Southern Hampshire Communities Living Through the Wars of 1793-1815: A Neglected Story

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Southern Hampshire Communities Living Through the Wars of 1793-1815: a Neglected Story.

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B.Sc. Hons (OU)

A dissertation submitted to the Open University for the degree of MA in History

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Abstract

This local study examines two bodies of evidence in order to explore how the long wars of 1793 to 1815 impinged on people’s lives in small town communities in southern Hampshire. The evidence relates firstly to the presence in the towns of French refugees, émigrés, priests and prisoners, and separately, to the response of the men of towns to appeals to volunteer for military training. Administrative lists have survived for both these facets of war-time experience and they form the bare bones of the enquiry, supplemented by personal observations, letters and autobiographical accounts, published satirical prints and drawings, and newspaper reports. The study asks what the evidence can illustrate about the social and economic effects and outcomes of the long war, and the degree to which it can reflect the experience and opinions of people across the whole of the social spectrum. The study is also concerned to consider the evidence of the study area in the context of historiographical writing, particularly within the debate between theories of popular loyalism or of emergent class awareness. It questions the relative neglect of civilian experience in these wars and the absence of the memorialisation which followed the wars of the twentieth century.
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1  Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2  Preamble</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3  The French</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4  The Volunteers</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5  Reflections and</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Illustrations


Rowlandson, Thomas (1795) ‘French Prisoners on Parole in Bodmin, Cornwall’, water colour, Yale Centre for British Art, accession number 81975.3145 (https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/catalog) accessed December 2022 page 29


Cruickshank, Isaac (1793) ‘Flannel Armour or Female Patriotism’ coloured etching, British Museum, accession number 1851,0901.670 (www.britishmuseum.org) accessed December 2022 page 49

Maps

Main towns of the study area page 2

French garrisons in the study area page 17

Initial Toulonese destinations in the study area page 21
I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work and that I have not submitted it, or any part of it, for a degree at the Open University or any other university or institution.

Part of this dissertation is built on work I submitted for assessment at the end of the MA first year course A825 at the Open University.
Chapter 1
Introduction

It is hardly conceivable that a local history of the twentieth century failed to mention the World Wars, yet the eighteenth century war described as the first world war, lasting with a only a short intermission for over twenty years, and impinging on people’s lives to an unprecedented degree, is rarely mentioned.¹ Even in academic writing, although in many respects the years between 1793 and 1815 are seen as a time of rapid and seminal change, inevitable historical compartmentalisation means that studies of, for example, eighteenth century urban or religious history might make little or no mention of the social effects of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Much documentary evidence from late eighteenth century Britain that historians would wish for has been lost. This local study will explore two facets of English southern small town life for which evidence is comparatively plentiful, firstly the accommodation among residents of displaced French citizens, and secondly, the response to appeals for men to volunteer for military training. Both facets arose from government policy and agency, both required administration and finance, and lists and registers have survived. The facets were coterminous but quite separate outcomes of revolution and war. Together, however, they build a more vivid picture of the way in which the wars were experienced in small urban communities, and the new demands and opportunities that they created for local economies, social structures and governance.

The study focuses on the town of Romsey, from which interesting material has survived, but paucity of evidence makes it necessary to draw on examples from the surrounding area. The study area therefore encompasses towns within a radius of twenty miles or so around the port of Southampton. (map below)
Romsey was a thriving market town serving its surrounding rural parish of Romsey Extra, with a total population in both parishes of 4,274 in 1801. A transport hub, it benefited from proximity to the county town of Winchester, and to the fashionable spa town of Southampton. The *Southampton Guide* for visitors recommended Romsey and its abbey as a pleasant outing. A visitor in 1799 noted that the Romsey was very full of inhabitants and a great deal of trade was carried on. If not at that time a major one, Southampton was a port as well as a spa, and importantly for the story, it served the regulated Channel Island trade. It was frequently the embarkation port for military expeditions, with occasional musters of large armies. The much larger naval city of Portsmouth grew rapidly during the wars. These developments undoubtedly influenced trade patterns throughout the study area, though these cannot be measured. The social networks through which news and rumour spread are also elusive, though surely extensive.

The study asks what the material evidence of the two facets can reveal about small town war-time experience in this southern area, and to what extent that evidence reflects the whole social spectrum. It will be shown that particular demands were placed on southern small towns and their communities; the evidence is set against nationwide historiographic accounts.

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2 https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk

3 *The Southampton Guide* 1798

4 George Lipscomb, *A Journey Into Cornwall, Through the Counties of Southampton, Wilts, Dorset and Devon* (Warwick, 1799) p48

5 W. Plees, *An Account of the Island of Jersey containing a compendium of its Ecclesiastic, Civil & Military History* (Jersey, 1817)
The writing of the second half of the twentieth century that first addressed ‘history from below’, most importantly E.P. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class*, was concerned with class formation and explaining why there was no revolution in Britain in the wake of the French Revolution, discussing repression, patrician paternalism and rampant capitalism. For Linda Colley, the wars were the period above all in which the great mass of the population developed a strong sense of British identity and loyalty to King and constitution. Perhaps the extremes of these two approaches lie with Roger Wells, for whom 1790 to 1800 was the most traumatic decade in British history, and Ian Christie’s very much more benign view of inherent stability. It might be argued that these approaches simply reflect the particular academic preoccupations of the later twentieth century, since sympathetic academic accounts from the early years of the twentieth century deal with the same question. Although more recent writing takes a more nuanced position between the extremes, the essentials of that debate remain a constant, including in works which examine various written sources to try to explore evidence of the opinions of the mass of the people. The study will ask how the local small town evidence sits within this debate, particularly since the class formation

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10 E.g Oskar Cox Jensen *Napoleon and British Song 1797-1822* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Catriona Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: Military and Civilian Experience in Britain and Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)
theorists are most concerned with the growing industrial cities, and Colley’s
nation-building examples for the war period are largely from cities, particularly
London.\textsuperscript{11} Recent economic historical writing has reconsidered a former
emphasis on industrialisation and stresses the importance of what has been
dubbed the eighteenth century ‘fiscal-military state’ culminating in the
Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, and the study considers the economic
effects of the facets.\textsuperscript{12} The few written accounts of the French presence in
Britain focus on aristocratic \textit{émigrés} in London, with perhaps a passing mention
of their servants; the full French diaspora is largely neglected.\textsuperscript{13} Abell’s
comprehensive if somewhat lofty 1918 account of French prisoners of war
remains the most frequently cited.\textsuperscript{14}

The most plentiful evidence for the study is the lists, official letters, letters-out
and minute books drawn up for financial and organisational needs, local or
governmental, that are retained in the public archives. Although the content is
often limited, they are revealing of their intent and purpose, and from their
appearance, resources available for their compilation. Retention of documents
was patchy, some local material comes from scrapbooks compiled by a late
nineteenth century antiquarian mayor of Winchester who trawled through a

\textsuperscript{11} Mark Philp, ‘Introduction’ in \textit{Resisting Napoleon: The British Response of the Threat of
Invasion 1798-1815} ed. Mark Philp (London: Routledge, 2016)

\textsuperscript{12} Philip Harling and Peter Mandler, ‘From ‘Fiscal-Military State’ to Laissez-Faire State,
1760-1850’ in \textit{Journal of British Studies} 32.1 (January 1993) p44

\textsuperscript{13} e.g. Debra Kelly and Martyn Corrick eds, \textit{A History of the French in London: Liberty, Equality,
Opportunity} (London: Institute of Historical Research: 2013)

\textsuperscript{14} Francis Abell, 1918, \textit{Prisoners of War in Britain: A record of their lives, their romance and their
sufferings} (reprint Alpha Editions)
mouldering heap of civic documents dating from the sixteenth century. If lists form the bare bones, however, the flesh that can conjure the lived experience of communities has to come from every possible identified source. Personal letters, commentary, and autobiographical writing are necessarily anecdotal and reflective of the purposes and social status of the writer, but have been essential, if requiring due caution. The study draws on the surviving letters of Dr Latham, retired medical practitioner, notable ornithologist and antiquarian, who moved to Romsey in 1795 to be near his son. His gossipy letters to an old friend over four years occasionally include topical comments that reflect the views of at least one segment of the community. Among the antiquarian information which prefaces the Winchester entry in the 1798 *Universal Register* is some revealing comment on the contemporary scene. The author John Wilkes managed the *Hampshire Chronicle*, but like all the provincial local press it is of use disappointingly infrequently, local journalism hardly existed, and newspapers mainly carried local notices and advertising with selected items from the London press, and of course newspapers too served particular audiences.

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15 Hampshire Record Office (HRO) W/K5 series scrapbooks

16 Derbyshire Record Office (DRO) D6104/40 1-17, D6101 1-16 Latham letters 1795-1799

17 *Universal Directory of Trade, Commerce and Manufactures* 1798 Hampshire Extracts https://specialcollections.le.ac.uk
Janet Marie Cairney

This was however supremely the age of the graphic print; made by highly commercial artists, sometimes paid by the Government or others to portray a certain view.\textsuperscript{18} Always seeking topicality, one of the most successful, Thomas Rowlandson, clearly adapted earlier work to illustrate issues of the moment. Although intended for a metropolitan audience, and not achieving mass circulation, the content and iconography of the prints needed to resonate with what people were thinking and discussing at the time, and prints are therefore called on in the study.\textsuperscript{19}

The next short scene-setting chapter sets out some essential background material about the war and its conduct at home, particularly in respect of the role of the small town, chapter three is concerned with the different French groups who arrived in the area, and chapter four discusses the stages of the volunteer movement. Chapter five then brings both together in considering what the material evidence can reveal about social life, urban development and governance during the war years.

