

FREE entry to Chawton House Library

House takes part in national heritage scheme

On Saturday 8th September from 10.30am till 4.30pm, Chawton House Library will be opening to the public for FREE as part of the Heritage Open Days scheme. Heritage Open Days celebrates England's architecture and culture by allowing visitors free access to interesting properties that are either not usually open, or would normally charge an entrance fee.

Visitors will be able explore the library, the house and the gardens and there will also be a number of activities going on throughout the day. In particular, the Hampshire Regency Dancers will be doing dancing demonstrations of some Blasis Quadrilles which they found in a book in Chawton House Library. The book was published in 1830 and they may not have been danced for over 100 years!

There will also be shire horse demonstrations, readings from Jane Austen, live music from the Liss band and children's activities. Refreshments will also be available in the Old Kitchen. Everyone is welcome to come and enjoy this special day.

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

- Chawton House is a research library with a unique collection of books focusing on women's writing in English from 1600 – 1830. This specialist collection, set in the home and working estate of Jane Austen's brother, provides the opportunity to study and savour the texts in their original setting and inspires passion in readers of all ages.
- The Chawton Estate has been closely connected with the Knight family since the early 16th century. Chawton House was built in 1583 by John Knight and passed by inheritance to Jane Austen's brother, Edward, on the death of childless cousin, Thomas Knight in 1794. Jane, her mother and her sister subsequently moved to a house in Chawton village, now Jane Austen's House Museum. Edward himself later changed his surname to Knight.
- In 1987, the house was inherited by Richard Knight, but was by then in such a dilapidated state that radical action was required. In 1993, following the failure of a plan to convert the estate to a country club and golf course, the American philanthropist, Sandy Lerner, acquired a 125-year lease for the purpose of forming a library and study centre based on her collection of 7,000 works by women writing in English before 1830. Following ten years of meticulous research, planning and restoration work, Chawton House Library opened as a research library and study centre in July 2003.
- Chawton House Library is a registered charity (registration number 1026921)
- Website: www.chawton.org

