

# OUTSIDE THE BOX



Newsletter February 2019 Issue 55



## Tea for two – or more!

The new Buffet or Tea Room has now arrived and has had its first two open days. Whilst this is not directly heritage related it is a welcome addition to our facilities that over the coming months and years should more than justify the expenditure. 2018 saw many new additions to the Trust's collection to enhance the experience of our visitors and expand on our aim to be a truly community based asset. There will be full reports of these changes at the forthcoming AGM – see reminder details overleaf.

Richard Kirk

## Chairman's Words

I hope you all have had a good Christmas

Since I last put pen to paper we have joined the new Community Rail Partnership (CRP) for the Bedford to St Albans line. This is the latest addition to the over 60 Rail Partnerships all over the network. Community Rail creates opportunities for local communities to become involved in their local railway line and in particular their local station. This CRP will cover all eight Thameslink stations between Bedford and St Albans. We have offered to look after the large flower bed which contains the concrete letters spelling the station name which can be found on platform four beside the Victoria Road bridge. Access has been delayed while the possibility of Japanese Knotweed is investigated and until the engineers are happy that removing the Buddleia currently growing out of the side of the bridge will not bring the bridge tumbling down! If you have an interest in gardening or would just like to see the station environment improved why not come along and help out. Through the CRP we were put in contact with Inspector Mike Boyce of British Transport Police and he has provided us with Thomas The Tank Engine rail safety books that we can hand out to all the Beavers and Brownies that visit the box along with Thomas sticker books that we can give to the younger visitors on our open days. This will go a long way to helping us in our aim to promote rail safety amongst our young visitors.

Our new Station Buffet has been used successfully twice since its erection and has managed to keep our catering staff warm and cosy and has encouraged visitors to sit inside and drink their teas or coffees in the warm, it still needs fitting out but is already a great success.

We have the AGM coming up with an interesting talk from member Brian Chapman on garden railways. It is thanks to Brian that we have a railway in the signal box garden. Hope to see you at the AGM.

Tony Furse



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

## 2019 Subscriptions are now due

Hopefully you have received a renewal notice by email, or by post with this newsletter. Many thanks to those who have renewed already; your subscription is much appreciated. For those of you yet to renew, we do hope that you will continue to support the Trust, and be part of our further development as a visitor attraction in St Albans.

Payment can be made to the Signal Box account at Metro Bank:

Sort code: 23-05-80

Account: 17746944

Reference: your name

Or alternatively you can pay by cheque or cash.

Rob Little

## Annual General Meeting

The AGM will be held on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March at 7.30pm at St Pauls Church Hall on Hatfield Road. Documents have been sent out, please let John Webb know if not received Please also let John know if you are planning to attend so we can cater for the correct numbers.

### From the Archives

We have the Harpenden Junction copy of an interesting document dated 7.7.75 from the Divisional Manager, London LMR relating to restrictions to apply in connection with the journey of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh from St Pancras to Nottingham on the 15<sup>th</sup> July. Details are given of all the special arrangements for this 4 coach train that was due to leave Platform 5 at 10.30pm and passing St Albans at 10.56pm. At the front were to be 2 x Class 25 diesel locomotives. Ice and propane were to be loaded in advance whilst the empty stock was in Cambridge Street sidings and S & T technicians had to be on duty at Cricklewood Junction and Luton for the passage of the train. Speed was limited to 70mph and the train was to be stabled at Old Dalby overnight.



Above: A picture of the box from Rodney Marshall's collection taken in the late 60s/ early 70s with a down DMU working passing a desolate looking south end of the station area. The 'For Sale' sign on the right relates not to the box but to the adjacent Heath and Heather building.



Left and overleaf: the new arrangement for the ground frame at the north end of the garden with the four levers now operating three signals and the ex-Talylyn points. Also pictured overleaf is the new Buffet building and the resited and elevated speed restriction termination sign.

## Progress at the 'box

At Christmas John Webb arranged a lights display on the lawn signal which proved a great success, in addition to our normal decorations upstairs at the 'box.

As mentioned last time, our Buffet building is now in use, although inside finishing off awaits some kitchen cupboards and worktop and a possible sink. This will enable wiring to be completed and then some floor insulation, and lino covering to be laid. Meanwhile Rodney has fitted guttering and a wooden skirt round the base.

Our ex-Talylyn points are in use from the Midland ground-frame, which also hosts the upper quadrant lattice signal, the upper triple ground signal and the ex-Southern Region ground signal. Along with its links, the ground-frame now needs a re-paint when the weather improves. The points have proved a big hit – duly ballasted from leftovers outside NR's adjacent Operations Yard! A big thanks to Jim and Michael Hodgson for their hard work on this project.

The long roadside hedge has had its annual trim; the permanent Termination Sign has been re-painted and re-positioned on a taller post; and the two spare LED feathers erected at the north end The wooden bases of the 4-Aspects are in the throes of being replaced.

After a long wait, Thomas the Tank Engine has been purchased and is due to join Percy and James on the garden railway at our Big Weekend on 6th and 7th April. The model railway, overseen by Chief Mechanical Engineer, Tony, has become a real favourite with the children, and family visits have increased substantially as word gets around!

The new drivers' Mess-room building in the station car park, also mentioned last time, is nearly fitted-out, and we are told it will open this month for the use of drivers on the Sutton circular routes. We also understand the new Entrance building to Platform 4 and other works will commence building in the early Summer. Something to keep us all interested whilst working in and around the 'box.

John Telford

St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust is a company limited by guarantee registered in England No.4653488.

Regd. Address: 5 Ridgmont Road, St Albans, Herts., AL1 3AG Regd Charity No.1104535 Email: info@sigbox.co.uk Phone: 01727 836131

Newsletter produced by Richard Kirk. Please send items for inclusion to richardnkirk@hotmail.co.uk or contact me on 01727 860047