\textsuperscript{18} Royal Collection Trust, \textit{High Spirits: The Comic Art of Thomas Rowlandson}, (London: Royal Collection Trust, 2013)

Chapter 2
Preamble

France declared war in February 1793 and fighting continued until the brief Treaty of Amiens of March 1802. The peace was always troubled, warfare resumed in May 1803, and did not cease until Napoleon’s final defeat at Waterloo in 1815. Moreover, this long period suffered very poor weather, in fourteen of the war years the harvest was deficient, there were grave grain crises in 1795, 1800, and 1811.¹ It was also a period of unprecedented population growth.

War with France was all too familiar, eighteenth century years of conflict outnumbered those of peace by almost two to one.² For most of the century, limited professional mercenary armies fought seasonal engagements, led by noble commanders sharing a pan-European military etiquette, in ‘a sort of theatre of the aristocracy’.³ But French leaders abandoned such values, the warfare which followed is described as ‘total’ war, Bell describes ‘an apocalyptic change, and an astonishing transformation in the scope and intensity of warfare’; his picture of limited earlier wars is challenged, his account of the 1793-1815 wars is not.⁴ The British army increased six-fold, the navy eight-fold, at home the county militia ballots were increased, numbers rose three-fold, and the militia was

¹ Michael Turner, ‘Corn Crises in Britain in the Age of Malthus’ in Malthus and his Time ed. Michael Turner (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan:1986) p112
³ Keith Thomas, In Pursuit of Civility: Manners and Civilization in Early Modern England (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018) p147,
Janet Marie Cairney

embodied on a more permanent basis. In a shifting series of alliances or alone, Britain was fighting a much larger, more populous adversary, the outcome very much in doubt.

In Britain at the start of the war, maintenance of a permanent standing army housed in barracks was still viewed as an unacceptable attribute of continental despotism; purpose-built accommodation for troops hardly existed. The army and militia at home were quartered in towns. A Home Office advisor reported:

'It is a dangerous measure to keep troops in the manufacturing towns in their present dispersed state, and unless barracks could be established for the men where they could be kept under the eye of their officers, it would be prudent to quarter them in towns and villages in the country, whence in case of emergency they would act with much more effect.'

Barracks were gradually constructed but did not cater for the county militias whose function was internal civil control as well as potential external defence, and were judged more effective serving outside their home counties. Local mayors or constables were responsible for accommodating troops and militias marching through their town, and by law commandeered inns and alehouses for this purpose. It was a deeply resented burden, the War Office paid too little, too

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5 Peter Hicks, ‘The Militarisation of society in Georgian Britain and Napoleon France’, *Napoleonica La Revue* 1 (2008) p137


8 cited in Knight, p52

slowly. Many letters of protest from publicans are in the public record.

Southampton publicans begged the mayor to petition for a barracks, Winchester publicans threatened to give up their licences.¹⁰

For operational and prudential purposes home based army units and militias constantly criss-crossed the country, moving from town to town in the summer months, and into small town winter quarters in October.¹¹ Though surely inevitable, what is not in the public record, and mentioned only fleetingly in the literature, is the extent to which troops and officers were accommodated in private homes and buildings. One picture of an officer in lodgings comes from Southampton where a letter from the wife of the Quartermaster responsible for the embarkation of a major military expedition describes how the Major, his wife and his daughter lived in ‘three cheap rooms and a parlour, into which are introduced 20, 30 or more people of various denominations from 8 in the morning till 11 at night’, and she says, visitors besides, a bustle no doubt felt by the neighbours, and perhaps not appreciated.¹²

A local history identifies some of the town buildings used by the troops in Lymington, a depot for foreign regiments throughout the wars, and further down the coast, an amateur historian in Shoreham has used parish, land and tax records in a study of the different fields, barns, warehouses and granary buildings that became temporary ‘barracks’ for army or militia accommodation, all within or

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¹⁰ *Hampshire Chronicle* 22 November 1793, 10 June 1793

¹¹ Knight p78

Janet Marie Cairney

close to the town centre. It seems reasonable to take these as typical of the kind of arrangements made nationally\textsuperscript{13}.

Exactly the same imperatives of secure supervision and avoidance of more volatile host populations applied to the settlement of French refugees and paroled prisoners. The quiet towns of the study area had been used as parole towns before in this century, including Romsey in 1757.\textsuperscript{14} The need for accommodation for the French in these wars was incomparably greater, and it is to this that the study now turns.

\begin{footnotes}
\item Francis Abell, 1918, \textit{Prisoners of War in Britain: A record of their lives, their romance and their sufferings} (reprint) p284
\end{footnotes}
Chapter 3
The French

Understanding the different groups in the study area towns and how they came to be there is necessary in order to consider their impact. This chapter first describes the groups, and then tackles interpreting what their presence meant in the communities.

The first challenge is semantic, ‘émigrés’ was contemporary usage but is coloured by romantic tales of tragic aristocrats. Mills uses ‘humanitarian and refugee crisis’ to describe the huge French influx of 1792 into the then poor island of Jersey, but loaded current usage in historical contexts is also questionable. In what follows ‘émigrés’ is used for those who left France voluntarily, in the main people of birth and status able to bring resources with them, for the rest, less loaded collective terms are more meaningful.

The priests

Legislation in 1790 required priests to swear loyalty to the Revolution, and by 1792 non-compliant priests were required to leave or face deportation to inhospitable colonies. Nationally perhaps 50% of priests refused the oath; in Brittany and Normandy resistance was stronger; only 15% of Breton priests complied. Many crossed the Channel, some in open boats, most arriving utterly

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Janet Marie Cairney

destitute. Breton and Norman clergy made the short crossing to Jersey, and by March 1793 an estimated 3,400 had arrived, besides perhaps 1,000 lay émigrés and refugees.\(^{17}\) The Jersey maritime connection served to funnel substantial numbers into the study area. The Lieutenant Governor of Portsmouth claimed that there were 500 priests there, press reports claimed that ‘cargoes of priests arrived daily in Southampton’, a traveller wrote that there were so many it seemed that the postilion had mistakenly carried them to a French town.\(^{18}\) Bellenger estimates that as many as 7,000 exiled priests were in Britain by 1793.\(^{19}\)

The priests’ plight elicited charitable response; the wealthy contributed generously to a newspaper appeal for donations for the relief of the French clergy, but many donations of less than £1 are recorded from ‘unknown persons’.\(^{20}\) The appeal was supported by the Anglican church; however much it disliked Catholicism succour for these men of conscience was a clear moral obligation in a Christian country, and even Catholicism was better than the dreadful thought of secularisation, or worse, atheism.\(^{21}\)

When donations dwindled the Government stepped in. The hasty refurbishment of a dilapidated Stuart barrack building known as the Kings House in Winchester

\(^{17}\) Mills, p104

\(^{18}\) Hampshire Record Office (HRO) 109A02/7 letter from Thomas Trigge; Hampshire Chronicle 1 & 8 October 1792; Dominic A. Bellenger, *The French Exiled Clergy in the British Isles after 1789* (Bath: Downside Abbey, 1986) p3

\(^{19}\) Bellenger, *French Exiled Clergy* p3

\(^{20}\) The National Archive (TNA) T93/8 List of subscribers to the French Committee

\(^{21}\) Bellenger, *Exiled Clergy* p32
Janet Marie Cairney

aimed to solve the problem of accommodation, and by 1796 over 1,000 priests were living a kind of monastic life there, with an estimated 170 more lodging in the town, and unknown numbers in the surrounding area. In 1796, to free the House for military barracks. Norman priests were moved to Reading, the Bretons to Thame, and numbers lodging in the town declined. Nevertheless, when the registration of aliens was enforced in 1798 Winchester landlords reported priests who by then had been living with them for over five years. Later waves of exiled priests were diverted to Scotland and the north. The experience of French priests living among them was shared by many small urban communities nationwide, others had priests passing through on their journeys, often on foot, to London in particular. Bellenger claims that French priests became familiar figures in every corner of the country for twenty years.

The exile of priests was more shocking news from Revolutionary France, adding to the execution of the King and worse, of the Queen, and the Terror after June 1793. Sensational and alarming news and rumour undoubtedly passed by word of mouth, on everyone’s lips. In this early period of the war, the study area experience of the refugees and the massing of troops ready for embarkation must have fed a contagious emotional response.


23 HRO DC/P19/2, DC/P19/7 Certificates of priests’ lodgings

24 Bellenger, Exiled Clergy p295


26 Emma Vincent Macleod, A War of Ideas: British Attitudes to the Wars against Revolutionary France 1792-1802 (London: Routledge, 2018) p293
Janet Marie Cairney

Alongside generosity and pity, however, and as strongly felt, went fear and mistrust. How could Catholic priests be trusted? The Bishop of Winchester expressed his sympathies but was quick to write to the leader of the French clergy in England demanding the removal of a priest accused of proselytising.27 Worse, how could people know that hiding among all the refugees there might not be those whose intent was to stir riot, turmoil and revolution in order to weaken Britain, fears eagerly fanned by Government anti-radical and anti-Gallican propagandists. It was a climate that eased the passage of repressive legislation.28 Habeas Corpus was suspended, and two Acts, the ‘Gagging Acts’, banned gatherings of more than 50 people, and treated criticism of the King as treason.29 The radical Francis Place recalled of those years in London that ‘the mass of the shopkeepers and working people may be said to have approved of them such was their fear that the throne and altar would be destroyed and that we should be deprived of our holy religion.’30

This response can be deemed loyalism; and certainly loyal addresses were sent to the King from all over Britain, while those who failed to express attachment and affection for George III were vilified.31 During the winter of 1792 there was a spate of burning of effigies of the radical author Thomas Paine in Hampshire as

27 Bellenger Exiles p 38


29 34 Geo III c54, 35 Geo III c7, 34 Geo III c8

30 Graham Wallas, The Life of Francis Place 1771-1854 (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1918) p25

happened nationwide.\textsuperscript{32} MacLeod argues that these feelings were common to all levels in society, but also points out that such waves of emotion are volatile, and over the course of the war, there were also waves of negative emotion following military failure, popular hardship, corruption, or the sheer length of the war.\textsuperscript{33}

