

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

GUEST, Thomas Robert

1755 – Salisbury 1818

An advertisement in the *Bath chronicle*, 25.XII.1788, announced that “Mr Guest, *Miniature and Portrait Painter* (late from Italy)” offered likenesses from 2 to 20 gns each, as well as drawing lessons in the “Italian method” in water, crayons, oil or encaustic. “Striking profile likenesses”, at 5s. to a guinea, could be had framed and glazed, the time of sitting being only one minute. Two of Storer’s celebrated Delineators with the late improvement were also available.

He was very probably the Thomas Guest recorded in the Royal Academy Schools in 1777. On 14.III.1779, at St Andrew’s, Plymouth, Thomas Robert Guest of Falmouth, portrait painter married a Margaret Douglass from Plymouth. He was recorded again in Portsmouth when, on 2.VI.1801, he was granted a patent for special paint boxes designed with a scientific method of arranging the colours. The patent mentions that he also had a house in London, at 82 Pall Mall: this was the premises of the firm of Guest & Rowney, a partnership between the artist and Thomas Rowney, a perfumer, formed that year and dissolved in February the following year, the stock being auctioned. Rowney continued as a colourman in London, but Guest moved to Salisbury where he continued as artist, teacher, restorer and supplier. In 1807 he published *A new pocket sketch book*. According to Farington, he was also a watchmaker. He would be forgotten today were it not for four strikingly modern paintings he made in 1814 of grave goods excavated at Winterlow: one wonders if the discrepancies in scale resulted from use of the Delineator.

His dates (but not birthplace) are confirmed by the memorial at St Thomas’s, Salisbury. His son was another portraitist, Thomas Douglas Guest (c.1780–1855); their work is frequently confused, and it is unclear which was the T. Guest, Jr of 76 St James’s Street who exhibited three miniatures at the Royal Academy in 1801. They may have been related to the Thomas Guest, tailor in Bath, father of Jane Mary Guest, Mrs Miles (c.1762–1846), piano teacher to Princess Amelia and Princess Charlotte.

Bibliography

British artists’ suppliers database, npg.org.uk;
Farington 1978–98; Foskett 1987; Oxford DNB;
Sam Smiles, “Thomas Guest and Paul Nash in Wiltshire”, in Smiles & al., *Envisioning the past*, Oxford, 2005, pp. 133–57; *The repertory of arts and manufactures*, XV, 1801, pp. 161, 215; parish records