



The Recorder

Issue 11 April 2013

An Occasional Newsletter for BSS Recorders — Edinburgh Edition

The picture above shows sun-bathers in Princes Street Gardens. Let's hope the weather is as kind to us in early April !

Thanks to: 'Edinburgh, Inspiring Capital' (www.edinburgh-inspiringcapital.com)

In This Issue

Exploring the Fixed Dial Register

Newts

The Art of letter Writing

New Features for Recorders

The Exorcist Dialler

The Blacksmith's Art

Calling All Masons

Wordle

Most Reported Dial

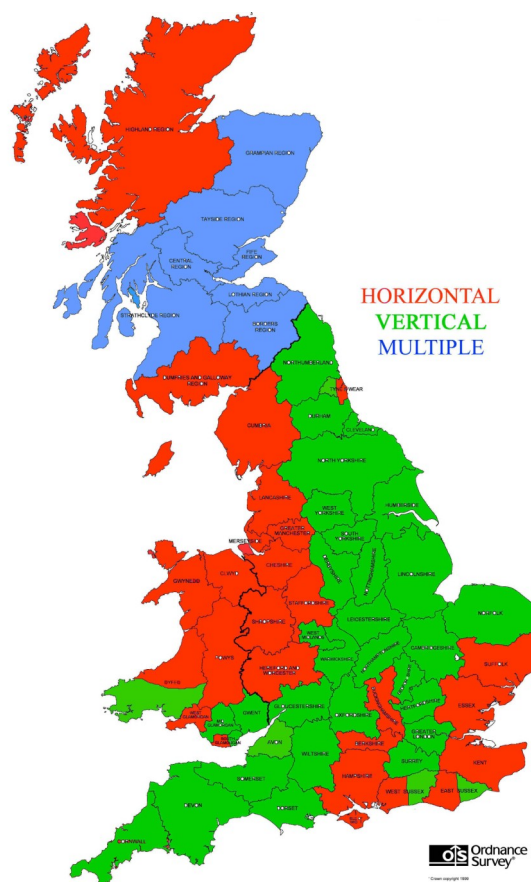
Top Ten West Sussex Dials

Exploring the Register

This map of the Fixed Dial Register (FDR), shows the main types of dial by region. If a county is coloured green we have more Vertical dials recorded than any other type, and so on. The results need to be taken with caution. For example a county could have only one registered dial, which happens to be Horizontal - enough to put a large Red splash on the map, with very little significance. Or again, consider Green Hertfordshire. They have 33 Horizontal and 35 Vertical—just three more reports of Horizontals and they would swing to Red.

That said, the predominance in most counties is fairly convincing, and I find the pattern interesting. I would have expected far more variation across the country. It appears that Horizontals predominate in Wales and the North West, and parts of the South East; while the Eastern, Central and South West regions of England have a majority of vertical dials. Is there a reason? If you have thoughts on this, or any other points to make about this type of analysis, perhaps a letter to the Bulletin would be a good way to share them. Maybe a breakdown by church and domestic dials would help. Maybe a map showing dial age would throw some light. The massing of Multiple dials in Scotland is no surprise, but why should they not come top in Dumfries & Galloway, and the Highlands? In the Highlands, the count is 13 Horizontal to 10 Multiple, not a large sample, nor a large difference; but the D&G figures seem significant, with 26 Horizontal and just 11 Multiple dials.

This is intended simply as an appetiser, suggesting the type of analysis that can be done on the FDR database. If you would like to look more seriously into the mass of data that we hold, I would be very pleased to hear from you. As well as dial type (and more subtly distinguished than amalgamated here), we have of course information on age, maker, material, and other matters. Please do get in touch, particularly if you have a specific exercise in mind.



Great Crested Newts!

Holnest sees the Newt as a salvation. Its presence resulted in the Parish being declared an SSI - so diverting a proposed rubbish tip. Funds from the grazing income of that land paid for this Millennium dial.



Holnest, Dorset
SRN 4582

The Fine Art of Letter Writing

As Recorders well know, part of the fascination of discovering older sundials comes when re-searching their history. While looking into the origins of the vertical dial on the chimney at Morden College, Blackheath (SRN 0503), I came across this florid epistle. It is worth taking the time to read it through. The language carries one back to days of leisure and delight in a well-turned phrase. It would hardly be the same, in an email — or a text!



