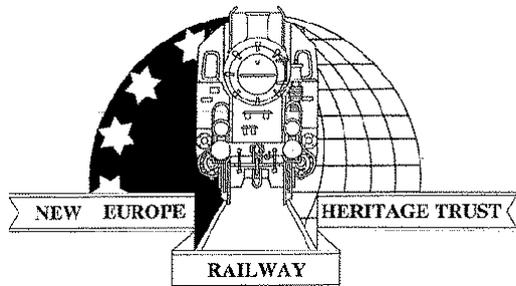


# Eastern Star



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*The Sibiu-Agnita Railway project in Romania has been one of the interests of NERHT over recent years. Steady progress is being maintained. Here, the framework of a new storage shed is welded together.*

*Photo  
David Allan*

## NERHT Chairman's Report for 2011-2012

In the past year we have actively pursued our objectives of helping railway preservation in the ex-Communist countries, both on our own account and in co-operation with Fedecrail and other organisations.

As in previous years NERHT has been especially busy in Ukraine where the railway preservation movement faces many challenges. It is now ten years since the first NERHT delegates visited the Western Ukrainian city of Lviv where we took part in the Carpathian Tramway Forum railway preservation conference and visited various narrow gauge lines which are the subject of preservation moves. Since then, we have had frequent contacts with this part

of Ukraine and last Autumn we were pleased to welcome delegates from Lviv City Council who are seeking to revive a broad gauge goods line in Lviv, the Znesinnya Railway in the City Park, as a tourist attraction.

The visit by the Lviv delegates is a good example of how NERHT is able to recruit all sorts of organisations and individuals to help welcome our guests, whose main destination on this occasion was the East Lancashire Railway. Like the Znesinnya Railway the ELR is the result of a partnership between the private sector and local authorities which in the case of the ELR include Rochdale, which is twinned with Lviv. In addition to receiving VIP treatment on the ELR, the Ukrainians were given dinner by the Mayor of Rochdale and visited the Rochdale Ukrainian Club and the Bury Transport Museum before moving on to Wales where they rode on the Festiniog and Welsh Highland railways, and met representatives of the Snowdonia National Park Authority and those seeking to establish a velorail service on the mothballed Trawsfynydd branch. Our thanks go to all of these and also to those NERHT members and others who kindly provided accommodation, lifts, interpretation services and other assistance, not forgetting the Member of the House of Lords who helped obtain British visas for the guests.

Still in Ukraine, we have established close relations with AZIZU, the Ukrainian Railway Heritage Association which seeks to fill a much-needed role by establishing itself as an enthusiast-led national organisation. I had the pleasure of meeting the leaders of AZIZU in Kyiv in May 2011 and it is gratifying to note that as a result of links created by NERHT their delegates will be attending the Fedecrail conference next month in Sweden where hopefully the organisation will be admitted as members of Fedecrail (see page 6 - Ed).

Those attending this year's Fedecrail conference as a result of our work will also include representatives of the Sibiu-Agnita Railway (or SAR) in Romania, a country which continues to be a focus of our activities. NERHT continues to work closely with SARUK, the British-based support group set up with our help, which is giving practical assistance to those seeking to reopen this historic line. Mention should be made of other Balkan links. It is a pleasure to welcome our friends from the Union of Bulgarian Train Modellers, which in addition to modelling is also the country's railway heritage association. Members of

NERHT and Fedecrail will be visiting Bulgaria later this year to discuss future cooperation.



*Our AGM was nicely complemented with a talk by our Bulgarian visitors. Their group's 03 - 12, shown here, was active this year; we hope to present a brief history of this locomotive in our next issue.*

In August 2011 I accompanied the Secretary of Fedecrail Livius Kooy to Moldova and we will be making a repeat visit this summer to develop our relationships with those responsible for the country's railway heritage. On this trip we will also be meeting preservationists in Romania. Elsewhere, we keep in touch with the Latvian narrow gauge railway, three of whose young people visited British heritage railways last year as guests of NERHT and gave a presentation at our 2011 annual general meeting.

It has to be said that the past year and more has been a difficult time for railway preservation in many countries, particularly those in Eastern Europe. NERHT and Fedecrail have recently been asked to lobby the authorities in Poland on behalf of a railway heritage scheme which is threatened by the current economic difficulties, and it is likely that we will receive similar appeals from other countries.

Apart from our core activities NERHT provides other assistance of various kinds. We are not able to fund major projects yet we make small grants, for example to enable recipients to attend the Fedecrail conferences and the youth camp (which provides valuable training in railway preservation). Another activity is that of helping our partner organisations with English versions of their publications.