The Foreign Corps

French army officers were also required to swear allegiance. By definition members of the first estate, the majority fled; army officers were among the earliest \textit{émigrés} to Jersey and mainland Britain. After war was declared the Government sought to exploit their subsistence, and mitigate the crisis in Jersey in particular, by recruiting officers into the British army.\textsuperscript{34} The necessary legislation to permit the recruitment of the French Catholics was in place by April 1794.\textsuperscript{35} Men were recruited in the Channel Islands and the south of England and regiments garrisoned in the study area.\textsuperscript{36} (see map page 17) The regiment commanded by the Comte du Dresnay was authorised in August 1794, and by February 1795 some 500 men were in Romsey for training before embarkation in July 1795 for the disastrous invasion at Quiberon.\textsuperscript{37} The monthly muster lists signed by du Dresnay show his address only as ‘Romsey’, exactly where the officers and men were accommodated is not recorded. It must be assumed that

\textsuperscript{32} Hampshire Chronicle 7 January 1793 14 January 1793 21 January 1793 28 January 1793
\textsuperscript{33} MacLeod p195
\textsuperscript{34} Mills p101
\textsuperscript{35} Enlistment Act 34 Geo III c43
\textsuperscript{36} C. T.Atkinson, ‘Foreign Regiments in the British Army 1793-1802” Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research Part VI 22 90 (1944)
\textsuperscript{37} TNA WO12/11708 Muster list du Dresnay regiment
Janet Marie Cairney

the men were housed in the rural areas immediately around the town in barns or temporary wooden structures, and that hostellries and private rented lodgings accommodated officers. One town centre address, care of Mr Walker of Banning Street, is known from a sad letter to a man in London to whom the writer had entrusted signed documents from the regimental second in command permitting him to return to Jersey to his sick wife and children. The promised passport had not arrived and his documents were apparently lost. All the exiles and refugees were vulnerable to bureaucratic failure.

French regiment garrisons in the study area

Du Dresnay’s muster lists include prisoners of war and the prisons from which they were transferred; forty-three from the large local Portchester prison, nineteen from Plymouth and ten from Falmouth. Nine from Chatham had been

38 Letter in private collection, 1795
sent first to the regiment d'Hector at Lymington, who did not want them. Abell cites a 1793 letter to Lord Grenville from the Duke of Buckingham in Winchester complaining of the ‘constant inundation’ of prisoners moving between Portsmouth and Bristol, which ‘stirred up the country people’.

At this stage in the war prisoners had not been taken on land; these men were seafarers, from French naval vessels, privateers or unfortunate captured merchant ships, and indeed seamen constituted the majority of prisoners of war until the Peninsula campaign of 1807. Whether the prisoners were recruited voluntarily or under compulsion is unclear. D'Hector was careful about the prisoners he accepted, perhaps the loyalty of the Chatham nine was doubtful. The enforced army service of prisoners was traditional, but in this war dangerous, prisoners were reported to have turned their guns on their officers during the campaign.

Government optimism that the Revolutionary army would struggle without noble officers, and that Breton insurgents would welcome and obey émigré officers was
Janet Marie Cairney

soon disabused in the incompetence and chaos of the Quiberon campaign. The du Dresnay regiment like the others was all but wiped out, captured officers executed as traitors.

What people thought about the presence of the counter-Revolutionary French regiments is conjecture. Protestantism and the constitutional monarchy had been a foundational belief ever since the Glorious Revolution; the Gordon Riots of 1780 had demonstrated the strength of adherence among the labouring classes. These Catholic soldiers were pledged to restore the absolute Bourbon monarchy. Those who took any interest in politics must have found their presence disturbing, and everyone who learned of the outcome shocked by the defeat and loss of life, their trust undermined by woeful military failure, presumably a topic of moral and political uncertainty. However, drawing on an autobiography, Watson suggests that for the mass of people, and particularly uneducated workers, political debate of any kind was of no interest at all.

The Toulonese

The garrisons of French regiments were a temporary phenomenon but other French groups remained in the study area for the duration of the war. Toulon was one of the ‘federalist’ Republican towns of south-east France which in 1793

47 Knight p64
Janet Marie Cairney

rebelled against the Paris administration. In most the insurrection was quickly and ruthlessly put down, but Toulon as chief naval Mediterranean port was protected by a series of defensive walls. The Republicans laid siege, and off-shore an Anglo-Spanish fleet under Lord Hood blockaded the harbour. Inevitably in the densely populated town food supplies dwindled. In August, civic leaders appealed to Hood who, on his own authority, agreed to help provided they declare allegiance to the Bourbon monarchy, and the town by then had little choice but to agree. The allies occupied the town, but in December the guns of the Republican army, commanded by a twenty-four year old captain of artillery, one Napoleon Bonaparte, gained the heights above the town and thus controlled the inner harbour. Hood decided he must evacuate, he and the civilian Governor ensured that every available vessel took as many of the panicking and terrified residents as possible. The ships carried their refugees to Mediterranean ports, but fourteen naval vessels, listed in ‘Steels Naval Remembrancer’ (reproduced below), sailed to Britain. A significant coup for the British, these were warships that had been placed under Lord Hood’s command by their officers during the occupation and sailed by their crews initially to Gibraltar and then to England. Warships were critical assets, taking time and huge sums of money to build, acquiring these ships and depriving the French of them made the promise of pensions to the crews and their dependents a price worth paying, in anticipation of a short war.

49 Malcolm Crook, Toulon in war and revolution: From the ancien-régime to the Restoration, 1750-1820 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991) p1

50 Godechot p244,

51 HRO9M73/697 Malmesbury papers item15

52 Steels Naval Remembrancer (CUP Collections 2010)
The 1st division ships reached England in March 1794, the smaller 2nd division ships in April. The ships and their stores were valued, and the crews paid the customary prize money, the amount of their share determined by their rank.53

Some of the fair copy ships’ pay books survive and for the largest each entry is numbered sequentially. The Commerce du Marseilles, of 120 guns, had a crew numbered to 670.54 The four largest ships together had crew numbers of over 1,500, and as many as another 1,000 can be added for all the smaller vessels, but in addition the ships also carried their families and other refugees, it was a sizeable inflow of people, as Rowlandson’s depiction of the disembarkation in Southampton portrays. He adapted his earlier depiction of a large invasion army being rowed to their transports to show large numbers of Toulonese refugees being landed.

53 Hampshire Chronicle 23 March 1795
54 TNA ADM42 Pay list Commerce du Marseilles
The transportation and settlement of the Toulonese was undertaken by the Admiralty’s Transport Board, the delay in the return to England was presumably to allow arrangements to be made to provide accommodation. It was not a novel task, during the century the Board had acquired responsibility for the settlement of paroled prisoners. Two of the Toulonese pension proposal listings indicate initial destinations. They show that boys, invalids, and junior ratings, their pay defined in shillings per day, were housed in ‘barracks’ in the village of Totton, and extra daily sums were granted to the responsible lieutenant, surgeon and chaplain who attended. The lists are annotated “Totton and Neighbourhood”, implying more than one location, of which there is now no knowledge. Junior and non-commissioned officers and crew members with families went to the village of Hardway, it must be assumed to quarters constructed to house them, though

again the whereabouts is not recorded\textsuperscript{56}. Some of the officers went to London, a minority volunteered for French regiments, numerous others were initially lodged in towns in the study area.\textsuperscript{57}(see map below)

1794 Initial Toulonese destinations within the study area

Clearly decisions did not involve consultation with local authorities; a letter from the magistrates of Gosport to the Secretary of State expressed concern that armed Frenchmen were at large in the town, near to the main naval ordnance depot, asking what they were supposed to do about it.\textsuperscript{58}

Curiously, the senior officers settled in fashionable Southampton and the large numbers lodged in Gosport flouted provisions in the 1793 Aliens Act that

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\textsuperscript{56} TNA T1/740/145-153, T1/741/1-7 pension lists of Toulon ships

\textsuperscript{57} TNA T740/145-153 pension lists

\textsuperscript{58} TNA HO42/34/F64 letter from Gosport magistrates
foreigners must reside ten miles from the coast. In 1798 however, under imminent threat of invasion, the Aliens Act was renewed and then put into full effect. The *Universal Register of Trades* noted that the Toulonese from Gosport had moved to Winchester after the priests left.\(^59\)

Canon Scantlebury quotes a letter from the Abbé responsible for the fifty-eight priests in Southampton in response to a request for the amount of additional money needed for them to comply. He explained that it was difficult to calculate since he did not know how far they would have to travel:

> ‘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……. 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’.\(^60\)

For Romsey, dated April 1798, rare contemporary numerical evidence of the French refugees survives, preserved by Dr Latham.(transcription below)\(^61\)

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\(^59\) *Universal Directory* 1798 p911

\(^60\) Scantlebury, Robert E, *Introduction to Catholic Southampton* (Catholic Record Society 2010)

Both the date and the column headings reveal that this is Schedule A of the returns required from all parishes under the Defence of the Realm Act, the Government’s initiative to measure the country’s resources to fight the imminently threatened invasion. Schedule A required the number of men fit to fight, and at this date the ‘aliens’ column, which Latham has instead headed ‘French’, totals 208. But then in June, 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. To say truth their behaviour is exemplarily good, but they consume so much of the butter, eggs, fish & vegetables about us that the price has been raised from such demand’.

If it is assumed that the alien numbers are indeed just of men and taken that Latham’s ‘half as many’ might be an exaggeration, an estimate of 250 seems reasonable, but then of course dependents must be added. Estimating an
Janet Marie Cairney

average of 2 per man, modest given the numbers of ‘attached persons’ shown in the pension lists, (a short extract is shown below) would give a French population of at least 750 in the Romsey parishes.

