

SUPPORTERS'
DARTMOOR RAILWAY
ASSOCIATION

THE DARTMOOR PONY

The Magazine of the Dartmoor Railway
Supporters' Association

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Rail Replacement at Bow
Pilgrimage to
Wadebridge
The Grey Van Turns
Blue

THE DARTMOOR PONY

Issue No. 5

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

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FRONT COVER: The southern end of the Okehampton Line.

N Class No 31845 of 72A(Exmouth Junction) at Plymouth North Road with an up train in the summer of 1961. NB. The office block is still under construction. *Photo P.Ritchie*

BACK COVER:

Top: The northern end of the Okehampton Line. WC 34086 219 Squadron sets out up the hill to Exeter Central from platform 3 at Exeter St. David's during summer 1961 *Photo: P. Ritchie*

Bottom: Z Class 30955 banks 219 Squadron and its train up to Exeter Central *Photo: P. Ritchie*

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Dartmoor Railway/DRSA

Telephone Numbers/Website

Dartmoor Railway Information and Timetables	01837-55164
DRSA Membership Matters	01837-840670
Westcountry Models	01837-55330
Buffet at Okehampton Station	01837-55667

DR/DRSA Website www.dartmoor-railway.org.uk

EDITORIAL

Before I start on anything else I must correct an error of omission in the last Pony. I failed to acknowledge Peter Barnfield as the author of *To Ilfracombe Eventually*. It was another of his anecdotes from *Memories of the Withered Arm*. Thank you Peter for allowing us to share in your delightful memories. Of course *Pilgrimage to Wadebridge* in this issue is another tale from his book.



Well, it's not long now to the opening of the 2010 season with our trains due to start operating on Good Friday. I'm hoping that this issue will reach you in time for Easter. You will notice that the timetable inside the back cover only runs until and including 22nd May. This is because there is still a degree of uncertainty about circumstances from the 23rd. If the Devon & Cornwall Railway Limited (D&CR) are successful in gaining license from the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) to operate between Okehampton and Exeter then the Heritage operation will continue between Okehampton and Meldon as normal. If D&CR is unsuccessful, then consideration of operation down to Yeoford is a logical next step. That's another story.

The Mince Pie Specials between Christmas and the New Year were successful and the year was finished on a high note. The closed season has seen the C&W volunteers working away like beavers. The track maintenance team – all two of them, our Unsung Heroes, have worked throughout keeping the track in good order. There are still no freight trains running – there probably won't be until NR goes out to contract for next year's ballast. 63 chains of track were replaced when NR used the DR for training purposes. Dick Henrywood has written an article about this and the equipment used.

Steve Goodwin has given a very encouraging report on Firefly's refit. For so long it seemed that this engine would never progress, so the news is very good.



Photo: M Ellis

And finally....

The winner of the Caption Competition is John Lavender of Tyne and Wear with this corny old one:- " *There's an 'Elf and Safety' CLAUS in you contract says you can't wear that outfit*" ... It is so corny it just had to win.

FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

By Graham Isom



Well here we go again, as we enter into a new season, there is so much going on behind the scenes at present and although there seems to the naked eye to be nothing happening, I can assure you it is. And very time consuming it is too but we are reaching the final stages of the Devon and Cornwall Railway (DCR) licensing process. Yeoford, Den Brook and Okehampton East projects are also slowly progressing.

With 'Spring' now creeping up on us (so the weather forecasters decree) we have to consider the start of the Dartmoor Railway on 'Good Friday' which is the anniversary of us re-starting last year, all be it a fortnight earlier.

The support shown by all the 'Volunteers' throughout, that period proved very, successful, and didn't you do well. The railway is back and now we have to encourage more visitors. Until the recession is over I believe they will holiday in this area more during this year of 2010. A good show put on by us all and the welcome you all give, will keep them coming to this area.

'Volunteers' are still required and I understand that some of you still need to renew your memberships to the DRSA, please do so as your support is very valued by the company, but more so by myself.

In regards to support, my health has suffered since before 'Christmas' not the sort of present I required from 'Santa' but there for the sake of 'God' go I. Thank you all for the support and kindness which will get me through, and I will be back firing on all cylinders. Once again thank you all.

We are receiving enquiries from far and wide, the latest being a coach firm from Leicestershire, who will be visiting Dartmoor Railway at Okehampton. at UK Railtours are returning on April 17th, as are the MG Club for their annual 'Atlantic Coast Express' run. Once again these return visits are down to you, the volunteers, in making everyone welcome at the railway.

Better close now our the 'Editor' will tell me off for taking more space up than he permits me to use. (That's my excuse anyway) Once again well done everyone in which ever section of 'Volunteering' you assist, as it is very much appreciated by all.

THE RAILWAY:

News from the line:

All is now gearing up to be ready to operate trains from Good Friday onwards.(timetable inside back cover) covering the schools Easter holiday then on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays only until 22nd May This, as some of you will have realised, is about the time that the Dartmoor Rover summer bus/train service starts. Because of lingering uncertainty about dates of the start up of DCR services, the company is not advertising the service at present.

