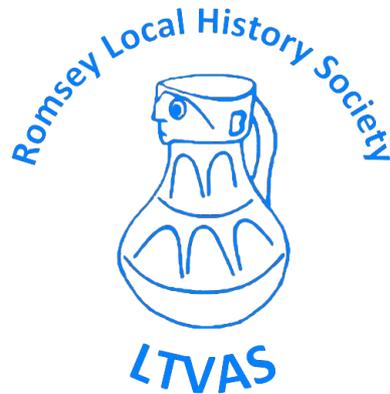


Romsey Local History Society **[LTVAS Group]**



Arrival of the Toulonese at Southampton
By kind permission of the Victoria & Albert Museum
(see article on Toulonese in Romsey, page 3)

December 2020

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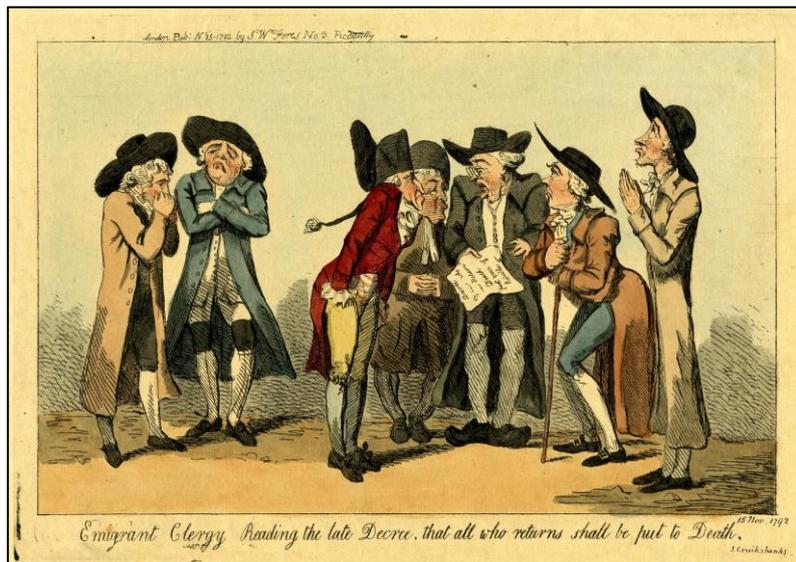
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*Emigrant Clergy Reading the late Decree
that all who return shall be put to Death
from a print by S.W. Fores Collection of the British Museum*

‘FULL AS AN EGG’: Romsey and the Toulonese by Janet Cairney

When we think of French émigrés, it is the Revolution that comes to mind, and the flight of members of the French nobility. However, the Revolutionary and then Napoleonic War which followed the Revolution lasted with just a short pause for another 22 years. It has been described as the first total war, fought all round the globe by the colonial protagonists, as well as impinging on the lives of civilian populations. Recent research is uncovering the hitherto overlooked presence of billeted French citizens, displaced by and captured in the wars, as a very significant element in the wartime experience of the people of Romsey, and of other Hampshire towns. This paper tells the story of just one of those groups of French refugees, whose stay was the longest. They were a long way from their home, Toulon on the French Mediterranean coast.

Toulon was one of the ‘federalist’ towns in the south-east of France which in 1793 rebelled against the ultra-radical Republican government in Paris. The towns planned to institute their own citizen assemblies and govern themselves, and Paris appointed officials were expelled. The insurrection was quickly checked by the Republican army in most of these towns, but Toulon was not as easy. A series of defensive walls reflected its long history as the chief naval Mediterranean port, and so the Republican army laid siege. At the same time, off-shore, an allied Anglo-Spanish fleet under the command of Admiral Lord Hood was blockading the harbour. The town remained defiant, and, in the febrile political jostling, the Royalist faction gained the ascendancy. Inevitably, in the densely populated walled town, its population swelled by Royalist refugees from along the coast, supplies dwindled. In August, the civic leaders appealed to Lord Hood who, on his own authority, agreed to help on condition that the town declare its allegiance to the Bourbon monarchy, and the town had little choice but to agree. The allies occupied the town and landed troops, but in December were decisively defeated. The guns of the Republican army occupied the heights above the town and thus controlled the inner harbour. The Republican forces were commanded by a 24-year-old Captain of artillery, promptly promoted Major General, one Napoleon Bonaparte.



Lord Hood decided that he must evacuate, and from the early hours of 18 December 1793, he and the civilian Governor, Sir Gilbert Elliot, worked to

ensure that every vessel, naval or merchant took on board as many of the panicking and terrified residents as possible. With French naval vessels set afire, and the arsenal exploding, families, men, women and children, used any means they could, even swimming, to reach the ships in the outer harbour. Elliot claimed 4,000 lives were saved.

Almost all the ships carried their refugees to Mediterranean ports, but fourteen ships returned to England; they are listed in 'Steel's Naval Remembrancer'.

A significant coup for the British, these were French warships which had been placed under Lord Hood's command by their officers and crews during the occupation and, crewed by them, sailed to England after the evacuation. The ships also carried their families, and other refugees. The 1st division ships reached England in March 1794, the smaller 2nd division ships in April.

The crews were paid in full until their discharge in the spring and summer of that year, and, in recognition of their service to the British, were awarded a pension based on their rank thereafter. As reported in the Hampshire Chronicle, the ships and their stores were valued, and the crews paid the customary prize money based on the value of the ships, the amount of their share determined by their rank.

The beautifully handwritten fair copy ships' paybooks survive in The National Archive for some of the ships, and for the largest each entry is numbered sequentially. This was the *Commerce du Marseilles*, of 120 guns, and a crew numbered to 670. The four largest ships together had crew numbers of approximately 1,540, and we can add perhaps as many as another 1,000 for all the smaller vessels, to which of course must be added the families and other refugees. This was a sizeable inflow of people.

The lists of the pensions to be paid show that the sums were not niggardly. They are comparable with British naval pay of the period and were augmented by additional amounts paid for dependents. The most senior Captains were paid £250 per year, but could claim additional sums for servants, the most junior officer without dependents, £37 10s, meagre but still well above subsistence level.

