The newsletter for Exmoor Associates CIC Issue 28, June 2021

We are now a Community Interest Company

The Registrar of Companies and the CIC Regulator have accepted our application to convert to a Community Interest Company with an effective date of 18th May 2021.

This will not make any difference to shareholdings in the company but does affect the way shares can be transferred and other terms and conditions in the original shareholders agreement.

Our new Articles of Association as agreed by the CIC regulator define the rights of shareholders and the company's obligations towards them. Acceptance of the newly issued CIC shares and any further shares issued will imply acceptance of the requirements of the Articles of Association. A copy of our full Articles of Association is available on request and on page two of this edition is our benefit statement that formed the basis of our CIC application.

As part of this change of our legal status we have updated the frequently asked questions (FAQ's) on our web site. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions that could be added and that would be helpful to others.

Keith Vingoe has pointed out to us that the way we announced the result of the voting on the Special Resolution in trackbed Trails 27 was incorrect in that we should have given the actual number of votes cast rather than the number of shareholders who voted for each resolution. To correct this oversight the votes cast were - For Res 1. 407,180, Against 5,100, For Res 2. 410,630, Against 1,550, Abstention 100.

Just to clarify matters, as reported in TT27

323 shareholders voted for resolution 1 (Arts), 3 shareholders voted against with 1 abstention.
325 shareholders voted for resolution 2 (CIC), 2 shareholders voted against.

Notice of next Meeting and L&B Gala

The L&B Trust is holding a gala over the weekend of 25-26 September including its AGM. We shall also be holding a meeting and trackbed visits spread and duplicated over the two days to enable members to participate in both our and the Trust events.

Our meeting will be held on the morning of the Saturday 25 September. Details of the venue and events will be communicated in due course but the above details are of necessity subject to all Covid restrictions being lifted and the country settling down to some sort of a new normal.

As we now have over four hundred members it would be helpful if you could send an email or brief note to say if you intend coming to our meeting as the anticipated numbers may well necessitate a change from our usual meeting venue. We intend to make lunch available after the meeting and closer to the intended date we will confirm and ask for an idea of the number staying for lunch and socialising.

Spot the not so deliberate errors from issue 27

In the last issue we mentioned that we had an anomaly pointed out by Ian Fraser in the aerial footage on the opening page of our website that gives a birds eye view of the trackbed from Barnstaple to The Old Station house Inn at Blackmoor Gate.

That started something because since then we belatedly found that several mistakes had crept into issue 27. The original anomaly is that at approximately 2.40 minutes into the video a car is seen speeding backwards alongside the adjacent road. The reason this occurred is that for continuity the video is shown running from Barnstaple to northwards but the drone footage for that section was taken southwards. We then discovered that in that video Chelfham Barton is spelt incorrectly in one of the captions. Then to compound the errors on page 2 of TT27 the same Palliser photo has been accidentally repeated and the last digit is missing from Tony's telephone number on the last page.

The Directors feel they have an obligation to publish this document explaining to the shareholders how the CIC's activities will benefit the local community and which formed an integral part of our application to the regulator.

COMMUNITY INTEREST STATEMENT

Beneficiaries

We, the undersigned, declare that the company will carry on its activities for the benefit of the community, or a section of the community.
In particular, the Company's activities will be carried on for the benefit of the residents of the town of Barnstaple and the Villages of the Yeo Valley in North Devon. Also, ultimately there will be the substantial public benefit of enhanced leisure facilities for holiday visitors to the area, and to residents of the United Kingdom at large who are interested in the history of narrow-gauge railway transport.

Activities & Related Benefit
How will the activity benefit the community?

In the first instance the Company will continue to seek out opportunities to negotiate the purchase of the abandoned trackbed of the narrow-gauge railway which ran through the valley, and to restore its architectural features for historical interest.
The community will benefit from employment opportunities during the reconstruction of the many engineering features of the railway.

There will also be opportunities for volunteer groups to assist in the restoration of the trackbed itself, and for historical research into lost elements of its important features.

In due course the acquisition of the entirety of the land once owned by the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Company south of Wistlandpound Reservoir will enable Exmoor Associates CIC to re-establish this protected transport route to serve the community locally and at large.

The local community will benefit from employment opportunities associated with the operation of the re-established railway.

The wider economy of this part of North Devon will benefit from the increased tourism which the re-establishment of this historic transport link will bring to the area.

The residents of the town of Barnstaple and the Villages of the Yeo Valley will benefit from having improved off-road public transport for schools, commuting, and shopping.

The Company does not intend to generate any surplus, but if one does arise it will be reinvested in the business.

