized, the friends of Austen, the Lances, also had a shock when their family yacht foundered!

Relive some of Jane's trips with an excursion on Steamship Shieldhall, which is also celebrating a birthday this year, 70 years young!

The cruise will pass down Southampton Water, into the Solent and will then enter Portsmouth Harbour, before returning to her Southampton berth.

The Shieldhall Padre will be on board to conduct a Merchant Navy Day Service.

See website for information on Tickets and boarding

<https://ss-shieldhall.co.uk/>



Thursday 25th September

“Tea & Money” Coffee House Conversations

2pm-5pm

God's House Tower



*“No coffee, I thank you,
for me - never take coffee -
A little tea if you please”*
Emma

The Georgians invented the Coffee House; a place to go and discuss the important issues of the day, so join us for tea and cake and learn a something about the banking crisis that rocked the Austen family, and hear the stories of the poor debtors who found themselves in God's House Prison when Jane lived in Southampton.

Event supported by the Royal Society of Arts

Tickets £8 (including tea & cake)

www.godshousetower.org.uk

EXHIBITIONS & OPEN DAYS

From 29th March – October

A VERY RESPECTABLE COMPANY, EXHIBITION: Jane Austen & her Southampton Circle

Sea City Museum, Southampton



*“My idea of good company,
Mr Elliot, is the company
of clever, well-informed
people, who have a great deal
of conversation; that is what
I call good company.”*

Persuasion

Jane Austen's circle of friends and neighbours included Ann Newell - her next-door neighbour, an absentee landowner of plantations and slaves, Charlotte Fitzhugh, who married into a wealthy East India Company family and was a superfan of Austen's favourite actress Sarah Siddons and Anne Middleton, the mixed-race plantation heiress born in Jamaica, who married in India and who had her private life splashed across national newspapers. Women who could easily find themselves portrayed among the characters found within the pages of Mansfield Park, Emma and Sanditon. Descendants have loaned items from family archives to provide new and largely unseen material linked to Austen and her networks, including the Austen Family Household Book.

<https://seacitymuseum.co.uk/whats-on/jane-austen-exhibition/>

A new book “First Impressions: Jane Austen's Southampton Circle 1780-1820” has been published to run alongside the exhibition.

<https://www.hobnobpress.co.uk/>

Wednesday 4th June

Pear Tree Church Open Day, Exhibition & Talk

Jane @ Peartree, 2pm – 4pm

Free Event

The historic Pear Tree Church was opened in 1620. By the eighteenth century it was the most fashionable church in Southampton, said to be the inspiration for Thomas Grey's Elogy in a Country Churchyard.



*"Everyone who comes to
Southampton finds it either
their duty or pleasure to call
upon us"*

Elizabeth Butler Harrison, cousin to Jane Austen, was a member of the congregation. Jane stayed with the family when she was seventeen and stood as god-mother to her cousin's eldest daughter, Elizabeth Matilda Butler Harrison.

Visit the Austen family memorial and the exhibition on the history of the church used by the Austen family. You can also sit on the writer's bench commissioned to commemorate Austen's link with the Church, and enjoy an afternoon talk on Jane & Peartree at 2.30pm.

Refreshments will also be available at the Church

<https://www.peartreeandstmarkschurches.org>

Sundays

Jane Austen at Westgate Tower

10am - 3pm

Westgate Tower, Westgate Street, Southampton

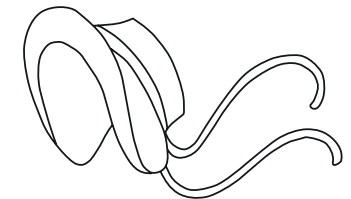
Free to enter

Explore Westgate Tower, with a small Jane Austen display highlighting her connections with Southampton.



Sundays 6 April, 4 May, 8 June,
'Jane Austen in Georgian Southampton' walking tour
Departing from Westgate at 11am

<http://www.seesouthampton.co.uk>



Saturday 18th October

Study Day: A Day at the Spa

10:15am - 4pm

Southampton Art Gallery Lecture Theatre

To celebrate the 250th anniversary of Jane Austen's birth, this study day will take a sojourn into Regency Southampton to explore the town as it might have been around the time of Jane Austen's residence in the early 1800s.



