



“The Signal”

*The Newsletter of
The Friends of Romsey Signal Box
President: Dick Hewett*

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Getting smarter!



After some impressive work through the summer, particularly in preparation for the Heritage Open Days in September, the signal box site is looking as smart as it has ever done – and the pavilion is becoming a very useful facility. Rod Hoyle’s restored display boards in their new mountings, and the new steps, feature here.

The Chairman’s chat:

A year of progress!

Peter Chatfield writes:

The Friends and the Trust

I make no apology for starting with the ‘big issue’. To recap, Romsey & District Buildings Trust, which owns the signal box site, made it clear earlier this year that they needed the Friends to assume a ‘greater responsibility’ for the project. This was largely due to increasing financial pressures. We responded by engaging in a dialogue with representatives of the Trust - mainly Frank Akerman and Ted Mason, who are also members of the Friends. And we also shifted our position from requesting full payment for box maintenance to one of open negotiation.

However, our main concern was how far the Trust would seek to change its role vis-à-vis the Friends. At this point, I said I would look into the alternative possible scenarios. This was done and the alternatives were:

- a) continuation of the existing constitutional arrangement, that is, the Trust owns the site, the Friends are ‘agents’ of the Trust, and the Trust has available specialist support services - legal, planning, buildings etc;
- b) the Trust disengages and transfers ownership to another local (?heritage) body;
- c) the Trust disengages and the Friends set up an independent trust.

In a nutshell, Dick and I concluded that continuation of the current arrangement was by far the best course. There are several reasons for this. Chiefly, there needs to be local stakeholding involvement for the box to remain as a heritage building in Romsey. The Trust is really the only appropriate local body to support this. Setting up an independent trust, while superficially attractive, is not a realistic option for us. The reality is that I personally would have to take on the bulk of such work. Living over 100 miles from Romsey, I would then have advocated moving the signal box to an organisation which could support it....!!

So I am very pleased to report that Dick and I had a very constructive meeting last month with Frank and Ted to reach an agreement on these constitutional/organisational matters. As a result, it appears that the Trust will endorse continuation of the current arrangement. This is also important because the Trust are keeping a close eye on planning proposals concerning the signal box

and adjacent sites, and are working to secure the best outcome to suit the future of the box in Romsey.

We are, in fact, indebted to Frank and Ted. For many years they have advocated the signal box cause at the Trust, and how fortunate we are that its local heritage value is understood and tirelessly promoted....

Signal Box structure

Anyone who hasn't visited for a few months will notice the new steps which have been built as replacements for the time-expired old ones. We're very grateful to John Trowbridge and his contacts for organising this. John is also heavily involved in arranging for the panelling of the box itself to be repaired and re-painted, a task



which everyone hoped would be done this autumn, but which is now programmed for the Spring of 2007 when the drier warmer weather returns. This work is a prime example of the valuable contribution which can be made by the Trust.

Open Days

I'm pleased to report that open days have been busy recently. We had around 40 visitors in October, and about the same in November. It's been quite a challenge coping with all the demonstrations, while also undertaking other tasks - surely, though, a symptom of success. Among our venerable volunteers, Garth on

the strimmer (but hope the back's better!), Neil, Ken Rye and Ken Hale with the paint brushes, Dick the demo king, Michelle in the 'garden', George on the simulator, not to mention Roger, Torin, Mike Walshaw, Stuart Jones and others from time to time - thank you all.



Pavilion

The message is: don't panic! It's 90% completed, but we had to postpone the final furlong due to so many other pressing matters. A working day is booked for 16th December and we should be able to fix some dates through January and February, aiming for completion before Easter. (No, I cannot hear you saying 'that's what we said last year....!')

S&T Group

The group continues to meet about every 6 weeks - a fantastic achievement in itself, and a tribute to the organisation of the group under Mike Walshaw's leadership. Much progress has been made, for example many of the lever-instrument functions have been restored, and recently the block controls on the simulator have been repaired. However, a number of problems have been uncovered as the restoration has proceeded, and so this is very much a work in progress.... One major job we will need to do shortly is to install supports for the large wooden cross beam which forms a platform for the lever frame.

Cowley Bridge Junction

Finally I am pleased to report that work on the new CBJ continues. Alan Johnston continues on the installation, and we have had Mike Ratcliff's (Exeter West Group) help in restoring the block instruments. Steve Hailes has kindly offered to take on fabrication of a simulator panel to work to the block shelf. Alan also suggested that a CBJ sub-committee is established, to coordinate the work through to completion. I have offered to lead this sub-committee and am currently identifying who is available to help. Apart from those above, I also have Bill Tyndall, Simon Cooper and Roger Pleasant connected with CBJ (and potentially Dick).

