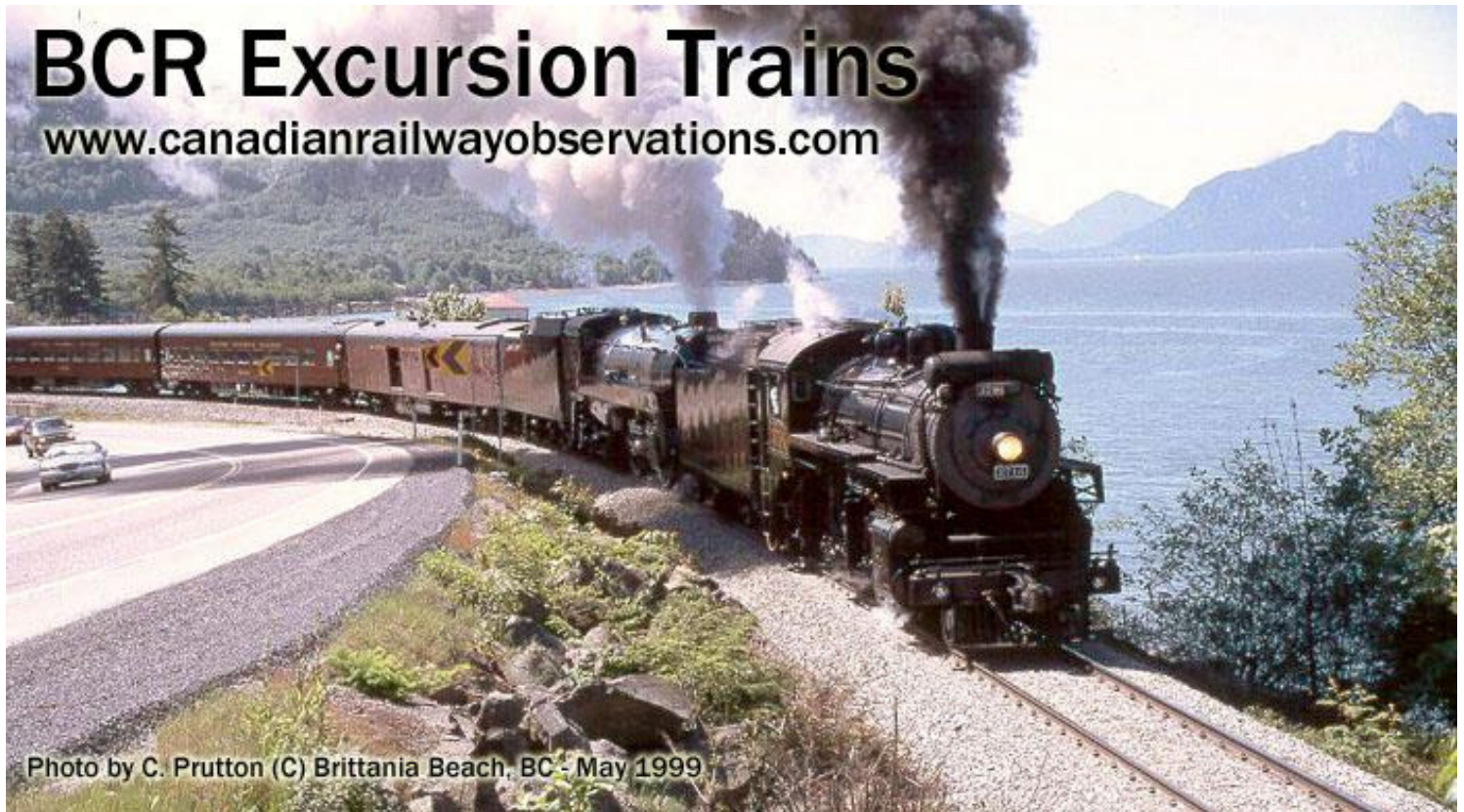


CANADIAN RAILWAY OBSERVATIONS



BCR Excursion Trains

www.canadianrailwayobservations.com

Photo by C. Prutton (C) Britannia Beach, BC - May 1999

BCR Excursion Trains March 26th, 2010

The most significant being the ROYAL HUDSON STEAM TRAIN which lasted 25 years. It ran from June 20th, 1974 until the end of October 1999. The 2860 was replaced for the 2000 season.

