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3, Station Road,  
Okehampton  
Tel: 01837 52937

SUPPORTERS'  
**DARTMOOR RAILWAY**  
ASSOCIATION

## THE DARTMOOR PONY

The Magazine of the Dartmoor Railway  
Supporters' Association

No.16

Winter 2012/13

£2.00



**Polar Express**  
**(A Personal Narrative)**  
**They Once Worked Our Line**  
**(The Staff at Bow Station)**

## The DARTMOOR PONY

Issue No. 16

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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:** The chefs hard at work as the Polar Express passes through a darkened Okehampton station en route to the North Pole

*Photo: P Ritchie*

#### BACK COVER:

Looking for all the world as though they had just returned from the North Pole:

**Top:** Class 31 31452

**Bottom:** Class 47 47375

*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 :- 01363 82383







the Dartmoor Railway slowly but surely more scenic views will open up along the line.

As I write, 31 452 is being collected by 31 190 for a contract operation at Doncaster - I was very concerned that we were losing this locomotive but I am told after its contact work it will return to Washwood Heath for a full service then come back to the Dartmoor Railway. 47 375 will remain here for the time being. I hope work will start very soon on repairing the Thumper which unfortunately has a major electrical fault. It is hoped the steam locomotive RSH 'Birkenhead' ST will arrive in early March from the Plym Valley Railway: she will haul trains between Okehampton and Meldon mainly on Sundays. It will be great to have steam again and I am sure this will be a great attraction for passengers to visit our Railway.



*Trainee driver ???*

Already, we have a couple of charter trains booked and on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 'Steam Dreams' is bringing a Special to Okehampton. 'Clan Line' is hauling the train from London (Victoria) to Exeter but, at this moment, we don't know which locomotive will be at the head from Exeter to Okehampton - it COULD be 'Clan Line' but 'Merchant Navy' class locomotives were not usually allowed west of Exeter so "watch this space". The train is due to arrive in Okehampton at 1700 .

However, despite planning an exciting and interesting operating schedule for the forthcoming season, as yet we have not been given the 'green light'; this is frustrating as I wanted the new brochure to have been at the printers by now so it would be ready for distribution by early March but clearly this will not happen. I am HOPING I might just get confirmation that my proposals have been accepted as this issue of 'The Dartmoor Pony' goes to press so do please check the website or telephone the office at the station.

We do urgently need more volunteers to run the planned train service especially (ideally trained) diesel drivers and guards. You will be welcome even if you can only come on , say, one day a week or two/three days a month. Do please contact the office at Okehampton if you can offer your services. Your assistance will be gratefully received.

### 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

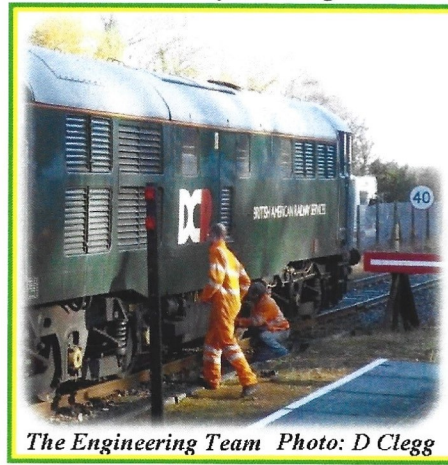
Dartmoor Railway Website [www.dartmoor-railway.co.uk](http://www.dartmoor-railway.co.uk)

DRSA Website [www.dartmoor-railway-sa.org](http://www.dartmoor-railway-sa.org)

### THE RAILWAY:

#### General:

Obviously, the Polar Express has dominated the action since the last issue of the Pony although there are other things to report. C&W have found the station maintenance team giving a hand here and there and the trackside clearance group have been seen hacking the jungle down in various places under the guidance of Alan and Andy. Thumper was stopped with electrical smoke creating despondency. Having nobody on hand qualified to deal with the situation we were awaiting the return of Alistair to sort it out. We reckoned without David Trant



*The Engineering Team Photo: D Clegg*



and Ian MacCulloch. They appeared at the station the other day covered in grime and grease, triumphantly announcing that they had identified the problem and it was repairable.

Two of the PE coaches plus Rocket formed the dining train on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> February topped and tailed by the two locos. A catering organisation known to the GM

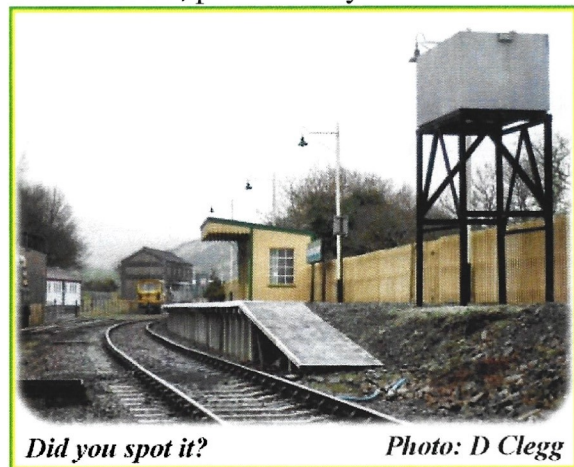
produced an excellent meal for the forty two diners. The consensus of opinion amongst the diners was that it was, indeed, an excellent meal.

