The Cuckoo

№7 (3-2002)

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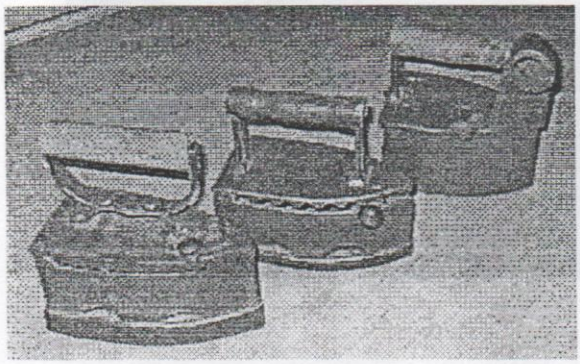
NEWS IN BRIEF

At last, after much talking, planning, hesitating and arguing the Museum took over the regular passenger operation between Kupanskoye and Pereslavl, 16 kms of track, Veksa station and shed, locomotives and rolling stock, everything in extremely poor state of repair. The first train under the new ownership ran on Wednesday, September'18, at 0815 in the morning quarter an hour late, as TY4-1984 diesel-hydraulic, used regularly on the train, suffered battery failure and had to be substituted by ESU-2a-377 diesel-mechanical.

Alexander Korsakov and Alexey Shyshin, young railway engineers from St. Petersburg, moved from Talitsy to live and work at Veksa, supervising all the regular operation and chartered diesel trains. Many problems were immediately faced, most serious being the absence of heating in the shed and living quarters. Much effort is being given to overcome this and other obstacles and to tidy up a little in the total chaos of the shed and workshops. All Museum team and volunteers embarked on the new project, as a lot has to be done before winter comes. The main internal goal is to install the new heating system in Veksa shed to allow comfortable living and working conditions in all weather. There are also two general external aims – to keep regular trains running and to prepare locomotives and rolling stock for more frequent diesel charters as soon as possible.



The Museum of Iron opened in Pererslavl in July. The private collection consists of over 130 irons of pre-electricity period, some of which are very rare. The collection is housed and exhibited in the newly restored building in the center of the town. The owner, young man called Andrew, is also keen collector of antiques and active member of the local club of historians and collectors. Close relations with Pereslavl railway Museum were soon established and collaboration started, mainly in the field of attracting visitors to the area and finding new items for collections.

The "Red Army" club has sent to Talitsy three young volunteers and a cook (!) for ten days to help work on the territory and shed. Yuri decided to use this labor for recovering second-hand sleepers from abandoned parts of the system. Using good relations with local forestry's chief hunter, he managed to obtain permission to drive the lorry into the woods, and eight full carloads of sleepers were shipped to Talitsy. Nearly half of the sleepers will be used in track repairs and reconstruction, while the rotten ones will be utilised as firewood in winter. As land legalisation of the territory, adjoining the Talitsy station, slowly moved on, it became also possible to dismantle for firewood several hundred yards of old wooden fences. This allowed the Museum team to get fully prepared for the coming winter.

To add to the fleet of XIX century ruins in the collection of Talitsy Msueum the 1896-vintage covered van was brought from Tuma in August – see separate article in this issue.

Work was continued on the rail-mounted crane, which was repaired to full operational condition and tested for 7½ tons load. When built in 1970, the crane was intended for operation either from own diesel-electric power unit or external electric supply. However, as the diesel engine was seriously vandalized, it was decided to remove it from the crane altogether. The power for the crane is supplied from the shed's electric system or by ESU-2a diesel-mechanical locomotives, which have powerful generators and are used on most breakdown and maintenance duties. Accordingly, the

ESU-2a-377 locomotive was taken over from the co-operative.