Recorders please note:

URLs In addition to your own photographs, we can now accept links to Flickr or other image web sites. If you use the MS Word Report Form, please cut and paste the link or links into the 'Remarks' box. We will be able to use the links in Bridol, and in any future DVD releases of the Register.

Post Code We now record the Post Code when available, so please provide it if you can.

National Grid Reference Note also that we can accept **8-digit NGR codes**, so for example you can provide either
TL 863 074 or
TL 8634 0736
if you have that level of detail.

Lat / Long Again if you have the detail, we can accept **dd mm ss.s**
ie decimals of arc-seconds

5 Up Stairs, Morden College, Blackheath

6 September 1852

Dear Sir,

Seeing that the Painters and other Workmen are now at work in this College, I would respectfully beg to draw your Attention to a great Fault in the Sun Dial, with a view, if you please, of having it amended. The Defect is this, a very important part of the Surface, viz the Space in which the Characters are placed, that denote the particular Hours of the Day, is black, and as the Shadow of the Gnomon or Index is of course black also, the greater Mass absorbs the Less, Perspicuity is not maintained, and the useful Purpose of the Dial is defeated. What I would humbly Suggest is this, if it meets with your Approbation: - the entire Surface of the Dial to be painted White, and the black Band to be completely changed, the gilded Characters of the Hours, might remain, for being, like the Surface itself, of a light Complexion, conspicuously showing the Progress of the Index Shadow, no other Colour would answer the Purpose better, nor yet so well. Great care should be taken by the Workmen not to derange the proper Adjustment of the Gnomon.

The Dial itself appears to have been turned out of Hand by the Sculptor in a very creditable Manner. It is therefore Matter of Regret that its Beauty and Utility should have received such material Injury from possibly unintentional Blemish, but certainly misapplied Powers of the Sister Art. She must however I suppose still be courted and Appearances may yet be indebted to her, provided Judgment guides her Pencil; the whole of the Surface being White, the Outside or Scroll part, might be a Shade darker say a light Stone colour.

In venturing to address you on this Subject, Sir, I hope I have not taken an unpardonable Liberty; if my Motive was demanded I might confess to having a useful Aim, a Desire to assist in doing good, where so much has already been done and where more may still be expected, for one cannot help noting the great Improvements which have of late been so handsomely effected, and which are production of much Benefit to the College; other important Advantages seem likely to follow, and I think they must have a Tendency to create among the Members of this noble Institution, genuine Feelings of Content and Thankfulness - not to be further prolix, I will at once beg Permission to assure you, that I continue to remain

very truly and respectfully,

My dear Sir,

Your most obedient Servant

J Westwood

Henry Smith Esqre

Morden College

The Exorcist Dialler

The design of dials, particularly church verticals, tends to have been a sideline for men learned in other matters - a clergyman, a schoolteacher, or a surveyor perhaps. Whatever the occupation of James Wallis, who made this dial, he was also a noted ghost-layer, according to Mrs Gatty. "... on one occasion [he] exorcised the spirits publicly in the market-place with candle, book, and bell, the bell being rung by a boy in attendance. The ghosts who so greatly troubled St. Ives were forced by this ceremony to remain shut up in a tower, where they avenged themselves by making terrific noises, and greatly alarming the inhabitants."



St Ives, Cornwall
SRN 3067

The Blacksmith's Art

To show some fine examples, and also to celebrate the photographic skill of our recorders, here are some fancy gnomons that have caught my eye while updating the Register.



Styleman's Almshouses, Bexley, London
SRN 0242



St Dionysius , Market Harborough, Leics
SRN 2175



St Helen's, Darley Dale, Derbyshire
SRN 6539



Skipton, North Yorkshire
SRN 0267

Calling All Masons



We have only two dials with Free Masonry symbolism in the Register, both simple 20th century horizontals. SRN 4745 is in the grounds of Stamford Hospital in Hammersmith, and 4759, by the London maker G Baker, is in the Channel Islands, on Jersey. I have just heard of another, pictured above but not yet in our records, at Kirby House, a 'Wedding Venue' at Inkpen in Berkshire. Kirby House is open to the National Gardens Scheme. If you like visiting gardens — or are about to get married! — perhaps you might get there when the weather improves, to record the dial? It is dated 179x, and the maker is Thomas Salt, not previously known to us. Among the symbols of Free Masonry are the letters "S S W T H S K T".

