



THE DARTMOOR PONY

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

No.26 Autumn 2016 £2.00



Long Service Celebration

The DARTMOOR PONY

Issue No. 26

Editor: John Caesar

E-mail: museum@dartmoor-railway-sa.org

DARTMOOR RAILWAY SUPPORTERS' ASSOCIATION

Website: www.dartmoor-railway-sa.org

Facebook: 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

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

FRONT COVER: 47828 wearing a special headboard pictured at Meldon on 1st August 2016. *Photo: David Hunt.*

BACK COVER: Top: The lesser-spotted (and currently out-of-service) 0-4-0 shunter 'Flying Falcon' in the yard at Meldon, captured in July by visiting photographer *Adrian Marshall*. Bottom: The new air braked set in the yard at Meldon with newly overhauled and painted 70273 in between driving trailer 61743 and Lab 11, on 31st July 2016. *Photo: Geoff Horner.*

CONTENTS

Notes from the Chairman	Page 4
Railway News	Page 6
Membership Matters	Page 9
Events	Page 10
Rail Operations & Line Update	Page 11
Graham Isom Celebrates 50 Years' Service	Page 15
Carriage & Wagon Report	Page 17
Stations Maintenance Team Report	Page 19
Arthur Westlake Museum	Page 21
Gardening	Page 21
Volunteers	Page 22
OkeRail Forum - update on progress	Page 23
Mining and Quarrying at Meldon	Page 24
Old Maps – Part 4	Page 27
Rosie's Diary	Page 28

Notes from the Chairman

The end of September saw the close of the Sunday services between Okehampton and Exeter and the end of the season for the heritage operations on Dartmoor Railway. This has been a successful season thanks to the hard work and dedication of DRSA volunteers and DR staff. The volunteers of the Carriage and Wagon crew have been busy at Meldon on many different projects including work on some of the Polar Express stock. The newly overhauled and painted carriage 70273 now forms part of the BR liveried Air Braked stock together with 61743 and Lab 11. Work is also progressing on the BR (SR) Brake Van LDS55625.

Volunteers assist in many other ways as well, including station maintenance, lineside vegetation clearance and in the buffet as well as working around the station. This work is greatly appreciated and the station and trains showcase the skills and dedication of all of our volunteers - thank you to all the volunteers and staff who have supported the railway over the past year.

The railway celebrated Graham Isom's 50 years in the industry with a special train which sported a headboard specially commissioned for the occasion and which was placed on 47428 through the end of the season's running.

DRSA will continue to support DR by assisting in the operation of the heritage service between Okehampton and Meldon. We are fortunate in having a terminus at Meldon which allows visitors to explore the area, either from the vantage point on Meldon Viaduct or by venturing out onto Dartmoor.

We are now moving into the Autumn which means that the Polar Express season is with us again. This is a time when the railway welcomes many visitors for many parts of the country and when the story of the Polar Express is retold by the team on board the train. There is much to do behind the scenes before the trains can run and many people have been working hard so as to provide the setting for

this year's Polar Express. If you have visited the station recently you will have seen the extension to the siding on platform 2 which will assist with the operation of the Polar Express this year. New track has been put in place and many people have worked on this project as can be seen by the pages on the DRSA website.

Mention also must be made of the shop, which is a new venture for DRSA, and which has been very successful so far thanks to Chris Horner and the shop team volunteers. I would like to thank all those who have volunteered at the shop and to everyone who has donated books and other items to sell. The shop together with the Arthur Westlake Museum, which John Caesar and the team are developing, give a focus for visitors who go on to Platform 2.

As we come to the end of this year, it's time to think about renewing your membership or taking out membership for the first time! DRSA supports DR in many different ways and by taking out, or renewing, your membership we can offer more support to the railway in 2017. Thank you for taking the time to consider membership again this year. I trust that you will join or rejoin. We will continue to keep you up to date through the publication of the Pony magazine and information is also available via the DRSA website.

Again, thank you to all the committee, volunteers, DR staff, our members and friends for your support over this last year and we look forward to a new season in 2017. In the meantime, may I wish you a Happy Christmas and a good New Year.

Rev. Philip Wagstaff

Railway News

For your future entertainment!

DRSA is currently working with the South West Film and Television Archive at Plymouth to produce a collection of archive railway films of the Southern in the South West, with particular reference to lines west of Exeter. The DVD to be produced will include some previously unseen amateur footage. Research is still under way, but film so far identified includes shots taken on the North Cornwall line, Halwill - Torrington, the Callington branch, Exeter - Barnstaple, Tavistock, plus lovely footage of the Lynton and Barnstaple railway which closed in 1935. DRSA will be licensed to use the film publicly over a three month period, and our intention is to show it at more than one location in Devon. We hope that many of the membership will jump at this opportunity of seeing this fascinating collection of archive material in due course. Watch out for further announcements!

Dave Clegg

SR Platform Seats purchased

We have recently taken delivery of 4 ex-Southern platform seats which we were fortunate to be able to purchase from the West Somerset Railway Association (WSRA) station groups at Stogumber and Dunster. These particular seats were purchased by the WSR from BR having been made redundant in the 1970's from North Devon stations. It could be said that they are, fittingly, being repatriated to Devon. These seats are in excellent condition having recently been displaced on the WSR by more appropriate GWR seats and only need repainting from GWR colours to Southern Green. It is planned that three of these seats will be sited at Okehampton station and one at Sampford Courtenay station. We are most grateful to long time WSRA member and volunteer Robin White for assistance in the acquisition by us and transport of these Southern Railway seats.

