

RAILWAYS ROUND EXMOOR

Robin Madge & Allan Stanistreet

Although Exmoor is renowned for its wild landscapes and impressive coast, it has also been home to some remarkable railways. Significant and much-loved lines such as the Taunton-Barnstaple, Exe Valley and Barnstaple-Ilfracombe have long gone, swept away by the Beeching axe, although traces of them can be followed on the ground to this day. Others catered for industry which once found a home on the moor, such as the West Somerset Mineral Railway, whose spectacular incline still descends from the heights of the Brendon Hills towards the Bristol Channel.

Above all, Exmoor today boasts the unique Lynton-Lynmouth Cliff Railway; the longest preserved steam railway in the country, in the West Somerset Railway which skirts the northern fringes of the National Park; and the Lynton-Barnstaple Railway which, when fully restored, will be the longest narrow gauge line in England.

Now fully revised, updated and re-illustrated, this classic guide to the railways round Exmoor appears again by popular demand. Fully comprehensive, it tells the history of Exmoor's railways from their earliest days and captures the ongoing story of the area's preserved railways in their twenty-first century glory.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

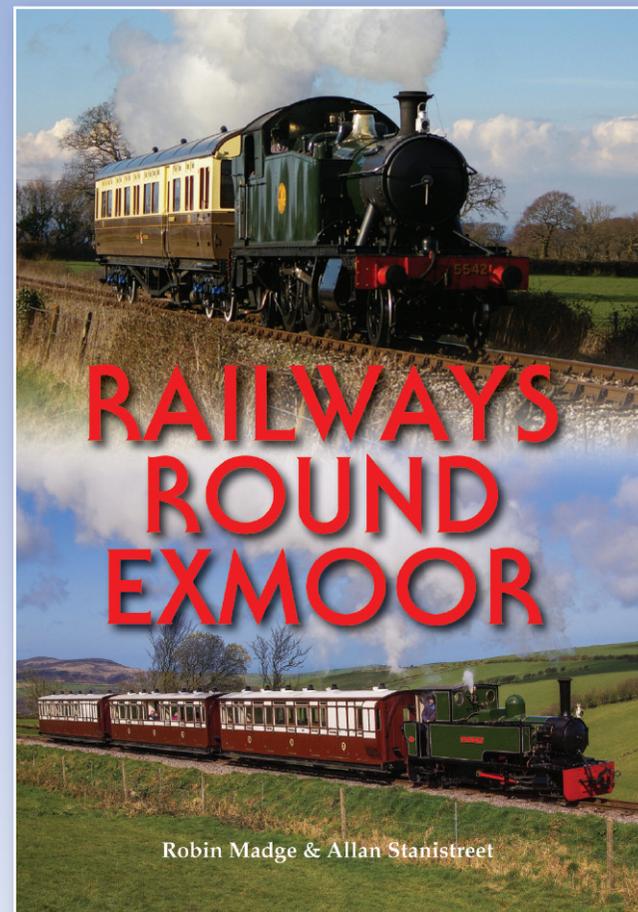
Robin Madge was a highly regarded teacher, head of the Art Department at Huish's Grammar School, Taunton, and railway enthusiast, who wrote the first edition of *Railways Round Exmoor* in 1971, and updated it several times thereafter.

Allan Stanistreet is the author of six books, and has assisted with several others, as well as numerous magazine articles, book reviews, the first four editions of the *West Somerset Railway Guide Book* and the first *WSR Stations and Buildings* book.

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Southern Class N2-6-0 No. 31841 with an up freight train crossing the River Taw at Barnstaple. The bridge is now demolished. (R.E.Toop)

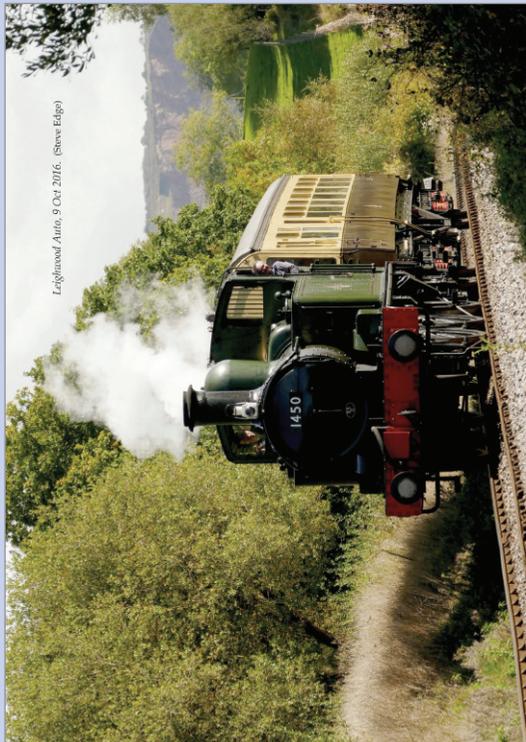


Lyd and Isaac at MP 15½. (Will Curry)



Right: The Lynton – Lynmouth Cliff Railway opened on Easter Monday 1890.

Example of a double-page spread.



Englishman's Aunty, 9 Oct. 2016. (Steve Edge)

No. 68. B & E 4-4-0 Saddle tank.

Taunton – Minehead

This line was the product of two separate enterprises, whose prime purpose was to provide additional outlets for the iron ore traffic from the Brendon Hills.

History

In November 1856, plans were deposited by the West Somerset Railway for a broad gauge line from Norton Fitzwarren (on the Bristol and Exeter Railway) to Watchet, a distance of 14½ miles. Nominally, Isambard Kingdom Brunel was the engineer in charge, though it is fairly certain that his deputy, R.P. Brereton, did most of the work. The second stage was to run an extension from the present station at Watchet (as the terminus of the line) to the West Somerset Mineral Railway at Whitehall and, since the latter line used the standard gauge, to convert the track to mixed. The W.S.M.R. objected, however, and so this part of the plan (though in essence the prime purpose of the railway) was not included in the W.S.R. Act of 1857. Owing to bad weather and other difficulties, construction proceeded slowly and it was not until 31 March 1862 that the line, including an extension to Watchet east pier, was officially opened to traffic.

The construction of the 8¼-mile route from Watchet to Minehead was competed for but had to wait twelve years for completion. The first plan had

Below: Dulverton Station, c.1900. (Dulverton Heritage Centre)

