

AZIMUTH

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Built
to come
back



PLACES / PEOPLE / THE THINGS THAT LAST

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THE WEEKLY ISSUE · No. 01

Built to come back

Three ports, three trades, and a week of reporting that kept arriving at the same arrangement: the work here is built for the person who returns.

EDITOR: **FARRAH DENHOLM** THREE FEATURES · 23-29 AUGUST 2066 KAVŞAK DESK ·
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Built to come back · the working boatyard beneath Southwark.

The letter

FROM THE EDITOR

Sena Boateng spent her first year at the Corrigan yard convinced that her employer's ear for a badly seated rivet was a party trick. It is not. A rivet set at the wrong angle sounds different going in, and you learn to hear it by ruining about four hundred of your own. That sentence is where this week's reporting kept returning, in three cities with almost nothing else in common.

In Gorodskie Ekho, Zinaida Marchuk names a boat by its engine pitch before it clears the lock gate, after forty-one years on the same dock. In New Batavia, the tide coat co-op at Rumah Surut has cut one jacket in three sizes for nine years, and the thing that brings customers back is not the cutting. It is the bench where the wax is remelted every dry season, at about a tenth of the price of the coat. Bayu Sundoro says it more plainly a tram ride up at High Thirty: a shoe you throw away is a shoe he got wrong. Sixty percent of his year is resoless.

These are not stories about durability. Durability is a property of an object. What our correspondents found is a property of a relationship. A market stall, a boat hull and a waxed coat, each of them made on the assumption that the same person is coming back, and each of them worthless to its maker if that person does not. Marchuk's claim to the third spot from Lock Four is written down nowhere. It rests on having shown up before the person behind her, for longer than the person behind her, which is the same arithmetic as Bridget Corrigan's order book: eight months out, never advertised.

It is worth saying what this arrangement cannot do. It does not survive people leaving. A market policed by forty good memories has to keep the same forty people within walking distance of the dock, and none of these three cities can promise that for another generation. Our job this week was to write down the parts that have never needed writing down, while the people holding them are still on the dock to be asked.

Three features, three ports, one working assumption in all of them. The second visit is the one that counts.

F.D., KAVŞAK

The brief

SHORT DISPATCHES FROM THE DESKS

Kavşak posts its own numbers. The lower souk tram extension has run eleven straight weeks without a headway slip past ninety seconds, and the crews at Anbar Station have taken to chalking the weekly figure on a board by the turnstiles rather than waiting for the operator's monthly bulletin. A schedule you can check on the way to work is a schedule people complain about accurately, which is most of what keeps one honest.

The Vantaa Ring library lends tools. The Nordics Arcology Network's busiest civic library has begun lending hand tools on the same terms as books: two weeks, renewable once, with a repair clinic on Thursday evenings staffed by retired fitters. Two hundred and forty items went out in the first fortnight. The head librarian reports one persistent problem, which is that the good block plane keeps coming back sharper than it left.

Java Scatter trains its own. The Sembilan yard at Tanjung Point finished its fourth intake of welders this month, all of them recruited off the same shoreline instead of flown in on eighteen-month contracts. The yard manager gives the reason without embellishment: an imported welder leaves, and a local one taught properly stays and teaches the next two. First-pass weld rejection is down by roughly half since the intakes began.

Four in the morning at the Arcadia freight gate. The six-stool counter inside the East Freight Gate has opened at four and closed at ten for eighteen years, on the principle that the people moving the city's food should eat before the city does. The menu is one item: barley porridge, cured pork, fried egg, no substitutions. The queue at quarter past four is drivers and dispatchers, and it moves.

A ferry that prints its own failures. The Stack's Southwark to Blackfriars service now lists the previous month's missed departures on the back of the fare card, with the reason beside each one. Nine misses in July, seven of them weather. Ridership rose rather than fell when the practice started in the spring, which the traffic manager attributes to nothing more complicated than passengers knowing what they are being told.

Granitsa reopens two rooms. The municipal museum has unlocked its two ground-floor galleries after nine years shut, with a collection cut back to what the staff could account for object by object. The new catalogue is thinner than the one printed in 2054 and every line in it is true. Entry is free on the first Sunday, and the tours are given by the three guards who stayed through the closure.

