



A day in the life of an intern

by David Huels

It's a typical Friday in Glasgow - although it's mid-August, it's raining and the city looks grey. I'm on my way to the Beatson Institute where I'm doing an internship.

My name is David Huels and I study Molecular Medicine in Freiburg, Germany. This was always my first sentence in the many letters I sent to institutes and labs while looking for an internship. I concentrated my search in the UK with a focus on cancer research and via the Cancer Research UK website found the Beatson Institute, one of the major cancer research institutes in UK. Coincidentally, I also knew a friend who studied in Glasgow and even he, as an History student, had heard of the Institute.

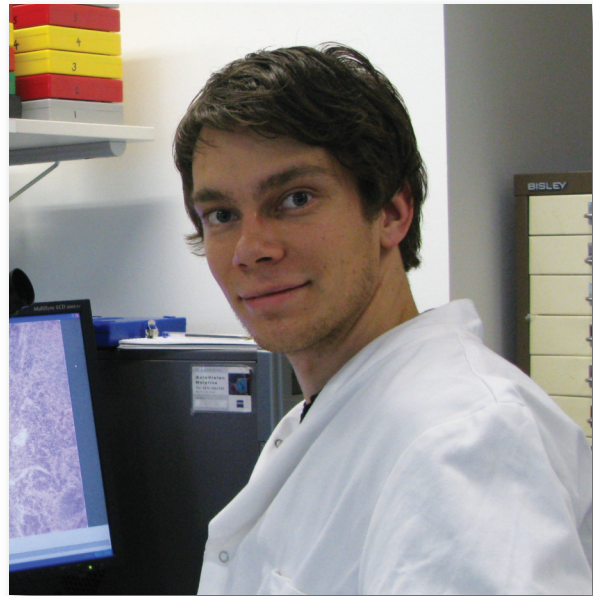
I am leaving the West End where I fortunately found a flat on gumtree.co.uk for my stay here in Glasgow. It is a good area to live and close to the Great Western Road from where the 118 bus takes you to the Beatson. The bus drivers here in Glasgow drive like crazy and in my experience you shouldn't try to drink a coffee on the bus.

At 9 o'clock I pass through the gate into the Beatson campus and there it is - a square-ish glass building which is not much more than a year old and which would be illuminated in the sunlight, if there were any today.

I am working in Owen Sansom's group – Colorectal Cancer and Wnt Signalling - mainly doing Immunohistochemistry. This morning, Rachel my co-supervisor and I are going to prepare some tissue - small intestine and liver - to take to the Histology lab. Here, the tissue is embedded by Colin, a real Scot and Glasgow Rangers fan, who is always very friendly if I need help with my samples, or if I forget which processing form to fill out. Once, the fixed tissue has been processed in the Histology unit I can collect the slides a few days later.

At around 12 o'clock it's time for lunch. Twice a week, there is a talk during lunchtime where someone from the Institute or a guest gives a talk on a specific topic. It is quite interesting to hear what the other groups are doing, but to be honest sometimes it's hard to remember all the abbreviations they use. The screens in the cafeteria also tell you when someone in the Institute has published in Nature, Cell, etc. I have the impression that this is the case nearly every week.

After lunch, I go back to my slides. Yesterday, I got back some that I now have to stain with Ki-67, a proliferation marker, which was incidentally invented in Germany (the name Ki stands for Kiel, a city in the north of country).



This afternoon, Rachel and I are also going to have a look at some other slides that I stained last week for tubulin. For this, we go down to the basement where the confocal microscopes are situated. In comparison with my other internships, I have to say that the Institute has facilities that are not only state-of-the-art but are also easy to access. Another advantage is that they are run by a number of specialists, so there is always someone around who knows exactly how to use the microscopes, and can help if something isn't working.

We take a few nice pictures of mitotic figures that I can use for my final lab report. As well as the report, I am going to give a talk at Owen's lab meeting, where I will present my results. Hopefully I will have some to talk about.

At the end of the day, around 6 o'clock, we leave the lab. A few of us are going into town for some pints. Glasgow is a great city for going out. There are so many pubs and bars, especially in the West End, which are always crowded. For me, it was a little bit weird to go to a pub that was once a church or a primary school but it seems to

be a British thing. Anyway, Glasgow has more than just pubs to offer - you can spend so much time discovering the city, the parks and the museums (which are mainly free to enter). From time to time, I have also been to the Glasgow University gym, which is really cheap for students. Tonight, I won't stay out long because I am going to the Highlands tomorrow. Glasgow lies directly at the bottom of the Highlands and if you stay in Glasgow you should definitely try to take a trip to Loch Lomond, Fort William or even further north.

To summarise, I can highly recommend doing an internship at the Beatson Institute in Glasgow. The research is very high level and you can learn a lot. You even get used to the Scottish way of speaking and Glasgow is a lively city. But the weather could be drier!