



THE DARTMOOR PONY

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

No.41 Spring 2021 £2.00



Dartmoor Line Reopening!

The DARTMOOR PONY

Issue No. 41

Editor: John Caesar

E-mail: museum@dartmoor-railway-sa.org

DARTMOOR RAILWAY SUPPORTERS' ASSOCIATION

Website: www.dartmoor-railway-sa.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/dartmoorrailway.sa

Postal Address: Jon Kelsey, Craig House, Western Rd, Crediton,
EX17 3NB

E-mail: info@dartmoor-railway-sa.org

Please note that the website/e-mail domain name will change shortly after the constitution is approved (see page 13).

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

FRONT COVER: Class 66 66723 'Chinook' paused briefly at Bow Station on January 28th, having delivered 2,520 concrete sleepers to Okehampton. The train was tailed by DB Cargo classmate 66039, its planned companion having failed before leaving Westbury the previous day. *Photo: Dick Henrywood.*

BACK COVER: Top: Out with the old. 22nd March 2021 saw the former long-term residents of the platform 1 siding hauled to Meldon behind Aggregate Industry's 08937. RMS's 31452 was on the rear for emergency braking. *Photo: Paul Vodden.* Bottom: 2 GBRf Class 66s powered the sleeper train on January 22nd 2021. They were 66723 'Chinook' and 66748 'West Burton 50'. The train's 15 Salmon wagons carried a batch of about 2500 Doncaster made concrete sleepers. *Photo: Dave Ellis.*

CONTENTS

Chairman's Report	Page 4
Membership Matters	Page 10
Don Bent	Page 11
Simplifying Our Name	Page 13
<u>Revised Constitution & Special General Meeting</u>	Page 13
Network Rail Infrastructure works along the line	Page 18
Volunteer Activities	Page 21
Volunteer Opportunities	Page 22
Station Maintenance Team Report	Page 23
Stock Movement Day	Page 26
Rosie's Diary	Page 28

Chairman's Report - A Timeline to the Reopening of services, 150 years on

Sue Baxter

It has been an exhilarating time since I wrote to you at the beginning of last December. Just a few days later on the 14th we got the call to say that the station was finally out of administration and back in Devon County hands, with the following from Jamie Hulland, Transport Strategy and Road Safety Manager. An accolade for all the station team:

"You have been fantastically helpful and have played a vitally important role in enabling Christian's project team to continue at pace in line with Government expectations and our teams to negotiate the lease surrender. I'm sure the momentum built and level of local support was instrumental in the rail reopening finding its way into the National Infrastructure Strategy, which was published at the end of November."

We have continued to hold the keys so that we could keep an eye on the building, particularly during freezing weather, and also to facilitate access for varied work visits, sometimes 5 a week.



On 15th Dec we had a visit by GWR loco maintenance staff from Laira depot in Plymouth, to examine the condition of the 08 shunter with a view to NR possibly being able to use *Bluebell Mel* during the construction. We were encouraged to help with starting her up. First, 48 batteries had to be prised out and topped up with 15

litres of distilled water, then put on charge in batches of 12. Our team succeeded in getting them charged, however NR decided they needed a more powerful loco and the scheme to refurbish her at Laira was dropped.

Meanwhile I was concerned at the very damp condition of the basement below Roy Gibbs former model shop. At the bottom of the

ladder we stepped into a wet sugary mess of candy walking sticks!!! That was shovelled out. Then we removed (and tried to check for archive material) what seemed like several hundredweight of old paperwork which was likewise sodden and mouldering. Members set to and fixed a temporary cover over the external flat hatch which now keeps out the rain. This, along with the basement of the Signal Box can currently be used for storage.

In January work was underway on 2nd when we saw road-railers departing up the line. Sometimes as many as 5 were stabled at Okehampton along with a crane overnight. On the 13th all the line, except the still hidden down line beside Platform 2, was surveyed twice by a test train going at a consistent 20mph with 4 carriages of instruments between two Class 37 locos.

To the west of the station the damaged point blade of the ground frame had been repaired by welding. Between the 6th and 20th the whole mechanism was brought up to scratch by a mechanical signals engineer including some new parts such as rods and pads. He commented on how reliable and robust the system is, with wearing parts straightforward to replace under a planned maintenance schedule.

14th January saw the early arrival of a very heavy train, 1265 tonnes, 342 metres long and the first of 37 planned. Great to have the station truly alive with the wagons gradually being unloaded of their sleepers and moved by the pair of class 70s back towards Fatherford viaduct.

A car with a Swedish numberplate on February 8th alerted us to the arrival of an extremely impressive Railcare Railvac. Built in Sweden but with two based in the UK this had been booked to do 24/7 working for two weeks with two operating crews. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kC8ExvAVXhQ> to watch it working elsewhere. However I understand the programme of work was completed ahead of schedule. Eat your heart out electronic hand-held model controllers!! *Helga* was controlled by one person walking backwards along the track in front of her. She is so delicate that she was able to lift off drain troughing covers by suction and then when

cleaning was finished she picked them up and replaced them again. The preparatory work for this had in some cases included the removal of 2 metres of debris above.

