

# WALSALL AREA RE-SIGNALLING



*The final days of Bloxwich Signal Box*

*Photo: Keith Flinders*

Over the August bank-holiday weekend, the major work in the West Midlands region was the commissioning of new signalling on the Chase Line and the area previously covered by the 1960s PSB at Walsall. With the completion of this work, signalling for the area is controlled from the new Saltley SCC, before all its control transfers to Rugby ROC. The signal boxes at Hednesford and Brereton Sidings [which was at Rugeley Town station] are being preserved, the latter at Chasewater Railway and the former in the playground near Asda. Bloxwich and Walsall PSB are for demolition and the fate of Bescot Down Tower is not yet known.

For the past eighteen months, new equipment cabinets and LED signals have been appearing alongside the lines radiating from Walsall to Aldridge, Hamstead, Willenhall and Rugeley. There have also been some significant infrastructure changes in the area; a new run-round loop of 1046 metres constructed on the former South Staffordshire line south of Pleck Junction, a new connection at the north end of Walsall's Platform 3 and a new facing crossover leading into the former Mid Cannock coal disposal site. The latter facility, which is now owned by Pentalver, will be dispatching full size containers by rail to Felixstowe when south of Cannock have been modified for W10 clearance. It may also be used as the electrification base.

Modern signalling on the Chase Line is particularly important for commuters as services have previously been restricted by the long (18 minutes) block section between Bloxwich and Hednesford. Now there should be plenty of capacity for both passenger and freight services on this line. Line speed improvements have been deferred until electrification.

*Peter Cousins*