

## Conferences

### The 26th IMC: Barèges, France, 7–10 June 2007: a delight!

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The International Meteor Conference of the IMO was organized in Barèges, France, on 2007 June 7–10. The conference included a lecture program, an unforgettable excursion to the famous Pic du Midi Observatory and above all a wonderful atmosphere of friendship and cooperation.

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#### 1 Introduction

Since the very beginning, the International Meteor Conferences got something of magic. Over the years, meeting after meeting more meteor workers got involved. As long as 20 years ago, a saying circulated: 'The IMC, you can't afford to miss it.' Once someone tasted the wonderful atmosphere, people can't resist the IMC spirit and come back year after year. The IMC community has grown into one of the most successful specialized international astronomical meetings within the world of amateur astronomers.

At a given moment it looked as if, for the first time, we would have had over 100 participants. However in the final week some registered participants cancelled for various reasons. With 84 people from 18 countries, it is obvious that the IMC spirit motivates year by year more people to take part. The lecture program was well filled and the presentations of exceptional quality, the atmosphere was always friendly and the organizational work done very professionally for every detail. The meals were in the French way and thus a delight for all of us, with always a salad to start and a tasteful menu with wine as much as anyone wanted, dessert, coffee and cheese with appropriate wine, not seen at an IMC since 1993 also in France. The wonderful Pyrenees with their impressive landscape, the spectacular excursion to the Pic du Midi Observatory via the pass Tourmalet, the legendary Astro Poetry show, the famous Belgian beers in the bar, the specialities that our Japanese, Polish, Bulgarian and other friends offered all of us, the several excellent guitar playing and singing meteor workers, it all helped the indescribable IMC spirit to be felt stronger as ever before.

#### 2 The arrival and opening

The days before the IMC several people were already in Barèges for the Radio School and the Orbit workshop (Wislez, 2007). Instead of late evening workshops during the IMC, specialized participants have sessions in



the days just before the IMC. The possibility to come a day or two before the main IMC is ideal to make the travelling more worthwhile and take a holiday to enjoy the region. Most participants arrived during Thursday 7 June. The accommodation in L'Hospitalet was perfect for an IMC with comfortable rooms and an extremely friendly, helpful staff. A movie theatre down in the village proved to be perfect as lecture room, a short walk several times a day between the IMC host and the lecture room served for some extra time to chat. Thursday at about 18<sup>h</sup> French time (defined as some instant between 18<sup>h</sup> and 18<sup>h</sup>30<sup>m</sup>) the opening speech and a welcome reception marked the official start of the 26th IMC. François Colas, coordinator of the local organizing committee, opened the IMC and introduced the mayor of Barèges who welcomed the IMC participants, in English. After the official speeches a welcoming drink was offered to everyone. Most people had arrived in time to enjoy the first evening dinner and learned to clean the tables after dinner. Some went to bed early to recover from the long journey to the IMC, while the others enjoyed the bar till late at night.



Figure 1 – Concentrated looks during the lectures: from left to right Danielle Moser, Tom Roelandts, Benny Gyes, Roland Winkler, Mirko Nitschke, Katya Koleva and Frans Lowiessen. Photo: Jean-Marc Wislez.

