



SUPPORTERS'
DARTMOOR RAILWAY
ASSOCIATION

THE DARTMOOR PONY

The Magazine of the Dartmoor Railway
Supporters' Association

No.12

Winter 2011/12

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UK Railtours
Lab Coach 11
Waterloo to Okehampton
It's NOT a Train Station

The DARTMOOR PONY

Issue No. 12

Editor: Peter Ritchie

Address: Resthaven, Cheriton Bishop, Exeter, Devon, EX6 6HY

Email: peter.ritchie4@btinternet.com

Telephone: 01647-24271

DARTMOOR RAILWAY SUPPORTERS' ASSOCIATION

Website: www.dartmoor-railway-sa.org

Postal Address: Peter Flick, Copse, Exeter Road, Sticklepath,
Okehampton, Devon, EX20 2NR

Telephone: 01837 840670

Email: flickstickle@yahoo.co.uk

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: 67027 with 67030 on the rear of the 1Z82
Waterloo-Okehampton at Okehampton *Photo D Hunt*

BACK COVER:

Both: Two more views of Britannia entering platform 3 at Okehampton at the head of the Atlantic Coast Express.

Top: *Photo D Hunt*

Bottom: *Photo R Szembek*

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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 :- 01363 82383

Editorial:

By Peter Ritchie



May I start by wishing you all a Very Happy New Year and I hope you had a super and festive Christmas. I had hoped to get this issue of The Pony out to you before the New Year but events conspired against such an aspiration and here I am now writing this editorial on 5th January. I left you towards the end of the main operating season with Santa Trains promised including the means to haul them.

“Bluebell Mel” and her trusty consist looking for all the world like the “Titfield Thunderbolt”, continued in service until the end of October when the railway effectively shut down to await the advent of the Santa Trains. However, there were other activities before the arrival of Santa. The successful visit of Britannia on the ACE was followed at the end of October by a UK Railtours excursion from Waterloo topped and tailed by two Class 67s. When the track between Crediton and Exeter was subject to major maintenance at the beginning of November, several Class 150s were stabled at Okehampton overnight to be available to continue the service to Barnstaple from Crediton. Then we had the Farewell to the Class 142 special at the end of November

After a lot of hard work, our Class 47 was declared serviceable together with the appropriate rake of carriages and a successful birthday train was run. Heroic work by some volunteers managed to make sure this train was then available for Santa but not before heating and lighting failures had plagued the initial services. Despite assurances from on high, it really did look as though we would not be able to run these trains and publicity was limited as a result. Members who would normally have volunteered to help out found the uncertainty too much and were unavailable when the trains were confirmed. This is one aspect of the Dartmoor Railway that needs attention now.

Sadly we have lost two characters from our membership, Arthur Westlake and Mick Bond. Arthur was a life-long railwayman and an article about him appeared in this magazine. Mick, although not a railwayman, was a regular attendee at the Bulleid Buffet with his wife Margaret. He celebrated his 80th birthday with the DR last December.

On the DR personnel side, John Wills has retired from the post of a Duty Manager but intends to continue volunteering on the railway. Thanks for all your work in the past John. It really has been appreciated. I am sure we all look forward to seeing you up at the station in the future!

For those of us who have to deal with the public at Okehampton, there is still no news about train services to Exeter. There are plenty of rumours flying about but nothing of substance. Looking back over the years at press reports about the line, this has been the subject of much publicity since at least 2003 when such a service was “definitely on the cards”.

I detest the use of the expression “Train Station”. Read about why it’s wrong on page 20

FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

By Graham Isom



I feel a bit of a fraud penning this missive to you all while I am stuck up here in Stanhope. Unfortunately, the situation up here is such that it is unlikely that I will be able to get down to Okehampton in the near future. However, I am more than conscious of the efforts that the volunteers have put in to keeping a viable operation running over the past quarter. Yes, Oke had slipped to the back of the memory and the Company have become used to DRSA just getting on and managing with the little they have, hence the late start date on the 47 and Mk 2 coaches. I have to say a “really well done” to all who have worked so hard over this Christmas and New Year period and I’m only sorry that things were left so late. The Birthday train, the Santa Specials and the Mince Pie Specials were operated successfully under trying circumstances. Alistair Gregory is intending to spend some time with you to get Thumper up and running before the start of 2012 services to give us some choice of traction and rolling stock.

I must acknowledge here the loyal service given to the Dartmoor Railway as Duty Manager, guard as needed and administrative help by John Wills. I’m sorry to see him leave DR’s employ but I know we will be seeing him at Okehampton station in one volunteer rôle or another. Thank you John. I am sure that the DRSA have also benefitted from your presence at Okehampton.

