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SUPPORTERS'
DARTMOOR RAILWAY
ASSOCIATION

THE DARTMOOR PONY

The Magazine of the Dartmoor Railway
Supporters' Association

No.15

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Polar Express Takes Shape
PE Recruiting Under Way
High Hopes for 2013
DRSA Christmas Cards

The DARTMOOR PONY

Issue No. 15

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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

FRONT COVER: Bluebell Mel waits patiently to take over responsibility for the ex-Virgin coaches from Yeovil from D&CR 31 602. The 31 then took the remaining 4 coaches on to Taunton for onward transit to the Weardale Railway

Photo: D. Clegg

BACK COVER:

Top: Fatherford Viaduct in the days of steam

Bottom: 2 Bulleid Pacifics on Okehampton Shed

Both: Adam Cann Collection

CONTENTS

Editorial	Page 4
From the General Manager	Page 5
The Railway	Page 8
Carriage & Wagon	Page 11
Station Maintenance	Page 13
DR Modelling Scene	Page 17
Letters	Page 19
Sketches	Page 20
Dartmoor Railway People	Page 21
Great Britain V – Part II	Page 21
Learning to Drive Thumper	Page 25
Rosie's diary	Page 27

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

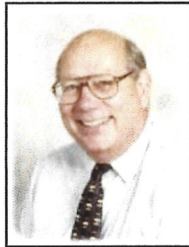
To volunteer on the Dartmoor Railway
please contact:-

Dave Clegg :- 01626 867210

Geoff Horner :- 01363 82383

Editorial:

By Peter Ritchie



This has been an eventful last month or so with seemingly intractable problems besetting Management and Volunteers. Most problems seemed to be due to the remoteness of our higher management located, as they are, in far away County Durham. As ever seems to be the case with the Dartmoor Railway, an amicable solution has been thrashed out to the satisfaction of all parties.

We came to the end of the 'summer' DR services with the last weekend of October. Good old Thumper, she did us proud as she has done for many a long year. We really missed her last year when she was in for maintenance. And has she earned her praise? We have just learnt that passenger receipts were up by 50% on 2011 – and virtually all without publicity. Publicity leaflets did arrive but, unfortunately, too late in the season for them to have any effect! Roger Webster, the General Manager, has already drafted out a skeleton timetable and hopes to have a complete leaflet and timetable ready for publication by, or just after, the New Year. Read on in Roger's informative piece about other planned, yes planned, activities. Optimism is in the air.

As some of you will have read in the press, Aggregate Industries have put the Dartmoor line up for sale and I'm sure BARS are in there and negotiating. If not, they ought to be! We await developments with considerable interest. One thing that we have to acknowledge at this juncture, the proposed Okehampton to Exeter daily service will not now go ahead until the Greater Western Franchise is let – and that, as a result of the incompetence of the DfT with the West Coast Franchise, is very much on hold as they sort themselves out. It is hoped that the seasonal Sunday service to Exeter will still go ahead

It has been good to see Steve Goodwin as the Polar Express Operations Manager with Alistair Gregory as his sidekick. They have both been working their socks off driving the Polar Express Project. Although a lot of work is being done by outside contractors, their enthusiasm has encouraged volunteers to help out with painting etc. If

you had seen the stock that arrived behind the D&CR class 31 you would have been very downhearted. The contrast now is remarkable. If we can keep the stock on completion of the Polar Express then we have to ensure that the PE is a success. Tiffany Arthurs, as the Events Co-ordinator, was sighted taking charge of the personnel recruited for the trains. Rest assured, the Drivers and Guards will be fully trained staff from DR and D&CR.

So, as I see it, the outlook for the Dartmoor Railway is currently on the up with planning now taking its rightful place in the great scheme of things! **Happy Christmas One and All**

From the General Manager

By Roger Webster



In the last issue, Graham Isom wrote thanking Dartmoor Railway members for the support and friendship you gave to him whilst he was in office and I would like to start this issue by thanking him for his kind words about the person who followed him into the 'hot seat' at the Dartmoor Railway!

As I write, we are just under two weeks away from the first operating day of the Polar Express on Sunday 18th November – this will be the dress rehearsal day followed by the start of passenger trains on Monday 19th; members of the press and media generally as well as the Mayors of Okehampton and West Devon Borough Council are being invited to experience the delights of the Polar Express. On the 19th. There are so many different aspects of this event to organise from obtaining suitable staff for all the different posts to ensuring there is enough hot chocolate (and cookies!) for the passengers as well as the building and decorating of an attractive North Pole site. Steve Goodwin has been appointed Operations Manager with Tiffany Arthurs as the Events Manager co-ordinating all the arrangements. Steve and Alistair have been working hard on 'getting the actual train together'. A few weeks ago, 3 of the coaches that had been standing at

Yeovil Junction for about 6 years arrived at Okehampton so you can imagine a LOT of work was required to bring these coaches up the high standard that will be expected from our passengers on the Polar Express. Considerable marketing and advertising is now 'kicking in' so I would imagine the numbers booked should increase dramatically in the next 3 to 4 weeks. I will no doubt be able to report in the next issue of 'The Dartmoor Pony' the level of success for this event. As you can imagine there has been a huge amount of support/finance thrown into the Polar Express.

