

Coeurs Vaillants - Brave Hearts

French Youth Movement “bons” or goodfors by Tony James

COUpons issued by a French Catholic youth movement have raised a few eyebrows recently as examples have come onto the market in various parts of the world. The design and illustrations on the coupons lead collectors to believe that there may be a military connection and the style places the coupons or ‘bons’ during the 1930-1950s. My investigation has led me to discover a rich history and interesting sidelines to the production and issue of these coupons.

During the 1920s French Catholic children of the working classes were

able to join church sponsored groups for activities during days when there was no school. These parish groups included reading groups which were an audience for newspapers or comics for the young readers.

The organisation “*Coeurs Vaillants*” or “Brave Hearts” (another translation maybe Valiant Hearts) originated from a weekly magazine produced by some French Catholic priests that commenced publication in 1929. Father Gaston Courtois, under the alias Jacques Coeur, and Father Henri Guesdon started the magazine for boys aged 11



1 Vaillant, early coupon with Cross of St Maurice and initials CV at centre.

to 14, and Father Jean Pihan joined the production team in 1935. In 1938 girls got their own magazine called *Ames Vaillants* (Brave Souls).

The sponsoring organisation was the Union of Catholic Works of France (UOCF) and it is suggested that because of this association with the church, *Coeurs Vaillants* was allowed to continue and the magazine to be published during the Second World War. However Father Courtois, like many publishers and artists, was charged by the Resistance with being a collaborator, and while soon released without charges, he left the magazine.

The magazine, or what we might today call a comic, is famous amongst devotees as being the first to publish the comic strip, “The Adventures of Tintin,” created by Georges Remi Prosper (1907-1983), better known by his pen name – Hergé. Father Courtois travelled to Brussels to win exclusive serial



Tintin and Snowy the cartoon characters of the artist Hergé. Image © Egmont UK Ltd.



CV-04-B-03, 100 Vaillants Blue and orange. Children on construction site with Christ at centre:- *If this is not the Lord who built the city work in vain.* Back- scene of churches and cathedrals in France:- *The cathedrals of France valiant, joyful and proud sing like our souls to the joy of serving.*



CV01-A-04, 5 Vaillants.

The five fingers of the hand symbol of the team Union –Flexibility-Strength.

rights to Tintin in France and in October 1930 started serializing “Tintin in the Land of the Soviets” in the *Vaillants* magazine.

Designers and Printers

Hergé, took his pen-name from the French pronunciation of RG which are his initials reversed. He was heavily involved with scouting in his youth, and he found the Catholic affiliation of the Coeurs Vaillant magazine and the motto ‘For Brave Hearts Nothing Is Impossible’ of the organisation which was run with Boy Scouts ideals most appealing.

Hergé’s best known and most substantial work is “The Adventures of Tintin” comic book series, which he wrote and illustrated from 1929 until his death in 1983, leaving the twenty-fourth Tintin adventure “Tintin and Alph-Art” unfinished. The Tintin stories have a realistic feel as a result of Hergé’s meticulous and wide ranging research, and they are instantly recognisable by his *ligne-claire* (clear strong lines of uniform importance without hatching) drawing style. Adult readers enjoy the many satirical references to the history and politics of the 20th century, for example the Blue Lotus, inspired by the Mukden incident that led to the Chinese-Japanese War of 1934, and Tintin is still an international success.

Hergé’s work still wields a strong influence on comics, particularly in Europe, and he was inducted into the Comic Book Hall of Fame in 2003. Hergé has become one of the most famous Belgians worldwide and the Hergé Museum which opened in Louvain-La-Neuve on June 2, 2009 reflects his huge opus which had, until that

time, been sitting in studios and bank vaults.

Another major contributor to *Coeurs Vaillants* was Frederic-Antonin Breysse (1907 – 2001) comic book writer and illustrator who left school in 1923 was

apprentice in the lithographic trade and worked for a printer in Lyon for eight years before moving to Paris. In 1940 he found a job with the publisher Fleury and by 1952 had become head of the design department. It was in 1945 that he started writing and illustrating comics for the magazine, “*Message aux Coeurs Vaillants*” in a similar style to Hergé. He created the characters of Oscar Hamel and his dog Titus, and cousin Isidore, and the series called *Oscar et Isidore*, was very successful.

