Ferrying – not fishing!


Photo: Marek Błuś

The *Solstice. Nordic Painting 1880-1910* exhibition in the Polish National Museum in Warsaw presented 105 paintings from 20 museums in Scandinavia, Finland, and Iceland, some depicting scenes from Danish fishermen's lives. One piece of art – *The fishing boats leaving after sunset, Skagen, 1894-1895* by Peder Severin Krøyer – was especially attractive owing to its touching story (and maybe also thanks to its impressive dimensions: 136 by 226 cm). That said, we're not absolutely certain whether the Warsaw audience understood the story properly. Fishing boats stand for loggers on the roadstead, not white boats that ferry additional crew to the waiting vessels. The farewell we are witnessing is for many weeks, perhaps even months on end, over the demanding North Sea herring season. Not for a night of fishing like most of the viewers could have interpreted! Sadly, we're quite confident that there was nothing Danish art specialists could do to help in this regard…

From duckling to ducky

The history of passenger shipping in the Baltic Sea includes an episode involving an aircraft carrier. Believe it or not, the former British *HMS Archer* plied between Stockholm and Helsinki carrying passengers – mostly Swedes – instead of aeroplanes. Then again, the story is more complicated than that. During WW2, the Allies converted many civilian ships into so-called escort carriers. Among them was the general cargo vessel *Mormacland*, built in the US in 1940. After one year of commercial service, she was requisitioned by the US Navy, remodelled, equipped with a flight deck, and transferred to the Royal Navy in 1941. Once demobilised, she resumed carrying freight and changed hands & names over the years before finally being purchased by Swedish Salen Shipping. Converted to a passenger ship and renamed *Anna Salén*, the ship mostly carried emigrants to America and Australia till 1955, but she also had her Baltic gig. In 1952, she served the Helsinki Summer Olympics, transporting Swedish fans to the Finnish capital, also functioning as a hostel. While as *HMS Archer*, she was one ugly duckling, the ship did blossom into a ducky passenger ship (indeed, more beautiful than most contemporary cruising monstrosities…).

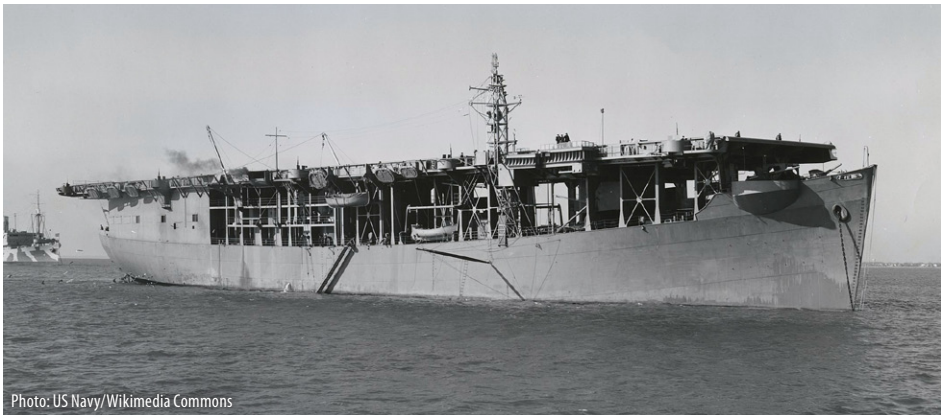

Photo: US Navy/Wikimedia Commons



Photo: National Maritime Museum of Sweden/Wikimedia Commons

Rail without rails?

The archives of the Finnish Heritage Agency include a picture titled *Rail transport in Finland 1959*. The caption couldn't be further from the truth! The steam locomotive is, perchance, a conversion, but there are no railways in sight (notice the track chains)! Other details also strike us: engine cylinders are vertically situated, the transmission is a drive shaft, and the log cargo rests on skids. Did some accident take this loco off the rails? Wooden beams support its front, insulation on top of the boiler is torn off, and the driver's platform looks bent. Mystery.

