



THE GREY-BRUCE Clubhouse Tour

By Ray Kehoe

Some snowmobilers might think the OSM staff is out on the trails all winter and they're probably right but we sometimes have to really work at juggling our time to accommodate the many regions we ride in.

For instance, we'd been in touch with Bruce Region's Tourism Coordinator and fellow snowmobiler Chris Hughes for over a year trying to put a trip together. He wanted us to go "clubbing" with him. "Clubbing" in the Bruce and Grey Regions? Who could resist! We planned the ride on three separate occasions, all of which had to be canceled thanks to freaky weather. You know – no snow, too much snow, too strong winds that blew all the snow off the trail and buried snowmobiles, barns and houses. Well, maybe not barns! This time though, regardless of what Mother Nature threw at us, we decided we weren't going to take 'No' for an answer from her. We were ready!

We've ridden here before and know the area quite well but to our surprise, we were to discover the Grey-Bruce Region is actually two regions, not one. There's the Bruce Region that includes the towns of Wiarton, Sauble Beach and the entire Bruce Peninsula, right up to Tobermory. Then there's the Grey Region that encompasses Owen Sound, Meaford, Flesherton, Durham and Mount Forest. Snowmobilers tend to incorporate both regions when they take to the trails here; and thus they refer to them as ...the Grey-Bruce. Between the two regions there are over

3,600 kms of trails, winding throughout the Lake Huron area, western Georgian Bay shores and the northern half of southwestern Ontario. There's quite a mixture of trails here too, ranging from open farm fields, mixed bush, Great Lakes coastline and the beautiful Niagara Escarpment. And thanks to the lake effect snow coming off Lake Huron, the snow comes in a hurry and when that happens, there's tons of it.

Our ride started in the afternoon at the Days Inn in Owen Sound, where Chris and I met up with Grey Region's Tourism Coordinator Bryan Plumstead and Bill Tennyson from Tennyson Yamaha in Underwood. Right outside of town, we stopped by the first Clubhouse of many on this trip; this one belonging to the Owen Sound East Side Club. After stopping for a while to chat with other snowmobilers, we then headed south on the TOP B110 trail and I have to say, the trails continued to be groomed to the nines through fields and bush, the kind you can put huge miles on. Following the railbed trail just south of Chatsworth, it was much of the same riding, we turned off and started towards Meaford. This area features long sweeping trails through more woods and fields. We stopped by Walters Falls, which is not a large town by any stretch of the imagination; however, it is home to one of Ontario's last working water mills. This is a photo-op and you should take your camera as the falls themselves are quite beautiful and the trail brings you right to them!



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Eastside Owen Sound Clubhouse



Saugeen SC Clubhouse

We continued on until we joined up with the TOP B trail, south of Meaford. Along this trail, we stopped by the Meaford Clubhouse, the second of the day. With the lowering sun, we were privy to a gorgeous sunset, one I'm told is typical to the region. Dinner took us to Ted's Range Road Diner, outside of Meaford. The food's good and the atmosphere is something I can only describe by saying: "You've just got to see it for yourself. This alone is worth the trip". After leaving Ted's, we hopped back on the B trail and headed back to the Days Inn. Considering there was only a few hours left in the day when we first left, we were really pleased as we managed to ride 120km on this loop.

Day two was our biggest ride of the three days, totaling about 250 km and visiting four more Clubhouses. Now the trip started to take on a 'destination' feel and we looked forward to seeing more of the different Clubhouses spread throughout the region. Along with Bryan, Chris, Bill and I, we were joined by Wayne O'Rourke from the Saugeen Snowmobile Club who is also the District 9 Sign Coordinator. The trail out of Owen Sound was freshly groomed and it was painful leaving it after only a dozen kms. But fortunately for us, all the connecting trails were also groomed so we knew there were more awesome trails to be ridden!

