



THE DARTMOOR PONY

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Supporters' Association**

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The DARTMOOR PONY

Issue No. 33

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

FRONT COVER: GWR Sprinter 150 202 waiting to leave with 2J09 1523 to St James Park on 5th August 2018. *Photo: Bernard Mills.*

BACK COVER: Top: Ex-LSWR Drummond 4-4-0 T9 30120 runs around its train at Swanage on the DRSA away day on 7th July 2018. *Photo: John Caesar.* Bottom: View of the Meldon shuttle with D4167 passing the former Military Sidings from Torr Road Bridge. 1555 Meldon Viaduct-Okehampton on 5th August 2018. *Photo: Bernard Mills.*

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Notes from the Chairman

Rev. Philip Wagstaff

The exceptional summer that we had in July and August was a boon to local tourism this year with many people coming to Devon either for the day or for their summer holidays. Days of continuing sunshine across the county made it a long hot summer. Visitors to Okehampton were able to take in the sights and sounds of the heritage services with many taking advantage of the facilities at the railway. Many visitors came by car or bike with some coming to the station on the Sunday services which ran between Exeter and Okehampton.

During the running season DRSA volunteers and staff from Dartmoor Railway CIC ran the timetabled heritage train services between Okehampton and Meldon. Occasional use of the whole line by Murder Mystery and Cream Tea trains added variety during the season. The station at Okehampton, being the main visitor centre, has been kept looking good, the buffet has served many meals and volunteers have allowed the DRSA shop and the museum to be open to welcome visitors.

DRSA volunteers have been active during the summer months in between well earned holidays. Much work has taken place at Meldon Shed by the C&W volunteers with the two main projects being work on a repaint for the Thumper unit 1132 and continuing renovations to the DRSA's Brake Van LDS55625. Volunteers have also been involved in vegetation clearance up and down the line, and the Station Maintenance Team have been busy around the station and have also done some work on the CCT van in Platform 1. The committee has continued to meet every six weeks or so to look at ways that DRSA can support the railway both now and in the future.

Thank you all for the time and energy that you give to the railway and for the support of every member of DRSA. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Membership Matters

Geoff Horner, Membership Secretary

Membership numbers reported currently stand at a total of 207 members. This brings us just above the total we had at the end of December last year. Hopefully with a few weeks of the current season still to run we will manage to increase this total by the end of the year.

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

- Michael Pearson & Tom Prouse of Barnstaple
- Jill Lee of Hayle
- Amanda Jones of Okehampton
- Paul & Susan Goodall of Torpoint
- Ian Kirkman of Bovey Tracey
- Terry Bridgeman of Bradworthy
- Madeleine Cooper of Walsall

Bob Austin

I was saddened to hear recently of the death on 15th June of one of our earlier members, Bob Austin. Bob was very well known in wider railway circles and ran a specialist company dealing with buying and selling railway rolling stock. He was a frequent visitor to the Dartmoor Railway from his home in Shropshire. Illness in recent years limited his ability to travel and he ceased DRSA membership in 2016. Many old friends attended his funeral at Wrexham on Friday 13th July and a wake was held at the Llangollen Steam Railway on the day, where a train ran in his honour.

Dave Clegg

Mike Ellis

It is with sadness that we record the death of Mike Ellis, a member of the DRSA and one of the team of model makers who worked on the Model Railway at Meldon. Mike was involved in railway preservation at different points in his life and was part of the team of volunteers here at Dartmoor Railway. Mike was a private man but was a friend to many of us at the railway and would share many stories with us. His skill as a model maker was greatly appreciated and his model of Meldon Viaduct forms part of the display in the Arthur Westlake Museum.



Members of the Association represented DRSA at the service of thanksgiving for Mike's life and heard there of his interest in railways and in railway modelling. The picture on the order of service is reproduced here showing Mike in earlier days on the footplate of Clan Line. He will be missed by many people and our condolences go to his family and friends.

