The newsletter for Exmoor Associates CIC Issue 36 November 2022

It is with much sadness that we announce the passing of Alderman Michael John Selby (13/07/1937 - 26/10/2022)

Mike was one of the founding directors / shareholders of Exmoor Associates in 2002 and a very generous supporter of the L&B Railway Company / Trust and Exmoor Associates.

Mike is survived by his two brothers Geoffrey and John to whom we send our sincere condolences. He never married but did tell me that he came "very close" a couple of times!

Mike was in the merchant navy as a young man and when he "came ashore" he worked for the Lloyds Banking Group. He was of course an independent Town Councillor and latterly an alderman.

From the very early years Mike was an enthusiastic supporter of the project to rebuild the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway. At various times he has served as both a director and trustee of the L&B and a director of EA and trustee of the Yeo Valley Trust. A thumb though the rearmost pages of the L&B magazines from the 2000's will give details of the many and various posts he held. *Tony Brown*

From the very first time I met Mike I realised what an absolute gentleman he was, very easy to get on with and it soon became very clear he wanted to help us rebuild the L and B, he had spent many years as a councillor with a special interest in planning and sat on the local planning committee which he loved.

Mike at Phil & Jan Rawston's wedding 21st September 2013 dressed as a gangster

I can honestly say from day one when we embarked on building the short railway from Woody Bay to Killington lane Mike was one of a very small group who without the outstanding help he gave financially and in the encouragement to all we would not be running trains at Woody Bay.

Mike was one of the four original Directors of Exmoor Associates and once again has continually pushed us to buy up every section of trackbed, and as you would expect his generosity in supporting this aim was 100% he was always first to step up and was way the biggest share holder.

Finally just a little story about Mike, when we were working at Woody Bay station before we opened in the depths of winter Mike and myself stayed at Chelfham, it was very cold especially in the bedrooms. Mike arrived then spent quite a while going backwards and forwards to his car emptying his bags and case, looking for his electric blanket, which he had forgotten to pack.
Moving on to the next time we were down Mike very proudly showed me his electric blanket, but shortly after started going through his bags and case only to find that he had left the lead back at home!

I will sorely miss Mike for so many reasons but his parting makes me even more determined to finish what we started and make him proud. *Mike Buse*

Farewell old friend, a faithful member of the Group and Society, who served us well, he had a rare knowledge of Company affairs, and procedures, and as a good companion to us all, we were lucky to have known him, RIP mate, and thanks for the memory. *Geoff Kingate*

I often think of Dear Mike. Sad news indeed of our most loyal supporter. *Fran Smith*

Mike was a fighter to the end, and has undoubtedly made a huge contribution to the Railway, both to the L&B and to EA

Mike was to me an interesting person who was not going to pass without leaving a lot of memories in others (he started his career as 2nd electrician on Union Castle line) which he often referred back to in his later life very much seeing opportunity and enhancement through technical development and the bringing together of sometimes opposing expertise.

So for me he's very much a part of the scenery of the journey like the trip from Barnstaple to Lynton and I think he would be amused and enthused to think of us all as vistas of that route .

Good on you Mike for what you did to support initially the L&B but more so Exmoor Transport and then EA. He also taught me a few handy little bits about probing local govt!! *Andy Richards*

The Mayor of Reigate & Banstead Cllr Rosemary Absalom called on former Cllr Michael Selby at his home on May 20 2021 to formally confer upon him the title of Honorary Alderman. He was presented with a framed inscribed scroll, an official badge of office and an engraved Dartington glass bowl. As Honorary Alderman he was entitled to attend council meetings and to use the Mayor's Parlour.

Cllr Absalom spoke in tribute of Michael's 35 years' service to the council and in particular its planning committee and hoped his extensive knowledge was something the council could continue to draw upon.

Mike at Norman Hamshere's garden railway on 8th November 2011.

Responses to the 3-Way Proposals published and distributed in Trackbed Trails 35.

We had quite a lot of feedback from the 3-Way Proposals put forward by Charles Gardner and Andrew Dakin. Obviously views varied on the various topics but as a general summary Way 1 was supported, most were against or urged caution on Way 2, and Way 3 had little support without first having the cooperation of the L&B Trust.
Excerpts are given below of some of the typical responses received.

WAY 1 – Short term BRATTON STATION
Construction of Goods Shed, Restoration of station and Possible private railway.

This generally got a positive response. At the Recent Goodleigh meeting the members present endorsed this and prompted by Dave Stockwell indicated that a replica signal should also be erected in due course.

