

Chapter 5

PUBLIC RELATIONS

The reporting years have seen intense activities in organising workshops and conferences, with two large-scale scientific conferences and four workshops. From May 27–31 2002 ING's second major scientific conference on the subject of "Symbiotic Stars Probing Stellar Evolution" was held on La Palma, attracting some 120 participants. The conference was made possible through significant financial and in-kind contributions the Excmo. Cabildo Insular de La Palma, the Patronato de Turismo de La Palma, the EU, and the IAC.

Almost exactly one year later, on May 26–30 of 2003 the third ING conference, jointly organised with the IAC, was held on the subject of "Satellites and Tidal Streams". This conference also enjoyed a large international participation of over 80 participants.

On a smaller scale, workshops were organised covering the subjects "Science from La Palma — Past, Present and Future", in honour of Dr Paul Murdin, on the use of laser guide stars at the observatory, on the future operations and development plans for the WHT, and on performance aspects of NAOMI and other adaptive optics systems.

As in previous years also during the summer of 2002 and 2003 observatory open days were organised. About 1800 visitors were shown the WHT and INT. Also the custom of a special open day for the people of the town of Garafía was continued. In spite of the lower turnout during the general open days, this year's event was again considered a success.

Throughout the years, many groups visited the ING telescopes. For the educational visits special attention is being paid to school classes, particularly those from La Palma. These activities help strengthen the ties between the observatory and the public on La Palma. Apprenticeships for a small number of technical students have been hosted by the observatory, providing further added value of the observatory to the local community.

The many new development activities have also attracted several important persons who were shown the WHT. VIPs include members of European commissions and governing bodies, members of the European Parliament, the president of the commission of Industry, Energy, External Trade and Research, members of the Centre for Research in Economics and Statistics (CREST), the UK ambassador in Spain, Mr Peter James Torry, the Spanish minister of science and technology, Mr Josep Piqué, together with a party of the Consejo Rectores of the IAC, and a delegation from Utrecht University Council.

Furthermore various TV teams visited ING, and the resulting footage was shown on the Spanish national television TVE, UK's BBC channel, the German ZDF, the Hungarian TV and as part of a Spanish research series that is still in preparation. Arguably the most important of these events took place on 23 August 2003 with a live BBC2 TV broadcast from the Isaac Newton Telescope as part of the special programme "The All Night Star Party". During the 90 minutes broadcast from Jodrell Bank, La Palma and the INT Wide Field Camera featured a number of times when live images of requested objects were shown to the audience.



Figure 1. Presenter Chris Riley and support astronomer Romano Corradi at INT control room getting ready for BBC2's *The All Night Star Party* programme.