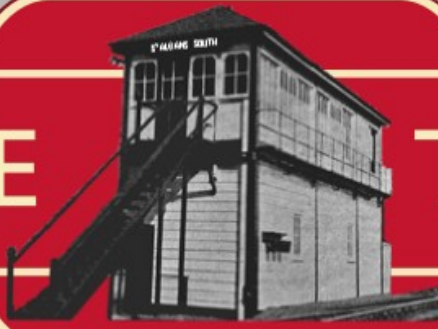


131 Years old

1892 to 2024

OUTSIDE



THE BOX

Newsletter August 2024 Issue 77

IT'S UP – Another one! (see page 2)

In Issue 73, 12 months ago we announced the successful erection in the Box garden of the North Eastern Railway slotted signal after many months of restoration work. A year on and we can now proclaim a similar outcome for the London & North Western Railway double arm yard signal. Later in this issue we tell the story of this acquisition – or what we know so far – prior to its arrival in St Albans. Its restoration and returning to operational use will be told in a future edition.

The usual note asking for volunteers for next month's Heritage Open Weekend openings appears below. I hope that as many members as possible will be able to help over the weekend and look forward to hearing from you in good time so that I can complete the rotas.

Richard Kirk

Chairman's Words

Although we've been open to the public now for 15 years and tried constantly to publicise ourselves, we still have visitors who say they'd not heard of us until now! We know we have been successful in making our Thomas and Friends model railway known to young families via Facebook and Mumsnet, so it has been useful recently to have had an airing on Radio 92.6FM (previously Radio Verulam) and an article in 'Now', a local magazine circulated to 7,000 homes. Do continue to spread the word!

Regarding our future plans it has also been helpful to receive groups who could lobby for us: NR Managers celebrating a colleague's retirement; other NR Managers via Member, David Smith; and senior figures from the Midland Railway Society.

Our LNWR Signal is finally up and working, largely due to efforts by Tony, Adrian and Richard K, plus others. Recently some NR contractors offered to erect the post with their crane, but the cement for the base had not cured sufficiently. More about the project elsewhere.

Better weather at last has enabled gardening and painting to press ahead, and the Spring to Summer floral display has been wonderful. We now have some pavement ramps available following an increase in wheelchair visitors, and will host a further visit from Rodney Chabot from our sister 'Box in Connecticut, USA. In September we are hosting a group from our friends at Romsey Signal Box.

We will also be celebrating the launch of photographs taken at the 'Box by visitors from HACRO on a training programme; along with a mural featuring the 'Box by children from Fleetville School and the Daylight Club. The Members' BBQ on 3rd. August went well with a good turnout of around 40.

Fortunately, several new, younger Members are coming regularly, which is great, and reminds us all of the need to procure the next generation of 'Box custodians.

John Telford

HERITAGE OPEN WEEKEND

As Richard mentions above, our HOD opening this year will be on Saturday 7th and Sunday 8th of September. The opening will be from 10am to 5pm both days. The success of the weekend, as always, relies on members volunteering to help with the organisation and operation of the event. Setting up starts from 9am and the days will be divided into roughly 2 hourly slots. If you are able and would like to help please let Richard know as soon as possible. Please indicate which day(s) and for what hours you are available. This will enable him to establish a rota. Contact him on 07855282664 or email richardnkirk@hotmail.co.uk



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



Adrian and Tony demonstrate the newly erected London and North Western Railway yard signal. Only the arm facing into the garden is intended to be operated by visitors. A stand has been built in front of the signal to make access to the operating handle easy.



Welcome

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

Callum Seabrook of St Albans

Jessica Young of Leverstock Green

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

Progress at the Box

Although work was concentrated on the final restoration of the double arm LNWR signal, as outlined elsewhere, our team of dedicated volunteers still managed to complete / continue with other restoration / maintenance work around the grounds.

The Southern WWII ground signal has been moved to a new position at the east of the garden and is now visible from the operating floor of the signal box. The plan is to connect this to lever 28, giving us a second signal operated from the box.

During one of our open days, we suffered a 'signal failure' of the NER 'slotted' signal (just shows that we do try to make a visit to the box as realistic as possible!!). Inspection of the signal mechanism revealed that the wooden signal chain pulley supports had rotted and had allowed the pulleys to become loose. The errant supports were replaced and the signal was restored to working order by the next open day.

