

SIGNAL BOX Takeover?

Well not quite but shortly before the newsletter was completed it was indicated that we had been invited by Thameslink to put a display in the windows of the new retail unit on the Ridgmont Road side of City Station. Whilst not completely finalised this offer gives us a chance to further promote the 'box and remind passengers and passers by that we exist and will hopefully soon be re-opening to visitors. The window space is quite extensive and we should be able to put information boards on display as well as some of our many photographs. How long we have there will depend upon how long it takes Thameslink to let the unit to a permanent tenant. Another sign for us of positive moves forward at last.

Richard Kirk



The two street signs donated by Rodney and now erected on the sleeper wall and opposite the gate, thus naming our two pathways around the site.

Chairman's Words

What did you think of the AGM on Zoom? For me it had a lot of positives, it was really great to see and hear again from those members living some distance away from the box who can never make it to St Albans for a mid week evening AGM. We will look to see if it is possible to do next years AGM both live and on Zoom government restrictions permitting. It looks now as though we may well be able to open the box to our visitors in July on the 11th and 25th some 16 months since we last opened. The worry of course is that we will be over whelmed but with careful release of our opening information we hope to control this to a sensible level.

With the help of Steph South we now have a recruiting video starring some of the regulars on maintenance which we will put on line with the hope that we can recruit new members to help with open days and the general maintenance, we just need a few tweaks of the website to have a membership route clearly displayed.

It will be good to get back into the routine of regular opening both on Sunday afternoons and of course for Heritage Weekend on the 11th and 12th of September, don't forget that if you can spare a few hours over that weekend it will make life easier for us all.

It is interesting to speculate the travelling patterns from St Albans and the effect that might have on the car park requirements especially those around the signal box. Les O'Leary is looking into the pedestrian access to the new station entrance which at the moment seems to require passengers to cross Ridgmont Road and walk through the car park amongst the moving traffic without protection. A designated walk way may offer us a little expansion room, watch this space!!

Tony Furse



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

Terry Worrall remembers – Part Two

Trust member Terry Worrall continues the story of his early railway career in St Albans.

No one ever wanted to go to St Albans Abbey station (see photo – gas works in the background), the terminus of the branch line from Watford, so I regularly covered the first 3 hours of early turn, especially on Mondays returning to City station mid-morning to start my 'day' job. I also worked weekends and early turns to assist with peak time working in the main Booking Office with many fine people, especially John Miller, a senior Relief Clerk, who was to become a friend with whom I kept in touch for over 50 years.



Whilst Salaried staff were automatically enrolled into the BR pension fund this was not the case with staff classified as 'conciliation' staff (later called CONGOTT – Conciliation grades other than Trainmen – a really awful designation!) Whilst I was in the Booking Office elderly retired railwaymen came up for their meagre pensions once per month which were as little as 7/8p (38p) per month – a reflection of how they were treated in all the years they worked for the pre nationalisation railway companies! There had been no contributory pensions for 'blue collar' workers in those days! Salaried staff had been treated differently.

Whilst at St Albans no one ever wanted the early Booking Office shift on a Sunday, which started officially at 0630. I always volunteered as it was time and three quarters – 14 hours pay for an 8 hour shift. However, I never did 8 hours! I arrived at 0505 hours each Sunday on the 0450 from Luton never having difficulty in catching this train even though I would have been out very late on the previous evening. As the office was not due to open until 0630 I used the intervening time to complete the 'weekly accounts book up as there were no passengers around until 0730/0800 hours. The person who then came on duty at 0800 to do this (normally Luke from the Parcels office even though he hated the weekly accounts) then took up my early Booking Office ticket window duty which allowed me to return home early in time for the Sunday pub lunchtime session. The Station Master, who only lived 'across the road', never caught on!

Progress at the 'box

So, Tony planked off the lower front of the 'box to keep out the foxes, but they simply reverted to the rear! Tony has now constructed a non-return trapflap, so watch this space! I then found that mice had finished off a bag of sugar at the downstairs tea point – which should have been put in a tin, but we've never had a mouse problem inside the 'box before – only rats under it. Mouse traps to the fore.

With better, drier, if not colder weather appearing, and two shots of vaccine, members have continued work parties with more sore-armeders appearing of late. Lawn-cutting, and grass/weedkiller patrols have been out; a non-functioning outside tap repaired by Michael; window-cleaning gallery in front of the 'box repaired by John W; and the ever necessary re-painting continue. Bull to prepare for re-opening also ensues, including decisions about where to put acquisitions donated during lockdown.

Outside professionals hope to start re-painting the 'box on 11th May, using more expensive, but hopefully longer-lasting and less fading coach enamel paint. Another contractor will shortly replace the 100ft. collapsing handrail along the path down to the 'box, and we will then replace the old trunking that affixes to it. Rodney has erected a superb 'Station Road' sign by the entrance gate, and fitted two more tread-plates on the stairs – only one more needed now to complete the flight – anyone out there got one?

