



*“Anyone considering returning to practice should definitely give it a go. It is never too late to get back into the workplace, I am proof of that!”*

**Mark Waddell** qualified as a **Diagnostic Radiographer** at the Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital in 1984 and then worked at Cambridge Military Hospital, Aldershot.

“After completing my 6-year Army contract in 1987, I decided it was the right time for me to leave. It was not an easy decision; I enjoyed Army life, but my role involved many postings and with my wife and young family I felt it was time to leave.

However, I was surprised at how hard it was to get a job as a Radiographer in ‘Civvy Street’. I started to look for alternative careers which would use my knowledge of film and processing and landed the job of trainee negative cutter with Technicolor Film Laboratories. I enjoyed the work and the increased income it provided for my family and stayed in that industry for 27 years, working as a colour timer with great directors like Ridley Scott and Kenneth Branagh.

Once my children were grown, I left the film industry, wanting to get back to something more meaningful. I was caring for my elderly in-laws and parents and was reminded what it is like to make a difference to people. As a Radiographer you come into contact with people and their problems every day, they are all equal and they need your help, reassurance and expertise.

It took me a little while to come to this realisation though, my wife noticed a distinct change in my outlook after I retired from the film industry, I risked just sitting around the house getting old! She suggested a return to Radiography and we found that Kettering General Hospital was having a recruitment open day. It was interesting, but they didn’t have an opening for a Return to Practice (RtP) applicant at that time.

But, not long after I saw that University of Derby were looking for RtP applicants and I jumped at the opportunity. Following an interview, I was accepted on the course. You can imagine what it was like being a student again at 55, but luckily there were other mature students too.

Everybody I encountered was friendly and helpful. My fellow returnees all had very different reasons for leaving and returning to Radiography and were the best group I could have hoped for. We attended study days at University to update our skills and a clinical placement to test those skills in practice. Arranging the placement was the most challenging time for me; there were delays in getting my Disclosure and Barring Service check and I lost my first placement opportunity. I was determined to complete the process though, and contacted the team leader at Kettering General Hospital about doing my clinical placement there. I started my 4-month placement in September 2016 and was delighted to complete all the necessary examinations and procedures needed to meet the RtP requirement.

My main worry was the new technology and especially the computers and systems - I didn’t have any worries about my technique, that had been drummed into me as a student!

When returning to Radiography after an absence of a few years (or in my case 29 years!) you need support from your new colleagues; I was very lucky and the staff are a great team who truly do care for patients and each other.

I take great pride in being able to wear the uniform of a qualified Radiographer, it represents years of study and practical knowledge.

Are you  
ready to  
return?