

esprit
HAUTS · DE · FRANCE

Charles De Gaulle

a man
of the "North"



7 itinéraires
in Hauts-de-France
to help you better understand
the man who embodied
"a certain vision of France"

CÉLÉBRER

HAUT & FORT

HAUTS-DE-FRANCE



Région
Hauts-de-France

De Gaulle, Hauts-de-France 2020

"The North wasn't just a place of birth but represented a set of beliefs, an education and a way of seeing the world.

Being effusive was deemed inappropriate. People didn't like to make a fuss. "Testimony from Philippe de Gaulle, General de Gaulle's son.

In 1944, in his liberated home town, Charles de Gaulle launched into a speech to the crowd:

"For us, the people of Lille, it is the truth that counts, not frills and fripperies."

In 1947, at Marcq-en-Barœul racecourse, in Flanders, he further elaborated: "We, the people of the North, are proud that the men and women of our communities, always, and in such vast number, served their country well in this struggle where our fate hung in the balance. And because we are not a race that fears the truth, however grave or difficult, we have gathered here today so we can confront it together."



*130 YEARS SINCE THE BIRTH OF GENERAL DE GAULLE,
80 YEARS SINCE THE "APPEAL" OF 18TH JUNE
AND 50 YEARS SINCE HIS DEATH...*

2020 *HAS BEEN DECLARED THE* **"YEAR OF DE GAULLE"**

*ON THREE DIFFERENT COUNTS
AND WILL BE CELEBRATED WITH PARTICULAR PRIDE
IN THE HAUTS-DE-FRANCE REGION:*

Charles de Gaulle was born here!
Walking in the footsteps of this native son,
offers a glimpse into the man behind the uniform
helping us understand the internationally
renowned person that we have come to know.

**FROM LILLE TO MONTCORNET,
FROM ARRAS TO ABBEVILLE
AND MALO:
7 SPECIALLY CHOSEN
INTRODUCTORY INTINERARIES**



The image on the front cover is designed by Mister P, the street artist, Thomas.

"I was looking for a way to express the pride I feel for my native region. "I immediately thought of the General, the only person to achieve such worldwide renown.

Since then, outside of Lille, I have produced more than 1,000 portraits throughout the world!"
He also designed the region's "De Gaulle, Hauts-de-France 2020" anniversary logo.



Place du Général de Gaulle



1 LILLE, AND THE “SPIRIT OF THE PLACE,” CREATED THE MAN WHO MADE THE 18TH JUNE APPEAL

“ THE BELIEFS AND ETHOS OF THE MAN, WHO EMBODIED ALL THAT WAS GREAT AND GOOD ABOUT FRANCE, WERE FORGED IN RUE PRINCESSE.”

Charles de Gaulle was born here on 22nd November 1890 at number 9, rue Princesse, in the home of his maternal grandparents, Jules Eilie and Julia Maillot. This, the house where he was born, was the only place in the world where Charles de Gaulle would have earned the right to be himself, something he confessed at the end of his life to journalist André Frossard who interviewed him: *“As you get older, memories assume greater importance and it’s particularly true for those memories from rue Princess, in Lille, where I was born.” But I know I will never go back there.* The spirit of the place is still much in evidence, helping us to understand the important role played by the North and Lille in forming the man destined to become the father of the Fifth Republic.

From the opening page of his memoirs, *Mémoires de Guerre*, (Memoires of War) de Gaulle portrays himself as a *“Petit Lillois de Paris.”*



House where Ch. De Gaulle was born



Quai du Wault

Although his mother's family was from Lille, the de Gaulles were Parisians and Charles was the only sibling to be born in the Flanders capital, a fact highlighted by Marc Fosseux, historian at the Charles de Gaulle foundation who is currently working on a book examining the relationship between Charles de Gaulle and the Hauts-de-France region, to be published in June 2020 by Voix du Nord Publications. It would be easy to see this as a pre-ordained alliance, an idea put forward by journalist and historian, Paul-Marie de la Gorce, the General's biographer who, as President Pompidou confided, helped him understand the *"man from the North"* that he detected in de Gaulle and his vision of France informed by his experiences in Northern France.

With three brothers, a sister, around ten aunts and uncles, and a dozen cousins, on his mother's side, Charles de Gaulle belonged to one of those large, middle class, Catholic families, typical of the North. Work, faith and love for one's country were core values. His mother's family history was closely bound up with the history of the Lille. In 1872, Jules Maillot, his grandfather, established **Lille's first Tulle factory** in rue Princesse.

His Irish, Jacobite and Catholic ancestors, the MacCartans had fled Ulster in the late 17th century to come and settle in Lille, at **quai du Wault**. The German branch of his family, the Kolb, were very religious and instrumental in the transformations that took place in Lille during the 19th century. Henri

Kolb, a civil engineer, with a road named after him in Wazemmes, was responsible for boring the Canal de Roubaix that led to the expansion of Lille. And it was one of his distant cousins, architect, Louis-Marie Cordonnier, who was responsible for building Lille Opera and the Chambre of Commerce, buildings synonymous with the city's skyline.



NEWS LILLE

- Office de Tourisme de Lille - Palais Rihour - 0 891 56 20 04 - lilletourism.com/
- Maison natale Charles de Gaulle - 9 rue Princesse - 03 59 73 00 30 charles-de-gaulle.org/les-lieux-gaulliens/la-maison-natale-charles-de-gaulle/
- Citadelle de Lille - Avenue du 43^e régiment d'infanterie - 0 891 56 20 02 lilletourism.com/site-et-monument-historiques-lille/citadelle-de-lille.html
- Pâtisserie Méert - 25-27 Rue Esquermoise - 03 20 57 07 44 - meert.fr/magasins
- Eglise Saint-André - 121 rue Royale - 03 20 55 45 92 - paroissstpierre-lille.fr/



Opera and Clock tower of Chamber of Commerce



Maison Meert, rue Esquemoise

Although Parisian, the de Gaulle family, who were originally from Burgundy, did have links to the North and the General's paternal grandmother, Joséphine Maillot, who was born in Dunkirk, was none other than the first cousin of Jules Maillot, the maternal grandfather of Charles de Gaulle. From this grandmother, a prolific novelist who published no fewer than 50 books, he inherited a certain eclecticism and a love for freedom of thought. In fact, although a devout Catholic, she even read Proudhon.