Signal & Telegraph (S&T) Report

Mike Walshaw writes: Let me introduce myself. I was born in 1935, read electrical engineering at Southampton University and joined the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE) at Farnborough (although I did consider joining BR as a Signal Graduate at a higher salary!). At the RAE, I worked on aircraft electrical systems, but after a few years I moved into management. I worked for a while in Ministry HQ in London and was then posted to Aircraft Technical Publications Branch at Chessington. The Branch was uprooted to Glasgow in 1986 and I moved home from Farnborough to Scotland before retiring from the MoD in 1995.

I have a life-long interest in railway signalling and have a fully-signalled 00 gauge model railway styled on Swanage in the 1940's. I developed a love for Swanage and its Railway, and my wife and I moved home from Scotland to Swanage in 2001. I soon joined the Swanage Railway's S&T Department, and have spent hours wiring up our three signal boxes and testing and maintaining our AOCL level crossing equipment and our single-line key token and tablet instruments. I also trained to become a Signaller and regularly work Harmans Cross and the delightful Corfe Castle Signal Boxes.

I joined the Friends of Romsey Signal Box a few years ago when I attended a Signalling Marathon with Geoff Coffin of Swanage. In January 2006, I was gingerly approached by Garth to see if I knew of anyone “who just might spare us a day or two on the S&T side to identify the major electrical gremlins for us”. Well, despite being busy enough at Swanage, I fell for that one and was given a mass of documents and drawings of the S&T installation to study. These include nearly 50 hand-drawn circuit diagrams representing the wiring of the signal box and the simulator as originally designed by Ian Maxwell around 1990-1992. I learned that some were subsequently modified in the light of installation work and they were all drawn up for us by Chris Hack before he departed the scene in 1999. I have to express our gratitude to these gentlemen for the very detailed and realistic representation of a working signal box that they designed. Some of their design features, such as electric lever locks, were never installed, so there is plenty of work for us for future years!

I have been working away to reproduce the circuit diagrams on my PC at home, enabling errors to be corrected and including additional information as we work round the circuits and find how they *actually* work. So far, I have done 28, some of which are totally new drawings. An up-to-date Master Set of these important documents is kept at Dick Hewett's home.

I am indeed fortunate to be supported by a team of S&T experts – Simon Cooper, Steve Hailes and Stuart Jones – to name them in alphabetical order, all professionals in signal engineering or computers, unlike myself – a ‘power &

machines’ man. We have also been supported by other workers, who have undertaken the filthy jobs of cleaning out the Locking Room, lubricating the external rodding and signal wires and humping tons of spare equipment out of the Locking Room, where it was very much in our way. The equipment that we moved out was listed as it was moved, but we are not quite sure where the originally listed spare equipment now lies. Any clues of whereabouts are welcomed!



Jim Russell from the Mid-Hants Railway working on the frame during the Heritage Open Days operating session – another occasion when more faults were noted! Vitrually everything in this scene has since been repaired or connected for the first time.

The S&T Working Party first met on 15 April and we have held 4 further sessions since then. One of these was an Open Day, when it has to be said that progress was a bit limited with all those visitors! I have created an S&T Fault Report Sheet for operators to record problems experienced and S&T to record their progress in fixing the problems. Thus far, we have recorded 27 faults and it sometimes seems that we make 2 steps forward and 3 back when new faults appear! To be totally honest, we are slightly disappointed by the poor standard of the original electrical installation and its supporting documentation. The latter I can correct and update as we go along, but it does not help when cables are not labelled, wiring shown as installed is not actually installed, wires break off terminals, lamps burn out due to excess voltage, etc. Even after 7 months, we have quite a way before we can say that the present installation is in full working order, let alone think about the many ‘enhancements’ that Chris Hack listed for us.

I will end this first report on a positive note by listing some of the major faults that we have fixed:

- The rodent-gnawed cable to the external Signal 3 detector box has been repaired, so this signal is now repeated on the block shelf and simulator.
- The rodding to external Points 4 has been adjusted so as not to overstrain the lever frame.
- The switch blades of Points 4 and the external rodding and signal wire pulleys have been lubricated, and we see this as a routine task for our non-technical supporters.

- The track circuit lamps on the diagram have all been put into working order.
- The block instruments were put into order but gremlins struck on 28 October and at the time of writing we have mysterious faults with both instruments.
- The burnt out lamps in the colour-light repeaters on the block shelf have been renewed (thanks to Simon and his employer) and the sequences (e.g. G, YY, Y, R) now look most impressive. The replacement of these lamps has also re-established their repeating LEDs in the simulator.
- The shelf relays have been cleaned externally and a missing relay installed.
- On the simulator, a broken block switch and a broken block bell tapper have been renewed.

It seems that there have been few reports on S&T work in past Newsletters once the initial installation work was completed, so I plan to rectify this regrettable situation! In the next Newsletter I would hope to be able to report on the rectification of further faults.