Our memorial to the railway personnel from St Albans that lost their lives during the World War is undergoing a full restoration and will be re-dedicated in the future.

An LNER 'Beware of the Trains' cast-iron notice has been fully restored and located next to the LNWR double signal and garden railway to warn our younger visitors to beware of Thomas & friends.

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

Many thanks to all our volunteers for all their hard work, without who we would not have such a fantastic museum. If anyone would like to help, please come along on Wednesday's from 11am **Adrian Wootton**

The London and North Western Railway Yard Signal – Part One

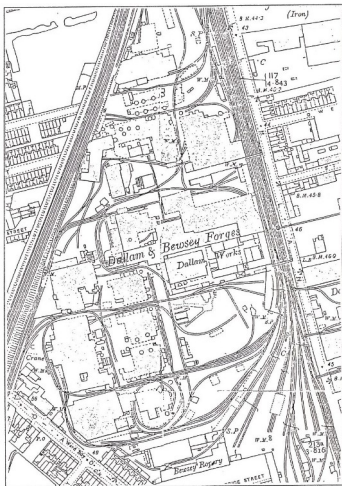
Some years ago a visitor to the Box on an open day, when leaving, mentioned how impressed he was with what the Trust had achieved. He also said that he had a signal in his garden that he would leave to us when he passed away. No more was thought of this until early 2023 when a solicitor contacted Tony Furse to advise that Philip Millard had died and had left us a signal in his garden in Woking! Thus began the journey of that signal to St Albans and the research into its history.

Original location

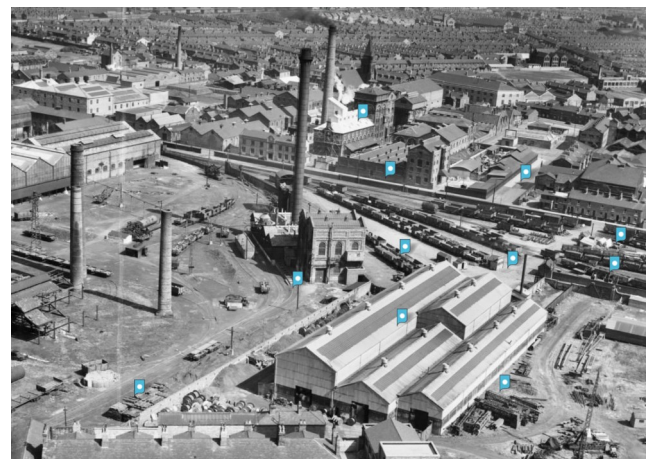
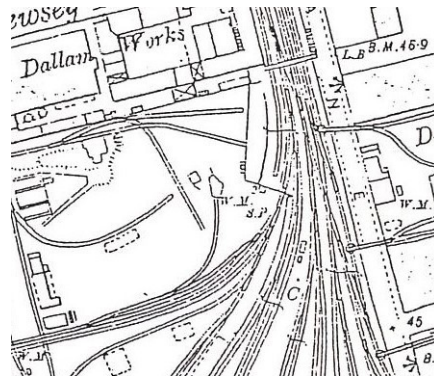
Our signal was built by the London and North Western Railway (LNW) at its Crewe works about 1890. It was situated in Dallam Lane goods yard to the north of Warrington Bank Quay station. The first railway into the town, the Warrington and Newton, was built from the north. It opened in 1831 and terminated at the end of Dallam Lane. In 1837 the Grand Junction Railway (GJR) opened what is now part of the West Coast Main Line through Warrington, bypassing Dallam Lane. The latter became an extensive goods yard in use well into the 1960s serving many industrial units on both sides. The original station building from 1831 survives and has for many years been the Grade 2 listed Three Pigeons public house! The GJR was a founder member of the LNW when this was established in 1846.

One of the industrial units adjacent to the yard started out life as the Dallam & Bewsey Forges part of Pearson & Knowles Coal & Iron Co from 1874. By 1930 the steel works had become part of the Lancashire Steel Corporation that was briefly nationalised in 1951 before being part of the British Steel Corporation in 1967. The works closed in the 1980s. It was this factory's complex rail yard that was served by our signal. The sidings themselves were very extensive with a number of factories connected by wagon turntables or, as in the case of the Forges, by direct rail link through gates that marked the boundary between the railway company's land and the factory's ownership.

