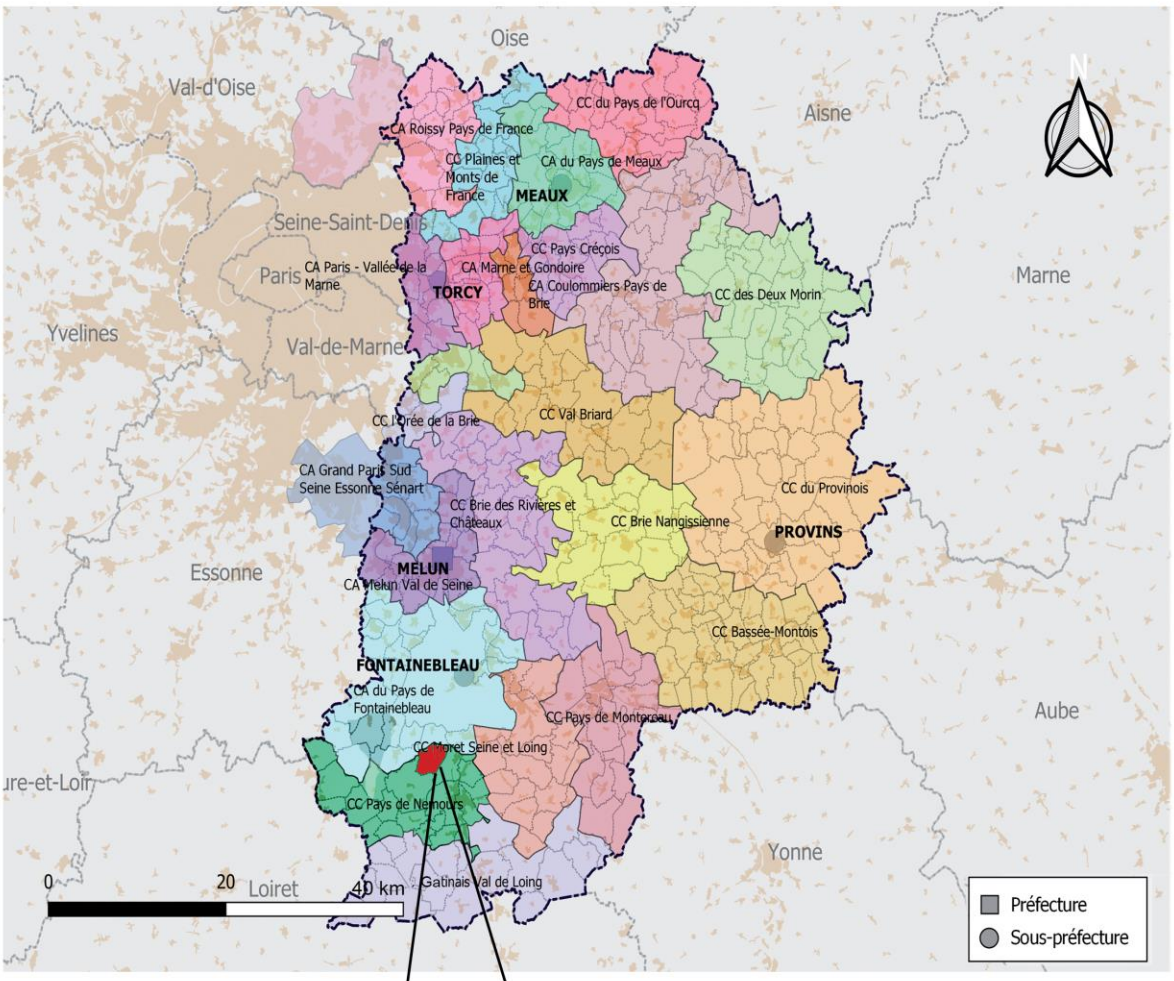
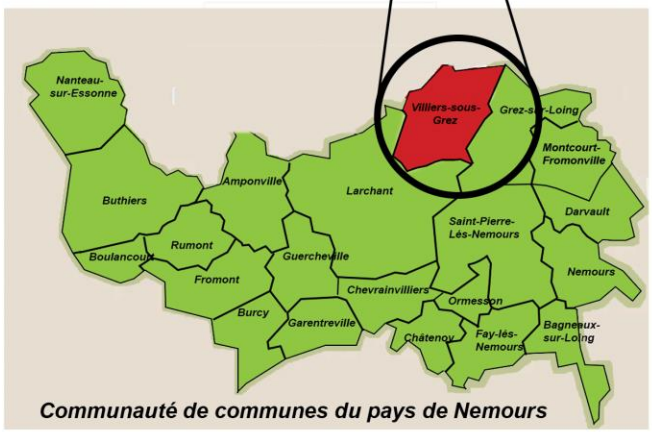
ASSOCIATION HISTOIRE ET PATRIMOINE DE VILLIERS-SOUS-GREZ

VILLIERS-SOUS-GREZ
DE 1939 À 1945



CATALOGUE DE L'EXPOSITION
DU 8 AU 11 MAI 2025





Village clairière du massif forestier de Fontainebleau et plus précisément du Bois de la Commanderie.
La commune a une superficie de 1.220 hectares et compte environ 770 habitants.
Elle fait partie de la Communauté de Communes du Pays de Nemours, et adhère au syndicat mixte de gestion du Parc Naturel Régional du Gâtinais Français (PNRGF).

A village clearing in the Fontainebleau Forest, more precisely within the Bois de la Commanderie. The commune covers an area of 1,220 hectares and has approximately 770 inhabitants. It is part of the Community of Communes of the Pays de Nemours and is a member of the Joint Management Syndicate of the Regional Natural Park of the French Gâtinais (PNRGF).

The Downed American Plane (December 1942)



On December 12, 1942, an American B-17 Flying Fortress was shot down in the forest near Achères-la-Forêt, at a place known as *Les Bois des Petits Béorlots*.

The crackle of gunfire could be heard as far away as Villiers, since in those days there was very little background noise. News that an American bomber had been brought down by the Germans spread quickly through the nearby villages around Achères.



Crew of the B-17 Flying Fortress *(James Toney, bottom right)*

The Man Who Fell from the Sky



As he did every morning, Pierre Lavau, an employee of the French Railways, inspected the two tracks of the strategic line running from the Bourron-Marlotte junction to Malesherbes. He lived in a small gatekeeper's house beside the road between Villiers-sous-Grez and Bourron-Marlotte.

One morning, as he passed near the Vignette Bridge, he noticed a man quickly hide behind a tree. Thinking it was a poacher checking his traps, Pierre continued his inspection. On his way back from La Chapelle-la-Reine, the man stepped out of the woods and approached him. His cheeks were scratched, and one lip was nearly split open. He didn't speak, but spread his arms and pointed to the sky, miming a fall.



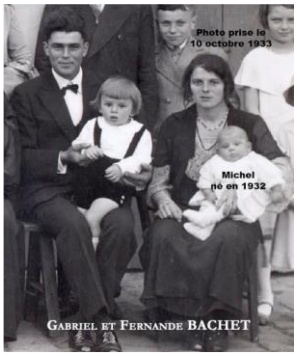
Pierre Lavau immediately understood — this was an American airman, a survivor from the downed Flying Fortress, and he wanted to help him. But Pierre couldn't keep the man in his own home; district officials visited too often, and too many people stopped at his roadside cottage.

So he turned to a trusted friend — Gabriel Bachet, a farmer in Villiers.

The Bachet Family Shelters the American Airman James Toney for Three Weeks

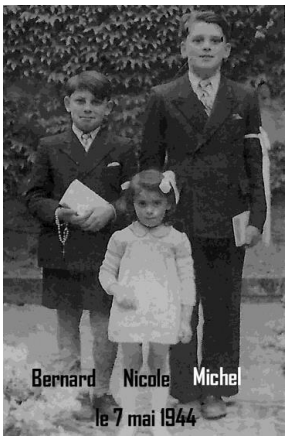


Gabriel brought the airman back to his farm, and problems arose from the moment he arrived. Communication was impossible except through gestures.
During the day, many people came and went villagers stopping by to buy milk, eggs, or vegetables so the airman stayed upstairs in the parents' bedroom.



He was often visited by the Bachet children: Nicole , barely three years old, and especially the two boys, Michel , aged eleven, and Bernard , nine and a half. They were fascinated by this young man, a little older than themselves, who couldn't speak French but whom they quickly began to treat as an older brother.

To protect him, the family decided to call him "Fernand" —the name ofFernande's brother (Gabriel's wife), who came by the farm almost every day. Itwas a clever precaution in case one of the children accidentally mentioned theairman's name in front of others.



At that time, the farm was also home to Denise Neveu , Fernande Bachet'scousin, and a farmhand named Georges Loiseau .

James only came down to the kitchen in the evening, once the farm gate had beenlocked for the night. He seemed to enjoy French food.
During the day, he kepthimself busy as best he could. In the United States, he had worked in abedspread factory and was skilled at sewing, so he began to embroider the household linens , carefully decorating the Bachet family's sheets by hand.On Christmas Day , the Bachet family invited their relatives for the traditional holiday meal. Since most of the guests had no idea that an airman was hiding in the house, he stayed upstairs in bed all day, perfectly still,so as not to make a sound that might reveal his presence.
From time to time in the afternoon, Michel and Bernard quietly slipped upstairs to visit him in his room.

