

The story of Pierre and Gabrielle GUILBERT, Resistance fighters from Yerres

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[This document is also available in HTML format on our website:

[Pierre et Gabrielle Guilbert.en.html](#)]



FFI Lieutenant Gabrielle Guilbert photographed after the Liberation, wearing her [Croix de Guerre](#) and the *Resistance Medal*.



FFI Captain Pierre Guilbert, photographed in civilian clothes, probably before the war

They are not the only members of the Resistance from Yerres; our streets also honor the memory of fellow citizens killed during the 1944 uprising: Jean LEGRAND (August 21, 1944), Guy GOTTHELF (August 25, 1944), and Jacques BOUTY (August 25, 1944). However, in Yerres, no woman has left a name associated with her involvement in the Resistance, even though there was at least one: Gabrielle GUILBERT.

In fact, many wives, partners, or relatives joined the networks fighting against the occupiers, but the era made the Resistance, here as elsewhere, an entirely male movement, and as time passed, the memory of these women faded or, at the very least, grew dim. The GUILBERT couple, Pierre and his wife Gabrielle, left their mark on the history of Yerres during World War II through their active participation in the local Resistance, and it is a fitting tribute to them today to tell their story.

In the 1930s, the GUILBERT family settled in Berck (Pas-de-Calais); Pierre was born in Boulogne-sur-Mer in April 1908. A garage owner, he ran a large garage (holding about 100 cars). On July 6, 1932, in Bercy, he married Gabrielle Gossiôme, who was born in Lille on September 13, 1909. They had two daughters, Cécile, born in 1936, and Nicole, born in 1937. Pierre was called up on September 3, 1939, upon the declaration of war, as a medical driver in the 6th Autonomous Artillery Group¹, with which he would participate in the 1939–40 campaign. He appears to have received training as a nurse. He was taken prisoner on June 25, 1940, in Étival (near Saint-Dié) in the Vosges region and interned in various [stalags](#)². There, he drew attention to himself by accusing the Germans of violating the Geneva Convention. Employed as a nurse in the camp's infirmary, he helped his comrades pretend to be seriously ill so they could be evacuated to France. He himself managed to be repatriated and reunited with his family on June 19, 1943.

We will now take a closer look at Gabrielle's course and then return to the couple's story once Pierre returns.

Gabrielle joins the Resistance

Date d'entrée dans la Résistance: dès juillet 1940.

Activité dans la Résistance: A. formé le groupe AGRO pour l'OCM. région forêt de Sénart. ai caché des Réfugiés. fourni de nombreuses fausses identités. Agent de Prison pendant l'insurrection entre Draveil et EM Paris.

SITUATION MILITAIRE AVANT L'ENTREE DANS LES F.F.I. et Section-Est.

Arme :

Active ou Réserve :

Durée des services :

Dernier grade et date de nomination :

Dernière affectation :

Signature de l'intéressé :

Observations du Chef de Service :

With the Pas-de-Calais coast under German occupation as part of preparations for a landing in England, she left Berck—most likely in 1940—to go to her grandparents' estate in Yerres, and she joined the Resistance in July 1940 as part of the [OCM](#) (*Organisation Civile et Militaire* Civil and Military Organization) group³; let's hear from her. Asked after the war to write an intelligence report, here is an excerpt from what she wrote and signed in her own hand.

There was no armed action in occupied France at that time⁴, and the resistance movements, beyond the desire to keep the flame alive, were content—and this was a great deal, as it could lead to their members' deportation—to learn to operate clandestinely, to organize, to gather intelligence, to rescue and smuggle through Spain Allied airmen shot down over France, to forge false papers, and so on. Organizing was likely the first thing Gabrielle set out to do, and she formed what was called the AGRO sector, an acronym whose meaning we do not know. We are, however, somewhat more familiar with her area of responsibility (see appendix), which included the towns of Draveil, Soisy-sur-Seine, Montgeron, Tigery, La Faisanderie (Sénart Forest), Brunoy, Yerres, Crosnes, etc. The Sénart Forest, which houses a branch of the [Eaux-et-Forêts](#) at La Faisanderie, is a very convenient place to conceal clandestine activities. We have no information about her contacts, nor about the members of the AGRO sector.

