

# TIME CAPSULE

What would you tell future generations?

Document Lab Life in 2020

# HISTOLOGY PROFESSIONALS DAY ONE DECADE LATER

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## What were some of the big technology changes that had the biggest impact on your work?

The advancement of technology is a key thing for histology! The most influential of which has to be the automation of staining. This is not just within the field of routine H&E staining but also in its application to immunocytochemistry and in-situ hybridization techniques. It has made the increasing advancing loads that we all bear so much easier to manage. It has revolutionized how we work and pushed the boundaries of what we can achieve within the laboratory frameworks. I think it's a wonderful thing and I look excitedly at what else we will see for the remaining duration of my working career.

## Do you have a favorite story of something that happened in the histology lab?



Well I once rescued a kestrel from the window ledge outside the laboratory!.... Let me begin.... It was 5.30pm on a Friday afternoon and I had to take some stained immunostains over to the main histopathology department at St. Thomas' Hospital in London. I was preparing the slides when I saw a group of individuals gathering around the old sash windows in the main corridor outside the department. They were peering at a bird trapped in some netting. The netting is there to stop the pigeons from getting into the building. I might add pigeons are the main food source for raptors in London and I knew that we had resident nesting kestrels in the old parts of the St. Thomas's building usually nesting in the towers, as I see them sometimes flying between the building blocks in the south wing of St. Thomas'. I walked to the crowd and asked what was going on. They replied, "We think the bird caught is a kestrel", which confirmed my fears. The bird had been flapping in the nets for quite some time. Nobody was doing anything. I made a decision. I asked someone to call the emergency animal rescue line. I opened the window and walked along a flat roof towards the

netting. The netting was on another section of the roof above me. I needed someone to give me a bunk up. I asked a person watching if they would help. He agreed. He gave me a hand lift so I could climb onto the section where the bird was and I hauled him up after me. The bird was tiring and flapping. I still had my lab coat on with all the usual top pocket equipment, including scissors. I asked the chap with me to pin the bird down while I cut it loose. This we did, and carefully removed the bird from the netting. I checked it over...it looked fine, but it was quite cross and indignant at this point! We clambered down the roof passing the bird carefully between us. In the end the bird had a damaged wing. It couldn't fly. I had to catch it as I couldn't leave it there and then I arranged to take it home where the emergency animal rescue services retrieved it from me. They later confirmed it was a young fledging male about 2 years old. I asked them to let me know what happened to the bird (the picture is me holding it just before the emergency services came to collect it from my house. They called me back two days later to confirm the bird had sprained its wing and that they would rest it, feed it up and return it to St. Thomas' Hospital. They are quite territorial birds and stay in the local area where they were born. So, it was a happy ending after all. I sometimes wonder when I look up at the skies within the hospital grounds if I will spot the kestrel we cut out of the nets again. He'd probably drop me a message I suspect!

**Is there anything in your career that stayed the same for you throughout the years?**

I have worked nearly my entire working career within the same laboratory. I came in as a junior biomedical scientist 35 years ago to St. Jos Hospital for Diseases of The Skin and I am now the Consultant Grade Biomedical Scientist and laboratory lead.

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