



New recruits

As recent newsletters have recorded there has been a most welcome number of new members who have joined the Trust over the last 12 months. In addition, as John notes below, a number of these have also become regular volunteers helping with the maintenance and running of the Box and garden. This is a very positive trend and long may it continue!

Richard Kirk



Left: new volunteers are given guidance in the operation of the simulator and lever frame.

Right: Richard Kirk accepts a new artefact from Network Rail's Nick Debellaigue and Stuart Leach. See page 3 for the story.



Chairman's Words

Spring has sprung, but continuing rain has hindered a number of our Work Days, Open Afternoons and the Half Term opening. Amazingly, we seem to get more Visitors to Open Afternoons when it's a poor weather forecast – but we're not complaining! As mentioned before, work days are also limited when the weather is bad and progress is put back. To compensate, the garden is currently full of spring colour, and leaves are sprouting all over the place.

St. Albans was successful in a recent poll of Hertfordshire Towns to be allocated its own version of Monopoly due out in October. We have applied to be one of the thirty places on the board and await the outcome. Selected pictures from the HACRO photography course we ran at the 'Box are going to be displayed on the Station to potentially launch during Community Rail Week this month, and there is also talk of an exhibition of the photos at the Cathedral in October. Also, Nick Hazell of Radio 92.6FM is walking the Alban Way this month for a live programme on the old railway line, interviewing locals, and we have a slot.

Most fortunately we have had some success in obtaining new volunteers, and our thanks to Laura, Derek, James, James (yes, two James'), Robert and Tom, who have been coming along and getting stuck in. Our spate of ill health with some of the old hands is gradually abating, and improved weather should see our work output increase. A departure from our normal routines was helping clear a house in Chiswell Green of masses of railwayana. This was asked of us by St. Albans solicitors who were tasked with selling the house, and our friends at North London Model Engineers were also involved.

No news, unfortunately, on approaches to Network Rail re our lease, but we press on!

John Telford



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

2024 Subscriptions are now due

Thank you for your support over the last year. It is now time to renew your membership for the year to 31 January 2025 if you have not done so already. The cost is just a minimum of £10, so we do hope you will want to continue to support the work of the Trust and our volunteers.

You can 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, you can pay by cheque payable to St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust, and send directly to me at 20 Flavian Close, St Albans, AL3 4JX or by cash when attending one of our open days.

Please note: as mentioned in the last newsletter a small number of members have not renewed for the last year or two, and we really would encourage you to consider continuing your support of the Signal Box. If you decide not to continue your membership this maybe your last newsletter.

Rob Little

Welcome

Welcome to the following who have joined the Trust since the last newsletter:

Laura Butler from Harpenden
Richard Hunt from Harpenden

James Eagles from St Albans
Michael West from Croxley Green

We hope that they all enjoy their membership and will visit the Box as often as possible.



Progress on the L&NWR signal as reported below.
On the left work has been completed on the signal post.
On the right the metal work has been test fitted together with the two arms – and it worked!
The arms have gone away for one of our members to apply some tlc before final assembly.



Progress at the Box

Don't say it too loud, but has summer finally broken out? After one of the wettest springs ever, it is possible that we might finally be seeing signs of summer. Yet again, despite the poor weather, our team of volunteers have still managed to get a lot of work done around the grounds, putting wellies and waterproofs through their paces!!!!

The damage to the shed roof, reported last time, has now been fixed. To celebrate, both the shed and buffet have been treated to a new coat of wood preservative.

After several rain delays the timber for the new balcony outside the signal box window has been installed; whether John W volunteered or was press-ganged into being the first to step out of the window and walk on the balcony has not been determined!!!

Elsewhere, the signal box window sill, the garden station benches, entrance gate and several of our railway signs have been re-painted and look fantastic. The picnic tables have also been varnished and weather-proofed.

Restoration of the double arm LNWR signal has continued. All associated metalwork has been re-painted and attached, the signal lamps have been beautifully restored and re-painted, the signal arms are in the process of being restored / re-painted and the hole, where the signal will stand has been dug (along with many sung renditions of 'The hole in the ground' by Bernard Cribbins).

As always gardening continues apace to keep the garden looking wonderful.

