



French Prisoners of War and Émigrés

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During the Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815 - this includes the War of the First Coalition 1793-97 and Napoleonic Wars themselves 1799 – 1815) prisoners of war suffered various fates. While enlisted soldiers were often confined in horrific conditions, **officers were able to secure parole** by providing their word of honour in writing that they would not escape. Parole allowed them to live relatively normal lives in lodgings with civilian families in certain towns around the country of which Tiverton was one. In some areas French prisoners earned extra money by drawing or teaching French classes. There were even dramatic troupes and performances. There are plenty of stories of French soldiers socialising and even attending parties with the local British gentry.

There were possibly 25,000 French POWs in Britain during these years – not all at the same time. There were peace treaties then return of hostilities etc. Some prisoners were returned to France in exchange for British prisoners. Most kept to their word not to escape but possibly 1,000 Pows escaped overall throughout the country.

First prisoners seem to have arrived in Tiverton in 1797. MS p195 In 1797 William Jenkins, the Mayor of Tiverton received a letter to say that French prisoners of war held at Ashburton were to be moved to Tiverton. Accordingly 176 Frenchmen arrived in September and from here until the end of 1798, 329 passed through the town. The first group left Tiverton at the beginning of December for Bristol, shortly to be replaced by others.

Overall over 1000 POWs passed through Tiverton. Register of French POWs released on parole , Ashburton, Bodmin, Callington and Tiverton. There are over 1000 entries for Tiverton.

They seem to have **integrated into the life of the town**. The first group of 1797 helped in one of Tiverton's fires. MS - their help was greatly appreciated when fire broke out on November 24th 1797. Although 2 houses were consumed the incident could have been much worse if not for the aid given by the prisoners. The Mayor offered them 15 guineas to repair their damaged clothes but they refused.

Anglo-French Encounters; The Integration of French Prisoners of War and Emigres into British Society 1789-1815 Katherine Stevens MA by Research Kingston University 2017 p44

Local people and parolees would sometimes build up a rapport. One parolee in Tiverton described his experience as “monotonous” but pleasant enough, with the locals being “generally kindly disposed” towards parolees. He claimed that the sympathy and camaraderie between parolees and the town’s inhabitants extended to some locals offering to help prisoners escape, which some did, but that others were conflicted after giving their word of honour to adhere to the regulations.

Lieutenant Gicquel des Touches described Tiverton as ' A pleasant little town, but which struck me as particularly monotonous....' Gicquel was at Tiverton six years and was then exchanged.

Saint Peters register records the burial of two of them and the baptism of James Antoine, the son of Jean-Baptiste and Louisa Harriett Dupont.

The house known as Rosebank in Bartows Causeway, Tiverton is said to have been built by French prisoners of war during the Napoleonic Wars.

However some did try to escape in later years. MS History of Blundell's p94

The French POWs billeted in Tiverton gave some cause for concern in 1812. From 1797 when the first of the arrived, they had always been very well behaved and had never attempted to abscond. Indeed they had given their word their 'parole' and were generally allowed to roam wherever they liked in the town, even as far as Bolham. However in April 1812, eighteen broke their parole. Fourteen of them fled the town and were not recaptured, but 4 were discovered in the School



House Meadow, beside the Lowman, behind the school. (The Star newspaper, London has the names and descriptions of 9 of them - February 11 1812 - under the title 'Breach of Parole of Honour' with a reward of 10 guineas for the recapture of each of them and a reward of 20 guineas for conviction of any British subject aiding them.)

While the French POWs were in Tiverton it seems that a **Freemasons' Lodge**, 'Enfants de Mars', was opened about 1810. (is Mars – french March or is it that they were captured by HMS Mars) In the book '*Prisoners of War in Britain 1756 to 1815; A record of their lives, their romance and their suffering.*' Francis Abell 1914, he says that the first and only master of this lodge was Alexander de la Motte, afterwards Languages Master at Blundell's School. The Masons met in a room in Frog Street, now Castle Street, until, two of the officers on parole in the town escaping, the authorities prohibited the meetings. The Tyler of the Lodge, Rivron by name, remained in Tiverton after peace was made, and for many years worked as a slipper-maker. He had been an officer's servant.

