

# **HERITAGE TELECOMMUNICATIONS CONFERENCE SALFORD 2019**

Discovering and Preserving  
Britain's Oldest Surviving Street Telephone Box

# **Andrew Hurley**

**Youth in training (1954) in Manchester  
Telephone Area**

**Graduated University of Salford (1966)**

**District General Manager, Severnside  
District, Bristol (1985-1992)**

# **A celebration of the Red Telephone Kiosk**

(Established in 1992 with exhibits from BT  
Museum)

**NATIONAL COLLECTION OF  
TELEPHONE KIOSKS**

# A wide range of GPO, BT, Private, AA, RAC, Police & Fire Kiosks, Boxes, Huts, Pillars & Posts









The Collection includes all six GPO kiosks introduced between the two World Wars

The earliest being the K1 circa 1921 of which there are 3 variations

It also includes Britain's last red phonebox, the K8, and examples of those introduced after privatisation, the KX range



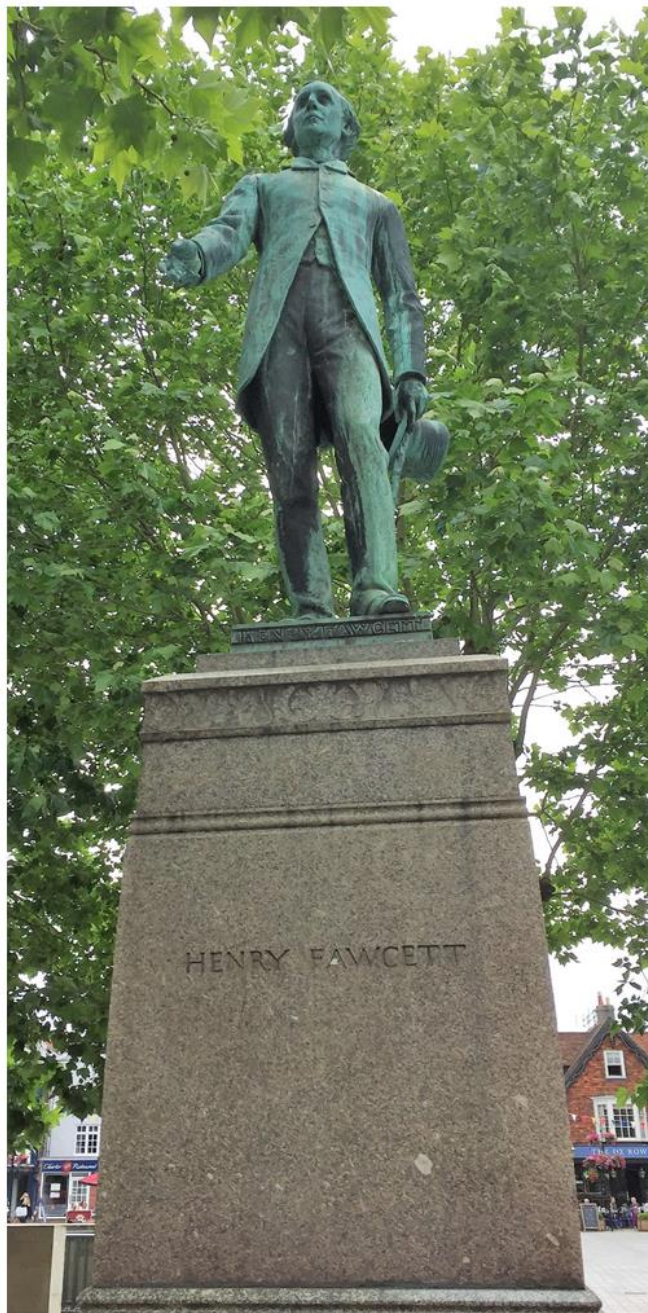
All kiosks have the correct fittings and working payphones in accordance with their age



There is no knowledge of  
any kiosk on display in the UK  
that is older than the 1921 K1

However the first telephone boxes  
were installed in the early 1880s





Henry Fawcett Statue  
Market Square, Salisbury

# Henry Fawcett

(1833-1884)

