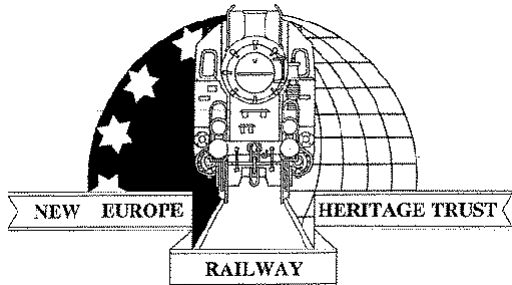


Eastern Star



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Gulbene - Aluksne Railway Festivities



This narrow-gauge railway, in which NERHT has had an active interest over many years, enjoyed its centenary in 2006 and now holds an annual festival on the first Saturday in September. David Clarke reports on last September's event (*next page*).

The great thing about this festival is that the train is central to the proceedings. A full programme of activities took place at Gulbene, Stameriene and Aluksne and a well-produced programme enabled participants to plan their train movements according to the events they chose to see. I started at Aluksne for the opening ceremony and then took the train to Gulbene. There was a band playing at Aluksne when we left and another played at Gulbene when we arrived. We glimpsed the Stameriene activities when we passed through although the stop there was not extended. The quality of events was exceptional and the list too extensive to list here. Highlights for me included open air theatre, dancing performances, the bands & singers, the exhibitions of cars, agricultural vehicles and other cultural collections and the general atmosphere of happiness.

The Railway has acknowledged that these festival events do not generate a surplus. I can now give some reasons for this. A huge number of passengers boarded the trains with complimentary tickets. Much of the top quality entertainment was free of charge. The selection of trading stands was good quality and specialised. However, the amount of rent received from stall holders would have been limited and a traditional large scale festival market would bring in far more rent. Only one-way tickets are available. I took four single journeys during the day but cost-conscious Latvians would need a price incentive before taking more than one return journey. The vast majority of participants were local and so picnic-hamper users outnumbered those buying their food.

So, to sum up, this was a very happy and successful event, although in the back of my mind there was some anxiety about the financial side. Maybe with some strategic adjustments a surplus could be gained from future events. But care has to be taken that loyal followers are not priced out from a high-quality event for which the directors and staff can take great credit. I have seen this happen with other Latvian festivals, some of which I have dropped from my calendar after free theatre events have given way to fairground rides at over £1 a go.

David Clarke

Naissaar - An On-going Project

Naissaar is a largely unknown small island, situated in the Bay of Tallinn, and thus easily visited from a city that has rapidly become a major tourist destination. The island's name means "island of women". Swedish fishermen were there by the 15th Century, and later the Russians came and had a new fortress built in 1720 for the defence of Tallinn and St. Petersburg. In the early twentieth century Russia began to modernize its fortifications in the Gulf of Finland and by the outbreak of the First World War a great deal of work had been undertaken, including the construction of a 37.7km (23.5 miles) long 750mm narrow-gauge railway system. The main line ran along the east side of the island from a centrally situated port (with a pier) to the northern and southern villages, with the works and depot situated at the former, and branches to serve batteries on the west side and centre of the island. There

were two locomotives. The first was an Orenstein and Koppel 90 h.p. 0-6-0 tank (7842), supplied in 1914, and the second an 0-6-2 tank, originally built by Tampella Engineering (a Finnish company) in 1907, and transferred in to the island in 1915. The original wagons came from a liquidated business in Parnu. By 1918, the Germans had occupied most of Estonia, and Naissaar was garrisoned by fifty men. They found that the retreating Russians had only partly destroyed the batteries, and the railway was left intact.

After 1918, the Estonian Republic used Naissaar as a naval base. In 1934, 450 people lived on the island; 291 were Estonians, mostly army personnel, and the rest fishermen of Swedish descent. The army of the Republic of Estonia continued to use the railway for military purposes throughout the 1930s. The existing locomotives were designated numbers 3 (the 0-6-0) and 4 (the 0-6-2). After a brief period of Soviet control in 1940-41, the island came under German occupation once more. The railway system functioned with the original locomotives until the Summer of 1944, when the retreating Germans removed Number 4, the Finnish 0-6-2. However, it was left behind in Estonia, where it worked on the mainland narrow gauge system until it was scrapped in 1953.



A 2011 view of the trackage.