How did she join the OCM? The complete secrecy surrounding the network's inception suggests a connection through neighbors, but we do not know whether the opportunity arose by chance or whether she volunteered to help one of her relatives. Her daughter Nicole tells us that her mother knew a certain Madame Quesnay (whom we will discuss later), the widow of a renowned economist at the time; the OCM was founded by [Maxime Blocq-Mascart](#), also a renowned economist.

Another hypothesis is that Gabrielle is the niece of Maurice Gossiôme, a bookseller and printer in Paris on *rue de Turbigo* who belonged to the “Brutus” network, which itself was part of... the OCM. Maurice printed forged documents by counterfeiting rubber stamps supplied to him by another member of the network.

Here is what Nicole, her daughter, wrote on January 4, 2025, and it may be this man she is referring to:

“I knew Mom had a very hard time finding food for us. She went to the farm every day to get the little milk we were entitled to. It was sold by the ladleful and had to be boiled before drinking. She also spent hours standing in line... “Actually, she was in charge of running the household for Grandma and Louise, her elderly maid. I’m sure it was a relief for Uncle Maurice to have her there, given their ages.”

In any case, this early commitment is admirable, especially since she had two very young daughters to care for and her husband was a prisoner in Germany. Let’s also remember that for a woman at the time, taking charge of a resistance group was not a common occurrence!

She worked actively to distribute leaflets and underground newspapers, while organizing the hiding of escaped prisoners, draft dodgers, and hunted-down resistance fighters within forestry and agricultural organizations, never hesitating to shelter them in her own home whenever necessary. But her commitment didn’t stop there: she gathered and passed on crucial military intelligence to her superiors, particularly regarding the coastal defenses of the English Channel (the region where she lived at the start of the war). She also distributed fake identity and ration cards—perhaps the very ones provided by Maurice—and transported weapons and secret Resistance documents. At the start of the occupation, women were less likely to be suspected than men and were checked less often, but this would not last.

Pierre joins the Resistance

Back home, as the saying goes. Pierre would soon join the Resistance as well, his wife having paved the way for him, and he appears to have taken command of the group, continuing the same activities. From then on, Pierre and Gabrielle would work together. Nicole explains that *“...when our father returned from captivity, we went to live with Madame Quesnay because of their roles in the Resistance—if not in Yerres, then at least in the region. The headquarters of their network was in Draveil.”* The Guilberts thus kept their children safe. Pierre then took on a pseudonym: “Jacques”, as was customary in the networks. The OCM would join the [FFI](#) (French Forces of the Interior), a military organization established in February 1944, like nearly all the major resistance movements except the [FTP](#) (*Freelancers and Partisans*).

Pierre was provisionally appointed FFI captain on June 5, 1944, by a certain Colonel Personne, but his rank was not definitively confirmed until July 2, 1945. It should be noted that no archives mention his appointment to the rank of lieutenant, as is usually the case prior to promotion to a higher rank.

The Guilberts and the Château de Villiers in Draveil

In Draveil, at the Château de Villiers⁵, Viscount François d’Origny—who served during the 1940 campaign as a liaison officer between the French Air Force and the Royal Air Force—and his wife Gilonne, a staunch Gaullist, took up residence; They joined the OCM in October 1940. This network gathered intelligence and arranged for the repatriation to England of Allied airmen shot down over France. The Château de Villiers, where Viscountess Gilonne d’Origny was very active, became a gathering point for these airmen before their evacuation. It was there that the Guilberts worked for the Resistance. They led a largely clandestine life, carrying out all the missions entrusted to them while evading the Gestapo and the Milice. In the spring of 1944, the Gestapo, knowing that the D-Day landings were imminent, intensified its crackdown, and all the networks at that time suffered arrests that would decapitate some of them. The Guilberts managed to escape this. According to some sources⁶, Pierre then commanded a “reconnaissance group” named “Isle de France”.

With the prospect of the D-Day landings approaching, the resistance movements were focused on transforming themselves into genuine military units. To fight, they needed weapons—and weapons were in short supply across all movements, as the British and Americans were providing only meager supplies to what were known as the maquis. These weapons are airdropped at night after a code indicating the date is received. Finding suitable locations for this type of operation became essential, as weapons could obviously only be airdropped in appropriate areas where the supplies had to be immediately retrieved and camouflaged before redistribution. This task became a major concern for Pierre Guilbert, whose unit was eagerly awaiting the weapons. The search would end tragically.

