

# OUTSIDE

# THE BOX



Newsletter February 2014 Issue 35

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## What an Exhibition!

Last month was busy for the Trust as Tony highlights below. Our attendance at the St Albans model railway exhibition was a step up from last year and saw our stand fully manned on both days. This enabled us not only to distribute almost 400 Trust leaflets to visitors but also to chat to people about what we have achieved and encourage them to come to visit the 'box'. It was also an opportunity to raise further funds by the sale of books and wagons. As a result of our attendance we have been invited to take the stand to the De Havilland Model Railway Society's exhibition on Saturday 26th April at Ludwick Way Methodist Church, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 3PN (10.00am to 5.00pm).

During the Resident's weekend opening we issued the 10,000th Signal Box ticket to one of our visitors. This is a remarkable achievement. John Webb has calculated that we have averaged 1,900 recorded visitors a year, counting from the first issue of the Edmundson tickets on 13th September 2008. In our original assessment for preserving the 'box' it was seen as a project worth doing if we got 500 visitors a year! One very pleasing aspect of our recent openings has been the number of children visiting the 'box' with their parents. We need to encourage the next generation of enthusiasts so that operations like ours and many others around the country can continue into the future.

Richard Kirk



John Webb manning the Trust's stand at the Chiltern Model Railway Exhibition at the Alban Arena last month.

## Chairman's Words

A New Year starts and once again we begin with a very busy month supporting firstly the St Albans Model Railway Exhibition and then as we recover from that we have Residents First Weekend. Hard work but good fun meeting so many people, 555, a lot of whom have never been to the signal box, where do they all come from?

Our new banner flags were a great success and so was manning the stand at the exhibition although we were a little thin at the 'box' on the ground around Sunday lunch time.

A big change outside the box has been the increase of the line speed to 125 mph. As yet the upgrade work is not complete and so we have temporary speed restriction boards, one for 100mph on the up fast outside the box and the other for 95mph on the down fast at the north end of the platforms. As the High Speed Trains go past the box now the shaking effect can be felt on the operating deck, what will it be like at the higher speeds?

The Roy F Burrows Midland Collection Trust has generously decided to donate us the pair of Tyer No6 single line operating machines that we have had on loan from them since the summer. This is a great gift as both machines have been refurbished and are in full working order. Our grateful thanks go to Roy and his Trust for their continued support.

Its AGM time again (see over for details) and hopefully we will have the opportunity to meet you all and tell you some of what we have been doing on your behalf. This year we hope to show you some more of the fantastic photographs that David Gaylard has been able to obtain from the HC Casserley collection most of which have never been seen before.

I look forward to meeting you all once again.

Tony Furse

**A wintery scene from the 1980s with a north bound express passing the 'box' hauled by 45 119. Courtesy of David Gaylard.** From the Herts Advertiser 23rd July 1898: '...on Tuesday evening of this week the 7.25pm from St Pancras was detained 10 minutes at Hendon to put on a horsebox in front of the train and on arrival at Elstree there was a further delay in shunting the 'box' to the rear. St Albans was reached at 8.34pm, 21 minutes behind scheduled time.' How would FCC explain that one?!



One of the new banner flags set up outside the 'box'. On Open Days the second flag is set up at the junction of Ridgmont Road and Victoria Street.



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](mailto:richardnkirk@hotmail.co.uk) or contact me on 01727 860047

# Membership Matters

## Subs for 2014 now due

A renewal form is included with this newsletter.

I aim to exclude those of you who have already paid subs but just in case please ignore the renewal if:

- you pay by standing order
- you have paid subs on or after 1st November 2013

I do hope you will renew your membership as your support makes the Trust what it is – a friendly self financing museum society – a rarity in these cost conscious times!

## AGM – Wednesday 12th March 2014 at 7:30pm

The AGM will be held at the Constitutional Club (opposite the 'box') followed by a short photographic display and light refreshments. Please let me know if you are planning to attend so I can firm up the catering numbers.

## And Finally .....

I hope you all managed to make use of the cards sent out with the last newsletter. Whilst we do not solicit contributions towards the cost, thank you to those who did send in a contribution. Please let me know if you no longer wish to receive cards with the November issue of 'Outside the Box'

My contact details are: [mary@sigbox.co.uk](mailto:mary@sigbox.co.uk) (preferred) 01727-836131

Mary Webster Membership Trustee

## Members' 'get togethers'

Just a reminder that Club nights are held every Monday from 7:30pm. Come along and chat, watch DVDs or learn how to operate the levers upstairs.

Working parties are held every Wednesday afternoon from 2:00pm - just turn up and you will be welcomed and will be able to help in the development of our various display projects. Plenty of tea and biscuits available!

## Swanage Railway visit

Our member Peter Hunt is also a member of the Swanage Railway and is offering to arrange a visit to the railway to look at their signalling operations. Unfortunately it has not been possible to arrange this for 2014 however we are hopeful that a date can be set for 2015. So watch this space for details in due course.

## Progress at the 'box

The exceptionally wet weather lately has stunted our outside work but didn't stop Howard doing a final cut of the lawn in December! Until now we have 'lost' green cuttings around the site but it hasn't rotted down as quickly as we had hoped. However, Les has managed to secure a green wheelie bin from the Council, so we will be able to use this in future – with fortnightly collections. Work has progressed on the winter clean up, in between showers.

Tony completed the re-painting of the bridge weight limit sign (on loan from Derby Museums). This is now on the sleeper wall – with a bright red background and white lettering. Bridge plate No.109 downstairs in the 'box has also been painted. Both upstairs and downstairs have been spring-cleaned in readiness for 2014 openings.

A stove donated to the 'box has been cleaned and painted and now sits upstairs with a mock flue pipe up to the roof. The 'box originally had two such stoves and it is hoped that we can put some red coals in our imitation stove with a light bulb behind to give a fire effect. A large level-crossing lamp, on loan from Roy Burrows, has been painted and it is intended that it will eventually adorn a level crossing gate giving access to our two parking spaces.

Upstairs Rob Little and Jim MacDonald soldier on with the important upgrade of the block shelf wiring and are making good progress. The simulator is still operational for public openings.

In the garden the parcels scales have been restored and await calibration and the purchase of some new brass weights. The telephone by the gate is now linked to the 'box (mainly for tea ordering!) and a restored post cap placed on top of it.

One of the 'watch this space' items in the last issue is moving forward. This is a "Dutch barn" type cover for the tea/ticket issuing point by the gate – built by Michael and Tony. The corrugated roof is still to go on when the roof eventually dries out and Tony has nearly completed a superb station-style wooden valance on the front. A photo will hopefully appear in the next issue.

Additional help on Wednesday afternoons is always welcome, as are Members to help staff our public and private openings. Let us know by phone or e-mail if you would like to help.

John Telford



The re-painted bridge weight limit sign fixed to the sleeper wall.



The repainted platform scales just waiting for some weights so that our visitors can check themselves before going round the garden!