



# Outside the Box

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

## Flattery

Imitation they say is the sincerest form of flattery. This thought occurred to me recently whilst reading the latest annual report from the Heritage Railway Trust. This well illustrated and informative publication details all the projects in which the Trust has assisted during the year. In amongst the station and bridge refurbishments there were three signal box restorations, Cromer, and Wroxham that are in or near their original locations and Great Missenden that has been moved to the Mid Hants Railway. A number of other box projects were also covered in the previous report. Whilst not claiming that our own restoration was the cause of these revivals getting off the ground it is interesting to see the number of signal boxes being saved around the country. Despite this, St Albans South still retains its unique selling point of being in its original position alongside an operating and exceedingly busy main line and open to the general public on a regular basis.

Richard Kirk

## Chairman's Words

I hope you all had a good Christmas break and have comfortably settled back in to your usual routine. Certainly the Signal Box has been a hive of activity since the break with much greater numbers on Monday evenings and Wednesday afternoons, the huge quantity of biscuits consumed and the gallons of tea drunk being a good indicator of activity!

We have managed to get the LNWR ground frame on the lawn operating the Midland ground signal much to the delight of our smaller visitors and some of the bigger ones too but now we must prepare for our National Railway Museum donations, although not as many as we had hoped for.

So far this year we have been open for 2 weekends, one in support of the model railway exhibition and the other for St Albans Residents First. These produced a total of nearly 500 visitors in the first 4 weeks of the year. Well done to everybody who helped. The Sunday of the Residents weekend saw us take part in Three Counties Radio 'Treasure Quest', The clue to the next location -**A submerged birth will make you blush where the wheels have kept turning -your treasure may be hard to handle** was sent to us in advance and this was passed on to their reporter Jenna who arrived complete with radio car. The clue was broadcast from the box and after the listeners had phoned in where they thought the new location was we had 7 or 8 minutes to talk about the box and its history before Jenna and crew took off again. If you haven't got the answer yet it was Redbournbury Mill at Redbourn.

Our AGM is coming up at the end of March (see over) and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the Constitutional Club.

Tony Furse

## Important—your vote required!

When the Trust was set up a quorum of 30% of the membership was written into the Articles of Association as the number of members required to make a members' vote valid e.g. electing new Trustees at an AGM. As our membership has grown so has the geographical spread of our members and the Trustee board are concerned that the attendance at the AGM may fall short of the required number. We are proposing therefore that the Articles be amended to read 10% of the membership. This figure has been chosen after reference to the Articles of other companies. **This change cannot be effected without the membership voting, to this end the renewal form (see below) has a section for members to complete with your vote.**

## Subs for 2012 are now due!

**A renewal form is enclosed with this Newsletter. Please complete and return as indicated.**

Mary Webster



Winter returned with a vengeance recently but still the 'box stood out against the snowy surrounds.



The L&NWR ground frame in the garden now operating the MR ground signal.



Winners of the 2008  
St Albans Civic  
Society Award



Winners of the 2010  
Invensys Rail Signalling  
Award (Structures)

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## 2012 AGM Meeting

The Trust's AGM will be held on Wednesday 28th March 2012. All members are invited to the County Constitutional Club, 29 Ridgmont Road, St Albans (opposite the signal box) at 7.30pm.

Please let us know if you wish to attend as there will be snacks available.

## Enthusiasts' Weekend

This will take place over the weekend of 12th and 13th May. We are hoping to put on a display of railway artefacts in the garden and downstairs and demonstrate the new simulator operating all four lines. Keep watching the web site for more up to date information.

## Wanted 2—old railway staff!!!

Following on from the exhibition of photographs of the St Albans Engine Shed prepared for last year's Heritage Open Days we are planning an exhibition for this year's HODs based on railwaymen (and women) who have worked in the St Albans area in the past in various roles. We are seeking photographs, service records, career details, etc. If you have ex-workers in your family or amongst friends and they would be willing to loan items to the Trust for display please contact Richard Kirk (details on the front).

