

= Lynton and Barnstaple Railway =

The Lynton & Barnstaple Railway (L & B) opened as an independent railway in May 1898 . It was a single track , 1 ft 11 1 ? 2 in (597 mm) narrow gauge railway and was slightly over 19 miles (31 km) long running through the rugged and picturesque area bordering Exmoor in North Devon , England . Although opened after the 1896 Light Railways Act came into force , it was authorised and constructed prior to that act . Therefore , as with all other railways , it was authorised under its own Act of Parliament and built to higher (and more costly) standards than similar railways of the time . In the United Kingdom it was notable as being the only narrow gauge line required to use main @-@ line standard signalling . For a short period the line earned a modest return for shareholders , but for most of its life the L & B made a loss . In 1923 the L & B was taken over by the Southern Railway , and eventually closed in September 1935 .

The Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Association was formed in 1979 ; and a short section was reopened to passengers in 2004 . This was extended in 2006 ; and the following year plans were announced to open 9 miles (14 km) of track , linking the station at Woody Bay to both Lynton (at a new terminus on an extension to the original line , closer to the town) and Blackmoor Gate , and to a new station at Wistlandpound Reservoir . The present track is now 600 mm (1 ft 11 5 ? 8 in) narrow gauge .

= = History = =

Following the opening of the Devon and Somerset Railway to Barnstaple , there were calls for an extension to serve the twin villages of Lynton and Lynmouth , which were popular with holiday @-@ makers .

Through the middle of the 19th century , several schemes were proposed , from established railway companies and independent developers . One scheme suggested electric power , while another proposed a line from South Molton . None of these schemes offered sufficient prospects to encourage investment , and few got further than initial plans .

Due to the difficult terrain , one scheme suggested a 1 ft 11 1 ? 2 in (597 mm) narrow gauge , already in use by the Festiniog [sic] Railway Company and elsewhere , to ease construction . This scheme was supported by Sir George Newnes , publisher of Titbits and The Strand Magazine who became chairman of the company . The Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Bill was passed on 27 June 1895 , and the line opened on 11 May 1898 with public service commencing on 16 May , connecting with trains from Waterloo on the Ilfracombe Branch Line at Barnstaple Town .

The scheme did not meet with universal enthusiasm , and from the beginning , there were some who doubted the true intentions of the promoters . Although many of the sinuous curves and deviations were due to having to maintain a 1 in 50 gradient where there was no leeway (most observers being oblivious to the fact that a straighter shorter line would have made the gradient even steeper) , several were due to resistance by local landowners along the route .

A guide published whilst the line was being built stated :

The L & B seldom attracted sufficient passengers to remain viable . The journey of nearly 20 miles (32 km) took on average an hour and a half . To satisfy several influential residents , the terminus at Lynton was some distance from the town itself , and from the cliff railway to Lynmouth .

Declining tourism during World War I , improved roads , increased car ownership further depleted the line 's income until it was no longer economic . A guidebook published in 1921 described the situation :

Despite numerous cost @-@ saving measures and extra investment in the line , the Southern Railway was unable to reverse the trend , and closed the line .

The last train ran on 29 September 1935 . An observer at the time wrote :

The Southern removed everything they could use elsewhere , and by 8 November , had lifted the track from Lynton to milepost 15 ? - on the Barnstaple side of Woody Bay station . On 13 November an auction was held , although the railway failed to attract much interest . Most rolling stock , and every loco except for Lew , was scrapped at Pilton . Some coaches were sectioned for use as

garden sheds . Third class seats became garden furniture , and first class seats found their way into local snooker halls and Masonic lodges . In December , Plymouth ship breaker Sidney Castle won the tender to dismantle the railway . The remaining track was lifted by June 1936 , and in September , surviving loco Lew was shipped to Brazil . The stations and track bed were auctioned in 1938 .

The L & B had an exemplary safety record , and no members of the public were killed or injured during its 37 @-@ year existence , although accidents at Braunton Road and Chumhill did claim the lives of three track workers .

= = Route = =

The route of this diminutive railway and the scenery through which it passes , has been described many times , such as in a 1920s guide to the area :

(* Note : Wooda Bay station was actually renamed Woody Bay in 1901 . The geographical feature Woody Bay after which the station was named was the subject of an attempt to develop it as a tourist resort to rival Lynmouth ; a pier was even constructed . The developers felt that the spelling " Woody " was more attractive to tourists , and so changed it from the original " Wooda " ; the station name was changed accordingly .)

As well as several foot- and cycle @-@ routes which can still be followed today , the hostelry in Parracombe mentioned in the article remains a popular venue (although the geese are now singular) .

