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A Lab Less Ordinary

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Brian Moore's publication rate and research impact are the envy of many in the hearing research community. He was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society in 2002 in acknowledgement of his contributions and achievements. He has also received awards and medals from various academic and clinical institutions and holds an Honorary Doctorate at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan. However, how many people know about the secrets of life in Brian's Lab (The Lab) where the research took place?

Upon arrival in The Lab, visitors may not have been struck or impressed by its appearance. Often the furniture had been salvaged from disposal containers (skips), the cups and mugs were not obsessively washed and a plastic garden gnome was always on display somewhere. However, if a visitor stayed a bit longer, they would see beyond the façade and understand what a special place it really was, appreciating that the charm was the people in the Lab and how they worked and socialized together.

Olek Sek, was a regular and a very popular visitor. Famous for his Polish parties (bottle of vodka and a packet of crisps), I will always remember the pancake party where his special Polish pancake nearly set my apartment on fire. We also had interns from Birger Kollmeier's Lab (e.g., Stefan Launer and Torsten Dau) and many other collaborators from around the world. Brian is understandably keen that all research should be published and the majority of these visitors and collaborators were fruitful in that way. Being ruthlessly efficient as well, Brian is always the first person to submit abstracts, prepare talks, and finish papers. Always, a few of the Lab members were not quite as efficient as Brian and could be found in the Lab late into the night on the run-up to a conference. Tom Baer and I would often keep each other company preparing posters on the evening before the BSA (British Society of Audiology) Short Papers

(now Basic Auditory Science) meeting, and we were not alone.

Brian understands the importance of the members of his Lab, and of course, no mention of Brian's Lab can go without acknowledgement of BG (Brian Glasberg), who was statistician, programmer, counsellor, an expert in the history of classic rock and roll, and friend for all the people in the lab, he looked out for everyone. This in turn became the underlying value of the Lab. Lunch outings (at the Grad Pad) were open to everyone and it was a great opportunity to catch up and chat, although I sometimes chatted too much delaying everyone's coffee. We always celebrated Birthdays. The birthday boy/girl had to buy cakes for everyone, in particular, the famous sticky Fitzbillies' Chelsea buns (see Figure 1) which were a real treat but everyone needed a lie down after eating one, not to mention a wash. We all sang Happy Birthday with some beautiful and some less beautiful harmonies, but it happened whether it was enjoyed or not.

Figure 1. Fitzbillies Chelsea Bun.

Brian is a keen musician. He built his own first guitar and taught himself how to play, and if you are lucky, he will sing you a Tom Lehrer song. He collects musical instruments from around the world and can play most of them. In The Lab, many people were involved in musical activities. Many people have sung in the Wolfson College Choir conducted by Lynnette Alcantara. We would have musical evenings

where different Lab members would give musical performances. Andy Oxenham, Shigeto Furakawa, Mike Stone, Thomas Stainsby were all pianists, Brian and Steve Borrill played the guitar, Marina Salorio-Corbetto, Josephine Marriage, Simon Goldman and Martina Huss were singers; BG, Tom Baer, Christian Füllgrabe, Karolina Kluk and I were the audience. What we lacked in musical ability we made up for in enthusiasm … and in our dancing.

When I started in The Lab, the members were BG, Tom Baer, Mike Stone, Andy Oxenham, and Shigeto Furukawa. I was the only woman but I never felt excluded or treated differently. I was, however quite grateful when other women visited (e.g., Magdalena Wojtczak and Inga Holube), partly because it often meant that the cups were washed. New female students arrived while I was there (Marina Rose and Martina Huss), and since then many women's careers have started or been developed in or in collaboration with Brian's Lab (e.g., Josephine Marriage, Joanna Robinson, Karolina Kluk, Kathryn Hopkins, Sheila Flanaghan, Marina Salorio-Corbetto, Sara Madsen, Alicja Malicka, Helen Waller and Anahita Mehta).

One of the most striking things about The Lab was the importance placed on the participants. They were treated as a member of the team. We knew all the participants, regardless of whose experiments they were taking in part in, and people would take time to chat with them, make them tea and make them feel welcome. Tom Baer and BG were particularly good at this. Martina Huss and I would never have been able to conduct the validation of the TEN test to diagnose the presence of dead regions if participants had not been willing to come in for hours of testing. I ran the PTC (Psychophysical tuning curve) measurements and Martina the TEN tests.[1] The same people then took part in filtered speech experiments.[2] It was a lot to ask of anyone, but somehow they kept coming back. We also had a very patient group of people with unilateral hearing losses. We were simulating their hearing impairment in their normal hearing ear so we had to make many measurements to understand their hearing function.[3] The same individuals took part in loudness balancing and modulation depth matching across ear experiments, which were not necessarily the easiest tasks to do.[4]

Brian Moore's Auditory Perception Lab was an invigorating environment to work in during my early research career. Brian was then (and still is) an inspiration, balancing

exquisitely designed psychophysical experiments with the development of meaningful diagnostic hearing tests and interventions for real-world applications. As the Research Associate in The Lab, I worked hard collecting and analyzing data to fuel the paper writing machinery. When the supply of data ran out Brian would silently emerge from his office, would suddenly appear looking over my shoulder, and asked in a disembodied voice 'have you got any data for me'? It was an enjoyable, exciting, and rewarding lab to work in because Brian saw the value in supporting individuals, collaboration, and sharing ideas. Brian is a great mentor and has also supported me on many occasions since I left The Lab. There is also a great research network of graduates from Brian's Lab who can usually be spotted by the copy of *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*[5] on their bookshelf.

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