

Glasgow Punter

"Local culture blog" - FourFourTwo Magazine

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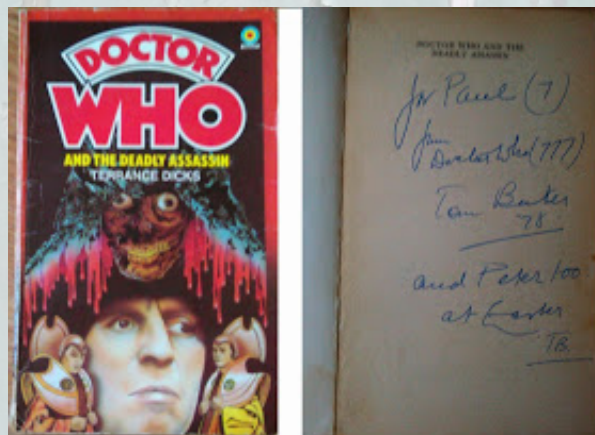
SATURDAY, 23 AUGUST 2014

Glasgow Police Boxes. The Scottish TARDIS

Glasgow Police Boxes. The Scottish TARDIS

With Doctor Who returning to our screens and Glasgow's own [Peter Capaldi](#) taking on the role this weekend I decided to take in some [TARDIS](#) boxes lying about the streets of our fair city on my weekend run.

Doctor Who was something I was really into as a child, when [Tom Baker](#) had the role. I was an avid reader of all the Doctor Who books that came out in those days, my favourites being anything written by [Terrence Dicks](#). When I was 8 years old we went in to get Tom Baker to sign one of them, in a book shop in town. My brother has never really got over his name being omitted by the great man, and added as an afterthought when prompted by my mum. The inscription reads something like *"For Paul aged 7 from Doctor Who (777). Tom Baker, (and Peter too)"*.



Tom Baker signed my book - happy days!

Now watching with my own children we got into the revived Doctor Who series on BBC, but after [David Tennant](#) left the role I rather lost interest. The acting was getting too silly and the storylines just daft. My children have stuck with it though, and I fancy that tonight we will all give it another go to see if Peter Capaldi can get it back on track.

We recently went on a family holiday to Wales and a highlight for us all was the [Doctor Who museum](#) in Cardiff. It was far more slick than the [one I visited in Blackpool](#) in about 1984 and I was just as excited by the old TARDIS consoles as I was by the numerous costumes that they had there (I mean "my children were just as excited...").

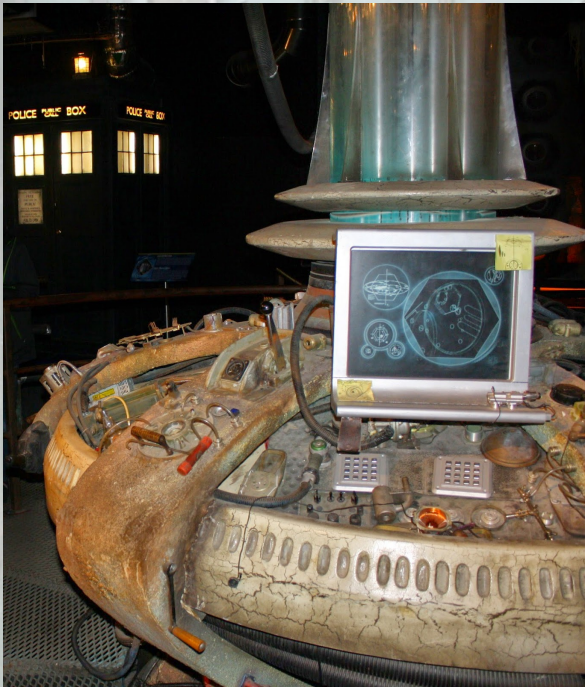
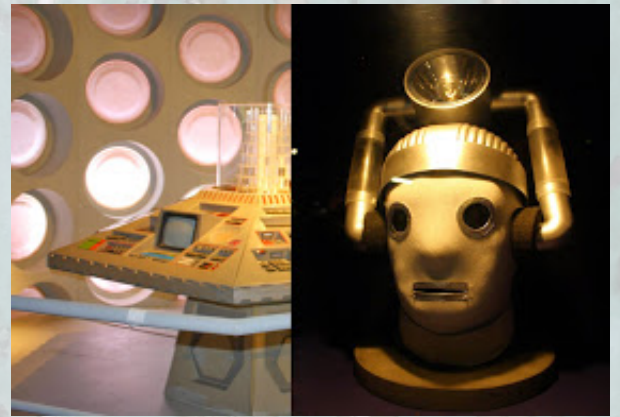


