

**THE FREE FRENCH CADETS
MILITARY SCHOOL**

80th Anniversary 1941-2021



SAINT-CYR

LE GÉNÉRAL DE GAULLE

Décembre 1951.

Les Cadets! Parmi les
Français libres, les jeunes furent les
plus généreux, autrement dit: les
meilleurs.

Par les efforts et les sacrifices de
leur cinq glorieuses promotions: "Libération",
"Bir Hakeim", "Pezzan - Tunisie",
"Lorraine et Sarre", "18 Juin", ces
bons fils ont, de tant leur, leurs, pour
la patrie en danger.

Mais aussi, dans son drapier,
aux plus jours de son Histoire, ils ont
construit la France.

J. de Gaulle.

THE FREE FRENCH CADETS MILITARY SCHOOL

I - THE ORIGINS

In June 1940, General de Gaulle found himself surrounded by more than a hundred adolescents between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, who had crossed the sea to offer him their total devotion to the service of France. Their young age prevented them from joining a fighting unit, however much they may have wanted to. However, they had to be supported materially and morally despite the nascent Free France's lack of resources.

At first, they were quartered in tents near the small town of Brymbach, in Wales where, with nothing to do and disappointed at being excluded from the fighting they were longing for, they had to wait for a final decision concerning them.

In October, the ones who had to interrupt their secondary school studies - just over sixty - were assembled in "Rake Manor", a small manor house in Surrey, in order to allow them to continue their studies while beginning their military training.

But these adolescents no longer had the mentality or the concerns of ordinary college students and the experience proved to be disappointing, for those concerned as well as for their teachers. General de Gaulle, who had been made aware of their situation, decided to satisfy the wishes of these volunteers, and to create a real military school for them, one which would also have a place for the general teaching these adolescents still needed.

This school took the name of School of the Free French Cadets.

II - SCHOOL OF THE FREE FRENCH CADETS

On 4th February 1941, the Cadet School moved into one of the requisitioned buildings of the important public school in Malvern, south of Worcester.

From the start, General de Gaulle wanted to ensure that despite the ordeal France was experiencing, this school would uphold the hundred-plus-year-old tradition of the Special Military School of Saint-Cyr, from which he himself had passed out.

In accordance with this will, all the military training there was provided by officers from Saint-Cyr, who were particularly committed to passing on the spirit and tradition of this glorious institution to their young students.



**Malvern College (Worcestershire) - House no. 5
February 1941 - May 1942**



Presentation of the school pennant by General de Gaulle on 13th September 1941

From then on, the Cadets were correctly set up and equipped in the French way thanks to the stock of dark blue outfits left behind by the alpine battalions of Narvik, outfits which were finished off for the aspiring students by a white aiguillette, the insignia among the English cadets. They enthusiastically worked towards earning the stripe which would recognize their efforts when the time came.

The cadets were divided into three sections:

- a preparatory section for those less advanced in age and knowledge,
- a first section for those whose level of education corresponded roughly to that of first-year high-school students,
- a section, which would become a company of aspiring students, graduates or those deemed worthy of it, and whose date of birth (either their real one or the one they'd sneakily changed it to) would allow them to enroll in the regular army at the end of their

studies.

The first year group, consisting of fifteen officer cadets, passed out in June 1942, and chose to be christened "Liberation". Of these fifteen young officers, eight were killed by the enemy.

*

In May 1942, after the buildings of Malvern College were requisitioned by the British military, the Cadet School moved - albeit not far - to Ribbesford manor, near the town of Bewdley (a deformation of the Norman term "Beaulieu"), where it found a larger environment which was better suited to the growth of its numbers.

As the Cadets of 1940 had now reached the age of eighteen, which was also the minimum age for newcomers, the preparatory cycle was abolished. The pupils were therefore divided into two companies, each of which had a period of instruction of six months. The first six months were



Ribbesford Manor (Worcestershire)
May 1942 - June 1944

devoted to the military training of young recruits and were recognized by the rank of sergeant. The second period was used for the technical and professional training of future officers.

From December 1942 to June 1944, four new classes passed out from the Cadet School. They bore the names: "Bir Hakeim", "Fezzan Tunisia", "Corsica and Savoy" and "18th June".

According to the tradition of Saint-Cyr, each passing-out ceremony featured a solemn taking of arms which was chaired by General de Gaulle when he was in the UK or, in his absence, by one of his representatives (notably Generals Leclerc and Koenig for the last promotion).

In total, two hundred and eleven officers passed out from the Cadet School. Forty-eight of them, nearly one in four, died for France.

The Military School of Free French Cadets was dissolved on 16th June 1944. In the order for the dissolution of the School, General de Gaulle wrote:

"The name of the Cadet School will stay in France's military history. It will forever be the name of the refuge where the young elite of our army learned to fight for the liberation and renovation of the nation."

III - THE CADETS

From 1941 to 1943, the number of students at the Cadet School gradually increased from around sixty to over 150.

Indeed, over time, the first volunteers, who mainly came from Brittany and, to a lesser extent, from the north of France, were joined by other young people who often arrived after multiple adventures:

- escaping from France by sea, or via Spain, very often after months of incarceration in prison or in the sinister camp of Miranda.
- from French overseas territories, already assembled or not: New Caledonia, French territories in the Pacific, Madagascar, Réunion, Martinique,

- or from abroad: Canada, the United States, Mexico. Argentina, Haiti, Belgium, Luxembourg, Sweden, Iceland - or, more simply, the UK.

Before attending the school, most of these young people had already shown determination through hardship. What compelling motivations pushed them to take such risks, when their young age could allow them to stay at home guilt-free, to continue their studies there? Despite their very different origins, they had two dominant feelings in common, feelings shared by all Free French people, but which they felt particularly strongly because of their youth. First of all, of course, patriotism. The state in which France had found itself and the shame of its defeat filled them with an ardent desire for revenge, but above all, they had the feeling of a deep wound buried inside them: what was happening in France was intolerable to them and affected their personal dignity. Allowing these events to unfold without being fully involved in them seemed unacceptable to them.

The strength of these feelings and this very committed community created a very powerful bond of shared identity among the Cadets which is still evident today.

IV - THE CADETS IN COMBAT

Since 1942, the year the first class passed out, the Cadets haven't stopped fighting on all the battlefields where France has been involved.

First of all in the Resistance, where a Cadet met a glorious death with his weapons in his hands.

Then in Italy, within the 1st French Free Division (twenty-five Cadets served in this prestigious unit). In 1944 virtually all the Cadets had been involved in the liberation of France and subsequently in operations in Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Germany.

