



Combe Rail members' magazine - issue #4 Winter 2017

(Combe Rail CIO - Charitable Incorporated Organisation 1164083)

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR MEMBERS!

May we take this opportunity to wish you all a happy and healthy 2017. We would like to thank you for your support in 2016, and gently to remind you that 2017 membership subscriptions are now due. Those of you who haven't renewed yet can do so [here](#).

IN THIS ISSUE....

... We have an exclusive preview of the artwork we've commissioned for the TawLink light railway. We reveal some railway artefacts found lurking in the undergrowth at Ilfracombe Station. Chris James shares the source photos and plans he used in the construction of his magnificent Ilfracombe Station model, Project 22's David Forster announces the rebirth of an iconic Ilfracombe line loco, and CR member Dan Iannone explains how to go about restoring historic railway masonry.

NEWS

Two dates for your diary:

Combe Rail has been invited again to attend the annual Ilfracombe Model Railway Society exhibition in the Landmark Pavilion on Saturday April 15th.

Our Annual General Meeting will take place at 2pm on Saturday 9th September 2017, also in the Landmark Pavilion.

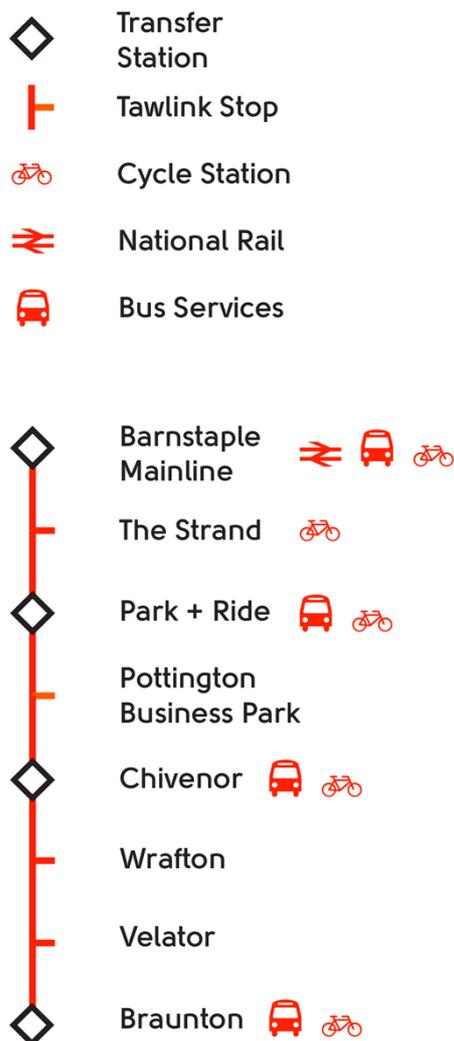
The AGM will be preceded, as it was last year, by a public railway exhibition.

We hope to see you there!



TawLink >

Light Rail Service



TAW LINK LIGHT RAILWAY

We met last year with Ellen Vernon, NDC's Economic Development Manager, in order to assess options for reopening part of the former Barnstaple-Ilfracombe railway. She (and other NDC officers present) were strongly of the opinion that all the region's heritage railway capacity and energies will be taken up (and rightly so) by the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway's ambitious expansion programme. However, great interest was shown in the possibility of reinstating a commercial Light Railway between Barnstaple and Braunton. As anyone who lives in or has visited the area will know, the A361 is unable to cope even with current traffic levels. Meanwhile, there are extensive new housing developments in progress alongside the former railway route at Chivenor, with more housing outlined in the 2014 Braunton Local Plan, along with expansion of the business parks at Wrafton and Pottington.

We published a [draft proposal](#) last year, and have now extended our proposed line from Barnstaple Strand to Barnstaple (National Rail) Station (the proposed light rail vehicles will be capable of street-running along Long Bridge and Sticklepath Terrace to connect with the national network.) We will shortly be publishing a dedicated TawLink website, and in order to present our plans clearly and professionally, we have commissioned graphics and 3D artwork from CR Kyle Chivers of [Firethought](#).

The Ilfracombe line opened in 1874 as a Light Railway. To re-open part of it as a 21st-century light railway is not only extremely necessary (in terms of local infrastructure) but also entirely appropriate. Combe Rail's heritage remit will not be forgotten in these plans, and historical interpretation will be installed along the entire route.

DISCOVERIES AT ILFRACOMBE STATION

Last September, Pall's Facilities Manager, Dave Courtney, kindly authorised the removal of undergrowth from the former pedestrian access steps to Ilfracombe Station (see Devon Belle#3.) Whilst brush-cutting through forty years of brambles, Steve Wightman (Pall's maintenance contractor) stumbled across two items of railway origin, which he kindly passed on to us.



