

The Recorder



An Occasional Newsletter for BSS Recorders —Cambridge Edition

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The 'Terminator' Unmasked?

Way back in 1987 Andrew Somerville, BSS's first Chairman, visited Glasgow University and recorded a dial there. It was and still is, known as *Kelvin's Globe* because it is a spherical dial believed to have been designed by Lord Kelvin himself. As befits a true Scottish dial, it has several supplementary dials attached, four direct vertical dials around its circumference and one horizontal one mounted at the top. The globe is engraved with the continents of the world and with 24 meridian



Kelvin's Globe Dial

lines. At the time, Andrew recorded it as a dial of the sort where the time is shown by the position of the shadow terminator and, as SRN 1521 it is still so described in *Register 2005* today. No one else has recorded the dial in the twenty years since. But earlier this year, Matthew Trainer, a Member of the Physics Department contacted the Society because this year marks the centenary of Lord Kelvin's death and since the dial appeared to be tilted it was thought a good idea to straighten it. The tilt of course

was simply the orientation of the axis of the dial to true North so that problem was solved. However the close up photographs of it from the East showed that the Noon line was on the South facing surface. It could not be a terminator design.

More e-mails and further photographs showed that there were traces of a set of 24 vanes set around the sphere - rather like those on the (more recent) globe dial at Regent's Park Zoo. The vanes have been removed at some time in the past and need to be restored for this dial which, far from being a nearly unknown dial brought from its original location to Glasgow, is actually the oldest vane globe dial on record.

The Strange Case of Half a Motto—Can you help?

This Edition

The livery for this edition has been based on the official Cambridge Light Blue and Cambridge Deep Blue colours together with the University Crest. We are grateful for permission to use these identifiers in this Newsletter.

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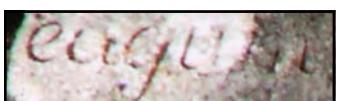


Dial at St Andrew's Kenn

In his researches on Mrs Crowley and her many drawings, BSS Member John Lester came

across an unrecorded dial on St Andrew's Church, Kenn in Devon. Trouble is that it is split vertically into two and the left half is missing. The date of the dial is divided between the top two corners (so we only have a date of ??83) and there is some writing in between. It seems to be "...eagum".

Now, this does not accord with any such sequence of letters in any of our many hundred recorded mottoes and (apart from Eagum being the name of a village in Holland) there is no mention of it anywhere.



The perplexing half motto

Gatty doesn't even mention a dial of that sort at Kenn (though she hopes a pillar dial is still there) and there is no mention of one in *Sundials and Roses of Yesterday* either. So, what is it?

Could Members visiting that part of the world try and solve the mystery for us?

Chatsworth and our Chairman...

The dial at Chatsworth is, as many Members have pointed out, very similar to many others at stately homes of a similar date. Perhaps the nearest in appearance is that at Castle Howard but there are many others. Sadly many of these dials are so corroded that we shall probably never know their makers or their dates of manufacture

In the last Society Newsletter we were rather impolite to suggest that somehow BSS Member Peter Baxandall was 'at fault' for showing so dramatically that The Register's list of dials at stately homes was incomplete! Peter and his wife had sat down to watch the film version of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* - the one in which Keira Knightley stars as Elizabeth Bennet.

There, in scene 12 of the DVD, Elizabeth runs out of Pemberley onto the rear terrace and, in turning to go down the steps we see, on the end of the balustrade, a lovely horizontal dial with an elaborately pierced gnomon.

Now, in the film, it is Chatsworth that is used to represent Darcy's house, Pemberley, and the implication was that this dial was indeed at Chatsworth.

Yet no such dial has ever been recorded by us as being at Chatsworth.

Furthermore, if it was there, how could it have escaped our collective attention for so long?

Well, this little Newsletter item provided the greatest response ever from our Members, both home and abroad, with all sorts of suggestions. However, it was left to our esteemed Chairman, Chris Daniel, to confess that he had photographed this dial in 1977 (yes, well nigh 30 years ago!) but had never thought to record it.

