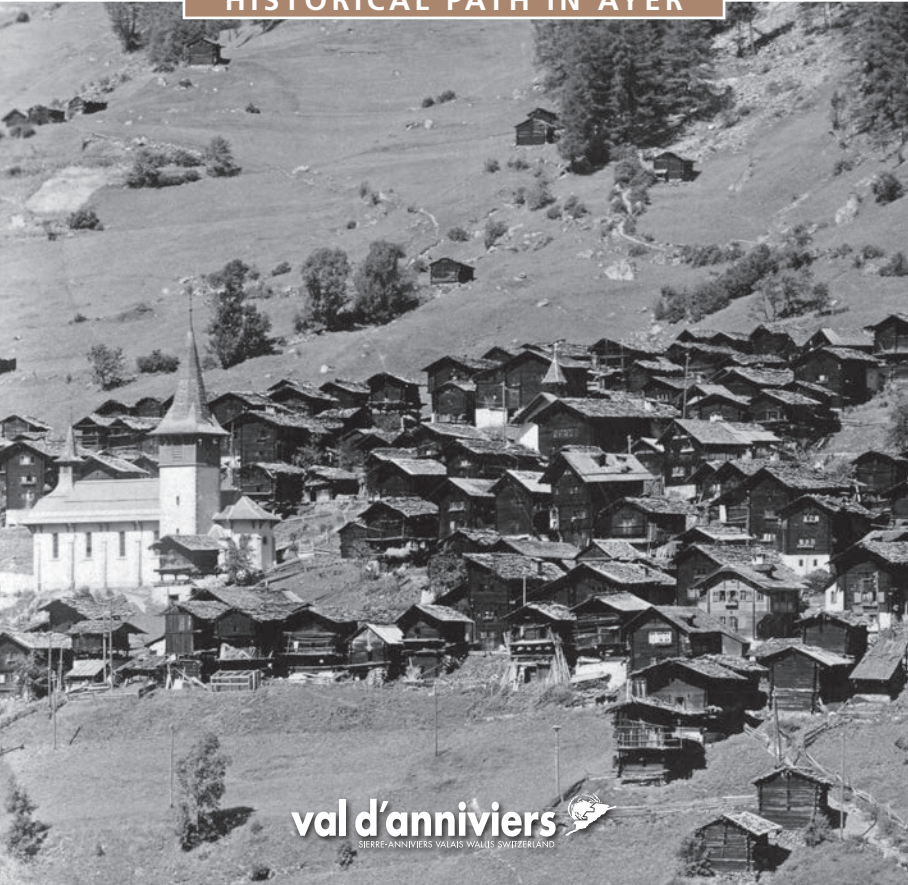
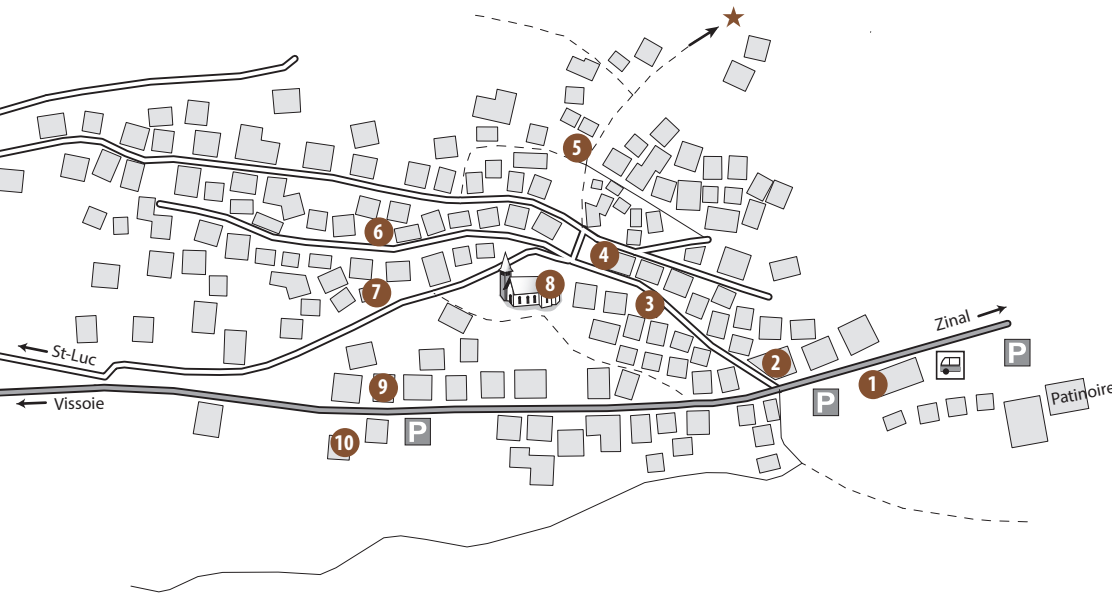