The Disappearance of Pierre Guilbert

Around August 10, 1944, the local Resistance, through Colonel-Count Chevert (whose real name was Pierre André Chavane), who had established his headquarters at the Château de Villiers, prepared an operation to retrieve weapons promised by a mysterious Captain Jack, supposedly belonging to the British Intelligence Service. To do so, he decided to requisition the trucks from the Water and Forestry Department's worksite based at the Faisanderie de Sénart and headed by a certain André Labussière. An informant reported to Colonel Chevert that Mr. Labussière spoke perfect German. On Saturday, August 12, in Mr. Labussière's absence, Colonel Chevert requisitioned the trucks. On Monday, August 14, the latter went to the Château de Villiers to retrieve at least one of the trucks. He was immediately arrested and interrogated. He confessed that his name was Charles Zimmer and that he was born in Würzburg, Germany, a Lithuanian Jewish refugee. His entire family had become naturalized French citizens. Unwilling or unable to reveal his ties to the French Resistance, he was executed on the night of August 14–15, 1944, and buried in the castle grounds. There is therefore a possibility that this man was a Gestapo informant⁷.

The Ambush on Leroux Street

Despite this, on August 16, 1944, a group of seven Resistance fighters set out from the Château de Villiers toward Paris to search for weapons. Among the fighters, Pierre Guilbert, "Captain," from Yerres, set out on this perilous mission. Other trucks departed from various points in the Île-de-France region heading toward Porte Maillot. The one from Draveil, delayed by a breakdown, arrived later than expected. On board were, among others, Pierre Guilbert and two uniformed gendarmes intended to facilitate passage through the German checkpoints.

Once there, a man posing as a guide leads them to Rue Leroux in the 16th arrondissement. It is actually a trap set by a French Gestapo agent, Guy Marcheret⁸, alias "Captain Jack". One of the resistance fighters realizes it is a trap and shoots the guide, triggering a shootout. Pierre Guilbert and his companions found themselves caught in enemy fire. Two men were killed immediately, while the survivors, including Pierre Guilbert, were captured, taken to the courtyard at 14 Rue Leroux, and executed. Their bodies were then transported to the Grande Cascade in the *Bois de Boulogne* along with those of other Resistance fighters who had been shot.



Commemorative plaque⁹ on Leroux Street

The news of this tragedy caused a stir among the Resistance fighters gathered at the Château de Villiers. There were fears that the identification of the gendarmes would lead the Gestapo to Draveil to carry out reprisals. This did not happen, however, because the French Gestapo unit to which Marcheret belonged, satisfied with its “feat,” left Paris for Nancy as early as August 17.

Pierre Guilbert was declared “dead for France” and posthumously made a Knight of the Legion of Honor by General de Gaulle on October 29, 1945. This promotion included the award of the Croix de Guerre with palm, and he was also awarded the Medal of the Resistance. His citation begins with the words: “An officer who has always demonstrated the purest patriotism and complete selflessness...” and ends with “...fell gloriously in the line of duty.” He also appears to have received another citation on June 16, 1945, this one signed by [Koenig10](#) on behalf of the army corps.



Of course, these decorations could not be presented to him. Those shown in the photo opposite are, from left to right: the Legion of Honor, the Croix de Guerre, and the Resistance Medal..

The end of the war and the Liberation

In the aftermath of this tragedy, Gabrielle Guilbert—who would become FFI Lieutenant Guilbert on September 15, 1944—took command of the group. The liberation of Paris¹¹ was approaching, and General Patton’s Third Army had crossed the Seine at several points between Créteil and Melun; it was this army that would liberate the entire southeastern part of the capital and, consequently, our region. The advance was rapid, but the Germans were carrying out what were known as delaying actions; a front line formed, cutting off north-south communications between the Resistance command posts in Paris and the local movements. Gabrielle would strive, despite everything, to maintain these lines of communication until the liberation of Paris.

