

JANE AUSTEN
2025:

A LEGACY



THE PROJECT

Jane Austen is Britain's greatest female novelist. Her novels, published in over 40 languages, have been adapted for the widest possible audience across all cultural media. Her profile is global: *Pride and Prejudice* alone has sold more than 20 million copies, having never been out of print.

2025 marks the 250th anniversary of Austen's birth. It presents a significant opportunity to bring her legacy to even greater prominence - in Hampshire, where she was born and spent most of her life, and in Winchester, where she died and was buried. That is why the Chapter of Winchester Cathedral wishes to install a memorial statue to Austen in the Inner Close.

The City of Winchester is always looking to boost the local economy: tourism and heritage are key drivers in this strategy. The project, particularly when allied to Hampshire County Council's 2025 initiative to celebrate Austen's birth, will raise awareness of the City and County nationally and internationally, and create sustainable, additional prosperity in the long economic recovery from pandemic.

Heritage in the UK currently generates £14.7 billion gross value added per annum directly and £36.6 billion indirectly, while locally the 2017 commemorations of the 200th anniversary of Austen's death brought £21M to Hampshire's economy. With sufficient Austen assets to encourage stays in Winchester, the City will become a natural point of departure for trips to Steventon, Basingstoke, Chawton, and further afield to Bath.



Memorial plaque to Jane Austen



Jane Austen's ledger stone

Austen is buried in the north nave aisle of Winchester Cathedral under a memorial stone, which mentions 'the extraordinary endowments of her mind' but which fails to pay tribute to her extraordinary achievements as a novelist. Her grave is a principal destination for many visitors. Her sister Cassandra wrote, "It is a satisfaction to me to think that her remains are to lie in a Building she admired so much".

Near the grave stands a memorial brass outlining her achievements and a commemorative stained-glass window by Kempe. Neither does sufficient justice to her moral vision or enduring literary legacy.



THE SCULPTOR

MARTIN JENNINGS

The Cathedral Chapter has worked in close collaboration with Martin Jennings, one of the country's leading figurative sculptors, to develop an outdoor memorial to Austen. Jennings' works include John Betjeman at St Pancras, Mary Seacole outside St Thomas' Hospital, Women of Steel in Sheffield, Philip Larkin in Hull, George Orwell outside the BBC's Broadcasting House, and the portrait of King Charles III for the Royal Mint.



Sir John Betjeman - St Pancras Station



Mary Seacole - Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital



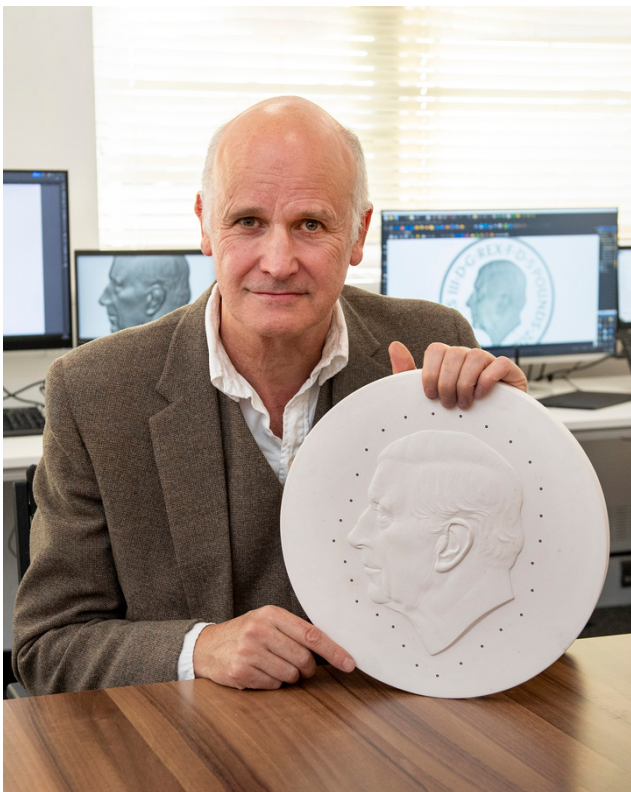
Women of Steel - Sheffield City Hall



Philip Larkin - Paragon Interchange, Hull



George Orwell - BBC Broadcasting House, London



Martin Jennings



Portrait of King Charles III

Jennings was chosen as the sculptor because his work seeks to convey through the total figure in its setting something of the inner life of the subject. This is especially important in Jane Austen's case, where her looks are uncertain, though notably sketched by her sister Cassandra.



Sketch of Jane Austen by her sister Cassandra

The portrait on the current £10 note is a stylised version of Cassandra's image.



Jane's features have been described by close family and friends. They mention ringlets, large hazel eyes, a small mouth and a long nose. Her surviving pelisse also gives clues as to her slender figure; from it, it is estimated that she was up to 5 foot 7 inches (170 cms) tall.

