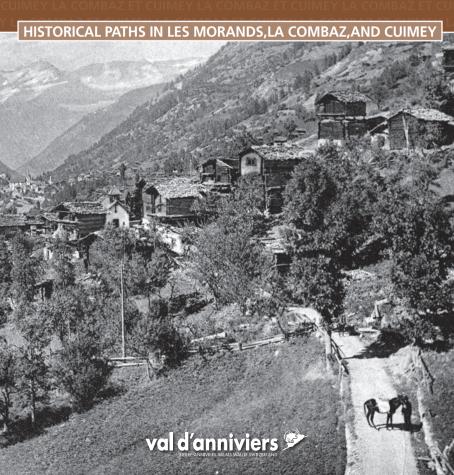
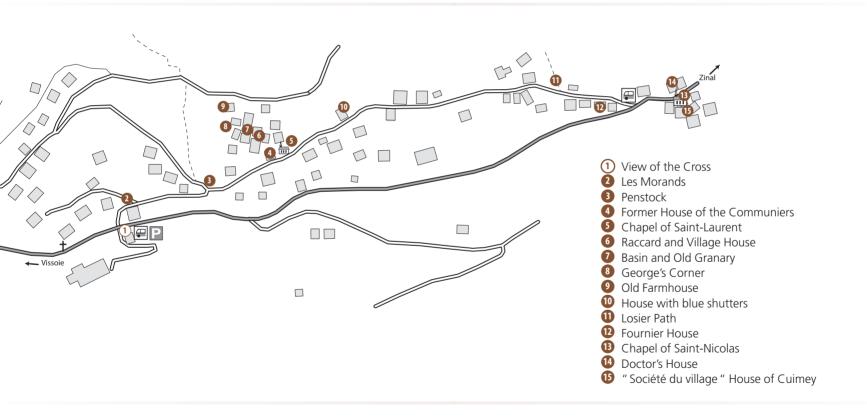
# LES MORANDS LA COMBAZ AND CUIMEY



# Map of Les Morands, La Combaz and Cuimey



# Quimet Vissoie et les Alpes Remaises

Cuimey and Vissoie, in the background, in the past



From left to right, Les Morands and La Combaz in the past

# Introduction to Les Morands, La Combaz and Cuimey

You will visit two hamlets that have always been inhabited and Les Morands where there were once only fields and meadows.

Before the construction of the Vissoie-Ayer road in 1912, the road passed above, crossing La Combaz, then reaching Cuimey-La Crêta located above the current site of Cuimey and continuing towards Effinec, Mission.

In the years 1920-1960, the children of La Combaz and of Cuimey went to school in Vissoie on foot four times a day. The school lasted six months, from November to late April. The rest of the

year, the children were busy in the countryside, keeping goats and traveling between the *mayens(small structures associated with medium altitude pastures)*, and the hamlets. Then, the young people left the villages to take up apprenticeships in the valley of the Rhone.

" You will visit two hamlets that have always been inhabited and Les Morands where there were once only fields and meadows."

Today, there are about 37 year-round inhabitants in Les Morands, 55 in La Combaz, 13 in Losier, and 11 in Cuimey. The four hamlets have approximately 116 persons residing all year and 173 people in secondary residences.

### The work of the farmer



Delphine Crettaz wielding the scythe, in the 1960's

In the old villages, the life of the farming population went on at the pace of work which essentially consisted in tending cattle, cutting the meadows and cultivating fields. They then practiced what is called transhumance or *remuage*: in the winter, the cows were in

the village and in the summer, they are led to the mayens.

For work carried out in common such as road and path maintenance and cleaning of villages, a day of chores (*corvées*) was organized, a term used to refer to these tasks, mandatory for all except the elderly and small children.

The *bisses(canals)* had a very important role. Water could be drawn from these canals for the fields, according to a well defined programme. Woe to anyone who exceeded the allotted time!

