SCHIRRHEIN-SCHIRRHOFFEN : AT THE EDGE OF THE FOREST

Robert Wideen : 2025

Soufflenheim Genealogy Research and History
www.soufflenheimgenealogy.com

Excerpts from "Schirrhein-Schirrhoffen: At the Edge of the Forest". Schirrhein-Schirrhoffen: à la lisière de la forêt, by Caisse de crédit mutuel, Strasbourg: Éd. Coprur, 1995, Monographie des villages d'Alsace No. 54, 416 pages. The first 59 pages, in French, are found at BNF Gallica, Bibliothèque nationale de France: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k3348048q.texteImage

The villages of Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen, adjacent to the Haguenau Forest and affiliated with the town of Haguenau during the monarchy, border Soufflenheim on the southwest.

Translated with DeepL Translator by Michael J. Nuwer, November 2024. More writings by Michael Nuwer can be found at: https://sites.google.com/view/nuwerfamily

Watercolor by Rose-Marie Vetter. Schirrhein-Schirrhoffen, gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliotheque nationale de fra

CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE HISTORY OF OUR TWO TOWNS

A Few Pointers

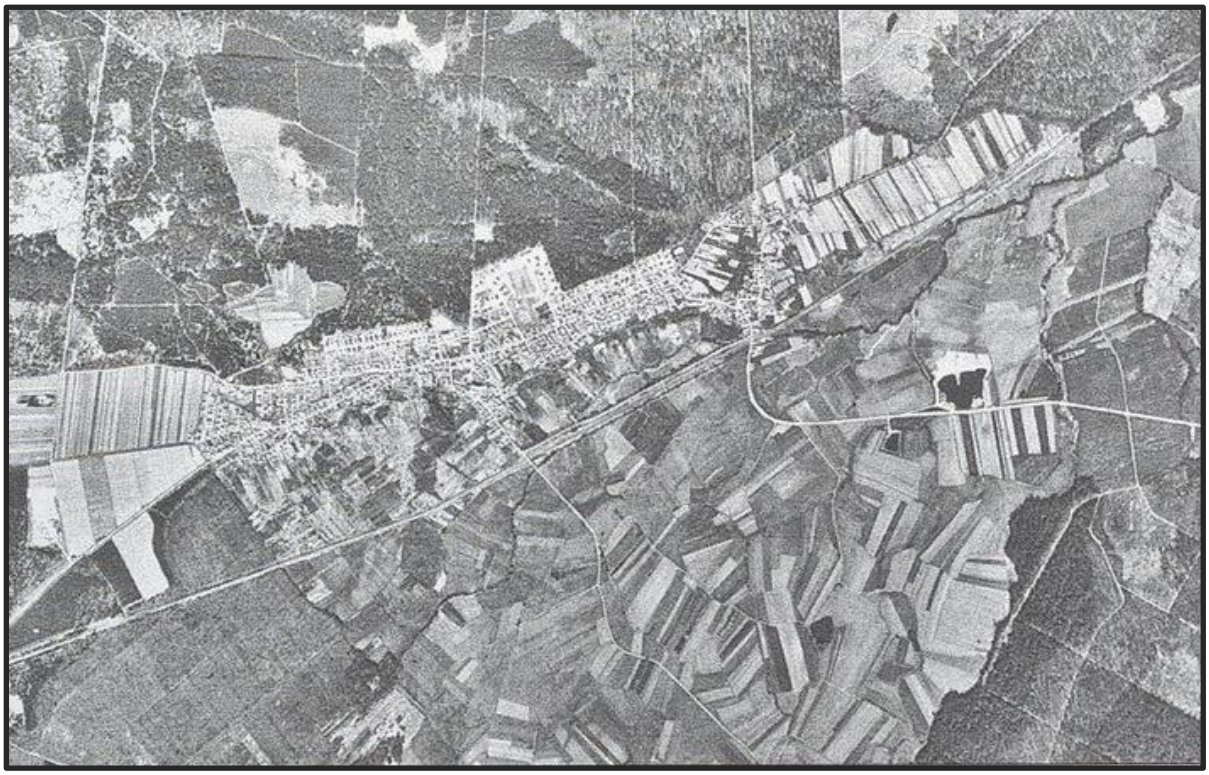
Located on the eastern edge of the Haguenau forest, on departmental road no. 37, which links Bischwiller to **Soufflenheim**, Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen form a pretty, peaceful ensemble with a rich, eventful past. At first glance, the two villages appear to be one and the same. You pass from one to the other without even noticing. In reality, they are two very distinct communes, each with its own mayor and administration. It's true that the history of these communes is so closely intertwined that it's difficult to separate them. Today, the two villages still share the same church, cemetery, school and many other activities. Until the French Revolution, they were attached to the imperial town of Haguenau. It was not until 1790 that they became independent. The history of these communes highlights two key points. The first is that the population of these localities has always had to fight bitterly for its existence, due to the poverty of the soil, the fragmentation of the land - which never allowed for intensive cultivation - and the threat of overpopulation. Soil exploitation was no longer sufficient to feed all the mouths, and even drove many inhabitants to emigrate.

The population was often called upon to defend its rights against the all-powerful town of Haguenau, on which it depended, and in particular its rights of use in the forest. Indeed, the villagers enjoyed the right to collect dead wood and leaves, the right to glean and the right to graze in the forest. These rights were sacred to the population and compensated somewhat for the poverty of the soil.

However, the city of Haguenau was constantly trying to limit and reduce these rights. Our two communes had to fight back. In the last century, Schirrhein and Kaltenhouse - a neighboring commune – took Haguenau to court. The lawsuit lasted over 50 years and was lost by both communes.

The second key idea that emerges from this story is the courage of the people. They have never given up, and have always risen to the challenges presented to them. The chapters on emigration and reconstruction after the Second World War bear witness to this.

These two key ideas - fighting for survival and facing up to all threats - aptly illustrate the nickname attributed to the Schirrheinois, Harzknüppe, meaning "softwood knot". Indeed, the Schirrheinois is a solid, courageous, hard-working man who doesn't give up easily. This nickname also reflects the close ties between the population and the undivided forest of Haguenau, where many Schirrheinois worked as lumberjacks. They are also known as Waldnickel.



Aerial view of Schirrhein-Schirrhoffen taken at 10,000 meters high in 1975. You can recognise the longitudinal shape of the villages, the roads, the railway line, the layout of the ban and the forest paths (collection of the mayor of Schirrhein).

The Geographical Context

The proximity of the forest gives Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen their distinctive appearance. Stretching along a main artery for almost two and a half kilometers, they once had the appearance of street villages. This type of village is common at the edge of forests. Other examples include Fortsheim, Eschbach and Walbourg. These more recent villages were created by successive forest clearings.

What also characterizes Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen is their eccentricity in relation to their ban. Whereas most Alsatian villages are situated roughly in the center of their boundaries, Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen are located at the extreme western edge of their terroir. They are sandwiched between the Haguenau forest and the Fallgraben wetlands. Pierre Maine Lombard, a French army officer stationed in the area in 1940, described Schirrhein as follows: "A strange, wiry village, stretching for two and a half kilometers, right on the edge of the Haguenau woods. You'd think that one day, in a single wave, the houses rushed, one fine day,to climb the cliff against which the Ried meadows die, and that the forest put up an impassable barrier. They managed to squeeze in at the very edge of the plateau, but were unable to

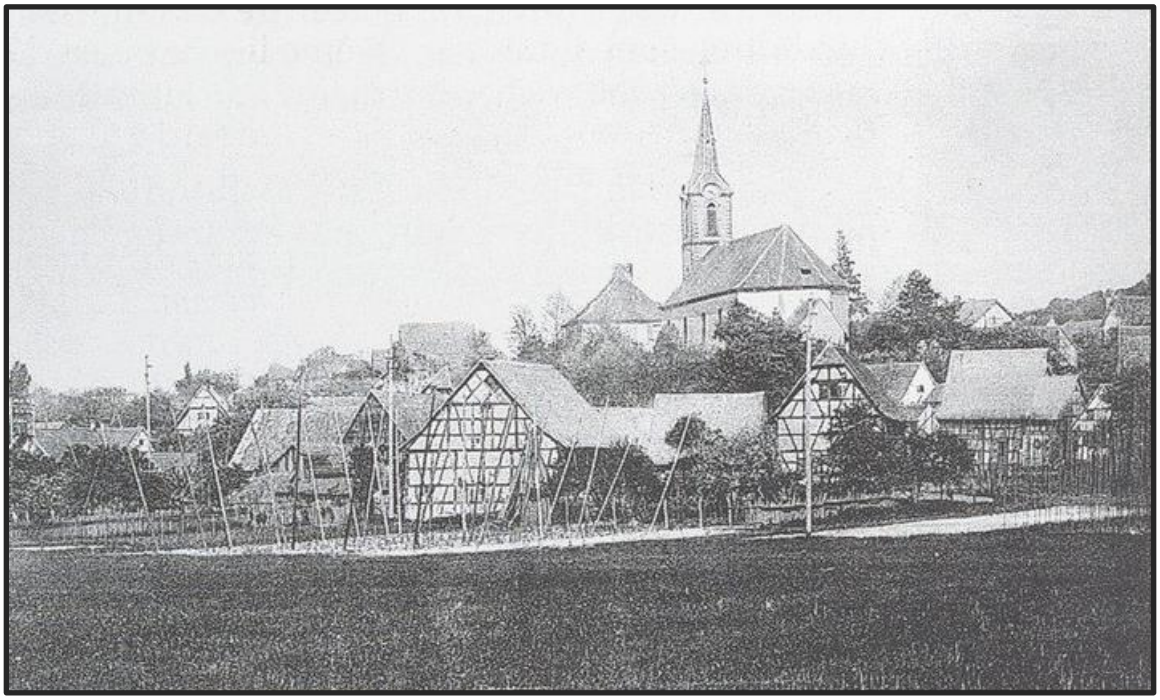
penetrate any further. They clung fiercely to the sun-scorched rocky outcrops in a single row, ready to topple over the Haguenau-Roppenheim railroad line at the slightest push from the fir trees."

In the past, all houses were built on one side of the main road, the other being occupied by the forest, hence the saying that in Schirrhein "were Eierkueche numme off einere Sitt gebacke". Today, this old saying no longer holds true, as since the Second World War many new houses have been built on the other side of the main street.

Today, Schirrhein has a population of 1,852 and Schirrhoffen 516. Most of them are blue-collar workers. This hard-working population lived in poverty until the Second World War. In Haguenau and Bischwiller, they were mocked for saying that "ganz Schirrhein kommt Hopfe zopfe, d'r Maire samt'm Adjue, un hätt der Pfarrer Schiie, käm er aü dazüe." [the whole of Schirrhein comes to hop, the mayor and his aide, and if the priest is in the shüe, he can also join in].

Originally, cultivating the soil and working in the forest were the essential resources of this industrious population. Although the local soil was more or less poor, the people of Schirrhein always tried to make the most of it. At the beginning of the 18th century, hemp was an important crop. But from 1850 onwards, the growing use of cotton supplanted hemp cultivation. Hops were also grown, and expanded rapidly. By the end of the 19th century, Schirrhein was one of the most important hop-growing towns in the district. In 1850, the village had 350,000 hop plants and harvested 2,800 quintals. Today, hop-growing has completely disappeared from Schirrhein.

After the Second World War, asparagus cultivation developed on the sandy Hart plateau. They were renowned for their quality and, for some families, represented an additional source of income.



View of Schirrhein at the beginning of the century, taken from the Reid.
At the foot of the embankment is the oldest part of the village. We can also see hop rows there.

In the past, the forest kept many people busy. In 1800, Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen had 280 lumberjacks, i.e. a third of the working population. These two villages thus provided the largest forestry contingent in the region. It was a regular job, providing the logger with benefits in kind. With the advent of mechanization, the number of lumberjacks fell sharply. Today, both villages are bedroom communities. The active population leaves the village early to work in industry in Bischwiller, Haguenau, Strasbourg, **Soufflenheim**, Hœrdt or elsewhere. But a high proportion of the working population - 30% - goes to Germany.

The two villages are served by two roads. The one linking Bischwiller to **Soufflenheim** and the one from Schirrhoffen to the industrial road near Sessenheim. In the past, our two villages were served by a railroad linking Haguenau to Rœschwoog. This line was closed to traffic after the Second World War. Today, the former station is occupied by Geoffroy Schott. He has built a carpentry workshop and living quarters next to the main building.

The bans of Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen are crossed by the Fallgraben, a river which has its source in the ban of Oberhoffen, at a place called “La Miss”. Brooks such as the Herzluekgraben, Altmattengraben and Boschgraben flow into the Fallgraben, which flows towards **Soufflenheim**, before emptying near Leutenheim into the Eberbach, a tributary of the Sauer.

The highest part of Schirrhein, the Rue du Sommet, is 140 meters above sea level, while the lowest, the Bosch, is 121.7 meters above sea level.

Both villages, 75% of which were destroyed during the Second World War, were carefully rebuilt and expanded, giving them a picturesque, clean, pleasant and well-kept appearance.

The Geological Setting

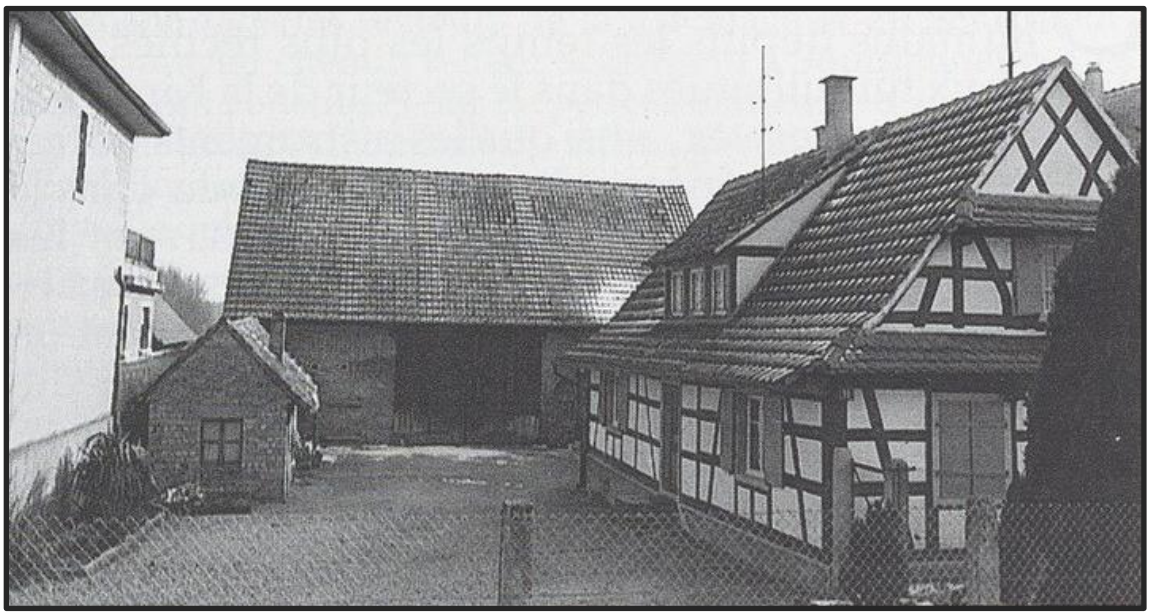
Lower Alsace, bordered to the east by the Rhine, is formed in its eastern part by an area of marshland which, in prehistoric times, extended widely on both sides of the river. The wet period, which began at the end of the Bronze Age, only enlarged this marshy area, known as the Ried.

Parallel to the Rhine, the remnants of a low terrace, towering some twenty meters above the Ried, correspond to the filling in of the last ice age. The rivers that rise in the Vosges have built up alluvial fans as they enter the plain, which are attached to the low terrace. These alluvial fans are made up of highly permeable, low-fertility sands and gravels. The Haguenau forest is located on the alluvial fans of the Moder, Eberbach and Sauer rivers. Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen were built on the edge of the Moder alluvial fan. The Schirrhein ban, covering some 654 hectares, comprises two parts: the lower part, known as the Ried, and the upper part, cleared in the 18th century, known as the Hart.

The Ried is a vast, flat expanse of land that was periodically flooded by the Rhine before it was corrected in the 19th century. Its foaming waters sometimes reached the foot of the terrace. These floods were frequent and dangerous. The farmers of yesteryear told many tragic stories about them. Today, the flooding of the Rhine sometimes leads to the clogging of tributaries, depositing sand on the regions they cross.

In general, the soils of the Ried are siliceous and moist, but peaty in areas with poor drainage, particularly in the Bosch area. In the past, much of the Ried was occupied by meadows. Today, it is almost entirely cultivated. Gardens have been laid out in the peat soils not far from the village. The only fertile soils are to be found in the Lichtenberg and Schweinau plots.

The Hart, the upper part of the Schirrhein ban, was cleared as early as the 18th century. It dominates the Ried at an altitude of 10 to 15 meters. The soil is made up of alluvial deposits from the Moder River. It is very light and dries out quickly. The subsoil consists of a layer of greenish clay that runs through the entire forest. This impermeable layer lies at an average depth of 1 to 1.50 meters. This clay, extracted from certain parts of the forest, provides the raw material for potteries and tile factories in neighboring villages. Schirrhoffen once had its own tile factory.



Typical farm of Schirrhein-Schirrhoffen before the destruction due to the military operations of 1944-1945,
that is to say - a modest dwelling and a farm building which serves at the same time as a barn, hayloft, stable and cowshed.

The gentle slope of the land, the numerous watercourses and the presence of this layer of clay in the subsoil mean that the entire Haguenau forest is a humid, sometimes even marshy region, with the exception of the Hart. In fact, the names of a dozen or so parts of the forest include the significant suffix “lach”, meaning puddle or pool. Hence names like Kirchlach, Blümelslach, Harzlach, Stallach, Erzlach...The presence of more or less stagnant water perhaps explains why the Haguenau forest has been less densely populated than other regions, and has thus remained one of France’s most important forest massifs. This excess humidity, often mentioned in ancient texts, has been significantly reduced thanks to drainage work carried out over the last few centuries.

DURING PREHISTORY

Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen are of relatively recent origin, but their sites have been occupied by humans since earliest times. The numerous burial mounds in the Kirchlach and Schirrheinerweg areas, as well as

working tools, axes, swords, and pottery buried in the ground and uncovered by recent excavations, are the oldest evidence of the occupation of our land. These discoveries enable us to reconstruct, at least in part, the lives of our distant ancestors. But what do we call prehistory? It's the period that precedes history and the appearance of the first written records. Historians divide prehistory into several periods. Here, we'll focus on those that most concern us.

To Neolithic

Originally, there was the forest. The Haguenau forest, as we know it today, is merely the remnant of the ancient primeval forest that covered the entire Alsatian plain. In Neolithic times – 5000 to 1800 BC – this forest was impassable and uninhabited. By the end of the Neolithic period, only a few areas around the edge of the forest were inhabited. The polished stone axes found in the forest are proof of this. The Haguenau museum houses six of these axes. They have always been found in the more or less close vicinity of ancient settlements, but do not tell us anything about the density of these populations.

These Neolithic settlers chose the Schirrhein site because its location on the edge of the terrace protected them from flooding by the Rhine. It enabled them to cultivate the land, raise livestock and use the forest for timber and firewood.

In the Bronze Age

During the Bronze Age – 1800 to 750 BC – evidence of the site's occupation became more numerous and varied. These testimonies, the numerous tumuli or burial mounds, are located in the Haguenau forest, and more particularly in the Kirchlach and Schirrheinerweg sectors, the old road linking Schirrhein to **Soufflenheim**. These tumuli consist of small mounds one meter high and six to ten meters in diameter. There are no visible signs of the settlements, which have disappeared beneath the earth and vegetation. It's their size that makes them easy to spot.

The largest funerary necropolis in the Haguenau forest is located at Kirchlach. It contained at least 120 burial mounds, scattered across forest plots 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6. The 80 or so burial mounds on plot no. 1 have disappeared under the new buildings on the Stade housing estate. The Place du Tumulus still serves as a reminder.

Another important necropolis can be found in the Schirrheinerweg area. On both sides of this old road are 17 burial mounds, two of which are located on plot no. 9 and six on plot no. 7. The settlements were numerous and already formed a real village.

The first excavations of the tumuli were carried out by Maximilien Ring in the 19th century. He excavated several tumuli, two of which date back to the Bronze Age. Between 1871 and 1900, Xavier Nessel, mayor of Haguenau at the time and concerned about our heritage, had all the burial mounds in the forest systematically opened up and inventoried. He counted 594, most of which date back to the Bronze Age. He dug trenches that intersected in the center of the mound. The earth was carefully sifted, so that no shard or fragment of object could escape his attention. Fragile and large objects were removed along with the block of earth enclosing them with a sheet metal plate.

In 1957, the expansion of Schirrhein threatened part of the Kirchlach necropolis. It was then that E. Dillmann excavated two adjoining burial mounds. One covered a burial site from the Late Bronze Age –

2000 BC – and contained the remains of a female skeleton. The other, also a female burial, dates from the Hallstatt period – circa 500 BC. These tumuli contained vases, bronze pins, bracelets and two fibulae.

A further extension of the village led to new excavations in 1961, this time by H. Zumstein and Prof. J.J. Hatt. In 1969, another strip of land was cleared and, in 1970, three more tumuli were excavated by André Thevenin. In 1976, the commune of Schirrhein was authorized to extend the housing estate through a land swap with Haguenau. An area of 6.83 hectares was thus taken from the forest, resulting in the destruction of around 25 burial mounds. An excavation campaign, financed by the Archaeology Rescue Intervention Fund, began in May 1977 and ended in November 1978.

The custom of erecting burial mounds was introduced to our region at the end of the Neolithic Age. It was imported by immigrants from North and East Germany, who crossed the Rhine near Seltz and travelled up the Sauer and its tributaries to occupy forest clearings. They mingled with the natives.