Have you seen Meldon Viaduct station recently? The accompanying photographs show some preparations in readiness for steam.

The Class 31, purloined by Garcia Hanson for carriage heating duties,

is due to return to us after maintenance at Washwood heath. More than likely, it will be accompanied by a Class 73 electro diesel. Good news if it does come to pass!

As you may have noticed, the two photographs show that the water tank is now



*Did you spot it?*

*Photo: D Clegg*

erected at the end of the platform up at Meldon. It certainly looks 'the goods'.



*Spot the difference*

*Photo: D Clegg*

## Carriage & Wagon Group News

*Geoff Horner, Joint Volunteer Co-ordinator*

Work on the external refurbishment of the DRSA's 'Laboratory II' carriage has continued steadily since the last report in the Autumn 2012 issue of the 'Pony'.

The first undercoat on the roof is now about 95% complete. The final weatherproof top coating will be applied very soon. Good progress has been made on both sides of the bodywork, about 80% of which has now received



*work on Lab 11 in January*

*Photo: G Horner*

the first coat of red oxide primer. Work on the overhaul of all the doors and their drop lights is also under way. One badly corroded area of the body forming a strip about 100mm wide running from gutter level down to floor level has been cut out and a length of metal inserted ready for final welding.

Much of this progress has been down to the willingness of the Station Maintenance Team, driven from their usual habitat by the Polar Express activities and the winter weather, to have a change from cutting down buddleias and lend a hand at sanding down and painting railway carriages. This has enabled an occasional additional Saturday group to gather at Meldon, as well as the usual 'Thursday Gang', thereby greatly increasing our productivity.

The diesel engine which powers the generator is now at David Trant's workshop where the overhaul back to running order will soon get under way.



With the new operating season rapidly approaching, busy times are ahead for the C & W group. The first train to be run was the Valentine's Day dining train on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> February. Essential to the running of this train was the inclusion in the set of the Serco Test Coach (ex 4TC Driving Trailer 76277/DB977335) known around the railway as 'The Rocket' This vehicle spent two weeks in the shed for a clean down and cosmetic 'touch up' of the roof paintwork plus some

'tlc' and painting to the body sides.

The photograph shows it gleaming in the sunlight at Okehampton ready for the Valentine train.



*Rocket resplendent in new topcoat*

*Photo: G Horner*

C & W attention has now turned to the vacuum-braked stock needed for the anticipated steam hauled trains scheduled to start at Easter. Two carriages are required for this service, the DRSA's Mk.2A 'FK' 13436 and the Class 117 DMU centre car 59520. It is hoped that the brake shoes for the 'FK' will arrive and be fitted very soon, enabling the braking system to be tested and passed (fingers crossed!). Internally this vehicle needs the carpet along the corridor laying, the compartment sliding doors adjusted, one corridor side window attended to and, after standing out in the yard for about 9 months now, a thorough clean inside and out. DMU centre car 59520 requires the replacement of two broken windows, attention to a roof leak and general bodywork repairs and painting. The LMS Goods Brake will act as the Guard's van and will also need a 'tidy-up'.

The C & W news items always end with an appeal for additional volunteers and this one is no exception. There is a good deal of work to be done over the coming weeks to get the stock ready and in a state

in which we like to be able to present it for public service, and any additional help would be gratefully received. Thursday is the normal work day for the group but with the amount of work programmed this is likely to be expanded to perhaps an additional day on a Tuesday or Wednesday plus some Saturdays. So if you have the time, skills and just as importantly the enthusiasm to offer, please do get in touch via the joint volunteer coordinators. Regular updates on C & W activities can be found on the DRSA website.

