

Guynemer, Georges

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Georges Guynemer (1894-1917)

Georges Guynemer was a legendary French fighter pilot known for his daring fighting style. His reclusiveness only increased his popularity with the French press.

Unknown photographer: Portraits de Georges Guynemer, black-and-white photograph, n.p., n.d.; source: Gallica, Bibliothèque nationale de France, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10336659v/f1.item>.

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Guynemer, *Georges Marie Ludovic Jules*

(Capitaine Guynemer)

French fighter pilot

Born 24 December 1894 in Paris, France

Died 11 September 1917 in Poelcapelle, Belgium

Summary

Georges Guynemer was a French fighter pilot. During World War I, he was known for his dangerous but effective fighting style. After his death, he became an aviation legend.

Table of contents

[1 Becoming a Fighter Pilot](#)

[2 World War I](#)

3 Death

Notes

Selected Bibliography

Citation

Becoming a Fighter Pilot

Georges Guynemer (1894-1917) was born in Paris on 24 December 1894. When World War I broke out, he wanted to serve in the infantry. After twice being rejected because he was deemed too puny, Guynemer was finally accepted as a trainee mechanic. Two months later, he entered a flying school and, in June 1915, he was assigned to the MS 3¹ squadron as a corporal pilot. He was led by [Jules Védrines \(1881-1919\)](#), the famous French aviation pioneer, and celebrated his first victory with his gunner, Charles Guerder, on 25 July 1915.

World War I

After two special missions, he had to wait for December to win new victories with his plane, "*Le Vieux Charles*" (The old Charles). He got his first double on 3 February 1916 and officially became a flying ace. His fighting style was risk-taking and dangerous, and he was known for attacking several enemies by himself. Although he was deemed a good pilot and very good shooter, he frequently returned from missions with a badly damaged plane. In total, Guynemer was shot down eight times. Promoted captain on February 1917, he achieved fame through exploits such as shooting down two enemy planes with only five bullets, a so-called "twice", on 16 March 1917. His most famous feat occurred on 25 May 1917, when he shot down four [aircraft](#) in one day.

Death

Guynemer was affected by the loss of several friends, and became increasingly reclusive and exhausted. He refused a post in the rear front and was eventually reported missing in action over Poelcapelle in Belgium on 11 September 1917. He had won fifty-three official victories. His body and plane were never found. After his death, he became an aviation legend.

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Notes

1. French squadrons changed their name when they were getting new model aircrafts. Squadron 3 was at the beginning BL 3 (Blériot), and became a fighter squadron with MS

3 (Morane-Saulnier). Then N 3 (Nieuport) and finally SPA 3 (Spad). ↑

Selected Bibliography

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- [Service Historique de l'Armée de l'Air: **Guynemer. Un mythe, une histoire**, Vincennes, 1997.](#)
- [Syndicat National des Pilotes de Ligne \(SNPL\) \(ed.\): **Icare 122. Guynemer et les Cigognes**, Bordeaux, 1987: SNPL.](#)

Citation

Eric Mahieu: Guynemer, Georges, in: 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer D. Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2015-07-23. DOI: [10.15463/ie1418.10689](https://doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.10689)

External Links

- [6 famous WW1 flying aces \(History Channel\) \(Article\)](#)
- [Bordeaux, Henry: Georges Guynemer. Knight of the air, New Haven 1918 \(Internet Archive\) \(Book\)](#)
- [Guttman, Jon: Georges Guynemer France's World War I Ace Pilot, 1 May 2007 \(HistoryNet\) \(Article\)](#)

Metadata

Regional Section(s)

[Western Europe](#) > [France](#)

Thematic Section(s)

[Violence](#)

Subjects

[Warfare and the military](#) > [Warfare, air](#) > [Air warfare](#)

Author Keywords

fighter pilot; ace; aviation warfare; Cigognes; Vieux Charles

GND Subject Headings

[Guynemer, Georges](#)

LC Subject Headings

[Guynemer, Georges, 1894-1917](#)

Rameau Subject Headings

[Guynemer, Georges \(1894-1917\)](#)

Key Person(s)

[Védrines, Jules](#)

Key Location(s)

[Poelcapelle](#); [Paris](#)

Title

Guynemer, Georges

Author(s)

[Eric Mahieu](#)

Article Type

Encyclopedic Entry

Classification Group

Persons