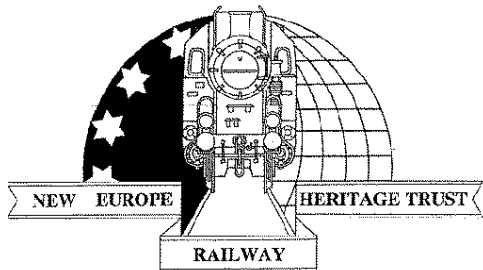


# Eastern Star



A publication of the New Europe Railway Heritage Trust, helping Railway preservation in the New Europe

Number 38

June 2010

## Our Annual General Meeting

*As in previous years, we are grateful to the Model Railway Club, whose London premises provided the site for our AGM on 8 May. The meeting concluded with a presentation of their projects by the delegation from Minsk in Belarus. The NERHT Chairman, Stephen Wiggs, presented the 2009-2010 Report:*

In the past year 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 Pereslavl narrow-gauge museum in Russia was the original interest of NERHT and it is flourishing. This picture shows the Ft-4 tank locomotive that was restored in 2009.*

*Photo Courtesy of Sergei Dorozhkov*

Possibly the most significant recent developments have been in Poland. There was widespread concern throughout Europe when it became known last summer that PKP, the Polish national railway company, was seeking to regain possession of the Warsaw Railway Museum site for redevelopment. NERHT worked closely with Fedecrail and with the British-Polish Railway and Industrial Heritage Partnership in lobbying politicians and diplomats for the Museum

and its collection to be safeguarded. At present the long-term future of the Museum still has to be resolved. This issue had one positive outcome in that it stimulated the formation of a national association, the Polish Federation of Museum, Tourist and Local Railways. NERHT assisted with arrangements for the conference held in Warsaw in November at which all these matters were considered.

As a small organisation our best hope of achieving things is to work with others, most obviously Fedecrail and Heritage Railway Association. Over half of our Committee and several other NERHT members were at last month's Fedecrail conference in Budapest and it is good to note that the post-conference tours included a visit to the Sargan Mountain Railway in Serbia which has been supported by NERHT over the years.

One example of a successful partnership has been our fund-raising initiative which enabled young Latvian preservationists from the Gulbene-Aluksne Narrow-Gauge Railway to attend the Fedecrail Youth Camp held last Summer in Germany. We were extremely grateful to the Locomotive Club of Great Britain, the British Latvian Association and private individuals who responded to our help for donations. Unfortunately the Ukrainians from the Donetsk Museum whom we offered to sponsor were not able to take up the offer of places despite all the efforts by the German organisers and NERHT to overcome the obstacles which prevented them from coming. Hopefully NERHT will be able to facilitate attendance by young people from the New Europe at future youth camps.

Over the past year our activists have been to several countries to support various events and initiatives. I visited Poland and Belarus in July with David Morgan; we were most grateful to our Lithuanian friend Udrius Armalis who acted as guide in Belarus and introduced us to the senior management of the State Railways who are responsible for the railway museums at Brest-Litovsk and Baranovici and the Children's Railway in Minsk. In October Frank Cooper and John Jones travelled to Lviv in Western Ukraine to help prepare a business plan for the broad-gauge Znesinnya Park Railway and in November Frank spoke at the Estonian railway heritage seminar in Haapsalu.



*Discussions in Belarus; David Morgan of Fedecrail (centre right) and Stephen Wiggs (extreme right) of NERHT.*

In recent months we have renewed our links with the Pereslavl Narrow-Gauge Railway Museum in Russia and have been glad to publish the reports by Sergei Dorozhkov in our *Eastern Star*. It was sad to learn that the plans to set up another narrow-gauge tourist railway east of Moscow at Shatura have come to nothing.

One new contact has been that made with a group in Bulgaria who are setting up a national railway heritage organisation; I hope to visit them together with a Fedecrail delegation in the autumn.

In Romania our partners the Sibiu-Agnita Railway are pressing on with efforts to restore part of their line which celebrates its centenary this year. Thanks are due to Bill Parker for all his good work in supporting this venture. As in previous years we continue to welcome visitors from the New Europe to Britain. We are delighted that our friends from Belarus are now with us in Britain and hope that cooperation in this area may continue.

Our task would be impossible without the hard work of our activists and the help given by our members and others. On behalf of the Committee I should like to thank you for your generosity and support.