In the early Bronze Age, these were individual burials. By the middle of the Bronze Age, individual mounds were reserved for wealthy men and women. Children and poor or middle-class people were buried in collective mounds. Cremation was also practiced at this time. This was mainly reserved for women and children. Ashes were not enclosed in urns, but deposited in the ground. Men, on the other hand, were not cremated, but buried in a tomb.

At the end of the Bronze Age, burial in burial mounds was replaced, for a time, by cremation and open-ground burial. It was undoubtedly a new ethnic element that determined this change in burial customs. But as soon as foreign influence began to wane, the native population reverted to their old customs.

The custom of the burial mound reappeared at the end of the Hallstatt period – 750 to 480 BC – and continued until the beginning of the La Tène period – 480 to 50 BC. Then, during the Gallic period, burial mounds were definitively abandoned and replaced by flat tombs.

Our distant ancestors were peaceful people, farmers and above all cattle breeders. They sent their pigs to gland in the forest, and their cattle to the vast meadows that stretched between the eastern edge of the forest and the Rhine. These populations had a highly developed religious life. Their funeral rites and piety towards the dead bear witness to this. In their cemeteries, the dead are peacefully buried according to different rites. There don’t seem to have been any slaves or all-powerful, tyrannical chiefs. The burials are modest and show no sign of social inequality. All individuals were buried with the same care. Women were esteemed and honored. They wore short-sleeved blouses and short skirts. On feast days, they adorned themselves with bracelets, necklaces, leg rings, rings, needles... In fact, it seems that women’s graves were the richest. Men’s graves contained swords or daggers, and almost always an axe. The latter seems to have served as a badge for the men. It is never found in women’s graves. Children were also buried with great care. They wore much the same type of finery as adults.

The Age of Iron

The discovery and working of iron, around 750 BC, profoundly changed the life of this population. Iron smiths rose to prominence and shook up society. Weapons and work tools were perfected thanks to the use of iron. While the previous population was more involved in animal husbandry, these newcomers were primarily farmers. They preferred to live on the edge of the forest, on the terraces overlooking the Ried, especially near Schirrhein, **Soufflenheim** and Kœnigsbruck.

During this period, burial mounds took on larger dimensions. Whereas Bronze Age mounds averaged six to ten meters in height, Iron Age mounds were 15 to 25 meters high. Height varies between 0.80 and 2 meters. These tombs contain iron objects, fibulae, bracelets, torques, pins, swords, and belt plates, as well as pottery. The latter are less ornate than those of the Bronze Age.

Numerous graves dating from the late Hallstatt period – 750 to 450 BC – have been discovered near Schirrhein. A child's burial at Schirrheinerweg yielded a torque, an earthenware rattle, a bird, a bracelet, a pearl and two bird-headed fibulae. At Kirchlach, in burial mound no. 102, a sword with an openwork bolt was found. The scabbard is fitted with a ring for attachment to the belt – a unique specimen. The upper part of this tumulus yielded a sword and its scabbard, both bent. It was during the first century that the fashion for cremation with bent swords became widespread.

The study of objects found in tombs from this period reveals a twofold evolution in this society. On the one hand, it became more warlike: axes were replaced by swords. On the other hand, it seems to have become more structured: the social hierarchy seems to have become more assertive. In the Bronze Age, the graves of rich and poor individuals contained more or less the same kinds of objects, whereas in the Iron Age, there were major differences.

The iron modules found in the Eisenbàchel attest to the fact that iron was worked in Schirrhein. Another clue also confirms this. When, in 1927, Georges Gromer, director of the Haguenau Museum, with the help of municipal workers, undertook excavations on the Schirrheinerweg Roman road, he found that the hard, six-meter-wide, heavily compacted roadbed was made up of a 40-centimeter layer of gravel mixed with ferruginous slag. The presence of this slag implies the existence of iron foundries in the vicinity of the road. In fact, one of the forest cantons, located a little to the north of where the slag was found, is still called "Erzlach."

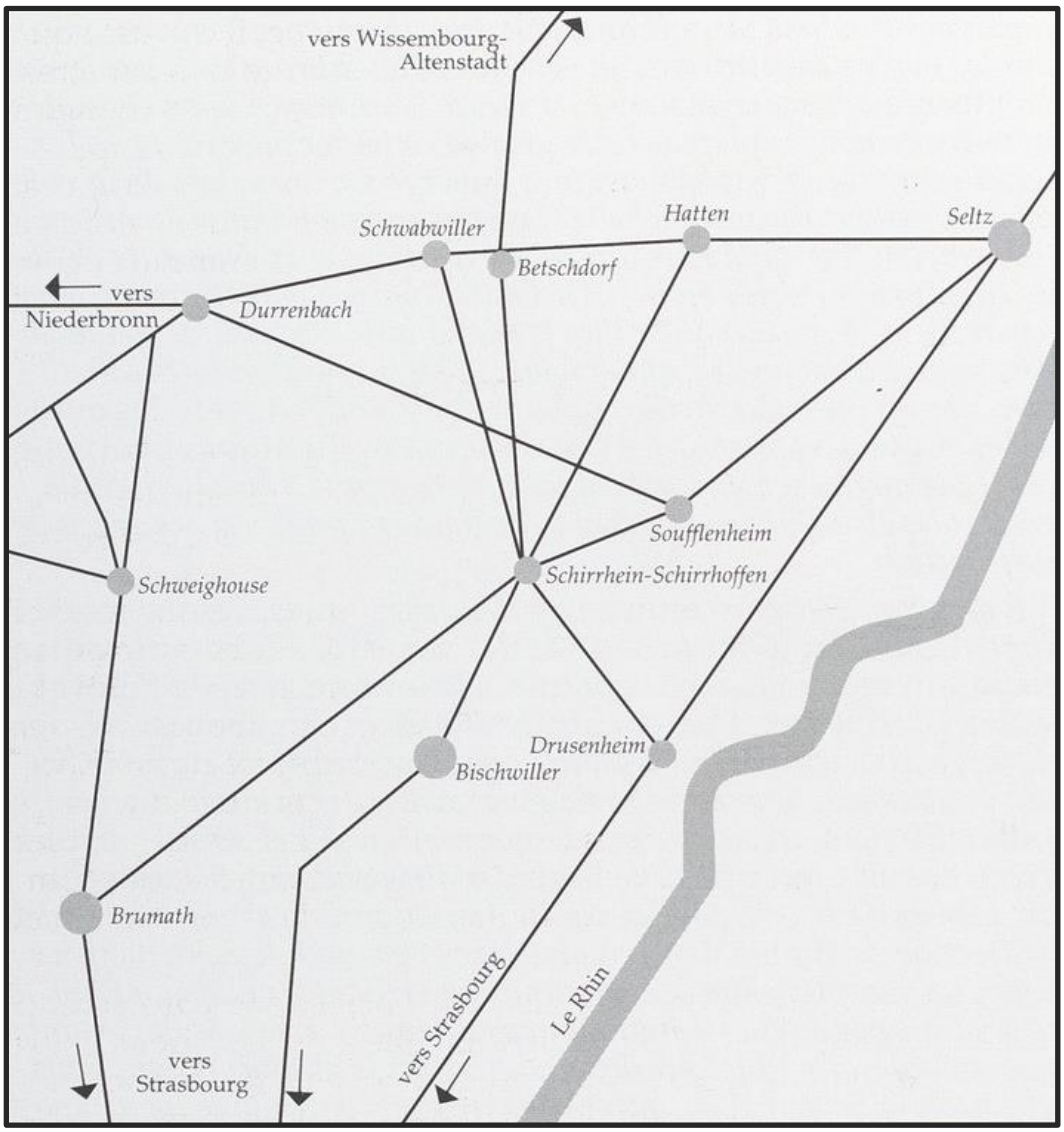
The Roman Period

In the 1st century BC, Germanic hordes – Suevians, Rauracians, Triboques – and others invaded Alsace. Fortunately, they were just passing through. They headed for southern Alsace where, in 58 BC, they were defeated by the Roman general Julius Caesar. Caesar occupied our province and settled the Triboques around Brumath and the Haguenau forest. Brumath then became the capital of the Triboque country, i.e. the administrative center of the region. Seltz became an important military base, from which the Roman legions set out to conquer the land beyond the Rhine. These two centers were not only populated by soldiers, but also by civil servants and merchants, who were responsible for supplying the population and the troops.

From then on, Alsace came under Roman protectorate. The legions fortified the Rhine. They built the fort of Drusenheim. But faced with constant pressure from the peoples beyond the Rhine, they occupied part of Germany, creating what was known as the "limes" – an advanced protection for the empire.

The Romans built communication routes across the country. A major Roman road crossed Alsace from south to north. It ran from Basel to Strasbourg, then on to Brumath, Seltz, Lauterbourg and stretched as far as Mainz. These routes enabled the Roman legions to move around and facilitated rapid trade between major centers. To build these routes, the Romans generally used existing roads, but tried to improve them and give them a straight line. This is how the ancient Celtic road from Brumath to Seltz via Weitbruch and Schirrhoffen became a strategically important Roman route.

The Romans also built stations called “mansiones” at regular intervals along their roads, where soldiers and colonizers could stop, quench their thirst, eat, and sleep. These “mansiones” included a guesthouse, stables, and repair workshops. It seems that one of these Roman stations was located near Schirrhoffen, on both sides of the Eisenbâchel. This station was located halfway between Brumath and Seltz, i.e. 17 kilometers from either town. This corresponded to a day’s journey for horse-drawn convoys and soldiers with their military baggage.



Schematic map of Roman roads around Schirrhein-Schirrhoffen according to M. A. Burg.

Over 100 years ago, Xavier Nessel’s excavations uncovered an ancient Roman “mansion.” In one of his lectures, Xavier Nessel said that “important foundations dating back to Roman times were still well preserved at the beginning of the last century, at least in plot no. 10, towards Schirrhein, on the site better known as the ‘Alte Keller’ or old cellar. Older people have told me that, as children, they often went to

play under the vaults of this cellar, that later the walls gradually collapsed and the stones were taken to Schirrhein. I was able to see for myself the layout of this large, long building, which probably served as an inn on the Roman road between Brumath and Seltz. When these foundations were gradually demolished, a child's grave was uncovered, along with various objects from the funeral rites of the time. On the other side of today's road, in plot no. 8, I discovered the foundations of two round rooms measuring three meters in diameter, which were either towers or bathrooms." Xavier Nessel also claims to have discovered Roman tools and coins in the canton of Seinfeld, also known as Steinacker.

"Opposite the forest are 'die alten Walle,' high mounds containing sections of wall and building debris."

It would appear that in Roman times, this "mansio" was an important crossroads. Several roads originated here, notably to Schwabwiller, Betschdorf, Hatten, Drusenheim and Strasbourg. Xavier Nessel writes that "Schirrhoffen appears to have been an important junction on the trade and traffic route between Brumath and Lauterbourg. In plots 12 and 30, there is a well-preserved network of tracks leading to Schwabwiller.

Another remaining track is clearly visible in plot M° 27. It runs in the direction of Hatten. A little further on, leading from Schirrhoffen, is an old road linking the village to the Rhine. We should not forget to mention another very important route for understanding the history of the forest: the road linking Oberbetschdorf and Schirrhoffen, which merges with the present-day road still in use. It was first mentioned in 995 in the deed of gift by which Empress Adelheid ceded a tenth of a large part of the forest to Seltz Abbey."

Around 350 AD, the Alamanni invaded our country. At first, the Roman armies tried to resist the pressure of the invaders. For the locals, these were years of insecurity, looting and burning, massacre and great misery. From this point onwards, many of the Roman settlements were deserted. Roman domination came to an end.

Around 405, General Stilicho withdrew his legions from the Rhine to protect Italy. The Huns, then the Alamanni again, invaded and settled in our region. The Roman Empire collapsed with astonishing speed.

Nothing is known about the decline and disappearance of the Roman site near Schirrhoffen. Was it destroyed by fire or simply abandoned after the invasions? The excavations, led by Xavier Nessel, reveal a layer of ash on the debris dating back to Roman times. It would therefore appear that this station was destroyed by fire.

After the passage of the Huns and Alamans, the Roman station near Schirrhoffen fell into oblivion. Forest and scrubland took over. The barbarian hordes that followed undoubtedly ignored the site. They even abandoned the ancient Roman road. The site remained uninhabited for a very long time. There were only a few huts, and the inhabitants lived off livestock and crops.

THE ORIGINS OF SCHIRRHEIN

Paul Piemont, one of today's leading experts on toponymy, derives the name Schirrhein from the Latin word "scara," which means watch garrison, controlling the postal service and ensuring road safety. It would appear that there was once a Roman garrison near Schirrhein, whose mission was to protect the road leading to the Rhine. Still according to Paul Piemont, a confusion between the "m" and the "n" would

have given the name Schirrhein instead of Schirrheim. But this hypothesis seems unlikely, given that more than ten centuries separate the period of Roman presence from the origin of the village. It's unlikely that the first settlers to populate the Ried remembered the existence of a Roman garrison here. A much simpler explanation, and probably the most plausible, is that of Edouard Halter.

According to him, the etymology of the name dates back to the Celts. It has a double root. The first is sceir, meaning place or shed for drying hay. Pronounced Scir or Chir, it translates into modern German as Scheune, meaning barn. The second is Rein, German for Rain, meaning grass-covered hillside. At the foot of this Rain, on which today's village stands, the ecclesiastical lords of Haguenau, former owners of the Ried, had set up their hay sheds. Schirrhein therefore means "barn slope." This name illustrates both the origin of the village and its location along the slope at the end of the Moder alluvial fan, connected to the lower Rhine terrace. However, no official document confirms this hypothesis, and linguists have put forward others. For example, Heinrich Menges and Bruno Stehle, in "Deutsches Wôrterbuch fur Elsasser," derive the name "Schirrhein" from Scheer, which means, according to Himly's old Alsatian-French dictionary, "meadow for mowing. But Scheer can also be spelled Schàr or Schâre. According to Friedrich Kluge, in "Etymologisches Wôrterbuch der deutschen Sprache" (1934), these words designate the steep coast, the promontory, the cliff. Thus Schierried would designate the location where "the coast meets the Ried" or "the cliff at the edge of the Ried." Schirrhein would qualify as "a steep slope."

A local expression seems to confirm this origin. Scharbruck was the name given to each of the bridges once built on the Rue Principale. Under these masonry bridges, streams flowed from the forest towards the Ried and into the Fallgraben.

At least twenty different spellings of the name Schirrhein have been found in numerous documents. It fluctuates between the original Schürrieth and the current Schirrhein.

Here are the different spellings of Schirrhein found in documents from the Haguenau municipal archivesor the Bas-Rhin departmental archives:

- Rieth, in 1257 (charte signée par Richard, roi des Romains).
- Schürrieth, in 1313, 1334 et 1568.
- Schierieth, in 1313.
- Schirriet, in 1521 (charte signée par Charles Quint).
- Schürain, in 1601.
- Schürrein, in 1631.
- Schierriedt, in 1636.
- Scheureut, in 1656.
- Schierrieth, in 1686.
- Schirein, in 1711.
- Schierem, in 1753.
- Giraine, in 1756.
- Schirème, in 1769.
- Schirrith, in 1789.
- Schirein and Schirain, in 1790.
- Schirreit, in 1791.
- Schirrein, in 1795.
- Schierheim, in 1796.
- Schirrhein, in 1870.

The name of our village was formed in three successive stages: first Rieth, then Schürrieth and finally Schirrhein. But how should Schirrhein be written? Should we write Schirrhein, as we do today, or should we write Schirrein, as we did for a long time, or should we simply write Schirrain? The question was first raised by the town council on July 8, 1894. The report mentions that a choice had to be made between Schirrhein and Schirrain. In the end, the council decided to retain the “Schirrhein” form, since this spelling appeared on the municipal seal and was already in use in 1870. In 1920, Edouard Halter asked the town council to rectify the spelling of Schirrhein. According to him, the letter “h” had been introduced in the last century by an ill-informed scribe. Schirrein should therefore be spelled as it was in 1795. In any case, let’s leave things as they are today. There’s no need to provoke a “religious war” over one letter. Let’s just write Schirrhein with an “h,” without asking ourselves too many questions.

The Birth of the Village

After the departure of the Romans, the Schirrhein site was gradually abandoned and returned to a wild state. An ungrateful and unfertile land, the area was of no interest to anyone. For centuries, the Rieth remained a region of marsh, forest, and scrub. To understand how today’s village came into being, we need to look back at the history of the Haguenau forest. This is where its true roots lie. Originally, the forest extended far beyond its present boundaries.

A diploma from 994, granting the right to collect tithes in the forest to the Seltz abbey founded in 991 by Princess Gerberge, reveals the boundaries of the Forêt-Sainte. At that time, the Forêt-Sainte was bounded to the north by the Sure – or Sauer – river, to the south by the Matera – or Moder – river, to the west by the Marbach – a small river near Uberach – and to the east by the Eligolesphat – a path that followed the route of today’s road from Kaltenhouse to **Soufflenheim** via Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen.

In the 10th century, the area of today’s Schirrhein was enclosed within the Forêt-Sainte and was legally and ecclesiastically dependent on the court of Schweighouse.

In the 12th century, Frédéric le Borgne had a castle rebuilt on an island in the Moder river, making it his personal residence. He was the true founder of the town of Haguenau. The castle was soon surrounded by numerous settlers. They cleared part of the forest, and little by little a flourishing market developed at the foot of the castle. At the same time, he naturally sought to free the new town from the troublesome dependence on the church in Schweighouse. He succeeded, thanks to the benevolent support of his brother Emperor Conrad III.

Construction of Haguenau’s Saint-Georges church began in 1143. With the permission of the bishop of Strasbourg, the emperor detached Haguenau from the royal court of Schweighouse and elevated the new church to the rank of mother church. With the charter of 1143, Saint-Georges became an autonomous church. Its territory also included the Schirrhein-Schirrhoffen area. Saint-Georges also had the right to collect tithes.

It was Frederick Barbarossa (1152-1190), son of Frederick the One-eyed, who triggered Haguenau’s economic boom. Eager to make his favorite castle, Haguenau, the political center of his empire, he granted the town numerous privileges and exemptions under a charter signed in Rome on July 17, 1164.

To attract peasant clearers, he granted the town’s inhabitants a number of rights of use in the forest, including the right to cut any wood they might need for building and heating, “subject to the condition that no one lay hands on an oak or a beech, except for building purposes. Everyone is free to graze his pigs

and other animals in the forest, with the exception of sheep, on condition that he hires a shepherd to watch over the animals."

It was not necessary to live in the town to enjoy these rights and privileges. Those who lived around the marsh – the Moder – or around Haguenau's Saint-Nicolas hospital also enjoyed them. The text does not expressly mention the Rieth, which at that time was not yet inhabited, but it is tacitly contained therein. It was on this text that Schirrhein's town councilors later based their disputes with Haguenau over the right to use the forest.

The Rieth

Schirrhein is mentioned as Rieth for the first time in history, on May 20, 1257, in a charter signed in Wissembourg by Richard of Cornwall, King of the Romans (the King of the Romans was the prince elected to head the Empire, but who did not yet have the title of Emperor because his predecessor was still alive).

This charter confirms Haguenau's rights over the Rieth: "The king of the Romans, Richard, being in Wissembourg, confirms the rights and privileges of the town, granted to it by the emperors, his predecessors, namely the rights over the forest and the marsh, called Rieth – palus quod vulgariter Rieth nuncupatur."

What we call here Rieth, later Schürrieth or das Gestöck in German, is a district on the left bank of the Moder, consisting of scrubland and forests, successively cleared and converted to meadows. These wetlands were regularly flooded by the Rhine, hence the name marsh. This district was crossed by a large ditch, called Fallgraben, into which the waters of the marsh discharged. At the time, the district was still uninhabited, and covered the area of today's Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen.

Cleared, the Rieth consisted of meadows, which were divided between the patricians and burghers of Haguenau. They were mowed at their own expense and profit, and then, after haymaking, left to the entire population as pastureland. Naturally, these lots reverted to the same families every year. They took on their names and kept them long after their owners had died out. Even today, certain localities in the Schirrhein area bear the names Kaltesch or Lichtenberg.

The Schürrieth

A new name, "Schürrieth," appeared in 1313. After the death of Henri VII of Luxembourg (1308-1313), the grand bailliage of Alsace remained unoccupied for a long time, and it was Haguenau that had the temporary task of administering the forest, which, it should be remembered, was an imperial domain. On October 27, 1313, the chargé d'affaires Jean de Lichtenberg issued a reversal letter to Haguenau, stating that the Schürrieth remained the town's collective property.

Why the change of name? Until now, the Rieth was a collective city asset, divided into numerous plots of varying size, leased each year to local families. These families had built barns or hay sheds at the foot of the terrace.

Gradually, the families who worked these meadows built their huts next to the barns. It would seem that the Rieth began to be populated at this time. These settlers probably came from other countries. It was the magistrate who granted or refused permission for foreigners to settle in the town. The first settlers in

Schürrieth were probably refugees from across the Rhine. The magistrate granted them aid, protection, and rights to use the forest, but not ownership of the land they occupied.

At that time, the Œuvre Saint-Georges de Haguenau collected tithes in the Rieth. The principle of tithing is very ancient. The tenth part of the earth's produce was offered to God. Founded in 1143, the Œuvre Saint-Georges received tithes from certain lands as its first endowment. For example, it had the right to tithe hay in Schirrhein and Kaltenhouse. A text from 1434 states that "each Mannsmatte or field in the Schürrieth gives three pfennigs each year for the tithe to the St. George's work in Hagenau." It should be noted that the term Mannsmatte originally referred to an area of meadow that could be mowed by one man in one day. A Mansmatte had a surface area of around 42 ares. On St. Lucia Tuesday in 1347, the head of the empire once again confirmed the rights of the town of Haguenau over the forest and the Schürrieth. The text, signed by Charles IV of Luxembourg, states that he maintains the town's freedoms, rights, and privileges. It also confirms the town's possession of the cantons in the forest known as Stocky and Schierrieth. The town of Haguenau often appealed to the Emperor to confirm its rights over the Rieth, as certain fiefs were attributed to lords or nobles of the town, who claimed to depend solely on the bailli, i.e. the imperial castle. As they refused to pay their dues to the town, the magistrate often had to appeal to the Emperor to certify and confirm the town's rights by official letters.

