

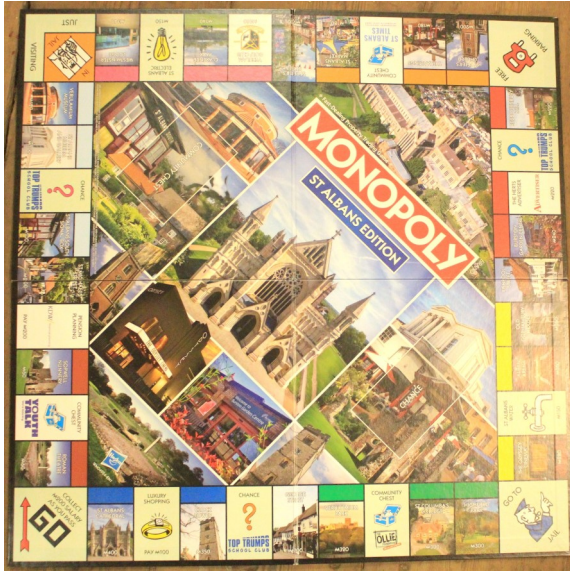
132 Years old

1892 to 2024



Newsletter November 2024 Issue 78

We're on the Board (Monopoly that is)!



After many months of waiting the make-up of the new St Albans edition of Monopoly was finally unveiled last month and, yes, the Signal Box has been included, not only as one of the squares but also within the central panel. The picture on the left shows the whole board whilst 'our square' is shown in close-up below. The game can be purchased

from the likes of W H Smith and Waterstones.

Richard Kirk



Chairman's Words

St. Albans South Signal Box is not immune from global warming, and Autumn has seen much heavy rainfall. This has limited gardening when the pre-Winter clear down should be progressing. Unsettled weather saw lower numbers for Heritage Open Weekend, albeit it went well, and only 31 visitors for the subsequent Open Day, although other events in the City also coincided. Generally however, visitor numbers have returned to pre-Covid levels. In spite of the weather Tony, Adrian and others, were able to complete the linking of the re-positioned Southern Ground Signal to Lever 28 upstairs, so we can now operate two items from the Box.

A recent Trustees' Meeting saw us reluctantly putting our pursuit of a Visitor Centre on the back burner. This was partly due to our inability to secure more land, ie. five hitherto unused parking spaces outside, now that Govia's change from Premier Parking to day parking is securing income for them. It was also as the result of recognising that the health of a number of current Trustees questioned undertaking such a large and lengthy project at this time. Consequently our immediate activity is at the very least to provide toilet facilities for the public that link to the mains, rather than into a cesspit!

This again recognises the need to secure more volunteers and potential Trustees for the future, and my request is that we all consider suitable folk that we might know who could be approached. We are not alone amongst voluntary organisations in seeking to supplement personnel, with a subsequent generation who often seem less keen on voluntary service.

In addition to our normal private visits, which have recently included two Mandeville School classes, it was a pleasure to welcome colleagues from Romsey Signal Box, and a return visit there would be good. A visit to our 'twin' SoNo Switch Tower in Connecticut, USA, would be the icing on the cake! The photographic display mentioned in the last edition was duly unveiled at the Box along with a set of mosaic panels crafted by pupils of Fleetville School. These were subsequently displayed at the Cathedral. A report will be in the February issue.

John Telford



Winners of the 2008
St Albans Civic
Society Award

Winners of the 2010
Invensys Rail Signalling
Award (Structures)

Winners of the 2017 Mayor
of St Alban's Recognition
Award

Radlett Rail Freight Interchange

What (we think) we know so far

The Midland Mainline between St Pancras and Harpenden is due to be closed for an extended period over the Christmas break. The line will be out of action between 21st and 27th December. During this time various engineering work will take place including the replacement of the first overbridge outside St Pancras that carries Agar Grove and its junction with other roads.

Of more interest to us is the planned installation south of Napsbury of the underbridge that will be used for the rail access to the new rail freight terminal currently being built. Travelling past on the train the scale of the work being undertaken on both sides of the line is now clearly visible. On the east (up) side preparation for the rail link is well underway with much of the activity at the northern end where the bridge will be inserted. A recent artist's view of the proposed structure appeared in the Herts Advertiser.

