



The Northern Ireland Amateur Astronomy Society got off to a great start last night at Ballyclare High School. Almost 50 people turned up on a very cold night to join in the launch of the new society and also the beginning of the International Year of Astronomy. We were pleased to welcome some distinguished guests and great friends of the society, Prof. Mark Bailey, Dr David Asher and Dr Miruna Popescu from Armagh Observatory, as well as Pat O'Neill, president of the Irish Astronomical Association. Our special guest and speaker was Dave McDonald, along with his wife Fiona.

We also welcomed the first new member of the new society, Darrin, who came along with his wife.

The evening started off with coffee and sticky buns, before Miruna, who is the Irish co-ordinator for IYA2009, gave us a short talk about IYA and the planned events for the year.



She particularly mentioned the events taking place in Dublin over the rest of this week, details of which can be found on the forum. She also showed us a poster promoting a competition being run in conjunction with IYA, the first prize of which is a trip to see the great telescopes in Chile. Well worth entering.



Officer Captain G. Smith, his head, was recognized with a award by this, was followed by three



Many of our members contributed to the success of the evening