Jam Yesterday Jam Tomorrow is a community led project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund to uncover and restore the history of market gardening in Middlesex through research, oral histories and the building of a model market garden to showcase traditional methods of growing and lost varieties. To find out more visit: www.jamyesterdayjamtomorrow.com.

Market Gardeners
Fact-sheet: The Poupart Family

1 Historical Context

Throughout the 19th century, the economy of Middlesex was dominated by the need to feed London’s booming population. Parishes along the river, and those within easy walking distance of the hungry markets of London, became centres for commercial agriculture. Over time the rapid expansion of London’s urban area forced out market gardeners from central London into the southwest suburbs, and a number of Enclosure Acts allowed common grazing land to become market gardens. Farmers became horticulturalists, and farms became market gardens and orchards. The arrival of the railway to Twickenham, Teddington and Whitten in the middle of the-century allowed market gardeners to move away from the river, deeper into Middlesex. In many areas, employment in agriculture exceeded that in trade, manufacturing, and handicrafts. Gradually, however, as London continued to grow, house-building for the new ‘commuter classes’ began, and orchards began to give way to houses. The industry peaked in the 1870s, and then moved to the Hampton area, where large glasshouses allowed growers to produce fruit and vegetables more efficiently. Several of the Hampton nurseries continued to thrive through the Second World War and after, until their land was finally built upon to become Nurserylands housing estate.

2 The Poupart family in Twickenham

If you were living in Twickenham during the early part of the Twentieth Century you would most certainly have known the Poupart name. William Poupart had moved his family to Marsh Farm in 1879 and established mixed farming on a large site – some of which is now covered by Craneford Road playing fields and Richmond College. There were Marsh Farm Dairy shops in Heath Road, near to the railway bridge (The Dip), and in York Street. The W. Poupart jam factory opened in Third Cross Road in 1911. William Snr’s sons all had their own enterprises in Twickenham. Charles had an “Electric Laundry” business in Norcutt Road, whilst, Ernest, was running a seed store in London Road. Donald had an electrical business – also in London Road, and William Jnr bought Blackmoor Farm (site of present day Squires Garden Centre) in 1912 and continued to practise mixed farming there until his death in 1939.

3 Key Facts/Time line

1874: William Snr and wife Sarah move from Kew to Twickenham, leasing land either side of London Road between Cole’s Bridge and Ivy Bridge
1879: William Snr increased his holding to include Marsh Farm – where the family took up residence and began to practise mixed farming

1880’s The size of the holding continued to increase, with the main farm house and accommodation for some of the workers, as well as buildings for sorting, grading and packing the produce for the markets at Kew Bridge and Covent Garden.

1892: Son John (only 19) takes over the Covent Garden market “pitch” on the cobbles, selling the best Poupart’s produce.

1893: Brentford market opened as a purpose built centre, moving from the informal site to the north of Kew Bridge, which was causing massive congestion locally.

1894: Poupart’s Milk shop opened at 188 Heath Road, advertising pure new milk from our own cows. The original herd of 80 cows had grown to over 100 cattle by 1897. They were taken from Marsh Farm over the railway level crossing at the north end of Marsh Farm Road and herded to the milking yard behind the Heath Road premises – twice a day!

1899: a total of 160 acres was devoted to market gardening in an area bounded by the Whitton Road to the east and north, the River Crane and the Duke of Northumberland’s River, plus the area between the Crane and the railway line west of the sidings. Poupart’s established a name for quality, carefully grading all produce; firsts and seconds would go to Covent Garden, Brentford, or local markets. Seconds (or even more damaged fruit) could still be used. William Snr began jam production in their home – Fernleigh House – in Belmont Road. William Jnr supervised his father, and grew fruits for jam making.

1911: William Poupart Ltd opened jam factory in Third Cross Rd, trading as Fernleigh Orchards.

1912: William Jnr won Gold Medal in fruit bottling section of RHS exhibition – showing 400 bottles of home grown fruit; William Jnr bought Blackmoor Farm.

1914: Marsh Farm taken over by Fred Secrett (William Snr and his wife Sarah continue to live in the farmhouse)

1926: The Jam factory expanded, much of orchard area between Third Cross Road and Trafalgar Road covered by new production areas. 300 or more people employed – mostly female

1936: William Snr. died, aged 89.

1937: A Compliments Slip shows William Poupart Limited as “Preservers of high class jams, marmalade, bottled fruits, jellies, mincement etc” with the motto “From orchard to table”. The factory address is given as Fernleigh Orchards, Twickenham. (Apparently no need to include Third Cross Road in the address!).

Late 1950’s Jam production ceases at the factory in Third Cross Road


Did you know? Produce, Transport and People

The exact mix of produce tended to vary over the years in response to market demands, but included a wide variety of apples, pears, plums and cherries, plus low crops such as cauliflowers, lettuce, seakale, celery, rhubarb, asparagus and cut flowers – especially daffodils.

The produce was moved by narrow gauge tramways, which cut across the area to the farm where it was graded and packed; later horses and carts were used, which gave greater flexibility.

The produce was then hauled to Twickenham Station over Marsh Farm level crossing, along Staten Lane (now called Marsh Farm Road), passing under the railway and continuing along what is now Lion Road and Staten Gardens, and then round to the station (which was on the opposite side of London Road) the produce for London was graded and packed and sent by the first train the following morning from Twickenham to Waterloo. The number of people employed in all aspects of planting, tending, gathering, transporting and selling was considerable, though much of it was seasonal.
4 Impact

William Snr was a thorough and particular farmer who established a reputation as a champion of quality, best practice and tradition. (His dairy business was advertised as *purity, punctuality and cleanliness guaranteed*). He was widely recognized as an authority on a variety of cultivation methods spanning fruit, vegetable and flower production, and his peers responded by electing him as President of the Market Gardeners’ Association in 1886, and subsequently for over thirty years. He continued as President when it became the Market Gardeners’, Nurserymen and Farmers’ Association, and finally the National Farmers’ Union. He was a member of the RHS Fruit and Vegetable Committee, and of their Daffodil Committee – as befitted his lifelong passion for cultivating narcissi. The RHS honoured William with their Victoria Medal – their highest award – in 1922, and formally recognized his outstanding contribution to raising daffodils in 1926.

John, who set up TJ Poupart in 1895, had soon established the family values of quality, integrity and careful selection and grading of produce around Covent Garden. The Hampton growers trusted him to sell their produce; farmers from the Lea Valley joined them. In 1897, John took on a buyer called William Ravenhill and they added imported fruit to the business; they were the first to bring South African oranges to market, soon to be followed by rare tropical fruits.

By 1901 a shop in the coveted Central Avenue had been procured. Later this was expanded to five shops and in 1907 they reached Long Acre. By 1936 T J Poupart had come into possession of all the buildings from 107 to 115 Long Acre and set about commissioning architects to rebuild the frontages with a steel framed structure in Portland stone which is still there to this day.

After a number of buyouts and takeovers at the end of 20th Century, the Poupart Group now operates from its Head Office in Hertfordshire and offices in Essex, Kent and Surrey, along with its associate companies and branches in Holland and Spain. The company and ten associated businesses have an annual turnover in excess of £340 million.

5 Find out more

Please visit our project website to find more resources: [www.jamyesterdayjamtomorrow.com/marketgardeninfactsheets](http://www.jamyesterdayjamtomorrow.com/marketgardeninfactsheets)

This factsheet was researched and written by David Lowrie, Research and Oral History Volunteer.