## Fedecrail Conference

The Fedecrail conference held in Budapest in April was attended by several NERHT members, including half of the Committee. We are pleased to report that during the proceedings the Polish Federation of Tourist Railways was admitted to membership of Fedecrail, while a presentation was given by Nataliya Khymych on behalf of our partners the Borzhava Initiative, who are campaigning to save the Borzhava Valley Railway, the historic narrow-gauge line in Western Ukraine. The programme of activities arranged for conference delegates included a steam-hauled trip on the Budapest children's railway and tours to a steam festival in Kosice (Slovakia) and to the Sargan Mountain Railway in Serbia, which has been supported by NERHT for some years.

Congratulations to the conference organisers and to the Hungarian, Slovak and Serbian hosts for an interesting and worthwhile series of events! S.W.

## Visitors from Belarus

*NERHT is very grateful to those who helped make the Belarussians' visit a success. The Great Central Railway and the National Railway Museum were both generous and thoughtful in their hospitality and, as the following account by John Hine testifies, the visitors were also given a memorable time in Wales.*

### Volunteering for NERHT

In 2009 I had said I would be willing to take on the job of interpreting for a small group visiting the Welsh lines. But it proved impossible in that year to bring about the proposed visit to the UK of a Russian-speaking group. However, this year the obstacles, whatever they were, were removed and we heard that a group of four from Belarus had obtained visas. We were to host two ladies and two gentlemen from Belarus Railways. One of the ladies had to drop out at the last minute when all journeys except a quick one to a hospital were ruled out for her. I was sorry to hear about the lady's misfortune but also relieved in another way. I had agreed to drive the group around North Wales and could not see how five of us plus luggage would pack into my Skoda. Even for four it proved to be a tight fit.

The three guests who finally reached the UK were, in order of age (and left to right in the picture below): Oleg Menshikov, Deputy to the Head of Minsk Area, Belarus Railways; Alla Safonova, Director of 'Dortour' the travel company within Belarus Railways which organises railtours; and Yauzhenii Tsyuba, Senior Instructor at the Minsk Children's Railway College. I met them at Bangor, where they arrived on 4 May after a two-day tour from London, visiting the Great Central Railway at Loughborough and the National Railway Museum at York. They were accompanied by Stephen Wiggs of NERHT, who handed them over to me and caught his train to London, while we drove to our hotel, the Saracen's Head at Beddgelert.

Yauzhenii's job is of particular interest to me. The Children's Railway College is an institution in which teenagers prepare for railway careers, not only via classroom lessons and computer programs, but also by actually running the 750mm-gauge Minsk Children's Railway. The children's – or pioneers' – railways were one of the Soviet Union's better ideas. Many Soviet cities had them. At first these lines mainly used the 0-8-0 750mm-gauge standard locomotive. (The Chinese also used this same narrow-gauge 0-8-0 design. One of the Chinese 0-8-0s was recently at Boston Lodge, and may still be there for all I know.) Later the children's railways were dieselised. The Minsk line lost its last surviving 0-8-0 some time ago and now has just two diesels.

The Minsk Children's Railway, while remaining a training organisation, has diversified into entertainment and catering. There are musical trains, folkloric trains, wedding reception trains, and, last year, a military re-enactment train celebrating the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Belarus's liberation from Nazi occupation. The youngsters wore Red Army uniforms and camped out by the track. They and the customers ate 'soldiers' porridge'.

I asked whether the Minsk railway has volunteers like ours. Well, the



teenagers are the volunteers, in that they choose to turn up after school for extra study at the Railway College and to work in the railway's workshops, which, as Oleg assured me after easing through the narrow gaps between the machines at Dinas on 6 May, are

much bigger than ours. I did not discover whether or not retired old geezers like me also volunteer in Minsk.

The visitors and I wish to thank James Hewett and his colleagues on Tremadog Road for their warm reception on 5 May. Our thanks are due to James himself, to Lyn in the shop, to Dave the driver, to Stuart our guide, to

Giles who told us about the restoration of the Gladstone coach. We must not forget the driver (name forgotten, sorry) on the miniature railway. The significance of the duck house on the stream was lost on our guests but I enjoyed a quiet chuckle. Each of the guests took a turn at the controls of the small diesel which took us to Pen y Mount and back. That morning made me very glad to be a member of both Welsh Highland societies.

The afternoon of 5 May was spent on the Ffestiniog Railway. The tickets for the 13:35 departure from the Harbour had been left for us at the hotel by John Keylock. I had noted that seats had been booked for us in coach 102 but, having only a skimpy knowledge of FfR rolling stock, I had not realized that we would be seated right at the 'observation car' end of this first-class vehicle. The visitors therefore had the best possible view of the FfR route and enjoyed close proximity to Double-Fairlie *David Lloyd George* on the way back down.

