



# Oakham Team Ministry

June 2016

To

## All Saints Oakham - Church Clock

### **Clock History**

This letter is a plea for help to restore and preserve the clock at All Saints Church, a wonderful and historic timepiece in the centre of our County Town.

The present clock installed at All Saints Oakham is the third generation of a series of movements to have featured at the church, with the first dating back to around 1684.

This clock was supplied and installed by Frederick Dent of London in 1858 as part of a general refurbishment programme of the church. This three train, flatbed clock was installed with two new skeleton dials and features the quarter chimes of Great St Mary's Cambridge (more commonly known to people as the 'Westminster Chimes').

Amongst Horologists this particular clock is regarded as 'The Rolls Royce' of movements, primarily because it was made by Frederick Dent, who was regarded as the finest clock maker during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in Great Britain for their precision, accuracy and high quality engineering. What is not commonly known is that this particular clock was being engineered and built in their workshops at the same time as another movement to be later installed as the Great Clock of the Palace of Westminster in London (often referred to as Big Ben!)

At the time, Sir Edmund Beckett Denison - Lord Grimthorpe, was technical adviser to Frederick Dent and much of the inventive work he carried out on this and several other similar movements were later incorporated into the final design of the Great Clock – thus making All Saints Oakham's clock one of a series of 'prototypes' not only to the world renowned Big Ben, but to represent a new standard for all high quality turret clocks ever since.

At the time of installation, the clock cost an eye-watering £120 (approximately £13,000 in today's money!) funded through a combination of donations and subscriptions and whilst some 158 years have elapsed the movement has largely avoided any major work needed to maintain its function other than regular servicing.

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## Here in 2016

Unfortunately at 158 years old the clock is just starting to show its' age. The repetitive nature of hand winding the three heavy train weights every 48 hours to keep the clock running is now putting wear on the movement. From expert inspection we have been advised that the clock should now have its winding mechanism automated with a system that will not damage the fabric or function of the clock.

With the 21<sup>st</sup> century brings new technological developments and the Parochial Church Council sees this as an opportunity and responsibility of extending the clock's lifespan for at least another 158 years and beyond. As part of the upgrade the Church would like to incorporate the following additional features;

- To maintain greater accuracy, the new system uses radio technology to synchronise with Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and adjust the clock accordingly.
- The new system can also adjust the clock for daylight saving between GMT and British Summertime (BST) as and when required.
- In case of power failure, the new system has a battery back-up so the clock can continue running for a further 12-24 hours without mains power.
- The system can disable the quarter and hourly chimes during curfew hours at night and for bell ringing activities.

An application for approval of the upgrade has recently been submitted through the appropriate channels and the total cost of the new upgrade will be £5,140. So far we have been fortunate to have secured £1,000 through generous donations towards the funding of this project. However, ongoing support is now needed at this crucial time whilst costs can be controlled.

We will be holding a number of events to help with fundraising and I would like to take the opportunity to invite you to become a part of this project through any donation you would like to make. Your support would be greatly appreciated.

Please help us to keep the Oakham Town Clock Ticking!

Donations can be sent to the Parish Office, Church Street Oakham, with cheques made payable to Oakham All Saints Church with 'Clock Fund' written on the back Thank you

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