

THE DEVON BELLE

Combe Rail
members' magazine
issue #2
Summer 2016
(Combe Rail -
Charitable Incorporated
Organisation 1164083)

IN THIS ISSUE....

... We have three more interesting articles sent in by Combe Rail members: Barry Hodgson tells us how he built the working model of Braunton station, which can be seen in Braunton Museum. Gary Best looks at maps and guides for Devon railway walks, and following Michael Brockington's article in the last issue, John Burch provides more information about the North Devon Railway Preservation Society. There is also official notice of our AGM in Ilfracombe on 10th September, when we hope to meet as many of you as possible!



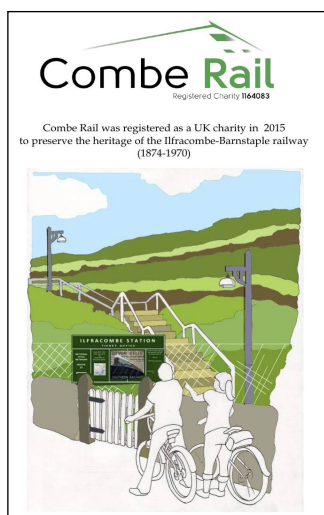
NEWS

Combe Rail was present at Barnstaple station on Sunday 17th April to greet the Tarka Tourer railtour - the first visit of an HST to Barnstaple since 1994. Our station totem fridge magnets (£2.50) were very popular and proved a good way of enticing passers-by to our stall.

BRAUNTON

ILFRACOMBE

BARNSTAPLE TOWN



A second order of "Woolacombe and Mortehoe", "Wrafton" and "Barnstaple Junction" totems will follow soon.

We have had 500 4-page A5 flyers printed (see left) for distribution at exhibitions etc. These are also available at Ilfracombe Museum and Tourist Information Centre. If you can think of a good location or an occasion when you could distribute some, let us know! info@combe-rail.org.uk

We have been invited to attend Exmoor Rail's model railway exhibition in Minehead on 6th August. If you're visiting the exhibition anyway, come and say hello. If you can spare an hour to join us on the stand that day, drop us a line at info@combe-rail.org.uk

ILFRACOMBE RAILWAY EXHIBITION

On 10th September, the morning of our AGM, we will be hosting a free public railway exhibition from 10am-1.30pm in the Lantern Centre, High Street, Ilfracombe. Our guests will include the Ilfracombe Model Railway Society (with a selection of models, rather than a full layout), Braunton Museum (with a selection of their historical railway exhibits) the Tarka Rail Association (who promote the Barnstaple-Exeter line) and our friends from Torrington, the Tarka Valley Railway.



HERITAGE PROJECTS

In Devon Belle #1 we announced four heritage projects: 1) Railway Interpretation Trail, 2) Surviving Railway Infrastructure, 3) Ilfracombe Station Steps and finally 4) the Heritage Line. The first three are all located in or near Ilfracombe, and form a heritage interpretation



package. We have continued to meet with NDC and Biosphere, and have identified what planning permissions will be necessary. We have also made contact with Pall Europe, who have given provisional approval for a replica "Ilfracombe Station" sign on their land at the top of Station Road.

HERITAGE LINE - OR COMMUNITY RAILWAY?

As we identified in Devon Belle #1, there is unimpeded double-track formation between Chivenor Cross and Ashford Garden Centre. This would give sufficient width for a one-mile single-track standard-gauge heritage railway alongside the existing Tarka Trail cycle path. Having discussed this at length with NDC councillors and planning officers however, we are now expanding the proposal into a much more ambitious *community* railway, which could eventually provide, once again, a regular rail service between Braunton and Barnstaple. Watch this space...





NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN

that the first Annual General Meeting of
Combe Rail CIO
will be held at 2pm on Saturday 10th September 2016
at The Lantern Centre, High Street, Ilfracombe, Devon

AGENDA

1. Introduction and apologies for absence
2. To receive and adopt the Report of the Trustees, and the Accounts for the year ended 31st July 2016
3. To elect five Trustees
(The current Trustees, Richard Heacock, Yvonne Hin and Daniel Roche are obliged to stand down at this first AGM, and all three are standing for re-election. It was decided on 21st May 2016 to increase the total number of Trustees to five.)
4. To approve the appointment of Andrew Hedges as independent auditor

PROXY

A member is entitled to appoint another person as their proxy, to speak and vote on their behalf at the meeting. Proxy Forms and a list of Trustee candidates will be emailed to the membership on 25th August 2016.