Philip Wagstaff

Events

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

Note that the 'West' DRSA socials at the Fox & Hounds are being discontinued, and that the venue has now changed to Sticklepath for the first Wednesday of the month social as below:

DRSA Socials – From 18:30, on the first Wednesday of the month. For all DRSA members, volunteers and DR staff. *Taw River Inn, Sticklepath, EX20 2NW.*

Crediton Station Tea Rooms

Jon Kelsey

After a few month's uncertainty following the disappointing departure of Linda Brown, Crediton Station Tea Rooms has been taken over by the Turning Tides Project. It reopened on August 4th and is already attracting excellent reviews. It is open from 1000 to 1700 Tuesdays to Saturdays.

The Turning Tides Project is a non-profit Community Interest Company which “believes that everyone has the right to equal access to music, the arts and life”. Please support this worthy initiative. Visit their website at www.theturningtidesproject.org.uk to discover more about their ethos and activities.

The Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership was heavily involved in facilitating the project. Some of you will remember the rather large model of Crediton Station, built by the Scale 7 Group, which used to be a feature of the Tea Rooms. It has been carefully dismantled and placed in store by Crediton Museum. Most of the other railwayana which was on display has been returned to its owners.

Rail Operations & Line Update

Paul Martin, Duty Manager

Line Update

The track crew recently has been restricted by what work they can do on the track in this extreme heat. Also not helped by fact that the Wickham trolley has been out of action for some time now and for a short time the back-up Robel trolley was unusable until repaired. Despite that, the whole line has been marked up with correct chainage. Also monitoring of the side wear on the track has taken place. A number of replacement track keys have been inserted and remedial work on some sleepers. This is in addition to the usual short notice fence repairs along the line.

DRSA volunteers have continued to assist Alan Cocker in some tree and vegetation clearance along the line. This has taken place over several weekends.

Heritage Services 2018

These have continued with the 08 and the vacuum braked stock namely Lab 11, the FK coach and the LMS brake van. This colourful combination is proving popular with passengers offering brake van rides, 1st class compartments and the unique Lab 11. The Class 31 deputised for a few weekends using same rolling stock. Numbers have generally been good with the brake van seeing lots of use by passengers.

Event Trains

The Mark 2 coaches used on these are still being maintained and upgraded. The biggest piece of work involving making the air-con operational, which is vital in this summer. As well as those events mentioned in the last issue Storytelling trains were planned over a 5-day period in August, but did not go ahead. There are still further Murder Mystery Trains and Cream Tea Trains scheduled in August and September. Tickets for the *Train to Christmas Town* are already on sale!!!

GWR Exeter Sunday Services

These services prove to be as popular as ever and make summer Sundays at Okehampton pretty busy with people going to Exeter and others visiting Okehampton. Most weeks the service has comprised of a GWR 2-car Class 150 unit. Though one week one of the few remaining GWR 1-car 153 units arrived making it a very crowded train. Just happened to be the week that a party of 4 carers and 4 passengers with wheelchairs had booked with GWR to use the service. Apparently it took 8 minutes to unload at Exeter Central making everything late. One Sunday saw the rare sight of a Class 143 unit, usually only seen here on training runs or skid pan training.

Traction Update

08937: Bluebell Mel is still the main traction for the Meldon heritage service. After the May Bank holiday it developed some issues and had to be withdrawn from services for a few weeks. There was fuel contaminating the oil and concerns about major damage possible resulting. Julian Pope carried out the repairs, fitting some new injectors, and the 08 is performing admirably.

1132 (Thumper Unit): The overhaul of 1132 continues at Meldon in the capable hands of the C&W crew

31452: The 31 continues to see use on event trains such as Murder/Mystery trains. It also ran the Cream Tea train on August 4th - one of the few occasions when most of the line length is utilised.

A message from Percy...

With summer here I've been busier than ever meeting and greeting people and other 4 legged visitors. Though the heat and my big black fur coat means I've retired to shady spots to attempt to keep cool. Building up to 'Percy Day' we got some new Percy merchandise, so in addition to the postcards we now have mugs, fridge magnets, keyrings and t-shirts. I featured in 'Your Cat' magazine - a 2-page spread in their working cats feature, even if they did caption it 'The Furry Fat Controller' – the cheek of it!

