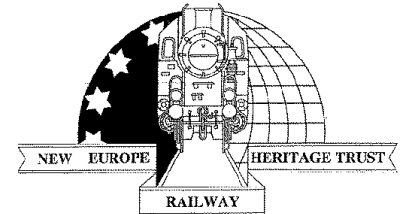


Eastern Star



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



Lobbying in support of the Ukrainian Railway Heritage Association's continued use of the Tsvitkove maintenance facilities for preserved locomotives was one of NERHT's preoccupations in the past year. This photo, by the late Ivor Harding, shows the Association's Alco 2-10-0 in the workshop.

The NERHT Annual General Meeting

As in previous years, NERHT enjoyed the hospitality of the Model Railway Club for its 2018 AGM. The annual report for 2017-2018 was presented by our chairman:

The past 12 months have seen NERHT busy in pursuing our objective of helping railway preservation in our area of benefit, that is the former USSR and the ex-Communist states of Eastern and Central Europe.

As recorded in Eastern Star our activists have visited tourist railways and museums in Croatia, Ukraine, Poland and Romania on fact-finding expeditions and for discussions with those with whom we have links; these contacts have resulted in all sorts of plans for co-operation and for sharing experience. We have also renewed our relationship with the Pereslavl Narrow Gauge Railway Museum in Russia and are working with the All-Russia Narrow Gauge Forum who are concerned with preservation schemes in the Urals and elsewhere, so it is a pleasure to have their representatives with us now.

As always much of our work is carried out in co-operation with Fedecrail, and it is good to note that following approaches by NERHT the Croatian Railway Museum and the Kosice children's railway in Slovakia are applying for Fedecrail membership; hopefully they will be followed by other tourist railways and museums in the East. Apart from recruiting new members, we also work with Fedecrail by providing financial aid from our Jonathan Sutton memorial fund to enable young volunteers from our area of benefit to attend the annual youth camp, and we hope to do so again this year.

Our role in NERHT is to act as a link between East and West, although in one case, namely the Sibiu – Agnita Railway in Romania, this role to a great extent has been taken over by the British group, SAR UK; we are pleased to support them in their more active hands-on involvement with this historic Romanian line where it is hoped significant progress will be made in the coming months.

Transport preservationists everywhere face major challenges, and this is especially so in the New Europe, so this report would not be complete without reference to setbacks encountered in the past year. In Bulgaria our friends are still trying to establish a base for a museum of urban transport, and we hope that their visit last year to the National Tramway Museum at Crich and the Sandtoft trolley bus museum will have given them inspiration and encouragement. In Ukraine we continue to give support - especially by lobbying - to the Ukrainian Railway Heritage Association ("AZIZU") in addressing the uncertainty facing their continued use of Tsvitkove depot. In Western Ukraine our long-standing partners the Borzhava Initiative have yet to succeed in their campaign to secure the long-term future of the historic Borzhava Valley Railway where the preservationists have still not reached agreement on plans to develop the line for tourism despite considerable efforts over the years by NERHT and Fedecrail.

The difficulties in Ukraine are numerous, and it was a great disappointment when all but one of the delegates from Lviv City Council and Ukrainian State Railways - who are concerned to develop the Znesinnya goods line in Lviv for tourism and were due to visit the East Lancashire Railway last autumn - had to cancel their trip at a late stage despite great efforts by the ELR, Rochdale Council and NERHT and others. It is hoped that the group may still come at some future date, and on a more positive note, this episode serves to remind us just how much help and support we get from UK heritage railways and museums and others who are always ready to welcome our guests. We will be visiting Ukraine this summer, and hope to find out more about the Znesinnya project. As in the past, there are still tourist railways and museums who prefer to act alone without international links. Obviously we must respect their right to decide what is best for them,

although we remain convinced that cross-border co-operation is best for everyone, and this remains so despite the changing international scene and political factors.



The 'Banitis' line in Latvia has long been an interest of NERHT. It has recently restored a potentially very useful permanent way trolley.

Photo Andris Bierens

As always, NERHT owes an immense debt of gratitude to a large number of organisations and individuals without whom our work would not be possible, including of course our own consultants and members. On behalf of the Committee I should like to thank everyone who has helped us for all the support and assistance which we have received.

