



Association du Souvenir des Cadets de la France Libre

A short notice to discover what was the "Ecole des cadets de la France Libre"

At the beginning

In June 1940, General de Gaulle found around him about a thousand young boys between 14 to 16 years old who had crossed the channel to engage themselves in the France's service.

There were too young to be enlisted in the army, any strong was there will to fight. Anyway, one had to take care of them however the lack of money and men that was the lot of the new-born Free France.

At first, they were gathered in a scout camp near Brimbach, a little place in Wales. There, with few things to do, they resented to be kept out of military activities. They had to wait all the summer. There were about 150 of them.

In October, some could engage in free French navy if there were 17 years or in the army if there were 18. Those who had interrupted their studies (comprehensive school) were gathered in Rake manor, a little manor in Surrey in the purpose to allow them to complete their studies as well as to receive a beginning of military instruction.

But these teen-agers were no longer interested in studies and were deceived by the material conditions as well as by a program too far from the war concern. Then, General de Gaulle decided to create a true military school with some place for the general instruction still necessary.

This military school will take the name of "Ecole des cadets de la France Libre" (Free French Cadets school)

L' Ecole des cadets de la France Libre

The fourth February 1941, the Free French Cadet's School is housed in the House 5 of the Public school of Malvern in south Worcester.

Since the beginning, General de Gaulle wanted this school to give the higher level of military instruction in the tradition of the Military School of Saint-Cyr¹ from which he himself had graduated.

In accordance with his will, the military instruction has been given there by officers graduated from Saint-Cyr. All of them were eager to transmit the spirit and the traditions of this glorious school.

From this moment, the Cadets will have proper installation. In fact Malvern facilities were appreciated as being a real luxury by the standard of French schools. The cadets will use the French blue uniforms and the other equipments issued from the stocks of the Narvik alpine troops. This uniform will be completed by a white fourragère to mark the cadet status. The white colour being used for the same purpose on the collars of English cadet officers uniforms.

They will work with enthusiasm until they get the stripe that will reward their efforts.

The cadets are dispatched between three sections.

The first one is a preparatory section dedicated to the younger one (less aged and or less advanced in studies).

¹ The equivalent of Sandhurst in England



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The second one is dedicated to those who had reached the level of year 12 in secondary school

The third one that will become the "compagnie des élèves aspirants" gather those having already the baccalaureat (A-level diploma) and whose age allow a regular enlistment in the army.

The first promotion is promoted in June 1942. It chose the name of "LIBERATION". It counts fifteen officers. Eight of them will be killed in war.

In March 1942, the English army requisitioned the Malvern college for military research and the cadets went in the manor house of Ribbesford near the town of Bewdley. They found there a large place proper for the training of a growing quantity of cadets. At that time, the first cadets have all reached the age of eighteen as well as the new one coming from all the world. The preparatory section is suppressed. For each of the two remaining sections, the instruction lasts 6 months. The six first months are for the first level of military instruction. At the end the cadets reach the grade of sergeant.



The second section is used to give the professional instruction of the soon to be officers.

Since December 1942 until June 1944, four new promotions will be issued from the school. They will wear the names of "BIR HAKEIM", "FEZZAN TUNISIE", "CORSE ET SAVOIE" and "18 JUNE"².

In the Saint-Cyr tradition, each time a new promotion gets its name, this is done in a ceremonial parade presided by either General De Gaulle when he stays in England or otherwise by one of his representatives (for example General Leclerc or General Koenig for the last promotion).

On the whole, two hundred and eleven officers were issued from the "Ecole des cadets". Forty-eight of them died in war.

The closing of the school

The Military school of the "cadets de la France libre" closed on 16 June 1944. In the order he gave to close it, General de Gaulle wrote:

"Le nom de l'Ecole des Cadets demeurera dans l'histoire militaire de la France. Il demeurera comme celui du refuge où la jeune élite de notre armée apprit à vaincre pour la libération et la rénovation de la patrie."

The name of the free French cadets school will stay in the military history of France. It will stay as the place where the young elite of our army has learned to win for France's liberation and for the homeland country revitalization.

² Not in the Waterloo memory of course, but in the memory of the first call of General De Gaulle