Extract from TNA HO42/75 f117 Statement of officers who have persons attached to them and allowances proposed for each.

Religion is a further reason for the Toulonese to cluster in Romsey and locations near Winchester. The Catholic Church in the south was extremely small, and Catholicism only recently granted modest relief from punitive legislation. The clergy found the presence of both priests and laity challenging. Priests had to be controlled and prevented from disturbing fragile tolerance, and their demands for
faculties dealt with. The French laity were accustomed to a continental liturgy very different to the restrained British worship. Surviving registers preserved by the Catholic Family History Society are for the ‘Winchester Catholic Chapel’, which the *Universal Register* describes as alongside the chapel where British Catholics worshipped.

The baptism, marriage and burial records movingly tell the human story of these exiles, here are the babies born from very soon after disembarkation, too often their burial, sometimes that of their mothers, and here the names of stalwart non-commissioned officers faithfully turning out for all the Toulonese funerals. All of the marriages remain inter-community, there are no English names in the record of participants or attendees. In 1798/9 during the invasion scare there was a small spate of brides aged 16, families desperate to secure their future.

Bellenger notes that exiled priests too clung within their home episcopates, suggesting that this helped to increase isolation from host populations, and perhaps this applied to the Toulonese; Latham makes only fleeting further reference to them in his letters. What Bellenger does not reflect is the linguistic diversity of France; uneducated Bretons spoke Brittonic Gaelic, the vernacular language of Toulon was described as ‘a form of Provençal …alongside vulgar

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65 Bellenger *Exiled Priests* p51

66 Bellenger, *Exiled, p5*


68 CDROM *Registers of the Catholic Chapel Royal*

69 Bellenger *Exiled p5*
Italian Genoese, Corsican, a bit of everything in fact'.\textsuperscript{70} For wealthy and educated Britons there was no language barrier, they were bilingual, for the common people the language barriers were complex.\textsuperscript{71} Experience today of communities finding themselves hosting incomers speaking a different language is not encouraging.

\textbf{The Paroled Officers}

The custom of parole for captured officers had been an accepted part of eighteenth century warfare, normally of short duration until exchanges were arranged, and funded reciprocally by the combatant nations, For both ideological and economic reasons (there was a considerable disparity in the numbers) the French abandoned this practice. Prisoners of war were held in Britain for the very long duration of the wars, the bulk of them, up to 120,000 by 1815, in dreadful prisons or hulks, but officers on parole in designated towns, managed by agents employed by the Transport Board.\textsuperscript{72} Parolees were paid a modest subsistence, subjected to curfew, permitted to go no more than a mile from the town, all correspondence channelled via the Board. There were eleven such towns in Hampshire, four, Andover, Alresford, Bishops Waltham and Hambledon, within the study area, but by the end of war over fifty parole towns nationally.\textsuperscript{73} By 1814, 3,600 men were confined in them, a few joined by their wives, but most single active men, idly kicking their heels for many years, clearly radically altering the

\textsuperscript{70} Crook p10

\textsuperscript{71} Colley ‘Britons’ p165,

\textsuperscript{72} Abell p288

\textsuperscript{73} Knight p111
Janet Marie Cairney

usual demographic balance.\textsuperscript{74} Rowlandson’s painting, also an adaptation, captures what was thought about this. (below)

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image1}
\caption{French Prisoners on Parole in Bodmin, Cornwall, 1795}
\end{figure}

Thomas Rowlandson \hspace{1cm} Watercolour \hspace{1cm} Yale Centre for British Art Collection

For townsfolk, the arrival and departure of parolees was arbitrary. In Bishop’s Waltham (1801 population 1,773), 161 were confined, in Alresford, (population 5,500) 375, plus wives, plus servants, some of them black slaves.\textsuperscript{75} Back after the short peace, the parolees were abruptly removed in 1813 to towns further away from the coast.\textsuperscript{76} The most remarkable story comes from outside the study area, Abell says 500 men were confined in Wincanton, 1801 population 1,800, until plotting was suspected; residents awoke one morning to find that all that

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\textsuperscript{76} Biddell p33
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remained of the parolees was the property they had not been permitted to take when they were transported before dawn.\textsuperscript{77}

Both Toulonese and parolees were irruptions into the life of small towns, an exigency of the war, bringing the reality of it to communities. Congested living with most houses in multiple occupation was familiar in growing cities, but perhaps not in rural market towns.\textsuperscript{78} The 1801 census was limited in its reach and challenging to interpret. The 1801 enumerators’ notebooks for Lymington are a rare survival.\textsuperscript{79} The census was taken before Napoleon’s amnesty but it is unclear whether the presence of aliens is hidden or is excluded, there are certainly no foreign names among the Lymington householders. There is however a marked disparity in the sexes, 44% more females than males overall in 1801, compared with 10% in Romsey. Men in the army, navy, militia or serving in registered vessels were excluded and this was a garrison town for foreign troops, the disparity explained if these were military wives and daughters. The numbers of houses occupied by more than one family is also higher than in Romsey, but the definition of ‘family’ is unclear in the 1801 census, particularly regarding lodgers.\textsuperscript{80} This tends to suggest that perhaps many aliens were lodgers, which may have been the case everywhere for the French refugees, who had no household goods and for whom there were not available houses for rent. (see census comparison tabulation below). The influx of new lodgers though profitable for some must have constituted a marked change for the host town

\textsuperscript{77} www.visionofbritain,: Abell p426

\textsuperscript{78} Amanda Vickery, ‘An Englishman’s Home is his Castle’ Thresholds, Boundaries and Privacies in the Eighteenth-Century London House \textit{Past & Present} 199 May 2008;

\textsuperscript{79} HRO42M75/PZ10a Lymington census enumerators notebooks 1801,1811

\textsuperscript{80} D.V. Glass, \textit{Numbering the People} (Farnborough:Saxon House, 1973) p93
residents, and even allowing for expectations of privacy different to today’s, a new situation which had to be suffered as a result of the war.

Comparing 1801 Census summaries for Romsey and Lymington

Staying

Reunification of the French people was a political imperative for Napoleon as Consul; a Concordat with the Pope was signed in 1801, and amnesty declared for exiles in 1802, excluding only those who had led forces against the French. Most exiles returned to France, and prisoners were returned after the Treaty of Amiens of March 1802. But not everyone returned, some had formed ties in Britain, some were not fit enough to undertake the long journey, additional payments for infirmity are noted in the annual Toulon pension lists. Property had been confiscated when people left France; officers no longer had career prospects. Lists record names of aliens wishing to remain in Southampton, Romsey and Winchester, clearly settled. A paper defending cessation of pension payments names a hairdresser in Winchester, a baker in Romsey and a

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81 Sources BL Add MSS 26776 Notes for a History of Romsey Volume 3 HRO 42M75/PZ10a Lymington enumerators’ notebooks
82 TNA AO1/851 annual accounts Toulon pensions
83 TNA HO42/74/ f 154 list of emigrants wishing to remain in Southampton and others
Janet Marie Cairney

violin teacher in Southampton.\textsuperscript{84} The anglicisation of names may hide the numbers who remained after 1802 and again after 1814, Abell gives the example ‘Burton’ for ‘Aubertin’.\textsuperscript{85} The British Government was still paying Toulonese pensions in 1841.\textsuperscript{86}

**The Chouans**

Uniquely, Romsey was chosen to host a further group. Breton royalists known as ‘chouans’ had conducted guerrilla warfare since 1793, funded and somewhat haphazardly supplied by the British.\textsuperscript{87} Godechot describes tactics that would earn the term terrorism today.\textsuperscript{88} By 1801, hunted and their numbers declining, they were reduced to brigandage. A deputation from them to the Governor of Jersey shocked him profoundly; he recommended that they be got out of France, and permission was given for 70 to travel to Jersey.\textsuperscript{89} Acceptance there of men regarded as criminals was one of the bones of contention during the uneasy peace, particularly since their leader, Cadoudal, was known by the French to be lionized in London.\textsuperscript{90} French intelligence believed that he had been the mastermind behind the 1800 assassination attempt on Napoleon by an

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\textsuperscript{84} TNA HO42/75/122 Report by Superintendent of Toulonese

\textsuperscript{85} Abell p307

\textsuperscript{86} TNA AO19/2/2 Annual accounts 1837-1841

\textsuperscript{87} Tim Clayton, *This Dark Business: The Secret War against Napoleon* (London: Little Brown, 2018) p9

\textsuperscript{88} Godechot p366

\textsuperscript{89} TNA WO1/924/1-8 January 1802 Arrival in Jersey of chouan officer

\textsuperscript{90} Knight p134
improvised explosive device, which only narrowly failed. A bland reply to diplomatic protest claimed that the men would be sent to Canada.\textsuperscript{91} Instead multiple lists record their transport in small groups aboard fast cutters to Southampton and their settlement in Romsey.\textsuperscript{92} By 1803 Cadoudal had returned to France and was part of an extensive conspiracy to ‘kidnap’ Napoleon. Clayton claims it was intended that the Romsey contingent would return to raise a royalist force in Brittany when the deed was done.\textsuperscript{93} In 1804 the conspirators were discovered and arrested. Second in command Guillemot led a small group from Romsey to rescue Cadoudal. but was apprehended and executed.\textsuperscript{94}

What is extraordinary in this tale is that throughout the war the press printed stories from France about the chouans, that they lived in the woods like animals and killed like animals, even naming Guillemot.\textsuperscript{95} It is difficult to imagine what it was like for violent young men who had never led a normal life to live in a quiet town for months, or for their hosts, some of whom must have known, or eventually discovered, who they were.

It was an embarrassment for the Government, the Morning Chronicle called the captured men ‘wretches……almost all of whom the pay of the British Cabinet has

\textsuperscript{91} The Monthly Magazine and British Register 15 Part 1

\textsuperscript{92} TNA HO69/28 HO42/66/30 ff132a-b, HO 42/66/50 ff173-176b, f216 HO 42/66/90 lists of chouans.

