



THE DARTMOOR PONY

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

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Royal Oke II

The DARTMOOR PONY

Issue No. 32

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DARTMOOR RAILWAY SUPPORTERS' ASSOCIATION

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

FRONT COVER: 43118 arriving into Okehampton with the train to form the Royal Oke to Stratford upon Avon on Saturday 21st April 2018. *Photo: David Hunt.*

BACK COVER: Top: Not a train in sight, but the wonderful bluebells at Meldon. *Photo: Dave Clegg.* Bottom: With snow still on the ground at Okehampton on 4th March 2018, Class 153 unit 153372 visits the line for GWR driver training. *Photo: David Hunt.*

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Notes from the Chairman

Rev. Philip Wagstaff

At our Annual Meeting held in May this year we were able to review what DRSA as an Association has done over the past year and also look forward to next year. Much has been achieved by our volunteers and DRSA members which has meant that we have been able to support Dartmoor Railway CIC in the running of the heritage service between Okehampton and Meldon. Volunteers have helped with station maintenance and providing members of train crew, selling tickets, serving in the shop, working in Carriage and Wagon maintenance and in the buffet. All association members through their membership and interest are supporting the railway – thank you.

At the AGM we had a conversation around how we support the railway and this theme will be part of the deliberations of the committee over the next year. If you have any thoughts as to ways that DRSA can support Dartmoor Railway, then please let a member of the committee know. We are fortunate that we have many hard-working volunteers at present and I would like to thank them for the time and energy that they give to the railway. Potential new volunteers are always welcome, especially for those areas which assist the operation of the railway. If you or anyone you know may be interested in volunteering, please let Geoff Horner, our volunteer co-ordinator, know.

Also at the AGM the existing committee were elected as last year. We have a hard working committee who work on behalf of the members and we seek to listen and respond to opportunities and concerns so please let us know of either. I would like to thank the committee for their hard work over the last year.

Since the publication of the last issue of the Pony, the weekend heritage service has begun using the Association's stock of Lab 11, the Mark 2 FK and the ex-LMS Brakevan. The motive power has been the Class 08. When the trains are running the DRSA Shop and the Arthur Westlake Museum are open, as is the Buffet, all of which adds

to the experience of a day out for our visitors. This takes a lot of work from DRSA volunteers and Dartmoor Railway staff who provide the train service and who give our visitors a warm welcome.

The Great Western Railway (GWR) run and Devon County Council supported, Summer Sunday train service to and from Exeter began at the national timetable change on May 20th, providing access from Exeter to Okehampton for visitors and the opportunity for people from the town to travel to Exeter and beyond. A GWR HST has also visited Okehampton for the second time when OkeRail ran a special train, this time going to Oxford and Stratford upon Avon.

As the season gets into full swing I would like to thank everyone at Dartmoor Railway CIC and DRSA who provide the opportunity for trains to run between Okehampton to Meldon. May we look forward to a good running season in 2018.

Events

Keep up to date at <http://www.dartmoor-railway-sa.org/events>

DRSA Socials (East) – From 18:30, on the first Wednesday of the month. For all DRSA members, volunteers and DR staff. *Red Lion*, Tedburn St Mary, Exeter, EX6 6EQ.

DRSA Socials (West) –From 18:30, on the third Thursday of the month. For all DRSA members, volunteers and DR staff. *Fox and Hounds* at Shortacombe near Lydford on the A386 Okehampton to Tavistock road.

Dartmoor Resonance Music Festival – 16th-24th June 2018
https://www.dartmoorsociety.com/dartmoor_resonance_music_festival

Classic Trucks – Sunday 14th October 2018

Membership Matters

Geoff Horner, Membership Secretary

Membership numbers reported at the AGM were 115 single members and 42 joint memberships giving a total of 199 members. This compares favourably with the total of 189 members reported at the previous year's AGM.

The new 2018 DRSA Membership & Volunteering Information leaflets are available. If there is any venue in your area where the DRSA could be publicised please email or write to me and I will be happy to post some to you. Please do publicise the DRSA whenever the opportunity arises and encourage others to join.

