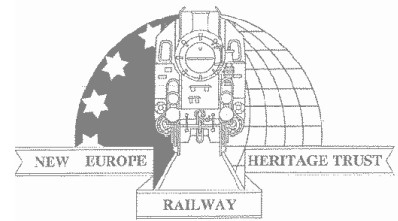


Eastern Star



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



In better times: AZIZU's recently restored Ea-2026 made several public appearances in 2021
Photo Sergei Palienko

We were hoping to include in this issue news from the various preservation ventures in Ukraine with which we have been co-operating. In view of the current situation our partners there have obviously not been able to send in reports, and railway preservation is unlikely to be anyone's priority in Ukraine at present. We are however doing our best to keep in contact with our friends there, and will publish whatever news we get in future issues.

The situation in Ukraine and Eastern Europe is extremely grave. NERHT is a non-political charitable trust, so we refrain from commenting in detail on the position, except to say that we hope there will be a peaceful solution to the crisis. We are determined to carry on our activities for as long as it is safe and legal to do so.

Romania

The Sibiu-Agnita Railway

We are grateful to Neil McGregor for the following survey of this line's progress over the past year.

Track

The level crossing at the south end of Cornățel station, which had been buried when the Nucet road was resurfaced, has been cleared and re-opened by the President of Sibiu County Council, who drove the first train over it. There is now access for trains to the south of Cornățel towards the junction at Mohu and on to Sibiu, but rails are missing immediately to the south of Cornățel.



The line to the north of Hosman is being cleared of overgrowth towards Fofeldea halt. Some rails have been found to be missing on this section but the aim is to allow access to Fofeldea halt for drasines and works trains by Easter. Beyond Fofeldea halt the girders



over a culvert have been stolen (*see picture*) but the Friends have replacements to hand and intend to deal with this in 2022. Beyond that culvert the trackbed has been eroded by the river and will need to be repaired before trains can reach Tichindeal / Marpod station. The community at Marpod are expected to help with machinery and stones to repair this. The next sections of the line to be restored are likely to be north of the current operational line, as local politicians in that area are understood to be supportive of the return of SAR passenger workings to their communes. Passenger working is in place between Cornățel and

Hosman, with locomotives running round at each station. Spot re-sleeping is being carried out on this section as required and as resources permit. A Matissa tamper has been acquired from the Tal-y-llyn Railway and is being restored in the UK before being brought to Romania. This is expected to ease the task of maintaining and restoring the line, subject to availability of suitable ballast.

Rolling Stock

In addition to the Deutz 0-4-0 diesel borrowed from Georg Hovevar, the Friends have acquired two new locomotives. This new-build 0-4-0 diesel constructed by Georg Hovevar, funded from EU money administered by the relevant Romanian authority for rural development. And then there is U23A (ex-Malaxa) 0-8-0WT steam locomotive 764.158 purchased at auction from the liquidator of SFT after more than 20 years plinthed outside Sighișoara station. This locomotive has been moved to Hosman and after being displayed at the steam gala in September, has been stripped down for inspection and overhaul.



Tests on the boiler thickness have been good and a contractor to overhaul the boiler is

being sought. The injectors and connecting rods are missing from this locomotive. It appears that neither it nor any of its classmates were fitted with automatic air brakes and a solution will need to be found to address this.

The original Deutz 0-4-0 is expected to be returned to Georg Hovevar at some point.



Passenger services are worked with borrowed carriages from Georg Hovevar. The Friends have obtained EU funding from the relevant Romanian authority for rural development to restore two of the original carriages latterly used on the line by CFR, one of which is owned by the Friends and the other by one of the volunteers. These are expected to be removed from the Agnita area and will be restored from derelict condition. The other two of the surviving carriages last used by CFR on the line remain in derelict condition at Agnita in the ownership of the consortium of local authorities which previously attempted to restore the line. Two open wagons have been acquired from Switzerland and see much use for works trains and for transporting visitors' bicycles.

The original CFR drasine (based on an ARO car) has been acquired in derelict condition and is stored in the shed at Hosman, awaiting restoration later on this year.