Work has started on the second footbridge at the Station. The upper foot-way will be swung into position during a possession over Christmas, in time for the several commuters who don't work from home to use it in the New Year. Some of the track outside the 'box has been replaced. Our successful 'How it's Done' videos on the website are to be entered in a Competition organised by the British Museum, and Tony, Stephanie and Jim have produced a 'Volunteer' video to encourage more under 70's!

John Telford

Membership Matters

2021 subscriptions - many paid, a few still to pay!

A big thanks to all those who have renewed their subscription for another year, and thus continue to support us in maintaining and developing the signal box. There are some new things to see when we are able re-open.

And, to the members who have not yet renewed, we very much hope that you will do. As a reminder, it is £10 for the year, and you can make a bank transfer to Metro Bank - sort code 23-05-80, account 17746944 - or, make cheques payable to St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust and send to me at 20, Flavian Close, St Albans, AL3 4JX. Many thanks.

Rob Little

BOOK REVIEW

A few years ago we were fortunate to be introduced to the late Richard Casserley. Richard was the son of Henry Casserley (HCC) the well known railway photographer and was a photographer in his own right. At that time he was managing the vast collection of pictures amassed over the years and he generously provided the Trust with copies of photographs that related to the St Albans area and locations along the line from St Pancras to Bedford and these have been used in our displays. Like his father before him, Richard lived in Berkhamsted.

Shortly before his passing in 2017 Richard collaborated with his daughter Mary to produce a book of HCC's photographs entitled '**Steaming Through Berkhamsted**'. Now Mary has worked with Berko railway enthusiast Rob Freeman and St Albans designer Alan Rogers to produce a follow-up volume '**Steaming Through The Chilterns and Thereabouts**'. As the title suggests the images roam further afield than the first book although there are still a good number of shots from the Berkhamsted area. All the major north/south railway lines through Hertfordshire and Bucks and a few branch lines are covered with a number of shots taken in and around St Albans.

The photographs date from 1935 to 1971 and include some Metropolitan electric locos and units and diesel and electric locos on the West Coast Main Line. But steam predominates.

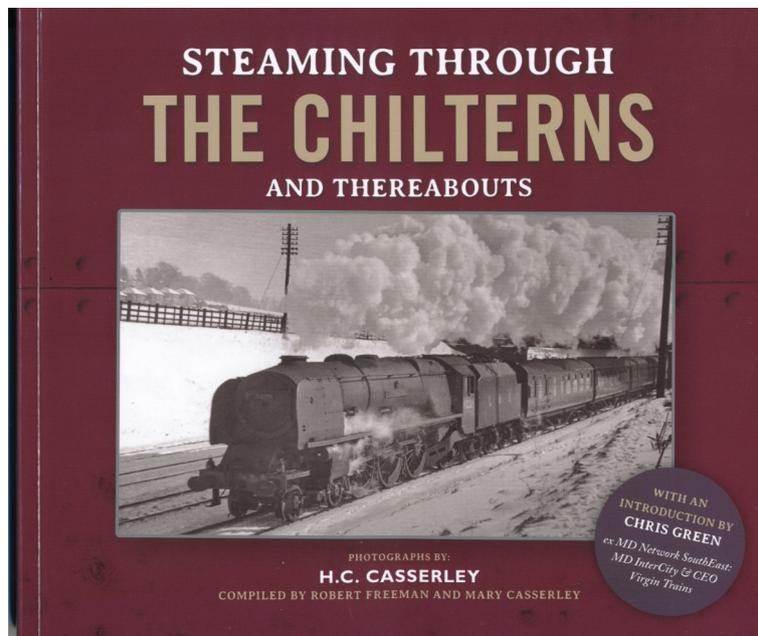
Whilst some of the images are a little dark and some disappear into the binding this does not detract from their interest and in many cases depict more than just a shot of a locomotive and its train. Much of the lost railway infrastructure is well illustrated. Inevitably in an effort to include as many pictures as possible some of the images are smaller than one would like and some detail is lost. However, where whole or half page pictures are used the full quality of HCC's photographic skills are evident. The reviewer's particular favourite is a shot of A4 '*Silver Link*' emerging from Potters Bar Tunnel with a southbound express in July 1948 (I was only 6 months old then!).

Illustrations of tickets appear amongst the pictures and there is a good selection of maps for readers unfamiliar with the areas covered.

The book is recommended and is available through local bookshops or direct from Mary at www.marycasserley.com

Paperback, 120 pages, published by Goose Publishing, £22.00

RNK



END of an ERA 1982 – 2021

For 39 years HSTs have been passing St Albans South on a regular basis but this month marks the end of their service on the Midland Main Line. They have appeared in various guises during this time from the original Intercity colours through Midland MainLine and East Midlands Trains to East Midlands Railway's hotchpotch of exLNER/Virgin and EMR liveries. A few reminders past and present are below.

