

WEARDALE RAILWAY

NEWS UPDATE – 13 JULY 2012

**STEAM LOCO ARRIVES IN WEARDALE
WILL FIRST OPERATE FOR WAR ON THE LINE
POLAR EXPRESS OFFICIAL LAUNCH HELD AT STANHOPE**

- **‘WILBERT’ AUSTERITY 0-6-0 ARRIVES TO OPERATE ON WEARDALE RAILWAY** : Wilbert arrived in Wolsingham on Wednesday July 10th. It comes from the Dean Forest Railway in Gloucestershire and is on hire to the Weardale Railway until the end of the seasonal heritage services in October. All being well it will operate part of the two train intensive service planned for War on the line this weekend (14th, 15th July). There will be five return services between Bishop Auckland and Stanhope supplemented by three ‘shuttles’ between Stanhope and Wolsingham. Timetables are available on the Trust website : <http://www.weardale-railway.org.uk/documents/WOTL%20Timetable%20LNER%20v3p.pdf>



JUST ARRIVED : Wilbert outside the Wolsingham Depot on 10th July having just arrived from the Dean Forest Railway Steve Race, Maintenance Manager surveys his new charge. (Both Photos : Ruth Carroll)

- **‘WILBERT’S History** : The Hunslet design of War Department "Austerity" tank was produced to assist in the invasion of Europe. However, works no. HE 3806 was built in the Leeds works after the war in 1953, and served at various collieries and loco sheds until 1973, when it was acquired by the Dean Forest Railway in Gloucestershire. In August 1981 the Rev. W. Awdry, the author of the ‘Thomas the Tank Engine’ books named it "G.B. Keeling" after the first Chief Mechanical Engineer of the Severn & Wye Railway following a members' ballot for a name for the engine. On September 13th 1987 following a major overhaul and repainting the Rev. Wilbert Vere Awdry named it "Wilbert", in his honour. The book “Wilbert the Forest Engine” by his son, Christopher Awdry was published in 1994. . In 1978 the Dean Forest members who originally purchased the locomotive were allocated shares in Forest of Dean Railway Ltd and it became the first steam locomotive owned by the Company.



Wilbert in action on the Dean Forest Railway – (Photos courtesy of their website)

www.deanforestrailway.co.uk/

- POLAR EXPRESS LAUNCHED AT STANHOPE STATION :** On Wednesday 12th July the seasonal event 'The Polar Express' was launched to the press and media in a special ceremony at Stanhope. The launch programme continued the following day at our associate railway in Okehampton, Devon – the Dartmoor Railway. British American Railways Company President. Ed Ellis stated “ We are honoured to bring The Polar Express train experience exclusively to the UK. We have produced this event in America for several years.” The Express will be a 10 coach train running from Stanhope to the North Pole, where Santa will come aboard with his elves and all the characters bringing the story to life. The Trip takes about a one hour round trip departing at either 5.00pm or 7.30pm and will commence on November 16th and run on selected dates to December 30th 2012. For full details, prices, pictures and to book - visit the special website : -

www.WeardalePolarExpressRide.com

**FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER AVAILABLE IN THE UK,
“ALL ABOARD” THE POLAR EXPRESS!**

Inspired by the run-away hit movie produced by Warner Bros. Entertainment and the award winning book by Chris Van Allsburg, this very special train ride has only been available in America before now. For the first time ever, you can be a part of history and ride the magical Polar Express during the first year of this new annual family tradition.

The Polar Express train makes a mystical round-trip journey to the North Pole. The characters of the story come to life with the conductor punching away at the children’s golden tickets, chefs dancing and delivering hot chocolate and cookies, and the doubting hobo wandering through the train. The story is read aloud and the music from the movie plays for all the children to sing along.

At the North Pole, Santa anxiously awaits the children amongst the sparkling lights of his little city and climbs aboard to give the classic silver bell to all the believing boys and girls.

FROM THE WEBSITE



POLAR EXPRESS LAUNCH DAY : The young passengers, in their pyjamas, ready to board the train. RH photo from left to right, Ed Ellis, Jordan and Lauren Parker, Becky Ashton and you know who. (Photos : Jo Brown)

For more detailed news see the next Newsletter. To subscribe, please email the address below.

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