



**Association  
Internationale  
d'Histoire des  
Chemins de Fer**

**International  
Railway History  
Association**

**Asociación  
Internacional de  
Historia  
Ferroviaria**

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May 2020 – Special Issue

## **The one-and-a-half-meter society**

Since our last newsletter we seem to have ended up in a different world. We are working from home like we never did before. We keep our distance from each other and here and there we hear hopeful reports, of lock-down being lifted or quarantine measures disappearing.

But what hasn't changed is the virus. It's still there and it's intervening, in the way we deal with mobility, in the way we deal with space. We suddenly wake up in the one-and-a-half meter society, taking care of social distance.

That's not easy for people. Always keeping our distance, no longer being able to shake hands, no longer being able to give a hug. These are really hard times. Sit on the train, if that's possible, and you'll feel like you're in a moving morgue. Everyone is wearing a mouth-nose protection mask, because it is expected that you will not be able to respect the rule of keeping your distance on public transport. In Belgium the use of public transport is still low, because the lock-down is being eased only slightly. The demand for mobility is slowly picking up, but it will take some time before we are running at full capacity.

What particularly fascinates is the demand from policymakers, from experts, from users, in short, from people who are experience experts, because they move around but who know nothing about mobility. 'How shall we proceed?' they ask. Let me say in advance that we as historians don't mean much unless we reinvent ourselves on the spot.

That is particularly true. What we now see (empirically establish) is a very sharp decline in mobility. Car traffic has dropped to about 50 %, public transport is still about 10 to 15% of what it used to be. How to get back to normal is then asked to the experts. The answer is simple: we don't know, because the data at our disposal are historical data collected in a different context. There was no pandemic. In real, we now see experts worldwide bringing solutions for the immediate needs and for the long term: avoid, shift and improve the mobility system you have. But this is another discussion.

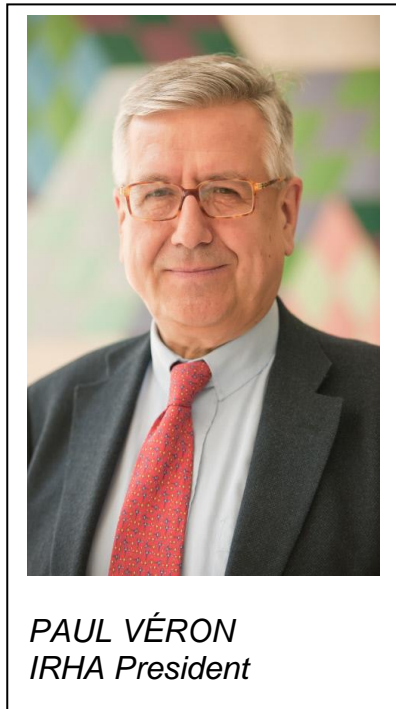
The question is: what can historians bring into the debate? What data do we have available and what were the effects at that time. I am thinking, for example, of the oil crisis of the fifties and seventies. What about the use of public transport? Can we learn anything from that? What about the period of Spanish flu, which obviously coincided with the end of the First World War? How did public transport systems react at Malaria, SARS, at MERS? What was the role of railways in spreading diseases? It is not because the existing historical data are not useful in this situation that there is nothing at all to say. So we still have work to do.

In this newsletter we try to keep virtual contact, to stay a bit closer together. Besides this editorial you will also find an encouraging message from our president, a manifesto of the Spanish railway museums, some publications on railway matters, a call for papers and a state of the art of the proceedings of the Budapest conference  
Stay healthy.

Paul VAN HEESVELDE

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

### TOWARDS THE 9th INTERNATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORY CONFERENCE



Dear members and dear partners,

In the past two months marked by the Covid-crisis, it seems that our life came to a stop in many regards. Whilst it remained possible, for a part of us, to go on with our regular activity in using the resources of digitalisation and virtual communications, a lot of our traditional habits characterising our private and professional life were deeply disturbed. International cooperation activities particularly suffered during the last months from the closing of borders, the cancelation of international travels by air, rail or other modes, as well as the postponement of all gatherings, congresses, conferences, working meetings. Among others, our association, IRHA, could not plan its statutory meetings in the first half of 2020 as initially foreseen but we still hope that all conditions will be there to hold them in the second half of this year.