Who Was James Toney?



Bombing missions always followed the same pattern. The aircraft would leave England, cross part of France, fly well beyond their true target to confuse the enemy, and then turn back to strike their real objective on the return flight toward England.

James "Sandy" Toney , nicknamed "the Sandy One" for his light hair and easy grin,was born on April 19, 1919 , in Commerce, Georgia, USA . He was a member of the crew of the B-17 Flying Fortress named "One O'Clock Jump," assigned to bomb the Rouen -Sotteville railway marshalling yard . James served as the tail gunner .

The Fortress was attacked and shot down by two German fighter planes flying above the B -17. The aircraft exploded in mid -air and split in two. James managed to free himself from the cabin and parachute out; his parachute opened at about 200 meters above the ground and caught in the trees. Pulling on the harness, James managed to reach the ground safely. He hid for several hours, then later that evening stopped a passing cyclist, who took him home and gave him civilian clothes.

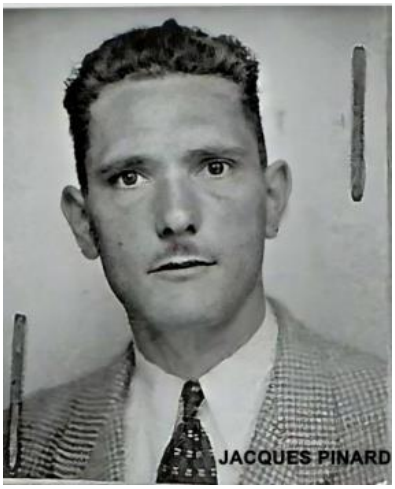
Airmen flying on missions carried several essential items with them: English and French money, a small compass, and a map of France printed on a large silk handkerchief.

A Path to Freedom

A born resistor at heart, Gabriel Bachet knew he had to find a network that could help James return home. Drawing on his old military connections, he contacted a former comrade from the Villemin Hospital, where he had served as a soldier during 1939–1940.
That man put him in touch with Yves Péhou, the head of a Resistance network operating in Paris.

The Long Journey of James Toney Back to England

With the help of Mlle Fleury from By-Thomery — an anti-Pétainist who had worked as a translator at the American Embassy — plans for James's departure were arranged through contacts in southern France.
On January 2, a young man named Jacques Pinard, a member of the Publican/Buckmaster network and one of the few who spoke some English, came from Paris to collect James from Gabriel's farm.



To make sure that the man claiming to be Jacques Pinard was truly the right contact, he presented half of a torn five-franc note, which had to fit exactly with the other half that Gabriel kept. When the two pieces matched perfectly, the transfer could begin.
At the Bourron train station, Pierre Lavau hid James inside the tender of the locomotive, while Jacques took a seat on the train as a regular passenger. Once they reached Gare de Lyon in Paris, Jacques retrieved James and took him to his home in Saint-Germain.
There, after having his photograph taken, false identity papers were made for James. Every detail of the next stage of his journey was carefully explained to him — everything had to be understood and memorized, since he could not carry a written itinerary, maps, or train schedules without risking exposure.

Thus began a long train journey. Crossing the demarcation line was difficult but ultimately successful, thanks to the help of railway workers. James reached Dax, then continued on to Toulouse. Whenever someone spoke to him, he pretended to be deaf and mute to avoid conversation.
He was sheltered for five days on a farm near Toulouse, then made his way to Luchon, where on January 8, 1943, a group of twelve people, including James, were escorted across the border into Spain by smugglers, paid for their services.
However, the Spanish Civil Guards arrested James. He had been advised beforehand to claim that he was an American civilian living in Switzerland, and fortunately, hestill had his American passport with him. After a telephoneconversation between the Civil Guards and the AmericanConsulate in Barcelona, James was allowed to crossSpain to Gibraltar, from where he finally returned toEngland on March 15, 1943.



What Became of James's Companions?

Because it was foggy that day, the Germans were unable to determine exactly where the plane had crashed, which allowed some of the airmen to hide at first and later escape.

Of the ten men in the crew, a second airman also parachuted and was rescued by Robert Chicard in La Chapelle-la-Reine; he eventually made his way to Spain and then to England.
A third airman, also on the run, managed to reach England through Spain as well.

Sadly, two of the airmen were killed, and the remaining five were captured by the Germans.

After the War

James Toney returned home to Georgia, but sadly, he died in a car accident near Atlanta in 1947.

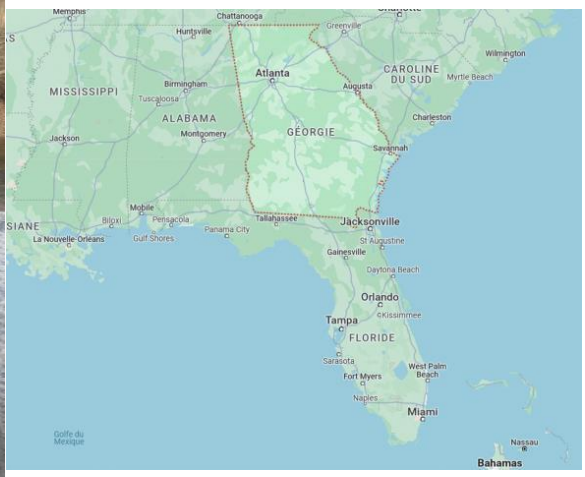
In 1947, Fernande, the wife of Gabriel Bachet, received a certificate signed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, expressing the gratitude of the United States to Gabriel Bachet for having helped and protected an Allied soldier from the enemy.

Decades later, through the power of the Internet and the help of Franck Signorile, a genealogical "helper" who assists families that once sheltered American soldiers, the family of James Toney was found.

His great-niece, Bobbie Walker, and great-grandniece, Wendy Walker, were overjoyed to learn more about the life and story of their great-uncle.



Bobbie and Wendy Walker



Gabriel Bachet – Resistance Member

Gabriel Bachet

Gabriel Bachet, born on December 25, 1905, in Villiers, was a farmer who worked his land at 13 Rue de Milly in Villiers. He married Fernande Laurent on October 2, 1928, and together they had three children.

In 1939, Gabriel was mobilized and assigned to the Villemin Hospital in Angicourt (Oise) — a facility that no longer exists today. While stationed there, he took note of several men who openly held strong anti-German views.



Wedding Photo — Gabriel and Fernande, October 2, 1928

Joining the Resistance

In December 1942, Gabriel sheltered an American airman, James Toney, in his home for several weeks after Toney had parachuted from a Flying Fortress shot down by the Germans. Gabriel then sought a way to help him return safely to England.



Yves PEHOOU

He reached out to his friends from the Villemin Hospital, who put him in touch with a group leader – Yves Péhoou, a pilot and member of the B.O.A. (Bureau des Opérations Aériennes) in Paris. Péhou was responsible for locating potential parachute drop zones not too far from the capital.

Gabriel joined the B.O.A., which determined that the area around Villiers, with its mix of fields and woods, was well suited for airdrop operations.

Gabriel Becomes Leader of the BOA Group in Villiers



Gabriel then became the head of the BOA group in Villiers. He organized a small team of Resistance members made up of trusted relatives and friends, including Fernand Laurent and Raymond Michaut from his own family.

From Villiers: Théodule Combe, Marcel Boisseau, Louis Soumier, Angélo Campigotto, René Lefèbvre, and Georges Naudet. From Ury: Maurice Duros and Marcel Narcy. From Grez-sur-Loing: Pierre Lavau, and from Bourron-Marlotte: Robert Grenet.

Gabriel's Leadership and Missions of the BOA Group

Gabriel served as the leader of the BOA group in Villiers, receiving orders from a superior within the organization known by the code name "Renard."

The B.O.A. (Bureau des Opérations Aériennes) had three main missions:

1. Airdropping supplies and equipment for urban Resistance networks,
2. Parachuting liaison agents into occupied territory, and
3. Gathering intelligence for the Allies.

On June 11, 1944, four members of Gabriel's group carried out a sabotage mission, cutting an underground telephone cable used by the Germans near Nemours.

Gabriel also passed along to the Americans the location of the Bourron refinery plant, which was later bombed by Allied forces.

Henri Debard later recounted that he had taken part in topographical surveys for the American army, right under the noses of the Germans.

> In 1943, the schoolteacher Marius David gave me written permission to miss school for a month so I could help a surveyor who was taking measurements. I held the surveyor's measuring rod, and the data he collected was later sent to the American army.
> After the war, someone came to see us, thanked me, and gave me a small reward. I also received a token of thanks from the surveyor himself."



The Parachute Drops

A parachute drop zone was identified and reported to the appropriate authorities. It was located at the edge of the woods, in the fields on the plateau at a place known as *Le Dessous du Landy*, parcel ZB 128, near a wooded path leading down to the village. The site was marked out by several members of the group and assigned the code name "Folie Collective."