Since the last edition of the 'Dartmoor Pony' we are pleased to welcome the following new members:

- Irene & Paul Tyler of Dudley

The General Data Protection Regulations

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) comes into force from 25th May 2018. As an association which collects personal data from its members it is incumbent on the Dartmoor Railway Supporters Association (DRSA) to have in place a policy for the management of the data collected and to make it clear to members how the data is stored and used.

DRSA is committed to protecting and respecting the privacy of its members. For any personal data provided for the purpose of membership, the Data Controller is the DRSA and the current DRSA Membership Secretary/Secretary, as elected by the committee, is the Data Processor responsible for storing and otherwise processing that data in a fair, lawful, secure and transparent way.

What personal data we hold on you

When joining DRSA by filling in membership forms, membership renewal forms or by corresponding with us by phone, e-mail or otherwise you have given us your name, address, e-mail address and telephone number(s).

Why we need your personal data

The reason we need your personal data is to be able to administer your membership

- By the processing of membership/membership renewal forms and payments.
- Sending out by post or e-mail your copy of the Association magazine.
- To advise you by post, e-mail or telephone of any special meetings, initiatives or events of the Association which as a member you may wish to attend or, if required, respond to

Who we share your personal data with

DRSA does not supply or share any personal data it holds to or with any other third party.

How long we hold your personal data

DRSA will hold your personal data on file for as long as you are a member. Data is updated every year on annual membership renewal forms. Any personal data DRSA holds on you will be securely destroyed after one years inactivity on that members account.

Your rights regarding your personal data

As a DRSA member you have the right at any time

- to request to see what personal data is held on you*

- to change details of the personal data held on you
- to have your personal data removed from the list**

* DRSA is required to respond promptly and in any case within 40 days of receipt of a request. A small fee for administration and postage may be levied.

** Please note that if you choose to have your personal data removed from the list DRSA will no longer be able to register or administer your membership.

Correspondence

Thanks to David Bell for writing in with a plausible answer to the question “*what is a Brearsman?*” in the article about 19th Century railway employees at North Tawton, published in the previous edition.

On some of the railways in early days goods brake vans were called "Break Vans". "Brearsman" may therefore, be a miss spelling for "Breaksman". I believe it may well date back to the days of wagonways and early steam railways with poor couplings and badly maintained privately owned wagons. The end wagon was manned by a breaksman in case of a coupling failure and resultant runaway, with dire mishaps to men, horses and machines following on behind. How he was expected to stop a run-away is another story!

Correction – Crediton Signal Box operating times

In the previous edition it was stated that Crediton signal box was now open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It is not open 24/7 currently though the long term plan is to make it so, but not in the immediate future.

DRSA Annual General Meeting 2018

This year's AGM was held on Saturday May 12th at our regular venue, the Ockment Centre, Okehampton. The 25 members present included some very welcome unfamiliar faces, and represented a small but encouraging increase on recent AGM attendance. It was also good to see a DR representative again.

Our Chairman, the Reverend Philip Wagstaff, gave a comprehensive report on the heritage services and commercial operations which took place on the Dartmoor Railway in the previous 12 months, and the many ways in which DRSA members were able to support them. DRSA is also contributing to the discussions currently taking place about reinstating an Exeter to Okehampton service. Philip thanked the committee and active volunteers for their work, and the entire membership for their financial and moral support. He outlined the discussions currently taking place about how the association could adapt to possible future changes on the railway, including the possibility of revising the name to reflect a changing role. Philip asked for ideas for an appropriate permanent memorial to the late Peter Flick.

Copies of the 2018 accounts were available at the meeting, and are printed on page 11. Clearly our finances are in good hands, as there were no questions for our Treasurer, Christine Horner. From this year we have a new auditor, Ian Barrett, a railway enthusiast apparently.

Membership secretary Geoff Horner announced that we have 115 single members and 42 pairs of joint members, a total of 199 individuals, 10 more than at the same time last year. Geoff remained standing and changed hats to give a brief description of the activities of our volunteers, which include train crew, ticket office, buffet, shop, museum, carriage and wagon, horticulture and station maintenance. There are about 35 active volunteers – a substantial proportion of our total membership. It is hoped that our new volunteering and membership leaflet will encourage more.

