

DARTMOOR RAILWAY
ASSOCIATION

The Dartmoor Pony

**The Magazine of the
Dartmoor Railway Association**

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Meldon Model

The Dartmoor Pony

Issue No. 53

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The views expressed in the newsletter are not necessarily those of the Dartmoor Railway Association.

FRONT COVER: The wonderful addition of Meldon Viaduct to the Okehampton model railway layout in the Signal Box (Photo: Graham Peacock).

BACK COVER: Top: Arriving soon? Class 175, 175114, at Newton Abbot on a training run on 28th October 2025. (Photo: David Howard). Bottom: Class 150 150202 forms the 10:37 departure from Exeter St Davids to Okehampton on 10th December 2025 (Photo: John Caesar).

CONTENTS

Chairman's Update	Page 4
Membership & Volunteer News	Page 6
Model Railway Update	Page 8
1997: A New Beginning for Okehampton Station - Part 2	Page 11
A River of Vitriol	Page 15
Background to the 'A River of Vitriol' Article	Page 18
Steam on the Dartmoor Railway	Page 21
Book Review	Page 23
Richard Trevithick in Dartford	Page 24
Miah's Diary	Page 27

Chairman's Update

Sue Baxter

Recently, after giving a talk about the station and the Dartmoor Railway Association (DRA), Tom and I got a telling off. We were in effect accused of “hiding our light under a bushel”. It was a moment when embarrassment was combined with pride. Our audience were well informed, seasoned, rail travellers of Okehampton’s Inner Wheel, who had raised £250 to go towards the station gardening. They made us feel that DRA volunteers were a huge unsung asset for the town.

So here is a flavour of what goes on during our main volunteering day, a Wednesday:

Around 8.30 Geoff Brooks and Ron are on Platform 3 changing the four bags in the litter bins and taking them to the bulk waste bins in the car park. The two Museum Rooms are opened, platform barrows wheeled outside, the model of Meldon Viaduct is lit up and the randomised slideshow of 100 old and recent photos switched on.

Meanwhile Ged has opened up the shop, got the signs up and heating on. The shop becomes a welcome hub for anyone needing a natter and a warm up. David and Dave patrol everywhere with a bucket and litter pickers. John joins forces with Geoff to tackle another bench in need of painting, having made space in Room 1 on Platform 2. Indoors the paint will have a chance to dry. The staff room heater is on and cups of tea made as and when required, accompanied by pieces of Pat’s cake.

Graham has joined Ron in the Signal Box, to maintain and add to the Okehampton Model Railway layout, running it for passing enthusiastic visitors. They also check on the Christmas model railway layout in the Bookstall/Shop window. The Christmas parcels train is running smoothly! Tom is fixing/cleaning the computer which David uses for building the archive.

Andy has arrived with another railway jigsaw puzzle, checked and complete for the shop, and then picked up a snow shovel and broom to

clear the soggy leaves from the front of the station. Chris and I fettle 18 planters, on Platform 3 and the north side of the station. Geraniums are removed to avoid the frost, a shrub pruned and moved to an outside planter to give it a new life in the rain.

Over lunch, next steps are pondered. Rooms 1 and 2 need to be changed around!!!

Our intention always had been to have the staff room and tea facilities in Room 1 which has two windows, while Room 2 with high benches on two sides is more suited to being a work room as well as the store room it already is! Plenty of sorting required in the New Year. I hope I do not have to be referee for what stays and what must go!

Meldon Aggregates Ltd. have indicated in Modern Railways Magazine that they intend to start up stone train operations again. The last heavy haul trains ran in 2011. These trains could be running again in autumn 2026. We look forward to seeing the development of the line west from Okehampton Station.

