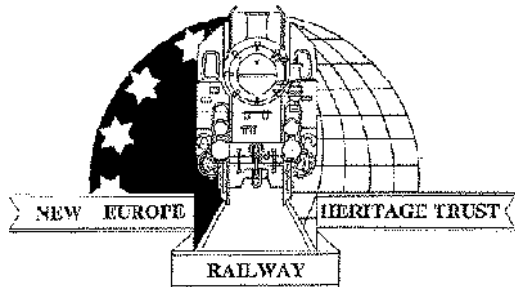


Eastern Star



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

Number 55

September 2014

Donetsk Railway Museum Under Fire



In happier times: one of the Museum's exhibits.

Since 2005, when NERHT sponsored a UK visit by its present director and others, it has had an interest in the Donetsk Railway Museum. This is located near the mainline railway facilities of a city that has become the key stronghold of the eastern

Ukrainian rebel movement. It has been seriously affected by the conflict, but details are unclear at the time of writing. From several sources it would appear that apart from some broken windows and other shrapnel incidents, there has so far been little physical harm and although the museum has been closed on some days, its six-strong workforce is still in attendance. Some, including director Vladimir Donchenko, live outside the rebel-held area and in order to go to work need to pass several guard-posts, time-consuming and expensive. For this reason several of them have stayed overnight, sleeping under a locomotive; whenever the railway facilities are under bombardment, there is the danger of a stray missile falling on the premises.

Earlier, the Kievan government instructed all local museums to send their exhibits to a safe government-held location, but locomotives are less portable than paintings. Since then, the local rebel government has 'nationalised' the museums, and there has been alarm in some quarters that locomotive exhibits might be taken away by the rebels. NERHT is doing its best to monitor the situation. The plinthed locomotive at Yasinovataya, and the Donetsk children's railway, also in the locality, appear to be undamaged

Romania

News from the Sibiu – Agnita Railway



On the SAR, track inspection at Cornatel river bridge

Photo David Allan

A party from SARUK, the UK supporters' group, paid their fifth successive annual visit to the Transylvanian Sibiu to Agnita Narrow Gauge Railway in September. The SARUK team was helping to assess the state of the track. This was in readiness for the proposed return of steam to Cornatel in September 2015. This promises to be an important milestone in the repair and re-opening of the line. It is reported that the track is in much better condition than had been expected, but will still need some fettling. The Sibiu-based 'Friends of the Mocnița' will beg, borrow or hire a steam locomotive, possibly from George Hocevar. A long weekend of celebration is planned to coincide with a traditional Transylvanian Brunch which will be held on the station forecourt and adjoining open area at Cornatel. The date for the event, with the Brunch already confirmed, is Saturday and Sunday 26th/27th September 2015.

The aim is to operate a service on the 7km length from Cornatel to Hosman – the next station towards Agnita. The line traverses the scenic Hârtibaciu Valley and provides breathtaking views towards the Carpathian Mountains. 'The Friends' plan to use one of the four coaches that they rescued after the line closed in 2001. This coach is currently being refurbished in the Group's shed at Agnita.

To have a steam loco running on the 7km of track between Cornatel and Hosman at the end of September 2015 is a big ambition for a small group but with determination it is achievable. To accomplish this the track must be in good condition. A run-round facility at Cornatel is required. The level

crossing just before Hosman has been covered over with tarmac and requires digging out and the single point at Hosman needs to be put into good condition to enable a chain shunt for 'running round'.

To supplement the excellent Romanian volunteers SARUK are proposing to organise a UK track gang to lend a hand for, say, a week in May next year. A minimum of four people will be required, but the more the merrier. If you would like to be involved or if you know anyone who would like a new and unique challenge then please advise David Allan as soon as possible.

David's contact details are – Tel : 0151 327 3576 or Email : david.allan132@ntlworld.com

If successful, to have steam again on 7km of track in the Hârtibaciu Valley next September will be a remarkable achievement and will make a political statement that it will be impossible for the local politicians to ignore.

