



THE DARTMOOR PONY

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

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20/20 Vision

The DARTMOOR PONY

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

FRONT COVER:. Class 20s 20142 'Sir John Betjeman' and 20189 at Okehampton station, with the Loram railgrinder in the background on 9th January 2019. *Photo: Paul Martin.*

BACK COVER: Top: The 'Train to Christmas Town', headed by 31452 with D4167 on the rear, at Meldon Quarry road 12 on 8th December 2018. *Photo: Dave Hunt.*

Bottom: One car of the rail grinder, having been dragged to Meldon to await a low loader on 17th January 2019 to take it to the Laira wheel lathe. *Photo: Geoff Horner.*

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Notes from the Chairman

Rev. Philip Wagstaff

Following the final Train to Christmas Town the railway takes a rest and, as we approach Easter, we look forward to a new season of trains running on the Dartmoor Railway (DR). Dartmoor Railway Supporters' Association (DRSA) continues to offer support to the Dartmoor Railway which runs the trains from Okehampton to Meldon with DR staff being supported by DRSA volunteers in many different ways throughout the running season.

Over the past few months volunteers have continued to give their time to the railway. Carriage & Wagon and Station Maintenance tasks have been undertaken with volunteers continuing to meet and to work on those and many other aspects of the life of the railway.

From time to time we report with sadness the deaths of our members' and do so within this edition of the Pony. Many, including Peter Ritchie, have supported the Association for a number of years – in Peter's case since the formation of the Friends of Dartmoor Railway. We offer our condolences to members families and friends and thank those members for their unique contribution to DRSA.

One of the ways that DRSA members volunteer is by being elected as part of the DRSA committee. The committee meets regularly throughout the year and many issues are covered during our meetings. These include how we support the railway both now and in the future, as well as receiving reports from the departments where DRSA volunteers offer their time. The committee reports to the members at the Annual General Meeting which this year will be held on Saturday May 11th.

We are at present in need of new (and, if possible, some younger) members of the committee as our numbers have been reduced due in part to the loss of Peter Ritchie and Peter Flick who were both long standing members of the committee.

If any members of DRSA of any age and experience who are interested in joining the committee could please get in touch via the website or ask existing members of the committee about what is involved that would be greatly appreciated.

Lastly, thank you all for your support for the Association which is greatly valued and which allows us to support the Dartmoor Railway throughout the year. Hope to see many of you at the AGM in May.

Membership Matters

Geoff Horner, Membership Secretary

By mid-February, when these notes were written, membership renewals totalled 175 and renewals are continuing to trickle in. Thank you to all who have renewed and also for the many donations received. If you have not yet renewed your membership please do not delay this. Your support of the DRSA is valued.

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

- John and Susan Abblett of Vernham Dean
- Ron and Marilyn Munns of Pathfinder Village
- Alan and Louise Harley of Exeter

Sadly we also have to record the deaths of the following members. Our condolences go to their families and friends.

- Mr M Fiedler (June 2018)
- Mr C Pawley (January 2019)
- Mr P Ritchie (January 2019)
- Mr M Stephens-Hodge (February 2019)

Finally I have been asked by our Treasurer to pass on the following message from our bank. “The banks are no longer accepting cheques made out with the name of the receiving organisation abbreviated”. This means that in the future we will be unable to accept cheques made out to ‘DRSA’, ‘Dartmoor RSA’ etc. We have also been told that cheques with initialled alterations will also be rejected. Thank you for your cooperation.

Peter Ritchie

Rev. Philip Wagstaff

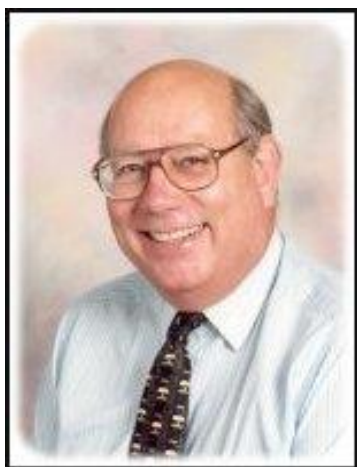
It is with great sadness that we report in this edition of the Pony the death of Peter Ritchie - Commander in the Royal Navy – sharer of stories and singer of songs, supporter of the Dartmoor Railway since the ‘Friends’ were formed, a man who recognised deep value in people and whose passing has left us all the poorer.