(Photo Alar Mik)

During the Soviet period, the largest arsenal for naval mines in the Baltic was established on the island. The Soviets therefore declared the island a military area and off-limits to the public. (This resulted in a 'return to a wilderness state' in large tracts of the island, creating conditions that resulted in flourishing wildlife.)

The Soviets also used the railway to connect the arsenal to the port. The remaining locomotive, Number 3, was overhauled at Moisakule works and re-designated RT3 (PT3 in Cyrillic script) before returning to the island. It was replaced in the 1950s by two Soviet 1930s Type 159 0-8-0 locomotives. The onset of 'glasnost' enabled enthusiasts to visit Naissaar for the first time. They were surprised to discover that as late as the 1990s there remained about fifteen kilometres of serviceable and seven kilometres of derelict track on the island. In 1986 there were three TU-6A locomotives; TU6A-1904 alone was operational, the others being cannibalised for spare parts. It emerged that, after the steam engines, four MD54-4 inspection motor cars had been obtained, but only their wrecked frames were left. The flat wagons largely dated from the 1950s. When the Russians left Naissaar in early 1993, they burned the explosives in the naval mines, leaving a multitude of metal casings

scattered throughout the island. Many of these were scavenged as scrap iron, but a field of mines is still visible near the wharf at Mädasadam. Another legacy of the arms industry is that the soil of the island remains contaminated by oil and heavy metals in several places. In 1995 Naissaar was converted into a nature reserve, and an active programme of conservation was begun.

There is considerable potential for tourism, and visitor numbers are slowly growing. Most people access the island by a ferry service operated by the 'Monika' of Tallinn Cruises (<http://www.tallinn-cruises.com/naissaar/>) from Piritä Harbour in Tallinn. The majority are day visitors, but there is a campsite, a small hotel in the former Soviet barracks, and a restaurant/café on the island. Visitors who prefer to explore the island on foot are advised to keep to the official hiking paths. There are tours by trucks, jeep, and the railway, and vouchers are sold for these by the Viimsi Coastal Folk Museum. What are the attractions to be seen? The original wooden island church and the cemetery have been renovated, the remains of the sea mine arsenal can be seen, the sand dunes and beaches are popular, and the old artillery batteries can be traced. Männiku village contains a military museum of Naissaar (with displays of the island during Tsarist and Soviet times). Nargen Opera house (a big wooden building) is used for concerts, and these attract large numbers of visitors to the island.

The remains of the railway system were 'asset stripped' by the departing Russians, and what was left was picked over by scrap metal thieves. Nevertheless, enough of the line remained to arouse the interest of enthusiasts. In the last few years the Viimsi Rural Municipality (located on the Estonian mainland nearest to the island) clarified land problems. All the land on the island was government property, so the municipality had to measure out and draw plans of the land it required and submit them to the land registry. Altogether they municipalized 'six grounds' (1,376 hectares) of land. Viimsi Rural Municipality gave the railway into the care of (Viimsi) Coastal Folk Museum (which operates the museum on the island, and other museums on the mainland) in October 2009 by means of a thirty-year ground lease. The lease stipulates that the Museum has to restore the railway and find means and funds for this purpose.

(To be concluded in our next issue)

Steam Locomotives of Lithuanian Railways 1919-1940 by Tom Altbergs (Latvian Railway History Museum), a well-illustrated 196pp hardback, is to be published in early 2012. The text is English/Lithuanian, with the English text checked by NERHT member Tony Olsson (who does the same for *Baltic Railways Magazine*). Price is as yet unknown. Readers interested in buying this book are invited to e-mail Tony at tonyolsson124@btinternet.com

Baltic Railways Magazine No 8 is now out, and gives space to passenger services - the cost of effective services, services in the Kaliningrad Region, and a view from Britain, together with a survey of Baltic pre-war international passenger services. Current developments are also treated and the historical section is as varied and interesting as ever.

The First Company of Feeder Railways in Russia

Anyone who reads about the history of narrow-gauge railways in the former Russian empire or indeed visits the remaining narrow-gauge lines in the area is likely to become aware of the First Company of Feeder Railways in Russia. Sergei Dorozhkov of the Pereslavl' Narrow-Gauge Railway Museum takes up the tale:

The last decade of the XIX century was characterised in Russia by the rapid expansion of all sectors of the economy. As the Russian government was devoting its main attention to developing the broad gauge network, the narrow gauge railways were left within the interests of private capital.

The most important and by far the largest of private narrow gauge companies was the First Company of Feeder Railways in Russia, registered on 26 March 1892.

