

Stockport No.2 Audio Recording : Support Information

Recording Date

The recording was made on 7th August 1981.

Package Contents

The recording is a double CD album with a total running time of 130 minutes. Sufficient information is provided in an 8 page fold out booklet to explain what can be heard on the CDs, including a list of the special bell codes and a box diagram. This supporting information is provided separately and may also be downloaded [as a pdf](#).

Background

The background to this recording was a chance sighting of the roof of Heaton Norris signal box on a journey back from Guide Bridge. Parking near the box proved simple but the box was between the two Fast lines leaving two running lines between the car and the box. Fortunately the signalman sent the booking boy over to conduct the visitors across the line and was then told "We have visitors". Without further prompting, he produced tea for everyone.

Heaton Norris is a box that was designed for operation by two signalmen: with Fast and Slow lines, paired by direction, there would normally be a single block bell towards Stockport No. 2 for each pair of lines, the direction being inferred from the code and which box originated it. As one signalman would be at each end of the frame, dealing with Up and Down trains respectively, there were four block bells to No. 2 box one each for the lines (reading from West to East) Down Slow, Down Fast, Up Fast and Up Slow. This visit whetted the appetite for a slightly more official visit to the adjacent box, Stockport No.2, armed with a reel-to-reel tape recorder - the results of which are presented on the CD.

Stockport No.2 Signal Box: Friday 7th August 1981

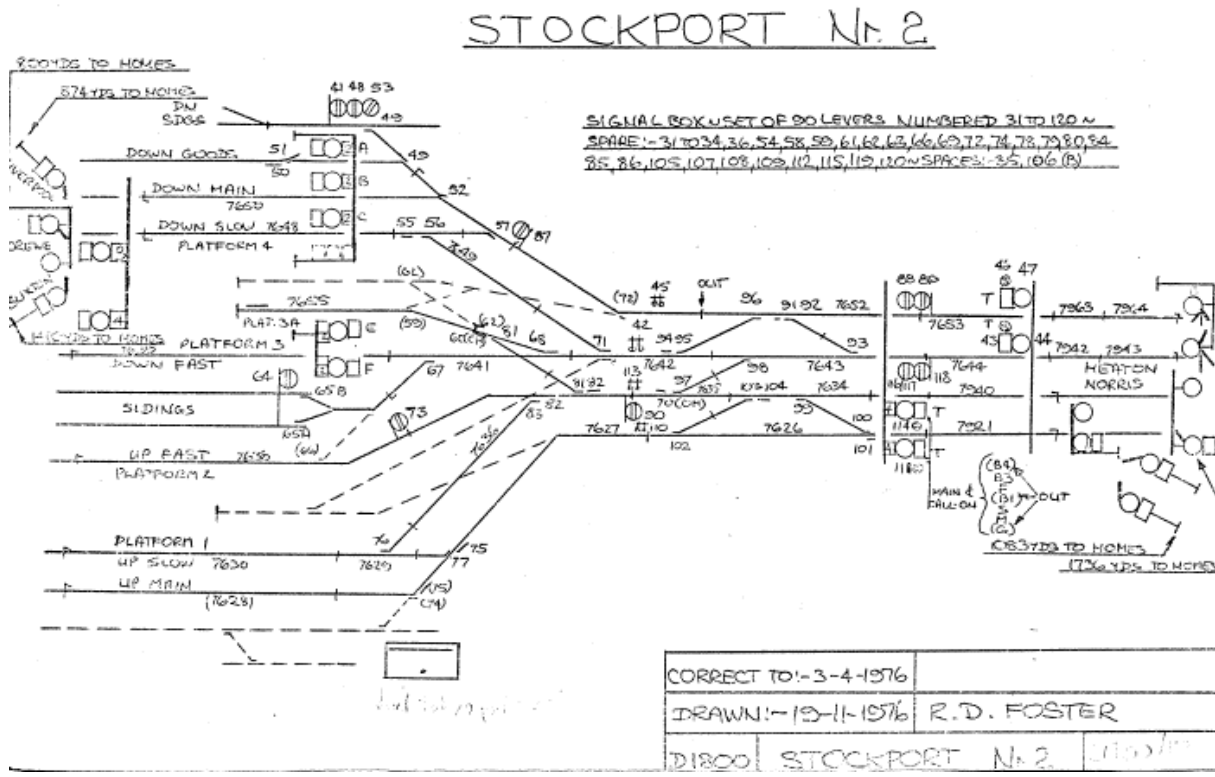
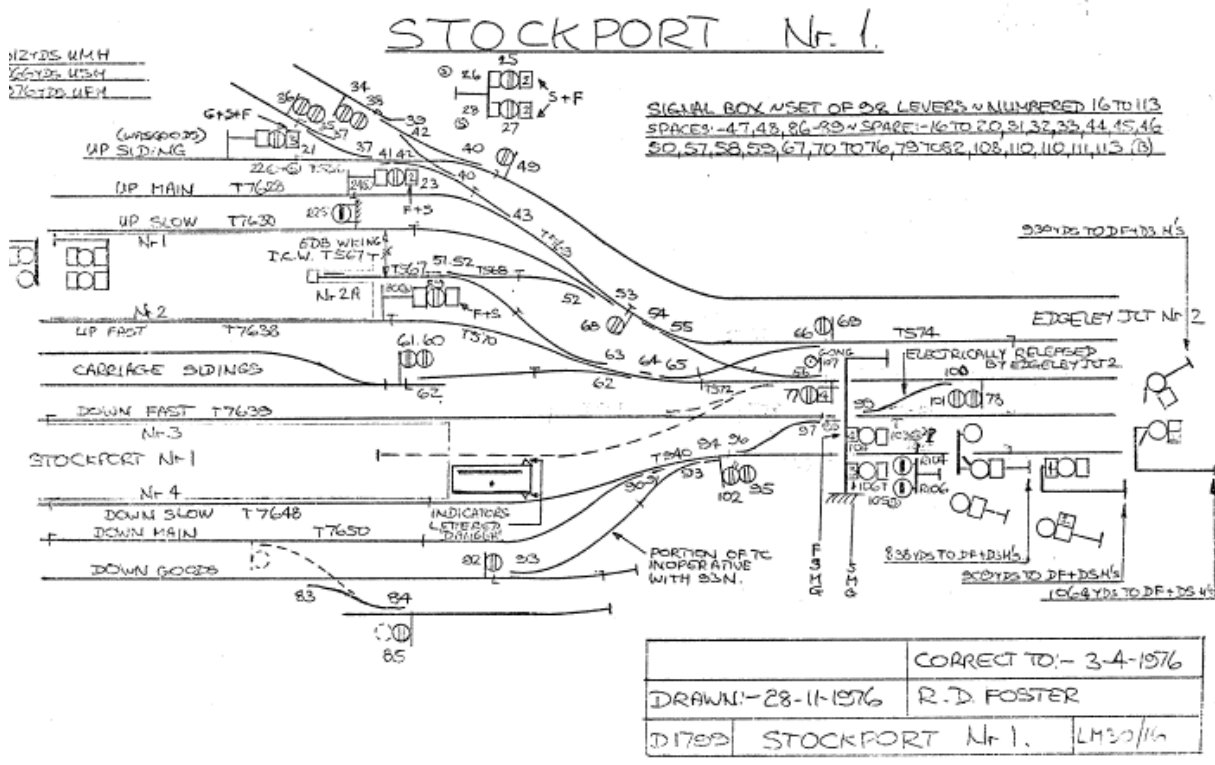
The Inspector, Les Haughton, introduced the two duty signalmen, Paul Wood (working the Down side, the 'low' end), now a Network Rail Manager, and Tim Oldfield (working the Up side, the 'high' end), now in Piccadilly panel, as well as the train recorder, Fred Jackson, now retired. Thanks are due to all of these for their cooperation in making it possible to produce this recording. The Inspector left just before 3pm but the signalmen continued working 'straight up', commenting "that'll keep No. 1 on their toes!" The sounds you will hear on the CD include the various bell signals exchanged with the adjacent signal boxes; various conversations, sometimes linked to the running of trains; the crashing of levers as different routes are set and signals cleared; as well as the sound of trains passing the box.

