

JOHN RUSSELL

1796 - 1873

Coal and Iron

Worcestershire, Monmouthshire, Gloucestershire



John Russell was a self-made man born in Worcestershire in 1796 (mother Lydia Russell). He married at St John the Baptist, Claines, Worcestershire 1st May 1817, Mary daughter of Benjamin and Mary Downs of Alton Court, Herefordshire, (she baptised Orleton, 18th Sept 1796). He was reputedly looked down on by the family of Mary Downs to whom he is said to have vowed 'that his wife would always have a carriage and pair'.

John Russell developed considerable industrial interests especially in South Wales, it was said that 'all he touched turned to gold'. He was owner of The Worcester Pipe Works and The Risca Coal and Iron Joint Co and Russell's Brickworks. In 1836 John Russell and Co bought Waunfawr Colliery with a site covering 1000 acres and in 1841 John Russell had a new shaft of 559 ft sunk at Coed Waunfawr (Blackvein). In 1842 John Russell and Co were awarded the contracts to provide the steam coal to the East India Company, Peninsular and Orient Company as well as The Royal West Indian Steam Packet Company.

Russell was a partner with Thomas Brown in the Blaina Iron Works which they took over in 1839 and the Cwmtillery Colliery which he took over in 1852. In 1853 he sank a new shaft of 785ft and was shipping 350 tons of coal a week from Cwmtillery, this is in contrast to the very evocative description he wrote of the way of life on the farm of Tir Nicholas which had existed in 1850 prior to his development of the colliery. In 1858 he sank a further shaft and 1864 he incorporated Cwmtillery into his South Wales Colliery Company.

Other interests of John Russell included iron workings in the Forest of Dean, The Monmouthshire Railway and Canal Company and he was active with Sir Charles Morgan (Lord Tredegar) in the development of the port at Newport. He is also associated with the development of Coalbrookdale at Madely in Shropshire. His son John Richard Russell was to marry Maria Francis the daughter of Sir Hugh Owen Bt of Orielton and Angelina Morgan sister of Lord Tredegar.

During the development of his South Wales interests John Russell it would seem that he moved between Terhill House at Cheltenham, Risca House and The Wyelands at Chepstow. From the late 1840s Russell leased Piercefield the neighbouring estate to Wyelands and in 1855 he purchased the Piercefield Estate. (The record indicates that he retained 27 servants to run Piercefield). During this period, much to the annoyance of the townspeople of Chepstow, he restricted access to the park.

John Russell was made a Justice of the Peace in 1842, High Sheriff of Monmouthshire in 1855 and at the time of his death was one of the oldest magistrates in Monmouthshire. His London house, at 28 Westbourne Park, was burgled by the infamous murder Chas Peace who was disturbed in his work and left behind a silver tea pot which he had flattened for ease of removal. (Russell's great grandson Noel Kynaston (Hookey) Gaskell wrote 'The Romantic Career of a Great Criminal', A Life of Charles Pearce, 1906)

In the development of his South Wales industrial interests Russell was in partnership with, George Randle Hookey of Risca House, (who on 30 June 1840, in the presence of Mary Anne and Jane Russell, was married at Risca Parish Church to Russell's daughter Susanna) and who in 1842 gave evidence to the Enquiry on the Employment of Children in Mines.

Russell's colliery interests seem to have been plagued by a series of disasters and loss of life (it was said that his collieries were so prone to accidents that he had to bring men from Somerset, Dorset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire to work for him). In 1846 a gas explosion at the Risca Blackvein Colliery killed thirty five men, in 1849 two men were killed and in 1853 ten men lost their lives in a gas explosion. The worst of the disasters occurred on the 1st December 1860 when there was a major explosion in which one hundred and forty six men died. Though working with naked lights had been banned, only a week before the explosion a collier had been convicted and fined by the local magistrates for the use of a naked light underground in breach of the regulations.

The Risca Blackvein disaster was a great human and a severe financial loss. The Risca Colliery Company was bankrupted by the explosion and by the cost of a legal battle with Lord Tredegar over encroachment on other rights, George Randle Hookey lost

everything. In 1861, to establish a trust for the miner's families, Russell sold Piercefield and returned to Terhill House in Gloucestershire. By 1866 the Blackvein Colliery had been sold to Thomas Rhodes.