On May 4, 1521, Emperor Charles V confirmed Haguenau's rights to the Schürrieth at the Reichstag in Worms. With this diploma, the Emperor acknowledged that his predecessors had long since granted Haguenau possession of the seigneury of the Rieth. He paid tribute to the pleasant and useful services the town had rendered him. He also renewed and confirmed the privileges, concessions, customs, and ancient observances of the Schùrrieth. In the future, Haguenau was to own the Schürrieth in perpetuity, with its pastures and all seigneurial rights: the right to give orders and prohibitions, and to use and enjoy these properties. Those living there were to be subject to the orders of the town magistrate, and to serve him in the same way as the town's burghers.

The emperor invites the prefect, provosts, city collectors and bailiffs to enforce this right and defend it if necessary. Anyone who fails to respect this right will fall into disgrace before him and will be obliged to pay, without remission, ten gold marcs as many times as he sees fit. Half of this sum will go to the imperial chamber, the other half to the Haguenau treasury.

For the first time, a text officially mentions that the Schürrieth was inhabited. It puts an end to all disputes.

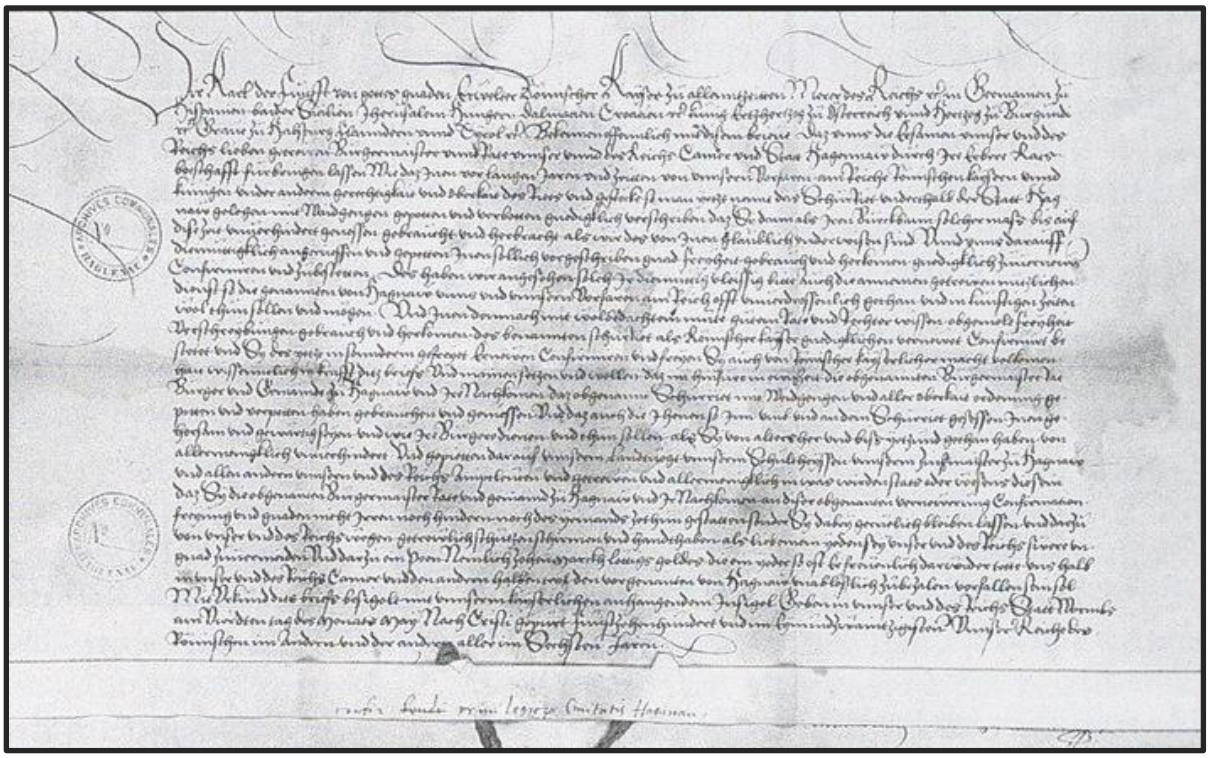
Here is Emperor Charles V's diploma: "We, Charles V, by the grace of God, elected Roman Emperor, still Augustus, King of Germania, Spain, the two Sicilies, Jerusalem, Hungary, Dalmatia and Croatia, Archduke of Austria, Duke of Burgundy and Count of Habsburg, Flanders and Tyrol, publicly acknowledge by the present letters, that the noble souls and fealty of us and of the empire, the councils and councilors of our chamber of the imperial city of Haguenau have made us expose by their honorable deputation of the senate, that many years ago our predecessors in the empire, the Roman emperors and kings, among others, graciously conferred upon them by letters the possession and seigneury of the Rieth and the scrubland, now called the schürrieth, situated below the town of Haguenau, with the pastures and the right to give orders and defenses, that they have enjoyed, used and profited from it without disturbance until our times as their ban ; as we have been sufficiently instructed by them and in a manner worthy of faith ; that they then humbly implored and requested us to graciously renew and confirm to them the said graces, privileges, customs and ancient observances, having regard to these humble requests and insistence, as well as to the pleasant, faithful and useful services zealously rendered by those of Haguenau to us and to our predecessors in the empire, and which they may still render to us in the future, we have consequently, as Roman Emperor, after mature reflection, good counsel and careful instruction, graciously renewed and confirmed the other privileges, concessions,

customs and ancient observances of the Schürrieth, as by virtue of the present letters and by the fullness of our imperial and royal power we knowingly privilege, renew and confirm them."

"We statute and will that in the future and in perpetuity, the said consuls, senate, burghers and community of Haguenau, as well as their successors possess the Schürrieth, with the pastures and all the seigneurial rights as well as that of giving orders and defenses there; that they use and enjoy and that also those who are established in the Schürrieth and around, be obedient and subject to their orders and must serve them in the same way as the burghers and do as they have done since and until now, without impediment from anyone."

"We then order from this our prefect, our provost, our receiver of Haguenau, all our bailiffs and imperial and faithful and all in general, whatever their dignity and state, not to prevent or hinder the aforementioned consuls, senate and community of Haguenau, nor their successors in the said renewals, confirmations, privileges and graces, nor allow anyone else to do so, but to maintain, protect and defend them in our name and that of the empire, insofar as each person wishes to avoid our disgrace and that of the empire, with a fine of ten gold marcs, which each person will be obliged to pay without remission as many times as appropriate, half to our imperial chamber and half to the above-mentioned people of Haguenau."

"In witness whereof we have given these letters sealed with our imperial seal in our imperial city of Worms on the 4th day of the month of May in the year 1521 after the birth of Christ, the 2nd of our imperial reign and of the others the sixth." "Ad mandatum Domini Imperatoris Proprium Albertus."



Diploma recognizing the rights of the city of Haguenau over the Schurrieth
delivered by Charles Quint to the Reichstag of Worms, May 4, 1521.

Village Administration in the Late Middle Ages

Schirrhein, as we have seen, was an annex of Haguenau, with the town magistrate acting as lord and judge of the village. The villagers were his subordinates and had to swear obedience to him.

The magistrate of Haguenau entrusted the administration of the village to a Heimburger, who was elected by the local inhabitants. The Heimburger administered the village, policed it, collected fines, and supervised the communal ban. He kept accounts of income and expenditure, and had them checked and approved each year by the town magistrate. He was assisted in his administrative work by jurors, die Geschworenen, who were also elected.

The villagers did chores for the benefit of the town's inhabitants, while the town never contributed to the village's expenses. Nor did it participate in the capital expenditure.

Haguenau also received various fees from Schirrhein for its protection. For example, Haguenau levied a tax known as Marzahl or household duty. This tax was levied on all individuals, whether bourgeois or not. As long as an individual lived within the jurisdiction, he or she was liable to pay it.

At that time, Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen consisted of huts and barns built at the bottom of the slope bordering the forest massif. The two villages were linked by two roads, one at the bottom of the slope, called "Mont des Vaches," and the other on the slope, called "Mont des Chevaux."

IN THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES

The late Middle Ages and early 16th century were a period of prosperity and peace for our region. No wars ravaged the country. Economic life was in full transformation. Trade was expanding. People lived relatively well. In 1525, the Peasants War broke out, wreaking havoc in Saverne, Molsheim, Scherwiller and the Sundgau, but hardly affecting our region. In the middle of the 16th century, the Protestant Reformation took hold in Alsace, but did not affect our two villages. While the great neighboring lords, the Lichtenbergs and Fleckensteins, rallied to the Reformation, Haguenau remained Catholic. Its two annexes, Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen, remained faithful to the old principle of "one prince, one religion". On the other hand, the neighboring village of Oberhoffen, which depended on the Lichtenbergs, became entirely Protestant.

The Thirty Years War

The peace that marked the end of the Middle Ages was broken by the Thirty Years War in 1618.Originally, this conflict was a religious war between Lutheran princes and Catholics in the Holy Roman Empire, led by the Emperor. The House of Austria remained faithful to the Catholic Church, while the princes and most of the free towns, with the exception of Haguenau, rallied to the Reformation. The conflict soon degenerated into a European one, with Sweden, Spain and France entering the fray one after the other. Alsace, in turn, experienced the horrors of war. It was even at the heart of this European conflict.

From November 1621 to July 1622, Ernest von Mansfeld's Lutheran troops invaded northern Alsace. They captured Lauterbourg and occupied Haguenau in December 1621. Ernest von Mansfeld established his headquarters there. From then on, his troops carried out murderous raids on neighboring villages. They looted and burned everything in their path. The frightened villagers fled to the Rhine islands, where they built huts.

In Oberhoffen, for example, the church and presbytery were looted and burned. There was nobody left in the village. The meadows were not mowed that year. Bischwiller and Herrlisheim were also pillaged on February 6, 1622.

It seems that Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen were better protected thanks to the Niedheimers, who had their residence in Schirrhoffen. Like all large landowners, they sought to defend and preserve their property and rights, and had the means to do so. After 1636, Haguenau challenged Jean-Philippe Niedheimer's claim to the hamlet of Schirrhein. The latter defended himself by asserting that "At that time there was not a single person who would have given only 20 guilders for the Schierrieth, and at that time a guilder was valued as highly as it is now. By the way, the village, like others, was burned down at that time, which I negotiated with great lords and people through great expense and good recommendation."

Mansfeld's hordes were subsequently repulsed by Catholic troops. Unfortunately, the latter in turn plundered all that the former had spared.

In the spring of 1632, General Horn's Swedish hordes crossed the Rhine. They had rallied to the Protestant princes and roamed victoriously across northern Germany. In 1633, these Swedish hordes ravaged the entire province, committing the worst cruelties that people remembered for centuries. Entire villages disappeared. They requisitioned almost all the livestock in Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen.

General Horn returned with his troops in 1634, but the Emperor, then the King of France and finally Prince Bernard of Saxony-Weimar fought over the country for years, causing famine, plague, atrocities and suffering. The years 1635 to 1639 were particularly deadly. Fighting and the presence of soldiers prevented normal work in the fields. Alsatians became miserable people.

On December 12, 1636, after the French intervention, Haguenau ran into such financial difficulties that it had to sell the hamlet of Schierriedt with all its rights and outbuildings for 350 florins to Jean-Philippe Niedheimer, master of the Schirrhof. The contract of sale, signed on December 12, 1636, was worded as follows: "Having taken into consideration that the current onerous war charges have depleted and diminished not only the town's income and fortune, but also those of each and every citizen, and that there is no longer any possibility of levying on the citizens the slightest amount to meet the most urgent expenses, that consequently it has become inevitable to consider extraordinary means – if we do not want to expose ourselves to total and general ruin – and to resolve to do so in the absence of others. ... we have appropriately requested and solicited by unanimous resolution, the very noble and just Jean-Philippe Niedheimer of Wasenbourg, our colleague and former Stettmeister, to assist us in this distress, that we have also had him propose the following sale, and that after long negotiations, made accordingly, we have loyally sold and given to acquire to our said colleague Jean-Philippe Niedheimer, the small village with all its rights and dependencies, known under the name of Schierriedt. Whereupon we have transferred our rights in the Schierriedt, with all appurtenances, rights and dependencies, high justice, seigniory and territorial jurisdiction, as well as dominion in the same manner as we have enjoyed from time immemorial and still do. It has been expressly stated and agreed that in the event of resale by the purchaser, his descendants or assigns, the honorable senate and the town shall in all cases have the right of first refusal."

This deed of sale was later contested. After the Thirty Years War, the magistrate demanded that the contract be rescinded. Towards the end of 1684, the Sovereign Council of Alsace annulled the contract and returned the lands and seigneury of Schierriedt to Haguenau, in return for repayment of the purchase price.

This map drawn up by Specklin in 1576 mentions Schirrhein under the name "Schirem". The village is entirely surrounded by forests.

The Schierriedt was officially taken over by Haguenau on January 8, 1685. On this day, the king's deputy, the lender, the Stettmeister, the magistrate and his advisors, two clerks and two marshals, went to Schierriedt. They assembled the Schierriedt inhabitants at the "Le Lyon d'Or" guesthouse, which served as a house of justice – there was no town hall at the time – and read out the Sovereign Council's decision.

They also asked all local inhabitants to raise their hands and swear to recognize the lenders, Stettmeister and magistrates of the town of Haguenau in the future, to deliver to them the seigniorial rights, to do the chores to which they are bound towards their lord, to behave in everything as subjects and vassals, are obliged to do towards their particular lord and to show them the respect due in this capacity. All signed the document. Haguenau thus recovered the Schierriedt. The Schierriedt remained the property of the town until the French Revolution.

The Treaties of Westphalia ended the Thirty Years War in 1648. Part of Alsace became French, but was ravaged and depopulated. More than a third of the population had disappeared. The French administration was faced with an enormous task of reorganization.

A Recovery Period

To rebuild the country and encourage repopulation, in 1662 Louis XIV asked former owners of castles, manors, abandoned houses and fallow land to assert their ownership rights within three months before a royal commission specially created for this purpose. After this period, unclaimed real estate would be made available to third parties, whether natives or immigrants professing the Roman religion.

It wasn't until 1686 that the Schirrhein-Schirrhoffen ban was consolidated. On March 27 of that year, the Sovereign Council of Alsace appointed Stettmeister Bartholomé Frantzen as commissioner for the renewal of the ban. Frantzen summoned all landowners to the town hall by July 26. He asked them to bring their original titles or certified copies, so that everyone could assert their rights and take possession of their property. The report drawn up by commissioner Frantzen gives a detailed account of the houses, gardens, arable land and meadows on the Schierriedt estate. The ban comprised 41 houses, two of which belonged to the Niedheimers. The Schirrhof included nine houses, all of which have been rebuilt. It would appear that they were destroyed during the Thirty Years War. Much of Schierriedt's land belonged to the master of the Schirrhof or to outsiders. Here's how they were distributed:

- The Niedheimers: 319 fauchées.
- Œuvre Saint-Georges de Haguenau: 105 fauchées.
- Baron de Türckheim: 98 fauchées.
- Baron de Flaxlanden: 34 fauchées.
- Lord of Wickersheim: 26 fauchées.
- Cordeliers de Haguenau: 21 fauchées.
- Prémontrés: 4 fauchées.
- Saverne chapter: 16 fauchées.
- Carthusian monks of Molsheim: 6 fauchées.
- Saint-Nicolas de Schirrhein parish: 16 fauchées.

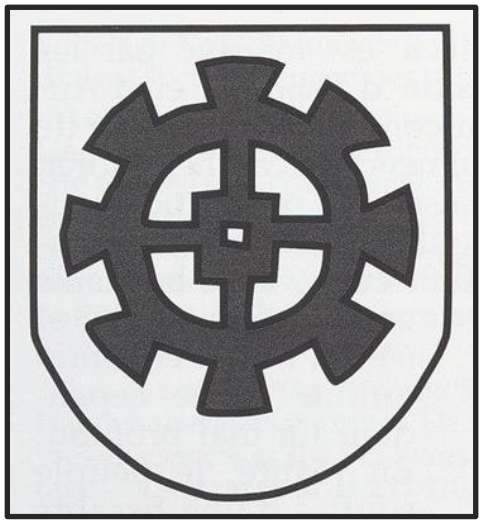
The remaining land belonged to private individuals in Schierriedt. So 53% of the land was owned by people from outside the village. This situation changed with the French Revolution.

To help repopulate the country, Louis XIV called on foreigners. He encouraged immigration by granting settlers land to clear, tax exemptions for six years and timber for construction. Settlers from Switzerland, Baden and Bavaria settled in Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen. Even today, certain family names bear witness to the origins of these immigrants, such as the Appenzeller and Schiffli families from Switzerland, or the Heisserer, Dorffer, Schmitter and Gentner families from southern Germany.

A Witchcraft Trial in Schirrhein

In the 16th and 17th centuries, as in many other regions, witchcraft trials took place in Haguenau. Belief in evil spells and witchcraft was widespread, and the Thirty Years War accentuated it.

These trials were presided over by the town magistrate. Most of the time, they ended in the violent death of the accused. The Jesuits accompanied the condemned to the ordeal. In 1616, eight women were burned alive. In 1618, three others and a boy were burned to death. Ten years later, Adam Harthausen, known as “the Black”, was brought before the judge for witchcraft, along with his wife and 14-year-old son. He killed himself in his cell.



Formerly Schirrhein had the same coat of arms as Mulhouse: a mill wheel.: The origin of this wheel probably dates back to the settlers who came from Switzerland or southern Germany, who, after the Thirty Years' War, repopulated our region. It is, without doubt, in memory of their country of origin where there was a lot of water and mills, that they chose this emblem. But to avoid any confusion with the coat of arms of Mulhouse, the competent authorities preferred, after 1945, to confer on Schirrhein as an emblem the axe and the half-rose, another historical memory.

In 1630, Hanz Lentz, a resident of Schirrhein, was accused of witchcraft. Here’s his story: on the Feast of the Kings, this man invited a band of merry men to his table. The food was good and the wine flowed freely. Some of them drank from the same cup as Hanz Lentz. Soon afterwards, they felt ill. A young girl from the village who had drunk from the same cup fell ill and died three days later. The death was probably caused by oxidation of the uncleaned pewter cup, but Hanz Lentz was accused of witchcraft. He was brought before the Haguenau court. His companions, who were supposed to appear before the court as witnesses, did not appear. Two medical experts from Strasbourg examined the fatal cup. To make the accused talk, he was subjected to the usual torture. Finally, he confessed to the crime. But what’s the value of such a confession? Today, it’s well known that any confession can be extracted under torture. The accused tried to commit suicide in his cell, but failed. Meanwhile, two other villagers accused him of causing the death of two of their horses through evil spells. The trial took place on February 16, 1630, and the verdict was harsh: decapitation by hanging.

To this day, we remain perplexed by such events. We can only deplore them, and feel the same way about the passions that provoked them. But let’s not forget that many countries still use torture today. This is not in line with the charter of human rights.

IN THE 18TH CENTURY

Although the 18th century was marked by the Wars of the Spanish and Austrian Succession, our region enjoyed a period of tranquility and peace. The forest began to be cleared, new houses were built, the population increased and life in the village went on peacefully. The village had 15 households in 1630, 30 in 1693, 364 inhabitants in 1720, 560 in 1763 and 640 in 1793. However, this tranquility concealed a deep-seated malaise. In reality, the people were suffering from ever-increasing taxation. Taxes and burdens weighed heavily on the poor, mainly rural dwellers. Peasants are exhausted. Once their crops have been sold and taxes paid, they have little left to survive on until the next harvest. This situation led to great discontent, which was one of the causes of the French Revolution.

The Spanish War of Succession

This war, which lasted from 1701 to 1714, had its origins in the succession to the Spanish throne. King Charles II of Spain had named the grandson of Louis XIV, Duke Philippe d'Anjou, as his successor. The French king readily accepted this succession, which was in his own interests. But the European powers refused, and declared war on Spain and France. Once again, Northern Alsace was to bear the brunt of the war.

On October 15, 1702, Lieutenant General de Friesen, a Saxon by birth and governor of Landau, seized Lauterbourg and Wissembourg. He laid siege to Fort-Louis and sent his troops in the direction of Haguenau. His demands on the town and surrounding villages were heavy: requisitions of men and carriages, supplies of grain, flour, fodder and wood.

He asked the town magistrate to provide 25 diggers and a cart with four horses to dismantle the square he commanded. The magistrate decided that the wagon and carriage would be supplied by Schirrhein. The workers would be drawn successively from the tribes, the peasants, and the Jews.

On February 19, 1703, General Friesen demanded 12,000 livres from Haguenau for his winter quarters, of which 1,000 livres were to be paid immediately. Greatly embarrassed by this demand, the magistrate called a meeting of the town's bourgeoisie. The choice was between advancing the funds by mortgage or distributing the sum on the basis of individual fortunes. In the end, the bourgeoisie preferred the latter and taxed Schirrhein 400 florins.

The sacrifices imposed on the 35 villages [including Soufflenheim] of the grand bailliage of Haguenau were enormous. From 1705 to 1712, the town had to provide 29,908 pounds in cash and 205,512 pounds in kind (livestock, grain, wine, fodder, etc.), for a total of 235,420 pounds. The imperial army, and later the French armies, imposed burdens on the town that rapidly exceeded the limits of its financial possibilities.

In 1706, Marshal de Villars, commanding the French troops, counter-attacked, retaking Haguenau and liberating Fort-Louis. The French troops then built locks on the Moder river to flood the area and improve the defensive system of the Ried. By 1706, over 4,000 local farmers were employed in the construction of these defensive lines along the Moder and Haguenau.

