

LINESIDE GAZETTE

Members' newsletter for the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway

Issue no. 89

Thoughts from the chair

As incoming Chair of the Trust I must first thank Peter Miles for his stoic service and dedication to the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway. Whilst it is far too easy to focus on the planning setbacks we've had, what cannot be denied is that the L&BR is a highly regarded, best-in-class, narrow gauge experience; something we are told repeatedly by journalists, enthusiasts and visitors alike. This recognition has been achieved with Peter at the helm. Thank you, Peter, for all you have done over the years.

With this newsletter comes the start of a new chapter. You will have seen that we have formalised arrangements with the Barnstaple and Yeo Valley Railway Trust, with both organisations adopting a policy of active dialogue and cooperation to better promote the mutual aims of rebuilding the former railway between Lynton and Barnstaple. Together we firmly believe we are stronger.

The depth and breadth of our strength come from every L&BR member, supporter and donor who contributes from near or far. The engine-room of our operation is our paid staff and volunteers, who, in all weathers, and under the guiding hand of our amazing General Manager Stuart Nelhams, make the railway what it is. They are all narrow-gauge heroes!

Those of us involved in operations recently attended our annual training days, hosted by Stuart, with brilliantly insightful and thought-provoking emergency scenarios led by Roger Bye and Glyn Amphlett, two of many volunteers who work diligently in the background. This work keeps our essential Safety Management System and other online systems up to date, thereby providing a safe and enjoyable environment for staff, volunteers and visitors alike.

The group working on the details for the planning application to Parracombe have been meeting weekly developing the background information required for submission. A huge amount of work has already been done which will help towards meeting our ambitions to extend the railway. In April we start our pre-planning application engagement with the community.

In developing our world-famous railway, we need the best skills, energy, support and enthusiasm to make things happen efficiently and quickly. I'm reminded of the words of JFK in his famous speech about the 1960s Apollo Moon Landing programme.

"We choose to go to the Moon in this decade and do other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard; because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one we intend to win and the others, too."

Reinstating the L&B is our moonshot, it takes a family of like-minded people, all behind a common vision.

Are you with us?

Giles Perkins - Chair, trustee, volunteer, supporter and enthusiast.



Modernising the L&BR's governance

Members will be aware that the Trust and CIC agreed to examine our governance model in the context of the challenges that we, and many others in the Heritage Railway and charity sector, find ourselves facing.

Enclosed with this newsletter, magazine and AGM documents is a briefing paper which states our vision, it provides background, insight and analysis of the work that has been done over recent months examining the modernisation of our governance structure.

Please take time to read this information carefully and then **cast your vote on the enclosed form**.

We are asking you to vote on whether, and how, we potentially modernise our governance model for the future so that we can be efficient in making decisions and capitalising on opportunities.

We are not making any decisions to change the governance structure at this time, we are simply asking you, our members, what the Board should examine in more detail for future consideration.

Heritage Railway Association Awards 2026

Our Event and Marketing Coordinator, Rebecca Paterson, was nominated in the category of Rising Star at the Heritage Railway Association Awards 2026 in March which were presented at an event in Llandudno.

She made to a shortlist of five and whilst not securing the top-spot she was highly commended, a remarkable achievement considering the number of very high-profile heritage railways around Britain.

Well done, Rebecca! A true star and always a winner at the L&B.

The start of a new season

After a rather wet and unsettled winter, here we are at the start of another season at the railway. 2025 was a tough year for all businesses in the tourist industry, but through your constant support, whether through volunteering, making generous donations, or coming along for a ride and a bite to eat, the railway has continued to invest in its infrastructure, rolling stock, buildings and all the essential jobs that have to be done in order to re-open the railway at Easter.

The new carriage shelter is now in use protecting our valuable heritage carriages from the often-wild Exmoor weather, and the whole project was completed in just 10 months!

A new leaflet has been produced for the 2026 season packed full of information with an attractive colour-coded list of special events at Woody Bay Station, and this year you can download a PDF version to keep at home or on your mobile device via the website.

The railway has also made its presence felt to the outside world far and wide, appearing in magazines, numerous television programs, YouTube and online gaming. It's all about constantly presenting the L&B to a bigger and wider audience, something we can all do by simply sharing our enthusiasm for the L&B!

Membership matters

We have moved away from the old green membership cards to a new consolidated card/letter format, which all Annual Members should have received. One of the key benefits of this approach is that these can be posted at a lower rate than standard Royal Mail second class and, in future, may be combined with other mailings.