\textsuperscript{93} Clayton, p135

\textsuperscript{94} Clayton p318

\textsuperscript{95} Godechot p226: Hampshire Chronicle 25 March 1795, 8 September 1802, 7 September 1795, The Sun Monday 13 July 1801, Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser 15 January 1805.
Janet Marie Cairney

successively led to the scaffold. Scandals at the highest level followed in 1805 and 1807. But suspicions of inglorious aspects of war surely abounded throughout; mutual spying and trickery, crude and blatant propaganda, corruption and profiteering, black market criminality. Measuring the level of cynicism behind apparent acquiescence is difficult, though Jensen finds many examples in popular songs and ballads, and a print of 1794 (below) swipes at hypocrisy and the unequal sacrifices of rich and poor, and the more generous treatment of French priests than the British poor, an observation certainly reachable by the mass of people.

Isaak Cruikshank c1794 Etching British Museum Collection

96 Morning Chronicle 24 January 1805


98 Oskar Cox Jensen, Napoleon and British Song 1797-1822 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) p5
Janet Marie Cairney

Outcomes

The French living in the small towns of the study area were not homogenous, from pitied priests to royalist fighters, comfortably pensioned senior officers to the lowest ranked ratings, close-knit community to deliberately separated parolees, the cultivated and educated to the illiterate, the skilled to the humblest servant, they undoubtedly faced different receptions.

Attitudes to the French were complex, always the ‘other’ to British ideas about themselves, they were the traditional enemy, vilified in print, representation shifting over the course of the war from weedy effeminacy to godless blood-thirsty aggressor. But France was also leader of pan-European culture, in science, arts and literature, fashion, style and cuisine. The British upper classes conversed in French, acquiring French was essential to elite careers.

Frenchmen from all groups found employment teaching French or Latin, drawing, music, dancing or fencing. A contemporary archive suggests that their teaching expanded educational opportunities for the less wealthy. Some of the French worked at skilled crafts, even prisoners were allowed weekly markets, though if they undercut local producers their activities were stopped, Abell says that complaints from Portsmouth boot-makers put paid to the enterprise of parolees in

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99 Colley, Britons p250; McLeod p185
100 Colley Britons p165, Knight p xxxi
101 Daly p377
the neighbourhood. The economies of towns that hosted the French were clearly boosted by their rents and consumption, and for some residents, the cultural life of the towns was much enriched.

Contemporary descriptions of the interactions of hosts and incomers come chiefly from paroled officers’ letters and autobiographies. They are inconsistent, two very negative and questionable versions were written by parolees in Bishop’s Waltham. The artist Garneray claimed that prisoners were charged exorbitant rents for hovels in a small tumbledown ‘village’. Biddell’s research shows that he shared a house with five other officers and rented an attic for his studio. There seems to have been a market for lurid accounts in France after the defeat. And all the accounts are markedly class based, the most senior officers imported funds, secured more generous conditions and lived very well. Particularly later in the wars local gentry enjoyed the presence of the officers and their theatrical performances, concerts and dinners, though friction could follow British celebrations of victories or French marking of Napoleonic occasions. Cultural and social norms differed however, Latham refers to the French as ‘that frivolous nation’, and the French prided themselves on maintaining their spirits in the face of adversity. In particular they found British Sundays very dull, with all pleasurable activities causing offence, contributing to what a visitor described as

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103 Daly p377, Abell p396
105 Biddell, p43
106 Daly p377
107 DRO 104/41 letter 11 December 1798: Abell p301
Janet Marie Cairney

British ‘gloomy taciturnity’. Nevertheless paroled officers wrote letters home about friendships, flirtations and hospitality, and according to Abell, citizens felt ‘orphaned’ when their paroled officers were abruptly moved.

The reception of those of lower status was undoubtedly very different. There are no accounts from refugees who had only their unskilled labour to sell, and whose employment was likely to have caused resentment, though as has been seen, some chose to remain living and working in Britain rather than return home. Jensen notes that contact with the French had always been familiar along the south coast, and cross-channel trade the norm, some of it continuing illegally during the war. Nevertheless, accounts relate instances of insult and aggression from ‘the lower orders’ particularly in rural areas. It is not easy to evaluate either the veracity or the relative numbers of reports. Given the extent and duration of the French presence it could be argued that actual violence was rare. Mills writes that even in Jersey, where the overwhelming French influx and resultant food crisis initially made martial law essential to prevent wholesale violence, there was only one case of insolence to an émigré among a Calvinist ‘viscerally anti-Catholic’ population between 1796 and 1815. Snell describes rural xenophobia as commonplace, and aggression a risk for any outsider,

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109 Abell p426

110 Oskar Cox Jensen , Napoleon and British Song 1797-1822 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) p54

111 Public Advertiser 17 September 1792, Daly, p378/9

112 Mills, p111
itinerant Methodist preachers perhaps, or, indeed, simply men from another parish.\textsuperscript{113}

Physical aggression is not the best measure of prejudice or antipathy however. During the civil unrest during the bread crisis of 1800, posters threatening suspected profiteers appeared in Romsey, among which one read:

‘By the unanimous voice of five hundred upwards the magistrates of Romsey are requested to clear the town and its vicinity of all French immediately and any persons harbouring them in their houses must take the consequences. They have been a nuisance too long.’\textsuperscript{114}

Scant evidence perhaps, but contemporary experience encourages the assumption that such sentiments were commonplace and the French presence resented, particularly by those who gained nothing but higher rents and prices.

In this respect alone the war was not a distant reality, but part of daily lived experience, challenging any conception of these towns as quiet insular backwaters immune from the great tides of history. The next chapter examines another aspect of that reality, the militarisation of civilian men.

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\textsuperscript{113} K.D.M Snell,‘The culture of local xenophobia’ \textit{Social History} 28:1 (2003)
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\textsuperscript{114} TNA HO42/51/9 fff20B
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Chapter 4
The Volunteers

The sheer scale of the wars and fears of invasion and insurgency, in Linda Colley’s words, ‘compelled a reluctant and fundamentally oligarchic Government to recruit the nation in an unprecedented fashion’; by 1804 there were 400,000 civilian men in Britain who had volunteered to undergo military training.¹ This chapter presents the documentary evidence of volunteering in the study area in the different phases of the wars, what the evidence suggests about social context, what can be identified of the class status of the volunteers, and the extent to which it can support notions of loyalty, patriotism and an overarching national British identity.

1794 The Yeomanry

Fear of insurrection dominated policy early in the war, and the first volunteer legislation in 1794 appealed for gentlemen of property to organise themselves into self-financed cavalry corps under the authority of county Lords Lieutenant. Their loyalty was beyond question, the cost to the state modest. The original document drawn up from a meeting of gentlemen, yeomen and farmers in April 1794 in the north of Hampshire records their resolve to form a corps to act within the county or in the adjacent counties for the suppression of riots and

Janet Marie Cairney

tumults. In the event of invasion they pledged to place themselves under military command and serve anywhere in the kingdom, provided that one quarter remained in their own county. This was generous, other 1794 yeoman corps stipulated higher proportions remaining at home, or declined service outside their county. From the start, gentlemen offered to serve upon their own terms, and in their own interests. The same tabulation reproduced by Dr Latham that provided the number of French men shows that in April 1798, seventeen men in the Romsey Infra and Extra parishes were either Yeomanry volunteers or officers in the militia.

1798 Defence of the Realm Questionnaires

By early 1798, French invasion plans were well known. Latham rarely wrote about the war, but in February, confessed his concern. Anxiety about the imminent threat was surely common throughout communities. In two English counties the Lords Lieutenant instituted surveys to determine the resources available for resistance, and legislation extended that initiative to the whole country. It was an extraordinarily ambitious project, seven pre-printed questionnaires with multiple columns in each, counting men of fighting age; those willing to serve and their available equipment; those unable to remove

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2 Hampshire Record Office (HRO) 38M49/7/101 Original Roll of Volunteer Cavalry


4 British Library Add MSS26776 Notes for a History of Romsey Volume 3, p47

5 Defence of the Realm Act 38 Geo III c27
themselves; names and resources of the nobility and gentry, livestock, food stores, wagons and carts, corn mills; millers and bakers and their capacity. Had the responses survived they would have provided historians with riches indeed. By chance the returns for some mostly northern Hampshire parishes were discovered among tax records. For this study, the important document is Schedule C, which asked for the numbers of fit men aged between fifteen and sixty who were prepared to fight, or to work in various capacities in support of the military.  

It is clear that the forms were a challenge to parishes, and not well understood, in some no-one volunteered to act as a pioneer, for example, but the numbers of specified tools that might be of use to pioneers were dutifully counted and entered. Colley describes the returns as ‘completed by harassed constables or schoolmasters, checked by clergymen, parochial vestries and deputy lieutenants’. It is striking how diverse the responses are, just six of the eighty-four forms indicate that all the fit men were prepared to fight or work, and over half of the forms are either blank or nil returns. Where men were willing, proportions vary between 0.6% and 89.7%. Parish sizes vary widely, but there appears to be no correlation between parish size and willingness. The returns for the most urban Portsmouth and Portsea parishes are incomplete, preventing valid urban/rural comparisons, and returns do not allow comparisons between towns housing French refugees or not, or those near the coast or further inland.

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6 HRO Q22/1/2/5/ 1-84 Returns Defence of the Realm Act

What does emerge however is independence of mind, respondents were happy to write 'none are willing to serve', two wrote over their form that they did not consider questioning appropriate but had confidence that everyone would do their duty if the need arose, others said men would serve but only in their own parish, or only if paid. The popular ideology of Britons’ unique freedom could encourage intransigent independence rather than compliant loyalty.