#### **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.

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

**Chairman:-** Dick Henrywood

**Secretary:-** Philip Wagstaff

**Treasurer:-** Christine Horner

**Membership Secretary:-** Peter Flick

**Joint Volunteer Coordinators:-** David Clegg, Geoff Horner

**Dartmoor Railway Representative:-** Roger Webster  
(General Manager)

**Committee Members:-** Peter Ritchie (Magazine Editor)  
Peter Chapman  
Sue Baxter



## WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT DRSA/DR

**SPREAD THE WORD!**

**HELP DISTRIBUTE LEAFLETS**

**RIDE THE LINE**

**VISIT THE BUFFETS**

**HAVE A CLEAR-OUT AT HOME AND BRING:**

**\* ITEMS FOR OUR BRIC-A-BRAC STALL**

**\*PAPERBACKS**

**\*OLD RAILWAY MAGS, RAILWAY BOOKS, VIDEOS ETC**

**BUY FROM OUR STALLS**

**VISIT THE BUFFETS AGAIN!**

**BRING FRIENDS**

**DONATE OLD SURPLUS TOOLS**

**DONATE!**

**BUY DRSA CARDS**

**VOLUNTEER**

And if you have any other money-making ideas, please let us know. If you need further information contact Dave Clegg 01626 867210 ([clegg.lethbridge@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:clegg.lethbridge@tiscali.co.uk)) or Geoff Horner on 01363 82383 ([g.horner936@btinternet.com](mailto:g.horner936@btinternet.com))

*Thanks for joining DRSA!*

## The Polar Express at Okehampton

*A narrative of one person's experience in 2012*

It started with a short-notice meeting in the White Hart Hotel in Okehampton for Dartmoor railway staff and DRSA members for a presentation on the Polar Express by Debra Goodman of Iowa Pacific. That was at the end of April 2012 which seems a very long way off now. There seemed to be no room for volunteers in the proposed programme and there was almost a sense of incredulity at this seemingly forced ditching of Santa Specials and Mince Pie Specials which had traditionally been held on our railway for many years. "Don't worry, everything will happen and be organised" was the cry. Your correspondent, and a good number of others present at the meeting, had never heard of the Polar Express, let alone seen the film.

Time passed and 11<sup>th</sup> July saw a somewhat ill-attended press launch of the PE at Platform 3 in Okehampton station. There seemed to be very few representatives of the press there and it seemed to bode ill for the future. Mk 2 FO No 3353 which the volunteers of the C&W team had



*D&CR 31 brings the coaches Photo: P Ritchie*

been working on for some time was used as the presentation vehicle and was a great example of C&W's standards of refurbishment. That was about it and there were no more coaches of a similar standard and classification on the DR. By this time, we had heard that 'Up North' were well ahead of the game and already had an

'Events Manager' appointed. The Dartmoor Railway – nada, zilch, ne rien, nothing, What was happening?

It wasn't until 24<sup>th</sup> September, the day after the last Sunday Exeter train ran, that the next event in the unfolding saga occurred. A D&CR Class 31 arrived at Okehampton dragging 7 coaches behind it that had



been in storage at Yeovil Junction for some 6 or 7 years and were in a very sorry state. At this sight the air of scepticism reigned supreme and some volunteers threw up their hands in horror and refused to have anything to do with the train thereafter.



Because of the lack of staff available to the General Manager, and the general air of disbelief, a second parallel management stream was set up with Steve Goodwin and Alistair Gregory taking full charge of the Polar Express operation. At long last an Events Manager was appointed and Tiffany Arthurs filled that post for the remainder of the year. At this stage the expression "Failure is not an option" was often quoted.



The PE coaches, platform 2 Photo: P Ritchie

On seeing the enormous effort put into the venture by Steve and Alistair, and knowing that the PE performance would reflect on the railway, a number of volunteers pitched in to assist in the readying of the rolling stock for use. Rampart Ltd, contracted to refurbish the coaching stock, did an extraordinary job getting things done in time. The



DRSA and RMS painting

Photo: A Gregory



After the storm - the North Pole

Photo: G Horner

The Dartmoor Pony Winter 2012/13

Generator Coach 'Rocket' was resurrected having lain in the sidings at Meldon for many years in a very sorry state – it had been earmarked for disposal recently. Dave Trant should take a bow at this juncture. Local builders were contracted to build the North Pole at Meldon and thereby lies another tale which I won't go into here. The weather didn't help matters when the North Pole was virtually flattened by a storm .....but it was back up again within 24 hours! The Station Maintenance Group were evident at times throughout the running programme and the Bulleid Buffet did a roaring trade.

The motive power for the train, a D&CR Class 31 and a Nemesis Rail Class 47 eventually arrived and it looked as though the Polar express was indeed ready to roll. But that was just the train itself. A large team of young people had been recruited from agencies in both Exeter and Okehampton and suddenly there were singing and dancing chefs, elves and conductors in evidence not forgetting a regiment of Santa Claus'. This team became the nightly cast and their enthusiasm was crucial to the success of the whole effort.



Carol singers

From video

The train had been painted in an undercoat which survived



Driving crews

Photo: P Ritchie

extraordinarily well with no topcoat applied. Last minute arrivals of an ex-Virgin coach and a BR blue and grey Mk 1 (?) rather spoil the effect of the uniform green train but, after all, the train actually operated after darkness had fallen. The same could be said about the use of diesel power instead of steam locomotion. It was in darkness!



