



50 NOT OUT!!

Keith produced the first issue of *Outside the Box* (see left) nearly 15 years ago in February 2003. It outlined the aims of the newly formed Trust, had a brief history of the 'box and included some recent press comments and details of membership. He edited a further 9 issues before handing over the John Bull Printing Kit to me in 2007. Since Number 1 came out the box has been restored inside and out, and painted three times; the garden has been planted, developed, rearranged and pruned umpteen times; artefacts galore have been donated and given to the Trust to fill all the nooks and crannies, and nearly twenty thousand visitors have paid us a call. All these happenings have been carefully recorded in the various issues of *Outside the Box* and back copies are available on the website and in the folder in the 'box for all to see and trace the story

What, I wonder, will the next 50 editions record? Hopefully continued progress in maintaining the aims of the Trust from issue No1 – 'to secure its long term viability as a museum and heritage attraction'.

Richard Kirk

Chairman's Words

Feedback is a very useful tool for organisations like ours. We are run by enthusiastic volunteers who strive to be professional in their presentation so that our visitors can obtain the best experience from their visit; but are we achieving that goal? We have often thought that we should ask visitors as they leave about their experience but as our visitor numbers increase this becomes a very difficult operation. On a recent three hour open afternoon we had over one hundred visitors looked after by a small hand full of members, certainly no time to ask if their visit had been worth while, hardly time to show them round.

We have two sources of feedback that we rely upon, our Facebook page and Trip Adviser both of which seem to record glowing testimonials especially towards the 'friendly and helpful staff' that have shown them round. This week I have for the first time received a feedback e-mail from the organisers of Heritage Open Days, The National Trust, passing on a comment left of their web site :-

Event: St Albans Signal Box and Railway Museum

Feedback: Fantastic! I took my two children aged 1 and 5 and my 5 year old has never had so much fun. Everyone was very kind to him, they explained lots of things, lots of demonstrations and things he could join in with including lots of levers and bell ringing! They didn't mind how many questions he asked and let him play with things. He wants to go back everyday! Brilliant day out.

This is the first feedback we have received from the HOD organisers but lets hope it's the first of many. Well done to all those who gave their time and effort over what was a very busy weekend.

This is the last 'Outside the Box' before Christmas so although it seems very early let me wish you all a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year

Tony Furse



November 1st Feb 2003
Volume 1, Issue 1

Outside the Box

St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust
www.stalbox.co.uk

Lights at green for the Signal Box:

- Company is Incorporated
- Railway heritage Trust give their support
- Network Rail agree to lease



This month:

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What's it all about?

In 2001, a group of St Albans residents decided that the signal box at the end of their road had been left to decay for 25 years too many. It could surely be put to a better use than a pigeon nesting box (they get in through the cracks in the boards).

So we looked at possibilities and talked to the Railway Companies and the end result is a determination to save the Grade 2 listed signal box, as the only other alternative is to let it fall down.

We also discovered that it still contains a rare Midland Railway signal lever frame.

In order to accomplish this goal, we have set up a Building Preservation Trust to enable us to get grant support.

Many costs will have to be covered, not least of which is the safety and security of a building approximately 1911 from a live high speed train line.

Once the building is restored the second phase of the plan will begin, to secure its long term viability as a museum and heritage attraction. It is hoped that the building room (the ground floor) will be used by a local model railway society for its layouts.

History of the Box

The box was the second at this location, replacing in 1892 the original 1877 structure which had only contained sixteen levers. The larger box was required in connection with the quadrupling of the Midland main line.

Originally, the second set of lines were for goods traffic only, but these were upgraded to passenger status in 1903. The box is of standard Midland Railway design, prefabricated in Derby.

was added in the late 1940s in anticipation of the installation of a larger lever frame which never took place.

The box and its 1906 lever frame was declared to be a historic monument and listed grade 2 in 1979. It is a local landmark and, unusually, the interior contents are part of the preservation order.

After closure, several unsuccessful efforts were made to have the building removed to an alternative site.

St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust is a Company limited by guarantee registered in England No. 04333482. Registered office: 9 Kingsway Rd, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3AQ



Recent steam past the box. Top: 60009 Union of South Africa on 23 September. Below: 60103 Flying Scotsman on 4 November. Both trains were bound for York. 60103 also passed through on 15 September. Next steam run will hopefully be on 16 December with 46233 Duchess of Sutherland out and 60009 back.



