

## The French Prisoners in Ashbourne.

By ERNEST A. SADLER, M.D.

**A** MOST interesting record relating to the French prisoners-of-war detained and quartered in Ashbourne during the years 1812-14 has been given to the writer by the Misses Lister of Ashbourne. It consists of a somewhat tattered manuscript volume of small folio size, half-bound in leather, with one cover missing but with all its 250 leaves present and undamaged. The first 100 leaves comprise the letter-book of Mr. John Langford who was appointed "Agent for Parole Prisoners at Ashburne" on March 19, 1812 in succession to a Mr. Wood who removed to Maidstone. The remaining 150 leaves consist of pay-sheets, lists of prisoners, balance sheets, etc.

Mr. Langford was a solicitor of Ashbourne and Clerk to the Magistrates, and it was Mr. Wise his successor in the practice who gave the book to Mr. John Lister the father of the Misses Lister. On Mr. Langford's appointment he submitted the names of those "who joined him in the bond required by the Transport Board of the Commissioners"; they were Mr. Thomas Pidcock of Ashbourne, Plumber and Glazier and Mr. Thomas Gallimore of Calwich in Staffordshire, Farmer.

If Mr. Wood, the predecessor of Mr. Langford kept any records they have not survived, and there is no account available before Mr. Langford took over the Agency in March 1812. A large number of his letters are formal notes asking for, or acknowledging the receipt of funds from the Commissioners of H.M. Transport Board; all his correspondence shows the respect and even fear in

which he held the "Honble. Gentlemen" of the Transport Board.

A weekly record of the number of prisoners had to be rendered to the Board, as well as a more comprehensive and detailed monthly list which gave the name, rank, vessel or regiment, and other details about each prisoner, together with the cost of his maintenance. Every quarter also a list, with full particulars, was required by the Board of all persons who were likely to be permanently incapacitated by reason of age or illness, for which duty a local surgeon Mr. James Riddlesden was called in. Furthermore a balance-sheet (or as Mr. Langford always wrote it—a ballance sheet) was sent to the Commissioners by mail coach every month. A copy of every balance-sheet is given, and an entry which occurs in all of them is "Pd. Sampson Gather for ringing bell night and morning" for which duty he received 9d. a day. The cost of stationery for a month varied from 2s. 5d. to 5s. 3d.; and one shilling the cost of an affidavit for swearing to the truth of the balance sheet was included in each account. The affidavit was sworn before a magistrate and the one upon whom this duty usually devolved was Mr. William Webster, who was Wm. Brunt the heir and successor of Dr. Taylor.

About once a month the Agent received a sum of £100 or £150 (according to the number of prisoners) "to be drawn at 6 day's sight." The daily allowance of each prisoner was 1s. 3d. or 1s. 6d. according to rank and standing. There are frequent records of money sent to the prisoners by their friends.

Mr. Langford had various troubles with his prisoners. To begin with there were some who broke their parole and absconded—"ran" as the official description usually has it. On April 19th 1812 Langford writes:

Honorable Gentlemen.

I take the earliest opportunity of informing you that Jaques

Perrond as described on the other side run away from this place some time in the night betwixt Friday and yesterday, he went to bed on Friday night as Usual and went out of the house some time in the Night. I have made every enquiry necessary but cannot learn the rout he may have taken but think it very likely he may have made for the Kentish Coast as he was particularly intimate with some of those gentlemen that had some time since run away from here and had gone that way.

I am, with great respect

Honble Gtle<sup>n</sup> your Obed<sup>t</sup>

St John Langford.

Then follows the description of Captn. Perrond and a list of his belongings:

Name:	Jacques Perrond
Rank:	Capt <sup>n</sup> Phoenix Privateer
Age:	39
Stature	5/6
Person	Well-made
Vissage:	round
Comp <sup>n</sup> :	Sallow
Hair	Brown
Eyes:	Blue

Mark or Wounds: Small pock on right eye lid.

He had got two good top coats which is happened he took with him the one is a brown, and the other a *new* Drab coloured one and wore a new hat with a Narrow crown and broadish brim with a ribbon and small white buckle.—he speaks English well.

A list of Captain Perronds Cloathes etc. left at his lodgings which I have taken into my care as Under:

One Trunk  
 4 Small French Dictionaries  
 3 pair Cloth pantaloons  
 4 old Cotton shirts small  
 2 Cotton pillow Cases

Paid to Eyre's for lodging etc. which he owed, o 4. 1.

Jacques Perrond was captured on 12 Sept. 1810, and was received on parole at Ashbourne on 9 Oct., 1810. His subsistence allowance was 1s. 3d. a day.