The parachute drops were announced by personal messages broadcast over Radio London, repeated several times throughout the day. In the evenings, when they came home from school, Michel and Bernard Bachet would listen to these mysterious personal messages, which seemed meaningless to most people — but for the Resistance, they were the secret signal to act.

The first message received signaled the preparations to begin, while the second message — either identical to the first or continuing its opening phrase — indicated that the operation was to be carried out immediately. Bernard still remembers the messages: *"De la bicyclette à la pédale"* and *"C'est une folie collective."* The radio transmitter, essential for emergency communication, was operated and hidden by Robert Grenet near the Bourron quarry, where he worked. A first parachute drop of weapons, flashlights, and radio equipment took place at the end of 1943, received by five men from the Bachet group. In February 1944, another airdrop of weapons and equipment took place, this time involving ten men from the group. On June 15, 1944, the drop was preceded by the coded message "Deux petits fous accompagnés d'un grand fou" ("Two little fools accompanied by one big fool"), signaling the arrival of three parachutists and four tons of weapons and supplies.

Twelve men took part in transporting and burying the eighteen containers in the woods along La Pente du Crot au Fer, before the contents were later distributed to Resistance fighters in Champagne-sur-Seine and to a network in Paris. Some of the weapons were hidden at the Monastery of the Oblate Fathers in La Brosse-Montceaux. On July 24, 1944, the Germans captured and tortured five monks, trying to force them to reveal where the weapons were hidden. When none of them spoke, the five men were executed, and their bodies thrown into the monastery well. The other monks were imprisoned at the Compiègne camp, and on August 25, they were loaded onto a train bound for Germany. They were finally liberated by the Americans on September 1, 1944, near Péronne. The monastery was ransacked.

The Arrest of Gabriel

Gabriel was betrayed by a liaison agent.

On July 2, 1944, the occupants of a black German Citroën Traction stopped two young women chatting on the sidewalk and asked them where Gabriel Bachet lived — as there were no house numbers at that time. The next morning, around 6 a.m., the Germans pounded on Gabriel's door. Two black cars drove into the courtyard and parked facing the road, ready to leave quickly. They arrested Gabriel, beat him in front of his wife and three children, and forced him into the first car.

Nicole Bachet testified:

> "The Germans beat my father, and they also struck Madame Péhou, who was thrown back onto the bed.
> I was in my pajamas, standing at the top of the stairs, clutching my mother's skirt.
> My father climbed into the car — that is the last image I have of him. After that, I remember nothing."



The Germans searched the entire house. They handcuffed the cart driver, Georges Loiseau, in the downstairs bedroom and, upstairs, found Madame Péhou, the mother of Yves Péhou, a Resistance member. She had taken refuge in the countryside with her daughter-in-law Jeanne, known as *Nita*, who was also in Resistance, and with little Anita, the baby only four months old. Thérèse Péhou was taken away in the second black Citroën.

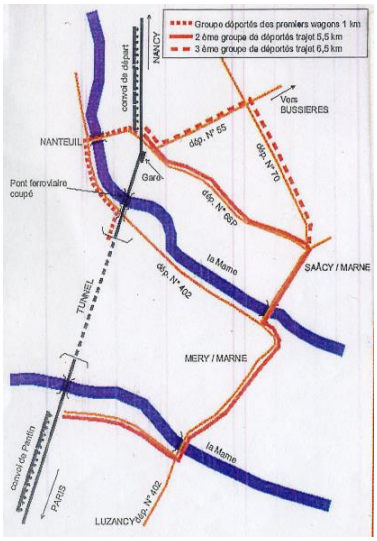
Nita, who had been lying upstairs in the bedroom, reacted instantly: she hid compromising documents inside the baby's diaper, tucked her child into the bed between two pillows, opened the window, and leapt into the street in her nightgown. She twisted her ankle, but fear gave her wings — ignoring the pain, she escaped down the lane. Passing through gardens, she found refuge with Louis Soumier, who hid her in his home at 31 Rue de Milly.

Meanwhile, Fernande Bachet had taken the baby in her arms, crying out, "My baby, my baby!" Fortunately, the Germans did not notice the open window facing the street.

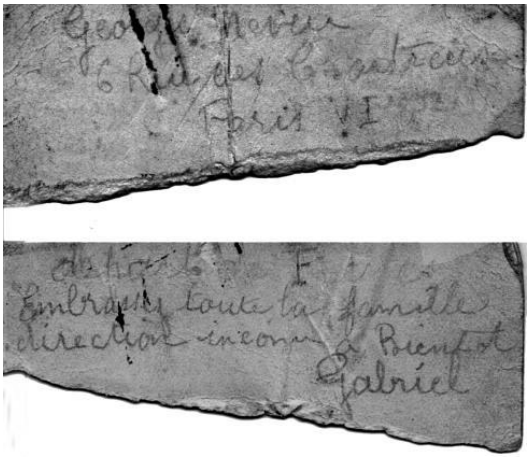
After the Germans left, Nita returned to retrieve her baby and then fled back to Paris, fearing the Gestapo might return to Villiers. Despite the thorough search, the Germans did not find the weapons hidden inside the seed drill or the radio transmitter concealed in an old barrel.

Following another denunciation, the Feldgendarmerie from Melun returned to the Bachet home one evening in early August 1944.
Before opening the door to the Germans, René Lefèbvre and Pierre Lavau, who were both at the farm at the time, hid behind the garden door, each armed with a shovel.
The Germans ordered the two boys, aged 11 and 12, to raise their hands — and likely Fernande's as well. They then searched the house, probably looking for weapons.
Fortunately, they did not discover the revolver hidden beneath the nest of a brooding hen, nor the radio transmitter. They also did not venture into the garden, where Lefèbvre and Lavau remained concealed.

The Journey from France to Germany

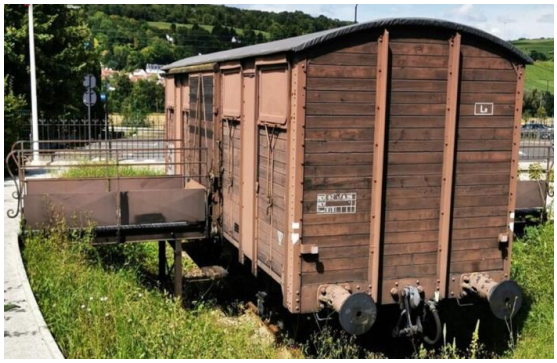


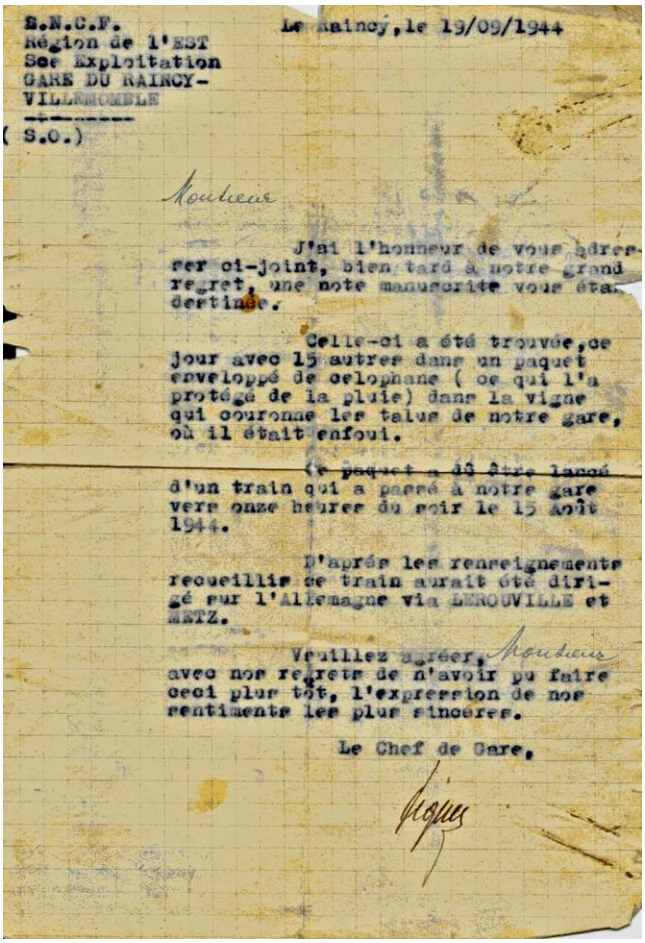
Gabriel was taken to the Fontainebleau prison, where he was interrogated violently by Korf, the sadistic head of the Gestapo in Melun. He was then transferred to the Gestapo headquarters on Rue des Saussaies in Paris, where he was tortured again, before finally being imprisoned in Fresnes Prison. It is clear that Gabriel showed great courage and remained silent under torture, for had he spoken, many more members of his Resistance group would certainly have been arrested. He was then deported on the last convoy that left Pantin station for Germany on the morning of August 15, 1944, along with 2,400 prisoners — men and women alike — taken from the Fresnes and Romainville prisons.



