



# Outside the Box

St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust [www.sigbox.co.uk](http://www.sigbox.co.uk)

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## What's in a name?

Why is our signal box not called plain 'St Albans'? Why was the name not changed when the North box closed in 1970 as happened at Harpenden in 1933 on the demise of its North box. In the early days of the railways many stations in places like St Albans had no suffix to their names, being identified merely by the owning company (see an example on the ticket on page 2). The London and North Western and Midland stations only became 'Abbey' and 'City' respectively in 1924 after both became under the control of the LMS. The Great Northern station did not become 'London Road' until 1950. For whatever reason City station reverted to St Albans in 1988 although interestingly the departure boards at St Pancras still show the full name and the signal box now has one of the former 'City' running in boards. I have no answer for the questions posed above, however it is clear that with all the efforts of the Trust and its members the name of ST ALBANS SOUTH is now becoming well known as an excellent community led project and an example for others to follow.

Richard Kirk

## Chairman's Words

### MEMBERS' BENEFITS

Monday evenings have until recently been devoted to training members who want to learn how to operate the signalling simulation programme. However it has been decided that the signal box will be open to all members who want to come along and enjoy the box, operate the lever frame and instruments and generally share in each others company. In essence Monday evenings will now be Club Nights. Members are welcome from 7.30pm onwards. On Wednesday afternoons Les O'Leary and his ground works team are in

attendance and again all members are welcome along to join in or enjoy a cup of tea and a chat.

### WORKING DAYS

The second Sunday of each month continues to be the main working day and all members are invited to come for however short or long a period they wish. There are always jobs to be carried out both light and not so light. The box and grounds are open from 10.00am onwards.

### SIGNAL BOX OPEN DAYS

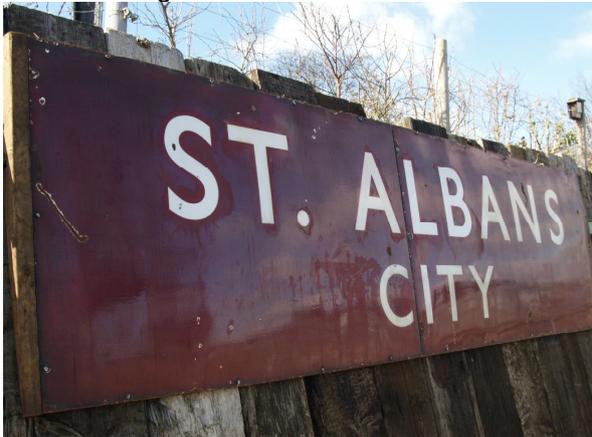
Members are reminded of the procedure for signing up to help show off the signal box and garden to the public on our regular open days (second and fourth Sundays each month until October). Log on to the website [www.sigbox.co.uk](http://www.sigbox.co.uk), click on 'members', enter the username 'siguser' and the password 'stalbans'. Then add your name on your selected dates. We then know if we have enough people to cover the box being open. BUT if you don't have access to the internet, come along anyway. The Open Days run from 2.00pm to 5.00pm

Keith Webster

### Visitors to the Box

The number of pre-arranged visits to the signal box has increased in recent months. Groups have included members of the University of the Third Age, Civil Servants Motoring Association, Herts Heritage Fund and earlier this month 22 cubs from the 9th St Albans pack. Visits can be arranged during the daytime as well as in the evening. If any members know of groups that would like to arrange visits please contact me on [Jtelford@btinternet.com](mailto:Jtelford@btinternet.com)

John Telford



Top: City station running in board now installed in the signal box grounds. Middle: City station totem recently sold at auction for £900. Bottom: a more recent City station board now on display at the box.



12.05pm Luton to Westbury stone empties passes signal No.6 on 9th August 1973 behind Class 52 1016 'Western Gladiator'. Photo courtesy of John Lewis



Winners of the 2008 St Albans Civic Society Award

Newsletter produced by Richard Kirk. Please send items for inclusion to me at [richardnkirk@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:richardnkirk@hotmail.co.uk) or contact me on 01727 860047



The Trust has recently been fortunate to acquire a second Midland Railway lamp post. Some work needs to be done before it can go in the garden. Here David Choppin is hard at work whilst Keith supervises!

