

## Call for Papers: Stars, Pyramids & Photographs

*A symposium to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Piazzi Smyth*

**The Royal Society of Edinburgh, 3-4 September 2019**

Charles Piazzi Smyth, second Astronomer Royal for Scotland (1846-1888), had a career that took him to the Cape of Good Hope, Tenerife and Egypt and encompassed interests spanning mountaintop observation, photography, spectroscopy, meteorology, metrology and pyramidology. He was responsible for developing a time service for Edinburgh, with a time ball on Calton Hill and time gun fired from Edinburgh Castle. He was in close correspondence with many of the leading scientific figures of the day, including John Herschel, who encouraged his early experiments in photography, and was a fellow of the Royal Societies of London and Edinburgh.

In this bicentennial meeting we invite speakers to explore the life, work and legacy of Smyth. We aim to bring together historians, scientists, curators, archivists and others in order to do justice to the wide range of Smyth's interests, to consider the objects and papers he left behind and the on-going fascination generated by his often pioneering and sometimes eccentric work.

We welcome abstracts of c.200 words proposing 30-minute papers, which should be sent to [r.higgitt@kent.ac.uk](mailto:r.higgitt@kent.ac.uk) by 5 April 2019. We particularly welcome those that consider:

- Smyth's contributions to astronomy and the legacy of the approaches he pioneered, including in spectroscopy and mountaintop observation
- Smyth's heritage, including objects, archives and buildings, in Edinburgh and beyond
- Smyth's work on metrology and pyramids, and its significance to Egyptology
- Smyth's beliefs, reactions to and controversies surrounding his work and reputation
- The visualisation of astronomy, in history and today
- The history of photography and stereography
- 19th-century time distribution and its legacies
- Smyth's family, including his naval officer and astronomer father, William Henry Smyth, and geologist wife, Jessie Duncan Piazzi Smyth.
- Confirmed speakers include Michael Barany, Jenny Bulstrode, Sarah Dry, David Rooney and Charles Withers, with keynotes from Simon Schaffer and Denis Pellerin (Curator of Brian May's photographic collection). The event will include visits to key locations, including the recently reopened City Observatory on Calton Hill and the Smyth and Crawford Collections at the Royal Observatory Edinburgh. It is hoped that the event will lead to a publication.

The symposium is being organised by Rebekah Higgitt (Senior Lecturer in History of Science, University of Kent), Andy Lawrence (Regius Professor of Astronomy, University of Edinburgh) and Chris Hall (Curator, Royal Society of Edinburgh). We are grateful to the Royal Society of Edinburgh and Centre for the History of the Sciences at the University of Kent for their support.

Registration for attendance through a dedicated web page will follow shortly. You may also be interested to know that Piazzi Smyth has come back to life on social media and may be followed on Twitter @piazzismyth.