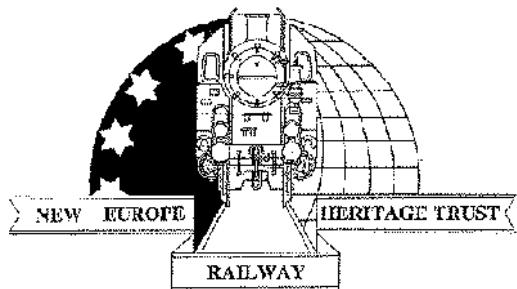


# Eastern Star



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

Number 43

September 2011

## Narrow-Gauge Developments in Russia



Following long negotiations, the St. Petersburg-based narrow-gauge railfan group managed to save from scrap the sole surviving ESU3 Bo-Bo diesel-electric locomotive (*pictured*). As the group still has no permanent premises, agreement was reached with the Pereslavl museum to store the locomotive at Talitsy. On 15 August the loco was brought to the museum.

The group's collection includes several narrow-gauge diesel locomotives and railcars of the 1950s-1970s and a rail-mounted steam crane, all awaiting restoration and stored at various places in the St. Petersburg area.

This time last year the Pereslavl narrow-gauge railway museum was coping with the fires that were blistering the Russian landscape. 2011 has been kinder and visitor-numbers are up. In fact on Independence Day (the major public holiday) there were almost twelve hundred visitors.



This year the 1955 Tula-built snowplough (needed for winter operation) has been undergoing major restoration work (see picture), with the blade-lifting mechanism overhauled and substantial work done on the wooden body.

The Ft4-028 0-6-2T, built in Finland in 1945 and restored in Talitsy in 2009 (see *Eastern Star* of June 2010) was test steamed in

May 2011 after the installation of the new chimney with spark-arrester and new petticoat, manufactured according to the original pattern. During the restoration much help was received from Jussi Tepponen and other colleagues from the Jokioisten Museum Railway in Finland. During tests the locomotive behaved well, but revealed several minor problems, including a need for the replacement of safety-valve springs. New springs are anticipated to arrive in September, after which another steaming will take place. Track repairs are under way in Talitsy both on the museum branch and at the station. The massive task over several years includes capital repair of the 2.5 km mainline section, tie replacement, new ballast and some serious realignment of the station tracks. New land has been acquired alongside Talitsy shed with the idea of building a replica passenger station. About 600 metres of rails and several sets of points were bought from the dismantled Kubrinsk branch for this project.

The process of liquidation of narrow-gauge railways in Russia continues at a rapid pace. August saw the final closure of the last narrow-gauge section of Russian Railways. The line between Tuma and Golovanova Dacha in Ryazan' oblast was closed for traffic several years earlier, but there had been hopes for reopening, in spite of the catastrophic forest fires of 2010, when several wooden bridges were completely destroyed. At the time of writing the rails are being torn up.

Sergei Dorozhkov

## NEW LINKS WITH MOLDOVA

A new chapter in the story of international co-operation in the field of railway preservation opened on 25 July, when Fedecrail Secretary Livius Kooy and NERHT Chairman Stephen Wiggs arrived on the overnight train from Bucharest in Chisinau, capital of the Republic of Moldova. The purpose of their visit was to meet those concerned with the country's railway heritage.

Moldova has had a somewhat eventful history over the past century. Much of the country was acquired by Romania from Russia after the First World War, becoming part of the Soviet Union after the Second World War and eventually gaining full independence in 1991. Travellers from Bucharest are reminded of this background as the carriage wheels are changed at the frontier to the broad gauge which is used in Moldova, and again on arrival at Chisinau where a plinthed Soviet 0-10-0 Class E stands on the station platform. Other preserved locomotives may be seen at main stations elsewhere in Moldova.



The somewhat challenging circumstances facing Moldova have not prevented railway preservation initiatives, as the visitors heard at a meeting with the Director of Moldova Railways Serghei Toma and Railway Museum Director Aleksej Semonov when ideas about international cooperation were discussed. A railway museum already exists at Bendery in the part of the country known as Transdnestr and another one is planned for Chisinau. On the first Sunday in August celebrations are held to commemorate the first railways in Moldova in the 1870s, and NERHT and Fedecrail may be represented at next year's events. Meanwhile ES hopes to give more news in future issues on our links with this fascinating and beautiful country.

