Trackbed Trails

The newsletter for Exmoor Associates Ltd | Issue 3, Spring 2006

Firstly, an apology for the length of time since the last newsletter. Particularly given the feedback we received through last year's Tell Us survey, our efforts on keeping everyone up to date have really completely failed this year.

To start, we have produced this newsletter. Following several requests we are going to increase the frequency of the newsletter, and I aim to see that we put out at least another two during 2006.

On a happier note, please notice we have scheduled the next shareholders meeting for 22nd April. This is primarily intended as an opportunity to get to know each other and have a friendly chat. There will be some food for those hungry people out there, and anybody trying to burn off those Easter eggs will be most welcome to come along for the trackbed walk in the afternoon. If you intend to come, please let us know before April (if possible) so that we can plan for numbers.

The other notable change in 2006 is a commitment from us to improve our land management programme. We are going to get a better grasp of coordinating our effort to look after the land we have now acquired.

We would appreciate any help we can get with this - several have spoken to me or others in the team over the last couple of years expressing an interest in helping. We are now looking at developing a proper list of those interested in helping, whom we can contact whenever we plan working parties. If you want to go on the list, please get in touch with me by email, phone or in person.

Thank you to everyone for your support in 2005; we now look forward to an even greater year in 2006!

Nik Barrie, EA Chairman

(Above) Chelfham Viaduct from the road, Nov 2005

Land at Higher Bodley

Those who have read the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Magazine 77, will all no doubt have seen the piece on pages 6 & 7 regarding our current project – to purchase the section of trackbed between Killington Lane and Parracombe Lane.

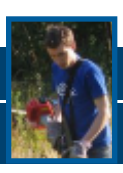
Early in 2005, Exmoor Associates made an offer to the L&BR to buy the trackbed required for this 'missing link'. After the summer, our offer was accepted, as the railway currently has a large number of priority projects on the go at once and this will enable the current pace of the overall project to be maintained. Since the agreement was made with the L&B, we have started raising funds towards this acquisition.

We are pleased to report that we are making good progress with this - including the money raised so far, pledges and loans we are now not much more than £10,000 short of the £50,000 needed to secure this essential section of the route between Woody Bay station and the outskirts of Parracombe.

Please consider if you can help us achieve this in the next few months by increasing your shareholding or subscription as we are anxious to complete this purchase before the agreement we have with the farmer lapses.

The prospect of trains running between Woody Bay station and Parracombe in the foreseeable future is now no longer a vague pipe dream. If you share this vision, then help us make it happen!

INSIDE



BEHIND THE SCENES

L&B STEAM TRAINS

SCOUT CAMP

TELL US *2005 Feedback*

In 2005 we circulated a questionnaire to all shareholders to gain feedback on the work done by Exmoor Associates. As promised, here is a breakdown of the responses.

Everyone who responded stated that they would speak highly of the work done by EA and feels proud to be a shareholder (or subscriber).
On the subject of open communication, most people felt this was being achieved.

69% of shareholders said they feel 'part of the family' at Exmoor Associates. It has always been our intention with EA to ensure it stays relatively informal and friendly. Working as a team will make us much stronger, and therefore this is an area we will be looking to develop.
85% consider that EA has an excellent reputation, with others all stating that it is improving. It is also pleasing to see that everyone who responded believes the company has a good relationship with the Railway Company.

Statistics aside, we have received a variety of very useful written feedback. The main subject that keeps cropping up is communication - in particular increased news updates. During 2005, we have had a notable increase in publicity within the L&B - posters at Woody Bay, an article in the guide book and also coverage in the railway's magazine. This year we hope to be able to build on this by increasing the number of newsletters and also the news output via the L&B magazine. The EA website is now receiving more updates, which we hope to maintain.

The next major topic was land & property acquisition. We make every effort to take on more land where opportunities arise. Since the last newsletter we have received the title deeds for the trackbed between Blackmoor and Wistlandpound. We have also negotiated for the purchase of the land at Higher Bodley.
With more EA supporters in the North Devon area, we hope to improve our local links further in coming months.

