Isaac Newton Group of Telescopes

Opened dome of the WHT and the Milky Way
(Image courtesy of ING, credit: Simon Dye, Cardiff University)

The Isaac Newton Group of Telescopes (ING) consists of three telescopes on the island of La Palma in the Spanish Canary Islands.

They are the:
- William Herschel Telescope
- Isaac Newton Telescope
- Jacobus Kapteyn Telescope

All three telescopes are located on the Observatorio del Roque de los Muchachos, an area of nearly two square kilometres, approximately 2,400 metres above sea level on the highest peak of the Caldera de Taburiente National Park. This remote location provides one of the best astronomical sites in the world as it is free from artificial light pollution. The ING also has a sea level base in Santa Cruz de La Palma, in collaboration with other institutions that are also on the Observatory site.

The ING is operated under a tripartite arrangement on behalf of the UK (STFC is the managing agency for the ING) the Nederlanse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk (NWO) of the Netherlands and the Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias (IAC) in Spain. The Director of the ING is Dr Marc Balcells.

The ING's aim is to develop collaboration between astronomers in the UK, the Netherlands and Spain and ensure that, through continual maintenance and development, these telescopes remain at the forefront of world astronomy.

Together, the ING:
- delivers an effective and coherent telescope programme
- facilitates world-class astronomical research
- maintains international competitiveness

William Herschel Telescope (WHT)

The William Herschel Telescope is the largest optical telescope of its kind in Europe. It is also one of the most scientifically productive telescopes in the world and played an important role in discovering that the expansion of the Universe is accelerating.

Its 4.2 metre primary mirror allows observations from ultra-violet wavelengths to the infrared. The William Herschel Telescope is equipped with a broad range of scientific instruments, and has made important contributions in the fields of observational cosmology, gamma-ray bursts, galaxy dynamics and star evolution, and astronomical instrumentation development. In the future, it will host an advanced planet-finding instrument, and play an important role in the development and testing of technologies for the future European Extremely Large Telescope.

Isaac Newton Telescope (INT)

The Isaac Newton Telescope provided the first observational evidence of the existence of a black hole in our Galaxy. It has made numerous other important contributions to the research

of quasars, supernovas, galaxies, planetary nebulae and star evolution.

The telescope began life in the UK, at Herstmonceux in East Sussex, before relocating in 1984 to the more advantageous astronomical conditions of La Palma, in a new dome, and with a suite of new instruments.

Today, the combination of its 2.5 metre primary mirror and advanced mounted instruments allows both wide-field imaging and spectroscopy.

Jacobus Kapteyn Telescope (JKT)

Named after a Dutch astrophysicist, the Jacobus Kapteyn Telescope started operation on La Palma in 1984 and has a 1 metre primary mirror and two secondary mirrors. It can view the horizon in all directions - ideal for observing a supernova, comet or any other interesting object. At present, the JKT is not routinely available for use by the scientific community.

M74 Galaxy taken by the INT
(Image courtesy of ING, credit: Nik Szymanek & Ian King)

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