

ST ALBAN'S SOUTH SIGNALBOX CHRONOLOGY Ed. 3

CHRONOLOGY, originally from members of the Signalling Record Society, as amended 2014 from MR Weekly Notices seen at the National Railway Museum at York by John Webb (Trustee) and added to in January 2023, also by John Webb.

MTX refers to National Archive files, WN refers to Weekly Notices of the Midland Railway for week ending (we), [Gough] refers to "The Midland Railway - a Chronology" by John Gough, published 1989 by the Railway and Canal Historical Society (ISBN 0-901461-12-1). ?? indicates that the source did not give a specific date. BoT = Board of Trade, responsible for overseeing railways at the time. One or two references are also made to the two books by Geoff Goslin "St Pancras to St Albans" and "St Albans to Bedford" published 2002 and 2003 in the Middleton Press "Midland Main Lines" series.

Before 16.08.1877 St Albans South SB (down side) opened [MR Appendix and Gough]

Minute No. 758 (31st March 1868) of the South Construction Committee: "Ordered That Engine Houses be built at Bedford and St. Albans to hold 4 Engines each with Engine Turntables at each place, and that Mr Kirtley fix the sites, and Mr Crossley and Mr Liddell be requested to arrange for the erection of the Buildings." [South Construction Committee]

St Albans engine shed was located on the up side of the line. [Gough]

1868 St. Albans Engine Shed opened [Gough]

- ??01.1892 Up goods line closed and new Up goods line opened from Sandridge to St Albans South. Connection between Up Goods and Passenger lines removed. New Down goods line between St Albans South and North SBs bought into use and Up and Down goods signalled by Block Telegraph between the two. Up goods from Sandridge to North SB signalled by Telegraph Bells. Down Goods line o.o.u . with fixed ground disc signal indicating shunt limit from North Box. [WN for we Jan 09]
- ??03.1892 Sandridge: New 'lie-bye' siding opened alongside the Up passenger line; trains required to use the siding will proceed onto the Up goods and back into the lie-bye siding. They may then proceed on the up Passenger line. [WN for we March 05]
- 13.03.1892 Harpenden Junction – old box closed and new box opened. [WN for we March 19]
- 15.05.1892 New central platform (3&4) bought into use at St Pancras [WN for we May 21 and Gough]
- 22.05.1892 Connection at South SB from up sidings to up main moved south [WN for we May 28]
- 29.05.1892 New points and crossings being laid at the south end of St Albans station. [WN for we June 04]
- 12.06.1892 Reiteration of the opening of new Up Goods from Sandridge to St Albans South as in January '92, including the Down Goods line o.o.u. (Until 9.10.92 when extended to Sandridge & Harpenden.) Signals at Sandridge related to the old Up goods will work onto the new Up goods. [part 1 of WN for we June 18]
St Albans North SB reframed and signals altered. [part 2 of WN for we June 18]
St Albans South SB: old box closed and new box opened. Various alterations to the signals. [parts 3&4 of WN for we June 18]
- 6.1892 Inspected for BoT. South box 36 levers, North box 20 levers. [MT6/583/11]
- 04.09.1892 Harpenden station: Old SB closed and new SB bought into use with alterations to the signals. [WN for we Sept 04]
- 09.10.1892 Up and down goods lines from south of St Albans North SB are extended to Harpenden Junction and are signalled by Telegraph Bells. [part 1 of WN for we Oct 15]
New Intermediate Block Telegraph post named 'Hyde Mill' introduced approx halfway between Chiltern Green Junction and Harpenden Junction. [part 2 of WN for we Oct 15]
Harpenden Junction signals altered. [part 3 of WN for we Oct 15]

