

A TRIP TO SOUTHERN FRANCE

MIKE COWHAM

Frequently, we take our holidays in France. In September/October 2017 we spent a week in Provence and each day we went in search of sundials. As usual we used the French website created by Michel Lalos¹ to determine where the dials were in that area, as well as for those on our route across France from England. The dials shown in this article are some of the more interesting of at least 82 dials that we found on this trip. Although we saw many simple mass dials, they were generally of poor quality, so these have not been included this time.

Our week was based in Département numbered 13, Bouches-du-Rhône, and most dials found were close to our lodging. Some days we travelled into adjacent départements, particularly to Département 84, Vaucluse, where there are many fine dials to be seen.

On our way to our gîte (cottage) we passed through various towns and villages. One fine large dial was found outside



Fig. 2. Dial on Chapelle Notre-Dame-des-Vignères at Cavaillon.

the college at Noyers in Yonne, founded 1633 (Fig. 1). The dial height covers two storeys of the building and its nodus is an attractive sun shape. The motto above reads:

*Quis melior vitæ monitor rerum que
magister
Cum doceat rapido quo fugit hora pede*

*(What better guide to life and master of affairs than that
which demonstrates how quickly time passes)*

At Cavaillon in Vaucluse, we saw an interesting early semi-circular dial on the south face of Chapelle Notre-Dame-des-Vignères (Fig. 2). It appears to have twelve equally-spaced hour segments.



Fig. 1. College at Noyers in Département 89, Yonne.

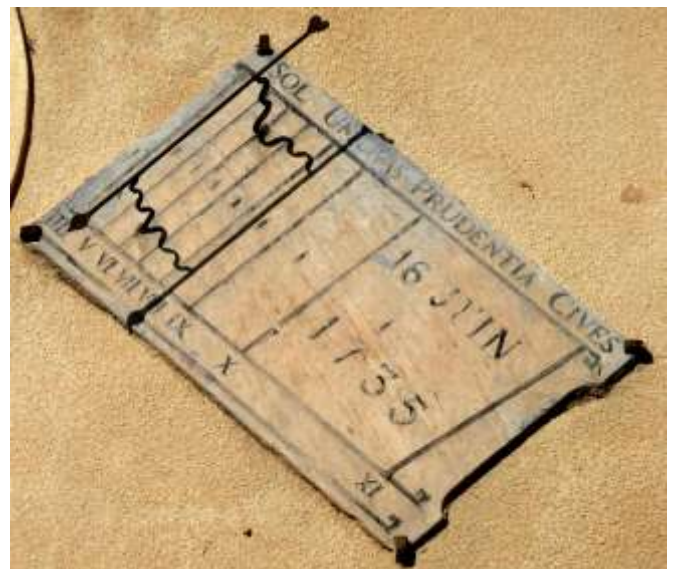


Fig. 3. East-facing dial of 1735 at Eyguières.



Fig. 4. Dial in Grand Rue at Lambesc.

Once at our gîte, we made daily trips in various directions. Travelling east from our cottage, we found an almost direct east facing dial dated 16 JUN 1735 in the village of Eyguières, situated high on the front of the Tourist Office, in a building that was formerly the Hotel de Ville (Fig. 3). Its motto is:

SOL UMBRAS PRUDENTIA CIVES

(The sun shades prudent citizens)

In the Grand Rue at Lambesc was a rather attractively shaped, almost bell-shaped, dial, with an arrow-shaped gnomon (Fig. 4). It was undated but appeared to have some reasonable age to it.

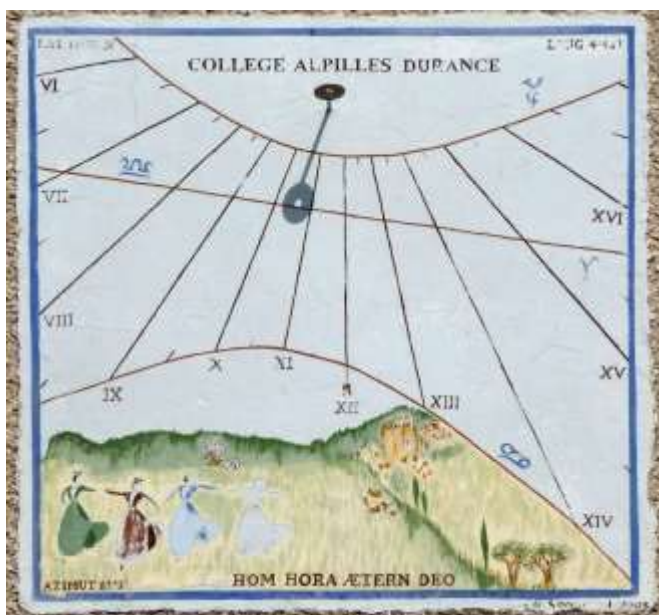


Fig. 5. Painted dial on Collège Alpilles Durance in Rognonas.