AYER

HISTORICAL PATH IN AYER



Map of Ayer



- 1 Old Hotel Rothorn
- 2 Old Hôtel de la Poste
- 3 Chalet Madeleine
- 4 House of the Bourgeoisie
- 5 Sombévilla Square
- 6 House of Foods/Maison des nourritures
- 7 Mill
- 8 Parish Church of Sainte-Anne
- 9 Bread Oven/Four banal
- 10 Daniel's Shoe Repair Shop
- ★ Zau Zoura Trail

Introduction to Ayer



Ayer, early twentieth century

Nestled on the hillside, above the road that dates from the late nineteenth century, Ayer is characterized by its wooden structures grouped around the church.

Mentioned for the first time in the late thirteenth century, with the spellings Ayert, Ayers and Ayeir, the village has the same etymology as Agarn (maple).

According to legend, the old village of Ayer, called "Venèze," was near the location of the quarry at the Pont du Bois. A woman wishing to finish her laundry, refused to go to mass in Vissoie, on the day of Saint-Thomas. Following this disrespectful gesture, a landslide completely destroyed the village.

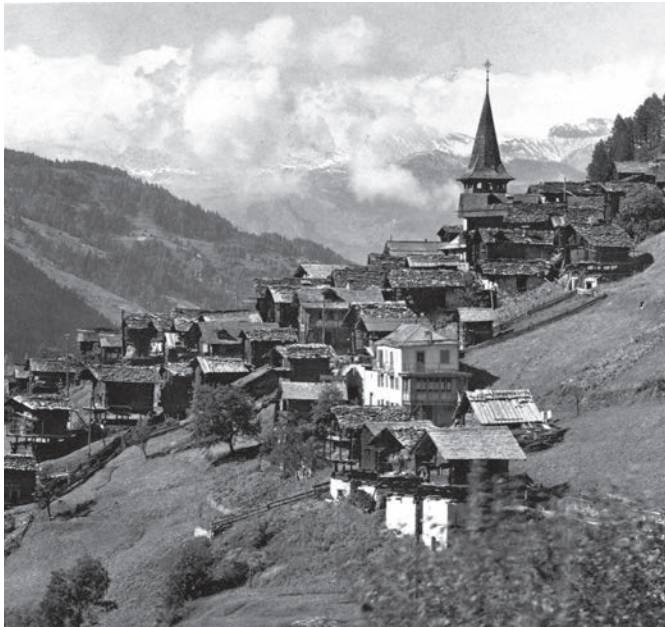
" Today, the village has a hundred or so inhabitants. Social life remains rich with several associations ... "

Today, the village has a hundred or so inhabitants. Social life remains rich with several associations, including the Bourgeoisie, the « Société de développement », the « Société du village », the « Société du tir » and the « Coopérative du Rothorn ». The choir called "La Cecilia", created in 1925 to animate mass at church should also be listed as well as the Fife and Drum band created in 1958. In 1960, the Parish bought the canteen formerly used by the construction workers of the Mottec power station, and gradually created the parish hall (Foyer Lyrette). The « Association Ayer pour demain », founded in 1997, organizes the Moyes Camp for children; and the « Société de la patinoire » (skating rink) which succeeded the Hockey Club of Ayer, whose promotion to higher league, in 1972, was an opportunity to bring the whole village around this event.

Ayer, between past and present

In 2002, at the initiative of the « Société de développement d'Ayer » a project called *Chemin des nourritures* (the Path of foods) was set up in Ayer and Mission in order to make the built heritage of the two villages better known.

The historic route allows visitors to discover this typical village and its unimaginable treasures, that can't be seen from the main road. Take time and walk through these beautiful alleys.



Ayer, in the 1930s



Bus Sierre-Ayer in 1925, after the Blanche Pierre turn

From the thirteenth century, Ayer, just like the main villages in the valley, formed a community and became, in the nineteenth century, a municipality with a Bourgeoisie.

Beginning probably in 1750, and until 1905, the people of Ayer regularly went by foot, on a pilgrimage to the Sacro Monte of Varallo (Val Sesia, Italy).

Ayer, located at the entrance of the Zinal valley was an important village, the seat of the municipality whose territory stretched from Zinal to Les Morands (near Vissoie). Under its leadership, the former mayen of Zinal, (small houses associated with mid-mountain pasturing) a summer tourist destination as of 1850, was transformed into a winter resort beginning in 1967, the year of the completion of Zinal-Sorebois cable car line. This development resulted in the creation of jobs in Zinal and the gradual loss of the influence of Ayer.