The next morning, the train was stopped inside the Nanteuil tunnel because the railway tracks ahead had been bombed. The prisoners were forced to carry on foot the heavy loot seized by the Germans, marching from the plains of Luzancy to the station at Saâcy-sur-Marne, a distance of about five kilometers.
There, the deportees were crammed into cattle cars, 80 to 120 people per wagon, with no space, air, or comfort — beginning a journey of unimaginable suffering.
A memorial to this event was erected and inaugurated on June 23, 2012, at the Nanteuil–Saâcy train station. It takes the form of an authentic cattle wagon from that era, which had been discovered abandoned in a rail yard and later restored by the SNCF with the help of public funding and private donations.

In the wagon where Gabriel was imprisoned, one of the prisoners had managed to keep a sheet of paper and a pencil. He tore the paper into small pieces, and on one of them, Gabriel wrote:
"Departed from Fresnes. Kiss the whole family.
Destination unknown. See you soon. — Gabriel" On the back, he added the address of a cousin living in the 6th arrondissement of Paris. These brief messages were gathered into a small bundle and thrown through an opening in the wagon onto the railway embankment. A railway worker found the packet on September 19, 1944, opened it, and made sure that each short note reached its intended recipient.





S.N.C.F.
Région de l'EST
Sce Exploitation
GARE DU RAINCY-
VILLEMOMBLE
(S.O.)

Le Raincy, le 19/09/1944

Monsieur

J'ai l'honneur de vous adresser ci-joint, bien tard à notre grand regret, une note manuscrite vous étant destinée.

Celle-ci a été trouvée, ce jour avec 15 autres dans un paquet enveloppé de cellophane (ce qui l'a protégé de la pluie) dans la vigne qui couronne les talus de notre gare, où il était enfoui.

Ce paquet a dû être lancé d'un train qui a passé à notre gare vers onze heures du soir le 15 Août 1944.

D'après les renseignements recueillis ce train aurait été dirigé sur l'Allemagne via LERROUVILLE et METZ.

Veuillez agréer, Monsieur avec nos regrets de n'avoir pu faire ceci plus tôt, l'expression de nos sentiments les plus sincères.

Le Chef de Gare,

Letter dated September 19, 1944

"I have the honor of sending you herewith — though much later than we would have wished — a handwritten note addressed to you.

It was found today, together with fifteen others, in a small packet wrapped in cellophane (which protected it from the rain) in the vineyard along the embankment of our station, where it had been buried.

This packet must have been thrown from a train that passed through our station around eleven o'clock in the evening on August 15, 1944.

S.N.C.F. Raincy-Villemomble Station.

The Prisoner Camps in Germany

The train carrying Gabriel passed through Weimar on August 20, 1944.

1. Buchenwald
   He arrived on September 3, 1944, at the Buchenwald concentration camp, where he was registered under the number 77190. Soon after, he was transferred to the Dora camp.
2. Dora
   He was sent to the Dora tunnels, an external commando of the Buchenwald concentration camp, where A4/V2 rockets — Germany's secret weapons — were produced in a vast underground factory carved out of the mountain in 1943 by thousands of prisoners.
3. Ellrich
   Then, on September 7, 1944, he was sent to the Ellrich commando, part of the Mittelbau concentration camp complex, where he survived thanks to the solidarity of another deportee, Raymond Bevan.



Tunnel à l'usine de fusées du camp de Dora

4. Nordhausen

In February 1945, Gabriel — in a state of extreme weakness and deemed unfit for work by the SS — was included in a convoy of 1,602 sick prisoners that left on March 3, 1945, for the Nordhausen commando. Like nearly all the prisoners in that convoy, he was reported missing on March 8, 1945. The Nordhausen camp was later liberated by Soviet forces on May 6, 1945, but news of this liberation never reached France or the Red Cross.

Article Detailing Gabriel's Story — Published in the Book *"Les 9 000 Déportés de Mittelbau-Dora"*
An article recounting the life and journey of Gabriel Bachet was later published in the memorial volume *"Les 9 000 Déportés de Mittelbau-Dora."* This publication preserves the names and stories of those who suffered and perished in the Dora and Mittelbau camps, ensuring that Gabriel's courage, sacrifice, and devotion to France are remembered among those of his fellow deportees.



BACHET Gabriel
matricule 77190 à *Mittelbau-Dora*

Gabriel Bachet est né le 25 décembre 1905 à Villiers-sous-Grez (Seine-et-Marne), fils d'Albert et Albertine Bachet, née Vaucelle. Jeune cultivateur, c'est dans cette commune que le 2 octobre 1928 il épouse Charlotte Laurent, cultivatrice. Le couple a trois enfants, Michel, Bernard et Nicole, nés respectivement en 1932, 1933 et 1940. La famille est domiciliée au village natal. Le 5 septembre 1939, Gabriel Bachet est mobilisé et envoyé comme infirmier à l'hôpital Villemin à Angicourt (Oise). Démobilisé, il est autorisé à rentrer dans son foyer.

Selon une attestation, il rejoint dès 1941 le réseau Action de la France combattante comme agent P2, chargé de mission de 3e classe. En décembre de la même année, il recueille un aviateur américain, mitrailleur à bord d'une forteresse volante, Robert-James Toney, qui vient de sauter en parachute de son avion en flammes. Il l'héberge pendant environ deux mois avant de le confier à une filière d'évasion vers l'Espagne. À la suite de cela, il est contacté par le BOA dont il reçoit les ordres par l'intermédiaire de M. Pinard de Laigle (Orne) du réseau Publican/Buckmaster. Gabriel Bachet développe une intense activité résistante, notamment comme chef de dépôt de parachutages. C'est sur dénonciation d'un camarade, suite à des aveux obtenus sous la torture, qu'il est arrêté dans sa ferme le 2 juillet 1944 à l'aube. Il est battu et emmené rue des Saussaies, siège parisien de la Gestapo, puis interné à Fresnes.

Le 15 août 1944, alors que les troupes d'occupation harcelées par la Résistance s'apprêtent à quitter Paris encerclée par la 2e division blindée, les Allemands décident de vider les prisons et de former un dernier convoi de déportés vers Buchenwald près de Weimar en Thuringe. Gabriel Bachet figure sur la liste des 1 650 hommes qui arrivent le 20 août à destination alors que les 550 femmes sont emmenées jusqu'à Ravensbrück. Au début du voyage, il parvient à jeter un message sur la voie qu'un cheminot transmettra à son épouse. Placé en quarantaine, il devient le matricule 77190.

Le 3 septembre 1944, Gabriel Bachet est envoyé au Tunnel de Dora, *Kommando* extérieur de Buchenwald se trouvant près de Nordhausen au sud du Harz. Ce camp annexe cache, sous la montagne du Kohnstein, l'usine souterraine de production des fusées secrètes A4-V2, la *Mittelwerk*, creusée et aménagée un an plus tôt par des milliers de détenus dont plus de la moitié ont péri dans d'affreuses circonstances. Mais il ne la verra probablement pas car il est dirigé dès le 7 septembre vers le *Kommando* tout proche d'Ellrich-Juliushütte, créé en mai 1944 avec mission d'enfouir l'industrie aéronautique allemande. Outre la pénurie totale qui y règne, les SS commandés par leur chef Kammler font preuve d'une totale et dévastatrice sauvagerie. Gabriel Bachet fait face en comptant sur la solidarité de son compagnon d'infortune Raymond Bevan (78197), mais selon le témoignage de celui-ci, « Gaby » se trouve, en février 1945, dans un état de grande faiblesse.

Jugé « inapte au travail » par les gardiens SS, il est en conséquence intégré au convoi de 1 602 malades en partance le 3 mars 1945 pour la Boelcke Kaserne à Nordhausen. Cependant, le transport doit repartir le 6 mars avec 2 252 inaptes pour atteindre le KL Bergen-Belsen le lendemain. Comme la quasi-totalité des détenus, Gabriel Bachet est porté disparu à compter du 8 mars 1945, victime à l'âge de 39 ans de la barbarie nazie. Depuis sa déportation, sa famille est restée sans nouvelles. Seules quelques informations « fragmentaires et contradictoires » sont livrées par les détenus rentrés des camps. La tragique réalité s'imposera alors.

Courageux résistant, Gabriel Bachet fera l'objet d'une citation à l'ordre de la Division.

Sources : Bu7/2-3/1 (Buchenwald) ; DAVCC 21p420240 ; *Les cahiers de la déportation seine-et-marnaise, le dernier convoi* ; LT6/03/1945 ; Mié ; Fiche Arolsen.

Bernard Doncker

The Family's Desperate Search for News of Gabriel
As prisoners began returning from the concentration camps in April 1945, the Bachet family still had no news of Gabriel. On August 12, 1945, his mother wrote to the Ministry for Prisoners, Deportees, and Refugees, providing all the information she had about her son and requesting that the authorities verify it.
A letter without a date, received on August 22, 1945, was addressed to "Monsieur le Capitaine" and written by Gabriel's mother, pleading for any information — good or bad — about her son. On September 14, 1945, his wife, Fernande, published a missing-person notice in the newspaper *Libération*. At an unspecified date, Fernande received a letter from Raymond Bevan, Gabriel's comrade from the Ellrich camp, asking for news of "Gaby." A certified copy of this letter was confirmed by the mayor of Villiers on May 8, 1946. On January 28, 1947, Gabriel's mother again requested that the Ministry for Prisoners, Deportees, and Refugees continue the search for her son. Finally, on June 14, 1948, Mr. Moreau of Montcourt submitted a similar request on behalf of the family, still hoping for an answer that never came.

