



# Romsey Signal Box Project

Project Manager: R.B.Hewett

42 Botley Road, Romsey, Hampshire SO51 5AP

## "THE SIGNAL"

Dear Reader

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### COLIN TO TAKE THE HELM!

It was confirmed at an excellently attended Extraordinary General Meeting on 17 October that Colin Meheux has agreed to take over from me as Project Manager with effect from the new year. I am doubly delighted, firstly because someone has come along to replace me, and secondly because I know Colin has the right experience and qualities to make a good project manager. Welcome Colin!

After the agonising of the last six months, those attending the meeting thrashed out some further issues of future policy, which are described in this edition of "The Signal". I am now confident that the project has a more definitive focus and future.

What was also particularly encouraging was the interest shown in the Friends, illustrated by the number attending the meeting (14) and by the number of messages of support received beforehand. Perhaps as many as half the members took the trouble to write or attend, and all were highly supportive. It shows that there is a will for the Friends of Romsey Signal Box to continue, and Colin and I are very grateful for that support.

Having said all that, there is still much work to be done. We have been woefully unsuccessful in attempts to generate new supporters from the populace of Romsey, and have now decided to concentrate on the railway enthusiasts. There were also several key tasks which hadn't been accomplished by our September target, notably the rebuilding of Cowley Bridge, the updating of wiring diagrams, and the repair of electrical circuits generally.

A new plan has been formulated, and responsibilities assigned, with a target delivery date of Sunday 7 February 1999 latest. We have also decided NOT to hold an AGM in January, but to combine it with the February Open Day. Put it in your diaries now:

*A shortened AGM will be held from 4pm until 5pm in the signal box, on Sunday 7 February 1999.*

It will follow a working (and open) day when we shall open to the public (as advertised) but not put the signs out in the road. Please come along for all or part of the day, and help blitz various jobs around the site.

By that time, Colin will be in charge of the project. I wish him all the best, and thank him for taking up the task. The project needed renewed enthusiasm and a new approach, and I know Colin is the person to supply it. But he needs your support: don't let the EGM be a one-off, let's support him on a regular basis.

Dick Hewett  
Project Manager

## EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

The following comprehensive report also forms the minutes of the meeting held at 2pm on 17 October in the signal box.

1. 14 members attended the EGM, including all the members of the "emergency" committee. Those present were: Dick Hewett, Colin Meneux, Bill Tyndall, Chris Hack, Peter Cattermole, Simon Cooper, Ian Maxwell, John Prytherch, Richard Beton, Neil Kearns, Christopher Rideout, Brian Smith, John Read and Ken Rye. Several had travelled long distances to be with us, the furthest yet again being John Prytherch, down from Warrington for the day!
2. The meeting opened with apologies for absence. Dick Hewett read out letters of support from David and Marion Canning (celebrating their 25th Wedding Anniversary the same day with a service in Tadley - our congratulations to them both), Steve Hailes (in Florida!), Andrew Moody (working), Mike Taylor, Derrick and Denise Palengat (at Glyndebourne), and Frank Akerman (on a canal boat in France) - good excuses from all of them! Other apologies had been received from Richard Read, Peter Jordan, John Evans, Adam Rapley, Flo Rye, Ben Penny, Ted Mason, members of the Hewett family, and Romsey County Infants School governor Fred Gibbs.
3. Dick Hewett summarised progress against the objectives we set in March:
  - 3.1 Identifying the "odd jobs" around the site: this had been done, and a list compiled (available in the signal box).
  - 3.2 Work within the box, including:
    - Completing the documentation of the wiring: Due to other commitments, this hadn't been done, but it remains critical.
    - Connecting the remaining equipment on the shelf: There were still some items which hadn't been wired up or removed.
    - Removing the controllers, boarding the gap behind, and fitting lino throughout the box: The controllers had been removed, but only a temporary cover put over the gap, and no lino obtained.
    - Building a small plug-in console for upstairs: This had been started, but more work was needed.
  - 3.3 Completing the display boards around the site: Rod Hoyle had supplied the latest boards, and those vandalised during the summer had been repaired.
  - 3.4 Selling surplus equipment: A block instrument and some bells had been sold, but there hadn't been any success selling the surplus controllers. (Afternote: four sold since the EGM.)
  - 3.5 Rebuilding Cowley Bridge Junction miniature box: This had been started but little progress made as yet.
  - 3.6 Concerted publicity campaign: Coverage was obtained in local newspapers, television, radio, and the Romsey & District Society's newsletter. Only two offers of help (neither very promising) resulted.