Interesting reading! Part 1 - No problem. *A.L.*

The short term plans for Bratton Station I would support, but not with a private railway. By all means relay track, as at Snapper Halt, but we do not need a diesel shunter. *D.M.*

I very strongly support the developments at Bratton Fleming.

Whilst the purchase and restoration of Bratton Fleming is important. As mentioned a presence in Barnstaple has far more potential to help raise awareness, bring in income etc.

WAY 2 – Medium term L&B FOOTPATH ROUTE
Continuous footpath on and off trackbed

A much less enthusiastic response to this with many respondents urging caution.

Once the eco-friendlies get on the scent of a footpath, bike trail etc. all other considerations can go bye-bye. Have seen it here in the U.S. and read about it in the UK too. (Laucenston railway extension for one.) *A.L.*

For example, Bratton Fleming to Chelfham Stations might work , provided car parking both ends could be found . And that route could possibly incorporate a cycle/path (e.g. Rudyard Lake Railway). We could also earn money ?
Incidentally, a temporary miniature railway may be more acceptable locally , until the L & B can establish itself from Blackmoor to Lynton. Emphasis on “temporary”.
Incorporating cycle/footpaths may not work unless there is lateral space for the eventual fenced 2’ gauge. Bridges also a problem. For example, Bratton Fleming to Chelfham Stations might work , provided car parking both ends could be found and that route could possibly incorporate a cycle/path (e.g. Rudyard Lake Railway). We could also earn money ? *S.W.*

We should not even consider public access to our land. A permissive path would be fraught with difficulties and once the public have got used to walking the trackbed, they will not want to stop easily. Please don't consider turning the trackbed into a pathway. *D.M.*

Where possible pathways should be kept to the side of the track bed. The section from Pilton to Snapper would be a good, as gradient is less, and Snapper would make a good destination for young family’s. *P.C.*

I very strongly support the developments at Bratton Fleming, and think that the creation of footpath links along the trackbed would be great, provided that these did not become public rights of way which might prevent or delay the reconstruction of the railway. *J.K.*

I am also concerned re footpaths and other access over existing and potential railway land since once allowed these factions WILL try to exclude future railway use and are far more powerful than the railway in the public's eyes. *D.W.*

Certainly pursue a continous footpath route along the line of the railway for the above reasons and to encourage landowners to sell more parcels of land. *J.G.*

I see this as very important and a big potential to raise awareness, increase political support, etc. Also as more of the trackbed is purchased or used there is the linked opportunity of dealing with issues such as culvert investigation and repairs, land slips, etc, etc. Also it helps deal with and enhance environmental management. Being involved in walking groups etc I don't see the danger of creating a right of way a problem providing it is properly managed and groups like the local Ramblers are brought on board from the start.In response to the 3 way proposal I think it is a well thought out plan, and strongly support the idea of the footpaths provided they do not give long term rights to users of the paths. *H.P.*

Provision of footpaths seems such a good idea, promoting knowledge of the line and a worthwhile public service. However, proceed with the utmost caution with anything even away from the trackbed (and with a lawyer at your side!) Considerable opposition has come elsewhere ,from vociferous walkers, to potential rail re-openings when trackbed has been turned into trails. *T.S.*

The plans for the railway into Barnstaple I support, but we should not even consider public access to our land. A permissive path would be fraught with difficulties and once the public have got used to walking the trackbed, they will not want to stop easily. Please don't consider turning the trackbed into a pathway. *D.M.*

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WAY 3 – Longer term RAILWAY ROUTE
Investigation and facilitation of railway route