Tony Hill



Painting the FK

Our 1967 Mk2A Corridor First (FK) coach, S13436, is due in the workshop for attention to its windows. As its paintwork is getting a little tired, the C&W team is considering giving it a refresh.



The suggestion has been made that its present plain dark green doesn't live up to the quality of the interior and the passenger experience, so we throw it open to members to propose an appropriate colour scheme for it. Warily, in view of 'Boaty McBoatface', we wonder if it could also be named? Frances the FK has been suggested... Members' views on these two questions to me (e-mail jonathankelsey@btinternet.com) by 20th December, please.

Jon Kelsey

An evening of steam nostalgia

A group of around 20 people enjoyed an evening with Simon Foote, who shared his photographs and sound recordings for an event arranged by DRSA at the Kings Arms, Tedburn St Mary, on 26th October. Simon took us on a tour of the country, featuring photos of locomotives from all of the 'Big Four' railway companies, and there were plenty of photographs (and sound recordings) of Bulleid Pacifics and T9s to keep the Southern fans happy.

OkeRail Public Event

On Saturday 12th November there was a well attended public event held in the Charter Hall in Okehampton to consult and inform on the growing campaign to reinstate a regular train service between Okehampton and Exeter. The DRSA sales & information stand, manned by Sue Baxter, with assistance from Tom Baxter and myself, received constant interest, generating about £90 in sales and donations and also some enquiries for membership. Besides several local dignitaries, the local MP Mel Stride also visited and spent time in discussion with many of those present.

Tony Hill

DRSA out and about

The 17th August saw a small group of DRSA volunteers on an awayday to the Avon Valley Railway, situated between Bristol and Bath. There is currently around 3 miles of track centred on the station at Bitton, which forms part of the old Midland Railway route that was opened in 1869 as a link between Birmingham and the South Coast, and which was closed under the Beeching cuts. A couple of journeys along the line were made, hauled by Hunslet 0-6-0ST 'Sapper', and participants were treated to a tour of the yard and workshop by some of the resident volunteers.

On 25th September, a small band of DRSA members visited the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway's Autumn Steam Gala. This photo (courtesy of Jon Kelsey) shows 'Lyd', the Manning Wardle replica built at Boston Lodge on the Ffestiniog Railway,



arriving at Woody Bay with the L&B's heritage coaches. What other preserved railway with a discontinuous history can run such an authentic train?

Membership Matters

Peter Flick, Membership Secretary

Since our last issue, we have been pleased to welcome Andrew Folland of Copplestone, Gregory Bennett of North Tawton, and James and Pamela Lamb of Bridestowe to membership.

Application forms for new members can be downloaded from the website. Please do what you can to swell our numbers. Current members will receive renewal forms by post in late November or early December.

<http://www.dartmoor-railway-sa.org/membership>

A NEW BENEFIT! All paid-up members in 2017 will be entitled to one free Dartmoor Railway ticket. Included with the membership card will be a voucher, to be exchanged at Okehampton station ticket office, for an All Day Rover ticket, valid on ordinary services. This benefit is based on the assumption that the 2017 timetable structure and fares will be similar to 2016. As such, at present it is provisional. It will NOT be valid on special event days or on Polar Express.

Online Fundraising

With Christmas approaching, don't forget that by doing your online shopping after visiting our [easyfundraising](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/drsa) page you can raise donations towards DRSA at no cost to you - *over £1500 has been raised so far!*

www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/drsa

Over 2700 retailers take part in the scheme, including Amazon, John Lewis, M&S, Asda, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Argos and Expedia.

Please contact our Treasurer Christine Horner if you would like more information.

Members' Events

DRSA Christmas Social – 15th December 2016

The annual DRSA Christmas meal will take place at the Fox and Hounds at Shortacombe near Lydford on the A386 Okehampton to Tavistock road. If you are going to attend, please contact Geoff Horner by Sunday December 11th, on g.horner936@btinternet.com, 01363 82383 or 07769 736536, indicating whether you want a 2-course or 3-course meal. The F&H Christmas menu can be downloaded from the following link:

<http://www.dartmoor-railway-sa.org/cms/files/F-and-H-menu-2016.jpg>

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

Other Events

From a field to the National Railway Museum – 19th April 2017

The speaker at the monthly meeting of the Mid Devon Tractor Engine and Machinery Group at Morchard Bishop Memorial Hall (EX17 6PL) will be Nick Stringer. Nick's subject, 'From a field to the National Railway Museum', covers the restoration of a 1930s LNER Gresley teak carriage. The standard of restoration was so high that the carriage was 'borrowed' by the NRM to sit alongside 'The Flying Scotsman' as part of the recent NRM exhibition. Anyone interested in attending is welcome, at no cost. A phone call to Michael Coleman on 01363 84622 would be helpful for catering purposes as there are refreshments in the interval. The event begins at 19:30.

