

DARTMOOR RAILWAY
ASSOCIATION

The Dartmoor Pony

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Dartmoor Railway Association**

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Model Progress

The Dartmoor Pony

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

FRONT COVER: The model railway layout of Okehampton station starting to take shape in the Signal Box. At least the footbridge has a roof! (Photo: Ron Kirby).

BACK COVER: Top: Visit of the Friends of Crewkerne Station in September. Bottom: Christmas lights adorning Platform 2 at Okehampton (Photos: Sue Baxter).

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Chairman's Report

Sue Baxter

On 20th November 2024 about forty people invited by OkeRail and supported by Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership (DCRP), celebrated the 3rd Anniversary of the Dartmoor Line Reopening with a daily service. In freezing weather the statistics from GWR's Matt Barnes came through clearly.

775,000 passenger journeys starting or finishing at Okehampton Station since the reopening

438,000 in the last twelve months

40,000 journeys in the last four week reporting period

The lines in Devon and Cornwall are generally carrying 15-20% percent more passengers now than in pre-covid times. The passengers I speak to are often so grateful not to have to be travelling so far by car, and enjoy boarding a train from a beautiful station. Mayor Allenton Fisher gave special thanks to all those who help look after Okehampton Station and there was a spontaneous round of applause.



You can see Gerald Smallacombe, last steam engine driver to have driven through Okehampton, watching Allenton about to cut the cake with his long ceremonial navy sword. We were delighted that his daughter Geraldine was able to bring Gerald up from town. Young driver Brendon Phillips, two years into his career, was pleased to bring out the familiar Crediton to Okehampton token from his cab. Gerald listened and questioned him as he said he was looking forward to the upcoming extension of GWR services to Axminster and the chance of driving through to Okehampton.



All the station was open to our visitors, escorted of course over the Footbridge to see the Museum. Devon County Council (DCC) is getting nearer to a date for the necessary works on the bridge, but faces extra expenses such as getting a BAPA (Business Asset Protection Agreement) for the effect of the works on Network Rail and GWR operations.

The Signal Box model railway group gave Gerald a lift up the steps to see the growing Okehampton layout. We were all chuffed that this was possible and Gerald wants to return soon. The new handrail is based on the original seen in old photos. Dartmoor Railway Association (DRA) now occupy the upper and lower floors of the Signal Box under a combined licence from Network Rail which also covers the Bude Bay

beside Platform 1 (but not the tracks in between!) During winter and difficult times the Signal Box is a lovely light, warm, positive and imaginative place to be. New engines, carriages, and characters are appearing on the layout, one even looks like our friend and photographer Dave Hunt.



At Meldon the lease on the Class 08 shunter and the licence on the use of sidings and buildings is on hold, while Aggregate Industries (AI) are in negotiations with a potential buyer for the Meldon site. Until the outcome is known we are continuing with protective work. Our FK carriage is covered with two large and heavy tarpaulins. It was achieved with great teamwork and careful planning under the direction of Graham Peacock, in the best weather you can ever have at Meldon, after being dry for days, no dew, mild and not a breath of wind. Graham, Ron, Tom and new volunteer Mark did some impressive limbo dancing amongst the undercarriage to fix ropes and additional straps round the whole carriage. Meanwhile trip hazards in the form of brambles, willow and buddleia had been removed with help from another new volunteer Tracy. Next plan is to cover the LMS Brake Van roof as the previous cover has gradually been shredded by the wind.

Platform 2 has had a face lift with the grey plastic cupboards being painted Southern Green by John, so they now look like heritage wooden stores! Geoff Brooks managed to get the fence behind it painted between showers, likewise the long seat, and the 'Okehampton' running-in board looks positively polished as it gleams so much!

Earlier in the year we were amazed to find ourselves included in a *Stations in Bloom* competition organised by the Blackmore Vale Community Partnership, in cooperation with South Western Railway and Great Western Railway.