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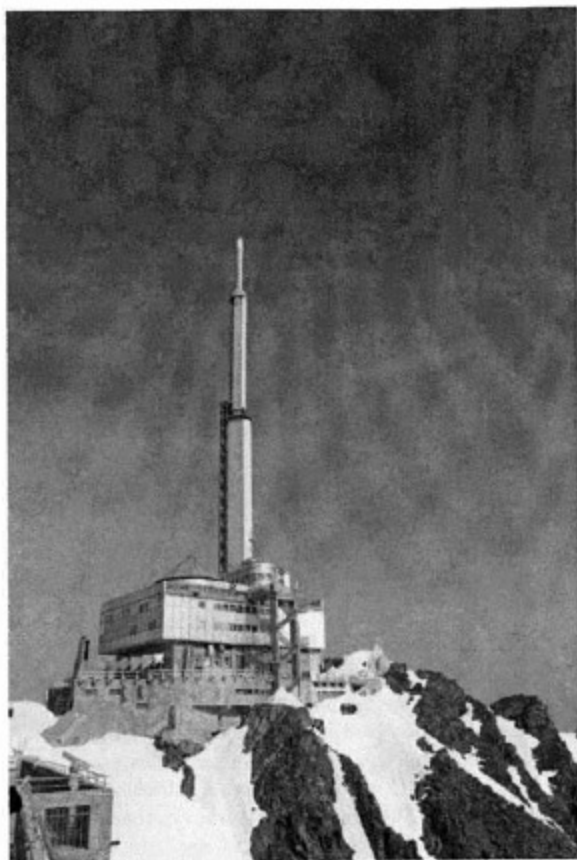


Figure 2 – The main building of Pic du Midi observatory and the dark blue sky. Photo: Luc Bastiaens.

### 3 The Friday program, lecture day

Friday was the main lecture day. The first session 'Method of observation: single and multiple station' was chaired by Jérémie Vaubaillon who introduced Peter Brown, one of the IMO founding members and first Council members. Peter presented an impressive lecture about his ongoing research: 'An Overview of the Meteor Research Program at the University of Western Ontario'. Then Detlef Koschny, one of our IMC veterans, informed us about 'Data analysis of double-station meteors'. Next, Eduard Bettonvil developed his 2005 and 2006 talks about determining positions of meteor trails with another aspect: 'Precision of a meteor's impact position on the Earth'. During the coffee break a local specialty from the Netherlands was offered at the occasion of Jos Nijland's birthday: a large tasteful bread with raisins, a most appreciated extra. After the coffee break Jonathan McAuliffe entertained the audience with a talk about 'Canary Islands Double Station Meteor Project — First Light!' with a flavour of Irish humour. Felix Bettonvil completed the first session with a talk about a very important but in the past often neglected aspect: 'Velocity determination of meteors based on frequency analysis'.

The second session was chaired by David Asher and was dedicated to 'Dynamics of meteoroids (1)'. Maria Grisevich from Moscow, Russia, presented: 'New

method for entry dynamics determination upon observations'. The morning sessions were completed by Jérémie Vaubaillon revealing the latest predictions for the possible 2007 Aurigid meteor outburst.

The excellent weather on Friday noon allowed the enjoyment of a tasteful lunch in the open air, offering plenty of time for informal contacts. The General Assembly of the International Meteor Organization opened the afternoon sessions. With Jürgen Rendtel, David Asher and Josep Trigo, being as only council members present, the IMO General Assembly was rather short, not even a financial report was presented to be approved.

After the coffee break the session about Dynamics of meteoroids continued, chaired by Peter Brown. David Asher explained 'the basic idea of Meteor stream resonances' and Galina Ryabova introduced 'the weighting method in modelling of meteoroid stream formation'. The time schedule of the lectures was remarkably well respected. Jürgen Rendtel chaired session 3 about Video observations. First Shinsuke Abe informed us about the 'Japanese TV meteor observation network and the future plans from space'. Then Juraj Toth from Slovakia described the 'all-sky TV meteor observations from Modra'. Josep Trigo and Jose Maria Maliedo introduced 'the Spanish Fireball Network for continuous all-sky CCD and video monitoring'. After this lecture it was time for the poster session with plenty of time for informal contacts and also to make renewals for IMO membership fees. Fewer posters were displayed than at previous IMCs, but the quality of the presentations was excellent.

The Friday evening dinner was preceded by another reception with local fine white wine and cake offered by the host of l'Hospitalet and much appreciated by everyone. After dinner, and when the tables were cleaned, the Polish team displayed a film about the past IMC 2006 in Roden and Jérémie got the audience in the mood with the 2004 IMC song. When the evening program was finished, nobody moved as if we all expected more, until Jérémie spoke the magic words: 'the bar is open' and in no time everybody rushed up to l'Hospitalet!