NR used the opportunity of the closed period to utilise the DR for training its rail replacement teams. They gave us 63 chains of continuously welded track and went away well pleased with their training efforts. They took the opportunity to use stone from Meldon when reballasting and very favourable comments were passed on its quality in comparison to ballast currently being used.

Despite the inclement weather, the station and its buildings still sparkle and are a credit to the railway.

Lineside vegetation has been cut back, especially in the station area. They have even found the old pit for the engine shed just outside the car park fencing.

Carriage and Wagon Restoration Team:

By David Clegg

At the moment we are working on Mk1 air-braked coach No. 61743. This ex-EMU driving trailer is the coach that formed the original Dartmoor Pony that used to shuttle between Okehampton and Meldon with the 08 diesel shunter: I expect some of you may remember it in dark green livery. It has been languishing in the sidings now for several years and in addition to the usual problems of bodywork rust and paintwork, it now needs at least eight windows to be removed and renovated due to stone-throwing and misted double-glazing. Removal of these windows is not a quick job as the fixing screws have rusted and have to be drilled out. On a bad day a window can take nearly a day to remove. This vehicle will eventually be outshopped in BR Blue/Grey livery to run with another ex-EMU coach, No. 70508 in the same livery (why can't we stick to proper colours, I hear you say, i.e.

Southern green?). The third member of this set will be Mk 1 brake coach 80225 which often gets called the 'Courier Coach' as it has roller shutter doors, and lots of van space with only one passenger compartment. It was used this year as Santa's Grotto. The coach will be made disabled-friendly thanks to its wide access points and will be finished in the proper green livery we all love. Confused.com? Why a different colour to the other two coaches in the set? Simple! This is dual-braked and will be able to run with a vacuum-braked set of coaches - which will be painted g**** [answers please to the C&W group, enclosing £5. The sender of the first correct answer will receive a paintbrush].

Oh for some warmer weather

The Buffet:

The buffet has continued its weekend openings under Mary's watchful eye. It is probable that the Meldon Buffet will be opening when the trains start running. Volunteers are needed to keep these two services operating. Hygiene and safety training is now available "on the job" so pre-qualifying is no longer necessary. Why not give it a try.

I keep trying to get a report from Mary but she really is very hard pushed to find the time!

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF THE
DARTMOOR RAILWAY SUPPORTERS'
ASSOCIATION
SATURDAY 5TH JUNE 2010

The meeting will be held at the Ockment Centre in Okehampton at 1900 on Saturday 5th June. Mr. Ed Ellis, President of Iowa Pacific has been invited to attend. The Speaker will be Mr. Richard Westlake, Railwayman and Councillor

RAIL REPLACEMENT AT BOW

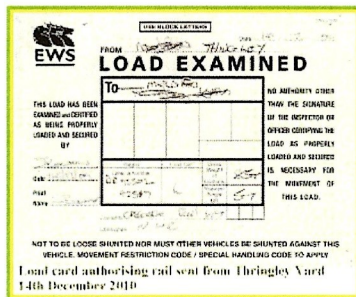
Article and photographs (except where indicated) by Dick Henrywood
Chairman DRSA

It was in November last year that we first heard whispers of possible rail replacement work to be carried out at Bow. It transpired that Network Rail needed to do some training with their high technology rail replacement train following transfer of the operating contract to Colas Rail, and the Dartmoor Railway, with its current lack of regular trains was thought to be an ideal location.

Early December was to see the first signs of work with men in high-visibility jackets swarming over the line, measuring, estimating and leaving painted marks and symbols as evidence of their work. Then we saw a rail-tractor fitted with flail working up and down, clearing overhanging branches and the worst of decades of undergrowth. We also acquired over a mile of white-painted wooden stakes, laid out neatly alongside the track every ten metres, each numbered and marked with the adjacent rail height.

On Monday 14th December, things got serious with the arrival from Thingley Yard of Freightliner 66 528 hauling the first of three scheduled rail delivery trains. The rail came in lengths of approximately 300 feet and the first train ran with a total of seventeen lengths. Unfortunately, and slightly comically, the train had been despatched wrong way round and, with the cranes on the wrong side, it couldn't drop the rails it brought. A second problem was the failure of the on-board generator, used to operate the cranes, so it must have been a slightly red-faced train (if trains apart from Thomas have faces) which headed back to Thingley with its complement of track still on board.

The second and third delivery trains ran on Wednesday 16th and Friday 18th December, hauled by 66 550 and 66 622 respectively. The work went a little better now, with all the track being dropped alongside the line, in batches of



Positioning rail using rail mounted tractor
12th January 2010

four rail lengths. As an aside at this point, the rail was dropped in fours since it had been decided to replace the existing wooden sleeper track at a first pass, subsequently to be replaced in turn as a proper training run.



Cutting rail ends in rotten weather
12th January 2010

Everything went quiet over the Christmas period but started again in earnest on Monday 11th January. A gang of men arrived to start preparing the track lengths ready for installation but unfortunately their equipment didn't turn up so no work was done. The following day was a little better, despite the late arrival of equipment, and preparation of the rail got underway. This entailed cutting clean ends for each track length, making sure there were no welds close to the ends, and positioning the prepared lengths right alongside the

existing track. This entailed use of an interesting rail mounted tractor-cum-crane, two of which were to become regulator workhorses over the next three or four weeks.



