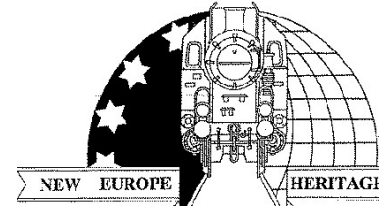


Eastern Star



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

NERHT ACTIVITIES TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED

We are distributing this special edition of *Eastern Star* to inform our readers that as a result of the corona virus crisis NERHT has been forced to suspend most of its activities so as to ensure the safety of everyone and to comply with the laws of the countries where we operate. Our Annual General Meeting will not take place on 16 May as previously announced, and will be held when circumstances permit at a date to be decided. We were planning to welcome four or five groups from the East to Britain this year, and take part in events abroad, so it is hoped that all these expeditions will take place eventually. In the meantime we extend our thanks to all those who support us, including our members and the railways and museums who earlier agreed to welcome our guests this year.

RAILWAYS AND MUSEUMS RESPOND TO CRISIS

Tourist railways and museums throughout Europe are taking stock of the situation. Many lines in Europe, like those in Britain, are no longer open to the public although individual activists are doing what they can within the rules, carrying out painting, minor repairs and track inspection on their own. At the time of writing we hear that two heritage-style lines which are also public transport facilities are still working, namely the Latvian narrow gauge railway ("Banitis") and the Bologoye-Ostashkov line in Russia which was described in *Eastern Star* No 76.

FEDECRAIL EVENTS POSTPONED

The Fedecrail conference, due to be held in Bilbao in April, has been postponed to a date to be announced. This year's Fedecrail Youth Exchange, which would have been hosted by the West Somerset Railway and Seaton Tramway, has also been cancelled and it is hoped that it will take place in 2021. NERHT is normally involved in both of these landmark events in the railway calendar, and we hope that the two young volunteers from the Pereslavl Railway Museum in Russia who we were to sponsor to take part in the 2020 Youth Exchange will be able to join in this worthwhile activity when it is rescheduled.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

The current crisis is possibly the greatest challenge ever to face the railway heritage movement worldwide. It is worrying to hear suggestions that some lines which have suspended operations may never reopen, and we must hope that these fears are not realised. Despite the situation NERHT is still very much alive! Our trust was set up over 20 years ago to support railway preservation initiatives which faced major difficulties, and our commitment to this aim is as strong as ever. Over the years preservation schemes everywhere have survived all kinds of threats - which often bring out the best in everyone - so hopefully enthusiasts will work together to overcome the current problems. At this difficult time our very best wishes go to all of the individuals and organizations who have worked with us.

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If, as we expect, our contributors continue their sterling work, *ES* should publish as many pages this year as in previous years, but it is likely that publication dates may be not quite as usual. In the meantime, we present below some material which is to hand at this moment.

Russia

We are indebted to Sergei Dorozhkov for the following:

COVID-19

Russia was relatively late to import the new COVID-19 virus, and the crisis is obviously in its infancy in the country. Nevertheless, many measures were taken immediately.

All state museums, archives and libraries were closed, conferences and other public events cancelled, postponed or switched to online translations.

The Alapayevsk Railway closed for visitors and is only running regular services for local residents.

The Apsheronsk Railway (Shpalorez section) has changed timetable, as schools were temporarily closed.

The Pereslavl Museum cancelled all group visits and excursions, but continued to welcome individuals and families until Friday, March 27, with strict disinfection and control measures. In conformity with the defensive policy, the museum was fully closed during following weekend. The anticipated isolation period will last till Sunday, April 5, while further forecast is uncertain. In case of the worst scenario there are plans to concentrate on inside investment-easy projects, and there is the 'Plan B' for the long-term conservation of the collection.

On the broad gauge, both the Ruskeala steam train and the Bologoye – Ostashkov service continue operation, as they provide timetabled local transport. So far no cancellations are planned.

Two 'Stolypin' Carriages Saved for Museums

One of the most significant economic initiatives in Russia in the first decade of the XX century was a series of progressive changes to the agricultural sector, implemented from 1906 on a

state basis. These are known as the Stolypin agrarian reforms, named after Pyotr Stolypin, the Minister of Internal Affairs.

The vital part of the reforms was colonisation of lands east of the Urals. Special resettlement benefits were introduced for peasants who moved to Siberia. To facilitate resettlement, a special type of railway carriage was designed, providing maximum general comfort at minimum cost. This had a common-space interior divided into several sections with three levels of transverse benches. Second level of the benches could be folded down to provide space for sitting. The carriages had wide doors, coal heating stoves, toilets and washbasins. Production was launched at most wagon plants, and towards 1913 there were over 3,300 'resettlement' carriages in operation. They were classified as IV class or 'Siberian-type' and accordingly painted light grey. The military also made wide use of these carriages for the transportation of troops.