I completely understand the desire to see the railway revived in the Yeo valley in our collective lifetimes, and nothing would give me a greater thrill than driving LYD over Chelfham viaduct. Also I completely support railway revival as a means of community enhancement, especially where mutually beneficial links can be made between urban populations and their surrounding countryside (ie with the car left at home, and for those with no car of course). Railway has got to be more fun that taking the bus?
However, unless the local authorities can be enthused 'big time' I think the sheer effort and cost of returning to Pilton Yard would be a non starter, much as I would personally love to see it. The field on the outskirts of Barnstaple looks a perfect site to me, though of course it would be a long trek on foot to the town centre; but a link via a bus route could work……?
The big worry I have is that any serious project in the Yeo Valley in the short/medium term would have a negative effect on the current project based at Woody Bay, which needs all the support it can get just to reach Blackmoor (plus), let alone return to Lynton. It is not just the financial 'competition' that I'm concerned about, it is the bad feeling and divisions that could be fired up again, we really don't need another FfR/WHHR showdown on the L&BR!
There is also the question of the economics of running another substantial railway, could it be financially viable, would it need to be subsidised by the local authorities? The L&B (Woody Bay) is probably about as financially viable now as it ever will be, and from experience it would seem that purely tourist railways are most sustainable up to about four miles long. The WHR, as we expected, is starting to market itself as two shorter railways as the full journey is too expensive and time consuming, especially for families, also quite a feat of endurance even for the enthusiast!
I don't want to sound negative, especially as there are obviously people prepared to put in a lot of hard graft on this proposal, but I do think that Exmoor Associates is doing just the right thing currently, acquiring trackbed, generating good local support and building the foundations for an eventual nineteen mile L&BR. Sadly some of us will not live long enough to see the project completed (I'm 75 and just recovering from cancer), but if we all work together we'll see more progress and have more fun than if we inadvertently create dis-unity. *J.E.*

I feel that ultimately the only possible way in which we shall all see a completely restored railway linking Lynton and

Barnstaple (which, for me, is the only satisfactory outcome) is for the L&B Trust, EA and the Yeo Valley Trust to find a way to work together. I appreciate the difficulty you face in the absence of any response from the L&B Trust, but maybe, in time, their hand will be forced by the fact that EA and the YVT have made such progress at the southern end that the alternatives are working together or two distinctly separate railways. If this is correct then perhaps EA and YVT should just press on with their plans. *B.E.*

In particular, I do not see how the "Velo Rail" idea fits in to the whole. *A.T.*

I think that we have to take a pragmatic approach to progress our ultimate aim to reopen the L & BR. I have been involved in another project which has all the money and planning consents , but has been stalled through 2 landowners refusing to allow reinstatement over their land. The TWAO application remains dormant .....
Sadly, this can equally affect our railway . My own thoughts are to set up a length of railway , either 12 1/4" or 10 1/4" gauge , but with (enclosed)carriages for all season use. No TWAO needed for these gauges. *S.W.*

I continue to support E A 's policy of acquiring L&B trackbed as it becomes available.

There are great dangers of completely falling out with the L&B Trust. I note that the report states it wishes to "seek positive EA and L&B relationships". I often see criticism of the Trust on Facebook which will not help build positive relationships!
I hope that EA will not go beyond the short term plans for Bratton Station (without a diesel).
Please keep buying trackbed but without planning to build a rival railway. *D.M.*

I support the three way plan, the chances of funding, will increase when directed to a greater number of people, where possible pathways should be kept to the side of the track bed. The section from Pilton to Snapper would be a good, as gradient is less, and Snapper would make a good destination for young family's.
It was said at the meeting, that we need at some point to join with the L&B, I believe that this will only take place, when we have farsighted and flexible people in the top jobs. We need to remember this when we vote. *P.C.*

Realistically it's going to take a very long time to get back to Barnstaple, unless a very rich benefactor appears on the scene? However the plan should only proceed with the agreement of the L & B Trust.
It is essential all organisations work together. *H.P.*

I read with some concern the proposals as presented at the meeting at Goodleigh. As a member of both the L&B Trust and of EA, I think it is really important for the L&B Trust and EA to work closely together to bring about the reconstruction of the railway. However I have serious reservations about any attempt to rebuild part of the railway near Barnstaple independently of the Trust. This would detract from what the L&B Trust is doing and no-one, I am sure, would wish for a serious rift between EA and the L&B Trust, especially given that many supporters are members and shareholders of both organisations, and we all have a huge vested interest in seeing the L&B succeed. It has already achieved more than was ever dreamed of when those first volunteers started back in the early 90's. Getting the line to Wistlandpound will be a major achievement. I share the frustration with the lack of progress on the extension, but hope that permission will be granted to extend to Parracombe, because that will help to reawaken interest and restore belief in the ability of the Trust to complete the extension.
I do detect undercurrents of dissatisfaction with the Trust and their lack of communication with members and with EA, which is a pity, but I hope the two organisations will work together to resolve any difficulties and progress the extension of the line. *J.K.*

