



An Occasional Newsletter for BSS Recorders —Latimer Place Edition

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A Declining Horizontal...?

A declining vertical, Yes, but what exactly would a declining horizontal be? SRN 1086 stands a few yards out from the main entrance to Westminster College, Cambridge. It is a simple square dial made by Francis Barker's workshops at Clerkenwell, with the motto

"Non Numero Horas Nisi Serenas", and was first recorded by Margaret Stanier in 1991. It is a good dial, but nothing out of the ordinary until we realise that the noon line is offset from the mid-line of the plate so that the dial can stand parallel to the frontage of the

building, which faces somewhat West of South. It seems a simple idea and maybe it was often copied, but it's hard to recall any other examples from the Register.

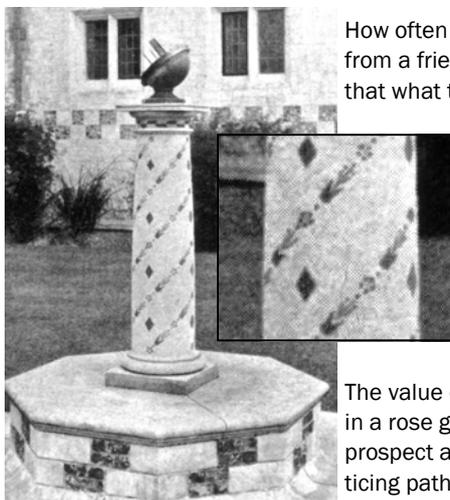


SRN 1086—Westminster College, Cambridge

There has been a Manor at Latimer since 1194 but Latimer House (now Latimer Place) gets its name from Edward III's gift of it to William Latimer in 1331. Later bought by William, Lord Cavendish of Hardwick, it is his Coat of Arms that decorates the building today and which heads this Newsletter. Permission to use the Arms is gratefully acknowledged.

Editor: John Foad. Layout: Patrick Powers. Contributors: John Foad, Chris Daniel, Patrick Powers and Irene Brightmer.

There's a Lovely Sundial in that Garden...!



SRN 6365—Marshcourt, Hants

How often have you heard that from a friend, only to discover that what they really meant was "There's a really nice pedestal"? To many less obsessed than ourselves, the pedestal IS the sundial, and there is a lot to commend that view.

The value of a horizontal dial in a rose garden, or as the prospect at the end of an enticing path, lies firstly in the beauty of the support. The

architect Lutyens, who designed many gardens with his friend Gertrude Jekyll, appreciated this, and designed a number of unique pedestals. In the case illustrated here, however, it was indeed topped with a worthy dial, a very early P&G helio-chronometer. This dial is, or was at Marshcourt, Stockbridge, Hampshire. Marshcourt was used as a school in the 1950's and was recently on the market. Would any member like to investigate the current situation?

High Time...?

Some of these inaccessible dials are known to be follies – placed simply to enhance the view from the nearby House. Are all of them really such? Could it really be that some were originally intended to be read, perhaps even from horseback?

We would not expect to come across a dial mounted so high that it cannot be read without a stepladder, but several are



SRN 1306—The Meadows, Edinburgh

to be found.

SRN 1306 for instance, in *The Meadows* at Edinburgh, has a pedestal some 5' 6" high. It was erected to commemorate the opening of the International Exhibition of Industry, Science and Art in 1886 and is surmounted by a small armillary sphere. This dial may be for show only. The pierced numerals in the hour ring are attractive against the sky, but would be hard to read, even close up.

SRN 1958, with a nice old octagonal plate and the date 1795 on the gnomon, is another matter. It stands in the churchyard at Weston in Not-

tinghamshire, and is well above eye level. Today it will never be read by the normal passer by, but may it perhaps have been designed for use by gentlemen on horseback? Did they really ride through the churchyard? And are many more such dials to be found? We have at least one other in the Register, a slate Melvin dial on another 5' 6" pillar, at a house in St Buryan, Cornwall. It was reported in 1992, but the description is scant. Can we have photographs, please, from the next member passing that way?

Let's Face it...

We've all admired them and many of us have reported them but we haven't always recorded them. We're talking here of cube dials in their various forms. We have no fewer than 199 cube dials recorded

in the database today but only in about half those cases (actually 102) are even the numbers of dial faces recorded to any degree of certainty!

detail and, as with the recent move to record more details of horizontal dials, maybe we should pay some similar attention to the recording of cube and prism dials?

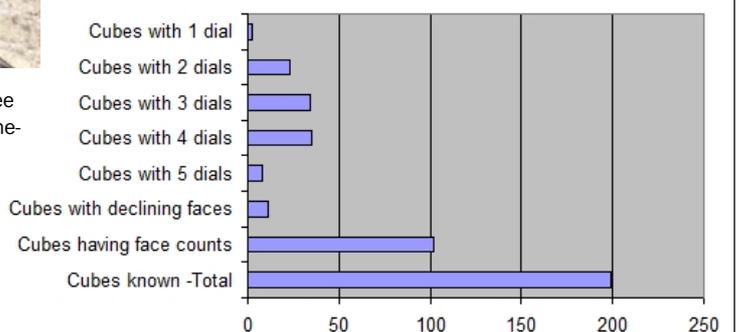


SRN 0023—The declining three face cube dial at Bourton-on-the-Water

Of course much of this uncertainty arises from the early days of dial recording when a dial face that was worn away often wasn't recorded. On top of that and in the early days too, the database wasn't always populated with such detail. However as times change and the technology improves we can now often see, photograph and record much more

There are a good 97 dials out there where we haven't yet got a handle on how many faces they have! When you are next out and about do look at your copy of the Register to see if there are any cube dials nearby where you might be able to improve our knowledge.