The farmers followed the course of the water in the bisse, which had been cleaned and prepared in advance. Arriving at the meadow, they channelled the water of the bisse and carefully irrigated the plot, with the watering time carefully counted. Then another landowner took over and so on until the evening.

Formerly, the famers went out to cut the fields at dawn to avoid the heat. After scything down a certain area, they would stop, standing straight with the scythe upright, and gather a tuft of grass to wipe the blade. They then would take the whetstone in the *covi* and carefully sharpen the scythe, dragging the stone on both sides of the blade several times, in a regular gesture. In the evening, the scythe was the subject of more intense care. It was placed on the anvil and tapped with a small hammer. The farmer sat on a bench, holding the scythe parallel to him, the handle resting at the back, on a wooden support. The front of the bench was topped with a wooden vise, operated with the foot, to open or close. The blade of the scythe was brought to the vise and compressed bit by bit along its length so that all its rough edges are corrected and that the blade becomes perfectly smooth. The scythe was thus made ready for a new day. This farming life was perpetuated until the 1960s.

### 1. View of the Cross

> The first location is close to the Bienvenue (Welcome) panel. The territory of the fomer town of Ayer extended to this point.

The sign indicates the pairing between the former town of Ayer and Montferrier-sur-Lez (France), which was concluded in 1999.

For safety reasons, we advise you to view the cross to the left of the road in the direction of Vissoie, from this location.



Welcome Sign

Formerly erected higher up, the cross was moved during work to widen the road in the 1960s. The inscriptions indicating the direction to Vissoie and Ayer-Mission on the cross arms are thus reversed.

The villages of Mission, Cuimey and La Combaz, while being part of the municipality of Ayer, were connected to the parish of Vissoie. That is why this cross was placed at the bounda-

ry between the old towns of Ayer and Vissoie. It was erected in "Memory of the Mission," preached in 1949.

Every ten years, preachers of the congregation of Redemptionists were sent by the diocese to the parishes. They preached during the masses and animated evenings, and retreats for ten days, in order to revive the spiritual impulse of the faithful. The Capuchin friars, Franciscans were very dynamic. It is said that their voices



Cross along the road today

would shake the vaults and raise souls. The retreats or missions, often ended with the installation of a cross. This explains the presence of numerous crosses in the valley.

Further down the road lies the community stable of Vissoie which was created in 1970. Several farm buildings of this type have been built in Anniviers, taking over from traditional agriculture, in order to maintain the meadows and to continue the rearing of Herens cows.

> Leave the main road and on the left, go up the secondary road to La Combaz. Continue fifty meters to the small wooden basin.

### 2. Les Morands



Les Morands today

Formerly, this hamlet did not exist. Here, there were no residences, only barn-stables, raccards and fields largely owned by residents of Vissoie.

All these lands were cultivated. The drier ones on the slopes, were chosen for growing potatoes, wheat and rye. Alternating cultivation was practiced, so as not to deplete the soil. In the same field, for example, one year potatoes were grown and another year, wheat.

"Formerly, this hamlet did not exist."

Beans were also planted and then nibbled during the watch and were found most often in soup, but also served as pawns to play *au Moulin*. The game is played by two persons on a checkerboard. The game consists in not allowing the opponent to align three consecutive pawns.



Les Morands (with the ski lift, right), circa 1965

There were also some hemp fields, whose stems were soaked in water found at the bottom of marshy ground. Then they were dried, softened, and finally sent to the factory to make the fabric. The flatter areas were cut or grazed. Hay for the winter was then stored in the barn above the cow stables.

Beginning in 1956, the date of the creation of the central dairy of Anniviers, milk was provided for the manufacturing of cheese intended in part for sale.

Around 1965, to the delight of the schoolchildren of Vissoie, a small ski lift was put in place at Les Morands. In the past, festivals and plays were organized at Les Morands.

> Continue to the first intersection and stop near the penstock. The wooden bench placed at the roadside is ideal for a break.