17th February we were included in discussions on the future use of the Platform 3 upside building. Currently there are plans for us to reinstate the Ticket Office as a museum, which will be seen from the Bulleid Buffet. Then to keep the Booking Hall in Heritage condition. Off that will be an Information Centre, mostly styled by the Dartmoor National Park, but also with GWR information and local advertising, and a small display for our Association. Further on in the old model shop area will be our heritage style railway shop and then finally the Waiting Room also in Heritage style and displaying in pictures the history of the line and the work done to reopen for services in 2021.

23rd February the track design team met in the Station Buffet (after a significant clean up by our team as the red carpet had turned white with mould, etc). It was interesting to discover that the continuous welded rail needs a wider ballast shoulder than jointed track, which helps explain some of the realignment, along with achieving the best speeds possible.

26th February official film material was taken of the station for the upcoming Dartmoor Line website.

3rd March we had the second Government announcement that £40.5m was allocated to the reopening of the service to Okehampton, but still no detail. I was getting stakeholder briefings but being told that the information was not to be made public until a final detailed announcement was made by the government, giving the full go ahead. In fact it is an incredible challenge within the budget, to buy the line, relay 11 miles of track, de-vegetate bridges, culverts, drains, cuttings, improve miles of fencing, repair bridges and refurbish Okehampton Station, when building Marsh Barton Station in Exeter alone is costing £17m.

More filming and interview opportunities were arranged for TV and press at Okehampton Station on March 10th, so they were ready for the final announcement when it came on Friday 19th. I was only alerted on the Thursday afternoon with a request to open up the station at 05.30hrs!!! A Twitter feed started at midnight when the Dartmoor Line website also went live.

At 06.40 Christian Irwin, NR Industry Programme Director for Devon and Cornwall, broke the good news in a live interview on the BBC One Breakfast programme, that the reopening of the regular service to Okehampton will take place in 2021. Then Tom and myself (with Rosie at our feet) found ourselves being interviewed for the local perspective.



Further interviews took place at 08.20 with Matt Barnes (pictured left) GWR Regional Development Manager and Becky Martin, Retail manager for Dartmoor National Park. Drone footage of the station and the 13,000 sleepers in the carpark was very impressive. Coverage across TV channels and

printed papers was excellent, helping to build the vital future patronage of the line. We hope all of our members saw or heard the announcement on the day somewhere.

RMS Locotec had a list of stock for sale by 1st March that included the Christmas train still stabled since February 2020 on the down line, the sleeper coaches etc. in the Bay Platform and stock at Meldon. Preparation for removing the stock from the station finally got under way, Network Rail patience (since July 2020) having finally run out. On 17th March members assisted again and the two engines were finally started up for the first time since February 2020. The sleepers had to be disconnected from water, gas, sewage, and corridor connection roof panels. On 20th March RMS Locotec took official charge of the 08 shunter from Aggregate Industries, the owner.

The move started early on 22nd March, carriages moved out at walking pace all the way to Meldon and through the Carriage and Wagon shed to sidings beyond, from which they are expected to go out to buyers by road haulage over the next few months. *Bluebell Mel* will be shunting the stock as the Class 31 452 left for Great Yarmouth on 7th April.



The Okehampton to Meldon staff and the Crediton to Okehampton token are now both with NR (pictured left with Che Wilson). As soon as the downline was clear road-railers started using it from the car park work site and it was a pleasure to see them running round through the points back onto the up line and through the station. The work continued on Easter Friday and Monday.

The station drive is sometimes closed to enable lorry deliveries to be made, some sleepers having to come by road in loads of 72. Each concrete sleeper weighs 312 kg. However a new work and welfare compound has opened up at the site of the future Parkway Station in the Exeter Road Business Park [see photo on page 30]. It has direct access onto the line and good connection to the A30.

Directly after the project got full government approval on 19th March, 430m of track were laid at the Coleford Junction end. The relaying of 11 miles of track will mostly be undertaken by a Total Track Relaying Machine in the next few weeks. To see this and other impressive work taking place go to the dedicated rail industry website: www.dartmoorline.com

In the background stakeholder briefings are ongoing. OkeRail Forum's next immediate focus being on supporting the GWR and Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership in marketing the line. To that end a celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the opening of the line in

October 1871 is planned. Back then there was a huge Triumphal arch in the middle of town and plenty of bunting.

We are already planning a steady reopening of our facilities on Platform 2 with agreement and support from GWR and NR, from the half term at the beginning of June. We aim to open the main Arthur Westlake Museum room, the bookshop, and the staff room for teas, coffees and little snacks. From our platform it will be possible to see the progress of work on the main station facilities and the line itself, while the station is still closed. A trench will be dug along the whole length of the platform for new cables. We will be able to keep the public informed, with leaflets etc.

