

Friday 19.05.00

I had a pleasant flight on AC 845 to Calgary. The Airbus A340 was not fully booked so I had two seats for me. Excellent view down on Iceland en route, still with abundant snow. Then again good sight of Baffin Island and the frozen Hudson Bay. Connecting flight AC 3680 (a dud B737) arrived after 9 pm at Winnipeg, got the rental car (a 185 HP Chevy Ventura "Minivan" for the price of a compact 4 door) and checked into Travellodge downtown.

Saturday, 20.05.00

Got a good street map of Winnipeg after I browsed the streets of St. Boniface to find the GWWD and their RS-23. Only ex CP 8016 and 8018 were stored (part sources) outside, two of the operable three units were inside the shed. Around were several cabooses, the wrecked Mack railbus, countless gravel cars and hoppers, an ex-VIA dayniter and a baggage car and the 205 Brill railbus at the depot.

The St. Boniface area is a mingle of rails, saw quite some CP and CN action but nothing to get excited about. CN's Symington yard seemed pretty inaccessible to me but tempting with dozens of units in sight.

Then off to Morris to see the Southern Manitoba Railway. Black 3536, the low-mileage ex BBD demonstrator, looked operational whilst 3518 (still in CN coat) has motor damage. No action around here, so back to Winnipeg.

About 11 miles west of Winnipeg I had to suffer a single CN SD75 (5773) with a long grain empty. SINGLE I say. Shoot that big power! After some waiting for more trains which didn't materialize I left to Portage la Prairie where I hoped to find more action because CP crosses CN west of the depots. Two CP GP38-2 (3022 in nice multimark paint and 3117) were switching a wayfreight. Then the distant rumble announced a well-powered westbound doublestack: CP 9113 (SD9043Mac), 5482 (high-nose SD40-2), 8577 (AC4400), 9632 (AC4400). On CN I caught SD75 5635+GEFX SD40-2 6033 with a eastbound doublestack. Those GEC-Alstom (GEFX) leasing SD40-2s were on at least every 2<sup>nd</sup> CN train...

CP produced two more eb trains (both grain empties): 9580+8548 and 9551+SD40-2 before clouds closed in from the west.

Sun was still shining over CP's Logan yard at Winnipeg. The west end is pretty good accessible and I sat there for quite some time seeing plenty of movements. Lots of big power now on most mainline workings. Pairs of GP9s are doing the heavy yardwork, with the occasional SD1200RSu thrown in.

Sunday, 21.05.00

Morning sky looked dreadful, so I went east to explore the CP and CN mainlines there. I caught a westbound CN (SD75 5656+SD60F) near Anola. Weather didn't quite improve around the Whiteshell Provincial park. Additional, there was no rail traffic at all so back to Winnipeg. I explored

the Logan yard area further and found a good watching spot opposite the diesel shops. It's the Stanley Knowles Park/Mc Phillips Athletic grounds.

In the afternoon it was time to drop the car at the downtown rental station. I walked the "few" blocks to the station to see at least something from the city. I checked my backpack in for the northbound "Hudson Bay" which should leave on 8:45 pm, not on 8 pm as stated on the timetable. Plenty of time to have supper at nearby Earl's, accompanied by some excellent microbrews from the tap. Recommended. After that I managed to photograph the departure of the late VIA no. 1 "Canadian".

Power for my VIA nr. 693 to Churchill was FP9Au 6311, which has a extremely loud HEP engine. You don't hear the prime mover at all. I had a single economy bedroom on the sleeper "Chateau Viger", bedroom no. 5 to be specific. It's not very spacious but provided a good bed for my 1,86 m. The train left on time, an the run was uneventful except some wildlife spottings (deer near Portage la Prairie and an elk near Hudson Bay Junction).

Monday, 22.05.00

The next day there was a lengthy refuelling stop at The Pas, the mecca for M420philes. 3555 was the yardgoat and switched the Lynn Lake train onto the proper track, i.e. behind us. I should experience that train later on the trip. As the bedroom was on the left side I didn't see all the other units at the Hudson Bay Railway shops. Before the VIA train departed a doublepack of M420s left the loco yard covering The Pas with extraordinary amounts of smoke (white and blue - not black). Next stop was Thompson. HBRY M420s 3559, 643 and 3544 sat there with a freight train. All units were at idle and all in their preowner's colors and markings, i.e. CN and BC Rail. We got a 2<sup>nd</sup> FP9Au (6304) and again left quite in time. The train had a good patronage, but quite some travellers got off at Thompson. A seat in the diner was never hard to get. The Linguine Alfredo were excellent on the "Hudson Bay", but that seems to depend on the cook's interpretation of the recipe as the menu is the same on the "Canadian". While some riders stretched their legs the train was wyeed. I met there Alun Williams from England who was also doing an exhaustive VIA trip. Northern Manitoba is becoming basher's country as it seems - at least as long as there's F&M, F-Units and MLWs.