John Rivron

Tyler of a Freemason's Lodge is an officer of the lodge – they have various duties including sitting outside to ensure only those duly qualified are allowed to enter the lodge room.
Slipper maker is a shoe maker.

John Rivron had been a servant (possibly Captain's servant) on board the French ship Le Rhin, captained by Michel-Jean-Andre Chesneau which had been captured of Rochefort on 28th July 1806 by HMS Mars. The crew had been taken first of all to Plymouth and then sent to Tiverton.

John Rivron stayed in Tiverton after the end of the war and married Mary Marshall (born in Alphington) on 19th March 1815 in Tiverton.
In the 1841 census he is given as being aged 55, born in 1786 and his birth country is recorded as 'Foreign'. The family are living in Gold Street.
Mary is aged 50, born 1786. They have children:
John aged 15 born 1826
Isabella aged 15 born 1826
David aged 13 born 1828
Dominique aged 12 born 1829

Also living with them are William Western aged 25, a shoemaker, Mary Ann Western aged 20, Maria Bidgood aged 15 and Thomas Wyatt aged 20, a shoemaker.

In 1844 Pigot and Co's Directory of Devonshire he is recorded as being a Boot and Shoe Maker and living in Gold Street.

Daughter Isabella married John Lutton Rodier (born 1825 in Exeter – possibly Topsham) on 5 December 1848 in Langham Westminster. (John's father was James Paillet Rodier – both Rodier and Paillet are old French names, though James was born in Devon in 1791.)
Son, David Rivron a shoemaker, married Mary Ann Kerslake a slipper binder on 15 April 1862 in St Peter's Tiverton. They had several children and moved to Exeter. David died in 1892.
Dominique Rivron joined the Royal Artillery of the British Army, aged 18 in April 1846. He became a Battery Quarter Master Sergeant and served in the Cape of Good Hope and Turkey. He left in 1867 after 21 years of exemplary service.



An entry in the Devon County Lunatic asylum has John Rivron being admitted on July 9th 1857 age 74 and death in 1858. Death recorded as being in parish of St Thomas Exeter.

Alexander de la Motte - later shortened to Lamotte) c 1769- 1836

Alexander de la Motte has always been put forward in books about the history of Tiverton as a POW who stayed here after the war. It now appears he was not a POW but a French emigre. In the years following the French Revolution of 1789, a large number of Frenchmen fled France and took refuge abroad. Nearly 1% of the French population left, including many members of the aristocracy. A significant number, particularly from Normandy and north west France came to Britain. (In fact Britain gave them some financial assistance.)

Prisoners of War in Britain 1756 to 1815 Francis Abell Oxford University Press 1914

After the establishment of Peace in 1815, some, rather than return to France, remained. Among these was M. Alexandre de la Motte, who lived at Tiverton, acquired property there, and gained much respect as French master at Blundell's School.'

MS p202 Alexandre de la Motte (later shortened to Lamotte) had found employment as a teacher of French at Blundell's School, and appears in the Land Tax Assessment as the owner of a house on the north side of Gold Street.

But he does not appear in POW records. There is an A la Motte in Prisoner of War records as on a prison ship in 1798 but it seems unlikely this was the person who lived in Tiverton.

Register of French POWS

A la Motte French 2nd Lieut

Prison ship or camp – Vryheid prison ship

Received into custody Feb 15 1798

French prisoners in Tiverton

There are 51 such pages (as below) of French POWs released on parole in Tiverton - 1012 entries.

The only one with de la Motte/Lamotte name or similar is

Gabriel Motte, Captain, (p39) received from Mill Prison Plymouth 22 December 1798 and released on parole to France.

Prison camp or ship	Country	Conflict					
Jean	Abe	—	1797	Tiverton	England	Napoleonic Wars	View transcript. View image.
J	Adelue	—	1803	Tiverton	England	Napoleonic Wars	View transcript. View image.
Fs Ls	Aillerin	—	1803	Tiverton	England	Napoleonic Wars	View transcript. View image.