Two of our stalwart drivers, Keith Netherton and Nigel Remmington manned the locos from the start and when Nigel was unable to attend for business reasons (to San Fransisco???), Alistair took over. Throughout, Ian MacCulloch acted as second man. Guarding was somewhat more problematic with Dennis LeWorthy and Don Bent providing home-grown talent on an occasional basis and three guards from the Bodmin and Wenford Railway filled the gaps. Many thanks are due to them for their efforts. I should perhaps mention here that train staff and the supporting cast were all being paid. Volunteers who signed up to help also went on the payroll.

The opening run was in mid November but only after a dress rehearsal the evening before. Ticketing was by way of a central booking organisation in the USA. Initially, the whole system was hopeless and we had people who couldn't contact the web site to book their tickets, then the ticket printing system failed in the ticket office. Scribbling out a name on a blank sheet of card for someone who has paid a lot of money for the event was just not good enough. The main problem here was that it was all outwith local control. This should be one of the major lessons for 2013 if the Polar Express runs again – local booking and allocation of seating is a must! The girls in the local booking office did a splendid job sorting out the mess that they were given on occasion.

The initial planning was for two trains per evening at 1700 and 1930 with two days free during the week. Numbers mid-week proved to be low, enabling all passengers to be accommodated on one train only. Marketing for the Dartmoor Railway Polar Express appeared to be minimal and bookings were poor, to say the least. In the north, the Weardale Railway was reporting many thousands of customers before we had our first 500. I understand that a company in Manchester won the advertising contract. As far as we were concerned, it amounted to nothing. It seemed, after the first few trains, that the message locally was spread by word of mouth. Eventually, the numbers climbed up to a very respectable total of just short of 11,000. So, it was with a slight sense of foreboding that the Polar Express continued. However, especially for those 'oldies' who had never heard of the Polar Express, it appeared that there were children all over the

country who had and were pressing their parents and grandparents to get them a ride on the real thing. And, surprise, surprise, the majority entered into the spirit of the occasion by wearing their pyjamas. When Mum and Dad and Grandad and Grannie also wore their night clothes it was obvious that there was a hit in the making. Rounding it all off was the sight of one Mike Fairburn in his fifties style dressing gown accompanying his family – well done Mike!



*Crowded platform*

*Photo: P Ritchie*

Each evening there was a really excited buzz on platform 3 as the families waited for the 'All Aboard'. Once aboard the chefs took charge of them and kept them occupied until the train was due to depart. After it had been to North Pole Junction the train returned

and crept through a darkened Okehampton station, the better to see the hobo warming himself on platform 2. Take a bow Steve Goodwin. It continued up to the North Pole where Santa and his helpers scrambled on board and started meeting the children. The train went back to North Pole Junction again before returning to Okehampton station. That the magic worked was evident in the children's faces and in the parental and grandparental faces. Fantastic, wonderful, marvellous, great – these were some of the superlatives proffered by the adults. Your correspondent undertook an ad hoc survey of passengers on the evenings he was able to attend and of all the people approached there were no adverse comments.



*Words fail me!*

*Photo: P Ritchie*



As you might imagine, when two trains were running, the atmosphere on platform 3 when the passengers from both were mingling was extraordinary. There were upwards of 400 people on the platform at times!

Where did they all come from in the end? Locally both Plymouth and Exeter provided a large percentage but most appeared to come from across the Tamar in Cornwall. From the rest of the UK they came from as far afield as Essex and Kent, Northumberland and Durham, the East and South Midlands, North and South Wales, London and Dorset – in fact, where didn't they come from? If the comments offered are a true reflection of their thoughts, then the Polar Express has been a phenomenal success and the Dartmoor Railway must, inevitably, gain from it. People may well now take time off to see our railway when they come to the Westcountry for their holidays.

I must make comment about the small group of chefs and elves who got off the train and sang carols on the platform on arrival. They were impressive in their efforts and drew many admiring glances and comments from the crowds. The President of Iowa Pacific, Ed Ellis



travelled one evening and was seen filming them on his mobile telephone. He passed comment that DR's Polar Express was better than any of his operations in the States. Praise indeed. On completion of the final run it seemed that all the onboard staff formed a huge choir and serenaded the customers, a lot of whom appeared spellbound.

So, from an indifferent start with great misgivings, the Polar Express was a big success which reflected well on the Dartmoor Railway.



Thanks to all the DR staff, paid and unpaid, and agency employees roped in from the surrounding area. As well as the train doing well, the buffet, run by Mary as usual, together with a barbecue, was a great success. Andrew's hot chocolate was always ready for the train on time!

