

Overtton Jane Austen Trails

A circular waymarked walk from Overtton to Steventon, the birthplace and home for 25 years of Jane Austen, across the beautiful Hampshire countryside.



Distance: 9 mile circular walk
Duration 4.5 hours at a leisurely (2.5mph) pace
Terrain: Fields and country lanes
 OS Explorer map 144

‘She has nothing, in short, to recommend her, but being an excellent walker.’

Mrs Hurst’s description of Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride & Prejudice*, by Jane Austen

Jane Austen 1775 to 1817

Jane Austen, one of our most famous authors, was born in 1775 in Steventon, within walking distance of Overtton. Jane’s father, the Revd George Austen, was the rector at St Nicholas church in Steventon and she lived with her family in the Rectory until 1801.



Jane Austen by Cassandra Austen,
©National Portrait Gallery, London

Jane’s brother, James Austen, became curate at Overtton in 1790 and lived in Overtton Vicarage and then Court House, overlooking the village as it still does today.

During her 25 years living in this area, Jane wrote early versions of *Pride & Prejudice*, *Sense & Sensibility* and *Northanger Abbey*.

Like her famous heroine, Elizabeth Bennet, Jane loved walking the countryside visiting friends and family and the landscape, people and places she knew in this corner of Hampshire must have fuelled her imagination and influenced her writing

Enjoy walking in Jane Austen’s footsteps.

How to get here:

The trail starts at the Overtton Jane Austen Trails information board in the centre of Overtton. OS Grid Ref: SU 5150049676 [qualify.revives.goofy](https://www.what3words.com/qualify.revives.goofy) (what3words)

Train: Overtton is on the London Waterloo to Exeter line, see www.nationalrail.co.uk

It is 1.3km from Overtton Train Station to the start of the Overtton to Steventon trail.

Car: Overtton is located 8 miles from Basingstoke, 15 miles from Winchester and 8 miles from Junction 8 of the M3.

Park at the car park on Overtton Hill RG25 3NU
 OS Grid Ref: SU 51749 49671
 What3words: crusher.fabricate.huddle

Bus: 76, www.stagecoachbus.com

Please follow the countryside code and respect private homes.

Some parts of the trail may be flooded in late winter and spring due to high water levels – see sections between (43) and (44) below.

- The trail begins at the information board (1) in the centre of Overton OS Grid Ref: SU 51500 49676

This is the site of the New Inn which opened in 1776. Described as the 'principal inn' in Overton, the New Inn was also the post office.

All Jane Austen's letters from Steventon were postmarked Overton and addressed 'Steventon, near Overton'.

In January 1801 Jane complained to her sister that she had been overcharged for her letter and she now had '...the torment of writing to Mr Lambould'. From 1796 until his death in 1834 Mr Lambole was the postmaster at Overton.

- On the wall of the building to your left, outside the entrance to the library, is the Trafalgar Plaque.

On 5th November 1805 Lieutenant Lapenotiere stopped at Overton to change horses on his journey to London bringing news of victory at Trafalgar and the death of Lord Nelson. Two of Jane's brothers, Frank Austen and Charles Austen served in the navy during the Napoleonic wars with Frank rising to the rank of Admiral of the Fleet and Charles to Rear Admiral.

- Walk to the traffic lights at the crossroads to see the White Hart (2).

The White Hart was a busy coaching inn for the twice-daily mail coach between London and Exeter, along with stage coaches, private coaches and waggons. The wide, arched doorway was the entrance to the stables in Jane Austen's time.

