

*This K1 is at the Tramway Museum at Crich. It is usable with an A & B coinbox case fitted with a pay-on-answer mechanism. The kiosk is a Type 235 which has different fenestration to the more typical Type 236 on which the Dartline model is based. Altogether some dozen K1s survive.*

# THE WOODS TELEPHONE



# DE PROJECT SUPPLEMENTARY PHONE KIOSKS

By Stan Roberts

All illustrations by author except where stated.

Before 1921 there were no standard designs for kiosks. From 1884 it had been permitted for public telephones to be used, but these were often in shops and the fee was paid direct to the shopkeeper or, in busy locations, to an attendant. In covered locations, such as main-line railway stations, wooden cabinets came to be installed. Later some outdoor kiosks had penny-in-the-slot locks fitted to the door as a means of collecting the fee. But unless there is positive evidence of the location and style of a particular kiosk, I would suggest that they are probably best omitted.

In 1921 the Post Office introduced 'Kiosk No.1' (K1). This was made of reinforced concrete with a wooden door. It stood 10ft high and was 3ft square. Dartline Castings/Shirescenes make an etched brass kit for this in both 2mm and 4mm scales. I found that I had to reduce the width of the roof to allow it to fit inside the gutter and to give a realistic appearance; also it did not look correct until I had provided a square plasticard base. The instructions say that it was painted red but this is incorrect – it was concrete coloured, with only the wooden door and window frames painted red. A preserved example can be seen at Crich Tramway Museum.

The K1 did not please many local authorities so after a competition the Post Office introduced the K2 in 1927. Designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott (the designer of Liverpool Anglican Cathedral), it was made of cast iron and painted red all over. The vast majority were installed in London, but a number were provided in major provincial cities. One of these survives in Liverpool as a 'listed building' next to the Town Hall. A cheaper, similar, design – K3 – in concrete was introduced in 1929 for more widespread use. Again the wooden door and window frames were painted red with the concrete body painted in what was described as light Portland (clipsham) stone colour. Langley Miniature Models make a 4mm-scale kit in etched brass and white-metal castings for the K3. At a pinch this kit could be used, painted red, to represent a K2 although it is marginally too small (K2 was 9ft 3in high by 3ft 4½in square, and the K3 was 8ft 7½in high and 3ft 1in square). K3s seem to have disappeared from use, but there is one in the Science Museum, London.

K4 was a larger version of the K2 incorporating stamp-selling machines and a letter posting box. It was not particularly successful and only 45 were ever installed, so can be reasonably ignored by modellers, as can the K5 which was a portable kiosk for use at exhibitions.

In celebration of King George's Silver

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*A listed K2 outside Liverpool Town Hall – one of only four surviving provincial K2s, although there are over 100 listed in London. Note that this has been fitted with a Cardphone telephone. These were introduced in 1982 and now comprise about 20% of payphones.*

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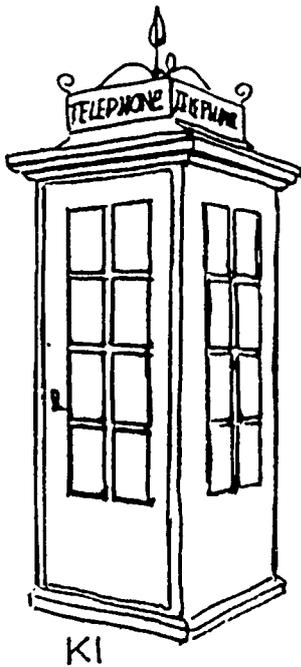
*In 1990 Merseyside Model Railway Society were asked by the Wirral Borough Council to build a 4mm:1ft scale museum model of the Woodside area of Birkenhead, set in the summer of 1934 (1994 will be the 60th anniversary of the opening of the first road tunnel under the Mersey).*

*Research indicated that the area to be portrayed included two TCBs (Ordnance Survey jargon for telephone boxes), and knowing that Society member Stan Roberts had worked in the telecommunications industry, we asked his advice. Of course, he offered to make the two necessary models! This proved to be the genesis of the following brief article.*

