



SUPPORTERS'
DARTMOOR RAILWAY
ASSOCIATION

THE DARTMOOR PONY

The Magazine of the Dartmoor Railway
Supporters' Association

No.11

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Atlantic Coast Express
Winthrop & Newatchee The
Withered Arm
Raising Money for the
DRSA

The DARTMOOR PONY

Issue No. 11

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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 last day of the month prior to publication date.

FRONT COVER: Britannia storms through Sampford Courtenay with the Steam Dreams Atlantic Coast Express 6th September 2011
Photo G Horner

BACK COVER:

Both: Two views of the quarry machinery while it was actively producing ballast for Network Rail. EWS then very much in evidence.
Both photos P Wagstaff

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**Whether cantankerous old curmudgeon,
Or hyperactive whelp,
The thing your railway wants the most,
Is a little bit of help!**

To volunteer on the Dartmoor Railway
please contact:-

Dave Clegg :- 01626 867210

Geoff Horner :- 07866 210399

Editorial:

By Peter Ritchie

2011 seems to have been the year of disappointments from the closing of the quarry to the failure of steam's appearance, from the continued absence of spare parts for Thumper to the delays to Thunderer's arrival. Is the future looking any brighter? My answer is that it has to be. Spares for Thumper are on order, Thunderer is under repair at Washwood Heath. Santa Trains will be upon us soon and we will get a locomotive to use on them. Let's look towards Santa and Christmas. In the meantime the extract from the front page of the Okehampton Times of 8th September (see p 29) does give rise to some optimism for the future

For the magazine I have to report the end of an era albeit a short one. Yes, we have now committed all of Peter Barnfield's 'Memories of the Withered Arm' to print and if, like me, you have enjoyed these tales of that bygone era then I am sure you will join me in thanking Peter so much for allowing me to use his book, chapter by chapter, in all of the issues I have edited so far. Thank you Peter. If ever you think of publishing it again, I have each of your chapters in .pdf format.

David Clegg has been travelling around some other preserved railways and provided a brief account of his travels. I have reports from member Dana Wiffen on other lines which I will use in (hopefully) the next issue.

The members' evening at Okehampton was most enjoyable with over 30 members taking advantage of the BBQ and the special train up to Meldon. A quick trip around the workshops was also on offer. I have been sent a couple of photos of that which will be used later. Adam Cann has been building up an archive/collection of old photographs and memorabilia which he has kindly made available and I will be copying these for future use

Articles/photographs for the Magazine

If submitted in hard copy, photographs should be of at least 6"x4" size and of good quality. Copy submitted electronically should be in Microsoft Word format (pre 2007 edition) with any associated photographs in jpeg format no smaller than 2Mb when expanded.

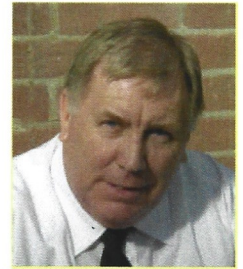
Deadline for Winter Issue – Saturday 3rd December



FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

By Graham Isom

It seems strange to be writing this up here in Weardale but, as you might have heard, I have had to move north on a temporary basis to help sort out a few of the problems that are being experienced in this area. At least I am now in a position to try and exert a little bit of pressure on 'headquarters' and push the needs of the Dartmoor Railway higher in the pecking order.



In the meantime John Wills and Denis LeWorthy are back on the roster as



Members' Evening 2

Photo D Clegg

Duty Managers with Richard Proctor ably assisting at weekends. Thank you gentlemen for all the assistance you are giving. It goes without saying that all the work being done by all, and I mean all, the volunteers is very much appreciated. The steady progress being made with the rolling stock and C&W side, the model railway and the Buffet Car sales up at Meldon, are a delight to see. Down at Okehampton the station maintenance team are making

visible progress all the time whilst Mary's team of volunteers in the Buffet work miracles at times. Down on the track the efforts of all those who join the lineside clearance teams under the guidance of Alan Cocker have become visible in Bernard Mills' photographs at Coleford Curve and Sampford Courtenay.

We now have the visit of UK Railtours, a train-borne Birthday party and the Christmas festivities to look forward to. We will have a loco available for these although I am not yet in a position to say which one. A good New Year resolution must be to try and plan further ahead as much as we can.



Members' Evening 1

Photo D Clegg

Bernard's Corner
Photographs by B Mills



THE RAILWAY

General

We have a lot to thank 'Bluebell Mel' and her supporting crew for over this last year's main season. She has soldiered on throughout, taking everything in her stride whilst the railway has waited in the forlorn hope that spares for Thumper would be forthcoming in plenty of time. This has not proved to be the case and these essential spares are still awaited. 'Thunderer' has not joined us yet being still under repair at Washwood Heath where her electrics and electronics are being brought up to a reliable state. She would be useless to us if this type of fault were to be perpetuated down here. Promised steam appeared to evaporate although every effort was made to hire in a loco. When servicing facilities for steam are limited such as at Meldon, it is difficult to find a suitable locomotive for our use. The USA last year is clearly the type needed but it needs advance planning and preparation to hire in such a loco in order to achieve a viable product to sell to the public.

The service increased over the main school holidays in line with previous years with trains on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. Throughout there was a steady flow of customers albeit not spectacular. Sampford Courtenay continued to be off the timetable because we were using Bluebell Mel.