Percy Day was a success with lots of funds raised for the cat shelter I came from. Virtually all the Percy merchandise sold out. I'm just waiting for the press feedback.

As always, my Facebook page will have all the details.....

Volunteer Activities

Geoff Horner, Volunteer Coordinator

By the time you are reading this the Okehampton – Meldon heritage services will be nearing the end of this year's season at the end of September. Just a few more weeks left for a ride in our 'FK' or Lab11 carriages or a trip along the line on the veranda of our ex LMS goods brake van. And don't forget to have your complimentary DRSA Members Ticket with you for your free ride.

Once again our dedicated volunteers have maintained this year's services without any hitches, the station has been much praised for its attractive appearance, the buffet, museum and DRSA shop have welcomed many visitors and a journey in our heritage carriages has given pleasure to many people whether they have been enthusiasts, walkers, cyclists or just those who take pleasure in a journey on a heritage train.

There are of course occasions when volunteers for a variety of reasons become a bit thin on the ground so new faces will always be welcome. We have recently welcomed two new members to the team running the DRSA shop and another two new members have started training in the Travelling Ticket Inspector (TTI) role. Two of our long-term C&W/Station Maintenance volunteers have just started driver training under the instruction of our two regular drivers Graham Isom and Rachael Wilson. Many hands help spread the load so if you fancy lending a hand the opportunities are there and you will be sure of a warm welcome.

Station Maintenance Team

Tom Baxter

Recent works have included a repaint of the footbridge inner wall cladding, further work on the CCT van, and vegetation clearance in the embankment area on the other side of Klondyke Road bridge. Repairs are also ongoing to one of the platform seats.

The internal wooden wall cladding of the footbridge has been repainted in an equivalent colour to SR Light Stone. It corresponds with the colour scheme under the canopy on platform 3. Interestingly, SR paint instructions do not mention wall cladding on footbridges and, to our current knowledge, we have no other heritage railway interpretations to guide us. However, the scheme chosen has considerably lightened up the footbridge interior and will help reflect the footbridge lights during after dark usage. So also helpful under health and safety considerations.



The CCT (Covered Carriage Truck) has now received a repaint outside in BR wagon grey plus some bodyside repairs. As it is not our vehicle and we had no instructions on colour required it seemed a good intermediate compromise. The grey allowing for other colours to be fairly easily applied in the future. Further work has now stopped on this vehicle as difficulties over future usage have emerged.

Work on the lineside has continued with members of the team assisting in clearance work on the embankment and the concrete building immediately west of Bridge 609 (Klondyke Road). It appears the railway has a scheme to re-use parts of this building for track maintenance and engineering purposes. The vegetation removal has

also enhanced the view from the signal box up the line towards Meldon.

One of the SR seats on platform 2 is undergoing repair involving the replacement of some of the wooden slats. This is an original seat and not one of the ex West Somerset railway ones. It does however highlight the ongoing nature of repairs required. Despite best efforts and painting the wood quietly rots away inside. We are tied by our SR parentage to finish in traditional paint style although we cannot but envy those railways that don't have the same tradition and can use modern wood preservative finishes. Maintaining seats and other woodwork outdoors are a continuous task in the somewhat damp West Devon climate. Although this year has been an unusual exception in weather terms.

Gardening – Chosen by Wild Orchids

Sue Baxter

As you can see from the photo we have had magnificent Early Purple Spotted orchids. The compost has not been disturbed too much, so what started as one arrival has now become six. We appear to have a good set of seed this year too and have left the heads on so they can spread themselves. With some large new garden labels we hope to encourage people to look upon seed heads as more interesting in their



own right, not to mention essential. Alan Cocker has been very good tolerating many tiny annual poppies around the station buildings.