These locks had catastrophic consequences for the people of Schirrhein: the old houses built at the bottom of the embankment were flooded, and the inhabitants had to seek refuge in the forest. The forest

along the plateau was then cleared. Houses were built and the fields reclaimed from the forest were cultivated.

Naturally, the State took a dim view of these illegal clearings. On December 1, 1714, an edict from the Grand Master of the Forest ordered the mayors of the two communes to collect for the King the fruits of the land they had cleared in the “Rin” of the forest.

In 1716, the Forestry Department ordered these people to demolish their homes and return the illegallyacquired land to the State. The administration wanted to take back the borrowed land as quickly as possible. A dispute arose between the two communes and the State.

But in the end, common sense prevailed. Given that the dams built in 1714 made the old houses at the bottom of the slope uninhabitable, the State Counsil decided on July 11, 1716 to leave the cleared land in the hands of its new owners, on condition that they pay an annual royalty of six sous per acre to the State coffers.

The War of the Austrian Succession

On October 20, 1740, Emperor Charles VI died. His succession proved very difficult. Would his daughter Maria Theresa ascend the throne, or the Bavarian Crown Prince Charles Albert? France, which supported the candidacy of the Crown Prince of Bavaria, was drawn into a new European conflict.

The conflict pitted Prussia, Bavaria, Saxony, Spain, and France against Austria. This anti-Austrian coalition initially achieved major successes: the conquest of Silesia by Prussia, and the conquest of Upper Austria and Bohemia with Prague by the French and Bavarians.

In 1742, Maria Theresa, the pretender to the throne, put this coalition in a difficult situation by enlisting the help of the Hungarians and the English. The French army was forced to withdraw from southern Germany.

On July 2, 1744, a 60,000-strong Austrian army under the command of Maria Theresa’s brother-in-law, Prince Charles de Lorraine, crossed the Rhine and invaded northern Alsace. It captured Lauterbourg and Wissembourg, then headed for Haguenau.

Among these Austrian invaders was the notorious Pandour Corps, commanded by Franz Trenck. These Pandours, also known as “the red coats” – Rotmân tel – were brutal, plundering Hungarian mercenaries serving in the Austrian army. They were to ravage the Alsatian countryside for several months. Prince Charles established his headquarters in Haguenau. His troops captured Saverne and pillaged the entire Kochersberg region. The Austrians remained in the region for six weeks, committing unbelievable atrocities. In his opuscule “Aus dem Pandurenlärm,” J. Crede, pseudonym of Abbé Julien Schiess and vicar in **Soufflenheim** from 1903, notes that the tales told in thatched cottages by the fire on winter evenings about the behavior of the Pandours, these barbarians of rare cruelty, were in no way exaggerated. Just the way these warriors dressed was enough to create panic and fear among the population: their oriental headgear, their long coats fluttering in the wind, their strange furs and leathers, their high boots, their belts with their many and varied weapons dangling menacingly, their enormous sabres! How well their sinister, frightening exterior matched their demeanor! Riding on their half-wild horses, they killed everything they could lay their hands on with obvious, cruel pleasure. They also set fire to what they had looted. They mutilated their poor victims, detaching one limb after another from their bodies, or killing in an atrocious and unimaginable manner. Sometimes they would disembowel their

victims and stuff live cats into their bellies. Before the horrified eyes of suffering mothers, they strangled their children and crushed the newborns' heads with their boots. So the peasants fled, hiding in cellars and barns, as soon as they heard the sound of their wild horses galloping and their weapons clanking, or saw their scarlet cloaks fluttering in the wind. Sadly, the poor fugitives were often caught by the merciless executioners, shot and burned in their hiding places. The cruelty of the Pandours matched that of the Swedes who, a century earlier, had rampaged through our region during the Thirty Years' War. So, Swedes and Pandours are equally hated by the inhabitants of our region. Hence the names "Wild Swedes" and "Wild Pandours."

In August 1744, Marshal de Noailles' French troops drove Austrian troops from Saverne, liberated the Kochersberg, advanced towards the Rhine and occupied Bischwiller. On Sunday, August 23, 1744, at around 4 p.m., Chevalier de Belle Isle, the Marshal's brother, advanced with his troops towards Schirrhein. He passed through the village along the sunken lane and advanced along the road towards **Soufflenheim.** Suddenly, in the middle of the forest, he came up against Austrian outposts. A fierce battle ensued. The Austrians lost 2,000 men and abandoned **Soufflenheim.** The mound where the Austrian outposts were located still bears the name of Pandurenkopf.

When Marshal de Noailles learned of his brother's success at **Soufflenheim,** he and his troops advanced through Drusenheim towards Rœschwoog. The Austrians burned and abandoned the village of Auenheim.

During the night, the French encountered fierce Austrian resistance near Rœschwoog. A very confused battle ensued. Many cavalrymen were knocked off their feet. Eventually, the French restored order, while the Austrians left around 1,200 dead on the battlefield. On August 26, the French arrived at the gates of

Fort-Louis. The Austrians hastily lifted the siege and retreated via Beinheim and Seltz across the Rhine, demolishing the Rhine bridge behind them. But Louis XV attached little importance to this reconquest. J. Crede notes that the French officers also experienced disappointment, an experience they least expected, since it came from their own king. The desire to win laurels for the royal crown encouraged them to fight without fear of death. So they gave their all in the performance of their duty, with many others seriously wounded. They were convinced that the news of this glorious victory would bring joy to the convalescent king, who himself had just overcome his illness. Alas, this was not to be, as the king was far less concerned with the glory of his country than with the favors of the Duchess of Châteauroux, with whom he was in love. Of the fighting on August 23rd, the only interesting fact the king found worth mentioning was the stampede of the soldiers' horses through the streets of Rœchwoog. The king liked to make fun of this fact. Whenever he met an officer who had taken part in this battle, he never failed to ask: "Are you also one of those who, on August 23 at Rœschwoog, were thrown to the ground by their horse?" The courtiers found the king's attitude very witty, and dubbed August 23 "tumble day."

Village Administration in the Eighteenth Century

Schirrhein was then an annex of Haguenau. The village master was the Schultheifi. He administered the town, the undivided forest and the villages of Kaltenhouse and Schirrhein. He presided over the town court and was responsible for public safety.

He collected taxes on behalf of the king, and supervised the chores performed by peasants on behalf of the bailiff and his collaborators. His powers were therefore very extensive. He received remuneration for his multiple functions. In 1727, for example, the commune of Schirrhein paid him an indemnity of 30 florins.

At the head of the village was a Heimburger, sometimes also called Bürgermeister. He was the most important person in the village. He was elected annually by the villagers and was responsible for administering the community's assets. The Heimburger could appoint two Gesellen (deputies) to assist him, but neither he nor his deputies received any remuneration.

Communal accounts were drawn up year by year by the Heimburger and audited by the intendant's subdelegate, the bailli (king's prosecutor), the provost, the burgomasters and the magistrate's clerks. Accounts were drawn up in Gulden (florins), Schilling (sous) and Pfennig (deniers). The florin was worth 120 denarii. Accounts were drawn up in German. Surplus income was carried forward to the following year.

The commune's resources were recorded in the register of royal taxes, the register of retributions and the register of foreigners owning property in the commune.

The register of royal taxes is by far the most important. It included the subsidy known as konigliche Impositionsgelder or Schatzung, taxes and the fodder tax.

Schirrhein Municipal Accounts in the Eighteenth Century

(in florins)

Year	Income	Expenses	Heimburger
1702	881	868	Hanz Witt
1705	1,096	1218	Magnus Heusser
1710	694	676	Joseph Zircher
1715	1,193	1,135	Hanz Laengert
1720	718	689	Michel Heisserer
1725	860	778	Hanz Laengert
1730	788	722	Jakob Leymann
1735	1,323	1,275	Johannes Borieg
1740	787	726	Mathias Dannenmuller
1745	1,796	1,311	Johann Lux
1750	869	841	Michael Harter
1755	866	752	Joseph Schmitter
1760	892	881	Lorentz Schmitter
1765	1,608	1,323	Maurice Halter
1770	1,422	1,481	Heinrich Halter
1775	1,710	1,700	Johann-Martin Schott
1780	1,581	1,568	Mathias Weiss
1785	2,036	1,993	Michael Halter
1788	1,485	1,444	Joseph Dannenmuller

The subsidy was a tax that the commune paid each year. The commune collected this tax and paid it into the royal coffers. It varied according to the sovereign's needs and increased from year to year. Between

1710 and 1740, it brought in an average of 300 to 400 florins. By the time of the Revolution, it had risen to 1,200 and even 1,500 florins. This is how the commune of Schirrhein paid:

- 390 florins for a total income of 952 florins, in 1703.
- 250 florins for a total income of 694 florins, in 1723.
- 420 florins for a total income of 788 florins, in 1730.
- 390 florins for a total income of 787 florins, in 1740.
- 393 florins for a total income of 869 florins, in 1750.
- 1,124 florins for a total income of 1,581 florins, in 1780.
- 1,502 florins for a total income of 2,036 florins, in 1785.

Under the Ancien Régime, the tax system was very heavy. The countless wars waged by the kings of France only added to the burden, which fell mainly on the working classes. These taxes became particularly crushing as the French Revolution approached.

Another royal tax was the “dixième,” “vingtième,” and “cinquantième.” The tenth was levied from 1710 to 1713, the fiftieth between 1725 and 1728 and the twentieth from 1749 until the Revolution, i.e. 160 florins in 1760, 188 in 1778 and 222 in 1787.

Then there was the fodder tax, Fourragegelder, which was paid by the commune to the royal store in Haguenau for military purposes, such as buying feed for army horses. Schirrhein paid 150 florins in 1702, 187 florins in 1714, 263 florins in 1744, 536 florins in 1735, 324 florins in 1765 and 274 florins in 1783.

Then there were the expenses paid by the commune for the militiamen, their equipment and pay. These expenses were particularly high during wars such as those of the Spanish and Austrian Succession: 541 florins in 1747, 162 in 1748 and 86 in 1749.

In addition to the royal taxes, there were the old seigniorial dues – herrschaftliche Gelder – owed to the Haguenau prefecture. This was essentially the corvée – Frohngelder . At the beginning of the century, the population paid many days of corvée each year to serve the town. From 1716, the corvée [unpaid forced labor] was replaced by a tax added to the capitation, paid four times a year, the Quartalgeld.

The “Kompetenzgelder” – the register of fees – recorded the sums collected by the commune from residents and paid to the parish priest, schoolmaster and municipal employees.

As for the register of foreigners owning property in the commune, it mentions that the commune collected an average of 92 florins per year. Let’s not forget that most of Schirrhein’s property belonged to foreigners.

The commune’s revenues could have been sufficient to meet its needs, but the king monopolized a large part of them. With the remaining sum, the commune compensated its authorities and agents: the Schultheifi (39 florins in 1727), the Heimburger (10 florins in 1759), the parish priest (100 florins for jahrliche Kompetenz and 6.5 cords of wood), the schoolmaster (8.8 florins), the cowherd (8 florins in 1759), the Wachter (3 florins) and the midwife (3.3 florins). It also financed the work required in the ban: regular cleaning of the Fallgraben, maintenance of roads and bridges, repair and upkeep of communal buildings, in particular the school.

The commune also bought and maintained the communal bull. In 1727, for example, the commune paid 22.5 florins for a communal bull and 7.2 florins for hay.

She paid a militiaman to kill the wolves still present in our region, to cut the horns off cows and to brand pigs.

The commune paid the village innkeeper for meals taken in his home when the bishop, Schultheiss or other VIPs visited, i.e. 32 florins in 1727.

The commune also contributed to the costs of the Corpus Christi procession. In 1727, for example, it bought 1.9 florins worth of gunpowder, as it was customary to fire a salvo in front of the repositories at the time of the blessing.

[Alsatian immigrants to Western New York were found preforming the Corpus Christi procession in 1880! The Kieffer, Voegele, Halter, Fuchs, and Nuwer families from Soufflenheim were participants in the procession.]

Village Situation Circa 1760

The register of the status and valuation of real estate drawn up in 1760 by Haguenau to fix the tax known as the vingtième (twentieth) enables us to assess the structure and situation of Schirrhein as the Revolution approached. The register shows house owners and values, as well as the surface area of land, meadows, forests and gardens.

At that time, Schirrhein boasted 94 dwellings of very unequal value. The three richest houses in the village belonged to people who didn't live there: Stettmeister Perraud, Diebold Erbs and Procureur Gâtt, all of whom lived in Haguenau.

Most of the houses were very modest. Twenty-six of them, owned by people who had neither farm nor land, were valued at 15 or 20 florins. Sixty others were worth between 40 and 100 florins. Only four were worth more than 100 florins. The most beautiful and richest house was that of Geôrg Heisserer, valued at some 610 florins.

The people of Schirrhein lived in poverty. Fortunately for them, the immense Haguenau forest was nearby. There, they could gather firewood and graze their herds.

Some fifteen owners, nobles or ecclesiastical lords, owned around 58% of the land. Here are the names of these owners in order of property size:

- Le seigneur de Vorstatt: 500 fauchées.
- L'Œuvre Saint-Georges: 121 fauchées.
- Le seigneur de Turckheim: 98 fauchées.
- Le Stettmeister Perraud: 90 fauchées.
- Le seigneur de Flaxland: 36 fauchées.
- Le seigneur de Rondam: 33 fauchées.
- Diebold Erbs: 24 fauchées.
- Le Schultheiss Georg Wirtherr: 24 fauchées.
- Le chapitre de Saverne: 20 fauchées.
- Le collège des Jésuites de Haguenau: 14 fauchées.
- Le procureur Gâtt: 10 fauchées.
- Le baron Krebs: 5 fauchées.
- Les Chartreux de Molsheim [Carthusians]: 4 fauchées.

- Die grauen Klosterfrauen de Haguenau [Grey Nuns]: 4 fauchées.
- Die blauen Klosterfrauen de Haguenau [Blue Nuns]: 4 fauchées.

The most important farms in the village were owned by out-of-town landowners. The villagers owned only one or two fauchées, except for Geôrg Heisserer, who owned 46.

The Schirrhein ban, covering 624 hectares, was extremely fragmented. It was divided into 495 parcels. By the following century, the number of plots had risen to 2,940. Most plots are small, covering 0.30 are. Few are larger than one swath. There are, however, a few large plots, but these are owned by foreigners. The land belonging to the Œuvre Saint-Georges de Haguenau was divided into two parcels: the one near the **Süffelheimer Bann** had a surface area of 16 fauchées, the one near the Oberhoffer Bann a surface area of 105 fauchées. The lord of Turckheim owned a parcel of 98 fauchées, and Stettmeister Perraud's parcel was equivalent to 90 fauchées. The oldest estates retained their original structure, while the properties of the local families became increasingly fragmented as a result of inheritance divisions.

In 1781, Ignace Perraud's heirs sold the land and meadows they owned in the Schierrieth, i.e. the Reeberg (3.5 arpents near the church for 300 livres), Grinling (11 arpents for 2,000 livres), Lichtenbergerin (10 arpents for 2,000 livres), Kirchmatt (12 arpents for 3,200 livres), Hofplatz (7 arpents for 2,000 livres) and Altmatt (10 arpents for 2,000 livres).

Land Distribution in the 18th Century (in Mannsmatten)

	0-1	1-5	5-10	10-20	More than 20	Total Areas
Local farmers	24	52	5	1	1	200
Farmers of the surrounding area	4	13	1	-	-	33
Commons	-	-	-	-	-	32
Local bourgeois	-	2	1	-	-	12
Bourgeois from elsewhere	1	4	6	2	-	70
Lay Lords	-	1	1	-	-	308
Ecclesiastical Lords	-	4	2	2	-	186

As for the profitability of the soil and the agricultural situation, the 1773 report mentions that the Schierrieth or Schirein ban differs little from that of the town. It is, however, a little better, since some wheat is grown there. No madder is grown here for lack of manure, which is barely sufficient for cultivating the land. The land is prone to flooding in wet years. Moreover, agriculture is not in good condition due to the aridity of the soil. There are 560 inhabitants, including children. They eat a lot of potatoes. It's estimated that they need 400 to 500 sacks more than they collect in rye, which they come to buy at the market in our town.

In 1753, the Schirrhein harvests and the needs of the population were distributed as follows:

- Rye products: 160 bags.
- Rye requirements: 320 bags.
- Oat products: 30 bags.
- Oat requirements: 60 bags.
- Hay quantity: 400 quintals.
- Hay requirements: 800 quintals.

- Straw quantity: 200 quintals.
- Straw requirements: 400 quintals.
- Amount of wheat: very little.

The land on the Schirrhein ban produced about half of what the inhabitants and their livestock consumed. They were obliged to buy what was lacking at the Haguenau market.

Schirrhein's economic situation is very precarious. The poverty of the housing stock confirms the impression conveyed by the Haguenau magistrate's reports. While the value of the largest farms in Schirrhein does not exceed 300 florins, a house in Hardhouse or Batzendorf is worth an average of 200 florins, while a large farm is worth 640 to 830 florins.

The Ban Map of 1760

By the middle of the 18th century, rural overcrowding in Alsace was posing a serious livelihood problem. To solve this problem systematically and with the help of very precise data, around 1760, the intendants ordered large-scale maps of each commune, on a scale of around 1:5,200. Thanks to this handwritten map from 1760, we know a great deal about the agricultural economy of the time.

We reproduce here the various names of the cantons in the Schirrhein-Schirrhoffen ban with their surface areas, specifying that the arpent (30 or 50 ares) was divided into 100 perches – one perch is equal to 34.18 m 2. The two communes totaled 1,261 arpents and 19 perches.

Plan of the Ban of Schirrhein in 1760

Arable land, meadows and houses	Arpents	Perches
Harth-feld	160	46
Klein Neufeld	14	27
Grossmatt and Strenge	376	28
Bilderau and Schitrinau	216	74
Kaltenhaissler Feld and Hedwan	356	94
The village and houses	35	31

Plan of the Ban of Schirrhof in 1760

Arable land, meadows and houses	Arpents	Perches
Altfeld	79	31
Haussmatt	3	18
The village and houses	18	71

At the Time of the French Revolution

The French Revolution triggered a veritable earthquake in our country's political, economic, cultural, and religious landscape. The Ancien Régime collapsed and a new world took its place.

Of course, the Revolution brought us some very positive things. It gave us the Declaration of the Rights of Man. It abolished feudal rights and a tax system that had become unbearable for peasants. It also enabled many small farmers to own a few plots of land. Last but not least, it led to the independence of our two communes. But the Revolution was also guilty of a great deal of disorder, vandalism, intolerance and persecution. Much blood was shed. The revolutionaries wanted the ideals of liberty, justice, and equality to triumph in our country. They only partly succeeded.

The causes of the Revolution are well known: absolute monarchy, the feudal regime inherited from the Middle Ages, the waste of public finances, the scandalous life of the Versailles court, the exploitation of the population by secular or ecclesiastical lords and the impoverishment of the working class. In 1789, the peasant landowner was devoting half his income to multiple and varied expenses. All of this provoked deep discontent in the minds of the people, and a desire for real change.

In the spring of 1789, the Estates General were elected and convened in Versailles. Like all villages, Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen had to elect three delegates for the elections of the deputies of the Third Estate. These elections took place on two levels. First of all, there were primary elections to designate three delegates, who in turn elected the deputies.

These elections were not based on universal suffrage like today, but on a censal system. To be eligible to vote, voters had to pay a certain amount of tax.

At the time of the primary elections, the canton of Bischwiller was divided into four primary assemblies: Bischwiller, Weyersheim, Gambsheim and Oberhoffen. The Oberhoffen assembly included 127 voters from Oberhoffen, 206 voters from Herrlisheim, 40 voters from Drusenheim, and 86 voters from Schirrhein. This made a total of 535 voters to elect three delegates.

Schirrhoffen, on the other hand, was part of the canton of Rœschwoog, which was subdivided into two primary assemblies: Sessenheim and Rœschwoog. The primary assembly of Sessenheim comprised the 160 electors of Sessenheim, 232 electors of **Soufflenheim**, 60 electors of Rountzenheim, 28 electors of Stattmatten and 74 electors of Schirrhoffen. Schirrhein was at a disadvantage compared with its neighbor Schirrhoffen. Schirrhein had only 86 voters for a population of 640, while Schirrhoffen had 74 voters for a population of 319. Schirrhoffen's population was wealthier thanks to the number of Jewish families who lived there and carried on a fairly profitable trade.

In late 1789 and early 1790, the Constituent Assembly created new administrative districts. Alsace was divided into two departments: Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin. Bas-Rhin was subdivided into four districts: Strasbourg, Wissembourg, Haguenau and Benfeld. Each district was in turn divided into cantons. Schirrhein was attached to the canton of Bischwiller, while Schirrhoffen was attached to Fort-Louis, which became the canton's capital. This canton was abolished in 1802, and all the communes were attached to the canton of Bischwiller.

Each department and district was headed by a general council with a board of directors. Throughout the revolutionary period, the Directoire of the Haguenau district was the immediate authority for our two communes.

On December 14, 1789, a new municipal law was passed, which led to the dissolution of the old magistrates and the election of new municipal councils. This law was particularly important for our two communes.

Until then, our two communes had been annexes of Haguenau, subject to the jurisdiction of the city's magistrate. Thanks to this new law, Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen became independent communes, each able to elect its own municipal council and mayor.

Schirrhein's first elected mayor was Romain Halter. He held office for only a short time. On September 11, 1790, he petitioned the district board to be relieved of his duties for reasons of age and health. The district council accepted this request and authorized Schirrhein to proceed with his replacement.

