

Pioneer of space research to speak at university public outreach day commemorating Space Shuttle

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Top scientists and academics from the University of Birmingham are set to celebrate 30 years of the Space Shuttle with a public open day featuring activities and talks to inspire the next generation of space scientists and astronauts.

Hosted by the University of Birmingham's Astronomical Society and the School of Physics and Astronomy, the Flight of the Space Shuttles is a community outreach day taking place on Saturday 19 March at the University, coinciding with the 18th annual National Science and Engineering Week. The day will feature an exciting programme of events suitable for all ages to celebrate the Space Shuttle and commemorate its upcoming last flight this summer.



Professor Peter Willmore

One of the highlights of the day will be a talk delivered by project leader of XRT, an X-ray telescope which was built by physicists at the University of Birmingham and flew onboard the Spacelab 2 Challenger Space Shuttle mission in 1985. 'Taking part in a Shuttle mission: Spacelab 2' will be delivered by Professor Peter Willmore, now an Emeritus Professor at the University, recounting his team's pioneering use of coded mask telescopes in the first instrument to image the centre of our galaxy at high energy X-ray levels.

Event organiser, Dr Somak Raychaudhury, a Senior Lecturer in Astrophysics at the University of Birmingham commented:

"We are very pleased and excited that Professor Willmore will be speaking at our outreach day. The success of the University of Birmingham's contribution to Spacelab 2 was a really big achievement for Birmingham and this talk looks set to be the highlight of what promises to be an exciting day for the whole family."

Other activities taking place on the day include: construction of a landing device from household objects to safely land an egg from the physics bridge to the ground, simulating the manner in which space scientists have managed to successfully land scientific instruments on to the surface of Mars; a build and decorate your own rocket contest for the construction of well-decorated rockets and those that fly the farthest; a second talk entitled: 'The history of the Space Shuttles and future of Space Flight' delivered by the European Space Agency's Space Ambassador, Anu Ojha and much more to enable understanding of the Space Shuttle; one of the greatest achievements of space science.

Dr Raychaudhury added:

"Previous outreach days we have hosted have been very successful and I am really excited about the Flight of Space Shuttles. It provides a great opportunity for scientists at the University of Birmingham to interact with members of the community and see the innovations they come up with during the activity sessions. It is always great fun to engage with all kinds of people interested in space science from the local community."

The University of Birmingham's Flight of Space Shuttles public outreach day will be held at the University's Poynting Physics Building on Saturday 19 March from 10-4pm. The event is part of National Science and Engineering Week, which this year takes place from 11-20 March 2011 and is open to the public and free to attend.

For more information, please contact Ms Robyn Budge via 0121 414 7434 or Dr Raychaudhury at somak@star.sr.bham.ac.uk (<mailto:somak@star.sr.bham.ac.uk>) or visit the event's webpage at: www.talkandtelescope.org.uk/shuttles (<http://www.talkandtelescope.org.uk/shuttles>)

Notes to Editors

For further media information, please contact Amy Cory, University of Birmingham Press Office, tel: 0121 414 6029 or a.cory@bham.ac.uk (<mailto:a.cory@bham.ac.uk>).