



# THE DARTMOOR PONY

**The Magazine of the Dartmoor Railway  
Supporters' Association**

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**The 'Devon Explorer'  
visits Okehampton**

# **The DARTMOOR PONY**

**Issue No. 21**

**Editor:** John Caesar

**E-mail:** [museum@dartmoor-railway-sa.org](mailto:museum@dartmoor-railway-sa.org)

## **DARTMOOR RAILWAY SUPPORTERS' ASSOCIATION**

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

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/dartmoorrailway.sa](https://www.facebook.com/dartmoorrailway.sa)

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

**Telephone:** 01837 840670

**E-mail:** [prflick@dartmoor-it.co.uk](mailto:prflick@dartmoor-it.co.uk)

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

**FRONT COVER:** The Pathfinder 'Devon Explorer' rail tour led by 37605 running into Okehampton alongside Lab 11 on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April.  
*Photo: M. Williams*

**BACK COVER:** Top: On 3<sup>rd</sup> June, Freightliner Class 66, 66522, driven by DRSA's Peter Chapman, brings new Thumper unit 1118 into platform 2 at Okehampton. Bottom: Newly restored 1118 at Okehampton.  
*Photos: P. Wagstaff*

## CONTENTS

Editorial	Page 4
Railway News	Page 5
Special Events	Page 9
The 'Devon Explorer' Railtour	Page 10
DRSA Annual General Meeting 2015	Page 12
DRSA Financial Statements 2014-15	Page 13
Fundraising Update	Page 15
Volunteering – Your Railway Needs You!	Page 16
Carriage & Wagon Report	Page 17
Station Maintenance Report	Page 18
Museum Update	Page 21
125 Years of Bere Peninsula Trains	Page 23
Is there anybody out there?	Page 25
Rosie's Diary	Page 28

Enquiries:	<a href="mailto:info@dartmoor-railway-sa.org">info@dartmoor-railway-sa.org</a>
Membership:	<a href="mailto:prflick@dartmoor-it.co.uk">prflick@dartmoor-it.co.uk</a>
Secretary:	<a href="mailto:jonathankelsey@btinternet.com">jonathankelsey@btinternet.com</a>
Treasurer:	<a href="mailto:christine.horner@talk21.com">christine.horner@talk21.com</a>
Volunteering:	<a href="mailto:volunteering@dartmoor-railway-sa.org">volunteering@dartmoor-railway-sa.org</a>
Museum:	<a href="mailto:museum@dartmoor-railway-sa.org">museum@dartmoor-railway-sa.org</a>

## **Editorial**

*John Caesar*

Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2015 edition of the Dartmoor Pony magazine! This will be my first attempt at editing the magazine, and this is also the first edition of the Pony not to be edited by Peter Ritchie. We all wish Peter a well deserved rest from the travails of editing, having produced the previous 20 editions all the way since No. 1 in 2009.

This is the first edition of the Dartmoor Pony that we are sending out in digital format for those of you who have supplied e-mail addresses. This helps DRSA by reducing the costs associated with postage and printing. Please contact us if you encounter any teething problems - we will aim to get these fixed for you.

### **Important Announcement**

Since the AGM (reported on Page 12), Dick Henrywood has resigned from the chairmanship of DRSA. He has been chairman of the association almost since its formation in 2009, and we would like to express our gratitude for all his work in that position. Philip Wagstaff has agreed to assume the role of acting chairman, which will allow time to give due consideration to a permanent appointment whilst keeping the DRSA wheels turning. Dick will be remaining as a committee member.

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

**Acting Chairman:** Philip Wagstaff

**Secretary:** Jon Kelsey

**Treasurer:** Christine Horner

**Membership Secretary:** Peter Flick

**Volunteer Coordinator:** Geoff Horner

**Committee Members:**

Dick Henrywood, Peter Ritchie, Sue Baxter

## Railway News

### *Heritage Services*

Services operated by Granite Line Ltd. (the operating company associated with DRSA) have been running since 3<sup>rd</sup> April. Initially, the Class 08 shunter (D4167) with newly restored Lab 11 and Driving Trailer 61743 have been running

between Okehampton, Meldon Viaduct and Sampford Courtenay. Now that the Sunday Rover service from Exeter has started there will be a heritage shuttle between Okehampton and Meldon Viaduct on Sundays until September 6<sup>th</sup>. On Saturdays and other running days, the new Thumper unit will be running to Meldon as well as Sampford Courtenay and Bow.



