

THE WHEATLAND ROUNDUP

WWW.WHEATLANDEXPRESSTRAIN.CA

A TRAIN TO REMEMBRANCE

It's Fall in Little Big Town. The leaves are gone, and the snow has come. In November, as we near Remembrance Day, slow down and think of times past. We reflect on heroism, sacrifice, and pride. We remember past November 11th ceremonies that we have attended or taken part in. Maybe we laid a wreath to remember an uncle, recited "In Flanders Fields" or joined in a hymn. The important thing was that we took part.

Remembrance Day gives us a setting when we can enjoy a sense of belonging to a larger effort. The stories that are told remind us not only of individual acts of dash and valor but also of what it felt like to be part of the team. I was in the Air Force. I remember, during my time at university, going to Ontario for summer training. Our journey on Canadian National's Super Continental started in Vancouver with a sleeping car full of cadets from UBC. Then we picked up a car from the University of Alberta. Then more from Saskatoon and finally more from Winnipeg. We were on an adventure. We were part of a team.

I was privileged to serve a career in the Royal Canadian Air Force and Canadian Forces. I was fortunate that, during my service, Canada never went to war. We were, instead, "Cold Warriors" pitted against the shadowy might of the Warsaw Pact. A while after my retirement, distinctive veterans' license plates were introduced to honor

veterans. I didn't get one. Somehow, I didn't feel my service met my standard of what a veteran was. After all, I had just been in the service. I didn't go in harm's way. I wasn't in Normandy or Korea or Afghanistan. I was just in the service. Finally, a few years ago, my friend Lyle, Company Sergeant Major Saumer (Ret) of the PPCLI, remarked on my lack of a veterans' plate. He said, "You know Buddy. We all did our part. We're all veterans".

This year, with COVID still affecting our daily lives, we come again to Remembrance Day. As we continue to adapt and come together as a community, in the safest way we can, it is just as important as every other year to remember our veterans and honor them for their service. While we gather in remembrance, wearing our masks, keeping our distance and sanitizing our hands for the gazillionth time, we are all doing our part to bring us through this time safely. We are part of a team, and we should serve with pride. We are all veterans.

Just something to think about. And by the way, I'll drive my Mini with its veterans' licence plate with just a little more pride.

Written By Bill Noble



NOBLE NOTATION

CANADIAN RAILWAY TROOPS

Written by Bill Noble

This year marks 103 years since the end of the First World War - that terrible 4 1/2 years that contained so much death and destruction. Each November we are reminded of the sacrifice and gallantry and each of us has a mental image of war in the trenches. We picture bloody battles on the Western Front - that unbelievable line of opposing trenches that stretched, unbroken, for hundreds of miles from the North Sea to Switzerland. The sheer size of the conflict beggars the imagination. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers, untold thousands of weapons of all kinds, millions of artillery shells. All of the supplies to support the fighting troops and evacuate the weary and wounded. And all of this materiel carried in and out over extremely rough and muddy ground under fire from the opposing armies. Herein lies a story that is virtually unknown today - the story of the Canadian Railway Troops.

Europe, indeed the world, of August 1914, when the war began, was in the midst of the railway age. The countries of Europe mobilized their armies and sent them off to war on the standard gauge, full-sized trains of the continental rail network. Everyone expected a short war, a war of movement with cavalry and riflemen attacking one another over open ground. However, artillery and machine guns made such tactics suicidal and within 6 months, the war moved into trenches. And, the wealthy, industrialized nations of Europe had the manpower and material to slug it out.

At first, supplies were carried on standard gauge trains to points behind the lines and were offloaded to be carried to the line by



horses, wagons, mules, early motor vehicles and men. But this system bogged down, quite literally, in the muddy conditions. The idea of light, narrow gauge railways to supply the trenches was, initially a hard sell. Early in the war, an industrialist had approached Lord Kitchener, the supreme commander of the British Army with the suggestion. Kitchener's reply was "That is not our way of working" and the visitor was shown the door. In addition, about 100,000 British and French railway workers had volunteered early in the war and were fighting as regular soldiers, with their numbers dwindling.