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

Christmas Party !!

There will be a Christmas Party in the Signal Box on Saturday 9th December from 7.00pm. Drinks and nibbles will be served, please do come along and bring the family. Please let Richard Kirk know if you are coming - contact details below.

Dates for your Diary

November 12th – Open Day

December 10th – Open Day

January 14th – Open Day

February 11th – Open Day

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

Comments on earlier item

Howard Green has written:

'Members may be interested to note that the locomotive depicted in *Outside the Box* issue 49 (Stanier Class 4MT 2-6-4T 42685) was the locomotive driven by Kentish Town's Harry Edwards that ran the 5.18pm St Pancras to Harpenden (9 crowded suburban coaches) to St Albans in 22 minutes 50 seconds – 4 minutes 10 seconds within the schedule (much to the astonishment of the city gentlemen!) the train then had to wait 6 minutes 10 seconds before departure to Harpenden, during which time the engine took water from the platform-end column.

That performance must be on a par with *Mallard's* epic world record run of 1938 when she achieved 126 mph down the 1 in 200 Stoke bank before being taken off at Peterborough with a mechanical fault. *Mallard* was a Class 8P express passenger locomotive and was pulling 7 empty coaches and had an unhindered straight run down the bank! (*Ed: Thanks Howard, interesting thought in the last paragraph!*)

Signal Box 'Uniform'

Please let Mary know if you wish to purchase a signal box 'uniform' of a polo shirt and/or sweatshirt.

Both are embroidered with the signal box logo.

She will need to know the size – S, M, L, XXL etc. Please refer to Engelbert Strauss website for sizing details.

Price is dependant on the size of the order (items are sold to you at cost) but is likely to be in the region of £20 per polo shirt and £30 per sweatshirt.

The quality is very good and the item will last for years.

Signal Box Cards

Please let Mary know if you want a selection of the Trust's cards for your own use. The items can be picked up from St Albans or if necessary can be posted to members further afield.

Chiltern Model Railway Association Show 13th/14th January 2018

We have been invited to attend this show at Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre. (It is the one that until 2016 was held at the Alban Arena.) It is good publicity for the box and has resulted in an increase in group visits in particular as well as welcome sales income. We need assistance on Friday 12th in the evening - one person to help John Webb set up the stand. To staff the stand over the two days of the show we preferably need to have three people each day, two can be manning the stand while the third has a break or views the other exhibits. Volunteers get free entry to the exhibition - meals and drinks are also provided by the organisers. People can do just a half day, AM or PM if they can't do the whole day. Attendance will need to be from around 9.30am until shortly after 5.30pm on Saturday, and on Sunday 9.30am until the show closes at 4.30pm - we'll then need to clear the stand away. Please contact John Webb via the website as soon as possible with your offers of help.

Please note that 14th January is also an Open Day at the 'box

ARRIVAL and DEPARTURE

Below left: a recent arrival in the form of a model of the Advanced Passenger Train, these models were used as advertising displays in BR Travel Centres. On loan to the Trust from David Smith. Below right: a gauge 1 model of a Class 66 in the original English Welsh & Scottish Railway livery. This has been on display in the museum whilst on loan from Brian Chapman but has now gone to a new home. Thanks to both David and Brian for their kindness.



Progress at the 'box

The re-paint of the 'box has now been completed and it's looking superb – thanks to Peter the Painter! A number of Members have been away over the late Summer – yes, we are allowed holidays – and so progress has slowed a little. The garden annual clear-down has started with David at the helm, but there is much to do! The main hedge will be again trimmed professionally and the debris taken away.

The tea shelter has been jet-washed and is looking much better, and Peter has sanded and re-painted the Permanent Termination (T) Sign. We are looking at a more structured maintenance schedule to ensure the checking, cleaning and oiling of artefacts – particularly those with moving parts - is carried out on a regular basis. Now Open Days are only once a month during the winter, we plan to revamp the ground frame standing platforms which have begun to rot, and hopefully upgrade our very successful model railway to double track.

In order to improve our merchandising sales Tony has produced a coloured board with our offerings mounted on it. This was trialled by the tea shelter but seems to have been more successful in the Museum - the experiment continues. Private visits have again been numerous during the year, and several bookings are already in for 2018. Heritage Open Weekend was again most successful.

John Telford