NOMINATIONS

Any member may stand for election as a Trustee, provided they are not barred from doing so under [Charity Commission regulations](#). They must be proposed by another member, and must supply their full name, date of birth, nationality, profession and address. They should also supply a short personal statement for distribution to the membership. Nominations must be posted to Combe Rail, Flat 5 Holly House, Avenue Road, Ilfracombe, to arrive by 2pm on Wednesday 10th August 2016.

By Order of the Board

(signed) Yvonne Hin
CIO Secretary
6th July 2016

BRAUNTON MUSEUM AND STATION MODEL

Combe Rail member and Braunton Museum curator Barry Hodgson tells us how he built the museum's impressive working model of Braunton station



Braunton Museum holds an extensive archive of information related to the Railway and Station in the area. Many Museum visitors remember the line and have expressed their regrets at its passing. Early in 2013 discussions were held regarding a model of the Station in the Museum. It was agreed that if possible a working model be built to offer more interest to visitors. We applied to several potential funders for support and were successful in obtaining a

substantial grant from the Co-Operative Membership Fund, which enabled us to buy materials for a model. Three volunteers agreed to build the model and work was begun in August 2013. The scale chosen was '00'- 1/76, as it was thought this gives several advantages being a popular scale and of reasonable size to view. It was decided to restrict the model to the station area from the Gated crossings of Braunton Gates and Caen Street. Regarding the time to be modelled, it was decided that an era of the 1950's would give us a reasonable chance of finding both railway models and vehicles etc to complete the effect.

The initial area we were offered in the Museum was ten feet long and three feet wide, however we soon discovered that at the chosen scale there would be no room to depict the station and certainly no way to be able to run trains through the model. Eventually we were allowed to extend the baseboard to 18 feet long and 4 feet wide, these dimensions being the maximum available in the chosen area of the building without us having to resort to major structural alterations to the building !

Even with the dimensions allowed we have had to reduce the platform length of the model by several feet. Another problem was how to enable trains to run through the station without operator intervention, the model was to be run unattended except by simple pushbutton controls available to visitors. We had just enough room at each end to lay 180 degree curves and two return lines along the rear wall thus giving us two loops and the 'Up and Down' lines in the Station itself. A backboard is setup to hide the return lines and end curves, trains exit and enter the station area through this board, but visitors do not seem to notice this. We were initially concerned about this as there were no convenient bridges or tunnels in Braunton. Track was also laid for the sidings of the goods area and two short sidings for the Banker Engines which were stationed to assist trains up the steep incline to Morteohoe. Although the tracks are laid we have not enabled their use as the model is designed to be semi automatic, only one train can be run on each loop as previously stated.



access for maintenance etc.

Using photographs from the Museum collections we decided to scratch build all the necessary buildings as no commercial models or kits were found to be appropriate. We were lucky to be on good terms with a local picture framing shop who have supplied us with off-cuts of 2mm card from which to build the models. Downloaded sheets of stone and brick paper have been used to cover the card where necessary and OHP film supplied by a Trustee has been very successful for glazing the windows.

Donations of scale vehicles and many unpainted figures have enabled us to populate the station and nearby shopping street, albeit with some burning of midnight oil to paint the population.

The two tracks are powered from a donated H&M - DC twin controller and are isolated from each other and all sidings. Dead zones are provided towards the ends of each platform to cause the trains to stop in the station. Push buttons are available for the public to start the trains running around the loops. We were also concerned about leaving the trains



in view on the platforms, so electronic timer units have been fitted to cause the trains to 'hide' at the ends of the loops, out of site of the public until a slot meter designed for sunbeds and bought second hand receives a donation of 20p. The trains then appear from each end and stop at the platforms. If the buttons are pressed the trains move off, or if no button is operated within a couple of minutes the electronic timers do the job anyway. When the 20p time of 5 minutes expires, the circuits move the trains into their hiding positions.

The basic construction work took about 10 months, work was carried out 2 days per week in the museum with model building being constructed at home. We were able to open

Except for the purchase of new track all model materials have been sourced second-hand from local dealers and donations from the public. Materials for the baseboard were purchased from local builders merchants, the main frame being substantial 4 x 2 timber with 12 mm MDF board as the base for the whole model. To preserve security and keep the model clean, the whole station area is covered with an Aluminium and Perspex frame which can be hinged up to give

the model to the general public for Easter 2014 although more work has been carried out until very recently.