Rail Operations & Line Update

Paul Martin, Duty Manager

Den Brook Crossing

Den Brook wind farm is now operational. The crossing was lifted in late October and installed again by new contractors to remedy the existing defects. A test train (47828 and Polar Express rake) was run over it at variable speeds to bed the track down and identify any issues. This involved one very late finish when the work was not completed as scheduled due to the returning train being further delayed by 30 minutes of herding sheep! The train had to return the following day to complete the process. Once the gates have been refitted the speed restriction will be lifted. The crossing will now be locked out.

Line Update

The biggest piece of work on the line has been the extension to the Platform 2 line at Okehampton station. The DRSA website has reported on progress and it seems a long time ago that a group of volunteers helped clear some of the scrub. Since then the track crew have used all their machinery on clearing and laying the new bit of track. The extension is still on the area level with the running line towards Crediton. Once the new track was laid and packed down, the buffer stops also had to be refitted and electrics extended to ensure it had working red stop lights. It all looks very smart and is already in use for stabling the Polar Express rake. It will enable easier stabling of this rake and all 3 of the locos. It is hoped in 2017 that the track will be extended further and up onto the old shelf so it remains level. The installation of catchpoints would enable a short train to be stabled there out of section.

The running line into Meldon is also having remedial work undertaken on a curve close to the start of Meldon Quarry sidings.

Rail Operations

The EMU stock owned by Peter Spokes which were due to leave in March have now been split, with 3 vehicles to leave by road and one to be probably scrapped on site. The 4-CIG driving trailer, 76747, has been acquired by Julian Pope and will remain on site.

Heritage Services

The Meldon Shuttle heritage service continued to run until the end of September. 08937 soldiered on with increasing amount of attention from Julian Pope as it developed numerous faults. It did not quite make it to the end of the season and 47828 had to cover for the last few weeks. 70273, a Mark 1 carriage from an SR EMU, was added to the air braked rake from August and this was used when the 47 was operating. This carriage, owned by Julian Pope, has been a long term restoration project for the railway and it was great to see it in use. The 08 operated with the vacuum braked set which saw a welcome return for the FK corridor coach and the LMS brake van. Both proved to be popular with passengers. On August Bank Holiday we involved nearly all our train crew and ran both sets with the 08 running the Meldon Shuttle and the 47 operating between Okehampton and our boundary with Network Rail - the day was well attended.

Despite minimal publicity for the services, almost 3000 people travelled with us during the season, with Sundays and Bank Holidays being the busiest days. Feedback was very positive. Special thanks to Keith Netherton and Graham Isom who performed all the driving duties alongside trainees. Our small team of guards also dutifully covered every operating day. Gerald Hocking was a stalwart in the Ticket Office selling tickets and making station announcements covering virtually every weekend.

Exeter Services

The Okehampton to Exeter services continued until September 11th. All the publicity obviously paid off this year with the services being well used and each service having ~50% more passengers in both directions. It was great to see so many people coming out to Okehampton for a day out and the station was certainly busy on those days. Only one weekend later in the season was the service made up of a single carriage unit due to availability issues. One train had over 120 people on it once it left Crediton for Exeter, which was the highest to date. 153 units were the main traction, with 143s a few times, and once we were treated to a 2-car 150 unit.

Polar Express

The Polar Express (PE) coaches have been prepared and one more coach will arrive by road. 47828 will be one of the main PE locos, providing train heat as well. Class 45 45060 will be the other main loco on PE. Class 33 33035 (owned by Pioneer Diesels who also own 45060) will be the standby loco this year.

Skid Pan Training

GWR were on the railway for their annual skid pan training for drivers in October. They also used Sampford Courtenay station for their 'Fail to Stop' training. Sadly the unhealthy unit they used for the first week failed and some days had to be cancelled, but another 143 unit was found for the second week of training.

Training

The training outlined in the last issue has been ongoing. Both Rachael Wilson and Julian Pope were passed out as drivers in September. New volunteer Andy Folland, who assisted Gerald in the Ticket Office, also started as a Trainee Ticket Inspector. If you are interested in any role and/or training make it known to anybody on the DRSA committee and they will point you in the right direction.

Traction Update

08937: The workhorse of the heritage services this year struggled on through the summer. The original water leak got worse until new 'water telephones' were fitted by Julian. It used an inordinate amount of oil and various replacement parts were tried to keep it going until September when it was taken out of service. It is hoped some work by RMS Locotec may be possible in the off season and hefty overhaul can occur to get it back to full operational status. Presently it is restricted to work in Meldon Quarry sidings.

47828: D05 Preservation's Class 47 resided at Dartmoor Railway for the whole summer. It reliably provided back-up for the 08 on heritage services and also ran a number of engineering trains. After Polar Express season, it is planned to have its roof grilles replaced with earlier version grilles. A full repaint into a new livery is also planned

for 2017. The locomotive will be resident at Dartmoor Railway, though will be made available for galas at other heritage railways and any spot hire main line work as it is still main line certified. You may have seen in internet forums that D05 Preservation has also acquired Class 46 46010. This is currently at GCR (Ruddington) and is a long-term restoration project.