PROPOSED DESIGN

Jennings' original design, unveiled late in 2018, provoked a mixed reaction in the local press. It was clear that a more obviously recognisable figure was wanted than an evocation of her spirit or authorial world. Jennings spent a further year simplifying and refining his design, consulting leading scholars, and studying the evidence from portraits and descriptions to achieve a greater likeness, and paring it down to essentials, while maintaining his own emphasis on her vision and legacy.



Detail from the Design

The result is an authoritative and elegant figure, which would stand at life-size, with her characteristic ringlets and cap, standing by her famous writing table. It is unashamedly public art, sympathetic to the scale of her surroundings.

This design may be further refined through consultation with the Cathedral's partners and the public, and will naturally evolve as it is realised at full scale. (The current maquette stands at only 57cms.)





EXPERT OPINION

Prof Paula Byrne, author of *The Real Jane Austen*, says, *'The Jane Austen maquette is truly wonderful. It captures Austen's sparkling intelligence, her slender, upright figure, her lightness of touch, as we see in her novels, and her playfulness. The WOMAN is at the forefront of the sculpture, resplendent in her vigour and energy.'*

Prof Emma Clery, author of *Jane Austen: The Banker's Sister*, says, *'It is unapologetically grand ... this model does an excellent job of fulfilling one of the chief functions of this form of art: honouring the subject.'*

Dr Gillian Dow, former Executive Director of Chawton House Library, says, *'I admire the quietly confident Jane Austen depicted by Martin Jennings here. She gazes into the distance, as if she were wishing the manuscripts composed at her writing table good fortune as they travel into the world to make their own way in it.'*

Rachel Bebb, Director of Rachel Bebb Contemporary, says, *'her intelligent face is a study of concentration and suggests absorption in her writing. This would be a fine addition to public art in the city; it would anchor the story of Jane's presence in Winchester.'*

Rupert Nabarro, trustee of the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, says, *'Martin Jennings has produced a fine study of a young woman at work, whose concentration and strength of character shine through; and where devotion to craft is central. It will be a wonderful addition to the statuary of the city.'*

Tracy Chevalier, author of *Girl with the Pearl Earring*, says, *'I love the idea of Jane Austen being honoured with a statue by Winchester Cathedral, her final resting place. Martin Jennings has captured her spirit in a delightfully fresh way, standing next to her iconic writing table, her form both graceful and moving.'*

PUBLIC IMPACT

Jennings' statue would greatly enhance the city centre's sense of place and add to its already considerable sculptural heritage. It would be situated in the Inner Close, set against the homely backdrop of No 9 the Close, a house built after the Restoration in the 1660s for a returning Cathedral canon, and on a pleasant lawn that could amply accommodate groups wanting to view and engage with the sculpture.



Proposed Location

Importantly, this location is near the route of Austen's funeral procession and the path she would have taken when visiting her nephews in Winchester College or her friends living at the-then number 12. The statue would provide a graceful focal point for this lawn and a point of welcome for all arriving through Prior's Gate.

Jennings intends to set this statue on a low plinth to allow visitors to interact with it. Many photos would be taken next to Jane Austen, and the sculpture would become as iconic as Antony Gormley's Sound II in the Cathedral crypt. The statue would be freely accessible to all during the day and securely locked in the Close from 10pm to 6am.



Sound II

The statue would become a staging post for the tours given by City Guides, and the start of a new trail, beginning in the Close with the sculpture of one woman and ending with the statue of another, of Licoricia on Jewry Street. This Women of Winchester Trail is a mile long and takes 40 minutes to complete - a walk through some of the most beautiful part of the City, and past its main shops, cafes and restaurants. Its being only walkable also benefits the local environment.

Jennings' piece would have three chief impacts on the heritage landscape of the City:

- it would draw many Austen devotees onto a City trail
- it would route visitors from the Cathedral into Kingsgate Village; consequently, visitors would reach the High Street via Broadway and the Central Winchester Regeneration area, rather than joining it higher up at the Buttercross
- it would bookend the trail between two of the principal visitor attractions of Winchester, the Cathedral and the Arc, leaving visitors near restaurants, the theatre and the station.

WOMEN OF WINCHESTER TRAIL

Having viewed Jennings' memorial, visitors leave the Close via Prior's Gate and Kingsgate, arriving in Kingsgate Village, whose historic buildings have remained largely intact since Austen's time. There is a chance here to visit the shops at the top Kingsgate Street and College Street, and at No 8 College Street, stands the house where Jane Austen died.



8 College Street

Discussions are taking place between the College and City Council to make it more accessible to the public. While this vision may take a while to realise, the proximity of the sculpture to the house would immediately be symbiotic.