I explained the heroic volunteer effort involved in the construction of the Deviation and our guests were duly impressed by the Dduallt spiral. Fortunately, the water was low in the Tanygrisiau reservoir and I was able to point out the old line and tunnel below us. Oleg asked about the incredibly steep trackbed heading uphill as we approached Blaenau and thanks to Vic Derbyshire's talks I was able to tell him about cable-hauled slate wagons.

During the evening of 5 May I gave the guests a tour around the Snowdon massif. There was a stop for photography among the great roadside boulders of the Llanberis Pass and then a brief, over-the-fence look at the Snowdon Mountain Railway. This was a frustrating experience as the guests really wanted to inspect the rack rails and pinion-equipped locomotives. If the schedule had allowed it they would have been very keen to ride to the summit.

The next day was devoted to the longer of the two Welsh Highland railways. David Allan had arranged an even more luxurious ride this time - in Pullman 2100, officially named 'Glaslyn' by the Queen on 27 April. This vehicle is a wonderful piece of work. A passenger might make a muted complaint about restricted legroom but in all other respects it is magnificent. The guests' cameras were clicking all the way to Hafod y Llyn and back as they strove to capture images of mountains, lakes, horses and Garratt 87 far ahead of us as we rounded Chairman's Curve. The sun had emerged at last and the landscape was at its wonderful springtime best.

As we paused at Dinas on the return journey we spoke briefly to Bryn Jones and Stewart McNair. After lunch in Caernarfon we drove back to Dinas and toured the yards, the workshop and the engine shed, where Garratt 138 in its splendid new red livery was the object of well-deserved admiration. After chatting to Elwyn Jones and observing preparations for the annual Cwrw ar y Cledrau / Ales on Rails festival ('Why couldn't it start today?' - asked Oleg) we set off down the A487, bound for Beddgelert. On the way we called at the Golan Woollen Mill, where the visitors had hoped to buy presents, but as it opens only from 10:00 to 16:00 we were far too late. Early closing of shops was one of the things (along with separate hot and cold taps on washbasins, substandard sausages and weak coffee) which had disappointed our friends on their travels around the UK.

Election night followed. I attempted to explain our voting system and to sum up the differences between the parties. This was not an easy task. We all retired early, as another long journey awaited us on Friday 07 May and I

wanted to be up in time to see the election results on television. Alas, no clear winner and therefore more explaining to do.

After a last look at the Beddgelert Antique Shop we set off again up the Gwynant valley but this time did not turn left towards Pen y Pass. Onward to Capel Curig, Betws y Coed (where I could not resist telling the story of the Afanc) and past the bison farm at Rhug, where the bison were not visible. There are still large numbers of wild European bison in Belarus and I had wanted to show them ours. After a brief walk around Corwen in the perishing cold we were soon warming ourselves by the wonderful old-fashioned fireplace in the station building at Carrog, talking to Martin Christie and awaiting the arrival of the train from Llangollen, which would bring William Shakespeare (no relation, apparently) and Chairman Jim Ritchie to greet our guests.

Hosts and guests all left for Llangollen at 11:50 and I drove alone to meet them at Llangollen. Jim and William showed us around the works, where two new steam locomotives (a 'Grange' and a 'Patriot') are under construction. Inspecting a Black Five boiler that was undergoing overhaul, Yauzhenii and Oleg were surprised to hear that boiler certificates last for only ten years. Our hosts then treated us to lunch in the station café. We wish to convey our thanks to Jim and Bill, to the ladies in the shop and the café and to the staff in the works. I shall be sending them a copy of this report.

The last leg of the car journey was the short hop to Gobowen, where I was to ensure that my charges caught the 15:43 Wrexham & Shropshire service to London (Marylebone). The gleaming silver-painted train arrived on time, headed by a class 67 locomotive, and my task was completed. The guests were on their way to dinner with David Morgan that evening and, on Saturday 8 May, to the annual NERHT conference. I was soon back in the car, which felt very empty.

## Consolidation in Poland

*As mentioned briefly in our December issue, a national umbrella body for Polish heritage railway enterprises has been set up and admitted to Fedecrail. Its international liaison officer has sent us additional information:*

At end-October 2009 the Polish umbrella organization 'Polska Federacja Kolei Muzealnych, Turystycznych i Lokalnych' or PFK ('Polish Federation of Museum, Tourist and Local Railways') was founded and was officially registered at the Polish Register Court in late December. The addition 'local' to the organization's name was to stress the importance of the member-railways for their regions.