Exhibit at the Doctor Who Experience, Cardiff



Exhibits at the Doctor Who Experience, Cardiff

I came up with the idea of trying to jog around all the existing Glasgow Police Boxes after a visit recently to the [Bo'ness Motor Museum](#). Like the old Blackpool Doctor Who museum, this is a home made museum created by a fan (on this occasion largely of James Bond, whose cars and props make up most of the exhibits). It's a great wee museum and I'd encourage you to visit it. Amongst its rather random displays there is an old TARDIS, salvaged from a BBC storeroom many years ago.

In the first episode of Doctor Who in 1963 he had landed in a London junkyard and his time machine and spaceship (**T**ime and **R**elative **D**imensions **I**n **S**pace) had blended into its surroundings by taking on the appearance of a Police Box. The clever trick of the "chameleon circuit" becoming stuck in this guise helped the early programme makers keep the show within budget.



A TARDIS in Bo'ness Motor Museum

Glasgow Police Boxes

Glasgow now has six old Police boxes on the streets, which I think is more than any other UK city. In the days before many people had a phone in their house this was the way for people to call for help. Unlike Doctor Who's flimsy looking thing these were made of concrete, apart from the wooden front door which opened. As well as a phone they contained some items a policeman may require such as an incident book and first aid kit. At one time there were 323 of these boxes on the streets of Glasgow, only 10 remained by 1994 and a decade later there

were only 4. In the past year or so 2 more have been returned to the streets of Glasgow. Until 1982 the GPO maintained all telephone lines in the UK. Unlike the rest of the UK where Police boxes were painted blue, the post office maintained the Glasgow Police boxes, and therefore painted them red like their post boxes.

Starting with the Glasgow police box which lies furthest to the east takes us to Barrowland Park at the city centre end of London Road.



Police box on London Road, Barrowland Park behind it

If it has been a while since you've walked from the city centre to the [Barras Market](#) or to [The Barrowlands Ballroom](#) for a gig then you won't recognise this place. I'm pretty sure that the police box wasn't here before, but apparently it is the only one in the city which is still used for its phone, by the Glasgow City Council Community Safety Team and Police Scotland. In time for the Commonwealth Games the derelict gap site behind this box was renovated and a walkway installed by artist [Jim Lambie](#). Inspired by the famous nearby venue, it resembles a shelf of LPs, listing bands who have played at the Barrowlands.



Barrowlands Park walkway by Jim Lambie

Famous for his works using colour, lines and popular culture there is an exhibition of more of Jim Lambie's work at the [Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh](#) at present. He is apparently not related to [John Lambie](#), famous for his use of colourful language to get the red 'n' yellow lines of Partick Thistle setting the football world alight in the 1990s. (Follow [this link](#) to some of *his* work, which may contain strong language).



High Street at Cathedral Street, Glasgow

The next one that I came to lies across from the Provand's Lordship at the junction of Cathedral Street and High Street. You can see that the old, red signs look odd against the current blue colour scheme. Is it just because of the popularity of Doctor Who's blue police box that Glasgow has adopted this colour over the years?



The High Street police box starts to dematerialise if you photograph it with the sun behind it

Beside this police box in Cathedral Square is one of the oddest statues in the city of Glasgow.

