

WEARDALE RAILWAY

NEWSLETTER No 67 - NOVEMBER 11 2012

GETTING READY FOR THE POLAR EXPRESS **LOCO AND COACHING STOCK DETAILS FOR POLAR TRAINS** **DONALD HEATH RETIRES FROM THE RAILWAY**



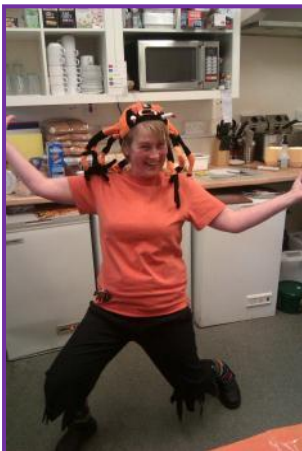
- **TICKET SALES FOR POLAR AHEAD OF EXPECTATIONS :** At the time of going to press ticket sales for the Weardale Railways inaugural season of Polar Express had reached 24,500 and new bookings were being received at between 500 and 600 per day. The original marketing plan was to operate 57 trains over the operating period between November 15th and December 30 giving a total capacity of around 28,000 seats. Because of the scale of the demand further trains have been added to the timetable. These trains are timetabled as a second run on some of the days originally scheduled for just one run and by adding a third run on Saturdays. This will make for by far the biggest operation in terms of passenger numbers since the start of the Weardale Railway eight years ago – up to 1,500 passengers per day and close to 100 staff and volunteers employed. This issue of the Newsletter will give more information on the work underway to prepare for Polar Express 2012.
- **POLAR EXPRESS – THE NORTH POLE :** The train journeys from Stanhope to the North Pole – a set which is being built by a local firm to a design from IP/ Warner Bros and is located lineside at and has been the scene of much activity by the Sunday gang for the last few weeks. Generators will provide power and I am informed that Santa's elves have already set up a 21 foot Christmas tree. This is where, if the children believe, then Santa will board and proceed through the train as it journeys back to Stanhope.
- **POLAR EXPRESS :THE MOVIE :** The 2004 movie is being reshown on Television. For the last two weekends it has been shown on the ITV2 Channel and will probably feature again in the near future. The Trailer for the film can be seen at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVfb6GhlwIM>

- PASSENGERS FROM FAR AND WIDE – INCLUDING BULGARIA** : Jo Brown, Marketing Manager reports : “So far, our furthest travelling Christmas customer is flying in from Bulgaria to ride the Polar Express! Other bookings are coming from Lancashire, Manchester, York, Essex, Leeds, Harrogate and calls from Kent and Ireland. Word has spread far and wide! October Press day was a success with attendance from ITV, BBC Radio Newcastle, Northern Echo and Weardale Gazette plus others. We snatched a slot on the evening regional news (see attached photo) and made the drive time feature on BBC Radio Newcastle. Our new recruits met for the first time and played their parts brilliantly! The Polar Express movie is showing on a regular basis on ITV 2. It was first screened two weeks ago and further screenings are planned.” Details below about further screenings of the film (or should that be movie?). Another key contribution to the passenger demand has been by spreading the word on the web – several family orientated websites feature links to the booking page and as for ‘social media’ – see the tweets in the box below – all from a period of a few hours.



Two photos from the Press Day as the staff prepare to receive over 25,000 visitors. Santa and his elves will proceed through the train where children who really believe will get a silver bell plus hot chocolate and cookies as the Polar story is retold with a cast of actors and a full sound system. Photos : Chris Parkinson.

- HALLOWEEN SELL OUT** : Tickets for Halloween Family Fun day on Saturday October 27th were completely sold out, reports Jo Brown, Marketing Manager. The train carriages were decorated for the occasion and there were other activities including a mummy wrap, Mask Making, and a Fancy Dress Competition. There were spooky goings on plus entertainment by Wanda the Witch and Magician Marvin during the day. Says Jo : “Congratulations to Paige from Darlington, Emily from Bishop Auckland and Iona from Consett who all won prizes in our Halloween Pumpkin Hunt and thanks to everyone who came along for our Halloween train, we had great fun.”



