

OUTSIDE

THE BOX



Newsletter November 2013 Issue 34

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'HOD' visitors in action.

A 'HOD' Load of Success

Although the number of visitors to the 'box during the Heritage Open Weekend was a little down on previous years those who did come were, as usual, suitably impressed with the Trust's efforts and very appreciative of the fact that we have restored part of St Albans history. As usual there were many interesting people to talk to including a number of current and former railwaymen and women two of whom had worked in the box in its operational days. Indeed on our regular open days there are always interesting visitors to talk to, many of whom have railway connections past and present. Showing these people around the garden and the 'box can prove to be very rewarding and makes attending the open days most enjoyable.

Overleaf John Telford describes some of the new developments both inside and outside the 'box. If you haven't been down recently then a visit is recommended—Christmas party coming up together with our usual extended openings in January.

Richard Kirk



Above: the three Railway Children pose on the 'box steps.

Below: the new Midland lower quadrant signal provides an excellent 'prop' for the three principals to stand on and wave to the trains!



Chairman's Words

Since I last wrote to you we have had a lot of media exposure. Keith and I hosted a visit from Flame TV who are the makers of 'The Heir Hunters' a BBC program tracing the next of kin of people who have died without leaving a will. Their subject for this program was a signalman from Sleaford in Lincolnshire and they wanted us to show them the sort of job he would have been doing with some idea of his daily routine. Hopefully we achieved this although we will not know until late in 2014 or even early 2015 when it is broadcast.

More immediate than this, the very next day, Keith was interviewed by Three Counties Radio for their afternoon program. Their slots are very short and it is difficult to explain the box in five minutes but Keith is well practised and did us proud.

We have also had a visit from the Abbey Theatre St Albans who used the box as a back drop for the publicity photographs for their Christmas production of 'The Railway Children'. We hope to have a display in the theatre during the run and have offered to lend them several of our artefacts for use on stage and to have around the theatre. This sounds a great production based on the version shown at York and Waterloo, minus Old No1, but well worth a visit.

The BBC will be back at the box later in the month when the training school, now returned to Elstree, will be using us as a subject in their course for the training of future directors. This involves a short visit to plan their program and then two days later they return with a camera crew and make a 5 minute short.

Christmas is fast approaching so let me take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy Christmas and a prosperous new year.

Tony Furse

STOP PRESS: the 'box was also visited by Sky Sport TV ahead of the St Albans City against Mansfield Town F A Cup tie on the 8th of this month, they were filming items of interest for visiting supporters. Whilst the resulting broadcast might have been a bit flippant, the extra publicity was welcome

January openings

The 'box will be opened for both days of the St Albans Model Railway Show (11th and 12th) and the St Albans Residents First Weekend (25th and 26th). Opening hours will be 10.00am to 4.00pm. If you are able to help with manning the 'box please sign up on the website or contact Tony Furse.

A selection of Signal Box cards is being sent to our paid-up members. Please use them to spread the word about the Signal Box. If you don't want to receive them in the future, please let Mary know (mary.webster@btinternet.com)

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



An archive picture donated by a recent visitor to the 'box shows long term St Albans resident Johnson 1F 0-6-0T 1854 in LMS days standing in the shed yard.

Steam past the 'box

Ever hopeful! The Railway Touring Company are once again running a trip on 21st December from Victoria to York hauled northbound only by A4 Pacific 60009 Union of South Africa. This train is due to call at St Albans at 8.00am. Not much light at this time so don't blame the Editor if you don't get a good picture. Keep watching the RTC website for updates.



Another archive photograph from Geoff Ryland taken in 1979 looking south from the 'box with trains passing on the slow lines

Christmas Party !!

There will be a Christmas Party in the Signal Box on Saturday 14th December from 7.00pm. Drinks and nibbles will be served, please do come along and bring the family. Let Richard Kirk know if you are coming - contact details on page 1.

