



Lichfield Science & Engineering Society

LICHFIELD **GARRICK**
Theatre & Studio

CHAIRMAN

Mike Beeson

PATRON

Mr Ian Dudson CBE

HM Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire

PRESIDENT

Professor Carolyn Roberts
FRGS, FIEEnvSc, FCIWEM, CEnv, CWEM

8:00 pm on Tuesday, 8th June 2021
A virtual lecture via Zoom

JOSEPH BANKS **MACARONI AND DILETTANTE**

Dr Patricia Fara
Clare College, University of Cambridge

During the eighteenth century, many young gentlemen completed their education with a Grand Tour of Italy, but the botanist Joseph Banks (1743-1820) decided instead to travel around the world with James Cook. Despite being heavily criticized, President Banks ruled London's Royal Society for 42 years, where he exerted great influence on British scientific and imperial policy. He is important not for his research legacy, but because he was a canny operator who knew how to promote himself as well as making sure that money flowed into science.

Banks was particularly concerned to control his public image, commissioning portraits to counter numerous cruel caricatures mocking him as a sexual adventurer and a bumbling collector. Banks transformed the stereotype of the English male traveller from the foppish aristocrat degenerating on his Grand Tour to the masculine hero risking his life for the sake of England and of science. By the time that he died, he had manoeuvred the Royal Society into a powerful position, and had restyled his own image as an authoritative government advisor on Britain's expanding overseas empire.

Patricia Fara graduated in physics from the University of Oxford, then spent fifteen years running a small educational publishing company before studying the history and philosophy of science at Imperial College London. She is now an Emeritus Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge, where she continues to carry out research, mainly in eighteenth-century science and the role of women. Her numerous books include one on Lichfield's very own local hero: *Erasmus Darwin: Sex, Science and Serendipity*, while her most recent is *Life after Gravity: Isaac Newton's London Career*. Her most ambitious is *Science: A Four Thousand Year History*, and the one most relevant for this talk is *Sex, Botany and Empire: Joseph Banks and Carl Linnaeus*. She regularly appears on TV and radio programmes such as *In Our Time* and *Start the Week*.