

TIME TRAVEL IN A CALL BOX? Ladies & gentlemen we present (trumpet sounds).....

The SSARGDIS



DESIGN

The K6 kiosk is constructed of cast-iron sections, bolted together, standing on a concrete base. Its general form is a four-sided rectangular box with a domed roof. Three sides of the kiosk are glazed, with eight rows of three panes of glass; a wide central pane of glass and two outer, narrow panes. There is reeded moulding around the window panel corresponding to the dimensions of the door opening, disguising that there is an opening on one side only. The door is of teak, with a metal 'cup' handle. For weatherproofing there is a drip cap above the door. The back panel has a blank, moulded panel conforming to the dimensions of the windows and cable holes either side of the foundry plate at the foot of the kiosk. Above the main body of the kiosk is a plain entablature, set back from the face of the kiosk. The entablature carries a rectangular slot for signage, with trim moulding. Set into the slot is an illuminated telephone sign, with serif capital lettering on opaque glass. Ventilation slots are inserted below the signage slot. The roof of the kiosk is domed, formed by segmental pediments, with a convex-moulded edge. The pediments carry a moulded Royal crown.

HISTORY

The K6 kiosk was commissioned by the General Post Office in 1935 to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of King George V. The design needed to be suitable for universal use, not repeating the mistakes of earlier kiosks. The K2 and K3 were attractive designs but had proved problematic. The K2 was too large and too expensive; the K3 too brittle. The General Post Office turned again to Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, with his triumphant new kiosk appearing in 1936. Some 8,000 kiosks were installed as

part of the 'Jubilee Concession', allowing towns and villages with a Post Office to apply for a kiosk. A year later under the 'Tercentenary Concession' celebrating the Post Office's 300th anniversary, a further 1,000 kiosks were installed over 12 years for local authorities paying a five year subscription of £4. In 1939 a more vandal-proof Mk II version was introduced. In 1949 the Royal Fine Arts Commission intervened again, and bowing to pressure allowed rural examples to be painted in different colours. Subsequently kiosks have emerged painted in colours such as green and battleship grey. By 1960 some 60,000 examples existed, but the design was beginning to look old-fashioned. The General Post Office was looking at a modern replacement: the K7.

HERITAGE LEGACY

Between 1936 and 1968 60,000 examples of the K6 were installed. There are around 2,500 listings for the K6 kiosk in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. There are approximately 8,400 non-listed K6 kiosks, giving a total number of surviving K6 kiosks of approximately 11,700 (about 20% of all K6 kiosks). Of the eight kiosk types introduced by the General Post Office, the K6 was the most populous type introduced, and the most populous type in terms of surviving kiosks. The majority of listed kiosks, more than 90%, are K6 variants.

Phase 2 of our refurb and renovation of the call box will turn the space into an archaeological information point highlighting the rich diversity of archaeology in and around Sutton Montis and its environs. It will be fitted out with a graphic of the geophysical survey SSARG conducted prior to the test pitting campaign of 2008/2009. There will also be a detailed graphic image of Pittmead, the field on opposite side of the road from the village Hall plus leaflets and links for further information.

There appears to be a wide interest in the telephone call box nationally, many having been converted into either book lending/exchange points or defibrillator stations. Many more appear neglected or abandoned! A small number remain active and working, though these are generally found in towns, small market towns (Crewkerne, Castle Cary etc).

The telephone call box, particularly the K6-a have become part of the popular culture, they appear in artworks such as an installation by Banksy (see 'evolution of the call box') and in tv programmes such as Dr.Who.

I've included a couple of links for further information should you wish to peruse this topic further. Go on I dare you! You could give 'em a call but..... www.the-telephone-box.co.uk and www.redphonebox.info, from which much of the above was drawn.

Nigel Harvey