= = = Gradient profile = = =

The L & B rises and falls several times along its length . Starting at 15 feet (4 @. @ 6 m) above sea level , The first 3 3 ? 4 miles (6 @. @ 0 km) , through Barnstaple , and along the Yeo Valley stays relatively level . Collard Bridge marks the start of an 8 @-@ mile (13 km) climb , mainly at one in fifty , to Blackmoor Gate . A shallower down @-@ gradient follows , of about 2 miles (3 @. @ 2 km) , towards Parracombe Bank , and the start of another climb , of about 2 1 ? 2 miles (4 km) , to Woody Bay ? at 1 @, @ 000 feet (305 m) , the highest railway station in southern England . The line then falls , again mostly at one in fifty (2 %) - to Lynton & Lynmouth station , still 700 feet (213 m) above the sea , and hidden by the landscape from the town of Lynton . The minimum radius on curves was 5 @-@ chain (100 m) .

= = Rolling stock = =

One of the most distinctive aspects of the L & B was its rolling stock , with the locomotives appearing originally in a livery of plain lined Holly green , later on a black base , with chestnut under @-@ frames , hauling passenger carriages coloured terracotta with off @-@ white upper panels , and light grey goods wagons . The schemes were simplified as individual vehicles were repainted . With the take over by the Southern and arrival of Lew the livery was slowly changed to Maunsell Green for locos and passenger stock , and umber for the goods wagons . The loco headlamps which had been black under the L & B were re @-@ painted red .

= = = Locomotives = = =

At least four contractors ' locomotives were used for construction . Unusually , some of the temporary track was wider than the final gauge - the section around Parracombe Bank for example , spanning the Heddon valley , was built to 3 ft (914 mm) gauge , with a locomotive known as Winnie . A fifth locomotive - perhaps named Spondon - may also have been used , although little is known of either of these . In 1900 , Kilmarnock was sold by the L & B. It is believed to have been left behind by James Nuttall , as a result of the financial problems and litigation between railway and contractor .

The L & B used only coal @-@ fired steam motive power . In 1896 , the Hunslet Engine Company

submitted two designs (a 2 @-@ 4 @-@ 2T and a 4 @-@ 4 @-@ 0T) , but eventually an order was placed for three 2 @-@ 6 @-@ 2Ts from Manning Wardle & Co of Leeds . The locos were named after local rivers : Yeo , Exe , and Taw . These were supplemented by a 2 @-@ 4 @-@ 2T , Lyn , built by the Baldwin Locomotive Works of Philadelphia , USA , as the Company realised that three locos would be insufficient . Baldwin was selected as they could deliver the loco ? based largely on standard components ? more quickly than domestic suppliers , who had a backlog of orders , caused by a national engineering dispute over the 8 hour working day resulting in a lock @-@ out by employers from July 1897 and January 1898 . After construction by Baldwin , the loco was shipped across the Atlantic in parts , and re @-@ assembled at Pilton by railway staff . It first steamed in July 1898 . The Manning Wardles were delivered ahead of the lock @-@ out , and Yeo and Taw were used in the final stages of construction . Exe was stored locally in a stable , where she received the unwelcome attention of thieves who stole various brass fittings and fixtures .

In 1923 the L & B was absorbed into the Southern Railway , and began an upgrade programme . All locos & coaches were repainted in Southern Maunsell Green livery , the wagons were repainted in Southern Umber livery and track and buildings were improved . A fifth locomotive , Lew was purchased in 1925 , with improvements to the original Manning Wardle design .

== Fate of Lew ==

Although bought at the auction (it is believed by Barwicks of London) by December 1935 , Lew was working for Sidney Castle , the dismantler of the railway . This work was completed by July 1936 and in September , Lew was moved by rail to Swansea and loaded onto the S.S. Sabor destined for the port of Pernambuco (since renamed Recife) , Brazil . Most of the relevant shipping records were destroyed in World War II , Lew then just vanished and despite several attempts , no trace of the locomotive , or evidence of its fate , has so far been found .

== Passenger stock ==

Sixteen passenger carriages were delivered for the opening . Built by the Bristol Wagon & Carriage Works Co . Ltd . , these comprised six different types , all the same size , being 39 ft 6 in (12 @. @ 0 m) long , 6 ft (1 @. @ 8 m) wide , (7 ft 4 in or 2 @. @ 2 m over steps) and 8 ft 7 in (2 @. @ 6 m) high ? large by narrow gauge standards ? and certainly superior to any previous British narrow gauge stock .

The coaching stock was extremely solidly constructed , and offered levels of accommodation far in advance of anything else at the time - certainly compared to any other narrow gauge railway . Almost 70 years later , the design was used as the basis for a new rake of carriages built by the Ffestiniog - testament to the excellence of the original design .

