



THE DARTMOOR PONY

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Supporters' Association**

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Castle Class

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

FRONT COVER:. Nameplate of newly named GWR 'Castle Class' 255 power car 43194 'Okehampton Castle' at Okehampton on 14th September 2019. *Photo: Sue Baxter.*

BACK COVER: Top: Power car 43188 leading the Okehampton-Weymouth special train at Crediton on 14th September 2019. *Photo: David Tozer.* Bottom: Colas Rail Tamper at Bow Station on 7th July 2019. *Photo: Dick Henrywood.*

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Notes from the Chairman

Rev. Philip Wagstaff

The ex LSWR main line between Waterloo and Exeter goes through Crewkerne where I am now living. Crewkerne station is still there, although it lost its buildings on the down side when the line was singled between Yeovil and Honiton but the station buildings on the up side remain and they include the waiting room and ticket office which is open from the early morning until early afternoon.

Every time I get a train to London or Exeter I, like many others, see this poster advertising the Dartmoor railway as it is next to the doors leading to the platform.



It dates from a few years ago now but it is still there advertising the railway encouraging visitors to come along and see what the railway has to offer.

As we come towards the end of the Summer running season I would like to thank all the volunteers who support the railway in many different ways. Visitors have been welcomed, train crews have been rostered, rolling stock has been renovated and maintained, the shop and ticket office have been staffed, the museum developed, catering

has been provided, the station gardeners and maintainers have been busy. Volunteers continue to give of their time throughout the Autumn and Winter as much 'behind the scenes' work continues particularly at Meldon and at Okehampton station.

Thank you all for your support for DRSA either as a member or as a volunteer. Your support for the railway is greatly appreciated.

Membership Matters

Geoff Horner, Membership Secretary

As at 31st August 2019 the association has a total of 208 members.

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

- Simon Arnold of Mary Tavy
- Paul Taylor of Bristol
- Robert and Kathleen Mitchell of Halwill Junction

Events

Keep up to date at <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.

October Social - 02/10/2019

November Social - 06/11/2019

December Social - 04/12/2019

Tarka Rail Association Quiz Night – 27th November 2019 at the Rising Sun, Umberleigh.

Summer trains between Okehampton and Exeter

Tony Hill

This year four trains each way have run on Sundays between 19th May and 8th September usually formed by a 2 car Class 150 'Sprinter' DMU, but on isolated occasions a 'Pacer' class 143 unit has been used instead.

Passenger loadings appear to have been very good this summer; coincidentally helped by the generally fine weather on the Sundays and punctuality has been good.

The first train to Exeter usually loaded in the region of 90 to 110 passengers, but a figure of 125 was recorded on 18th August.

It is thought that the total number of passengers this summer has exceeded 8,000; a terrific figure and yet more evidence of the need for a regular train service for Okehampton.



Here are two photos taken on Sunday 1st Sept 2019, the penultimate Sunday of the GWR Okehampton Summer Sunday services. A 2-car

class 150 unit forming the 0953 Okehampton to Exeter entrains its approximately 100 passengers with a few more joining at Sampford Courtenay and Crediton.



Congratulations!

DRSA Members and long serving volunteer stalwarts Tom Baxter and John Coxon have recently been passed out as locomotive drivers and deemed competent to drive the class 08 and class 31 locos currently based at Okehampton.

Photo shows the view from the cab of the 08 approaching Meldon, with Tom Baxter driving.



Charter train Okehampton to Weymouth and return - Sat 14th September 2019

Tony Hill & David Clegg

This excursion train with approximately 300 passengers was chartered by OkeRail Forum and formed of a former Inter-City 125 HST specially made up of four standard class coaches with the addition of a spare first class coach to make 5 coaches. Power Car 43194 on this train now carries the name 'Okehampton Castle'.



Platform 3 at Okehampton was already packed by 0730, with the station buffet doing a roaring trade of teas, coffees and bacon baps. Leaving Okehampton on time at 0815 for an excellent but uneventful run via Exeter St Davids, Taunton, Westbury (reverse), Yeovil Pen Mill and Dorchester West to arrive on time at Weymouth at 1145.

Uniquely, as far as we can ascertain, the train was worked right through to Weymouth and back by Exeter traincrew, with a Westbury

based driver acting as pilot to the Exeter driver between Yeovil Pen Mill and Weymouth.

