

Some of the containers are being retained as we continue to build on Paranal (e.g. VST and VISTA) and often have more people working on site than are expected in a steady state of operation. The recent MIDI commissioning required for the reactivation of some containers for ESO and consortium staff. Not all were happy with the move back to the not-so-good-old days.

The new Visitor's Centre was concluded and is in use for the weekend visitor programme, and as a starting point for VIP visitors.

The scale of the Paranal operation is often difficult to appreciate. Ourselves on the mountain find it all fairly normal. To put it into context the ESO Paranal

casino serves approximately 100,000 meals every year and we have 40,000 overnight stays per year. Paranal is not connected to the Chilean electricity grid and has to generate its own power (up to three megawatts). Water is of course a necessary resource and we can store up to 1 million litres in our tanks. Keeping the observatory supplied requires a water tanker truck to arrive on site every 8 hours, every day of the year.

In 2002, Joerg Eschwey, who more than any other individual has personified the challenge and success of creating a whole observatory and its infrastructure in the middle of the Atacama desert, has moved on from the VLT to

the ALMA project. With this move a small shake up of the observatory organization was necessary and it has been a pleasure to welcome Frank Ruseler from the Santiago office of ESO to Paranal where he has taken over the logistics department.

The year ahead of us promises to be as exciting as this past one. VISIR, VST, OmegaCAM, MACAOs for the UTs, FINITO, AMBER, Auxiliary telescopes and the laser guide star all intend to arrive on Paranal. Times will continue to be interesting on Paranal for the foreseeable future. Exciting new facilities and capabilities continue to be added to this astronomy wonderland.

News from La Silla: Science Operations Department

O. HAINAUT

This year has seen a major restructuring of the internal workings of La Silla observatory. While this is not immediately obvious to the visiting astronomer, it prepares the observatory for the future and decreasing staffing levels. In particular, the engineering and telescope teams have been reorganized and now constitute two departments:

(1) La Silla Engineering Department (LED). This is a merger of the previous Mechanics, Electronics and Instrumentation teams. This department is responsible for the maintenance of the telescopes and projects taking place at La Silla.

(2) La Silla Science Operations (SciOp). This team actually operates the telescopes.

The Infrastructure Support Group (ISG), Software and Communications (SWC), Logistics, and Management departments all keep the same structure as before.

La Silla SciOp

This is a merger of the three former telescope teams (NTT, 3.6-CAT and Medium-Sized Telescopes) which were abandoned in order to optimize human resources. SciOp currently consists of 17 astronomers, 18 TIOs, and 2 operation engineers who are allocated to different "Instrument Forces". The astronomers and TIOs work within a specific instrument force to focus their expertise on instruments of a particular type. For example, the Infrared Instrument force consists of SOFI and TIMMI2. All people working within this force will support both of these instruments.

Each force is led by one of the Instrument Scientists, and primary responsibilities include implementing a coherent calibration plan, producing consistent documentation, observing templates, etc., and following-up developments and problems that may occur with the instruments within the instrument force.

The La Silla web pages will be restructured to reflect the organizational changes in the observatory, and in particular to make comparisons between instruments simpler. If you have a query about a particular instrument, you should contact the corresponding instrument force (see below). You can also contact La Silla SciOp by sending an email to lasilla@eso.org. This account is continuously monitored by the SciOp Shift Leader (one of the astronomers on duty) who will then forward your query to the correct person.

This email address is the best way to contact us in order to receive a fast reply.

The new web page of SciOp is available at <http://www.ls.eso.org/lasilla/sciops/>. Here you will find links to all the instrument pages, as well as more information on the new structure.

The RITZ!

For the visiting astronomer, most of the above will probably go largely unnoticed. The one big change for visitors is the opening of the new control building (nicknamed "RITZ", for Remote Integrated Telescope Zentrum). This new, central observing hub of La Silla is located at the bottom of the NTT access ramps in front of the "Sarcophagus" (Figure 1). It is 300 metres square and will ultimately host the con-

Instrument Force	Instruments	Contact email
Imaging	WFI 2.2-m SUSI2 NTT	ls-imaging@eso.org
Visible Spectro-Imagers	EFOSC2 3.6-m EMMI NTT	ls-spectro@eso.org
Infrared	TIMMI2 3.6-m SOFI NTT ADONIS 3.6-m	ls-infrared@eso.org
High-Res. Spectroscopy	FEROS 1.5-m/2.2-m CES 3.6-m HARPS 3.6-m EMMI-Echelle NTT	ls-hires@eso.org
Telescopes	NTT, 3.6-m, 2.2-m	ls-telescopes@eso.org

trol rooms of the NTT, 3.6-m and 2.2-m telescopes in a common area, allowing us to operate the telescopes more efficiently.

The RITZ was built with the comfort of its inhabitants in mind. Toward the west, it has many large windows overlooking the valley and ocean, with a fantastic view of the sunset (and potential green-flashes). On the other hand, its walls are almost completely blind toward the north-east since this is the direction from which the wind blows most of the time. All of the control computers are located in separate rooms behind the consoles, allowing us to keep the computers cold and the control room temperate. These computer rooms also provide additional thermal insulation for the main working area, and keep it free from the noise of the many workstations. The floor plan of the main control room, as well as the materials chosen for the walls and ceiling are ergonomically optimized, ensuring that sounds are damped and glare from the windows is avoided.

Since October 18, the NTT has been operated fully remotely from the RITZ. We hope to move the 2.2-m control room this year, and the 3.6-m early next year.

News from the Instruments and Telescopes

From the start of Period 70 (start of October), and as reported in previous *Messenger* articles, the two 1.5-m telescopes on La Silla are no longer offered to the ESO community. The ESO 1.52-m will be operated until the end of 2002, with 100% of the time allocated to Brazilian observers, and the Danish 1.54-m will continue to be used by the Danish community only.

A few months ago, the red CCD of EMMI was upgraded to a mosaic of 2×1 MIT/LL $2k \times 4k$ chips. The quantum



efficiency of the mosaic is significantly higher than that of the former Tektronix CCD and the larger size of the CCDs leads to a wider field of view. In addition, the pixel size (0.166") gives a better sampling in good seeing images and permits narrower slits to be used. However, the most striking feature of the new detector is its read-out time: thanks to the FIERA controller, the 4k chips are read in only 18 seconds, with very low read-out noise. More information can be found on the updated EMMI web pages.

FEROS, the high-resolution, fibre-fed spectrograph that used to be mounted on the ESO 1.52-m telescope, has been transferred to the 2.2-m, where it is now installed in parallel with the Wide Field Imager. The move took place in early October and the instrument is currently being commissioned in its new home. We expect that this will

result in an improvement of the spectrograph's performance by a factor of 2. Keep an eye on the FEROS pages for up-to-date information.

TIMMI2, the mid-IR spectro-imager mounted at the 3.6-m, is currently undergoing a major upgrade: the control electronics and software are being entirely replaced by an IRACE controller and VLT-software. This will improve the performance of the instrument, but more notably, it will make its operation and maintenance much more straightforward. Also, for the observer, the main difference will be that TIMMI2 will be operated from the standard P2PP-BOB interfaces.

Finally, ADONIS, the adaptive optics system at the 3.6-m, was retired at the end of August after almost 10 years in service. The field of high resolution imaging is now carried by NAOS-CONICA on the VLT.



Two unusual views of La Silla. The left-hand picture shows La Silla immediately after the snow storm of 28 August 2002. Some weeks later the desert around La Silla was for a short time transformed into a sea of flowers. Photos by Peter Sinclair.