

# Re:Mark's

The Supporter Newsletter of St Mark's Hospital Foundation | 2022



Frontiers  
in Intestinal and Col

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# Welcome and thank you, from Foundation Chief Executive Jason Bacon

The past year has presented unique challenges to the charity and hospital. To ensure continuity of care for patients, St Mark's Hospital and most of its clinical services have relocated to the same site as Central Middlesex Hospital. We are now settled in our new home in Acton and if you are attending an appointment, be sure to swing by and say hello!

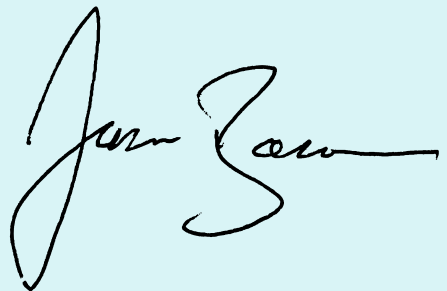
In terms of Research and Education, the Foundation continues to support a range of projects across Bowel Cancer, IBD and other complex bowel diseases, and I am delighted to share with you some research updates in this edition.

Sadly, Foundation Trustee Paul Bouscarle passed away in the autumn of 2021, and we are privileged to share his story in honour of his immeasurable

contributions to our hospital and charity in this edition. We also bid farewell to long-serving Trustee Catharine Boardman, and thank her for her years of dedicated service to our charity, while welcoming our latest Trustee Professor Sue Clark.

I again want to communicate my heartfelt thanks to you, our supporters. Your continued support of our charity and specialist hospital, particularly during these difficult times is appreciated now, more than ever.

Thank you,



# Community Champions



**01** Steve celebrated being 3 years cancer free by walking 10k steps every day in March raising £375. “I thought that with my cancer diagnosis, I wouldn’t have got to meet my granddaughter. Thanks to St Mark’s, 3 years on, Lucie is a big part of my life and, I have a grandson on the way.”

**02** Jane has been under the care of St Mark’s for 10 years and, along with her friend Rachel, whom

she met on the Frederick Salmon Ward, is taking part in the London Bridges Walk. “This specialist hospital has helped me through the hardest of hard times, and continues to help me and others like me.” Jane has raised a fantastic £1,775.

**03** Jo completed the legendary Marathon des Sables raising a fantastic £2,770. Over 6 days she covered 156 miles over dunes, rocky hills and hot salt plains in Morocco.

Jo dedicated her ultra-marathon to St Mark’s as her sister Lynn is under the care of the hospital for Crohn’s disease.

**04** Mark completed the epic challenge of climbing Ben Nevis. Mark took on this mammoth mountain climb to show that, despite the health related obstacles he has faced, he has been able to lead a normal life thanks to St Mark’s.





05 | Ria



06 | Natalie



07 | 40tude



08 | Vernon Drive

**05** Ria took to social media to live-stream the courageous act of shaving off her hair as a way to thank the Intestinal Rehabilitation Unit who have cared for her, raising over £1,145. “If it wasn’t for their fast action, I’d never have seen Christmas 2019, let alone be here to shave my hair off!”

**06** After being diagnosed with advanced and inoperable cancer at the age of 36, Natalie is celebrating her big 4-0 by swimming 40 miles for St Mark’s. “I would not be here

without the Complex Cancer Clinic at St Mark’s, who took on my complicated cancer and gave me the chance of more life.” Natalie has smashed her £7k fundraising target!

**07** Congratulations to everyone who completed 40tude’s Telemark challenge, retracing the route of a WWII sabotage operation in Norway. If you would be interested in joining one of 40tude’s upcoming events visit [www.40tude.org.uk](http://www.40tude.org.uk) or email [kate@40tude.org.uk](mailto:kate@40tude.org.uk)

**08** The Vernon Drive Safe Neighbourhood street party was held over the jubilee weekend, raising £1,710 which will be used to help purchase a Fibroscan® device. Thank you Robin, Komal and everyone for their support!

