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At the repair depot at Beregovo on the narrow-gauge Borzhava Valley line in Ukraine. This line has repeatedly been on the brink of closure but always, though diminished, seems to survive. Here preparations are made for the 2022 summer season.

Photo Denys Dobra

NEW EUROPE RAILWAY HERITAGE TRUST

2021-22 ANNUAL REPORT

The objectives of NERHT are to support railway preservation in the former USSR and the ex-Communist states of Central and Eastern Europe. Along with so many other organizations, we put much of our work on hold during the Corona pandemic, and in my report to last year's Annual General Meeting I expressed the hope that normal conditions would soon return. Sadly, and for reasons which probably few predicted, this has not happened.

This report is shorter than usual as it only covers the brief period since our last AGM, held later than usual on 2 October 2021 when our activities were reduced because of the winter and the on-going Covid situation, although this time was hardly uneventful in the area where we seek to operate. Since NERHT is an organization concerned with the ex-Communist world it is obvious that we have been affected by the war in Ukraine. As a registered charity and a non-political association we refrain from commenting in detail on the situation while expressing every sympathy with those affected by the terrible conflict. Our aim as always is to carry on with our work for so long as it is safe a legal to do so, and with this in mind we keep in touch with our partner organizations throughout our area of benefit even where we are unable to visit them, or invite their representatives to Great Britain. We are already starting to think about the role of the railway heritage sector in post-war reconstruction in Ukraine and we look forward to working with a range of other organizations in this.

Away from the former USSR, we have carried on our work as best we can.The period covered by this report saw our delegates going on the first post-Covid NERHT expedition, namely to the Istria region of Croatia where we met the leaders of the Croatian Railway Preservation Society and saw the mothballed Most Rasa branch line which they hope to revive as a tourist attraction. Elsewhere in ex-Yugoslavia, we have made contact with those seeking to develop the remaining steam-worked lines in Bosnia for tourism and will be visiting them soon. In Romania we continue to work with the Sibiu-Agnita Railway in Romania where local volunteers helped by the British support group SARUK continue to make progress in restoring this narrow gauge line and preserving historic items.

As always, we owe an immense debt of gratitude to our members and consultants and to the railway organisations and individuals without whose help our work would not be possible; in the past year and more, these have included those who have promised to support our activities as soon as these can go ahead. On behalf of the Committee I should like to thank everyone for all the assistance which we have received.

Stephen Wiggs Chairman, NERHT **21 May 2022**

Ukraine

The Ukrainian Situation at End-May

Railway Museums The museums at Donetsk (in territory held by Russian separatists) and Kharkiv have so far sustained only minor damage in the fighting. The collection of historic locomotives and rolling stock at the main station in Kyiv, and the sole preserved *Iosif Stalin* class 2-8-4 plinthed here, are intact. Meanwhile enthusiasts are carrying on

work at the small narrow-gauge museum at Korostiv in Western Ukraine.
Steam Depots. The historic locomotives owned by AZIZU (the Ukrainian Railway Heritage Association) are still at Tsvitkove depot. Most of the steam locomotives preserved by Ukrainian State Railways remain at the depot at Snovsk (formerly known as Shchors) which was briefly twice occupied by the Russians at the start of the war.
Linea 102 Project. The mothballed cross-border standard gauge line – the site of the Polish/Ukrainian preservation scheme – has been partly reopened for use in the current emergency.
Narrow gauge lines. It is understood that Ukrainian State Railways intend to resume passenger trains on the Antonivka line and the surviving portion of the Borzhava Valley Railway from Berehove to Khmil'nyk. Passenger trains are still operating on the Haivoron railway from Haivoron to Rudnytsia. On the Vyhoda forestry railway in the Carpathian Mountains of Western Ukraine timber traffic is continuing but understandably tourist trfains have been suspended.
Pioneer (Childrens) railways. The narrow-gauge lines at Kyiv and elsewhere have not operated since the start of the war.

We in NERHT are keeping in touch with the leaders of AZIZU and other railway heritage associations in Ukraine with a view to renewing active cooperation with them when circumstances permit.