Freightliner 66624 and 66604 return light engines having delivered sleepers to Meldon
15th January

Work on rail preparation continued for the rest of the week then on Friday 15th January a delivery of sleepers passed by on its way to Meldon early in the morning double-headed by Freightliner 66 604 and 66 624. They returned light engines mid-morning and rail work was also interrupted

by the Tamper which passed by at lunchtime. Early evening also saw the arrival of the High Output Track Replacement train (HOTR), sighted for the first time of many as it headed to be stabled at Meldon. A busy day.



Rail tractor leaves track ready for Tamper
15th January



The Tamper passes Bow station on its way to be stabled at Meldon
15th January

Work started in earnest the following day with the first use of the HOTR train delivered by Freightliner 66 624. It started work midway between Buttisland Crossing and Bow Station, working up towards Bow, and spent over seven hours on site. It was followed by a set of five ballast wagons hauled by 66 604. Possibly one of the initially most impressive parts of the operation were the onboard cranes which run up and down the HOTR getting the new sleepers in place and removing the old sleepers to be taken away.



New concrete sleepers on the HOTR train alongside Bow station 16th January

It was at this stage that the reason for two replacement runs became apparent. Lifting the old wooden sleepers was causing continual problems for the automated equipment, and a technique evolved which entailed men working beneath the moving train to cut the old rail clips away so that the rail chairs did not foul the works.

Sunday 17th January saw the first run of the Tamper, DR73114 "Ron Henderson", which slewed the old track away from the platform at Bow to provide clearance for the HOTR, which started work again mid-morning. This was one of the most interesting days with fantastic close-up views of the operation beneath the train as it lifted the old rail, removed the old sleepers, placed the new concrete sleepers and finally laid the new rail, all in one continuous operation – fantastic!



The Tamper unit at work, DR73114 Ron Henderson



Replacement rail fed onto newly laid sleepers 17th January

Obviously it is impossible to show the work successfully in still images but the enthusiast can see the whole operation in some detail on the train manufacturer's website www.matisa.com (select "Track Laying and Renewal Trains – P95", and then click on "Video P95 UK").

The whole of the next fortnight was taken up with similar operation of the HOTR and the Tamper, with the first appearance of the Regulator DR77903 "Frank Jones" on Friday 22nd. This device follows the Tamper and effectively performs a clean-up operation, moving excess ballast to the sides of the track and sweeping up. The HOTR finally completed its work by Friday 29th, and departed the line at teatime, followed shortly afterwards by the Tamper, which was to return later.



The Regulator DR77903 Frank Jones 22nd January

The week beginning Monday 1st February saw the start of the final track operation, welding all the joints, fitting the breather slips



Preparing one of the rail joints for welding on 1st February

(expansion joints) at each end of the continuous section, and tensioning the new length of track.

The following week was dormant with little apparent work, albeit still with a number of hi-vis vests around, but the next operation was to start on Monday 22nd February. This was ballast cleaning with the automatic HOBC train.

This device works slowly along the line, completely lifting the track and attached sleepers, clearing out all the existing ballast, sieving and sorting the ballast, feeding clean ballast back down onto the track bed, supplemented by brand new ballast where necessary, and relaying the track and sleepers. This all takes place in a central

section of the train over a length of about 20 metres, the remainder of the very long unit having hopper wagons to take the reject ballast at the front, and further



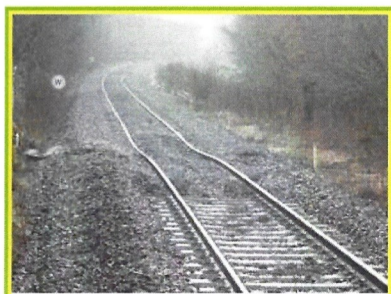
Thermit welding of the joint - fireworks at Bow



The main working section of the HOBC train 23rd February

hopper wagons full of new ballast at the back, all joined by continuous belts.

In our case a decision had been taken not to clean the old ballast, but to replace it completely with new material, from Meldon Quarry of course, some welcome trade for the quarry in these difficult times. The old ballast would normally have been taken away for disposal but a quantity was donated to local farmers and dropped by the HOBC train as it travelled back in the evenings to be stabled at Meldon. One of these journeys was reckoned by driver Peter Chapman to be one of the largest trains ever seen on the line; he commented



A minor hill in the track marking the end of one day's work seen on 23rd February before HOBC restarted work

"Yesterday evening [22 February] Stuart Cowan and I believe that we worked the longest, heaviest, most powerful train ever on the line (unless anyone knows different?). 6Y11 was worked from Fairwater empty by Darren and Eddie in two halves as Network Rail wouldn't allow it to run as one train. At Meldon it was loaded with stone and joined together, then worked to Bow with just 66 617 powering. After work

had finished at Bow the train was worked away with 66 610 & 66 605 leading. The spoil was dropped on North Tawton Bank and restarted with all three locos powering for the run to Meldon

Vital statistics of the train:



6Y11 departs Bow for Meldon

Photo: P.Chapman

2934 tons, 2373ft (113SLU) 40 vehicles long, plus locos 66 610, 66 605, & 66 617, combined hp 9900, combined tractive effort 315,240lbs (1401kN).

