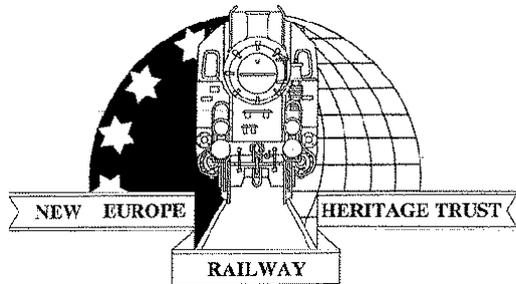


Eastern Star



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A Russian relic-hunting expedition comes across a locomotive-type boiler in the Arctic, but is it from a locomotive? (see page 8).



Photo by courtesy of
Sergei Dorozhkov

Our Annual General Meeting; Chairman's Report

Once again, we were fortunate to enjoy the hospitality of the Model Railway Club for our AGM, which was further entertained by a talk by Andris Biedrins about restoration projects in the Baltics. Stephen Wiggs presented the Annual Report:

In the past twelve months we have continued to pursue our objective of helping railway preservation in our area of benefit, the former USSR and the ex-Communist countries of Eastern and Central Europe.

The Autumn of 2014 saw the 20th anniversary of the first meeting of the informal 'Russian Committee' which eventually became NERHT, and this

seemed a good time for the Committee to carry out a strategic review of our position. We concluded that there is still a job for us to do and we are able to do it. Our Trust of course was one of numerous initiatives, in all sorts of fields, which were set up after the end of Communism to build bridges across what had been a divided continent. Despite the changes and indeed the progress of recent years we have to acknowledge that new challenges and new difficulties have arisen which affect NERHT along with other organisations.

Sadly, these include the very grave situation in Ukraine, a country where NERHT has been active for the past decade and more. As a non-political association and a registered charity we must not take sides in political disputes, and the Committee has resolved that where possible we should continue to support railway preservation throughout the New Europe despite the current difficulties. Our Ukrainian friends are still working to safeguard their country's railway heritage, and there can be fewer more impressive examples of dedication than that of the staff of the Donetsk railway museum who have carried on working throughout the armed conflict which resulted in damage to the museum.

At the request of AZIZU (the Ukrainian railway heritage association) we made representations to the authorities early this year urging them to save steam locomotives threatened with scrapping. Members of NERHT have recently shown their sympathy with our colleagues in Ukraine by responding generously to our appeal for donations to enable young members of AZIZU to attend this Summer's Fedecrail youth camp in Hungary, and we are most grateful to all who have made donations.

Obviously, railway preservation is closely linked to the tourist industry which in Ukraine has been badly affected by the current unrest, and it is good to report that railway tourism continues there, including steam specials around Kiev and tourist trains on the scenic Vygoda Forestry Railway which NERHT delegates will be visiting again in June.

In June 2014 NERHT helped arrange a highly successful conference on the Latvian narrow gauge railway ('Banitis') which was attended by some extremely eminent participants in the field of railway preservation from Britain and elsewhere; this event is a good example of how we can act as a catalyst making things happen. Our links with Banitis go back to 1997, and it is good to welcome their delegates who are now with us as guests of NERHT.



A highlight of the Banitis conference: return to service of restored steam locomotive.

Also in June 2014 it was a privilege for our representatives to attend the celebrations to mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Romanian National Railway museum, when guests had the pleasure of riding behind the Canada Works-built *Calugareni* 2-4-0 locomotive of 1869 in contemporary carriages. We continue to support the Romanian Museum and the Train Club of Romania (the national railway heritage association), and the leaders of both organisations were here a year ago on a study tour taking in NRM York, Shildon and other museums. Still in Romania, we continue working with the Sibiu Agnita railway project, and while we cannot claim any credit for the impressive lobbying carried out on behalf of this scheme by Fedecrail President David Morgan and by SAR UK Chairman David Allan, leader of SAR UK (the British support group) we were glad to be able to give them logistical and other support.