## ARTEFACTS

The Trust's collection of artefacts continues to grow and details of some of them will be in future Newsletters. A recent acquisition is the signal box diagram from Esholt Junction in West Yorkshire. A detailed article about this Midland Railway box and its workings appeared in Back Track magazine for April 2007. If any members become aware any items that may be of interest to the Trust either on loan or donated please contact Tony Furse on [tony.furse@dsl.pipex.com](mailto:tony.furse@dsl.pipex.com) or

## ROMSEY VISIT

A number of members enjoyed a very interesting visit in February to Romsey signal box in Hampshire. This is another community based project that has restored the local signal box although in the case of Romsey it has been moved away from its original position. More details will follow in later editions. Visit their website at [www.romseysignalbox.org.uk](http://www.romseysignalbox.org.uk)

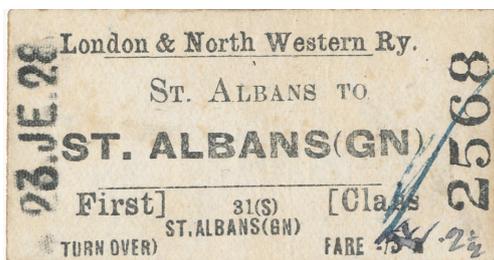
## KEEP 'EM ROLLING!

Howard Green reminds us that many steam locomotives on the Midland Main Line were fitted with a vacuum and steam brake valve and if a train was brought to a stand at a home signal it took a minute or so to re-create the vacuum to be able to re-start. It was therefore advantageous to keep the train rolling if at all possible. The down main at Napsbury was on a 1 in 176 rising incline. If Napsbury could not get 'line clear' from St Albans South the Napsbury signalman could not clear his signals. To keep the train rolling the driver, on passing the distant signal at caution would creep up to the home signal. As soon as he hit the track circuit the Napsbury signalman would slowly raise the home signal allowing the train to roll on to the starter by which time Napsbury had, hopefully, got 'line clear' from St Albans South.

The photograph shows BR Class 9F 92110 skirting Napsbury up slow platform in August 1959 and passing the up slow starter. On the left is the Napsbury down main splitting home signal (Howard Green)



## Interesting or Unusual Journeys from the Past No.1



A first class single from the Abbey station to London Road station originally printed by the L&NWR. It was however not issued until the days of the LMS being dated 23 June 1928. The fare appears to have been amended from 3 to 2½ old pence (1p). Who would make such a journey and why first class? The distance is shown in the working timetables as 60 chains (¾ mile) and trains took approximately 3 minutes to travel between the stations. So our passenger would hardly have had time to settle into his or her first class compartment before getting out at the end of the journey! Quite possibly this was someone who had arrived by train into the Abbey station from the Watford direction and rebooked. The July 1922 Bradshaw shows 8 GN departures from the Abbey to Hatfield on weekdays plus one extra on Thursdays (no Sunday service). All would connect with incoming LNWR services (25 arrivals) some tighter than others. There was little change in the train pattern up to World War Two. An historical journey to dwell on, if only it could be repeated today!

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](mailto:info@sigbox.co.uk) Phone: 01727 836131

## OUTSTANDING SUBS

Thank you to everyone who has paid their subs. A reminder is included with this newsletter for those who have yet to renew.

## BBQ - 10th JULY

This year's BBQ will be held on Saturday, 10th July from 1.00pm onwards. Food will be provided but bring your own drinks. A donation will be sought on the day to cover the cost of the food. Friends and family are invited, but please let us know via email or phone how many are coming so we know how many to cater for. See you there!

## MUG COMPETITION

The Trustees are reviewing the entries received. Thank you for your efforts.

## Coming soon!

## STEAM PAST THE BOX

UK Railtours 'Midland Tornado' rail tour on Monday 26th July is a circular trip from London Victoria to Gloucester and back and is scheduled to return up the Midland Main Line passing through St Albans at around 8.00pm (provided it does not get cancelled like many other planned steam trips through St Albans have recently). Keep a check on details on [www.uksteam.info/tour/trs10.htm#twk](http://www.uksteam.info/tour/trs10.htm#twk)

## 'LOST TRACKS' EXHIBITION

The previously postponed exhibition at the Museum of St Albans devoted to the closed branch lines of Hertfordshire is now expected to take place later on this year. The opening date has not yet been announced but is expected to be in late September. The Trust will be providing some of our artefacts for the exhibition. The Museum held a reception last month at the signal box for some of the exhibition contributors. For details see [www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk](http://www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk)

*'The Midland Railway Company are erecting a large signal-box on the south side of St Albans Station.'* From Herts Advertiser 28 May 1892

# Editor's comment

At first glance, the prospect of transforming a Victorian railway station into a café by day and an Indian takeaway by night might seem incongruous. Already there are suggestions that such a use is not what many people want to see at Bricklet Wood Station on the Abbey Flyer line. But as those who use the boarded-up station know, the building is in a poor state of repair and not at all welcoming. So if nothing is done, it will fall increasingly into wrack and ruin. The idea of transforming it into a heritage centre seems to be the perfect solution for many, with both the Abbey Flyer Users Group and the parish council clearly wanting to see it preserved in

keeping with its Victorian heritage. But the reality of the situation is that such a venture is unlikely to build up a head of steam. It does happen from time to time – witness the sterling work achieved by the enthusiasts who have restored and reopened the old St Albans Signal Box. But such dedication is in short supply, even more so in these days when both parents have to work to make ends meet and spare time is at a premium. Most people would agree that a café is a welcome daytime addition at a station – who hasn't sat waiting for a train and wished they could have a drink or snack to wile away the time – and although an Indian takeaway at night might seem an

incompatible use, it will make the area busier and discourage vandalism. So while heritage centres and the like might be an excellent idea, the reality is that little Bricklet Wood is unlikely to attract the funding necessary for such a venture and can't afford to let its station decay even further.

