



Outside the Box

St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust
www.sigbox.co.uk

Lights at green for the Signal Box:

- Company is Incorporated
- Railway heritage Trust give their support
- Network Rail agree to lease



What's it all about?

In 2002, a group of St Albans residents decided that the signal box at the end of their road had been left to decay for 25 years too many. It could surely be put to a better use than a pigeon nesting box (they get in through the cracks in the boards).

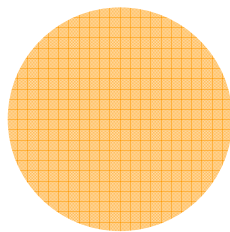
So we looked at possibilities and talked to the Railway Companies and the end result is a determination to save the Grade 2 listed signal box, as the only other alternative is to let it fall down.

We also discovered that it still contains a rare Midland Railway signal lever frame.

In order to accomplish this goal, we have set up a Building Preservation Trust to enable us to get grant support.

Many costs will have to be covered, not least of which is the safety and security of a building approximately 15ft from a live high speed train line.

Once the building is restored the second phase of the plan will begin, to secure its long term viability as a museum and heritage attraction. It is hoped that the locking room (the ground floor) will be used by a local model railway society for its layouts.



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History of the Box

The box was the second at this location, replacing in 1892 the original 1877 structure which had only contained sixteen levers. The larger box was required in connection with the quadrupling of the Midland main line.

Originally, the second set of lines were for goods traffic only, but these were upgraded to passenger status in 1903. The box is of standard Midland Railway design, prefabricated in Derby.

As originally built, the box was not as long as it now is - the furthest section

was added in the late 1940s in anticipation of the installation of a larger lever frame which never took place.

The box and its 1906 lever frame was declared to be a historic monument and listed grade 2 in 1979. It is a local landmark and, unusually, the interior contents are part of the preservation order.

After closure, several unsuccessful efforts were made to have the building removed to an alternative site.



June 1950 - the Star
of MRC magazine



*“No shaking mops
from the windows
(there’s 25,000
volts around!)”*



The Box in 1977
©John Hinson

Where are we now?

The Company was incorporated on 31 January 2003 with 11 residents as trustees and many more as friends of the Trust.

Funds are being raised to support the next phase of the project which is to carry out a feasibility study into the repair and possible future uses of the ‘box. We are hoping for support from the Architectural Heritage Fund for this study.

On completion of the study, we can proceed to the next phase of renovation and rebuilding, this time with support from the Railway Heritage Trust and

hopefully from the Lottery Heritage Fund.

The lease is being drawn up by Network Rail, and they have kindly offered to support the project by providing the security fencing between the track and the ‘box.

The lease will have some interesting clauses about the use of red and green lights, and shaking mops from the windows (there’s 25,000 volts around!), etc, so professional help will be needed to interpret the small print.

In the press

Articles have appeared in ‘Rail’ and ‘Railways Illustrated’ this month.

‘Rail’ said...

‘Heritage Trust Cash for St Albans Signal Box - Money from the Railway Heritage Trust is to go toward restoring the grade 2 listed Midland Railway signalbox.

RHT is to provide up to a quarter of the funds needed to restore the ‘box and its 44-lever tumbler frame, which is also listed, to 1950’s condition. it closed in 1977’

‘The ‘box is likely to be restored with equipment from the Bedford-Bletchley

line that is now being resignalled.

‘Railways Illustrated’ said...

‘New life for St Albans box - A lease is expected to be signed soon between Network Rail and The Friends, when the first job will be to erect a steel fence around the structure to prevent vandalism. The plan is to lease the locking room as a venue for a model railway society, with the operating floor used by a signalling group.’

‘Once open, it will also be used for school visits to demonstrate the dangers of going near the railway. Talks are in progress to use the box as a training room for Network Rail.’

Become a ‘friend’ of the Signal Box

We need all the friends we can get! Its not because we wear anoraks, but the more support we can show, the happier funding agencies are to give us grants.

If you can help by joining the friends and donating £10 or more, we will make sure you are kept up to date via the newsletter, are invited to the social

functions of the trust, and have access to the ‘box once it is safe. We will also allow you to help paint, garden, dig and generally muck in (not compulsory!)

Please complete the attached ‘friends’ form and post it to the address shown. Your support will be gratefully received! see www.sigbox.co.uk