The company was headed by talented engineers, among which were Boleslav Yalovetskiy, Anatoly Nikitin, and Amand Struve. Boleslav Yalovetskiy took active participation in working out standards for Russian military field railways. In 1900 he was granted a patent for an improved system of rolling stock for temporary railways. In 1909 Anatoly Nikitin published a book on the theory and practice of narrow gauge railways based on his experience with their construction and operation. Amand Struve, a known railway bridge engineer, was one of the founders, owners and directors of Kolomna machine-building works.

According to its statutes, the First Company was established for the construction of 750mm gauge branch lines to feed into the St. Petersburg–Warsaw Railway. However it was not before long that the range of its activities significantly expanded.

With capital of 2 million rubles, the company initially had some difficulties in raising money, but with the boost from the state the work soon started off.



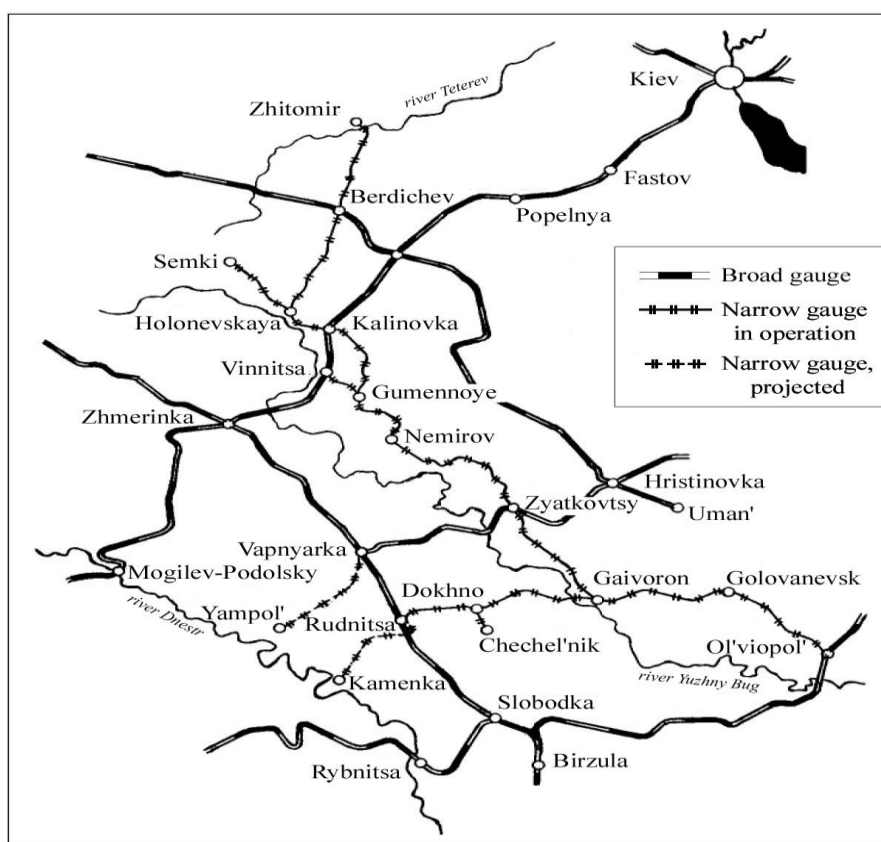
First Company pass issued to Baron Taube

27 June 1894 saw top-level approval of 'Conditions for Construction and Exploitation by the First Company of Sventsyany Narrow Gauge Common Carrier Feeder Railway'. The traffic on the 71km section between Novosventsyany (Shvenchionelyai) and Postavy began 11 November 1895, and in July 1897 the branch was extended to 126km to Berezvech. A 145km section from Novosventsyany to Panevezh (Panevezhis)

followed on 14 May 1901. This network in the territory of present-day Lithuania and Belarus became known as the Sventsyany Division.

Soon after opening the Sventsyany branch, the First Company began constructing the 'Yuzhnaya' (Southern) branch in Ukraine. Its sections were brought into use in the following order:

Berdichev–Zhitomir converted to 1524mm in 1915	53km	October 1896
Rudnitsa–Ol'viopol'	195km	August 1899
Berdichev–Kalinovka	73km	June 1900
Holonevskaya–Semki	41km	June 1900
Kalinovka–Gaivoron	219km	June 1900
Gumennoye–Vinnitsa	15km	June 1900
Dokhno–Chechel'nik	11km	June 1901



The
Southern
Network
in
1910

The third railway network to be built by the First Company was from Pernov (Pärnu) to Reval (Tallinn) in Estonia. Regular traffic began on the Valk–Pernov section in August 1897; there next followed a 170km branch line from Fellin (Vilyandi) to Moizeikyul' (Miyzakula), extended by 150km from Fellin to Reval and by 13km from Allenkyul' (Turi) to Weissenstein (Paide) in August 1901.

