RECORDING TURRET CLOCKS 1

All mechanical clocks are important (including those with electric automatic winders). Electric clocks of the master-and-slave variety are of interest. Synchronous movements, ie those driven from the electricity mains are frowned upon by conservationists. They have usually been installed as a cheap substitute for a mechanical clock which has been scrapped.

As with the church fabric, styles of clocks changed over the years as technology advanced. The changes were not continuous and took place in jumps. The distinctive periods are:

1 Mid 14th - mid 17th century. Wrought iron frames, usually with finials on corner posts. Trains end to end to suit foliot escapement (see notes).

2 Mid 17th - mid 18th century. Wrought iron frame; finials on corner posts, trains side by side.

3 Late 18th - mid 19th century. Cast iron frames, knobs on corner posts, trains side by side.

4 Mid 19th century onwards. Cast iron flatbed arrangements ie all trains mounted in a horizontal line on a long cast iron box or bed.

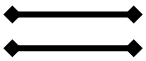
Notes

A *train* is a set of wheels and their spindles (technically known as *arbors*).
In the *end to end* arrangements the trains are like this:

In the *side by side* arrangements they are like this:

The *foliot* was a very early type of escapement (the tic-toc thing). It was completely superseded by the pendulum in 1680.

In another type of clock the trains are arranged in a frame like a door frame. The trains are often one above the other, thus:



In the Midlands between Suffolk and Shropshire there is an area in which many of the clocks have wooden frames. They are usually of the 18th century but some started life with foliots, and are therefore prior to 1680.

Very many of the later turret clocks have a setting dial which enables the clock winder to set the clock to time when inside the tower, (ie unable to see the hands). Setting dials commonly have a name and date on them. The name is often that of the supplier and installer, rather than the maker, and may be that of the man or firm which modernised it.

The important things to record are the type and date, maker, size and number of trains. Photographs are the most informative records. A wide-angle lens and flash are essential.

Details of the dial, ie shape and material are of interest. A telephoto lens is an asset. The remains of a discarded clock should be carefully recorded. Such clocks are historically more interesting than later ones.

Makers

Before cast iron clocks appeared, clockmaking was a local individual industry. Many makers are known. With the arrival of cast iron, manufacture took place in 'steam' clock factories. Notable among these were John Moore of Clerkenwell, John Smith & Sons of Derby, Ritchie of Edinburgh, Gillet & Johnson of Croydon, Benson of Ludgate Hill, London, Frodsham, Dent and JB Joyce of Whitchurch. An outstanding maker of the 19th c was BL Vulliamy.

RECORDING TURRET CLOCKS 2

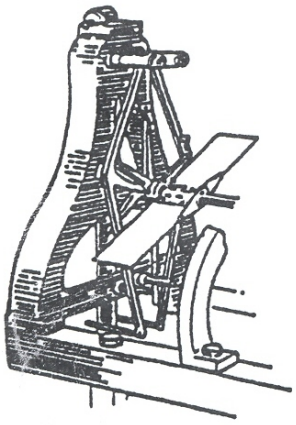
Bibliography

McKay, CG *Turret Clock Keeper's Handbook,* AHS Turret Clock Group
Beeson, CFC *English Church Clocks 1280–1850* ISBN 0 903512 149
Grimthorpe, EBB *A Rudimentary Treatise on Clocks, Watches and Bells* ISBN 07158 10308

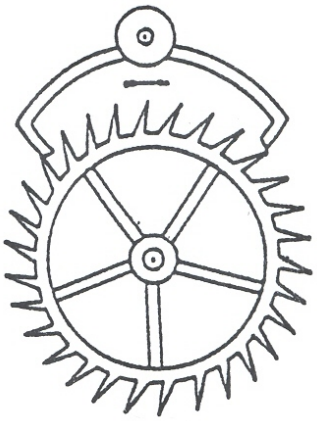
Specialist Knowledge

Antiquarian Horological Society, Turret Clock Group www.ahsoc.demon.co.uk
New House, Ticehurst, Wadhurst, TN5 7AL
or the Clocks Adviser to the local Diocesan Advisory Committee