On May 6 of the same year there was another absconder, N. Saillard who was the "2nd captain" (mate) of the

privateer "L'amiable Nellie" and who was captured on 11 January 1810, received on parole at Ashbourne 29 April, 1810, and given a subsistence allowance of 1s. 6d. a day. Langford writes:

I lose no time in informing you that I expect N. Saillard as described on the other side is run he not attending Yesterday at the Usual time to be paid. I went to his Lodgings and was informed that on Monday night about 9 o'clock he was much intoxicated (sic) and went to bed that he got up yesterday morning at 5 o'clock and went out but had not been seen afterwards have been at his lodgings again this morning and find he is not returned which leads me to believe he is gone.

And on May 10 he again writes:

I have made every enquiry in my power about N<sup>s</sup> Saillard who (I inform<sup>d</sup> you in my letter of the 6<sup>th</sup>) went of (sic) on Tuesday Morning last but cannot get the least trace of the rout he has taken but think it very likely he may have gone by one of Pickford's Waggons as he about 6 months since set of by one, and went a few miles and then returned back, and also that his lodgings were close to the Waggoners Inn where he had an opportunity of making himself acquainted with the man who travels with the Waggons (he being a man much addicted to liquor and having little or no money and but few cloathes) I enclose you a list of the cloathes he has left—a small trunk, 3 p<sup>r</sup> old stockings, a small brush, 2 p<sup>r</sup> old halfboots 2 very old Shirts.

M. Saillard timed his escape rather badly, as had he waited a few days longer he would have received a sum of money sent on May 18 for his use through Messrs. Gressulki & Co. of London.

On July 24, 1812 Langford writes to tell the Board that he is "obliged to attend the Assizes at Stafford on Wednesday next as an evidence on the prosecution of Olyott and maybe from home 3 or 4 days. I take the liberty" he says "of proposing my son who resides along with me to Act during my Absence if your Honour's approve of the same." And in another letter on August 3 he announces

I have the pleasure of informing your Honours that Edward Olyott a native of this Town was tried at Stafford on Saturday

afternoon, and Convicted of Aiding in the Escape of Commodore Paollucci and L.Col Manneville on the 14 of January last.

The list of Commodore Paollucci's effects makes interesting reading. Mrs. Longdon, with whom the Commodore lodged when in Ashbourne, informed the Agent that the Commodore's servant (who had now been transferred to Norman's Cross) had written to ask her to send to him his master's clothes. The Agent wrote to the Board for instructions sending an "Inventory of Cloaths and other Articles belonging Commodore Paollucci" which is written on the back of the letter of Aug. 6, 1812.

An Inventory of Cloath &c. delivered to me by Mrs Longdon, Monday Aug<sup>t</sup> 3, 1812.

- 2 Telescopes large size
- 5 Maps
- 1 Table Cloth
- 1 Uniform Coat silver-laced
- 1 Cocked Uniform hat
- 6 Small books

Articles in Portmanteau.

- a Portmanteau
- 2 Black Coats
- 1 Blue Coat
- 1 Olive Coat
- 1 Pair Blk. Silk drawers
- 1 pair White Manchester Cord do
- 2 Nankeen Waistcoats with Sleeves
- 1 pair Nankeen drawers
- 1 Blue Striped Waistcoat linnen
- 3 pair old Silk Stockings white
- 1 pair do Black
- 1 pair Worsted Black

The Board directed that the 2 telescopes and 5 maps should be sent to them, and ordered the Agent to sell the other effects. The sale took place on Aug 18 and included also the effects of Saillard and Perrond who had previously "run." The auctioneer's account of the Sale is here given in full as it appears in Mr. Langford's records:

An Account of Articles late the property of French prisoners of

War at Ashburn sold by Auction by Mr Hawthorne on Tuesday the 18 of August, 1812 at the Agent's Office

*Saillard.*

Lot 1.	2 p <sup>r</sup> Stockings & Night Cap & braces	..	..	..	..	0	0	9
2.	2 p <sup>r</sup> half boots	..	..	..	..	0	2	0
3.	1 p <sup>r</sup> blue Trowsers & Linzey Shirt	..	..	..	..	0	2	0
4.	2 Shirts	..	..	..	..	0	1	1
5.	hat shaving box & brush	..	..	..	..	0	1	6
6.	brush & p <sup>r</sup> Shoes	..	..	..	..	0	2	0
7.	Trunk	..	..	..	..	0	2	7
						<hr/>		
						0	11	11

