



Newsletter 5th February 2007
Issue 9

Outside the Box

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



Good news:

- Happy New Year
- Builders
- Toilet gone

This issue:

Builders	1
AGM	1
Act of God	1
Subs due	1
Heritage Open Days	2
Simulator	2
Demolish it!	2

Happy New Year!

Welcome to the ninth newsletter of the Trust, and apologies for the long gap since the last one. We are now desperately looking for a volunteer who would like to edit and produce the newsletter on a more regular basis!

Things are still moving slowly but surely. Contractors have been appointed to open the access to the street and level the grounds.

Another building company is being appointed to work on the structure.

The conditions imposed by the planning and listed building consent have been met, and landscaping and building reports completed.

Our grateful thanks go to all the willing helpers who have attended working days. The site has been cleared of debris, and the frame cleaned up. The water supply has been located and we can now boil a kettle! (Cups of tea are very necessary)

Further Funds have been received from The Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, and money has been saved by the fortuitous storms in December – read on!

Heritage Open Days were successful way beyond our expectations. Over 300 visitors were shown the ground floor. We can't wait till the first floor is open.

Check the website at www.sigbox.co.uk

Builders

Groundworks Hertfordshire have been appointed to level the gardens, dig up the concrete, lay the paths, replace the fence, and open the road access. They will be starting on 19th February.

The building company will then start on the box following completion of these works, and with agreement from Network Rail on safety requirements. This should be within a few months.

AGM - 15th March 2007

The Annual General Meeting of the Trust will be held on 15th March at 7:30pm at the County Constitutional Club, Ridgmont Rd. St Albans.

The club is immediately opposite the signal box – there will be tea, coffee and a buffet provided. Please let us know if you are coming.

Subs for 2007 now due

A renewal form is included with this newsletter and your continued support is greatly appreciated.

If you wish to donate by standing order, please ask us for a form to complete.



We need some of these !

St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust is a Company limited by guarantee registered in England No. 04653488.
Regd. address - 5 Ridgmont Rd. St Albans, Herts, AL1 3AG
Regd. Charity no. 1104535

Act of God

Without spending a penny, the storms in December demolished the toilet free of charge!



Heritage Open Days 9th & 10th September



Peter welcoming visitors

Heritage open days on the weekend of 9th & 10th September were a huge success. Many thanks to everyone who came to help. We had 310 visitors and although entry was free we raised over £500 for the Trust's funds.

Les's operating model signal was the star performer, with the cardboard signal boxes doing well. Tea, coffee and cakes went down well, with water and soft drinks selling well on one of the hottest September weekends we have seen for many years.

Some excellent display panels were made to explain to the public what is happening on the site and tell them some of the history of the signal box.

The signalling simulator was operating in the signal box and we were able to

'Accept trains from Harpenden'. There was a lot of interest in how the trains were kept apart.

The video show was not so successful as it was a bit too bright and sunny to see the screen – but we know for next year!

Amongst the visitors were a few signalmen who had worked in the signal box during its heyday, and we are very pleased that they were able to tell us exactly how it worked, and what equipment was where.

"Fascinating piece of nostalgia. I look forward to seeing the next phase of its completion next year. Great to see such a familiar landmark being brought back to its former glory" – visitors book quote.



Signal box simulator

Work is under way on the computerised signalling simulator. Phil has produced a new full size track circuit diagram, and work is under way to devise a way of connecting microswitches to the lever frame. This work has also shown that we are deficient in signal box equipment such as repeaters – so if you see any for sale please let us know.

Website

The website is regularly updated with news, open day information, and items wanted. Please check it out.

www.sigbox.co.uk

Working days

The working days have been well attended over the last few months despite the poor weather.

Achievements are impressive with huge quantities of glass and rubbish having been removed from the first and ground floor, and the gardens cleared. The toilet was neatly stacked after the storms, and the first floor door repaired. The lever frame has been cleared of glass by crawling underneath! Fantastic!

The total number of hours spent is already well in excess of that needed to meet the conditions of our Lottery Grant.



Before and...



After the storm

From 'Signalboxes' by Michael A. Vanns - published 1997

"The story of preserving redundant signalboxes in situ on British Rail is an unsatisfactory one. Broadly speaking, regardless of whether a structure is listed or not, if it is not in revenue-earning service, and it cannot be adapted for alternative uses, it suffers neglect and invariably dereliction. St Albans South signalbox is the most embarrassing example of this. Closed as an

operational signalbox in 1979, and listed by English Heritage, it has remained in situ but unused, a target for graffiti artists and vandals. In this case, demolition ought to be considered acceptable, especially as so many former MR signalboxes still survive, and those on preserved railways like the Midland Railway Trust are accessible to the public." – **we don't agree!**