They served in all the units of the French Army: in the 1st Free French Division, in the 2nd Armored Division, with SAS paratroopers or Marines and Navy commandos, at the Central Intelligence and Action Bureau for the supervision of the maquis, in the 1st Army or in tactical liaison missions with the allied armies.

The service of Cadets who chose military careers continued after the end of the fighting in Europe. Twelve former students were killed in

Indochina, two in Korea, three in Algeria, one in Katanga and one in Togo.

Everywhere the Cadets have proven themselves worthy of the finest traditions of the French army, as shown by the many citations and decorations awarded to them. Seven of them were made Companions of the Liberation.

V - HONORS

On 9th June 1949, at Malvem College, a bench commemorating the presence of the Cadets was inaugurated.

On 17th March 1954, a law of the Republic officially assimilated the Military School of the Free French Cadets into the Special Military School of Saint-Cyr.

On 12th March 1956, in the ruins of Saint-Cyr-l'École, the flag of the Military School of the Free French Cadets was decorated with the Cross of the Legion of Honor and the Croix de Guerre with a palm. The quote includes this:



**12th March 1956 in Saint-Cyr-l'École,
General Koenig decorates the flag
of the Military School of the Cadets with the Legion of Honor.**

"From 1940, taking up the most beautiful traditions of Saint-Cyr; it grouped together and trained young French people who came to England wishing to fight for the liberation of the fatherland. First in Malvern, then in Ribbesford, there were five classes which performed magnificently on the most varied battlefields. When it dissolved on 15th June 1944, it could be proud of having fulfilled its mission well."

On 25th August 1956, the flag of the Cadet School, also decorated with the Medal of the Resistance, was solemnly deposited at the Remembrance Museum of Saint-Cyr-Coëtquidan, in the presence of General de Gaulle.

On 24th July 1966, a monument in memory of the Free French Cadets was erected at the entrance to the courtyard of the School of Saint-Cyr-Coëtquidan.

On 24th May 1985, the Luxembourg Croix de Guerre was awarded to the Cadet School.

On 26th July 1987, the passing-out class of the Special Military School of Saint-Cyr chose “Cadets de la France Libre” as their name.

In addition, nine year groups from the Joint Forces Military School and the Reserve Officers School have chosen to bear the name of a Cadet who died for France.

On 28th October 1998, a “Place des Cadets de la France Libre” was inaugurated in La Ferté-Saint-Aubin.

On 27th February 2001, a “Rue des Cadets de la France Libre” was inaugurated in Lyon and on 28th June 2002, another was in Paris.

On 8th May 2004, finally, an "Allée des Cadets de la France Libre" was inaugurated in Massy.

Plenty of sites or roads in other French cities bear the name of a Cadet who died on the battlefield.

In Les Invalides, the Liberation Museum and the Free France Museum, as well as the Officer Museum in Saint-Cyr, have dedicated one or more showcases to the Cadet School.

A plaque affixed to the manor in Ribbesford, England, and a display case at the Bewdley Museum recall the school's presence in the heart of Worcestershire during the Great Test.

*

Quotes from General de Gaulle about the Cadet School:

"The Military Cadet School has been a full and noble French achievement. I would like you to know and say how much comfort I myself have found in my task, whenever I have had the honor of inspecting the school. The pure ardor, the entire discipline, the beautiful outfit of our Cadets are the best nourishment of our hope..."

Charles de Gaulle

*Letter to the Commandant of the School dated from Algiers,
7th November 1943.*

The Cadets: "Nothing comforts the leader of Free France as much as the contact of this youth, a jewel of hope added to the obscured glory of France."

Charles de Gaulle

Mémoires de guerre.

"But also, in its sorrow, in the worst days of its history, they consoled France."

Charles de Gaulle

December 1951.

*

VI - THE ASSOCIATION

From 1947, an Association brought together the former members of the Military Cadet School: executives, officers, students and trainees.

The Association organized many activities including official and unofficial meetings, celebrations, visits, remembrance and cultural trips.

The Association has published several editions of a directory and distributes a biannual newsletter.

The families of the missing have been regularly associated with the meetings, especially at weekly lunches, for three decades.

General de Gaulle accepted the Honorary Presidency of the Association and honored two of its dinners with his presence.

The Association ceased its activities in 2010.



"BACK THEN"¹

On the framework of the School's history, each of the survivors has now placed their own memories.

As far as I am concerned, I would just like to try to revive, one last time, the environment, the atmosphere, the spirit which characterized the School, so that this past doesn't completely disappear in the universal confusion which seems to be the brand of our times. If, before analyzing the subtle composition of this atmosphere and this spirit as best I could, I had to express an overall impression, it seems to me that I could sum it up this way: the Cadets were happy.

This state of mind might be considered inexplicable, if not shocking: cut off from their wounded country, separated from their families and often worried about their fate, hardly rich, torn away from any sweetness and intimate affection at an age when those forms of support were still necessary, leading an austere life after all, bound by the firm discipline which must be endured by those who will one day be in command, how could these young people have been happy?

A basic explanation, which would clarify everything, is that perhaps the vast majority of men today are mistaken about the true nature of happiness and the elements which cause it to arise. Anyway, the Cadets, with very rare exceptions, worked in joy, so much so that everyone who

¹Text written in 1954

visited them felt the generous warmth. And where did they get this state of grace?

First, no doubt, from the times they lived in, which were very exhilarating. This is, of course, a bygone era, the time of purity, of intransigence, of the choice which fully draws people in, the time of this particular freedom for rebels (for "dissidents" according to Vichy's hushed vocabulary), a freedom fraught with perils and responsibilities, but armed with a sense of duty and a discipline which one draws from the best of oneself.

It was the time when souls were laid bare, when all false claims were easy to see through, when children instinctively behaved like adults while so many informed people got bogged down in degrading calculations.

It was, in short, the time of greatness, that of which Churchill said to his compatriots, with rightful pride: "The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this Island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, "This was their finest hour."'"

