**St Andrews Church Public Clock**

At a public meeting in the school on 8th February 1887 it was agreed to mark the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria by the provision of a public clock to be installed in the church tower. The anticipated cost of the clock was £120, the money to be raised by public subscription. It was later decided to place the clock in the south wall of the tower, in the lower part of the window and the dial being made with a square face. On the south wall the clock would be visible, with the lopping of a few branches on intervening trees, from four roads, any other position would be less visible. It was also decided when the amount promised reached £80 that the clock would be ordered. Promises of subscriptions to a total of £50 was made at the meeting and by a second meeting a week later £80 has been raised and the clock ordered. By May 1887 £121 had been raised and by the end of the year a total of £136.10s 6d had been raised from over 220 people named in the parish magazine. The cost was £120 for the clock by Sir John Bennett of Cheapside in London and £13 6s to Mr Hogg and £3 4s & 6d to Mr Bloomfield for the mason’s and carpenter’s work to the tower.

Sir John Bennett (1814- 1897) owned a famous firm of jewellers and watchmakers in the City of London and was known for installing large clocks like this one. He may not have actually made the clock himself but may have commissioned it from another manufacturer and oversaw the installation of it.

Clock mechanisms for public buildings are large. They have to be as the hands on the dial revolve outside the building and receive the full force of the weather. The face and hands of the clock are also large although they may not seem so from the ground. Inside the tower, the clock mechanism was driven by one or more large weights. The driving weight was used to turn the clock wheels and the wheelwork was released for a moment each time the pendulum swung by a device known as an escapement, so called because it allows the wheelwork to escape at regular fixed intervals. Our clock is what is known as a three train clock. There are three distinct parts to the mechanism, the going train which turns the hands of the clock; the chime train which rings the bells for the quarter hours; and the strike train which sounds the hour on the largest bell. The clock is of “flat-bed” construction as all the wheels or trains of wheels are attached to a solid cast iron base. The striking train is on the left, the going train in the centre and the chiming train on the right. The escapement on the going train is known as the “dead beat” and is one of the more common types of clock escapement, of which there are more than 100 different types used in turret clocks. On each end of the mechanism there are two brass wheels outside the main body of the clock, which have a series of notches cut into the circumference and are spaced out unevenly. The spaces between the notches determine the number of times the bell or bells are sounded for the quarter hours or the hours.

The clock was wound by hand every other day which required someone to climb the very narrow tower stairs and hand crank the winding mechanism.

To commemorate Queen Elizabeth’s Diamond Jubilee the Parish Council decided to electrify the winding mechanism. It cost nearly 60 times the original cost of the clock 125 years ago but the Parish Council was able to get a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to help cover the cost of the electrification and for additional items for the school for its “Time” project which includes a sundial. It is hoped the clock will now continue to inform residents of the time for at least another 125 years.