A working party at the Korostiv Museum. Photo by courtesy of Wolfram Wendelin.

One of the AZIZU locomotives at Tsvitkove: an Su 2-6-2.

Photo Sergei Palienko

Ukrainians Save Narrow-gauge Locomotive

Amidst all the terrible news from Ukraine it is good to hear that enthusiasts there are still working to preserve their country's railway heritage. Members of the Korostiv narrow gauge museum in Western Ukraine have recently acquired their first steam locomotive, a 790 mm gauge 0-4-0T built in 1942 at Slavonski Brod, Croatia, for the Wiener Lokomotiv Fabrik at Floridsdorf, Austria. The loco was used at the Donawitz steel works in Austria and was taken as reparations by the Soviets in 1945 to Dnipro where it worked at a pipe factory until 1976, when it was placed on a plinth as a monument. Having been acquired for the Korostiv museum, it was transported in mid-April by road to Ternopil despite the conflict. Notwithstanding its poor condition and some rough modifications carried out during its working life, the loco is now being restored to working order by a local firm in Ternopil and will be regauged to 750mm gauge for use on the museum line being laid at Korostiv.

Russia

Alexey Vulfov has sent this picture of the developing railway museum at Voronezh.

Vintage Tramcar Performs in St Petersburg

Eastern Star no.84 introduced readers to Russia's tram preservation scene. Here is another instalment:

The most widespread tramcar of pre-war USSR was class Kh (*X*) four-wheel double-ended wagon, built by Mytishchy and later at the Ust-Katav plant.

Introduced in 1925 at the 2nd All-Russian Congress of Tram Workers as standard for most cities of the USSR, the design was somewhat straightforward, in fact being a simplified and more robust version of earlier cars. Combined wooden and metal body on metal riveted carcass was mounted on the rigid four-wheel bogie through four leaf springs. First examples had two longitudinal benches for 24 passengers, while total capacity topped 100. Later versions had welded carcass and transverse single seats, allowing even more space for standing passengers.

Prototype motor and trailer cars were built by Mytishchy plant near Moscow in 1926, and in 1928 serial production was launched. The first batch went to Kharkov and was classified Kh (X). The first trailers were ordered for Moscow, hence classified as class M.

As some towns of the USSR had non-standard gauges and specific conditions, narrower and shorter versions were also built in limited quantities.

In 1937 production was moved to Ust-Katav in the Urals, where up to 150 cars were built annually. In total, over 2000 wagons were built between 1928 and 1941.

Class Kh trams worked in most towns of the USSR, and several are preserved in various condition in Russia and Ukraine. The last of the class to be returned to active life was no.17 from Dzerzhinsk, a town in Nizhny Novgorod oblast.

Dzerzhinsk is an interesting place in itself. Renamed from Rastyapino (loosely translated as 'muddler settlement') in 1929 and granted city status in 1930, the town rapidly grew in the 1930s, as several chemical plants were launched here. Factory buildings, residential and public houses were designed in bright and unusual constructivism and modernity styles, making the city one of the models of the modern USSR. The first tram line was launched in Dzerzhinsk in 1933. Sadly, despite strong public opposition, the tram system was closed in 2015. Rails were lifted and all infrastructure demolished, but two vehicles, vintage class Kh motor no. 17 and snow-sweeper RGS-2 from the 1970s were saved by enthusiasts. The preservation group managed to secure part of former tram shed as a home for a future museum, and both vehicles were kept under cover.

Restoration of no.17 started in 2019. As time and work proceeded, the project became widely known among vintage transport enthusiasts all over Russia. And to the great surprise and delight of city transport fans the first appearance of the newly restored tram in public was organised in St. Petersburg!