King William III (King Billy to you and me) has sat astride his horse in Glasgow since 1734, previously down at the Trongate. In the style of a Roman general the city's oldest sculptural landmark is rather hidden away here, probably a sensible decision. What is noteworthy about the statue though is that the tail is articulated on a ball and socket joint and can (or certainly could) flap about in the wind.



Nearby in the Merchant city lies the next Police box. On Wilson Street near its junction with Glassford Street I remember this one being red in colour not so long ago, and before the street was re-laid in handsome paving stones I am sure that it stood in an island in the middle of the road. Again the red signs jar on the blue paint job.



Wilson Street Police box, Glasgow



On Wilson Street the Doctor is declaring his referendum voting intentions

The next Police box is on Buchanan Street, so to get there you have to pass another fine equestrian statue. The Duke of Wellington stands in front of the Glasgow Gallery of Modern Art on Queen Street and on the day which I passed both he and his horse were sporting traffic cone head wear. Known as the victor at the Battle of Waterloo, he was unpopular as Prime Minister for promoting the emancipation of Catholics apparently, which won't have endeared him to followers of the previous horseman I passed. The sculptor, Carlo Marochetti, is also responsible for the statues of Albert and Victoria on horses in George Square and for James Oswald's statue there, holding a hat which [Joseph Conrad and Neil Munro allegedly tried to toss stones into](#). It appears that there is a history of people in this city thumbing their noses at his works.



Duke of Wellington and traffic cone(s)

Walking through Royal Exchange Square you can see Buchanan Street ahead and the next Police box.



Royal Exchange Square, Glasgow

This box in the busy shopping street has been painted a variety of daft colours for various promotions over the years and has also been a coffee stall for a while, but is currently blue again and unused.



Buchanan Street Police box

This Police box is the one in most need of a bit of TLC, with some fittings missing and the wooden door rotting. It's a popular feature on the street, often photographed by tourists and

Whovians, so it needs a bit more care from someone I think.



Buchanan Street, Glasgow

When the Transport Museum was housed in Kelvin Hall there used to be a red Police box standing near the door, in front of the trams. I was at the new Transport Museum in the [Riverside Museum](#) recently with my children and it is no longer on show. The more I go to the Riverside Museum the sadder it makes me. For all the time and effort spent creating this new space and ramming it full of stuff, there just seems to be so much less opportunity to actually see things than there was in the old space. In the past you could wander amongst the cars, see them up close and peer inside them. Now they are placed on shelves high on a back wall, a clear case of "Do not touch". Unfortunately you also cannot see the bloody things.



Cars (barely) on display at Glasgow's Riverside Museum

Searching the internet shows that people had spotted the **red Police box in Glasgow** in 2011 and 2012 after the old Transport Museum shut down. Rather poignantly, like the 1963 version in Doctor Who, this one was seen in a junkyard (in Maryhill as it turns out). When I went jogging along the canal to try to spot it, it appears that it has moved on. Then in recent months a red Police box has materialised on Sauchiehall Street. The only Police box sporting its original red colouring, which only appears to have been the case because it is now used to sell the red topped Evening Times. This seems to be the old one from the Transport Museum.



Red Police box on Sauchiehall Street



Police sign now replaced by Evening Times

I finally jogged along Great Western Road to find the box I am most familiar with at the top of Byres Road, as I pass it regularly on my way to watch Partick Thistle play at Firhill up the road from here. Again until recently it was used as a coffee shop and is in good nick at present.



Police box on Great Western Road, Glasgow

So those are the Police boxes currently on show in Glasgow. The other 317 that we used to have appear to be long gone. The Glasgow Police boxes currently out on the street are now mostly B-listed and will hopefully not be swept aside in the name of modernisation.

A lesson to show that you never know when some old piece of junk will find a new set of fans.

Glasgow Punter at 10:45

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ABOUT ME



Glasgow Punter

Random postings from the city of Glasgow. Living and working in Glasgow I write here on occasion about stuff in and around this fine city rather than just moaning at home about it. I enjoy football, films, politics, music, gigs, theatre, art. Any old thing really. Also @Paul4Jags on twitter.

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