

OXFORD SUNDIALS



MARGARET STANIER

Stained Glass Dials

Three of the stained glass sundials in Oxford are in the Museum of the History of Science, at the east end of Broad Street next to the Sheldonian. The museum's opening hours are shown on a notice at the gate. Two dials are in the Convocation House of the University, to the west of the Bodleian Library. Guided tours of the Bodleian and its related buildings are arranged by the office of the visitors' centre in the quadrangle of the Library between the Sheldonian and the Radcliffe Camera.

MUSEUM OF THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE (R & P)

The Museum possesses three stained-glass window dials, herein to be called Dials A, B, and C. Dial A can be seen whenever the Museum is open to the public. Dials B and C are in the Curator's private office.

Dial A, in a south-facing window on the Museum stair case, is about 250 mm square. It shows hour lines III to IX, radiating from the bottom right corner. A goldfinch stands on a perch between the 8th and 9th hour lines. The motto VESPER IN AMBIGUO EST-AGE(N)DUM - MORA NOXIA - CRAS NIL, can be translated "The evening is uncertain-Come now! - Delay is harmful - Tomorrow is nothing." The arms (bottom right) were granted to Edward Heyward of the Inner Temple in 1611. They are described thus: "On a wreath of the colours a wing argent charged with a pale sable thereon three crescents silver".

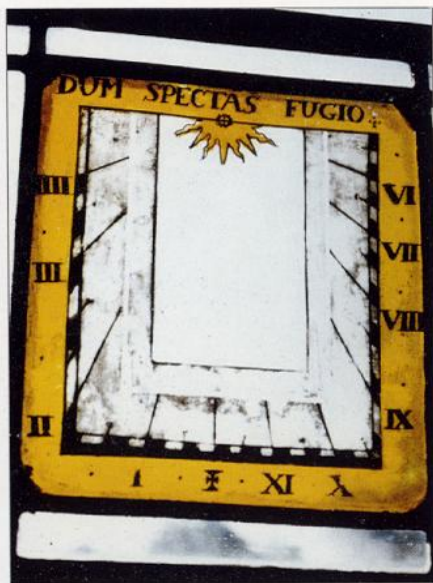


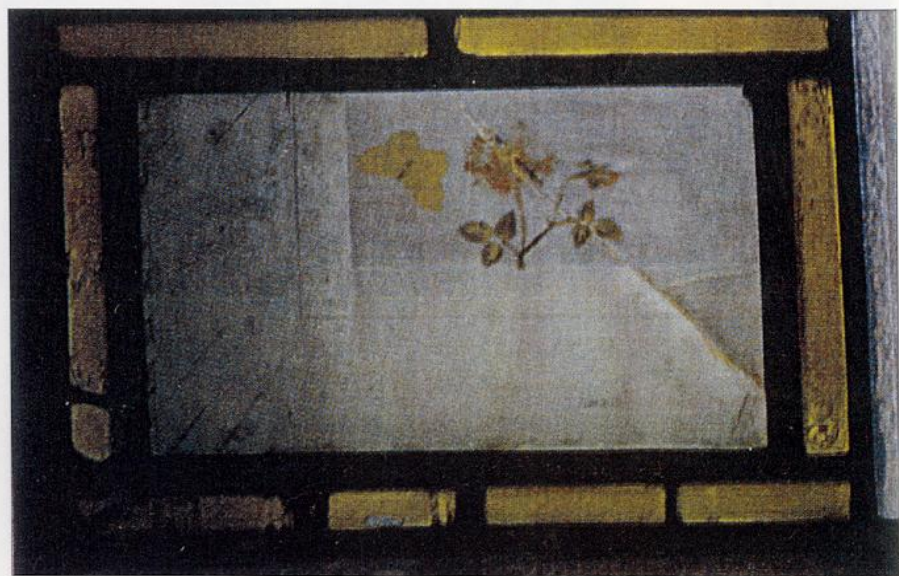
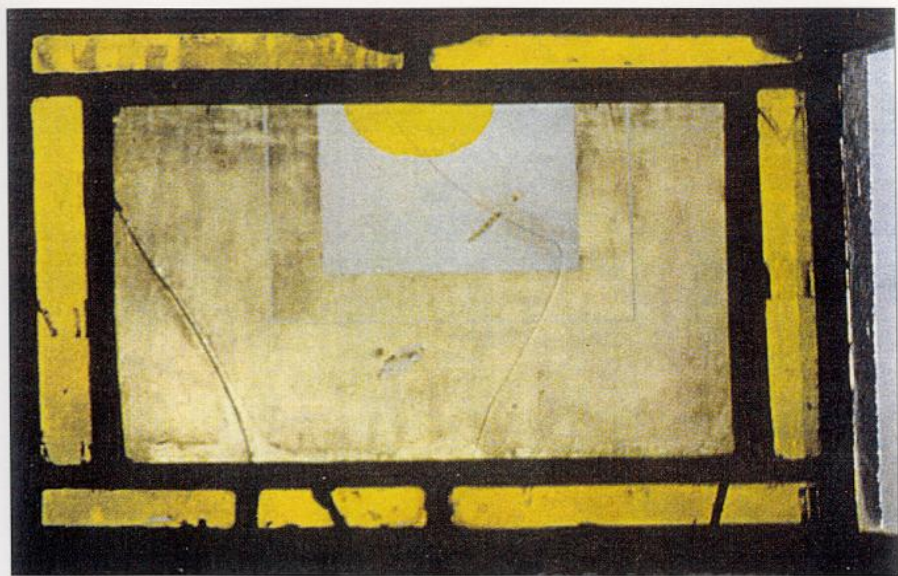
MUSEUM OF THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE (R & P) continued

Dial B is a diamond shape 143 mm in height, and was made for a direct east-facing window. The numerals 4 to 9 are arabic, X and XI are Roman. Above the dial a fly is painted; below is the date 1648.

Dial C, a 17th century dial, was intended for a window facing south, declining slightly east. The Roman numerals 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. are clearly marked on a yellow border. Above the sunburst, centre top, is the motto DUM SPECTAS FUGIO ("While you watch I fly away").

All three dials were inserted into the Museum windows in 1956, when the 19th century diamond-paned windows were replaced by rectangular glass panes. Dials A and B came to the Museum directly from the Lewis Evans Collection, the foundation collection of the present Museum. Unfortunately Lewis Evans did not record their provenance. Dial C was a gift from the glazier, Mr Dennis King of Norwich.





UNIVERSITY COLLEGE (P)

University College possesses a glass sundial, about 300 mm by 150 mm. Roman numerals, VI a.m. to VI p.m. run round the edge; in the centre is the figure of Christ holding an orb in the left hand, the right hand raised in blessing. Along the top are the words SUM VERA LUX ("I am the true light"). This dial is in excellent condition; if provided with a gnomon it would probably tell the hours with fair accuracy.

The sundial is the work of Henry Gyles of York, in the late 17th century. Gyles gave it to the college gratis on completing a large order for the east window of the Chapel. This is not the Chapel's present east window, but several panes of the Gyles east window still exist elsewhere in the College.