Only some of the lists record the 1794 residence of the men, but they show that the boys, invalids, and junior ratings not recruited into the Navy or émigré regiments, their pay defined in shillings per day, were housed in 'barracks' in Totton, and extra daily sums were given to the lieutenants responsible for the

barracks, and the surgeon and chaplain who attended. The lists are annotated *Totton and Neighbourhood*, implying more than one location.

Inferior officers and crew members with families went to Hardway, then little more than a village, and it must be assumed that quarters were built to house them, though the whereabouts is not recorded. Construction of Totton and Hardway reception facilities may be why the ships did not arrive in England until March.

A number of towns and villages are given as the 1793 residence of the senior and junior officers, among these are Romsey, Gosport and Botley, and for the most senior captains who did not settle in London, Southampton and Salisbury. All of these towns already had French refugee residents, many of them expelled priests, and in Romsey a volunteer French regiment was billeted for some months in 1795, training for the disastrous invasion attempt on the Quiberon peninsula.

Romsey is shown as the 1794 residence for a just a few of the listed families, but for 1798 we have, perhaps uniquely, two sources of contemporary evidence for the numbers of French refugees then living in the town. In this year the threat of invasion was very real, and a new Aliens Act replaced the 1793 Act which had never been effectively enforced. The new Act banned Aliens from living in coastal towns.

The first of our sources is a letter reproduced by Canon Scantlebury in his history of the Roman Catholic Church in Southampton. The letter is from the Abbé de Tromelin written in May 1798 in reply to the patrician François de la Marche, Bishop of Saint Pol-de-Leon in exile, the head of his charity. The harassed Abbé was responsible for distributing the charity's money to 58 émigré priests in Southampton and Hamble, and had been asked how much extra money would be needed for his priests to comply with the Act. He describes his difficulty in giving a simple answer, and says;

The nearest town for us is Romsey, but the Toulonese have stolen a march on us and thrown themselves into it, which makes lodgings more difficult to find as well as more expensive.

and

Several priests are afraid that they will have to move away from Romsey, the town is as full as an egg. I was told last evening that they do not wish to take in any more émigrés there.

The second source comes courtesy of Dr John Latham, in a tabulation reproduced in Phoebe Merrick's modern editing of his *Notes for a History of Romsey*.

It is clear from both the April 1798 date and the column headings that he was given sight of the return required from all parishes under the Defence of the Realm Act, and he recorded the data for the first of the series of the forms intended to provide the British Government with information about the resources in the country in the event of invasion. Form A demanded a count of all men between the ages of 15 and 60, and the column headings clearly reflect the intent of the Act. The final column should read 'Those unable to remove themselves', but Latham gives these as 'Women and children', presumably how this category was understood in 1798, and for 'Aliens' he uses the more explicit 'French'. Very few indeed of these returns survive.

But then in one of his letters at the beginning of June, Dr Latham wrote:

but within this month we have had the addition of those from Southampton perhaps half as many. We do not well like this and are in hopes the Government will order them further inland.

So by the deadline of May 1798 set by the Aliens Act, the number of French men had increased, to a number we can make a reasonable guess at, allowing for the inclusion of some of the French men over age 60, and perhaps a degree of exaggeration by Latham in the heat of the moment. But most of these men had dependents, and because of the allowances paid for the Toulonese families, the pension listing gives us evidence for that group of refugees. Looking down a complete list for just one large ship, in addition to the "wife, son, daughter" one would expect there are a number of other female dependents, pretty much every (legal) relationship one can think of, including servants, and *'the wife of a butcher who left the ship in Gibraltar and her daughter'*.

Names of Tythings	Able men	Infirm	Volunteers	French	Quakers	Women & Children
Market Place	207	20	6	87	2	600
Chervil Street	76	-	-	-	-	273
Middlebridge Street	47	6	6	24	-	242
Extra	236	5	1	71	2	758
Cupernham	102	20	-	9	-	381
Wooberry	78	15	-	-	-	182
Wools	49	2	-	15	2	94
Spurshott	5	1	1	-	-	13
Mainstone	25	3	3	2	-	61
Lee	39	4	-	-	-	88
Ranvils	9	-	-	-	-	18
Standbridge	15	-	-	-	-	37
Total 3942	888	76	17	208	6	2747

Source Phoebe Merrick, ed. John Latham Collections for a History of Romsey Hampshire Book 3 (LTVAS Group, 2017) page 12

It seems that senior officers secured places on the ships for more of their connections, and that some of those young junior officers (called '*Aspirants*' or '*Mousses*' in French documents) who had not found another ship or joined an émigré regiment and were living in Romsey perhaps had no dependents. We know, too, that Catholic priests were among the French men. Even so, if we use a guesstimate of 270 men in June 1798, and use an average number of dependents per man of 2, we get a French refugee population of 810; if the estimated average is 2.5, the population would be 945, either way, if correct, an extraordinary number in a small town of maybe 3,000 inhabitants.

One very obvious question is how so much accommodation was found for the refugees, and by whom. We know that the responsibility for determining and organising the pensions payments lay with the Transport Board of the Royal Navy, under Captain Hugh Christian, shortly after promoted to Admiral. The Board primarily dealt with the movement of troops and stores, but was also responsible for the transportation and accommodation of prisoners of war, and by convention captured officers were placed on parole, and were paid a subsistence allowance and provided with lodgings in private houses, so the task of finding billets would not have been a novel one, and although there is no evidence, this seems to be the likeliest answer, certainly for the initial destinations, and perhaps for the response to the 1798 Aliens Act, though there is as yet no evidence to support that.

