

The Recorder

Issue 10 April 2012

An Occasional Newsletter for BSS Recorders — Cheltenham Edition

Welcome to the 2012 Conference, and the tenth issue of the Recorder.

This year we are at Brockworth, between Cheltenham and Gloucester.

The vertical dial pictured above is just two miles away, on the church at Shurdington.

Digital Reporting

Did you know that you can send me your dial reports by email? No photograph printing costs, no postage costs, faster for you and easier for me as well. The system has been running for a couple of years now, with great success. Let me know if you would like details.

An Unusual Geographical Sundial

Whilst visiting churches in Norfolk recently, I found an interesting horizontal sundial in the churchyard at Brandiston.

Made of bronze, the dial is particularly unusual, being fitted with a star-shaped disc which is free to rotate beneath the gnomon. This disc is divided into 24 segments with the names of various geographical locations around the world inscribed in long-hand lettering in a number of the segments. By setting a reference marker fitted on the disc against the local time at Brandiston, the time at the distant locations may be read from a separate scale engraved around the sundial plate. The contemporary names of the few distant locations established so far would suggest that the dial was possibly constructed during the latter part of the 1700s, or into the early part of the 1800s. The dial plate is also inscribed "W B Fecit", the initials perhaps of a local clockmaker. In other respects the sundial is quite conventional, indicating the time from 4 am to 8 pm, with the hours being sub-divided down to 5 minutes.



Research continues in an attempt to establish the date and maker of this dial. *Any information would be most welcome from members who may have found dials with similar features, and which may help to establish further details about this interesting, and possibly unique sundial.*

Ian Butson

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A Dial-Rich Area

The little table below shows that within five miles of our Conference location, we have 84 dials recorded in the Register!

This started me wondering — is this a record? I tried a few other likely places, and the top three found so far are Brockworth, Oxford and Cambridge, in that order. Can anyone suggest a contender?

When it comes to dial density, in the sense of dials per inhabitant, Wroxton wins by a country mile, with only 530 residents of the parish. But still Brockworth beats any of the remaining field.

[Stop Press: I have just found that there are 103 registered dials within 5 miles of St Paul's!]



Tempus Omnia Revelat

"Over a decade ago I was giving a talk on Hampshire Sundials to a U3A group. One of the dials I talked about was the fine example at Cranbury Park, Otterbourne, Hants (SRN 1714). This is a 22 inch horizontal with a very ornate 'toothed' pedestal and is signed by John Rowley (fl.1698-1728) who was Master of Mechanics to King George I, and who worked with Isaac Newton. The gnomon is pierced with the initials I.C., for John Conduitt, who in 1717 married Newton's niece, Catherine Barton. After the talk I was approached by a lady who was very interested to hear about the Rowley connection, because she had researched her family tree and had recently discovered that she was a descendant of John Rowley! She had not come across anyone who had known about him before, so was delighted that attending the talk on sundials had thrown some light onto her past. *Tempus omnia revelat* (Time reveals all things)."

Peter Ransom

Place	Unit	Pop '000s	Dials. 5 miles	Dials / 1,000
Wroxton	Parish	530	37	69.8
Brockworth	Parish	6,612	84	12.7
Chipping Campden	Town	5,066	58	11.4
Oxford	City	153,700	67	0.4
Cambridge	City	125,700	47	0.4

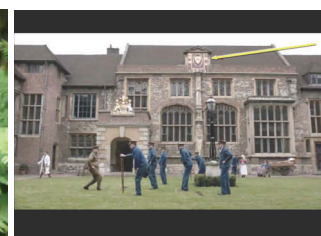
TV Dials

TV costume dramas, and even more modern productions, can be a fruitful hunting ground for previously unrecorded dials. Of the five shown here, two are known, one is a fake, and two are in need of a keen researcher. **'The Body Farm'**, a rather gory series on BBC1 last September, had several shots of the 'Indian' supporter with dial SRN 1724, Arley Hall, Cheshire.

'Edwin Drood', also on BBC1, had a dial on an attractive pedestal that turned out to be a Haddonstone garden urn (those props departments are resourceful!). ITV's **'Downton Abbey'** featured SRN 4550 at



the Charterhouse, Islington, just visible in the top right photograph, but unmistakable in its setting, and two more that I can't trace, shown below. The first is a simple armillary sphere, possibly at Highclere Castle or Bampton, Oxfordshire, where the series was shot. The



other is a vertical dial barely visible in this shot, on a distinctive church. These last three were pointed out by NASS member Tom Kreyche, and Maureen Salmi in New Zealand. *Identification sought for these*



Underslung gnomons

Good horizontal sundials will normally recognise the thickness of the gnomon by marking two noon lines, giving a 'split noon', or 'noon gap'. Hour lines for 6am to noon need to radiate from the west corner of the toe of the gnomon, and those from noon to 6pm from the east corner; before 6am and after 6pm the situation is reversed. Tony Wood's search for the designer of the dial with the 'underslung' gnomon (see back page) raises the question of how such a design should be delineated. Play with a flat ruler, pointing to Polaris, to represent a wide style; and a pencil, held against the ruler, to represent a sunray; and you can see that these rules are exactly the opposite for an 'underslung' gnomon.



The only problem is that the minute scale leading up to noon, and the scale from noon onwards, overlap! A very elegant solution to this problem can be seen in John Davis's dial made for a location in Montana, USA. The gnomon thickness matches two five-minute segments of the time scale, and the overlap can be shown tidily and clearly.



