



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. All three signal boxes have won the prestigious Westinghouse Award for Best Heritage Signalling Installation from the National Railway Heritage 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 came into use in February 2002, the photograph on the left being taken at its official opening ceremony shortly after. 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 is situated in the main station building at Corfe Castle Station and was used by British Railways from 1956 until the Branch was closed in 1972. It contains its original 12 lever Stevens frame which miraculously survived. Currently under construction is a new signal box on the Down platform at Corfe Castle to replace the original demolished in 1956. This new box will be completed by 2012 to replace the current system at Corfe, and will enable more versatility at the Station as well as controlling movements further up the line and the interface with the National Network. This 'box will have a 32 lever Westinghouse frame which was formerly situated in the Brockenhurst "A" 'box. This lever frame was rescued when the current panel was installed in the 1970's.

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 Dave Cobb Telephone: 07918 714927 or Email: davecobb@corfestation.f2s.com
Or contact the Volunteer Liaison Department as above.

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