### *'New' Thumper*

The eagerly awaited Thumper unit, DEMU 1118 arrived on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June. It was originally scheduled to arrive on 27<sup>th</sup> May, but there were issues with the availability of locomotives to tow it to Okehampton on the mainline. It arrived behind Freightliner Class 66, 66522

driven by DRSA's Peter Chapman. The restoration of 1118 took place at Williton workshops on the West Somerset Railway, and the unit now looks immaculate in BR blue. Resident Thumper 1132 is now out of service and scheduled for much-needed mechanical and bodywork attention.



*Nigel Remington looking suitably proud of his impressive new toy and Geoff Brookes looking for something to paint...(Tom Baxter).*

### ***Laboratory 11 enters service***

Following the sterling efforts of the Carriage & Wagon team, and overcoming last year's graffiti attack, Lab 11 entered service this April after extensive restoration. It has been finished in the eye catching blue and orange livery it carried when in service with BR Research. The interior, once filled with complex electronic monitoring equipment, now houses a comfortable passenger saloon. There is also an on-board generator which has been brought back into operation.



*The first trip out of the shed for Lab 11 following restoration (P. Wagstaff).*



### ***Sunday Rover***

The 2015 Dartmoor Sunday Rover service, operated by First Great Western, started on May 17<sup>th</sup> and runs between Exeter and Okehampton every Sunday until September 6<sup>th</sup>. Supporters of a



permanent rail service to the town are keen to see people use the Rover trains in order to demonstrate to decision makers in government that there is the demand for better transport links to Okehampton. Despite this, and with the notable exception of the DRSA website, there has been a lack of publicity for the Sunday Rover service this year. Okehampton Town Council's 'Destination Okehampton' work group is helping to fill the gap by producing a leaflet with timetables and suggested days out from Okehampton, which should be available in the usual Okehampton area outlets, or can be downloaded from: [www.okehampton.gov.uk/data/uploads/429.pdf](http://www.okehampton.gov.uk/data/uploads/429.pdf)

### ***Bridge updates***

The main Okehampton to Crediton road was closed for several days in April to allow repairs to be made to Greenslade Bridge (no. 595). Numerous bridge strikes from tall lorries or careless drivers had necessitated welding repairs, which were carried out by British American Rail Services (BARS) engineers.



Plus we have a new overbridge! Bridge 605A is a new cycle/pedestrian bridge on the Exeter road out of Okehampton. Work began in December and overnight on March 19th/20th the road was closed and the bridge span was lifted into place onto the concrete abutments.

### ***150 Years of Railways in Bow and North Tawton***

Did you know that 1<sup>st</sup> November 2015 marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the railway reaching Bow and North Tawton? The association is exploring suitable ways to mark the anniversary, perhaps with a special event, displays or publications. Philip Wagstaff is heading the planning. We would be very interested to hear from anyone with memorabilia, anecdotes or reminiscences of the railway at either of the two stations. Please contact [museum@dartmoor-railway-sa.org](mailto:museum@dartmoor-railway-sa.org).

### ***Heritage Railway Association***

The DRSA was recently accepted as a full corporate member of the Heritage Railway Association – the national body which provides its members with professional advice and information, and represents the interests of heritage railways to government and other bodies.

One aspect of our membership is that we now participate in the HRA's Interrail scheme, and as a result we are able to provide a valuable benefit to our volunteers. Holders of Interrail cards are entitled to free or substantially discounted travel at participating UK heritage railways, which in practice is virtually all of them. We will reciprocate by giving a substantial discount to visitors to DR with valid Interrail cards.

To qualify you must be an established working volunteer with DRSA. A card costs £25, and is for 2 people: the named card holder and one other. It is valid for a year, and unfortunately the year starts on March 1<sup>st</sup>, so we have lost some time this year, though the majority of the season is still ahead of us. The card is usually invalid on Gala days and other special events, and some railways have other special restrictions. HRA's advice is always to contact the railway before you visit. To apply for your card, contact the DRSA Interrail Coordinator Chris Horner ([christine.horner@talk21.com](mailto:christine.horner@talk21.com)).



## Special Events 2015

### Barbecue & Jazz Evenings

A Barbecue and Jazz evening took place on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July. The evening started at around 6pm with the *Charlie Henshaw Quartet* playing at Okehampton and later on at Sampford Courtenay. Passengers enjoyed a barbecue, accompanied with real ale and wine, and a 25 mile round trip on Thumper 1118 to Meldon, Sampford Courtenay and Bow.

**A further event is planned for Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> August.** Please ask at the Okehampton Station ticket office, use the contact numbers below, or keep an eye on the website events page for further details.