On May 21, 2021 VII Parade of Retro Transport took place in St. Petersburg. More than 250 vintage motorcars, lorries, buses, trolleybuses and trams went out to the streets in three caravans and later were exhibited on Engineer Street. There were guest vehicles from other cities, but the star performer, without doubt, was class Kh motor no.17 from

Dzerzhinsk. For the first time in Russian history a vintage tram was brought to an event in another city. Moreover, as all rails in Dzerzhinsk were long lifted, this was the only opportunity to try out the tram in action. To the credit of restorers and organisers, everything went smoothly. *With thanks to Sergei Dorozhkov for the text and Yuriy Pasholok for the photo.*

From the Back of Beyond: Return of a Narrow-Gauge Power Station

In *Eastern Star* no.84 colleagues from Belarus reported acquisition of a body from a PPES-40 mobile steam power station wagon, built in Germany for the USSR in the 1940s. This very special type of equipment was designed to provide electricity for numerous logging camps in far-away areas. (A detailed history of electricity stations and mobile workshops on the Soviet narrow gauge has been given in 'Electrifying the Soviet Forests' by David Scotney in 'Locomotives International @100' Special Issue of 2016).

The boiler, 60hp steam engine, condenser, generator and all accessories were neatly incorporated in a 750mm gauge covered van, making the unit easily movable around forestry railways. To expand the range of operation even further, the frames of the wagon were strengthened with additional girder arrangement, thus allowing removal from bogies and transportation on sledges by tractor.

Constructed between the late 1940s and middle 1950s, power station wagons were dispatched to virtually all forestry railways around the USSR. Many went to Siberia and the Far East. Some units were later rebuilt with diesel engines and more powerful generators, but generally their life rarely exceeded 15 years, as the principles of logging operation have changed. Mass appearance of skidder tractors and introduction of petrol chainsaws made electric stations redundant. Steam equipment went to scrap while covered bodies found further use as sheds.

Thus, the chance of finding a relatively complete station in the 21st century was considered a miracle. The only hope was for some extremely remote location, where a lucky unit might have been pulled on sledges by tractor. However, there was no idea how to find such a place.

The miracle came true in autumn 2020, when historians from Magadan reported finding a power station wagon in an abandoned camp on the river Khinike, some 30 miles from nearest civilization and 275 miles north of Magadan. And – it was complete with most of its machinery!

The team of the Sverdlovsk Rly Museum were willing to recover the wagon. The idea was supported by heavy emotional pressure from Polytechnic Museum and the Centre for Industrial and Transport History. Clearly, this was a unique chance which could not be lost. Moreover, the Sverdlovsk Rly already had in collection a mobile workshop wagon of similar type, restored in 2016.

The recovery of the power station wagon needed thorough planning. Following lengthy consultations it was decided to build special sledges and pull the wagon out of the taiga by tractor in winter, when rivers and marshes became frozen. In fact, the only difference of the 'return' journey was in modern sledges and much more powerful tractor, compared to those used 70 years ago to deliver the station to the Khinike bank.

The rescue operation was designed and realised by Philipp Kolesnikov, an engineer of Modern Machinery Far East, the principal supplier of heavy machinery in the Magadan area. His assistants were mechanic Sergei Devyatkin and tractor driver Victor Goruk.

There was a reconnaissance expedition in January 2022 on snowmobiles, to check and

work out possible routes and examine the wagon. Original works drawings were still missing, so precise measurements were needed for designing the sledges.
It was decided to postpone the rescue to the latest possible time when ice was still sound but the daylight time already long.
Recovery expedition started on March 30, consisting of tractor with sledges and a snowmobile. Initial plan to use frozen river as a road failed due to unstable ice, so the caravan had to follow the river bank, finding its way between groves and hills. As the route had been studied in the first expedition, this went relatively easy.
A day and a half was spent to raise the wagon and put it on sledges.
On the way back the tractor was trapped in the river by broken ice, and it took much effort to get out. Additional engineering savvy was needed to pull the sledges with wagon across resulting ice-hole. These difficulties overcome, the rest of the journey went smoothly.
At the time of writing the power station wagon was on its way to Ekaterinburg for restoration. Suitable original bogies were found in the collection of the Centre for Industrial and Transport History in Talitsy, but a lot of interesting tasks are still ahead. And the search for new relics continues…

