



Romsey Signal Box Project

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"THE SIGNAL"

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Dear Reader,

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF BOX CLOSING: BOX OPERATIONAL AGAIN!

Everyone will be delighted to hear that the next stage of the restoration of Romsey Signalbox will shortly be completed - when the diagram, blockshelf and associated instrumentation come into operation, connected to our new simulator. This means we can operate a full service once more through Romsey signalbox.

The Signalbox was closed on Sunday 17 October 1982. Exactly 10 years later, on Saturday 17 October 1992, we shall celebrate its reopening. A whole weekend of events is planned, with the highlight being a ceremonial box-opening bell sequence on the Saturday afternoon, to be rung hopefully by a suitable celebrity.

Over the course of the whole weekend, the team of professional and amateur signalmen will be operating the box continuously for a marathon 48 hours, to a special timetable prepared by Chris Hack. All the operators will be sponsored by the hour for Signalbox funds. Actual reopening of the box will be at 6pm on Friday 16 October, and the closing ceremony will be at 6pm on the Sunday.

On the Saturday afternoon, as well as the celebrity, we hope to welcome representatives from our major sponsors and benefactors:

- A representative from Hampshire County Council;
- Councillor Craig Lewis, Mayor of Test Valley Borough Council;
- Councillor Charlie Mead, Town Mayor of Romsey;
- Chris Gibb, Manager Western Cross-Country Sector, Regional Railways;
- Ivor Mason, for Foster Yeoman Ltd;
- John Walker, Southern Electric, Basingstoke Division.

It is hoped that we will gain extensive local Press and TV news coverage both before and during the weekend. In addition, the quality national newspapers have been invited, and correspondents are expected from the major railway periodicals.

The signalbox and its site will be open to the public throughout the 48-hour period of operation. Obviously we would be delighted to see all readers of "The Signal" at any time during the weekend.

This weekend will be a time to gain good publicity, to raise much needed funds for the Project, and moreover to celebrate the reaching of another target. We hope everyone will be present at some time during the weekend to share in that celebration.

Agents of the Romsey and District Buildings Preservation Trust

ROMSEY SIGNALBOX AND SITE

What has been achieved in 1992

Earlier in the year the Project Team set themselves some challenging but achievable targets. October 1992 was always in their sights.

The major breakthrough was clearly the provision of an electric supply, thanks to Southern Electric. However before wiring could commence, Ian Maxwell had to firm up his plans for the complex electrical circuitry. Most of his ideas had been formulated by the time Chris Hack, Richard Sanderson, Chris Smith and Richard Reed found themselves with nothing to do post-GCSEs.

The longer-than-usual summer holidays for this team were used to their best advantage, and a considerable amount of work was completed by the time of the last Open Day on 30 August. Indeed part of the box was operational. However the weather on the day was severe, and there were major problems with rainwater seeping into the ground floor area where the electrics were mounted. The final straw was when a sudden and quite unexpected lightning strike within 100 yards of the box damaged some of the components before the trip switch had time to activate.

Repairs are now well in hand however, and work is progressing sufficiently for the whole diagram area to be operational by 16 October, thereby meeting our target. Congratulations must go to all concerned for their enthusiasm and dedication.

Unfortunately one negative aspect remains. Problems with vandals continue with a further broken window during August. Efforts are now being accelerated to gather all the remaining materials to provide improved security, and it is hoped the Maplin floodlights will be fitted in time for the 48-hour marathon.

Opening to the Public

Following on from the successful Open Day in September 1991, the Project Team have opened up again on four Sundays in 1992 so far:

- 26 April was a very wet day: around 50 people braved conditions.
- 21 June coincided (intentionally) with the running of steam specials along the Salisbury-Romsey-Eastleigh line: around 150 people visited the box, many after seeing the posters at Romsey station;
- 28 June was a late decision to open the box on the second of the steam days: perhaps 40 people visited;
- 30 August coincided (again intentionally) with the Fire and Police Station Open Days in Romsey: another stormy day deterred many visitors, but up to 75 people braved the elements.

