



# The West Lancs Letter

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE  
WEST LANCASHIRE LIGHT RAILWAY



ISSUE 40 DECEMBER 2023

## Christmas is coming...

Santa's visit to West Lancs is almost upon us, and the Bearded One has ensured there will be no delay with his supply of presents by sending them on ahead.

Joseph, Simon and Gordon are amongst those tasked with carrying the precious boxes to a place of safety in the Diesel Shed.



Also on orders from the North Pole, the Official Sleigh gets an overhaul and spruce-up to ensure it is fit for purpose as Santa's Gift Conveyance. Barry is the Chosen One.

And Santa Specials need plenty of coal to keep the loco fires burning. This load should just about do.





Meanwhile work on the access coach continues. A major milestone is delivery of the doors - a long-awaited event, hence the look of relief on Alan's face. Just the droplight windows to make now...

Accurate woodwork needs concentration and a steady hand. Mike applies both to machining a light fitting for the new coach.



With the topsides of the coach's braking system complete, Paul turns his attention to the components on the bogie. He assures us that the wood is only for dimensioning, the finished articles will definitely be metallic.

With the boiler repairs complete, *Montalban's* insulation is refitted, and covered with large sheets of aluminium. So if you wondered why local supermarkets were clean out of turkey foil recently, you now know why.



Is *Monty* going green? Well no, actually, it's just the primer coat going on the boiler's outer covering. A good sign that *Montalban* is on her way back, just in time for Santa duties.

The finishing touches. Simon fettles the regulator valve while Keith does some last-minute brazing on the steam pipe and Cameron tries to keep out of the all-pervading rain.





Meanwhile across in the woodwork shed some precision joinery is underway, making the dumb buffers for *Sybil*.

It takes 15 or so accurately-cut squares to be carefully glued together for each buffer. No rough shunting please.

A tale of two seats. This one was in use for many years at Hesketh Bank station. It was kindly donated to the Railway by the executor of the estate of Mrs Joyce Wignall, daughter of William Cookson, the stationmaster at Hesketh Bank. He waved off the last train when the station closed in 1964.

A valuable piece of local history, which we are very pleased to have.



This seat is also very special. It was given to the Railway in memory of our long-serving member and volunteer John McIntyre, who passed away earlier this year.

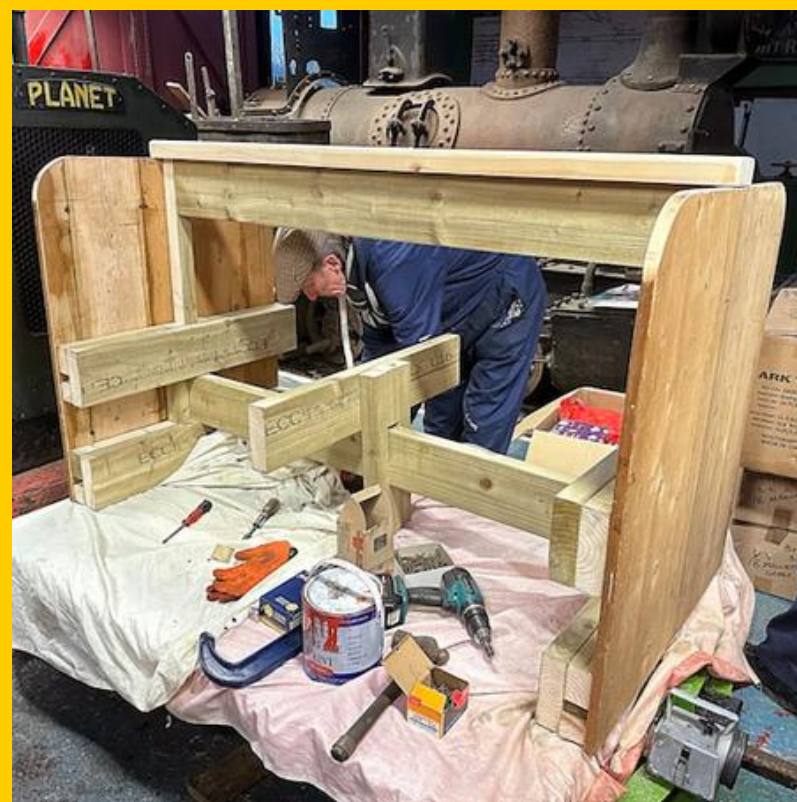
John's wife Barbara and daughter Lizzie came to present us with the seat, which now has a place of honour adjacent to the platform at Becconsall.



