



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

**International
Railway History
Association**

**Asociación
Internacional de
Historia
Ferroviaria**

HIGHLIGHTS

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December 2021

What's another year?

If I had to describe the past year by means of music, I would perhaps put forward the song by Johnny Logan: What's another year.

But for an organisation like ours, every year is important, of course. It was not possible to organise a conference in 2021 and it seems that 2022 will not be much better. If there is an advantage in this covid crisis, it is that we will refresh our knowledge of the classical Greek alphabet, but apart from that, there is not much to look forward to.

And yet life goes on. I hope to underline with some contributions in this newsletter that we still continue to progress in railway history. There is some exhibition news and events in the framework of Europalia. Of course, theatre productions and film screenings can no longer take place in this context and we can deeply regret it, but we are clearly not entirely lost yet.

Let us learn to deal with this virus and adapt to a 'brave new world'. For example, by living a little differently: a little more organising

during the summer, at times when the virus circulation has less chance? Actually, none of us knows.

For the heritage railways, the situation is not rose either. Climate change might affect the operations of running steam engines. There is a huge demand of technical developments to have the rolling stock operational, without the enormous environmental damage.

I have made a confiteor: I had hoped that this newsletter would write itself by, for example, providing a large article on the survey of our newsletter. The respondents are too scarce as white ravens are.

Happy New Year
Keep safe stay healthy.

Paul VAN HEESVELDE
Chief-Editor



President's Corner

Adapting to the "new normal"...

Dear members and dear partners, dear friends,

As we are entering a new year, I first want to express my warmest wishes to you all and your families. After a so difficult period shared by people from all regions of the world and considering that the pandemic is still there at the beginning of 2022, I express my sincere hope that the New Year can bring to the world more serenity, health, peace and harmony. We all have to adapt our way of life to lasting constraints and limitations on our freedom. Let us hope that despite this crisis and all the new habits and regulations forming the "new normal", we can maintain and develop the essential values of humanity and solidarity in our personal as well as professional life.

For the International Railway History Association IRHA, the new year 2022 also announces a number of challenges (see next p.)

PRESIDENT'S CORNER - CONTINUATION

The international conference on 'Europe and the Railways' that had been planned for 2021 could not take place as it also happened to a majority of international events, postponed or canceled. At our last general assembly held by visio in June, it was feared that the worldwide pandemic could restart or become a long-term phenomenon. We therefore concluded on the need for considering these worrying prospects by the planning of our future activities.

A coordination group was appointed within IRHA with the mission of determining dates and location and possible partnerships for the organisation of an event in 2022. The solution of a combined face-to-face and virtual conference or entirely virtual conference has to be considered as the "new normal" in view of future covid evolution.

2022 will mark the 20th anniversary of IRHA. That represents a unique opportunity for reviewing and promoting our activities, conferences and publications targeted at historians and researchers. It is therefore urgent to effectively progress towards finalization of the conference books that represent the quintessence of our work... thank you in advance to all responsible of our editorial teams for their continuous efforts to this aim. Actually the publishing of the conference books constitutes one of the the main assets of our association. Three books are currently being finalized.

In 2022, the International Union of Railways UIC, one of the founding members of IRHA, will celebrate its centenary (1922-2022). That offers another opportunity for a partnership and common action during this year. On another hand the European Year of Rail started in 2021 under the EU umbrella is now ending despite the request supported by all European railway associations to extend it until end of 2022 due to the crisis that the rail sector had to cope with in the recent period.

The 20 years anniversary of our association IRHA could also be celebrated through a participation at an event organised by one of our members on a European theme.