- Harpenden Station signals altered. [parts 4&5 of WN for we Oct 15]
 Wheathampstead SB closed and its signals discontinued. [part 5 of WN for we Oct 15]
 Sandridge signals are altered and the fixed ground disc at St Albans North SB limiting travel on the down goods line is removed. [part 6 of WN for we Oct 15]
- we22.10.1892 The two parts of this WN confirm the above arrangements, together with more details of the handling of shunting operations on the goods lines at Harpenden Station using a ground frame. [The above is repeated in the WN for we Oct 29, 1892 and in following notices for some weeks.]
- 1893 (only relates to earth siding at Park Street) [MT6/607/9]
 07.01.1894 Closure of old SB at Park Street and opening of new box. No change to signals. [WN for we Jan 13]
- ??05.1894 New up and down goods line now in use between Chiltern Green Junction and Harpenden Junction making the up and down goods lines continuous between Harlington and St Albans South. [part 1 of WN for we May 05]
- 29.04.1894 Down main line at St Albans South SB under possession for renewal of points and crossings. [part 2 of WN for we May 05]
- 03.06.1894 Up & Down Goods lines between St Albans South SB and Aldenham Junction into use, making the goods lines continuous from Harlington to Elstree South SB. Trains to be signalled by Telegraph Bells. Various changes to be made between St Albans South and Aldenham Junction. (See below) [part 1 of WN for we June 09]
 At St Albans South SB the existing double junction was removed. Numerous alterations to the signals were made, and a new junction between the passenger and goods lines was not to be brought into use until June 10th, 1894. [parts 2&3 of WN for we June 09]
 Park Street – changes made to the signals. [part 4 of WN for we June 09]
 Parkbury Siding – connected to the up goods line by a ground frame. Not to be used for shunting train or engine to allow another to pass. [as for Park Street]
 Harper Lane SB closed and signals taken o.o.u. [as for Park Street]
 Radlett – old box closed and new box opened with altered signals. [part 5 of WN for we June 09]
 Aldenham Junction – SB closed and use of connections and signals discontinued. [part 5 of WN for we June 09]
- 10.06.1894 Engineer's possession at St Albans South SB to lay in new points and crossings on the passenger lines. [part 1 of WN for we June 16]
 New double junction into use, (Up Pass > Goods, Down Goods > Pass) with minor signal repositioning. [part 2 of WN for we June 16]
 New connection from “up back platform line” (the Bay) to Up Goods.
NB - neither of the WN for June 9 or June 16 make any mention of this connection being new; they only contain a reference to a new signal with four arms at the south end of the up platform.
- 14.06.1894 above work inspected for BoT. 44 levers, 35 working. Spare 7 14 24-27 31 32 37. [MT6/663/5]
- 16.06.1895 Passenger lines – engineers working on bridge 101. Repeated frequently in further WNs [WN for we June 22]
- 23.06.1895 The new tunnel from Elstree South to Scratchwood Junction is opened for traffic and the goods lines are continued from Elstree South through the new tunnel.
 From south of St Albans the passenger lines become the “Fast Passenger Lines” and the goods lines become the “Slow Passenger lines” worked by the Block Telegraph System including lines south of Mill Hill to Silkstream Junction which are also opened to passenger traffic.
 New starter (7) on up slow line worked from St Albans South SB with an alteration in the locking. [part 1 of WN for we June 29]

Connection from Bay to Up Slow now adopted for pass trains. [NB Not mentioned in the WN]
[Details of the alterations south of St Albans can be found in parts 2-4 of WN for we June 29]

- 30.06.1895 Some of the locking at St Albans South, Radlett and Elstree South to be removed for alteration.
[part 1 of WN for we July 06]
[part 2 of WN for we July 06 repeats information regarding whistles at various SBs first mentioned in the WN for we June 29]
- 20.10.1895 Possession of lines at south end of Elstree tunnel for the removal of the superstructure of bridge 68 – work in progress for several days. Old Elstree tunnel being worked on as well.
[WN for we Oct 26]
- 6 & 12.95 above work inspected for BoT. interlocking alt. Now 36 working, 8 spare. [MT6/717/3]
- 10.11.1895 Mr Sinclair's siding – points and signal giving connection to the down slow from this siding on the up side of the line being bought into use. Also Engineering possession of up slow at Park Street for laying in points and crossings.
[WN for we Nov 16]
- 12.1895 diagram of this date published in Geoff Goslin's book. 44 levers. Spare 14 24 25 26 27 31 32 37.
- 1896 Diagram drawn by John Hinson of www.signalbox.org
- 1898 O.S. 25" plans show layout as above
- 13.07.1902 Park Street – new connection between the south end of the up siding and the up slow line bought into use. "...will be signalled and worked in accordance with the instructions on page 305 of No. 20 Appendix to the Working Time Table". Alteration to be made in the locking.
[WN for we July 19]
- 09.11.1902 Engineer's possession of the goods lines between North and South SBs to lay in points and crossings. Connection from up back platform line (the Bay) to the up slow line removed. A new crossover between up and down slow lines and a facing connection to the Bay from the down slow will be brought into use from this date. The buffer stop at the north end of the Bay to be removed and line extended to a connection with the down goods line at the North SB. Bay to be signalled as a Terminal Station and is to be used only for down passenger trains terminating at St Albans or up trains starting from that point. Restriction on trains/engines entering the Bay through the connection with the down goods line at St Albans North SB.
[part 1 of WN for we Nov 15]
- . St Albans South SB - Rearrangement of signals and an alteration to the locking for the above.
[part 2 of WN for we Nov 15]
- St Albans North SB – Additional signals and interlocking alteration for the above .
[part 3 of WN for we Nov 15]
- 16.11.1902 Notice confirming above work has been done and bought into use. [WN for we Nov22]
- Various dates: WNs re the bay being signalled as a Terminal Station and trains and engines not to be allowed to enter the bay from the connection with the down goods line worked by the North SB. Eg WN for 1903 we Jan 10.
- 25.01.1903 South SB – some points and signals to be disconnected for new angle blocks to be fitted. Down home signal on the passenger line [fast??] and distant on same post to be replaced by new signals.
[WN for we Jan 31]
- 1903 (month?) above work inspected for BoT. 44 levers. Spare 14 24 25 26 27 [MT6/1138/2]
- 1903 Diagram drawn by John Hinson of www.signalbox.org
- 08.04.1906 At South SB engineers to have possession of fast line to make alterations in the permanent way. Crossover between the passenger lines [ie north of the junctions between fast and slow lines] to