Jospeh's stone wagon is progressing nicely, here the man himself applies the first coat of paint to the new flooring...



...whilst inside the Sybil shed, father Alex works on the seating which will sit on top of the wagon. Sadly, it's unlikely to feature as a gravity train, strictly loco-hauled only.



Regular visitors will know the carriage shed is a venerable structure 'of a certain age'. Its eastward leaning has been arrested, now it's time for renewal of some of the side timbers.

And no, the webmaster is not going to update his scale model to match - it's definitely a once-off frozen-in-time representation.





Alongside all the activity in the workshops, our work with local schools continues apace. Anfield Rd school visited us recently from Liverpool, and an enthusiastic bunch they were!

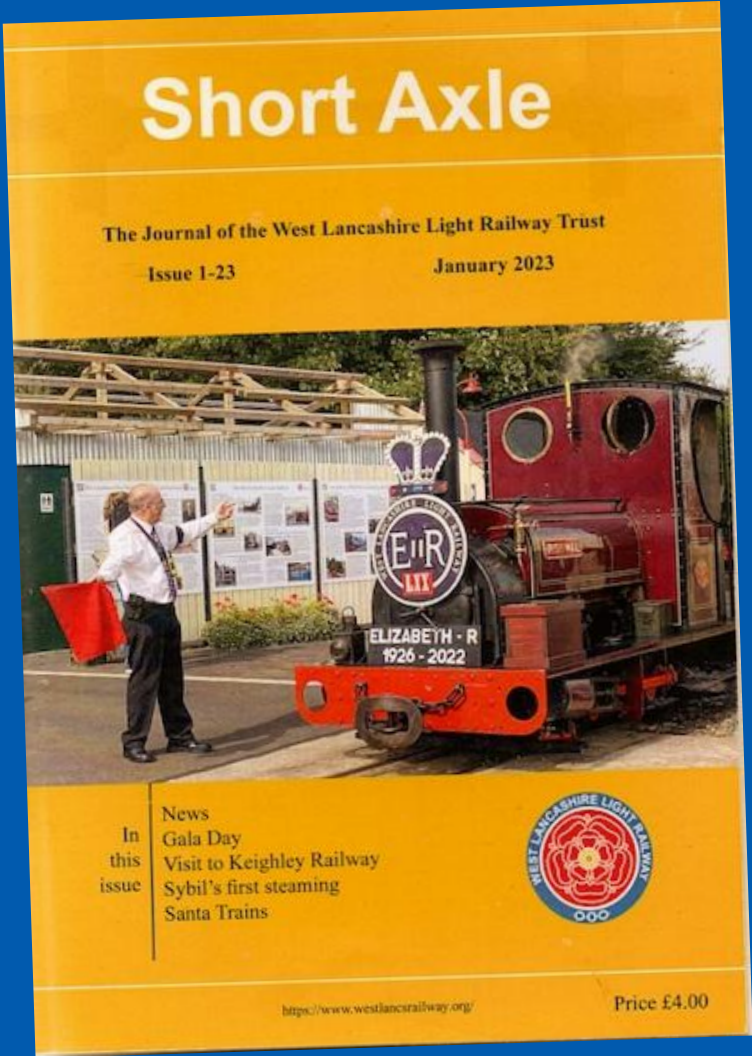
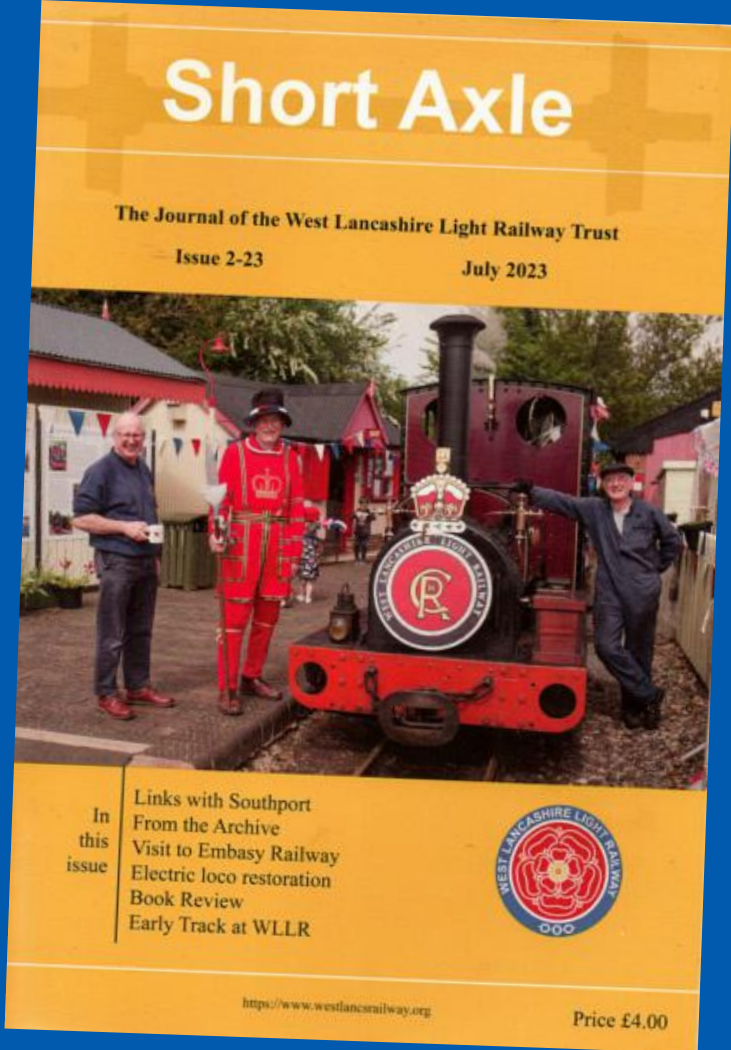
Schoolchildren, like any army, march on their stomachs. As can be seen, a sizeable part of their transport was taken up by lunch.