Can anyone tell me what they mean?



This is taken from the descriptions of dials in one county in the Fixed Dial Register. Can you guess which county has been used to create the image?

Reproduced with thanks to Jonathan Feinberg and Wordle.net

Our Most Recorded Dial



This large vertical dial (SRN 2118) has been the target of our recorders more often than any other. On eight occasions over fifteen years, members travelling to the little sailing village of Maldon in Essex have taken note of it. In the early days it was undistinguished, the furniture, if any, hard to discern, and the lead sheet and the oak frame nibbled by squirrels and nested by birds.

In 2003 the local council decided to do something

about it, and John Davis was asked to carry out a restoration. The story can be found in Bulletin 19(i), March 2007.

CONTACT

To get in touch with me, John Foad, whether about normal dial reporting, or any other matter,

please email :

registrar@sundialsoc.org.uk

or phone me on :

01622 858853

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.

And finally, from West Sussex - Maureen Harmer's Top Ten Dials

1. Aldwick Bay, Bognor Regis (a Millennium Dial). After supper with friends we took a walk to view this dial, which looked stunning amidst the empty beach on a late Summer's evening. The most remarkable fact about the dial is that it was designed by John Edwards, who suffers with tunnel vision. SRN 7418
2. Rymans, Apuldrum. The Armillary dial which sits comfortably in the gardens of this Grade I listed building, built in the early 15th C, was made by David Harber in memory of the owner's late husband and grand-daughter. A previous sphere was installed in 1999 but was stolen, as was its replacement! So this is the third such dial to find its home at Apuldrum — this time within the walls of the parterre, hopefully a more secure resting place. SRN 7494
3. Chichester Cathedral x 2. I may be forgiven for putting two dials in this slot, but both these similar vertical dials, which are situated at either end of the south side of the Cathedral, are in perfect proportion and a joy to observe when walking through the cloisters of this ancient building. SRN 0663 & 2447
4. Stoughton, St Mary's Church. The Church records show that there had previously been a dial on the tower of this downland village church, but it has since been lost. To celebrate the Millennium a modern vertical dial was made from Welsh slate by Mr Jolly, and was financed from funds collected from a 'knees up' by the local farming families. SRN 7416
5. Stoughton (1974). Adjoining the Church is Church Farm, and on the front lawn is a Polar Dial made from Portland stone in the shape of an anchor. It is a copy of one which was made for Admiral Penn and which has a special meaning for the family. This is on private land but is just visible from the driveway entrance. SRN 7417
6. Waterbeach (17xx). This is an interesting vertical dial set on the stable block within the estate of Goodwood House, with accessibility during events such as The Festival of Speed. I have yet to view this dial but it is high up on my list of 'dials to visit' especially as I drive past almost on a daily basis. SRN 4569
7. West Dean College (1990). A fairly new dial made by Sally Hersh, set on the flint wall of West Dean College, who were instrumental in restoring the dial at Goodwood House. The sur-



rounding gardens and countryside are beautiful, and the dial sits perfectly within its environment. SRN 2302

8. West Dean, St Andrews Church (1729). Best viewed from the gardens of West Dean, where the tower of St Andrews Church stands above the perimeter wall. Set in the flintwork of the south face is an old vertical stone dial with Roman numerals and an iron gnomon, which is a good contrast to the newer dial on the college. SRN 3029

9. Singleton, St Mary's Church. My particular interest is Saxon, Mass and old dials on Churches, so when wandering around this Church looking for scratches and pocks on the walls, I suddenly remembered to look upwards. Over the porch I saw an old vertical lichen encrusted stone dial without a gnomon, which was indeed an added bonus. SRN 7360

10. Uppark South Harting (18xx). This horizontal dial, made by F Watkins, is placed on a fairly plain stone pedestal, and situated in the front of the National Trust property amongst the lavender. The websites for Uppark contain many photographs of this dial which illustrate its importance within the landscape of this property, literally five minutes away from where I live. SRN 2951