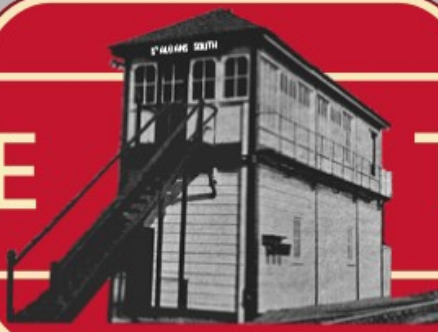


133 Years old

1892 to 2025

OUTSIDE



THE BOX

Newsletter May 2025 Issue 80

## HS2 or GR3 - which will be first?



Work is progressing on the third addition to the garden railway (GR3) and as can be seen above Tony and Adrian are hard at work digging, mixing concrete and laying the foundation blocks for the ambitious extension of the outer track around the north end of the garden. In due course the plan is to have two trains running on this circuit with at least one being radio controlled so that collisions can be avoided! This is one part of our contribution to the Rail 200 celebrations.

**Richard Kirk**

## Chairman's Words

It's hard to believe we're now 25 years into the new Millennium, with currently global politics/business being turned on its head; our railways being 're-nationalised'; war in Europe and the middle-east; new Popes and Archbishops; and 23 years since residents of Ridgmont Road decided to restore the eyesore at the end of their road!

Meanwhile, a bunch of stoic volunteers press on keeping St. Albans South open to the public, and continuing to add to the offering. Our Permanent Way Team of Tony and Adrian and others have nearly completed the model railway extension, now with a tunnel under the footpath to the upper level. Spring flowers are appearing with more planted by David S, and better weather means we have started jobs like re-painting artefacts and restoring new acquisitions. Following our haul of items from Winchcombe, mentioned last time, Adrian has now brought a number of items bequested to the Box from Stone in Staffordshire, and several other items have been donated locally.

In addition to the model railway extension, our other Railway 200 special projects are also progressing. Steph has completed the video of Members' steam reminiscences; Richard K is revamping the 2009 Box Handbook – the copy having been updated and photos now being added. A photographic history of the Midland and St. Albans City Station will hopefully be completed; and a new signal might even be up! We are looking at re-lining our leaky cess pit, having concluded that linking up to the mains would probably be too expensive. A Group visit to a heritage railway is proving difficult to organise, but we keep trying!

We still await East Midlands Railway new 810 bi-modal 'Auroras'. Recent possessions to upgrade the voltage continue, and there have been a few test trains by the Box, but no driver training yet. Good, therefore, to hear that LNER might be re-routing some of its Azuma trains into St. Pancras due to Network Rail's planned extensive engineering work on the East Coast Main Line. Volunteering at the Box will enable you to see these new trains coming by!

**John Telford**

Have a great Summer!



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 a final reminder

Thank you for your support over the last year. If you haven't yet renewed your membership for the year to 31 January 2026 now is the time to do it. 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.

As a reminder, you may pay your subs by bank transfer to the Signal Box account with 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.

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

25 Trustees and members attended the AGM at St Paul's Church Hall on 3<sup>rd</sup> March with some joining via Zoom. The usual reports from our Chairman and other Trustees were presented and Richard Kirk and John Webb were re-elected as Trustees. John Telford summarised the previous year's events and achievements and Rob Little confirmed that despite a deficit for the year the Trust's finances are in good shape. All reports were duly accepted.

After refreshments, Steph South showed extracts from her video production Railways of Hertfordshire.

---

## Progress at the Box

In late February a team of volunteers and a 7.5 tonne lorry re-visited the Winchcombe Railway Museum to collect a number of items for our collection including: a Great Northern Railway (Ireland) lower quadrant signal, a LMS double arm signal, a Cheshire Lines committee ground frame, a Midland fog repeater signal and a black and yellow disc ground frame. Thanks to our volunteers for making this a successful, albeit very tiring, day.

Restoration has already begun on the Great Northern Railway (Ireland) lower quadrant signal post and metal work. The signal post having been rubbed down and undercoat applied. Painting has also started on the LMS signal post. Further updates will follow.

The extension to the garden railway has progressed well. The garden path has been raised and a tunnel installed beneath. The track bed is complete and a new viaduct, which sweeps around the telegraph pole at the north end of the garden, has been erected. The track has also been positioned and the first test train made the journey through the tunnel, across the viaduct and back without any disasters (see our Facebook page for the video!!). The track now needs to be pinned in place and connection to the current garden railway made before we can hold a grand opening.

Elsewhere, the light to our 1942 Southern ground signal has been connected and the lighting in the museum display cabinets has been replaced with LED's which make the displays brighter. The opportunity was taken to re-position and tidy up the displays at the same time.

We have also collected several items which were bequeathed to us by the late David Foster-McCann, including two London Brighton and South Coast Railway (LBSCR) Tyers gongs, a single wire signal box instrument, and several LBSCR finials. The two gongs have been overhauled and connected to our Tyers tablet machines in the museum and make an interesting contrast to our 'bells'.

As always work in the garden continues, the hedges having been cut back, bushes trimmed, grass cut and weeds removed. Many thanks to those who help with this.

**Adrian Wootton**

## Destination Dash

Destination Dash – the ultimate race across the railway is an initiative to promote rail travel and destinations accessible by rail.

This year Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern went head-to-head in an epic battle over two days. Promoting the race via Instagram and TikTok, the three teams took part in six challenges across the networks to win “the winning ticket” using their skills to test their creativity, athleticism and quick thinking.

Guided this year by Matt Streeton (aka the voice of Thameslink and Southern – “See it, Say it, Sorted”), the three teams took part in a football contest at Stevenage Football Academy, racing to Hastings via train, creating a train pottery model at Eastbourne gallery, a cook-off competition, culminating in a signalling challenge at St Albans Signal Box.

After a brief demonstration by John Webb and James Eagles, the three teams took it in turns to signal a train from Harpenden to Napsbury, while the other two teams were given a guided tour. Teams were deducted points for any signalling errors made (as noted by the eagle-eyes of John and James) and the winner – Great Northern - was announced by John Webb at the end of the day. No trains were harmed or delayed during this challenge!



The overall victors from all six challenges were Team Great Northern, who were awarded their prize at the Odyssey Cinema in St Albans.

## Welcome

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

Toby Amiel of Radlett

Mark Griffiths of Greenford

We hope that they enjoy their membership and will visit the Box as often as possible.

## Summer BBQ

This year's summer barbecue for members and family will be held on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> August from 2pm with food served from 2.30pm. This year we have engaged an outside caterer as we mark the Railway 200 celebrations. This is a one-off event but inevitably means that our costs are higher and we are requesting members to pay £20 per head to cover. Payment can be made by cash or card on the day. As usual please bring your own drinks. Please let Richard know (contact details at the bottom of page 2) if you are going to attend.

## The Winchcombe acquisitions



Clockwise from top left: The GNR(I) signal in position in the museum at Winchcombe in restored condition a few years ago; the fog signal repeater, LNER ground signal and the Cheshire Lines Committee ground signal; the post for the LMS double arm signal (this is not the original but is a new post purchased by Tim Petchey); Tim and Tony discussing which bits relate to the LMS signal; the spectacle plate from the GNR(I) with the company's initials showing through. And below is the lorry after delivery of all the bits and pieces back to the Box.



### And finally....

apologies from the Editor for the late running of this edition of Outside the Box. As you can see he has been on his travels and couldn't get back very quickly on his chosen mode of transport!

(The mock-up locomotive is located in a park in the Vietnam city of De Lat and is going nowhere fast!)