The Parish Church of St Mary at Cheriton Bishop was full and standing as we joined in a celebration of Peter’s life, hearing the stories that moulded his life through the years. The service was a point of remembrance as we all thought of Peter in our own way and we will continue to do so. What came across was the way that in the Navy he was fair in his dealings with people and even though he was in charge, those who were ranked below him knew just how far to push the boundaries, while still keeping Peter on board. Hearing the stories of those who spoke with deep affection for Peter it became obvious that he was a gentle giant while at the same time he was the man in charge. A great sense of humour included calling for everyone’s attention, anywhere, with the squawk of a peacock!

Music was very much part of Peter’s later life and he would break into song at the drop of a hat at committee meetings. As part of the *Mariners Away* choir he sang in many hostelrys in the area and would enjoy the hospitality that they afforded. Singing was part of his life and he joined other choirs in the village too - two of the choirs of which Peter was a member sang their tribute to Peter during the service.

At DRSA we remember Peter for his 'being there'. Peter was part of DRSA for many years and took on many volunteering roles, offering support at front of house and in the background in equal measure. He was generous in the giving of his time to the railway and he sponsored some projects as well. For many years his booming RN voice came over the tannoy at Okehampton station informing us that the train to Meldon would somehow go over Meldon viaduct to long closed stations on the way to Bude – it must have confused some visitors (which would have made Peter smile) but it showed something of the historical significance of the railway too.



Peter edited the Pony for many years before John took over. His attention to detail, his knowledge and his ability to get copy on time meant that his spell as editor was one where we were able to build up the magazine. He was also able to put a very dashing photo of himself in the editor's comments page! The Pony has been shaped by his editorship which meant an easy transition when John took on the role.

We will miss Peter, but his legacy to DRSA is immense. We will miss his insights at the committee meetings, his knowledge of the railway, his singing and perhaps most deeply of all, his friendship.

We offer our condolences to all of his family and friends as we give thanks for a life well and uniquely lived.

Martin Stephens-Hodge

Sadly we have to report the death of Martin Stephens-Hodge. Martin was a supporter of Dartmoor Railway since the days of the Friends. He held a real enthusiasm for railways and he would often tell stories of the railways that he visited with the North Yorkshire Moors line often making an appearance.

Martin had a deep love of Dartmoor and knew much about its story, its people and its landscape. He would often lead walks on the moor, sharing his knowledge with others. He offered insights into the topography of the Moor in a quiet yet authoritative way and he walked miles with many different groups of walkers through the years.

He was sometimes to be found combining both of his interests as he led local groups of walkers taking them on the train to Meldon and making sure that they all got back to Meldon station before the last train left!

We will miss his insights into the story of the Moor and the story of Dartmoor Railway and we offer our condolences to Martin's family and friends at this time.

Trevor Knight

We were sorry to learn of the recent death of Trevor Knight, a steam driver on Dartmoor Railway during the ECT period of ownership. Trevor was a fireman based at Bude shed until the end of steam there, after which it is believed he moved away to another Southern shed. He was also a volunteer driver on the Bodmin & Wenford Railway and occasionally on the Swanage Railway. A Service of Thanksgiving was held at Bude Methodist Church on Tuesday 8th January.

Cyril Pawley

Sadly we have also learnt of the recent passing of DRSA member Cyril Pawley. A Devon man living in Woking, Cyril was member number 34, so clearly had been with us a long time. We offer our condolences to his wife and family. We were gratified to receive from Mrs Pawley a substantial donation from the collection at his funeral service.

2019 Annual General Meeting

The 2019 Annual General Meeting will take place on May 11th at The Ockment Centre, North Street, Okehampton, EX20 1AR. Nominations for election to the committee must be received in writing by the secretary (contact details on page 31) by April 27th. Doors open at 1800 for an 1830 start. After the meeting there will be a showing of the 2006 'Dartmoor Railway Highlights' DVD. There will be a light buffet.

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

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.

