

133 Years old

1892 to 2025

OUTSIDE

THE BOX



Newsletter February 2025 Issue 79



LES O'LEARY

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Les O'Leary on 9th January 2025.

He was one of the original Ridgmont Road residents who helped set up the group in 2002 and later became one of the first Trustees and volunteered much time and energy in the garden and with the website, which his Company hosted. He continued to have ideas for the improvement of the signal box and its presentation to the public until the end. We will miss his enthusiasm and suggestions and remember his working in the garden especially in the early days when the 'edible hedge' was planted. Trustee meetings won't be the same without his input.

Thanks Les, Rest in Peace.

Keith Webster, President and Trustee

Chairman's Words

It is sad to commence this issue by recording the recent loss of Les, a founding Trustee and stalwart of the 'Box until fairly recently, despite growing ill-health. His contributions, physical in the earlier days and mainly in connection with our website in later years, will be sorely missed. Trustees and Members, I'm sure, offer our condolences to the family.

Apart from several cold spells and the inevitable rain, the Winter has been relatively frost-free so far! It was good to see a number of Members at the Christmas Social, and I trust those who made it enjoyed the festivities (thanks to Tony and Trish for the food) and catching up.

We were sorry to learn that Rob Little has had some health issues and trust his treatment will be successful. Along with several others, this again reminds us of the need to encourage additional volunteers into our ranks, and we welcome the contributions of our new, younger Members.

The Winter clear-down is just about complete. This is always a bind, but if you want the Spring and Summer displays you have to accept that, at least until Autumn comes round again! Elsewhere in the Newsletter you will find reports on our trip to the now sadly closed Winchcombe Railway Museum and Gardens, near Cheltenham. This was to secure various donated and purchased items, and a further visit shortly with a hired truck will see them brought to the 'Box. Restoring and erecting them is another story!

You will probably by now be aware of Railway 200, celebrating the start of the Stockton-Darlington Railway on 27th September, 1825, the first ever public railway using locomotives rather than horses. We plan a number of initiatives to play our part, mainly focussed on Heritage Open Weekend (13/14th September), and assuming we can have them ready in time.

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

2025 Subscriptions are now due

Thank you for your support over the last year. It is now time to renew your membership for the year to 31 January 2026. The cost is just a minimum of £10, so we do hope you will continue to support the work of the Trust and our volunteers.

You will have received a renewal notice by email, or by post with this newsletter. As a reminder, you may pay by bank transfer to the Signal Box account at Metro Bank - sort code 23-05-80, account number 17746944, with your name as reference. Alternatively, you may pay by cheque payable to St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust, and send directly to me at 20 Flavian Close, St Albans, AL3 4JX.

Several members have already renewed, including some by standing order, so, thank you and you have nothing more to do.

Once again a small number of members have not renewed for the last year or two, and we really would encourage you to consider continuing your support of the Signal Box. If you decide not to continue your membership this may be your last newsletter.

Rob Little

Annual General Meeting

The Trust's AGM will take place on Monday 3rd March at St Paul's Church, Blandford Road, St Albans, AL1 4JP at 7.30pm (room available from 7.00pm). All members are invited. Formal notification of the meeting and the proposed agenda accompany this newsletter. It is not known at this stage if there will be a guest speaker.

John Webb

Vacancy – Publicity Officer

Our current Officer John Webb is stepping down from this role and the Trust is looking for a successor. John has outlined the role thus:

Ensure display of open dates at Box and on website. Also, where appropriate, websites, town centre poster displays, etc. Keep website Newspages updated. Respond to requests for external talks.

Respond to requests to attend exhibitions, arrange for volunteers to 'man' the display or stand and to set up and take down as needed, returning exhibits, etc to the Box. In conjunction with the Trustees, update publicity material as required. Supply information to press, local and national. Co-operate with Webmaster and others as required. The Officer does not have to be a Trustee.

If any members would like to help with this role please contact the Editor who will put you in touch with John Webb for further guidance or speak to John direct.

Progress at the Box

Despite the recent cold weather, our team of volunteers has still managed to get a lot of work done around the grounds. The annual tidy up of the embankment is almost complete, with last year's growth of brambles and Buddleia (which was obscuring the view of the Box) having been cut back. Similarly, hedges around the garden have been trimmed and weeds (lots of them) removed.

Work has started on a major extension to the garden railway, with track foundations laid to a 'footpath' crossing near to the Midland ground frame. Here, our own version of "Box Tunnel" will be installed before the railway heads off on a return loop round the telegraph pole at the north end of the site. This area will require some major engineering works as one side of the loop will be very much higher than the ground level. Watch this space for updates as the work progresses. Hopefully the project will not be subject to HS2-like descoping or cost over runs!!!!

Finally, in November we visited the Winchcombe Railway Museum which has sadly closed. Mike Marr a former Trust member and volunteer at the Museum has kindly donated to us a Great Northern Railway (Ireland) lower quadrant signal, which will need minor restoration work. Whilst there we also took the opportunity to purchase several other interesting railway items, including mainline and ground signals. A working party to collect our new items will be dispatched in late February. Again, watch this space for updates.

As always, many thanks to all our volunteers for all their hard work. If anyone would like to help, please come along on Wednesday's from 11am.

Adrian Wootton