Cambridge Professor and Liberal MP

Postmaster General (1880)

Appointed by William Ewart Gladstone

**7<sup>th</sup> August 1884**

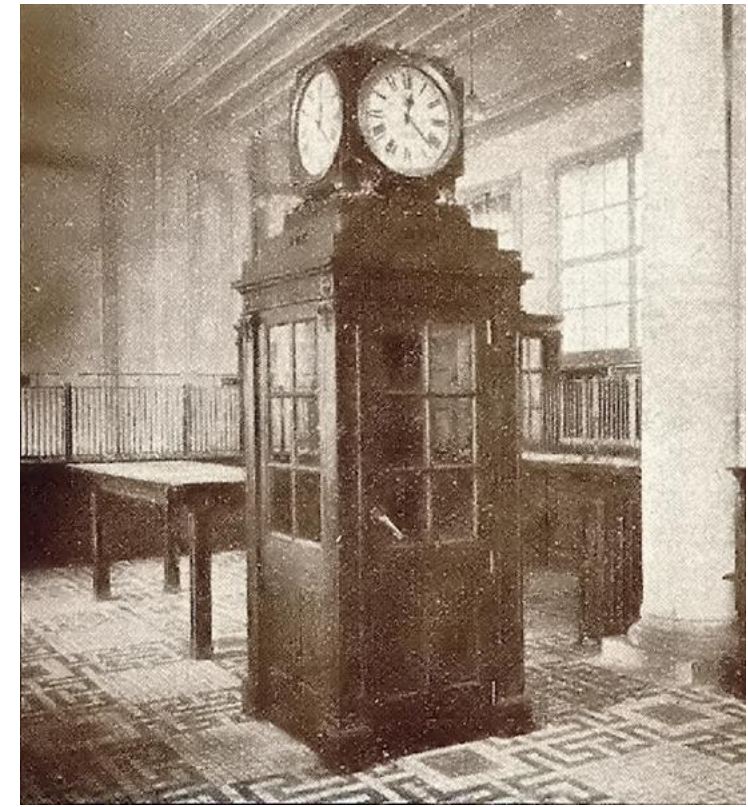
*Allowed the establishment of public “call offices” – telephone access for the non-subscriber.*

# You may telephone from here . . .

The first telephone boxes were installed in the early 1880s of numerous designs, initially indoors (railway stations and shops) and then on the street.

The telephone companies did in many cases use “off the shelf” designs.

Eventually the National Telephone Company became the dominant supplier of local telephone services.





It is known that the National Telephone Company (NTC) introduced standard boxes. As evidenced from in BT archives.



“Norwich” pattern



Wilson A Design



“Birmingham” pattern





# Norwich

Why was this box named 'Norwich'?

Used in East Coast District of National Telephone Company (NTC)

Designed by the NTC but manufactured by Boulton & Paul in Norwich.

£13 15s 0d (*price quoted in 1914*)