« FOR US, THE PEOPLE OF LILLE, IT IS THE TRUTH THAT COUNTS, NOT FRILLS AND FRIPPERIES »

These strong family roots, certainly left their mark on the young Charles. The austere façade of the house in rue Princesse is somewhat reminiscent of his restraint and love of truth as he stated during his first visit to Lille after the Liberation on 30th September 1944:

Lille was the scene of many important childhood events including his schooling at Notre-Dame de la Sagesse, **place aux Bleuets** when his brother had scarlet fever and the countless holidays they spent in Lille; in fact, the entire city seems to resonate with his footsteps. At Easter and Christmas, during Saint-Nicholas Day celebrations, when the **funfair was in town**, or whenever there was a **flea market**, the entire family would gather in the house at rue Princesse. His grandmother, Julia, arranged a special room for the children: the "hurloir," or screaming room. Charles

was strong willed. Charles' brothers and cousins had no chance during the interminable games of lead soldiers that they played on the veranda. He and he alone had to be Commander of the French armies.

His godmother, Lucie Droulers, lived at **33, rue de Metz**. At that time, a garden connected her house, in rue de Metz, to the house in rue Princesse.

The Esplanade du **Champ-de-Mars** which encircles the **Vauban citadelle** wasn't far away: every year, a funfair with rides would set up camp there. After the fair, the young Charles would keep back a few francs so he could go and buy a waffle from **Meert at 27, rue Esquemoise**, just a stone's throw from the main square that today bears his name. Although a bust of the General is displayed inside the shop, the overall décor has remained unchanged since the 19th century, firing the visitor's imagination.

Lille citadelle



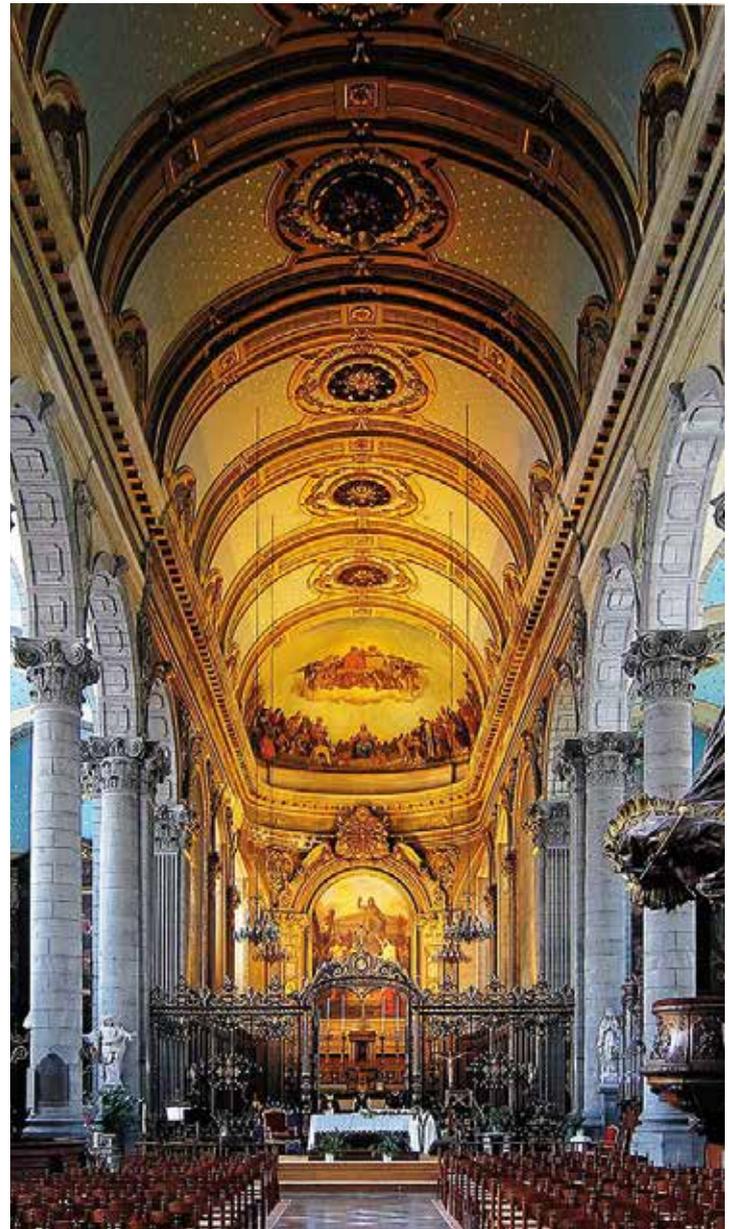


House where Ch. De Gaulle was born

Since 2014, the Nord Department has managed and run the **House in which de Gaulle was born**, now a listed monument and registered “Maison des Illustres” building, which has been owned by the Charles de Gaulle Foundation since 1991. The house in rue Princesse will re-open its doors to celebrate the 130th anniversary of the birth of the General on 22nd November 2020 as well as the 50th anniversary of his death on the 9th November and 80 years since the 18th June Appeal. The idea is for visitors to be able see the house, in its near original state - the very same house that Charles de Gaulle knew as a child with the exact same shades of wallpaper, the same bumpy wooden floors, even the same kitchen, bathroom, laundry and conservatory. Even the dining table is the original table, around which the family so often gathered.

Saint-André Church, **nearby**, was another important place in the General’s life, as it was here, in its baptistry, that he was baptised on the day that he was born. A plaque on site commemorates the event.

Lille, which named its main square, **place du général de Gaulle**, was close to the heart of this man who later became the face of the Resistance; even in the midst of the turmoil of 1942, he wrote to the American government, stating:



Saint-André Church

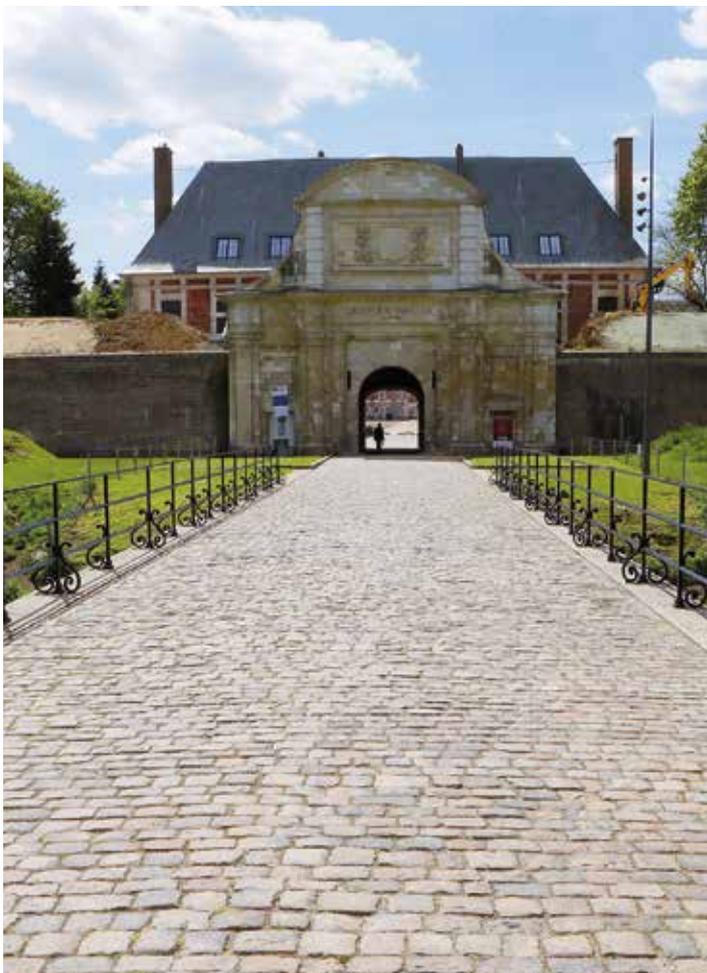
“ IT IS IN LILLE, IN THESE REGIONS OF THE OCCUPIED ZONE, SOME OF THE WEALTHIEST AND MOST POPULATED PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, THAT WE FIND OUR MOST LOYAL SUPPORT. ”



Place d'Arras



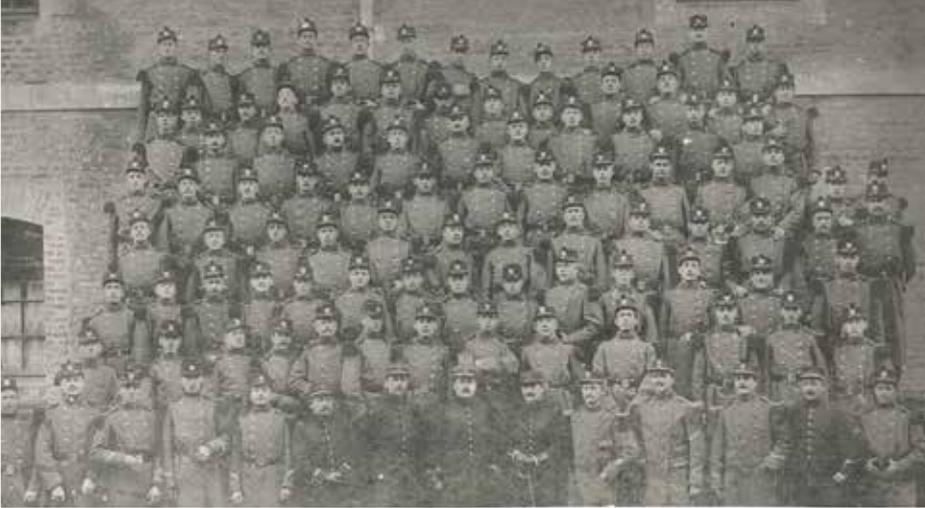
2 ARRAS: THE MAKING OF A VISIONARY MAN-AT-ARMS



Arras citadelle

Charles de Gaulle always wanted to be an officer; **joining the army and being in charge almost seems to have been a foregone conclusion for him.** By the age of 14, he had already written a short story, called *Campaign for Germany* on the subject of retaliation for the 1870 war in which his father had fought. The hero of this tale was a certain “*General de Gaulle*”. His studies naturally led him towards a military career and after spending a year studying at the collège du Sacré Coeur d’**Antoing in Belgium**, he prepared for his entrance exam to the exclusive College Stanislas and the Saint-Cyr military academy in **Paris**. In September 1909, after he had passed his entrance exam to Saint-Cyr, in accordance with the 1905 loi Bertheaux, he had to complete one year’s national service, serving in the ranks so he would develop a better understanding of the troops. Once again he chose to serve in the region, joining the **33rd Infantry Regiment stationed in Arras.**

He became tougher, as he later recalled, but he also mixed with all kinds of people from Hauts-de-France, a fact noted by Paul-Marie de la Gorce, *once again [...]he felt a strong connection with the North of France and with these “people of the North” who, to his mind, largely represented the French nation.*



De Gaulle, serving as a soldier in the 33rd Infantry Regiment, Arras, circa 1909.



Saint-Cyrien
©Bridgeman-Giraudon

His room mates were mine workers from Pas-de-Calais as well as agricultural labourers from the regions of Thiérache, Avesnois and Valenciennes. He was tall and stood out, asserting his character which earned him the nickname "Constable."

In 1912, after Saint-Cyr, when he had to decide on a posting, he once again chose **the 33rd IR in Arras**, commanded by Colonel Pétain. Marc Fosseux saw in the young de Gaulle an officer with incredible ambition, convinced of the key role he would play in the region in the future war against Germany, and with a burning desire to be at the forefront of any action. Here he met the future Marshal Pétain, also from the same region - two men whose paths were destined to cross time and time again. *After Saint-Cyr, he said, I have served my apprenticeship as an officer. My first commander, Pétain, has shown me the importance of the art of command.* De Gaulle's admiration for the future "conqueror of Verdun" was reciprocated and once the war was over, Pétain made him his ghost-writer, helping him realise his great ambitions, until a painful disagreement over a publication by de Gaulle, "La France et son armée," (France and her army), initially written for Pétain, resulted in a rift between de Gaulle, the child of a middle class Lille family and Marshal Pétain, the son of a farm worker from Pas-de-Calais.

In **Arras**, as his friend, Lucien Nachin observed, the young lieutenant attached himself to *"these short, stocky miners and patient agricultural labourers, men who used crude, sometimes colourful language, men*

who were difficult to win over but who were willing to give their all, forever, to the leader who earned their respect." At that time, he lived at **No16, rue du 29 juillet** - now marked by a plaque that records his presence between 1912 and 1914 - in a small, simple house with a white façade, in a charming, unspoilt street that gives us a good idea of the pre-war Arras that the General might have known. He also frequented the Levis barracks, today no longer in existence, and the Schramm barracks, a magnificent, vast, red and white building, in cours de Verdun, built under the auspices of Vauban between 1667 and 1700, and currently under renovation.