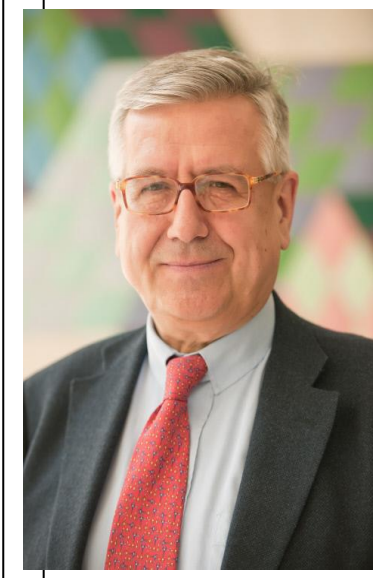
Following first exchanges with our potential hosts, the 10th IRHA Railway History Conference should take place in Canada, possibly Montreal, in 2024. Our coordination committee will consider together with the hosts the optimal date, possibly in the last quarter of the year. The conference theme could focus on "considerations and decisions that led to the development of different high speed rail systems projects across the world", an exciting topic linking past, present and future. As a background, two ambitious railway projects are currently recording progress in Canada: the construction of the REM (Réseau Express Métropolitain) using the tunnel under the Mont Royal, and the Train à Grande Fréquence (TGF) on a 1,150 km long corridor dedicated to passenger transport serving the cities Windsor-Toronto-Kingston-Montreal-Drummonville-Quebec. This conference should offer unique opportunities to discover latest railway developments in this part of North America.

In 2022, IRHA will further encourage a participation of its members - also on behalf of IRHA- at a number of seminars and conferences dedicated to railway. During the new year we will further need the strong involvement of all our IRHA members participating in the bureau, management board and general assembly and I want to pay tribute to all of them for their continuous commitment and support. In a time marked by the increased use of virtual communications, we will rely even more than before on our information tools, in priority the website and the newsletter, and I want to warmly thank all members committed to their development.

Finally the extension of IRHA membership to new generations and the enhanced participation of IRHA members at the governance and promotion of the association are further goals for the next period.

In wishing you again all the best for the New Year and thanking you for your support, I share with you the hope that our association will be able to adapt itself to the "new normal" and be very successful in the months and years to come

Paul VÉRON – IRHA President



Paul VÉRON
IRHA President

EXHIBITIONS

ROYAL MUSEUMS OF FINE ARTS OF BELGIUM – IN A CLOUD OF STEAM



How the arrival of the train fascinated but also frightened people: a Europalia exhibition shows this with a beautiful collection of works of art.

A review by Geert VAN DER SPEETEN – source: De Standaard, (Belgian newspaper) and translated by Paul VAN HEESVELDE

Eveningtrain, Paul Delvaux, 1957. rmfab / foundation Paul Delvaux.

A model train rolling around in the first room of the Brussels Museum of Fine Arts arouses childlike enthusiasm. After that, shiny locomotives and train sets appear in multiples in the exhibition Tracks of modernity: in a cloud of steam, on film images, photographs, posters, but especially on paintings.

In the 19th century, there was the shock of the new. The impact of the train on daily life is hard to imagine, says Dirk Vermaelen, curator and artistic director of Europalia. You have to compare it with the arrival of the Internet. Distance, time, speed, the sense of space: they were all shaken up drastically.

The steam train, imported from England, was initially used for industry. It soon became the ultimate symbol of modernity and progress. For Leopold I, the development of a railway was not so much a boyhood dream as an economic necessity. He needed fast connections and accessible ports for the newly founded Belgium. The king was quick: already in 1835 the first steam train ran between Brussels and Mechelen.

The historical introduction to the exhibition shows how double feelings - fascination and fear of the new - leapfrogged him. Gustaaf Wappers depicts the train as a 'Satan's wagon'. He based this on the young Conscience, who in an early poem spoke of a 'terrifying monster animal' that swings and bellowed furiously and that broke the 'sulphur fire.

Ensor painted a derailed train. He thus indicates that the fear of accidents was not unfounded. In 1889, 22 people were killed in Groenendaal when a train full of passengers rammed into a bridge pillar. Another legendary photograph is that of a locomotive which crashed through the facade of the Gare Montparnasse in Paris in 1895. Caricatures mocked the new rules of conduct in stations and on platforms. For the first time, different population groups came together in one place and class differences collided.

Cult of speed

The train also took up a lot of space. The urban landscape changed spectacularly. In the nineteenth century, monumental station architecture, for which entire districts were bulldozed, mirrored palaces and cathedrals. The Pont de l'Europe in Paris, a metal bridge spanning the railway lines, appears in many paintings.