**Newsletter Electronic Supplement No.1 Recent Publicity**

# First things first on special weekend

RESIDENTS came first on the weekend dedicated to giving them a chance to enjoy everything the St Albans district has to offer. There were plenty of opportunities for them to take part in the eighth Residents First Weekend – and a large number of local people did just that. Organised by the district council, various attractions were open free for the day and there were many special events and offers available, including restaurant deals and special offers in local entertainment and leisure venues. Charles Baker, the council's tourism and regeneration officer, said the weekend had been very successful. He went on: "Everywhere has been very busy, particularly

Butterfly World, The Organ Theatre, Signal Box, Redbourne Watermill, Tyttenhanger House and Verulamium Museum to name a few." A number of events required tickets to be collected from the Residents First Information Point and once again, the tours of the Abbey roofspace were the number one hot ticket. St Albans tour guides took over 180 people into the cells and courtroom at the back of St Albans Town Hall while the Abbey Guides showed over 120 residents up the Tower. See the full gallery of Residents First Weekend pictures at [www.hertsad24.co.uk](http://www.hertsad24.co.uk)

4 February 2010



## Signalling a new era for railway attraction



HUNDREDS of people flocked to St Albans station at the weekend for the grand opening of a newly restored signal box. After seven years of planning and restoration works, the St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust unveiled the gleaming red and yellow box at the south end of St Albans station to a crowd of 750 people on Saturday afternoon. The move to restore the listed 1982 former Midland Railway signal box began in 2002 when a group of local residents came together to try and save the crumbling structure, which was last used in 1980. With help from the Railway Heritage Trust and the Heritage Lottery Fund, the trust had the box professionally underpinned, replaced all the rotten wood, painted the outside in the correct colours and even fitted a simulator inside so that visitors can see how it used to work.

At the launch, which was attended by executive director of the Railway Heritage Trust Jim Cornell, visitors had the opportunity to take a first look around the box and its surrounding garden before enjoying tree traction engine rides in the sunshine. Chairman of the Trust Keith Webster said he had a lovely day: "I talked and talked about our signal box to anyone who would listen and it was nice to meet fellow enthusiasts. "Mr Cornell was amazed at the transformation and when he first saw it he exclaimed, "It's alive!" That's just the kind of response we were hoping for." The signal box is open between 2pm and 5pm on the second and fourth Sundays of each month until the end of September. Admission is free – see [www.sigbox.co.uk](http://www.sigbox.co.uk) ■ More photos on our website at [www.hertsad24.co.uk](http://www.hertsad24.co.uk)



Thomas Groth, five, from St Albans



17 September 2009

# The Herts ADVERTISER

Visit our website at [www.hertsad24.co.uk](http://www.hertsad24.co.uk)

## Celebrating district's finest new architecture

Annual St Albans Civic Awards recognise outstanding achievements and building blunders over the past year – do you agree with the judges' decisions this time round?

**THE rich heritage of St Albans continues to influence modern developments and restorations, something which is championed by the annual Civic Society Awards, an influential celebration of the finest architectural work completed within the district over the past 12 months.**

This year's prestigious event took place in a packed Maltings Arts Theatre and marked a record number of completed schemes, covering everything from flat conversions through to the extensive restoration of a railway signal box.

It was this particular scheme which won over the judges, as the work undertaken by the St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust highlighted not only the remarkable work on restoring the listed former Midland Railway signal box, but was also an example of an entire community coming together for

the benefit of their environment. The seven year project began in 2002 when a group of local residents met to try and save the crumbling structure, which was last used in 1980 and dates back to 1892. With help from the Railway Heritage Trust and the Heritage Lottery Fund, the trust had the box professionally underpinned, replaced all the rotten wood, painted the outside in the correct livery and even fitted a simulator inside so visitors can see how it used to work.

The judges praised the trust's work, including architect Melanie Canaway and builder Richardson Builders Ltd., and said: "This project fulfilled all our criteria and more – a nugget of St Albans' railway heritage, rescued from dereliction by voluntary effort and fund-raising, now a real community asset."

Their citation added: "A wonderful

example of community involvement in the historic fabric of the city. This small but vital part of our Victorian railway system has been saved from dereliction by inspired voluntary effort and fund-raising and is a shining, ongoing asset for residents and visitors alike."

