



THE DARTMOOR PONY

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

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**Looking forwards and
backwards**

The DARTMOOR PONY

Issue No. 39

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

FRONT COVER: 34013 *Okehampton* on a Sunday service ex-Plymouth (leaving ~11.15) for Waterloo entering Platform 3 Okehampton, January 1955. *Photo:* ©Colin Lennox-Jones

BACK COVER: Top: Pressed Steel Single Unit DMU 55027 stands in the Up platform at Okehampton having just arrived from Exeter St Davids in May 1972. *Photo:* ©Pete Colton.

Bottom: Stormy conditions at Dawlish as a southbound GWR Hitachi IET passes through on May 5th 2020. *Photo:* ©David Clegg.

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Notes from the Chairman

Rev. Philip Wagstaff

As we are all aware we are in a process of transition as a railway and we are in the middle of a global pandemic which has changed many things and has affected many lives.

It is within this context that this edition of the Pony comes to you. Since the time the Dartmoor Railway went into Administration at the start of the year, DRSA volunteers, in C&W and Station Maintenance as well as members of the committee have been exploring how DRSA might fit into any future plans for the railway. Those with long memories of the railway will know that we have been here before as an Association (or the Friends as it was then) but this time we have had more time to plan our future. Contact has been made with Aggregate Industries, the Administrators and members of Devon County Council which means that DRSA is engaged in the ongoing conversations around the future of the railway.

While keeping to the social distancing guidelines, DRSA volunteers have been keeping an eye on the station and have been making sure that the DRSA stock is safe at Meldon. There will be a big stock move at some stage in preparation for the vehicles owned by Dartmoor Railway to be sold. The committee is looking at whether some of them may be helpful to DRSA in the future.

Plans are continuing for the potential reopening of the line between Exeter and Okehampton, which is supported by DRSA. The link is long awaited and work is continuing behind the scenes with many agencies involved.

It is unlikely that we will be able to hold our AGM on the June date as was originally planned but we will hold an AGM before the end of the year. On a personal note, I will be stepping down from the committee at the AGM or in July as I have been posted by the Methodist Church to Hastings from September. I have many good memories of my time with the Friends and later with DRSA. I have met many people who

collectively have a passion to make the railway thrive and even though there have been bumpy moments, we are still here and are still supporting Dartmoor Railway into its future.

What that future will hold will unfold soon and I look forward to reading about it in future editions of the Pony. I would like though at this time to thank everyone who has been part of DRSA, all members of the committee, Pony editors, volunteers and members for your support over the years.

May I wish you all well for the future.

Membership Matters

Geoff Horner, Membership Secretary

So far 184 members have renewed for 2020 out of the 210 total at the end of December 2019 so a huge thank you to all those who have renewed their membership and also for the many generous donations that have been included. We are pleased to welcome the following new members who have joined us this year:

- Bruce Fraser of Crawford, South Lanarkshire
- Dick & Susy Goodwin of Ware, Hertfordshire

Although commercial activity is gradually resuming we have, at the time of going to print, no clearer picture of what the future of the Dartmoor Railway will be. Whatever this turns out to be it will almost certainly involve negotiations and agreements with third parties and a strong, supportive membership base will greatly strengthen our negotiating position. So, if you have yet to renew your membership now is the time!

Volunteer Activities

Geoff Horner, Volunteer Coordinator

In spite of the railway being dormant since January (hopefully just the case of being in hibernation) there has been some volunteer activity. A group of members have maintained a watching brief over Okehampton station and the shed and yard at Meldon thankfully without any instances of damage to report. Working within the social distancing rules a very small Station Maintenance team at Okehampton have taken advantage of the fine spring weather to undertake some fence painting and keeping the weeds and undergrowth in check. In the same way our Gardening Ladies have tended the flower beds and tubs so there should be a summer flowering display as usual.

With the easing of the lockdown rules a small group from Carriage & Wagon has been busy at Meldon rearranging a part of the shed interior to ensure the messing and hygiene arrangements are ready and in line with the guidelines for the C&W team returning to work.

A message from Percy...

Hi! Greetings from sunny Crediton. Just to let you know how I'm doing since the sad day when I had to leave the station. Everything happened very quickly and I didn't even get a real chance to say goodbye to many of my friends at the railway. I spent a couple of weeks at the DMs house in one room whilst we looked at options. Though I couldn't go out it was good to be safe and I got lots of attention.