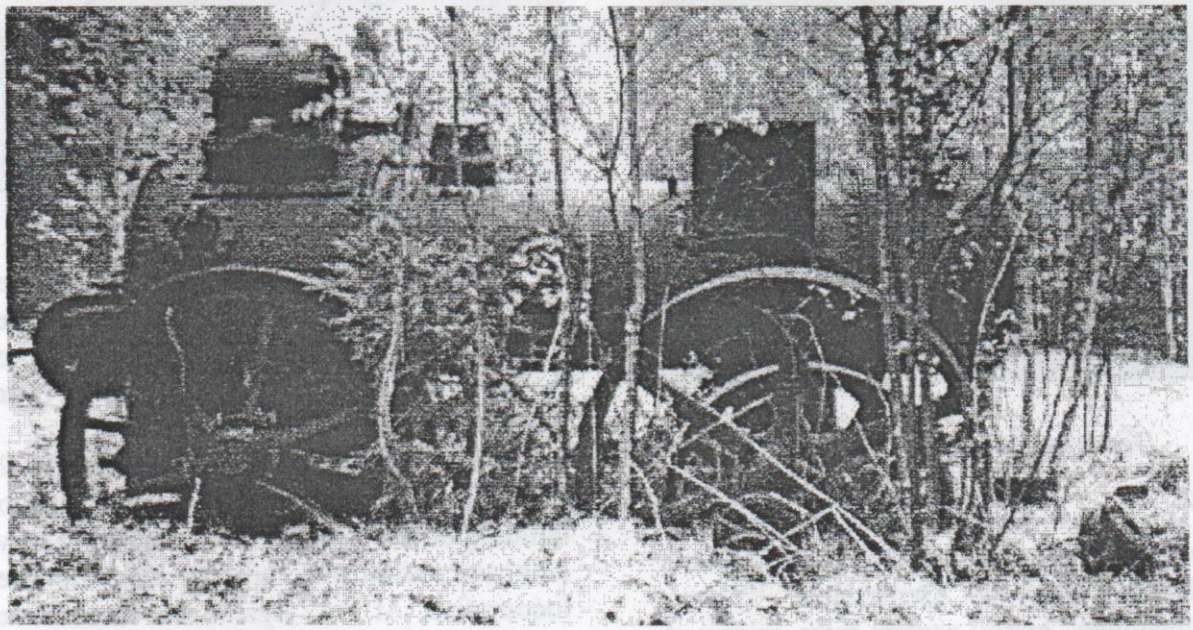
The commission of local architectural committee was received in Talitsy in mid August, for measuring of the shed building and oil-storage hut and completing the full passport of the building. This will allow propelling land legalisation of Talitsy station.

Own water supply system for Talitsy shed was finally completed and launched. The well had been dug out two years ago inside the third stall of the shed, but as local village water supply system had been working satisfactory, the installation of tubes and water pump went very slowly. When in mid August local system began to show symptoms of nearing collapse, the work on own supply speeded up. Plastic tubes were installed between the well and the water tank and water pump acquired. The own system was launched in the end of the month. Though there remains plenty of finishing work to be done, the supply works properly, and the shed no longer depends upon external water.

The hand winch trolley, very popular with visiting tourists, failed on the evening of Sunday, August'25, which was hardly a surprise after two years of intensive and reliable service. When power axle broke on enter points at Talitsy, the trolley smoothly derailed and settled in the grass, and nobody was hurt. The following Monday the trolley was dismantled, and new power axle turned, so the vehicle was back in service on Tuesday evening.

September brought rapid cooling of the weather and repeated rains. While this was too late to ensure good crops, the risk of forest and peat fires eased considerably. It is anticipated that steam operation on Pereslavl railway will be resumed in autumn.

Remains of British-built Ruston & Hornsby portable engine were discovered in the far North, in Murmansk area. Very unfortunately, the engine is in very remote location and heavily vandalised, and there is hardly any sense of removing it to the museum, the cost of transportation being far beyond the engine's value. It is believed that the portable was brought to the area by British during the Russian Civil war of 1918 – 1924, then used in GULAG logging camp and later abandoned. As the engine was discovered by a stranger, and we received only three poor quality photos and main dimensions, it was impossible to identify it properly, only "Ruston..." name could be read on the rear wheel.



Remains of Ruston & Hornsby portable engine in the woods near Murmansk

KRATOVO PIONEER RAILWAY

2002 saw the 65 anniversary of Kratovo Pioneer Railway in Moscow Eastern suburbs. To commemorate this event, we include in The Cuckoo the story of the railway by noted Pioneer Railways historian Dmitry Sutyagin.

On October'30, 1935 pioneers of Ramensky region near Moscow gathered at an annual meeting. One of the topics discussed was the call of Tiflis (Tbilisy) pioneers, who had built their own railway for education and training, to build similar institutions all over the country. The idea seemed so interesting, that on the very day of the meeting the council for support of pioneer railway construction in Kratovo was elected.