Joseph Hagenbach succeeded him, but his election was contested and annulled by the Directoire on October 3, 1790. New elections were held, and Antoine Halter was elected. He held office until 1792, when he was suspended. The reason for this will be explained below. He was replaced by Joseph Hagenbach. In Year IV (1796), Casimir Falck and Jean Baechtel were successively mayor. The following year, Georges Lux took over. In Year VII (1799), it was once again Jean Baechtel and, from Year VIII (1800), Antoine Schlosser took over as mayor of Schirrhein.

In Schirrhoffen, the first elected mayor was Sébastien Steinmetz. On March 2, 1791, he asked to be relieved of his duties. He was replaced by Georges Baechtel, who was removed from office on October 20, 1791 for causing unrest in the commune. In his place was elected Antoine Ruerte, who served until 1800.

It should be noted that from 1795 onwards, the "agent communal," as the mayor was officially called, had to swear an oath of hatred of royalty and anarchy, and of loyalty and attachment to the Republic and the Constitution, before taking up his duties, and to perform the duties entrusted to him with zeal and probity. On 21 Pluviôse an VII, Deputy Mayor Feig de Schirrhoffen was forced to resign for refusing to take this oath.

So it seems that during the turbulent years of the Revolution, the job of mayor was not an easy one. Mayors changed frequently. It wasn't until 1800 that our local elected officials found a degree of stability.

In the countryside, peasants, hit by a poor harvest, revolted and engaged in acts of violence. The slogans and objectives of the rioters were the same everywhere: abolition of the feudal system, recovery of communal forests, destruction of censor books and acknowledgements of debts to rural bankers, convents and Jewish lenders. Convents were looted and devastated in many regions. Officially, it was a case of brigandage committed by outsiders. In fact, it was a popular movement. The fire lit in Paris spread throughout the country. Peasants refused to pay their seigneurial dues. Authorities were no longer respected. Revolutionary ideas took hold.

The first incidents broke out in Schirrhoffen in early 1790. On the one hand, the commune, represented by its mayor Georges Baechtel and his two deputies Joseph Staub and Joseph Eck, was claiming communal property over which it had no rights. On the other hand, they sought to strip Lord Antoine de Vorstatt, master of the Schirrhof, of his property. It encouraged peasants and farmers to stop paying him rent. The inhabitants thought that the authorities would tolerate this, but they were mistaken.

As early as August 9, 1790, the departmental Directorate intervened for the first time to condemn these subversive actions. He reminded Schirrhoffen that the Vorstatt family had been in actual possession of the fiefdom since 1720. He also noted that in his decree of October 18, 1789, the King had expressly forbidden municipalities and all other persons from disturbing the owners of any property in their possession prior to August 4 of the aforementioned year, and that the law of April 20, by which the petitioners intended to justify their conduct, only affected feudal property and not the stripping and suppression of fiefs, which are properties protected by law and whose respect is recorded in the aforementioned decree of August 31.

On January 19, 1791, the municipality of Schirrhoffen submitted a new request to the Directoire, again with the aim of seizing the fiefdom of the Lord of Vorstatt for the benefit of the commune. The mayor of Schirrhoffen was summoned to appear before the Directoire, who read out and interpreted into German the decree of the Directoire du Département, informing him that his request was inadmissible. The mayor of Schirrhoffen, who was in office at the time, couldn't read French, so the decree had to be translated into German.

But all these warnings were not enough, for on December 20, 1791, the Directoire suspended Mayor Baechtel and his two deputies from office for subversive activities. A commissioner was dispatched to read out the suspensive decree in front of the entire town council.

In Schirrhein, too, difficulties began to arise between the mayor and the parish priest Jean François Zipp. The mayor felt that the parish priest was spending too lavishly on the church and presbytery. He therefore sought to prohibit the members of the church's fabrique from paying for the objects most necessary for worship. In desperation, Father Zipp wrote a letter to the Haguenau Directory, stating that despite all the good he had done and would continue to do for his flock, and despite the attentions, kindness and friendship he had always shown to the mayor of Schirrhein, the latter, led and inspired by people who seek only to stir up trouble in the surrounding area, wants not only to have him summoned before the municipality to account for all and everyone he has spent on the church and presbytery, but also to forbid the fabriciens from procuring and paying for the objects most necessary for divine worship. He therefore asked the directoire to review the parish accounts himself, and to forbid the mayor and municipality from molesting and disturbing the supplicant, and to order the members of the fabrique to continue paying for the supplies necessary for worship. In the end, Father Zipp won his case, but his troubles were just beginning.

As early as November 1789, the National Assembly had made church property available to the nation. In compensation, the State undertook to pay the costs of worship and to guarantee each parish priest an annual salary of 1,200 livres. These initial confiscations excluded the property of church factories, teaching colleges, hospitals, and foreign orders. However, from 1793 onwards, the Republican State sequestered most of these excluded assets, as well as the estates of émigrés and foreigners. It had thus built up an immense national estate.

On 12 Nivôse An III, the Haguenau Directoire dispatched a commission to Schirrhein, comprising Jacques Beiner and Jacques Heusch from Bischwiller. Accompanied by the mayor, Joseph Hagenbach, and two village councilors, they were to estimate the value of the emigrants' houses and landed property.

Once again, the appraisal showed the poverty of many Schirrhein houses. Some were valued at just 20, 30 or 40 francs. This was the case for the houses of Pierre Steinmetz, Anne-Marie Blust and Pierre Willmann. Others were valued at 200, 300 or 400 francs, such as those of Joseph Lehmann, Laurent Dannenmüller and Michel Bapst.

The richest houses, such as those belonging to Antoine Piam, Martin Staebler or Chrétien Richter, were valued at 1,000, 2,000 or 3,000 francs, and the former Schirrhoffen castle at over 9,000 francs.

However, the sale of national property had no immediate impact on the village's inhabitants. None of them bought the land. The only buyers were revolutionary bourgeois from Haguenau or elsewhere. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, because the Church had forbidden Catholics to buy national property, and secondly, most of the lots were too large and too expensive for a peasant to purchase. Thus, for example, the property of the Saint-Georges chapter in Haguenau was auctioned in two lots of 202,000 and 428,000 livres. Who could have bought them?

From 1795 onwards, however, new laws ordered the sale of property after division into multiple parcels for the benefit of the peasants.

It is not possible here to give an exhaustive account of the sale of all the assets placed in state receivership. It would be too long and arduous. Let us give just three examples.

Baron de Türckheim owned 90 arpents of land and meadows in the Ried as a fief under the French crown, which were sold. The 40-acre Wackesteinerau, also known as Oberund Unterlehn, was sold on Vendemiaire 20, Year VI (October 11, 1797), half to M. Denier de Bischwiller. The other half was returned to the brother of Baron de Türckheim, resident in Frœschwiller, who had not emigrated. The 40-acre Kronenburgersau was purchased by the same Denier de Bischwiller, for 3,200 livres. The Mühlsau, covering 10 acres, was sold on 24 fructidor year VI to Jacques Stock, from **Soufflenheim**, for 1,200 livres.

Baron de Flaxland's lands were sold on 22 Floréal Year III (May 11, 1795) in small lots of one acre each. Most of these lots were purchased by farmers from Schirrhoffen.

On 8 pluviôse year X (January 28, 1802), citizen Joseph Lux of Schirrhoffen purchased the village's former château, comprising a two-story dwelling house, a courtyard, stables, a small wooden outbuilding formerly used as a chapel, two small garden pavilions, 13 arpents of meadows and 2.5 arpents of garden, for 9,841.20 livres.

The sale of national property was undoubtedly a far-reaching economic and social phenomenon. It enabled many peasants in Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen to become owners of a few plots of land.

From 1792 onwards, events gathered pace. The increasingly radical revolutionaries pursued all those who opposed the Republic.

Alsace was particularly targeted by the Terror, as it was considered a suspect country by the revolutionaries. In Paris, Alsatian was considered a counter-revolutionary idiom. For revolutionary leaders, the language of a free people must be one and the same for all. They therefore used every possible means to eradicate the Alsatian dialect. They demanded that official acts and municipal reports be written in French, without asking themselves by whom or how this could be achieved.

A defrocked priest named Ronsville even suggested transferring part of the Alsatian population to the interior of France. In his eyes, the Alsatians should have been exchanged for the Vendéens. He suggested calling on the brave revolutionaries and wounded veterans to cultivate the abandoned land. "Your daughters," he told the Alsatians, "will become their wives." The people's representative Lacoste declared in Bouxwiller that the only measure to be taken was to guillotine a quarter of the inhabitants of this region, keeping only those who had taken part in the Revolution, driving out the rest and sequestering their property.

The Terror in Alsace was personified, in dramatic fashion, by the sinister figure of Euloge Schneider, a defrocked monk. As public prosecutor for the Strasbourg Revolutionary Court, he took his guillotine across the country. He brought down many heads. He also stayed briefly in Schirrhein. For two days, his guillotine was installed in the courtyard next to the "A l'Etoile" restaurant, but it seems that no sentence was passed.

Euloge Schneider was arrested on his wedding day. Even the fiercest revolutionaries were scandalized by his excesses. He was displayed with his guillotine in the public square for insolent pomp. Transferred

to Paris, he appeared before the Revolutionary Court, where, accused of tyrannical follies, he was condemned and executed.

The years of the Terror were extremely difficult for the local population. Incessant requisitions, conscription into the army, numerous harassments and the constant fear of arrest were the daily lot of the population. The economic situation was becoming increasingly catastrophic. Continual drudgery kept many peasants away from work for weeks at a time. Prices were skyrocketing. Foodstuffs were scarce. The population was destitute.

One of the greatest hardships for the population of Northern Alsace during the Revolution was the war from 1792 to 1794 and its disastrous consequences. In April 1792, France declared war on Austria. At first, Alsace was not directly affected by this conflict, except through the raising of volunteer battalions. The first volunteers were raised in July 1792, but their numbers were small. By August 5, only 750 had been recruited for the Bas-Rhin region. This was clearly insufficient. It was therefore necessary to convene the entire population in a position to bear arms and draw lots. On August 5, a first battalion of 800 men joined the Army of the Rhine. By December 17, five further battalions had been formed.

At the same time, fortifications along the Rhine were rehabilitated. Supply depots were set up to equip, feed and clothe these mobilized men. As always in wartime, the population was called upon to contribute. The chores required by the army were numerous. Thus, on December 31, 1792, Antoine Biam, Georges Halter and Laurent Dannenmüller of Schirrhein were asked to provide the army with their horses and carriages to drive fodder from Fort-Louis to the Wissembourg army. They refused, claiming that their horses were ill and unable to perform the service. After examining their case, the Haguenau directorate ordered them to take part in the next convoy.

In addition, people from Schirrhein were requisitioned to stand guard along the Rhine. On October 19, 1792, Michel Lehmann lodged a complaint with the Haguenau Directory. He and his servant were no longer able to carry out domestic chores, as they were obliged to stand guard at the same time. The board ruled in his favor. From then on, they took turns to stand guard, so that there was always someone at home to do the housework.

On February 29, 1793, with the danger growing ever more menacing, the Convention ordered the raising of 300,000 additional men. Bas-Rhin was to provide a contingent of 5,254 men. Each commune had to raise a certain number of volunteers, according to its population. But defections were numerous. Many young people fled into the forests. At first, there weren't enough police to track down these fugitives. Mobile columns were formed to support the gendarmes in their pursuit of the rebels. The Republic was hard pressed to find defenders of the fatherland. Alsatians felt little involvement in the war.

A statement of requisitions, drawn up on Frimaire 25, Year IV, mentions that Schirrhoffen had provided eight volunteers: Mosser Hetzel of the 10th regiment of mounted chasseurs of the Army of the West, Georges Heisserer, Chrétien Baechtel, François Muller, François Kauffmann, Keim Kahn, André Colmer and Nicolas Dorffer, enlisted in the 31st battalion of the Army of the Rhine.

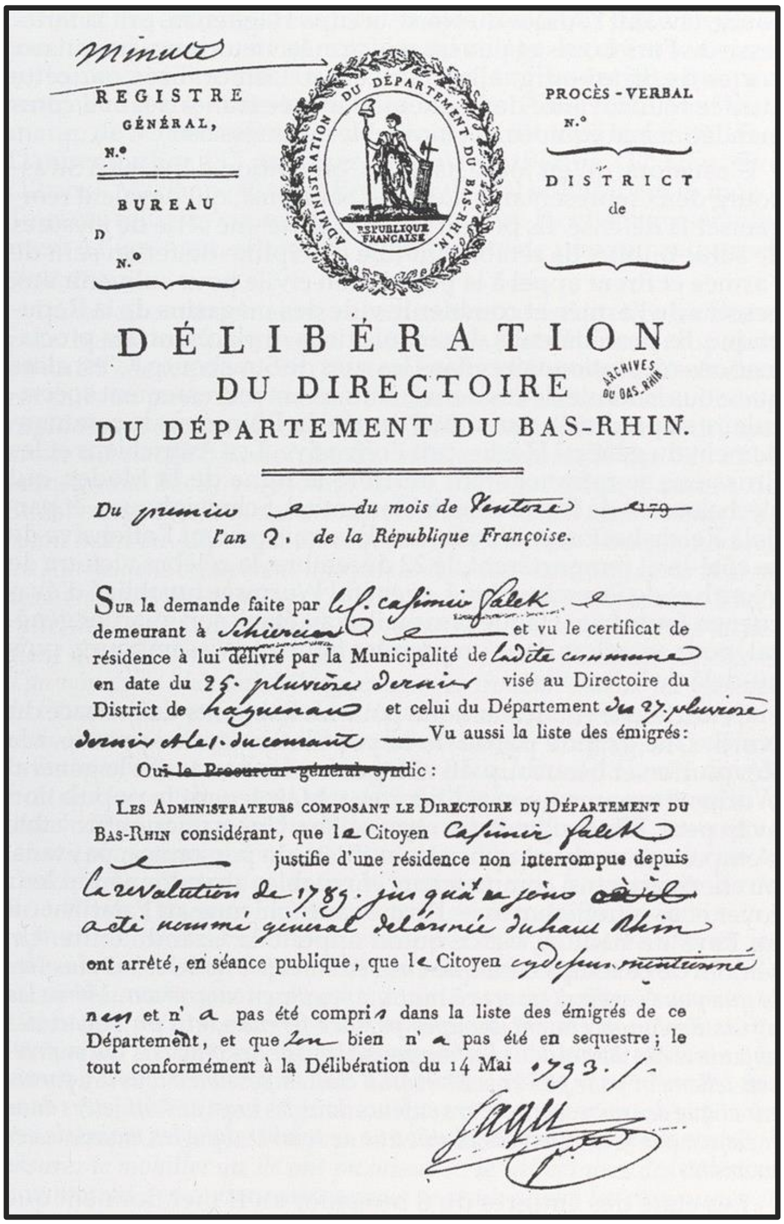
On March 18, 1793, it was reported to the board that two Schirrhoffen volunteers had returned without passport or leave. The board's reaction was brutal: all citizens serving in volunteer battalions who returned without passport or leave will be arrested wherever they are and taken to the district prison. Municipalities are responsible for arresting all deserters found on their territory.

The statement, drawn up on Prairial 27, An IV, lists eight volunteers from Schirrhein: Jean Halter, Georges Martin, Georges Berrwiller, Georges Halter, Antoine Lohr and Nicolas Steinmetz were engaged

in the army of the Rhine, Sébastien Stâbler in the army of the Alps and Ignace Schlosser in the army of the Vendée.

According to the census of Vendémiaire 1, Year VII, the young people were relatively small: Jacques Heisserer, age 20, 1.66 meters; Louis Hochheim, age 20, 1.62 meters; Leib Salomon, age 22, 1.60 meters; Nicolas Linck, age 22, 1.71 meters; Nicolas Hochheim, age 22, 1.69 meters and Leib Ruff, age 22, 1.54 meters.

The military jury released Leib Ruff, who was too short, and Louis Hochheim, who was deprived of the use of the index finger on his right hand.


Minute

REGISTRE GÉNÉRAL, N.°

BUREAU D N.°

ADMINISTRATION DU DÉPARTEMENT DU BAS-RHIN — RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

PROCÈS-VERBAL N.°

DISTRICT de

DÉLIBÉRATION
DU DIRECTOIRE
DU DÉPARTEMENT DU BAS-RHIN.

ARCHIVES DU BAS-RHIN

Du premier du mois de Ventose ~~179~~ l'an 2. de la République Françoise.

Sur la demande faite par le C. Casimir Falck demeurant à Schirrein et vu le certificat de résidence à lui délivré par la Municipalité de ladite commune en date du 25. pluviose dernier visé au Directoire du District de haguenau et celui du Département du 27. pluviose dernier et le 1. du courant — Vu aussi la liste des émigrés:

Oui ~~le Procureur-général-syndic~~ :

Les Administrateurs composant le Directoire du Département du Bas-Rhin considérant, que le Citoyen Casimir Falck justifie d'une résidence non interrompue depuis la revolution de 1789. jusqu'au jour ~~où il~~ a été nommé général de l'armée du haut Rhin

ont arrêté, en séance publique, que le Citoyen cy dessus mentionné n'est et n'a pas été compris dans la liste des émigrés de ce Département, et que son bien n'a pas été en sequestre; le tout conformément à la Délibération du 14 Mai 1793. /.

Faqu

On the 1st Ventose of Year II, that is to say on February 19, 1794,
the Schirrein citizen Casimir Falck was promoted to general of the army of Haut-Rhin.

Early in 1793, the military situation deteriorated. The Austro-Prussians laid siege to Mainz. Alsatian general Kléber held out for several months. During the summer, the French armies were forced to withdraw. As autumn approached, Alsatian general Wurmser forced the Wissembourg line, invaded northern Alsace, occupied Haguenau, took the fortress of Fort-Louis and pushed his victorious army to the gates of Strasbourg at La Wantzenau. Demoralized by the enemy's lightning advance, the poorly commanded and ill-equipped French army was unable to recover.

At this point, the Convention hastily dispatched two representatives, Lebas and Saint-Just, to Strasbourg to reorganize the defense. They immediately took a whole series of measures for public safety. They re-established iron discipline within the army and appealed to the civilian population to provide for the army's needs and fill the void in the Republic's stores. They requisitioned goods and placed revolutionary proclamations in the streets of Strasbourg. It was then, under the leadership of these two men, that a spectacular turnaround took place. Immediately, the Army of the Rhine, under the command of General Hoche, took the offensive. The Austrians and Prussians dug in behind the Moder line, which stretched from Bischwiller to Marienthal, Schweighouse, and beyond to Reichshoffen and Wœrth. The French took the offensive on this side, winning the famous victory of Wœrth and Frœschwiller on December 22. General Wurmser was forced to hastily evacuate Haguenau, where he had established his headquarters, and withdraw first to Wissembourg, then across the border.

This defeat was dramatic for the inhabitants of Northern Alsace. A large part of the population was opposed to the Revolution, and many villages had welcomed General Wurmser as a true liberator. Now the population was afraid. They feared reprisals. An appalling panic took hold of the people. Thousands of peasants, workers, craftsmen, shopkeepers and notables abandoned their homes and took refuge with the Austrian army in the Palatinate and Baden. This was known as the Great Flight. A witness of the time writes that the imperial army seemed to be there only as an escort for a migrating people. Even the gun carriages were occupied by women, and children and ladies could be seen in the officers' baggage vans. There was such a rush to cross the Rhine that it was impossible for everyone to make it, and mothers, with their children in their arms, threw themselves into the river and drowned rather than fall into the hands of these monsters.

The 8 Messidor, Year II emigrant records mention that 159 families from Haguenau, 119 from Kaltenhouse, 118 from Weitbruch, 448 from **Soufflenheim**, 125 from Schirrhein and 51 from Schirrhoffen emigrated.

These emigrants included many farmers and day laborers, but also the village notables, the parish priest and his vicar, the mayor and the schoolteacher. Entire families left, often with small children. For example, 43-year-old Nikolaus Wartmann from Schirrhoffen left with his wife Eve Dannenmüller (37) and children Catherine (17), Eve (12), Marianne (8), Bénédict (5) and Elisabeth (6 months). All these refugees suffered a sad fate. They live miserably abroad, anxiously awaiting their chance to return home.

The Austrian defeat had another unfortunate consequence for many citizens. While the Austrians were still occupying northern Alsace, many emigrant priests had returned home, believing that the whole of Alsace would soon be freed from the revolutionaries. In his book "La constitution civile du clergé,"

Rodolphe Reuss recounts the case of Abbé Jean-Louis Beck, former vicar of Strasbourg's Saint-Laurent parish: docile to the orders of Cardinal de Rohan, he emigrated early to Germany after refusing to take the oath. When the Austrians occupied part of Lower Alsace, after taking the Wissembourg lines, Abbé Beck had returned to the country, following in their footsteps, with a host of other refractory priests, believing too easily in their definitive triumph. He had accepted from them the duties of chaplain at the hospital in Haguenau, and found himself ill when the imperialists rushed to evacuate the town. His friends

tried to protect him from the inevitable vindictiveness of the authorities, by transporting him by cart to the Rhine.

But he was arrested by a patrol in the Haguenau forest – near Schirrhein – on Christmas Day, and immediately sent back to his hometown. His fate was in no doubt, given the terrible laws promulgated by the Convention against emigrants returning to the territory of the Republic. Forty-eight hours after his arrest, the young priest died bravely under the guillotine. He at least had the supreme consolation of being able to celebrate mass one last time in his cell, thanks to the connivance of the prison warder. Abbé Beck was the first non-juring priest in the Bas-Rhin region to climb the scaffold. Faced with this mass flight of over 40,000 Alsatians, the Directoire reacted very severely. On January 24, 1794, it issued the following decree: Considering that the large number of French emigrants in this department requires that the most rapid measures be taken to secure the furniture they may have left behind... the district directorates will appoint commissioners to visit the communes and seal the furniture, titles and property belonging to emigrants or persons suspected of emigration, who do not immediately provide proof of residence. All these fugitives were declared traitors to the nation, liable to the death penalty and despoiled.

