

OUTSIDE

THE BOX



Newsletter May 2015 Issue 40

So good they named it twice!

Those of us who keep a watchful eye on the passing railway scene have been wondering what might happen to the Class 319 named 'City of St Albans' last year; would it be transferred to the North West, would it be re-liveried and would it keep its name? Well we now know the answer. Not only has it been repainted into the anonymous white livery, it has retained its name and now has the nameplates (!) at both ends of the unit and on both sides.

Our summer season openings are now in full swing – see over for forthcoming dates – and we are also taking the display stand and merchandise to a number of events in the local area. These all need volunteers, so if you fancy helping out for a few hours in the fresh air please contact Tony who will be only too pleased to put you on the rota.

Richard Kirk

Chairman's Words

Over the last couple of years we have been involved with St Albans Attractions Group, a committee set up to support St Albans Tourist Office with trying to persuade the public to visit St Albans from around the United Kingdom and abroad. This is a very interesting group to be part of with representatives from a wide range of attractions from the Cathedral to Redbourn Museum and of course St Albans Signal Box. As part of our deliberations it was decided to create a new tourist map and new signage for visitors to the city. This has now been completed and the new maps are for sale for £2 at most visitors places across the city and clearly show the box. There is a descriptive panel on the reverse with information about the history of the Signal Box. The new signs have also gone up and direct visitors in our direction. (see photograph overleaf).

You may have seen recently that Govia Thameslink Railways are intending to build a new station building on the west side of St Albans City station to replace the plastic shelter which currently acts as an exit from platform 4. This will include a cafe and cycle repair shop much in the style of the rebuilt Hatfield Station. We believe that they want to reduce the parking spaces currently available on the west side to encourage more parking in the under used multi storey car park that replaced the engine shed. They intended to make the area more cycle and pedestrian friendly which may create space for us to expand and perhaps build our visitor centre.

I hope to see as many of you as possible at our BBQ in August, lets hope the sun shines on us.

Tony Furse

BBQ—Saturday 8th August

from 2.00pm onwards. Food will be provided but please bring your own drinks. A donation will be sought on the day to cover the cost of the food. Friends and family are invited but please let us know via email or phone (to Richard Kirk) how many are coming so we know how many to cater for. See you there!

Newsletter produced by Richard Kirk.
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Unit 319 444 'City of St Albans' displaying its new livery and new position for the nameplates whilst departing from City Station on an up working in April.



An archive picture taken in 1972/3 showing the Experimental Advance Passenger Train about to pass the 'box on the up fast line. This 4 car gas-turbine powered unit was the fore-runner of the later electric powered service trains that were up to 12 cars long. This unit ran regularly on the Midland Main Line between Derby and Cricklewood and achieved a record 58.5 minutes for the 99.1 miles from Leicester to St Pancras (101.6mph). This compares with the current fastest time of 62 minutes. A record speed of 152.3mph was recorded between Swindon and Reading. Photograph courtesy of John Lewis.



Winners of the 2008
St Albans Civic
Society Award



Winners of the 2010
Invensys Rail Signalling
Award (Structures)

Dates for your Diary

Forthcoming Open Days:

June 14th and 28th

July 12th and 26th

August 9th and 23rd

Heritage Open Weekend: September 12th and 13th

In addition the Trust stand will be at the St Albans Steam Fair on the 30th and 31st of May at Oaklands College, Hatfield Road.

If you can help on any of these occasions please contact Tony Furse or any of the other Trustees.

Subscription renewals

Thank you to all those members who have renewed their subs for this year. If you haven't yet done so please let me have your £10 payment as soon as possible. Your support is important to the Trust and your subscriptions plus the accompanying Gift Aid help to maintain the momentum of developments at the 'box.

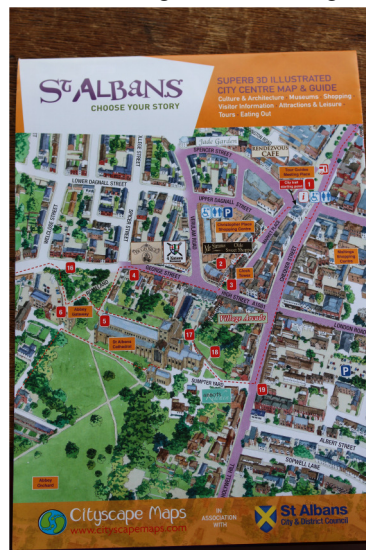
Mary Webster

(another) Spotter's Observation

You would never see the 5.18pm Harpenden on the train board in Kentish Town Motive Power Depot. It was on the board as the 2.35pm Cattle Dock. At 2.35pm a Stanier 2-6-4T would leave the depot and cross over the main line to the Kentish Town Cattle Dock carriage sidings. There it would steam heat and shunt carriages before bringing the empty stock of the 5.05pm to Bradford into platform 4 at St Pancras. It then banked the 5.05pm out to Cambridge Street before dropping back on to the 5.18pm in platform 5. It worked the 5.18pm along the main line to St Albans and then on to Harpenden where it was switched to the slow line. It then worked the empty coaches along the goods line to Luton before returning through St Albans with the 8.45pm Luton to St Pancras.

If the 5.18pm was switched to the slow line at Napsbury it gave a clear run to the following 5.30pm to Leicester. On Fridays this was often double headed by two Class 5 4-6-0s. It was worth staying behind at St Albans to watch the two locomotives tackling the 1 in 176 gradient in unison.

Howard Green



Photographs wanted

For this year's Heritage Open Weekend photo display we are planning to focus on Kentish Town and Cricklewood engine sheds. There are still some pictures from the Casserley collection that have not been used together with others in the Trust collection. If any members have any pictures of their own of these two locations and are happy to make them available please contact Richard – details on the front.

Above are three new images from around the 'box. On the left is the upper level platform furniture collection, in the middle is the new direction sign at the City Station and on the right is the front of the new St Albans maps that are on sale in the 'box.

Progress at the 'Box

A dry Spring after a mildish Winter equals lots of gardening. The tops of the bushes along the fence have been trimmed and all the dead stuff from last year cleared – mainly by our stalwarts Howard, Val, and Percy. Howard and Richard have also de-weeded the wall and the embankment behind the 'box – avoiding bees' nests! Spring flowers are in full bloom, so the garden is now looking pretty good! Tony has also planted lillies in the lower flower bed, and daisy enclaves on the lawn have been cut out and replaced by new turf.

New artefacts have been donated: a second set of working-order parcel scales (Avery) complete with weights, four rail shoes, and a long-base sack barrow – all of which have been cleaned and painted and are now on display. This takes our total tally of artefacts to over 800. The existing scales have also been calibrated and missing imperial weights purchased.

Some 'touching up' of the 'box is being undertaken, now it's nearly 2 years since it was fully painted. Tony recently read that modern paints don't sit well with heritage wood! A pane of glass upstairs which suddenly splintered – we know not how – was also replaced.

The repairing/replacement of our trunking has been completed brilliantly by John Webb, and the laying of bricks alongside the path (to protect it as the original wooden strip gradually rots) is now finished.

At a recent after-dark Rotary visit Jim added some discrete lighting around the site which proved very effective. Could this be used again, or even become permanent?

Tony has been refurbishing a Midland lamp - it's amazing what lettering appears from under the various coats of paint! Work on the finials and simulator continues as ever!

So, a lot done, but plenty more still to do. Have a peep at the 'To Do' list behind the door to the Museum, and if inclined, have a go at one or two!

John Telford