Our Heritage rolling stock is all out in Meldon Yard. We continue to have support from many quarters to help us achieve a service to Meldon again. It continues to be a two section railway which enables this. As the RMS stock is sold, the yard and Carriage and Wagon shed will gradually be freed up, as will the opportunity to discuss our role with Aggregate Industries. We have asked for our stock and class 08 *Bluebell Mel* to be part of the 150th celebration, at Okehampton.

A formalisation of the way we work with Network Rail, Devon County Council (which will continue to own Platform 2 and 1), and Great Western, will be sorted over the next few months. So it is important at this time to update our constitution (see page 13).

As I write there are 19,000 sleepers at Okehampton and 4 mobile solar lighting towers sunning themselves ready for overnight working.

This project is very important, likely to be the first to open under the Beeching Reversal Funding.

Above all remember to plan to use, and tell your friends and family about the eight trains a day, two hourly service, ***that is coming this year 2021***. Help make it a success and then the Parkway station will get built, bringing in more passengers which will further justify the upgrade to an hourly service, planned for 2022.

Keep watching our website for updates on opening and events.

Membership Matters

Geoff Horner, Membership Secretary

Membership of the Association is, at the time of writing, just under 180 with renewals still trickling in. It would be good to break the 200 mark before the end of April when the deadline for renewals is reached. So if you are reading this and still undecided please do continue with your support. Sadly since the last edition the deaths of the following members have been passed on to us.

- Mr D Bent
- Mr R Chester
- Mr R Doe
- Dr R Manners
- Mr G Merry

Our condolences go to their families and friends.

It is however a pleasure to welcome the following new members:

- Jeremy Doe of Stroud who has joined in memory of his late father Mr R Doe.
- Richard Manners of Leatherhead who has joined in memory of his late father Dr R Manners.
- John and Beverley Newman of Bridport.
- Richard Westlake and Susie Hewitt of Exeter.

Richard Westlake's name will be familiar to many members as our museum at Okehampton is named in memory of his father Arthur Westlake whose long railway career was closely associated with Okehampton station and the efforts to keep the station intact and the Dartmoor line open.

DRSA Shop

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

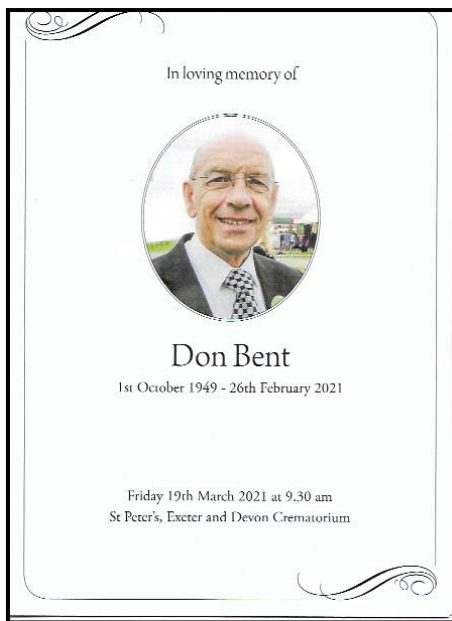
Don Bent

Dennis LeWorthy

Many of you on your visits to Okehampton station, if you came on a day when trains were operating, will undoubtedly have noticed the dedicated people who volunteered to be trained and perform the duties of train crew to ensure that services were running for the general visitors that came to the station. Whether they were drivers, drivers assistants or guards without them the trains would not and could not have run.

One such person was Donald Bent, more generally called Don Bent. I first came to know Don when he was performing his duty not with trains but as the town clerk for Okehampton. I recall visiting him in his office at the town hall to sort out a couple of matters that needed his assistance, on those occasions he was always most helpful possibly because I was from an organisation that held a particular interest for him. I was at the time one of the duty managers for Dartmoor Railway and sometimes we needed to speak with the town council and that would have been via Don.

As time passed his interest in things railway became more apparent and we chatted about opportunities to work as a volunteer for Dartmoor Railway. He professed an interest in train crew to which end I was able to help him achieve his goal and he trained for and became a qualified guard, in this role he was able to ensure that the services that the railway offered were always available. Throughout all this time not everyone knew but he was having a private battle with



leukaemia but was holding his own in that battle and subsequently able to continue with life to the full.

At Dartmoor Railway he not only assisted as a guard on the heritage trains but also performed duty on the Polar Express and subsequent Trains to Christmas Town something he really enjoyed especially interacting with the young actors who took on the roles needed to ensure the Christmas trains were very special to the visitors.

Unfortunately as time passed his battle against the disease became too much for him so that on the 26th February this year 2021 he eventually left us.



I was fortunate in being able to attend his funeral at St Peters, Exeter and Devon crematorium and was able to witness for myself his love of trains as when his coffin came into view it was not the traditional wood with brass handles but was pure white with the Flying Scotsman emblazoned on the sides. I rather felt that as the curtains came round to signify the end of his committal that a whistle should have sounded and a green flag waved to signal 'Right Away Driver!' Safe journey!