1132 (Thumper Unit): It seems a long time ago that 1132 returned from Bristol after tyre turning. Sadly, one of the carriage's wheelsets was too thin to be turned. An alternative set of bogies would be prohibitive cost-wise so the provisional plan is to swap the bogies out with the set on Thumper 1128 at Meldon. This would require a crane to be brought in and, if it occurs, this would be next year. It would be good to see 1132 back out on heritage services where it is cost effective and popular.

A message from Percy...

In case you missed it, I arrived at the station this summer! I am the official Station Cat and live at the station. If you've been to the station recently you most likely have met me and hopefully said 'hello'. Officially I am the pest controller and I have displayed my rodent eating skills to visitors!! I have lots of other duties such as



welcoming visitors both 2 legged and 4 legged. I've even made friends with Rosie. I have my own Facebook page where you can read about all my exploits, just search for 'Percy Okehampton station cat'. So I'll not take up any more space here and I need to start work on my Christmas wish list....

Graham Isom Celebrates 50 Years' Service

David Hunt

On 1st August 2016 a special event took place on the Dartmoor Railway, being the date on which Graham Isom attained 50 years of service in the railway industry.



Graham started his railway career at Ipswich before moving on to Norwich, Stratford and Ilford Training School on what was then the Eastern Region. He then moved to Swindon on the Western Region and retired from Plymouth as the Driver Standards Manager. He soon

found that his expertise was still required by the main line companies and spent some time undertaking various projects as a contractor.

He then became General Manager of the Dartmoor Railway, which brought him into contact with the Heritage Railway scene. He later moved to the sister company as General Manager of the Weardale Railway which took him to live in the northeast. He eventually retired from that post and returned to Devon where he resumed his association with the Dartmoor Railway and where he still performs as a regular driver as well as being duty manager at Okehampton on a relief basis, and looks after the regulatory requirements of running a railway. He also acts as driving trainer and deals with driving competence assessment and certification on the Dartmoor Railway, both for its own staff and persons coming in from other railways and groups, and is often asked to travel to other railways to perform such duties.

On 1st August it had been arranged for him to conduct a 'Rules and Regulations' refresher for certain of the Dartmoor Railway volunteers which was to be held in Okehampton signal box. Unbeknown to him, plans were in motion at Meldon Quarry for a day of running to take place with him as the special guest.



47828 had been made ready with new ‘Cockney Sparrow’ stickers on the cab sides below the driver’s windows to commemorate his time at Stratford, and a commemorative headboard had been made especially for

the day. The train comprised of former research vehicle RDB 975046 (Lab 11), former 4 Cep TSOL S 70273 (which was the first journey of this vehicle after restoration and painting, and which now has the name *Elizabeth* under the numbers on both sides) and former 4 Cep DMSO S61743. The train started from the Meldon Viaduct platform at 10.35 with family, work colleagues (both past and present) and friends on board for the short journey to Okehampton where the time honoured tradition of a symphony of exploding detonators greeted its approach to Okehampton station.

The ‘Rules and Regulations’ refresher promptly ceased (the participants all knowing what was going to happen) and the day then continued with various trips from Okehampton to the Network Rail boundary at Coleford and up to Meldon, some of which Graham drove and others which he travelled as a passenger to greet and talk over old times with those who had gathered.



Thanks must go to the Dartmoor Railway for providing the train and allowing it to run, for the headboard, and also for the lavish mid-day buffet with cakes suitably decorated for the event. Also to members of the Dartmoor Railway Supporters’ Association who provided their services free, and all those people who assembled for the day to make it such a success, including one officer from the American parent company who had flown across the pond especially for the event.

Carriage & Wagon Report

Geoff Horner

As this is the last 'Pony' of 2016 it seemed the right moment to look back at the activities of the C&W team over 2016.

From January through to July most of our time was spent on the refurbishment and repainting of TSO 70273. The completed carriage entered into service on the 10th August as part of the three-coach heritage air braked set (see photo on back cover) forming the Graham Isom 50th Anniversary train.

Whilst the work to 70273 was going on we also spent some time in March getting the DRSA owned 'FK' corridor compartment coach S13436 and Lab11 ready for the start of this year's heritage services.

In April we were delighted to take delivery of new safety barriers for our work trestles. The purchase of the barriers was made possible by a generous grant from Okehampton United Charities who have over the past few years been willing and generous supporters of the DRSA and to whom we are extremely grateful.

April and May also saw us occupied on the DRSA's ex LMS Goods Brake Van 731411 replacing some of the rotten timber work.

July saw a combined C&W/Station Maintenance team begin preliminary work on the restoration of our ex Southern goods brake van. So far the work has consisted of temporarily weatherproofing the roof with a tarpaulin and starting to deal with the damaged or missing axle boxes and bearings. For those who would like to see more pictures of this work than space permits here it is more fully recorded on the 'Work in Progress' section of our DRSA website. Here you will also find photographs recording the doings of all the DRSA volunteer groups.



DRSA's BR (SR) Brake Van at the back of the Meldon workshop on 16th April 2016 before work began (Jon Kelsey).

August and September were mainly given over to repainting for DR two of the 'Polar Express' standard class carriages in the corporate 'Polar Express' blue livery.

