The Newsletter of the Barnstaple & Yeo Valley Railway Trust incorporating Exmoor Associates

Issue 49 April 2026

Welcome to Trackbed Trails Nº 49

In this issue :

- ➔ Details of the annual meeting to be held on May 16th – *this page*
- ➔ B&YVRT has a new Chairman - *see page 2*
- ➔ This year's Spring Trackbed Walk – *see page 2*
- ➔ Can you help – *see pages 2 and 5*
- ➔ More trackbed purchased – *starts page 3*
- ➔ Flying Over the L&B – *see page*
- ➔ A new volunteer tells of his experience with the Snapper Navvies – *see page 7*
- ➔ Who's Who and How to contact them – *see page 10*
- ➔ And finally – Bratton Fleming Goods Shed - *see page 11*

2026 EA and B&YVRT May Meeting

The usual meetings of Exmoor Associates CIC and Barnstaple & Yeo Valley Railway Trust will be held in Green Room (the room we used last time) at Growforward, Chelfham MIll on Saturday 16th May 2026.

For satnav users the Chelfham postcode is EX32 7LA

The doors will open at 9.15am when there will be tea, coffee, and biscuits available. All Exmoor Associates shareholders and B&YVRT supporters, non-shareholders, and volunteers are most welcome to attend the meetings as usual. The meeting business will commence at 10.00am. A buffet will be provided at lunchtime, £10 donation requested if you can. Could we please ask that you let us know if you are coming so the catering team can provide enough food – email mike.buse@byvrt.org.uk

The trackbed walk in the afternoon will be over the newly-acquired route through the Collard Bridge Scout campsite (see page 2 for details). So, please ensure that you bring appropriate footwear!

A New Chairman for the Barnstaple & Yeo Valley Railway Trust

At the Trustee's meeting held on 24th February, the Chairman Phil Heathcote resigned his post and Bruce Knights was elected to be Chairman in his place. Bruce is taking on the role of Chairman just as the Trust starts to change its focus towards building a railway on the trackbed purchased at the southern end of the route and was keen to thank Phil for all of the hard work he has contributed over the years. Phil remains a valued and active Trustee and volunteer.

We will have more information about Bruce's background and his vision for the future of the Trust in the next Trackbed Trails.

A Great Afternoon for a Walk

Saturday, May 16th promises to offer a great opportunity for traversing (on foot) the most recent major acquisition of trackbed.

The Scouts Association have given permission for there to be a trackbed walk over the 718 metres which we have just purchased and which threads through their campsite and to which there is normally no public access. The period for walking this stretch will be between **2.00pm and 4.00pm <u>on Saturday 16th only</u>**. If you are able, this is a chance not to be missed.

The walk will start and finish at the EA site at Collard Bridge. There is no access to this length of trackbed from the southern (Snapper) end because Blackwell Bridge is missing.

Negotiations are in hand for the purchase of more sections of trackbed. If any of these are completed in time there may be additional trackbed walking opportunities on Sunday 17th.

Do ***You*** Have the Skills We Need ?

The Barnstaple & Yeo Valley Railway Trust engineering team are developing the plans for the railway's progressive reinstatement from Barnstaple to Wistlandpound.

To assist in this task the team are looking for a volunteer with experience in the use of **AutoCad Civils 3D** especially in relation to rail (and road) design development.

If you have this skill and are able to use it to support the project please, in the first instance email info@byvrt@org.uk

Looking ahead, the B&YVRT will also be seeking volunteers with experience in other disciplines in the near future. These include Land Surveyors, Setting Out Engineers, Hydrology, Ecology and Archaeology practitioners.

