



## Combe Rail members' magazine - issue #7 Autumn 2017

(Combe Rail CIO - Charitable Incorporated Organisation 1164083)



### IN THIS ISSUE....

*...Robin Webster shares his DMU cab views of a journey to Ilfracombe in July 1969, there's an update on preserved locomotives known to have used the line, and we report on two more railways that might have been - the Braunton-Saunton branch line and the Hillsborough Mountain Railway*



### 2017 Railway Exhibition

Our second annual Railway Exhibition on 9th September was a great success. Ilfracombe Model Railway Society brought along three layouts, and other exhibitors included the West Somerset Railway, Lynton & Barnstaple Railway, Lynton & Lynmouth Cliff Railway, Instow Signal Box, Ilfracombe and Braunton Museums and, from the pre-railway transport era, Arlington Court Carriage Museum. The p-way lookout's horn discovered at Ilfracombe station site last year was on display, and one of our younger visitors produced the first successful toot from it in 50 years! Thanks to all the CR members who attended.



## TAW LINK NEWS



The TawLink display at our exhibition provoked great interest, and we spent much of the day explaining our plans to the public and answering their questions.



The next step for TawLink is a "pre-feasibility" study - an independent, professional assessment of the proposal's business case and technical challenges.



For our exhibition, we created a petition to NDC, with the request:

*We support the proposal by Combe Rail CIO for a light rail service between Barnstaple and Braunton, and we urge North Devon Council to commission a pre-feasibility study.*

All the visitors we spoke to were keen to sign our petition, and it is intended to supplement this with an online petition in due course.

Following the statement of support for TawLink which we received from the Tarka Rail Association, we have also received a positive response from the North Devon Public Transport Users' Group:

*NDPTU believes that Local Government should welcome constructive critique of existing public transport provision and the exploration of new ideas for its delivery. It therefore appreciates TawLink's interest in North Devon's provision and its recognition that facilities for transport into and out of Barnstaple town centre are long overdue for modernisation. While NDPTU favours across-the-board improvement and integration of the totality of provision, we welcome TawLink's appetite for the reform and modernisation of a significant part of it.*

The TawLink display boards will be on show in Braunton Museum from 11th to 25th November, and we have been invited to give a TawLink presentation to the Devon Railfuture conference in Crediton on 25th November. This will be at 2pm at the Boniface Centre, and CR members interested in attending should email [info@combe-rail.org.uk](mailto:info@combe-rail.org.uk)

**railfuture**

the independent campaign for a better passenger and freight rail network



## VIEW FROM A DMU

In July 1969, Robin Webster made a return journey along the line, and took a series of fine colour photos through the cab window. These photos often appear singly on Facebook pages, so we contacted Robin to ask his permission to publish the complete set, and to ask what else he remembered of the holiday:

*The memory is more or less lacking - it was 48 years ago! We stayed, for a week I think, at Coulsworthy Guest House (now no longer) above Combe Martin. In the hallway were leaflets extolling the virtues of Coulsworthy mineral water, which could be shipped via the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway. This was closed 34 years earlier! I still have one somewhere. We visited most of the local attractions, which included a ride on the railway from Barnstaple to Ilfracombe and back. Specific memories of the ride are lacking, it could have been a return trip in the other direction, but I don't think so.*



Pottington, looking west towards Chivenor



Braunton station, at the former up platform



Near Knowle



Stoney Bridge crossing



The tight curves at South Dean Farm



The descent from Morteheo



Into Slade tunnel



The first view of Ilfracombe station, the Bristol Channel, and Wales



The final approach to Ilfracombe



Looking south from Ilfracombe platform

## ILFRACOMBE LINE LOCOMOTIVES - THEN AND NOW

In Devon Belle #5 we identified some of the surviving preserved locomotives which once used the Ilfracombe line. With a couple more having been identified, here are some then-and-now photos of eleven Bulleid light pacifics which escaped the cutter's torch.

### 34010 Sidmouth



Climbing Mortehoe bank in 1950, ph. C.R.L.Coles



Sidmouth's boiler on the SVR 2017, ph. N.Thompson

### 34016 Bodmin



c.1949 at Ilfracombe, Colin Runnals coll.