Elsewhere, we keep in touch with old friends in Russia, Poland and elsewhere, and are always seeking new contacts, with a view to giving active support when the time is right.



In Bulgaria, restoration of the post-war 2-10-0 No. 16 27 is now complete and it should soon be hauling excursion trains.

Photo Tzanko Simeonov

As always, we must remember that our work would not be possible without those who assist us in all sorts of ways, including railway companies and museums in Great Britain and elsewhere, other helpers of all kinds, and above all NERHT members. On behalf of the Committee I should like to thank all of you for your support.

Stephen Wiggs
Chairman, NERHT
7.5.15

Hungary

Carpathian Basin Narrow Gauge Railways Conference. *NERHT Secretary Jonathan Sutton attended this conference at Debrecen in February and here are some points from his report:*

The twenty-two narrow gauge railways in Hungary listed on the Hungarian Transport Foundation calendar of narrow gauge railway days are not individual companies but are in fact groupings under umbrella companies, one of which is the Forestry Division of the Agricultural Ministry, no doubt due to the fact that historically several of the lines were built for forestry purposes although the one line, at Csömöder, which does still transport cut timber by rail seems to be an independent company. There does not appear to be any co-operation between the lines within a group when it comes to buying items which they all use, such as lubricants. With the exception of the Childrens' Railway in Budapest it seems promotion is very much by word of mouth or local advertising, although the narrow gauge days are promoted in the *Indoház* railway magazine, as is news generally about the narrow gauge scene. This is however the only railway magazine in Hungary and has recently reduced its publication from monthly to bi-monthly.

The main day of the Conference examined general topics such as drainage using plastics rather than concrete surfaces for level crossings and an interesting presentation about the need to better integrate rail – standard and narrow gauge – with buses and trams, using examples from Switzerland and Austria. It was disheartening to hear that proposals to make a better interchange at Debrecen between the mainline station and the 'Szuzsi' narrow gauge railway were all turned down (it would have needed about a 500m extension to the narrow gauge line to reach the station). There was a presentation on the solar-electric railcar at Királyrét and on studies being done to develop the next generation of railcars and multiple units for narrow gauge (although it seems that none of the Hungarian narrow gauge railways would be able to afford such new rolling stock).

There was a progress report on the line at Lillafüred with particular reference to 'Fairytale' trains run after the main season was over, which resulted in a total of 34,000 passengers for the year and helped them get over the loss of a government subsidy. The line at Felsőtarkány is hoping to attract 15,000 passengers this coming year but there was no complete run-down of all the lines and their passenger figures for 2014.

On the Csömöder line in 2010. A timber train awaits clearance to pass over standard-gauge tracks.

Photo Jonathan Sutton



There is an impression that all the lines do their own thing whether they are part of an 'umbrella' group or not and that the general situation is a positive one. The 'Friends of the Narrow Gauge Railways' – or KBK – have their own website: kisvasut.hu However they seem to be largely concerned with the railway at Kemence which is much more of a 'volunteer' railway than the others – there was a call for volunteers for a week-end work party there last month. The website does cover the whole spectrum of narrow gauge in Hungary. *NERHT looks forward to future contacts with these stalwarts of the narrow gauge.*

Romania

An Interview with Octavian Udriste

Honorary Chairman of Club Feroviar (The Romanian Railway Club) and President of Tren Clubul Roman, Octavian is interviewed by Ruxandra Bratu on the occasion of his 80th birthday.

How could you define yourself? Briefly: I am a railway man, by birth and training. I am a third generation born and bred in a family of railway people. My maternal grandfather was a locomotive driver at the depot Chernautsi (Northern Bukovina, territory embedded after the Second World War into the Ukrainian republic of the USSR). My grandfather's permit was issued in 1899 by the Austrian railways of the former Habsburg empire)

When did your passion for trains start? My love for trains and steam locomotives was nurtured from childhood, before the Second World War, spent at my grandparents' home, in Vijnita - a small village in Northern Bukovina. Very often, in the evening, my grandfather, who was driving goods train filled with timbers on the forest narrow-gauge railway, used to stop the train near the house, whistling and calling my uncles - just a bit older than me - and me, in order to offer us apples baked in the locomotive firebox.