## The Sibiu - Agnita Railway and its Supporters

Why is it that the sight of grassy overgrown tracks, derelict stations, lonely river bridges and rusty signals stimulates an irrational desire to put the thing back in working order? So there it was, the Sibiu to Agnita railway, its 2ft 6inch gauge tracks peacefully rusting away and not doing any harm to anyone, a curiosity, another scratch on a rural landscape and then there's that Damascian flash, a moment of inspiration when something says 'we can't let

this happen'. Well, it's happened again - and this time in Transylvania!



Transylvania, which is part of Romania, has no real history or culture of railway preservation. The long-term future of railways does not seem to be a part of official Romanian railway thinking. They are going through their own 'Beeching era' where everything is being sold as having out-lived its usefulness and where the scrap value is far more important than the potential. Fortunately a young and far-sighted group, concerned for their country's railway history and a place for it in their country's future, was

established in 2006. Entitled 'Friends of the Mocanita' these Agnita-based preservationists are dedicated to the re-opening of the 38-mile long railway.

NERHT got wind of their predicament and following a trip to North and South Wales in 2009 by three of the Romanians a return visit was organised by NERHT in September of last year. So impressed were the visitors by the enthusiasm and potential of the line that it was felt that 'something must be done' - it was this sentiment that led to the creation of a UK Supporters' group with the quite dreadful acronym of SARUK. Surprisingly the group is the only UK-based organisation (so far) to support the reconstruction of a narrow gauge line in a foreign country.

With the keen political support of the Mayor of Agnita, a consortium was formed of the communities along the line. This has succeeded in having the line declared a National Monument (roughly equivalent to 'listing' in the UK). This means that the line and its buildings cannot be lifted or demolished. Sadly Romania is still recovering from its years under communism and the culture of the state control of that era remains, with officials able to negotiate their own deals with scrap merchants and others. However that situation is changing thanks to the efforts of the young Romanian preservationists.

SARUK now has some 25 members; it has the aim of supporting and reinforcing the efforts of our colleagues in Romania. It will provide expertise, it will help to fund specific projects and it will offer political support. Already

SARUK has collected funds which have helped to restore a unique derelict and vandalised water tower on the line. The group has met with the Romanian Embassy in London who have been most supportive. The British Embassy in Bucharest is aware of our interest and the group are planning to meet with the Romanian Railway Tourist Authority later this year, hopefully in the company of the President of 'Friends of the Mocanita'.



*Before and after the restoration of the Cornatele water tower.*

A small party of nine SARUK members is returning to Agnita for a five night stay in mid-September when it is hoped to be able to help with work on the track as well as looking at the reconstruction of a large former goods shed that will house stock and act as an HQ for the 'Friends'.

The Transylvanian country is delightful, the people are warm and friendly, the food and wine are excellent and there is a narrow gauge railway to restore – bliss!

David Allan

## At the Fedecrail Youth Camp in Poland

*Joel Pearse, of the Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway, reports on his participation:*

In July I had the opportunity to attend the FEDECRAIL Youth Camp again; this year it was held in Poland. Like last year, there was a good selection of people attending this year. There were two chaps from Serbia, four Hungarians from the Children's Railway in Budapest - where we stayed last year, three chaps from Sweden, two Austrians, one German, two Ukrainian girls, the chap from the Worth Valley and me, and the three Polish chaps who were organising things.

[The first day] I was up early, and went for a walk before breakfast. The rest of the participants had arrived during the night and we all had breakfast at 08.15. After breakfast we walked down the road to the station, where we had a look around the sheds. The railway has its main depot at Nowy Dwór Gdańsk; there were a couple of Lxd2's and a railcar in the shed, the railway's Px48 was out with a train at the time. After looking around the sheds, and having a closer look at one of the Lxd2's we made our way to the standard gauge platform. We then travelled to Malbork on the Arriva service, this service runs in the summer only, and the line is quite overgrown. After trundling along for a while we eventually arrived at Malbork. After our tour we walked back to the station to get on the Arriva service back to Nowy Dwór Gdańsk. The narrow gauge trackwork and platforms can still be seen adjacent to the standard gauge station; you can see where the narrow gauge used to continue and cross the river and also see where the triangle used to be. Quite a lot of the track between Nowy Dwór Gdańsk and Malbork is still in place. After a short wait we got the train back to Nowy Dwór Gdańsk.