The body for coach 17 was built in 1911 , by local firm Shapland and Petter , and mounted on a steel underframe constructed by the railway in its own workshops at Pilton . Marginally longer than the earlier coaches , it contained both smoking and non @-@ smoking accommodation for first and third class passengers , as well as the brake van space .

== Goods stock ==

The Southern Railway introduced several new items of goods stock , and also purchased two ex @-@ War Department travelling cranes for the line .

Goods @-@ only trains were a rarity , and the usual practice was to attach goods wagons to any scheduled passenger services . Whilst the shunting of wagons at intermediate stations no doubt added to the interest of the tourist and occasional traveller , it also added marginally to the journey time .

The open goods wagons were originally delivered with a single top @-@ hung side door on each side , but these proved inefficient , and all were eventually converted to side hung double doors . By 1907 , most had been fitted with tarpaulin rails . The goods vans used the same underframe , and

were fitted with double sliding doors on each side .

The bogie open doors were also originally top @-@ hung , but converted by the railway at Pilton .

Wagon ? 19 was originally used by the contractors . After the railway opened , it was modified and entered revenue service in 1900 . At only 6 long tons (6 @.@ 1 t ; 6 @.@ 7 short tons) it was used often in preference to an 8 @-@ long @-@ ton (8 @.@ 1 t ; 9 @.@ 0 @-@ short @-@ ton) wagon as it reduced the overall weight of a train .

Van 23 - now restored and being prepared (2014) for service at Woody Bay - was built at Pilton by the L & B. Unlike all other L & B stock , its underframe was entirely made of wood .

The travelling cranes were ex @-@ WD stock , and fitted with outriggers , rated at 3 long tons (3 @.@ 05 t ; 3 @.@ 36 short tons) with a fifteen @-@ foot (4 @.@ 57 m) radius , 4 @.@ 5 long tons (4 @.@ 6 t ; 5 @.@ 0 short tons) at 11 ft 6 in (3 @.@ 51 m) . Intended as recovery cranes in the event of a derailment , neither saw much use . One crane , with its match truck , was kept in the long headshunt at Pilton , the other was put to use in Lynton goods yard .

The 1927 bogie goods vans were originally fitted with heavy diagonal wooden cross braces at each end , but these were later replaced with single diagonal angle @-@ iron braces .

= = Present = =

Eighty years after its closure , much of the line is still in evidence . The most spectacular evidence is Bridge 22 - the brick @-@ built Chelfham Viaduct . Fully restored in 2000 , its eight 42 @-@ foot (13 m) wide arches reach 70 feet (21 m) above the Stoke Rivers valley ? the largest narrow @-@ gauge railway structure in England .

The stations at Lynton and Bratton Fleming are now private residences , Blackmoor Gate is a restaurant and Barnstaple Town a school . Chelfham and Woody Bay both serve the new L & B. Chelfham station is currently being restored , and open to visitors every weekend , while Woody Bay is the main centre of operations . Snapper Halt was purchased in 2010 by Exmoor Associates - a private company dedicated to securing trackbed for the restoration of the railway .

A short section of the line reopened to passengers in 2004 . Bridge 67 was generously rebuilt as a gift by Edmund Nuttall Ltd . ? a firm descended from James Nuttall of Manchester , the main contractors for the original construction ? allowing an extension to Killington Lane in 2006 .

Work is progressing on the next section to be restored , towards Parracombe , Blackmoor and a new temporary Southern terminus at Wistlandpound Reservoir . A total of 7 planning applications were submitted to Exmoor National Park Authority and North Devon Council in February 2016 , with decisions expected during the Summer .

= = Restoration = = =

Unlike the Welsh Highland Railway , the track bed was sold off piecemeal - often reverting to the original owners , paying much less than they had sold it for originally . Although there has been minor development on parts of the route , and Wistlandpound Reservoir has flooded the track bed close to its mid @-@ point , much is still in open countryside , with many sections identifiable .

The Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Association (since 2000 , a charitable trust) was formed in 1979 . Woody Bay Station was purchased by the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway Company in 1995 and , after much effort , a short section of railway reopened to passengers in 2004 . This was extended to over a mile in 2006 , with steam and diesel @-@ hauled trains running between Woody Bay and the new , temporary terminus at Killington Lane .

In 1995 , the Lynbarn Railway ? at the Milky Way , a theme park near Clovelly , was created and operated by L & B volunteers . Profits from this funded the purchase , restoration and reopening of Woody Bay . The Lynbarn was handed over to the park in 2005 , once Woody Bay had become established , and continues to operate as part of the attraction .