In the coming year we will be looking to recruit new Committee members to replace those who have stood down (to whom our thanks must go). I am pleased to say that progress is being made with our web site which at last includes details of NERHT meetings together with an electronic version of our quarterly *Eastern Star*.

As always our activities would not be possible without the practical help of all kinds which has been given by our members and by all the organisations and individuals who have assisted us. On behalf of the Committee I should like to thank all of them for their generosity and support.

Stephen Wiggs

We are once again indebted to the Model Railway Club for providing the venue for our annual general meeting, which was held on April 28. The following were elected to serve on the Committee – Stephen Wiggs (Chairman), John Snell (Vice Chairman), Robert Raynor (Treasurer), Jonathan Sutton (Secretary), Mike Hudson, Richard Tapper, John Jones and John Westwood.

We should like to record our gratitude to John Fuller, who stepped down from the Committee earlier this year, and to Frank Cooper who was Secretary until the AGM and did not seek re-election to the Committee, for their hard and useful work for NERHT over many years.

**NERHT PARTNERS JOIN FEDECRAIL** The 2012 international Fedecrail conference at Helsingborg saw two of our partners, the Sibiu Agnita Railway in Romania and AZIZU, the Ukrainian railway heritage association, admitted to membership. NERHT encourages eligible bodies with whom we work to join Fedecrail, and feedback from the Romanian and Ukrainian delegates demonstrates how membership and indeed cross-border cooperation throughout the railway heritage movement is as important to those in the East as it is to railway organisations everywhere. Contacts made at Helsingborg are likely to lead to various new initiatives in Romania and Ukraine. The Romanian and Ukrainians who travelled to Sweden were especially appreciative of the excellent organisation of the conference and post-conference tours, and have thanked us for helping them arrange their attendance. Fedecrail President David Morgan also made special mention of the role of NERHT in recruiting the new members.

## News From Poland

NERHT has been invited to approach the Polish authorities on behalf of a railway project threatened by closure. There are other lines and museums, too, that are under threat. The following survey of the Polish situation is compiled from information supplied in May 2012 by Andrew Goltz of the British-Polish Railway and Industrial Heritage Partnership.

The official PKP-sponsored programme of regional railway museums was one of the early victims of the cutbacks endured after an IMF-approved austerity plan was adopted by Poland in 1991. Historic coaches, wagons and locomotives were literally abandoned to the Polish weather and scrap thieves.

To some extent volunteer-run railway societies and local authorities have stepped in to fill the vacuum. But there are serious problems: legal obstacles, reluctance of PKP to transfer redundant historic assets, and cultural factors. There are currently some 30 railway heritage locations in Poland of which 12 are under some sort of threat and 5 are in imminent danger.

**Lines and railway centres currently being actively developed** include the well-known Bieszczady Forest and Znin Narrow Gauge railways. Others are the Bytom Narrow Gauge, Hajnowka Forest, Hel Military, Pomeranian Narrow Gauge (formerly Gryfice Narrow Gauge), and Naleczow Narrow Gauge

railways, as well as the Rudy Slaskie Narrow Gauge Railway and Jaworzyna Slask Railway centres. Of these, the Bieszczady, Hajnowka, Gryfice, and Naleczow railways have benefited from EU funding; while the Rudy and Znin projects have had EU-assisted local authority funding. The Bieszczady, Znin and Jaworzyna projects have also invested their own or their owners' funds.



*On the Bieszczady Forest Railway*

Photo Denys Dobra

**Lines and railway centres currently regarded as stable** are the Elk Narrow Gauge, Kalisz Narrow Gauge (Poland's last freight-carrying narrow gauge line), Nowy Dwor Gdanski Narrow Gauge, Pleszew Narrow Gauge (mixed gauge, carrying substantial freight on its standard gauge), Rogow Narrow Gauge railways and the Sochaczew Narrow Gauge Railway (run by the Warsaw Railway Museum) as well as the Skierniewice Railway Museum.

**Lines and Museums under some long-term threat** include the Chabowka Railway Museum, run by PKP Cargo and threatened by Cargo's increasingly commercial approach and imminent privatisation. Its transfer to the provincial government is snagged on property-title difficulties. Then there are the Gniezno Narrow Gauge Railway and the Smigiel Narrow Gauge Railway (currently being asset-stripped by its local authority owner). The Karsnice Railway Museum has been successfully taken over by the Zdunska Wola Council, thanks to energetic lobbying. A meeting between David Morgan and the responsible minister was very important in this regard. However, PKP SA did not transfer the shed in which a historic train of wooden coaches was stored, and the vehicles are rapidly deteriorating. The Koszalin Narrow Gauge Railway is in dispute with the local mayor with respect to the operation of its trains across level crossings. A plan for a local-authority-led consortium to form a company to manage the Wolsztyn Steam Depot (also part of PKP Cargo) has floundered because of differences over funding.