It certainly appears that the process did not involve consultation with local civic leaders. A letter to the Aliens Office signed by two Gosport magistrates expresses their concern that large numbers of apparently armed Frenchmen

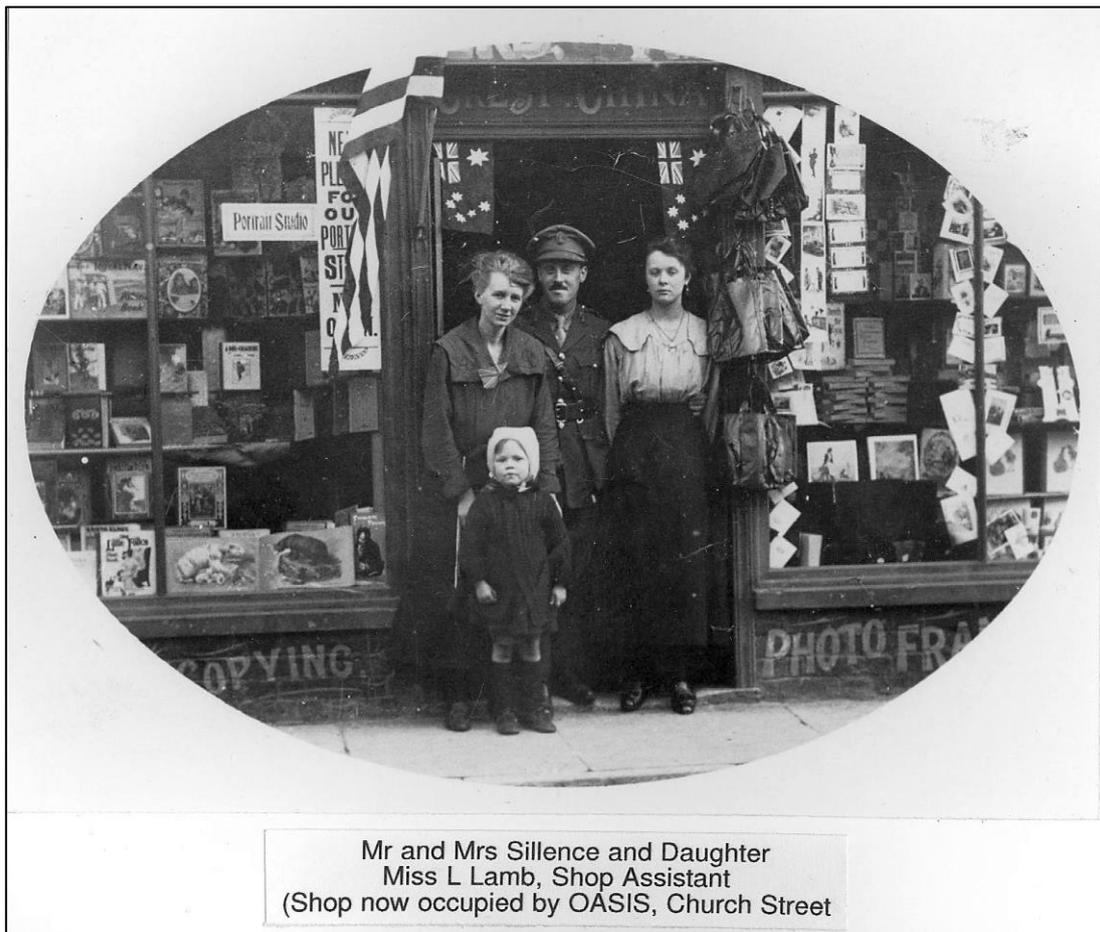
were living in Gosport close to naval installations and the arsenal, and asks for guidance on what they were supposed to do about it.

Another major source for the Toulonese is the registers of Catholic baptisms, marriages and burials that survive, and have been preserved and compiled by Catholic archivists. These, too, are less complete than we would like, some records are known to have been lodged in the French Embassy and were lost during the Second World War, but those that do survive include the names of godparents, witnesses and mourners as well as the immediate actors, with their birth places and naval ranks and professions, and they tell the human stories that bring to life the real people behind the official lists, the marriages and then the birth of children, who all too often died in infancy; the stalwart men who faithfully attended all the funerals of those who would never return home; the intermarriages of families in this close knit community. Two of the brides are recorded as 16 years old, surely a sign of anxiety for the future security of these girls. There is not one English name in these records.

Pacifying and reuniting the country was a policy imperative once Napoleon became Consul in November 1799. By 1801 peace was made with the Pope and religious freedom was granted, and from Easter 1802 priests were paid by the French state. Most priests returned to France including the Abbé de Tromelin. His passport was issued in May 1802. 5,600 priests were receiving Government aid in Britain in 1800, but by the end of 1802 only 900 remained. Amnesties were granted to all French émigrés, except those who had commanded forces against France. Many émigrés and refugees also returned to France, undoubtedly influenced in their decision by the departure of their priests. The accounts for the last quarter of 1802 for pension payments made in Romsey show that these were the final payments made here, thereafter those who remained had to travel to Winchester. We have records that some pensions were stopped because the recipients were known to be employed or to have started businesses; one 1803 list has a baker working in Romsey, though his name is illegible.

Pensions to Toulon refugees continued to be paid until well into the 19th century and were a topic that stirred political debates in Parliament and press controversy every time financial provision was discussed, right up until 1843. The Treasury accounts survive in The National Archives, in somewhat unmanageable roll form, but regrettably do not include the recipients' addresses. The post-1802 pension lists include extra payments for age and poor health; many of those who remained were perhaps not able to undertake the long voyage home. Four unfortunates are described as *lunatique* and living in *Le Maison de la Force*, Salisbury.

The records that attest to the presence of French refugees in Romsey and other towns in the hinterland of the ports of Southampton and Portsmouth are plentiful, a presence that lasted over ten years. It was a presence that must have had marked economic effects, bringing rental income and as well as stimulating the provision of services for cooking, laundering clothing, and transport, while at the same time straining the food economy, especially in the years of poor harvests. It seems curious then, that this episode has not figured in the local histories of our area at all. Is this a quirk of how history is written? Was it too short a period to be remembered? Or, looking around our contemporary world, might we think that these refugees, who lived so closely intermingled among their hosts, still remained foreign, divided by language, religious practice, social norms, just about tolerated of necessity, but not ever wanted or welcome?



*Sillence Family, Church Street
(see following article on Christmas Shopping)*

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING in Romsey 100 Years Ago

by Mary Harris

The Romsey Advertiser always carried adverts for local businesses and at Christmas time many shops submitted special adverts.

In December 1920 there was also an article entitled ROUND THE SHOPS. The reporter mentions specifically a display of Belgian lace at Nix's with a window display with a model of a Belgian lace worker making bobbin lace. Nix claimed that he sold his lace items at 'half London prices'.



One item was a picture of Romsey Abbey in filet lace. Nix and his wife had come to Romsey from Belgium and in his advert Nix specifically said that he did not sell German goods. 1920 was only two years after the end of World War One and the war memorial had been erected in the park earlier that year. Feeling against Germany was still high.

