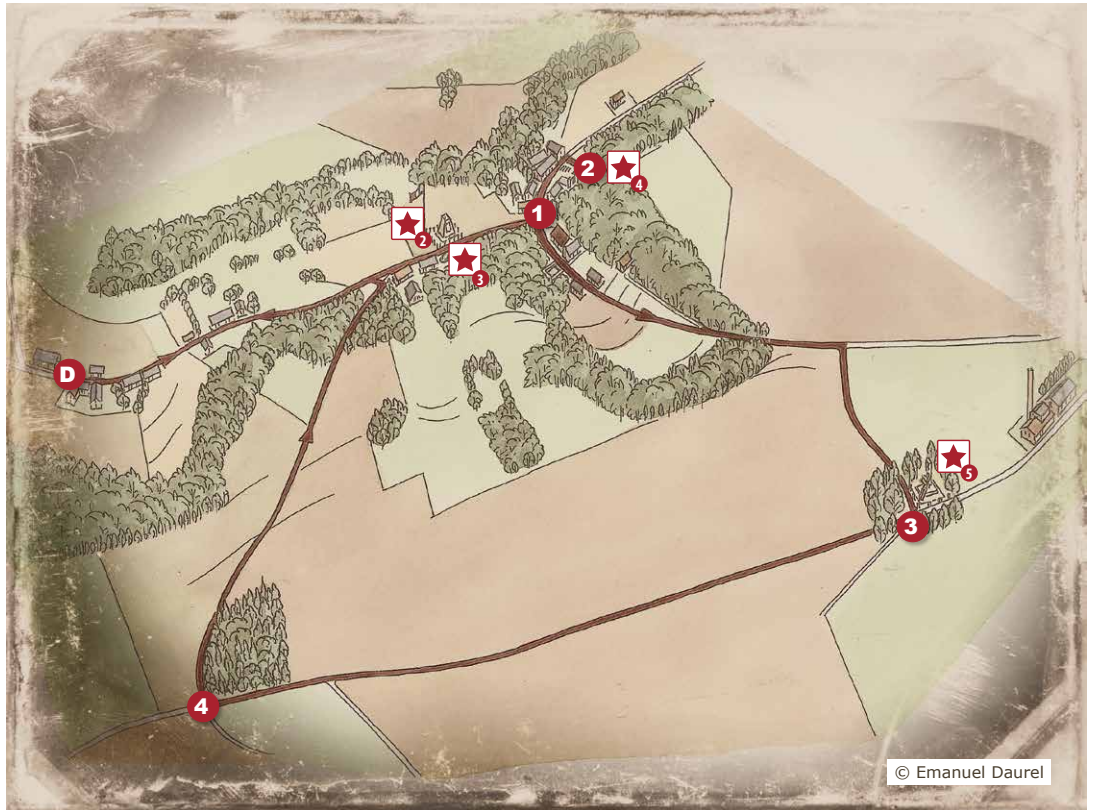




- **Est. time :** 1hr15
- **Length :** 4.6 km
- **Lowest point :** 75 m
- **Highest point :** 139 m
- **Level :** Fairly easy
- **Waymarking :** None
- **Passing through :** Vingré, part of Nouvron-Vingré

In the first months of the war, faced with an army that had not yet proved itself, military justice was extremely harsh and severe towards its own men. The aim was to "punish as a warning to others" in cases of insubordination. Selected arbitrarily from the amongst the accused, the soldiers went before a council of war and were condemned to death. The Vingré affair is exemplary, not only for the number of men executed from the same unit but also for the circumstances surrounding their conviction. This walk follows the final footsteps of the "Vingré 6".



© Emanuel Daurel



Vingré ceremony

© Association Soissonnais 14-18

ON THE ROUTE

- ★₁ Explanatory panels in the village
- ★₂ Memorial to the executed soldiers of Vingré
- ★₃ Cellar where condemned men held before their execution
- ★₄ Old temporary French cemetery which still has some original tombstones. It was here that Joseph Déchelette, the father of French archaeology, was buried on 4th October 1914. He had been a Captain in the 298th Infantry Regiment, that of the 6 executed soldiers.
- ★₅ Broken Cross monument

NEARBY

- ★ Ruins of Confrécourt
- ★ Confrécourt quarries
- ★ Château of Vic-sur-Aisne

TOURIST INFO.:

Pays de la Vallée de l'Aisne Tourist Information Office
Tel. 03 23 55 92 41

CREATION AND UPKEEP OF ROUTE:

Communauté de Communes du Pays de la Vallée de l'Aisne

Route card taken from www.randonner.fr the Aisne walking/hiking website.



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Access: From the centre of Vic-sur-Aisne. At crossroads by Town Hall, follow signs for Saint-Christophe-à-Berry (D13). At junction take D138 road to hamlet of Berry. In Berry, turn right into the Rue d'Ourscamp. 100m beyond Berry (large farm) take right hand road at junction. On outskirts of Vingré, park near barn.