The city's military heritage certainly impressed him, particularly the strength of the **Vauban citadel** and the importance of strategic strongholds would become a common theme in his works. And when he returned to Arras after the Liberation, on the 1st October 1944, cheered by crowd, he wrote:



NEWS ARRAS

- **La Citadelle d'Arras - Boulevard Vauban - 03 21 51 26 95**
arraspaysdartois.com/les-incontournables/la-citadelle-darras/
- **Office de Tourisme d'Arras - Hôtel de Ville - Place des Héros - 03 21 51 26 95**
arraspaysdartois.com/
- **Carrière Wellington - Rue Arthur Deletoille - 0321512695**
carrierewellington.com

« IN ARRAS, I RETURNED TO THE CITY WHERE I FIRST LEARNED »



Plaque on the pont Charles de Gaulle bridge - Dinant

3 1914 - 1916:

CHARLES DE GAULLE'S GREAT WAR IN AISNE

THE FUTURE GENERAL'S DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL AND MILITARY TACTICS

The First World War had a profound impact on **Charles de Gaulle**, then a young officer in the 33rd Infantry Regiment, in Arras, and is crucial to our understanding of his way of thinking and the rest of his prolific career, much of which was spent in our region.

The Battle of the Somme (July 1916), the Chemin des Dames, the Battle of Arras (April-May 1917), the Rethondes Armistice (11th November 1918): all these names, anchored in our collective memory, describe key phases in the First World War. They were also the bloodiest phases: and the memorials erected at Thiepval, Villers-Bretonneux, the

Historial de Péronne (Museum of the Great War, Peronne), the Caverne du Dragon, the Wellington quarry and the clairière de l'Armistice (Glade of the Armistice) etc. illustrate both the heavy toll paid by the region and the incredible resilience



Captain De Gaulle in 1915
©Fondation Charles de Gaulle

of its inhabitants. Here, the ability to bounce back is considered a virtue.

When war was declared on the 3rd August 1914, the young lieutenant seemed impatient for his first taste of action; however, he was sad to leave Arras, noting: *Goodbye flat, goodbye books and all my other familiar objects. The more intense life becomes, the more we derive pleasure from the simplest of things, particularly when life might suddenly end.* He received his baptism of fire in Belgium, in Dinant, where he was wounded. A plaque, on a bridge over the River Meuse, reminds us of his bravery.

A 2.5 m high statue of him stands just a few metres from the house where he took refuge, his knee shattered by a German bullet.

He was evacuated and did not return to the front until 17th October when he was sent to **Pontavert** on the west bank of the Aisne, near the chemin des Dames, where he took over command of the 7th company.



Berry-au-Bac, Tank Memorial

Like all infantrymen, he experienced highs and lows, as he explained to his father: *We are engaged in trench warfare; occasionally, we capture an enemy trench but 50 metres further back, there is always another. From time to time [there are] appalling gunfights between opposing trenches but, of course, they never achieve anything.* However, on the 10th February 1915 he became a Captain and thrived in his “Northern” regiment, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Boud’hors. In 1915, de Gaulle was stationed at Bois des Buttes at the same time as Roland Dorgelès, author of *Croix de bois* (Wooden Crosses), the exact same spot where, one year later, Guillaume Apollinaire received a shell wound to the head. He was shot in the ear on 6th March and then in the hand on the 10th March, and was evacuated to Mont Dore to be looked after. In October 1915, he found himself in **Berry-au-Bac**, taking command of the 10th company and carrying out, with an enthusiasm that would earn him the approval of his superior, earth-moving and camouflage work to help prepare defensive positions for the French troops. *Here we are, back in defensive positions and some say we’re going to be here all winter* he wrote. His instinct was right; he was not spared the pain and tedium that was the daily existence for infantrymen in the trenches. After a flood, in Aisne, on the 8th December 1915, he described with great humour – a humour that later came to define him – their inconceivably difficult living conditions. *We live in the water like frogs and, if we want to get out, we have to lie in our dugouts on our raised beds.*

Charles de Gaulle’s presence on the very spot where the first French tank battle would take place some two years later, is fascinating, according to Marc Fosseux who sees it as a little nod to history and an affirmation of the vision and vocation of this man who, in his inter-war publications, **constantly promoted the importance of armoured forces. This demonstrates how his war experience on the Picardy front helped shape and develop his political and military strategies.** He was taken prisoner in 1916 in Douaumont and spent the rest of the war in captivity, despite five attempts at escape; However, he returned to Aisne during the Second World War and, in 1951, presided over a ceremony for the Tank Memorial at **Berry-au-Bac**, as a nearby sign attests; yet, when he spoke about these extraordinary moments, he did so with a certain modesty, burdened, perhaps, by painful memories.

**“ I KNOW THESE PLACES WELL
BECAUSE I LIVED THERE AND FOUGHT THERE”**



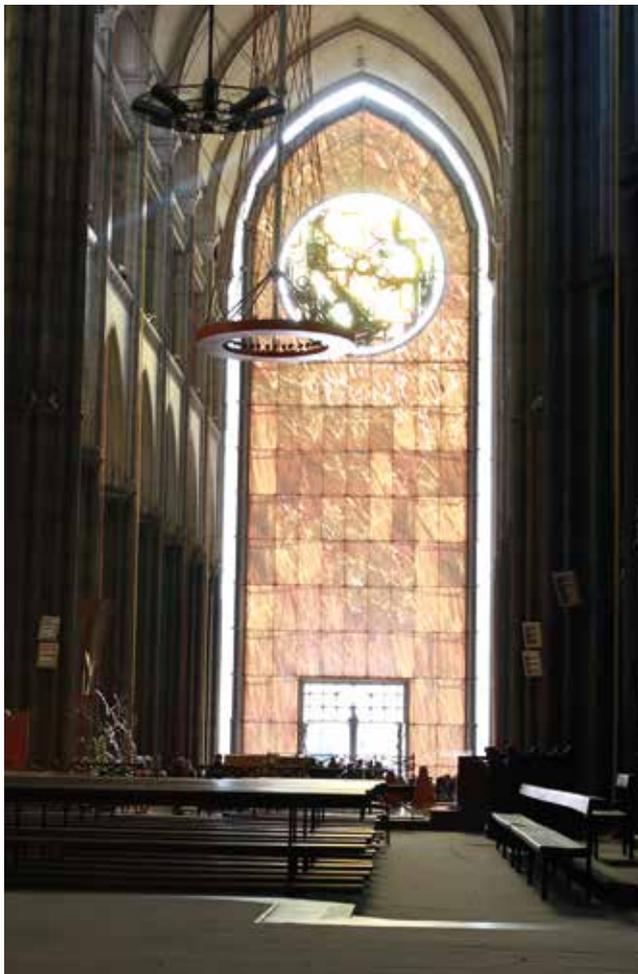
NEWS AISNE

- Le Musée de la Grande Guerre - Place André Audinot - PERONNE
03 22 83 14 18 - historial.fr/
- La Caverne du Dragon - Chemin des Dames - OULCHES-LA-VALLÉE-FOULON
03 23 25 14 18 - chemindesdames.fr/fr
- Office de Tourisme de Laon - Place du Parvis Gaultier de Mortagne - LAON
03 23 20 28 62 - tourisme-paysdelaon.com/
- Mémorial de l’Armistice - Route de Soissons - COMPIEGNE - 03 44 85 14 18
musee-armistice-14-18.fr/
- Office de Tourisme de Compiègne - Place de l’Hôtel de Ville - COMPIEGNE
03 44 40 01 00 - compiègne-tourisme.fr/



