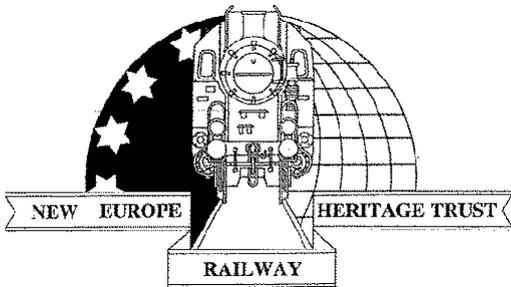


Eastern Star



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NERHT and Georgia



The Caucasian republic of Georgia has an uneasy history, and not least since its exit from the Soviet Union. Not much news of any railway preservation emerged over recent years, so in June a small NERHT delegation visited the country to find out more. Graham Farr reports:

As always our objectives were to obtain information on preservation activity, to make contacts, to develop links, and offer help to those seeking to preserve the railway heritage.

Following our arrival in Tbilisi we met directors and senior managers of Georgian Railways to discuss railway tourism and the preservation of the railway heritage. We were shown the railway museum (not normally open to the public) consisting of small exhibits and other items housed in the railway headquarters. Georgia does not yet have a full-scale railway

museum, although we were told that there are plans to develop one at an open-air site in Tbilisi where locomotives and rolling stock from around the country could be brought together.

Our main destination was the historic **Borjomi-Bakuriani railway**, which we reached by mainline train from Tbilisi. This, a 37km long 900mm gauge electrified line, has been transferred to a subsidiary, with the aim of developing it for tourism. We had ascertained that it runs through spectacular countryside, and serves important holiday resorts, as well as being of great historic interest, but we were told that it has fallen on hard times since independence, especially with the loss of freight traffic from an andesite mine close to the outer terminus, and road improvements.

Arrangements were made whilst we were in Tbilisi for the local director to meet us at the Borjomi depot the following day. On arrival he briefly showed us the workshops and locomotive shed, the latter dating back to the early days of the line, before we caught the (second and final for the day) train for Bakuriani. The locomotive at the head, one of several of steeple cab Bo-Bo configuration built in Czechoslovakia for the electrification of the line in the 1960s, sported a livery difficult to describe in words, as can be seen from the photograph heading this article. There were just two coaches, the first being one of a fleet of a luxury version of the familiar Demikhovo vehicle with cushioned seating and end balconies delivered in the 1970s, in original condition (single fare 1 lari or about 1.40 Euros), the second a heavily modified example with larger windows, new seating and enclosed ends (single fare 2 lari or about 2.80 Euros). The director accompanied us on the journey, insisting that we travelled with him in the modernised carriage.



At Tzagveri, approximately halfway, we crossed a Borjomi-bound train, of identical composition but with locomotive in a more conventional plain green livery (*above*). At the adjacent maintenance depot one of the two Tu7 diesel locomotives used for maintenance trains could be seen stored outside, looking very forlorn. The line's civil engineering

highlight, the Gustave Eiffel viaduct, was crossed almost unnoticed, there being little in the way of obvious vantage points from the train. The branch to the andesite mine seems to be still in place, although not in usable condition. For the return trip we insisted on travelling on the unmodernised coach, to get a little closer to the familiar Demikhovo experience.

Back at Bakuriani, we viewed, on a plinth north of the depot, a 0-6-2T steam locomotive built in 1915 at the Kolomna locomotive works and used on the line until electrification. At the depot itself we observed, stored in the open, several more electric locomotives and Demikhovo coaches, all identical to those we had seen in operation, some appearing to be operational, others in varying states of disuse. Also a large number of wagons, most apparently out of use, and what appeared to be one of the original carriages in very poor condition.

Following our return to Tbilisi, we saw the 750 mm gauge **Tbilisi children's railway**, said to be the first of numerous such lines built in the ex-USSR to provide training for young people hoping to pursue railway careers. The line is located in Mushtaidi Park, and comprises a short circuit of track about a kilometre in length with a spur to the terminus and a storage siding. The train consisted of a brightly painted Tu7 diesel locomotive and three open coaches, running at hourly intervals. The local director, who we met whilst there, confirmed that children are no longer involved

in operating, this now being entirely by Georgian Railways staff. A 0-4-0T steam locomotive once used on the line, built in 1911 by Jung, is plinthed near the terminus (*right*). We were told that another steam locomotive that worked on the line, an 0-8-0 class 159 tender engine, also pictured on the internet, was moved to Russia a few years ago.



