



Royal
Astronomical
Society

RAS George Darwin Lecture 2022 Professor Alan Fitzsimmons

The Royal Astronomical Society's 2022 George Darwin Lectureship is awarded to Professor Alan Fitzsimmons

Prof Fitzsimmons has made major contributions to our understanding of small bodies in the solar system. He has been involved in many high-profile scientific investigations during his career, including early discoveries of Kuiper-belt objects, imaging of the impact of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 on Jupiter, and discovery of the sodium tail of Comet Hale-Bopp. He has been involved in planetary defence for over 20 years, when he began programmes of tracking and photometric characterisation of Near-Earth Objects. He obtained pre-impact spectroscopy of 2008TC3, the first asteroid predicted to hit Earth. He was on a ESA panel to investigate theoretical asteroid deflection techniques and is involved in the NASA DART and ESA HERA missions to test this.

Most recently he assembled and led a fast-response team to obtain spectroscopy of the first interstellar object 1I/Oumuamua, and discovered the presence of cyanogen in the second interstellar object 2I/Borisov. Aside from being a recognised expert in his field at an international level, Prof Fitzsimmons is well known for being an engaging and enthusiastic speaker and communicator, be it at a scientific meeting or at a public event. He is an excellent choice to bring these new investigations of interstellar objects to an audience of broad astrophysical interests.

For these reasons, Professor Alan Fitzsimmons is awarded the 2022 George Darwin Lectureship.