



"The Signal"

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

No 36, April 2007

Chairman: Peter Chatfield, tel 01892 522143, email: chairman@romseysignalbox.org.uk

*Editor: Dick Hewett, tel 01794 500523, 42 Botley Road, Romsey, Hampshire, S051 5AP
email: treasurer@romseysignalbox.org.uk*

www.romseysignalbox.org.uk

Major events planned

Celebrations in 2007! Be involved!

Chairman Peter Chatfield writes:



Get out your diaries – mark clearly in bold red ink under 3rd June, 1st July, 8th/9th

September and 7th October – “Be at Romsey Signal Box!”

We have much to celebrate and commemorate. And it's free to get in (as Dick says: visitors have to pay to leave – when we wave the donations tin!). The lights are on green! More details below...

Meanwhile great progress continues. The April Open Day has just passed, the second day of another good weekend - further S&T progress on the Saturday (Mike Walshaw reports later), and quite a few visitors on the Sunday.

We also had plenty of volunteers, including the 2 Kens - Ken Hale (usually with paint brush in hand) and Ken Rye - also new member Clive Millward (digging out weeds and generally tidying the site), and Neil Kearns, a dabhand with the tin of

paint. Then apart from Dick taking the lead in entertaining the visitors (in his own inimitable style), we also saw Garth Long (attempting to get the strimmer to work!), Rod Hoyle with the camera, young George Cooper ('the simulator') as ever; also Stan and George Streather and family. Young George Streather is fast becoming a star signalman.... great stuff!

Importantly, matters are in hand regarding the repairs to the exterior of the box this year, thanks to Ted Mason and colleagues on the Trust – and the pavilion finally nears completion!

As you'll see from the following report of progress since the last Newsletter, there's not much going on, really.... But come along, get involved, and share the success!

Pavilion

Great news! - the structural work is now complete. Thanks to Dick's acrobatics, including some heroic clambering around on the loo ceiling, the very last section of internal cladding was fitted in February. To celebrate, Rod Hoyle took a picture of Dick's boots protruding from the ceiling.... nice one, Rod!

At the same time, Ken Rye completed a superb job of re-hanging the exterior door opposite the loo, allowing direct access from outside, as per the spec for disabled access. Dick has also constructed a shelf unit for the sink area, and Neil has made excellent progress with the painting. I have continued in my role as 'number 2 chippy' (sort of - Dick being number 1!!).



At the April Open Day last week, Neil continued with the interior painting, and Ken Rye attended to the loo lock - I think I was the first to test it and, er, managed to escape again.... *(Note from Editor/President: Sorry, Mr Chairman, you can't have that claim to fame. Just I was the first ever to use the loo, so I was the first to use it with a locked door on the room!)*

Dick, Neil and myself are arranging dates to finish the painting. We will meet on Sunday 22nd April re further Pavilion matters - especially focusing on constructing a pathway/ramp to entrance, also to do interior 'beading'. We have also earmarked some dates to complete the painting (with Neil taking the lead), fitting window hooks, adding fire extinguishers to meet fire regulations). Dick will also collect some preservative from Clive for the exterior.

Don't hold your breath, folks, but we really should be done by this summer. Many thanks to all.

The box itself

Significant news on renovation of the box: the Trust are about to progress the professional repair of the rotten wood, and the professional external decoration of the box. Although the Trust temporarily do not have the funding required, I am pleased to say that three Friends are kindly providing a short-term loan to the Trust to enable this work to go ahead this year. This is just as well, because the water ingress is getting worse all the time, and the likely cost of repair would simply escalate as time goes on. Once again, I am grateful to Ted Mason - our direct link with the Trust - for taking this forward, and to his colleagues.

Meanwhile Dick is aiming to get the sink in the box itself plumbed in shortly so that there is at least a cold water supply for those in the box.

Colour scheme

There has been some discussion on what colours the box should be painted, and some different preferences. There are 3 possible appropriate colours, reflecting different periods in the box's history: LSWR salmon/brown (c1865 - 1920s); SR green/cream (c1920s - 1960s); late BR white/black (c late 1960s - 1982). **The Friends' Committee would like to seek the opinion of members, and we will also ask visitors to the site, via an informal 'vote'. Please send your votes to Dick**, who is bound by Scouts' honour to be an honest returning officer!! *(Editor: As I was never a Scout, you're taking a risk, Mr Chairman – but I promise to welcome all votes – especially those which agree with mine!)*

S & T

I'm very pleased to say that the Signalling & Telecommunications working group have made further progress, with Mike Walshaw ably at the helm, and an admirable supporting cast including Steve Hailes, Simon Cooper, Stuart Jones and Roger Pleasant. The electric and mechanical locking, lever frame, block instruments and repeaters are now in excellent working order. Attention has somewhat now shifted towards additional matters, such as restoration of some of the telecommunications equipment, and correcting the working of the Halterworth crossing sequence. Also, Roger has done a great job on covers to protect the relays in the locking room.

