



THE DOB CAYGEON LINE

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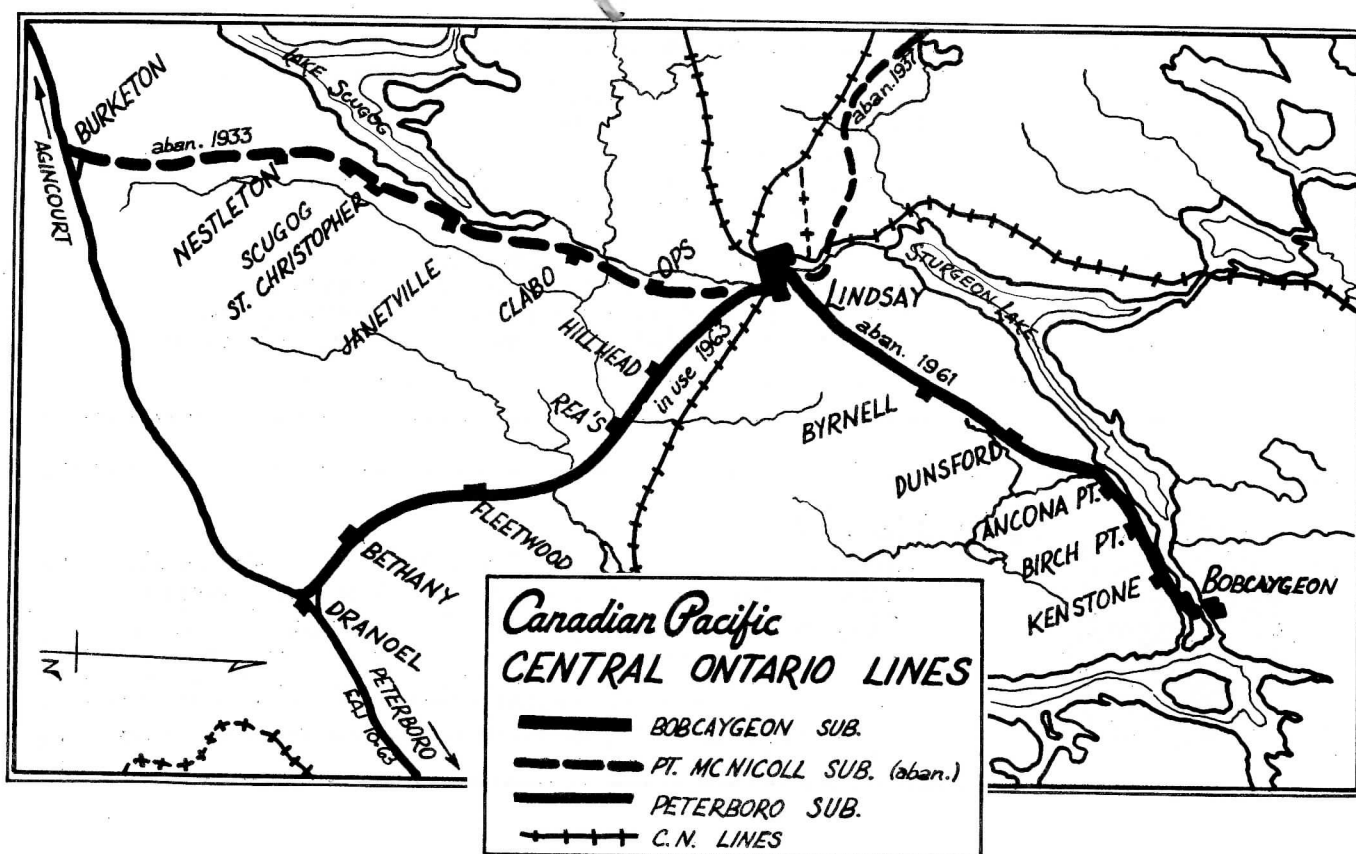
Want to ride on an abandoned railroad?

by **RAYMOND F. CORLEY**

At 12:01 a.m., on September 15th, 1961, the northern half of the Bobcaygeon Subdivision of the Canadian Pacific Railway was officially abandoned. Thus disappeared the last section of the original Lindsay, Bobcaygeon and Pontypool Railway (except for a small section within Lindsay), which originally opened from Burketon through Lindsay to Bobcaygeon on July 28th, 1904, shortly after its line had been acquired by the C.P.R.

Abandonments and Rearrangements

The section from Burketon to Lindsay Junction was closed on July 29, 1933, and cut the original Bobcaygeon Subdivision in half. Then, on September 7th, 1937, the centre half of the Georgian Bay and Seaboard Railway, from Dranoel (Bethany Junction) to Port McNicoll, was abandoned from Lindsay to Orillia, leaving only two outer sections of the C.P.R.'s Port McNicoll Subdivision. The southern section of the Georgian Bay and Seaboard (Dranoel to Lindsay Junction) was renamed the Bobcaygeon Subdivision and was officially joined to the northern remnant of the L. B. & P. to form a new Bobcaygeon Subdivision, complete from Dranoel to Bobcaygeon, with its one mixed train a day (M605-M606), hauled by a D4 class 4-6-0. The last run of these trains was made on October 26, 1957 with engine 434, after which only freight service was operated, initially to the same schedule as 605-606, then as required, and finally (in 1961) principally to Lindsay only. By this time, when 660 h.p. diesel switchers regularly held down the run, trips to Bobcaygeon were rarely made. The last known train to Bobcaygeon was operated on June 20, 1961, but abandonment was not posted until the close of operations on September 14, 1961.