I did get an offer to work at another railway in the Midlands that was tempting. It would have meant a long trip and in the end we decided to take up the kind offer of a family home in Crediton. I've settled in and get out an explore the local countryside. I have a sister called Belle who sadly is a canine!! Luckily we get on OK though I'm definitely in charge. I'm enjoying the life of being part of a family.

I still have my Facebook page letting people know how I'm getting on:
<https://www.facebook.com/Percy-Okehampton-station-cat-1787757494837243/>

Keep Safe!

The Nott Bequest

Jon Kelsey

In November 2017, DRSA was contacted by Julian Nott of Santa Barbara, California, in advance of his planned visit to Devon. Julian's great grandfather was Robert Nott, the Chief Accountant of the Bristol and Exeter Railway, one of the original constituent companies of the Great Western Railway. Nott family history has it that Robert's ancestor William was a North Tawton farmer who became rich by selling land to the railway.

Very sadly Julian Nott passed away in March 2019, following an accident related to his profession as a test pilot of scientific balloons.

Recently, Julian's widow, Anne Luther, kindly bequeathed three Nott family artefacts to DRSA, and very efficiently organised their shipment from California. The artefacts are portraits of Robert Nott and William Nott, and Robert's B&ER watchchain fob and railway pass. The portrait of Robert is by Charles Ernest Butler (1864-1933), a noted English painter.

Ms Luther has been made aware of the current situation at the railway. We made it clear that although we are pretty confident of retaining access to the Okehampton Station museum for the foreseeable future, there remains the possibility that we might not, in which case the artefacts will be donated to other appropriate local organisations.

When the coronavirus restrictions are eased, and the station's future is settled, we will be getting the museum ready for the public again. We will be very keen to find a volunteer to re-frame the two paintings ready for hanging. The painting of Robert Nott is about 4' x 3'.

When time allows, some genealogical research would be useful. The William Nott portrayed was thought to be Robert's father, but the two subjects appear to differ by more than one generation.



Painting of Robert Nott, Chief Accountant of the Bristol and Exeter Railway, and subsequently an employee of the Great Western Railway.

Painting of William Nott, ancestor of Robert, and North Tawton landowner.



Robert Nott's watchchain fob and railway pass.

HOPS

Jon Kelsey

Many of us hope that heritage services to Meldon will operate again, though it seems a distant prospect at the moment. If things work out and we have the opportunity to run trains ourselves, we will need to tackle a whole raft of unsexy administrative activities for which our vast collective volunteering experience hasn't prepared us (although many members bring valuable professional skills of course).

To comply with the regulatory framework which governs all railway operations, as well as the requirements and expectations of any modern business, we will have to deal with stuff like competence management, rostering, risk analysis, health and safety, safeguarding, a properly documented maintenance system, etc., etc. It will come as a bit of a culture shock to those members – e.g. me – who just signed up for a bit of convivial mucking about with someone else's old railway kit.

A tool that can help is a computer system called HOPS – Heritage Operations Processing Systems. Originally developed to automate signalling rosters on the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway about a decade ago, since it became available on the open market its use has become widespread in UK heritage railways. It can't replace the need to put appropriate systems in place, or the need for relevant levels of expertise in key roles, but it eliminates much donkeywork and ensures tasks are carried out accurately.

The brainchild of a career railwayman, Danny Scroggins, HOPS is designed specifically for heritage railways. It enables a railway to manage operations like timetabling, competence assessment and management, rostering, control logging and fault management. Other functionality is gradually being added in response to feedback from users.

Possibly a tad prematurely, DRSA has signed up to HOPS. The first impression is that it's easy and logical to use, is very thorough, and could easily save us at least one volunteer having to do rather boring work. Given that, at its basic level, it doesn't cost anything, there isn't really a case for not using it. Let's hope we get the chance to try.

Exeter-Okehampton regular train service - Update

Tony Hill

Now that the end has (finally) come for the remote US outfit's Dartmoor Railway CIC following it being put into Administration in February; the significant obstacle that clearly has delayed this increasingly needed regular rail service has finally been removed.

The direct award from April 1st 2020 for the GWR franchise was announced as expected in late March. We await specific details about the regular service scheme that the government has tasked GWR to introduce 'as soon as practicable'.