Sergei Dorozhkov

Builder's photo
(Ammendorf Works)

Along the river

Photo Philip Kolesnikov

Review

Standard Gauge Locomotives in Russia and the Soviet Union. By Toms Altbergs. Published by Frank Stenvalls. 144 pages A4; numerous illustrations. Price 28€ (orders can be placed by email to frank@stenvalls.com)

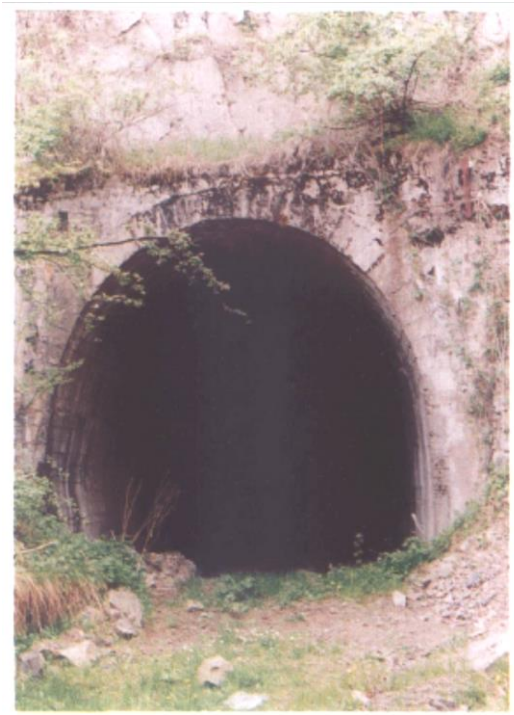
As is well known, the rail network of Russia and the USSR was and is mostly broad gauge, but fewer people may know that the standard gauge was also used. This book tells the story of the locomotives – mostly steam – that ran on these lines. One of the first railways in the Russian Empire was the Warsaw to Vienna Railway, opened in 1845, which together with connected lines in what is now Poland was laid to the standard or 1435mm gauge. The earliest locomotives on this system came from Belgium, Britain and Germany, and later classes included those such as 4-4-0 and 4-4-2 types of a sort which most people would probably not associate with Russia. The two world wars saw both sides using railways in captured territory, often using locomotives brought from elsewhere, including for example the Belgian State Railways 2-10-0 locos sold by the exiled Belgian government to Imperial Russia for use in occupied Austro-Hungarian territory. Many locomotives thus ended up far away from where they first ran; as an example, the book contains a photograph of a Great Western Railway 0-6-0 Dean Goods, used by the British Expeditionary Force and seized by the Germans after the Dunkirk evacuation in 1940, which may have ended up in Soviet hands. It would be an understatement to say that the locomotives described in this book worked in turbulent periods, and those that escaped destruction by enemy action often survived various conflicts, and in many cases were regauged, and in some cases were even converted back to their original gauge; many of those used by the Imperial Russian and Soviet armies spent their last years in the countries which today are the ex-Communist states of Eastern and Central Europe. Large numbers of the numerous illustrations depict scenes in wartime and one wonders how these photos ever came to be taken; others dating from the Communist era must have been taken at great personal risk to the photographers! Remarkably, a few examples of the locomotives depicted survive to this day in preservation. The author Toms Altbergs is known to many as one of the leaders of the successful campaign to preserve the Latvian narrow gauge railway ("Banitis") and he is to be commended for producing this excellent and well-researched volume.