Figure 3 – Kazuya Noguchi and Masa-yuki Yamamoto reading Haikus in Japanese and then in English. Photo: Jean-Marc Wislez.

More people discovered the wealth of Belgian beers in the bar where the excellent guitar players like Valentin Velkov, Jérémie Vaubailon, Jonathan McAuliffe, etc. inspired everyone to sing all together playing music in various ways. The Bulgarian K-K-song couldn't fail, 'Let it be' was performed as 'I-e-M-Cee', and the meteor blues were invented till early in the morning.

#### 4 Saturday, the excursion day

After breakfast, and having cleaned the tables, we left by bus at 8<sup>h</sup> French time to visit the Pic du Midi observatory. The ride with the two busses through the Pyrenees offered breathtaking views with a short stop at the well known Tourmalet. The final track was even more spectacular as we went up to the 2900 meter high observatory by cable cars. Visiting the observatory under the excellent weather conditions was a real delight, excellent to take the traditional group picture. Thereafter we were guided to see the 2 meter telescope, a 60 cm telescope and the famous Bernard Lyot Coronagraph.

Due to some delay to get the entire group down by cable car, we got caught in a thunderstorm with heavy rainfall. The planned picnic at Tourmalet was replaced by plan B. While it rained cats and dogs, the entire IMC group found shelter under a kind of public roof where the picnic packages were distributed to eat. The law of Murphy did it again as it stopped raining once we were all in the bus to return to Barèges where we arrived a bit delayed for the final 10 lectures of this IMC.

Session 4 started with about an hour delay and covered Meteor Shower analysis chaired by Masa-yuki Yamamoto. First Pavel Koten from the Czech Republic informed us about 'the video observations of the 2006 Leonids at the Ondřejov Observatory'. Then Geert Barentsen revealed some new features of the VDMB data input and showed with some animated graphs how

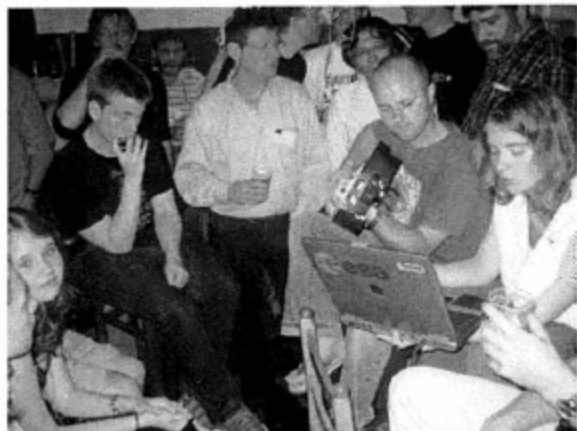


Figure 4 - The last IMC evening many spent the night singing together. On the foreground we recognize from left to right: Galina Gospodinova, Desislava Zhivkova, Geert Barentsen (harmonica), Detlef Koschny, Masa-yuki Yamamoto, Jonathan McAuliffe (guitar), Frans Lowiessen and Lucie Maquet (laptop). Photo: Katya Koleva.