We are delighted that the beautiful hardy Fuschia has risen again (after apparent demise in the snow) in one of the grit boxes. Similarly all of the Begonias we took in have survived. Their vivid colours work well with the delicate *abelia* shrub that we have cultivated from cuttings. It is great to see our culinary herbs being picked for use in the kitchen by Sam. Along with all other plants they have really flourished in the peat free organic compost. What a relief to have lower temperatures and some rain, to ease the need for watering, (Mavis and Ann have been real Trojans in providing the Aqua Vita!) Now it is up to us to keep remembering to top up the nutrients with comfrey liquid and seaweed.

The wildflower patch is hosting a good range of bumblebees. Penny has persuaded her brother to make two bee boxes which we are gradually filling with hollow stems from our teasels and hollyhocks for egg laying. We are providing a shallow dish of water too, with vegetation for insects such as honey bees to land on so they don't drown as they drink.

Online Fundraising

Remember that by doing your online shopping after visiting our [easyfundraising](http://www.easyfundraising.org) page you can raise donations towards DRSA at no cost to you - *over £1800 has been raised so far!*

www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/drsa

Over 3300 retailers take part in the scheme, including ebay, Amazon, John Lewis, M&S, Asda, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Argos, Booking.com, Flybe, easyJet, Expedia.....

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

A Day trip by train from Devon to Swanage

Tony Hill

On Saturday 7th July Sue & Tom Baxter, Rosie and myself travelled from the North Devon line on a well filled 0705 from Barnstaple formed of a class 153 single car and a class 143 'Pacer' 2 car unit, changing at Exeter St David's for the 0824 towards London Waterloo. John Caesar joined the train at Exeter Central and we continued to Yeovil Junction to join the recently introduced South Western Railway through train at 0940 (0722 from Basingstoke) to Corfe Castle on the Swanage Railway.



John Caesar, Tom Baxter, Tony Hill, and Rosie on a ramble around Swanage (photo Sue Baxter).

We returned on the 1545 Corfe Castle to Waterloo via Weymouth where a 2 car 158 unit was attached, alighting at Yeovil Jn for the train to Exeter/North Devon after refreshments at the 'Royal Oak', some 10 minutes walk away in nearby Stoford.

It was noted that the 0722 Basingstoke was formed of a 2 car class 158 portion for Weymouth and a 3 car class 159 portion for Corfe Castle, and this proved ideal for the passenger traffic on offer, being principally those heading for the Swanage Railway or Weymouth.

Full credit must be given to those, not least Senior SWR Management, who will have worked hard behind the scenes to introduce this increasingly popular Summer Saturday service with excellent punctuality, train cleanliness, welcoming, efficient staff throughout and fully functioning train air conditioning on another exceptionally hot day this summer.



The icing on the cake was to experience a ride behind the National Railway Museum's legendary 1899 built T9 loco 30120

hauling 5 former BR Mark I coaches resplendent in Southern Green, on a well cared for and heavily volunteer run line that has made tremendous achievements since its closure in 1972 and its very hasty and shortsighted dismantling soon afterwards.

We had time in Swanage to look around; it seemed an unspoilt and traditional seaside town with several streets of mostly independent shops and also do a walk around the headland there with some fine views of the white chalk cliffs and the Isle of Wight in the distance.



We also did a visit at Norden to the award winning ball clay mining museum adjacent to the station, which has a 2 ft railway system and much of interest from the once busy ball clay mines of Purbeck.

'Where there's a will there's a way' as they say; something long overdue in provision of some through timetabled trains from Taunton to Bishops Lydeard for the West Somerset Railway and where the associated signalling provision at Norton Fitzwarren was completed now several years ago.

Memories of the Meldon Quarry Cottages

Jon Kelsey

In July we were contacted by Suzanne Phillips from Australia, asking if we had any information about the Meldon Quarry railway cottages in the 1940s, and about a quarry worker called Jack Pellow. We were willing to help, but it quickly became obvious that Suzanne already knows far more than we do about the cottages.



The back of the cottage.