A small team of infrastructure specialists from Network Rail Western carried out a walking inspection of the line from the Coleford boundary to Okehampton Station over three days in early March to assess the overall condition of the assets. The view is that the line's overall condition is generally good, but some works will be needed in places.

Then the virus struck by mid-March bringing a virtual stagnation of normal life. Thus the line is currently mothballed by its present owner Aggregate Industries.

18 rail vehicles together with the Class 31 and the Aggregate Industries owned Class 08 are at Okehampton awaiting arrangements by the Administrator's agent (Walker Singleton) to be made to move them to Meldon so that an 'online' auction can be held. The vehicles are subsequently expected to be despatched by lorry, as their condition is thought not to be up to the standards required by Network Rail for movement by rail. The 08 loco is currently expected to be retained at Meldon Quarry.

Once some normality returns it is expected that it will become clearer as to the likely timescales for introduction of the regular services and also what future options might exist for the line from Okehampton to Meldon.

Beeching Reversal Funds Bids

David Clegg

Most members will no doubt have read in the national press about the £500 million ‘Restoring your railway’ fund announced by the Department for Transport in January this year. This fund is intended to support proposals for station and railway re-openings and boost schemes already being considered – not to actually fund work on the ground (£500 million wouldn’t get anyone very far!).

It was therefore good to read the following in the May edition of Modern Railways (MR) magazine (under the above) heading: “a new Northern Route Working Group has submitted a bid to the fund to develop a Strategic Outline Business Case for reopening the former London and South Western Railway main line between Exeter and Plymouth via Okehampton and Tavistock. The proposal is backed by four local MPs and the working group of industry personnel”. The Working Group is coordinated by southwest based rail journalist Andy Roden, our 2015 AGM speaker.

The group is not arguing for replacement of the coastal route via Dawlish (thank goodness as this is now my home station!) but recognises its vulnerability and is therefore arguing for the northern route to be complementary to the existing route to Cornwall. Strong easterly winds on 5th May this year (see photo on back cover) revealed once again the difficulties faced in maintaining this route. The MR article records that the LSWR route still exists (as we all know) between Exeter and Okehampton, and that Devon County Council is leading plans to reopen the stretch between Bere Alston and Tavistock, leaving just over 16 miles between Tavistock and Okehampton. The group also points out that the line between Exeter and Newton Abbot has been identified in Network Rail’s long-term planning as needing additional capacity and opening the Northern Route would provide the necessary relief.

A nice touch is that the Tavistock to Okehampton Reopening scheme is abbreviated as TORs – most appropriate for the route via Dartmoor! And it’s very good to know that reopening ‘our’ route is once again being looked at again under this new initiative.

Wickhams on the Dartmoor Railway

Jon Kelsey

Between 1922 and 1991, D. Wickham & Co. Ltd. of Ware in Hertfordshire produced nearly 12000 rail vehicles; a mixture of trolleys, trailers, inspection cars, railcars and the like, lightweight vehicles mainly for the use of track engineers. Their output was delivered worldwide. The Dartmoor Railway has three Wickham vehicles, in various states of repair.

The one we are most used to seeing on the railway is Wickham works number 10841, (numbered DB966033 by BR, later DX 68086). When it had a makeover a few years ago, a '1' was painted on it to simplify identification. It was originally delivered on November 27th 1975 to British Rail at Sevenoaks, a Type 18A MkVI HD GT, powered by a Ford 2712E 4.1 litre diesel engine. It would be nice to think that 'GT' denotes a sports model, but it actually stands for Gang Trolley. HD indicates Heavy Duty.

10841 came to the Dartmoor Railway accompanied by a 4 wheeled, trailer, Wickham works number 8385. Originally it was a special 4 ton twin skip trailer, delivered to BR on June 5th 1959, numbered DB965161, later DX 68087. It was one of three skip trailers, ordered with a crane trailer, for work on Sevenoaks Tunnel. By the time it reached DR it had lost the skip superstructure and become a dropside trailer.

'Our' third vehicle was 10842, identical in specification to 10841, and part of the same original order. It was delivered to BR Civil Engineers, Stewarts Lane, London on November 20th 1975, numbered DB966034, later DX 68088.

What happened to 10842 on the DR is slightly hazy. We have seen a photo of it with most of the body panels removed, very rusty, and with substantial vegetation growing through it - i.e. in standard Meldon condition. We haven't found evidence that it ever ran here, nor that it even arrived here complete. On June 26th 2010 it was photographed in

the same location, further integrated with the Meldon scenery, but also with a MkIII sleeping carriage leaning against it, bending the body frame uprights, and possibly doing other damage.