The following is a brief history of this train:

During the steam era almost every type of steam locomotive had a class designation which was determined by the wheel arrangement, thus a HUDSON had a 4-6-4 wheel configuration while a NORTHERN's configuration was 4-8-4 & a CONSOLIDATION was a 2-8-0 etc.

In 1939 King George V1 & Queen Elizabeth visited Canada & CPR engine Hudson #2850 was assigned to handle the Royal Train from coast to coast. The Royal Couple were very impressed that a single steam locomotive could travel that long distance without any significant maintenance or change out along the way. The public relations department at CPR decided to capitalize on the memorable occasion & permission was granted by the King to name the engine class "ROYAL HUDSON" The streamlined version namely engines 2820 to 2864 from that day on have worn a Royal Crown on both sides their running boards.

During the late 1940's Diesel locomotives began appearing on North American Railroads & by the late 50's most of CPR's steam engines were retired and set out on back tracks awaiting scrapping. In the early 1960's a group of Vancouver rail enthusiasts visited the scrap line in Winnipeg & discovered that engine #2860 was still in tact & cosmetically looked very good. It was quickly decided that the locomotive should be saved. Accordingly, a Museum group was formed and the locomotive was moved to Vancouver. Although the intension was good there was insufficient interest to find a permanent home for 2860 as a static display & when it appeared the locomotive was once again in danger of scrapping a local business man bought the engine & it remained stored in CPR's Drake St. Roundhouse. In 1973 Joe W. Hussey sold the CPR 2860 to the Provincial Government who decided to restore the locomotive to operating condition & run it as a tourist train on the Government owned BCR.

Robert W. Swanson Mechanical Engineer & inventor of the 5 chime whistle (used on BCR & Amtrak) was in charge of the rebuilding project which took place in the CPR roundhouse under somewhat less than satisfactory conditions. The restoration was completed in June 1974 & shortly thereafter the 2860 made its first trip from CPR's Vancouver Railway station. Robert Swanson posed for the writer, cleaning the headlight of 2860 moments before the train left on that memorable occasion. Some pictures are attached including a poster inviting donations to the proposed Vancouver Railway Museum when 2860 was being moved to Vancouver.

<http://www.canadianrailwayobservations.com/2010/04/cpr1.htm>

A couple of ads used to save the CPR 2860.

One was for raising funds for a Vancouver Museum Club to save the CPR 2860.

The other was for saving the CPR 2860 from the deadline in Winnipeg, Manitoba before she meets a certain demise of being cut up for scrap.

From Claude Prutton's collection.

A photo of Robert Swanson cleaning the headlight of the 2860 in June 1974 by Claude Prutton.

The semi streamlined light weight passenger cars used on the train were built in the 1940's & were in transcontinental service until the streamlined "Canadian" was inaugurated in 1953. The cars also saw service on the "Kootenay Express" which operated between Vancouver & Lethbridge via the Kettle Valley Railway & on CPR's seasonal transcontinental the "Dominion" until its demise in 1966. Several of the cars were then stored in Vancouver. Significant deterioration was evident by the time the refurbishing was started in 1974 & some pictures showing the work in progress are attached.

<http://www.canadianrailwayobservations.com/2010/04/cpr2.htm>

All photos by Claude Prutton.

Two of the old CP coaches being repaired for use on the Royal Hudson excursion train at North Vancouver, BC in April 1974. Two more photos of the CPR 2860 being restored inside the Drake Street Shops in May 1974.

The Royal Hudson train was a total success & attracted tourists from all over North America. It operated 5 times a week on a round trip from North Vancouver to Squamish during May to October. Over 47,000 people rode the train the first season. In addition it made several excursions across the Country & into the USA. & also ran trips double heading with restored engine CPR 3716 & CNR 6060.

