



# Romsey Signal Box Project

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## "THE SIGNAL"

No 2 July 1991

Dear Reader,

The first issue of "The Signal" was distributed in February - over 5 months ago. So much for the "quarterly" ambitions! But in fact there have been good reasons for the delay, not least of which was the effort which went into our Open Evening on Wednesday 26th June.

I am making no promises about the date of the next issue - but it will probably be shortly after our next big event - our

OPEN DAY on SUNDAY 22nd SEPTEMBER.

The box and site will be open all day (from 10am until 5pm) for members of the general public (no charge, but donations welcome). At the same time, Cowley Bridge will be operating in the Infants School Hall, and refreshments will be available.

Obviously all readers of this newsletter will be more than welcome. Bring your families and friends - spread the word around your workplaces and schools, and amongst anyone you feel may be interested. The Open Day will be an opportunity for the potential of the Project to be shown to a wider audience.

To get us ready for another big day, the Project Team will be working hard throughout the coming weeks. Regular working sessions are now held on Saturday mornings (starting 9am) and Monday evenings (starting 7pm). Either Ian Maxwell, Andy Webb or I should always be in attendance.

In that context, I would like to finish this "editorial" by thanking the small army of volunteers who have worked so hard over the last couple of months. I'm sure they will agree that every little bit helps - and so much has been achieved against the odds in a very short space of time. Keep up the good work!

Dick Hewett  
Project Manager

22 July 1991

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### THE OPEN EVENING, JUNE 26TH

When Ivor Mason, former Rail Manager with Foster Yeoman, and Chris Gibb, Regional Railways Manager responsible for Cardiff-Southampton services, pulled off lever no 3 to raise the signal returned to Romsey by Ralph Brewer, it signified the completion of Stage One of the Project, with much of the main development of the outside site complete. The signal arm was formerly the down branch home (by Tadburn Cottages, now replaced by a colour light) whilst the post was that for the down branch distant (further towards Redbridge).

Other guests present for the celebration included Cllr Craig Lewis, Deputy Mayor of Test Valley; Graham Hatton from BR Civil Engineers Department at Wimbledon; Alan Mayhew and colleague from BR's Romsey track gang; and Peter Hamblett from Southampton Community Service. In addition there were representatives from the education sector.

Romsey & District Society, the Buildings Preservation Trust, Hampshire County Council, and of course the Project Team members.

Media coverage was provided by the local press (articles in the Romsey & Southampton Advertisers and Southern Evening Echo); Railway Magazine (who sent their correspondent John Bird) and Railway World, both of which will be including reports in their September issues; and Jim Palm, who recorded an interview with the Project Manager for his Rail Report broadcast throughout south and south-west England on BBC local radio on July 15th.

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## THE SIGNALBOX AND SITE

### PROGRESS REPORT

Since February further progress has been made both inside and outside the box. A repetition of the Easter programme of 1990 was followed by a concerted effort on a series of Saturday mornings and Monday evenings (not to mention the odd Sunday) throughout June. The regular working party were joined when needed by extra pairs of hands for particularly heavy work (many thanks). Trips to Merehead, Bicester, Medstead and Ralph Brewer's house brought us many useful materials including three signal posts.

Inside the box the levers have been cleaned, the lever plates and levers repainted, and the cupboards restored to their rightful positions. The main bauk timbers below the frame have been positioned and the point rodding and first signal wire attached to the lever tails. Unfortunately the box has been the victim of vandalism with the upstairs door and some windows smashed, but two of the culprits were caught and we have been awarded compensation.

Outside a further 20 tons of ballast from Merehead were moved onto the site over the Easter weekend. Other work included the sinking of conduits for electricity, water and telephone lines, and the construction of a sleeper bank at the canal end to support a viewing platform. Since then the trackwork has been completed. More significant has been the raising of the first two signals, one of which has been connected to the box. Pathways have been constructed from the gate to the box and onwards, and a general site clearance programme undertaken.

Finally the Project Team have invested in smart bottle-green sweatshirts bearing the Signalbox Project logo in cream, not only to help develop the team spirit but also to show the Project to advantage on public occasions, such as our Open days and Cowley Bridge displays. Further sweatshirts are available from the Project Manager (Adults £10, childrens £6.75).