Its Halloween : Debbie Ravenhall (l) and Sam Ireland get into the spirit of the day , while suitably disgusting Drinks, such as ‘Bats Brew’ are being prepared in the café. (Photos : Sam Ireland)

- RTC CHARTER : STANHOPE VIDEO ON YOUTUBE** : Last month’s charter from Carnforth and Preston which featured the K4 ‘The Great Marquess’ was videoed by Tim Ruffle who has put his video on you tube. It gives extended high quality ‘footage’ of the arrival , watering and departure from Stanhope Station and is well worth watching. See it at : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dXlBxEkN50>

- IOWA PACIFIC ADDS ANOTHER RAILWAY TO ITS PORTFOLIO :** Weardale Railway's majority shareholder, Iowa Pacific has announced its acquisition of a controlling interest in Cape Rail, Inc., and its subsidiaries. This is a line on the Cape Cod peninsula about 40 miles south of Boston. The line runs 37 miles from Middleboro, which is on the Boston suburban railway, to Hyannis and has been operating tourist and dinner trains over sections of the line for the past few years – it is also operating the Polar Express this year. The Polar operation is being run over two separate sections of the line simultaneously, up to 5 trains per day. (That may be giving some people ideas!) Iowa Pacific's interest will be held in trust until necessary regulatory approvals are received from the Surface Transportation Board. Chris Podgurski, President of Cape Rail said "We are very excited to be working with Iowa Pacific. Access to Iowa Pacific's marketing and equipment resources will substantially enhance Cape Rail's ability to grow both its freight and passenger services." Ed Ellis, Iowa Pacific President noted "With the addition of Cape Rail, and the recent start-up of operations of our new Santa Cruz and Monterey Bay Railway in California, Iowa Pacific now has a truly coast-to-coast scope." Including Cape Rail, Iowa Pacific now operates nine railroads providing freight and/or passenger service, located in Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Illinois, Oregon, New York, California, and Massachusetts. The company also has recently launched its new Pullman sleeping car service between Chicago and New Orleans.



Cape Cod Central is the passenger operating arm of Cape Rail, a recent Iowa Pacific acquisition (see article). It operates tourist trains, dinner trains and also the Polar Express and has aims to build up the freight service and connect with the Boston commuter rail network.

- LOCOS AND COACHES FOR THE POLAR EXPRESS :** Group Managing Director Mike Fairburn reports : “ We are about to complete a deal to hire ‘Peak’ 45133 for haulage of Polar Express on Weardale Railway. The fleet will therefore be 45133, 31454 and 33103. 31454 and 45133 are fitted with Electric Train Heating generators which will power on-train heating, lighting and sound systems on Polar Express. 33103 will be available as back up and it is expected will share some haulage duties. In addition to the first class coach already at WR, coaches to make up the complete 11 coach set are being completed at Barrow Hill by Rampart Carriage and Wagon Services (two further First class and one brake second) and at Dereham on the Mid Norfolk Railway (5 Second class, one first class and one brake second class). The latter coaches are being hired, the former are part of RMS’s hire fleet. RMS has a fleet of 15 Mk 2 coaches in total which following work done to make them ready for Polar Express will be available for use during 2013 and beyond, on other services. The coaches have not been overhauled up to the specification required for operation on Network Rail, but will be available for use on Weardale Railway and Dartmoor Railway. Of the 15 coaches in the fleet, 6 are First Class vehicles which have very spacious and luxurious accommodation.” The editor understands that the coaches are due to start arriving in Weardale on either Monday or Tuesday, 12 and 13 November.