Detailed maps of the area clearly show the location of the signal and it can be spotted in aerial photographs from 1949.



Dallam and Bewsey Forges from the 1907 25in OS map (Warrington Borough Council – Library, Museum & Archives Service)



Clockwise from upper left:
1907 map of part of the sidings complex at Dallam Lane; detailed extract showing location of the signal (sp); aerial photograph from 1949 of the factory yard and sidings; detailed extract with the signal visible in the upper centre; a brake van rail tour visited Dallam Lane in 1967, our signal is clearly visible as is the connection into the Lancashire Steel works; view from the 1960s showing the entrance to the works with an industrial shunter clearly visible inside.



What's special about this signal?

The signal consists of an extremely large post with two lower quadrant stop signal arms. In its original position it was attached to the railway side of the outer wall of the Lancashire Steel works with an operating platform placed around it on top of the wall. Access to this appears to have been by a ladder placed inside the factory site. As far as we have been able to ascertain so far, the signal arms were manually operated as there was no signal box in the sidings complex. The 1960s picture on page 3 suggests that there were pulley wheels on the platform that may have been connected to a ground frame in the factory yard below. The height of the platform would have given the operator good visibility of the surrounding railway network and we have surmised that one arm controlled movement into the factory and the other arm for the exit. Photographs seen so far only show the, upper, entry arm in use.

When recovered by the Trust from Philip Millard's garden the end of the operating lever for the upper arm had clearly been shaped into a handle for manual use whilst the lower arm lever had not. Our pictures are not clear enough to establish what the levers looked like when in operation – were they as seen now or did Philip fashion one to make it easier for him to operate? In addition the two large lamp holders that sit behind each arm were different when retrieved from Woking. The one behind the upper arm had lenses and had had an electric light fitting installed by Philip. This has now been restored and a new LED light installed. The other lamp holder had no lenses and was a complete blank. Is this how it was in Warrington or was a replacement fashioned by or for Philip?

Philip acquired the LNW signal in 1972/73 and erected it in his garden in Woking. It is understood that he had to shorten the post due to rotting!

Previous owner

Philip Anthony Millard was a railwayman, modeller, retailer and member of many railway and other societies. He was regarded by the LNWR Society, of which he was a long standing member, as an acknowledged expert on LNWR carriages and wrote a number of books on the subject as well as contributing articles to various society journals. Details of his railway career are vague but we believe at one stage he was the Principal of BR's Senior Management Training Centre at Woking. He was a keen modeller and was the proprietor of a retail shop 'Home of O Gauge' in Raynes Park. His home was full of beautifully detailed models and other railwayana all of which have been bequeathed to various societies. Philip died in January 2022

Community Projects and the Box

Towards the end of last year Govia Thameslink Railways (GTR) announced the winners of their community grants. St Albans Arts Group won three awards, to work with Hertfordshire Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders (HACRO) in a photography course, the creation of a mural with Fleetville School and the creation of a quilt to be made by a group of ladies of Bangladesh origin from the Cottonmill area of St Albans. The finished results of all 3 projects would be displayed in St Albans City Railway Station..

Our signal box was chosen as the base around which the photography course would be run and a professional photographer was employed to teach a group of ex offenders how to take quality pictures rather than holiday snaps. As the weeks progressed the pictures got better and better until we had 42 high quality art photographs of the signal box and its surrounds. Unfortunately GTR rejected those that showed East Midlands Trains and then rejected those photographs taken at night that showed our signals glowing in the dark as they might 'confuse GTR drivers'. The photographs were intended to be mounted on the railings at the back of the platforms therefore not in the drivers line of site at all. The railings themselves presented a problem, would the mounting of the photographs make the railing unstable in a high wind.? Sadly this still has to be resolved but the photographs will go on display at the Signal Box on 21st August and on our web site.

More problems ensued when it was realised that the mural produced by the school would need planning permission to be erected on the outside of the station, not budgeted for and that the quilt might contain religious symbols and therefore cannot be displayed.

A lot of people put a lot of work into these projects it would be sad to see them never completed. I will tell you if these problems are resolved in the next edition.

Tony Furse



Two of the photographs that didn't make the final cut. left: 'Go for green' by Anton; right 'reflection' by Joe