If Romania wants to encourage tourism then it needs to tempt those money-spending visitors with fresh ideas and imaginative attractions, one such attraction would be the re-opening of the Sibiu to Agnita narrow gauge line as a tourist railway.

The 'Friends of the Moc nița' are a volunteer group, based in Sibiu, who are offering their services and their enthusiasm free – they simply need support. SARUK includes a vast range of British expertise in tourist-generating railway restoration and they too are offering all this expertise - free.

David Allan

Earlier, in July, Mihai Botor informed us that both the SAR draisines had been used for tourist rides on the 7km between Cornatel and Hosman, when an issue with the points in Cornatel forced a suspension until repairs were done and the points secured from vandalism . . .

' . . . Having had an increased number of tourists this year, especially large organized groups, the moto-draisine was preferred to the velo-draisine, as it offers 17 seats. No proper train movements have taken place since 2012 but we are planning for such in September next year. As stated before, there are issues with the points at Cornatel (unsecured point, missing counter-rail) which forced us to suspend tourist rides. The 7km of track which we are using at present (Cornatel-Hosman) are in bad condition (rotten or burned sleepers, missing fishplates and spikes) and overgrown, but allow light draisine rides thanks to our repairs. We have replaced a broken rail with the physical help of SARUK, have bought new fishplates and replaced parts where stolen, have also put newish (main-line second-hand) sleepers at some of the joints where the old sleepers were completely rotten. We have run the marathon this year to raise funds in order to upgrade these 7km of track so it can sustain a proper train. Starting September 2015 we plan to held yearly Days of Mocanita, which mean operating a proper tourist train for a weekend each year, at the end of September. This upgrade involves purchasing and replacing many sleepers, fitting fishplates and spikes where missing, digging up a level crossing which has been asphalted, building two ramps to load rolling stock onto road platforms, finish

restoring the passenger coach which [NERHT visitors] travelled on back in 2010 and take it to Cornatel and, finally, borrowing a steam locomotive, most likely from Georde Hocevar. Having lost [political] support from Agnita and rebased at Cornatel, the re-erection of the shed has been postponed, while the wood is secured under cover inside the tin shed at Agnita which also houses the carriage.'

A Visit to Covasna and Comandau

Possibilities for visiting other surviving narrow gauge railways within a day's travel out and back from Sibiu are limited. This year the SAR Friends and the SARUK team decided to visit what remains of the once-extensive narrow (760mm) gauge forestry system at Covasna (Kovaszna) and Comandau (Kommando), in predominantly Hungarian-speaking territory north east of Brasov, some 200km distant.

The system is in two parts, with an intermediate 1445mm gauge gravity worked inclined plane, transferring narrow gauge vehicles between them by 'platform wagon' in similar fashion to the former Dinorwic Quarries railway in North Wales. The lower, westerly, part links, or linked, Covasna standard gauge railway station with the base of the incline, wrapping round the north and east of Covasna town. The higher, easterly, part comprises or comprised a link between the top of the incline and sawmills at Comandau, with branches from there into the extensive surrounding forest areas.

Use as a timber carrier finally finished almost twenty years ago, brought forward by fire and flood damage and post-communist era changes in forestry management. Information obtained before the visit indicated that much of what had survived until then remains in place, with a summer weekend tourist operation on part of the lower section, and a more occasional tourist operation on part of what remains of the branches from Comandau.

For the September visit, public transport was briefly considered but we opted for the speed and flexibility offered by the availability of a comfortable Mercedes minibus with driver. The sixteen seats were almost fully occupied by SAR Friends and the SARUK team, who also paid for the hire and other expenses. We arrived at the eastern extremity of the lower section, close to the base of the inclined plane, in the early afternoon. Here we found a run-round loop and sidings, the former occupied by a steam-hauled passenger train in the final stages of preparation, the latter by a number of bogie coaches and wagons in varying condition. The inclined plane was scarcely visible, being engulfed by vegetation and impossible to explore as the intervening river bridge deck had disappeared, presumably the victim of flooding as some of the rails remained hanging in mid-air.