Visitors have commented very favourably on the model, it is surprising how many remember coming on their annual holidays up the line to Ilfracombe back in the 1960's. Overall we are pleased with the results and have been forgiven for extending the area we needed. The model has also been able to add some much needed funds to the Museum via the collection of 20 pence's. The Museum is open each weekday from 10.00am until 3.00pm, this is extended to closing at 4.00pm during the school holiday period, and from 10.00am to 1.00pm on Saturdays. Admission is free, we look forward to greeting you.

THE NORTH DEVON RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY

by Combe Rail member and Vice-chair of the Tarka Rail Association, John Burch

The present Barnstaple station was once a junction. Beyond the current buffer stops two routes diverged. One route ran on towards Bideford, Torrington and ultimately to Halwill Junction. The other route crossed the River Taw by a distinctive iron bridge and ran to the seaside town of Ilfracombe. The line survived the Beeching cuts, but the cost of maintaining the line's 10 road level crossings, a swing bridge, the River Taw iron bridge and the Slade Tunnels, eventually caused the accountants to put an end to the line. Officially the line closed on Monday 5th October 1970, but with no Sunday service the last passenger trains actually ran on Saturday October 3rd. That wasn't quite the end though.

On Thursday 8th February 1973 a class 08 diesel shunter (probably the Barnstaple yard pilot) and two brake vans departed from Barnstaple Junction at 10.15 and proceeded to Ilfracombe and back as an engineer's Inspection special. The purpose of the trip is believed to have been to collect all remaining loose items such as seats, weighing machines, signs etc. etc. Three detonators and a red hand signal were placed on the track behind the train ¼ mile from Barnstaple Junction. On the return journey the train was to stop at the detonators until authorised to proceed towards Barnstaple. Even this wasn't quite the end.

NORTH DEVON RAILWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY
Secretary: E. J. C. DANIELL, Easter Ground Cottage, West Down, Ilfracombe

Short History of the Ilfracombe—Barnstaple Line and aims of the Society.

The Line was opened in 1874, and the Iron Bridge over the River Taw was constructed in 1870; the line is ex L. & S.W.R., and a special 0-6-0 Loco was built for the gradients by Beyer Peacock & Co, known as the Ilfracombe Goods. The gradient out of Ilfracombe is 1 in 36, the line being 15 miles long with five stations—Ilfracombe, Morteohoe, Braunton, Wrafton and Barnstaple Town, over the Iron Bridge to Barnstaple Junction, this being the B.R. Terminus.

From the turn of the century, the 0-4-4 M7 Tanks built by Dugald Drummond handled most of the traffic, with now and then a 4-4-0 T9, then came the "N" Class 2-6-0 Moguls in the War years, followed in the fifties by the 4-6-2 West Country and Battle of Britain classes. In 1964, the Ivatt 2-6-2's made an appearance, and in October, 1965 came the last steam train known as the "Exeter Flyer," hauled by British Standard Tank No. 80043; finally D.M.U.'s until the line was closed in October, 1970. The aims of the Society are the Re-opening of the Line, and bringing together of Ex Railway men, Railway enthusiasts and Railway Modelers, of which surprisingly there are quite a number in the Society. We also run Social events, and put on displays at Traction Engine Rallies and Exhibitions, and trips to other Preservation Societies.

A Limited Company was formed in May to raise the Initial Capital of £100,000 in 10p shares, minimum £5, named the North Devon Railway Co. Ltd.

An Engine fund has been started to save 2-6-4 Standard Tank No.80136

PLEASE JOIN THE SOCIETY—Contact Mr. E. J. C. Daniell (Secretary)

Please enrol me/us as a member of the Society :

Name Tel.

Life Member £20.00 Family Membership £3.50 Ordinary £1.50

OAP/Junior 50p Donation

Date..... Signed.....

The North Devon Railway Society had been formed on 26th May 1971. This group subsequently changed its name slightly to the North Devon Railway Preservation Society. Following this the North Devon Railway Company was subsequently incorporated on 19th February 1973 with the intention of restoring the line. NDRC had its registered office at Station House, The Square, Barnstaple.

