

William Herschel

Explore his life and story

25 August 2022 was the 200th anniversary of William Herschel's death. In commemoration of that event, we have created this map to reveal the places where William Herschel travelled, worked and lived. Turn over the page to find out more about each location and places that you can visit, to follow in his footsteps and find out more.



- 1 **1755 Hanover** A musician in Hanoverian Guards (from May 1753) along with his brother Jacob.
- 2 **1756 Maidstone** As a musician in the Guards he visits England with his father and brother.
- 3 **1757 Hastenbeck** After the battle of Hastenbeck (26 July) he leaves for London with his brother Jacob.
- 4 **1758 London** Visits a number of places outside of London including Tunbridge Wells, Maidstone and Rochester. Jacob returns to Hannover.
- 5 **1760 Darlington** Stays at Halnaby Hall working for Sir Ralph Milbank, composing symphonies and concertos. He visits Doncaster and the surrounding area as a music teacher. **Places to visit:** Halnaby Hall Parks and Gardens
- 6 **1761 Sunderland** William accepts the job of director of a militia band of Earl of Darlington in September 1759 and leaves for Yorkshire, basing himself in the North of England for the next six years. He leads the Durham Militia Band and travels to Edinburgh to apply for the job as director of concerts. He meets and performs with Avison in Newcastle and with the Duke of York at Halnaby. **Places to visit:** Sunderland Heritage Trails
- 7 **1762-6 Halifax, Leeds** Moves to Halifax and directs Handel's Messiah with the Halifax Messiah club. Lots of compositions produced including some grand symphonies. Performs in Newcastle. Appointed director of concerts in Leeds (April). Gains his formal dismissal from the Hanoverian Guards and becomes Director of Subscription Concerts in Leeds. Composes and visits musical families around Leeds, continuing to teach, perform and compose. Briefly visits his family back in Hanover. Is looking for a job as an organist and developing his keyboard skills. Attends musical families around Leeds, Halifax, Pontefract and Doncaster. Wins the competition for job as organist at Halifax church but also applies and accepts job as organist at Bath's new Octagon Chapel. He leaves for Bath. **Places to visit:** Halifax Minster
- 8 **1767-81 Bath** William has his first benefit concert and starts a lucrative teaching practice in Bath. Starts summer evening concerts at the Spring Gardens and opens the new Octagon chapel organ with a concert and later The Messiah. Works with Thomas Linley (senior) who tries unsuccessfully to replace Francis Fleming as leader of Pump Room Band. Develops his teaching and performing portfolio in Bath and Bristol, publishing his Sei Sonate per il Cembalo (with optional parts for cello and violin) in October 1769 in Bath - his only substantial printed work. Alexander arrives to live in Bath (stays 46 years) and begins a career as a cellist and clarinetist – Alexander joins the Bath Orchard Street theatre band and assembly room orchestras. New upper Assembly Rooms opened and Herschel is included in the band and Linley is the director but they fall out over the 'incident of the music stand' and Herschel walks out, operating his concerts in Bristol and Bath's lower Assembly Rooms. William travels to Hanover to rescue sister Caroline. He runs concert seasons of his own in Bristol and Bath and trains Caroline as a singer. He develops an obsession with Astronomy and starts to make his own telescopes, using them to observe and to meet other astronomers. Caroline works with William on performances and choir training and he performs less, concentrating more on Science and Teaching. There are many private concerts with pupils organised by the Marchioness of Lothian. William makes a larger telescope. Linley leaves Bath and William becomes director of music at Assembly Rooms, no longer working for the Octagon he takes over as organist at the Margaret chapel. At this time he builds a 10-foot reflector telescope. William's youngest brother John Dietrich comes to live with the Herschel family in Bath. Caroline sings in a season of Lenten oratorios as a principal singer for the first time, later turning down the opportunity to sing in Birmingham and take on a career as a principal singer. William joins the Bath Philosophical Society through Dr William Watson, his profession as a musician is increasingly neglected and his teaching practice declines. John Dietrich leaves Bath. William has papers read at the Royal Society in London and starts his search for double stars, discovering the planet Uranus from the garden of 19 New Kings Street. William visits Greenwich as the guest of Nevil Maskelyne and the King is approached to give Herschel a position as an astronomer. **Places to visit:** Herschel Museum of Astronomy, Octagon Chapel, now The Botanist, The Pump Rooms, The Assembly Rooms, River Street.
- 9 **1781-92 London and Slough** A guest of Sir W Watson, he receives the Royal Society Copley Medal for the discovery of the planet Uranus. William's performances begin to fail and he performs publicly with Caroline for the last time at the Margaret Chapel. They both move to Slough in July and William begins his life as a Royal Astronomer. He visits Sir W Watson in London, has audiences with the King at Windsor and takes the 7ft telescope to Greenwich for comparative tests with Dr Maskelyne and others, as part of his campaign to get Royal patronage. William takes the 7ft telescope to show the royal family at Windsor, secures his appointment as King's astronomer with a pension of £200 p.a. William, Caroline, (and briefly Alexander) move to Datchet. William pays many visits to the King and Royal family to show them objects through the 7ft; and he begins construction of the 20 ft telescope. William gains the King's commission to build the 40 ft, observing and recording with Caroline and submitting between 80 and 85 key papers to the Royal Society. William and Caroline move to Clay Hall, Old Windsor, for less damp living conditions before moving to what became Observatory House in Slough, William's home for the rest of his life. Major modifications of the house and garden took place and they were visited by the King who gave a £2000 grant for the 40 ft telescope, plus £200 pa for upkeep and £50 pa for Caroline. The second catalogue of 2000 was almost complete. William married Mary Pitt, after which the second Catalogue of nebulae and clusters represented to RS and his son John Herschel was born. **Places to visit:** Slough Museum, The Curve, Slough, St Laurence's Church, Slough, Royal Society Library and Archive, London, Royal Observatory, Greenwich, London, Royal College of Physicians, London, Windsor Castle, London
- 10 **1792 Birmingham** Visits James Watt at his house and factory. Remains of the Boulton and Watt Soho foundry and mint, Birmingham Canal, Smethwick.
- 11 **1792 Llanorust** Attempts a climb of Snowdon with the 7ft telescope – defeated by cloud and wet ground. **Places to visit:** Snowdon walk
- 12 **1792 Glasgow** Is presented Freedom of the City, and an Honorary Degree from Glasgow University.
- 13 **1792 Edinburgh** Visits Edinburgh Castle and Observatory, tries out their Gregorian reflectors on Land objects. **Places to visit:** Royal Observatory, Edinburgh, Edinburgh Castle
- 14 **1802 London** Presentation of the third catalogue to the RS, including planetary nebulae of 500 clusters and nebulae.
- 15 **1809 Keswick** Climbed Skiddaw. **Places to visit:** Skiddaw walk
- 16 **1811 Lake District** Climbed Helvellyn. **Places to visit:** Helvellyn walk