In 2008, the town of Ayer merged with other towns of the valley, to form the municipality of Anniviers.

The Anniviards lived between the valley of the Rhone, and the mountains, according to the seasons. Around December 15, part of the inhabitants of Ayer went up to Zinal for a month.

A schoolteacher then resided in Zinal and a second one remained in the village. The priest went to celebrate Mass in Zinal. In March, the people went down to Sierre to work in the vineyards. In the village, guards remained, as did the elderly. Easter marked the beginning of the cleaning of the meadows and planting of fields. By June 10, they went up to Zinal or to the *mayens* to graze cattle on the meadows of the « Société de Zinal » until the *inalpe* at the end of June. On November 26, they went down to Sierre, for the Sainte-Catherine Fair to buy the necessary provisions for the winter. This pattern of movement called the *remue* or *remuage* lasted until the years 1950-1955.

In the years 1950-1960, the construction of the Moiry dam, and the electrical stations at Mottec and Vissoie, significantly improved the access roads and provided stable work.

The arrival of winter tourism profoundly changed the lifestyle of inhabitants: the Anniviards stopped their seasonal movement and the ski resorts came to be the center of interest at the expense of the villages. The neighbourhoods of Sierre were inhabited year-round.

“In 2008, the town of Ayer merged with other towns of the valley, to form the municipality of Anniviers.”

The farming world changed slowly to adapt to this new configuration. While living the old farming life was no longer possible, the will to continue the maintenance of meadows and keep cows for milk led to the construction of a community stable in 1972.

Today, Valley residents live mainly, directly or indirectly from tourism.



Ayer Road, in the 1940's

1. Old Hotel Rothorn



Old Hotel Rothorn and old road in 1926



Old Hotel Rothorn and new road, in the 1950's

➤ The path, consisting of ten locations, begins at the Rothorn building near the parking lot.

The former Rothorn Hotel was built in the nineteenth century and operated until 1970. It was demolished in 1979. It was situated below the current road on the edge on the old road, which leads today to the skating rink, and that once was used by travellers on their way to Zinal.

Over time, the hotel underwent transformations: first, a veranda which hosted a pool table was added, and, then a new floor was added at the same time as the post office and the road in the 1950's.

The leaflet advertising the hotel stated *"Ayer, the centre for walks and ascents, beautiful forests nearby, pure, invigorating air, games-room, running water on all floors ..."*. Near the café-restaurant there was a grocery store that sold postcards and various items.

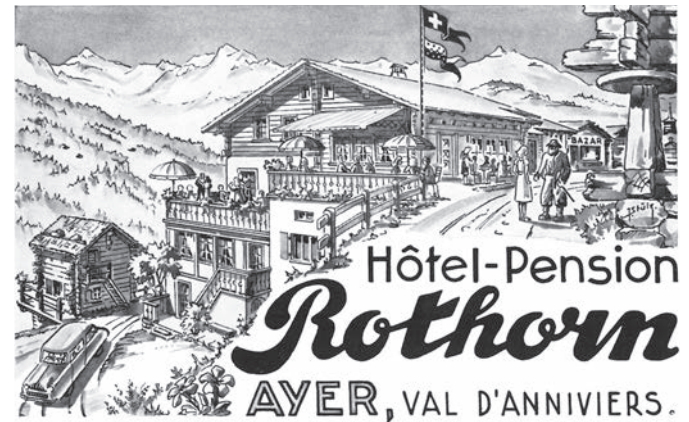
The current building, which includes a hotel, restaurant and a store, was built by the villagers gathered in a cooperative in 1981. One of the floors, dedicated to the old town of Ayer, now houses the finance office of the municipality of Anniviers.

The last post office in the village, finally closed in 2002, was in the house opposite, built by Rémy Theytaz (President of the municipality of Ayer from 1957 to 1968 and president of the Grand Council of Valais in 1971).

The *Café-Restaurant La Bergère* dates from 1949.

Previously, this area was very busy, with two hotels, three coffee shops and a post office.

➤ Continue 20 meters up the lane that climbs to the right. The last building on the right before the lane is the next location on the tour.



Hotel Advertisement

2. Hôtel de la Poste



Former Hotel de la Poste, right, with the new post office, left in 1921

The building that is now the Chalet Génépi was built around 1920. It housed the Hotel de la Poste from 1925 to 1970. It had six to eight rooms rented only in summer, since the hotel had no heating.