Despite 10842's condition, an organisation primarily concerned with railway heritage would probably have attempted to restore it, but DR's track gang understandably had other priorities, and subsequently converted it to a trailer. Most recently it has been seen carrying part of Christmas Town, flat-packed. Somewhere at Meldon there may still be the components with which to reverse the conversion.

[Reference: The Wickham Works List by Keith Gunner and Mike Kennard, published by Mainline and Maritime. Our thanks to Jonathan Flood, who runs the 'Wickham of Ware' Facebook page, an absolute goldmine. Thanks also to all the photographers acknowledged in the captions]



Trailer 8385 and trolley 10841 in a thriving Meldon yard on August 10th 2007. © Roy Hennefer.



10841 being re-roofed in the Meldon C&W workshop on February 25th 2016. © Geoff Horner.



*10842 at Meldon on June 26th 2010, bent against a sleeping carriage.
© Dennis Graham.*



10842's ignominious role as Christmas Town storage, attached to RMS's Robel trolley at Meldon. January 2018. © Sheron Vowden



Forward and reverse crownwheels hint at 10842's origins as a powered trolley. June 2015. © Dev-Lak Photography

Ford to Devonport King's Road

Graham Parkinson

It was from about the age of 10 that I became interested in railways, being fortunate to live in the Keyham/Ford area of Plymouth within 50yds of the Great Western line which I could see from my bedroom window and, in the opposite direction, about 170yds from the Southern Region (LSWR) line. Both lines spanned the valley across St Levan Road, Great Western by a stone, brick and metal viaduct and the Southern line by a stone 7-arched viaduct. Interestingly, GWR and SR trains travelling to the same destination of London (Paddington and Waterloo respectively) would, at this stage, be travelling in completely opposite directions. The same situation, as you are probably aware, being replicated at Exeter (St David's) station.

Both lines through Keyham/Ford lay between Plymouth (North Road) Station and the two St Budeaux Stations (GWR, St Budeaux Ferry Road and SR, St Budeaux Victoria Road). The SR metals wound their way to Exeter via Okehampton and the GWR, via Saltash to Penzance.

Ford Station lay on the boundary between the Keyham and the Ford area of Plymouth, 228 miles 52 chains from Waterloo. It was a double track station which opened to passenger traffic on 2nd June 1890. Ford Station, apparently, was shown to be one of the busiest passenger stations (for local traffic) on the line only exceeded by Okehampton, Bere Alston, Devonport and Tavistock.

I used the SR Ford station to travel to secondary school at Devonport Kings Road between 1961 and 1964 at which time trains stopped running. The line actually closed on 7th September 1964. The fare to school was 3d single and 4d return. We were very fortunate that our English teacher lived at Gunnislake and joined the train at Bere Alston, so if the train was late and we were consequently late for school we were not taken to task by the prefects on gate duty as the teacher would explain the reason for our lateness.

Trains were hauled by a mix of locos including un-rebuilt Bulleid Pacifics, Ivatt Tanks and others, the classes of which I am uncertain. (I can't remember if rebuilt Bulleid's ever came further south than Exeter (I'm sure you true enthusiasts will know better than I). The train journey to school was mainly in the dark, not because of the time of day, but because after leaving Ford Station and traversing the viaduct (135yds long) the train entered the first of two tunnels under Devonport. The first was Ford Tunnel (363yds) and the second was Devonport Park Tunnel (534yds). Between the tunnels was Albert Road Halt (disused in my day) about 150yds of daylight then entered the second tunnel only to re-emerge into daylight just 120yds or so from Devonport King's Road Station – our destination, so not a scenic journey. At one point in the first SR tunnel the GWR line passed over the SR line (itself in a tunnel) with only 4 feet between the crown of the SR tunnel and the base of the GWR one.

Trainspotting was obviously very popular in that era and so it was that we would travel to Exeter (St David's and Central) to collect the numbers of GW locos and SR Locos. It was always a treat to see the rebuilt Bulleid Pacific locomotives at Central Station. We left Plymouth North Road to travel to Exeter on the SR line and then returned by GWR via Dawlish to vary the journey. I remember on the return trip we were often fortunate to find a coach at the end of the train with a door at the extreme end of the coach so we could lean out and see the track disappearing behind us, especially exiting as we descended Hemerdon bank at speed. I also vividly remember the voice of the announcer at Plymouth North Road Station - it was deep, slow and very "West Country" and the announcement of our train was very rhythmical. He would announce "The train now standing at Platform **Two** is the Eight-Thirty **Two** to Waterloo". I can hear it now!