A few passengers alighted at Dorchester for a look around the town or a bus trip to Bridport with all the other passengers enjoying the superb warm and sunny weather at either Weymouth or taking a bus ride to explore Portland with its excellent coastal paths, some of which use parts of its railway system, closed as long ago as 1952 to passengers and 1965 to freight.



The return journey from Weymouth at 1626 was to Yeovil Pen Mill, where the train reversed, thence via Yeovil Jn to Exeter via the former L&SWR main line, with the Guard, Colin Hann of Exeter, announcing the train renamed as the 'Atlantic Coast Express' (!). During the journey a prize draw was held raising £650 for OkeRail (first prize, two “go anywhere tickets on GWR”), and GWR train-crew announced that all profits from the on-train buffet would be donated to OkeRail (another indication of the evident support that GWR is giving to the reinstatement of regular passenger services to Okehampton). Arrival at

Exeter St Davids was 10 mins early and finally, with a noticeable setting sun, the train reached Okehampton at 1923 on time.

All agreed it had been a very enjoyable and successful day and thanked those at GWR, especially the Regional Manager Matt Barnes, the GWR volunteer train stewards, traincrew and OkeRail members who had been involved in the, often challenging, organisation, of this special train.

The twelve 'Castle Class' sets consist of two ex-HST power-cars plus four second-class coaches and are allocated to services between Cardiff and Taunton, and Exeter to Penzance.

First Class accommodation is no longer provided on these sets, and the First Class coach specially provided for the OkeRail excursion was a coach retained in connection with the current temporary lease by GWR of two HST sets to Hull Trains TOC.

Online Fundraising

Remember that by doing your online shopping after visiting our [easyfundraising](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/drso) page you can raise donations towards DRSA at no cost to you - *over £1900 has been raised so far!*

www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/drso

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.

Rail Operations & Line Update

Paul Martin, Duty Manager

Line Update

A busy time on the track with vegetation control, fishplate oiling and lots of packing at various locations. Some of the ballast from the station car park has been used for the packing and boxing in of sleepers. There has also been realignment of the track at one location.

In early June the long dry spell was followed by torrential rain and a significant landslip was discovered close to the Network Rail boundary. The track crew cleared this overnight to enable the GWR Exeter service to run the following day.

The demic Mark 2 brake van was extracted from the long siding at Okehampton station and placed next to the GUV with a plan to convert it to a mess room and workshop for the track crew. This included slewing the track to enable access to the line into the bay platform.

Traction Update

08937: Bluebell Mel has worked the heritage service on all non-event services, performing admirably. It has been racking up the miles!

1132 (Thumper Unit): The overhaul of 1132 continues at Meldon in the capable hands of the C&W crew. See C&W report for full details. It made an appearance at the English Electric Gala in June (see gala entry below). It's now awaiting rectification of the faults and now realistically it will be the 2020 season before it sees regular usage.

31452: The class 31 has been used on all events trains. The change of formation of the events rake (being reduced to 6 vehicles) and a change in ruling re propelling trains has enabled the 31 to operate events trains on its own, propelling the formation in the down direction. The 31 has also seen occasional use in track inspections in inclement weather running light engine to the boundary with Network Rail to ensure the line was fit for Sunday GWR Exeter services.

There is still no news on the potential arrival of 31285 from Weardale.

Heritage Services

Heritage services between Okehampton and Meldon continue with passenger numbers increasing as the season runs. 08937, Lab 11 and the LMS brake van has now added Mark 2 (6181) added to the set for the peak period of the season. This was extracted from the Christmas train rake replete with decorations!!



The FK carriage has had its vacuum brakes issues addressed but it needs inspections before being put into service and is not likely to be used this season as other time commitments take precedence.

Events Trains

Events trains have run both at weekends and midweek. These have included Afternoon Tea trains, Murder Mystery events and other themed services. Many of these have been sold out and proved to be popular. Luckily DRSA have managed to supply sufficient train crew to cover the long days. With the new rake formation weekend afternoon tea trains have been able to run towards Bow whilst the normal heritage service continued to run to its normal timetable.

English Electric Gala

The gala took place on June 8th & 9th. With the ongoing issues surrounding the non-arrival of 31285 it was a late decision for the gala to go ahead. This probably impacted on numbers, though Saturday saw a reasonable attendance. Sunday was restricted to the Okehampton–Meldon section due to the GWR Exeter trains. On Saturday 31452 (on a shortened rake) operated over the full length of the line, propelling the train in the down direction. 08937 ran with the heritage set on the Meldon run, but after a shunt the 08 then used Thumper as coaching stock. Then Thumper 205032 ran under its own power on that trip for the first time it had been out for 2 years. Later Thumper went down to the boundary but sadly failed at Sampford Courtenay. Attempts to rectify the fault came to nothing and the small number of passengers were ferried back to Okehampton by cars. Later 31452 was sent down as rescue engine to drag it back to Okehampton. Sunday saw the 31 running on the Meldon section with a switch when 08937 and Thumper as coaching stock was used. DRSA provided train crews and support staff for 2 trains through Saturday.