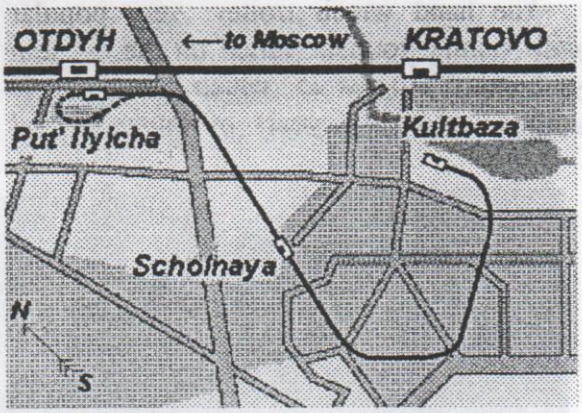
Departure signal at Put' Ilyicha

The council acted so resolutely, that just a week later it found support in the Moscow – Ryazan' Railway Department. "Young Railwaymen" hobby centers were organised in Kratovo, Bykovo and Ramenskoye schools. Guided by professional railwaymen, the schoolchildren completed the project and survey of future railway.

After the end of school year, on June'24, 1936, the pioneers began to build their own railway. Members of local Komsomol organisations helped children on most labor-intensive projects, but most of the work was fulfilled by pioneers. The members of Komsomol organisation of Moscow – Ryazan' Railway in their spare time overhauled three narrow gauge wooden passenger coaches and a 0-4-0WT steam locomotive. The locomotive received designation VL-1 in favor of Vladimir Lenin.

The first portion of the railway, 2.3 km long, with 1.8 km of mainline tracks was finished to November 7, 1936. On two stations, Put' Ilyicha and Scholnaya temporary wooden structures were erected.

The theoretical training of young railwaymen and overhauls of rolling stock and locomotive continued all winter. In April 1937 everything was ready for the opening.



The railway was solemnly opened on May'2 1937. Veniamin Pasynkov, the active participant in the council of support from the very first day, drove the first train over the line.

In 1940 young pioneers built nearly 2 more km of railway line, new station building at Put' Ilyicha and completely new Kultbaza station with turning triangle for the locomotive. At Put' Ilyicha the locomotive was turned on a loop. The reconstruction was finished in time for Railwayman's Day,

August'4. On that day the Moscow – Ryazan' Railway Department presented to the railway the club building near Kultbaza station.

The opening for the 1941 season was planned for June'22. Instead, the gathered public listened to the news of Fascist Germany's invasion in the USSR. In summer the railway continued working for some time, but was closed in August because of air raids.

In spring 1942 young railwaymen answered the call to substitute fathers and brothers who had went to the front. They participated in the construction and operation of narrow gauge logging railways in Bronnitsy, Faustovo and Khobotovo in Moscow suburbs. During war years these branches transported wood, used for manufacture of sleepers for trench railways.

For heroism and selfless work three pioneers received "Hero of the Soviet Union" ranks and 12 were rewarded medals "For Defense of Moscow".

After the war young railwaymen, again assisted, restored their railway to working order. June'14 1945 saw resuming of traffic, and all restoration work was completed only in summer 1947.

The length of mainline tracks reached 3.8 km, and the total length of all tracks – 4.962 km.

Polish Rp-771
with Pioneer badge symbol
on the smokebox

Train with TU2 diesel and Pafawag coaches

Over the years the railway was twice renamed. First, from Minor Lenin's Railway into Minor Moscow – Ryazan' Railway, then – to Minor Moscow (Kratovo) Railway. Station names were also changed. Kultbaza station was renamed Pionerskaya in 1950-es, and Put' Ilyicha – into Yunost' in 1992.

The motive power on the railway first consisted of only one second-hand 0-4-0WT of German origins. As this was not enough, not long before the war the second locomotive was added, Kolomna class 63 0-8-0 (cover photo). The locomotive received designation JS-1 for Josef Stalin. After the war the railway received the third locomotive, Polish Wp29-4582 0-8-0 of 1929, which received designation Rp771.