The Waterperry dial, discussed on the back page, and the many similar ones elsewhere, have got it doubly wrong :



(i) They mark out the hour lines with a noon gap, but laid out as if the style were the top edge of the gnomon;

(ii) They do not even relate the noon gap to the thickness of the gnomon, using an unusually thin gnomon but a wide gap.

Perhaps the person who made the gnomon was well aware of the overlap problem, and chose a very thin design to allow a 'no gap' layout with minimum error. It is just unfortunate that he did not speak to the person who carried out the delineation, apparently in the expectation of a thick, 'top-style' gnomon!

Recorders: Please keep an eye out for further examples of underslung gnomons; and if found, please note carefully the delineation around noon. Of the score or so reports we have of this particular design, none have remarked upon the incorrect delineation!

John Foad

Calling Somerset!

Dennis Cowan is a prolific recorder and researcher of dials, and if you have never seen his web site 'Sundials of Scotland', it is well worth a visit. He is trying to trace a dial from the grounds of Riccarton Castle, now a part of Heriot-Watt University, outside Edinburgh. Mrs Gatty writes "at Riccarton Castle, Midlothian, there is a dial of grey stone inscribed "Robert Palmer fecit, 1829", most scientifically constructed". It is reported that, when the castle was demolished in

1956, the dial was removed to Somerset by a Mrs Sudlow. *The pedestal remains at Riccarton, and Dennis (and !!) would very much like to hear if anything is known of the dial itself.* Robert Palmer's only other known dial, at the nearby village of Currie, where he is buried, is a beautifully inscribed 'geographic' dial with the noon times of foreign cities. Mrs Gatty's description may imply that the missing dial is of the same type.



'Big Box Ltd'

The Society Archive store is now located in Maidstone, very conveniently for your Registrar. If you need information on a registered dial, beyond what is published, give me a call. There may well be further photos and more extensive details, held in store, and I can now get to it easily.

“A Well Known Design”

The dial illustrated usually carries the comment of the title above, in the Register records. The design is not uncommon, examples occurring at Stodmarsh, Kent and Waterperry Gardens, Oxfordshire with a dozen or so further examples around the country.

So far no-one has come up with the maker or designer but somebody, somewhere, must know – please contact the Registrar.

The dial has some unusual features. The overall design is quite elegant and the sweeping gnomon has the shadow casting style on the lower edge, which is certainly unusual, if not unique. The gnomon is very thin, but there is still a split noon delineation. The thin gnomon is rather flexible making the dial rather



fragile and easily liable to damage. There is an extensive motto:

*Make time Save time While time lasts
All time is no time When time is past*

The numerals are read from inside the dial and the delineation is to five minute intervals. The other unusual feature is the marking of IV for 4 a.m. and IIII for 4 p.m. possibly done for spacing layout reasons or perhaps the designer just forgot! The illustration shows the Waterperry Gardens dial.

Tony Wood

CONTACT

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I am always glad to hear of a new dial or a new sighting, or to supply further details that we may hold of currently registered dials.

Irene Brightmer's Top Ten Dials Along the North Wales Coast (with a worthwhile detour into the Conway Valley!)



The Celtic dial at Clynog Fawr



Bodnant Gardens

1. CLYNNOG FAWR, St Beunos's Church – One of Britain's oldest sundials. A tall stone monolith with a large style hole. In the churchyard of this huge, isolated pilgrim's church, having been rescued in 1930 from various farm uses. SRN 0743
2. LLANWINDA, Fort Belan – A painted vertical dial of 1898 by F.Barker and Son, signed on the gnomon. Shows 'slow of Greenwich 17 minutes'. On the watchtower of an 18th century fort replete with ramparts, cannons, parade ground and drawbridge. A stone's throw from Anglesey across the Menai Strait. A very special place. SRN 7222
3. HOLYHEAD, St Cybi's Church – A recently restored vertical painted dial with a rare Welsh language motto from a 6th century poet. SRN 2736
4. BANGOR – In the University quadrangle, a replacement horizontal dialplate on its original stone pedestal. English, Welsh and Latin inscriptions. SRN 4351
5. BODNANT GARDENS – P&G Heliochronometer in the Rose Garden. Much used and admired, hence very worn and loose. Mounted on a large bronze plate with compass points and direction signs to local places of interest. A magnificent setting. SRN 1721
6. LLANRWST – A rare bridge dial. Brass horizontal of 1936, commemorating 300 years of Inigo Jones' bridge. SRN 0623
7. BODELWYDDAN – Horizontal dial signed by Troughton, London. In the Rose Garden having been recovered from a fishpond in the 1970s. Typical of the many good 18th and 19th century London dials I have 'discovered' in remote churchyards and country house gardens in North Wales during the past 5 years. (This one is not my 'discovery' though!) SRN 3863
8. DYSEARTH – Bodrhyddan Hall – A fine carved stone vertical declining dial with Latin motto, high on the front wall of the house. SRN 5085
9. DYSEARTH – Bodrhyddan Hall – In the garden. Early stone horizontal dial carved on a simple sandstone pillar, with initials and the date 1637. Plain triangular bronze gnomon, tip broken. One of a group of early stone carved horizontals in gardens in this area, all dated and initialled, the others from the 16th century. SRN 4717
10. PRESTATYN AREA – My first double horizontal 'discovery'. Signed by Johannes Marke, London, probably 1670s. Dialplate heavily patinated but intact with its gnomon, and in its original garden location. SRN 6408