**09** Ben ran the London Landmarks Half Marathon raising £625. Ben dedicated the half marathon to his wife Elspeth, who is under the care of St Mark’s for ulcerative colitis. “Thanks to the expertise of St Mark’s, her





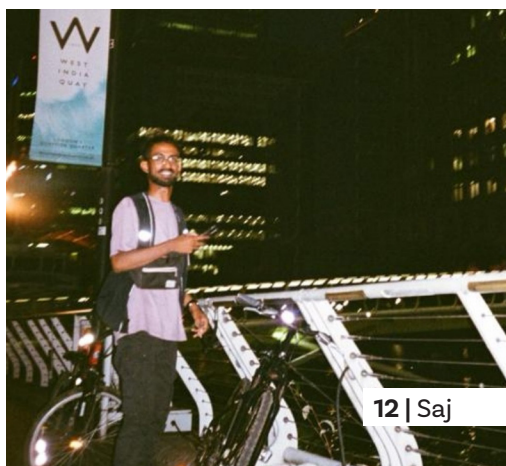
09 | Ben



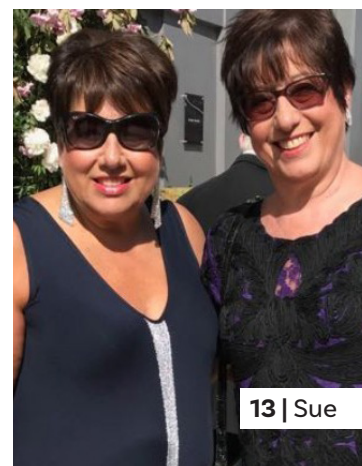
10 | Aaron



11 | Siwan



12 | Saj



13 | Sue

transformation is life changing.”  
Shout out to Winnie and Sulak who also ran the LLHM!

**10** Aaron took part in the London Marathon 2021 raising an incredible £1.4k for our charity; “St Marks is a cause very close to home, providing life-saving treatment for a family member almost ten years ago to the day of the marathon.”

## Upcoming events

**The Big Half, Royal Parks Half Marathon, London Landmarks Half Marathon**

To get involved, email [info@stmarkshospitalfoundation.org.uk](mailto:info@stmarkshospitalfoundation.org.uk)

**11** While on sabbatical, St Mark’s Professor Siwan Thomas-Gibson is walking the Camino de Santiago, an ancient pilgrim route covering a vast stretch of Europe, raising funds for, and awareness of, St Mark’s Hospital. To date, Siwan has raised over £5k.

**12** IBD patient Saj completed the nightrider cycling challenge,

covering a distance of 100k while taking in some of London’s iconic landmarks under the night sky, raising over £600.

**13** Sue celebrated her 70th birthday in style by fundraising for St Mark’s. In lieu of receiving gifts, Sue asked her family and friends to make a donation to our charity. Both Sue and her sister Ruth have Crohn’s disease and the funds will be used to support Professor Ailsa Hart’s IBD research.









# Remembering Paul Bouscarle:

## Trustee and founder of the Colon Challenge

Sadly, in September 2021, Foundation Trustee Paul Bouscarle passed away. Paul was a truly remarkable man who made immense contributions over the years as a Trustee, mentor, advisor, and fundraiser.

The Colon Challenge was the brainchild of Paul, and it was an idea that came to him while recuperating in the Frederick Salmon ward after receiving treatment for bowel cancer. His chance observation of a poster of a colon became the inspiration for the cycling route that would make the Colon Challenge truly unique, with participants cycling in the shape of a colon around central England. To date, the Colon Challenge has raised over £250,000.

We are forever grateful to Paul, his wife Gill and Paul's daughters Natalie, Jessica and Susen for their long-standing support.

If you have been inspired by Paul's story, why not consider cycling, walking, or running for our charity to honour your St Mark's story and continue Paul's legacy.