DRSA Members Visit to Christow Exeter & Teign Valley Railway Wednesday 15th May 2019

A visit to the base of the Exeter & Teign Valley Railway at Christow goods yard, for DRSA members is announced. The visit will start at 1100 and will include a guided tour, led by owner Colin Burges, of the numerous items of standard and narrow gauge rolling stock, also the large collection of railway artefacts, most of which have been, or are in the process of being, restored to a very high standard. A buffet lunch will be provided. Cost £8 per head payable on the day. If you wish to participate please email Tony Hill by 10th May: tonyjhill@gmail.com

Rail Operations & Line Update

Paul Martin, Duty Manager

Line Update

With the flail repaired work has been ongoing on cutting back lineside vegetation which is, as always, a mammoth task. This operation can only work when the line is not being used for other purposes. In January, Class 20s 20142 and 20189 brought a Loram grinder to the railway. Some 25 years ago this vehicle was one of the fleet supposedly to be replaced by the new grinders that we have seen on the railway over the last 2 years, but Loram decided to purchase it and convert it from a 7 car unit to a 5 car unit. The purpose of the visit was to rectify a braking issue. Unfortunately it developed wheel flats on the rear vehicle which necessitated it being uncoupled and taken by 08937 to Meldon. It was then moved by road to Laira TMD for wheel turning and returned to Meldon. The unit was stabled under



possession at Sampford Courtenay and after rectifying the brake issue left the railway under its own power in early February.

GWR sent unit 150263 on 14th February 2019 to test its new software to tackle wheelslip issues. There was quite a crowd of GWR and Network Rail staff around and it seemed to go well.

Traction Update

08937: Bluebell Mel worked the *The Train to Christmas Town* (TTCT) season throughout with no issues. It has also shunted stock when required and been called onto both rescue the grinder and take one vehicle to and from Meldon as mentioned earlier.

1132 (Thumper Unit): The overhaul of 1132 continues at Meldon in the capable hands of the Carriage & Wagon crew. See the volunteers' report for full details. It is hoped that 1132 will form part of the heritage service in 2019 though it's not expected to be in use at the start of the season.

31452: After working the TTCT season throughout with no issues, the 31 has seen occasional use on engineering trains and shunting stock at Okehampton. There is still no news on the potential arrival of 31285 from Weardale.

Train to Christmas Town (TTCT)

A revised schedule of trains ran from late November to December 23rd. Feedback was very positive and the trains ran with no incident. There was the usual huge effort to keep everything running through what seemed like endless rainy days. The driving was carried out by Graham Isom, Rachael Wilson and Jules Pope. Guard duties were covered by Dennis LeWorthy and Don Bent. Traction was as described above and the rolling stock formation saw the use of the Courier coach providing a second changing area for the cast.

Events Trains

A draft schedule of events trains has been produced running from March 31st 2019 until October half term. As well as Murder Mystery trains and Afternoon Tea trains there are some new events planned for 2019. These include themed days such as Meet Peppa Pig on Easter Sunday alongside events such as trains for Mothers' Day train and Sunday Lunch trains. Everything is provisional at this time. There is also an English Electric weekend planned for the 8th and 9th June (more info at <https://www.dartmoor-railway-sa.org/eeweekend>).

Heritage Services

The start date for heritage train in 2019 is now planned to be Saturday March 30th. It is planned to use 08937 at the start of the season with the same stock as last year i.e. Lab 11, the FK, and the LMS Brake Van.

Dartmoor Railway Standard Timetable 2019

Meldon Viaduct	Dep	-----	10.45	11.45	13.00	14.45	15.55	17.05
Okehampton Platform 2	Arr	-----	11.00	12.00	13.15	15.00	16.10	17.20
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Okehampton Platform 2	Dep	10.15	11.15	12.30	14.15	15.25	16.35	-----
Meldon Viaduct	Arr	10.30	11.30	12.45	14.30	15.40	16.50	-----

Standard Fares

	Adult	Senior	Child	Family
All Day Rover	£5.00	£4.00	£3.00	£14.00
Single Journey	£3.00	£2.00	£2.00	£8.00

Trains will run on weekends and bank holidays. The standard timetable will apply except on days when events trains run, the first of which will be for Mother's Day on May 31st.

Please note that as yet we don't know what, if any, arrangements will be made for passengers wishing to travel on the standard heritage service to Meldon on an event day. Until clearer information is available, we strongly advise prospective passengers to **contact the railway before travelling**. On non-event days, the vacuum braked set of Lab 11, Mk2A FK, and the LMS brakevan 731411 worked by D1467/08937 will operate. At some point in the season Thumper 1132 may re-emerge from its current re-paint and become available.

GWR Exeter Sunday Services

The summer Sunday Exeter-Okehampton service, supported by Devon County Council, is expected to start Sunday 19th May 2019 and run until Sunday 8th September.