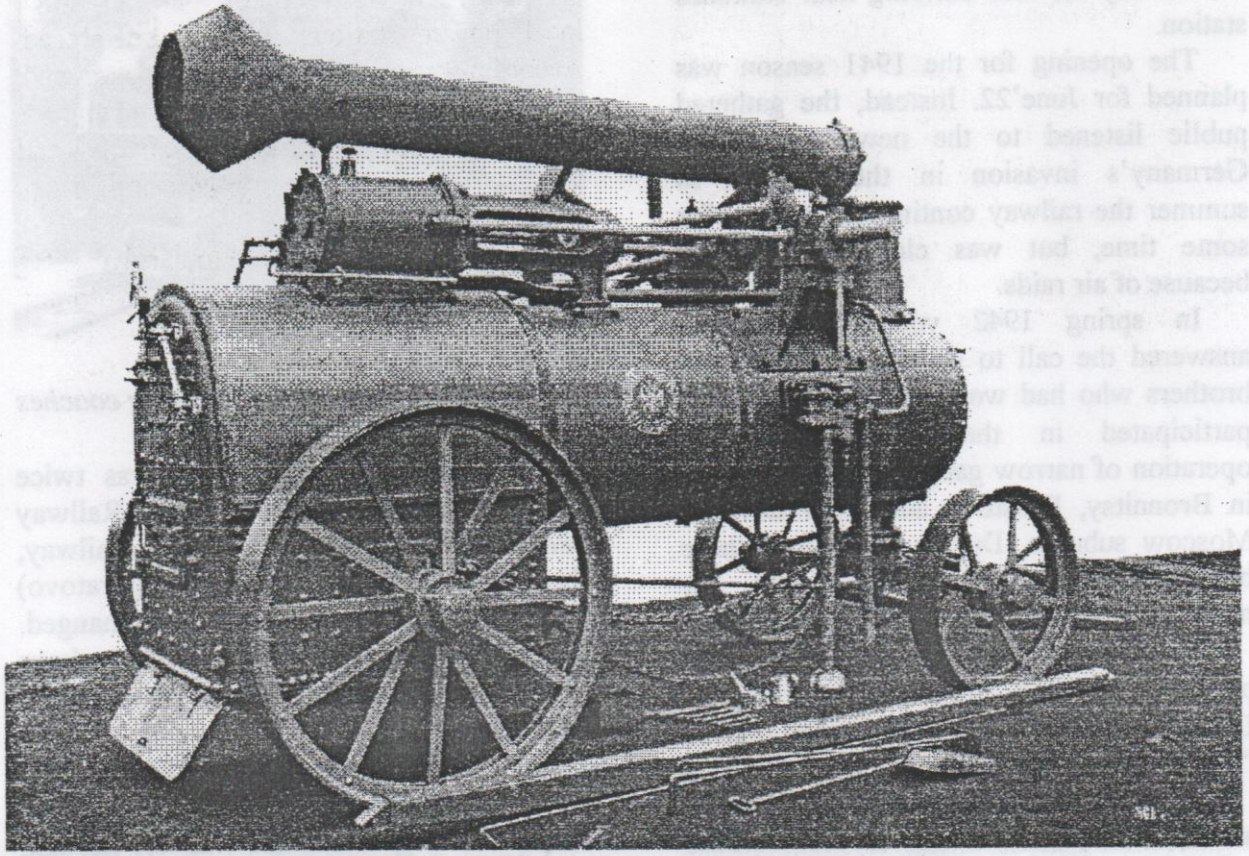
In 1957 the railway received two modern Bo-Bo TU2 diesel-electric locomotives and four all metal Pafawag coaches. In 1960-es modern centralisation system was installed. The steam locomotives were soon scrapped.

In 1979 eight new passenger coaches were bought for the railway, high concrete platform and the new building of off-school training center built at Pionerskaya station.

In 1987 the railway received two TU7 diesel-hydraulic locomotives, which appeared unsuitable for the line because of long engine hoods, obscuring the view of the tracks in sharp curves.

The railway provides the 4-5 years long course of railway training, both practical and theoretical, for schoolchildren 11 – 15 years old. The trains run from June to last Sunday of August.

PORTABLE ENGINES IN RUSSIA AND THE USSR

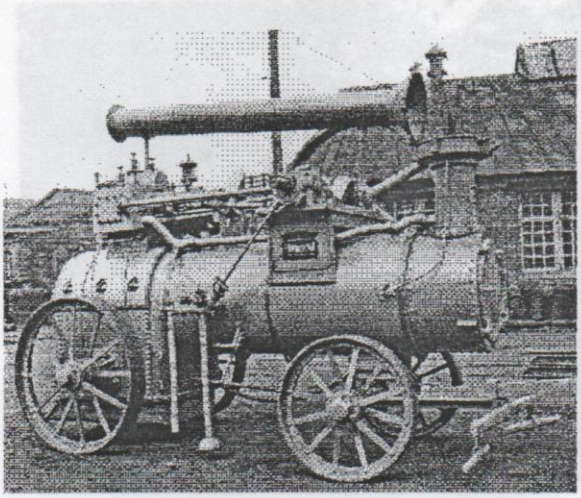


Kolomna single of early 1890-es

What manufacturer in Russia was first to build portable engines is so far unknown, as this subject is at all little investigated. However, in 1890-es portables were already in massive production at Kolomna, Maltsov and several other works. As with railway locomotives, many engines were also imported from variety of sources abroad, because the manufacturing capacity of domestic industry was too small for the vast and developing country. Up to 85% of portable engines used in Russia were of foreign origins.

