

Turret Clocks in Ipswich

Ian Coote finds a number of interesting clocks and churches in a small area

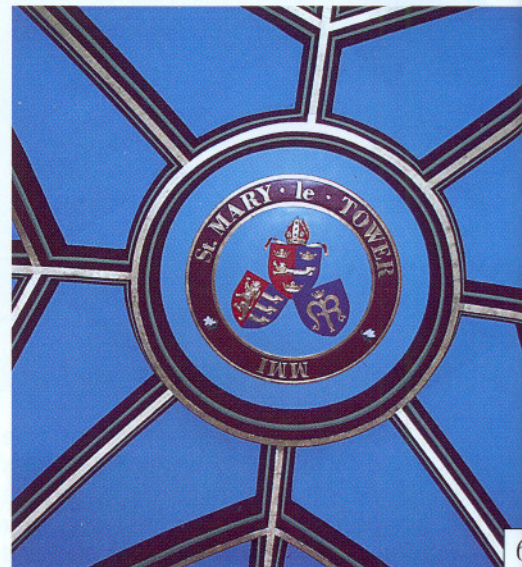
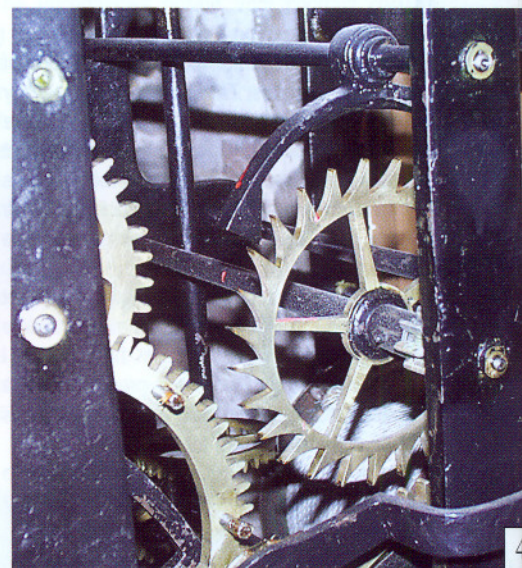
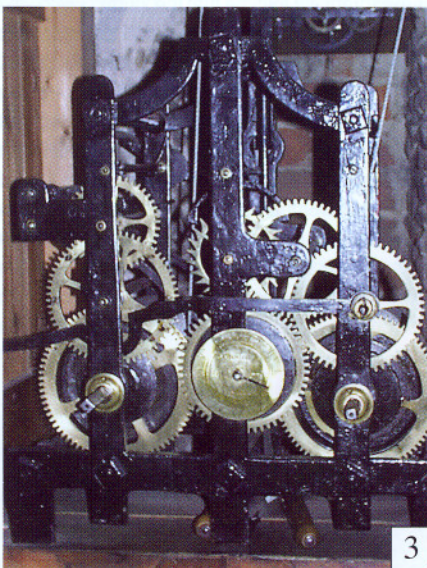


STANDING in a derelict industrial landscape in Ipswich's former dockland are three fine and fascinating churches, all now redundant but still, like St Mary at the Quay, **1**, defiantly showing the time on their clock dials. They were all part of the Ipswich branch annual turret clock tour: this year a walk around Ipswich town centre.

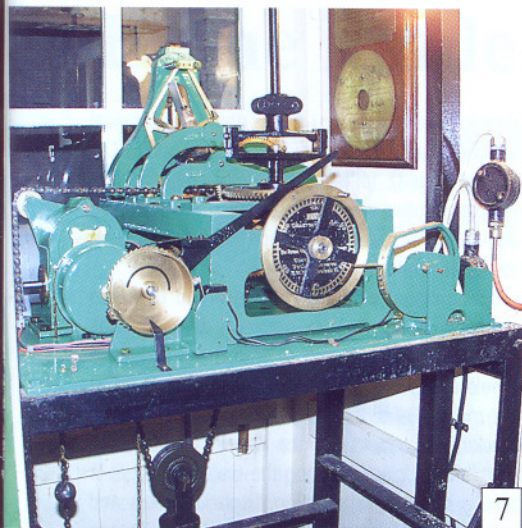
The churches in the first part of the tour were all in use and well maintained. Starting at the beautiful church of St Margaret's, **2** next door to Cardinal Wolsey's Christchurch mansion, we climbed to see one of the oldest surviving public clocks in Ipswich, made by Moore of Ipswich in 1778. Since the celebrated Thomas Moore died in 1762, this clock, **3**, was probably constructed by his sons Edward and Hartley Moore¹. It is an unusual iron framed clock, detail **4**, with count-wheel striking and anchor escapement controlled by a $1\frac{1}{4}$ second pendulum.