Several years after the restoration a steam shop was built on BCR property in North Vancouver where servicing & repairs were undertaken. After the end of the 1999 tourist season the 2860 was in need of a complete overhaul & the cash strapped Railway decided to terminate the steam program. Although the engine is still owned by the Provincial Government it is on permanent loan to the West Coast Railway Association based out of Squamish, BC. The latter has brought back the 2860 to operating condition & once again its being used on special occasions & at this writing operated in conjunction with the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Note: Recent photos of the 2860 in action are in the March 2010 CRO issue.

<http://www.canadianrailwayobservations.com/2010/04/cpr3.htm>

***On August 18th, 1996 the 2860 rolls by Southbound at MP 26.5 on the Squamish Sub Station Name "Porteau Cove".
Photo by: Mark Forseille.***

***In August 1989 the 2860 is letting off some steam as she's just leaving BC Rail's North Vancouver Passenger Station.
Photo by: Mark Forseille.***

***In September 1987, the 2860 is outside the BC Rail Steam shops in North Vancouver.
Photo by: Mark Forseille.***

On September 2nd, 1998 Claude Prutton caught the 2860 going over Newman Creek (not too far from Lions Bay, BC)

On September 2nd, 1990 Claude Prutton caught the 2860 twice in Squamish, BC. The vertical photo was taken during its two hour layover at Squamish, and the second was as the train was just leaving Squamish on her Southbound trip back to North Vancouver.

On September 12th, 2002 the 2860 is no longer operational at this time is parked at the West Coast Railway Association Museum in Squamish, BC. The 2860 wouldn't run again while BC Rail was still operating. The 2860 would make a comeback in September 2006. All thanks to the hard work of the WCRA. Photo by: Mark Forseille.

The first photo dated back in June 1974 by Claude Prutton as the 2860 is about to leave Vancouver for the first time after being restored for service once again.

In August 1991 the 2860 is climbing upgrade in West Vancouver heading North to Squamish. Photo by: Mark Forseille.

<http://www.canadianrailwayobservations.com/2010/04/cpr4.htm>

Photos of Coaches used on the Royal Hudson excursion train named "Birken", "Horseshoe Bay", and "Whistler" all taken at North Vancouver on Aug 18th, 1996 all by Mark Forseille.

Photo of the Coach named "Lillooet" back on July 23rd, 1978 at Vancouver, BC by Claude Prutton

Photo of Coach named "Brunswick" on July 13th, 1996 also at North Vancouver by Mark Forseille.

<http://www.canadianrailwayobservations.com/2010/04/cpr5.htm>

On March 30th, 1978 Claude Prutton catches the 2860 heading on a cross Canada trip to celebrate Captain James Cook's discovery of Vancouver Island in 1778. The two CP B units (#4459 & #4438) were controlled by a special throttle installed on the 2860. The intent of course was to protect the various Railways on route in case the Royal Hudson failed or required assistance on grades etc.

Claude Prutton also caught photos of the two CP B-Units #4459 and 4438 in Vancouver just a day or two before the #2860 left on it's cross Canada trip in March 1978.

A Brief Look at Engine 3716.

Besides the Royal Hudson another steam locomotive that was completely rebuilt in 1975 was CPR 3716, a 2-8-0 Consolidation built in 1912. This engine saved from scrap in 1966 was to be displayed in Port Coquitlam BC. For years however it sat derelict outside the CPR Drake St. Roundhouse. In 1974 it was decided however to rebuild the engine to pull the Province's proposed Museum train. The locomotive was in very poor shape with a cracked boiler plate as well as several layers of rust most of which however turned out to be superficial. The work was completed in 1976 & once again another steam engine graced the rails much to the delight of tourists. The locomotive made several excursion trips throughout the Country & was also used as standby power for the Royal Hudson. 3716 is currently used as a tourist train in the Okanagan at Summerland & is run by the Kettle Valley Steam Railway.