After the revolution of 1917 the situation changed, as rapid industrialisation with total electrification of the country meant that portable engines were needed in huge quantities. Though there are rumors that some engines were brought into the country during the Civil war (see the caption in news section of this issue), no trustworthy evidence is known. To cover urgent need for portable engines in both industry and agriculture, several mechanical works were reconstructed and adopted for manufacturing of portable engines. While production of portables ceased at Kolomna, giving way to more complicated railway locomotives and other machinery, it became the mainstay of Lyudinovo (former Maltsov), Votkinsk, Syzran', Herson, Mogilyev and other works.

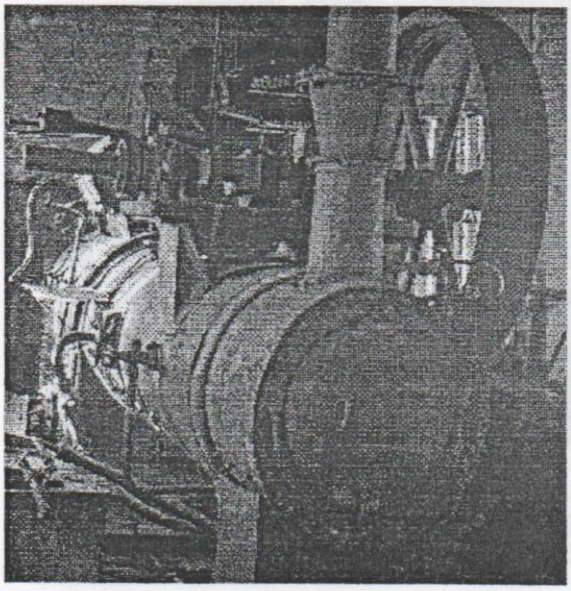
Not surprisingly in the atmosphere of planned economy, the variety of designs was very little if any. According to post-WW2 standards, adopted in 1946, the portable engines were built in only two variants, 25 and 75 h. p. This severe standardisation meant that many parts were interchangeable between engines of various manufacturers, which proved very useful in maintenance. However, small batches of non-standard engines were built from time to time, and while every works continuously worked on improving their products, considerable difference in details could be observed.



Kolomna two-cylinder portable engine

All domestic portable engines of post-revolution period were singles, with fireboxes adopted to burn extremely low quality fuels as peat, sawdust or straw. Welding was widely adopted for boiler construction already in 1930-es, and after 1946 the fireboxes with corrugated wrapper plate became nearly obligatory.

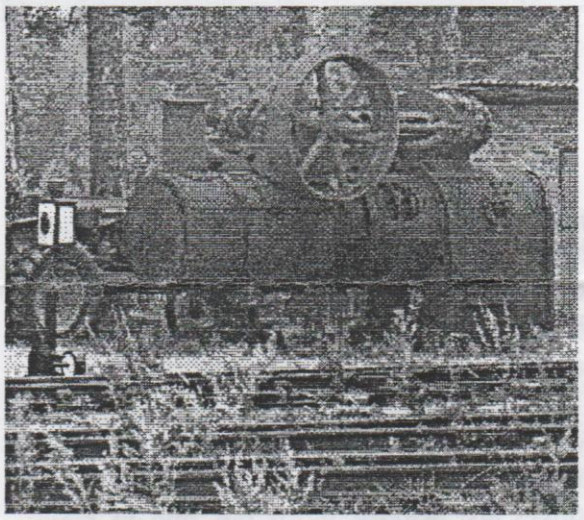
As elsewhere in the world the portable engines found great variety of applications in industry and agriculture, providing momentum, steam and heat for assorted purposes. Before the total dieselisation of logging and peat industries in the 1960-es portable engines powered most stationary equipment in logging camps and virtually all heavy machinery in peat bogs, including peat shovels, cranes and hydraulic peat pumps.



Maltsov two-cylinder engine in Unor

The production of portable engines came to an end as late as 1960, when centralised electrification was adopted and all small local power stations had to be closed. Accordingly, most engines were scrapped, but many survived as boilers in various small heating plants, public baths and similar ventures. Some of these still work today.