It is interesting to note that in those days I probably took little notice of Okehampton Station as we passed through it and yet it became a significant and rewarding part of my volunteering life from 2003 until the present day.



80036 Waiting at Plymouth to take 4.48 towards Okehampton
© Graham Parkinson



Bulleid Pacific at Ford Station © Graham Parkinson



Last 8.25 through Ford Station towards Exeter Saturday 5th September 1964. © Graham Parkinson



Ivatt Tank No. 41317 leaves with the 1.9 to Plymouth from Ford Station Saturday 5th September 1964 © Graham Parkinson

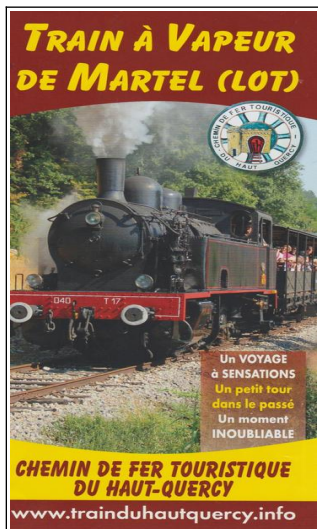


***The very last train to pass through Ford Station towards Exeter.
Sunday 6th September 1964. Loco No. D6349 © Graham Parkinson***



Derelict Ford Station. Date unknown. © Graham Parkinson

Train a Vapeur de Martel (Lot)
or
Chemin de fer Touristique Du Haut-Quercy
Geoff Horner



Planning a holiday last September to the Dordogne area of south-west France prompted the usual search on the internet for a heritage railway within reasonable travelling distance of our chosen location, a cottage on the edge of the small country village of Proissans and some 4 miles north-east of the very attractive town of Sarlat-la-Caneda. The result of our internet browsing was the discovery of this standard gauge heritage line based at the small town of Martel about a 25 mile drive across country from our holiday home.

Before describing our afternoon at the railway, information taken from the present railway association, L'Association Du Chemin De Fer Touristique Du Haut Quercy leaflet and the railway's website (www.trainduhautquercy.info) gives a summary of the history of the line.

“The St Denis to Souillac line was part of the second route from Paris to Toulouse, and also part of the line linking the forest of the Massif Central with the wine producing regions of Bergerac and Bordeaux. Carved into the cliffs of Mirandol towering 260ft above the River Dordogne construction began in 1880 and took four years. There are five tunnels on the St Denis to Martel stretch each with its name and date at either end. The longest is ‘Mirandol- at 430 yards. During the excavation of one of the shorter (79 yards) tunnels a cave with some prehistoric cave paintings was discovered giving it its name ‘Les Peintures’ (‘The Paintings’). The building of the present double track main line direct from Brive to Souillac, by-passing St Denis made this

section of the line less necessary so during the 1914 – 1918 war its rails were lifted and taken to north-east France where they were used for a line supplying the American Army. After the war the US government replaced the rails with American flat-bottomed rails, still on the line today. During the Second World War when France was occupied by the Germans the French Resistance blew up a viaduct and derailed a large locomotive on a bridge over the Dordogne rending the line between Brive and Souillac unusable. This meant that all trains between Paris and Toulouse had to use the Martel line again so for more than two years it carried 40 to 50 heavy trains a day, many headed by two or three locomotives with another banking at the rear up the 1:50 gradients. After the war, as in many other places, rail traffic dwindled until there were only two or three trains a day. These were withdrawn at the end of May 1980 and were replaced by a bus service.