The train, which consisted of an 0-8-0 tank locomotive and three four-wheeled open coaches then gave the group an exclusive ride downhill through very pleasant surroundings for approximately two kilometres to a stopping point adjacent to a hotel (Hotel Bradul) and bus turn-round on the eastern outskirts of

Covasna. This appears to function as the westerly terminus and main joining point, with two 0-8-0 tank locomotives on adjacent plinths advertising the line's presence. On this occasion passengers and other visitors were also entertained by the carriages and locomotive changing places with gravity assistance (the locomotive taking refuge in a short siding with the carriages descending downhill on the adjacent track under the control of the brakesman), and the locomotive water supply being replenished by the local fire brigade.

After a pleasant half hour or so the train set off, slowly climbing uphill on what for us was the return trip. It struggled a little, with the valve gear, and possibly other parts, apparently requiring adjustment, although it gave an impressive run-past towards the end.



The minibus then took us up the forestry road that largely follows the railway, either

directly on it (with the rails exposed in places) or alongside, to Comandau. There we found an extensive complex of sheds in apparently semi-derelict condition, linked by a spider-web of railway lines, on which were stored a variety of wagons, an open bench-seat bogie carriage, and two ex-state railway bogie diesel locomotives in apparently poor condition. Peering between the doors of a couple of the sheds revealed that they housed several more locomotives, mostly steam with at least one more diesel, but not having access we were unable to investigate further.

We were then left with just enough time to obtain brief refreshment in a café/bar within the complex, and all too soon we had to set off on the long journey back.

We were not able on the day to discover much about the current management arrangements. Further investigation suggests local authority, CFI Criscior (George Hocevar) and Hungarian (Budapest) enthusiast involvement. The train on which we travelled was provided by CFI Criscior, the locomotive believed to be the one lent to the Friends for the anniversary celebrations at Agnita in 2010.

In all, a fascinating system, in idyllic settings, and well worth a visit. Those of us who had visited the Vyhoda system in Ukraine commented on the similarities . . .

Graham Farr

Thanks from Romania

Between April 28 and May 5 a Romanian delegation visited the UK at the invitation of NERHT. It consisted of Dionisie Ardelean (Director General of the National Centre for Railway Staff Qualification and Training), Mircea Dorobantu (Director of Bucharest Railway Museum), Octavian Udriste (President of Romanian Train Club, or TCR), and Mrs Ruxandra Bratu (railway enthusiast and interpreter).

After a brief meeting at the Romanian Embassy, followed by a visit to the Science Museum, the delegation's first day ended with a business dinner in the company of David Morgan, President of FEDECRAIL. The next day the visitors enjoyed the collection of historic locomotives and carriages at Shildon in the company of George Muirhead, manager, and Andrew J. Scott, who was already known to them. They noted the museum's social and economic benefits as a tourist attraction for the community.

At the National Railway Museum at York they were welcomed by Ed Bartholomew, senior curator, and viewed the collection of vintage rolling stock as well as the archive of historic documents and photographs, and saw their mode of preservation, before taking a short trip with the Rocket steam replica. Next day they visited the London Transport Museum, where their host was Sam Mullins, its Director, and were impressed by the number of visitors of all ages. They then met NERHT members at the AGM, where Mircea Dorobantu and Octavian Udriste presented the history of the Romanian Railway Museum and of the Romanian Railways.

Their final visit was to the Bluebell railway, where under the guidance of Roger Price they saw the operation of vintage trains between vintage stations and also had the chance to see workshops where volunteers, especially of the third age, are busy restoring rolling stock. It was a wonderful experience, writes Octavian Udriste, in his letter of appreciation . . .

' . . . And what did we discover and learn from this unforgettable visit?