As Suzanne Pudney, she was evacuated to number 10 Railway Cottages in 1940, and lived there for over a year with William John Pellow and his wife Mabel Eveline (née Jenner). Reaching the age of 5 she moved into Okehampton in order to attend primary school, and lived with Mr Pellow's sister, Enid May and her husband John Francis Gale before returning to London at the age of 11. Neither the Pells or the Gales had children.

Suzanne provides an interesting description of life in the cottage, of which she clearly has fond memories:

“.. the living room had a coal oven range that Aunty Pellow did all the cooking on. The small window to the left of the back door was a small scullery. There was a paraffin stove and a sink but no running water. A door from the living room opened onto the small steep stairs leading up to two bedrooms.

The wooden shed held the water tap. Each two cottages shared a water shed. Beyond that they had a lovely vegetable garden, but Aunty and I would walk the moors collecting Wattle Berries which she made into jam and jelly. Aunty Pellow was an extremely good cook.



Aunty and Uncle Pellow (and the top of Suzanne's head).

I believe John Pellow was a foreman at the Quarry. I remember each afternoon at a certain time a hooter would be heard which meant we had to stay indoors as the quarry was blasting. The moors were my playground and I learnt to swim in the river now covered by the dam.

We often walked across the Viaduct. There was a white wooden (weatherboard) church below the viaduct where I started Sunday School one Palm Sunday”

Each cottage would have a large piece or two of the green glass that at one time was produced in that area. It would be interesting to know where they all went. They were big and heavy.”

Suzanne has kept in touch with an Okehampton school friend. A visit to the area in 1991 was tinged with disappointment *“It was sad to see the dreadful state of them even though a couple were still inhabited. There were 11 cottages and they were kept in such good order by the quarry workers”*.



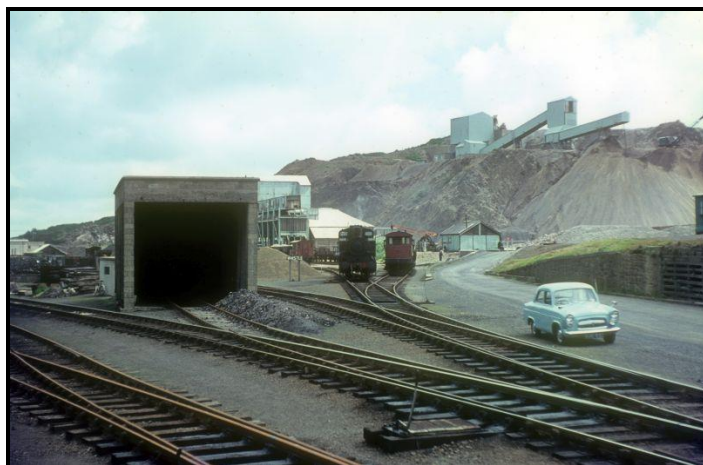
Suzanne at the front of the cottage in April 1941. The window is that of the sitting room, which was only used at Christmas

Nevertheless, Meldon clearly made a lasting impression *“Although I now live in Australia my heart is still in Devon”*.

[Our grateful thanks to Suzanne Phillips for sharing her memories, and for permission to use her photographs. If anyone has any further information on the cottages or Jack Pellow, we'd love to hear from you, and to pass it on to Suzanne. Can anyone shed any light on the church she refers to? Old maps show a St Luke's Mission Church in Meldon village]

Meldon Quarry Past & Present

Bernard Mills



Above is Meldon Quarry as seen from a passing train on 14th June 1965 with the USA Shunter DS 236 (ex 30062) on show, the concrete building to its left being the engine shed. Note the extensive infrastructure, especially in the background. The updated shot below is the same view today, the obvious link being the concrete engine shed and some of the track work.



Secondly, we have 25223 and 25052 on the Wirral Railway Circle Atlantic Coast Express railtour on the 20th October 1979 with the overnight 2300 Crewe – Meldon Quarry. To the left is the loading plant.



Below is a present day view on 5th August 2018. The quarry infrastructure was demolished in 2011. Many thanks to Don Bent and Rachael Wilson for making these updates possible.