Catalogue of coupons

This catalogue details five series of coupons issued. While many designs are the same for each issue, the colours, sizes, printers and artists separate the issues.

The most interesting issue for the collector is probably the CV-01-A-04 with the five fingers symbolising Union-Flexibility-Strength which is printed on a card stock or plain paper. By comparison, the next issue of the same design, CV-01-A-05, was printed on thick recycled paper from a calendar put out by the Valiant Heart organisation. The calendar is dated 1943 thus firmly placing the coupon issue in WWII years.

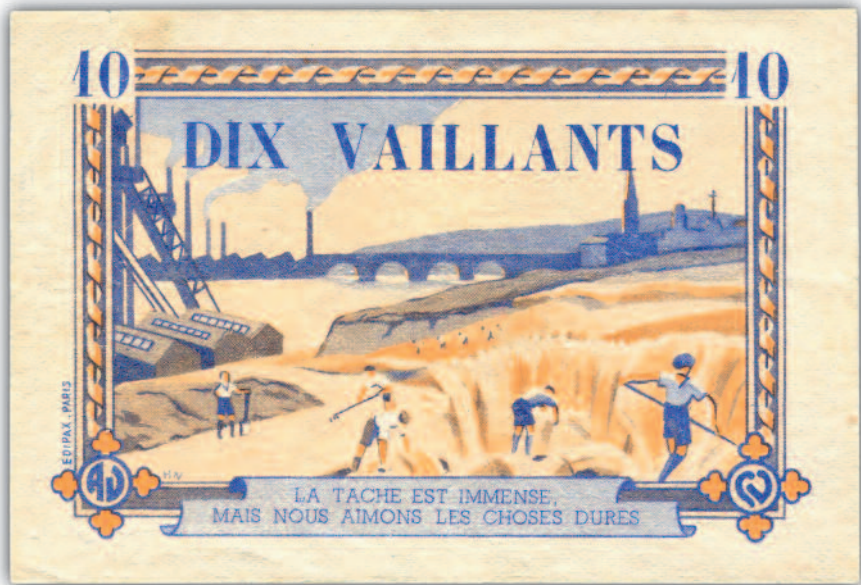
CATALOGUE OF COEURS VAILLANTS COUPONS				
Catalogue No.	Series	Denomination	Size	Colour
Series 1 w/o printer's name				
CV-01-A-01	Unis 1 vaillant un seul coeur	1 vaillant	60x43mm	blue & black
CV-01-A-02	1 vaillant w/cross superimposed	1 vaillant	28 x 37mm	black
CV-01-A-03	5 fingers Union-Souplesse-Force on card	5 vaillants	60 x 37mm	black
CV-01-A-04	5 fingers Union-Souplesse-Force on calendar card paper	5 vaillants	50 x 40mm	blue & black
CV-01-A-05	designer F.A.Breysse row boys/girls looking at centre cross	10 vaillants	120 x 77mm	blue
CV-01-A-06	designer F.A.Breysse, boy and girl each side of cross over countryside	50 vaillants	160 x 95mm	blue
Series 2 Printer Boutin-Paris				
CV-02-A-01	designer Henri Neveu. Boys linking hands	10 vaillants	120 x 80mm	blue & brown
CV-02-A-02	Girl at right. Plane, car & ship	50 vaillants	160 x 90mm	blue & brown
Series 3 designers name Henri Neveu				
CV-03-A-01	Line of girls/boys holding cross at centre.	10 vaillants	120 x 80mm	blue & brown
CV-03-A-02	Children on construction site w/Christ at centre	100 vaillants	180 x 110mm	blue & brown
Series 4 Large size before 1949 Imp Edipax- Paris designer Henri Neveu				
CV-04-A-01	Line of girls/boys holding cross	10 vaillants	120 x 80mm	blue & orange
CV-04-A-02	Church scene w/plane	50 vaillants	160 x 90mm	blue & orange
CV-04-A-03	Children on construction site w/Christ supervising	100 vaillants	180 x 120mm	blue & orange
Series 4 Small size before 1949 Imp Edipax- Paris designer Henri Neveu				
CV-04-B-01	Line of girls/boys holding cross	10 vaillants	100 x 65mm	blue
CV-04-B-02	Church scene w/plane	50 vaillants	130 x 72mm	blue
CV-04-B-03	Children on construction site w/Christ at centre	100 vaillants	130 x 80mm	blue
Series 5 w/o printer before 1954 design Henri Neveu				
CV-05-A-01	Line of girls/boys holding cross	10 vaillants	100 x 65mm	Blue
CV-05-A-02	Church scene w/plane	50 vaillants	130 x 72mm	Blue
CV-05-A-03	Children on construction site w/Christ at centre	100 vaillants	130 x 80mm	Blue
Over prints with name of patron/parish				
10 patronage St Montain La Fere (Aisne)				
10 Ames Vaillants/ Sourire Tourjours				
50 NOEL 48 F.P.S.Cat/ cross w/shamrock and motto Etre Pret				
10 vaillants stamp Doan Thanh Guise-Myno (French Indo China)				
Local Issues				
Coeurs Vaillants /Cross1 /CASSEL(Nord) Pink card				
5 Vaillants/ Patronage des Coeurs Vaillants/ Lacapelle- Marival (Lot)				