# Patients to practitioners

**Anne-Marie Benson and Dr Stephanie Chin share their inspirational stories of how, despite health related adversity, they have been able to pursue a career in nursing and medicine respectively.**

## Anne- Marie Benson

I was referred to St Mark's when my cancer returned, and met Mr Anthony Antoniou, Dr Claire Taylor and team. I had six further rounds of chemo, five weeks of radio/chemo and radical abdominal surgery which Mr Antonio said was the best course of action. Amazingly, I recovered, and as time ticked by, each scan came back clear; I decided I would allow myself to think about the future. My body is different now; I'm in full menopause, incontinent, and have an ileostomy, but I am very much alive!

The inspiration to go back to college and study nursing arose from my daughter, Daisy and the excellent care given to me by Claire. After everything, I couldn't think of a more rewarding career than working with cancer patients and their families. Daisy and I have started our exams; hopefully, I'll be wearing my student nurse uniform next time you see me!

## Dr Stephanie Chin

One year after my first admission to St Mark's, I took part in the Foundation's 2014 'What is hope?' video, saying that my ambitions were unchanged despite long-term illness. That dream, to be a doctor, had grown up with me. At times it felt impossible, particularly when I developed renal failure and started haemodialysis. St Mark's guided my family through the challenges and helped me see beyond bowel disease. One particular pillar of reassurance has been the encouragement to be actively involved in my care: asking questions and making the best decisions for me.



**Anne-Marie with daughter Daisy**



**Dr Stephanie Chin and St Mark's surgeon Mr Ian Jenkins**

This privilege of Dr Stephanie is one that we have collectively invested so much into. The first few weeks of 'official doctorhood' have already brought me so much joy. My own experiences have undoubtedly shaped my approach to patient care, providing insight into the emotions of my patients. I hope to be able to work with the same kindness and respect that I am so gratefully treated with at St Mark's.



# Research And Education

## Welcome from Professor Ailsa Hart, Dean of the St Mark's Academic Institute

I am delighted and honoured to be the Dean of St Mark's Academic Institute. I first joined St Mark's Hospital over 25 years ago as a junior doctor and am incredibly proud to be a part of this historic and internationally renowned "National Bowel Hospital". We pride ourselves in delivering clinical excellence, coupled with research and educational excellence. Throughout its nearly 200-year history, the hospital has offered an outstanding service to patients with complex gastrointestinal issues by virtue of its collective specialist expertise. From this multi-disciplinary expertise flows the ability to conduct world-class research and education in these specialist areas. St Mark's has always been at the forefront of research in these specialist areas and maintains its global reputation through the dedication and collaboration between its clinicians.

This year we are celebrating 20 years of our annual international congress 'Frontiers in Colorectal and Intestinal Disease', with a spotlight on the management of inflammatory bowel disease, which has always formed a major part of the hospital's expertise. We are fortunate to have Amy Lightner as our Sir Alan Parks Visiting Professor and Iris Dotan as our Sir Francis Avery Jones Visiting Professor, in addition to an esteemed external as well



as internal faculty. In addition, educational courses continue during the year in which visiting clinicians can spend time within the hospital to gain an insight into the multidisciplinary working of the teams.

Our research fellows form the heart of the academic institute and their works covers an incredible breadth of complex gastrointestinal and colorectal diseases, such as intestinal failure, complex colorectal cancer, polyposis, hereditary cancer syndromes and inflammatory bowel disease. Their work in conjunction with an active clinical trial programme enriches the academic profile of St Mark's.



# Celebrating 20 Years Of Frontiers

For the past two decades, St Mark's Academic Institute's flagship event, 'Frontiers in Colorectal and Intestinal Disease' has showcased the incredible talent and expertise that St Mark's has to offer to the international medical community. In addition to our own expert clinicians presenting at the congress, Frontiers attracts exclusive guest speakers from around the globe, who have delivered fascinating talks and insights from across the spectrum of gastrointestinal disease.







