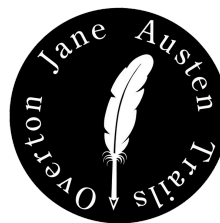


Overton Jane Austen Trails

A circular cycle trail from Overton to Steventon, the birthplace and home for 25 years of Jane Austen, on country lanes and roads in the beautiful Hampshire countryside.



Distance: 12 mile circular cycle trail
Duration 1.05 hrs at a 12.5mph pace
Terrain: On road
Total ascent: 803.27ft

‘...we have been obliged to take advantage of the delightful weather ourselves by going to see almost all our Neighbours.’

Jane Austen’s letter to her sister Cassandra from Steventon, 25th October 1800

Jane Austen 1775 to 1817

Jane Austen, one of our most famous authors, was born in 1775 in Steventon, within walking distance of Overton. 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 Overton in 1790 and lived in Overton 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*.

Jane loved being in the countryside visiting friends, family and neighbours and the landscape, people and places she knew in this corner of Hampshire must have fuelled her imagination and influenced her writing

Enjoy cycling on the lanes that Jane Austen knew so well.

How to get here:

The trail starts at the Overton Jane Austen Trails information board in the centre of Overton. OS Grid Ref: SU 5150049676 qualify.revives.goofy (what3words)

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

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

Car: Overton 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 Overton Hill RG25 3NU
OS Grid Ref: SU 51749 49671
What3words: crusher.fabricate.huddle

Please see Rider Responsibilities on the last page.

This project is funded by the UK government
through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund

- Start at the Overton Jane Austen Trails Information Board outside the Overton Community Centre on the B3400 (what3words /// qualify.revives.goofy).

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.



Artistic impression from floor plans of the New Inn by Donald Moss, from Overton and its National School by Alison M. Deveson

- From the Information Board directly cross the High Street towards Overton Bathroom Centre and turn right, proceeding 30m towards the traffic lights.
- At the traffic lights turn left into Kingsclere Road (signed for Kingsclere and Newbury on the fingerpost at the junction). The White Hart Hotel is on the right-hand side as you turn.

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.



St Mary's Church and Court Farmhouse by Inigo Millard, 1785

- In 0.2 miles turn left into Church Road. You will see St Mary's Church on the right-hand side. Stop here to visit the Church.

Jane's brother, James Austen, became curate at St Mary's Church in 1790.

- Continue along Church Road for 100 metres to the junction with Bridge Street (on your left) and Court Drove (ahead). Stop at this junction to view Court Farm House on the right hand side.

James Austen 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'.

- Return back along Church Road to the junction with Kingsclere Road and turn left. Proceed for 0.2 miles, passing the Churchyard on your left and some allotments on your right. At the foot of the hill turn right into a Bridleway, through two brick and flint pillars labelled Flashetts.
- Continue alongside the River Test, past Flashetts House on the left. Bearing right here onto a narrow path. After 0.3 miles this path joins a public highway (Station Road).
- Turn left onto Station Road. After 150 metres stop just before the entrance to Quidhampton Farm House to see the chapel, set back on the 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?



Quidhampton Chapel, Quidhampton

- After a further 70 metres, follow the road round to the left, signposted to Hannington, Overton Railway Station and Overton Mill. Continue for 0.2 miles, bearing right up the hill towards Overton Mill. DO NOT go up the road towards the Railway Station.
- At the next road junction bear right, signed towards Hannington, and continue along the lane for 0.9 miles eventually descending a hill to a crossroads with a fingerpost.
- Turn right at the crossroads, following the sign to Ashe and Deane. Continue down this lane for 0.4 miles, passing Ashe Warren Cottage on your left, until you reach a staggered road junction with fingerpost.
- Bear right and immediately left by Folly Cottages following the sign for Deane.
- Continue for 0.6 miles until you reach a right-hand turn signed for Deane. Turn right here and proceed down the lane for 0.5 miles, passing the Deane village sign on your left and Deane House Cottage on your right.
- At a small road junction by the entrance to Deane House (right hand side), bear right and continue for a further 50 metres to a wooden gate and public footpath, on the righthand side of the road.

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

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.

- Return to the road. In the field opposite the end of the path is the site of Deane Parsonage.

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 for a further 250 metres, passing Deane Hill House on your left, to a road junction with the B3400.

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

- Cross the B3400 to the road immediately in front of you signed to Steventon passing the Palm Brasserie Restaurant on your right (formerly The Deane Gate Inn).

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 on towards Steventon. In 250 metres you will pass the area known as Cheesedown Farm on the right, and Cheesedown Cottages on the left.

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.

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 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 a further 500 metres, pass the gates of Ashe Park on your right and Ashe Park Copse on your left.