Eleven years later in 1991 the Association du Chemin de Fer Touristique du Haut Quercy (the High Avery Tourist Railway Association) was formed by a group of volunteers interested in restoring the line and turning it into a tourist attraction. Approaches were made to the SNCF (French railways) which agreed to sell the line. There followed a long period of negotiations leading to the eventual purchase of the line and the start of the tourist trains in the summer of 1997. Prior to this the Society's members had cleared the track and drains, repaired bridges, buildings and points and replaced several hundred sleepers. The Society also started acquiring rolling stock consisting of a 'Vesta' small steam factory shunter built in Lille in 1927, two diesel powered and two track maintenance crew vehicles and a diesel shunter. In 1999-2000 the Society obtained a small crane, two 2nd/3rd class carriages and a more powerful 0-6-0T steam locomotive, now named 'Marine,' from a Polish potato-glue factory. There are now four shunters (two being in service) and a post war economy type diesel railcar nicknamed 'Picasso' because its raised driving cab is off-centre and near one end, rather like the noses in Picasso's portrait. The Society also owns a stationary crane, several flat wagons (one with fire fighting equipment), three ex TEE carriages (one converted into a bar) and two maintenance crew vehicles with small cranes. Other locomotives include a large former East Germany 'BR50' class 2-10-0 of 1938 (waiting restoration), a

French type 825HP diesel shunter BB63000, a small 0-6-0T steam locomotive 'Trambouze' built in 1891 in Le Creuzot (now on display). Finally in 2010 a more powerful locomotive than 'Marine' arrived in the form of an 0-8-0T 'SACM' built in Alsace in 1927. Today the Society has 116 members and six paid staff.



0-6-0T 'Trambouze'



East Germany Class BR50 2-10-0



Also in the yard at Martel was this electric locomotive of unknown origin. Perhaps a reader can identify it?

On a hot sunny Sunday 15 September 2019 we drove across country to the small picturesque town of Martel the terminus and starting point of trains on the Martel Steam Railway. Arriving at the station at mid-day and in good time for the 14.30 steam departure we found that a small crowd had already gathered..

The present station building was opened in 2010, replacing the previous building which is now a private residence. Prior to this in 2006 an 18m x 30m workshop was completed and recently some additional sidings have been laid. The signal box adjacent to the station is a replica left behind in 2002 by a company making a film about the French resistance.



Martel station – present

Martel station – past



At around 14.00 the station doors were unlocked and we joined the throng edging their way into the booking hall where we purchased our tickets and visited the small refreshment and gift counter before making our way out on to the platform. Here we found the 0-6-0T ‘Marine’, at the tail of the twelve four-wheeled open sided passenger carriages which formed our train.



The replica signal box

Departure on our 4 mile journey was prompt at 14.30 taking us first through open countryside with views across to Martel village and then into a cutting before reaching the Mirandol tunnel. Emerging from the tunnel the line carries through other tunnels in quick succession before emerging to run along a ledge high above the Dordogne river with extensive views across the valley. At about the 3 mile point the line crosses the Scourtils viaduct, a stone built structure 115m long and 35m high, before finally reaching the end of the line at the village of Saint Denis les Martel.



Standard class travel, Martel style

After a short interlude to enjoy the views the return journey starts with 'Marine' now heading the train on the rising gradient back to the Scourtils viaduct. Here the train stopped to allow passengers the opportunity to walk along on to the viaduct.



Scourtils viaduct

Under way again the train then travels the short distance back to the mouth of the Mirandol tunnel and the small stone built hut which comprises the station building of Halte des Courtils. Once again passengers are allowed to alight for further photo opportunities.

Faced with a restart on the rising gradient 'Marine' produced a prodigious amount of smoke and steam which seemed an ominous foretaste of what might be expected riding through a tunnel in open carriages behind a hard working steam loco.



'Martel' at the portal of the Mirandol tunnel

In the event the journey through the Mirandol and the other tunnels was nothing like the smoky ordeal that was anticipated and we once again emerged out of the cutting and then back across open countryside to the terminus at Martel and the end of a thoroughly enjoyable day.

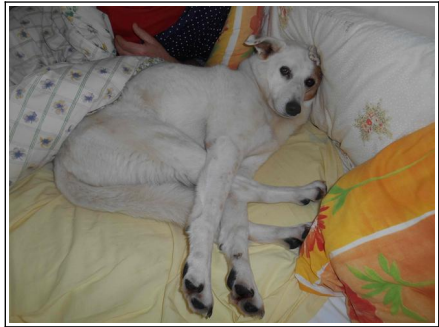
Further information including a short video of the journey can be found at www.trainduhautquercy.info-cfthq@wanadoo.fr

The railway also features on several YouTube videos.

Rosie's Diary – Relaxing and Patrolling

by Rosie

This is how I prepare myself for a good day..... Find a warm pillow or two, snooze and then stretch legs. I make sure a two legs has been pushed out of bed so that he/she (usually she) gets dressed, ready to be taken for a walk.