Meldon Viaduct is immediately to the west of the 15 miles of railway line bought by Network Rail in 2021. Devon County Council (DCC) own it and established the Meldon Viaduct Company in 1998, a charity, to attract funding for the maintenance of the heritage structure. It carries the Granite Way path and cycle route. Survey work is underway in preparation for carrying out renovation in the next decade, estimated to cost £2 to £3 million, considerably more than the £17k income of 2024. DCC decided to take direct control of Meldon Viaduct in November this year and dissolve the company, while ring fencing remaining funds for maintenance. Funding pathways have changed so that DCC can access grants for heritage structures.

The slipometer tests (reported in Issue 52) were repeated by Devon County Council on the main span of the Okehampton station footbridge. Despite lots of boots going over it, they showed that the surface was still too smooth. So heavyweight composite mats have been installed to cover all the wood, now providing excellent grip in wet weather.

Some trains have been cancelled, due to sheep or a bull on the line, or a train losing power in one of its two engines. It is also sad for us to see travellers regularly not able to make intended connections between bus and rail. However it is good to report (in a whisper) that the ticket machine, car parking machine and the Passenger Information Screen have been working well.

Don't forget we always welcome more members to join the volunteers at the station.

I wish everyone a Good Christmas and Happy New Year!

Membership & Volunteer News

Geoff Horner, Membership Secretary

As usual at this time of the year a heartfelt thank you to all our members. Without your support the association would not be able to carry on with the work of preserving the heritage side of Okehampton station nor would we be able to continue having a seat at the table of our various partner organisations that to a great extent influence our future plans and aspirations.

The association membership currently stands at 158 down just 15 from the end of 2024. Although we have been pleased to welcome a number of new members over the year, age and health issues do unavoidably take their toll. Please do spread the word and encourage anybody you know who might be interested in joining to visit us at Okehampton or get in touch at info@dartmoor-railway-association.org

For your convenience a membership renewal form for 2026 is included in with this copy of the Dartmoor Pony.

Okehampton station has continued to attract praise and favourable comments from passengers and visitors. This is thanks to the unstinted efforts of our station maintenance and gardening teams in keeping the

station buildings, fixtures and fittings in the heritage style in which the public enjoy seeing it. Their efforts have also been recognized by the awards the station has won.

The Arthur Westlake Museum, supported by behind the scenes volunteering work in the archives, continues to attract a steady stream of appreciative visitors.

‘The Bookstall’, the DRA shop, has enjoyed another successful year again thanks to the team of volunteers who run it.

The Model Railway layout in the former signal box showcasing Okehampton station as it was in mid-1960’s opened in the summer.

Regrettably the year has seen little change in our status in the Meldon sheds and yard. The new owner/operator Meldon Aggregates Ltd., while remaining approachable and agreeable to our presence on a day by day arrangement basis, have not yet made any decisions on how the quarry will operate should they resume shipping out stone by rail and consequently are not yet able to offer DRA any license or lease arrangement. We continue to live in hope!

Over the year Carriage & Wagon volunteers have undertaken visits to ensure that our rolling stock there remains protected from the weather and vandalism. A schedule of works to our SR brake van stored in the Meldon shed is currently being put together with the intention of restarting the restoration project. Any former C&W team members who would like to be involved again do please get in touch!

The Bookstall on Platform 3

We welcome donations of railway books, railway miscellanea, model railway items, paperbacks and hardback books, and railway DVDs.

Contact Christine Horner for further details:

christine.horner@talk21.com

DRA Members' Socials

Dates for upcoming DRA social evenings at the Taw River Inn, Sticklepath, Okehampton, EX20 2FG. Held on the first Wednesday of each month starting from 18:30. All DRA members are welcome!

- Wednesday 7th January 2026
- Wednesday 4th February 2026
- Wednesday 4th March 2026
- Wednesday 1st April 2026

DRA Members' Library

A reminder that we have a collection of books on (mostly) West Country railway themes. Current local DRA members are welcome to borrow from the library. The latest list is shown here:

<https://www.dartmoor-railway-association.org/library>

Please contact us on info@dartmoor-railway-association.org if there's anything you are interested in – please don't just turn up at the station unannounced.

