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It's Easter holidays and I'm sitting by the fireplace feeling guilty. I had promised to write a short biography for the next IRGWP newsletter and writing was never easy to me. Writing about myself is even more difficult!



Maybe, it will be easier if I start from the end... This is me just three days ago enjoying the little snow we can find in my home country, Portugal (figure 1). I'm 51 years old (born the 10.12.1964 in Lisbon) and I'm the very proud mother of two wonderful young men, João and Pedro who were born in 1998 and 2000, respectively.



Figura 1: Proud mom

My last pregnancy made me miss the most attended IRG meeting so far, the one in Hawaii. The doctor thought I was crazy when I tried to explain that these are very important meetings that I try to attend every year.

I missed that meeting and other famous ones but I've also attended many more since my first one in Madrid back in 1988 (Figure 2). I had finished my degree in Biology (Faculty of Sciences, University of Lisbon) the year before and as a research trainee I had started working in wood protection at the National Laboratory for Civil Engineering in Lisbon. I'm still working there, which is good, but from time to time it gets very challenging to escape from routine.



Figure 2: My first IRGWP meeting, IRG19 in Madrid (April 1988). Dario Reimão (IRG lifelong member) on my left in the photo helped me a lot to attend this meeting and was my first co-author. Figure 3: I found the familiar face of our Vice-President Joris Van Acker on one of my photos. It was probably his first meeting too...

For me, IRG meetings were always a very interesting mixture of work and friendship and in fact on my first meeting I met my future PhD supervisor Dr. David Dickinson from Imperial College in London (UK) and my, to this day, best friend and colleague Dr. Maite Troya from

Spain. I could add a list of names here of other significant people I've met at IRG who are always an extra reason to find the money to attend the meetings.

From 1991, I did my PhD in Timber Technology at Imperial College on termites and boron but always had to divide my time between that and my other work at LNEC. Wood preservation was changing a lot in early 90's and most of my work back home and in European Research Projects was on developing methods of test and testing of alternatives to sodium pentachlorophenate for sapstain treatment. I soon lost count on how many tonnes of boards I was dipping. Board by board (Figure 4). I've been also involved in several national and international Research Projects related to the characterization of degrading agents, monitoring and protection of building materials *in situ*.



Figure 4: Anti-sapstain tests.

Back to my IRGWP story, my second meeting in 1991 was great. I won the Ron Cockcroft Award which had started the year before and went to Kyoto in Japan. My colleague at Imperial College, Jeff D. Lloyd, also won the RCA and nowadays we still talk a lot about this trip we did together. Many other IRG meetings followed until now, I've been in 19 so far, including the last 10 (from Tromsø to Chile).



Figure 5: IRG22 in Kyoto, Japan. Working on left and taking photos on the right.

Termites have always been my main subject of interest and a big proportion of my close to 30 IRG papers are about them. My former and present PhD students Tânia Nobre and Sónia Duarte have been fundamental in the development of this work.

Time flies and responsibilities increase. Since 2007 I've also added teaching to my duties as Invited Professor on the Conservation and Restoration Degree of ESAD (Escola Superior de Artes Decorativas) and came across the wonderful new world of art protection. Meanwhile, drywood termites discovered the fantastic world heritage site of Angra do Heroísmo in the Azores Islands and gave me extra reasons to concentrate on termite research. I became an associated member of the Azorean Biodiversity Group (University of the Azores) in 2010 and we now belong to the Centre for Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Changes (CE3C).

Like many other colleagues in Europe I've been actively involved in the last ten years in several COST Actions. Presently I'm the co-Convenor (with Stig Bardage from Sweden) of the Working Group 1: Material capability and enhancement of the COST Action FP1303 – Performance of bio-based building materials and I'm slowly moving my research interests from wood to other bio-based materials in construction. Always thinking about the impact of the insect factor on the materials.

I've been a member of IRGWP since 1990 and my first official role was as WG leader. In recent years, I've been a member of the Communications Committee playing around with Facebook and LinkedIn pages and I was Section 1 - Biology vice-leader and leader from 2011 till last year in Chile where I was appointed to the Executive Council. All extra reasons to not miss a meeting. I don't have to worry about it this year because I'm organizing it!

Normally, I don't have a lot of free time but when I do, I confess, I love "to do nothing". Sit on the sofa and watch a nice movie on TV or walk my dog (Pipoca) on weekends is also really nice. Summer holidays for me means beach and beach means Monte Gordo in the Algarve. I need my 2 weeks in the sun to cope with the rest of the year.

I do have a few hobbies. I love collections. I collect coins, stamps, postcards and sugar packs. By "collecting" I mostly mean I have many boxes full of these things... I might need another life to organize them. Nevertheless, I've re-discovered in the last 2 years the pleasure of sending and receiving postcards. I found the "Postcrossing" site almost by chance and I'm totally addicted (<http://www.postcrossing.com/>).

And, I like football and rugby. I'm a Sporting Clube de Portugal supporter and because we don't win as much as we deserve I do suffer a lot!



So, I hope you now know a little bit more about me and also about my experience in IRGWP. It's an organization that I'm proud to belong and I'm really looking forward to receive all my IRG friends here in Lisbon next May.



Figure 7: Good friends make work a lot more interesting!