Wendy Ware, Pat Lennon and myself received tickets to travel up to Sherborne for the event held in a marquee at the Castle Garden Centre on the 16th October. We were frankly blown over by the range of planting, artistic talent, welcome feeling, green and sustainable wildlife planting carried out by so many groups of station friends. So just to mention a few, we were up alongside Pinhoe Exeter with a beautiful big mural, Castle Cary with a creamery garden, Copplestone with a signal box for hedgehog and bugs, not to mention major winner Barnstaple where they have literally reclaimed the abandoned platform. This was the citation for Okehampton:-

The volunteers here really make a difference maintaining and promoting the local heritage at the same time producing fantastic and varied floral displays over many years.

A great station to visit in its own right.

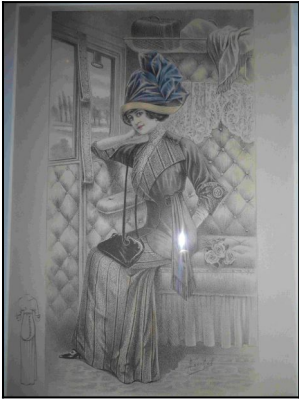
Gold for Okehampton at the Stations in Bloom awards 2024.

A celebration of Volunteering at stations across the SWR and GWR railway.

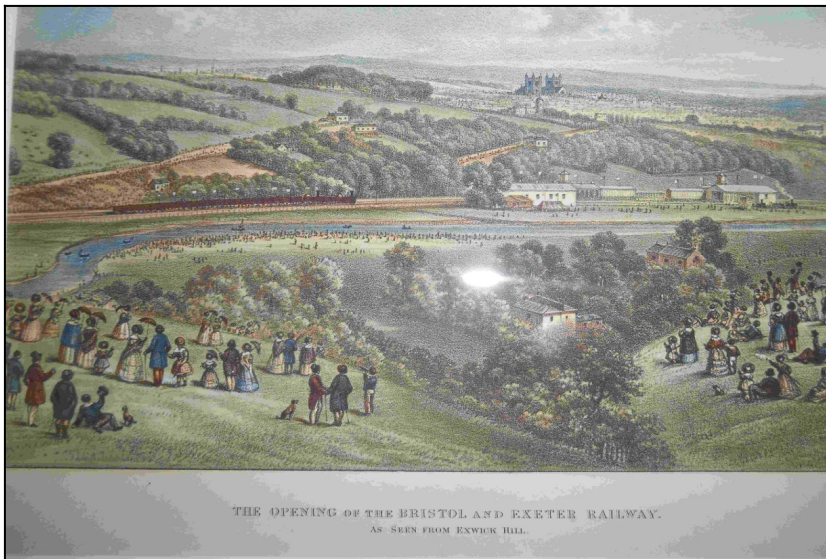
Enthusiastic Friends of Crewkerne Station paid us a visit in September, and it was good to share experiences and challenges, about our Signal Boxes, watering, fences and heritage displays. We met again in Sherborne where they also won a Gold Award. During the rail journey home we arranged a return visit to them on their weekly working day, Thursday, 17th April 2025.



Three of our canny shopkeepers agreed to pose outside the shop door, Ged, Christine and Andy with a sunflower looking down on them! Our collection of new local railway books attracts railway buffs to make return visits, including Matt Barnes of GWR!



At the other end of our line, Exeter St Davids featured in the Transport Exhibition in the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM) in Exeter. A painting showed the crowds on Exwick hill gathered to gaze at the first train to travel from Paddington to Exeter at 12.30 on 1st May 1844. By 1910 wealthy ladies had actually developed travelling outfits specifically for rail travel, including extravagant hats which could be worn inside in the comfort of the first class carriage.



Looking the other way, we were glad to welcome David Gordon, Chairman of Connect Launceston, to Okehampton Station on the 3rd anniversary. We wish them well and with Tavy Rail and Bude Connect the momentum can be kept up for reopening more of the North Dartmoor Line.