The consequences of the departure of these thousands of Alsatians were harshly felt. Villages were partly depopulated. Much land was no longer farmed. There was a huge shortfall in agricultural production. Food shortages worsened.

Alerted by this state of affairs, the Convention then looked for a merciful way to bring back these useful producers. In Paris, after some hesitation, a general amnesty was considered. The law of 22 nivôse an III (January 11, 1795) authorized fugitive peasants and workers to return, provided they had left French territory after May 1, 1793 and had returned by ter germinal an III (March 21, 1795). Confiscated land would be returned to them and, if it had been alienated, the peasants and workers would be compensated.

For most of these emigrants, it was the end of a nightmare. They flocked to the various crossing points on the Rhine, in the hope of being able to return home within the time limit set by law. But many of them, either because they had not been warned in time, or because the enemy army would not allow them to approach the borders, arrived too late at the customs posts. They were turned back by French customs officers. Some tried to cross the Rhine by boat at night, but were shot at by customs officers or military posts. More than one boat ran aground on a sandbank or sank in the current.

The Convention then took a new measure of clemency in favor of émigrés. The law of the 4th supplementary day of year III (1795) granted fugitives a further two-decade period in which to obtain permission to return. Many fugitives took advantage of this last measure of clemency to return home.

Once this period had elapsed, it was no longer possible to return. However, this law of clemency did not apply to true émigrés or refractory priests, who were still liable to the death penalty if they returned.

On their return home, those who had fled were often faced with insurmountable difficulties, as their possessions had meanwhile been auctioned off and bought back by those who had stayed behind. The Directoire had to declare the sequestration lifted so that people could regain possession of their property. This took a long time.

Antoine Buchs de Schirrhein, who had left the territory of the Republic on 3 nivôse an II (December 23, 1794), returned on 2 thermidor an III (July 20, 1795). He had to apply to the Directoire for his property to be released from sequestration. In order to have the sequestration lifted, he had to produce a certificate from the municipal council, attesting, under oath from eight witnesses, that the aforementioned Antoine

Buchs had been a village carpenter before 2 nivôse an II, that he had emigrated under the effect of fear, and that he had returned before 2 thermidor an III, i.e. a few weeks before the deadline set by the law. On 22 germinal an III (11 april 1795), the directoire ordered the lifting of the sequestration of unsold goods.

Here's another example: on Germinal 24, Year IV (April 13, 1796), 20 citizens of Schirrhein addressed a collective letter to the Strasbourg Directory, asking to be removed from the list of émigrés and to have the sequestration lifted. In this letter, they declared that when the enemies of the Republic retreated, they were so seized with fear and dismay at hearing of the horrors and vexations of the infamous Schneider and his accomplices, that they believed the only course of action was to seek salvation by fleeing. The letter was signed by André Schitter, Antoine Schott, Joseph Halter, Chrétien Hunzinger, François Martin, André Halter, André Kirchdorffer, Jacques and Maurice Lehmann, André Witt, Ignace Witt, André Brucker, Mathieu Weiss, Maurice Halter, Madeleine Schott, Joseph Schott, Louis Vetter, Laurent Dannenmilller, André Lux and André Schlosser. The Management Board approved their request and lifted the sequestration order.

The problem of compensation preoccupied the authorities for many years. By law, those whose property had been sold had to be compensated. Michel Bapst, for example, owned a house and an acre and a quarter of arable land in Schirrhein. His property was confiscated and sold at auction on 15 Nivôse An VI (January 4, 1798). In 1792, these assets were worth 17.02 livres. He was paid 306.36 francs only 30 years later, on September 2, 1827. Following the law of clemency of September 20, 1795, the Republic ensured that no émigré returned to the country clandestinely. On Brumaire 10, Year VI (October 31, 1797), the Directoire reported to General Augereau, commander of the Army of the Rhine, that individuals whom the law had expelled from the bosom of the Republic were finding their way back through the communications maintained by military service from one bank to the other. These dangerous men, hidden under the national garb, which they dishonor, cross the bridges of the Rhine with impunity, some on foot, others in caissons or other military equipment, and can thus return to the places where their presence almost became fatal to liberty.

The directoire therefore asked the general to attach a description of the soldier to all military permits. A few days later, a number of emigrants were reported to have returned illegally to Schirrhoffen. They were farmer Philippe Steinmetz, day laborer Joseph Dorffer, Joseph Heisserer's wife Marianne Linck, and the wife of the deceased Joseph Heusser, a woman named Mérikel. Upon their return, they placed themselves under the protection of the local agent.

Immediately, the Haguenau directorate sent Commissaire Hild and a troop of soldiers to the scene, with orders to arrest them and escort them to the Strasbourg military commission. He was instructed to carry out his mission with all the caution necessary to maintain public tranquility. He was also to provide the accompanying troop with the food they needed, at the expense of the commune of Schirrhoffen.

However, Inspector Hild was unable to seize any of the stowaways, as by the time he arrived on the scene, they had vanished into thin air, some hidden by kindly neighbors, others in the nearby forest. A stay in the forest was not without its risks. Indeed, towards the end of the 18th century, numerous wolves infested the Haguenau forest and surrounding area, ravaging flocks and herds, injuring and devouring many animals. On Frimaire 22, Year VII (December 12, 1798), the forestry administration organized a wolf drive and hunt. The commune of Schirrhein was to provide 70 men, and Schirrhoffen 40. They gathered at 8am on the appointed day, near the Langbrück bridge, under the leadership of Joseph Adam, forest warden of **Soufflenheim**, to hunt and track the wolf. Many wolves were slaughtered that day.

When General Napoleon Bonaparte, victorious in Italy, overthrew the Directoire in the coup d'état of 18 Brumaire An VIII and was proclaimed First Consul, the revolutionary period came to an end and calm returned to the country.

The years of the Revolution had brought serious disorder and anxiety to the country. Gangs of rascals had formed and were attacking travelers and isolated farms. The local gendarmeries were no longer able to effectively control all the shady elements lurking in the forest. Mobile detachments of line troops and national guards had to be called in to search the woods and hunt down all suspects, army deserters, escaped Austrians, conscripts in hiding, emigrants who had escaped and many other elements.

Ten years after the end of the Ancien Régime, our province had changed profoundly. It had achieved unity. The old enclaves had disappeared. Henceforth, our province had the same laws and the same administration as the other provinces of France.

For our two communes, the Revolution had brought profound and lasting changes. They had become independent communes. They were no longer subject to the magistrate of the town of Haguenau. The Revolution enabled small farmers to acquire land and live more decently. They no longer had to pay tithes and seigneurial royalties. They could cultivate their land and keep the produce.

But the Revolution was also a source of vandalism. Schirrhoffen castle was sold at auction. The chapel was dismantled. Its small bell was installed in the bell tower of Schirrhein's Saint-Nicolas church. The Revolution also brought intolerance and religious persecution. The measures taken against the Church and the persecution of priests had offended the religious feelings of the population. In addition, the economic slump had caused a deep malaise among the people.

IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

During the 19th century, Schirrhein's population grew significantly, mainly between 1801 and 1821. In 20 years, the population more than doubled. Natural increase played an important role in this demographic development. But the most important factor was immigration. Between 1801 and 1821, 269 foreigners settled in Schirrhein. This immigration was linked to the new distribution of land during the French Revolution, and the reclamation of land that had previously lain fallow. Between 1780 and 1790, cereals covered around 40 hectares. By 1860, on the other hand, 130 hectares were devoted to cereals. In 1816, the Schirrhein ban had 303 hectares of meadows and only 89 hectares of ploughed land. Towards the middle of the 19th century, the situation was reversed. Immigration and a high birth rate quickly saturated the land. From 1821, people began emigrating to America. This movement was particularly strong between 1833 and 1842. Some 302 people left during this period. The population decline continued until 1860, and was accentuated by the agricultural crisis of the 1850s.

Evolution of the Population of Schirrhein in the 19th Century

Annee	Population	Annee	Population
1773	560	1851	1,251

1801	592	1861	1,265
1811	750	1871	1,364
1821	1,223	1880	1,278
1831	1,261	1890	1,335
1841	1,162	1900	1,429

Share of Migration in the Demographic Movement

Periods	Migrations
1801-1822	+269
1823-1832	-100
1833-1842	-302
1843-1852	-132
1853-1862	-95

The Napoleonic Wars

Napoleon Bonaparte needed soldiers for his many wars. Alsatians, known for their discipline and bravery, were much appreciated by the Emperor. Over 60 of them became generals, and 24 have their names engraved on the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. Many Alsatian officers were awarded the Légion d'honneur.

The Emperor won the hearts of Alsatians because, through his many victories embellished by former grognards, he conferred great prestige on the country. Military glory has always impressed in Alsace.

Of course, not everyone loved the Emperor. A case in point. On February 11, 1812, the Prefect of Bas-Rhin had to suspend the Deputy Mayor of Schirrhoffen, Sieur Eck. It seems that, "for several months, he had been holding illegal and nocturnal assemblies at his home, in which the most scandalous remarks were uttered against His Majesty the Emperor."

These facts were declared by several inhabitants heard by the General Commissioner of the Strasbourg Police and denounced by the Minister of the General Police.

Like so many other poor and populous communes, Schirrhein had provided the Emperor with a sizeable contingent of men to fight in the four corners of Europe. The exact number of these soldiers is not known, but five of them fell on the Emperor's battlefields:

- Georges Halter, hussar in the 4th regiment of the 1st squadron, died aged 34 on August 2, 1807 at Arz, near Massov, on the way to hospital in Stettin.
- Henri Schlosser, killed at the age of 28 on the battlefield near Esslingen on May 22, 1808.
- Charles Dorffer, fusilier with the lieutenant company of the 3rd battalion of the 94th regiment of the line, admitted to the Bolgal hospital near Pamplona, wounded on January 21, 1808 and died on February 6, 1808.
- Nicolas Mayer, fusilier in the 96th regiment of the line, 5th battalion, 1st company, regimental number 7933, died at age 20 on June 17, 1811, in Thionville hospital.
- Joseph Steinmetz, rifleman in the 152nd regiment of the line, wounded on May 14, 1813, died at age 21 on June 23, 1813, in Münster-Lippe hospital.

The Russians in Schirrhoffen

Napoleon's glory and successes were short-lived. In 1812 came the disastrous Russian campaign. In 1813, the whole of Europe rose up against France, and the Battle of Leipzig in October 1813 sounded the death knell of the Empire. In December 1814, the Allies invaded. Our region was flooded with Austrians, Russians, Baden and Württemberg. For three months, Alsace had to support the cantonment of almost 300,000 men. In his book "My Youth," Alexandre Weill recounts, with great talent, a scene from the occupation of Schirrhoffen by Russian troops, then by Württemberg troops:

"One morning, the village was crowded with soldiers. For eight bears and eight nights, all the children were huddled together in the Schirrhein forest. In a single room in our cottage, my parents housed and fed 32 soldiers. I can still see my mother coming up from the forest, tears in her eyes, to bring us food. Little by little, we got used to this state of affairs. I especially became the darling of a senior Russian officer, and as I loved music, every time we retreated, a soldier was ordered to carry me in his arms, following closely behind the drums and fifes.

Thanks to this officer, we only had a dozen garrisoners left. I loved playing with the long beards of the Cossacks, and for a long time I was known in the village as "Cossack." It pained me greatly when the long beards were replaced by Württembergers, whose reputation was detestable, and later by Austrians. We still had the musicians to accommodate, and I remember a review in the Ried that lasted from morning until evening. The drum-major, whom I never left, had me carried on a crate to keep me with him. I've never forgotten his favorite tune, which he whistled to me every night before going to bed.

Here's a more tragic scene I witnessed. The Württemberg had given way to the Austrians. My father, denounced as a Bonapartist, contained his hatred, devoured his grief, and was ruined by requisitions. All his livestock had been slaughtered and eaten by the enemy.

We had to accommodate a quartermaster, a drunkard, a rascal of the worst kind, who beat his wife like a plaster cast when he drank, and he always drank like a burst wineskin. One day at dinner, it was the eve of the Sabbath, as he sat down at the table, he picked up the plate and smashed it to pieces. Give the dog a pewter plate," said my father to my mother. Which he did... He took the plate again, bent it into a tricorn and threw it under the table. His wife, as usual, whimpered in the corner behind the stove. Then, in a frenzy of anger, my father seized the quartermaster by the collar, embraced him, overturned the table, the soup, the crockery, the seven-bouted oil-filled lamp hanging from the ceiling, and both rolled to the ground in a heap of debris. My mother leapt on top of the combatants and was lucky enough to separate them. But then a spectacle, half tragic, half comic, presented itself to us. In the same fight in which my mother, with a dexterous hand, tried to raise her husband, the quartermaster's wife, rising abruptly, took his seat, smashed it to pieces, then seizing a chair leg and brandishing it as a club, amid our cries and screams, rushed towards the combatants, and after helping my father to his feet, she struck her husband, lying on the ground, with her chair leg. Then, throwing down her weapon and leaping to her feet over the unfortunate man's body, arms folded, hair flowing in disorder, she danced an infernal bourrée, uttering cries of rage and vengeance. I've never seen anything like it. Her mouth was foaming. Her eyes were smoking. Her heels ploughed into the drunkard's crimson face, while her quivering lips uttered Hungarian insults that none of us understood. My father, who had barely recovered from his fright and was full of blood, had all the trouble he could muster to wrest this fury from its prey. Just then, the guard, called by neighbors, arrived. They began by arresting my father, whom we followed, crying out in desolation.

The guard soon returned to carry away the slightly sobered quartermaster on a stretcher, but full of dust, oil, soup and blood, riddled with bruises and no longer able to stand. He was placed under arrest in a room at our neighboring old Walstetten farm. As for my father, he was held in the house where the Major was staying. He was to be brought before the council of war. It was the most painful night of my childhood. Although barely four years old, I understood the gravity of the situation.

My mother asked the major for an interview. She took me with her. This brave soldier questioned me for a long time. I told him what had happened. By imitating the woman's gestures, I made him laugh out loud. He sent my mother away in mourning, telling her that you don't die from a few blows of the hawthorn. An unforeseen circumstance saved my father. When they went looking for the quartermaster to confront my father, they found him holding in his hand the wooden crucifix he had hung from the wall, and on which he had just urinated. From then on, without any formality, he was condemned to receive the fifty strokes of the Schlague intended for my father.

They weren't the first, but they were the last for him. The regiment was ordered to leave the same day. The quartermaster was left in the village, where he died the next day. He was buried like a dog at the edge of the forest. His wife never left Alsace."

Emigration to Russia (1803-1811)

During the first half of the 19th century, one crisis followed another. Many people found it hard to make a decent living. As a result, an impressive number of people from our region asked to emigrate to unknown lands. We all know that from 1820 onwards, many Schirrheinois emigrated to America, but what is less well known is that others emigrated to Russia. Why did they choose Russia, where life seemed so harsh?

In fact, Tsar Alexander I lured emigrants with enticing promises. He offered them vast, fertile, uninhabited lands along the Volga. He also promised tax exemption for ten years, free practice of religion, school and religious self-management of their villages, regional semi-autonomy and exemption from military service.

These families from Alsace settled in the Odessa region of Kutschurgan, a region formerly occupied by the Turks. They founded villages with Alsatian or German-sounding names such as Strasbourg, Elsass, Seltz, Kandel, Baden... The descendants of the first settlers had an average of six to ten children. They then founded new villages such as Neu-Elsas, Neu-Seltz, Neu-Strasbourg.

Here are the names of some of the Schirrhein families and residents who emigrated to Russia:

- Anton Halter (27), his wife Eva (née Eck, 34), and their children Anton (5), Joseph (3) and Marie-Eve (2) settled in Baden.
- Joseph Rieder (43), his wife Juliana (36), and their children Régina (7), Eva (5), Joseph (died1813) and Lorent2 (14) settled in Kandel.
- Jakob Scherer (64), his wife Magdalena (56), their children Johann (24), Mathias (19), Joseph (14) and Johann's wife Katherina (22) settled in Baden.
- Valentin Scherer (30), his wife Magdalena (30), and 1E brother Joseph settled in Kandel.
- Michael Scherer (30), his wife Elisabeth (34) and Joseph (28) settle in Kandel.
- Mathieu Halter, aged 18, settled in Kandel.

Here are the names of two Schirrhoff families who emigrated to Russia:

- Ludwig Bechel (47), his wife Barbara (42), and their children Nikolaus (19), Magdalena (15), Michael (11), Nikolaus (9), Katherina (9), Elisabeth (7), Joseph and Geneva settled in Kandel.
- Joseph Isemann (38), his wife Marianne (38), and their children Katherina (12), Marianna (7), Magdalena (3) and Johann (died 1812) settled in Kandel.

What became of these emigrants? Their descendants are undoubtedly genuine Russians today!

The Migration to America (1820-1870)

One of the most moving and dramatic pages in the history of Schirrhein-Schirrhoffen is that of emigration to America. From 1820 onwards, tens of thousands of Alsatians left for America in the hope of finding better living conditions. One of the cantons of the Bas-Rhin most affected by this emigration was Bischwiller, with 1,256 departures. From 1823 to 1832, 100 people left Schirrhein, 302 from 1843 to 1852 and 95 from 1853 to 1862. However, not all these people went to America. Some had settled in closer regions, such as Lorraine, but most headed for the New World.

It took serious motivation and exceptional courage to leave one's native village, sell all one's possessions and set off for an unknown and distant land. There were many reasons for these departures. The first, and undoubtedly the most important, was the misery and poverty of the land. Schirrhein's soil had always been poor, making intensive farming impossible. The land barely fed the small farmers. What's more, the land was far too fragmented. Cultivation required all the more energy and time as the plots were small and far apart. Moreover, the fertilizers needed to enrich the soil were not yet available, and no industry had yet been established in the region. Wages, especially those of the many day laborers, were very low. Families, with many children, were barely able to get by.

Overpopulation also prompted people to leave. Between 1802 and 1822, Schirrhein's population more than doubled. Schirrhein grew from 592 to 1,223 inhabitants, because massive immigration led to a high birth rate. This soon led to saturation.

And finally, there was military service. In those days, military service lasted seven years. Many young people preferred to leave the country rather than serve in uniform for so many years. The temptation to leave the country was so strong among young people that, on December 21, 1854, the Minister of the Interior had to issue recommendations to the prefects. Until further notice, they must no longer issue passports for foreign countries to young people who have reached the age of 19 and are not free from military service, whenever it appears to them that the applicants motive is a plan to emigrate and a desire to evade the obligations of the recruitment law.

Some emigrants were undoubtedly adventurers. For them, America was a myth, the promised land. Most were poor people, day laborers, craftsmen or farmers. They were so poor that they had nothing to lose by attempting the American experience. Many left without paying their debts. As early as 1846, a circular from the prefecture recommended that mayors of communes no longer issue passports to future emigrants before checking that they no longer owed anything to the tax authorities.

Entire families headed for the New World. It was not uncommon for families to apply for passports when their youngest child was only a few weeks old. In August 1828, for example, day laborer Antoine Hahn (40) left Schirrhein with his wife Elisabeth (34) and children Catherine (9), Xavier (7), Barbe (4) and André (1). They embarked in Le Havre on the liner "L'Espérance" and arrived in New York harbor on September 6. They settled in Richland, Illinois.

Those who left did not forget those who stayed. Barbe Schott, for example, donated 800 francs to the Schirrhein church before leaving the village, in order to celebrate a mass with libera every year in perpetuity, for the repose of the souls of her father Mathieu and her mother Elisabeth, née Halter.

The Journey and Arrival in the New World

The ports of embarkation for America were Le Havre, Rouen or Antwerp in Belgium. To get there, the first settlers travelled by road with their carriages and wagons filled with basic necessities, which they sold on board. Later, voyages were organized by the shipping companies, who had their recruiters on the spot. There were recruiting offices in Haguenau, Rceschwoog and Niederbronn.

When they arrived at the port of embarkation, emigrants lived in expectation and danger. In 1832, many of the colonists awaiting embarkation in Le Havre succumbed to a cholera epidemic.

To embark, you needed a valid passport for outside France. In 1858, some emigrants who only had inland passports were unable to embark at Rouen and Le Havre, and had to return home after spending what they had saved to go to America.

The crossing cost 110 francs in 1854. This represented roughly three months' work for a bricklayer or tailor, and much more for a day laborer. In the early days, settlers left on mail or transport sailing ships.

These means of transport were slow. The average crossing took 30 days. Contemporary documents reveal the greed, avarice, brutality and harshness of the captains and crews. It's likely that more than one emigrant had to work on board to pay his fare. The women, children and men who didn't work were kept in steerage, an uncomfortable, stinking, disease-ridden hole. With so little light and fresh air, it's almost a miracle that these people made it to their destination alive.

The first settlers had to solve the problem of provisioning for the crossing themselves. They were advised to take 20 kilograms of dry cookies, 2.5 kilograms of rice, 2.5 kilograms of flour, two kilograms of butter, seven kilograms of ham, four kilograms of salt, potatoes and two liters of vinegar. However, meals had to be prepared during the crossing, as the stoves and ovens installed on the ships' decks were often inadequate.

The port of arrival in America was New York. Here, passengers changed ships. Some headed south to New Orleans, others north to the great Canadian lakes. Most of the settlers from Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen settled in southeast Missouri. When they arrived in New Orleans, they used steamboats to head north.

Near Cap Girardeau, a number of Schirrheinois, warned of their arrival, waited for them and welcomed them as soon as they docked, to take them to their colony.

