

AHS London Lecture Thursday 21 November 2013

Roger Smith, 'Justin Vulliamy and the Swiss Community – Networking in 18th-century London'

About the lecture

In the eighteenth century, watch and clockmakers did not operate in isolation. Professionally, the traditional subdivision of labour in these trades meant that they needed to establish trustworthy links with other workers and businesses requiring their skills, or able to supply the skills and materials they could not provide for themselves. Socially, they needed the support of those who could provide moral and material assistance if they were unemployed or fell sick. While local communities could use the traditional connections of family, friends and established institutions, the many immigrant workers in large cities like London had to create these professional and social networks for themselves.

Some immigrants, through personality or family background, were particularly active in this way and developed pivotal roles within the various networks used by their community. This was true of the watchmaker François Justin Vulliamy (1712-97) who was a central figure in the London Swiss community in the later eighteenth century. Exploring his relationship to this community sheds light on the role such networks played for his compatriots and - by extension - for other immigrant groups and for London craftsmen and entrepreneurs as a whole.

About the speaker

Roger Smith FSA is an historian interested in how clocks and similar luxury goods were manufactured and sold in the eighteenth century. He has published extensively in *Antiquarian Horology* and elsewhere, and gave the 2006 Dingwall-Beloe lecture at the British Museum on the clock trade to China. He was historical adviser for the 2010-11 exhibition of clocks from Beijing at Museum Speelklok, Utrecht. Recently he gave a series of lectures at the University of Neuchâtel on 'Manufacturers and Merchants: making and exporting clocks and other luxury goods in the eighteenth century'.



Title page of the *Règlements de la Société des Suisses de Londres* (Rules for the Swiss Society of London), c. 1737. This allegory on the freedom of the Swiss, with Liberty and Union personified, includes a scene representing William Tell about to shoot the apple off his son's head. Etching and engraving. BM ref AN544052001.

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