In AOB, Dave Clegg pointed out that C&W rolling stock restorations not only make heritage vehicles available for services, but also substantially increase the value of our assets. He also hoped there would be more trips to other railways. More downbeat was the discussion about the sad state of Meldon buffet.

With no new nominations, it took about a minute to re-elect the committee, which thus remains as listed on the inside back cover.

After the formal meeting there was an opportunity to discuss the future of the association, which didn't really take off, but it gave Tony Hill an opportunity to outline the progress being made by OkeRail towards re-instatement of a daily Exeter - Okehampton service. GWR is taking the lead in this process, and much activity is going on behind the scenes. It is hoped that a trial service will start in the next couple of years, initially to Okehampton Town as the proposed Parkway station won't be ready. The timescale is complicated by the expiry of BARS's lease of the railway at the end of 2019. Members will have seen in the local press that the recent Jacobs report showed a total cost of about £9m, largely comprising various Parkway station options to accommodate DR commercial services, track and fencing renewal work necessary to bring the railway back to the required standard, and GSM-R installation.

An interesting evening ended with a showing of "Dawlish – The Great Storm", a fascinating DVD produced by Dawlish Museum, which gave an insight into the February 2014 damage to Dawlish seawall, and the subsequent work by Network Rail to repair it. (Shown with the permission of Dawlish Museum).

DRSA Accounts 2017-18

Christine Horner

DARTMOOR RAILWAY SUPPORTERS ASSOCIATION

Financial Statements for the year ended March 2018

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

	Unrestricted Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Total for 2017/2018	Total for 2016/2017
Receipts					
Membership	3162.00			3162.00	2931
Donations	1169.26			1169.26	2280
Pony Magazines	0.00			0.00	26
Shop Sales	2982.70			2982.70	3808
Bank Interest	0.87			0.87	1
Museum Donations	139.87			139.87	291
HRA Railcards	90.00			90.00	195
Peter Flick Memorial Fund		778.75		778.75	0
	<u>7544.70</u>	<u>778.75</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>8323.45</u>	<u>9532</u>
Payments					
Stationery, postage & general printing	673.31			673.31	1000
Pony Magazine printing	924.50			924.50	904
Carriage, Wagon and Station refurbishment costs	2293.23			2293.23	2105
Shop Stock/Insc	1087.35			1087.35	1607
Examination Fee	130.00			130.00	146
Miscellaneous Expenses	1060.86			1060.86	2228
Museum	137.71			137.71	30
HRA Railcards	90.00			90.00	195
HRA Membership	66.00			66.00	66
Anon. grant usage			391.06	391.06	109
Peter Flick Memorial Fund usage		25.00		25.00	
	<u>6462.96</u>	<u>25.00</u>	<u>391.06</u>	<u>6879.02</u>	<u>8390</u>
Excess of receipts over payments	1081.74	753.75	-391.06	1444.43	1142
Bank and cash Balances at 1st April 2017	16821.84		391.06	17212.90	16071
Bank and cash Balances at 31st March 2018	<u>17903.58</u>	<u>753.75</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>18657.33</u>	<u>17213</u>

DARTMOOR RAILWAY SUPPORTERS ASSOCIATION

Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2018

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

Bank and cash balances	18657
Assets retained for Association's use:	
Brake Van (February 2011)	2000.00
FK Coach	9000.00
LAB11 Coach	17500.00
Brake Van	10000.00
Water Tower	1000.00
	<u>39500.00</u>

The Shop income and expenditure has been recorded on a cash basis, however at the year end there was shop stock with a value of £800 at cost

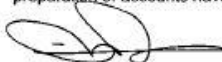
INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS REPORT ON THE ACCOUNTS OF DARTMOOR RAILWAY SUPPORTERS ASSOCIATION

Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2018

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 and best practice for community and supporter organisations. The examination included a review of the accounting records and documents 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.