The Emigrants of Schirrhein Between 1828 and 1838

Head of household, profession, number of people [emigrating], amount taken (in francs)

- Jean Stuby tisserand 7 9 000
- Joseph Amann journalier 6 2 000
- Sébastien Anding journalier 5 2 500

- Louis Linck cultivateur 8 3 000
- Joseph Halter journalier 4 2 000
- Louis Halter cultivateur 6 3 000
- Martin Weiss cultivateur 6 4 000
- Georges Bechel journalier 1 300
- Martin Bechel journalier 1 300
- Benoît Dannenmuller journalier 1 300
- Jean Dannenmuller journalier 1 300
- Georges Dannenmuller journalier 1 500
- André Schitter boulanger 1 600
- Benoît Muhlheiser journalier 1 300
- Louis Muhlheiser journalier 1 300
- Michel Lehmann journalier 5 3 000
- Georges Schitter cultivateur 6 3 000
- Michel Scheiber cultivateur 8 10 500
- Nicolas Blust cultivateur 2 8 000
- Louis Blust cultivateur 2 3 500
- Joseph Lehmann cultivateur 4 2 000
- Michel Amann cultivateur 5 6 000
- Nicolas Lehmann cultivateur 4 3 000
- Chrétien Witt journalier 4 2 000
- Nicolas Heisserer journalier 4 2 000
- Georges Heisserer journalier 1 600
- Martin Steinmetz journalier 7 8 000
- Madeleine Linck journalière 1 300
- Nicolas Zercher journalier 5 2 000
- Antoine Schott cultivateur 2 3 000
- Antoine Buchs charpentier 5 3 000
- Antoine Halter cultivateur 3 3 000
- Michel Amann cultivateur 6 3 000

At that time, there was nothing but virgin forest in Missouri. Nature, untouched and immense, had formed a rich breeding ground for crops. These deserted regions, though extremely rich, were swampy. It took many years for this region to become Missouri's "ideal garden."

The New Hamburg Colony

In 1947, St. Lawrence Parish in New Hamburg, in southeast Missouri, celebrated the first centenary of its founding. To mark the occasion, Romana Glastetter of Kelso published several articles in a local

newspaper on the history of the parish. These articles provide a number of valuable insights into the lives of the first settlers from Schirrhein-Schirrhoffen.

Around 1839, a small group of immigrants from Schirrhein-Schirrhoffen settled in Massillon, Ohio. Among them were Louis Pfefferkorn, John Martin, John Claus and Martin Richter. Leaving Le Havre, they disembarked in New York, after a 41-day crossing. From there, they headed north on another liner, via Albany and the Canadian lakes of Ontario and Erie. They disembarked at Cleveland, made their way down to Canton and settled in Massillon. A small group of immigrants from Alsace and Lorraine were already living in the area.

But these newcomers couldn't find a place to settle permanently. Land was selling for $50 an acre, far beyond their financial means. The following year, they decided to move further southwest. They took a steamboat down the Ohio to the Mississippi. It's easy to imagine how discouraged they were as they made their way down this river. We need only recall the descriptions of these regions given by Charles Dickens in his "American Notes." He writes that "the trees were stunted, the banks low and flat. The villages and log cabins few, their inhabitants of the poorest and weakest we met. Not a birdsong could be heard; there were no pleasant smells, no moving lights and cloud shadows, passing quickly. Hour after hour, a heavy, unchanging sky, a bright sun over the same landscape. Hour after hour, the river flowed as painfully andslowly as time."

He goes on to write:

"What words can describe the Mississippi, the Father of Rivers, who - praise God - has no children like him. A huge ditch, sometimes two or three miles wide, rolling liquid mud at six miles an hour, its current strong and full of spray, slowed and obstructed by huge tree trunks or whole trees interlocking in great rafts.... the low banks, the dwarfed trees, the marshes teeming with frogs, the poor cabins few and far between, their pale, sunken-cheeked inhabitants, the hot weather, mosquitoes entering through every crack in the boat, mud and silt covering it all, nothing is pleasant-looking, except the harmless lightning seen on the horizon every evening."

Such was the landscape traversed by our brave pioneers from Schirrhein. All that has changed today, but at what cost? How many people have died of malaria, that terrible killer of swampy regions?

Our four families disembarked at Price's Horse Shoe Bend in Scott County and settled in Texas Band, about six miles northeast of Charleston. It was a swampy, unhealthy area. Their stay here was short-lived. In 1842, a terrible malaria epidemic broke out. All contracted the disease and suffered great misery. Fortunately, no deaths were recorded. In autumn of the same year, sick, suffering and discouraged, they set off once more in search of higher, healthier ground. They arrived at Benton in southwest Missouri. Today, Benton is the county seat of Scott County. It was a richer, smiler region. The newcomers began by building shelters from tree branches. They settled near land belonging to Sam Tanner. He was a very influential man. He offered them shelter and helped them by advising them on the purchase of land. He was their leader and guide.

During the first night of their stay here, a storm, accompanied by a violent wind, broke out. It toppled and destroyed their poor shelters. In the morning, Mr. Tanner came to see what had happened to them. He found them soaked to the skin, haggard and shivering with cold. He offered them something to dry off with, and some comfort.

Now they had to find land to farm. John Barnès, a land registrar and friend of Tanner's, a man who knew the laws of the land and how to make their claims legal in a land of squatters, helped them in this search. He accompanied them to Jackson, where the title deeds were granted, and also took care of all the

technical details. They paid 25 cents an acre. Most of the land was forest. Squatters had settled here and there. They settled where four 40-acre lots met. They cleared a bit of land on each parcel and then claimed ownership of all 160 acres.

The pioneers's early days in the New World were very hard. The men cut wood for the steamboats to make a little money. They spent most of the winter in the swamps by the river, cutting wood for 25 cents a cord. They returned home in the spring to plow and seed their fields. They harvested the crop and then, in winter, returned to the river to cut wood.

Other families from Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen joined them in 1842 and 1856: Louis Halter, Mathias and Christian Halter in 1842, Bénédict Halter in 1843, Michel and Antoine Heisserer in 1844, Sébastien Eisenmann in 1845, Louis Dannenmuller in 1854, Charles Schitter in 1855, Joseph Schott and Joseph Brucker in 1856.

Apart from a few English Catholics, the majority of Benton's inhabitants were Protestant. Until then, these pioneers had no church. A priest from Cap Girardeau visited from time to time. He would hear confessions in a chicken coop that had been cleaned and decorated for the occasion. Mass was celebrated in the largest room of the Halter house.

In 1847, this priest encouraged them to build a church in Benton: "It didn't have to be rich or exactly right angles. The main thing was that it should have a roof and become a gathering place for these pioneers." This church was built of logs, but unfortunately fell prey to flames some time later. A new wooden church was erected. At the same time, serious difficulties began to arise between the pioneers and the natives.

Religious persecution began. The priest often found the church door and windows damaged. During services, stones were thrown against the church windows. On one occasion, a drunkard called the priest names. He was severely punished. Following these events, many settlers left Benton and moved to New Hamburg.

The first Catholic priest, Father Zapotto, arrived in New Hamburg in 1847. He took up residence in Wendelin Bucher's house. Two hundred people attended his first mass. Many new houses were built in New Hamburg that same year. It was also in this year that Sebastian Halter harvested his first crop, 30 sacks of wheat.

A wooden church dedicated to the Immaculate Conception was built in New Hamburg in 1858. The first marriages were celebrated, notably those of Donat Scherer and Madeleine Bruder, Ludwig Bucher and Elisabeth Arper, and David Halter and Joséphine Hahn. In 1853, the construction of a "definitive" church began under the direction of Father Osreka and according to the standards of the Schirrhein church, following indications provided by the schoolteacher called "Rummeli," a native of Schirrhein, who remembered the dimensions and shape of the church in his native village. For many years, this church was the mother church of all southwest Missouri, encompassing the parishes of Benton, Oran, Kelso and Chaffée. It should also be noted that a rivalry between two groups of settlers from Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen arose during the construction of this church.

New Hamburg became a target for the warring factions at the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861. The Confederates opened fire on the church, which was soon engulfed in flames. The tower was spared by the flames, but all that remained of the nave were the charred walls. All the parish registers were destroyed. We had to start all over again!

In early August of that year, a detachment of Southerners attacked the village, killing one man, wounding five and capturing thirteen. These prisoners included: John Claus, Joseph Glastetter, André Wilhelm,

Louis Dannenmuller, Philippe Halter, Peter Vogt, John Hahn, André Foress and Franz Kranz. They were escorted to Little River near Sikeston. Three weeks later, after swearing never again to bear arms against the Southerners, they were released.

Romana Glastetter also tells us a rather amusing story: the janitor of the Father Tuerck parish priest hadinvented a clever device using ropes and pulleys to ring the church bells from his kitchen. As soon as a detachment of enemy soldiers approached, he sounded the alarm by ringing the bells. At the given signal, all farmers abandoned their work and gathered at the church. Perched on the steeple and equipped with ropes, they waited for the attackers. When the attackers arrived, they threw down their lassos, disarmed the horsemen and fired on them.

During the same period, other families from Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen settled in Kelso, a village near New Hamburg. Even today, many gravestones recall their memory. They include Georges Baechel, Louis Dannenmuller, Antoine Halter, Antoine Heisserer, Michel Heisserer, Régine Heisserer, Nicolas Mosser, Antoine and Louis Willmann.

To better understand the lives, struggles and courage of these pioneers, let's follow in the footsteps of two of them: Bénédict Dannenmuller and Vincent Heisserer. These are two men who came to America at avery young age, and who succeeded to the full. Can the same be said of all the others? Probably not. Even today, the descendants of these pioneers have not forgotten Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen, their homeland.

Every year, some of these pioneer's grandchildren return to our region in search of their roots. And it's always with a certain emotion that we welcome them.

Bénédict Dannenmuller

Bénédict Dannenmuller was born in Schirrhein on December 22, 1813. He was the second child of Bénédict Dannenmuller père and Madeleine Bechtel. A former soldier named "Schario," who had served in the American army under La Fayette, aroused Bénédict's keen interest in America from an early age.

This soldier presented the country as a land of freedom, where success was easy. More than one villager was convinced and left for the New World. Benedick, who was just 16, wanted to leave too, but his father objected, saying that Benedick was too young for such an adventure, and that life in America was not as rosy and easy as he was made out to be.

A year later, young Bénédict's father was convinced, as letters from emigrants confirmed the former soldier's claims. One of these emigrants, close to the Dannenmuller family, wrote that he lived in Canton, Ohio, and that success there was easy for dynamic young people.

Accompanied by his uncle Philippe Bechtel, young Bénédict set sail from Le Havre for America in September 1830. Taking the Albany, Buffalo, and Cleveland route from New York, they arrived in Canton on November 28. They set up a forge on the corner of Walnut Avenue and South Heast Street, where they remained for around a year. Philippe Bechtel was a blacksmith by trade, and Bénédict helped him as an apprentice. Later they moved to MacKinley Avenue.

On July 14, 1834, Bénédict Dannenmuller parted company with his uncle and opened his own forge. He worked as a blacksmith for almost a quarter of a century. The year 1838 was particularly eventful for the young man. That year, he became an American citizen and married Barbara Scheiber.

But ever the creative spirit, Bénédict was not content with his traditional trade of blacksmithing: he invented a new part for ploughs, which considerably increased his profits. In 1852, when the railroad linked the western states to Massillon, he turned his attention to business. He understood that the arrival of the railroads would lead to the decline of the river ports. This would weaken his business in Canton.

The town of Massillon, on the other hand, was booming. It was renowned throughout the county as the "City of Wheat." Its importance was such that it even claimed the county seat. In 1859, Bénédict Dannenmuller decided to close his forge in Canton and bought land near the railroad to start trading grain.

Later, he sold the same warehouse to Ohio "mower" builder Ephraim Ball, and opened another near the Pennsylvania Railroad. He became one of the region's leading grain producers.

In 1869, Bénédict Dannenmuller bought the warehouse of wholesaler Thomas Kimball-Bros, located in the center of the city. His business became known as B. Dannenmuller and Sons, because he had enlisted the help of his two sons, William and Auguste, to run the business. Within three years, his business had become so successful that he had to buy more land to expand.

In 1876, he took on two more of his sons, Edouard and Jules, as partners in the business. That same year, Bénédict Dannenmuller specialized in coffee sales. His business took off to such an extent that he was forced to look for even larger plots of land and warehouses.

In 1881, it moved for the fifth time to a building on Southeast Avenue. This building, now occupied by the Dannenmuller & Sons Company, is home to the county's largest business.

Bénédict Dannenmuller retired from active life in 1887. He was a man devoted to public service and charity. As a member of the St. Peter's Catholic congregation, he made substantial donations to the construction of the new church. His last donation to the church was a bell, a gift in memory of his wife, who had preceded him in death. Bénédict Dannenmuller died on April 24, 1904. He had eight children, the eldest and youngest of whom died in infancy. He is a typical example of a man who, attracted by the New World, left his native country at an early age and made his fortune there. His life was that of a true pioneer. Starting from nothing, he built himself an empire in faraway America.

Vincent Heisserer

Vincent Heisserer emigrated to America in 1847 at the age of seven, with his father Georges, his mother Anne, née Walter, and his brothers Nicolas, aged six, and Jean, aged five. Their destination was Benton, in southeast Missouri, already home to other immigrants from Schirrhoffen. Arriving in New York, they took a steamboat to New Orleans, then another that took them north on the Mississippi. They stopped at Saint-Laurent, unsure of Benton's whereabouts.

So Georges Heisserer and André Pfefferkorn left their families and luggage on the quayside of the Saint-Louis port to reconnoitre the area. While they were gone, Joseph Georger happened to be passing by and spotted the two women and their children sitting by the levee, watching over their poor luggage. From the way they were dressed, he quickly realized that they were from Alsace. He approached them and asked where they were from. They replied, "From Schirrhoffen in Alsace." Smiling, he said, "Well, we're neighbors then." This is how the women met another pioneer from Alsace.

Together, they waited for the two explorers to return. On their return, Joseph Georger explained that if they wanted to get to Benton, they'd gone 165 miles too far and would have to turn back. So they returned to the ship, chatted with the captain, who took them back a little later to Commerce, Missouri.

Arriving in Commerce, they headed for Benton on foot. They settled temporarily on two farms, where they worked as day laborers. It was in Benton that Vincent Heisserer, now an adult, met a young girl named Catherine Dirnberger, originally from Bavaria. She had come to America with her parents in 1845, when she was just a one-year-old girl. Her parents wanted to settle in Scott County, but the boat that brought them here had an accident and had to stop in Commerce. There, they learned from a German pioneer that there was room in Benton and that they could settle there easily. They visited the area and were won over. They settled about half a mile south of Benton. They operated a farm owned by Judge W. Lambert.

Vincent Heisserer and Catherine Dirnberger were married on November 20, 1864 in the church of Saint-Vincent de Cap Girardeau, and rented a farm in Commerce. They worked hard and lived on their meager savings. In 1877, they left Commerce to settle in Benton, where they had rented another farm.

In 1880, Vincent Heisserer opened a merchandise store in Benton, while continuing to manage and live on the farm to the south of the town. A few years later, he embarked on a hotel business. He bequeathed his Benton business to his son

William and his son-in-law Franck Miller. His hotel business remained his sole concern. But in 1893, great misfortune struck. His hotel was destroyed by fire. Overnight, he found himself without a roof over his head. He accepted the generous hospitality of Senator W. Hunter and his wife for a couple of months, until he reclaimed his farm south of Benton. Here he lived until 1898.

Vincent Heisserer was also very active in local public life. In 1874, he was elected Scott County Treasurer, a position he held until 1890. During the American Civil War, he enlisted in the Union (Northern) army and took part in the famous Battle of Schiloh. He was later appointed county judge. He was a prominent Democrat.

Always interested in progress, Vincent Heisserer was also one of the region's railroad promoters. He helped and encouraged Louis Hauck in this venture. He also financed Benton's first flour mill and was one of the promoters of the Benton Bank, of which he even became a director until his age no longer allowed him to take part in the business. He was also regarded as one of the region's best combine mechanics. Anyone who had trouble with their machine would call on him.

Vincent Heisserer died on November 2, 1926, at the age of 87. He was buried in the Anges-Gardiens church in Oran, alongside his wife, who had died 18 years before him, in New Hamburg.

His wife Catherine was a very active and esteemed member of her parish. She energetically supported the construction of the parish church. She was very active until her death. Her funeral was celebrated on January 4, 1909 by Father Moenig, the parish priest. Over 600 people attended her funeral.

Their marriage produced 11 children, nine of whom survived. They were Mary Tenkhoff in Oran, W. H. Heisserer settled in Benton, Crescent Miller settled in Oran, Anna Mier died on September 2, 1908 in Cap County, Michael died at the age of two in Schott County, Ludovica Profit settled in Oklahoma City, Sister Olivia, a nun from Saint-François-de-Joliet in Illinois, Thead Heisserer died at the age of two, Ida died in infancy, Coenan Dohogne settled in Kelso, and Zenno Heisserer settled in Sile.

The Population of Schirrhein in 1836

In 1836, Schirrhein had 1,286 inhabitants, 224 houses and 257 households. 615 men, including 406 boys, 194 married men and 15 widowers, and 671 women, including 432 girls, 197 married women and 42 widows, lived here. The population was relatively young, with a low average age. 18 people were over 70 in 1836.

There were 74 farmers, 276 day laborers, 19 maids, 22 soldiers, 23 replacements, eight shoemakers, seven masons, six weavers, five wheelwrights, five servants, four tailors, three innkeepers, two carpenters, two bakers, two blacksmiths, two tinsmiths, two coopers, two gardeners, two basket makers, two butchers, two pensioners (Louis Kirchdorffer and Guillaume Revell), a grocer, a carpenter, a potter, a cutter (Antoine Schitter), a field warden (Joseph Martin), a cowherd (Georges Halter), a seamstress (Julia Halter), a turner (Antoine Brenner), a state pensioner (Jean Halter), a priest (Pierre Resch), a schoolteacher (Joseph Eyer), and a retired schoolteacher (Louis Resch).

Schirrhein's population was divided into three categories. Firstly, there were the farmers - the Ackerers. There were 74 of them. They owned or rented the land they farmed. They were among the wealthiest people in the village. Then there were the day laborers - the Tagner - by far the most numerous. There were 276 of them, including 149 day laborers. They farmed a plot of land and rented out their hands to the farmers in return for payment or some benefit in kind. There were just as many day laborers in Schirrhein, as their wealth did not guarantee them economic independence. The wage for a day laborer was two to three francs. Schirrhein thus had a large number of agricultural workers whose living conditions were precarious. This explains the desire to become landowners quickly, and the many day laborers who left for America. The advent of hop-growing in Schirrhein did not diminish their numbers.

In 1866, Schirrhein had 50 farmers and 132 day laborers. In 1880, there were 53 farmers, 110 day laborers and 28 lumberjacks. The fragmented nature of the land and the average surface area per inhabitant (0.47 hectares) also explain the large number of day laborers in our village. Part of this workforce was employed during the agricultural off-season, from October to March, in the forest. In 1880, lumberjacks and their families accounted for around 11% of Schirrhein's working population. Large contingents also emigrated to the forests of the Vosges or found work as laborers in the mines of Lorraine.

At the bottom of the social ladder were servants and handmaidens. They lived in the family community of the ploughman who employed them and housed them in fairly rough rooms, usually above the stable or barn. They could change employer on St. Stephen's Day - Bindelesdaa.

At that time, Schirrhein also had 22 soldiers and 23 replacements. In those days, military service lasted seven years, and you were required to draw lots before leaving. Every tenth ticket went to someone who was exempt from military service. Occasionally, some people would sell the right number to make money and do military service in the place of someone who had drawn the wrong number. They were called substitutes. Yet another sign of poverty in Schirrhein families.

The Evolution of Agriculture

With the sale of national property, the French Revolution had brought about a redistribution of land in favor of the peasantry. Between 1760 and 1838, the proportion of middle-class property remained stable, while noble property completely disappeared and the proportion of peasant land almost tripled. Expressed in hectares, the greatest increase was achieved by medium-sized landowners. The number of

smallholdings, i.e. less than one hectare, has also increased. This increase is largely due to the division of estates and the expansion of the village. The population more than doubled between 1775 and 1828.

From 1838 to 1907, there was no further extension of the area under cultivation, but production was reorganized. From 1860 to 1893, the area farmed rose from 130 hectares to 165 hectares. Herd numbers also increased. Livestock breeding has always been important in Schirrhein. The communal herd included horses, cattle, pigs and goats. The animals did not stay in the stables, but were herded into the communal grounds or into the royal forest. This herd was supervised by a cowherd who marked the cattle for easier identification and herding. Pigs were marked twice a year. In 1789, Schirrhein was fined by the forest authorities for sending pigs into the forest without having marked them. The cowherd also shortened the animal's horns to prevent accidents. The proportion of sheep has always been very limited in Schirrhein, as it was forbidden to take these animals into the royal forest.

The most important agricultural event of the 19th century was the introduction of hop growing. Hemp played an important role at the beginning of the century, but disappeared completely around 1850 with the widespread use of cotton. In his book "L'administration de Bischwiller à partir de 1840", Luroth writes that "hops became an important branch of agriculture in our region, the greatest agricultural resource of the population and particularly of the communes of Oberhoffen, Bischwiller, Schirrhein and Kaltenhouse." Schirrhein was one of the most important hop-growing communities in the Haguenau district. In 1877, the Schirrhein hop harvest amounted to 2,800 quintals. In this way, the peat soils of the Ried were fully exploited. In 1813, 60 hectares of land in Schirrhein were used to grow hops, 61 in 1908 and 45 in 1913.

Knitting Hairnets

It was an Israelite from Schirrhoffen who, around 1850, introduced this type of home-based work to our two communes. This activity, mainly carried out by women, provided a small extra income for some large, poor families. The nets produced were used to hold back ladies headdresses. Front nets were made to cover the entire head of hair, while bun nets were smaller and usually made of silk.

A good worker could make a dozen a day, for which she received, towards the end of the 19th century, only 60 to 70 pfennigs, from which it was necessary to deduct 10 to 12 pfennigs, retained by the depositary, who forwarded them to the wholesaler in Strasbourg. From there, most of the nets went abroad.

In his book "Les petites industries en Alsace," Louis Stroh cites the example of two Schirrhein families who made these nets.