We have also lost 2 stalwarts from the railway scene, Arthur Westlake and Mick Bond. Arthur was a long time, through and through railwayman who used to visit the station frequently whilst he was able. Mick, although not a railwayman, was a regular in the station buffet with Margaret, his wife. It is good to hear that Margaret is continuing to come up and visit their friends in the Bulleid Buffet.

I am sure that there is another topic that you would wish me to mention, the service in to Exeter. I regret to restate that I am still in no position to say anything about this at the moment. I know it puts volunteer staff at the station in to an awkward position with the public but I can't help you I'm afraid.

Let's hope that 2012 is a good year for us all

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.

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

THE RAILWAY

General

There has been quite a bit of 'outside' activity since the last edition of The Pony. On completion of the First Great Western (FGW) skid pan training, a 142 was permitted forward to Meldon for gauging trials in anticipation of the 142 special arriving on 27th November (see John Wills' email).



67027 Rising Star

Photo T Baxter

29th October saw a UK Railtours special coming to

Okehampton. As with all specials, volunteers turned out in numbers to act as marshals and guides for the incoming visitors. The train had dropped off those who wanted to visit Exeter at St David's station and buses were waiting at Sampford Courtenay for Castle Drogo enthusiasts. Okehampton had buses waiting for those who wanted to visit the Launceston Steam Railway and the Dartmoor Pony was there for those who wanted to go up to the viaduct. All seemed to go well from our end and the



Dartmoor Pony arriving at Platform 2

Photo T Baxter

passengers and staff of the train appeared well and truly satisfied with the facilities supplied by the Dartmoor Railway. The train duly departed on time but suffered from disruption later on – see article and letters.



150131 at Platform 2

Photo T Baxter

On completion of that last weekend in October, the service up to Meldon ceased to allow the railway to ready itself for the

rigours of Santa Specials etc*. A blockade on the line between Crediton and Cowley Bridge led to class 150 DMUs being stabled up at Oke for a week to enable a service between Barnstaple and Crediton to be maintained. One spare set was kept at Oke during the day and all units were stabled there overnight. It was good to see railway activity at night under the lights.



150202 at Platform 3 at night

Photo T Baxter

The etc* consisted of the Class 142 Special which was formed of three 142 units (for those interested 142001,142063 and 142068). They managed to visit Gunnislake, Marsh Barton (Exeter), Heathfield, Meldon Quarry and Barnstaple during their wanderings. They were duly met and looked after by volunteers.



Farewell to the Class 142

Photo P Wagstaff

which had been arranged earlier in the year. This was to celebrate three birthdays in the same family, mother, mother's uncle and mother's son and it worked out to be 60, 90 and 30 years being celebrated. Alistair and Tim were dispatched to us from 'Up North' to ready the Class 47 and two Mk 2 coaches for use. After a lot of hard work the train was produced and brought down to Oke for decorating. On the night and after a number of hiccoughs, the train served its purpose well and was a



Farewell to the Class 142 at Meldon

Photo T Baxter

The next crucial train to be operated by DR was a Birthday Special on 29th November

great success with an appreciative article appearing in the Okehampton Times!

Santa Specials commenced on the second weekend of December and were



Santa Special at Trescott Bridge
23 December 2011

Photo P Wagstaff

limited to weekends only up to Christmas. It was a struggle to get the rolling stock serviceable in time for use and it was an heroic effort by David Trant that came to the rescue each time. Because of its fire suppressant system, the 47 was only authorised to be used with a second man on the loco. Adam Cann was that man and his efforts on the train were commendable. Both he and

Dave Trant worked throughout Boxing Day to present a serviceable train for the Mince Pie Specials. Bernard Mills' photographs show how well the train looked – how the eye deceived.

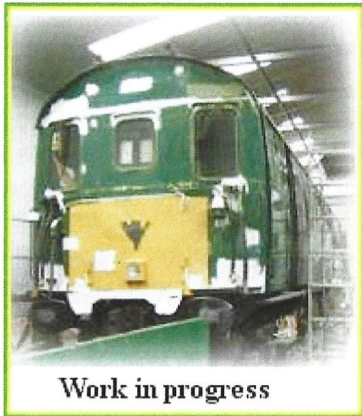
There is now the usual shut down period for maintenance until Easter looms over the horizon. Plans should now be formulated so that publicity leaflets can be drawn up and distributed in plenty of time!