He won't be forgotten.

Simplifying our Name

Sue Baxter

Having to change our constitution, because the situation around us has changed, has given us the chance to simplify our name at the same time.

There is no Dartmoor Railway CIC to support now, so we need to drop “*Supporters*”.

Members of the public have often said, after hearing what DRSA stands for, that it is a bit of a mouthful!

However we are railway and keeping ourselves as **Dartmoor Railway Association** keeps us distinct from *The Dartmoor Line* and the industry dedicated website dartmoorline.com

Just dropping a word makes changing easier, particularly with the bank, which keeps our Treasurer, Christine, happy.

So your committee has decided to make the simplest change to **DRA, Dartmoor Railway Association**.

Revised Constitution & Special General Meeting

This magazine represents formal notification of a virtual special general meeting, to ratify changes to DRSA’s constitution. In the section above, Sue Baxter has explained the rationale for changing the association’s name and objectives. Published below is the amended constitution, in which all references to the association's name have been changed to Dartmoor Railway Association or DRA as required, references to the former Dartmoor Railway have been removed, and entirely new objectives are shown in *italics*. Members who object to the changes have until 20th May 2021 to do so, either in writing or by email to the relevant addresses shown on the inside front cover. No response is necessary if you agree with the changes.

Dartmoor Railway Supporters' Association Constitution

(Note: for the purposes of this constitution the 'Dartmoor Railway Supporters' Association' is abbreviated to 'DRSA' and 'Dartmoor Railway' is abbreviated to 'DR'.)

A. Name.

The name of the association is 'Dartmoor Railway Supporters' Association'.

B. Administration.

DRSA shall be managed in accordance with this constitution by the members of the Executive Committee constituted by clause F of this constitution.

C. Objectives.

The objectives of DRSA are:

- ~~1. to encourage the recruitment of volunteers and other supporters of DR, and to keep them in touch with developments.~~
- ~~2. to provide a vehicle for communicating views of supporters to DR management.~~
- ~~3. to support the development and operation of heritage, tourist and enthusiast rail services on the DR.~~
- ~~4. to promote interest in the history and operation of DR through education and other appropriate means~~
- ~~5. to support the reinstatement of public rail services to Okehampton.~~

1 To record and promote interest in Okehampton area railway history

2 To support the 'Dartmoor Line' Exeter - Okehampton rail service, and Okehampton Station

3 To explore the possibility of operating heritage rail services between Okehampton and Meldon Viaduct

4 To support the Northern Route initiative, i.e. the reinstatement of the entire former London and South Western Railway Exeter - Plymouth route.

D. Powers.

In furtherance of the objectives but not otherwise, the Executive Committee may exercise the following powers:

1. to raise funds and to invite and receive membership fees and other contributions.
2. to acquire, take on lease or in exchange any property or consumables necessary for the achievement of the objects and to maintain and equip it for use.
3. to do all such other lawful things as are necessary for the achievement of the objects.

E. Membership.

Membership of DRSA shall be open to individuals over the age of 16 years who have paid any annual subscription laid down from time to time by the Executive Committee or who exceptionally have been granted membership by that committee. Every member shall have one vote. The committee may at its discretion introduce a class of junior membership should this appear beneficial; such membership shall exclude the right to vote. The committee may unanimously and for good reason terminate the membership of any individual.

Membership shall commence when the membership secretary has issued a membership card on receipt of the appropriate fee or by the Executive Committee's authority.

~~(Information note: It is a requirement of DR management that all volunteers who work on the railway shall be members of DRSA).~~

F. DRSA Executive Committee.

1. The committee shall consist of not less than six elected members.
2. The elected members of the committee shall appoint a chairman, vice-chairman, secretary and treasurer from amongst themselves. The committee may in addition appoint not more than four co-opted members who shall have similar voting rights to elected members of the committee.
3. Nominations for election to the Executive Committee must be made by members of DRSA in writing and must be in the hands of the secretary of the committee at least 14 days before the annual general meeting. Should nominations exceed vacancies, election shall be by ballot.
4. Committee members are elected or re-elected at the Annual General Meeting by ballot and will serve on the committee until the next AGM.
5. The proceedings of the committee shall not be invalidated by any vacancy among their number or by any failure to appoint or any defect in the appointment or qualification of a member.

G. Executive Committee Members not to be personally interested.

No member of the Executive Committee shall receive remuneration from DRSA funds.

Committee members may claim reasonable expenses connected with the furtherance of their executive duties and as agreed by the committee. In any proposed decision on expenditure concerned with ~~DR or~~ DRSA, committee members must declare any personal financial interest. Where such clash of interests does occur, that member becomes ineligible to vote on the matter.