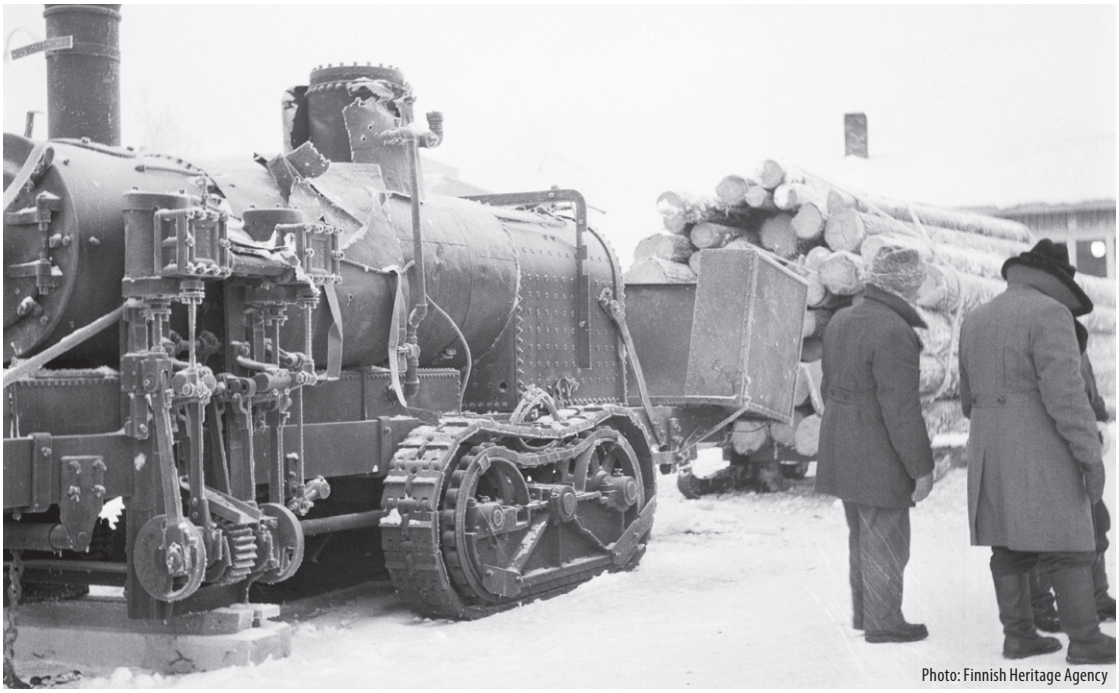


Photo: Finnish Heritage Agency

Describe your photos…

… because you never know what their fate will be! Bernt Bachlen (1899-1973) was a famous Norwegian aviator and hero of transatlantic and polar flights. He also had American citizenship and served in the US Air Force, commanding rescue units. He left behind a box with about 150 photographs documenting his life. The collection changed hands until the last collector's heirs donated it to the National Museum of Science and Technology in Stockholm in 2017. We looked through them and chose the prettiest one with six people sun-resting on the wing of a floatplane. Museologists briefly titled the photo "Bernt Balchen. Expedition participant on the wing of a flying boat" (!). What about the rest?! According to our detective work, the aircraft is a Northrop B2 Gamma, and the party obscures two writings: *Polar Star* (the craft's name) and "Ellsworth Trans-Antarctic Flight" (mind the floats – planes up in the farthest south used skies, though, the landing technique is similar). The pair in the middle is Bernt Balchen (the one with the hat) and Emma, his wife. The 7-14-34 date in the bottom right corner informs us that the photo was taken between the first (Antarctic summer of 1933-34) and second (1934-35) expeditions, both unsuccessful (Balchen left Lincoln Ellsworth's team after the latter). The plane was repaired in Northrop's factory near Los Angeles, and a calm lake in California was probably chosen as a testing field. Let's add that the third expedition was successful: Ellsworth, accompanied by another pilot, crossed the Antarctic (but they didn't fly over the South Pole!). Done so, he donated *Polar Star* to the Smithsonian Institute, which is today displayed in the Air and Space Museum in New York.



Photo: National Museum of Science and Technology in Stockholm



Photo: Wikimedia Commons