### 3. Penstock



Penstock, 1959

This pipe was created at the same time as the Moiry dam, between 1954 and 1958 to bring water from the plant at Mottec to Le Biolec, situated at the top of the penstock and then to the power plant at Vissoie.

A hundred workers worked on this project day and night. During the construction period, three canteens were built to house and feed all the workers: at Le Biolec, halfway to La Combaz d'en bas(lower), and at the Grand-Pont, at the plant in Vissoie. The transport of workers between Les Morands and Le Biolec was provided by a small train, called *la platine*. From Le Biolec, a wagon was used for the extraction of earth and stones and to transport workers in the tunnel.



In front of the penstock in the 1960s

The penstock marks the boundary between Les Morands and La Combaz. The path taken to this point was the old Vissoie-Ayer mule road

A few meters from the penstock, after the turn above Les Morands, there was a shooting range that was used until the end of the 1970s. All military personnel had to practice firing once a year, under penalty of fines. The targets were placed uphill to the last chalet built at the top of Les Morands. Today, there is a shooting range for the whole valley, above Vissoie, on the road to Saint-Luc.

> Follow the road to the house of Communiers to the left of the road, just before the chapel.

# 4. Former House of the Communiers



Former Villagers House

This house, adjoining the chapel once housed the meeting room of the former villagers of La Combaz. Due to the steep slope, it is located on a relatively high base.

In the 1920s, the house of villagers/communiers was bought and transformed by the Crettaz family from Vissoie and La Combaz.

In the Middle Ages the small village communities came together to form larger entities in an effort to make themselves

stronger against external authorities. A kind of puzzle was thus created, depending on the circumstances, bringing together three or four villages. The villages were merged by three or four to form one,in order to avoid sending too many men to the war. In Napoleon's time, a quota was required for each community.

The small community of La Combaz, originally independent, was incorporated into Vissoie, then Ayer and Mission. The book published by the French-speaking Valais Historical Society (Société d'histoire du Valais romand) in 2004, about the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of the town of Vissoie in 1954, recounts the following: "January 22 and February 5, 1820, 14 villagers from La Combaz made a petition to the State to request the reestablishment of their town. However, they said that they consented to be included in Vissoie if the Council of State thought fit."



Villagers House and Chapel, in the past

"The small community of La Combaz, originally independent, was incorporated into Vissoie, then Ayer and Mission."

# 5. Chapel of Saint-Laurent

The chapel of La Combaz, dedicated to Saint-Laurent, was built in 1724 (see the date above the door). In this chapel, once considered an oratory, masses are celebrated today, above all on the day of the patron saint.

The chapel was restored in 1960. The cross that was directly attached to the facade was moved in the 1990s. Beneath the chapel as was customary in the past, a cellar was used to keep wine barrels.

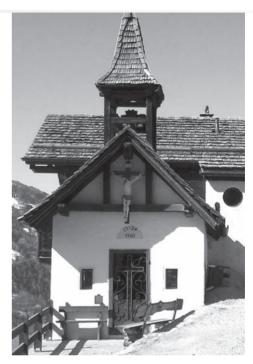
"We see, in the middle, Saint-Laurent, patron of the chapel, and the gridiron of his martyrdom."

The altar includes in its front part, a painted faux marble tomb. Visible in the middle, Saint-Laurent, patron Saint of the chapel, and the gridiron of his martyrdom. To his

right Sainte-Barbe depicted as a Crowned Virgin, with the palm of the martyr and the tower where, according to legend, she was locked up by her father. On the upper level of the altar there are the Virgin and Child holding a globe (with base dated 1724). The altar, with twisted columns, has a total of six statues. The vault of the chapel has painted floral decorations.

To the left of the altar, on a small stool, two round stones are kept one on the other, two round stones carved in the centre, one that served as a container and the other as a cover. Formerly, they were used to keep butter. By the grace of Saint-Laurent who perished in a fire, the butter kept here was thought to have virtues for treating burns, but also for soothing eyes and eczema.