GWR Exeter Sunday Services

The service is once again proving to be popular. The service consists mainly of Class 150 2 car units. On 21st July the last return trip was strengthened to two 2 car units which seemed strange as the one service that needs strengthening is the first departure from Okehampton which routinely has well over 100 passengers. The, soon to be withdrawn, Pacer 143 units have made two appearances to date. Basically, it appears that if Tom Baxter is travelling on the train it will be a Pacer unit!!

Thankfully we have avoided the issues of previous years regarding a lack of units and/or drivers. Most weeks has had additional staff in the form of drivers gaining route knowledge and guards on training.

A message from Percy....

Percy Day came and went on Sunday August 11th. It proved a very busy day with 2 group bookings as well. It was great to see lots of people including a group from Mitzis Kitty Rescue (who took me in as a stray before coming to the railway).



We exceeded last years fund raising accruing £750 for Mitzis. Kay works tirelessly with the Tombola and bric a brac stalls and lots of other people help out each weekend.



A bonus for me is that my treats supply has been fully replenished by donations on the day. You can never have enough treats!

As always keep up to date with me through my Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/Percy-Okehampton-station-cat-1787757494837243/>

Volunteer Activities

Geoff Horner, Volunteer Coordinator

By the time you are reading this the DR Okehampton–Meldon heritage services will be nearing the end of their 2019 season.

It is a fine tribute to all our volunteers that once again this year's services have operated without any hitches, the station has been much praised for its attractive appearance and a journey on the heritage train set has given pleasure to many people whether they have been enthusiasts, walkers, cyclists or just those who take pleasure in a trip on a heritage railway.

It is not only manning the heritage trains that our volunteers are to be found. DRSA volunteers have provided train crews and catering assistance on the various events trains that have been run by DRCIC over the season, often working late into the evening. The DRSA shop has been open on every running day, the ticket office manned and the station buffet supported. The Carriage & Wagon team have continued their work on 'Thumper', the ex SR brake van and on some of the DR coaching stock whilst the Station Maintenance and Horticultural teams have kept the station looking as attractive as always.

On behalf of the committee thank you to all our volunteers. We are sure that DRCIC appreciates the volunteer effort that goes into keeping the wheels turning.

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

Carriage & Wagon group

Geoff Horner, Volunteer Coordinator

Photos by David Bell

Despite being the summer holiday season, a full turnout of volunteers was achieved on several occasions. However, Alan Harris, our underframe ‘painting machine’ was notably absent for a few weeks following a stay in hospital and subsequent recuperation; the latter enforced by Maureen he claimed!



A full turnout of the C&W volunteers (less photographer) in relaxed mood.

Although work continued within the workshop on the “Thumper” 1132 power car and SR brake van LDS55625, on the odd occasions effort was diverted elsewhere - to carry out running repairs and cleaning on the heritage stock at the station, together with the buffet carriage and visitors facilities at Meldon Viaduct; not forgetting cleaning the underneath of Platform 3 canopy.

“Thumper” power unit 1132

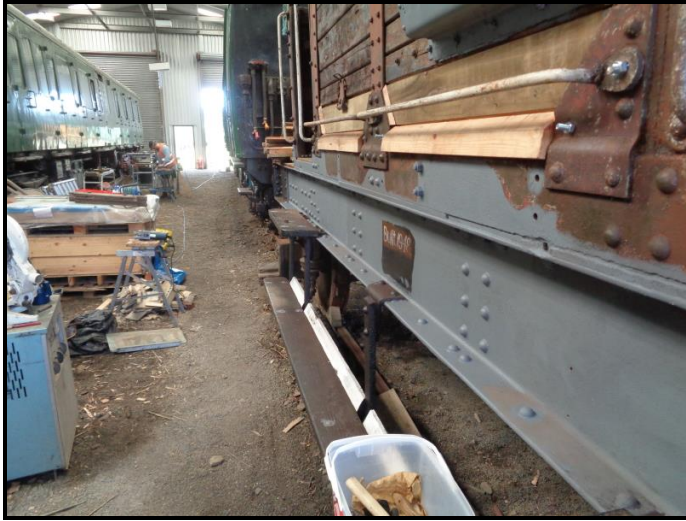
Repainting is almost complete with just the east end requiring a final coat. The diesel engine is still unserviceable awaiting the procurement of a water cooling pump. The door of the Guard's compartment required heavy surgery by Ron Kirby in the form of a new part-outer panel which he fabricated from scratch.