Stockport No.2 box is at the North end of Stockport (Edgeley) station. Down trains may be signalled on Fast, Slow, Main or Goods lines from No.1 box (which is at the other end of the station) and proceed, towards Manchester, on Fast or Slow lines to Heaton Norris Junction, where a line diverges towards Denton Junction. Up trains proceed on the Fast, Slow or Main to No.1 box and thence continue to either Northenden Junction, Hazel Grove & Buxton, Macclesfield or Crewe (see [map](#)). No.2 box also provides the access to some Carriage Sidings.

The box was operated by two signalmen, one dealing with up trains and one with Down trains, one of which with overall responsibility for regulation (deciding which train should take priority to minimise overall delay). The booking boy would advise on train announcements and deal with telephone messages, only skeleton booking ('booking' is the recording the time each bell signal was sent and received) being required at this location. Bell codes indicate the route, class and stopping pattern of the train and, thus, its running time from box to box.

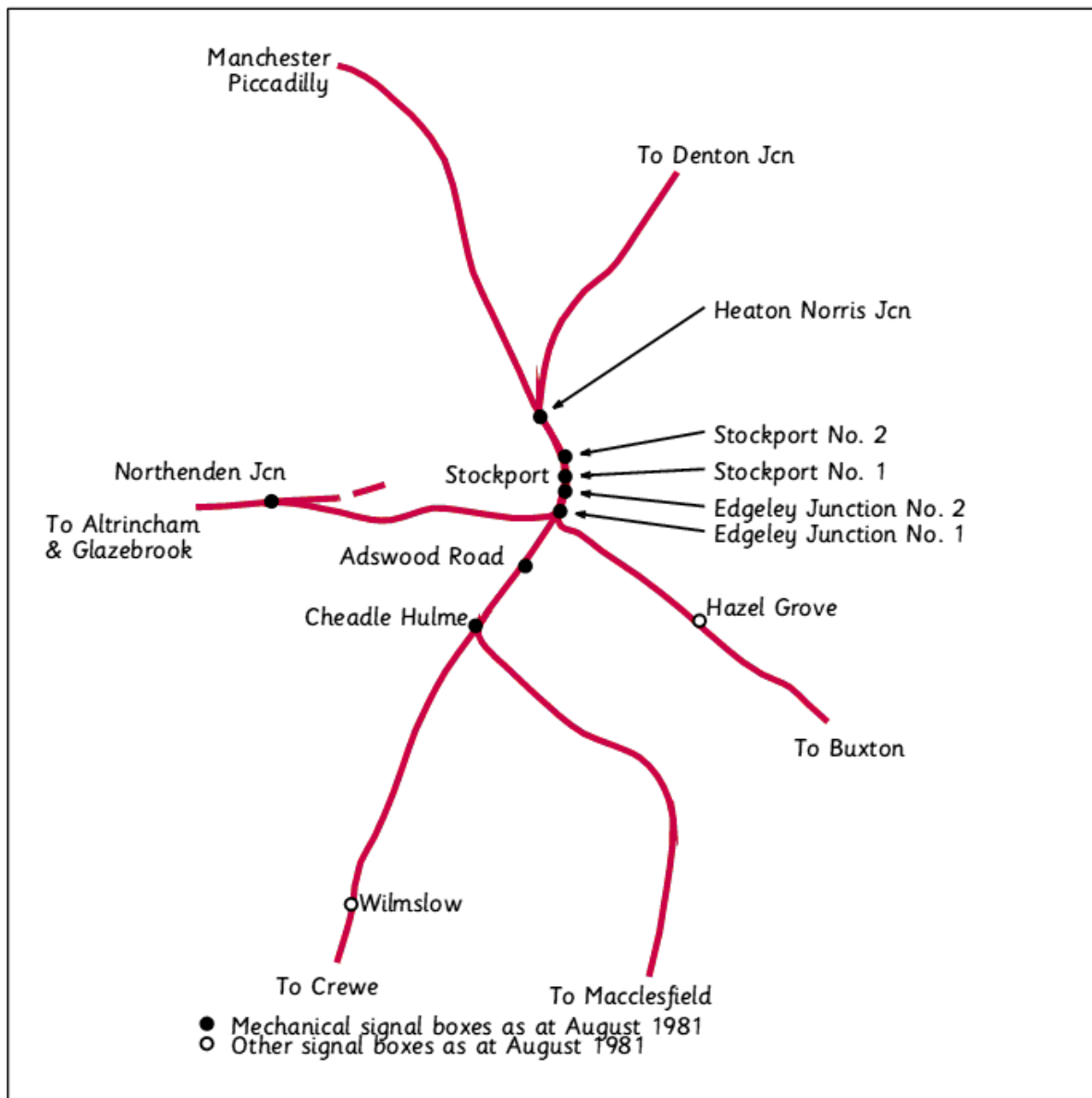
The four running lines from the north continue through the station, each being provided with a platform. There is also a bay platform (3A) for terminating trains from the North. The Up Main (to the East) and the Down Main and Down Goods (to the West) run to each side of the station, away from the platforms.