Grocers advertised fruits and nuts, biscuits, iced cakes and non-alcoholic wines just as they do today. Purchase's in the Market Place, the Cooperative Stores in the Cornmarket and International Stores in the Hundred were fully stocked with Christmas groceries.

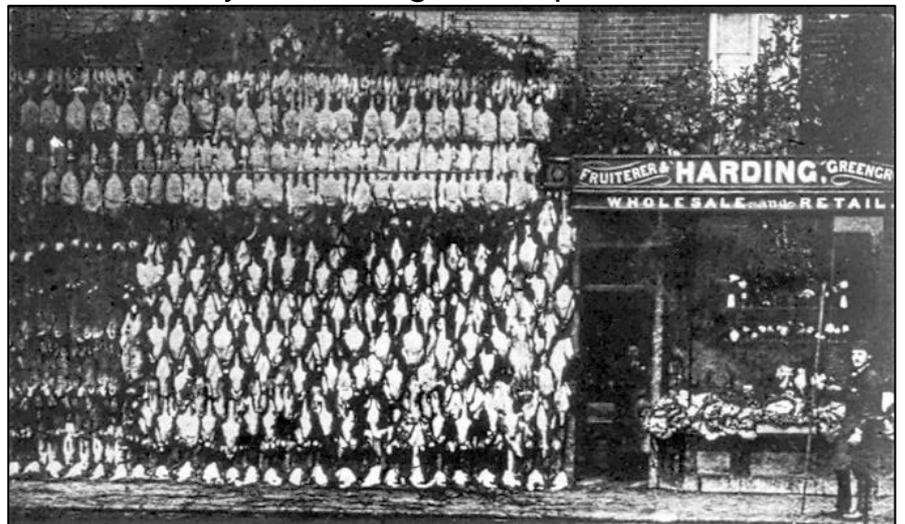
Water's, in the Market Place, sold Christmas cards and presents in 'leather, silver, brass and ebony'. Silence's, in Church Street, sold pictures and picture frames. Miss Smith had 2 shops, one in Bell Street and one in Latimer Street, selling cards, games, toys and sweets. Mrs Elcock at 29 Bell Street also sold toys, including Meccano.

The Christmas fat stock show had been held the previous week and the butchers like Butt's and Rall's and Honisett's were trying to outdo each other with their displays of prize meat.



Honisett's Christmas display competing with other butchers

It was reported that Butt and Son, 8 Bell Street, had the best show of prize oxen and steers, champion sheep, prime pork, bacon, and hams, turkeys and chickens 'that was ever seen in Romsey'. Harding's, the poulterers in the Market Place, had an impressive show of poultry.



Harding's poultry and fruit & greengrocery shops were next to the Town Hall in the Market Place



Kersey's, then at No 3 The Hundred, had a large collection of jewellery and watches 'most suitable for presents'. In addition, Mr Kersey made use of his Christmas advert to add an election plea. He was standing in the elections for councillor for the Borough of Romsey and the election was due to take place on December 29th.



An example of special advertisements in The Romsey Advertiser for December 1920

LAST OF THE RFC AIRMEN

by Raymond Metter

*I know that I shall meet my fate
Somewhere among the clouds above*

W B Yeats' opening lines from the poignant poem based upon Robert Gregory is a reminder of the dread harboured by all airmen of World War 1. Major Gregory MC, the son of Yeats' patron, lost his life over Italy in 1918. The life expectancy rate of 2-3 weeks for pilots in WW1 is exemplified in the egregious losses associated with these gladiators of the skies, many of whom were barely adults.

Almost half of the deaths in the 'suicide club' occurred in training. An experienced professional soldier, William Charles Watson of the Light Somerset Infantry, called his son a fool for even considering to join the Royal Flying Corps. 'They shoot 'em down like shooting pigeons in a field', he retorted in exasperation. The young lad, who was approaching his eighteenth birthday, was Charles Watson. He was born in Romsey in 1899.



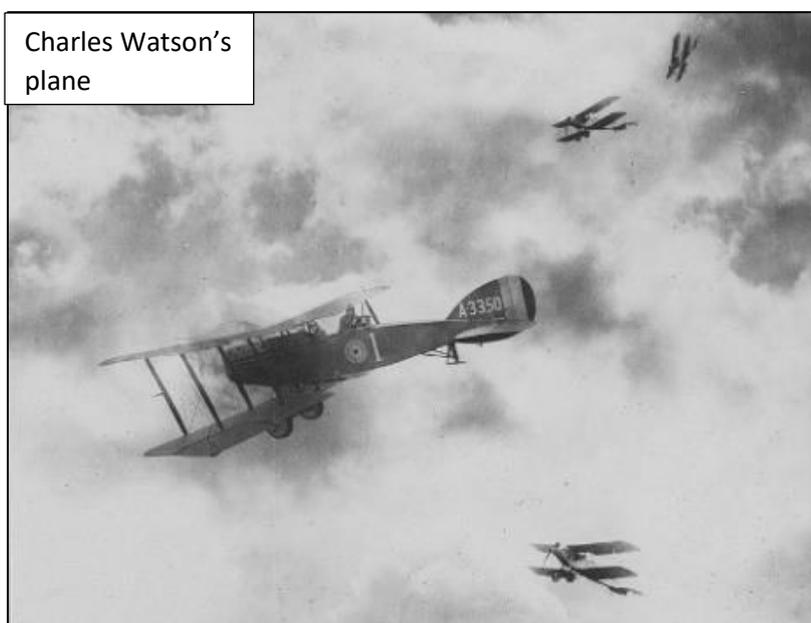
Charles Alfred William Watson's mother, Louisa Baker, was born in 1871 when the family lived in Church Road, Romsey. The Baker family were very old inhabitants of the small market town and had been resident at least since 1808.

Charles Watson's father, William Charles Watson, was the son of a self-employed boot and shoemaker from Little Shelford, Cambridgeshire. William appeared to prefer the smell of gunpowder to leather and polish and he enlisted as a regular soldier. It is likely that Louisa Baker was in service when she met William, as a census record for 1891 shows her working in this role previously at Chiswick. The couple were married in Romsey in 1898.

