

Eastern Star



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

Banitis Ploughs Ahead



Photo Andris Biedrins

Quite heavy snowfalls this winter in Latvia brought out the *Banitis* snow plough, here seen at Kalniena station. Before this, the line was reviewing some of its achievements of 2018. Among these was the historical exhibition in what was once the spacious

freight shed, and the major refurbishment of the Gulbene station interior, this latter project also including some exhibits.



The freight shed exhibition.

Photo Andris Biedrins

But perhaps the most eye-catching project was the construction of an old-style manual track trolley. This was a replica of a vehicle photographed on the line in the early 1900s. Turned out by the *Banitis* workshop, it has been an immediate success with the public, especially the junior public.*



The new trolley entertains its guests.

Photo Andris Biedrins

An old picture showing the original trolley. A copy of this picture is on show.

**(Members who have a general interest in trolleys should know that NERHT has an exchange arrangement with The Velocipede Group, which publishes the E-journal Velocipede. Any NERHT member who would like to receive this can arrange it through the Eastern Star editor)*



Croatia

Local Railway History as Part of the Big Picture

Tamara Stefanac of the Croatian Railway Museum describes how a local initiative has been utilised as part of a national project, a process that might well be usefully studied by other railway historians.

The Croatian Railway Museum collects materials to present railway history from the entire area of Croatia, and if sufficient materials have been preserved, it is sometimes even possible to reconstruct a specific local railway story. It is precisely such material preserved as the Vinkovci Railway Collection that has been created through co-operation of retired railwaymen from the Vinkovci area and the Croatian Railway Museum. Vinkovci had a reputation as a town of railwaymen, in which a member of every fourth family was employed in the railway system. Members of the Vinkovci HŽ Pensioners' Club have collected objects from their work history in the past, documenting the development of railways in the wider Vinkovci area. By donating objects to the Croatian Railway Museum, they have created the possibility of permanently protecting and preserving the collected material as a unique railway regional collection. Presentation of material as a permanent exhibition at Vinkovci railway station is an important manner of communication, in which the preserved objects clearly show the history of the railway system, and members of the Vinkovci HŽ Pensioners' Club from Vinkovci convey their memories of railwaymen's lives by direct contact with the visitors. The intention of the Croatian Railway Museum from the moment of taking over the objects into the Museum's holdings was to create an exhibition as a place of encounter and a collaborative project between the Museum and retired railwaymen gathered in an association. A collaborative project is primarily directed at making retired people participate in shaping exhibition content with the aim of getting away from an exclusively, professional, manner of presenting local railway history. A step beyond the local in the presentation of the collected material is digitalizing the archived material and its presentation in the *Topotheque* virtual platform: <http://crorailways.topoteka.net/>, created with the assistance of the European Union. Virtual space serves as archives, which can be accessed globally and in this way, the local community of railwaymen has been granted access to a wider space interwoven by researchers of railway past, railway fans and local historians. This online space is at the same time a possible point where you can encounter fans of railway history, especially bearing in mind their journeys on Croatian railway lines in past times, where they created their own archives by making photographs of structures and objects of the railway technical heritage.

Topotheque, as a collaborative online archive in local communities, represents a point of cooperation, knowledge and information exchange with a possibility of interactive participation. Descriptive data of material units has been presented in the *topotheque* and is also available in English as an encouragement for railway heritage fans to make an active contribution in these virtual archives.

Ukraine

Wolfram Wendelin writes that there will be very few or no broad gauge steam trains for enthusiasts in the immediate future, as track occupation fees are too high. On the narrow gauge, the Borzhava line has not been running since December 20th; its only locomotive still being under repair. On the Antonivka – Zarichne line there is still a

thrice-weekly service (Wednesday, Friday, Sunday). Elsewhere, the Holovanivs'k branch was temporarily (but perhaps permanently) closed on January 4th.