This is illustrated by a sketch of Stockport No.1 and No.2 boxes showing the layout as at 1976 (which also applied as at 1981).



A map of lines in the Stockport area shows the many different routes that Up trains may take after passing Stockport.

Map of lines in Stockport area

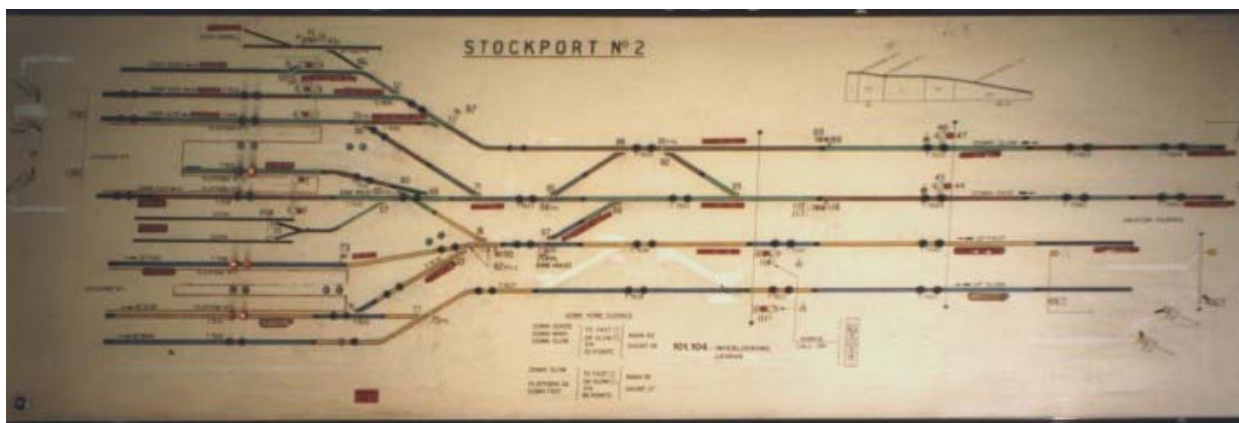


Absolute Block Principles

The principle of the 'absolute block system' is to prevent more than one train occupying a defined section of line between adjacent signal boxes. Within the section of line wholly under the control of a single box, trains are allowed to proceed 'signal to signal' until the 'section signal' controlling access to the block section. After a train has passed through the 'block section' the signalman observes from the presence of the tail lamp that the train has passed, complete, through the section and uses the bell code 2 pause 1 ('2-1') to inform the signalman in rear that the section is now empty - the term for which is 'normal' or 'blocked'.

A block instrument, controlled by the signalman ahead, indicates in both boxes the state of the block section: 'normal', 'clear' (where a train has been accepted but has not yet entered the section) or 'on-line' (train has entered the section). Only one train is allowed within an 'absolute' block section at any time: this is the stretch of line between the last controlled stop signal of the rear box and the first controlled signal ('home' signal) of the box ahead. In the area controlled by the signal box ('station limits'), there may be a train waiting at each stop signal. The signal controlling the entrance to the block section ahead ('section signal') cannot be cleared unless the block instrument indicates 'clear'.

The signalbox diagram is displayed in the box and shows the layout, points, signals and track circuits. When No. 1 box offers a train on the Down Slow (i.e. via platform 4) it can only be accepted under Regulation 4 if the line is clear to the clearing point – for trains calling at Stockport this is signal 87 (i.e. just short of the facing crossover from Down Fast to Down Slow). For a non-stop train, the line needs to be clear right through the facing crossovers as well. Signal 47, the section signal on the Down Slow towards Heaton Norris, can only be cleared if the train has been accepted by that box, although signal 'C' (controlled by lever 40) reading from Down Slow up to signal 47 on the Down Slow via 92 points is under the control of No.2 box. The lever leads give the function of each lever and the pulling sequence.



The diagram above [photo: the late David Wittamore] shows some changes since the recording: the facing crossovers Up Fast to Up Slow and Up Slow to Up Fast have been removed, following a derailment which wrecked the points and mechanical connections.

Lever leads

Lever	Pulling sequence	Function
31		(spare)
32		(spare)
33		(spare)
34		(spare)
35		(space)
36		(spare)
37	<u>Signals 37 & 38</u> Down Slow to Slow: 91 96 95 94 71 56 55 Down Slow to Fast: 94 71 56 55 Bay 3A to Slow: 91 96 95 94 68 60	Down Slow, Bay 3, Down Fast Shunts
38	Bay 3A to Fast: 94 68 60 Down Fast to Slow: 91 96 95 94 Down Fast to Fast: 94	Down Slow, Bay 3, Down Fast Homes
39	<u>Signals 39 & 40</u> Down Gds to Gds: 91 52 51 50 Down Gds to Fast: 93 92 91 52 51 50 Down Main to Slow: 91	Down Goods, Down Main, Down Slow Shunts
40	Down Main to Fast: 93 92 91 Down Slow to Slow: 91 57 55 Down Slow to Fast: 93 92 91 57 55	Down Goods, Down Main, Down Slow Homes
41	93 92 91 53 52 49	Down Siding To Down Fast
42		Down Fast Detonators
43		Down Fast Shunt Ahead
44		Down Fast Starting
45		Down Slow Detonators
		(space)
46		Down Slow Shunt Ahead
47		Down Slow Starting
48	91 53 52 49	Down Sidings To Down Slow
49	53 52	Down Sidings To Down Goods
50	52 51	FPL For No.51 Points
51	52	Traps In Down Goods
52		Down Main From Down Goods
53		Down Sidings To Neck
54		(spare)
55	57 or 71 56	FPL For No.56 Points
56	71	Down Slow To Down Fast
57		Down Slow From Slow Or Main
58		(spare)
59		(spare)
60	94 68	FPL For No.80 points

