



Romsey Signal Box Project

Project Manager: R.B.Hewett

42 Botley Road, Romsey, Hampshire SO51 8AP

"THE SIGNAL"

Dear Reader

No 6 - February 1994

"FRIENDS OF ROMSEY SIGNAL BOX"

This edition of "The Signal" is the first for almost twelve months. The Project progresses - but only just. It has been difficult to maintain the momentum with the ever-widening range of tasks. As a consequence, the Signal Box Project team held a special meeting on 6 February, at which it was decided unanimously that the Project membership should be placed on a more formal footing.

In addition, the Team have been discussing how appropriate resources can be developed to secure the long-term future of the Signal Box without the reliance on such a small band of volunteers.

Enclosed with this edition, therefore, is a Membership Application Form for the "Friends of Romsey Signal Box". We have set the membership fee at £5 per annum (January-December), but any donation above that would not be refused! All contributions will go to the running costs of the Project, and to the purchase of materials and artifacts to continue the improvement of the site. All applicants will be sent a Membership card with their next newsletter.

Those recipients who wish to take an active part in the Project are encouraged to complete the relevant section of the form indicating precisely how they feel they can help. This will enable us to plan our resources more appropriately, and involve everyone in the things they really want to do.

Many other recipients of "The Signal" play no active role in the running of the Project. If you are in that category, your financial support would still be very much welcome. In return, we aim to produce a more effective newsletter on a quarterly basis.

We hope that anyone who supports the continued development of the Signal Box and its site will join the Friends of Romsey Signal Box.

Finally, I would like to say my personal "thanks" to all the volunteers who attended our meeting or sent their apologies. It indicated their clear support for the Project and their commitment to further developments. *Let's go for it!*

Dick Hewett

WORKING SESSIONS

Another important decision taken at the meeting was to concentrate our main working sessions upon a couple of weekends during the

year. The first of these will be on *Good Friday* and *Easter Saturday (1 and 2 April)*, from around 1000 until dark (internal work may continue longer). Work will continue on Easter Sunday if necessary, though the Box will also be open to the public.

Together with the membership form, *this newsletter is accompanied by a form for volunteers to indicate whether they can help at any time over the Easter weekend*. Anyone who offers to help with the project on their membership form is requested to complete the working session form, and to *return both forms to Dick Hewett as soon as possible*, in order that a full work programme may be planned. Tasks under consideration include:

- concreting for various items around the site;
- preparation work for our colour light signal;
- improvements to the existing signals and pointwork;
- various items of re-wiring inside the Signal Box;
- work to progress the telephone concentrator;
- completion of the track diagram;
- various other electrical and labouring tasks.

Please volunteer for part or all of the Easter weekend working session. With a concerted, well-planned effort, real progress can be made. Please note that we are also planning tasks which can be undertaken in the event of bad weather.

In addition, all volunteers may wish to note that *access can be obtained to the site at any other time* by obtaining the keys from Dick Hewett (0794-522979), or from Bill Tyndall, Chris Hack, Richard Read or Ian Maxwell. Ken Hanks, the school caretaker, will open up for you on presentation of your membership card.

OPEN DAYS

The Project Team agreed unanimously to continue opening the Signal Box to the public on the first Sunday in every month (excepting January). Attendances vary from 15 to 50, depending upon the weather. A remarkable number call simply because they are passing and see the signs out on Winchester Road.

It was also agreed that entrance should continue to be free, but that volunteers shouldn't feel guilty about waving the donations tin in front of visitors before they leave!

COWLEY BRIDGE JUNCTION

As our miniature display is shown at more and more exhibitions, so our fame spreads and the invitations also increase. However, resources will not permit us to attend more than one exhibition per month. This Spring, Cowley Bridge Junction has been taken to Egham (Surrey) and Newbury, and Fareham is booked for 20 March.

Exeter celebrates 150 years of railways on 1/2 May with a big rail

event, and it is quite possible that we will be operating Cowley Bridge Junction miniature box on the platform of Exeter St Davids station, but two miles away from its real life setting.