Ian Barrett FCA FCIE
Chartered Accountant
Barretts
22 Union Street
Newton abbot TQ12 2JS

8th May 2018

Rail Operations & Line Update

Paul Martin, Duty Manager

Line Update

The track crew has been working hard on areas of track that needed remedial action. This includes a major piece of work near North Tawton station which has involved laying over 400m of new drainage pipes, and packing and changing ballast. With a new temporary speed restriction at Sampford Courtenay, and a change of line speed elsewhere, some new signage has been erected and some existing signs covered up. DRSA volunteers have been assisting Alan Cocker in a large scale lineside fence repair around Den Brook Wind farm. This has taken place over several weekends.

Heritage Services 2018

These started on Good Friday March 30th and now run on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays until the end of September. The service started using 31452 and the rake used for the Class 31 weekend. Sadly services were curtailed on Easter Sunday and cancelled for the following day due to lack of fuel. With no time to get everything ready with inspections, services then ceased until restarting on April 21st. They presently are formed of the 08 with the vacuum braked stock namely Lab 11, the FK coach and the ex-LMS brake van. This colourful combination is proving popular with passengers offering brake van rides, 1st class compartments and the unique Lab 11.

Event Trains

Dartmoor Railway have planned a number of events trains through the summer. These include Murder/Mystery trains and Cream Tea trains on Bank holiday weekends. These will utilise the 31 and a short rake using the Mark 2 coaches. These have been painted externally and decorated internally. They will be set up so that the air con is operational.

GWR Exeter Sunday Services

The services between Exeter and Okehampton started on Sunday May 20th and run until September 9th. The Sundays only service is operated

by GWR and comprises of 4 trains each way per day. The timetable is virtually identical to last year. The service brings lots of local people to Okehampton station who rarely use it otherwise and draws significant numbers from Exeter and beyond to the railway.

Traction Update

08937: Bluebell Mel is now back in service providing traction for the heritage services to Meldon from April 21st. It's also been utilised on shunting work at both Okehampton and Meldon

1132 (Thumper Unit): The non-power car of 1132 is in the shed at Meldon being worked on by Carriage & Wagon and is nearing completion. The plan now is carry out the overhaul of the power car at the end of the season. Therefore it is hoped Thumper will be available for use on heritage services earlier than planned this year, with one of the car's overhaul completed. The power car vehicle was moved up Meldon Quarry sidings in April.

31452: Now resident at Dartmoor Railway. It is planned to use this loco on events trains throughout the season. It is also utilised for engineering trains and shunting operations.

Visiting traction

In February/March GWR utilised the line to expand their pool of drivers with route knowledge of the Okehampton line. This took place over three Sundays with the fourth cancelled due to the snow. The OkeRail train to Oxford and Stratford upon Avon saw an HST (power cars 43098 & 43188) on the line.

A message from Percy...

Despite a few trips to the vets I've been working hard here at Okehampton station. Luckily the new range of postcards are selling well to fund these extra vets bills. As well as meeting lots of old and new friends we have regular visitors. Not just Rosie either, Jules' dog Bella accompanies him on his days here and I've shown her the ropes. Now the GM has a puppy that I need to bring up to speed. No rest for the wicked!! As always, my Facebook page will have all the details.

Station Maintenance Team

Tom Baxter

Continuing the varying work schedule, the team recently carried out some tree lopping near the GUV van at the Meldon end of platforms 1 and 2. There are trees growing by Bridge 609, the Klondyke Road underbridge which have become a problem and have also made the area around the bridge very damp and slippery. Most are sycamore. For stage one of the process they have been topped and de-branched, with the intention of further work to follow at the end of the season to trim them back to the rock face above the road. We also tidied a lot of growth around the bridge on the town side and around the fence approaching the main entrance gates.

A recent repair undertaken involved a bottom hinge on one of the entrance gates. The hinge pin assembly had broken off. This is a large fitting somewhat bigger than on an average farm gate. Fortunately it was able to be re-welded by one of our members using their own welding gear. Another case of the useful skill sets and versatility available within the team.

An ongoing project is a tidy up and refurbishment of the former workshop area of the CCT Van stabled between the Mk3 Sleeping Cars on platform 1 (the Bude bay). This had been used as a dumping area for anything and everything. So the first task was to clean out and dispose of broken or non-essential items and move other useful things to alternative storage. It was then necessary to rehang the end doors which had been impossible to close due to the proximity of the corridor connection of the adjacent sleeping car. Some may wonder why we didn't just divide the train in a shunt move, shut the doors and then re-couple. Unfortunately not so easy as the bay track is not connected by any point work so a track slew has to be undertaken to shunt vehicles in and out. Also the sleeping cars are permanently plumbed into a foul drainage system. This would have required dismantling to move the vehicles. Likely to be a gruesome and unpleasant task. So a door re-hang it was.