**“ JOINING FORCES FOR THE COMMON GOOD,
PERFORMING ACTS OF CHARITY FOR THOSE WHO ARE
SUFFERING, GIVING BREAD TO THOSE IN NEED.”**

4 DE GAULLE, ECONOMIST AND INDUSTRIALIST *HIS VISION OF MAN, SOCIETY AND MAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO WORK*



Notre-Dame de la Treille, Lille

The atmosphere at **rue Princesse**, an atmosphere that defined de Gaulle's Lille childhood, greatly influenced his social policies. In fact, although today the area around the house where he was born exudes a sense of affluent calm, it wasn't always thus: the neighbourhood was a hive of activity with a mix of socio-economic classes, with factories and breweries set alongside middle class homes and courtyard housing. It was, according to Michel Marcq *a working-class district with factories, slaughterhouses and stockyards as well as the canal de la Basse-Deûle and its warehouses; the streets were thronged with bargemen and labourers, loading and unloading barges, and further enlivened by the comings and goings of inmates from the local General Hospital*. Charles de Gaulle's mother's family were affluent, middle class, factory owners and devout Catholics - his mother attended mass at Saint-André church at 7am every morning - who upheld and promoted the Church's Social Doctrine in favour of the most disadvantaged. His great-uncle, Charles Kolb-Bernard, an MP and later a senator for Lille, set up the Collège de Marcq institution and the Oeuvre de la cathédrale Notre-Dame de la Treille and was also the founder of the conférence Saint Vincent de Paul de Lille voluntary association, whose rules, written in his own hand, set out his social and charitable ambitions.



Charles de Gaulle, in centre, with his brothers and sisters, circa 1899

Mining Basin, headframe



At home, the Maillot family had first hand experience of what social conscience meant. Marie-Agnès, the General's sister recalls this anecdote about life in rue Princesse, Lille. *We weren't spoiled!*

remember that we used to cut pears and oranges in half; every time we wanted more food, my mother would say, "we need to leave some for the kitchen staff." She was always thinking about the kitchen staff. It was an issue close to her heart. The young Charles de Gaulle began to develop his own sense of social justice while serving with the 33rd IR in Arras where he came up against men from all social backgrounds and where, during law enforcement operations, he learnt of the harsh working conditions particularly within the Mining Basin, an issue that would later form the cornerstone of his post-war social policy. Later, when he was second lieutenant in the same regiment, he attended his first miners' strike in Lens. *I was deeply affected by this scene, he observes. The miners' wives were there; they looked very sad [...]. It [...] meant a long strike, in other words, no bread on the table and poverty...* One of his greatest political battles was fighting for Worker Participation in Business Enterprises. Although the labour-capital association was a central tenet of social Catholicism,

this in no way diminishes the influence the region had on the General, particularly the Familistère de Guise experiment in which some workers received a share of the company. *This*, declared de Gaulle, the statesman *is the great reform that we need to promote, organize and implement.* He later declared in 1950 *that it was social issues - issues that had always been present but never resolved - that were the root of the major upheavals experienced throughout the world over the last 35 year.* After the Liberation, he wanted to promote a new social order that he called social democracy. On the 1st October 1944, in Lille, he proclaimed: *We have really suffered, we have been humiliated. We are going to show the entire world, we are going to show ourselves, that this suffering and this humiliation has not been in vain.* Liberation was also a time to assess the state of the country, a country ravaged by war with devastated housing, industry that was almost at a standstill and working conditions that were worse than in pre-war France. From 1944 onwards, as head of the Provisional Government, he embarked upon **a fierce battle to restore production and, in so doing, improve the standard of living of the French people, and once again headed to the North in search of political inspiration.**



NEWS

• La Fosse d'Haillicourt - Rue de la Lampisterie - HAILLICOURT - 03 21 52 96 52 tourisme-bethune-bruay.fr/venez-en-groupes/groupes-scolaires/se-souvenir-de-14-18/balade-sur-l-ancienne-fosse-6-d-haillicourt-et-les-terris-du-pays-a-part-1044394

• Office de Tourisme de Béthune-Bruay - 3 rue Aristide Briand - BETHUNE 03 21 52 50 00 - tourisme-bethune-bruay.fr/

• Le Familistère Godin Cité Familistère - GUISE - 03 23 61 35 36 familistere.com/fr

• Le centre Historique minier - Fosse Delloye - Rue d'Erchin - LEWARDE 03 27 95 82 82 - chm-lewarde.com/fr/



Familistère de Guise



Haillicourt slag heap

In 1944, he embarked upon the Battle for coal, in the Mining Basin, to try to bring an end to the energy shortages that France was experiencing. On the 11th August 1945, in Béthune, in front of a crowd of 30,000 people, he enthusiastically proclaimed: *Today we are producing 75% of the coal that we produced in 1939; soon it will be 100% and more.* A target to produce 100,000 tons of coal per day was set. In June 1946, Auguste Lecoq, Mayor of Lens and Under-secretary of State for Coal Production, approved the *miners' statute*, guaranteeing improved salaries, housing, social security protection and other benefits. A genuine race to increase production then took hold throughout France, inspired by the example of the Mining Basin. And de Gaulle wrote: *from today, coal production is no longer just about improved living conditions and opportunities, it also determines our worth and our place in the world. Yesterday, there was no national priority more important than fighting. Today, there is none more important than production.*

On the 26th September 1959, in Douai, in front of a large gathering of miners, all wearing white hats, he commended the workers for their key role in France's economic success, and the Douai miners in particular. The previous day, he had visited the Haillicourt pit where, watched by cheering miners, he had donned pit cloths and descended to the bottom of the mine, after which he declared:

« I WAS IMPRESSED BY THE PROGRESS THAT HAS BEEN MADE IN TERMS OPERATING THE MINE AND WORKING CONDITIONS. THE VERY FIRST TIME I WENT DOWN A MINE WAS 45 YEARS AGO. THAT WAS IN LIÉVIN AND THE PROGRESS THAT HAS BEEN MADE IN THE INTERVENING YEARS, IN TERMS OF YIELD AND MODERNISATION, IS ABSOLUTELY INCREDIBLE. »

Later, when he returned to the North, in 1966, to open Lille's 41st fair, he was quick to stress the importance of transforming and improving collieries, and establishing and diversifying businesses in the region, as well as to talk about the housing crisis.



