



# The West Lancs Letter

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE  
WEST LANCASHIRE LIGHT RAILWAY



ISSUE 41 FEBRUARY 2024

## Christmas has come...and gone

Our Santa Specials were again fully subscribed, and thanks to a lot of hard work by our many volunteers, over 3000 passengers enjoyed a trip to see Father Christmas.



As you can imagine, Santa himself was in great demand, with every family getting not only a personal visit but also a moment of the occasion, in the form of a Santa Selfie. All part of the service!

It's not all hard work though. Blockman Paul gets a chance to relax inbetween trains, with his own personal brazier, chair and footrest.







The New Year brings a determined push to get the new access coach finished. Here Gary learns a new skill, using the jigsaw to cut out vents for the battery box.

The first door goes on! Our two master joiners get the frame hanging just as it should. Only five more to go...



Looking good, or what?



Outside it's a bit chilly, but the track gang keep warm building a new point. It's destined for Road 15, leading down to the car park loading area.



This is where the point will go. Andy L, Rick and Andy B get stuck in removing sleepers and digging out ballast.

We need to acquire several tons of ballast to level up the rails forming the new siding. Gordon and Mike set to fitting drop doors to one of our ex-RAF Fauld bogie wagons, ready to accept its share of used stone, washed, one fairly careful owner.







Meanwhile in the mechanical workshops our long-serving diesel shunter *Planet* gets a much-anticipated overhaul. Bob and Dave start by removing the engine covers, overcoming some stubborn resistance from inaccessible and well-rusted bolts.

Also under restoration is a slate wagon believed to originate from the Penrhyn Quarry in North Wales. Contrary to much rumour, it is not going to be fitted out as baby Robert's bassinette, for use when dad Simon is on footplate duty.



In another corner of a somewhat crowded workshop, work starts on renovation of the heritage seat from the long-gone Hesketh Bank station.



One of the many essential winter tasks. John, our official 'competent person' inspects the lifting slings to ensure they are good for another season.

Only those that pass his stern gaze get the Yellow Plastic Tie of Approval. And definitely not the Blue Plastic Tie - so last year...



Another important job is lubricating the fishplates that join the rails together. Mike leads by example, ruining yet another pair of gloves in the process.

Why use one pair of ears, when five will do? Simon, Gary, Dave, Jeff and Bob all strike a pose to listen intently for any sound of steam leaks from inside *Sybil's* smokebox. Non detected, fortunately.







On a historical note, one of a set of photos by John Simm of the naming of *Joffre* in July 2012.

The full collection can be viewed [here](#).

And somewhat further back, a press cutting records one of our Enthusiasts' Days.

More cuttings can be seen [here](#).

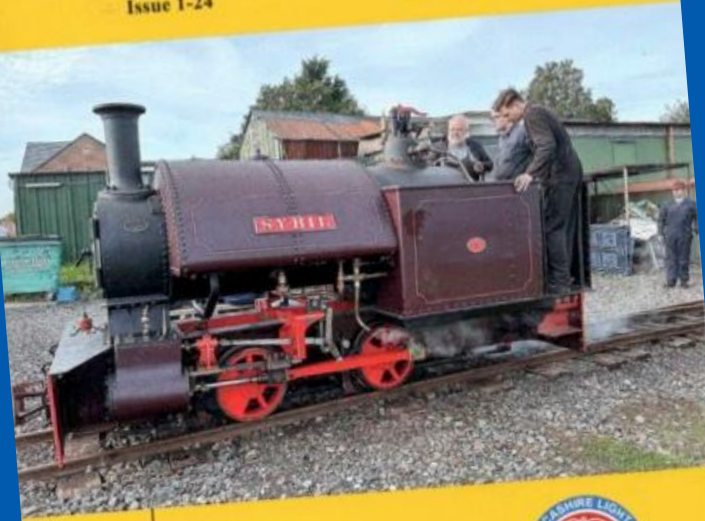


And while all the work goes on across the site, there are signs that Spring is approaching, and along with it the start of our new season. Good Friday is approaching fast, and still lots to do!



# Short Axle

The Journal of the West Lancashire Light Railway Trust  
Issue 1-24 January 2024



In this issue  
The Guinness Railway  
Member Profile  
Slate wagon Restoration  
Early history of the WLLR



<https://www.westlancrailway.org>

Price £4.00

The new Short Axle is here!

Members will get theirs in the post - or you can buy it in the shop.



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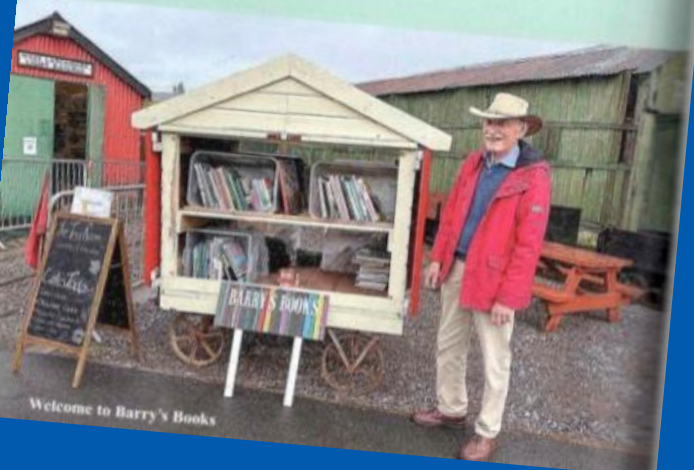
### Submitting Material to Short Axle

Short Axle is the journal of the WLLR Trust. The Editors welcome articles of WLLR interest. Please, ensure you have copyright for any material you submit. Electronic formats are preferred but handwritten / typed may be considered. Photographs can be submitted in JPEG or TIFF format. Any material may be edited as required.

Copy should be sent to the Editor's email : [shortaxle@westlancrailway.org](mailto:shortaxle@westlancrailway.org)

Deadline for next issue  
1 July 2024

Cover Picture  
Sybil Back in Steam  
by Derek Pratt



Welcome to Barry's Books





And finally....a house notice:

We are looking for volunteers (new or existing) who could help us fill the vacancies of diesel engineer, civil engineer and treasurer. These roles are a good way of getting involved with the running of the Railway and helping to steer the future direction we take. If you would like to know more, contact Mike at [chair@westlancsrailway.org](mailto:chair@westlancsrailway.org).

The image on the front page is of our newest member Robert, seen here putting his name down for the next fireman's training course. Proud parents Lucy and Simon look on.





We restart on 29th March!



**BUY OUR ADVANCE ANYDAY 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 busy getting ready for the 2024 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](#).