Volunteer Report - Carriage & Wagons Group

Geoff Horner, Joint Volunteer Coordinator

I am writing this as understudy to Dave Clegg who as many will know is upholding the tradition of the C & W team by getting himself sent off to hospital and then to be confined to rest and recuperation at home for a while. We hope that he will take the opportunities offered by the festive season to take on board all the essential vitamins necessary to get him fighting fit and back with us early in the New Year – so from the whole 'Last of The Summer Wine' carriage & wagon 'team "best wishes and get well soon Dave"

The year started off with us preparing 'Thumper' for a much needed repaint after almost two years of running up and down to Sampford Courtenay and showing signs of it having made close acquaintance with the plant life on its way. On closer inspection it was decided that it needed rather more than a quick repaint and the decision was made to take the opportunity to make it a



'proper job' and fill in the worst of the dents prior to a thorough rub down to give a sound base for the painting. With the number of doors and relatively small windows along both sides of the two coaches painting 'Thumper' is always a slower job than other carriages that have larger windows and fewer doors. Starting on the roof we worked our way down and along both sides with the exception of the area round the motor compartment where various pieces of the engine were being removed. Apart from this area both coaches have received one top

coat. The motor compartment area will be tackled when the engine overhaul is complete (rumour has it that this will be in February) and then the second top coat will be applied to the whole 2-car unit. The interior needs very little work to freshen it up and if all goes to plan we have high hopes of seeing and hearing 'Thumper' back in action next season.

As well as 'Thumper' the first part of the year also saw us putting the finishing touches to the BR blue/grey driving trailer '61743' which was to be seen on all the trains throughout this year's season. Hopefully it can now be retired back into the shed in order that the last sections of lining out can be completed and the inevitable wear and tear of a season in constant use can be remedied ready for next year.



The main effort this year has however been in the refurbishment of the BR Mark2A 'FK' (1st class corridor compartment coach) which arrived from its previous home at Chinnor in the spring.



Once we had it in the shed the much closer inspection possible showed that it was going to need a considerable amount of tender loving care bestowed upon it. Whilst the compartment interiors had remained in very good condition the time it had spent out of use and in outside storage had allowed the effects of the inevitable leaks from the gutters and around the windows to take a hold particularly along the corridor where some of the interior panelling had rotted and a fine growth of grass taken root in one area.

However once the carpet in the corridor was lifted and the whole vehicle started to dry out we were able to form a much better idea of what could be repaired and what would have to be replaced. Externally apart from the inevitable and numerous areas of bodywork requiring patching and filling, years of water penetration had caused the metal framing of the doors to rust and swell beneath the fibreglass panelling resulting in all five doors becoming jammed and the drop windows seized. Getting the doors and windows back into working order took up much of our time through the summer months.

Internally the panelling over all ten compartment sliding doors had to be removed in order that their track could be cleaned and the rollers cleaned and adjusted. The doors are all now back in place although some remain stiff to operate and will need the rollers replacing as and when new ones have been

obtained. However now that the hard graft of preparation has been completed work has proceeded apace. The roof has been repainted and the exteriors have now had their four paint coats (primer, undercoat and two 'Southern Green' top coats) applied to both sides.



1st Top Coat

By the time you read this the yellow lining above the windows denoting 'first class' will have been applied and the emphasis of our work will now turn back to the decorating and cleaning of the interior.

There is no evidence that the workload for the C & W team will slacken off next year. There is the BUO/Lab 11 coach which will require a considerable amount of work particularly when the plans for the fitting out of the interior are finalised. The ex DMU centre coach has never received more than the cursory makeover undertaken in 2010 to get it service for the steam service that August and would benefit from a thorough refurbishment which, as it is a vacuum braked vehicle, would enable it to be paired in operation with the 1st Class FK. Up at Meldon the buffet car has now withstood three years Dartmoor weather and is due to have a freshen up in the spring of next year. As a change from carriages there is the recently arrived SR-type Goods Brake Van for which, when parts have been sourced, we shall be looking for someone with carpentry skills to restore this potentially useful addition to the fleet. So there are plenty of opportunities for anybody with a yearning to get

their hands dirty on a railway carriage to come along and join us either on our regular Thursdays or on our new venture of a Saturday team which we hope to get going soon on a regular basis. Either Dave Clegg (01626 867210 or clegg.lethbridge@tiscali.co.uk) or Geoff Horner(01363 82383 or g.horner936@btinternet.com) can give you all the relevant information so please don't be shy in getting in touch.

Finally to all those who have laboured as part of the C & W team this year many thanks for all your dedication and hard work and to you and all our DRSA friends our best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Catering

*By Mary Trant
Catering Manager*



Another season has drawn to a close. A very successful year for both Okehampton station and Meldon buffets. Many thanks to everybody who has helped including ticket people, duty managers, train crew who came to help clearing and wiping the tables at the most hectic times. Saturday mornings were a whirl of activity. Sandwich making, piling table nine high with cakes and scones etc by the station buffet staff ready to be transported to Meldon. Sunday lunches are still selling out. We are also getting large groups a cyclists coming in for tea and cake. Again, many thanks to all who have helped in the buffets.