Heavy snow resulted in the felling of several trees (which were still in leaf across our tracks on 21st November, but a works train with chainsaw gang went out immediately and cleared them. As soon as the points at Crediton were freed and further trees removed there the service could resume. Managing lineside vegetation is a challenge for Network Rail as, amongst other things, they are not allowed to disturb dormice. Did these trees miss their nests?!

On Platform 2 our Christmas Lights are up to welcome travellers home. If you are a DRA member visiting the station, do make sure to speak to the volunteers and make yourself known. Or even consider giving a few hours a month volunteering. There are many ways to help maintain and develop the welcoming nature of our station, including your own ideas. I hope winter treats everyone kindly.

Membership & Volunteer Matters

Geoff Horner, Membership Secretary/Volunteer Coordinator

Here we are again approaching the end of the year and membership renewal time fast drawing near. At the time of writing (mid-November) membership stands at 168 members, a reduction of 15 from this time last year.

It is a pleasure to welcome new member Mark Hill-Tout of North Tawton

As I mentioned above it is now the time for the renewal of your membership, details of which are included with this magazine or separately in the post if you receive the magazine via email. The Association is now firmly established as the custodians of the heritage of the railway at Okehampton and your continued support is vital for us to maintain this role.

Looking at volunteer activity, the teams at the station have again been active throughout the year. Redecoration and refurbishment of the two museum rooms has been ongoing and several new artefacts have been

acquired and displayed A digital archive of documents of historical interest relating to the railway is being prepared with the view of making this accessible by the general public once the how, when and where have been decided on.

The buildings, seats etc. on Platform 2 have, as is to be expected, required care and maintenance attention and have also kept the painters busy. The shop team have had another profitable year with a growing base of regular customers. Network Rail contractors recently installed new handrails to the entrance door to the signal box and we have now signed the lease for this building. Inside the box the model railway group are making good progress on the new display and hope to soon be at the stage when controlled visits by the public will be possible. The floral displays on both platforms have as always been lovingly tended to throughout the year by our team of *Flower Fairies*.

Many of you will have seen the report on our website of the award in October of the Stations In Bloom Gold Award. Congratulations of course to the *Flower Fairies* but it is important to remember that it is your continued supporting membership which enables them to acquire the plants and materials necessary to keep up the standards required for such recognition. Well done and thank you to all our members for this support.

Turning now to Meldon there has unfortunately been no change in the situation regarding the sheds and yard. In October we expected that we were about to sign the licence agreement with Aggregate Industries but a last minute change in their plans for the quarry site caused this to be postponed. We can now only wait with patience (yet again) to see what the next steps will be. Consequently the Carriage & Wagon group, apart from carrying out essential repairs to our rolling stock, remains in limbo.

In conclusion a huge thank you is due to all the membership for your support throughout the year. Please continue this into 2025.

DRA Members' Socials

Dates for upcoming DRA social evenings at the Taw River Inn, Sticklepath, Okehampton, EX20 2FG. Held on the first Wednesday of each month starting from 18:30. All DRA members are welcome!

- Wednesday 8th January 2025
- Wednesday 5th February 2025
- Wednesday 5th March 2025
- Wednesday 2nd April 2025
- Wednesday 7th May 2025
- Wednesday 4th June 2025
- Wednesday 2nd July 2025

Okehampton Model Railway

Ron Kirby

Network Rail has extended our lease of the bay platform to cover the signal box so we are moving on with a bit more pace. They also supplied and fitted two hand rails to the entrance of the signal box. These look very much how they did in the 1950s.



So what has happened to the model railway? 95% of the track is laid and 60% of the electric points wired and working. We have two operating boards one for the Okehampton Station and goods yards, and one for the fictitious station and goods yard. We are concentrating on the Okehampton side first. The rolling hills, fencing, grass and buildings are all taking shape.

The winter projects are to scratch build the goods shed, which is now the Youth Hostel building, and we have had permission to take pictures and measure the building by the owners.

