



By JOHN A. KNOWLES, F.S.A.

IN the seventeenth-century Puritanical prejudice against windows in churches forced glass-painters to turn in other directions in order to make a livelihood. Business was slack. Poor Henry Gyles, of York (1645-1709) could only subsist by taking in lodgers, and his friend, Francis Place, the engraver, wrote from London to say that things in town were just as bad. "I made Inquiry at *Mr. Price's* about *glass-painters* he tells me there is 4 In Towne but not work enough to Employ one, if he did nothing Else."

Heraldry formed their principal employment, and they also turned their attention to, and endeavoured to create a demand for, other and hitherto unknown or little used forms of stained glass, such as hanging lamps, and sundials. Advertising was then in its infancy, but glass-painters did not fail to make use of it in order to sell their wares. Gyles issued a portrait of himself executed in mezzotint by Francis Place (No. i.), being one of the first engravings in that process ever published. Underneath he announced:—"Glafs painting for windows as Armes, Sundyals, History, Landskipt, &c. Done by Henry Gyles of the City of York."

The Price Bros. informed the readers of the *London Gazette* of June 14th, 1705, that:—"Gentlemen may have Church History, Coats of Arms, &c. Painted upon Glass in what colours they please, to as great Perfection as ever; and



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NO. I.—ADVERTISEMENT OF HENRY GYLES (1645-1709)
MEZZOTINT BY FRANCIS PLACE

The Connoisseur



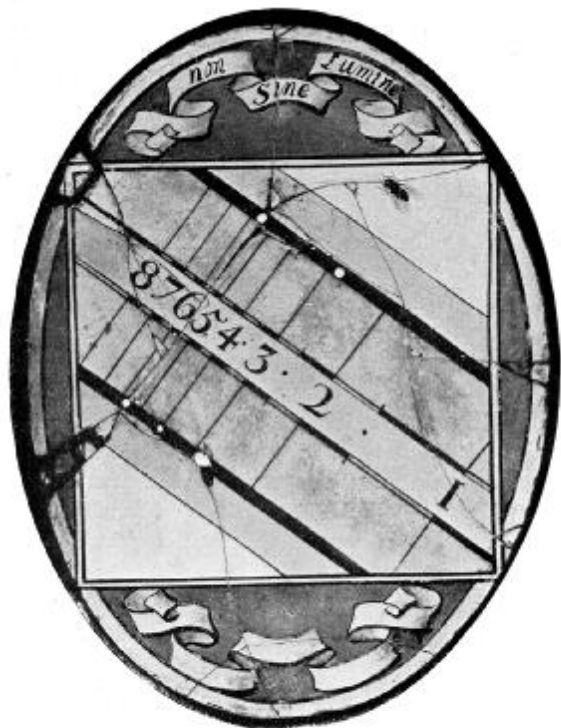
NO. II.—SUNDIAL
DATED 1664
FROM A DRAWING BY F. SYDNEY EDEN, IN THE
VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM
WIDDINGTON
CHURCH, ESSEX

draws Sun-dyals on Glass." Whilst John Rowell, of Wycombe, announced in the *Craftsman*, Feb. 3rd, 1755, that :—" He also makes sundials and coats of arms in the said stained glass, and repairs any antient work in that art."

Gyles also solicited business by letter. Writing to Thoresby, the Leeds antiquary, in 1698, and enclosing one of his advertisements drawing attention to the advantages of " china glass," whatever that might be, he said :—" The conveniency of it you will see on the back of my picture inclos'd, and if you have a convenient window for a glass dyall, if you please I will paint you one on sending me directions."

Thoresby evidently wanted some idea as to cost before committing himself, for in a later letter Gyles wrote :—" For glasse dyalls according to ye bignesse such as I usually paint upon squares of 10 or 12 inches high, a brass style to 'em I have usually 20 shill." (*Henry Gyles, Glass Painter of York*, by J. A. Knowles. Walpole Soc., Vol. XI., 1923).

