

OUTSIDE THE BOX



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What's the Point!

The picture on the left shows some rusty old rails being delivered to the 'box earlier this month. Tony Furse and Jim Macdonald had just completed a round trip to Tywyn in Mid-Wales to collect the major part of a set of points donated to the Trust by the Talyllyn Railway.

For some time now we have discussed the merits of installing some form of point mechanism adjacent to the Midland ground frame and operated from one of the levers to further the demonstration of interlocking. Through contacts of David Smith and a recent visit to the 'box we were offered this trackwork. It was too good an offer to refuse even though the collection involved the hire of a trailer and some heavy lifting after the photograph was taken!

The track had previously formed part of the passing loop at Quarry Siding between Dolgoch and Abergynolwyn (see photo below) and was at the end of its useful life on the railway. The Trust is very grateful to the Talyllyn. This donation is another example of the co-operative atmosphere that exists between heritage railway operations.

Richard Kirk

Chairman's Words

As you may remember we are working towards persuading Network Rail (NR) to allow us to build a Visitor Centre within the existing grounds of the Signal Box, however the opportunity may have arisen with the rebuilding of the station on the west side of the railway for us to make an appeal for additional space beyond our current boundary. The ideal spot would be the five parking spaces to the south of our existing entrance onto which we could erect our Visitor Centre. We knew that if we were granted permission to go ahead the next problem might well be the Council and planning permission but after a recent visit from the Leader of the Council we have received very positive comments and promises of support. Just NR to get through now!

Those of you who have visited the box in the winter months will have noticed the small group of wives who gallantly in all weathers provide us and our visitors with cups of tea or coffee to wash down the mountains of biscuits. They stand under a very windswept shelter and although we erect a tarpaulin to keep the rain off they do get wet and cold. We are looking into the possibility of building a garden type room where we could provide heat and light and perhaps somewhere for our visitors to sit in the winter when the lawn is not an option. I will give you more information as the project develops.

Heritage Open Weekend approaches on the 8th and 9th September when we would hope to entertain 500 plus, visitors. This is a great weekend enjoyed by all those who take part, so if you can spare a couple hours why not come along and join with us celebrating 150 years of the Midland Railway coming to St Albans.

Tony Furse



**Above: Quarry Siding track before its recent replacement.
Left: New Trustee Richard Allen – see page 2**



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

Dates for your Diary

Heritage Open Weekend September 8th and 9th – if you are able to help even for a short while this will be appreciated and hopefully you will enjoy your time, please contact Mary on 01727 836131 or mary.webster@btinternet.com to let her know and so you can be allocated an activity on the rota.

Open Days other dates coming up are August 12th and 26th, September 23rd and October 14th and 28th. Please contact Tony Furse or any of the other Trustees if you can help on any of these occasions.

Members' Open Day: on Wednesday 12th September members of the Trust are invited to join the members of the North London Society of Model Engineers at their outdoor railway site at Colney Heath. The site will be open from 12 noon until late afternoon. Some food and drink will be available for which a donation will be appreciated. For details of the location please refer to the Society's website <http://www.nlsme.co.uk/>

Appointment of new Trustee

The existing Trustees have recently invited Richard Allen to join their number to assist in the running and development of the Trust. Richard has agreed and for those who don't know him he has penned a few personal notes. He is professionally involved in the railway industry, is a regular visitor to St Albans and the 'box and is a keen Watford supporter. His appointment will require ratification at the next AGM. Richard says: *'I've been interested in railways and their workings all my life. I have my grandfather and uncle to blame for 'leading me astray' as a child as I was their excuse for visiting various railway locations, mostly in West Yorkshire, to see what remained of steam on BR. I came to St. Albans at the age of ten having spent my single digit years in New Barnet next to the main line watching my beloved Deltics.*

Once settled in St. Albans I soon became part of a large group that used to assemble at the south end of the old Platform 1 on a Friday evening, no more than 50 yards from the signal box. We often used to go on the cheap Merrymakers that used spare coaching stock at weekends to visit many places across the country. I particularly remember one such trip to Llandudno in 1972 which cost us £1! My adult life saw me going on trips to far flung countries that were still using steam traction, including Portugal, Germany, Turkey, China, India and Pakistan to name a few.

All along I have had an interest in railway related artefacts and have been collecting 'stuff' for the last forty years. Some of my 'lumps' of cast iron and wood now adorn the walls of the signal box museum.

I have been a member of the signal box trust for a few years now and was honoured to be asked to become a trustee.'



Left is the new ground signal and associated equipment donated by Network Rail. This was previously at Petersfield in Hampshire. Middle is a slightly different version currently in use at Gloucester Shrub Hill station. Right is the new lighting installed in the 'box toilet.

Autumn Steam Past the Box

The Railway Touring Company are due to run their Ealing to York specials on Saturdays 20th October and 17th November (no December run currently showing on their website). In charge should be 60009 *Union of South Africa*. Booked to call at St Albans at 8.01am (diesel return).

Progress at the 'box

Our garden has defied the drought and kept growing – so the need for much trimming has continued! Even the buddleia on the railway side of our fence is sprouting strongly again – having been slashed by Network Rail (NR) to stop leaves on the line.

Work has continued on a number of fronts: Michael W has constructed a fence behind the Lamphut to screen our stored items. This has enhanced the area where we display working lamps and our tappet interlocking signals. The cage, aka our work bench, has been cleaned and painted to eventually take our Eurostar horns. Peter and myself have restored a second Switch sign and a diamond bridge weight restriction sign. Both are now on the sleeper wall.

John W has replaced a modern ceiling light in the loo with some donated swan neck ex-railway carriage lamps to create a more appropriate atmosphere! John has also hung some new donated fire extinguishers. Rodney has jet washed our wooden garden furniture, and will treat it with preservative, meanwhile maintenance/re-painting of outside artefacts continues. Tony has rebuilt our model railway tunnel, and the other Elstree Tunnel sign, obtained by Jim, and in poor condition, now sits below our restored sign to show 'before and after'!

Richard and Les have produced a display commemorating 100 years since the end of the First World War, and recognising the eleven St. Albans railwaymen who lost their lives. This will be on display at Open Days for the rest of the year. *Stop Press:* is our just-received Ground Signal which David has obtained from NR at Eastleigh. Initial reaction is that it is restorable to working order – with its own light. We are exploring other items which they might donate and the subsequent challenge of where to put them!

John Telford