There is one point that jars a bit, we have had no official feedback on the success or not from higher management. This report is gleaned from personal observation and word of mouth only.

The editorial of the January edition of The Railway Magazine had the headline and picture seen in the editorial of this magazine. The marvellous picture of the train in the station was taken by David Hunt

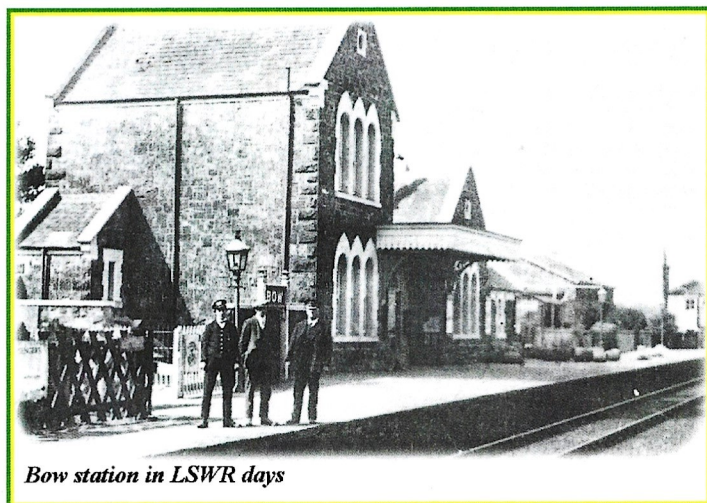
### **They Once Worked Our Line – Some 19<sup>th</sup> Century London & South Western Railway Employees on the Dartmoor Railway.**

*By Geoff Horner*

The inspiration for the first of what may, if our Editor agrees, become an occasional series of articles on the people who worked on the line of what is now the Dartmoor Railway came from the article in the Autumn 2012 issue of 'The Dartmoor Pony' by Dick Henrywood naming some of those who worked at various locations on the line in the late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This coupled with an awareness of the research resources such as some LSWR staff records, 19<sup>th</sup> century directories and the 19<sup>th</sup> century census returns now readily available on the internet spurred me on to see what else could be discovered on this subject starting at Bow as the first station on our section of the former London & South Western main line to the west..



The earliest record traced so far is that of George Hillard (or Hilliard as the LSWR staff records have his surname) who was station master at Bow for just over three years from 1868 to 1871. George, who was born in Chard, Somerset in 1846 joined the LSWR in May 1862 as a telegraph clerk at Exeter on a wage of 10/- (ten shillings = 50p) per



*Bow station in LSWR days*

week. He seems to have performed his duties well as his wages rose quickly to 12/- per week in August 1862 followed by a transfer in July 1863 to Wilton at a weekly wage of 14/-.

Further transfers and wage increases followed steadily with George moving to Brockenhurst in June 1864 (at 18/-), Bideford in July 1866 at the same wage, then Okehampton in January 1867 before transferring to Bow in January 1868 at a wage of 25/- (£1.25) a week. In August 1870 George was placed on the salaried staff list at a yearly salary of £70 and remained as Station Master at Bow until September 1871 when he transferred along the line to a similar position at North Tawton. Although others followed later in his railway career George's record shows just one official reprimand when in 1868, not long after he had taken up the post of Station Master at Bow, he was officially cautioned for not sending the cash taken at the station by the specified train (presumably to Exeter).

According to the 1871 census there was a porter at Bow named William Cole but he does not appear in the LSWR staff records and nothing further about him or his railway career is known. Trade directories for the period 1878/79 name the Station Master at Bow as William Gardiner but again his name does not appear in the surviving

LSWR staff records and where he served before or after his arrival at Bow remains unknown.

The next Station Master to serve at Bow was John Busby who served there for 10 years from 1878 to 1888. John was a comparative latecomer to railway service, joining the LSWR in November 1853 at the age of 30 having previously found employment as an agricultural labourer. His first position was as a porter at Nine Elms on 16/- a week. A number of relocations and increases in pay followed

(including time at Winchester as a Porter around 1871) until in November 1866 he moved to Chard, still as a Porter, at 21/- a week. Four years later in July 1870 his wage was raised to 24/- a week. In August



*Bow station 1968 Photo: c Ben Brooksbank*

1872 he was transferred on to the Staff List at a yearly salary of £70, increased to £75 pa in June 1877. A transfer to Portsmouth Arms as Agent on £85 pa followed a year later. John finally transferred to Bow in August 1878 receiving a salary increase to £90 in 1882. He finally retired aged 65 in September 1888 on a company pension. John appears to have had an unblemished railway career as his surviving LSWR records show no reprimands or warnings issued against him.