Charles De Gaulle in the mine - © Paul Wallet



Meeting with the Prime Minister
Winston Churchill
Demonstration of tanks
©Bridgeman-Giraudon

5 FROM ABBEVILLE TO MONTCORNET

“IT WAS IN ABBEVILLE THAT I START TO BELIEVE THAT THE 18TH JUNE APPEAL WAS POSSIBLE”
THE MAN WHO REFUSED TO ACCEPT DEFEAT



Bust and plaque honouring General de Gaulle, Huppy

When the Second World War broke out, Colonel de Gaulle was no longer the young officer, freshly graduated from Saint-Cyr and keen to see action. He was already an important figure in the Army. Thanks to his close relationship with Marshal Petain during the inter-war period, he was able to teach at the Ecole de Guerre, an environment which helped him to develop his tactical strategies. He published *La Discorde chez l'ennemi* (The Enemy's House Divided) in 1924, *Le Fil de l'épée* (The Edge of the Sword) in 1932, *Vers l'armée de métier* (Towards a Professional Army), in 1934 and *La France et son armée* (France and her army), in 1938, in which he was able to set out his tactical thinking, strategic ideas and the importance he placed on armoured warfare. He argued in favour of manoeuvre warfare, led by professional soldiers, backed by armoured tanks. This earned him the admiration of Hitler who was inspired by his ideas. In May 1945, amongst the remnants of the Berghof, Hitler's residence in Berchtesgaden, Alain de Boissieu, de Gaulle's son-in-law, found a publication by Charles de Gaulle, with handwritten notes by the Führer.

In 1937 he had the chance to become better acquainted with tanks, his preferred form of weaponry, and in 1940 was in command of the 507th tank regiment in Metz. On 11th May 1940, in the midst of a full German offensive, he took command of the 4th Armoured Division, France's largest armoured unit.



European Monument at Huppy, built in 1990.

Come on, de Gaulle! You have long had a good understanding of enemy strategy so now your time has come to act, so said General Georges, sending him off to **Laon** where he was to halt the German offensive.

He set up his command post in Bruyères, south of **Laon** and noted the disaster at hand: *a distraught population and military defeat*. It's too bad, he wrote *in his War Memoires, the war has begun poorly. But we must fight on. There's plenty of room for war in the world. If I live, I shall fight, wherever I need to, for as long as it takes, until the enemy is defeated and this stain on our county is expunged. It was on that day that I figured out what I could do.*

As he advanced towards **Montcornet** to fight, with his poorly trained troops, he travelled through the **Thiérache** region, the scene of countless invasions since the Middle Ages, and here, surrounded by fortified churches that it would seem nothing could destroy, he strengthened his resolve to never accept defeat. At **Montcornet**, he managed to push back the Germans, enjoying one of the few successes achieved by the French Army during the Battle of France. At the entrance to the village, on the D946, stands a monument, surmounted by an AMX-13 tank, in commemoration of this victory. The department of Aisne is also planning to erect a monument in homage to the combatants of 1940.

On the 25th May, he was temporarily made Brigadier General and, on the 28th May, arrived in **Abbeville** with the aim of reducing the size of the enemy pocket. He took **Huppy** from the Germans on the 29th May and set up his HQ in the château; a plaque together with a bust of the General on the

perimeter wall, overlooking the church porch, are reminders of his presence here. It was here that a flicker of hope reignited within him. He wrote: *I am under no illusions, here, in my billet in Picardy. But I intend to keep hopeful. Although, at the end of the day, we can do nothing to rectify the situation in mainland France, it must be redressed elsewhere.*

On 6th June, De Gaulle was appointed Under-Secretary of State for National Defence in Reynard's government, embarking on the path that would culminate in the 18th June Appeal. But the Battle of France fought in the **Hauts-de-France** region would mark General de Gaulle's association with the resistance and his refusal to accept defeat.



Speech given by Ch. De Gaulle in Huppy 1949.

Colonel Colombani who commands the 501st Armoured Tank Unit, stationed in Mourmelon, and a repository of knowledge about de Gaulle's army career, explains that the example of the Battle of France fought by the General between **Montcornet** and **Abbeville** is still taught to the regiment today, with lessons given to the NCOs to illustrate both the tactical strategies used as well as the General's refusal to accept defeat.

It didn't involve mass combat but, rather, small skirmishes, explains Colonel Colombani. After the war, General De Gaulle returned victorious to **Picardy**, the scene of his earliest battles, and, in a speech delivered during a visit to **Huppy** on 29th May 1949, he recalled the important role played by the region in helping initiate the Liberation: ***But those events, I tell you now, here in Huppy, those events set in motion another chain of events: a slow, tough military recovery that culminated in the 1944-45 Allied Victory.***

Which is why, in 1990, a European monument, paying homage to all those who fought in the battle of Abbeville, was erected in the Somme region, symbolically sealing the Franco-German reconciliation.



NEWS

- **Le musée de la résistance - 2 Chemin Saint-Georges - BONDUES**
03 20 28 88 32 - ville-bondues.fr/musee/
- **Le Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation de Picardie**
5 Place Carnegie TERGNIER - 03 23 57 93 77 - mrdp-picardie.com/
- **LE Château d'Huppy - 3 rue des Moulins - HUPPY - 03 22 28 56 34**
chateau-fort-manoir-chateau.eu/chateaux-somme-chateau-a-huppy-chateau-de-huppy.html

THE 501TH TANK REGIMENT

The 501st tank regiment, commanded by Colonel Colombani, continues the traditions of the 507th tank regiment, commanded by General de Gaulle in 1940, keeping its memory alive both within the army and amongst the general public, particularly through its contact with schoolchildren, in collaboration with the Charles de Gaulle Foundation. The regiment will also take part in the numerous celebrations to mark Charles de Gaulle Year in the Hauts-de-France region. The regiment was formed in the region on 20th May 1918, after the battle of Berry-au-Bac - the first French tank battle that took place on the 16th April 1917 - and upholds the memory of their squadron leader, Bossut, the father of tank warfare in the First World War and another man of the North, born in Roubaix. His statue, in Roubaix, stands on the boulevard Charles de Gaulle, a fitting gesture, uniting these two great soldiers with their shared love of armoured warfare.