I would particularly highlight the importance of the work undertaken to update the circuit diagrams. This will be invaluable and time-saving in trouble-shooting of the electrics in future. Mind you, such is the quality of the S&T that I'm not expecting

much trouble for a long time yet.... However, I have promised to compile a maintenance schedule so we can keep things working as well as they are now.

(Mike has submitted a more comprehensive report elsewhere in this edition.)

Site Maintenance

Not a lot to report - well, it has been the winter. But as we move into the ‘gardening season’, you can rest assured that the marestail and weeds will, as surely as night follows day, return with a vengeance.... All our gardeners are always more than welcome at the site on Open Days, even if it is more weeding than cultivating a floral display!

I’m sorry to report that Garth Long has had a lot of trouble with his back, and so for the moment we have lost one of our most talented strimmer operatives. He is going to investigate getting a replacement strimmer as the old one seems to have given up the ghost. I have suggested that he gets hold of a director’s chair, however, and shouts instructions to the rest of us.... Garth, we wish you well.

Other odd jobs on the list for the site include repairing/painting the trolleys, and sorting items dumped at the rear of site (mainly for disposal).

The Site and Development

Once again, we are grateful to Ted and company at the Trust for monitoring the proposed development of the adjacent land. A key issue to emerge is that of access to the site during construction work, as well as afterwards. Together with adequate parking space, pedestrian access is vital to the role of the Project as a public asset.

Open Days

Open Days have generally been well-attended and, anecdotally, it seems as if we have an increasing number of visitors who do wish to stay on site for some time after the demonstration, to ask questions, chat with volunteers, visit the various displays etc. An entirely new set of display boards are in preparation at Dick’s house and should be ready by the AGM. On a subject dear to Dick’s heart, your Chairman has given serious thought to his delivery in demos and, as we should not rely on Dick to have to do all the demos, we do need to strive to give a quality demo appropriate for the particular audience each time. Many thanks to all involved on the demo side, not least the ever-enthusiastic young George Cooper.

It is also noticeable that Open Days have generated a trickle of new members. We welcome each and every one with open arms (and a donations tin!).

Cowley Bridge Junction

No further news on our miniature signal box. Alan Johnston has been very busy, but it is to be hoped that we can report progress by the next newsletter. Meantime, thanks to Alan for all the work done on what is a big project.

Operating Events

Unfortunately, Garth was unable to organise what was becoming our start of year operating ‘bash’ in January, due to family commitments. However, we do have a busy period coming up for events at the site - see below.

Visitor Events

And so to this year’s **THREE BIG PUBLIC EVENTS!!** Mark the dates in your diaries now, Romsey SB’s the place to be this summer and autumn!!



Sunday 1st July (Open Day) - ‘40 years since Southern steam’ – an exhibition of atmospheric and evocative photos taken in the last years of Southern steam, by local photographer Rod Hoyle. (The B&W picture to the left, and the one of Dick’s boots, both taken in February by Rod, are recent examples of his unique style.) (For those reading a monochrome copy – all the other photos are in colour when viewed on the version on the website.)

Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th September: Heritage Open Days – Operating Marathon - the box will be operated continuously (to a new timetable being compiled by Neil Kearns), whilst open to the public for demonstrations; PLUS Rod Hoyle’s exhibition continues, PLUS (either September or October Open Day) the launch of ‘The Atmospheric Southern’ – a new book compiled by Rod, in association with Kevin Robertson’s

publications, as a celebration of the atmosphere of the era of the steam railway.

Sunday 7th October (Open day) - ‘Romsey Resurrection - Alive and Kicking 25 years on....’ - 25 years since closure of the box, and 15 years since it was

re-opened – a special exhibition of photos taken around the time of closure; PLUS Rod’s earlier exhibition and book sales continue.

AGM

Don’t forget also the Annual General Meeting, which will be held on Sunday 3rd June at 3.30pm in the pavilion. The agenda is published elsewhere in this edition.

