

REBUILDING AN INDIAN CANDLESTICK

A friend said to me that she'd recently been looking longingly at some reproduction candle-stick telephones in a local department store but felt that they were too expensive for something that she didn't really need. I decided to see what I could turn up.

As luck would have it one soon appeared on e-Bay. The Seller was very honest and said that he'd no idea how old it was but it looked obvious to me that it was an Indian-made reproduction.

I managed to get it for a reasonable price, if it was what I suspected, or dirt cheap if it was a pusser GPO one from the 1920s.

It turned out to be Indian but was a very faithful reproduction of the originals, including all their drawbacks!

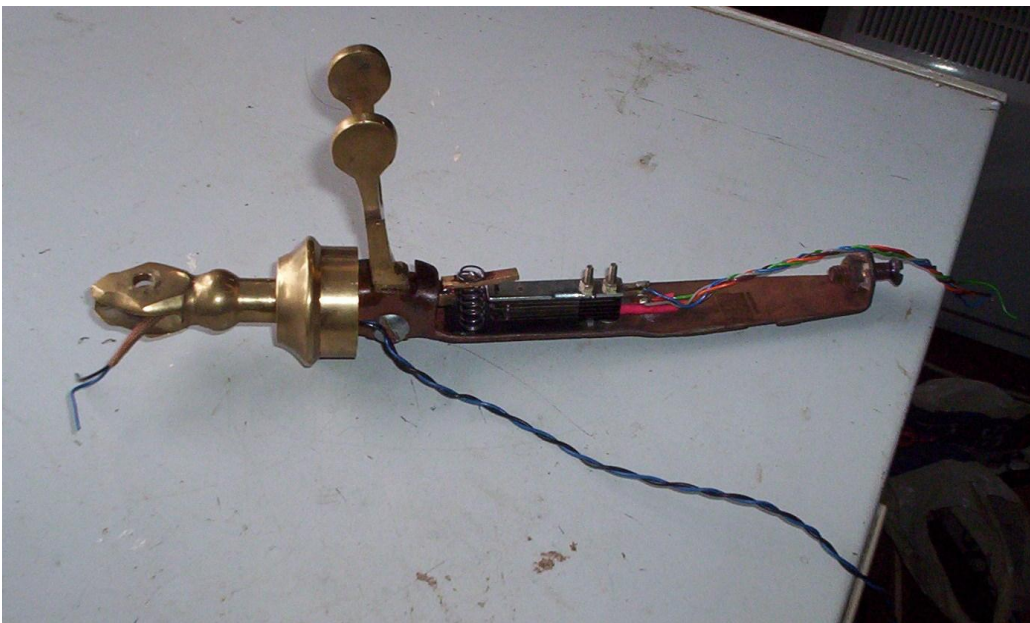


These telephones never had bells in them. These were located on top of a separate wooden box but the box also contained other bits that are in the bottom part of later telephones. The upshot was that as it stood it was pretty neigh useless but that just made it more fun.

Complete circuit boards for 746s, the ones from the 1970s to 1980s, are still cheap and easy to obtain as plenty were made and never used. I got one of those to pinch the bits I needed off.

I'd made a PCB to mount these on but then found that space was so short in the base of the candle-stick that it wouldn't fit. I therefore glued them in place and connected them up with bits of wire.

As with the originals, the gravity switch on this 'phone was only single pole, which I wasn't keen on. With a bit of alteration to the metalwork I managed to fit one off a 706.

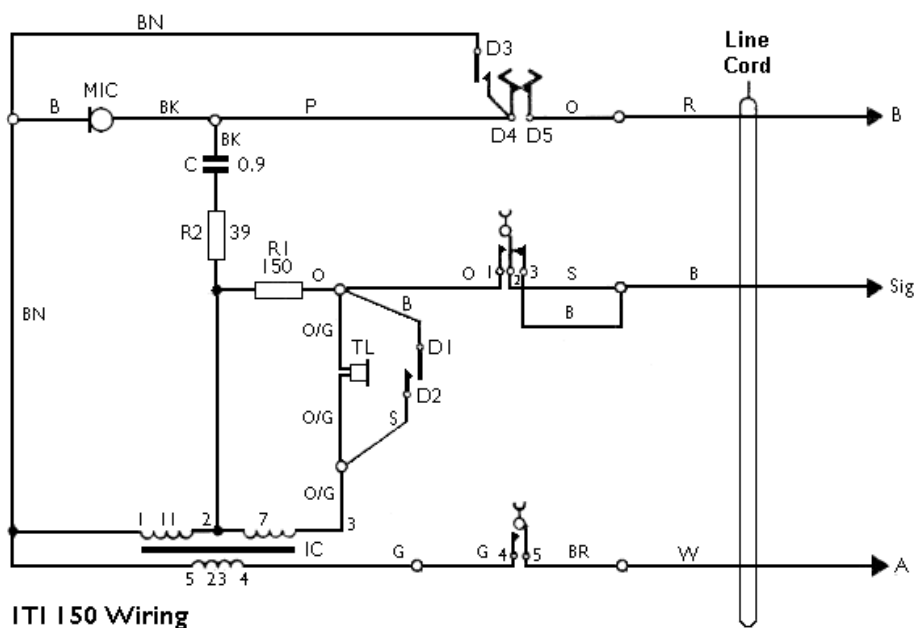


The dial didn't seem very good. This was an ITI (Indian Telephone Industries) version of an ATE one.* My luck continued as I'd got a broken ATE one and the ITI one provided the bit I needed to fix it.

The finger plate was a modern clear plastic one that had been bodged on but yet more good fortune caused a black ATE one to turn-up on e-Bay, despite it being described as a GPO one.†

The carbon transmitter was utterly stuffed but making an electronic one was a simple matter.

The final configuration is basically that of a 706 with its regulator reversed, ie disabled. This isn't a problem as older telephones didn't have them and they were only introduced to lower the power on telephones located near to exchanges and these days line regulation is much better any way.



After that it was just a case of giving the brass a damned good polish. I did this by smearing it with a mixture of vaseline and chromium dioxide and then buffing it off with a felt wheel in a dremal.



* Indian Telephone Industries was set-up by the newly independent Indian government in 1948 to make telephones in India for use there. They were assisted by the British Automatic Telephone and Electric Company who supplied them with designs and machinery. The telephones they produced were made to a high standard but in recent years production has continued at much lower quality (partly due to the equipment that was second-hand seventy years ago now being well and truly shagged-out) and attempts have been made to pass the results off as old GPO equipment.

† The GPO never used ATE dials, it's easy to tell the difference as these have a gap between the finger-stop and the zero whereas GPO ones don't. ATE dials were used in the UK on private systems, especially the railways and they would/will work on the GPO/BT network.