First Great Western (FGW) provided the Sunday Rover Service through

the high period but gave rise to some concern when they arbitrarily brought forward one of the departures from Okehampton by three minutes for no apparent reason and with no notice and without telling anyone. The 1600



became the 1557 resulting in missed connections for some passengers. Nevertheless, the Sunday Rover was popular throughout the season and the passenger loadings at times were satisfyingly high. It would seem to bode well for a future daily passenger service.

FGW have undertaken three weeks of skid pan training at the station. During the first week the railway had a visit from Lord Faulkener of Worcester, a former Chairman of the Railway Heritage Committee, Minister with responsibility for transport in the House of Lords in the previous government and present President of the Heritage Railway Association. He is pictured here with the Duty DR Manager, John Wills. Lord Faulkener took the opportunity to ride in the FGW 142 to see for himself the training the drivers were undertaking.

Of note were a successful members' evening and the crowning glory of Britannia's visit. On the horizon are the Santa and Mince Pie Trains and a visit from UK Railtours on 29th October hauled by Class 67 locos.

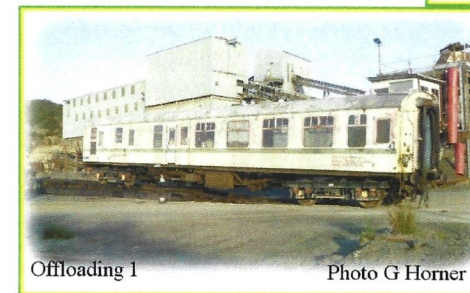
C&W Group

Work continues apace on the BK at Meldon. The delayed delivery of the BUO from Ruddington has allowed all attention to be concentrated on the former which was recently photographed in a smart grey undercoat.



BK in undercoat

Photo G Horner



Offloading 1

Photo G Horner

The BUO only recently arrived at Meldon after several months delay at the hauliers yard where its trailer had reportedly suffered a major malfunction. This of course is the coach that was converted to a mobile laboratory. There is a lot of work to do on this coach but it is

fully owned by the DRSA. It is hoped that this coach can be moved down to Platform 1 at Okehampton to facilitate work on it.

Stations Maintenance Team



Alright GUV?

The GUV van in platform 1 is now resplendent in its new coat of red. They are now 'attacking' the signal box and giving it some much needed TLC In the meantime they have carried out detailed assessment of maintenance outstanding on the whole stations estate. This will help both DR and the DRSA in prioritising work to be done.

Catering

At Okehampton the pressure on Mary and her volunteers has been absolutely manic at times. The numbers using the buffet can vary over the day from absolutely packed and queueing onto the platform to just one or two patrons in the space of half an hour or so. At the very busy times it is a case of all hands to the pumps and everybody has to muck in and help serve and help collect in the dirties! Fortunately, such is Mary's reputation as a cook that most customers are content to wait if they can see that the pressure is high.

Up at Meldon, Sue, Rosemary and Co have served up Mary's confections to good effect and have managed to provide a great service which is fully appreciated by all those walkers and cyclists who partake of them.

Committee Matters

Now that the DRSA is the owner of some items of rolling stock, a cash flow is required to service these vehicles after they have been brought up to usable standards. Your committee, therefore, has set up a small sub-committee to investigate all aspects of fundraising. They have produced a preliminary report with several suggestions that will be discussed in due course. In the meantime, the Treasurer has entered the association into the Easyfundraising on-line shopping scheme which promises to give good returns but **only if we all make use of it!** Details are later in this issue.

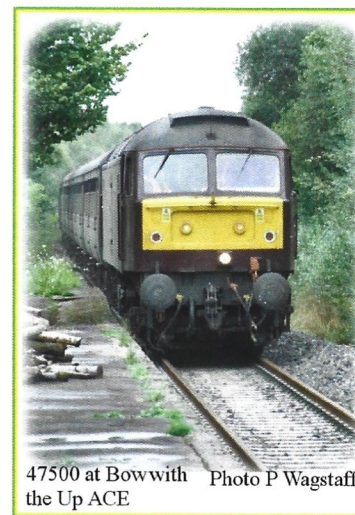
Ross Henrywood has carried out a study of the potential for the Dartmoor Railway. This is being studied by the Committee and has been given to the DR for their perusal. It could prove a very useful document.

Personnel

Sadly we have bidden farewell to Martin Kent. He has moved on to pastures new and we wish him well in his new endeavours. This means that Geoff Horner has stepped into the breach to assist Dave Clegg as second Volunteer Coordinator. Martin's input into the Traction and Rolling Stock Department will be sorely missed.

On a different level, our General Manager has been whisked away without warning by BARS to step into the breach up at Weardale and help sort out problems there. It does mean that John Wills, Denis Leworthy and Richard Proctor are back in the frame for Duty Manager

47 500 on the ACE



47500 at Bowwith the Up ACE Photo P Wagstaff



47500 at Yeoford with the Up ACE

Photo B Mills

HELP RAISE MONEY FOR THE DRSA WITHOUT COSTING YOU A PENNY USING EASYFUNDRAISING.ORG.UK

By Christine Horner

Treasurer

Dartmoor Railway Supporters' Association

HOW IT WORKS

Easyfundraising.org.uk provides a FREE service where you can shop with your favourite online stores and at no extra cost raise funds for the DRSA. You still shop directly with each retailer as you would normally, but by simply using the links from the **easyfundraising** site first, each purchase you make will generate a **CASH BACK DONATION to the DRSA**, instantly raising money for us. For example, spend £25 with W.H.Smith on books and 2.5% will be donated. You will have raised 63p at no extra cost to your purchase, Amazon donate 2.5% and some suppliers and retailers even more.