The Bookstall

Our DRA shop, 'The Bookstall', on Platform 3 at Okehampton station opens on Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Holiday Mondays throughout the year. As well as the varied selection of 'previously loved' railway books and DVD's available in the shop, new railway book titles are available to order online via the DRA website:

<https://www.dartmoor-railway-association.org/shop>

The shop also stocks a selection of local hand crafted candles, glassware, jewellery, cards etc which make ideal gifts. There is also a selection of DRA and Dartmoor Line souvenirs. Do visit the shop when you are in Okehampton.

Model Railway Update

Graham Peacock

Meldon Viaduct, which is the final significant feature on the DRA model railway in the signal box is now in place. The photos (magazine cover and adjacent) show a Bulleid pacific loco, appropriately number 34013 'Okehampton' crossing the new structure. The layout is now essentially complete, although there is still some scenery and detailing to finish.

The layout has been open to visitors each weekend since Easter and received favourable comments from rail enthusiasts and the general public. Opening times may be reduced during the winter months, but anyone wishing to view the layout can contact a committee member to arrange a suitable time.



Perhaps a case of history repeating itself, the black and white photo, published in the July 2025 issue of the 'Railway Modeller', shows West Country Class pacific number 34030 'Watersmeet' at Okehampton in 1964. The next photo shows our own Hornby version of the same loco at the same location on our layout, an indication of how we have captured the essence of the station at that time in its history.



Online Fundraising

Please consider using easyfundraising every time you shop online!

www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/drsa

Please contact our Treasurer, Christine Horner, if you would like more information: christine.horner@talk21.com

1997: A New Beginning for Okehampton Station - Part 2

David Naylor

After an almost complete overhaul of Okehampton station, the 25th of October 1997 saw a special visitor arrive. This was an LMS Stanier Mogul (No 2968). This particular model was designed by William Stanier at the Horwich works then built at Crewe in March 1934. This was the penultimate loco of the 40 built in this class to be withdrawn & was rescued from the Woodham Bros. scrapyard in Barry in 1973, being restored on the Severn Valley Railway and first entering service in 1991.



Loco 2968 heading west from Okehampton Station

The year following its' visit to Okehampton, it was withdrawn from service for an overhaul, re-entering service in 2003, and after a further overhaul, was back on the tracks in late 2023.





Nearly two months later, on the 13th of December 1997, the station witnessed another special visitor, a very modern looking one! This was a High Speed Train, featuring Class 43 power car 43192 (more recently a GWR Castle Class power car, 'Trematon Castle' running with four carriages on routes between Cardiff and Penzance). This particular power car is still in service – in Africa! It was one of eleven Class 43s exported to LAMTA (Lagos Metropolitan Area Transport Authority) for service in the burgeoning rail network around Lagos in Nigeria.

Magazine Contributions Invited

We invite contributions for the magazine of items likely to be of interest to members – photos, memories, articles, history. Photo contributions preferably in jpeg format and less than 2MB, and text preferably in Word (.doc/.docx) or Open Office (.odt) format. Please get in touch if you'd like to ask any questions or send in material for consideration: museum@dartmoor-railway-association.org

Deadline for the next issue is 1st March 2026.



As Class 158 158749 pulls away from Exeter St Davids on the 12:38 to Okehampton on 6th December 2025, converted Class 153 153317 sits in the siding beyond. This is now an Angel Trains Rail Head Treatment Train demonstration unit. The unit is used to identify and analyse areas of the railhead where adhesion is poor, which can result in wheel slip (Photos: John Caesar)



A River of Vitriol

Article written in 'Railway News Writings' in February 1913 about an accident that occurred at Okehampton Station, London & South Western Railway during that month.

A RIVER OF VITRIOL.

EXTRAORDINARY ACCIDENT AT OKEHAMPTON.

WHOLESALE DESTRUCTION OF TROUT AND EELS.

There was an alarming railway accident at the London and South Western Railway station at Okehampton on Saturday afternoon, which, fortunately, was unattended with loss of life, but caused a serious loss to property.