The Long Administrative Process to Establish the Declaration of Death

On May 8, 1946, Gabriel's wife submitted a request to regularize the civil status of those listed as *"not returned."* On October 10, 1946, the Ministry of Veterans and War Victims issued Act of Disappearance No. 23960 in the name of Gabriel Bachet. On January 25, 1950, the Fontainebleau Court of First Instance held a hearing that officially recognized Gabriel's presumed death as having occurred on March 3, 1945.

On February 7, 1950, the court's ruling formally declared that Gabriel Bachet had died on the presumed date of March 3, 1945, and ordered that this judgment serve as the official death certificate, to be entered into the civil registry of Villiers-sous-Grez. Finally, on June 10, 1950, his wife submitted a request for the inscription of the phrase "Died for France" (*Mort pour la France*) on his official record.

On the death certificate of a political internee, political deportee, or forced labor deportee, a final document was later added — a certificate from Commander Braun, head of the Publican network of La France Combattante. It attested that: "Gabriel Bachet was a member of the Action Network of La France Combattante, classified as P2, and served as a third-class mission officer. He was arrested by the German police for acts of resistance and deported on the convoy known as the '77,000,' of which I was also a part.

Gabriel Bachet showed admirable conduct in deportation. He died at the Ellrich extermination camp, surrounded by the esteem and affection of all his comrades."

France's Recognition

Title of "Deported Resistance Fighter"

On December 18, 1954, the Minister of Veterans and War Victims officially granted Mr. Gabriel Bachet, deported for his role in the Resistance, the honorary title of "Déporté Résistant" (*Deported Resistance Fighter*).



Croix de Guerre

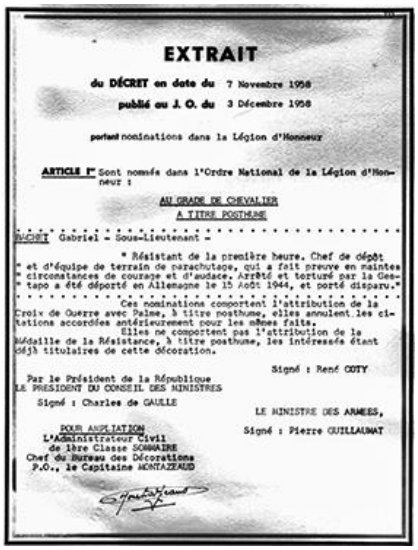
On August 29, 1946, Gabriel Bachet was cited in the Order of the F.F.I. Division of Île-de-France for the following commendation: "An early member of the Resistance, leader of a parachute drop site, who on many occasions demonstrated great courage and daring. Arrested and tortured by the Gestapo in July 1944, he was deported to Germany in August 1944 and is reported missing." This citation carried the award of the Croix de Guerre with Silver Star, signed by General Legentilhomme, Military Governor of Paris and Commander of the 1st Military Region.



Légion d'Honneur

Gabriel Bachet was named a Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur (*Knight of the Legion of Honour*) posthumously, by decree dated November 7, 1958, and published in the Journal Officiel on December 3, 1958.

He was listed as a Resistance Second Lieutenant, under the authority of the Ministry of Defense (Army Division). The official certificate was issued on December 16, 1958.



EXTRAIT

du DÉCRET en date du 7 Novembre 1958

publié au J. O. du 3 Décembre 1958

portant nominations dans la Légion d'Honneur

ARTICLE 1er Sont nommés dans l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur :

AU GRADE DE CHEVALIER
A TITRE POSTHUME

BACHET Gabriel - Sous-Lieutenant -

" Résistant de la première heure. Chef de dépôt " et d'équipe de terrain de parachutage, qui a fait preuve en maintes " circonstances de courage et d'audace. Arrêté et torturé par la Ges- " tapo a été déporté en Allemagne le 15 Août 1944, et porté disparu."

Ces nominations comportent l'attribution de la Croix de Guerre avec Palme, à titre posthume, elles annulent les citations accordées antérieurement pour les mêmes faits.

Elles ne comportent pas l'attribution de la Médaille de la Résistance, à titre posthume, les intéressés étant déjà titulaires de cette décoration.

Signé : René COTY

Par le Président de la République
LE PRESIDENT DU CONSEIL DES MINISTRES
Signé : Charles de GAULLE

LE MINISTRE DES ARMEES,
Signé : Pierre GUILLAUMAT

POUR AMPLIATION
L'Administrateur Civil
de 1ère Classe SOMMAIRE
Chef du Bureau des Décorations
P.O., le Capitaine MONTAZEAUD

Médaille de la Résistance

He was awarded the Médaille de la Résistance (*Medal of the Resistance*) on March 25, 1960.



Recognition by the Commune



By a resolution of the Municipal Council on June 21, 1947, the commune honored Gabriel Bachet by giving his name to the street where he had lived.
A commemorative plaque was placed on the wall of the house located at No. 2 of the former Rue de Milly.
Since then, the plaque has been adorned with flowers each year during the commemorative ceremonies of May 8 (Victory in Europe Day) and November 11 (Armistice Day).

The Bachet Family's Commitment to Protecting Jews

The Bachet family also took part in efforts to shelter Jewish families during the war.
A young Jewish girl was present at Albert Bachet's home during the wedding of Jean Duvigoureux on April 17, 1944. She played with Nicole Bachet, who was about the same age. The identity of the little girl and the exact period she stayed with Gabriel's parents remain unknown.



The Little Jewish Girl and Nicole



Learn More About the B.O.A. (Bureau des Opérations Aériennes)

The B.O.A. (Bureau of Air Operations) was led by the Polytechnic graduate André Dewavrin (alias *Passy*) in the northern zone, under the influence of the Gaullist networks of the B.C.R.A. (Central Bureau of Intelligence and Action, created in 1941). Originally from northern France and also known by the code name *Brumaire*, André Dewavrin was one of the first companions of Charles de Gaulle. He later came into contact with Pierre Brossolette, alias *Arquebuse*.

On February 9, 1943, General de Gaulle signed the mission order for *Arquebuse* in the northern region to communicate the directives to be followed in the occupied zone, in collaboration with *Brumaire* and *Rex (Jean Moulin)* in the southern region. The two Resistance members, Brumaire and Arquebuse, decided to establish a Bureau of Air Operations. It was officially established on April 24, 1943, with four operational sectors — North, West, East, and Center. It functioned as a centralized service under the authority of the National Committee's delegate in France.

To carry out its missions, the B.O.A. required communication resources and the assistance of qualified technicians.

On February 3, 1944, Pierre Brossolette was arrested in Brittany near Audierne, then transferred to Rennes, and later to Paris, arriving at the Gestapo headquarters on March 19. There, he was tortured but never spoke.

On March 22, after yet another brutal interrogation, a brief moment when his guard was absent allowed him — though his hands were tied — to climb onto the window ledge, jump onto the fourth-floor balcony, and then throw himself off, falling into the courtyard below. He died that evening, on March 22, to the great frustration of the Germans, who had hoped to make him talk.

The only words he is known to have repeated were:

"It will be better on Tuesday."

What was supposed to happen that coming Tuesday?

The Allied landings took place on Tuesday, June 6, 1944.

Did he already know the date in advance?

The Brossolette family owned a house in Recloses.



André DEWAVRIN



Pierre Brossolette (alias "Arquebuse")

The Resistance Fighters of Villiers
The French Forces of the Interior (F.F.I.)

The Villiers Maquis

After the arrest of Gabriel Bachet, Captain Gaillardon, mayor of Souppes-sur-Loing and leader of the V.P.O. (Volontaires Paysans Ouvriers) Resistance movement for the southern sector of Seine-et-Marne, appointed Maurice Duros as head of the Villiers Resistance group.

As the American forces drew closer to the region, the Villiers Resistance members took to the maquis — leaving their homes and taking refuge in the woods near the village. They went underground on August 17, 1944, sleeping in a hut in the Grouettes area or in the surrounding forest. Local residents brought them food to help them survive while they awaited liberation.

Claudine Neveu testifies:
"While going to Châtillon, along the path, my father and I heard a radio playing. The men from the Resistance group were sitting in a circle, their rifles piled in the middle, eating while listening to Radio London. Gisèle Poirier and I brought them food every day in a basket, down in the lower part of Châtillon."

Raymond Champion testifies:
"Jacques Charpentier and I went to supply the Resistance fighters with soup and wine at Maurice Hureau's place. We made the deliveries with a wheelbarrow. The Resistance fighters were also staying in the huts at the Grouettes."