Interestingly 610 & 605 in multiple handled the train with no problems, the addition of 617 made it pretty effortless".

The runs of the HOBC were followed repeatedly by runs of the Tamper and Regulator, with all three finally leaving the line on Friday 26th (Tamper and Regulator together followed by the first half of the HOBC) and Saturday 27th February (the remaining half of the HOBC).



Frank and Ron have their tea break
22nd January

The following week saw the final clearing up, with the Tamper returning for two days to do its final runs, including slewing the track back into correct alignment past the Bow platform. And that was it, apart from minor further work positioning and testing all the redundant rail, and some work to replace sleepers which were either damaged or had defective rail clips.

And at the end of it all we have around one mile of continuous welded track from a point between Buttsland Crossing and Bow Station up to midway between the two Common Moor crossings. Dartmoor Railway has the track and lots of spare rail and Network Rail have a trained crew ready to work on the main network. And the cost of the work? Estimates vary but at around £750,000 per kilometre, a simple sum leads to a total in the region of one million pounds. Great value for the Dartmoor Railway.

THE GREY VAN TURNS BLUE

By Tom Baxter

Photographs ©Paul Bartlett unless otherwise stated

I expect most members will be aware of the grounded railway goods van used as a store at Okehampton station. Recent visitors will have noted it is in the process of changing colour from grey to a rather fetching shade of light blue. Why?

Some months ago the Okehampton Station Maintenance Team were asked if they could give the van a repaint as it was starting to look a bit tatty, having been one of the earlier items repainted back when the railway reopened. But what colour to paint it? After a bit of research one of the team found that in a

former life it had been a BR Blue Spot fish van. In that guise it would have been painted in either of two colours, white or ice blue. Further research failed to show any currently preserved fish vans painted in ice blue so, in order to be different, we decided to do just that. With the G.M.'s full approval, of course, as we did not wish to upset the station décor! Having done the research we were asked to share it with the rest of you. Wagons being a bit of a diversion from the more general ration of locomotives, thumpers, buses etc.

At nationalisation the new British Railways (BR) took over a vast and diverse fleet of fish vans from the former railway companies. The most modern were a series of vans produced by the London North Eastern Railway (LNER). In fact the LNER were the railway that excelled in carrying fish with its many lines into the east coast ports. BR needed to replace much of its inherited wagon fleet as a lot was worn out after limited maintenance during the war years and immediately afterwards. It decided to rationalise the existing wagon fleet and produce new designs of its own. Pre-existing former company designs were often used as their basis. Such was the case with the replacement fish van fleet. LNER diagram 214 metamorphosed into



E87263 RBV Blue Spot Fish Van
Darlington Lot 30125 of 1954
Seen at Stanlow 1982

BR diagram 800. Six hundred new vans were built in 1949/50 with a further 330 in 1954. All were built at the former LNER wagon works at Faverdale, Darlington which was the builder of earlier LNER vans and should have learnt quite a bit about how to build a good fish van.

The vans were constructed to quite high and exacting standards for their time and were a world away from standard freight vans of the day. The body was constructed from plywood skinned with aluminium sheet. The roof was made from aluminium filled with "Ozanote" rubber insulation. The double sliding doors were draught proofed with quick release locks. They had a 15-foot wheelbase and all were fitted with vacuum brakes. The vans were 12 ton and designated "INSUL-FISH". Some were also fitted with roller bearing axleboxes. These roller bearing vans were designated for higher speed running with a blue circle marking known as "Blue Spot". Model railway

afficionados may have one of these in their collection (I know the Editor has a Hornby Dublo one – envy!).

A second series were constructed in 1960/1. These were to a modified design under diagram no.801. All were fitted with roller bearing axleboxes and the body framing and door handles were redesigned. At around the same time



E88007 RBV Blue Spot Fish Van
Darlington Lot 30442 of 1960
at Bridgewater 1981

the decision was made to change the livery from white to ice blue. 542 were built, all again at Faverdale. This would have been one of the last major orders before this Works closed in 1963.

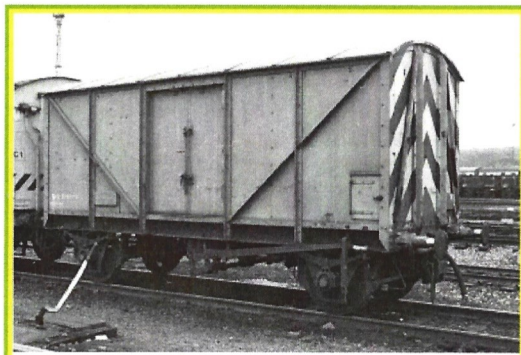
So what about the fish traffic for which these vans were built? Fish was once a very important railway traffic with much originating from the East Coast ports. Long trains loaded with fish left ports such as Aberdeen, Hull and New Clee, Grimsby each day for destinations in London, Banbury, Cambridge, Cardiff, Leeds, Leicester, Nottingham, Manchester and Plymouth to name but a few. The fish was carried as "wet fish" packed in boxes of ice kept cool by boxes of "dry ice" (solid carbon dioxide) also carried in the van. The vans were well insulated, but not refrigerated, and there was inevitably some melting of the water ice on the long journeys. Drains were provided in the wagon floors to prevent melting ice flooding the floor. Fish trains ran fast unlike many freight trains of the era. Fish being highly perishable, time was of the essence, and fish trains were given high priority by railway control offices.