### SUMMER WORK PROGRAMME

During the summer it is hoped, amongst other work, to:

- complete the connection of the point and second semaphore signal to the box's lever frame;

- complete the restoration of the block shelf and lever frame;
- rebuild the remaining furniture inside the box;
- connect the box to the mains electricity supply and start the wiring of the simulator to the block shelf;
- repaint the outside of the box;
- improve site security;
- construct low fencing around the site;
- and add certain other artifacts such as the speed limit signs and gradient posts.

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### WHICH VERSION OF ROMSEY?

Ian Maxwell explains how we came to decide the date our restored box should resemble:

"The signalling equipment inside Romsey Signal Box has been altered a number of times during its life to cater for the changing requirements over the years. As the so called 'Technical Expert' it is my job to design the circuits and equipment which will make it all appear to work as if for real. The first decision therefore had to be 'Which version?'

"First thoughts suggested that the 1982 model (as abolished) was the only feasible option due to the alterations made to the mechanical locking. However the idea of restoring a mechanical signalbox to a state where it had no semaphore signals was unacceptable to me. After much thought and discussion the 1972 model (resulting from the Eastleigh line being singled) was chosen as the most suitable version to represent.

"The 1972 model has two main advantages. Firstly it incorporates both semaphore and colour-light signals, so both can be legitimately represented. Secondly, by having a predominantly semaphore layout the circuitry is a lot simpler to design. There are a few details which cannot be correctly represented due mainly to the alterations to the mechanical locking mentioned above. If you want to find out what these are, come along and get involved."

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### COWLEY BRIDGE JUNCTION MINIATURE, MOBILE SIGNALBOX

#### COWLEY BRIDGE PROGRESS

Cowley Bridge was formally launched at Fareham on April 6th. During the rest of the summer term the display was taken to most of the summer fetes at schools in Romsey. Interest on the whole was disappointing, but the experience was useful and it enabled the future use of the display to be clarified.

Work since February has included the painting of the simulator panel, a certain amount of re-wiring, and the completion of the accompanying display boards.

### TRAINING SESSIONS ON THE COWLEY BRIDGE DISPLAY

Several new operators have joined the team, and it was found to be possible to mount the display on a number of occasions with the resources available. However more help is still needed. Volunteers should contact Bill Tyndall on Romsey 512410.

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### OTHER ASSISTANCE

We have been fortunate to have gained several new offers of assistance since February. Andy Bott brought his JCB along on Good Friday, enabling us to dig a trench and clear the site with little effort. Terry Knowles has joined us as our electrician. He and Andy are aiming to have us connected to the mains by the end of August. Rod Hoyle did a superb job repainting the lever plates.

However there still remain many other tasks which, whilst not having any direct relation to railways, still require a specialist of some type. The Project Team is small and an awful lot of work is falling upon a few shoulders. Any offers of assistance would be more than gratefully received.

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### ASSISTANCE FOR THE PROJECT FROM FIRMS AND ORGANISATIONS

Since the first issue of "The Signal" the following have been invaluable in providing assistance of materials and/or labour:

British Rail - who have supplied yet more sleepers and rail, and whose track gang have now completed our track.

Foster Yeoman - who have donated yet another 20 tons of ballast.

A-Plant - who donated a dumper truck and roller free of charge for the Easter clearance and ballast moving operations.

Several lorry firms, including J C Dean - who have provided transport to Merehead, Bicester, Ralph Brewer's, etc.

Southampton Community Service - who have assisted with site clearance, path building, signal raising, bank building, etc.

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### CALENDAR OF EVENTS UNTIL THE END OF SEPTEMBER

Day	Date	Event
Sat	Jul 27	Working session at Signalbox site, 9am-noon
Mon	Jul 29	Working session at Signalbox site, 7-9.30pm and subsequent Saturdays and Mondays at same times
Sun	Sep 22	Open Day, Signalbox Site (with Cowley Bridge)
Wed	Sep 26	Talk to Lower Test Valley Archaeological Group