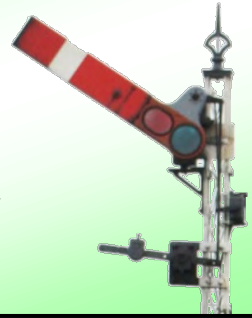


# THE SIGNAL



*Journal of the  
Friends of Romsey Signal Box*

*Issue 43, Spring 2010*



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Friends of Romsey Signal Box

<http://www.romseysignalbox.org.uk>

CONTENTS

- 3. Chairman's Report
- 5. S&T Report
- 7. Denis Hickman
- 8. Site Report
- 10. 30 Years Ago...
- 13. Young Members
- 13. Model Railways
- 14. Membership
- 14. Romsey Clothing
- 14. New Treasurer
- 15. St Albans South Box
- 15. Site Volunteers
- 16. Diary Dates

Contributions of news stories, and particularly photographs are always welcome from readers. Please forward to Danny Scroggins.

If you have received a monochrome copy of this newsletter through the post, but actually have access to email, please let us know and it will save the costs of photocopying and postage by sending future editions by email. There is a full colour version on the website.

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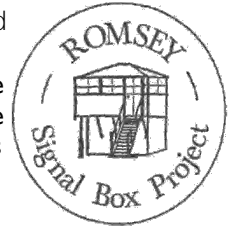
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COVER PHOTO: Taken on the occasion of the visit by the St Albans Signal Box Group, the site is busier than ever with exhibits of signalling and the achievements of the Friends. (Photo by Tony Spynx-Jeall.)

Peter Chatfield



Welcome to the latest roundup of the activities of the Friends. We have had another fantastic few months, and progress on the development of the site and our organisation as a whole continues to move from strength to strength with increasing pace.

The Friends will now be aware that Dick Hewett, our long serving former Chairman and current President, has retired from active involvement with Romsey Signal Box Project. This has now been announced on the website.

There will be a special leaving do for Dick on Sunday 6 June, 5 – 7pm, at Romsey Signal Box. All members and anyone who knew Dick will be most welcome to attend. I am contacting members and others to invite you – a must for your diary!

My intention is to devote much of the next edition of The Signal to an article on Dick's invaluable contribution to the preservation and restoration of Romsey Signal Box. I can report that many of the various activities have been transferred over to the current transition process has been a great help.

Joan Bennett took up the post of Treasurer of the Committee. Joan, and her sons Luke and Zack, have been volunteers for several years now, and have done a great deal to develop the site - see also Clive's

We are fortunate to have received a grant from Romsey Town Council, which is being used for restoration of the town heraldic sign at the site. Mike Curtis, Deputy Mayor, kindly advised us on the grant, which Dick Hewett then applied for. I'm pleased to say this will be another artistic production by Rod Hoyle, so we can be assured it will be of superb quality. Again, see Clive's Report that Rod also produced the nameplates. Talking of Rod, I was surprised but delighted on a stroll to my local W.H.Smith in Tunbridge Wells to see his superb book the shop is hardly known for an extensive transport section!

We held our annual younger members' open day and resurrected the adults' operating day. Members and their friends can operate the signal box to a timetable, just as it used to be worked. It is intended that these two events will continue on an annual basis.

Operating means enjoying the signalling and telecommunications equipment we have at

Romsey. Progress on the restoration of this equipment continues, thanks to Mike Walshaw and Co in the S&T Group. We are hoping, shortly, to expand the number of levers operating mechanical signal and point mechanisms. In addition, we have several colour lights that, once restored, can be connected. This is in keeping with the mixed mechanical/power functions controlled by the box in its later years. Please also see Mike's S&T Report for more detail of t h

I am very grateful to Clive and Gavin for producing a report on the Meat Wagon. This has been a vexed issue in that it is a rare vehicle; but unfortunately has deteriorated to a poor condition. The good news is that, once we have passed it on or disposed of it, much-needed space will be released for a new building. We have received an offer of interest and I will keep you updated.

I am delighted to say that our joint event with Romsey Railway Modellers Society on 6-7 March was a great success. We had well over 100 visitors during the weekend. We would now like to hold this event on an annual basis.

Also, on 20 February we welcomed our colleagues and friends from St Albans South Signal Box. We hope to have a reciprocal visit to St Albans at some stage.