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...'

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.'



Elm Tree Cottages, Steventon

- Continue for a further 0.6 miles to a railway tunnel adjacent to Kimbers Copse and Peak Hill House on the right.
- 160 metres after the tunnel you will pass a red iconic 'Jane Austen' telephone booth (on your right) set back from the road.
- Proceed into the centre of Steventon Village to a road junction featuring a grass triangle, large lime tree, wooden benches and fingerpost. Stop here and look to your right to see Elm Tree Cottages.

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

- From here turn left following the sign to Steventon Church, passing the village hall and bus stop on the right.
- After 330m stop by a gap in the hedge and metal gate on the left-hand side of the road. Here you will see the new Steventon Rectory standing 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.

- Directly across the road on the opposite side through a gap in the hedge you can see the site of the former Steventon Rectory where Jane Austen was born and lived for the first 25 years of her life.

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.



Engraving of Steventon Rectory from James Edward Austen-Leigh's memoir of his aunt, Jane Austen

- Continue along the road for a further 50 metres to a right-hand turn signed for Steventon Church. Turn right here and proceed up the lane for just under ½ mile to Steventon (St Nicholas) Church. Stop here to visit the Church and graveyard.

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 route back to the bottom of the lane first passing Steventon Manor on your left.

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.

- At the bottom of the lane turn left back towards the road junction in Steventon village centre. At this point turn left, signed to Micheldever Station.
- Proceed for 0.7 miles, passing Old Steventon School and Bassetts Farm, until you reach a road junction with fingerpost. Turn right here following the signpost to Overton.

- After ½ mile, pass under a railway bridge and continue up the hill for a further 0.3 miles to a road junction at the top of the hill. Turn right here, heading north towards Ashe.
- Continue along the lane for 1.1 miles to the junction with the B3400, passing Upper Ashe House and Barn on your right, and Burley Wood and Burley Lane Farm on your left as you go.
- At the junction with the B3400 continue straight across heading north.

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

- On your right on the B3400 is Hyde Hill.

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.

- After 150 metres you can stop to view Ashe Parsonage on your left.

Ashe was the home of Jane Austen's friend, Anne Lefroy, who features frequently in her letters.

Rev'd 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.

- Proceed for a further 130 metres to Ashe (Holy Trinity and St Andrews) Church on the left, adjacent to the sign for Lower Ashe Farm. Stop here to view the Church and graveyard.

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.

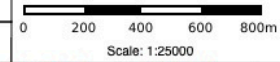
- Continue north along the lane for 0.8 miles passing under a railway arch until you reach the staggered junction at Folly Cottages. Here turn left, sign posted for Nutley Bottom and Kingsclere and continue for just under ½ mile to the crossroad.
- At this crossroad, turn left signed towards Overton. Proceed for 0.9 miles to a road junction, crossing a railway bridge on the way.
- Continue straight on at this junction, downhill for 0.2 miles, bearing left whilst passing the Overton Railway Station sign on your right.
- At the next road junction opposite Quidhampton Farm bear right along Station Road. Continue for a further 230 metres to a bridge over the River Test with Quidhampton Mill on the right-hand side.
- Continue for a further 0.4 miles along Station Road to the junction with the B3400, passing the Old House At Home Pub on the left. At the junction with the B3400 turn right and proceed 100 metres to the traffic lights, with the White Hart Hotel on your right.
- Proceed straight on over the junction and pull into the bus lay-by on the left immediately after the traffic lights.
- You have now finished the ride having returned back to where you started.