Dunes de la Slack - Wimereux

6 OPAL COAST: A LOVE FOR OPEN SPACES THAT FREE UP THE MIND



Villas and beach huts at Wimereux

Charles de Gaulle, a man for stormy times. Biographer, Jean Lacouture describes de Gaulle as *“a man used to adverse conditions, like the weather he encountered on Wimereux beach when his father, Henri de Gaulle, coming to find his children, would have to grab hold of his hat in both hands. A man well able to weather a storm, he consistently employed maritime metaphors in his writing.”*

Although the de Gaulle family came to spend every holiday in Lille, summer was the time for trips to the sea, and the Opal Coast with its long beaches, sea spray and special quality of light was the perfect place to excite the imagination of young Charles. First of all, they would visit **Malo** where they would stay in a small Flemish house in **Rosendaël**, called Moederhof. Then, when Charles de Gaulle was about 6, Henri de Gaulle rented Les Tilleuls villa at **Wimille**. The days were action-packed: beach in the morning, holiday homework in the early afternoon, tea in a neighbouring farm “where you could enjoy local cheese and freshly baked bread.”

But most of his memories were from the **times spent in Wimereux**. The de Gaulle family then went to stay at villa Saint-Patrick, rue Saint-Maurice, which was built around 1900 by Jules and Lucie Maillot, Charles’ godmother.



Cap Blanc Nez

The house had six rooms, two floors, stables, a vegetable garden and another garden, where the young de Gaulle - who would spend the summer holidays here with his Corbie cousins - would act out his imaginary battles. His bedroom, which was in the attic, had a stunning view of la Digue beach as well as Napoleon's column where de Gaulle would dream of imperial grandeur and military victories. The very name of the villa, and the green shutters that proudly adorn its windows, evoke the Maillot family's Irish roots, roots that General de Gaulle set out in search of during his famous trip to Ireland in 1969. On leaving office, the General set off to walk in the footsteps of the Mac Cartan family, distant relatives of his Lille grandmother, Julia **You could be forgiven for thinking you were on a vast beach on the Opal Coast; a place where, de Gaulle, a man of action and reflection, would endlessly pursue and develop his ideas.** General de Gaulle loved the sea, its whims and the infinite landscapes of the Opal Coast. His style was full of maritime metaphors that he honed during his long walks to the **Cap Gris-Nez** and the **Cap Blanc-Nez**. From the top of the headlands, you can glimpse England, so close you can almost touch it; it was a little nod from history to the man made famous by the 18th June Appeal.

His wife, Yvonne, who was originally from **Calais**, also spent her holidays in **Wimereux**. This is what she wrote to her brother when she fell under the spell of her future husband. *"It turns out that he's been on holiday to Wimereux several times [...] and such a strange coincidence - it's such a small world - he'd often go and play at Fouquetone château and meet our close friends, the Legrand family, "*

After they were married, Charles de Gaulle spent two successive years holidaying in **Wissant**, staying, first of all, at villa Antoinette and then at villa Wissantaise. The Vendroux rented a house not far away which helped establish a bond between de Gaulle and his brother-in-law, Jacques Vendroux. It was here, inspired by the landscape, that he wrote a large portion of his first work: *Le fil de l'Épée* (The Edge of the Sword). *I've always loved the vastness of the sea...he confesses. I find my thoughts flow more freely when there's nothing on the horizon!* "Whenever he visited **Calais** with his family, right up until his death, de Gaulle would go walking on the beaches between **Sangatte** and **Cap Blanc-Nez** or **Wissant** and **Cap Gris-Nez**.

**« I'VE ALWAYS LOVED THE VASTNESS OF THE SEA...
I FIND MY THOUGHTS FLOW MORE FREELY WHEN
THERE'S NOTHING ON THE HORIZON! »**

CHARLES DE GAULLE



NEWS

• Office de Tourisme de la Terre des 2 Caps - Place de la Mairie - WISSANT
03 21 82 48 00 - terredes2capstourisme.fr/fr/fr/accueil/



In Calais' place d'Armes, in the shade of a tall Watch Tower, – one of the few remaining traces of Old Calais – stands a unique statue depicting General de Gaulle walking arm in arm with his wife, Yvonne Vendroux. This sculpture, created by Élisabeth Cibot, was inspired by a visit made by the President and the first lady in 1959 and speaks of the unique and special nature of the **relationship between General de Gaulle and Calais**. This was mainly because it was the home town of Yvonne, his wife and constant support, a woman who was strong in moments of tragedy and adversity, yet unassuming and unaffected when surrounded by the gilded trappings of Presidential life. The Vendroux family was an old Calais family, originally from Holland, who changed their surname "Van Droeg" to "Vendroux." **According to Marc Fosseux, the two families had something else in common: both were very catholic and patriotic.** When Yvonne was born in Calais on 25th May 1900, all the signs of her future husband's greatness were evident; for her baptism, in a nod to history, she received a Point d'Angleterre lace veil, given to one of her Leveux ancestors, the Mayor of Calais, by Mary Stuart when she was visiting the city.

The daughter of a middle class, Calais family, she spent most of her childhood in the family home in rue Leveux (another relative who was mayor during the Revolution), then she studied at Notre-Dame boarding school in Calais before meeting, in October 1920, a young Officer, just back from Poland, who invited her to the Saint-Cyr ball: Charles de Gaulle **It's him or no one** she declared to her parents and then everything moved very quickly.

NEWS CALAIS

- La Cité de la Dentelle et de la Mode - 135 Quai du Commerce - 03 21 00 42 30 cite-dentelle.fr/fr/
- L'Eglise Notre Dame - 17 rue Notre Dame - 03 21 36 38 23 - paroisses-calais.fr/
- Office de Tourisme de Calais - 12 boulevard Clémenceau - 03 21 96 62 40 calais-cotedopale.com/