Invitations have already been received for the autumn from model railway societies in Basingstoke and Weymouth, and others are likely to follow. These events are a good way of promoting the Project as a whole, and money is raised through attendance expenses (which are always ploughed straight into the funds).

From now on, Bill Tyndall (Romsey 512410) has taken over responsibility for coordinating the timetable for Cowley Bridge and recruiting operators. Anyone interested in having a go at operating the miniature box should get in touch with Bill.

ROMSEY STATION WAITING ROOM

Cowley Bridge used be stored at Redbridge Station, but several break-ins forced the Team to move the expensive and unique equipment to a safer haven early in 1993. Whilst an alternative home for the miniature signal box has been sought, it has been stored in Dick Hewett's lounge. This has prevented work on Cowley Bridge except when it is brought out for exhibitions.

We are delighted to report that, after lengthy negotiations, we have signed an agreement with British Rail Property Board for the lease of the old Ladies Waiting Room on the Up platform at Romsey for a nominal annual rent of £10. Work is now in hand to clean and secure the building, after which Cowley Bridge will be moved to its new permanent home, hopefully by Easter.

The great advantages of this new property are that:

- Cowley Bridge can be left set up ready for training and other operating sessions;
- Repair work to Cowley Bridge will be much easier;
- The room can also be used as storage space for some of the items presently cluttering the Signal Box;
- The room is close to the homes of several members, who can keep a close watch on it;
- The situation on the station platform will provide an ideal opportunity to promote the Project to anyone using or passing through Romsey Station.

SCHOOL VISITS AND SPECIAL OCCASIONS

During 1993, we hosted visits by school parties from Romsey Infants, Romsey Junior, Abbev, and Cuperham Schools. *The Project Manager would be delighted to hear from anyone who has contacts with a local school, and who may be in a position to encourage them to partake of one of the formal one-hour visits.*

Mention must be made of the most significant events of 1993. A

special Open Day was held on 26 June 1993, exactly 10 years to the day since the Box was lifted from the side of the railway line.

One week later, at the end of the July Open Day, the Project Team held a barbecue, at which the guest of honour was Audrey Gebbie, the headteacher who started the whole thing off. Audrey retired at the end of July, and to thank her for her initial interest and continued support for the Project, the Team presented her with three photographs of the Box and a Signal Box Project sweatshirt.

At the August Open Day, Audrey returned with Eric Romaine, who was the British Rail official who had first approached her about demolishing the box, and who showed the necessary interest when Audrey suggested saving it.

The Team remains very grateful to Audrey, and is delighted that her successor at Romsey Infants School, Mrs Helen Rogers, is a railwayman's daughter and likewise has a soft spot for the Box!

FRIENDS FROM NEAR AND FAR

Many of our volunteers are prepared to travel considerable distances to help us on a regular basis. Alan Gilmour, for example, travels down from Ilford, east London, as often as he can, to operate both Romsey Signal Box and Cowley Bridge Junction.

David Canning, often accompanied by his wife Marion, and David's colleague John Evans, venture down from their homes in Aldermaston and Thatcham whenever their shifts as BR signalmen on the Reading-Newbury line permit them. David is also our photographer.

Finally, some new recruits to the Project regularly attend Open Days from their homes in Basingstoke. The three Rapley boys (Adam, Jack and Steve) bring an ever-increasing number of friends to help on the Project. The more the merrier - they're all welcome!

CALENDAR OF OPERATING SESSIONS UNTIL THE END OF 1994

Signalbox Open Days (all Sundays):

March 6; April 3; May 1; June 5; July 3; August 7; September 4;
October 2; November 6; December 4.

Cowley Bridge on display:

Contact Bill Tyndall (0794-512410) for details.

ENQUIRIES, ARRANGING VISITS, ETC.

For any special visits or offers of assistance or materials, or any for any other enquiries, contact the Project Manager, Dick Hewett, 42 Botley Road, Romsey, Hants, SO51 8AP; tel: Romsey (0794) 522979.