We have also secured sponsorship for both the printing costs and the 2025 mailing, resulting in a saving to the Trust of approximately £1,600. However, this transition has not been without its challenges. To maximise



savings and minimise sponsorship costs, cards have needed to be printed in large batches, which has unfortunately led to delays for some members in receiving their membership cards.

The majority of this year's Annual Membership Cards will be dispatched in April, once Direct Debit payments have been processed and verified. All renewals received online or by cheque before 1st April will be included in this mailing. We then hope to move to a monthly print run to accommodate members who renew later.

I would strongly encourage all members who are able to do so to switch to Direct Debit, as the administrative burden associated with processing online payments and cheques is considerable.

Peter Leach

News from the engine shed

Our team of engineers have been busy in the shed throughout the winter months. Steam and diesel engines have had thorough inspections and repair work carried out.

762 LYN has had its annual boiler exam and tests. All carriages have been lifted for bogie inspections, and the new bogie has been put into use allowing for another bogie to be fully overhauled.

Chief Engineer John Uphill reports good progress is being made machining the new brake cylinders for Van 23 which when complete means the underframe will be shotblasted and painted, thus allowing its transport to Essex for construction of the body. Work on Axe will then begin in earnest. Donations are welcome, just quote 'Project Axe'.

Carriage and wagon report

David Ely recently came to Woody Bay to check the final dimensions of the new steel underframe for Van 23 prior to its delivery to Essex for body construction. Carriage No 7 is almost ready to be sent back to Woody Bay and it is hoped that transporting the carriage and Van 23 underframe can be co-ordinated to save on costs. Once at Woody Bay, carriage 7 will have its lighting reconnected and footboards fitted with the full fleet then back on site.

Charles Summers

Permanent Way report

The January work weekend provided a partial release from the bad weather that has plagued us for some months and enabled some tasks to be completed that have been on the plan for some time.

Near the ¾MP a pair of 36' rails that had noticeable battered ends were removed and adjacent rails cut back to enable new 40' rails to be installed. This has made a noticeable improvement on ride quality at that location. Additionally, a further 40 composite sleepers were laid at two track panels approaching Bridge 67; the softwood and hardwood sleepers recovered were sorted and re-usable hardwoods will be retained for use on sidings, etc. After jacking and packing the track was tamped using the Temo Tamper.

Miscellaneous sleepers have been replaced with hardwood sleepers at various locations, and the tamper has again seen action as required. Some slight settlement that had occurred at the location of the former Bridge 68 (now a culvert) was jacked and packed to restore top and line.

Routine inspections have been carried out on drains and cesses and, where necessary, have been cleared of debris. Fencing repairs have been carried out where there has been evidence of livestock ingress.

Fencing of the section of line between the Old Station Inn and Pound Lane (near Wistlandpound) is complete and work is commencing to develop a haul road and path to the alignment.

Dave Hallett



Photo album



The 1st Exmoor Scout Group came along to help at the Spring Work Weekend.



The carriage cleaning team at Woody Bay.



Maintenance never stops at Chelfham!



The latest addition to the fleet, Hunslet prototype no. 001, hauls a scrap train at Woody Bay.



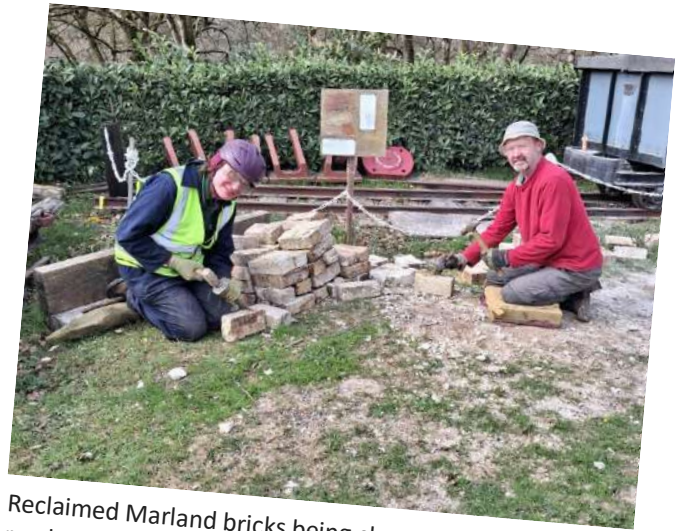
Pride in a job well done!