In 1913, the last peaceful year before the outbreak of the Great War, the First Company already operated 337kms of tracks in the Pernov-Reval Division, 272kms in the Sventsyany Division and 616kms in the Southern Division, becoming the Russia's largest owner of common-carrier narrow gauge railways. More lines were planned.

In addition to building and operating its own railways, the company also offered private financiers its services for constructing narrow gauge lines.

(To be concluded in our next issue)

Narrow Gauge in Romania

This is the first part of a compilation by Mihai Blotor and deals with the lines still operating. A very detailed map has been prepared and can be seen at <http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?msid=215120874022241853263.0004b3a4efa800a6153c%msa=0&all=45.97406.24.906006&spn=4.459106.9.876709>

1. Viş eu de Sus

Most definitely the biggest tourist attraction of all Romanian narrow gauge railways, the Viş eu de Sus railway started its life as a mountain forestry line back in 1933. While it still serves this purpose, in fact it is the last forestry line operating in Romania, tourist trains were introduced in the mid 90s thanks



Special train on the Viseu de Sus line (Photo by Denys Dobra)

to the efforts of the Wassertalbahn Association led by the Swiss Michael Schneeberger. Today tourism provides most of the income and is certainly what kept the line running after the fall of communism. In fact, there is such an abundance of tourists in the summer months that they need to operate two full trains just minutes after the other on the 32 kilometres of track. A further length of some 14 kilometres is accessible only to production trains, as the track is not in reasonably good condition to allow for passenger traffic. During the high season (July - September) trains depart daily at 9 AM from the station at Viş eu de Sus; if you happen to be there off season do schedule your visit for Thursday, Friday, Saturday or Sunday, as these are the tourism days.

For prices, special trains or more information please visit their website at www.cffviseu.ro , also available in English.

2. Moldovița

If you don't fancy crowded places and lots of tourists, but would prefer a peaceful ride in a gentle landscape, just cross the Carpathians east and you'll come across the Moldovița line.

Built in 1889 also as a forestry line, this time in the sub-Carpathian hills, the line barely survived until 2005, after traffic ceased in the late 90s, when the Austrian Georg Hocevar started rebuilding the tracks and slowly turned it into a tourist attraction. Since last summer the line is 10 kilometres long and the train usually consists of a tender steam locomotive and two balcony-end axle carriages.

The round-trip costs 20 lei for an adult and half for children, while the winter holidays train departs each day between 26 December - 2 January at 11 AM and 1 PM from Moldovița. The timetable for next year's season has not yet been published and the train does not operate off season. You might also like to see the famous monastery at Moldovița while you are there.

Keep an eye on www.cfi.ro for the timetable, hopefully the website will also be available in English soon.

3. Sovata

The newcomer amongst Romania's tourist narrow gauge railways, the 14 kilometres at Sovata were restored in August this year. This is at the far end of the southern branch of the extensive State owned Târgu Mureș narrow gauge network, which has recently been rented for tourism purposes. The train, comprising of the formerly Sibiu based tender steam locomotive no. 764.052, an open coach and a covered carriage, ran daily until the end of September through the hilly landscape, but is available for hire all year long.

The round trip is priced at 30 lei for an adult and 15 lei for children and starts at Sovata, which is also a famous national spa resort. A few kilometres away, at Praid, an underground trip into the vast salt mines is something not to be missed.

The railway recently developed a website, at www.mocanitasovata.ro, which is still rather undeveloped and only available in Romanian.

4. Arad - Ghioroc

A special place amongst the Romanian narrow gauge railways is the 'Green Arrow' electric train at Ghioroc, which linked Arad to a handful of nearby villages. Nowadays integrated in the Arad tramway network and stripped of some its branches, only the depot at Ghioroc reminds of the glory days. Ancient train sets still lurk around the yard, fewer every year, but inside the shed a beautifully restored driving carriage awaits each year the Days of Arad, when it drives back into Arad as a statement of the city's vast and historic tram network. This usually happens in late August, but never on a fixed date.