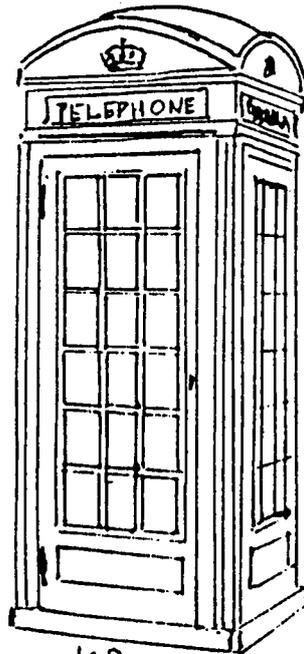
*Stan worked for GPO Telephones from 1936 until his retirement in 1980, but is better known in modelling circles as the author of numerous articles in magazines, as well as contributions to books on Midland Railway architecture, particularly around Bakewell in Derbyshire. He has also written a book The First Hundred Years of the Public Telephone Service in the Liverpool Telephone Area.*

*So, for the sake of those modellers who consider that all telephone boxes are the same. . .*

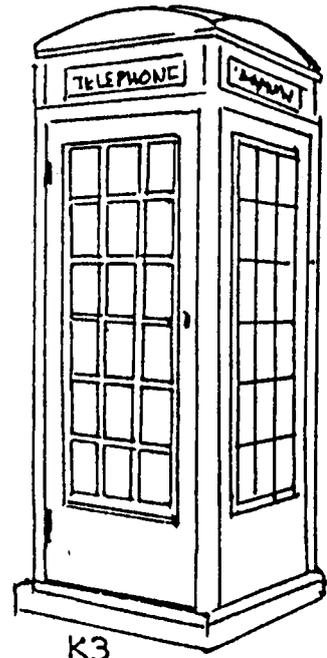




K1



K2



K3

Jubilee of 1935 the Post Office promised to install a public call office in every village with a post office. For this much-increased usage a new design was made by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. Introduced the following year, the K6 kiosk was commonly known as the 'Jubilee' kiosk. Made of cast iron with a wooden door and painted red, it stood 8ft 4in high and was 3ft 1/4in square. In some rural areas the red colour was objected to, and in these cases the box would be painted dark grey with the window frames picked out in red. Again Langley make an etched brass kit for this and Merit make a 'ready-to-run' version in plastic. The K6s were used in vast quantities and

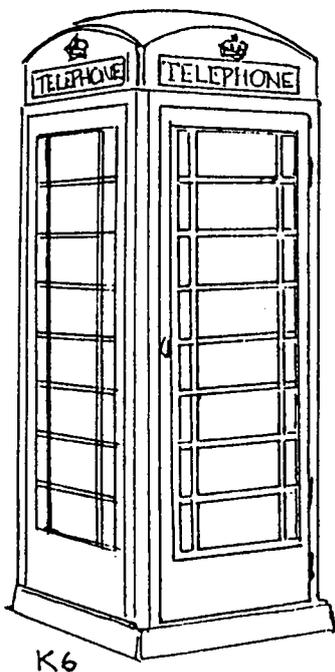
many still survive in spite of BT's efforts to eliminate them. It should perhaps be noted that in the 1980s BT painted a few of them yellow in an attempt to form a new image, but this was not followed up. A growing number of K6s are listed, and appropriately one of these is situated at Liverpool Cathedral – both of course being by the same architect.

K7 was produced experimentally in 1960 and was made in cast iron or aluminium, but only six were ever made.

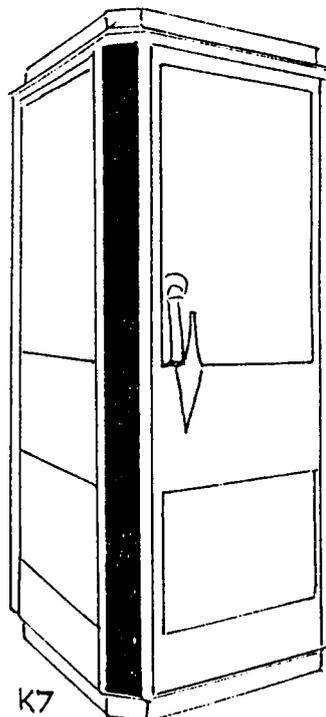
K8, designed by architect Bruce Martin, was introduced in 1969. The large windows of toughened glass with no glazing bars was

an attempt to combat the widespread growth of vandalism and theft. It was considered that the unobstructed view of miscreants had a deterrent effect, and all crevices into which levers or jemmys could be inserted were avoided. It was made of cast iron with an aluminium door and was painted red with a black cill and head ring. A kit for the K8 is now made by Shirescenes.

