



Newsletter

1/2019



**SMALLFORD STATION
& ALBAN WAY**
Heritage Society

May 2019

BRINGING SMALLFORD STATION BACK TO LIFE

Spring has sprung - and our work has begun.
Join us for a season of family fun!

The Smallford Station Alban Way Heritage Society ((SSAWHS)) team has been busy preparing a season of outreach activities to share their Smallford Station revival efforts to-date; the tranquillity and historical aspects of the Alban Way; as well as the joys of all things trains and railways to delight both ardent enthusiasts and inquisitive families alike.

Some highlights of our activities over the past few months include:

Presentations

The Society made a presentation by the Hatfield Townswomen's Guild on 1 April and were delighted to be given a reproduced photograph of Mr Frederick Charles Field, crossing keeper at Nast Hyde in the 1950s, by his grand-daughter, Pat Adams, who is also a member of the Hatfield Townswomen's Guild.

Exhibitions

The Society displayed their Smallford Station model, masterfully created by committee member Mr Alastair Cameron, at the Luton Model Railway Club in Flitwick on 27 April. The next opportunity to view the Smallford Station model is on 1-2 June at the St Albans Steam & Country Fair.

Guided Walks

We ran two successful Guided Walks on 16th and 21st May.

On Saturday 14 September, we will have two very short Guided Walks from Smallford to Nast Hyde Halt, return, as part of our Heritage Open Day, the first at 12:00 noon and the second at 2:00pm. See more on page 4.

Station Area Improvements

Read all about our plans for improvements to the Smallford Station Area on pages 5-6.

Other Activities

- Since the start of the year, we have held 5 monthly committee meetings, teeming with exciting plans and action points.
- We are a member of the Welwyn-Hatfield Historical Network.
- We are also registered with the UK Heritage Open Day - and are making preparations for our participation in the St Albans Heritage Day on 14 September 2019.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE



Latest News

An update on our activities and progress.

Pages 2-3



Events & Activities

Dates for your Diary in 2019

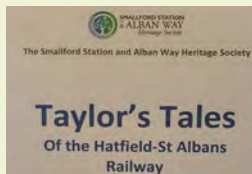
Page 4



Station Area Improvements

An overview of our proposals to improve the environment around the Smallford Station

Pages 5-6



Taylor's Tales

Some great summer reading provided by railway author Mr Roger Taylor

Pages 7-9



Stay in Touch

How to contact us for

- General Information
- Membership
- Guided Walks
- Facebook & Website

Page 10

Latest News & Updates

Greenspace Action Plan

Over the past 5 years, St Albans District Council (SADC) have spent many thousands of pounds on major improvements to the Alban Way - under their Alban Way GAP (Greenspace Action Plan 2014-2019) managed by Countryside Management Service (CMS). A new draft GAP 2019-2024 has been published at:

https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/parks-and-green-space/railway-trails/albanway/al_gap_com.aspx.

The closing date for comments was 20 May, but the document is still available to download.

We continue to work in close cooperation with SADC and CMS and our own plans to improve the environment around Smallford Station will be incorporated within the GAP.

World War I Troop Movements along the Line

We are pleased to be receiving some assistance with our enquiries on this subject by Prof Sarah Lloyd of the Everyday Lives in War Centre at the University of Hertfordshire, and hope to have more of an update in our next Newsletter.

Our hope is to be able to research the role of the Hatfield-St Albans Railway during the Great War years. If you have any information and/or photographs relating to this subject matter for the period 1914-1918, we would love to hear from you at email address: info@smallford.org.

WW2 Lancaster Crash

Our SSAWHS team recounted in our last committee meeting the story of Lancaster Aircraft (L7575) which passed over the railway in flames on the way to its final resting place. The members of the local fire brigade who attended the crash, whilst originally being commended for their bravery, did not ever receive the medals they were promised because it was subsequently learned that - unbeknown to the attending fire crew - the bombs which they extracted from the flaming aircraft were fake. SSAWHS Committee member, Mr Christopher Musk, suggested that the Society head a campaign to get the much earned medals reinstated.