LETT	MOIS	DATE	FÊTE
1	D	7 ^e ap. Pent.	
2	L	S. Alphonse de L.	
3	M	S ^e Lydie	
4	M	S. Dominique	
5	J	N.-D. Neiges	
6	V	Transfigur.	
7	S	S. Gaétan	
8	D	8 ^e ap. Pent.	
9	L	S. Jean-M. Vian	
10	M	S. Laurent	
11	M	S ^e Suzanne	
12	J	S ^e Claire	
13	V	S. Hippolyte	
14	S	S. Eusébe	
15	D	ASSOMPT.	
16	L	S. Joachim	
17	M	S ^e Elise	
18	M	S ^e Hélène	
19	J	S. Eudes	
20	V	S. Bernard	
21	S	S ^e Jeanne Chant.	
22	D	10 ^e ap. Pent.	
23	L	S. Philippe B.	
24	M	S. Barthélemy	
25	M	S. Louis, roi	
26	J	S. Zéphyrin	
27	V	S. Joseph C.	
28	S	S. Augustin	
29	D	11 ^e ap. Pent.	
30	L	S ^e Rose de Lima	
31	M	S. Raymond	

CV01-A-04 (Back pair 05)
Calendar of 1943 showing fixtures.

The coupons, which were printed in blocks of 10 and then cut by hand, appear to have been printed in three different positions on the backs of the calendars.

The majority of the coupons show the organisation's activities, including hiking, working in the fields, parades, and both male and female members in uniform. Scenes of both the French countryside and cities underline the

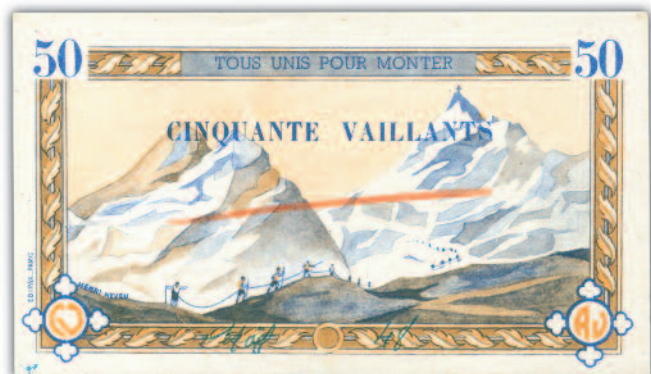


CV-04-B-01, 10 Vaillants, Front – Our chief is Jesus-Christ. AV –Âmes Vaillants – Girls
CV- Coeurs Vaillants- Boys Back- The task is huge but we love hard work.

work of the church with such mottos and principles such as that on the 100 Vaillants coupon which says "Si ce n'est pas le seigneur qui construit la cité, en vain travaillent ceux qui bâtissent" – "If this is not the Lord who built the city, work in vain who build." It shows youth working on building a church

and on the other side – "Les Cathédrales de France, vaillantes, joyeuses et fières, chantent comme nos âmes la joie de servir" – "The cathedrals of France valiant, joyful and proud sing like our souls to the joy of serving."