On 26th November the 30th, 60th and 90th birthdays were celebrated on the train. A buffet was served on the train. They all had a very enjoyable night. This culminated in several enquiries for similar events. Thank you to all who volunteered that night.



34065 passing Okehampton Engine Shed Adam Cann Collection

I look forward to another successful year in 2012

Incidentally, I am always on the lookout for more volunteers to work both at the station and up at Meldon. Come and have a look around and have a chat..

Stations Maintenance Team Report – Winter 2011

The repaint of the GUV (General Utility Van) in Platform 1 is now virtually complete. It has the topcoat applied with a version of BR Coach Maroon obtained, with some difficulty, from a local supplier. Note for painters. Special maroons and reds are far more difficult (and frustrating) to obtain locally than green. The van still needs a few finishing touches. Numbers and lettering, for example, but these are categorised as a “nice to have” rather than “must have”. We have therefore moved on to other things.



We have been applying some paint to the Signal Box before the winter weather really sets in. The paintwork had deteriorated quite badly at the Meldon end. Paint had completely flaked off parts of the window frames.



Photo P.Shute

The Box has a number of painting “challenges” due to the inaccessibility of some areas. Those that are familiar with the structure will know it has large drops at the rear and on parts of the sides. We can only venture where it is safe to work and ladders cannot be used everywhere. Scaffolding and other forms of access equipment are very expensive

and not within available finance at the moment. We hope we have stabilised the situation for the time being. We also completed another painting task which has seen the refresh of the platform edge lining on all three platforms at Okehampton.

Vegetation clearance continues. This is a relentless process. We have cut back the vegetation on the track bed and edges adjacent to platform one and around one of the concrete buildings at the Meldon end of the station. Numerous weeds, bushes and trees love to grow in and around the railway track side including that good old “railway weed” - Buddleia. However the butterflies love it, so it must not be all bad.

We have also assisted the model railway department at Meldon with window boarding and other work in association with their buildings. Also, quite

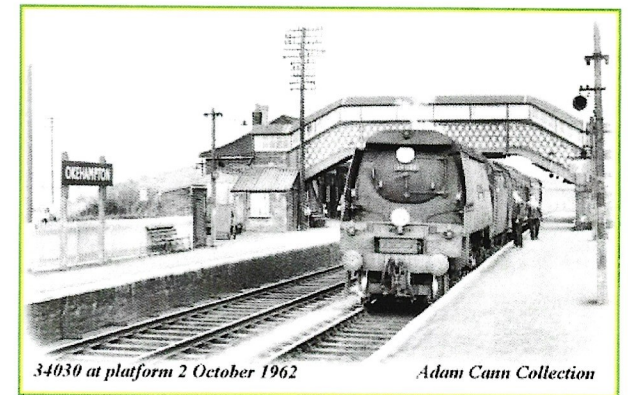
recently, the Santa Grotto builders. Other jobs have been Charter Train “watering” and a bit of impromptu carriage cleaning. Much easier to do at platform level as the water runs up your arms when you work from track level. One member of the team even went “Big Railway” and helped re-water the Class 150s during the period Okehampton station became a temporary First Great Western Stabling Point.

Toilets have been a bit of an issue this year, as they have seemed to break themselves with monotonous regularity. In fact we were starting to dread going anywhere near Meldon as our visits always seemed to coincide with a breakdown somewhere in the Toilet Block. Handles falling off, mechanisms becoming detached and urinals failing to flush, amongst other exciting incidents. Also a great flood in the Gents when the lid blew off a toilet cistern when a pipe detached. All accompanied by the Great British Public continuing to use the facilities oblivious and then, at times, failing to dispose of the resulting evidence. Not quite why we became railway volunteers, but we guess someone has to fix it.

Generally, we have managed to organise a working party every couple of weeks with individuals working in between these times. We extend a warm welcome to a new “regular”, John Caesar. Plenty of space for more on the team, if the events previously described have not put you off. We generally have a good time and the excellent fare from the Buffets makes it all the more worthwhile. John Coxon has had a “Heavy General Overhaul” but is now mended and we are pleased to see him back on the team. His plumbing skills have been sorely missed. Some of us have an uncanny knack of making leaks worse!

Again the usual request for tools and rags. If you are looking to dispose of any, please remember us.

As this is now the season to be jolly etc. , a Belated Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from the team to you all.



