



# Outside the Box

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

## A 'totem' success!

Avid railwayana collector and member Richard Allen put on a magnificent show for us on the Heritage Open Days with a display of all the known totem station signs, bar one, from the stations between Bedford and St Pancras. The latter apparently never had these signs and the other missing one from the collection was Mill Hill Broadway, a veritable rarity that has not come up for sale at any of the railwayana auctions. Richard also produced a few other choice offerings that helped to add to the interest for visitors on our 6th HOD weekend. It is hard to believe that our first opening was as far back as September 2006. On that occasion we had over 300 visitors who came to admire the new garden and view the outside of the 'box. There was no access to the inside for visitors for another 2 years.

Richard Kirk



Left: the display of totems with the mystery missing name. Right: the display of 14C locomotive and shed scenes



## Chairman's Words



Members and visitors enjoying the Heritage Open Day.

Heritage Open Days this year were a lot less hectic than in other years with far less visitors as a result of the tourist office dropping us from their Monopoly game and sending potential visitors in the opposite direction. The advantage was of course we were able to spend more time with those that did come and we had time to admire the superb display of station totems and the exhibition showing St Albans engine shed all put together by members. Congratulations to everybody involved.

Prior to HOD we had a health and safety inspection from English Heritage to ensure that we complied with their rules and regulations. We received a very good report with just a few minor suggestions. A new first aid kit, which we have purchased, a warning board about uneven surfaces and moving machinery, which Les is having made up as this goes to print and a signing-in book. This register will be placed behind the inner door of the lock room and must be signed by everybody who attends a working or visitor day. For social events like Monday evenings it should be signed by whoever unlocks. By signing you agree to the Health and Safety and Fire plans for the 'box which are attached to the register and also available on our website.



The full moon on 12th September cast a ghostly glow over the 'box'

During November we should hear from the National Railway Museum what artefacts they are going to let us have for our displays. This will require us to put a team up to York for a couple of days to dismantle and collect the chosen items and then we will need volunteers to help restore and install them. If you think you could give us a little time in York or would be interested in restoration, watch out for a request on the website or in an e-mail.

I know it's rather early, but it is my last chance, so a Happy Christmas to you all.

Tony Furse

**With this newsletter we are sending you a number of Christmas cards to help you spread the word about St Albans South Signal Box for the festive season.**

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](mailto:richardnkirk@hotmail.co.uk) or contact me on 01727 860047



## Christmas Party !!

There will be a Christmas Party in the Signal Box on Friday 16th December from 7.00pm. Drinks and nibbles will be served so please do come along and bring the family. Please let Richard Kirk know if you are coming - contact details on page 1.

## January openings

The 'box will be opened for both days of the St Albans Model Railway Show (14th and 15th) and the St Albans Residents First Weekend (28th and 29th). Opening hours will be 10.00am to 4.00pm. If you are able to help with manning the 'box please sign up on the website or contact Richard Kirk.

## Enthusiast observations

1. On Sunday afternoons a cavalcade of five coupled light freight engines (Garratts, 9Fs and 8Fs) passed through St Albans City on the down slow en route from Cricklewood to their home depot of Wellingborough.

2. Many a still summer night was punctuated by the drivers of up mineral trains whistling a code to the Napsbury signalman if they wanted to go over the flyover at Silkstream Junction, referred to by Midland men as the Hendon Crossing. The code was added to the normal bell codes to 'boxes up the line.

(Ed: Oh to see and hear them now!)

Howard Green

## Items from the Collection No.3, Signal Repeaters

Visitors to the 'box will have noticed a number of glass dials on the block shelf showing a picture of a semaphore signal.

These are signal repeaters. These instruments were for the purpose of informing the signalman of the position of the signal arm in cases where the actual signal was either difficult or impossible to see from the 'box.

The repeaters were activated by switches on the signal itself which detected the physical position of the arm, rather than through the lever frame which would have the effect of reporting the position of the lever, which obviously the signalman could see for himself.

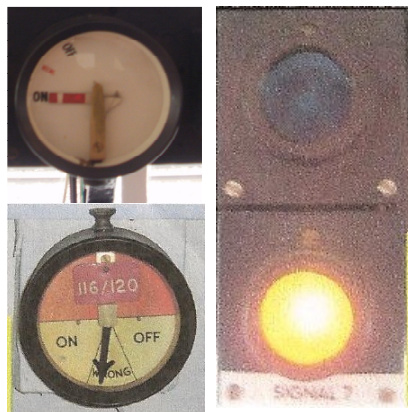
The semaphore type could have a pictorial representation of the signal arm or a simple arrow pointing to "On" or "Off" as appropriate (see illustrations far left). As the signalman pulled the lever, thus moving the arm, the repeater would, if all was well, move to the appropriate position, thus confirming correct actuation of the signal arm. In the event that the repeater did not move or moved only partially the signalman would suspect a failure and request the engineers to investigate.

The arm, or needle, was biased to the central or "Wrong" position which it would fall to in the event of a circuit failure, rather than either of the 2 positive indications. This would still require a call out to the engineers to fix it.

In addition to the semaphore repeaters, there are also a number of colour light signal repeaters (see near left picture). The colour light type consists of a couple of lamps showing red or green for stop or home signals, or yellow and green in the case of distant signals.

Rob Crisp

A view of the 'box taken in June 1984 four years after closure showing class 31 31411 in the parcels siding coupling up to a single van. Note the siding trap points and the Down side ground frame that was featured in Issues 21 and 22.



Signal repeaters

## Progress at the 'box

To keep you up-to-date, this is the first of an occasional article on working party progress at the 'box.

In recent weeks the triple ground signal has been moved so it can eventually be worked from the 5 lever ground frame. The Midland ground signal has been positioned at the edge of the lawn along with the 2 lever ground frame that will eventually work it. The other lever on this frame will be used to work the semaphore signal, after it too has been moved. The 4-aspect sequence lights have been painted and now look a treat.

We have made some mock level crossing gate supports to take the metal caps we already had. These have been positioned either side of the path, and a mini gate will be added in due course, complete with round red discs. Earlier in the year the 'box had a full wash down and some cracked paint will be touched up before the Winter. Next year we will start to re-paint the outside of the 'box completely.

It goes without saying that during the year the garden has needed regular maintenance, as it always will, and work on the moat surrounding the 'box continues to progress.

Inside work on the 4-track simulator continues, as does the referencing and the description labelling of the artefacts downstairs. Work has also begun on draft proofing the downstairs room.

We are hoping to be granted some artefacts from the National Railway Museum and also from the old Luton-Dunstable railway line that is now being turned into a guided bus way.

So the work is never going to run out and any additional help would be most welcome! We meet on Wednesdays at 2pm. and on the second Sunday of each month at 10am. The kettle is always on and more often than not there are some biscuits! Also, don't forget there is an informal Members' night every Monday evening at 7.30pm.

John Telford

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

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The edge of the lawn showing the new position for the L&NW ground frame and the MR ground signal behind. The second MR lamp, the triple ground signal and the semaphore complete the artefacts mentioned in John's article.