

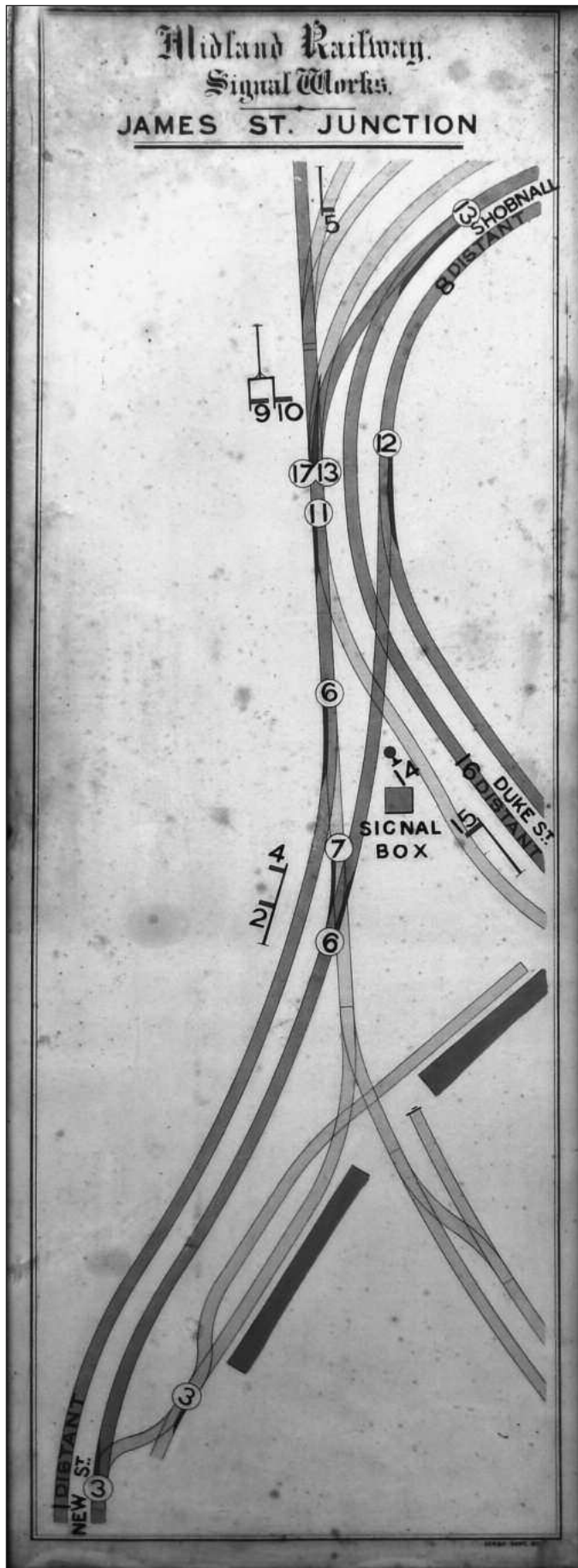


ITEMS FROM THE STUDY CENTRE – 4

by Roy Burrows

MIDLAND RAILWAY SIGNAL BOX DIAGRAM – JAMES ST. JUNCTION

(Item No 11288)



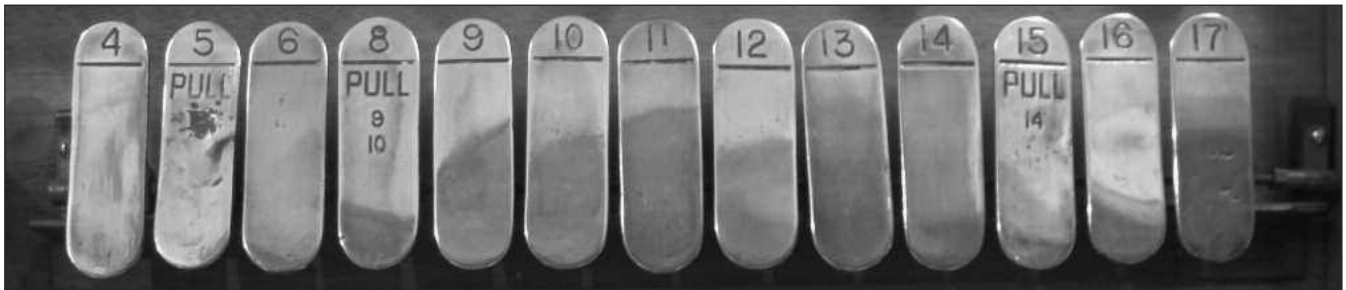
Those members who have visited the Study Centre will recognise this item as hanging on the wall in the Centre. It is the only vertical signal box diagram I have seen, although I believe Wigston Central box also had one. Does anyone know any other location on the Midland which had a similarly configured diagram? This one is dated September 1887 and is in its Midland frame in original stained and polished condition. James St. Junction was one of the boxes on the series of lines serving the breweries of Burton on Trent. Located in the south-eastern segment of the town, it controlled a small complex of lines just off the Bond End branch. (See the accompanying extract from the 1915 fourth edition of Distance Diagram Sheet 26B, which also incidentally demonstrates the Midland's uncompromising thoroughness in recording distances from St Pancras by the shortest route. James Street Junction Signal Box was 127 miles 47 chains from the London terminus via Leicester Junction Sidings and Dale Street Junction using the Dale Street Branch!)

