



## Then and Now!



Tony makes reference below to the development of the signal box environment. By way of illustration these shots show the remarkable transformation of the garden area. The picture on the left was taken in March 2007 and the one on the right in July 2019. Although from different angles, the changes in the fore and backgrounds are evident.



Richard Kirk

## Remarkable Rise in Visitors in 2019

As most of you will be aware, we count the visitors to the box by issuing them each with a numbered 'railway ticket' as a souvenir. The ticket numbers for 2019 show we had 3,366 visitors; this is a startling 39% rise compared to 2018!

Two new records were set during 2019 - 250 people in one 3 hour Sunday opening in March, and 1,197 over our extended 'Big Weekend' in April. We're obviously doing something right, and our "Excellent" ratings on TripAdvisor keep us around 10th of 50 attractions in the St Albans area - a remarkable achievement. Almost without exception TripAdvisor reports speak of the 'enthusiastic' and 'friendly' volunteers to be found at the box; so our thanks to all who guide our visitors around the site.

John Webb

## Chairman's Words

It has been over ten years now that the signal box has been open to the public for regular Sunday openings and for group visits and in spite of an ever increasing number of visitors many still say that this is their first visit and they have been meaning to come for years. What would they have seen ten years ago? When one looks back at photographs from the beginning and compare them with today's they could almost be different venues. The garden, which although it had some planting and signs of a hedge had little else, now has a wide collection of signals from the very latest LEDs through to a 150 year old Midland style signal. We have lever frames, points, numerous signs, a quarry wagon, a buffet, an interlocking display with miniature signals and a garden railway all gathered over those ten years. The museum now has so many items on display it's becoming difficult to see the walls and still the collection grows. When we first decided we could open to the public the display was basic with a television showing videos in the lock room and a simulator with a up slow only demonstration, but it worked and the public liked coming. It is only the dedication of the membership and the generosity of members, friends and visitors that has allowed the signal box to grow into the fantastic visitor attraction that it is today.

With your help it will continue to grow

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

## 2020 Subscriptions are now due

It is that time of year again when members' subscriptions are due for renewal. The cost is just a minimum of £10 for the year to 31 January 2021, so we do hope you will continue to support the good work of the volunteers.

You will have received a renewal notice by email, or by post with this newsletter. As a reminder, you may pay by bank transfer to the Signal Box account at Metro Bank - sort code 23-05-80, account number 17746944, with your name as reference.

Alternatively, pay by cheque payable to St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust, at 5 Ridgmont Road, St Albans, AL1 3AG; or by cash at the 'box. Those of you who pay by standing order have nothing more to do. Many thanks.

**Rob Little**

## Annual General Meeting

**The AGM will be held on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March at 7.30pm at St Paul's Church Hall on Hatfield Road. Documents are attached to this newsletter, 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.**

## ST JAMES DEEPING SIGNAL BOX

Up in the wilds of Lincolnshire, a signal box is slowly but surely rising from the ashes ... Trust member and former St Albans City station staff member Tim Stevens takes up the story.

St James Deeping signal box was situated on the Great Northern line between Peterborough and Spalding. It was abolished in October 2014 when the adjacent level crossing was automated as part of the line upgrade works. Network Rail intended to demolish the box, but there was an outcry from local villagers, so NR agreed to dismantle it brick by brick and store it, ready for rebuilding on a new site.

Our group was successful in buying a plot of land adjacent to the railway line, 200 yards from the original location. Work on rebuilding is now well under way. We are very fortunate to have the help of Stamford College, whose Building and Construction students are gaining hands-on experience in the rebuilding work. This not only saves us money, but is a valuable community project.

When we install the signalling equipment, we plan to include a computer simulation. Hopefully the St Albans technical experts will be able to help us! It won't be as complex as St Albans, we only have two tracks to signal, not four.

At present the site is a construction area and is closed to visitors. But we look forward to welcoming members and supporters of St Albans Signal Box to St James Deeping before too long. In the meantime, further information about the project is available from me on 01778 349003, or visit our website at [stjamesdeepingsignalbox.org.uk](http://stjamesdeepingsignalbox.org.uk).



**Left: St James Deeping signal box in its original position, note the modern steel staircase. Right: one of the new boundary posts in the garden. Far right: the PW gang at work relaying the garden railway with a more substantial track bed.**



## Progress at the 'box

We're into the third decade of the 21st Century and of the 'Box's restoration history! A relatively mild Winter to date (global warming?) has ensured gardening could continue unabated. The long hedge on the roadside received its annual trim, with help from Michael and Caroline, and a branch rubbing against the side of the Buffet removed using Tony's chainsaw. A start was made on clearing down the flowerbeds, and more bulbs planted at the same time. The woodpile was finally sorted out and surrounding area cleared by Martin. Much surplus wood went to the tip, and open fires/wood burners! David and Peter have spent a lot of time clearing the embankment.