Additionally, this Summer two return bus services are expected to run between Gunnislake station and Okehampton station to connect with a morning and an afternoon GWR train service.

A message from Percy....

Well I survived TTCT and the crowds. It meant a lot of time restricted to the Signal Box, but I met lots of new friends with the cast and all the helpers. I've had my annual encounter with the dreaded white stuff and my friend Sam made sure I was fed over Xmas and in the snow when the station was closed.

Lots of old and new friends pop into to say hello to me and often get a picture of themselves with yours truly. Thank you for all the presents over Christmas – I think I've got enough treats to last me most of the year, but don't let that stop you bringing me more!!!

As always keep up to date with me through my Facebook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/Percy-Okehampton-station-cat-1787757494837243/>

OkeRail update

Tony Hill

Mike Davies (OkeRail Forum Chairman and Mayor of West Devon) and Okehampton MP Mel Stride reported in Okehampton Times articles (22/2/19 and 29/2/19), asking the Department for Transport to give a target date for the introduction of regular trains between Okehampton and Exeter; for which Great Western Railway Train Operating Company are compiling the submission, which is understood to, at last, be nearly finished.

Volunteer Activities

Geoff Horner, Volunteer Coordinator

Now that the festive appearance required for the *Train To Christmas Town* season has ended the Station Maintenance team have restored the station to its traditional Southern Railway appearance. This is not the time of year that allows much if any exterior painting but some of the team have found tasks to occupy themselves. A not very exciting but necessary task has been the replacing of a flushing cistern which had detached itself from the wall in the Gents toilets on platform 3. A more rewarding task has been the replacement of some rotten timbers to one side of the over bridge (Bridge 609) immediately to the west end of platforms 1 and 2.



Preparing to fit the new timbers that will reduce the gap between the bridge girder and the lowest railing (Picture courtesy of Sue Baxter).



*This image shows the function of the new protection boards
(Picture courtesy of Sue Baxter)*

The flower beds and tubs are being prepared for the spring, work on the museum displays has continued and the shop is being readied for its regular opening when the heritage and other services start again in early April.

The Carriage & Wagon team have continued working on the motor car to 'Thumper' 1132 and on our ex Southern Railway brake van LDS55625. The following pictures, all by courtesy of David Bell, show some of the works that have been taking place over the past weeks.

Regular pictorial updates of our volunteer activities can be found on our website:

<https://www.dartmoor-railway-sa.org/wip>



A C&W team sanding down the side of Thumper. This along with any required filling takes the time in the preparation process before painting can begin.



New and rubbed down timbers to the side of the GBV.



Working on the replacement of timbers to the end and side of the GBV.



Muscle power employed in refitting one of the buffers.

Station Maintenance Team

Tom Baxter

First job back after Christmas/New Year was the restoration of various barrows, sack trucks, planters etc. back into their rightful places on Platform 3. These had again been successfully stored in the Museum Rooms and the Staff/Store Room on Platform 2. Movement this year was made much easier by availability of the DR maintenance truck ably piloted by Duty Manager Paul Martin. In previous years we have had to manhandle items across the tracks (and through stored rolling stock). Not easy as some items are a considerable weight. So our grateful thanks to Paul for his help on this occasion.

After a general tidy up around the station it was then back to SMT work in earnest. A tree lopping expedition towards the end of last year had revealed rotting timbers on Klondyke Road bridge – Bridge 609.



This is the under bridge immediately west of the station. The one situated between the last sleeping car and GUV van on Platform 1. The bridge is an interesting hybrid construction. Stone arch for the two main running lines but of metal beam

construction for the platform 1 line. Understood to be as a result of this being a later addition when the branch to Holsworthy was opened. A bay platform then being needed at Okehampton for the branch trains. The parts that needed replacement were the wooden protection boards on the Youth Hostel side of the bridge.

Suitable timber was obtained and cut and fashioned to fit. Made a little more complicated by the bridge being of riveted construction. In order to get a good fit, the timber had to be cut out to provide clearance for the rivet heads.



A final touch were additional side protection boards. All coated in some timber preservative to hopefully enhance longevity. ‘Main contractor’ on this has been Paul Vodden and a very fine job he has made of it.

John Coxon has also been a regular attender and ‘in cab’ work on the 08 has continued. As a result, the cab internal decoration looks far smarter than before. He has also given it some other TLC as befits its importance as a key operating loco on the railway.

