

Welcome to Weekend Wonder: Take Time to Look – sharing our heritage from Bruce Castle Museum & Archive.

Saturday 28 March to Sunday 29 March 2020

Welcome to Weekend Wonder: Take Time to Look – here is something to ponder and wonder about as we share our heritage from Bruce Castle Museum & Archive.

As the clocks go forward tonight at 1am, we thought we would spend a little time sharing a little bit of history about two magnificent historical clocks of Haringey – one in Tottenham and the other in Crouch End.

Our first impressive clock is at Bruce Castle of course. Behind the peaceful blue facade of the Bruce Castle clock is a hardworking mechanism, which dates from the late 18th century. It was made by the great clockmakers Mudge and Dutton. Their partnership is said to have defined Georgian clockmaking.



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This partnership between [Thomas Mudge](#) and [William Dutton](#) once operated from 148, Fleet Street, London. They joined forces in business from around 1765, sharing an ethos of ‘quality, not quantity’, which saw them produce many of the finest clocks of the late 18th century.

Their name is engraved on the brass ‘dial’ plate of the Bruce Castle clock, which is where you go about changing the hour and minute hands.



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The Bruce Castle clock features lever escapements, which look like a series of cogs to power the clock and its pendulum. The 'detached lever escapement' was invented c.1755 by the very same clockmaker as the Bruce Castle clock - Thomas Mudge. The escapement when it moves makes the 'ticking' sound in clocks, moving the hands forward in a steady way. His invention helped to improve the accuracy of clocks and was amongst the most important advancements in clock-making. It is used in almost all mechanical watches, as well as small mechanical non-pendulum clocks, alarm clocks, and kitchen timers ever since.

The clock we have today is not the original clock for Bruce Castle. You can see the first clock from the 1686 painting of Bruce Castle (an engraving of it below).



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The clock that survives today was very likely to have been commissioned by [James and Henrietta Townsend](#) who were lord and lady of the manor at Bruce Castle from 1764 and undertook a lot of remodelling of the house until the 1770s. In the later 18th century, and well into the 19th century, it would have been servants of the manorhouse or the Bruce Castle School who climbed the stairs to the very top of the building to the clock room in order to wind this grand mechanism.

So, when you change your clocks tonight, spare a thought to what it usually takes for us to change the time and wind up the big old clock at Bruce Castle

Nowadays, museum staff make that same journey to wind the clock by hand, climbing up to the second floor and then a spiral staircase to the top of the tower. It is certainly something that can keep you fit! As an 8-day clock, it means that really it only needs winding once a week. But breaking that task up into two sessions a week, makes the task an awful lot easier and here's why ...

When completely wound down, the hour hand takes over 16 rotations of winding the cogs with the lever to wind the heavy weight up to the top again. Each rotation is a very hard to push round with the lever.

The lever moving the weight up for the minute hand by contrast is much easier to rotate - but it requires an awful lot more winding. If you are not exhausted by the process and you can keep count, it takes about 165 rotations of the lever to wind it up. A great workout!

The clock still keeps good time and is wound twice a week, and has an annual check-up once a year with a specialist historical clock-engineer.

In Crouch End, the Clocktower is an iconic landmark, the focus of many photographs of the area. Here's a view of it from the Broadway in Crouch End, not long after it was built in 1895.

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For its history, the Hornsey Historical Society has kindly written it up on their website for us all to see [here](#).



If you want to catch a glimpse of the inside of the Crouch End clocktower and behind the clock's face, with views of Crouch End from the top of the tower, then you can see this on a short film undertaken by the late David 'Tec' Evans. Bruce Castle has many films by David who, although he was an amateur film-maker, he had a massive production line of films about the area which he shared with Bruce Castle Museum, Hornsey Historical Society and London Screen Archives. Always there with his camera, he captured this – a celebration marking the centenary since the clocktower was unveiled in Crouch End.

The film opens with a choir singing on that commemorative day, but if you go to 2 minutes and 30 seconds into the film, that is when you can see behind the clock-face, with a commentary by David. This and the filming of the view from the tower around the local area takes about 2 minutes or so (the remaining film then takes you on a journey through historical postcards and photographs of Crouch End from different periods of time). You can see his delightful and informative film [here](#).

And on that note, it's time to end this Weekend's Wonder. We will share the history of some other clocks from the borough in later posts.

Don't forget to change the clocks tonight – we lose one hour this weekend!

Keep well, stay at home and enjoy learning a little more about our borough.

Deborah Hedgecock, Curator Haringey Council
Haringey Archive and Museum Service, Bruce Castle Museum, Lordship Lane, London N17 8NU