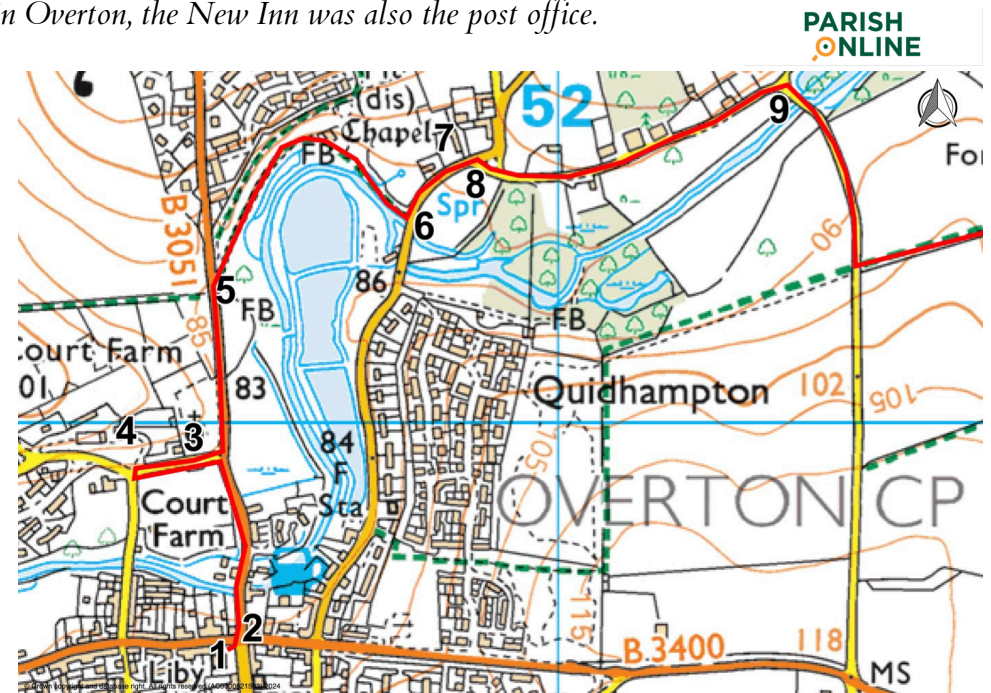
- Cross the High Street and walk up Kingsclere Road. Turn left at Church Road to see St Mary's Church (3) and then Court House (4) on your right.

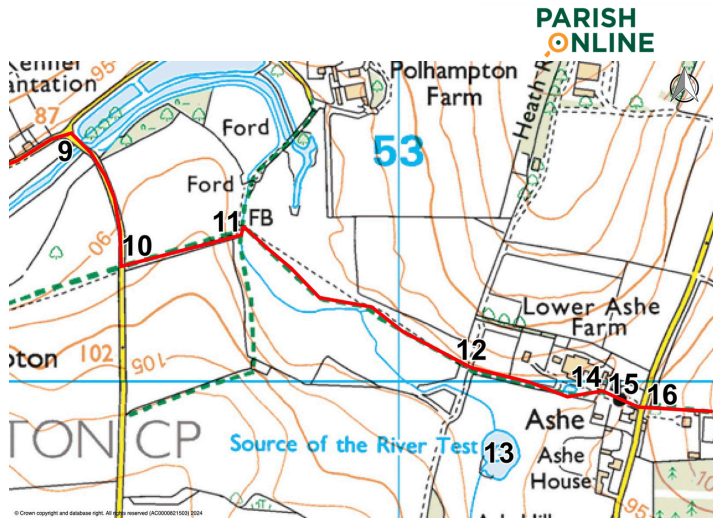
Jane's brother, James Austen, became curate at St Mary's Church in 1790 and lived firstly in 'the very small vicarage house' before marrying Anne Mathew in 1792 and moving to the grander Court House. According to Jane Austen expert, Deirdre Le Faye, 'The Austens would obviously have visited James while he was living at Overton whether at Overton Vicarage or Court House.' in 'Jane Austen's Country Life'.

- Retrace your steps back, cross the road and turn left up Kingsclere Road. After 240m turn right between two brick and flint pillars into Flashetts (5) OS SU 51490 50197. Continue walking along the track as it becomes a path with the River Test on your right.
- Turn left onto Station Road (6) and continue for 100m to see Quidhampton Chapel (7) on your left.