Looking to the longer-term, as I write there is not much news regarding the former infant school land adjacent to the site. Developments (or lack of same) continue to be monitored by Ted and his colleagues at Romsey & District Buildings Preservation Trust. Whatever happens, I am keen that the signal box continues as an asset to the Town. It is pleasing to see a number of railway signal boxes recognised for what they are - unique, and often attractive, buildings which add historic and architectural interest to the built environment. We should never forget the success of the Trust in preventing Romsey from becoming a town planning disaster and just another bland 'anytown'. With the Signal Box, a unique pocket of Romsey's history lives on.... thank you all very much for your interest and contribution. Do come over to the site when you can; the signal box belongs to us all and you will be very welcome.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

A reminder that the AGM of Friends of Romsey Signal Box will be held on Sunday 6 June 2010, 3.30- 5pm at the Signal Box. The agenda will be advertised nearer the date.

The AGM will be a by party. See details at the top of this go o report.

Mike Walshaw

The S&T Working Party has continued to meet at roughly four-monthly intervals. The equipment seems to be functioning pretty reliably and routine faults are being dealt with.

Design faults in the Eastleigh single line controls have been investigated and eliminated so that they operate correctly.

Our collection of electric lever locks has been examined and we are well on the way to installing three of them to provide the essential prototypical locking between the section signals and the block, which is so far missing. The lock on signal 13 has been fitted and this requires Line Clear can be pulled. Once it has been pulled again. The existing lock on direction lever 6 has been cleaned up to operate more smoothly.

No. 3 had already been fitted with a lever lock. A drop rod was fixed up to connect it to the tail of the lever. The wiring to no. 3 lock was installed. When mechanically and electrically connected, no. 3 was tested to prove that the lock is only released with Line Clear from Kimbridge Jct. No. 3 so arrangements are in place to ensure that it is free to be operated without requiring a simulator operator and without requiring the electrics to be switched on the lock slide when appropriate.

The team plans to get more outdoor signals linked to the frame, notably colour-light draw-ahead signal 19, shunt signal 23 and a rodding compensator. A number of options have been examined and a staged plan drawn up.

The SPT previously installed on the telegraph pole beside the level crossing was connected to the "Crampmoor Crossing", key 18 on the concentrator. The dial-type phone in the pavilion (with its dial disabled) was connected to the "Station Booking Office", key 23 on the concentrator. Beside the Simulator the two current phones are: the black one connected to "Ground Frame", key 10 on the concentrator and the red one to "Control", key 22 on the concentrator.

Other recent work has included rectification of some sneak interconnecting paths between the two 12V DC power supplies, 12V(1) and 12V(2), stemming from issues with the original design.

It was asked if the valuable Preece block instrument, on loan from a Friend, could be made to work – possibly in conjunction with operations in the Box. It was stated that it would not be straightforward to link it to the SR Standard 3-Position Block Instruments to Redbridge or Kimbridge. Initially, at least, it would be better worked as a self-contained demonstration in the Pavilion.

There are also other new technical developments in the pipeline, such as

- Extension of the telephone system to the Pavilion and to a Signal Post Telephone (SPT);
- Fitting of an electric lock to No.3 Signal Lever;
- Rationalisation of the 12V dc Power Supplies;
- Installation of a Platform Bell for communication from the Signal Box to the Pavilion;
- Signal repeater for Signal 5 (wish-list!)
- Self-illuminating switches for the TCs on the Simulator panel.

A full set of S&T circuit diagrams is now kept in the cupboard on the rear wall of the operating floor. Since the last newsletter fourteen updated sheets have been issued.

*The working party sessions are open to any member of the Friends as ALWAYS welcome especially those with a working knowledge of our telephone system. People who understand the S&T equipment, the more likely it is that the occasional develops on open days can be fixed immediately.*

Contact Mike Walshaw on 01929 421 913 or email [mhwalshaw@talktalk.net](mailto:mhwalshaw@talktalk.net)



## Denis Hickman 1926-2010

Bill Tyndall

I know very little about Denis's early life. He was a carpenter at Eastleigh for the Southern Railway. He became a teacher for a while, before entering the flooring trade.

Denis came from a railway background so his love of railways lasted all his life. I cannot remember how Denis and I first met but it would have been at a railway function somewhere. Anyway we formed a friendship, which included his wife Trisha.

When it came to making things, Denis was exceptional. His skill included woodwork, metal work and the very skilled use of a lathe. He made his own engine, Beaver, from a C5 Sinclair motor and other scrap pieces, with gears that he made himself. The engine and trucks were taken to various schools on the Talylyn Railway in Minsted. I had the honour of driving Beaver a few times.

Denis was a very kind and considerate man. When you asked him how he was he would reply not too good or ok at the moment. When we used to visit him he would always sit next to my wife and with a twinkle in his eye tell a slightly risqué joke.

