vercorin
SO CLOSE. SO WILD.

POST 10. GRAND BISSE OF SAINT–JEAN

The Grand Bisse which passes through Saint-Jean du -milieu, is one of the prides of the village. It was restored and opened in 2012. This irrigation canal with a length of about 4 km, begins at the Gougra stream below Grimentz, and ends at the Puchottaz stream in Mayoux.

The Val d'Anniviers is located in one of the driest regions of Switzerland and the Bisse is inseparable from agriculture. Until the decline of the latter in the years 1950 - 1960 the Bisse was used to water the meadows and grainfields..

Its date of construction is unknown. According to the writings of Abbot Erasmus Zufferey, it already existed more than 500 years ago. A raccard sales deed from 1475 mentions it.

The " Société du Grand Bisse " is a consortage governing water rights to the Fios, Saint-Jean and Mayoux. Chores were carried out in common. In the spring, before the water was allowed to flow, all owners were invited to "the day of the Bisse." After the winter, there was much work to clear land, larch needles, and branches and to repair damaged embankments.

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The water flowed in the Bisse between mid April and early May until late September. After the refoins the second cutting of hay, the water was stopped to prevent freezing..

From the opening of the water flow into the Bisse, it took a day for the water to reach the end. Landowners had rights according to the size of their plots, but the expression used in Anniviers of "we are at the end of the Bisse" suggests that people who are at the end of the Bisse were less advantaged. The "right to water" entitles the holder to use the Bisse water for fields for a set time. Once the watering is complete, the owner then places across a tornio, a small metal plate, to block water and direct it to the next field to be irrigated. When finished watering, the tornio was removed and the water continued to flow on.

> Next post
Stop near the Bisse, to observe the two operating stables in Saint-Jean.