Making our Collection more accessible

We are about to start a new initiative on our Facebook page, by presenting a 'Historical Object in Focus' from our Smallford Station collection on a fortnightly basis. Please circle back to our Facebook page for more information, at:

<https://www.facebook.com/ouralbanway/>



Latest News & Updates

Listing of Smallford Station

We have submitted a Freedom of Information Act request concerning the exact definition of the listing of Smallford Station to St Albans District Council. This has been referred to the Cambridge office of Historic England. We are still awaiting formal confirmation of the exact details of the listing of Smallford Station.

National Archives

We are currently making enquiries with the National Archives to see if any new material relating to the railway has been released in the last couple of years. We hope to have an update on our progress in one of our upcoming Newsletters.

Rediscovering the Hatfield & St Albans Railway

We are delighted to be able to share a YouTube video, first published in September 2017 on the 'Rediscovering Lost Railways' section. It is produced by a North Hertfordshire teacher, who is most passionate about this subject and generously provided us with permission to post it on our website.

We hope you will enjoy watching his journey along what is now The Alban Way - linked here:

<https://bit.ly/2VYg5Lz>.

The Hatfield & St Albans Branch of the GNR

We hope you enjoyed first of three separate papers on the railway written by Roger Taylor under the heading of 'Taylor's Tales' in our previous Newsletter. The second tale - 'Railway Memories' - can now be read on pages 7-9 of this Newsletter issue.

Calendar of Activities 2019

We have a busy activity calendar in store for 2019. For more information, please see our latest calendar overview on our planned activities on page 4.



Dates for your diary

We have some exciting events and activities planned for 2019 - including the following:



**SMALLFORD STATION
& ALBAN WAY**
Heritage Society

SSAWHS Events

Upcoming Presentations & Activities:

- 6 Aug:** Presentation by *Alastair Cameron* to Letchworth Arts & Leisure Transport & Industrial Heritage Group
- 22 Oct:** Presentation by *Alastair Cameron* to Welwyn and District History Society

SSAWHS Exhibitions

Upcoming Exhibitions:

- 1-2 June** St Albans Steam & Country Fair
Venue: Oaklands College
- 22 June** Nast Hyde Halt Open Day
Venue: Nast Hyde Halt
- 14 Sept** St Albans Heritage Open Days
Venue: Smallford Station Car Park

Other Events from our community partners in Herts

We will be represented at:

- 22 June:** Nast Hyde Halt Open Day.
- 14-22 Sept:** St Albans Heritage Open Days.
For the latest updates, please check our **website** and **Facebook** page.

Guided Walks

14 September, 12:00 and 2:00pm:

Here is a very special opportunity to come along to a very short Guided Walk - between Smallford and Nast Hyde Halt - which could be of particular interest to families and those who find longer walks more challenging. At Smallford, you will have an opportunity to see our Exhibition and meet with members of our Project Team, and enjoy a range of refreshments provided by Colney Heath Women's Institute (at very reasonable prices!). At Nast Hyde Halt you will see the fantastic improvements made by Mike Izzard on and around the platform.

For more information about our Guided Walks, please feel free to email us at:

albanwaywalks@smallford.org



Download a FREE map of the Alban Way **HERE:**

<https://bit.ly/2Ym273K>



info@smallford.org



[@ouralbanway](https://www.facebook.com/ouralbanway)



albanwaywalks@smallford.org



smallford.org/smallford-station/

Proposals to Improve the Environment around the former Railway Station at Smallford

Published for discussion May 2019

Over the last year the Smallford Station & Alban Way Heritage Society (SSAWHS) Committee has been exploring ways in which the environment around Smallford Station Ticket Office can be improved.

