

Mr Joseph Hardwicke
Report on visit to Toronto June 2016

In all honesty, I had never heard of the Travelling Surgeons Society (TSS) prior to the day I saw the Price-Thomas Fellowship advertised in the Royal College of Surgeons newsletter that appeared in my inbox. It intrigued me, and after a quick Google, I decided to apply for the Fellowship. It was a chance to visit Toronto, to which I had never been before, and as well as gaining a privileged insight into a foreign healthcare system, there was the opportunity to travel with my wife, Rachael. Although both of a medical background, we had never before travelled together to a medical meeting or conference. As such, this report will be in two halves: a quick report of my experience as the Fellow, and the essential report from Rachael which we hope will encourage future applicants to travel with their partner.

The prospect of an overseas trip with people that I had never met was an unknown quantity. Professor Brian Ellis, TSS Honorary Secretary, was extraordinarily welcoming with his email communication, and the real hard work of organizing the trip had already been done. Our fellow Travellers were all leaders in their field and had held significant positions within their specialty. In essence, we all had common ground, and although from a mix of surgical specialties, I found the group easy to relate to and all were interested in my background, both professionally and socially. The excellent organization allowed me to visit many of the places that I may not have seen if visiting Toronto as a holiday-maker. The academic meetings were eye-opening, and the local host, Professor Jim Rutka could not have been more gracious. We had unprecedented access to the Canadian healthcare system, and saw local “trainee” presentations of International quality. We were wined and dined at the highest level (at the top of the CN Tower!), the guided tours were excellent, and the provision of free-time was perfect to allow myself and Rachael to enjoy a holiday. The separate partner’s programme allowed Rachael to see even more of Toronto and the surrounds, whilst I was “working” at the academic meetings. Here follows her report.....

“When Joe mentioned the trip, I jumped at the chance to have a holiday with minimal planning (apart from what clothes to pack) in a country we had never visited. I was quite nervous on arrival, not at all sure what to expect from the other partners,

but I was made to feel very welcome and I really enjoyed getting to know the other travellers. The day trips were excellently planned and our guide was very informative and helpful - a walking tour on the first day really set the scene for our stay. I thoroughly enjoyed the guided tours of the museums - I found myself fascinated by an eclectic assortment of pots, prayer beads, paintings and shoes! My favourite day was a whole group trip to the Niagara Falls followed by a wonderful vineyard lunch and a wander around the lovely Niagara-on-the-Lake. The meals we had as a group were excellent, enhanced by the good company in often breathtaking surroundings. Overall I would highly recommend a trip with the TSS to any would be traveller.”

Overall, I feel I can highly recommend the Price-Thomas Fellowship as an excellent opportunity to combine work and pleasure in the presence of like-minded individuals. This was the first time that I have gone on such a venture, and now I am sure will not be the last. The opportunity to take a partner was excellent and we would both suggest this as a vital part of the Fellowship to future applicants.

Joe and Rachael Hardwicke