William Watson moved away with the Somerset Light Infantry for the South African Campaign before his first child's birth. It appears that Louisa decided to stay at the town of her childhood for the pregnancy, but the precise residency at Romsey is unknown. By the time of the 1901 census, mother and child had moved to the premises of William's parents in Little Shelford, Cambridgeshire. Life for a regular soldier's family could be harsh. The young infant did not even see his father for the first three years.

When William returned from the Boer War, the family were compelled initially to move to the regiment's barracks at Taunton. Charles finished his education in Cambridge, as the Great War raged. His father was again absent from the home, but this time on the Western Front. Charles, once eighteen in November 1917, ignored his father's caution and applied to join the RFC.

It is astonishing to recall that the Royal Flying Corps had produced a plane for aerial combat only nine years after the Wright Brothers had achieved their amazing and daring plan of barely taking to the air over North Carolina in 1903. Louis Blériot's later precarious first-ever air crossing of the Channel had only occurred three years before the success of the RFC's first fighter. The incredible development was intensified by war and as early as 1915, the Germans had perfected the technique, developed by French scientists during 1913, of firing a machine gun through a plane's propeller. By then, airmen could also use bomb launching equipment, rather than simply dropping a hand grenade over the plane's side. The growth of the Royal Flying Corps was equally impressive. One source claims that at the conclusion of hostilities, the force of British combat aircraft, which had numbered just over 100 planes in 1914, had expanded to 4000.



Charles Watson's
plane

Charles Watson trained as an aerial photographer and gunner before joining 11 Squadron as an observer at the war front. This was the prestigious squadron in which Gilbert S M Insall had won his VC in 1915 and where fighter ace, Albert Ball, accumulated his amazing number of victories during 1916. However, any romantic war notions held by Charles were soon

crushed by the grim conditions encountered, once billeted in a tent on the edge of an airfield.

Charles recalled the day he arrived abroad, feeling tired, wet, hungry and homesick. However, he soon settled into his new role and certainly knew where he would not wish to be, as he gazed down at battalions locked into quagmire

and trenches. He would think of his father, trying to hold the ground during the ferocious German Spring Offensive launched by Ludendorff. It was a critical moment during the hostilities, as the British Army was driven miles westwards with such rapidity that Ludendorff's army almost reaped a final victory.

Occupying the rear of his Bristol Rolls-Royce engined F2b fighter, the young observer defended the plane's tail with a Lewis machine gun, whilst his pilot attacked with the heavier Vickers gun. At least, the Lewis gun gripped by Charles was a far more formidable weapon than the revolvers and rifles used by earlier combatants. Nevertheless, he remarked about the flaw with the gun, when it would occasionally jam with two cartridges in the breech. Charles would have to eject the troublesome cartridges as enemy bullets sprayed around him. Always phlegmatic, he added that this 'caused a bit of a problem'.

During reconnaissance work, young Watson would lean over the plane's side with his camera. This was a skilled job, usually performed at around 10,000 feet, and undertaken at sunrise with the utmost precision to avoid shadows obscuring the precious overlapping images needed to complete a whole picture. An extract from an interview printed in the online version of *The Daily Telegraph* dated 23 September 2017, quotes part of Charles' own account:

You went up as the sun was rising, got your camera and took six photos overlapping each. It was a funny feeling, aged 18, going up in the dark, and then, as you hit 6000 feet, seeing the sun rising across the world.... I went up to 20,000 feet... They [the Bristol fighters] were alright but a bit flimsy.

One astonishing admission made by the humble Charles was that he didn't claim to be much of a shot and that he didn't even know if he had hit anybody or forced a plane to ground during any mêlée. There were fighter pilots in WW2 as well, who went through the whole war without a 'kill' but they seemed aware of this. Watson commented further on the lack of gun control during dog fights when he would not know whether his plane would be going up or down. It must have been easier for the fighter pilots who, at least, were at the controls of the plane.

The feats of such famous pilots as Edward 'Mick' Mannock (with 61 victories), James McCudden and Albert Ball, were truly remarkable, especially during the early stages of the war when a machine gun was slung over the plane's wing above the propeller with the pilot sometimes standing up to use it. Such heroes, who protected the troops below so effectively with vital reconnaissance operations, were also responsible for many admiring youngsters joining the

RAFVR in the 1930s, thus providing their country with experienced pilots at the start of WW2.

The nonchalant Sergeant Watson described a frightening incident when his pilot was injured. Trained as an observer and gunner, Charles could hardly be expected to fly the aircraft, let alone in combat with the pilot slouched at the controls. Yet, this is what he achieved on the day that the Allies began their massive final onslaught against the Germans at Amiens in August 1918. Charles and his pilot, Sergeant Hutt, were escorting planes on a bombing raid when the sergeant was temporarily blinded by petrol fumes. A hail of bullets had penetrated the plane's fuel tank. Fortunately, the aircraft was equipped with dual controls which enabled Charles to use the spare joy stick.

Charles soon realised that he had lost track of their whereabouts and feared they might have strayed over enemy lines. He selected a cornfield for his landing which, unfortunately, was bisected by a ditch. The obstacle could not be avoided and the impact turned the plane over. Both occupants received head injuries, with the pilot losing consciousness. Charles prepared for the worst, as a group of soldiers could be seen running towards the wrecked plane. He released the pilot and the Lewis Gun from its mounting and sought the shelter of the ditch.

Shouts in French would soon make a relieved Charles realise what a beautiful language this could be. Both airmen remained with their French allies until they could be transported safely back to their unit many miles away. When Charles returned, he was just in time to prevent his packed civilian clothes being sent home to his family. His unit had presumed that he was dead.

The Armistice appeared as a misty dream which many found difficult to believe, especially troops near 11 Squadron. Some jubilant and reckless members of the unit celebrated the peace extravagantly by throwing cans of aviation fuel on to a bonfire. The loud explosions startled nearby troops with skittish nerves as they thought the Germans were at it once again!



Charles, who had no experience of employment except for a brief period as an apprentice at Cambridge Engineering Labs, faced a world with no job prospects. Hence, he felt compelled to continue military life, not as an airman, but as a dispatch rider in Cologne with the Army of Occupation. The occupation of the Rhineland lasted until 1930, although Charles would return to Cambridge before this. He met his future wife, Winifred Smith, in the town and they married in 1926.