Monet is represented with three works. He was fascinated by the hustle and bustle of the Gare Saint-Lazare. The steel and glass canopy, whose changing light he wanted to capture, was for him a symbol of the new era.

Many artists portrayed a world of two speeds. They highlight the contrast between the old and the new era, between slow and fast, silent and noisy. In Dario de Regoyos's work, a train rushes over a railway bridge above the

heads of a procession of mourners.

Picture: Monet, Arrival of the Normandy Train, Gare Saint-Lazare, Art Institute of Chicago

The brute force of the machine and the cult of speed fascinated the Italian Futurists in the 1920s. They too frequently saw the train, as a roaring bullet train as in Ivo Panaggi's campaign image.

In the twentieth century, with the advance of tourism, the train as a luxury vehicle also comes into the picture. The exhibition has beautiful posters in store that recommend destinations such as Spa, Ostend-Constantinople or 'The Belgian seaside resorts'. At the end of the 1920s, the train appeared in posters as an abstracted beast at breakneck speed, evoking the dynamics of the modern machine. Abstract artists, such as Victor Servranckx, were also fascinated by the aesthetics of the railway. Fernand Léger experimented with contrasting forms and bright colours to capture the chaos of modern life. In two versions of *The Railway Crossing*, he evokes the confusion of signalling.

Crime and fornication

With the surrealists and their predecessors, such as De Chirico, stations, trains and railways appear as dream images. Or as nightmares, as with Max Ernst who sees the train compartment as a theatre for crime and fornication. Our own train fanatic Paul Delvaux is also present with two of his most beautiful works. He shows himself to be a true nostalgist, seeking out the strange atmosphere of deserted railway yards by moonlight and ghostly illuminated train carriages.

Photography and cinema are dealt with in separate presentations - the symbolism of trains in films and the Freudian interpretations thereof could be the subject of a separate exhibition. Another chapter pays attention to the financial interests in the development of railway networks and their social implications: the exploitation of miners, the railway workers' strike. The doom of mass deportation wagons also surfaces.

Tracks of modernity has thus become a comprehensive exhibition. It shows not only how artists became mesmerised by the train, but also what upheavals the new mobility brought with it and how it reflects the fashions and sensibilities of the time.

More information on: <https://europalia.eu/en/trains-and-tracks/events/tracks-to-modernity>

EASTWARD IN OPULENCE EXHIBITION IN TRAIN WORLD – BRUSSELS – BELGIUM – UNTIL APRIL 22th

Until April 22th 2022, Train World delves into the myth of the Orient Express, a story of luxury on wheels. But this Europalia chapter also zooms in on an associated Belgian business empire.

A review by Geert VAN DER SPEETEN – source: De Standaard, (Belgian newspaper) and translated by Paul VAN HEESVELDE



Train World is pulling out all the stops for its exhibition on the Orient Express. Two carriages from the heydays of the legendary train connection, which led across Europe to the gates of the Orient, are on the rails in Hall 4. The accompanying locomotive was brought from France to the train museum in Schaarbeek by special transport.

Those who enter the chillingly beautiful first-class coaches, the night-blue Côte d'Azur saloon from 1927 and the Riviera restaurant from 1929, get an insight into how passengers must have experienced the journey. The nostalgia and romance are enhanced by a touch of theatrical flair. The editors, including designer and stage designer François Schuiten, present the mobile restaurant as if the guests had just left it.

Comfort and opulence bordering on decadence went hand in hand on the Orient Express. The journey between Paris and Istanbul, a distance of 3,000 kilometres that took 85 hours and initially also required two ferries, was taken care of down to the last detail. The cuisine was refined and, as befits a travelling hotel, the sleeping quarters received fresh sheets every day. Gradually, the Compagnie Internationale des Wagon-Lits, which had set up the routes, even set up its own laundries along the way. Apart from the Orient, for a time there was also a Simplon Express between London and Venice, a Taurus Express between Istanbul and Baghdad and several-day connections between Ostend and Vienna or London and Bucharest.

