

# WILLIAM E. A. AXON, LANCASHIRE SUNDIALS

*Published 1890 - 1900*

This is a small booklet of *BYGONE LANCASHIRE* with 7 pages about **Lancashire Sundials** By WILLIAM E. A. AXON, M.R.S.L.

Dr. William Edward Armytage Axon (1846-1913) was a librarian and antiquary. He was, for around 30 years, a journalist for the Manchester Guardian newspaper and he contributed to the Dictionary of National Biography, using his initials W. E. A. A.

His small book on Lancashire Sundials commences with extracts of poems by Wordsworth and Whittier.

“The shepherd lad, who in the sunshine carves  
On the green turf a dial, to divide  
The silent hours ; and who to that report  
Can portion out his pleasures, and adapt  
His round of pastoral duties, is not left  
With less intelligence for moral things  
Of gravest import.”

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (*The Excursion*, Book iv.)

“With warning hand I mark Time’s rapid flight  
From life’s glad morning to its solemn night ;  
Yet through the dear God’s love, I also show  
There’s Light above me by the Shade below.”

—J. G. WHITTIER (*Inscription on a Sundial*).

He then goes on to list some Lancashire sundials, mentioning their dates and mottoes, making reference throughout to the Book of Sun-Dials by Mrs. Gatty. In a note, he writes:

The best authority on sundials is the volume due to the zeal and interest of the late Mrs. Alfred Gatty. A third edition of her “Book of Sundials” was, in 1890, published by Messrs. George Bell and Sons, and forms a handsome quarto volume of nearly 600 pages. It is illustrated by many charming sketches of sundials, remarkable for their quaint design or picturesqueness of form or situation. The new edition is edited by Mrs. H. K. F. Eden (the daughter of the authoress) and Miss Eleanor Lloyd, and there is an appendix, in which the construction of dials is dealt with by Mr. W. Richardson. The book is already a standard one.

Sundials mentioned in **Lancashire Sundials** include:

A vertical sundial on a house in Rochdale.

A dial formerly on Manchester Church.

A dial formerly on a cottage in Clarendon Street, Hulme.

In Aldingham Churchyard with the inscription:

“Use the present time,  
Redeem the past ;  
For thus uncertainly,  
Though imperceptibly,  
The night of life approaches.”

A dial originally from Belfield Hall, inscribed:

“Vt hora praeterita  
sic fugit vita.  
1612 A.B.

(As the hour that is past, so doth life fly.)

At Cartmel a dial of 1727 by Russell Casson.

A dial at Chorley Church with the motto:

*Sine sole sileo*  
(without the sun I am silent)

At Garstang Churchyard a dial of 1757 with:

*Pereunt et imputantur.*  
(They pass by and are reckoned.)

A dial at Knowsley, with four dials supported by eagles, probably from the crest of the Stanley family.

At Shaw there used to be a copper horizontal dial:

“Abuse me not, I do no ill ;  
I stand to serve thee with good will ;  
As careful, then, be sure thou be  
To serve thy God as I serve thee.”

He also quotes this short poem:

“THE DIAL’S LESSON.  
To none is given  
Pow’r to delay,  
Told off in Heaven  
Passeth each day.  
Be thou not fruitless,  
Work, while ’tis day ;  
Trifling were bootless,  
Watch thou and pray.”