



Important information

A slightly early August newsletter that includes important guidance for returning volunteers. Now that you are welcome back at the box to help with the routine gardening and maintenance activities it is vital that we endeavour to observe Government advice on keeping safe. Overleaf you will find the Trust's guidelines for attendance at the box. Please ensure that the requests are followed for your own sake and your fellow members.

Richard Kirk

Chairman's Words

As some of you are probably aware we will not now be open over the Heritage Weekend. The difficulty of keeping social distancing on such a narrow site and with both the museum and the operating deck being very confined, has led the Trustees to make the decision not to open. This is very disappointing as I know we all get great pleasure in showing the public round the signal box and are proud of what we have achieved over the last fourteen years. In an attempt to not disappoint our many regular visitors we have decided to make some films of the box and put them on YouTube with links from our web site and Facebook page, making them available over the Heritage Weekend and perhaps again later in the year. We are lucky to have two excellent camera operators and editors in Stephanie South and Jim MacDonald who have agreed to put these together for us. We hope to produce a film of the upper part of the garden showing the electric and semaphore signals along with the lever frames and points plus various signs and notices. A film of the garden railway with cameras mounted on the engines and beside the track which should keep our younger visitors happy (ed: see photo of trial run above). A view of the museum and its many interesting artefacts and of course a film of the demonstration of the operation of a signal box. If we have time and enough visual material we will try to put together a simple history film. These films will not replace a good visit to the box but hopefully encourage visitors to come once we are open which now is increasingly looking like next year.

I would like to thank the Wednesday volunteers who throughout the lockdown have ensured the safety and the maintenance of the box by coming, often on their own, to mow the grass and to perform general maintenance tasks to keep the box in good order ready for those first visitors.

Stay well until we can all meet again at St Albans South Signal Box.

Tony Furse

Progress at the 'box

As you will know, the 'box has been closed since lockdown commenced on 21st March. We all readjusted for Covid but our new lifestyles seemed bizarre at the time. The new normal evolving now seems equally strange and we still debate how it will settle down in a much changed world! A small stalwart group of volunteers, including David, Steph, Richard and myself have been distancing at the 'box to mow the lawn, cut the hedge and fight the weeds!

Michael has made and fitted a brilliant new wooden signal arm for our 1890s lower quadrant signal, to replace its fast deteriorating predecessor. The two latest boundary posts have been repainted and our

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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

Reopening of Box for Volunteer Working

The following points are for the guidance of our volunteers in returning to regular working parties at the box. They are designed to minimise the risk of passing on any infection including the Covid-19 virus.

Volunteers should be satisfied that

- (a) they don't have the Covid-19 virus;
- (b) if they have any of the symptoms announced in Government advice they do not attend the box;
- (c) that the precautions being taken at the box as detailed here are acceptable to them.

John Telford, as works coordinator, will keep a note of all volunteers attending working parties; please ensure your presence is noted by him. If you are the only person attending the box please sign in, the register sheet will be in the Buffet. If you contract the Covid-19 infection or find you have been in contact with someone with the virus, please notify John as soon as possible to assist in contact tracing.

Equipment:

Sanitising gel and wipes, face coverings and latex disposable gloves are kept in the Buffet and will be placed on a table outside the Buffet during Wednesday afternoons.

Hand sanitiser and wipes are also provided in the toilet and adjacent to the kettle downstairs.

Please use gloves or sanitiser before handling common equipment or entering the box or toilet.

Please maintain the present 'social distancing' requirements as defined by the Government; if two or more have to work cooperatively on a task in closer proximity to each other please wear face coverings.

When using sanitiser wipes to sanitise the toilet seat, please dispose of the wipes in the waste bin, not in the toilet.

Refreshments:

An important part of working parties! Please wash hands thoroughly before handling the drink-making equipment. It is recommended that you only handle your own cup. Paper towels will be left by the kettle; use these to hold the kettle, coffee jar, etc.

Cups, spoons etc should be washed after use and left in a clean condition.

Other Safety Matters:

The usual safety precautions remain in force, in particular that any work requiring the use of ladders should not be done unless there is at least one other person on site aware of what you are doing and giving assistance as need be. It is also advisable that work with power tools is only done when more than one person is available.

Casual Visitors:

Must firmly, but politely, be refused entry and asked to watch the website or Facebook for information on when we will be opening to the public.

Progress at the 'box' *continued*

recently erected, third lamp post, is also in the process of being repainted. The top will also need painting and converting from gas to electricity. Tony has been testing the model railway track, once he'd uncovered it from foliage, and it's working a treat. He and Jim have also put a new battery in one of our fleet of engines. The 'St. Albans South' display at the end of the lawn is being revived, and our signal posts are having a new lick of paint. John Webb has recommenced the rewiring of the colour light signals display.

We will need to spring-clean upstairs and downstairs before opening up again, and assuming we can meet all Government distancing and health/safety/hygiene requirement in place at the time, including those for the garden. The To Do List provides plenty of outstanding tasks, so there's scope for anyone who can make a Wednesday afternoon, or any other time for that matter. So, in the words of Bruce in The Price is Right: 'Come on Down'!