Her commitment since 1940 would be recognized, but it would take a little longer, a fact certainly not unrelated to her status as a woman. She was belatedly made a Knight of the Legion of Honor by a decree signed on October 30, 1963, by General de Gaulle, who awarded her the Croix de Guerre with palm. But she had already received an initial citation also awarding her the Croix de Guerre with a silver star. The nomination memorandum of October 30 specifically states:

“...carried out numerous liaison missions, including on August 24 and 25, during which she maintained contact between her colonel’s command post, isolated in the suburbs, and Commander Bourgoin...had to cross enemy lines several times under enemy fire...always demonstrated the finest qualities of bravery and a complete disregard for danger.”



It appears that this decoration was presented to her by Air Force General [Martial Valin¹²](#), as shown in the photo above.

After the war, Gabrielle remained active in what might be called the Resistance movement through various French and foreign organizations, such as the well-known American Legion and Royal Air Force Association. She settled in Paris on Rue Pergolèse in the 16th arrondissement.

She maintained her connections with veterans and served as vice president of the Combattants Volontaires de la Résistance. The photo below shows the bar of decorations she likely wore during ceremonies commemorating the Resistance. From left to right, we can see the Legion of Honor, the Croix de Guerre (with a clou and a palm), and the Resistance Medal. The six other medals are associated with her membership in various organizations, some of which were foreign.



Having likely had no profession other than that of a homemaker prior to 1940, she had to find a job. She worked for the OCM, then began a career with various government agencies, notably at the Quai d'Orsay within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in various departments, particularly those responsible for managing the French occupation in Germany and Austria.

She was tempted to run¹³ in the April 1945 municipal elections in Paris as a candidate for the Union Démocratique et Socialiste de la Résistance (UDSR), to which the OCM belonged, but she was not elected. In the 1946 legislative elections, wishing to remain true to herself, she asked her constituents in a public letter: *“faithful to my republican, patriotic, and social convictions,”* to vote for a socialist in the second round of the elections because *“...some elected officials from the UDSR lists had mixed their ballots with those of people who still harbored regret for the Vichy regime, which, along with the Gestapo, caused the heroic death of my husband...”*



A demonstration, likely on the Champs-Élysées, on an unknown date, after the war, with Gabrielle Guilbert in the front row

Gabrielle passed away in Maisons-Laffitte on June 29, 1976, a few months before her 67th birthday. She was buried in Yerres alongside Pierre. On the bare headstone, only a palm branch—a discreet, perhaps too discreet, symbol of a great sacrifice and a great story that must not, however, be forgotten. While Pierre's name is familiar to us as we walk the streets of Yerres, Gabrielle's has faded from our collective memory. There is still time to make amends; we must remember Gabrielle Guilbert.

Béatrice Romey and Véronique Gossiôme-Roncin

Appendix: Note on the Civil and Military Organization (OCM)

The creation of the organization

It was one of the most significant resistance organizations of World War II. It was formed very early on in December 1940, but the name that has gone down in history did not appear until later, in early 1941.

One must try to imagine the state of mind of the French people, reeling from defeat, with a country split in two—the northern half occupied by the German army and the southern half ruled by a government that had changed the country's political system. The OCM was founded in the occupied zone, and this is one of its distinctive features. Until the end of the war, it had only a limited presence in the so-called free zone, even after the German invasion of the southern zone.

The first networks were nothing more than simple gatherings of small groups of friends—some closer, some less so—who met and tried to discuss the future of their country. What to do, and with whom?

First, they met; then they banded together and set up a program of actions that could only be clandestine.

Two men played the leading roles in the organization's creation: a civilian, [Maxime Blocq-Mascart](#), an economist and advisor to a Parisian industrial group; and a reserve officer, [Jacques Arthuys](#), who had enlisted in the cavalry in 1914 and later transferred to the air force. Political leanings varied, but when the organization was founded, the majority of its members were on the right, and some had joined political parties belonging to the far right, such as Colonel de la Rocque's Parti Social Français (PSF) or the Croix de Feu, a movement that emerged from Action Française. Somewhat paradoxically, other members came (and there would be more and more of them) from the SFIO, in other words, the Socialist Party. Arthuys was arrested by the Germans on December 21, 1941, and deported to Germany, where he died in August 1943, but there were others to take his place.