With the painting of these two carriages completed, October saw us return to working on our own DRSA vehicles. Currently in the shed are the 'FK' corridor compartment coach S13436 and the ex LMS Goods Brake Van 731411. Several of the double glazed windows on the 'FK' are misting up because the double glazing has failed and these are to be taken out and replaced as single glazed units. It is also planned to repaint this carriage over the coming months and to do some tidying up of the interior. At the same time there are yet more rotten timbers to be replaced on the brake van and once this is done it will also be repainted. The coming months will also see work continuing on the BR/SR brake van, so plenty in the pipe line to keep C&W busy and out of mischief!

Stations Maintenance Team Report

Tom Baxter, Stations Maintenance Team Co-ordinator

As we approach the end of another year it is well to review the work we have done during that time. Most of the work has been on and around Okehampton station as would be expected.

The year started with the now normal restoration of items to platform 3 following the Polar Express. Storage of these was made easier by the area we now have available on platform 2. Although the downside of this was the need to put the museum rooms out of use during this time as they are used for the storage of the sack trucks, luggage and barrows etc.

Regarding these items, we have started a progressive repair and refurbishment of several during the year. In particular the spoked wheel barrow and ex-Barnstaple sack truck. The barrow and sack truck had a woodworm issue that had eaten away some of the woodwork. This we've replaced or repaired and are part way through a repaint. Stripping the paint off the wheels has proved difficult and has revealed a tarred finish underneath which has surprised us.

We were pleased to welcome David Bell to the team during the year and he has proved adept at undertaking a number of projects. During the year the station's booking on point was moved to the lean to building attached to the footbridge. Unfortunately a number of leaks in the roof area were discovered and David has diligently pursued these and the building is now far more watertight. He has also taken the footbridge 'under his wing' and is currently re-pointing areas where the mortar has deteriorated. We have before described this structure as our 'Forth Bridge' and it is a beast where you do a bit (and continue to do a bit) but never really finish. Someone asked us the other day about when we would be restoring the glazing. We wish, but in the absence of a rich sponsor, something that can only ever be a dream for the future.

Painting is the other item extensively done by the team. Geoff Brooks is our wizard painter and has just about completed a repaint of all the

platform fencing on platform 2. This is despite him needing some 'works attention' during the year. Despite this he was soon back and off again with paint brush in hand. It is a very extensive job given the amount of wood used in a palisade fence. However as a result of this platform 2 is looking very smart and a big credit to all the those involved.

Other stalwarts are John Coxon, Jon Kelsey and John Caesar. John Coxon ably attends to various 'plumbing emergencies'. Some involving the toilets which can be less than pleasant. However this must save the railway much money as the cost of an emergency plumber could be enormous. Jon Kelsey is on the case with the barrow and sack truck and John Caesar keeps the museum in good order. Also a mention must go to Paul Van der Linden who has refurbished the platform ticket machine as a homework project. Hopefully it can be put back in to service next year dispensing souvenir platform tickets.

We have also occasionally strayed in to carriage and wagon territory and have assisted with the restoration of the SR Brake Van at Meldon. Mainly dismantling various bits of it so far but hopefully putting it back together in due course. If we can remember where the bits go, of course!

Finally, and this should never be forgotten, is vegetation clearance. The Devon 'Amazon' grows weeds, buddleia, trees and basically anything which will grow out of any available crevice. Recently we've been cutting back various saplings and overhanging branches near the GUV van at the Meldon end of the station. Much more to do but probably in the New Year after Polar Express.

Again many thanks to our stalwarts who continue to support the 'Team'. Work would not get done without them and, as always, any others who would like to join us would be very welcome. Relatively simple DIY skills are needed although extra skills and knowledge are always most appreciated. We also now have our own tea brewing and meal room area on platform 2. If we speak nicely to the shop folks, there is also a chance to preview various railway dvd/videos and books during the lunch breaks.

Arthur Westlake Museum

John Caesar

Now that winter (and the Polar Express) is approaching, the museum is winding down for its annual hibernation. Over the past year, we've managed to open up the second museum room on Platform 2, and are in the process of trying to improve the exhibits and information on display in there.

We have had a number of interesting new items come in over the past year. You wait ages for a London and South Western Railway boundary marker, and two come along at once! Many thanks to Neal Westlake and Ian Doswell for these interesting (and heavy) cast iron objects. Railway boundary markers of various forms were used by railway companies to mark out the limits of their land ownership sometimes in places where fences might not have been practical, or where the land boundaries extended some way beyond the fenced railway line.

DRSA member Keith Beaumont has provided a Southern Railway design signal lamp which will also be going on display for next year.

Gardening

Sue Baxter

A warm, dry and calm autumn has meant a little extra watering has been needed to keep the remaining conifers, now root bound in their tubs, to keep growing. However, several are stallwarts aged about 19 years. They and some tubs are gradually being replaced now. This is proving a big job, but it is good to be using much of our own compost from the stations three compost bins. Some is especially fine due to ants making their nests in them. Butterflies have been scarcer this year, matching the national picture. However, the wildflower patch has continued to have interest, albeit not strictly native. The sweet peas love the bit of shelter and the sunflowers were very nearly above fence level. Hopefully birds rather than mice will soon start feeding on the seeds. Tall *aster ericoides*, a white relative of michaelmas

daisy, has been a beautiful, waving statement through late autumn with plenty of yellow pollen for passing insects.

