



## British Railways Western Region

Area Manager's Office,  
Barnstaple Junction Station,  
BARNSTAPLE. N. Devon.

5th April, 1968.

y/r W/-  
o/r A.M. 100

Dear Sir,

With reference to your letter of 23rd March.

I enclose herewith a draft of the proceedings leading up to and surrounding the temporary shuttle service referred to.

I trust it will be of interest to you.

Yours sincerely,

(E.J.M. McLauchlan)  
Area Manager.

Temporary Torrington - Bideford Service .

The events which gave occasion to running the Temporary Torrington - Bideford service were as follows, in chronological order.

On the morning of the 9th, the 06.15 freight ex Exeter stopped at Portsmouth Arms and the driver informed the duty Area Movements Supervisor at Barnstaple that the train had passed through considerable amounts of water on the track between Kings Nympton and Portsmouth Arms. He then went on to say that although it was still "pitch-black" outside, there seemed to be considerable flooding in the valley ahead. He was told to "stay-put" and secure the train until daylight came and the position could be properly assessed. Inspection after dawn showed the line to be under water up to a depth of four feet in places. The line was badly washed away Barnstaple remained cut off from the outside world until 13th.

We maintained the Ilfracombe - Barnstaple service with a 3 coach D.M.U. set which we had on hand and arranged a road link from Barnstaple to Kings Nympton, where passengers were able to pick up a D.M.U. service from the Exeter end of the line. We unloaded the freight train stranded at Portsmouth Arms by using road vehicles to ferry the loads to Barnstaple Victoria Road Goods Depot.


January,

On the night of the 9th/the Bideford Bridge collapsed, after 600 years good service, dividing Bideford in two. Unfortunately, the main part of the town and the residential area were then stranded on the West bank. Early on the morning of the 10th I reached agreement with the local Superintendent of the Southern National Bus Co. to loop around the obstruction by using the Torrington road bridge, about six miles upstream. There is a good road along the West bank of the river, but no corresponding road on the East side. The service was by double decker bus on the road, the passengers debussing and entraining at Torrington Station, then by rail to Bideford Station, which is at the end of the broken bridge on the East bank. From this point the Southern National were to maintain their normal service at a frequency of 20 minute intervals. The agreed fare was 2/- by bus Bideford to Torrington Station and 2/- Torrington to Bideford, single tickets only to be issued.

During the morning of the 10th the Southern National Superintendent and I met the Council and Civil authorities, and we agreed to drop charging individuals when the Town Clerk promised that the Council would pay the bill on a per day basis to the Southern National and the Railway. They promised to have a footbridge link in operation by late on the 11th, so they stated they would only require the service on the 10th and 11th. It was withdrawn on the 12th, but the bridging authorities struck snags and the council then asked us to renew the road-rail link starting again on Saturday 13th, which we did.

The train during this part of the service (10th - 13th) was rather comical for, as mentioned earlier, my only coaching stock was a three car D.M.U. which was already committed. We took the middle coach of the D.M.U. and with a class D63XX locomotive, the only engine in our isolated area we formed a train using an S.R. BG as Brake vehicle. This, of course, meant that we had to "run-round" at each end of the trip. The loop at Bideford is spiked out, so that at that end we had to run on to Instow to round the train.

However, we were reconnected to the rest of the Railway on the 13th and managed to secure a single power car from Exeter. This was used to run the service daily from Monday 15th to Saturday 20th January, inclusive. By this time the footbridge had been erected over the bridge gap and the emergency road-rail service was terminated.

  
(E.J.M. McLauchlan)  
Area Manager.