Rise of tourism

The greatest care was taken for the interiors. As early as 1890 there was electric lighting on board, and from 1895 central heating. The first coaches, furnished with teak, Cordoba leather, goblin carpets and velvet curtains, were replaced after 1920 by steel ones with panelling in shiny mahogany and luggage racks in brass. The decorative elements were equally lavish. Crockery and silverware was ordered from the most prestigious houses and provided with their own logo in Art Deco style.

In the meantime Wagon-Lits built up a travel and tourism empire. Its own agencies grew into veritable travel agencies - 160 by 1900. The acquisition of Thomas Cook & Son in 1928 quadrupled that network. In order to guarantee the same level of luxury to wealthy customers en route or at their final destinations, subsidiaries also built up a chain of Grand Hotels. The rise of tourism is illustrated by photo albums and postcards, Baedeker travel guides, a map of the Bosphorus with sights, Vuitton suitcases and even a 1905 camera in the form of a pocket watch.

The Orient Express, king of trains and train of kings, did not carry ordinary tourists, but rather the greats of the world who could afford it. Among them were diplomats and businessmen, but also celebrities such as Marlene Dietrich or Mata Hari. The legend of the train was further nourished by literature, from Graham Greene over Agatha Christie to Paul Theroux, and a fleet of films of which fragments appear in Train World.

Banker's son

What is less well known is that Wagon-Lits is a Belgian success story, written by the Liège banker's son Georges Nagelmackers. In 1868, during a sabbatical in the US, he was impressed by the chic rolling stock of manufacturer Pullman. He decided to translate the principle of sleeping trains to the home front. He even received the support of Leopold II for his innovative venture.

Nagelmackers' merit was that he contributed to the internationalisation and increasing uniformity of the railways on the European continent. In order to run the first Orient Express in 1883, he had to negotiate with ten railway companies that were still privately owned at the time. Until then, the train had been primarily lucrative for freight transport, but Nagelmackers proved that it could also become a business for passenger traffic. All the clichés and projections about the attraction of the East came into play, as posters from 1888 to the 1950s, including those by the artist Théo Van Rysselberghe, show.

After the Second World War and with the rise of air travel, Wagon-Lits train services lost their glamour. The last 'classic' Orient Express ran in 1977. Since then there have been a few more revivals.

Night train nostalgia has recently reared its head again, and we have come to appreciate the practicality of softly humming high-speed trains. But a magical aura like that of the Orient Express will not be returning any time soon.

See: <https://www.trainworld.be/nl/expo-orient-express> and <https://europalia.eu/en/trains-and-tracks/events/orient-express-%E2%80%94-mythical-luxurious-belgian>



Temporary Exhibition: 170 years of the Railroad in Madrid – Madrid Railway Museum

The Madrid Railway Museum, from October 28, 2021 to May 15, 2022, offers its visitors the temporary exhibition "170 years of Railroad in Madrid", which presents the implementation and development of this mode of transport in the city of Madrid and its region and that, since 1851, which has not stopped growing to this day.

The exhibition, installed in the Andalusian Hall, began in the first half of the 19th century, with the pre-industrial transport of stagecoaches and carts. Continued with the inauguration of the Madrid-Aranjuez Railway on February 9, 1851. It advances with the importance of the legislative framework of the General Law of Railways of 1855. From there, the exhibition reflects the growth of the Madrid network until the end of the century XIX and the important events of the first third of the XX century, with the First World War, the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera and the Second Republic. Coming to the outbreak of the Civil War, and then the Franco dictatorship and the creation of Renfe in 1941. The democratic transition has a special place,

The exhibition is completed with the development of the narrow gauge in Madrid, the evolution of rolling stock during these 170 years, rail intermodality and other urban transport networks, and, finally, a panel dedicated to the heritage legacy of the railway in the Community from Madrid.

Two large photographic murals have also been arranged: the evolution of the Atocha station, in front of which there is a conceptual-structural model of it; and a collage dedicated to the generations of male and female railroad men and women who have made this mode of transport possible. The exhibition is contextualized by an audiovisual projection and various historical pieces from the collections of the Museum and its Historical Railway Archive and Railway Library.