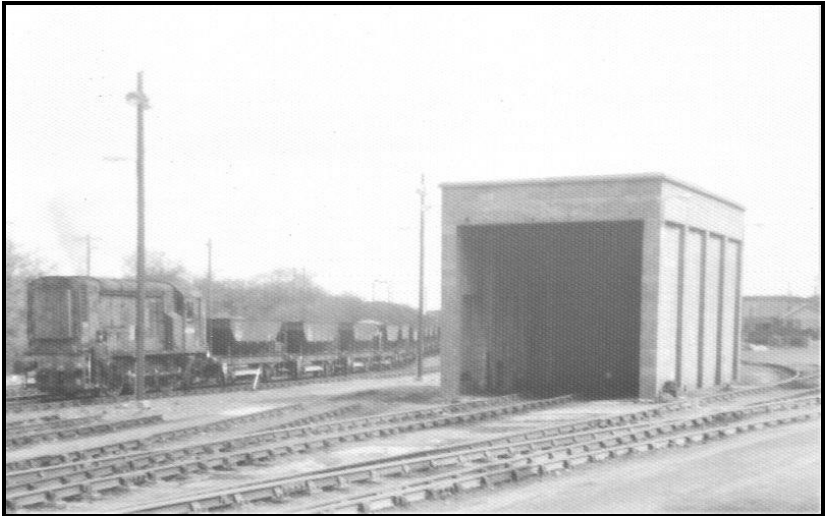


More Meldon Memories

Kevin Redwood

Over the last three years I have made a number of visits to Okehampton on the Sunday train from Exeter, and enjoyed trips on the Dartmoor Railway, as well as visits to the museum and shop where I picked up some old copies of the Dartmoor Pony.

My late father Norman Redwood was a supervisor for the Western Region Civil Engineers. One of his jobs each year was to visit all the locations that supplied track ballast to the WR to collect a sample for analysis. He would visit each quarry and collect a 56lb sack of ballast to be sent to Soil Mechanics at Paddington. I went with him on two trips to Meldon in 1979 and 1981. By 1981 on my second visit I also worked for BR, in the Bristol Area Freight Centre.



The first photo, from 30th April 1979, is of the Meldon Quarry loco shed and pilot loco 08584. The second photo from the same date shows my father Norman Redwood walking beside a rake of Mermaid wagons.



Moving forwards to the 9th July 1981 when the installation of new plant was taking place at Meldon. It shows the engine shed which, unlike now, was accessed from the west end of the shed (compare with the previous article). There is a selection of engineer's wagons stabled nearby.



The photo below is also from 1981 and shows a view of the quarry infrastructure.



The final photo from 1981 shows a view of the loading plant but with a shovel loader at work in front. The new plant, as yet not commissioned, can be seen on the hillside behind.



The Railway in the News

Geoff Horner

A look at some 19th/early 20th century newspaper reports that featured the Dartmoor Railway line.

Press coverage of what is now the Dartmoor Railway line from Coleford Junction through Okehampton to Meldon really started with the opening of the line to Bow and North Tawton. The 1st November 1865 edition of Trewman's Exeter Flying Post recorded it.

“DEVON AND CORNWALL RAILWAY - OPENING OF FIRST SECTION *The first section of the Devon and Cornwall Railway, namely the piece of eight miles, from the Yeoford station of the North Devon line to Northtawton (sic), will be opened for traffic today”.* (much more of a travelogue nature followed)

A notice in the Exeter & Plymouth Gazette for 24th May 1867 announced the opening of the line as far as Okehampton Road station (now Sampford Courtenay) with the headline ***OPENING OF THE LSWRly TO OKEHAMPTON ROAD: THE SHORTEST ROUTE TO LONDON BY 65 MILES***. The notice continued with timings for the ‘Vivid’ coach from Launceston departing at 8.30am and running via Lifton, Lewdown, Bridestow and Okehampton to Okehampton Road Station from where the train for London departed at 12.00, arriving at Waterloo Station at 6.47pm. A ‘down’ train left Waterloo at 10.50am arriving at Okehampton Road station at 5.10pm. The ‘Vivid’ coach departed from there at 5.20pm eventually arriving at Launceston at 8.40pm. The single fares for this very full days travelling were £2.5.6 (1st), £1.12.4 (2nd) or £1.0.6 (3rd)

