

# The Recorder

*An Occasional Newsletter for BSS Recorders —Oxford Edition*

## Topics

- Mass Dials go International!
- Get the current EoT from your phone
- The 2005 Edition of the Register
- The WI Collection
- The BSS Museum Survey
- Some of the best Dials.

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## Mass Dials International

The picture about mass dials is gradually changing.

When we started collecting all the records together in one place for the first time and discovered there were so many in England, there was a tendency to regard mass dials as peculiarly English; not even Scottish or Welsh.

Now, eight or nine years later we are finding more and more evidence of mass dials in Continental Europe although England is still the most densely populated with them.

At least one author has suggested that their origin was English, even the West of England because that was where most records had been obtained.

Now, thanks to Bob Adams, we know that Lincolnshire is also very well provided with mass dials as are Kent, Sussex and

East Anglia, all in the east of England.

The 'dial deserts' of Cornwall and Lancashire remain however. Cornwall has been well explored by Len Burge and Carolyn Martin and it seems likely that there are practically none there.

Indeed, the recent digging up of the Crowan dial in Cornwall has led to speculation that early slate dials took the place of mass dials scratched on the south walls in other parts of England.

Now, in France in Touraine and the adjoining regions, François Pineau and Mike Cowham are finding relatively high concentrations of mass dials; but maybe that's because they are the first to look seriously there.

Again, Maria Koubenec in East Germany beavered away for several years and found many

there. She also compiled a really impressive bibliography—which included "Mediaeval sundials, worthless or valuable?"

There are Spanish and Italian accounts also as well as ones from Johan Wikander in Norway and Shaul Adam in Israel who between them cover the extremes of Europe and elsewhere.

England *may* have been the last outpost of mass dials, introduced after William's 1066 Conquest; and maybe that is why we have so many.

The Society retains all records of Continental mass dials which come its way but obviously we do not do much by way of processing them. They are sorted by country and available for any members to research if they wish.

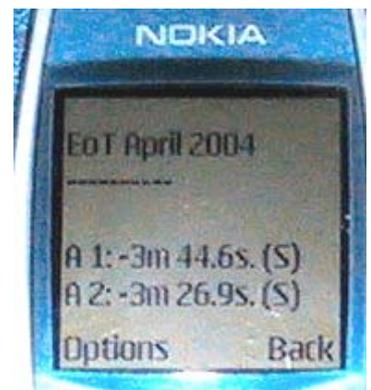
## EoT from your WAP-enabled phone

Have you ever discovered a dial and wondered if it was telling the correct time but not had with you the Equation of Time for the day?

Well, if you have a WAP-enabled mobile phone you can dial up and obtain the current EoT there and then in front of the dial. All you need to do is to store this bookmark:

<http://wmlproxy.google.com/wmltrans/h=en/g=/q=Sundials+horses/s=0/s=0/u=ourworld.compuserve.com@2Fhomepages@2Fpatrick@5Fpowers@2Ffeot2.htm/c=0>

Call it and then select the month to get a display like the one shown here for April 1st and 2nd this year. (S) indicates Dial Slow.



## The BSS Fixed Dial Register 2005

A new edition of the BSS Fixed Dial Register will be published later this year.

As a consequence of the many additional dial reports that have been received since the publication of the 2000 Edition this new Register will be twice the size and will be made available in two volumes roughly corresponding to the Northern and Southern Counties of the UK and the Island Dependencies. The exact County split will be chosen in order to achieve a similar size for the two volumes.

The format will be generally the same as that for the 2000

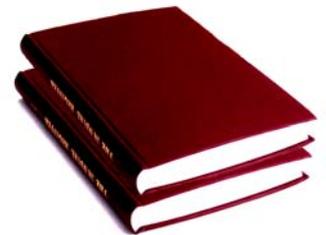
Edition although a glued binding will be used as standard. Hard backed editions like those illustrated may be purchased to special order and at extra cost.

It is also planned to publish a *Shorter Register*, as an A5 sized, glue bound edition which will just contain basic details. It has been designed to be a more portable reference to what dials exist and where.

