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Organising INSAP

Dr Valerie Shrimplin

It was the chance meeting of Nick Campion and Valerie Shrimplin at the Second INSAP conference in Malta, January 1999 that led directly to the holding of the fourth conference (4½ years later) at Magdalen College, Oxford. Dr Shrimplin coordinated the organisation of the conference.

I travelled to Malta in January 1999, delighted to have the opportunity to present my research work to a truly interdisciplinary audience of experts, ranging from artists and art historians to hardcore astronomers and astrophysicists. I little realised at the time what an effect it would have on my life for the next few years! Finding a kindred spirit in Nick Campion, we soon agreed that it would be a good idea to suggest a subsequent meeting in England. Disappointment (tinged with relief) followed when Palermo, Sicily, was selected as the venue for INSAP III but by the end of the Palermo Conference in January 2001, it was agreed that yet another ‘small island;’ should be the location for INSAP IV.

Our location had to be within striking distance of Stonehenge (the must-do day trip) and we soon settled on Magdalen College Oxford with its exquisite ambience, perfect sized auditorium and excellent and reasonably priced accommodation – not to mention the river and deer park. The location also meant, importantly, that we were able to capitalise on all that Oxford and other nearby centres of learning had to offer, particularly the ‘galaxy’ of special guest speakers who gladly gave of their time and support.

Becoming involved in INSAP really did change my life, giving me the inspiration to continue to do research in the area of art and astronomy, as well as furnishing me with a huge international network of friends and colleagues, many of which have developed into lifelong friendships, with visits and meetings outside the conferences themselves (of course living near London, the centre of the universe, helps!) Thank you, everyone, for making INSAP IV, Oxford, such a success. I will never forget it.

Group photograph at Magdalen College, 8 August 2003.



Culture and Cosmos/Proceedings of the INSAP IV Conference

Professor Clive Ruggles (Leicester University) leading the tour at Stonehenge (above) and Woodhenge (below), 7 August 2003. The tour was joined at Avebury by Mike Pitts, former curator, Avebury Museum.

