

How to get there

Chawton is one mile southwest of Alton, signposted off the roundabout at the junction of the A31 Winchester Road with the A32 Fareham Road.

Transport

Public car park available in Chawton village.

Rail: Alton Station: www.southwesttrains.co.uk

Bus: Service from Alton Station to Alton Butts: www.stagecoachbus.com, then a 12 minute walk down Winchester Road to Chawton village.

Places to visit

Jane Austen's House Museum.

Chawton House Library.

St. Nicholas' Church, Chawton.

All Saints' Church, Farringdon.

Refreshments

Cassandra's Cup.

The Greyfriar.

The Rose and Crown, Upper Farringdon, passed on route.

The Golden Pheasant, Lower Farringdon, a short detour.

A range of snacks and meals are also available in Alton.

Further Information

Walks in East Hampshire: www.easthants.gov.uk/walking

Petersfield Tourist Information Centre: 01730 268829.

Follow the Countryside Code: www.naturalengland.org.uk

St. Swithun's Way: www.hants.gov.uk/walking

Acknowledgements

This leaflet was prepared by the late Anne Mallinson of the former Selborne Circle of Rural Writers for East Hampshire District Council. Revised 2014.

Jane Austen's Letters, collected and edited by Deirdre Le Faye (OUP).

Jane Austen's House Museum for the front cover picture.

Maps

Ordnance Survey

Explorer Map 133

Haslemere & Petersfield

(1:25,000).

**East
Hampshire**
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Jane Austen

1775–1817

A walk from Chawton to Farringdon



“...and the plan is that we should all walk with her to drink tea at Faringdon”

Letter to Cassandra, 29 May 1811

*Literary Walks
in East Hampshire*

Points of literary interest

East Hampshire has a wealth of literary associations. The literary walks have been devised to illustrate the work of six important writers who were close observers of their natural (and social) environment. Their combined experiences span more than two centuries of East Hampshire life.

- a Jane Austen spent the last eight years of her life in Chawton, from 1809 until 1817. The 17th century house, now Jane Austen's House Museum, is open to the public. Here, where she lived with her mother and sister, Cassandra, and their friend Martha Lloyd, Jane wrote or revised her six great novels.
- b This valley contains land springs which provide one of the sources of the River Wey. Jane Austen wrote of it as "a fine running stream...it is nothing but what beautifies us and does to talk of." (Letter to Alethea Bigg, 24 January 1817.) Sometimes there is no water to be seen, for the Lavant stream is rather elusive.
- c Edward, Jane Austen's third brother, had taken the name of Knight in 1812 to ensure he inherited the estate at Chawton from distant relatives. This included the 'Great House', as it was known. Jane often visited the house – now Chawton House Library, particularly when Edward and his family were in residence. "Aunt Cass: & I dine at the Gt House today. We shall be a snug half dozen." (Letter to Fanny Knight, 18 November 1814.)
- d Gilbert White, the 18th century naturalist, lived at The Wakes in Selborne (see Gilbert White's Literary Walk leaflet). Jane Austen refers to a special occasion of 'Gaities' on Selborne Common in which her own friends and Gilbert's nephew took part.
- e White was curate of Farringdon from 1761 to 1784, but it is the Rev. John Benn, who held the living of All Saints' from 1797 to 1857, who claims our interest here, for his family were particular friends of the Austen's and there was much visiting between the two villages: "Harriet Benn sleeps at the Great House to-night and spends to-morrow with us; and the plan is that we should all walk with her to drink tea at Faringdon" (Letter to Cassandra, 29 May 1811.)

- f Wood Barn, a small isolated farm, has disappeared but in Jane Austen's time the farm provided poultry for the table, as Jane recorded in a letter to her sister Cassandra, who was visiting their brother at Godmersham in Kent: "We shall have pease soon – I mean to have them with a couple of Ducks from Wood Barn..." (Letter to Cassandra, 31 May 1811.) And they did on the 7 June that year, with the rector of Farringdon's sister, Miss Benn, who lived in Chawton, and Maria Middleton from the 'Great House'.
- g As you approach Jane Austen's House Museum, you pass thatched cottages on your left. Here by the roadside too was once a considerable pond, which in "sad weather" induced Jane to write rather dismally: "Our Pond is brimfull and our roads are dirty and our walls are damp, and we sit wishing every bad day may be the last." (Letter to Caroline Austen, 13 March 1816.) However, the days themselves were not dull, as she ends the letter with: "We have had a great deal of fun lately with Post-chaises stopping at the door; three times within a few days, we had a couple of agreeable Visitors turn in unexpectedly..."

From the poem *My Dearest Frank, I Wish You Joy*:

"Our Chawton home, how much we find
Already in it, to our mind;
And how convinced, that when complete
It will all other Houses beat
That ever have been made or mended,
With rooms concise, or rooms distended."

J. A. Austen, 26 July 1809.

Route

The route is about 4½ miles (2¾ hours).

- 1 The walk starts from the centre of Chawton (Jane Austen's village) on the outskirts of Alton; to the south of the A31.

Jane Austen's house (see a) is situated in the village and there is a public car park opposite. The Greyfriar is nearby.

From the car park, turn left and follow the old road, towards St. Nicholas' Church which lies along the valley on your left (see b). On the higher ground, behind the church, the Elizabethan Chawton House can be seen (see c).

In the churchyard, the graves of Jane Austen's mother and sister, Cassandra, can be found round the back of the church. The building is Victorian, for the church was rebuilt in 1871 after a disastrous fire.

Continue along the old road to its end and along a path through trees. Cross a stile and follow a permissive path (courtesy of Chawton House Library), parallel to the busy road – a far cry from the days when this was the Gosport turnpike road in Jane Austen's time!

- 2 Cross a stile and turn away from the road. Cut diagonally across the field and through Noar Copse, leading to higher ground beyond. Keep straight on to the Berryhill Plantation.

Here, at the highest point, you can look away, left, over the countryside – and a line of pylons – to Gilbert White's village of Selborne, which Jane Austen knew (see d).

Continue along the track bordered by tall Wellingtonia trees, which give way to yew trees as you descend into Upper Farringdon. Turn left as you reach houses. Go through the farm yard with Manor Farm House on your left. Turn right to the Church of All Saints' (see e). Enter the churchyard via the lychgate.

- 3 From the church porch, walk across the churchyard into the lane. Turn left then right into Crows Lane; you will fairly soon reach the Rose and Crown.

Turn right and continue straight on between attractive cottages on either side. Turn right into Church Road and take the footpath on the right at the entrance to Parsonage Close. On passing the playground, turn left along the track to the A32. Cross this road with care and follow the road opposite for a short distance.

- 4 A footpath leads off to the right just before the bridge. Take this path down onto the disused Meon Valley railway line which ran between Alton and Fareham. This part of the route follows the St. Swithun's Way.

Follow the track as far as it goes. Away on your left, the wooded countryside rises to where Wood Barn once stood (see f).

- 5 At the end of the old railway track, follow the field edge towards a clump of trees. Carry straight on, then bear right and follow the hedgerow back to the A32.
- 6 Cross the road with care, mount the steps and take the stile opposite. Keep straight on with the belt of trees on your right. Continue over the stile and into Ferney Close. On reaching the old road again, turn left and retrace your steps to the village (see g).

Map