If you have the skills needed – please help us on our journey

New Trackbed : A further 277 metres purchased

L&B David Moore

32 502m

Southacott

33 277m

34 192m

Lower Knightacott Bridge 38

35 6m

36 198m

37 174m

38 277m

Narracott Bridge

Public Road (Twitchen Lane)

39 970m

Hunnacott

40 622m

South Thorne

41 168m

Non-original alignment

42 440m

Wistlandpound

This newly acquired piece of trackbed – Section 38 – is to the north of Bratton Fleming. The northern limit of this section is Narracott Bridge, Bridge 39. The bridge is interesting in that the road did not cross the railway at right angles but rose parallel to the line before curving round over the arch. This layout is evident on the Land Registry plan, above. Also, the curvature of the road rising towards the arch can just be seen by the alignment of the fence posts on the picture, below, taken in 1948. **Michael Bishop explains the reason for this :** *The Engineer had an even worse problem here than at Killington Lane where the difference in height to the surrounding ground was about 5 ft. ('Measured & Drawn' p204) At that location the rise in the road could be limited to about the same extent, and the Bridge was part of the contract. As can be seen from photographs, rail level is only slightly below ground level, but the critical point was probably that, unlike at Killington lane, the road is on a gradient making a raised bridge impractical.*

Section 38

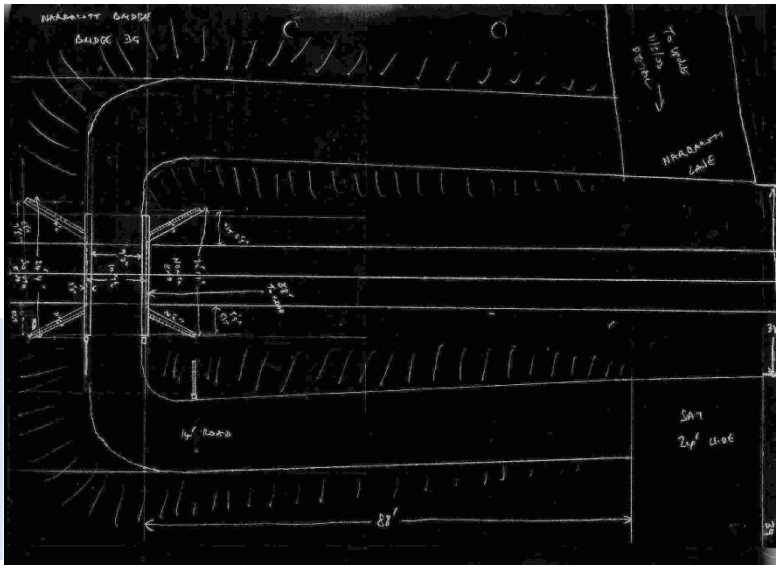
The Engineer was forced to place it 34 yards south of the road on the railway which it was crossing with inclined road approaches either side. The bridge was not included in the plans deposited with Parliament or the construction contract, suggesting it had been planned to have a level crossing here. Unfortunately the construction plans have not survived.

It was built under an extra works order issued 4 months after the contract was signed and therefore came under the heading of 'Accommodation Works' - those items such as cattle creeps, water shutes, station yards etc. Confirmation is lost, but the owners of the private road (the Rev. Wardroper and Alfred Carthew) probably insisted on a bridge, and then it was built on Miss Rosalie Chichester's land.

more pictures on the next page

Bridge 39 in the back ground, seen from the 'wrecking train'

Bridge 39 soon after the track was lifted in 1936. Beyond is bridge 40. The section between bridges 39 and 40 is the roadway which was created during the bad winter of 1962 to improve access for milk tankers



Michael Bishop's plan of Bridge 39. This was hand drawn as part of the immense preparatory work for *The Lynton & Barnstaple Railway, Measured and Drawn* although it was not included in the completed book

1956

2026

Start of a New Chapter for the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Project

Press Release issued April 2nd 2026

The Lynton & Barnstaple Railway (L&BR) Trust and the Barnstaple & Yeo Valley Railway (B&YVR) Trust are pleased to announce the start of a new chapter for the last great narrow-gauge adventure in Exmoor and North Devon.

Both organisations recognise the scale of their joint ambition to restore the world-famous railway and understand that cooperation will be an imperative in realising this goal.

Therefore, both organisations are adopting a policy of active dialogue and cooperation to promote better the shared aims of rebuilding the former railway between Lynton and Barnstaple. This approach will be enabled via a regular joint working group which will report activity to their respective boards for any decision-making.

