

## John Carmichael

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**From:** "Fred Sawyer" <fwsawyer@cox.net>  
**To:** "John Carmichael" <jlcarmichael@comcast.net>  
**Cc:** "Sundial List" <sundial@uni-koeln.de>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 02, 2006 9:08 AM  
**Subject:** Re: The Libertine

Hi John,

Yes that's the dial. Bob Terwilliger has also given a link to an image of it on the NASS website. I've also just learned from John Davis that Mike Cowham will have an article on the dial in the June issue of the BSS Bulletin. Given your interest in the sundial for the blind - you might be interested to know that one of the glass spheres on this dial was probably the first instance of this idea.

Since you cited your entry on the stained glass website (and since I have some material for a talk that I will probably not give now since Mike will be publishing his article on the dial), I should point out that in my view there is very little doubt about what happened to the dial: Rochester destroyed it on the night of 25 June 1675. Some modern works on this have suggested that the dial might have survived in a bad state - but I don't believe there's any real evidence.

Chris Daniel does suggest that it survived and made its way to Buckingham House. I believe this claim originates with Mrs. Gatty's book on Sundials and she is not always reliable. She cites Vertue as her source, but this is what was actually said (note that Francis Hall and Francis Line are one and the same person) : "Afterwards there was other dials of Glass, like pyramids, erected in Whitehall Garden by Francis Hall, but were not so durable being of Glass. I think I saw them in the Duke of Buckingham's gardens near the St. James Park, and then was told they had been erected first in Whitehall garden." (Vertue B.M.Add. MS 23086, f.40)

Hardly a definitive statement.

From the Survey of London (v. 13) we have: p.94 1675 26 June 1675 letter, "My Lord Rochester in a frolick after a rant did yesterday beat doune the dyill which stood in the midle of the Privie [Gard]ing, which was esteemed the rarest in Europe. I doe not know if. it is by the fall beat in peeces."

Aubrey identifies this dial as the one by Dr. Hall "which were one night broken all to pieces (for they were of glass spheres) by the Earl of Rochester, Lord Buckhurst, Fleetwood, Shephard, etc, coming in from their revells.

p.95 The incident seems to have marked the end of the dial, for it does not appear in the view of 1695-8. Vertue doubtfully suggests that some of the remains were afterwards at Buckingham House, and Walcott records that "about 1710 Mr. William Allingham, mathematician in Canon Row, demanded £500 to repair this dial, but his offer was refused." It has not been possible to confirm this statement, which more likely refers to the great sun-dial.

Note the reference to the 'great sun-dial'. This is actually a different sundial - a large horizontal dial designed by Edmund Gunter and placed in the Privy Garden. I believe these two dials are often confused. For example, it is sometimes stated, in reference to Lines' dial, that Charles II loved to set his watch by the dial. But in fact he was most probably using the Gunter dial - which was also in the Privy Garden, was there before Lines' dial, and was much more accessible for providing an exact time. Line's dial had a great many small dials on it and I doubt that it would have been particularly useful for setting a watch - whereas Gunter's dial was a great horizontal that allowed for some precision.

Gunter's great stone dial was regularly being repainted - and it is probably this repair that Allingham was offering to do for £500 - an amount in line with the earlier bills for doing this same thing - and certainly too low an amount for recreating the elaborate glass structure of Line's dial.

There seems to be a wish to absolve Rochester of his heinous crime. Conor Reilly, a biographer of Francis Line, stated: "By 1681 the dial had been dismantled and removed from the garden, as William Leybourn tells us in his Dialling." But this appears to be just wishful thinking. If we look at what Leybourn actually wrote, we see only: "Thus have I given a brief Account of this (now demolished) Dial.." And John Holwell writing in 1685 says "The Dyals that were set up in His Majesties Privy Garden in the Year 1669 have been some years demolished.. "

Relevant portions from Jeffreys' Scene 7:

"Sackville: What time is it? You're standing next to the most sophisticated timepiece in Europe, you tell me.  
Rochester: It's a sundial, shufflehead, we're in the dark."

The dial is not described in detail.. An expensive, phallic object.. A big glass whatsit..

"Rochester: He calls himself King! The greatest patron of the arts and sciences in Europe. The nimble mind, bounding with ease from subject to subject. . spends sixty thousand pounds on a clock and it doesn't work in the dark. "

So they destroy the dial - and Rochester says:

"Rochester: All right. Take me away in chains. I admit. I did it. Whatever is the King's pleasure shall be mine. I must always go too far, you see, it is my genius to go too far."

In A Profane Wit - a Rochester biography by James William Johnson - we find:

"Word of Rochester's latest folly swept through London. The King learned about his ruined plaything soon after the dial was wrecked. In a fury he left London for Plymouth and, on June 26, began a cruise on his yacht.. The whereabouts of the yacht were unknown for ten days.. "

Rochester was banned from court - this was a regular occurrence with him - but the King always eventually let him come back.

and

"The theatrics of the Sun Dial episode appealed widely. In September, Thomas Otway's play Alcibiades debuted in London, with the King in attendance. The very first speech of the play alludes to Rochester's escapade in "tumbling down" the sundial. "

In closing:

Comments on Rochester the man: "The very name of Rochester is offensive to modest ears." - David Hume. "The writer of the filthiest verse in the language." - Sir Sidney Lee

Fred Sawyer

----- Original Message -----

From: John Carmichael

To: Fred Sawyer

Cc: Sundial List

Sent: Thursday, March 02, 2006 10:10 AM

Subject: Re: The Libertine

Hello Fred:

I think we have a photo of an old drawing of The King's Sundial that you mentioned. It's in the stained glass website Image Archive. It must be the same sundial, don't you think? Here is a direct link to the photo I got from Chris Daniel:

[http://advanceassociates.com/Sundials/Stained\\_Glass/sundials\\_files/StainedGlassSundial68original.jpg](http://advanceassociates.com/Sundials/Stained_Glass/sundials_files/StainedGlassSundial68original.jpg)

And here is all the info we have on it:

His Majesty's Pyrimidical Dial

Maker: Reverend Francis Hall (alias Line), Professor of Mathematics at Liege University for His Majesty.

Date: 1669

Original Location: In his Majesty's Private Garden at whitehall, somewhere in UK

Present Location: Lost or destroyed

Orientation: undetermined, but some are inclined to vertical.

Size: unknown

Adornment: many painted glass sundials

Mottos: unknown

Condition: Quickly destroyed by weather and vandals

Comment: Famous "pyramidical" sundial. According to C. Daniel, it was made of stone, iron, brass, wood and glass with about 270 individual component dials including a number of spherical glass dials and painted plane glass dials. Carefully recorded details in an 'Explication' published in London in 1673.

Original Photo: Here

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