



Alumni profiles



Name: Paul Brennan

Leaving year: 1997

Education/Training after St Mary's:

Medicine at Edinburgh and Cambridge

Current role: Neurosurgeon/ neuroscientist

Current city:

What have you done since leaving St Mary's?

I decided to study medicine whilst in the sixth form at St Mary's and went on to read medicine in Edinburgh and Cambridge. Early on at medical school I knew I wanted to be a neurosurgeon. I intercalated a science degree whilst at medical school so that I could combine research with clinical neurosurgery, and over the next almost 20 years I trained as a neurosurgeon and scientist.

Tell us more about your current job & role

I became a Consultant in 2016. A long haul, but I'm glad I did it. As a so-called junior doctor, whilst you are said to be in 'training' all the time you're actually operating and doing the job, so it's never dull. Once you're a Consultant you then take on different additional roles and responsibilities, as well as more independence. I work in the neurosurgery department in Edinburgh, combining my clinical work treating patients along with academic work. I specialise in brain tumours, but treat all sorts of conditions affecting the brain and spinal cord. There is a lack of knowledge about how to best treat many of the conditions neurosurgeons deal with, especially brain tumours, so I am fortunate to also work for the University of Edinburgh as a senior researcher. I lead clinical and laboratory research, mainly on finding a cure for brain tumours, but I also collaborate with lots of other researchers where my experience as a surgeon and a scientist can be valuable. The research and clinical work has taken me all over the world to meet collaborators and present my research findings.

My clinical work is very varied. It can be busy, responding to emergencies in the middle of the night, but as a Consultant there is also much more planned operating and clinics, so I have a good work/life balance.

Best advice for current pupils at St Mary's

Have confidence in yourself and believe you can do well! Just go for it!