Giles Perkins, Chair of the L&BR Trust, said: "In the public's mind there is only one historical Lynton & Barnstaple Railway and the two organisations working together to restore sections of the line can achieve so much more than separately. Over many years invaluable knowledge has been gained of how to build and operate a narrow-gauge heritage railway, expertise which should be capitalised upon. The two organisations share the same deep desire to see this unique narrow-gauge railway restored to a bigger operation for the benefit of all."

Bruce Knights, Chairman of the B&YVR Trust, said: "This is really excellent news for both Trusts and all supporters of the former Lynton and Barnstaple Railway. A good dialogue with our friends at Woody Bay is essential and very welcome, in what promises to be a year of significant progress at the Barnstaple end of the old line. I am very optimistic that this will speed up progress towards what we all want to see, the rebuilding of the line from Barnstaple to Lynton."

The work of the B&YVRT Costs Money – Can *You* Help?

You have a choice of funds for your donations :
General Fund : Trackbed Fund : Bratton Fleming Goods Shed Fund
(If you do not specify a fund it will go into the General Fund)

To Make a One-off Donation, make a bank transfer to:

Bank name: *CAF Bank*
Account Name: *Barnstaple & Yeo Valley Railway Trust*
Sort Code: *40-52-40* Account N°: *00036083*

or

Send a cheque (payable to *Barnstaple & Yeo Valley Railway Trust)* to:
Barnstaple & Yeo Valley Railway Trust, 6, West Yelland, Barnstaple EX31 3EY

To Make Regular Donations by Standing Order , the bank details are:

Bank name: *CAF Bank*
Account Name: *Barnstaple & Yeo Valley Railway Trust*
Sort Code: *40-52-40* Account N°: *00036083*
Reference: *To include your full name so that B&YVRT can identify the payment*

Want to leave a Legacy?
Please get in touch with the Treasurer : Jacki Wright, Windswept, Ruden way, Epsom Downs KT17 3LL, 07714 712351 : email treasurer@byvrt.org.uk

Thank you for your Support

A Birdseye View of the Lynton & Barnstaple

We have to thank Keith Edwards for producing an informative and inspirational 'flight' over the route of the Lynton & Barnstaple. He worked with other interested people to create this film using Google Earth Studio combined with a Google map supplied by Chris Lane.

Each section of trackbed is depicted in a different colour depending on ownership. It also shows the location of bridges (with a custom icon showing the type of bridge), mileposts, stations and platelayer's huts.

The film is available on YouTube – search Flying Over the Route of the Former Lynton & Barnstaple Railway

A New Volunteer

After attending the Exmoor Associates Spring 2025 meeting at Goodleigh, I was impressed with the enthusiasm and progress being made to acquire more trackbed in the Yeo valley. A visit to the Chelfham Viaduct open day that afternoon, allowed an introduction to Phil Heathcote as well as a view of the cleared trackbed beyond the viaduct. I explained to Phil that I was shortly moving to Minehead, would become a member of EA and looked forward to helping out where I could.

Thankfully by the end of the summer the move had been completed and I was ready to start volunteering. In early September Phil kindly offered to show me various sites along the route to get an appreciation of the work required and the difficulties of rebuilding a railway that had closed 90 years ago! I had looked on Google Earth many times whilst at home in Cheshire, trying to pick out the trackbed and see what had changed. We met at Pilton Car Park in Barnstaple and looked at the potential way the railway could exit the town. Then moved on to Raleigh Weir, Collard Bridge and Loxhore Bank. Comparing photos of these areas from a few years ago, it's truly remarkable how much clearance has been achieved by such a small group of volunteers.

A week later I joined Phil to help clear the trackbed beyond Raleigh Weir, working up to the boundary of the section opposite the bowling green. Using loppers and bow saws we cleared various bushes encroaching on the trackbed and growing into the fencing. This was the last of the warm summer weather and from here on it's been mixed. I was encouraged by the enthusiastic way Phil approached the task and since then I've made regular weekday visits to help him. We have worked at Loxhore, Collard Bridge and most recently at Snapper Halt. The following photos show Phil using the brush cutter on the embankment wall near bridge 15 at Snapper and the Saturday gang using the chipper in the same area.

