

Turret Clock tour

Ian Coote concludes his Colchester tour with the Ipswich branch.

Following the visit to clocks removed from their towers and displayed in Timperleys museum in Colchester (see Part 1 - *HJ - February*), Ipswich branch continued their annual turret clock tour by visiting a range of clocks still in their original situations.

There are surprisingly few public clocks in Colchester compared with other towns of a similar size, but we were able to visit three in the town centre.

St James the Great, Colchester

Dent; 2 train; flat bed; pinwheel escapement; countwheel striking; 1872

The clock at St. James' provided both excitement and disappointment - disappointment to a member who remembered an older "birdcage" movement from a previous visit in the 1950s, and excitement to the one who recognised the compact flat bed movement with pin wheel escapement as an original Dent, rather than the much commoner type made by French for Dent's. It dates from 1872. Nobody could enlighten us as to the fate of the earlier clock.

This was the clock we all wanted to take home with us – perfect for the living room.

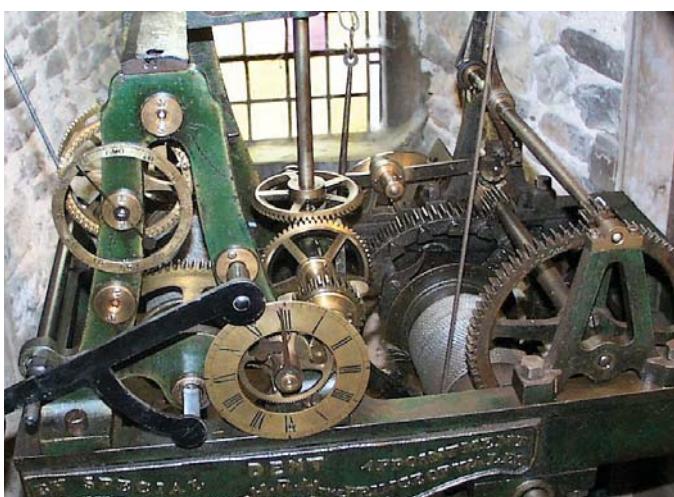


Figure 1: Flat-bed clock by Dent at St James'

St Peter's, Colchester

Mott, Colchester; 3 train; deadbeat; rack strike; 1865

The large 3 train clock at St. Peter's bears the name of R. Mott, Colchester, 1865, although it is clearly made in the specialist workshop of one of the major manufacturers of turret clocks, almost certainly John Moore of Clerkenwell. The frame is constructed from iron castings with acorn finials at the corners. The dead beat escapement has an escape wheel which has not been crossed out.

Various gas and electrical fittings remain, presumably from lighting equipment for the dial.

It has internal rack striking and a chime drum playing an unknown sequence on the peal of bells. There are also the vestiges of a carillon. The chimes were silenced many years ago to avoid clashing with the Town Hall clock. This clock is very much in need of an overhaul to put it back into good working order.

The top of St Peter's tower affords wonderful views of the town.

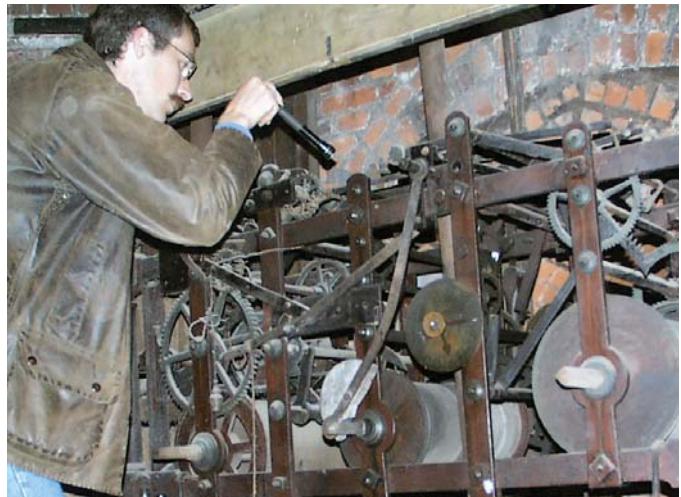


Figure 2.: St Peter's large chiming movement.

Colchester Town Hall

Smith, Derby; 3 train flat bed; double 3-legged gravity escapement; lantern pinions; 1900

This splendid clock is known as Charlie after Charles Hawkins, 3 times mayor of the borough, whose widow donated the clock for the fine tower of the new Town Hall. The tower itself was paid for by James Paxman of the important engineering firm, later known for its diesel engines.

The clock and its Westminster chimes are a prominent feature of the town. Time is displayed on 3 translucent glass dials, illuminated at night. The clock movement appears in excellent condition.