Ann and Mavis have been planting up small wind resistant daffodils *tête-à-tête*, yellow winter *aconites* and *anemone blanda* for early colour. We hope Percy will keep the mice at bay as the anemones are apparently a favourite snack! Meanwhile trailing begonias have made a brilliant display in the tubs. A red one is particularly striking against the grey foliage of *senecio maritimus*. *Abelia x grandiflora* is out in the open for a while now as Platform 3 gets cleared for Polar Express. The shrub (which is awarded Garden Merit by RHS) continues to carry delicate pink tubular scented flowers on near evergreen arching foliage. We hope you all find some plants to enjoy during the winter.

Volunteers

Geoff Horner, Volunteer Coordinator

May I take the opportunity of the last 'Pony' of 2016 to publicly acknowledge the efforts of the 40+ volunteers who have worked so hard over the year to keep the trains running and the carriages and other vehicles refurbished and repaired, taking care of the station and its floral displays, manning the ticket office and our shop, helping in the buffet and all the other numerous tasks, often unseen, that the DRSA volunteers undertake on the railway week in and week out. Without your support and commitment, the Dartmoor Railway heritage services would not have run.

A total of over 40 volunteers active around the railway are too numerous to mention individually within the space available as I am sure you will understand. On behalf of the committee and the whole DRSA membership a heartfelt Thank You to each and every one of you.

OkeRail Forum – update on progress

Sue Baxter & Tony Hill, DRSA members of OkeRail forum

It is now nearly a year since the DCC initiated OkeRail Forum/Group/team was formed with the specific objective to reinstate a regular passenger train service between Okehampton and Exeter, which ceased in 1972.

A major concern is that the Dartmoor Railway management has recently withdrawn from this Forum. This followed press reports quoting local elected representatives of the people of Okehampton expressing unhappiness at an Okehampton Town Council meeting that the Exeter services could terminate in a bay platform at the (still to be fully financed and built) Okehampton (East) Parkway. This would enable Dartmoor Railway to run the major component of their current business - the "Polar Express" trains that run for about 20 weekday afternoon and evenings in November and December.

Clearly a best solution is to be sought when both the Polar Express and the Exeter service would be running. We suggested 'bustitution' of scheduled services during that time as is timetabled on some National Rail lines.

At the most recent meeting of the Forum on 26th October we were pleased to hear that discussions are on-going at County level with Dartmoor Railway and that DR remains committed to a regular passenger service coming to Okehampton.

We now wait with bated breath until next February. Then we will learn if the successful winner of the South West Trains franchise (which renews next June) has any plans to run trains west of Exeter and, hopefully, to Okehampton.

Mining and Quarrying at Meldon

Jon Kelsey

Meldon's complex and unique geology created a rich array of resources which was heavily exploited by mining and quarrying in the last few centuries. Quite a lot of evidence remains, but in some cases nature has had well over a century to reassert itself, so the evidence is well hidden and difficult to interpret. It's a fascinating area which needs a detailed study. Perhaps this brief overview will whet someone's appetite.

Limestone Quarrying

In the agricultural boom of the 18th and 19th centuries, lime was in great demand as a soil improver, and the area's limited limestone resources were heavily exploited to meet the need. There is a small limestone outcrop at Meldon which was quarried until, at the end of the 19th century, it became too expensive to follow the steeply dipping deposit downwards. When the drainage pumps were turned off, the quarry filled with water to create what is now the 130ft deep Meldon Pool. Two limekilns remain; one near the pool dating from the late 19th century, and one further east from about 1790. Originally the limestone was probably roasted with charcoal from coppiced oak woodland in Meldon Woods, but the railway enabled coal to be imported after 1874. There is evidence of inclined tramways used to charge the kilns. Other surviving relics include a weighhouse with the iron platform of the weighbridge, numerous finger dumps which would have carried tramways for removing spoil, a wheelpit and an assortment of earthworks and stoneworks.

Red-a-Ven mine

Attempts to exploit the copper mineral chalcopyrite (and possibly the arsenic mineral arsenopyrite) took place here on several occasions during the 19th century; sometimes under the alternative names Meldon Mine, Devon Copper Mine or Okehampton Wheal Maria. There is no evidence of commercial success; nor is there any for Homerton Mine and Forest Mine, mines which used the same mineralisation a little further south west and were submerged under the

reservoir in 1972. At Red-a-Ven there is a wheelpit, adit, shaft and numerous dumps, though they are well hidden.

Aplite Quarries and Glass Making

The chemical composition of the Meldon aplite (a fine-grained form of granite, also known as granulite or microgranite) is unique in Britain, and ideal for glass making, although it was also used for other purposes including roadstone. The deposit is in the form of an 18 metre wide dyke, bisected by the Red-a-Ven Brook. There is evidence of aplite quarrying and glass production in the late 19th century. In 1920 an attempt was made to establish a major glass works at Meldon, but it was unsuccessful and ceased by 1921. Quarrying had certainly finished by the 1970s if not before. Examples of Meldon glass products can be seen in the Museum of Dartmoor Life in Okehampton, and occasionally pieces of glass turn up on the site. Some of the quarry buildings still exist in the vicinity, as well as various waste dumps and earthworks.