- be removed and replaced by slip points in the junction. Alteration to the interlocking.
- 09.04.1906 Connection between the bay and the down goods line worked by the North SB and associated signals to be removed. Temporary stop to be fitted at north end of the bay.
- 12.04.1906 Engineer's possession of the goods lines to remove points and crossings. Connection with goods yard worked by the North SB temporarily o.o.u. - traffic to enter via the south connection.
- 13.04.1906 Engineer's possession of the goods lines at North SB to alter their positions.
[part 1 of WN for we April 14]
- 13.04.1906 North Box: Old box removed and new box erected on site of old and bought into use.
New connections to goods yard from goods lines and a new carriage siding between up passenger and down goods line, connected to the latter, bought into use with appropriate resignalling. List of the new signals.
[part 2 of WN for we April 14]
- [all the above repeated in parts 1 and 2 of WN for we April 21]
- 15.04.1906 Engineering possessions in turn on the down goods, up goods and up passenger lines to alter connections and the positions of the goods lines. When working on the up passenger line there will be single line working on the down passenger line and up goods trains to be worked through the sidings.
[part 2 of WN for we April 21]
- St Albans South box: The down goods line will take the position of the up back platform (the Bay) line and the up goods line will take the position of the down goods line. Passenger trains to go on the up slow will still start from the up back platform.
A new facing connection from the up goods to the up fast line brought into use.
Commencing at 3am all signals and points will be disconnected for a new lever frame to be fixed.
[part 3 of WN for April 21]
- List of the altered signalling [but without lever numbers] [parts 3 and 4 of WN for we April 21]
- 21.04.1906 Harpenden: Engineer's possession of the goods lines for track alterations.
- 22.04.1906 Harpenden - Major works including:
Down goods to take position of the back platform line and up goods to take the position of the down goods line. South end of back platform to be rebuilt.
Station SB becomes 'South Box' with some resignalling and locking alteration.
A new North SB on the down side of the line opens and takes the place of the ground frame to control access to the north end of the goods yard. It is a Block Telegraph post and regulates trains on both the passenger and goods lines. List of signals controlled by this new box.
[All above in parts 1 & 2 of the WN for we April 28]
- Harpenden Junction: Some replacement signals introduced. [part 2 of the WN for we April 28]
- 13.05.1906 Harpenden North Box: Possession to lay in new points and crossings, with crossings from down passenger to down goods brought into use for traffic purposes and from the down back platform line to the down passenger line for engineering purposes. Alterations to signals detailed.
Harpenden Junction: changes to signals. [parts 1 & 2 of WN for we May 19]
- 14.05.1906 Harpenden and St Albans: Engineers installing awnings on the new platforms alongside the up goods line. Drivers not to exceed 10mph on the goods lines when passing through these stations.
[part 3 of WN for we May 19]
- 10.06.1906 Harpenden: Block Telegraph working to start on the goods lines between North & South SBs.
[WN for we June 16]
- St Albans: Possession of both goods lines to allow extension of station footbridge over them.
[WN for we June 23]
- 24.06.1906 St Albans: Changes to signals on the up passenger and up goods lines worked by both boxes.
[WN for we June 30]
- 01.07.1906 The goods lines between Harpenden Junction and St Albans South are made slow passenger lines and worked by Block Telegraph throughout. The passenger lines from Harpenden Junction to St. Albans South are named "Fast Lines". Some signal and interlocking alterations made at Harpenden North and South SBs.
[part 1 of WN for we July 07]

Sandridge: new starting signals on the slow lines.

St Albans North: New starting signal on down slow, changes to points and interlocking.