See: <https://www.museodelferrocarril.org/temporal/170Madrid.asp>

RAILWAY & MOBILITY READINGS



The past is a foreign country. faro is the magazine of FARO, the Flemish support centre for cultural heritage, and reports on (how to deal with) what is left of that 'foreign country': the heritage that archives, preservation libraries, documentation centres, heritage associations, museums, etc. now preserve. And with which many people do 'something': it is examined, restored, exhibited, dismantled, questioned and much more. Heritage is also all that which you cannot grasp, literally: just think of traditions, skills and techniques.

Faro concludes this European Year of Rail with a dossier on railway heritage. After all, the train has great cultural and social significance, and for a long time was the symbol of the new era. Without the train there would have been no industrial revolution, and its many consequences. Progress and wealth, but also fear and resistance to change. In the 1820s, the first railway lines were built in Great Britain to facilitate mining. Belgium was the first country to follow suit, and in 1835 Leopold I inaugurated the railway between Brussels and Mechelen. The train brought about profound social reforms. It rearranged time and space and developed further and further.

The dossier starts with an analysis of the 'heritage reflex' at SNCB: how and when did people realise the value of all that material from the past? From steam locomotives to staff uniforms, printed matter and other material sources ... Train World is the (provisional) pivotal point of that journey.

The train also played an important role in the development of tourism, as it turns out. As a symbol, it also featured regularly in all kinds of cultural products, such as films and literature. The next article will take a closer look at the history of the station buffet. One of the (many) crown jewels of Train World are the so-called 'royal carriages': fully restored, and a pivotal moment in the view of preventive conservation.

Source: Paul VAN HEESVELDE – author of an article in the railway heritage dossier.

LES TRAMWAYS BELGES DANS L'EMPIRE OTTOMAN

Roland Dussart-Desart



TRAMANIA asbl

R. DUSSART – DESART, Les tramways belges dans l'Empire ottoman (in French)

This book describes the detailed history of the tramways of Beirut, Constantinople, Damas, Salonica, Smyrna. It evokes several light railways in the former Ottoman Empire and a bunch of aborted projects (i.a. Jaffa, Jerusalem, Lesbos). A chapter is devoted to the Aleppo trams, established under French rule, and other sections illustrate the horse trams of Bagdad and Tripoli, two networks which were the subject of electrification schemes in the thirties. All those networks were wholly or partially financed and/or equipped by Belgians, the last of those enterprises being nationalized in the fifties. A final chapter is devoted to the tramways preserved in Lebanon, Istanbul and Salonica.

This study is based on an in-depth survey of the archives of the operators and in the Belgian and French diplomatic files. Next to the description of the networks, their operation and rolling stock with an unprecedented accuracy, the book reveals how concessions could be obtained in the highly corrupted Empire. There was little change under the Republic, while the operation of Salonica, once Greek after the first Balkan war, had to face the bureaucracy and the insolvency of the new rulers. Quite strangely, the operations in Beirut and in Damas became under the French flag a prime target for the nationalists. Beyond an historical approach describing the harsh realities of another era, the author tries to add a touch of humor and of humanity. The life of

the people who built and operated those tramways, whether Ottomans or expatriates, is dealt with too.

220 pages A4 on glossy paper 115 g/m², hardcover, 9 tables of the rolling stock, illustrations

Price shipment included:

44 EUR (Belgium)

49 EUR (France, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands)

59 EUR (Other European countries, UK included)

Note: The Belgian Post requires a telephone number and an email address of the addressee on the parcels shipped abroad.

Tramania asbl: IBAN BE41 0001 3319 1710 // BIC BPOTBEB1

Source: <https://tramaniaen.wordpress.com/2021/09/18/11-9-2021-new-book-les-tramways-belges-dans-lempire-ottoman/>

MUSEUM NEWS

The situation of railway museums is quite different from one country to another. On the website of the Dutch Railway Museum is marked: The Railway Museum is temporarily closed due to the corona measures. Other museums are still open, but deal with some difficulties. But the museumstaff is inventing the future.

In the newsletter of FEDECRAIL, the European Federation of Museum & Tourist Railways, the Museu Nacional Ferroviário in Portugal gave an overview of the harse time under the pandemic.