*Perrond*

						£	s.	d.
8.	4 pillow Cases	..	..	..	..	0	1	2
9.	2 p <sup>r</sup> White Gaters	..	..	..	..	0	1	4
10.	3 Cotton Shirts	..	..	..	..	0	7	0
11.	1 p. Cotton Trowsers	..	..	..	..	0	2	0
12.	1 p. do.	..	..	..	..	0	2	1
13.	1 p. do.	..	..	..	..	0	2	0
14.	1 p. do.	..	..	..	..	0	2	5
15.	Dictionary 2 Vol.	..	..	..	..	0	2	6
16.	1 Dictionary 1 Vol.	..	..	..	..	0	0	8
17.	Trunk	..	..	..	..	0	10	0
						<hr/>		
						1	11	2

*Paollucci*

18.	Table Cloth	..	..	..	..	0	2	8
19.	Uniform Coat	..	..	..	..	2	8	0
20.	Cocked hat	..	..	..	..	0	4	2
21.	6 books	..	..	..	..	0	4	6
22.	portmanteau	..	..	..	..	0	5	9
23.	Black Coat	..	..	..	..	0	18	6
24.	do.	..	..	..	..	2	2	0
25.	blue do.	..	..	..	..	0	10	6
26.	Olive do.	..	..	..	..	0	19	6
27.	p <sup>r</sup> black Silk drawers	..	..	..	..	0	6	0
28.	p <sup>r</sup> Cord pantaloons	..	..	..	..	0	5	0
29.	Nankeen Jacket	..	..	..	..	0	3	2
30.	do.	..	..	..	..	0	2	8
31.	pr Nankeen Trowsers	..	..	..	..	0	2	8
32.	pantaloons & Jacket	..	..	..	..	0	2	7

33 & 34.	4 pr Silk Stockings & 2 pr Worst <sup>d</sup> do.	o	8	6	
					9 6 2
	Saillard .. ..	o	11	11	
	Perrond .. ..	1	11	2	
	Amount of Sale	11	9	3	
Expenses.					
P <sup>d</sup>	for printing Bills .. ..	o	5	o	} o 17 6
P <sup>d</sup>	man Assisting .. ..	o	2	o	
P <sup>d</sup>	Auctioneer .. ..	o	10	6	
	in hand	10	11	9	

Settled the above Account & p<sup>d</sup> the ballance of 10 11 9 into the hands of Mr. Langford.

Thos. Hawthorne, Auctioneer.

Ashbourne, 20 Aug<sup>t</sup> 1812.

There is another interesting and amusing list of "linen and effects" belonging to a prisoner named Jerome Bernard who was transferred to Chatham on April 22 and was expected to arrive there on or before the 30th of the month and who was subsisted at the rate of 1s. 3d. per day until that date.

List of Bernard's Linen and effects:—

a Syringe	1	four pocket handkerchiefs	4
a chess-game	1	three paires half Stockings	3
three maps	3	five waistcoats	5
seven books	7	a piece of cambrick	1
a pair Buckles	1	two Big Coats	2
two Candle Steeks	2	two Green Carpets	2
a pair Snuffers	1	a paire Breeches	1
4 Curtins	4	a Knitting Shirt	1
a Jacquet	1	a pair Boots	1
two cravats	2	two pairs Shoes	2
three Coats	3	a Small Loocking glass	1
1 paire drawers	1	a trunk	1
three pantaloons	3		—
three towels	3		69
nine Shirts	9	a hamock	1
three Napkins	3		—

This list, which shows M. Bernard to be a man of substance compared to some of the prisoners, is not in the hand-writing of Mr. Langford, who must not therefore be held accountable for its quaint orthography. The goods were packed in a trunk addressed to Gen Pillet and sent by "one of Pickford's Waggon which goes to Castle in Wood Street, London."

Absconding prisoners were not the only troubles with which the Agent had to deal. There had evidently been two drunken brawls in the streets and on Oct. 6. 1812, he writes:

I herewith for your Honors inform<sup>n</sup> inclose the Exam<sup>n</sup> of Marg. Tomlinson & Dan Hand. the prisoners therein mentioned were all before Mr Webster yesterday they did not deny the fact but attributed it to the effects of Liquor. Mr. Webster has ordered M. Yvon and Drivett to the house of Correction here to be detained until your Honours give direction as to the disposal of them in add<sup>n</sup> to my own observation Mr Webster has directed me to suggest that they are both of a quarrelsome dispos<sup>n</sup> and given to liquor. As Mons<sup>r</sup> Dessin took no part in the assault or in breaking the window but left them and returned to his lodgings Mr. Webster is of oppinion if it meets your Honours approbation that he should only pay the Guinea for breach of parole.