St Albans South: Removal of catch points in up goods line and alteration to interlocking.

The engineer will be working on weekdays erecting awnings over the new platforms by the up goods line at Harpenden and St. Albans. [part 2 of WN for we July 07]

(New slow lines platforms into use.)

WN for we July 14: Reiteration regarding the new slow lines being worked by Block Telegraph system throughout and continuing work on the new awnings.

15.07.1906 above work inspected for BoT. 44 levers. Spare 13 14 22 27 34-38 [?MT6/1509/12]

19.08.1906 St Albans South – alteration to up slow line home bracket signal. [WN for we Aug 25]

? Rotary block into use

22.05.1915 St Albans South: distant signals for the down slow line replaced, home signals for that line moved a few yards further from the SB. [WN for we May 22]

18.07.1915 St Albans South and North SBs: fast line homes and distants are moved short distances. [WN for we July 24]

24.10.1915 St Albans South: relaying works on up and down slow lines; changes to the up slow home signals. [WN for we Oct 30]

21.11.1915 St Albans South: Points and signals disconnected and locking removed for cleaning and repairs. [WN for we Nov 27]

05.12.1915 St Albans South and Napsbury SBs: Some locking to be removed for electric locks to be fitted. [WN for we Dec 11]

12.12.1915 Track Circuits (TCs) 424-427, 501-506 into use. Points 15, 17, 29, 33 locked N & R by TCs.

13.12.1915 The instructions in Clause (a) of Rule 55 respecting the reminding of a signalman of the position of a train or engine need not be carried out in the case of trains detained at the down fast and down slow lines home signals worked by the North box and the up fast and up slow line home and starter signals worked by the South box. [parts 1 & 2 WN for we Dec 18]

[Explanatory comments: The fitting of track circuits (TCs) enabled the signalman to be reminded of a train or light engine standing on certain tracks. This removed the need for the fireman to go to the signal box to remind the signalman of the presence of a train. It seems likely that this was part of the MR's works following the Ais Gill accident of December 24th, 1910, when a signalman forgot about two light engines and an express crashed into them. Subsequently some 2,000 locations were to be given TCs.]

14.12.1915 new SB diagram issued. Now held by MR Study Centre but on long-term loan to St Albans South. (44 levers. Spare 3 8 22 23 34 35 36 37 38)

1924 O.S. 25" maps show layout as above

26.11.33 TCs 1614-17 into use at North SB (plan 108/32)

03.12.33 TCs 1618-19 into use at South SB, controlling rotary block. (class C controls?)

1937 O.S. 25" maps show layout as above

(post 1937?) Fast lines crossover relaid further north

30.05.1948 TC 11327 into use, existing TCs modified (plan S/400/47) – Up Slow starter moved further out?
New wiring diagrams issued W.272 to 279/48.

Partial chronology from 1960 onwards:

1960 Diagram drawn by John Hinson of www.signalbox.org of arrangement before engine shed closed.

11.01.1960 St. Albans Engine Shed closed [Gough]
? engine shed sidings t.o.u. – levers 18 24 25 spare
? fast line crossover t.o.u. – levers 32 34 35 37 spare

19.06.1967 St. Albans goods yard closed to public goods traffic

3/5.10.1969 Up Slow to Fast line junction t.o.u. – levers 5 15 spare

19/20.12.1970 North SB abolished, certain signals worked from south box (qv)
Sandridge Down Fast & Down Slow IBS worked from South SB instead of from North
Diagram drawn by John Hinson of www.signalbox.org

06.05.1973 Slow lines facing crossover (lever 4) and associated signal 25 brought into use; fixed stop signal (unnumbered) provided at north end of Up Slow platform to stop further 'wrong line' movement. Crossover 17 fitted with a facing point lock (worked by lever 5) and shunt signal 16 moved to south end of Down Slow platform and altered to a ground-level three-aspect CLS. *(These alterations allowed a train to be terminated in either slow line platform and used as a service train back towards London without the need for any shunting moves.)*

1975 Diagram drawn by John Hinson of www.signalbox.org

17.07.1978 “No.1 Siding situated adjacent to the Down Fast line immediately on the Napsbury side of the box, will be taken out of use pending removal. No.2 Siding will be renamed “Down Siding”.” [Gough]

??.02.1979 Box given a grade II listing by English Heritage.

02.12.1979 Box taken out of use for signalling purposes following installation of colour light signals worked from West Hampstead Power Signal Box. Ground frames control access to the Up Slow and Down Fast sidings.

Unknown: Both sidings and their ground-frames taken out of use at different times between 1979 and 1990.

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JSW October 2014, amended May 2019 and January 2023