



The Recorder

Issue 9 April/May 2011

An Occasional Newsletter for BSS Recorders — Wyboston Edition

Welcome to the
2011 Conference
at Wyboston,
Huntingdonshire.
The County Coat of
Arms is shown
above.

In this Issue:

A rare old book
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Dials

REGISTER 2010

The fifth edition of the
Fixed Dial Register has
just been published.

DVD copies (fully
illustrated and
searchable) are still
available. Please
contact Elspeth Hill if
you would like one.

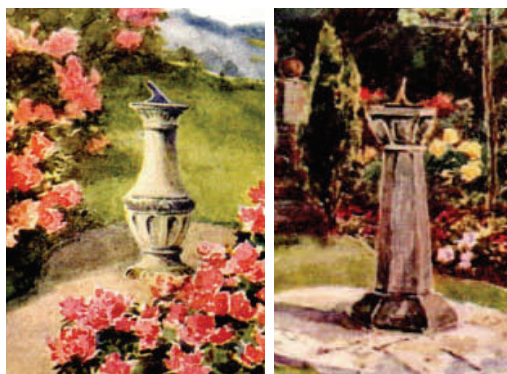
Do these dials still exist?

Long standing BSS Member John Ingram really started something when he acquired a box of Bassett-Lowke model trains way back in 2006!

In with them was a copy of Alfred Rawlings' "A Little Book of Sundial Mottoes" and in a very generous gesture John donated the book to the Society. The book is quite rare, and was clearly the inspiration for the later better known volume which includes the delightful drawings of Warrington Hogg. This little one contains four watercolours by Rawlings, each with an artist's soliloquy. Given the realistic nature of Rawlings' landscapes and seascapes, these were probably real existing dials. Maybe a BSS member reading this can identify one or other of them – perhaps by their pedestals and settings?

The mottoes are quite special too. There are 131 of them in all and surprisingly many do not forecast the doom and gloom that we have come to expect today. Of course several are well known, but some are not. Who, for example, has seen this gem on a dial?

*See the little day star moving,
Life and time are worth improving,
Seize the moments while they stay,
Seize and use them lest you lose them
And lament the wasted day.*



A few of the mottoes have their original dial identified, and it would be fun to check with the Register how many of those still exist.

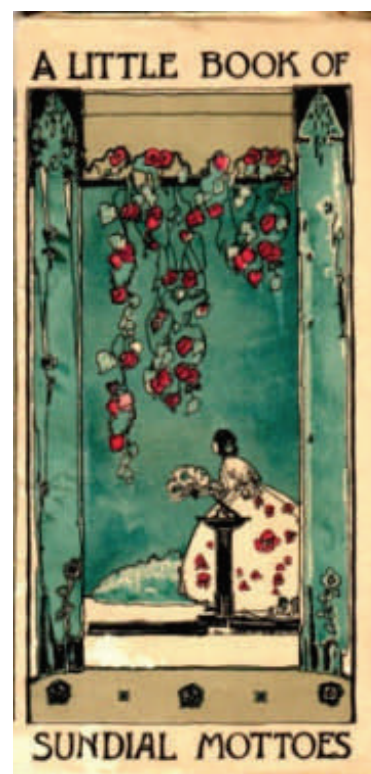
Interestingly, the booklet confirms the origin of the motto which has so often been quoted as representing fake dials: *Let Others tell of Storms and Showers I'll only Count your Sunny*



Hours. Its popularity stems from the fact that it was chosen by Queen Alexandra for the dial at Sandringham.

Thank you again John for a fascinating, as well as a valuable, gift to the Society.

