



Outside the Box

St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust www.tlr.ltd.uk/sigbox/home.eb email:info@sigbox.co.uk Tel: 01727-836131

A signal box is not just for Christmas!

On 3rd July many members and friends gathered at the box for the unveiling by Lord Faulkner of our Railway Heritage Award plaque. Chairman Tony Furse welcomed Lord Faulkner together with Andy Savage from the Heritage Railway Trust and representatives from the Heritage Railway Association and the Heritage Lottery Fund. Tony paid tribute to the work undertaken by members of the Trust and in particular he highlighted the considerable efforts of his predecessor Keith Webster in masterminding the restoration project of what has been described as a pigeon loft. In his speech Lord Faulkner praised the restoration of our 'wonderful signal box'. He also emphasised the importance of the railway heritage movement in the UK not only in providing employment, paid and voluntary, for many hundreds of people and allowing visitors to enjoy the fruits of their labours but also keeping alive an important part of our heritage for future generations. He highlighted the importance of signalling to the safe operation of railways and paid tribute to the highly responsible role undertaken by signallers past and present. He then formally unveiled the plaque as shown in the photographs. This event marked the end of 10 years of endeavour on the part of the Trust and its members during which much has been achieved. It is not, however, the end of our story as shown overleaf with some details of new acquisitions and planned developments.

Richard Kirk

Chairman's Words

'A bit of a do'

What a great day we all had on the 3rd of July! The sun blazed down, the garden and the signal box looked at their best and we were able to entertain the great and the good from the Heritage Rail industry. Lord Faulkner of Worcester, Chairman of the Heritage Railway Association, unveiled our plaque and made a very good speech, (available on our web site) praising the work put in by volunteers across the Heritage Railway world.

There were lots to eat and drink and lots of stories to be told. Richard and John worked hard at the publicity and managed to get us into both local papers, 3 Counties Radio, Radio Verulam, The Railway Magazine and even into The Times newspaper. I think the day was a great success and I would like to thank all the members and their wives who put so much effort into 'a bit of a do' at the signal box.

I attended the Heritage Railway Association reception at the House of Commons in July, (without our MP) and was able to meet representatives of many of the preserved railways across the country, including some of the directors of The National Railway Museum. They were keen to distribute some of their surplus signal equipment as they needed to create space and so Rob Crisp was able to have an interesting afternoon in their warehouse in York selecting artefacts to go on display and bits and pieces to restore our Midland Signal Post.

Heritage Open Weekend is coming in September, probably our busiest weekend of the year, so if you can help I look forward to meeting you, especially those unable to make the unveiling.

Tony Furse

Special Offer!

'Sussex Signalman: The Ted Cook Story': a limited edition of 500 copies only. A5 size, perfect bound, 102 gloss pages, 83 photographs, diagrams, maps including 24 colour images. The story charts Ted's career from 1965 when he joined the Southern Region of BR and is a first hand account of life in manual signal boxes. Members can obtain the book at a special price of £10.95 (plus £1.50 p&p) - a saving of £1. 10% from all orders will go to the Bluebell Railway Brighton Atlantic Group Fund. Please send orders to Sussex Signalman, 22 Glassenbury Drive, Bexhill-on-Sea, E Sussex TN40 2NY. Cheques payable to Buggleskelly Books.



Above: before and after the unveiling with Lord Faulkner and Tony Furse.



Lord Faulkner greets member Steve Lake who was one of the last signalmen to work in the box in 1979. Steve is still a signalmen working in the box at Llandudno and he travelled down from Manchester for the event.



Winners of the 2008
St Albans Civic
Society Award



Winners of the 2010
Invensys Rail Signalling
Award (Structures)

Newsletter produced by Richard Kirk. Please send items for inclusion to me at richardnkirk@hotmail.co.uk or contact me on 01727 860047

Heritage Open Weekend

Once again the box will be open for the Saturday and Sunday of the Heritage Open Weekend on 10th and 11th of September. To make sure that this is once again a success for the Trust, members are asked to volunteer to help over the weekend. We need sufficient members to be present to show visitors around, answer their questions and ensure that they have an enjoyable and safe time inside the box and in the garden. If you can help even for just a couple of hours on one of the days please contact Mary Webster on 01727 836151. Mary will be drawing up the rotas and will allocate you a role.