*Jazz at Okehampton (left, P. Martin) and Sampford Courtenay (right, P.Wagstaff).*

**For further info and booking enquiries:**

*Website:* <http://www.dartmoor-railway-sa.org/specialevents>

*In person:* Okehampton Station ticket office on Saturdays and Sundays

*Telephone:* Daytime on 07518 764445 or Evenings on 07818 032612

## The ‘Devon Explorer’ Railtour

*Paul Martin*

Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2015 saw the first visit of a charter train for some time to Okehampton when Pathfinder Tours organised ‘The Devon Explorer’, a train starting from Crewe and picking up passengers as far south as Bristol. Some lucky people joined the train at 6 am and got back to Crewe after 11 pm!



The 12 coach train headed by two Class 37 diesels (both over 50 years old) was eventually scheduled to be at Okehampton for just under 2 hours. With the station crowded with regular patrons and enthusiasts, 37059 and 37605 double headed the train as it climbed into Okehampton

station despite earlier plans for it to be ‘topped and tailed’ from Exeter. Roger Webster, Chris Peters, John Caesar and Mark Williams (pictured) had bravely joined the train at Exeter to sell the ~100 tickets for the single trip that the Class 08 and Lab 11 train was making to Meldon Viaduct.

On arrival there was a hive of activity as around 400 people disembarked the train, some to get the train to Meldon, some to use the bus shuttle into town, and many more to explore the station. Tom Baxter ensured that the Station Maintenance Team leapt into action to get as much water into the train as possible with a specific focus on the catering



coaches. Andrew Turner (the BBQ King) had fired up the BBQ and did a roaring trade and the buffet was almost overrun with numbers.

Once the 08 shuttle service returned the charter train then proceeded to Meldon to enable the engines to be run around. This was done one at a time making it quite a complex procedure. The train returned to Okehampton about 15 minutes after its planned departure time. The briefest of stops was made to pick up passengers and then it was away with almost indecent haste, flying back down the line towards Exeter.



The station then returned to normal and everybody took a deep breath. It was great to see so many people at the station and our band of helpers contributed in various ways including getting the rubbish off the trains (no mean feat), marshalling areas to ensure safety, selling items to raise

funds and generally dealing with the public. The tour operator and the passengers seemed impressed by the efforts made by everyone and hopefully it won't be long too before we have another charter train visiting us.

### **DRSA Social Gatherings, open to all members!**

**First Wednesday of the month from 18:30 onwards:**

The Kings Arms Inn, Tedburn St Mary, EX6 6EG

**Third Thursday of the month from 18:30 onwards:**

Fox & Hounds Hotel, Bridestowe, EX20 4HF

# **DRSA Annual General Meeting 2015**

*Report by Jon Kelsey*

The AGM took place on Saturday May 16<sup>th</sup>, at the Ockment Centre in Okehampton. DRSA Chairman Dick Henrywood<sup>a</sup> was unable to attend, so Philip Wagstaff deputised, presiding in typical relaxed manner. Sadly, attendance was at an all time low with only 21 members present, plus the speaker and a dog.

In the slightly unusual manner prescribed by DRSA's constitution, half of the committee stood down for re-election, though as this half included one co-opted member, and one member not re-standing, only 3 were actually re-elected. It took longer to explain than to carry out, and the upshot is that your committee is as before, with the exception of Peter Chapman who, for personal reasons, cannot continue. We would like to record our gratitude to Peter for his contributions, and hope we will continue to see him at the railway.

It was a meeting of two halves. Upbeat, thanks to a regular train service, the introduction of the superb Lab 11, the imminent arrival of 1118 and the increased possibility of the LSWR diversionary/complementary route perceived by many members. Downbeat also, because of declining membership, declining numbers of active volunteers, the state of the rolling stock (Nigel Remington and Keith Netherton arrived late after a fraught session with D4167) and the general survival mode in which we operate.

A bright spot was our speaker, Andy Roden. Andy is a railway journalist with several books under his belt, contributor to Rail magazine, and, as of April, editor of Steam World magazine (see [www.andrewroden.com](http://www.andrewroden.com)). His presentation "From Passion to Action" was a bit different, being about the ability of the railway movement to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles, and provoked interesting discussion. DRSA and Andy seemed to like each other, so hopefully we will keep in touch. His suggestion that DRSA needs to be more assertive was particularly notable.

Grateful thanks to Philip for chairing, Sue Baxter for the refreshments, Christine Horner for organising the auction and raffle, which made over £60 for our funds, and Geoff Horner for supplying the technology and DJ'ing.

<sup>a</sup> See announcement on Page 4.

