



The Fox Scholarship

Rebecca Richardson

The Harold G Fox Scholarship programme has been running since 1985 following the wishes of the late Dr Harold G Fox QC, a former member of the Law Society, scholar, teacher, author, practitioner and Honorary Bencher of Middle Temple. Since then the partnership between Middle Temple and Osgoode Hall, Toronto, has gone from strength to strength. A succession of Fox Scholars have travelled between the UK and Canada, with the British spending either six or ten months placed in the litigation department of a large Toronto law firm and the Canadians undertaking 'pupillage' in London. This January I found myself becoming the latest in the line of English Fox Scholars to arrive in Toronto, fully unprepared for just how cold the Canadian winters can be...



Shortly before leaving England I found out that I had been placed at WeirFoulds LLP, a medium sized law firm based in downtown Toronto. Having been part of the Middle Temple amity visit to Toronto in April 2004 I had already had the opportunity to visit the firm and meet several of the lawyers. After being shown such a great display of hospitality and friendship I hoped I would be placed there. It was wonderful to know that I was going to such a prestigious firm - one which was friendly and welcoming too. I was the first Fox Scholar to work at WeirFoulds (it remains to be seen whether the experience of having me in the firm for six months leads to me being the LAST Fox Scholar to be placed there...!) so my arrival in January marked the beginning of many new experiences for both myself and the firm.

I was pleasantly surprised at how quick-

ly I came to feel at home in Toronto and at WeirFoulds. Toronto is a very easy city to live in - like a much more compact version of London, feeling very clean and open with its wide streets and pavements. Living within walking distance of so many diverse areas of the city (the scholarship fund owns two furnished harbour front apartments used by the visiting scholars) was also a great bonus. Half an hour's walk could take you to the entertainment district, the famous St Lawrence Market, the heart of downtown, the huge Eton Centre with its endless shops, any number of museums or galleries or even across to the Toronto islands. However, it did take true British grit to get used to the extreme Canadian weather. Despite hearing previous scholars' stories I could not believe how cold minus 30 degrees feels - and I was definitely not expecting summer temperatures reaching the low 40s with oppressive humidity.

Working at WeirFoulds was thoroughly enjoyable. The array of work was eye opening, ranging from multi-million dollar lawsuits to judicial reviews and even an attendance at the Ontario Pork Board Tribunal. Each and every case I worked on gave me a new insight into both the workings of a fused legal profession and life as a commercial 'firm' lawyer. The variety of work also kept my days interesting and instructive. I regularly found myself writing research papers on unexpected areas of the law and aspects of the Canadian - and occasionally English, American and even Caribbean - legal systems. I also had the opportunity to draft pleadings and correspondence, all of which was invaluable pre-pupillage experience. The work was often challenging, but never dull and invariably instructive.

In addition to the skills and insights I gained during my time at WeirFoulds I also picked up some handy non-legal training, as well as being able to explore many of Toronto's entertainment facilities in great company. Courtesy of the

annual skating party I'm proud to say that I can now do a passable lap around an ice rink unaided (just), although ski day showed that I clearly lack the physical coordination to even stand up on a snowboard without doing myself injury – I proved to be much more suited to après-ski! Rebecca Major, the other Fox Scholar, and I also managed to find time away from our respective law firms to do some pioneering in the name of Middle Temple together, visiting Montreal for the Canadian Grand Prix and making the unforgettable train journey across Canada from Toronto to Vancouver.

It is impossible to do justice to the rich and rewarding experience of life as a Fox Scholar in so few words – I could fill the Middle Templar and still have more to say. Spending an extended period of time working in a foreign jurisdiction with such experienced lawyers alone is a valuable professional experience. When

you add in the chance to live in such a culturally rich city and explore Canada it becomes clear that I have only just begun to describe why the Fox Scholarship is one of the jewels in the Middle Temple and Osgoode Hall crowns. My thanks go out to everyone in Toronto who made my experience so memorable and instructive and to Middle Temple and the trustees of the Canadian Fund for making the scholarships possible. Particular thanks go to Bryan Finlay, Frank Walwyn, John O'Sullivan, Chris Diana and the articling students at WeirFoulds for providing me with such good role models, interesting work and enjoyable lunches, dinners, and the occasional drink.

Rebecca Richardson is about to start pupillage at Bridewell Chambers