

## Apt Sundial Tour:

by Roger Bailey, Walking Shadow Designs

Apt is a market city in the heart of Provence, north of Aix en Provence and east of Avignon between the Luberon and Vaucluse hills. Most people pass through on their way to the general tourist destinations of Provence without considering that this city blocking the valley has anything to offer. It is known locally for its Saturday market, perhaps the best in



Provence. But for someone interested in sundials, there is quite a collection of historic sundials hidden in the side streets and squares off the main shopping street. The dials are engraved in stone and track the sense of time from the 17th century up to the introduction of standard time. Analemma noon marks are common to correct the clocks and mean time to the true time shown by sundials.

For an active map see: <http://tinyurl.com/AptSundials1>

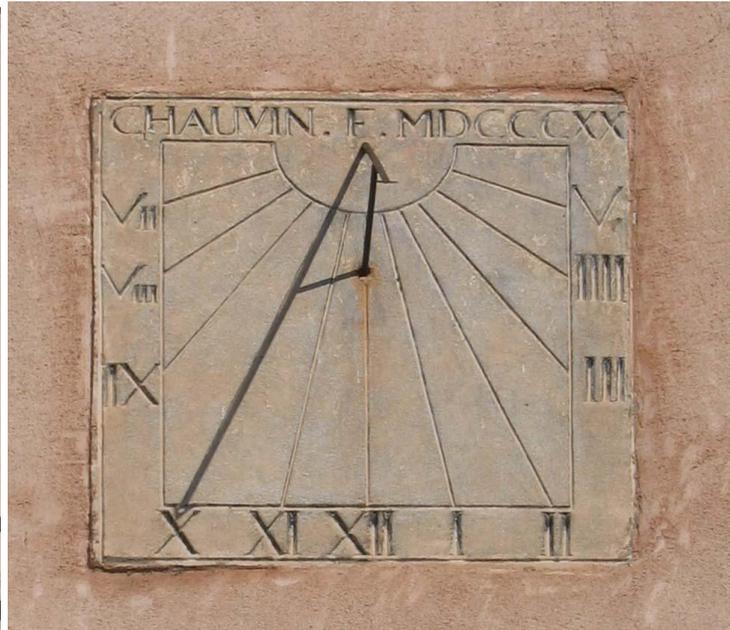
To start the tour, park in the large lot, Place Lauze de Perret, at the east end of town and enter by the Port de Saignon to Rue St Pierre. Walk three blocks and turn right on Rue Pasteur. Walk a short block to the corner of Rue Saint Elzéar. Above you on the corner is the first sundial of the tour, a simple dial engraved by P.E. Pascal in 1834 (MDCCCXXXIV). This dial is our introduction to the sundials of P.E. Pascal, an engineer born in St Saturnin d'Apt around the turn of the century. The dial is a simple vertical dial declining slightly to the west. The sub-style support is at 1:30 pm. The gnomon is in place but it has been bent quite rudely as seen in the picture. GPS location: 43°52.580'N, 5°23.898'E.



To find the first of Pascal's meridians, turn left and walk along Rue Saint Elzéar past the bibliothèque and Place Carnot to the corner of Rue Eugène Brunel. Above you on this corner is the Meridian noon mark engraved in 1844 (MDCCCXLIV). This Meridian shows average or local clock time (Temps Moyen) an noon throughout the year. The altitude of the sun determined by the declination of the sun and the latitude is plotted with the equation of time to give the analemma shaped correction for the clocks. The date marks are engraved for every 4 days throughout the year. The gnomon is in place and the dial accurately marks solar noon. Pascal refers to the equations of Ferdinand Berthoud for the determination of the Equation of time correction. Berthoud was a well-known maker of astronomical instruments and chronometers. Berthoud was a scientist with Napoleon's expedition to Egypt. GPS location: 43°52.583'N, 5°23.789'E



Turn left on Rue Eugène Brunel and walk a block to the main shopping street, now Rue des Marchands. Note where you joined this street, as you will be returning to this point later to continue the tour. For now turn right onto Rue des Marchands and walk to the main square dominated by the Sous Prefecture. At the butchers shop on Place Gabriel Péri is another old sundial engraved in stone. F. Chauvin engraved this dial in 1820. This is a simple south facing vertical sundial, still showing solar time. GPS location: 43°52.572'N, 5°23.682'E



Now return to where you came out onto Rue des Marchands at Rue Vacon. Now turn right at the cinema arrow and walk a block to the back of the “ancienne Abbaye St Croix (XIV Century) at Place Jules Ferry. Note the engravers marks on the stone of the abbey. Turn around to look up at the balcony above “Le Platane” restaurant. Behind all the plants is a west facing vertical sundial on the wall. It was quite visible in 2004 but unfortunately it is now hidden by foliage. If you are lucky or time your visit correctly, the steel barred gate of the restaurant will be open and you can go up to the terrace. From there the sundial is visible. This west facing dial has sloped parallel hour lines from noon to sunset. The hour is indicated by the bright spot in the shadow of the disc at the end of the



gnomon. The date is difficult to read as the dial face is eroded but it looks like 1664. GPS location: 43°52.543'N, 5°23.770' E.