H. Meetings and Proceedings of the Executive Committee.

1. The Executive Committee shall hold at least two ordinary meetings each year. A special meeting may be called at any time by the chairman or by any two members of the committee upon not less than 14 days notice being given to other members of the matters to be discussed.
2. If the chairman is absent from any meeting, the members of the committee present shall choose one of their number to be chairman before any other business is transacted.
3. There shall be a quorum when at least three members of the committee are present at a meeting, one of whom shall be the chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, or treasurer.
4. Every matter shall be determined by a majority of votes of the members of the committee present and voting on the question but in the case of equality of votes the chairman of the meeting shall have a second or casting vote.
5. The committee shall keep minutes of the proceedings at meetings of the Executive Committee and any sub-committee.

I. Receipts and expenditure.

The funds of the DRSA, including all donations, membership fees, contributions and bequests, shall be paid into an accounts operated by the Executive Committee in the name of the association at such bank as the committee shall from time to time decide. All cheques drawn on the account must be signed by at least two members of the committee ~~who shall not be employees of DR~~, as nominated on the bank mandate. The funds belonging to DRSA shall be applied only in furthering the objects as set out in Section C.

J. Accounts.

The Executive Committee shall keep appropriate accounts and prepare an annual statement of account that shall be subjected to external independent examination. For the purposes of the accounts, the financial year will run from 1st April to 31st March.

K. Annual Report.

The Executive Committee shall prepare an annual report.

L. Annual General Meeting.

There shall be an annual general meeting of DRSA which shall be held in the month of April in each year or as soon as practicable thereafter. Every annual general meeting shall be called by the Executive Committee. The secretary shall give at least 28 days notice of the annual general meeting to all members of the association. All members of DRSA shall be entitled to attend and vote at the meeting, or by post. The committee shall present to each annual general meeting the report and accounts of the association for the preceding year.

M. Special General Meeting.

The Executive Committee may call a special general meeting of DRSA at any time. If at least ten members request such a meeting in writing stating the business to be considered, the secretary shall call such a meeting. At least 21 days notice must be given. The notice must state the business to be discussed.

N. Alterations to the Constitution.

The constitution may be altered by a resolution passed by not less than two thirds of the members present and voting at a general meeting. The notice of the general meeting must include notice of the resolution, setting out the terms of the alteration proposed.

O. Dissolution.

If the Executive Committee decides that it is necessary or advisable to dissolve DRSA, it shall call a meeting of all members of the association, of which not less than 21 days notice (stating the terms of the resolution to be proposed) shall be given. If the proposal is confirmed by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting, the committee shall have power to realise any assets held by or on behalf of DRSA. Any assets remaining after the satisfaction of any proper debts and liabilities shall be given or transferred to one or more like-minded organisations.

Network Rail Infrastructure works along the line

Tony Hill

Following the initial inspection on foot of the whole line from Coleford to Meldon Viaduct platform by various Network Rail (NR) engineers in (mainly) March 2020, much preparatory and enabling works have been carried out along the line between Coleford (183m79c) and Park Road overbridge at 197m51c, just beyond Okehampton, in anticipation of NR acquiring the whole line from Aggregate Industries, part of the huge Swiss company Lafarge Holcim and government giving the green light to the scheme to reintroduce a regular rail service for Okehampton.

These NR managed initial works have mostly been clearance of vegetation from and around bridges to enable condition surveys, clearance of strips of scrub etc on cutting and embankment slopes, crests and toes to enable geophysical surveys of their structure and stability, and clearance of lineside ditches and drainage systems, much done by the 'railvac' self-propelled on-track machine.

A couple hundred new baseplated timber sleepers, last Autumn, were inserted between rotten sleepers to maintain the gauge and thus prevent a possible derailment of the heavy trains of rails and sleepers, prior to full track renewal.

Along the whole line survey datum posts a couple of feet high have been installed, every 20 yards or so, for use in alignment etc of the track, about ten miles of which will be completely relaid with new long welded rails made at Scunthorpe Steel Works and new concrete sleepers made by Trackmol at Doncaster plus of course new ballast, via Westbury, from Cliffe Hill Quarry in Leics.

Works to upgrade the couple of user-worked level crossings (LC) and footpath crossings are to be carried out, including the fitting of miniature warning lights for crossing users at Butterlands Farm LC just west of Bow and on the popular Two Moors Way long distance footpath crossing west of Coleford.

Both sides of the single line have been at least double flailed by one of the several Quattro Road-Railers that have been trundling up and down the line from their Okehampton base on various tasks.

There is much fencing to be renewed to stop livestock getting on the line and delaying trains with the resultant financial penalties that NR have to pay the train operating companies.

The first engineers' train (hailed by loco 70805 with 66580 on the rear) of long welded rails, was delivered to sites between Coleford and Bow on night of 21st/22nd November 2020 and the first train (with a Colas class 70 loco each end of 15 'Salmon' bogie flats) of concrete sleepers arrived at Okehampton on the night of 13th/14th January this year.

A NR track testing train with a class 37 loco each end ran on the night of 12th/13th January, allegedly detecting no significant faults that would prevent the subsequent running of engineers' trains.

Recently a couple of trains from Westbury with ballast, in 'Falcon' open bogie wagons, was delivered and stockpiled at two sites along the line.