You can shop with 2000+ brand name retailers and to raise funds just use the links from the **easyfundraising** site first- it's that simple.

If you ALREADY shop online why not help our cause at no extra cost from purchases you would make anyway- e.g. donation rate for M&S is 2.5% of all you spend. DRSA will receive 2.5p for every £1 spent.

HOW TO RAISE FUNDS THIS WAY

- 1/ Google on to **easyfundraising.org.uk**
- 2/ Login using your user name and password and search on "Find a cause" for the Dartmoor Railway Supporters Association. Once you have registered with us this should come up automatically in the future.
- 3/ Finally, click on any of the retailer links provided and then shop just as you would normally.

That's all you need to do – APART FROM REMEMBERING TO RETURN TO EASYFUNDRAISING EACH TIME YOU SHOP ONLINE.

Easyfundraising will then send total donations raised direct to the DRSA.

Just out of interest another Railway Association have raised over £2000.00 to date using this method.

Dartmoor Railway/DRSA

Telephone Numbers/Websites

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

Dartmoor Railway Website www.dartmoor-railway.co.uk

DRSA Website www.dartmoor-railway-sa.org



Devon & Cornwall Railways Class 56

“A Change is as Good as a Rest”

David Clegg. Photos by the author

I had a few days off in Sussex recently. Not as good as Devon of course, but nevertheless parts of the countryside are very pleasant. And while I was there, deep in Southern Railway territory, I took the opportunity to try out the opposition.

First the Spa Valley Railway (SVR) at Tunbridge Wells West, which on the day before my visit, had at last been able to extend its services through to Eridge, running parallel to Southern train operating company's line to Uckfield for the last mile or so (and if they can do it, surely this must improve the case for DR running to Yeoford alongside FGW services). Mention of Southern and FGW reminds me of the incredibly different standards of rolling stock I found between the two companies for their local services. I travelled down



0-6-0 ST Ugly at Eridge (Spa Valley Railway)

from Eridge to Uckfield and back on a Southern Class 171, and compared with a FGW Class 150 or Pacer, you might think you're travelling first class inter-city!

I have to say straightaway that I liked everything about the SVR. The scenery is excellent, the

volunteers very helpful and friendly, interesting stations finished to a high standard, clean carriages, plenty of steam and diesel rolling stock, and a station at Tunbridge Wells which is right in the town. I travelled behind 0-6-0 industrial tank 'Ugly' which handled the four coach train with ease, including two stretches at 1/100 and a short 1/88. I do hope they do well, and I heartily recommend it as worth a visit. I shall certainly go again. Oh, and I must tell you about a conversation overheard across the aisle as we were waiting to leave Eridge. Mum to her little girl (about 8 years old?): "All trains used to be like this, pulled by steam engines". There then followed a fairly lengthy

explanation how steam in the boiler made the train go, and how the engine used lots of water and coal to make the steam. To which, the girl replied "Why haven't they become extinct then?" Well it made me laugh anyway!

My second visit of the day was to the Lavender Line at Isfield, not far away. This is a very short line, with understandably less to offer, but the station at Isfield is very pleasant with a signalbox where kids can enjoy pulling the levers. I was pleased to meet one of our distant

DRSA members who works there (Hi Rod!), who introduced me to a colleague who kindly took time to show me around the C&W shed (much to envy there). I was pleased to hear that Rod had visited DR last year, had thoroughly enjoyed his visit to us, and



0-4-0 ST at Isfield

would be coming back. There was just time to fit in a short trip behind another industrial ('Birkenhead') before I sped off to my third railway of the day – the Bluebell.

The difference between all three railways was very noticeable. The Bluebell is really BIG business: very professional, and with masses to offer, including a well-stocked engine shed which visitors can walk round. But I missed the friendliness of volunteers which the other two railways, like DR, are able offer in bucket-loads to their visitors, and I think I would feel a very small cog in a big wheel if I volunteered here. I also missed a trip up the line as the scheduled 3.0pm departure was cancelled due to engine failure, and as the following train was described as "busy" as it only had one coach for non-dining passengers to cater for the throngs already waiting on the platform, I paid my £1.25 platform entrance fee (double if you're not a senior), bought a cup of coffee, and called it a day. But quite a nice day actually!

THE ATLANTIC COAST EXPRESS

6th September 2011

Was it coming? Wasn't it coming? Up until a couple of weeks before its intended visit to Okehampton, Steam Dreams' ACE had not contacted the Dartmoor Railway (DR) for access to the Dartmoor line and Okehampton. The tour had been advertised for months in the railway press and had a full



At Coleford Curve

Photo B Mills



.....then through Bow

Photo P Wagstaff

complement of passengers. West Coast railway was in charge of the timetabling and itinerary. Finally, they had made contact and were coming! DR and the DRSA set in motion publicity in the surrounding areas for the visit and on the duly appointed day Okehampton station hadn't seen that many people on the platforms for some time and every vantage

point on the line from Coleford Junction to Okehampton was also occupied.

