

# the SwitchStand



A quarterly publication of the Guelph Historical Railway Association  
For questions, membership issues, or how to help, contact: GHRA, 516 Kortright Rd W, Guelph, N1G 3Z1

**August 2005**

**vol. 1, issue 3**

Welcome to the Third edition of the Switchstand! Summer is here and with that comes enjoyment of the beautiful weather mother nature has in store for us. For the GHRA this usually means it's our slow period, which is why we cancelled our August meeting. Nonetheless, there are lots to be said otherwise and this newsletter will fill you in on our latest news and information.

A couple of reminders seeing that the next newsletter will arrive just before the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in November:

**Dues:** Dues for 2005/6 are due by November. Membership is still \$40. Please encourage any friends to join the club!

**AGM/Elections in November:** At our November meeting, we will be holding elections for the Board of Directors. We would always like to give others a chance to participate and there are plenty of spots available on the Board for those who wish to participate in the club's business. If you have any questions about what the board does and how you can help, I will be glad to discuss this with you. Call me at 836-7186 or e-mail at [shost@uoguelph.ca](mailto:shost@uoguelph.ca)

- Steve Host, GHRA President.

## **Regular Monthly Meetings**

Regular meetings are held every second Monday monthly, 7 PM Cooperator's Insurance building 130 MacDonnell Street downtown Guelph. Meetings consist of an overview of club business and topical entertainment or guest presentations.

Upcoming regular meetings:

**September 12, 2005**

**October 17, 2005**

**December 12, 2005**

Annual General Meeting for 2005:

**November 14, 2005**

## **Board Meetings:**

Held the first Monday of every month, contact a Board member if you wish to attend.

## **Association News**

### Doors Open Guelph

The GHRA board is proud to announce that we have an event being arranged to display our Caboose for April 2006! Doors Open Guelph is an event showcasing a dozen buildings of historical or architectural significance that are not normally open to the public. The Doors Open Guelph Committee was contacted in July, and we received a favorable response from their organization welcoming our participation. Over the next few months, logistical preparations will be made by the GHRA board to have our caboose put on display at the siding track under the Heffernan pedestrian bridge downtown. Volunteers will be needed to clean up and prepare the caboose for display, as well during the event to ensure safety and provide interpretations of our historical artifacts inside. Also on the subject of our caboose, we will need some volunteers for a work party to perform some

minor repairs and regular maintenance on the caboose before the winter hits. We will be organizing this at our September regular meeting, please keep this in mind.

### OBRY Rare Mileage Excursion

On August 14th a rare mileage excursion train was organized for a trip on the OBRY from end to end (North Orangeville to Streetsville, Ontario). The GHRA was offered participation in the event, perhaps to sell a second coach worth of tickets, but this did not work out due to logistical and insurance issues with the Railways involved. We did help promote the event and 5 GHRA members managed to purchase tickets to ride the train.

Member Chris vanderHeide rode the excursion train and writes:

"The day ended up being rather overcast, but the rain stopped shortly after departure from Orangeville. We enjoyed run-pasts or photo stops at the former site at Cataract Junction, the Forks of Credit trestle bridge, a rural crossing north of Snelgrove and at Brampton when we were held up for over half an hour by a pair of CN freights. The sun came back out when we returned to Orangeville and we were treated to another run-by at the south end of the yard. The trip was truly the length of the line: we backed up to the end of track at the north end of Orangeville and upon arrival at Streetsville we were actually able to obtain permission from the CPR dispatcher to bring our train right into the CPR yard next to the Galt sub mainline.



*Photo stop at Forks of Credit Trestle. Chris vanderHeide photo.*

The crew was very friendly, making small announcements over the PA system about historical notes and features along the line, and in a couple locations decided to add a couple extra run-by stops. The engineer even dimmed the ditch lights for a couple run-bys when some of the history buffs present requested such a shot.

Overall, it was an enjoyable trip despite the overcast weather, and an opportunity that doesn't come by very often, and not likely to occur again on this particular section of track. [see *Rail News Section*]"

### Local Railway News

#### Guelph Rail Service Updates

In the January issue of the Switchstand, we reported that Ontario Southland Railway had begun Saturday shifts servicing Guelph industries. In the late spring this ceased, however on the first weekend of September, they ran a Saturday shift again. Only time will tell if this becomes regular again.

Since the early summer, GEXR Train #580 has been reported to be servicing Guelph on Sundays to also become a 6-day per week operation. It is good to see that both of Guelph's railways are doing enough business to warrant these increases in service, when you consider that when OSR took over from CP in 1998, that line only operated a couple cars a week at most.

#### ABB Transformer Plant to Close

ABB, the leading power and automation technology group announced (again) in June that its Guelph plant will close January 31, 2006. The facility that has struggled for years will now finally close its doors, ending what will amount to a \$15M loss again this year.

ABB is located on Woodlawn at the north end of Guelph and has rail access on the Guelph Junction Railway (OSR). Traffic comes in/out via both GJR and Goderich-Exeter (via interchange with GJR).

#### Huntsman Chemical Update

The Huntsman Chemical Facility on York Road in Guelph is expected to shut down by the end of August. It has been reported this plant offered as many as 200 to 250 cars yearly for Ontario Southland Railway/GJR.

### Former WSJR Trainset news

Two of the former WSJR ex-CN steel passenger cars have been sold and relettered to Rocky Mountaineer Railtours. It is not known at this time if any of the other parts of this trainset have been sold. This trainset has been sitting at the Toronto Maintenance Centre for VIA/GO Transit since 2000/2001 after the closure of operations over in Elmira. The GHRA operated excursion trains on the GJR in the spring and fall of 1999 using this trainset.

### Results/Observations from VIA's service improvements in May 2005

In May of 2005 VIA train #89 and 84 were extended from Kitchener to London, Ontario. It is with great pleasure that it has been noticed #89, although passing through Guelph at 11:30 PM is noted to have increased ridership often showing one to two coaches full of passengers on board. Contrast this to the prior performance of only a half dozen to a dozen passengers making the final leg of the trip to Kitchener.

In June of 2005 VIA train #688 began operations on Fridays and Saturdays only, slated to end in the beginning of September. This train appeared to have extremely poor to non-existent ridership, which calls into question the reason for even paying to operate this train. Most other trains run in daylight and are noticed to have very good ridership throughout the week, including both the former International trainsets (#85/88).

It is very clear from these observations that VIA rail should next take steps to increase service during the daytime, where there is clear demand for such service. The city of Guelph could surely benefit from this extra service.

### OBRY Track Abandonment Plans

A piece of news that came out of the fan trip on the OBRY is that the OBRY has plans to abandon and remove track from the CN diamond south to the CP connection in Streetsville. OBRY will then interchange traffic with CN at Brampton. Apparently this is hoped to take place sometime within the next two years. The salvaged track supplies are apparently slated to be used to rebuild track north from Orangeville to Fraxa.

There are still rumours of new customers in the Brampton area, but nothing visible has come to pass as of yet.

Also, OBRY has added a second coach to their excursion operation, and a third is onsite and was displaying a recent coat of primer on the day of the rare mileage excursion (this car had been delivered to OBRY in VIA blue and yellow colours)

### Board of Directors

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*GHRA's circa 1941 ex-CP wood cabooses on display at GuelphFest in 2004. Chris vanderHeide photo.*