Signed by all directors in office on the date of the application.

Michael Buse
Anthony Brown
David Cameron
Paul Stileman
Andrew Hearn

Recent News Odds & Ends

Certificates and Share Issues

Now that we are a CIC replacement share certificates will be issued in the new company name. These will incorporate any previously issued certificate values into one document. This may take a little while so please be patient, shareholdings are kept on a central database with an independent backup and will not be lost.

Tree clearance at Rayleigh Weir

Local tree surgeon Christian de la Cour has removed a tree from the river Yeo which was threatening to fall into a neighbours garden on the opposite side of the river.

Chelfham Viaduct

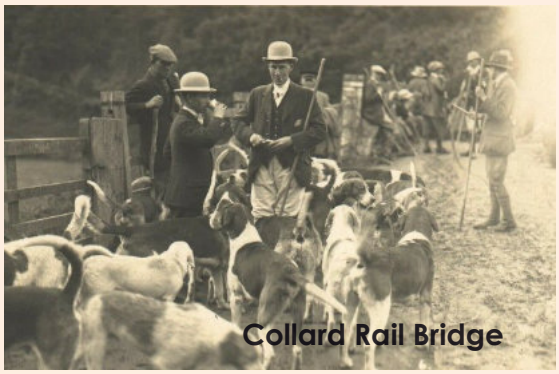
Just occasionally. If you happen to be in the right place at the right time, you get the opportunity to walk across Chelfham Viaduct. Andy Hearn struck lucky on the 4th April and took this photo looking along the viaduct towards Distant Point.

Different Times.....

It seems barbaric now but the otter hounds once toured Devon's rivers. The photos show a Hunt meet on the River Yeo 3rd July 1922,

It seems that these are the Cheriton otter hounds, it has been suggested that they were kennelled for a while at Pilton, more precisely at Alan's Hill, lower Raleigh, there is a book about their history but its quite pricey and the read up suggests that they hunted many rivers in and around Devon so possibly they were based in different areas for a season at a time. I also read that the pack of hounds in Tarka the Otter could have been based on the Cheriton pack as this was all about the same time.

Andy Hearn (with thanks to Dave Tooke for the photos)


Collard Rail Bridge

Collard Rail Bridge

Collard Rail Bridge

Blackwell's Bridge

Odds & Ends Continued

Chelfham Station

24th April saw the demolition of the last part of the incongruous extension to Chelfham Station. It's been a long time coming but the result is really impressive.
Our congratulations to the L&B Trust volunteers on a magnificent job.

Land Purchases in the South

Having recently missed out on a section of trackbed (See Trackbed Trails 26 pages 4 & 5) which you may be aware failed because the owner had several linked deals going on at the same time which all fell through when the chain collapsed.
The good news is that whilst this was very disappointing we had other irons in the fire. As I mentioned at the time we have three other sections of trackbed we are closing in on, the first one is very active and an offer has been placed and we are agonisingly waiting to hear some news, the other two are getting closer, family owned they are waiting for the land to be registered at H. M. Land Registry. We have agreed a figure and then we can hopefully complete the deal.These transactions represent many years of discussions with the owners but at long last we are all optimistic that finally they will go through.
As well as these trackbed sections we are also looking at some parcels of land that will connect up to existing land we own to vastly improve the long term enjoyment of future visitors to the railway in the south. Now that we are a CIC we need to cater for the bigger picture as well as the railway, we have an opportunity now so grab it if you can as it might not be available when you want it. This land is not trackbed and we have thought long and hard if it is right for us to use money given for trackbed purchase but in this instance we are all convinced you will approve of what we are trying to achieve. We feel it could be detrimental to reveal the location of the land yet as if it becomes common knowledge we may lose it.
Sorry that we cannot be more specific with the above but the majority of you will understand why we cannot reveal the location of the various sections. Needless to say as soon as we have news you will be the first ones to know. I will be contacting more land owners in the hope that further sections will become available. We still have plenty of challenges ahead but the jigsaw is gradually being completed and without your help we would have nothing.
We still cannot believe your generosity in purchasing Bratton Fleming Station and then the appeal for trackbed directly afterwards. Those funds still remain available for track purchase with other residual funds.

Mike Buse

Riparian Rights

As you will gather from the brief history below (pages 7-11) EA owns several sections of the banks of the River Yeo. The boundary extends to the centre of the river.

A landowner (and that will include all shareholders) may fish his own river provided it is by legal methods with the appropriate licences. If you wish to take advantage of this just let us know for suitable access to be arranged.