The oldest known engine to survive dates back from late 1880-es, having Kolomna works number 187. As usual, only boiler with cylinders remained. From 1930-es to recent years the boiler was used to heat water in a public bath in remote settlement near Shatura in Moscow region. Unfortunately, peat fires so far prevented removal of the boiler to Talitsy Museum.



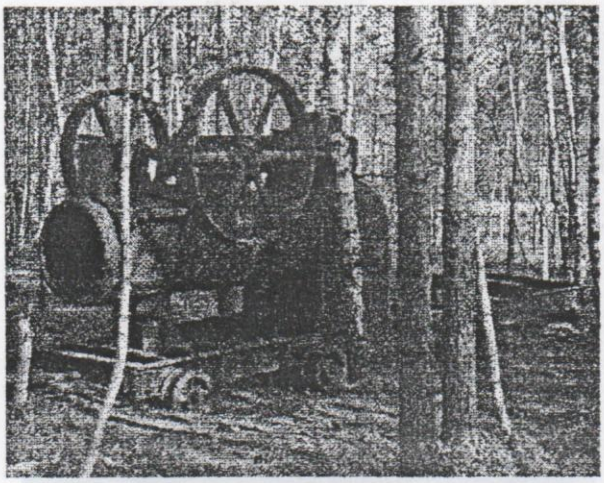
Marshall in Talitsy Museum

Another very interesting representative of pre-revolution period survived at Unor station of Vyksa narrow gauge railway in Nizhny Novgorod region. Two-cylinder Maltsov engine was used here to give electricity, pump water and heat water tower, but was abandoned and vandalised in recent years. The possibility of its preservation is being discussed.

A Belgian portable engine of the turn of the century, unfortunately incomplete, is exhibited in the Museum of Revolution in Moscow.

One of the most complete and interesting survivng foreign portables, built by Marshall in Britain, was saved several years ago from Dubna bogs in the North of

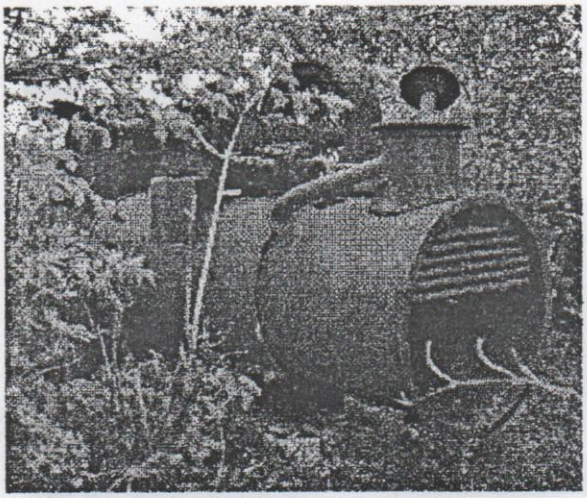
Moscow region and brought to Talitsy, where it constantly attracts attention of visitors. It is surprising how few people in modern Russia know what a portable engine is. Most of the visitors believe it is just an overturned railway locomotive...



Remains of peat shovel with unknown portable engine

Another similar engine of unknown origins stands in the forest quite near Moscow on the site of former peatery. This two-cy;inder portable once powered peat shovel and after the extraction of peat ceased in the area, was abandoned.

Very few portable engines survived to nowadays complete and none, as far as we know, in mechanically working order. Most boilers are heavily worn out due to many years of use.