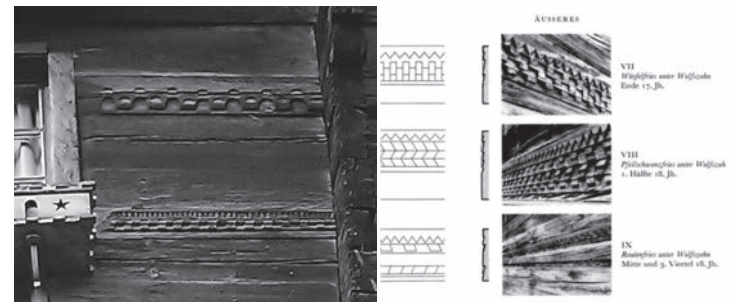
At the cafe, which was open all year, the men of the village got together. In the same building, a grocery-haberdashery sold clothes, wool, fabrics and tools, until 1981 (see the sign on the facade). Around 1980, the hotel became the Auberge Génépi. Until the inauguration of the Zinal road in 1957, the car road ended here. The Anniviards on their way to Zinal could continue on foot or by mule cart, while tourists continued in a postal jeep.

The postal depot was located in a house on the left of the lane, which was demolished in 1915, then in a second building at the same location until 1948-1949.

On the small square to the left there is a statue of the mountain guide Louis Theytaz. The guides of Ayer were in charge of bringing tourists and climbers from Zinal to the mountain heights at the end of the valley. The development of mountaineering contributed to opening up tourism and stimulated the development of Zinal.

> Continue to the next location, the Chalet Madeleine, following the street named "Petit Chêne", probably by soldiers from Lausanne, in reference to a street in Lausanne.

Along the street, some homes have friezes (to the right on the way up), whose style and design help to determine the time of construction of the house. The frieze seen in the photograph probably dates from the late seventeenth century, according to the directory prepared by the MHV (Historical Monuments Valais). On the buildings, the marks (inscriptions or symbols) that correspond to the trademarks of master carpenters are also visible..



Frieze on a house in the rue du Petit Chêne MHV Directory of friezes (figure VII of MHV repertory)

3. Chalet Madeleine



House in 1974



Kitchen with hearth

This house, which dates from 1579, was acquired by the « Société de développement d'Ayer » in 1985. A visit gives an idea of what the interiors of old houses in this area looked like.

The furniture, utensils and objects are, for the most part of origin. On a beam, the date 1651 is inscribed. The soapstone stove dates from 1794.

Madeleine Viaccoz, born in 1885, lived in this house until her death at the age of 84, in 1969. Despite the arrival of drinking water and stoves in homes, she continued to take water from the village basin and to cook on a wood fire in the fireplace.

The inhabited part of the house, located on the third level, is composed of a bedroom and a kitchen. The kitchen is basic, with a clay floor and simple dishes. A rack is located in the foyer. The walls are in stone, to avoid any risk of fire.

A large soapstone stove heated the house. This type of stove made out of refractory stone that keeps the heat, was present in all the houses in the Alps.

In the bedroom, bunk beds, called à *charette* (i.e. like a cart) allowed the whole family to sleep in a small space; the parents above, and below, the children. The room had also functioned as the main family space. One area was always reserved for images of the saints and the dead. This is where evenings were spent: women knitted or spun, while men repaired tools or dedicated themselves to other small jobs.

In the room on the second level, where tools were once stored, objects and tools loaned by inhabitants are currently on exhibition.

In the cellar, located on the ground floor, wine was kept in barrels, but so were potatoes and provisions.

For guided tours of the Chalet Madeleine :
www.annitrek.ch

The house located in front of the Chalet Madeleine has a number of interesting elements: an original wall with mortar joints and a cellar door, restored on the basis of the old decoration, dated 1768. The fresco on the wall of the basin is the work of a German artist. The wooden sculptures were created by Bernhard Hubert.

➤ Continue along the Petit Chêne, until you reach the house of the Bourgeoisie.

4. House of the Bourgeoisie



House of the Bourgeoisie today

Following the unification of the communities of Ayer and Mission (1798), in 1799, the building that houses the Bourgeoisie of Ayer was enhanced and expanded. "Bourgeois" refers to a person from the place (the village). The first traces of the Bourgeoisie of Ayer date back to 1327.

The building consists of three levels. On the top level is the meeting room, with a soapstone stove of 1799, that includes the coat of arms of Ayer, Cuimey, Mission and Zinal. The furniture inside is rich with paintings, as well as religious and historical images.

On the second level, formerly, there was a school room. Students from Ayer started going to the central school in Vissoie in 1973. From 1974 to 1976, the hall was occupied by a clock workshop with fifteen employees on site and a further dozen who worked in their homes. Today it serves as an office for the Bourgeoisie.

