

2012 AAALAC International Technician Fellowship Award

This year I was privileged enough to receive this award from AAALAC International through a grant by Priority One Services, Inc. (POS) and in cooperation with the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science (AALAS), the Institute of Animal Technology (IAT), the Medical Research Council (MRC), and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

This has been an incredibly rewarding experience. I am extremely grateful for the tremendous support from my home institution, particularly from our Facility Director who initially thought that I was deserving of such an honor and submitted my nomination and from all the staff who not only covered during my absence but also wrote a lovely nomination letter for me.

On St. Patty's Day 2012 I arrived in London. I had all weekend to do some sightseeing and took full advantage. I visited many of the notable London sites including St Paul's Cathedral, the Tower of London, Buckingham Palace and Westminster Abbey. I also had a wonderful time walking through some of the various neighborhoods. It was a bit raining and cool on Saturday, exactly the weather that I was expecting. By Sunday the sun was out and the weather stayed warm and dry for the remainder of my visit, an unexpected bonus that is for sure!

The following days were a whirlwind of meeting new friends and seeing a variety of fascinating facilities with an assortment of different species. Everyone that I met was very warm and welcoming, making me feel right at home. There are not words to describe all the marvelous people that I met and how grateful I am to each for making my trip such a wonderful, once in a lifetime experience.

On Monday I visited the MRC National Institute for Medical Research at Mill Hill. It is situated in a lovely semirural area north of London with outstanding pastoral views from some of the lab windows. It was very interesting to get to see their facility and simply delightful to meet those that work there.

That evening I traveled by train to Grateley to meet my contact from the Centre for Macaques (CFM). We had an excellent discussion about animal behavior and many other things over a yummy Indian meal. The next morning we toured the vicinity, stopping at Stonehenge and a wonderful castle ruin at Old Sarum. The CFM maintains its goal to be the "centre of excellence in primate welfare and care" to the utmost level. The highlight of the day was getting up

close and personal with some of the residents of the CFM, something I will always remember.

Wednesday and Thursday were spent in Cambridge at the MRC Laboratory for Molecular Biology visiting various components of their exceptional program. I was also treated to a marvelous jaunt through the city of Cambridge, strolling through the streets, marveling at the architecture of the various Colleges, stopping for tea and scones at a charming little tea shop and visiting the Eagle pub, where in 1953 Francis Crick and James Watson first announced the discovery of how DNA carries genetic information. The evening ended with a lovely dinner visiting with new friends.

On Friday I went to Kings College in London for a delightful tour of that College's animal facility. This lab had a quite similar feel to my home institution. I adored the break room with a variety of animal pictures plastered all over the walls. After a quick ride on the "tube" to the Framer's Club, the afternoon was spent discussing nearly every topic known to mankind over a wonderful extended lunch with two delightful new friends.

The weekend was free time for more sightseeing. On the advice of my luncheon buddies from the day before, on Saturday I took the train to York for a marvelous excursion to that historic walled city. This was a great day as it included three of my all-time favorite things, a farmers market, a cemetery and a botanical garden. With that in mind on Sunday I visited Kew Gardens in London, even in March this botanical garden is outstanding.

Monday found me back in Cambridge touring the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute, a participant in some of the most important advances in genomic research. They have a truly remarkable facility with a wonderful staff.

On Tuesday I traveled to the IAT Congress with two of my new friends from LMB. Despite the fact that the American was navigating we arrived at the venue without a single detour and in very good time. Upon arrival we immediately got caught up in the spirit of the Congress. We made several great friends, including other Internationals from Wales and Scotland. We spent the next few days enjoying the variety of seminars, visiting, competing and just having a marvelously fun time. The IAT Congress, although considerably smaller than AALAS Nationals, more similar in size to a district meeting, was a superb experience. With less attendees, there is a more intimate friendly atmosphere. The seminars were top notch with a strong emphasis on animal welfare and the 3 R's. I thoroughly enjoyed the entire experience.

Overall, I came away with the reality that there are many similarities and very few differences between the animal research communities. It takes a special person to work in animal care research and an animal care person is an animal care person regardless of where you live.

I cannot express how appreciative I am to all, from both sides of the pond that made this trip possible. Thank you to Priority One Services, Inc., AALAS, the IAT, the MRC, and the NIH for funding such a splendid exchange. Thank you to my home institution for the nomination. A special thank you to all those who entertained me on my journey, your genuine warmth and friendliness made this a truly awesome experience. It has been an experience that I will always remember.

Thank you All!

Jean Kundert