**Jane Austen: Ramsgate**

Visited at least once, in 1803.

**Publication(s)** *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*

‘My sister, who is more than ten years my junior, was left to the guardianship of my mother's nephew, Colonel Fitzwilliam, and myself. About a year ago, she was taken from school, and an establishment formed for her in London; and last summer she went with the lady who presided over it, to Ramsgate; and thither also went Mr. Wickham, undoubtedly by design; […] he so far recommended himself to Georgiana, whose affectionate heart retained a strong impression of his kindness to her as a child, that she was persuaded to believe herself in love, and to consent to an elopement.’

*\_Pride and Prejudice*\_ (1813)

During the Regency period, [Ramsgate](/dickens/19c-ramsgate) blossomed from a small watering hole into an important garrison town and social destination. Edward Austen Knight is known to have gone there with his family, and on one such occasion at least, Jane Austen accompanied him. She may have visited at other times as well. A family acquaintance, Sir Egerton Brydges, recalls seeing Austen there at this time:

When I knew Jane Austen I never suspected that she was an authoress. But my eyes told me that she was fair and handsome, slight and elegant, with cheeks a little too full. The last time, I think, I saw her was at [Ramsgate](/dickens/19c-ramsgate) in 1803.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Jane Austen and her siblings may have been particularly keen to visit around this time because their brother Francis was a Royal Navy officer and commanded the North Foreland Sea Fencibles here in 1803-4. While stationed in [Ramsgate](/dickens/19c-ramsgate), Francis met a local woman, Mary Gibson, whom he married in 1806.[[2]](#footnote-2) Jane Austen celebrated their nuptials in an unpublished poem written for her niece, Fanny Knight:

See they come, post haste from Thanet,  
 Lovely couple, side by side;  
They've left behind them Richard Kennet  
 With the Parents of the Bride!

[Canterbury](/19c/19c-canterbury) they have passed through;  
 Next succeeded Stamford-bridge;  
Chilham village they came fast through;  
 Now they've mounted yonder ridge.  
  
Down the hill they're swift proceeding,  
 Now they skirt the Park around;  
Lo! the Cattle sweetly feeding,  
 Scamper, startled, at the sound!   
  
Run, my Brothers, to the Pier gate!  
 Throw it open, very wide!  
Let it not be said that we're late  
 In welcoming my Uncle's Bride!   
  
To the house the chaise advances;  
 Now it stops—They're here, they're here!  
How d'ye do, my Uncle Francis?  
 How does do your Lady dear?[[3]](#footnote-3)

In Austen’s published work, [Ramsgate](/dickens/19c-ramsgate) is associated with less reputable male characters. In \_*Pride and Prejudice\_*, the ostensibly charming militia officer George Wickham connives to seduce and elope with the young, impressionable, and very wealthy Georgiana Darcy at [Ramsgate](/dickens/19c-ramsgate). In \_*Mansfield Park\_*, [Ramsgate](/dickens/19c-ramsgate) becomes a destination for the selfish and profligate Tom Bertram. In her private life, Austen also casts dispersions on the port, commenting in a letter to her sister: “Ed. Hussey is warned out of Pett, and talks of fixing at [Ramsgate](/dickens/19c-ramsgate). Bad taste! He is very fond of the sea, however. Some taste in that, and some judgment, too, in fixing on [Ramsgate](/dickens/19c-ramsgate), as being by the sea”.[[4]](#footnote-4) Austen seems to have harboured reservations about the opportunities for loose or immoral behaviour in [seaside towns]( /19c/19c-seaside) such as [Ramsgate](/dickens/19c-ramsgate).

Article by Susan Civale

**Bibliography**

Selwyn, David, ed. *\_The Poetry of Jane Austen and the Austen Family\_*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997.

Note to MC:

Image: View of Ramsgate Town and Harbour. © The British Library Board .003KTOP00000017U007B0000 / Maps K.Top.17.7.b Images Online

We have iii manifest for this. It’s in Ron’s google spreadsheet ‘Kent Images’, kent-23. This means we can annotate it?

1. Egerton Brydges, *Autobiography of Sir Egerton Brydges*. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Paul Poplawski, 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. ‘Lines Written by Jane Austen for the Amusement of a Niece, (afterwards Lady Knatchbull) on the arrival of Captn & Mrs Austen at Godmersham Park after their marriage July 1806.’ \_*The Poetry of Jane Austen and the Austen Family\_* 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. To Cassandra Austen, 14-15 October 1813. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)