# Features

Coin entry door lock

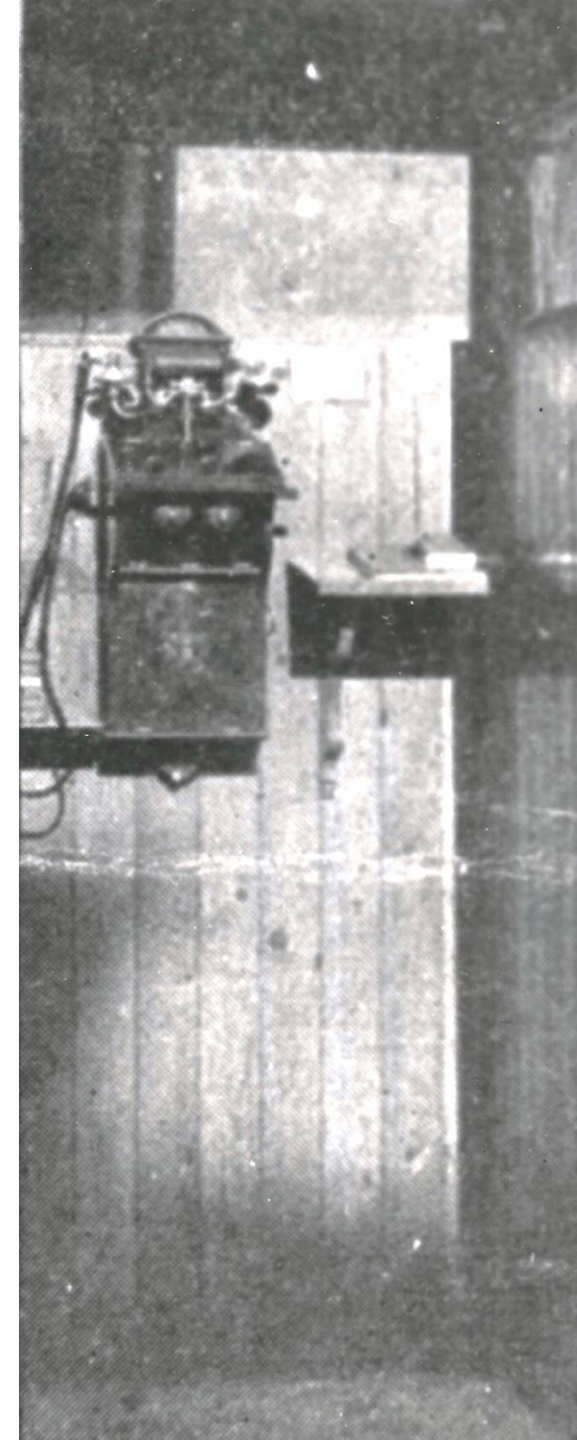
Telephone

Writing shelf

Sound insulated

# Facilities

Local calls only





# Early life of Norwich Kiosk . . .

Press Cutting shows that the NTC installed their 'Norwich' box in Gonville Place, Cambridge in 1905

The box was recovered in 1933 and acquired by the Cambridge and County Bowls Club

They used it as a telephone box from 1933 until 1986





**Put a £50 call through to county's past...**



## Grand old phone kiosk up for sale

WHAT could be the oldest phone box in the county has gone on sale in Cambridge.

The wooden box with leaded windows has been at the Cambridge and County Bowling Club for more than 50 years.

But time has taken its toll and the phone has been moved inside the pavilion. The kiosk is on sale for £50 to anyone who could use a strange-looking shed or who has a penchant for the past. "I doubt there's another one like it anywhere in Cambridgeshire," said the



Great Shelford newsagent Jeremy Brown with his wife Ann and children Nicholas and Anna in the 1932 telephone box he bought for £50.

## Oldest phone box?

GREAT Shelford newsagent Jeremy Brown is the new owner of a telephone box which he thinks may be one of the oldest in the country.

Mr Brown bought the box last week for £50 from the Cambridge and County Roadside Club, where it had been for over

wooden box, with leaded windows, which he thinks dates from 1932.

But he definitely doesn't want to sell it and intends to restore it as a play hut for his children, Nicholas (4) and Anna (2).

He said: "When I saw the advert in the paper for it I rang up straight away - I

## Cambridge local newspaper cutting 1987 . . .

Jeremy Brown and his family after buying the Norwich box for £50

He used it as a play hut for his children





# Avoncroft Connection

I tried without success to buy the box in 1997

Jeremy died in 2010, his children asked BT to buy

I negotiated purchase for the Kiosk Collection

The box was donated to Avoncroft Museum

The box was then put in store to 'dry out'





## Restoration

This Norwich is with us today because it was so well maintained by the bowls club

Paint sample shows eleven phases of decoration

Sadly over the last 22 years the roof and floor have deteriorated necessitating major restoration

Challenges – sourcing a coin operated door lock and authentic telephone

Restoration plans leading to public display are in progress . . .







# Acknowledgements

**Help and guidance of Nigel Linge much appreciated**

**Photographs from:**

- **Andrew Wood, The Communications Museum Trust Ltd**
- **Nigel Linge & Andy Sutton – The British Phonebox**
- **Steph Sutton**
- **BT Archives**



**<https://avoncroft.org.uk/>**



**@AvoncroftMuseum**