VOLUNTEERS : Week of 12th November :

We want to present our station in the very best possible light so anyone who would like to lend a hand on station, touching up paint, fences, clearing leaves and tidying up would be most welcome. Please contact Graham Isom to put your name forward to help out next week. The aim is to impress our Christmas visitors and encourage them to return next year! Jo Brown



Steve Goodwin standing beside the Motor Alternator he has removed from a coach.- note the Polar Express logo. See article below. (From : Mike Fairbairn)



Shildon in October. here are 60008 'Dwight D Eisenhower' and on the left 60010 'Dominion of Canada' (Chris Simpson)

- POLAR EXPRESS : OKEHAMPTON TO WEARDALE :** While the Dartmoor was also busy with its Polar Express preparations there was still time for Steve Goodwin of RMS and who is currently overseeing the operations at Okehampton to remove a Motor Alternator from one of the Dartmoor Polar coaches. Mike Fairbairn explains : “The alternator is destined for Barrow Hill and fitment to a coach for the Weardale Polar Express set. Man handling this component weighing around ½ tonne in the facilities available at Okehampton Station is definitely ‘Going the extra mile’ in support of colleagues at Weardale.
- IOWA PACIFIC REACHES AGREEMENT ON NEW US PASSENGER SERVICE :** In the days before the development of the US highway system the fashionable elite of the New York area would head upstate to the healthy hill country of the Adirondack mountains. They would travel on an overnight Pullman sleeping car service operated by the New York Central railway. In 1965 the NYC discontinued the passenger service to the terminus at Lake Placid and in 1972 abandoned the line altogether. The line was acquired by the State of New York who operated trains to the Winter Olympics in 1980. The line was then essentially abandoned over most of its length. In 1995 it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places which helped local enthusiasts to raise funding to gradually reopen the line. Tourist trains have operated since 2001. Now Iowa Pacific (IP) has reached a Memorandum of Understanding with the Adirondack Rail Preservation Society (ARPS) to link Lake Placid to New York City with Pullman sleeping car service. IP President Ed Ellis said “Iowa Pacific has been working to revive rail corridors across the U.S. and in other countries for freight and passenger service for over a decade, and our recent success with the (nearby) Saratoga and North Creek is an indication of what can be done in the Adirondack market.” Iowa Pacific will bear the equipment and operating costs and risks, and will be open to partnering in the costs of capital improvements required on the rail line, to be defined as part of the full plan.



Two views of the Adirondack Scenic Railroad where Iowa Pacific aims to develop a through overnight Pullman sleeping car service between the Lake Placid area and New York. (See article). Photo on the left a train en route to Saranac Lake Union station, which is shown on the right. (Photos L : Susan Bibeau and R : Andy Flynn)

- POLAR EXPRESS : STANHOPE STATION PROCEDURE :** All the WR staff are working very hard on getting everything ready, so what follows is what your editor has gathered from Jo Brown, Graham Isom and Mike Fairburn. Passengers arriving in cars will be directed by stewards to the crossing and into the Bondisle and an adjacent field where hard matting will be laid down to obviate some of the problems we have encountered in the past. Passengers will be directed to the station footbridge, which is to be retreaded. The train will be 11 coaches plus 2 locos, which means the east end platform crossing will be unusable by foot passengers. Then passengers will be directed to the station entrance where both ticket windows will be in operation for picking up the golden tickets. The tickets have coach and seat numbers allocated. The passengers can then move to the marquee and refreshment stalls in the station car park from where they will be called for boarding the specific coaches. Signage has been organised from the entrance into Stanhope and to and around the station. Additional toilets are being provided at the station and all the Mk2 coaches have functioning toilets.