Let's now move on to what is planned to happen on the Dartmoor Railway in 2013. A 'spin off' from the Polar Express is that we will have a number of coaches now to enable us to run trains – we have been promised that a Class 31 locomotive will be shedded here throughout 2013. In addition, an RSH 0-4-0 steam locomotive will be at the Railway for most of the summer. We have booked the GWR

(sorry Peter but you know it is a rather special Railway!!) Steam Railmotor for a visit to Okehampton in the Autumn. Thinking of steam trains we



The GWR Steam Railmotor on the B&WR Photo: A Turner

have at least one booking for a special off the main line on Saturday 16th March hauled (I am told) by a rather suitable locomotive for our location! Whilst the train is at the D.R., we will run a **Meldon Viaduct** (note the new name which I believe most of us think is better than Meldon Quarry) shuttle and Richard Proctor is hoping to run his ex London Transport No.336 motor bus down to the town and back. Thinking of Meldon, all the five station lights have now been repaired/re-connected.

The timetable is still to be worked on but will include some regular trips as far as Bow mainly with the Thumper. I am planning to run a number of day/evening specials including Dining Trains, Murder Mystery events and Steam, Beer and Jazz trains and possibly Driver Experience Days.

The Buffet has had a 'makeover' by the Baxters and their team whilst Mary has been on a very well deserved holiday. At long last, we now have a credit card machine in the Booking Office as well as in the Buffet.

In order to run a more regular train service along with the special event trains, we do urgently need more volunteers including guards, diesel drivers and steam crews. Please don't hesitate to drop into the signal box to see either me or one of the duty managers to offer your services; we weren't able to run trains this year on Tuesdays and Wednesdays because we just didn't have enough staff. I realise we are all busy but it will be great if we can manage to get even a small number of new volunteers regularly available on, say, 2/3 days a month each.

I wish everyone the Joys and Blessings of the Christmas Season and convey my grateful thanks to all the volunteers and staff who work so hard to keep the Dartmoor Railway steaming into the future.

By Ed: Where did you get that dreadful GWR hat Roger? The photo will be changed in the next edition of the Pony!!

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:

Despite the total lack of publicity earlier in the year, the Dartmoor Railway continued to draw visitors from far and wide. It's always a delight to see old friends on their annual visit and to find those who 'used to use Okehampton regularly in BR days' reminiscing about the old days. One general remark often heard is the comment about how friendly people are here. Through the operating season we often have visitors from around the globe. We will soon be needing expert linguists to assist in hosting the wide variety of customer we get.

The last Sunday of the Exeter service was 23rd September and the trains were well loaded to the last. Thumper spread her wings thereafter and included Sampford Courtenay again in her timetable. There have been a few passengers who catch the train from there. It is almost inevitable that, if the first train to Sampford is cancelled for

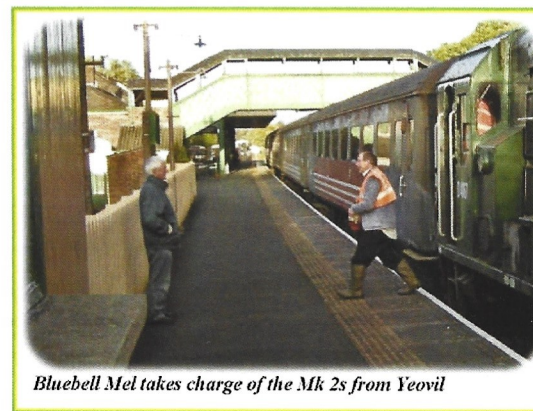


The train from Yeovil arrives

operational reasons, there will be somebody there waiting. Thumper continued the service until completion of the last day of this year's normal service, 28th November

The day following the last Exeter service saw Devon & Cornwall Railway's 31 612 arrive with seven Mk 2

coaches from Yeovil Junction. Three were for the Dartmoor Railway and four were for onward transit to the Weardale Railway. Since the engine and four coaches for 'up north' were required to continue on their journey fairly rapidly, a complex manoeuvre to shunt the three for the DR was successfully carried out. Keith Netherton in 08 Bluebell Mel came up to drive! The coaches were, not surprisingly, in a bit of a sorry state after many years out of use.



Bluebell Mel takes charge of the Mk 2s from Yeovil

viewing the line with an idea of buying it from AI? As ever, of course, the residual slippery mix applied to the rails made poor old Thumper suffer from a touch of wheel spin on occasion.

The final consist of the Polar Express sees ten coaches in operation which includes the 'Rocket', a generator coach to provide on-board power. Heavy duty cabling has been run the entire length of the train to distribute the power. An audio system is being installed, the coaches are being deep-cleaned and repairs carried out to ensure all defects are ironed out. Alistair Gregory has been sending regular reports to Weardale and (hopefully he won't mind) the following is one such:-



FGW 150 on skidpan training duties at Meldon?

We have managed fantastic progress since the last update, with the coaches out of storage that arrived at Dartmoor two weeks ago now steam cleaned outside, repainted, cleaned inside and work arising identified. In the next few weeks they will all go through a programme of wiring modifications to allow them to be supplied off the generator car rather than the unreliable Motor Alternator arrangement, always considered the weak link in Mark 2 air conditioned stock. They will

Skid-pan training has become a regular feature of the year for First Great Western at Okehampton in October. On the last day the train was given permission to pass the stop board and proceed to Meldon. It had Network Rail officials on board and one wonders if they were

also have their interiors deep cleaned by a specialist cleaning contractor and damaged windows and defective doors continue to be tackled admirably by Rampart Ltd. The generator car, known as



Combined efforts

Photo: A Gregory

'Rocket' because of the large on board power generating capability, has been checked over by local engineer and DRSA supporter David Trant and after a few tweaks to the fuel pump and voltage regulator it is once again running clean and quiet and exporting power.