On the artefact front our two new boundary posts have been erected, and will be painted in the Spring. Tony hung our latest signs in the Museum, on the shed, and in the garden. Richard has nearly and nobly finished removing old ballast and replacing it with new gravel around the 'Box, with all our 56 rail chairs now in position. The released ballast will be used around the Midland ground frame and linked signals; and John W has erected and wired up the lamp accompanying the Southern Ground Signal. This now adds further lighting to the garden display. Jim has cleaned and painted our fog signal, and made two new mini-signal arms, and its erection and linking to signals is on the To Do list.

The 'big' project of re-basing the model railway continues, and 100 breeze blocks and sharp sand were recently delivered with great precision, by Selco, craning the two pallets over the hedge between the shed and tall LED signal, down onto the concrete. The breeze blocks will be progressively cemented in position by Tony, Jim and Michael, in order to provide a more stable base for the tracks which hopefully won't warp in various weathers and temperatures.

**John Telford**



# St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust

5 Ridgmont Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 3AG

Tel: 01727-836-131

www.sigbox.co.uk

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Formal Notice is hereby given that the 2020 Annual General Meeting of the Trust will be held at St Paul's Church, Blandford Road, St Albans, AL1 4JP on Wednesday, 11th March at 7pm for a 7:30pm start of business.

## AGENDA

1. Welcome and apologies for absence
2. Approval of the 2019 AGM minutes
3. Matters arising from those Minutes
4. Chairman's report *Tony Furse*
5. Finance Director's report and adoption of accounts *Rob Little*
6. Election of Trustees: Rob Little and Keith Webster have served for three years and are willing to stand again for election.
7. Trustee reports:
  - Membership *Rob Little & Les O'Leary*
  - Visits to the box and maintenance *John Telford*
  - Artefacts and 'Outside The Box' *Richard Kirk*
  - Publicity and Museums *Richard Kirk & John Webb*
8. Any other business

## Refreshments

### Followed by a talk by Mr David Fenner on "The Next Steps in Railway Signalling"

Mr Fenner has worked on signalling, including the St Pancras-Bedford line in the run-up to electrification and subsequently on other signalling matters.

*(Please Note: a collection will be taken for the Railway Children charity at the request of our speaker in lieu of a speaker's fee.)*



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**Heritage Lottery Fund**

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### ELECTION OF TRUSTEES

- In accordance with the Articles of Association of the company, one third of the Trustees (the longest serving members) are required to resign at the Annual General Meeting. This year these are:

Rob Little and Keith Webster  
(Both are willing to stand again for re-election.)

*Members are asked to vote on the election of these candidates at this AGM or by Proxy vote on the form on the following page.*

- There are no retirements from the Trustee Board at this AGM.
- Since the 2019 AGM there have been no resignations or appointments of Trustees.

Members of the Board already empowered to stand for at least one more year are:

Richard Allen  
Tony Furse  
Richard Kirk  
Les O'Leary  
John Telford  
John Webb

Further Nominations to the Board may be made in writing, giving the name of the Proposer and Seconder and accompanied by a letter of agreement from the Nominee.

Proposer, seconder and nominee must be fully paid-up Members of the Trust.

These should arrive by 6pm on Saturday 7th March 2020 to:

John Webb (Company Secretary),  
17, Meadow Close,  
London Colney,  
ST ALBANS,  
AL2 1RQ



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## PROXY FORM

If you are unable to attend the AGM but wish to vote on any matter arising - eg Trustee elections - please complete this form, including signing and dating it.

I, (Name) .....

of (Address).....

.....

being a member of the Trust hereby appoint Tony Furse (Chairman) as my proxy<sup>[1]</sup> to vote on my behalf at the AGM of the Trust to be held on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and at any adjournment thereof.

Your proxy will vote as he/she thinks fit unless specific instructions are given here:

.....

### NOTE [1]

If you wish to appoint someone other than the Chairman, please cross out his name above and write in the name and address of your chosen proxy here:

.....

**Signed:** .....

**Date:** .....

Completion and return of this Proxy Form will not preclude members attending and voting at the AGM should they subsequently decide to do so.

Please return this form to:            John Webb (Company Secretary)  
17, Meadow Close,  
London Colney,  
ST ALBANS,  
AL2 1RQ

To be valid, this form must be received no later than 6pm on Saturday 7th March 2020.