34030 at platform 2 October 1962

Adam Cann Collection

Personnel

John Wills has now retired from the Dartmoor Railway but we will be seeing him as a volunteer in future. Thanks John for all you have done for us in the past in your official capacity as a Duty Manager. Have a really good (second) retirement.

Unfortunately we have seen the passing of two stalwarts of Okehampton. Arthur Westlake was the subject of an article spread over editions 1 and 2 of the Dartmoor Pony which described his life as a railwayman in the Okehampton area. I'm sure we would all offer our sympathy to his family at this time. It is intended that the DRSA will be taking up Richard's offer of Arthur's Station Masters uniform to mount in our museum in due course.



The second passing is not of a railwayman but of a great supporter of the railway who was a frequent visitor to the station and buffet, Mick Bond. Those involved will remember Mick's 80th birthday when he was treated to a footplate pass on a Class 31 in

December 2010. Our sympathies go out to Margaret and family and it is super to see her taking up the trips to the buffet again. Margaret, you are



among friends. The photos here were all taken by Richard Proctor on the occasion of Mick's 80th birthday



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.

Yes, you're right, this article appeared in the last Pony. It is repeated again to remind you all of this super way of raising funds

Bernard's Corner
Photographs by B Mills



Bernard took a trip on a Mince Pie Special on 29th December

It's Not a Train Station

By Doug Rose

(www.dougrose.co.uk)

In a very short space of time, a new grammatical irritation has gripped radio, television and the press in general — 'train station'. Even the BBC has fallen for it.

A 'station' is a stopping point, a base or focal point, for people (members of staff and so on) or a centralized part of a particular infrastructure. Hence fireman and their equipment are based at a fire station. The fire does not congregate or meet there; a fire station is not somewhere one goes to get a fire.

Ambulance station, police station: they are for the ambulances and the ambulance staff, or for the police and their equipment. Bus station: where busman book on and off or a place to have as their base - they are 'stationed' there. In the army, one is 'stationed' at such-and-such barracks. It is the place of belonging for the staff and/or equipment associated with that place. At the Boat Race, Oxford may end up at the Surrey Station - it is place at which they find themselves. It is not a station for Surreys.

A railway station is a point on the railway where staff work - a congregating point for the operations of the railway, a place to which passengers (not 'customers') come to join or leave the infrastructure of the railway. In literal terms, a 'train station' would be the point (on a train) where staff and the like might be based.

The root of the word 'station' is almost certainly the same as that for 'status', meaning a fixed point of reference - something static, in time or location, hence: statue, status quo, statute, statement, stationary and so on.

'Train station' is illiterate in the form that has become common usage in recent years and does not convey the meaning that is implied by most perpetrators of the expression.

I am no grammarian nor etymologist, but this recent fad is ignorant - unintelligently used by uninformed commentators who think they are somehow 'correcting' an obvious error. After all, buses serve a bus station, so trains must serve a train station. Wrong.

Ed; Taken with permission from Doug's web site

Lab 11

By Peter Chapman

Photos supplied by the author

I would like to introduce you to Lab 11, the DRSA's first passenger rolling stock purchase and to explain some of the reasons that led us to purchase it.

The process started when your committee decided that to best support the railway and develop our heritage services, we would seek out suitable rolling stock that would be usable in the planned loco hauled air or vacuum braked rakes. In particular we identified the need for more vacuum braked vehicles that would be suitable for use with steam locomotives. There was also the need to find a substitute for the Courier coach which we believed could be removed from the railway, and is now in restricted use.



A Rolling Stock Sub-Committee was formed to investigate, inspect and report on suitable vehicles. It was also evident that the potential vehicle had to be in good condition especially below the solebar as we don't have heavy engineering

facilities, and also that any work that needed doing was within our volunteer skillset. We came to the conclusion that the most suitable vehicle would be a Mk1 Brake Coach, preferably dual or vacuum braked, although we did look at other options including another courier coach. The main disadvantage of the courier is lack of seating capacity so we felt a conventional Mk1 Brake would be better. We also considered early non air conditioned Mk2 vehicles, but bodywork corrosion is much harder to repair on these because they are of monocoque construction like a car, whereas the Mk1 construction of a heavy underframe and simple framed and panelled body is much easier to deal with.

We were able to view a Mk1 BSK at Toddington and felt that it was ideal for us. An offer was subsequently made on the coach but we were outbid by another railway. Alistair Gregory then put us in touch with the GCR (North) who had a coach that might fit our requirements. We went to Ruddington and inspected Lab 11 and then recommended purchase to the committee.

