

Chapter 5

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public outreach activities have continued to play an important role at ING. A summary of the main activities is given here.

Outreach to the general public focussed on many group visits to the telescopes throughout the year, and general observatory open days for the public during the summer months. In these ways thousands of interested visitors passed through the WHT and INT domes, saw the facilities, and received an explanation of ING's activities.

The visiting groups included many school pupils. But for more specific exposure of students to astronomy ING have been working closely with students from the Cornwall Astronomy School Project who came to La Palma to assist in an observing programme to get hands-on experience at the JKT. This visit was an outstanding success and demonstrated the potential of the JKT as an educational tool. Following this success,

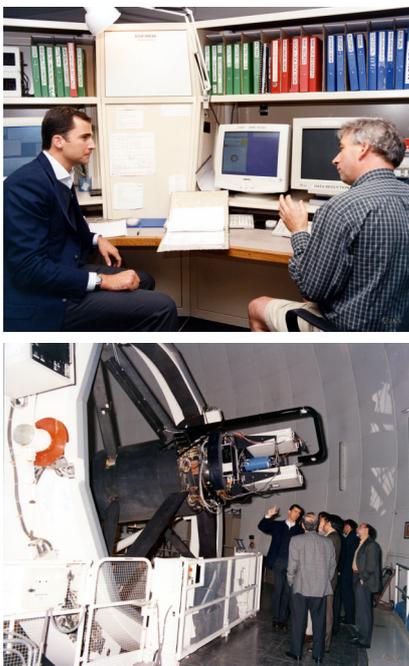


Figure 1. Above: Prof Richard Ellis explaining his observing programme to look for the Cosmic Shear to SAR Don Felipe. Below: The visiting group at the WHT Prime Focus. Next page: Image of M51 Galaxy obtained by SAR Don Felipe using the new mosaic Prime Focus camera.



Figure 2. Filming of BBC's Final Frontier programme.

also students from a local school on La Palma and from a second school in the UK observed on the JKT.

Having press material available, and in particular having good photographic material for the press on-line helps attract quality press interest. For that reason we started to build an archive of superb astronomical images for publicity purposes. This work relies on the assistance from the renowned amateur astronomer Nik Szymanek. The results are shown as collections of images on the public information web pages.

A number of important guests visited the observatory. Most notably, on June 1st 2000 the Crown Prince of Spain, Su Alteza Real Don Felipe de Borbón visited the WHT. He was shown the telescope, met the observer (Prof Richard Ellis) and took an image of the galaxy M51. On the following day the prince laid the first stone of the GTC telescope, which was the prime reason for visiting the observatory. Furthermore, the European Commissioner for Scientific Research, Philippe Busquin, members of the European Parliament, the president of the commission of Industry, Energy, External Trade and Research, and members of the Centre for Research in Economics and Statistics (CREST) visited the telescopes on various occasions.

Also various television teams filmed the ING telescopes, amongst them the Spanish national television TVE, the German ZDF, the Hungarian TV and the popular BBC programmes "Blue Peter" and "Final Frontier".