Okehampton station is a very busy one; in addition to the heavy mainline traffic, there is the Holsworthy, Bude, and Launceston traffic, so there are plenty of shunting operations. During Saturday afternoon the ordinary shunting was being carried out. The 4.19 train was expected from Meldon, and an engine with from fifteen to twenty trucks was shunted off the main line, and turned in to the new Government siding. The engine and trucks, so it is understood, were turned into this siding by the signalman who was in charge of the signal-box.

ON THE WRONG LINE.

When the engine and trucks came back from the Government siding, to get on the main line, the shunter who was in charge thought the signalman had closed the points. So he rode back on the trucks and did not personally see if the points were in order and the disc showing. The signalman had been in the habit of closing the points as it saved a lot of time. Unfortunately, in this case, the points were not closed, the result being that instead of the engine and trucks getting on the main line they ran on to a short line of rails by the side.

Mr W.H. Passmore and Mr R.W. Passmore, who were standing some little distance off, saw that something was wrong, and commenced shouting. This attracted the attention of the engine driver who at once clapped on the brakes dead. It was not quick enough, however. The line of rails the engine was on was only a short one, constructed for the convenience of Messrs. T.F. Wood and Sons, manure manufacturers, who store two large vitriol tanks there. The tanks are really specially constructed railway trucks, built for the conveyance and storage of vitriol.

TEN TONS OF VITRIOL.

The two tanks were standing on the line against what is known as a stop block. The engine ran into the tanks, and dashed them over the embankment. They fell some distance and pitched headlong into the main road leading from Okehampton to the station. The tender of the engine left the rails, but the wheels sank up to their axles in the soft soil, and this prevented the engine and tender toppling over. Some of the trucks were heavily laden with granulite, from Meldon.

Of the two vitriol tanks one was empty and one full, the latter containing ten tons of the powerful corrosive fluid. The empty truck was the first to go over, and the full one fell on to the other tank. The top of the full tank was knocked off and the vitriol commenced to run away.

ACID DESTROYS EVERYTHING IN ITS PATH.

The dark fluid soon covered the road and made its way down the Station-road, carrying destruction in its wake. Dogs sniffed at it; one or two put their feet into it and soon commenced howling. They were to be seen in the road licking their feet and looking very hurt and surprised.

Traffic was stopped and all the railway staff were engaged with covering the vitriol with earth and sand to stop its destructive work. There were two narrow escapes. A horse and cart belonging to Mr. Wills was standing under the bridge just where the tanks fell. The horse heard the noise of the collision and bolted, thus saving its life. The

Mayor (Mr. W. Rowse, C.C.,J.P.) passed in his motor a couple of minutes earlier.

The vitriol is used by Messrs. Wood and Sons for the manufacture of artificial manure. The truck only arrived with ten tons in it on Saturday morning, and Messrs. Wood and Sons had been waiting for it for some time, and had only secured this supply with the greatest difficulty. Messrs. Wood and Sons works adjoin the Gas Works, and the vitriol is conveyed direct to their works from a pipe which is connected with the truck or tank – a distance of about half-a-mile.

The deadly fluid did considerable damage. It ran down the side of the pavement and into a garden, blighting everything. Then it got into a grass field, and did further damage.

FOUR HUNDRED DEAD TROUT

The most appalling destruction of all was to the fish. From the Station-road the vitriol soon found its way through the rain water drains to the East Ockment River, and the sight of the stream running through Simmons Park on Sunday was enough to bring tears to the eyes of the disciples of Izaak Walton. Every living thing in the river was killed. At a low estimate 400 dead trout were to be seen, to say nothing of eels. Fish large and small were lying dead everywhere; some were fine specimens. They were all on their backs, on some of them the deadly acid was so strong in its effect that the skin was peeled and bleached. Some very large eels were also destroyed. Some tried to get out of the water to the bank, and were seen curled up by the side.