Nevertheless, our association demonstrated during his period its ability to maintain 'virtual' contacts between all its members and partners to further progress according to its program.

One of our urgent tasks consists in progressing in the preparation of the 9th International Railway History Conference that will succeed Istanbul 2016 and Budapest 2018. The time target is end of 2021 or the very beginning of 2022, the following 10th conference being provisionally planned in Canada in 2023. The main theme, as it was discussed and approved by the IRHA governance, will be "Europe and the Railways".

Several reasons motivated us to decide on this theme and period. One of these reasons was the opportunity to develop fruitful synergies with renowned institutional partners in Europe. As an example, the European Commission led by Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen, decided to make 2021 to the "European Year of Rail" and will therefore promote with various initiatives rail as a sustainable, innovative and safe mode of transport. On the other hand, prominent authorities from Belgium are organizing the "Europalia 2021" international arts festival that will take place from October 2021 until January 2022 with the theme "EUROPALIA TRAINS". Against this background the 9th International Railway History Conference could offer interesting synergies with some of the events prepared by these institutions.

The scope of the 9th Conference

First proposals for the conference program were exchanged between members of the IRHA bureau. Of course, a specially appointed Scientific committee will take over the mission to define the scope, the structure and the program for this 9th Conference. According to initial reflexions, the conference should include following subthemes:

Theme: "Railways and the political, economic, social development of Europe from the 19th to the 21st Centuries - Railways and the European construction, achievements and perspectives"

I - Beginnings of a "European" railway system in the 19th Century

- Theories and doctrines
- First achievements of cross-border railway operations
- International train services across Europe
- Great infrastructure projects and achievements

II - The Institutional framework

- Premises of technical harmonization and standardization in Europe - nationalism vs harmonization
- "European Conferences" and Regulations for the international harmonization of operations
- The legal Framework - intergovernmental organizations and international conventions

III - From the post-WW 2 international organizations to the Treaty of Rome

IV - From the Treaty of Rome to the implementation of a European Railway Policy

- Initiatives from the rail sector aiming to create a European railway system
- From a Common Transport Policy (CTP) to a genuine Railway Policy extended to all Europe - failures and successes, perspectives

V - Railways, a strategic tool serving mobility and sustainable development of Europe in the 21st Century

- A sustainable mode of transport by excellence, the energy issue,
- Interoperability as the key to take full advantage of the assets of rail transport on the European continent - failures and successes – cooperation with industry, nationalism vs. globalisation,
- Developing trans-European and Euro-Asian corridors
- Developing a "Digital Railway" - From Cybernetics in the 60s to the Digital Railway
- the Social dimension: the European railway man or woman does not exist yet

VI - Railways and Culture in Europe

- The Rail world, a strong inspiration source, a continuous contribution to cultural and artistic life in Europe
- Rail in architecture, painting and graphic arts, literature, cinema, music, museums (railway heritage)

The next step will be the constitution of the Scientific committee. Within the very next weeks you - all members and partners - are cordially invited to submit all your ideas, comments or suggestions on further themes or aspects that could be missing in this first overview.

Thank you to you all for your future cooperation. All together we will succeed in preparing an attractive event that should mark a new important milestone in our association's life.

PAUL VÉRON  
IRHA President

## Railway readings

Kevin HOGGETT, *Rails across the sea Sporen over de zee. The Harwich – Zeebrugge Train Ferry Story. Het verhaal van het treinverkeer Harwich – Zeebrugge.*

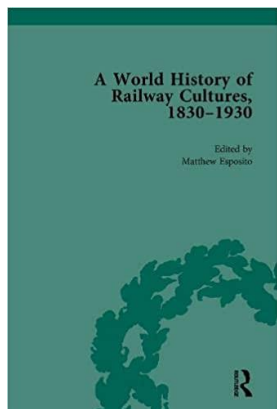


This bilingual (English/Dutch) book is a long overdue history of the train ferry service between Harwich and Zeebrugge, its precursors and its legacy. Included within the book are the initial concept of the Train Ferries to provide a military service to the continent during World War I, and an account of their service record in World War II, when two were sadly lost to enemy action.