# A Selection Of Research Projects At St Mark's

The projects we support aim to drive clinical improvements for patients living with complex bowel diseases and, ultimately, enhance disease understanding.

## Tissue Engineering

For more than a decade, scientists and clinicians at St Mark's and The Griffin Institute have researched how to grow bowel from a patient's own cells which has the potential to offer hope of an alternative to parenteral nutrition for patients that have lost large amounts of bowel due to disease or trauma. The latest stage of the project, which now includes researchers at Imperial College, is focused on the development of a bioreactor, which is a specialist piece of equipment that is designed to grow small bowel. Time has also been spent extracting organoid units, which are small clusters of key cells that have the potential to grow into all the components of the intestine, from existing bowel.

**This project has attracted funding from trusts, foundations and long-term individual supporters Chris Foley and Brunel Eiliazadeh. Most recently, we have received a significant bequest specifically for this work. We thank all contributors, whose support has been critical to the progress of this important research.**







*Professor Trevor Graham, Director of the Centre for Evolution and Cancer at the ICR*



*Mr Kane Smith, PhD student at the ICR in Trevor Graham's laboratory*

## Research collaborations

St Mark's collaborates with a number of other centres of excellence including The Royal Marsden, Imperial College, The Barts Cancer Institute, Kings College London and the Institute of Cancer Research (ICR). An example of these collaborations is with Professor Trevor Graham who is the ICR's Director of Evolution and Cancer. Trevor's understanding of the evolutionary dynamics of cancer development and translating this knowledge to improve clinical management of disease is a vital part of a number of projects at St Mark's. These include:

### **Early diagnosis of dysplasia/cancer in IBD patients using a novel non-invasive test**

This research aims to develop a blood test to spot early signs of cancer in IBD patients. Using the test could help target endoscopy to only those who need it most. There have already been important findings and the team has seen a signature in the blood that, to a

large extent, mirrors what is seen in endoscopic tissue samples. The ultimate goal is the development of a non-invasive test for early cancer detection that will benefit people with IBD.

### **Predicting cancer risk in inflammatory bowel disease: The ICAN (Inflammatory CANcer) studies**

As people with IBD are at an increased risk of bowel cancer, they are offered regular colonoscopies to look for early signs of cancer. However, this surveillance could be improved if there was a more sensitive way to predict those who are at highest risk. Hence, the central goal of the ICAN research is to develop effective tests for bowel cancer risk. As part of the '40tude fellowships', long-term supporter 40tude, are funding a clinical research fellow who will be focused on driving the research whilst working with Trevor and his team to produce a biomarker for IBD cancer risk.



## Fibroscan®

Fibroscan® is a specialised, non-invasive medical device which uses ultrasound to assess liver stiffness as an alternative to the traditional investigations of liver tests and liver biopsies. FibroScan® also has application in patients with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. The Foundation is helping to fund the purchase of a Fibroscan® device and, has already attracted support from donors, including the Vernon Drive Safe Neighbourhood Team. If you are interested in learning more and supporting the purchase of this device, email

[info@stmarkshospitalfoundation.org.uk](mailto:info@stmarkshospitalfoundation.org.uk)



*Dr Laith Al-Rubaiy appeared on Channel 4's '21 day body turnaround' with Michael Mosley, demonstrating the benefits of Fibroscan®*

## FIT for Lynch Study – New diagnostic techniques for bowel cancer detection and prevention

St Mark's Lynch Syndrome Clinic is undertaking a range of projects including the development of tests which facilitate the prevention and early diagnosis of cancer in people with Lynch Syndrome (LS). Project lead and Consultant Gastroenterologist Dr Kevin Monahan says, "we're working closely with people with LS to design national health services. The FIT for Lynch Study is the first longitudinal study of its kind which will assess the potential role of faecal immunochemical testing (FIT) as a means of bowel cancer surveillance in people with LS. Studies such as this one are incredibly important in providing insights which have the potential to shape and improve clinical guidelines."