Such a wholesale and regrettable destruction of fish has not taken place for many years. In many of the pools a dark brown shadow could be seen where the vitriol had settled, meaning death to all fish. In one pool no fewer than 70 dead trout were counted.

BREAKDOWN GANG AT WORK.

Immediate steps were taken to deal with the accident. All traffic was restricted to one line, the branch trains running late in consequence. A breakdown gang was wired for and the men were soon on the spot. A powerful steam crane was soon in position. It was found that the stop block had been torn up and hurled into the road. One tank was smashed and all the wheels were off, and the second was badly damaged. If the engine and tender (weighing nearly 80 tons) had gone another yard or so, nothing could have stopped them going over the embankment.

The sight of the breakdown gang at work was a weird and impressive one. It was a fine, moon light night, but bitterly cold, with a biting wind. The men, carefully wrapped up, were silhouetted against the sky line, and their shouts, the moving, blazing flares, and the creaks of the crane as it slowly but surely pulled up the heavy weights, made up a scene that will not be easily forgotten by the large crowd who had assembled.

First the gang managed to get the engine and tender safely up. Then there was an adjournment for supper, welcome hot rations being served out and consumed by the side of the blazing coal buckets.

It was nearly four o' clock yesterday morning before the men finished, and at six o' clock they returned to Exeter.

The embankment was cut up, and the solid wall at the bottom was torn away. The amount of the damage is considerable.

Background to the 'A River of Vitriol' article

Tom Baxter

We are indebted to Thomas Hewitt for this most interesting account of a shunting 'incident' at Okehampton station which took place in February 1913. It happened on what we would know as the head shunt exit from the Military Sidings situated on the up side west of the station. In

between is the Klondyke Road underbridge also known as Bridge 609 in the LSWR/SR numbering system.

The story came to us as part of a collection entitled 'The Rise and Decline of Okehampton Station' which was a school project undertaken by Thomas whilst a Year 11 student at Okehampton College. Thomas undertook the study of the station during the period when it was closed to passengers from 1972 to 1997. The project appears to have been completed and marked in and around April 1993. So predates the Devon County Council station reopening which took place from 1997. Hence the 'Decline' title ending. The station had yet to arise phoenix-like from the ashes!

Thomas compiled a very interesting collection of historical information and press articles concerning what we know today as the Dartmoor Line. Amongst other things it illustrates that there were attempts to reopen line from at least the mid 1970s with a number of special trains and newspaper and other articles.

As regards this article entitled 'A River of Vitriol'. It appears this was originally in a newspaper and came from a series called 'Railway News Writings'. It was published in February 1913. Unfortunately the name of the newspaper concerned is not recorded. I have tried to find other information about this on the internet but so far without success.

There is also a photograph with the article but this is not of good enough quality to reproduce. Both the article and photograph are taken from photocopies which are of degraded quality and it is not possible either to identify the locomotive involved, although it could be an LSWR 0-6-0 or even a 4-4-0. Only the cab end of the loco is shown in the photo. The image itself is very poor but does show wreckage of the trucks piled up in the roadway in front of Klondyke bridge.

Vitriol appears to be an early name used for an acid – most probably it was sulphuric acid. Artificial manure would nowadays be known as artificial fertiliser.

What I found most interesting about the article was the somewhat matter of fact way the incident was reported and the fact the reporter seemed more concerned by the loss of the fish and eels than its effect on the local dogs. Presumably the writer was more of a disciple of Izaak Walton than of Rover?

Also one wonders what the authorities might make of such an incident occurring nowadays. I wonder whether such prompt action could even be actioned and the speed of the subsequent clear up would be able to take place. The railway line past the site of the accident continued operating albeit with single line working. Nowadays much evidence would surely first have to be taken and many legalities completed before anything was allowed to be moved. No doubt many agencies would be involved and enquiries could take months or even years to complete.