(Photos John Burch)

On the left is an enamelled (Southern Railway-era?) lampshade, identical to the one which can still be seen atop its concrete lamp post just behind Pall's perimeter fence. On the right is (we think) a permanent way lookout's horn. Any group of track workers working on a live line would appoint a lookout. When a train approached, the lookout would blow the horn loudly enough to be heard above the noise of shovels, hammers and drills. If any reader can supply more information, or can hazard a guess at the origin of the horn (BR? SR? LSWR?) we would be pleased to know more.

ILFRACOMBE STATION IN 4mm scale

Anyone who attended last year's Ilfracombe Model Railway Society's exhibition in the Landmark Pavilion cannot fail to have been impressed by Chris James' magnificent 4mm scale model of Ilfracombe Station. Chris has generously shared some of his source photos and CAD drawings [here](#).



In 2007 I visited the Ilfracombe Model Railway Club Exhibition. I was impressed with their model of the station and it inspired me to start designing a layout that would be as accurate as possible to line and level of the original as well as the buildings.

(Chris' model in 2016. Photo John Burch)

I used three books to research the line:

The Barnstaple and Ilfracombe Railway by Colin Maggs
 Branch Line To Ilfracombe by Vic Mitchell and Keith Smith
 The Ilfracombe Line by John Nicholas

From the first book I established the gradients, the station platform being 1/300.

The Ilfracombe Line was the most used, it contains a BR plan of the station. I scanned this into Autocad and produced a 1/76 plan of the station complex, see drawings below, some 24ft long.



From the plan I realised I would have to scratch build the double slips which meant I would have to use code75 rails. All the buildings were drawn in Autocad to full size and reduced to scale. This involved counting blocks as in the engine shed. They were all scratch built mainly using Scalescenes paper although I had to make the window surrounds for the goods shed from scratch. The station canopy was scratch built using Plasticard Styrene (pictured above.) The stanchions were different in the original Victorian part of the canopy (*the extension was added by the Southern Railway in 1929.*) I used Dapol canopy parts here, from the extension platform where 2 different stanchions were used. The steps leading up to the station are made from card.

CLASS 22 REBORN



(D6327 at Ilfracombe, July 1964 photo R.C Riley)

The Class 22 North British diesel-hydraulic locomotives were built in 1958, with the intention that they would replace ageing steam locomotives on West Country branch lines. They were a regular sight on the Ilfracombe branch in the early 1960s. Sadly many of the lines for which they were built were then closed in the Beeching cuts. The class were relegated to ECS movements at Paddington and finally cut up in 1972. One of the fifty-eight members of the class, D6319 was purchased for preservation, but was tragically cut up at Swindon Works through an administrative error. Now the Project Class 22 Society has been formed, to resurrect this extinct class with a new-build loco. Project 22's David Forster takes up the story...

We at the 'Project Class 22 Society' are a group of like-minded enthusiasts from different backgrounds who, having seen the successes of new-builds of steam locomotives in the UK, had the idea of similarly recreating a diesel locomotive. First proposed in March 2014, 'Project 22' was remarkably conceived through a Facebook Group (*like Combe Rail - Ed.*) The group has subsequently attracted key volunteers specialising in design engineering, project management, marketing, publicity and legal competence.

As a North British Locomotive Company mainline diesel locomotive of any type is missing in the ranks of railway preservation, it was decided that one of these, a 1,100hp Type 2 locomotive with hydraulic transmission - later known as Class 22 - would be the favoured choice as it is the simplest in terms of design and technology. Class 22s roved far and wide over the former GWR network, and we are collecting many hundreds of photographs of them, handling duties such as hauling coal in the Dean Forest, milk in central Devon, branch trains in Cornwall and demolition trains on the former S&D lines.

Although we haven't many pictures of Class 22s north of Barnstaple, Alan Edwards took some, and reminisces:

"I bought a British Railways Circular Tour Ticket valid from 14th June 1964. It was a three-part ticket that had tear-off vouchers stapled into a card folder: I still have the folder with the last voucher ticket intact. The



journeys were Guildford to Birkenhead, Birkenhead to Ilfracombe, and Ilfracombe to Guildford ... and the adult fare for this circular tour was £7 and one shilling! I was working at The Home & Colonial Stores at Guildford at the time, and this was my Summer Holiday. I stayed with my Uncle and Auntie at Birkenhead, also visiting many places along the North Wales area, before taking a

mammoth journey from Birkenhead to Ilfracombe. It was at Ilfracombe where I saw D6316 and took the opportunity to take the accompanying photograph; then it was back home via the Southern route to Guildford via Woking. Sadly, I didn't take many photos and didn't keep a note of dates etc. I would say it was June 1964, but sadly cannot put an actual day to it.