Buildings & structures

The Friends now have possession of all of the main building at Cornățel station and are seeking funding to repair the roof and other aspects. They hope to work with another NGO, Ambulanta Pentru Monumente in this work. Access has also now been gained to part of the station building at Hosman, where works to restore that part are expected to commence shortly. Repairs to the access road are in the hands of the council of the commune the lean-to shed constructed over the industrial siding at Hosman has proved extremely valuable as it allows rolling stock to be stored and worked on undercover and in secure conditions. It is expected to extend this shed to the full length of the siding this year



to increase the availability of covered storage for rolling stock. The Friends enjoy a good relationship with the factory served by the industrial siding, for access for secure storage areas and use of machinery.

The goods loading dock at Hosman has been paved with cobbles and generally improved as the main passenger access point for trains run by the Friends.

Wish list

The Friends (i.e. the preservation society) are working to be recognised as a "public utility", which should improve their ability to attract funding and support. In addition to supporting the restoration of 764.158 they however would welcome funding to acquire the following:

- ❖ Other ex-CFR rolling stock may be sold at auction by the liquidator of SFT. This may happen at relatively short notice and so it is important to be able to assemble purchase funds quickly to enable the Friends to bid, as was the case with 764.158.
- ❖ A mini-digger and a "lowmac" to transport it on are needed to assist in the restoration of the line. Georg Hocevar is understood to have a number of ex-BDZ low machinery wagons available for sale.
- ❖ As mentioned above, supplies of ballast are needed to maintain and restore the running line, particularly once the Matissa tamper becomes available. The Friends have been able to obtain some supplies of second-hand serviceable rail and sleepers but more is needed to replace missing rails and rotted sleepers, as well as suitable fastenings and fishplates.
- ❖ The liquidator of SFT appears to be attempting to sell various buildings on the line, including station buildings and the loco shed in Sibiu. Although this may be of unclear legality, it appears that the Ministry of Transport is not inclined to challenge this. The purchase prices are not expected to be particularly large and purchasing them now from the liquidator would give the Friends access to them and, more importantly, would prevent them from coming into the possession of third parties who may not support or who wish to obstruct the preservation of the SAR.

Russia

Sergei Dorozhkov reports:

The Cuckoo goes broad. 'Kukushka' (the Cuckoo) was a widespread nickname for narrow gauge steam locos and trains in Russia. Sometimes the same name had been used for a small broad gauge locomotive or a local train.

Back in the 1990s this name was chosen for the museum in Talitz, specialising in the narrow gauge.

As the collection in Talitz expanded and comprised items of various narrow gauges, the idea arose to install a short section of broad-gauge track with a wagon or two to show the difference. As our interests lie in the steam era, search for suitable rolling stock was not easy. Additional difficulty was presented by the size of possible candidates, as all of them were out of loading gauge limits for road transportation and needed special trailers and permission. Some interesting wagons were discovered at reasonable distances from Talitz, but, having been used as grounded sheds for many years, all lacked wheels and suspension. As it was unclear, where to get wheels, the decision to collect any of the finds was repeatedly postponed.

In the middle of December, quite unexpectedly, an advertisement appeared at one of Internet auction sites. Offered for sale in Astrakhan Region were two spoked wheelsets! Following immediate phone call it became possible to fix both sets at bargain price and find out some details. Two pairs of standard 1050mm broad gauge wheels with cast and

forged spoked centers had been located in the sands of Baskunchak steppe by scrap metallists, working at the site of a former industrial branch.

Transport was soon organised, and three days later the wheels arrived in Talitzy. In spring, when snow melts, work will start on the broad gauge track. Simultaneously, hunt for a broad gauge wagon body will resume!



Under cover. The main part of the locomotive shed and workshop building in Talitzy, which now houses the Cuckoo museum, was constructed in 1958 to a standardised 1930s design. Initially consisting of two-stall main part for locomotives and additional shorter stall for wagon repairs, in 1970s the building received additional sections for mechanical workshop, forgery and auxiliary rooms, while the wagon stall was lengthened. As time passed, the building saw little attention, so when museum team arrived, it faced numerous household problems. Some of them were addressed more or less successfully, but gradually it became apparent that the building needed major overhaul.