Wilbert on its final weekend on the WR passing the site of what will be the North Pole, where the Sunday gang have been very active for the last weeks. (Photo: John Lewins)

Driving No 40 for the final time prior to his retirement is Donald Heath. See separate article. (Photo: John Lewins)

- DONALD HEATH : RETIREMENT OF A WEARDALE RAILWAY PIONEER :** The end of October saw the retirement of our Operations Manager, Donald Heath OBE. Donald has served in a voluntary capacity for the last 13 formative years of the Railway. He joined the Board of Weardale Railways Limited, as it was then, after a long railway career culminating in his leading the project to complete the electrification of the East Coast mainline for British Railways. As Deputy Chairman of the Weardale Railway his experience of the railway industry and his many connections within it, were indispensable in guiding the Railway through the difficult early years of gaining legislative approvals and acquiring the expertise of others within the industry to assist in rebuilding the line and the associated infrastructure. In the succeeding years he has carried out the role of Operations Manager initially on the 5 mile section from Stanhope to Wolsingham running as a Heritage Railway and latterly has overseen the operational aspects of reopening the line to Bishop Auckland and its reconnection to the Network, where again his industry contacts were invaluable. He thus saw his efforts bring about the transition from an abandoned branch line to a 15 mile passenger and freight carrying operation and he can be justly proud of this achievement. Fittingly his last 'operational' day was as driver on the steam engine 'Wilbert' on the last day of the heritage service in October. We wish him well and trust that he will continue to visit Weardale and the Railway which he has done so much to preserve. **Editors Note :** Donald has agreed to provide us with some of his thoughts about his years with the Weardale Railway which we will add as instalments to this and subsequent Newsletters.

- WR TRUST LOCO No 40 : THE MOVIE :** shows No 40 in action and in colour on the NCB network at Ashington, no dates given but it must be between 1954 and 1965. It is an 8 minute video and you see No 40 from 2 minutes in and it is hauling wagons, not carriages! My thanks to Stuart Watson for discovering this video. It was posted by "sirtinycreep" – all I know about him is from his Twitter which says "Who is Sir Tiny Creep? Well, it's me. I'm a guy, mid 30s-ish and I live in the UK." There are many other historic railway videos on his Youtube site which are well worth a look . Here is the link to the No 40 video : <http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=endscreen&v=Y2Ume1SnLgQ&NR=1>

A GLIMPSE OF THE POLAR EXPRESS ON TWITTER – 7 pm. 9th November

Some random tweets from the WWW

- @[Louise](#) *****: All aboard The Polar Express, got our ticketswe believe ! Train tickets available from **weardale** railway ..not many left
- @[Scotty](#) *****89 the real polar express is coming to **weardale** - then it's Xmas :D
- [D_O](#)*****rby hahaha it's too cute tho, there's a railway up in **weardale** that do the polar express experience for kids, I secretly want to go!
- @[dolly](#)*****5 **Weardale** in co Durham. Kids go in pyjamas! They get a little bell as first gift of Christmas. Dancing chefs deliver hot choc!
- [K** M** B](#) : The Polar Express Ride on the **Weardale** Railway https://www.weardale-railway.com/Polar_Express/index.html OMG, We so want to go on this But we don't have kids!
- @[Rudolph](#)***Reins we are going on the polar express at **weardale** railway next week. Rudolph will u be at the north pole when we arrive. ?

- **YOUTH TEAM HOLDING RECRUITMENT DAY** : The S and D Railway Youth Team will hold its next recruitment event at Locomotion, the National Rail Museum in Shildon. Members will operate a recruitment stand at Locomotion on Sunday, November 11, between 10am and 4pm. Details on the group can also be found at www.sdryt.org.uk. The group was set up five years ago as the Weardale Railway Youth Team, now based in Bishop Auckland its aim is to provide members with work experience, volunteering, training and leisure opportunities at a network of railway organisations within the North-East. The group has joined forces with Trackwork, a locally based Rail Engineering apprenticeship scheme, and is also in talks with Beamish Museum.



