



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

Action Note from Herschel Society AGM on Saturday 2 March 2024

Those present (on line), 17 total, including: Charles Draper (Chair); Mike Edmunds, Tony Symes, Jonathan Hall, Patrizia Ribul, Will and Cassie Herschel-Shorland; Geraint Day, Udo Reffke; Chuck and Pat McPartlin; Sadaharu Uehara; Ai Iijima; Chris Lee; Mike Leggett; and Duncan Steel.

Charles welcomed those present (online). He had received apologies from several people. Our President Allan Chapman was unable to attend, so it was particularly good that our Vice President, Mike Edmunds, was taking part. The AGM was being conducted virtually this year because there was relatively little substantive business to conduct, and it would save effort and cost in favour of the upcoming 8 June Conference on John Herschel, which would also provide a good opportunity for members to get together in person. He expected that the 2025 AGM would be hybrid as in 2023.

The main update from the last AGM was on the various actions from the membership issues discussion. In overall numbers our membership was steady (159 now compared to 162) at end 2022, but remained rather male and advanced in years. We had updated the website, and produced new banners and flyers. Jonathan Hall had taken on the important social media role. Other actions had also been implemented. Charles had learned from a visit to the Flamsteed Society that their observing group, which was just a WhatsApp group within their Society, was a thriving and well-balanced community, and also the source of most of the individuals than ran the overall Society. It was clear from this that, while separating out Bath Astronomers as a separate entity had been a great success, there had been an unintended consequence of cutting off an important source of recruits to the Herschel society, and in particular its management. Charles was discussing with Simon various steps to bridge this communication gap. For the time being, the excessive dependence the Society placed on key individuals for managerial tasks remained the greatest threat to its future. Chuck McPartlin commented that this was a common problem in all such enterprises.

The main focus for the year ahead was the upcoming John Herschel Conference at BRLSI in Bath on Saturday June 8th. This had come about quite fortuitously on the back of the imminent publication of the CUP Companion, and preparations were going well, both with the authors of the Companion, and BRLSI, following the model of the very successful



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conference on William 18 months ago. This, and the other events that weekend, would hopefully start a major resurgence of interest in, and knowledge of, John's remarkable story.

The Lecture programme continued to thrive under Tony Symes' direction, with thematic links with the Herschel Museum and other BRLSI programmes enriching the whole. After a discussion the meeting voted to adopt the Chairman's report.

Tony Symes presented the Annual Accounts. After a brief discussion the meeting voted to adopt them.

Charles summarised the Bath Astronomers Report (copy attached) in Simon's absence.

Charles welcomed Patrizia Ribul as the new BPT Director of Museums. Patrizia reported that the Herschel Museum continued to do well, and benefited greatly from the public observing sessions supported by Bath Astronomers and the Herschel Society. The main focus this year was on the feasibility study on the proposed expansion into the upper 2 floors of the house. There would be a consultation exhibition and feedback process over the next few months, opening in the next two weeks. Patrizia would provide a document that Charles could send to Herschel society Members so they could feed their views back to the BPT. (If feasible this would include a box enabling the responder to state they were a Herschel Society member.) The feasibility study was at an early stage, so there would be few visuals offered to the public, but the aim would be to provide more detail of current thinking on visuals to Society Members. This consultation process was very important as part of the preparation for going to funders.

Charles presented the proposed new committee, including the recent valuable additions of Sarah Waltz as a member and Woody Sullivan as an attendee. The committee was then elected.

Under AOB, Charles summarised the interesting Report from the Japan Society. He was particularly impressed that two of their members were attending despite the meeting starting at 3am Tokyo time!

CD 08/03/2024