

Regular readers will be well aware that the Ipswich Branch organises an annual turret clock tour. It is one of the highlights of our horological year – if your branch does not organise a similar event, then it is time to get started! This year's tour was notable for starting and finishing at a stately home, as well as for visiting one of the oldest surviving clocks in Britain. The first visit was to the stable clock at Wimpole Hall, a National Trust property. The clock is housed in a brick-built tower over the gateway.



1. Wimpole Hall stable block.

Briant of Hertford was the name on the dial and it is a good, solid iron-framed clock of the early 19th century, with anchor escapement. The removable pallets appear to be a feature of this clockmaker's work – his clock at King's College, Cambridge has the same arrangement.



2. The Wimpole Hall clock

Orwell was the next destination. When the decision was made to organise this year's tour in the Cambridge area, the first on my list of places to visit was Orwell church, housing the old Trinity College clock. It is a rare survival from the early 17th century – one of a group made by Leonard Tennant and identified by a scallop-shell mark stamped into the upper cross-bar. Seven of these clocks have been identified, and are described in detail in a series of articles by Jeremy Evans in *Antiquarian Horology*. Eight more clocks in the same style, but without the scallop-shell marks are also known.

The clock, together with a dial-plate and bell, were first installed by one Thomas Tennant in Trinity College, Cambridge in 1610. (There is no evidence to link Thomas Tennant to his namesake, the clockmaker Leonard.)

The bell remains and bears the inscription: TRINITAS · IN · UNITATE · RESONAT · 1610. RICARDUS · HOLD · FELD · ME · FECIT.

(The Trinity resounds in unity. 1610. Richard Holdfield [or Oldfield] made me.)

A replacement clock was fitted in 1726–7, when the old mechanism was presented to Orwell St. Andrew's, near Royston.

This old clock, discarded nearly 300 years ago by Trinity College, is still working in its second home, although it was displayed in the church for a time before being restored by a local enthusiast.

The frame is wrought iron, with the corner pieces extended to angled finials, square in section. The corner uprights are moulded in an architectural style.



3. The 1610 clock at Orwell.

Other bars are wedged to the main frame. Wheels are iron, with the rim forge-welded to the crossings. The arbors are forged to a square cross section. The smaller fly pinion is solid, but lantern pinions are used for the larger mobiles, with the trundles riveted into the shrouds.

The going barrel at the back has a four-armed capstan for winding, while the strike barrel is wound by an offset arbor and lantern pinion driving the wheel on the barrel.

The winding pinion is not disengaged when not in use. The drive to the hands comes from a pinion on the barrel arbor.

Although it has been converted to anchor escapement, with a brass escape wheel, little was altered in the conversion and the original bracket with the bottom pivot for the verge is still in situ.

Much more could be said about this clock: it is a thing of beauty, in all its oily 400 year old glory, but for more details I must refer you to Jeremy Evans' excellent articles.

At All Saints' Church, Barrington we found a large, solidly made flat-bed clock by Bailey of Salford.



4. Barrington's Bailey.

The form of the pin-wheel escapement, the (now unused) large bevel gear on the front for the leading-off work, and the 4-bladed fly are characteristic of Bailey's work.

Cast into the frame is the legend 'J. Bailey & Co. Albion Steam Works, Salford, Manchester, England'. It carries no date, but it is clearly late 19th or early 20th Century.

The dial at St Lawrence, Foxton, is driven by an unremarkable synchronous motor, but the old clock is displayed in the church with the sign '1723–1958.

This clock is now in honoured retirement after long serving the church and village'. It has a wrought iron frame with brass wheels and anchor escapement.

Some of the striking work is sadly missing, but it is a good honest example of the 18th century clockmakers' craft.

Sawston St. Mary boasts a fine 3-train Potts of Leeds clock of 1891 with double 3-legged gravity escapement.

The unusual feature here was the wall dial in the ringing chamber, driven directly from the main clock by bevel gears.

Many of these dials may have been supplied by Potts, but few now survive. We were also struck by some ancient and stylish graffiti on the walls in the tower.



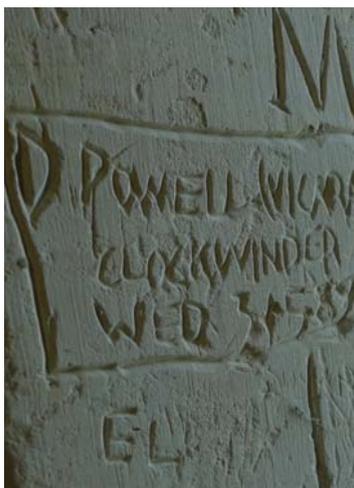
5. Potts clock at Sawston.



6. Potts dial in the ringing room.



7. The drive to the wall dial.



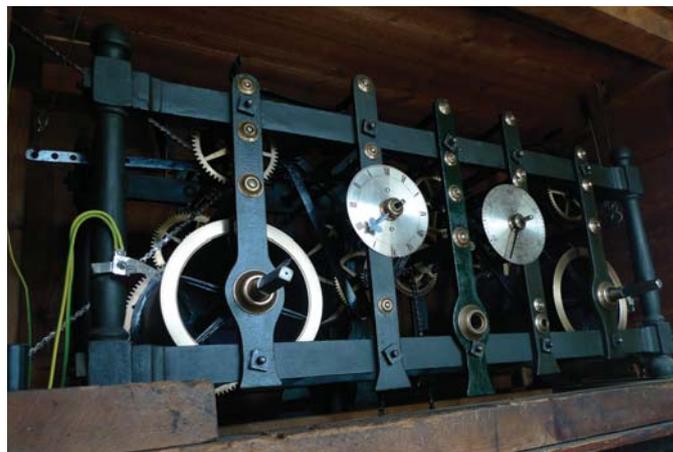
8. Graffiti at Sawston.



9. Hinxton Clock by Thomas Safford.

Hinxton brought us back to the early 19th century with its wrought movement credited to Thomas Safford, Cambridge, although more prominence is given to the two church wardens named on the setting dial. The iron frame is bolted together. Apart from the brass escape wheel, the wheels are forged iron, and the lantern pinions are riveted into the shrouds as in the Orwell clock. It is driven by stone weights.

Finally, to finish the day in the stately style in which we began, we arrived at



10. Thwaites & Reed clock at Audley End.



11. View over the roof of Audley End.

Audley End, owned by English Heritage, whose staff escorted us down seemingly endless corridors and up to the cupola, housing the very fine 1863 three-train Thwaites and Reed clock.

It seems an odd place to put a clock, as the dial faces across the roof to its matching cupola, and is barely visible from the ground. Here perhaps is a case of the demands of architectural purity overriding practicality. The cast-iron frame of the clock is bolted together. It has a deadbeat escapement with rack striking, and the solid pinions are excellently cut and finished. The wheels appear to be bronze.

It is also unusual in possessing an indicator dial for hours as well as minutes. It was a shame to see the removal of the going barrel to accommodate the electric winding, but the parts were kept with the clock.

Another memorable day out for Branch members was made possible by Graham Newman who organised the tour, helpful and tolerant staff at the two stately homes, and volunteers at the churches who gave their time freely to show us their treasured clocks.

References

1. Antiquarian Horology: 1999; volume 25; pp 149-165; 303-323; 388-406.
2. Trinity College website
<http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/index.php?pageid=734>

Lack of space limits the number of photographs that can be included in this article, but many more pictures of this and previous tours can be found at <http://www.flickr.com/groups/turretclockeast/>