# DRSA Financial Statements 2014-15

## DARTMOOR RAILWAY SUPPORTERS ASSOCIATION

*Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2015*

### RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

	Unrestricted Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Total for 2014/2015	Total for 2013/2014
<b>Receipts</b>					
Membership	3518.00			3518.00	4146
Donations	2284.29			2284.29	2318
Pony Magazine	70.00			70.00	152
Cards, books and other sales	£222.10			222.10	253
Bank interest	0.86			0.86	1
Model Railway	341.20			341.20	495
Granite Line Ltd	0.00			0.00	2196
Lab11 Donation	71.70		2583.81	2655.51	1837
	<u>6508.15</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>2583.81</u>	<u>9091.96</u>	<u>11398.00</u>
<b>Payments</b>					
Stationery, postage & general printing	1047.91			1047.91	1360
Pony Magazine printing	502.50			502.50	1943
Carriage, Wagon and Station refurbishment costs	1012.10			1012.10	1268
Cards and books for resale	63.84			63.84	0
Granite Line expenses	1660.20			1660.20	3380
AGM, administration and Examiner costs	133.75			133.75	179
Miscellaneous Expenses	390.91			390.91	307
Lab11 expenditure	162.05		2,330.80	2492.85	2080
Museum			42.01	42.01	251
Okehampton United Charities expenditure			12.06	12.06	458
	<u>4973.26</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>2384.87</u>	<u>7358.13</u>	<u>11226</u>
<b>Excess of Receipts over Payments</b>	1534.89	0.00	198.94	1733.83	172
Bank and cash balances at 1st April 2014	14083.49	2860.14	-198.94	16747.81	16576
Bank and cash balances at 31st March 2015	<u>15618.38</u>	<u>2860.14</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>18481.64</u>	<u>16748</u>
<b>Analysis of Designated Funds</b>					
Yeoford		1517.00			1517
Water Tower		1343.14			1343
		<u>2860.14</u>			<u>2860</u>
<b>Summary of Restricted Funds</b>					
Total funds as at 1st April 2014			-198.94		
Net inflow of funds for the year to 31st March 2015			<u>198.94</u>		
Balance of Restricted funds at 31st March 2015			<u>0</u>		

**DARTMOOR RAILWAY SUPPORTERS ASSOCIATION**

***Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2015***

**STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES**

Bank and cash balances	18482	16748
Assets retained for Association's use:		
Brake Van (February 2011)	1900.00	
FK Coach	9000.00	
LAB11 Coach	17500.00	
Brake Van	4500.00	
Water Tower	1000.00	
	<u>33900.00</u>	

*Based on March 2014 valuations and current year's work*

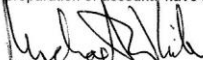
**INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS REPORT ON THE ACCOUNTS OF  
DARTMOOR RAILWAY SUPPORTERS ASSOCIATION**

***Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2014***

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance of accounting records and the preparation of accounts.  
An audit is not required

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general directions towards community and supporter organisations as set out by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Association and a comparison of the accounts with the records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from trustees (particularly the treasurer) concerning such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

In connection with my examination no matter has come to my attention which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, that requirements for the keeping of proper accounting records and the preparation of accounts have not been met.

  
**Michael White FCA**  
Chartered Accountant

14 April 2015

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***For up to date news, photos and train service updates  
please keep an eye on our website, and don't forget that we  
also have a Facebook page!***

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

**[www.facebook.com/dartmoorrailway.sa](https://www.facebook.com/dartmoorrailway.sa)**



## **Fundraising Update**

*Christine Horner, DRSA Treasurer*

An impressive **£549.84** was raised last financial year for DRSA via the Easy Fundraising website, and the total is now over **£1100**. Thank you to everyone who has contributed so far!

If you would like to help in this way, here's a reminder:

Whenever you buy anything online - from your weekly shop to your annual holiday - you could be raising a free donation for DRSA. There are nearly 3,000 retailers including Amazon, John Lewis, Aviva, and Sainsbury's, who will donate a percentage of the amount you spend to DRSA to say thank you for shopping with them.

It's really simple, and doesn't cost you anything.

**All you have to do is:**

1. Go to [www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/drsa](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/drsa)
2. Sign up for free
3. **Get shopping** - your donations will be collected by easyfundraising and automatically sent to DRSA. It couldn't be easier!

There are no catches or hidden charges and DRSA will be really grateful for your donations.

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

Thank you for your support!

## Volunteering – Your Railway Needs YOU!

We are very keen to recruit more volunteers in all departments of the railway to help out with current and future operations. Here's an overview of some of the departments:

**Carriage & Wagon:** work on the DRSA's heritage rolling stock at the Meldon workshop.

**Station Maintenance Team:** maintain the much-admired 1950s/60s ambience of Okehampton station, with occasional forays to Meldon or Sampford Courtenay.

