



The West Lancs Letter

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
WEST LANCASHIRE LIGHT RAILWAY



ISSUE 34 MARCH 2023

Welcome to another round-up of West Lancs railway news!



The boiler man cometh...

February means boiler inspector time, when we submit our steam locos to examination and test by an independent surveyor, to prove they are fit for service.

For Simon it means getting the big spanner out to remove *Irish Mail's* fusible plugs. The firebars are also removed for a good look underneath.

For Sybil, he's already here

British Engine's inspector comes to do a hydraulic pressure test, as part of the design verification process.

Paul is volunteered to be the front man...



Is it meant to do that?

Despite Keith's concerned expression, it's draining, not leaking. And the boiler passed the test!

So where does this fit?

Clive plays the Ruston jigsaw game, with Gamesmaster James looking on but saying nothing.



Aerobic exercise

A big nail gun is a heavy nailgun.

Lifting one to head height a dozen times or more for each plank in the toilet canopy is not for the faint-hearted, nor the weak-muscled.

Barry is neither, fortunately.



All hands to the crowbars

Trackwork is strenuous exercise also, just the job for keeping warm on a chill February day.

As well as relaying the pointwork and topping-up the ballast, the chain gang are putting in a new walkway across the track, from the end of the platform to the new(ish) workshop.





Cutting it fine

Gary does some (fairly) precision trimming on the tops of the information boards.

The original build wasn't quite level, apparently, not that many people noticed.

But we did.

A study in green

Rob and Jorge show they know how to concentrate when working on the Lister.

Can you spot the highly-sophisticated non-digital warning device?

A rubber-bulb horn is distinctly low-tech, but highly audible...



Steam dome lift

Sybil's steam dome is carefully lifted above the firebox, using the overhead crane and more concentration.

Sybil is really coming on now, and team leader Keith is even starting to predict a possible completion date, although careful to ensure that 'the back end of Spring' isn't too precise.

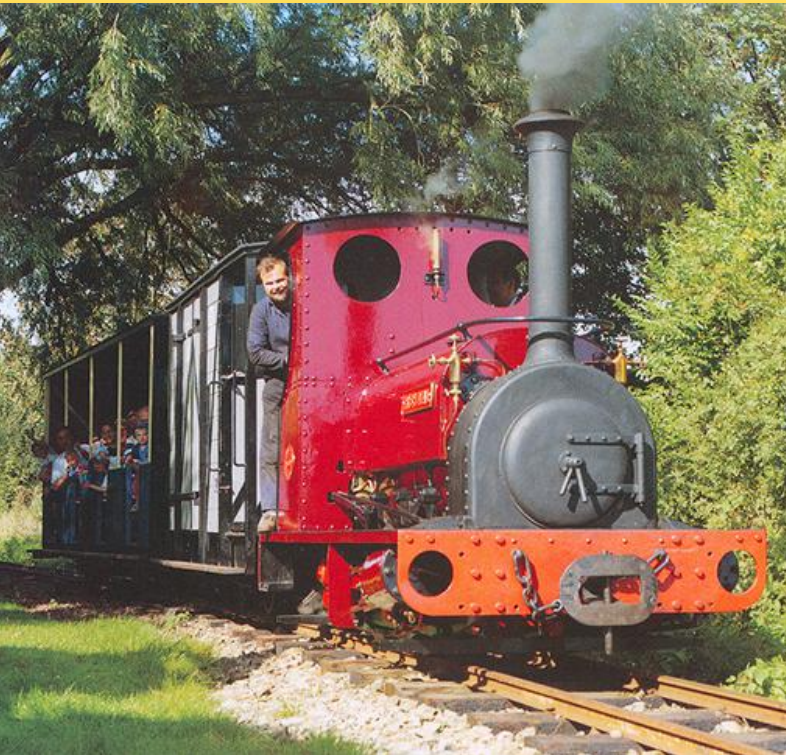


Goodbye to Santa!