*At Chabowka six years ago.*

As a result of a massive lobbying campaign, in which NERHT took a leading role, the Warsaw Railway Museum has been given security of tenure on its current site at the former Warszawa Główna station for five years. After this term expires there is no agreement between PKP and the Mazowsze provincial government as to the long-term location of the museum.

**Lines and Museums in imminent danger include** the Czarna Białostocka Forest Railway which appears to have ceased its operations after several years of concerted opposition from one of its local authorities; the abandoned Elk Railway Museum which is currently being liquidated by the PKP Estates

Department - some half-dozen steam locomotives in 'Barry condition' are unlikely to escape the oxy-acetylene torch; the Krosniewice Narrow Gauge Railway which was a successful public railway operating a daily passenger service as well as a substantial freight operation, but closed by its local authority owners who had property development plans which conflicted with the railway's operation; and the Mława Narrow Gauge Railway, which was awarded a 2 million zloty EU-assisted project by the Mazowsze provincial government but floundered when the other local authority stakeholders failed to raise the required 'own funding'.

Currently the Pyskowice Railway Museum is a critical issue. It has custody of some 150 items of rolling stock including several ex-PKP locomotives donated to the museum. Many items have been restored cosmetically and two steam locomotives have been restored to working order. Currently PKP has recently started court action to evict the museum from the former steam depot in which it is situated.

## AZIZU and Ukrainian Preservation

AZIZU, the Association for the Preservation of the History of the Railways of Ukraine has recently, with some encouragement from NERHT, become a member of Fedecrail. It was established in June 2008 in Kiev, and called itself, in all languages, AZIZU, which is its Ukrainian acronym. Some progress has already been made in the museum and educational aspects of its task, but there is still a lot to do.

Since 2008 AZIZU has sent about 75 official letters, the contents of which in one way or another were connected with the preservation of old rolling stock. Some of these letters are assumed to have helped ensure that work began in 2010, to establish a museum of the South-Western Railway in Kiev. At the same time, in 2010, the Directorate of Ukrainian Railways ('Ukrzaliznytsia') began preparations for the establishment of Kiev's freight station, Kiev Tovarniy, as a state museum of Ukrainian railways. But due to a change in leadership in the Directorate, work on this was unfortunately suspended. Even before the official registration of AZIZU, members of the organization, having known each other for some time, decided to buy and restore old railway equipment on their own initiative. Four locomotives have been preserved in



*No Su251-86 after restoration*

*Photo: Ivor Harding*

this manner. They are passenger 2-6-2 Su251-86 (built by the Red Sormovo works, Russia, in 1949); freight 2-10-0 Ea2026 (ALCO, 1944); freight 2-10-0 L5141 (Lugansk works,

Ukraine, in 1955); and freight 0-10-0 Em735-72 (Built by the Kharkiv factory, Ukraine in 1935). There is also a variety of passenger and freight cars awaiting restoration, including a Fourth Class two-axle suburban passenger car built in the 1890s.



*The ALCO 2-10-0 awaiting restoration in the Tsvetkovo workshops. Photo: Ivor Harding*

In 2009 work began on the restoration of a narrow gauge line, in the Lviv region, which was built during Austro-Hungarian times and dismantled by the Soviet Union. By the end of 2011, about 100m of track had been replaced and three flatcars, trolley and snow clearing wagon are displayed.

In the village of Antonovka, Rivne region, near the

narrow-gauge Antonovka - Zarechnoye line, there has been restoration work on diesel locomotive TU6A-3222, the private property of a member. Three exhibitions have also been mounted in Kiev. Although AZIZU is centered on Kiev, there are branches in three regional centres - Kharkiv, Ternopil and Lviv - and branches are planned in other cities.

