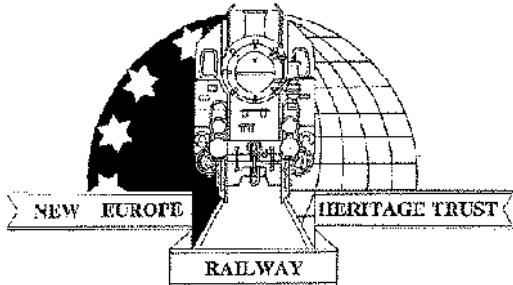


Eastern Star



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The newly-restored and about-to-be-named Ferdinands of the Banitis line in Latvia awaits its inauguration (see p.5) Photo Andris Biedrins

Our Annual General Meeting

We again enjoyed the hospitality of the Model Railway Club in London for our 2014 AGM. The main items of the formal proceedings were our Chairman's report (see below) and our Treasurer's financial report. The latter, as usual, indicated that our main expenditure item was the financing of visits to the UK by actual or would-be preservationists while the main source of revenue was subscriptions, followed by donations. In the absence of alternative candidates, the existing NERHT office-holders were re-elected. After the formal proceedings there was a much-enjoyed presentation of their railway heritage and prospects by our Romanian visitors.

Chairman's Report

The past year has seen NERHT as busy as ever in pursuing our objective of helping railway preservation in our area of benefit, the former USSR and the ex-Communist countries of Eastern and Central Europe, notwithstanding the difficulties which have affected the region. Amongst other activities, in 2013 and 2014 our representatives have made visits to Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and Ukraine.

As always a major part of our activities involves working with others in order to achieve our objectives. One example of this is our participation together with Fedecrail in the Access to Mountains Programme under which national governments and a range of other public and private sector organisation have acknowledged the role of tourist railways as a means of sustainable transport in national parks and environmentally-sensitive areas. We are also co-operating with Fedecrail in arranging for young volunteers from the East to take part in the annual youth camp, and have set up the NERHT Youth Fund to make payments towards the costs involved; we are most grateful to all those who have made donations to the Youth Fund.

Our networking also includes supporting co-operation between different countries in Eastern Europe, and within these countries. In this context we are grateful to the Latvian narrow gauge railway (or Banitis) for providing valuable advice to AZIZU, the Ukrainian railway heritage association, on the prospects



for developing railway tourism on the Antonovka-Zarechnoye narrow gauge line in Western Ukraine which was visited by British and Latvian delegates from NERHT in April 2014.

Motive power of the Antonovka-Zarechnoye line.

Photo Andris Biedrins

Banitis has kindly invited the Ukrainians to attend the conference on railway preservation now being arranged with help from NERHT which will take place in Latvia in June 2014; this conference hopefully will attract delegates from railway organisations in other countries, especially Lithuania and Estonia [see p.4 for a report on this conference].

In the past year we have continued to support those in Romania who are seeking to preserve the railway heritage of their country – one which is

amongst the most interesting in the ex-Communist world. At this time it is a great pleasure to welcome our Romanian friends who include those addressing two major tasks, the establishment of a full-scale national railway museum and a national railway heritage association. Mention should also be made of our on-going co-operation with the Sibiu-Agnita narrow gauge railway preservation movement and its British support group SAR UK.

Since NERHT was founded we have sought to help those from the East who wish to see railway preservation in the country where it first began and gain ideas which may be useful in their own countries. Apart from the Romanian delegation, in the past few months the National Railway Museum in York has hosted delegations from Poland and Russia, the former of which consisted of officials concerned with new plans for a national museum of technology and transport which may eventually house the collection currently located at the site near Warsowa Głowna station which is required for redevelopment. We have already offered to support this project.

The study tours provided by NERHT could not take place without the help kindly given by all sorts of individuals and organisations, and we are grateful to the staff of NRM and other railway museums and preserved railways who have kindly given up their time to welcome visitors from our partner organisations. Those who may soon take up our invitations include the representatives of the municipality of Sofia who may wish to visit the National Tramway Museum in Crich following submissions made by our friends in the Bulgarian Public Transport and Infrastructure Association, and by NERHT, on the importance of preserving Bulgaria's tramway heritage.