Have you memories about your 'railway' childhood in Romania before the Second World War? Growing up in a railway environment, in Timisoara where I was born (18 April 1935) and then in Bucharest, where my father was a railway employee, I was enjoying fantastic holidays in the village of my grandparents. I dare say that my 'expertise' in driving trains started very early. As is known, in Romania, before communism, 'la joie de vivre' characterized the life-style. My parents together with friends from Timisoara or Bucharest used to 'visit' my grandparents in Vijnita. On this occasion, my grandfather attached a small flat-car to the train. This flat-car could be detached to run free when going downhill. After having spent a day-long picnic in the forest, the whole group of joyful friends was descending to the valley in the evening, on that flat-car alone, using the hand-brakes. 'Trainmen' responsible for 'traffic safety' were my uncles and me.

When was your first real work contact in the railway sector? During the terrible 50s - the Stalinist age - the admission exams for higher education were conditioned by a certificate issued by the high school. As a person of 'unhealthy origin' - son of a 'petit bourgeois' (my father was a graduate in economics) - I had not received this document. Consequently, I decided to look for a job. I was working for the Romanian Railway Company (CFR) as a fitter-mechanic. From this new position, as a worker, I submitted another file

for admission to evening classes that did not require the school's recommendation. In this way, I was gaining experience in the railway sector, by starting from the shop floor. After one year, I came back to the day courses.

How do you regard now your studies and professional career? There is a long story about my profession, to which I have remained faithful. In 1958, I graduated from the Faculty of Mechanics, Locomotive Section of the Railway Institute (today Polytechnic). After my graduation, in 1958, I passed through different stages from fireman to driver on steam locomotives. In 1959 I started an engineering career, occupying various positions with CFR, from engineer at Braşov locomotive depot to general inspector with CFR (1973-1976) in the field of traffic safety. In 1968, I took a specialization course in the Federal Republic of Germany, for rolling stock exploitation and maintenance. During 1977-1984, I was the head of the underground rolling stock service in Bucharest and Technical Director (1985-1994). During 1994-1996 I was general Manager of Metrorex (Underground Company). Later on, I was the Executive Manager of INCERTRANS and during 1997-2005, I was Manager of Transportation Systems Department at Siemens Romania. Starting with 2006, I have been administrator of Sistem Transport Consult.



What could you tell us about preserving the Romanian railway heritage?

Unfortunately, the Romanian Railway Museum that had been set up in 1939 was bombed in 1944. A great part of its valuable exhibits were lost. Afterwards, during communism, a campaign of wagon and locomotive cutting-up for scrap-iron started. Much later, a concern for the railway heritage preservation was born hesitantly, at the level of individuals. Unfortunately,

this issue, linked to the history of railway technique, has not been a priority for the authorities. Even today it is not up to the desired level. Personally, when I had the possibility as head of depot, I saved from scrapping some locomotives, including 142.044 (pictured) built by Malaxa Bucharest and Pacific 231.065 built by Krauss Maffei Munchen.

And after the changes of 1989 what happened? Have you been involved in the events?

In December 1989, I was a member of the management team within Bucharest Metro (the Underground Transport Company of Bucharest). I remember that in the afternoon of the 21st I was repeatedly called by the head of Militia of the Metro, on behalf of the head of 'Securitate' Bucharest who commanded me to stop the metro train circulation or to close the underground entrances at Piata Universitatii, where the city's revolting population was gathering. I continually refused, explaining that the 'comrade general' was not my boss. It is easy to imagine what my destiny

would have been if Ceausescu, the communist dictator, had not fled after the masses' pressure on 22nd December.