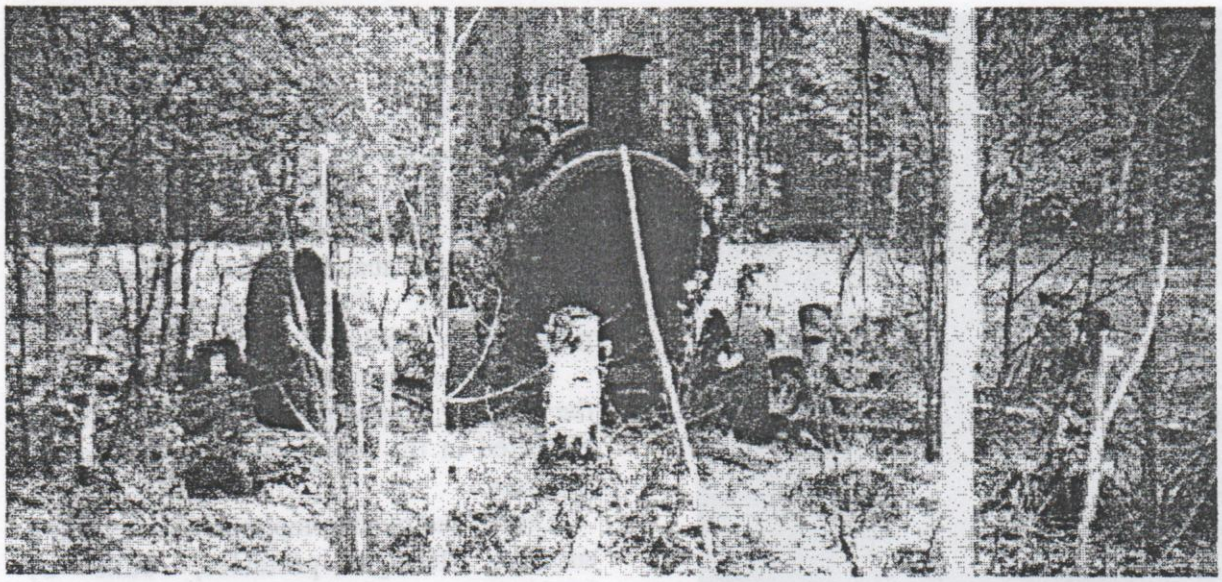


1950-es standard П-25 engine by Herson works in Yelat'ma town on Oka river. Note the superheater in the smokebox

The most complete portable engine, the П-25 single of 1950-es, is saved in local museum in the town of Myshkin on the Volga river.

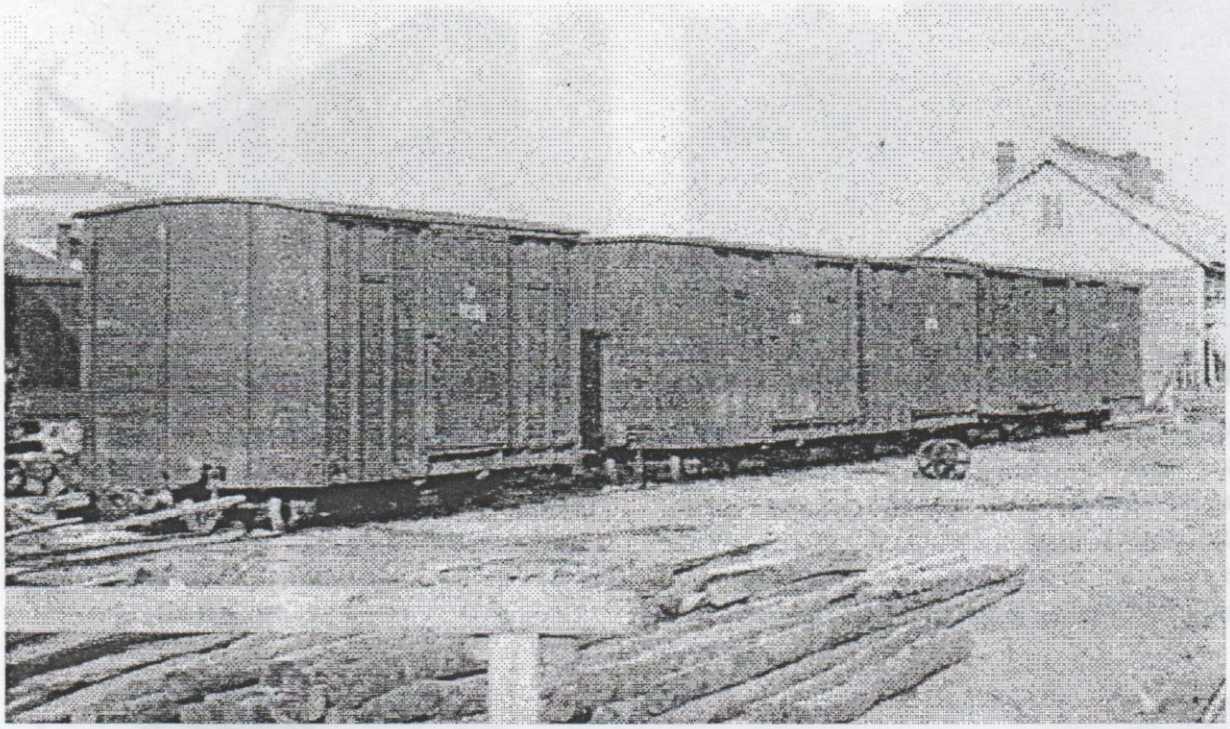
While foreign and older Russian or Soviet machines are rarities, there are pretty many post-WW2 engines, scattered all over the country.