North Macedonia

After Eight Decades the Guyesheva-Kumanovo Line May Open Soon

After Yugoslavia was occupied by Nazi Germany, its Macedonian territory was allocated to Germany's ally Bulgaria, which thereby acquired the North Macedonian railway network, To link this system with the Bulgarian railways required a new line, and in June 1941 construction began. The planned length was 102.3km and it would connect Guyesheva with Kumanovo. Between 2000 and 3000 workers were employed at a time. The railway route was split into two sections: Gyueshevo-Kriva Palanka and Kriva Palanka-Kumanovo (Gyueshevo is the current checkpoint on the frontier between Bulgaria and North Macedonia). Because of the great enthusiasm and the long lasting expectations by the locals, the line was affectionately called the "Railway of Hope". It was to have 53 tunnels, having a total length of 15,330 m, the longest being of 2,362m. A total of eleven (later nine} railway stations were to be erected. Twenty-five bridges of more than 10m span and 285 other additional facilities were to have been added to the infrastructure. The official record of construction up to 1st January 1944 records 29 tunnels already finished

and the construction of eleven more underway.
Because of the mountainous terrain of the railway the engineering team adopted a minimum curve radius of 300m on the first section, between Gyueshevo and Kriva Palanka, and 500m on the second section, between Kriva Palanka and Kumanovo. As for the bridges, of those spanning more than 10m, three were finished and the construction of three more was underway. Among the lesser facilities 90 were already finished. Unfortunately, we do not have for the moment any annual records from 1944 preserved. No matter, we know from eyewitness accounts that construction work continued throughout 1944 and stopped immediately before the retreat of the Bulgarian troops from the area in October 1944. Therefore, we can assume a much higher volume of finished construction on the ground than officially announced by the state statistics. For example, according to the official accounts the long tunnel No. 1, planned to be driven immediately underneath the two check-points Gyueshevo (on the Bulgarian side), and Deve Bair (on the North Macedonian one) was 'officially' driven to a distance of 320m, although the real length being finished on the Bulgarian side is three times longer, part of it even faced with granite slabs! So the real state of construction could be much better than currently assumed by the statistics.



And now? After the end of the Iron Curtain the European Corridor No. 8 came back on the agenda. No wonder: It provides a vital link across the whole of the Balkan peninsula from the Black Sea to the Adriatic coast. It becomes even a significant part of the political agenda right now, against the background of the latest political developments in Europe and the ongoing efforts to speed up the integration of the West Balkans into the EU. Some concrete steps were already taken in this direction. As early as April 2018 a meeting was held between the manager of the Bulgarian company railway infrastructure and his Macedonian counterpart. It was agreed for the construction works to continue with a planned inauguration of the line by early 2023, a deadline, however, hardly realistic in the current situation.
The construction works were split onto three sections: Kumanovo-Belyakovez (31 km), Belyakovez -Kriva Palanka (32 km) and Kriva Palanka-Deve Bair (23 km). The last section should be linked up to the unfinished long tunnel No. 1 of almost 2400 m. The continuation of the construction of the section Kriva Palanka-Belyakovetz is already underway, the first eight kilometres are even used for freight traffic. For the remaining two sections tenders are expected to be held in due time. The total cost of the scheme is supposed to reach between 600 and 700 million Euro with a small share of it already granted.

Dimitar Deyanov
Iliya Iliev

Croatia

In our last issue we published details of a contract whereby Croatian Railways undertook to make four locomotives available for purchase by the proposed Istrian tourist railway. It now appears that both parties have had second thoughts, and a more modest programme is likely.