The 1798 Volunteers

The same legislation ordered Lords Lieutenant to invite civilian men to form volunteer associations and undertake military training. In Romsey, a meeting on the 17 April resolved to form a corps of infantry to serve the town and neighbourhood in case of invasion or domestic riot, and by June 1798, Latham wrote proudly that Romsey had two companies of fifty men. This represents 11% of the men of suitable age, as reported in Schedule A. Corps were locally self-financing, but weaponry and a modest daily training allowance were provided by the government, consequently numbers were controlled and approval required. Interestingly, Latham suggested to his friend that his local volunteers had not been approved because of the political affiliations, presumably Whig, of the leading men rather than because of a failure to promise action outside the parish, since the Romsey corps had not promised that either. Their meeting had resolved to defend the parishes of Romsey and

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8 Derbyshire Record Office (DRO)6104/40 letter 9 June 1798
9 DRO6104/40 letter 28 June 1798
Janet Marie Cairney

Romsey Extra, ‘beyond the limits of which we shall not be subject to any military duty.’

As was common among the 1798 corps, Romsey officers were elected by all members. The senior commander, Captain Seward, had been a military officer in the East India Company; the second company was led by John Latham junior, who according to his father had ‘learned the manual’ at his school, and was elected, nem con.

Analysis by name of the volunteers list against Romsey’s entry in the Universal Directory of Trade, Commerce and Manufacture of 1798 is revealing of the social status of these volunteers. 156 professional and business men chose to be listed in the Universal Directory, 40% of them joined the volunteers. Of the ninety-four men listed in the Minute Book, twenty-eight can be fully identified from the Directory list, and a further twenty-seven share a surname with Directory listed men. Of the remainder, nine were bandmen, employed and fully equipped by the corps. It was decided that their management committee should consist of those who had paid most tax in the previous year, which follows contemporary practice for election to the vestry.

10 King Johns House (KJH) Minute Book of the Romsey Volunteers April 1798

11 KJH Minute Book p5


13 The Universal Directory of Trade, Commerce & Manufactures 1798

14 KJH Minute Book p7

unidentified corps members served on the committee, and presumably some at least of the remaining thirty came from farming, rentier or unlisted trade families. Only four men had all their uniform provided by subscription. If some members were artisans, they were a minority, and the Romsey corps certainly does not appear during this period to support Colley’s ‘enlistment of working men’, or Gee’s contention of a predominance of artisans, skilled workmen and small shopkeepers.16

Both the Minute Book and Latham’s letters use the word ‘tradesmen’, Latham wrote ‘When the various tradesmen entered as volunteers they little thought that anything more was to be done than to display their dress and gallant the ladies’ but, he continued, many in Winchester, Romsey and Salisbury now knew they would be ruined if things went badly, implying perhaps that they owned businesses and had debts, rather than that they possessed artisanal skills as in today’s usage of the term17. Latham junior is listed in the Directory as a brewer, but his eventual bankruptcy in 1817 revealed that as well as a brewery he had acquired a number of inns and alehouses throughout the region and was hugely indebted.18 None of the men listed as ‘grocers’ in the Directory were volunteers, the members were those listed as Grocer/Tea Merchant and Grocer/Brandy Merchant, as were men with composite trade description; maltster and coal-merchant, or cabinet maker/auctioneer are examples. It will have been younger men who volunteered for military training, perhaps ambitious entrepreneurial

16 Colley Britons p291; Gee, Austin, The British Volunteer Movement 1703-1807 unpublished PhD thesis (University of Oxford,) pxiv
17 DRO6104/40 letter 23 April 1978
men. With strong vertical connections, and preferring to conduct business in back rooms of inns rather than in the formal regulated Market House; such men were both agents of, and the product of, urban development. Discussing ideas about urban renaissance, Barry critiques theories of the spread of urbane polite behaviour and stresses the civic value of the burgeoning and varied associations of late eighteenth century urban life, as emollients of competitive friction and networking opportunities for men who shared a civic identity and were proud of the their mercantile values. Volunteering exempted men from the militia ballot, but for the affluent men who provided their own uniforms insuring themselves or paying for a substitute may well have been the cheaper option, and was commonplace; most militiamen were substitutes and Colley claims, poor illiterate men. The 1798 Romsey evidence strongly suggests that men joined the volunteers for social and economic reasons.

Uniforms were important to all the volunteer corps, and the Romsey Minute Book reflects this; the committee was much occupied in choosing the design, sharing the orders among the town’s tailors, and determining which members should have items provided from subscriptions. Latham senior describes the uniform as scarlet faced with black velvet, with little gold ornaments on the

21 Colley Britons p293
22 KJH Minute Book
epaulettes, and a cap with a red tipped white feather.\textsuperscript{23} Though easily mocked, and target for caricaturists, the neck stocks and padded tailoring were important for bodily deportment, in Colley’s words they ‘enhanced the physical impressiveness of the wearer however inadequate he might be.\textsuperscript{24} Infantry training was aimed at close order combat; drill manual exercises developed precise coordinated manoeuvres, no doubt creating a strong sense of gendered muscular bonding.\textsuperscript{25}

The brightly coloured uniforms, music and flags were spectacular. Romsey raised forty guineas to buy silk colours for their corps.\textsuperscript{26} Latham described displays in celebration of royal occasions or victories, and in combined reviews with the yeoman cavalry and army units quartered in or near the town, all attracting ‘a great concourse’, all followed by corps dinners and hospitality at ‘our head inn’, ‘mirth and hilarity’.\textsuperscript{27} The volunteers added to wartime economic stimulus by purchasing uniforms, patronising local hostelries, paying local landowners for drill grounds, and attracting visitors to the town. But these exciting occasions, accompanied by bell ringing, fireworks and \textit{feu de joie} also expressed the status of the community, and its importance and connections in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23} DRO 6104/40 letter 9 June 1798
\item \textsuperscript{24} Colley, \textit{Britons} p185
\item \textsuperscript{25} Kevin Linch and Matthew McCormack, ‘Defining Soldiers: Britain’s Military, c1749-1815’, \textit{War in History} 20:2(2013) p157
\item \textsuperscript{26} DRO 6104/40 letter 29 March 1799
\item \textsuperscript{27} DRO 6104/40 letters October 7 1798, May 27 1799, June 9 1799,
\end{itemize}
the wider region. It could not do other than heighten civic pride and the competitiveness that spurred urban improvement.28

Church parades were part of volunteer ritual, the sermons sometimes printed and sold.29 They articulated the loyalist message, divinely ordained social order, inestimable benefits of the Anglican church and constitutional monarchy, the unique freedom of the British people, the benign, merciful, equitable system of justice, in a county in which in April of that year a young man had been jailed for three years for reciting a republican verse.30 At least one clergyman was conscious that he was providing what was expected, ‘A rhapsody delivered with a violence as suiting the ignorance and blunted perception of my auditors.’ 31 Arguably, sermons and government propaganda both worked best if they told people what they wanted to believe. Stirring occasions and recital of British freedom and superiority were attractive to the whole community, with colour, music, festive mood, hatred of the enemy, sentimentalised reverence for the King, pride in their town, all widely appealing, Latham senior wrote that he had been touched by a Thanksgiving Day manifestation of universal loyalty, including even from the French immigrants.32


29 eg HRO 18M84/Z2/35 Discourse preached before Fawley Volunteers


31 cited in Kennedy, Catriona, Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: Military and Civilian Experience in Britain and Ireland (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) p141

32 DRO 6104/40 letter 2 December 1798
Janet Marie Cairney

The lessons of the sermons were learned from earliest childhood. This was a time of rapid population growth and Colley estimates that in 1826, 60% of the English population was under 24. Gleadle has studied autobiographies that look back to childhoods in the war period. She relays one man’s somewhat improbable claim that as a child he was chosen to command a ‘regiment’ of 100 boys, but perhaps it has an element of truth, because another story describes how the boys of the neighbourhood had played soldiers, with the sons of farmers and tradesmen assuming rank and determining which of the boys played the ‘radicals’. Learned early, Dickinson argues that most people did believe that men with the greatest stake were most fitted to assume responsibility. Rowlandson’s 1792 propaganda etching (below) lists ‘equality’ as one of the ills that had befallen the French.

![The Contrast 1792 Engraving British Library Collection](image)

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33 Colley ‘Whose Nation?’ p103


Janet Marie Cairney

Ladies had a role to play, highly gendered but not silent; they presented the corps’ colours at annual ceremonies, and delivered speeches on those occasions. Gentlewomen were among the subscribers to the French refugee charities and to the volunteers, and undertook suitably feminine charitable endeavours. A Cruickshank print (below) suggests that a certain discomfort

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Isaac Cruikshank Etching British Museum Collection

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36 David Clammer, ‘Dorset's Volunteer Infantry 1794-1805’ Journal for Army Historical Research 89 (Spring 2011) p17

37 Catriona Kennedy Bayonets across the Hedges: Civilian Diaries and the War at Home, 1793-1815 in War Memories: The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in Modern European Culture eds Alan Forrest et al (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) p80
Janet Marie Cairney

was felt about this female participation, and about the attraction to ladies of watching the uniformed men at their exercises. Female admiration and ‘scarlet fever’ were a useful spur to recruitment however, as were appeals to the manly protection of wives and daughters.