We're not just good at trains, we know how to look after our environment as well! So much so that we won the award for Best Kept Community Space in the Hesketh Bank 2023 Best Kept Competition.

Here our gardeners receive the certificate from Councillor Steve Kirby.

**The Short Axle  
deadline  
approaches!**



**Send your  
contribution to Andy  
at [shortaxle@  
westlancsrailway.org](mailto:shortaxle@westlancsrailway.org)**





And finally...

With all the busyness involved in running a heritage railway, it's important to relax occasionally and enjoy a bit of socialising.

So here we are at the Hesketh Arms, Rufford, where Mike is about to show some slides of the early years of the Railway. Some of the the volunteers looked very young!

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The image on the front page is of *Irish Mail* in full-on fright mode, returning a train-load of petrified passengers back to the relative safety of Beconsall at Halloween.

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**BUY OUR ADVANCE ANYDAY DISCOUNT TICKET!**

Valid for all trains, including special events, except Santa Specials and Halloween. No expiry date - use whenever you like!

2024 tickets will be available shortly before the season starts

With the Railway now running the final trains of the 2023 season, we need more volunteers to help run our services and to maintain and improve our facilities.

If you would like to help, please contact Mike Spall at:

[chair@westlancsrailway.org](mailto:chair@westlancsrailway.org)

The West Lancs Letter is published by the West Lancashire Light Railway Trust, a UK registered charity. Our contact address is: Station Rd, Hesketh Bank PR4 6SP.

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If you would like to join our growing band of members, you can do so online [here](#).