

The Thomas Reid Circular

SUMMER 2023

Dear Friends and Alumni,

We have recently seen the class of 2023 graduate from our wonderful University – what a week of celebrations and joy for our students. There are so many stories to tell about this cohort of students, not least that part of their studies was undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic. They have come a long way and achieved so much despite that and there are many students amongst them that would not have been able to access higher education without the support from many of our donors.

Supporting students with a gift in your will is life-changing for our students, taking away the financial worry so that they can concentrate on their studies and achieve a university degree. They can go on to flourish in their careers without the burden of large student loans, and they can make a difference in this world. Having been around for over 500 years, the University has many alumni who have made an impact and with your continued support, we can help many more students achieve their full potential and do the same in the future.

The University continues to make a real difference in the world of research – the discovery of a breast cancer gene traced back to Westray in the Orkney Islands is one recent breakthrough that will produce huge benefits both locally and much more widely. A gift in your will really makes a difference to our research teams throughout the University, making both a local and global impact.

As an ancient university we are lucky to have amassed incredible special collections which are housed in the Sir Duncan Rice Library. Our collections need to be preserved, shared and, in some cases, restored, and we are very lucky to have received gifts that have allowed us to do just that.

A gift in your will helps with all of these areas and more, and I would like to thank you for letting me know about such a gift. Having this information allows us to ensure that your support is directed as you wish and, through your membership of the Thomas Reid Circle, it enables us to thank you.

For now, I hope that you enjoy the summer, and are managing to take some time to relax and enjoy the warmer weather.

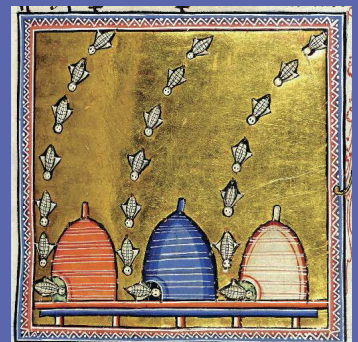
With warmest wishes,

Vanessa Holmes, Legacy Giving Officer



The Aberdeen Bestiary

This priceless manuscript, written and illuminated in England around 1200 and a favourite of many students, is considered one of the best examples of its type due to its lavish and costly illuminations.





Our First Thomas Reid Circle Event

On Saturday 20 May, we were delighted to host our first Thomas Reid Circle event. Anyone who lets us know that they have pledged a gift in their will to the University automatically becomes a member of the Thomas Reid Circle which recognises their significant commitment and generosity.

With enthralling talks from both Donald Lamont, who spoke about his involvement in locating, filming and surveying Sir Ernest Shackleton's Endurance, and Professor Anne Kiltie, who spoke about her reasons for pledging a gift, this wonderful event gave us the opportunity to entertain guests and thank them for their support.

Unrestricted Legacy Gift Enables Interdisciplinary Fellowships

Dr Jane Hellman, a medical graduate of the University of Aberdeen, left an extremely generous unrestricted gift in her will, trusting the University to use her gift wisely and with the greatest impact. It has now been agreed that her generous legacy will be used to establish new interdisciplinary research fellowships, in support of the University's Aberdeen 2040 strategic goals.

Dr Hellman, nee Caseley, enjoyed visiting campus and was well known to the University. She donated not only to the Medical School but to the Sir Duncan Rice Library, the Suttie Centre, and other causes during her lifetime, including the Aubertin Organ Replacement Fund.

In 2022, her surviving family were able to visit the University and see where Jane and her mother, Katherine, had studied their medical degrees. They enjoyed meeting with Principal George Boyne and other staff members who showed them the beautiful King's College campus, including the Science Teaching Hub, a great example of interdisciplinarity in action. They heard the Aubertin organ being played by Head of Chaplaincy,

Stuart Muir, bringing to life the sound of the organ which Jane would have enjoyed on her visits to campus.

The family said *"It was truly a fantastic experience to walk in the footsteps of Jane and Katherine, to see some of the original buildings that would have been here when they were here, and to meet so many lovely people. We also heard about the interdisciplinary fellowships, gaining an understanding of what that really means and how the gift will make a difference."*

An interdisciplinary approach is critical to tackling some of the biggest challenges facing our global society today, and gifts to support fellowships ensure that the University can attract and retain the best

minds to help us be at the forefront of these new solutions. We are incredibly grateful for Jane's trust and vision to enable us to direct her gift in this way.



Legacy Gift Supports Special Collections and Fellowships

Following many years of generous lifetime giving to the University, alumna Anne Young is now enabling the vital conservation of historic manuscripts and the advancement of interdisciplinary research fellowships thanks to the CRUT she set up in the USA in 2001 which has now been gifted to the University in her will.