Our range of activities is never static, and we have recently revived links with the railway museums in St Petersburg, and are developing contacts with those in Russia who are seeking to develop narrow gauge lines in the Urals for tourism. We also keep in touch with the Pereslavl Narrow Gauge Railway Museum, Russia's pioneer private sector preservation venture.

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

Stephen Wiggs

Chairman, NERHT

YOUR COMMITTEE

At the annual general meeting on 3 May all existing Committee members were re-elected and the list is now as follows – Stephen Wiggs (Chairman), Robert Raynor (Treasurer), Jonathan Sutton (Secretary), John Jones (Fedecrail liaison), John Westwood (Editor, Eastern Star), Richard Tapper (Membership Secretary), Graham Farr and Mike Hudson.

Latvia's International Conference

Tourism and Heritage Railways

With its eight participants, NERHT was well represented at this event. Indeed, one of our members, Gordon Rushton, played a significant role in its unfolding. HRA, in the person of Lord Faulkner, and Fedecrail, with David Morgan, Livius Kooy, and two other well-known participants, took an active part in proceedings.

The conference was both celebratory and political. The celebration consisted in the steaming and naming of the Banitis line's renovated locomotive GR-319, while the politics was a matter of publicising the potential role of tourist railways in boosting the economic fortunes of the regions in which they run. In the background, the conference facilitated unpredictable but valuable exchanges of experience between participants.

In a sense, NERHT and Banitis have grown up together, because this Latvian narrow-gauge project was one of the first interests of our Trust, and we like to feel that our encouragement and support was useful, although we are well aware that the success of the project was essentially the success of Andris Biedrins, whose good-humoured imperturbability was well in evidence at this conference.

For international participants, the first event was a visit to the Latvian Railways Museum in Riga, where Toms Altbergs was the ideal guide. Most of the outside exhibits had a Soviet flavour, although it was interesting to see, standing together, the German and the Soviet concepts of the 2-10-0 locomotive.

To reach Gulbene, site of the conference and terminus of Banitis, a DMU serving as Directors' inspection train was provided (pictured). With its



conference room serving as buffet and lounge, and with easy access to the driver's cab, this seemed an ideal form of transportation. En route the Minister of Transport and the Director of Latvian Railways joined the group,

and on arrival at Gulbene the mayors of Gulbene and Aluksne, together with a brass band, were waiting.

Outside the locomotive depot the waiting crowd saw Gr-319 steam into view, curtsy on the turntable, and ease forward to a halt, at which point a bottle of Latvia's best champagne-style liquor was smashed against the smokebox, while the name Ferdinands was unveiled [Ferdinands was a local nobility, which among other things provided a wife for Count Zeppelin, progenitor of another form of transport]. Following this ceremony the guests were treated to a return trip on a special train (pictured) to Kalniena, a midway station of Banitis, hauled by a Tu4 locomotive on the outward trip and attached to a regular Tu7-hauled train for the return.



The following day saw the convening of the conference proper. Lord Faulkner described the workings of Britain's All-Party Heritage Railway Committee, with distribution of that committee's Report on the Value of

Heritage Railways, and Gordon Rushton spoke about the economic potential of tourist railways. Taken together, these two expositions were both encouraging and instructive. Further support came from Livius Kooy, who suggested how Fedecrail might help and, on a local level, from Janis Eiduks, Director of Latvia's Railway Department, who looked at the potential of closed railways for tourism. Banitis, the host railway, was the setting for Toms Altbergs's account of the trials and successes of GR-319's restoration and for Juris Jesalnieks' review of how railway legislation might be changed to better accommodate tourist railways.

Additional international input came from Lithuania, with a presentation about the now well-established Panevezys-Anyksciai line (another of NERHT's early interests), and from Russia where a St Petersburg-based group is at the early stages of redeveloping the narrow-gauge peat line at Tesovo, in Novgorod District.

Participants were also given the opportunity of seeing something of local life, including attendance at two national commemoration day ceremonies and sightseeing at Gulbene and Aluksne, with a final trip back to Gulbene by the regular service train.