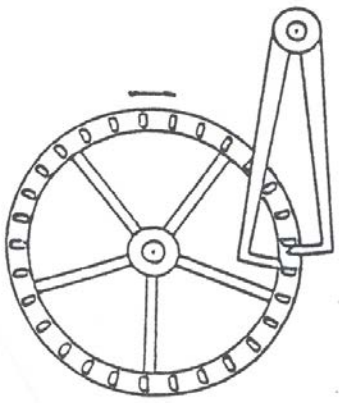
Examples of Escapements



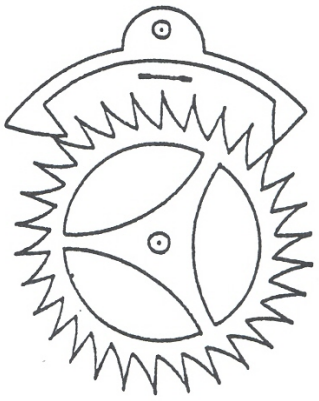
Double 3 legged gravity escapement



Deadbeat escapement



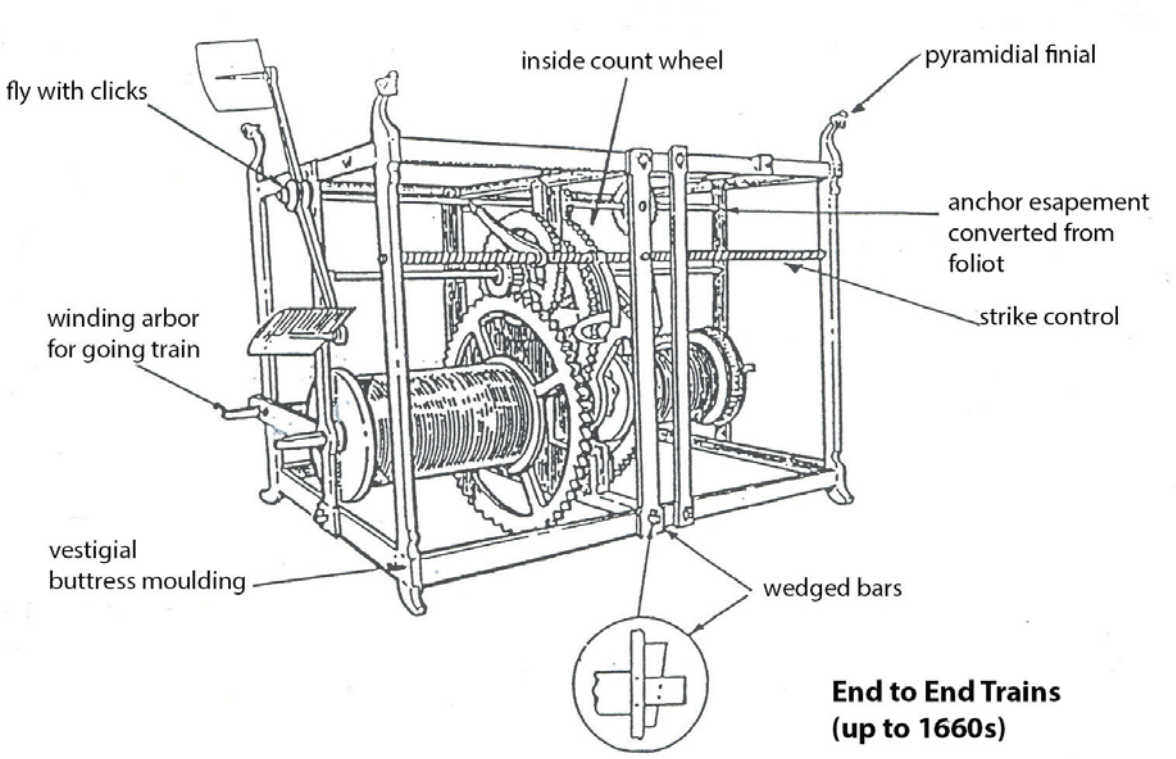
Pin wheel escapement

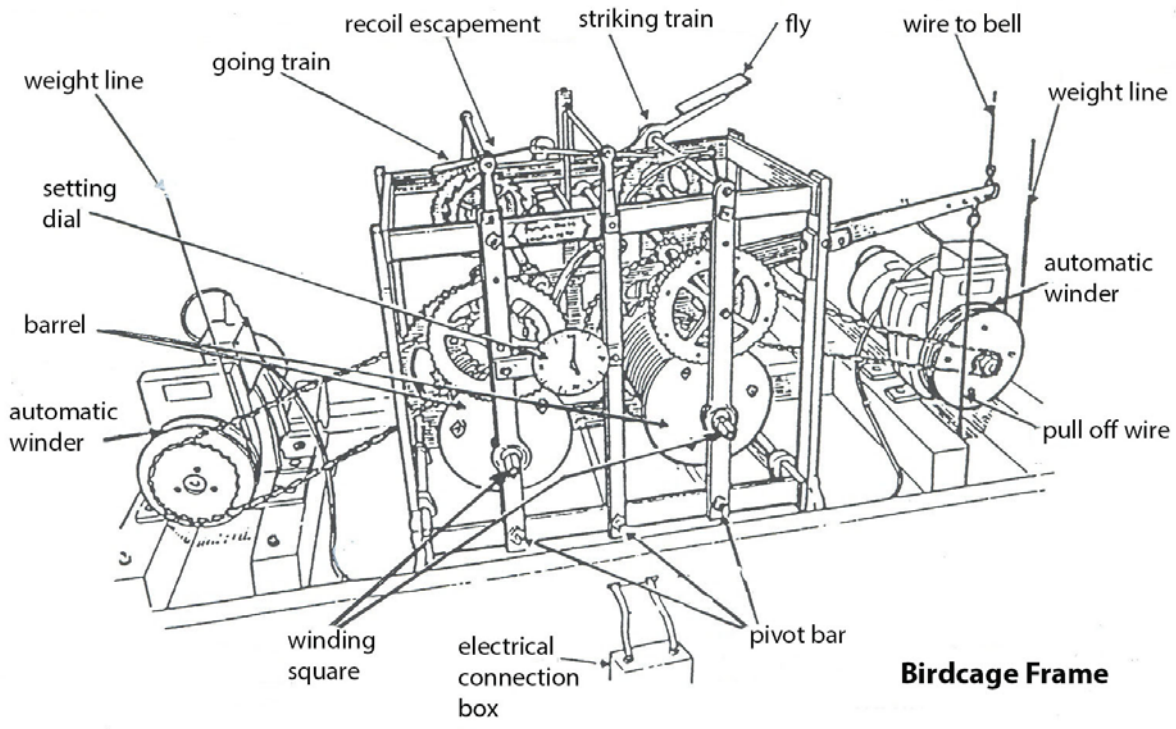


Recoil escapement

RECORDING TURRET CLOCKS 3

