



## THE DARTMOOR PONY

DARTMOOR RAILWAY  
**DRSA**  
Supporters Association

The Magazine of the  
Dartmoor Railway Supporters Association

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The  
DRSA is Born

## THE DARTMOOR PONY

Issue No. 1

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

This magazine will be published four times a year in the following months: March, June, September and December. Copy should be sent to the editor by 10<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to publication date.

**FRONT COVER:** 34067 Tangmere at Okehampton in 2003

*Photo P Ritchie*

**BACK COVER:** General Winter in command, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2009

*Both photos: John Wills*

**Top:** Downside running-in board from platform 3

**Bottom:** Platform 3 looking in the up direction

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## Editorial:

I have held publication of the magazine over to allow me to include the result of the Special General Meeting (SGM) in this issue. As you can judge by the front cover, the Friends of Dartmoor Railway will be changing both constitution and name to the Dartmoor Railway Supporters Association as I predicted in the last issue. More details are in the news section. With the blessing of the Committee, I have also changed the title and description of your magazine to better reflect the aspirations of the Association. I chose the name "*The Dartmoor Pony*" from the name of our train that runs between Okehampton and Meldon. I hope you think it appropriate. The logo used is experimental at present and may change in the future depending on the outcome of deliberations within your committee. What we have to remember is that we need a logo instantly recognisable which can be used both on the magazine front cover, perhaps on membership cards and on the website which is currently under construction. I trust that you can bear with us on this one. At the SGM there was one aspect that pleased me enormously – the positive feeling emanating from all the members who attended and, of course, the number of members who attended from near and far. Someone passed the comment that there were more there than attended the last AGM! Thank you to all who did attend and a special thank you to the gentleman who was very complimentary about the magazine. I failed to thank you then and I hope this now corrects the situation. The SGM having been completed and the new constitution and name adopted (from 1<sup>st</sup> April), the Steering Group Committee has been disbanded. I must thank Denis LeWorthy for presiding over this committee and providing the one contact point which was a requirement of the Railway Management. I don't think there were too many times that he had to bang heads together. Thanks Denis for all your hard work. As an Association covering all supporters, both active volunteers and non active members, our Committee is now in a position to deal as the single point contact that Ed Ellis requires. The model shop is now open again (more in the news section) and the Meldon buffet car is being reactivated for the start of services over the Easter period. A start will soon be made on the refurbishment of Yeoford island platform. This has to be keyed in with other activities. In conclusion, there are exciting times ahead and we are just beginning to see tangible evidence of progress. Borrowing the motto of the Great Central railway – *FORWARD*.

PGR



## From the Operations Manager

*By Graham Isom*

In the last Friends Newsletter I told you all how much I was enjoying getting my teeth stuck into this job. Well, do you know, I'm still enjoying it. AND we now have something to show for our efforts. Elsewhere in this magazine you will find the timetable for our events over the Easter period and on up to 17<sup>th</sup> May. Why 17<sup>th</sup> May. Well, the very next weekend we hope to have Yeoford station "up and running" so that we can undertake the Dartmoor Rover duties that will be required of us. Here I have to mention the support that we are receiving from Devon County Council and the Local Authorities. They are very supportive of our efforts.

None of this would have been possible without the excellent work put in by the various groups of volunteers. That we have Thumper available in time is due to sheer dedication from the working party at Meldon led by Dave Clegg. He even managed to sign on one volunteer, who shall remain nameless, and had him working on Thumper within minutes!! A great big thank you is due to you all. Of course, there are so many areas of running a railway that require volunteers. Richard Proctor did all the research to work out timetables both for Thumper and a modern train to work down to Yeoford and back - thanks Richard. Then I've got to look at the super effort being put in by the volunteers at the station buffet. I reckon they've been very successful and, of course, every customer they serve is somebody else who has been made aware of the railway – thanks, then, to Mary's volunteer gang at the buffet. Oke station is looking immaculate thanks to the efforts of the station support group. Nothing appears to be too small a task for them if it means enhancing the appearance of the station. I mustn't forget Sampford Courtenay where the team there are keeping the standards up for us. Once trains start calling there again it will all seem worthwhile. On the volunteer training front, I mustn't forget the guards. They have been undergoing a refresher course to ready them for the first trains and they're doing well. If I've left any groups out I hope you'll forgive me.

There is one more group of people that I want to mention – the committee. They have always made me welcome and I have come to appreciate all the work they have done in the last few months, including the formation of the DRSA. I think we are on the right track.