M87832 RBV Blue Spot Fish Van
Darlington Lot 30384 of 1959
at Aylesbury 1981 Express Parcels

But then the world changed. The wet fish market declined with fish being frozen and packed in plants very close to the ports. Fish landings declined, perhaps a precursor of over fishing and fish quotas. New main roads were being built and deregulation of road transport gave the railway a very serious and predatory competitor. Politics intervened and a man with the name of Beeching was put in charge of

British Railways. In a less than rigorous way he and his team defined freight traffics that were or were not suitable for rail carriage. Fish was one not deemed suitable so a fairly steep and terminal decline began. From carrying annually around 75% of all fish landed in Britain in the late 1940s/early



ADB975377 (E87582) Blue Spot Fish Van
Darlington Lot 30344 of 1959
at Tinsley 1984

1950s, by the end of the 1960s all the traffic had gone, lost to road transport. That could have been the end for the fleet of the, by then, former fish vans but it was not to be the end of their railway career.

In the 1960s BR had replaced steam with diesel and electric locomotives. These had far faster acceleration and better braking than the steam locos they replaced. These

characteristics coupled with the use of continuous welded rail led to many difficulties with the existing short wheelbase wagon fleet. Derailments occurred, the combination of short wheelbase, older and less sophisticated wagon suspensions, new rail and locomotives proving a great problem for the railway engineers of the day. The fish vans, having a longer wheelbase than standard vans with their 10 and 12-foot wheelbase and, many, also having roller bearing axleboxes proved a useful stop gap. Around 600 continued in service as parcel and general freight vans. They continued to be used as such until the early 1980s when replaced by longer wheelbase air braked vans. Some also found new uses as Barrier Vans or other Special Purpose vehicles. Others, such as ours, lost their wheels and running gear and found a use grounded as stores.

Which brings us conveniently back to ours and its vital statistics. It is number E87554 and was built in 1960 as a second series diagram 801 to Lot no. 30344. Prior to its coming to Okehampton it saw service as a grounded store in Woking Yard. It is listed on the Vintage Carriages Trust website, although some of the details they show are incorrect. Where it was before Woking and what it did before that we do not know but we do know it was part of the vast fleet of fish vans that travelled all over the country. How many tons of fish and other goods must it have carried before it lost its wheels?

Finally many thanks to the following for information used in the preparation of this article. Paul Bartlett and his excellent fotopic website with many fish van photos (and they've all got wheels). Paul kindly gave permission for the use of his photos in this article. Others are the Bluebell Railway website (they've also got a van with wheels) and the Southern E-Group website for lots of other background information. Also as previously mentioned the Vintage Carriages Trust website who list our vehicle – last surveyed in June 2008 apparently. When we've finished the repaint we must send them a new photo and update the details. We shall have to see if it starts an ice blue revolution.

Useful Links :-

<http://gallery6801.fotopic.net/c521664.html>

<http://www.cs.vintagecarriagestrust.org/se/CarriageInfo.asp?Ref=5143>

http://www.semgonline.com/vandw/fandxp_01.html

<http://www.bluebell-railway.co.uk/bluebell/wagon/87720.html>

FIREFLY UPDATE 16/03/10

By Steve Goodwin

Boiler. Pridhams have finished work on replacing the outer firebox . the expansion bracket has been remachined and refitted to the boiler. All the

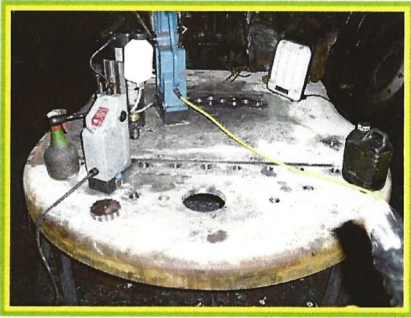


welds have been NDT (Non destructive testing) and are Ok. A problem has developed when welding the replacement patch to the bottom of the boiler barrel; the plate



work was found to be de-laminating when welding (a bit like if you bend a piece of plywood around and cut the out side it all splits and de- laminates). On further investigation it was found that the boiler was constructed out of iron not steel! Which is very unusual and the welding will have to be butt strapped (sandwiched between two plates and riveted together) to stop the weld cracking.