Adrian Wootton

Summer BBQ

This year's summer barbecue for members and family will be held on Saturday 3rd August from 2pm. Catering arrangements are still to be sorted and if necessary further information will be sent to members. To defray the costs we ask for a donation of at least £5 per head. Bring your own drinks. Please let Richard know (contact details at the bottom of page 2) if you are going to attend.

New Acquisition

Back in January we were contacted by Tim Hedley-Jones the Executive Director of the Railway Heritage Trust to see if we were interested in a possible new acquisition. The item was an NUR notice board complete with its final notices that had originally been in the rest room at Euston Power Signal Box. When the Box was due to be demolished to make way for HS2 a senior official rescued it and moved it into store in King Cross PSB with a view to it being offered to the National Railway Museum. Covid then intervened and the board was all but forgotten until discovered by Nick de Bellaigue a Network Rail Programme Manager. Nick was due to retire at the end of the of March this year and wanted to find a good home for the board before then. He quickly established that the NRM was not interested and turned to Tim Hedley-Jones for help. We gladly accepted the offer and on 20th March the board was delivered to the Box by Stuart Leach a signalling engineer with Nick accompanying him.

The notice board has now been mounted on the wall of the operating floor with all its old notices on display. One intriguing item is a booklet that has been turned with only its plain back cover on display. Unfortunately the board did not come with a key so we are at present unable to turn it round the right way! If any members have any small cupboard/drawer keys please bring them to the Box to see if we can find a fit!



The new notice board now in position on the operating floor wall. The mystery booklet is in the bottom right hand section.

Two recent interesting movements passed the Box are shown below. On the left 46100 'Royal Scot' seen with support coach working south from Barrow Hill to Southall on 9th May. On the right the 'reimagined' 'Midland Pullman' High Speed Train set returning on 12th May from Cricklewood to Crewe having worked a special trip the day before from St Albans to Carlisle and return.



Annual General Meeting Report

The Trust's AGM took place on Monday 4th March at St Paul's Church Hall. 25 members and Trustees were present with a further 5 members joining the meeting via Zoom. 6 apologies were recorded.

The usual formal reports were submitted to the members and approved and the retiring Trustees, Richard Allen, Tony Furse and John Telford were duly re-elected for a further 3 year term.

John Telford outlined the events of the previous year many of which have been recorded in the newsletter and Rob Little summarised the healthy financial position of the Trust following the grants received during Covid and the bequest that accompanied the L&NWR signal. The full minutes of the meeting will be made available to members at the 2025 AGM.

The meeting lasted for just under an hour and, after a break for refreshments, recently retired local railwayman Bob Kemp gave an illustrated talk on his career on the railway.

Bob Kemp's career

Before starting on the railway Bob was a trainspotter and recalled the delights of watching Deltics at King Cross. Later he became involved in 1973 in the rescue of GWR Pannier Tank No. 3738 from Barry scrapyards and its movement to Didcot Railway Centre. (The loco was subsequently restored but is now currently out of service and on static display at Didcot.)

After completing a Mechanical Engineering Degree at Portsmouth Polytechnic Bob joined the Graduate Trainee Scheme of British Railways in 1980 and was initially posted to York Carriage Works. The Scheme involved fast track movement around BR to gain comprehensive knowledge subsequent to which Bob was appointed Senior Technical Officer at Stratford Depot. He then moved on to various other locations including a spell as a Senior Instructor at the Derby Railway Engineering School before arriving at Derby Locomotive works and later the Railway Technical Centre at Derby including involvement in Class 60 and Class 92 locomotives from Brush Traction.

Later Bob was a Project Manager overseeing, on behalf of the Train Operator, the production, testing and introduction of new trains including Classes 175, 180, 185, 360 and 380. He was heavily involved in the development of the Class 700s for Thameslink.

After this Bob was looking to move towards retirement and took on the role of advisor to projects including the development of the new rolling stock for Trans Pennine Express and the Class 701s for South Western Railway.

Bob retired in 2023 after 41 years on the railway. In his spare time now he regularly volunteers at the De Havilland Museum.



Another recent retiree after over 40 years of railway service is local resident Robin Groth. We were pleased to help Robin ease into his new status by hosting a visit to the Box for him and over 20 colleagues from all over the network. The photograph shows the party lined up for the usual 'family' portrait with Robin third from the right of the front row.