Thanks to one and all.



## News from the Line;

### The Special General Meeting:

This took place at the appointed time in the Bulleid Buffet at Okehampton Station. As well as members of the committee there were 34 other Friends present. Before presenting the resolution, the Chairman invited questions from the assembled members. Most questions centred around the rolling stock and the programme for refurbishment of Yeoford. Graham Isom, the Operations Manager of DR answered all of these to the satisfaction of the questioners. When put to the vote, the resolution was passed unanimously and the Friends of Dartmoor Railway will become the Dartmoor Railway Supporters Association from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 adopting the new constitution at the same time.

### The Buffet:

Mary is doing a marvellous job helped by some very hard working volunteers. As is probably inevitable, the flow of customers is very variable. At times the buffet is packed out and the small staff are run off their feet. At other times the station appears to be a ghost station. Overall, though, it appears to be working well with a number of local people becoming regular customers.



Even the Editor has been sighted enjoying his soup and a jacket potato – sounds so much healthier than an All Day Breakfast! The bikers and hikers are certainly finding the sustenance provided restores their energy levels.



### Meldon Buffet:

Once Thumper is out and running again, the Thumper team will be turning their attention to the Meldon Buffet assisted by the Tavistock Task Force.. The buffet car has already been checked out electrically and now needs some tender loving care to restore it to a usable condition.



### The Shop:

The model shop is now open and trading starting off with much the same hours of business as the buffet. Messrs David Weekes and Dave King, two local enthusiasts, have taken over the shop from DR. That means that they are independent of the railway. Initially, not unexpectedly, they will be unable to offer discounts to Association members until they have



established themselves and built up trade. I have no doubt that your committee will be negotiating with them for such privileges sometime in the future. In the meantime, the shop is being managed by our old friend Tom Hussey (welcome back Tom) and he is being assisted by Simon and BJ – Dave Weekes' sons



### News from the THUMPER Restoration Team:

*Dave Clegg writes*

Ed Ellis, President of IOWA Pacific Holdings made an unannounced visit to the Meldon workshop on Saturday 31st January and found some of the volunteers working. What I mean is, that some of the volunteers were there, and these were all working: which is most

impressive. It was good to hear that Ed praised the quality of the results so far. Won't it be great to see and hear this unit back in action again! We hope this will be at Easter, though the snow has caused us to cancel one or two working days and the cold weather generally is not good for painting.

*Ed: Since Dave wrote the above the team have been working all hours of the days to get Thumper ready. It was moved out of the shed on Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> March and, after a battery charge and final attention back in the shed, it was expected down at the station on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> if all went well. It certainly looked resplendent in its new coat of paint!!*



Thumper is hauled out of the shed

Photo: P Ritchie

#### Other Rolling Stock:

We now have a Class 47 on site. 47701 "Waverley" has arrived and will be ready for traffic after a bit of attention. Class 08 "Bluebell Mel" has been repainted and looks smart in its BR Green. The Mk2 coaching stock has been badly attacked by the graffiti merchants. It is expected that Mk2 stock owned by BARS will be made available in the near future. It



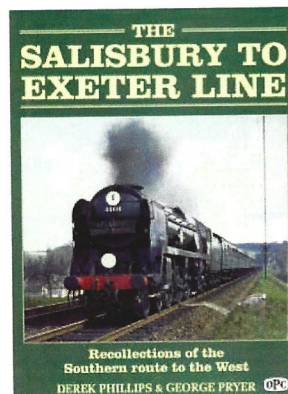
47701 Waverley shortly after arrival

Photo: D Clegg

is believed to be in much better condition than that stock at Meldon

#### Book Review:

In general, the books reviewed are about the Southern route to the west country with some emphasis on Devon and Cornwall. Some may be out of print and prices quoted will be those at which the books were bought. ISBN numbers are quoted to enable the reader to either go to the local library to borrow the book or, if a purchase is required, to search for new or used volumes on the internet. Amazon.co.uk is usually a good indicator of availability.