Stephen Goodwin has moved in to the Okehampton office as the Polar Express Operations Manager, and is spearheading the work on the ground to make sure that the carriages and all of the other construction and specialist tasks stay on schedule. We are also excited to welcome on board Tiffany Arthurs, our new Event Coordinator for Dartmoor. She has hit the ground running and already made a significant impact on the project.



Night train at Platform 2

Photo: D Clegg

Once again both Steve and I are extremely grateful for the fantastic work of the Dartmoor Railway Supporters

Association Carriage and Wagon Team, and especially Dave Clegg and John Coxon for their coordination of volunteers, guidance and support. Not only have we had some great turnouts of volunteers who are great painters and hard workers, but they are also becoming closet experts in Mark 2 carriage restoration – a skill invaluable to us.

Meanwhile at the Rampart Ltd main works at Barrow Hill, carriages for the Weardale Polar Express continue to be repaired, restored and repainted.

(Monday 22/10/12).

On the social aspects of the DR, we have now successfully had two evenings of entertainment at the station, a 'Fish & Chips' evening and an evening of 'Fings Ain't What They Used To Be'. Both were rated a great success although lessons were learnt from both. Visitors on the Fish & Chips evening were treated to a trip down to Bow and up to Meldon in Thumper. The limited resources of the small deep fat fryer at Okehampton slowed the production line down, nonetheless producing excellent food. All was accompanied by a dance band (trio) who played after the style of the Dutch Swing College Band. The second evening's entertainment, a week after the first was let down a bit by the weather which decided to turn cold. After a first half of the evening on the platform it was thought better for our customers to continue the show in the buffet. For all that, it was an excellent and enjoyable show and indicates what can be done to raise the railway's profile locally.

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.

Carriage & Wagon Group News

Geoff Horner, Joint Volunteer Co-ordinator

The main focus of the groups activities is now concentrated on the refurbishment of the 'Laboratory II' carriage. Formerly a BR Mk1 BSK number 34249, the vehicle was withdrawn from passenger carrying duties by BR and converted to become 'Laboratory II' which formed part of the Tribometer Test Train that ran throughout the 1970's and 1980's. After its main line services ended the carriage ended up on the Great Central Railway from whom it was purchased

by the DRSA early last year. The carriage offers many operating possibilities to the railway being dual braked and therefore able to run with diesel or steam locomotives, having its own on board generator which (once the diesel engine has been returned to working order) will



Workshop Scene 1

Photo: P Wagstaff

able to provide electric light and heating to several carriages, a kitchen and an open saloon passenger area. However much work will be required before the vehicle will be able to realise its full potential.

The first stage of the refurbishment is to restore the exterior of the

carriage to a condition suitable for public service. Work so far has seen the peeling roof coating scraped back to a sound base and any bare areas of metal given a coat of red oxide as a protection against future rust. The gutters have been cleaned out and once they have been sealed to prevent water

penetration into the body shell the roof will be ready to receive its weatherproof coating. A start has been made on the body sides and some areas have already been sanded down and dents and small holes filled. A consequence of the vehicles previous use as a laboratory coach is the



Meldon Workshop

Thumper and Flying Falcon

Photo: P Wagstaff

number of holes cut through the end panels to allow the various pipes and cables to pass through to the other vehicles of the test train and these will require a greater amount of plating over than has been the case on previous refurbishments.

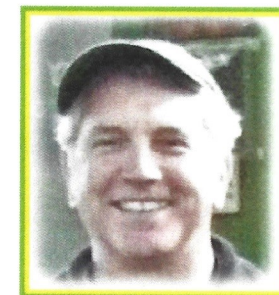
Mention has been made of the diesel engine which powers the generator. Unfortunately this had siezed whilst the vehicle languished out of use and will require a considerable amount of work to restore it to working order. However after much hard work and a lot of pushing and shoving the engine has now been moved out of its encasing compartment enabling all round access to the head, cylinders and crankshaft. A thorough examination has shown that returning the engine to working order is quite feasible and a start on this will be made soon.

Reports on progress will be included in future editions of the 'Pony' meanwhile if anybody out there has the time and skills to offer and would like to join the C & W group please do get in touch with either of the joint volunteer coordinators (Dave Clegg can be reached on 01626 867210 and Geoff Horner on 01363 82383).or via the DRSA website or any committee member..

We look forward to hearing from you!

DRSA – Stations Maintenance Team Report – Autumn 2012

By Tom Baxter, SMT Co-ordinator, October 2012



The main job recently has been the repaint of the Ferry Van in Platform 1 at Okehampton. It has been repainted in early BR Bauxite livery as applied to fitted freight vehicles in the 1950s/early 1960s era. Although it is not now in original condition, having been converted to a Tool Van, we felt this livery was the most appropriate. It is the livery it would have carried when first built.