He was surrounded by several active-duty military officers or those who had recently returned to civilian life. One of them, Colonel [Touny](#), would be able to replace Arthuys. The OCM would then organize itself into two offices: a civilian office led by Bloch-Mascart and a sort of military office under Touny's command. The organization quickly established a steering committee and expanded by developing at the regional and departmental levels, though always within the occupied zone. It needed external support, and this would, of course, come from London, where General de Gaulle was based and was increasingly asserting himself over time as the unifying figure of the resistance movements in occupied France. Around mid-1942, Touny made contact with Gilbert Renault, alias [Rémy](#), founder of a network called the *Confrérie Notre Dame* (Brotherhood of Our Lady) and in liaison with the Central Bureau of Intelligence and Action ([BCRA](#)) of the *France libre*.

Maturity

From that point on, the OCM was able to expand, receiving funds, weapons (though few), and instructions from London. In return, the OCM, in radio contact with the BCRA, transmitted the intelligence it gathered through its members in the field or within government agencies: movements of German troops, locations of depots, positions of units and command posts, information on the construction of German fortifications along the English Channel and Atlantic coasts, etc. The political relationship with de Gaulle was not always easy; the general, whose stated ambition was to restore the state, viewed relations with resistance organizations—as a true military man—solely as those between a superior and subordinates, which was obviously not how the movements understood their own actions.

The structure and organization of the OCM in metropolitan France were not intended to launch armed actions against a still-powerful Wehrmacht, but rather to prepare to launch them on the day of the Allied landing in France. This did not prevent the group from carrying out acts of sabotage whenever possible, primarily targeting railroads and telephone lines.

Therefore, for “D-Day,” it was necessary to gather troops and weapons, attract volunteers, and infiltrate all of Vichy's public administrations. This recruitment often led to serious setbacks, as the enemy used it to plant “moles” within the networks and expose them when the time came. This is what unfortunately happened on many occasions, and it was thus that Touny was arrested on February 25, 1944, and shot in the moats of the Arras citadel in late February 1944, just a few months after he had taken the helm of the OCM.

The Resistance would evolve. On May 27, 1943, [Jean Moulin](#) succeeded in the daunting task of convening the first National Council of the Resistance ([CNR](#)) in Paris, composed of the eight major movements, including the OCM, represented by Jacques-Henri Simon and later by Maxime Bloch-Mascart. This CNR would seek to establish an armed wing, which would be the Secret Army (or AS) led by General [Delestraint](#). Originally formed in the southern zone, the AS would have some difficulty in bringing the

movements of the occupied northern zone under its umbrella, but the OCM would join it fairly quickly. As the D-Day landings approached, London sought to transform the AS and the resistance groups that had not joined it—such as the communist-inspired FTP—into a more cohesive and, above all, more easily controllable entity; thus, in February 1944, the French Forces of the Interior (FFI) were formed, to which the OCM would belong. There was thus a determination to move toward armed insurrection.

The OCM in our region

What about our region? This southeastern region of the Seine, then part of Seine-et-Oise, is part of Region P, and the entire department belongs to an area designated as P2; the region itself had come under the command of the communist [Rol-Tanguy](#)¹⁴ just before the Liberation. None of our archives have allowed us to identify exactly the sector (sometimes called a sub-sector) known as AGRO and, in particular, its geographical extent. Some clues suggest that this could also be the name (perhaps that of its founder) of a small network that remained local. In any case, in February 1944, at the time of the FFI's creation, the OCM had, very roughly, a little over 10,000 men in Seine-et-Oise, of whom only 75 were armed, which explains the almost desperate search for weapons and its consequences in the death of P. Guilbert.

This AGRO sector had come under the command in June 1944 of a newcomer, Lieutenant Colonel Pierre Chavane, a genuine reserve captain in the French Army and a curious figure contested by his peers, perhaps for political reasons. He called himself “de Chevert” and took up residence at the Château de Villiers in Draveil. He was a friend of Air Force Colonel Heurtaux, who had played a role in the creation of the OCM. It appears that P. Guilbert, when consulted, accepted his arrival, which implies that until then he had been in command or, at the very least, had played an important role in this network since his return from captivity in 1943.