From the archives

Board of Trade Report, 31 December 1881

'St Albans Station—South Cabin: 16 levers of which 2 are spares.'

Board of Trade Report, 19 June 1892

'St Albans South Signal Box: New box. 36 levers of which 6 are spares.'

Board of Trade Report 16 July 1906

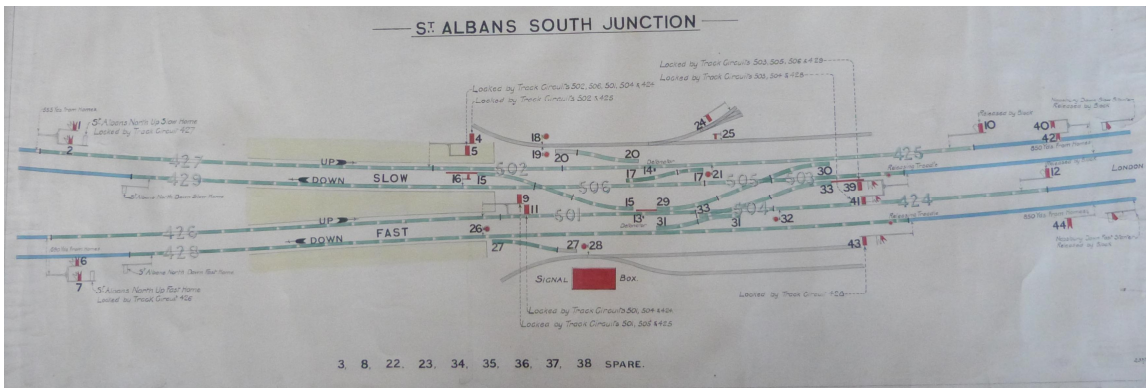
'St Albans South Signal Box: This is an old box and a new frame has been provided with 44 levers of which 9 are spares. No 3 to lock No 15 points both ways.'

Howard Green



Two more shots from Heritage Open Days. Above: part of the lamp display. Below: a quiet moment to catch up with emails!

The 1915 Midland Railway diagram from the 'box that is now on display courtesy of the Roy Burrows Collection. Note the name of the 'box with the addition of the word 'Junction'.



Progress at the 'box

After a poor start to the year the Summer weather was excellent, and good progress has been made. In pride of place, our new lower quadrant Midland signal on the lawn was completed in time for Heritage Open Weekend. Operated from the LNWR ground frame by the path, it has proved very popular with visitors and now has the addition of a platform to enable the paraffin lamp to be inserted. The post was from the NRM and the parts from the Roy Burrows Collection. Furthermore, all our signals now have access ladders, thanks to some nifty metalwork by Jim Macdonald.



The new Midland signal stands in the middle of the garden.

A close second are our Tyer's No.6 single line working tablet machines, also on long term loan from Roy. Assembly was completed by one of his staff and training undertaken, so we can now show the public how trains were controlled on single lines as well as quadruple tracks.

Top favourite with the children, however, is our massive brass platform bell. This was hung temporarily on the sleeper wall but has proved so popular, we are minded to leave it there!



Mike Christensen from the Roy Burrows Collection assembling one of the Tyer's No 6 machines.

The original 1915 track diagram (Roy Burrows Collection) is now resident on the back wall of the operating floor. Its delicacy is recognised by the need to cover it with blackout material when the 'box is closed - to preserve it from direct sunlight.

Another MR boundary post is now on display in the garden, as are two mile posts and the coffin carrier fully restored. The annual garden clean up is underway (additional volunteers welcome) and we are looking for ways to dispose of our green stuff!

A recent Trustees' Meeting has approved some further improvements to the site (watch this space!), but include a laptop to store our artefact database /archive material, a replacement marquee for open days and two 'sail' advertising flags.

Don't forget we have merchandising available to Members, including T-shirts, polo shirts, sweat shirts and in due course some umbrellas! Make contact via the website to put your order in.

John Telford