

GASTVORTRAG

Mittwoch, 28. Juni 2017, 18 Uhr c.t.

Raum: VG 2.45

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Instruments, Institutions and Iconography: The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers and the World of London Science

Historians of science are well acquainted with many of the Fellowship and Masters of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers (f. 1629), and with occasions on which they interacted with sites of elite scientific knowledge, including the Royal Society, Royal Observatory and Board of Longitude. In general, these examples have been considered individually and the extent to which these men used the Company to develop a collective identity has tended to be overlooked. In large part this is because the role of London's Livery Companies in trade regulation was in decline throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. Yet they persisted and, in the case of the Spectacle Makers', were represented by many eminent scientific instrument makers. This paper will share work in progress that attempts to resituate some of the well-known names within the context of their craft guild, considering what role it played for them, the extent to which it helped to develop a collective identity for opticians and optical instrument makers, and whether this played a role when artisans cooperated, negotiated and consulted with scientific institutions. The paper will, as far as possible from the limited sources, explore the role of science within the Company's identity and iconography, considering evidence for the development of a scientific rather than trade or artisanal identity. It will suggest some ways in which this may have been presented internally and externally, and what, if any, impact it had on the Company's position among London's Livery Companies and the self-presentation of the Company's Freeman.

Rebekah Higgitt is a lecturer in history of science based in the University of Kent's School of History. After a PhD at Imperial College London, she undertook postdoctoral research at the University of Edinburgh before spending 5 years as Curator of History of Science at the National Maritime Museum and Royal Observatory Greenwich. Her research has focused on the relationships between science, government and the public, including studies of scientific biography, institutions – including the Board of Longitude, Royal Observatory and British Association for the Advancement of Science – and the material culture of science. She is currently leading a new three-year Leverhulme Trust-funded project, "Metropolitan Science: Places, Objects and Cultures of Practice and Knowledge in London, 1600-1800" in partnership with the Science Museum, London. She is author or editor of a number of articles and books, including *Recreating Newton: Biographies of Newton and the Making of Nineteenth-Century History of Science* (2008) and *Finding Longitude: How Ships, Clocks and Stars Helped Solve the Longitude Problem* (2014, with Richard Dunn).

Zum Gastvortrag ergeht herzliche Einladung