So, the dial does exist at Chatsworth and it's just that the area at the SE corner of the house has since been placed out of bounds to visitors which explains why no one else has got to record it



The horizontal dial at Chatsworth as it was in September 1977

in the meantime. Now that we know the 'culprit' - Oops, I should have said "our very first recorder", (!) we clearly must now make our 'peace' with Peter who has of course done the Society a very great service by noticing this matter in the first place.

All in a (Saint's) name?

It's odd how something quite unconnected with one interest can sometimes force one to think a little laterally and differently about another.

One interesting example of this has recently arisen from no less an unusual discipline than the etymology of place names.

A subject of interest in its own right of course but the purchase of a second hand copy of 'English Place Names' by HG Stokes (1949 ed) led to one of these moments. There on page 52 we read:

"One of the features of a holiday in Cornwall, by the way, is



the number of strange saints encountered. Nearly every signpost records a saint – yet among them all there is hardly one to be heard of outside the Duchy. The explanation is said to be that in the early days it was an old Cornish custom to canonise the founder of a church. The same custom was followed in Brittany by those

who crossed the sea from Cornwall".

Now, there is no reference for this statement by which to prove its validity but if the practice of sanctifying church founders could indeed spread from England to France maybe we should be more prepared than perhaps we have been until now, to think that some aspects of dialling and possibly even mass dialling, could have spread to France from Britain rather than always the other way round.

An interesting thought.

The Benefits of Technology

It's always nice to understand and even to use the old graphical techniques for dial design but, as many of us know, there are also advantages to using calculators and computers to simplify that task.

However, these days the use of computers in gnomonics is

not limited to dial design. BSS uses a computer database to record dial sightings and nowadays too the Internet can be a useful tool in helping to locate dials.

Take a case that came across the Registrar's desk recently. Members will know of Tony Wood's sterling work in con-

tacting UK museums to enquire about any dials that they may have in their collections. Well the Register does not generally record dials that are already recorded in other collections like museums but sometimes, as in this case, an enquiry elicits a response about a dial that is somewhere else.

When Tony contacted the *Hook Norton Brewery and Village Museum* to see if they had any dials, the answer from curator Barbara Hicks was "No but there is one on the wall on Dial House, in Hook Norton, and it has been there for probably over 100 years".

A dial Recorder's nightmare. No grid reference, no proper address and no details but clearly a dial that we should record. Tony duly sent in a form - an unusually blank form for Tony in view of the near complete lack of information.

What could one do with this? Well, because the village is quite small we could immedi-

ately get an approximate grid reference and Lat/Long of the village centre by typing 'Hook Norton' into Multimap. However typing 'Dial House Hook Norton' into Google throws up the fact that the address belongs to a firm of Accountants and gives a post code! Putting this postcode back into Multimap shows that Dial House is somewhere on the South side of the High Street and a better estimate for location is thereby obtained. Sadly, nothing about the dial itself and of course Multimap locations based on postcodes only reflect the midpoint of all properties with the same code. Nevertheless modern technol-



SRN 5363 at Dial House

ogy had helped locate the dial and enabled its location to be entered into the Register. All in a few minutes and all from one's desk too!

Some months later Tony visited the High Street and took the much needed photograph and details. SRN 5363 was at last properly recorded.

Which way did you say?

Perhaps our gentle readers are unaware of the difference between 'report' and 'record' as regarded by the Registrar.

A 'report' comes in from our man (or woman) in the field and a record is what finally appears in the Register and is (hopefully) filed away in the dusty archives.

Checking, amending and a bit of extending are what the Registrar does before setting things into firm print.

He starts probably with 'County?' - they change about our ears and I'm still none too sure where South Gloucestershire should appear. Ploughing on, correcting the odd typo - through 'height a.g.l. 500cm'??? and converting Imperial to Metric; remembering that mass dials have a radius but their gnomon holes have a diameter, he finally looks at the photograph!

Which is what happened with Milton Abbey Church at Milton Abbas; a very old and respectable dial reported by Andrew James, a very respected 'man in the field'. It is one of those dials so old it might be 'transitional' which is a whole extra story but meant that both Registrars looked at it -



SRN 4444 - Milton Abbas

as we do - and finally noticed a respectable vertical dial with clockwise numbers. By the way, it was inverted as well.