Tuesday, 23.05.00

Our train entered the wye before entering the yard so the train went backwards into Churchill. Weather was dreary with a gusty wind, some rain&snow and temperatures around zero. Ex-CN M420s 3551 and 3550 were idling the yard. The HEP engines of the two F's were to be heard all over the place so that everybody knew, today's VIA in town... Had a tour on my own to the ports, the library (20 mins free internet on a slow Apple) and the dull rest of the town. To get around the day I had altogether three meals at the Churchill Motel which offers quite good value. I could leave my backpack there for the day.

In the evening the two M's came to life and switched the port and the fuel storage. At least some action up there. The grain season starts around late June when the Hudson Bay is open. At my visit both Churchill River and the Bay were still frozen solid.

Wednesday, 24.5.00

Woke up early to see Gillam at daylight (around 5:30 am). It's also a fuel stop so I had time to take some early morning pics. A GE 23-ton and a caboose are on display there. 6304 leaves us at Thompson and likewise the freight car the train 692 had brought down from Churchill. No MLWs in the yard that day. At Hockin we meet with 6308 which was in charge of the northbound 693. Another meet occurs at Wekusko where 3559, 643 and 683 thunder past with a freight to Thompson.

Arrival at The Pas was quite timely.

I walked to my stay for the next nights, the Golden Arrow Motel at the south end of the yard. It's much cheaper than the central Wescana Inn but still clean and ok - and happy about their 1<sup>st</sup> reservation fax from Germany...

Thursday 25.05.00

Started the day slow after having fixed a meet with HBRY's shop foreman, Argyle Hillman, to see all the "dirty dozen" units around and in the shed. We set up a time around noon, so I explored The Pas and did some shopping as there was no action, even 3555 was sitting.

As I was entering the HBRY shops around lunchtime I was introduced to a lot of Argyle's colleagues and we sat there having a coffee and talk before I set off for a first wandering around the property. South of the turntable is the mostly permanent storage area. I found there the remnants of ex SP 6622 (GP35) which was spread around. Two more EMDs were there: ex Vancouver Wharves 824 and HBRY 2512 (SW900). The latter is painted in the new HBRY green and will move to Churchill for the grain season to switch the port tracks. 3541 and 3539 are both stored with major failures. The company has plans to put them back to service someday. 3556 is definitively beyond that status, it'll be stripped for parts and eventually scrapped - someday. Three engine blocks were stored outside, one good looking 16-251 as a replacement for the C-424 fleet.

Only two units were inside the shed. 3544 was fixed (and fired up for me and the microphone) while ex Belt Railway 601 (C-424) was found to be in too a poor status to continue overhaul right now. It as then decided to pull in 603 the following day and park 601 south of the turntable. Maybe next winter 601 will be taken care of again.

In the temporary storage line next to the shed it found: ex BRC 605, 603, 602, 600, 3545 and 685. The 685 (ex BCR M420B) suffered a compressor fire while 3545 had three burnt traction motors. Among the serviceable units around were the 3555, 3548 (HBRY's 1<sup>st</sup> green M420) and 3530, I got to operate those two MU'ed M420 a bit (thanks, Jeff!). Excellent to have 4000 ALCo horses at the left hand... Then finally 3533, which was shut down however.

3548 and 3530 were switching the Tolko lumber plant north of The Pas in the late afternoon and met with CN 5271 and GEFX 6045 at 8:30 pm at The Pas yard. The CN units were parked for the night to return to Winnipeg the other day. A nice sight of the "CN" 3530 next to the 5271.

Around 11 pm 3555 was switching the yard throwing quite some glowing cinder into the night air, a very enjoyable unit. The Lynn Lake was 3 hours late that night, arriving at 12:20 am.