Also to build the fictitious station and bridge - the station is going on top of the bridge with steps down to the platforms. These jobs we can build at home in the warmth of our homes. On the days we are at the station we can concentrate on installing and wiring the last of the points and track. We were approached by a local artist who has volunteered to paint the backscenes for us - the one along the station has been done and looks like the real thing.



We managed to pick up an S.P. Gunn and Son coal truck from a well-known auction site. S.P. Gunn and Sons used to have a yard just by the station selling coal and fuel.

If you are up at Okehampton Station please call in to the DRA shop on platform 3 and the museum on platform 2. We are open on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Opening times do vary but normally 10 till 3, weather permitting in the winter.



And of course the model railway in the signal box at the end of platform 3, at the moment on Wednesdays only.

We are looking to have a grand opening around Easter time.

If anyone has any model railway items they wish to donate to us please email me on ybrik@gmail.com

From the Archives: ‘Sleeping Beauty’ GWR Special Saloon Coach 9005

David Naylor, DRA Archivist

The archiving of photos continues & at present the massive collection of photos from the Rob Townsend Collection is the main focus. Much of this collection dates from the mid 1990s through to the mid to late 2010s. Just recently one batch of photos which caught my eye particularly, concerned a luxury sleeper carriage called ‘Sleeping Beauty’, which to all intents and purposes is GWR Special Saloon Coach 9005. This first visited Okehampton Station in Oct 2002 as part of the Luxury Alliance company which specialised in luxury rail travel. It made another appearance in Nov 2003.



The 1st Night at Okehampton station Nov 2003.

GWR 9005 was built in 1937 at the Swindon works, designed to appeal to the nouveau riche who were expecting opulence and speed in their forms of travel, partly as the result of the increase in volume and swiftness of the transatlantic liners. In an attempt to make the carriages more appealing to the ocean liner companies (and because of

competition from the Pullman coaches), the design team at GWR decided to use their original broad gauge so as to enhance the size, enabling them to develop carriages to their own dimensions.

It



Inside the Luxury Carriage.

also made them available to Southern Railway but limited their use on the remainder of GWR's network. Each of the carriages was outfitted in French-polished light walnut with free standing (though very heavy, to avoid movement during transit) wing-backed chairs. GWR 9005 has two seating areas – one equipped with first class seating, and the other being an observation saloon, enabling the carriage to be employed for inspection train use. It is equipped with a kitchen, galley, fridges, wine coolers, store room, guards brake and two seating areas. One seating area is equipped with first class seating for ten and the other is an observation saloon with seating for 7 plus a useful area that can be used for setting out tables for buffets. It also has the advantage of being corridor connected at both ends.

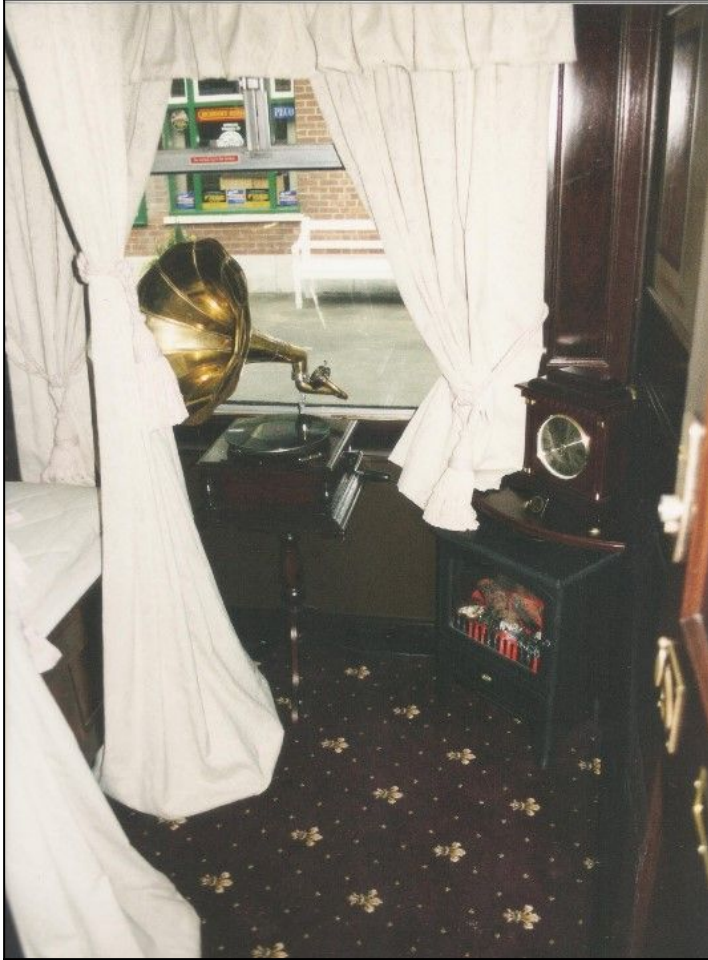
This coach number 9005 was an adapted special saloon carriage and, as a result, was not given a royal title as the original eight had been.