Recorded 'Cube' and Prismatic Dials



A Mystery Globe Dial...

An important exhibition to mark Liverpool's year as European capital of culture has just closed before crossing the Atlantic to the USA. The exhibition explored Joseph Wright of Derby's three years in Liverpool in the 18thC. The paintings were from public and private collections in several countries, and other painters influenced by Wright were also represented. One of these artists was William Tate

(1748-1806) who was Wright's pupil. "*Man and Woman in a Landscape with a Gate and Sundial*" is the title in the catalogue of a fine work by Tate, from around 1773. The size and scale of the figures, the dress of the woman and the pose of the man are said to closely resemble Wright's work in the immediately preceding years. But of interest to us is the globe sundial in the foreground and with 'XII' just visi-



ble, but placed almost off the picture on the right. The gaze of the couple appears to be focused on the sundial, and the man even seems to be pointing to it. Who are these people? Unusually, they are not named. And where is this place? Might the sundial help us to locate and name them? Can anyone help?



A Mass Dial Desert?

Is North Wales really a mass dial 'desert' or has it just not been fully explored? Or were mass dials scraped away when the old limewash was removed from so many North Wales churches in the 19thC?

Irene Brightmer embarked on a personal quest to record the

'first' mass dial there and, on the way, had the fun of visiting the usual variety of grand and modest mediaeval churches, many dedicated to early Celtic saints, some in remote hills, some redundant—though their churchyards are often still well kept—some open but many closed. Despite the searches,

there were no mass dials. But she was rewarded with fine and interesting horizontal and vertical dials, some not yet in the Register, and even with 'new' 18thC makers like Joyce and Lewis Thomas. Sadly, though, she also found many churchyards with empty pedestals, some of which had

dialplates reported as recently as the 1980s, although others had already lost gnomons or dialplates a century ago. Some of these pillars are actually the cut down stems of pre-Reformation crosses. It seems poignant that they have lost their purpose twice over!

A Theft from Belmont House, can you help?

The reporting and recording of sundials for the *Register* may not always provide sufficient descriptive and photographic data to enable the sundial to be reconstructed should the demand arise. However, such a record may at least enable a stolen sundial to be publicised, if not to assist in its actual recovery.

Last year, in the early summer of 2007, an 18th Century

bronze horizontal sundial by George Adams of London was stolen, together with its entire pedestal, from the beautiful grounds of the old two acre kitchen garden of Belmont House, restored in recent years by Lady Arabella Lennox-Boyd. As it happened, the gnomon had been removed some time earlier by the Curator of Belmont House, since she had found it to be loose

and considered that it would be safer in her office.

Belmont House, set in fine parkland at Throwley, lies some four miles to the south of Faversham in Kent. It is a charming 18th century mansion, which has been the country seat of the Harris family since 1801. It is superbly furnished and also houses the unique clock collection, formed by the 5th Lord Harris.

As it happens, the dial had been recorded by Tony Wood, who was able to provide photographs of the instrument. Thus, it is just possible, if unlikely, that this sundial may resurface and that its recording may help identify it, in which case it would be nice to see it restored to Belmont House.



The stolen dialplate & its pedestal



The British Sundial Society

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The British Sundial Society was formed in 1989 and is a thriving and friendly Society of several hundred 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.

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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 in various forms 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, John Foad or to the Mass Dial Group Coordinator, Tony Wood at the addresses to be found in any Bulletin

And finally, Kent's Excellent Sundials—John Foad's Choice

John writes: "This year, as your new Registrar, I thought I'd introduce you to the wonderful dials of Kent.

It is hard to choose just ten, but these are some of my favourites.

Top has to be the Leeds Castle dial by my hero Hogben, who designed so many Kentish dials, and the castle with its grounds is one of the most beautiful in the country, never mind the county. Check summer garden opening times for Sandwich and Boughton Monchelsea; the others can be visited at any time.

Phone Maidstone Museum before you go as the dial is in store, but they will be happy to get it out for you and it is a delight".

John's Kentish Crackers ...

1. **Leeds Castle** Designed, delineated and signed by Thomas Hogben, but possibly made in the London workshops of Thomas Wright. SRN 0406
2. **Sandwich** A beautiful Lutyens vertical, with the unusual motto "Clock and Dial agree April 16, June 15, Sep 1, Dec 25". SRN 3320
3. **Dartford** A declining and reclining dial on the interior ledge of a window at Holy Trinity Church. SRN 4763
4. **Tunbridge Wells** Church of King Charles the Martyr. Bold colourful 1771 vertical by Alex Rae. SRN 2182
5. **Barham** An 8 foot 18th century multiple, in good condition. SRN 1709
6. **Boughton Monchelsea** A complex 17th century horizontal with extensive furniture, in a beautiful setting. First in the Register!! SRN 0001
7. **Biddenden** A vertical dial on a simple farmhouse in an elaborately carved surround. Unusual and well worth seeking out. SRN 5184
8. **Tenterden** Trapezoidal church vertical of 1836 with seven declination lines and zodiacal symbols. In need of restoration. SRN 0626
9. **Maidstone Museum** A charming small double horizontal by John Allen. Made in 1632, possibly as a 'passing out' piece at the end of his apprenticeship. SRN 6035
10. **Chatham** Piers Nicholson's Millennium dial made for the Royal Engineers at Brompton Barracks. Stainless steel polar dial on a plinth of exactly 2000 bricks. SRN 4277



SRN 0406—Leeds Castle