4. Dick Hewett then summarised the current situation as regards finances (nearly £2,000 in funds at present), membership (most members now renewed - see list elsewhere in this newsletter), and relations with the Romsey & District Buildings Preservation Trust and Romsey County Infants School.

- The last meeting with the school was in July. Relationships were good, with the exception of concerns on the part of the school about possible proposals for a miniature railway.
- Dick and Colin had attended a Trust committee meeting on 14 October. For the first time, governors from the school also attended (Fred Gibbs and Chris Riley). There was a very constructive exchange of views, illustrating vividly how the three organisations have conflicting priorities:
  - The Trust are only interested in the fabric of the signal box but don't have funds to maintain it;
  - The Friends are interested in the operation of the box and the development of the site, but don't want to be responsible for the costs and effort involved with the fabric of the box;
  - The school are naturally worried about the security of the children, and of potential vandalism to the school.
- Colin Meheux had suggested that the Trust themselves might consider a working weekend when they could blitz the work on the fabric on the box through their own efforts. (Afternote: Since both this meeting and the EGM, this idea has been developed by Dr John White, the Chairman of the Trust. See below.)

#### *Actions (1):*

- John White and Dick Hewett to raise the issue of lack of support in Romsey at the AGM of the Trust on 11 November.
- John White to raise with the committee of the Romsey & District Society (R&DS), the parent organisation for the Trust. The proposal would be for a working weekend and social event at the signal box site. Members of R&DS and the Friends of Romsey Signal Box to be invited. Probably a weekend in late April/May 1999 (when the weather is likely to be warmer and drier, and longer evenings are available).
- Other work at the signal box site to be focused upon this as a target date.

5. Discussion then focused upon recruitment and Cowley Bridge Junction. The meeting agreed that:

- Given the lack of interest from non-railway enthusiasts, the only likely source of new members was through local railway societies (which will be targeted), and demonstrating Cowley Bridge Junction at model railway exhibitions etc.
- A new lever frame for Cowley Bridge had been commissioned, and

electronic locking will be provided (free of charge). The total cost of Cowley Bridge works is likely to be around £1,500; the meeting endorsed the use of funds for this investment.

- Cowley Bridge Junction could be hired out to Railtrack or preserved railways for training. A possible deal with Railtrack fell through during the summer, but Colin Meheux intends to pursue the preservation opportunities in the Spring.

- Chris Hack is currently heavily involved in supplying plans and materials for the work on Cowley Bridge Junction. He hopes to finish before Christmas. The aim is for Cowley Bridge to be partially finished in time for static display in March at Fareham.

*Actions (2):*

- Chris Hack to complete work for Cowley Bridge, by Christmas.
- Bill Tyndall and Chris Hack to monitor progress on Cowley Bridge, with target of late Spring completion (perhaps by the date of the R&DS working weekend in late April/May).
- Colin Meheux to pursue the potential for hiring out Cowley Bridge once completed.
- Try to get the railway press interested in an article about Cowley Bridge Junction once it is completed.

6. The meeting then turned its attention to the controllers and wiring plans for Romsey signal box. Richard Beton had brought along his laptop, to show progress on the programme he was creating to provide a computer simulation for Romsey. After much discussion, the meeting agreed:

- Three alternatives are possible and these should be developed in the following order of priority:

- Simple console demonstrator for operation on Open Days;
- Manned simulator for more comprehensive operation (special occasions);
- Computer simulator (as an alternative to the manned simulator).

- Whatever is fitted in Romsey must be simple to operate and maintain. For the controllers to be fitted, they would need more restoration work, and then could easily go wrong, and in any case we still need the connecting rods (which have proven impossible to obtain). In the short term, until there are available experts willing to fit and maintain them, the controllers allocated to Romsey should continue to be mothballed.

- These controllers should be by-passed for the linking of the frame to the shelf. Separate electrical circuitry should be fitted to avoid the immediate need for the controllers. If the controllers are eventually fitted, they should operate only the locking, not the indicators etc. on the shelf.