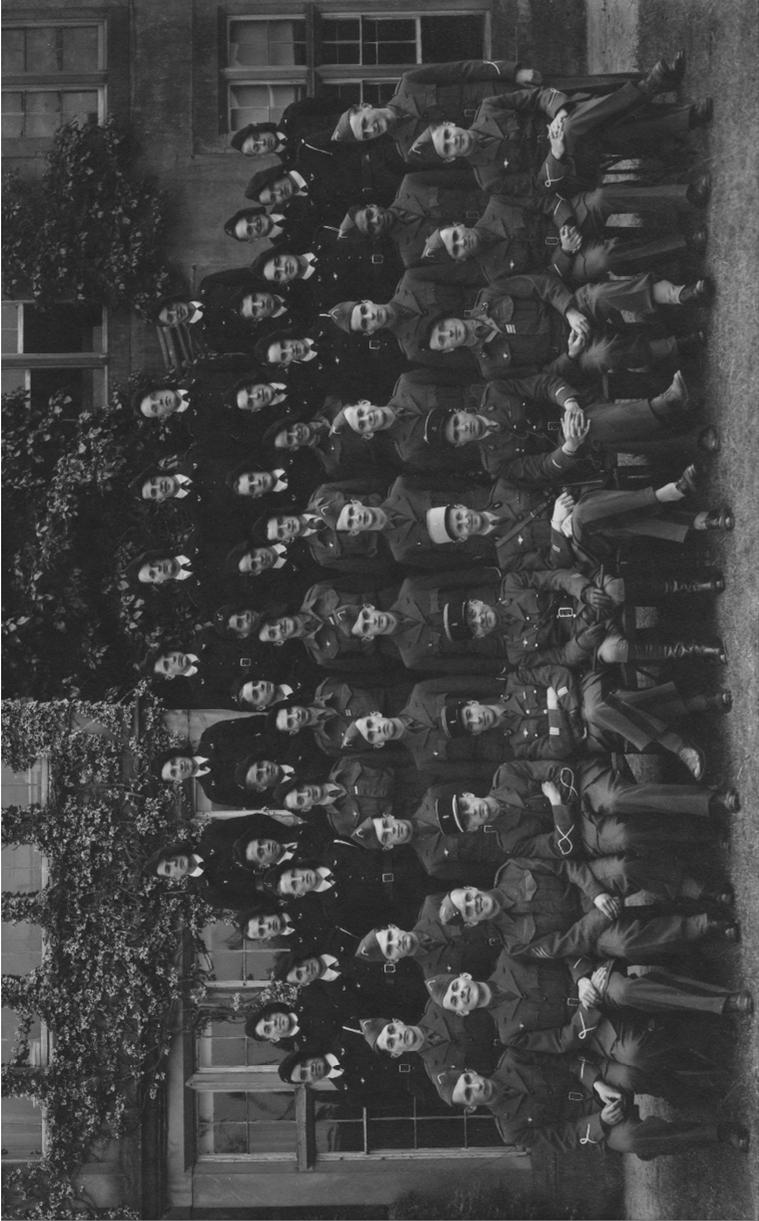
At any time when France doubts itself, it wouldn't be bad for her to remember that some of her children, in the literal sense of the word, had chosen to share this most beautiful hour of this great destiny.

The spirit of confusion which reigns today likes to dispute their right to claim with this title, claiming that it was mere "luck" that they were present on a soil which was destined to be freed - although only the future would reveal this to be the case - from the curse of the Nazi occupation. It seems useful to recall, for the sake of historical accuracy, that if this "chance" was indeed offered to many reasonable Frenchmen who had only to stretch out their hand to seize it and who didn't benefited from it, the Cadets themselves often had to force it: all those, among others, who crossed the passes of the Pyrenees on foot, and who had to successively outsmart the vigilance of the "national" gendarmerie, under penalty of getting to know the inside of the Vichy jails which too often served as an antechamber for the Kommandos de la Mort, and the surveillance of the Spanish patrols if they wanted to escape the unspeakable regime of the "model" prison of Pamplona and the concentration camp of Miranda; those who, having left Fort-Mahon, in schoolboy breeches, in fragile canoes, with a boy-scout's compass for a navigation tool, spent thirty-six hours afloat in the English Channel, before running aground on the rocks of the English coast; those who, resistant from the start and hunted to death early, set out at night in a plane or a submarine specializing in this kind of rescue: those whose escape involved such terrible responsibilities that they were condemned to silence; those who, finally, without precisely accomplishing these exploits, rushed from all four corners of the French Union and the two Americas, after having abandoned everything, after having braved the active malevolence of various authorities which were still all-powerful in their fiefdoms, just to offer their young life which it would have been so easy for hold on to without even harming their reputations.

So, consciously or not, each Cadet carried within him the quiet conviction of being in order with himself, and the fullness of their commitment gave them a balance throughout their life which no vicissitude could upset.

Another element of their serenity, they drew it in the environment which surrounded them. It would certainly be no exaggeration to speak of fervor when describing the feeling shown to them by the British nation. A fervor which took various forms: it was the tireless concern of the women who watched over their beginnings and who then, for four years performed, discreet miracles to meet all their needs; it was the cordial welcome in homes across England and Scotland who opened themselves up to cadets on leave and contrived to offer them, for just a few weeks, the feeling of having found a new home. This demonstrated the absolute confidence of the British command, which locally regarded the School as an elite unit and provided it with the material and moral benefits reserved for such units.

It was finally the cheers of the crowds, the ones in London, and especially the ones in the small towns of Worcestershire whose enthusiasm was unleashed when suddenly, during a parade, against a background of bayonets, the tricolor pennant of the Free French Cadets appeared in dark uniforms, a little old-fashioned, and whose still-young faces, pale with pride, turned on command to honor some old English colonel, who was overwhelmed with emotion, and who passionately returned the salute, because he felt that it was loyal France, the real France, that he was greeting in this way.