- D** Walk along the Rue des Vignes (explanatory panels).
- 1** At T junction, turn left (ruins 50m further on).
- 2** Return to junction and follow signs for the Croix Brisée monument (Rue de la Chaînée). At the highest point of the plateau, 100m after the line of trees, turn right onto a grassy path.
- 3** At the Broken Cross monument turn right and follow the red and white waymarks.

- 4** After the wood turn right and go back to the village. At the end of the track take the street on the left to return to car park.





STORY OF WOMEN

The Anne Morgan route



© Communauté de Communes du Val de l'Ailette

Application

«The Anne Morgan route»

Anne Morgan was a pioneering American humanitarian who drove her Ford Model T all over Picardy from 1917, helping the civilian population. The route links the 5 towns where she set up an operations centre for CARD (Comité Américain pour les Régions Dévastées): Blérancourt, Anizy-le-Château, Coucy-le-Château, Soissons, Vic-sur-Aisne.

More information on www.anne-morgan.org

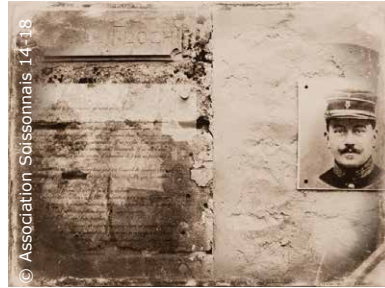
See details of WW1 centenary events on www.aisne14-18.com and in brochure available for free in all Aisne Tourist Information offices

Find «Aisne-14-18» on



Story of an execution

AN UNJUST CONVICTION



© Association Soissonnais 14-18

On 27th November 1914, after heavy shelling on a trench in the front line, soldiers were captured by the Germans. In the ensuing crush they managed to escape. The 24 men were accused of desertion in the face of the enemy. On 3rd December 1914, the war council arbitrarily selected 6 of the 24 men and condemned them to death. Privates Jean Blanchard, Francisque Durantet, Pierre Gay, Claude Pettelet, Jean Quinault and Corporal Paul Floch were executed by firing squad at Vingré on 4th December 1914.

< Explanatory panel on the route

In the firing squad

CONFESSIONS OF THE EXECUTED MEN AND OF THEIR COMRADES

4th December 1914

Corporal Henry Floch's last letter, written to his wife Lucie before his execution :

6.30am "My darling Lucie, [...]. In haste I say my last farewell to you, with tears in my eyes and a heavy heart. I humbly beg your forgiveness for all the grief that I will cause you and the difficulties that you will have to face because of me [...] I'm going to Confession now and I hope to see you again in a better place. I shall die innocent of the crime of desertion with which I stand accused. If, instead of escaping from the Germans, I had remained a prisoner, my life would be spared. It must be fate. My last thoughts are for you, right to the end."

Testimony of J.B. Grousson from St-Etienne, 238th Infantry Regiment :

7.30am "Jules and I were part of the squad which flanked them, with fixed bayonets, as they were taken to the place of execution where the regiment was assembled. The chaplains talked to them and embraced them, then their hands were bound and tied to the posts. They were blindfolded. Warrant Officer Delmotte, commanding the squad, lowered his sword; 72 rifles all fired at the same time and the 6 men fell without a sound. A non-commissioned officer gave them the coup de grâce..."

Testimony of Jean Dumont, 238th Infantry Regiment:

7.35am "Then all the companies filed past the bodies lying at the foot of the posts. What a terrible thing to see! I couldn't stop tears filling my eyes. Me and all the others. Everyone - officers, non-commissioned officers and men - was appalled."

Testimony of Sergeant Grenier of the 298th Infantry Regiment:

8.00am "It's disgraceful, absolutely disgraceful. And it's supposed to give us a lesson, boost our morale, give us courage. At the moment we can't say anything but, when I can speak, I'll say exactly what I think and, since we couldn't save their lives, we will save their honour."



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Death by firing squad

Story of a Memorial

REHABILITATION AND HOMAGE TO THE MEMORY OF 6 INNOCENT MEN

The Vingré Martyrs, as they came to be known, were rehabilitated by the Cour de Cassation on 29th January 1921.

A monument was erected in their honour on 5th April 1925, on the spot where they were executed. On the day of its unveiling, the brother of Corporal Floch spoke the following words: "For years we have lived in a terrible atmosphere of unfounded suspicion and unjustified shame because we knew that they were innocent, these Vingré martyrs ... With all our hearts, with all our faith, we thank those who avenged the memory of the unhappy soldiers of the 298th regiment. It is thanks to their efforts that our families can now walk with their heads held high, it's thanks to the former soldiers of the 298th that this expiatory monument has been erected. To them all, to everyone who subscribed, we say thank you".



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Unveiling the monument to executed soldiers of Vingré