The Actions of the Villiers Resistance Fighters

Alongside Gabriel Bachet, they all took part in the parachute drops of February and June 1944 in Villiers. They hid weapons and ammunition while waiting for them to be distributed through Resistance networks.
They took to the maquis on August 17, 1944, captured four militiamen, and guided the Allied troops to the Loing River on August 23, 1944. Working in coordination with the American forces, they carried out clearing operations in the Villiers-sous-Grez area and the Fontainebleau forest. They returned to their homes on September 1, 1944. Beginning in 1948, all members received an official certificate of membership in the F.F.I.
(French Forces of the Interior), recognizing their validated service from June 1 to August 31, 1944.

Who Were the F.F.I. of Villiers?



Marcel Boisseau

Marcel was born on May 26, 1913, in Recloses. He married Jeanne Soumier of Villiers on January 7, 1936, and together they had three children. Mobilized in September 1939, Marcel was taken prisoner in May 1940 and held in the Ardennes. In August 1941, his wife Jeanne took the train to the Ardennes, bringing two bicycles. Marcel managed to escape from the camp, and the couple made their return journey by bicycle, traveling in secrecy.
Once back in Villiers, he hid at 24 Rue René Lefebvre, in the home of Marc Pampin, his wife's brother-in-law. During the day, Marcel worked in the nearby woods, returning in the evening to sleep at his sister-in-law Louise's house. On July 5, 1944, he carried out a liaison mission in Brunoy. On August 24, 1944, Marcel Boisseau captured three militiamen and a lieutenant of the LVF (Legion of French Volunteers Against Bolshevism), who supported the Germans. He took part in various policing actions and patrolled the Fontainebleau forest. His wife Jeanne also played a crucial role, transporting hidden messages in her bicycle.

Louis SOUMIER



Born on July 28, 1905, in Villiers-sous-Grez, he married Suzanne Naudet on December 16, 1930, and they had two children. Louis was a butter and cheese merchant and lived at 31 Rue de Milly (now Rue Gabriel Bachet). He joined the Resistance on January 10, 1943, and took part in the operations of the Villiers group.

Théodule COMBE dit Théo



Born on March 29, 1913, in Villiers, Théo first worked as a farmer, then as a truck driver. He married Andrée Hureau on November 20, 1934, and they had two children. Théo spoke very little about this period of his life, even to his close family. A testament to his participation in the Resistance was discovered years later — a box of machine gun bullets hidden inside a garden wall belonging to Théo, found by chance when the wall collapsed after repeated freezing and thawing.

René LEFEBVRE



He was born on October 18, 1911, in Le Mée-sur-Seine. He married Madeleine Meurier of Villiers on December 23, 1933, and they had three children. He worked as a farmer. Mobilized in 1939, he was taken prisoner and sent to Germany, from where he managed to escape. Upon returning to Villiers, he hid in a friend's house at 8 Rue de l'Église. He harbored a deep hatred for the Germans and joined the B.O.A. (Bureau of Air Operations) group in Villiers. He took part in all of the group's missions, including the sabotage of an underground telephone cable near Nemours. He was killed by the Germans on August 18, 1944, in a street in Villiers.

Maurice DUROS



Born on October 7, 1907, in Paris, Maurice — known by the aliases "Daguet" or "Paco" — lived in Ury, where he worked as a painting contractor.
From late February 1943 to June 1944, he was a member of the B.O.A. group in Villiers.
After the arrest of Gabriel Bachet by the Germans, Captain Gaillardon, leader of the V.P.O. movement in the southern sector of Seine-et-Marne, appointed him as the head of the B.O.A. group in Villiers. He recovered weapons and recruited men between June 7 and August 31, 1944, before returning home on October 1, 1944.

Fernand LAURENT



Born on February 12, 1911, in Villiers-sous-Grez, he lived in Larchant, where he married and had two children. He joined the Resistance on January 10, 1943. As a railway employee, he was assigned to the Bourron-Marlotte station. In addition to taking part in the group's missions, he participated in the sabotage of the railway junction on the line from Bourron to Malesherbes.

Marcel NARCY



Born on October 2, 1913, in Paris, he lived in Ury, where he worked as a woodcutter for the Water and Forest Service of Fontainebleau. For possession of weapons, he was arrested on June 9, 1943, by the State Police. He was interned at the Romainville camp, then at Compiègne, and later deported to Baden-Baden, from which he escaped on October 27, 1943. After returning from Germany, he was taken in by Mr. Harret at the Restaurant du Roi de Pique in Fontainebleau, and afterward, he joined the B.O.A. group of Villiers.



Though Not Officially Recognized as F.F.I., They Aided the Resistance

Thus, Pierre Lavau, a railway employee, rescued the American airman who had fallen in the woods, thereby taking part in the actions of the B.O.A., represented in Villiers by Gabriel Bachet.

Pierre Lavau was commended by the S.N.C.F. for his exemplary conduct in December 1942, receiving his citation and decoration in July 1945. Also assisting the B.O.A. group of Villiers were Raymond Michaut, Angelo Campigotto, and Robert Grenet.

Speaking about her brother Angelo, Joséphine Campigotto testified:
"During the war, Angelo lived with Denise at ***Le Petit Nice***. There were weapons for the Resistance hidden under the floorboards of the house. Whenever a car passed by, Angelo would run to hide in the woods behind the house.
Angelo took part in the Resistance with René Lefebvre's group, and his mother, Marguerite, was very worried about him."

A Fighter of the Free French Forces (F.F.L.)

Pierre Libermann, known as Jean Mercure

Pierre was born on March 27, 1909, in Paris. He and his wife, Jacqueline Jeannerot, had a home in Paris, but they often stayed in Villiers, at 23 Rue René Lefebvre (present-day address).Both were theater actors.



He was mobilized on August 22, 1939, with the 4th Hussars Regiment, and demobilized on July 28, 1940, in Buzançais (Indre). He first went to Lyon, where he worked to earn some money, then crossed the Spanish border on November 12, 1942. He was arrested and interned in the Miranda camp for a short time. He left Spain by boat and reached England on June 6, 1943.
He volunteered for the duration of the war with the Free French Forces in London on July 21, 1943, and was assigned to the ground forces.
He landed at Bayeux on August 1, 1944, and took part in the French campaign with the Military Administrative Liaison Missions, serving in Normandy, Brittany, Paris, and Strasbourg.
He was demobilized on July 30, 1945.

The Commemorative Medal for Voluntary Service in Free France (*Forces Françaises Libres – F.F.L.*)was awarded to him on November 28, 1990.



FORCES FRANÇAISES LIBRES

ACTE D'ENGAGEMENT

No. de l'engagement 5311 D

Par devant nous, (1) Commandant Pons suppléant légal de l'Intendant Militaire représentant le Général de Gaulle, Commandant en Chef les Forces Françaises Libres, a comparu M. (2) LIBERMANN Pierre dit Jean MERCURE

M. (2) LIBERMANN Pierre dit Jean MERCURE a déclaré :

—avoir pris connaissance du statut du personnel des Forces Françaises Libres ;

—s'engager à servir avec Honneur, Fidélité et Discipline dans les Forces Françaises Libres pour la durée de la guerre actuellement en cours plus trois mois.

Le présent engagement est définitif sous réserve :

1° du résultat favorable de l'examen médical ;

2° de l'accord de l'Etat Major Particulier du Général de Gaulle ;

lesquels devront être obtenus dans un délai maximum de 42 jours.

Fait à Londres le 21 juillet 1943

vingt et un juillet mille neuf cent quarante trois

Le (4)

Lu et approuvé (3)

L'engagé

Signature de deux témoins

Le présent contrat est devenu définitif à la date du

L'INTENDANT MILITAIRE

(1) nom de l'Intendant Militaire ou de l'Officier en faisant fonction.
(2) nom et prénoms de l'engagé.
(3) mention à porter en toutes lettres de la main de l'engagé.
(4) Grade et nom de l'Intendant ou de l'Officier en faisant fonction.
L'acte d'engagement est établi en deux exemplaires :
L'exemplaire blanc est à conserver par le Bureau des Effectifs.
L'exemplaire bleu est à remettre à l'engagé.

(28687) W.P.1918/119 10,000 (2 sorte) 8/43 A.& E.W.Ltd. Gp.685

FINALLY, THE LIBERATION!

The F.F.I. of Villiers, led by Maurice Duros, alias "Daguet," went into hiding on August 17, 1944, taking refuge in the woods near the village, toward the plateau of La Chapelle. Local residents brought them food to help them survive.

The Fighters of the Liberation

Responding to General de Gaulle's second appeal, dated August 7, 1944, which called on all French people—wherever they were—to fight by every means available, assist the Allies, and support the Americans in their advance across France, two young men, André Surget and his friend Henri Simonin, joined the F.F.I. of Villiers and went into the maquis.

They stayed in a cabin on the Grouettes plateau, watched the battle of August 22 at La Chapelle-la-Reine from a distance, and later helped the Americans reach Grez-sur-Loing.

The American Reconnaissance Missions

On August 17, 1944, a few American vehicles — including one GMC truck and several small cars — entered a zone still occupied by the Germans on a reconnaissance mission.

They passed first through Achères, then Ury, Recloses, and Bourron.