The Dartmoor Pony Winter 2011

Lab 11 started life in 1952 as a standard Mk1 Brake Second Kcorridor, built at Eastleigh and numbered S34249. It was part of sets 874 and 350, then loose until 1967 when it was transferred to the London Midland Region. It was highly likely that it traversed our line during this time, perhaps as part of the Atlantic Coast Express. In 1970 it was transferred to the Railway Technical Centre at Derby where we believe it was part of the Tribometer test train which tested the wheel/rail interface. During this period the passenger compartments were stripped out and a diesel generator fitted.

So why is Lab 11 suitable for us?

Firstly, the running gear is in very good condition. It rides on B4 bogies as used on the Mk2s which ride better and need much less maintenance. It is dual braked like the Courier so can be used in either rake.

Moving inside, we have a high capacity diesel generator in a soundproof compartment which will be capable of supplying the lighting and heating needs of the full rake. We have enough space for wheelchair passengers and bike storage, and a stripped out passenger section which is our "blank canvas". We are planning to fit 22 first class seats in an open saloon style here.

So whilst there is quite a lot of work to be done on the coach, it is well within the capabilities of our widely praised C&W group and when complete will be a unique vehicle that fulfils all our needs.

if you are interested in helping to restore Lab 11, please contact the Volunteer Coordinators, and if you have any questions regarding Lab 11 or any of the rolling stock then please contact the Rolling Stock Sub-Committee, members of which are:

Julian Pope
Tom Baxter
Peter Chapman



Waterloo to Okehampton – a Passenger’s Perspective of the UK Railtours Excursion to Okehampton

By Dan Smart

My friend Martin is getting married in February and decided we ought to have a stag do with a railway theme, which is what brought me and ten friends to the concourse at Waterloo on the morning of 29th October to admire the departure board showing "Okehampton". Graeme C had suggested we buy breakfast because there was still half an hour before departure, a sensible idea that somehow resulted in ten people heading left and me going right so I then spent the rest of the time on my own. A rumble and ying-ying of a diesel engine in the otherwise quiet train shed announced the arrival of the empty stock for the Okehampton train, so I made my way toward the noise with a huge paper cup of tea and, helpfully, all the tickets for the whole party. The UK Railtours chaps on the gate to Platform 19 thought I was their first ever tout with my wedge of tickets as I stood there waiting for the others to reappear. There wasn't any casual interest in extremely short-notice day trips to Devon before 0800 on an October Saturday so I gave up touting, found the others and walked down to coach H, one back from the front of the train, to get settled in our reserved seats in an early Mark 2 standard class coach. After a premature attempt to depart with the brakes on, the charter powered out of Waterloo in wintry sunshine.

We picked up John at Woking (he'd declined the Friday night out in London) and after a trip to the buffet car I lined up and drank a J2O for the vitamin C, a tea to wake me up and the first beer of the day at 0930. Charter trains make better use of the public address system than the endless instructions about not leaving my bags unattended that I'm used to with First Great Western, so we got commentary on places of interest and the history of the train as we sped toward Devon. There was a stop at Salisbury to stretch our legs and again at Yeovil Junction, all in the sunshine plus we spent a bit of time waiting to cross the regular service trains at the various loops on the single line. We were told, over the public address, by our guide that there are technically no available train paths beyond Salisbury so it had only been possible to run the charter train thanks to South West trains retiming some of their scheduled services. The restart up Honiton bank with nine coaches and a dead loco (equivalent to three more coaches I'd say) behind the engine was clearly not as fast as the usual class 159 DMU as we really felt the cant at the lower speed. Debate ensued inside coach H about what we should do on arrival at Okehampton because the train arrived at a time we thought would make for a

tight trip into town to get fed in a pub. Meanwhile the train took the branch token at Crediton (we were impressed by the station in LSWR colours).

As the train drew into the platform at the beautifully restored and surprisingly substantial station at Okehampton, eleven spied the barbecue set up under the generous platform roof and made up their minds. I



Photo D Smart

decided that the station buffet looked a better choice for a proper meal, ordered cod and chips from the menu and settled down with a copy of the Dartmoor Pony to wait for my food while the others examined the bookstall outside. It was only after a while that I noticed the sign behind the counter saying something like "we don't serve fast food here, just good food

made properly", so I bought another drink and read the Pony again. The others caught the shuttle to Meldon for a walk over the viaduct, a train I had a good view of as it departed while I was crossing the footbridge so I spent the time looking at the museum display on the Down side and the former signal box on the Up side. Alas, the signalbox is devoid of signalling equipment but it does make a rather smart office for somebody. I then enjoyed a leisurely ride to Meldon with half the coach to myself and arrived in time to see eleven cold and wet friends returning to the station with Steve explaining that Dartmoor weather is exactly why he doesn't leave the comforts of urban life. Martin nearly lost his hat to the wind on the viaduct.

