

HERSCHEL SOCIETY PLANS (HERSCHEL 200) FOR MARKING THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF WILLIAM HERSCHEL'S DEATH ON 25 AUGUST 1822

We intend to use the anniversary to increase awareness of William's many achievements, (including his music) and in particular the fundamental role that he and Caroline played in developing astronomy beyond the solar system into today's studies of galactic and intergalactic astronomy, and cosmology.

We hope this will lead to positive media coverage, further publications about the Herschels, more performances of William's music, and increases in membership of the Society and in visits to the Museum.

The main events will be a concert and conference in Bath over the weekend of Friday 30 September and Saturday 1 October.

The Friday evening concert of (mainly) William's music will be held at St Swithin's Church in Bath, will be introduced and directed by Dr Matthew Spring, and will be on similar lines to the event he put together for the RAS National Astronomy Meeting in 2021. You can see the Youtube video here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxVgbVNaL8E> . But the live version will be even better!

The Saturday Conference will be held at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution on a hybrid basis – i.e. individuals can attend in person or online. Almost all of the speakers will be in person. The planned programme is: Professor Mike Edmunds – The Context of William's life and work; Dr Jim Bennett – William's Telescopes; Dr Wolfgang Steinicke – William's Astronomy; Dr Sian Prosser – William and Caroline in their own words; Dr Josh Nall – William's and Georgian views on Extra-Terrestrial Life; Dr Michael Perryman – Giant Strides Herschel to GAIA; a Round table discussion; and Dr Allan Chapman – Light-hearted closing remarks. There will also be an Infra-Red demo by Dr Bob Fosbury.

We will organise a Herschel themed walk in Bath on the Sunday, which can then be recorded so others can repeat it later.

We have a variety of other plans and ambitions. One of these is to produce a virtual 3D model of William's main 20 ft telescope that can be used for display and demonstration on a computer screen in the Herschel Museum and elsewhere. It is by far William's most important telescope, yet is much less well known than the famous 40 ft. This will now be undertaken for us as a project next year by students in the Creative Computing School in Bath Spa University. This is a new and exciting development with much potential benefit.

We have also been trying to develop a plan for or encourage the playing of William's music this year in the northern towns of England (such as Richmond, Darlington, Sunderland, Pontefract, Leeds, York, Halifax, and Durham) where he played, taught, and composed music for much of the 1750s and 60s. We have concluded that mounting a tour from the Bath area would not be financially viable, and have been trying to find ways of encouraging local music groups, professional or amateur, to take this on, so far without success.

We are also looking at the possibility of encouraging other concerts this year involving William's music near Bath or elsewhere. And we are encouraging plans for a local choir to put on a concert of a dramatised version of Handel's Messiah in March which is itself a celebration of a performance conducted by William in the Octagon Chapel in Bath in 1771.

This is already quite a comprehensive programme, but we are always open to new ideas . We also know that other Societies with an interest in William Herschel are making plans, some linked to ours, for the anniversary. We have encouraged this, and intend to provide an information focus for all significant such activities over the coming year. We would therefore welcome news (see below for one important example*) of what others are doing in the UK or elsewhere to celebrate the Herschels this year.

We are also encouraging the BBC to take an interest in the anniversary. This has already born fruit with Melvyn Bragg's Radio 4 "In our Time" programme on William and Caroline broadcast on 11 November 2021, and featuring one of our Saturday Conference Speakers.

We are working closely with the Herschel Museum's plans to mark the anniversary. They have secured almost £61,000 for this from the Heritage Lottery Fund. They will work with partner organisations to create a year-long programme of activity, using the anniversary to better connect audiences with William's story, and encourage inspiration, learning and enjoyment. The museum team and wider partners will engage as wide and diverse an audience as possible with William's life and work, and those who influenced him, including Caroline. The programme includes:

- Free access to new planetarium shows in partnership with the University of Bath, Bath Astronomers and Percy Community Centre for disadvantaged families in Bath
- Free craft workshops, enabling families to visit the museum and develop creative responses of their choosing
- An exhibition with the Royal Astronomical Society and the Herschel family, that will bring collections to Bath for the first time and reveal the Herschel story through original artefacts
- Students will develop content and learn new curatorial skills with the support of our professional team
- School projects provide a creative programme of participation.
- A light box installation by UK artist Lynda Laird will encourage new, artistic audiences to the museum
- We will create a downloadable map based on research by volunteers from the Herschel Society that highlights the locations across the UK with Herschel connections
- New museum trails will make collections accessible for everyone. The public will participate, voting for the objects in the trail and taking ownership of their experience
- A commemorative stone in the garden will mark the anniversary and serve as a telescope platform, providing a legacy and marking the very spot where the planet Uranus was discovered
- Herschel Museum of Astronomy events will continue with the support of Bath Astronomers
- A new partnership with Slough Museum will enable them to co-design performances, exhibitions and participatory activity to engage the communities of Slough with William's story.

*We have recently heard that the University of York will be hosting - Cosmic Harmonies: A Symposium Celebrating the Life, Science, Music, and Legacy of William Herschel on 19 June 2022.

The organisers say that the symposium will explore new aspects of Herschel's work as composer, instrumentalist, impresario, and astronomer in the intellectual, creative, and cultural contexts of his time. It will take a wide perspective on astronomy, music, and natural philosophy, including the Herschels' legacy in connections between science and art today. It will include public keynote lecture by Professor Tom McLeish, a panel discussion on Herschel's legacies, and a concert of Herschel's music given as part of the York Festival of Ideas, 11–24 June 2022 (<https://yorkfestivalofideas.com/>).

The Programme Committee includes
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Sarah Clemmens Waltz (Conservatory of Music, University of the Pacific)
Woodruff T. Sullivan III (University of Washington, Seattle)

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Chairman

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