A Norman chapel which had fallen into disuse by the 17th century. Jane's dear friend Mrs Lefroy describes an afternoon having fun in the river at Quidhampton and drinking 'tea in the Alcove'. Could she mean the chapel?

- Continue a short way along Station Road until you reach a triangle junction with a large tree in the centre (8). Turn right towards Polhampton. Continue on the road for 500m to the junction for Polhampton (9) and follow the road right onto Straight Lane. Cross the bridge over the River Test.





- Continue for 300m then take the steps on the left (10) and go through the gate in the hedge.
- Continue on the path through the centre of the field. Cross a footbridge (11) OS SU 52685 50300 and pass through a gate into a second field. Continue with the beginnings of the River Test on your right. At the far end of the field, pass through the wooden gate (12) and into Ashe.
Ashe was the home of Jane Austen's friend, Anne Lefroy, who features frequently in her letters.
- Continue ahead along a track OS SU 53165 50014 with the official source of the River Test (13) on the other side of the hedge to your right.

The River Test, which was known as the Anton in Jane Austen's time, rises in Ashe and flows for 40 miles until it reaches the sea at Southampton Water. In 1806 Jane Austen, her mother, sister and friend moved to Castle Square in Southampton close to the point the Test empties into the sea.

- After the track bears left, turn right onto the road at the farm buildings (14) and see Ashe Church (15) on your left.

George Lefroy, husband of Jane's friend, Mrs Lefroy, was rector at Ashe Church from 1783. The church we see today was built in the 19th century.

- Continue to the junction and cross Ashe Lane and go up the steps (16) and through a gate into a field. Continue along the right hand edge of the field and go through the wooden gate at the end of the field. Pass through the wooded copse and then through a tall wooden gate and into another field.
- Continue ahead on the path through the field with a lake on your left. At the far end of the field pass through another gate (17) and small wooded area and then through metal gates OS SU 54315 50150 into Deane Park (18).
- Continue until you reach Deane Church on your left (19).

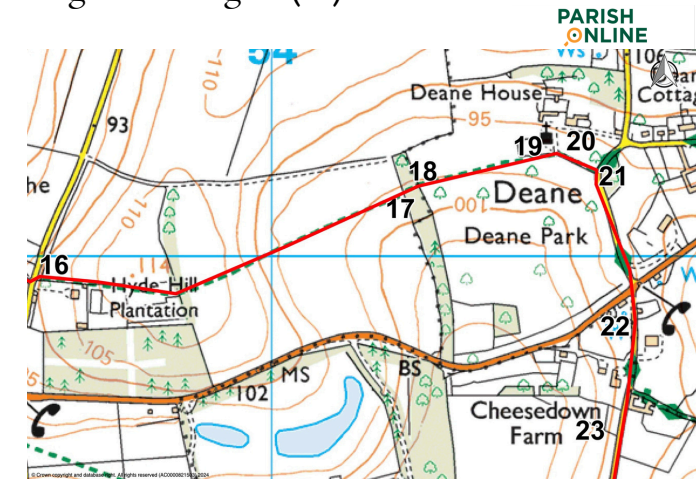
Jane's father, George Austen, became rector at Deane in 1773 and James Austen became curate in 1792. The church we see was built in the 19th century

- Pass through the metal gate on the left just past the church OS SU 54604 50211 and turn right onto the path in front of Deane House (20).

The Harwood family, friends of the Austens, lived at Deane House where Jane frequently visited, dined and danced. In January 1796 Jane describes attending the 'Harwoods' ball' where she had danced with Tom Lefroy (the nephew of Anne Lefroy), who stole her heart.

- Go through the metal gate at the end of the path and turn right onto the lane. In the field opposite the end of the path is the site of Deane Parsonage (21).

In 1764 Jane's parents moved to Deane Parsonage before moving to Steventon Rectory. Jane's brother, James, moved to Deane Parsonage from Court House in Overton in 1782. The parsonage was demolished in the 19th century.



- Continue ahead until you reach the junction and cross the main road OS SU 54771 49930.

