

50 YEARS OF TOURIST GUIDING IN SOUTHAMPTON

and the birth of the
**Sarah Siddons
Fan Club Theatre**



In 1976 there was a small ad in the Southern Echo, promoting a series of lectures on local history.

But on arrival for the first talk, it was revealed that the actual aim was to train the first blue badge tourist guides in the Southern Tourist Board area.

Fifty years on, one member of that original training course - Cheryl Butler, who was also given the first blue badge and guiding ID, is still going strong.

To commemorate this Golden Jubilee, Cheryl has chosen five of her favourite walks to lead this summer.

The walks cost just £5pp, with the money raised going to support future heritage events.

Each walk will begin at a different historic site in Southampton and will include a special visit, or something of added interest.

Tours will last approximately 90minutes unless otherwise stated.



Cheryl describes the tours below:

TITANIC



The 90th and 100th anniversaries of the fateful maiden voyage of the Titanic were huge events and led to a whole range of creative ways to explore her story, particularly in light of its impact on Southampton.

With three ancestors who sailed on RMS Titanic – a fireman, a steward and a cook – there will be a chance to hear family tales and see some surviving artefacts.



Date: 3rd June, 2pm

(the date when the 'White Star' dock opened in Southampton)

Starting Point: Holy Rood Church, High Street

Tickets available [here](#)

2017 and 2025 were pivotal anniversaries for Jane Austen and resulted in two major festivals in Southampton, which I helped to organise, with study days, exhibitions, plays, concerts and films.

This walk will focus on a health theme, including spa treatments, and all the ailments which beset Georgian Southampton ...and almost carried off Miss Austen before she even got going!

All attendees will get a chance to win a book bag.

Date: 18th July, 11am

(the date Jane Austen died)

Starting Point: St Michael's Square, Bugle Street

Tickets available [here](#)



JANE AUSTEN:

Typhus, Smallpox &
Melancholia



HARRY'S HAMPTON



2015 was the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Agincourt. During that year I curated a whole range of events; street theatre, drama, exhibitions, medieval fairs, publications and of course, guided walks.

This walk will explore medieval Southampton, in its context as an important site for Henry V and his plans to invade France, but more than this, Henry's knightly ideals were based on his studying the story of Sir Bevis of Hamtun.

The tour includes a special visit to St Julien's Chapel.

Date: 24th July, 11am

(the date of Henry V's Will, which was written at Southampton Castle)

Starting Point: 58 French Street

Tickets available [here](#)



Southampton's links with America had begun in the sixteenth century and 2020 was the 400th anniversary of the sailing, in August 1620, of the Mayflower and Speedwell from Southampton.

Despite events being affected by Covid; walks, exhibitions, documentaries and films were all produced. This walk, which will also reflect on America 250, will explore why the pilgrims chose Southampton as their departure point and includes a visit to the Mayflower exhibition at West Gate.

THE SAILING OF THE MAYFLOWER



Date: 5th August, 11am

(the day the Mayflower sailed from Southampton)

Starting Point: God's House Tower, Town Quay

Tickets available [here](#)



AROUND THE WALLS IN 80 MINUTES?!



Back in 1976 it was all about the medieval town, at that time a hidden part of Southampton's long history. In the last fifty years, more of the walls have been landscaped and made more accessible.

In 2026, therefore, it will take a bit longer than the original 80 minutes to complete the circuit. With the final completion of the Bargate Quarter development, access to the Eastern walls will finally make it possible to do a complete circuit of the Old Town walls.

Date: 9th September, 2pm

Starting Point: The Bargate, High Street

Estimated time of walk 2 ¼ hours.

Tickets available [here](#)



COMING SOON...

In 1988 a new walk was developed - the infamous Ghost Walk! This developed into a more theatrical experience and The Sarah Siddons Fan Club Theatre Company was formed.

Our first ghost walk was called *The Lepers Day Out* and we are looking to recreate that groundbreaking performance in 2026.

<http://www.cherylbutler.co.uk/>



<https://sarahsiddonsfanclub.org.uk/>



YouTube

All tickets & more information available:

<https://wegottickets.com/sarahsiddonsfanclub>