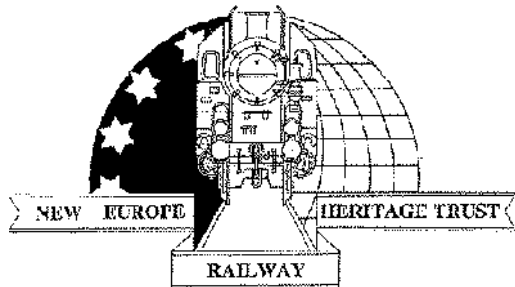


Eastern Star



Journal of the New Europe
Railway Heritage Trust,
helping railway preservation
in the New Europe

Number 50

June 2013

Our Annual General Meeting

We are once again indebted to the Model Railway Club for the use of their London premises. Our Chairman gave a brief address (see



next page), and the report by the Treasurer indicated that although, as in previous years, our bank account diminished as NERHT undertook more tasks, this diminution was relatively small, thanks to a notable increase in donations. After the business was concluded our Ukrainian visitors presented a survey of their current achievements and hopes, which Eastern Star has chronicled with great satisfaction in the past and expects to do in the future.

A volunteer worker aboard the Borzhava line's Wine Special in March (see p.5).

Photo by courtesy of Denys Dobra

Chairman's Report

In the past year we have continued to pursue our objective of helping railway preservation in our area of benefit, the former USSR and the ex-Communist countries of Eastern and Central Europe.

As a small voluntary organisation we operate by working with others, and by persuading others to support our aims. Those with whom we co-operate on a regular basis include, of course, Fedecrail (the European Federation of Museum and Tourist Railways) and Heritage Railway Association. It is good to note that following the creation of Wattrain (the World Association of Tourist Trams and Trains) international co-operation in railway preservation now takes place on a worldwide basis and in the Autumn I and others from our Committee were privileged to represent NERHT at the Wattrain conference held at the National Railway Museum in York.

As reported in Eastern Star, in January our links with Fedecrail were placed on a firm basis with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, which may be viewed on our website. Several of our activists were present at the recent Fedecrail conference held in France.

A good example of what NERHT and Fedecrail can do together was our joint expedition to Bulgaria in October 2012 at the invitation of the Union of Bulgarian Train Modellers. As well as visiting railway sites, we were invited to address the all-party transport committee of the Bulgarian parliament and argue the case for preserving the railway heritage with particular reference to the narrow gauge line from Septemvri to Dobrinishte [pictured below in a photo by Gordon Rushton]. It is hoped that the coming months will see positive news about this line and other Bulgarian matters.



Other recent lobbying activities have included our submissions to the Latvian Ministry of Transport in support of a new railway law which our friends at the Gulbene – Aluksne narrow

gauge railway ('Banitis') believe will help secure the future of their line.

The past year has also seen us active in Romania where we continue to work with SAR UK, the British group supporting the Sibiu Agnita railway project, which was set up following the NERHT expedition in 2010 to the centenary celebrations on this narrow gauge line. The SAR project still faces major legal

and political challenges which must be overcome before significant progress can be made. We are also in touch with those who may establish a Romanian national railway heritage association, and had two meetings in 2012 in Bucharest with those concerned with this proposal.

Our Balkan involvements are examples of the kind of initiatives which involve us in a lot of hard work yet take a long time to bear fruit. Other such activities include those in Moldova and, also in Poland, where the very existence of what seemed to be well-established museums and tourist railways is threatened as a result of problems of various kinds. Projects which - despite hard work by NERHT - now seem unlikely to make real progress this year include plans to hold international conferences on railway preservation in various locations in Eastern Europe.

As always we are keen to help those in Eastern Europe who wish to see something of railway preservation in Western Europe and especially in Great Britain where it began 60 years ago. It is good that we now have delegates from AZIZU, the Ukrainian Railway Heritage Association, with us and I should like to place on record our gratitude to the representatives of the National Railway Museum at York, the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways, and the Bluebell Railway who have all very kindly agreed to welcome our Ukrainian friends from Ukraine, a country where NERHT has been involved for over a decade, and is still developing new contacts, including most recently the Kiev Museum of Passenger Transport. Other visits facilitated recently by NERHT have included those made by officers of the St Petersburg railway museums to NRM York as well as the participation of young volunteers from Eastern Europe in the Fedecrail Youth Camp.