Scenes at Okehampton Station

GWR 9005 was stored for a while at Meldon up to 2005 but suffered some water ingress and the then new owner relocated it to the South Devon Railway at Buckfastleigh where it was intended for use on dining trains. In 2019 it was moved to the One:One Collection at Margate, Kent.

(Sources: *One to One Collection & South Devon Railway Association*)



DRA Members' Library

At Okehampton Station we are accumulating a decent collection of books on (mostly) West Country railway themes. Current local DRA members are welcome to borrow from the library. The latest list is shown here:

<https://www.dartmoor-railway-association.org/library>

Please contact us on info@dartmoor-railway-association.org if there's anything you are interested in – please don't just turn up at the station unannounced.

The Bookstall

Our DRA shop, 'The Bookstall', on Platform 3 at Okehampton station opens on Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Holiday Mondays throughout the year thanks to the dedicated team of volunteers who make this possible.

As well as the varied selection of 'previously loved' railway books and DVD's available in the shop, new railway book titles are available to order online via the DRA website:

<https://www.dartmoor-railway-association.org/shop>

The shop also stocks a selection of local hand crafted candles, glassware, jewellery, cards etc which make ideal gifts. There is also a selection of DRA and Dartmoor Line souvenirs. Do visit the shop when you are in Okehampton.



Selection of new railway books on offer at the DRA Shop

Magazine Contributions Invited

We invite contributions for the magazine of items likely to be of interest to members – photos, memories, articles, history. Any photo contributions preferably in jpeg format and less than 2MB, and text preferably in Word (.doc/.docx) or Open Office (.odt) format or similar. Please get in touch if you'd like to ask any questions or send in material for consideration: museum@dartmoor-railway-association.org

Five go Trainspotting....Again

Andrew Turner

The *Atlantic Coast Express* was a Southern Region named train that started from London Waterloo and ran to the coastal towns of Padstow, Bude, Ilfracombe and Plymouth from 1926 to 1964. Exeter and Okehampton would have featured in the timetable with departure from Waterloo usually at 11:00 am behind a Merchant Navy class locomotive, post war, arriving at Exeter Central just after 14:00 pm, where a loco change would take place, then on to Okehampton arriving at 15:08 pm according to the 1960/61 timetable, departing a few minutes later for the western reaches of Devon and Cornwall.



So here we are 60 years later witnessing the *Atlantic Coast Express* running again on the 12th October 2024. Of course this was a truncated version but the five trainspotters from Okehampton could not miss this opportunity. Unfortunately it meant a trip to Exeter St. David's as the 2024 version only ran as far as there. The locomotive involved was 35028 Clan Line and it ran from Waterloo via the Southern line through Salisbury and Honiton, arriving at St. David's a couple of minutes late but preceding the Okehampton service. It would have been lovely to have had the steam to replace the service up to Okehampton. However 35028 put on a good show as it departed for Riverside Yard for

servicing then later in the afternoon it headed back to Waterloo via Taunton and Bristol. Our five Graham, Tom, Andrew and Dave joined by Pat Lennon caught the next train back to Okehampton passing Clan Line looking good in Riverside Yard. Last steam of the year and a reminder of days past and Clan Line's visit to Okehampton in 2013.



