

Chapter 5

PUBLIC RELATIONS

In 2006 and 2007 thousands of visitors were shown the WHT, many as part of the annual observatory open days during the summer, but also through a large number of group visits. In total over the two years more than 6000 people visited the telescopes. These activities help strengthen the ties between the observatory and the public in general, and in particular, on the island of La Palma. VIP visits included the science ministers from Spain and the Netherlands, the director general of UNESCO, the Education and Science Commission of the Spanish parliament and Mr Lembit Opik, member of UK parliament.

ING has been very active in public outreach activities during the reporting period. Some of these activities were developed under the auspices of the OPTICON coordination network funded by the European Union. Activities included participation in the European Science Week organised on La Palma and dedicated to Einstein's theory of relativity. The participants visited the WHT and learned out about the observational aspect of special and general relativity.

There have also been many scientific outreach activities, including the organization of a well-attended 4th conference on "Asymmetrical Planetary Nebulae", in collaboration with the Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias and the Nordic Optical Telescope and a conference with the title "The Nature of V838 Mon and Its Light Echo" in collaboration with the Istituto Nazionale di Astrofisica and the Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias. Furthermore, ING collaborated in the organisation of the IAU Symposium 241 on "Stellar Populations as Building Blocks of Galaxies". We also collaborated with the organisation of the Starlight conference organised by UNESCO on La Palma, and with the events organised around first light of the 10.4m GTC telescope.

During the reporting period, more than 60 press releases based on results obtained using the ING telescopes were issued by ING or other institutions. Good examples of these include the announcement of the release of the Millennium Galaxy Catalogue and the first results from the IPHAS survey, the use of the first ground-layer adaptive-

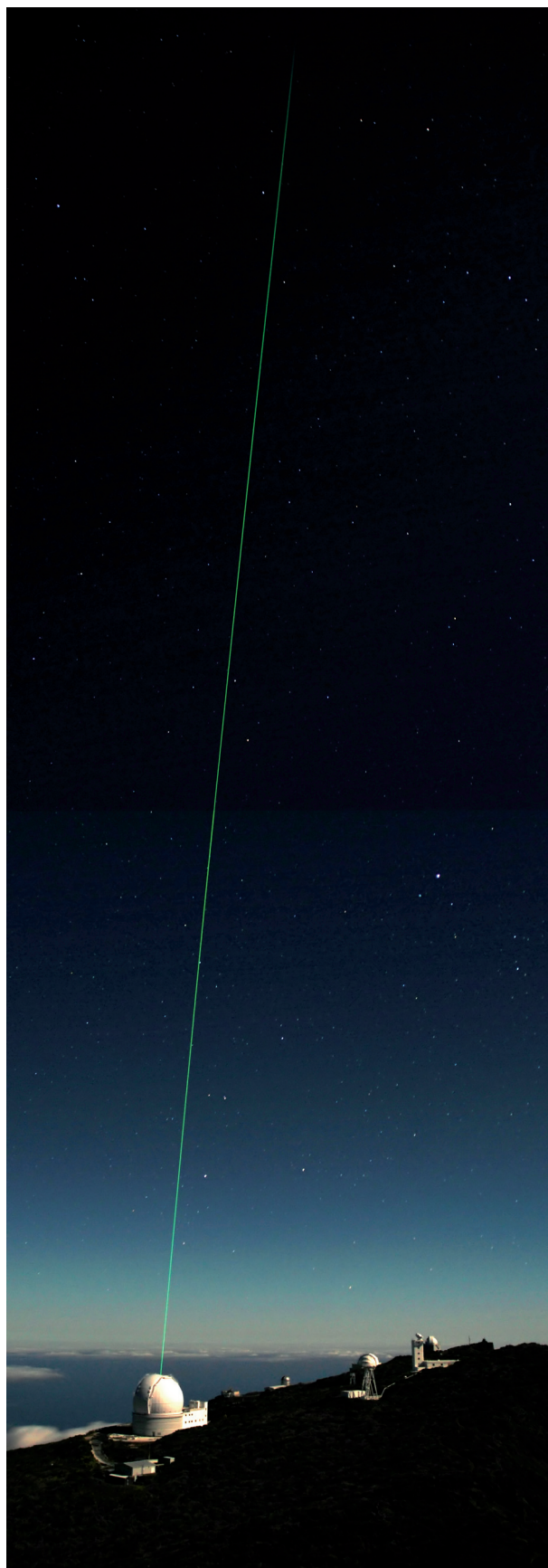


Figure 63. The first use of a ground-layer adaptive-optics system for general astronomical observations was widely covered in the press. Spectacular photos such as the one shown here were used to disseminate the news. Credit: Tibor Agocs.

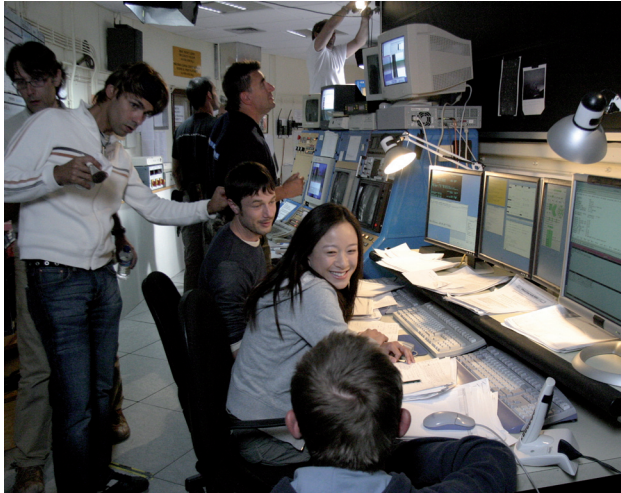


Figure 64. Some of the scenes from the filming of the series “Armageddon -- The Longest Night” at the INT.

optics system for general astronomical observations and the images of the exploding comet 17P/Holmes from the Isaac Newton Telescope.

Other press activities included assisting TV teams filming at ING, and of particular impact was the scientific docudrama “Armageddon — The Longest Night”, produced by ZDF, Discovery Channel and France-3. The

two-chapter series is about the collision of a comet with the Earth and its consequences.

We continued with the production of graphical and multimedia material for use with PR activities: photographs, digital video movies and 3D panoramic views of the telescopes, examples of which can be seen in the accompanying figures.



Figure 65. The WHT at sunset and waning Moon.