Keith Webster, chairman of the Preservation Trust, said afterwards: "We are very pleased and honoured to be awarded the Civic Society award for our work at the St Albans signal box."

"We are a local community group that got together to save this derelict building and put it to good use. When we started we were unsure whether the residents of St Albans would be interested in an old signal box but we have had nearly 2,000 visitors this year."

"To receive the Civic Society award has now confirmed to us that it is recognised as a valuable asset to the community and the environment of St Albans."

"The project has shown what a group of volunteers can achieve with little more than the determination to do something about it" and at no cost to council taxpayers."

Elsewhere in the district, the Society was less complimentary. They strongly criticised the new multi-storey car park at City Station for destroying the sense of space that used to greet the rail traveller arriving from London and, although they appreciated the restoration of the Town Hall, they questioned the validity of awarding the ground floor catering contract to a firm with no understanding of its elegant Georgian interior, who had simply crammed in its own corporate neo-colonial fittings.

This year's awards were judged by Jude Dyson, Roy Darby, Donato Cincicco and Marion Hamman, and presented by St Albans Mayor Cllr Chris Oxley.

Marion praised the wonderful standard of restoration which has taken place across St Albans, which she said is not only of benefit to the people who have shown the great commitment to taking on such projects, but also means so much to their local community and can transform a street scene.

Cllr Oxley said: "It is all too easy for some owners of historic buildings to severely damage their integrity. However, it was a great pleasure for me to present the Society's commendations to those who clearly love the building they currently own and have done thrilling and tasteful refurbishments that will bring pleasure to residents for many years to come."

"Congratulations to all those who received commendations and particularly to the trust that has refurbished and now maintains the old railway signal box, which won the award, and will

now be protected by loving volunteers." Cllr Melvyn Teare, portfolio holder for culture and heritage, said afterwards: "I am very pleased to receive the endorsement of the Civic Society on the major refurbishment of the council house undertaken at the Town Hall, especially as it was completed by local talent in Roy Darby as architect and the Borras

Construction Group." The signal box, which is located by St Albans City Station will be open on Sunday, November 8, from 2-5pm. The railway museum downstairs will include videos and a slide show and there will be continuous signalling demonstrations on the operating floor upstairs.



**St Albans Town Hall**  
Client: St Albans City & District Council;  
Architect: Roy Darby;  
Builder: The Borras Group.



**The Stationmaster's House, Ridgemont Road, St Albans**  
Project devised and carried out by: Daniel and Natalie Newby-Ricci;  
A charming example of Victorian railway architecture, which through painstaking and loving refurbishment has been returned to its former miniature splendour.



(Left) The grand opening of the restored signal box earlier this year and (below) the presentation of the Civic Society Award to representatives from the St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust



22 October 2009



## Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line

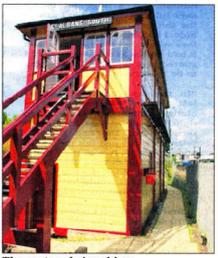
FEBRUARY 2010

Magazine No. 119

£2.50

### St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust

The 'Scotch Expresses' which travelled over the S&C to/from London St Pancras passed many Midland Railway signalboxes as they did so. We have two such boxes in preservation (at Armathwaite and Settle) and members may care to know of another – St Albans South. For details please see the website: [www.sigbox.co.uk](http://www.sigbox.co.uk)



The restored signal box.

**Signal box open**

A HISTORIC landmark in St Albans is open to the public following seven years of restoration.

The south signal box will now be regularly open to visitors thanks to the preservation trust which has worked hard to bring it back to life.

Twice a month, members of the public will be able to take a look back at the district's heritage with a visit to the box.

A formal unveiling took place on Saturday during the Heritage Open Days weekend.

The move to restore the Grade II listed 1892 Midland Railway signal box began in

2002 when a group of local residents got together in a bid to save the structure which was last used in 1980 and was in danger of falling down.

Rotted wood has been replaced and the outside has been repainted all thanks to sponsorship from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Railway Heritage Trust and the efforts of the signal box's preservation trust.

The signal box is located along the Midland Mainline a the south end of St Albans City Station.

More information can be found on the website [www.sigbox.co.uk](http://www.sigbox.co.uk)



The Mayor with the winners of the award.

A LOCAL award for architecture was presented last week at a ceremony in St Albans.

The Civic Society Award was presented to the St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust last Wednesday for its signal box project. Architect Melanie Canaway and Richardson Builders Ltd were commended by Marion Hamant of the Civic Society on 'A wonderful example of community involvement in the historic fabric of the city.'

This small but vital part of our Victorian railway system has been saved from dereliction by inspired voluntary effort and fundraising, and is a shining, ongoing asset for residents and visitors alike.'

It was deemed that prizeworthy schemes in this era of recession, were as ones involving restoration, renewal and repair.