The R. family lived in a small house on the first floor. The dwelling consisted of a small eat-in kitchen, two bedrooms, one to the right and the other to the left of the kitchen, an attic and a garret. Mrs. R., a widow, lived in this house with her three daughters, one of whom was herself a widow with a young son. The mother and two of the daughters knitted net. The two sisters each earned 70 to 80 pfennigs a day. A cow, a pig and 90 ares of land, cultivated with potatoes and wheat, provided part of the household's food. Bread was made from the wheat, which was ground at the nearby mill. The third sister worked in the fields in summer and sewed in winter. The prospect of lower wages in 1913, and the new health insurance regulations, made the three knitters very unhappy. They decided to give up their network and join the cigar factory in Schirrhoffen. Up to now, however, network had been an indispensable resource for these women. It was the only way they could stay in the village. The fourth sister was married in Schirrhein. Of the four sons, two were employed at Strasbourg station; the other two, married in the village, were one a farmer, the other a station employee.

In the Sch. family, the net industry met a less immediate need. The household consisted of father, mother and seven children, the eldest of whom, aged fifteen, was the only one actively helping his parents. His sister, who lived with them, made hairnets on her own so as not to be a burden on the family. She knitted a dozen a day. The father cultivated two hectares of land, which enabled him to raise two cows and a pig. In winter, he made shingles. He earned three marks a day. The wife and eldest son were actively involved in farming. In winter, the son often worked as a lumberjack in the forest.

These two examples illustrate the humble, hard-working lives of the people of Schirrhoffen and Schirrhein around 1900.

Our Communes Under the Second Empire

Before his coronation in 1852, Emperor Napoleon III had declared that “Empire means peace.” And indeed, the imperial government did much to promote the country’s economic development. It made efforts to build roads and railroads. It was at this time that the railroads linking Strasbourg to Wissembourg and Haguenau to Niederbronn were built. Industry and commerce were booming.

Significant progress was made in improving agriculture and viticulture. The construction of churches, presbyteries and schools was subsidized. But Napoleon III’s foreign policy was less successful. He led the Crimean War in 1854-1855, the Italian campaign in 1859, and the ill-fated expedition to Mexico. Like so many other communes in Alsace, Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen had to provide a sizeable contingent of men to fight in these different regions of the world. The exact number of these soldiers is not known, but nine of them lost their lives.

Eastern Army:

- Nicolas Bechtel, 32, grenadier in the 19th regiment of the line, died of typhoid fever in the ambulant hospital of the 1st division of the Army of the East.
- Nicolas Buchs, aged 22, fusilier in the 62nd regiment of the line, died of dysentery in Constantinople military hospital on September 3, 1855.
- Antoine Lux, aged 26, 2nd class in the 17th Battalion of Foot Chasseurs, wounded in Constantinople and died on February 7, 1855 on the vessel Dupré.
- Louis Halter, aged 41, gunner in the 2nd veteran company, died in Constantinople hospital on August 10, 1856.
- Laurent Gaengel, 28, rifleman in the 97th regiment of the line, died of chronic diarrhea at Gallipoli military hospital on March 2, 1855.
- Michel Heymann, aged 26, from Schirrhoffen, grenadier in the 10th regiment of the line, died of dysentery on January 3, 1856 in Constantinople hospital.

African Army:

- Mathieu Halter, aged 23, chasseur with the 4th French Regiment, died at Oran military hospital on October 29, 1855.
- François Scherer, soldier in the 2nd Zouave Regiment, killed on June 27, 1857 during the attack on the Schriden camp in Algeria.

Italian Army:

- Jacques Halter, 46, voltigeur no. 3,516, assumed killed during the Battle of Solferino, June 24, 1859.

Conscription

Under the Second Empire, compulsory military conscription was carried out by drawing lots. The right number meant exemption from military service, the wrong number obliged the conscript to serve for seven years in the Emperor's army. However, the law offered the possibility of being replaced by anotherconscript. Often, a poor conscript would sell himself and perform the military service of a wealthier conscript who had drawn the wrong number. Thanks to this money, more than one poor conscript was able to set up his own business as soon as he returned from service. A case in point is Wilhelm Schitter, the Empress's dragoon, also known as s'Schitterwilhelms. Son of Antoine and Anna-Maire Eck, he was born in Schirrhein on December 16, 1832. At conscription time, he drew the right number and sold his ticket to Hippolyte Desmarets for a large sum of money. Guillaume Schitter intended to take the money to America, but his father objected, as he already had a daughter there whom he feared he would not see again for a long time. So Guillaume stayed at home. On October 15, 1853, he was called up to serve in the dragoon regiment at Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Then, in 1856, he joined the Empress's dragoon regiment.

Finally, in view of his height, he became a cavalier in the régiment des guides de la garde of Empress Eugénie, wife of Napoleon III - all men in this regiment had to be 1.72 meters tall. This regiment was sent on a campaign to Italy in 1859. It left Melun on horseback on May 5, arrived in Marseille on May 7, entered Italy on May 16 and reached Magenta on June 7, arriving at Solferino on June 25, where the French army defeated the Austrians.

Guillaume Schitter often recounted his memories of this campaign. He recounted the raging horse battles. The dead littered the ground, but no horse ever stepped on a corpse. Napoleon III wept at the sight of the dead. The emperor rode a beautiful white horse, but it was too conspicuous in battle and had a tendency to bite. Napoleon III entrusted him to Guillaume, and took him back only for parades.

Guillaume Schitter was discharged early on September 20, 1859, after six years' service. He was issued a certificate of good conduct. Back in Schirrhein, he married Madeleine Baechel on February 2, 1859. They had a son, Jean, and a daughter, Elise. Guillaume Schitter built his house at no. 9 rue Principale – today no. 91 - and continued to run the family farm and lumber business. He was mayor of Schirrhein for 13 years. His son died at the age of 21 following a blood transfusion. At the time, blood groups and their role in blood transfusion were still unknown.

His daughter married Nicolas Schitter on May 24, 1886, and had four children: Marie, Eugénie, Louise and Guillaume Jean. When the First World War broke out, Guillaume Schitter hoped and predicted that the French would return to Alsace. He sent his grandchildren to boarding school to learn French: the girls to Frénétrange and the boys to Lure. But he didn't get the chance to see Alsace pass to France, as he died shortly before the First World War.

The Schirrhein People's Attachment to the Emperor

The people of Schirrhein were very attached to Emperor Napoleon III. His reign was considered a golden age. The common people used to say that “with Napoleon money came into the country, with Napoleon order came into the country, with Napoleon France became the first country in the world.”

When on June 6, 1867, an attempt was made on Her Majesty’s life, the people of Schirrhein were deeply affected. On June 16, 1867, the Schirrhein town council sent His Majesty a message of sympathy in the following terms:

The mayor and the entire town council of Schirrhein, on receiving the news of the odious and ef-inqualifiable attack of June 6th, hasten to thank the Most High for having preserved Your Majesty’s precious days, and for having spared the country the painful humiliation of seeing the days of hospitality accepted from them by the allied monarchs turned into days of mourning. The mayor and the entire town council are anxious to seize this opportunity to offer Your Majesty a new expression of their respectful sympathies and their wholehearted, unshakeable attachment.

This message was signed by Mayor Halter and all the councilors, namely Pfefferkorn, Wagner, Schitter, Halter, Heisserer and Clas.

The Railroad

The railroads first came to our region in the mid-19th century. On July 18, 1855, the first train from Strasbourg entered Haguenau station. The rail network gradually expanded. The Haguenau-Saverne line was opened in 1864, and the Strasbourg-Lauterbourg line in 1876. The latter was widened to two tracks between 1894 and 1896. Kaiser Wilhelm II often used it on his travels through Alsace.

The Haguenau-Rastatt section was declared to be in the public interest in 1892 and opened to traffic on May 1, 1895. Local and foreign workers were called in to build it. The Prompicai family settled in Schirrhein. By 1900, Bischwiller and Oberhoffen were also linked by a railway. This enabled workers to take the train to their place of work. From then on, many day laborers went to work outside our two communes. In 1945, passenger service was not resumed on this line and was replaced by a bus service.

This section was also closed to freight traffic on December 16, 1975. Today, the line remains open only to military personnel from the Oberhoffen camp.

Accidents at the Oberhoffen Shooting Range

In the old days, the people of Schirrhein were busy on the military field near Oberhoffen during maneuvers. They would collect shrapnel and bullets and hand them over to the military authorities for a small fee. This was not without danger. Accidents due to carelessness sometimes occurred. In 1888, 17-year-old Louis Lux fell victim to his own carelessness. The projectile he found on the firing range exploded while he was handling it. The shrapnel tore off the thumb of his left hand, shattered his lower jaw and slightly wounded his thigh. Despite his injuries, the victim was able to return to his parent’s house. The local doctor, Dr. Faullimmel, who happened to be in the village at the time, was able to administer first aid.

THE UNDIVIDED FOREST AND ITS DISPUTES

Schirrhein has never owned a communal forest. Some malicious tongues claim that the commune oncehad a communal forest, but that a mayor sold it off cheaply. This claim is false. History bears witness to this. On July 17, 1164, Frederick Barbarossa granted the town of Haguenau and its inhabitants a number of privileges, including the right to take wood from the forest for building and heating purposes, on condition that the oak and beech trees remained untouched. He also granted the right to remove grass in proportion to their needs, and the right to graze pigs and other domestic animals freely, with the exception of sheep. This charter granted the town a number of rights, but not that of co-ownership. Little by little, the town of Haguenau grew in importance. It sought to free itself from imperial power and become an independent republic, with its own constitution and senate. For his part, the Emperor, keen to accommodate this growing power, granted the town ever greater rights over the forest. As a result, Haguenau gradually came to see itself as the owner of the forest, a right that the emperors had always contested.

After the Thirty Years War, when part of Alsace was annexed to France, Louis XIV maintained all the rights and privileges acquired by the towns in order to secure these newly-acquired regions for all time. The magistrate of Haguenau took advantage of the King's generosity to obtain the right of co-ownership. This right was granted by decree on August 28, 1696, after lengthy debate. Henceforth, the forest would be undivided, meaning that the town would share half the proceeds of timber sales with the King. For the price of his generosity, the king asked the town to cover the costs of guarding and administering the forest. Admittedly, this was a good deal for the town of Haguenau.

As long as Schirrhein was part of the jurisdiction of Haguenau, until the French Revolution, its inhabitants enjoyed more or less the same rights as the town. With the Revolution, this situation changed. A decree from the National Assembly declared the village independent, and it lost all its traditional rights of use.

On October 10, 1790, Schirrhein was authorized by Haguenau to put 64 pigs to sleep for a fee of 32 sols per animal. But this authorization was provisional and did not constitute a right. Sensing the danger, the mayors of Schirrhein and Kaltenhouse took the town to court. They demanded to be given possession of the assets and revenues that the communes should have been endowed with at the time of separation.

According to the mayor of Schirrhein at the time, an equitable division would have entitled the commune to one-fifteenth of the forest revenues. But the town would have none of it. The Count of Flaxlanden, district deputy, took up the defense of the two villages. He described the situation as follows:

"The two villages, from which the town has been unjustly withholding income and firewood for so long, lack everything. Their churches are too small; their cemeteries, too small, are so overcrowded that half-preserved dead have to be dug up to make room for others. They have no common house. Schoolteachers are poorly paid, ignorant and too few in number; the crumbling schoolhouses can only hold a small proportion of the children who should be attending lessons; there are no fountains; no reservoirs, although there is no shortage of water; no fire pumps; all the bridges, especially that over the Moder, are in a state of disrepair. Schirrhein doesn't even have a gravel pit to maintain its byways. Everything needs to be repaired, built and restored."

This testimony is undoubtedly a tad over-simplified, but it nonetheless has a certain degree of authenticity. The demands of the inhabitants of Schirrhein and Kaltenhouse were met with increasing resistance from Haguenau. On Pluviôse 22, Year VII (1799), the municipality of Haguenau forbade the

grazing of Kaltenhouse and Schirrhein herds until their inhabitants could prove their rights. For the inhabitants of these two villages, the proof was obvious: as they had belonged to Haguenau at the time when the rulers of the Holy Empire had endowed the town with usage rights, they should continue to enjoy these rights, even after their detachment from the territory of Haguenau. The town, on the other hand, maintained that the status of the two settlements was that of feudal vassalage. The imperial favors of past centuries only concerned the town's bourgeoisie. However, the inhabitants of the two villages were never bourgeois or manants, but vassals of the town. So the identity of the two towns with Haguenau is nothing but a fiction. Consequently, the franchises granted to the town's inhabitants did not have to revert to the villagers of Schirrhein and Kaltenhouse.

This led to a lengthy dispute between Schirrhein and Kaltenhouse and Haguenau. In the end, Haguenau prevailed, and the forest remained undivided between the state and Haguenau. The forest will remain undivided between the State and Haguenau. Schirrhein will have to make do with grazing rights and dead wood.

The forest has always played an important economic role in the life of our two communities. As we have seen, the inhabitants of Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen enjoyed rights of use, such as the collection of fallen leaves and dead wood, pig runs and grazing. These rights varied in importance from one period to the next. The population was very attached to them and would revolt whenever they were touched.

Forest Use Rights

The right to collect fallen leaves was very important, as the soil in our area - sandy on the Hart, marshy and gravelly in the Ried - was poor and not very fertile. Cereals, potatoes, rye, corn [maïs], and hops grew here only with hard work and fertilizer. This fertilizer, if needed at all, came mainly from animal litter. Collecting dead leaves and ferns in the forest provided a much-needed supplement to the animal's bedding, as the straw produced was clearly insufficient for this purpose.

Since the French Revolution, this right was no longer automatic. A request for renewal of this concession was made each year, and each family had to pay a fee of three cents. The town council's register of deliberations mentions such a request on September 11, 1859:

"The municipal council, considering that the soil in the suburbs of Schirrhein is too ungrateful and hardly suitable for the cultivation of potatoes and March, which must be smoked every year and for each harvest, considering that the commune only plants cereals on around 130 hectares, that these 130 hectares produce around 1,900 metric quintals per year, that this quantity of straw is insufficient to provide the necessary fertilizer and bedding for the 366 horned cattle and horses owned by the inhabitants, especially as many heads of household are obliged to convert a large quantity of straw into fodder, considering that among the inhabitants who own cows, there are many who are absolutely deprived of litter, that the others, given the aridity of their land and their few resources, are not in a position to provide themselves with what is necessary for their cultivation and the upkeep of their livestock, for these reasons the municipal council requests, Monsieur le Préfet, to continue the concession of dead leaves to the commune of Schirrhein, previously made in the undivided forest of Haguenau, admits all heads of family to the distribution of the requested leaf, requests the use of rakes and carriages and invites Monsieur le Maire to draw up a list of all households, called upon, without distinction, to take part in the collection of dead leaves."

To protect the substance of the forest floor, the administration had often sought to limit this right to collect dead leaves, but was nevertheless tolerant of poor communes.

The two communes also benefited from the right to graze pigs and glean in the forest. To retain this right, a request had to be made each year and a fee paid. The herd had to be supervised by a pig keeper approved by the administration, and the animals had to be marked for easier recognition. The pig herd could only be sent to areas authorized by the Water and Forestry Department. In 1789, Schirrhein was fined for sending unmarked pigs into the forest and into prohibited cantons.

This right was severely contested at the time of the French Revolution. At the town council meeting of January 3, 1793, the municipality of Haguenau vigorously protested against the presence of pig herds from neighboring villages in the forest. The Haguenau municipality summoned the officers of the Maîtrise, who had authorized this glanding, to remove the herds within 24 hours.

Haguenau jealously guarded its monopoly on glanding in the forest. From then on, no animal could be driven into the forest without authorization. Here are the terms of the agreement signed with Schirrhein on December 23, 1865: grazing was authorized for the years 1866 to 1870; the herd was to be continuously under the care of a shepherd approved by the forestry administration, and required to comply with all the forestry officer's instructions, in particular to change the resting place of its pigs every day; it was to follow the Niederbetschdorf or Oberbetschdorf road to and from the forest; damage caused by his passage, either to roads or ditches, will be repaired by the commune at the first requisition; the route will cease completely during hot weather; before March 1st, 60 francs will be paid annually to the Haguenau estate fund, and the same sum to the town's municipal fund.

Like all neighboring communes, Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen also enjoyed grazing rights in the forest. To benefit from this right, it was necessary to apply for it, pay a cowherd and pay an annual tax of three sous per head of cattle to the Water and Forestry Department.

This right was vital for the inhabitants of both communes, as the natural meadows were insufficient to feed all the livestock. In the 18th century, 46 hectares of the undivided forest were natural meadows. Like the other two rights mentioned above, the right to graze was contested at the time of the French Revolution. In An VIII, the peasants of Schirrhein and Kaltenhouse petitioned Prefect Laumond to maintain their right to graze in the forest. The prefect, arguing that "the privilege they enjoyed was merely a free, precarious concession, granted out of pity for the citizens, most of whom were indigent, a concession which was based solely on feudalism and not on title, nevertheless specified that he had no objection to their continuing to enjoy grazing, as the constituted authorities had placed moderation in the use made of it by the riparian communes." This text shows once again that the town and the Water and Forestry Department wanted to protect the forest and limit this right of use.

Around 1900, this grazing right was only used for horned cattle. The animals were driven into the forest under the care of a cowherd for five months, from May 1 to October 1. At that time, the communal herd numbered around 200 animals. The commune paid 0.50 marks per animal per day, i.e. 100 marks per day and 15,000 marks for the five months. This represented a considerable sum of money.

Illegal Land Clearing

Demographic expansion led the inhabitants of Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen to encroach on the forest to build a thatched cottage and clear a few acres of land, which they annexed to expand their farms. When, in 1704, French troops built locks on the Moder to improve their defense lines and flooded the entire Ried, the lower part of Schirrhein was covered by water. The houses at the bottom of the embankment were flooded, making them uninhabitable. So people cleared forest land to build houses. The Oberfeld district dates from this period. On December 1, 1714, an edict from the Grand Master ordered the mayor to

collect the fruits of the illegally cleared land for the benefit of the King. The administration wanted to take possession of this land once again. However, on July 11, 1716, the State Council decided to leave the land in the hands of its owners, on condition that they pay an annual royalty of six sous per acre to the State. It should be noted that the locks on the Moder were still in place at this time.

In the same year, the Ministry of Water and Forests ordered these people to demolish their houses, but in the end they were allowed to stay in exchange for an annual indemnity. Subsequently, building permits were rarely granted for land in the undivided forest. In 1791, Michel Scherer of Schirrhein's application for a building permit on undivided forest land was categorically rejected by the district of Haguenau. Today, these unauthorized clearings are no longer permitted. Whenever the commune wants to create a housing estate, it has to exchange land with the town of Haguenau.

Forest Crimes

When we consult the records of the hearings of the Water and Forest Management in the 18th century, we are struck by the large and varied list of offences committed by certain inhabitants of Schirrhein-Schirrhoffen in the Haguenau forest. The offenders were generally poor people, but there were also wealthier people who used their horses and carriages to take timber out of the forest.

These crimes were particularly prevalent during the French Revolution, due to the war, billeting of troops, requisitions and economic difficulties. In 1742, a resident of Schirrhein felled 18 oak trees measuring 2.5 feet in circumference in the forest and drove them to Bischwiller to sell them to a private individual. He was fined 572 livres and had to return the stolen wood. In 1777, another Schirrheinois was fined 21 livres for removing a ten-foot pine from the forest. In 1779, Maurice Halter of Schirrhein was sentenced to 15 day's imprisonment for maltreating a guard with a log.

For minor thefts, the master's office was generally quite conciliatory. Penalties were limited to a fine of a few pounds, but were particularly severe for repeat offenders. In 1752, two repeat offenders from Schirrhein and two from Haguenau were sentenced to settle at least seven hours walk from the forest. The forestry administration wanted to reserve wood resources, because at the time, the demand for wood by the navy and industry, and for war purposes, was constantly increasing.

The Burns

In the past, many Schirrheinois worked as lumberjacks. No wonder. The forest is so close by, and there's so much work to be done. From February to April, it's felling time. Then it's time to clean up, sow seeds in nurseries and plant new trees. Then it's time to maintain ditches, rivers, roads and drainage channels.

This work takes place throughout the year and requires a lot of manpower. In 1880, Schirrhein already had 128 lumberjacks, a third of the working population. By 1950, the number had risen to 184, and by 1955 to 231. At that time, Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen alone accounted for almost 30% of the forestry workforce under the jurisdiction of the Water and Forestry Inspectorate.

Added to these numbers was an almost equal number of women employed for a few days or weeks in summer to harvest seeds. Forestry work was more attractive than factory work, because the apprenticeship was shorter and less costly. The salary was higher than that of a skilled worker, and the work schedule was more flexible. With the same eight-hour working day, it was easier for the lumberjack

to get a few hours or even a day off, if necessary - especially in summer, when work was less pressing - to tend to his garden or his fields, a not inconsiderable addition to his lifestyle. The woodcutter also has 20 steres of wood at his disposal.

But loggers aren’t the only people who make a living from the forest. There are also the voituriers who take care of transporting the wood from where it is felled to the sawmill or to the logging yard where it is picked up by the company that bought it. Before the war, there were around fifty forwarders for the whole forest. Some were from Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen. They transported the wood with their own two- or three-horse teams. Many Schirrhein and Schirrhoffen lumberjacks worked in the Vosges forests. They stayed on during the week and only returned home at weekends.

It's true that the situation for lumberjacks has changed a great deal. Mechanization has taken over, and factory work, especially in Germany, is more attractive to young people. Today, many lumberjacks are foreigners, and the nickname Harzknüppe is less and less justified. In 1986, the Water and Forestry Inspectorate employed five forestry technicians, 18 technical staff, 61 permanent workers (including two part-timers due to physical disability) and five seasonal workers. There is currently one worker for every 205 hectares. Today, there are only 16 workers from Schirrhein-Schirrhoffen working in the undivided Haguenau forest.