In Bourron, the American soldiers captured two German soldiers who had been shopping at the cheesemonger's.

Testimony of Raymond Mortier:

"Around August 20, an American dispatch rider on a motorcycle, coming from the Larchant road, turned around at the Three Lindens and went back toward Larchant."

Testimony of André Surget:

"On August 17, 1944, a few American vehicles, including one GMC truck and several small cars, entered a zone still occupied by the Germans on a reconnaissance mission. They passed first through Achères, then Ury, Recloses, and Bourron."

The Battle of La Chapelle-la-Reine – August 22, 1944

To allow their troops to cross the Seine at the Valvins Bridge and continue their advance eastward across France, the Germans decided to launch an attack at Butteaux, a hamlet of La Chapelle-la-Reine, targeting the American troops coming from Malesherbes along National Road 51. On August 21, the Germans of the 1010th Wehrmacht Regiment gave orders to the local residents for the following day, instructing them to stay inside their homes, take shelter in their cellars, and leave their windows open. The F.F.I. of La Chapelle tried in vain to warn the Americans of the ambush by radio.

For some time, the Americans of the XX Corps, commanded by General Patton, 5th Infantry Division, 10th Infantry Regiment, had been advancing without encountering German resistance.

At Butteaux, however, three German Tiger tanks, hidden beneath trees and supported by two heavy guns, twelve smaller cannons, and numerous machine guns concealed behind haystacks, lay in wait with 400 soldiers for the first American vehicles to arrive at the railroad crossing.

Around 8 a.m., the head of the American convoy—a jeep carrying two officers followed by two tanks—was destroyed, and its occupants were killed. The Americans immediately returned fire, launching air-burst shells, impact shells, and incendiary rounds to strike the German soldiers hidden behind the wheat stacks and hay piles. The fighting continued until about 6 p.m.

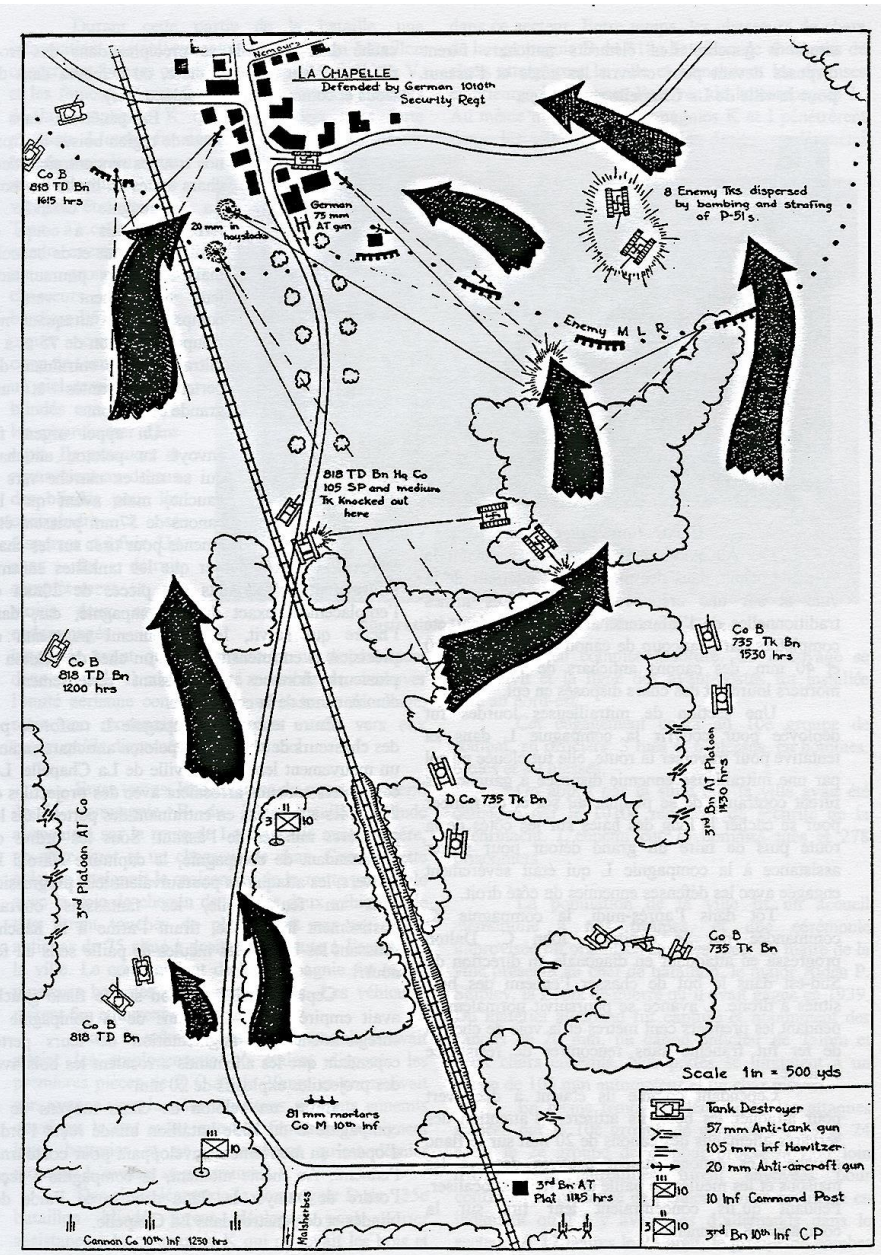


Illustration 1: Plan de la bataille de La Chapelle-la-Reine.

Results for the inhabitants of La Chapelle:

One resident was killed, three were slightly wounded, and nearly all the roofs in Butteaux were destroyed.

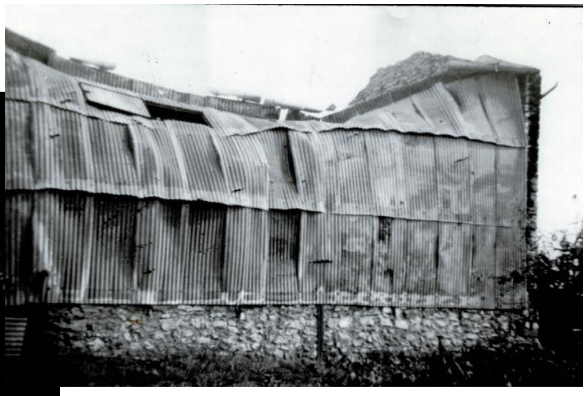
Three barns, a sheepfold with its flock, and seventeen haystacks were set on fire.

For the Americans:

9 dead and 46 wounded.

For the Germans:

75 dead, numerous wounded, and 277 taken prisoner.



The Destroyed Barn of the Vincent Farm



American Tank Overturned at the Butteaux Railroad Crossing

The sound of the battle, which lasted all day, could be heard from Villiers, Ury, Recloses, and Achères.

René Amiot:
"On August 22, 1944, from Villiers we could hear the American armored cars advancing and firing toward the Germans at La Chapelle."
Raymond Mortier recounts:
"On August 22, we could hear the cannon fire coming from La Chapelle. All the Germans who were in the Dumesnil park in Larchant fled with their trucks, and the trucks were crashing into each other. That evening, in the street, old man Fanichet was giving directions to the Boches, showing them the way back toward Germany."
Gérard Pasmant also speaks of August 22:
"Night had fallen, and coming from the Larchant road, the shattered shock troops reached the square in Villiers. Their equipment was covered in dust, the men disheveled, exhausted, stunned by the day's shelling. Where was the proud, victorious army I once saw parading on Rue de Rivoli? What a downfall! All the vehicles moved slowly, in disarray, like the wounded: trucks, cannons, and half-tracks reeked of gunpowder. The crippled caravan turned at the crossroads toward Bourron-Marlotte. Four Panther or Tiger tanks, in bad shape, tried to keep up. When they reached the square, I saw that one had broken down and another was struggling to tow it. They took the turn cautiously, hesitantly. Once on the straight road, they disappeared into the night — and that would be the last time we saw our occupiers."

The Arrival of the Americans – August 23, 1944After spending the night of August 22 in La Chapelle, the American troops set out the next morning, August 23, heading toward Villiers in order to cross the Loing River at Grez.

Account of Jean Przybylski:
"On the morning of August 23, Villiers was bathed in sunshine. An observation plane was circling above the village. At the entrance, on the road from La Chapelle-la-Reine, a group of armed Resistance fighters unfurled a large tricolor flag. Three jeeps full of soldiers came roaring down the hill from La Chapelle, entered the village without slowing down, forcing the villagers to step aside.
I later learned that they stopped in the square, took two or three Resistance fighters on board, and then sped off toward Grez-sur-Loing, where the Loing Bridge had been destroyed."

A few moments later, soldiers appeared at the foot of the hill from La Chapelle. They were walking in single file, using neither the road nor the Milly path, but descending between the vineyards — at that time, the entire area was covered in vines, and the path they made remained visible until the spring of 1945.

It was Mr. Debard, standing at the high window of his attic, who first saw the Americans coming down the lower part of the hill from La Chapelle and shouted:

"They're here! The Americans are coming!"