First, that in the UK there is a cult for history in general and technology in particular. Second, that passion for heritage preservation, regardless of its size, needs comprehension and material support, primarily from the state, and from the local authorities as well. The fact that the railway administration has provided, free of charge, areas for organizing museums is highly appreciated.

Moreover official cultural agencies' financial support for some expenses, sponsorships and donations, and the income from own commercial activities, ensure the museums' functioning.

Then, the educational role of these museums, especially among children, who are there in massive numbers with their schools or parents.

Last, but not least, the support of volunteers, especially those of the third age, who with great passion and pleasure bring their indispensable contribution to restoring, preserving and presenting these invaluable technological treasures.

We could say more, but what is important is that we have learned so much from this experience and we are determined to do everything possible to transpose to Romania as much as possible. We count on continuing this collaboration between our organizations and on the support of FEDECRAIL, which our TCR will join as soon as possible.

Finally, heartfelt thanks to all our hosts for the kindness, warmth and passion with which they presented their impressive heritage. A special thought to our friend Stephen Wiggs.'

Ruxandra Bratu later wrote: 'My experience in England was agreeably completed by a short trip to Northern Ireland, a real chance to enlarge my knowledge of railway heritage preservation in UK.

Located in picturesque scenery, the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum pleasantly surprised me by its variety of collections, and especially by the railway transport exhibits. The open and sincere dialogue with Mark Kennedy, the curator, was an occasion for me to receive suggestions of how to solve the problems all those involved in museum activity have to face. I left the museum with the Romanian "La revedere!" ("Au revoir"), because I'm sure we'll meet again within some inter-museum cooperation. And why not, with the help of our NERHT friends? The story will be continued . . .

BULGARIA

Sofia Trams

The installation of a historic tram replica on Sofia's main street Vitoshka has been approved by the municipality. Plans are now being made for the



construction of this replica.

The project for the tram museum is much bigger and is therefore taking more time to process. But the Sofia municipality organised an open day at the former Klokochnitsa tram depot where the proposed museum will be.

The Klokochnitsa depot

Photo Ivo Radoev by courtesy of
Gradski Transport I Infrastruktura

This event was on Sunday 30 March 2014 and the sun gave a great warm day. It lasted from 11.00 to 14.00 pm. We [the Association of Railway Modellers] participated as an organization with our stand here, with encouraging results even though the attendance was not great.

In the entrance hall visitors were able to share ideas to transform the site, and our publications were deployed nearby. Musicians from the Sofia orchestra set the atmosphere. About midday Sofia's mayor Yordanka Fandakova arrived, touring the halls and viewing their condition. In between radio and television interviews, members of our association were able to talk to her. First the issue of building a museum of urban transport in the depot to accommodate historic trams was raised, the association welcoming the idea of combining the museum with space for seminars, exhibitions and concerts. For her part, Mrs. Fandakova assured us that our idea of deploying a historic railcar on Vitoshka Street had been adopted and its deployment is involved in the project to restore the streets in the area between Alabin Street and Thessaloniki. Mrs. Fandakova noted the models of trams made by our colleague Darian Georgiev,

assuring him that the museum will be a place to exhibit handmade models.



The Association's publications on display

Photo Yoana Mladenova courtesy of Gradski Transport i Infrastruktura

The visit of the Mayor of Sofia was the culmination of the open day. Freed from the journalists and officials, citizens were able to calmly consider neglected warehouses and to feel the spirit of Old Sofia. Architects, engineers or simply lovers exchanged different ideas about the reincarnation of the site. In the open-day poll the great majority of votes were for the urban transport museum proposal, with a few others voting for an art gallery. If Sofia should win its bid for European Capital of Culture 2018 the project will be more likely. Currently the ACR team is focused on our main works. The political situation here again is not stable and we need to pay more attention to the projects in our works. The book we have published has swallowed a lot of funds and therefore we have to be very careful in starting new initiatives.

