

# OUTSIDE THE BOX



Newsletter May 2017 Issue 48



**Above: Eurostar unit 3005 ends its last journey at a Tamworth scrap yard displaying a temporary tail lamp. Below: Chairman tries his hand at train driving but, Tony, don't look round, all the passengers have gone!**



## It's an ill wind or so they say

Despite the disappointment of the Heritage Railway Association Awards mentioned in the previous *Outside The Box* the last quarter has brought us some good local publicity. Some of it was courtesy of Storm Doris that caused damage to our tall Midland Railway lower quadrant signal at the north end of the garden. Not only did this get us a piece in the Herts Advertiser and on their website (the latter with photograph) but we also managed to have an item later about the replacement arm being put in place ahead of the Big Weekend (picture again on their website). More recently both local papers have covered the Mayor's award referred to below by Tony. There have also been brief mentions in some of the railway press following up the HRA awards ceremony. All very satisfactory in helping to promote the 'box and keeping it in the public eye.

In March we held the Trust's AGM in St Paul's Church Hall, Hatfield Road with a number of members in attendance. Although not able to be advertised in advance we were fortunate to persuade Larry Heyman, Thameslink's Local Development Manager to join us. After the formal proceedings and light refreshments were over Larry presented an illustrated talk that covered the current Thameslink services with performance data and explanations of the causes of some of the delays and the remedies proposed. He also outlined the plans for expanding the facilities at the City Station especially on the Signal Box side with details to be published shortly once the positioning and financing of a second footbridge is agreed. He promised to keep us informed of these developments as they proceed.

Richard Kirk

## Chairman's Words

During the early part of this year we were delighted to receive an invitation to the Mayor of St Albans Pride Awards to be held at St Michaels Manor Hotel. These awards have a number of categories including Community Projects, Cultural Innovations, Young Person of Distinction etc, a total of eight, all of whom had been suggested by members of the community with the winner selected by a committee chaired by the Mayor. We were aware that we were not short-listed but were happy to accept the invitation. The Mayor of St Albans Frances Leonard had visited the box during Heritage Open Day and had confessed to me that it was certainly not her first visit as she had been many times with her grandchildren. The evening was a delight with the opportunity to meet a wealth of people working for the benefit of the community of St Albans. As the evening was drawing to a close the Mayor stood and said:

'During my year as Mayor I have seen some great projects around the District however the work of St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust has stood out. Volunteers have come together to preserve an interesting historic building and to organise special community open days to the public. I wanted to reward their hard work by giving them a Special Mayors Recognition Award'.

This was a wonderful surprise and we were happy to accept a nice certificate and glass trophy now displayed in the signal box. Since this event we have seen the Mayor again when she visited with her granddaughter during the Big Weekend, I think she's going to be a regular visitor.

I would like to express my grateful thanks to all those who gave up the weekend to support us over the 'Big Weekend' I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did.

A date for your diary the 9th & 10th September will be Heritage Open Weekend when we can do with as much support as possible so please put it in your diaries now. Thank you.

Tony Furse

## Visit to Fawley Hill Railway and Museum

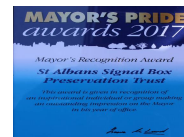
The Trust has secured a number of tickets for the Open Day on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> July. Times are Noon to 5pm. For those who have been before you know what to expect. For those who haven't the location is the grounds of the home of Sir William McAlpine located between Marlow and Henley. Not only is there a very extensive museum of railway artefacts and a large model railway but also a full size working steam (usually) railway around the grounds with a very steep incline up to a genuine old railway station. There is a recommended donation of £10 per head and there are 20 places available. Please contact Richard Kirk - details over plus notice of a July visit to the Bluebell Railway



Winners of the 2008 St Albans Civic Society Award



Winners of the 2010 Invensys Rail Signalling Award (Structures)



Winners of the 2017 Mayor of St Alban's Recognition Award

# Membership Matters

**BBQ—Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> 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!

## Dates for your Diary

June 3rd & 4th - St Albans Steam Fair at Oaklands College  
June 14th & 28th - Open Day  
July 9th & 23rd - Open Day  
July 15th & 16th - St Albans Country Fair at Highfield Park  
August 13th & 27th - Open Day  
Please contact Tony Furse or any of the other Trustees if you can help on any of these occasions .