Inaugurated in May 2015, the Portuguese National Railway Museum Museu Nacional Ferroviário in Médio Tejo sub-region tells the story of more than 160 years of railways in Portugal, spread over four buildings and the outdoor area. The collection ranges from smaller objects such as the First Train Ticket to multiton steam locomotives and treasures such as the “Royal Train” and the “Presidential Train”.

When the pandemic hit Portugal in January 2019, we didn't know for a long period what challenges it would bring. It created an unprecedented level of uncertainty and brought our National Railway Museum a drop in visitors of more than 60%. Portugal had two general lockdowns, forcing our museum to close for three months at a time. After the government allowed the use of cultural facilities again, the museum reopened with a contingency plan.



During these periods of lockdown, we managed to keep our entire museum team working. Those who had to stay in person at the museum dedicated themselves to cleaning, preserving and restoring the collection. The rest kept their functions, but in telework. We also invested in improving the museum's accessibility.

At this point, we realised that the museum needed to invest more in digital content to maintain the relationship with its audience - the paradigm had changed! We invested in digital content, from texts to filming and editing videos. This involved online training and the purchase of new computer equipment. The whole team was involved to create a sense of mission common to all. Of the various initiatives we have developed, were the virtual tours.

The museum does not yet have a professional virtual tour and we did not have mobile equipment, so we created a tour with videos and photos. The visits were made available through online platforms like Zoom and Teams. We publish the virtual visits through our social media and website. At the same time, we sent mailing lists to schools, care homes, old people's and medical facilities, youth prisons, among others.

We were aware that we did not have a professional product, so it was a great surprise and pleasure to receive hundreds of appointments. We did virtual tours for individuals, families and up to groups of 20 and 30 people. We reached a lot of people, many had never heard of the museum, others knew the museum and still others - and this is the interesting thing about this initiative - had never visited the museum and probably never would, for example because of prolonged illness or very serious mobility problems.

This adjusted reality has brought us a new audience. For some, our visits have contributed to lighten and brighten their days, with the certainty that they will visit us in the future. For others, this was the only opportunity to get to know us.

Since the reopening of the second lockdown, the museum has been offering all its services and even committed to cultural programming such as plays, literature events, conferences and even a music festival (Railfest) and two temporary exhibitions.

The big challenge has been to find a balance between health requirements and providing a good experience for the public. For the confidence of our visitors, the museum has the Clean and Safe seal (awarded by Tourism of Portugal and the Ministry of Culture) and the European tourism covid19 safety seal.

A strong adaptation to these new times required a quick, accessible and comprehensive response that allowed us, even from a distance, to continue to promote and publicize our collection and our museum. Alongside our efforts to make the museum visitors' experience even better, we decided to invest in digital - we are developing a virtual tour with tour guide, we have launched a new website in several languages and keep our online content. This recent August and September, we have surpassed the number of visitors in August 2018 (before the pandemic) and we strongly believe that this has happened because of our strategy during the pandemic. We are still far from the arrival point, but we believe that the strategy we have been adopting especially with the emphasis on digitalization is the way to go.

Source: FEDECRAIL UPDATE 47 – December 2021.



RAILWAY HISTORY
KNOWLEDGE
FACTORY

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:
PAUL VAN HEESVELDE
paulvanheesvelde@gmail.com

Next issue:
Spring 2022
(as I live and breathe)

Do not forget to visit
our website!

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AIHF.COM

Miscellaneous

Happy anniversary UIC

Our president mentioned already that the International Union of Railways (UIC) will become hundred years in 2022. Prepared at the Portoroz conference in November 1921, then in Genoa in May 1922, the UIC was created in Paris on 17 October 1922.

Its mission was to "standardise and improve the conditions for the establishment and operation of railways at international level". The Genoa conference, which aimed at the economic reconstruction of Europe, was considered a failure, in a context overshadowed by the assassination of Walter Rathenau on 24 June 1922 and the occupation of the Ruhr by French troops to impose the payment of reparations to Germany.

Even afterwards, the Second World War could not stop the efforts made by UIC to make rail transport better.

Every success story has a history. This is the right time to start research of this topic.



SEE YOU ONE DAY:

"...what thrills me about trains is not their size or their equipment but the fact that they are moving, that they embody a connection between unseen places."

— Marianne Wiggins

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