



Stations in wartime 1914-1918

**International Colloquium, Paris
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 3/4/5 September 2014**

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This call for papers will run from 1 October 2013 to 1 March 2014.

Proposed contributions (title, outline, including an indication of prospective sources, brief CV) should be sent by 1 March 2014 to: contact@ahicf.com

Potential authors will be informed of the programme committee's decision by 1 May 2014.

Foreword

By focussing on stations as network hubs and major points of interchange, the colloquium should provide useful input for historical research into the First World War, as an example of total war, raising questions with regard to the endless and growing flows of men, goods, materials and mail, the forms of mobility occurring in practice in a war considered to have reached stalemate and immobility by the end of 1914. By bringing together historians specialising in technical systems and wartime economies, in architecture, warfare, cultures of mobility, behaviour patterns, literature and art, from or conducting research into the different warmongering nations, the colloquium should highlight the importance of transport, not only in a wartime economy but also as a factor colouring the perception and remembrance of war, addressing how stations came to have landmark status for war and soldiers and, by extension, examining how troops travelling in uniform played a part in fostering a culture of war.

In heritage terms and in the way these places are perceived, the colloquium should provide insights into the historical role and enduring legacy of major urban stations, and remind today's citizens and those in charge of historical monuments and urban development of the need to be conscious, not only of the existence of the technical and landscape heritage represented by urban and rural stations or freight yards but also of the disappearing nature of this heritage.

As a reflection of AHICF's dual scientific and cultural focus (research and its dissemination, furthering cultural and historical knowledge), the colloquium primarily targets the scientific community (history, social sciences) and heritage professionals; it is also open to other interested publics (rail sector and other transport professionals, members of learned societies), and anybody else wishing to attend. No charge is levied for registration at AHICF colloquia.

The colloquium will also be a chance especially for the younger generation of researchers to report on their research in the presence of older, more experienced colleagues and converse with people from a variety of backgrounds representative of the societal demands they are likely to face, particularly in commemorative contexts, in their future careers.

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Call for papers

Stations in wartime 1914-1918

International Colloquium, Paris
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 3/4/5 September 2014

Call for papers (English version)

This call for papers will run from 1 October 2013 to 1 March 2014.
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Potential authors will be informed of the programme committee's decision by 1 May 2014.

In the First World War, railway stations found themselves cast in a role they had never had before and were never to have again, as transit points and anterooms between the front line and the rear¹. Stations have always housed a multiplicity of frequently changing, not necessarily structured functions. They are exchange points, places of discovery and social intercourse but also of order, organisation and innovation, of resistance and conflict², interchange hubs, collections of buildings and equipment, workplaces and, last not but least, places of remembrance.

By taking stations as its focal point, the colloquium should add to our knowledge of the history of the First World War, as an example of total war, by raising questions with regard to the endless and growing flows of men, goods, materials and mail, the forms of mobility occurring in practice in a war considered to have reached stalemate by the end of 1914. How did stations cope with the logistics, on so many different yet interrelated scales (goods, civilian and military personnel), between home and front? The aim is to highlight the importance of transport not only in a wartime economy but also as a factor colouring the perception and remembrance of war, addressing how stations came to have landmark status for war and soldiers and, as a further stage, examining how troops travelling in uniform were conducive to a culture of war as well as to a new trend-setting experience of individual and collective mobility.

By harnessing the various approaches and specialities vital to a greater understanding, the colloquium will provide an opportunity to analyse and better appreciate the reciprocal links between railway history and the history of war, only rarely the subject of now rather old academic research or isolated monographs on specific sites. It will flag up the importance of transport for wartime economies, for the perception and remembrance of war and its influence on mobility.

¹ A critical bibliography on the subject will be published on the website www.ahicf.com. By way of example, see the following major works published by members of the programme committee: Karen Bowie, *Les Grandes Gares parisiennes au XIX^e siècle*, Paris, DAAVP, 1987; Ralf Roth (dir., with M.-N. Polino), *The City and the Railway in Europe*, Ashgate, 2003; (dir., with Karl Schlögel), *Neue Wege in ein neues Europa, Geschichte und Verkehr im 20. Jahrhundert*, Campus Verlag, 2009; Stéphanie Sauget, *A la recherche des pas perdus. Une histoire des gares parisiennes*, Paris, Tallandier, 2009; Emmanuelle Cronier, *Permissionnaires dans la Grande Guerre*, Belin, 2013.

² Michael C. Keith, Steve Pile, *Place and the politics of identity*, Routledge, 1993; issues in this connection with regard to urban stations in Ralf Roth (dir., with M.-N. Polino), *The City and the Railway in Europe*, Ashgate, 2003; same author, *Das Jahrhundert der Eisenbahn. Die Herrschaft über Raum und Zeit 1800 – 1914*, Thorbecke, 2005 and *Die Eisenbahn und die Revolution 1848*, Berlin, DB AG, 1999.