"British train ferries played an undeniable role in the development of freight traffic between Britain and continental Europe. Today, it is hard to imagine that at one time all goods between mainland Europe and Britain were processed by hand and transhipped by cranes in conventional cargo ships. From the last year of the First World War, British train ferries unleashed a transport revolution. They were at the basis of today's ro-ro ships. And not to forget: they also helped the British to win in the two world wars," says Hoggett.

The Harwich-Zeebrugge train service ran from 24 April 1924 to 31 January 1987 and was only interrupted by the Second World War. It was a success from the outset: suddenly, fruit and vegetables - in specially designed refrigerated lorries - could be loaded in Europe today, shipped tomorrow and sold in London the day after tomorrow. In 1927, some 80% of the 154,880 tons were exported to the United Kingdom. All these years, up to four departures took place daily in both directions.

Matthew D. ESPOSITO, *A World History of Railway Cultures, 1830-1930*, Routledge; 1 edition (January 13, 2020), IV vol., 2985 p.



*A World History of Railway Cultures, 1830-1930* is the first collection of primary sources to historicize the cultural impact of railways on a global scale from their inception in Great Britain to the Great Depression. Its dual purpose is to promote understanding of complex historical processes leading to globalization and generate interest in transnational and global comparative research on railways.

In four volumes, organized by historical geography, this scholarly collection gathers rare out-of-print published and unpublished materials from archival and digital repositories throughout the world. It adopts a capsule approach that focuses on short selections of significant primary source content instead of redundant and irrelevant materials found in online data collections. The current collection draws attention to railway cultures through railroad reports, parliamentary papers, government documents, police reports, public health records, engineering reports, technical papers, medical surveys, memoirs, diaries, travel narratives, ethnographies, newspaper articles, editorials, pamphlets, broadsides, paintings, cartoons, engravings, photographs, art, ephemera, and passages from novels and poetry collections that shed light on the cultural history of railways. The editor's original essays and headnotes on the cultural politics of railways introduce over 200 carefully selected primary sources. Students and researchers come to understand railways not as applied technological impositions of industrial capitalism but powerful, fluid, and idiosyncratic historical constructs.

Miguel MUÑOZ RUBIO, Pedro Pablo ORTUÑEZ GIOCOLEA, *Inversión exterior y transferencias de conocimiento: el caso de las primeras locomotoras de vapor de los ferrocarriles españoles (1848-1855)* [Foreign investment and knowledge transfers: The first steam locomotives of the Spanish railways (1848-1855)], in *História Unisinos* 24(2):163-174, Maio/Agosto 2020

The purpose of this article is to study how the formation of the fleet of steam locomotives took place and what were its consequences during the first stage of the Spanish railway history, between 1848 and 1855. The way locomotives were commissioned is important to learn about the processes of knowledge transfer. The main conclusions of the research are that neither the institutional framework of foreign trade nor the absence of a native industrial sector prevented the start of the railroad business. Also, it is noted that the later start of the railways in Spain was beneficial, because the companies acquired a technology that was already consolidated and the formation of the fleet was the ideal one for the needs of that conjuncture.

Another conclusion obtained is that the way in which the locomotive fleet constitution process took place does not differ substantially from what happened in other countries: a slow conformation of the first locomotive fleets from the British industry.

What did differ was that, while in these countries this stage became its own industrial sector, in Spain no such circumstance occurred.

## CONFERENCES – CALL FOR PAPERS

The 7th International EARLY RAILWAYS CONFERENCE  
NATIONAL WATERFRONT MUSEUM, SWANSEA, SOUTH WALES 10th – 13th June 2021

### CALL FOR PAPERS

This seventh international conference continues the sequence of both the Early Railways and Early Main Line Railway conferences. These two themes will henceforth be combined. Researchers into early railway history, from its origins in the seventeenth century right through to the developing main line and industrial railways of the 1870s, are invited to submit papers, arising from previously unpublished research, to be delivered at the conference. One day will be allocated to the pre-main line era, and the remainder of the programme will be devoted to the development of main line railways in their earliest years.

