



The Hundred Parishes

An introductory article about TELEPHONE KIOSKS

In 1924 the Royal Fine Art Commission invited three architects to submit designs for new telephone kiosks. The winner was Sir Giles Gilbert Scott who also designed Battersea Power Station and Liverpool Cathedral where he is buried. Somewhat confusingly, Scott was the grandson of his namesake, Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, a prolific designer of workhouses and also St Pancras Station.

In 1924, the younger Scott was a trustee of Sir John Soane's Museum and he topped his telephone kiosk with a dome similar to that on the mausoleum which Soane had designed for himself a hundred years earlier – Soames' mausoleum stands in Old St Pancras churchyard and has a Grade I-listing. The new telephone kiosk was produced in cast iron as GPO model K2, replacing the K1 concrete kiosk.

Later designs had a similar appearance. The most common, the somewhat shorter, lighter and cheaper K6, was introduced for King George V's silver jubilee in 1935. Around 50,000 were installed around the UK and it is this model that we see around The Hundred Parishes.

The colour red was chosen to make them easy to spot, although Scott had suggested silver. These robust and iconic survivors of the 20th century, found in almost every town and village, are worth preserving. Across England, over 2,000 have been listed; at the last count, 51 within the Hundred Parishes had been listed, all model K6.



Most red phone boxes have now been decommissioned although a few, like the one in Anstey, still operate as a pay phone (at least in 2023).

Many villages have used their box to house a defibrillator, like those shown here: in Westmill on the left and Finchingfield to the right.



Other communities have inventively turned them into informal book exchanges and information points. The one in Berden serves two purposes: defibrillator and lost property box.

Below, we show, from the left: a library in Hildersham, Barbara's Book Box in Chrishall and the inside of Great Chesterford's mini museum.



Boxes in Sawbridgeworth, on the left, and Standon, on the right, have been transformed into greenhouses full of colourful plants; Sawbridgeworth's claims to be an information point.



A good number of our iconic phone boxes have been purchased privately and now delight their owners with a variety of uses in private gardens.

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Any comments or suggestions for improvement may be submitted by using the Feedback form on the website. The website has many short articles on various aspects of The Hundred Parishes, as well as introductions to individual parishes and to a number of local celebrities, and an extensive What's On section. More than a hundred walk route descriptions can be freely downloaded, with each of the hundred parishes featuring in at least one walk.