A short ride on the **Tbilisi Metro** presented no surprises, the station architecture and rolling stock being much as in other large cities in the former USSR.

In the areas we visited we saw very little sign of the former tram network, which closed in 2006. (Scenes from its final years of operation can be viewed on Youtube). Our final railway experience was the **Tbilisi funicular**. Recently modernised, it provides convenient public access to the highest parts of Mount Mtatsminda, on which is sited an urban park from which there are panoramic views over the city and beyond.

As is so often the case we received invaluable help from all sorts of quarters in arranging our visit; our thanks are especially due to the British Council who gave advice on local conditions, the British Georgian Society who helped us make contacts and to Alexander Bainbridge, a British resident of Tbilisi, and his Georgian wife and in-laws who arranged meetings and provided the Georgian-language translation of the NERHT brochure (now on our internet site). Finally, we are very grateful to Andris Biedrins of the Gulbene-Aluksne narrow gauge railway (*'Banitis'*) in Latvia who came to act as interpreter in meetings with those who spoke Russian and gave our Georgian friends much useful information on how railway preservation can succeed in a post-Communist society. All in all it was an extremely worthwhile introductory visit, and hopefully the contacts we have made will be developed further over the coming months and years.

Photos by Graham Farr

BULGARIA

CONCERN AT PLIGHT OF BULGARIAN LOCOS

British enthusiast Dave Whitfield recently saw several steam engines at a dump at Kalojanovets in Bulgaria and contacted NERHT to ask us to help save them. The locos – which include some unique examples – certainly do seem to be neglected, and as this issue went to press we were awaiting information on their status and likely future. We hope to give an update in the next issue of *Eastern Star*.



2-10-0 No. 15.242 and
2-8-2 No. 01.43 at
Kalojanovets.

Photo Dave Whitfield

Sofia Museum of Public Transport.

As readers are probably already aware, this project envisages the use of the old Klokonitsa Depot for the exhibition of preserved trams, with the possibility of their operating over the city's network. Tzanko Simeonov has been negotiating with the city authorities and a letter of support from NERHT and another from the National Tramway Museum have been used in reinforcement of the appeal.

UKRAINE

8th Anniversary of AZIZU

The Association for the Preservation and History of the Railways of Ukraine, AZIZU, celebrated its Eighth anniversary on July 16.

Dmytro Turovets writes: The celebration took place in the informal surroundings of our Vishneve site, with the participation of activists. Questions connected with the future course of development of our organisation were discussed, taking into consideration the interests of participants. During this time our organization has achieved a lot, and we have many more plans for the future.

In the last year TE3 7305A, the last working section of a TE3 type diesel locomotive in Ukraine, built at the Lugansk Works in 1970, was added to our collection. Also, found in a private garden in fair condition, was a two-axle 'Canadian' type box car, built in the 1920s at

the Andre Marti factory in Nikolaev. (These cars were shipped to Ukraine as a kit of parts. This example, found in 2011 at a dacha in the Odessa region, was moved to Vishneve in June 2015).

The 2-10-0 Ea2026 (Alco 1944) passed its live steam test and was able to move under its own power in the depot yard.

At the beginning of October we took part in 'Vintage Car Land 2015' at the Zhulaniy Aviation Museum, the largest Retro Auto festival in Ukraine, being nominated for the 'Grand Prix.'

In 2015 three members attended the FEDECRAIL Youth Camp in Budapest, being sponsored by NERHT.

During the year 2-6-2 Su 251-86 made new trips, Tsvetkovo - Pomoshnaya (162km), and Tsvetkovo - Grebyonka (155km), and on Dec 4th we took part in the 150th anniversary celebrations of the Odessa Railway with Su 251-86 making a short trip from Tsvetkovo to Cherkassy (63km).

The main direction of our future activity is the creation of a museum of working railway technology in Tsvetkovo. Restoration to working condition of steam locomotives 2-10-0 Ea 2026, 0-10-0 E 735-72, 2-10-0 L 5141, and diesels TE3 7305A, the TGM3a and narrow

gauge TU4 2234, and motor trolley MK2/15 as well as wagons from our collection. We shall also continue the search for potential items of railway heritage abandoned at commercial sites and private property all over Ukraine.

Each year, our organization improves, and is confidently moving forward with our aim, which is the preservation of Ukraine's railway technology.