By contrast, the symbolic role of urban stations has been addressed in a number of much remarked recent works in different specialist areas. The colloquium will offer an opportunity to analyse the various facets and forms of this role during the war and the immediate post-war reconstruction period, and the way in which war is represented and remembered, and comparing this with the normal workings of passenger and freight stations and their production systems.

To this end, the colloquium hopes to bring together a variety of different players around the theme of stations: historians, researchers in social sciences and the humanities specialising in war, technical systems and economy, organisation and management, industry and consumption, architecture, cultures of mobility, space and time, behaviour and forms of presentation. Experts in heritage sciences, iconographic analysis, history of art and artists, literature and autobiographies will all be welcome to contribute to the proposed multidisciplinary exchanges.

The colloquium is, by its very nature, international and covers a geographical area extending to all those countries involved in the First World War, either on the sending or receiving ends of troops and workers or the theatres of military operations. International comparisons between these and other countries fall within the scope of the event.

1. Exceptional loads

The successive troop mobilisation plans studied by Pierre Lepage³ show how, since the American Civil War and the 1870 Franco-Prussian War, stations and rail transport came to play an increasingly strategic role in military thinking. In the pre-war period, one of the recurrent concerns of military leaders was whether rolling stock and infrastructure would be able to cope with their needs and handle the requisite movements of troops, horses and arms. One of the objectives of this colloquium is therefore to see how theoretical forward planning measured up to the many logistical challenges of keeping supplies flowing to such a wide variety of battlefields.

Over and above their role at the beginning of the war (mobilisation, troop concentration), stations as points of departure, arrival or transit for soldiers travelling by train are to be analysed, irrespective of whether the journey was out to the front, back on leave, to recuperate or as stretcher cases, or as staging points in the transport of military equipment (arms and supplies).

The role of stations in military operations, their design and organisation corresponded to their role in civilian transport, where conditions changed and restrictions were imposed by law or force of circumstance for the duration of the war, not to mention by evacuations or forced exodus, including in enemy-occupied zones⁴.

2. Stations as anterooms between home and front

An anteroom is a place in itself but a place through which people have to pass. This image is illustrative of the role played by stations as a functional interface on the way to and from the front, an interface taking up increasingly more space and requiring ever more sophisticated equipment, but specifically organised to limit waiting time or at least make it more bearable: soldiers waiting in stations were a favourite subject for artists, a “sitting target” for their talents.

³ ‘Armées et chemins de fer en France’, *Revue d’histoire des chemins de fer*, No. 15 (Autumn 1996), Proceedings of AHICF’s 7th scientific round table (19 October 1995), in cooperation with the Historical Records Department of the French Army, see the part entitled ‘Les chemins de fer français à l’épreuve de la guerre : 1914-1918’, ‘De la mobilisation à la concentration : le plan de transport français en août 1914’, by Pierre Lepage.

⁴ See here the recent colloquium: ‘Sur les chemins de la Grande Guerre’, Guise, 22 and 23 March 2012.

Photographs of the hordes of conscripts assembled at the Gare de l'Est have long come to symbolise summer 1914. Stations, which started out as gathering points, gradually as the war dragged on became waiting areas, service centres: reception of conscripts and troops on leave, relief agencies, entertainment, etc. It is in or near stations that artists and photographers, including postcard manufacturers, portrayed soldiers while, by contrast, written or oral records placed the emphasis on stations as staging points in each individual journey, as well as scenes of alternating partings and reunions. Stations were also where people came for news, to collect letters or parcels from the family, to pick up supplies or food. As anterooms on the way to and from the front, both literally and figuratively, they typified the sights, scenes and practices of the time⁵.

The station experience was fundamental. As places of transit and discovery, it was here that displaced peoples or foreign troops had their first real encounter with urban France. For the local populations, stations were where they saw their first foreigners, troops, colonial and foreign workers, Allies (British, American), and later, prisoners of war. The recent inclusion in historiographical works of the multinational, multicultural aspects of the war has put a completely new perspective on the role played by stations in shaping the representations of “otherness”, during and by virtue of the war.

Stations also had a social dimension: a place for contacts, interchange between different groups – conscripts from different backgrounds, designated railway personnel, commanding officers, local residents, women working for relief organisations – but they were also fraught with tensions that could boil over into fistcuffs in a confined and regulated space. Stations were also a hotbed of transgression, in particular in 1917, with the disorderly behaviour of soldiers under orders or on leave, which spoke volumes with regard to their endurance and their attitude to discipline⁶.