- The small console for operating upstairs should be wired in as an alternative to the simulator, such that the simulator is not required on Open Days. The policy on Open Days generally should be to use only the standard Redbridge-Romsey-Kimbridge sequence to demonstrate. The simulator should be reserved for more comprehensive operating sessions, when there are sufficient staff both to operate and to fix any wiring which goes wrong.
- It is thought unlikely that the box itself would be popular for trainee staff from preserved railways to visit, as it features a double-track junction with tokenless block working, quite different from what happens on preserved railways.
- As part of the rewiring of the simulator, it should be moved into the visitor van. Given that it will not be used for Open Days, it would be preferable to place it away from the box for greater authenticity.
- There was a suggestion to dispose of all the controllers, but the meeting agreed it would be short-sighted to part company with those allocated to the Romsey box, as it would cost more to get replacements if they were needed in due course, and we are not that desperate for the funds.

*Actions (3):*

- Bill Tyndall and Peter Cattermole were authorised to dispose of the seven surplus controllers for a minimum of £100 each. (Afternote: Four since sold to Swanage Railway for £400 in total.)
- Chris Hack was instructed to make the wiring diagrams for Romsey available to Peter Cattermole as soon as possible, to enable Peter to plan fitting the console.
- Peter Cattermole is to fit the console by 7 February latest, in time for testing during the February Open Day, before the AGM.
- Wiring diagrams for the rest of Romsey SB, and necessary amendments to the wiring to permit the simulator to be moved into the visitor van, to be completed by April 1999.
- The gap in the floorboards behind the frame should be made safe.

7. Other business:

Priority for use of the funds was agreed as:

- (1) Cowley Bridge Junction (up to £1,500);
- (2) Lino for the signal box floor (up to £500);
- (3) Replacement of the security lights (up to £250).

Every effort should be made to use these funds before 31 March 1999, to reduce the balance and increase chances of obtaining financial support from grants and other local sources.

*Actions (4):*

- Chris Hack was actioned to obtain a quotation for lino from a source he knows. Lino to be fitted by 7 February.
- Peter Cattermole was authorised to investigate investment in more authentic and effective security lighting for the site, with a target of February 7 for fitting.
- It was suggested that Richard Beton's computer simulation could be adjusted to fit Cowley Bridge, and could even be put on a website as a publicity tool for the project. Richard to consider.
- Rod Hoyle is restoring the "Strong Country" sign. Work to be completed in time to present invoice to Test Valley Borough Council for outstanding grant to be claimed before 31 March 1999. (Afternote: Cost of £300 agreed with Rod, and work commissioned, with a target date of 7 February 1999 for supply to site.)
- The Friends are committed to opening the box on the first Sunday in the month throughout 1999, and publicity is booked. Support is needed for Open Days, to avoid one-man operation. It would only take 12 members to do two days per year each to provide the support needed for Colin and Dick (who have undertaken to continue to staff Open Days). Dick/Colin to co-ordinate roster.
- The signatories for the Friends' bank account needs to be changed to include Colin Meheux instead of Richard Read.
- Future meetings should be held on Open Days, from 4pm to 5pm.
- A list of members should be published (see back page).
- A checklist of actions is needed for people arriving at/leaving the signal box site (drafted).
- Before committing to open days in 2000, the policy of "first Sunday in the month" should be reviewed. Should the box be opened on Saturdays as well/instead? And more than once per month? To be raised at future meetings.

8. The meeting closed at 4.15pm, but not before John Prytherch had given his own personal assessment of the state of things. John was extremely positive about the situation, and believed the Friends had come to some difficult but essential policy decisions at the meeting. He saw a bright future ahead, and was particularly pleased to meet Colin Meheux, the Project Manager designate.

John's words were welcomed by everyone present, and the meeting eventually broke up with a renewed enthusiasm and determination to see the Friends of Romsey Signal Box succeed in their aims.

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#### MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The "emergency" committee will continue to operate until the AGM in February, with Dick Hewett in the chair, assisted by Colin Meheux,

Oct 98

Bill Tyndall, Chris Hack, Peter Cattermole, and Simon Cooper.  
The list of responsibilities will need to be redefined in time for the AGM, after which Colin will assume the role of Project Manager, with other committee members elected as appropriate.

