

Updated
Events July - December 2025
including new editions!

BALH
BRITISH ASSOCIATION
FOR LOCAL HISTORY

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.



SCAN ME

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



PERFORMANCES, CONCERTS, EVENTS

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

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/>

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

Persuasion



Thursday 25th September

"Tea & Money" Coffee House Conversations

2pm-5pm

God's House Tower

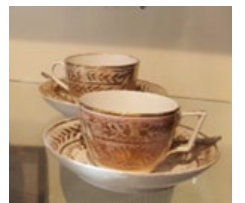
The Georgians invented the Coffee House; a place to go and discuss the important issues of the day, so join us for tea and cake and learn something about the banking crisis that rocked the Austen family, and hear the stories of the poor debtors who found themselves in God's House Prison when Jane lived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

Tickets £8 (including tea & cake)

www.godshousetower.org.uk

"No coffee, I thank you, for me - never take coffee - A little tea if you please"

Emma



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/>

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/>

...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

JANE AUSTEN WALKS

"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>



Wednesday 9th & Saturday 12th July

Jane Austen & Southampton Spa: In Search of a Heroine

6pm

Guided Walk starting at St Michael’s Square

A twilight tour illustrating the inspiration Jane Austen drew on from her time in Southampton which can be seen in her first novel *Northanger Abbey* and her last unfinished novel *Sanditon*. The Tour also includes a private visit to God’s House Tower, the former Debtor’s Prison in Georgian Southampton.



Tickets £10

<https://wegottickets.com/sarahsiddonsfanclub>

Friday 18th July

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

Walking tour with The Friends of Southampton Old Cemetery.

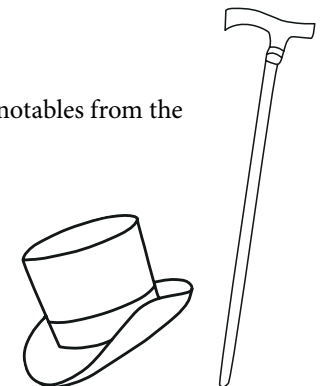
11am-12.30pm

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.

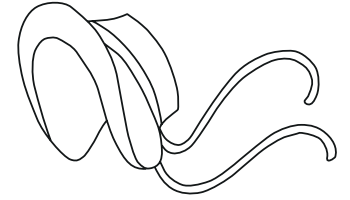
This is a 5-mile circular walk, with a stop at lunchtime to view Peartree Church.

Bring a packed lunch.

Teas and Coffees will be available at Peartree.

Tickets £10

www.wegotickets.com/sarahsiddonsfanclub



YouTube Trailer



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.wegottickets.com/sarahsiddonsfanclub

GUIDED WALKS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE FOR GROUPS

Other Upcoming Fan Club Events

Saturday 2nd August

Armada! - Study Day

Southampton Merchants & the Spanish Armada

10:30am -5pm

The Mason's Hall, Albion Place

A study day where researchers and historians will explore the historical background to the events of 1588. The day will end with a screening of the film *'The Armada Chronicle'* set in Southampton in 1588.



Speakers include John McAleer from the University of Southampton, Josh Harper from the Mary Rose Museum, Di Budden from the Jenner Trust, Cheryl Butler from Southampton Records Series, & Maria Grove-Gordillo from the University of Bamberg.

There will be an exhibition and book stall. Attendees will get a free copy of the book *Theatre of the World*.

Tickets £28 (Lunch included)

<https://wegottickets.com/event/655938>

Saturday 2nd August

The Armada Chronicles

New film screening

Doors: 3:30pm

The Mason's Hall, Albion Place

For those who missed the premiere of *The Armada Chronicles* at Hanger Farm we have a limited number of tickets available for the screening on the 2nd August at 4pm.

There will be an introduction at 15.45

Watch the trailer here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEt4fwtZUDY>

Tickets £5 <https://wegottickets.com/event/666231>



3rd, 4th, 5th August

The Reverend Shapcott's Historical Armada Pageant

or "Hola! Has anybody seen our ships?"

A theatrical walk telling Southampton's story of the Spanish Armada

7:30pm

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

The Reverend Shapcott is on a mission! The vicars of St Mary's and Peartree have been receiving too much attention for their historical pageants, so the Reverend Shapcott is going to organise one for St Michaels!

It is going to be all about the Tudors, particularly Queen Elizabeth I and the great trials the town suffered in 1588!



It's the 3rd August 1588 and the Spanish are sailing up the Channel, heading for the Isle of Wight – Southampton is on the Front Line and the Queen has asked for two ships!

Bit of a problem ... the town only wants to send one, the mayor is being threatened with prison for privateering, the town is full of plague, there are spies everywhere and the beer is running out!

Don't Panic!

Join the Reverend Shapcott in the battle to save England ... we hope!

In the 19th and early 20th century pageants were all the rage, usually organised and written by local clergy and with the story of the Tudors being the most popular theme.

The Sarah Siddons Fan Club Theatre will recreate this historical pastime at 7.30 pm each evening starting from St Michael's Square.

Tickets £10

<https://wegottickets.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>