## Wanted 1—your old curtains!!!

We are looking for some 1950s material to cover up the tea things in the 'box. We need 2 pieces of material 1 yard (or metre) wide by 1.5 yards (metres) length or even bigger—old curtain or bedspread would be ideal (I would then cut and sew to fit).

If you are happy to donate such a thing please drop off at the 'box marked with your name or bring it round to 5 Ridgmont Road. Many thanks.

Mary Webster

## Derailment in front of the 'box

The picture on the left appeared in the Herts Advertiser on January 19th 1962. The accident happened at 5.00am during an empty stock movement blocking three of the four lines and caused commuter chaos (sounds familiar!). However the paper reported that travellers 'cheerfully took advantage of emergency bus services to Radlett and Harpenden.' One line was cleared by 6.45am with trains passing at caution and passengers warned 'to keep their heads in!' Normal services were resumed a few hours later—a much quicker clear up than seems to be the case these days.

## Spotter's observations

The only times you would see a 2-6-4T pass St Albans City non-stop was the 7.15am St Pancras—Mill Hill—Luton which passed through on the down fast at 7.47pm. The train had nine suburban coaches and made a spectacular sight as it stormed up the 1-in-176 especially when worked by a keen Kentish Town top link crew. The return evening working left Luton at 5.45pm and passed through St Albans at speed on the up fast at 6.07pm with a St Albans Fowler 2-6-4T running bunker first. The trains were run in connection with Vauxhall Motors at Luton.

Howard Green

## Progress at the 'box

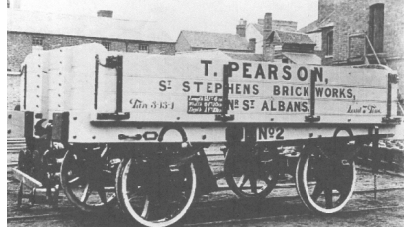
The mildest Winter for years (as at mid-January), and some new volunteers, has enabled more progress to be made than was expected. Outside, the foliage screen has been trimmed; the single ground signal is ready to be wired up (this has now been completed and is in use); and the mock level crossing gate is installed and ready to paint when the wood has weathered. The paraffin drum has been re-painted and put on a cradle, and now sits proudly by the Lamp hut. There is still plenty of gardening to do, so if you have any spare time, do drop in and lend a hand.

On the Operating Floor the four line simulator has been installed and tested, and was launched at the Open Weekend linked to the model railway exhibition at the Alban Arena on 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> January. Also, more of our information boards have been upgraded.

Downstairs the draft proofing is completed and the room is much warmer – albeit, the weather hasn't been too cold! (Ed: this piece was written by John in January!) The Napsbury track diagram has been framed and hung and the Locking Room shelf has been installed so as to be able to facilitate our tea point, and more artefacts.

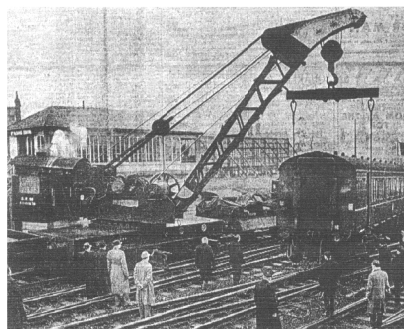
We have now been allocated some of the signalling artefacts from the NRM, and await clearance to collect them. This will give us plenty to do during 2012!

John Telford



### Mystery solved!

Ever since the Trust commissioned the limited edition brick wagon there has been speculation as to where the St Stephens Brickworks was located. The mystery has now been solved. The works were sited close to Bricket Wood station and probably only operated between the 1860s and mid-1890s.



Downstairs showing the re-positioned Locking Room shelf displaying various exhibits



The new 'level crossing' gate at the top of the footpath flanked by the posts topped with our genuine crossing gate caps.

Right: the newly framed Napsbury signal box diagram. This is dated 1977 and was in use until the 'box closed in 1979. Interestingly the station platform is still shown despite having been removed some years before!