First big steps were taken in 2015, when part of the former wagon stall roof was replaced. Work continued in 2020, when renovation of wagon stall roof was completed and half of the main two-stall section roof was insulated and covered with metal. More work was planned for 2021, but contractors were overloaded with other orders and managed to come to Talitzy only in January of 2022. Fortunately, frosts and snowfalls eased, so work progressed rapidly on the rest of the building. Old soft roofing was cleaned, covered with thick layer of insulation and topped with new metal on wooden framing. On February 23 the last screw was driven into the new roof. Opportunity was also taken to replace the heating room chimney.

Taking the snowplough out. Winter 2021-22 brought heavy snowfalls to Central Russia. From November temperatures steadily kept below 0 degrees Celsius, and it was



repeatedly snowing. Towards the end of December it became clear that the snow-sweeping wagon, normally used for keeping tracks of the Talitzy branch operational, can't cope with thick drifts. Aid came in the form of a 1950s wooden snowplough. This is a rare example of a double-ended plough, built by Tula works for narrow gauge lines of the Ministry of Ways of Communications (MPS). Only two other examples survive, one in Estonia and one in Ukraine. Our plough no.68, built in 1955, was brought to the

museum from Kazakhstan in 1990s. Fully restored in 2011, the machine saw last service

in 2013. Prior to putting it into action some effort was taken to revise and lubricate all mechanisms. On the last day of 2021 the plough was taken to the line to clean the tracks for New Year Holidays hand-car rides. In the following weeks it had to be used repeatedly, as snowfalls continued.

Book Review

Leonid Moskalev, Vladimir Bochenkov, Sergei Dorozhkov, *USSR Narrow Gauge Steam Locomotives*. Moscow, 2021.

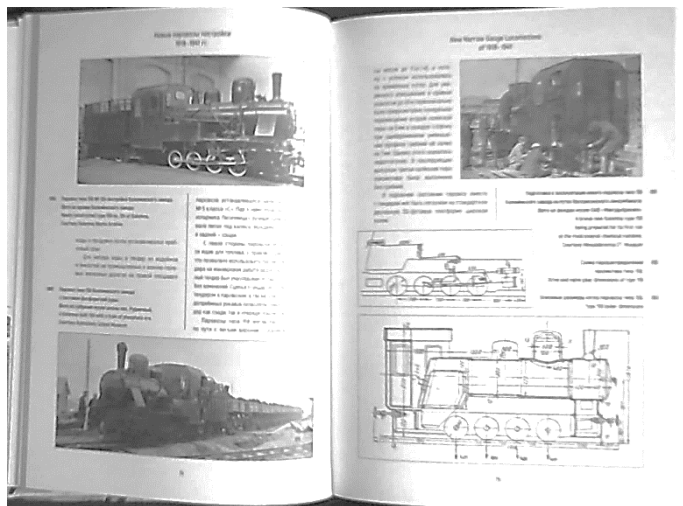
544 pages long, this hardback, printed on heavy art paper, is weighty physically as well as figuratively; a lectern would not come amiss. But it is worth the trouble and its authors deserve congratulation for producing a highly detailed description of narrow-gauge steam locomotives in post-revolutionary Russia (they treated the tsarist period in an earlier volume).

It is in Russian, but each chapter has a quite lengthy summary in English and the captions and tables are bilingual. Because tables and illustrations occupy so much page area this in effect means that the contents are largely accessible to English-speakers.



750mm was the usual narrow gauge in Russia, but there were many exceptions, among which were 600mm, 760mm, 3ft (used by some American-origin companies), metre, and 3ft 6in. There was a distinction between common-carrier lines (subject to the Railways Ministry) and the industrial lines such as those of the mining and peat enterprises. These were managed by their owners and tended to buy their locomotives from their previous suppliers, which were often foreign, German in particular but also Polish, Czech, Hungarian and American. British-built locomotives were very rare until 1945 when the acquisition of Sakhalin brought, among others, some antique Beyer-Peacock units.