The ceremony was held at the Maltings Arts Theatre, in front of a full house of members and local dignitaries. The winning project was rescued from dereliction by voluntary effort and fundraising and is now considered a real community asset.

**Signalling success**

THE restored historic signal box in St Albans is celebrating a successful year since it reopened last spring.

Built in 1892, the Grade II listed St Albans South signal box was left abandoned, derelict and crumbling before a group of residents united to restore and transform it back to its former glory.

Volunteers who formed the St Albans Signal Box Preservation Society have worked hard to bring the landmark back to life.

Over the past year the box has welcomed some 2,000 visitors and the trust has announced its plans for the rest of 2010. Between April 11 to September 26 it will be open to the public on the second and fourth Sunday of each month between 2pm and 5pm. In early September the National Heritage Open Days weekend will see extended opening times.

As well as drawing in the crowds the trust has also celebrated a St Albans Civic Society annual award.

For more information visit [www.sigbox.co.uk](http://www.sigbox.co.uk)

October 2009

16 September 2009

Hertfordshire  
**Countryside**

**ST ALBANS SOUTH SIGNAL BOX**

Your readers may be interested to learn that the Signal Box was formally opened during the Heritage Open Weekend in September. A commemorative plaque was unveiled by Jim Cornell, Executive Director of the Railway Heritage Trust. The Trust has been one of the biggest sponsors of the restoration project.

Over 700 visitors came to see the Signal Box during the weekend. Following this success it has been decided that public openings will

continue throughout the year. The next two will be on Sundays November 8th and December 13th between 2pm and 5pm. Entry is free. Dates for 2010 will be posted on the Signal Box website in due course.

The Mayor presented the Civic Society award to Keith Webster, Chairman of the Trust in a ceremony at The Maltings. The citation stated it was: 'A wonderful example of community involvement in the historic fabric of the City. This small but vital part of our Victorian railway system has been saved from dereliction by inspired voluntary effort and fundraising, and is a shining, ongoing asset for residents and visitors alike'. We are all very pleased with the recognition and appreciation that has been shown to the project by the award.

**SIGNAL BOX**

Congratulations on your 600th edition and thank you for printing my article on the restoration of St. Albans South Signal Box.

With more than 100 members and grants totalling over £120,000 the Trust has certainly made good progress since the initial meeting of

locals in 2002. St. Albans South Signal Box now presents a colourful sight to visitors arriving in St Albans and a reminder of former glories to all those regular travellers who pass it on the way to and from work. Although more restoration work remains to be carried out I am pleased to advise your readers that the signal box is now open to the public on the second and fourth Sundays of each month until the end of September from 2pm to 5pm. Entry is free although donations are welcomed. Please check the website for up to date information: [www.sigbox.co.uk](http://www.sigbox.co.uk)

The Trust is planning a formal re-opening in September during the Heritage Open Weekend.

If any of your readers have any old photographs of the signal box or St. Albans station area generally or have any recollections of the same that they are willing to share with the Trust, I would be very interested to hear from them. Please contact me via the website or by phone on 01727 860047.

17 March 2010



August 2009

Below:  
Jim Cornell,  
Executive Director  
of the Railway  
Heritage Trust (left)  
one of the main  
sponsors and  
Keith Webster  
Chairman of the  
St. Albans  
Signal Box  
Preservation Trust



14 - Hertfordshire Countryside

November 2009



St Albans signalbox in May 2009 with Britannia 4-6-2 No 70013 Oliver Cromwell passing with Steam Dreams 'Cathedrals Express' bound for Sheffield. M CORLEYSASBPT

**St Albans 'box now open to visitors**

CONSERVATIONISTS have finally opened St Albans South signalbox to the public after a restoration programme lasting seven years. The Grade 2 listed Midland Railway Type 2a 'box' will open on the second and fourth Sundays of each month between 2pm and 5pm until the end of September. A formal opening of the 1892-built structure is due to take place on Saturday 12 September at the start of the Heritage Open Weekend.

The move to restore the signalbox and its tumbler lever frame began in 2002 when a group of local residents got together to try and save the structure that was last used in 1980 and was in danger of falling down. With the help of sponsorship from the Railway Heritage Trust and the Heritage Lottery Fund, the box has been professionally underpinned, rotted wood replaced and the outside repainted in correct colours, with assistance from the National Railway Museum.

Internally members have restored the lever frame to working order and replaced many of the instruments.

A simulator allows the working of the box to be demonstrated to visitors and the trust has plans to expand this aspect to include the whole of the frame.

A small plot of land around the box has been included in the area leased to the trust by Network Rail and this has been landscaped to form a garden area for visitors.

Admission is free.

**STEAM joins GWR for 175th Anniversary event**

THE Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway has joined forces with Swindon's STEAM museum in a bid to provide the best event to mark the 175th anniversary of the Great Western Railway in 2010.

