

EAST COWES CASTLE CLOCK

This clock has not always been inside Carisbrooke Castle Museum; it has been displaying the time to museum visitors only since 1997. However it is now a museum piece rather than a time-piece and it has had a long and interesting history!

John Moore - Clockmaker

An inscription on the drum tells us that the clock was made in 1819 by John Moore in Clerkenwell, London. Moore is recognised as one of the great designers and makers of turret clocks. His firm made and installed hundreds all over the British Isles and abroad, most of them for churches and other public buildings.



Traditionally, clock and watch-making had involved specialist craftsmen working at home to produce the different parts, before they were assembled by 'finishers'. Moore successfully established a factory system, which was more efficient and profitable. Even so, his clocks were not mass-produced and each one was individually assembled and finished. The factory had a smith's workshop and a wheel-cutting shop on the ground floor. Turret clocks, like the one in the museum, were assembled on the floor above. House clocks were produced in a workshop on the top floor. The windows were large to let in plenty of light.

This engraving shows Moore's factory in 1828

In its stately home



The clock was bought by the architect John Nash in 1824 for his new country mansion at East Cowes where it stayed for over 130 years. It was probably intended to add to the grandeur of his home rather than to tell the time! It would have been wound once a week and chimed every hour. From the 1930s, the cost of maintaining house and grounds became too expensive for the owners. Vandalism, theft and use by the War Office all took their toll.

This engraving shows the clock-face high up in the square tower to the left of the castle entrance.

In 1958 the estate was sold to Arthur Guy, who rescued the decaying clock mechanism from the tower. Eventually the estate was bought by property developers. A road named John Nash Avenue is now a reminder of the man who built the castle.



The clock-face in the tower of the ruined castle

At the Isle of Wight College

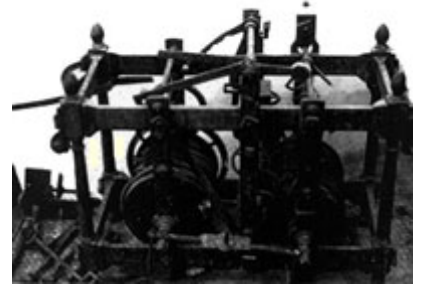
After its rescue from the dilapidated tower, Arthur Guy presented the damaged and corroded clock movement to the Isle of Wight College at Newport as an example of early-19th-century engineering and a restoration project for students.

In 1974 the clock was examined by John French. He reported

'Most of the wrought-iron parts were deeply rusted but not so badly as to obscure their function and their relation to adjacent parts. The cast-iron framework, however, was in good condition . . . The pendulum was missing although the top block of its suspension still remained in the chops. Both going and winding barrels appeared to be serviceable. . . '

'The weights were missing. All pivots turned in ornamental brass bushes riveted into the frame and appeared easily restorable. . . All pinions, integral with their shafts, were badly rusted, and the brass wheels, though appearing merely slightly corroded, may prove to be internally unsound. The escape wheel had lost nearly all its teeth, and one pallet was broken from the anchor. . . '

'On the striking side, the fly shaft was broken at the journal, and the fly itself, detached from the movement, considerably damaged. The remainder of the striking-train and the various reciprocating parts appeared relatively undamaged.'



Staff and students worked on the restoration project

Staff and students began working on the restoration of the clock under the direction of Ifan Thorner MBHI, a lecturer at the College, and John French. The work included the manufacture of important new parts to replace what was missing; a dial engraved with Roman numerals and a pendulum made from mahogany and mild steel.

The College also made an oak table to support the mechanism and displayed it - not yet in working order - to mark the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977.

In the restorer's workshop

In 1995, Bernard Pratt, another lecturer at the College, persuaded the College Principal to offer the clock to Carisbrooke Castle Museum. At the same time, Ifan and Ann Thorner offered to complete the restoration on behalf of the Museum.



The dial - this is made of rolled brass sheet and engraved with Roman numerals.



Ifan Thorner finished the restoration in his Freshwater workshop during 1996.

The mechanism was cleaned and conserved; however some of the parts were too corroded to be used so replicas were specially made. Other parts were missing and had to be designed and made, using information from similar clocks. A careful record was kept of all the restoratory work. Parts that were replaced are kept by the museum together with this record. Traces of the original blue paint were found on the frame, so it was repainted blue.



The escape wheel - most of the teeth were missing from the original so a replica was made.

The Friends of Carisbrooke Castle Museum paid for the materials that were needed. Many other organisations and individuals contributed to the project, providing materials, skills, time and knowledge.

The clock as a museum exhibit reminds us of different stages in its history and its different uses



It was intended to impress but the fact that it is now in a museum reminds us that impressive country residences became difficult to maintain in the 20th century. However, it tells the time, as it did at East Cowes Castle in the 19th century but it is now in a museum because country residences became difficult to maintain in the 20th century.

It was rescued, preserved and restored because it was an interesting example of the clockmaker's skill. Originally the clock movement was hidden from view and it was the clock face that people looked at. Now that the clock is a museum exhibit it is the movement that people want to look at, so it is displayed at eye-level.

There are two sides to the clock movement - the 'watch' controlling the hands on the clock face and the 'strike' controlling the striking mechanism. The power source for each is a lead weight which turns a drum.

Because the clock was originally in a high tower, the weights had a long enough drop to keep it in motion for eight days. Someone at East Cowes Castle would have wound it once a week. Now the drop is only a metre so each winding lasts only about 20 hours.