In Search of Documents

AZIZU, the preservation group based in Kyiv, has a number of dilapidated passenger vehicles, like the one pictured here, but very little documentation covering them. This makes accurate restoration near-impossible. Original drawings are the vital documents. It is in this kind of situation that an organisation like NERHT can play a useful role by bringing contacts together. In this case our NERHT Secretary, Livius Kooy, knew that Toms Altbergs of the Railway Museum in Riga had a specialised knowledge of Russian passenger cars (and Imperial Russia of course was the proprietor of both the Ukrainian and Baltic railway systems). An approach to Toms brought useful results and following his advice a contact was also made in Hungary. At the time of writing it seems there is ground for optimism and we can hope one day to see newly-restored cars in service.



Kosovo

Kosovo is a new state, as yet unrecognised by many governments, and the provision of historical relics has great importance for establishing the spirit of a nation-state. The bringing into being of a national Kosovan railway museum is therefore of great interest and is being advanced by a group known as the European Station Association. Its founder, Nata Zivanovic, has sent us the following explanatory letter:

On behalf of the European Station Association from Belgrade, I would like to inform you that we successfully carried out a first donation activity for the Railway Museum of Kosovo on 30th November 2018. The European Station Association was founded to help the reconciliation process of the Western Balkans societies with regards to transport and tourism. Railway experts of Railway Museums from Germany, Slovenia and Croatia joined this activity.

The goals of this activity were to gather railway experts and people committed to railway heritage and to confirm our good will in efforts to reach a high goal in the reconciliation process of the Western Balkans societies with regards to transport and tourism. Thanks to this activity we were able to draw attention to railway transport as a way of connecting separate people, regardless of their religion or ethnic background.

In the picture, inspired by the 'Berlin Process' that was launched by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, I hand over the Railway Model Template with train of friendship. This Model has a meaning that symbolizes the connection of nations, good neighbour relations and a hope for a better future of all generations.

This small and charming Railway Museum of Kosovo is different from others, because it was created thanks to railway workers' initiative and with people of good will it can grow for the well-being of societies. This donation action was warmly welcomed by management and staff. We were fortunate to have had met such wonderful people with good will and we made good connection for future donations to come.



Bearing in mind the above-mentioned I am using this opportunity to kindly ask you to think about the possibility of finding a potential model of cooperation. The good news is that there is a way to build a tourist rail line in Kosovo.

I sincerely appreciate your attention to this matter and am looking forward to your response.

(NERHT has been in further touch with Nata and we hope to publish more information on the European Station Association in our next issue).

Russia

Sergei Dorozhkov writes that there are moves to bring Russian museum legislation closer to the needs of technology collectors and restorers and there was a seminar on the railway side of this question at Moscow's Polytechnical Museum in March, and in April there is to be a conference in St Petersburg on the public transport heritage. Meanwhile the Pereslavl Museum is engaged in tiresome legal proceedings brought by proponents of a so-called Alternative Pereslavl Project. But these disputes do at least bring to wider public attention what might be termed its own 'Pereslavl museum project'.

A 2015 photo of traditional-style uniforms introduced for Pereslavl Railway Museum staff.



Photo Sergei Dorozhkov

Russian Narrow Gauge: The Last Decades

(This is the concluding part of Sergei Dorozhkov's history of the narrow gauge in Russia)

With democratic reform, the 1990s brought total collapse of normality both in the economy on the one hand, and of culture on the other. The effect of what happened could be roughly compared to the revolution of 1917. Russia became a different country once again. And in this new country there appeared no suitable place for small railways. At least, it seemed so. Economic catastrophe made most narrow gauge lines unnecessary, and scrap-fever rapidly swept them away. Those which survived had to severely fight for survival with trucks and buses. But there was one serious aspect, which played a positive role: return to private property meant that not just the effectiveness of business became different. Many undreamed ventures could now be established. Buying a locomotive or even a railway into private ownership became possible – and this was the start of preservation.

In Soviet times the state in general, or separate industries either, were not interested in conserving heritage. The only possible scheme to preserve a piece of technical equipment was to convince local or higher management to put it on a plinth. However, this was not easy, and politically sound reasons had to be found. For example, a certain connection between the locomotive and noted political figure or shock-worker. The unique pre-revolutionary 'Russian Prairie' class S express passenger engine could only be saved when it was announced that it was exactly the engine which had taken the train with the young Soviet government from Petrograd to Moscow in 1918. With small and industrial engines this scheme could hardly work. Anyway, in various sheds across the country locomotives were put on plinths thanks to the efforts of local veterans, and to the current day this remains the main source of vintage motive power. The possibility of a locomotive or wagon remaining abandoned in the middle of nowhere was small, as scrap plans were a must within the Soviet economy. We shall return to this later.