Further details of the vehicle can be found on the DSRA website in the Stations Group section or by reading the description now posted in one of its side windows. The website also has a series of photos covering the repaint and various other jobs recently done by the Team. Our thanks to Jon Kelsey who has now taken charge of this section of the

website and is keeping it updated with SMT's work programme and other information prepared by members of the team. This section has a growing list of information leaflets to download covering DR rolling stock and other items of interest to visitors. It is worth looking at just to enjoy the slightly tongue in cheek captions and irreverent comments about certain members of the team. Jon has also produced a most informative leaflet covering the industrial archaeology at Meldon.

Other painting tasks undertaken have been the platform 2 entrance gate and ramp access. This is an ongoing job with some woodwork requiring replacement due to extensive rot. Unfortunately the damp Okehampton climate is neither kind to woodwork nor paintwork. I probably don't need to remind readers of the weather this year which has severely challenged anyone who needed to paint outdoors and there have been many weather related changes of plan. Also we recently painted the gradient sign by the bridge at the Meldon end of the station.

The weather also resulted in a faster than usual expected growth of vegetation. The



Fish & Chips, Jazz, and a railway - sublime Photo: D Clegg

platforms have sprouted weeds, the buddleia have had a most wonderful season and the car parks and line sides have produced abundant growth in all directions. SMT have done their best to control things in their area but at times it has seemed an almost hopeless task. Special thanks must go to Dave Matthews who has almost single handedly taken control of vegetation in the visitor area at Meldon. Visitors up there will have noticed the difference around the Sleeping Car and Buffet which now have a most well manicured appearance.

The Station Museum continues to develop under the supervision of John Caesar. It has been a work in progress as the museum has needed

to be open whenever the railway has been operating. We are hoping to proceed and improve it further during the "closed season" and I know John has a number of ideas he wishes to develop. Space is currently a severe limitation and we are hoping other places will become available which would be suitable for exhibits. A number of items of interest continue to be donated and we are pleased to accept any with an Okehampton or more general Dartmoor Railway connection. It is not possible to exhibit all we have at the moment but we are reluctant to turn anything down in case the opportunity to acquire them does not arise again.

Other less exciting but vital jobs undertaken have included clearing the valley gutters on the platform canopy over platform 3 and a clean and repair of the ceiling in the Kitchen. The gutters were severely choked having not received any attention for several years. We removed many buckets of silt which are now in the compost bins behind the Fish Van. In due course the resulting compost will be used by the Flower Fairies to fill flower tubs and hanging baskets. The Kitchen ceiling is rather high so required the use of the DRSA scaffold tower to gain access and its use by operatives lacking a vertigo qualification. Mary was, quite sensibly, absent during this process on the pretext of her daughter's wedding or some such excuse. So one of us missed their customary bacon and sausage bap that Saturday!

Mention of the Flower Fairies brings us to one of the great "breakdown challenges" of this year – the station water timer. Last year it was toilet cisterns, this year the prize must go to the water timer. The hanging baskets, flower tubs etc. on platform 3 are on an, allegedly, automatic watering system. It is supposed to water twice a day, at a set time, for a set period – but it doesn't always. It wins the prize for the crankiest electronic item ever devised. Despite many time resets and batteries it has watered visitors trying to enjoy their cream teas, Paul and his sales stand, Andrew and his barbecue and passengers for the Sunday Rover awaiting their train back to Exeter. Recently it packed up for several days when Sue and I were on holiday and now the hanging baskets at the end of the season look rather more tired than they should. It then had yet another set of batteries fitted and now works perfectly again – but for how long this time? Some might think

we should just get a replacement but it is not that simple. This is the third timer in about the same number of years and each has been a different make and just as cranky in its behaviour. Okehampton station seems to have some sort of jinx for them.

The Stations Team continues to expand, albeit quite slowly. Our most recent recruit is Mark Williams and we welcome him into the team and delights of working on DR. Again, as always, more new faces would be most welcome.

DRSA Christmas Cards



There are two designs, both of Class 31's in the snow at Okehampton and both have the option inside of either 'Seasons Greetings' or left blank. The backs of all cards carry the DRSA logo.

The cards are on sale in the Bulleid Buffet on Okehampton station or by telephone order from Christine Horner tel: 01363 82383

Prices from the station;	£1.50 per card
	£ 5.00 per 4 cards
Telephone/Mail Order.....	£2.20 per card*
	£6.00 per 4 cards*

*post & packing included

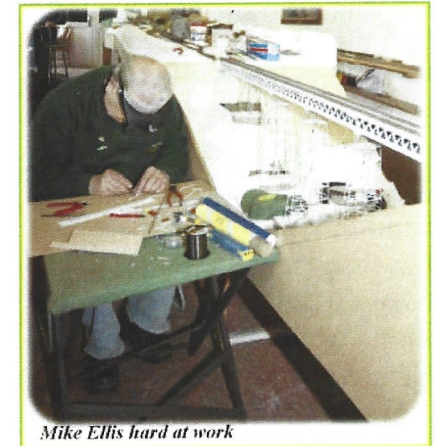
The Dartmoor Railway Modelling Scene

or, the Mad Meldon Muddlers Model on!