Finally, it is planned at a somewhat later date, to issue the Register on CDROM in a similar format though with some additional facilities for search-

ing, greater resolution of images and, where they have been scanned, with copies of the original report forms that were submitted by Recorders.

All such versions will this time only be prepared to order but expressions of interest may be made at the Oxford Conference without financial commitment at this stage.



*Please help us plan for the next Edition of the Fixed Dial Register 2005 by letting us have details of which versions you are interested in purchasing. Pick up a form at the BSS desk at the Oxford Conference.*

## The WI Dial Collection—and a find!!

Following the decision to keep collections of dials together in the Society's archive it has finally been possible to enter all of the 200+ dials found by the Northamptonshire Women's Institute in that County. Their project was one of two designed to mark the Millennium. (The other was to walk and record the bounds of the entire County). Master-minded by Meg Mahew the innovative and imaginative sundial survey threw up a lot

of dials not known to the Register at that time. Naturally some of those dials found proved to be modern garden type dials but all would function as dials and all have been recorded. In amongst these were a few gems like this one, the second dial known to have been made by D Bolton of Kimbolton. This is a rare find when you consider that the first known dial by this maker was stolen some years ago.



Dial by Bolton of Kimbolton

*The Romans are known to have used both IIII and IV during the period of their Empire and even used VIIII as well as IX. The use of such numerals on dials and clocks is often queried*

## 'Numerals' on the Internet...

Readers will be aware of the excellent Sundial Mail List operated on the Internet by Daniel Roth. Recently the matter of usage of certain Roman numerals on dials was raised and whether or not it was more correct in designing new dials to use IV or IIII for 4am and 4 pm. Since this detail of dial furniture has been recorded for some time when new data is being en-

tered into the BSS Register, this prompted an examination of the database to see if it might be possible to determine their relative incidence.

A simple query showed that out of 446 dials which indicate 4am or 4pm and where such detail, has been entered, 273 use "IIII" and 173 use "IV".

One might perhaps expect on vertical dials to find IIII used

more on an East decliner where the pm time lines are more widely spaced and IV used more on a West decliner where they are closer together. However, in fact one finds that the position is that:

14 East decliners use IIII  
6 East decliners use IV  
15 West decliners use IIII, and  
4 West decliners use IV  
So there is no such apparent bias.

## The Sad Search for the UK's Most Recorded Dial...

Have you ever wondered which dial in the UK is the one that has been recorded most often by our wonderfully dedicated band of Recorders?

Now the number of times that a dial gets recorded changes all the time. Most of course have been seen only once or twice. At the time that this count was done there was still a fairly large backlog of recent reports to enter so for any one dial, the counts today will probably not be the same tomorrow. Nonetheless, a search of the database today shows that there are only 61 dials that have been four

times. **Sixteen** have been recorded six times and only **four** have been recorded six times.

Three of these four are Vertical Declining Dials and one is a cube dial, viz:

SRN 1947—The pair of dials at Shrewsbury Library

SRN 0501—That on the front of Dial House Rectory in Marlow

SRN0043—That on the East end of the Nave at St Cuthbert's Church, Wells, and

SRN 1346—The cube dial on a market cross at Acton, Nant-

wich.

But the one that wins the count having been recorded an amazing **seven** times is:

**SRN 2526—The original vertical declining dial at Stokesay Church in Shropshire.**

This is amazing enough but when you realise that the last record of this worn 19thC dial was the one that recorded its demise in 1999 it is even more remarkable.

Sadly SRN 2526 is reported to have been scrapped by the churchwardens in 1999 because it broke when it was removed. There is an excellent

replacement in SRN 4179 but it is still very sad to lose such a popular and well documented friend.



The old dial at Stokesay Church before it was scrapped.

## The Museums Survey—an Update

At the Yarnfield conference the suggestion was made that we might publish some information on dial collections held by museums. Tony Wood went in search and wrote a lot of letters.

