



Downpatrick & County Down Railway Society

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PRESS RELEASE

15/11/05

New Rolling Stock at Downpatrick

The Downpatrick & County Down Railway was a hive of activity this weekend as carriages and engines were moved between its Market Street base and the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland's depot in Whitehead and Iarnrod Eireann's (Irish Rail) headquarters in Inchicore, Dublin.

The local heritage railway was taking delivery of a 1925 vintage railway carriage from the Great Southern and Western Railway, and is the first at Downpatrick with the famous "side-corridor" access route into compartments.

Railway Chairman, Mike Collins, explains how the vehicle was obtained. "The vehicle was running on RPSI's main line trains - such as the Portrush Flyer - up until two years ago when new legislation came into being that restricted the use of wooden bodied vintage vehicles on the NIR network.

"We can still run them as we have our own line and our trains don't mix with NIR services," he adds.

The carriage, No. 1097, arrived on Sunday afternoon and was immediately taken out for clearance trials before being accepted into service. The vehicle will form part of Santa's "Lapland Express" this December.

On late evening last Monday, the second vehicle arrived - a pioneering diesel railcar built for the rural Sligo, Leitrim and Northern Counties Railway, which ran to Enniskillen.

Mr. Collins says, "This vehicle is a gift to us from Irish Rail, the national railway operator in the South. It is in a relatively poor state of repair, but we're already sourcing grant aid for its restoration and hope to contract an outside agency to do the repair work."

He also says that this is the first time this vehicle has been north of the border in nearly 50 years.

Also in the move was a steam engine - identical to the little black engine loved by children across the District and County. Mr. Collins reveals that this engine, No. 1, is away to the RPSI's depot in Whitehead for overhaul.

"The RPSI are the leading experts in steam engine restoration in Ireland and beyond," states Mr. Collins, "And we know they will do an excellent restoration. Hopefully No. 1 will be completed by the time our current engine, No. 3, needs to be taken out of service for boiler overhaul - insuring that we have steam in Downpatrick for years to come."

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