We have had discussions with a range of key organisations, including –

- St Albans District Council (SADC), who own the land around the station, including, of course, Alban Way
 - Community Services Department and their Alban Way Greenspace Action Plan project management team, Countryside Management Service (CMS)
 - The Planning Department

Both have provided invaluable information and advice

- Oaklands College – with whom we are building a strong, collaborative, working partnership
- Smallford Residents' Association and Councillors representing the local community

Everyone has been very supportive!

As you might imagine, some of our discussions have been 'sensitive' in nature and therefore necessarily confidential. However, we are now in a position to share our aspirations with you and, hopefully, you will be as excited about the opportunities and prospects as we are.

There are two aspects –

1. Making the Entrances to the Station Area more Inviting

We hope to provide some 'Welcome' signs and a Noticeboard –

Welcome Signs

- Station Road
- Car Park Entrance

Noticeboard

- Alban Way
Car Park Entrance



Proposals to Improve the Environment around the former Railway Station at Smallford

Published for discussion May 2019

2. Improving the Environment around the Station

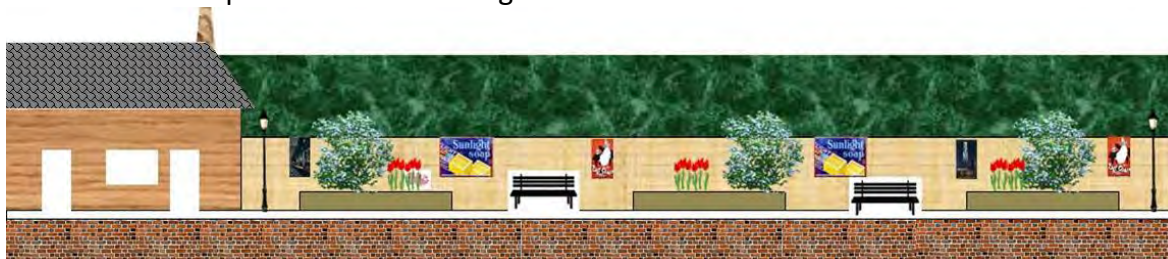
We know what the platform used to look like 100 years ago –



We have ideas about how it could look. On the platform we plan to –

- create flower beds
- install replica vintage benches and lamp posts
- install display panels

And here's an impression of how it might look! –



To be totally honest – we've already started, in a small way. Last autumn we planted 200 daffodil bulbs (generously donated by Notcutts Garden Centre) around the Station Car Park.

Plus – we shortly hope to be able to let you know about another exciting possibility – watch this space!

If you:

- would like a copy of a more-detailed plan produced by our Working Party
- would like to be actively involved (design, implementation, maintenance...) - it would assist us if you would let us know how you would like to be involved together with any particular skills and interest that you could offer.
- have any ideas/suggestions to contribute

Please contact us via info@smallford.org

Jeff Lewis: Chair: Smallford Station & Alban Way Heritage Society

TAYLOR'S TALES:

Railway Memories - 1954-1972

May I begin by stating that I have never been a train spotter, not even when I was a schoolboy. I became interested in railways when I 'discovered' the branch line from Hatfield to St Albans in June 1963.

My first memory of the line was near Smallford in c1954 whilst on a walk with my parents. I remember crossing the line on our way to The Plough PH at Sleafshyde. Another early memory is crossing the line at The Camp - Flora Grove - at about the same time. I recall my father saying that "a blind man was killed on this crossing" a few years ago. I think he was confusing this tale with the accident at Hill End Lane level crossing in the 1920's when a DEAF man was killed! In late 1959 I attended Alma Road School in St Albans. In order to play our football games we had to walk along London Road and I remember passing the former Great Northern station and hearing a steam locomotive. Unfortunately I didn't see the engine or its train - at this time goods only. Memories of passing Hill End Station in 1961 but that was about it until June 1963.

In that year, we moved from Charmouth Road to a new maisonette in Cranbrook Drive, just off the Hatfield Road, and very near to the British Banana depot and Downes supermarket warehouse. This is when I "discovered" the railway.