After breakfast on Sunday, an Ikarus bendy-bus picked us up from outside the accommodation. After a rather noisy, but interesting journey we were dropped off across the road from the railway station in Gdańsk. After taking a few photographs we walked down to Solidarity Museum where we had a look at the various exhibits. After that we had walking tour around Gdańsk, mainly the old town. Then the bus dropped us back at the accommodation in Nowy Dwór Gdańsk.

On Monday, we spent the day working on a couple of semaphore signals in the yard at Nowy Dwór Gdańsk. The signals were going to be installed along the line to control the passage of trains across the railway's swing bridge. At about 16.30 we cleared up and made our way back up the road to the accommodation, stopping off at Lidl for 'essential supplies' on the way. It was decided that we would have a barbecue later on that evening. After a very nice evening I turned in rather late.

On Tuesday morning we walked down to the depot with Maurycy, to prepare the steam loco. The diesel driver was nowhere to be seen, so there was some delay in pulling the loco out of the shed. Eventually the diesel driver appeared, only to hurry off again to drive a railcar. In the end Maurycy and the fireman started up the diesel and pulled the Px48 out of the shed. Maurycy explained the smokebox and tubes would have to be cleaned, and the remains of the fire pushed through the grate. I was glad the Austrian and Mr Brown were quick to volunteer to do the smokebox, which left me with the cleaner task of raking the fire through. Rather than throwing the remains of the fire out with a clinker shovel, some of the firebars were removed, allowing it to be raked back and drop into the ashpan. When I had finished raking the fire through, Maurycy replaced the firebars and I gathered wood from the store for lighting up. Mr Brown and the Austrian had just about finished clearing out the smokebox and brushing the tubes. The screens were brushed down, and replaced and then the fire was lit up. We then set about cleaning the loco. All of the cleaning was finished by about 09.15, Mr Brown and I then climbed up into the tender and threw the coal forward. By this time the driver had arrived

and did his oiling up, and the fireman had started to make up the fire. When we had finished I decided to have breakfast and take a few photographs. We then wandered over to the sidings to have a look at our train. Maurycy oiled a few things up, whilst we helped the guard to persuade one of the sliding doors to open with a sledgehammer. The loco came off shed and then shunted the wagons to the platform. The others had arrived at about 09.30 and had been painting the signals, and while they were clearing up we went and had a rather rapid shower before making our way over to the train.

The special train (with the PX48 and two heritage wagons) then took us to the swing bridge, stopping for a photograph on the way. Everyone had the opportunity to travel on the footplate for part of the journey. We stopped on the approach to the bridge, and we all hopped off and walked along to the bridge. I understand that the swing bridge is the last surviving narrow gauge railway swing bridge in Europe. The bridge was built in the 1890s and is turned by hand. After about half an hour the bridge was positioned for the train to cross and we all walked across so that we could take a photograph of the train crossing from the other side. After picking us up the train then continued to Sztutowo Muzeum. We had a tour around Stutthof concentration camp, and then walked back to the station where our special train was waiting for us. The train then took us to Stegna Gdańsk, and I had another ride on the footplate on the way. Shortly after we alighted from the train, a man in a van arrived with our lunch. After lunch we walked down to the beach and spent about an hour and a half there before walking back to the station. We got the 17.30 back to Nowy Dwór Gdańsk arriving back at 18.10. This gave us the opportunity to travel in one of the railway's railcars, which didn't give a very smooth ride. Back at the accommodation, we packed our bags for the transfer to Koszalin the next day and spent the rest of the evening chatting.