#### The Salisbury to Exeter Line

Derek Phillips and George Pryer

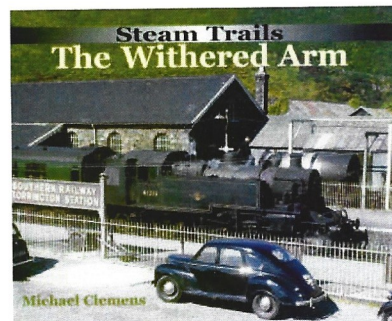
Published by Oxford Publishing Co.  
ISBN 0 86093 525 6

£24.99

A comprehensive history covering all stations on the route – including those now closed – crossings, gates and sidings. Plus diagrams of track layouts at

all these locations. The book is profusely illustrated with excellent photographs (black and white) predominately of steam but also of diesel and dmu workings. But this is much more than a history. The authors are both former railwaymen and it is their recollections from the latter days of steam that make this book so readable. George Pryer writes on signalling and Derek Phillips (then a footplate fireman) provides the "footplate comments" at each location covered. I travelled the route during the latter days of steam and reading this book makes me wish I had been more observant – rather than reading my "Daily Telegraph".

RWFJ



#### Steam Trails – The Withered Arm

Michael Clemens

Published by Ian Allan Publishing  
ISBN (10) 0-7110-3221-1 or (13) 978-0-7110 3221-7

£16.99

(pto)

As with many railway books, this volume consists predominantly of pictures and captions, but unlike many others, the captions here are not only extremely detailed but full of interest and railway history. Michael Clemens travelled in the West Country with his father in the late-1950s and 1960s, between them taking most of the photographs in this volume. They clearly had an eye for composition, and the details in their pictures are a real bonus. The so-called Withered Arm, covering the London and South Western Railway lines west of Exeter, was decimated in the Beeching era and little now remains in operation. The Clemens' images hark back to a less stressful era, albeit with worrying signs of the deterioration which were to presage sadder times to come. Enthusiasts of the current Dartmoor line will find only one shot of Okehampton itself and five good views of Meldon viaduct, but don't let that put you off a fine book with 96 pages of excellent black and white and colour pictures. If you are interested in the railways of Devon and Cornwall buy this book and, like this reviewer, take a fascinating journey back in time.

RKH

### Letters

Ian Douglas writes from Chippenham.....

"I often dream about the old Princetown to Yelverton GWR branch line through the lovely wild and scenic Dartmoor. Perhaps our new Devon & Cornwall Railway or the Dartmoor Railway Supporters Association would like to buy and reinstate the remaining trackbed from Princetown to near Dousland. Last October I enjoyed walking the 12 miles from Princetown down to between Ingra Tor Halt and Burrator and Sheepstor Halt and back. ..."

*Ed: Thanks for your letter Ian, I will remember the old track bed of the Princetown line from the time when I lived at Dousland. Unfortunately, that branch was abandoned before even Dr Beeching was around. I think any attempt to resurrect that line would be really fraught with difficulties. DRSA is concerned with the old Southern route to the South West.*

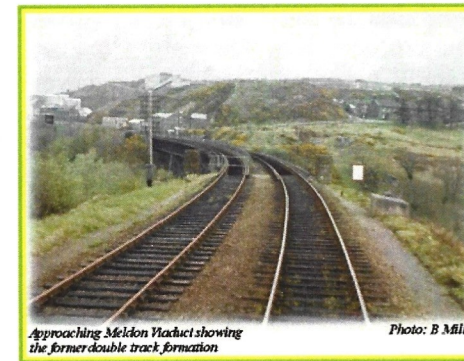
*Dana Wiffen has emailed from Bexley with news of two activities in Kent As those who read the railway press will know, it looks as though the Folkestone Harbour branch has finally been closed but it looks very much as though efforts to save the Sittingbourne & Kemsley Down Railway are beginning to bear fruit. Also thanks, Dana, for the info re Gordon Ramsey and Oke.*

### The Penultimate Day

The last of Bernard Mills' delightful photographs takes us as far as Meldon Quarry signal box



Approaching stone overbridge - start of Meldon Viaduct beyond Photo: B Mills



Approaching Meldon Viaduct showing the former double track formation Photo: B Mills



Meldon Jct. down home signal. Line singled from here to Meldon Quarry Photo: B Mills