From the point of view of the participants, this was a highly enjoyable event, well organised and with thoughtful provision for their needs. In this respect, the hosts can congratulate themselves. As for the long-term gains, only time can tell. Inevitably, speakers were to some degree preaching to the converted, but anyone contemplating the possibility of a tourist railway could only be encouraged by the proceedings, and gain a deeper understanding of how things are best managed. Given the publicity that this conference was expected to attract, it seems likely, too, that the potentialities of tourist railways will have been brought to the attention of the broader public. JNW

Romania

NERHT JOINS IN ROMANIAN MUSEUM CELEBRATIONS

By invitation of the Romanian Ministry of Transport, representatives of NERHT joined in the 75th anniversary celebrations of the Romanian Railway Museum held in Bucharest in early June. At its opening in 1939 the original museum was remarkable for its time, with its well-laid out displays of historic locomotives and rolling stock. Sadly, the building, and much of the collection, were destroyed in the Second World War, and today's museum at the Gara de Nord in Bucharest only houses small exhibits. Today we in NERHT are supporting our Romanian friends in their moves to establish a new museum to



house their country's wonderful collection of heritage items. In the meantime we make no apology for printing yet more pictures (by Mircea Dorobantu) of Calugareni, the 2-4-0 built in Britain in 1869 at the Canada Works, Birkenhead, and the three contemporary carriages (also British-built) it was hauling to give short rides to those

taking part in the June celebrations. The delegates also rode on the Romanian royal train from Bucharest to Giurgiu, while a temporary narrow gauge line laid out near the Gara de Nord offered steam trips to members of the public, using a locomotive provided by George Hocevar.



Ukraine

NERHT VISITS UKRAINIAN NARROW GAUGE LINE

Despite the very grave crisis in Ukraine, life there goes on, and our friends in AZIZU (the Ukrainian railway heritage association) are as keen as ever to preserve their country's historic railways. Thus it was that at the beginning of April a NERHT delegation visited the Antonovka – Zarechnoye narrow gauge railway (or AZR) in Western Ukraine at the request of AZIZU. The aim was to share ideas on how the line might be developed for tourism drawing on the experience of the delegates who comprised Alasdair Stewart from the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways, Graham Farr from the Welsh Highland Heritage Railway, NERHT Chairman Stephen Wiggs and above all Andris Biedrins of the Latvian narrow gauge railway which has already been developed as a tourist attraction using diesel locomotives and carriages similar to those on the AZR.



Apart from spending two days at the AZR, the delegates had useful discussions with the leaders of AZIZU and with officers of the Culture and Tourism Department of the Rivne Regional Administration who have already made some moves to promote the AZR as a tourist attraction. The AZR (which was described in ES 52) is already known to foreign enthusiasts, having featured in a number of rail tours.

While NERHT does not take sides in political disputes we are still keen to support our partners in the East who are facing difficult conditions. We therefore hope that our readers will visit those parts of Ukraine which are not affected by unrest, and we would mention the October rail tour (see p.10) which takes in some fascinating broad and narrow gauge lines.

(Photo by Andris Biedrins)

The Donetsk Railway Museum advises us that since 2009 the following major items have been acquired. With the exception of the LV, which came from the South Urals Railway, all were acquired from Ukrainian locations (Tsvetkovo, Znamenka, Slavyansk and Khristinovka).

Steam locomotives:

Em722-81
9P-82
FD20-2714
Su252-21
Er799-98
LV-0407
Er762-68
SOm17-3146 (pictured)



Electric locomotives: VL8-100 and VL60pk-001
Electric multiple unit sections: Sr3 21654 and Sr3 21770

Russia

(We are indebted to Sergei Dorozhkov for the following items)

Old-timer Gallery and Seminar in Sokolniki. The first weekend of March in Russia is not only a public holiday but also the time for a major annual event for vintage machinery restorers. For over 10 years Ilya Sorokin has organised in Moscow an exhibition of mechanical restoration skills, which attracts collectors, technical museums, restorers, admirers from all over the country (<http://www.oldtimer.ru/>). The exhibition is not only a good chance to show off for many private collectors, but also a place to hold various consultations and seminars on the theme. Not surprisingly, much attention is given to automotive history, but from year to year the percentage of other kinds of machinery grows. With railways, it is evidently difficult, as full-size relics are heavy and not easy to transport, so this year the rail-related participants were just the two hobby magazines, Zheleznodorozhnoye Delo and Lokotrans. Meanwhile, railfan clubs and museums sent in their representatives to take part in discussions.

