

Brief Biography: William Tate (1747-1806)

It is thought that William Tate was born in Gawber, near Barnsley, in 1747. His father, Paul Tate, was a glass-maker at the glassworks situated close to Gawber Hall. Paul Tate was a nephew of William Thorp, who had built the glassworks in the 1730s. William's mother, Ann, was originally from Cawthorne.

William had an older brother, named Richard, who was born in 1736.

Some time after 1766, William went to study at Woolton Academy, a boarding school just outside Liverpool. It is thought that this is where William learned to paint. By this time, William's brother Richard was already living in Liverpool. He had found work as a clerk at a glass-works, married, and, as an amateur artist, set himself up as a supporter of the arts in Liverpool.

William became a pupil and friend of the well-known artist Joseph Wright of Derby, probably while Joseph was staying with Richard Tate between 1768 and 1771. It is thought that this helped William to become a professional artist. After Joseph's death in 1797, William finished some of his unfinished paintings, which is an indication of their long-lasting friendship.

During his adult life, William lived in several different places including, Liverpool, Manchester and London. He attended the Royal Academy Schools in London in 1777. Later in life, he married a lady named Ann, who is thought to have been from Wakefield, but there is no evidence that they had any children. In 1802, William moved to Bath where he died in 1806. At his death, he owned land in both Liverpool and Manchester and a dwelling house in Manchester.

William's early work reflects his familiarity with Joseph Wright's work but his style changed during his lifetime. Late in life he seems to have favoured landscape painting, whereas his early career was mostly in painting portraits. William exhibited 13 paintings in Liverpool (in 1771-75 and 1791) and 12 paintings at the Royal Academy between 1776 and 1804. He was elected a Fellow of the Society of Artists in 1773. His subjects included local families in Yorkshire, founders of the Manchester Royal Infirmary and the Daulbys, a prominent family in Liverpool. Some of William's paintings are now owned by the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, but many others are in private ownership.



A portrait of William Thorp of Gawber Hall attributed to William Tate