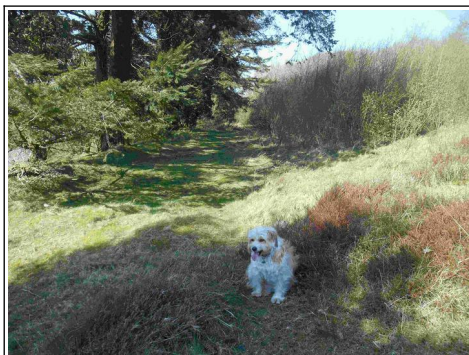
Percy, on the other hand would probably be just returning to the Signal Box after a night out on the rails. He has now found another home since the Administrators stopped up his catflap with a nail. I have not yet made close acquaintance with his successors. One black and one ginger cat who continue

to be rodent controllers without portfolio (and no catfood).

I inspected the Christmas Train, on children's biscuit hoovering duties, but really did not fancy the sacks of cocoa left over. Now I have learnt, sadly, not to expect any sausage left overs from the buffet, or cake left under the tables. Neither do I have to worry about little children running about, so I take every opportunity to stretch out in this glorious spring sunshine. I do keep an eye open for the wagtails that run and the jackdaws which hop along the platform. Swallows are also chittering on the wires and swooping into the nest at the back of the DRSA shop.



However Fluffet and I were tasked to do a Meldon Yard patrol. We walked past the temporary barriers to the quarry road placed on the A30 bridge, which were there to discourage recreation during lockdown. You see Fluffet on the original road into the quarry, now almost covered by Scots pine. Birch and willow grow on the spoil heap to



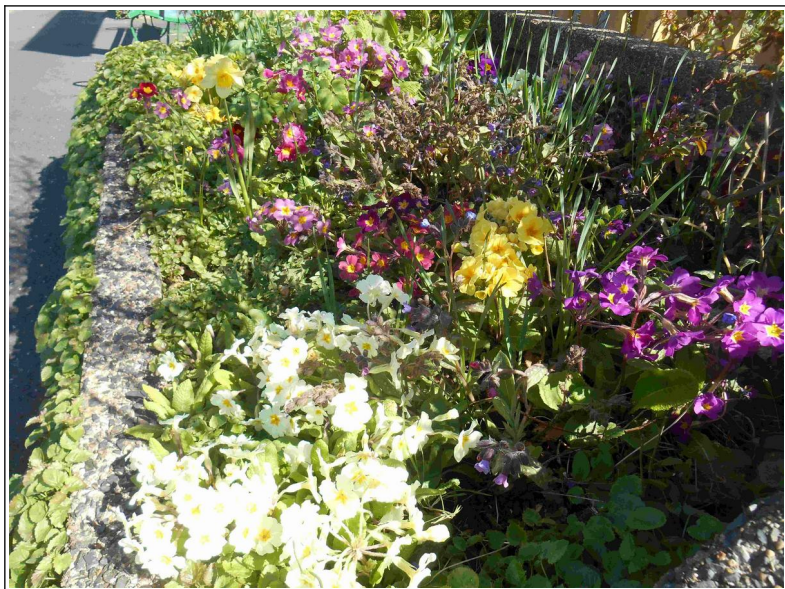
the right, covering the site of the terrace houses which would have had spectacular views over the West Okement valley. Our patrol was disappointing, no rabbits under the carriages and no rodents to repel at the doors of Lab 11. But Fluffet commented that she couldn't see anything amongst the thick moss covering the rails, and how would the drivers know where to go?!!



My diligent assistants in daily Station Watch and Meldon Patrol include David Ellis and Alan Harris. Between us we have kept a presence and an eye on the property. I also took my two legs Tom down the upline. Below

Station Wood I was looking for mice when I realised there was a fox just feet away. I leapt into action, my big white tail high and chased her up there. However where the brambles thickened my tail went into rotating mode to achieve an emergency stop. But I had seen off the intruder! Maintenance has continued with strimming around the GUV, and I lie patiently waiting for escaping miskies.

Weeding and watering continue while I sleep. The patrol staff have enjoyed the flowers on Platform 2. Flower pots are changed regularly outside the station so walkers and cyclists can see it is being cared for. (20 cars in car park midday 16th May)



I leave you with a peaceful view over the landscaped quarry workings below the main gate:



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

Association Contacts

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