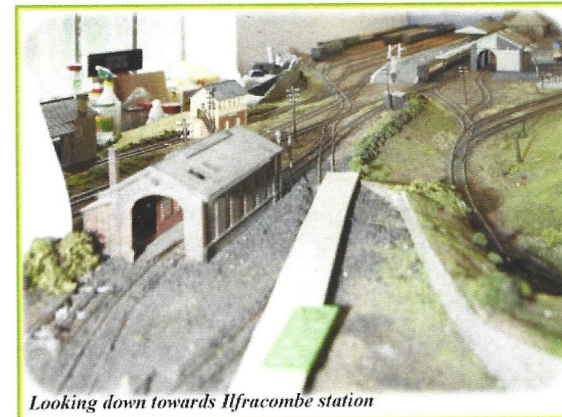
Article and photographs by Roger Filer-Cooper

At least two years ago Mike Ellis was asked to resuscitate the remains of the model of Okehampton Station and turn it back into a worthwhile visitor attraction. The project turned into a marathon task to start with.

The Old Compressor House at Meldon was the proposed destination for the lay-out but was stacked solid with forty years junk and detritus which Mike and his team eventually re-housed or quietly hid in more appropriate places! The model of Okehampton had to be bodily dragged one hundred yards to its new home - the Old Compressor House. When it had been tidied, the building needed electric power and light; all this Mike arranged. He then started work to rebuild and to extend, our first lay-out to include a representation of Meldon Quarry in the 1960's. Mike then had a bit of a brainstorm and set himself the task of modelling Meldon Viaduct as an extension - he is still working on it and may well still be doing so six month's time.



Mike Ellis hard at work



Looking down towards Ilfracombe station

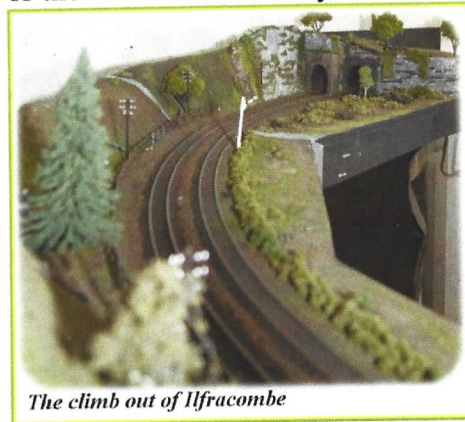
Halwill Junction which had languished in my office at home and was only half the size of its present incarnation. (I just remember the

Junction itself in its working state although very run down) I believe that we all owe a great vote of thanks to Mike for his dedication and sterling work in holding together the team who have achieved what I am sure will enhance the attraction of the Dartmoor Railway. I will find it a challenge to follow in such footsteps.

Both the Okehampton and Halwill models are far from complete and only in the early stages of running trains. The development work is, almost by definition, slow and intricate thus the modellers do not expect to have a good working exhibit for many months, if not years.

We none-the-less are delighted to welcome any members who visit us and to demonstrate the potential of our lay-outs

Lastly, WE NEED MORE VOLUNTEER MODELLERS!! If you have experience or even just an interest in trains and modelling, don't be bashful. Come to the Old Compressor House any weekend; we are



The climb out of Ilfracombe



The magnificent Meldon Viaduct

Alternatively please feel free to contact me on 01409 231244 preferably in the evening.

More model news in the next Dartmoor Pony.

Letters:

From Jed Falby.

Dear Peter,

I guess summer is really over when the Dartmoor Pony does its final run of the year. Sadly the rail connection from Exeter finished even earlier so our early-morning group had to drive to Okehampton.

After a great breakfast in the Buffet we joined the 10:00 train to Meldon. With scattered sunshine it looked a good day for Dartmoor.

It was only when we were at the exposed summit of Sourton Tors that the weather did a Dartmoor on us and it poured all the way back to the dry, warm comfort of the Buffet Coach at Meldon Quarry

In that warm, dry, comfort we found the Meldon Modellers (and Rosie the dog). The wetter it is outside, the warmer the welcome inside.

So sadly we left them for the train back to base – but I bet all those old boys (dog and youngsters) are still there! Cheers!

Jed

By Ed: Jed has sent a couple of the sketches he drew on board the Meldon Buffet Coach (See the following page)