3. Stations as regulators

‘Regulating’, one of the chapters in the Georges Duhamel’s *Civilisation* (1919), offers a striking vision of the changes of scale and complexity that can prove so disorienting for individuals thrown into a station environment, where movements of objects, men and machines are supposed to obey rules and produce order. Organising rail transport in wartime is a complex, constantly changing technical and economic business, a mixture of tried and tested methods and radical innovation. How does such a system work, to what extent is it capable (or not) of catering to hitherto unknown needs?

Making two separate systems work together – the railway and armed forces – in operating rail services soon became a major challenge in the face of the requirements expressed. The State inevitably tightened its control over the railways. To shift whole units, materials and supplies, sustainable technical solutions had to be found, not only for rolling stock but also for the management of staff, flows or technology transfers, first British and later American in the case of France. Requirements with regard to raw materials and their conveyance - the typical example being timber for the trenches – culminated in changes in the notion of public contracts and the relationship between transport economics and the State.

⁵ The exhibitions to be staged by AHICF in 2014 will give pride of place to paintings by Julien Le Blant (1851-1936), Joseph-Félix Bouchor (1853-1937), Maximilien Luce (1858-1941), Théophile Alexandre Steinlen (1859-1923), Albert Herter (1871-1950) representing soldiers in stations.

⁶ Emmanuelle Cronier, *Permissionnaires dans la Grande Guerre*, *op. cit.*

New stations were the most immediately apparent symbol of how the rail network adapted to cater to war, the wartime economy and supply movement needs⁷: cases in point were the huge installations sprawling over vast areas of the countryside, especially following the influx of American troops (Gièvres, Is-sur-Tille), all of which formed extra links in a network connecting the ports along the western Coast to the different fronts. But “logistical requirements” in the true sense of the term also meant adaptation of existing stations, close to the front or back up the line, to enable them to cope with flows of people and goods and with traffic peaks of totally different kinds and proportions to those encountered in peacetime, the most obvious and most distressing examples being repatriation of the wounded or the bodies of the dead⁸.

4. Construction and reconstruction

The counterpart to these new stations, some of which did not survive the end of the war and the remains of which can now only be seen from the air, was those that were destroyed and later rebuilt. As with other public works in the north and east of France, the plans and style of these reconstructed stations were the subject of discussion, the result often favouring a regional approach, and fostering the emergence both of sustainable options and of a new generation of architects⁹.

At the same time, the enduring presence of the major urban stations and their historical and symbolical role during the war has given them war memorial status. The history of how stations came to be landmarks commemorating war and the soldiers that fought in it – veterans or victims – should encompass the whole of the 20th century. “Le départ des poilus” (French conscripts off to war) is the title of the painting offered to the Compagnie de l’Est by its artist, Albert Herter, and unveiled in the main concourse of Paris-Est station in 1926. When the station was extended, it was decided that it should be reproduced exactly as before, with the western façade crowned by an allegorical statue of the City of Strasbourg, mirrored on the eastern façade by a seated statue personifying Verdun sporting a French army helmet.

Rail-based tours to regions devastated by the war and to military cemeteries, which were to be the first form of remembrance tour, anniversary visits by American veterans, and memorials to the fallen have made stations symbols of remembrance, part of the remembrance business. Not only are they memorials for railway personnel, they are also historical and geographical landmarks, monuments to memory¹⁰. The continued presence of the main urban stations should not however be allowed to overshadow the historical role of other stations. Today’s citizens and those in charge of historical monuments and urban development need to be conscious, not only of the existence of the technical and scenic heritage represented by urban and rural stations or freight yards but also of the disappearing nature of this heritage.

⁷ Unpublished references: Anne Desplantes, ‘Les grands réseaux de chemin de fer français pendant et après la Première Guerre Mondiale, 1914-1921’, thesis, Jean-Jacques Becker, director, Université de Paris X Nanterre - Paris Ouest La Défense, 1997, 2 volumes; Didier Malavialle, ‘Les chemins de fer français pendant la Première Guerre Mondiale - Aspect économique et financier: Les cas du Midi et du PLM’, thesis, Jules Maurin, director, Université de Montpellier III - Paul Valéry, 1984, 2 volumes.

⁸ See the following unpublished reference: Julien Blain, ‘Les trains sanitaires en France pendant les guerres de 1870, de 1914-1918 et la campagne de mai-juin 1940’, medical thesis, 1994.

⁹ See, for example, in Eric Bussière *et al* (ed.), *La Grande Reconstruction. Reconstruire le Pas de Calais après la Grande Guerre : Actes du colloque d’Arras du 8 au 10 novembre 2000*, Arras, Archives départementales du Pas-de-Calais, 2002; Jean-Claude Vigato, *L’Architecture régionaliste : France 1890-1950*, Paris, Norma, 1994; same author, ‘Gustave Umbdenstock, professeur d’architecture’, in ‘Ecole Polytechnique et architecture’, *Bulletin de la SABIX*, 16 (1996), p. 29-50 [web reference : Jean-Claude Vigato, ‘Gustave Umbdenstock, professeur d’architecture’, *Bulletin de la Sabix* [on line], 16 | 1996, first put on line on 22 February 2012, consulted on 15 May 2013. URL : <http://sabix.revues.org/804>].