A few years ago the management of the Sverdlovsk Railway – a division of Russian



Railways – stepped forward with its initiative to create a working steam railway museum in Ekaterinburg, the Urals capital. It was decided to start with narrow gauge, with more distant plans covering the broad gauge. The children's railway in Ekaterinburg was chosen as a base for narrow gauge exposition, and a huge construction work began. Simultaneously, a search for relics was launched. The interest of the Ekaterinburg team spread even beyond the country's borders. The very German-looking locomotive

pictured here was taken in Ekaterinburg, with Orenstein & Koppel 0-8-0 tank no.9, formerly from Mansfeld Metallurgical Combine in East Germany. There are locomotives from other countries in the collection too, some of which have a chequered history.

In its efforts to find and preserve railway relics, the team soon found understanding and co-operation from Pereslavl and the North-West. It was quite clear that administrative resources of the Sverdlovsk Railway joined with expertise of the two older groups could create miracles. Indeed, the scheme worked, and in winter 2014 with joint efforts it became possible to rescue the last two narrow gauge locomotives known to survive 'in the wild', not on plinths.

Other difficult projects also came true, such as saving a vertical-boiler Cockerill loco from Volgograd. To ensure quality restoration, a special workshop was established in one of the blocks of old Ekaterinburg locomotive shed on the broad gauge station, with the capability of restoring broad gauge locomotives. The shop is being equipped with the necessary machinery with the ultimate goal of mastering full steam locomotive restoration, including manufacturing of new boilers. The restoration of wagon and coaching stock is done jointly by several workshops, including the carpentry division. All work is directed by the Sverdlovsk Railway's Centre of Scientific Information and Libraries, ensuring proper historical backgrounds for restoration.

Some 100 miles north from Ekaterinburg is Alapayevsk, a place where one of the oldest and simultaneously longest and best equipped narrow gauge systems is still in operation. Built for the local metallurgical industry, in the 1950s the railway changed to logging, and there are occasional logging trains even today. As the railway crosses extensive marshland, it serves several communities which have no other connection with the rest of the world. An overnight passenger train runs nearly the full length of the line from Alapayevsk to Sankino, taking 5 hours to reach its destination. The area has deep and diverse connections with Russian history, and there are two big local museums in Alapayevsk and Verkhnyaya Sinyachiha. Both places and the linking railway section are included into a new tourist route, named 'The Silver Ring of the Urals' and uniting several historical ensembles and complexes.

Most rolling stock on the line is relatively modern. Co-operation with Ekaterinburg is being developed, and there are plans to use the Alapayevsk system for operation of steam locomotives and vintage rolling stock from Ekaterinburg as a more comfortable and picturesque setting than the children's railway. Of course this will need a lot of negotiations and some serious changes in legislation, but the work is under way. As co-operation between groups developed, an idea appeared to call together an All-Russia Forum on narrow gauge preservation. This was done in 2016 and 2017, based on Ekaterinburg and Alapayevsk.

Probably the most complicated and demanding serious joint efforts at various levels is the problem of absence of a legal background for the operation of narrow gauge lines. Following Perestroika, narrow gauge railways fell out of legislation. Those few which survive continue to work by Soviet-era standards, which do not reflect modern realities. This provides a serious threat to safe and effective operation and heavily hinders further development. In view of the time already lost and the much changed circumstances, it is difficult to catch up quickly. Consultations with the Ministry of Transport and other relevant bodies are being repeatedly held, possible solutions explored and recommendations worked out, but of course it is a slow process.

A similar situation has developed in the museum field. Russian museum legislation has only a sketchy framework for technical heritage. The question of operation of historical machines as transport or tourist objects is not covered at all. Solving of the situation needs a very thoughtful approach. Following the All-Russia Forums we were heard by the Polytechnical Museum of Moscow, the head organisation in the country responsible for conservation of technical past. Certain understandings were achieved, and now the ultimate task is to work out preliminary recommendations, with the future task of fitting into the new museum legislation.