My thanks once again to Simon, Steve and Stuart and our ‘non-technical’ S&T supporters.

Dick Hewett reports: A superb effort from Mike and team, which has continued: STOP PRESS 1: Another very fruitful working session on Saturday 2nd December, when most of the remaining faults were resolved, culminated in the wiring of the last repeater on the block shelf. For the first time, every repeater now works, and the block shelf is virtually complete. Congratulations to Mike, Simon Cooper, Steve Hailes, Stuart Jones, Roger Pleasant and Peter Chatfield, who all attended. STOP PRESS 2: During the Open Day on the following day, the signal wire to no 5 signal was replaced, being re-routed through a new pipe under the path to the level crossing (thanks particularly to Dick Hewett, Neil Kearns, Ken Hale and Steve Hailes), and Steve continued with work on a number of minor repairs to the wiring and the block shelf. All in all an extremely productive weekend’s work, to follow what Mike reports.

Heritage Open Days and our 5000th visitor!

Dick Hewett writes: Since 1991 we have opened the box on many occasions. Our Heritage Open Days weekend in early September was particularly significant.

Even before the event, we were delighted to be visited by Meridian TV during our July Open Day. They were highlighting four sites which were due to open for the Heritage Open Days, and we were very fortunate in being one of the sites they chose. The 5-minute film clip was shown in August – and an excellent advertisement for us it was. The specialist might quibble at very minor technical

errors, but to the layman it was a superb introduction to Romsey Signal Box and what we're about. The true star was our new young volunteer, George Cooper. If anyone wishes to see the clip, I have a CD which can be loaned for short periods.



Then at the event itself, we were delighted to launch our new CCTV system, funded by Awards For All. Two cameras mounted in the signal box transmit to a receiver in the pavilion, which in turn is linked to a TV monitor. Several older people who would otherwise not have been able to see what was happening in the box were able to sit in front of the TV and watch and listen. The only change to our own operating was the need for those in the box to watch their language and behaviour even when there were no members of the public on the operating floor – the spy cameras were broadcasting it all in the pavilion!

We had some added attractions, including David and Marion Canning who brought their layout with working swimming pool etc – fascinating for the children. And in the pavilion Rod Hoyle mounted a special display of some superb black and white photographs of local railway scenes from earlier days. Our thanks to all of them.



Finally, a very successful operating session continued throughout both days, and we were very pleased to receive 113 visitors in total. Amongst these was a special milestone late on the Saturday afternoon – our 5000th visitor since we first opened in 1991. Those who were present will witness the total coincidence of the situation, when I welcomed my best friends Peter and Bridget Brook into the box, and handed them ticket numbers 4999 and 5000! I'm not sure who was more embarrassed – them or me!

Photographs were taken with Peter, and publicity gained with local press coverage prior to the October Open Day – a factor in the high attendance on that occasion.

The question now is: when will we reach no 10000?! Our thanks to everyone involved in the weekend. We are highly likely to repeat it on an annual basis – so watch this space for September 2007!



Quite separately, but only a few weeks later, my wife Anne and I played host to two clergy from South Rwenzori Diocese in Uganda. I discovered Rev Ezra and Rev James had only ever once been on a train in their lives! So we took them on a trip from Romsey to Southampton, outwards via Chandlers Ford and back via Nursling. And of course a visit to the signal box was essential.

This just goes to show how far our visitors come to see our unique attraction!

Visit by St Albans South

Peter Chatfield writes: Dick and I had the pleasure of hosting a visit to Romsey Signal Box by Keith and Mary Webster, and their son Thomas. For those not in the know, Keith is the Chairman of St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust, and they have made excellent progress in preparing for major building work on the box since they acquired a lease from Network Rail in March 2006. Their visit was an



inspiration for all of us, though we never once touched on what it is that makes rational people, not known for their insanity, embark on trying to rescue signal boxes.... Dick later visited St Albans South Box, and dived with death ascending and descending the ladder to gain access. I warned him not to go to the loo there, as the wooden overhang that houses the toilet is liable to collapse at any time. At least they've got a loo - it took us

19 years to get ours!! [Afternote: The loo collapsed during recent gales!] Keith and co: we wish you every success....

Membership:

Membership Secretary Neil Kearns writes:

We're midway through the year and most people have renewed, but if you're you're not certain if you have, please ring me on 02380 618 167 (evenings or

weekends) or e-mail me on membership@romseysignalbox.org.uk. Subscriptions are £5.00 for members aged between 17 and 59 years and only £2.50 for those up to 16 and 60 years and over. If you do need to renew, post your subscription to -

Neil Kearns,
38 Arundel Road,
Boyatt Wood,
Eastleigh,
Hants, SO50 4PQ.

