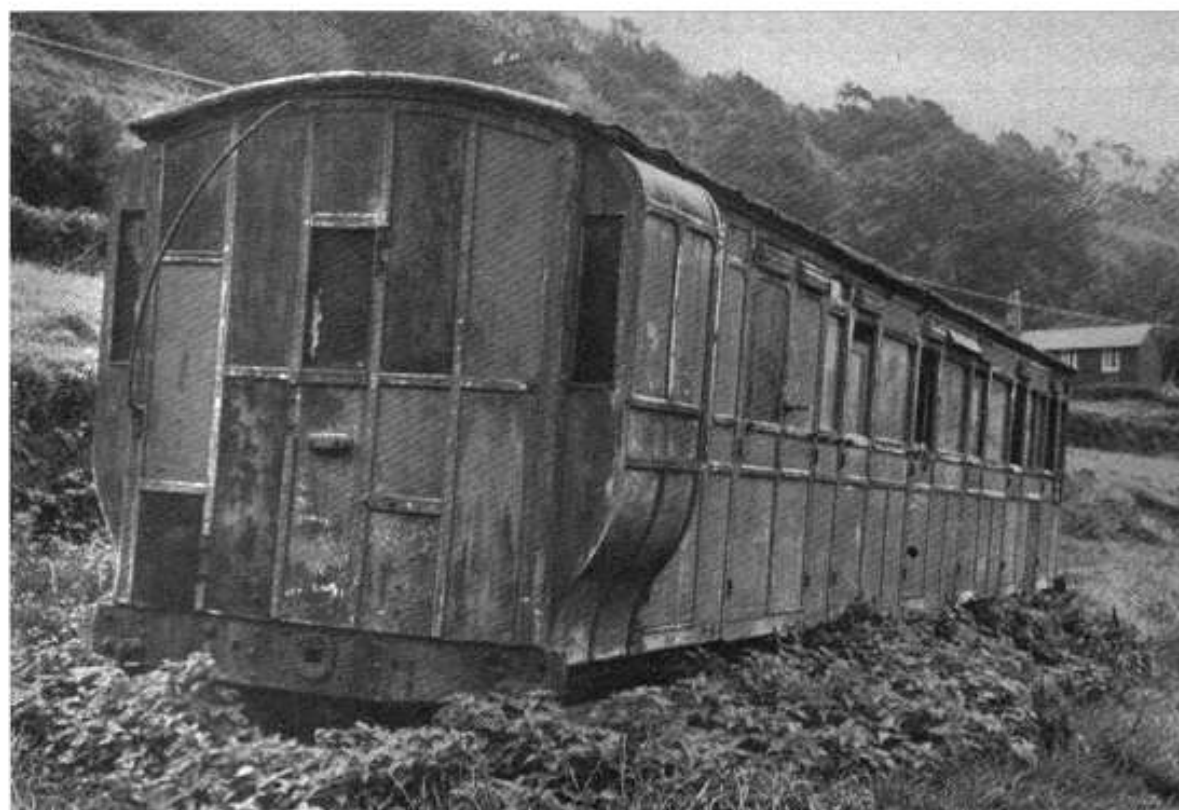


A Lynton & Barnstaple Relic



Photo]

[G. J. Flower

MAROONED in a field near the site of Snapper Halt, with the rails beneath it severed close to each bogie, may still be seen a coach of the abandoned narrow-gauge Lynton & Barnstaple Railway. Despite being used as a chicken house, it is in surprisingly good condition after over twenty years' exposure. Some of the gold-leaf lettering and numbering (Southern No. 6993) is still discernible on the peeling green paintwork of its exterior. On one side, on the double doors at the rear of where were once five passenger compartments, the legend "guard" can just be made out. About 300 yd. away lie the truncated remains of another coach (No. 6991) left as a summer house when the track was lifted in 1936.

The last train over the Lynton & Barnstaple, opened in May, 1898, and purchased by the Southern Railway in March, 1923, was run on September 29, 1935. The track bed over the section on which the two rolling stock relics rest is now overgrown, but the course of the railway for most of its 19 miles along the edge of Exmoor can still be clearly traced. A large proportion was on embankments

or in cuttings and has been completely obliterated only in the vicinity of road improvements and house building and, notably, by a recently-constructed dam south of Blackmoor.

The station buildings are largely extant; of the three in red brick built by the company at the north end of the line, Blackmoor Gate has been converted to a guest house and Lynton contains a small shop. At Barnstaple Town Station the unoccupied bay platform marks the 1 ft. 11½ in.-gauge railway's southern terminus, and a level crossing gate survives near the former Pilton Works, the headquarters of the L.B.R.

The principal engineering structure on the railway, Chelfham Viaduct, 70 ft. high and with eight spans each 42 ft. wide, was repaired last year. The parapet was removed and the top of the brickwork cemented over, and a wall surmounted by spiked iron railings erected at each end at track level. Presumably demolition of the viaduct was considered impracticable, and it is thus likely to survive for many decades as an impressive memorial to the much-lamented little railway.