St Mary-Le-Tower has also been recently restored and boasts unusually colourful decoration to the porch, **5**, and its vaulted ceiling, **6**. The 1810 clock was replaced in 1967 with a small GILLETT & JOHNSON movement with double 3-legged gravity escapement and Invar pendulum rod, **7**. The separate striking mechanism is not in use.

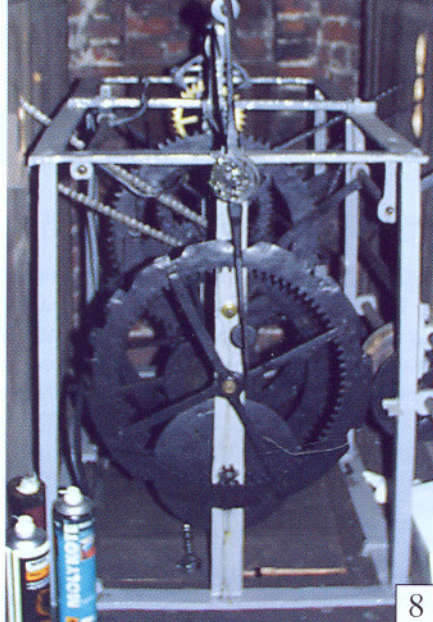
By contrast, St Mary at the Elms possesses a much earlier clock, **8**, probably 17th century. It has the unusual features of end-to-end trains and an odd, offset, winding arrangement. The pictures in Haggard and Miller¹ show the arrangement more clearly than is possible here as the clock is now enclosed in a cabinet and hard to photograph. A question mark remains over the date of this clock. It has all the appearance of mid 17th century work, detail, **9**,



1. Haggard and Miller, *Suffolk Clocks and Clockmakers* (1974)



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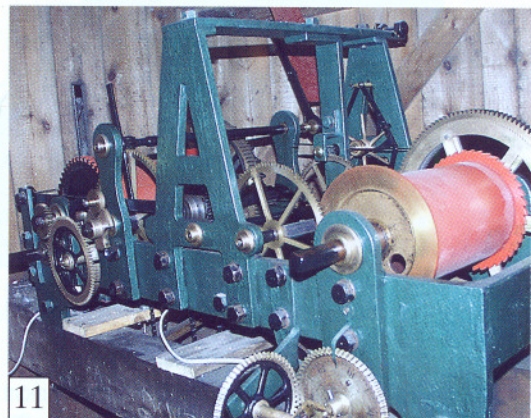
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and the escape wheel and arbor are replacements, but there are no other signs of the expected conversion from verge escapement. Perhaps it is rather later in date but old-fashioned in style.

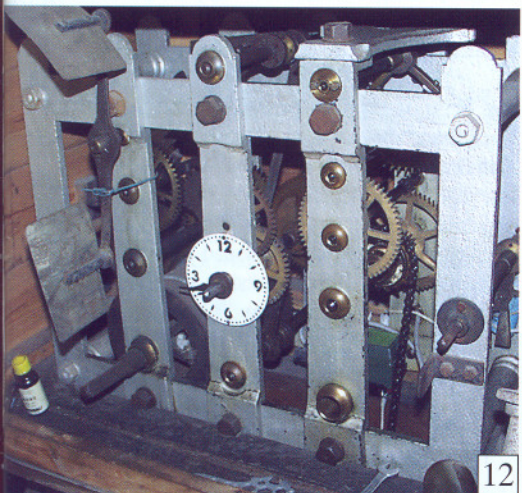
After lunch the party proceeded to the dock area where the three redundant churches are to be found. The treasure of St Peter's is a wonderfully carved 13th century font, 10, made from a black Belgian limestone very much like that used for 19th century French mantel clocks. The St Peter's clock is by THWAITES AND REED and dates from 1901. Its timekeeping is controlled more by the quantity of pigeon droppings in this sadly neglected tower than by its double 3-legged gravity escapement. It was good to see that the clock has been well maintained but we were not impressed by the colour scheme, 11. Green HAMMERITE® may be an excellent product, but this is not the place for it!