This was the first visit of a main line steam locomotive to the line for some years. It is believed to be the first visit of a Britannia class loco to the line – ever! DR provided a pilotman in the cab (Gerald Smallacombe) and a Conductor (Peter Chapman) to assist the



Storming through Sampford

Photo G Horner

guard. They both joined the train at Crediton. The ACE reached Crediton 8 minutes down on time. With Gerald's guiding hand they made it to Okehampton 'right time'. The organisers seemed totally unaware of the facilities at Oke and were amazed at the reception. A stop of only 15 minutes



The final lift into Oke

Photo M Ellis

had been scheduled but this was extended by 5 minutes – time needed to get the seething mass of humanity back into the train. All too soon West Coast Railways' 47500 was hauling the ACE back down the line towards Exeter.

This was a prime example of the drawing power of steam and the importance of publicity to get the word spread. The buffet was

open throughout the day to cater for the afficianados who started turning up quite early in the day for a train due to arrive sometime after 3 o'clock so the railway gained extra income from that. Steam Dreams and the West Coast Railway Company now know about Okehampton and the DR. Passengers and enthusiasts on the train were made aware of what could be offered in facilities at the station and the existence of the line up to Meldon. All in all, we all gained.



Easing to a halt at Oke

Photo M Ellis

Incidentally, Britannia looked splendid in her unlined black livery but it's a shame she wasn't wearing her nameplates!



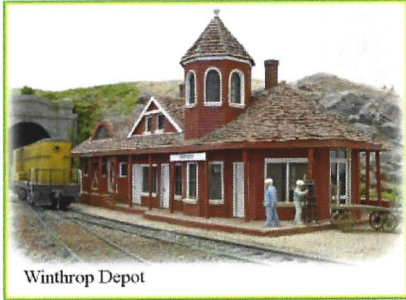
En Route Okehampton - Exeter

Photo Bernard Mills

Winthrop & Newatchee

Peter Chapman – photos from the author's collection

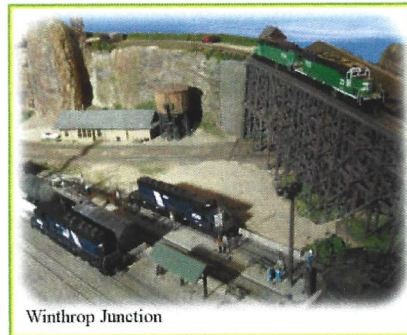
Winthrop & Newatchee is the DRSA's American HO Scale model railroad situated in the old geology display building opposite Meldon platform.



Winthrop Depot

Some of you would have seen the Winthrop part of the layout in action at the member's evening. Winthrop depicts a museum railroad complete with a scratch built wooden trestle viaduct and a covered road bridge. We believe that this part of the layout is based on the Northwest Railway Museum in Snoqualmie, Washington State, 25 miles

from Seattle. The station building on Winthrop is a replica of the preserved Snoqualmie Depot building which was constructed in 1890. The name Winthrop comes from a town about 200 miles from Seattle in the North Cascades region. Many of the buildings there have been restored to the American old west design and this is depicted on the model too.



Winthrop Junction

The larger part of the layout is a fictitious place called Newatchee, although there is a real place called Wenatchee on the Great Northern railway (now BNSF) main line from St. Paul, Minnesota to Seattle. Newatchee boasts a more modern town scene, several industries and a large terminus station and yard.



Winthrop Junction

The layout was donated to the DRSA when the original builder Peter Weldon moved house. The layout is large (over 41' long when alterations are complete, with three "peninsulas" of 15') and it was difficult to find a new home for it. The building Winthrop & Newatchee came from was squarer than ours, so we are making some alterations to the layout

so we have sufficient aisle width for public display.

The building at Meldon that housed the geology display had suffered at the hands of vandals and a lot of the exhibit had been ruined by water ingress. It was also something of an eyesore greeting our passengers when they alighted at Meldon Quarry Station and for the public passing by on the cycle path. The first job was to try and make the building weather tight, which we have partially achieved by boarding up the



Newatchee

broken windows, and we are investigating ways of sealing the walls. Additional lighting and electrics are being installed and salvaged exhibits from the former Meldon Visitor Centre will be displayed in the far left hand corner of the building, which has been adopted by the Station Maintenance Group.



VIA Rail at Winthrop

The model railway displays are part of our plans to make Meldon more of an attraction in its own right, to give visitors something to see when the weather is unfavourable, and to help publicise the railway.

If you haven't volunteered on the railway before, and perhaps find full size trains a little daunting, why not come and join our friendly Model Railway Group. We are hoping to open Winthrop and Newatchee fully next season but we need assistance to achieve this. It doesn't matter if you have no experience, we are all learning on the job anyway. If you prefer your model railways a little more home grown, in the other building we have our layouts depicting Okehampton & Meldon, Ilfracombe and Hallwill Junction. Next season we will need help to operate the layouts and make the most of the opportunity to host visitors, to give out information and encourage them to ride on our heritage train services. If you are interested in helping us to improve the 'Meldon experience' please contact:-

Model Railway Group leader	-	Mike Ellis	07930443771
Publicity Officer	-	Peter Chapman	07758895999
Stations Group leader	-	Tom Baxter	07941601815

Rosie's Diary

A Day out to Dawlish with Sunday Rover.

By Rosie.



I was excited when I heard I was going to travel with Rover, then disappointed when there wasn't an interesting bottom to sniff.