Then, in January 1915, the British Army asked Canada for help. In the years leading up to the war, Canada had constructed more railways than any other part of the British Empire. Canadians knew how to construct and operate railways over rough territory. Under the leadership of its president, Sir Thomas Shaughnessy, the CPR began recruiting immediately. On 25 June 1915 the first 507 officers and men of the Canadian Overseas Railway Construction Corps arrived in England. This contingent was the first of a force that ultimately numbered over 15000 men - soldier/railway workers. And, make no mistake, they were soldiers - each man was issued a rifle and bayonet. And, while their normal weapons were shovels, picks and railway equipment, they worked exposed to

sniper, machine gun and artillery fire as they went about their jobs, largely above ground. While there were British, French and, later, American railway battalions, Canadian Railway Troops provided the bulk of the leadership and manpower for the railway networks of the Allies on the Western Front.

The rail network was immense. Canadian troops helped the standard gauge (4 foot 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch) French rail system as that country struggled under the tremendous strain but the bulk of the effort went into the several thousand miles of narrow (2 foot) gauge tracks that went everywhere.



Figure 1: Canadian Railway Troops laying narrow gauge track (Imperial War Museum Q35499)

Figure 1 shows a Canadian battalion laying prefabricated track. These track sections permitted rails to be constructed (and repaired) quickly and provided stable track, even when laid upon the substandard chalk ballast. The classic image is of a routine of emerge at dusk and repair or lay new rails, run as many trains as possible and then “get out of Dodge” as the morning light allowed German artillery to zero in on the hours old rails. While that image is true, in actual fact, operations carried on around the clock with care being taken to avoid the attention

of ever-watchful artillery spotters. The railway troops worked tirelessly, responding within hours to repair or lay new rails as the battles ebbed and flowed. And at every opportunity, the tiny trains moved thousands of tons of material.

The trains themselves varied from small single cars moved by hand to trains of diminutive freight cars pulled by dinky gasoline or steam powered locomotives. The engines and rolling stock were largely manufactured by British and American companies, with quite a lot sent to France in “kit form” and assembled by the railway troops. The tools and workshop equipment for assembly, maintenance and repair tasks came from all the Allies, including Canada. In addition, Canada supplied a pair each of steam shovels and pile drivers. Most of the work took place outside regardless of the weather.



Figure 2: Comparison of O Scale models to show the small size of trench locomotives (The Author)

As the world returned to normal after the armistice of 11 November 1918, there wasn't much use for the vast amounts of rolling stock and thousands of miles of rails. Allied armies took some surplus equipment home for use in military fortifications and supply facilities. Canada had no requirement. Some equipment was sold off to mining or industrial companies. But much of the surplus was scrapped as the Western Front resumed its

life as towns and farms. By 1939, when the next war overtook Europe and the world, newer technologies such as better roads and motor vehicles and the aeroplane had rendered trench warfare and the incredible railway system that was created to serve it, obsolete. All that remains are memories and photographs.



Figure 3: A trench engine and a train of tiny cars prepares to leave a yard and venture "up to the line". (Imperial War Museum Q35517).

If anyone wishes to find more information including many photographs on this little known corner of history, some of my sources were:

Canadian Rail No 437, Nov-Dec 1993 - Canadian Railway Troops

Railways and War Before 1918 - D. Bishop and K. Davies 1972 Blandford Press

The War Diaries, Vol 1 - Canadian Railway Troops - P. Wilson Wilson's Publishing March 1995

Narrow Gauge To No Man's Land - Richard Dunn Benchmark Publications, 1990

Tracks To The Trenches - David R. P. Guay Railfare/Fifth House, 2017

EMPLOYEE PROFILE

Name: Tucker Fast

Born: August 15th, 1994

Currently Reside: Saskatoon

Work History: Conductor at Great Sandhills Railway for two years. Currently works as a Trainmaster for the past two years.

Favorite Movie: The Wolf of Wall Street

Favorite Sports Team: Montreal Canadians and the Rough Riders

Favorite Wheatland railcar: His favorite car is the Diner Car

Did you know: Tucker helped in the restoration of the Diner Car from start to finish!