An out of date website is available at www.sageata-verde.uv.ro, Romanian language only but good for pictures. For each year's running day you'll have to keep an eye on the local online newspapers.

5. Brad - Crișcior

Last but not least, the former industrial line at Brad. This used to carry coal from the standard-gauge station at Brad to the nearby power station at Crișcior until the mid-90s, when the premises and the line were taken over by the Austrian Georg Hocevar and turned into a large rolling stock repair

workshop, well known to those of you who are familiar with the Welsh Highland (carriage no. 2060) or the Welshpool and Llanfair (Reș iț a locomotive) railways. The business has slowly grown, allowing the railway to be used sporadically for special event tourist trains, such as the Christmas train. One might also like to look around the Museum of Gold in Brad.

Timetables for special trains are displayed on the company's website - www.cfi.ro , though in Romanian.

The 2011 Youth Camp

(Joel Pearse of the Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway concludes his account of his participation in the 2011 youth camp in Poland)

...on Wednesday morning we worked on the signals for the rest of the morning. At about 14.00 we made our way to the Ikarus bendy-bus, arriving at Koszalin at about 20.00. We had a quick nocturnal tour of the depot, then took some chairs and sat around a fire whilst one the railways members told us a bit about the line.

...on Thursday, after breakfast, an Lxd2 was sitting in the "platform" at the head of the railway's renewals train. We all made ourselves comfortable(?) and after about 45 minutes we arrived into Manowo, where the loco ran round the train. The loco propelled the train a few hundred yards out beyond the station, where we would be replacing some sleepers. My track induction course now had some use. We worked in groups of four per sleeper. The sleepers were changed in the standard way: first the adjacent beds were dug out, and then a trench in the cess; the ballast was then removed from under the sleeper. The chair screws were removed allowing the sleeper to drop down, and then be slid into the trench in the cess. A new sleeper was then put in and the ballast packed under. Finally the adjacent beds are filled back up. After replacing a couple of sleepers with the German chap and one of the Hungarians, I went to help the other Hungarians. The local television people appeared and filmed us working, as well as interviewing a few people. After a pleasant lunch the train took us back to Koszalin, and thence by Ikarus to Białośliwie, where we had dinner. One of the Ukrainian girls had her birthday party. Everyone had a good time and after a really nice evening we all turned in rather late.

...on Friday the Ikarus took us to the Interlok workshops at Piła and we were shown around by one of the managers. After spending a bit of time wandering around and looking at the old roundhouse adjacent to the Interlok sheds, we headed back to Białośliwie where we walked to the depot of the Wyrzysk District Railway, adjacent to the mainline. The line was once part of a large 600mm gauge network, and the society is gradually restoring further lengths of the line. A train was arranged especially for us, consisting of two wagons hauled by one of the railway diesel locomotives. Back at Bialośliwie we walked back to the depot to have a good look around. The railway has several diesel locomotives, some very nicely restored carriages and many wagons in un-restored condition. We all got to drive a couple of the diesel locomotives up and down the yard

...on Saturday, back to Nowy Dwór Gdański. I was nabbed to be interviewed by the Polish television people, along with Eszter from Hungary, after which there was a presentation of our certificates and a group photograph. I was up fairly early on Sunday morning, and after breakfast said goodbye to everyone. I had a really good time on the camp in Poland, and once again made some nice friends. We saw some fascinating narrow gauge railways, and visited some interesting places. Like last year, I thoroughly enjoyed the whole week and we managed to do a lot in quite a short time.



Ukraine. Wolfram Wendelin informs us that extra trackage has been laid at the Korostiv narrow-gauge project, using land belonging to the museum

The Illustrated History of Romanian Forestry Railways, a substantial well-illustrated hardback with English text, will be reviewed in our next edition. It can be obtained from Richard Tapper (price £35.00 plus P&P)

BULGARIAN GUESTS TO SPEAK AT NERHT 2012 AGM Our AGM this year will take place on Saturday 28 April at the Model Railway Club, Keen House. 4 Calshot Street. London NW1 9DA (near King's Cross Station) starting at 2.00 p.m. After the formal business Venelin Vasiliev and Tzanko Simeonov of the Union of Bulgarian Train Modellers (the Bulgarian railway heritage federation) will give an illustrated talk on the theme of 'Preserving Bulgaria's Railway Heritage.' All who are interested are welcome to attend.

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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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