Tsanko Simeonov

Russia

Pereslavl' Narrow-Gauge Railway Museum. Sergei Dorozhkov writes that the 2014 season can be regarded as good in terms of attendance. But a great deal of energy has been spent working on ownership and structural problems. After a difficult period, the road ahead is now clearer, and new long-term plans are being made although it may be some time before these take concrete shape. However, there has been a renewal of field research, and expeditions are taking place with the hope of discovering possible new acquisitions.

Alapaevsk. We note that the Ekaterinburg region's tourist bureau has been offering a day-trip from Ekaterinburg to the Alapaevsk narrow-gauge



railway, one which is still operating passenger trains and has its own museum. NERHT was aware that this region has shown an interest in tourist railways and has been in tentative touch. Meanwhile, our correspondent Artyom has sent this picture of passenger rolling stock recently put into service.

Ukraine

AZIZU

AZIZU (Association for the Preservation of the History of Railways of Ukraine), based in Kiev, became a member of Fedecrail in 2012 and recently presented an account of its recent outdoor activities. Here is a summary:

2011 - restoration work on steam locomotive Cy 251-86 [Su 251-86] was completed and in November it took part in celebrations to commemorate the arrival, in 1861, of the first train from Peremishel (Poland) to Lvov.

2012 – May 1 saw the first return trip of a steam passenger train between T.Shevchenko and Cherkassy (60km). It was educational and was free of charge for all volunteers and the public. In July the restoration of freight locomotive Ea 2026 was started, and in the summer a film-making group proposed the use of Cy 251-86 (in September-October various episodes were made). Then in November Cy 251-86 made a second trip, between T.Shevchenko and Zolotonosha (120km return) to celebrate Ukrainian Railways Day.

2013 – In April three AZIZU members made a study tour, sponsored by NERHT, to UK Museums and preserved railways. On 17 May Cy 251-86 took part in the 150-year anniversary celebration of the start of construction of the Odessa Railway. A special train ran a circular trip around Odessa. During the summer there was the shooting of a TV serial at Zvenigorodka. and two more return trips between T,Shevchenko and Zolotonosha.

2014 - Trips of Cy 251-86: on 2nd May and 2nd August there were return trips between T.Shevchenko and Zolotonosha and on 24th August there was the first trip between Tsvetkovo and Khristinovka (300 km return).

Also in 2014 the shunting diesel locomotive TGM3A 1129 was acquired, and four narrow-gauge wagons from Kirovograd oblast.



Cy 251- 86, on trial after restoration in 2011, is passed by a mainline freight train.

Photo D Babaraika

Wolfram Wendelin has sent news from the Korostiv project. There has been a three-day project day in which up to 12 enthusiastic members took part. The new roof sections were completed and other sections reinforced so that the total size of the roof is now about 16 x 5 metres. The blue surfaces of the railbus were retouched and ten truckloads of earth were delivered as a base for the trackbed on the strip of land belonging to the project. A mini-excavator and willing hands placed this and in the end 13 metres of new track had been put in place. Tools and components were delivered from Austria and Kiev. Grass and bushes were removed from the state-owned land. A further 2-day work session in October was expected to make more headway with the roof, begin repair of the Lviv childrens railway covered van and make the next 6 metres of track. A new wagon is to be delivered from Vyhoda.



Baltic Railways Magazine No 16 is now available. As usual it has a strong showing in history; this time it describes the two Soviet prototype high-speed electric trains that were abandoned when the USSR disappeared and there is also a history of Valka Junction, perched on the Latvia-Estonia frontier, which has seen a variety of gauges and operating authorities. This summer's event on Latvia's Banitis also has full treatment. Present-day news is also covered (including the appearance of Lithuania's first female locomotive driver).

A Lithuanian/Russian as well as the Lithuanian/English edition is available. Either can be obtained by post from J A Olsson (to whom the £6.00 cheque should be payable) at Flat 2, 10 Oxford Grove, Ilfracombe, EX34 9HQ

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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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