Returning to the topic, I must say that even after the change of regime in 1989, interest for the railway heritage preservation has not reached the desired level. In 1995 a government decision (no. 88) was issued on the recovery of the railway station Filaret, transferred arbitrarily into the assets of a motor transport firm. This station was the first railway station in Bucharest (1869), on the Bucharest-Giurgiu line, a railway heritage building. The purpose was to turn it into a museum, as was proposed by predecessors. Unfortunately, this decision was not implemented. Space does not permit a description of the case.

You are the President of Romanian Train Club. Could you briefly describe for us this organization? I am dealing now with revitalization of the Romanian Train Club. It was 'born' in 1990, at first focused mainly on model trains. Then, the activity scope was widened to cover railway heritage saving and preservation. More recently, the new 'Train Club pro railway Romanian Alliance' aims also to advocate and to revitalize the rail system as indispensable for an EU country member. This organization aspires to attract under its umbrella teams of enthusiasts involved in preserving narrow-gauge railway lines, which can be saved and enhanced. For example, Georg Hocevar who is working with the line from Moldova, or Michael Blotor on the Sibiu-Agnita Cornățel line.

We hope that through this merger and reorganization, TCR will become stronger, more vocal and more efficient.

What could you say about your relationship with NERHT? I want to thank NERHT, Stephen Wiggs and his colleagues, for offering us assistance in our efforts of preservation of the railway heritage. I assure them that, especially after the visit made last year to the UK, we are acting now with more energy. Unfortunately, we still need support from the Romanian authorities. But I am not abandoning this struggle: my identity card expires in 2050. . .

Russia

Alapayevsk: Artyom Belov informs us that the museum of the Alapayevsk railway's history opened in the loco depot (pictured) this spring. [We hope to have more about this railway in our next issue. It has begun to operate a scheduled Saturdays-only train for tourists but apparently much remains to be done before it can call itself tourist-friendly].



Pereslavl': Sergei Dorozhkov writes that during winter and the delayed spring outside work was minimised. Visitor numbers are holding up quite well despite unfriendly weather and the rival attractions presented by the various events organised in Russia to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany. Some changes in the museum's routines are expected this year. One observable change will be that on holidays and weekends the staff dealing with tourists will be dressed in uniforms which are authentic replicas of railwaymen's clothing in the 1943-53 period. (Three new members/volunteers, the historian and railway engineer Alexei and his wife and daughter, are the models for the second picture).



Some members of the Pereslavl' team took part in the Arctic expedition organised by 'Primordial Russia' (www.iskru.ru). The latter is a combined air and cross-country search expedition seeking to find relics of early attempts at northern industrial developments during the five-year plan period. The course of the 'Dead Railway' [described in *Eastern Star* earlier] is included in the search. Sometimes further research is needed to find out precisely what a given relic might be; the locomotive boiler illustrated on page 1, for example, might well have been used on a river boat or have supplied power or heat to a factory.

Ukraine

Continuing conflict. From various sources it appears that the Donetsk childrens railway has been in operation, even though the location is in the potential target area should hostilities flare up. Some off-site exhibits of the Donetsk Railway Museum are reported to be in target areas and inaccessible to railwaymen. In the fighting for Debaltsevo the Chernuhino locomotive depot was hit. An electric locomotive was destroyed and also several vehicles of emu SR3 type which were stored there awaiting preservation.

Meanwhile the administrators of breakaway Donetsk organised a special Victory Train to celebrate the anniversary of VE Day. This consisted of 0-10-0 Er 775 07 and two specially-prepared vehicles carrying young men in replica Red Army uniforms. It proceeded from Yasinovataya into the territory of the neighbouring Luhansk (Lugansk) administration, whose chairman gave a rousing speech on its arrival.