Little original rolling stock survives , but as well as the heritage coaches mentioned below , the largely restored Van 23 was on display at Woody Bay until being removed to the L & B restoration team in Essex in November 2013 , for refurbishment and the fitting of brakes , underframe and

couplers . The remains of several other coaches and Goods Van 4 are in storage awaiting reconstruction .

Coach 2 , used as a summer house , is on display (unrestored) at the National Railway Museum York along with the nameplates of the original locomotives . Coach 15 , recovered from Snapper Halt in 1959 and restored by the Ffestiniog Railway in North Wales , has been running there (now as FR Coach 14) for longer than it did on the L & B. Due to the Ffestiniog 's smaller loading gauge , the roof profile was altered so it can pass through Garnedd tunnel . In September 2010 , Coach 15 visited the L & B with the Lew replica loco , Lyd .

A 1915 Kerr Stuart " Joffre " class 0 @-@ 6 @-@ 0T loco was bought in 1983 , and named Axe . Restored to working order in 2008 , Axe worked most passenger trains at Woody Bay until December 2013 . An 0 @-@ 4 @-@ 0WT Maffei named Sid , owned by several L & B members , was also used on the L & B steam service until the end of 2013 , when it was sold off to a railway museum line in Sweden . To replace " Sid " , another privately owned loco , " Isaac " - a Bagnall 0 @-@ 4 @-@ 2T , ? 3023 , built in 1953 for use in South African Platinum mine - arrived at Woody Bay from Boston Lodge in December 2013 , principally for use hauling the restored original L & B heritage coaches .

The Trust owns two industrial diesel locomotives , one of which Heddon Hall , is often used as backup for Axe and Isaac , and for maintenance trains .

A number of other visiting diesel and steam locomotives have also seen service on the line .

===== Heritage coaches =====

Sixteen coaches were originally built for the L & B in 1898 , and another was built by the railway in 1911 . Although most were broken up when the railway closed , several parts have survived , and have been retrieved and stored by the railway preservationists .

Following a ten @-@ year restoration , Coaches 7 and 17 returned to Woody Bay on 15 April 2013 , to re @-@ enter passenger @-@ carrying service on 10 May 2013 after an absence of 78 years . Coach 16 followed in September 2013 , and Coach 11 returned in April 2015 . The initial rake of three heritage coaches , after an inaugural service over the Autumn Gala weekend in September 2013 , entered regular service - hauled by " Isaac " - for the Santa Specials in December 2014 .

===== Modern replicas =====

===== Lyd =====

A Lynton and Barnstaple Manning Wardle type replica , named Lyd , is operational on the Ffestiniog Railway in North Wales .

First Steamed in Spring 2010 , Lyd visited Woody Bay in September 2010 - to mark the 75th Anniversary of the closure of the L & B. Lyd first moved under its own steam on 5 August 2010 and then underwent running @-@ in trials before visiting the L & B in September 2010 with former L & B coach 15 and Ffestiniog Railway observation car 102 .

===== Lyn =====

A replica of the Baldwin , Lyn is currently being built . It is being assembled by Alan Keef Ltd and is due to be operational in 2016 .

===== Yeo =====

A set of frames for a new Yeo were built by Winson Engineering in 2000 , and these are in storage , awaiting further funds to continue the construction .

= = Prospects = =

Restoring passenger services from Woody Bay was a major undertaking by the enthusiastic volunteers . Although much of the track bed survives intact , several obstacles ? including Wistlandpound Reservoir ? must be overcome if the greater part of the route is to be restored , fulfilling the hopes expressed in a card left at Barnstaple on the day after the line closed ? Perchance it is not dead , but sleepeth ...

In October 2007 , the railway announced plans for reinstating enough trackbed to reopen 9 miles (14 km) of track , linking the station at Woody Bay to both Lynton (at a new terminus on an extension to the original line , closer to the town) and a new station at Wistlandpound .

Exmoor Enterprise , the working group leading the project , estimated that the full project being considered was likely to cost around £ 30 million , including the building of replica rolling stock , reconstructing original coaches and Van 4 , as well as improving the line as an important local tourist attraction . The railway 's management predicts the scheme will generate over £ 70 million for the south west economy within five years .

Working closely with international engineering and design consultants Arup , The L & B Trust held a series of public consultations during May and June 2012 , providing information to local communities about plans for obtaining a TWO , and the next phase of the reinstatement , south @-@ west from Killington Lane to Blackmoor , then Wistlandpound , and north @-@ east to Caffyns , and eventually to Lynton .

Longer @-@ term plans see reopening the line towards Barnstaple .