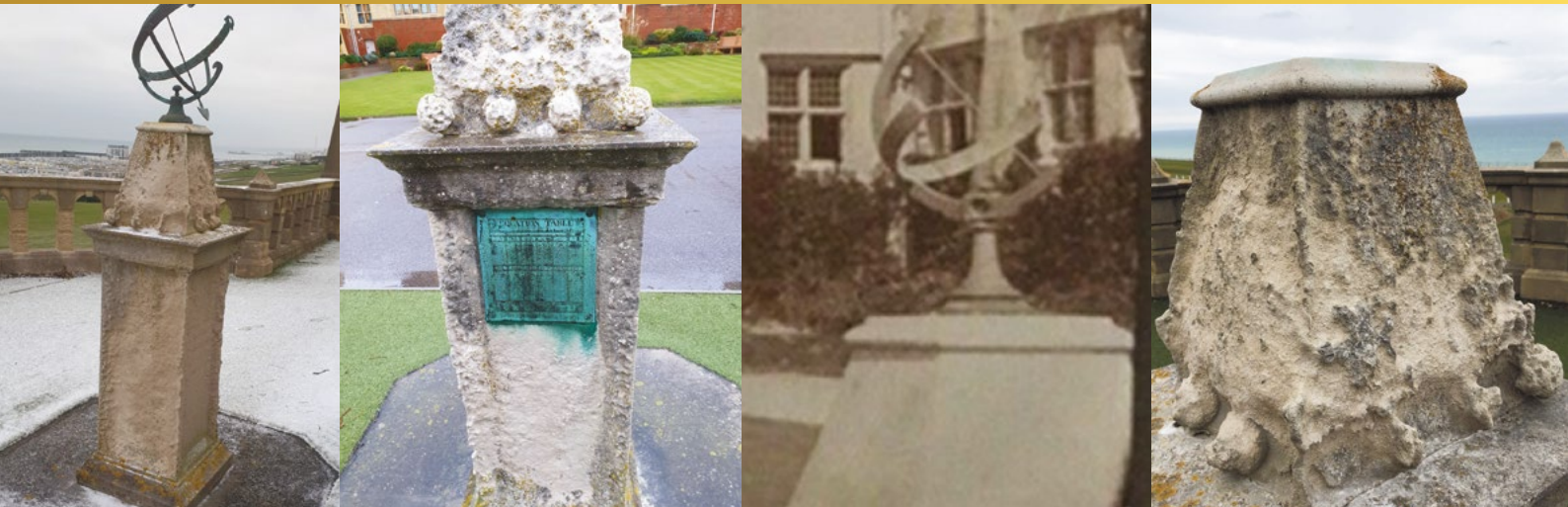


# Old Roedeanians' Association



## The Sundial / Astrolabe



# The Sundial / Astrolabe

The sundial, or astrolabe as it is often called, is situated on the front terrace, in front of the Quad. It is especially significant as it was one of the first gifts received by the school when it moved to the current site.

The sundial was donated in 1899 by the School's architect, Sir John Simpson, KBE FRIBA, to commemorate his daughter Clara's years as a pupil at Roedean from 1897-99. Clara Carrick Simpson (No. 4, 1897-99).

Constructed in Bath Stone with a brass armillary sphere (or astrolabe) on the top, it is constructed in four pieces:

- a base which sits on an octagonal four-piece paver, flush with the grass,
- a square pedestal section with sunken panels on each side,
- a moulded cornice
- and a short obelisk on which the brass astrolabe is mounted.





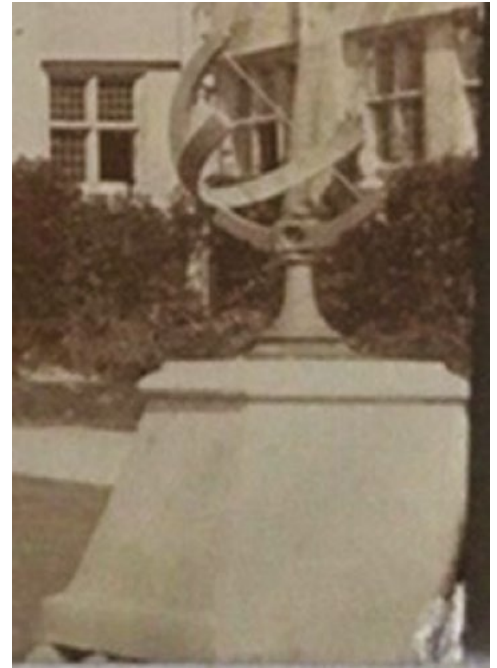
Fixed on the southern side of the plinth is a brass plate engraved with the equation table for correcting the solar time, and at the bottom of the plate, underneath the equation table, is the following verse:

**ME STATUIT MANUS IPSA PATRIS CLARAEQUE VOLUNTAS  
ET DOCUIT CERTUM DICERE SOLIS ITER  
MANE VELUT SOLES RENOVATA LUCE RESURGUNT  
USQUE TIBI COMITUM CLARA RESURGET AMOR**

Which translates to:

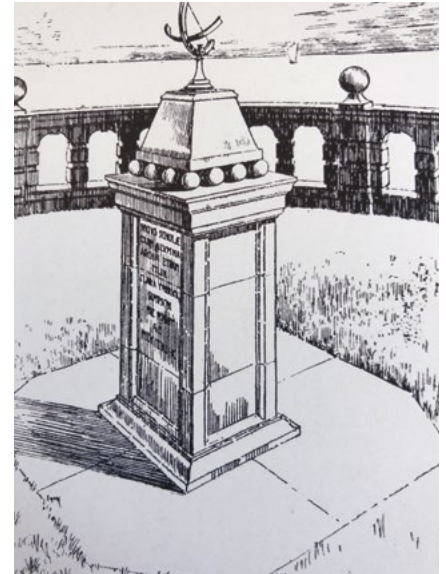
**A FATHER'S HAND, A DAUGHTER'S PIETIE,  
HAVE FIXED MY DYAL THAT YOU THE HOURS MAY SEE;  
AS EACH NEW SUN REVIVES THE LIGHT SO WE,  
DEAR CLARA, RENEW OUR LOVE AND THINK OF THEE.**

The author of this translation is unknown but speculated by Dorothy E. de Zouche in her book *Roedean School (1885-1955)* to be Leslie Cope Cornford.



The inscription on the north face of the pedestal, now completely eroded, originally read:

**HUJUS SCHOLAE  
OLIM ALUMNA  
ARCHTI ETIAM  
FILIA  
CLARA CARRICK  
SIMPSON  
ME POSUIT  
A.D.  
MDCCCXCIX**



## Current Condition

The sundial is in an extremely exposed position. Time has not been kind and the weathering of the stone square pedestal and top obelisk is severe. The form of the obelisk is lost and many of the ball features at its base have “melted away” with erosion. The inscription on the north face of the pedestal is illegible.

The brass plate on the south face of the stone pedestal, engraved with an equation table for correcting the solar time, is pitted with surface loss of the weathered vert de gris patina making it almost illegible.

Sadly, the armillary sphere is not the original. In 2013 Laurie Keen, a local Brighton & Hove historian, donated a replacement brass armillary sphere for the top of the obelisk.

## Proposed restoration/conservation treatment

It is desirable to retain as much of the original fabric as possible rather than replacing old for new wholesale. The history and age of the sundial is very much part of its value. Although we are hoping to salvage as much of the stonework as possible, replacing the remainder in similar Portland stone would ensure that the sundial will remain in its prominent position for a further 125 years.

The stone base has not suffered from the same kind of erosion as the pedestal. While the moulded cornice has some significant erosion to its lower surface, it is recommended that these two stones are preserved in the interest of the sundial’s authenticity. These retained elements will be consolidated and shelter coated with a casein bound limewash. This will offer some protection from the elements and serve to blend the old and new stones, with the new being left in their natural state to best show off the detail of carved elements and letter cutting.



- Replace stone pedestal and obelisk to match original
- Deconstruct, clean and conserve stone base and cornice being retained and refix stone structure
- Hand cut inscription to north face of new stone pedestal in Roman upper case
- Remove, wax and refix plaque and astrolabe
- Reorientate the astrolabe as it is currently fixed in an incorrect orientation
- Clean and re-patinate brass plaque
- Clean and re-patinate brass astrolabe

## Sir John William Simpson (1858–1933)

**John Simpson was the first President of the Royal Institute of British Architects after the First World War. He was President from 1919 -1921. He was knighted in 1924.**

His most famous work was the Empire Exhibition buildings at Wembley which opened in 1925 and the Wembley Stadium, opened in 1923, which survived until early this century. The RIBA website lists his other notable work as Roedean School, and the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum. John Simpson was first introduced to the Founders by Leslie Cope Cornford who had been his pupil. Simpson then embarked upon a long relationship with Roedean School, producing not only the initial designs but, in partnership with Maxwell Ayrton, continuing to design for Roedean over the first three decades of its life. (The partnership with Ayrton was dissolved in 1928 and Simpson died in 1933.)



Portrait of Sir John Simpson  
by Sir Arthur Stockdale Cope, KCVO, RA  
Photo credit: RIBA Collections



John Simpson also designed the Roedean Coat of Arms, with the explanatory memoranda, and the school motto 'Honneur Aulx Dignes'.

## Recollections of Winifred Eleanor Russell (JH, No.3, 1916-21)

As well as being a pupil at Roedean, Winifred Russell also worked at Roedean South Africa in 1935 where she was sister in charge of the school bungalow sanitorium.