		(space)
61		(spare)
62		(spare)
63		(spare)
64	94 67 65	Platform Sidings To Down Slow Or Down Fast
65	67	Traps In Platform Sidings
66		(spare)
67		Down Fast From Platform Sidings
68		Down Fast From Bay 3
69		(spare)
70	98 97	FPL On 97
71		Down Fast From Down Slow
72		(spare)
73	98 97 70 90	Set Back Up Fast To Down Fast
74		(spare)
75	Nil or 77	FPL On 77
76		Up Slow From Up Fast
77		Up Slow To Main Or Slow
78		(spare)
79		(spare)
80		(spare)
81		Up Fast To Bay 3 Crossing
82	76 85 or Nil or 81	FPL For Nos.81, 83 Points
83	76	Up Fast To Up Slow
84		(spare)
85		(spare)
86		(spare)
87	57 or Nil or 52 51 or 53 52 49	Set Back From Down Slow
88	96 85 and 67 65 or Nil or 68 or 71 56	Set Back From Down Slow To Down Fast
89	87	Set Back Along Down Slow
90	98 97 70	Set Back Up Fast To Down Fast
		(space)
91	Nil or 93 92	FPL For No.92 Points
92	93	Down Slow To Down Fast
93		Down Fast From Down Slow
94	91 96 95 or Nil	FPL For No.95 Points
95	96	Down Fast To Down Slow
96		Down Slow From Down Fast
97	98	Up Fast Crossover

98		Down Fast Crossover
99		Up Fast From Up Slow
100	99	Up Slow To Up Fast
101	75 or 82 99 100 104	FPL On 100
102		Up Slow From Up Fast
103	102	Up Fast To Up Slow
104	75 102 103 or 82	FPL On 103
		(space)
105		(spare)
106		(space)
107		(spare)
108		(spare)
109		(spare)
110		Up Slow Detonators
111	Signal 111 Up Slow to: Up Goods: 74 75 78 101 Up Main: 75 78 101 Up Slow: 35 77 75 78 101 or 76 80 83 82 99 100 101 Bay 1: 84 78 101 or 79 80 83 82 99 100 101 Up Fast: 82 99 100 101 Bay 3: 81 82 99 100 101 Bay 4: (deleted)	Up Slow Home & Calling On To Up Main
112		(spare)
113		Up Fast Detonators
114	Signal 114 Up Fast to: Up Goods: 74 75 78 102 103 104 Up Main: 75 78 102 103 104 Up Slow: 35 77 75 78 102 103 104 or 79 80 83 82 104 Bay 1: 84 78 102 103 104 or 79 80 83 82 104 Up Fast: 82 104 Bay 3: 81 68 59 60 82 104 Bay 4: (deleted)	Up Fast Homes
115		(spare)
116	76 83 or Nil and 82 98 97	Set Back From Down Fast To Up Fast
117	67 65 or Nil or 68 or 71 56	Set Back Along Down Fast
118	93 92 87	Set Back From Down Fast To Down Slow
119		(spare)
120		(spare)

The Down Home signals are arranged in an unusual way, levers 39 and 40 controlling all movements via 92 points and levers 37 and 38 controlling all movements via 95 points. Indicator lamps show which way the routes are set over which these signals apply [photo: Reg Instone].



The first track of CD1 illustrates the bell sounds as a train is signalled along the Down Slow.

A simplifier (based on the 1981 Working Time Table) is provided which lists the scheduled train service as well as the elapsed time on each track as the train is offered through the rear and advance block sections. Click [here](#) to see the full simplifier.

Headcode	Diesel?	Bellcode	From	Up/Down	ARR	DEP	To	Actual time rear & advance sections	Notes
2K67	EMU	3-1-2	1442 Piccadilly	UF	14:49	14:50	Stafford via Crewe	CD 1 track 3 (00:00 = 1510 to 57:15)	1510 to 1609 (gap 1537-38)
2K62	EMU	3-1-2	1420 Altrincham	US/UF	14:55	14:56	Crewe		
2H62	EMU	3-1-2	1422 Crewe	DS	15:03	15:04	Altrincham		
2H67	EMU	4-3-2	1350 Stafford via Macc	DF	15:05	15:06	Piccadilly	04:06	04:21
		5	xxxx Glazebrook	D			Haverton Hill	13:02	13:14
2H60	EMU	1-3-2	1435 Altrincham	US	15:13	15:13	Hazel Grove	13:30	13:51
2H60	EMU	1-3-2	1512 Hazel Grove	DF/DS	15:18	15:18	Altrincham	18:08	18:12
	EMU	2-4-4	ECS				Macc line	22:20	22:40
1A59	E455	4-4-2	1515 Piccadilly	UF	15:22	15:23	Euston via Macc	24:49	25:10
2H54	EMU	3-1-2	1450 Altrincham	US/UF	15:28	15:28	Alderley Edge	26:26	26:40 2-4-2
1H11	E455	4-2	1285 Euston via Crewe	DF	15:30	15:31	Piccadilly	22:10	22:35
1G66	E315	4-4-2	1523 Piccadilly	UF	15:30	15:31	Birmingham via Macc	29:16 2-4-2	31:17
4V20	E595	3-1-1	1520 Piccadilly Pcls	US/UF	15:31	15:40	Bristol TM via Crewe	10:41	11:02
2H71	D2	3-1-3	1508 Buxton	DF/DS	15:48	15:49	Piccadilly	33:02	33:27

It gets complicated as the rush hour proceeds, as there may be a train signalled on each parallel running line and in both directions (and there are two signalmen in the box sending bell codes, sometimes simultaneously). Each pair of running lines to No. 1 box, at the other end of the station, is signalled on a single bell which applies to trains both to and from the relevant box, the direction being inferred from who originates the signal. Each bell ('Fast', 'Slow', 'Main' and 'Goods') has a different tone - the lines are listed in order of 'importance' and the 'Fast' bell has the highest pitch, the 'Main' bell being much lower in pitch.

