

Herschel Museum 2018 report for WHS AGM, March 2nd 2019

Wonder Women of Science Exhibition and Events

Last year's exhibition 'Wonder Women of Science' looked at how Caroline Herschel's life and work is an inspiration to women working in contemporary astronomy today. Through its linking outreach programme, participants of the exhibition like Luke Lukas from the European Space Agency and Prof Carole Mundell of the University of Bath were able to visit local schools and also talk to the local community to encourage interest in Astronomy and Science. The exhibition and talks were enjoyed by the public with very positive feedback and also generated wide media interest.

The Events programme was a collaborative effort with the William Herschel Society and Bath Astronomers, allowing the museum to put on a number of joint lectures linked to 'Wonder Women of Science' at the BRLSI and observing sessions hosted at the museum throughout the year. These proved popular with the public. One observing session was held as part of World Heritage Day in front of the Royal Crescent, where approximately 4000 people attended for all the events held on that day, and successfully generated interest in the museum, the WHS and Bath Astronomers.

The museum also presented a concert as part of the exhibition programme called 'Wonder Women of Science' performed by the 'Electric Voice Theatre' held at BPT partner MoBA.

The museum hosted artist Lois Cordelia who painted the 'HerschOwl' for the BANES wide 'Minerva Owl' trail campaign which ran throughout Bath with Owl sculptures in public spaces. The owl was sponsored by Mogers Drewett.

Visitor Figures and Shop Sales

2018 was the most successful year for visitor figures in the museums history since opening in 1981 and the first time we have reached five figures. **10,692 people visited in 2018** including schools and groups, compared to **8,768 people in 2017**, an increase of 18%. In 2018 admission sales were up to approximately **£48,000** compared to **£38,600** in 2017. **Shops sales were £6,532.99 in 2018** which was a decrease from **£7,064.41 in 2017**.

Learning and Engagement in 2018

It was a positive year for education and outreach with a number of primary schools, home school and Brownie groups booking both the 'Amazing Astronomy' and 'Spectacular Space' workshops. We received positive feedback from teachers and students. In total there were **342 children** who took part in booked workshops.

There were a number of school holiday workshops organised throughout the year including Octobers 'Museums Week'. For example the 'Planisphere Perfection' workshop held on October was attended by 50 adults and children.

In May, BPT working with Bath Spa University Drama and media students produced filmed monologues to be played by visitors as multimedia interpretation in the museum.

The 'Starseekers' education project (funded by the Ernest Cook Trust) will continue to develop in 2019, run by the Herschel/BPT learning team with support from the Bath Astronomers and Herschel volunteers. It will incorporate hands-on activities, talks and telescope observing sessions both at the museum and in schools. So far, both primary and secondary schools have been involved plus members of Age UK (B&NES).

Group visits 2018

Booked group visits continued to be encouraging in 2018 with **383 booked visitors**, for tours, talks and observing sessions held at the museum. This included astronomy clubs, history societies, international universities, and European language academies.

Building/General Maintenance

2018 saw investment in renovating the top floor flat of 19 New King Street which had been completed by February 2018 and let immediately after completion. Both flats continue to be a dependable and regular source of income for the museum.

Jill Hunter (BPT facilities manager) who oversees all BPT sites has introduced a new maintenance programme to the museum and flats. This includes general maintenance of the building and rooms, annual health and safety standards visit, security review, new CCTV installation and office renovation.

Opening hours in 2019

The museum will continue with the extended opening hours introduced in 2018, which proved successful in attracting extra visitors. In 2019 the museum will be open from February 2nd 2019 till closing January 1st 2020. We will also repeat extending weekday hours in July and August from 11am to 5pm, for the busier summer period.

Exhibition/Programme in 2019

The 2019 exhibition will be titled 'Invisible Light' and will be part of the BPT 2019 programme on the theme of Photography. The exhibition will focus on the discovery of Infrared radiation by William Herschel in 1800 and through the objects in the exhibition, will cover its history and uses in astronomy, science, medicine and technology since then.

We will continue to collaborate with the WHS on joint lectures in 2019, and also put on a programme of Observing sessions hosted at the museum over the year.

The museum will also be the venue for Bath Astronomers meetings and their 'Introduction to Astronomy' course.

New Acquisition

In 2018 the museum received a gift from Geoffrey Biggs, former Director of NASA's Solar System Exploration Program and a member of the William Herschel Society. The donation was a special collection of stamps compiled by the European Space Agency to commemorate Giotto mission to Comet Halley, 1986, including stamps issued by dozens of countries around the world.

We also were very kindly given speculum metal mirrors for use by Dr Brad Elder of Doane University, USA, who cast and polished the mirrors himself.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all the Herschel volunteers and support of the Herschel Society and Bath Astronomers for making 2018 an successful year for the Herschel Museum.