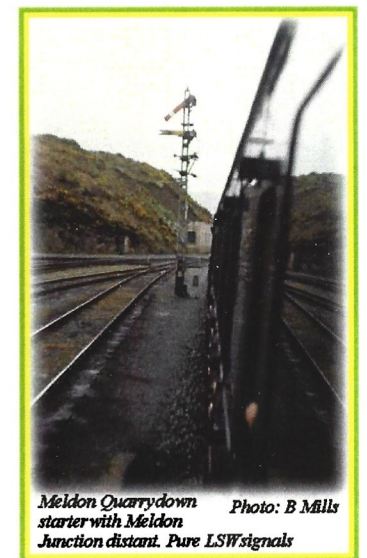


Catch points on the former down - note former up main on left Photo: B Mills

Thanks, Bernard, for allowing us to share your photographic memories



Meldon Quarry signal box with the start of double track again Photo: B Mills



Meldon Quarry down starter with Meldon Junction distant. Pure LSW signals Photo: B Mills

## **Arthur Westlake, Okehampton Railwayman (Part 1)**

*The article below was written by Mke Hedges and Tony Hill and first appeared in the Dartmoor Society magazine during 2008. It is reproduced with kind permission. ©The Dartmoor Society 2008, the authors and Mr A Westlake himself*

Arthur Westlake, whose 90<sup>th</sup> birthday falls this year, is one of that vanishing breed of retired railwaymen who spent most of their working lives operating steam engines. He and his wife Ethel, whom he married 64 years ago, still live in Okehampton, where he was based for many years.

Arthur worked for the Southern Railway, British Railways and British Rail from 1934 to 1983, a period of enormous change on the railways which, among other developments, saw steam locomotives replaced by diesel traction in the South-West by the end of 1965. He began his duties as an engine cleaner at Yeovil Town locomotive shed and, on his retirement, was an Assistant Area Manager based at Okehampton.

Like many other railwaymen, Arthur comes from a railway family; he was born at Halwill Junction, Devon, and of his brothers, Reg was a signalman at Yeovil Junction, Cyril was a shunter at Halwill Junction, Gerald was a driver at Guildford [Surrey] and Holland was a guard, based at Bristol. Arthur's sister Agnes was a signalwoman at Venndown Gates and Meldon Junction. His father was a ganger at Halwill Junction and, even further back, his grandfather had worked at Okehampton Station when the line from Exeter was opened by the London & South Western Railway in 1871.



*Arthur Westlake (photo: Mike Hedges)*

So it was that the 16-year old Arthur, his railway pedigree already well established, applied to join the Southern Railway [SR]. He was keen to work on the footplate of a steam locomotive, but of course had much to learn before this aim could be realised. The way to become a fireman and then a driver was to start as an engine cleaner and Arthur found that the nearest such vacancy was at Yeovil in Somerset. He recalls that one of the first stages was to be checked by the SR's Dr George at Salisbury, where one of the most important tests was for him to state the colour of different flowers to make sure that colour blindness would not prevent him distinguishing a night-time signal on red from one on green [during daylight hours, of course, the angle of the semaphore signals then in use told a driver whether to stop or go].

Arthur passed his medical and began work as an engine cleaner at Yeovil in 1934. He was paid 15 shillings [75 pence] for a 48-hour week, working 8 hours per day from Monday to Saturday. His weekly lodgings cost 12s 6d [62½ pence] and, with his trade union fee and national insurance amounting to one shilling, or 5 pence, he was left with the equivalent of 7½ pence per week spending money!

Arthur's period as an engine cleaner lasted 5 years. He says that the worst job was cleaning out ash and clinker from steam engine fireboxes. The special shovel used for this purpose weighed 75 pounds and had a long handle, as it had to be used in fireboxes that were as much as 11ft long. Up to a ton of hot clinker would have to be removed and, as the shovel was made entirely of metal, it became very hot to hold. Later, the new 'West Country' locomotives, introduced in 1945, came equipped with a grate that could simply be opened to deposit the clinker into a pit beneath the engine, thus taking some of the hard work out of firebox cleaning.

Gaining more experience as an engine cleaner, Arthur began to learn how to fire a locomotive and, in December 1940, he became a fully-fledged fireman at Launceston locomotive shed in Cornwall, much nearer his birthplace. A year later he moved to the Okehampton locomotive shed as a fireman, and has lived in the town ever since.

During World War Two, the railway system was used for many military purposes. Arthur remembers volunteering for any class of firing work, thus qualifying for an extra shilling per day in wages. Thus it was that he worked on locomotives hauling troop trains, ammunition trains and the once-monthly howitzer trains, on which a howitzer mounted on a rail truck would be hauled to the North Tawton and Sampford Courtenay area. From there, artillery

troops would practice by firing at targets set up on Dartmoor a few miles away. On one occasion, Arthur and his driver were on the footplate of a locomotive between Sherborne and Templecombe in Dorset, when they passed an ammunition train that was being attacked by a German fighter plane. They came through unscathed but, at the next stop, they found that the tender of their locomotive was leaking water through numerous bullet holes.