Signalbox and Equipment

The signalbox dates from April 1890 when it was constructed to replace a much smaller structure in connection with the widening of Stockport Viaduct and quadrupling of the line to Heaton Norris (into use on 11th May). I believe the new station was brought into use around this time, or shortly afterwards. The box is a LNWR type 4, size S with the top made from standard components. It appears quite low at the front but is very tall at the back as the ground falls away steeply, and is strengthened by three substantial buttresses. In fact much of the lever frame is below rail level.

The lever frame is of the LNWR tumbler type. It originally had so much locking that it was necessary to provide four tiers of it, with rocker arms in between to counterbalance the weight of the upper two and lower two racks (see "LNWR Signalling" p153 & fig 11.13). It was constructed with 135 levers (nine girders for 15) and remained pretty much unaltered until 1955, when colour light signals were provided in connection with the resignalling at Heaton Norris. Some minor alterations to the layout were made in 1905 and 1910, following which there were 129 levers in use. This was later reduced to 123, partly due to the down distants being made unworkable. Track circuits were installed in rear of the up home signals in 1913.

At some time after 1910 the through connection from the Up Main to the Horse Landing was taken out and five more levers made spare. Of the block of TCs allocated to the Heaton Norris scheme, six were brought into use in February and March 1951 to protect the points and FPLs of the scissors crossing on the viaduct. In March 1954, as a preliminary to the main scheme, the engine release crossover between bays 2 and 3 was removed, as well as the Up Main to Up Slow part of the scissors in the centre of the station. Some other functions were transferred from one lever to another.

The main part of the resignalling was carried out in February and March 1955 and involved an extensive relock of the frame. Although most points, FPLs and ground signals remained unchanged, the running signals were mainly replaced by multiple-aspect colour lights, leaving only the Up Slow and Up Main starters as mechanically-worked semaphores. Full track circuiting was commissioned.

The arrangement for operating the down home signals – after 1955 - is curious and may well be unique, at least on a mechanical frame. Originally there were seven signals each of which applied to Down Fast or Down Slow, in some cases via alternative routes using the scissors crossover. Thus there were a total of 20 possible routes, some of them parallel and some not (the simplest case of parallel routes is Down Fast to Fast and Down Slow to Slow). These 20 routes were controlled by levers 37, 38, 39 and 40 according to the position of the points and FPLs. 40 (main) and 39 (sub) operated aspects from any route to fast or slow via 92 points while 38 and 37 similarly applied via 95 points. Therefore two sets of route lights were provided on the instrument shelf, both as a reminder to the signalman of what he had just done and a confirmation that the aspect that was about to clear was in fact the intended one. Obviously with 92 points reverse signal 40 or sub 39 would clear from any relevant line to Down Fast but there was no possible route with 38/37; similar remarks applied with 95 reverse.

Two of the consequences of this arrangement were that levers 1 to 30 of the frame could be removed and that the identification plates for the down home signals were lettered A to G as there was no unique lever number for any of the signals.

Also from 1955 the Up Slow and Fast home signals were operated by levers 111 and 114 respectively, with all aspects selected by the position of points and FPLs and occupation of track circuits. Levers 121 to 135 were also removed from the frame and boarded over.

Situation at August 1981

The layout controlled by No.2 box in 1981 was considerably reduced from that of 1955, with many spare levers. The scissors crossover midway along the Up Slow platform was removed in 1958, together with the protecting (semaphore) signals. This was followed in June 1960 by the replacement of signals at the south (No.1 box) end of the station by multiple-aspect colour lights, thus completing the resignalling of the Crewe to Manchester line prior to electrification.

Also by 1959 the scissors crossovers on the viaduct had been simplified by moving the Down Slow to Fast and Up Slow to Fast points further from the box. Consequently the associated ground signals had to be rearranged, and additional levers brought into use.

The three bays at this end of the station dated from when there was a separate stopping service between Stockport and Manchester, and also local services ran to a number of destinations via Heaton Norris and Denton Junction. They may also have been used for attaching or detaching portions to main line trains, such as through coaches to Manchester Victoria. After withdrawal of the service over the former OA&GB line in May 1959 there only remained the Stockport to Stalybridge service. (when were stoppers incorporated into Buxton/Wilmslow services?) However all three bays remained usable until at least 1969. Around this time the connections from Bay 1 to Down Fast and from Bays 2 & 3 to Down Slow were recovered. Bays 1 and 3 were taken out of use on 26th October 1975, as was the facing connection from Up Main to Up Goods, converting the latter line into a dead-end siding. Bay 2 remained in use for the Stalybridge service. This state of affairs was unchanged at 1981.

Train services

This was an electric railway, with 25 kV overhead wires being energised in 1960. However services running via the Macclesfield & Stoke route remained (?diesel) hauled until the OLE on this line was brought into use in 1966/67. The recording was made before the completion of the Hazel Grove chord in March 1986, which allowed services to and from Sheffield to be routed via Stockport, and before the construction of the "Windsor Link" in 1988, when it was not possible for through trains to run to and from Bolton, Chorley and the north west. However, the former MSJ&A line had been converted from 1500V DC to 25kV Ac and a through service of EMUs on the Crewe and Altrincham route had been commenced in May 1971. The Stockport and Stalybridge service (via the ex-LNW link line to Guide Bridge, and ex-GC line thence) still ran hourly on weekdays at this time. All other trains ran to or from Manchester Piccadilly.

Passenger traffic predominated, with only a few parcels, ECS or light engine movements each day. What in LNWR and LMS days had been a heavy flow of merchandise traffic on the Crewe, Heaton Norris, Hillhouse and Leeds route had long since been diverted to other routes.