At present, PFK comprises five organisations operating 11 lines in the whole of Poland on the following gauges: five lines of 750mm, and one each of 600mm, 785mm, 900mm, 1000mm, 1435mm as well as the dual-gauge (1435mm and 750mm) Pleszew Miasto to Pleszew line.

PFK is in contact with other preservation associations with a view to extending its membership and influence. Its chairman Jarek Lipinski is taking part in parliamentary negotiations concerning changes in Polish rail law. He is trying to get the changes needed to improve the situation for Polish heritage railways, especially those of narrow gauge. Apart from PFK member-railway SKPL there is no heritage operator in standard gauge so far, due to the complicated concession procedures and lack of finance for standard-gauge rail

museums. For all steam specials on Polish rail, the formal operator still is a company of the state PKP group or another, commercial, rail operator. PFK intends to use the internet to publicise its own activities as well as current rail issues, including Fedecrail issues. By end-March its own internet rail TV channel was established: KOLEJWIZJA - Nasza wizja o kolei, or Railvision - our view on rail (<http://www.kolejwizja.pl/> and <http://www.youtube.com/user/KOLEJWIZJA>)

Every Monday a new 10-minute film will be issued. All films are in Polish and are provided by Tomasz Dassuj, a journalist and director of photography cooperating for years with Polish steam repair workshop Interlok (a PFK associate-member) and in his official job working for Polish public TV. Being an independent journalist since the 1970s, I am directing and editing our films. German, English or French language versions of our films are being put on our channel parowoz07: <http://www.youtube.com/user/parowoz07> We also have purchased the web address <http://www.kolejwizja.net/> and in due course intend to use this as well for foreign-language versions of our films (maybe under the Railvision label, if that name is still free to use).

Should NERHT members or partners be interested in publicising their work on KOLEJWIZJA, please feel free to send us your raw film and picture material, and we'll put it into our program. Our films are already gaining international acceptance. We find them distributed by other web services, such as aol TV, Albanian TV and Japanese rail services: <http://gotovan.com/video/?usr=parowoz07>

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<http://www.interlok.info/PFKd.htm> (German language)

## Shatura and the Failed Tourist Railway Scheme

Shatura, a small town 140 kms east of Moscow, was for many years the Mecca for Russian narrow gauge railfans. Radiating from here was a huge system of 750mm gauge lines, serving the peat industry. In its heyday, the network boasted over 500km of line, with double-track and dual-gauge sections, regular passenger workings and even electrification of the most significant routes (see picture).



Born in 1920 as a beloved child of Lenin's GOELRO (Governmental Electrification of Russia) plan, Shatura power station was fuelled with peat. Over sixty years the technology of peat combustion little changed and the station consumed millions tons of peat annually, most of which was transported by the narrow gauge. However, the 1980s saw conversion to gas and a rapid decline of

peat extraction, taking the railway with it. *Perestroika* added to the collapse, and in the 1990s the narrow-gauge system was demolished, leaving but a

small section between Shatura and Backsheyevo. A short revival came in the early 21st century, when tracks were repaired and peat traffic resumed, although only as a weak shadow of bygone glory.

October 2005 saw the sudden launch of a wide advertising campaign of a ShUZhD (Shatura Narrow gauge Railway) tourist project. The avowed aim of its group of volunteers under the leadership of Maxim Tyshkevich was to restore the passenger traffic on the Shatura - Backsheyevo line and start tourist services. Some agreement was reached between the group and the railway's management, and the group was given a standard PV51 class passenger coach. Restoration of this started on a volunteer basis in 2006 (*The picture shows how far restoration progressed*).



Maxim Tyshkevich widely publicised the group's ambitious plans on the mass media and Internet, and the project received considerable attention from railfans and the general public. There was a visit by NERHT representatives, and Tyshkevich began to emphasise plans for steam restoration.

However, this was not for long. Working sessions rapidly gave way to lengthy Internet discussions, and by the end of 2008 all activities *in situ* halted. The project was abandoned, to public irritation. Maxim Tyshkevich disappeared from view. Private investigation, undertaken by several railfans, revealed that from the very beginning the financial side of the project had not received proper study [*as indeed the NERHT representatives reported – Ed*]. Much of this story, and the public disillusionment, awaits further explanation.

Meanwhile, peat extraction in the Moscow region was banned for environmental reasons, the new law becoming a death-blow for the remains of the Shatura narrow gauge. 2009 saw rapid scrapping of remaining rails, rolling stock and peat machinery. The end came in December 2009 when the last rails were torn up.