Bulgaria

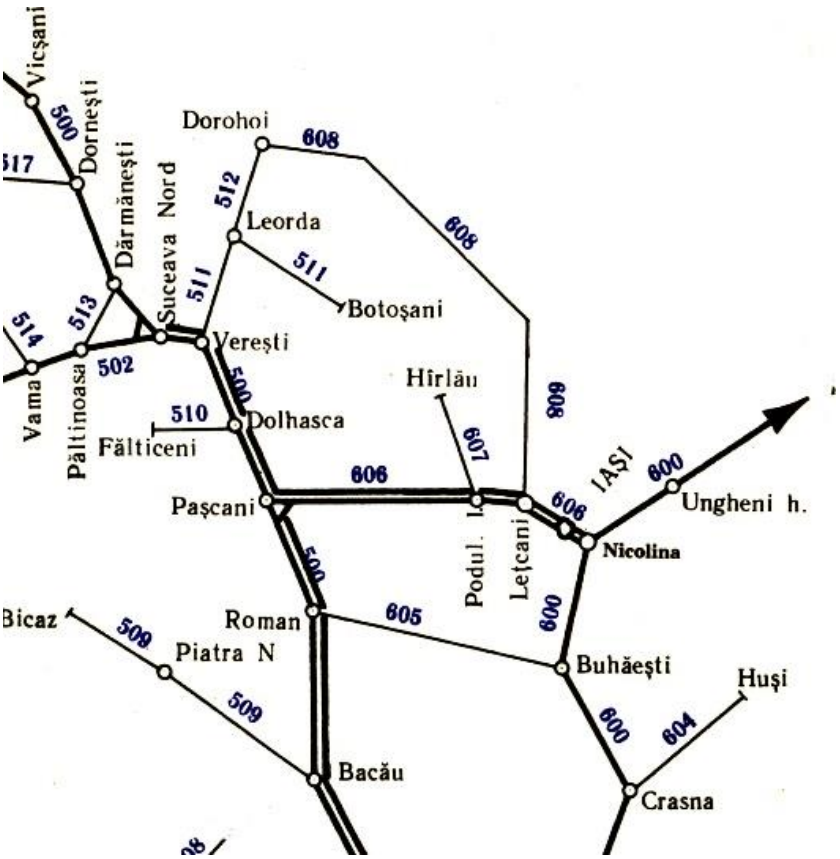
The Septemvri – Dobrinishte Line

Two of the diesel locomotives of this picturesque narrow-gauge line have been overhauled, suggesting that the proposal to close it has (once again!) been quietly by-passed. Over recent decades there have been several similar proposals that have similarly been ignored. Until very recently communities along the line could point out that in winter the only available road was unusable so the railway was the only means of transport. An improved road has now been provided but nevertheless the overhaul of those two locomotives suggests that the line will yet survive; it certainly has a tourism potential. Its operating costs could be cut with modern half-barriers and remote-controlled points but here again local opinion, concerned with employment prospects, could be involved.

Point-keepers at work

Photos by Livius Kooy

Travelling by *Cursa*



In the autumn of 1977 my wife and I were in Romania once again visiting relatives in Iași in the north-east of the country. This was a 4-week visit and as I could not be deprived of some railway activity I took rather more risks than usual with the inevitable results. Steam was by then at a very low ebb, confined to shunting operations and some industrial locations. I decided to investigate reports of an industrial shunter at a factory near Roman and found that I could comfortably make the round trip in a day. Thus I caught the 11.05 from Iași to Paşcani and then the 11.44 from there to Roman. At that time there were four varieties of passenger trains, firstly *Tren Rapid* which were the fastest with limited stops and a supplementary fare. Then there were the *Tren Accelerat* which were also fast but with more stops and these also attracted a supplementary fare. Then there were the *Tren de Persoane*, ordinary passenger trains which were generally all-stations. Finally, there were the *Tren Cursa* which not only stopped at all stations and halts but also at various spots not in the timetable for the convenience of farmers – peasants if you like but not meant in any derogatory sense – and others going to and from market.

The 11.44 from Paşcani to Roman was one such *Cursa* and the journey of 25 miles took 48 minutes. Whilst it had a modern diesel loco at the front the 4-wheel coaches were a great deal older but, as it turned out, quite appropriate for the duty. At departure, the train was largely empty but rapidly filled up at the rural stops. Large ladies wearing headscarves and long dark blue skirts came on board loaded with bags and even sacks of produce. One had a bundle of chickens, their legs tied hobble fashion. Another had a small pig in a string bag. Yet another brought a goose on board in a bag, the bird's head and neck emerging from an opening at the top. Another bag which contained an anonymous but silent creature was pushed under the seat in front of me. The other livestock was noisy, with the squawks of the hens and the occasional squeal from the pig mingling with the noisy conversation of the locals. They were a jolly lot and clearly there was a great deal of humour being exchanged. I was reasonably fluent in Romanian at this time but had some difficulty in following the local accents and patois.