I am conscious that I am a small and recent shareholder but perhaps may express a view. I am concerned that by putting phases one and two ahead of the ultimate objective, EA is taking its eye off the eventual ball in terms of both time and resources. I wonder if EA should remedy this by track-laying on one or more sections that it owns (e.g.. from Snapper Halt?) and perhaps running (or better, inviting L&B Trust to run) shuttle services for walkers to link in with Phase Two of the Proposal; this could be with just a diesel and single carriage so as not to distract from Woody Bay. Would this help heal an apparent rift between EA and L&B Trust? I appreciate that this would advance the need for permissions, bridge-rebuilds &c. but these have all got to be done eventually - sooner the better? *M.W.*

I have serious concerns regarding the possibility of the 3 way plan creating a very divisive situation similar to the Ffestiniog/Welsh Highland situation which as well all know took many years to resolve and set everything back for both parties by decades and was also very damaging to the whole Heritage Railway sector at the time.

We are all trying to achieve the same result and EA and others involved MUST have constructive dialogue and agreement with the existing L&B railway before I would support ANY move in this direction. I am wondering why you have had no response from your previous approach particularly if as you say many involved have been serving within the L&B organisation in the past? Is there perhaps bad feeling from the current railway management towards EA or some of the individuals involved? Your proposal here being in the public domain will certainly open that can of worms if there is, and in that situation you will have seriously jeopardised all your proposals AND the current work EA has been doing to help reinstate the railway.
Also, are EA and the YVT big enough and financially secure enough to take this forward? I have serious doubts here as well I'm afraid.
Finally, I do agree that I feel the railway is possibly 'dragging its feet' and I totally understand why you have come up with this proposal. I think constructing separate sections that can be linked in the future may have some merit but coordination between ALL of them would be key. Finance is also a very big factor here especially for the existing railway. *D.W.*

Disturbing!
Firstly, the presentation strongly suggests a lack of co-operation and communication between the two areas of restoration. Many other Heritage Railways have shown that this is highly counterproductive.
As a relative newcomer, it seems to me that the north and south sections are proceeding quite well in their own way. The north is being extended to Blackmoor Gate and land acquisition is being successfully pursued in the south. The south also has three sites that are being developed. So far so good.
We are being presented with an “alternative plan” but there is no mention of why an alternative is needed, or what the current plan is. Maybe the lack of a current plan is the problem in the south? If so, I would certainly accept the need for one, but this presentation doesn’t identify either a need or a solution.
Certainly continue to develop all three sites, Snapper, Chelfham and Bratton Fleming to give a visible presence, to show capability for PR purposes and to encourage volunteer activity.
The entry to Barnstaple is much more problematic. Maybe this is really the area that needs considerably more study, with a properly skilled team who can work with all the various stakeholders to suggest alternative approaches. This likely to take a very considerable time, and is dependent on there being a viable southern railway section to use a Barnstaple Terminus. Is a Light Rail Tramway really a viable option? The Bridport example seems to be a highly speculative venture costed at around £100M - "a monumental task – the costs would be astronomical and much of the former branch line route, especially through Bridport, has been built on”. Surely better to use the model of the Welsh Highland as a tourist Jewel In The Crown?
In summary, I would like to see the southern group continue to build on its successes and develop a user-friendly corridor between Barnstaple and the reservoir. Also most important to have a working relationship with the northern section, and for the longer term a team should be assembled (but by whom?) to develop a strategy plan for the railway integrated into the Barnstaple area. *J.G.*

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The absolute fundamental is working with and rebuilding relationships with the L&B Trust. I know nothing of the background to the difficulties and as an outsider I support and have donated to L&B trust, EA and see them as part of a whole. Very important and has the potential to make a real difference as funding is obtained and the railway restored. *M.W.*

A common cause with the directors and members of the operating part of the L & B is fundamental. I may be wrong but it seems to me this has yet to be established. Ffestiniog/ Welsh Highland were an example, since coming together, they have prospered. *N.B.*

If the L&B trust agrees (not necessarily with enthusiasm, but I do mean “agrees” rather than any sort of “assumed consent”), yes, I think these are ideas worth pursuing , but the L & B will need to have opportunity for input to the plan at all stages. If the L&B does not agree, my reaction can be given in three words : No, NO, **NO.** *A.T.*

Directors and Trustees Initial Responses to the feedback on the 3-Way Proposals

EA - L&B Trust Issues

There have been strong comments that EA and the L&B Trust should work closely together particularly with regards to any development plans in the Barnstaple area. In the 3-Way Proposal pages 18-20 it was reiterated that cooperation would be essential.

