

OUTSIDE THE BOX



Newsletter May 2014 Issue 36

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A close shave or all mod-cons available!

Starting on a light note, the picture on the left shows how versatile our facilities can be and how accommodating the Trust can be. Whilst members were recently waiting for a visiting party to arrive, a team of track workers was in the car park being trained on new face safety masks. Unfortunately one of their number was too unshaven to wear the item and some drastic action was necessary. Fortunately one of his colleagues had an electric shaver but no power; that was where we came in allowing him to use our electrical connection under the tea shelter. A quick wiz round with the razor and we had another satisfied visitor.!

On a more serious matter it is pleasing to report that the Trust has recently been invited to join the Railway Signalling Collections Group. The Group has been brought together by Russell Hollowood, Assistant Curator at the National Railway Museum at York. Russell is keen to establish a register of all the mechanical and power signalling equipment that is still in existence on the network before it is all replaced under the current plan to have only 12 Signalling Control Centres for the whole country and close all other installations. He sees this as signalling's version of the 'end of steam' on BR in the 1960s. He wants to ensure that representative items covering as much of the history and development of signalling as possible are saved and his plan is to include where possible the heritage railways, museums such as ours and private collections within an overall data base. The first meeting took place at York earlier this month with members from such organisations at Network Rail, the Heritage Railway Association and the Signalling Record Society. Yours truly represented the Trust. Follow up actions and meeting are planned and I will try to keep members informed.

Richard Kirk

Chairman's Words

As we move into the summer we start to see more of groups wanting to visit the signal box. Of great interest later in the summer will be the visit of the Bentley Owners Club which should provide great photographs given a warm sunny evening. In the middle of June we have a visit from our friends from Romsey Signal Box who gave us such a warm welcome when we visited their great little box a few years ago. I remember being very envious of the space they had which enabled them to lay out a working set of points, we can only dream.

Work on the upgrade of the Midland Main Line continues with some very interesting machinery being left outside the box during the day and the odd relay train trundling past on Monday evenings. We haven't reached 125mph yet but already some of our commuter trains (319 EMUs) are on their way to Manchester to be replaced in the short term with yet another class of train (387s).

It has been sometime now since we received our loan items from The Roy Burrows Collection and Derby Museum and yet as John will tell you we have only just got round to putting the last of these on display. However, that doesn't create a lull in our restoration work for we have just received from Elstree Museum three very fine gifts. A Midland Boundary post, a BR(M) notice about parking your bike and one of the Elstree Tunnel boards, we think given the distance shown, 1056 yards, from the slow lines and therefore probably from about the same period as the box.

Having seen some of the BBC Museums at Night program we are thinking about opening the box on a night towards the end of the school holidays when we can light the oil lamps and pump up the Tilly lamps, watch this space for further information.

I hope you will all be able to come to the summer BBQ and be marking in your diaries the Heritage Open Weekend dates (September 13th and 14th).

Tony Furse



The array of signals and levers in the garden ready for visitors to operate.



The stone sign has been refurbished for the summer.



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 richardnkirk@hotmail.co.uk or contact me on 01727 860047



The view from the new lower quadrant signal lamp platform gives a heightened perspective of the 'box.



Another new sign in the garden courtesy of the Roy Burrows collection.

BBQ—Saturday 2nd August

from 2.00pm onwards. Food will be provided but please bring your own drinks. A donation will be sought on the day to cover the cost of the food. Friends and family are invited but please let us know via email or phone (to Richard Kirk) how many are coming so we know how many to cater for. See you there!

What's in a name?

In Issue 20 of *Outside the Box* your editor wrote about the name changes over the years to our neighbouring station. The more observant of you will have noticed that recently it has reverted to St Albans City with new signs all round. The Trust can claim some credit for this having pointed out to a recent visitor from First Capital Connect that we deliberately set-up the old running-in board on the sleeper wall to remind passengers that they were entering or leaving the CITY station. Our visitor commented that, of course, it was still known thus, only to have it pointed out that all the station signs were *sans City!* This prompted a response along the lines of 'I'll see to that' and, hey presto, a few weeks later new signs. Let's hope that the new franchisee does not change them back again!

Dates for your Diary

Forthcoming Open Days:

June 8th and 22nd

July 13th and 27th

August 10th and 24th

Heritage Open Weekend:

September 13th and 14th

Sandridge 900 Midsummer Gala, Jersey Farm:

Saturday 21st June

(the Signal box display stand will be present)

If you can help on any of these occasions please contact Tony Furse or any of the other Trustees.

Subscription renewals

Thank you to all those members who have renewed their subs for this year. If you haven't yet done so please let me have your £10 payment as soon as possible. Your support is important to the Trust and your subscriptions plus the accompanying Gift Aid help to maintain the momentum of developments at the 'box

Mary Webster



Another one of Peter Hunt's shots taken in the 1970s from a passing DMU shows the 'box gleaming in the morning sun in its final colour and with the toilet block looking a bit more solid than when the Trust took over in the early 2000s.

Progress at the 'box

Summer is approaching fast and the continuing rain means everything is growing fast – hence my usual reference to the garden and the amount of work that has been done to keep it looking good. Fortunately, our gardening folk are up to the job, supplemented at times by others who don't normally get their fingers green! We now have two green and one black wheelie bin and are into the routine of putting them out each week for the dustcart. This avoids the need to dump green stuff on the site and carting rubbish home to put in our own wheelies!

We have been presented with a wooden garden table and set of four chairs and these are now in use and will provide extra seating for visitors.

John Webb has completed replacing our north end signal/ground signal lights with LED bulbs, making them much brighter – even during daylight hours. Having originally thought we would light the new lower quadrant signal on the lawn with a paraffin lamp, we have now opted for LED. The cable work, in conduit, has been buried under the lawn and run along the top of the sleeper wall to the power feed. The lighting up will be completed in due course. John has also made up and painted two bases which our exhibition displays can stand on.

Slabbing is finally finished, with the area under our new tea/coffee structure now paved. This proved harder than expected as we had to first remove what appeared to be an old, sloping concrete path to the road outside. This whole project will be complete when the painting of the underneath of the shelter is finished. Loose slabs around the 'box have been re-laid and the final bit of paving completed at the rear of the area between the 'box and the lamp hut.

Our 'No bathing in the Reservoir' sign is now resplendently displayed between the lawn and the rear hedge. This took a lot of work as two protrusions on the rear of the sign had to be drilled and tapped in order to create a fixing point to the metal post.

Work on the new wiring for the upstairs simulator continues and is hopefully nearing completion. Our phones are now operational and tea/coffee orders can be pre-ordered by volunteers!

A treat during our working party on 14th May was seeing Tornado (60163) pass the 'box on the down slow. If you'd been helping out that day you'd have seen it too!!!

Stop Press: the three items have recently been donated by Elstree Museum and are already being repaired and restored and should be added to our displays in a short while.

John Telford

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

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It's the end of another Open Day and John and Howard begin the process of clearing up ready for home!