Overton to Steventon Jane Austen 12 mile cycle trail

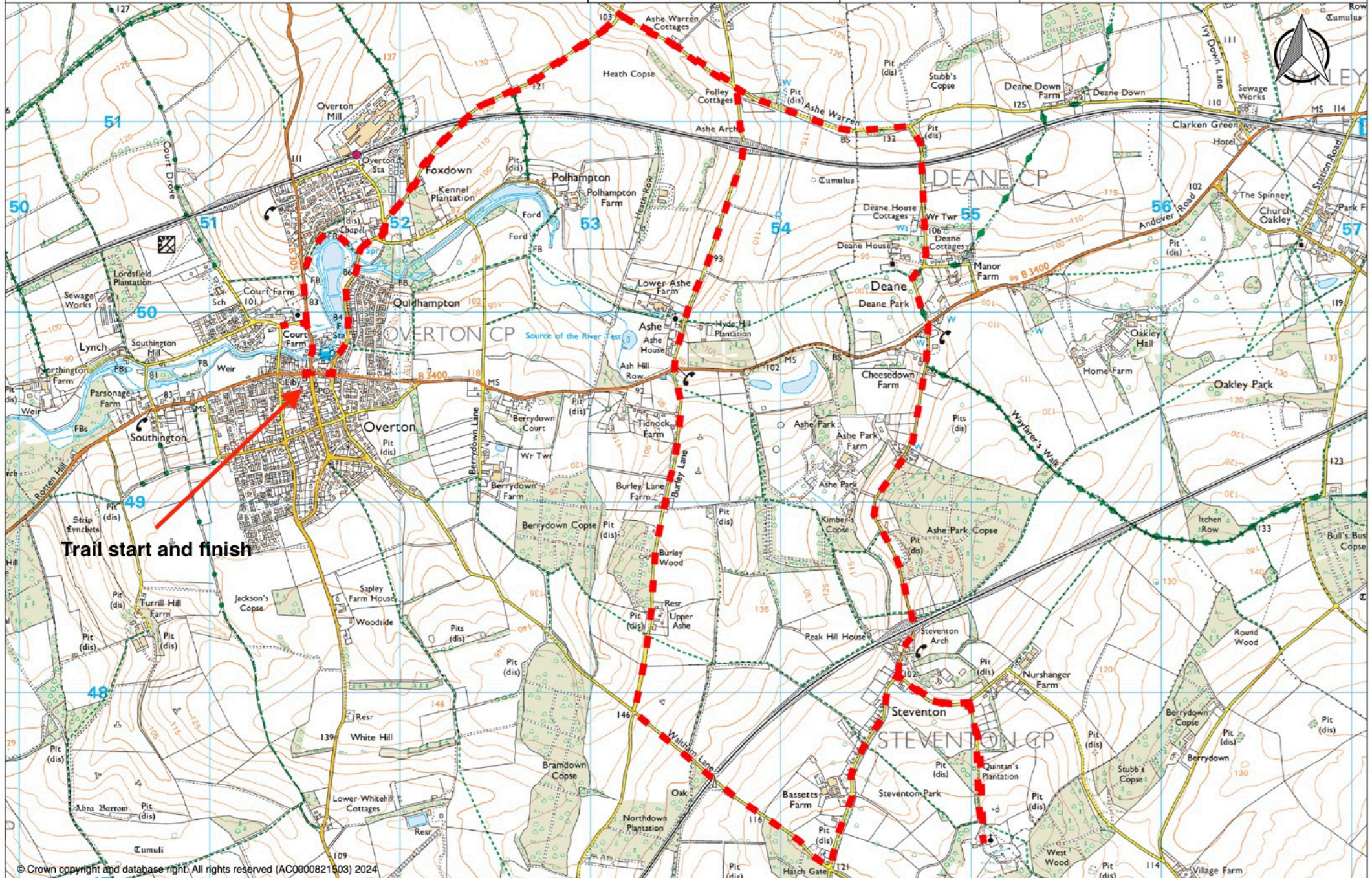
Overton

Author:

Date: 17/12/2024



PARISH
ONLINE





Rider Responsibilities

The Overton Jane Austen Trails Group asks you to observe the following when undertaking the trail:

- Please wear a safety approved cycling helmet ideally complying with safety standard EN1078
- Riders under 16 should be accompanied by a nominated adult at all times on the ride.
- The route largely follows public roads, so riders should anticipate encountering vehicle traffic. Riders are asked to comply with all traffic law & regulations and obey the Highway Code. You are requested to ride in single file where appropriate and no more than 2 abreast at any time. Please be aware of your fellow cyclists and other traffic. Please do not pass through any traffic lights on red.
- Whilst riding, please behave in a manner that is safe for yourself, and all other road users. Please indicate your intention to stop or change direction. Do not use your mobile phone while riding. Please stop at the side of the road if you need to make or receive a call.
- Please ensure you wear / carry suitable clothing for the prevailing and forecast weather conditions on the day that you ride. We suggest you also carry an energy bar or similar snacks, a water bottle, a spare inner tube, a working pump, a mobile phone, and ideally a multi-tool.
- You should also ensure the roadworthiness and safe working order of your own cycle.
- As a rider you undertake the route at your own risk and you should rely on your own ability in dealing with all hazards. You should:
 - stay vigilant to avoid potholes, patches of mud and loose gravel on the lanes;
 - take particular care when crossing the B3400 as the traffic on it can travel fast;
 - be respectful when encountering horse riders – please slow down and say hello as you approach so you don't spook the horses.
- One section of the route is on an easy off-road path which is normally fine for any kind of bike but may be muddy in bad weather (Flashetts, off the Kingsclere Road). See a map for an alternative way round.
- Finally, please note that a number of the historic locations mentioned in the route guide are private property, so do not encroach on private land either on bike or foot.

Have a fun and safe ride on the Overton to Steventon Jane Austen cycle trail