Applying the first top coat to the “Thumper” power unit.

Ex SR Goods Brake Van LDS55625

Work continued uninterrupted on replacing both external and internal woodwork in addition to the seemingly never ending chipping away of old paint and rust down to bare metal on the main frame. However, the half way stage on the mainframe has been reached and the appearance of primer on the finished areas is rewarding. The buffers at the other end will be removed and the rotten oak blocks replaced in the near future.



Mainframe on N. side of the brake van cleaned and primed.

First class corridor compartment carriage (FK) – S13436

Painting has been completed and new vacuum brake cylinder seals and flexible couplings have been fitted. It now awaits its Fitness To Run examination.



Under the FK fitting brake cylinder seals.

Station Maintenance Team

Tom Baxter

The team have now modified their working day to suit the remaining team members. We now meet on most Wednesdays, but currently operate with a very limited number of members - generally two manage to turn up and sometimes three. **We would very much welcome others who might be keen to join!** Complex skills are not a necessary requirement and ours could be described as general DIY in nature. But, of course, those with a more detailed knowledge would also be very welcome. Sometimes we also assist our C&W colleagues with work on rolling stock. The railway now stores more stock at Okehampton station and with its limited requirement for use during the week it can provide other work opportunities.

Recent jobs undertaken will give a flavour of the work we do:

- Fix and secure former gate at the Exeter end of platform 2 in order to make it part of the existing fence.
- Finish painting of new end of platform fence adjacent.
- Repair and fix outlet in shower unit in 'Superloo' on platform 2.
- Repaint internal walls of Superloo and re-varnish wooden ceiling after removing and replacing rotted section. This occurred as the result of a water leak through the roof which was repaired by ourselves some time ago.
- Clean and polish Arthur Westlake Museum plaque and re-varnish surrounding woodwork.
- Clean gutter over station entrance canopy and attempt to clear blocked downpipe (ongoing!)
- Prepare and commence repaint of Meldon end of platform canopy on platform 2. After removing accumulated debris!
- Prepare fencing for repaint between platform 2 building and entrance gate.
- Strim and clear vegetation on walking route to GUV storage van and area around platform 1 siding on Klondyke Road bridge (Bridge 609).
- Carry out repairs to Setright ticket machine used by TTIs (Travelling Ticket Inspectors) on Heritage train.

Station Gardening – Medicinal potential and more...

Sue Baxter

Ann is always full of intriguing anecdotes, but do not get her onto the subject of sweet williams. She was prejudiced against them by her father who said they should be called ‘Stinking Billy’ because the William they referred to led the defeat of the Jacobites at the Battle of Culloden and then went on to lead a brutal crackdown on the Highlanders. Fortunately there is a lack of evidence for this origin of the name, and we can both agree that they are beautiful late spring flowers. Even better they have set lovely seeds and Mavis has been sorting these along with many others such as corncockles and wild poppies.



The greatest surprise show this year has been of mallow and lady's bedstraw, lining the sides of the path to the car park. Both are native perennials and have thrived with the reduced strimming and herbicides, at the same time as strewn grass has been removed. Interestingly we have mostly white rather than mauve mallow. If we run out of medicines in the next few months (for you

know why!) we could turn to the mallow (*malva sylvestris*) for treating inflammation such as toothache and bee or wasp stings. If you fancy making Cheshire cheese and colouring it, use the leaves of lady's bedstraw. Alternatively use it to “stuff your mattress”, as Mary is said to have given birth to Jesus on a bed made of this plant.



Mountain ash and wild roses have been rehomed from Exeter courtesy of John and Paul, joining the dogwood, fieldmaple and guelder rose planted by Penny on the signal box bank. We feel sure these new flower fairies will keep an eye on their saplings, so they remain protected from strimmers and drought! They all bring welcome colour in the flowers, fruit and foliage as we arrive up the drive.

Another name for mountain ash is quickbeam from the Saxon *cwic* meaning alive, referring to the constant movement of the foliage. Perhaps because it is restless, it is believed to ward off evil!

