



# Outside the Box

St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust [www.sigbox.co.uk](http://www.sigbox.co.uk)

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## The Little Things that make the difference!

As we move towards the official opening next month it is a good time to take stock and consider how much the Trust has achieved in the seven short years since the initial meeting of minds that set this ball rolling. Looking at photographs of the Box covered in graffiti and surrounded by vegetation before the Trust took over and looking at it now tells only part of the story. A lot of time and effort has gone into the work in the garden and the interior of the Box. In the latter much time has been spent in recreating the layout of the instruments as they were immediately before it closed using genuine equipment and signs wherever possible. But it is also some of the small detail that has been applied that demonstrates the care and concern that the Trust and the members have to recreate for our visitors the atmosphere of a working signal box, whether this be the fire buckets outside or the replica signal box cat inside!

Richard Kirk

## Chairman's Words

### SCHOOL VISITS

We have welcomed the first school party to the signal box - hosted by Tony and John. This was our first attempt at a school visit and it tied in with the 'Victorian' theme they were studying. It sounds like all 30 children had a good time and we are awaiting feedback from their teachers. Hopefully this will be the first of many such visits and if anyone is available during the day to help host these events, please let us know.

### OUR WONDERFUL GARDEN!

The garden is looking better and better every time I visit the box. Many thanks to all who have helped to turn it into a really beautiful place. Again, if you have time to do a little weeding or tidying please come along on any Wednesday pm if you can't make the Sunday working days.



An interesting view of the Box taken in April 1977 by Mike Davies a local resident and recent visitor

### FILMING THE BOX

The signal box continues to attract attention and following the visit of the BBC we are looking forward to seeing the completed film. English Heritage have contacted us to see if we are interested in being featured in the run up to Heritage Open Days as an unusual community project that will be opening our doors over that weekend. They want to make a recording for release to the media. As we are all in favour of free publicity we have agreed to meet them at the box and perhaps they can record the bells! **Don't forget, we will need all the help we can get over 12th and 13th September.** These will be our most popular open days especially with the grand opening on 12th at 2pm (you should have received your invitation already!)

Keith Webster



Thameslink goes internal combustion! Not quite, just one of the road-rail vehicles being used during weekend possessions in connection with the lengthening of the station platforms.



Above, the colour light signal in its original position.

Below, the signal seen from behind showing the 3 aspects



A fascinating view of the box taken in 1937. What looks like an engineers' train with an ancient Midland Railway 0-6-0 locomotive (number unreadable) in charge. The toilet block is still many years away and there is no name board on the end of the Box. This was presumably on the front of the Box below the balcony. Compare this view with the one on page 1.

## Guest of Honour

The Box will be officially opened on 12th September by Jim Cornell CEng FREng FICE FCIT FCMI.

Jim is a career railwayman with almost 50 years experience in the industry. Having trained as a civil engineer, he held a series of senior roles within British Rail including General Manager ScotRail, Director of Civil Engineering, Managing Director Regional Railways and Group Managing Director, BRIS. Upon leaving BR he became Executive Director, Railway Heritage Trust in 1996.

## Another signal in the garden

John Webb has begun the task of restoring to working order the 3-aspect colour light signal that previously stood at the London end of the Down Slow platform. This was originally operated by lever 16 and signalled trains that had terminated at the Down Slow platform back towards London over crossover 17. It is intended to display the signal in the garden and control it from the box, interlocking with the various crossover levers. A 12 volt supply with 4 watt bulbs will be used rather than the original 24 volt 24 watt. This will minimise the size of cable required as well as ensuring that the lights are not too bright and visible to drivers on the track. The signal has the red aspect at the top which is the reverse of post mounted signals but with the same object of keeping the red as close to the drivers' eye level as possible.

## Newsletter contributions

I have recently been fortunate to receive some old photographs of the station area including the Signal Box. These have come from two separate visitors to the Box. If any members have any interesting pictures old or new that they would like to share with us please contact me on 01727 860047 or via [richardnkirk@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:richardnkirk@hotmail.co.uk). Contributions will always be acknowledged



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## Tombola prizes

With the Heritage Open weekend only just around the corner members are asked to donate any items suitable for prizes. Please bring them along to the Box or contact Rod Woodward on 01727 853623

## Steam past the Box

Vintage Trains are running a steam trip on 26 September from Tyseley to St Albans and return hauled by GWR Castle 5043 'Earl of Mount Edgumbe'. No times yet available, please check their website for further details.

## New Exhibition

Following on from the exhibition at the Hatfield Museum the Museum of St Albans on Hatfield Road is putting on a new feature exhibition 'Lost Rails'. This is a Heritage Lottery funded project to commemorate and celebrate the closed railways of Hertfordshire. The exhibition runs from 19th September until 21 February 2010.

## Publicity - 1

Many thanks to Steve Nall who has re-designed the flyer and is working on other documentation. It looks very good! Copies are available from the Box and members are encouraged to take some to spread the word wherever possible. The leaflet is also in the local Tourist Information Bureau and the Museum of St Albans.

## Publicity - 2

The Signal Box has received further good publicity in the July/August issue of Steam Railway (page 36) and the August issue of Heritage Railway (page 29). Both feature Mike Cobby's photograph of Oliver Cromwell with Heritage Railway devoting a half page to the shot (minus Rod in the window!) and including good text announcing our public openings.