These, along with the numerous other suggestions, have all been taken on board and are being considered or put into action. Thank you to everyone who responded!

Behind The Scenes

In the second of our mini-series of short articles, providing an insight into the team members behind Exmoor Associates. This edition takes a look at **Nik Barrie**, our company chairman.

Nik has so far spent his life living in Essex, although has taken almost every available spare week in North Devon since he turned a teenager...

Having been involved in the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway project since the purchase of Woody Bay, Nik has become very involved with the project. Having moved between working on the coach 7 project, helping at exhibitions and assisting on site at Woody Bay, Nik then took on the little job of compiling the L&B's web site.

Away from the L&B, Nik has worked as a reserve volunteer for the local Wildlife Trust, and has also spent eight years as a fireman at Mangapps Farm Railway.

Since 2004 Nik has worked as a manager of South West Trains, the last year of which he has been working in a role as a manager of London Waterloo. The work in SWT has given him a very wide range of managerial experience, and has also made him adamant that Exmoor Associates must not get overloaded with paperwork or top heavy with policies and procedures - it is essential we remain focused on exactly what we're here to do.

In 2000 Nik served as a director of the L&B Railway Company for two years, and has since focused time on the development of EA. He has also done a considerable amount of work in assisting the L&B's management team and on developing the marketing of the railway.

"Since first encountering the L&B Association as a teenager, I have really been able to see a massive potential in this project and I want to do all I can to see that it happens.

In years to come I want to be able to see future generations get pleasure from the unique experience that was, and will again be, the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway."

ALL THEIR OWN: A 21 ACRES CAMP SITE ...20 years later

"It's North Devon Scouts' biggest ever project... And their £20,000 new camp site looks set to make them centre of nationwide attention.

The 21 acres of grass and woodland at Collard Bridge, four miles from Barnstaple at Snapper gives them a district base of their own for the first time.

The land used for many years for grazing cost just £17,500 and the remaining money is being spent on drainage, installation of a water supply and eventually on modern sanitation.

A rota of local troops have been formed to carry out routine maintenance of hedges and grass. And the site is being run by a committee of representatives of all sections of the movement in North Devon, the supporting group, the Scout Fellowship, and outsiders to add expert advice." *- Extracts from an article published in the North Devon Journal, July 1985*

TODAY the site is still in regular use. The old Lynton & Barnstaple trackbed runs right through the centre of the site along what is now the access road.

In the longer term, it would be preferred to move to a new site further from Barnstaple - a more secure site with a little less land to manage. Hopefully it will be possible to make such a move eventually, enabling the railway to be reinstated one day...

For now, the camp continues to provide a base for a range of activities for Scouting groups from throughout the UK. For more information, visit - *http://districts.devonscouts.org.uk/northdevon/*

News Bites

2006 Shareholders Meeting

This year's meeting will be held on Saturday 22nd April at Bratton Fleming Sports Club at 1000.

We would like to invite all existing shareholders or subscribers of Exmoor Associates (and also anyone else interested in joining the team!) to come along this weekend.

The meeting is intended to be relatively informal, allowing the opportunity to ask questions and hold discussion on any current topics.

Lunch will be available towards the end and we will also have another short length of trackbed lined up after lunch for an afternoon walk.

Anyone interested in attending on the 22nd, please give either Tony or Nik a call, or drop us an email at nik@exmoor-associates.co.uk. We need to know numbers for the meeting to help with catering. We would also like to know if you are intending to participate in the afternoon walk. We would appreciate responses by 1 April.

Marketing

The Exmoor Associates website was given a facelift last summer. At the same time similar improvements were made to the L&B website. To start 2006, we have now again made a few more improvements including a fresher look and improved content.

At the 2005 shareholders meeting, distribution of leaflets was discussed. Owing to other events taking place during 2005, the production of public leaflets was not pushed forward; however, a design is now nearing the stage of completion. We anticipate starting to circulate the leaflet during the 2006 season as part of a wider awareness publicity campaign on the activities of EA.