The front tube plate has been drilled and is now waiting to be reunited to the boiler barrel (a lot of drilling took me 3 days)

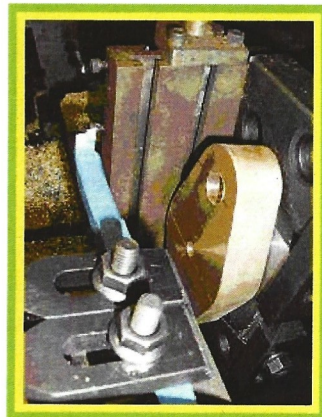
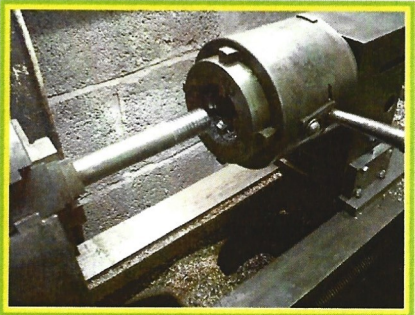


Frames Not much has happened here due to the winter weather, The frames are going to be moved back into the loco shed soon to finish off the painting

Side Tanks The right hand tank has been finished and put back on the frames, The left hand tank has been fabricated and can be seen here being shot blasted before painting.



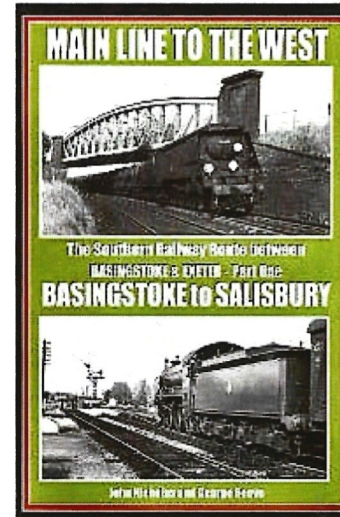
Other I have purchased a thread chaser and adapted it to fit the lathe for the manufacture of boiler studs



Machining of the gauge cock bosses

BOOK REVIEW

A review of the third of the trilogy of Irwell Press books describing the Southern route to Exeter



Main Line to the West – Basingstoke to Salisbury

The Southern Railway route between Basingstoke and Exeter – Part One

John Nicholas and George Reeve

Published by Irwell Press Ltd
ISBN 1-903266-43-2

£26.95

This is a very informative publication and a must for 'Southern Region' supporters and a far wider section of railway entrepreneurs' as it includes the LSWR, MSWJR and GWR (sorry folks), also within its ten chapters there is something for everyone.

A well investigated publication by the authors, whose knowledge and appreciation of the lines of route covered are informative throughout and enhanced by excellent track diagrams, timetables (passenger and freight) and a full history illustrated in photographic delight.

A reference book that should be considered for all railway supporters of this route and for those with celebratory events to consider looking for that present they can not find.

A very good publication, that should be in the 'Green Badge' supporters library.

GI

Don't forget, Members get 10% discount at Westcountry Models

PILGRIMAGE TO WADEBRIDGE

Tuesday 18th August 1959

By P. Barnfield

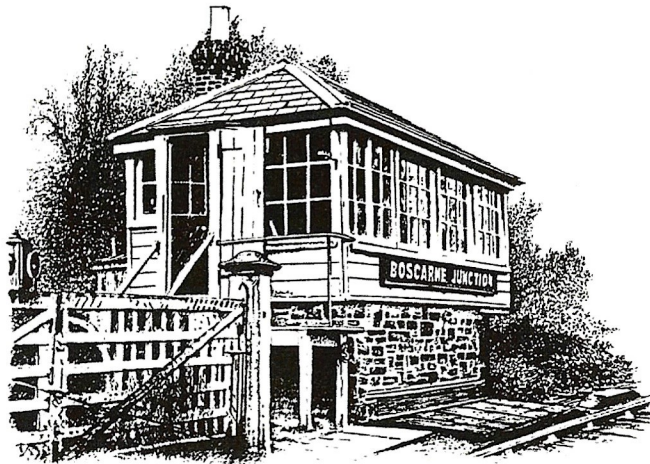
A few days holiday with relatives in Torquay was merely an excuse for my first visit to Cornwall. At that time three Beattie well tanks, stationed at Wadebridge, exerted an almost magnetic attraction. These ancient engines, having started life in the 1870s were the oldest design still running on British Railways. I loved their antique appearance in photographs and a pilgrimage to pay homage was essential.

A gleaming GW Castle drew me slowly through the rumbling ironwork of Brunel's Saltash masterpiece to that landscape of innumerable inlets and wooded valleys across the Tamar. Noon found me at Bodmin Road vainly searching for the refreshment room clearly advertised in the timetable but seemingly concealed by delinquent piskies. When a fellow traveller told of its legitimate closure only a week previously, I put all thoughts of lunch aside and photographed the Bodmin branch train, a 'B' set headed by 5551, into which several;

barrowsful of mail
off the down
express were being
thrown with some
alacrity by two
porters.

Then doors were
clapped shut and
we were off up the
gradient for
Bodmin, the loco's
crisp bark echoing
through
surrounding

woodlands. 5551 ran around the train at General station before we skirted the town, our progress down the hill to Boscarne Junction being what Charles Rous-Marten might have described as "a hurricane descent". Somehow the heavy Webb & Thompson train staff must have been safely exchanged and we even managed a brief pause at Nanstallon before plunging across the pretty lane to the nearby village and racing on at great speed. Possibly the driver was as anxious about his lunch as I was now beginning to feel about



mine, but whatever the reason we sailed majestically past lonely Grogley Halt, shuddering to a stop which surely emptied every loaded luggage rack, some way down the line. After an ignominious reversal, the guard was able to step out onto the empty platform in order to perform the customary ritual with his green flag before the race was resumed along this secluded valley of the Camel.