On behalf of the Committee I should like to thank you for your support.

Stephen Wiggs

27 April 2013

* * * * *



In May the Kiev Children's Railway was celebrating the 60th anniversary of its re-opening. The line operates from May to August and steam traction is planned on 28 June, 24 July and 24 August

Photo Ivor Harding

NERHT's Ukrainian Visitors

One of our visitors, Victor Gorodnyaynskiy, writes that he had not been in the UK before April 2013, but he already knew a lot about British trains, starting in the 1950s when he saw a copy of the Hornby Book of Trains. Names like The Caledonian and Denbigh Castle, for example were known to him. Mainline steam in Ukraine ended in 1973, not before he had managed a few cab rides, but he believed that British locomotives were something special. This visit to the UK only confirmed his dreams.

'...since 1986 I was trying with my friends to open a Ukrainian Railway Museum in Kiev. We sent a lot of letters to different organizations in Moscow and in Kiev which were in charge of that question. But we failed. Bolsheviks were people without national pride, as their task is to start a world revolution... We decided to work for steam locomotive tours as the finance source to open a railway museum. I do not want now to describe the grim story about our ordeals and conflicts [with those who might have been expected to help us, but instead opposed us] ... but we are proud now to say that we are not only steam locomotive enthusiasts but members of AZIZU (abbreviation of the Ukrainian Railway Heritage Association which was founded in June 2008 in Kiev) whose task is to protect the Ukrainian railway heritage and also to organize a Central Ukrainian Railway Museum. So far we have four steam engines (one, 2-6-2 Su251-86, is in working order, and another, YEa-2026, is under repair) and ten coaches and freight wagons.

I and my friends Alexander Hopkalo and Victor Berdnikov were invited by the NERHT's Mr. Stephen Wiggs into the U.K. to study the priceless experience of railway heritage system maintenance. From 23 to 28 April we were visiting the National Railway Museum in York, and the Ffestiniog, Welsh Highland and Bluebell railways. We also took part in the annual general meeting of NERHT on 27th of April, where we were introduced by Mr. Stephen Wiggs and Mr. Ivor Harding; we explained our tasks for the immediate future and answered many questions concerning our activity.

It is rather difficult to explain and to describe what we saw in the U.K. during our visit but I can say now that we received part of the accumulated experience of the U.K. Railway enthusiasts know how this particular business was going on since the 1960s and even the 1950s. A Russian proverb says that it is better to see something once than to hear about it a hundred times.

We have seen already that railway enthusiasts in U.K. had the same problems in the 1960s as we have now in Ukraine when we apply to the Ukrainian Railways Directorate about saving narrow gauge lines from demolition. These historic narrow gauge lines could involve some unemployed people in restoration campaigns and thereby decrease the amount of state aid. If there are coal-fired engines on narrow gauge lines they must be restored and repaired, because steam locomotives are more attractive than modern ones. We realized also that there are possibilities to make brand-new steam locomotives if there is the will to do it. We have realized that we are not in a vacuum and that we may ask everybody whom we met in the U.K. during our visit and may receive advice that is priceless for us.

We understood also that there are no quick ways for narrow gauge lines restoration. That is confirmed in practice by certain historic railways in the U.K. and this business is sometimes endless.

We hope that next time we will show more results for our friends in U.K. We are grateful to many people whom we met during our visit. Especially to Mr. Stephen Wiggs who organized all our visits. Also we say 'Many thanks' to Mr. Paul Lewin, General Manager of the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland railways, and his colleague Stuart, and also to Mr. Ed Bartholomew who is Senior Curator at the National Railway Museum and to Mr. Roger Price of the Bluebell Railway. Those people gave us possibilities to know more than do ordinary visitors. God Bless them! Also, we cannot forget Mr. Gareth Robert's hospitality; he gave us his house for three nights, plus food and drink!



