

OUTSIDE THE BOX

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On 31 July 1955 Beyer-Garratt 2-6-0+0-6-2T 47967 trundles through St Albans City Station with a northbound train of empty coal wagons. The Signal Box and Heath and Heather building are in the background. The locomotive was built for the LMS in 1930 and spent most of its life shedded at Toton. The rotating bunker was fitted in the mid 30s. It was withdrawn from Hasland Shed in December 1957.

Give us a clue!

The Railway Magazine, August issue, Crossword, 19 Down 'Midland Main Line station whose South signalbox has been preserved in situ(2,6)'. No prizes for getting that one correct! But it does help to illustrate how our place in the railway heritage scene has been established. Compliments from our visitors continue to flow and when we are out spreading the word at events such as the annual Steam Fair and Highfield Park Fete it is clear that many appreciate what the Trust and its members have achieved over a short time. However there are still people that come up to us and say, 'I didn't know you were here!' or some such, so we must keep on spreading the word when we can.

Richard Kirk

Chairman's Words

July and August are not the best months for visitor numbers at the signal box due to school holidays and a large part of the St Albans population sunning itself on some foreign beach, but September is a great month. The second weekend we, along with organisations like ourselves and the owners of many historic buildings open free to the public as part of Heritage Weekend. We of course never charge for our open days but by joining in we get national publicity and the backing of English Heritage. Every year we look to offer something different and Richard works hard to produce a new photographic display, this years sounds really good. So what else is new? Jim is going to bring his ground level steam railway so that we will be able to offer rides up and down Ridgmont Road in competition with his son Peter and his traction engine doing similar. Sadly our advertised display by the Hertfordshire Home Guard Re-enactment Group will not now take place as they have withdrawn their support, they were going to show us what the real Dads Army was all about with displays of weapons and equipment.

This is a very busy weekend often with several hundred visitors each day, so if you think you can spare some time to come and help please let me know. No prior knowledge of signalling is needed and you will not be asked to do anything outside your comfort zone, there are lots of jobs like meeting and greeting and manning the stalls which are vital to the weekend success.

So please spare us an hour or two and join in the fun of Heritage Weekend.

For the engine buffs amongst you a new treat on Wednesday afternoons is the sight of the Colas locomotives passing the box with the empty fuel wagons on their way to a refinery in Lincolnshire. Everything from the new class 70/8 to double headed class 60s. Why not come along and help with the maintenance of the box as part of the Wednesday working party and see the Colas locos?

Tony Furse



The new display posters mounted in the signalbox



Left: the newly restored LMS signal lamp



Right: the LMS tensioner that is now fitted to the wire from lever 32 to the garden signal showing how any slack in the cable was taken up in hot weather



Winners of the 2008 St Albans Civic Society Award



Winners of the 2010 Invensys Rail Signalling Award (Structures)

Newsletter produced by Richard Kirk. Please send items for inclusion to richardnkirk@hotmail.co.uk or contact me on 01727 860047

Heritage Open Days

Once again the box will be open for the Saturday and Sunday of the Heritage Open Weekend on 12th and 13th of September. To make sure that this is once again a success for the Trust, members are asked to volunteer to help over the weekend. We need sufficient members to be present to show visitors around, answer their questions and ensure that they have an enjoyable and safe time inside the box and in the garden. If you can help even for just a few hours on one of the days please contact Tony Furse on tfurse@btinternet.com or Richard Kirk on richardkirk@hotmail.co.uk or phone 01727 860047. We will be drawing up the rotas and will allocate you a role.

Branch Line Society Rail Tour

Sunday 12th July saw John Webb passing the box at speed rather than being on duty in it. Not that he was shirking his responsibilities, indeed he gave out some 200 leaflets to those travelling on the "Thameslink Tracker", a trip organised jointly by the Branch Line Society and Thameslink Govia to raise money for three charities. Starting at Bedford and worked throughout by unit 319 444 "City of St Albans", the train explored various train depots around Bedford, which included passages through two working train washes! The journey continued to Luton where it went into a siding south of the station, then came out again, before taking the fast line south through St Albans. At various places on the journey the train was switched through crossovers not usually used by service trains, followed by driving non-stop through St Pancras and Farringdon stations to Blackfriars in the Up direction on the nominal 'Down' line, to the surprise of passengers waiting at all three stations. The train terminated in a siding at Herne Hill station before returning back to one of the terminus platforms at Blackfriars for an hour's break. John left the train at this point, but several other sidings and lines awaited those still on the train



Left: City of St Albans at Bedford.
Right top: The group gather in front of Corfe Castle 'box'.
Right: Inside Swanage Station 'box'.

Visit to the Swanage Railway

On Saturday 6th June 14 Trust members assembled at Norden Station in Dorset for a conducted tour of the Swanage Railway signalling system. The Railway has been restored from a completely derelict state with track and stations rebuilt (and in some cases new builds as well) and this has required the construction of three new signal boxes and other signalling infrastructure. The group paid visits to the boxes at Harman's Cross, Swanage and, after enjoying a fish and chip lunch in the sun on the seafront, Corfe Castle. The operation of each box was explained in detail and at Corfe the arrangements for accepting trains from the main line at Wareham were seen.

It was a most interesting and enjoyable day and thanks are due to Trust member and Swanage volunteer Peter Hunt who organised it and to Mike Whitwam of the Swanage Railway who was our guide for the day.



Progress at the 'box

Summer growth came on suddenly with a vengeance this year, so the secateurs have also been out with a vengeance! The garden has been looking at its best and complimentary comments have flowed. As usual we have allowed the flowers to grow over the path, so the route down to the 'box is a bit tortuous.

Our main development on this occasion has been the upgrading of our security alarm system. The recent burning down of a heritage signal box in the Midlands determined us to review our own security. As a result we have upgraded our fire and intruder alarm systems with up-to-date equipment.

The final display preparation is nearing completion, so Peter has cleared an area near the gate in readiness. Hopefully, a photo of the finished display will follow. Also, opposite the gate, we have erected an erstwhile electrical cabinet, duly restored, which will now permanently display our site Health and Safety advices to incoming visitors.

On a similar note, we have had all our information posters revised and re-printed in a slightly smaller size. This means those on the back wall upstairs can be replaced and a second set is now available for our external exhibition boards. This will save having to constantly move our previous single set between the two.

A few more signs have gone up downstairs and some donated small items are being placed in our display cabinets. We have also been presented with some relays by Richard Pike, and John Webb hopes to get them going again. He also hopes to restore a platform announcer's microphone console.

The very busy John Webb has just restored and fitted an LMS wire tensioner to Lever 32 and we can now demonstrate this when visitors look at the downrods in the Locking Room.

So, once again a busy period, and some good turnouts on our Wednesday workdays (12 noonish til around 5pm.). Do come and join us.

John Telford