The Chairman was the grandly-named Evan Llewelyn Taliesyn Cant Davies of *Elmhurst*, Chambercombe Park in Ilfracombe. He was an Ilfracombe Parish Councillor and a former City bank official with considerable experience in company matters. Other Directors were Thomas Graham Davies of '*Rockleigh*,' Morteohoe, a retired advertising consultant and proprietor of a gift shop in Morteohoe; Edward John Churchill Daniell of Easter Ground Cottage, West Down who was Secretary of the ND Railway Preservation Society and had been a railway enthusiast for many years. He was also proprietor of a

motor cycle repair business and specialised in collecting vintage motor cycles; John Kemp of

Beechcroft, East Down was a Local Government officer; John Bernard Welcombe van Dieren of 23, Old Steine, Brighton a former member of the Political Warfare Executive, Psychological Warfare Board and Special Training School for Western Operations and former P.A. to the Deputy Controller of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. He was an International Public Relations Consultant and a Director of Words in Action Limited (who were also the PR contractors to and registrars of the NDRC); Richard Mallard Simmonds of 12, Summer Gardens, East Molesey, Surrey who was a Property Consultant and Investor and Director of Dedingham Limited. The Company Secretary was Christopher Brian Carpenter of Barncroft, Ashford Nr Barnstaple and the Assistant Secretary was one P.M.Kenny. Subsequently C.A.Disney, J.A.B.Lock and R.Roberts were also listed as Directors.

On 31st December 1973 BR valued the line initially at £410,000 for which the NDRC authorised a share issue of £500,000. Subsequently the BR valuation figure increased to £750,000. A Centenary exhibition organised by NDRPS was held in Ilfracombe at Easter 1974 and over 5,000 attended. Initial response looked good and over 13,000 people responded to the appeal during the two-day exhibition.

The NDRC then formally set about trying to raise the money to buy the line with the intention of running it as a going concern. The initial share issue opened on Saturday 20th July 1974 and was advertised in a 4-page prospectus document. The date coincided with the Centenary of the opening of the line. This indicated that the project would seek to run mainly steam passenger services and also freight services. 6,987,320 shares were offered at 10p each, but allotment was to take place when application for shares to a total value of £650,000 had been received.

By the Autumn of 1974 the company was stating that it had investors from all parts of the country and in addition many from overseas. Sadly the share issue raised just £20,000 and, as is now well known, concerns were raised over misappropriation of funds. While there were further attempts to secure the line, local investors had lost faith in the plan. Of the original Directors, Bernard van Dieren died in 1974, Thomas Davies in 1980, Edward 'John' Daniell in 1984 and Evan Davies in 1986.

The track remained in place, rusting away, until the gloriously sunny Wednesday 26th February 1975 when inspection saloon DB999508 hauled by class 25 loco 25.063 ran the entire length of the line to Ilfracombe. Once at the terminus it ran round the train and returned to Barnstaple Junction – and that really was the end.

In the Summer of 1975 a start was made on demolishing Ilfracombe station with the removal of the station canopy. Track lifting and removal commenced in October 1975. The rest of the station was demolished the following year. The route was severed in the Summer of 1977 when the iron bridge over the River Taw was demolished.

A winding-up order dated 16th January 1978 finally brought the North Devon Railway Company project to an end and an investigation was launched. In March 1978 a Creditor's meeting was held in Exeter by the official receiver. The company affairs were subsequently investigated by the DTI under section 165 of the Companies Act 1948 and a 107 page report was eventually issued during 1979. In 1977 the station area site was sold to the American PALL Corporation who began building their new Ilfracombe filter factory the following year on the cleared station site. When it opened in 1979 all traces of Ilfracombe station had been obliterated – or had they?

The station was built on a plateau high above the town. Here the main station buildings were levelled, but below the plateau, much remains. Pedestrian access to the station was available via two walkways. One led from Station Road and another from Belmont Road.