Class 150, 150202, at Okehampton on 10th December 2025 (Photo: John Caesar)

Steam on the Dartmoor Railway

Geoff Horner

Here is a nostalgic look back to the days when steam trains ran on or visited the Dartmoor Railway. (Photos/text from the DRA website or the author).



2006-2008: Darfield No.1

Darfield No. 1's residency seemed to coincide with the period of peak optimism on the Dartmoor Railway, and it is remembered with much affection. It is an 0-6-0ST built by Hunslet of Leeds as Works No 3783. It was built in 1953 for the National Coal Board, working mainly at Darfield Main colliery near Barnsley until the early 1970s. After moving around various heritage railways it was hired by the Dartmoor Railway between mid 2006 and mid 2008. It is now (as of 2024) operational on the [Chasewater Railway](#), carrying the name Holly Bank No 3.



2010: 30075

Many DRA members have fond memories of 0-6-0 tank engine 30075, which spent some of the 2010 season operating the Meldon service on the Dartmoor Railway. 30075 was constructed in 1960, a member of a class built in Croatia to an improved version of the wartime USATC S100 design. The class already had a relevance to our railway, as a member of the original USA-built batch, the former 30062, renumbered DS 234 in departmental service, operated at Meldon in the 1960s.



2011: 70000 ‘Britannia’

Completed at Crewe on 2nd January 1951 4-6-2 ‘Pacific’ type locomotive 70000 ‘Britannia’ was the first of the BR Standard locomotives. A total of 55 of the ‘Britannia’ class were built, seeing service over most, if not all, the regions of BR. ‘Britannia’ was withdrawn by BR in 1966 after 15 years service and is now operated on main line tours and heritage railways by the Royal Scot Locomotive Trust. She visited the Dartmoor Railway in 2011 hauling the Atlantic Coast Express rail tour. The photo shows her passing Sampford Courteney station heading for Okehampton

2013 – 35028 ‘Clan Line’

Another Sampford Courteney view, this time of 35028 ‘Clan Line’ passing the station on 10th May 2013 on her way to Okehampton hauling the ‘Cathedrals Express’ special from Exeter St Davids to Cardiff. Built at Eastleigh in 1948 ‘Clan Line’ spent the first eleven years of her working life at Stewarts Lane shed in London regularly working the ‘Golden Arrow’ and ‘Night Ferry’ services to and from Dover. After being rebuilt in 1959 ‘Clan Line’ returned to service at Nine Elms shed,

London often appearing on named trains such as the ‘Bournemouth Belle’ and the ‘Atlantic Coast Express’. ‘Clan Line’s’ last BR run was on 2nd July 1967 on which she was unofficially timed at 104mph passing Axminster. Following withdrawal by BR, ‘Clan Line’ was purchased by the Merchant Navy Preservation Society and now runs on the main line hauling heritage and enthusiast specials.



Book Review: Railways in Devon and Cornwall in the Late 20th Century

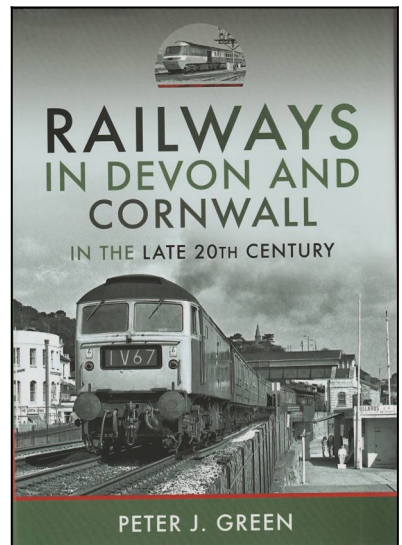
Dana Wiffen

Author: Peter J. Green

Publisher: Pen & Sword

The Railways of Devon & Cornwall have always had a particular attraction to many railway enthusiasts, whether it's from the wonderful viaducts of Cornwall to the busy junctions of Cowley Bridge & Aller, the rolling Devonshire hills or the wonderful branch lines like Looe or St. Ives.

