

AHS London Lecture Thursday 24 September 2015

David Bryden

Insights into the horological trade in Georgian London from evidence given at Old Bailey trials

Old Bailey Trials between 1715 and 1839 include over 800 cases in which more than 1300 members of the London clock and watch-making trades are named. These practitioners appear as victims of crime, as witness to a crime, as character witnesses for an accused, or as persons accused of a crime. Many unrecorded members of the trade – from business proprietors, specialist workers, journeymen, apprentices, errand-boys and employees of unknown status – are named in these records. The speaker will give examples of the social history of the London clock and watch trade provided

by these trial reports, but will concentrate on the first hand evidence of the practitioners themselves that authentically illuminate the custom and practice of the horological trade in Georgian London. Of particular interest are statements made by members of the specialist trades involved in the making of silver and gold watch cases – including illicit practices relating to hall marking. There is also evidence on ‘christening’ – the improper addition of the names of reputed to makers, to time-pieces that came from inferior workshops.



Dr David Bryden spent most of his career as a Museum Curator, moving from the Royal Scottish Museum, to the Whipple Museum, Cambridge, the Science Museum and finally to the National Museums of Scotland. In retirement he continues to undertake and publish research into early scientific instruments.

Following his AHS London Lecture ‘Bankruptcy and insolvency in the English horological trade, 1720-1849’, given in November 2012 and reported in the March 2013 journal, Dr Bryden will now discuss another important serial source of historical information on the horological trade in Britain.

Members may be interested to know of Dr Bryden’s article ‘The scientific instrument trade in Georgian London. Gleanings from Old Bailey Trials’, published in the *Bulletin of the Scientific Instrument Society*, 118, Sept 2013, pp 26–34.

TICKETS:

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