

Herschel 200

16 July – 31 December 2022

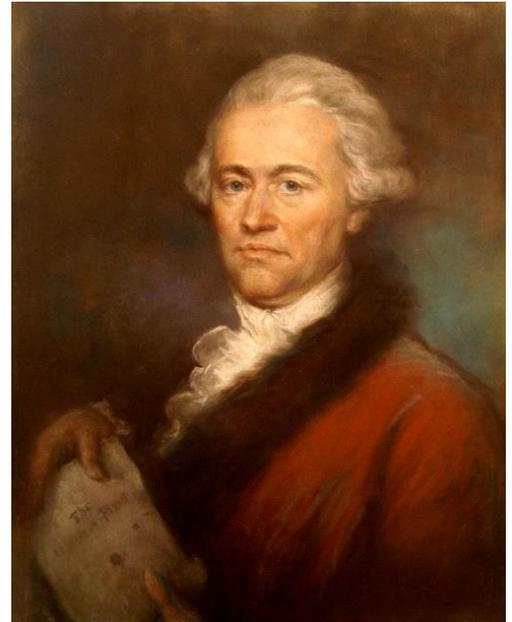
Herschel Museum celebrates the life and achievements of pioneering astronomer with new exhibition

To commemorate the bicentenary of the death of Bath-based astronomer William Herschel (1738-1822), Bath Preservation Trust is hosting a major exhibition to highlight the hugely-important achievements and contributions he made to our understanding of space.

The exhibition – at the Herschel Museum of Astronomy - will take place in the very same building in central Bath, where William and his sister Caroline lived, worked and made several important discoveries during the late 1700s. Indeed, it was in the garden of 19 New King Street in 1781 that William Herschel became the first person ever to identify Uranus as a planet.

The exhibition, organised in partnership with the Royal Astronomical Society and the Herschel family, will also bring collections to Bath for the first time and reveal the family's remarkable story through original artefacts.

Herschel 200 explores William's early life as a musician teaching and performing in Bath and travelling across the UK, whilst also developing his interest in astronomy. Visitors will find out about his innovations and discoveries, collaborations with his siblings, Caroline and Alexander, and the legacy he left behind. Also, for the first time the museum is working in partnership with Slough Museum, as William and Caroline moved to Observatory House in Slough, when William became the King's Astronomer and Caroline also took a salary as a professional astronomer. The exhibition will feature the Slough story and an accompanying exhibition will be on display in the Slough Museum.



The Royal Astronomical Society has loaned William's observing notebook, which includes his notes from the night (13 March 1781) when he first observed the planet Uranus, as well as a catalogue of stars recorded by Caroline. Also on display will be never before exhibited letters from William to his brother Alexander, loaned from the Herschel family collection. A miniature portrait of William has also been very kindly loaned by the family and will be proudly on display in the museum as part of this special anniversary year.

The exhibition has been co-curated with local students who had the opportunity to develop content and learn curatorial skills with the support of the Museum's professional staff.

"The 200th anniversary of the death of William Herschel has provided us with opportunities to develop new partnerships, working with Slough Museum and the Percy Community in Bath for the first time to connect with new audiences both in the city and beyond. The project has been made possible thanks to the National Lottery Heritage Fund and through the exhibition and our programme of wider activity we aim to inspire people not just with the family story, but their contemporary relevance to science and music today, encouraging young people in particular, to participate. The project will inform future plans to transform the museum so that it realises its potential," explains Claire Dixon, Director of Museums for Bath Preservation Trust, which runs the Herschel Museum of Astronomy.

Mike Edmunds, President of the Royal Astronomical Society says: *"I am really delighted that the Royal Astronomical Society is able to lend historic archive material for the Bath exhibition celebrating William Herschel's work. He contributed to so many astronomical fields in which intensive work continues to this day. I feel a particular connection as I have just become President of the Society – and William was the very first, elected in 1820."*

In addition to the landmark exhibition, there are a number of additional activities and events to be enjoyed as part of the 200th anniversary commemorations, including planetarium shows and free workshops.

On 25 August, a commemorative stone will be unveiled in the garden of 19 New King Street, to not only mark the anniversary of William's passing but also serve as a telescope platform. The stone will mark the very spot where Herschel first glimpsed Uranus, allowing visitors to contemplate the moment, during a crisp March night in 1781, that William spotted the planet using a homemade telescope. It is an object that at its closest to earth is 1.6 billion miles (2.6 billion kilometres) away, and at its furthest a staggering 1.98 billion miles (3.2 billion km).

For more information about *Herschel 200* and the Herschel Museum of Astronomy, launch herschelmuseum.org.uk or for updates in other dimensions follow @HerschelMuseumofAstronomy on Facebook, @herschelmuseum on Twitter, @herschelmuseum on Instagram and Herschel Museum of Astronomy on Tripadvisor.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

[The Herschel Museum of Astronomy](#) is located in 19 New King Street, the very place where William Herschel discovered the planet Uranus in March 1781. In doing so, he doubled the size of the known universe. What makes his achievement even more remarkable is that Herschel was a self-taught amateur astronomer, who built his own telescopes at home.

Number 19 forms part of a terrace built around 1764. When the Herschels moved here for the first time in 1777, the modest townhouse (laid out over five floors) was typical of the houses of 'the middling sort' – i.e. artisans and tradesmen. It stands in contrast to the grand Georgian houses rented by visitors for the Bath season – such as No.1 The Royal Crescent (another historic house museum which, like the Herschel Museum of Astronomy, is run by the Bath Preservation Trust).

Today, 19 New King Street is a Grade II* listed building and was purchased with the help of Doctors Leslie and Elizabeth Hilliard in 1981. The house has subsequently been fully restored, in the authentic style of the period. Dr Brian May (a member of the world-famous band, Queen) is the Museum's patron, who like William Herschel before him, is both a musician and an astronomer.

[Bath Preservation Trust](#) was set up in 1934 to safeguard the historic city of Bath. Bath is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the only complete city in the UK afforded World Heritage Status. The purposes of the Trust are: to encourage and support the conservation, evolution and enhancement of Bath and its environs within a framework appropriate both to its historic setting and its sustainable future, and to provide educational resources, including museums, which focus on the architectural and historic importance of the city. The Trust receives no statutory funding and is supported by visitor income, grants, legacies, donations and around 1400 members who share a passion for the city and its environs. The Trust runs four accredited museums in Bath - No. 1 Royal Crescent, the Museum of Bath Architecture, the Herschel Museum of Astronomy, and Beckford's Tower.

HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGES FOR MEDIA USE CAN BE DOWNLOADED HERE

William Herschel (1738 – 1822) (c) Herschel Museum of Astronomy, Bath Preservation Trust

FOR MORE INFORMATION, INTERVIEWS AND IMAGES

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