There is something for everyone in this book which covers them all and more. Diesel rules during this period with many large diesel locomotives, DMU's and also the odd diesel-electric shunter covered by the numerous photographs.



While all the photos are in black & white they are high quality and echo the period superbly, there are interesting photos of the now closed North Devon & Cornwall line through Meeth & Torrington stations and there is a good mix of passenger and goods trains exemplified by a 1984 photo of an expanded Meldon Quarry at the height of its business. Some DRA Members may remember these busy times?

While the map at the front of the book does not include freight or heritage lines, they are though included in this book.

Peter Green passion for Devon's railways was ignited when he was holidaying with his family in 1959 and travelling by train along the Dawlish Wall to Teignmouth, while later holidays in the 1980's were to expand his interest into Cornwall. This wonderful pictorial journey is a must for many collectors of books that take you right there.

Richard Trevithick in Dartford

Dana Wiffen

While Richard Trevithick was a well known engineer and inventor who was the pioneer of high pressure steam, while his contribution to railways and mining safety is recognised across the UK and he is commemorated in his home town of Camborne in Cornwall and also Merthyr Tydfil in Wales where he worked for many years, lesser known though is that there is another town that also recognises him.

There are statues to commemorate the great man's work. Erected in 1932 in Camborne is a statue of him holding a small model locomotive, while a year later in Merthyr Tydfil a large model of his loco that had run into the town on rails in 1804, was also unveiled on top of a monument. One of Richard Trevithick's high pressure steam engines (No.14) can also be seen in the science museum in London today.

Richard had found it difficult to continue to work on a steam locomotive because of the lack of funding, George Stephenson had always argued that his work had been vital to his own locomotive development and it

was George, via his son, who was to come to Richard's rescue later in his life.

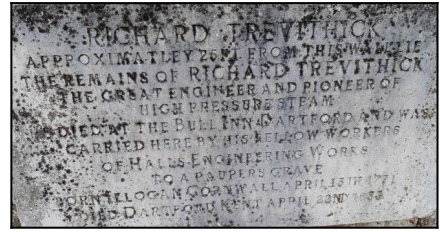
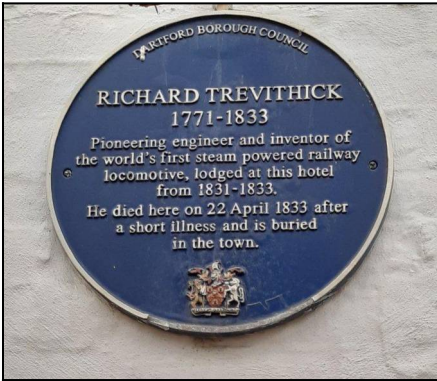
An unsuccessful attempt in 1808 at running a locomotive for circular public rides in Euston Square in London failed due to constant track problems, Richard then turned his hand to the development of a steam dredger, and he used his profits from this adventure to invest in a silver mine in Peru.

When civil war broke out in Peru in 1826 Richard lost everything, penniless he was stranded in Columbia, although luckily for him a chance meeting with George Stephenson's son Robert in Cartagena was to see him receive his UK return fare of £50 and he arrived back in October 1827.

He was successful when he answered an advert for a job to build a steam engine for a new vessel with J & E Hall Ltd. at their engineering works in Dartford, Kent. For his work he was paid £1,200. He became unwell in 1831 and with limited funds he moved into The Bull Inn (former Coach Inn) which is part of the Royal Victoria Public House and is still in Dartford High Street today (pictured).



He sadly passed away in his room on the 22nd April 1833. His fellow workers from Halls Engineering carried his coffin to be buried in St Edmunds Cemetery at Dartford East Hill - today the cemetery has been turned into a park but a stone headstone type plaque has been placed on the wall facing Dartford Town near to where he was buried (pictured).



There is also a road named Trevithick Drive in Dartford which confirms his recognition in the Kentish Borough, this was again to

be highlighted in 2007, when Dartford Council unveiled a blue plaque on the outside of the Bull Inn where he had lived the last years of his life (pictured).



