

Dear Friends of Romsey Signal Box

May-99

As you will see from the accompanying newsletter I have taken over from Dick, much to his relief, as Project Manager. He doesn't disappear but rather remains in the role of Area Manager. No work but lots of Kudos (Bill T will appreciate that). I think that whatever I do however it will always remain Dick's project. I would like therefore to explain how I see the Friends being involved in this year's proceedings and hopefully for some time after that.

Firstly it must be remembered that the Box is one of the buildings owned by the Romsey & District Buildings Preservation Trust (RDBPT). Their aim is to retain the Box but not necessarily as a working signal box. The Friends' aim is to maintain its working status and arrange the rest of the site to support that aim. Dick and I recently briefed the RDBPT and as a trial they have agreed that this year they will run a working maintenance weekend on the box. This may be tied in with a barbecue. It is hoped that this weekend will be one weekend in June perhaps that of the 12/13.

Our task as members of the Friends is to support the concept of the working box with hands-on for the public. To this end we are looking for a financial income, albeit small, to maintain the remainder of the site. To that end we have decided to refurbish Cowley Bridge as a potential training aid for Railtrack or the preserved railway authorities. Bill is in the process of arranging the whole rebuild such that it will be electronically interlocked thus meeting one of Railtrack's earlier objections.

The bread and butter income comes from members' subscriptions and open days at the signal box. As you are aware these are on the first Sunday in every month other than January. For the remainder of this year I or Dick will be available but this is still only a one-man option. When this situation arises demonstrations are difficult because of moving points, signal wires etc that cannot be seen at the same time as demonstrating their use.

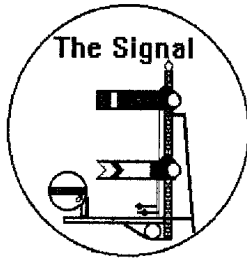
What is required are members who are prepared to give up **one or two Sundays in a year**?. If eleven friends are prepared to give up one Sunday in the next year we have the problem covered. This does not seem to be a difficult commitment to meet. On the membership list we have some 70 friends. If half of those are prepared to come one day in a year then we will have more than sufficient to cover the demonstration task but will also be able to carry out the essential maintenance tasks around the site.

I should like to think that we can all match this commitment. Please signify on the tear-off slip below whether you could give one day work and some idea of when that could be, with maybe two or three dates. I know we can beat this. Please return your slips in the pre-paid envelopes.

Thanking you in advance for your help,

Colin Meheux
Project Manager

Name..... Membership Number.....
Working Sundays.....



The Newsletter of the Friends of Romsey Signal Box

Call Attention.

As the new Project Manager I hope you will appreciate the new format. Most of the editorial blast comes in the attached letter which I hope you will all read and, hopefully at least, think about. The project is probably at a relatively low ebb as most projects are when most of the original work has been achieved. However the aim of the friends was not just to restore the box but to provide a continuous capability for the public to see and appreciate the highly skilled and vitally important job of the "bobby". To that end I have included a letter asking for a limited commitment to this aim. I realise that some of you joined for Cowley Bridge and not for the 12 inches to the foot box but I hope we can rely on some of you to support Bill. You'll see

the dates of the next outings on the operating timetable.

The second part of my message is that we can do nothing without finance. Membership fees are now outstanding for a significant number of you. The amount is not large but magnified by 80 or so becomes a significant base upon which to build. I hope that even if you cannot spare any time for the project you will at least support it financially.

Finally Cowley Bridge is well on the way to completion and Bill hopes to have photographs available of the frame soon

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1. The committee was re-elected other than Chris Hack and Peter Cattermole who sadly are overcommitted elsewhere. Paul Allwood was elected to the committee as youth coordinator since most of the rest are a touch older.
2. Colin Meheux, that's me folks, was elected as Project Manager with responsibility for Publicity, Marketing Newsletter Operations and Mechanical fittings. Dick Hewett retains the position of Chairman of the Friends Treasurer and Membership with special responsibility for the ARCHIVES.

3. Project managers statement (see elsewhere and the enclosed letter)

4. Treasures Statement. Currently have significant funds but all are earmarked for expenditure on Cowley Bridge ,external lights and hopefully if we have any left on flooring for the box

Other Actions and matters arising have mostly been dealt with subsequently.. It still remains the aim of the committee to continue with the opendays but it depends upon the level of volunteers and their commitment..

Signal Box Register

The box recently had a visit from a Mr. Paul Martin , the son of the Romsey station master in the early fifties. I asked whether he would write something for the newsletter and this is story.

“When my Father ,Mr E.R.(Bob)Martin , became stationmaster of Romsey in 1950 the family were surprised by the size and impressive nature of the house which was to become our home. Station houses came in all shapes and sizes but the station house at Romsey was most unusual as a great deal of the actual station was sandwiched between our living rooms and our bedrooms, thirty-nine stairs away. Consequently one was often reminded of being in the thick of things as far as the railway was concerned Only visitors to the house took notice of the vibration caused by trains

passing almost over our heads as the family got used to such things. However as the waiting room was situated directly above our lounge on cold mornings, especially, passengers stamping their feet to keep warm certainly made their presence felt to us down below.

Our kitchen window looked out on to the road from the goods yard as it emerged from the tunnel under the railway lines. All the lorries carrying coal and other heavy commodities which had been unloaded in the yard passed within feet of us , their noise echoing and reverberating through the tunnel.

The station was quite busy with passenger traffic with “rush hours” in the mornings and evenings of workers going to and from Eastleigh railway works. Romsey was then a junction with passenger and freight services going to Southampton, Eastleigh, Andover and Salisbury and so the station was rarely empty as passengers changed trains and waited for connections

A special day in the Romsey station calendar was the Strongs Outing. Then ,on a Saturday during the summer , the brewery chartered a complete train to take their employees to the seaside, eg Torquay. The passengers (and the beer) would be loaded on the train early in the morning to return, rather noisily but happily, late in the evening

In 1957 my father became the stationmaster of Folkestone Central and Harbour stations and so our occupation of the unusual station house at Romsey came to an end but my mother maintained that her time in Romsey was amongst her happiest.

To my shame, I can recall accompanying my father to visit the signal box at Romsey only once, it being situated some distance from the station .I was delighted to get an unexpected opportunity to revisit the box, albeit in its new surroundings, on a recent visit to Romsey. Thank you, Romsey Signal Box Project

Engineering Works

The site at present is to say the least a little overgrown. This is a result of the Project Managers oversight. However it is intended to seek a more permanent solution to the problem of site maintenance. I hope to interest the Romsey Allotment Society or some similar body to make use of the far side of the site as an additional allotment. Thus they get a patch for free in return for a little grass cutting and weeding. Failing that the paths will be regraded and plastic sheet laid an inch or so below to suppress the weeds etc.

Dick has always wanted, as do I, a couple of telegraph poles to simulate the omnibus connections that all the old boxes possessed. In addition it would be nice if a track circuit and facing point lock could be installed and connected up to the levers in the box and the signal diagram. I am currently working on a scheme to get 79 Railway Squadron RLC who are based at Marchwood Military Port to perhaps aid us with these projects. As you can imagine they are quite busy at present!

Operating Timetable

Timetable of events for 1999-2000

Open days	6 June
	4 July
	1 August
	5 September
	3 October
	7 November
	5 December
AGM	9 January
	6 February
	5 March

Excursion and Specials

RDHBT Working Weekend	12/13 June
Romsey Festival Weekend	10 /11 July

Mutual Improvement Classes for Signalmen

Cowley Bridge	
Fareham & Dist Model Rly	2/3 October
Wessex Association	23/24 October