Meldon Quarry

The hard hornfels rock in the Meldon area was created 280 million years ago when mudstones and shales were baked and squeezed by the emplacement of the Dartmoor granite. Discovered during the construction of the railway, the Meldon hornfels has a crushing strength of about 75000 lbs per square inch (twice that of the Dartmoor granite, for example) and makes high quality railway ballast. By the mid 1890s the quarry was in production, soon to be producing over 100,000 tons annually, a substantial proportion of Britain's railway needs. The quarry was a significant employer until less labour intensive production techniques were introduced. A halt for quarry workers' trains was constructed during the 1920s (not the present DR one), and a terrace of 12 workers' cottages was built at the turn of the 20th century and demolished in 1994. BR sold the quarry in 1994 to ECC Quarries, subsequently part of Aggregate Industries. The quarry was in production until it was mothballed in 2011. Subsequently most of the machinery was dismantled and removed.

Access Restrictions

Please note that quarry working restrictions are still in force at Meldon Quarry, and unauthorised access is strictly forbidden. The Aplite Quarries and Red-a-Ven mine are in a Site of Special Scientific Interest at which mineral collection is forbidden.

References and further reading:

- Exploring a Dartmoor Valley, Keene, Peter, 2007, pub. DCC/Dartmoor NPA. Available in the DRSA shop.
- Geology Explained: Dartmoor and the Tamar Valley, Perkins, John W, 1972, pub. David and Charles.
- The Metalliferous Mining Region of South West England, volume 2, Dynes, H.G., 1956, pub. British Geological Survey.
- Meldon – A Railway Quarry, Reeve, George, article published in British Railways Illustrated Magazine Volume 2 No. 2 : December 1992 - Jan 1993
- <http://www.devon.gov.uk/geo-meldon-aplites-quarry.pdf>
- There are interpretation boards on the Granite Way fence near the Quarry, on the Viaduct and in the Quarry car park.
- The Rock Park. Created in 2009 to illustrate the types of rock found in the quarry, the display comprises 9 large boulders and a comprehensive interpretation board. It is a few metres east of the DR buffet coach.

DRSA Shop

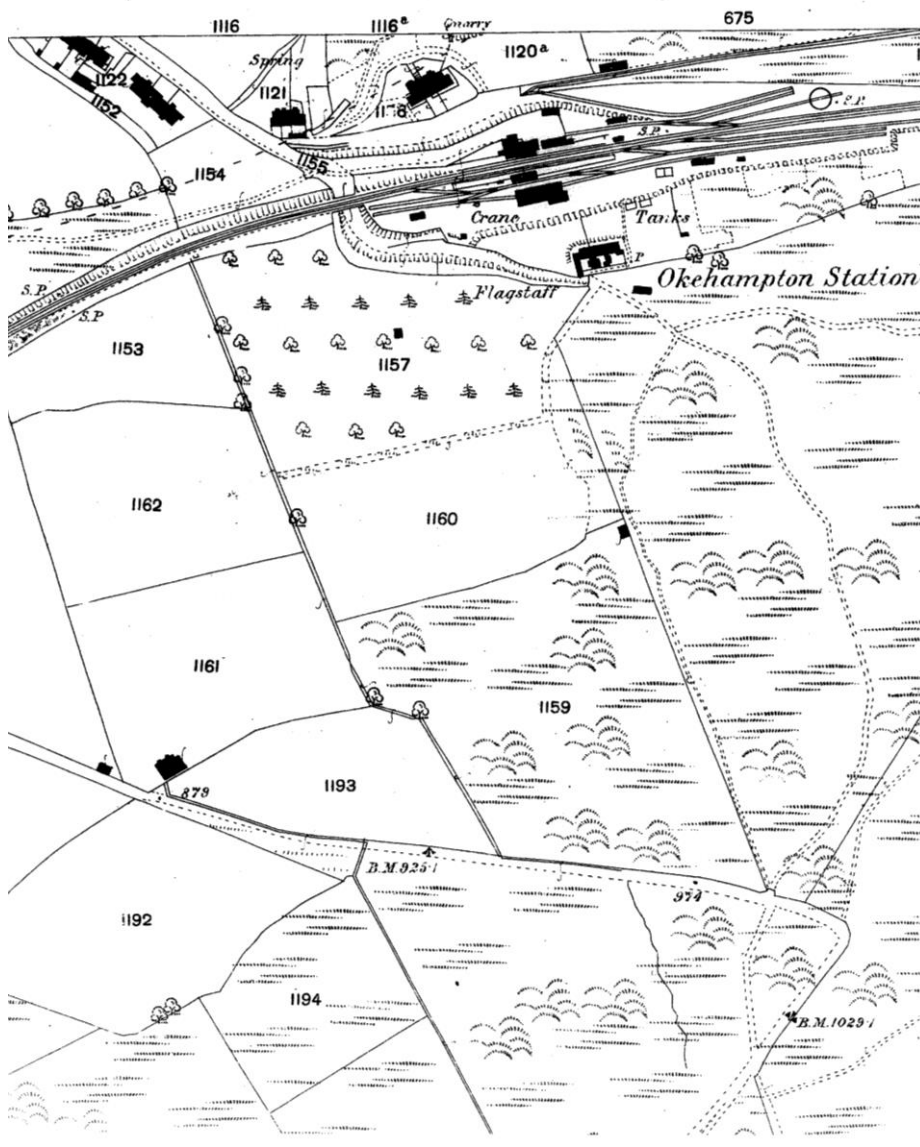
Platform 2

We welcome donations of railway books, railway miscellanea, model railway items, paperbacks and hardback books, railway DVDs and videos.