Class 159, 159004, leads into Exeter St David's with an arrival from London Waterloo on 6th December 2025 (Photo: John Caesar).

Miah's Diary – A Very Famous Four Legs

I hear some very interesting questions.

“Where do trains go at night?” asked one shy little girl.

I wasn't sure, but have found out that the flat nose little trains like the 150's have a rest in the new sheds at Exeter St David's, where I hope they have some heating.

The big ones with long noses called IETs go far away to a D Pot in Plymouth which doesn't sound so comfortable.



I want to know why some trains hiss and tremble more than others, why some are so smelly, and why others quieten down, sputter and then take a short nap in the station???

Talking about quietening down, I want to make a plea to all my 2 leg friends **to stop the bangs** which come with the night lights. The big night lights are a bit puzzling but seem to keep you all happy because you murmur “OOOO and AAAA”. But I have many four legged friends who are scared stiff and don't know where to go to get away from the **frightening loud bangs!** I feel very confused, they seem very threatening so I feel I ought (and sometimes do!) run towards them to chase away the threat. But I never get to them while they are brave enough to show themselves.

However it does not matter what time of day it is, I will always be on duty. After a particularly busy evening my finest hour was finally chasing them away from the bedroom window with my loudest barking at 2.30 am. I am sure most Okehampton and surrounding residents welcome my efforts to guard them.

Now I want to tell you about two celebrities who have yet to meet me. Joey and Paddington. One has his own train and the other his own station. They met on the occasion of the 200 Years of the Railways celebrations in London, and Joey's train came down to Exeter, without anyone telling me.

Joey is the fine War Horse from the First World War whom Michael Morpurgo wrote about. His memory lives on only about 7 miles from Okehampton at a village called Iddesleigh, where there is an exhibition. Nearby is Nethercott Farm where Michael and his wife Clare established a charity called Farms for City Children.

Children from urban areas are offered an opportunity to experience life on a farm there, or in Pembrokeshire or Gloucestershire. The life of thousands of horses was changed as they were sold to the army. They would probably have left from the military sidings. I hope some stable boys travelled with them and were kind.



Joey (now a lifesize puppet) is really only allowed on the station because he is house trained. IET 802007 carries his image and Michael Morpurgo's name, but I would much rather meet him in the flesh, so to speak, with his handlers one day.

The last horses to live at Okehampton Station were two shunters who moved individual wagons around. Their hay barn was just beyond the Signal Box, on the opposite, south side of the tracks. Their paddock was on the north side of the tracks. I wish we still had some strong friendly horses here.

Christmas Trains Past & Present....



From the archives, the Dartmoor Railway 'Christmas Town' on the 24th December 2019!



The Dartmouth Steam Railway 'Train of Lights' at Paignton on 28th November 2025 (Photo: John Caesar).

The Bulleid Buffet

Named after Oliver Bulleid, the Southern Railway's innovative engineer, the excellent station cafe is run by Leanne Knight and her team.



The Bulleid Buffet

Barista Coffee, homemade cakes, quiches, pies, pasties & treats. All day breakfast, lunch & takeaway. Picnic pick up point for your Granite Way exploration. Open: Summer 7am-5pm, Winter 8am-4pm.

f Tel: 07410 609160 • thebulleidbuffet@gmail.com 

Okehampton Railway Station, Station Road, Okehampton EX20 1EJ

Okehampton Train & Bus Information

With bus connections available from the station, please visit our Service Information web page which can give you pointers towards information to help plan your journeys:



<https://www.dartmoor-railway-association.org/services>

Committee of the Dartmoor Railway Association

Chairman: Sue Baxter

Secretary: Tom Baxter

Treasurer: Christine Horner

Membership Secretary & Volunteer Coordinator:

Geoff Horner

Committee Members:

Ron Kirby, John Caesar, Liz Westlake, Ged Kirby

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