Back at Okehampton, it was time for a scone and jam (no cream today for some reason) with a cup of tea and pick up some Thomas the Tank Engine

books from the model shop for my toddler son before the advertised 1650 to London Waterloo. As soon as we pulled out of Okehampton, I returned to the

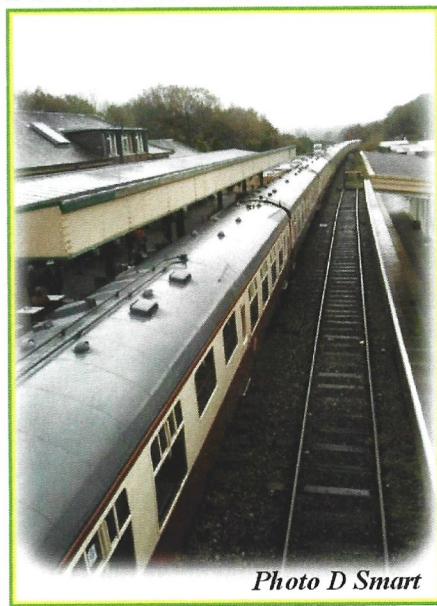


Photo D Smart

buffet car for some more beer and then settled down to watch the light fade as we trundled across north Devon. A nice touch was the gift of a replica meal sitting ticket for the Atlantic Coast Express and a few stories from a former BR ACE restaurant steward who was something of a star guest on today's train. The return journey was all going according to plan until we arrived at Exeter St Davids and spent a long time going nowhere before it was announced that one of the first class coaches had severe wheel flats and needed to be shunted out of the set. As instructed, we all got out onto the platform and discussed our options for onward travel after what we expected would be an hour's delay. For me, trying to do Exeter to Chippenham via London Waterloo on a delayed train over a single line that would be getting close to missing the last Down train off Paddington seemed a rather risky plan so I bought a single home via Bristol and stood watching the set thump its way to Riverside Yard. Spare a thought for the chef on the train who must have been well on with preparing the evening meal for several coaches of first class passengers at that point. Most of the others decided to press on as planned and reported a very spirited run home missing all booked stops between Honiton and Woking, with the train 90 late on leaving Exeter but only 60 late on arrival at Woking. When was the last time an express train ran non-stop through Salisbury?

Well, it has been fun recalling all that lot anyway!

By Ed: Dan Smart works for Network Rail at the GW Signalling Design Centre at Reading. Also see the letters page for emails from Dan

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

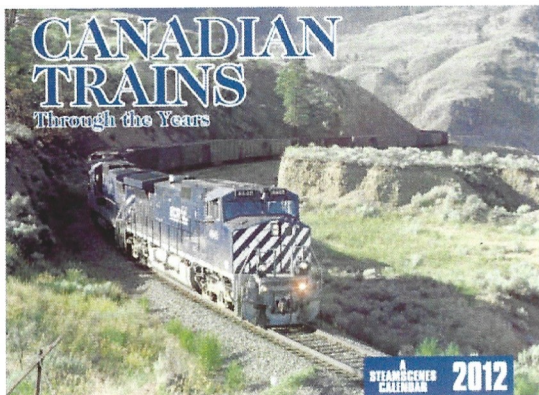
Mike on 07930-443771

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

COME AND JOIN US IN THE BULLEID BUFFET AT OKE

At the request of members the Buffet will be open to members only from 1500 on Thursday 8th March for a chance to have a cream tea and to meet other members of the DRSA and staff of the railway.

BOOK REVIEW



Canadian Trains through the years

Published by Steamscenes
U.K.
www.steamscenes-cadeco.co.uk

Not strictly a book but...this is one of a whole range of railway calendars by this publisher. The Canadian scenes depicted in these

whole-page photographs are of the highest quality and cover both the steam age and more modern traction from a wide variety of geographical locations. With a format giving space for notes for each day it is a very useful tool in keeping track of appointments at a glance. Other calendars include a number of North American railroads, British steam and world steam all in good quality materials

£6.25 per calendar plus £1.00 for postage – good value

Steamscenes also produce a range of high quality books of railway photographs. *Rocky Mountain Sunrise* was reviewed in the Autumn 2010 edition of the Pony

PGR



80041 on Okehampton shed

Adam Cann Collection

Rosie's Diary. Of Rabbits and Hoovering.

