

Punting post



Photo: Piotr Stanislawski

Travelling broadens the minds and widens the horizons, they say. Well, it sure did when we saw this picture taken by Piotr Stanisławski during an excursion through the canals of Spreewald. Before that, we thought that bicycle was the first and last human muscle-driven vehicle in the

postal fleet (there were – are? – postriders, of course). In the village of Lehde – rural Venice in Eastern Germany – a postie does one's rounds by driving the boat with a punting pole. Now, here's the question: what came first – the pole or the boat?

From North to South

Ships born on the Baltic shores seldom grace minted-money reverses. If they do, it happens in the region only. Therefore, a coin made far, far, far away from the Baltic Sea – by Pobjoy Mint, authorised by the British territory of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands – cannot slip under the radar. The 50-pence coins, minted from silver and cupronickel, depict the German steam-and-sail corvette *Moltke*: the first steam-powered vessel which visited South Georgia 140 years ago. The ship was built in the naval shipyard in Gdańsk in 1877 and based in Kiel for many years. In 1882, the corvette was deployed to carry Germany's first scientific polar expedition to South Georgia, a task she fulfilled in August. German scientists spent the whole year on the island making important observations as part of the first International Polar Year. But that's another story...

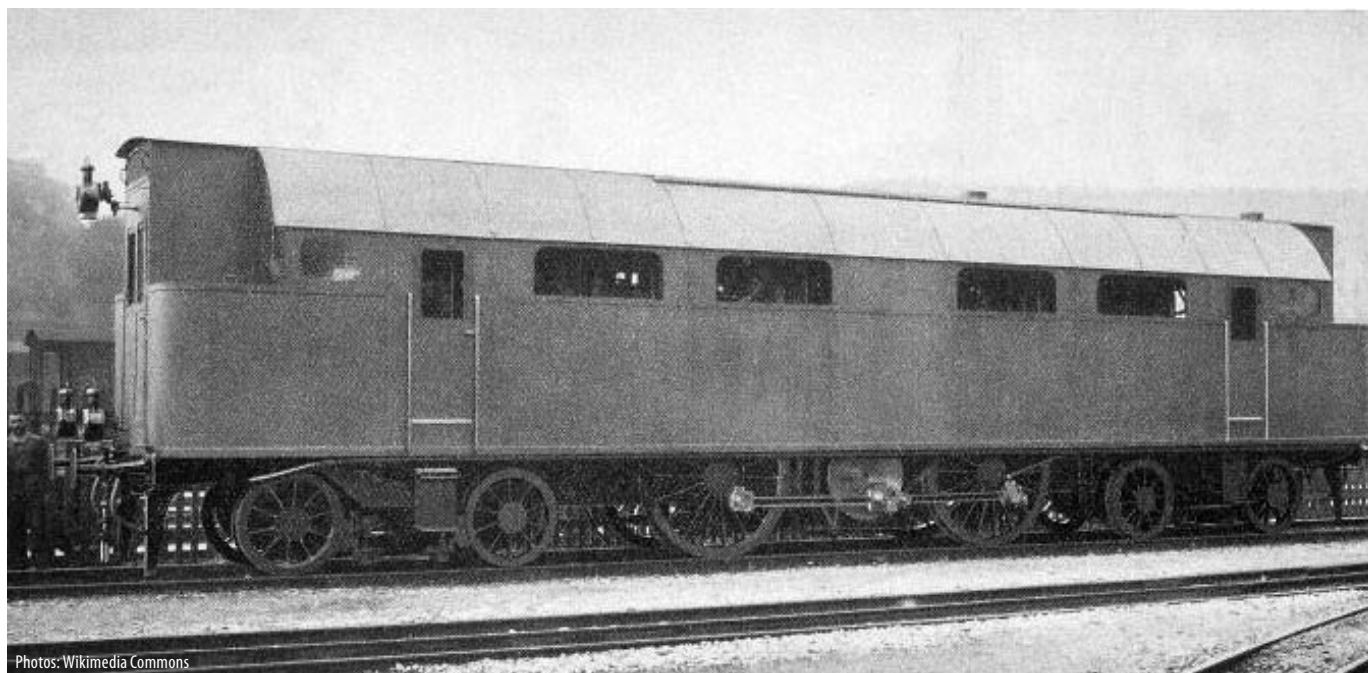
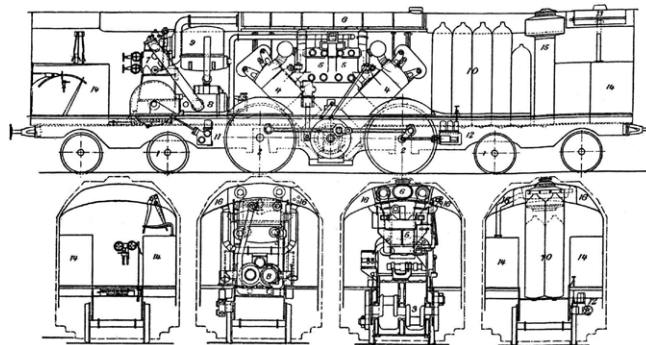


Photo: Pobjoy Mint

Difficult beginnings – for some

Suppose you ask what happened 110 years ago with the Diesel engine in transport. In that case, everybody will probably answer that the first large diesel-powered ocean-going cargo ship *Selandia* entered service, 'setting sail' from Copenhagen to Siam. Two sister ships followed suit shortly after, altogether inaugurating a new era in shipping (though steam engines kept other vessels running for another six decades). Alas, another 1912 adoption of Diesel's contraption failed miserably. It was the first Diesel locomotive built by the special purpose entity Diesel-Klose-Sulzer-Thermolokomotive. The motor was directly connected to the wheels without coupling and gearbox! Such a setup meant that starting the engine set in motion the whole train and vice versa – each stop killed the engine. This procedure required vast amounts of compressed air, which, by expanding, cooled the cylinders – consequently causing cracks... Well, some beginnings are

just difficult. That said, the Diesel engine was back on track only 12 years later, this time successfully owing to the electric transmission concept.



Photos: Wikimedia Commons

A century ago in Tallinn

Omniva, an international post & logistics company based in Estonia's capital (formerly known as Eesti Post), commemorates the centenary of the first steel ship built in the independent country. The construction of the motor-sailer *Läänemaa* (tonnage 567 grt, auxiliary engine 109 NHP) started in December 1919 in Tallinn's Noblessner shipyard, meaning that keel-laying was held during the still ongoing war for independence. She set sail in August 1922 and served for Tallinn Steamship Co. until Soviet annexation. In 1928, her sails got 'stripped.' Afterwards, the vessel underwent two conversions (including engine replacement). She dutifully worked under the same name, taken from the Estonian county, till scrapping in 1970.



Photos: Omniva