

HALSGROVE DISCOVER SERIES

# JANE AUSTEN'S HAMPSHIRE

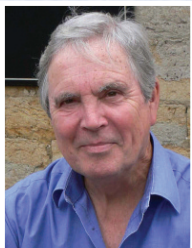
Terry Townsend

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a reader in possession of a good book gains further pleasure from knowing where the author lived, loved and found inspiration. In the case of Jane Austen, this was predominantly in Hampshire, the historic and beautiful county where she spent most of her days. By following in the steps of Jane Austen through Hampshire you will discover the great cities she knew, market towns where she shopped, villages where she lived and visited friends, country parks where she strolled, country houses where she danced and churches where she worshipped.

Jane was born in 1775 in her father's rectory in the small village of Steventon where she spent the first twenty-five years of her life. She grew to love the area and declared herself proud to be 'a Hampshire Austen'. In 1809, after a brief period living in Bath and Southampton, Jane eventually settled with her mother and sister Cassandra in the cottage at Chawton which is now opened as a museum dedicated to her life and works. Early in the spring of her 41st year Jane became ill and moved to Winchester, to be closer to the doctor who was treating her. She died on 18 July 1817 and was buried in the nave of the grand cathedral. Hampshire provided the cradle for Jane Austen's talent and the peace and stability for the blossoming of her genius. All her novels were conceived and written in Hampshire, the county where she was born and where she died.

In this fascinating and beautifully illustrated book, Terry Townsend takes us on a journey of discovery through this most characteristic of English shires, tracing the life of one of English literature's most beloved figures.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

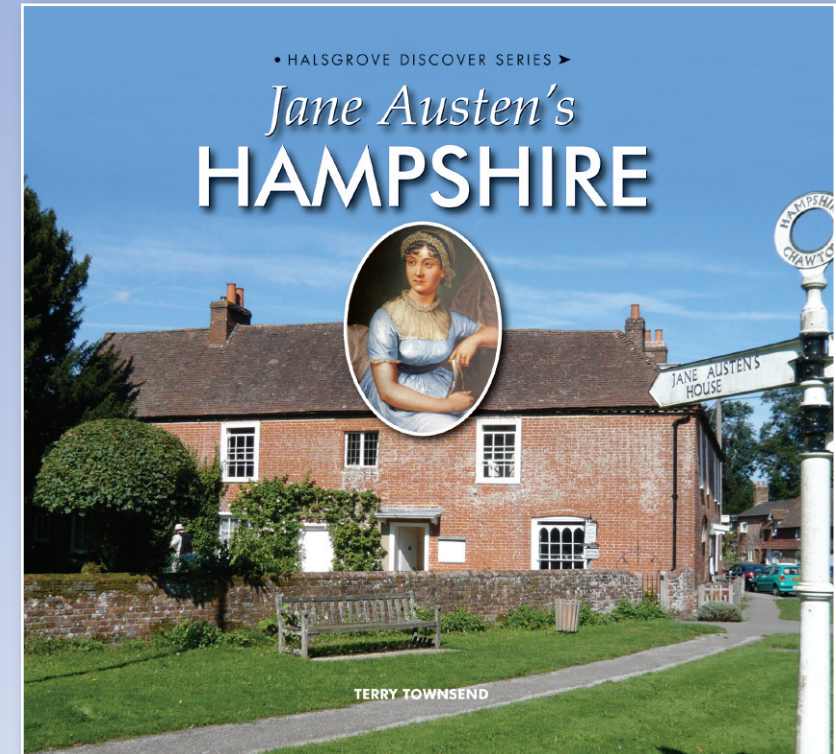


Retired graphic designer Terry Townsend has had a lifelong interest in English literary landscapes. This latest book is the result of years of travel and research throughout Hampshire seeking out the people and places that were significant in the life of Jane Austen. Terry's previous books for Halsgrove are *Once Upon a Pint, a guide to the Literary Pubs & Inns of Dorset and Somerset* and *Kent Smugglers' Pubs*. Now living in Dorset with his wife Carol and their cat Smudge, Terry is currently working on a new title celebrating Jane Austen and Bath.

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Above: Right from the beginning of her dancing days Jane's letters are full of descriptions of the people she observes at the balls.

Right: Jane declared herself proud to be 'a Hampshire Austen'.



HMS *Victory* gun deck. The Austen family would have witnessed a similar scene when they visited HMS *Neptune* in 1801 when it was captured by Frank.



Oakley. In the centre of the village a number of old cottages remain which Jane would have known.

Southampton. Summer balls were held in the Long Rooms which stood near here at Westgate.

Example of a double-page spread.

## Sherborne St John & The Vyne

THE VYNE, NORTH of Basingstoke, in the parish of Sherborne St John, is a beautiful Tudor house built between 1500 and 1520 for William, Lord Sandys, Lord Chamberlain to Henry VIII. The house later passed to the Chase family who in 1656 bequeathed it along with 112 acres to the National Trust. Among the highlights are a superb Tudor chapel and an ornately decorated Palladian staircase, as well as the striking neo-classical portico which is one of the earliest in England.

In Jane's time the property was owned by William John Chase who was Master of the Vyne Hunt and MP for Hampshire. When William inherited the estate from his father in 1790, he was thirty-three, single and in possession of a good fortune; so naturally it was

universally accepted that he was in want of a wife. Jane was not a contender; she was just fourteen at the time but she must have picked up on the speculation among the chattering Hampshire ladies about whom he might choose.

Jane's elder brother James was always a keen huntsman. When he lived at Oxene he rode out with the Vyne Hunt and became friendly with William Chase who, in 1791, presented him to the living of Sherborne St John. This was a position James was to hold jointly with that of Steventon (from 1805) until his death in 1819.

In 1793 William finally put an end to the Hampshire neighbourhood's speculation by marrying Eliza Smith, one of the daughters of Devizes MP Joshua Smith. On many occasions, after taking the Sunday service at St Andrew's church in the village, James Austen would ride over and have dinner at The Vyne with William and Eliza, often taking his son James Edward with him.

ABOVE LEFT: When impromptu dancing followed a dinner party it would have taken place in one of the drawing rooms with the furniture moved aside and the carpet rolled back.

ABOVE RIGHT: The stone staircase in Sherborne Hall is one of the most striking features of the house.