And THE Other Event!

Yes, you’ve guessed it! We couldn’t let the grand opening of the Pavilion pass unnoticed!! It is likely that this will dovetail with the July Event, but more news on this shortly....

Very best wishes to you all, and hope to see you sometime down at the site.

Peter

Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the AGM of the Friends of Romsey Signal Box will be held in the Signal Box Pavilion at **3.30pm** on **Sunday 3 June 2007**.

Nominations are invited for posts on the Committee. Peter Chatfield, Dick Hewett, Garth Long, Roger Pleasant, Neil Kearns and Ted Mason all offer themselves for election.

Agenda:

1. Apologies
2. Acceptance of record of AGM (2006) (as published in “The Signal” No 34, July 2006)
3. Chairman’s Report
4. Financial and membership statements
5. Election of committee of the Friends
6. Diary dates 2007-08
7. Action list
8. Any other business
9. Date of next AGM

Peter Chatfield, Chairman

Development of the school site:

Dick Hewett writes:

Hampshire County Council and the Romsey & District Buildings Preservation Trust have now submitted a joint application for outline planning permission for the school site together with the strip of land which the Trust own on the other side of the footpath past the signal box. The application is for “Residential development of up to fifty dwellings and replacement parking area for Romsey and District (Buildings Preservation Trust)”.

The application can be viewed on the Test Valley Borough Council website (www.testvalley.gov.uk) on the “public access” area under “Planning”: application: search under reference 07/00898/OUTS.

The land occupied by the signal box and its associated artefacts and structures is not included in the application but is referred to in the background documentation. The most useful items to view are the Site Location Plan, and the Design and Access Statement (pages 4, 16-17 and 19) (both documents found under “Associated Documents”). Interestingly the “expert” archaeological report refers to the canal being opened in 1784 (it was 1794) and the railway in 1865 (so why in 1997 did we celebrate 150 years of the railway opening through Romsey in 1847?!) – experts aren’t always right!



The new view from the rear window of the signal box, with the Trust’s second plot of land cleared of all but a few saplings. In a few years’ time, this view will consist of houses and back gardens.

The sale of the Trust’s land beyond the footpath will bring in very essential income to the Trust, giving them a greater chance of financial stability for the longer-term. Negotiations with the County Council have centred around the value of this land, and the requirements of parking and access for the land which the Trust will retain (i.e. the signal box site).

From the Friends’ point of view, the welcome element is the plan for six dedicated parking spaces alongside the southern (school) boundary of our site, which will be plenty for ourselves as working members. However, there may be more of a problem when we are open to the public: the obvious solution is to open discussions with the Plaza Theatre to negotiate use of the theatre car park for public visitors to the box.



The Trust’s land can be seen in the background, cleared of undergrowth but still with small trees. Under the proposals, there would be houses on the ground beyond the path, and parking spaces for the signal box to the right on the area of grass on the other side of the fence from the signal.

It must be remembered that this is an application for outline planning permission only, that the layout shown in the application is for illustration only, and that any detailed plans will be subject to submission by whoever ends up as the ultimate developers of the site. We will watch for more news!

Membership:

Neil Kearns writes:

First of all, thank you to all the members who have already renewed your membership from 1st April 2007.

The membership fees for the Friends of Romsey Signal Box will remain the same for the next year - £5.00, and £2.50 for members under 16 and over 59. I will be at the signalbox on Open Days to renew your membership on the day. Alternatively your membership renewal can be posted to me at:

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

Thank you.

Neil Kearns, Membership Secretary

Signal & Telegraph (S&T) Report

Mike Walshaw writes:

The S&T Working Party has continued to meet at two-monthly intervals, so I report on progress made at our meetings on 3 February and 31 March 2007.