Thankfully, such incidents were rare and Arthur continued to gain experience as a fireman during and after the War. Even though he had not yet become a driver, Arthur was asked to set up improvement classes for the firemen based at Okehampton, Launceston and Bude, to widen their knowledge of the rules and regulations. The Southern Railway instigated the classes across its operating territory so that it could have a number of firemen available as drivers for emergency cover. Of the six men in the class, Arthur was the only one to pass – and with a very high mark. He reckons he could still recite the rule book even now!

In 1948, Arthur was upgraded to be a driver at Okehampton. At that time, the Okehampton Shed comprised 16 drivers, 16 firemen, two cleaners and two shed staff. Arthur drove passenger and freight trains from Okehampton to Plymouth, Exeter, Padstow, Bude, Callington and Barnstaple. He is proud of the fact that he never ‘ran out of steam’; he says that the important thing was to keep the fire hot and not to shovel in too much coal at once.

Arthur’s favourite was the ‘N’ class locomotive which saw service from 1918 until the end of steam-hauled trains in 1965. He recalls an incident where one of these locomotives performed well in difficult circumstances. Driving the 1.15pm passenger train from Plymouth, Arthur and his fireman Gerald Smallacombe stopped at Bere Alston, where there were four parcel vans containing thousands of Mother’s Day flowers destined for London. The worried station master approached them, saying that the next available train was not due until 7pm and this would mean the flowers missing the service from Okehampton to London and arriving too late. Arthur and Gerald agreed to hitch the additional four parcel vans on to their train, which already comprised 14 passenger coaches, and to try and reach Okehampton on time. They realised they could only achieve this by cutting out unnecessary stops. So the stationmaster was asked to phone ahead to each station to ask the staff there to display a green flag if there were no passengers waiting for Arthur’s train. At the same time, Arthur and Gerald’s guard Tommy went through the train to ascertain which stations they would have to stop at, to allow passengers to alight. With the number of stops thus reduced to the minimum,

they were able to get their train, now consisting of an unprecedented 18 coaches, to Okehampton on time and save the stationmaster’s skin!

On another occasion, when Arthur and Gerald were working a very heavy train of cattle trucks through Halwill Junction, the sparks from the hard-working engine set light to the roof of a bungalow next to the track.

Arthur remained an engine driver for eight years and was then promoted to Locomotive Foreman at Okehampton in 1956. He was now in charge of the Okehampton Locomotive Shed itself, along with the smaller sheds at Bude, Launceston and Callington, and wore the foreman’s badge of authority – a black bowler hat, still in his possession!

*(Part 2 will be published in the summer edition)*

### **Yeoford:**

As can be seen from the following article, services to and from Yeoford will commence on 23<sup>rd</sup> May connecting into FGW services on the Barnstaple line. The popular Dartmoor Rover scheme is due to start on 24<sup>th</sup> May with passengers changing at Yeoford. The eventual aim will be to run DR trains into Exeter, probably as far as St James’s Park – but that is some way in the future

### **Volunteers Wanted:**

Volunteers are required to support all aspects of the railway. If you are interested, contact Peter Flick (Membership Secretary –address on the back of the front cover).



Alternatively go to [www.dartmoor-railway.co.uk](http://www.dartmoor-railway.co.uk) and go to the volunteers page. The Heritage services with the Thumper start on Good Friday. The photo shows volunteers at work in February refurbishing the Thumper DEMU.



## The Phoenix Rises – Timetable and Fares for Spring 2009

Dartmoor Railway services will re-commence on Good Friday 10th April and will run between Okehampton and Meldon Quarry until Sunday 17th May as follows:-

### Days of Operation and Timetable

Friday, Saturday, Sunday & Monday 10th – 13th April, then every Saturday & Sunday until 17th May 2009.

Okehampton	arr	10.00	11.00	12.00	13.00	14.00	15.00	16.00
Meldon Quarry	dep	10.10	11.10	12.10	13.10	14.10	15.10	16.10
Meldon Quarry	dep	10.30	11.30	12.30	13.15	14.30	15.30	16.30
Okehampton	arr	10.40	11.40	12.40	13.25	14.40	15.40	16.40

All services will be diesel operated.