Carry on along Rue Jules Ferry to Place Jean Jaures to find above you another Pascal sundial and meridian carved in 1834, ten years before the similar meridian near Place Carnot. The blue shutters usually partially obscure the dial and the shadows of the building often get in the way but this was a fine elaborate sundial. The text behind the shutter is: "Il est de la nature l'unique conducteur". A plaque on the building explains the meridian noon mark. The vertical dial declines slightly to the west as the sub-style support is at 12:20. The meridian marks every 10 days through the seasons of the year and the zodiac. Unfortunately the gnomon has been broken off at the support point so the noon mark no longer shows the noon shadow point on the meridian. GPS location: 43°52.527'N, 5°23.833'E.



There is a lot of information in the details on this sundial. Pascal is correct in calling the solar hour lines "Heures Vrais" or true time. Note the Masonic symbol of the crossed setsquares with the G. Note his trademark, a triangle with dots on the three apexes. He claims the dial is unique. Perhaps it was not common at the time, 1834, but there are many sundials with analemma meridians, most made later, just before the introduction of standard time.

For the next dial exit Place Jean Jaures by towards St Martin church. Go around the back of the church and carry on south. Look for a side street turning left, Rue Barriol. Walk along Rue Barriol to the sign for Le Couvert, a maison de hôte. Look back above the wall to 20 Rue Barriol for another Pascal sundial, much like the other sundials, this one created in 1836. It also declines a little west. The location is the rear of the chapel of the Récollets convent. GPS location: 43°52.472'N, 5°23.869'E



Come out of the old section to the large courtyard, Cours Lauze de Perret. Turn left and walk about 50 m to house #107. There you will see a similar engraved stone sundial, this one by Bernard in 1844 (MDCCCXLIV). This dial declines to the east as seen with the sub-style position, about 7am and the skewed hour lines favoring morning hours. The design is very similar to the Pascal dial around the corner. GPS location: 43°52.480'N, 5°23.901'E.



This brings you back close to the starting point and ends the walking tour in the old section of Apt. There are several sundials by Pascal and others in the surrounding towns, east and west of Apt, including Saignon, St. Saturnin, Roussillon, Ménerbes, Lacoste, Bonnieux, St Martin, St Michel, Simiane etc. These I will leave for other tours.

But there one sundial quite close to Apt that should be included. Why? It's mine!

On the south facing wall of Mas de Genet near Saignon is a sundial designed by Roger Bailey, Walking Shadow Designs. Mas des Genets is just east of Apt, halfway up to the perched village of Saignon is an old stone farmhouse visible across a vineyard. Mas des Genet is owned by Stephen and Meg Parker. The Parkers live there and have two holiday suites (gites) available for rent. While enjoying the hospitality in 2003, Roger designed a sundial for the south facing wall of the old stone farm house. This design on a piece of cardboard was left as a gift for the house. Before the Baileys returned the next year, Meg Parker had local craftsmen make the dial pieces: a mason to engrave the dial and blacksmith to fabricate the gnomon and support brackets. During a



2004 visit we installed the gnomon and mounted the dial on the wall. At the first shadow celebration on Steven Parker's birthday, the sundial was unveiled in the company of their friends. The design was done from basic principles, as the designer had no computers, files or instruments. The full story is told in a couple of presentations "Designing a Sundial from Scratch" available on the Walking Shadow Designs website [www.walkingshadow.info](http://www.walkingshadow.info). The design was inspired by the many Pascal sundials in the area. The dial is south facing with no declination. The dimensions of the limestone slab are 20" wide, 32" high and 2" thick. The motto is CARPE DIEM.

For information on Mas de Genet see <http://www.masdesgenets.eu/>

#### References:

1. "Cadrans Solaires Français Catalogués" SAF Commission des Cadrans Solaires
2. "Cadrans Solaires du Luberon" J.M.Homet & F. Rozet, ÉDISUD 2003

Roger Bailey

Walking Shadow Designs ([www.walkingshadow.info](http://www.walkingshadow.info))

North American Sundial Society ([www.sundials.org](http://www.sundials.org))

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