¹⁰ See: www.lieuxdusouvenir.com, a site that gives a list of all the memorials on French railway property and details of the texts and names engraved on them.

Scientific responsibility

The colloquium will be under the patronage of a Scientific Committee, which will be consulted throughout the preparatory stages and will contribute to finalising the programme and ensuring the best possible scientific standards for the event in general (good mix of specialisms, international dimension, interrelated issues).

Scientific committee:

- **Etienne Auphan**, emerit professor of Geography, Université de Paris-Sorbonne
- **Christophe Bouneau**, professor of History, Université Michel-de-Montaigne – Bordeaux 3
- **Karen Bowie**, professor of Art History, architectural history and cultures, École nationale supérieure d'architecture de Paris-La Villette, head of AHTTEP (UMR AUSser 3339)
- **François Caron**, emerit professor of History, Université de Paris-Sorbonne, Honorary President of the AHICF scientific committee
- **Christian Chevandier**, professor of History, Université du Havre
- **Anthony Heywood**, Chair of history, University of Aberdeen
- **Henry Jacolin**, honorary diplomat, President of the International Association for Railway History
- **Susanne Kill**, historian, Deutsche Bahn, Berlin
- **Pierre Lepage**, honorary engineer, historian
- **Michèle Merger**, Honorary Research Fellow in History, C.N.R.S., President of the AHICF scientific committee
- **Rainer Mertens**, historian, curator, DB Museum, Nuremberg
- **Arnaud Passalacqua**, assistant professor, Université Paris-Diderot
- **Georges Ribeill**, sociologist, honorary research director, École nationale des Ponts et Chaussées (LATTIS)
- **Prof. Dr Ralf Roth**, historian, Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität, Frankfurt-am-Main
- **Pierre Schoentjes**, professor of French Literature, Université de Ghent
- **Paul Smith**, historian, direction générale des Patrimoines, ministère de la Culture et de la Communication
- **Laurent Tissot**, professor of History, Université de Neuchâtel
- **Paul van Heesvelde**, historian, Special PhD Fellow - Research Foundation Flanders (FWO) - Vrije Universiteit Brussel / Université Libre de Bruxelles, Bruxelles
- **Dominique Viart**, professor of French Literature, Université Lille 3, membre de l'IUF
- **Jean-Pierre Williot**, professor of History, Université François-Rabelais (Tours)
- **Henri Zuber**, Heritage Chief Curator, Head of Service des archives et de la documentation de la SNCF

The programme committee will make its selection from the proposals submitted and take scientific responsibility for the colloquium.

Programme Committee:

- **Karen Bowie**, professor of Art History, architectural history and cultures, École nationale supérieure d'architecture de Paris-La Villette, head of AHTTEP (UMR AUSser 3339), member of the AHICF scientific committee
- **Christian Chevandier**, professor of History, Université du Havre
- **Emmanuelle Cronier**, assistant professor, Université de Picardie – Jules Verne
- **Prof. Anthony Heywood**, Chair of history, University of Aberdeen
- **Arnaud Passalacqua**, assistant professor, Université Paris-Diderot, member of the AHICF scientific committee

- **Stéphanie Sauget**, assistant professor, Université François-Rabelais – (Tours)
- **Prof. Dr Ralf Roth**, Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität

Publications

Colloquium proceedings:

Authors of papers are invited to submit an article to the Committee of the *Revue d'histoire des chemins de fer* by 31 December 2014 (publication in 2015).

Other publications:

A work entitled *Gares en guerre*, containing a selection of the papers of contributing authors and members of the scientific and programme committees and a critical iconography produced from the exhibitions and research in preparation for the cultural events programme proposed in parallel by AHICF under the title “Le départ des poilus” (French conscripts off to war).

Organisation

The working languages for the colloquium will be French and English. Simultaneous translation will be provided (subject to available funds).

The Secretariat for the colloquium will be provided by AHICF,
AHICF - Association pour l'histoire des chemins de fer / French Railway Historical Society
9, rue du Château-Landon, F-75010 PARIS –
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contact@ahicf.com - www.ahicf.com

AHICF and its partners will contribute towards the **travel and accommodation costs** of colloquium speakers in Paris in proportions depending on the amounts their own institutions are able to provide. Speakers and committee members will be entitled to free lunches.

Registration at AHICF colloquia is free of charge.