Contact Christine Horner for further details:
christine.horner@talk21.com

Old Maps (Part 4) – Okehampton, 1884

Jon Kelsey



Rosie's Diary - Upstaged by Percy? Or Another Station

Ally?

By Rosie

I knew about Percy before we met. My two legs had already fondled him and I caught his scent. He is no longer a full Tom and so I approached with wagging tail at our first meeting. Likewise the young gent ran over and in no time at all we were nose to nose briefly,



then I was allowed to sniff his bottom (just a courtesy gesture you understand). That is now our standard meet and greet. Percy knows I will not be demented like the occasional canine 4 paws platform visitor. We have certain things in common. His unsettled early days were on the streets in Torquay, and he had to be taken in for medical treatment. But like me he has landed on four feet. At Oke Station he has his own Catfather in Paul, our Duty Manager. However I am now the only station volunteer not allowed in the Booking On Point. Why? Because Percy's dinner plates are there!

Usually he has free roam of the station and I am scandalised at the way he jumps down onto the tracks to cross from Platform 3 to 2. *His catfather clearly has not impressed him with the necessity of using the safe route via the footbridge.* On another note he has shown ignorance of ticketing, having made several attempts to get to Exeter on the Sunday Rover, without having an accompanying fee paying passenger! He has, like me, nearly changed colour. He walked over and up against white newly painted wood. At his age I was investigating

rodent holes besides a large can of especially water resistant black fishplate grease. We both protested at the ensuing scrub down.

Percy's main role is Rodent Controller which I am sure he does very well. However I don't see wagtails or jackdaws on Platform 3 now after visitors have gone. Generally, Percy is very friendly unless pushed too far. So remember that his wagging tail is not the sociable sign that mine is. He does have claws and he may use them, especially



when approached at ground level by a bald head! The Post Office Barrow is his throne, catching the sun and giving a prime view of all goings on.

Time now to give you an insight into my travels. The highlight has been riding on the Bala Lake Railway. Reason? You

can see the open carriage seats are perfect, robust wooden slats offering some grip and all my white hairs whisked away on the wind instead of sticking to upholstery. I was able to revel in all the local scents, and heard geese cronking overhead. In the future, I look forward to riding down the road into Bala town itself. They have plans to follow the precedent of the Welsh Highland Railway which has shown how trains and cars can safely mix, in Porthmadog.



You can see I was very relaxed when a little steam engine ran round. I am not always so, especially if big Garratts release steam at ground level from their cylinders. The name was intriguing, 'Holy War'. Surely she did not help out in the Crusades? No! She is a 1908 Hunslet named after a racehorse. Can you imagine how she managed to survive being trapped by a rockfall at 1,860 above sea level in Dinorwic Quarry under Snowdon? By being dismantled and sent down two levels on a ropeway!! - braver than me.

Memories now from the last heritage services that I supervised in September. Firstly I am so grateful for the frequent compliments on my good looks, fine coat and calm nature. However I still have to apologise for occasionally showing teeth. Usually it is when someone tries to stroke me when actually I am focussed on hypnotising someone else into giving me a little of their food!

Secondly you must hear Richard Fortt's musings. He first remembers visiting Okehampton in the early 1940's to see his uncle Harold Brooking. He was a cattle and pig farmer at Brightley with responsibility for allocating pig food to the local producers. The beasts were herded through town to the cattle market (Waitrose now!) Aged 7 or 8, Richard also helped the drive up Station Road. He ran ahead of the Red Devon beef cattle to be sure all the garden gates were shut, or stand in open driveways to shoo them past (a different traffic issue to today's). Then under the railway bridge, past the goods shed (YHA now!) and into pens, until they could be driven up earth ramps directly into cattle trucks. It is great that Richard still pays our train a visit when he comes.

So, Percy is still a youngster and inclined to be running and swaggering all over the station (and neighbouring houses). But you may find us both stretched out in the sunshine together briefly, in comfortable companionship. Between us we keep good eyes, ears and noses on our station. If only we could tell you *all we know*.

Committee of the Dartmoor Railway Supporters' Association

Chairman: Philip Wagstaff

Vice-Chairman: Sue Baxter

Secretary: Jon Kelsey

Treasurer: Christine Horner

Membership Secretary: Peter Flick

Volunteer Coordinator: Geoff Horner

Committee Members:

Dave Clegg, Tony Hill, Peter Ritchie

Association Contacts

General Enquiries: info@dartmoor-railway-sa.org

Membership: prflick@dartmoor-it.co.uk

Peter Flick, Copse, Exeter Road,
Sticklepath, Okehampton,
EX20 2NR

Tel: 01837 840670

Volunteering: volunteering@dartmoor-railway-sa.org

Secretary: jonathankelsey@btinternet.com

Treasurer: christine.horner@talk21.com

Museum: museum@dartmoor-railway-sa.org

Website: www.dartmoor-railway-sa.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/dartmoorrailway.sa