The team are continuing to recruit eligible individuals with LS and, should this study be of interest, please reach out to the team at [fitforlynchstudy@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:fitforlynchstudy@kcl.ac.uk)

## Vaginal Anal Fistula Quality of Life Study

Research Fellow Charlene Sackitey is in the final phase of the Vaginal Anal Fistula quality of life study and is actively recruiting for participants to test the questionnaire. If you have a rectovaginal fistula and are aged 18+, email [lnwh-tr@vafqol@nhs.net](mailto:lnwh-tr@vafqol@nhs.net) for more information.



# Rising Research Star:

## Spotlight On Research Fellow Rachel Baldwin

I'm Rachel, one of the current Research Fellows at St Mark's and, the first radiographer in the Trust to gain a Clinical Research Fellow post! I have worked at St Marks since 2009 as a senior diagnostic radiographer. I wanted to work at St Mark's as they promote exploration of clinical excellence and, encourage multi-disciplinary interaction and training. Radiology's strong links with other St Mark's departments is invaluable in gaining experience working with leaders in the colorectal cancer diagnosis field.

Currently, I am undertaking research in the training, education and sustainability of CT Colonography, which is a colorectal bowel cancer diagnostic test. I am hoping to add to recent findings by my colleague Dr Anu Obaro, and further explore the impact of training on radiographers to help bridge the gaps in available service provision. I am also looking at the impact of ionising radiation used in diagnostic tests on cells, specifically ones found in Lynch syndrome patients. Although in the early stages, my research aims to establish current practices undertaken by Radiographers interpreting CTC's, to look at the impact of new educational training programmes, and see whether radiographers are equal to radiologist in the interpretation of



pathology on CTC images, and therefore, offer a resource to help speed up colorectal cancer diagnosis for patients.

Outside of work, I am a busy mum, wife, daughter, sister and friend! I love to visit art galleries and spend time with our 2 elderly, and very naughty, miniature Dachshunds; Ernie and Walter.



**Congratulations to Endoscopy Research Fellow Dr Ahmir Ahmad, winner of the John Nicholls Prize 2021. Dr Ahmir says, "It's a huge honour to receive the John Nicholls Prize in recognition of our research projects that will help improve performance of colonoscopy and enhance patient care."**



## Work for Good

Work for Good (WFG) is an online platform which has simplified the process for small businesses to donate to charities. If you are a small business owner who has been thinking about how to support the Foundation, head over to WFG and search for 'St Mark's Hospital Foundation'. We hope you will sign up today and use your company as a force for social good by donating to St Mark's.



## Polar Moon

We are excited to announce our latest WFG partnership with Polar Moon, an online store offering ostomates unique and fun stoma bag covers.

Founder Kim believes that every stoma bag should be as fun and unique as the wearer and offers a range of fantastic designs and products which can be tailored to you. So, whether you have had a urostomy, ileostomy or colostomy, Polar Moon has a cover for you!

With 10% of sales being donated to support St Mark's Hospital, shop today and help raise vital funds for our charity via [www.polarmoon.co.uk](http://www.polarmoon.co.uk)





# Additional ways you can support St Mark's



Make a  
**donation**



Set up a **direct  
debit or standing  
order**



Participate in a  
**challenge event**



**Employer support**  
via Payroll Giving or  
Matched Giving Scheme

## easyfundraising

Summer is here! Whether you are looking to upgrade your garden furniture or treat yourself to a new summer wardrobe, remember to shop via easyfundraising and raise donations for St Mark's.

## Amazon Smile

Select 'St Mark's Hospital Foundation' as your Amazon Smile charity and a percentage of the purchase will be donated to us at no extra cost!

### Contact the team

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Whichever way you choose to donate,  
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**a future free from  
the fear of bowel  
disease**



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