This background of territorial acquisitions, wartime trophies and post-war reparations meant that non-Russian-origin designs outnumbered the home products. And this is reflected in the structure of this book, which consists essentially of four chapters. Chapter 2 is the longest and is devoted to trophy, reparation and 'displaced' locos, the latter including, for example, the large locomotive stocks of the Baltic states. Chapter 4 is the shortest and covers the mainly Japanese-built locomotives of Sakhalin (3ft 6in being a narrow gauge in Russian terms). It is Chapter 3, devoted to new locomotives in 1945-60, where the reader will encounter the several designs which, built in large numbers, include most of the units that have since become preserved items. They were built abroad as war reparations because the Soviet locomotive works were overloaded with broad-gauge production. Russian designers and engineers participated in the design and production of these units, and East German and Finnish works were the major builders.



There are over 800 illustrations, including very many informal shots from private collections, local museums, and industrial museums. Thanks to the high-quality paper, they have reproduced well. The book is obtainable online from www.modellhouse.com in St Petersburg. The delivered price will be influenced by the exchange rate and the substantial postal charges but was in the region of 75 Euros in 2021.

JNW

Official Status for a 1913 Locomotive

The annual XXIX expert council of Polytechnic Museum, held in Moscow on December 10, awarded the status of a Monument of Science and Technology to class Э.918 0-10-0 from the collection of Central Museum of Railway Transport. Built in 1913 by Lugansk Hartmann Factory, the locomotive is the oldest survivor of class Э, world-largest family of steam engines. Over 11 thousand locomotives of this class were built between 1912 and 1957, becoming the mainstay of Russian and Soviet freight motive power and one of the symbols of USSR's railways.

The status of a Monument of Science and Technology confirms historic significance of the locomotive and ensures that she is properly conserved and not vandalised for spare parts, needed for keeping younger members of the class operational, the sad practice of recent times.



Photo by Alexander Shalashov

Croatia

Good Prospects for the Istrian Preserved Railway

Neil Vlasic writes that this proposed project, undertaken by the Croatian Railway Preservation Society, has been offered four diesel locomotives by HZCargo and moreover it now has the support of the Istria Tourist Board. On payment of a 10 per cent deposit the locomotives will be reserved for the Society and subsequently HZCargo will help them move to a more permanent site, possibly at Most Rasa station. Apparently the Society has been granted a generous discount on the purchase price, but of course the money has to be raised. Two of the locos are of the mainline E645 series type built by EMD Canada, which were previously in mainline service on such runs as Zagreb-Varazhdin.

They are numbered 2062-008 and 2062-055. The latter is a well-known unit having once rescued a train stranded by heavy snowfall. It is anticipated that these two units will haul the tourist specials that the society envisages. Then there is 2132-085, a Jenbach diesel-hydraulic shunter, and 2041-024, a Duran diesel-electric shunter.

BOSNIA STEAM TOUR – APRIL 2022

Bosnia is one of the last places where you can still see non-preserved steam on both standard and narrow gauge, although access to railway sites can be difficult. Now FarRail Tours, the specialist travel company, are arranging a tour of the remaining steam-worked lines offering the chance to ride behind and photograph historic locomotives, including the last surviving operational 2-10-0 "Kriegsloks" and the famous 760cm gauge 0-8-2 at work at Banovici coal mines. The tour will take place from 9 to 16 April; for details visit www.farrail.com

Please note that NERHT are not organising this tour and cannot accept any liability for it.

NERHT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The NERHT Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 21 May at The Model Railway Club, Keen House, 4 Calshot Street, London N1 9DA, starting at 2.00 p.m. (Formal notices of the meeting will be sent to members in due course). At 3.00 p.m. members of NERHT will give an illustrated talk on the theme of Visitors to Railways in the New Europe from the 1950s to the present. All welcome.

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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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