

Unravelling our cosmic ancestry

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An international astronomy conference will mark the retirement of a Cardiff University scientist who helped to challenge the theory that life originated on Earth and who will be the focus of a BBC Horizon programme.

The conference, 'Progress towards unravelling our cosmic ancestry' (September 5-9) will review progress in areas of astronomy pioneered by Professor Chandra Wickramasinghe, who completes more than thirty years as Professor of Applied Mathematics and Astronomy at the University in September.

Professor Chandra Wickramasinghe's achievements include pioneering research on interstellar dust, which has influenced the development of astrobiology internationally; his theory of cosmic life, developed in collaboration with the late Sir Fred Hoyle; and popularising astronomy through the publication of more than 25 books. Several television companies are also charting the progress of these ideas including the BBC Horizon series which filmed Professor Wickramasinghe, in both Cardiff and India. The programme will be broadcast this autumn.

Conference speakers will explore topics from the possibility of life on Mars to investigating claims that red rain which fell over India in 2001 could contain alien microbes.

Professor Wickramasinghe said: "For the past 30 years I have worked on the theory that life didn't start on Earth but on comets some 4,000 million years ago and this theory is fast moving into mainstream science. I look forward to welcoming eminent scientists from around the world to Cardiff for this conference."

Source: Cardiff University

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