Some familiar faces are now reappearing at each of our Open Days. It is clear many visitors are interested to see progress being made, and that the novelty of pulling off the signal does not wear off for children.

Open Days in 1993

The Project Team are currently considering the strategy for 1993. We have decided that now Romsey itself is operational, there will be no need to operate Cowley Bridge at Open Days. The effort in opening will thus be much reduced, and it will merely be a matter of finding enough volunteers for each day.

In practice work on the box could continue even when it is open, and thus in turn the box could be open to the public whenever there are more than two people working on site.

If we are to open on a regular basis, a firm form of promotion will be essential, rather than the special poster/newspaper article method currently used for Open Days. To that end, discussions are in hand with the Southern Tourist Board.

The likely formula is a regular programme of opening to the public on, say, the first and third Saturday in each month. It may well also be time to start charging for entrance - say 50p per adult, 25p per child.

Hopefully a firm decision on plans for 1993 will have been taken by 17 October to enable us to make announcements through the press, and to meet publication dates for 1993 promotional booklets/leaflets etc.

PUBLICITY/PUBLIC PRESENTATIONSTalks/Presentations

We have now built up quite a respectable slide collection which can be used for talks and presentations. Anyone aware of opportunities for talks/presentations should contact the Project Manager.

Photograph/slide collection

We are always looking to improve our slide and photograph collection. Anyone who has taken photos of any aspect of the Project is invited to send a copy to the Project Manager.

Press Cuttings

We like to keep track of all the publicity given to the Project. If anyone spots an article, however small, in any newspaper or magazine, or hears reference to the Project on radio or TV, please let the Project Manager know, sending a copy of any printed material if possible. (We don't always submit them ourselves!)

Video materials

The Project Team would be interested to hear from anyone who has archive or current footage featuring the railways in the Romsey area.

COWLEY BRIDGE JUNCTION MINIATURE, MOBILE SIGNALBOXProgress

After a long wait, we have at last found people with the time and skills to make the catch handles and drop boxes for Cowley Bridge. For this we are grateful to Rod Garrett at Eastleigh Works, who cut the parts for us, and to Harold Vickers, who stuck them all together. It is hoped to have them all fitted for the next operating display.

Displays in 1992/93

Cowley Bridge Junction's next outing is a prestigious and potentially very influential appearance at BR's Eastleigh Works Open Day on Sunday 27 September. Over 10,000 people attended the last Open Day in 1988, and, with a number of steam locos in attendance, similar numbers are expected again.

Cowley Bridge will be stationed in a very prominent position where many visitors will hear and see us. We hope to have a large quantity of leaflets to hand out, advertising the Open weekend in October, and a good number of volunteers will be needed to operate and police the area, as well as handing out the leaflets.

Further bookings for Winter 1992/93 are at Tolworth, London, on 14/15 November (4 operators needed each day), probably 28/29 November at Lordshill, and possibly 2/3 January at Bridgwater, Somerset. Volunteers for all these dates will be sought soon.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS UNTIL THE END OF 1992

Fri	Oct 16)	
Sat	Oct 17)	Open Weekend, Signalbox Site
Sun	Oct 18)	
Sat	Nov 14		Cowley Bridge display at Tolworth, Surbiton, Surrey
Sun	Nov 15		(display at Tolworth continued)
Sat	Nov 28		Cowley Bridge display at Lordshill (provisional)
Sun	Nov 29		(display at Lordshill continued)
Sat	Jan 2		Cowley Bridge display at Bridgwater (provisional)
Sun	Jan 3		(display at Bridgwater continued)

Working sessions

No formal working sessions are being arranged. All further work on the signalbox itself is being coordinated by Ian Maxwell. Others who have keys include Chris Hack, Richard Reed and Bill Tyndall.

Finally, just a reminder if you need to telephone:

Project Manager: Dick Hewett, tel: Romsey (0794) 522979.