On the Mid-Hants Railway in 2005, ph.Charles Moorhen

### 34023 Blackmore Vale



c1955 at Ilfracombe ph. unknown



On the Bluebell railway in 2014, ph. Steve Sedgwick

### 34028 Eddystone



c1955 at Mortehoe, ph. unknown



On the Swanage Railway in 2013, ph. Dave Deane

## 34046 Braunton



1st September 1947 at Ilfracombe, ph.S.C.Nash



On the MHR in 2013 ph. Dave Deane

## 34058 Sir Frederick Pile



c1955 climbing Ilfracombe bank ph. unknown



On the Avon Valley Rly in 2006 ph. Gilletts Crossing

## 34059 Sir Archibald Sinclair



Departing Mortehoe in 1951 p. R.J. Sellick



On the Bluebell Railway in 2010 ph. Roger Carvell

## 34067 Tangmere



At Foxhunters in 1962 ph. Peter W. Gray



On a charter at Wymondham 2012 ph. ukrailways1970

## 34070 Manston



Barnstaple Junction c1963 ph. unknown



On the Swanage Railway 2008 ph. Mark V. Pike

## 34072 257 Squadron

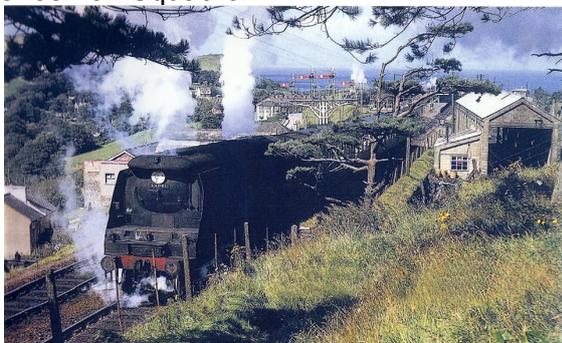


Ilfracombe c1963 ph. unknown



North York Moors Railway 1991 ph. unknown

## 34081 92 Squadron



Ilfracombe c1963 ph. unknown



Nene Valley Railway 2017 ph. Kingsley Harris

Altogether 110 Bulleid light pacifics were built, and 20 of them survive today in various stages of restoration. Besides the 11 pictured above, some of the remaining 9 survivors may have used the Ilfracombe line. We would be very interested to receive photos of any of these on the line:

- 34007 Wadebridge
- 34027 Taw Valley
- 34039 Boscastle
- 34051 Winston Churchill
- 34053 Sir Keith Park
- 34073 249 Squadron
- 34092 Wells
- 34101 Hartland
- 34105 Swanage

## SOME MORE EXOTIC TRANSPORT SCHEMES FOR ILFRACOMBE

In DB#6 we reported on Lord Wakefield's 1970 proposal that the soon-to-close Ilfracombe line should be re-laid as a narrow-gauge tourist railway (Lord Wakefield was a board member of Shapland and Petter in Barnstaple, and was also Chairman of the Ravenglass and Eskdale Miniature Railway in the Lake District.) A follow-up story in the North Devon Journal Herald reveals further ambitions for a new branch line from Braunton to Saunton, whilst a report from 1973 unveils engineer Wilfred Fyson's proposals for a Hillsborough Mountain Railway.

### Ilfracombe tramway on old rail-line workable idea

Devon County Council's tourism committee feels that a tramway link between Barnstaple and Ilfracombe might be a feasible proposition.

The committee plans to get the reaction of North Devon councils to the idea, as a replacement for the doomed railway line due to close on October 3.

Under the plan, old trams would be used as rolling stock on the 12-mile line.

Barnstaple Town Council's general purposes committee thinks the plan is worth further consideration.

The committee is also looking into the possibility of running a narrow-gauge line from Barnstaple to Saunton—an idea first raised by Lord Wakefield, a director of Shapland and Petter Ltd.

This would require a new narrow-gauge line being built from Braunton to Saunton.

NDJH 1970

### Scenic railway for Hillsborough 'resort boost'

A scheme for the development of Hillsborough, Ilfracombe, involving the construction of a scenic railway, has been devised by a 75-year-old retired engineer.

Mr. Wilfred Fyson, of Barnstaple Road, Ilfracombe, wants the council to construct nearly a mile of narrow-gauge track winding up to the summit of the hill.

It would cost less than the rejected £120,000 cable ride and would attract many more visitors to the town, he says.

He has calculated the gradient at about 1-in-10 and he says this would call for a rack train of the type used on Snowdon. It would not only be inoffensive, he says, but would attract enthusiasts from all over the country.

He suggests a route leading from Rapparee Lane, winding up the side of the hill to a tiny station in a hollow at the summit.

Mr. Charles Disney says he will be putting the plan before the council if investigation proves it to be a feasible idea.

NDJH 1973

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