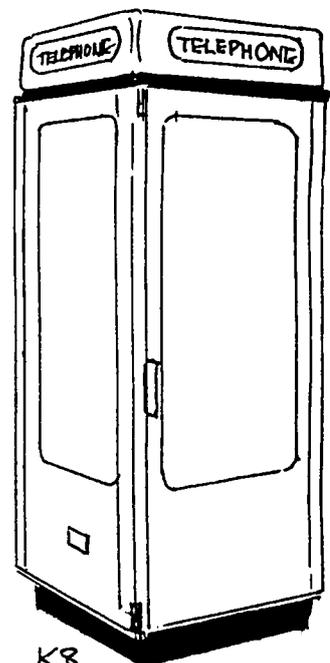
The current range of triangular and square BT kiosks is available in 2mm and 4mm scale kits from Dartline/Shirescenes. Note that the original T symbol was being replaced from 1991 by the new BT logo of the two men – one listening and one talking –



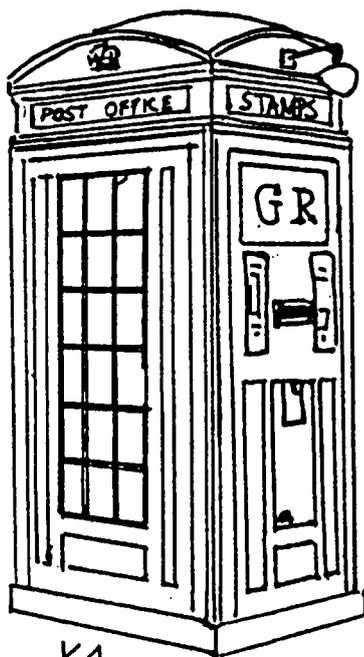
K6



K7

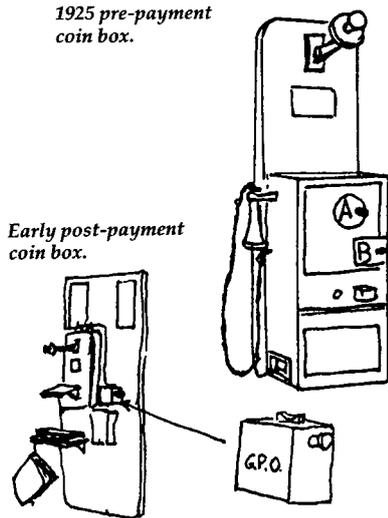


K8

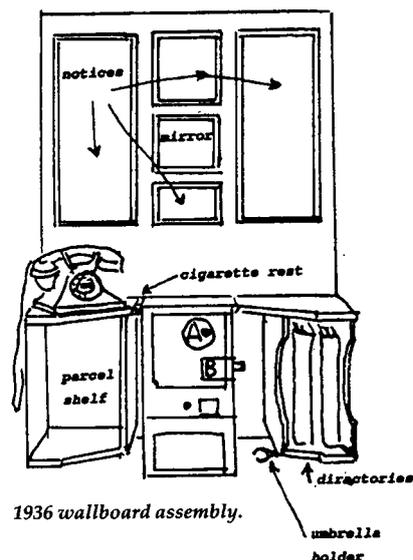


K4

1925 pre-payment coin box.



Early post-payment coin box.

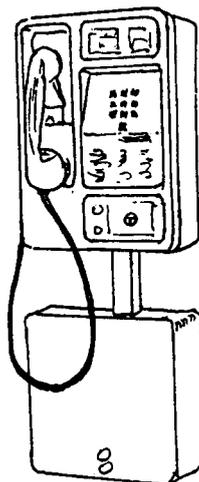


1936 wallboard assembly.