The plan for the Interchange was initially outlined back in the early years of this century. Subsequent local planning refusals, enquiries, permission granted, land purchases and legal challenges have been well documented. The present position is that the 3.6m sq ft development is going ahead on the 1,035 acre site that was part of the old Radlett Aerodrome close to the Handley Page aircraft factory. The Branch Line Society published a recent report:

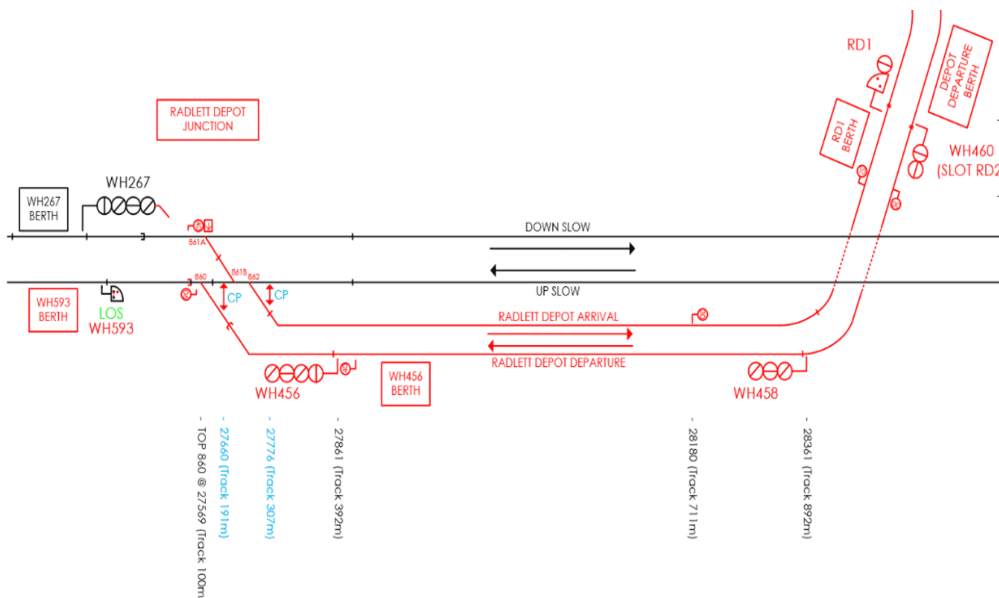
'The Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) will be accessed by a new double junction, Radlett Depot Jn, on the Slow Lines of the Midland Main Line (MML) at 17m 10ch - just north of the M25 underbridge. A new Radlett Depot Arrival Line, a Radlett Depot Departure Line and an underbridge at about 17¾ miles will take the Depot Lines under the MML to the new SRFI. The four tracks at the underbridge will be renewed over about 100m as a result of its construction. Radlett Depot Jn will have a new crossover on the Up and Down Slow lines and two new turnouts on the Up Slow, at about 17m 10ch between Radlett station and St Albans City station. From the MML towards the SRFI, the new branch descends on a right hand curve, moving away from the MML Up side. This curve transitions to a straight alignment for approximately 350m before changing to a left-hand curve then straightens for the MML underbridge. The MML running line speeds will remain as now (80mph on the Slow Lines and 100/110mph on the Fast), following completion of the works. Radlett Depot Jn turnout routes to/from the Depot Lines will have a 40mph restriction. Radlett Depot Departure Line will be 30mph restricted. The Arrival line will be 40mph from Radlett Depot Jn, which decreases to 30mph approaching the curve. On the Down side, Radlett SRFI covers over 1,035 acres with eight parcels of land (Areas 1-8) in the St Albans District. It is a private development by Segro (Radlett) Ltd. The scheme has completed Approval in Principle Stage. The SRFI will be privately owned infrastructure that exists solely for use by the infrastructure owner for its own freight operations.'

A further report set out the planned construction timetable:

*'Overhead Line Electrification (OHLE) preparatory works during week commencing 19 Oct 2024.
A nine day Christmas 2024 blockade for the railway underbridge construction.
Radlett Depot Jn earthworks and OHLE Works 1-21 Mar 2025.
Radlett Depot Jn S&C Installation during weeks commencing 5 & 12 Apr and 10 May 2025.
Radlett Depot Jn commissioning Quarter 3 of 2026.'*

Presumably the commissioning date is when the Terminal buildings and infrastructure are ready for use. It was recently announced that VolkerFitzpatrick have been appointed the main contractor for the rail link. Their full report can be seen at: <https://www.volkerfitzpatrick.co.uk/en/news/volkerfitzpatrick-start-construction-first-phase-radlett-strategic-rail-freight-interchange>

Many questions still remain with regard to the use of the rail element of the Interchange. Not least the ability to bring container trains from terminals such as Felixstowe and London Gateway through the various tunnels to the south. (Elstree, Belsize and Tottenham North Curve. The latter two could be avoided with trains routed through West London via Acton and Dudding Hill Junction.) As can be seen from the diagram on the next page, the rail link is designed for trains to enter the Interchange from the south only. There is no facility for traffic to flow from the north.



GI of bridge under Midland Main Line in Radlett Picture: SEGRO

The London and North Western Railway Yard Signal – Part Two

On receiving the letter from Philip Millard's solicitor we agreed to meet a friend of the family in Woking to see if it was going to be possible to remove the signal easily from its location. Phillip's garden was littered with railway signs and the signal was at the rear next to his large garage. The road outside was quite narrow and so was the gateway into the property which was a potential problem as we obviously were going to need a lorry with a HIAB crane attached.