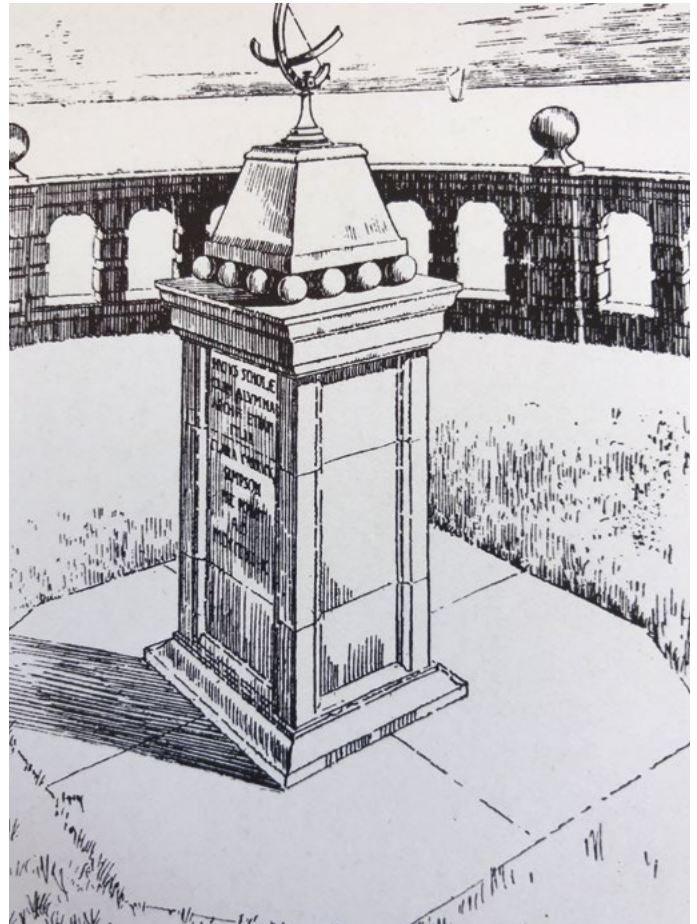
Winifred latterly lived in Bradford-on-Avon where she discovered the 'St Lawrence window' being removed from a Saxon church as being 'not in keeping'. She was instrumental in the window being installed in the Roedean School antechapel. After the summer reunion of 1974 she wrote: "Found it in the 2<sup>nd</sup> window, catching the western sunlight in the antechapel and safe at Roedean." John Hunt (*Headmaster 1971-84*) collected the window from Bradford-on-Avon in 1971. It was not installed until maybe 1973/4. Winifred died in 1989.

Winifred extensively annotated a copy of Cope Cornford's book with her memories of Roedean. Of the sundial she wrote:

*"The Sundial on the terrace where PL (Penelope Lawrence) could see all the playing fields and tennis courts and all the girls, cricket and hockey and so on and yet not too far for her to get to her house if rain fell".*

*"PL saw me from her place (by the sundial) as I climbed the iron ladder inside School House Tower from the bottom to the top past a window in the west tower."*

*Later she writes of the sundial..." PL, her favourite place to stand, with grass, she missed just NOTHING."*



# References

- *Roedean School Archive, archivist Jackie Sullivan*
- *RIBA Library*
- *Roedean School by L. Cope Cornford and F.R. Yerbury, (1928)*
- *The History of Roedean School by Dorothy E. de Zouche (1955)*
- *Roedean School Magazine June 1933*
- *HB Archaeology & Conservation Ltd Roedean School, Brighton, Main Library: Heritage Statement. 2017/18*





# Do you want or need to know more?



More information on each of the projects can be obtained by:

- Downloading detailed project brochures from <https://community.roedean.co.uk/resources>
- Emailing [heritage@oldroedeanians.co.uk](mailto:heritage@oldroedeanians.co.uk)
- Calling the Roedeanian Office on **01273 667398**

## How to donate

- Online via JustGiving <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/ora-heritage-projects>
- Online via Roedean Community Network <https://community.roedean.co.uk/supportus>
- By Cheque or Credit Card, completing the enclosed form.

Donations go directly to the School so can also be Gift-Aided if you are a UK tax payer.

If you are based in the USA, you are able to make a tax efficient donation through the British School and Universities Foundation (BSUF) by going to <https://www.bsuf.org/donate>.

Do let us know if you want to support a specific project.

**All donations will be ringfenced for the ORA Heritage Projects.**

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**Roedean Community Network:** <https://community.roedean.co.uk/news/ora-news>

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### **By newsletters and publications**

We will also be including updates in the Roedeanian Society Newsletter, The Roedeanian, as well as in the Old Roedeanians' Magazine.

**Thank you so much for your support!**

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