> Follow the alley behind the chapel, to the large raccard on the right.



Saint-Laurent Chapel, today



In front of the chapel in the in the 1950's

# 6. Raccard and village house





Raccard today

House in the village today

The area is dominated by a large raccard, (barn) currently owned by the family of Sylvain Crettaz. It was used for the storage of cereals, mainly wheat for making bread.

The "neighbourhood of Combaz" was part owner of the oven in Vissoie where bread was baked, according to an established programme. The construction of barns on stilts prevented mice

and other rodents from reaching the stored grains. The *grenier*, also built on stilts, is smaller and used to store supplies.

"The grenier and raccard appear similar but have important differences."

The *grenier* and *raccard* appear similar but have important differences The *raccard* has a central area meant to separate

wheat from chaff. On each side, there were several compartments defined by partitions that were used to separate the wheat of different owners.

At the foot of the *raccard*, traditional tools are exhibited by Etienne Crettaz: a handcrafted winnow (*van*) used to separate the chaff from the grain; a "crazy bench" (banc du fou) where a worker could place the wooden log and work it to make stakes for the vine-yard); an anvil to beat imperfections out of the blade of the scythe.

> In front of raccard is the village house. Enjoy the beautiful view of the valley from the terrace.

The "Société du village" of La Combaz was established on July 29, 1983. It was initially created around the chapel, to ensure its maintenance and to get together the villagers.

The building, which was originally a *grange*-écurie,(barn-stable) houses a meeting room. Meetings are held here on the first of the year, at Corpus Christi, at the time of celebration of the patron Saint-Laurent, in the summer and in the fall for the *brisol*ée.(a traditional dish of chestnuts, grapes, fruit and cheese).

At the next location, on the right, there is a pig barn. The pig came out of this stable only the day it was slaughtered. The pigs would shriek and advance only if they were pulled by the tail.

> Follow the path of the village to the basin.

# 7. Basin and Old Granary



Basin and old shoe (shoemaker's collection) today

This concrete basin dates from 1928. The village basins formerly made of wood, used to provide water to the inhabitants and their animals.

Household water was obtained here and clothes were washed. It was only around 1947 that water arrived in the kitchen.

Above the basin, one can notice an old granary that has been converted into holiday accommodation.

On the beam that frames the door, is the probable date of the original construction: "1693". This type of building was used as a pantry for families to store food, utensils, clothing and various objects.



Old transformed granary

There are *greniers* and *raccards* mainly in Valais, but also in the Aosta Valley of Italy. The *grenier* consists of separate rooms whose doors open onto an outdoor gallery. Several access doors of this old barn are still visible today.

Next to the basin, in a small display case, the tools of the shoemaker are exhibited, including old shoes with nails. The adjoining small room was originally a smithy where all kinds of nails were made. In 1958 it was transformed into a laundry for a few families in the village. It was also used by the butcher for the preparation of sausages.

> Follow the road for about 10 meters.

# 8. George's Corner



George's corner today



Collection of old objects

These objects were collected by the family of Théophile Savioz and displayed here by Georges Claivaz. They were used for the various farming activities and for the house. In this collection there are also shoes and wooden forms from the shoe store of Georges.

To the right, there are military shoes with nails dating from 1950 and ski boots. From left to right, you can see an old wooden washing machine and the tools used to stir the laundry soap.

Among the tools exhibited that were used for the work of the stable and care of animals, there is a cow-bell, a goat-bell and a muz-zle that prevented calves from eating straw and from suckling. The oil lanterns were used by farmers at dusk or before dawn, to go from the house to the stable. The lamp was suspended from the roof of stable during milking and checking of the animals.

