



A Message from the New Editor

It is an honour and a pleasure to take on the responsibility of the Editorship of THE MESSENGER. The former editors, and in particular Richard West who was editor for two terms (1976–1979 and 1986–1993), made the Messenger an informative and friendly publication. It is therefore clear that no large changes should be brought to the Messenger.

However, because of the forthcoming deployment of the VLT-VLTI, the ESO observers' community has an increasing need for technical information in all domains: site infrastructure, telescopes, instrumentation and detectors, calibration, data analysis and archiving. More emphasis will be given to these topics concerning both Paranal and La Silla. The Messenger will also carry articles on the use of the VLT-VLTI for specific astronomical topics. These articles are written by astronomers invited by the Editor to present their views. As before, observational results obtained at La Silla will also be presented. In this area, there will be no attempt at presenting a complete panorama of the observations carried out at ESO, and the number of articles in the observations section is likely to fluctuate from issue to issue. The most apparent change in the look of the journal is a division into sections: first the telescopes and instrumentation including detectors. This will be followed by articles on science with the VLT. Then there will be a section on scientific results obtained at La Silla and a section on other astronomical news. The last section groups all the announcements of ESO conferences and workshops, some announcements for positions (mostly in the Science Division), the titles of the accepted programmes and similar matters.

The technical editor of the Messenger remains Kurt Kj ar and I look forward to our collaboration in producing the Messenger.

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TELESCOPES AND INSTRUMENTATION

The 8.2-m Primary Mirrors of the VLT

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1. Introduction

The 8.2-m Zerodur primary mirrors of the VLT telescopes are on their way to the observatory. On June 25, the first of the four mirror blanks (code name Joe Dalton) was delivered by SCHOTT,

the mirror blank manufacturer, to REOSC, who will polish it and mount its interfaces. Inspections performed before delivery have not only demonstrated the compliance of the blank with its specifications, but also the performance of the blank manufacturer in

achieving superb quality.

On July 19 at 14:20, Joe was transported to Mainz harbour, a few kilometres away from the SCHOTT plant (Figure 1). At 9 p.m. it was loaded onto the barge ELDOR. The ELDOR went down the Rhine to Rotterdam, travelled south