Very few preservationists or local museums pay attention to the portables and they rapidly disappear, falling victims to scrap metal hunters and vandals. However, Pereslavl team develops plans to save several more examples of this interesting steam machinery.



Murmansk Ruston once again, showing scattered parts of the mechanism

NEW FREIGHT WAGON IN THE COLLECTION



Ryazan' – Vladimir Railway just open, freight stock at Spas-Klepiki station. 1890-es.

The Moscow Company of Secondary Lines together with the First Company of Secondary Lines and Kolomna works developed in the early 1890-es the whole range of passenger and freight rolling stock for domestic narrow gauge railways. The overall appearance of both passenger carriages and freight wagons reflected that of standard Russian broad gauge equipment. Mechanically, however, the stock differed from broad gauge considerably. All coaches and wagons were built with bogies and very low centre of gravity to ensure good and stabile running on rough tracks and tight curves.

First batch of 750 mm covered wagons was manufactured by Kolomna in 1894 – 1898. The wagons had 8.0, 10.0, 12.5 and 16.5 tons capacity. Part of the batch had mechanical brakes and brake platforms. The bodies and frames were built entirely of wood, except for the bolster beams. Accordingly, through coupling was used. The bogies were of riveted frame type with either spiral or leaf springs.

The wagons were supplied to various private narrow gauge lines all over Russia and became the mainstay of freight stock. In few years several mechanical works and workshops began to build own covered vans to Kolomna design. However, later versions had already metal frames.

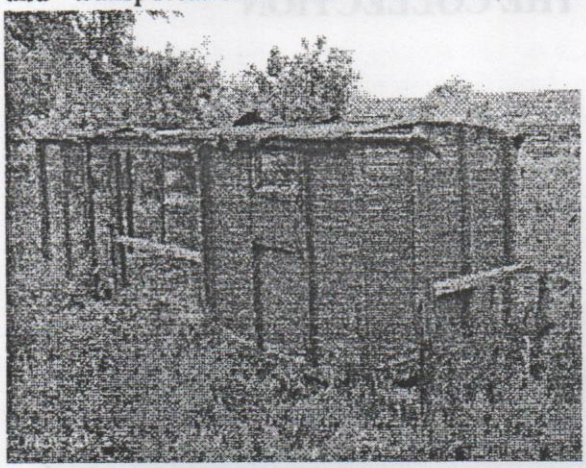
Rolling stock with wooden frames successfully worked for over 50 years. In 1950-es the frames of few remaining wagons of this type were replaced with metal ones.

Several all-wooden vans survived until the end of XX century as storage huts, but, not surprisingly, in very bad condition. One of the best, the 10 ton brake version, stood at Tuma station of former Ryazan' – Vladimir Railway.

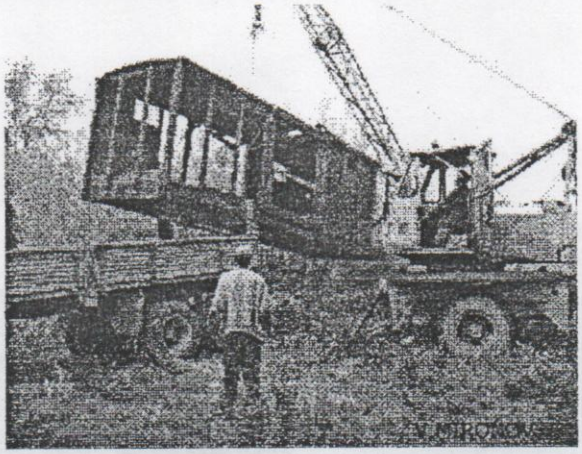
As there was hardly any chance of discovering a better example, it was decided to remove the van to Talitsy Museum. The whole operation was organised and supervised by Vadim Mironov and Arthur Berzin and took two days.

The wagon was standing in a remote corner of the station without bogies and over the years completely sank into the soil. When Vadim and Arthur dug it out it became evident that the frames were very

rotten and needed strengthening for lifting and transportation. This was done with



several thick wooden planks. Planks were also used to strengthen the body. On August'12, 2002 the van was loaded on a trailer and brought to Pereslavl Museum. On the next day it was put on suitable bogies which had been discovered and brought to Talitsy several years earlier also from Ryazan' – Vladimir railway.



While the wagon is saved, it will hardly be possible to restore it with original wood, as most elements of the frames are too rotten. Most likely an entirely new exact copy will be built with the old wagon used as example and source of metal parts.

The last surviving 10 ton brake van with wooden frames at Talitsy museum

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