In spite of the huge role played by the 'resettlement' carriages in Russia's history, very few were saved in the museums.

Thus we are very proud to report the recent rescue of two surviving 'Stolypin' carriages. Both projects became possible thanks to long-time sustained efforts and persistence of volunteers and professionals, coupled with the understanding and patience of the previous owners.

Last November the 7-window version built in 1913 by the South-Russian plant in Kiev was brought to the museum of the South-Urals Railway in Chelyabinsk from the Argayash power station.

In March 2020 another carriage, the 8-window version of 'Dvigatel' plant in Revel (Tallinn), also from 1913, was removed from the Shortyug Railway, a private industrial logging line in the Kostroma region. The carriage was transported by road to Ekaterinburg, and after restoration will replenish the broad gauge historic collection of the Sverdlovsk Railway.

Both Chelyabinsk and Ekaterinburg are principal cities in the Urals on the way to Siberia, and both had played outstanding roles in the resettlement of peasants. So, apart from being rare survivals of a once-common family of coaching stock, both newly-acquired carriages have comprehensive historic and memorial significance for the area.



The 8-window vehicle loaded for Ekaterinburg.

Photo Evgeniy Zdrovenko

The 7-window carriage at the Argayash power plant.

Photo Egor Kazakov



A Common Mistake

There is great erroneous contradiction, not to say fundamental mistake, in the understanding of the term 'Stolypin carriage'. The real 'Stolypin carriages' were never used for the transportation of prisoners. They were designed especially for resettlement, with many thoughtful details. For example, the washbasins were arranged so a small baby could be bathed there.

The military also paid attention to this type of rolling stock, but the huge movement of troops during the Great War asked for mobilisation of all kinds of suitable wagons, so the majority of troops was conveyed in standard covered vans.

During Soviet times, the former 'resettlement' carriages were put on regular passenger trains, and through several generations evolved into the well-known Soviet 'platzcart' type.

Before 1917 prisoners were transported in specially built carriages (see picture). During the Gulag times standard covered vans were used.

Under the loose hand of folklore, the 'Stolypin car' nickname was erroneously stuck to the standard covered van. Even Solzhenitsyn (with his very individual attitude to reality) wrote of this substitution of meanings. Anyway, the folklore was stronger, and now museum guides and historians have to make big efforts to put things right.



Narrow-Gauge Acquisitions

The Pereslavl Museum has acquired two 600mm gauge 'Unterwagen' bogies, dating from the time of WW2. The concept of a universal flat wagon which could be used either as a base for a separate vehicle or as a bogie for a bigger wagon was known from the end of the XIX century. In late 1930s the idea was widely implemented in Germany for the 'Feldbahn' rolling stock. Of course, a lot of this equipment came to the Eastern front. Some was left over after hostilities and used for civil purposes. The newer and less complete 'Unterwagen' is of yet unidentified manufacturer. Another one is from an early series, built by Dolberg of Berlin in 1937.



Photo Sergei Dorozhkov

Our member Tony Olsson has sent some comments on the subject of Russian narrow-gauge diesel locomotives:

A Russian Diesel in Wales



This picture (by courtesy of Donald Brooks and *Narrow Gauge News*) shows the Brecon Mountain Railway's Soviet-built TU7 750mm gauge locomotive (converted to 600mm gauge), Most British narrow gauge railways are 600mm or 2ft gauge (the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway is 762mm gauge, a gauge more common - as 760mm - in the ex-Soviet-controlled countries of Eastern Europe. Throughout Russia and its former constituent provinces including Finland and the Baltic States, 750mm is the prevailing narrow gauge.

Brecon Mountain Railway TU7-1698 diesel hydraulic shunter was built in 1980/81 by the Kambarka Engineering Works in Kambarka, Russia, and was imported by the Brecon Mountain Railway from the Seda Peat Railway in Latvia via a contact in Estonia.

In Latvia the loco had been out of use and stored for a number of years. It arrived in Wales in 2010. A rebuild including conversion by the railway workshop to 600mm gauge was started in 2012, and worked on sporadically when manpower and funds allowed, with completion in 2018. This class of locomotive was made in various gauges, but not 600mm, so the Welsh TU7 is probably unique.

The railway also has a metre-gauge version from Slovakia, but that was bought to provide spare parts in the expectation that they might be difficult to obtain from Kambarka.

It may seem strange to buy and import a 750mm gauge locomotive and then go to the difficulty and expense of converting it to 600mm gauge. The Brecon Mountain Railway found that trying to obtain a large and powerful 600mm gauge Bo-Bo diesel loco capable of hauling the railway's trains at line speed on steep gradients was difficult, with few options available. Few British narrow-gauge lines have diesels powerful enough to pull service trains. When looking at possible sources from abroad, the TU7 was virtually the only option.