THE "NEW" YEO VALLEY TRUST

Exmoor Associates' sole purpose since its inception has been to secure ownership of L&B Trackbed, and in recent years, only in the Southern Sector. Potential shareholders knew that scarce resources could not be made available for restoration of bridges, stations, fencing and general maintenance of the acquired property to assist the work of the volunteers when external spending was required.

So, in 2009 the Yeo Valley Trust was established with a limited remit for charitable fund raising, but the call on its finances has necessarily been very limited, until recently, principally being the funding of the work to restore Snapper Halt to its former glory.

The Yeo valley Trust has supported Exmoor Associates by giving grants towards the renovation and improvement of the Snapper Halt site

Things changed when Bratton Station came again onto the market at short notice, and with the decision of the L&B Trust not to attempt its purchase for the Railway. The Directors of EA launched an appeal which received huge, but still inadequate support, and the successful purchase was completed by releasing available additional EA shareholder funds.

Financial support for the purchase of Bratton arrived as "Donations" to EA in support of the appeal, but a donation to a non-charitable Limited Company is taxable. Hence the decision by the Directors to issue shares in recognition of the many supporters' financial contributions.

Unfortunately, there was insufficient time to rejig the "Objects" of the existing YVT, and in any case it was not at the time registered with HMRC to receive Gift-Aid. It was also the case that charities are generally unable to donate funds to a limited company, such as EA then was, and so EA has become the owners of the Bratton Station site, including the Station building. This could change should shareholders so wish, by transfer of the ownership, in order to provide the Yeo Valley Trust with an ongoing tax-free rental income.

With the conversion of EA to a Community Interest Company, together with the reconstitution of the YVT, it has become possible for funds to pass between the two partners for Charitable Purposes where the objectives of the two organisations coincide.

<u>The YVT's Objectives include:-</u>

(1) To investigate and promote for the Public Benefit the re-establishment of the Lynton & Barnstaple Narrow Gauge Railway along its original route.

(2) To support and enable, in the first instance, the rebuilding and operation of the southern section of the Railway between Barnstaple and the Wistlandpound Reservoir Visitor Centre, via Bratton Fleming, the route of which has protected status as a transport route within the N. Devon Local Plan.

(3) To facilitate, promote and encourage supervised and /or guided access along the trackbed of the former railway for the recreational enjoyment and benefit of the wider public, and for the education of students and pupils studying :-

- The unique features of the railway, its construction, history, artefacts, buildings, stations, structures and operational aspects.
- The particular landscape and environment through which the trackbed of the former railway passes, and the geology, fauna, flora and social history of the Yeo valley and its tributaries.

(4) To promote and enable disabled access to the features of the former railway, including buildings and land, where reasonably possible.

(5) To promote and encourage tourism in the area and to provide convenient access to the local network of public footpaths in and around the Yeo valley and its villages.

(6) To identify and promote local employment opportunities through the supply of goods, services, materials, expertise and labour during the reconstruction and operation of the railway.

(7) To encourage the use of a reconstructed railway for regular local and tourist travel between Barnstaple, Snapper, Chelfham, Bratton Fleming, and Wistlandpound to reduce the use of cars and their consequent carbon footprint.

The Trust has recently received registration by HMRC as a recognised Charity with substantial taxation benefits including Gift-Aid facilities. It will progress to full Charity Commission status as soon as charitable donations exceed at least £5k annually. This is a Charity Commission ruling.

It's anticipated that there will be increasing demands on trust funds as activities increase in the Southern Sector. So the trustees will be appealing for financial contributions as and when appeals are made for support for specific objectives. Ones to think about already are the reconstruction of the Bratton Station Goods Shed as a base for activities, storage, and meetings, plus the restoration of the Lynton Station diesel loco for future use in the South. Ultimately a Property Purchase Fund of considerable size is our ambition. This will enable complete properties, containing L&B Trackbed, to be purchased and re-sold. This may be the only way forward in some cases as I think we all know.

The initial Trustees are :-

John Buck,(Treasurer), Mike Buse, Dave Davies, and Tony Hobbs.

John is a retiree from the teaching profession, and past Trustee of the L&B Trust.

Mike needs no introduction!

Dave has retired from a career in engineering education, and is Founder Trustee of The Robey Trust, which has its base in Tavistock. He is a long standing member of the L&B and EA.

Tony had a career in railway engineering in both public and private sectors, a founding trustee in a local heritage trust, and is a past director of the L&B Estates Company.

The Trust will be establishing its own website in the near future, but in the meantime we suggest that potential donors make contact with the Treasurer, John Buck, who will be happy to assist with Gift-Aided Donations or proposed Legacies.