BE AWARE THIS IS A BUSY ROAD - LISTEN AND LOOK CAREFULLY BEFORE CROSSING



There is a bus option back to Overton (no 76): Manor Farm Lane to Overton - request stop on the south side of the B3400 outside the Palm Brasserie (there is no bus stop sign) see www.stagecoachbus.com for times.

- Continue along the lane with the Palm Brasserie restaurant on your right (22).

The Palm Brasserie was called the Deane Gate Inn in Jane Austen's time. Located on the turnpike road between London and Exeter, it was the drop off and pick up point for post and for people visiting the Austens in Steventon.

In January 1796, Jane Austen wrote, 'We left Warren at Dean Gate, in our way home last night, and he is now on his road to town.'

- Continue along the lane with the Palm Brasserie on the right through the area known as Cheesedown Farm (23).

When Jane's parents made the move from Deane Parsonage to Steventon Rectory in 1771, this lane was a heavily rutted dirt track. Jane's mother, who was ill, made the uncomfortable journey on a feather-bed in the back of a waggon along with their household goods.

Jane's father farmed the land around Cheesedown Farm to supplement his income as the rector at Steventon. All of the Austen children, including Jane, were sent to live with a local family in their first year and Jane may have lived with the Littleworth family at Cheesedown Farm.

Jane would have walked on this lane many times visiting her brother James and the Harwood family at Deane and Mrs Lefroy in Ashe. 'On Thursday we walked to Deane, Yesterday to Oakley Hall & Oakley, & to day to Deane Again.' Letter from Jane Austen to her sister Cassandra 25th to 27th October 1800.

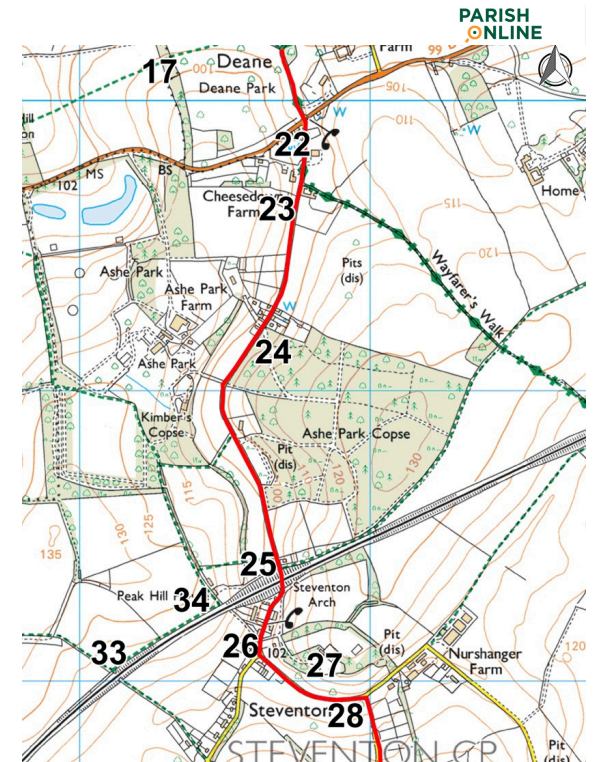
- After 1km pass the gates of Ashe Park on your right OS SU 54499 49024 with Ashe Park Copse on your left (24).

In a letter to her sister, Cassandra, in January 1799, Jane joked about being murdered at Ashe Park Copse.

'You express so little anxiety about my being murdered under Ash Park Copse by Mrs. Hulbert's servant, that I have a great mind not to tell you whether I was or not, & shall only say that I did not return home that night or the next...'

- Continue along the lane passing under the railway bridge (25) OS SU 54694 48361 and into Steventon.
- Continue for 30m until you reach a junction with a grass triangle in the centre OS SU 54621 48092 with Elm Tree Cottages on your right (26).

Elm Tree Cottages is one of the surviving houses from Jane Austen's time in Steventon.