- The problems with the block instruments were sorted out and their connectors have been rewired.
- We have discovered some peculiar features of the two 12V power supplies, whereby most of the time they are inadvertently connected in parallel through certain relay contacts.
- We are grateful to the Bluebell Railway for the provision of some new shelf relays.
- By tightening up all the shelf-relay connections and re-setting the output voltages of the 12V supplies, we have improved the operation of the one and only working lever lock, on Direction Lever 6. It now works perfectly so long as the Signaller allows time for the lock to pick when moving the lever from the Normal and from the Reverse positions.
- The shelf relays now reside in a pair of smart new wooden cases to keep the brick dust from falling on them. The cases will have Perspex windows in the front so that the relays can be inspected. We are most grateful to Roger Pleasant for this piece of work.
- We are experiencing some nuisance tripping of the main circuit breakers in the Pavilion and the Locking Room and this remains to be sorted out. One message seems to be to avoid boiling water in the kettle whilst heating water in the water heater! (Dick is now seeking professional advice on this.)
- All of the installed signal-arm and colour-light repeaters on the block shelf now function correctly and just one signal-repeating LED on the Simulator Panel remains to be wired up. I think this is one of our major achievements.
- We had some concerns over the Acroprops that support the floor joist at the front of the lever frame. We have moved one of the props that was fouling Lever 23 and have convinced ourselves that the Acroprops perform a vital function and are correctly set up.
- The simulation of No. 11 power-operated points has been improved.
- The wire run to Signal 5 has been tightened up.
- The roller-type microswitches that detect many of the levers in their Normal positions continue to plague us, since if slightly misaligned they can be operated by ‘wagging’ the lever in its Normal position. Where new microswitches are required, we are installing long-lever ‘paddle’ type microswitches operated by the lever tails. We hope that they will prove to be much more reliable.

- The wiring within the Simulator continues to plague us too, with breakages and dry joints a regular feature.
- I have continued to update the circuit diagrams to reflect reality and to apply labels to the many cables and terminal blocks around the installation. In this period I have issued 14 updated diagrams, some of which are modifications of the original circuit designs.
- Work has started to investigate the telephone system with a view to getting it working.

I think we can say that our first year’s work has really paid dividends for the operators. Virtually all of the known faults have been cleared and we are now beginning to look at some of the ‘enhancements’ listed for us by Chris Hack when he left the scene in 1999.

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

Mike Walshaw, Swanage Railway.

(A comment from the Editor/President: It is great to see all this progress. As a non-technical volunteer, who can’t tell his relays from his repeaters, it was so frustrating over the last few years to know that things weren’t working properly, but having no idea what action was needed to repair things. Now we’re even getting to the stage where further developments, which have never been installed, can be considered. I’m particularly delighted to see this progress and my very sincere personal thanks and congratulations go to Mike who has shown the focus, good organisation and determination to get the work done so systematically. He has also built a good team around him – they also need to be thanked. We must make sure we never fall back into the old situation again. Thanks, all of you.)

Farewell to Bill...

Dick Hewett, President, writes:

March saw us say a fond farewell to one of our original and most influential members. Bill Tyndall has sold his home in Romsey and moved to a new house in the Malvern Hills, within sight of the line between Worcester and Hereford, and a little bit closer to his beloved Talyllyn Railway. I was able to take a few photos of Bill when he popped down to the box to hand over a few final artefacts and records from his days with the Project.

It was Bill who, together with George Pryer, was the main railway expert at the time of the saving of the box. Bill and George also developed the original Cowley



Bridge, and it was Bill who introduced me to the fun of operating that. Bill was also right behind me when I got involved with the School committee, and subsequently when I offered to take on the project management Bill gave unstinting support. He was a key link with the professional railway (through his many contacts). Bill was also very much involved with the development of the site and the fitting out of the signal box simulator and electrics. So all told, he has been as important as anyone to the saving of the box and its subsequent development.

Ultimately Bill was never happier on the Project than when operating Cowley Bridge with his old colleague George Pryer, and he will be missed for his involvement with that as much as anything.

We wish him and Felicity happy days of retirement in their new home, and hope he'll pop back to see us occasionally.



Barton House, Norfolk

Ken Rye writes:

No, this is not a stately home! However, the substantial grounds border onto the River Bure, and accommodate two miniature railways, plus a full-size working signal box, hence this short article.

The box was rescued from Honing East in 1959 when the ex-Midland and Great Northern Joint Railway line to Yarmouth Beach closed. The interior is fully equipped with a 26-lever McKenzie & Holland frame from the Lowestoft North, ex-Norfolk & Suffolk Joint, signal box, together with two Tyers tablet machines, and block instruments. The box is used to control movements on both miniature lines. Not all the levers are in use – each end is allocated to each of the railways respectively, to operate relevant points and signals.

The Mid-Land Railway is an oval “elevated” 3.5inch circuit, with only the one pick-up and set-down point, without a passing loop, and thus for which signalling seems superfluous, but use of the Tyers tablet system allows for two trains to be run simultaneously.

