

Telling Time in Tyttenhanger...
Article & Photo by Patrick Powers
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Well, no not really – we just like alliterative headlines! However this story does involve ‘time telling of old’ with the discovery of an hitherto unrecorded stained glass sundial.

Chris Daniel has long had a great interest in the stained glass dials of the British Isles and he and Ian Butson found in the 1910 edition of the *The Royal Commission of Historical Monuments, Inventory of Historical Monuments in Hertfordshire* a mention of an otherwise unrecorded sundial at Tyttenhanger House, a house now used as commercial offices.

Its presence had been omitted from the 1950s English Heritage inventory for the house – it being simply reported as ‘Heraldic Glass’. Even Pevsner failed to note the dial in 1977.

Ian and Chris each contacted the building’s owners for permission to view without success, but then Ian ‘Super Sleuth’ Butson discovered that despite the reluctance regarding visitors there was to be an Open Day organised by St Albans District Council on the last weekend of January 2010. It was the eighth so-called ‘Residents First’ opening, but open only to Council Tax payers of the District and then only via a voucher and timed tours.



Well, never underestimate the tentacles of BSS!! It was swiftly realised that Patrick Powers, is a St Albans Council Tax payer and he was immediately detailed off to attend the Open Day.

Let’s set aside the fact that it snowed that day, that an unnecessary trip had to be made to St Albans on market day to collect a later unneeded voucher and that what had been advertised as a 30 minute tour of the house eventually took over 90 minutes. Our team stayed the course eventually emerging with several photographs of an hitherto unrecorded, old but memorable stained glass sundial.

Yes, it is mounted in a frame as a sort of ‘suncatcher’ in front of a north facing window and it is also mounted back to front! But it is a lovely, previously unknown, stained glass dial properly designed for the declination of the front façade and dating back to about 1675. See the picture here, which has been reversed to show its correct orientation.

A rare discovery of a lovely dial brought about by cooperation between several BSS Members. That is exactly what *BSS Dial Recording* is all about.