I have also to acquaint your Honours that on Sunday last a Quarrel arrose among a party of the French prisoners when standing in the Town Street that four of them namely M. Le Canne, Vaccassin, Notin and Frohart was engaged in fight which caused the assembling of a large concourse of people on hearing which I went and ordered the Above 4 mention<sup>d</sup> to be put in confinement until yesterday. When I had them before Mr. Webster who on Investig<sup>n</sup> found that M. Vacassin was the sole cause and beginer of the Quarrel by Striking M. Frohart several blows before he offered to make any resistance, that Le Canne & Notin were engaged only by endeavouring to part the others. Mr Webster has therefore disch<sup>d</sup> Le Canne, Notin & Frohart, ordered M. Vaccassin who began the quarrel to the House of Correction along with Yvon & drivet to wait your Hon<sup>s</sup> directions.

Three days later Mr. Langford writes:

Honb<sup>le</sup> Gent<sup>l</sup>. I last night received your line of the 7<sup>th</sup> instant wherein you direct me to fend Mons. Yvon, M. Drivett and M.



Dessin who are in confinement at the Jail of Ashburne to Norman Cross. Whenever the escort arrives to conduct them thither, you also direct Mess<sup>rs</sup> Yvon & Drivett to make good the expence of repairing the damage done by them & Mons. Dessin to pay the sum of One guinea for breach of parole. But you have not made any mention about Mons. Vaccassin who I expect is one of the three intended to be sent of.

The three prisoners were sent under an escort to Normans Cross on Oct. 13, and were expected to arrive on the 19th.

On 26 November, 1812, Mr. Langford had another trouble to report to the Board and wrote as follows:

Honourable Gentlemen. Yesterday morning M<sup>r</sup> Mellor of this place informed me that Monsieur Frohart a french prisoner who lodged at his house appeared to him to be deranged, that he had been very restless a part of the preceding night. Sometimes making a noise and at other times singing, that in the morning he came downstairs part undressed and ran into the Street and there behaved in a rude manner and broke the Windows of some of the neighbouring Houses in consequence of which I went with Mr. Mellor and found the appearance of M. Frohart to be very Unusual. I ordered him proper attendance and applied to M<sup>r</sup> Riddlesden to see him from whom I am informed he is in a State Insanity, finding it therefore quite necessary for M. Frohart to be attended by proper persons I have given directions accordingly. I understand that about Two years since M. Frohart being then on his parole at Chesterfield was in a similar State and ordered from there to London. Waiting your Honours directions etc.

Acting on instructions received from the Board Mr. Langford sent Frohart under the escort of Joseph Rutland to the Transport Office in London.

Another letter describes the rudeness of M. Notin to M. Sewan who according to M. Sewan was "frequently Insulting him by saying he was a Coward and durst not fight and other such like languages to provoke a Quarrel." M. Notin was ordered to be confined in the House of Correction until the wishes of the Board were known and on Dec. 30 was brought up before Mr. Webster and by him ordered back to prison. At the same Court "Mons.

de Burbrine, Mons. Drivet and Salleneuve was also before Mr. Webster on a Charge of being found in the town street in a State of Intoxication about Eleven o'clock the night before and are by Mr. Webster ordered with Confinement to wait your Hon<sup>s</sup> directions."

A sadder note is struck in a letter dated 31 August, 1812. Mr. Langford writes to the Board:

I received your letter of the 28 instant relating Mons<sup>r</sup> Dupin and in answer to which I acquaint that in the month of October, 1810 he married to Jane Attkin a Native of this place—that he had by his said wife One Child (a girl)—his wife died in October 1811 and his Child in July last and was both interred at Ashburne. The person who he calls his Friend at Chesterfield is a preacher at the Calvinist Chapel there but he does not recollect his name. M. Dupin has as he states in his letter been very unhappy in the loss of his wife and Child, he is a very religious man and a constant attendant at the Calvinist Chapel at this place.

Another letter hints at a little romance. One of the prisoners a M. Antoine Tedoldi, a Lieut. in the 2nd Italian Regiment, wished to marry a young woman of Ashburne, and applied to Mr. Shipley the Vicar "to be asked in the Church" but was refused. Mr. Langford writes to the Board:

As Mr. Shipley expects that previous to next Sunday M. Tedoldi will again apply he will feel himself greatly obliged if your Honours will have the goodness to favour him with advice for his guidance therein.