Patrick Powers

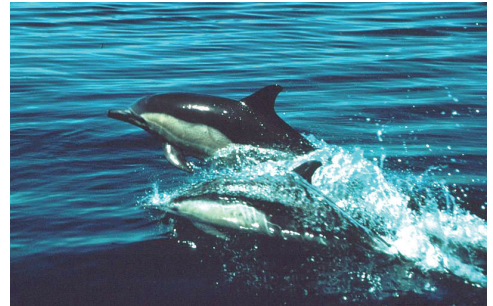


Dolphins Spotted in Cumbria

If you are planning a day out dial hunting, maybe I can help. Give me a location (a town or village, Grid Reference or Lat/Long), and I can send you a list of all the dials in the Register that are within x miles of that spot. If you want only those for which we have no photograph, or those which have not been visited for ten years (say), I can do that too. Please just ask and I will be pleased to help with such as these, and indeed more complicated, requests.

John Foad

Cumbria had more than its fair share of rain last year, but it was still a shock to hear from Robert Sylvester that he had spotted dolphins there! Sadly, I allowed an error to go through into the 2010 Register (not the only one, but the most unfortunate one). Chris Daniel's famous 'Dolphin Dial' can be found in the new Register not in Greenwich, Greater London, but in the newly invented town of Greenwich in Cumbria. I offer my heartfelt apologies, and will be sending an errata slip to those who have received the Register.



The Dialler's Tale

Back in the early pre-digital age (1994) I toured round a lot of dials in Hampshire since we had just moved into the area and it was fairly virgin territory as far as recorded dials were concerned. One Saturday I decided to visit Titchfield Abbey, since I had a postcard of the site and there seemed to be a vertical dial on the front of the gatehouse.

Titchfield Abbey is the ruins of a 13th century Premonstratensian abbey, later converted into a Tudor mansion. The church was rebuilt as a grand turreted gatehouse. More details can be found at

<http://www.englishheritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/titchfield-abbey/history-and-research/>

When I arrived it was clear that a wedding party was there. Everyone was attired in wedding dresses and suits, yet there was an air of them waiting for someone (not the bride – she was there). When I got my cameras and lenses out of the boot and put them in my bag I sensed I was the focus of attention and I heard comments like “at last the photographer's arrived”. As I walked towards the gatehouse people parted, which allowed me to get my camera out, fit the telephoto lens and focus on the sundial and take a few pictures. I then walked round to the side where I had spotted another dial (you can see both gnomons on the picture). I took pictures of that and returned to my car and beat a hasty retreat.

I still wonder whether the official photographer turned up!



Peter Ransom has memories of an early adventure



The Youlbury War Memorial, Oxfordshire

Tony Wood starts the tale:

Amongst the papers left by Edward Martin I came across a copy of a photograph, taken from a book, showing an elaborate War Memorial incorporating a sundial which was claimed to be the first which showed both Summer as well as Winter time. This seemed to be a significant dial and so I set about enquiring if it was still with us.

Youlbury itself was not easy to track down, but turned out to be Youlbury Wood at Boars Hill, just south of Oxford. The memorial was designed and set up by Sir Arthur Evans, the noted archaeologist and excavator of Knossos and the Minoan Civilisation on the Island of Crete. An area at Youlbury Wood is also the site of a Scouts Venture Training Centre, and enquiries of the local Scouts Leader in Gloucestershire produced a useful contact phone number and consequent reassurance that the memorial was still there – hidden away in the woods.

On my next visit to that part of the world I diverted to Youlbury and the Scouts Centre. Although they were sure that the memorial was there, nobody had actually seen it, but I was given vague directions. Enquiries at 'Youlbury Cottages' revealed that even the locals were not sure of the current state but that it was last seen as very overgrown. It was however only a hundred yards or so from a parking place on the woodland track. I was now late for a lunch appointment and regretfully had to call the search off at that point. However chatting with Ian Butson who is 'Our Man in Oxfordshire' produced an offer to go and try to find it – now read on!

... And Ian Butson now takes over:

Having readily accepted Tony's request to further seek out the memorial, a visit was duly made to the Youlbury Scout Centre, and more enquiries made about the location of the memorial. It was suggested that I contact the owner of the woodland estate on which the memorial stands. Having done so, I was most willingly met by the estate manager who accompanied me to the memorial in the woodland and who also explained about the recent restoration work that had been undertaken.