Following the creation of the FFI, Chavane was appointed commander of a regiment, the 3rd FFI Regiment, whose headquarters was located in Draveil. This regiment had no military reality beyond the name it bore and was certainly not a unit in the traditional sense of the term. On the day of the Liberation of Yerres, civilians wearing FFI armbands bearing the inscription “3rd FFI Regiment” were seen. Similarly, the ranks adopted by the resistance fighters serving in it were recognized “by analogy.” P. Guilbert, according to the interpretation that can be drawn from the various documents that have come down to us, was then in command of the reconnaissance group of this “regiment,” a group named “Isle de France,” and it was likely in this capacity that he attempted to recover weapons in Paris.



An FFI armband belonging to a resident of Yerre, with the words “3rd Regiment” in the upper right corner

Chavane states that in July and August 1944 he commanded 3,275 men stationed in the towns of Draveil, Soisy-sur-Seine, Montgeron, Tigery, La Faisanderie (Sénart Forest), Brunoy, Yerres, Crosnes, etc., and that he took 285 German prisoners and captured four cannons. The precision of the figures, down to the last unit, is obviously illusory and makes the claim somewhat suspect.

It should be noted that what is referred to as a concentration camp (but which is not one in the historical sense of the term, rather a detention camp) was established in the Forest of Sénart at the so-called Eaux-et-Forêts¹⁵ camp in and around La Faisanderie. In the fall of 1944, while awaiting trial before purge commissions, it held up to 280 detainees for a theoretical capacity of 75.

The Postwar Period

After the Liberation, the OCM, like all resistance organizations, would have to be “dissolved,” and, as such, one of its members was appointed as liquidator to conduct inventories, settle the various and numerous disputes, and respond to the countless requests from the reconstituted civil-military administrations—particularly to validate service records required for the awarding of honors, certificates of membership, commendations, decorations, etc.

Like many others, it would also transform into an association under the 1901 law, known as the Association for the Civil and Military Organization of France, registered on November 28, 1944, and it would establish its headquarters at 138 Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris (it would later change addresses), and it was there that Gabrielle would carry out her work.

The OCM continued to seek a political role, just as it had begun to do throughout the occupation by publishing **Les cahiers de l’OCM** (four issues). Having become a left-wing movement of socialist inspiration, it actively participated in the lively debates concerning the drafting of a new constitution and the passage of nationalization laws. Its views were relayed by a major newspaper: [Le Parisien Libéré](#), which still exists today.

Sources:

- Arthur Calmette, *The OCM: A Civil and Military Organization*, Paris: PUF, 1961.
- Defense Historical Service: GR16 P: 125100; GR16 P: 263977; GR16 P: 416801.
- Departmental Archives 91: 982W/4

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Notes:

- [1.](#) A very unusual and likely one-of-a-kind unit tasked with tracking aircraft. Among its ranks was a draftsman who would go on to become famous: the cartoonist [Dubout](#).
- [2.](#) Stalag XIII A near Nuremberg, then Stalag XI B in Lower Saxony.
- [3.](#) See appendix.
- [4.](#) Except for that of the Communist Party.
- [5.](#) Now converted into a cultural center and serving as city hall.
- [6.](#) See appendix. In fact, a lieutenant colonel; this is also a pseudonym. Note that we do not know Gabrielle's pseudonym.
- [7.](#) As will be seen later, this was not the case. Four other “collaborators” were executed around the same time at the Draveil cemetery.
- [8.](#) He was arrested, sentenced to death, and executed on April 20, 1949.
- [9.](#) The plaque disappeared at an unknown date.
- [10.](#) Military Governor of Paris at that time.
- [11.](#) The general strike, a prelude to the liberation of the capital, began on August 18.
- [12.](#) General Valin had joined de Gaulle as early as 1940 and likely knew other pilots who were members of the OCM, notably Captain Heurtaux, a former member of the Air Force.
- [13.](#) She presented herself as an employee and the wife of a man who had been executed.
- [14.](#) He would countersign the German surrender of Paris with General Leclerc, who would be “reprimanded” by de Gaulle for having authorized it.
- [15.](#) During the occupation, charcoal—virtually the only fuel available at the time, including for so-called gas-powered vehicles—was produced there.