Keele observatory featured on BBC Stargazing Live show

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By dave knapper dave.knapper@thesentinel.co.uk

STARGAZERS were given the chance to view the wonders of the night sky as an observatory opened its doors to the public for a national televised astronomy event.

Dozens visited Keele Observatory, based in the grounds of the University, for an interactive tour after the venue was chosen to feature on the BBC's Stargazing Live series.

A BBC crew, along with members of the public, were able to check out the range of telescopes on offer as well as pick up some expert advice on star spotting from the in-house experts.

Dr Jacco Van Loon, a lecturer in astrophysics at Keele University was leading one of the tours.

The 40-year-old, from Audlem, said: "It's always a pain when it's cloudy but people have still come along to the event.

"It's nice to be able to explain to people all about the observatory and the work that goes on here. The Stargazing event is a good way of getting people curious about the stars and what's above them.

"The good thing about astronomy is you don't need expensive telescopes you can simply look to the sky."

Visitors were able to inspect the observatory's control room and see pictures of the stars which experts had photographed.

Dr John Southworth studied a PHD in eclipsing binary stars at Keele University.

The 31-year-old from Madeley, said: "It's nice to have such a variety of people coming along to the evening.

"We have people who know quite a bit to people who are just curious."

James Albinson, aged 54, from Silverdale, a member of the Telescope and Observatory Group at the facility, said: "We have had hundreds come along to see various things in the past including Halley's Comet.

"We are pleased the BBC has used us as a location."

Footage from last night's tour could be used on the BBC Two show today, hosted by Professor Brian Cox and Dara O Briain, which aims to encourage people to take an interest in astronomy.

And despite the cloudy night, families visiting Keele remained star-struck.

Elizabeth Talbot, aged 12, from Cellarhead, a pupil at Moorside High School, said: "I had a telescope for Christmas and really enjoy looking at stars. I find it really interesting."

Debra Jolley, aged 47, from Tittensor, said: "I brought a group of Brownies here a few weeks ago and we just found it so interesting I decided to come back when I heard about the event.

"It's so interesting to think about what is out there. It's fascinating."

The observatory is open to the public every Tuesday from 8pm. Stargazing Live is on BBC2 at 8pm.

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