St Albans Motive Power Depot

As many members will know and some can recall, the engine shed was situated opposite the signal box on the up side of the line. The shed closed in 1960 when local services changed from steam to DMUs. We are planning to have an exhibition during Heritage Open Weekend of photographs of the shed, some of its locomotives and some of its staff. If any members have any relevant photographs or other memorabilia that they would be willing to lend to the Trust for the weekend please contact Richard Kirk (details overleaf).



Two recent additions to the artefacts on display: a Midland Railway milepost and a Midland trespassing notice from 1906.

Items from the Collection No.2, Block Instruments

The principle of the British Railways Absolute Block system states that only one train should be in any one block section at any one time. This only applies on double or multiple lines where each line is designated for use in a single direction. As each block section has a signal box at each end, it is necessary for the signalmen to follow a strict procedure to ensure that only the one train is admitted to the section at a time, in order to avoid collisions. This is achieved using

Block Instruments, a set of which would be installed in the signal box at each end of the double line piece of railway.

Illustrated is a standard BR block instrument of early 1960s vintage. At the top of the instrument are two electrically controlled needles, capable of pointing at Line Blocked (Line Closed or Normal on some instruments), Line Clear and Train on Line. Below the needles is a commutator handle that allows the signalman to choose the position of the lower of the two needles in this instrument (black case), and the upper needle (white case) at the box at the other end of the section. At the bottom is a bell and a bell tapper. The bell tapper rings the bell at the next box.

Designed by the London Midland Region, St Albans South had two of these instruments for the Fast and Slow lines to and from Harpenden, which along with everything else were removed on closure. We are lucky to have been able to replace these with similar instruments on the block shelf whilst a third is on display in the museum.

As with most things, the different railway companies had their own ideas on the design of block instruments although the basic principles were adhered to. Some older instruments do not have all of the equipment built into one unit, for example the Midland Railway units controlling the lines south of the St Albans have each needle and bell housed in separate casings on the block shelf. We also have examples of various other types in the collection and we will look at some of these in future editions.

Rob Crisp

Request for information

Trust member Howard Green has raised the following procedural query: 'In the late 1950s, prior to rationalisation, St Albans South did not have starting signals on the down lines and St Albans North did not have them on the up lines. On the down lines you passed St Albans South down home (also carrying St Albans North distant), St Albans North home and then the North starter. On the up lines you passed the North home (carrying the South distant), South home and then the South starter. If he remembers correctly, the 7.05pm Hendon to Derby class E express freight stopped at the South box on the down slow whilst the fireman went to the box, presumably to carry out 'Rule 55'. The Derby then went to the North home and left its train on the down slow whilst the engine and a few vans went forward to collect additional vans from the north sidings. Can anyone confirm this procedure?'

Comments on Earlier Item

Howard Green has also written in with comments on the archive photograph of the Schools Class locomotive at St Albans that was published in the last issue. Although he does not have any record of the 1960 arrival shown in the picture a visitor in 1958 was 30909 *St Paul's* with a train of schoolchildren from Shorncliffe, near Folkestone, visiting Verulamium and the Abbey. He presumes that a crew change was necessary at Clapham Junction with a pilot man taken on at Brent. On arrival at St Albans the engine could take water at the Platform 3 water column and then return to Brent to turn on the engine loop, Dudding Hill triangle, or on a turntable in Cricklewood motive power depot. The green Southern Region coaches had meanwhile been stabled behind Platform 4 (as it then was). The photograph showed 30939 *Leatherhead* retrieving the coaches before reversing them into Platform 4 for loading prior to departure. Howard recalls that there were occasional excursions to Luton for Whipsnade Zoo. In 1961 34055 *Fighter Pilot* was reported on a working with school children from Portsmouth. The 16(?) coach train proceeded to Bedford to be turned and serviced.

St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust is a company limited by guarantee registered in England No.4653488.

Regd. Address: 5 Ridgmont Road, St Albans, Herts., AL1 3AG Regd Charity No.1104535 Email: info@sigbox.co.uk Phone: 01727 836131