Preparations for Polar Express underway at Stanhope : on the left a view from the station footbridge of the matting being laid in the field next to the down platform and on the right work is underway on decorating the up platform – both photos taken on the 11th November (Photos : Editor)

- **WEARDALE TRUST DIRECTOR RESTORES WW2 MEMORIAL** : In October 1944 a Halifax bomber on a night training run crashed in the Keilder Forest in Northumberland, Four of the crew of seven were killed Debris from the crash has since been left in place at isolated Glendhu Hill as a mark of respect, and 20 years ago a commemorative cross was situated there. Recently Weardale Railway Trust Director Richard Maughan of Stocksfield and his girlfriend Alison Phillips, of Belsay, discovered the state of ruin of the original wooden cross on a walk to the area two years ago, they decided something had to be done. Said Richard “ I made some inquiries with the Air Crash Investigation and Archaeology group as to how we could go about renewing the memorial. “Between them and the Forestry Commission, who have been tremendously helpful, we found the way forward, and got permission.” The next step was to find someone to create a sturdy replacement. I’m involved with the Weardale Railway so I asked the railway people if they could create a replacement, and they did, using Jarrah wood – a very hard wood used for railway sleepers. The new cross is far more substantial, and larger – about 4ft tall – and the original brass plaque bearing the names of the airmen who died has been preserved.” This is an abridged outline of a much fuller account given in the Newcastle Journal. You can read more at : <http://www.journallive.co.uk/northumberland-sites/bellingham-northumberland/bellingham-and-north-tyne-news/2012/11/06/glendhu-hill-memorial-to-brave-airmen-has-been-replaced-61634-32173017/#ixzz2BXNBwP5j>

- DONALD HEATH : “SOME THOUGHTS ON THE EARLY YEARS”** My involvement with the Weardale Railway started back in 1999 when Sir William McAlpine asked me to “look at some things” for him. As a result of that little exercise, I have had an active association with the Company and, to a lesser extent The Trust, ever since. Highlights included commissioning the Parliamentary Agents Messrs Rees & Freres to obtain a Transport & Works Act Order (TW) for the Company. (This was a process that, at the time, seemed never ending but eventually we did get there.) At the same time, I was involved in active negotiations with Railtrack and then Network Rail to arrange for the purchase of the line and, since this became a very extended process, to obtain a licence to run on what was still Network Rail’s property so that we could start the service in the summer of 2004. The fact that we were able to agree with Railtrack that they would sell the railway to the Weardale Railway Company for a very reasonable price was entirely down to Sir William’s contact with Sir Bob Horton who was the Railtrack Chairman. With Brian Morris and Steve Bissell on board, we found a Project Manager and started the lengthy process of putting the railway back into shape for reopening once we had obtained our TW Order. Before we could start running a service we had to have an inspection by HMRI and this was duly carried out on the Monday before we were due to start running on the Saturday. Unfortunately, the railway was far from ready and we were extremely lucky that the Inspecting Officer – who I knew extremely well from my professional activities – agreed to come back at very short notice the following Thursday to do another inspection. In the 72 hours between these two inspections the amount of work completed was phenomenal and we were able to secure his consent to our starting operation by the midday on the Friday. The Weardale Railway was formally reopened the following day.



The extended Hillary Family spent their time at the NYMR wartime weekend promoting Weardale Railway’s War on the line event to be held on the 13/14th July 2013
(photo : Kevin Hillary)



Weardale Railway General Manager Graham Isom looks a happy man, see news item below.

- WEARDALE RAILWAY GENERAL MANAGER TO MARRY :** Donald Heath broke the news as follows : “This is to advise you that Graham Isom asked Marion Peagram to become his wife last weekend. I am delighted to tell you that Marion accepted and that they are planning to get married in February. I know that you will all join me in wishing them all the happiness in the world and every success in their life together.”





Farewell 'Wilbert'. The summer visitor from the Forest of Dean Railway is seen on its final weekend of operation before its return at the end of the Weardale Railways 2012 operating season. Seen here approaching Enginemans Terrace on October 27th. (Photo : John Lewins)

- **EDITED BY Gerry Mudd : 11 November 2012**
Please send your contributions, photos, news, suggestions to gcmudd@ntlworld.com
PS : The Editor lives 300 miles away from Weardale (most of the time !) so contributions on the events of the next six weeks would be very welcome.