If the volunteer movement was intended as a tool of social control, in the event the Romsey corps was found wanting. Recurrent poor harvests led to shortages and escalating prices for bread, the staple food of the mass of people. 1800 and 1801 were years of famine and widespread riot. For Thompson, working people were protesting about the replacement of an historic moral economy by rampant capitalism. Bohstedt agrees the crowd’s outrage was moral, not in his view political or theoretical, but aimed at those they suspected of profiteering. Latham junior, by then in his mayoral year, felt it necessary in September 1800 to write twice to the Home Secretary to request military support to deal with marauding gangs who were breaking bakers’ windows and threatening much larger incursions from the wider area. The mounted Yeomanry were too few and too dispersed, the town volunteers had undertaken nightly patrols, and ‘every praise was due’, but they ‘were not of

38 Louise Carter , ‘Scarlet Fever: Female Enthusiasm for Men in Uniform, 1780-1815’ in Britain’s Soldiers : Rethinking War and Society, 1715-1812 eds Kevin Linch & Matthew McCormack ( Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014) p157
39 Carter p158
40 Michael Turner,‘Malthus and the Corn Crisis’ in Michael Turner and Chris Cunnen (eds) Malthus and his Times (New York, Palgrave Macmillian,1986)
themselves sufficiently strong without the aid of the military.’ He enclosed transcripts of the anonymous warnings posted in the town. Lines from one, in doggerel verse, ran ‘We don’t care for your volunteers, That won’t put us in any fears’. Elsewhere in the country protesters attacked volunteers that they considered complicit in protecting shopkeepers, and in some cases volunteers joined forces with the rioters. The belief that individuals were taking advantage of the shortage was not confined to mobs, deprecating sermons were preached, and landowners threatened any of their tenants found hoarding grain. It is probable that what the armed and trained Romsey volunteers lacked was any will to fire on the hungry.

Defending the Realm 1803

Some authors judge the 1798 volunteer legislation as to some extent intentional political propaganda, though Cookson describes governmental compromise and uncertainty and a movement developing under its own impetus. When peace was declared the volunteers were promptly disbanded, but on the resumption of the war, with preparations known to be under way for landing Napoleon’s

43 TNA HO42/49/7 ff26-28, HO42/51/9 f20, letters re disorder


45 Hampshire Chronicle 8 September 1800; Turner p125; John Rule, Albion’s People: English Society 1714-1815 (New York, Longmans,1992)

200,000 strong Armée d’Angleterre, new legislation was swiftly enacted. This time however the scope for local self-determination was curtailed, a national hierarchical command structure created, officers and inspectors appointed, not elected. Command of cavalry corps carried an attractive social cachet for the well-born, their patriotism did not run to eagerness to command the infantry corps for which it was more difficult to find men of the birth and stature thought necessary to secure respect. The Southampton corps was led by Josiah Jackson, a West Indian planter who had purchased the prestigious Bellevue estate on his retirement.

These commissions were no sinecure, frequent detailed reports were demanded, treats and extras for the men expected, commanders often paid out personally in advance of Government allowances. Their men were not under military discipline, and were entitled to resign. The Winchester muster lists showed that they did so, junior officers particularly, rather more so in one Captain’s company than the other. In Portsmouth the choice of commander was contentious and to put an end to factional squabbling Lord Lieutenant Bolton appointed an army officer, who managed to offend everyone. Linch has

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50 Cookson Context p888

51 HRO Q30/3/50 Names of Volunteer Officers
identified over 100 items of correspondence arising from the quarrels, resignations and eventual disbandment of the corps. Civic factional infighting was not unusual. In his preface to the Winchester entry in the *Universal Register* the author sniped at the factional interests of the noble parliamentary electors, most not residents, whose rivalry ‘allowed no place for principles’. In Southampton disagreement over urban development between the corporation and ‘Gentleman’s Party’ led to what became known as ‘The Civil War of Southampton’. In some cases the volunteer corps could exacerbate friction, with local concerns more compelling than the defence of the nation.

Recruitment to the 1803 volunteers differed from that of 1798. For Romsey the 1803 muster list shows 108 men, of whom, remarkably, just thirteen had been volunteers in 1798, and three of those were employed bandmen. Of the remainder, most had had items of uniforms supplied in 1798, three had achieved promotion to corporal or sergeant, the others were privates, none identifiable with the tradesmen of the *Universal Register*.

The Winchester records support Cookson’s description of 1803 volunteer committee structures balancing democracy and hierarchy. The Winchester muster lists carefully record who did and did not supply their own uniforms,

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54 TNA WO13/3466ff20a-20b Muster Books and Pay lists

55 Cookson Context p889

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Janet Marie Cairney
down to noting the man who had failed to pay his tailor, in order to monitor their
rule that rotating committee membership consist of four men who supplied their
own uniforms, three who did not, with any decision requiring the presence of an
officer. Of the 100 men listed, fifty-six had uniforms supplied. This evidence
does suggest a different social status in the 1803 volunteers than those of 1798.
But the muster lists also shows ages and marital status, unsurprisingly, a high
proportion were young single men, including twenty-nine aged under twenty,
who would have been young boys when the wars started.\textsuperscript{57} That young men of
all classes who had grown up in a militarised society wished to join when old
enough, to wear smart uniform and earn some status and a small supplement to
their income is hardly surprising and not necessarily indicative of very great
loyalism.

Volunteer overall numbers were determined by government controls. Senior
officers were warned in footnotes on pre-printed forms that any claim to daily
allowances above their approved complement would not be met. An 1803
ledger recording the Hampshire defence forces gives a snapshot picture
throughout the county for parishes within hundreds, suggesting that the
increase in Hampshire volunteer numbers arose largely because approval was
given for small corps in rural areas, which could be overseen by a hierarchical
inspection and organisational structure that had not been put in place in 1798.\textsuperscript{58}
Determining the class composition of the corps remains a challenge. According
to Colley the kind of community in which volunteers lived was the factor that

\begin{footnotes}
\item[57] TNA WO13/4368 Winchester muster list
\item[58] HRO 8M62/28 Register of Forces
\end{footnotes}
Janet Marie Cairney

mattered most, rather than class. Studies based on volunteering in London, for which plentiful evidence is available, or in the large industrial cities, cannot be taken as valid for the whole country, with some areas facing a different risk from invasion, and where differing social dynamics were in play. There is enough evidence for the development of the study area corps of 1794-1801 and 1803-13 to show them as strongly embedded in local social relations, even if it is difficult to define those fully. And with an army of 200,000 poised across the channel, led by the hated and vilified Napoleon, whatever their class or political opinion, men did respond to the call to arms.

Nevertheless, Emsley suggests that equating volunteering with patriotism is problematic and conditional, and Eastwood writes ‘the spirit of patriotism harnessed by the volunteers was a delicate flower requiring the most careful nurturing’ and that it was ‘an enthusiasm which like all enthusiasms, a passion eventually spent’. The government preferred to transfer willing men into the militias rather than to continue funding volunteers of very questionable effectiveness, and after 1807 some volunteer corps were transferred to militia regiments, with up to half of the members resigning. By 1813, the volunteers had all been disbanded. Cookson says that though it was done in the name of efficiency, an aristocratic state put an end to military power that was localised, communal and self-governing to a degree that it found intolerable.

59 Colley Britons p299
60 Philp Introduction p1
62 Cookson Context p878
Janet Marie Cairney

With just a short interval of peace, military training, exercises and parades were part of life in the study area towns, large and small, for almost twenty years. As McCormack notes, volunteering meant that an active participatory citizenship extended further down the social ranks than ever before. It was part of what made an apparently interminable war a constant background fact of life, as did the other facet, the presence of French refugees in the study area. The next chapter reflects on the extent to which the evidence illuminates the social consequences of this protracted experience.

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Chapter 5
Reflections and Conclusions

Both study facets were just part of civilian experience. Communities faced unprecedented recruitment to the armed forces, sometimes by brutal and involuntary means, and mourned loss of life, overall in these wars, as a proportion of world population, heavier than that in World War 1. They experienced the constant movement of militias and English, Scottish, Welsh, Irish and continental army units, and prisoners of war of different nationalities and ethnicities. The cost of the long war was financed by unprecedentedly high levels of taxation.\(^1\) Importantly for this area, agricultural development accelerated, with more enclosures, consolidation of landholdings and increasing cultivation of marginal land.\(^2\) Feeding the armed forces, prisoners of war and the growing population meant higher profits for farmers, higher food prices, new patterns of trade and bulk transportation.\(^3\)

For twenty-two years, a stream of alliances, defeats, occasional victories, threats of invasion, poor weather and harvest failures shaped lives and attitudes. Of the Napoleonic war Whig politician Charles James Fox wrote ‘a picture of a people

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\(^1\) Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain c1790-1840* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995) p110


\(^3\) Roger Knight and Martin Wilcox, *Sustaining the Fleet 1703-1815: War, the British Navy and the Contractor State* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010) p4
so terrified as we have been was never before exhibited.'

From her studies of the letters of ordinary soldiers, and of diaries and commonplace books, Kennedy concludes that people were conscious that they were living in significant times, and had a sense of an acceleration of historical time, particularly at the turn of the century.

McCormack critiqued Colley’s assertion of national loyalty on the basis that it conflated loyalty, which he defined as allegiance to the government and institutional status-quo, and patriotism, or love of country. Though both were undoubtedly felt by many, neither seems to offer a full explanation; the evidence suggests how fearful people felt, of invasion, radicalism or insurgency. It has been argued that the presence of French refugees sharpened belief that Revolutionary thinking had simply plunged France into chaos and internecine and international war. In his memoirs Samuel Romilly, the campaigner for prison reform, he wrote:

‘If any person be desirous of having an adequate idea of the mischievous effects which have been produced in this country by the French Revolution and all its attendant horrors he should attempt some legislative reform on a humane and liberal principle. He will then find not only what a stupid dread of innovation but what a savage spirit has infused the minds of many of his countrymen.’