With Butterwick Sidings nearby, the sound of a Diesel Locomotive shunting Banana Vans at approx. 6.30am every morning certainly made me aware that there was a railway not far away!

During the years 1963 to 1968 I saw and heard the 350HP (later Class 08) Diesel Shunter on countless occasions.

Amongst the Locations were:-

- Butterwick Sidings, shunting the Banana Vans, track maintenance (installing a point) freight to and from Hatfield.



- Hill End Lane, at the level crossing with a train on the way to Hatfield, asking the guard if I could have a lift in his van on the way to St Albans - unfortunately there had been an accident at Wheathampstead Station the week before where several wagons had derailed

and the guard refused my request - quite rightly. My only chance to travel on the branch - foiled!



- St Albans Road overbridge at Hatfield.
- Lots of times at Smallford Station and environs.
- Cottonmill Lane Overbridge - seeing a light engine diesel, either a Class 15 or 20 on the branch, probably waiting to return to St Albans Abbey Station.
- Colney Heath Lane Overbridge - shunting near Butterwick Sidings.
- A1 Overbridge at Hatfield.

There used to be a carriage siding that ran alongside the branch at Hatfield where Gresley Articulated coaches were stabled for Suburban trains.

The last 'engine' I saw on the branch was a bulldozer that was removing the track in 1969. This took a total of three months to complete!!

I used to walk the line almost daily with my dog and I often took the opportunity to photograph what remained. I did take a great colour photograph of the vans in the siding at Butterwick and then promptly lost it!! In 1968 I walked the entire length and took some B/W photographs. In 1964 I shot some poor 8mm colour film of Smallford Station and the newly installed siding into Pearce's Yard.

Memories of Locations along the Line

- The former bay at St Albans Abbey.
- The "scrapyard" at London Road Station
- The amount of rubbish on the line between that station and Camp Road
- The goods lift/loading dock at Salvation Army Siding
- The narrow bridge at Sutton Road (one lane width)
- The siding crossing the road into Hill End Hospital.
- The burnt out remains of Hill End Station and the enamel station signs on the building, the old Victorian urinal on the platform (all complete, years after closure).
- Finding the two weigh-bills near Butterwick Sidings - one for coal to Hill End Hospital, the other for banana traffic

- The footpath crossing near Frankpile's depot complete with warning signs
- The old gravel workings alongside the branch complete with narrow gauge railway track and wagons.
- Walking along the line to watch football at Ballito Sports Ground
- Trying to see the inside of Smallford Station - always locked
- Nast Hyde Halt, sitting inside the hut on the platform. This was complete with permanent way tools etc.
- In 1966 I started work at Welwyn Garden City and I remember, seeing from the bus, the footpath crossing where the A1 Motorway is now.
- The bridges at Hatfield
- The remains of Lemsford Road Halt with lamp posts still in situ
- And finally the main line station at Hatfield before it's rebuild in 1972.

As an aside, my Dad used to work in London before the War and he occasionally used to come home via Hatfield just for a change. My mother travelled the line in order to see her aunt who lived at Essendon, apparently she used to walk there from Hatfield Station!!

After the line was finally closed I wrote a short history of the branch in 1970 (for my collection) and in 1972 I married and moved from St Albans to Cambridgeshire. I kept up to date with any happenings connected to the branch via my parents and in 1986 I met Brian Anderson and the rest is history.

Then it all started happening with Jeff Lewis and the Smallford Society culminating in the 150th Anniversary of the Opening of the Line celebrations.

Stay in Touch!



Please let us know of any News or Events, Tips or Ideas, that you feel may be of interest to our Subscribers.

To Join as a Member, and Where To Find Us & Our Activities:



General enquiries **info@smallford.org**



Guided Walks **albanwaywalks@smallford.org**



Membership sign-up: **www.smallford.org/membership**



Facebook **[@ouralbanway](https://www.facebook.com/ouralbanway)**



Website **smallford.org/smallford-station/**

We look forward to hearing from you!