

**Report of the 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the International Association of Forensic Sciences  
(IAFS 2005) 'Justice through Science'**

**Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre 21-26<sup>th</sup> August 2005**

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Being given the opportunity to travel to Hong Kong, was an amazing experience, in a truly fantastic setting. The conference was well attended, with over 1,500 delegates. The workshops were also successful; with interesting and informative speakers. I attended the Drug Profiling workshop, which allowed me to fully understand the significance of the area, the research currently underway and the international nature of drug trafficking which previously hampered the efforts of authorities. Currently many agencies are encouraging international co-operation in order to overcome the problem.

The theme for the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting was Justice through Science. A theme reiterated by many of the plenary speakers on the first day, including Professor J. Fraser, University of Strathclyde, who questioned how science contributed to justice, and how this can be developed and utilised further. Mr J. Comparin from the Drug Enforcement Administration, USA, presented an overview of the drug profiling work being carried out around the world, and the various projects which have linked drug profiling laboratories internationally. Professor H. Lee finished the day with a summary of lessons learnt from high profile cases, and reiterated the importance of international co-operation and the theme of the conference 'Justice through Science'.

The session titles were wide ranging, and as such I tried to attend as many sessions outside of my own interest area as possible. The sessions included: criminalistics, DNA profiling, drugs of abuse, toxicology, questioned documents, fingerprint detection and identification and also such areas as forensic odontology, pathology, nursing, and psychiatry, to name but a few.

Criminalistics was among the most interesting session as the presentations were truly wide ranging. One such session included stable isotope analysis of explosives, engineering analysis and fall mechanics, detection of capsaicins in clothing, and finally a memorable presentation entitled '500 days in the life of a forensic scientist'.

This presentation given on behalf of Mr. P. Lamb, by Mr. R. Palmer, detailed the work carried out by the Forensic Science Service, UK, upon the disappearance of two schoolgirls, from Soham on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2002. The presentation detailed the importance of fibre recovery and analysis to the case and the subsequent imprisonment of the suspect, Ian Huntley, 500 days later. A second criminalistics session included a keynote lecture from Mr. M. Gardiner, from Gardiner Associates, who detailed fire training and accreditation in the UK, which was followed by Miss R. Pepler from MScan, who spoke about the work she is involved in, including the profiling of petrol additives, by mass spectrometry, to determine the brand of petrol. This work has been used in court on numerous occasions and was extremely enlightening.

The drug profiling session was interesting also, as it included presenters from all over the world detailing new methods for drug profiling in their laboratories. The countries represented included, Germany, Serbia, Hong Kong, Switzerland, USA, France, New Zealand, Netherlands, and more. Each gave a slightly different view, but showed work was progressing in the same way internationally.

Included in the conference was a half-day excursion. I chose to tour Hong Kong Island, and so I was able to sample such delights as a small market at Stanley – to buy those gifts and mementoes for home and improve my haggling skills, but also to take in the view of the bay from Victoria Peak. The conference dinner was held in the Grand Hall, the location of the hand over of Hong Kong to China. This was a stunning location for the dinner, the festivities were well planned.

I was also given the opportunity to present my work at the first poster session. The conference gave me the opportunity to meet a large number of people from all over the world, and in a variety of areas of expertise. I was able to glean information from many people with respect to my work, and also obtained numerous offers of help for the future. It was definitely a fantastic opportunity, which gave me the ability to travel on a post-conference tour to Beijing to see the Great Wall, Tiananmen Square and many of the other important historical sights, in addition to sampling a traditional Emperor's banquet and authentic Peking duck. The post-conference tours were well attended by many delegates from the conference, which provided me the opportunity

to socialise with other Forensic Scientists and their partners outside the constraints of the conference.