AZIZU's Soviet vintage 0-10-0 No.Em 735 72

Photo Ivor Harding



AZIZU's accommodation problem. According to a letter received, ever since it was established AZIZU has repeatedly requested, at different levels of the state railway *Ukrzaliznitsa* and the Infrastructure Ministry, to allow the transfer, as a gift, of the derelict building at Tsvetkovo locomotive depot which contains two tracks with 80m inspection pits. The building has been out of use for two decades and could be adapted to provide cover for restored items. But there has been no response. And UZ is now raising charges for the storage of exhibits at Tsvetkovo. In 2012 a 300% increase was demanded but was reduced to 30% following protests. 2016 has seen another rise. Protests have been made, but of response there has been none.

Vladimir Donchenko. We were sorry to learn of the death in August of Vladimir Donchenko, initiator and director of the Donetsk Railway Museum in Ukraine. NERHT was of some support to him in the beginning, and arranged for him to visit the UK in 2005. We hope to pay a fuller tribute in our next issue.

Korostiv. Wolfram Wendelin continues to develop his museum site at Korostiv. This summer there was a summer camp devoted, under the supervision of Dima Babarika, to the restoration of the museum's Czech/Hungarian boxcar, as shown here. Though the workforce was small, there was a reassuring gender/generation mix.



RUSSIA

Alapaevsk Railway. As reported by the TASS newsagency in July, the Sverdlovsk regional government has allotted 12 million roubles from its reserve fund to restore the Alapaevsk narrow gauge line after it's flooding. The main effort will be the replacement of the bridge



over the Sinyachikha River. The work is expected to be completed this year.

The bridge under reconstruction

Photo Aleksandr Goncharov

LITHUANIA

Things are evidently going on with the Lithuanian narrow gauge and its *Siaurukas* tourist line. The Transport Ministry has been seeking a replacement for its director Gintaras Kerbedis. Why the latter is being replaced is not clear; local opinion suggests he did good work getting *Siaurukas* going but had some personal relationship problems. NERHT had some difficulty keeping in contact. Meanwhile what appears to be a *Siaurukas* takeover of the abandoned line northward from Panevezys to Birzai (see our June issue) has yet to take shape in physical terms, but news is expected soon and will be reported in *Eastern Star*.

Alexas Vilcinskas of the British Lithuanian Association writes:



During my recent trip to Lithuania I had the opportunity to visit Birzai. While there I asked my hosts if they had heard anything about the Siaurukas. They knew nothing, other than that the track through town had been partly dismantled.

However, while driving through town I spotted this 'train'. Sorry about the quality - it was getting late in the day.

Tony Olsson comments that he has a tourism CD showing TY2 051 and that same train in 2007, in somewhat better condition then. *'It's good to know it is still there after all those years. According to my information, TY2 090 is at Joniškėlis and TY2 245 is at Pakruojis. I haven't visited those locations so cannot confirm they are still there. All three locos were presumably placed at the stations many years ago by Siaurukas in anticipation of the lines reopening. All are on lines which I understand have been bought by SGK. One of my British friends who has a Lithuanian wife recently visited the area and sent me a report of activity in that region:*

" Didn't do too much of railway interest on this trip although I did drive through Linkuva, Petrašiūnai and Pakruojis to see what remains of the narrow gauge there. At Linkuva and Petrašiūnai there is some track and the station buildings are still present. At Petrašiūnai there is evidence of work going on on a small exhibition of narrow gauge artefacts in the station building, which can be opened for visiting by appointment it seems. At Pakruojis I can see no evidence of any remnants of the narrow gauge line." '

763-247, the unique Krauss 4-6-0T at Covasna with a Baltic history, Jim Ballantyne writes that readers might like to know that photos and drawings of this loco as a 4-6-0 as well as a 4-6-0T are included in the excellent multi-lingual book *Railway Vehicles at Covasna and Comandau* by Andras, Szilard, Lacriteanu and Hufnagel, a book that can be highly recommended to NEHRT members.

Banitis Annual Festival

The *Banitis* line held its annual festival in early September, and Andris Biedrins has sent these pictures. The steam special train is shown at Stameriene in the picture below.



Elsewhere, the opportunity was taken to celebrate the opening of new passenger shelters at four of the stations. Here at Purini three notables play their part: (left to right) the Mayor of Gulbene, the line's General Manager, and Latvia's Minister of Transport.