"One more memory of travelling from Birkenhead to Ilfracombe stays with me. The reason that I headed all the way up to Ilfracombe was that my brother was in the RAF at Chivenor (Wrafton Station) and lived at Braunton, so I was making a visit to him and his family at that time. I broke my journey at Exeter and caught an early morning Devon General route 19A bus to Christow, to take a photo of the disused Christow Station. The Circular Tour Ticket was valid for three months from 14th June 1964. As I had a two-week holiday I must have been back home before the end of June. They are great memories; all I wish is that digital cameras had been invented way back in the 1960's instead of the basic camera and rolls of film (plus the low wages that I had in those days.)"

Alan's fondness for those days is commonly felt by those behind 'Project 22' and spurs us on to gather such experiences in order to build our locomotive (D6358) as authentically as possible. Much of the Society's work is "behind the scenes" at present, as we plan and consolidate the task. We have a very attractive website at www.class22newbuild.co.uk, where more information can be obtained. If you know of any way you, or others you know, might be able to help us, we will be very pleased to hear from you. Who knows – one day our Class 22 might be trundling along the West Somerset or South Devon railways, not too far away from you, ... or even on a low-loader clogging the streets of Ilfracombe!



RESTORING TORRINGTON STATION COALING-STAGE

The railway from Bideford to Torrington was built in 1872 by James Taylor, who two years later won the contract to build the Ilfracombe line. The handsome granite station building at Torrington survives today as the [Puffing Billy Restaurant](#). Two buildings of similar construction and vintage survive on the Ilfracombe branch: Braunton goods shed, and the slightly later (1898) Barnstaple Town station. Since 2008 the [Tarka Valley Railway](#) has been busy restoring railway infrastructure at Torrington. Torrington stonemason, TVR volunteer, and CR member Dan Iannone tells us how he helped restore the former coaling-stage.

In the winter of 2015 I saw an advert in the North Devon Journal from the TVRG who were recruiting volunteers to join the existing team with the restoration project. I was keen to get involved as I knew I could help with certain jobs there, one of which was the clearance and restoration of the old coaling platform.



As I am stonemason this was a perfect project for me to start with. I have a keen interest in historical masonry and I like to see it being restored in a sympathetic manner using traditional methods and materials. Historically all stone structures were built using lime mortar, where its use dates back to Egyptian times and perfected by the Romans. Lime mortar is often looked upon today as “something they used to use” and that cement is a modern equivalent that will do the same job and is cheaper. Yes, cement might be cheaper but as far as stone and soft bricks are concerned it is the worst possible thing that could be used and will eventually damage the masonry which can lead to costly repairs.

In a nutshell, lime is breathable which is needed in solid wall construction, it is flexible which helps with movement in the masonry and it allows trapped moisture to escape out of the wall. Stone does retain moisture believe it or not, even hard stone like granite will have a small amount of moisture present inside. Lime is the perfect mortar to deal with this and should still be used, even in modern stone wall construction.

When the coaling stage was first assessed it was apparent that years of neglect had caused a lot of damage. Trees were growing out of the top of the platform and cracks had formed in the masonry from the stress of the tree roots pushing down. It was decided that it would be cleared and repaired in two phases, paying attention to the upper section first which had the most damage.



Firstly the trees were felled leaving many stumps to be dug out by hand as plant machinery would have been too brutal for the structure. This exposed a concrete block bunker which is believed was added at a later date to help with loading bigger tenders on steam engines. This was removed piece by piece by myself and other volunteers as it served no purpose to the group.

Once the upper section was completely clear, the focus was then put on removing the cement mortar pointing from the stone work. This was done initially with hand tools to inspect the strength of the masonry and then proceeded cautiously with power tools. Once all the old cement pointing had been removed, it was evident that some areas had been rebuilt with just cement but other areas showing evidence of the original lime mortar.

Choosing the right lime mortar for repair can be tricky as different forms have benefits and disadvantages and sometimes a little trial and error is needed to establish the best one for repair.

As the masonry had suffered from the cement pointing, an 'air lime' was chosen to be the most sympathetic for repair. The whole repair was done over several weeks by volunteering on a Thursday when it was possible for me to get free time from my own work.

The first phase of repair was then completed and air lime mortar appears to be doing its job and giving the coaling stage a fresh new look.



(Photos 1 & 3 Dan Iannone, 2 Rod Garner, 4 Guy Wareham)

You can see more of Dan's work at Sanctuary Stone Masonry
