

0 - Foreword

The mission of the association is to promote the study of French railways – their equipment, the lines they operated, the events and activities connected to them – as they were before 1938 and the creation of the S.N.C.F.

This short summary is intended to help non-French-speaking people understand purpose of the association and the benefits of becoming a member. It is also intended to facilitate the registration of foreign *amateurs* who just want to receive the association's magazine.

However it is not the intention of the association to distribute literature and documents in English. This is a very difficult job which is beyond the scope of the group.

1 - Purpose and Activities of the Association

The *Cercle Historique du Rail Français* (Historical Society for French Railways) was established 1 March 2010. It aims to popularize and promote the study of the history of French railways before 1938, making available to members documents and information pertaining to French railways before the creation of the SNCF.

The association's semi-annual magazine reveals the history of French railways, from the first line between Saint-Etienne and Andrézieux up to the merger of the great companies, the Alsace-Lorraine, Est, Nord, Ouest and Etat, PO, Midi and PLM, to create the SNCF in 1938.

The core principle of the association is to share freely, not only any primary documentation we might have, but also the fruits our own researches, so that we may all delve more deeply into the history of French railways.

By end of 2018, the association counted about 450 members.

2 - The Association's Magazine

The early newsletters of most associations are rather unsophisticated. On the other hand, the desire to create our own "magazine that we would otherwise never have" was one of the primary motivations for the founding of the association.

Rails d'Autrefois

(i.e. Rails from the Past) is intended to be a quite professional quality magazine from the very first issue, printed partly in colour on good quality paper, offering over 90 photos and diagrams throughout at least 64 pages! This is our best business card. Moreover, many members join just to receive the magazine, since it is not available at any newsstand. The magazine is an internal publication, available only to the members of our association. Back issues are available for new members.

[Download contents of back issues](#) (French text only)

The editors try to include articles on each of the major companies in every issue of the magazine. The topics are balanced between locomotives, passenger cars, and rolling stock. Articles on specific railway lines and fixed infrastructure also appear.

The magazine is the result of all who contribute. Anyone can submit an article, as long as it is in French (we accept papers in English - they were translated for publication). All subjects are welcome, though preference is given to well-illustrated original research.

Newly founded societies usually publish rather unsophisticated newsletters. The creation of our society, on the other hand, was decided by the desire to take into our own hands the creation of the "the magazine that we would otherwise never have."

3 - Why Joining us ?

To receive our bi-annual magazine, of course! Both issues for 2018 will be 64 pages long (with no advertisements) and included articles covering all of the *anciennes compagnies*...

To join a society of enthusiasts, being able to exchange information (via the Internet or in more traditional ways), and to meet others who share your interests in French railway history...

To access rare and unusual documentation...

... and finally have a real alternative to those other magazines, mainly focused on the recent past and contemporary French Railways!

4 - Registration and Membership Fees

41 - Membership

Memberships are for the calendar year. The 2019 membership year will include issues n°19 and n°20 of *Rails d'Autrefois*, to be released in June and November 2019, and special issue n°7, dealing with refrigerator and insulated railway vans. Regarding 2018 members, renewal for 2019 is requested since late February.

[Download 2018 membership application form](#) (French text only)

Back issues from 2010 to 2018 (n°1 through n°18) are available to members, while supplies last (see below).

42 - Types of Membership and 2019 fees

There are no supplementary postage fees for members residing outside of France.

Honorary member & benefactor (membre bienfaiteur):

Minimum fee €250. Does not give any voting rights.

Full Member (membre actif):

Full members commit themselves in the association activities, the first commitment being a financial support to the association. They have voting rights at both our annual and special general meetings. €40 (minimum) contribution for 2019.

To join the association as a Full Member your application must be approved by the Board.

Affiliate Member (membre sympathisant):

This level of membership is for those who just want the magazine. Does not give any voting rights. Fee €25.

43 - Purchasing back issues

Regular issues must be purchased by the year.

€25 per year: 2010 - n° 1 & 2

2011 - n° 3 & 4

2012 - n° 5 & 6

2013 - n° 7 & 8

2014 - n° 9 & 10

2015 - n° 11 & 12

2016 - n° 13 & 14

2017 - n° 15 & 16

2018 - n° 17 & 18

Special issues - €15 each, except N° 5 & N° 6 (double size) €25

2012 - n° 1 (Les 800 du Midi)

2013 - n° 2 (Les voitures à impériale)

2014 - n° 3 (Les Atlantic françaises)

2015 - n° 4 (Autour des wagons)

2016-2017 - n° 5 (Les wagons USA1918) (double size - equivalent to 2 copies regarding P&P)

2018 - n° 6 (Les locomotives 030 Bourbonnais du PLM)

Overseas postage and packing fees:

1 copy €6

2 to 4 copies €8

5 to 15 copies €14

16 copies & more €21 (fixed fee)

5 - Method of payment

Bank transfer (in euro currency):

IBAN FR76 1562 9026 3200 0206 6280 127 BIC CMCIFR2A

Please send transfer acknowledgement to railsdautrefois@gmail.com and do not miss to mention your detailed postal address for shipment.

PayPal or credit card:

Please add €2 and send your payment to railsdautrefois@gmail.com and do not miss to mention your detailed postal address for shipment.

6 - The Web Documentation Area

This page showcases our members' personal collections, as well as collections donated to our

association.

The association is notable for having several founding members who are webmasters of excellent personal websites dedicated to aspects of French railway history pre-1938. Those websites we regard as essential references and offering a promise of long term sustainability can benefit from a link in the *L'univers documentaire* page of the association's website.

These sites remain independent of the society and are the property of their founders, but they are also concrete examples of how information about our special interests can be made available to the public.

So far, three websites are part of the *L'univers documentaire* page:

- [FRANCE FERROVIAIRE](#) , a permanent collaborative project aiming to put together a database on French historic railway stations, coupled with a photographic database. Launched in 2005 the database currently lists almost 17,000 French train stations.
- [WikiPLM](#) , an ongoing online database project centered on obtaining and publishing all information available on the Paris-Lyon-Méditerranée company - aka PLM (1857-1937).
- [WikiMIDI](#) , an ongoing online database project centered on obtaining and publishing all information available on the *Chemin de Fer du Midi* (1857-1937).
- [WikiPO](#) , an ongoing online database project centered on obtaining and publishing all information available on the *Chemins de Fer de Paris à Orléans* (1840-1937).

(Translation by Christopher Martin - USA member)