Work is still ongoing but the advantages for workshop use are that mains power is already laid in and operational and it is much closer than the longer trek to the GUV. We will still require the storage facilities in the GUV though as the CCT workshop area is quite small with around 2/3rds of the vehicle converted into a lounge/kitchen area for users of the sleeping cars. For those that are unaware these cars are normally used as dormitory accommodation by the actors and others employed for the Christmas event trains.

Some of the team have recently gone ‘off piste’ and have been assisting with tree felling and lineside fence renewal and repairs. After a long absence, the ‘down the line’ working parties have restarted under the supervision and tutelage of Alan Cocker, one of the permanent staff. These often involve a trip to the work site on the Wickham Trolley which is an experience not to be missed if you wish to get good views of travel along the railway. Although a bit draughty it is probably as close to original rail travel as you might wish to get!

Gardening – A Welcome Visitor

Sue Baxter

Everything was looking quite perky under the canopy when I last wrote. However the extreme low temperatures, not to mention the snow which drifted right under the canopy, finally struck down all the geraniums and pelargoniums, some of which were six or seven years old.

On the other hand Ann did a great job overwintering the begonias. She lets them dry out, knocks off most of the soil and keeps them wrapped in newspaper on her kitchen floor. Then at the end of March they get passed over to be put in a deep tray of compost on a windowsill, where they have all burst into crisp leaves. We are planting these out in the tubs along with cuttings we took from many of our geraniums. We are holding our breath to see if the magnificent fuschia on Platform 2 has come through - if not we have two 20cm high cuttings taken from it.

We have a member volunteering to replace the statue heads in the car park by the bus turning bay! Watch that space!



One day Penny and I were discussing the likelihood of a hedgehog visiting our wildlife patch, but felt that the lack of nearly continuous vegetation makes it unlikely. To my amazement I then became acquainted with Coco, who was visiting the station between visits to the vet. His foster Dad is our chef Chris Connor, who found him and his two brothers wandering along the

road, abandoned at the age of about ten weeks. Judging by Coco's wonderful condition, Chris is a top chef in the hedgehog world and it was lovely to see the trusting relationship they had... no spiky spines between friends!



Arthur Westlake Museum

John Caesar

The museum has contributed two items on loan to an exhibition in Bude Castle Museum, entitled 'Branch Line to Bude'. DRSA was represented at the Preview Evening on 23rd May by Tony Hill, and the exhibition is now open for around 18 months. The items on loan, of particular relevance to the Bude branch, are the framed Halwill Junction track diagram, and a book from the ticket office at Dunsland Cross which lists destinations, routes and ticket prices. Find more information at www.thecastlebude.org.uk



Yeovil Railway Centre Visit – 26th April 2018

Andrew Turner



On Thursday 26th April, Graham and Marian Isom, Kay Mills and Andrew Turner visited Yeovil Railway Centre from Dartmoor Railway to see the Great Britain XI tour visit, and surprise DRSA's own Peter Ritchie (our former magazine editor)

who was on the train. This was the penultimate day of the tour that had been as far north as Inverness, using steam power all of the way.

Just before 1pm, Black 5 45212 came into view from Yeovil Pen Mill, and as the engine came into the platform, the driver, Bill Monteith, yelled out "Hello Graham Isom!". The former work colleagues would catch up with each other later in the afternoon. The smile on Graham's face got better with the surprised look of Peter's face when he saw us.



Peter's travelling companion, his sister-in-law from Canada, had alighted at Pen Mill so we kept him company for the next hour and a half. There was plenty of steam action as 45212 was turned on the turntable, and the second loco, U class 31806, on its first mainline steam run in 54

years, was attached as a banker up to Pen Mill, then would lead the train to Weymouth and Swanage for the night.