It appears also that on the rare occasions when Gyles received a commission for a church window, he sometimes gave a glass sundial with it ; in the same way that shipbuilders, when they get an order for an Atlantic liner, " throw in " the tug. Thus, in gratitude for the order for the east window of University College, Oxford, he presented them with a sundial for the Hall inscribed :—" *In perpetuam gratitudinis et observantiae memoriam Magistro et sociis celeberrimi hujus collegii Henricus Gyles de civitate Eboraci hanc Fenestram pinxit et humillime obtulit.*" This interesting souvenir was recently found in a lumber room, and Sir Michael Sadler intends to have it restored to its former place in the south window.

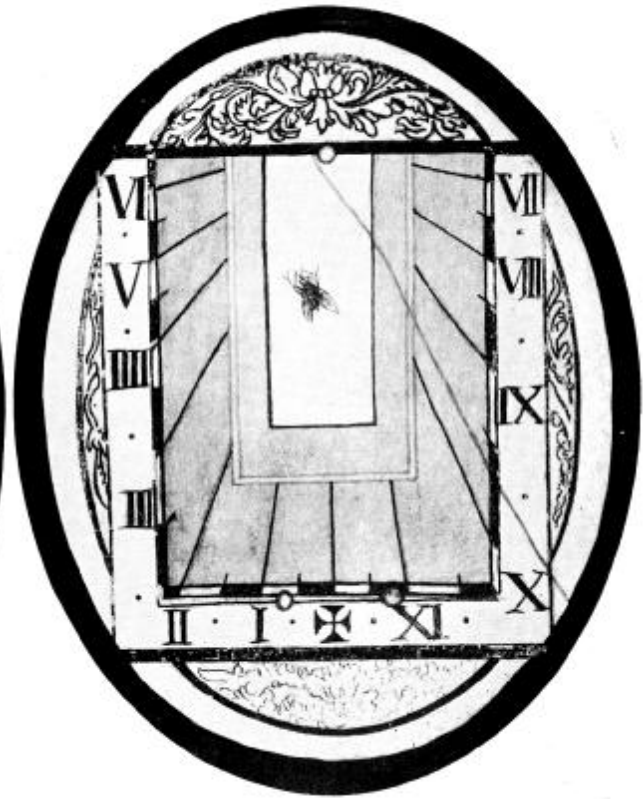


NO. III.—SUNDIAL WITH FLY BY JOHN OLIVER
(1616-1701) IN THE POSSESSION OF GEORGE O. MAY,
SOUTHPORT, CONNECTICUT

Stained Glass Sundials

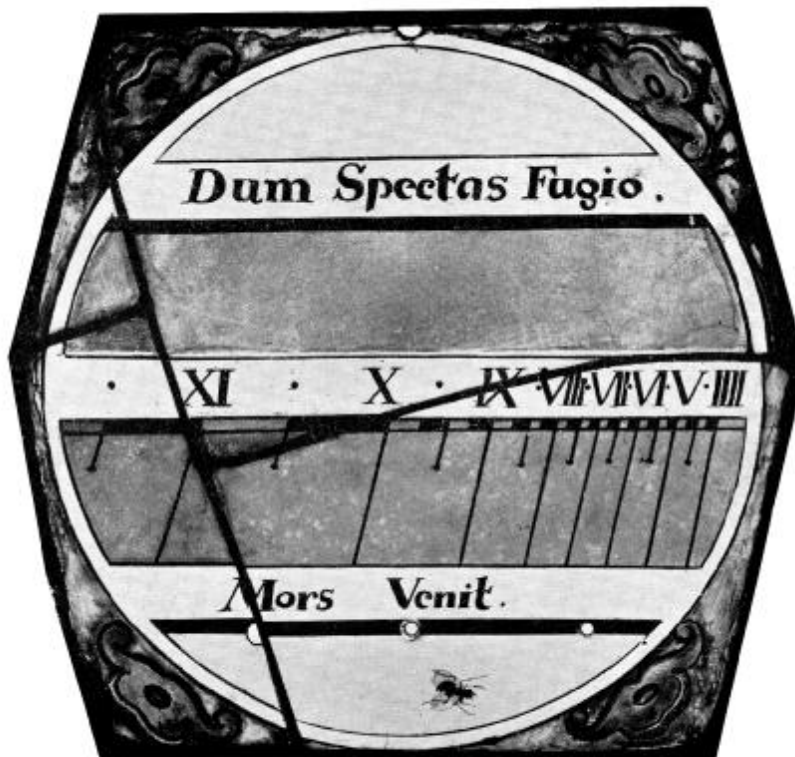


NO. IV.—SUNDIAL WITH FLY IN A. L. RADFORD COLLECTION FROM A DRAWING BY WILFRED DRAKE, IN MAURICE DRAKE'S *History of English Glass-Painting*