Speakers will include Dr Cheryl Butler, Dr Maria Newbery, Andy Skinner, Helen Howe and Jane Glennie and will explore varied topics including: 'Sea Bathing & Taking the Waters', 'Tea-Drinking- A Cup of Scandal Broth', 'Southampton and the Second Hundred Years War', 'The Georgian Town via the Art Gallery Collection', 'The Austen Sisterhood & the Navy.'

The day will also provide an opportunity to visit the Jane Austen display in the museum galleries.

Tickets: £30

<https://southamptonmuseumsandgallery.co.uk/events/study-day-jane-austen-and-southampton/>

JANE AUSTEN WALKING FESTIVAL

"I walk. I prefer walking"

Walking became very popular in the eighteenth century, doctors promoted it for health reasons, fashionable leaders of society liked to be seen strolling – they were known as loungers – although Elizabeth Austen described the Duchess of Devonshire and her sister as being: "dressed like their maids" and that they "strolled about Southampton like showmen." The passion for the picturesque encouraged walks in the countryside, and the obsession with the gothic led visitors to medieval ruins. Jane Austen, like her most well-known heroine Lizzie Bennet, liked a long walk, such as the five miles she travelled to visit her friends the Lances.

The Southampton Jane Austen Walking Festival has embraced all these themes, you can join us as a 'lounger', as a Lizzie Bennet, or just for the pleasure of a healthy walk.

4th April – 7th September

In the Footsteps of Jane Austen

Fridays at 2pm and Saturdays at 11am

Starting at the Bargate

A traditional guided walk in Jane Austen's footsteps with the Southampton Tourist Guides. Find out about Jane and the time she spent in the old town of Southampton.

Tickets £10

<https://wegottickets.com/TourGuides1976>

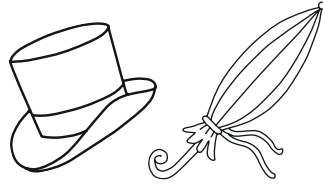


Saturday 12th April

Walking with Jane & Mr Darcy

10am

Meet at St Michael's Square



A well-being walk - with the real Mr Darcy - Mark Darcy (not only a well-known character in the Bridget Jones novels and based on Mr. Darcy) but also local wellbeing guru Mark Darcy of Mark Darcy New Wellbeing.

As our Mark Darcy says, "The purpose is to bring people together to help improve their lives, health, and wellbeing while having meaningful conversations and connections. I encourage everyone to bring an open mind and a willingness to learn and share. The possibilities are endless, and you have many reasons not to come, but I promise you will not regret it, so maybe make a different choice and create a new experience.

For this walk, alongside Mark, Austen historian Cheryl Butler will explain how 'melancholia' was treated in the time of Jane Austen when Southampton was a watering place and health spa. The talk and walk will be 2 hours, around 3 miles, at a very easy pace; no worries about pace at all.

If you have any questions, please get in touch by emailing:
mark@markdarcy.co.uk

Booking: via Eventbrite. The cost is £10 and all the money goes to New Forest Wellbeing Community Interest Company.

We kindly ask that if for any reason you cannot make it, please cancel your registration at least 48 hours before the walk. This will mean someone else can take your space and enjoy the benefits. No refunds but it will go to this good cause

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/wellbieng-talk-walk-with-jane-mr-darcy-tickets-1246986753949?aff=oddtcreator>

Sunday 4th May

"NB There will be very few Dates in this History", Jane Austen's History of ~~England~~ Southampton.

Costumed Guided Walk in the company of the Sarah Siddons Fan Club Theatre.
Pre-booking strongly advised.

11 am – 12.30 pm

Starting point: God's House Tower, Winkle Street, Southampton.

Join our costumed guides and take a walk around old Southampton and find out about what inspired Jane as a writer, where she lived, who her neighbours were, the latest gossip, where to meet Mr Darcy.

Led by Institute of Tourism Guides who specialise in Austen tours, joined by actors who will give short readings from contemporary eighteenth century letters, poems and novels, appropriate to each stopping point.

Tickets £7 (early bird discount)

www.wegotickets.com/sarahsiddonsfanclub



Sunday 4th May

Trafalgar Days

Costumed Guided Walk in the company of the Sarah Siddons Fan Club Theatre.
Pre-booking strongly advised.

2pm – 3.30pm

Starting point: Holy Rood Church, High Street, Southampton.

Join our costumed guides and hear Naval stories and links to Admiral Nelson and Frank Austen, a tale of beef burgers, flogging and gambling, including a visit to St Michael's Church to view the 'admirals memorials'.
Led by Institute of Tourism Guides who specialise in Austen tours, joined by actors who will give short readings from contemporary eighteenth century letters, poems and novels, appropriate to each stopping point.