Prior to the opening of the line on through Okehampton and on to Meldon, press reports covered meetings of the railway company. For example, the Western Times of 19th March 1870 carried a report of the half-yearly meeting of the Devon & Cornwall Railway Company at which the chairman, Lord Portsmouth, expressed his confidence in the

almost certain prospect of narrow gauge (*as opposed to the broad gauge*) lines of railway between North and South Devon.

The line finally opened to Okehampton on 3rd October 1871, an event accompanied by long and fulsome press reports of the celebrations.

In October/November 1872 the Devon & Cornwall Railway Co. became involved in an arbitration case which was reported in the Exeter & Plymouth Gazette Daily Telegram. The case revolved around a claim of some £6,000 for compensation by the leaseholders of the Meldon Lime Quarry against the D&CR basically for loss of access to the quarry workings and of income and profit due to the works of the railway company. The railway company of course denied that any of its works interfered with the quarry. Much was made of the extent of future limestone workings, considerable according to the leaseholders but almost worked out according to the railway company. The case was adjourned for a later hearing before an arbitrator in London.

‘Observer’ wrote a strong letter to the editor of the Daily Western Times of 21st August 1874 saying that “of late great complaint has been made by the public respecting the exposed position of our railway station at Okehampton” and stating that all that was required was the fitting of side screens to each end of the covered part to protect the public, “who were much heated when coming from the town” from the winds to be expected at a location 800 feet above sea level.

Also in 1874 the Western Times of 31st July carried a notice of the service provided by the ‘Queen’ coach of four horses which left Bude every morning, connecting with the train at Okehampton which was due at London at 6.14pm. On the ‘down’ service the ‘Queen’ left Okehampton on the arrival of the 6.45am departure from Waterloo.

As is the case today, accidents on the railway always make the news and the incidents below were as typical then as they would be now.

A ‘Special Telegram’ report in the Exeter & Plymouth Gazette Daily Telegram recorded an accident that befell one Joseph Stanning aged 23

who, having arrived at Okehampton on the train from Holsworthy and was crossing the line to continue his journey, was struck by an engine moving off the turntable resulting in his right leg being severed below the knee.

The 24th July 1896 edition of the Weston Times carried a long report on the funeral of Mr W. J. Palmer “a well known and respected surgeon of Okehampton” who was killed at Okehampton Station when “he endeavoured to enter the train when it was coming out of the station”.

An example of vandalism was reported in the Devon & Exeter Gazette of Saturday December 12th 1904 under the headline “**Railway Outrage At Okehampton**”. A labourer employed by the LSWR at Meldon Quarry noticed one of the safety catch points was bent by a large stone having been forced between the switch and stock rails. This was removed and the incident reported to the Meldon Junction signalman. However later that same day a goods guard finding it necessary use the ground frame to shunt into that same siding found that three stones had been wedged into the points. The points in question were situated between Meldon Viaduct and Meldon Junction signal boxes and under the observation of both signalmen. The points had also been inspected by a Ganger during the afternoon and found to be in good working order. The police were investigating the matter.

The Western Daily Mercury of 6th February 1912 reported on serious delays to LSWR passengers when an engine became derailed on the points just outside the Meldon signal box and ended up blocking both the up and down running lines. The engine, described as a powerful ‘Roller’ built for hauling heavy weights –*can anybody suggest what class of locomotive this would have been?* – was hauling a train of trucks for the quarry. In order to assist passengers continue with their journeys the railway placed trains to/from Exeter and Plymouth on either side of the blockage and then utilised the quarry workforce to help the passengers to transfer from one train to another, carrying their luggage for them and also where necessary carrying passengers – “a work of great discomfort and difficulty.”. As well as all this a

special train was sent out to the scene from Okehampton to collect passengers from the North Cornwall line and Holsworthy. A heavy breakdown train was summoned by telegram from Exeter and the line was finally cleared by 8.0pm that evening. Can similar efforts be likely on the railway today?

