

# Travelling Fellowship Report

I recently attended the 41st Mohs College annual meeting (Austin, Texas, U.S.A.) which was greatly facilitated by my receipt of the annual BSDS travelling fellowship. This is a four day conference held in late April/early May each year for the burgeoning American Mohs College membership. The conference venue changes each year and travel for European delegates can be a bit of an ordeal. However, next year will be New York (so only a short hop across the pond) and the following year (2011) will be Las Vegas (which should be of some compensation for any travel weariness!).

I travelled to Austin with my current Mohs surgery fellow colleague (and a good mate), James Shelley. We arrived in Austin late and had a day to see the sights before the conference began in earnest. Austin is the location of the University of Texas which has nearly fifty thousand students on its books! In spite of the muggy 90° F weather, we walked most of downtown Austin in the morning, taking in the Capitol on the way (“the largest in the country”, we were assured by proud Austinians). The afternoon was spent pedalling around Austin and its environs grace à la Lance Armstrong and two trusty “steeds” rented from his bike hire shop (although at a slightly more sedate pace!). The city itself was a good conference venue with a good variety of eateries and local hostelryes—something for all tastes!

The conference starts each morning at 0715hrs with the “breakfast sessions”. These are didactic lectures given by expert speakers on various subjects including regional reconstruction, melanoma update, cosmetic procedures and immunostaining to name but a few. These sessions tend to be very popular and need to be pre-booked. They are only open to ACMS members/trainees or to international Mohs fellows who are sponsored by an ACMS member (in our case, Dr James Langtry who also attended the meeting). The conference programme was very comprehensive and included interesting sessions such as the tumour board (interactive discussion of difficult cases between a panel of experts and audience), research abstract session, a clinical pearls abstract and movie session where various techniques were demonstrated. There was also a Mohs frozen tissue histopathology slide library and quality control examination which was then discussed on the last day. The two key guest speakers were Prof Shan Baker (“applying rhinoplasty principles to nasal reconstruction”) and Dr Clay Cockerell (“challenging cases from a Mohs unit in Dallas”) and these talks were well received.

After the conference, I visited Prof Tri Nguyen at MD Anderson in Houston, Texas (just a short trip down the road, i.e. a four hour drive!). I met Prof Nguyen at the 2008 annual Mohs college meeting in Vancouver. Prof Nguyen is one of the foremost Mohs surgeons in the U.S.A. and his lectures are always a tour de force of innovative reconstructive ideas. He very kindly put me up in his home in Houston and was an extremely generous and hospitable host. He had two colleagues at MD Anderson (Drs Migden and McFarlane) and all three were very helpful to me during my weeklong stay. It was very instructive to see the set-up of a leading American academic Mohs unit. I learnt a number of new techniques which I will try to incorporate into my practice in the UK. Certainly, having seen the set-up in America, it drives one on to emulate a similar infrastructure here in the UK. The visit to Prof Nguyen’s unit was the highlight of my visit and I look forward to maintaining contact with him both professionally and personally. I would strongly encourage current and future Mohs fellows in the UK to attend this annual conference and to try to foster links with a well-known Mohs unit in the U.S.A. Lastly, I would just like to say a big thanks again to the BSDS for enabling me to complete this trip through their BSDS travelling fellowship.

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