

I applied for an educational bursary to attend BDIAP Maastricht 2018, after having an abstract accepted for the meeting, and was delighted to be granted one. On Monday 18th June I travelled to Maastricht in Netherlands, courtesy of the BDIAP's generous bursary. I flew to Amsterdam and enjoyed a pleasant train journey onwards from there, as there are no direct international air connections to this picturesque but small city. The torrential rain leaving Dublin was in sharp contrast to the glorious sunshine I found on arrival at my destination!

As always, the BDIAP had lined up a great selection of topics and speakers over the course of the meeting. I concentrated on attending all the trainee sessions, and found the cytology session particularly useful in terms of preparing for the FRCPath Part 2 exam. The molecular symposia were also especially helpful and illuminating. The trade stands and industry talks were also interesting, and I was very impressed by the mass spectrometry system being developed as an alternative to frozen section analysis. I had not anticipated the high quality images available from this new technology!

The conference was held from 19th to 22nd June, in the large and very well appointed MECC conference centre in Maastricht. This was central and easy to find. The electronic displays of which talks were going on in each room (regularly updated) was very useful, and enabled easy switching between the various streams during the day. Catering was also fabulous in the centre! Unfortunately the networking boat trip was oversubscribed so I was disappointed to miss out! However, the social highlight of the trip was undoubtedly the dinner in a Belgian cave we enjoyed on Thursday night! This was a novel backdrop and a wonderful location for our meal. We had a great night dancing afterwards too! It was a wonderful chance to meet colleagues in other European countries, as well as some Australian and Japanese ones!

I would like to express my gratitude to BDIAP for giving me the bursary. I would also like to compliment the local hosts for their organisation of the meeting. I recommend all trainees make the most of opportunities such as this bursary – I applied but had not expected to receive one – and I am very grateful to the BDIAP.

- Carmel Ryan