Unfortunately, due it is believed to 'resource' problems, at least one train load of ballast and two train loads of concrete sleepers have instead been delivered by large heavy lorries to the understandable concern of mainly residents of Station Road in Okehampton. Nearly thirty lorries were needed (instead of one train of 15 bogie flat wagons) to move over 2,500 sleepers from Doncaster; one lorry was reported being lost and heading for Belstone!

The former steam loco shed and sidings area at Okehampton was the initial site compound for the enabling works and this is now the storage compound for the approx. 24,000 concrete sleepers that will be laid by the track construction train which is scheduled for five weeks track renewal work on the line from the end of April.

Whilst the whole scheme with regards to renewals and maintenance of the infrastructure is project managed and overseen by NR 'in house' staff, with several normally based in Exeter, there are numerous specialist Consultants, Contractors, Sub Contractors, Sub Sub Contractors and labourer supply firms involved, invariably involving lengthy road journeys between home and works sites on the Okehampton line. Many of the labourers are from the Welsh Valleys, no doubt several were once coal miners.

It is believed that four or five GSM-R (Global System for Mobile Communications-Railway) masts, for communication purposes, will be erected along the line; this sometimes involves public consultation. It is known that mains electric feeds provided by Western Power are required at certain points along the associated lineside cable route and this requires goodwill and co-operation from landowners.

NR have recently built a large temporary main compound on the Exeter Road Industrial Estate, close to the site of the proposed Okehampton Parkway station with a compacted base of 3,500 tons of China clay waste rock and sand roaded up from the St Austell area and a smaller site compound in a farmer's field near Coleford with a base of 1,200 tons of the same material.

The main compound is for site managers, supervisors and technical teams as well as visitors and the project team to use as a base. It is also the main hub for meeting and keeping traffic away from local country lanes. There is a mess room with changing rooms, lavatories and storage. There is also a workshop for use by some contractors.

We encourage you to keep an eye on the new Dartmoor Line website for more details and news of the project:

<https://dartmoorline.com>

Volunteer Activities

Geoff Horner, Volunteer Coordinator

The report in the last edition of the ‘Dartmoor Pony’ ended with the hope that we would be able to complete the grey undercoat to the north side of Lab11 and wondering what lockdown would mean for 2021. As it turned out cold wet weather dashed any chance of completing the undercoat and the continuing of lockdown restrictions through the first three months of this year put paid to any further C&W work. With restrictions now being gradually lifted a glimmer of hope for the resumption of work at Meldon emerged. However events still continue to conspire against us.



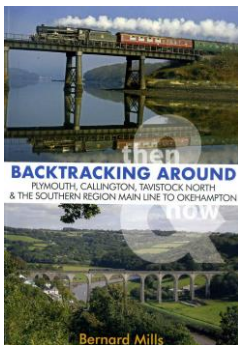
The move at the end of March of the DRCIC stock from alongside platforms 1 and 2 at Okehampton to Meldon has resulted in the yard being congested with carriages and wagons awaiting sale and disposal. The shunting movements necessary to enable the stock to be accommodated at Meldon has resulted in our rolling stock being scattered, temporarily we hope, in various locations around the yard and shed. A situation that is far from ideal. To enable the DRCIC stock to be moved away much further shunting will have to take place and it is our hope, though outside our direct control, that eventually our rolling stock will be relocated all together either in or just outside the shed. Meanwhile we hope to have discussions with the quarry owners, Aggregate Industries, to enable us to enter into a formal agreement over the use of the shed and yard. Optimistically it will then be ‘full steam ahead’ for the C&W team!

Volunteering opportunities

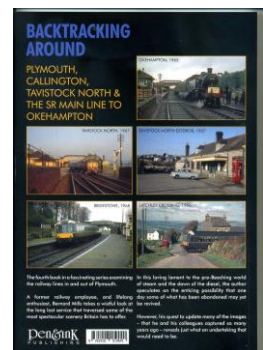
Until the situation at Meldon is sorted out there are currently no volunteering opportunities at Meldon. However it is a different case at Okehampton where there is much to be done to get us ready for welcoming visitors to the platform 1 & 2 sides. The present Station Maintenance team (who meet on Wednesdays and Saturdays) are already working hard on repairing and painting the many yards of wooden fencing. It is planned to have the museum open but before this can happen the two rooms will have to be cleared out, cleaned, the displays reset and possibly some internal redecorating undertaken. We also plan to have the shop open on weekends and bank holidays so additional assistance here will be most welcome. Even just a few hours can be of enormous help so if you are able to offer some time please get in touch.

Please contact Geoff Horner by phone 07769 736536 or by e-mail at volunteering@dartmoor-railway-sa.org

Backtracking around Plymouth, Callington, Tavistock North & the Southern Region main line to Okehampton



This latest book by well known west country railwayman and photographer Bernard Mills, will especially appeal to those who remember and lament the short-sighted closure of the once important Southern main line beyond Okehampton. Priced at



£16.99, copies can be bought online from Pen & Ink's partner website www.chrisrobinson.co.uk/shop/books.

