



The clock under restoration 2007

Commemorative plaque in St James Church



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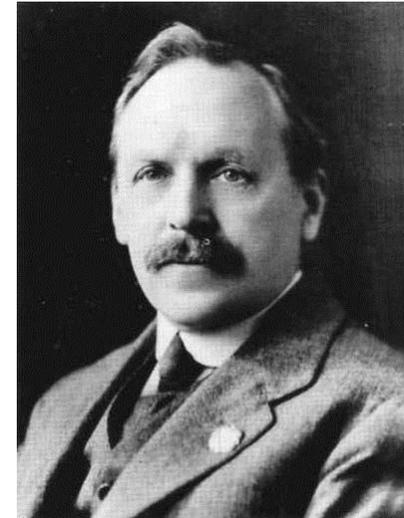
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Edwin Turner Cottingham and the Thrapston Church Clock



Edwin Turner Cottingham was born in Ringstead in 1869. By 1891, he was living in lodgings with his brother, Herbert, in Bridge Street and working as a self employed watchmaker.

He married Elizabeth Smith, daughter of George Smith (of Smith & Grace) in 1894 and they lived at 3 Midland Road.

His shop was in the High Street and is now the Bonophol Balti Hut.

Until recently, his name was written in mosaic floor tiles at the entrance.



In 1899, he decided to make a clock for St James' Church. As the Church was hidden behind the High Street, an external clock face would not have been visible. Instead he made a Westminster Chime mechanism, released electromagnetically by a good dead-beat wall mounted regulator inside the Church, to strike the hour and chime the quarters. This had not worked for many years.

He also made a wall clock for the bell ringing chamber which was stolen in 1984. Although the total estimated cost was £75, he offered it all for only £25.

The picture below shows the clock being displayed in front of his shop in about 1902 prior to installation, with the Rector, Rev. Septimus Kingsford, looking on. Mr Cottingham is second from the right.



Close up of the mechanism



Fragment of original label found on the clock

In 1905, Cottingham was elected a member of the Royal Astronomical Society and was highly regarded. He was entrusted with the cleaning and refurbishment of a least two John Harrison clocks, one dated 1717 with a movement made entirely of wood.

He also made a new standard clock for the Greenwich Observatory which was used from 1922.



He retired from active clock making in 1928 and died in 1940 being buried at Thrapston Baptist Church where his weathered headstone remains.

To leave a lasting memorial for the Thrapston 800 Celebrations in 2005, Thrapston Town Council agreed to fund restoration of the clock to working order. Grants were received from the Manifold Trust, the Pilgrim Trust and East Northants Council, the latter to provide a means of commemorating the Queen's 80th birthday, to assist with the costs.

The contract was awarded to John Smith & Sons of Derby Ltd. and the work carried out during the summer of 2007. The clock mechanism and hammers were removed and taken to Derby for repair and refurbishment.

A new chime and strike unit was made, the original 1900 electro magnetic solenoid was checked and rewound and a new Smith of Derby master clock manufactured. New auto winding equipment was installed – originally, it was hand wound.

Despite the repairs and upgrades, the clock retains its original appearance.