The Patagonian Basin publishes its retrofit. The hotel at Lago Frío that fixed its water problem two years ago by admitting it had one has now released the entire greywater specification, including the two decisions its engineers got wrong on the first attempt. Four other properties in the valley have copied it without paying a fee. The managing director's reasoning: a valley of dry hotels is bad for her hotel too.

New Batavia counts its ladders. The Shelf's vendor association spent the dry season numbering every ladder on the market's rooftop approaches, 611 of them, and assigning each to a vendor row responsible for inspecting it. No permit was involved and no authority asked. The stated aim is narrower and more useful than safety in general: knowing within a morning whose ladder failed and who is fixing it.

The lit window on Kovalenko Street. The pharmacy in Gorodskie Ekho's Dry tier has kept a bell and an overnight light since 2059, staffed by whichever of the four partners is not asleep. They take no card after midnight and turn nobody away, and the arrangement has never been written into anything. Regulars leave what they owe in a tin by the scale. The partners say the tin runs a small surplus most months.

Maison Vey opens an alterations bench. The house has begun taking back its own garments at any age, at cost, at a bench behind the fitting rooms of its Kavşak shop, on the argument that a house unable to repair what it sold is only half a house. The first month's book ran to thirty-one pieces. The oldest was twenty-two years old and needed a lining and nothing else.

This week's features

IN THE EDITOR'S ORDER

002 MAKERS

The boat everyone asks for by name

We ran this because Corrigan's service log settles an argument the flooded grid has been having on instinct for a decade, and she gave us the number without being asked twice.

KENJI ALDRIN

FLOODED LONDON 001 ON THE GROUND

The Ninth Hour Market

The most instructive piece of governance we saw this week is a market nobody governs, and Duclos was right to file it as a story about fish rather than a story about policy.

INES DUCLOS

GORODSKIE EKHO 003 WARDROBE

Cut for the ladder

Pellerin has filed the first wardrobe piece in this magazine whose decisive number is how often a garment comes back to the person who made it.

DAX PELLERIN

NEW BATAVIA

The edit

WORTH KNOWING ABOUT

Oilcloth tide table, Ekho river office. The annual table printed on a square of oilcloth, eight credits, sized to be taped inside a crate lid. The paper version is free at the same window. Almost nobody on the dock takes the free one, for reasons anyone who has opened a wet crate can supply.

The Corrigan service log. A public document by accident: thirty-one years of hull repairs in one ledger the yard will read to you over the phone if you ask. No other yard on the flooded grid keeps one, and the water-taxi operators have started asking the others why not.

Thursday repair clinic, Vantaa Ring. Free, drop in, nothing to buy, retired fitters on the bench. Bring the thing that stopped working. The rule is that you hold the tool and they tell you what to do with it, which takes longer and is the whole point of the evening.

Podovyi at the east corner, the Current. Taras Wozniak's flatbread: ember-back seared skin on, folded into dough cooked directly on the coals, off an iron plate four owners deep. Nine credits. Go before seven, while the fish still glows, and expect him to eat the first burnt one himself.

210-gram plain weave, ORIGINAL EQUIPMENT. An undyed shirt with nothing added to it, eleven years of refused requests for a water-repellent finish, and a cloth that takes salt without keeping a record of it. Expensive, plain, and the only thing the house sells.

Hesti Wirasmo's smock, the Shelf. Ninety-five credits, two rows of stitching at each pocket mouth, and an inside slit at the left ribs sized to the transit chit. The registered version costs more and does not have the slit. Sold two rows over from the label's own rack.

The Granitsa short catalogue. Forty-one pages, one line per object, every line checked before it went to print. A model for anyone reopening anything, and cheaper than the guided tour it quietly replaces.

The closing note

WHAT STUCK WITH THE DESK

What stayed with the desk this week was not the fish, the hulls or the coats. It was a nod.

At the third stall from Lock Four, Zinaida Marchuk's eleven-year-old granddaughter called out "Vira's boat" thirty seconds before the hull came through the gate, and she was right. Marchuk did not praise her. She nodded once, the way you would acknowledge that somebody had passed a test they did not know they were sitting, and went back to the crates.

We keep asking people in this line of work how the knowledge gets handed on, and we keep being given something smaller than we expected. No syllabus. A nod at six in the morning, from a woman with forty-one years on the same dock, to a child who has just heard an engine correctly for what may be the first time. Marchuk is exact about what she is teaching, and it is not how to sell fish. It is how to know, before the boat is visible, whether today is a good day. Everything else in this issue is a variation on that.