

Book tells story of when town was centre of little-world world

A BOOK has been published detailing the "most wonderful show of the 18th century" and its surprising roots in Waltham Abbey.

In 1733 a man named Henry Bridges unveiled a giant four-tiered machine in the town. Known as his Microcosm or Little World, the painstakingly put together contraption made use of the finest clockwork, sculpting and woodcarving of the time.

Different parts of the machine moved separately from one another, depicting musical scenes and tales from ancient Greek literature.

Barb Drummond, a self-taught historian based in Cardiff, stumbled upon the story when she was researching Bristol

Bridge.

Henry's son James was the driving force behind the project and said his father had taught him everything he knew.

Ms Drummond's book not only follows the story of the Little World, but inventors from across Europe who were pushing the boundaries of the day's technology to create weird and wacky shows for the public.

The book's central mystery is not wildfowl however, but how and why Waltham Abbey became the centre of mini-world building.

Ms Drummond said: "There was something strange happening in Waltham Abbey."



MAGIC MACHINE: Barb Drummond with Waltham Abbey Church vicar the Rev Peter Smith and (inset) Henry Bridges' Microcosm or Little World