Friday, 26.05.00

3530 and 3548 were in charge of a freight to Flin Flon. I managed to get some trackside shots of it but quit the chase around Rocky Lake (near Root Lake siding). The Hwy 10 parallels the tracks for a good share and crosses the 54<sup>th</sup> parallel north of The Pas as it's posted along the road.

I dropped the rental car (this time a Dodge Grand Caravan, again paid only for a 4dr compact as booked) and was given transfer to the depot where the Lynn Lake train was prepared for its 12(+ ?) hour ride into the wilderness. I was pleased to have three units, but even more pleased when I saw 604, the only working HBRY C-424, sandwiched between 3543 and 3544. The VIA train 291 left at 11:45 am, 30 minutes late, with 13 lumber empties, 10 empty ore gondolas, two boxcars and VIA coaches 5648 and 5649 marking the rear of the train. The coaches were pretty occupied, mostly native people. The adults were somking and gambling whilst the brats were busy making a mess. The coaches have both an individual power supply by a gas or diesel engine driven generator and so the sound of the units further ahead is covered somewhat. The three diesels didn't have much hard work with all the empties. Only north of Cranberry Portage where the line is getting a rollercoaster you could see the towering smoke. The ride was quite enjoyable, weather was good and the vestibule windows open all day. At Heming Lake, a former water stop in steam days, three guys were set off with their fishing gear. Sherridon received a bundle of newspapers and magazines. A lumber loading spur is located at MP 47, the 13 lumber cars were dropped here, a boxcar was left with most of the train's patronage at Pukatawagan. It was a funny sight of the row of people waiting for the train with the one white fellow fighting the insects. The others were motionless - smoking. Lynn Lake was reached at 11:50 pm, not before the ore empties were left at the mine... Freight comes first on that line!

Found a good bed at The Bronx Rooming House, had to ask for the way and met only one drunken fellow.

A sore eye caused some suffering, seems like I sampled a second time after Greece 97 something into my eyes, this time the left eye so I still figured to be able to focus my cameras as usual. Although I thought about where to get rid of the pain as the trip schedule was very tight.

Saturday, 27.05.00

In the morning the train stood there as I left it the other evening. The crew arrived shortly before departure time. At least they cleaned the train already but we spent some time at Lynn Lake wying the train, attaching an empty tank car and getting 9 loaded gondolas from the mine. Inside the mine the gondolas seem to be moved by a shovel tractor. The three units are now sounding excellent with the load and still they're not too far away. Two boxcars are added at Pukatawagan.

Around MP 91 3544 quits amidst a pouring rain. The train stalls in a long twisting grade after lots of slipping and thundering. A second engineer manages to restart the unit and operates it manually ("if it holds 900 amps we can make it...") and so we move again - slowly, but anyhow. The train crew has their seats in the second coach and the radio traffic is good to hear for the passengers... Boy, the locos work their guts out on that little crooked line.

We get even more load at MP 47, the 13 lumber cars are added. Needless to say around MP 45 the train stalls again. We back up on a level stretch of track and the crew tackles the grade with less than walking pace. Excellent, though the units now disappear around every other curve due to the length of the train. The line is extremely scenic around Pawisitk, with three crossings over currents. Between The Pas and Sherridon the line has lots of tangents and much larger curve angles than north of Sherridon.

The ore cars are dropped at Cranberry Portage and will be picked up by the next Flin Flon bound train for the smelter. At Prospector the train stops at the grade crossing for a train crew change. The old crew has reached their time limits and so a guy, called back before having been able to touch his first Saturday night beer, takes over for the rest of the trip. The lumber cars are switched into the Tolko plant north of The Pas. Train 290 terminates at 23:30 at The Pas and I aim almost directly for the Motel to drop my weary head. Oh well, some final recordings had to be done en route of course...

Sunday, 28.05.00

Except some switching by 3555 there was no action at The Pas on that rainy day, so I got my rental car (a 4.7 V8 Dodge Durango) and headed to Flin Flon to see the other end of the HBRY's western portion. The HBRY serves the Hudson Bay Mining and Smelter at Flin Flon. The city is nearly completely built on solid rock. Even the sewage pipes have to be laid over the rock. The small museum features a 1929 Plymouth loco, a hopper car and the usual caboose. From the outside at the HBM&S plant I could see the two retired GE 70-ton locos in the open pit area. Another was hidden between cars. Some of the hoppers still have QIT markings.