- Turn left onto the lane signposted Steventon Church. After 330m, viewed through a gap in the hedge **OS SU 54898 47940** on the left, the new Steventon Rectory (27) stands on a hill.

The new Steventon Rectory was built in 1823-24 by Jane's brother, Edward Austen Knight, to replace the old Steventon Rectory which was then demolished.

- A few metres, further through a gap in the hedge on your right **OS SU 54902 47931**, we can see the site of Steventon Rectory (28), birthplace of Jane Austen.

Jane was born in Steventon Rectory in 1775 and it was her home until 1801 when the family moved to Bath.

A fenced off area in the field encloses the remains of the water pump that once stood in the washhouse at the back of the Rectory and behind this you can make out the slope of the terraced lawn which Jane's nephew, James Austen-Leigh, believed must have been in her thoughts when she described Catherine Morland in Northanger Abbey 'rolling down the green slope at the back of the house'.

Jane's brother, James, moved into Steventon Rectory as his father's curate in 1801 before becoming rector at Steventon in 1805 upon his father's death.

In 1813 James and his son planted a lime tree 'as a record of our mutual love'. The tree is still standing tall in the corner of the field, a living reminder of the Austen family's links to Steventon.

- Continue to the corner of the field and turn right onto Church Lane, **OS SU 54987 47946** following in Jane and the Austen family's footsteps on the half mile walk from Steventon Rectory uphill to St Nicholas Church (29).

Jane Austen was born on December 16th 1775 in the middle of a bitter winter and it wasn't until April 5th 1776 that she was taken to St Nicholas, where her father was rector, to be 'received' into the church.

To the left of the front entrance to the church is an ancient (800 year old) yew tree, which Jane would have passed many times in her 25 years at Steventon.

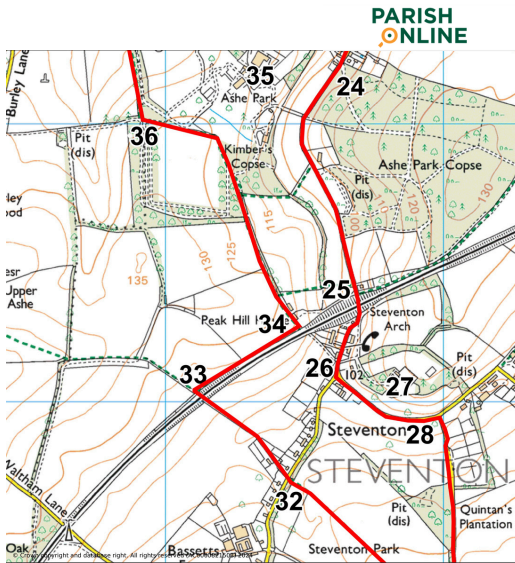
Jane's brother James is buried in the churchyard and his grave, marked by a small silver plaque, can be seen behind the church.

- Retrace your steps leaving St Nicholas behind you on the right and turn left onto the footpath just past Steventon Manor (30) **OS SU 55050 47327**.

Steventon Manor was the home of the Digweed family, the Austens' neighbours and friends, who are mentioned many times in Jane's letters. The building we see today is not the same one that Jane knew.

- Follow the path for 140m then pass through the gate on your right **OS SU 54924 47280** into a field (31) .





- Follow the left edge of the field until you reach Ashe Park Lane (32). Cross the road and continue on the path opposite between the houses OS SU 54435 47737 and up a hill with a field on your right.
 - Pass under railway bridge and through gate immediately on your right (33) OS SU 54114 48036 and into field.
 - Continue on path to the end with the rail line on your right (about 400m). Pass through a wooden gate (34) and follow the path to the left with the back of two houses on your right and entering the grounds of Ashe Park (35).
- Ashe Park was the home of the Austens' friend and neighbour, Mr Holder. Jane describes evenings there in her letters including a witty account of arriving early for a gathering and being 'shut up' alone with Mr Holder for ten minutes when 'nothing could prevail on me to move two steps from the door, on the lock of which I kept one hand constantly fixed.'*
- After approx. 500m the path enters a wooded area OS SU 54293 48641. Continue ahead (ignoring the right-of-way on your right). As you leave the wooded area continue on the path/track as it bears left OS SU 54186 48945. After approx. 300m pass through a gate on the right and into a field (36) OS SU 53899 49035.