Bernard Mills called my train a Bouncy Castle (aka class 143), but I didn't hesitate to lead the way on board as I could see nice wide doorways. You know the swinging doors on our carriages can be dangerous and I have to be sure there is time for both me and my tail to get through safely. You know my tail is one of my most attractive features. No one knows where it has come from, but I carry it very high when I am on guard duty.

At Exeter St David's I didn't have a ticket to get through the barrier. Tom and Sue's joint ticket didn't work either. However it was much more friendly to have it opened specially for us by a station 2 legs. Once we reached Dawlish Warren I noticed many 2 legs were in hunting mode. I never quite understand this trait. When I chase rabbits or squirrels it is because they are running away. However 2 legs ran to stand over the path of King Edward II, but didn't move as it hurtled underneath them. I stood my ground as the King whistled at me. Then we had to find Tom who had been perched up on Langstone Rock, near Dave Hunt (who sometimes has two legs and other times five).

Soon I was down on the beach, one of the best places to sniff and wind up other 4 legs to play and chase. Then up to Dawlish Station for refreshment, but there were no bowls of water (which I really needed after tasting the sea, yuck!) and no offer or even sign of dog biscuits. It must be a very low class station.

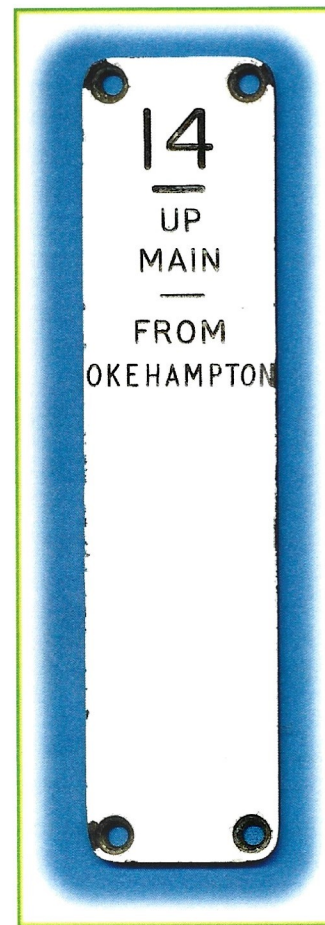
Then Sue didn't allow Tom to catch the train to Teignmouth, saying he would enjoy the fine views after the climb up the Coast path. Back down on Teignmouth sands I found my match in a fine little lurcher whom I chased until my tongue was hanging out and I had to give up. The scent of a teacake from the promenade cafe helped me lead Tom to a teatime revive. My sample however showed they were not a patch on our Buffets' teacakes!

There were lots of trains back, but Tom got confused and nearly missed the connection to Rover. I didn't mind when I found I was on a 125, with plenty of leg stretching space on the carpet. Then back on the Bouncy Castle. We got off, several 2 legs waved at Rover as he left, and then seemed pensive. It was September 18th and the last time Rover visited Okehampton in 2011.

PUZZLE CORNER

by Dick Henrywood

Anyone looking at the image shown here might be excused for thinking there is no puzzle involved. After all, it is quite clearly a signal lever plate. No problem. The puzzle is, of course, where it came from.



The inscription tells us it was lever number 14, controlling a signal on the Up Main line from Okehampton. Simple deduction points to the fact that it must have been east of Okehampton; if it had been west it would have said Up Main TO Okehampton. The likely candidates are North Tawton, Sampford Courtenay, Bow, Coleford Junction, Yeoford or Crediton.

Unfortunately, while North Tawton had enough levers, number 14 seems to have been a spare (possibly an unused shunt signal); Sampford Courtenay only had 13 levers anyway; Bow only had 12; and Coleford also only had 12 (extended to 13). Yeoford originally had 19 (latterly 31) but number 14 was a shunt signal from the Down Main to the Down Goods Yard. Crediton had 22 levers but 14 was a shunt signal from the Up Main to the Down Main. We must remember that the plates at Yeoford and Crediton would probably have been inscribed "from Coleford Junction" rather than "from Okehampton", since both boxes also controlled the Tarka line to Barnstaple.

Of course, as with many lines, re-signalling took place at various times and being made of Trafalite (a plastic rather like Bakelite), this plate would be a replacement, not original to the line's opening. Possibly it was made when Coleford Junction was taken out in 1971, although that might seem a bit too late for the material used.

So come on all you signalling buffs. Where did this plate come from?

MEMORIES OF THE WITHERED ARM

By the Editor

In the last eight copies of The Dartmoor Pony, we have been privileged to be able to read the marvellous tales of the journeys undertaken by author Peter Barnfield along the length and breadth of the Southern Region west of Exeter between the years of 1958 and 1963. I don't know about you, dear reader, but I have found it a delightful journey which has kept me amused with each trip. Unfortunately, we have now reached the end of the 'line' so to speak. There are no more chapters.

There are three sections that I have omitted, the Introduction, a description of the Withered Arm and the Postscript, and I am now going to remedy that omission. So, without further ado, back to the words of Peter Barnfield we must go:-

Introduction

By Peter Barnfield

This is not a railway history, nor is it a list of dates, train times, mileages and engine numbers. It is simply an attempt to record my impressions of journeys over the Southern region lines to the west of Exeter between the years 1958 and 1963, when the Western Region of B.R. took control of them.

At the time I kept a travel diary and it is around the contents of this yellowing book, lying half forgotten in a drawer and rediscovered some thirty years later, that these words are written. They are unashamedly nostalgic, but hopefully convey some of the 'Withered Arm's' special atmosphere, an atmosphere which had seen little change for many years but which was soon to be swept away for ever in the name of progress.