The XXII Sorokin's Old-timer Gallery of 2014 was organised in the Sokolniki exhibition centre to commemorate the 55th anniversary of the American exhibition in Moscow of 1959, which had been held at the same grounds. Apart from numerous examples of American motorcar industry products of the late 1950s, which, to tell the truth, not everyone admires, the main stars of the event this year were four 1930s Soviet agricultural tractors, meticulously restored to full working order by Evgeniy Shamanskiy's workshop. Just several years ago the two tracked representatives of the collection had been considered totally extinct, but today both examples of once numerous machines are not only restored to original condition but running.

The seminars held within the event included lengthy discussions of proposed legislative framework for the restoration of mechanical relics. In today's Russia the legal basis for machinery conservation is nearly non-existent, which causes difficulties in many aspects, from recovery to safekeeping. A major problem for rail preservationists is the total absence of rules for the exploitation of steam locomotive boilers. According to current legislation, even firing an engine's boiler is a violation of law, not speaking of raising pressure and running the locomotive. Thus this topic is

being carefully addressed at various levels. Sadly, the progress is so far slow, but bearing in mind support from Russian Railways there are hopes for success.

The working life of most steam locomotive boilers in Russia has long expired. New replacement boilers are planned to be ordered from Europe. While being costly, this is the easier side of the situation. The legal background so far lags far behind...



The 750mm gauge Gr-185 0-8-0 from the Rostov children's railway under repair at Tikhoretzkaya, stripped down and awaiting a new boiler. Photo by Vladimir Burakov.

New preservation scheme launched in Russia. At midnight May 21-22 the first piece of rolling stock arrived at the new technical museum at Mytishchi, near Moscow. Two days earlier two sections of 1524 mm gauge track were laid on the lawn near the hangar housing technical relics. The new item is a broad-gauge snowplough, built by Tula works c.1934 and the second-oldest known to survive in Russia. The plough was discovered several years ago at one of the industrial sidings in Moscow. Negotiations to acquire it for preservation began in November 2013. Following the usual bureaucratic proceedings a final decision was taken in early May 2014. The plough was loaded for transportation after noon on May 21. The caravan of a low-loader and a heavy crane had to travel less than 20 km, but it was decided to wait until late evening, when traffic jams eased. The snowplough was unloaded under floodlights. Restoration is planned to start before long. Negotiations to acquire more items continue.



The St Petersburg childrens' railway has acquired steam locomotive Kp4-447 from the Bologoye creosoting plant. This photograph by Grigory Egorov shows its delivery to the terminal station after renovation.

Ekaterinburg childrens railway: the inaugural trip of 0-6-0 No 9, an O&K locomotive acquired from the Mansfeld Bergbahn in Germany. Photo by Evgeniy Zdovorenko



Hungary. This year Fedecrail held its annual conference in Hungary, which gave an opportunity to see and hear about what MAV Nosztalgia is doing for railway preservation, which is quite a lot. Among other business, there was also an account of the work of the European Museum Forum. A detailed account of the conference can be found in HRA's Broadlines, No 42, June 2014.

Western Ukraine Tour, October 4 - 11. Wolfram Wendelin is running another of his Ukraine excursions in October. The programme includes train rides and bus line-siding. Features include the Borzhava and Vykhoda lines (with a special train on the latter), the pursuit of mixed local trains and D1 railcars as well as local freights. Other highlights are visits to brickworks having narrow-gauge lines and time spent photographing trains in the Beskyd Pass area. The trip is designed to facilitate photography. The price, to and from Vienna, is Euro690, which covers trains, buses, hotels (bed and breakfast). Any profit from the trip will be devoted to the Korostiv museum railway project. The complete programme can be obtained from Wolfram at wwlok@gmx.net

(This picture shows a Vykhoda line excursion arranged by Wolfram earlier this year)



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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).

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