- Follow the path downhill along the right edge of the field. After 450m bear left across the field at the right-of-way post (37) OS SU 53829 49474. Pass through a metal kissing gate and follow the path across a small field and through a second kissing gate and then across a meadow to a third kissing gate OS SU 53459 49616 and turn right onto Burley Lane (38) and continue to the main road OS SU 53438 49693.



Bus option back to Overton (no 76): Ashe Corner to Overton – request stop on the left (before crossing the road)
www.stagecoachbus.com for times.

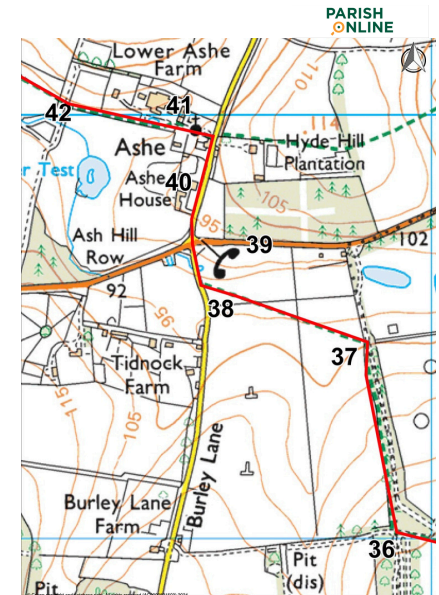
- Cross the B3400 to Ashe Lane. **BE AWARE THIS IS A BUSY ROAD – LISTEN AND LOOK CAREFULLY BEFORE CROSSING**
- On your right as you cross is Hyde Hill (39).

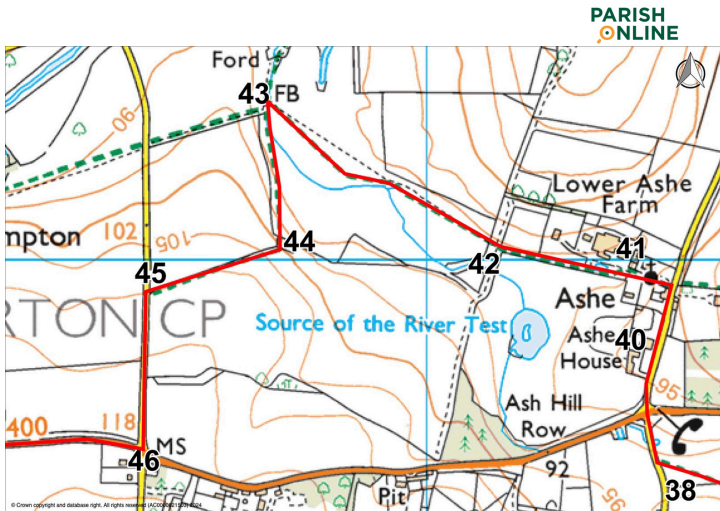
On the night of 6th June 1793, the carriage of the Austen's friend, Mrs Bramston of Oakley Hall, was held up at Hyde Hill and the occupants robbed.

- Continue along Ashe Lane for 250m passing Ashe House (40) on the left OS SU 53459 49827, known as Ashe Parsonage in Jane Austen's time

Revd and Mrs Anne Lefroy moved to Ashe Parsonage in 1783, and Jane and Anne became good friends. Anne's nephew, Tom Lefroy stole Jane's heart when he stayed at Ashe over Christmas 1795/96. The flirtation was short-lived and a ball at Ashe Parsonage, in January 1796, was the last time they saw each other. In Jane's words, 'At length the Day is come when I am to flirt my last with Tom Lefroy..' Tom admitted in old-age that he had loved her.