Station Maintenance Team Report

Tom Baxter

The last time a report was written by SMT was in September 2019 before the administration and demise of Dartmoor Railway CIC. Much has happened since then including a Pandemic. But we are still here. Doing more or less what we did before plus quite a few additional duties.

As readers will only be too aware just over a month after DR CIC went into administration came the first national lockdown for Covid 19. By then we had already set up a daily security check for the station. Many of the team were locally based and were willing to continue this duty.

Which was fortunate as we shortly discovered the local miscreants were totally unaffected by the lockdown and were trying to empty the stabled train of its Train to Christmas Town contents. Several boxes of TtCT mugs were found stashed under a tree in the wood above Klondike Bridge by one of our eagle-eyed patrols. Who then also found some youngsters eagerly removing more of the contents stowed in the *Rocket* generator car situated at the Meldon end of the train. Of course they ran off when challenged but we were able to reunite the contents and re-lock the coach. Sporadic attacks continued afterwards affecting the train. The worst subsequent damage being a further break in and smashing of the instrument gauges in the *Rocket* cab. Followed by another when fire extinguishers from the train were collected, let off in the *Rocket* cab and one was thrown through its side window plus breakage of other windows. Persistent and varied attempts were also made to get in the cabs of the 08 and Class 31. Fortunately in those cases the door locks and other defences held. Sadly though a rear window in the 08 and a side door window in the class 31 were broken by ballast thrown at them.

Delays and obfuscation during the administration process and general lack of interest in what we reported made us wonder at times why we bothered but despite that we continued. Our general feeling being that once vandalism starts and there is no reaction it can only embolden the perpetrators to do more and likely worse next time. It was with mixed

emotions we saw the stock finally depart for Meldon but also a relief in some ways as it is now off our 'patch'.



However now on to more positive news. Once the first lockdown ended it was back to work with a vengeance. By this time cheered along by the ever increasing sight of numbers of orange hi vis clad individuals with Network Rail and sometimes GWR emblazoned on their jackets. Although nothing was yet 'official' it was obvious something in the outside railway world was stirring. So we decided it was time to make 'our building' on platform 2 look as good as possible. The exterior walls on the platform side have been repainted, the doors and windows also and the under canopy concrete supports. The gully drain covers have had a lick of paint and even the outside tap is resplendent in SR green. A few details yet still to do and we hope our Network Rail colleagues can help with the canopy front painting which will need access equipment, which we do not have. The majority of the platform 2 fencing has been or will be repainted by the time you read this. We have also rebuilt and replaced the rotten fence at the end of the bay platform line where it meets with the platform 2 entrance ramp. This being made much easier by the removal of the stock. Now all we need is a buffer stop!

Also we must report the gradient board at the Meldon end of the station has been returned to its correct SR green colour scheme after

many years in a BR(W) black and white livery. All done in co-operation and with Network Rail's approval. We hope also to repaint the one at the Exeter end but that currently is in the NR works compound area, so not accessible at present.



Following departure of the DR CIC stock a few weeks ago the bay platform line has been cleared of all the vegetation and rubbish that had accumulated under the coaches and vans during their many years berthed there. Our hope now being that a new railway function can be found for this bay to complement and enhance the museum side of the station.

Other work around the station by team members has been much general tidying and sorting through the 'stuff' amassed by the railway over the years. And what a great mass of stuff there is. It was everywhere. All is now being sorted to ensure no things of historical value are lost and also anything confidential is disposed of correctly. In amongst this will be the transfer of the up side to Network Rail and its subsequent lease to GWR. We are working closely with both and they seem very grateful for our background knowledge plus sorting and cleaning abilities.

Finally I must acknowledge the general determination and steadfastness of the team through all of this. It would have been quite easy to have become demoralised. At first we had no idea of our or the railway's future. The situation in the outside world also could not have been more uncertain. But despite that they stoically got on with things even when somewhat disrupted by outside events. Though we must admit to having a secret weapon. It consists of a teapot, copious supplies of hot water, a tea bag or two and limitless supplies of biscuits. Plus of course certain cookery inspired individuals who have become famous for their presentations of cake. The whatever it is Bake Off has nothing to compare!

Stock Movement Day

Paul Vodden

Spring is the time of plans and projects - Leo Tolstoy

By the middle of March the secret was out. Okehampton would once again become a living, breathing railway destination. Much to do to get to that point!