<http://www.canadianrailwayobservations.com/2010/04/cpr6.htm>

All photos by Claude Prutton

Two more photos both on March 16th, 1975 inside the Drake Street Roundhouse. Included is a close up of the 3716's Boiler & Super heater tubes

Two earlier photos of the 3716 parked outside at the Drake Street Yard in May 1974 before she was restored for the Museum Train.

<http://www.canadianrailwayobservations.com/2010/04/n3716.htm>

The 3716 now on the BC Museum train is captured by Claude Prutton at Vanderhoof, BC on July 9th, 1976

Another Steam double-header with the 3716 and 2860 on May 29th, 1999. This time, Claude Prutton catches the pair at Britannia Beach, BC.

On June 17th, 1998 the 3716 is double-heading with the 2860 is at Porteau Cove. Photos by: Mark Forseille

The 3716 is being tested at North Vancouver under the Lions Gate Bridge in April 1994. The 3716 was outfitted with a brand new cab that was made in Squamish at the BC Rail shops. She would be totally overhauled at the BCR Steam shops in North Vancouver. Photo by: Mark Forseille.

On June 17th, 1998 the 3716 is double-heading with the 2860. The first photo is at Porteau Cove and the second photo is at Squamish, BC. Photos by: Mark Forseille.

On July 9th, 1999 the 3716 is parked outside the BC Rail Steam shops. There's no room inside the Steam shops for the 3716 as the CPR 2816 arrived in September 1998 and has been stripped apart to be rebuilt for the CP and the 2860 is also inside no longer in operation. Photo by: Mark Forseille.

On June 17th, 1998 the 3716 is double-heading with the 2860 during their layover at Squamish, BC. Photos by: Mark Forseille

On August 11th, 2006 the CPR 3716 is now at Summerland, BC on part of the old Kettle Valley Railway line excursion train. The 3716 still operates in the summer months. Photo by: Mark Forseille.

Pacific Starlight Dinner Train

In June 1997, BC Rail launched its Pacific Starlight Dinner Train. It would leave their North Vancouver, BC station at 18:15 and travel north through West Vancouver and up Howe Sound to Porteau Cove. Appetizers would be served after leaving the station. Dinner would follow shortly after departing. There were four excellent main course choices. Pacific Salmon, Beef Wellington, Black Pepper Chicken or Vegetable Rotolo. My Wife and I went on the dinner train back in October 2003, and I can confirm that the Beef Wellington was truly delicious!

There would be a 40 minute layover at this spot as passengers would be treated to a Big Band playing at the Porteau Cove Station. Locomotives on this run were fitted with ditch lights on the long hood for the trip north. The locomotive would be moved to the other end for the return trip. Dessert would be served once the train departed Southbound.

The round trip would take about 3 ½ hours and would run until the end of August in 1997. In later years the season would finish at the end of October. BC Rail acquired the rolling stock from the Sprit of Washington Dinner Train. The train would consist of 6 coaches, 2 dome cars, a diner and a kitchen car. In the beginning, BC Rail ran this train with several different B36-7 locomotives along with a power car BCOL #76 RS18 cat #601 would later be painted for dinner train service along with a former Via Steam Generator car #15483 renamed "Borealis".

The Pacific Starlight Dinner train service ended in October 2002 and the rolling stock would eventually be sold off.

<http://www.canadianrailwayobservations.com/2010/04/cpr8.htm>

*See attached photos for dinner train equipment.
All photos in this set by Mark Forseille except otherwise noted.*

Photos include:

BCOL 76 power car at North Vancouver in August 1992.

BCOL 154 "Rainbow" dining car at North Vancouver Feb 27th, 1998.

BCR RS-18Cat #601 at North Vancouver on April 11th, 1999.

BCR B36-7 #3613 at Porteau Cove (2 photos) on Aug 1st, 1997.

BCR B36-7 #3616 night photo at Porteau Cove on October 3rd, 1998.

BCOL Borealis power car, (formerly Via 15483) replaced the BCOL 76 at North Vancouver taken on April 10th, 1999.
This photo by: Douglas Sanford.

