

BSG Postgraduate Conference Attendance Grant: European Geosciences Union (EGU), Vienna, Austria, 17th-22nd April 2016

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Overview

I was generously awarded a grant of £500 from the BSG to aid my attendance of the EGU general assembly in April 2016. My contributions at the conference included both an oral presentation and a poster presentation. These focussed on the rationale and aim of my research, some preliminary results and the scope for other methods to be used. The conference was my first and the experience was invaluable. I attended a variety of sessions related to my research in some way and also engaged with experts in a diverse range of topics. The international reputation the conference maintains attracted a large number of PhD students from around the world, providing the opportunity to network, gain an overview of current research and receive valuable feedback on my work.

Contributions and outcomes

The oral presentation was titled "A palaeoenvironmental reconstruction of c. 2 million year old Oldowan archaeological occurrences on the Homa Peninsula, southwestern Kenya: a multiproxy approach" and was presented in the session "Cenozoic stratigraphy and palaeoenvironments" (SSP2.5). This gave an overview of the background and rationale for my PhD research, whilst also stating the aim, objectives and the methods that are being employed. This is to create a palaeoenvironmental reconstruction of the Homa Peninsula, southwestern Kenya by utilising methods such as field sedimentary investigations, particle size analysis (PSA), analyses of phytoliths, as well as scope for other methods. Unfortunately there was no time for questions and instead it was asked for these to be forwarded later.

The title for the poster presentation was "Alluvial systems as archives for environmental change at a Hominin site with Oldowan archaeological occurrences: the Homa Peninsula, southwestern Kenya" and was presented in the session "Sediment archives and landscape evolution in dryland areas: New approaches, perspectives and challenges" (GM3.4/CL1.27/HS11.11/SSS3.9) (Figure 1). Its content was similar to the oral presentation, but more focus was devoted to the preliminary results and what these may show about the palaeoenvironment.

Preliminary results were shown for PSA and the varying phytolith morphologies were also displayed. The feedback received from this session was very much positive and encouraging. Suggestions were made to develop my PSA results through the use of end-member modelling. This is an area I am now actively investigating. Moreover, some of those that took interest in my work were involved (or knew people

involved) with the methods that I intend to use. Overall, this was very successful.

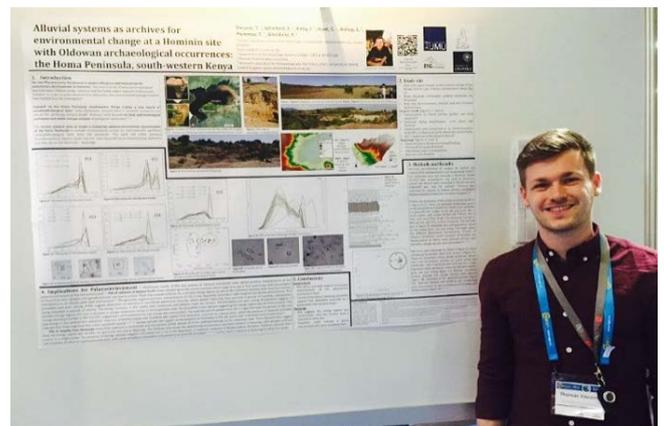


Figure 1 – The author (myself) prior to the poster presentation session

Sessions attended

EGU16 offered a large number of sessions on an extremely diverse range of topics. The sessions that I attended were related to my PhD research in some way, with the exception of the medal; these included those delivered by Benjamin Horton, Pierre Valla and Niels Hovius. Sessions that I attended generally focussed on stratigraphy, sedimentology, palaeoenvironmental change, East Africa, biomarkers, limnogeology and similar. Those that particularly stood out to me included: "Limnogeology – reading the geological record of lakes" (SSP3.14); "Multiproxy organic geochemical and micropalaeontological approaches in Earth Sciences" (BG6.2) and "Sediment archives and landscape evolution in dryland areas: New approaches, perspectives and challenges" (GM3.4/CL1.27/HS11.11/SSS3.9). These sessions in particular were directly related to my PhD and many of the talks enlisted methods that I intend to utilise. Aside from the sessions provided by the EGU, I also attended the BSG/Young Geomorphologist social event. This was an excellent opportunity to meet other PhD students and network.

Use of BSG funds

The sum of £500 provided by the BSG covered the costs of flights, accommodation, registration and abstract submission to the EGU. This was invaluable and has allowed me to place more money into my upcoming fieldwork. I am grateful to the BSG for providing me with the opportunity to develop my early academic career and hope to attend more conferences in the near future.