**Catering:** help out in the friendly bustle of the acclaimed *Bulleid Buffet* at Okehampton.

**Lineside Maintenance Team:** get out and about and keep fit looking after the lineside vegetation.



*Andy Turner being ably assisted in sprucing up a chipping box by John Wills during a Tuesday lineside clearance session (S. Baxter).*

There are also roles available to assist with operations and providing information to our many visitors. Specialised skills are not a prerequisite, but most useful if you have them

To become a volunteer you will need to be a member of the DRSA. Our Volunteer Coordinator will arrange for the appropriate briefings and training where necessary. Come and join us in the very rewarding task of running the railway!

For more details contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Geoff Horner, at [volunteering@dartmoor-railway-sa.org](mailto:volunteering@dartmoor-railway-sa.org) or by phone on **01363 82383**.

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## **Carriage & Wagon Report**

*Geoff Horner, Volunteer Coordinator*

With Lab11 and former EMU '4CEP' driving trailer 61743 providing the train service, the C&W group have now turned their attention to two other DRSA owned vehicles that are expected to be utilised as an '08' hauled set during the summer.



*Refurbished interior of Lab11*

'FK' corridor compartment coach S13436, last used in service in 2013, has had the worst of the scratches and rust spots to the exterior paintwork touched up and, after several sessions with vacuum cleaner and carpet shampoo, the corridor carpet has been restored back to a

useable condition. Our C&W mechanical chief Julian Pope has refitted the brake rods and checked over the shoes and other running gear. There remain the final electrical connections to enable the coach to be powered by the Lab11 generator to install. A final wash down externally and a final polish and vacuum of the compartments is all that remains, after which the coach will be ready to come back into service.

Ex-LMS Goods Brake Van 731411, which again was last used on passenger trains in 2013, is being prepared to enable it to carry passengers on brake van rides. The roof has been patch repaired to keep it watertight; new gates are being fitted to allow passengers to ride on the verandas; both verandas and the van interior are being repainted and the worst of the exterior paintwork will also be freshened up. However we are continually coming across previously hidden areas of rust and rot that need be dealt with which slows down progress and makes a final completion date difficult to predict. The aim is to be ready by the start of the school holidays.

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## **Station Maintenance Report**

*Tom Baxter, Station Maintenance Team Co-ordinator*

We continue with most of our work concentrated on or around Okehampton station. This is hardly surprising given its size and scale in comparison to those at Meldon and Sampford Courtenay.

The team has shrunk somewhat in recent times but we manage to field an average of 3 volunteers on most Saturdays. We are however always very pleased to see more. So if anyone reading this is keen to join us they would be more than welcome. A previous skills knowledge is certainly not a pre-qualification although most useful if you have it. We can mostly get by with average DIY skills. But anyone with previous building, electrical or other trade skills would be very, very welcome and could help enormously and enable us to do much more.

Recent work has involved us repainting the platform fencing on Platform 2 at Okehampton station. For this the prime mover has been

Geoff Brooks. Fortunately Geoff is a wizard with the paintbrush and doggedly moves onwards with this extensive ongoing task. As anyone who has visited will know we have extensive swathes of wooden palisade type fencing at Okehampton station and also elsewhere. The downside of these being they require maintenance to the timber and repainting on a fairly regular basis. Although part of our 'heritage' they hark back to a time when labour and materials were plentiful and paint in particular was very much cheaper. Paint is per litre now around ten times more expensive than petrol. So in essence we are limited to a high degree by the depth of our pockets and, of course, numbers of volunteers.

Geoff has previously repainted large areas of the footbridge and other 'green' areas around the station. The station is painted in a version of the Southern Railways 1930s colour scheme whose style was continued in a slightly modified form by British Railways (Southern Region) into the 1950s and early 1960s. The footbridge is a metal span with brick built staircases on either side. It is also roofed, having a timber frame and metal corrugated roof. Originally it was fully glazed but this disappeared, or more likely was destroyed by vandals, during the time the station was closed. There is quite an intricate network of gutters and downpipes to take rain water away. Some of these actually cross over within the structure. One of the jobs undertaken fairly recently was to replace an original metal cross over gutter which had literally just corroded away. Fortunately a pvcU replacement was available and a match to the original profile. Although purists may complain we should have replaced like with like, at least we now have an acceptable replacement installed that will never rust away. In its painted finish it is quite hard to tell the difference in any case.

Another stalwart member of the team has been John Coxon who has been busy replacing some of the rotted timber frame window surrounds on the footbridge. He has managed to profile the timber to something close to the original design using a router tool which was donated to us some time ago but whose operation up to now had defeated the rest of us. Whilst complete re-glazing of the footbridge is well beyond our present resources we are attempting to maintain the footbridge with its general appearance to as near original as possible.

