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Delvert, Charles

By [Michaël Bourlet](#)

Delvert, *Charles*

French reserve officer and war diarist

Born 27 April 1879 in Paris, France

Died 11 December 1940 in Paris, France

Charles Delvert was one of the witnesses of the Great War. A graduate of the École Normale and a reserve officer in the 101st Infantry Regiment, he won fame in the Fort de Vaux fights during the Battle of Verdun. After the war, he went on to become a history teacher and published his war diaries.

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Early Life

Charles Delvert (1879-1940) was born in Paris in 1879. As a history student and graduate of the École Normale, he was called up to join the 101st Infantry Regiment as a reserve officer in 1914, first as a platoon leader, then as the commander of the regiment's 8th Company.

During World War I

Delvert was wounded several times, and won fame in the Massiges fights in late 1915, as well as in

the Fort de Vaux trenches during the Battle of Verdun in June 1916. The garrison of the Fort Vaux endured bombardments and assaults until the end of May 1916. On 1 June, the German [infantry](#) began preparations for the invasion of the fort. Delvert kept defending R.1, the last and the closest entrenchment to the Fort de Vaux, even after the fort fell on 7 June; this battle is the highlight of his later *Carnets d'un fantassin* (Diary of an Infantryman). He was evacuated and declared unfit for fighting, before being given a provisional assignment to the 5th Army headquarters, and later, to the Italian Expeditionary Force, until his demobilization in August 1919. Delvert's *Histoire d'une compagnie* (The Tale of a Military Company) was published in July 1918 by Berger-Levrault. This trench [newspaper](#) tells the story of France's 8^e Compagnie (8th Company) of the 101^e Régiment d'infanterie (101st Infantry Regiment) from November 1915 to June 1916.

After the War

During the interwar period, Delvert taught history in high schools, traveled around the world, and wrote articles for various magazines and newspapers. Eventually, in 1935, he published the diaries that he had written during the war: *Carnets d'un fantassin*, in which he describes his life on the front lines in a very clean and simple style. He also writes about the affection and pride he felt towards each of the soldiers in his platoon. These diaries were dedicated to his men of "the Eighth"; they never reveal anything too intimate, but nonetheless represent a fighting man's emotions in a concentrated form. Delvert died in Paris on 11 December 1940 as a result of his injuries. His writings became classics of war veteran testimony. Charles Delvert was a highly skilled man: history teacher, reserve officer, citizen of strong convictions.

Michaël Bourlet, Ecoles militaires de Saint-Cyr Coëtquidan

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