Amongst the tools used in the fields one can see a large toboggan that was used in the summer to transport hay and in winter, for wood. The wheelbarrow was used to transport small loads and also for construction. The sickle was useful for the farmer for cutting grass at the edge of the irrigation canals and in corners inaccessible with a scythe. The faithful companions of the sickles were the *covi* and the whetstone. The *covi* is a small wooden container that farmers attached to their belts, to carry the whetstone. In the *covi*, the stone was in water and was used to sharpen tools.

> Follow the road for about 10 meters.

### 9. Old Farmhouse



House dated 1855 and a mule stable in the foreground, circa 1960

On the front of this old farmhouse, a coat of arms and the date 1855 are visible. The photo on the right shows the back part of the structure made of stone, which was the location of the kitchen and the wooden front, which housed the main room of each dwelling.

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Formerly, the kitchen floor was made of clay with large flat stones. In one corner was the hearth with a pot where soup or polenta were made. More modern kitchens were equipped with a wood rack with iron hoops that could be removed to introduce the wood and adjust the pans. Each kitchen had a "wood box" to store logs. An opening between the wall of the kitchen and the

room allowed residents to directly place wood in the soapstone stove. The kitchen was not insulated and was used to prepare food, wash and put away the dishes. The only heated space, a little more insulated, was the main wooden room with a rustic table where people ate.

In the evening, stories of "ghosts" were told around the soapstone stove that was used to dry clothes and also cook pota-



House, circa 1960

toes in a small cavity called *la cachette*, (the hiding place). Massive wooden beds, often made up of two levels, called *charettes* (carts) were placed against the walls of the room. The beds were pulled out for the night on little wheels. In some larger homes, from the main room one could access two small adjoining bedrooms.

The mule stable to the right of the house, is higher and narrower than those intended for cows.

> Take the path to the chapel and continue on the road about 20 meters to the house with blue shutters. This road follows the route of the old Vissoie-Ayer mule track.

### 10. House with blue shutters



House with blue shutters

This old house has kept its charm. It probably dates from the seventeenth century and is the subject of several stories that the villagers transmit from generation to generation.

It is said that the house was haunted. At one time, at night, the doors opened by themselves and a clanking chain noise rose from the cellar. Apparently Fari-

net, a famous counterfeiter may have been hidden in this house by the Epiney family from Ayer who brought him up from Sierre, on a cart, between two bundles of straw. This family had a nickname: *les Farines* (the flour). A native of Aosta, then established in Valais, Joseph-Samuel Farinet (1845-1880) was known as a smuggler and counterfeiter. He mainly produced twenty centime pieces that he distributed to the population. Sentenced to four years in prison, he hid in various valleys in Valais. Several villages in Valais claim to have been on his route.

Continue along this road and look to the right, where the wall of the Fournier house (a family that is evoked further on), has original lime mortar and iron joints. This plaster is both aesthetically pleasing and durable.

> Continue 50 meters to the stone basin and into the woods

### 11. Losier Path

This path, situated above the basin indicates the boundary that separates the hamlets of La Combaz and of Cuimey. The path or "Tsablo", as it was called in the local dialect, was a common path that was used by people and animals. It would be used to go to the fields and to slide down the wood.



Losier path today

Each village had its paths with rights of way to be paid that were established by the village association. In the past, each blade of grass mattered. Crossing fields or meadows was strictly forbidden. Routes and rights of way ensured the proper functioning of land use. The path was used for driving goats, and cows were allowed to graze there. Unlike cows, goats did not go up to the mountain pasture in summer. The children kept them in the village. Their sour milk, was used for personal consumption. Sometimes a cow was kept in the village for vacationers who wanted to drink fresh milk and did not appreciate goat milk.

Formerly, there were only a few houses here, but many stable-barns and meadows

> Continue 20 meters to the house on the right.

## 12. Fournier House

This house probably dates from the seventeenth century and presents an interesting architectural ensemble(structure) that has not changed much over time. The house is known by the inhabitants of Losier under the name Maison Fournier. The history of this area and of the Fournier family were closely related.