Visitors can enjoy the College's Treasury Museum and the 14th Century Virgin and Child above the College Gatehouse, before walking to Wolvesey Palace and Castle, then along the Itchen, past the 3rd Century remains of the Roman wall, leading to Thornycroft's Alfred the Great.



Viaduct Way



Alfred the Great

Visitors would then amble up the full length of the High Street, past the Mayor's House, the Guildhall, the Buttercross, and many shops and cafes, up to Frink's Horse and Rider. If able to manage stairs, by turning left visitors would find the sculptures Pride of Hampshire, A Promise Honoured and Gilbert's Queen Victoria in the Great Hall, before returning to the High Street.



Horse and Rider



Queen Victoria - Great Hall



Hampshire Hog

The stair-free route from Frink would lead directly up the High Street from Frink to Westgate and Kemp's Hampshire Hog, before visitors return down the other side, turning left into Jewry Street to arrive finally at Rank-Broadley's Licoricia of Winchester, and the Arc, with its gallery and tapestry by Alice Kettle.

INCLUSION

The City is right to focus on its Saxon and medieval inheritance; Winchester's glory days are certainly a unique selling point. This, however, should not be to the exclusion of other periods, especially those which have the benefit of linking visitors to other places of interest in Hampshire and beyond.

This early period highlights 'the great men of history' - monarchs and bishops and the affairs of Church and State which occupied them - who are not of universal appeal, as recent debates about contested heritage have shown. It's a powerful and inclusive cultural and economic strategy, therefore, to complement this ancient focus with a more recent and literary strand from the Early Romantic period, in which the domestic lives of individuals, especially women, are so sympathetically celebrated.

This literary strand can also be linked to the Winchester Bible, Keats' visit to the city when he wrote Ode to Autumn, and the Romantic movement cradled at Winchester College. The Church Times Festival of Faith and Literature, now hosted biennially by the University of Winchester and the Cathedral, will also raise awareness of this heritage. The next festival is planned for 2025.

Jane Austen, as Britain's most famous female novelist, has a huge significance for women and women writers. She and her family were, in tune with the social mores of the time, reticent about her work. Now is the time, as we approach the 250th anniversary of her birth, for Winchester to celebrate her achievement as an inspiration, especially for women and women writers.

The statue would offer wider educational opportunities for Hampshire County Council's secondary curriculum. Winchester Cathedral would work with the Winchester College and other educational partners to develop educational resources linking Austen's cultural legacy to place. This has already been successfully achieved for Licoricia of Winchester, following the unveiling of her commemorative statue in 2022.



Statue of Licoricia of Winchester

The statues of these two women together, of different faiths and with different talents and callings, would stand as a profound and complementary witness to women's contribution to the history and culture of the region. It would also put Winchester at the forefront of the fight to celebrate great women on Britain's streets.

THE WAY AHEAD

In these economically straitened times, public art must hold its own amongst other pressing priorities, but good art always brings renewal, not only economic but ecological: it enriches the natural environment, bringing joy to the generations which will encounter it. The budget for the sculpture is around £100k, of which over £60k has already been raised.

Because of competing demands for money, including the Cathedral's own essential works, the funding for Austen's memorial will come from those with an interest in the welfare of the City and County, especially its agenda to increase visits, and individuals with a passion for Jane Austen and the creative arts.

Where there is new public art, controversy will follow. Good art stretches the imagination and unsettles assumptions. Antony Gormley's Sound II was no exception to this, nor his more recent Angel of the North. Controversy that generates interest and stimulates people to come and see for themselves is to be welcomed, and when it comes to a figure like Jane Austen strength of feeling runs especially high, given her unique stature in the County. Ultimately, this is a sign of how deeply and fiercely Austen is loved.

Consultation is an important component of the way ahead, so that interested groups have a chance for direct conversation with the artist. These groups would include the Jane Austen Society, the City of Winchester Trust and the Hampshire Cultural Trust; and there would be general public consultation.

The project will be divided into two parts, the creation of the full-scale clay model in 2024, which will need approval by an expert consultative group before the second stage of casting and installation in 2025.

The 250th anniversary of her birth in 2025 will be the last time in a while when Jane Austen will be at the forefront of the public imagination. Hampshire County Council have already begun their planning for this with multiple partners, and the Cathedral will be joining in with its own creative programme, the Year of the Word.

The installation and unveiling of this sculpture will be of national interest and emblematic for all these celebrations. Most importantly, however, the sculpture will endure in the everyday far beyond 2025, continuing to deliver the substantial benefits already outlined to the culture and economy of both City and County.

If you would like to support the completion of this exciting project, please contact Zoe Seenan, Director of Development at fundraising@winchester-cathedral.org.uk
Your support will be most gratefully received and acknowledged.