His love of railways involved him in various societies. On the Talylyn Railway in Wales there is a family picture of him driving No 7. He also made a Gavel and Anvil for the Wessex Area Group to use at its AGM. He also helped on the sales stand until his health started to fail. He also was a member of the Eastleigh Railway Preservation Society to which he gave his memoirs and other artefacts. The Romsey Signal Box Project also benefited from his knowledge and skill.

Denis bore his illness with great fortitude and did not fear its outcome.

We will all miss such a kind and considerate man.

C d d c g ] h Y . ' : f c a ' D Y h Y f Ñ g ' Ð ' \$ ' M Y U f g ' 5 [ c Ñ ' train arriving at Brighton on 4th August 1971. The buildings in the background are the office block of the former Brighton loco works and in the distance Brighton signal box.

Clive Millward, Site Manager  
operations@romseysignalbox.org.uk

I take this opportunity to thank everyone involved with the signal box project over the last year.

Members of the Romsey & District Society, visitors to the September Open day, the Heritage weekend in September, the group from St Albans Signal box and the weekend of 6th & 7th March in conjunction with Romsey Model Railway Exhibition visitors commented favourably on the restoration of the Signal Box, pavillion and garden area.

Although it looks as though not much has been done on site over the last few months, you may be surprised at what has taken place: We now have two rail mounted trolleys; one built the junior members under guidance (2009/2010) Jamie aided by George, Geraint, Luke and Zack. The trolleys are named Engineers' Dept. No 1 and Platelay Hoyle. Both trolleys have already travelled Health & Safety - PUSH ONLY !)

Rod also repainted the SR Beware of Trains within the pavillion. Thanks Rod.

There is also a wooden floor in the locking room, complete with a carpet making it warmer and cleaner for the simulator operators and visitors.

The large timber that holds down the lever cranks and signal wheel brackets is now fixed directly to the concrete floor by 10 studs , so the ACRO jacks have been removed. Thanks to Michael and Gavin. One of the ACRO jacks has been positioned under the operating floor to start the slow process of realigning that over time became displaced.

We have now received two point rodding cranks kindly donated by the Swanage railway. They will be used to set up the compensator to lever 10 and with the re arranged base plate, the two ground signals will be connected to levers 21 and 23.

We now have two working telephones on the site connected with the signal box.

We still have to complete the floor in the large shed, then construct shelving to store artefacts lying around the site or in the container awaiting restoring for future use or display in the pavillion or on the site.

Although there is no set theme to the display within the pavillion, if anyone has anything



## SITE REPORT

they would like to loan/donate would be most welcome.

We were donated some signalling equipment from a railway source which needs restoration and possible positioning on site, hopefully in working order.

The crossing gates were removed and stored in the pavilion over the winter months so as to dry them out ready for repainting. The decking of the crossing itself is in the process of being relayed.

Gavin Brooker and I did a restoration survey on the meat container and the report was sent to the Chairman. The conclusion was that it would cost more than its future use at Romsey could justify. So rather than cut it up for scrap, it has been offered to the Bluebell Railway for them to restore and use. We await their response.

There is now a paved walkway around the whole site. Last spring the willow tree behind the pavilion was cut back and the area in front of it is being developed into another seating area and small garden area.

The ability of the weeds to grow at the canal end of the site still gives up problems. Spraying it with the advertised TV weed killer has not cured the problem, very frustrating when we spend so much time cutting it down only to see it grow back next month. This year has seen less mares tails, instead being replaced by bindweed. If we get another 200 plus slabs from the school site and temporarily lay them over the area, although OTT would reduce the weeds considerably, giving us time to come up with a solution.

Again, if not by name, I thank everyone involved.

Right: one of our young members stands on the new crossing he assisted in relaying.