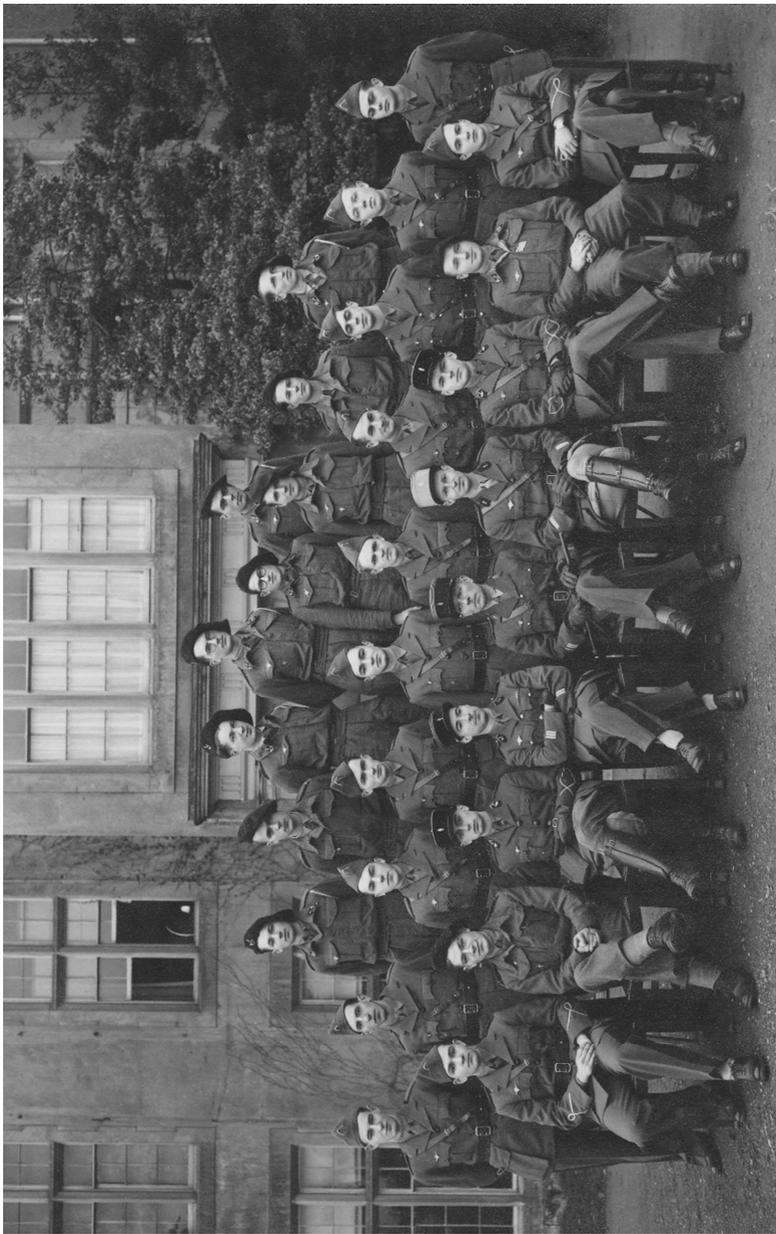
"Liberation" passing-out class - June 1942

This fervor of the English people was fortunately joined by the real prestige, by the marked favor enjoyed by the young Cadets within Free France, prestige and favor whose demonstrations, as discreet as they were touching, contributed so much to the development of their young minds. Without any embarrassing word ever being uttered on this subject, the Cadets knew that they were loved by their chiefs, their great chiefs, the most eminent and the most glorious.

It was no secret that General de Gaulle had a predilection for his "little soldiers", as he called them, with a restrained emotion which galvanized them, during the evening organized for Christmas 1940 which he spent among them. Yes, this man who was often considered to be so cold, with such rare smiles, so preoccupied by the enormous responsibilities which he had taken on, openly relaxed when he lunched under the big tent, among this beautiful group of youths who venerated him without any hint of shyness.

It is traditional in the French army to joke that the colonel is the father of the regiment. But it was indeed a paternal responsibility that the great Chief took on with regard to these "little young people" who effectively had no families, and, with him, all the generals who successively commanded the French Land Forces in Great Britain: General Angenot, General Bureau, General Monclar, General Renouard, General Marchand. It was thanks to their constant benevolence and their active affection that all the organizational problems were immediately resolved, that all the wishes of the school management, even when they went beyond the framework of the regulations, were fulfilled.

The same liberality was observed in the composition of the framework of the School. The best active officers were assigned authority there, and it was primarily through their presence that the Cadet School could bear the title of Saint-Cyr of Free France without being overwhelmed by it.



"Bir Hakeim" passing out - December 1942

These educators were assisted in their mission, first of all by excellent non-commissioned officers who had the rather ungrateful task of instilling the solid rudiments of the profession in young willingly mischievous "mad dogs", and also by a remarkable phalanx of assistants who were completely devoted to their tasks, from civilian teachers, padres, matrons, Canadian, English or French volunteers to fine squads of mechanics, gunsmiths, storekeepers, housekeepers and cooks, without forgetting the bugler who, on special occasions, let loose at the top of his lungs, indifferent to the powerful false notes he drew from his tiny bugle.

All of them formed a cohesive team which set a rare example of cooperation in fellowship, regardless of age, rank, gender or function.

This de facto fraternity, between all of them, manifested itself openly during passing-out ceremonies for outgoing classes. It was a beautiful celebration, long prepared for and always successful. There was a small taste of what was to come during the fitting of the outfits ordered before the examination, an enterprising tailor from the neighborhood having agreed, to corner the market, to pass the potential failures through profits and losses. They were "precision" outfits, as the soldiers say, made from gabardine which may have been a little thin, but was still sufficient to put a fresh officer cadet at his ease. It was also topped off with prestigious accessories, including the harness, stick and whistle.

After a last look at the chevron braid, which was already sewn but remained to be conquered; for a moment they forgot these frivolities to plunge bravely into the threatening wave of recaps, of tests finally, during



"Fezzan-Tunisia" passing out - June 1943

which they couldn't get away from the blindfolded reassembly of a machine gun, only to fall back into the traps of an English translation, wade through the sacred text of the infantry regulations, and finally run out, with sweaty hands, onto the peaceful Bewdley Hills which the "combat" examiner's imagination transformed into a battlefield bristling with bizarre devices.

The list of winners declared, it was time to relax. The chosen ones beamed shamelessly, already ruminating on the "amphi-garrison". The unlucky ones, consoled in a gruff fashion, were philosophically getting ready to rejoin, unless they were assigned, with corporal's or sergeant's stripes, to training at Camp de Camberley.

And then, the big day dawned, with a busy schedule. Starting at dawn, it was the ordinary way of preparing for an inspection, all polishing, fever and running back and forth.

Everything was ready when General de Gaulle, or his representative, got out of the car, to the engine noises of the escort of honor selected from among the best motorcyclists of the Cadets. The ceremony was usually simple and short. However, the one which marked the passing-out of the last year group and the dissolution of the School was exceptionally brilliant: in front of General Kœnig, surrounded by high-ranking French and British officials, the Cadets marched for the last time through the alleys of Ribbesford, preceded by a flag which had been entrusted to their guard, and set to the strains of the "Galette", the famous march of Saint-Cyr.