The loco has been fully rebuilt by the railway's workshops. This included fitting a new Barnaul engine of the original type, as well as overhauling the transmission. The loco has been fully re-wired and fitted with a complete new air system for the loco and train braking. The re-gauging from 750mm has entailed a lot of work on the bogies, especially the wheelsets and final drive gearboxes. The other locomotive is also Kambarka-built. Built in 1985 it was obtained from the Tatra Electric railway in Poprad, Slovakia where it was out of use. It is 1000mm gauge and was supplied originally with snowploughs attached. *(With thanks to Neil Thompson of the Brecon Mountain Railway for the information)*

The Soviet TU-2 Diesel Locomotive – a footnote

So many of the TU-2 units have survived in ex-Soviet territory that there might be an impression that this was one of the most successful narrow-gauge designs. In fact it was not. Nor, by Russian standards, were many built.

What was needed in the mid-fifties was a more powerful narrow-gauge mixed-traffic design. In other words, a 'mainline' locomotive, and the resulting design was in fact a small edition of existing 5ft-gauge designs – an all-over body, cabs at each end, and electric transmission. But the need was urgent so adequate testing could not be as long as it habitually was with 5ft-gauge designs. (For example the 2TE10L broad gauge diesel design first appeared in

1962 and was on trial until 1966, when production started and over three thousand were built). The TU-2 prototype emerged in 1955 and may have benefitted from a couple of TU-1 prototypes built in 1954, but itself spent only a few weeks on the Railway Ministry's testing circuit at Shatura and then went into production in 1956, with only 281 units produced until production was stopped in 1959. It was only after it went into production that full balancing tests were undertaken. These tests took place in 1958 in Estonia, largely to investigate the pronounced hunting and galloping of the locomotive (which, it was found, stemmed largely from excess unsprung weight in the bogies). On well-laid straight track, it was recommended, a train hauled by these locomotive should not exceed 50kms/hr.

Because of these characteristics, and because of the 8-tonne axleload and quite long wheelbase, the design was not very suitable for industrial use, still less for peat and forestry railways, so the class ended up largely on the childrens railways and in the Baltic States and Ukraine.

The locomotives were needed urgently. Already the K and G class steam locomotives were being withdrawn while at the same time the Virgin Lands project anticipated the construction of new narrow-gauge lines in the wide expanses of Kazakhstan that were being prepared for mass cultivation of maize.



The prototype TU1-001 on the Kiev Childrens Railway



A TU-2 on the St Petersburg Childrens Railway

Photos J N Westwood

Lithuania

In late March there were no corona virus cases in Anyksciai.

All entertainment and tourism places were closed in Lithuania, including *Siaurukas*. But this was being regarded as a good opportunity to repair infrastructure and equipment, and after this crisis *Siaurukas* would be hopeful of continuing development.

Ukraine

HAIVORON – HOLOVARNIVSK: Wolfram Wendelin tells us that instructions have now been received to dismantle this 53km narrow-gauge line, inactive since January 2019.

KOROSTIV PROJECT: work continued during the winter, a main task being the provision of shelter for rolling stock. In particular, the recently-acquired blue shunter is now safely protected from the elements (*right*).



Photo Wolfram Wendelin

The 'Esteemed Railwayman' Decoration

This Soviet award was introduced in the 1930s and was destined for rank-and-file workers. About 200,000 seem to have been conferred. In the early years workers who averted or coped with accidents were the most likely recipients, although innovators were also prominent. At first termed a badge (*znachok*) it later was elevated to an award (*znak*). The very first award was in gold and silver, but later ones were of tin and bronze.



Later there was a change in the award. The medal was no longer lettered in the dative case ('To an esteemed railwayman') but simply in the nominative 'Esteemed Railwayman.' The image of a Iosif Stalin steam locomotive which the first medals bore was replaced by an electric in 1962, and later a more modern electric locomotive was portrayed.



A later award was for 'distinguished' (*otlichnyie*) railwaymen, subdivided into the various specialisations. The third picture is of this award intended for a 'distinguished constructor.' This particular item was bestowed on the present writer by a Ukrainian Railways administrator in appreciation of interpreting services rendered; an example, maybe, of post-Soviet grade inflation?



Line 102

Unfortunately the presentation by a Line 102 visitor of this project's progress will not take place as planned, due to the postponement of our AGM. In the meantime, here is a picture of the draisine vehicles, mentioned in Olga Kostiv's appreciation of the line in our last issue.



Photo Olga Kostiv

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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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