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*(To be concluded in our next issue)*

## The Plovdiv-Karlovo Line in Bulgaria

This picture shows the station at Banja, on the Plovdiv - Karlovo line. This, in a scenic tourist area, was also the station for King Boris's summer residence, and it was here that he mounted or dismounted from the locomotive after his spells of recreational engine-driving (he was a qualified steam locomotive driver)



This standard-gauge line links Plovdiv, Bulgaria's second largest city, with the famous Rose Valley region. It was initially planned as a large-scale

infrastructure project, crossing the river Danube and the Balkan Range and linking the countries of Northern and Central Europe with the Aegean coastline. This initiative also included driving a tunnel through the Balkan Range, near the town of Trojan, almost 11 km long and also providing a bridge, near Svistov, in the Bulgarian-Romanian section of the Danube. This enormous project was beyond the power of one country and should have been implemented within a long period of time. The first preparations and surveys for the line itself started as early as 1894 following a decision taken by the Bulgarian parliament.

In the process of time, the engineering team developed two alternative routes; later the investing company opted for the existing version which proved to be shorter and cheaper.

Because of the outbreak of World War 1 the project's execution was stopped, being reinstated in 1920.

Construction itself started in 1921 with the use of volunteers and troops. Due to the world financial crisis construction was stopped in the late 1920s, but restarted as early as 1930, to be completely finished and officially inaugurated on November 19th 1933. The line's total length amounts to 67 km, over mainly flat terrain, except for the section between km39 and km43, crossing the southern slopes of Sredna- Gora Mountain with a rock cutting of up to 23m depth. Here also is the only tunnel, with a length of 165m. and the two big bridges are also in this area. The ruling gradient of the line is 17 degrees.

The terminus of the line is Karlovo, one of the main centres of the Rose Valley, Bulgaria:s most famous region thanks to the production of the world-famous rose oil , the best raw material for international brands of perfumes, including Chanel and Nina Ricci.



*And this is the locomotive that hauled King Boris's funeral train in 1943. A 3-cylinder 4-8-2 built by Henschel in 1941, it has been restored and is used for rail tours.*

Ilija Iliev

## Narrow-Gauge News from Ukraine

**Proposals to modernise and develop the Ukraine state railways have turned thoughts to future staffing provision and in this connection attention is being paid to the childrens' railways. In Soviet days, the purpose of these lines was not simply to entertain children during the summer holidays, but to push young people into the railway profession. The Kiev children's railway was attended by over 350 children this summer (and carried over ten thousand passengers). Meanwhile the track, locomotives and stations of the 75-year-old Dnepropetrovsk 2-kilometre children's railway are being upgraded, and modern computerized operation introduced.**

**The future of the Borzhava Valley line is not clear, but track-lifting took place over a few kilometres earlier this year, giving rise to a campaign to halt the process.**

**Meanwhile the indefatigable Wolfram Wendelin is encouraging the projects at Antonivka and Korostiv (see previous issues of *Eastern Star*), and has sent these pictures:**



*Working parties at Korostiv (left) and at Antonivka (right)*



*Mixed train at Vyhoda.*



**BALTIC RAILWAYS MAGAZINE** Issue No 8 of this commendable bi-lingual publication is now available through Richard Tapper. The contents include a highly informative account by a well-known historian of the Baltic railways during the Soviet years; a well-illustrated history of the narrow-gauge Jonava to Ukmergi line, built originally by the Germans as a field railway; a report of this summer's PTG rail tour of Estonia, detailing the places visited and the trains used; an account of the Kaliningrad Railway's situation and prospects by its head. As usual, current events are covered in some detail. Passenger coverage includes new routes from Riga to Tallinn and Minsk; the modernisation of passenger trains inside Lithuania; analysis of passenger service requirements in Estonia; and a report on the planned renewal of the tramway system in Tallinn. Modernisation of a CME3 locomotive receives extensive coverage, as does the new Plasser & Theurer EM140 track recording machine.

**Contributions for *Eastern Star*.** We are always glad to use articles and pictures sent in by our readers; at times our regular contributors feel the strain of supplying the material to maintain our 10-page format and help would be welcome. If you have any ideas, please get in touch with the Editor.

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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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