

The Dartmoor Pony *Express*

News in Brief

As I write we are looking forward to the reopening in just 4 weeks' time. Construction work continues at a faster pace around Platform 3 and the car park. The remains of both the original 55 foot turntable and the later 70 foot one were briefly uncovered. New car park levels do not coincide with the original brick edging, but their exact position will be marked out on the ground. A GSMR mast for driver communications has gone up beyond the original Engine Shed.

The blue Fish Van has gone and a start has been made on the new fire exit ramp there. Our sheds, planters and other equipment have *almost all* found their way to our side now via a massive tele-handler and after the temporary removal of some of our fencing.

On Platform 2 we are repainting fence panels which are due to go back up on new posts between the Signal Box and the small former Paraffin Room building.

The 150th celebration went well with Andrew Turner being the star Victorian in his role in the Refreshment Room dressed with bowler hat and very long white apron.

The paperwork regarding our various leases, Station Adoption, funds for station gardening etc. continue positively.

We hope you are all able to join in the celebration of the Reopening of the railway to Okehampton on Saturday November 20th

2021. Whether you are there in person, watching it via the media, or planning a journey on it on a quieter day! 49 years after it closed to passengers, as a member of DRA you can feel proud in playing a part in this achievement!

Sue Baxter, Chair

Report of 2021 AGM results

Annual General Meeting business was conducted via The Dartmoor Pony magazine due to ongoing unease over Covid.

Following the publication of details in the Summer Pony magazine, there were no new nominations to the committee and no objections to the candidates listed on the AGM voting slip so all the existing committee members are duly re-elected as of 25th September 2021.

The positions on the committee were agreed at a committee meeting on 15th October 2021:

Chair: Sue Baxter

Vice Chair: Paul Vodden

Acting Secretary in the absence of any nominations: Tom Baxter (Jon Kelsey has stepped down from the role after 7 years)

Treasurer: Chris Horner

Membership Secretary and Volunteer co-ordinator: Geoff Horner

Committee members: John Coxon, Ron Kirby, Tony Hill, Dave Clegg.

Membership & Volunteer Matters

Once again due to the current Covid 19 situation this year's AGM took place remotely. The outcome is covered by the Chairman's report in this newsletter.

What has been going on? A team of volunteers has continued working on the platform 2 buildings and the footbridge at the station. As always much of their work has involved the repainting of various parts of the building, fences and the interior of the footbridge. The flower beds and tubs require, and have received, constant attention. All this effort has maintained our side of the station as an attractive place to visit. The museum and shop were open on Saturdays and Sundays throughout the summer and on in to early October as was our refreshments table where hot and cold drinks plus crisps and other snacks were available. This proved very popular with walkers and cyclists using the Granite Way cycle/foot path as well as casual visitors coming to the station to see progress with the works for the starting of the regular Exeter service later this year. The 150th anniversary of the railway opening at Okehampton was marked with two days of celebrations in the town and at the station. DRA participated on both days with some members in appropriate Victorian dress.

The Carriage & Wagon team's situation at Meldon has remained static with the Aggregate Industries licence to RMS Locotec/Independent Rail Services for the

removal of the Dartmoor Railway rolling stock extended to the end of October. Regular checks on our rolling stock in the yard have been made.

What of the future? Tickets for the services on the re-opening weekend of Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st November are on sale and are reportedly being quickly snapped up. Our DRA shop and refreshment table will be open so if you do travel on the trains do come across to platform 2 and make yourself known.

Negotiations with Network Rail/GWR for our shop to move from the room on platform 2 into a much larger room in the main station building on platform 3 are ongoing with an Easter 2022 opening date intended. With the Exeter service running and the station buffet reopened, our shop will be ideally placed to welcome an increase in visitor numbers. This in turn will enable some expansion to be made to the Arthur Westlake museum.

At the Meldon end of the line the quarry owners, Aggregate Industries have intimated that they are in the process of preparing a licence agreement for DRA to have access to the quarry sidings and shed. What the terms and conditions will be has yet to be explained but this is for us a welcome step in the right direction.

One of the aims of DRA, or perhaps the main one, is to see the restoration of a heritage service between Okehampton and Meldon an outcome that we have some reason to believe is not viewed as impossible by Network Rail.

So, grounds for future optimism.

*Geoff Horner, Membership
Secretary/Volunteer Coordinator*