



“The Signal”

*The Newsletter of
The Friends of Romsey Signal Box*

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Annual General Meeting

This was held in the box on Sunday 4 February 2001, after that month's open day.

Present:

- Dick Hewett (Chairman, etc.), Colin Meheux (Project Manager), Simon Cooper, Robin and Paul Allwood, John Read, and Ken Rye.

Despite the low attendance, those present agreed that the meeting should continue, as more than 10% of the total membership were present. The meeting opened at 1605.

1. Dr John White

The meeting opened with a minutes' silence in honour of the Chairman of the Romsey & District Buildings Preservation Trust, Dr John White, who passed away suddenly just before Christmas. John was instrumental in saving the pavilion, as well as being an avid supporter of the project for many years.

2. Apologies received:

- Bill Tyndall, Neil Kearns, John Prytherch, Adam Rapley, Steve Hailes, Chris Hack, and Peter Woodbridge.

(Apologies to anyone else who notified their absence but who is not listed!)

3. Report from Chairman (Dick Hewett):

There had been a number of positive developments during the past year.

- The arrival of the pavilion was a major step forward. It was now stacked safely on site. Planning permission has been granted, and Test Valley Borough Council

have made a grant of £1,500 towards the building's construction, on the basis that it will be suitable for the disabled.

- The regular attendance by a gang from the Community Service at Lymington on Open Days had provided a welcome source of labour, enabling the site to be cleared, and all the pathing to the Visitor Van to be completely relaid with a membrane and pea gravel (to stop the growth of weeds). The site was much tidier than it had been for some years.
- Signage around the site, including the Strongs sign, had been repaired.
- Insurance had been re-negotiated. The Trust now fund insurance for the building, whilst the Friends fund insurance for the contents, including the instruments.
- We had excellent coverage in a Hampshire Magazine article. We have now joined "Test Valley Tourism", which will give us access to free publicity and training. The marketing of the box is being re-examined.

On the negative side, however, progress on some other initiatives was delayed.

- The new Cowley Bridge Junction miniature box was now a year late. Progress was at last being made, but the lack of a box to take to model railway exhibitions meant recruitment of new members was severely handicapped.
- There had been virtually no recruitment of new members, and members' attendance at Open Days was even less than in 1999, with great reliance upon Colin and Dick to staff the box. Resources were stretched, and visitors and the Community Service gang were not always given the attention they deserved.
- Wiring at the box still needed to be addressed.
- We have not acquired sufficient rods for the controllers to do the whole job. We now hope to acquire suitable rods from the Bournemouth re-signalling scheme.
- The vandals were at work again during the year, smashing the trollies into the level crossing gates and badly damaging both.

Plans for 2001 must focus upon key developments:

- The re-construction of the pavilion, with a completion targeted for the autumn. *Action:* Dick Hewett, to pursue with the Buildings Preservation Trust.
- The Re-wiring of the box. *Action:* Simon Cooper and Chris Hack.
- The completion of the new Cowley Bridge. *Action:* Bill Tyndall.
- The restoration of the trollies and level crossing. *Action:* Colin Meheux, with Robin and Paul Allwood.
- The exterior painting of the box. *Action:* Colin Meheux
- Acquisition of rods from Railtrack. *Action:* Bill Tyndall.
- A survey and subsequent marketing plan to be developed. *Action:* Dick Hewett.

Dick also made it clear that he wished to step back significantly from any active role in the Friends from the AGM in 2002. *Action:* Other members to step forward!

4. Report from Project Manager (Colin Meheux):

Colin had little to add to Dick's report, other than to emphasise the frustrations with the poor wiring at the box, and the need for more volunteers to help on Open Days. *Action:* All members to consider spending even one day per year at the box.

5. Report on Cowley Bridge Junction (from Bill Tyndall):

Dick Hewett summarised the position as it stands at present, on Bill's behalf.

- The new frame is nearing completion, with only the circuitry for the locking to be added. This is now in hand with Alan Johnston.
- A new simulator panel is to be built which will satisfy the needs of both professional and amateur signalmen, with various switch-in or switch-out options.
- A number of bookings have now been taken for the summer, including Copythorne (June), Bideford (August) and Salisbury (September).

Colin asked whether the old Cowley Bridge could be used as a display in the new pavilion. Some will be re-used (for example, the instruments), but the simulator and lever frame will be spare. *Action:* Colin and Bill to decide what to do with this.

Long-term storage remains a problem. The rooms at Romsey are not secure and it was agreed that the rent would not be renewed after May 2002. However, we will need to leave the rooms in a satisfactory state, and repairs are still needed to the door. *Action:* Colin to organize repair of the door, and Dick to send notice of termination.

6. Treasurer/Membership Secretary's report (Dick Hewett):

The accounts, which run from April to March, are fully audited and then presented as part of the accounts of the Buildings Preservation Trust to their AGM. Accounts for the year ended March 2000 are available from the Treasurer.

Membership had stabilised during 2000. For the year since April 2000, as at 31 January 2001, combined funds in the petty cash and bank account stood at £1042.53. Commitments in the pipeline include lino for the floor, new security lights, and materials to repair the door at Romsey Station. We need to consider applying for further grants. *Action:* Dick to write to Romsey Town Council for June 2001.

7. Officers of "Friends" – re-elected as follows:

- *Colin Meheux:* Project Manager (including Operations and Mechanics at box)
- *Bill Tyndall:* Cowley Bridge Junction.
- *Simon Cooper:* electrical fittings at box.

- *Paul Allwood*: youth development.
- *Ted Mason*: ex-officio member of committee with special responsibility for the link with the Romsey & District Buildings Preservation Trust.
- *Dick Hewett*: Chairman, Treasurer, Membership Secretary, Archivist, Newsletter editor, Marketing/publicity.

8. Any other business:

We could host evening visits by local groups. *Action*: Paul Allwood to investigate.

The cooker could be moved into the pavilion, and the box made more user-friendly. *Action*: Colin to pursue with Ken Rye.

9. Date of next AGM:

Agreed as 1600 hours, Sunday 3 February, 2002.

The meeting closed at 1715 hours.

Membership subscriptions:

If you have already renewed your subscription with the Friends for 2001 and have not had your membership slip yet, you will find one enclosed with this edition. We are delighted to thank all members who have included donations with their subscriptions. In fact, the donations received have averaged significantly more than the subscriptions themselves. Your generosity is recognised and extremely welcome.

For those few members who have still yet to renew, please note that this will definitely be the last newsletter you will receive until you send in your subscription for 2001. Forms were issued with the last newsletter, but don't worry if you can't find them - just forward the £5 for adults, £2.50 for juniors and senior citizens. You know it is all going to a good cause!

Open Days:

Remember: we need volunteers to help us on Open Days. Dates:

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

Contact Colin Meheux, 01425 672814.