The ground level is occupied by the wine cellar of the Bourgeoisie. The Bourgeoisie has forests (645 hectares) and vineyards (1 hectare) above Sierre, with several varieties of grape. Wine is served on request, at receptions. The wine of the Glacier, of a grape variety known as "rèze", is a white wine that was kept in barrels in village cellars. In the cellar *channes* (pewter goblets) are aligned given by those who have occupied functions in the Bourgeoisie, the town and the canton.

On the west wall, above the third level is the paw of the last bear killed in 1870. The beam was cut for the purpose of enlarging the windows.

On the wall is a fresco made with smooth mortar, created by Alfred Wicky in 1959.

The inscription on the northern wall is reproduced and translated on a plaque, "Ayer and Mission built this building. Now both are united in one heart. Peace makes our fields fruitful; our granaries are full and our cellars like a lake, filled with sweet nectar. May almighty God bless our fraternity, the Bourgeoisie of Ayer".

" The beam was cut for the purpose of enlarging the windows."

5. Sombévilla Square



House of the Bourgeoisie to the right of the Saint-Marc Chapel (demolished since), 1940

Formerly, next to the House of the Bourgeoisie, there was a Chapel dedicated to Saint-Marc. After the construction of the church it was used to stock fire fighting equipment. In 1956, when the square was enlarged, the chapel was demolished. The altarpiece dating from 1753, was transferred to the chapel of Sainte-Anne in Niouc.

➤ Take the road along the building to the right and turn immediately left. Follow this street until the square that dominates the village.

Inside the bend, on the left, the renovated building had two classrooms for girls and boys as of 1950. A few metres further on, look at the house on the left of the road. It is dated 1620 and has particular facades, typical of the region of Leuk.



Current view from the Sombévilla Square

This location is ideal for observing the configuration of the village and its neighbourhoods, a mix of housing and farm buildings such as *raccards*, *greniers*, and *granges-écuries* (barns, granaries, barn-stables). Wood was the main material for construction in these mountain villages.

The village of Ayer is a fine example of a tightly configured village where buildings were concentrated together, in order to save the land for fields. The fields around the village were used for the cultivation of cereals (rye, barley, wheat), beans and potatoes.

Since the 1960s, new houses were built essentially outside of the village. That's why the centre has kept its original appearance.



Aerial view of Ayer and its grain fields, in the years 1945-1950

The houses often show several phases of construction. Built with larch wood, they are generally taller than they are wide, in order to use as little land as possible. They are almost all devoid of balconies, as they were considered unnecessary. Each house had several owners, in principle, one per floor. The cellar was dug directly into the earth.

By following this route, note the summary, but solid architecture, of the buildings: the beams were axe-hewn and ladders were carved from tree trunks.

The granges-écuries (barn-stables), quite small, were usually located near the fields, but they are also found in the village.



Ladder carved from solid wood

> Follow the lane and on the way by, observe the raccards located in the bend, right. Cross the town road and walk along the path to the next road. Turn right and follow the Rue de la Boucherie until the next location.

6. House of Foods / Maison des nourritures



Maison des nourritures today

Formerly, this building housed the butcher and dairy. On the ground floor butchers tools are on display, while on the upper floor, tools used in the dairy are shown.

The dairy was managed by a *consortage* composed of thirty-two owners. From February to the end of May, cheese and butter were made here. When the owners went up to the *mayens* with cows, they produced *tommies* (cheese) on site. The pastures, twelve in number in the territory of the former town of Ayer, were occupied from late June to late September by cows, sheep and some pigs, with an average of 70-120 heads per pasture. From 1964 to 1967, milk was channelled through two pipes called “pipelines” from the pastures at Nava to the village and from Sorebois to Vernec (near Mottec).

The same building was used as a butcher's shop in November and December. In the past, the village lived in self-sufficiency and produced its own food. Each family kept a pig that was fed with the remains of the family diet. The day of the slaughtering of the pig, the work on the carcass was carried out by hand, outside. The meat was stored in the cellar and then in the *grenier*.

From 1960 to 1984, the cellar of a nearby *raccard* sheltered a freezer, that was set up and managed by the « Société du village ». Each family had a compartment.



Milking cows at the pasture of Nava, circa 1920

7. Mill

On the ground floor, there was also a fuller which was used to beat linen coming from Sierre, of which sheets and towels were made.

Against the building there is a basin. Formerly, each neighbourhood had a basin that was used to water livestock and to supply water for households. Morning and evening the cows were brought there. The owners organized themselves so that their animals did not meet around the basin. They had to prevent the animals from fighting over the water, so that people nor animals would be injured.

The women also did their laundry in these basins, until the years 1953-1956.

➤ Retracing your footsteps, in order to reach the next location, note in passing, the house with green shutters on your left. This is a fine example of a building that was built in phases over time. Note that the first numbering of buildings in the village dates back from the twentieth century.