The visitors and guides at Portmadoc

Photo Ivor Harding

A Wine Special on the Borzhava Narrow Gauge Railway

March 9, 2013. Vinogradov station. 10 a.m. The train leaves with about 80 participants from Kyiv, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Uzhgorod, Mukachevo, and Budapest. The route is unusual: Vinogradov - Shalanky - Khmelnik - V. Remeta – Nagy Bereg - Beregovo. First stop at the historic wine cellars in Shalanky village, which cherishes the spirit of Hungarian Prince Ferenc II Rákóczi. Next stop, isolated from civilization, is Khmelnik junction, near which is the last vintage openwork metal bridge.

In the village of Upper Remeta could be seen a unique breed of cow, the 'Hungarian gray' with its extraordinary endurance. At the same farm warmed-in-the-field mulled wine was available. Continuing, at a railway crossing we met the celebrated Transcarpathian winemaker John Ursta. In gloomy rainy weather after a long journey the train slowly headed to the final station Beregovo but not before all participants received postcards from the earlier wine train tour and had a symbolic payment ticket specially date-stamped. At Beregovo, near the centre, there was the international wine festival to enjoy.

The NGO 'Borzhavska Initiative' (<http://borzhava-railway.com>) plans to hold similar events every Saturday during the summer. Welcome!

Denys Dobra

Railway Preservation in Hungary

(concluded from our previous issue)



The narrow gauge lines that still operate today are, with the exception of the Childrens' Railway in Budapest and the Széchenyi Museum Railway at Nagycenk, the remnants of lines built for transporting timber and mineral products, and depend on tourism for their existence. The exception to this pattern is the Csömöder-Lenti Forestry Railway in south-west Hungary (pictured) where as late as 1999 a stretch of new

line was constructed to link the two formerly separate systems and where logs are still brought from the forests to the sawmill by rail. It, too, acquired a Re i a locomotive and runs a timetabled service from Spring to Autumn; it is possible to hire the locomotive for enthusiasts' specials.

The nearest thing to the British 'volunteer ethos' is the 'Kisvasútak Baráti Köre Egyesült' - the 'Group of Friends of Narrow Gauge Railways', which acts as an umbrella group over the narrow gauge scene and which was founded after the political changes of the 1990's. Members form working groups to assist with various renovation/conservation projects being carried out on the surviving railways. Most of these are run as private companies created after the State gave up its ownership. The 'Zsuzsi' line at Debrecen is particularly interesting in that it is 'on its third life': dating from 1882 with a gauge of 950mm as a forestry railway with no passenger traffic, it developed after the First World War into a passenger railway with goods traffic as well; it survived the Second World War and was taken into state ownership and was finally re-gauged to the usual 760mm gauge in 1961. Like the other lines it fell victim to the 1968 plan mentioned earlier, and was closed down when the goods traffic was taken away for road transport. The city of Debrecen then took over the rolling stock and re-opened part of the line as a 'Pioneer' railway run by the DKV City Transport Company. It survived in this form after the fall of Communism with its name changed to the DKV Forest Railway, but in 1994 the City decided they could no longer afford to run it after the end of that season and it was closed for a second time. However, a group of people including retired railway workers formed the 'Friends of the Susi Railway' and were able to re-start operations from Spring 1996.

I know of one other local group, the 'Friends of the Szeged Narrow Gauge Railway'. Sadly, there is no railway left for them to re-open, but the local authority at Domaszék has renovated the former station building as a small

museum, and the group were able to acquire an Mk48 locomotive and a goods wagon which they have restored and placed on a piece of track beside the building.

The narrow gauge railways in Hungary seem to be enjoying good health. For some reason 2010 was a bad year for a lot of them, but passenger figures have recovered well since. There is a website – kisvasut.hu – which gives news of events, timetables, histories etc. (although not all sections have an English or German translation) and some lines have been able to obtain funding from the EU for renovations. It is to be hoped that this happy state of affairs will continue.

Sources: Schmalspurig durch Ungarn, Paul Englebert, Stenvalls
Reiseführer zu den Schmalspurbahnen in Ungarn, Thomas Allgaier
Röhr, Verlag GmbH

Jonathan Sutton

Travelling Back to the Past in the Baltics

An interesting article in issue 86 of Narrow Gauge World alerted me to the fact that the July 1913 edition of Bradshaw's Continental [Railways] Guide, as used by Michael Portillo in his journeys through Europe, includes the railways of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The station names on tables 313A and 317 are in their Russian-regime versions, so reconciling the names in the tables with their present-day names is time-consuming, but I've done it, and the fruits of my labour are as follows. Please email me on tonyolsson124@btinternet.com if you would like a complete list of the translations, and copies of the relevant tables, and I will email them to you.