The memorial itself is constructed in the form of a seven foot high over topped stone sundial flanked by two stone pillars, set within a curved brick wall, at each end of which is a square pillar. Although having been restored after falling into disrepair in the long distant past, it had once again deteriorated in more recent years through general neglect and suffering from a degree of vandalism, as well as becoming very overgrown. About two



Tony Wood and Ian Butson track down a fine early dial showing British Summer Time

years ago it had been fully restored and the area cleared of overgrowing vegetation by the owner of the estate. The curved brick wall had been rebuilt using new bricks, some stone work replaced and the memorial inscription lettering reworked and gilded, restoring the whole to good order.

Originally installed in 1920 by Sir Arthur Evans, it commemorates friends and associates who were lost during the Great War of 1914-1918. The central pillar which carries the sundial supports a stone recalling the joyous hours spent by a youthful band of children who played in the woods, but who in later years were lost in the war, whilst the two side pillars mourn the losses. The names of those who perished are inscribed upon the face of the wall's coping stone. The memorial and the sundial are oriented towards the south-west and positioned upon a bank overlooking a view of the woodlands descending gently into a valley below, a most peaceful setting. The sundial itself indicates the hours with Arabic numerals for the 'New Summer Time' and in Roman numerals for the 'Old Time', perhaps being the first sundial to indicate this innovation following the introduction of British Summer Time in 1916. The dates of 1914-1918 are shown and also, as might be expected, we find the poignant message: "Horas non numero nisi serenas" (I count the sunny hours alone).



Do you know these dials?



Some of these dials may be in the Register, but I have not been able to track them down. Particularly interesting is the multiple dial on the left, photographed by Edward Martin, which I am sure we do not have recorded. If you recognise it, or either of the others, please let me know.

John Foad



CONTACT

To get in touch with me,
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I am always glad to hear of
a new dial or a new sight-
ing, or to supply further
details that we may hold of
currently registered dials.

And finally, from Hampshire – Peter Ransom's Top Ten Dials



*The Andover Millennium man.
Claire Norrington
was the artist who made it.*

1. Andover – Millennium man (2000). This is my favourite dial since I was instrumental in calculating and designing the east/west pair and orienting it correctly. SRN 4455
2. Otterborne – Cranbury Park (1720). Allegedly designed by Sir Isaac Newton and made by John Rowley. A large horizontal dial with much dial furniture. SRN 1714
3. Grately – St Leonard's Church (1784). A beautiful vertical south dial that was a gift by William Benson Earle – a relation of Alice Morse Earle? SRN2714
4. Portsmouth – HMS Excellent - Whale island (2000). A vertical declining dial with a declination line that commemorates the 'Glorious first of June 1794' on the oldest shore training establishment within the Royal Navy. Made by Harriet James. SRN 4364
5. Portsmouth – George Court, High St. (Date unknown). A 600mm diameter spherical dial set on the site where Nelson spent his last night on shore. The iron gnomon can still be moved. SRN 3726
6. Bramdean – St Simon & St Jude (1872). The first polar dial I discovered. Dials visible on all faces of this 3D cross dial. In memory of William Legge. SRN 2922
7. Corhampton – Parish Church (Saxon). One of five early octaval system dials in the county and the largest and most accessible. Since they have many common features I think there might have been one of the first gnomonists working in this area. SRN 3196
8. Ellingham - St Mary's Church (1720). A vertical declining dial in the form of an isosceles triangle at the top of the porch. What a dial under which to have a wedding photo taken! SRN 2916
9. Winchester – Winchester College, in the Election Chamber (16xx). A west declining glass dial with 'Ut umbra sic vita transit' and fly present. Lacks a gnomon. SRN 2293
10. Southampton – The Gregg School. A vertical west declining dial with a black background and sunray hours in gold busting forth from white clouds. Date unknown, but so integral to the house that it must have been incorporated as Townhill Park House (as it was before it became a school) was built. SRN 3725