Other works undertaken recently have been the almost inevitable toilet repair. A little more exciting than usual with the Urinal Cistern in the Gents having let go of its position up on the wall. Subsequently crashing down and shattering into many pieces on the quarry tile floor.

Fortunately it happened after hours and when no one was ‘in residence’ underneath. A replacement was obtained locally and SMT colleagues securely mounted it back on the wall. The new one interestingly has substantial brackets which were not present on the original. So hopefully a repeat performance is now very unlikely.

A bit of vegetation cutting back has taken place. Some recent lineside work to remove gorse growing through the lineside fence between the Granite Way and railway up towards Meldon. This being impossible to cut down with the railway’s flail trimmer due to the proximity of the chain link fencing. A somewhat ‘scratchy job’ as gorse does not give up its hold easily. Other work has been to commence cutting a number of overhanging branches in the main car park. Some now so low as to cause an obstruction to higher vehicles. This was particularly noticeable at the Vintage Truck event last year when some vehicles could not access the former loco yard car park due to risk of damage.

Station Gardening

Sue Baxter

It was worth getting up to the station after it snowed because the weight of the sticky white stuff had bowed several plants like the *abelias* right down to the ground. I knocked it off and they have since recovered, which cannot be said for all trees and bushes. The miniature daffs are blooming well. A few snowdrops planted by Penny are showing on the wildflower patch and *pulmonaria* is beginning to show its startling blue flowers, which will turn to pink.

It is really sad when wild gardening goes wrong. We feel we have good wildflower potential in the gravel and low bank around the west side of the turntable site, So after strimming our idea was to let the seed fall and then after a couple of weeks remove the cut grass and thereby start lowering the nutrient level. However the Christmas Security gang made a compound there and put their caravans on it, before we could rake it up. When I was able to do it everything was either well compacted or had become tough and tussocky. So I set to

and raked quite vigorously. To my joy I suddenly saw two slow worms wriggling, a large 12" and a smaller 4" long. Then I was crushed to realise I had just cut the tail off one beautiful legless lizard. The low south facing bank and relatively dry conditions with the shelter of the grass are apparently ideal for adults to hibernate in until the end of February.



A rotted fence has been replaced by a hedge on the steep bank above the main gate entrance. Beech saplings and one hazel with some native honeysuckle to come. It is hoped that this will be less expensive and less awkward to maintain than the painted panels. Saplings were kindly

donated by Geraldine who was keen that these self-seeded garden plants found a home.

In Station Wood I picked up some fallen lichen. It soon started shrivelling once it had fallen from the security of a high branch. *Usnea florida* is becoming rare as it is a clean air indicator. It has distinctive disc-like fruits with rays. Dainty and intriguing structure, relying on a single foot to hang onto its perch. Found within 100m from the A30 dual carriageway, surprising.



Memories of the Last Rail Freight Traffic at Okehampton

Tony Hill

After the closure to passenger traffic in June 1972, Okehampton continued to be served by (usually) a morning freight service from and return to Exeter Riverside yard which ran, at first, several days a week. Gradually this declined to once or twice a week with final traffic often being conveyed from Riverside on one of the empty Meldon ballast trains for detaching en route. Accumulated empty wagons, mostly Vanfits [vacuum brake fitted vans], were sent to Exeter on the return of a Saturday Only morning freight, usually worked by a class 25 loco.



April 1979. Arthur Westlake stands proudly at Okehampton with behind him in the goods yard some 'Lowfit' wagons with new dung spreaders from Diss and several 'Vanfit' wagons with sugar beet pulp & nuts from East Anglia sugar factories for delivery to local agricultural merchants. Photographer Tony Hill.

Besides Vanfits of animal feeds and fertilisers, sheeted 'Hyfit' open wagons were received with sacks of animal feed, such as cotton cake, loaded direct from ships in Avonmouth Docks. The last regular container traffic was Scribona cakes from Ashford received in BD containers for transferring to their Okehampton Agent's little van for delivery to the area's shops.

For a few years in the 1970's, rock salt for roads was received from Over & Wharton in elderly rusting Hyfits [sided open wagon with sheet rail high bar], often their last revenue earning journey, before condemnation and scrapping....wagon sweepings made sure I was never short of salt for winter!

The three Up (Military) sidings last uses included in the late 60's the loading into Hyfits of re-useable sleepers from recovery of the North Cornwall lines, and in the mid 70's, many wagons of steel water pipes from Stanton Gate for the Roadford Reservoir Project.