Given that it probably dates back to shortly after the station opened (1870s?) we feel this is most important. It is also the only means of public access between the platforms and as such has to be maintained whilst any work continues.

Other jobs at present under way include a new running in board for Meldon. We are grateful to Jon Kelsey for taking 'ownership' of this project and hopefully the result will be visible at Meldon shortly. It will complete the 're-naming' of the station to 'Meldon Viaduct'.

One of our other team regulars, Dan Roche, has recently take a 'family sabbatical'. Prior to this he led on the project to repaint the 08 shunter 'Bluebell Mel'. Repainted in BR green livery she now looks very fine operating the early season trains. We look forward to welcoming Dan back in due course as and when family duties allow.



*Ann and Mavis tending to the station plants (S. Baxter)*

This leads us on to other roles undertaken by SMT. In fact in an organisation like DRSA that has a very limited number of working volunteers the ability to multi task and join other departments as and when required is also incredibly useful. As such we sometimes assist colleagues in Carriage & Wagon (C&W). In fact some of our team are also C&W volunteers. As an example some recently worked on the Lab11 restoration. Another 'outside job' was the re-watering of the



Pathfinder Tour train. Despite the very limited 'time window' whilst at Okehampton we were able to get an impressive amount of water into its various carriage water tanks, thus enabling the tour passengers to have the continuing luxury of flushing toilets and enough water for coffee and teas on their journey home.

The 'Flower Fairies' continue to keep the station greener than the paint. Sue Baxter recently being joined by Mavis Goff and Ann Rochester. Their versatility knows no bounds and the flower displays are much the better for it. A new flower bed has appeared by the side entrance at the Exeter end of platform 3.

This incorporates many wild flowers including poppies as a commemoration of those military personnel who would have left Okehampton by train in WW1 but sadly never returned. Ann joined the Horticultural team after pointing out that the station really needed the poppy display. Wild poppies which Ann provided as plug plants as well as glorious commemorative Chelsea poppies grown from seed by Kay Mills are beginning to bloom. Come and see how many you can count!

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## **Museum Update**

*John Caesar, Museum Coordinator.*

Our museum on platform 2 was open regularly throughout 2014, and the guest book records a large number of satisfied visitors from near and far. Much of the refurbishment work has now been completed by members of the Station Maintenance Team, but there is still ongoing work to improve the displays as well as behind-the-scenes archiving activities. We are still planning to hold an event to formally open and dedicate the refurbished museum during 2015 – watch this space!

Since we have more material than we can display in the platform 2 museum, work has also been taking place in one of the buildings adjacent to Meldon Viaduct where we have been assembling an exhibition focused upon the quarry, viaduct and surrounding area,

including a set of posters about the historic tramways of Dartmoor. This was open to the public on just a few occasions last year, but we could open it more frequently in the future if we can get more volunteers to help out as stewards. If you have an interest in helping us with our heritage activities and improving the visitor experience, then please get in touch with Geoff Horner, our Volunteer Coordinator.



*A recent photo of the museum interior.*

One particular highlight of 2014 was the delivery of the first set of replica bridge plates crafted by Simon Jeffrey to replace some of the missing plates along the line. These are made of wood and look very authentic. The lineside team began installing these last August, and plate 609 was most recently put into place in June this year, located just beyond the signal box at Okehampton.

As usual we are always on the lookout for relevant artefacts, images, information or memories about the railway in Okehampton and the surrounding area. If you are able to help, then please get in touch. Either find one of the team at the station or contact us via e-mail on [museum@dartmoor-railway-sa.org](mailto:museum@dartmoor-railway-sa.org)



*The lineside team attaching 599, one of Simon Jeffrey's replica bridge plates, at Sampford Courtenay on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2014.*

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## **125 years of Bere Peninsula trains**



Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2015 marked the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of Bere Ferrers and Bere Alston stations and the opening of the Plymouth to Tavistock and Lydford railway. The line between Plymouth, Bere Alston, Tavistock and Lydford was opened by the Plymouth, Devonport and

South Western Junction Railway in late May 1890 to provide a new fast route for London & South Western Railway express trains from London Waterloo to Plymouth via Okehampton. North of Bere

Alston, the line closed on 6<sup>th</sup> May 1968 though plans are advancing to reopen the section to Tavistock. South of Bere Alston, the line is now part of the Tamar Valley Line. The route between St Budeaux and Plymouth, which had two major viaducts, two tunnels and two stations, closed in 1964 and trains ever since have used what was the Great Western Railway's Cornish mainline.