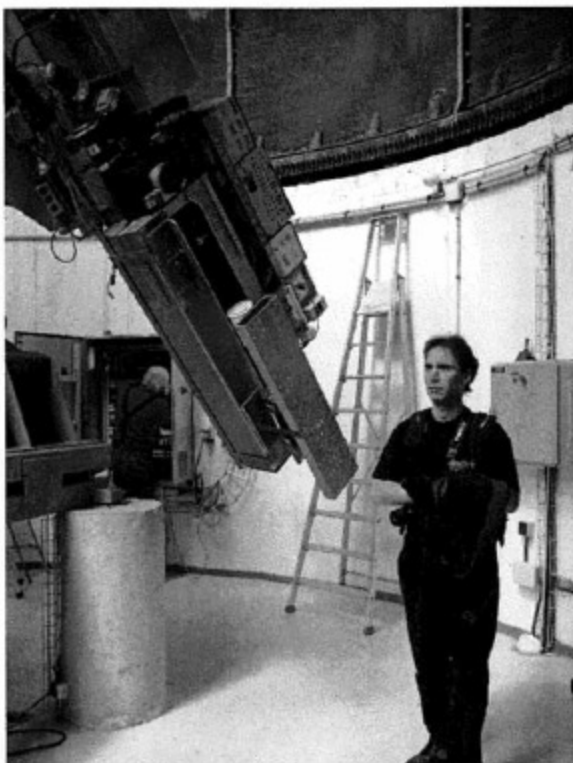


Figure 5 - Jérémie Vaubailon explains the history of the coronagraph. Photo: Detlef Koschny.

the on the fly ZHR gets its shape as observations are being added. Next, Przemyslaw Żołądek and Mariusz Wiśniewski gave an impressive overview of 'the results of the Polish Fireball Network double station results and 2004 Perseid meteor shower'. The session was completed with the lecture of Jürgen Rendtel about 'the details of the strong 2006 Orionids outburst' and comparison with past Orionid activity.

After a short coffee break, Session 5 about Radio observations was chaired by Galina Ryabova. Kazuya Noguchi presented 'Development of an automatic echo-counting program for HROFFT spectrograms' and Valentin Grigore described 'the visual and photographic 2006 Geminid results in Romania'. The final session 6 about special observations was chaired by François Colas. Masa-yuki Yamamoto introduced 'the WIND project: A Lithium release experiment by a Japanese sounding rocket'. As the lectures were shorter than planned, the program got almost on schedule (French time). Jiří Borovička gave a detailed overview of 'the spectroscopic results for Geminid meteors' which are very distinct from other meteor showers being more compact due to their perihelion passage close to the sun. Then Jérémie Vaubailon talked about 'the hard task of observing meteoroids' and stressed the importance of amateur-professional cooperation. Professional astronomers cannot do the amount of observations needed and amateurs need the professionals for information and motivation. The final speaker was Valentin Grigore who proposed: 'the European Near Earth Asteroid Research Project'.

Then at the end of Saturday afternoon, sooner than on any previous IMC, IMO President Jürgen Rendtel thanked the IMC organizers François Colas and Jérémie Vaubailion as well as their assistants who did the work 'behind the curtains' for this splendid IMC we all enjoyed so much. Any words fail to express the degree of our gratitude to the organizers.

After dinner the cinema alias lecture room was filled with more participants than during any of the lecture sessions. An IMC without the legendary International Meteor Poetry Show directed by Andrei Dorian George would not be a real IMC anymore. Andrei managed to get many participants on stage for poems, haikus and performances accompanied by the guitarists Jérémie Vaubailion, Valentin Velkov, Jonathan McAuliffe and Stanislav Kaniansky. Songs like the 2006 IMC song of Jonathan and the 2005 IMC song by Jérémie got the audience singing together, an unforgettable atmosphere.

At the end of this memorable evening Jérémie Vaubailion spoke words of thanks to François Colas who had done most of the impressive organizational work. After some final instructions for the departure Sunday Morning, we were reminded to clean the tables.

The law of Murphy hit again as all the IMC participants were showered by the intense rainfall on the way up to l'Hospitalet, a few hundreds of meters at the other side of the village. Afterwards the bar was filled with people, playing guitar, singing all together, for many hours as nobody wanted to quit this magic emotional atmosphere of friendship and brotherhood. For many of us no more than a couple of hour of sleep were left before the departure of the bus to Lourdes and Barcelona for the participants who went on to attend the professional meeting 'Meteoroids'. The exceptional timing of this IMC was planned to connect the two meetings so that one journey made it possible to attend the two conferences and 19 persons took advantage of this formula. More about 'Meteoroids' can be read in a report by Jürgen Rendtel and David Asher (2007).