Sometimes the same evening, sometimes the next day, the family party continued. After the gala dinner and the ritual benefits, it was time for the new graduates to mercilessly "dégager" their revered masters. "Dégager" in this sense meant in particular that, in a burlesque show



"Corsica and Savoy" passing out - December 1943

organized just for this occasion, the whole year group was represented by a troop of particularly observant Cadets who tried - and succeeded all too well, it must be said - to mimic the gait, the accent, the tone, the tics of Poireau, of Chichi, of the director of the Mili, of the instructors, of all those, in short, who, during their training, had embodied authority.

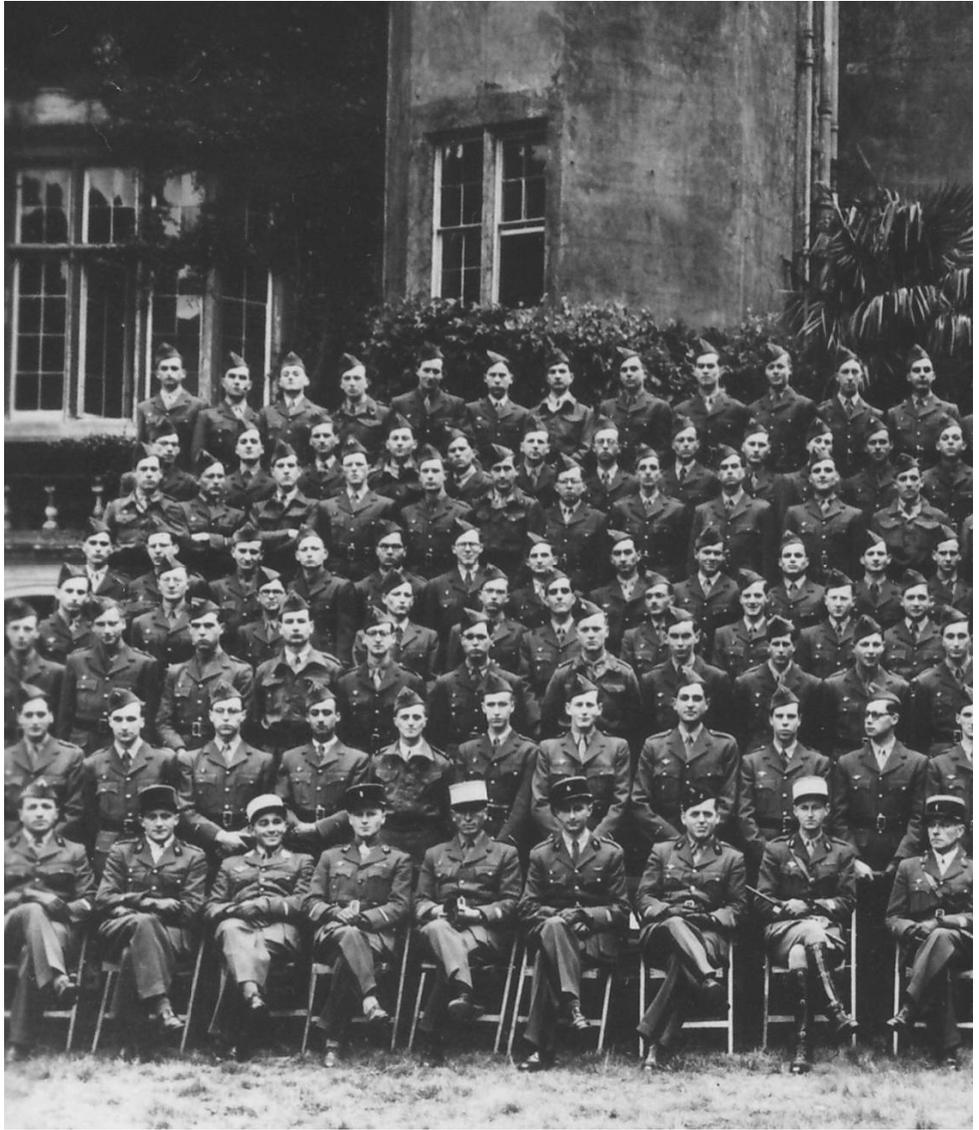
A worldly night closed the cycle of celebrations - the officer cadets, wearing the large flag, received jackets strapped to glorious torsos, pants renewed with a final touch of iron, sparkling leathers, impeccable linen, smiles and vocabulary of good company. The guests were soon arriving, among whom the fresh young ladies, also in all their finery, formed an overwhelming majority. For a few hours, the austere barracks returned to being a romantic mansion, with ballrooms, buffets, bars, jazz and fun, loud juvenile laughter and moonlight courting.

With the lanterns extinguished, the hour of separation came. And the "Song of farewells", sung at the last minute, faithfully conveyed everyone's feelings, made up of poignant regrets and invincible hopes.

On top of this support, which came in short from the outside, offered by the time and the environment, ultimately the biggest role was played by the strength of soul which the Cadets found in their own background, in their deep and sometimes secret personality. First of all, a collective personality, with its precious cement, camaraderie, this feeling made of altruism, of self-sacrifice when necessary, of unreserved trust, of fraternity which was often more real than the kind imposed by nature.

Circumstances dictated that, in this School, young people of the most varied origins, tendencies, and backgrounds lived together: among them were aristocrats, bourgeois, sons of officials and workers; Catholics, Protestants, Jewish people, atheists; spoiled children whose first years had been painful: there were also, alongside the French of the metropolis and the Empire, Franco-English who had asked to serve with us, without the British authorities ever opposing it; there were even complete foreigners: a Belgian, a Luxembourger, a Swede, a Haitian, an Italian, those who profess that every man has two countries, his own and then France. Well, this spirit of understanding which seems so definitively foreign to our divided world, so difficult to bring about even within a single homeland, it had firmly established itself, after a brief period of adaptation, among all the Cadets.

This powerful camaraderie did not, of course, exclude personal affinities, but it dominated all the groups. Naturally it had given birth to all kinds of unofficial traditions, to a common collection of memories and projects, to a kind of code reserved only to initiates, finally to a collective secret, joyfully and jealously guarded, and which the command, with its big boots and its strange outlook on life, didn't have to know. It didn't venture there, moreover, especially since this sympathetic complicity was often the most effective aid to regulatory discipline. Because even if the Cadets were united - and what a union! - to cover up a guilty comrade or to plan some deplorable hoax of which a predestined professor would be the victim, on the other hand, the union intervened harshly with its





Passing out "18th June" - June 1944

collective conscience, to nip in the bud any act or any demonstration which went against their young men's code, to support morale which may have been low one evening, to rectify dangerous drifts.

And it is only to observe with what sober but total joy they meet again today, to appreciate the solidity, the beauty of the affection which united them, and, at the same time, to justify the rebirth of their human group, in the form of an Association.