*Mark Williams and Tom Baxter take a turn on the pump trolley under the supervision of Chris Grove (Jon Kelsey).*

Various special events were laid on, including a commemorative dinner, historical exhibition, an illustrated talk and an open day at the Tamar Belle Heritage Centre at Bere Ferrers station. A delegation from the DRSA Station Maintenance Team visited the latter event on May 30<sup>th</sup> and found it to be a fascinating place. They have 3 ex-MOD Hunslet shunters, a number of coaches including 3 Gresley LNER ones in service as buffet, B&Bs or exhibition rooms. The former Pinhoe signal box has been reconstructed on the platform. There are short standard gauge and narrow gauge running lines - we had a ride in a coal truck accompanied by a group singing railway songs. We all had a spin on a pump trolley, constructed from scratch by Tamar Belle's engineers.

A 1938 Peckett 0-4-0 saddle tank is the subject of a two-thirds complete share appeal to rebuild its boiler. We brought back details if anyone is interested to find out more (please contact [museum@dartmoor-railway-sa.org](mailto:museum@dartmoor-railway-sa.org)). Wouldn't it be nice for a spell of brakevan rides on the DR when it's finished?

There's much more detail on their website at [www.tamarbelle.co.uk](http://www.tamarbelle.co.uk). We are very grateful to Dennis and Chris, both of whom gave up a lot of time to show us around this extraordinary place.

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## **Is there anybody out there?**

*Jeff Vinter, Railway Ramblers*

The above is a strange title for an article in a railway magazine, but it was the question that Nigel Willis asked in a 'Railway Magazine' small ad back in 1978. He wanted to know if there were other people 'out there' who were interested in walking disused railways. The answer was 'plenty' – and thus Railway Ramblers was born.

At the time, the Beeching Report had been out for 15 years, causing a change in the mindset of British Rail such that railway closures became an end in themselves. What worried some was that all this newly abandoned railway infrastructure – which had cost many fortunes and lives to build – was being wasted. Initially, Railway Ramblers was formed to walk old lines, but it soon formulated a set of aims and objectives which included the dissemination of news about old railways, and making recommendations to local authorities about those which might successfully be converted into trails.

35 years later, what was seen once as 'woolly-minded hippy thinking' has become accepted practice. The UK now possess ca. 5,000 miles of old railway and tramway that one can walk, and often cycle, with official blessing. Not only does this help to preserve old railway infrastructure, but it also performs a valuable service in providing safe places where cycling can be encouraged, especially by the young. Not

that these routes are exclusively aimed at the young: in north Dorset, mobility scooters are a common sight on parts of the former Somerset & Dorset Railway, which Dorset County Council and its partners are converting into a multi use trail called the North Dorset Trailway ([www.northdorsetrailway.org](http://www.northdorsetrailway.org)).



*Derriton Viaduct was situated immediately west of Holsworthy station on the LSWR's Bude branch. Devon County Council re-opened it for public use in 2001. Although the trail here is currently of local significance only, it is intended eventually to form part of the new 'Ruby Trail' which will re-connect Meldon Junction with Bude on the Atlantic coast. © Jeff Vinter.*

Devon County Council is a force to be reckoned with in the world of railway paths, for nowadays there is hardly any disused railway left in the county which cannot be walked or cycled at least in some small part. The flagship route is that from Ilfracombe to Plymouth, which combines a variety of old railways to create a coast-to-coast route which is largely off-road, i.e. on former trackbed. This forms part of 'Eurovélo 1'. Why is it so named? Because, at Plymouth, a trip on the Roscoff ferry leads to a continuation of the route which uses yet more disused railways to get right down to the Franco-Spanish border. That's an eye-watering 800 miles!





*Between Stourpaine and Sturminster Newton, the Somerset & Dorset Railway crossed the River Stour twice, but British Rail removed both bridges after the line closed in 1966. In recent years, Dorset County Council has replaced them as part of its 'North Dorset Trailway' project. This example is just north of Stourpaine & Durweston Halt. © Jeff Vinter.*

We live in a very different world from that of 1963. We have traffic levels undreamt of 50 years ago, while few in the swinging sixties could ever have imagined that, one day, there would be such a thing as an 'obesity crisis'. Rail trails offer practical solutions to these problems, while local communities along the way are discovering that they bring something else too. Long distance walkers and cyclists spend as they go and deliver economic benefits which are beyond the scope of the car driver, who can so easily take everything he needs in his vehicle.