***Peter Chatfield describes his experiences as a railwayman in the 1980s in RECOLLECTIONS OF A LEARNER GUARD.***

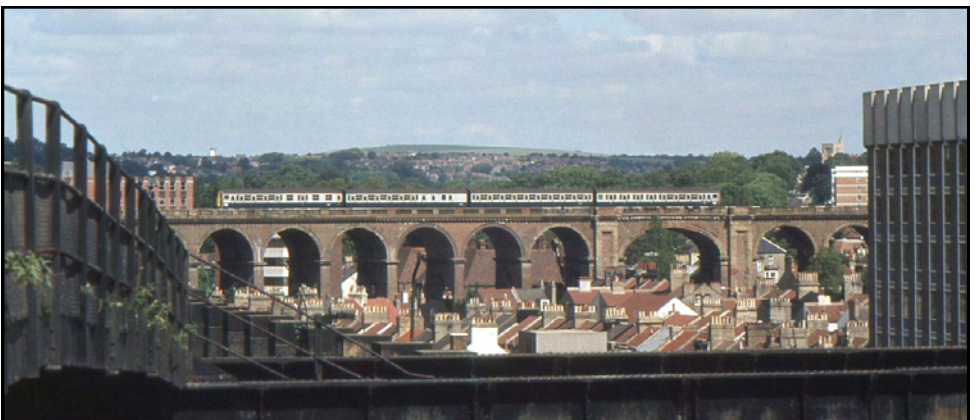
Thirty years ago I failed an A-level and had to re-sit to get into university. The re-sit was to be November 1979. If I was successful, I could start at university the following October. What would happen in the meantime?

My mother decided I could continue living at home but should go out to work. Unbeknown to me, and aware that I had an interest in railways, she approached British Rail at Brighton Station.

It transpired that BR had vacancies for guards. So I duly arrived at Brighton Station for an interview and psychology test. I had a head, two arms and two legs, that was good enough, providing I passed the psychology test. Well, apparently I neither passed nor failed it, but scored on the borderline! I never really worked that one out, but it made no difference as they gave me the benefit of the doubt.

Due to some problem, related I think to recruiting, there was a delay of at least three months before I could start training with the other learner guards. So work was as a Railman, on the platforms at Brighton when time passed so slowly.

Below: 4VEP crossing London Road Jn viaduct between Brighton and London Road. The picture was taken from the site of the Brighton loco works next to Brighton station. The site has now been covered by a bus





Left: A 73 passes near Cophold Junction.

Other than giving the right away for an average of three trains an hour, and occasionally sweeping out a carriage or the platform, time was spent trying to keep warm while standing around doing virtually nothing. I certainly learnt a lot

of obscene lingo: plenty of disgruntled etc. and drank plenty of BR tea - never mind cappuchino and the delicacies which arrived with Starbucks, Costa and the fancy franchises that now occupy the major stations - at least it kept you warm for a while.

Around April it was suddenly announced that we would start training. No more freezing platforms! Instead, it was off to a hut south of Redhill Station - opposite the large 'B' Box and Redhill's wonderful indicators. Paradise! (See George Prye Signals' if you never had a chance to s

Most of the training was practical. Calculating the wagon load at Nine Elms yard, lifting the buckeye coupling at Beckenham Junction. Best of all, joining the observation coach in the (now defunct) yard at New Cross Gate for route learning, and trundling endlessly back and forth over the Southern Region, Central Section suburban lines, and then down into Sussex.

What were the highlights, the real memories? These are some. Working the goods from Drayton to Lavant, a Class 47 down the Ardingly branch/siding, shunting at Southerham Junction, near Lewes, where the early LBSCR signal box was shortly to close, cab rides along the Coastway lines which, in 1980, still had semaphore signalling. (Shortly after, the year 1987 was imprinted in my mind: that was the year of the wholesale closure of West Coastway signal boxes, and transfer of control to Three

30 YEARS AGO....

Bridges ASC.)

Finally, later that summer, I was passed out. It was then mainly a diet of 2 HAPs, 4 VEPs, 4 CIGs and the like, now of course fondly remembered as the 'slam doors'. I remember taking a train from Bognor Regis to Victoria. We stopped at Billingshurst and the guards van I was in was miles from the platform, which itself was out of sight on a curve. I must have got in the wrong guards van. Fortunately, a white light from a railman at the edge of the platform gave the 'right away'.

On a darker note, I do also remember when I started that there was still debris by the line north of Preston Park on the Brighton Main Line. This was just over a year after the fatal accident in 1978 when a driver ran into the back of a stationary train, having missed a signal at caution and with the next protecting signal failed.

Towards the end, I was called to a manager's office. There were vacancies for drivers - would I like to transfer? It was too late. I had passed the A-level and received an offer of a place at university. I regret that I cost BR more than they gained in the short time I worked on the railway. Dull though much of the railway seemed at the time, what with the loss of goods yards, liveries and, of course, steam, its amazing what the passage of time does for nostalgia....

Below: A 4CIG in Network South East livery near Bishopstone on the Seaford branch. In 1991, the Seaford branch used two forms of signalling: tokenless block between Newhaven Harbour and Seaford signal boxes, or



## YOUNG MEMBERS

Jamie Brooker

This year has been a very good year for the young members at Romsey signal box, the main reason being that we had our first project the re-building the old trolley. This took us two work days and two open days to get it finished. As this was our first project and it turned out to be a great success, we are now choosing our next project. This is probably going to be the rebuilding of one of the benches at the signal box, as suggested by Clive Millward.