My VIA train 692 back to Winnipeg leaves on time at The Pas at 8 pm, with excellent 6308 in charge. Finally an HEP-equipped F-Unit which still sounds good. The train had only a handful passengers so I could spread out for a quite good sleep. In the fading daylight the three coach passengers manage to see some deer and moose out on the fields.

Monday, 29.05.00

Marc Simpson picks me up at the Union Station. As my credit card went dead the other day we try to fix that problem first. Finally my bank raised the limit and we explored the Winnipeg area for he's knowledgeable about the hot spots there. Yet, nothing hot on that Monday, it was quite tragic: no action anywhere, even Logan yard seemed like on strike... We had a "quick" look to Morris to see if the black BBD unit would operate, but it was still where I found it the week before.

We then checked CN's Transcona and Symington yard. We drove into the latter and had a tour around the parking lot. Most of the units there were stored in fact, some of them in really bad

shape. Along Wilkes Ave we got each a CN east- and westbound freight. Same luck on the CP main near Panet road. An excellent finish after all near Symington yard, where we sat in a fantastic evening light near the GWWD diamond (inofficially called "baseball diamond", as there's a baseball field). Quite some movements there, though the obscure Central Manitoba Geeps wouldn't come along after they toured the loop track until we called it a day. Best catch was 7263+slug 265 with a couple of tank cars and a caboose at the end. On the way back to downtown we checked the GWWD yard but same as the week before. I guess the units in the shed were the 200 and 201.

Tuesday, 30.05.00

Another slow start and some shopping (CDs...). Another long train ride was on the schedule. Took a cab to the Union station. VIA's F40PH-2 6453 (with Kool-Aid colors) and 6441 were in charge of train 2 "Canadian". I managed to keep a four-seater for myself the entire trip to Toronto, though I hardly got into any deep sleep. The train left about 30 minutes late which we made up but more time was lost again... Near MP 156 a derailment site was being cleaned up. I was surprised to see that the "Canadian" serves local traffic as well, consequently the train filled with each stop. It was not before Farlane when we met the first westbound freight. 2405+54?? carried lots of wrecked freight cars with their grain empties. I noticed lots of trackwork however.

During the lengthy stop at Sioux Lookout I spotted two GP40, in a siding west of Lookout we met 2547+GEFX SD40-2 with another westbound.

Wednesday, 31.05.00

There were two freights at Capreol waiting, the eastbound had CN 6022 and GEFX 6064. At Burwash a worktrain was powered by CN 6009. At MP 221 three SD40-2s thundered eastbound past us. At Washago I noticed a signal bridge, a water tower and a coaling tower around. We had to back into the siding because of "heavy freight traffic ahead". Infact, freight tended to build up towards Toronto, but in my opinion not that much to cause a 2 hour late arrival in the end. At MP45 we met Ontario Northland 2002 (Cat-F7) with train 697 to Cochrane.

At the Union station I picked up my backpack (after some tedious waiting) and walked around the corner to the Strathcona Hotel. Not a bargain stay, but very convenient downtown location. I got a king size bed for 145 \$/night. The room is normally priced 229\$/night. After a shower I went out for a couple of drinks. Finally I found a nice brewpub ("C'est What", 67 E Front St), where I tested four brews before I went back to the hotel. The Hemp Ale and the Coffee Porter are really excellent creations.

Thursday, 01.06.00

A final train ride day, have to get up at 6 am to catch the 7 am LRC to Montreal. A quick breakfast at the Union station and we are allowed to take the escalator to the platform. It's quite dark under the shed and I am allowed to go to the LRC unit, train 52 was hauled by 6921. Veery loud at idle. I

still can't get used to the practice to not being able to walk freely around the platforms. It's like taking children by the hand because they can't take care of themselves...! The time-consuming boarding procedures sure leave plenty of room for improvement. The train was quite wedged after some more stops enroute and there's not much to hear from the LRC unit due to the very loud aircon. VIA officials and train builders should ride a european train to see that you can make a pretty silent ac coach. One more point of critics, the seats seem to be designed by a fellow who takes the car to work. Lots of sharp and hard edges everywhere. So it's good to hear that VIA get some millions to improve the trains - so please, take some of it for these cars!

I was warned by Alun Williams, that Montreal Union station is the darkest he's ever seen. Infact, it looks like a secret bunker from the WWII. Some funding here as well, please. At least the hallway received some attention recently. But among all those gleamy shops one can hardly find a way out. You're lucky if the sun is shining when you find an exit - you have some first orientation then...