The national miner's strike of 1912 also had its effect on the fortunes of the staff of the LSWR at Okehampton. The Western Daily Mercury of 4th March reported that the staff have received notice that the men are to be put on short time. The report stated that "in view of the loyalty of the men during the recent strike, none of the men are to be wholly stopped, but the whole will have their time shortened". The report also had a footnote that "It is rumoured that all the men employed at the Meldon quarry have received notice to stop work".

These are just a few examples of how the railway affected life in Okehampton and the surrounding areas and made the local newspapers between the mid 1870's and the First World War. There are many more, continuing on to more recent times but nearly all on similar themes.

With acknowledgements to the Find My Past Genealogy site/British Newspaper Library.

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

Rosie's Diary – Shy in Famous Company

By Rosie

I left you peering at a very light coloured brick engine shed in the middle of wet woodland. Well you can now see inside the shed where the surface of the inspection pit is covered in green slime. Yuck, I would not go near it! Ball clay is still produced nearby at Peters



Marland. But since the railway shut in 1982 it is transported out by the lorry load. There is more to see at the Meeth Nature Reserve, a most recent acquisition by, and the largest site of, Devon Wildlife Trust. Thankfully a large part is dog friendly, so I have padded up from the

main car park up to the huge loading bay in a building now quite near the lake. It was built above the line which it is possible, just, to sniff out through the undergrowth. Go too far and you end up in the lake which shows where working continued across the line of the railway. This also explains the curious Tarka cycle route through.

The last time I pawed to you, the Saturday gang were in the relative luxury of the Wickham Trolley, and I deigned to travel with them as their lookout. However I looked on them disdainfully when they travelled in Robel, which is more akin to a go kart. It is quite nippy going downhill, but I feared they would get me out to help tow it on the



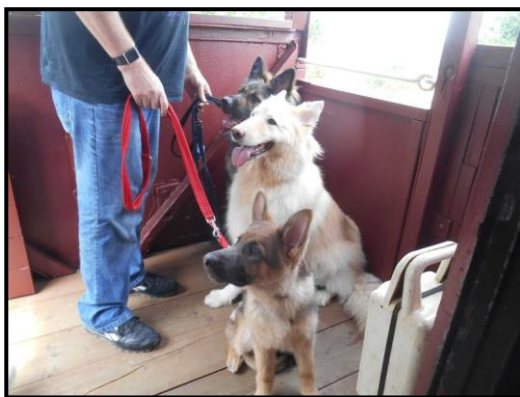
way back up to Okehampton. When maintenance is required it is, however, useful to have the back up.



Now I was rather overcome and anxious at first when Rob Bell came and loomed over me. So I stayed out of the way while filming was going on. Rob was interviewing Richard Westlake for a Channel 5 series on how the Beeching cuts affected both industries and communities. One

programme is all about Bere Alston to Okehampton. Rob turned out to be good with dogs and bent down to my level to make a fuss. He is a lean ultra marathon man and I am not sure at my age (11) that I could keep up with him on one of his challenges. It would be easier to sit at the feet of Richard who is a natural raconteur, and mine of information on our railway.

So who has been travelling in my Brake van recently do I hear you ask, besides the film crew? It is lovely to report that we have had excellent company. People who have contributed generously into the Donations Churn towards the refurbishment of the next, Southern Brake Van. Well behaved canines whom I have allowed to enjoy the outer balcony, while I take a rest in the seclusion of the inner verandah. Small children who love kneeling on the plush red seats to look out through the ducket windows.



The puzzle for you this time is to sort out which station I padded around recently (in the extreme heat, tongue hanging out for the end of ice cream cones!), where I came across a museum in a pill box, a steam engine in topiary, and a crazy (working) steam engine design.



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Vice-Chairman: Sue Baxter

Secretary: Jon Kelsey

Treasurer: Christine Horner

Membership Secretary & Volunteer Coordinator:

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