



## **JANE AUSTEN'S MANSFIELD PARK AT 200**

*WRITING HOME: JANE AUSTEN AND HER HOUSES*

THURSDAY 9 OCTOBER

DR MICHAEL WHEELER

The third of Jane Austen's novels after *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park* was published in 1814, two hundred years ago. Far more socially complex and quietly subversive than either *Pride and Prejudice* or *Sense and Sensibility*, it is the most controversial of her novels. In *Mansfield Park* she exposes the hypocrisies and deceits, pretences and failures in the English behavioural and moral code. In this Regency country house world, women's prettiness may appear in inverse proportion to the quality of their virtues; cutting down an avenue of trees draws into question the then-current popularity of estate 'improvements'; a garden Ha-ha becomes a Rubicon and a wilderness a place of danger; the amateur production of 'Lovers Vows', ostensibly a mere bit of fun, reveals all the messiness of emotional life; and a chosen card game is not called 'speculation' for nothing. *Mansfield Park* is a meditation on the State of England.

Professor Michael Wheeler, author of *Jane Austen and Winchester Cathedral*, sets the novel in its historical and literary context, focusing upon the events and writings of 1812-14. He then gives an illustrated talk in which he discusses the way in which Austen uses and describes houses and estates in her novels, particularly in *Mansfield Park*, which he relates to the restoration of the estate at Chawton during his time as Co-Director of the Library there. The day concludes with analysis of selected passages from the novel, a copy of which should be brought to the event by each participant.

MEET 10:30 am coffee for 11 am lecture at the Art Workers' Guild

ENDS 3:30 pm at the Art Workers' Guild

COST £75 members, £85 non-members