

**LONG FORM (for historical record) Entertainment Report for April 2, 2016**

**April 2, 2016. A Baltic Sea Outing.** Herb Pence showed slides he took in 2015 of several countries in Europe, followed by some slides he took in 1999. The show proper started with photos of the Belgian bays into which the first leg of his trip arrived. The first stop was in Belgium, connecting with the Coast Tram, with views of a station, trams, and buses. The Coast Tram is a meter gauge interurban line, and is 68 kilometers (42 miles) long, with 69 stops. It serves several municipal areas, with prominent examples being Knokke (northeast end of the line), Blankenberge, Oostende (photos of car barn shown), Nieuwpoort, Adinkerke (southwest end of the line). De Lijn, the company that operates the Coast Tram, also operates trams and buses throughout Belgium. Cars are brought in to this line by flatbed truck when an increased number is needed during the tourist season. The modern trams are articulated into three segments each; they are semi-low floor -- a photo of a center door when open revealed a step, so that wheelchair boarding requires a raised platform, which is only available at some of the stations. Many people ride in Belgium bicycles, requiring massive bicycle stalls at stations; reportedly, due to the enormous number of bicycles at these stalls, Belgians (and Netherlanders, who commute under similar conditions) actually do not find and use the same bicycle that the brought into the stall. An interlude featured photos of electric commuter trains, and then Herb showed a photo of a Belgian turnaround loop, required because most of the equipment on the Coast Tram is single ended -- turnaround loops in Belgium have a much greater radius than in Boston. Two of the turnaround loops are next to national borders. Some historic trams are kept for charters, but not often seen because they would slow down the modern trams.

The next stop was Amsterdam (the Netherlands), starting with a photo of car barns at the Amsterdam Tramway Museum, featuring several tracks that were embedded in a paving brick surface, all very neatly maintained, but lacking overhead wire. This was followed by museum operating tracks (part of a line about 5 miles long) having overhead wire, including a connection to the city transit system. The museum was closed to the public at the time of Herb's visit, but he got a tour anyway. He showed several photos taken inside the shops, featuring several cars being rebuilt, including both urban and interurban streetcars. Cars that are being held for restoration, but for which restoration has not yet started, are in a very large shed that is open at the sides, but covered. One of the businesses in the museum area restores military vehicles, and we got to see an amphibious Jeep. Herb also inserted a photo of an automobile even smaller than a Smart car, for just 1 person.

Moving on to Stockholm, Sweden, the view shifted to Route 7 there, which runs modern light rail vehicles using two-person operation (a driver and conductor). The modern cars are low floor and articulated in three segments; historic cars are in scheduled service, although most of these commonly on short turn route 7N to alleviate slowing of the fast modern vehicles; Herb saw route 7N in operation, but was unable to take photographs of it due to road traffic. Historic trams sometimes pulled trailers, of which one photo showed the drawbar coupling between the cars; the trailer in this set was a cafe car. Another interesting photo was of an 1890s vintage service car at a car barn; the rugged appearance of this car (including a very heavy-duty pantograph) made it resemble a locomotive, but it was very short, having only two axles. As an interesting historical note, Sweden changed from left hand running to right hand running in 1967, which required major conversion effort of the tram system (and large-scale temporary busing) due to the doors being on the wrong side; many of Sweden's tram lines closed at that time.

Moving on to Helsinki, Finland, the view featured a tram system having signage in Finnish and Norwegian. Here, Herb got another good view inside a car barn, including the interior service area, which was remarkably clean, and included some well-maintained historic cars -- mostly Euro-PCCs, but also some cars from the early Twentieth Century. This car barn even had a spotless wash basin. The Helsinki tram system uses meter gauge, but is quite extensive. The modern Helsinki trams are articulated; the historic cars are single units. One of the historic cars was a red streetcar that had an onboard beer bar and bathroom (the latter being necessitated by the former).

After this, Herb's ship set out for St. Petersburg, Russia. Photos followed from Nevsky Prospect, a major street in that city, which has electric trolleybus service. Tallinn, Estonia followed, where the tram system there was undergoing a complete rebuild of a major 'T' junction, with tracks replaced by temporary pavement but with overhead wire in place; unfortunately, Herb was unable to access the shops.