SPIKES SAFETY SCOOP

Hey everyone! It's Spike the safety dog here, and I can't wait to tell you all my train safety tips today! Did you know something as little as a penny on a railway track could derail a train? That is why it is very important that you do NOT put anything on railway tracks or throw anything at trains as they pass. Remember to never stop on train tracks. Remember, a train could come at any time and from any direction. Instead, whenever you are crossing tracks, always use the designated railway crossings and walk quickly across the tracks after you have STOPPED, LOOKED, and LISTENED. Trains are very big and cannot stop quickly so it is very important to remember all of your train safety rules whenever you are near any train tracks! All this teaching has got me hungry for some treats! I'm going to go see if the train conductor brought some biscuits with him today! See you guys next time!



-Spike the safety dog

Write a letter to Spike



Name: _____

Write your letter here: _____

Did you know the very
first public railway
was built in England!

OPERATIONS UPDATE



Wheatland Express Safety Train

Throughout the week of November 22 - 27, 2021, the Canadian Safety Train Express was able to have a booth and display our program to the public. We were able to hand out many activity books to children, and the feedback was incredible. After coming home from Agribition, we had many inquiries about our program and various classes interested in coming out to the train in the Springtime. We hope to see you all out at the train for our 2022-2023 season!



Wheatland Express Learning Centre

We are very excited to have been able to bring our "All-exhibit to Agribition 2021. It ran from November 22-27, 2021 and we received excellent feedback. Many kids, teens and young adults participated in the interactive game and everyone who participated couldn't believe the amount of creativity and technology that went into the creation of the game. We cannot wait for the completion of more of our exhibits and we hope everyone will have a chance to come and check it all done once we are open!



Great Sandhills Railway

We may be on our way to a record month as we have been busy handling cars being called in and out. We continue to get ready for the winter months doing work on the snow fighter and installing hot starts on the locomotives. Work on the Western town continues, and we are on plan to have it ready for our 2022 grand opening.

The group is now working on getting the train ready for Christmas, adding lights and decorating the rail cars. We will be making an application for funding to add a Wey at Totske and additional siding to accept and deliver 100 car trains.

We remain at 12 operation employees working out of the Cudworth shop. They will continue in the winter working on the baggage car and starting several projects for inside some of the buildings in Little Big Town.

Items we are looking for:

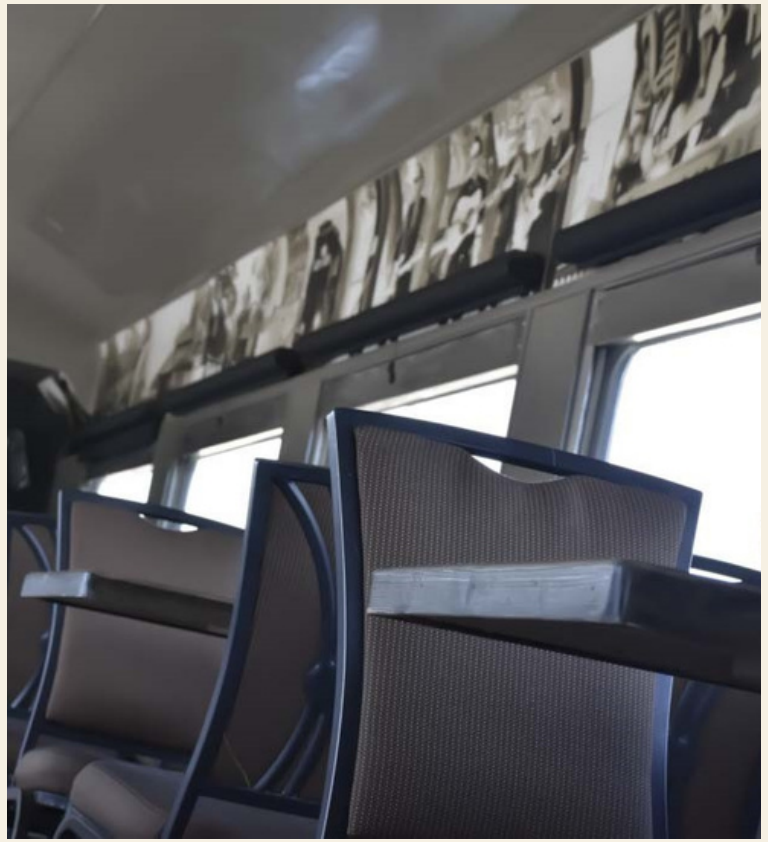
Old type Scale both big and small, Old style Cash register and Any type of telephone.