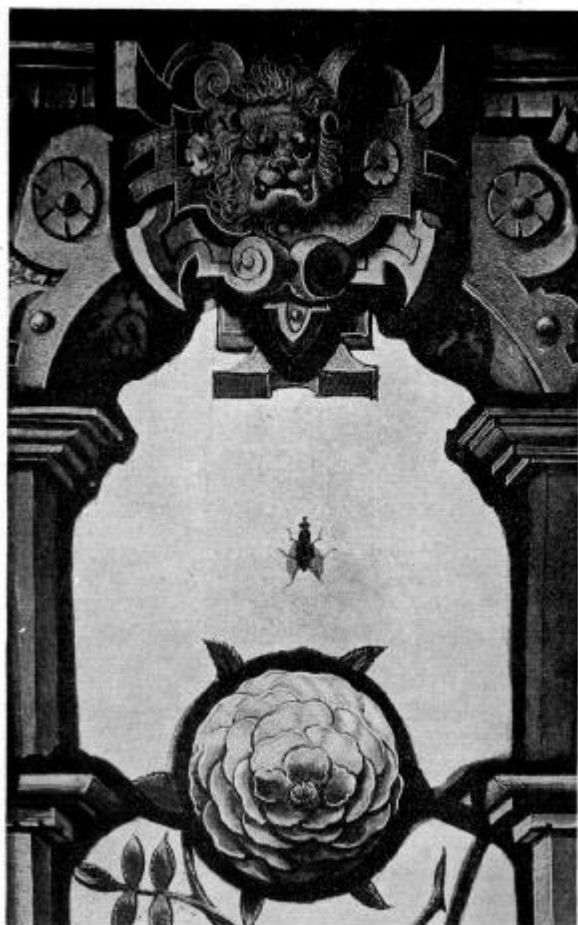
NO. V.—SUNDIAL WITH FLY IN SOUTH WINDOW LOLLARDS' TOWER, LAMBETH PALACE. FROM A DRAWING BY F. SYDNEY EDEN, IN THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

Stained glass sundials are not very common. As they had to be executed on comparatively large squares of thin glass, they were very fragile, particularly so seeing that a hole had to be drilled through the pane to receive the brass gnomon, or "style," as Gyles called it, which throws the shadow. This constitutes a very weak point and a frequent cause of accidental



NO. VI.—SUNDIAL WITH FLY BY JOHN OLIVER IN THE WILFRED DRAKE COLLECTION

fracture, as in the case of the dial dated 1652 in the Roy Grosvenor Thomas collection (No ix.) where the cracks have had to be repaired with lead. The dials at University College and Nun Appleton Hall are complete with their original gnomons, whilst that in the Radford collection shows the hole drilled through the pane, though the style is missing. The