One of the dominant feelings of their common state of mind, in these times I'm referring to, was the hope, or, more exactly, the sum of the very particular hopes which each of them was incubating in the recesses of his soul.

Today it takes a real effort of memory and imagination to think back to that waiting period when the glorious outcome was still unknown to us. Now that the military goals of the last war have been achieved one by one, all the great events of the end seem to have unfolded with relentless logic and formed a chain of actions and successes which could not have been anything other than what they were. Nothing could be further from the truth. Until June 1944, we knew nothing, we had given up planning, we lived from day to day on our capital of pure faith. We sensed, of course, that at a near, predestined date, would be the assault, then the entry into Paris, the liberation, the victory, but all this had not yet taken the form of the now-familiar images, and each of us gave the color of his personality to the future.

For the Cadets, it was a beautiful, heroic and tender dream. Heroic, because the intoxicating clash of irresistible charges passed through

him. Tender, because it would result in the deliverance of his family, the father aged by ordeal, the mother consumed by anxiety, the little brothers and the little sisters who, one wonderful day after the fighting had retreated a little towards the east, would see their big brother appear, tanned, helmeted, virile, victorious; and who would throw themselves into his arms, saying to him, through tears: "There you are! There you are, finally! We always knew you would come to save us."

For many, sadly, that beautiful dream never came true, because they fell before even catching another glimpse of their home. But this dream, they lived it intensely, it enchanted their brief youth, it was their concrete good, the supreme reward granted in advance of their supreme sacrifice.

André Beaudouin

(1900 - 1973)

Commander of the School
of the Free French Cadets



**Ribbesford House - 20th May 1961
Inauguration and commemorative plaque**

On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the creation of the Military School of the Free French Cadets and the presentation of its pennant to the School by General de GAULLE in MALVERN on 13th September 1941, the Association of the Memory of the Free French Cadets celebrates 80 years of continuing, warm and trusting relations with the United Kingdom.

No Cadet could forget the welcome he received from 1940 to 1943 when he arrived on British soil to join LONDON and General de GAULLE. These young people, bruised by the occupation of their country, the insult of the Armistice, the estrangement from their homeland and their family, always found comfort and benevolence on the part of their hosts who knew how to welcome them and receive them into their homes. For this, they were and will always remain grateful. Bonds of friendship and affection were maintained after the War which still remain today.

A meeting resulting from the circumstances of the war was replaced as soon as peace was restored in 1945 by a desire to maintain links between the Cadets and their British hosts. These links, beyond individual meetings and a few matrimonial unions forged between Cadets and young British girls, were first maintained by the Cadets Association, then more recently by the Association of the Memory of the Free French Cadets (Association du Souvenir des Cadets de la France Libre or ASCFL).

If we stick to only the collective meetings of the Association on British soil, we note the first meeting on the occasion of the inauguration of the “bench of remembrance” at MALVERN in June 1949. A large delegation of Cadets was welcomed by the British authorities and by the management of the School.

It was not until May 1961 that a commemorative plaque was affixed to RIBBESFORD, in the presence of a delegation from Saint-Cyr. This plaque, written in French and English, was inaugurated by Mr. TRIBOULET, Minister of Veterans’ Affairs and Sir AGNEW, Lord-Lieutenant of the Midlands.

Then the 30th anniversary of the transfer from MALVERN to RIBBESFORD was celebrated in May 1972 by a large delegation of the Association which went to MALVERN, to BEWDLEY (RIBBESFORD) and then to EDINBURGH where it was received by their former instructor Louis de CABROL, then

consul-general of France in that city. A souvenir photo gives an account of this visit.

The same year, Princess Alexandra of England went to BEWDLEY where she met a delegation of Cadets.

On 18th June 1980, the Association made a memorial trip to LONDON for the 40th anniversary of the Appeal. It was received at the French Embassy.

In June 1984, the Cadets were present at the unveiling by the Queen Mother of the official Greater London Council plaque on the facade of the Carlton Gardens building. They also participated in the ceremonies of the 40th anniversary of the closure of the Cadet School in BEWDLEY and RIBBESFORD.

It was not until March 1988 that the Association made another visit to MALVERN and BEWDLEY; in MALVERN, with the laying of a wreath at the War Memorial, followed by a parade of the "Free French Cadets" passing-out, arrival from France by parachuting, and reception by the management of the College; then to BEWDLEY with the unveiling of a commemorative plaque at Town Hall, then with a parade through the streets of the city by Saint-Cyriens from the "Free French Cadets" passing-out.

In June 1993, the Association participated in the inauguration of the statue of General de GAULLE at Carlton Gardens, in the presence of the Queen Mother, the Chancellor of the Order of the Liberation and Jacques CHIRAC, mayor of PARIS.

The following year, in May, there was a new commemorative trip to MALVERN and RIBBESFORD for the 50th anniversary of the closure of the School, with a reception at the Town Hall in BEWDLEY and planting of a "tree of remembrance" in the gardens of the Town Hall.

In July 1995, again thanks to the interpersonal skills and fame of René MARBOT who lived in LONDON at the time, a delegation of Cadets was received at Clarence House by the Queen Mother who, like her daughter Queen Elizabeth II, had always paid benevolent and warm attention to the Free French in general, and to the Cadets in particular. Let us remember here that between 1941 and 1943, the Cadets were often called upon to participate in parades and patriotic demonstrations in LONDON in the presence of the King and Queen!

In May and July 1997, the Association took part in the pilgrimage of the "Commandant MORIN" passing-out to MALVERN and RIBBESFORD, in

honor of their "great elders", then a delegation of Saint-Cyriens and Cadets was received again by the Queen Mother who was symbolically given a Cassowary, the ceremonial headgear of the Saint-Cyriens and therefore of the Cadets whose passing-outs since 1954 have been considered Saint-Cyr passing-outs in their own right.

In June 1999, a new remembrance ceremony led the Association to BEWDLEY where a showcase dedicated to the Cadets was inaugurated in the town's history museum. A Saint-Cyrien saber was given to the County Council.

Then on 18th June 2002, the Association went to LONDON for the anniversary of the Appeal. At the foot of the statue of General de GAULLE, a solemn tribute was paid to the Cadets.

In February 2005, the Cadets went to LONDON to visit the CHURCHILL Museum.

In June 2010, a large French delegation including Cadets and families of Cadets participated in the 70th anniversary of the Appeal of 18th June in LONDON, in the presence of the President of the French Republic, Nicolas SARKOZY.