Unfortunately there is no further reference to this matter and no indication of how the romance ended. M. Tedoldi was probably a man of means as on the 15th of the same month (Jan. 1813) he had received from his friends the sum of £39.

Still another letter tells of a different kind of trouble which Mr. Langford had to contend with. He writes on July 24, 1812.

Yesterday John Johnson the carrier between Leek and Ashburne, brought me a Small parcel directed for M<sup>r</sup> Dabiac one of the prisoners who lately came from Leek to this Place. I sent

for Mr Dabiac and opened the parcel in his presence it contained two yards &c. of Cloth in the middle of which was lapped up the inclosed papers and altho they may not contain any thing very material the conveying of them being contrary to the parole engagement have inclosed them for your Honours information.

In this instance we are again left in the dark as to the subsequent happenings.

There is a tradition in Ashburne that Walton Bank, a house on the Derby Road was the house where most of the French prisoners were lodged, but it is clear from Mr. Langford's record that they were billeted all over the town and that application could be made by any householder who wished to accommodate one or more of the men. On Nov. 18, 1813, such an application was received from several inhabitants.

There is no mention of the presence in the town of women and children relatives of the prisoners until the weekly return of the 4th July 1812, which list first contained the names of a fresh batch of 32 prisoners who had been received from Leek a few days previously.

From this date until May 7, 1814 the weekly return of prisoners contains the names of three women, Jaunat the wife of Lieut. Chas. Barjau of 34 reg<sup>t</sup> L<sup>t</sup> Infan<sup>y</sup> Boniface Alexandre the wife of a Capt. of the 6 reg<sup>t</sup> Artillery, and Regula Mas the wife of a store-keeper in the Army Civil Depot, each of whom received subsistence at the rate of two shillings a day. There is no special mention of children in the list.

On Sept. 21, 1813 Mr. Langford writes:

Hon<sup>l</sup><sup>e</sup> Gentl<sup>n</sup>. I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 15<sup>th</sup> instant directing me not to make any allowance after Saturday last to the women & child<sup>n</sup> belonging to any of the french prisoners of War under my care, and make your Honours acquainted that I have informed the parties of the contents theirself and am directed by Mon<sup>s</sup> Alexandre & Mon<sup>s</sup> Barjou to say that they request (if consistant) that your Honours will permit their wives to remain along with them without receiving pay. Mon. Mas whose wife is far advanced in her pregnancy has

also desired me to forward the inclosed for your Honours consideration.

A later letter informs us that the Board had agreed to Mrs. Mas' subsistence being continued for the present, and on the weekly return of Nov. 24, 1813, there is a note "Mrs. Mas brought to bed 24<sup>th</sup> inst. J.L." but there is no addition to the number of "women and children" in the weekly return, and no mention of their names in the monthly pay sheet.

The number of prisoners in the weekly return at the beginning of Mr. Langford's term of office March 21, 1812 was 49. On the 27 June the number had been reduced to 45, two having been transferred to other quarters and two having "run." Then a contingent of 32 was received from Leek and on July 4, 1812, the number rose to 77.

- 38 Officers in the Army.
- 9 Officers in the Navy.
- 4 Captains of Privateers.
- 6 Mates of Merchant Vessels.
- 16 Passengers and others.
- 1 Officer's servant, and
- 3 Women.

One additional prisoner (an Army Officer) was received from Leek during the following week raising the number of prisoners to 78. From this time onwards there was no great change in the numbers. A few discharges at occasional intervals reduced the total gradually to 63 in May 1813, and by Nov. 27, 1813 it had become 53. The only addition to the numbers for many months occurred on Jan. 1, 1814, raising the total to 54 for a few weeks. Repatriation of the prisoners began in earnest in April, 1814 so that by May 21 only 11 remained and these were discharged to Portsmouth on their way to France on 11 June, 1814. Napoleon had abdicated on April 11, he landed in Elba on May 14, and the treaty of Paris was signed on May 30th.

To the last list Mr. Langford appends the note "sent copy of the above with my last accounts up to 12 June, 1814, inclusive by mail Sunday morning 12 June, 1814 to F. P. Board—J. L."

The only entry in the letter book after this date is on July 20, 1814, and is a reminder to the Board that Mr. Langford was £21 7s. 11½d. out of pocket according to the account he forwarded to the Commissioners on June 12, and he "shall esteem it a particular favour if your Honrs will have the goodness to permit me to draw for the same. Waiting your Honours permission, I remain with greatest respect, Honble Gent<sup>n</sup> Your most obed<sup>t</sup> st.

John Langford"

Again we are left in the dark as to the result of this pressing appeal.

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