As far as I know, 31806 never had a shed allocation in the west so it may never have visited Okehampton – however, it is a Southern loco and is now based at the Swanage Railway.



The Yeovil Railway Centre's own 0-4-0 'Lord Fisher' performed shunting duties so there was plenty of steam for the many spectators and passengers alike. The train departed at 1445 and I am sure that Peter will regale you of his steam adventure on GBXI whenever you next see him.



50 years since closure at Tavistock

On 5th May 2018 Tavistock Heritage Trust organised events to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the last train from Tavistock, which were attended by a number of DRSA members.



First, during the afternoon, there was a walk led by Stephen Fryer, which gave rare access to the former Tavistock North station, now partly used as holiday lets. Local railway photographer and author, Bernard Mills, told the group stories about his time on the

railway when he worked in Tavistock ticket office. Bernard also brought along the sign originally from Tavistock North signal box.

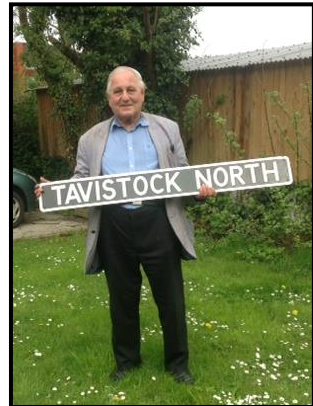


Following this, the walk continued over the 1889 viaduct and along a stretch of the line now converted to a footpath and cycle way.

DRSA committee member Tony Hill, the

only member of the group to have travelled on the last train, brought along a commemorative wreath for photos (modelled here on the viaduct by Tom Baxter and Jon Kelsey).

In the evening, Stephen and Bernard gave a well attended illustrated talk on the history of the line with 'then and now' photos between Plymouth and Okehampton. This rounded off a sad but memorable day to mark the 50th closure of this much missed former main line.



Celebrating 50 years of the Tamar Valley Line

A weekend of events took place from the 1st to the 3rd June 2018 to mark 50 years of regular direct services between Gunnislake and Plymouth. On Saturday 2nd June, a single decker 1979 Western National Bristol LH6L bus made a special trip from Gunnislake to Okehampton and back, passing the old stations at Brentor and Bridestowe. The bus is part of the *The West Country Historic Omnibus & Transport Trust*, who set up a stall on Platform 3 at Okehampton during the day (<http://www.busmuseum.org.uk/>).



1979 Western National bus at Okehampton whilst the passengers enjoyed a visit to the station on Saturday 2nd June 2018 (John Caesar).

Other events over the weekend included an organised walk on Saturday around Calstock, focusing on the railway, history of the viaduct and the East Cornwall Mineral Line. And on Sunday there was an open day at the Tamar Belle Heritage Centre at Bere Ferrers station (<http://www.tamarbelle.co.uk/>).

Snippets from the past - 1970

Tony Hill

Thursday 22nd January 1970 found maroon Warship D815 'Druid' performing its part in the Government sanctioned 'criminal butchery' of the former Southern main line between Meldon and Bere Alston, so shortsightedly closed now fifty years ago on 6/5/68, when it collected the day's recovery train formed of a brakevan, 16 Hyfits (opens) with re-useable sleepers & scrap chairs, a bogie bolster with re-useable rails and a brakevan to bring up the rear of the last train (hopefully it will not prove to be!) to cross Bannerwell Street viaduct in the middle of Tavistock.

On Tuesday 21st July a visit to Okehampton found staff Arthur Westlake (Booking/Parcels Office), George Farley (Porter/Shunter) & Jack Rammell (Relief Porter, formerly an Okehampton Guard) and a well filled goods yard containing (for agricultural merchants in West Devon and North Cornwall) about 50 Vanfits of fertiliser and animal feeds, 1 sheeted open wagon of cotton cake from Avonmouth Docks, 3 Lowfits from Diss with new dung spreaders, and 3 bogie parcel vans with churns of whey from (or to) Davidstow Creamery. Also a single car DMU on the 1140 to Exeter, and Warship D870 'Zulu' with 17 open wagons of ballast waiting to follow the Up passenger.