Just before Christmas I ventured out on a Saturday to join the working volunteers at Snapper, meeting Andy, Rob, Graham and Anne. We took the chipper down and spent most of the day chipping all the cut material from previous work days that had been piled up along the edge of the trackbed.

In the New Year I look forward to continuing the clearance work and already Snapper is looking much clearer. There's lots to get on with, so more volunteers would be welcomed and I can really recommend getting out into this beautiful valley with nature all around you.

Quentin McGuinness

All images on pages 6 & 7 are by Quentin McGuinness

more on the next page

Since writing his article (page 6), Quentin reports that work has continued at Snapper through January, February and March as he was looking forward to.

Want to get involved?

The Snapper Navvies are a friendly bunch who are always ready to welcome new people to help keep *our* trackbed clear and tidy. If you would like to join them, please contact Andy Hearn in the first instance: andyhearn264@btinternet.com / 07803 926430

Thank You

Trackbed Trails does not just write itself! The compilation of each issue is largely dependent on the activities of a small number of hard-working people. Whether they are working with landowners to achieve the purchase of more trackbed, starting the engineering planning which will eventually see track and trains on the trackbed we own, managing the finances or dealing with all the legal responsibilities of EA and B&YVRT – it is *their* active contributions to *our railway* which generate the articles you read.

As for the pictures and plans in this edition, thanks are due to Nik Reuther-Hols (who has taken over managing the linear maps), Barry Marshall, Chris Duffell, David Cameron and Quentin McGuinness. To those names must be added that of Keith Vingoe – he hasn't let me down yet when I pick up the phone and start the call with the words "*Keith, Help! I need a picture of …….*"

Please Keep In Touch

If you change your email address, 'phone number or move house please let us know. We want you to receive Trackbed Trails and to be kept up to date with any changes affecting the Barnstaple & Yeo Valley Railway Trust

New Inn Goodleigh, Barnstaple EX32 7LX

Monday, Thursday – Sunday 6pm – 11pm

Over the past twenty plus years many of us from the L & B, Exmoor Associates, and now the Barnstaple & Yeo Valley Railway Trust have been absolutely spoilt having the New Inn at Goodleigh on our doorstep.

We have enjoyed this friendly village free house in Goodleigh not far from Barnstaple and about 20 minutes walk from Snapper Halt.

This is a cosy warm really inviting place to go; not just any old run of the mill pub. Justin and Julia who are excellent hosts have got to know many of us by name.

Listening to Justin go through the menu at your table where he takes your order just makes the job of choosing what to eat even more difficult. Julia masterminds the kitchen and has an ever-changing menu. They provide very high-quality home cooked food along with dishes from further afield; if you haven't already tried the New Inn please do try it and it's always best to book.

If you are travelling to Devon to visit the L & B any time of the year don't delay, check out the New Inn web site and look at TripAdvisor you will not be disappointed. Please mention to Justin or Julia that you are down looking at the L & B.

Finally, we have lost so many small local pubs over recent years this is one we cannot afford to lose.
Thank you in anticipation of your support. Mike Buse

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Barnstaple & Yeo Valley Railway Trust

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And Finally …… A New Beginning
Bratton Fleming Goods Shed Is Under Construction

For a significant amount of time last summer the Snapper Navvies had been busy breaking up and crushing the concrete pads outside of the station building, as well as demolishing the old garage building that was mostly made up of 6 inch poured concrete walls. All of this was to make way for the Goods shed project. In the September/October period the foundations were dug and the concrete footings poured with fixing bolts installed.

After a long break, at the latter end of March the contractors moved back on site and have started erection of the steel frame of the Goods shed. At the time of writing, half of the roof panels are in place. It's beginning to look like real building, rising from the ashes of the original goods shed.

We have a stock of genuine L&B Marland bricks, laboriously recovered and cleaned by Anne Belsey, which had been dumped in the cutting beyond Chelfham viaduct when the parapet walls were demolished. These will be used to face the lower walls of the shed.

You can expect a further update on progress with this exciting project in the next issue of Trackbed Trails.