Tickets £7 (early bird discount)

www.wegottickets.com/sarahsiddonsfanclub



Thursday 19th June

Sugar, Slaves & Seabathing

'Thinking Thursday' Guided Walk

11am – 12.30pm

Starting point: Tudor House, Bugle Street, Southampton

The Southampton of Jane Austen's day was a watering place famed for sea bathing, but it was also a town dominated in politics by the 'West Indian Party', plantation owners who fought against abolition and made their money from sugar and rum. It was a town of admirals, shipbuilders and colonialists who were at the forefront of a growing empire.

The walk was commissioned as part of the outreach programme of the University of Southampton's AHRC funded English Maritime Communities and Trade research project.

<https://maritimebritain.org/>



Part of the Tudor House Thinking Thursday, see their website for ticket information

<https://tudorhouseandgarden.com/>

Sunday 13th July

Netley Abbey, Monks, Marquess and Mystery

Guided Walk with the Hamble Valley Guides.

11am-12.30pm

Netley Abbey, Netley Village

Inspiration for Jane Austen's gothic novel Northanger Abbey, this walk celebrates the medieval Netley Abbey's link to the gothic literature - a romantic ruin that inspired not only Jane Austen, but also Horace Walpole and Thomas Grey

Tickets £10

<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/HAMBLE-VALLEY-WALKS>



Friday 18th July

Town, Military and Naval: Old Cemetery Connections with Jane Austen's lifetime

Walking tour with The Friends of Southampton Old Cemetery.

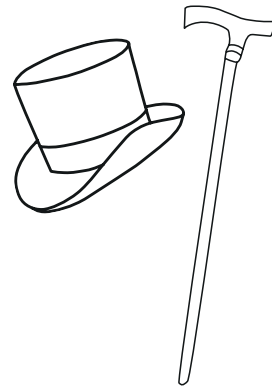
11am-12.30pm

Meet at Cemetery Gate, Cemetery Road.

The tour includes Austen family graves along with other notables from the period; naval, military, businesses and friends.

See website for ticket information

<https://fosoc.org/>



Saturday 19th July

Jane Austen & Southampton Spa

11am-12.30pm

Starting point: Tudor House, Bugle Street, Southampton

Jane Austen spent three key parts of her life in Southampton, firstly as a seven-year-old child on a stay as part of her education, as a seventeen-year-old young lady and acknowledged 'flirt' who came to enjoy the balls and entertainments of the popular spa town and, finally, as a mature woman about to embark on her writing career and residing in Castle Square.

Join Dr Cheryl Butler, author of "Jane Austen & Southampton Spa" to find out why Southampton was important in the life of the author and how it influenced her writing.

Tickets £9

<https://southamptonmuseumsandgallery.co.uk/events/jane-austen-walking-tour/>

<https://tudorhouseandgarden.com/>

Saturday 9th August

Pattens to Peartree All-day CIRCULAR walk

10.30am

Starting point: St Michael's Square, Bugle Street, Southampton

"Martha and I made use of the very favourable state of yesterday for walking, to pay our duty at Chessel. We found Mrs Lance at home and alone, and sat out three other ladies who soon came in. We went by the ferry and returned by the bridge and were scarcely at all fatigued"

Recreating Jane Austen's walk from Southampton to visit her friends the Lance Family of Chessel House, with a stop at the historic Peartree Church, inspiration for Thomas Gray's Elegy in a Country Churchyard.

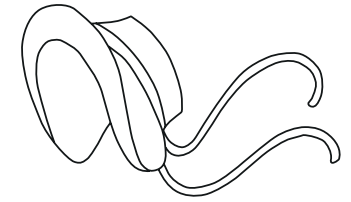
This is a 5-mile circular walk, with a stop at lunchtime to view Peartree Church.

Bring a packed lunch.

Teas and Coffees will be available at Peartree.

Tickets £10

www.wegotickets.com/sarahsiddonsfanclub



Sunday 17th August

Literary Netley

Guided Walk with the Hamble Valley Guides.

11am-12.30pm

Netley Abbey, Netley Village



This walk tells the stories of those associated with Netley Abbey and its ruins, starting with the arrival of the Cistercians who built the abbey and taking the story through to the nineteenth century with readings and poetry.