Fig. 6. Dial in Rue Pasteur at Mouriès.

Travelling north from our cottage, we found the following dials.

At Rognonas was a dial at Collège Alpilles Durance, overlooking the market square (Fig. 5). It was finely painted and it carries the motto:

HOM HORA AETERN DEO

(One hour for man eternity for God)

Its nodus was a disc at the end of its gnomon, tracing the equinox and two solstice lines.

At Mouriès was a fine oval dial in Rue Pasteur, painted on plaster on a wall (Fig. 6). It is now shaded by several nearby trees, preventing its full use. It appears to show a



Fig. 7. Painted dial at Paradou.



Fig. 8. Dial in Place du Marché, Tarascon.

wine barrel, a fine local feature, with the hour lines radiating from it. Its motto is:

ULTIMA FORSAM
(Last chance)

The dial at Paradou (Fig. 7) was colourfully painted although it will soon need another repaint.

I have included the dial, now missing its gnomon, dated below as 1784 (Fig. 8). It is carved on a house at Place du Marché in Tarascon and it is similar to many seen in the area, mostly on churches. Some of these dials are now hardly visible, but this, although partly covered by a shutter, was about the clearest that we had seen.

A rather attractively painted oval dial dated 1896, showing two young angels holding it, was found in St Martin-de-la-



Fig. 9. St Martin-de-la-Brasque with two small angels.

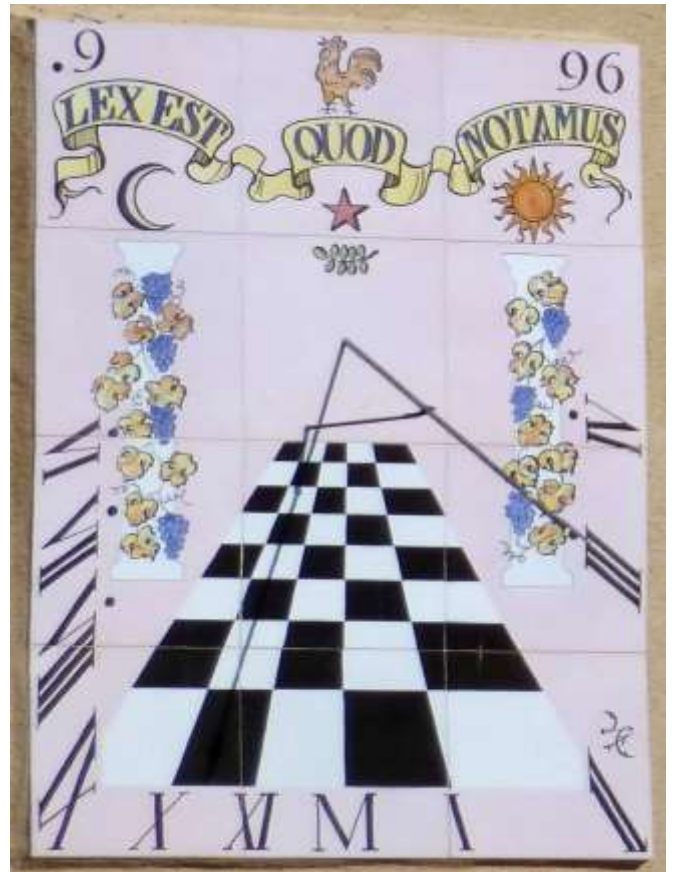


Fig. 10. Dial on a wall in Lauris, Vaucluse.

Brasque in Vaucluse, in Rue des Treilles but at the end of Rue du Cadran (*cadran* = sundial; Fig. 9).

A dial in Lauris, Vaucluse, in Rue Louis Mourre was attractively constructed in 1996 (Fig. 10). It appears to have been constructed on tiles. Its design shows a chequered floor which quite unusually follows the hour lines from IX to II. On either side are bunches of red grapes with their leaves. It carries the motto:

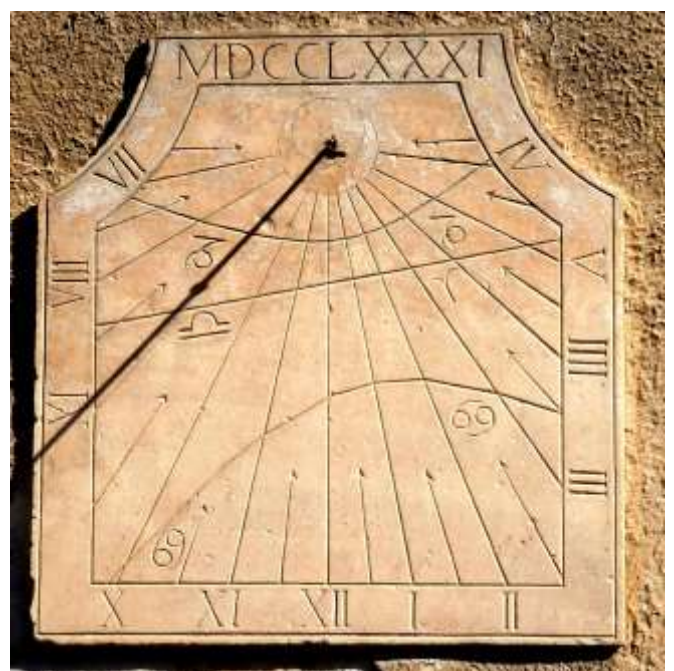


Fig. 11. Dial in Chemin de St Cassian in Oppède.

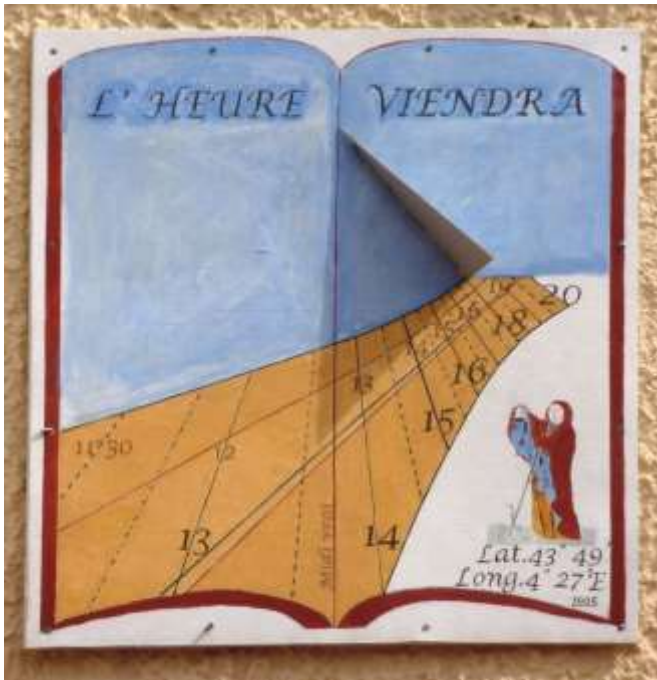


Fig. 12. Painted dial of 1995 at Manduel.

LEX EST QUOD NOTAMUS

(The law is what we observe)

Note that noon is not shown as the usual, XII, but just as M meaning Midi. This is also seen later on Figs 15 and 16.

A dial with its date in Roman numerals at the top was found in Oppède (Fig. 11). Its date of 1781 and its shape are interesting. It also has lines for the equinox and both solstices.

To the south of our holiday region we found a dial at Manduel, in Gard, Département 30 (Fig. 12). It was dated 1995 and carries the motto:

L' HEURE VIENDRA

(The hour comes)



Fig. 13. Dial on a house at Bouc-Bel-Air.



Fig. 14. Carved dial at Châteauneuf-le-Rouge dated 2011.

This dial has been repainted, with some small changes, since the version that is shown on Michel Lalos' website. It is interesting to see that the equinox line appears to be doubled. This also appears on the dial in Fig. 15 below.

In Bouc-Bel-Air was a delightful dial, painted on stone, on a house showing a man above, holding its gnomon (Fig. 13). It is dated 1999. On the architrave above the dial is the motto:



Fig. 15. Dial and clock at Dieulfitt, Drôme.



Fig. 16. Dial on the Mairie at La Groise in Département 59, Nord.

TA VIE, SON OMBRE DANS MA LUMIÈRE

(Your life, it is a shadow in my light)

In Châteauneuf-le-Rouge was a fine dial apparently carved from wood in 2011 (Fig. 14). At the lower edge it carries the coat of arms of that city.

On our trip home we came across some other interesting dials. At Dieulfit, in Département 26, Drôme, we found a fine dial (Fig. 15) on the Tour de l'Horloge with a clock joined to it. To indicate the Equation of Time there is an analemma on the noon line, extending between the two solstice lines; there is a disc-shaped aperture nodus on the gnomon. It carries the motto in the Provençale language:

lou tems passo
passo lou ben

(The time passes, pass it well)

Note that the dial is showing the local sun time of about 10:25 and the clock is showing national time, 10:00.

We then spent a little time in the Alsace, remembering our BSS Sundial Safari there in 2008.

Then travelling north into Département 59, Nord, we found a very interesting and large dial on the Mairie at La Groise (Fig. 16). It too has the analemma, this time moved slightly to the right of the noon line. It was made there in 2005 by J.M. Ansell with the motto:

Le soleil et la Terre nous donnent la vie

(The Sun and the Earth give us life)

REFERENCE

1. http://michel.lalos.free.fr/cadrans_solaires/

mandvcowham@gmail.com