So how does Railway Ramblers fit into this, and what does it do? The club still fulfils a valuable service as a source of news, via its website ([www.railwayramblers.org.uk](http://www.railwayramblers.org.uk)), quarterly magazine and regional newsletters. It is no exaggeration to say that disused railways today are in the news almost as much as operational railways. RR is a small club – its membership hovers between 700 and 800, depending on

The Dartmoor Pony Spring/Summer 2015

how recently Julia Bradbury has been walking old railways on television! – but it has set up a Footpath Fund which has contributed tens of thousands of pounds over the last 30 years to railway path projects around the country. RR also organises railway walks throughout the UK. Intending members should be aware that old railways are nowhere near so common as public footpaths and bridleways, so the club cannot match the Ramblers' Association for the frequency and nearness of its walks. However, it can provide some very different days out, in good company with well-informed and like-minded enthusiasts. Those who love railways often love pubs, and so RR usually organises its walks in such a way that lunchtime miraculously arrives as its members pass the door of some congenial hostelry where the books can be brought out for a look at how things used to be.

At the moment, South Western Area Organiser Jeff Vinter runs a small programme of walks every year between March/April and October. Non-members are welcome to try up to three of three of these (and still be covered by the club's public liability insurance), so if you are interested, send Jeff an email ([jeff@jvinter.plus.com](mailto:jeff@jvinter.plus.com)) and he will send you a copy of the current area programme.

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## **Rosie's Diary: Who has the Last Laugh?**

*By Rosie*



Welcome again to musings by a patchy quadruped. The first photo brings back happy memories of last spring in Meldon Yard, when I was on duty flushing out the rabbits from under the carriages. They

Pony Spring/Summer 2015

were breaking out of rhododendron cover beside the North Pole when 2 legs Tom insisted on restraining me for this photo with the Station Maintenance Team (SMT). 2 legs Sue unkindly pointed out that I was at least a minute behind in my tracking. Charlie, who looks after Geoff and Chris, a cheerful gent who does not lose his cool, was perfectly composed.



However you can see how restrained I was in the photo shoot on MY station platform. I was attempting to be gracious in the presence of Merlin, who is the woof in the sky for Okehampton Station as well as Jo's fitness trainer, and Jubilee, who manages Bow Station with some help from Dick, Melanie and Ross. If you want a guided sniff and



swim around Meldon then Jubilee or Merlin are your pals. Personally, getting ones eyelashes wet (I have white and brown), is ridiculous, but I go mad for a pooh stick circling in a Red-a-Ven pool. You will see I also did a photo shoot wearing this season's tan effect, a more butch husky look don't

you think, with the added benefit of a fabulous aroma of fox poo. However you have yet to see me in my new high vis, which unfortunately might give another impression, of midlife spread. Tom measured me up for it and, SMT don't laugh, made me 5 inches shorter!

On the Welsh Highland I carried out a sleeper inspection. The old wooden sleepers being taken off The Cob were a bit rotten and I could help, if needed, in their removal by pawful digging. However no chance of that in the future as I don't fancy digging or gnawing on the new recycled plastic sleepers.



Alan and Andy will undoubtedly be interested in my research - they are good mates. If I am looking a bit down, Andy gives me a good run about by winding me up and pretending to frighten me. Whereas I have found that I can wind Alan round my little paw by shivering and shaking until he wraps me up in his best thick coat.

I have recently heard about a two legs called Ecologist. All the Pway team were very impressed by him because he was searching for dormice at the site of the Denbrook level crossing and in the two 30 metre stretches of hedgerow managed to find evidence of a dormouse's dinner last October. It is a hazelnut which is very carefully and smoothly chiselled. But you have to admit it doesn't stand comparison even as a snack with a Markie! Dormice must be very fat



when they go into hibernation for 6 months and very cold as they drop their body temperature to match their surroundings. Clever little 4 paws though, they actually weave a complete ball of grass and shredded honeysuckle about themselves and hunker

down below or just above ground, amongst some brambles. In April they emerge, at night, to find snacks of hawthorn pollen and aphids. They must have a heck of a nose to find those in the dark. Then they climb up trees and stay up in the canopy for 6 months. Now that *is* the way to get close to squirrels!

Despite being a dominant female, I don't actually know what to do when I get close to a little furry creature if it stops, and just looks at me. It is quite different if I spot that someone has left a pair of gloves about. It is important that no one sees me until I have actually run off with one and then I reveal myself by shaking it like a rat, and taunt the owner. I had great fun down the line with Andy T. He was just having a well deserved rest from dragging out the brash, when I struck. I was spotted and chased but will only give up one glove for another, as it is much more of a prize than a stick. I only relinquished it when I had trimmed off the cuff and retained the tasty morsel for further destruction. The only trouble is..... he is in charge of the station BBQ and, in the past has been extremely generous with the leftovers.....ouwwWWW!