The basic off-peak weekday service in August 1981 was:

- Hourly class 1 to/from Euston via Stoke
- Hourly (approx) class 1 cross-country to/from Birmingham New Street with many extended to or from places such as London Paddington, Brighton, Poole, Plymouth or Swansea.
- Hourly semi-fast EMU to/from Stoke, with some extended to Stafford or New Street
- Two EMUs per hour on the Crewe – Manchester – Altrincham route; only one of these went as far as Crewe, the other terminating at Alderley Edge (south of Wilmslow)
- One DMU per hour from Piccadilly to Buxton, with an additional Piccadilly-Whaley Bridge every hour on Saturdays
- Hourly DMU to and from Stalybridge
- Hourly Hazel Grove to Altrincham EMU service

Block working

Absolute Block working was maintained after the signalling was converted to MAS in 1955 and 1960. LNWR block instruments were still in use in 1959 but these were later replaced by BR standard plastic instruments. A photograph taken a few years after the recording [photo: the late David Wittamore] shows one of the Fletcher block instruments has been replaced by a B.R. 1947 'Tri-ang' block. At the time of the recording, the Fletcher block instruments were all still present.



Subsequently these were all replaced and the B.R. block instruments were provided with indicator lamps which remained lit for 7 seconds after a bell signal was received to assist in identifying the source. Permissive working was authorised on all lines through the station, of all three types. Platform permissive was in force on the Up & Down Fast and Slow lines for passenger trains; "permissive for goods trains on passenger lines" on the Fast, Slow and Main; and goods permissive on the Up & Down Goods lines (note that the regulations differ in detail for each of the three types). Stopping passenger trains on the passenger lines (including light engines and ECS) would be accepted using the code 2-4-2 and out of section (2-1) for a train which left the section occupied would be acknowledged by a single beat. Freight trains (including light engines and ECS) on the passenger lines would be accepted using the code 4-3 if the section was clear and 2-4-2 if occupied (other than by a passenger train).

Between No.2 and Heaton Norris SBs there is a separate block bell for each line. A separate bell for each direction is provided because the Up and Down line instruments are at different ends of the frame at Heaton Norris, which was designed for two man operation. Normally a block instrument comprises a "combined" pegger, non-pegger and bell.

A full range of special "Is Line Clear?" codes is used according to the route of the train and whether diesel or electric, stopping or not. These are listed separately.

Clearing points (for the acceptance of trains) at No.2 box are somewhat unusual in that those for the Down Fast and Slow lines differ for stopping and non-stopping trains:

Line	FPs set for DF	FPs set for DS	
DF, booked to call	7641	7641	
DF, not booked to call	7643	7652	
DS, booked to call	7642	7651	
DS, not booked to call	7643	7652	
DM	7643	7652	
Line	FPs set for UF	FPs set for US	FPs set for UM

UF & US	7636	7629	7627
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Although not normally used, "Shunting into Forward Section" (3-3-2 etc.) was authorised on every running line at the box, except the Up Fast from Heaton Norris. "Working in Wrong Direction" (2-3-3 etc.) was authorised on every running line through the station; the Sectional Appendix showed that the latter was authorised only for coaching stock, and a brake van was not required. Coaching stock could also be propelled (between Nos. 1 & 2 SBs) through the station, although this was limited to 35 SLU unless a brake van was provided. These authorities clearly facilitated the attaching and detaching of vehicles to passenger trains. *Until about 1976 loaded passenger trains were allowed to be propelled, as could freight vehicles, but these dispensations were withdrawn after a review of current requirements. Until that time there was also an authorisation for freight vehicles to be worked through the Down Main and Down Goods lines without a brake van.*

No.2 box was exempted from full booking. Even when the booking boy was on duty only arrival, departure and passing times were recorded. At other times a single entry for each train sufficed. As is the universal rule, all engineering work, incidents and unusual occurrences had to be recorded.

Both No.1 and No.2 boxes were assessed as class C in 1980/81, but under an agreement of 1980 were allowed to keep their existing D grade, which seems reasonable in view of the complexity of the work.

Special Bell Codes

A list of the special bell signals is given below.

Special bell signals	Electric	Diesel
Trains for Crewe direction		
Class 1 not stopping at Stockport	4-4-1	4-4-5
Class 1 calling at Stockport (standard bell codes)	4-2	4
Class 2 calling at Stockport (standard bell codes)	3-1-2	3-1
Empty Coaching Stock (ECS) (standard bell codes)	2-2-1-2	2-2-1
Trains for Macclesfield direction		
Class 1 not stopping at Stockport	4-4-3-2	4-4-2-3
Class 1 calling at Stockport	4-4-2	4-4
Class 2 calling at Stockport	4-3-2	4-3-1
Empty Coaching Stock (ECS)	2-4-4	1-4-4
Trains for Hazel Grove direction		
Class 2 from/to Hazel Grove/Buxton line not stopping at Stockport	4-4-1-2	4-4-3
Class 2 from/to Buxton line calling at Stockport		3-1-3
Class 2 from/to Hazel Grove calling at Stockport	1-3-2	1-3-3
ECS from/to Hazel Grove or Buxton line	2-3-1-3	1-3-1-3
Trains from/to Northenden Junction		
Class 6 to 8 (Up lines only)		1-2
Class 2 Up train terminating at Stockport		1-3
Line clear to Home Signal only (permissive block)	4-3	4-3
Line occupied acceptance (permissive block)	2-4-2	2-4-2

Manchester Evening News Report 2004

This report appeared in the Manchester Evening News for 24 May 2004.

"A VICTORIAN signalbox earmarked for closure is rescuing a massive railway upgrade - after a hi-tech, computer signalling system had to be abandoned. Stockport No.2 signalbox, one of the oldest in the country, was due to be pensioned off when a new signalling system was installed three years ago, as part of the £85m upgrade to the West Coast Main Line. But the Italian system would not work on the complex Stockport line and was shelved, although it has since been used successfully at Cheadle Hulme.

"Instead, Network Rail decided to improve the existing line, along with five Victorian signalboxes at Stockport, Edgeley and Heaton Norris - renewing the points on the tracks and the mechanical lever operation. The complete upgrade will make the line suitable to take 125mph Virgin tilting trains, aiming to cut journey times to and from London to just over two hours from September. The work will take place during an 11-week "blockade" due to start next month, when passengers will have to use diverted trains and replacement bus services instead of going through Stockport station.

"Stockport No.2 signal box, built in the 1870s, has 60 levers and is operated manually by two signallers using a system of bells and flashing lights. David Mills, 38, a signaller for 20 years, said: "I prefer the old-fashioned signalboxes - it's a good, reliable system and it's been working for more than 100 years. "I feel like it's a part of history and it's something we should preserve, but we know things have to progress and there will be other areas for us to go into." Ken Croston, 61, a signaller for 40 years, said: "I like the old signal boxes, because it's all hands-on. You see trains going past and you feel more involved."