Tickets £10

<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/HAMBLE-VALLEY-WALKS>

Saturday 6th September

Jane Austen & the Navy

Costumed Guided Walk of Maritime Bursledon, with Hamble Valley Guides

11am -12.30pm

Starting point: Bursledon Station carpark

A walk around the picturesque riverside village of Bursledon that celebrates the Austen family's Naval links; including the ship building yard that produced HMS Elephant, (whose notable captains include Admiral Lord Nelson and Frank Austen), and Brooklands, the home of Admiral Thomas Williams, husband of Jane Austen's cousin, Jane Cooper, and a visit to St Leonards church, where the builder of HMS Elephant, George Parsons, has a memorial.

Our guide will be dressed in beautifully recreated Georgian costume to lead this stroll around the beautiful village of Bursledon, which was largely rebuilt in the eighteenth century following a disastrous fire.

Tickets £10

<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/HAMBLE-VALLEY-WALKS>

Sunday 5th October

'Black Georgians'

Black History Month, Hidden History Walk

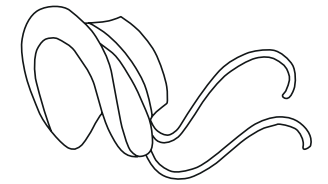
With the God's House Tower Guides.

11am -12.30pm

Starting point: God's House Tower, Town Quay Road, Southampton.

Jane Austen's Southampton was a multicultural society, not only the plantation families and their black servants, there were also black soldiers who served with Wellington, black sailors who served with Nelson, as well as abolitionists, actors, writers.

www.godshousetower.org.uk



Sunday 12th October

Sugar, Slaves & Seabathing

Black History Month, Hidden History Walk

11am -12.30pm

Starting point: Holy Rood Church, High Street, Southampton.

The Southampton of Jane Austen's Day was watering place famed for sea bathing, but it was also a town dominated in politics by the 'West Indian Party', plantation owners who fought against abolition and made their money from sugar and rum. It was a town of admirals, shipbuilders and colonialists who were at the forefront of a growing empire.

Tickets £7

www.wegotickets.com/sarahsiddonsfanclub



GUIDED WALKS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE FOR GROUPS

...And Finally, to celebrate Jane Austen's actual birthday,

Saturday 13th December

Mr & Mrs Middleton invite you to

Jane Austen's Birthday Ball



Townhill Park House, (aka The Gregg School)
6.30pm

Come and help Mr and Mrs Middleton of Townhill Park House celebrate the birthday of their very good friend Miss Jane Austen. A sumptuous Regency Ball will be held in the beautiful Walnut paneled music rooms.

Arrive in your Regency costume at 6.30pm and be prepared to dance the night away from 7pm to caller Dr Helen Davidge of Georgettes of Oxford with live period music.

Early bird price of £85.00 until May!
After this £95.00

Invitation includes:

Live music on period instruments,
Canapes with tasting bowls and sumptuous desserts,
Entertainment with Miss Austen & her friends,
Complementary pre-ball free dance workshop,
Licensed bar

<https://www.townhillparkhouse.co.uk/whats-on>



Tuesday 16th December

Jane Austen 'In Her Own Words'

With the Sarah Siddons Fan Club Theatre

7:30pm

The Masons Hall, Albion Place, Southampton

The Sarah Siddons Fan Club Theatre has been proud to support Jane Austen 250, both with our own events and also working with other arts and heritage partners. As we say a fond farewell to Miss Austen on the day of her 250th Birthday we would welcome you to join us for an evening of rehearsed readings and dramatized interludes from the pen of Jane Austen.



The Mason's Hall is on the corner of Albion Place, originally the sight of a parade of houses designed by the architect John Plaw and a minute away from Jane Austen's home on Castle Square. The plot was originally the home of Colonel Powlett and his wife Laetitia who Jane mentions in her letters, due to Mrs Powlett's scandalous affair with Lord Sackville. The houses were destroyed in the Second World War, the Mason Hall was built in 1879, and exhibits a display of mason memorabilia

Tickets £10

www.wegotickets.com/sarahsiddonsfanclub

Find out about our other events and productions
www.sarahsiddonsfanclub.org.uk



For Other Austen 250 Events

Visit Southampton website:

<https://visitsouthampton.co.uk/janeausten250>

Visit Hampshire website:

<https://www.visit-hampshire.co.uk/things-to-do/jane-austen/jane-austen-and-hampshire>