MONTHLY GATHERING

Staff, Volunteers and Association Members gather on the evening of the third

Thursday of each month
at the

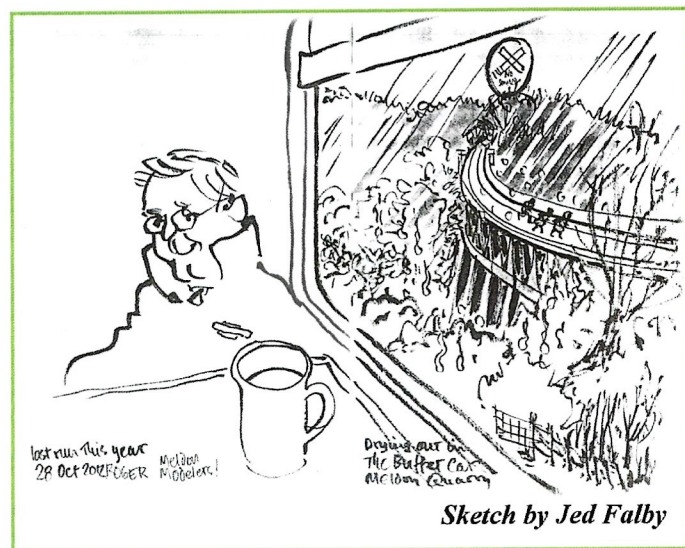
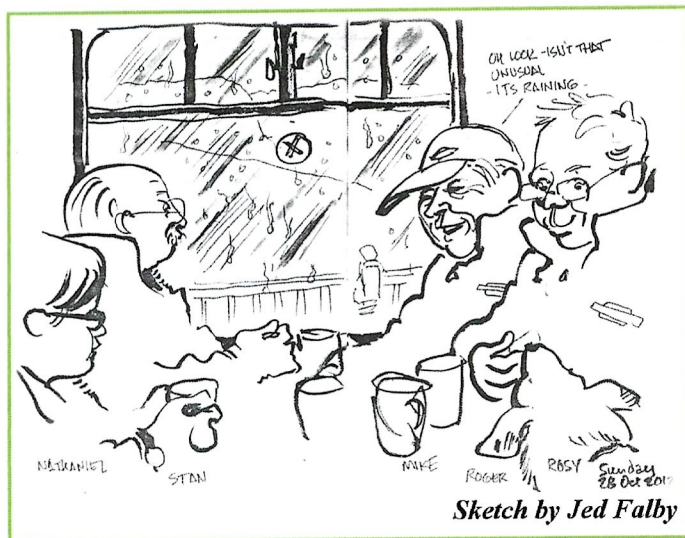
FOX AND HOUNDS

On the A386 Okehampton to Tavistock Road.

If you can make it you will be more than welcome to come and chat.

Meldon Buffet Sketches!

By Jed Falby



WANTED People with modelling skills or just with interest in modelling and who would like to join us at Meldon; please contact Roger on 01409 231244

Dartmoor Railway People

By Dick Henrywood

It is easy to get so involved with the railway and its stock and equipment that the human side gets forgotten. In hunting for information about Bow (which would always be gratefully received), I sometimes come across other snippets which might be of interest to others, so here are a few of the names I have unearthed:

John BANKS, Railway clerk, Sampford Courtenay (1871)

Samuel GRIBBLE, Station Master, North Tawton (1878)

George HILLARD, Station Master, Bow (1871)

William H. ODAM, Station Master, North Tawton (1919)

George RISBRIDGER, Station Master, North Tawton (1889 and 1902)

Richard John RISDON, Station Master, Sampford Courtenay (1902)

Frank RUSSELL, Station Master, Okehampton (1902)

William WHEELER, Boy porter, Sampford Courtenay (1892)

Can anyone else contribute similar names?

Great Britain V – April 2012 – Part II

By Peter Ritchie

The following morning the weather was foul and we had an early start. Our engine for the run down to Kyle of Lochalsh was 45305, one of Sir William Stanier's 4-6-0 "Black Fives" formerly of the LMS. The photo of her at Inverness station has many blurred white spots on it – this was due to the reflection of the camera's flash on the raindrops. If you have been on this piece of railway before then you



will know what I mean when I say that it is one of the most beautiful scenic routes in the British Isles.



Black 5 45305 awaits the 'off' in the rain at Inverness at 06:23

Just outside Inverness we crossed the Clachnaharry Swing Bridge over the northern end of the Caledonian Canal. For those of you unfamiliar with this subject, the Caledonian Canal follows the Great Glen Fault line from Corpach in the west near Fort William to just by Inverness and links the

Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea.

At Dingwall Junction we left the North of Scotland line and headed west. Once we got clear of the rain the rest of the day was very pleasant. We stopped for water and to cross a service train at Achnasheen. This station was roughly at the mid point of the line and trains would inevitably take on water here in the days of steam.

Past lochs and glens climbing hard at times and at others rattling downhill at a fair old lick. It was a delightful journey. All too soon we were at Kyle of Lochalsh where the ferry used to run to the Isle of Skye. Skye is no longer an island as it is now linked to the mainland by a bridge. We decanted from the train and made our way to motor buses waiting, ready to take us on the



Water stop at Achnasheen

next part of our trip.

We were driven over the Skye bridge and down the island to Armadale

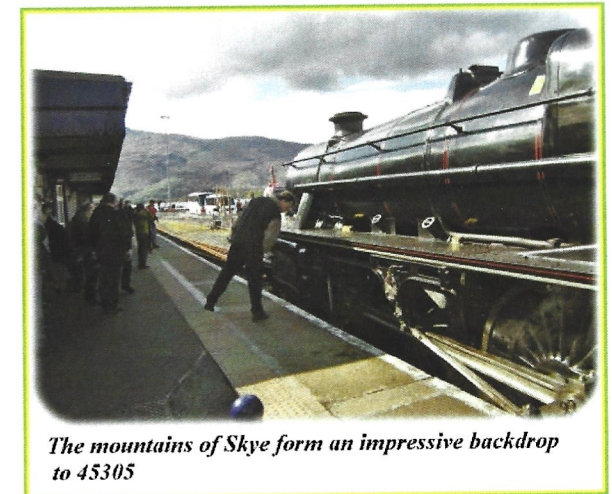


45305 arrives at Kyle of Lochalsh

where we awaited the arrival of the Caledonian-Macbrayne ferry to Mallaig. It was bright sunshine by this time and we sat outside eating ice creams! If you recall, in Part 1 I mentioned that the original train had been split in two at Thornton Junction after which we

headed for Inverness in our portion. We now crossed with those passengers who had been in the other portion of the train who would be bussed up to Kyle of Lochalsh to take over our coaches. We replaced them on the ferry and took over their coaches once we reached Mallaig. It was really quite a feat of logistical organisation I suspect!