The infantry then crossed through the village, cheered by the people of Villiers. Soon afterward came convoys of vehicles of every kind, loaded or not with soldiers, passing through Villiers and stopping often. This allowed the villagers to watch them, touch them, try to speak with them,

and of course, offer them generous drinks!

A column of Sherman tanks also passed through the village, stopping for a long rest. The soldiers ate a quick meal ("casser une croûte"), and one of them handed me his canteen cup —

it was delicious! It was water mixed with a small packet of orange powder.

"And then came our joyful discovery of the K-ration boxes — cans, chewing gum, candy,

powdered drinks, and blond cigarettes — which we teenagers were quick to try!!!"

Photos of the Liberation of Villiers-sous-Grez



André Surget:

"On August 23, 1944, the Resistance men from Villiers had joined the Americans at La Chapelle. That morning, as we were heading toward Villiers, we saw Jacqueline Pelletier arriving by the Mare Assieuse on her bicycle, coming to get news, and Tintin (Jules Beauvais) with his horse-drawn cart. The American jeeps, with Resistance fighters aboard, sped through Villiers to stop at Grez, where the bridge had been blown up. When they arrived in Villiers, flags were hanging from the windows, and the villagers were waiting for the soldiers with bottles in hand."

Raymond Mortier:

"On the 23rd, the jeeps came through with soldiers on foot, and the Resistance riding along with the Americans — including André Surget, Robert Soumier, and others — followed by a few trucks and then the tanks.

The infantry crossed the village on foot; they drank water, filled their canteens, and left the wine untouched. They bit into the green apples along the hill from La Chapelle.

The American officers stopped for an aperitif at Camille Plé's house. We had never seen tanks before."



Photo Montage

The American tanks drove across the fields, leaving tracks that remained visible for several years near La Mare Assieuse. The tanks then regrouped to pass through the village by road.

The Decorated Village

After the Americans arrived, many villagers hung flags on their doors and windows. Armand Charpentier, René Fauvet, and Marcel Loiseau climbed up to place a flag inside the church bell tower. Raymond Mortier, then nine and a half years old, was lifted up by Armand to hang the flag on the small steeple above the clock near the trapdoor.

Fauvet's beret rolled down the roof and fell to the ground. Inside the bell tower, the ladders were half-rotten and bundles of twigs were piled everywhere. The men lit Bengal flares for light, and it was a miracle the tower didn't catch fire.

Unexpected Consequences of the Liberation

The joy was immense for all the inhabitants — the village was liberated without fighting or violence. Marcel Plé, who had been seriously ill for a long time and felt his end approaching, asked Joséphine, who worked for him, to see what the noisy vehicles were passing by on the street.

Joséphine replied, "It's the Americans."

He answered, "I'm happy — now I can die."

And indeed, he passed away peacefully the next day, on August 29, comforted by the news of freedom.

Shortly after the Liberation, an American soldier came to see René Milandre, claiming to be a distant cousin. How this American discovered his family connection with residents of a small Gâtinais village remains a mystery.

The Arrival of the American Army

The U.S. Army set up in the village, establishing supply depots for equipment and ammunition.

Raymond Mortier:

"All along the Busseau road, the La Chapelle road, and the Bourron road across the fields, at the Croix Bûchette — everywhere there were artillery shells. The ammunition depots moved forward as the equipment advanced."

René Amiot testifies:

"After the Liberation, American cannons were placed near Michel Fraix's barn, in the corner along the fence. Around ten 105 mm and 155 mm guns were set up in Les Rouillères to fire toward Valvins. Once the Battle of Valvins ended, the Americans took them away. The Germans never fired on Villiers.

A lot of soil from Le Murger was brought into the village and even into Les Sables, carried by the wheels of the convoys. There were many convoys at the end of August. On the 25th or 26th, there was a heavy storm, followed by continuous rain for several days — ten centimeters of mud in the village, with trucks driving through it. An American tank got stuck, leaving deep ruts in one of our fields on the plateau.

There were also American munitions stored in our field along the La Chapelle road, just after the crossroads to the right, in the lower field, and along the Chemin de la Châsse."



The American Troops in the Woods of Villiers-sous-Grez

Some villagers had collected munitions, which they later disposed of — a bomb placed on a rock at the first turn of the Larchant road, and shells near the cemetery wall.

Children searched for parachute flares, rolling the parachute silk into a ball and launching it with a slingshot — it lit up as it burned. Of course, their parents had no idea what they were doing.

Raymond Mortier recounts:

"The American army was stationed along the Chemin de Milly — there were Black soldiers — and also on the Larry. Later, the 2nd Armored Division was on the Larry as well. They practiced throwing knives into trees.

American tents were set up along the Chemin de Milly and at the top of the Ury hill, on the left. A guardhouse was built in the square, where the road signs are — it served as a telephone exchange. The hut stayed on the square for about a month.

I brought tomatoes to the soldiers and, in return, I got chocolate, chewing gum, cigarettes, fruit jellies..."

Rolande Fleureau:
"Mother had sent us, along with Denise, to work in the vineyard on the Ury road. There were Black American soldiers on both sides of the road, and my sister and I worked in the vines without lifting our heads or looking at them. Mother didn't care if we were scared — she sent us to work anyway! The Black soldiers were looking for women. They were also looking for brandy, but we didn't give them any."
Gérard Pasmant:
"Around Villiers, all the roads had turned into enormous campsites where the newly arrived troops from the west lived, slept, and trained. We had a few soldiers at our home, and we cooked them fried potatoes.
They loved it and didn't know how to thank us, since all they had to eat were canned rations."
Jacqueline Pelletier recounts a tragic accident after the Liberation:
"On September 9, 1944, Arthémise Naudet was struck and killed on the square in Villiers, in front of Camille Plé's house, by an American truck that was backing up and didn't see her with her wheelbarrow. It was around mealtime, and as usual, Arthémise was returning with her wheelbarrow full of grass for her rabbits. In the accident, the wheelbarrow also overturned, and the peaches hidden under the grass for
the rabbits rolled into the gutter. Arthémise was killed instantly." She was 68 years old.

Unexpected Testimony from March 30, 2025 — Alix Tardieu (born 1938), daughter of Jean Tardieu, collected by Isa Mercure:



"As for me, as a little girl, I spent a winter in Villiers — I think it must have been in 1941, maybe because I was going to school. I must have been at least five years old. I attended the communal school in Villiers, and there was a teacher who was well-known because he was very strict and used to hit children's fingers with a ruler, as was common at the time. He was not nice at all.
I really didn't like it there. My family taught me to make straight lines — that's about all I learned! And then, well, the years went by. I went back to Paris to live with my parents and

went to school there. In 1944, they announced the arrival of the liberators — and also many dangers in the city. Both grandmothers and I, the little girl, were sent to Villiers in the spring and summer of 1944. The house was located on the little square of the ***Trois Tilleuls*** (Three Lime Trees). From there, they could see all the roads that crossed the area. They saw the Germans leaving to the right — and it all happened within one night. By morning, the Americans had arrived — yes, it was the Americans.

My grandmother had as many as 40 hens. In Villiers, I traded eggs for things the Americans brought us — fruit jellies, instant coffee, chocolate, things likethat — and it was wonderful for us!
My parents had bought what was quite something then — a beautiful Peugeot 202. It was a small car, four seats, and it ran very well. They had hidden it in a barn that my grandmother owned next to her house, on Rue de l'Église. That car stayed there throughout the entire war. When the Germans left that night, they blew open the barn door and tried to take the car, but they couldn't get it started. So my parents got their car back at the Liberation — and they kept it for years afterward. We even drove it to Italy!"



H&P

Histoire&Patrimoine de Villiers-sous-Grez

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The Association "History and Heritage of Villiers-sous-Grez"

Nonprofit Association (Law of 1901) – Founded on October 25, 2024

Purpose:

To promote and share the history of our village.

To organize events, exhibitions, conferences, and other cultural activities related to the village's history.

To collect, preserve, and share documents, photographs, testimonies, and other historical resources.

To collaborate with schools, local institutions, and other associations to promote local history.

To contribute to the restoration and maintenance of the heritage of Villiers-sous-Grez through fundraising and initiatives that showcase this heritage.

More generally, to carry out any activity that supports the association's primary purpose.

Board of Directors (as of October 25, 2024):

- **President:** René FLEUREAU
- **Secretary:** Marc BLANCHARD
- **Assistant Secretary:** Yves LECHEVALLIER
- **Treasurer:** Charlotte VALLAUD-BLANCHARD
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Website: https://hpvilliers-sous-grez.fr

Current and Future Projects:

- Archiving and organizing the documents used in the creation of the catalog and the exhibition
- Maintenance of the historical walking tour (refurbishment of QR codes) and display panels in the village
- Creating an accessible archive database allowing everyone to trace their roots
- Writing short stories inspired by articles from old newspapers
- Producing audiovisual materials (photos, films) to share and promote the history and heritage of Villiers-sous-Grez





Après la libération ...





... la vie reprend.





AVEC LE SOUTIEN

BRIE PICARDIE

COMMUNE DE VILLIERS-SOUS-GREZ