In 1867 John Russell acquired the estates of Badgeworth Court at Churchdown, Gloucestershire from J Viner Ellis; he died in 1873 and is commemorated by the great east window at Badgeworth parish church, though he was buried at St Clement's at the heart of his Worcester estate. Mary Downs died at Terhill in 1878 and was buried with her husband at St Clements Worcester.

In 2017 Peter Verity presented to the Pitzhanger Trust some of the Soane period furnishings from Piercefield.



John Russell's Children:

- 1b **Susannah Russell**; b 1818 St Clement's, Worcester, bp 30 Nov 1818 St Clement's, Worcester, ed Oaklands House, Clains, m 30 Jun 1840 Risca, George Randle son of George Hookey (b 20 Oct 1808 Southampton, bp 25 Oct 1808 St Lawrence in the Lawn, County of Southampton) and Anne Gaskell, lived at Worcester and Ludlow (law suit with Lavender Bank, Curler and Hallmark Solicitors, Worcester), George Randle Hookey was in partnership with John Russell in the development of South Wales mining interests these included, Risca Coal and Iron Joint Co, Cwtillery Colliery, South Wales Colliery Co. He lived at Risca House and Piercefield, Monmouthshire, and later at Furze Hall, Fryening, Essex, town house 28 Westbourne Park, d 19 May 1877, bd Kensal Green Cemetery, Susannah d 18 May 1884 Cheltenham, bd Kensal Green cemetery issue:
- 1c George John Hookey; b 8 March 1842, ed Llandovery, m 13 Oct 1873 Constance Emily (d 5 Feb 1886) daugh of Samuel Cox (b 1811, d 1894) and Catherine Verity, Glamorgan (b 22 Aug 1811, d 12 July 1894), lived at Waterton Court, Bridgend, Glamorganshire, d 11 Jun 1896, bd St Crallo's, Coychurch, Glamorganshire, issue:
 - 1d Constance Mary Russell Hookey; b 1874 m, 20 Apr 1904 St Mary's, Coity, Glamorganshire, her cousin Graham Martin Verity (bp 29 Dec 1867, d 1933) son of Abraham John Verity (see Verity Family Record), d 1952, issue:
 - 1e Gerald Martin Clive Verity.
 - 2e Martin Camillo Verity, issue.
 - 3e Denis Abraham Verity, issue.
 - 4e Graham Elydyr Verity, issue.
 - 5e Constance Eryl Verity.
 - 2d Lillian Edith Hookey; b 1876, d um 7 Sep 1909.
 - 3d George Randle Hookey; (b 30 Mar 1879), m Elizabeth Holmes, issue:
 - 1e Constance Athenie Hookey; m Clifford Tetley, issue.
 - 4d Violet Isabel Randle Hookey; b 21 Jun 1881, m 1 Jun 1912 Walter Powell David, d 8 Sep 1971, issue:
 - 1e Adrian Graham David, issue.
 - 2e Brian Randle David, issue.
- 2c Henry Gaskell (Hookey), Gaskell of Churchdown; b 1847, ed Clifton, m 28 Oct 1879 St Peter's, Newlyn his cousin Agnes Maud 2nd daugh of Rev George Ellis Cleather and Jane 3rd daugh of John Russell, (witness Gertrude Mary Cleather) changed his name by deed pole to Gaskell (See Burke's L.G. 1906, Gaskell of Churchdown), lived 7 Pelham Crescent, Chelsea and Cheltenham, d 1931, bd with his wife and daughter at Brompton Cemetery, issue:
 - 1d Noel Kynaston Gaskell; b 22 Jan 1880, author 'The Romantic Career of a Great Criminal'- A life of Charles Pearce.
 - 2d Irene Maude Gaskell; b 1887, d um 26 Oct 1888, bd Brompton Cemetery.
- 2b **Eleanor Mary Anne Russell**; b 1821 St Clements, Worcester, bp 25 Oct 1821 St Clement's, ed Oaklands House, Clains, m 15 Oct 1854 Thomas Henry (b Lambeth 06 Feb 1830, d 14 Mar 1892), son of Thomas Henry Maudslay (b 16 Jun 1792, d 23 Apr 1864) g. son of the engineer Henry Maudslay (b 22 Aug 1771, d 14 Feb

