BBC’s All Night Star Party!

Coinciding with the closest approach of Mars to Earth in the last 60,000 years, BBC Two had a party. The All Night Star Party, a special live Open University programme for BBC Two, took place on 23 August night and lasted for one hour and a half.

In the course of this special programme BBC Two handed over the Isaac Newton Telescope to 600,000 viewers giving them the chance to point the telescope to stunning objects live and see the images on screen and online as they came out from the Wide Field Camera. The programme also focused on several aspects of British amateur and professional astronomy, in particular, the Beagle 2 Mars lander and, of course, obtaining an image of Mars live. This latter task was the responsibility of two amateur astronomers, Damian Peach and John Mills, who were based on the roof of INT’s building.

The event was followed by 400 amateurs at Jodrell Bank where the main broadcast centre had been placed.

I would like to thank all ING staff for the impressive effort made for this big event and without whom this couldn’t have been possible. I would also like to thank all the people involved at the Open University and the BBC, in particular, Peter Brown, programme producer, Martin Mortimore, La Palma broadcast director, and Chris Riley, presenter on La Palma.

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