



Volunteer Liaison Department
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USEFUL INFORMATION FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS SIGNAL AND TELEGRAPH DEPARTMENT

The Signal and Telegraph Department, comprised mostly of volunteers, is responsible for the design, construction, installation and maintenance of all the signalling equipment on the Swanage Railway. When British Rail abandoned the line in 1972 almost all the signalling equipment was removed and Swanage signal box was demolished, so our small team has created just about everything you see today from scratch.

The signalling equipment essentially allows a signalman to set the points and then to indicate to the trains if it is safe to proceed. It also allows us to run up to three trains on different parts of our single line at the same time. The signalling systems are vital to the safe running of the trains and allow us to run more trains and carry many more passengers than would otherwise be possible.

On the Swanage Railway almost all of the points and signals are mechanically operated by levers in signal boxes using traditional equipment much of which is between fifty and one hundred years old. At one time most of the signal boxes on the national railway worked this way, but nowadays very little mechanical equipment survives outside of heritage railways such as ours.

All the visible equipment both trackside and in the signal boxes is authentic to the Southern Railway 1950's era and presents a valuable and accurate working historical record. Swanage and Harmans Cross signal boxes have won the prestigious Westinghouse Award for Best Heritage Signalling Installation from the National Railway Heritage Awards. The new Corfe Castle signal box has been short listed for the 2011 Awards

There are presently three signal boxes on the Swanage Railway. The first 'box we built is at Harmans Cross where there is a passing loop allowing trains to pass each other on the single line. This 'box was brought into use in 1997 and contains a 22-lever Stevens frame which was rescued from Gunnersbury signal box in West London after it was closed by British Railways.



Our largest signal box is at Swanage and has a Westinghouse 40 lever frame controlling the departure and arrival of trains at the terminus station, and shunting movements around the station, yard and engine shed. It was built from scratch and was commissioned in February 2003. The lever frame was originally from Brockenhurst "B" signal box and was rescued after its closure by British Railways in 1978. Swanage signal box represents the ultimate in Southern Railway mechanical signal boxes and its operation is augmented by much electrical equipment including full track circuiting which monitors the positions of the trains and locks some levers electrically.

Our third signal box, also built from scratch, is situated on the Down platform at Corfe Castle Station and was commissioned in April 2011. The new signal box allows more versatility at the Station as well as controlling movements further up the line, and will be the future interface with Network Rail at Basingstoke ASC. This 'box has a 32 lever Westinghouse frame which has been made up from a mixture of former Brockenhurst "A" and Broadstone frames. The former was rescued when the current panel was installed at Brockenhurst in the 1970's, and the latter was found lurking in the basement of the old Bournemouth signal box as strategic spares. It contains the other Tyers No. 6 Tablet Machine which is used when Harmans Cross 'box is closed, a Tyers Key Token machine used when Harmans Cross is open, and a Tyers No-Signalman Key Token machine for the section to Norden.

The department is run by an experienced full-time member who is on site most days of the week. He is supported by an enthusiastic team of volunteers. Behind the scenes a highly-qualified design team ensure our plans are well-founded. The work is very varied, including groundwork, metalwork, fitting, electrical installation and carpentry. There is also a regular maintenance schedule which involves testing of our mechanical and electrical systems, cleaning, greasing and painting to maintain the equipment in good order and appearance.

Most members join with little or no previous experience and enjoy learning as they go along. Given time, a real sense of achievement is gained from the results. Indeed the success of the Swanage Railway is due in no small part to the signalling which allows us to run the line to capacity at peak periods day and night. An added bonus is working alongside steam trains in the wonderful Purbeck countryside! The Swanage Railway operates a documented Youth Protection Policy to safeguard children. The policy of the Swanage Railway Trust is that all Volunteers should be Members. For further information please contact:

The Signal and Telegraph Manager is Tony North Telephone: 07407 730940 or Email: signalmannorth@googlemail.com
Or contact the Volunteer Liaison Department as above.

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