The Withered Arm

Was it perhaps the British habit of always backing the underdog that in 1958 aroused my interest in that seemingly almost forgotten Southern system to the west of Exeter? The straggling lines, crossing remote and lightly populated parts of Devon and Cornwall, reaching out for distant outposts, were indeed not unlike the withered arm of some great, otherwise healthy tree.

But here were all the essential ingredients of a railway lover's pie, bucolic branch trains shuffling slowly along, named expresses thundering down from the moor, mixed trains ambling away the day.

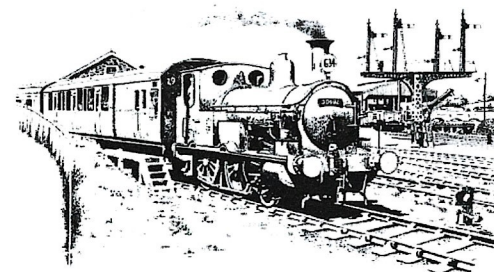
Here in this land of Arthurian legend, was the grandeur of Dartmoor, the secrecy of wooded valleys and sheltered harbours. Here the thrill of seaside holidays, immortalised by John Betjeman and the untamed Atlantic coast so tellingly portrayed by Thomas Hardy. Here also were isolated signal boxes, secluded stations, remote junctions and lonely lines quietly rusting between occasional trains.

To the south, former Great Western main lines echoed to those strange sounds from Swindon's diesel hydraulics – for me, only the names the names they carried held any attraction. The Western Region was firmly in the grip of modernisation fervour and putting aside the chocolate and cream W.R. timetable I reached for its larger, green companion. The section to be scrutinised took up a miniscule portion of its thickness but here were many fascinating places served by a rail system worked entirely by steam locomotives, some of which were undoubtedly museum pieces.

Thumbing through those tissue-thin pages I discovered that one could apparently spend hours, slowly going almost nowhere. Promptly producing paper and pencil I began working out some journeys – they were to prove unforgettable.

*.....the long express from Waterloo
That takes us down to Cornwall. Tea-time shows
The small fields waiting, every blackthorn hedge
Straining inland before the south-west gale.
The emptying train, wind in the ventilators,
Puffs out of T. gloskerry to Tresmeer
Through minty meadows, under bearded trees
And hills upon whose sides the clinging farms
Hold Bible Christians. Can it really be
That this same carriage came from Waterloo?
On Wadebridge station what a breath of sea
Scented the Cannel Valley! Cornish air,
Soft Cornish rains, and silence after steam.....*

John Betjeman, Summoned by Bells



Wadebridge 1914 August 1959

Postscript

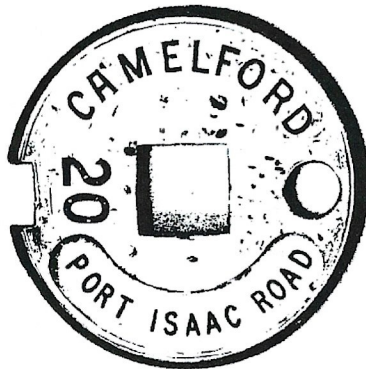
I was married in the year that the Western Region took control of the Withered Arm. There followed a change of job, the purchase of a house and the birth of our son. Railways took something of a back seat for a number of years but of course the interest and memories remained, backed up by a file of photographic negatives.

In the mid 60s I purchased a number of items from the Withered Arm which were destined to start me searching for further relics of the old system. At the time BR ran a sort of mini 'Collectors' Corner' in a small shed at the up end of Newton Abbot station. One had to apply to the booking office whereupon a helpful railwayman would unlock this treasure store for inspection.

We came across it by chance, parted with £5 and carried away enough items to fill the boot of our mini. Included in the haul were a Boscarne Junction – Bodmin Town Webb & Thompson train staff, a Coplestone – Morchard Road key token and a lovely LSWR block bell from Exmouth Junction.

The collection, although still small, has grown steadily over the years and is still expanding. I find a luggage the Withered Arm there are still some time of writing. Edmondson other hand, are not many intermediate such little traffic, a illustrated by the Rly. Ticket Stock Tresmeer. Another in the collection is the station inventory from Tower Hill, a small, much thumbed, LSWR notebook first issued in 1912 and detailing equipment and furniture there until closure.

A set of wooden, booking office cash bowls which my wife took a fancy to at an auction and for which she was the only bidder, were signed, mostly in old copperplate handwriting, by the staff. When we got them home under a magnifying glass we discovered to our delight that they came from *Bow, North Devon*. and that the signatures ran from April 1888 to 1964. This habit of marking and dating everything applied at many stations of course,



live in hope of label from each of stations although gaps to fill at the (1994 – Ed) tickets, on the plentiful since stations generated fact amply old Southern Book from interesting book

including nearby North Tawton where one of the staff stamped *North Tawton 11-2-88* inside the wooden box of type for the ticket dating press. The characterful state of this box, complete with Edmondson's patent plate in brass on the lid, leaves one in no doubt that the 88 is 1888! The longevity of such items is incredible, viewed from today's throw-away age, for even if few tickets were actually sold at North Tawton the dater type would have been changed daily and the box must have been in constant use for nearly 80 years.

