



**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND**

**THE FIRST FOUR ASTEROIDS: A  
HISTORY OF THEIR IMPACT ON ENGLISH  
ASTRONOMY IN THE EARLY  
NINETEENTH CENTURY**

**A dissertation submitted by**

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**For the award of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**2014**

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines how the first four asteroids (Ceres, Pallas, Juno and Vesta) were studied and written about in Great Britain in the early nineteenth century. It concentrates on the work of William Herschel, who pioneered the scientific study of the asteroids. Just as importantly, he introduced the word ‘asteroid’ to distinguish the new discoveries from planets and comets. Solving a mystery that has lasted for more than two hundred years, work for this thesis finally revealed the originator of the word ‘asteroid’.

A synoptic survey of the asteroid-related correspondence between astronomers within England and between England and the Continent is presented, with some 140 letters noted, most of which are given in full. The asteroids were also given extraordinary press coverage in the periodicals of the day. Each one of these entries, totalling more than 125 scattered across 34 magazines and journals, is listed with the full text given for many of them.

Based on every extant source, this thesis presents the first detailed examination of the scientific and popular impact the discovery of the asteroids had on English astronomy in the early nineteenth century.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to my thesis supervisors: Professor Wayne Orchiston, Dr Lutz Schmadel and Dr Carolyn Brown. With a sense of sincere loss I must also thank my two advisors who died during the creation of this thesis: Dr Brian Marsden and Professor Hilmar Duerbeck.

Thanks to Richard Oslund for his translation of the 1855 Russian paper by Savich. Translation of the German and French language material is by Telse Wokersien; Latin translation is by Christopher Gordon; and Greek translation is by Dr Roger Ceragioli.

Thanks to Professor Claes-Ingvar Lagerkvist, Uppsala Observatory, for supplying me with a copy of Regnér's first Latin treatise on the asteroids. For their knowledge of William Herschel and Johann Schröter, respectively, I thank Professor Michael Hoskin and Dr Roger Ceragioli. Gratitude for personal communications quoted in the thesis: Dr. Ceragioli (Section 3.3) and Dr. Ivor Grattan-Guinness (Subsection 6.2.3)

This work would not have been possible without the assistance of librarians and archivists at the following institutions: The Royal Astronomical Society (London), The Natural History Museum (London), The British Library (London), University of Cambridge (Cambridge, UK), Yale University, Bremen University, Göttingen University, Palermo Observatory, Paris Observatory, Brera Observatory (Milan), Jagiellonian University (Cracow), Universitäts-und Forschungsbibliothek Erfurt/Gotha.

For providing me with funding for archival visits to England, France and Germany, I am indebted to James Cook University.

Finally, an acknowledgement of the personal support of Dr Matt Emanuele.

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