The 1881 census records show that there were two signalmen employed at Bow during John Busby's time as Station Master – Joseph Hatchley and William Jerrett. Other staff there at that time were Richard Tapp as Booking Clerk and Thomas Clow, who joined the LSWR as Lad Porter at Bow on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1880 when he was 19 years old and earning 13/- a week. By 1884 he had qualified as Signalmen at 17/- a week, presumably still at Bow where he remained until March 1898 when he moved to the position of Signalmen at



Barnstaple, where he remained certainly until 1911, and possibly until his last entry in the Staff Records in July 1923 by which time his wage had increased to 55/- a week.

The next recorded Station Master for Bow is Alfred Hearson Webb who was certainly in post by 1891 and may have immediately succeeded John Busby when he retired in 1888. His LSWR records are very brief merely recording that he joined the company in August 1866 at Barnstaple. The 1871 census shows him at Barnstaple as a Railway Clerk and then ten years later in the same role at Bideford. In 1898 his salary increased to £100 pa but whether by this time he was still at Bow or had moved on to Holsworthy, where he was definitely the Station Master in 1901, is uncertain.

Overlapping the time in charge at Bow of John Busby and Alfred Hearson Webb was Thomas Clow who joined the LSWR at Bow as a Lad Porter in December 1880 on a wage of 13/- a week. In February 1883 he was promoted to Porter at an increased wage of 15/- a week rising to 19/- a week plus 1/- a week extra for telegraph duty in 1886. In March 1898 he left to become signalman at Barnstaple where he seems to have remained up to the time the LSWR ceased to exist in the grouping of 1923. Also spanning the time at Bow of Messrs Busby and Webb was Joseph Hatchley (no LSWR records) who is recorded there as a Signalman in both the 1881 and 1891 census returns. By 1901 he had moved on and was a Signalman at Barnstaple

Additionally at Bow during the time A H Webb was Station Master was Thomas Gould who was a Porter there in 1891. There are no LSWR records for him but according to census records, before coming to Bow he was at Chard in 1881 (quite a few of Bow's Victorian era railwaymen seem to have come from or been at Chard at some point in their railway careers). According to the 1901 census he was a Porter at Minehead (not a LSWR station so he presumably jumped the LSWR ship and went to work for the GWR). In 1911 he was a Porter at Exeter (GWR or back with LSWR?).

The final 19<sup>th</sup> century LSWR railwayman known to be at Bow was William Edwin Jerrett who joined the company in May 1895 as a Lad Porter. The term must have been more that of 'rank' rather than of

youth because, if the records are correct, he was about 40 years old when he joined on the somewhat meagre wage of 10/- a week (3/- a week less than Thomas Clow received in a similar role some 15 years earlier). William Edwin moved on to Devonport in 1896 still as Lad Porter. His railway career then took him on to spells at Templecombe as Parcels Porter (whilst there in 1899 he was suspended for eight days with loss of pay and 'reduced' to Porter for "misappropriating the companies money for cloakroom articles" – one might suspect that he was lucky to avoid dismissal), then to Petersfield and finally Reading.

### DRSA Cards



There are two designs, both of Class 31's in the snow at Okehampton and both have the inside 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



## Great Britain V – April 2012 – Part III

By Peter Ritchie

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> April saw us setting out from Fort William behind “The Great Marquess” on our way south to the great



*'The Marquess' brings in the empty stock at Fort William*

before changing to a southerly direction towards Curroul. The whole of this portion is a fairly stiff climb all the way. Curroul station is inaccessible by public

city of Glasgow. In contrary fashion the line takes us first in a northerly direction along the Great Glen to Spean Bridge, site of the Commando Memorial, then eastwards to Roy Bridge for water and through the Monessie Gorge to Tulloch



*At Rannoch station*



*Rannoch - letting off steam*

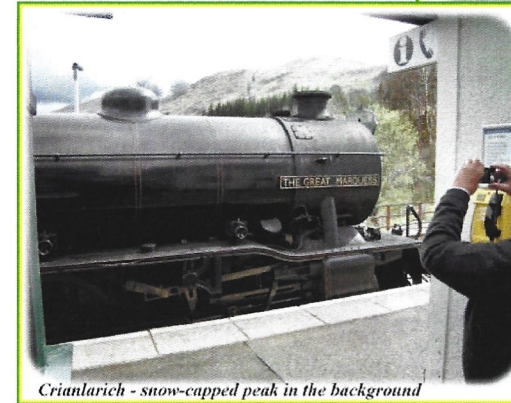
road and, apart from the railway, Walking is the only way to get there. Then it is on across the vast expanse of Rannoch Moor on a falling gradient to Rannoch station where we take on water.