➤ Go back along this street to the Place de la Bourgeoisie and turn right to the mill.

“The house with green shutters on your left, is a fine example of a building built in phases over time. ”



Mill in 1935

The mill was working until 1941. It was an unfortunate accident that marked the end of its operation. The last miller had the sleeve of his jacket caught by the wheel, and lost his arm. As of that time, residents of Ayer had to go to the mill in Mission.

The grain obtained after threshing in the *raccards*, was stored in the *grenier*. As required, grain, which is easier to conserve than flour, was transported to the mill for grinding.

8. Parish Church of Sainte-Anne

The *raccard* and *grenier* were steps in the cycle that began with the cultivation of cereals, and ended at the mill, with flour. The latter was stored in the *grenier* in paper bags until bread was to be made.

The *raccards* have balconies that were used to dry the grain before storing it inside. The *greniers* were used to store grain, but also food supplies and other valuable goods such as clothes for festivals and documents. The main structure of these two wooden buildings, rests on pillars covered with large round stones, which insulate them from moisture and rodents.



The mill in 1975

“ The wheel caused a stone to turn, that was used to grind the grains.”

➤ Continue to the church



Church of Ayer and house of the priest, left



Alfredo Cini at work in 1949

The Church of Ayer, consecrated in 1920, is dedicated to Sainte-Anne, patron saint of the village. The parish of Ayer along with that of Zinal was founded ten years later, in 1930. The home and office of the parish priest, built in the late nineteenth century, is older than the church itself.

The church's history began in 1915, when the inhabitants of Ayer founded an association for the construction and the creation of a rectory. The desire to separate from the parish of Vissoie was criticized by part of the population, which judged this undertaking too ambitious, especially with the war at the gates of Confederation. Finally, the church was built, after many financial difficulties that forced the initiators to use a lottery to ensure completion.

The church was built using a system of “chores” (*corvées*) of the inhabitants, who worked for free on Saturdays and Sundays, between 1916 and 1920.

From an architectural point of view, the church of Ayer is relatively simple, like many Valais churches, built during the same period by the Kalbermatten architectural firm. It is inspired of the "Swiss national style" (Heimatstil).

The Florentine painter Alfredo Cini (1887-1970) painted several frescoes on the outside and inside (the choir arc) of the church in 1949. The choir's sculptures are the work of a German artist, then living in Ayer: Bernhard Hubert.

> Before you go to the next location, look at the cemetery.

The tombs are largely identical, a way to show that human beings are equal in death.

Formerly, the wake and funeral meals were very important for the repose of the soul of the deceased. As soon as a person was married, wine and cheese were laid aside for the funeral.

In the popular imagination, there are many ghost stories related to cemeteries. It is said that one night a year, "the night of the four times", the souls of the dead go in procession to the glacier where they stay for a while, before reinvesting the place where they lived before they died.

A plaque dedicated to the German climber Georg Winkler, was placed near the church after his remains were found by climbers at the foot of the Weisshorn glacier in 1956. He had disappeared in 1888, at the age of 19, when he tried to climb the Weisshorn alone.

> Follow the path next to the side of the cemetery to the main road. Go along the road in the direction of Vissoie, until you reach the bread oven.

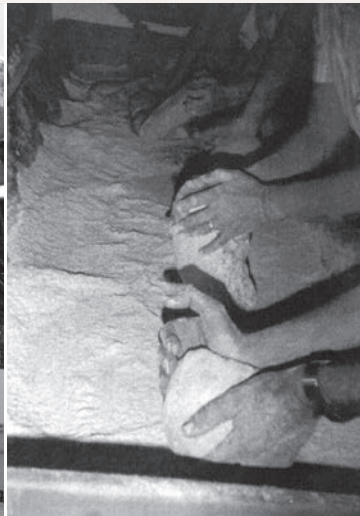


A procession in Ayer between 1935-1940

9. Bread Oven/Four banal



Four banal (bread oven) today



Manufacturing rye bread in the communal oven in 1982

The bread oven, which dates from 1937, now belongs to the « Société du village ». The term « banal » indicated a common good. Formerly, every village had an oven, necessary for the production of rye bread. A second furnace was located near the House of the foods (Maison des nourritures) until the 1950s.

Until 1935, in Ayer, bread was made a maximum of four times per year. The oven remained lit for fifteen days. Families followed one another, day and night, in the bread room, so that the oven would cool as little as possible.

The significance of rye bread in the normal diet of the residents of Valais is documented by writings dating back to 1209.

Rye is the only cereal able to adapt to extreme weather conditions (cold winter, long snow cover, summer heat, dryness) and to higher altitudes.