Between now and February, members of the committee will continue to meet and liaise on an individual basis in order to progress the work programme agreed at the EGM on 17 October.

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#### CINE FILM URGENTLY REQUIRED/NEWS OF VIDEO

Work is still in hand on the promised video for the project, but we really would like to include some original footage of the box when it was in situ (and if possible in operation). Any offers of footage - to Dick Hewett as soon as possible. If it has already been transferred to video - all the better.

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#### SWEATSHIRTS AND T-SHIRTS

BRING YOUR MONEY TO THE AGM - when we shall be selling both  
Sweatshirts (£13.50) and (for the summer) T-shirts (£9.50).

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#### SHOPPING LIST!!

All members are asked to see whether they have direct access to any of the following currently required items, or to a man who can (collection can be arranged from anywhere in the country):

- Concrete troughing and concrete supporting blocks.
- Floorboards (ordinary household 5"-7" boards would be fine).
- A small fan heater.
- A quantity of lino, together with underlay.

Any offers: Dick Hewett, 01794-522979.

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#### NEWS OF "FRIENDS OF ROMSEY SIGNAL BOX"

Renewals for 1998 continue to arrive, and some members have taken the opportunity to renew for 1999 already. It was agreed at the EGM that this edition of the newsletter should contain a list of members. Any members who haven't yet renewed for 1998 and/or 1999 are urged to do so; the names of anyone not renewed for 1998 will be deleted from the membership list after the AGM in February 1999.

Since the last newsletter we have recruited two new members: Bob Hailes and John Meredith. The latter, verger at Southwell Minster in Nottinghamshire, has joined after enquiring about Romsey signal box whilst entertaining members of Romsey Abbey Choir at the

top of the tower at the Minster in August: your project manager just happened to be facing John with the video camera at the moment he asked! Welcome to both John and Bob.

**LIST OF MEMBERS**

*Paid up for 1998 and 1999:*

Richard Beton	Rod Blencowe	John Prytherch
David Canning	Michael Taylor	Frank Akerman
Marion Canning	Neil Kearns	Chris Hack
Ian Maxwell	Andrew Moody	Christopher Rideout
John Meredith	Steve Rapley	Richard Howe

*Paid up for 1998:*

Dick Hewett	David Hewett	Simon Cooper
Anne Hewett	Paul Hewett	Peter Jordan
Ted Mason	Bill Tyndall	Krish Kulkarni
John Evans	Juliette Tyndall	Smita Kulkarni
Richard Read	Raymond Lane	George Pryer
John Read	Mrs J M Lane	David Lyons
Peter Cattermole	Ralph Montague	Garth Long
Ken Rye	Adam Rapley	Colin Meheux
Flo Rye	Nick Dyer	Brian Smith
Jason Webber	Russell Lingwood	A M Bridge
Martin Cooper	Bob Hailes	Ivor Mason
Maurice Spencer	Dennis Hickman	Barry Sherratt
Derrick Palengat	Dr Peter Johnson	Eric Romaine
Denise Palengat		

*1998 subscriptions outstanding:*

Richard Sanderson	Alan Gilmour	Craig Phillips
Chris Smith	David Josev	Ken Phillips
Alex Munro	Rod Hovle	Barbara Phillips
Richard Cobbold	Robin Allwood	Adrian Gilmour
David Sexton	Paul Allwood	Ben Penny
Audrey Gebbie	Paul Kinch	Norman Hurst
Eric Gebbie	Ralph Brewer	

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**DIARY DATES**

6 December 1998 (Sunday): Open Day, 10am-5pm.  
 3 January: **NO MEETING IN JANUARY**  
 7 February 1999 (Sunday): Open Day, 10am-4pm; **AGM**, 4-5pm.  
 7 March 1999 (Sunday): Open Day, 10am-5pm.  
 21 March 1999 (Sunday): Cowley Bridge at Fernham Hall, Fareham.  
 4 April 1999 (Sunday): Open Day, 10am-5pm.  
 Late April/May: Romsey & District Society open weekend?

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The next issue of "The Signal" will hopefully be after the AGM, in late February/early March.

*Contributions from members would be most welcome!*