The newly married Mr Watson found work with English Electric where he was employed in Rugby as a draughtsman. These were the years of great depression and, when factory orders at English Electric declined, the draughtsmen were all dismissed. Charles was now forced to reside with his parents for a year. Eventually, an appointment as a draughtsman in Bedford enabled the couple to live normally once again. It was secure work as Charles remained with the firm for 31 years, becoming the chief draughtsman and designer. He also taught at night class sessions, including sterling work with borstal boys.

During WW2, Charles served his country as an air raid warden. He remembered the Bedford power station being bombed when Luftwaffe crews passed over on their Coventry raids. No doubt, he was reminded of his former days in the air when he too had used bombs.

Charles Watson became famous in late life as part of the group of WW1 veterans. These included the celebrated Harry Patch and Henry Allingham. Both had featured in BBC documentaries. A group of veterans had visited Paris in 1999 to receive the highest French order of merit, the Légion d'honneur. Charles stated that he was also a recipient.

William Watson, the father of Charles, returned home from the Great War thankful that his sons had survived. The other son, Ronald, had joined the navy. Ronald lived to be 70 and his father until 89. Charles, however, who had been severely warned by his father to avoid the RFC, survived until he was 105. Life in the air may well have been healthier than in the mud or at sea. Perhaps his long life can also be attributed to a special medicine. His remedy for constipation would be to spoon the Bristol Fighter's Castrol engine oil from a can, amply justifying one of Castrol's familiar slogans: 'It's more than just oil'



Sources:

Charles Watson told his story in Max Arthur's *Last Post* (Phoenix History, 2005).

There is also an online interview available on the website of the Imperial War Museum. Slight differences occur between the two sources.

Andrew Pentland of the airhistory.org.uk website kindly supplied details of the National Archives' Service Record for Watson (AIR 76/532/87) and an Officer Cadet Record (WO 339/126104) which has not yet been digitalised.

THE INFLUENZA PANDEMIC, 1918-19

by Shirley Rogers

Great concern is expressed about the problems that the present Covid-19 pandemic is inflicting on the world but they are not so serious as the effects of Spanish 'Flu just over a hundred years ago. Then millions died around the world although the effects in Romsey seem not to have been severe.



A new children's rhyme appeared in playgrounds across the country:

I had a little bird
His name was Enza
I opened the window
And in-flu-enza

Emergency measures

The great 'flu pandemic swept the globe. It killed between 20 and 40 million people worldwide, 230,000 of them in Britain. The first case was reported in March 1918 in a military camp in Kansas, USA, from where troops went to France. An outbreak occurred in the Ypres salient; by May it had spread to British, French, and German armies although at that time the symptoms were mild. It reappeared towards the end of June with respiratory complications. By December, the outbreak was global with a high death rate. By early 1919 symptoms became less severe again.

It killed between 20 and 40 million



Surprising parallels to today

Although the virus did not start in the trenches, the dire conditions there led to its wildfire-like spread. Ports were likely places of entry; the first British case was reported in Glasgow. Overcrowded trains aggravated the situation and by June the disease had reached London.

Although the disease was called 'Spanish 'Flu' it was unlikely to have originated in Spain. As the country had no censorship, cases tended to be reported there first; this probably led to the association. Unlike most 'flu outbreaks when the very young and old are the likeliest victims, young healthy adults between 15 and 40 were affected.

The speed with which the disease struck was frightening. One could be aware of a shivery feeling early in the morning; by lunchtime the skin had turned a vivid purple and by evening death could have occurred, often by choking on the mucous that formed in the lungs.

Many doctors and nurses were overseas so there was a shortage at home. Hospitals could not cope; there were tents in the grounds. Mortuaries were overflowing and there were not enough coffins. There was no effective treatment.

THE LOCAL SCENE

The first reference to Romsey was in *The People* national newspaper on 20 October 1918 which reported many deaths in Romsey (Hants) among other places. This was followed six days later when *The Hampshire Advertiser* printed advice from The County Medical Officer of Health on how to react to symptoms – bed, blankets, a milk diet, and quinine. By November doctors were so overworked that they were given permission to seek the help of military doctors.

The Romsey Advertiser made no reference to the 'flu outbreak until 1 November 1918 when it reported 'a mysterious disease which is ravaging the whole civilised world, gives no indication of abating, but is rather increasing in virulence'. Their best advice was 'to go to bed, keep warm in a well-ventilated room until the doctor arrives'. For those with weaker constitutions, recommendations included beef tea, wine, and water.

From other sources we know that soldiers from Romsey's Remount Camp were not allowed to visit nearby towns from July to October (a form of lockdown!). From November there were reports in the local press of communities being affected and the inevitable deaths: in Nursling a mother (Mrs Payne) and new-born son, William, both died from the disease.

Although the town does not seem to have been badly affected, the American troops stationed at the Woodland Mile Hill camps were, a report in December noting that many soldiers in one contingent were attacked. At one time more than 300 were stricken with many deaths resulting.

The epidemic spread to Kings Somborne where Rose Geary aged 14 died; in Stockbridge Sergeant and Mrs Woodland lost their little boy and in December Rosemary French aged only five, daughter of Lt. Col. and Mrs French of Bullingdon Manor, Hants, succumbed. Another sad case was that of Henry Martin aged 33 who was undergoing treatment for the disease when he decided to end it all by drowning. His body was found in the River Anton.

After reports of the disease abating, 'flu made a comeback in early 1919 which prompted *The Romsey Advertiser* to repeat the advice of The Medical Officer for Health. This time gargling with a solution of salt and a few crystals of potassium permanganate in water was added to the list; bottles of the solution were available from the Town Hall on application.

The disease eventually disappeared; by April *The Hampshire Advertiser* reported only two deaths in the county. After five years of war and suffering people breathed a sigh of relief and hoped for a better future.



Masks were not only worn by medical staff

Sources:

Centenary News

LTVAS for National and Hampshire reports and *The Romsey Advertiser*.

