



European Association of Geochemistry



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WONDERS OF THE EAST



Rachael James

It was a surprise and honour to be asked to deliver the EAG Distinguished Lecture Tour 2014 talk and to be given the opportunity to connect with geochemists working in Eastern Europe. In recent years, my research has focused on applying isotope geochemistry to environmental problems, including assessing the links between gas hydrates, climate change and methane emissions from the seafloor in the Arctic, quantifying the impacts of seepages of carbon dioxide from sub-seafloor storage sites

on the marine environment, to evaluating the utility of light stable isotopes as tracers of weathering processes. Interest in these topics was expressed by academics who specialise in subjects as diverse as biology, to environmental science and engineering, and geology.



First lecture of the tour at Charles University, Prague

Having swiftly modified the introductions to my lectures to accommodate this diversity, my tour kicked off with my first ever visit to Prague (Czech Republic), hosted by Dr. Juraj Farkas from the Czech Geological Survey. My talk was given at Charles University, enabling not just survey staff but also university staff and students to attend. It turned out to be a wonderful opportunity to catch up with lithium isotope colleagues of old and to make new acquaintances interested in applying isotope techniques to trace groundwater pollution. Juraj kindly took the time to acquaint me with the old town, with Charles' Bridge and, of course, a brewhouse: but thankfully no English stag parties.



Audience at the Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania



Rachael in front of the Ceausescu's triumphant palace in Bucharest (now officially the 'Palace of the Parliament')

The remainder of my tour took place in a week-long hit, having re-arranged teaching, PhD student initiations and nursery pick-ups, at the end of November. Woollen overcoat retrieved from the attic, I set off for Bucharest where I was met at the smart new airport terminal by Dr. Cristina Sandu from the Romanian Academy Institute of Biology. We made a swift tour of the city, taking in the Arcul de Triumpf, the history museum, as well as the balcony from which the Ceausescu's departed. The next morning I toured the institute's impressive microbiology facility, and gave two lectures before meeting with the director of the Romanian Academy of Sciences. I was delighted to learn that the academy is refurbishing its research station on the Danube delta, and I hope that I will work there with my team in the near future. After a whistle-stop tour of the geological museum, with its fantastic collection of indigenous Romanian dinosaurs, and of Ceausescu's triumphant palace, I set off over the snow-covered mountains for Cluj-Napoca.

I confess that I had to do a Google search for Cluj when I learnt I was to travel there. I was intrigued to discover that it was the haunt of Count Dracula and Vlad the Impaler, as well as host to Romania's largest university, Babeş-Bolyai. My host, Prof. Calin Baciu, filled me in on other aspects of Cluj history before we took off to a fascinating ceremony to award an honorary doctorate to the first Romanian cosmonaut, Dumitru-Dorin Prunariu. After the reception, fuelled by Cinzano, I gave two particularly well-attended talks to staff and students in the Faculty of Environmental Science and Engineering.

Then it was on to Sofia, after a short delay to clear snow from the runway. I was sped to the heart of the city by Dr. Momchil Dyulgerov from the Department of Mineralogy, Petrology and Economic Geology at Sofia University, to spend a relatively balmy evening (1 °C compared to -4 °C in Cluj) taking in the sights. The next morning, I gave my lectures in the university's spectacular main building, spending some time debating the use of isotopes in palaeoenvironmental studies. Then, after a tour of Sofia's baroque cathedral, it was time to depart for home via gloomy fog at London Heathrow.

I'd like to extend my warmest thanks to all of my hosts for making me most welcome and for taking the time to show me the sights, discuss science and meet their colleagues. I'd also like to thank Marie-Aude Hulshoff for ensuring a smooth and painless journey, and the EAG for affording me this opportunity.

Rachael James

Ocean and Earth Sciences, University of Southampton, UK
EAG Distinguished Lecturer 2014



EAG DISTINGUISHED LECTURE PROGRAM 2015



We are excited to announce that Prof. Miryam Bar-Matthews, senior research scientist at the Geological Survey of Israel, has been selected as the EAG Distinguished Lecturer 2015. Miryam's main field of research is the reconstruction of terrestrial palaeoclimate during the last 500,000 years using high-resolution cave speleothem records.

Once again, the 2015 Distinguished Lecture Program will focus on bringing innovative research to under-represented regions with a focus on Central and Eastern Europe. Therefore, institutions located in Central and Eastern Europe are strongly invited to contact the EAG Office should they wish for Miryam Bar-Matthews to come and present one or two lectures. **Find all details at www.eag.eu.com/education/dlp.**



"May I take it, Professor Pilkington, that you have taken the University's Health & Safety course on the use of step ladders?"

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25
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