Fournier House today

Florentin Fournier, who was appointed as a teacher in Mission, met his future wife Emilie Melly there. Hired as a teacher six months a year, he worked in parallel for a company of Sierre, watching over road construction work on the Vissoie-Ayer road, between 1908 and 1912 and set up his office in Losier. The Vissoie-Ayer road was opened in 1912, and the Ayer-Zinal road in 1951.

Seduced by the place in 1923 Florentin Fournier bought this house where he lived with his family, part of the year. Later, his son acquired the neighbouring house.

At fifty, Florentin Fournier, then a building contractor, obtained a federal diploma and left teaching. He drew the plans of the Mission Chapel in 1930 and helped build the Place(square) de la Fête in Vissoie in 1936.

> Return to the main Vissoie-Ayer road and go on to the chapel of Cuimey.



Fournier House, in 1923

# 13. Chapel of Saint-Nicolas

The Cuimey chapel is dedicated to Saint-Nicolas. This building, originally an oratory, was described as a chapel in 1954. It was built in the early eighteenth century. The wooden steeple, typical of the Val d'Anniviers, houses a single bell.

The central part of the altar is occupied by a statue of Saint-Nicolas as a mitred and gloved bishop. He carries a book in which we see the three golden apples that, according to legend, would have enabled him to provide for three poor girls, who would otherwise have been destined to prostitution. The statue has a stick in its right hand.

The statues on the two-level altar, surrounding Saint-Nicolas, have not been kept in their original order: Saint Pierre, Saint-Felix (inscription), Saint-Jacques Majeur (inscription), Saint Jean-Baptiste (animal skin), Sainte-Catherine (wheel) and Sainte-Euphémie (two lions). Aside from the altar, there are large statues of Saint-Francis of Assi-

"The chapel of Cuimey is a fine example of the religious heritage of the valley..."

si, Saint-Joseph with the Child Jesus and Sainte-Teresa, as well as a figure in plaster.

The altar is decorated with painting that imitates marble. Note the

wooden hands that serve as candle holders. A simple iron gate protects the altarpiece and statues.

The chapel of Cuimey is a fine example of the religious heritage of the valley, because of its location, its architecture and the furnishings.

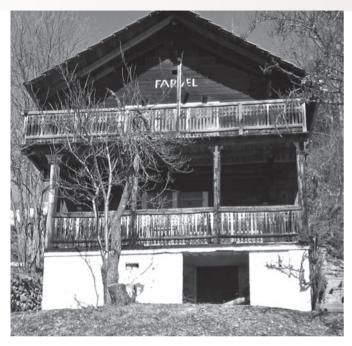


The chapel in the past

Observe the notch in the outside wall, prior to 1912, which allowed for the passage of carts, between the chapel and a house. The latter was rebuilt higher up, during the construction of the current road. Both cellars beneath the chapel belong to the "Société" of Cuimey whose statute dates from the old regulations of 1879.

> From the chapel, you can see the next location on the opposite side of the road.

### 14. Doctor's House



The Doctor's House today

This house, called "Chalet Farvel" (a contraction of the word "farewell", in English and adieu in French (goodbye), is known by the inhabitants of Cuimey as the Doctor's House.

Emil Schleiniger, a young doctor of Swiss German origin, practiced from 1935 to 1938 in Anniviers. Living in Vissoie, with his wife who was a nurse and their two children, he was one of the first doctors to live in the valley. In 1938 he published a thesis on tuberculosis and diseases that are common in the Val d'Anniviers.

A daughter of the doctor remembers "the Clinique de la Gougra" which was installed in Vissoie, on the site of the current medical



Members of the Emil Schleiniger and Rigobert Melly families, circa 1940

centre, during the construction of the Moiry dam, between 1954 and 1958.

Upon completion of his mandate, Emil Schleiniger bought this house from its many owners. One of them, Louis Genoud, has left his name with the date 1915 on an outside wall. The doctor and his family have kept the spirit of the past of the house.