- 1831), he an engineer, lived Brighton (1861) later London. Eleanor, *d* Surrey 1884 (1886 he remarried, 2 daughts) *issue*:
- 1c Mary Prime Maudslay; *b* Lambeth Jan 1857.
- 3b **Jane Russell**; *b* 1823 St Clement's, Worcester, *bp* 9 Dec 1823 St Clement's, *ed* Oaklands House, Claines, *m* Rev. George Ellis Cleather (*b* 1824 Britford, Wiltshire, *d* 1897 Warminster), *ed* Exeter College, Oxford, Vicar Chirton, Wiltshire, later St Andrew's, Plymouth, Devon, *d* 1909, *issue*:
- 1c Agnes Maude Cleather; *m* 28 Oct 1879 St Peter's Newlyn, Henry Gaskell *son of* George Randle Hookey and Susanna Russell, *d* 1928, *bd* Brompton Cemetery, *issue see above*.
- 2c Gertrude Mary Cleather; *b* 1852 Alton Barnes Wiltshire, *d um, bd* Brompton Cemetery.
- 3c Rev. Arthur Ellis Cleather; *b* 1858 Chirton; lived Smethwick Staffordshire later at Gwithian, Redruth, Cornwall, *m* 6 Jan 1901 St Germans, Sheolock, Cornwall, Violet Oak *daugh of* Col. George Hutchinson Esten Trefusis Phillips (*d* 17 Jan 1932).
- 4b **Ellen Harriet Russell**; *b* 17 Mar 1828 St Clement's, Worcester, *ed* Oaklands House, Claines, *m* 1 May 1850 Newport, Col. John Handcock Selwyn Payne JP, (1822-1880) *son of* Charles Payne, West Indian Merchant, Sherrif of Bristol 1827, Mayor of Bristol 1834 and 35 and Albina Selwyn (1781-1860), Col. commanding Royal Monmouthshire Engineer Militia; *his sister* Susan Rodon Payne *m* John Baskerville Mortimer and their *daugh* Rosina *m* Lt. Col. Lawrence Heyworth JP. (*b* 15 Feb 1831 *son of* Lawrence Heyworth MP and *sister of* Lawrencina Potter *mother of* Beatrice Potter), Heyworth became Chairman of John Russell's South Wales Colliery Company (*note* Rosina Heyworth Colliery), lived at Risca House. Ellen inherited Badgeworth Court, Gloucestershire from John Russell, *d* 30 Jan 1903 Chiswick, *issue*:
- 1c John Hancock Selwyn Payne of Badgeworth Court, Gloucestershire; *b* 1852 Risca, Monmouthshire, *m* 1872 Anna *daugh of* William Clark Trotman, *d* 1928, *issue*:
- 1d Maude Albania Margaret Selwyn Payne; *m* 1903 Badgeworth, Lt.Col Sir Percy Cunynghame of Milncraig, *10th Bt*, JP, OBE, (*b* 21 Feb 1867, *d* 7 Jan 1941) (*Burke's PB Cunyngham Bts*), British Advisor to the Raja of Sarawak, Member of Supreme Council of Sarawak (Resident) (*and elder brother of Maj. Stuart Cunynghame, Comdt Sarawak Rangers, Member of Supreme Council*); her portrait by Bassano in NPG, *d* 1948, *issue*.
- 2c Maj.General.Richard Lloyd Selwyn Payne CB, DSO, of Badgeworth Court, Gloucestershire; *b* 1854 Risca, Monmouthshire, *m* Sep 1884 Clara Fripp Bethune (*b* 1854, *d* 1921) *daugh of* Brig. General Henry Bethune Patton (*b* 14 Feb 1835, *d* 1875), *d* 20 Dec 1921 St Thomas Devon, *issue*:
- 1d Richard Fripp Bethune Selwyn Payne; *b* 18 Sep 1885 Rangoon, cricketer, *d* 1 Feb 1949 Exmoth.
- 2d Guy E.T.L.Payne; *b* 1888 Colchester.
- 5b **John Richard Russell: JP.** *b* 1831 St Clements, Worcester, Capt. Royal Monmouthshire Engineer Militia, *m* 1. 