Papers are particularly sought on:

- Political and statutory influences and context, economic evaluation, capitalisation and finance, management, staffing and administration,
- Engineering, including all civil and mechanical aspects, including locomotive and winding engines, rolling stock, infrastructure and buildings,
- Social context and cultural impact,

Papers from around the world are encouraged, to provide international context.

Written versions of the papers presented to the conference will be considered for publication in the conference proceedings, *Early Railways 7*.

Proposals for papers, accompanied by short synopses, should be e-mailed to the organising committee [er7@rchs.org.uk](mailto:er7@rchs.org.uk) by June 30th 2020. Authors selected to present papers should provide a 200 word abstract by 31st December 2020 for assessment by the committee.

Sponsored by: The Newcomen Society, Railway & Canal Historical Society, National Railway Museum, Institution of Civil Engineers, The Stephenson Locomotive Society

More information on <https://rchs.org.uk/early-railways-conference-combined/>

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## MUSEUMS

European railway museums have started a collaborative action process aimed at showing the beneficial role that these spaces can play, in the social and cultural spheres, within a context of coexistence with COVID-19. The first of the actions has consisted of writing and disseminating a Manifesto, which will be made public on May 18, coinciding with the celebration of the International Day of Museums. The document emphasizes the peculiarity of these museum spaces that establish a vital link between railways and society. Large centers, conducive to generating healthy environments that promote well-being and can help alleviate the physical and psychological effects generated by the pandemic.

Among the objectives included in the Manifesto are the interest in contributing to the recovery of cultural activity in Europe and in establishing joint strategies for action. Partnerships that promote reflection on the value of this heritage in relation to technological, economic and social development in the past, present and future of this mode of transport, as well as contribute to ensuring that European citizens keep trusting and the role it plays for mobility throughout the continent. The Manifesto, to which the main European railway museums have joined, is also supported by other institutions and international associations of museums, railway history and transport in general.

## MANIFESTO

### EUROPEAN RAILWAY MUSEUMS UNITE TO FACE A NEW PERIOD

In view of the impact of Covid-19, the cultural world has to seek new ways of interacting with society in this new period. Museums are a key element in order to attain such goals. Scientific evidence shows that museum visits have preventative and therapeutic effects. This is highlighted by the World Health Organization (WHO), which has confirmed that participating in artistic and cultural activities promotes physical and mental well-being.

Undoubtedly, in the following months we are going to need safe, healthy spaces in order to facilitate the return of public activities, and railway museums would like to play a role therein, especially the ones in Europe, the cradle of this mode of transport. The spaciousness of railway museums (housed in old railway facilities such as stations, workshops and steam depots), which sometimes feature open spaces, makes it easier to avoid overcrowding and respect the recommended social distancing.

Therefore, at this critical time, the managers of European railway museums, aware of the social role played by their institutions, and that they share the same challenges and objectives posed by this temporary context of having to live with Covid-19, would like to contribute their unique facilities to this common goal of recovery and declare their interest in:

- Promoting alliances and establishing joint museum action strategies that enable us to reflect on their present and future as public spheres of civic service, custodians of a common heritage, as well as vehicles that convey the outstanding role of this mode of transport.
- Contributing to the recovery of cultural activities in Europe and helping citizens to continue trusting in the use of the railway as the healthiest, safest and most environmentally friendly mode of public transport, and the one that is best able to adapt to contingencies such as the ones we have experienced.
- Using museums as a way of helping to overcome the pandemic's physical and psychological impact on society, offering the spaciousness of their unique facilities, devoted to rail travel, to provide the therapeutic effect highlighted by the WHO, generating the necessary atmosphere of peace and quiet.

- Promoting more than ever the use of digital tools, in order to make even clearer the social and educational role played by railway museums and their contribution to the conservation and dissemination of their cultural legacy.
- Stimulating creativity in order to attract visitors and thereby restore citizen trust and safety in our museums, always taking into account the health authorities' recommendations at any given time.
- Programming activities in collaboration with local, regional and state government authorities, as well as railway companies, aimed at, among other goals, recognising the work carried out during this crisis by healthcare and emergency personnel, security forces and all essential workers that have laboured tirelessly throughout the pandemic's most critical moments, including railway workers.