The Riverside Railway is a 7.25inch ground level line over 500 feet in length with sidings and passing loop, and is fully signalled using Tyers tablet from a remote trainman-operated machine, which allows for up to three trains to run simultaneously.

There is a museum containing artefacts including various signalling items. For me it was nostalgic to see in use on the 7.25inch railway the Whittakers Tablet Apparatus which I used to witness in use at my home station Broadstone for trains going onto and coming off that other Midland Joint line, the Somerset & Dorset.

Situated in Hartwell Road, Wroxham, this location is well worth a visit to see signalling in action. Open afternoons are on the third Sunday Easter to October. Entrance is £2 (£3 if arriving by launch from Wroxham Bridge), plus 50p for going up into the box.

(Dick adds: For more information, ring Peter Bower on 01603 782470, or type “barton house railway” into your search engine on the web.)

(We hope to have more contributions from Ken, who is having a feast of rail travel this coming summer – and who should have plenty of tales to tell. Your president needs something interesting to read whilst he’s sat in comfort and seclusion behind the toilet door which Ken has so skilfully fitted in the pavilion!)

Redbridge – trains and signal box recalled...

Neil Kearns writes:

A few memories of Redbridge for you, illustrated from my collection of slides. Redbridge is, of course, the junction to the south of Romsey and, ever since Nursling box closed, the next box along the line towards Southampton. A familiar box to anyone listening to the standard demonstration given to visitors to the signal box at Romsey...



Brush class 4, 47110 propelling train 7B21 1604 Eastleigh East Yard - Redbridge CCE from the down main line into the civil engineers yard. This movement saved using the ground frame on the Maritime Reception Line and allowed a longer train to be delivered into the yard in one movement. The leading two wagons

are "Borails" conveying new rail from Workington steel works to Redbridge works rail welding plant. The loco off this train ran light engine to Millbrook freightliner terminal to work 4E85 1810 Millbrook FLT to Stratford FLT. 18 May 1977.

*Hampshire DEMU
1130 on a
Portsmouth Hbr -
Salisbury service.
The Signal box
can be seen above
the train and the
Up Main Home
signal to the
right of the train.
18 May 1977*



"The Signal" No 36, April 2007



47108 passing Redbridge signal box working 0330 SO Coatbridge FLT to Southampton MCT container train on 18 October 1980. Note that the train is running up over the down line to gain the Maritime reception line. The facing crossover on the Romsey line was installed in the early 1970's. The two coaches behind the signal box were used by a sail making and rigging company.



47108 working 1637 SO Southampton MCT - Coatbridge FLT passing Redbridge Jn on 18 October 1980. The train was diverted via Salisbury due to engineering works at Southampton Central. This was before Laverstock Loop was re-opened, so the train had to run-round at Salisbury

station which limited the train to 15 wagons. The Up Main Home signal had been moved since 1977 from close to the junction to a colour light signal halfway across Redbridge causeway.

Twenty one years later and a train run by "Steam Dreams".

The locomotive is 35005 "Canadian Pacific" which is still based on the Mid Hants Railway, but is no longer approved for mainline running.

More bushes have grown between the two lines. The signal protecting the junction is now positioned on the causeway between Redbridge and Totton. Note that the site

of the civil engineers works has been cleared and fenced off from the railway.



Two views of the interior of Redbridge Signal box, 21 October 1978



The Editor 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!

Diary dates:

Next Open day: 6 May 2007. Contact Neil Kearns, 023 8061 8167.

Subsequent Open Days 2007: 3 June (including AGM at 3.30pm), 1 July (new exhibition launch), 5 August, 2 September, 7 October, 4 November, 2 December.

S&T Working sessions: 2 June, and thereafter bi-monthly on the Saturday immediately preceding alternate Open Days: 4 August, 6 October, 1 December.
Contact Mike Walshaw, 01929 421913, to confirm dates and arrangements.

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

ALL MEMBERS REQUIRED TO ATTEND IF AT ALL POSSIBLE!

Further operating days: To be confirmed. Contact Garth Long, 023 8031 5075, or Peter Chatfield, 01892 522143 and ask to be kept informed on plans.

Finally, an unusual view of the signal box from amongst the grove on the Trust's other plot of land. In a few years, this will be the view from the back garden of someone's property...



.....

If you have received a monochrome copy of this newsletter through the post, but actually have access to the internet and email – let us know. There is a full colour version on the website – www.romseysignalbox.org.uk - and it saves us the costs of photocopying and postage by alerting you to future editions through email.