

The Church Clock

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*“Stands the church clock at ten to three
and is there honey still for tea? “*

So wrote Rupert Brooke of the church clock at Granchester, which was stopped for many years. We perhaps rarely wonder what is behind the dial of the clock, but it is in fact a very interesting mechanism, called a turret clock, or tower clock. Codsall is fortunate in having a very good quality turret clock, which was made by E. Dent & Co. in about 1850. Dent was a famous maker who also made the Great Clock at Westminster, called Big Ben, though some people think that this refers to the bell, named after the rotund Commissioner of Works for the rebuilding of Westminster, Sir Benjamin Hall.

At St. Nicholas church the clock is in the tower and sits above the tower ceiling. If the church is quiet the tick-tock of the clock, at one second intervals, can be clearly heard. The clock has a pendulum about a metre long, just like a longcase clock, but the clock in the church is very much more substantial than a longcase clock having a large steel frame on which brass wheels and arbors are mounted. These regulate the time and work levers to strike the hour on the tenor bell, located in the bell-chamber, above the clock.

A lead-off rod runs from the back of the clock to a set of gears at the back of the dial. The hands are fixed to rods which pass through the centre of the dial and are attached to these gears.

The clock strikes the hours by means of a thin wire which extends from the striking part of the clock, up through the ceiling into the bell chamber, where it repeatedly lifts a heavy steel hammer and allows it to fall onto the bell to strike the hours.

Two steel ropes wrapped around the clock barrels, pass upwards, over pulleys, and then drop into a corner of the clock room. The ropes have large steel weights hanging from them, which provide the driving power for the clock and the striking. We don't see the weights in the church below, because they are boxed in for safety.

The clock is wound manually each week and this takes about five minutes; at the same time the timekeeping of the clock is checked and adjusted if necessary.

The clock works seven days a week fifty two weeks a year and it is believed that apart from regular servicing and overhaul it has run continuously since it was installed, 159 years ago. This means that it has been running for roughly 58,000 days or 1,390,000 hours and has struck more than 9,000,000 blows on the tenor bell, to sound the hours. Quite a performance!