So, we did our bit of seatime and found our train waiting for us in Mallaig station. We now found ourselves with the second catering crew but we needn't have worried, they were every bit as good as the other team. Waiting to haul us on to Fort William was "The Great Marquess" No 61994 the last survivor of Sir Nigel Gresley's 2-6-0 K4 Class which were built for operation on this line.



The mountains of Skye form an impressive backdrop to 45305

Now this stretch of railway is really the tops for highland scenery and this and the portion of the West Highland line heading south from Fort William are on a par with the Kyle line for the dramatic backdrop of mountains and lochs. En route to Fort William, we pass across Glenfinnan viaduct built by 'Concrete Bob' Sir Robert McAlpine who

built the bridge in concrete – the first major structure so built in the United Kingdom. This was where some of the Harry Potter film sequences were staged. On another historical point, it was here that



61994 'The Great Marquess' awaits the 'off' from Mallaig

we could see the Glenfinnan Monument, erected to commemorate the raising of the standard by Bonnie Prince Charlie of the Jacobite Rebellion on 19th August 1745 which ended with defeat at Culloden.

The train then headed on down towards Fort William passing through Lochelaside and Corpach before crossing over the southern end of the Caledonian Canal on the swing bridge at Banavie. Just by the swing bridge on the canal is a flight of eight locks known as 'Neptunes's Staircase'.

Then it was on into Fort William where transport awaited us to take us to overnight accommodation. From an early start we had an early arrival in Fort William so we had time to look around the area.

Part III takes us on to Glasgow!

Learning to Drive Thumper – 205-032

By Graham Kelly

It must have been one Christmas evening at the "Fox and Hounds" in 2008 that a suggestion was made about the possibility of training new drivers for the Thumper. The Dartmoor Railway was short of drivers and train services were becoming increasingly difficult to maintain because of this problem.

Our General Manager at the time, Graham Isom, was keen to address this issue and gave me and two other volunteers the opportunity to take up this "once in a lifetime" offer. All three of us were guards on the railway and had been active in this role for a number of years but I am sure that we had never even thought that an opportunity like this would come about so it didn't take us long to reach the conclusion that we would accept it.

The proposal was great, but who was going to train us and how long would it take to complete the course? We quickly understood from Graham that he was the person who would be assessing us when the time came for us to be tested on our driving capabilities, but there needed to be somebody else who would undertake the training and we were fortunate in having a driver, Peter Chapman, who was willing to take us on. From conversations with Peter I understood that he had completed his early railway driver's training "on the Southern" and so he was well versed in driving the Class 205s.

When I think about it now we must have spent hours and hours in those driving cabs while we gradually assimilated the practical aspects of driving. Peter also spent all of this time with us and patiently taught us about the Class 205s. His training was thoughtful and thorough (and disciplined!). He gave us an understanding of the mechanics of the Thumper ...and even set homework for us to do! The homework, by the way, was an important part of the training because it made us read our manuals which were specific to the Class 205s. We used these books time and time again until the information contained within them was indelibly marked on our brains. Peter would then test us on what he thought we should know and was capable of throwing the odd

question or two, or three, at us to see what we had retained! It was good training and we were fortunate to receive it.

I suppose that one of the drawbacks of the training schedule was that, at times, it would become "loosened" and its natural progression would falter due to pressures such as work and home life. We were all volunteers and Peter, in particular, was subject to shift patterns with his work on the mainline. Nevertheless, I managed to complete everything and so the day finally arrived when I had to show Graham that I could drive the Thumper. Graham met me at Meldon, which

until recently, was the "depot" where we stabled 205032. He observed me as I prepared the Thumper for service, eg examined the DEMU externally, put in the battery switches, and checked the engine oil and water levels. I went through all the personal checks that one has to do in both driving cabs, and then to cut a long story short, I started to move The Thumper out of the yard (with Graham in it, of course!).

Now, to go into service, permission has to be sought from the Duty Manager, and so I had to get this consent before I could go into One Train Working. Permission was granted and off we went to Okehampton and into service with our train for the day. Well, Graham stayed with me all of the time, asking me questions and observing what I was doing; he was filling in the necessary paperwork. The driving seemed to go well without any hitches, thankfully....except for an unexpected emergency stop which



*This is the key to the problem.....
Or: Graham, this is Graham, over....*

took place as we were setting off from Platform 3 at Okehampton....the guard had given one bell to stop the train, and so that is what I did...promptly! The day's service eventually drew to a close with our last run back to Meldon and into the yard. I berthed the Thumper for the night, locked the doors and awaited the results of my day's efforts. Two other volunteers, Julian and Martin, were nearby and asked me if I had passed my test but I really didn't have any idea as to whether I had or not. They then asked Graham how I had done but he remained tight-lipped! I began to suspect that it may not have gone as well as I had thought it had, but all was shortly revealed.... I had passed!

I note, from a diary of mine, that I took the driving test on 18 July 2010 and my first solo run was a fortnight later, on the 31 July. It had taken me from April 2009 to complete the course, with many interruptions in between, but it had been done! My thanks, of course, must go to Peter and Graham for their patience and support. I hope that they thought it was worth it!

