

AN ARMILLARY SPHERE SUNDIAL

January 2017

The Trust was pleased to be present, along with many colleagues, at the unveiling of the Armillary Sphere Sundial in the Ipswich Lower Arboretum restored by public subscription (ourselves included) in memory of the great Dr John Blatchly. John, a former headmaster of Ipswich School who wrote the foreword for Cobbold & Kin, was a good friend of the Trust and would have approved enthusiastically.

This sundial's exact origin is obscure but it was probably installed by the Fonnereau family as the centre-piece of the gardens on the north-west side of Christchurch's Wilderness Pond. Over the years it fell victim to at least one reorganisation and ended up in a sorry state at the back of Christchurch Mansion. Its restoration was led by David Miller, the equally enthusiastic Chairman of the Friends of Christchurch Park.

Armillaries date back to ancient times and without going into excessive detail they are designed to show Apparent Solar Time. Adjustments are necessary to compensate for the Earth's oval orbit around the sun and of course for its distance from the Greenwich meridian. Correctly positioned the gnomon arrow (the part which casts a shadow) will point at the North Star; but what a sad reflection of our times that our newly restored armillary was denied this most important part on grounds of the ubiquitous health & safety regulations!

The restoration work on the plinth was carried out by Suffolk Masonry Services and that on the armillary itself by expert, Robert Foster. Lifechart's proprietor, Martin Surgey, one of our trustees, designed and produced an excellent interpretation board similar to those produced for Holywells Park.



*The Armillary Sphere Sundial unveiled in
January 2017*



A bronze Solstice Armillary, also by Robert Foster, showing the gnomon arrow.