*Telling our stories
Finding our roots*

M	Aldercaureere	—	1807	Tiverton	England	Napoleonic Wars	View transcript. View image.
Fras	Allard	—	1808	Tiverton	England	Napoleonic Wars	View transcript. View image.
Gabriel	Allemant	—	1805	Tiverton	England	Napoleonic Wars	View transcript. View image.
Joseph	Allemes	—	1805	Tiverton	England	Napoleonic Wars	View transcript. View image.
Charles	Alliom	—	1804	Tiverton	England	Napoleonic Wars	View transcript. View image.
J Marie	Allion	—	1797	Tiverton	England	Napoleonic Wars	View transcript. View image.
Robert	Alliou	—	1797	Tiverton	England	Napoleonic Wars	View transcript. View image.
Jean	Alotte	—	1798	Tiverton	England	Napoleonic Wars	View transcript. View image.
Chs	Amelin	—	1803	Tiverton	England	Napoleonic Wars	View transcript. View image.
Etienne	Amette	—	1805	Tiverton	England	Napoleonic Wars	View transcript. View image.
Fras M L	Amour	—	1811	Tiverton	England	Napoleonic Wars	View transcript. View image.
Josh Louis	Andouard	—	1798	Tiverton	England	Napoleonic Wars	View transcript. View image.
A	Andrieux	—	1808	Tiverton	England	Napoleonic Wars	View transcript. View image.
Olimpe L	Ange	—	1808	Tiverton	England	Napoleonic Wars	View transcript. View image.
Vt S	Anglois	—	1808	Tiverton	England	Napoleonic Wars	View transcript. View image.
Lambt	Annies	—	1811	Tiverton	England	Napoleonic Wars	View transcript.



[View image.](#)

Pierre Antoine — 1805 Tiverton England Napoleonic Wars

From this and other information it seems that he was an emigre not a POW.

There is a marriage certificate for Alexander Galeye La Motte of Halberton and **Lousie Laroche** of Halberton 17 April 1805.

Louise Laroche was married to John Laroche who was a large landowner in Halberton. Records of 1760 state that John Laroche of St James, Westminster owned amongst other properties, 'rectory or parsonage of Halberton. Captain Christopher Laroche (son?) is recorded as an extremely large landowner in Halberton. Henry Laroche (son?) was a Deputy Lieutenant of Devon.

In 1799 Louise Laroche applied for British citizenship (Application for Naturalization and Denization). At the time most of the applicants emphasized their measure of existing integration and assimilation into society and of these most cited marriage or longevity of residence. Arguments for French petitions for citizenship aimed to show a degree of social and cultural integration. In January 1799 Louise stated that she 'was born out of your Majesty's allegiance but she hath been married to your Majesty's faithful subject John Laroche.....and hath resided with him in your Majesty's Dominions for upwards of Forty Years last past.' She went on to state 'that your petitioner's husband is possessed of considerable freehold property and your practitioner is desirous to be enabled to inherit the same in case she shall survive him'.

John Laroche died in 1802. Not known if she was granted citizenship.

Her will is dated 19(?) February 1805 and she is described as being a widow. In this -which is three pages long which presumably indicates she had many possessions to dispose of – she calls Alexander Lamotte 'my good friend' and leaves him a considerable amount of money. He is also one of her executors. She must have died very soon after the marriage as there is a probate date for Louise Laroche 11 May 1805.

Some years later Alexander Lamotte married Mary Leach (1796-1866) 24/25 January 1813 at St Marylebone, Westminster. Mary Lamotte's place of birth in future censuses is given as Somerset and date of birth as 1796. (There is a baptism of a Mary Leach on 15 March 1796 in Yeovil, Somerset.)

They may have married in St Marylebone because the largest community of French emigres settled in London and by 1801 London's West End and the parish of St Marylebone were populated with a substantial number of French political refugees. Marylebone was where the emigres of the 'bon ton' – the better sort – were drawn. They socialised in the Rose of Normandy.