His contact details are :-The Yeo Valley Trust, 152 Florence Road, London, SW19 8TN

e-mail: johnbuck534@btinternet.com

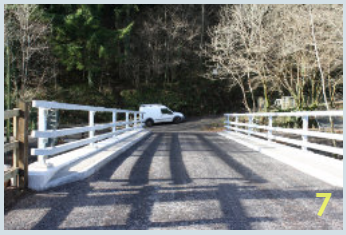
General questions about the Trust can be addressed to Tony Hobbs at :- aewhobbs@btinternet.com

Or Mike Buse at Exmoor Associates CIC:- michaelrbuse@gmail.com or 07776202105

A Brief history for new shareholders of our acquisitions over the years

Collard Bridge

In 2002 when Charles Gardner was chairman of the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Co Ltd and Mike Buse was the property director, a group of fields at Collard Bridge came up for sale at auction. One of theses had a section of the trackbed running diagonally across it. The railway company had no funds available to make a bid so Mike suggested setting up a limited company to try to buy the fields. At this time Mike Selby was company secretary of the Railway Co and Tony Brown was the fundraising trustee of the L&B Railway Trust. Inevitably they both got roped in, heavily encouraged to put money in for shares, and Exmoor Associates was born. We put in a successful bid at the auction and the first bit of trackbed was ours in October 2002.



1. Railway river bridge newly built

2. Road / rail bridge newly built

3 & 5. Road bridge at purchase

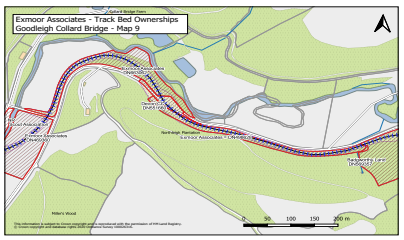
4. New weir installed by The Environment Agency

6 & 7. Road bridge swept away by floods in 2012 and subsequently replaced with a new bridge

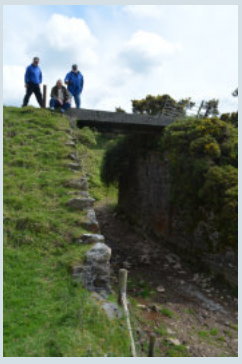
Northleigh Plantation

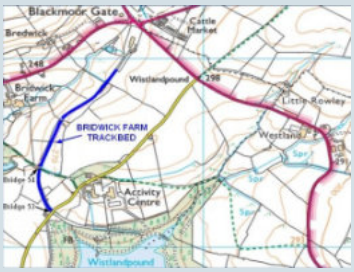
We move on to May 2004. Mike Buse is now chairman of the L&B Railway Co Ltd. The opportunity arises to purchase the section of trackbed between Skew Bridge and Budds Wood. A deal was done that involved transferring the “spare” fields that came with our auction purchase (and happened to be adjacent to Northleigh

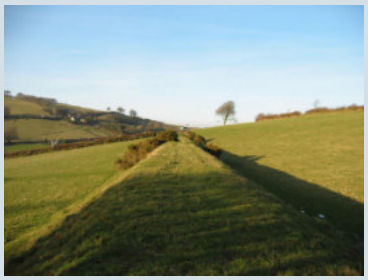
Plantation). We then owned two sections of trackbed with a tantalising short section between them. The railway went under the road at a shallow angle. The original road layout had two sharp bends so as to cross the railway nearer a right angle. The road has since be re-aligned from the original “skew”.



Blackmoor Gate to Wistlandpound Road Bridge



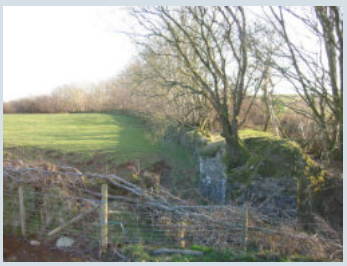


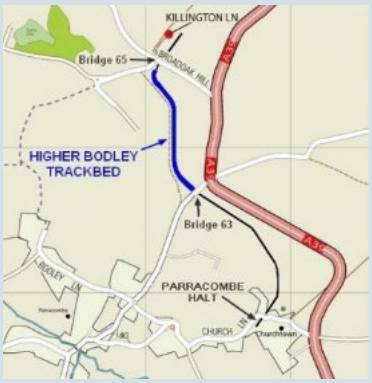


In June 2006 we successfully negotiated to buy this section. It was transferred to the L&B Trust in March 2018.

Killington Lane to Parracombe Lane

In February 2009 prolonged negotiations resulted in us acquiring the trackbed southwards from Killington Lane. This was transferred to the L&B Trust in March 2018.