Whistler Northwind Passenger Train

The Whistler Northwind train started operation in the spring of 2001.

Whistler Northwind northbound departures were every Sunday from North Vancouver and southbound departures are every Wednesday from Prince George. Guests travel through the diverse landscapes BC offers, riding along the edge of the Pacific Ocean's Burrard Inlet, through the mountain peaks of the Cheakamus, along the historical gold rush route, and across the plains of BC's cowboy country. Overnight stops were at Whistler Resort and 108 Mile House Resort Hotels on this trip. Two levels of service were being offered. Panorama Service and Summit Service being the ultimate in first class rail service.

The Whistler Northwind would consist of:

GE Locomotive B39-8E #1700

Power car (former VIA / CN baggage car) created at BC Rail's steam shop

Crew Sleeper (former VIA/CN sleeper Enfield, Pullman-Standard 1954), purchased from the Okanagan Wine train and refurbished at Livingston, MT

Panorama dome car built new by Colorado Railcar

Panorama Lounge car former VIA/CN coach, purchased from Okanagan Wine Train

Panorama dome car built new by Colorado Railcar

Kitchen / Diner twin unit set former Union Pacific, ACF 1953, refurbished by Northern Railcar in Milwaukee, WI

Summit dome car built new by Colorado railcar

Summit observation round end car, former Florida East Coast Bay Biscayne, Budd 1939

Unfortunately, BC Rail decided to get out of all passenger services by the end of 2002. All rolling stock would be sold off. Some of the equipment was purchased by Via Rail and would run on the Skeena train.

<http://www.canadianrailwayobservations.com/2010/04/cpr9.htm>

Photos of the Whistler Northwind equipment all by Mark Forseille unless otherwise noted:

Coaches BCOL 1703 and 1705 both at North Vancouver on October 6th, 2000.

Claude Prutton caught the BCOL coach #1720 at Dragon, BC taken on September 17th,

A Roster photo of B39-8E #1700 at Prince George, BC September 2nd, 2003.

Claude Prutton catches the Whistler Northwind train BCR #1700 at Dragon BC, photo taken on September 17th, 2002

An action photo of the entire train heading Southbound at Woodpecker, BC (MP 436) on July 10th, 2002.

Current Railbus Service between Darcy and Lillooet, BC

After the cancellation of regular BC Rail passenger service in October 2002, return trip service operated Lillooet - Seton - Darcy by railbus, sponsored by the Seton Lake Indian Band, and was available to the general public.

This current Railbus traffic provides service along the isolated Seton and Anderson Lakes which started back on November 1st, 2002. The BC Rail provided the two railbus vehicles, and the Indian Band manages the passenger bookings, revenue, marketing and customer service. The new service operates daily and makes at least one round trip per day. The operation covers the 34.9 mile stretch of the line from Darcy to Lillooet.

BC Rail acquired the two 20 passenger vehicles for this service from the Aluminum Car Company of Sacramento, California. The vehicles are Ford Fairmont Motor Cars converted into 20 seat passenger cars, and were tentatively destined for a planned excursion service in California before BC Rail snapped them up.

<http://www.canadianrailwayobservations.com/2010/04/cpr10.htm>

Two photos of the BC Rail Railbuses numbered TU-108 and TU-109 both taken at Lillooet, BC on September 3rd, 2003 both by Mark Forseille.

Please note:

We previously covered the BC Rail Budd car passenger trains (see the September 2008 CRO) & the school train (see the October 2008 CRO) in the noted previous issues.

Today, Whistler Mountaineer operates passenger service on the former BC Rail trackage between North Vancouver and Whistler between May 14th and Sept 29th except for Tuesday's and Wednesday's.

The Rocky Mountaineer also runs a train from Whistler, stops one night in Quesnel, through Prince George and Eastward to Jasper and also with a reverse option starting in mid May until the end of September.

For more information, check the Rocky Mountaineer website

<http://www.rockymountaineer.com>

This article was written by Claude Prutton and Mark Forseille and published on Canadian Railway Observations (www.canadianrailwayobservations.com)