

## Chapter 7.

### Thomas Roe - Master Mariner & Shipowner 1772 - 1833.

Thomas Roe was born at Wareham on 9th February 1772, the son of Thomas Roe from Corfe Castle and Mary Hill of Wareham. Mary died in 1778 and Thomas with his 6 year old son moved to Blandford where the father met and married Mary Eliot on 1st. June 1779. There is no record of the fathers death or when Thomas Roe moved to Poole. However he must have had a reasonable education and realised an inheritance from his father to grasp the opportunity to become a master mariner in Poole.

He married Sussanah Major of Poole by license on 9th February 1802 his 30th birthday, at St. James Parish Church. His wife was about 3 years his junior and the daughter of the shipowning family W. and R. Major and maybe this was the biggest help to Thomas in his seafaring career.

It is difficult to tell whether Susannah lived in Poole when Thomas was away at sea as none of the children were baptised at the Parish Church.

Their first child was born in 1808 and christened Thomas Major Roe. This practise of using the Mother's maiden name as a second christian name was popular at this time and was to be used frequently in succeeding generations. There was a gap of 10 years before another child was born to Susannah, by which time she was 30 years of age. William Edmund Roe was born in 1813, Jane in 1815 and George Gardiner Roe in 1816.

The first record of Thomas Roe as Master of a ship comes in 1818 when he captained 'Emulation' for Spurrier Joliffe and Company of High Street, Poole. He sailed the 196 ton vessel built in Bideford in 1811 on the Newfoundland run in 1813 and 1814

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Poole was at the height of its prosperity through these years with extensive trade both coastwise and with Newfoundland. The quays were hives of activity. Warehouses were full of merchandise and citizens were flourishing. The trade with Newfoundland was still considerable and exports consisted of provisions, nets cordage and all sorts of wearing apparel, commodities much sought after in Newfoundland. The manufacture/s of the town and neighbourhood included rope, twine and sailcloth.

In addition there was regular shipping to London, Guernsey and Jersey, Portsmouth and Southampton at least once every week. The majority of ships were brigs, they had two masts both square rigged, many built and equipped in Poole where shipbuilding yards had a great reputation for excellent ships.

Thomas Roe never actually sailed a Poole built vessel although his son did. After two years as Master of Emulation he spent the years 1815 to 1817 captaining the brig 'Hannah', a 259 ton vessel built in Philadelphia in 1810. The Americans were building some of the finest and fastest sailing ships in the world at this time. The 'Hannah' was owned by Jolliffe & Co.

In 1818 Thomas took on a larger vessel still, the 287 ton ship 'Venus', French built in 1801 and this time owned by Spurrier, Jolliffe & Co. He stayed with the Venus till 1821 always on the Newfoundland run.

At this time he seems to have retired as his name no longer appears in Lloyds Register as a ships master. Poole was a thriving town now and although the railway had not yet arrived the 'Age' horse drawn coach left for London from the Antelope at six every morning. It was also possible to travel to Bristol or Bath three times a week by the 'Wellington'.

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Other towns to which there was a regular connection included Salisbury, Southampton and Weymouth. With coaches leaving from a variety of Inns, Taverns and public houses in Poole.

The family became one of substance in Poole and Thomas Roe is listed in Pigotts Directory of 1830 as a 'Gentleman' living in Ponsonby Place, Parkstone. Ponsonby Place was named after W.F.Ponsonby, one of the members of Parliament for Poole at this time.

Thomas appears to have had a keen gardener amongst the servants he employed and the Dorset County Chronicle reported in its edition of 29th. May 1828, 'In the garden of Mr. Roe at Ponsonby Place in the pleasant village of Parkstone near to this town a quantity of fine strawberries were last week picked.'

The houses in this road were much sought after by seafaring gentlemen and amongst Thomas Roe's neighbours were a ~~xxxxxi~~ Royal Navy Captain, a Lieutenant and a shipowner. While ~~xxxx~~ amongst the gentry of Poole in the 1830 directory no less than eleven lived in this part of Parkstone, at a time when the total population for the village was only around 600.

The children of Thomas and Susannah had the opportunity of gaining educations probably at one of the many private schools and academies in Poole and their father's position and wealth helped to establish them all in a good way of business.

The name of Thomas Roe can be found in Poll Books for Pimperne near Blandford for the years 1807 and 1831 as owning freehold property and it may be that in the early years of his career he lived Blandford and not Poole.

He also owned other property in Poole. referred to in his will. The churchwardens accounts for 1829 show that he owned a house at 29 High Street Poole, with a rateable value of £16, tenanted by Mesdames Martin and Butler, Milliners and dressmakers, and later by Miss Frances (Fanny) Bird.

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These tenants appear to be in some way related, as Elizabeth Roe of Arfleet in her will of 1825 leaves everything to great niece Sarah Bird Butler. There could also be a shipping connection as Joseph Bird was a shipowner in Poole.

Thomas Roe also owned a plantation and premises jointly with Mr. William Hooper called Olive Point Room in Burin Harbour, on the South coast of Newfoundland. He died on Christmas Day 1833 aged 61 years and was buried at St. James Church Poole. His will is dated earlier that year 6th. July and it must be assumed, therefore he was in ill health for much of his last year. The will was witnessed by Mr. Robert Saunders a cooper of Fish Street, Poole and the two junior clerks of Thomas Arnold, a solicitor in Poole. The will was proved in London on 3rd. May 1834 with his wife Susannah appointed as sole executrix.

John Brown a timber merchant on the Quay who lived in Parkstone and George Gollop, junior, a carpenter and joiner in Fish Street both good friends of Thomas were appointed to be administrators.

They were instructed by his will to sell his part of the Newfoundland property and invest the money to provide an income for his wife Susannah as long as she lived or remained unmarried and thereafter to divide the investments equally between his four children. At the time of his death only George had not reached the age of 21 and provisions were made for trustees to act on his behalf till that time.

He also instructed that 29 High Street be sold together with any ships, boats etc. and the money invested for his wife, but out of the monies his daughter Jane and son George were to receive £300 each to establish them in any trade, business, or employment they wished.

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Presumably Thomas and William, who were already established in business had received similar settlements during their fathers' lifetime.

His wife could also if she so wished sell the house in Parkstone where they had lived, together with the household goods and furniture. However, the plate had to be distributed equally among the children.

Susannah continued to live in Parkstone for a while but by 1841 she had moved with William to a house purchased by George in Market Street. William was at this time carrying on the trade of brewer and George a grocer.

The premises in Market Street are noted in the Poole Rate Books of 1841 as a house and shop with a rateable value of £16.5.0. and this must be where George carried out his trade. Jane was not living at home but there is no indication she was married and in fact by 1851 she was again living with her Mother now aged 76 at Wimborne Road, Longfleet then a village just north of Poole.

This is the last record of Susannah and by 1861 there is no remaining trace of the family in Poole.