



Outside the Box

St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust www.tlr.ltd.uk/sigbox/home.eb email:info@sigbox.co.uk Tel: 01727-836131



Keith posing by the frame in the early days of the restoration.



The partially restored L&NWR lever frame.



Tony Furse and John Webb with the new display boards at the recent model railway exhibition in Edgware.

Happy Birthday Mr President!

The history books tell us that the Midland Railway had its origins in a public house. In 1832 local coal mine owners met at the Sun Inn at Eastwood in Nottinghamshire and began the process that ultimately became the Midland Counties Railway one of the significant parts of the Midland Railway when this was formed in 1844. What has this got to do with St Albans South Signal Box restoration you may be wondering. Well, the Trust also has its origin in a meeting in a public house. 10 years ago in the summer of 2001 a group of locals gathered in the Garibaldi in St Albans and bemoaned the state of the old signal box. Amongst the group was Keith Webster who subsequently began to look into the possibilities of restoration. Armed with a copy of the Architectural Heritage Fund guide 'How to rescue a ruin' and a lot of determination Keith took the idea forward and in December 2002 the first formal meeting of what became the Trust took place in the County Constitutional Club. The rest as they say is history. Keith has worked tirelessly since then, taking on the role of Chairman. In recent months pressure of work has led to him relinquishing this post, initially on a temporary basis. Keith has now decided to step down as Chairman although he will continue to be a Trustee and an active member of the Trust. Tony Furse has agreed to be the new Chairman, a move that was unanimously approved at a recent Trustees meeting. Also at that meeting it was proposed and agreed that Keith be offered the honorary title of President of the Trust, an accolade that he has accepted. So, on the 10th anniversary of that meeting in the Garibaldi we can, in the words of Marilyn Munroe, truly say 'Happy Birthday Mr President!'

Richard Kirk

(New) Chairman's Words

Since the last edition of 'Outside the Box' we have had our AGM, we have built and put into use our new storage unit and begun the planning for the unveiling of our National Heritage Railway Award.

The AGM was not well supported this year which is a shame for it is your opportunity to shape the way the Trust is managing your signal box. We need your input into the way we go forward given that the major reconstruction phase is now over and we need to develop the box as a tourist attraction and as an educational resource for both children and adults.

Our new storage was delivered and erected at the beginning of May and is already looking very full, mainly of tentage, garden equipment and spare chairs. Work has started to see what treasures are lurking at the back of the Lamp Hut. Rob Crisp is going to be very busy over the next few months cataloguing the equipment removed from the lock room during the rebuild. He has already registered over 500 items on our inventory list (see article over).

The unveiling of our National Heritage Railway Award is to take place from 2.00pm on the 3rd July when Lord Faulkner of Worcester the President of the Heritage Railway Association has agreed to come to the box, his second visit, and unveil our plaque. I hope you will all come and help us celebrate this fantastic award. We plan to have a free bar and a selection of nibbles and snacks and hope that you will come and bring your family.

I am due to attend a reception at the House of Commons in June arranged by the Heritage Railway Association to encourage MPs to take an interest in their local heritage railway and to explore the benefits of volunteering; alas Anne Main our Conservative MP for St Albans has declined the invitation to attend.

Tony Furse

New signalling DVD: Transport Video Publishing of Wheathampstead have recently published a new DVD entitled 'Focus on Signalling'. See over for more details.



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 me at richardnkirk@hotmail.co.uk or contact me on 01727 860047

Let there be lights

The four, four-aspect colour light signal heads in the garden together with the mechanical banner repeater and the junction indicator (the 'feathers') have now been connected up and are working. Two sequences have been programmed one to include the feathers and we can now demonstrate to visitors how more modern electronic signalling works before they step back in time and see the semaphore operations carried out from the box. The lights have been expertly wired and illuminated by John Webb who has also devised the operating sequences that are controlled from a small repeater panel in the downstairs display area.

The colour light signals and banner repeater illuminated at a recent open day.



The above picture from 2007 shows members working on restoration of the frame. The interlocking can be seen to the right of the levers with the casings removed.

New signalling DVD (cont)

The video contains scenes filmed at St Albans South and includes Tony Furse demonstrating signalling practice using our simulator. The DVD costs £19.95 and copies are available from the Box.

GRAND UNVEILLING PARTY

SUNDAY 3rd JULY from 2.00pm. All members and their families are invited to the Signal Box to celebrate last year's prestigious award and witness the formal unveiling of our award plaque by Lord Faulkner. To assist with the catering please advise Richard Kirk if you are planning to attend—see over for contact details.

Donation of historic artefacts - Appeal

We are very fortunate to be the custodians of a large number of "things" but apart from a small number of items we do not know who has donated them and whether we can expect to keep them indefinitely.

If you have donated or loaned any items to the Trust please give us your details, the details of the item and whether it is a loan or a permanent gift. This will then be recorded in the asset register for future reference.

Rob Crisp

The Collection

We now have in excess of 500 items recorded in the collection and we are still counting.

These range in size from big, the Signal Box, to small, a Midland Railway Pay Check and from Timetables to porters barrows. Each edition of the newsletter will feature an item from the collection to give members a flavour of the variety of things we hold.

The box itself is our largest single exhibit but that has featured in the newsletter on numerous occasions. I think it is appropriate then to describe the second most impressive single exhibit we have: the Lever Frame. Although consisting of many hundreds of individual parts the lever frame is for the purposes of the asset list considered as a single item. This also includes all the down rods, cranks, pulleys etc that used to connect the frame with the outside world and most of which is currently in storage.

The frame, which dates from 1906 and has been restored to its 1979 condition, is of the "tumbler locking" type, where all the interlocking mechanism between levers is contained in the casing behind the levers. This design was unique to the Midland Railway, which had its own ideas about signalling, and was in use from about 1870.

When the Midland changed to tappet locking in 1909 the mechanism, which was much more compact than the tumbler type, continued to be placed at the back of the levers,

Rob Crisp

Archive Photograph

This photograph spotted by a member is reproduced courtesy of the Bluebell Railway Museum Archive - JJ Smith Collection. It was taken on Friday 24th June 1960 and shows Schools Class 30939 'Leatherhead' pulling out from the goods yard exit on to the Up Slow line. The information provided suggests that this was a 6.30pm departure. I have not found any mention of this working in magazines from the time. Do any members have any knowledge of this working? Was there a regular visit by an ex-SR locomotive or was this a one off?