In the spring of 1976, en route for Cornwall by car, we delivered something to a remote farm at Sheepwash near Hatherleigh. Trying to find our way back to the A30 we became quite confused on the tiny Devonshire lanes that appeared to be taking us round in a circle and I pulled up at a minor junction to study the map. Glancing across the road I saw what was unmistakably some weatherbeaten Southern concrete fencing and beyond it a long, low, shabby and singularly uninspiring abandoned building. "It's alright," I said. "Now I know where we are – this is Halwill Junction!" The motor car has destroyed Halwill's isolation and the huge growth in private transport could do nothing but signal the end of the railway routes for which it formed the hub. If Thomas Hardy complained of the slow journey times to Boscastle in the 1800s one could only assume that the writing had been on the wall for a very long time.

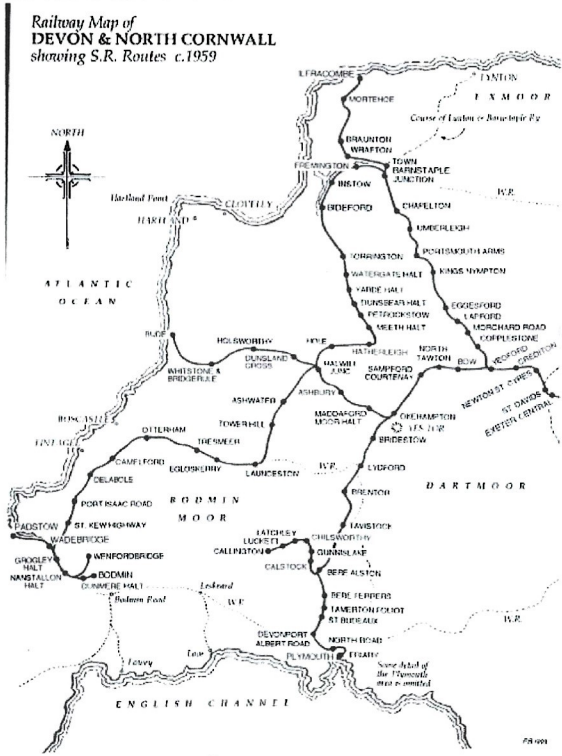
Be that as it may, a few limbs of the old system still cling tenuously to life, if anything their appearance being even more withered than the days of my narrative. Elderly DMUs climb from Plymouth to Bere Alston, then rattle and squeal their way to Gunnislake's despoiled station on the truncated Callington branch.

The once important Barnstaple Junction has virtually been reduced to the status of a halt at the end of something akin to a long siding from Exeter, although the Town station signal box is now a railway museum and there are plans to reopen part of the Lynton & Barnstaple Rly. Along the coast at Instow the signal box has been lovingly restored by local volunteers, with the help of Devon C.C. The trackbed is in use as a foot and cycle path all the way to Meeth so that even if trains are lost forever the right of way is there for the benefit of all.

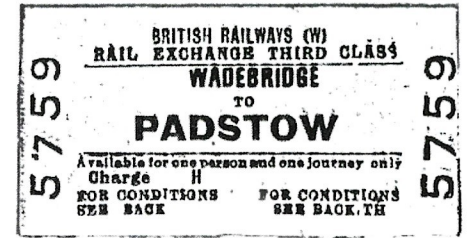
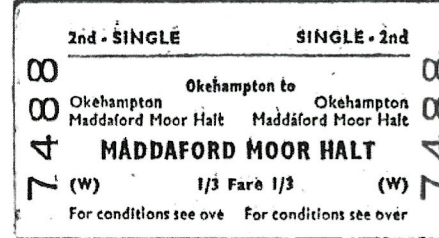
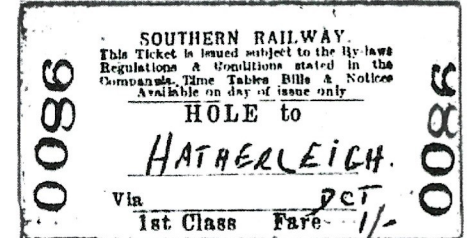
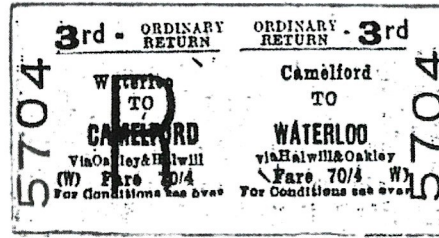
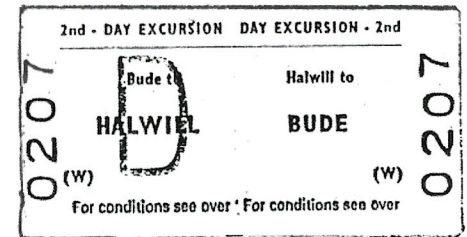
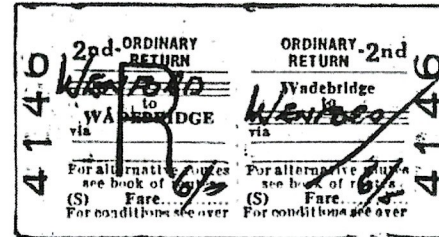
The Dartmoor main line goes no further than the still active quarry at Meldon (*no longer – Ed*) and whilst writing this account I spent an hour reliving memories at the abandoned Okehampton station on the hillside above the town. From high on Yes Tor one can look down on the spindly viaduct at

Meldon and still see quite clearly the course of that great sweeping curve away from the junction towards Halwill.