AN ANGLO-SAXON SPEARHEAD FROM ROMSEY

by Roger Leech

Stored in the vestry of Romsey Abbey is an iron spearhead. First evidently recorded in 1907, it was then thought to be of Roman date. Writing about the earliest finds from Romsey Abbey and its locality, and specifically those on display in Romsey Abbey, the Revd. T. Perkins referred in 1907 to 'a Roman spearhead found at Greatbridge, a short distance to the north of the town'. This is at present the only known reference to the discovery (in *A Short Account of Romsey Abbey: a description of the fabric and notes on the history of the Convent of SS. Mary & Ethelfleda*, Bell's Cathedral Series).

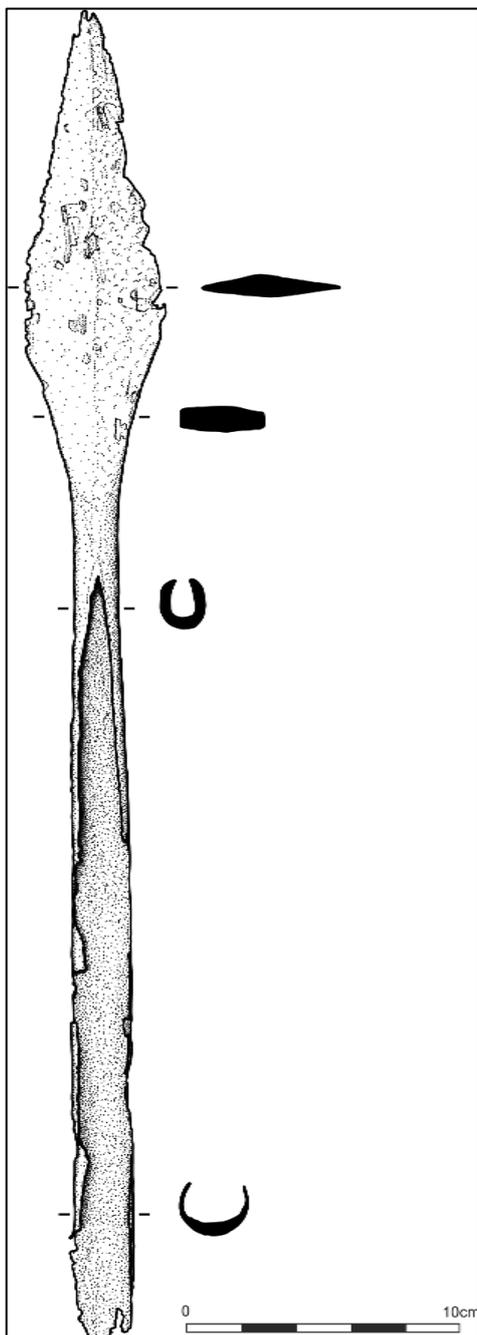
Two separate studies have now agreed that the spearhead is of the Anglo-Saxon period. The spearhead is therefore of interest to The Romsey Local History Society's (LTVAS Group) project to study the lower Test valley in the Anglo-Saxon period (<https://www.ltvas.org.uk/anglo-saxon-project>), which arranged for the preparation of the archaeological drawing of the item (shown on page 20) as drawn by Penny Copeland of the University of Southampton Archaeology Department.

It should be explained for the non-specialist in Anglo-Saxon archaeology that most such spearheads are found in Anglo-Saxon burials. Deceased men were often buried with weapons, including a spear and shield. Usually, only the metal parts survive – the spearhead which would have been affixed to a wooden shaft, and the metal shield boss which would have been fixed to a timber circular shield. Cemeteries of such burials and many isolated single burials have been found across southern and eastern England in large numbers and can now be studied in an online dataset that results from a project by archaeologists in London University that brings together information on Early Anglo-Saxon burials in southern England:

(<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/early-medieval-atlas/map-data/beyond-tribal-hidage-data>).

First to examine the spearhead was Professor Michael Swanton, historian, linguist, archaeologist and literary critic, specialising in the Anglo-Saxon period and its Old English literature and now Emeritus Professor of Medieval Studies at the University of Exeter. In his *The spearheads of the Anglo-Saxon settlements* (1973, 92-5) and in his *A Corpus of Pagan Anglo-Saxon Spear-Types* (1974, 76) Swanton identified the Romsey spearhead as being of his category F2, a small group of spearheads where the blade is separated from the cleft socket by a length of solid shank. Swanton used selected examples of spear types found with associated dateable other objects to provide the dating for the different types identified.

Looking at the F2 type he concluded that 'probably all are to be placed some time in the later sixth or seventh centuries'.



Since the publication of Swanton's two books, further research into the dating of Anglo-Saxon spearheads has taken place, to be found in a volume published by the Society for Medieval Archaeology - *Anglo-Saxon graves and grave goods of the 6th and 7th centuries AD : a chronological framework*. In that study, the Romsey spearhead conforms with Dr Karen Høilund-Nielsen's spearhead type SP4, which she dates from the third quarter of the 6th to the first quarter of the 7th century. The SP4 group, however, appears to cover two or three different Swanton (1973) types (D1, D2 and F2, the latter a more angular blade than the others), so Swanton seems more helpful for identifying workshops and distribution areas. His basis for extending the range well into the 7th century, however, seems a little uncertain, and it may be safest to conclude that more evidence is needed to establish when the F2 type went out of use - though he does note, on the basis of later, very similar, forms, that the type could even have lasted into the 8th century. The example from Romsey is one of the most westerly occurrences of the F2 group, which is particularly evident in Kent and along the Thames valley.

There is no evidence for how or where the Romsey spearhead was discovered. It is most likely however that it came from the chance discovery of an Anglo-Saxon burial, examples of which have been discovered in the river valleys to the north and south of Romsey.

Some were isolated single burials: going north from Romsey the closest known site was that of an Anglo-Saxon burial with a knife, spearhead and shield boss discovered at Broughton in 1875. Further north a similar burial was found in building works at Middle Wallop in 1957. Without the benefit of further archaeological work, we cannot be certain that these were not within larger cemeteries such as that recorded on the Portway Industrial Estate at Andover

in 1974. Here some 150 burials were recorded: 69 inhumation graves and up to 87 cremations. Finds from female inhumations included two bronze-bound wooden buckets, six saucer brooches, fifteen disc-brooches, seven small-long brooches, two bone combs, two finger-rings and strings of beads. Nine male burials were equipped with a spear, three of them also containing shields. The cemetery probably began in the late 5th century and continued in use throughout the 6th century.