It is hoped to have up to 14 locomotives in steam during a GWR 175 event from 22-30 May.

STEAM officials are helping to co-ordinate the event in conjunction with planned activities at Swindon. Topping the bill will be Toddington-based GWR unofficial record-breaker No 3440 City of Truro.

It will be joined in traffic by newly restored GWR 2-8-0 No 2807, the oldest surviving member of its class.

The railway also hopes to have Collett 0-6-0 No 3205 - the engine which launched public services on the Severn Valley Railway in 1970 - provided that its repairs at the South Devon Railway's Buckfastleigh workshops are completed.

Negotiations to bring in a King and a Castle are also under way.

Kings were barred from the route because of a weight restriction on a bridge in Cheltenham, south of the line's current Racecourse terminus.

**IN BRIEF**

**Corris models**

THIS year's Corris Railway Model Railway and Toy Exhibition will take place in Corris School over the 29-31 August Bank Holiday weekend.

**Hitting a new peak**

THE Snowdon Mountain Railway has reported an unprecedented demand for tickets to the mountain summit following the opening of the new Hafod Eryri summit visitor centre.

The railway said ticket sales were up nearly 30 per cent over budget, as more than 1000 visitors a day have been using the 106-year-old rack-and-pinion line to reach the peak.

**Flypast for 9F**

AN RAF flypast is to accompany the public launch of a new Dapol N gauge limited edition version of BR

**ST ALBANS MODEL RAILWAY EXHIBITION**



**2010 ARENA**

**16th & 17th January**



*Visit the Award-winning Signal Box!*

St Albans South Signal Box is pleased to announce that we are open during the 2010 CMRA Exhibition from 10am to 4pm on both Saturday and Sunday. We are a couple of hundred yards from the entrance to Platform 4 of St Albans City Station in Ridgmont Road, off Victoria Street. These Open Days for CMRA visitors initiate our second year of regular public opening for this 1892 structure, the largest preserved Midland Railway box in the country and the only one preserved where it worked, overlooking the Midland main line.

As recounted in last year's Exhibition Guide, the box, disused since 1979 but listed Grade 2 in 1980, was saved from Network Rail in 2006 by a Building Preservation Trust set up by local residents. Major structural works were undertaken, and much work has been done since to restore the 1906 Midland 'tumbler' interlocking lever frame and set up a simulator to demonstrate the workings of the box. The grounds around the box have also been the subject of considerable work by our members; besides a wide range of plants we now have two signals operated from the box.

Our efforts in restoration were crowned this year by the St Albans Civic Society granting us their top award for 2008, against strong competition from other public and private buildings, citing "A wonderful example of community involvement in the historic fabric of the city...inspired voluntary effort and fund-raising...". So our thanks to those who have assisted us by their donations or by becoming members of the Trust.

We shall be open from April to September on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of each month from 2-5pm. Light refreshments will be available. See our website [www.sigbox.co.uk](http://www.sigbox.co.uk) for the latest information. And our thanks to the CMRA for this chance to tell you about Hertfordshire's only public railway preservation project.

Opposite are photographs of the box and the lever frame.



A scene from one of the 2011 visiting layouts, Camp 93, Parsons Lumber Co by Richard Turner.

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# RAILWAY MODELLER

**Steam Heritage**

**BRITAIN'S MOST INFORMATIVE GUIDE FOR MUSEUMS, RAILWAYS & EVENTS**

## Award-winning St Albans South signal box opening dates 2010

St Albans South Signal Box opened to the public in spring 2009, and by the end of the year well over 2,000 visitors had called. They saw the restored signal box and the signalling simulation, operated the levers and enjoyed the garden area. 2009 culminated in the Trust being given the St Albans Civic Society's annual award.

The Trust now announces its opening plans for 2010.

From April 11 to September 26 it is open on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month between 14.00 and 17.00. From October onwards it reverts to winter times, opening only on the 2nd

Sunday of each month. Entry to the signal box is free on the public Open Days; light refreshments are available.

The National Heritage Open Days Weekend, 11 and 12 September, will see extended opening on both days from 10.00 to 16.00 together with extra attractions. Other special openings may take place, and party visits can be arranged.

St Albans South Signal Box is the largest preserved Midland Railway box in the country, and is still in its original 1892 position.

Full details can be found on the Trust website at: [www.sigbox.co.uk](http://www.sigbox.co.uk)

May 2010



### St Albans South opens

AFTER seven years of planning and restoration, St Albans South Signal Box is now open to the public on a regular basis. The 'box stands in its original position alongside the Midland Mainline at the south end of St Albans City station.

The move to restore the Grade 2-listed 1892 former Midland Railway Type 2a signal box and its tumbler lever frame began in 2002, when a group of local residents teamed up to try to save the structure, which was in danger of falling down.