At Wadebridge, my attention was immediately divided between the somewhat sticky contents of a temperamental chocolate slot machine and station pilot No 30586. Both were basking in the heat of the midday sun and Cadbury's Dairy Milk took precedence over photography as I leaned on the goods yard railings beside the simmering well tank, vainly trying to sort silver paper from soft warm chocolate.

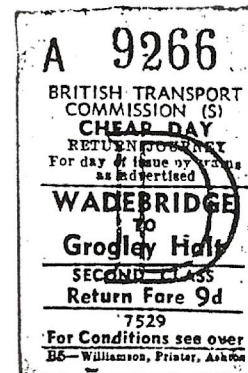
Nothing much stirred at Wadebridge, town and station seemed deserted, the oppressive heat having driven everyone indoors. The nearest movement, a whisp of steam from 30586, seemed to emphasise the stillness around me although the station cat languidly licked a paw while eyeing me warily. I took photographs, explored the engine shed beside the river and found another well tank. The third 2-4-0WT was I assumed pottering around further up the Camel at Wenfordbridge, the working of this goods only china clay line being the sole reason for these locos' long survival.

Beattie Well Tanks had been at work in the area for some 66 years, the first having braved the treacherous voyage around Land's End when delivered by sea from Southampton in 1893. The parent London & South Western Railway did not have a physical connection with the Bodmin and

Wadebridge until some two years later. The B&W was actually the first locomotive hauled line in Cornwall, dating from 1834 when it made money by transporting sea sand from the Camel estuary inland for agricultural purposes. It was acquired (illegally I believe) by the South Western in 1846, when that concern's tracks were still about 200 miles away! What would today be termed forward planning.

History lesson over we return to Wadebridge on a hot, sticky afternoon and 30586 finally rousing itself from a lunchtime siesta stirred the station into life with some spirited shunting. Loud clanking from a T9 heralded the arrival of a passenger train from

Padstow, although the 4-4-0 was quickly uncoupled and replaced with a



shiny 02 from the shed which took the train on to Bodmin North. Another T9, 30338, steamed in with a Padstow-Exeter train and while this was being changed for a Southern mogul a similar engine arrived with a down North Cornwall line working and a Bodmin Road train appeared in the remaining platform.

A flurry of porters hurried from cool, dark corners and platforms were suddenly bustling with barrows and suitcase lugging passengers. 30586 shunted noisily in the yard, dust billowed from behind the shed as men heaved coal into the T9s' long tenders and the signalman in the grey granite East Box clattered levers, rang bells and wiped his sweaty hands on a grubby duster. 4553 took me back to Bodmin Road and as we passed Boscarne the Wenford goods must have been just out of sight, waiting for us to clear the section before it was allowed out through the gate from the branch to waddle back to Wadebridge in time for tea.

KIDDERMINSTER AND THE SEVERN VALLEY RAILWAY

Article and photographs by P. Wagstaff

Being a native of Kidderminster and travelling back there occasionally I sometimes go back to the wooden bridge which spans the tracks of both the Severn Valley Railway (SVR) and Network Rail, to see how the SVR is getting on.



The original Severn Valley Railway ran from Hartlebury in Worcestershire from its junction with the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway, to Shrewsbury in Shropshire. The railway was later linked with Kidderminster, both lines converging at Bewdley which gave that

intermediate station much significance. The railway did not serve many major centres of population but did serve the coal mine at Alveley near to

Highley and the sugar beet factory in Kidderminster where Foley Park halt was situated.

As one of the lines affected by Beeching's cuts, the railway was proposed to be reduced in scale back to Bewdley. The last part of the passenger railway to close was the section from Bewdley to Kidderminster in 1970. I remember travelling with my brother on one of the ubiquitous Derby Built DMU's (later to be Class 106) on the last day of passenger services as the train picked its way through the old goods yard and down the valley through Foley Park tunnel and into Bewdley. The yard was a feature which is to play a major part in the later story of the Severn Valley railway at Kidderminster.

As with many ex BR rural branch lines, the early preservation movement was picking up momentum and the new Severn Valley Railway opened in sections firstly from Bridgnorth to Hampton Loade in 1970 and later down the line to Bewdley by 1973. At that time the Sugar Beet factory at Kidderminster was still in production and sugar beet and associated goods were brought in by rail. The then thriving carpet industry meant that the yard in Kidderminster was active with the import of jute and the large scale use of domestic coal meant that the coal staithes in the yard needed to be kept full.

All this was to change in the 1970's when carpet production was challenged by imports, printed carpets and changes in people's tastes for interior design and decoration. As the carpet industry declined, and central heating displaced domestic coal, the need for the once busy goods yard declined as well.