Although rye bread keeps better than white bread, after three months, it becomes nearly as hard as stone. It was then cut with an axe and dipped in soup in order to eat it.

Today, the oven is used for baking rye bread once or twice a year. In 2008, five couples created a “brotherhood” (confrérie) in order to keep it functioning.

The oven is heated for three days to reach the temperature of 220°C. The dough, prepared with cooked mashed potatoes, mixed with rye flour and corn is left to stand overnight. Afterwards, it is kneaded by adding water and yeast. Several steps lead to the shaping out of ten blocks called “Peacocks” (paons). 120 rolls are aligned on boards and put in the oven very rapidly. The cooking lasts 45 minutes.

The fresco depicting the work in the communal oven was painted by Roger Theytaz in 2013.

➤ To reach the last location, cross the road.

“Rye is the only cereal able to adapt to extreme weather conditions (cold winter, long snow cover, summer heat, dryness) and to higher altitudes.”

10. Daniel's Shoe Repair Shop



Disassembling the mill in 1995, with the old sawmill in the background

Cordonnerie Daniel

The old mill, built in the eighteenth century was operated with water power. The flowing water of the stream was used to turn the wheel and the saw. In 1952 it was replaced by a sawmill which was operated by electric power. The building was dismantled in 1995 at the time of the widening of the road. It was rebuilt according to the orientation of the oldest sawmill, and is currently used as a museum.

The mill belonged to the Bourgeoisie of Ayer, that could thus exploit the forests that they owned, producing firewood, beams and boards for construction. Sawdust was used as bedding for the stables.

This small museum, which now houses the tools and equipment that belonged to Daniel Melly (1919-2002), was created with donations from his family, in 2008.

Once, at a time when money was scarce and people constantly walked between the valley of the Rhone and the mountain, shoes wore through rapidly. Itinerant cobblers went from village to village to offer their services. Then, residents learned the craft and exercised it as an accessory activity. Daniel Melly tried to make it his profession in 1936 (CFC degree obtained in 1947).

“The building was dismantled in 1995 at the time of the widening of the road. It was rebuilt according to the orientation of the oldest sawmill, and is currently used as a museum.”

All the different stages of shoemaking are presented in the museum. The wooden forms used to create the sizes, sewing machines and different tools can be seen here. Before the arrival of machines, all operations were performed by hand, from the soles to the laces. The form of the sole was cut in a piece of leather that was softened in water. It was then pounded to give it the necessary rigidity. The soles of hiking boots were equipped with nails.

The square is dedicated to the twinning of the former town of Ayer with Montferrier-sur-Lez (France), agreed to in 1999. The old water pump, situated nearby, was used to fight fire before 1900.

➤ The historical visit of Ayer ends here, but more discoveries of the heritage of the village are possible in the suggested visits.

Suggested Visits

Sentier Zau Zura

➤ The Zau Zura trail starts from the square of the House of the Bourgeoisie. It takes about three hours to walk the entire trail.

This educational trail crosses the “Zau Zura” forest (dialect term meaning “sworn” or protected forest) for about 3 km. This forest has been protected since 1874 when it was forbidden to cut wood. The people decided this in order to protect the village from avalanches and landslides. In February 1990, Hurricane Viviane knocked down over 1200 cubic meters of wood and ravaged nearly four hectares of forest. Following this disaster, avalanche barriers were built, beginning in the autumn of the same year. About 10,000 larch seedlings were replanted.

The trail aims to raise awareness of the protective role of the forest and its ecosystem.

Oratory of the Pierre Blanche

➤ Follow the road in the direction of Vissoie, just outside the village, right up to the Oratoire de la Pierre Blanche.

Formerly known by its name in local dialect, the *Blanzy Pirra* is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. In 1861, the pastor of Vissoie, Jean-Baptiste Rouaz, asked the Episcopate for a concession of indulgences. This act of faith made it possible to reduce the punishment for sins and, thereby, the length of the stay in purgatory. The fourteen chapels and oratories mentioned in the archives, amongst them the oratory of Blanche Pierre, received a grant of indulgences of forty days to all the faithful who recite three Our

Fathers and three Hail Marys. It was not necessary to recite the prayers on the knees, it was enough to say them when passing near the oratory. In 1943, the young people of the village replaced the old oratory with a new one and offered a fresco by Paul Monnier.

Together with the chapel of Les Morasses and the chapel of Saint-Théodule in Grimontz the oratory was part of a pilgrimage that the faithful undertook to ask for healing. Once, near the village, there was a spring whose water was renowned for its healing qualities.

The community stable of Ayer is located nearby.

Pierre des Grands Praz

➤ Walk along the main road towards Zinal. At a place called “Grands Praz” at the exit of Ayer, to the right of the road, there is a large rock with an unusual shape. Located on private land (near the second chalet) it is visible from the road.