11

mounted above the clock. The rare feature of this installation is the carillon, 14, made by the same company and designed to play a different hymn tune each day of the week.

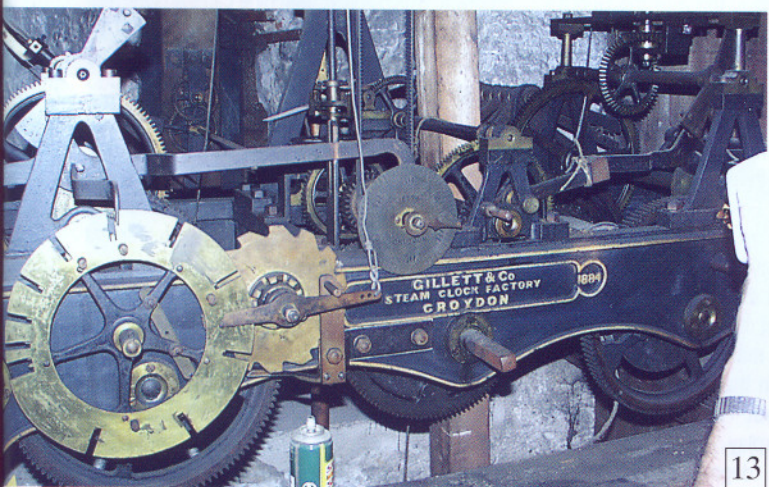
Every year, as I write about the clocks we visit, I mention the churches that house them and admire the dedication of those who care for these treasures. This time I am more than ever conscious of the urgent need to support this selfless group of people in their efforts to preserve our heritage. These churches are no longer needed for their original purpose in our secular society, but vigorous efforts must be made to find alternative uses for them. Only then will the money be found to restore and conserve these irreplaceable buildings – and their clocks.



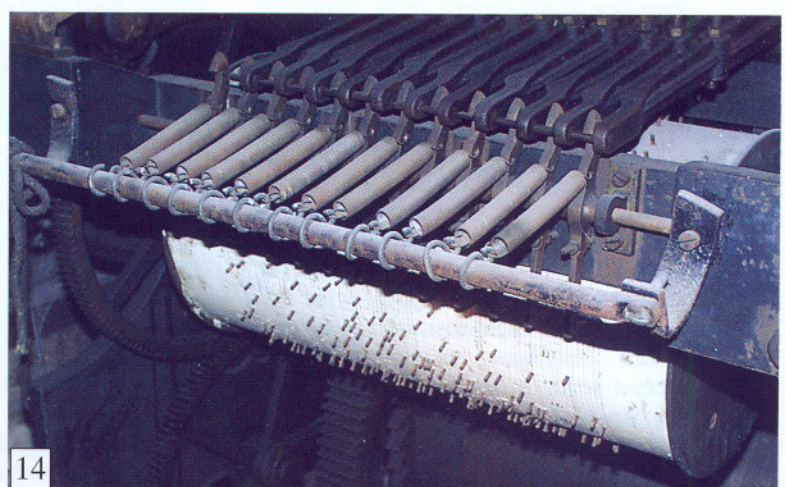
12

The Victorian clock with dead-beat escapement, 12, in another crumbling tower at St Mary at the Quay is also kept in good working order. It was the only clock on the tour with rack striking. The real beauty of this church is its wonderful and rare double hammer beam roof.

The final clock on this year's tour is housed in St Clement's; another ancient, fascinating and deteriorating redundant church. The GILLETT AND Co clock, 13, is a fine example of Victorian engineering and still in fair condition, although the hands are now driven by a synchronous motor



13



14

Photographs by the author