



Topics in this Issue

- A Coronation Conundrum
- Beccles—an epilogue milestone
- The Archive's New Home
- Further information requested
- Counting Sunny Hours
- Mass Dials—where did it end?
- Essex's excellent dials

A Coronation Conundrum...

Perhaps rather oddly there are only nine sundials in *Register 2005* that commemorate past Coronations in some way. Only four of these are horizontal dials and only one of these properly marks the commemoration on the dial itself. That dial (SRN 5561) marks the Coronation of George VI in 1937 with arms in the centre and an inscription around its periphery. Apart from its curious siting in a cemetery (though it has to be said, a cemetery having the 'apt' address of *Bury Lane, Epping!*), this dial is really not much to write home about. Indeed it has every appearance of being an example of the commemorative garden sundial of its day having, as it does, the Royal Arms at its centre and an inscription round the outside.

Yet on close examination the inscription seems oddly incom-



SRN 5561

plete. It reads: "GEORGIVS VI DEI GRATIA BRITT OMN REX CORONATION 1937" whereas one might have expected that the inscription would have included the King's other major title "IND IMP" - Emperor of India—but not so; even though there is clearly sufficient space.

Now, however, another dial has turned up in a private collection with remarkable similarities. Although this one is octagonal it has the *identi-*

cal arms in the centre and the inscription "GEORGIVS DEI GRATIA BRITT OMN REX CORONATION". So, to which King George might *this* dial refer?

Could it be that the second dial refers to a King George before Victoria's elevation to Empress? The Royal Arms certainly look older than modern day ones.

Perhaps this is indeed an earlier commemorative dial whose artwork was 'lifted' for use in the 1937 Coronation dial now in Epping? If so then the design and possibly the second dial itself could be quite old.



Beccles—an epilogue 'milestone'

We are pleased in this edition of *The Recorder* to use a livery based on the colours of the County Palatine of Durham—the lands ruled by the Prince Bishops until 1536—but whose shades are still seen today in the colours of Durham University. Permission to use the logo and colours is gratefully acknowledged



Members will remember last year's discussion in the *Bulletin* about the curious holes in the lettering of the old dial at Beccles Church and Roger Bowling's and Harriet James' separate subsequent comments that they were made to provide a key for a lead infill. No remaining evidence of lead was to be found at Beccles but, undaunted, our redoubt-

able researcher Ian Butson reports a milestone 20 miles from Bury St Edmunds where the very same technique has been used and where some lead is still in place. It is interesting to see that the holes are much smaller in proportion to the letters than those at Beccles. Maybe exactly as Roger surmised, this was indeed why the lead on the dial fell out?

The Fixed Dial Archive's New Home...

Anne's original filing system had the convenience that the archive could be perused without a need for prior consultation with the database but the number of occasions on which advantage was taken of this was minimal. Files deposited under the new system cannot easily be perused in the same way but the database can easily be used to identify all that is needed from the new archive.

During the first years of the Society Anne Somerville maintained the not inconsiderable archive of submitted forms and photographs in her own home. At the time she died this took the form of a four drawer filing cabinet of copy report forms, a series of metal boxes holding photographic prints and other boxes holding submitted slides.

Both report forms and photographs were filed by County and then by SRN with all items of an individual dial's record being held together.

After Anne's death the Council decided that the forms and photographs would have to be placed into commercial storage and that we could not then justify such a high maintenance approach to filing.

Accordingly a new much easier system has now been adopted, one which makes use of the database for the location of records. Submitted forms and their photographs are now not split and filed by County but rather they are kept together in sleeves and are simply filed by the Report's serial number in boxes of 250 submissions.

Not only does this *much* reduce the work of the Registrar but it also permits rather more material to be archived where that might have been submitted by a Recorder. Perhaps just as importantly it also permits us to keep together those specific collections of dials that have been bequeathed by Members to the Society on their death.

The old files have not been re-filed, only the new forms are being filed in the new way.

Access to records in the Archive for research or other purposes can be had by contacting the Registrar.

Further information requested...

There are currently 80 dials in Register 2005 where further information has been requested. Any BSS Recorder finding such a comment against the entry for a dial near them is invited to send in a further sighting record - hopefully one that can add to the knowledge that we have about it.

There are several instances in *Register 2005* of incomplete descriptions of dials, many through no fault of the original Recorder. They may have only been seen from a distance,



Is it a dial? SRN 5965, Lloyd Park, London

from low down, in a newspaper or even only on television!

However close up one may get though, a few sightings still leave one to wonder. SRN 5965 in Lloyd Park, Walthamstow, London is a case in point. It has the appearance of a 30ft analemmatic dial but it has no proper date scale on

which to stand and it has three scales yet no numerals. The curator of the nearby Wm Morris Gallery says "*The area you refer to is not actually a sundial. I understand that it was originally intended to form part of a war memorial, but it was not completed and as far as I am aware was never dedicated.*" Apparently a time capsule was placed under it in 2000 but information on that is also unclear. So, is it a dial? Some measurements are clearly needed!

Counting Sunny Hours

It is certainly true that mottoes like *Sunny Hours* or *I'll Only Count Your Sunny Hours* are generally regarded as pointers to doubtful or fake dials.

Yet, the Latin originator of these mottoes *Non Numero Horas Nisi Serenas* (*I count no hours that are not bright*) has an excellent pedigree and is arguably the second most common motto after *Tempus Fugit*. Indeed the slightly expanded English version of the motto e.g. "*Let others tell of storms and showers; I'll only count your sunny hours*" is

nearly as common as its Latin version whereas the incidence of the English "*Time Flies*" is only one third that of its Latin.