Two recent returns from adjacent museums in Hertfordshire look as though they may be holding mass dials; all most intriguing as the only other museum to make a similar claim is in Bedfordshire, right next door.

Our Registrar, who lives in Hertfordshire, has been asked to chase up these dials and as a start, produced a couple of websites about the original locations of one set of dials

held at Letchworth Garden City – a prime haunted chapel with an equally haunted website.

Wardown Park in Luton, told us of an Edward Nairne dial they had and we were able to fill them in with his biography, much to their delight.

We are also finding lots of new makers for Jill Wilson's next edition of Dialmakers' Biographies.

Many returns have said 'No – but there is a dial nearby' which is a helpful effort as is 'Do human dials count?'

RAF Hendon said they had some sun compasses, which are, of course, sundials in reverse. Tony now asks all muse-

ums about these and has apparently turned up another one.

He had meant to include 'miners' dials' without comment in his listing of Dublin's dials and wait for the response but Mike Cowham has actually provided a photo in the March Bulletin.

Finally, thanks to Ian Butson for chasing up dials at the Clockmakers' Museum, Guildhall in London. This was in response to Tony's appeal in the last Newsletter. Ian has also visited the Mechanical Music Museum near Stowmarket in Suffolk where, guess what, there is one dial,

An equally unlikely looking prospect was the Lace Museum in Honiton in Devon who tell us of one dial with a maker's name, and a new maker at that. We await a reply from the Cycle Museum at Harlow as it's known that they certainly did have a dial there.

Next museum you visit, just ask, you never know!

The above museums constitute a good selection for Tony's regular Newsletter contribution "At a museum near you".

## Researching a dial or dial maker?

If you have an interest in researching dials of a particular type or maker or if you simply want to know how common or otherwise certain dial types and recorded features are, do not hesitate to ask: either of these gentlemen:

**Fixed Dials:.**  
Patrick Powers  
16 Moreton Avenue  
Harpenden  
Herts AL5 2ET  
patrick\_powers@dunelm.org.uk

**Mass Dials:**  
Tony Wood  
5 Leacey Court  
Churchdown  
Gloucester GL3 1LA  
aowood@soft-data.net

*If you have an interest in researching dials of a particular type or by a particular maker do not hesitate to make contact.*



**The British Sundial Society**

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The British Sundial Society was formed in 1989 and is a thriving and friendly Society of nearly 600 members. Its objects are to advance the education of the public in the art and science of gnomonics and the knowledge of all types of sundial; to catalogue and advise on the restoration of sundials that still exist in the British Isles, and to research their history. In addition to publishing the Bulletin and other books, it organises meetings and a major conference every year.

**Secretary: Douglas Bateman,  
The British Sundial Society,  
4 New Wokingham Road, Crowthorne, Berks  
RG45 7NR. Phone: +44 (0)1344 772303  
BSS Web Site: <http://www.sundialsoc.org.uk>**

*The Registers of the British Sundial Society are formed from archived written records each certified by the individual dial recorder and accompanied by photographic prints or transparencies.*

*The main data on the forms and (since 1998) a scan of one or more of the photographs of the dial and a scan of the form itself are recorded on a relational database for subsequent search, identification and retrieval.*

*The database content forms the basis of the Register which is published at intervals and which is made available to Members at a competitive price.*

*Searches of the databases can be made for research purposes upon application to the Registrar (for Fixed Dials) or to the Mass Dial Group Coordinator (for Mass Dials) at the addresses on page three..*

## And finally, are these Contenders for the Top Ten Dials in the Country...?

At the Yarnfield Conference interest was expressed in the idea of publishing lists of the top ten dials in each County. No-one has come forward so far with their ideas for this but we would be happy to publish any suggestions. In the meantime one might also ask what might be considered the top ten dials of the Country. Surely these would be contenders for this crown?

However, if you know better please do let Patrick Powers know..

Top left: SRN 0010, Queens' College, Cambridge.

Top right: SRN 3121, Double Horizontal dial by J Seller.

Bottom: SRN 2157 The Dolphin Dial at Greenwich.