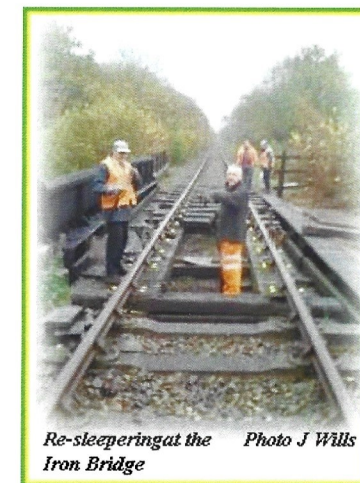
By Rosie

The two legs haven't taken me anywhere exciting recently, although Tom and I did say goodbye to Sue at Exeter St David's. We found her there again, 10 days later. She apparently came back on an ICE train from Cologne to Brussels, with a blue screen between her and the driver. She could see through it but going at a top speed of 320kmph would have been useless for spotting any rabbits. In any case I would prefer a WARM train.



Now Meldon Yard, that's the place for rabbits and I got my nose into everywhere when Tom wanted to look at all the big wheel things there. I used to be very nervous of going under anything, because I thought it might move. But Tom only takes me there when there when things are not rolling around. The pile of sleepers is really interesting but I can't squeeze in between them. On the other hand the rushes hold the scent well and I really got stuck into the chase there, until Tom scolded me for getting my Hi Vis dirty.

Then there are the tunnels, something could always be hiding from me in there. I have heard that the paw prints of a big cat were seen nearby, by Martin. Sometimes I chase cats but if it was like my friend Horace I would play with him, and nip his ears if he hung round my neck. Meanwhile Tom was getting very excited, dusting off bits of rusty metal, muttering names like Jacapacka, Zander, Dace and Dogfish. I pricked my ears up at the last one and checked the puddles. But why would a dog fish?



Re-sleeping at the Iron Bridge Photo J Wills

Finally off to visit my friends, the Model Men. I leant heavily on them and decorated them with my finest downy white hairs. We partook of biscuits and on this occasion I think Roger at Halwill Junction gave me the most. Now I am looking forward to my duties on the Christmas trains when I do an important biscuit hoovering job round all the little children.

Letters

Hello Peter,

When I saw you at the station, you were telling me that the winter copy of the 'Dartmoor Pony' had not been published and so I would like to offer this photo of an unusual visitor to Meldon Quarry platform by 142029 on 7th



142 at Meldon

Photo J Wills

October 2011 at 1345 hrs. Skid pan training by FGW had finished early on this, the last day of training and so a trip was authorised by the Duty Manager, from Okehampton to Meldon and return as a gauging exercise in preparation for a visit by the Class 142 Farewell Tour planned for Sunday 27th November 2011. There were no gauging issues and as we all know, the Dartmoor Railway played host to part of the Farewell Tour.

Photograph taken by the Duty Manager!

Best wishes,
John

By Email

And 2 Emails giving versions of the problems affecting the UK Railtours excursion to Oke

Email 1

Hi Peter,

The return trip was delayed by 94 minutes at St Davids due to severe wheel flats on Mk1 First Open 3059, but ran non-stop from Pinhoe to Woking in order to arrive at Waterloo only 55 late. Alas, I bailed out at Exeter to get home to Chippenham because it was touch and go to get the last Down from Paddington if I went home via Woking so I missed what must have been the first non-stop express through Salisbury for a long time! It didn't detract from the trip, which had all gone perfectly to plan until Exeter.

Flippantly, there's not much to say about the trip from the passenger's view: it was a train with seats and a bar! (I realised the same thing when I travelled

on the Orient Express from Venice, albeit an extremely nice train). I'll see if I can think of something worthwhile to write for you.

Regards,

Dan

Email 2

Dear Peter,

I'm not sure if you had heard but the trip went downhill after we left Oke yesterday.

The train developed a fault (brake problem on dining car) we all had to alight at Exeter St Davids, Some hour later, cold and tired, we were told that our tickets would be valid on SWT. We boarded the next train to Waterloo only to be told by SWT that they were not valid. After getting off and back on again. We eventually decided to stay on and pay as further delay could have resulted in us missing our connections to Kent.

The cost was £55.90 each, we hope to recover from UK Railtours and goodness knows what time they got back to Waterloo, but a good day was spoilt and we were glad to get home after 11pm having set off at 6.30am

I also have complained that we had no time at Oke although we were told we would have. By the time the coach got us back from Launceston (which was great by the way) we had to board as the train was about to leave.

Regards
Dana

Ed: Apologies Dana, I'm still trying to get your account of your travels in. One day I will manage it



Down train running into platform 2

Adam Cann Collection

Puzzle Corner

This photograph has been submitted by André Farmer. Can anyone guess its location?



Photo Andre Farmer

You will probably need a few clues:

1. The DR mug is a complete red herring
2. The equipment is sitting atop the motive power
3. The railway line snaking away in the background is narrow gauge
4. There are nautical connections?
5. It is in the West Country.



Dave Trant in his Natural Habitat

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