The Summer Timetable will commence on Saturday 23rd May, when it is anticipated that services will run through to Yeoford, to connect with the Exeter – Barnstaple – Exeter services.

### Fares

#### Okehampton – Meldon Quarry

Return Ticket: Adult = £4.00, Senior Citizen = £3.00 and Children (5 – 15 years) £2.00

Single Ticket: Adult = £3.00, Senior Citizen = £2.00 and Children (5 – 15 years) £1.00

#### Dogs, Bicycles and Children Under 5 Travel Free of Charge.

The service and Fares will be updated for the Summer Timetable.

#### West Country Model Shop

This will be open at the Okehampton Station.

#### Taxi and Local Bus Services are available.

#### Meldon Quarry Rock Walk - To open soon

## The Hengist Story Part 2:

By Sam Denley



### In Service

The 'Clans' were popular with their crews, especially the Carlisle Kingmoor men, and operated daily over routes which encompassed many of the notorious long hard climbs in the border country, Ais Gill, Shap, Beattock, and the steep, twisting Stranraer route. Despite the

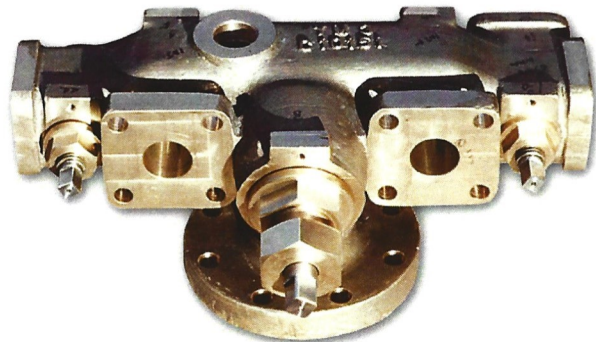


4-6-2 pacific wheel arrangement which is prone to loss of adhesion the engines had a reputation for sure footedness. The Scottish region were very satisfied with their 'Clans' reporting upon its free steaming boiler, that it was light on coal and water, crews found them very comfortable except

for the draughtiness of the cab, easily ran to the booked time, it was just about everything a well run railway would want. Being only ten in number there are few timed runs to indicate what the engines were capable of when pressed. The official observations were conducted in the presence of a traction inspector who was not interested in spirited bursts of speed but economies of coal and water and arriving at each station right on time as per the timetable. However 72005 Clan MacGregor was timed over the Settle and Carlisle to Leeds after taking sole charge of the 'Thames-Clyde' relief from a failed Jubilee and Black five with an eleven coach train already 50 minutes down and made up 18 minutes. It fair near flew over the Pennines in 141.5

minutes despite 3 temporary speed restrictions and two signal checks, one bringing the train to a complete stop, this is seven and half minutes quicker than today's fastest booked schedule with modern diesel units.

Another blistering performance was reported in Trains Illustrated by C. J. Allen in an article entitled 'The most rapid starts in Britain'. In an effort to determine the fastest accelerating train C. J. Allen



compared the time and distance various locomotives required to attain a mile a minute average or 'even time', that's the point at which from a standing start the train has averaged 60m.p.h. The fastest was a 'Clan' which achieved 6.95 miles in 6.95 minutes with 8 cars and was still accelerating out of Gleneagles to Perth. However he did observe that it was probably the only place on British Rail this could possibly be achieved, with a downhill start and no restrictions thereafter. The next quickest was an A1 with 11 coaches, 11.5 miles in 11.5 minutes, again with a downhill start out of Hitchin.

### **How You Can Join in and Help Build Hengist**

72010 'Hengist' is being built by The Standard Steam Locomotive Company Limited, a not for profit registered charity. All money raised through membership, raffles, donations and sales go towards the building of the engine. Several large components are already nearing completion including the frames, cab and smoke-box and many of the smaller but non the less important parts have already been made, purchased or donated, just require fitting. You can follow the progress on line at [www.72010-hengist.org](http://www.72010-hengist.org) and anyone wishing to join the project and become a member can do so simply by contacting the project via the website or by writing to the Membership Secretary, Mr Ron Reynolds, 124 B Torquay Road, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ12 4AH.

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### **Committee of the Dartmoor Railway Supporters Association**

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**Secretary:-** Phillip Wagstaff

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**Membership Secretary:-** Peter Flick

**Dartmoor Railway Representative:-** Graham Isom

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 Dick Henrywood  
 Andre Farmar  
 Peter Ritchie  
 (Newsletter Editor)  
 Dennis Barnes