"Much of the computerised equipment installed at Stockport Viaduct has already been removed. Network Rail claims much of it will be recycled when the system is installed from Sandbach to Wilmslow next year."

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Booked running line & timing

Headcode	Diesel?	Bellcode	From	Up/Down	ARR	DEP	To	Actual time rear & advance sections			Notes
2K67	EMU	4-3-2	1442 Piccadilly	UF	14:49½	14:50½	Stafford via Macc	CD 1 track 3 (00:00 = 1503 to 47:55 = 1600)			1503 to 1600 (gap 1537-45)
2K62	EMU	3-1-2	1420 Altrincham	US/UF	14:55½	14:56	Crewe				02:04 'Depression bar in bay'
2H62	EMU	3-1-2	1422 Crewe	DS	15:03	15:04	Altrincham				03:00 'Woodhead closed, freights..'
2H67	EMU	4-3-2	1350 Stafford via Macc	DF	15:06½	15:07½	Piccadilly	1507	04:06	04:21	
4V20	E595	3-1-1	1520 Piccadilly Pcls	US	15:29½	15:39	Bristol TM via Crewe	1513	10:41	11:02	
		5	xxxx Glazebrook	D			Haverton Hill	1516	13:02	13:14	12:30 'Let it come' 13:26 "G. - Haverton Hill"
2H60	EMU	1-3-2	1435 Altrincham	US	15:13	15:13½	Hazel Grove	1516	13:30	13:51	
2H60	EMU	1-3-2	1512 Hazel Grove	DF/DS	15:18	15:18½	Altrincham	1521	18:06	18:12	
1H11	E455	4-2	1255 Euston via Crewe	DF	15:28	15:29	Piccadilly	1525	22:10	22:35	
5H79	EMU	2-4-4	1525 Longsight CS ECS	UF		15:34½	Macclesfield	1525	22:20	22:40	22:30 "5H79" 24:29 'Good vantage point!'
1G66	E315	4-4-2	1518 Piccadilly	UF	15:25	15:26	Birmingham via Macc	1527	24:49	25:10	
2H54	EMU	3-1-2	1450 Altrincham	US/UF	15:25½	15:28	Alderley Edge	1529	26:26	26:40 (2-4-2)	27:18 'Altrincham 1'
1A59	E455	4-2	1512 Piccadilly	UF	15:19½	15:20½	Euston via Crewe	1531	28:41	29:04 (2-4-2)	29:40 'They're taping this ..'
1M51	E455	4-4-2	0942 Poole via Macc	DF	15:30	15:31	Piccadilly	1532	29:16 (2-4-2)	31:17	31:05 'Point pulling time ..' 31:38 'Make it 1-3'
2H54	EMU	3-1-2	1519 Alderley Edge	DS	15:33	15:34	Altrincham				Note: 8 minute gap from 33:40 to 33:43 corresponding to 1537 until 1545
2H93	D1	1-3	1519 Stalybridge	US	15:39½		Stockport				
2H71	D2	3-1-3	1529 Piccadilly	US	15:42½	15:43	Buxton				
1A62	E455	4-4-2	1535 Piccadilly	UF	15:42½	15:43½	Euston via Macc				
		3-3-2		U				1534		31:21 (2-4-2)	38:28 "8 Shunt withdrawn"
2H71	D2	3-1-3	1508 Buxton	DF/DS	15:48½	15:49	Piccadilly	1536	33:02	33:27	
2K67	EMU	4-3-2	1542 Piccadilly	UF	15:49½	15:50½	Stafford via Macc	1536	33:10	34:42	35:00 "Sod's law in action!"
		2-1-6		U				1545	33:55/41:36	35:50 (4-3)	36:40 "Longport"
		4-1		D				1547	36:05 (4-3)	43:19	
		2-2-1		U				1548	36:31		42:50 "Hazel Grove-Guide Bdg"
2K62	EMU	3-1-2	1520 Altrincham	US/UF	15:55½	15:56	Crewe	1549	37:36	38:32 (2-4-2)	
2H71	D2	3-1-3	1549 Piccadilly	UF/US	15:57½	15:58	Buxton	1551	39:22	42:05 (2-4-2)	
2H93	D1	3-1	1540 Stockport	DF		15:40	Stalybridge	1552		39:50	
2H62	EMU	3-1-2	1522 Crewe	DS		16:03	Altrincham	1553	45:05/47:00	45:55/00:50	Redescribed 1-3-2 to 3-1-2, cancelled & reoffered.
		1-2		U				1554	45:32	00:10	00:15 "Fiddlers-Northwich"
								CD 1 track 4 (00:00 = 1600 to 09:20 = 1609)			1600 to 1609
2H65	EMU	1-3-2	1558 Hazel Grove	DF	16:04	16:04½	Piccadilly	1558	01:29 (2-4-2)	03:01	01:55 "What's the game?"
		1-2		U				1600	03:25	03:50	03:55 "Healey Mills-Northwich"
2H60	EMU	1-3-2	1535 Altrincham	US	16:13	16:13½	Hazel Grove	1604	07:52	08:01	05:12 'Tell that lad ...'
2H67	EMU	4-3-2	1508 Barlaston via Macc	DF	16:06	16:07	Piccadilly	1605	08:59		
2H79	EMU	4-3-2	1605 Piccadilly	UF	16:12½	16:13½	Macclesfield				
2H71	D2	3-1-3	1538 Buxton	DF/DS	16:18½	16:19	Piccadilly				
2H71	D2	3-1-3	1610 Piccadilly	US	16:19½	16:20	Buxton				
Explanation of some notes											
24:29 'Good vantage point!'			the view from the back of the box over the Bus Station etc.								
01:55 "What's the game?"			some comments by the No. 2 man to his mate at No. 1 after the latter made a bit of a hash over 2H62. 'Furness Vale for you' refers to a much simpler box in the country!								
05:12 'Tell that lad ...'			the train recorder, a signalman covering a vacancy, referring to over-confident remarks by the booking lad at Heaton Norris								