Charles Gardner writes "I had a recent follow-up call from Peter Miles (following a brief meeting on the footplate at the gala) and he repeated his enthusiasm for a Joint Forum. Peter shared the view that any meeting should best be left until April/May 2023, a point with which everyone seems to agree. This may seem to be too distant but there is a logic in this timescale.

1) EA's priority is the development of the Bratton Station / Goods Shed project. This will be an enterprise that will take us beyond the April/May date.

2) The L&B Trust has two outstanding issues that will dictate its future direction. Firstly the purchase of The Old Station House Inn at Blackmoor Gate. It is highly unfortunate that the apparent conclusion of the purchase has coincided with a significant contraction of the hospitality industry, (particularly as winter looms), the highest mortgage rates for decades, inflation in double figures, war in Europe and soaring energy costs. Secondly the pending Section 73 planning application regarding extending the railway to Parracombe. If both of these fail then a major rethink would be required, perhaps with the focus on the Chelfham area as between EA and The L&B Trust as between the two organisations there is ownership of about 2.9 km (1.8 miles) of trackbed. *T.B.*

I'm very happy to have a friendly chat with Peter Miles, Trust Chairman to Trust Chairman, at any time of his choosing, although I understand from one of his trustee colleagues that the best time would almost certainly be following the Yeo Valley Trust's registration with the Charity Commission.
Clearly there will also be a need at that point, for a clarification of the YVT's relationship with EA CIC with regard to the charitable funding aspect of heritage aspects of EA's forward programme. This will require further advice from the CC so that fund raising for any EA non-heritage work can continue to be supported by new share issues.
So I think I must agree that the time for dialogue with the L&B Trustees and L&B CIC Directors will be April or May 2023, when the substantial outstanding planning and purchasing issues have been resolved in the North, the Yeo Valley Trust has been registered, and the YVT/EA interrelated structure has been clarified.
I see no problem at all in cooperation between the North & South Trust's which is inherent in both organisations' constitutions.Such cooperation is exemplified by the Great Central Reunification Project, which perhaps demonstrates that for the L&B's restoration, two initially separate teams may actually be better than one! *T.H.*

Unfortunately I have to say that I think that Charles and Andy Dakin have certainly not helped the cause of rebuilding the L&B Railway, and in particular have made the mistake of highlighting a supposed conflict between the L&B Trustees and EA/YVT. In my opinion lack of communication or obvious recognition of progress in the South does not imply conflict.
I'm also disappointed that to at least one reader/shareholder the presentation/publication of the 3-way proposal suggested quite strongly that EA in some way approved the views expressed in what was I understood to be an unsolicited document. It was not made clear that the document was simply the view of two interested parties.

The situation in the North rests heavily upon the decisions to be made between now and March '23 by the EPNA, the L&B Trustees, and to a possible extent, the Courts. Certainly if the case initiated by Parracombe Objectors proceeds then the Park will be unable to make a Section 73 decision until judgement has been passed, except perhaps to refuse permission. Whether the proposed purchase of The Old Station Inn goes ahead is an unrelated matter unless the L&B Trustees defer it while awaiting the ENPA's Section 73 ruling whenever that comes to pass.
In the South, the hoped-for registration of the Yeo Valley Trust with the Charity Commission will almost certainly require changes in the financial and managerial responsibilities of the Trust and EA CIC.
The manner in which between the two bodies relate financially will definitely require the approval of the Commission, as was the case when reorganisation was forced upon the L&B Trust.

I feel it should be stated that should the inn purchase fail, should the S73 fail or even if it allows for Bridge 65 to be rebuilt to secure the planning but no extension be allowed to take place or at the worse case scenario the planning expires that

the initial focus should be on stabilising the operations at Woody Bay and trying to rebuild confidence with the L &B members. This is a very critical time for the L&BR and I am most certainly not looking forward to March, let alone April or May. *A.H.*

My only comment in our response is concern that the protected route of the trackbed in the ten year plan might be at risk unless we can show a reason for keeping it, the L and B have not had the contact with the local authority that they said they would, so we need to have a very strong plan to keep them on board, and keep them fully up to date as we progress with land purchase.

A fully prepared costed scheme, railway to Snapper then to Chelfham on to Bratton finally to the reservoir etc. To not have the trackbed protection will be a major loss. *M.B.*

And Lastly - a mystery photo.

We think this is a photo of part of the original L&B blue enamel running in board at Bratton station.

The whitish sign below the running in board (after enlarging and contrast adjustment) reads, we think "Part of original Bratton station sign and sleeper?"

Does anyone have any information on this?

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