

AHS Annual Meeting 2019

The Life, Work and Context of Alexander Cumming

To be held in the Leopold Muller Lecture Theatre at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London SE10 9NF, on Saturday 18 May 2019.

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| 10.00 Museum doors open. Registration with tea, coffee and biscuits. | 14.00 Annual General Meeting and presentation of awards |
| 10.30 Chair's introduction | 15.00 Rebekah Higgitt, <i>The Metropolitan Science of Georgian London</i> |
| 10.35 Gloria Clifton, <i>A Biographical Sketch of Alexander Cumming, Watchmaker and Mechanician, 1731/2–1814</i> | 15.35 Peter Holmes, <i>The Case for Chippendale?</i> |
| 11.10 Charlotte Rostek, <i>The Third Earl of Bute's Patronage of Alexander Cumming</i> | 16.10 Alison Boyle, <i>The Life of a Cumming Clock: Luke Howard's Barometric Researches, 1814–1847, and Beyond</i> |
| 11.45 Jonathan Betts, <i>Alexander Cumming and Precision Timekeeping</i> | 16.40 Closing words. The museum will close at 17.00. |
| 12.15 Lunch in the Queen's House | |



Alexander Cumming, FRS, portrait in oils by Samuel Drummond ARA. Image courtesy of the Clockmakers' Museum.

We look forward to welcoming as many members as possible, and guests are also welcome. The full day programme charge of £20 covers the costs of buffet lunch and refreshments. There is no charge for members wishing to attend the AGM only between 14.00 and 15.00. Please complete and return your booking form to the Secretary as soon as possible, or book online at www.ahsoc.org/events/annual-meeting/ with PayPal or payment cards.

General enquiries, and those concerning the AGM, to the Secretary please (secretary@ahsoc.org, 07733 481 595). Enquiries about arrangements at Greenwich to the NMM Conference Manager, Lizelle de Jager (020 8312 6716).

The AHS reserves the right to alter the published programme as necessary.

The day's events have been arranged with the kind sponsorship and support of Sotheby's.



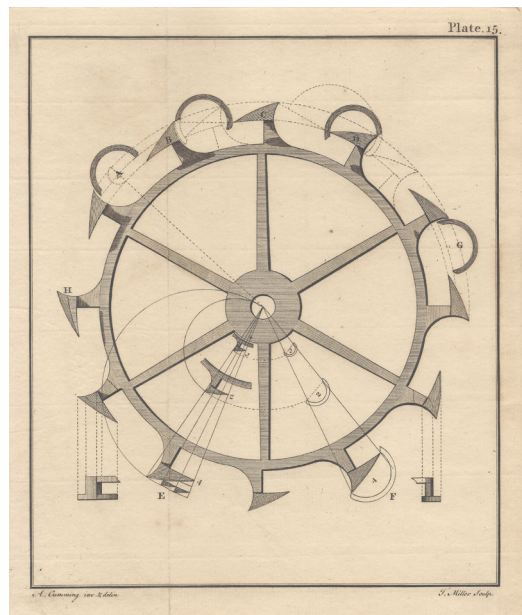
Barograph clock by Alexander Cumming, 1766, used by meteorologist Luke Howard from 1814 in pioneering climate science research. Image courtesy of Sotheby's, London.

In August 2017, the Science Museum unveiled the latest exhibit in its flagship *Making the Modern World* gallery. Newly on show was a pedestal barograph clock that was previously on loan to the Museum but had recently been permanently acquired with support from the Art Fund and Wolfson Foundation. It dates from 1766 and was made by Alexander Cumming, clockmaker to King George III, and is one of only four of its type known to have been constructed by the London maker.

After Cumming's death the clock was bought by the famed meteorologist Luke Howard and used to make systematic observations that are among the world's first urban climate studies. The clock's exuberant carved mahogany case has been attributed to the esteemed cabinet-maker Thomas Chippendale and displays the detailed craft skill that expressed the status of science in the 18th century.

The acquisition of this crucially important clock prompted the theme of this year's AHS Annual Meeting, which is the second in a series started in 2017 looking in detail at the life and times of celebrated figures in horological history. What do we know about the life, work and context of Alexander Cumming, and what more can we learn? Who was in Cumming's network and what was the role of science, and scientific instruments, in Georgian society? And what else, besides clocks and watches, did this important mechanic make – and with whom?

Whatever your interest – clocks and watches, history of science and instruments, furniture history, biography, or history of mechanism – this event is for you. It is also, as ever, a wonderful opportunity to catch up with old friends and make new ones in a sociable and informal environment. After the morning session and lunch in the Queen's House, you'll also have time to visit the Royal Observatory, or see the National Maritime Museum's latest galleries, before returning for the AGM and the rest of the day's talks. We look forward to seeing you there.



Drawing of cylinder escapement by Alexander Cumming, from his book *The Elements of Clock and Watch-Work Adapted to Practice ...*, 1766. Image courtesy of Charles Frodsham and Co. Copies of this book are held in the Clockmakers' Company collection at Guildhall Library.