- Continue along Ashe Lane for 250m passing Ashe House on the left and then turn left on the lane OS SU 53484 49946 back past Ashe Church (this time on the right) (41).





- After the farmyard turn left on the track which then immediately bears right and continue ahead with the official source of the River Test in the field to your left this time.
- Pass through the wooden gate (42) OS SU 53131 50035 and into the field. Continue ahead through the field bearing slightly right to reach the wooden gate on the far side OS SU 52688 50310 – **but do not pass through gate.**
****The section of the route between (43) and (44) crosses the path of the River Test and may be impassable after periods of heavy rain in which case follow the detour at the bottom of the page****
- ****Turn left just before the wooden gate (43) and follow the margin of the field with the hedge on your right. At the corner of the field pass through a wooden gate (44) OS SU 52705 50046 and turn right into the next field. Continue along the top edge of the field with the hedge on your left for 257m to reach a wooden gate (45). Turn left onto Straight Lane. ****

- Continue uphill to reach the main road at Overton Hill OS SU 52432 49630, the site of Mrs Lefroy's fatal horse accident (46).

On 15th December 1804, Jane's friend Mrs Lefroy fell from her horse at the top of Overton Hill on the way back from a shopping trip to Overton. She died the next morning, on Jane Austen's birthday. In 1808, on the fourth anniversary of her death, Jane wrote a poem, 'To the Memory of Mrs Lefroy.'

On the opposite side of the crossroads is the remains of a milestone that marked the mileage between London (53 miles) and Andover (11 miles). The Andover and Basingstoke turnpike was opened in 1754 and this is one of a series of milestones on the turnpike.

- Turn right onto the main road OS SU 52432 49630 and follow the footpath beside the B3400 to descend Overton Hill and return to the start of the trail in the centre of Overton OS SU 51500 49676.

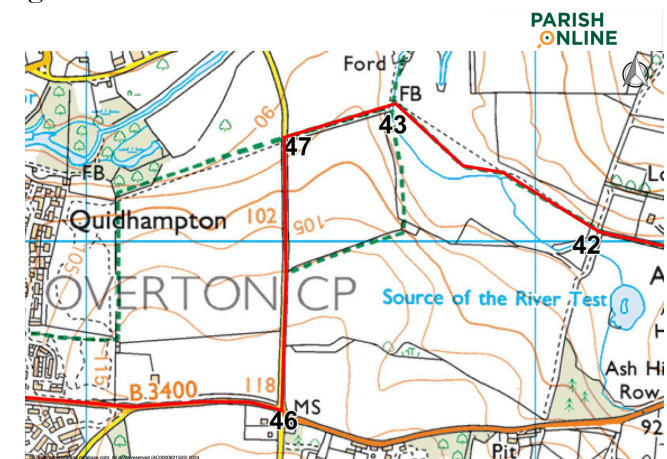
How different this road would have been in Jane Austen's time with the sixty plus scheduled stagecoaches, mail coaches and waggons and the private carriages rattling up and down the hill and stopping at the White Hart and New Inn to change horses and drop off and pick up passengers.

Imagine how Jane Austen felt in 1801 as she travelled down this very road through Overton leaving behind her beloved home of 25 years at Steventon to start her new life in Bath.

****Alternative route if section between (43) and (44) is flooded****

- **** Continue ahead through the wooden gate(43) and cross over the footbridge. Bear left and then right up the hill and continue across the centre of the field to reach the wooden gate (47). Turn left onto Straight Lane and continue uphill to reach the main road at Overton Hill, the site of Mrs Lefroy's fatal horse accident (46). Follow instructions above from (46).****

We hope you enjoyed walking in Jane Austen's footsteps.



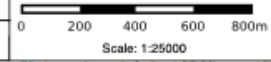
Overton to Steventon Jane Austen

9 mile walking trail from Overton to Steventon, the birthplace of Jane Austen and her home for 25 years.

Overton

Author:

Date: 17/12/2024



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