Stephen Wiggs

Chairman, NERHT

7 April 2018



After the AGM, Sergei Dorozhkov delivered an illustrated survey of narrow-gauge in Russia, a talk which his audience obviously judged to be exemplary. Later in their short visit our two Russian guests, Sergei and Dmitri Kalinovsky, both from Pereslavl, found time to visit the Southwold and Bressingham railway sites, and also a noted

garden centre (of interest especially to Dmitri in his museum work). The picture (left) by John Bennett shows the pair at the Southwold site, Dmitri on the left, Sergei at right, while their positions are reversed in the Bressingham picture contributed by Gordon Rushton.



Narrow Gauge in Russia; the Present Situation

The presentation by our Russian visitors of the development of the narrow gauge in their country was so informative that it was a pity that only a fraction of our membership could attend our AGM to hear it. To remedy this, with the cooperation of Sergei Dorozhkov we shall be publishing the greater part of it in coming issues, though not necessarily in the original sequence. Since we are essentially a newsletter, we are starting with the present-day picture; the history will come later.

All in all, about two dozen narrow gauge lines are still active in Russia, all being remains of former industrial networks. There is one purely passenger operation, providing regular timetabled services between Kirovo-Chepetsk and Karintorf, on the ruins of a former peat network. Due to the absence of a paved road and permanent road bridge over the river Cheptsa, the narrow gauge train is the only means of reliable transport between two communities, and up to 5 carriages are coupled on busy days.



The regular passenger train crosses the River Cheptsa on the Kirovo-Chepetsk to Karintorf line.
Photo Ilya Semeonov

Some logging lines provide local passenger service too, although on a much more modest scale. The only exception is the Alapayevsk Railway with overnight sleeping cars and brand new diesels. We shall address this system separately. Several branches continue operation in quarries and at creosoting plants, and this is about all.

The only narrow gauge lines which flourish are the former pioneer, now called children's, railways. They happily dwell under the loving care of Russian Railways, whose regional divisions compete in the development of their 'little' railways. However, it is difficult to change attitudes to these; they can sometimes be regarded as playthings, even though they play a considerable educational role.

The first preservation group, focusing on the narrow gauge, was formed when it became known that the Pereslavl peat railway had become private. The bankrupt system was bought out from the government in 1989 by a group of entrepreneurs, planning to develop farming around Lake Plesheyev in Yaroslavl Region. Railway enthusiasts managed to persuade the new railway magnates to allow the establishment of a museum – and the pattern was set. Further schemes came much later, in the 21st century.

Some projects faltered or failed. For example, at Shatura. This is a town 70 miles east of Moscow and a former hub of a huge narrow gauge network, built from 1918 for peat extraction. About 2005, a group of young volunteers from Moscow ventured with a preservation initiative here. The railway was on its deathbed already, but it became possible to gain some support from its owners, who probably hoped to save at least part of the system and restore passenger service to remote settlements. In spite of an advertising campaign, launched at then-new Internet forums, and some material steps, the project soon died out, the group slipping into internal controversy. Meanwhile, the power station got rid of the narrow gauge, remote communities received a bus service, and towards 2009 the last rails were lifted although most vintage rolling stock was saved by the Pereslavl group and removed to Talitsy. One of the two plinthed VP-4s was later acquired by Ekaterinburg and became the first Votkinsk loco restored to working order in Russia. Another VP-4 is still on its plinth at Shatura, zealously guarded by local veterans, but not excluded from prospects for real preservation.

Another project which can't be omitted is the Tesovo Group, which is running occasional tourist trains on the tracks of the Tesovo peat railway in the Novgorod area, 100 miles south of St. Petersburg. The project started similarly to Shatura, but obviously gained much greater success. Based on a bankrupt peat system, still fuelling a local heating plant, the Tesovo group focuses on military-historic reconstruction and modern rolling stock. The perspective, however, is somewhat cloudy.



A winter view of the Tesovo line in 2015

Photo Artyom Belov

There is a quite representative exposition of narrow gauge locomotives and rolling stock at the railway museum on Sakhalin Island, mainly devoted to the Japanese inheritance. Small collections of narrow gauge equipment are included in several other railway museums, and there are also small displays at Tuma and Vyksa, former narrow gauge stations.

Last but not least is the 'Poyezd Naprokat' (Train-for-Hire) project. This is a two-man initiative, mainly focusing on the organization of tours to railway and industrial places of interest. In 2015 they bought the body of an AM-1 diesel railcar with the intention to restore it to running order. Since then original bogies have been found and supplemented with many rare parts and fittings, and the railcar itself moved to the Pereslavl museum. The project works as a crowd-funding scheme, and much is planned for 2018.

Now for some more details, starting with our Pereslavl Museum. This has developed along with Russia's recent development. At an early stage we began to co-operate with the New Europe Railway Heritage Trust, and now need to say a very big thank-you for all the

help, expertise and participation, which NERHT and its members provided over the years!