Raleigh Weir

These photos were taken during a working party shortly after we purchased the trackbed in September 2009.This section, being close to Barnstaple housing estates is popular with dog walkers.

Snapper Halt

Photos showing the gradual restoration and improvement works from the purchase date in 2010 to the current view

Snapper to Blackwell's Bridge

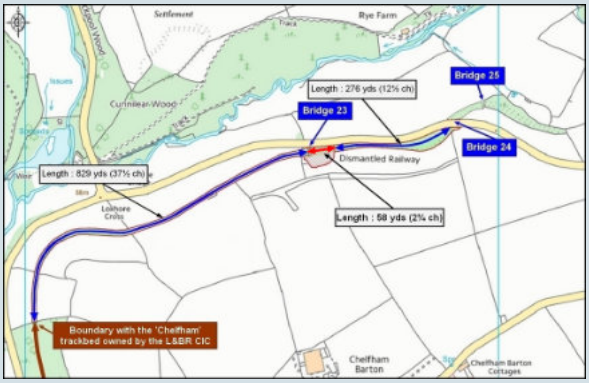
May 2011

The abutments of Blackwell's bridge are still visible in the photographs alongside and bottom right.

Below left - views along the trackbed. The trackbed was very overgrown when we acquired it, one of the first tasks we completed was clearing the vegetation to allow safe visitor access.

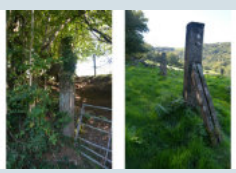
Chelfham Barton

September 2015



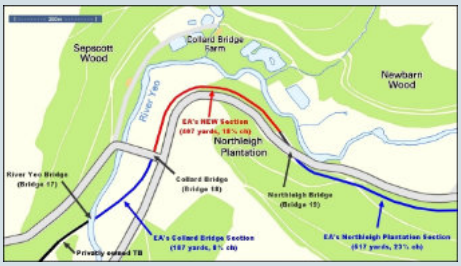
This section runs from where the L&B Trust Chelfham trackbed finishes to the Bratton Road bridge (Bridge 24)

This is probably the most diverse section we own. Starting from the Chelfham end it runs from a wooded area then opens out clinging high up on the hillside above Loxhore but gradually as the ground level rises it descends into a (very wet) valley through a quarry (not owned by EA) to eventually finish by the Bratton Road at bridge 24.



Collard Bridge - Skew Bridge
2016

This short section is actually quite significant as it is the “missing link” between our original Collard Bridge trackbed and the Northleigh Plantation length acquired two years later in 2004.



Attending members to our initial trackbed walk here held a ceremonial knocking down of the dividing wall between the sections.

After crossing the field field it sweeps around the river Yeo and heads up an embankment to meet the Bratton road, which is a bit confusing at first as the railway went under the road before the straightening out of the Skew. Some of the original bridge abutments can still be seen.

Garage / Workshop
2018

Our declared intention had always been that shareholder funds were intended for trackbed purchases only. However in 2018 and with our purchase of Snapper Halt it became apparent that there would be ongoing maintenance at issues at Snapper and some plant and tools would be required.

By chance we were offered the garage, and a short strip of land that provides two parking spaces, when the owner of one of the houses opposite was moving.

The workshop has an electricity supply and has made life much more comfortable for our volunteers.

Bratton Fleming Station November

See Trackbed Trails 26 & 27 for more details of our most recent purchase.

As soon as Covid regulations allow, we will be looking to organise a couple of Open-days at Bratton Fleming Station, by agreement with Andrew Naish, where members can view our new acquisition; these will be confirmed but are provisionally arranged for 25/26 September 2021.

In the meantime, we would ask that members do not 'cold-call', or just wander onto the site. This is Andrew's home and he can reasonably expect privacy.

Can You Help?

Exmoor Associates CIC, in common with many "not for profit" organisations relies on all the directors and participants in working parties volunteering their time (and often expertise) to keep the company active.

If you can assist with any of the following you would be most welcome:

Bookkeeping, finance, share issues and Companies House returns, publicity, publications, web site maintenance, landscaping and maintenance of our various sites.

At the moment all of the above are being covered by a handful of volunteers many of whom have been involved in various Lynton & Barnstaple Railway roles over many years and are past their prime.

If you feel you can inject some new blood into our organisation please get in touch.

WANT TO GET IN TOUCH?

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email enquiries@exmoor-associates.co.uk Tony Brown (secretary) 01822 481572
Mike Buse 07776202105 Mike Selby 01737 358120 Paul Stileman 01256 762848
David Cameron 01277 353272 Andy Hearn 01769 520492