The bells, cast by John Warner & Sons, London bear the inscription:

"With measured speech
Well-timed and true
Our message due
We tell to each"

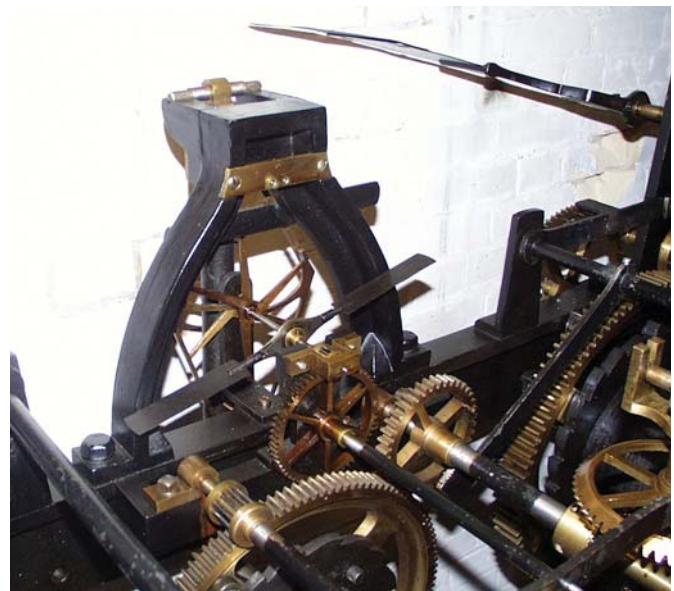


Figure 3: Double 3-legged gravity escapement on the Town Hall clock by Smith of Derby.

St Leonard, Lexden

John Cowell, Royal Exchange, London; 2 train; anchor recoil; countwheel striking; 1769

Clocks of this type with the characteristically shaped forged iron plates bolted together and set with ringed brass bushes are to be found in many East Anglian churches with various names on the setting dials. It would be interesting to know who actually made them. Two similar movements in Tymperleys museum were described in Part 1 and from previous tours, we have records of similar clocks in Ipswich St Margarets, Dedham and Wattisfield. I am assured by the experts that there are many more.

This particular example predates the church, which was rebuilt in 1821. It was originally installed in a wooden clock tower beside the derelict mediaeval building.

A feature of the church tower is the delightful 12-bell carillon, played from a keyboard below.

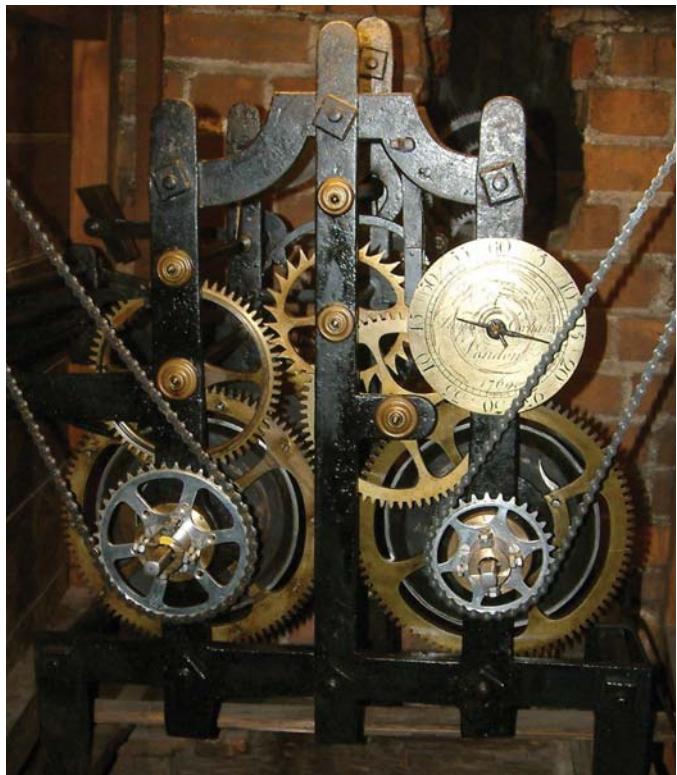


Figure 6. The 1769 Lexden clock.

St. Andrew, Earls Colne

Smith & Sons, Clerkenwell; 3 train flat bed; deadbeat; countwheel striking; early 20th century

Here is an industrial scale clock, with its massive cast iron frame, heavy duty wheels and pinions and bolted-in bushes. Difficult access prevented photographing the whole movement.

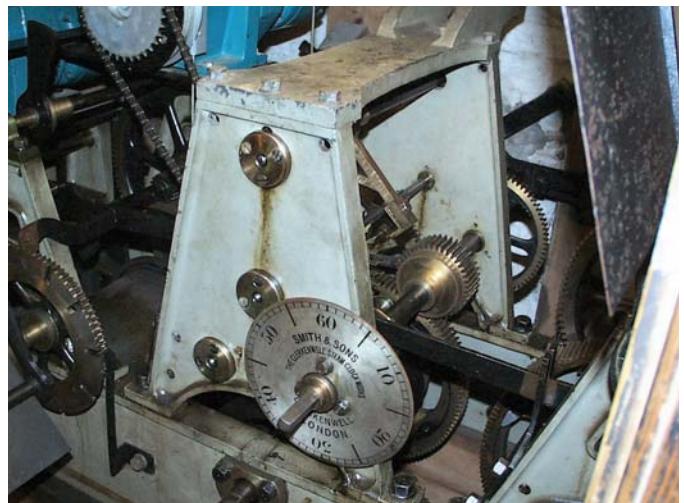


Figure 6. Smith of Clerkenwell clock at Earls Colne.



Figure 6. Another view of the Earls Colne clock.