New line diagram ready for installation at the Woody Bay signal cabin.



The Thursday gang enjoy the sun between essential tasks.



Reclaimed Marland bricks being cleaned at Chelfham in readiness for re-use at Bratton Fleming.



The finishing touches are made to the signal at the Old Station Inn.



Chris Chivers presents Stuart Nelhams with a £1000 cheque from the West Midlands Group



Gleaming carriages are reversed into the new carriage shelter.

News from Chelfham

Despite the poor weather and a succession of rainy days this winter, we successfully constructed a new tool shed as an add-on to the lower shed. This has been fitted out inside and can house lawnmowers and garden tools required around the site. The log store was moved to a new site down below the shed. This now means that only the bookshop shed remains visible in a public area.

Thoughts are now drawn to a larger visitor building which as our regulars know is behind the restored station building.

More logs from track-bed clearance continue to be brought back across the viaduct for chopping up and made available for volunteer's log burners as required. Original parapet Marland bricks have been recovered, and many are to be reused with the construction of the goods shed at Bratton Fleming.

Other routine maintenance around the site takes place to preserve the charm and character of Chelfham, and we continue with Sunday and Wednesday open days entertaining visitors with signalling demonstrations and track-bed walks.



Nigel Thompson

100 Club

Taking over from Robin Horne, I am the new administrator of the 100 Club. I would like to thank Robin for the fantastic job he has done, and I hope I can live up to his standards.

Raising money is the lifeblood of the L&B project and if you are not already a member of the 100 Club then please consider joining. You might be lucky enough to win the monthly prize that currently stands at over £300!

The more people who join, the more money we can raise for all our essential projects as well as a larger prize-pot for participants!

Colin Rainsbury

Museum Update

Work to catalogue the Trust's collection of historic objects in a digital database continues. The museum cabinet at Woody Bay Station was tidied and re-arranged over the winter to get it ready for the new season.

We use the collection to help us better tell the story of the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway and its place in the local community. We have received some very generous donations over the last year and are looking forward to getting them on display when space allows. Thank you to everyone who has donated items for our collection.

We are always looking out for interesting and appropriate new objects. If you have a piece of L&BR history that you would like us to add to our growing collection, or if you have any questions or suggestions, you can contact the museum team via: museum@lynton-rail.co.uk

Rob Prosser

News from our groups around the regions

West Midlands Group

We formed the group last summer and the first meeting was held at Kidderminster Station on the Severn Valley Railway. We have attended several model railway shows already plus putting on our own stand-alone show which had 17 layouts and 5 traders in conjunction with Blackheath Methodist Church who we now have

a working partnership with. To date we have raised over £1000 towards the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway and we invite any other members to join our team.

Gary Stevens

Surrey Group

The Surrey Group was founded 35 years ago at a meeting held on the 16th February 1991. Our first chairman being Adrian Maunders. We will be holding our next Surrey Group AGM on 4th July 2026, 11am at Mizens Railway. Giles Perkins has kindly offered to give a talk on "Recent and Future Developments on the L&B." Unfortunately, we are now suffering from the ravages of old age, so we have had to temporarily curtail our attendance at shows and events, so we're hoping to recruit some able-bodied volunteers to help at these events. Roger Hardwick has generously donated around 75 books which are being sold on eBay and have raised over £125. Thanks very much Roger!



Phil Rawston

Somerset & Bristol Area Support Group

Thank you to those who have donated banknotes and coins to the group, the proceeds providing funds being used for Van 23. But we still need more: Old £1 coins 50p, 10p, 5p and 1/2p. Old £1, £5, £10 pound notes. Pre-decimal coins. Isle of Man, Guernsey and Jersey coins and foreign currency coins and notes. Please contact me, details below. The Group maintains a stock of back numbers of the L&B magazine. Issues 15 to 21, plus 33 and 34 have now been re-printed and are available at £2 each + postage. We also continue to receive donated items which are added to our eBay account (LynBarn-SABA). These donations are greatly appreciated.

Contact details: landb-bristol@hotmail.co.uk or write to: 7 Clements Way, Tytherington, Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire GL12 8FT. Tel: 07811 774469

Mark Bladwell

Thames Valley Group

The Thames Valley Group information stand has been to two, two-day shows so far this year. In February we attended the Alton Model Railway Exhibition and in March the Basingstoke Model Railway Exhibition. Our next outing will be to Narrow Gauge South Show in Eastleigh on Saturday 25th April.