Figure 6 – The cable car arriving at the Pic du Midi Observatory. Photo: Adriana Nicolae.

## 5 The impressions of some of the youngest IMC participants

The roots of the IMC tradition go back to 1979 and the formula still appeals to young observers and newcomers. We hope that our testimonies may convenience you to join us at our next conference!

**Galina Gospodinova:** Although I observe meteors since 2003, it was my first participation in a meteor conference and my first visit to France. When we entered the small beautiful mountain village of Barèges, my first impression was that it looks like a site taken from a fairy tale. It was surrounded by mountains from everywhere and a small river flowed through its centre. I have so many memories of the conference itself but I will share the most exciting of them. Most impressive was the friendliness of all participants. All of them were friendly, joyful and amusing and predisposed me in favour of being myself. The lectures were very interesting and made me even more enthusiastic than before to observe meteors whenever I have a chance to do it. The hostel where we stayed was unusual with its ancient appearance. The meetings we had in it in the evenings were new for me. I liked them very much because I saw people of different ages and different countries being together and having a good time in one and the same way. These are my brightest impressions of the IMC and I am glad to share them with you!

**Katya Koleva:** First I want to say that this conference was one of the best for me. It was full of emotions. Everyone predisposed me to communicate and this made me very close with them. The astronomers are very friendly persons. No matter what age they are! The place of Barèges was amazing. We saw the most beautiful observatory. For its location... — I have no words! Îèciàà íà áyò àèæääèà íàní ñáíáí. Jérémie and François had organized everything perfectly. Everyone looked happy and satisfied. I want to thank them again!

This year we saw the results, which these meetings generate: double-station meteor observations between neighbour countries. It is so exciting to see that the IMC unites the participants and that they start to work together like a close team. I noticed that many of the conference participants were involved as professionals in physics and astronomy. This is wonderful. Each IMC always supplies me with new interesting and useful acquaintances.

**Desislava Zhivkova:** My impressions of the IMC this year are wonderful. From the lectures of the other participants I learnt many new things about meteor observations. I realized how and what our data are used for, and I am glad to know that our work during the year gives results. As young observers we are happy to help the study of these interesting phenomena. I was fascinated by the friendly atmosphere of the IMC. The people there are very friendly and although we are quite younger than most of the participants, they accepted us very well. I give my special congratulations to the organizers who were taking care for us during all our stay. The village where the conference took place was very beautiful indeed. Our visit to the Observatory Pic du



Figure 7 - The Astro Poetry show director, Andrei Dorian Gheorge, Valentin Grigore and their shadows in action Photo: Luc Bastiaens.

Midi was very interesting. Thank you for this unforgettable experience. For sure my participation at the IMC made me enjoy astronomy stronger and especially meteor observations. I will have very pleasant memories of it!

## 6 Conclusions

Although the 2007 IMC took place in June instead of September, this did not have a negative effect on the number of participants. Those who had the privilege of taking part will keep most pleasant memories of this as a highlight in lifetime. Our friends François Colas, Jérémie Vaubailon and the assistants, Julien Lecubin, Alain Montintin, Christian Ruatti, of the local organizing team together with the staff of L'Hospitalet offered us a fantastic IMC. Thank you all for the work and effort you did to make this possible, all the extras you gave us, your friendship and your human qualities!

## References

- Rendtel J. and Asher D. (2007). "Meteoroids 2007 in Barcelona". *WGN*, 35:3, 53-54.
- Wislez J.-M. (2007). "Report of the 2007 Radio Meteor School". *WGN*, 35:4, 72-73.

## IMC photographs

Photo galleries on the IMO website: the IMC history since the first meeting in 1979 is documented with commented photographs. Anyone who has photographs of past IMCs and who wants to share these with all of us, please contact Paul Roggemans. The IMC galleries are available at: <http://www.imo.net/imo/imc/history> and include a detailed overview of the 2007 IMC.

The IMC group photo is on the front cover of this issue.