The next membership year begins 1 April 2007, and there will be a reminder in the next edition of The Signal.

Coincidences Involving Locomotive 30729

Ken Rye writes: To the uninitiated, 30729 is the BR number allocated to one of Dougal Drummond's T9 class of 4-4-0 locomotives introduced in 1899 for use on LSWR express passenger duties, becoming known as "Greyhounds" for their turn of speed. However as trains became heavier they were relegated to cross-country services, and Friends who have studied the superb display in the van (sorry! things have moved on from then), the PAVILION, will have seen a photo of this example passing Romsey signal box on Sunday May 1st 1955 on its way to Portsmouth.



"The Signal" No 33, page 6, also had this picture of 30729 passing through Romsey on Saturday 14th May 1955, so it was no stranger to this area. 30729 was based at Fratton Depot in the 1950s, and would have been used on services such as those to Salisbury, Gosport, Alton and Andover, either before the lines closed, or when loco-hauled services were displaced by Hampshire Diesel-Electric Units.

Those of my generation will probably have seen the feature film "The Cockleshell Heroes" at the cinema, whereas those much younger have had the opportunity to see it on the TV. The film released in 1955, contains a number of railway sequences including a superb shot of 30729 in ex-works condition passing through Fort Brockhurst Station on the Fareham to Gosport branch. It was from this branch that our demonstration track came, and it is therefore likely that 30729 passed over the very points we now have outside Romsey Box on its present site, as well as along the line above us.

And finally one of the few photos I took of locos of this type is in fact 30729. This was taken from Broadstone signal box (where else but my home station!) leaving the station with the 10.04 Bournemouth West to Salisbury service on Friday 12th June 1959. Apart from one preserved example (30120) (of which I also have a photo), all locos of this class were withdrawn in 1961.

Building a Garden Railway?

Derrick Palengat writes: If you are, or are thinking of doing so – or even if you are not – I have to say that the “Hillside Railway” experience was great fun both in the building and in its operation over 15 years. It was 5inch gauge, with one steam loco and 3 battery electrics, together with all narrow gauge stock, scale 2in/1ft. With advancing years, the line was dismantled in 1999, before moving to a small flat with an event smaller (unsuitable for railway) garden.

Dick Hewett and Bill Tyndall will remember it well. On several occasions for our Annual Open Day in the 90s, Bill brought over a team of signallers from Romsey signal box, to keep safely apart the three trains we had running at the same time.

I have a 20-minute video of the “Story of Hillside Railway” if anyone would like to borrow it, free of charge. I would suggest a small donation (up to £5?) to the Treasurer of the Friends. Just phone me on 023 8028 2572, and leave you name, address and telephone number.

Dick writes: Indeed I remember it very well, and also have some video coverage, with my then young son driving one of the battery locos round the circuit! Happy memories indeed, and a fascinating little railway, of which Derrick is right to feel proud. I shall certainly be contacting him, and would encourage others to do so likewise. Perhaps I’ll find a photo or two for the next edition.

(A letter to the President from a friend in Romsey, Mike Rowland:)

So is your interest in signalling in your blood?....

Dear Dick

I have some ancestors who were employed in the 19th Century by the London & South Western Railway. They worked as Railway labourers in the main although two at least achieved Station Foreman/Master status, one at Redbridge Station and another at Shawford (both to be verified!). The attached Railway Ancestors Family History Society has amongst other things a 'Staff Database' and it occurred to me that your many visitors to the 'Signal Box' might be interested to know about this 'specialist' Family History Society. I have only come across it recently myself

and have yet to see the database so cannot vouch for its work though the aims and ideas they present seem sound enough.

<http://www.railwayancestors.fsnet.co.uk/index.html>

Next edition

Many thanks to Ken and Derrick for their articles. I already have another article by Ken, and some photos from Neil Kearns, which I have had to hold over until the next issue, but I would be delighted to receive more articles, letters, or photographs from any members on any topic which they think would be of interest to other members. All contributions welcome for the Spring issue!

Next Open day: 4 February 2007. Contact Neil Kearns, 023 8061 8167.

Subsequent Open Days 2007: 4 March, 1 April, 6 May, 3 June (including AGM at 3.30pm), 1 July, 5 August, 2 September, 7 October, 4 November, 2 December.

S&T Working sessions: 3 February, and thereafter on the Saturday immediately before each Open Day (dates above). Contact Mike Walshaw, 01929 421913.

48-hour Marathon/Heritage Open Days: *Provisionally* 8-9 September 2007.

ALL MEMBERS REQUIRED TO ATTEND IF AT ALL POSSIBLE!

Further operating days: Jan 07 cancelled. Next one likely to be April 2007. Await news from Garth Long, 023 8031 5075, or Peter Chatfield, 01892 522143.



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