

[Page 13 - Working on the S&L Railroad Part One](#)ISSUE : [Issue 28](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1981/6/1

Wintertime, first thing, those switches have to be cleaned out for trains to operate. And then your railroad crossings, you've got to salt them--you know a storm is coming and you salt them--so the train can travel all during the storm, freezing cold nights, so it wouldn't ice up. But if it got ahead of you, on the weekend like, and everything froze up--then you've got to dig it all by hand--an awful lot of work. You clean your switches, shovel all that out. Then you've got to plow it, run a flanger through. I remember leaving here on a Monday morning, leaving here in a snowstorm, go down to keep the collieries going in New Waterford--3 collieries in New Waterford--keep them open, keep them going--get back home 9 o'clock on a Thursday night--4 days. Sleet storm. The wires came down. Couldn't get any communication from dispatching office to us, to give us an order to tell us to come home--and we had to travel by train orders. Highways blocked, nobody could get down to us. And we were just flanging and plowing and digging out switches all day long--snow piling in, ice piling in, digging--and at night, we'd sleep in the flanger, get our meals downtown. Some bad storms. We used to get buried in snowstorms. I remember we were coming down--Dr. Maxwell from Dominion got married, and the only way he could get to Sydney was to run a special train--a fast engine, engine 45--and a van. And they came to within a mile and a half of Sydney, when they got buried in the Banjo. They were buried there. The engine was covered. She stalled in there, stuck in there, and everything drifted over. That thing was 14-15 feet high. And they were inside the van--had some coal and taking coal out of the bunker for the engine, keep the fire going. And that was the first night of his honeymoon. And we came from Waterford with the plow in back of him. He didn't have any plow. He wanted to catch the fast express leaving Sydney--and the company put out a train for him. The next morning Dan Gillis with a horse and sleigh went up and took them into Sydney. Well, to get that engine and that van out of that, there was a gang of men who worked at the coal banks, dumping coal--about 40-50 men--came with shovels and started shoveling that out. And when they got the engine out, they put us in it. We put two engines on it, you know? We put our plow ahead and we had two engines and then our flanger behind--and we made a '0' M. Snapshots of a locomotive stuck in the snow at the Hub Junction in 1935. About half a mile, as fast as that thing could go--to drive through to open it up. We'd shoveled the train out first--but there was another 75 feet of snow ahead of us. That train wasn't a quarter of the way through when she got stuck. We hit that bank of snow and--oh, the snow ?? flew up, broke the glass in the engine and everything. We came at it half a mile, everything was in it, wide up, plow ahead of you--and we got through it. You had to stand on the flanger and hold on, you'd be rolling, the stoves would be tied down and everything. And I saw times when we didn't get through. I saw snow at Grand Lake where the whole day, where the snow drifts across the lake onto the track there--the only way we could get through it, we shoveled, we dug holes every 50 feet--shoveled holes down with a gang of men--the men would have to put it up from one shelf onto another shelf to



get it out. Now when you'd get back with the engine, you'd take a run at that--and when you'd hit that, the hole would give you a chance to get clear of the snow in front of you--4 or 5 times of running at that to go the full length before we got through. Snow, my god, talk about snow! I remember 1967, it was like cement. You couldn't go 5 feet--the snowplows would

BRIAND'S CAB C' BretOD Fortress
Louisbourg Graham Bell Museum Miners' Museum Gaelic College SEE THE
BEAUTIFUL aBOT TRAIL 664-6161 664-61' Energy Efficient Reeves Homes MODEL
HOME K-MART PLAZA WELTON ST. HEAD OFFICE AND PLANT POINT EDWARD
MODEL HOME RESERVE ST. GLACE BAY 539-3468 564-5573 849-6524 Point
Edward Industrial Park, P.O.Box 1414 Sydney, NS BIP 6K3 "COMPARE BEFORE YOU
BUY" (13)