

The station and its cafés

Stopping here!

Acquin railway station also served the surrounding villages of Quelmes, Boisdingham, Westbécourt, Bouvelinghem and Quercamps... with, according to an engineer's estimations in 1875, just over **60 000 passengers per year, each travelling an average of 14 kilometres.**

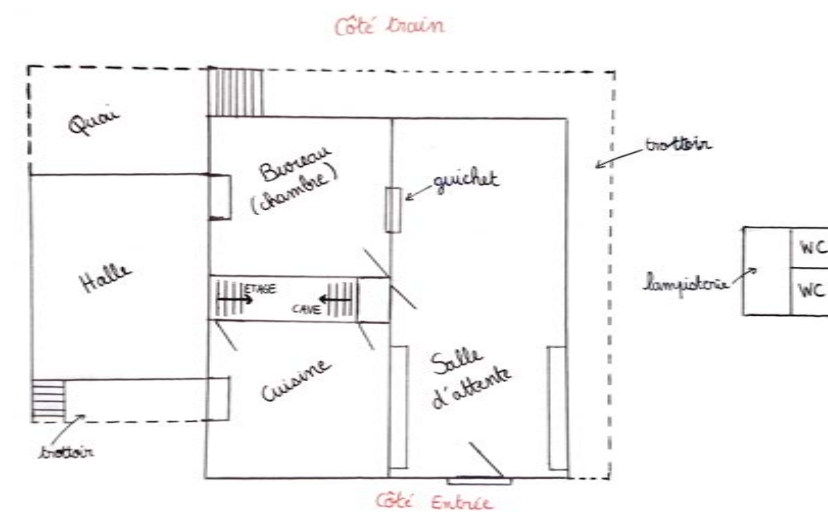
This red-brick building was **typical of the other stations on the Anvin-Calais line.** Square in shape, it had two storeys. The **waiting room** and ticket window occupied part of the ground floor, while the upper floor was used for the **station master's living quarters.** There used to be an adjoining building to the left: this was a **goods warehouse** which opened onto the **passenger platform.** Another much smaller building, set apart, was used for storing lamps, wrenches and other equipment for track maintenance. It also housed the Ladies and Gentlemen's toilets!

Like many such buildings, Acquin's station is now a private home, while others **have been converted and now house** the town hall (in Remilly-Wirquin) or Tourist Office (in Lumbres).

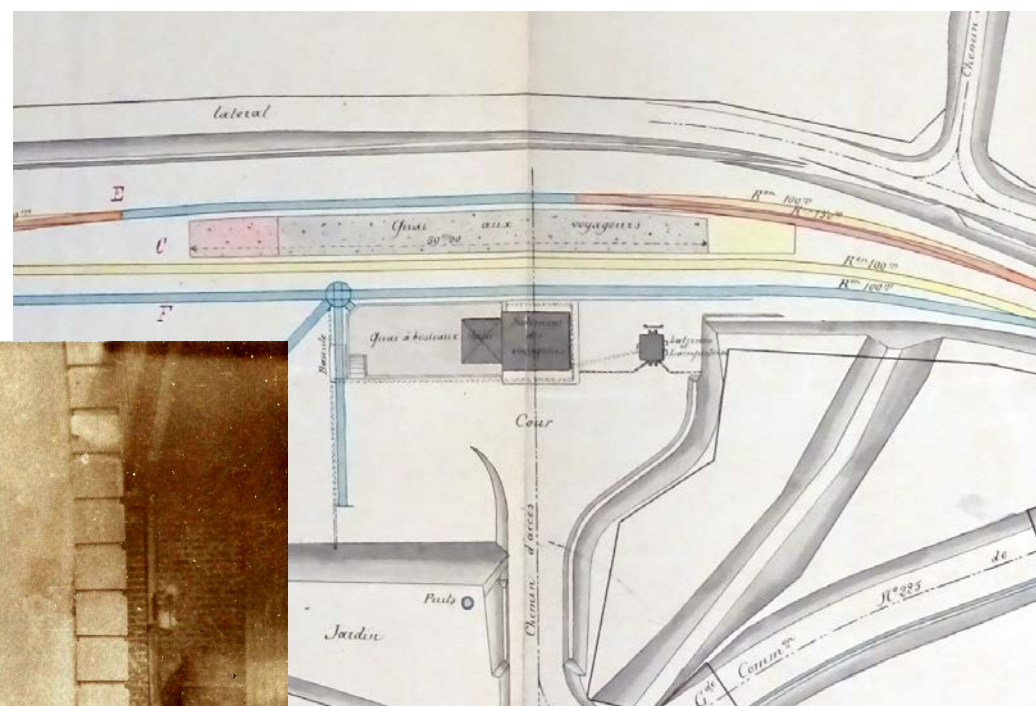
Odette and Roger Méteyer in front of Acquin station, around 1935. The warehouse can be seen to the right (coll. Arnauld Méteyer).



Acquin station around 1910: to the left we can see the toilets and lamp house (postcard, coll. CCHP).



Plan of the ground floor of the station (drawn by Mathilde Duval, based on information provided by Arnauld Méteyer).



Plan of the station area in 1889: we can see the lamp house to the right, the platform for livestock to the left, and the passenger platform at the front (ANMT, 2000 024 3761).

The café, a popular meeting place.

The farm and factory workers were great beer drinkers, which explains the large number of cafés, especially prior to WW1. In their heyday, there were **11 cafés in the village for a population of 600.** It is no surprise then that when the station was built, two new cafés sprung up nearby. **The two train drivers would stop the train to get a coffee there.** The café owner knew exactly what time they would drop in, making sure there was a hot cup of coffee waiting for them!

Cafés would be identifiable by their **sign** (which can still be seen on the right-hand building) or by the bars and **rings in the wall** which were used to tether horses. Although a **licence** was required to operate a café, some houses could serve drinks by simply declaring it to the authorities. It was a much-appreciated source of income.

Cafés weren't just a place **to drink beer or wine** though (or even the excellent **mead** produced by Mme Normand in Rue du Tilleuil). People would play cards or dance, and sometimes wedding parties were held there... in fact the café was **a meeting place for the whole village.**



Map identifying the cafés and homes selling drinks in the village in the second half of the 20th century.



Marceau Méteyer and Jeannine Gazda, posing for a photo with their relatives in front of the café that was just down from the station on the left, on 22 August 1951 – their wedding day (coll. Arnauld Méteyer)..

But **when the Anvin-Calais line was closed down**, there was less business for cafés around the station which resulted in their closure too.