## Romania: Sibiu to Agnita Railway

SARUK, the UK support group for the Friends of the Mocănița, the Romanian group responsible for the restoration of the Sibiu to Agnita railway in Transylvania, held its first AGM on Saturday 31st March 2012. The meeting agreed to help fund the concrete foundations necessary to support the ex-wooden framed Agnita goods shed which had been dismantled and removed from its old site in Agnita town centre to the 'new' (1963) station on the outskirts of the town. This will be used to store the line's preserved carriages as well as provide a very necessary covered workshop. It was also agreed to help with the possible purchase of an electro-diesel locomotive together with tourist type carriages from a site in Bucharest. An appeal has been made for funds to help with both of these projects, which are considered to be fundamental to the start of a successful preservation project. The meeting was advised that a smaller 'tin' shed was in the process of being erected at Agnita

station. This will provide further covered storage and is being sited adjacent to the main storage/workshop shed (see photo on Page 1).

The 'Friends' have been presented with an unpowered drasine; a motor-powered one will be handed over this summer. This will be very useful in keeping an eye on those remoter parts of the line from which track materials such as spikes and fishplates have been illegally removed. It could also be used to provide track rides in the extensive Agnita station layout, as a 'teaser' to show what might be possible. As a first commercial venture the 'Friends' are offering velocipede hire on the lovely branch line connecting Cornăţel to Varpur. This machine was trialed by SARUK members during their visit to the line last year.

The AGM agreed that another visit to Agnita should be arranged. This is likely to be from September 27<sup>th</sup> to October 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup>. There could be some interest in this visit from members of the Welsh Highland track gangs looking for fresh challenges! However, proper track tools are a definite prerequisite of any working party – SARUK is still seeking donations of this essential equipment (such as track hammers).

At a meeting in London attended by Mihai Blotor, the president of the Romanian group, Fedecrail president David Morgan agreed to intercede with the Romanian government on behalf of the 'Friends' to stress the benefits of railway tourism in an area where such a project is much needed. The 'Friends' have since joined Fedecrail, another significant step towards the SAR's restoration.

David Allan

## Bulgarian Visitors at the NRM

By invitation of the NERHT two representatives of the Union of Bulgarian Modellers visited the UK for a week in April. They were the president of the Union, Mr. Venelin Vasilev and myself, our foreign relations officer.



The program was prepared by Mr. Stephen Wiggs and included visits to Welsh narrow-gauge railways (Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland, the National Railway Museum, York and several other attractions.

We greatly looked forward to the NRM visit. Here, this sacred ground for railway enthusiasts, we were shown round by Mr Ed. Bartholomew, seeing under one roof all those varied examples of Britain's railway technology down the ages.

Bulgarian railways in their first years of existence were closely connected with Great Britain. This totally changed in the 20th century when our railways were influenced by Czech, German, and Soviet manufacturers of rolling stock and no British vehicles were operated. The subsequent liberalisation of the railway sector allowed us again to see British

locomotives on our network. Private freight operator Bulgarian Railway Company acquired its first two electric locomotives of British class 87 in 2007. Currently 17 locomotives of this class are hauling heavy freight trains on our network. One locomotive of the same class is preserved in the National Railway Museum and this was the reason to prepare a small present for the archives of the Museum – the original authorisation for placing in service the first two locomotives delivered in Bulgaria!

We continued our trip on British rails, but the visit to the National Railway Museum will stay for a long time in my mind!

Tzanko Simeonov

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Issue No 10 of the well-regarded *Baltic Railways Magazine* is now available. Contents include a study of the battery-electric multiple units introduced in Soviet times, an account of the 1971 Klaipeda collision, and a cover story celebrating the latest international container train, from Klaipeda to Moscow. The refurbishment of the former Prussian terminal of Kaliningrad South is commended, and two freight modernisation projects in Latvia are covered. Among the motive power features, there is a report of the trials of the Kazakhstan-built GE *Evolution*-type mainline diesel locomotive in Estonia.

*Produced, as with previous editions, in English and Lithuanian, this magazine is obtainable through Richard Tapper (address on p.10)*

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In reference to the note on the Borzhava line in our last issue, Ferenc Joo observes that in September, on the occasion of a special excursion train, it was the Soviet-built coaches that were in use and the Pafawag vehicles that were stored. He sends this picture of the special train.



*This picture relates to the article in our previous issue on the First Company of Feeder Railways in tsarist Russia. It shows the Company's impressive station at Zhitomir in Ukraine.*

*Picture by courtesy of Sergei Dorozhkov*

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Paul Engelbert's *Schmalspurg durch Ungarn II*, favourably reviewed in our last issue, is obtainable via Richard Tapper for £26.00 post-free. English-speakers will be able to find their way around this superbly-illustrated book which deals, among others, with the Borzhava Valley and Sibiu-Agnita lines, in which NERHT has long been interested.

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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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