One of the very last farm removals by rail, took place in the late 70's, when two bogie carflat wagons of tractors and equipment were loaded at Kidderminster for a farmer moving to Bridestowe, arriving at Okehampton on an empty Meldon ballast train for unloading in the Up sidings.

The last freight traffic to Okehampton was, I think, in early 1984 (by then both Arthur Westlake's and Jack Ramell's posts had been withdrawn and they had retired) and was sugar beet pulp and nuts in sacks from East Anglia loaded in the then still relatively new, long wheelbase COV AB [covered van] wagons.

Jack Ramell was then the last uniformed member of rail staff based at Okehampton. He had previously, until closure of the North Cornwall lines in 1966, been a respected Okehampton Guard of the old school. Jack was almost certainly the unidentified Shunter mentioned by Tim Miles in his article in the Dartmoor Pony No. 34. photo taken by Arthur Westlake.



April 1979. Tony Hill (at the time based in the BR WR Bristol Divisional Movements Manager's Office) with Railman Checker Shunter Jack Ramell who was in the process of sweeping out (note the LSWR Handcart and old coat) and preparing the wagons before they were sent away empty to Severn Beach ICI works for loading with bags of fertiliser for farmers.

The Area Manager takes a cab ride to Meldon

Tony Hill

John Heaton, one time BR WR Area Manager at Exeter St David's, in his enlightening second book 'Devon Railways: The Area Manager's Diary 1987-88' (available from Amazon), recounts a cab ride from Exeter Riverside Yard to Meldon Quarry on 33049 working a ballast empties from Salisbury with 30 empty Dogfish (hoppers) and Grampus (opens).

En route (passing 31404 with the unofficially Exeter based 'secret standby set' of two MK 1 coaches covering for another 142 'Skipper' unit failure on a North Devon line service) he remarks on the good condition of the line including the stretch of continuous welded rail on concrete sleepers, laid in 1983, on the curve at Coleford and how the line retains a sense of its former main line status.

He records the building of the Okehampton by-pass, surmising that the interest from the money involved would have financed a local passenger service between Exeter and Plymouth via Okehampton.

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Devon-Railways-Managers-1986-1987-nationalised/dp/1521272409/>

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

Last Revenue Earning Train through Tavistock North

Bob Bunyar

The former 'Southern' Main line from Plymouth to Exeter was closed completely to all traffic between Bere Alston and Meldon Viaduct from May 6th 1968 leaving the tracks between these two locations lying rusting and gathering weeds. It would not be too long before the scrap men moved in, ripping up the rails and demolishing the infrastructure, but before this occurred, something happened which can only be described as quite incredible and bizarre on a railway line that was 'officially' closed!

On February 21st 1969, severe weather conditions were gripping the South West with 10 to 15cm of snow being recorded as falling in the Dartmoor area. Along with strong winds this caused the Great Western main line between Plymouth and Exeter via Totnes to become blocked leaving a fully fitted freight train made up of vans and china clay wagons bound for Exeter Riverside waiting in Tavistock Junction Yard (Plymouth), unable to proceed.

Of course the route from Plymouth up to Bere Alston was still open for trains serving Gunnislake, as it is today as the Tamar Valley Line, and the section from Okehampton down to Exeter was at the time also still in use for both passenger and freight traffic leaving the section from Bere Alston through Tavistock North, Brentor, Lydford, Bridstowe to Meldon being officially closed.

A stranded fitted freight at Tavistock Junction Yard train, hauled by Warship Class diesel D827 'Kelly' of Laira shed, was given permission to run over the closed section of the former SR main line to reach Exeter. It is understood that the driver of D827 did have route knowledge of the old SR line, but of course this was nearly ten months after closure and in this case, snow was heavy on the ground.

WR Senior Management, Control and the Civil Engineer all liaised with each other to arrange for the line to be used in this emergency. The train ran at caution and facing points had been clipped up for

safety, the train went forward from Bere Alston to Meldon Quarry with special authority.

Tony Hill saw the diverted train passing Tavistock with D827 with an Exeter Crew. It was fully brake fitted i.e. no brakevan, and had 35 wagons; mostly vanfits, open sheeted wagons of clay and some BD Type containers on flat wagons.