15 Jan 1856 St Mary, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, Maria Frances (*b* 14 Dec 1836 Pembrokeshire, *d* 12 Feb 1880) *daugh of* Sir Hugh Owen *2nd Bt* of Oriulton MP, DL, Pembrokeshire (*Burke's PB Owen Bts*) and Angelina Maria Cecilia Morgan *sister of* Sir Charles Morgan *2nd Bt*, 1st Lord Tredegar and *g. daugh of* 1st Lord Rodney of Rodney Stoke (*Burke's PB Rodney B*), *div* 1870 on the grounds of Maria Frances's infidelity (*bd* Brompton Cemetery); *m* 2. Jul 1874 Brighton, Annette Willoughby-Hill (*see BPB Willoughby Bts*) (*b* 1839, *bp* St Luke's Chelsea, *d* 21 Dec 1919), *daught of* Frederick Arnaud Forbs Clarke KGS FRA (*banker* Foster Lubbock Bosanquet and Clarke, *later* Robarts Lubbock and Coutts) of Henfold, Surrey and later Binnegar Hall, Dorset and Anna Caroline Brett of Grove House Old Brompton Road SW (*see BPB Esher Vicounts*); lived at The Lodge Risca, Coldbrook Park Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, later at The Hollys, St Mary's, Little Ealing and Halden House, Kent; *d* 14 Feb 1910 *bd* Clevedon, Somerset, (*see: County Families of UK Russell of Halden*) *issue*:
- 1c Frances Rosa Mary Russell; *bp* 15 Mar 1857 Risca, Monmouthshire, (*1891 nurse companion to George Winter Thorner Yorkshire*), *d* 1906.
- 2c Angelina Maria Cecilia Russell; *b* 7 Jan 1858.
- 3c Richard Owen Morgan Russell; *b* 1859, *bp* 10 Jan 1859 Risca, Monmouthshire, *d* 1859.
- 4c Georgiana Henrietta Russell; *b* 1860 Risca, Monmouthshire, *bp* 6 Feb 1860, *d* Sept 1892 Blything, Suffolk.
- 5c Rodney Owen Richard Russell; *b* 2 Nov 1861, Risca, Monmouthshire, (*note Sir Hugh Owen's 1st wife Angelina was g.g.daugh of 1st Lord Rodney and sister in law of 3rd Lord Rodney, while Sir Hugh's 2nd wife Harriet was g.daugh of 1st Lord Rodney*), *m* 1890 Richmond, Surrey, Catherine *daugh of* David Cock, *b* Roche, Cornwall, farmer living at Little Bryn, Lajew Withiel, Cornwall, emigrated on the St Louis arriving in New York July 1896. (*1910 U.S. Federal Census*) lived, Merced, California, *d* 21 Jan 1926 Vancouver B.C., *issue*:
- 1d Rodney Owen Richard Russell; *b* 1893 Bodmin.
- 6c Hugh Russell; *b* 1863 Llanvapley, Monmouthshire.
- 7c May Russell; *b* 1865 Coldbrook Park, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire.
- 8c Fanny Augusta Russell; *b* 1866 Risca, *bp* 11 Nov 1866, *m* 1893 Holbeach, Linconshire, Arthur Stanley Barling (*b* 1862, *d* 8 Aug 1938), *d* 26 Mar 1950 Lancaster, *issue*:
- 1d Hilda Russell Barling; *b* 12 Sep 1895, *m* 1919 Ralph Stuart Oglethorp, *d* 6 Apr 1956.
- 2d Arthur Russell Barling; *b* 1897, *d* 1897
- 3d Lilian Owen Barling; *b* 15 Jan 1899 Lancaster, *m* 1923 Lancaster Frank Douglas White (*b* 1886, *d* 1964 Norwich), *issue*:
- 1c Christine White: *b* 1924.

6b Thomas Brown Russell; *b* 1832 St Clements, Worcester *bp* 7 Nov 1832 St Clements, named after John Russell's partner the industrial innovator Thomas Brown JP, DL, *d* 10 Mar 1834.

References:

Shropshire Archeological Society, iv 92; Downs of Alton Court

History of the Verity Family, Vol 2. Glamorgan Records Office. D/D Xcb4/1-6. Under Constance Russell Hookey (Verity).

Shropshire Archives Re Hookey. Ref:5411/171/14

Jones, Alan Victor. Risca: It's Industrial and Social Development. ISBN08611

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Gloucestershire Records Office. D1421/12

Gwent Records Office. Ref: D394. D591. D797.415

Walters, Ivor. Piercefield on the Banks of the Wye. F.G. Comber.1975

Records held by Sonia Pether (nee David).

Portrait, collection Julian Verity. Picture of Piercefield (as designed by John Soane) belonging to Peter Verity.

www.welshcoalmines.co.uk >Collieries >Gwent >Risca Blackvein > John Russell here

Worcester Records Office. Manor of Guesten, Worcester. Ref: 705:477 BA4120/37/1. Dec1854 John Russell of Wyelands and Mesuages in St Clements Parish, Worcester