

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Newsletter November 2016 Issue 46



Above: Engine Driver Wright shows off his skills during the recent Signal Box trip to the North London Society of Model Engineers miniature railway at Colney Heath.

Below: The new telegraph poles erected in the garden and now almost fully wired up.



A long way in a short time

In his piece below Tony refers to this year's Heritage Open Weekend. In preparing this issue of *Outside The Box* I have been looking back at earlier issues and in particular those from 10 years ago. In issue No 8 from July 2006 there was notice that 'we have decided to open the signal box and gardens to the public in a 'work in progress' state. This will give us a chance to explain to the public what is happening on the site..' This was the Trust's first public Heritage Weekend opening and although there was no access to the operating floor of the 'box the event attracted over 300 visitors. It is sometimes easy to forget how far we have come in the subsequent decade both in terms of the restoration and development of our heritage asset and our establishment as an important local and national asset.

Richard Kirk

Chairman's Words

During the second weekend in September lots of organisations like us open their premises to the public free of charge as part of Heritage Weekend and although we don't charge our visitors we still join in and try to put on a bit of a show to make use of the free national publicity and this year was no exception. Jim and his son Peter provided free steam engine and miniature traction engine rides up and down Ridgmont Road and into the station car park to the delight of many passing children and adults who perhaps may not have visited the box without seeing this spectacle. In the garden Richard had produced a superb display of photographs of St Pancras Station through the ages which shared the tent with an 00 gauge railway given to us by a local resident. With the sound of steam engines shunting from our speakers, smoke billowing out from behind the tent and our Midland Pullman air horns blasting their twin tones a great atmosphere greeted our visitors. In spite of a very wet Saturday we had nearly 200 visitors while on Sunday in the sunshine an additional 350 came through the doors including the Mayor of St Albans, Councillor Frances Leonard and her husband. The Mayor admitted this was not her first visit as she had been with her grand children on several occasions and would be returning with them again. My grateful thanks go to all who worked so hard to make this a great weekend, we made a lot of friends and a lot of people will return.

As you may be aware the last Budget allocated £5,000,000 to Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) for improvements to St Albans Station particularly the west side where the signal box is located. We have been in friendly discussions with GTR to see if any extra land could be made available to the box to allow for a visitor centre to be built. As yet no plans have been revealed but I will let you know as matters progress what has been decided.

Tony Furse



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

Christmas Party !!

There will be a Christmas Party in the Signal Box on Saturday 3rd December from 7.00pm. Drinks and nibbles will be served, please do come along and bring the family. Please let Richard Kirk know if you are coming - contact details overleaf.

Steam past the box

The Railway Touring Company are once again running their pre-Christmas trip from Victoria to York via St Albans. This year it takes place on Saturday 17th December calling at St Albans at approximately 8.00am. At the time of writing the train is booked to be hauled northbound by 46233 Duchess of Sutherland (the return is diesel hauled). For up dates please check their website.



An archive picture from Howard Green's collection shows Royal Scot 4-6-0 46115 'Scots Guardsman' passing St Albans North 'box' with a St Pancras bound express in the early 1960s. On the right a diesel shunter is working away from the goods yard.



The two new platform indicators mentioned below. On the left is the 'OFF' indicator that shows, when illuminated, that the signal is clear for the train to depart (it would be either yellow or white depending upon where it was located). In the middle and right is the 'CD' / 'RA' (close doors / right away) indicator. This is normally operated by platform staff and located where the driver can see it. Examples of both can be seen at St Albans City station.

Progress at the 'box

Breaking news for this issue is that the 4-telegraph pole run across the garden, complete with wiring and Midland insulators, is now almost finished, and superbly depicts how signal boxes communicated with each other in times gone by. Contractor Chas commented that this Midland run is now unique in Great Britain - so, it's a must-see sight!

Early rain and then a reasonably hot summer meant that the garden display grew beautifully but profusely! Occasionally we felt like David Livingstone entering the jungle, but visitors are still bowled over by the garden, which they don't expect. A big post-season clean-down is under way!

Artefacts, etc. restored a long time ago now need re-painting, so the Ground Frames, 4-Aspects, weighing scales, sleeper wall and Great Northern bench have all been attended to. The Radlett Signal Box sign, mentioned last time is now up in the lobby downstairs, as are a row of donated indicators in the Museum.

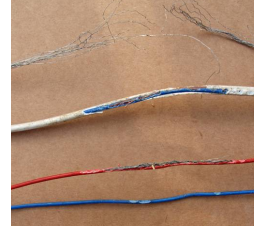
Thanks to Jim the Blue Pullman horns are mounted on the telegraph pole by the lamp hut, in two-tone blasting order! We recently hosted the S&T guys from the Bluebell Railway and are organising a reciprocal visit next Spring - watch this space! The model railway, so loved by young visitors, has been considerably extended by Tony and others, with a long tunnel at the rear to stop leaves and other debris causing derailments.

Michael W has expertly made a rack with a sloping corrugated roof behind the lamp hut, to protect our Grade II items removed from the 'box. Two platform indicators have been donated and will no doubt be set up and illuminated in due course by John W.

So, as ever, a great deal is happening, but there's still plenty to do, and any additional help on a Wednesday afternoon would be much welcomed!

Rodent attack!

For a little while now one of our four-aspect signals in the garden has not been displaying the correct sequences. Recent clearing of some of the vegetation around the site has allowed John Webb to investigate the cause. It would appear that part of the trunking for the wiring has been invaded by some little furry creatures who have taken a liking to electric cable! This nibbling of the wires has caused the lights to malfunction. A quick repair by John and our demonstration is now working properly again. As for the temporary visitors, we are hopeful that eviction has taken place and they are now comfortable somewhere else!



The chewed wires and the nesting site within the trunking.



The Radlett 'box sign in the downstairs lobby and as it appeared on the ' box itself until closure in 1979.



John Telford