Your correspondent took a

short break here to see if the Moor of Rannoch Hotel was still in existence – it used to be a splendid source of a good pint of Guinness and a venison steak – but that’s another story. From Rannoch we are



on the climb again breasting the summit at Gorton before descending 8 miles to Bridge of Orchy. Leaving Bridge of Orchy behind us, we are on the climb again to County March Summit and the gradient down towards Tyndrum Upper station. Tyndrum Lower station on the Oban line is visible on the other side of Strath



*Crianlarich - snow-capped peak in the background*

Fillan and both lines make their ways down towards Crianlarich station where they meet and where we take on water. The Oban line used to pass under the Fort William line with only a connecting spur here on its way to Callander but that section was shut following a landslip further down in the

1960s.

After climbing away from Crianlarich we then start downhill towards



*Helensburgh Upper - admirers*

Glen Falloch and the shores of Loch Lomond.. From Arrochar and Tarbet we cross to the shores of Loch Long and begin a formidable climb to the summit at Glen Douglas. It’s MOD land up here. The railway moves away from Loch Long over to the shores of the Gareloch, base to nuclear



submarines of the Royal Navy. From here we stop for water at Helensburgh Upper then continue down to the shore of the River Clyde to make our way to Ashfield in the north western suburbs of Glasgow where coaches await to take us to our hotels.

Both the Kyle of Lochalsh line (last issue of the Pony) and the West Highland line are, in modern parlance, 'awesome' and I hope I have done them justice in this series of articles. The 'Jacobite' steam hauled train runs on a regular daily basis during the summer months on the West Highland Line Extension (Fort William to Mallaig) Go on, treat yourselves!

The following day there was a choice of a day free in Glasgow or a trip to Stranraer behind double-headed Black 5s 45305 and 45407. I had not been to the South West by rail before. Yes, we decided to visit the south west of Scotland.

The two halves of the train had been reunited on arrival in Glasgow and so it was, once again, a long train. It would need every bit of the power available from our two locos. The train starts from the suburban station of Barrhill and then winds through the suburbs and across the Clyde



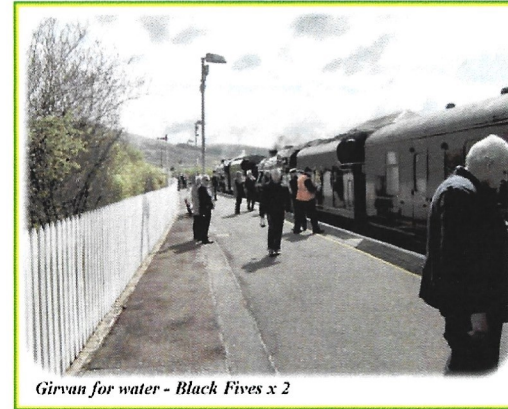
*Girvan for water - 45407*

towards Paisley and Irvine. From Irvine we continue south along the coast of the Firth of Clyde and find ourselves surrounded by golf courses when we reach Troon. This is now tourist



*Girvan for water - 45305*

country and the resort of Ayr is soon reached once we pass Prestwick and its International Airport. The airport is also the location of HMS GANNET, the Royal Navy's search and rescue base for the west of Scotland.



*Girvan for water - Black Fives x 2*

The train passes on southwards into Rabbie Burns country – he was born in Alloway which we pass quite close to – and on to Maybole and Girvan, the latter where we take on water. The island of Ailsa Craig is prominent to seaward. It is known as Paddy's Milestone because it

marks the halfway point between Belfast and Glasgow!

From Girvan the line really moves into some beautiful countryside but it is by no means an easy path to follow. Steep gradients abound in both directions and it twists and turns quite sharply adding to the locomen's challenge to keep the train moving and on time. Wild moorland and forest greet us. This was the area where trains have been stuck in snow drifts in bygone years. There is much evidence of the 'Beeching Cuts' along this line with many closed stations and derelict sites along its route. To facilitate our return, one of the locos was taken off just before we reached Stranraer so that the long train had room for the remaining engine to run around it.



*Stranraer - we made it.*



What greets us at Stranraer was an imposing welcome area which was just beginning to show signs of neglect. The ferry for Ireland has transferred to Cairnryan leaving Stranraer with very little except run down expanses of car parks and, in the rain, the depressing sight of disused facilities for tourists who used to flock to the ferry. The closure has had a similar effect on the town itself with a lot of closed down shops and the like.



*Stranraer - ready for the off, tender first*

The trip back to Glasgow proves uneventful and, once again, coaches await us to make the transfer to our hotels.

### **Rosie's Diary. "Santa's got a white dog!"**

*By Rosie*

Two legs Sue had the idea that she would take me to meet and greet customers arriving for the Polar Express by sitting down demurely on the platform and offering a warm paw to any frozen little children. Of course I had other ideas.



