



Issue No 5

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NEWSLETTER

This week the School of Physics, N.U.I.G brought our Young Hearts astronomers on an unforgettable adventure to the picturesque setting of Birr Castle in Co. Offaly.



Our tour guide brought us up to speed with the Castle's history.

We entered a world of fun-filled exploration as we encountered a 17th century castle, the famous Great Telescope and the historic science centre. The museum specialises in astronomy and botany.

Both the young and older adults thoroughly enjoyed the tour of Ireland's historic Science Centre. We experienced History, Science and so much fun!



YOUNG HEARTS PROJECT



BIRR CASTLE DEMESNE & HISTORIC SCIENCE CENTRE

'Where learning and fun collide'



Inside the museum we discovered astronomical instruments, cameras, photographs and photographic equipment used by the Third and Fourth Earls and Mary, Countess of Rosse, in the middle and late 1800's.



(Maura, Josephine & Loyola marvel over their surroundings)



(Helena looking back in time)



Also on display was the electrical and engineering equipment originally belonging to Charles Parsons and used in his experiments as well as a large area devoted to the botanical work carried out in the Demesne.



(Atom looking up!)



The Dark Room contained within the grounds is believed to be the oldest surviving dark room in the world which belonged to the 5th Earl of Rosse and his mother who were renowned photographers.



The interactive centre revealed the wonders of early photography, engineering and astronomy with a special emphasis on the brilliant design and assembly of the world famous *Great Telescope*.



(Lenny directing her gaze to the Great Telescope)

We were then brought to the location of one of the most extraordinary telescopes ever built... the Great Telescope (the biggest in the world for over 70 years). Our guide highlighted the importance of Birr Castle in modern astronomy. The Great Telescope was completed by the third Earl of Rosse in 1845.



The telescope has a

mirror of 72 inches in diameter, larger and more powerful than anything built before. We learned that one of the major discoveries with the telescope was the spiral nature of the nebulae!



Both the young and older adults had really worked up an appetite so our next stop was the Courtyard Café at Birr Castle, where we enjoyed a delicious lunch which was kindly paid for by the School of Physics, N.U.I.G.

After our delightful lunch Adriana brought us to the site of the Irish Low Frequency Array (I-LOFAR).



I-LOFAR is the Irish station in a European-wide network of state-of-the-art radio telescopes, used to observe the Universe at low frequencies (10-240 MHz), which is based at Birr Castle.

It connects to the International LOFAR Telescope network, which stretches nearly 2,000 km from Ireland to Poland.

We then spent time strolling through the 120 acres of beautiful gardens and parklands.



(Helena, Natalie, Geraldine, Rosemary & Nicole having a rest in the beautiful demesne)



(Aisling, Claire, Dayna, Aaron & Maura relishing Birr Castle Gardens)



(Josephine, Maura, Breda & Lenny enjoying the demesne)

This trip was fun & educational and inspired both young and old to explore science, astronomy, engineering and biodiversity.

We are all very grateful to our tour guide, Adriana, Aaron and the School of Physics, N.U.I.G for bringing us to marvel at the Great Telescope & explore the science Centre!