

“Beam me up Santa”

Budding astronomers and astrophysicists from years ten and eleven recently had the opportunity to visit Cardiff University’s School of Physics and Astronomy for its annual Christmas Lectures. After a train journey that averaged a little below warp speed, followed by a gruelling trudge up far too many flights of stairs they were greeted by Dr Andrew Newsam. Dr Newsam, the Director of the National Schools Observatory, then took them on a breathless journey encompassing telescopes, time and extra-terrestrials. It was fascinating stuff from start to end.

This was followed up by other thought provoking talks on Lasers, Dark Matter and Dark Energy and the need for further research into these areas, possibly by members of the audience in a few years!



They were then treated to demonstrations of possible physics solutions to Christmas dilemmas. Mr Thomas showed considerable skill in the field of Lego construction whilst demonstrating how Santa might teleport, Star Trek style, into houses. Next came the vacuum-cleaner-based carrot launcher used by the elves to feed the reindeer mid-flight. Mr Spear proved a little too talented when it came to peeling and streamlining carrots leading to the destruction of a set of metal window blinds. Then they were shown how to make ice-cream in under a minute using liquid nitrogen at a temperature of -200°C . The end result

was cold, sweet and creamy, and promptly devoured by the audience. Finally came the Ruben’s Tube and its flames that danced along to Jingle Bell Rock. It was no Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer, but it was both festive and spectacular. A fitting way to end the day!



A big thank you goes out from the Physics Department to Dr Newsam and everyone at Cardiff University involved in organising such a rewarding and enjoyable day. Our thanks extend to Mrs Robjohn and of course to the pupils involved, who proved to be worthy ambassadors for the school.