Shareholders

We now have 70 shareholders/subscribers and an issued share capital of over £90k.

We are expanding at an encouraging rate but considering that the L&B Trust has nearly 1,500 members there is still plenty of scope for expansion!

L&B Relations

Our thanks to the editor of the L&B Magazine, Tony Nicholson, for the three-page feature in issue 77 on our efforts to purchase the Killington Lane - Parracombe Lane trackbed and particularly for the colour photographs.

In conjunction with the L&B Railway Company it is the intention to fence this section as soon as possible after purchase (funds permitting). This will provide a walk for members along the trackbed until such time as the L&B can get the bridge at Killington lane built and extend the railway.

FIRST STEAM AT WOODY BAY
Sponsored By Exmoor Associates

Following the shareholders meeting in March 05, as a special privilege, Exmoor Associates shareholders were given the opportunity to take free rides on the first steam-hauled passenger train on the L&B since 1935.
Exmoor Associates arranged the visit of Kerr Stuart steam loco 'Peter Pan', and paid for the associated costs. In exchange, we got free travel for the day and also took the rights to use the railway over Easter for publicising the activities of Exmoor Associates.

(Above) Graham Morris (owner) and Nik Barrie (EA) on the footplate of Peter Pan at Woody Bay Station with the first day of steam hauled passenger trains.

Distant Point

Want somewhere to stay in North Devon when visiting? Distant Point is the former station master's house at Chelfham, built at the foot of the viaduct in the Stoke Rivers Valley. The purchase and restoration of the property was done several years ago by means of a timeshare scheme.
A chance has arisen to buy a share in this delightful house. Interested? Call Mike Buse on 01206 734030.

L&B Group Restructuring

By now you will be aware of the proposals to restructure the L&B group of companies by forming a new Community Interest PLC which would absorb both the L&B Railway Company and the L&B Estates Company. Exmoor Associate directors Nik Barrie, Tony Brown and Mike Buse have all been working closely with Doug Hill to prepare the draft proposals and circulate the discussion documentation.

During these discussions the position of Exmoor Associates has been examined and it has been decided that for the moment our independent status is advantageous particularly in respect of possible grant funding.

No changes in our status would take place without the full consent of our shareholders and your directors will continue to act in the best interests of both this company and the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway as a whole.

(Below) Looking down towards Bridwick Farm, taken from the trackbed recently acquired by Exmoor Associates near Blackmoor Gate

Volunteer!

Fancy getting involved in the maintenance of land owned by Exmoor Associates? We are increasingly taking on ownership of a variety of different stretches of land and we have a variety of jobs to do throughout the year to look after these sections of countryside.
It doesn't matter what skills you have, we have always got little bits that need doing... Hedge laying, litter picking, fence repair, right through to woodland maintenance and felling trees. This year we intend to organise some group volunteer working parties. If you would like to get involved - either at a group event or just to lend a hand on your own when visiting the area, get in touch! Contact nik@exmoor-associates.co.uk / phone 07862 249279.

And Finally...

Exmoor Associates are now working with the Environment Agency (also 'EA'!) in assisting them to make a series of improvements to their river monitoring facilities. A short stretch of river bank on part of our land at Collard Bridge is to be used for a new modern river monitoring station to track height and flow.

IN THE NEXT EDITION >

Look out for news from the 2006 shareholders meeting, and trackbed walk. Also expect an update on progress with land at Higher Bodley and also on EA land management...
Trackbed Trails - Putting you in the picture... Issue number four, out summer 2006...

Have you got a new idea? Contact the Exmoor Associates team!
Tony Brown *(secretary)* 020 8550 9183 / 020 8539 3067 or e-mail to enquiries@exmoor-associates.co.uk
Nik Barrie 07862 249279 / 01708 524388, Mike Buse 01206 734030, Mike Selby 01737 358120.