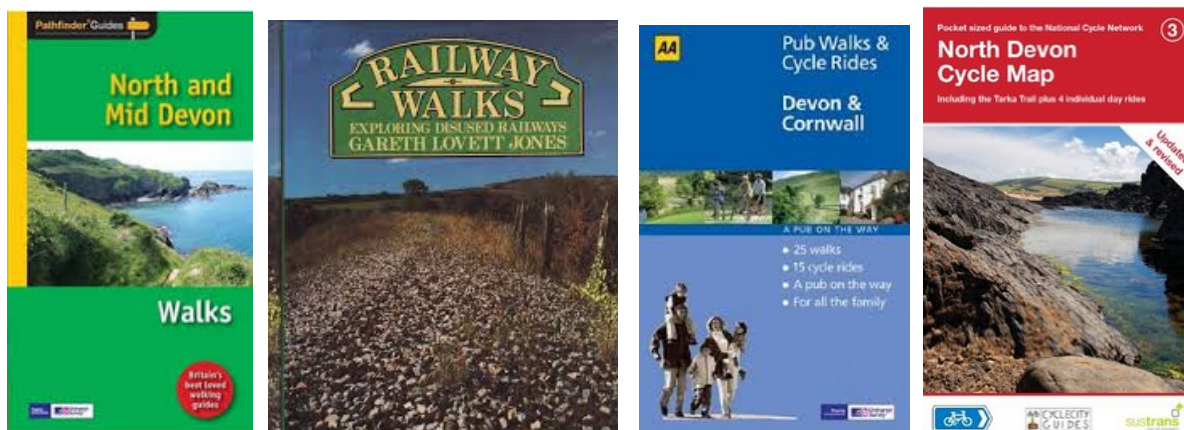
Evidence of both of these entrances remains. The Station Road entrance was at the end of Lamb Park and is now behind the boundary fence for the PALL factory. Incredibly everything here remains – the railway concrete fences, the steps, handrails, lamp standards, notice posts and even some of the wiring cables. Houses constructed for railway workers in Ilfracombe also still exist. There were also railway facilities for dairy products and an abattoir and even railway booking offices in the town. Most histories of the line ignore all this.

The railway track bed from Ilfracombe is well preserved. It was leased in 1983 to the Devon Wildlife Trust, remade and topped with fine stone as a nature trail. Bridges and the Slade Tunnel are also well preserved. The Devon Wildlife Trust reduced their input into the area and on 24th April 1996 a meeting took place between the DWT and North Devon District Council. The DWT decided not to renew their lease of the old railway line and responsibility for maintaining the railway track bed path moved to Devon County Council, but North Devon Coast and Countryside service undertook this on their behalf. North Devon District Council meanwhile were responsible for management of vegetation either side of the path. Subsequently in the late 1990s the track bed became National Cycle route No.27.

DEVON RAILWAY WALKS

Combe Rail member Gary Best rounds up some of the best maps and guides for railway walks in Devon

The following maps and guide books are available and cover most railway walks in Devon and other disused railways. They are also useful for historical reference.



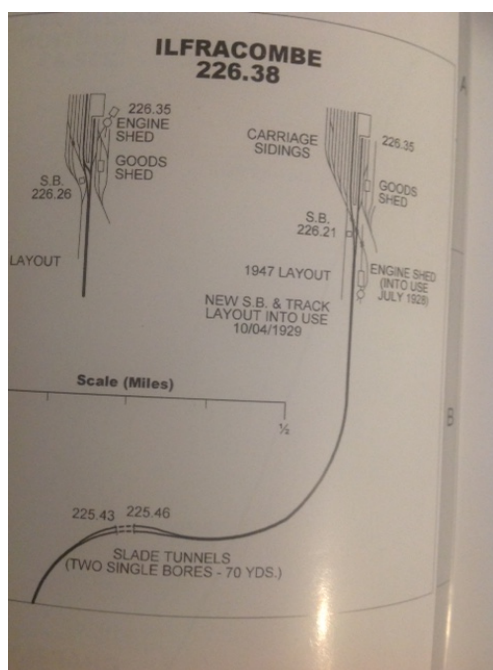
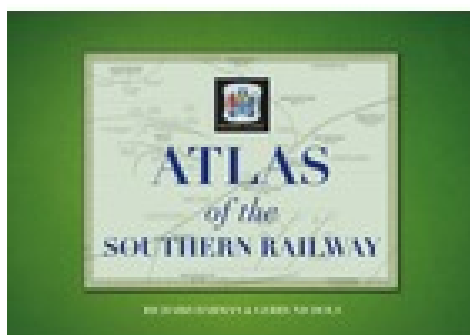
There are other books which cover the rest of the UK disused railways. You never know what you might find along the way, old signal or mile posts.



The Tarka Line books (*published by our friends, the Tarka Rail Association*) are available from The Stationmaster's Cafe at Barnstaple station. They are a very interesting read and a well-informed guide to the walks covered.



And just published, Ian Allan's Atlas of the Southern railway includes some fascinating historical track plans:



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