➤ To get to the next location, go down the alley adjacent to the chapel.

Observe the *grenier* and *raccard* located side by side, to the left of the lane.

> Continue a few meters up to the house of the « Société » of Cuimey which is on the left.

# 15. «Société du village» House of Cuimey



« Société du village » House today

The « Société du village » of Cuimey is a consortage, composed of various members who have acquired through inheritance, the rights recorded and recognized by the assembly. In the past, each village had its own association which regulated the rights of access to common goods. These rights were only transmitted to the eldest member of each family.

Unlike La Combaz which was a community, Cuimey was part of a "neighbourhood community" (communauté de voisinage), more like a private company with no political affiliation, but with a similar organization including a house in the village, a wine cellar, jointly owned goods and even a bread oven. Erasme Zufferey, in his book "Le passé du val d'Anniviers" refers to "Quimey la Ville" (the city) and "Quimey la Crête" (on top) in the 1300s. "Quimey la Crête" was located above the current road and "Quimey la Ville" below.

Association members meet twice a year for the Rogation days, in May, and on the day of Saint-Jacques for the accounts. The "Rogation" from the Latin "rogatio" (request) indicating the three days preceding Ascension where processions, accompanied by prayers, were supposed to attract divine protection for crops and animals.

The «Société du village» of Cuimey celebrates its patron, Saint-Jacques, the third Sunday of July, a day that ends in front of the wine cellar where different generations compete in the game of

"morra". This old game consists in announcing numbers in the local *patois* language. The winner is the player who guesses the figure for the total shown by the fingers of the players.

"The generations compete in the game of morra. This old game consists in announcing numbers in the local patois language. The winner is the player who guesses the figure for the total shown by the fingers of the players...."

The «Société du village» of

Cuimey possesses the vineyard from which the wine kept under the chapel is made. The vin du Glacier(glacier wine) as it is called, is served on special occasions and for the Corpus Christi procession. It is kept in barrels, which are never completely emptied. Each year new wine of the Malvoisie, Hermitage or Rèze varieties is added.

On the morning of Corpus Christi, the Fife and Drum band from Mission comes to sound the reveille (awakening) in Cuimey, Les Morands and La Combaz. By late afternoon, they reach Vissoie, after Vespers, and according to custom, they stop at La Combaz for a small snack, at Cuimey for a glass or two of wine and a cup of broth in Mission. In front the house of the «Société du village» of Cuimey an ancient

# **Suggested visits**



The «Société du village» of Cumey in 1936, inauguration of the flag

stone with a carved "cup" from the "Seja" a mayen above Cuimey is exhibited. The discovery of a praying figure and different small cups carved into the stone suggests the existence of a place of worship that dates from Neolithic times. According to an ancient popular belief, still very present today, these carved cups were used to receive the blood of the victims, in ritual sacrifices practiced by the Druids and Celts.

> Continue your tour in the lower village where several old houses are located.

### Vissoie

> Walk along the Losier path, until the road above, and continue towards Vissoie.

This route offers a splendid view of the villages on the other bank of the Navisence. Discover Vissoie by following its historical path.

### Mission

> From Cuimey, at the bottom of the village, follow the road to Mission.

Discover this village by following its historical path.



Losier in 1936



Children of La Combaz, in the 1930's

Cover photo: Old postcard of Cuimey Backcover: Cuimey towards 1950

### Texts

Claudia Savioz, with the collaboration of the inhabitants of les Morands, La Combaz, Losier and Cuimey.

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### Images and photos

Family albums of Claivaz, Crettaz, Savioz, Solioz, Zufferey; old photos of Ghislaine Parry Fournier and Carla Fournier, Suzanne Epiney; collection of old postcards of Marco Epiney; archives E. Crettaz-Stürzel, Zinal, reproductions of the Maison Rurale Valaisanne, Brique/Sion; recent photos of Claudia Savioz and Adriana Tenda Claude.

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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 »