As most of the Russian technical heritage has long been swept away by wars, revolutions, planned economy and scrap-hunters, the only possibility to find survivors remains in very remote and little inhabited areas. Thus in recent years expeditions began to play a vital role in preservation. These are now being organised on an earnest level with participation of all sorts of state and private boards and companies. Some industrial concerns offer sponsorship for such ventures. Bigger expeditions are usually planned and conducted jointly, in co-operation with the Russian Geographical Society, the Expedition and Research Centre of the Ministry of Defence, the Polytechnical Museum and others. To ensure positive results, the historical background is investigated for every expedition. Here there comes extensive help from central and local archives and libraries, as well as individual researchers.

As we have seen from the start, the development of Russian railways was always deeply intertwined with international history. With this, most research topics reveal international connections, often very interesting and complicated. In recent years we have been conducting extensive work on opening forgotten chapters of Russian history, and I need to thank all friends and colleagues from the UK and other countries who are helping us. Your assistance is invaluable!



A memory of the post-war decade: new Soviet PT-4 narrow gauge locomotives, built by Lokomo in Finland, are shipped to the USSR in 1951

Poland/Ukraine

Line 102: Rail Enthusiasts Save Time-Expired Cars

Victor Halchynskyy (Vice-Head, Linia102.Ua) writes:

November 2018 became a new milestone for Linia102.PL, a non-governmental organization in Przemyśl, Poland, which fights for restoring the abandoned cross-border route from Przemyśl to Ustrzyki Dolne via Ukrainian Nyzhankovychi, Dobromyl and Khyriv. On November 11 it received two time-expired passenger coaches which were due for scrapping but offered as a gift to railway enthusiasts in Przemyśl. The first coach is a buffet car which had been built in 1978. A few years ago it still worked on routes Berlin-Warsaw and Warsaw-Vienna, and its saloon and kitchen equipment was well preserved. The second coach is a business class sleeping car with roomettes for two and three persons, dining space and shower. Both coaches were presented to Linia102.PL by Polish passenger lines operator PKP Intercity, and the transportation was arranged by the country's main freight carrier PKP Cargo. Enthusiasts from Linia102.PL intended to arrange a small café with mini railway museum and cinema hall in the buffet car and a small hostel in the sleeping car, and they started work on it immediately after the cars arrived at Przemyśl. The first visitors of the renowned cars were children from first Ukrainian station of Linia102 – Nyzhankovychi - who arrived in Przemyśl via Linia 102 on December 6 to celebrate the



traditional celebration of 'St. Nicholas Without Borders' which Linia102.PL jointly with its Ukrainian counterpart Linia102.Ua organizes yearly for children of the border regions of Poland and Ukraine (see picture). Now the railway cars have been moved from the starting platform of

Line 102 in Przemyśl-Bakonczyce station to the territory in the city centre close to the main railway station, and Linia102.PL has already made there two public celebrations – Valentine's day and Women's day - in February and March. In turn, the mini railway museum has been provided with a huge vintage exhibit – an old railway snowplough which was retired out of service and placed at the track near the cars.

As for now, railway enthusiasts from Line 102 are actively preparing for the new tourist season – in addition to the present manual car *Przemyslanka* they have created a new light car with engine which will allow tourist visits to the closed line near the Polish-Ukrainian border. New cross-border action is planned on May when a tourist group from Poland will travel by Line 102 to the Ukrainian Zakarpattia region.



A sitting target for hot-dog wisecracks: Line 102's new buffet

Annual General Meeting. NERHT's 2019 AGM will be on May 18 and as usual at the Model Railway Club's premises at Keen House, 4 Calshot Street, NI9DA (near Kings Cross station). The formal business starts at 2 p.m and at 3 p.m. will be followed by an illustrated talk (at which non-members are also welcome) on Croatia's railway heritage by Dr Tamara Stefanac, Director of the Croatian Railway Museum.

* * * * *

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 tel. +44(0) 2085053186

Secretary: Livius Kooy l.j.kooy@planet.nl

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