Lithuania

Narrow Gauge. *Tony Olsson writes:* Following the offer for sale by LG Lithuanian Railways in December 2014, no offer to purchase the unused narrow gauge lines to the north of Panevezys in Lithuania was made, so for the time being, they remain the property of LG. The offer for sale included a requirement to restore the lines for tourism, a commitment which the Lithuanian Government laid down at the time the ASG Siaurukas narrow gauge line was resurrected. Presumably, no one is willing to, or can afford, to restore the railway, although it seems that some local authorities would like to be able to buy some of the land for redevelopment. For somebody with bottomless pockets and an ambition to run a large 750mm narrow gauge network in Lithuania, the opportunity is still there. The purchase price on the original tender was € 363,551 excl. VAT, but that doesn't include the considerable cost of rebuilding the line and providing rolling stock.

[Tony has been checking the English translation of Lithuanian Draisines and Motor Locomotives 1919 -1940, which is expected to be published this summer].

RAILWAY PRESERVATION IN BRITAIN AND LATVIA

Our three Latvian guests from 'Banitis', the Gulbene-Aluksne narrow gauge railway (whose leader Andris Biedrins gave a presentation on Baltic narrow gauge lines at the AGM) have thanked NERHT and Gordon Rushton for organising their visit to the United Kingdom in May.

Like other overseas visitors the Latvians were overwhelmed by the vast scale of the UK heritage railway sector which seemed to them to include preserved lines everywhere - an unscheduled visit to the Epping-Ongar line minutes after their arrival at Stansted Airport provided an interesting contrast to the Welsh narrow gauge lines which were the main objective of the trip. In Wales the group saw the Ffestiniog, Welsh Highland and Welsh Highland Heritage railways; the visitors were particularly impressed by the variety and good condition of the locomotives, and expressed amazement that such a huge project as the WHR rebuilding could have been carried out by enthusiasts. The problem in Latvia is that there are few enthusiasts, fewer volunteers and numerous problems with bureaucracy all of which of course makes the revival of Banitis as a community railway even more impressive.

While in Wales the Latvians gained all sorts of useful ideas, and they hope to see more co-operation with British heritage railways in future. In the meantime they would be delighted to welcome visitors to Banitis from Britain and elsewhere; steam services will be operating most weekends this summer, and a good time to travel on the line is always the charming narrow gauge festival which includes all sorts of cultural activities and is held on the first Saturday in September. For more information see www.banitis.lv or contact NERHT.

Polish expertise wanted: Terry Browne, member of a research group interested in clerestory-roof coaches, needs an expert on Polish coaches to check a picture of a Polish coach said to be of Lancashire & Yorkshire origin. Anyone who might help (or is interested in the group), could contact Terry at terry_browne@talktalk.net

Forthcoming Steam Tours

(*IMPORTANT NOTICE:* NERHT is not the organiser of these tours and neither NERHT nor its officers or other representatives can accept any liability in relation to them).

Bulgaria steam tours. The Bulgarian Railway Modellers Association is offering a grandiose tour using four steam locomotives, the former royal train, a narrow-gauge train, and a retro tram and covering extensive routes, including some very scenic stretches, totalling almost 1200km. The tour costs €2995 and operates 17-26 October. A shorter tour (25-29 October, 295km and one locomotive plus royal train) is offered at €1330. Details from www.steamexplorer@railwaymodel.eu or (mobile) +359 878 661 160

Ukraine October steam tour. Wolfram Wendelin is organising another of his well-reputed steam tours in the autumn. Scheduled for 18-24 October, it includes traction by L and E type broad-gauge locomotives, as well as narrow-gauge Gr 280 on the Haivoron line. Two days will be spent in attractive Carpathian terrain, with photostops and an optional 'photobus.'

The price per person in a single room, from L'viv or Kyiv, is €1090.00. Much more detailed information is available from Wolfram at wwlok@utanet.at or by telephone (+43)(0)676 5025639.



Gr 280 works one of Wolfram Wendelin's special trains on the narrow-gauge Haivoron line in Ukraine.

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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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