In 1989 my wife and I paused at Halwill Junction on our way to stay at Dunmere in order to walk the old Bodmin & Wadebridge trackbed to Padstow. The council had provided a seat near to where the level crossing had been so we had a picnic breakfast while gazing along the abandoned earthworks towards distant Dartmoor. A builder was gradually covering the old station site with somewhat inappropriate little houses and only the up platform remained intact. We wandered past the site of the once lofty signal box and brushing through some long grass found the spot where the main platform led round to the bay for the light railway to Torrington. One of the ancient engineering bricks that formed the platform edging here was loose and so I rescued it from the bulldozer by pulling it out and bringing it home; it could doubtless tell a tale or two.



Help to keep the last of "The Withered Arm" alive – tell everybody that the Dartmoor Railway lives. Volunteers are required.



A Selection of Tickets from Peter Barnfield's meanderings on the Withered Arm

Volunteers Still Wanted

There is still room for new volunteers to assist Mike Ellis in the refurbishment and extension of the 'OO' layout at Meldon.

If you'd like to help please contact
Mike on 07930-443771

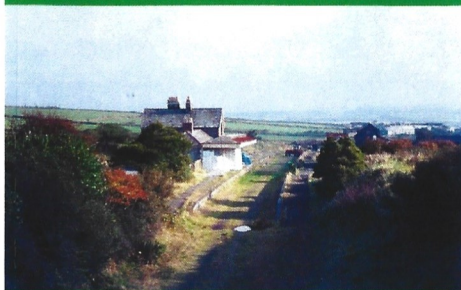
Mike can also be found up at Okehampton station on most Saturdays and Sundays

**** If you feel that the "FOX AND HOUNDS is too difficult to get to, then let a Committee Member know and suggest an alternative which can cater for our numbers, and is also not remote for others. At the moment, the Fox and Hounds suits the purpose ****

BOOK REVIEW

IN THE TRACKS OF THE 'ACE'

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SOUTHERN
NETWORK WEST OF SALISBURY



Jeffery Grayer

*In The Tracks of the 'ACE' – The
Destruction of the Southern Network
West of Salisbury*

Jeffery Grayer

Published by Noodle Books
ISBN 978-1-906419-01-1
£10.95

This is one of the saddest books I
have ever read. It documents in stark
images the last days, neglect,
dismantling and destruction of the

LSWR network to the west of Salisbury, best known of course, west of
Exeter at least, as the Withered Arm.

As with many railway books, this volume consists predominantly of pictures
and captions, in this case showing all the stations and halts either during the
last days of operation or later when the railway had been removed. The air of
futility which pervades it all is quite terrible. Here we see stations which
once proudly hosted the famous Atlantic Coast Express reduced to a single
car DMU with few, if any, passengers, or with no train at all, no track, and
little, if any, hope of a future. In all too many cases, such future never
materialised and the stations have now either been converted to houses or for
business use, or in quite a few cases just demolished altogether.

Supporters of the current Dartmoor line will find pictures of Bow, North
Tawton, Sampford Courtenay (2), Okehampton (3) and the Meldon viaduct,
each sensitively captioned, together with similar views of Crediton and
Yeoford (3).

First published in 2008 but reissued in revised form in 2010, this is a
paperback book with 104 pages, in colour throughout, which I can
recommend without the slightest hesitation. It is a document full of sadness,
that's true, but for anyone interested in the history of "our" line it should be
required reading.

RKH

From the Front Page – Okehampton Times 8th September 2011

Cllr Christine Marsh
said: 'It will be a huge
boost.

'I'm hoping it will
become a really positive
project for the town and
give back a bit of
confidence in the area.
We desperately need it —
this is an opportunity,
with Devon County
Council and West Devon
Borough Council behind
it as well, and hopefully
other businesses
throughout the country
will see the potential and
location of it.'

The county council
have also been backing
the extension of services
on the Okehampton to
Exeter rail link, which
could possibly be
implemented as early as
May 2012.

Cllr Marsh said: 'In
terms of the parkway
station, one will support
the other.

'We have to look at
alternative methods of
transport now other than
roads. There's a report

being done on the
railway, which is looking
very positive, and one
will help the other.'

'Everyone's hoping
the building of the
Parkway station will start
in January.

'It's going before
cabinet, and they will
look at it.

'The plan is to have a
passenger service if
possible by May next
year, and to have
development start in
January makes me hope
the timescales for this to
happen will be correct.'

Will Mumford,
Devon's cabinet member
for economy, enterprise
and employment said:
'We have been looking at
both the short-term issues
and long-term issues, and

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DARTMOOR RAILWAY

Okehampton Station, Station Road, Okehampton, Devon EX20 1EJ
Tel:01837.55164

Timetable

(Saturdays & Sundays from 24th September until 30th October 2011)

Meldon Quarry	dep		11.00	12.00	13.00	14.30	15.30	16.30
Okehampton	arr		11.15	12.15	13.15	14.45	15.45	16.45
Break								
Okehampton	dep	10.30	11.30	12.30	14.00	15.00	16.00	
Meldon Quarry	arr	10.45	11.45	12.45	14.15	15.15	16.15	

All services will be diesel operated

www.dartmoor-railway.co.uk

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3, Station Road,
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Committee of the Dartmoor Railway Supporters' Association

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