When did you last have a ride on the Ponevesh – Ootzyani – Sventsiany Railway? Surprisingly recently for some of you, when you know that part of this railway is now the Siaurukas or Aukštaitijos Siaurasis Geležinkelis and Ponevesh is now Panevėžys, Ootzyani is now Anykščiai, and Sventsiany is now Švenčionėliai. OK, perhaps you didn't travel to Švenčionėliai; this part of the line from Kiauneliškis was closed between 1920 and 1940, and though re-opened, finally closed in 1966. Rubikiai became the end of the line when the route beyond to Kiauneliškis closed in 1981. The narrow gauge track from Švenčionėliai to Utena was converted to 1520mm gauge and reopened after 1981 to serve the brewery, a truly noble cause. In 1913 you could have continued on the narrow gauge to Postayi (Postavi) and Beresvetch, both in Belarus. There are no timetables for the 750mm lines north of Panevėžys, but as these weren't opened until after 1913, it would be a miracle if there were.

At Ponevesh you could take a train on the Russian gauge to Radziwilischki (Radviliškis) in one direction, and Ponemunok (Panemunėlis) and Kalkuhnan (Griva) in Latvia in the other direction. After arriving at Radziwilischki (Radviliškis), you could take a train to Libau (Liepāja) in Latvia, calling at Schaul (Šiauliai) and Moscheiki (Mažeikiai). In the other direction you could go south to Vilna (Vilnius) via Keidani (Kedainiai), Koschedari (Kaišiadorys) and Landwarovo (Lentvaris).

All this information comes from the recently published reprint of Bradshaw's Continental [Railway] Guide of July 1913, as used by Michael Portillo in his

recent Continental Railway Journeys series. That, and several hours of research on-line to match the station names in the Guide, with those of the modern day. The book is readily available from shops at £24.95.

The significance of Bradshaw's Continental Guide 1913 is that WW1 started



one year later, and was to result in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia gaining independence from Russia and the newly-created Soviet Union. One immediate consequence of this move was the conversion of the 1520mm Russian gauge lines in the Baltic States to the 1435mm European standard gauge. Obviously this involved a change of locomotives (mainly steam at that time). The recently published *The Steam Locomotives of Lithuanian Railways 1919-1940* provides details. The book can be obtained from Ian Allan railway bookshops and specialist railway bookshops on line. During WW2, the occupying armies kept swapping gauges, which makes things difficult for railway historians to keep track of.

Some of the 750mm tracks lasted until after WW2, with new ones being built. Very few were widened to standard or Russian gauge. Many 600mm feldbahn railways were built by the German armies for front line support, and most of these are long gone, but a few locomotives have survived in Latvia and Estonia.

So what locomotives ran on the Panevėžys – Beresvetch line? The ubiquitous T 2 diesel locos were introduced by the Soviet Union in 1956, but motive power at the time of the Bradshaw's Guide was steam. The few remaining 750mm gauge steam locomotives are from the Soviet era, and, as far as I know, the pre-WW1 locomotives were scrapped long ago. So all that remains are a few photos hidden away in archives.

The picture (from the collection of Toms Altbergs and Dainis Punculs, and included in *Steam Locomotives of Lithuanian Railways 1919-1940*. Reproduced by kind permission) shows a T₃ Class steam locomotive with a freight train somewhere between Panevėžys and Kiauneliškis. Date is not known, but these locos were made between 1901 and 1917, so it might well have been taken around 1913. Were train crews always as well presented, I wonder?

Tony Olsson

News from Russia

Sergei Dorozhkov writes: The 2012/2013 winter in Russia is considered to be the most snowy in all history of meteorological observations. Though obviously a journalistic tale this can't belie the fact that there was very much snow. Keeping even the short line open for weekend traffic of the hand trolley in Pereslavl museum required extensive use of all snow-fighting equipment and hand shoveling often several times a week.