Rosie's Diary. Patchy Quadruped

By Rosie

Did you all get out and about with Rover this summer? Well I did. We had a good trip one Sunday. The train was well filled but fortunately not standing room only (as I heard it almost has been), so as usual I stretched out full length in the gangway. Then just as normal, my doze was disturbed by the guard, who is always too small. Larger guards are needed who have long legs to step over me.



Anyway I was enjoying the day until I met THE MONSTER, at Exeter St David's. He seemed to have no control over his safety valve. It went off without any warning, so how safe is that? The sound ricocheted under the canopy. I shot away, tangling up my 2 legs Sue so that she ended up with a gentle bump on the platform, as I headed for the safe haven of a quiet X-Country train. I was not allowed to board but my 2 legs really had to put down anchors into the platform to hold me.

My shoulder muscles have been developing since I have been harnessed to pull the Meldon Buffet trolley.

You know I like most steam engines – do you remember the King



Now this is what I call an engine Photo: T Baxter

whistled to me at Dawlish last year? Out in the open where one could appreciate the tone. That was exciting. However, THE MONSTER, is a republican – Oliver Cromwell- no refinement – need I say anymore?

Mind you, that was not the only engine to give me trouble recently. One nearly turned me into Sooty! 2 legs Tom was to blame – wanting a ride in an open carriage behind Beyer Garratt 87 working hard on the climb to Rhyd Ddu on the Welsh Highland Railway below Snowdon. I wondered if anyone was going to notice my plight. 2 legs Sue couldn't because she already had grit in her eyes

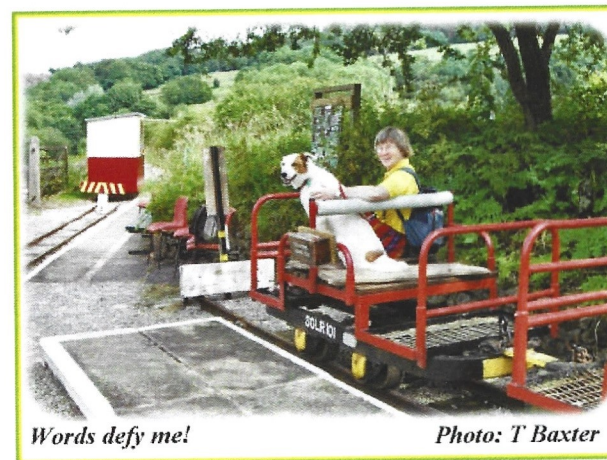
Fortunately the coke was completely blown away next day on a saunter up from the new station at Tryfan Junction along the recently opened footpath up the old line and incline to the slate quarries at Tryfan. In the pouring rain that day I was looking particularly slim and appealing. That was useful as it encouraged everyone



Blimey, a Ticket Office! Photo: T Baxter

to donate to me an amplitude of pasty, sandwich and even other 4 legs' biscuits!

It has not all been a picnic however. You can see I had to tell them “how Peter Ritchie does it” when I encountered the staff at the Ecclesbourne (former territory of new volunteer Phil Tarry) Railway ticket office at Duffield. To get more canine custom they need to offer munchies. Actually Peter would hardly have fitted in their office. Do you notice the striking resemblance of the cabin to our very own new station store? Did they have as many screws left over as we did? (I sniffed around but couldn't find any.)



Words defy me! Photo: T Baxter

You can see that I had to keep my wits about me on the Steeple Grange Light Railway near Wirksworth. It was an open carriage without a roof or any sides! Much easier to spot the rabbits and mice from it. I was puzzled when we were told we had

gone to the bottom of the sea and were shown the skeletons of tasty looking sea creatures, only to find that they had no scent and were hard as rocks.

At home on our railway one of my most pleasant tasks is to proffer a paw to some of our more far flung supporters. So it was that I met siblings Angela and Chris Brown from Nottingham on one of their regular Devon holidays. They joined in 1997, before I was born! (May 2007 if anyone wants to send me a birthday present). It was good to hear them enjoying a bite in the Meldon Buffet, (and benefitting from the 10% off for members).

Did you know that rabbits have already settled under the “new” Polar Express coaches? I put one up, but 2 legs Tom was a spoil sport and

kept me on my lead. Rabbits are welcome in my territory, they are such fun. But cats? - quite a different matter and sometimes very difficult.



Home James..... and don't spare the horses Photo: S Baxter

One Saturday, taking a break from railway duties, I was at home with Mum Kathryn, in the refined feline company of Henrietta and Horace, when I heard that there was an imposter on my station. None other than a ginger tabby, of unknown name, pedigree or provenance. After

parading on my platform all day AND posing for photographs!!!! the IMPOSTER actually boarded the train! Fortunately the intruder was spotted and escorted off my train and I trust told exactly who is in charge here.....the *PATCHY QUADRUPED*. (I am not offended now that I have had my new name translated!).

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MK 3 SLEEPING CAR AND CCT

This privately owned stock, situated next to the Meldon buffet coach is for the use of volunteers working on the Dartmoor Railway. Occupancy is on trust and it is essential that users are prepared to properly respect the facilities. Whilst there will be no formal charge for use, a donation towards the upkeep of the vehicles would be much appreciated.

Further information can be obtained from:
Dave Matthews on 01579 362343 (mob: 07926 381803) or
David Clegg on 01626 867210