According to a popular legend, this stone contains a treasure. One Christmas Eve, a very long time ago, two slightly drunken friends were hurrying to arrive on time for midnight mass. The first stroke of midnight rang when they were near this stone. Suddenly the stone lit up and a door opened in the rock. An endless staircase became visible. Intimidated, they went down and found themselves facing a mountain of gold coins. One of the two picked up a handful, was afraid and went back leaving behind his friend who could not get enough. At the last stroke of midnight, the door closed and no one ever saw him again.

Where reality meets legend is that one hundred meters above the stone, there was a cobalt deposit that made a fortune for a few daring miners in the nineteenth century.

The forest, to the left of the road (direction Zinal), after the first turn has a small oratory dedicated to the Virgin, that was made in 1965 by the villagers. The statue was a gift from a resident who had visited Lourdes.

Cup stones

➤ Around the village camouflaged by time and nature, there are a number of curiosities.

Stones, whose surface have small cavities carved into them, called "cups" (*cupules*), sometimes accompanied by signs or symbols, are found in the Alps and are frequent in Anniviers. The origin of these rocks is unknown. Men probably shaped them in Neolithic times. Offerings and tombs, found near some sites appear to link these stones with cups to ancient spiritual practices. Legend has it that the cups were used to collect the blood of victims in human sacrifices.

Eight of these stones are listed between Ayer and Saint-Luc. The site of the Ilot Bosquet in Grimetz is a good place to find out more with a brochure available in the tourist offices.

The stones with cups (*pierres à cupules*) of Ayer and its cobalt and copper mines, active in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, are largely embedded in the natural environment.

To visit them, please contact a local guide (www.annitrek.ch) because access is often difficult, and even dangerous.

Nava Pasture

➤ Take the pasture path that starts right of the road to Saint-Luc or one of the marked paths.

The Nava Pasture is located at 2,034 m above sea level, above Ayer. Formerly, the pasture was a significant step in the system of life based on the *remuage* between the valley of the Rhone and the mountains. Today, the Nava Pasture receives cows from the region in summer. The day of the Inalp when the animals are led up to pasture at the beginning of summer, the "black" cows of Hérens, from different stables, clash in an enclosure. The day of the Désalpe, when the cows are brought down, the "horned queen" (*reine à cornes*) the cow that has defeated all the others during the summer, and queen of milk (*reine à lait*), the one that gave the most milk during the summer, open the procession of cows returning to the village.

If you want to know more about the legends linked with pastures, you can read the book about the adventures of Rozinna "a lively cow that loves her independence, a bit too much...". The book "Rozinna, raconte-nous Anniviers" published by CAWA in 2008, is on sale in the Anniviers Tourist Offices.



Ayer in the beginning of the 20th century

Cover photo: Ayer in the 1920's

Backcover photo: At the exit of Ayer, direction Zinal at the beginning of the 20th century

Texts

Georges-Alain Zuber (Société du village) and Adriana Tenda Claude with the collaboration of Nicole Melly, Marcia Melly, Aline Melly, Alphonsine Theytaz, Laurent Melly, Nicole Zuber, Elisabeth Theytaz Steffe, Manu Zufferey.

Bibliography

Service cantonal des Monuments historiques et Recherches archéologiques. Témoins du passé dans le Valais moderne. Année européenne du patrimoine architectural 1975. Sion, 1975; Bernard Crettaz. Nomades et sédentaires dans le Val d'Anniviers. Ed. Grounauer. Genève, 1979; Gaëtan Cassina.

Eglise paroissiale Sainte-Anne. Paroisses vivantes, Anniviers, 1998.

Images and photos

Collection of old postcards of Marco Epiney, Laurent Melly, Rose-Marie and Hermann Vianin; archives E. Crettaz-Stürzel, Zinal, reproductions of la Maison Rurale Valaisanne, Brigue/Sion; recent photos by Manu Zufferey, Adriana Tenda Claude.

Religious Heritage

Elisabeth Crettaz-Stürzel, art historian.

Built Heritage

Norbert Jungsten, former director of MHV (Historical Monuments of Valais).

Translation

Alexandra and Philip Jodidio.

Concept and coordination

Anniviers Tourism/Adriana Tenda Claude and Simon Wiget.

The Historical Paths are based on written and oral information. We welcome any comments or suggestions.

Contact

Anniviers Tourisme +41 (0)27 476 16 00 – info@anniviers.ch – www.anniviers.ch

The 14 Historical Paths are available at the Tourist Offices and Editions Monographic. They are grouped together in a book titled « Parcours historiques d'Anniviers »

Sponsors:

