



THE OLD OYSTER HOUSE, FARLINGTON

# Russell Family

## Oyster Merchants New Milton Fisheries

FARLINGTON MARSH

## History of the Oyster House

by Allen Musselwhite

### Mathew Russell 1776 -1846

*Mathew Russell was born in 1776 in Portsea in the county of Southampton as it was called then. When he was a young man he made his living as a pilot in Portsea ferrying Naval personal to and from their ships. There is no information that I can find about his childhood.*

*Mathew married on the 12<sup>th</sup> November 1798 to a spinster called Jane Tilley at St Mary's church Portsea.*

*Jane was born in the same year as Mathew 1776 in Portsea.*

*During their marriage they had 6 sons and 2 daughters.*

*I can only find reference to 5 children in later years unless 2 of them died at an early age.*

*In 1815 Mathew and his young family bought a small Islet on the south eastern point of Farlington marshes in Portsea. This is when he started his business with his eldest son David and became an oyster merchant in Langstone Harbour. Local historians believed that he had rented this tiny Islet, but he had in fact bought the freehold to this piece of land. By 1819 he*

*had a house built on the Island, there was also a house built on Farlington marshes, whether this was one of their homes as well remains a mystery. The construction of the house was very basic.*

*Four rooms, four fire places, one in each room. exterior walls covered in tar to protect the building from the elements. In the 1841 census Mathew Russell (Elder) gives this as his address he called it New Milton.*

*He had 18 acres of mud flats where they grew oysters. This included what was known as Crastick creek. Mathew later called it Russell's lake, and it still called Russell's lake to this day. The Russell family had oyster lease's around the harbour. This included Eastney Lake, it was leased from John Burrill (esq).*

*In 1839 Mathew took up temporary residence at Bennett's hill doctors, then later Cherbourg France. In his absence his wife and son continued to run his business. It is possible at the time of his absence he could have spent his days locating stock for his oyster business.*

*During the 1830's Mathew Russell was implicated by other Oyster merchants for trying to have a monopoly on the oyster fishing in Langstone harbour. It was said that he was using illegal under hand practice's to out produce his rivals. He refuted these*

*accusations, and what I have been able to find out is that no action was taken by the fishery board.*

*On the 11<sup>th</sup> December 1846 Mathew Russell died. His funeral was at St James Church Milton and he was buried in the graveyard there. His last Will and testament Listed that there were only five benefactors to his will. As I said earlier unless 2 of his children died at an early age or he may have just not included them in his will. I think the latter is most likely. (you will see why later).*

*He left all his freehold house and land to his Eldest son David with whom he started the business and his other four named Children in the will were to receive an annuity annually. The will is very complex and is written in 19<sup>th</sup> century legal terms, it makes for very hard reading.*

### Jane Russell 1776 -unknown

*Jane Russell married Mathew Russell in 1798 in St Mary's church Portsea. There is very little known about Jane other than it is documented that she survived her husband and continued to receive an annuity annually after his death. She was the same age as him. At this time, I am unable to confirm the date of her death, but I believe she is also buried In St James Cemetery Milton in the 1841 census, her address is documented as New Milton fishery Farlington.*

# David Russell

1811 - 1875

*With the death of his Father David Russell took control of the family business which thrived under his leadership. David and his family took up residence at the Oyster grounds, where I think there were two dwellings one on the island and one on Farlington marshes itself. The reason for this thinking, there is the remains of a dwelling on the south east corner of the Farlington marshes landward side, but also in the 1851 census it lists David Russell and his family of six at the oyster house New Milton and another family at the same address Called Charles Fleet and a family of five. So, I think that there was in fact two houses not one.*

*David had 3 sons and 3 daughters. David Emery, Andrew, & James. Martha, Anna & Alice.*



*All the sons and grandsons worked for the family business, which was making serious amounts of money.*

*David died on 28th September 1875. He left a fortune to the sum of £7000 which was divided between his six children. The daughters with larger cash sums than the sons, but the sons had inherited the oyster business, that was continuing to thrive. Some of this family's cousins were continuing to farm oysters at Eastney lake, but the primary business was*

*still at New Milton. David was also buried at St James Church Milton.*

## PAINTINGS

As you can see there seems to only be a few pictures or painting that's exist of this marvelous house that was used by a very successful local business

RESEARCH IS ONGOING.

*"The below picture is the old Oyster House which was also known as the Black house due to the tar that was used to weatherproof it."*

# Mathew Russell Jnr

Unknown dates



*Mathew Russell, I believe might have been the son of Mathew Russell (senior). He is listed as living in Southwick West Sussex as an oyster merchant. In 1851 he took a lease on some mudflats at post creek (now known as ports creek) and the marshes. For the sum of £6.00 per year for a period of 12 years.*

*There is not much known about this gentleman other than the lease was taken out in 1851. The other interesting fact if he is the son of Mathew Russell snr this lease and his involvement in the oyster business took place after Mathew snr had died.*

## Henry Russell

1856 - 1916

*He returned in 1899 and bought the winkle market in Langstone High Street. From there he continued to trade in shellfish. He had 3 son's Augustus, Horace & Percy.*

*He also had 2 daughters Ethel & Adelaide. All his children were born in the county of Kent.*

*On his return to the area he also purchased Langstone house, in Langstone High Street*

*which was right next door to the Winkle Market. Henry traded from the winkle market buying all forms of shell fish from local's. Some of which were professional and some that were semi-professional adding additional income for their families.*

*The family still had an interest in the oyster house and was still occupied during the early 1900's. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 1913 the house, the land of 18 acres was put up for auction in London auction house as a freehold purchase. Since the death of the Dean of Winchester in 1902 due to the consumption of contaminated oysters, from Emsworth. The market for oysters from that part of the country had dried up. It is believed that the property did not sale.*

*The house and some of oyster penn's remained for a long time, after the house was un-occupied on a regular basis.*

*Henry died in 1916. His 3 sons continued with his shellfish business up until the early 1950's. The winkle market building was bought by Lt Col Selwyn Guise Cutler in 1954 and turned in to a house. Both Langstone house and winkle market are still there to this day (2017).*

## Augustus Russell

1885 - unknown

*Augustus Russell was the second eldest son of Henry Russell. Like his father and ancestors, he was an oyster merchant. He was also an active punt gunner as well as an oyster merchant. I know this to be true because I have his elevating gear on one of my punts. I have also heard stories of travelling punt gunners using the old oyster house to overnight in, when punting Langstone and Chichester Harbour's. Gus as he was commonly known was involved with Royal Navy. He was on a patrol boat protecting inshore waters of Langstone and Chichester Harbour's during WW1. The Commander of his patrol boat was John Buckle of Farlington Portsea.*



*"This is all that's left of the old oyster house. You can see the foundations to the old house"*

## Ethel Longcroft (nee Russell)

1884 - 1967

*Ethel Russell was the youngest daughter of Henry Russell.*

*At the age of 42 she married a Gentleman called Charles Longcroft. He was from a well-known family of solicitor's, from Havant. They married in St Nicholas's church Langstone High street. The church had not been allowed to carry out wedding ceremonies, so they had get a special license to be married in that church. Charles bought Langstone Manor House during the 1930's for their marital home. In the grounds of the house had two other houses built for his staff.*

*Prior to this he lived at Langstone mill house. Ethel died in 1967 and Charles in 1974 she was the last surviving relative from the Russell dynasty they are buried in Warblington Cemetery.*

*Oyster island and its land is now owned by 3 individual people all with a common goal of protecting it from eroding any further.*





## A bit about the author...

### Allen Musselwhite

Allen Musselwhite has spent many years researching and collating the information that makes up this document about the 'mythical' house that used to once reside in Langstone harbour. Over the years it has become a passion for Allen to share details about the history of a very overlooked important landmark in Langstone Harbour. To this day the foundations of this house can still be seen when the tide is out, and many have spoken of a rumor about an

'old black house' that used to reside in Langstone Harbour. Allen's own interest was sparked, and his investigations began. It seemed there was very little known about the origins of this building.

If you have any information about the 'Old Oyster House' or would like to contribute to future documents then please send an email to [Allen.Musselwhite@sky.com](mailto:Allen.Musselwhite@sky.com)