We have also had two other events this year the first being our young members operating day at which Zack Edwards, Luke Edwards, George Cooper, George Streather, Dickson Cossar and Jamie Brooker attended and the other was providing model railways for the model railway open weekend.

Last year we ran a training day which Geraint Shippides and I attended; we passed as official open day talkers. We hope to train George Cooper at this in the coming year and Luke Edwards at operating the simulator. We have also had a few new members sign up this year and we would like to get them more involved. So we have had a great year and we would like to especially thank Clive Millward for all his help in our trolley project and his support in all the other tasks we have completed. I would also like to thank George Cooper for his donations box, visitor centre sign and flat pack signal box models.

## MODEL RAILWAYS

Many thanks to all of you who supported this event. We had 162 visitors over the weekend and nearly £100 donations, which is superb for us, especially as this is the first time we have done this event. The Romsey RMS seem to be happy too, and we are hoping that this can become annual fixture on the calendar, together with the Heritage Open Days Weekend in September.

### MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Firstly, thank you to those members who have already renewed your membership of the Friends of Romsey Signal Box for the year 2010/2011.

I will be at the April, May and June open days if you wish to renew in person. If you wish to renew by post, please send your payment to me: Neil Kearns, 38 Arundel Road, Boyatt Wood, Eastleigh, Hants, SO50 4PQ.

In case you can't remember the members £5.00 for adults, and £2.50 for members under 18 and over 60 years. Please make cheques payable to Friends of Romsey S

Thank you, Neil.

### SIGNAL BOX CLOTHING & UNIFORM

A reminder that we still have plenty of sweatshirts (£14), polo shirts (£12.50) and T-shirts (£8). These are always available on open days and other special events.

It would be great if EVERYONE present were wearing some articles of Romsey Signal Box clothing. Please consider making the investment. Credit facilities are available at zero interest!

### NEW TREASURER

As you know, Dick Hewett has ceased active involvement with the Friends (although there are several matters where he is kindly 'winding down' arrangements to ensure an orderly transition to future arrangements). Dick is no longer on the Committee of the Friends and has resigned as Treasurer. Once again, I'm sure I speak for all in thanking him for his long and invaluable contribution.

I am delighted to report that Joan Edwards has now been appointed as Treasurer of the Friends of Romsey Signal Box. We therefore also welcome Joan to the Committee of the Friends. Joan will be known to Friends as a regular volunteer at the signal box open days. Thank you Joan for offering to take on this vital role and your contribution will be much appreciated.

Peter Chatfield

## ST ALBANS SOUTH

Members of the St Albans Signal Box group visited Romsey on 20th February.

Visits like this are enormously valuable for networking between our organisations and sharing best practice.

Photo by Tony Spynx-Jeall.



## SITE VOLUNTEERS APPEAL

Peter Chatfield / Clive Millward

It is heartening that we regularly have more volunteers during open days than we used to, but there is a cost. We now have up to 9 younger members on site and they do need supervising. Clive, our Site Manager, their parents and other volunteers spend much of their time ensuring our younger folks have things to do to keep their interest going. This is a good thing. However, it does mean that much of the main infrastructure works cannot be done on open days.

I am appealing for a few members to come forward to join Clive, and occasionally others, outside of open days. We want to restore and connect up more signals, lay pathways, and continue to improve - but we could be prouder!!

It would be really good if just one or two folks - maybe retired or not working but in reasonable health - could form a working party on, say, three or four days a year. Volunteering is what it says on the tin - we rely on you to come forward; in return there is no commitment, you simply offer whatever time you can.

FRIENDS DIARY DATES

Sunday 2nd May	Public Open Day. 10am — 4pm
Sunday 6th June	Public Open Day. 10am — 3.30pm Annual General Meeting, 3.30— 5.0pm Dick Hewett's 7pm leaving D.O.
Sunday 4th July	Public Open Day. 10am — 4pm
Sunday 1st August	Public Open Day. 10am — 4pm
Sunday 5th September	Public Open Day. 10am — 4pm
Sat 11th / Sun 12th September	Heritage Open Days
Sunday 3rd October	Public Open Day. 10am — 4pm
Sunday 7th November	Public Open Day. 10am — 4pm

*For Public Open Day information contact Neil Kearns.*

*Private Members' Operating Sessions and  
Contact Peter Chatfield to be included in plans.*