AOW to PP - Numbers wrong way round - off a transparency?

PP to ALJ - Numbers wrong way round - could you check the print?

ALJ to PP (fwd AOW) - Can't remember details but you view from the emulsion side and so - etc. etc. I don't think any mistake by printer and I'm sure I loaded the film right side out!

After a few more e-mails it was decided it was correctly photographed but we noted its 'need to sort it out one day' status - in other words, forgotten.

Fast forward two or three years and I am surfing the net having Googled 'mass dials' (and meeting myself) and came across 'Dorset Church Histo-

ries' which featured Milton Abbey done in depth. The dial was there of course and the local historian (who kindly acknowledged us 'en passant') noted that the numerals mysteriously went the wrong way round.

The confirmation was most gratifying and the explanation of a straightforward error by the mason seems indeed to be the most likely. The upside-down bit is a further mystery but probably just due to re-building. Our historian in Dorset didn't further adduce that it was from carving horizontals, which was cautious and astute as they would have been quite rare in the early days of 'mass or is it scientific?' dials; I imagine.

So, all's well that ends well, but I still want to go and have a look myself one day.

A tailpiece to the above is that I recently came across a couple of fixed horizontal dials (in England too) with numerals going the wrong way round - noted at the final check of actually studying the photographs, and so - straight into the 'sort it out one day' tray!

In this issue, Tony Wood, our Mass Dial Coordinator, reflects on the vicissitudes affecting those who enter other people's data into a Register. The Milton Abbas dial is in Register 2005 under SRN 4444

Oh Yes, and just for the record (no pun intended on Tony's excellent article!), and perhaps to stop others from writing in, South Gloucestershire is not a County; it is merely an administrative part of the geographical County of Gloucestershire. BSS Registers classify location by geographical Counties and Areas, not by administrative entities - Ed.



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 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, at the addresses to be found in any Bulletin.

And finally, Gloucestershire's Great Sundials—Tony Wood's Choice

These listings of the favourites of some of our most prolific recorders have become something of a tradition now.. Last year it was Ian Butson's choice for Essex. This time Tony Wood submits his ten favourite dials of Gloucestershire; not an easy task given that more than 400 are known there!

He writes: "My all time favourite has to be that at St Mary's at Great Witcombe. I have always claimed this dial to be the clearest in Gloucestershire, maybe England. It has a razor thin gnomon. One of the most beautiful mass dials is that at Hardwicke. The dials at Wotton-under-Edge, Mickleton and Chipping Campden are bright and cheerful and the cube dial at Bourton-on-the-Water is a conceit with its setting at 45 degrees to the cardinal points and its curlicued gnomons.

Carry your copy of Register 2005 with you when you visit...!"

Tony's Gloucestershire Favourites ...

1. **Great Witcombe** - The West decliner on St Mary's Church tower - SRN 3165
2. **Hardwicke** - St Nicholas, - The mass dial on the East quoin stone of the West buttress of the tower. A design set entirely in pocks - MDR 0232
3. **Churchdown** - The horizontal dial in St John's Church yard - SRN 3192
4. **Wotton-under-Edge** - The vertical direct South dial over the porch of St Mary's Church - SRN 3622
5. **Mickleton** - The recently restored gold and black vertical direct South dial over St Lawrence's porch door - SRN 1428
6. **Coleford** - The large wooden outdoor horizontal dial at the Cyril Hart Arboretum - SRN 5262
7. **Chipping Campden** - The Art Deco East declining dial at Dial Cottage, Blind Lane - SRN 4240
8. **Naunton** - The two colourful vertical dials at St Andrew's Church - see one, get one free! - SRNs 1108, 1109
9. **Sandhurst** - The Arabic numbered transitional mass dial at roof height at St Lawrence's Church - SRN 3222
10. **Bourton-on-the-Water** - The cube dial over the porch at the Dial Post Hotel - SRN 0023



*The clear winner! SRN 3165
- Great Witcombe*