The final push for the SVR and the goal which was and continues to be prized is the run into Kidderminster was achieved in 1984. Not only does Kidderminster have direct trains to Birmingham and Worcester but now has a through service to London. Not of course Paddington which was the destination of the long gone 'Cathedrals Express' portion which run down to Worcester behind a 2-6-2 tank to join up with the portions from Hereford and Worcester but to its near neighbour at Marylebone. So the SVR now had a main line connection and a largish town to operate to and from.



From those early beginnings, the Severn Valley Railway has flourished and in spite of a difficult operating year when heavy and persistent rain washed away some of the line around Highley; the line has continued to host galas, offer a variety of traction and historic rolling stock as well as run train services at weekends throughout the year and has developed a major museum 'The Engine House' at Highley.

Being one of the early railway preserved lines means that the railway has had the advantage of collecting items of pre-BR rolling stock as well as Mark 1 carriages from the 1950's. The construction of a carriage shed a few years ago, again on the old Kidderminster yard, has allowed the railway to place its collection of now historic rolling coaching stock from the LMS, LNER, GWR and BR under cover and the provision of a turntable has allowed stock to be turned so that the effects of the weather (mainly the sun bleaching the paintwork on one side of the carriages) can be balanced out.



Stanier 2-6-0 42968 at Kidderminster Town

Taking a trip down the line, starting at Kidderminster, we travel from the rebuilt Kidderminster Town station and its substantial signal box which controls movements in and out of the station. At the station approach is one of the few working signal gantries left in the country with GWR style lower quadrant arms and shunting signals. Passing by the

West Midlands safari park with its elephants, the next main station is at Bewdley, once the junction for Stourport-on-Severn (the spur of which comes in from the left just before the first of Bewdley's two signalboxes) and once junction for the branch across the River Severn to Cleobury Mortimer and beyond which accounts for the double track over the viaduct which is crossed on departure from the station.

Because of these two junctions, one at each end of the station, this rural halt at Bewdley has three platforms and substantial buildings. It is now the administrative headquarters of the railway.

Following the halt at Northwood, which is a request stop used mainly by anglers wishing to fish in the River Severn, the next station is Arley, coming just after the River Severn is crossed by the famous Victoria Bridge. The railway follows the meandering River Severn for much of its length. Following next is Highley, which is the site of the 'Engine House' museum. The station's single platform with its stone buildings is a typical GWR wayside station.

The rest of the line is that originally reopened in 1970 between Hampton Loade (one of the crossing points, the other being at Arley) and the halt at Eardington – which has been opened and closed at various times – and finally to Bridgnorth. The SVR line goes as far as Bridgnorth tunnel through which trains once ran through to Shrewsbury.

The Severn Valley Railway is one of the older preserved railways in the UK which has built up a reputation for the quality of its stations and rolling stock and has worked hard in developing its engineering capabilities. The new Engine House museum at Highley has helped in bringing many people to travel along this Rural Branch line through the rolling countryside of

Worcestershire and Shropshire. There is also a very good railway museum in the old goods shed at Kidderminster next to the SVR station which now includes the signal box from Wrangaton in Devon.

The railway has a longish run, and is well established as a preserved line in the West Midlands. The Severn Valley Railway has a variety of rolling stock and locomotives and is well worth a visit at Kidderminster off the M5 as a place to sit awhile and watch as the trains go by.

For further information including running days see the web site www.svr.co.uk



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Easter 2010 Timetable

(From Good Friday 2/4/10 until 9/4/10 except Thursday)

Sampford C'try	dep		10.16		12.31			15.24		17.31
Okehampton	arr		10.28		12.43			15.36		17.43
Okehampton	dep		10.30	11.30	12.45	14.00	14.45	15.45	16.30	17.45
Meldon Quarry	arr		10.40	11.40	12.55	14.10	14.55	15.55	16.40	17.55
Meldon Quarry	dep		10.50	11.50	13.00	14.20	15.00	16.05	16.50	18.05
Okehampton	arr		11.00	12.00	13.10	14.30	15.10	16.15	17.00	18.15
Okehampton	dep	10.00		12.15			15.12		17.17	
Sampford C'try	arr	10.12		12.27			15.22		17.29	

All services will be diesel operated

FARES

Return: Adult £4.00; Senior Citizen £3.00; Children (5-15 yrs) £2.00

Single: Adult £3.00; Senior Citizen £2.00; Children (5-15 yrs) £1.00

Whole line Return: Adult £6.00; Senior Citizen £5.00; Children (5-15 yrs) £4.00

Spring Timetable

(Fridays, Saturdays & Sundays from 9/4/10 until 22/5/10)

Sampford C'try	dep		10.16		12.31			15.24		17.31
Okehampton	arr		10.28		12.43			15.36		17.43
Okehampton	dep		10.30	11.30	12.45	14.00	14.45	15.45	16.30	17.45
Meldon Quarry	arr		10.40	11.40	12.55	14.10	14.55	15.55	16.40	17.55
Meldon Quarry	dep		10.50	11.50	13.00	14.20	15.00	16.05	16.50	18.05
Okehampton	arr		11.00	12.00	13.10	14.30	15.10	16.15	17.00	18.15
Okehampton	dep	10.00		12.15			15.12		17.17	
Sampford C'try	arr	10.12		12.27			15.22		17.29	

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