Internally members have restored the lever frame to working order and replaced many of the instruments. A simulator

allows the working of the box to be demonstrated to visitors, and the Trust has plans to expand this aspect to include the whole of the frame.

A small plot of land around the box has been included in the area leased to the Trust by Network Rail and this has been landscaped to allow access to the box and to form a garden area for visitors to enjoy.

The 'box is open on the second and fourth Sundays of each month, between 2pm and 5pm until the end of September.

A formal opening is due to take place on Saturday September 12 2009, at the start of the Heritage Open Weekend.

No. 70013 Oliver Cromwell passes the 'box on the down slow line on June 6 with Steam Dreams 'Palatine'. RICHARD KIRK



August 2009



# Outside the Box

St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust [www.sigbox.co.uk](http://www.sigbox.co.uk)

email: [info@sigbox.co.uk](mailto:info@sigbox.co.uk)

Tel: 01727-836131

## What's in a name?

Why is our signal box not called plain 'St Albans'? Why was the name not changed when the North box closed in 1970 as happened at Harpenden in 1933 on the demise of its North box. In the early days of the railways many stations in places like St Albans had no suffix to their names, being identified merely by the owning company (see an example on the ticket on page 2). The London and North Western and Midland stations only became 'Abbey' and 'City' respectively in 1924 after both became under the control of the LMS. The Great Northern station did not become 'London Road' until 1950. For whatever reason City station reverted to St Albans in 1988 although interestingly the departure boards at St Pancras still show the full name and the signal box now has one of the former 'City' running in boards. I have no answer for the questions posed above, however it is clear that with all the efforts of the Trust and its members the name of ST ALBANS SOUTH is now becoming well known as an excellent community led project and an example for others to follow.

Richard Kirk

## Chairman's Words

### MEMBERS' BENEFITS

Monday evenings have until recently been devoted to training members who want to learn how to operate the signalling simulation programme. However it has been decided that the signal box will be open to all members who want to come along and enjoy the box, operate the lever frame and instruments and generally share in each others company. In essence Monday evenings will now be Club Nights. Members are welcome from 7.30pm onwards. On Wednesday afternoons Les O'Leary and his ground works team are in

attendance and again all members are welcome along to join in or enjoy a cup of tea and a chat.

### WORKING DAYS

The second Sunday of each month continues to be the main working day and all members are invited to come for however short or long a period they wish. There are always jobs to be carried out both light and not so light. The box and grounds are open from 10.00am onwards.

### SIGNAL BOX OPEN DAYS

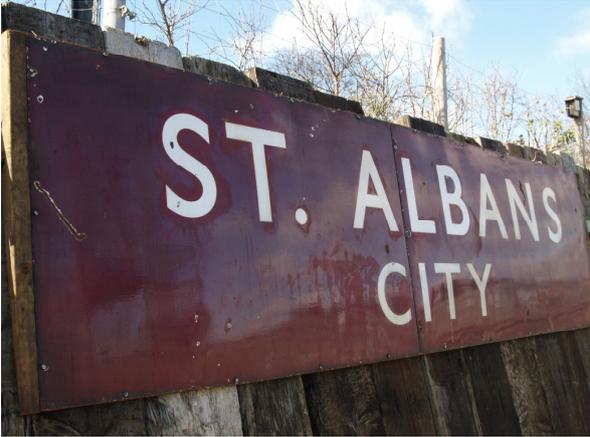
Members are reminded of the procedure for signing up to help show off the signal box and garden to the public on our regular open days (second and fourth Sundays each month until October). Log on to the website [www.sigbox.co.uk](http://www.sigbox.co.uk), click on 'members', enter the username 'siguser' and the password 'stalbans'. Then add your name on your selected dates. We then know if we have enough people to cover the box being open. BUT if you don't have access to the internet, come along anyway. The Open Days run from 2.00pm to 5.00pm

Keith Webster

### Visitors to the Box

The number of pre-arranged visits to the signal box has increased in recent months. Groups have included members of the University of the Third Age, Civil Servants Motoring Association, Herts Heritage Fund and earlier this month 22 cubs from the 9th St Albans pack. Visits can be arranged during the daytime as well as in the evening. If any members know of groups that would like to arrange visits please contact me on [Jtelford@btinternet.com](mailto:Jtelford@btinternet.com)

John Telford



Top: City station running in board now installed in the signal box grounds. Middle: City station totem recently sold at auction for £900. Bottom: a more recent City station board now on display at the box.



12.05pm Luton to Westbury stone empties passes signal No.6 on 9th August 1973 behind Class 52 1016 'Western Gladiator'. Photo courtesy of John Lewis



Winners of the 2008 St Albans Civic Society Award

Newsletter produced by Richard Kirk. Please send items for inclusion to me at [richardnkirk@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:richardnkirk@hotmail.co.uk) or contact me on 01727 860047



The Trust has recently been fortunate to acquire a second Midland Railway lamp post. Some work needs to be done before it can go in the garden. Here David Choppin is hard at work whilst Keith supervises!