Booked running line & timing

Headcode	Diesel?	Bellcode	From	Up/Down	ARR	DEP	To	Actual time rear & advance sections			Notes
								CD 2 track 5 (00:00 = 1700 to 45:48 = 1746)			1700 to 1746
2H79	EMU	4-3-2	1700 Piccadilly	UF	17:08	17:09	Macclesfield	1701	01:50	02:09	
2H71	D2	3-1-3	1700 Piccadilly	US	17:09½	17:10½	Buxton	1702	02:32	03:07 (2-4-2)	04:05 "Buxton 1 Macc 2"
2H67	EMU	4-3-2	1528 Wolverhampton via Macc	DF	17:07½	17:08½	Piccadilly	1702	02:53	02:59	03:xx '4-3-2 in front of express'
											04:58 "Carrier pigeons!"
2H60	EMU	1-3-2	1635 Altrincham	US	17:14½	17:15	Hazel Grove	1706	06:42	06:57/09:18 (2-4-2)	07:40 'Hazel Grove 1, next Down 3'
1H12	E455	4-4-2	1355 Euston via Macc	DF	16:30½	16:31½	Piccadilly	1707	07:00 (2-4-2)	08:54	08:59 'Next 1H12 then 5H75'
2K62	EMU	3-1-2	1640 Altrincham	UF	17:15½	17:16	Crewe	1709	09:50	10:01	
5H75	D1	2-2-1	1715 Stockport ECS	DF		17:15	Piccadilly	1713		13:00	(After wkg 1619 Stalybridge)
2H65	EMU	4-4-1-2	1710 Piccadilly	US		17:19½	Hazel Grove	1713	13:50	14:15	14:54 'Giving it a run (UF-UM)?'
2H71	D2	3-1-3	1638 Buxton	DF/DS	17:19½	17:20	Piccadilly	1713	13:16	14:40	
2H71	D2	3-1-3	1715 Piccadilly	US	17:24½	17:25½	Buxton	1717	17:22	17:57	18:10 "Buxton 1"
1A70	E455	4-4-2	1712 Piccadilly	UF	17:19½	17:20½	Euston via Macc	1717	17:40	18:10	??
2K67	EMU	4-3-2	1715 Piccadilly	UF	17:23½	17:24½	Stoke-on-Trent via Macc	1718	18:07	18:20	"Stoke next UF then ,,"
5H65	EMU	2-2-1-2	1715 Hazel Grove ECS	DF		17:21	Piccadilly	1719	19:10	19:38	
2H93	D1	1-3	1704 Stalybridge	UF	17:26½		Stockport	1721	21:40		
2H54	EMU	3-1-2	1719 Wilmslow	DS	17:30	17:31	Altrincham	1723	20:23	21:24	21:40 "Altrincham 4"
2H60	EMU	1-3-2	1650 Altrincham	US	17:29½	17:31	Hazel Grove	1725	25:00	25:11/30:xx (2-4-2)	30:xx "Hazel Grove 1"
1H27	EMU	4-2	1700 Crewe	DF	17:35½	17:36	Piccadilly	1728	28:26 (2-4-2)	30:36	
1H13	E455	4-4-2	1455 Euston via Macc	DF	17:26½	17:27½	Piccadilly	1729	29:00	29:27	29:27 "1M27"
2H53	EMU	3-1-2	1700 Altrincham	US	17:35½	17:36	Alderley Edge	1730	30:15	30:20	
1V68	E315	4-2	1727 Piccadilly	UF	17:34	17:35	Didcot via Crewe	1731		31:20	
2H60	EMU	1-3-2	1728 Hazel Grove	DF/DS	17:35	17:35½	Altrincham	1731	31:45 (2-4-2)	34:23	
2H79	EMU	4-3-2	1730 Piccadilly	UF	17:38½	17:40½	Macclesfield	1733	33:32	33:48/35:10	
5H38	E455	2-2-1-2	1532 Oxley CS via Crewe ECS	DS	17:34	18:02	Piccadilly	1734	34:56	38:58	
2H93	D1	3-1	1738 Stockport	DF		17:38	Stalybridge	1736		35:49	
2K62	EMU	3-1-2	1710 Altrincham	US/UF	17:46	17:48	Crewe	1736	36:50		??
2H62	EMU	3-1-2	1709 Crewe	DS/DF	17:50½	17:51½	Altrincham	1739	39:16	39:57/	
1M22	E455	4-4-2	1115 Plymouth via Macc	DF	17:33	17:34	Piccadilly	1740		40:24	
2H71	D2	3-1-3	1730 Piccadilly	US	17:39½	17:40½	Buxton	1741	41:31	41:46	
2H93	D2	1-3	1729 Stalybridge	US	17:49½		Stockport	1743	43:39		
2H65	EMU	1-3-2	1740 Piccadilly	US	17:52½	17:53	Hazel Grove	1743	43:55	44:19	
1H27	EMU	4-2	1700 Crewe	DF	17:35½	17:36	Piccadilly	1744	44:50		
5H88	EMU	2-2-1-2	1736 Hazel Grove ECS	DF		17:41½	Longsight CS	1744	44:39		
2H79	EMU	4-3-2	1720 Macclesfield	DF	17:46½	17:47½	Piccadilly				
2H71	D2	3-1-3	1708 Buxton	DS	17:49½	17:50	Piccadilly				
2K67	EMU	4-3-2	1745 Piccadilly	UF	17:52½	17:53	Stafford via Macc				
5H88	EMU	2-2-1-2	1738 Macclesfield ECS	DF/DS		17:54	Longsight CS				
5H88	EMU	2-2-1-2	1744 Hazel Grove ECS	DF		17:57	Longsight CS				

Explanation of some notes

04:05 "Buxton 1 Macc 2"	not a football score but a phone call to the station announcer about the platforming of trains
03:xx '4-3-2 in front of express'	the local is running ahead of a late-running Euston-Manchester express
04:58 "Carrier pigeons!"	Fred spots a scantily-skirted lass with a pigeon basket wending her way up the path at the back of the box
08:59 'Next 1H12 then 5H75'	the 1619 Stalybridge is booked to return as empty stock and will follow the late-running express
14:54 'Giving it a run?'	the 1710 Piccadilly is booked non-stop through Stockport and is turned from the Up Fast to the Main to run through the station. Lots of lever pulling before and after.