If you are aware of any suitable events or shows within a 40-mile radius of Basingstoke, please encourage them to invite us to attend. They can send an email to Mike Pearce: tvgl@lynton-rail.co.uk

Mike Pearce

Spring work weekend

Sunshine greeted volunteers from all over the UK who joined our local regulars for the final work weekend before the start of the season. A huge variety of tasks were tackled to ensure the railway is not only ready for a new season but is in a better position year-on-year.

Here are just some of the jobs completed over the weekend:

- Restored signal from Woody Bay installed at the Old Station Inn.
- Engine shed gutters cleared and general tidying around the shed area.
- Sleepers changed in trans-shipment siding.
- Carriage shed and trans-shipment siding access pathway constructed.
- Drain soak-away dug.
- Three carriages deep cleaned and polished inside, and out.

- Guards van cleaned and tidied.
- Signal cabin cleaned and new signal box diagram installed.
- Various scrap collected from around the site by rail and then transferred to a road trailer for removal.
- Scrap wood sorted and stored.
- Greenhouse area tidied.
- Miniature railway cleared of built-up leaves and cess cleared.
- Station windows, notice boards, trolleys and benches cleaned.
- Shop cleaned, stocked and price labels made.
- Café guttering cleaned / site fences checked and wires tightened
- Woodland footpath repairs and clearing.
- Car park cleared of washed silt and drain entrances opened up S&T equipment brought from Chelfham for storage.

Thank you to the 1st Exmoor Scout Group who came along and helped with lining the woodland footpaths and tidying the car park. They clearly enjoyed their visit to Woody Bay Station.

Chris Chivers presented a cheque for £1000 raised by the West Midlands Group for the General Manager's Fund, where every penny raised is used for projects and tools for volunteers and staff all across the railway. Donating to the General Manager's fund is a great way of directly supporting our hard-working volunteers.

And of course, everyone was kept going by copious amounts of tea and coffee, and as always at these weekends a fine selection of delicious homemade cakes baked by Amanda Tompkins. Many of our volunteers gathered at the Old Station Inn for a very enjoyable evening meal at the Old Station Inn.

A huge thank you to all our amazing volunteers and staff who come to these work weekends. Every single job keeps steam trains running on Exmoor!

Stuart Nelhams, General Manager

Woody Bay Youth Volunteers

The first session of our L&B Youth Volunteers took place at Woody Bay Station on 11th April. This major, new initiative will educate young people in the history of the L&BR and its place in the local community both in the past and present, at the same time developing their personal skills and learning everything involved in running a heritage railway.

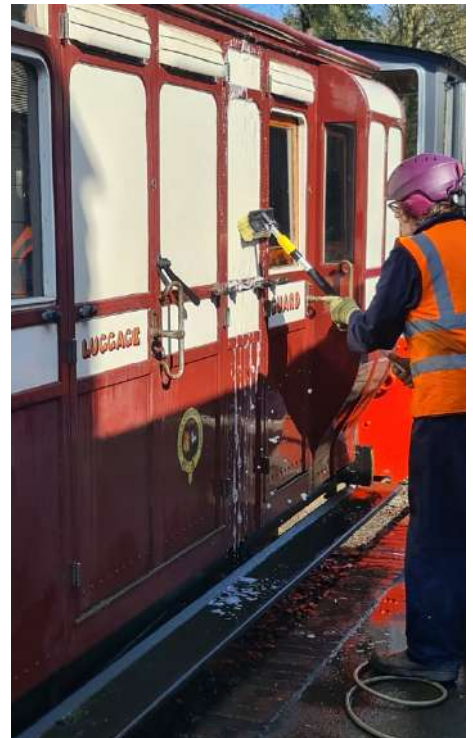
We're very excited about this scheme and our volunteers and enthusiasts of the future and there will be more news future newsletters and the members' magazine.

Tail lamp

Don't forget our **AGM on Saturday 16th May** at Lynton Town Hall starting at the **earlier time of 6pm**. Members will need to bring their membership cards to gain admission.

At 2pm (prompt) on Saturday 16th May we'll also be staging a track walk (£3 nominal donation) from the Old Station Inn along the recently fenced track-bed towards Wistlandpound. Bring sturdy waterproof footwear.

From early April we have a 6-week exhibition at the Exmoor National Park Centre in Lynmouth telling the story of the L&BR.



This newsletter is edited by David Balmer. We hope you like the new format. Any feedback and suggestions for future content please email david.balmer@lynton-rail.co.uk