Not all was – and is – sunny, and probably the main pity was the loss of the railway connection between the museum site in Talitsy and the Pereslavl town, even although this loss was very natural and simply unavoidable.



One of those secondary restorations that can make all the difference. A re-assembled and re-installed water column at Talitsy
Photo Sergei Dorozhkov

In 2003, when the railway had to be dismantled and the museum remained with just two miles of running line, it became apparent that the usual international scheme of preserving a railway by keeping trains running did not work. We had to seek other means of survival and promotion, and it took many experiments and five years to find a plausible scheme. Since then we steadily implemented the idea of 'a journey in time' for our visitors, creating at the station and around it an atmosphere of a rural railway station of the past, with elements of museum and gardening. The goal is to create a place to spend time and rest, a working historical park where it would be interesting to return again to learn or find out something new, or just to rest and comfortably spend time. Experience shows that the idea works. As for live steam and trains, of course these topics are on the agenda, but a long way still has to be travelled to launch this on a regular basis – I shall explain details a bit further. Today Talitsy receives a constant flow of tourists, which allows the Museum to work independently and to spend funds on development as well as research projects and expeditions.

The Narrow Gauge Preservation Group of the North-West was formed in 2008 by several enthusiasts from St. Petersburg, most of whom were professional railway engineers, and some had extensive experience with narrow gauge. They started by taking into private ownership surviving early diesel locomotives. Finding a suitable place to house the collection turned complicated, but just three years ago a decision was finally made. The group bought a piece of land not far from St. Petersburg and began construction of the shed and tracks there, everything from scratch. This allowed accumulating the

collection in one place and starting restoration. There is no talk of public admission to the site, the participation remaining limited to just members of the club. However, recently the group developed co-operation with a state project in Kronshtadt, where a historical park is being created. There are some railway plans, both for broad and narrow gauge, but let's not tempt fate by revealing them now. Members of the North-West Group are very active in expeditionary and research work. They have provided information and help in discovering and acquiring exhibits for the Ekaterinburg project and other schemes.

The Apsheronk mountain railway in the Caucasus always stood a bit separately from other members of the Russian narrow gauge world. According to rumours, needing confirmation, the first narrow gauge rails in Apsheronk were laid by a British logging concession before 1917. Official documents, however, show 1928 as the first year of operation. The railway was built for cutting valuable species of trees, and towards the 1970s developed into a complicated system of mountainous branches. Since then it has been a story of decline and separation, and today two independent sections survive.

A short but very picturesque line through Guamka Gorge connects the hotel at the foot of the mountains with a café in the depth of the gorge. The railway is owned by a private company with a certain percentage of regional shares, and runs a purely tourist operation with comparatively modern locomotives and stock.

In logging times the rails used to run through the gorge to the upper plateau and even much farther into the mountains. Now there is a nature reserve. There are plans to restore the full line and even extend it in the direction of a skiing resort at Krasnaya Polyana. This breakneck scheme will need introduction of a cog section, and preliminary negotiations were already conducted with Stadler. However, apart from organizational and financial difficulties there are some legal complications. Cog railways never operated in Russia, and there is no legal field for this type of rail transport. Moreover, in current conditions the operation of narrow gauge railway itself asks many legal questions to be solved. The Guamka railway is pioneering in this.

The second branch in Apsheronk is much longer and also very picturesque. It belongs to a local logging company and operates regular railcar service to remote communities, but desperately needs financing. I do not have precise details at the moment, but for quite a while the railway has been offered for sale. This means that the line is under real threat of closure.



On the Apsheronk Railway's scenic route

Photo Dmitri Balandin

We have already referred to children's railways. Four of these are keeping steam alive. There are Kp-4s in Nizhniy Novgorod and St. Petersburg, and a Gr in Rostov-on-Don. The latter has recently received a brand new boiler from the Czech Republic, which was redesigned in comparison with original one. Another Gr has just been removed from a plinth at the Yaroslavl children's railway and sent to St. Petersburg for repairs. It is

planned to restore steam in Yaroslavl, and intentions for the acquisition of a second steam locomotive have been announced.

You might have noticed that I mentioned four lines. The fourth children's railway already running steam is at Ekaterinburg in the Urals, which is the home for the youngest, but most ambitious and successful, narrow gauge preservation project in Russia.

