

# Santa Wagon History

For the last 30 years the Santa Sleigh has become well known in the Lymington, Pennington, Sway, Hordle and Milford areas bringing joy and pleasure to the many generations of children at Christmas time.



The story begins in 1973 when a Rotary Santa Float at Lymington was first seen in Lymington. Initially it was just a flatbed trailer with a Christmas tree on each corner which was built by Dr Basil Thornton and Alan Figgures. A 12v car battery powered lights and sound system. Santa sat on a simple wooden chair in the middle. A cunning mechanism using car trafficators waggled the reindeer's ears and flashed it's nose when a coin was inserted into a slot. This was soon to change with the construction of the current Santa Sleigh in 1978.

The current Santa Sleigh was the brainchild of Mike Corbin, President in 1984. Mike was a gifted boat builder in his spare time and he brought his skills to bear by designing the current Santa Sleigh. The construction took place in a barn made available by Rotarian Ron Hook (President in 1992), whose business was in Barrows Lane. A small army of Elves who included Frank Johnston, Bob Tanner, Frank Carter, Ted Chalk and others then cut, sawed and sandpapered the marine plywood to Mike's specifications then put the bits together before finally painting on the bright red colour that says "Santa has arrived". Mike provided most of the funding for the Wagon with the rest being made up by the Club. Maurice McNeill supplies a petrol generator supplying 240v which powers lights, signs and a tape deck for the sound system.

Peter Cooper Ltd has maintained the Santa Float which involves servicing bearings, tyres, tow bar connections, lighting and sound system. When required Coopers have also regularly repainted the Santa Float and provided petrol for the generator and about 25 tins of sweets for distribution by Santa at no cost to the Club.

The Santa Sleigh has appeared each year since then to the delight and expectation of everybody both young and the not so young. That is all in the past. But what may also be forgotten are some of the incidents that occurred over these years.

For instance the initial sound system consisted of 2 very large box type speakers lashed down on the roof of the Wagon. They were very effective but sometimes suffered from very poor sound quality. However one night a real disaster struck. As the Wagon toured the streets a sharp corner, plus a bump in the road, caused the speakers to fly off the roof; the Wagon was silent thereafter that night!

On another occasion after hitching up at Peter Cooper's the car and wagon left for its scheduled tour of Lymington. However when the tow car turned right on to the main road the Wagon continued on a straight line into the ditch. Santa that night was Alan Andrews who, shaken but not stirred, stood quietly by as the Wagon was properly reconnected. The rest of that night was as successful as usual!

On another occasion in 1993 the then President Jason Watkins decided to join us as a collector on our tour around Bath Road and surrounding areas. He was a keen collector and wandered away happily doing his own thing. when we stopped as planned at the Community Centre to decide if we had covered enough ground we were horrified to find we had lost Jason. While we were wondering what best to do a lonely disgruntled figure hobbled into the Community Centre forecourt and with a few choice words told us exactly what we should do.

These are some of the incidents that occurred when I accompanied the Wagon on its rounds but I am sure other members must also have recordable incidents which they might like to share.

## Income

1986 £1116.36	1996 £1656.54	2006 £3618.00
1987 £1046.78	1997 £2399.05	2007 £3921.74
1988 £1371.17	1998 £2176.10	2008 £3798.80
1989 £1337.08	1999 £2255.45	2009 £2888.50
1990 £1529.02	2000 £2333.50	2010 £2416.50
1991 £1436.95	2001 £2500.87	2011 £2880.79
1992 £1563.75	2002 £2004.25	2012 £2634.07
1993 £1904.17	2003 £2231.40	2013 £1468.37
1994 £1804.06	2004 £2088.64	2014 £2177.78
1995 £1981.24	2005 £2550.96	<b>29 years £63,091.89</b>



Outside Moore and Blatch 1973



1991 – Rotarians Graham Saunders, Richard Burkmar, Jason Watkins, Ron Palmer, John Barton



1987 – Rotarians \_\_\_\_\_, Frank Johnstone, Mike Reed behind the beard, \_\_\_\_\_, Ian Bowen Ashwin