Online Fundraising

Please consider using easyfundraising every time you shop online!

www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/drsa

Many well known online shops take part, including Amazon, John Lewis, eBay, M&S, Tesco.....

Each time you shop via easyfundraising, a small donation makes it's way to the Dartmoor Railway Association at no extra cost to you!

Please contact our Treasurer, Christine Horner, if you would like more information: christine.horner@talk21.com

Mystery Wheel Returned to the Moor

Detective work!

Can anyone fathom how this cast wheel might have been used? It was brought to Okehampton Station by Graham Coules, who writes:

This wheel was found half buried alongside the abandoned railway between Princetown and Foggintor quarry roughly 50 years. Rough OS reference is 580732.



I assume it is from a truck carrying stone?

As you can see it is damaged and I imagine was replaced on the site and the old one (this one) flung to one side. I note on the OS map that there are Tin workings nearby so could be related to that too?

I have tried locating pictures of the works but none appear to have trains in.

It has been in various garages as we have moved around but I thought it should at least return to the Moors.

Miah's Diary - White dog turns Green

My most important duty on the station is to announce the arrival of the next train. I am able to do this by listening to the track which starts vibrating as the wheels of the diesels pass over Fatherford Viaduct. Some passengers now recognise my announcement, which is always accurate. As I find making this announcement very exciting I am tied to the fat leg of a very large table in the first room on Platform 2.

The other Saturday I knew that a strongly scented tin under the table had nothing tasty in it and was not worth opening. However in twirling around, as I do to reach maximum volume for the all important arrivals announcement, I knocked it over. As luck would have it the lid was not secure and a horrible sticky liquid slid out. I jumped around a bit more but couldn't get away from it and soon my paws and my side where I slid over were yucky.



Panic stations then as all the two legs told me to stop licking myself to get clean. Then my pet two legs started cleaning me with fairy liquid. Well as you can imagine, as a dog who only bathes in streams, or wheel barrows full of rainwater, I was not impressed. In fairness I knew they did have a debate about how to wash me down, but I can tell you that it was not very effective. In fact it was spread about my beautiful white fur and I went around with a green tinge for ten days or more.

I make it quite clear every week that I am only too happy to clean up lunch box crumbs from under tables!



Pullman SECR 136 Formosa Pullman Kitchen First built 1921 pictured at Portsmouth Arms on the Tarka Line on 7th August 2024. It had been there since 2006 but was moved to The Creamery, Castle Cary, in October 2024 (photo: J. Caesar).

<http://www.cs.rhrp.org.uk/se/CarriageInfo.asp?Ref=2219>


The Bulleid Buffet

Named after Oliver Bulleid, the Southern Railway's innovative engineer, the excellent station cafe is run by Leanne Knight and her team.



The Bulleid Buffet

Barista Coffee, homemade cakes, quiches, pies, pasties & treats. All day breakfast, lunch & takeaway. Picnic pick up point for your Granite Way exploration. Open: Summer 7am-5pm, Winter 8am-4pm.

f Tel: 07410 609160 • thebulleidbuffet@gmail.com 

Okehampton Railway Station, Station Road, Okehampton EX20 1EJ

Okehampton Train & Bus Information

With bus connections available from the station, please visit our Service Information web page which can give you pointers towards information to help plan your journeys:



<https://www.dartmoor-railway-association.org/services>

Committee of the Dartmoor Railway Association

Chairman: Sue Baxter

Secretary: Tom Baxter

Treasurer: Christine Horner

Membership Secretary & Volunteer Coordinator:

Geoff Horner

Committee Members:

Ron Kirby, John Caesar, Liz Westlake, Ged Kirby

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