GEARS

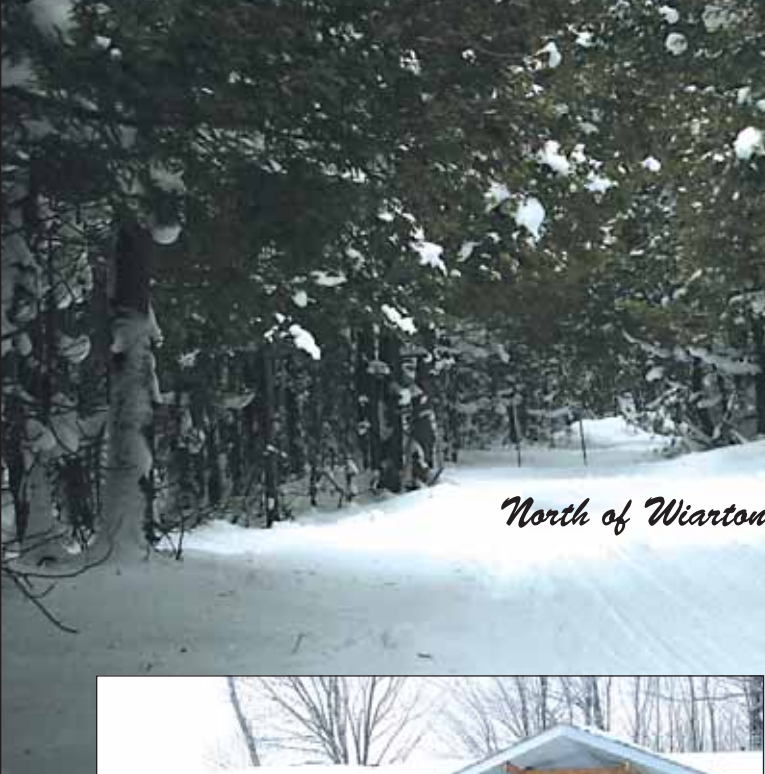
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North of Wiarton



Chelsea Clubhouse

lot of ice build-up on the shore and the open water was a few hundred feet out. While it looked pretty darn cold, it still gave us a feeling of how wonderful it was to be snowmobiling here and be able to experience how Mother Nature's strong winds could throw the huge chunks of ice around so easily. She can be tough, no doubt about it. As for the water, there was no polar-dip for this kid! Carrying on, we stopped again just north of town at Sauble Falls where you just have to take your camera to capture the beauty in this area. I came to realize this whole region is home to not only dozens of Clubhouses and thousands of kilometers of great trails, but also several beautiful waterfalls that everyone should experience in the winter.

We rode to Chesley and arrived at the Chesley Clubhouse which is about the same size as the ones we visited yesterday only painted a different colour. After heading south from Chesley, we rode on beautiful trails through farm fields and mature forests and arrived at the Saugeen Snowmobile Clubhouse. Another beauty, this Clubhouse is actually located on the Saugeen River and is another site for taking some beautiful pictures. Heading back northwest, we ran this trail for roughly 10 clicks before reaching the town of Paisley and TOP trail B108. This trail is really interesting in that it follows the Lake Huron shoreline, passing the towns of Port Elgin, Southampton and Sauble Beach along the way. There's no lack of accommodations, gas or food along this stretch of trail. Just take a peek at the Dining and Accommodations section in this issue. B108 is also the trail that heads right up to Tobermory, at the tip of the Bruce Peninsula, another trip really worth taking if you have extra time.