The next stop was back in time, in 1999, in Athens, Greece. There, Herb photographed the national railway museum, which includes steam engines (standard gauge) and streetcars (meter gauge), so that the museum (including the inside of the car barn) has dual gauge track. Photos in the associated yard included a small four axle streetcar built by Breda before World War II; an interior photo of this showed the controls. To serve its surface public transportation needs in 1999, Athens used Russian-built ZiU-9 (Zavod imeni Uritskogo, in Russian Завод имени Урицкого, ЗиУ) electric trolleybuses; since Herb's visit, a tram system has opened in Athens, and most of the ZiU-9 electric trolleybuses have gone to Belgrade (Serbia) and the nation of Georgia. Herb's luck with getting tours ran out with an attempt to get photos of the electric trolleybus yard, where he was not allowed in, but was allowed to take one photo (which he managed to turn into two) to show the rather old electric trolleybus fleet. Herb got a ride on a trolleybus, although most of the service was provided by modern diesel buses. He showed a photo of Piraeus, which serves as the seaport for Athens, followed by the Athens and Piraeus Railway, which opened in 1869 as a steam railway, and was electrified with third rail in 1904, renamed to the Hellenic Electric Railways in 1926, extended to Attiki in 1948 and Kifissia in 1958 by takeover and standard gauge conversion of the metre gauge Lavrion Square-Strofyli railway, and renamed to the Athens-Piraeus Electric Railways in 1976, at which time it was supposed to be made into Line 1 of the Metro, although the actual merger of organizations into the Athens Metro Operations Company was not completed until 2011. Photo of shops and yards for this line included cars built in East Germany in 1953. This line has several suburban sheds built where steam train turnarounds used to be.

Still in 1999, Birmingham, England followed Athens, starting with a canal including its lock, photographed from the hotel windows, with the background featuring huge gas storage tanks, which seem to be very common in England. The next photos were of the Midland Metro interurban tram service from Birmingham to Wolverhampton, including a Travel Enquiry Office that serves a function similar to the MBTA office between Park Street and Washington Street, but is not stuffed underground. Rolling stock photos included Breda T-69 cars (now consigned to storage, even though built in 1999), and interior photos. Looking out the window, Herb photographed the Angel of the North statue along the way. The Midland Metro map included a planned extension of the main line, as well as a branch line of significant length. Photo of Midland Metro shops included a custom-built HiRail work vehicle and a computerized control center, as well as cars being serviced in the shop, also showing a good view of an inspection pit.

Continuing travels in England, now in 2000, the next photo showed Birmingham New Street Station for intercity rail. British Railways ("BritRail") is gone, but its logo (of parallel arrows pointing in opposite directions) is retained for inter-city rail. Herb got diverted to various areas of England due to the Hatfield Rail Crash that killed 4 people and resulted in 30 mph speed restrictions and widespread diversions (due to the finding of many cracked rails), and thus photographed various diesel multiple unit coach (locomotive-hauled) inter-city trains. One of his stops was at the Black Country Living Museum (close to Wolverhampton). This area got its name due to deposition of coal smoke in the 1860s - 1890s from the high concentration of industry in the area, which was a leader in the Industrial Revolution, but at a terrible cost to human health and the environment, although the area looks much better now. Various interesting things Herb photographed while there included canal boats; the meter gauge streetcar line with very long poles on single-deck cars to be compatible with double-decker cars running on the same line; the inside of the workshop with electric trolleybuses and streetcars under maintenance and restoration, including a double-decker bus being restored from a sojourn as a two story house.

Moving on to downtown Croydon in the south suburbs of London for a brief period, Herb showed us the newly opened light rail system there, using articulated low floor light rail vehicles (both

exterior and interior photos shown) running on an abandoned British Railways line. This system is heavily used, requiring purchase of additional equipment. The mayor of London is reportedly interested in expanding the light rail system, and Transport for London acquired the system in 2008.

Herb wound up the show, with photos from 2004 of Southborough, MA, USA. This featured Gulbankian's Bus Service, a bus line (of just one line) running from Boston to Southborough and thence to Marlborough; equipment included school buses and old transit buses, as well as a motor coach leased from Executive Office Transportation and Construction. The MBTA has since declined to continue subsidize this line, so it has closed.

**SHORT FORM (for Annual Report) Entertainment Report for April 2, 2016**

**April 2, 2016. A Baltic Sea Outing.** Herb Pence showed slides he took in 2015 of the Coast Tram in Belgium; the Tram Museum of Amsterdam, the Netherlands; Route 7 in Stockholm, Sweden; and scenes from Helsinki, Finland, plus slides he took in 1999 of Athens, Greece; in 2000 of Birmingham, England; and in 2004 of Southboro, Massachusetts, USA.