Wheatland Express Excursion Train

This past month has been a bustle of activity along the railway. After a long three years, the Ghost Train Escape returned to the Wheatland Express for a spooktacular Halloween in October. Attendees solved interactive puzzles to find the conductor's lost head before the end of the excursion. It was a howling good time and we're looking forward to delivering the programming again in October 2022. In early November, we hosted Griff's Great Canadian Adventure, a



television show that follows Welsh comedian and travel enthusiast Griff Rhys Jones, on an epic journey across Canada. We are proud to have represented Saskatchewan as Griff travelled across Canada and are looking forward to seeing the end results when the six-part series airs on BBC First.

We now set our sights on a full Christmas program this December beginning with a Christmas in Graceland Elvis Tribute with Saskatchewan's own Rory Allen and his ten-piece band on December 3rd. Limited tickets remain, so don't wait to join us on this spectacular holiday excursion. Our team is busy bringing the magic of Christmas aboard the train. Beginning December 4, our Magical Christmas Express begins delivering some railway holiday spirit to guests of all ages. Tickets are available now.



STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSES MOUTH

HOW TIMBIT SEE'S IT

Neigh there. I am Timbit, a reporter for the Wheatland Round-Up. My job is to keep the folks of Little Big Town updated to the goings-on on all things four-legged. The cold is finally here, and the farm is now covered in snow! I will be going to check on our newcomers Peter, Clyde and Boss to see what they think of this weather.

Hey boys! What do you all think about all this snow?

"Hi Timbit! This snow came all at once but at least it hasn't gotten too cold!" said Clyde.

"I'm not too big of a fan of the snow. I hate when my feet fill up with ice. It feels like I'm walking on high heels!" jokes Peter.

"I'm enjoying it! Now that there is snow, we get to go inside overnight, and I love the warm barn!" Said Boss.

That's good to hear! What else are you doing to keep warm?

"Well, the one thing we do every year is work on growing our big fluffy winter coats!" Boss stated.

"Once our hair has grown out all the way it will be like we are wearing ski-suits" added Peter.

"I also make sure I'm always eating! When we eat it helps to heat us up on the super cold days." Said Clyde.

I can agree with that, that's my favorite way to keep warm! The extra "fluff" in the winter never hurt anyone! What else have you guys been getting to this month?

"We've all started our training so that we can enter some races this season!" exclaimed Boss

"Yeah, the girls come and get us in the afternoon to brush us and pick out our feet." added Clyde

How has that been going?

"I can't lie, it wasn't too fun in the beginning. The feeling of the brushes and the hoof pick was hard to get used to. But now that we have been doing it for a few weeks, we have gotten used to it." said Peter.

"The best part about it is that we get a bunch of grain while they do it!" said Boss

"In January we start our actual exercise training, and we are all looking forward to that!" added Clyde.

That's super exciting! Thanks for talking to me today guys! I'll let you all enjoy the rest of this sunny winter day!



2021 WHEATLAND EXPRESS SCHEDULE



DECEMBER

- 03- Christmas in Graceland
- 04 - Magical Christmas Express
- 05 - Magical Christmas Express
- 11 - Magical Christmas Express
- 12 - Magical Christmas Express
- 18 - Magical Christmas Express
- 19 - Magical Christmas Express

SEE YOU ALL NEXT SEASON!



STAY TUNED FOR ADDED DATES, TOURS
AND TRAVEL OFFERS!

www.wheatlandexpresstrain.ca