Alexander and Mary Lamotte had 7 children.

Matthew 1814-1851 born Tiverton

Louisa 1816-1889 born Exeter

Henrietta 1818-1874 born in France, British subject

Alexander 1819-1864 Born Tiverton

Thomas 1821-1874 born Tiverton

Charles 1824-1873 born Tiverton

and a child who died - Mary 1821-22 born Tiverton



The four boys were educated at Blundell's School
Register of Blundell's School

1891. Matthew Gallye Lamotte, ii, son of Mr. Alex Lamotte, Tiverton, Jan. 31, 1825 - June 29, 1832; elected to a Sidney Scholarship, June 29, 1832.

2045. Alexander Gallye Lamotte, ii, son of Mr Alexr. Lamotte, Tiverton. Aug. 14, 1830 – June 29, 1835.

2074. Thomas Gallye Lamotte, 10, son of Alexr. Lamotte, Esq., Tiverton, Aug. 15, 1831 – June 29, 1835.

2130. Charles Eugene Gallye Lamotte, 8, son of Alexr. Lamotte, Esq., Tiverton, Jan. 30 1833 – June 29, 1837. Re-entered - left Dec. 19, 1839

The family lived in Tiverton. MS says Alexander Lamotte appears in the Land Tax Assessment as the owner of a house on the north side of Gold Street. They also lived in Bampton Street

Exeter and Plymouth Gazette Saturday 23 April 1831

Market Place Tiverton

A property being sold in Bampton Street is described as being 'between the Corn Market and the entrance to the New Market; now occupied by Alexander Lamotte, Esq., having a front of 25 feet wide and 42 feet deep, a curtilage and offices; and behind the same, an excellent walled garden, about 30 feet wide, and 60 feet deep.'

It appears he did teach at Blundell's School. In the Blundell's Archive there is a reference of 1836 to his teaching -

'for many years past a master has attended at the School one day a week to teach the French Language to those boys whose parents choose that they should learn it, and he has been paid an annual remuneration by those parents'... an application has been made to the Trustees to employ such a Master with a salary of 25 guineas a year.

Alexander Lamotte died on 9 November 1836

Western Times Saturday 12th November 1836

'Nov 7th at Tiverton, Alexander Lamotte Esq. Aged 77. He came to Tiverton in the beginning of the first French Revolution and that town has been principally his residence ever since.'

Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser Wednesday 16 November 1836

'On Tues 9th inst. Alexander Lamotte Esq. of Tiverton aged 68. The deceased was a French refugee and is understood to have been a page to Louis XVI. On his arrival in England he was engaged as tutor to Sir T.D.Ackland Bart., with whom he made the tour of the Continent and being taken prisoner, very narrowly escaped the guillotine.'

This does seem correct -

Trewman's Flying Post (Exeter Flying Post) of March 5th 1879 – has a series about Exeter and its neighbourhood under George III – IX, selected and annotated by Robert Dymond FSA. It quotes an entry for January 21st 1808 -

'We are happy to learn that Sir Thomas Acland of Killerton, Devon Bart., who had been detained in his passage through Denmark, and sent to Konksberg prison, together with Comte la Motte and Mr C. C. Addeley the companions of his tour, have been liberated and they are returned to England on the Lord Duncan packet which arrived at Southwold on Sunday, the 20th inst.'

(Ackland toured Scandinavia in 1807 and was briefly detained as a prisoner during the British



attack on Copenhagen.)

In probate of his will in 1837 his occupation was recorded as Gentleman.

His library was sold off.

Exeter and Plymouth Gazette Saturday 24 December 1836

Valuable Library. Bampton Street, Tiverton.

'To be sold at auction, by Mr James Salter, on the Premises in Bampton-street, on Thursday the 29th December instant, and following days, the valuable library of the late Alexander Lamotte, Esq. deceased consisting of about 1500 volumes. ' (It then details the volumes.)