Santa liked Christmas at West Lancs so much he stayed for an extended holiday.

However all good things come to an end, and the Bearded One was carefully strapped to John Johnson's pickup truck for the journey back to the North Pole.

Somewhere near Banks, so we are told.



Historic images now viewable

Glenn Clarkson has uploaded a set of historic WLLR images for public viewing. They are from the archives of the Narrow Gauge Railway Society.

This picture is from John Simm, a postcard showing *Irish Mail* hauling a train past Willow Tree Halt.

The set can be viewed [here](#).

Only the worthy may enter...

It's not often mere mortals are allowed a peek into the Inner Sanctum of the loco workshop. Fifty years' worth of carefully-hoarded supplies and spares await the call of duty.

Rumours abound of a set of hardly-used flux capacitors buried deep in the rearmost shelves. Next to the box of left-handed screwdrivers, apparently.





A heavyweight delivery

A pair of newly-cast buffer beam weights for Alan's autotruck arrived recently.

But how to get them off the van? Too heavy to manhandle (or even move!) and our handling equipment won't reach inside.

Contractor co-operation

The solution was an excavator from a nearby building site, whose driver kindly agreed to help us out.

The forklift attachment was just right for the job, and some precision steering set the load down right by our waiting flat wagon.



Spring is nearly here...

Evidence from down the line that the seasons are advancing, and it won't be long before we start services on April 2nd!

Short Axle

Out now!

Journal of the West Lancashire Light Railway Trust

Issue 1-23

January 2023



In this issue

News
Gala Day
Visit to Keighley Railway
Sybil's first steaming
Santa Trains



<https://www.westlancsrailway.org/>

Price £4.00

Short Axle Issue 1-23 Contents	
Who's Who	2
From the Chair	3
Editorial	5
Progress with Sybil	8
Development of the Cafe	10
Restoring Mountbatten	14
Repairing Tased	16
Gala Day	18
Member Profile	22
Santa Trains	25
Our Visit to the WLLR	26
In Miniature	30
Book Review	32
On the Heritage Trail	34
Unexpected Finds	36
Remembering John McIsaac	38
Volunteering at the WLLR	

Editorial

The last three years have been challenging but have also brought us some memorable times. As the initial lock down was eased in Spring 2020, we returned in small numbers to the railway for some maintenance work. The sun was shining and I remember eating ice cream on the platform and Mike was putting up a sun shade, while he laid the platform bricks. But it was the friendship that had previously been formed that was being reinforced, highlighting how the railway is more than just running trains. This sense of community continues to be central to the railway's success.

During these three years much has happened at the WLLR and the running of all the Santa trains during this time is a great credit to all those involved, when many other venues were closed. This is the first issue of Short Axle for a while and I must thank Mike for accepting my offer to help with its production. My own interest in narrow gauge railways started during childhood holidays in North Wales, which also showed the pleasures of outdoor activities, such as hill walking and sailing that remain a key interest. However, early retirement gave time for a rekindling with narrow gauge steam and brought me to help in a small way

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@westlancsrailway.org
Deadline for next issue - 30 June 2023

The editor as one of Santa's helpers



The latest issue has been mailed to members.
Copies will also be available soon in the station shop.



And finally...

Just occasionally there's a special moment at the Railway. This time it's the spectacular sunset, as one of our volunteers heads home after a long day.

Photo: Alan Frodsham

The front page image shows Gordon preparing *Montalban* for boiler inspection.



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Specials and Halloween. No expiry date - use whenever you like!

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With the Railway currently closed to the public, this newsletter highlights some of the activities aimed at maintaining and improving our facilities.

If you would like to help, we would love to hear from you!
Contact Mike Spall at: chair@westlancsrailway.org

The West Lancs Letter is published by the West Lancashire Light Railway Trust, a UK registered charity. Contact address: Station Road, 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](#).