If for enlightened thinkers, as Mokyr contends, faith in the possibility of progress

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5 Kennedy Bayonets p87


Janet Marie Cairney

was set back and replaced by a growing Malthusianism, for many people conservatism and the defensive embrace of the familiar preached ideology of British elect superiority seem to have offered comfort in difficult and threatening times.⁸

But little evidence exists to prove the opinion of the great mass of labouring people. Both class formation or loyalty are interpretations rooted in twentieth century political and academic thought, perhaps paying too little attention to anxiety, volatility and contradictoriness. However, that workers understood their own vulnerability and were solely and necessarily concerned with their own and their families' self-preservation is beyond doubt. When asked in 1798, they said so, taking full advantage of that vaunted British freedom.⁹ History does not support Marxist theorising that workers initiate revolution or rebellion, that they did not do so during these wars proves neither loyalty or complaisance. Protest did not cease, there were bread riots, ‘crimping’ riots against trickery in recruitment, naval mutinies over conditions and ill-treatment.¹⁰ These were causes that moved people, not class awareness. Attending the burning of effigies of Thomas Paine and participation in, or enjoyment of, local volunteering, toleration of French refugees and troop billeting all suggest that a majority, whatever their class, did share that defensive conservatism which as much as state repression, which Emsley argued lacked sufficient resources, created a

⁸ Mokyr p74
⁹ HRO Q2/1/2/5 1-84; Philp 'Introduction' p7
¹⁰ Philp Introduction p9, p11
Janet Marie Cairney

communal ‘intolerance toward heterodoxy’.¹¹ No evidence of anti-war feeling in the study area has been found, and though demonstrations for peace were reported in cities they were never wide-spread. Repressive legislation and the capacity of the state to enforce it could not have prevented mass protest, as the difficulty in controlling the bread riots demonstrates. What Western saw as the politicisation of all classes through the volunteer movement, might, to the contrary, be de-politicisation, a shying away from political ideas toward ideology and orthodoxy. But these were also years in which church attendance seems to have been falling, suggesting that orthodoxy was not satisfying for everyone.¹² Dinwiddy’s suggestion of passive disaffection in the mass of people cannot be proved but certainly cannot be dismissed.¹³

Both facets of the study along with military service contributed to unprecedented social mixing, between different classes and between strangers. In her study of nineteenth century working class autobiographies, Griffin discusses early lack of working class organisational and speaking skills.¹⁴ Though undocumented, the wartime social mixing and particularly the experience gained through volunteering seems likely to have provided some remedy. Providential interpretations of events during the war, and a consequent growing emphasis on


personal morality and religious observance fed the growth of membership of dissenting chapels, in the study area as elsewhere, the ultimate importance of these for working class organisation has often been described. That organisation would be sorely needed for the hardships of the post-war years, in Thompson’s “pauperised south’, for a rural workforce, in Archer’s word, suffering ‘proletarianisation, pauperisation and disinheritance’. In that respect the war experience can indeed be said to have contributed to the slow process of class formation. Hampshire experienced a high incidence of so-called Swing Riots in the post war years.

What the study evidence does clearly indicate is strength of local identity. The volunteers’ primary aim throughout was the protection of their town, in Romsey Latham always refers to them as ‘our’ volunteers. Kennedy suggests that the increased movement of troops and people eroded small town particularity, but the intrusion of strangers with different accents into their inns and homes, the parading of ‘our’ volunteers, and the town’s particular burden of French refugees or prisoners might all reinforce particularity. As has been seen, for some towns in the study area there were economic and cultural gains from the French, the volunteers and prospering farmers. Supplying the army and navy increased

\[\text{References}\]


18 Catriona Kennedy, Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars Military and Civilian Experience in Britain and Ireland (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) p7
Janet Marie Cairney

trade, ship building expanded in the coastal south, there was no continental competition for tourism, or for industries like Romsey’s paper making. The additional demand for goods and services suggested by the study were part of an expanding and modernising economy, the fiscal-military state a stimulant encouraging innovation, just as happened in twentieth century wars.

Military displays encouraged urban competitiveness, equivalent perhaps to contemporary football teams. Like ongoing agricultural development, it is difficult to estimate the extent to which the pace of urban consumption and development may have escalated because of the wars. It is noticeable however that the Hampshire parole towns are today very attractive towns of wide main streets lined by handsome Regency houses.

What is quite clear from the documentary evidence is the increase in local government workload in order to comply with more central Government intrusion into local life. From 1793, the Aliens Act required local constables to maintain registers of aliens, who then required passports to return to France. Morieux describes this as a turning point, the ‘monopolisation of legitimate means of circulation’, and a transition from a logic of identification based on face-to-face contact to one based on written documents. All foreign mail was identified and

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20 e.g. Southampton Archive Town Clerk’s Box 4/14/7; List of émigrés; DCP19/2, 7, certificates of priests in Winchester; TNA HO69/13/13 original passports signed by Duke pf Portland

Janet Marie Cairney

forwarded to the Secret Office of the Post Office, and, without public scrutiny, the Government ‘observed’ its own population’s correspondence and publications, through justices and magistrates and, cheaply, part-time deputy postmasters. In part responsibility for managing the French and the volunteers devolved on local authorities, as the retention of papers within in civic archives indicates. The work of local magistrates increased and their numbers rose accordingly.22 The county lieutenancies oversaw local ballots for the militia, supervised the volunteers, local magistrates certified exemption from the ballot.23 The increased movement of militias and army units, with wives and families, increased the number of settlement hearings to determine which parish was responsible for poor relief if they fell on hard times.24 Sweet says that quarter sessions and the bench became more formalised institutions meeting with greater regularity and frequency.25

As has been seen, the Defence of the Realm Acts in 1798 and in 1803 required very detailed local data to be returned to the county Lieutenants, and thence to central Government. It is not coincidental that libertarian resistance was breached and the first census taken in 1801 together with retrospective reporting of parish birth, marriage and death records. It was a response to the war and to the food crises, but arguably the inception of what Foucault would eventually call

22 Eastwood Patriotism p167


24 e.g.HRO 97M81/3/ Settlement examinations

Janet Marie Cairney

‘governmentality’, the shaping of behaviour by Government intervention. 26 Latham had access to these numbers as he did the 1798 Defence of the Realm returns, both processes linking the small towns to the national British polity. Once again though his access to this information demonstrates his own connections to the leading men of the town, perhaps as he proudly related to his friend, as an invited member, with his son, of the ‘Assembly of Turnpikians’.27 These remained small towns with very small social elites.

Bureaucratic change is strikingly apparent from the appearance of lists and records; the incomplete, scrappy, poorly written Southampton aliens listings of 1793, or the simple minute book of the Romsey volunteers in 1798, are replaced after 1803 by printed government forms, to be completed and delivered by deadlines, or by ledgers of complex information, and letter books written up by copy clerks.28 When first appointed to command the Winchester volunteers, George Frederick Ricketts signed his full name, but gradually his signature became truncated. The letter book includes a printed reminder for a late return, and in 1807 an error was found in the allowances claimed; Ricketts who had signed off the claim on his honour as an officer and a gentleman promptly resigned, having made good the discrepancy of £3/1s/5d, but then had to write twice to chase up approval of his successor.29

27 DRO letter 20 September 1797
28 Southampton Archive Town Clerk’s Box 4/14/7 List of émigrés, KJH Minute Book of Romsey Volunteers, HRO 182M84W Winchester Volunteers Letter Books 1-3l
29 HRO 182M84W Winchester Volunteers Letter Books 13 November 1807
New business opportunities were created, for example, the agents who managed the parolees for five per cent of the moneys due, and agents who dealt with the complexities of finance and compliance for all the post 1803 volunteer, militia and army units, and the navy. Some of these enterprises continued as ongoing service sector businesses. Agencies were not sinecures, parole agents were required to make monthly returns on standard sized paper that were examined in minute detail, even to the extent of reprimanding poor English. Copy clerks too clearly found employment, the surviving Defence of the Realm returns are fair copies, all the tythingman ‘signatures’ are in regular copperplate script, and monthly volunteer muster listings betray the copy clerk hand. Secretariats grew, if still tiny by modern standards.

30 Abell p293: Knight p398

31 Eastwood Governing p53


33 HRO Q22/1/25/1-84 Returns under Defence of Realm Act
Perhaps not obvious to people at the time, and now under-researched, all these changes arguably compare with a pattern of increased bureaucracy in the twentieth century wars and were then a significant permanent step toward a modern statistically informed bureaucratic government. A transition from the treatment of public office as a personal possession or perquisite to more professional standards of performance was a consequence of the war, but for Briggs, also part of a socially complex process by which a more unified ruling class emerged from the war years.\textsuperscript{34}

The evidence does, if imperfectly, allow theories to be formulated to describe the economic consequences and some of the social consequences for the towns in this long period of war. But it is revealing of local governmental organisation and the experience of the educated elites and middle classes. It does not reflect the whole social spectrum to the same degree. Understanding the experiences and opinions of the great majority in this period remains challenging. Men, women and children of the labouring classes did not commit their thoughts and experiences to writing. What is inferred from the evidence remains conjectural, but this local study has perhaps, if nothing else, highlighted the complexity and regional variability that can be lost in broader brush national scale theories and illustrated the extent to which the war impinged on ordinary people’s lives. In the absence of documentary evidence, its inferences have sometimes drawn on ideas from the contemporary world and the twentieth century wars, not historically ideal of course, but an acknowledgement of the experience of twenty-two years of world war.

What emphatically does not compare with twentieth century wars is lack of memorialisation. Monuments were created for great heroes, Nelson most notably, and memorials mark the many dead prisoners of war, French and other nationalities, a slur on Britain’s reputation. But twentieth century universal local memorialisation is a mark of increased democratisation and is absent in Britain for the warfare of 1793 to 1815. Kennedy says that contemporary emphasis focused on stories of tragic aristocrats, and later literature took up that theme, hardly reflecting the sheer magnitude of suffering and loss. It is thus unsurprising that home civilian experience during the wars is little known and omitted from local histories for the general reader, though the improbability of little or no effect would seem obvious. The penalty is not just bland and complacent historical writing, but more importantly, a discouragement of local research which might seek out more of the scattered documentary evidence to help answer some of the questions. That the study of this period often raises reflections on today’s world, as it did for Colley, seems further justification for that research.

35 in Penicuik, Dartmoor, Leek, Medway, Chatham, Norman Cross
36 Kennedy Bayonets p88
37 Colley Britons pp xxviii-xxxii
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