

NEWS RELEASE

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Stars of astronomy walk in Jeremiah's footsteps

Preston will host one of the biggest and most significant astronomy events of 2004 thanks to a successful proposal by the Centre for Astrophysics at the University of Central Lancashire.

The University is hosting an international astronomy conference in June 2004 when delegates will have the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to observe the Transit of Venus, a huge astronomical event where Venus can be seen as a dot moving across the Sun. But even more significant is that they will watch it from the house where the Transit Of Venus was first observed by Preston-based scientist Jeremiah Horrocks in 1639.

“The last Transit of Venus was in 1882 so no-one alive has ever seen it, which makes it a major event in itself,” says Professor Gordon Bromage, Head of the University’s Centre for Astrophysics. “The fact that we can actually watch it from the very house where it was first observed makes this something very special.”

The Conference will be held between June 7th and 11th 2004 with the Transit of Venus occurring on Tuesday 8th June from early morning to noon. The event has been awarded the prestigious status of an International Colloquium by the International Astronomical Union (IAU), the world’s leading astronomical organisation. IAU members voted it the best of all conference proposals from around the world.

Organisers are expecting over a hundred delegates to attend from over twenty countries. “Only a handful of other UK universities has ever hosted an IAU Colloquium so this is a real opportunity for us to put both the University and the city of Preston under the world’s gaze,” says Professor Bromage.

The conference is called Transits of Venus: New Views of the Solar System and Galaxy. Professor Bromage and his colleagues are also organising a series of public events in the lead-up to the Transit of Venus, including lectures, amateur astronomy events and school competitions.

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