After the dissolution of the Association in 2010 and the efforts of the Alumni to find a new way to remember the Cadets, we would have to wait until late 2014 for the creation of the Association for the Memory of the Free French Cadets (Association du Souvenir des Cadets de la France Libre or ASCFL).

From 3rd to 5th June 2016, the new Association followed in the footsteps of the Cadets with its President René MARBOT. This was an opportunity for the families and children of Cadets and their instructors to discover the now-historic places where their elders and parents stayed while preparing to regain a foothold on national soil after their training at MALVERN and RIBBESFORD. Meetings with local authorities in BEWDLEY, with the Director of MALVERN College, visits to the Cadets' premises (House no. 5 in MALVERN and Manor of RIBBESFORD).

This visit allowed the families to get to know Merryn and Columb HOWELL who, after the death of their parents, the owners of RIBBESFORD, piously preserved the traces of the presence of the Cadets in their property.

The year 2021 is the occasion to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the creation of the School and, in September, of the handing over of the School pennant to the first classe in MALVERN by General de GAULLE. An opportunity to take the road to LONDON, MALVERN and RIBBESFORD to get to know the memories which brought us together through the glorious actions of our fathers, Cadets and instructors of the Military School of the Free French Cadets.

"Crossed destinies" of Cadets from Franco-British couples² Six Franco-British cadets in the spotlight

Georges-William TAYLOR was born on 25th August 1924 in Gironde. In June 1940, his father, a British citizen, boarded a Dutch freighter at Pointe de Graves with his four children on the 16th, which reached Falmouth after four days of hard and perilous crossing. With dual nationality, he chose to serve in the French Army. But he wasn't sixteen yet and after three months spent at Camberley, he was directed to the Military Cadet School which had just moved to Malvern in early 1941. George (Bill to his comrades) showed off his qualities and left as a Major in the "Bir-Hakeim" passing-out class, in December 1942. He quickly volunteered to join the SAS paratroopers and was incorporated into the 2nd RCP at the end of 1943 after a move to the Legion Brigade commanded by General Monclar. From June 1944, he took part in the campaign for the liberation of France and stood out for his exploits: sabotage missions in Brittany, organization of the maquis and the Saint-Marcel camp, disorganization of the retreating enemy within the 2nd RCP, with multiple armed jeeps, in Brittany, then in Limousin and Berry, Nivernais and Burgundy. His exploits were recognized by the award of the Legion of Honor and the "Military Cross". At the end of 1944, he found himself in the Ardennes facing the German push of Von Rundstedt. He was again recognized for his daring and bravery and took part in the advance of American troops on Bastogne, which earned him the award of the American "Silver Star". After a brief leave and a return to Great Britain to prepare Operation Amherst on Holland and the British offensive towards Northern Germany, he was parachuted into the Drenthe region with his stick. During an engagement with a large number of SS troops near Orvelte, he

²Source: Memorial to the Franco-British Free French Cadets (published in October 1968 by the Association of the Free French Cadets

was mortally wounded by enemy bullets. It was the end of an exceptional warrior's journey. The youngest officer of the 2nd RCP "with lightning enthusiasm, with countless strokes of brilliance" had just entered into legend. Posthumously, he received the Dutch "Bronze Cross", and was then made a Companion of the Liberation. Surely one of the most emblematic heroes of the Cadets.

Robin WRENACRE was born in London in 1925 to an English father and a French mother. Although a British subject, he chose to serve in the Free French Forces. Incorporated into the Military School of the Cadets, he earned his stripes as an officer cadet in the ranks of the "Bir-Hakeim" class. He was sent to the Middle East in the spring of 1943 and charged with a liaison mission in Beirut between the General Staff of General Monclar and that of English General Paget. Demobilized in April 1945, he returned to civilian life in England but asked to serve again in 1955 in the Foreign Legion engaged in North Africa, where he was assigned to the 13th Demi-Brigade, as an intelligence officer of the 3rd Battalion of the 1st Foreign Regiment which operated in North Constantine. He obtained two citations for his actions and initiatives, then two new citations at the head of a harka of 120 men for daring and victorious actions carried out day and night against the rebels. After a new citation in January 1960 before his departure from North Africa, he was named Knight of the Legion of Honor. Transferred to Madagascar against his will, he resigned in June 1960. Recruited by Moïse Tshombe, during the independence of the Congo, he mysteriously disappeared during this particularly troubled period. He will remain a fighter for the Free World in the eyes of his friends.

Charles-Albert WITT was born in November 1919 in Sydney, Australia. He was a native British subject, although his mother was French. He chose to fight in the Free French Forces which he joined on 25th April 1941 in Noumea, New Caledonia. Then he was sent to England where he landed in July 1942 after a long and perilous journey. He was incorporated into the Military School of the Cadets and left it with the rank of officer-cadet in June 1943 as part of the "Fezzan-Tunisia" class. He was then assigned to the 1st Free French Division, 4th Brigade, Command Battalion. The 1st FFD soon ended up in action in the glorious Italian Campaign. Towards mid-June 1944, it fought north of Rome. On 10th June, his Jeep landed on a German mine between Viterbo and Monte Fiascone. Officer cadet Witt was killed instantly and buried in the French military cemetery of Viterbo.

Ralph FIRTH, James POOLE, Jean-Luc SCHERDLIN

Three Franco-English cadets who fought for France in the Chadian marching regiment, in the 2nd Armored Division

Ralph Firth was born in Levallois Perret in May 1926 to an English father and a French mother. He was 13 years old in 1939 when war broke out. His family took refuge near Carcassonne and left France in May 1941 with passports provided by the American consulate in Marseille. They crossed Spain, Portugal, then arrived in Gibraltar and reached England on 6th August 1941. On 17th December 1941, General de Gaulle was introduced to the French refugees in Leeds and asked young Ralph (15) what he wanted to do when he was older. Ralph burst out saying that he wanted to fight with the Free French. The general made sure that he could join the cadet school from the age of 16, which he didn't fail to do. He left as an officer-cadet in the Corsica and Savoy class and joined the 2nd Armored Division in Morocco. He brilliantly made the French campaign as deputy then head of section within the Chad Regiment in the 2nd Armored Division. He then pursued a military career in the French army. He was the only cadet to reach the rank of general.

James Poole was born on 21st June 1924 in Grasse, while **Jean-Luc Scherdlin** was born in November 1925 in Boulogne-Billancourt. Like Ralph, they would leave as officer-cadets in the Corsica and Savoy class and joined the 2nd Armored Division in Morocco.