On our return from Woking we contacted Day Brothers Haulage and Transport a local company who suggested the size of lorry we needed given the limited space available and a day was set to try to achieve the recovery. The lorry looked huge when it arrived on site and we were doubtful if it would fit through the gateway but removal of the gates and a highly skilful driver squeezed the lorry through the entrance with millimetres to spare and in to the rear of the house. The signal was concreted into the ground and so the decision had been taken to cut it off at ground level rather than try to dig it out. At 5.5 meters high it was quite tall enough! In no time at all the strops were attached, the base was cut and the signal complete with ladder was on the back of the lorry and on its way to St Albans. Unfortunately the unload at the signal box was difficult as we needed to get the signal onto the concrete apron and during the operation the signal slipped and bent one of the arms.

Having it on blocks at last we were able to have our first good look at what we had been given. There were 2 or 3 areas of rot around the ladder stays and behind the counter weight pivot but nothing that could not be fixed. The iron work was difficult to get off as it probably had not moved for 50 years but with rather a lot of effort and occasional bad language it was removed ready for cleaning and painting. Some of the metal parts went off to members homes where they were painted, repaired and returned ready to be mounted. With everything stripped, we set to filling the holes and painting the post with at least 5 coats of paint, As it came back together we had to consider how we would erect this very tall post, It obviously needed to sit in a collar as we had done with our other existing home signals and so dimensions were taken and a design was submitted to a steel fabricators in London Colney. The collar was mounted on a 800mm square of 10mm steel and was 400mm high making it very heavy and difficult to move once it had been delivered. We succeeded in a trial fitting to the end of the post and took the opportunity to put on multiple layers of paint and drill holes in the base and sides. A large hole a meter square was dug in the flower bed next to the garden railway, a frame made to fit the bolt holes and concrete was delivered and wheel-barrowed into the hole. At this point it was decided not to fit the ladder at the rear of the post until it was erected as the ladder did not reach the ground and projected from the back almost a meter making it very unwieldy. This turned out to be a mistake. Once again our friends at Day Brothers turned up with the HIAB and lifted the signal into its collar. My goodness it did look tall! In fact we realised we would need scaffolding to attach the arms and down rods. After quotes varying in price from £400 to £1600, Arron Scaffolding erected a tower on which we were able to safely complete the fitting of the arms and down rods. The top of the tower gave us great views of the box and Cathedral. Once the tower had come down we now tried to fit the ladder. Alas it takes 4 people to lift and the top mounting was just below the cap, We could not find a way to hold it in place as the bottom of the ladder had to be 1 meter above the ground. The solution we think may be a cherry picker at another time.

This was probably the hardest task we had set ourselves since restoring the box in the 2007 and it was only the moon crew that it all worked so smoothly.

Tony Furse



Above: the HIAB is in place in Woking and the post is being cut off at ground level. Centre top: work starts on dismantling the metal work. Centre bottom: work completed, the post is wheeled into position ready for lifting.

Above: the HIAB returns to St Albans to lift the post into its collar.



Left: the post is in place, the scaffolding erected and the assembly of the signal arms and mechanism can be completed. Above: the view of the Box from the scaffold tower. And finally on the right: our benefactor of the signal and funds, the late Philip Anthony Millard.

CHRISTMAS SOCIAL

We plan to hold the Christmas Social evening at the Signal Box on Friday 6th December from 7.30pm. All members and partners are welcome. In view of the limited space on the operating floor we may have to restrict the number of attendees. Therefore, if you would like to join in the festivities please let Richard know as soon as possible and in any case by 30 November.

Email him on: richardnkirk@hotmail.co.uk

Or phone on: 07855282664

Welcome

Welcome to the following who has joined the Trust since the last newsletter:

Howard McLean of Castle Douglas, Kirkcudbrightshire (Howard is the Midland Railway Society Newsletter Editor)

We hope that he will enjoy his membership and will visit the Box if he is ever in the area.

Progress at the Box

The Southern WWII ground signal has now been connected to lever 28, giving us a second signal operated from a lever in the box. Lever 28 actually worked a ground signal controlling the exit from the former siding immediately in front of the box during the signal box's working life. Lever 27 (siding exit points) also has to be reversed before 28 can be 'pulled'.

An electrical supply box has been installed at the north end of the grounds meaning that we will no longer need to connect three extension leads together when we need power at that end of the garden.

Another signal failure!! - During one of our recent school visits, we suffered another 'signal failure' of the NER 'slotted' signal. This time inspection of the signal mechanism revealed that the pin linking the lever frame to the signal rodding had fallen out. Once again a fix was made and the signal was restored to working order by the next open day.

Work has continued in the garden to cut back this year's extensive growth of foliage - it really does seem to be growing quicker that we can manage to cut it back (Forth Rail Bridge and painting spring to mind!!!)

As always, many thanks to all our volunteers for all their hard work, without who we would not have such a fantastic museum. If anyone would like to help, please come along on Wednesday's from 11am.

Adrian Wootton