

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Newsletter August 2017 Issue 49



'Nearing the end' On 27th October 1959 only a few months before steam ended on the local services a very dirty and wheezy 2-6-4 tank 42685 starts the 8.24am to St Pancras and passes St Albans South 'box. Photograph taken by Peter Bland and shown courtesy of Bryan Cross.

Continuing to spread the word

Recent excursions with the Trust gazebo have taken us to St Albans Steam Rally at Oaklands College and the St Albans Country Fair at Highfield Park. At both events we have joined with our friends from the North London Society of Model Engineers who were operating their portable track giving train rides. At both the Trust was able to distribute a large number of leaflets and talk to visitors to encourage them to come and see us at the 'box. As a consequence, at a recent Open Day, we welcomed over 100 visitors during the 3 hour session. This may well have been a record for a regular opening and goes to indicate that there are still plenty of folk out there who have yet to experience the delights of the Signal Box, its garden and ever expanding collection of railway artefacts. It also encourages us all to continue to spread the word about the 'box at every opportunity.

Richard Kirk

Chairman's Words

Once again as we approach the autumn we have to think ahead to the Heritage Open Days (HoD) which occur each year on the second weekend of September. This is usually our busiest weekend of the year with many hundreds of visitors squeezed into the box over the fourteen hours that we are open. It is difficult to think of new attractions each year with which to encourage previous visitors to HoD to want to come again but with the old favourites: Jim's ride on steam railway, Peter's traction engine rides, the garden railway with the friends of Thomas the Tank Engine, the fantastic photographic display, the 00 gauge railway plus the garden and museum displays and the operating demonstration all at no charge these still have to be a big draw. This year on the Sunday we also have a visit from Pauline Hazelwood a well known children's author and railway artist who will bring her display of books and paintings along with her model train. If you would like to take part in this fantastic weekend email Mary on mary.webster@btinternet.com and tell her when you are available and she will find you a role. No specific skills or knowledge are required just a friendly face and a willingness to show off our signal box. I am sure that if you try it you will really enjoy yourself and help create a good weekend for visitors and members alike.

Alas membership numbers are declining slightly, perhaps its our age, and so we are putting together a hand out to encourage visitors to join, when it is published I will ensure you all get a copy and would urge you to recruit a friend or like minded colleague.

It was good to see so many of you at our BBQ even if it was through the smoke, thanks to all who gave their time to make it a success. See you at HoD.

Tony Furse



Trust Chairman, Tony Furse is presented with the Train Staff and Key from the Harpenden to Hemel Hempstead branch (see below) by ex-railwayman and Trust member David Ford. The handover took place at the recent barbeque. David and his wife had travelled up from Cornwall where they now live. David saved the Staff when the branch was closed in 1979.



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

Dates for your Diary

August 13th and 27th - Open Days
September 9th and 10th – Heritage Open Weekend
October 8th and 22nd – Open Days

Please contact Tony Furse or any of the other Trustees if you can help on any of these occasions .

Members' Open Day: on Thursday 14th September members of the Trust are invited to join the members of the North London Society of Model Engineers at their outdoor railway site at Colney Heath. The site will be open from 12 noon until late afternoon. Some food and drink will be available for which a donation will be appreciated. For details of the location please refer to the Society's website <http://www.nlsme.co.uk/>

Awayday 1

On Sunday 2nd July a group of Trust members and friends paid a return visit to Sir William McAlpine's railway and museum at Fawley. On this occasion the weather was glorious and all had a most enjoyable time. Keith Reeve was the lucky winner of the draw to undertake a footplate ride on the 0-6-0 tank locomotive that energetically pulls its train up the steep 1 in 13 incline through Sir William's park land. On a number of the runs the engine was driven by Trust member Mark Hamlin who is a volunteer at Fawley. In the picture below Mark can be seen undertaking shunting manoeuvres at the end of the afternoon.



Awayday 2

Tuesday 25th July also produced good weather for the band of Trust members who travelled to East Grinstead. There they were met by members of the S & T Department of the Bluebell Railway for a conducted tour of the signalling installations on the Bluebell. All 3 of the signal boxes and their associated equipment were visited and the workings explained by the hosts. There was also time for some refreshments, a look around Sheffield Park sheds and, of course, a ride behind steam. The trip was arranged as a reciprocal visit following the S & T guys' tour of St Albans South during 2016. The shot below shows the signalman at Sheffield Park relaxing awaiting the departure of the last train of the day



Progress at the 'box

Receiving the Mayor of St. Albans Recognition Award, 2017 gave us a great uplift and spurred everyone on to greater things. Most of the greater things, however, have amounted to even more maintenance, cleaning and re-painting! In spite of a dry Spring, the garden has sprung into life, without admiring visitors realising how much pruning and cutting is involved - spear or rather secateur-headed by Howard, along with welcome newcomer David. Tony and Howard removed a large branch from our silver birch tree, which partially snapped in earlier high winds. Fortunately, the model railway below was unharmed, and the wounded tree is recovering.

The trunking and handrail on the lower path have been cleaned and re-treated by John W and Michael, The banner repeater has had an inside clean and re-paint, and both mini-level crossing gates have been sanded and re-painted, with new red discs attached. The LNWR ground frame base has also had a new coat of paint, as have all three garden signals - so everything looks fresher and brighter.

After four years, we have arranged for the re-painting of the outside of the 'box this year, and in preparation Michael has replaced the warped panel in the door to the Operating Floor. It has now been under-coated in readiness for the re-paint by our painter, Peter, who started on 12th July. Michael has also repaired our two wooden garden tables. John W and Jim have moved the Open Days signboard nearer to the gate, and we have put up an official no trespassing sign to try and deter a recent spate of youngsters climbing over the fence and eating takeaways in the garden. Long, hot Summer evenings seem to have encouraged this trend, and local and British Transport police have been made aware.

As well as work-parties, our displays at shows are in full swing, as are private visits to the 'box, so come along and join the fun!

John Telford