They were engaged on the 11th November 1920 and married on 7th April 1921 in Notre-Dame de Calais church with its magnificent vaulted ceiling – a church redolent of England’s great Gothic buildings and a true witness to history. It wouldn’t have taken much more to persuade de Gaulle of **Calais’** charms but, as it happened, he also struck up a genuine friendship with Yvonne’s oldest brother, Jacques Vendroux, the elected representative for Pas-de-Calais, then mayor in 1945, and again from 1959 to 1969. Vendroux, who was chairman of the family biscuit factory, soon became deeply attached to his brother-in-law with whom he developed a very special relationship. The Germans made no mistake; they knew all about de Gaulle’s connection with Vendroux and in 1940 he was interned in an oflag in Silesia. No sooner was he freed than he joined the Resistance, alongside his brother-in-law, and became his faithful representative in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region. **After the Liberation, during a triumphant visit to Calais and cheers from crowd, Charles de Gaulle jokingly remarked to him: “You should go into politics, the people of Calais love you”.** Although the battered town was still nursing its war wounds, 35,000 people turned out to greet the General during his visit on the 12th August 1945. Nord Littoral wrote: *We’re going to learn much more about the man who delivered that fateful [...] 18th June speech.* The triumphant General descended boulevard Jacquart, surrounded by the crowd, just as he had descended the Champs-Élysées when Paris was liberated. Erected around the boulevard were 12 triumphal arches, bearings the names of the main towns in the Calais region. The General returned on numerous occasions, in private, as his wife was very attached to her home town (most of her ladies-in-waiting were from Calais), but he also made two other, official visits: on the 24th September 1959 and the 25th April 1966. In 1959, together with his wife, he visited the ruins of Notre-Dame church where he was married. In fact, it was thanks to Yvonne’s insistence that the church was restored. Today a plaque commemorates the marriage of the De Gaulles and this phrase, drawn from his *Mémoires d’espoir* (Memoires of Hope), sheds light on the role played by this indefatigable Calais native.

**“FOR YOU, YVONNE,
WITHOUT WHOM, NOTHING WOULD BE POSSIBLE”**



Hôtel de ville, Calais



The home where de Gaulle was born in rue Princesse is going to be restored to its original appearance, using the exact colours that the General would have known as a child. The renovation will be also be funded by additional sums donated by private individuals and companies. To make a donation, please visit: <https://www.fondation-patrimoine.org/les-projets/maison-natale-charles-de-gaulle-a-lille>

QUOTE ...

P.5 : « Nous autres Lillois, ce sont les vérités que nous regardons en face, beaucoup plus que nous ne goûtons les formules » : Discours de Charles de Gaulle à Lille 30 septembre 1944 que j'ai trouvée pour ma part dans : Michel-Pierre CHÉLINI : « De Gaulle, La résistance et l'économie du Nord-Pas-de-Calais » in Stéphane CUVÉLIER (dir.) De Gaulle, Vendroux, la Résistance dans le Nord de la France [Colloque] actes du 8e colloque européen des pays du calaisis, Arras, 2013. p.29

P.6 « C'est à Lille, dans ces provinces de la zone occupée les plus riches et les plus peuplées de la métropole, que nous trouvons les meilleurs soutiens » citation exacte : « Il ne serait pas juste d'apprécier notre véritable position d'après l'atmosphère à Vichy ou à Casablanca. C'est à Lille, dans ces provinces de la zone occupée les plus riches et les plus peuplées de la métropole, que nous trouvons les meilleurs soutiens » in Pierre PIERRARD, « Le Nord et Lille dans la vie de Charles de Gaulle », in Charles de Gaulle, la jeunesse et la guerre 1890-1920, [Colloque] Paris Plon, 2001, p. 17-21 - Contexte, memorandum destiné au gouvernement américain en 1942 afin d'éclairer le soutien intérieur de la Résistance Gaullienne.

P.8 « par Arras je revins dans la capitale avec mes résolutions » Charles DE GAULLE, Mémoires de Guerre, t.3 « Le Salut 1944-46 », p.27 Paris 1969
contexte : visite officielle dans le Bassin Minier le 1er octobre 1944 (le lendemain de la visite à Lille de la 1ère citation)

P.10 « Je connais bien ces lieux pour y avoir vécu et combattu » Franck VILTART, « Une certaine idée de la guerre, Charles de Gaulle au chemin des Dames » in La lettre du Chemin des Dames, octobre 2015 Contexte : phrase prononcée le 15 avril 1951 lors d'une cérémonie annuelle au monument des Chars d'assaut de Berry-au-Bac durant le voyage de la campagne des législative de 1951.

P.11 « Se réunir pour faire le bien, exercer la charité envers ceux qui souffrent, donner du pain à ceux qui en manquent. » Pierre PIERRARD « Un grand bourgeois de Lille : Charles Kolb-Bernard (1798-1888) » p.381-425 in La Revue du Nord n°190, 1966. Contexte : règlement de la conférence Saint-Vincent de Paul implantée à Lille par Charles Kolb Bernard en 1850 donne une idée des idées sociales de la Bourgeoisie catholique lilloise puisque Charles Kolb-Bernard est apparenté à de Gaulle et que lui même en 1962 lors d'un voyage en Allemagne note sa fierté d'appartenir à cette famille Kolb originaire du pays de Bade.

P.13 « J'ai été impressionné par les progrès qui ont été réalisés ici dans l'exploitation, dans les conditions de travail. La première fois de ma vie où je suis descendu dans une mine, c'était il y a 45 ans. C'était à Liévin, et vraiment le chemin qui a été parcouru pendant ces années-là au point de vue du rendement, au point de vue de la modernisation est quelque chose d'absolument saisissant ! » visite du Général de Gaulle à Haillicourt, le 25 Septembre 1959 au siège 6 de Bruay, transcription in Fresqueina.fr (<https://fresques.ina.fr/memoires-de-mines/fiche-media/Mineur00348/visite-du-general-de-gaulle-a-haillicourt.html>) contexte : troisième visite d'un Président de la République française auprès des mineurs.

P.18 « J'ai toujours aimé l'immensité de la mer... Il me semble que ma pensée se développe mieux quand mon horizon n'est pas bouché ! » Charles de Gaulle - Lettre à son beau-frère Jacques Vendroux

P.20 « pour Yvonne sans qui rien ne se serait fait » Stèle érigée devant la cathédrale Notre-Dame en souvenir du mariage du général de Gaulle et d'Yvonne Vendroux. Célèbre le rôle politique d'inspiratrice de la femme du général en vérité cette citation provient de la dédicace faite par Charles de Gaulle à sa femme sur le premier exemplaire de Mémoires d'Espoir sous cette forme « Pour vous Yvonne, sans qui rien ne se serait fait »

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

You will find all articles and information about the De Gaulle anniversary year on the the Hauts-de-France Region website degaulle2020.hautsdefrance.fr

hautetfort-hautsdefrance.com

De Gaulle Foundation - 5 Rue de Solferino à Paris
Tel: +33 (0)1 44 18 66 77 - www.charles-de-gaulle.org

Birthplace of Charles de Gaulle - 9 Rue Princesse à Lille
Tel: +33 (0)3 59 73 00 30

www.charles-de-gaulle.org/les-lieux-gaulliens/la-maison-natale-charles-de-gaulle



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