I'd heard that hot dogs ( please sign my petition to have these renamed hot cats) were going to be served. To my delight Mary was also cooking copious quantities of chips. Now little children often drop several chips, so, I was in heaven. At least that was until Sue set a quota. People laughed when they saw my predicament because I would gradually manoeuvre within inches of another morsel only to be pulled unceremoniously back to duty without her even realising my loss.

However, the little people did notice me. One toddler astounded her friends by saying "I've seen Santa's dog." "But Santa doesn't have a dog!" "Yes he does!" "Show me." My two legs was wearing a red cloak with a deep hood, and had her back to the buffet door when I saw three little children emerge, and then grin as they pointed at me. At least they knew I was a dog. There was some confusion later on..

As the Express departed I stood on my hind legs (with assistance) and waved a paw. I felt safer left behind, after all they might be meeting a polar bear. Now I have squared up to a bulldog and my hackles were raised at least 4inches high. That includes the white hairs at my neck, down my spine and the brown fan above my tail. He was impressed and turned away respectfully. However I might just run if I saw a bear.

Anyway, on the return some little people made a special toddle to see me. One sorted out my status with a passing Elf. When asked, " Is that a baby reindeer?" He told the Elf "No, Rosie is Santa's dog ".

After it had all finished I was able to discover the little treats children had kicked into corners beneath the seats. After finding a carriage door ajar I completed a hoovering duty of the whole train. My two legs didn't know where I was or what I was up to, until I jumped out again! Satisfaction at last!

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**"The DARTMOOR EXPLORER"**  
Charter Train - FRIDAY 12 APRIL 2013.

The Dartmoor Society has arranged the Charter of a Special Train on Friday 12 APRIL from Okehampton at 1030, principally for members of The Dartmoor Society but members of the DRSA and General Public may also travel on this train.

This train, which will provide a rare opportunity to travel over the whole of the independently owned Dartmoor Railway by a conventional locomotive and coaches train, is planned to be worked by a cl 31 Diesel locomotive with mainly First Class former BR Inter-City MK II coaches and will leave Okehampton station at 1030 for the Coleford Jn boundary with Network Rail, reverse, thence to Okehampton for a brief stop at approx 1145, before running to Meldon Viaduct station for a stop of about 45 mins. to enable passengers to alight for a walk across the spectacular Viaduct that spans the West Okement Valley. It is planned for a short talk to be given on the history of the immediate local area including the nearby Moor, former Railway Quarry, Mining, Lime Kilns, Aplite Works, Railways and Meldon Dam etc.

It is planned that the Model Railway Exhibitions at Meldon will be specially opened for viewing by passengers of this train.

The train will arrive back at Okehampton stn at approx 1300 where passengers can visit the station buffet for refreshments & lunch etc.

Passengers should arrive at Okehampton station in good time (by 1015 at the latest) and the excellent Station Buffet will be open from 0930 for teas, coffees & snacks, also Breakfast & Lunch are available. Refreshments may be taken onto the train by passengers.

The cost per passenger is £12 (£6 per child 5-15 incl) under 5's are free. A reduction of £2 adult & £1 child applies to members of The Dartmoor Society.

It is best not to bring dogs.

Bookings by 30 March please, enclosing Cheque made payable to the Dartmoor Society by post to:-

The Dartmoor Society,  
PO Box 38,  
TAVISTOCK  
PL19 0XJ

To assist with arrangements Passengers are encouraged to book in advance; but passengers will be able to join the train at Okehampton at 1030 and pay on the day.

For any further information please contact Tony Hill, Event Organiser - Dartmoor Society on 01837 83934.

DRAFT		Dartmoor Railway 2013																																					
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31							
January	Tu	W	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th		
February	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M
March	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M
April	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	
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June	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	
July	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	
August	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	
September	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	
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November	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M
December	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W
January 2014	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa

SPECIAL EVENTS		Date	Title	Event Description	Timetable
Sat	Sun	23-24	March	All Travel at Half Price	GREEN
Sat	Sun	1-5	July	Re-enactment of the Dartmoor Railway at war.	SPECIAL
Sat	Sun	19-20	October	Visit of GW Steam Railmotor	SPECIAL
Sat	Sun	28-29	October	Visit of GW Steam Railmotor	SPECIAL

SPECIAL TRAINS		Code	Event
MH	Murder Mystery Evenings		
DTE	Evening Dining Train		
BJ	Beer & Jazz		
DTT	Dining Train - Devon Cream Tea		

Color	Description
Blue	Diesel ONLY days (Meldon - Sampford Courtenay)
Yellow	Steam & Diesel Days (Steam, Okehampton - Meldon) (Diesel, Okehampton-Bow)
Red	First Great Western & Steam Days (F.G.W., Exeter - Okehampton) (Steam, Okehampton - Meldon)