May 18, 2020  
International Museum Day

List of museums, institutions and associations adhered:

Museums:

Asturias Railway Museum  
Athens Railway Museum  
Basque Railway Museum  
Catalonia Railway Museum  
DB Museum (Germany)  
Hungarian Railway Museum  
Latvian Railway History Museum  
London Transport Museum  
Madrid Railway Museum  
National Railway Museum (Italy)  
National Railway Museum (Portugal)  
National Railway Museum (United Kingdom)  
Norwegian Railway Museum  
Postal Museum (Czech Republic)  
Postal Museum (Finland)  
Russian Railways Museum  
Het Spoorwegmuseum / Dutch Railway Museum (The Netherlands)  
Swedish Railway Museum / Swedish National Maritime and Transport Museums  
Train World, National Railway Museum of Belgium  
Verkehrshaus / Swiss Transport Museum  
The Workshops Rail Museum (Australia)

Institutions:

Ingenium Foundation (Canada)  
Italian State Railways Foundation  
National Railway Museum Foundation (Portugal)  
SNCF, Heritage & Patronage (France)  
Spanish Railways Foundation

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## Associations:

Iberian Railway History Association

International Association for the History of Transport, Traffic & Mobility (T2M)

International Association of Transports and Communications Museums (IATM)

International Railway History Association (IRHA)



Invitation to a virtual trip – stacation 2020 – Welcome in Bilbao

Photo: Paul Van Heesvelde – all rights with the owner of the railway station building

Photo Museos DIM – Welcome in Madrid





## DB Museum in Nuremberg reopens with special program and new exhibitions

On 19 May the German Railways DB Museum will reopen and welcome back its visitors. The Museum had been closed mid-March as many other institutions to prevent the expansion of Covid-19. As the Director of the Museum Dr. Oliver Götze underlines, "during a long period, the most important in the DB Museum was missing, its visitors..... It is therefore our great pleasure to reopen this house and to be able to present two new exhibition in addition to a special program.."



A first exhibition entitled "Bahnhofszeiten" (times of stations) presents on 200 square meters the life in railway stations in all aspects and in different periods. Use of docufiction enables to bring some typical historic characters to life, such as the maid of the "Kaiser" (imperor) time, a luggage porter of the German federal railways Bundesbahn or the first users of the digital timetable-Apps.

From 25 June a second exhibition will start on the theme "Focus on 100 Years of Deutsche Reichsbahn. The museum will present an outdoor exhibition of steam, diesel and electropowered railway rolling stock from the years 1920 to 1945.

The DB Museum founded in 1882 is the oldest railway museum worldwide. More than 200 000 visitors are welcomed every year in the main museum in Nuremberg or the two external locations of Coblenz and Halle/Saale. The museums are placed under the umbrella of the railway foundation Deutsche Bahn Stiftung GmbH.



RAILWAY HISTORY  
KNOWLEDGE  
FACTORY

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Next issue:  
Summer 2020  
(as I live and breathe)

Do not forget to visit  
our website!

WWW.AIHC-IRHA-  
AIHF.COM

## Proceedings of the Budapest Conference on Railways in World War I

The Editorial committee led by Andrea GIUNTINI - who chaired the Scientific committee of the conference - together with Henry JACOLIN, IRHA Hon. President, is coordinating the publishing of the book of the 8th International Railway History Conference organized by IRHA in Budapest from 29 November to 1 December 2018 on the theme "Railways in World War I".

Thirty lecturers have written their papers. Each paper has been assessed by one of the six members of our association, specialist of one geographic area or a thematic domain. That led them to propose:

- to reject some papers .whose scientific quality was not at the required level
- to improve some papers. Their authors (about ten) have been informed by the leaders of the editorial committee, Andrea Giuntini and Henry Jacolin. Only half of them have sent their improved papers, some been unable to reach their documentation because of the virus.

Next steps: immediately: activating the authors who must send their improved paper. Within weeks: a decision of the editorial committee on the shape of the future book.

Henry JACOLIN

***Next issue – July 2020  
Deadline for copy: June 30th***

**SEE YOU ONE DAY:**

***The press, the machine, the railway, the telegraph are premises whose thousand-year conclusion no one has yet dared to draw.***

*Friedrich Nietzsche*