Sadly, demolition of industrial lines continues all over the country. The last relatively big peat system in Central Russia near the town of Goos'-Hrustalny (200km east of Moscow) was cut into two parts and severely shortened, all redundant buildings sold and stock scrapped. The small portion of the former 100+ km network remains, near the Mezinovsky settlement on the broad gauge Moscow - Kazan' main line and is anticipated to see some regular peat operation for more years. Another even smaller section near Goosevsky also continues peat traffic and even runs occasional chartered excursion trains to the bogs in cooperation with Poezd Naprokat (Train-for-Hire) group of Moscow (<http://www.poezdnaprokat.ru/>). Thanks to the sympathetic attitude of the railway's owning industrial concern towards preservation it became possible to save from scrap two pieces of rare equipment. The PD1 railcar remained on the home system. Transferred from Mezinovsky to Goosevsky days before the rail link was lifted it is being



refurbished for summer excursion charters. The GMD4 rail lorry (left) was removed to Pereslavl for restoration and future use for maintenance of way purposes there. Both vehicles come from an extensive family of petrol railcars

manufactured specially for industrial narrow gauge systems by Demikhovo works in 1950-1970s and now nearly extinct.

Russian Narrow Gauge Railways Websites: a well-wisher has sent us a list of Russian narrow-gauge railway websites, and this may be obtained by application to the Editor.

The Kudemskaya narrow-gauge railway, situated in the far north, is worthy of investigation, and there is an English-language account of it in Wikipedia. Apparently it still runs a passenger service.

BALTIC RAILWAYS MAGAZINE No 13 is now out, and maintains its high editorial and production standards. It is in Lithuanian and English (a Russian/English version is also obtainable by special order). The contents include a history of the Riga car-building plant, which was the Soviet Union's mass producer of electric multiple units. Other Russian topics include a review of the TG102 diesel-hydraulic locomotive's history in the Baltic republics and a report on the Siemens high-speed Lastochka trains now working in the Moscow-St Petersburg service. There is a report on how a commonsense approach to border formalities obtained a half-hour acceleration of the Minsk-Vilnius passenger service; the Kaliningrad Railway is now seeking accelerations. The EU's interest in broad-gauge regulation is also discussed. On the infrastructure front, the upgrading and doubling of Latvian lines and the building of a new freight facility at Riga are described. The success and possible extension of the 10-year old Viking Baltic-Black Sea freight shuttle is noted.

This issue will be sent to those who have paid in advance. It is also obtainable through NERHT's Richard Tapper, and from the Ian Allan Birmingham, Manchester and London shops or, on receipt of a £6.00 cheque payable to himself, from Tony Olsson, Flat 2, 10 Oxford Grove, Ilfracombe, North Devon, EX34 9HQ.

Forthcoming Ukraine steam tour. To help raise money for the Korostiv and Antonivka projects, Wolfram Wendelin is organizing the following steam trips, and enquiries and bookings should be addressed to him at wwlok@gmx.net

1. Wednesday 25 September: Hajvoron-Holovanivs'k and back with Gr-280 and mixed train. Dep. approx. 10.00 ending 17.00. (fare 75 euros).
2. Thursday 26 September. L-3535 with mixed train. Route not finally decided but will be either L'viv Hol.-Pidzamche - Lychakiv (70 euros) or L'viv Hol. - Zhovka and back (120 euros). Approximate timing 0900 - 1500

* * * * *

The New Europe Railway Heritage Trust ('NERHT') is a voluntary organisation established to help railway preservation in the former USSR and the ex-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe (registered in the UK as charity No 1099229).

Chairman:

Stephen Wiggs

Sandgw@hotmail.com

Secretary:

Jonathan Sutton

490fan@gmail.com

Membership & Sales:

Richard Tapper
39 Grange Court
Boundary Road
Newbury
RG14 7PH

Treasurer:

Robert Raynor
2A Avenue Road
Forest Gate
London E7 0LD

Editor, Eastern Star:

John Westwood
9 Whitefriars Meadow
Sandwich
Kent CT13 9AS
jnwestwood@tiscali.co.uk