These Franco-British Cadets with varied backgrounds are the symbol of both the tenacity and the courage of the young French people who joined Free France and General de Gaulle and of the pride and daring of their British lineage. It is this alchemy which, 80 years after the creation of the Cadet School, is the source and the sign of the unwavering friendship between our two countries.

The Association for the Remembrance of the Free French Cadets

The ASCFL, created in December 2014, has taken up the torch of the former Cadets' Association which lasted since the end of the war until the year 2010

Our association, faithful to the commitment to carry on the Cadet's memory we made to Pierre LEFRANC and Serge ARVENGAS, now deceased, aims to not only preserve the memory of the Cadets, but also to participate in handing down the values they carried, in particular with regard to the younger generations, who need benchmarks today more than ever. In this sense, the association aims to join the initiatives pursued to this end by the Charles De Gaulle Foundation with which we are working together at 5 rue de Solferino as well as with the Free French Foundation.

Two main tasks occupied us in these early years.

First, the effective search for our recognition acquired by our legal status of association. Our first official contacts were with those with whom we are called to work: The Free France Foundation and the Charles de Gaulle Foundation, the Grand Chancellery of the Legion of Honor, the Governor of Les Invalides, the Military Governor of Paris, the Liberation Order, but also associations pursuing goals identical to ours (associations of the 1st FFD, the 2nd Armored Division, SAS parachute families, etc.) We have also established contacts with the Saint-Cyrienne and with the "Free French Cadets" class at Saint-Cyr.

Then, a significant work of memory is continued with a census of the archives concerning the Cadets, in the continuation of the work undertaken by the Association but also by André CASALIS who was one of the first Cadet's classe. This considerable work is already underway by scanning the numerous documents in our possession. It will then be a good idea to archive them by taking advantage of the experience and the support of the scientific councils of the two Foundations which sponsor us. Then the time will come for the analysis

and use of these documents and photographic and cinematographic collections with the support, we hope, of specialists and academics.

We have also set up the website <http://cadetfrancelibre.fr/> to make the cadets' story accessible to a large audience.

We have also started establishing regular contacts in the UK with the authorities of MALVERN College as well as with BEWDLEY Town Hall and the owners of the manor of RIBBESFORD, the places where the Cadets School stayed.

These are the tasks which we have tackled with enthusiasm and perhaps with a little subconscious "Cadet spirit".

We wanted the former Cadets to be the bearers of this work and for the Association to be chaired by one of them. René MARBOT (died December 2020), assisted by Claude VOILLERY (died April 2019) and Etienne LAURENT (died June 2017) took on this responsibility. Their energy, their interpersonal skills and their excellent memory were a wealth for our association and its work. Children of Cadets and Cadet instructors, or admirers and friends of Cadets with no direct family ties, we are aware that we must take advantage of this capital which all the still living Cadets constitute.

We will be happy to count you among us and to continue this memorial work with you in homage to the "Free French Cadets"

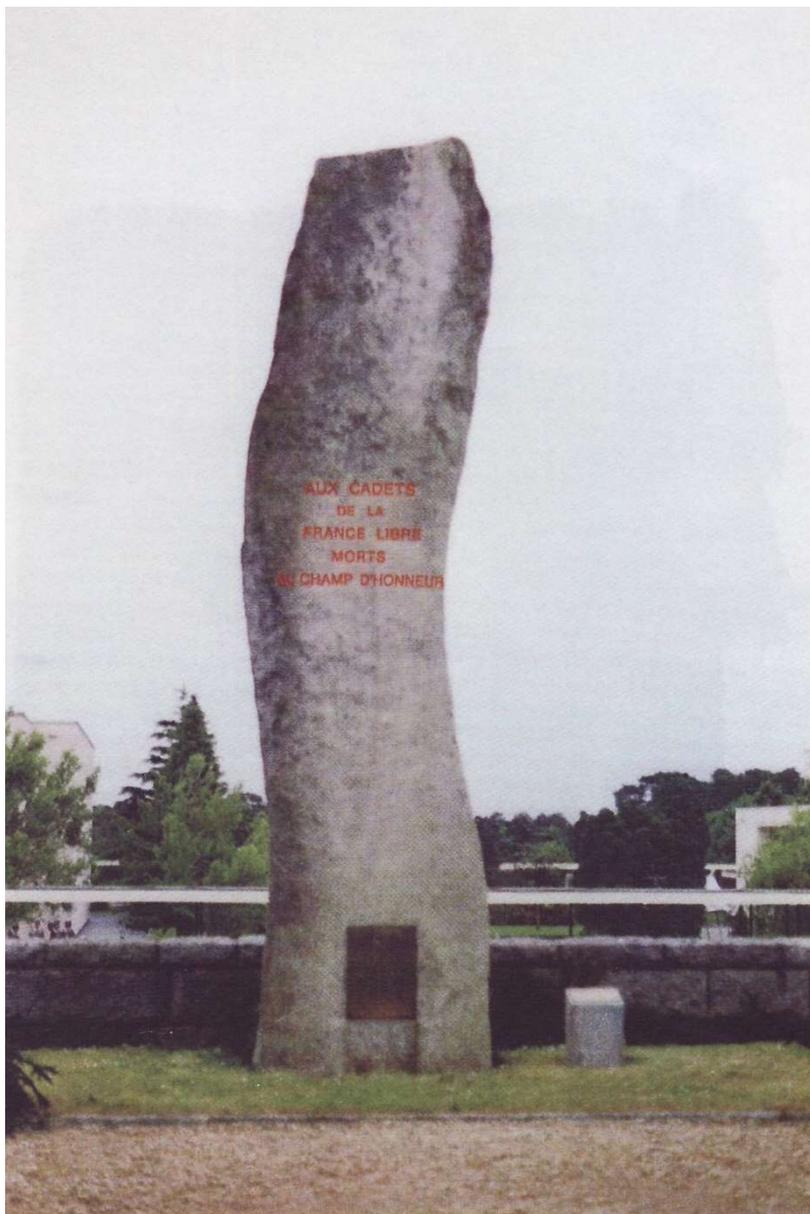
Pierre Moulié, -President

To learn more

Our website <http://cadetfrancelibre.fr>



The flag of the Cadet School preserved in St-Cyr Coëtquidan is decorated with the Legion of Honor, with the Croix de Guerre 39-45 with palm, with the Medal of Resistance and with the Luxembourg Croix de Guerre



**Menhir erected in Saint-Cyr-Coëtquidan
In memory of the cadets who died for France**