Mary Lamotte 1796-1866

1841 census – living in Bampton Street with Matthew and Charles

1851 census – living in Cheltenham. Described as being Head of Boarding House. Also there were Louisa, Henrietta and her husband Rev. S. Ellis.

1861 census – living with Louisa and Thomas in Westbury-on-Trym

Cheltenham Chronicle Tues 27th March 1866

'March 17, at the residence of her son, Maitland House Clifton, in her 74th year, Mary, widow of Alexander G. Lamotte Esq. late of Tiverton.'

Matthew Lamotte 1814-1851

Born Tiverton

Baptised 23 July 1814 in Selworthy.

Went to Sidney Sussex College Cambridge. BA 1836 MA 1839 BD 1846

Ordained deacon and then priest Exeter 1842. Curate/priest of Cove 1841-56

1841 census - living with mother and Charles in Bampton Street. Occupation given as clerk (Clerk in Holy Orders).

Cambridge Chronicle and Journal Sat 4 October 1851- death recorded-

'June 20th at Montreuil, Normandy The Rev Matthew Gallye Lamotte....late fellow of Sidney Sussex College, eldest son of the late Alexander Gallye Lamotte Esq. of Tiverton.'

Louisa Lamotte 1816-1889

Born Exeter. Baptised 15th July 1815 at St Mary Arches Exeter. (There was an Elizabeth T Lamotte 1782-1853 – widow of Lewis Lamotte of Jamaica living in Heavitree at this time.)

1841 census – governess in Westbury-on-Trym

1851 census – living with mother, Henrietta and her husband in Cheltenham

1861 census – living with mother and Thomas in Westbury-on-Trym

Then lived in 26 St Paul's Road Clifton

Tiverton Gazette Tues 26th November 1889

Deaths. Nov 16th at Clifton Louise Gallye Lamotte, eldest daughter of the late Alexander Lamotte of Tiverton

Probate granted to William Lamotte, nephew (Charles' son)

Henrietta Lamotte 1818-1874

Born France British subject

Married 3 August 1843 Bays Hill House Cheltenham

Gentleman's Magazine 1843 reports marriage of Rev. S A Ellis incumbent of St Ives, Cornwall to



Henrietta Gallye Lamotte youngest daughter of the late Alexander Gallye Lamotte Esq. of Tiverton.
(Three of her siblings witnessed her marriage certificate)
1851 census – living with her husband, mother and Louisa in Cheltenham
1861 census – living in Charlton Kings, Cheltenham
1871 census – living in Long Itchington, Warwickshire
Died September 1874

Alexander Lamotte 1819-1864

Born Tiverton
1851 census – living 43 St Peter Street Tiverton. Surgeon. Member of the Royal College of Surgeons 1842
Was a medical officer at Tiverton Union (Workhouse)
The Exeter Flying Post Thurs 2 June 1853 records that the Friday before he was thrown from his horse near Bickleigh and fractured his thigh.
1861 census – living 24 St Peter Street Tiverton
Died 13 January 1864 Tiverton.

Thomas Lamotte 1821-1874

Born Tiverton
1851 census – druggist
1861 census – chemist. Living with mother and Louisa 4 White Ladies Road Westbury-on-Trym.
4th June 1861 married Emma Ebsworth at St Andrews, Clifton, Bristol
1871 census - he and Emma living at Grants Farm Bampton. In Rank, Profession, Occupation, he is described as 'son of French nobleman'.
Died 9 December 1874 at Bampton.

Charles Lamotte 1824 -1872

Born Tiverton
1841 census – living in Bampton Street with mother and Matthew
Married 3 August 1853 at St Ann Newcastle upon Tyne to Hannah Hodgson
1861 census: Living Athenaum Street, Bishop Wearmouth, Durham. Occupation General Practitioner. Also living there wife Hannah, children William 6, Richard 4, Louise 3, Hannah 1 and 2 servants, a cook and child's maid. Another child later.
Admitted to Dinsdale Lunatic Asylum on 30 July 1872 Died 19 December 1872