Starting from 2005, I have undertaken continuous efforts to rescue every possible piece of historic equipment from the Shatura narrow gauge. During the ShUZhD epoch Vladimir Yegorov, the head manager of the Shatura peat trust, and not completely confident about Tyshkevich's project, was at the same time most helpful in salvaging vintage rolling stock for the Pereslavl museum. The international project to return the Pomeranian coach and covered van to Germany succeeded largely thanks to his enthusiastic support. Altogether, it became possible to acquire from Shatura a 1930s railcar, seven old riveted flat wagons, four passenger coaches and a saloon, two covered vans, a steam locomotive boiler, ten sets of new points, four vintage machine tools, spare arch-bar bogies and several carloads of spares and materials. There are more plans for 2010.

(There is a good article and pictures about the remains of the Shatura system by James Waite at <http://www.internationalsteam.co.uk/trains/russia12.htm>).

Sergei Dorozhkov



## Ex-British Military Steam Locomotives in Bulgaria

*(Continued from our last issue, which detailed the use of ex-British army Baldwin locomotives by the forestry enterprise associated with the Rila Monastery)*



When the timber railway associated with the Rila monastery was taken over by Bulgarian State Railways the four ex-British Baldwin locomotives likewise changed ownership

The BDZ had earlier shown interest in purchasing Baldwin locomotives straight from the UK. In 1920 documents (ref Sec/Disp/3940) in the archives there is correspondence between the British Foreign Office and British Embassy in Sofia. Two items testify that the British submitted an offer to BDZ via the Bulgarian business delegation visiting London of 19 brand-new 600 mm-gauge 4-6-0 steam engines standing in Purfleet. The price per unit was fixed at 1400 British pounds for immediate payment, plus 10% for packing and placing on board ship in the Thames.. There is no specific reference to the manufacturer. However, the odds are that these were Baldwin 4-6-0s widely used by the British combat troops in World War 1 and quite well known to the Bulgarian army. Some of the same type had been also used on Bulgarian soil immediately after the end of the War, when the south-western part of the country was briefly occupied by British troops. We know definitely that Baldwin engines were in service on the Demir Hissar-Simitly-Dupniza-Radomir railway in the same area, carrying both British and allied troops.

We know also for sure, that the above-mentioned British offer was never implemented. Unfortunately, we do not know for what reasons: maybe it was just a part of market research!

Ilija Iliev    Stefan Stoitschkoff

### *Baltic Railways Magazine*

Issue No 4 of this commendable publication is now available. Production and design standards remain high, and articles and captions are fully presented in English translation. As usual, the 48 pages accommodate a wide range of topics, both current (new trains for Lithuania, the proposed tunnel between Tallinn and Helsinki, among others), and the historical. A feature of the historical section is that hitherto concealed events in the Soviet period are brought into the light of day (in this case the lethal collision of the *Baltika* inter-city train with freight locomotives in 1976 – there are some striking pictures here).

*(To obtain this magazine, please refer to the next page)*

## NERHT Sales

No 4 of *Baltic Railways Magazine* is available at £6.00 post-free from Richard Tapper (address below). He also has copies of the new book *Phoenix at Sargan: Two Lives of the Sargan Railway Line* by Dr Milan Grujic (English text) at £16.00 + P&P.

### SIBIU-AGNITA RAILWAY CENTENARY – VISIT TO ROMANIA

As mentioned in ES 37 a group of NERHT members are planning to travel to Romania for the Sibiu-Agnita Railway centenary celebrations on 25 September (direct flights to Sibiu should be available). We should know by July whether this event is going ahead – please contact the Secretary or Chairman if you wish to attend. As well as the narrow-gauge railway Sibiu is home to a large collection of standard-gauge locos dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century which can be seen at the mainline depot.

### UKRAINIAN RAIL TOUR – OCTOBER 2010

Wolfram Wendelin, the Austrian expert on Ukrainian railways, is arranging a tour of Ukraine which will take place between 3 and 9 October. Starting in Kiev and ending in the frontier town of Chop the programme includes visits to the children's railways of Kiev and Lutsk, a tour of threatened tram lines in Kiev, and rides on the surviving narrow-gauge lines at Gaivoron, Antonivka and Irshava (the Borzhava Valley Railway) together with peat lines. If it can be arranged there will be steam on the Gaivoron line using a Gr class loco. Please note that NERHT is not the organiser of this expedition. Neither NERHT nor its officers accept any liability of any kind to those taking part in the tour or wishing to do so. For further details contact Wolfram on [wwlok@utanet.at](mailto:wwlok@utanet.at)

\* \* \* \* \*

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