RSS Conference 2018 – A blog.

At the start of September, 5 intrepid ICTU statisticians and my good self ventured west to the picturesque and historic city of Cardiff to attend the 2018 RSS conference. I arrived at the quirky yet charming Royal Hotel late Monday and prepared myself for the upcoming 3 days of seminars, presentations, lectures and endless buffet-food.

Statisticians… ASSEMBLE!

The conference this year took place at Cardiff's town hall, an ornate palatial building you'd associate more with period dramas than periodic data. However, it proved to fit the bill perfectly as presenters seemed to rise to the occasion and match the grandios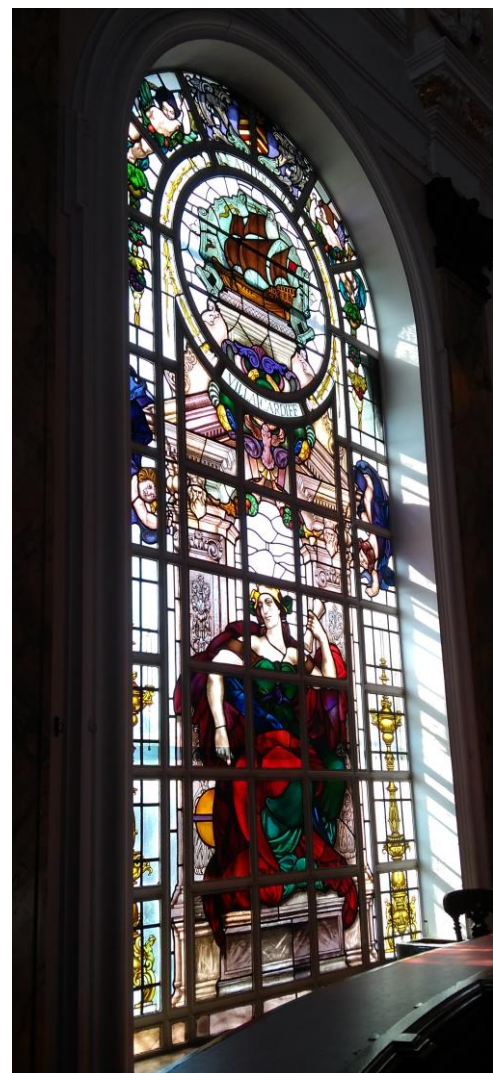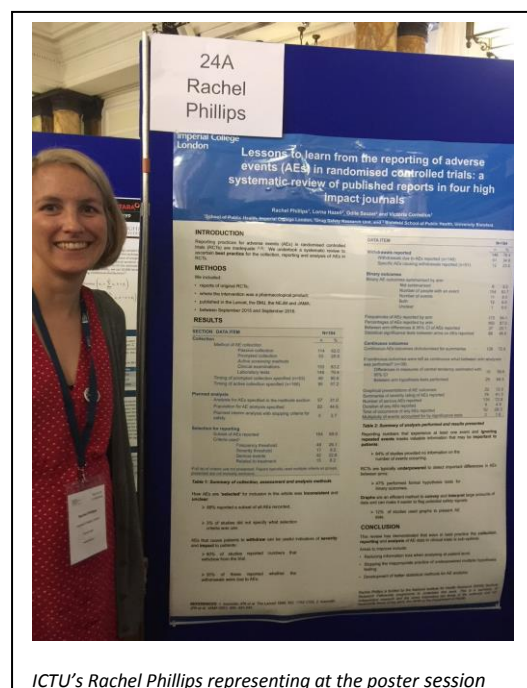ity of their surroundings (though quite how heavy Victorian doors equals 'easy access' I'll never know…). Of the aforementioned presentations topics covered every base of statistics, ranging from technical model-fitting methodology to light-hearted reviews of visual data representation. Another striking observation was the sheer diversity of speakers (in age, gender and ethnicity) which is hopefully an encouraging sign of things to come within our field.

ICTU's Victoria Cornelius' presentation contained a personal favourite – cartoon wasps!

Numerous cups of coffee were consumed in order to help me get through the 3 days as the volume and quality of information available meant that switching off was not really an option (as was my overly optimistic idea of working in the evenings). Highlights included Letisha Audrey's YSS completion winning presentation on optimising cooking recipes using clustering methods (and one of the most sophisticated and easily digestible slide packs seen), Leonardo Grilli's talk on imputation within a multilevel model and our very own Victoria Cornelius who gave a superb 5-minute introduction to her work on signal detection using WSP models. The keynote speakers also kept up the high standard; Hannah Fry giving a talk as entertaining as it was informative on the world of computational algorithms and our trust in them.

It was pleasing to see Imperial College well represented at the conference. Whether it was bumping into ICTU alumni and RSS President-Elect Deborah Ashby, witnessing Hilary Watt present on removing the jargon from teaching statistics, or discussing research proposals with a mathematician based in South Kensington it did seem that you were never far away from a familiar face. Even in the rare occasions where this did not occur the friendly atmosphere meant that you were soon chatting away regardless. Part of this should go down to the YSS team whose enthusiasm seemed almost infectious.

Not the worst place to present in.

ICTU's Rachel Phillips representing at the poster session

Most important part of any conference, the freebies!

After three, highly informative days I was soon on my way back to sunny Sussex. Head weighed down by a mixture of newly obtained statistical knowledge,

caffeine, and a lack of sleep thanks to some high-spirited football fans enjoying Cardiff's many bars.

As conferences go this is one I would definitely recommend (Belfast in 2019 for those that are wondering). A big thankyou goes to the organisers, the RSS (and the YSS), all the speakers, the catering team and most importantly ICTU and the stats team for taking me along and making this an enjoyable experience.

By Nick. ICTU Statistician who likes cats.

You cannot have a stats conference without a presentation on Data Science.