James Street box faced south, so the top of the diagram is south and the bottom north. Curving in from the south-west (top right) is the 'main line' from Uxbridge Street Junction which divides as the Duke Street branch to the north-west (bottom right) and the New Street branch to the north-east (bottom left). The fourth 'branch' at the top of the diagram is that referred to in John Gough's Chronology as the Wood Street connection which crosses the Bond End branch on the level, joins a curve from Uxbridge Street and crosses Wood Street to serve Charrington's Maltings.

The branch from Uxbridge Street to Duke Street was opened at the same time as the Bond End branch in December 1875. James Street Junction came into existence when the New Street branch was opened in April 1880 and the original box dates from that time. The Wood Street connection was brought into use in October 1886 and alterations were made to the levers in March 1887. The diagram (September 1887) presumably represents the situation as a result of these alterations. Gough gives no indication of any further changes until January 1898 when the box was re-framed.

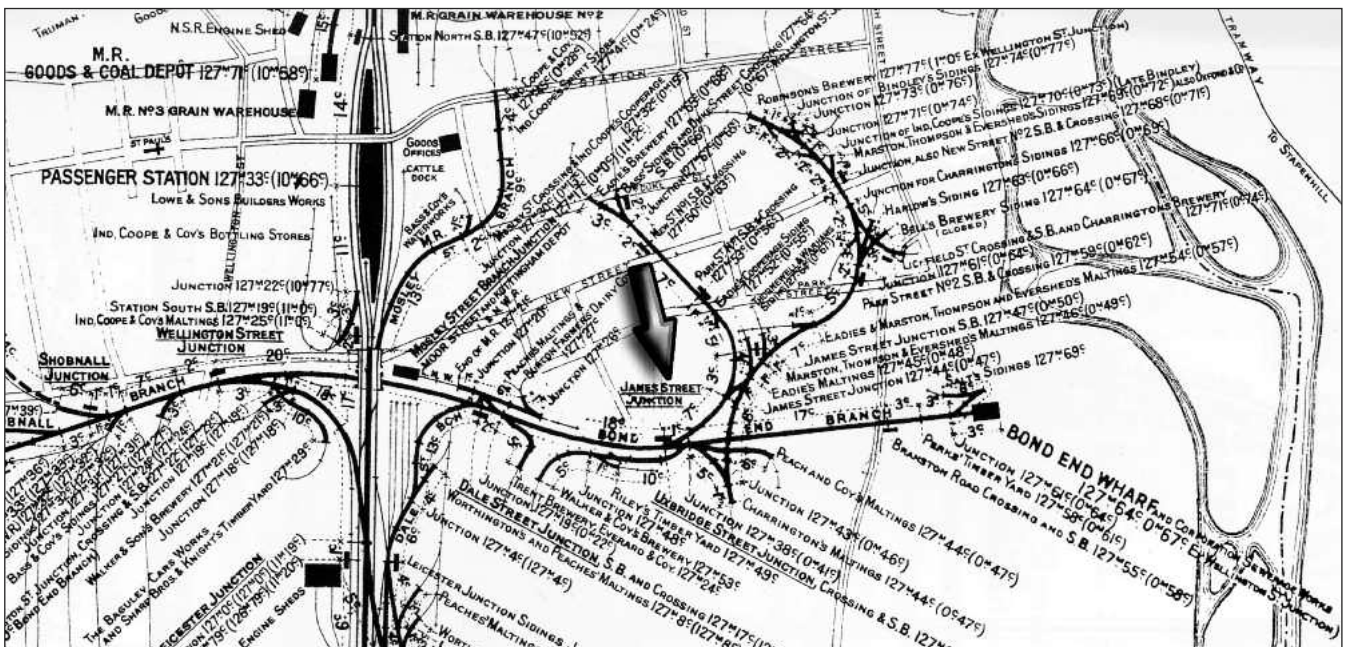
Two other items in the Study Centre enable us to fast-forward to the later history of the box. Gough records a change in operating practice on the New Street branch from May 1928 when the section between James Street and New Street was operated as 'one engine in steam' but using both lines in the correct direction. A replacement box was provided shortly after in January 1929 and the up line was removed in 1935.