The ladies were accompanied by just a few elderly men, wizened and blackened by the sun. Their faces showed little familiarity with razors and similarly their teeth showed little familiarity with the dentist! They were carrying nothing, gave no assistance to the overloaded women and seemed to have come along for the ride. After 20 minutes or so the ticket collector arrived. "Tickets please" he announced. There was no decrease in the general hubbub so he tried again: "Has ANYONE got a ticket?" Then looking at a

particularly wrinkled gent he said "Don't worry, grand-dad, I know you NEVER have a ticket!" He looked quite startled when I produced my ticket for inspection and for just a moment I became the centre of attraction. But not for long. After a few seconds the squawks, squeals and chatter recommenced and I was once again ignored.
Upon arrival at Roman, the locals made off in the direction of the town centre market. Meanwhile I walked about a mile or so out of town to the point where a long siding joined the mainline, this siding leading to the Fabrica de Ţevi Roman, the Roman Pipe Factory.

The siding was a long one and the factory itself was a good distance away. Wagons were being shunted by an ex-KPEV (Koniglich Preussische Eisenbahnverwaltung, the Prussian State Railways) G8 0-8-0, 40-020, presumably transferred from the CFR to industrial use. The loco had been KPEV FFT 5282 (FFT is Eisenbahn Direktion Frankfurt, one of 21 such regions of the KPEV), had been built by Jung as their 2733/18 and had been purchased by the CFR after WW1.
This class had become uncommon by this time so I was quite pleased to see it. There was nobody about and it was very quiet and I took a couple of photos quite unhindered by the loco crew or the shunter. Bolstered by my success I returned to the railway station and promptly spotted that a small tank engine was shunting the adjacent beet sugar factory. This was a 0-6-0T numbered CFU 35, one of 145 built by the Romanian Reşiţa factory post-war. They were rarely seen, being usually confined to

impenetrable industrial premises. This one was 2190/55. I could not resist taking a photo so I walked across the footbridge and this was an error. No local people bothered to use the footbridge, merely crossing the tracks so I stood out like a sore thumb. Also visible within the confines of the beet sugar factory was an even more interesting loco, an Austrian 92 class 0-8-0T, probably 92-2295 according to Halliwell in T*he Locomotives of Roumania* (sic) but in no position to be photographed. When I returned to the station platform the policeman was waiting for me. I was taken into an office and my passport examined. Had I been taking photos of trains? I confessed that I had and he seemed surprised by my honesty. I showed him various UK railway magazines I usually carried on such occasions to prove my authenticity and he retired to an adjacent room and I could hear him reading out my passport details over the phone. He returned and asked if I had a video camera or if I had been to the USSR, surprising questions in the circumstances. He accepted my double negative and we chatted for some time until the phone rang again and I was sent on my way, complete with films etc. I even shook hands with him which caused him some surprise!
However, all this had taken some time and I had missed my return train but found that I could use an alternative route via Buhăieşti – see map. Thus I went into town and found a pleasant restaurant where I ate but also imbibed a few glasses of local brandy in celebration. When I got 'home' I found anxious and, let it be said, disapproving relatives who just could not understand my enthusiasm for railways and steam locomotives – and in a large part, still don't!

The photos show 40-020 shunting at the Fabrica de Ţevi, the 0-6-0T shunting outside the sugar factory and (left) the same loco out of use in 1991 when restrictions were less onerous!

Many thanks to Jim Ballantyne for the text and photos

FRANK COOPER 1946 - 2022

We were sorry to hear of the death of Frank Cooper, a founder member of NERHT, following a long illness. Apart from acting for a time as NERHT Secretary, Frank played an important role in visiting and advising heritage railway projects in the East and welcomed several of their delegations to the Welsh narrow gauge lines. In addition, he was active in various railway organizations and was Treasurer of SARUK, the offshoot of NERHT set up to support the successful Sibiu-Agnita Railway preservation scheme in Romania. We extend our sympathy to Frank's partner Petra McGuiness and his family.

Freshly prepared for the summer season, locomotives of the Borzhava Valley Railway in Ukraine await their duties. Photo Denys Dobra

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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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