The difference is puzzling since Mrs Gatty merely records the English version as being inscribed on a fairly obscure 1870 dial in Co Kerry and she gives no earlier reference than that. In its Latin form it is said to have been Tennyson's favourite sundial motto but that cannot account for the popularity of the English version.

The matter becomes a little clearer when it is realised that

the expanded English version was the one selected by King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra in 1892 for the dial that was placed on one of the several extensions being made at Sandringham House in order to improve the accommodation for visiting Heads of State.

So, could the popularity of the English motto be attributed to its use by the Royal Family? Quite possibly.

There's an interesting further coincidence to this story too. It relates to SRN 2722 which is an horizontal dial that used to



SRN 1299—Sandringham

be outside the Swiss Cottage in the grounds of Queen Victoria's residence at Osborne, in the IOW.

That dial disappeared for many years until our 'sleuth

extraordinaire', John Ingram made several visits and finally discovered that it had been taken into store by the gardeners on the basis that the dial was thought to be a more modern one installed after the time Edward VII gave part of the House over as a convalescent hospital for Officers. Now that may indeed be the case although it does seem odd for the dial to have been placed near a children's chalet if that was so.

The interesting thing is that SRN 2722 too has an English motto.

Interestingly, it is "I count the bright hours only".



SRN 2722—Osborne

Odd that it should be one of the same family of mottoes so favoured by Edward VII and Queen Alexandra for Sandringham.

Could it be that King Edward VII first became acquainted with it as a child at Osborne after all? Perhaps the dial is older than we think?

Mass Dials—where did it all end?

The dates of mass dials can only vaguely be surmised.

Their beginnings and endings are consequently indistinct with 'transitional' forms occasionally being offered as an explanation for some dials not fitting into our current categories of Saxon, medieval and scientific.

Towards the end of their currency numbers were carved round their circumference. Consequently such dials are regarded as 'late' but even

of earlier canonical dials.

The final expression may well be in the form of a circular design with some attempt to



Figure 2

delineate the dial with unequal intervals and possibly using an inclined gnomon set by eye and shadow observation – as distinct from a properly made 'scientific' dial, almost invariably square in layout from the geometric construction followed.

Fig. 2 shows such a dial at Sandhurst in Gloucestershire and its similarity to one at the Jacobi Church near Utrecht in Holland is striking.

This is illustrated in Mark Lennox Boyd's recent book 'Sundials' although the date of 1463? is far earlier than a late dated (1629) mass dial at Upton in Oxfordshire (fig. 3).

This latter dial is well into the 'scientific' era but probably



Figure 3

was made in a rural area which still followed the old ways.

Some mass dials were 'converted' as at Selling in Kent or their circular form retained as at Ampney St Peter in Gloucestershire, but a scientific dial carved into the wall marked the next step and onto a separate stone the final jump to today's dials.

At least the end is visible, if only in a few examples and 'transitional' reveals the struggle to reconcile the simplicity of 'a peg in the wall' with the care required to make an accurate gnomon and the move to an 'equal hours' regulated world provided by clocks.

[NB: The Jacobi Church dial may also be seen at :

<http://www.dezonnewijzerkring.nl/zw-arch/eng-home-zw-0301.htm>]

Tony Wood, our Mass Dial Coordinator, muses here on the dating of mass dials and the matter of their abandonment in favour of a move to equal hours.



Figure 1

within this classification there is variation in that the numerals may be Roman, Hindu-Arabic or sometimes in a 'dot' form as at Avening in Gloucestershire (fig. 1).

Full interpretation is difficult but the markings are clearly numerical and based around 'noon' at 12 o'clock as opposed to the Terce and Nones



The British Sundial Society

*An Occasional Newsletter for BSS
Recorders —Durham Edition*

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. In addition to publishing the Bulletin and other books, it organises meetings and a major conference every year.

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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, Patrick Powers or to the Mass Dial Group Coordinator, Tony Wood at the addresses to be found in any Bulletin

And finally, Essex's Excellent Sundials—Ian Butson's Choice

Last year's edition of *The Recorder* contained John Ingram's top ten Wiltshire dials. So many compliments were received about this list that we decided to have another person's list this year. Here Ian Butson submits his ten favourite dials of Essex

He writes: "I would suggest the following as being my choice of favourite sundials in the County of Essex. They are distributed across the County and all are openly visible except that at Spains Hall, Finchingfield. However this may be viewed when the splendid gardens are regularly opened to the public during the summer months of March to September".

Ian also stresses that there are a number of other sundials within the county each of which may hold a particular interest and fascination to the enthusiast. Carry your copy of Register 2005 with you when you visit...!

Ian's Essex Favourites ...

1. **Beaumont-cum-Moze**—The Vertical (D) Coronation Dial on St Leonard's Church. SRN 5516
2. **Dedham**—The Vertical (D) dial on 'Sherman's' in the High St. SRN 0313
3. **Finchingfield**—The Horizontal dial by Adams in the rose garden of Spains Hall. SRN 2954
4. **Harlow**—The Vertical (D) dial dated 1666 on St Mary-at-Latton Church. SRN 0974 I
5. **Inworth**—The horizontal commemorative dial in All Saints' Churchyard. SRN 4982
6. **Leigh-on-Sea**—The Vertical (D) dial dated 1725 at St Clement's Church. SRN 0759
7. **Maldon**—The new Vertical (S) dial on the Thomas Plume Library (Old St Peter's Church) SRN 3118
8. **Newport**—The finely carved wooden Vertical (D) dial on St Mary the Virgin's Church. SRN 0314
9. **Sturmer**—The Vertical (S) dial of bricktile on the porch of St Mary's Church. SRN 5709
10. **Tollersbury**—The modern memorial polar cross dial dated 1974 on a grave in the village cemetery. SRN 5031



SRN 5516