Wednesday 17th March 2021 – a ‘normal’ station maintenance day – or was it? After remaining stationary since January 2020 the 31452 type 31 diesel and D4167 08 diesel shunter had to be fired up by RMS locotec in readiness for their move to Meldon to make space for Network Rail engineering works at



Okehampton Station. DRSA volunteers had ably assisted RMS charging up batteries over the preceding weeks and those present for station maintenance sprung into action assisting on the day. Naturally it was not a textbook mission, with much head scratching going on to start the 31, in particular, as many procedures had to be carried out in



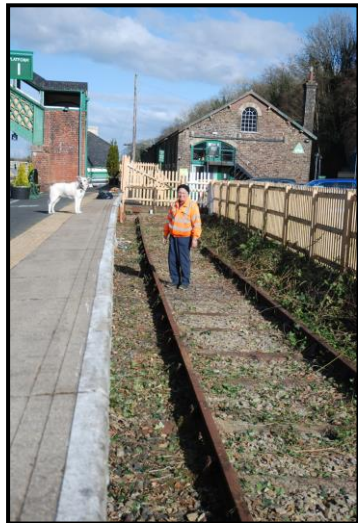
the correct sequence before the start button could be pushed. Several relays after a long lay-up were jammed and needed coaxing back to life. When all checks were completed and with many fingers crossed both locos came back

to life with a cloud of smoke, spluttering into that familiar rhythmical chug, much to everyone's delight and relief 'time for another brew'.

Monday 22nd March 2021 - A large crew from RMS Locotec and associated companies, gathered early in the morning at Okehampton Station ready to move all the rolling stock sitting at Okehampton down to Meldon and onward dispersal. With the promise of an interesting day ahead I was there camera at the ready. With the expertise of the onsite Network Rail engineers the track from Platform 1 (the Bude Bay) was slewed to connect with the downline track enabling the sleeping cars and wagons stranded in the Bay to join the evacuation. Back on the



downline the 08 was slowly moved to couple up front with the assorted rolling stock in the Bude Bay. All was then very gingerly moved out of the Bay onto the downline without any mishap. The 31 was then moved up to join the rear of the illustrious procession up to Meldon. Not so much of a high velocity express but a very slow



ponderous creep with a gang of the RMS crew keeping pace walking alongside all the way to Meldon carefully watching every rotation of the wheels to ensure safe passage. Whilst this pedestrian move was taking place, Network Rail engineers connected the slewed track back to enable the 31 and the 08 both to return home to Okehampton and pick up the events stock from Platform 2 double heading with the 31 leading the way to join the collection at Meldon.

Okehampton Station was now cleared of any rolling stock. A sight not seen for many a year, with several DRSA members commenting that as long as they have been members (a long time) there had always been something parked in the 'Bay'.

Rosie's Diary – Driver Training

by Rosie



This will only be a short article because my paws are so hard worked at the station, up to five days a week. Not only do I patrol the platforms and check over all the new orange 2 legs, but my rodent patrols have extended to the Bude Bay line and a basement! The track was well grown over under the sleeper

carriages, and I did not mean to disturb the robins which were trying to nest there, but there were lots of other snug places in the pipes and under the rubbish for miskies. Then I went down below the Signal Box where Christine certainly needed my help as she went through smelly nibbled papers. You remember that my father was a terrier.



Anyway I have a lot to do and so when a wagon was by my nose with a four legs space I thought someone would offer me a ride, but no



luck. On another occasion I tried charming the Driver, no luck. So I took all the Colas Drivers up the line to show them the route, and even pointed out the way to good pasties over Bridge 613, Meldon Viaduct. My efforts may pay tasty future dividends.



Back at the station I was having to restrain one of my two legs when he spotted a Boys Own Awayday Roadrailer with seats for mates at the back. Good job the virtual police were on duty everywhere.

I was puzzled when I spotted that the Okehampton ground frame now has its own lights. But I suppose the new drivers eyesight might not be as good as our Tom and John.



At the end of a day I like nothing better than to lie where I can keep an eye on everything. But I am also dreaming of the train which will take me to Exeter and beyond to the beach at Teignmouth, then a salty sea ride to a canine cafe terrace at Shaldon. Just so long as the drivers know the way from Okehampton!





Network Rail and its contractors' main site compound for the Okehampton project infrastructure works, located beside the line, at the site of the proposed Okehampton Parkway Station carpark on 13th April 2021 (Tony Hill).



Wide open view of the station from the signal box (Sue Baxter).

Committee of the Dartmoor Railway Supporters' Association

Chairman: Sue Baxter

Vice-Chairman: Paul Vodden

Secretary: Jon Kelsey

Treasurer: Christine Horner

Membership Secretary & Volunteer Coordinator:

Geoff Horner

Committee Members:

Tom Baxter, Dave Clegg, John Coxon, Tony Hill, Ron Kirby

Association Contacts

Please note that the website/e-mail domain name will change shortly after the constitution is approved (see page 13)

General Enquiries: info@dartmoor-railway-sa.org

Secretary: jonathankelsey@btinternet.com

Jon Kelsey, Craig House, Western Rd,
Credon, EX17 3NB

Treasurer: christine.horner@talk21.com

Membership: g.horner936@btinternet.com

Geoff Horner, 11 Collatons Walk, Bow,
Devon, EX17 6LS

Volunteering: volunteering@dartmoor-railway-sa.org

Arthur Westlake

Museum: museum@dartmoor-railway-sa.org

Website: www.dartmoor-railway-sa.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/dartmoorrailway.sa