To the south of Romsey a further such cemetery has been recorded beside the bend of the River Itchen at Bitterne, between the river and the site of the Roman settlement or small town of *Clausentum*. Six supine and extended inhumations were recorded in building works in Hawkeswood Road. All were orientated west-east, five were without grave goods. The sixth burial was accompanied by a seventh-century spearhead. Radio-carbon dating of one of the burials has given a seventh- or eighth-century date.

The Anglo-Saxon spearhead from Greatbridge at Romsey is therefore of more than passing interest. Not only is it the earliest known Anglo-Saxon artefact from Romsey, but it is also part of the evidence for the early Anglo-Saxon settlement of Hampshire. It also has a wider context in Anglo-Saxon burials with weapons across southern England and finds of similar spearheads in the closest parts of continental Europe from whence some of the Anglo-Saxon settlers came. In his recently published *From Roman Civitas to Anglo-Saxon Shire*, Dr Bruce Eagles has drawn attention 'to the extent of 'Frankish'/Kentish influence in southern Hampshire and the Isle of Wight in the sixth century'. Mary Harris, chairman of the Romsey Local History Society (LTVAS), has thus expressed the hope that the spearhead can eventually be placed in the care of Hampshire Cultural Trust and displayed as part of the history of Romsey at *King John's House*.

In concluding this note I must thank for their interest and advice my friend Dr Bruce Eagles of Salisbury, and through him Barry Ager, formerly on the staff of the British Museum, also Liz Hallett for first locating the spearhead in the Abbey vestry and Penny Copeland for coming to Romsey to make the drawing. Anyone wishing to follow up this note will find the key references on the Internet, including the Historic England Heritage Gateway and Pastscape search sites.

The Anglo-Saxons in Hillier Gardens

by Karen Anderson

Visitors to Hillier Gardens are treated to a display of plants from around the world in a variety of settings, from meadow and woodland to carefully laid out walks and borders. The seasonal changes add to the pleasure and interest of the experience. Frequent visitors will be well aware of the yearly cycle, but few would have considered the changes that have taken place over a longer timescale. Information boards have recently been installed in the Gardens to draw attention to features in the landscape that date back to the time of the Anglo-Saxons, when the land was divided between the nuns of Romsey Abbey and the Bishop of Winchester.

The boards are based on research carried out as part of the Romsey Local History Society's long-running Anglo-Saxon Project, funded by the Christopher Collier bequest. The association of the Anglo-Saxons with Hillier Gardens is based on the examination of land grant charters recording the gift of estates by the 10th-century kings of Wessex. An Anglo-Saxon charter was a legal document, written in Latin, witnessed by members of the royal family, Church officials and high-ranking individuals. The Anglo-Saxons did not use maps. Instead, the area of the grant was defined by a description of a perambulation of the boundary, referring to features in the landscape. This boundary clause was written in Old English so that local people would be able to understand the extent of the land grant. If a dispute arose concerning ownership, they would have been able to give evidence on the location of the boundaries.

The landmarks used to define a boundary included topographic features such as rivers, hills and valleys; man-made structures - bridges, gates, roads, banks; and plants - notable trees, meadowland, pasture. The challenge of 'solving' a charter involves locating those features in the modern landscape.

Two information boards were designed to invite visitors to explore features that were described in the 10th century. One has been placed in the Winter Garden at the top of the broad, grassy walk leading down to the valley of the Fairbourne. The Fairbourne stream, which runs near the northern edge of the Gardens, was mentioned in the Michelmersh charter, written in 985. It formed the boundary between the nuns' estate, south of the stream, and the land given by King Ethelred the Unready to his friend Alfred. The second board has been installed next to the Bishop's Bank, at the top of the stepped path leading to the woodland pigns. The bank was referred to in the Romsey charter of c972 as the 'bisshopes marke', the Bishop's boundary. The bank originally extended from the Fairbourne to Crampmoor. Sections survive in woodland adjacent to Jermyns Lane and the Straight Mile. Prior to the research undertaken during the Anglo-

Saxon Project, it had been thought that the bank had been destroyed where it crossed the Gardens. It is still there - go and have a look.



*The Information Board next to the Bishop's Bank
As prepared and sponsored by Romsey Local History Society*



*Drawings for the information boards for the Bishop's Bank at Hillier Gardens
drawn by Society member, Janet Cairney*

Remembering Nancy Kelly

by Barbara Burbridge

It is with great sadness that I have to report the recent death of Nancy Kelly on 2nd November at the age of 91 years. Every society needs the support of a mainstay like Nancy, modest and unassuming while quietly getting on with the task she had undertaken.



Nancy joined the LTVAS Group over 30 years ago and in that time she was a key figure in many of our projects and special occasions. She could be relied on to enter enthusiastically into many events whether helping with refreshments, stewarding exhibitions or welcoming guests. And she was part of several special projects over the years.

She was one of the team that set to work in the Botley Road Cemetery non-conformist chapel where we gathered on a Monday morning to sort a dauntingly large collection of draft legal documents and social ephemera. This was an undertaking that lasted for months and was the inspiration for the Monday morning workshops that have continued ever since (even though by Zoom in recent months).

Later, along with her friend, Angela Henley-Jones, Nancy painstakingly catalogued the printed – as opposed to digitised – photographs and illustrations scattered in our files. They were working with the catalogue system which is part of the overall catalogue devised and overseen by Phoebe Merrick.

But Nancy, a supportive committee member, is probably best remembered as our programme secretary, a role that she fulfilled for some 25 years and where she was most visible. She was meticulous about contacting speakers, greeting them with grace and friendliness and never forgetting to express thanks afterwards.

One other role that Nancy took on – and one that was dear to her heart – was that of representing the Society as a trustee of *King John's House*. There she also became a steward and a knowledgeable guide, winning considerable praise from the visitors she showed around the complex.

It was only in the last couple of years that ill-health caused Nancy to step back from close involvement with Romsey and its past. Romsey Local History Society has lost a key figure, who will be missed by many, and those who knew her more closely have lost a lovely friend.