



EUROPEAN FEDERATION

OF MUSEUM & TOURIST RAILWAYS

Fédération Européenne des Chemins de
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I. V. Z. W. Europäische Föderation der Museums- und
Touristikbahnen

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

First, I thought that, before reviewing the past year, I should draw the attention of members to the details of next year's AGM and conference, which will take place in Antwerp from 4th – 7th May 2017. Topics we hope to address will include the UIC TOPRAIL Project, the European Parliament's Transport & Tourist Committee, ERA (European Union Rail Agency) and reducing emissions while using coal.

The last conference held in Dornbirn, Austria, in April 2016 was very successful, not only in the nature and spread of subjects covered but also in the number of delegates attending which exceeded 140. Many of these participated in the full programme, creating a larger surplus than usual, offsetting some increased costs.

FEDECRAIL has also been reaching out to other organisations. It is now a full member of the Group of Representatives Bodies (GRB) representing railway operators before the European Union Rail Agency (ERA). We have also held meetings with UIC (Union Internationale de Chemin de fers) with a view to establishing a Memorandum of Understanding with UIC and WATTRAIN (the World Association of Tourist Trams & Trains) to cover collaboration in agreed spheres.

You might ask: "what is the point of linking up with different organisations?" Well, I can only quote the experience of a friend of mine,

Courtney Wilson, who is Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum in Baltimore. His museum has entered into a twinning arrangement with the Japanese Railroad Museum in Omiya, near Tokyo. “This year” he told me “the number of Japanese tourists have increased by 44% over the last year”. And we are talking of several thousand.

When I took a group of FEDECRAIL Councillors, officer and volunteers to visit the Bluebell Railway last month, I was forcibly struck by the friendliness and hospitality extended by the senior office holders. I thought I knew the Bluebell well but I realised during our visit how much the railway had progressed since my last visit. It somehow manages to meet the raised expectations of its 21st century visiting public, while retaining the interest of the railway cognoscenti with displays of historic scenes and information and extending some old fashioned values and hospitality. I have always said I never cease to learn something new whenever I visit another heritage or tourist railway; this was true of the Bluebell by the bucket load. I urge all those responsible for running a railway or museum to do the same.

David Morgan

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“Belgium 2017” Conference: Altered Base Venue

A quick news update on developing plans for the 2017 Fedecrail Conference and General Assembly. As with the 2016 conference (and also some previous years) we have encountered difficulties in securing suitable hotel accommodation at the right ‘star level’, locations and - above all - prices which we know from experience members and delegates expect.

As our result, it is now planned that our main base for the conference will be Antwerp instead of Bruges. We appreciate that the beautiful city of Bruges is a very popular location and it will still feature in the programme with a full day Partners Programme visit. It is likely that we will also have a ‘Bruges Area Day’ to relevant locations of rail and tramway heritage in and around the city.

Key point is that dates and business programme remain unchanged: Thurs 4.5 - Sat 6.5 for the business activities, Working Groups and opening reception (Thu 4.5), main Business Sessions (Fri 5.5) and General Assembly (Sat 6.5 morning) with the customary visits programme for period: Sat 6.5 - Wed 10.5

It is envisaged that more comprehensive details and booking forms should be available early January.

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60th birthday of Gunter Mackinger

A representative cross-section of the Austrian Railway Industry celebrates the traffic expert at the Open Air Museum Großmain

Invited was a selected circle of close friends and companions, former employees, traffic experts, representatives of railway and traffic museums, officers of the ministry of transport, representatives of citizens' initiatives as well as transport initiatives, trade unions, leaders of safety organizations, members of the Austrian army, befriended mayors and other political representatives, amongst them guests from Upper Austria, Baden-Württemberg and representatives of the European Museum and Tourism Railways from the United Kingdom and 96 of them travelled to the Open Air Museum Großmain with a brand-new modern double decker bus of the company Albus. The guests at the celebration represented a cross-section of the Austrian railway industry and one can speak about a bunch of professional expertise on the railway scene in Austria and beyond: Gunter Mackinger himself subsequently introduced the cheerful guests to each other.

The director of the Open Air Museum Großgmain welcomed the guests and, in particular, the very astonished jubilarian Gunter Mackinger with his family, who up to this moment did not know anything about the birthday festivities. The guests filled two trains of the narrow gauge line that took them around the Open Air Museum Großgmain. After a group picture in front of the train at the station „Tennengau“ they went to the restaurant Salettl for the birthday celebration.

In a remarkable laudation the president of the associated municipalities, Helmut Mödlhammer, characterised Gunter Mackinger. Besides the jubilarian's uncontested and internationally recognised professional expertise Mödlehammer emphasised, in particular, Mackinger's human qualities, amongst them his trademark, the quality of his hand shake with negotiating partners, such as the mayors. One thing Mackinger has never been capable of, in fact, was to say “I have no time for you”, regardless who approached him, because his employees, too, could always feel how Mackinger appreciated them personally. Mödlhammer said that Mackinger was a synonym for “warmness of heart”. Mackinger's removal from his position as director of the Salzburger Lokalbahnen was an enormous mistake and none of the guests understood this wrong decision. Gunter Mackinger himself called the term "disappointment" something positive, because someone who has been "disappointed" by colleagues, in the truest sense of the word, actually becomes aware of his true friends who can then be "exchanged" with an honest conscience.

If amongst Mackinger's „close friends“ nearly 100 attended his birthday party, he can, in fact, consider several hundred people as „true“ friends. This was shown clearly by the petition against his removal in 2014 with nearly 4,000 signatures.

The association, S-Bahn Salzburg, congratulated Gunter Mackinger for his friends and, of course, for his milestone birthday. In particular, we wish him a long life with lots of energy and health for his and his family's future!

Richard Fuchs

05012017 Sabor@fedecrail.org