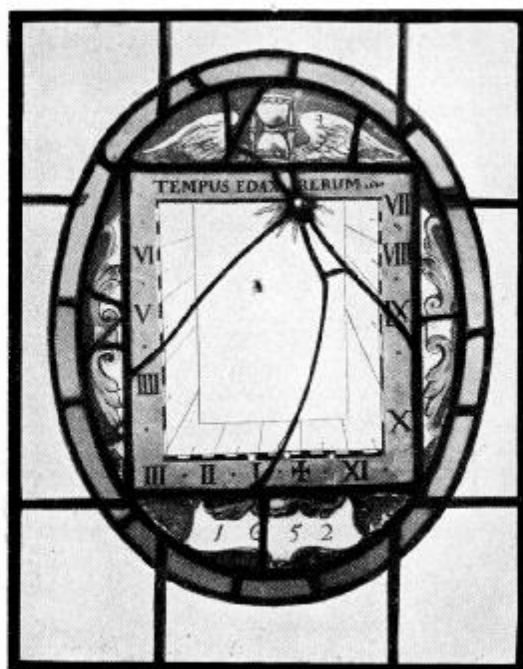
No. VII.—DETAIL SHOWING FLY ON 17TH-CENTURY SWISS GLASS WINTERTHUR MUSEUM



No. VIII.—SUNDIAL BY HENRY GYLES 1670 NUN APPLETON HALL

Nun Appleton example (No. viii.) is signed and dated 1670, and is Gyles' earliest known work. The decoration includes Cupid (from a print after Titian) and ovals representing the Four Seasons.

There is a glass sundial at Park Hall, Leigh, Staffs. dated 1664, with the Aston arms in the centre, *az., on a fesse sa. a crescent arg., in chief 3 lozenges sa.* Another, dated the same year and painted with flies and bees "well calculated to deceive the spectator," by John Oliver, is at Northill, Beds. John



No. IX.—SUNDIAL WITH FLY, DATED 1652 ROY GROSVENOR THOMAS COLLECTION

Oliver, the son of Isaac Oliver, who was a prominent glass-painter in his day. When he was eighty-four years of age he painted and presented to Christ Church, Oxford, a window representing *Peter delivered from Prison by the Angel*, probably in gratitude for a similar deliverance in his own case. When it is remembered that at that time thousands of people who had not committed any crime languished in gaol, this is extremely likely. Oliver also presented a beadle's staff to

Stained Glass Sundials



NO. X.—PAINTED GLASS PORTRAIT OF SIR WILLIAM SKIPWITH SHOWING FLY PAINTED ON PILLAR AT HONINGTON HALL

the London Company of Glaziers and Painters on Glass, of which he was a member, together with an annuity of £3, secured on a lease of his house in Queen Street, alias Soper Lane.

The flies seen in the examples in the Grosvenor Thomas and Radford collections (Nos. iv. and ix.), and which Oliver painted on his dial at Northill, were a common feature of domestic glass at that period. They are also to be seen in Swiss glass (e.g., No. vii.), and in the portrait of Sir William Skipwith over the doorway of Honington Hall (No. x.). Mr. F. Sydney Eden, whose knowledge of the glass in the Halls of the City Companies is extensive, says there are several examples of not only flies, but even spiders and their webs to be seen there. Although attempts have been made, in the case of the Skipwith portrait, to attach to the fly some reference or allusion to the story of the bees which hovered over the cradle of the infant Demosthenes, actually there is no foundation for the connection. The fly or bee was purely a glass-painter's joke; and the amusement consisted in seeing people try to knock

it off. Sometimes the legs of the fly were painted on one side of the glass and the body on the other, the difference between the two plane surfaces of the glass giving an extraordinary life-like effect of projection, and one, moreover, very easily produced.

This joke was evidently still prevalent a hundred years or more later, for Le Vieil, in his *L'Art de la Peinture sur Verre* (1774), tells how he employed it when he was cleaning the windows of Saint Etienne du Mont to rid himself of the attentions of a fussy churchwarden, who persisted in poking his nose into everything. Le Vieil painted a fly on the glass and awaited results. When the windows were being put back, the eagle eye of the vigilant churchwarden immediately spotted it, and the following conversation ensued:—" *Ne sont-ce pas là des vitres bien nettes? Que fait là cette mouche?*" "*Elle y fait beaucoup, monsieur, en faveur du peintre, puisque la simple imitation de cette mouche a paru pouvoir vous autoriser à me taxer de négligence.*"

Le Vieil was no longer troubled with the unwelcome attentions of the churchwarden.