



Royal Holloway Travel Award Report

Dorothy Weston

Part-time PhD Student – Centre for Quaternary Research, Department of Geography

In March 2019, I was fortunate enough to be awarded both the Irene Marshall Scholarship and the Bill Chaloner Memorial Award. This enabled me to attend the 20th International Quaternary Association (INQUA) Conference held in Dublin, Ireland from 25th – 31st July 2019. The congress is the premier international Quaternary conference which meets once every four years and is attended by over 2,700 academics working within the discipline of Quaternary Science. The INQUA congress is an ideal conference to attend because it is the foremost opportunity for globally-renowned Quaternary scientists from around the world to present their current research interests and discuss the latest developments across a range of disciplines.

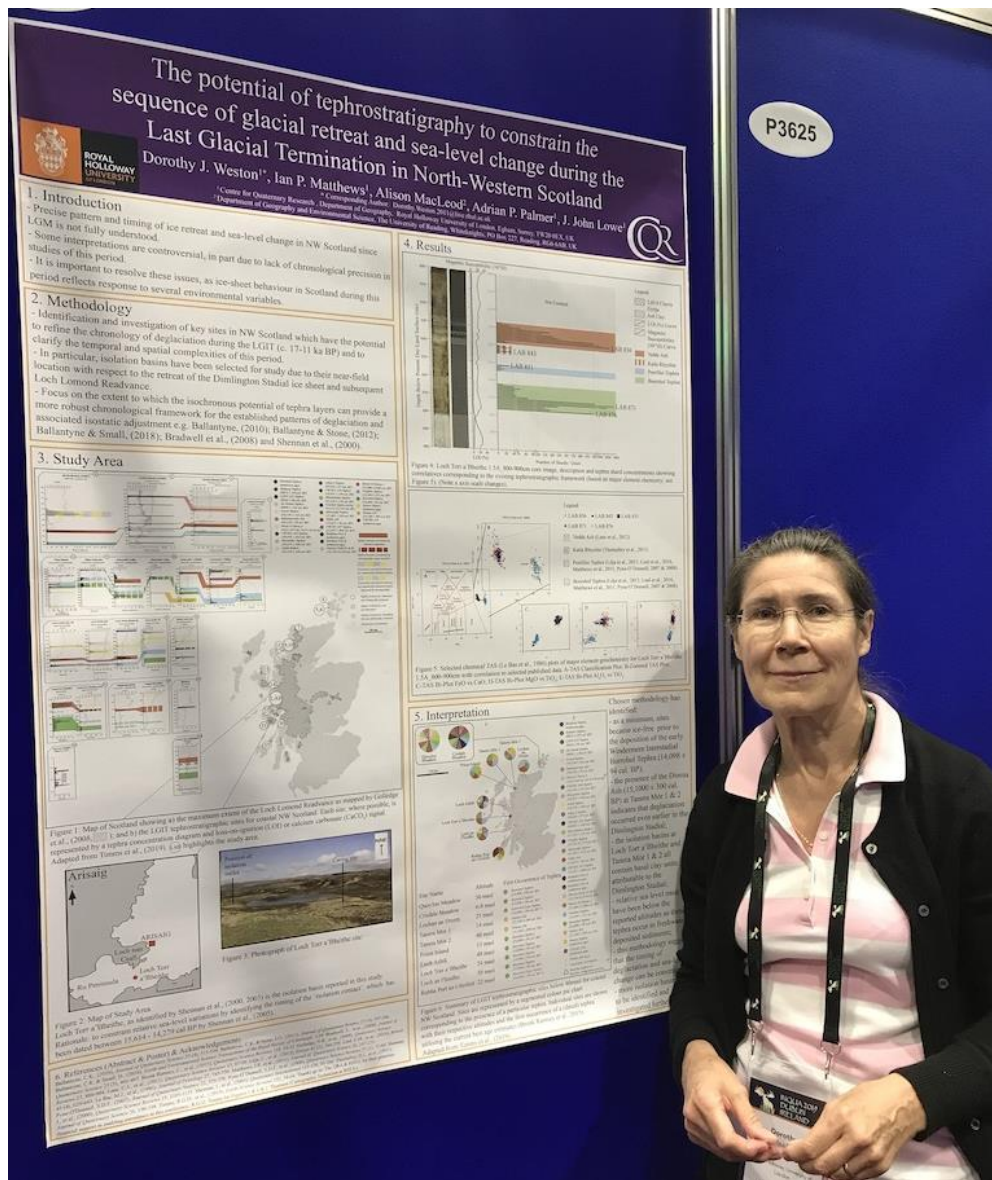


The impressive Conference Centre Dublin on the north bank of the River Liffey

My PhD research is examining the pattern and timing of ice retreat and sea-level change in north-western Scotland during the period c. 17 - 11 ka BP. Specifically, my study aims to investigate key sites that have the potential to refine the chronology of deglaciation in north-

western Scotland and to clarify the temporal and spatial complexities associated with this time period. I focus on the extent to which microscopic traces of distal volcanic ash (cryptotephra), which has been deposited as tephra layers or 'horizons' (geologically instantaneous deposition of volcanic ash), can provide a more robust chronological framework for the established patterns of deglaciation and associated isostatic adjustment.

As a self-funded part-time student approximately half way through my studies, this funding afforded me the opportunity to attend my first international conference, providing me a wonderful opportunity to engage with cutting-edge researchers in my chosen field. Additionally, as part of my conference attendance, my abstract was selected for a poster presentation on the preliminary findings of my research, to an extremely wide and diverse audience. My preliminary research findings not only generated interest, but valuable discussion and feedback concerning my novel approach from a wide range of Quaternary scientists including tephra and sea-level change specialists. I shall use this invaluable feedback to drive my studies forward.



Poster presentation ready!

As with all successful conferences, they are far more than merely attending the extensive and varied program of talks, discussions and poster presentations. My physical presence meant that I was also able to attend a number of specialist group meetings. These meetings provided a further excellent opportunity to develop my network of academic contacts within both the tephra and sea-level change communities, as well as to connect with other researchers from the wider Quaternary science discipline.



Members (past and present) of the RHUL Centre for Quaternary Research,
Department of Geography

Overall, the conference was a fantastic experience and one of the most productive weeks of my PhD to date. It gave me the opportunity to present my research to an international community of researchers, to network with scientists who share my research interests and to hear about contemporary research and trending topics which will be useful in planning future studies during my PhD. Away from the conference, I also had the chance to visit Dublin, a city I last visited over 40 years ago! One particular highlight was to visit the *Kingship and Sacrifice* exhibition at the National Museum of Ireland. These are Iron Age human remains better known as the “Bog Bodies” and have been dated to between approximately 400 BC and 200 BC, which show a remarkably good state of preservation.

None of this would have been possible without the generous support of the travel awards and the constant support and encouragement of my supervisory team headed up by Dr Ian Matthews. I am extremely grateful to the University for awarding me both the Irene Marshall Scholarship and the Bill Chaloner Memorial Award and urge any current Royal Holloway student who is seeking research-related travel support to apply for the Award next year.