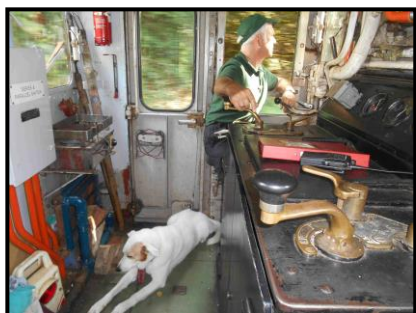


Rosie's Diary – Come Join Me On My Walks

by Rosie

This summer has settled into the ideal pattern of walk, snacks, and relax.

You see me first in relax mode on Y Garn watching a butterfly. I was in Snowdonia on a beautiful still day. We had just padded up the steep fellside from the Welsh Highland Railway station at Rhyd Ddu and if my eyesight was sharper I could have seen Snowdon's



summit station and the beaches on Anglesey. I may be 12 now but I really enjoyed our 7 hour Nantlle Ridge challenge, partly because of the generosity of fellow ramblers (about 1 in 3 melt under my respectful but intense stare and tilt of the head).

Back home, I like all passengers who have food, but paying them attention can be tiring. So you see me cabbing a not so quiet but nevertheless restful ride in Bluebell Mel, with the chance of getting some fetching diesel black eye makeup. John Coxon is now our smartest DRSA driver and for some reason, along with Graham Parkinson and Dave Hunt, does not appreciate me leaning my clean white soft coat up against him.





You see Graham on his last day as guard this season alongside Okehampton Castle at 8am. He had just done an early turn taking the heritage stock out of the station prior to the arrival of the GWR special.

Next up was a slippery but fascinating walk from a Sunday Train to Newton Abbot. We padded along the Templar's Way which runs along the high tide mark on the South side of the Teign estuary to Shaldon. I was quicker, more secure and

less challenged by overhanging trees than my two legs.

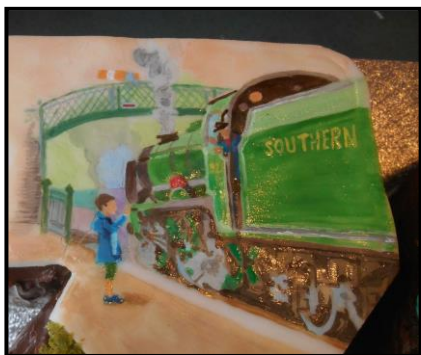


However they shouted at me when I began taking a short cut across brown mudflats, only then I found I could hardly turn round. The Combe Inn fortunately welcomes canine guests (even though I was plastered) half way down the estuary. We finished with a salty sea dog ride in the Shaldon to Teignmouth ferry. Then relaxed on the carpet in an 802 set back to Exeter.

The final 8th September Sunday service turned out to have the most passengers for Exeter, 155, and you can see them ready, waiting in the sunshine on Platform 3 under the hanging baskets.



It can be a busy time for the first heritage service and you see me relaxing, but also keeping a watching brief on driver Tom.



Sadly, not all treats are destined for me. Sveta Bent excelled herself with the most amazing cake for Graham's 70th birthday. On the 7 we could imagine Graham as a young lad waving to Southern engine drivers. While on the 0 we could see the latest 800 series train bursting out of the tunnel onto Dawlish seafront near his home.





Now for my third walk, which started on a train protected by a castle and a dragon. I am sure by now you are acquainted with the Weymouth Special. The castle relief was bright and shiny but it

was the fearsome dragon which really made me feel safe. I took my 2 legs onto the bus for Portland and a snack stop in a cafe in Easton where a fellow customer's sausage was proffered for my delectation. Replete we then headed off to the site of the old station and the impressive track which still leads down through active Portland Stone workings to the cliff top and then slopes down towards the harbour under looming cliffs and more quarries below. Back on the promenade I helped polish off the tips of two ice cream cones as I wondered why 2 legs were fascinated by mounds of sand built up to look like Shrek. I wasn't given the chance to show what a big hole in the beach I could dig. Probably best as the donkeys might have tripped. A long sleep in my own double seat bay in Coach D closed a perfect day.



Committee of the Dartmoor Railway Supporters' Association

Chairman: Philip Wagstaff

Vice-Chairman: Sue Baxter

Secretary: Jon Kelsey

Treasurer: Christine Horner

Membership Secretary & Volunteer Coordinator:

Geoff Horner

Committee Members:

Tom Baxter, Dave Clegg, Tony Hill

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