On Wednesday 16th December 1970 the 0417 passenger & news from Exeter St Davids to Okehampton and its 0722 return was, most unusually, worked by Class 22 D6334 hauling a single Mark 1 BSK coach, due to the failure of the regular single car DMU.

**Raise money for DRSA when you shop online
via our [easyfundraising](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/drsa) page:**

www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/drsa

Rosie's Diary – A Snack along the Track

By Rosie

On a fine summer's day after a satisfactory dig around rodent holes and an excellent roll about in fresh clean spring grass, it is strange to think back to my winter ramblings in the snow. The Mystery Railway I was on then is known as the Rattlebrook Peat Railway. It is now an excellent easy walk up onto the high moor. It was opened in 1879 to link an already existing peat works to the London and South Western Railway at Bridestowe. In 5 miles the standard gauge track ascends 950 feet to 1,750 feet above sea level, reaching the boggy headwaters of a tributary of the River Tavy. Now to be honest it is a bit of a let down when you get there because I just get very wet black paws slithering around the blown up remains of the buildings there. Health and Safety for moorland livestock got in on the act in 1961 and the army was asked to blow up the dangerous 4 foot thick walls of the chemical works.

I like to think of the peat railway in the days when powerful friendly cobs would have worked the wagons, taking them up past the reversing points on Corn Ridge. There the horses would have been unhitched and moved to what had been the rear of the train to complete the journey. The hollow stacks or ruckles for drying peat on the Somerset levels were less successful high on Dartmoor. Nevertheless there were all sorts of schemes for using the dried peat, including firing the Royal Navy steam ships more economically than with coal, producing naphtha gas and other chemicals. The railway was mechanised for a while, although wagons on the lines into the peat workings were probably always worked by hand or horse. Then in 1931 the rails were taken up, and I am very glad because it is much pleasanter padding along without them.

In some places today there are two tracks. In 1936 a scheme began to produce crude oil from the peat. So a roadway was made up to the workings which diverges from some of the narrower parts of the original railway track. That is the likely reason for the evidence of the wooden sleepers I saw, lasting so long. The idea was to pipe oil direct

to Devonport, with a target of 100,000 gallons a week. However, like all the schemes before, no great success was recorded.

There is a sequel. In my roving up and down the peat hags or “journeys” left between the workings, I have noticed that small dams are being made across gulleys. These are reducing the rainwater runoff and encouraging more vegetation to grow. This is a deliberate policy to restore headwaters so they can again act as sponges storing and regulating our water supplies. Gradually peat formation will increase again. For the time being I keep my paws drier by using the dams.



Oh, and by the way, the full set of sheep’s horns was a very tasty snack along the track. Aren’t you envious, Heather, Fluffy, Freddy and Tess?

This winter and spring several of us have been down the line helping Alan Cocker with his fencing near Denbrook, between North Tawton and Bow. You will note that I was the only one to know which way round to sit when heading up the line, sitting on Alan’s coat ready to bark a warning to any wildlife lingering on our line.



It was not the easiest of worksites for two legs. They muttered about mudbaths, Andy lost a welly, and Alan slid into a pool in the stream. I enjoyed a good dig because the ground was so soft and got myself plastered ready to sit on Alan’s coat again.



To be serious, I kept well out of the way when the post wacker was in action. John Wills and Tom made a valiant attempt to emulate Alan. You can see John studying the technique. It was hard work for them so I mostly took up a supervisory role on the embankment above and relaxed to the gentle whirring of the nearest wind turbine.



Personally I am not averse to a nose pack and I was horrified on a visit to South Devon Railway's Riverside Station to find a puppy drinks bowl advertising Hudsons soap. As you can see I do not need any such smelly thing to keep myself clean!

Finally I want to share with you two railway other worldly moments. The first was when we were returning home from Tavistock to find a runaway railway carriage, or rather a stuck GUV (General

Utility Vehicle), attempting to take a turn in the middle of Mary Tavy. Who wouldn't know that there are no rails from there to its destination at Brentor Station?



The last photo shows an engine shed which has been left to cope with the natural regeneration of a woodland. No hint now of smoke, steam, or diesel fumes. There was a pond inside and the lovely scents of spring all around above moist leaf litter. Any thoughts on its location?



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:

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