## ARTEFACTS

The Trust's collection of artefacts continues to grow and details of some of them will be in future Newsletters. A recent acquisition is the signal box diagram from Esholt Junction in West Yorkshire. A detailed article about this Midland Railway box and its workings appeared in Back Track magazine for April 2007. If any members become aware any items that may be of interest to the Trust either on loan or donated please contact Tony Furse on [tony.furse@dsl.pipex.com](mailto:tony.furse@dsl.pipex.com) or

## ROMSEY VISIT

A number of members enjoyed a very interesting visit in February to Romsey signal box in Hampshire. This is another community based project that has restored the local signal box although in the case of Romsey it has been moved away from its original position. More details will follow in later editions. Visit their website at [www.romseysignalbox.org.uk](http://www.romseysignalbox.org.uk)

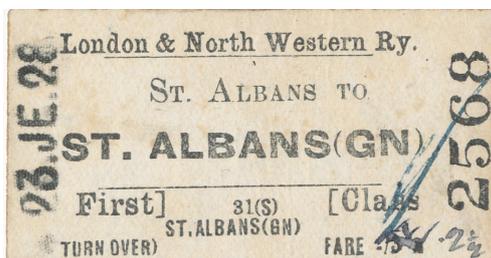
## KEEP 'EM ROLLING!

Howard Green reminds us that many steam locomotives on the Midland Main Line were fitted with a vacuum and steam brake valve and if a train was brought to a stand at a home signal it took a minute or so to re-create the vacuum to be able to re-start. It was therefore advantageous to keep the train rolling if at all possible. The down main at Napsbury was on a 1 in 176 rising incline. If Napsbury could not get 'line clear' from St Albans South the Napsbury signalman could not clear his signals. To keep the train rolling the driver, on passing the distant signal at caution would creep up to the home signal. As soon as he hit the track circuit the Napsbury signalman would slowly raise the home signal allowing the train to roll on to the starter by which time Napsbury had, hopefully, got 'line clear' from St Albans South.

The photograph shows BR Class 9F 92110 skirting Napsbury up slow platform in August 1959 and passing the up slow starter. On the left is the Napsbury down main splitting home signal (Howard Green)



## Interesting or Unusual Journeys from the Past No.1



A first class single from the Abbey station to London Road station originally printed by the L&NWR. It was however not issued until the days of the LMS being dated 23 June 1928. The fare appears to have been amended from 3 to 2½ old pence (1p). Who would make such a journey and why first class? The distance is shown in the working timetables as 60 chains (¾ mile) and trains took approximately 3 minutes to travel between the stations. So our passenger would hardly have had time to settle into his or her first class compartment before getting out at the end of the journey! Quite possibly this was someone who had arrived by train into the Abbey station from the Watford direction and rebooked. The July 1922 Bradshaw shows 8 GN departures from the Abbey to Hatfield on weekdays plus one extra on Thursdays (no Sunday service). All would connect with incoming LNWR services (25 arrivals) some tighter than others. There was little change in the train pattern up to World War Two. An historical journey to dwell on, if only it could be repeated today!

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](mailto:info@sigbox.co.uk) Phone: 01727 836131

## OUTSTANDING SUBS

Thank you to everyone who has paid their subs. A reminder is included with this newsletter for those who have yet to renew.

## BBQ - 10th JULY

This year's BBQ will be held on Saturday, 10th July from 1.00pm onwards. Food will be provided but bring your own drinks. A donation will be sought on the day to cover the cost of the food. Friends and family are invited, but please let us know via email or phone how many are coming so we know how many to cater for. See you there!

## MUG COMPETITION

The Trustees are reviewing the entries received. Thank you for your efforts.

## Coming soon!

## STEAM PAST THE BOX

UK Railtours 'Midland Tornado' rail tour on Monday 26th July is a circular trip from London Victoria to Gloucester and back and is scheduled to return up the Midland Main Line passing through St Albans at around 8.00pm (provided it does not get cancelled like many other planned steam trips through St Albans have recently). Keep a check on details on [www.uksteam.info/tour/trs10.htm#twk](http://www.uksteam.info/tour/trs10.htm#twk)

## 'LOST TRACKS' EXHIBITION

The previously postponed exhibition at the Museum of St Albans devoted to the closed branch lines of Hertfordshire is now expected to take place later on this year. The opening date has not yet been announced but is expected to be in late September. The Trust will be providing some of our artefacts for the exhibition. The Museum held a reception last month at the signal box for some of the exhibition contributors. For details see [www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk](http://www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk)

*'The Midland Railway Company are erecting a large signal-box on the south side of St Albans Station.'* From Herts Advertiser 28 May 1892