



# "The Signal"

*The Newsletter of  
The Friends of Romsey Signal Box*

*No 30, May 2004*

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## Advance notice of Annual General Meeting

**The AGM of the Friends of Romsey Signal Box will be held in the Signal Box on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2004, commencing 3.30pm. Agenda:**

1. Apologies
2. Acceptance of record of EGM (June 2003) (as published in "The Signal" No 29, November 2003)
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman's Report:
  5. General/Committee meetings
  6. Signal box building and site: news
  7. Pavilion news
8. Treasurer's Report
9. Membership Secretary's Report
10. Cowley Bridge Junction news
11. Election for Committee/Officers of the Friends
12. List of other responsibilities
13. Diary of Open Days 2004-5
14. Any other business
15. Date of next AGM

Dick Hewett, Chairman, 8 May 2004

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## Slow progress maintained

It is six months since the last edition of "The Signal", and as usual this has been due to a lack of time for your Chairman and others on the Project. In particular, several key people have suffered illness or domestic difficulties which have hampered availability. In this respect, we extend our best wishes to Colin Meheux, Bob McCann and George Pryer, and others who we know have not had the best of times recently.

On top of this, your Chairman has got himself a new full-time job, as well as various extra voluntary responsibilities he had taken on during his period of unemployment. He is now desperately shedding certain of these to keep himself sane!

It is gratifying therefore that, despite of various setbacks, we can report that progress is being made on all the developments associated with the Friends of Romsey Signal Box. For a first-hand report on progress, you are encouraged to attend the Annual General Meeting. In the meantime, we can give you the following summary.

### Signal box itself

In the signal box, the most significant news has been the acquisition at last of a number of rods and links which, with some necessary modifications, will enable us to complete the restoration of the workings of the box, connecting the lever frame to the block shelf. We have waited many years to obtain this equipment, and were grateful to Bill Tyndall, Howard Sprenger, and several others for sorties to Branksome signal box when it was decommissioned earlier in the year.

During the April Open Day, and on Good Friday, the underneath of the box was cleared and sorted, creating much better space. We want to keep it that way!

### Sponsorships

We have been very generously supported again by Borcombe Printers. The new edition of our guide book has been updated and reprinted, entirely at Borcombe's expense. Copies are available from the Chairman for £1.50 (including p&p).

Members will also be delighted to learn that our restored Strongs brewery sign has been sponsored by The Hampshire Brewery. This new concern operates from Romsey, and they have been granted permission by Whitbread to market Strong's ales once more. The association with the Hampshire Brewery is a very logical one.

## **Pavilion**

We were delighted to report in November 2003 that we had received £4,500 from Awards For All. We have to use the money by November 2004.

We immediately pushed ahead with the installation of a connection to mains drainage, and the mains water supply. This work was a major undertaking, costing almost exactly £3,000 and involving a professional building firm. The mains drainage involved digging a large hole down the outside of the sewer inspection chamber just outside the signal box site, and connecting into the sewer some 12 feet below ground level. With unstable ground, it was a major undertaking, especially as the bottom of the hole was well below the water table. The job was completed successfully, with a drainage pipe laid in to the appropriate position below the site of the pavilion.

At the same time, a connection was made into the mains water supply in the school grounds, and a pipe laid through the second conduit which we had very sensibly laid when we installed the electric supply in 1991! We now have mains water on site. The builders laid further conduits to the pavilion site, through which we shall be able to continue the water supply, and also lay an electric cable from the existing supply in the box. These works will be undertaken whilst the building is being completed.

The building itself has suffered significantly whilst being laid up over the past three years. Early in December all the existing timberwork was assessed. It was agreed that the entire floor should be replaced, not just because this had suffered the most, but also because this was the most important element to be in good condition when the building is in use, since this will have to bear all the weight of visitors (including wheelchairs).

The only progress made during the early part of 2004 involved the removal of the two tree stumps at the signal box end of the site for the pavilion, careful measurements of the various sections of the building, and the dismantling of these components. All the windows, and other important materials, have been safely stored under the signal box.

Plans have now been agreed for the foundations, for which we are enlisting the assistance of the same builders who installed the drains. Hopefully this work will be completed before the AGM. Once the foundations have been built, a new timber floor will be constructed in situ, then the remainder of the building reconstructed. We estimate that we will be replacing the majority of the timbers, but the structure will still be recognisably the same building as was rescued from its previous home. The final work will involve fitting it out. All the work must be completed this year.

Your Chairman has decided that he has insufficient time to give the pavilion the leadership it needs. We are pleased to note that Colin Meheux and his son Quentin have taken on the mantle, aided by several other volunteers with particular expertise to offer, including a timber conservation expert, David Jeffery.

## **Cowley Bridge Junction**

Bill Tyndall has also been heavily involved in pushing Cowley Bridge ahead at last. After appeals for assistance through the local and signalling press, we were delighted to get two offers of help from local Romsey folks. Alan Dyke (electrician) and Chris Norvall (metalworking/carpentry/engineering) have been working closely with Alan Johnston to progress necessary the work. The soldering which was causing the long delays has now been done, and a full programme initiated to complete the new frame by the end of the summer.

On this basis, Bill has started to consider bookings for model railway exhibitions for 2005. Cowley Bridge is a key part of our publicity and recruitment of new members, as well as being an element of the Project of particular interest to certain members. It will be good to see the results of what has been a considerable investment in a superb piece of miniature mechanical and electrical engineering.

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## **Finally, a reminder! Membership, and see you at one of the Open Days!**

**Membership reminders** have been sent out by Howard Sprenger. Any members who have not renewed by the AGM will be deleted from the distribution list thereafter.

It was great to see so many members at recent **Open Days**. The best attendance was in March when 11 members were on duty or visited, several with partners or friends. Not only does it enable us to get more things done whilst still entertaining our many visitors, it is also a really good morale boost to the regulars.

**Next Open Days:** 6 June, 4 July, 1 Aug, 5 Sep, 3 Oct, 7 Nov and 5 Dec.

**And keep in contact:**

**Dick Hewett (01794 500523) or Colin Meheux (01425 672814).**