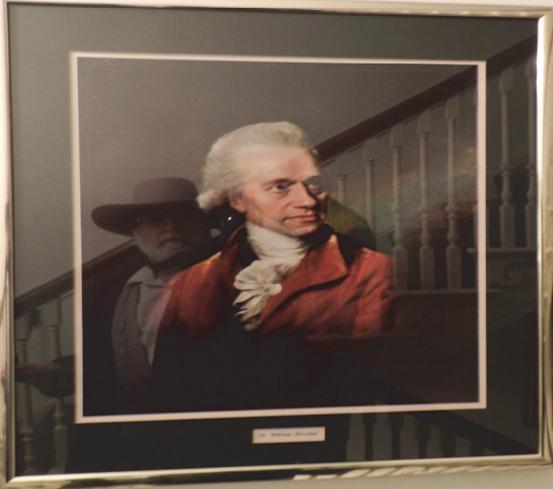


Photons Focused On - The Trail of William Herschel



Discovering the Discoverer of Uranus

The Father of Modern Observational Astronomy, also the discoverer of Uranus and two of its moons and infrared light, cataloguer extraordinaire—these words barely cover the legacy of Sir William Herschel. Born in Hanover, Germany, emigrated as a musician to England, he first made his mark as a musician and composer, then as a world-class telescope maker. Astronomy was his passion but it became his vocation after his discovery of the planet Uranus.

I've always been fascinated by Herschel, spending so much time as a youth mimicking his actions unknowingly. So when I had the opportunity to go to England this December, I made sure that in the brief time I was there I went to the most important places where he lived, discovered, and rests, and saw what was possible to see of his telescopes.

Herschel's first major employment as a mu-

musician was in the city of Bath, renowned from Roman times and still a major player in the arts of Great Britain. He lived in two locations, one of which is now the Herschel Museum. A forerunner of today's towering townhouses in the middle of a row of connected domiciles, today, his backyard is tiny, surrounded by two brick walls and a walled/fenced/thicketed rear wall but in his time he probably could have walked and set up his telescopes on land all the way to the Avon River. However, needing Caroline for both assistance in recording his shouted observations and the occasional bite to eat or tea to

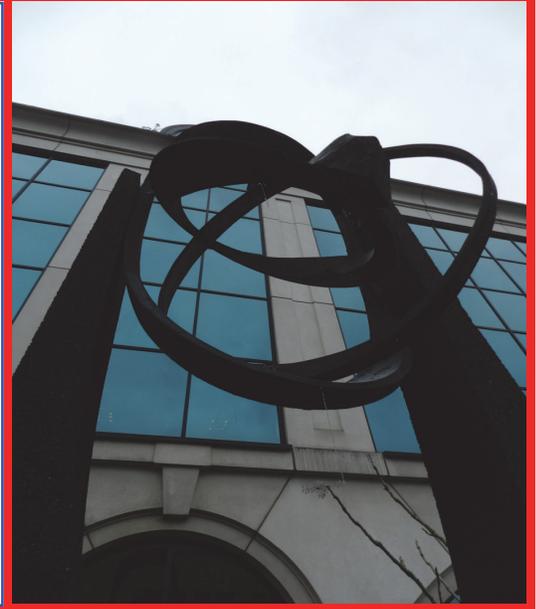
drink, it is likely that he stayed within the bounds of today's property. Thus, it is likely that he first observed Uranus from the location of the armillary sphere, where I posed for a photograph for myself.

Upon gaining royal favor...and stipend...Herschel finished his musical obligations and moved to Windsor briefly and then Datchet for a few years, then settling permanently in then-Upton, England, at what became known as Observatory House. The site took up, with its gardens and the 40-foot towering telescope, most of a modern city block, now within the boundaries of modern day Slough. One of the 40-foot telescope's metallic mirrors can be found in London's Science Museum; that's me ghostly imaged in it.





Counterclockwise from the upper left, images from Slough, England: (UL) The office building with the green glass windows sits on the site of Herschel's Observatory House. (UR) A closer view shows the renamed side street heading towards left where (LR) we find a sculpture and plaque mutely standing in for the 40-foot telescope, which may have stood (LL) where this recent demolition of a modern building was found.



Observatory House was torn down in the 1960s to make way for an office building. All that remains there now is a monument...some shops and a shopping center that alludes to the names of Herschel and Observatory...and a recent demolition that eerily may be the site of the 40-footer itself, if only we could dig and discover.

When Herschel married one Mary Pitt, he moved to a house in today's Upton area that I am told still exists, though I did not get to see it. When he died, in his 80's, he was buried inside a small Upton church, St. Laurence, that still exists. Additionally, there is a memorial and stained glass window in his honor, along with his wife's tomb. **TCA**

*All photos from L. Krumenaker except the grave, courtesy Rev. A. Allen.*

## TCA's First Astronomers' Footsteps Tour?

Does this photo story interest you in seeing these places for yourself? *The Classroom Astronomer* is planning to create two tours, to England, and England + Hanover, Germany.

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