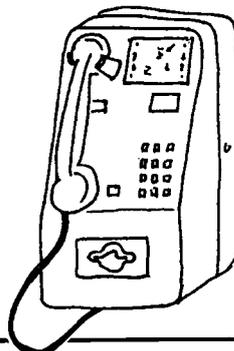
This official photograph of a K3 dates from its introduction and is unusual in having an all-red door as all other pictures I have seen show only the window frame of the door picked out in red.  
(Courtesy of BT Museum Oxford)



1958 pay-on-answer assembly.



1983 public call office payphone.



1983 cardphone.

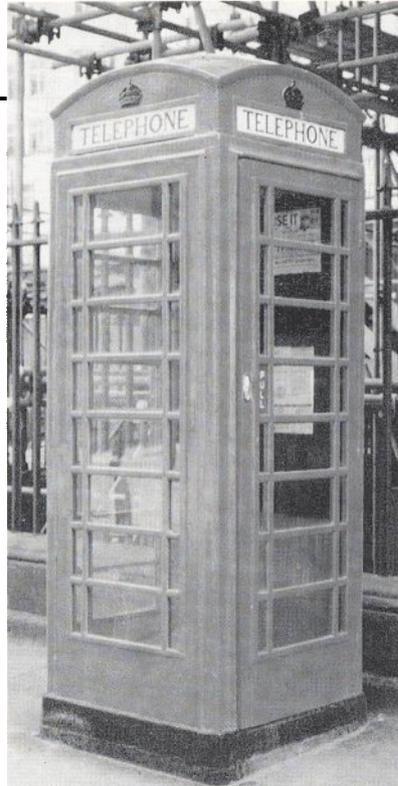
and I bet you didn't know that is what it is supposed to represent!

### Interiors

As stated earlier, the first public call offices were under cover, for example in shops or in wooden 'cabinets', with the fee being paid to an attendant. Some early kiosks had a penny-in-the-slot lock on the door. When the first coinboxes were introduced the fee was inserted and turning a knob deposited the coin and energised a buzzer to be heard by the operator.

The pre-payment coinboxes with the A and B buttons came along in 1925 and would have been used with a wall-mounted telephone with a separate receiver (earpiece). After about 1930 a handset telephone would have been used. To go with the Jubilee (K6) box a black wallboard with chromium-plated frames for the notices and a mirror was introduced, together with black shelves for the handset telephone, parcels and directories. The Dartline K1 kit has etched parts for these, but the Langley kit has a white-metal casting which is more convincing and this can be obtained as a separate item. From 1958 to the early 1970s pay-on-answer coinboxes were introduced as STD (Subscriber Trunk Dialling) spread across the country. The Langley kits supply a casting for this as an alternative.

At high revenue sites such as main railway stations and airports Blue Payphones were introduced in 1982 followed in 1983 by



*This K6 is adjacent to the listed K2 outside Liverpool Town Hall. Although the crown is picked out in black this was not original practice.*

an electronic version of the pay-on-answer payphone.

### Conclusion

To summarise: when modelling prototypes set in the 1920s I would suggest that only K1s would generally be suitable. In the 1930s K1s and K3s would be normal, with the K6 becoming more usual from 1936 onwards as the concrete panels of the K1 and K3 designs tended to deteriorate rather more quickly than their cast iron counterparts. In post-WW2 years I do not think that many K1s or K3s would be found. K6s still survive today, but in the 1980s their numbers were decimated as they were replaced by the new BT square and triangular kiosks.

Not considered here (because of their present-day comparative rarity and locations in large towns) are British Telecom's main competitors: Mercury. The numbers of Mercury kiosks have been increasing since the late 1980s.

As a postscript to the article I have just heard that a Telephone Kiosk exhibition is being set up at Avoncroft Museum in Worcestershire, which will include examples of K1, K2, K3, K4, K6 and K7 kiosks.

[Acknowledgments must be made to the Institute of Post Office Electrical Engineers journal and to its successor British Telecom Engineering, The Telecommunications Heritage Bulletin, Old Telephones by Andrew Emmerson and Requiem for a red box by John Timpson].



*This K4 was photographed at Cranmore railway station on the East Somerset Railway in 1987, unfortunately it was fitted with a K6 door. However news has just reached me that it has been restored to as near original condition as possible with the postal facilities fully operational. But use of the A & B mechanism (with decimal coins) only enables*



*These K8s were seen in Gibraltar, hence the palm*

