



People : Artists and Painters

James Gooch

Artist chronicler of Twickenham
1790- 1872

Trains as an artist

James Gooch was born and baptised in Wymondham, about six miles south-west of Norwich. There is uncertainty as to whether this was in 1784 to parents James and Ann, or 1790 to parents Thomas and Elizabeth. The confusion derives from a reading of his Christian name in the baptismal register as Jonas, rather than James. However, in the 1861 census he declared his age to be 71, thus suggesting his birth to have been in 1790. Furthermore, when he died, and was buried in Twickenham on 20 April 1872, he was stated to be 81 which would probably confirm the birth date of 1790 and so his parentage.

James may have come under the influence of John Crome, founder of the Norwich Society of Artists in 1805 and a teacher at the Cathedral School. The school had been attended by members of the Gooch family, James perhaps among them.

James exhibited 62 paintings with the Norwich Society between 1812 and 1828, being an actual member from 1819 until 1828.

In September 1818 he married Easter Sarah Carlton (1798-1869) at St George Colegate, Norwich and there appear to have been 9 children of the union, five born in Twickenham. He moved to a Cambridge address in 1820-3 and to Richmond in 1824-8, where his second son, Richard Augustus Carlton was born. He must have been in Norwich in May 1825 where his son James was born. It seems likely that he had moved to Twickenham from Richmond by 1827.

His brother Samuel was also an artist and a member of the Norwich Society and another brother Noah married into the Ninham family, very well known artists locally. James maintained his artistic interests all his life (as late as 1871, in the Census, he described himself as an artist).

A life of public service in Twickenham

By 1833 he had become Vestry Clerk at St Mary's Church ([detail.php?ContentID=177](#)). In his *Book of Correspondence* he at first described himself as Vestry Clerk, but by 1840 he had taken on additional public duties as Assistant Overseer of the Poor and Collector of Poor Rates.

To these posts he added:

Registrar of births and deaths,

Local Registrar for the Censuses from 1841 to 1861,

Clerk to the Highways Board,
Clerk to the committee revising the Poor Rates assessment in 1837.

And he also kept the minutes for the Tithe Commission Enquiry meetings of 1845.

He finally retired in 1867. In the following year the Vestry handed over most of its powers to the newly created (and elected) Local Board of Health.



(images/content/medSt_Marys_East_End_Gooch.jpg)

St Mary's, Twickenham, East End by Gooch

Artistic interests maintained

Two interior watercolour views of St Mary's painted by Gooch show the church as it was in 1859 before the substantial alterations carried out during the subsequent few years.



(images/content/medSt_Marys_West_End_Gooch.jpg)

St Mary's, Twickenham, West End by Gooch

He executed five lithographs in 1832 which give us a glimpse of the village of Twickenham as opposed to the great houses. They show streets with carts, beasts of burden, a herd of cattle and various pedestrians, giving a vivid impression of life in those days.

Further reading:

T H R Cashmore, The Tithe Award: Twickenham in 1845, Borough of Twickenham Local History Society Paper No.46, 1980

St Mary's Twickenham Parish Archives, James Gooch's Letterbook.

(note: Valuable information about the Gooch family has been contributed by Gillian Mathews, who is descended from a brother of James, and Janis E Say (nee Gooch), who is a great great granddaughter of James)

[back to top](#)