The Right-of-Way To-day

East of Lindsay station the line was left intact to about one third of a mile east of Highway #36, or Verulam Street (as it proceeds north out of Lindsay), to serve existing and future industry within the town limits.

The roadbed then cuts diagonally north-east (while Highway #36 makes a series of lengthy right-angled bends) across marshy country past Pleasant Point station (almost three miles south of Pleasant Point on Sturgeon Lake) to the village of Dunsford. Mile board 26 is still in evidence just west of Dunsford, firmly affixed to a pole. This section is navigable but not operative, as ties, etc. have been left in place over most of it and little grading has been done.

Dunsford can be approached on Highway #36 from Lindsay (travelling east) or north on Victoria County Road #7 from Omemee (Verulam Concession 3), which crosses the C.P.R. at the outskirts of Dunsford. The two roads join in the village and Highway #36 turns abruptly north on the alignment of the concession line (turning east again a half mile further on). About 100 feet north of the road intersection a dirt road cuts east through the village to the Dunsford station, mile 26.4. This station is still in its original shape, less the resident operator's furniture, station equipment, signal, and station name boards. One has to look twice to be sure that the main and passing tracks are actually gone from beyond the wooden beam marking the edge of the cinder platform.



The former Bobcaygeon station, as it appeared on August 19, 1961, after the last train had departed from it but a month prior to official abandonment of the line. This station was sold to a local area farmer and removed from this location in October, 1962.

Still intact on June 30th, 1963, although now far from the nearest rails, was the armstrong turntable at Bobcaygeon. The table, which can still be moved in its pit, once creaked under the weight of D4 ten-wheelers.



The village road turns and parallels the right-of-way for a half mile out to the diagonal crossing of Highway #36. From here to Bobcaygeon, "abandoned" operation can take place. Leaving Highway 36, the roadbed has been completely regraded, and another mile can be covered at high speed until the long causeway approaching the crossing at the mouth of Emily Creek, with swamp on either side, is reached. Planks have been laid on the steel bridge for automobiles to operate on, and a 15 m.p.h. slow order is still recommended.

Having reached the lake, the right-of-way turns east along the shore paralleling a cottage road on the south side of the former railway, running west from Ancona Point. Concession 6 (Scotch Line Road) is crossed at Ancona Point (mile 30.3) and the remains of the floor of the frame "halt" are seen at the south-west corner of the intersection.

A mile further on Birch Point is reached (mile 31.6) and another road parallels the track on the north side for a short distance east of the crossing of Concession 7. Another two miles brings us to the western limits of the cottages at Kenstone, where the road leaves the right-of-way and diverts to a short road paralleling on the south side. The roadbed is on an embankment, with the road on the south, and cottages right on the edge of the lake on the north. While the passage of a D4 must have been a delight to the cottagers, automobiles on this narrow strip evidently are not, and their privacy is aided by keeping cars to the earlier road to the south.

Upon crossing Kenstone Road (Concession 9), one may see the site (only) of the station (mile 32.6) at the south-east corner, and we now transfer back to the roadbed for a quick run to the Otonabee River bridge (mile 33.79). This is a wooden bridge, on which side rails have been added for safety, as well as planks on the timbers, for cars. We then roll past more cottages and into the west limits of Bobcaygeon yard, where again the roadbed must be left, with a transfer to the short "station" road running along the south side.

Looking across the former C.P.R. wooden trestle over the Otonabee River. The bridge has been converted for "single track" automobile use by the addition of longitudinal planking strips and wooden side railings.



Most surprising is the continued existence of the "armstrong" turntable at Bobcaygeon (the table can still be moved), although the approach track from the west is gone, as are the rails on the turntable itself. The foundations of the water tower stand behind it, on the passing track to the main line. Of the Bobcaygeon station site (mile 34.3) no trace remains, as the building was sold in October, 1962, to a local farmer and moved four miles away.

So ends our trip. Despite speed restrictions, the journey can be made as quickly as, if not quicker than, the Highway 36 route by which one takes 10.7 miles to go from Dunsford to Bobcaygeon versus 7.9 by "rail". Traffic congestion is noticeably less on the erstwhile C.P.R. line, and scenery is far more picturesque. However, the lakeshore residents are not happy and want the right-of-way road closed off as they fear the traffic that it will eventually bring. Now is the time to ride the last of the L.B. & P. in close to its original state; in many respects this line would have made an ideal operating museum section for an entrepreneur!