Item 12196 is a copy of a British Railways drawing dated 2 February 1955 which indicates a changed layout at James Street Junction. It shows the up line from New Street no longer in place and no connection to Wood Street. It probably represents the basis of the layout after 1935 and the changed numbering of the levers, compared with 1887, probably reflects those of the replacement box of January 1929, but after removal of connections to Wood Street which could have given rise to the spares listed.

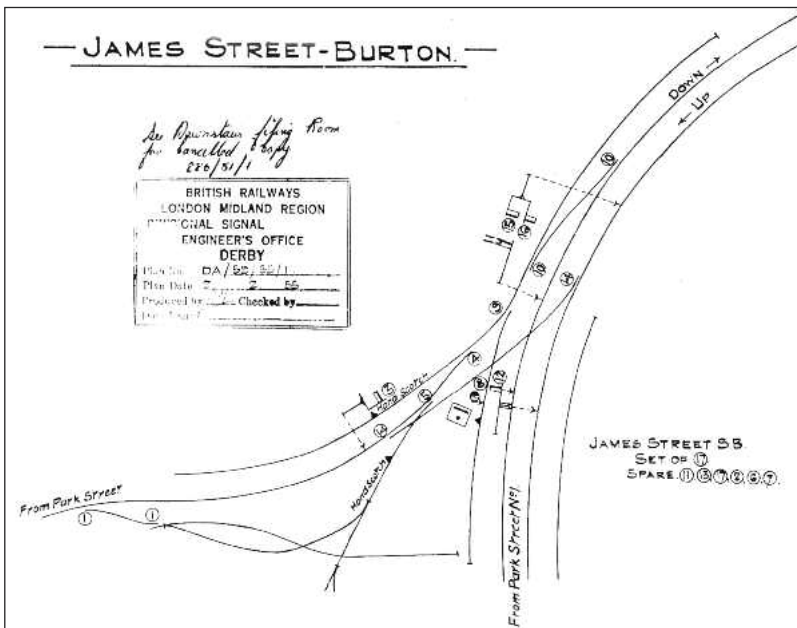


Also in the Study Centre is the set of preserved lever pull plates (Items 18159 to 18171) saved from the box at closure in January 1968 by the late George Dow. They are of the type which would have been in use in 1929 and in two particulars correlate with the numbers on the 1955 drawing. In order to operate the ground signal, it would indeed have been necessary to pull levers 9 and 10 first and, similarly, to signal a train onto the New Street line it would have been necessary to pull lever 14 first. Unfortunately, the pull number on lever plate 5 has been obliterated but it would have been logical for this to have been 4.

To the question of 'why are plates 1, 2 and 3 missing?', I have no answer - just supposition. (I'm assuming George Dow didn't lose them. Apart from the fact it would have been out of character, they were all securely tied with the original label when I received them.) Was there an alteration to the layout between 1955 and closure in 1968 which necessitated changes affecting the use of levers and which, inter alia, gave rise to obliterating the pull number on plate 5? Could this, for example, have been the taking out of use of the sidings in the immediate vicinity of the box, eliminating the need for points 1 and 5 and re-levering signal 3? I hope someone can supply the answer.



The arrow indicates James Street Junction on this extract from the Midland Railway Distance Diagram for Burton on Trent. The site of James Street Junction signal box is in the set of lines to the right of the arrow.



The figure to the left is based on the information in Study Centre Item 12196. It shows the disposition of the lines at James Street in 1951, and the signals that the various levers then worked.