(To be continued in our next issue)

Lithuania

Lithuanian Narrow Gauge Developments

Gordon Rushton and Stephen Wiggs visited the Lithuanian narrow gauge line from Panevezys to Anyksciai and Rubikiai (*Siaurukas*, see their internet site www.siaurukas.eu) in May together with Andris Biedrins of the Latvian narrow gauge railway (*Banitis*). In the sheds at Panevezys the Polish-built Kp class 0-8-0 is being restored while the Skoda 0-8-0 is in the museum at Anyksciai. At present the line is operated as a tourist attraction by a consortium of Anyksciai municipality and the Ministry of Transport although the most scenic part of the line, from Anyksciai to Rubikai, is closed pending repairs to the



embankment, and services are currently limited to the section westward from Anyksciai. The Ministry are seeking to dispose of their interest, which is likely to be transferred to local authorities in the area; during their visit the NERHT delegates met the mayors and officials of Anyksciai and Panevezys council for preliminary talks about international co-operation following the reorganisation.

The station at Raguleve

Photo Andris Bierens

The Panevezys – Birzai Railway Project

The Lithuanian Narrow Gauge Railway Club, promoters of the scheme to reopen this section of Lithuania's narrow gauge network (see ES No. 62), are aiming to start restoration from the northern terminus at Birzai. Rails are still in position although the track is heavily overgrown.

The Kostolac Colliery Railways

(This is the conclusion of James Waite's article begun in our last issue)

It's difficult to piece together quite what happened at Kostolac during the troubled years of the 1990's other than that the power station was damaged by US bombing in 1999.

Enthusiasts were able to visit freely after the turn of the century and found that five of the Davenports were still there and were working trains on a short line to a huge opencast pit at Klenovnic. Coal from a new mine to the east of the power station was being brought in by a long system of conveyor belts and a second power station was built close to it. These developments were controversial as the mine encroached on the remains of Viminacium, an ancient Roman city which had become one of the largest archaeological sites anywhere in Europe, and the international community was bringing pressure to bear on the Serbian government to protect it.

When a friend and I first visited in November 2005 we were shown around by Dragan Milošević, the transport manager who was a most hospitable person and was clearly very fond of the locos. He told us that the Klenovnik pit was likely to become exhausted by 2008 and they would then be redundant but he was actively trying to find new homes for them. The Klenovnik pit was only worked during the winter and the Davenports were kept in store for the rest of the year save for one which was used to provide steam to a machine used for maintaining the rubber components of the conveyor belts.

Visiting the pit required further permission from a different manager; again we were made very welcome with the assistance of the obligatory slivovice produced from an old Bell's whiskey bottle, the "whiskey of Serbia" as we were told! It was lunch time by the time we had finished our photography and he suggested we head off for refreshment at the evocatively named Bar Pikadili, the social hub of what was otherwise a somewhat bleak colliery town.

I returned early in 2007, hoping to see the Davenports running once more, but it turned out that they weren't in use that winter. Mr. Milosevic had, however, overseen a major



refurbishment of the roundhouse, possibly for the first time since it had been built fifty years or so earlier. It was now resplendent in a smart new coat of light blue paint and one of the end walls was adorned with a life-size portrait of a Davenport loco. No 12, one of the five, had disappeared but I soon discovered that it had been repainted and had taken up residence in the town square outside the Bar Pikadili. The conveyor system

The Davenports inside the roundhouse Photo James Waite

from the mine by the ancient Roman site had closed and it was no longer necessary for a loco to be steamed to maintain its belts.

I visited for the last time with a tour group in May 2009. As anticipated the Klenovnik pit had closed. The boiler certificates of the last two working locos had expired a few days before the visit and the points leading away from the roundhouse area had been disconnected but the locos were nevertheless put in steam for us. It was the Orthodox Easter Sunday and Mr. Milosevic and his staff treated us to a traditional Serbian Easter meal before the locos posed for their portraits outside the roundhouse, perhaps for the last time.

The roundhouse building is still clearly visible on Google Maps. Environmental remediation is needed for the old Klenovnik site and a plan has been mooted to build a museum there to record the district's mining history and the contribution made by its railway. It's part of a broader proposal to encourage tourism with the ancient Roman site as the major attraction. The plan involves rebuilding the line from the power station to transport tourists and so maybe the Davenport's will run again. As ever finance is the main obstacle but it's possible that funding will become available as a part of expansion of a large opencast pit to the east of Klenovnik, now the principal mine, and construction of a third power station nearby which is the subject of a proposed joint Serbian-Chinese venture.

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Alexander Hopkalo. We are sorry to report the death of this stalwart of preservation in Ukraine. A fitting obituary will appear in our next issue.

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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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