So, I made it and walked to the green area at the Rue de la Commune to photograph train 22 to Quebec which had 6917. Excellent view with the skyline in the background. The VIA trains seem to take all the same way in and out so this is a great spot to watch the action. Got two F40 workings as well. The commuter trains have some leased CN GP40W, didn't see an F-Unit.

6921 arrived back at Toronto with train 67 about 30 mins late. Between Port Hope and Toronto we met one CN eastbound after another. CP was quiet though. It parallels quite some portions of the CN.

At Toronto I explored yet another brewpub. This time it was Growler's Pub (75 Victoria St), supplied by the Denison's Brewing Co. Found there the best wheat beer in North America so far. Ended up with a local at the bar after it started to rain, a nice downtown patio however.

Friday 02.06.00

Picked up the rental car at Avis downtown. The first time I received the booked car size, I left the garage with a Chevy Cavalier, I know that model from my last year's 10.000 km (or 6000 miles) trip. After all a more economic car than a fuel-guzzling Durango (it's fun though to have it for a day...).

I drove east to Guelph Jct., after I found out that it's neither on my map nor at Guelph. So, just another map bought and I pulled alongside the OSR units at Guelph Jct. Sean Steele's father is the CMO of the Ontario Southland RR, Sean arrived later for our appointment. Meanwhile his father, who worked on the idling RS-18 no. 183, let me notch out the unit and make some other interesting experience. 504 (ex CP RS-23) is stored with a bad piston. We later got RS-18 181 near Guelph with a southbound freight, its tail made up by a bright red caboose.

I then followed Sean south to Tillsonburg to see the rest of the OSR fleet. They're hidden on two industry properties. Only S-6 #500 was operating around T'burg that day and it was just returning from work. At a cartage company four units are stored, that are 184, being painted but not operational yet, 501, 502 and 503.

At another plant, 500 was tied up for the night. Next to it stood no. 180, still in full CP paint. Trillium Railway 3568 (ex CN M420) was at yet another Tillsonburg location, but freely accessible.

Sean took me then to St. Thomas, where he hoped to show me the "Empress of Agincourt" at the Railway museum, but it was inside the huge ex Conrail shed. At least, a GE 70ton (lettered 10), and OSR units 51 (EMD NW2) and 52 (EMD SW1200?) were stored outside.

Sean and I parted after having dinner at a good burger place, I had a long 2 hour drive to Port Colborne. I arrived at 10:15 pm and pulled in at the second Motel, not wanting to drive any further. Can't recommend the "Good Night Motel", not clean, at least the owner, a native Calcuttan was very courteous. There were plenty of more Motels just next to it but anyway, I was too tired to see them...

Saturday 03.06.00

Last day of the trip. Had the first really long sleep of the trip. Checked out at 10:30 am after having repacked my luggage for the flight home. I explored the harbor area to find the Port Colborne Harbor Railway locos. The first spotting was a bright yellow GE 45ton at the ADM plant. Despite being hidden behind a trailer I noticed the shapes of an ex CN S-13. I asked for permission to trespass and found Trillium Railway 117 and slug 168 (all old CN nos.) stored, obviously unserviceable. I asked a worker if he knew where I could find the other units and so I drove north to the Robin Wood Flour plant. All was marked as private property, so I walked along the 130 lb rail (in good shape here) until I saw the front of C-425 #6101 next to the grain elevator. Behind was S-13 #110 which was running. Two mechanics were working on it and after a while I just went through the open gate and asked to take some pics. No problem, they told me to stick around as they would fire up the C-425 as well! Eventually they moved the S-13 into the sun so I could get a good picture of it. To round up to good experience, they explained me the way to the remaining two units at St. Catharines...

These are located at the CN Merriton yard. 108 was tied up for the weekend, S-1 #308 is stored with water drained, as is posted on the control stand. So, full score on that operation as well.

After all, the time left was too short to see the nearby Niagara Falls, so I had a late lunch and went straight to Toronto's Pearson Airport where I arrived just in time at 5 pm. Everything was under construction there so I was glad to find my way through to the return location - at the Arrivals. Would you've guessed it? It took me two rounds to decide where to drop the car...

Flight AC 876 to Frankfurt was pleasant on a new Airbus A340, again not fully booked. A good finale to just another excellent trip.