Southampton SC Clubhouse



Along the stretch to Sauble Beach, we took in two more clubhouses: Southampton and Sauble. When we reached Sauble Beach, we rode the back streets to the shoreline and Lake Huron. There was a

Our final destination before returning to Owen Sound was the beautiful Waterview Resort in Wiarton, located on the south shore of Colpoy's Bay, east of town and right on the trail. What a gorgeous Resort in a perfect setting! Our day was coming to an end and it had been a long one, but with so much more to see and the trails being so finely honed, we wished it could have lasted even longer. I'll put money on you knowing the type of day we were having and the feeling I'm talking about as we could have spent several more hours snowmobiling in this area. →

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Getting up the next morning, we all knew all good things must come to an end....but do they have to? We decided that although this was going to be a 'short' day, we were going to fill it with as much as we could possibly see. Leaving the Resort, we headed north of Wiarton along TOP Trail B107 that heads right up to the town of Lion's Head and joins up with B108 that could take you right up to Tobermory, affectionately called the 'Tub'.

If you're ever riding in the area and become worried about a lack of snow, this is the place to head for. While the snow accumulation was not as heavy south of Wiarton, there was tons of snow going north as they just seem to catch a little more heading in that direction. Wanting to experience one of the 'must sees' in this area, we turned off the Top trail and jumped on to what locals call the Purple Valley Loop. This groomed trail is a fairly infrequently traveled one, but once you're in the area, you've just got to see it. Running along the loop, you arrive at a dead-end trail that heads to King's Point Bluff that offers a spectacular view of Colpoys Bay and Georgian Bay. On a clear day, you can see forever and it was so beautiful when we arrived, it was hard dragging ourselves away from one of the most beautiful spots in Ontario.



After getting our scenic overlook fix, we took the loop back to B107 and headed south back to Wiarton. South of town, we decided to jump off B107 and follow the south shore of Colpoys Bay as we wanted to see the Wiarton Kepple District Airport. This is one of Toronto's Pearson International emergency landing airports, which means its runway is long enough to land a 747. To top it off, the trail not only goes

across the front lawn, but actually heads down next to the runway. Talk about being Test Pilots!

Leaving the airport, we pressed on south towards Shallow Lake where the Keppel Clubhouse is located and again it offers a sanctuary for snowmobilers and Club members in a beautiful setting. Talk about a great destination. From here, we were going to take the trail to north of Owen Sound, cross the bay to the south side which was staked earlier with markers and head right to the Day's Inn where our trailers were parked. However, about 10 days earlier, the icebreakers had come in and spoiled our plans. It's always wise to check with the local snowmobile Club before venturing onto any ice to make sure it's safe. Always, know before you go! Anyway, this just meant we had to ride more. Dang!

So off we went and joined up with TOP B trail, which brought us around Owen Sound from the west. Some fifteen minutes from town, we came to the only bad stretch of trail, heading through the Inglis Falls Conservation Area. There's a fairly steep hill you have to go up, and it brought



back memories of our snocross days. It's not an insurmountable hill, but be aware some of the moguls found here were not pleasant. If we had more time, we could have taken the trail west of town to Tara and then back to Chatsworth, south of Owen Sound. Chris assures me the Club is working diligently on fixing this problem but there's no complaining from this camp. Hey...it's tough to complain running into a 1-km stretch of junk trails over the course of 525 kilometers! Besides, we're tough. We're snowmobilers, right?

The trail mix on the Clubhouse Tour offers everything from riding in the woods, to open fields, to rail beds, up and down hills and much, much more. It's also safe as the Clubs here have worked hard at keeping the trails on dry land and keeping you off the water. Another thing I loved about this tour is that you can extend your stay by simply staying on the trail and heading in any direction. All you need is time. If you want to head up to Tobermory, it's an easy eight-hour ride from Owen Sound. Further south, the towns of Mount Forest, Durham, Goderich and Walkerton are within easy reach and have many offerings. If you're heading east, Collingwood and Wasaga Beach are easily within a day's ride and they're gorgeous places to visit. Yes, the Grey-Bruce is a great place to ride and it's not far from many of the major centres. Accommodations, food, fuel, repairs are all in abundance and you'll experience some of the most beautiful real estate this Province has to offer. Ride more and drive less – what a great idea!

For further information on the Bruce Region, visit the OSM website, at www.ontariosnowmobiler.com or go to www.explorethebruce.com & www.greycounty.ca