



*Astronomy, and the musical family  
that did so much to pioneer it.*

## Action Record of the Herschel Society AGM held by Zoom at 2pm GMT on 6 March 2021

Those present by Zoom – about 30 members, including Vice President Mike Edmunds, and all members of the Committee, and at least two cats!

Charles Draper (Chairman) welcomed those present, and added that it was regrettable that the meeting could not be held in person, but doing so virtually did mean that members were attending from as far away as California and Japan. This was obviously beneficial, and the Society would ensure that future AGMs would also be Zoom enabled in.

Charles summarised the Agenda as circulated. All the actions from last year's AGM had been completed. The change of the Society's name, and the associated change to the constitution, had been implemented, and publicised once the new logo had been agreed. The new logo had been well received, and we had now commissioned the designer to propose how it should be applied to the Journal. The membership fee changes had also been implemented.

Charles summarised his Chairman's report. Sadly, this again included reports on the deaths of two committee members, Michael Tabb and Jim Foreman, who would be very much missed. After a couple of questions, it was agreed that the report should be adopted.

Rachel Holbeche (Treasurer) summarised the financial report. After a few questions it was agreed that the report should be adopted.

Simon Holbeche reported on the activities of Bath Astronomers, our partner organisation, of which he was the Chairman.

Claire Dixon, Hd of Museums at the BPT, reported on how the BPT and Herschel Museum had managed their way through the past year, as described in her presentation slides, which you can find on our website here <http://herschelsociety.org.uk/society-documents/>

It had been difficult, but there was now a realistic plan for this year and next. In discussion, it was noted that the support received from our Society and others, and the effective and still relatively new BPT management structure, had been key factors in enabling this outcome.

The main discussion item was a gathering of ideas for marking the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of William's death on 25 August 1822. The main ideas put forward are listed at Annex, with no attempt at prioritisation or refinement. Charles said this was very helpful, and exactly what he hoped for at this stage.

Charles then noted that the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of William's brother Alexander's death was in 10 days' time. We had given more prominence to him through our President's address after last year's AGM. [ Afternote – there is also now a piece about him on our website]



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Charles introduced the election of officers item by explaining that he had agreed with Claire Dixon that it was more appropriate to describe her as attending, rather than being a member of, the committee, as she had no responsibility for running the Society. Will Herschel-Shorland had agreed to join the meetings on the same basis, and would provide a welcome closer link to the family. Dr Mark Whalley had recently joined the committee and would provide a welcome education focus, as well as a link to the IoP. The Japan Society would continue to be referred to as correspondence members. (It was only possible for Will and Mark to take part in this way because it had been agreed that future committee meetings would continue to be zoom enabled, even when meetings in person are allowed again). It was agreed that the committee should be elected as proposed.

Under AOB Charles summarised the Japan Society Report which as ever we were glad to see. It was also agreed that we would aim to publish a short tribute to Professor Arnold Wolfendale in the Journal. Peter Ford and Roger Moses would draft an appropriate piece and send it to Tony Symes, our Journal editor.

Charles then thanked the committee for the work it had done over the year, and closed the formal part of the meeting.

The final item was meant to be a recorded address by Dr Allan Chapman, our President, linking the Herschel siblings' experience of sickness and health to today's circumstances. Unfortunately it proved impossible to make the recording audible, and Charles' attempts to fix the problem led to his Zoom connection crashing! Vice President Mike Edmonds kindly stepped in and thanked everyone for their contributions, and closed the meeting. Charles subsequently sent the recording of Allan's talk to attendees.

CD 21/03/2021



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## Annex – Possible Ideas for the William Herschel Bicentenary.

- Should we look at the achievements of John Herschel's many children?
- We could celebrate the huge collection of surveys by Gaia, Rubin, etc. They are rich and productive projects following in the steps of the Herschels. So, a theme could be the developments of astronomical surveys over the years.
- Link to RAS, RS.
- We should make it a celebration, including of Herschel's music, and Bath. We could plan more concerts, and seek Arts Council funding to tour a music programme. The BBC may help, too.
- There was a new spectrograph on the William Herschel Telescope
- We could celebrate the connection of science and music through William's life journey and related stories today.
- The discovery of infra-red
- We should connect with William's later life at Slough, with the Herschel Astronomical Society there, and the Church where William is buried. There is a poetry and choral group there called the Herschel Stars with connections to the Slough Museum. They were making a film.
- There were many possibilities. We couldn't pursue them all, but it would be good to provide some kind of notice board to pick up what others are doing, too.
- It would be good to organise something, perhaps a meal, in the Octagon Chapel building (currently a restaurant)
- We need to decide what we are celebrating.
- We should find out if the northern towns (e.g – Leeds. Halifax) where William pursued his music career are doing anything.
- Hannover? Link with the Japan Society?
- A Dark Skies theme? This could relate to the clean skies Herschel must have enjoyed at Datchet. What could be seen then, and now – e.g low on the horizon?
- We could look at what the Herschels did, and what this led to.
- Maybe a virtual tour of places where William was active?
- See if "Inside Science" on Radio 4 would look at modern applications of Herschel's work.
- What about Patrick Moore's role in founding the Museum? There would be BBC interest, and Patrick's own centenary was in 2023.
- Try to get Brian May involved?
- Use George Sibey's recent film about William?
- Get an article in Physics World?
- If we get a good programme together, the media will be interested. Local media (Bath Chronicle) too.
- William often recorded where he composed his symphonies. (e.g. Maidstone, Pontefract, Darlington, Sunderland,) Would this suggest a musical journey?
- William went travelling in the north again in the 1790s after his marriage, and met the great and the good there.
- We should involve the RGO at Greenwich, with their section of the 40 ft telescope.