Baltic Railways Magazine

Tony Olsson informs us that the sadly-missed BRM should soon be available and accessible again. The following information from <http://www.railbaltic.eu/en/> gives some details:

New issues of *Baltic Railways Magazine* will be available for downloading using its application which will be launched soon for iOS and Android platforms. The BRM app will have a library of most of the *Baltic Railways Magazine* issues plus other publications about railways. A purchase feature built into the app will allow readers to buy a magazine and read it instantly without closing the app. Readers will also find free publications available for downloading. It will announce the release date on the webpage and the Railbaltic Facebook fan pages. Printed Baltic Railways Magazine issues will no longer be available.

Tony adds: 'Whilst on the website, have a look at the film "Rail Baltica" News. It's informative, and shows that the scheme which for so long was obstructed by Estonian and Latvian Railways is back on track. The operators of the website couldn't understand why the only users of their Facebook pages were Lithuanians, and mainly their own staff. Having pointed out it was the Lithuanian version on the English version of the website, that anomaly has been corrected, so you can now indulge in Facebook conversations about Baltic States Railways *in English!* I've had a look even though I no longer use Facebook; it is interesting and the webmasters provide new information every Friday.'

European Railway Atlas 2016 edition

A review by Tony Olsson

In my role as a writer about railways, particularly those of the Baltic States, I make much use of an extensive library of books, magazines, maps and atlases. Amongst those, the *European Railway Atlas Regional series* map books are perhaps the most regularly consulted. Over the years I've bought two editions each of The Baltic States, Belarus and Ukraine; Poland; and Nordic Region maps. Having recently felt the desire to buy the all-Europe atlas on which the regional maps are based, in order to broaden my sphere of interest, I was delighted to read in *Today's Railways EUROPE* that a new edition has been issued. *If ordered from the publisher*, it comes with a free PDF version.

The PDF version is of particular interest to me because, as readers of ES and other magazines will know, I do modify and use the maps to illustrate my articles (with the publisher's permission). Not having to scan the pages will be a great help. Copyright does of course remain with the publisher.

The Atlas contains a huge amount of information which is constantly being updated. The *Regional series* maps are updated more frequently, but even so I think the new Atlas will prove to be invaluable. With such a wide coverage of European railways, it is inevitable that there are some omissions and mistakes (as in all books) and in a rapidly changing world, some information quickly becomes out of date. I'm already using my knowledge of the Baltic States to allow the publisher Mike Ball to update subsequent editions of the maps and atlas.

For enthusiasts wanting an atlas of the railways of Europe as they are now, this is an invaluable reference. People wanting historic information will need to look elsewhere.

The book + free PDF costs £19.95 plus p&p. It can be ordered from European Railway Atlas, 18 Maes-y-Waun, Chirk, Wrexham, LL14 5ND. www.europeanrailwayatlas.com
mail@europeanrailwayatlas.com

Fedecrail Work Camp. NERHT sponsored several participants to this work camp which took place this year. Two of them, Dmytro Turovets and Diana Liliana Nita, have written accounts of their experience, which we hope to publish in our next issue.

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JONATHAN SUTTON 1951-2016

We are extremely sorry to report that Jonathan Sutton, Secretary of NERHT from 2012 until May of this year, died on 17 September having been ill with cancer for some time.

After a career in the air freight industry Jonathan retired to Szeged in Hungary although he made frequent visits to Great Britain and other countries. No doubt our members become involved with NERHT for all sorts of reasons, and like other supporters Jonathan combined a love of trains with an interest in the history and culture of Central and Eastern Europe, in his case especially the former Austro-Hungarian empire which covered so much of our area of benefit. His knowledge of this part of the world was a great asset and his excellent German and basic Hungarian were very useful on our expeditions. Generous with his time and with his money, he was always willing to give what help he could to our trust and our partners, and despite ill health he continued to take part in our activities until a few weeks before his death. His last days were spent at the Pilgrims Hospice in Canterbury where he received excellent care, and was cheerful and thoughtful towards others to the end. Those of us who knew Jonathan have lost a good friend and a valued colleague. Our deepest sympathy goes to his family.

S W

David A Leyland

A member of NERHT since 2002, David Leyland has died in tragic circumstances, aged 70. A retired solicitor in local government, his main railway interest was Polish railways, and especially the Wolsztyn Experience, which he visited regularly; he was fluent in Polish. Condolences have been sent to his widow.

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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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