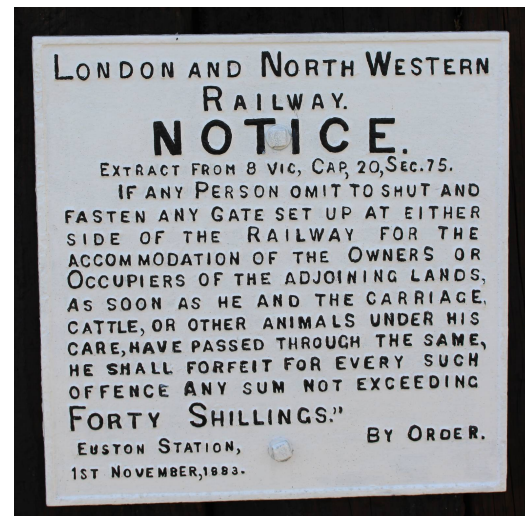
**STOP PRESS:** We have made arrangements, subject to confirmation, to visit the **Bluebell Railway** on Tuesday 25th July to see their signalling installations. The group will be limited to 15 members. We are hoping to travel by train to East Grinstead as well as, of course, travel on the Bluebell between locations. Please advise Richard Kirk if you would like to be in the party. Further details will be sent to participants as they become available.

## 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 Mary have your £10 payment as soon as possible. Payment can be made directly to the Trust account with Metro Bank at 23-05-80 account 17746944 quoting your name as the reference or by cheque directly to Mary. 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.

## Midland Railway Society Meeting

The Society is holding a meeting on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> June at Trinity URS Church, 1 Beaconsfield Road, St Albans. The speaker will be Geoff Bounds who will give an illustrated talk 'Electrifying the Midland Main Line – some of the challenges we have inherited from the Midland.' The talk starts at 1.30pm and Trust members are invited to attend. Some of the MRS members will be visiting the 'box during the morning.



Recent display items. From the left: the Midland Pullman air horns and control handle mounted on the telegraph pole; a Eurostar emergency head/tail lamp and the restored L&NWR trespass notice.

## Progress at the 'box

Bizarrely, the highlight of this issue must be the burst water main immediately outside the 'box, during our Big Weekend opening (1/2 April). The ride-on railway that Jim and colleagues from the North London Model Engineers graciously provided, was nearly washed away! The affected pipe was the feed to the 'box, and thankfully, having reported the leak, it was soon fixed. However, does anyone know why the feed was a large 3 inch pipe – we only use it now to fill the kettle and flush the loo?

The garden was looking beautifully Springy for the Big Weekend, but a full opening does involve a lot of setting up and taking down. Still, it was worth it as numbers and takings were strong.

Small maintenance has been the theme this time: the Website sign onto the lines was moved to avoid buddleia; the Midland ground frame, banner repeater and some of the trunking and handrail have been repaired, as has the big lower quadrant signal – with Tony making and erecting a new semaphore arm – the previous one having been blown in two by Storm Doris.

Our 1883 L&NWR cast iron sign has finally been restored and hung on the Sleeper Wall. An operating handle for our Midland Pullman horns has been donated and works well, and we now have on display a front/rear lamp used when Eurostar units are towed to be scrapped.

The Endpaper Theatre Company, who presented Grave Expectations (based on Charles Dickens's ghost stories) at the 'box several years ago, would like to come again and perform The Signaller, and the St. Albans Tour Guides, who visited recently, would like us to help train their 'Victorian Walk' Trainee Guides.

Finally, on Monday, 10th April, during our Members' evening, a full-scale alert took place before us, when a Midland Mainline driver reported a trespasser on the line just north of the Station, who he thought he might have hit. Trains were stopped and lots of blue flashing lights quickly appeared. Do come along on a Monday evening as it can be quite exciting!

**John Telford**