that repairs and alterations are likely to have occurred over the life of a turret clock; for example, trains get re-wheeled. Does the clock come with any records about its provenance and service history? Ask for condition reports if buying at auction and for any purchase, always check that the clock is for sale legitimately. Do not buy one that has been removed from a building or church without permission.

What is a typical number of trains in a turret clock?

Most commonly available at auction are two trains; single trains less so. Three trains start coming in generally from the late Victorian period; that is, the latter half of the nineteenth century.

What do you suggest for any collectors who are considering restoring a turret clock that they have just purchased?

Hold off starting any restoration project straight away. Think about the clock and the plan for the restoration project first. Take your time. Learn as much as possible about the clock, particularly with older and rarer turret clocks. Talk first to experienced restorers of turret clocks and understand the principles about restoration and conservation. Leave the clock in as much of its original condition as possible. Don’t start polishing it up, painting it and replacing parts until you have carefully considered the effect on the clock. Much of the value of older clocks is in their originality and how they look after years of use. Old repairs are part of the clock’s history.

What things should one be aware of in particular when collecting and working on turret clocks?

There are health and safety issues and practical ones that collectors must consider. For example, some turret clocks come with long pendulums — how is this going to work practically if you intend to install a turret clock in a home or domestic setting? Turret clocks can also have weights that range from 50 to 500 pounds. If you are thinking of installing a turret clock you must factor all the weight issues and load...
bearing requirements. Any installation, display or even storage, must be safe for you, others, the building, and the clock. You can replace weights with automatic winders, but decent quality automatic winders can be expensive, so you need to consider these costs too. Parts on turret clocks can be large and heavy; you need to take particular care when working on them.

Additionally, factors such as the supporting frame, wires, pulleys, access issues, height issues and any hazardous materials must be considered. Working safely is a priority. If in any doubt seek help or advice. (Building consent from the local Council might also be required for installation projects).

**Apart from auctions, you also follow turret clocks on eBay. Are there any basic tips from your perspective when either listing or buying there?**

**If you are listing a turret clock on eBay, give a full accurate description with a good set of detailed photographs. This can save so much time later and help avoid disputes. For buyers there are bargains to be had there, but you must do your research. Know what you are looking for and remember ‘buyer beware’. Ask questions, ask for more photos if necessary. As I mentioned, do not buy a clock that has been removed from a building or church without permission.

Collecting a purchase in person can be a good idea. This gives you a chance to see if the clock is what you had expected.**

Take a check list to make sure it has everything that was described to you. Think in advance about how you will get the turret clock and any accessories home safely including parts such as the pendulum, weights and bells.

**What helpful resources are available for new collectors?**

There are organisations including the Antiquarian Horological Society (AHS), specifically its Turret Clock Group (TCG). The Church Buildings Council (CBC), the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers and, of course, the BHI. There is also a Turret Clock Forum, last held via Zoom in September 2020 (a report appeared in the October 2020 issue of the HJ, page 406).

Some books to consider include Lord Grimthorpe’s from the mid-1800s, *A Rudimentary Treatise on Clocks and Watches, and Bells for Public Purposes.*1 Beeson’s book, *English Church Clocks 1280 – 1850* is useful.2 There is also *Turret Clocks: Lists of Clocks from Makers’ Catalogues and Publicity Materials*, edited by Chris Pickford and *Joyce of Whitchurch Clockmakers 1690 – 1965* by Steve and Darlah Thomas.3+4 (Chris has also written his own books on the subject, including *The Turret Clock Keeper’s Handbook* and *The Maintenance, Repair, Restoration, Conservation and Preservation of Turret Clocks.5+6*)

Collecting a purchase in person can be a good idea. This gives you a chance to see if the clock is what you had expected.
A Rare William Clement, Turret Clock Movement, circa 1672

Lot 177, sold by Dreweatts at its 'Fine Clocks, Barometers and Scientific Instruments' sale on 21 April 2021

Estimate: £2,000–3,000
Sold for: £3,500 (hammer price)

Listed as a fine and rare Charles II forged iron and brass turret clock movement. It is signed ‘WILLIAM CLEMENT + LONDINI FECIT + 1672 +’ on the rail above the hammer pivot. The clock has a posted wrought iron frame with finely forged polyhedral finials and a three-wheel going train.

Interestingly, an article was written about this clock by The Hon. G. W. Bennet, ‘A Turret Clock by William Clement’, published in the June 1956 issue of the Horological Journal (pages 348–350, 367).

This movement was sold at Christies in London on 7 October 1981 (as Lot 99) for £4,800 (hammer price).

Dreweatts notes that the brass wheels are now reversed due to wear and laid out end-to-end opposing each other, pivoted with brass bushes set into vertical movement bars. It also records that there are some incomplete parts and alterations to the clock; for example, the escapement is a replacement. However, the auction house notes that its configuration is believed to mirror that of the original. There are no pendulum, weights or other accessories.

The frame measures 67 × 69 × 41 cm (26 × 27 × 16 inches). It is 77.5 cm (30.5 inches) high overall.

William Clement is particularly noted for supplying a turret clock to King’s College, Cambridge in 1671 which was an eight-day clock with an anchor escapement and long pendulum.

A Two-Train, Small Turret Clock Movement

Lot 2012, sold by Gardiner Houlgate at its 'Fine Clocks & Related Items Auction' on 27 May 2021.

Estimate: £650–850
Sold for: £1,600 (hammer price)

Catalogued as an interesting late seventeenth- to early eighteenth-century, two-train, small turret clock movement with a bronze bell and winding handle. It has accompanying hands, pendulum and later lead-off work.

The frame is 21 inches high, 16.5 inches wide and 11 inches deep (53 × 42 × 28 cm).
Attributed to Gillett & Johnston

Lot 857, sold by Hutchinson Scott Auctioneers at its 'Fine Art and Antiques Spring Catalogue Sale' on 15 May 2021

Estimate: £1,500–2,000
Sold for: £1,450 (hammer price)

Listed as a nineteenth-century brass and iron turret clock attributed to Gillett & Johnston. It has a painted frame, turned pillars and brass end stops. With an eight-day weight-driven movement fitted with a dead-beat escapement. The movement has adjustable pallets, wheels with six crossings throughout and an adjustable crutch. The pendulum is missing. It is 39 cm (15 inches) high.

ENDNOTES

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Please note: All lot descriptions, photographs, illustrations and quotes are courtesy, and copyright of the respective auction houses or noted individuals/organisations. Listed sold prices exclude premium unless stated.

BHI Website Resources:
www.bhi.co.uk/resources

Download the original article by The Hon. G. W. Bennet (HJ, June 1956).

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