As noted, the stylized initials of the girls –Âmes Vaillants - and boys- Coeurs



CV-04-B-02, 50 Vaillants in blue and orange. Aeroplane flying over French town with churches "Higher and higher – Always best" On the back- figures roped together trekking and mountain climbing "All united to climb".

Vaillants - in the lower corners appear on nearly every coupon and if both do not appear on the same side then one of each will appear on each side.

One would assume that the coupons with a single colour were issued during wartime, and those with two colours appeared later. The name or initials of the designer appear in the body of the coupon, usually to the lower left, while the name of the printer, if shown (Imp, Boutin / Edipax), appears outside the frame on the left.

Structure of *Coeur Vaillants*

Although *Coeurs Vaillants* was sponsored by the Catholic Church it was firmly based in the local parish. Many similarities may be seen between the Scouts and *Coeur Vaillants*, such as uniform, mottos, magazine origins, graded awards upon passing tests and leadership ideas.

The flag of *Coeurs Vaillants* is a blue

Nordic cross on a yellow background with the stylised initials "CV" in red in the centre of the cross and words "*Coeurs Vaillants de France*" in the top right quadrant "*A Coeurs Vaillants Rien D'Impossible*" (To Brave Hearts nothing is impossible) in the lower right quadrant, all in red.

Members were organised by gender and age into divisions

Les Aiglons (Eaglets) 7-9 years

Les Coeurs-d'Or (The Hearts-of Gold) 10-11 years

Les Ardent (The Ardents) 12-13 years

Les Entraîneurs (Coaches) 14 years

Les Entraîneurs en Service (Coaches in Service) 15 years – junior leaders.

The Girls – (*Âmes Vaillants*) (Brave Souls)- were divided into *Souriantes*, (Smilers) *Rayonnantes* (Radiators) and the *Conquérantes* (Conquerors).

Each group was led by a priest – *Aumônier-Directeur* (Chaplain Direc-

tor)- with lay leaders responsible for different parts of the program, all of whom had insignia to distinguish their title and role. Administrative supervision was also conducted at regional and national levels.

The members of *Coeurs Vaillants* gained points (*vaillants*) for attendance, participation and for achievement and when they had been accumulated enough points they could exchange them for coupons of a higher value. These coupons in turn could be exchanged for the loan of sports equipment, books and comics from the parish library and even for entry to special film screenings. The coupons remained in use until the early 1960s when the *Coeurs Vaillants* and *Âmes Vaillants* became the *Catholic Action for Children*.

Passing of an era

The *Coeurs Vaillants* movement was spread by French colonisers from its inception in 1929. It grew throughout the 1930s and WWII continued into the independence era of the 1950s and 60s and is still active in parts of Africa particularly in Egypt. The French Communist party copied the *Vaillants* when it set up its own youth movement in 1944! The similarities with the World Organisation of the Scout Movement are not lost on those who have had scouting as part of their life, however the differences of religious instruction, sponsorship, and administration between *Coeurs Vaillants* and six existing scouting organisations in France separate the two. *Coeurs Vaillants* changed its name in 1956 to *Catholic Action for Children* and was one of the first organisations to suffer in the decline of Christian organizations since the 1960s.

(Translation of titles, terms and colloquial phrases maybe inaccurate and subject to personal interpretation).

Acknowledgement

Jean-Luc BUATHIER, <http://multicollec.net> Le Site du Collectionneur for his permission to use his catalogue numbering system for *Coeurs Vaillants*

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CV-05-A-01, 10 Vaillants in blue same as opposite, but with overprint from French Indo China most likely from the Order of LaSalle who established several youth programs. Border shows:- L.D.S.V.S.G.VN. Doan thanh GUISE My.no. Centre reads:- †/ HOC SINH/ CONG QIAQ.