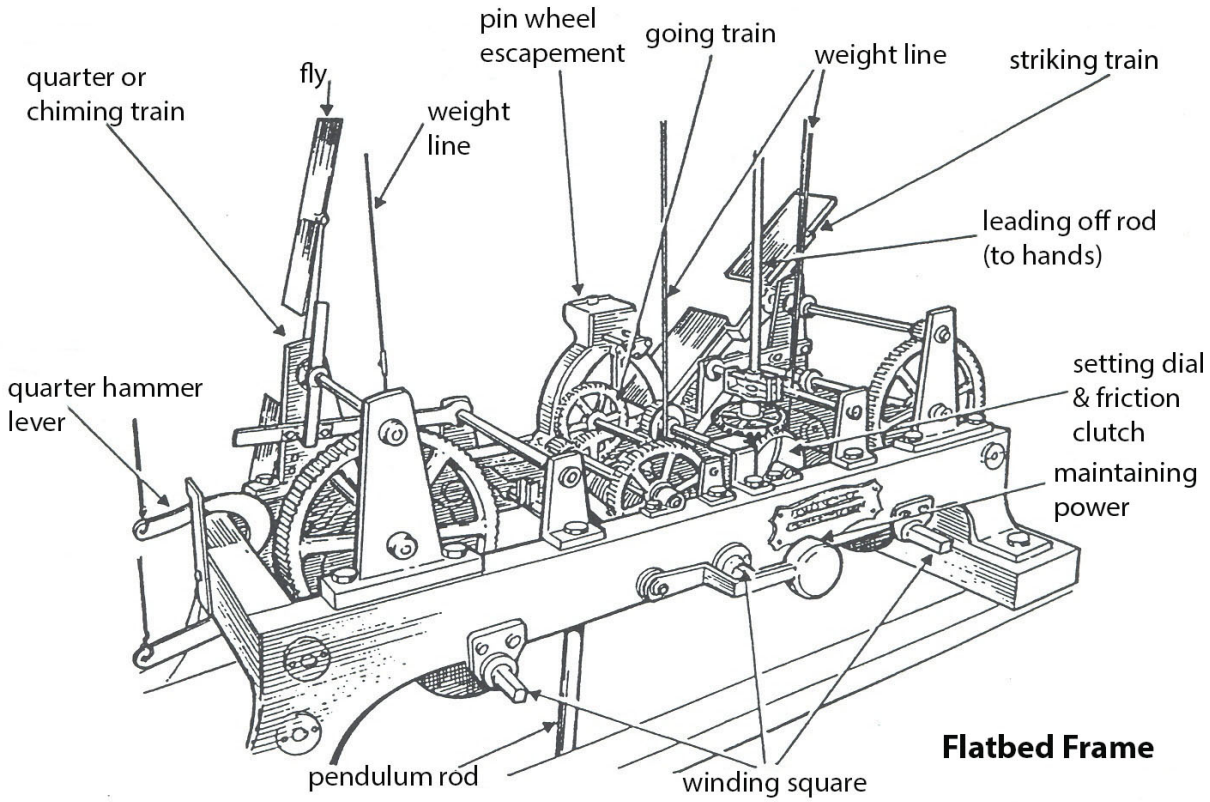
Examples of clock frames

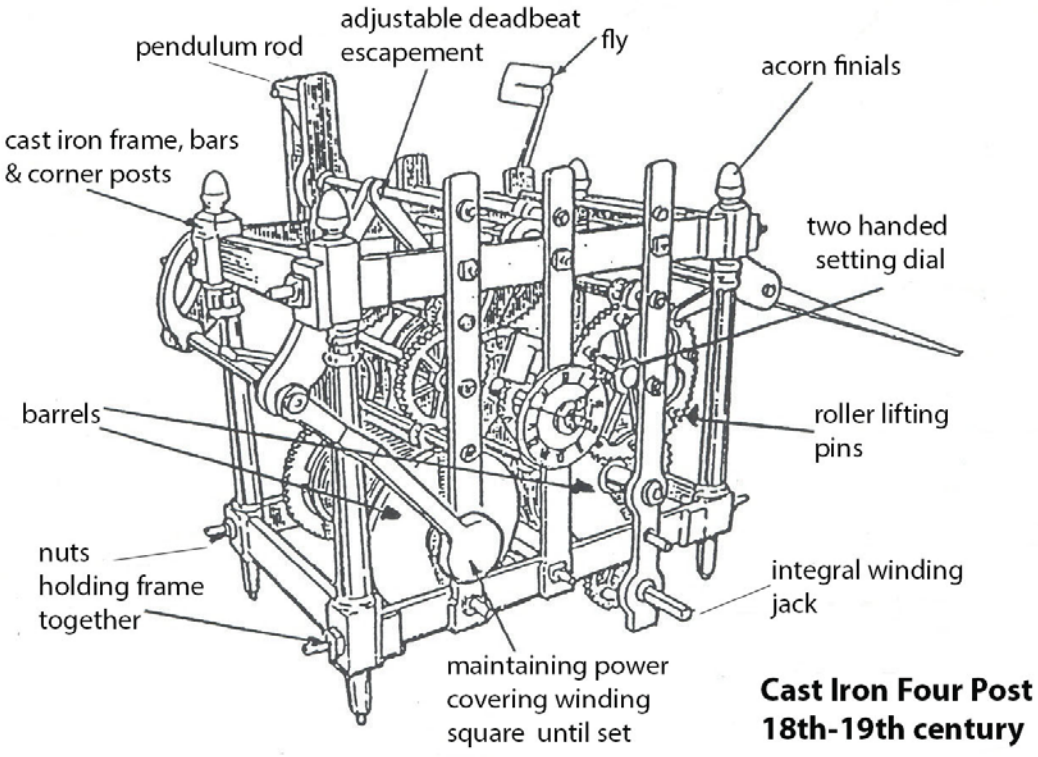




RECORDING TURRET CLOCKS 4

Examples of clock frames





January 2014