I'm pretty sure that in this modern world of health and safety legislation, risk assessments and Network Rail's attitudes to anything out of the ordinary, events such as occurred on February 21st 1969, would just not happen today.

For now D827 Kelly and its fitted freight train should be recorded as the last revenue earning train to pass over the whole of the old SR route from Plymouth to Exeter via Tavistock North, but let's hope one day in the future that might change!

The 50th anniversary of this working was in February 2019. We would be interested to hear if anyone has any further knowledge of the working.

Online Fundraising

Remember that by doing your online shopping after visiting our [easyfundraising](https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/drsa) page you can raise donations towards DRSA at no cost to you - *over £1900 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.

Rosie's Diary - Grand, Impossible and Delightful Stations *by Rosie*

I have just taken my 2 legs away on a short break. Copplestone to Shrewsbury. Showing a paw to stop the train is not easy you know. However I found tables under which to stretch out in comfort on 153, 165, 175 and 221 units, and thankfully avoided the dubious delight of the new 800's which I believe are poor at accommodating 4 long legs.



Shrewsbury has a very Grand Station. The canopy is being painted green amongst other refurbishments. Carved stone Kings heads stared down at me from doorways as we alighted. However as you can see I was soon transfixed not by them but by rodents rustling the brambles just through the railings above the station. (As usual, I didn't catch them but neither did I get my head stuck between the bars!) One of my 2 legs climbed up into the Castle for a panoramic view of the tracks and signal box. *I was not allowed.* Can you imagine any

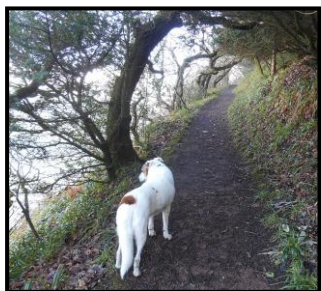


respectable castle not having dogs to clear up the bones?

Now I can quite imagine that many of my readers have been to Woody Bay Station on the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway. New engine *Lyd* was a visitor for their latest gala. Inclusion of a Southern

Engine in this magazine, would please my mate Peter Ritchie. He knew how to treat a new dog at the station as he calmed my nerves in the seclusion of the Booking Office and introduced me to markie biscuits.

But, how many of you have been dragooned into visiting the Woody Bay itself? One of my 2 legs thought it would be “interesting”. And so it was, as you can see I had to brave a waterfall and a precipitous path where my only protection was from ancient windswept oaks. However I hoped it would be worth it all as it has a beach and the sun was out so my mind was on having a good dig in the sand. Can you see the rocky dark bay with huge vertical cliffs? Well we sat in the cold shadow of those North facing cliffs, even at the lowest tide mark.



Then I learnt that this was part of the Martinhoe Estate bought in 1885 by Benjamin Lake, a wealthy solicitor from Kent, with the intention of turning it into a Swiss style resort with a branch line from the station above. He got as far as building a pier to attract cross Bristol Channel traffic, and some steamers did call, before a storm

demolished it. But really where did he think he could build the lower station and then a funicular? Certainly not to the standard I am used to! On the other hand he could have been a man before his time, ie when climate warming really takes effect we shall all be seeking out the cool dark places in summer!





So which station is just simply delightful? Well of course my home base Okehampton! Even in January's snow it looks good and Platform 3 gets some sunshine because it faces South. When it snows the canopy protects us. However I would appreciate a screen at the West end of

the platform when I am unreasonably tethered, away from the Buffet Door, and in the teeth of a westerly gale! Once upon a time there was one there.

Further Stock of DVD available now!

We now have a further stock of our DVD, 'The Southern's Withered Arm and other lines in South West England'. This DVD, which is only available through DRSA, is the brainchild of DRSA committee member David Clegg, and has been produced in association with the South West Film and Television Archive (SWFTA). It features a wide selection of professional and amateur railway film, including footage of the North Cornwall line, the Callington branch, Tavistock to Okehampton, Halwill Junction to Torrington, Exeter to Barnstaple and Ilfracombe, the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway, and the Princetown branch. Much of the content has previously not been in the public domain.

Running time is approximately 1 hour. Priced at £16.50 including P&P, the DVD can be purchased by contacting David Clegg by email at clegg.lethbridge@tiscali.co.uk, or by phone on 01626 867210.

Please note that the DVD has been produced in association with SWFTA and that, for licencing and copyright reasons, purchased copies are for private use only. All proceeds will go towards supporting DRSA's activities.

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