Born in Bolton in 1936, Anne graduated from the University with an MA in English in 1957. Following a brief period as a Trainee Buyer at Harrods, she went on to teach English in various schools in both England and Africa before moving to Princeton to be with new husband, and fellow Aberdeen graduate, Ken in 1965. She initially taught speed reading to students at Princeton but always maintained a love of the arts and archaeology.

The University houses a stunning collection of surveyor plans, many of

which are manuscript/hand coloured and date from the late 18th century to the mid-20th century. The collection consists of approximately 5,500 plans and concerns estates, farms, districts, towns and villages throughout Scotland, but particularly Aberdeen City and Shire, and the historic shires of Kincardineshire, Banffshire, Moray and Nairn, Angus and Perthshire.

In May, Anne's husband Ken visited campus to view some of the maps and to discuss how her legacy gift will enable a specialist conservator to assess the collection, stabilise it and then rehouse it in specialist units. This will allow the whole collection to be examined and the conservator will then decide what restoration work will be needed. Each plan is a true work of art, with each one telling a fascinating story about the development of the North East of Scotland.

Anne's gift also includes support for interdisciplinary research fellowships at the University so her generosity will not only help us preserve this rich source of historic knowledge forever, but will also help the University make new discoveries and develop creative solutions to tackle some of the world's most urgent challenges.



Legacy Pledge Motivated by Mutual Passion for the Arts

Emile Zola famously described *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (*The Luncheon on the Grass*) as the greatest work of Édouard Manet. It is a huge painting which takes your breath away when you turn the corner and see it up close for the first time in the incredible Musée d'Orsay.

It remains a cherished moment in my memory: my husband Laurence and I were enjoying the painting together during a romantic weekend in Paris. Laurence studied at Art College and trained as a Graphic Designer and my appreciation of art came from my time at Aberdeen University.

When I arrived in Aberdeen in 1988 my plan was to study English Literature. I did not realise that being accepted into the Schools of Arts and Social Sciences meant that I had access to a much wider range of options including History of Art. It also meant that I got to study English and Scottish Literature and Language and was exposed to an incredible range of Celtic writing. This is the amazing educational difference that Scottish universities provide – the broadest, richest access to learning.

Thirty years on, through the Development & Alumni Relations team, I was reconnected with my alma mater by the genuine need to help support students today. Whether that be through the Student Hardship Fund or the Alumni Annual Fund your gift can make a real difference. What is particularly special is that you can be personally connected with the student you are supporting – in my case a fellow student of English and Scottish Literature.

So, when Laurence and I started to think about our wills last year, we wanted to leave a more permanent gift to one of the world's finest institutions of higher learning. At a time when the study of the arts is under increased pressure with fewer courses and fewer resources, it felt more important to us than ever. Sir Ken Robinson famously said *"To realise our true creative potential – in our organisations, in our schools and in our communities – we need to think differently about ourselves and to act differently towards each other. We must learn to be creative."*

In June we spent an incredible weekend in Aberdeen and, with the practical help and advice of Vanessa Holmes, Development Officer for Legacy Giving, we agreed our plans. Our gift will widen access for undergraduate students to The School of Language, Literature, Music, and Visual Culture which incorporates everything Laurence and I are deeply passionate about.

It means that when Laurence and I are long gone, lots of other couples in the future can create their own cherished memories having been able to study at Aberdeen University.

David Blackburn *Class of 1991*

Brother Provides Inspiration for Legacy Gift

My name is Professor Anne Kiltie and I came to the University of Aberdeen from Oxford in June 2021 to take up the position of Friends of ANCHOR Clinical Chair in Oncology.

I decided to pledge a gift in my will to the University after my brother, who had Asperger's syndrome, died suddenly of heart disease on Christmas Day 2022. He benefited from support from various autism charities and initiatives. Knowing that autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is prevalent among students and the wider community, I thought it would be good to support individuals at the University of Aberdeen who have this condition, to allow them to do things that might not have been possible otherwise.

Having last updated my will in 2012, after my brother's death seemed like a good time redraft it. During my time at the University, I have been made to feel very welcome by students and staff and their passion and warmth has inspired me to leave a gift in my will.

I will therefore be supporting a fund to support students and staff (not only academic staff) who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, to allow them to enhance their time at the University of Aberdeen, as well as supporting University of Aberdeen medical students to enable them to access a summer placement in research.

For individuals with autism spectrum disorder, the funding will allow them to access equipment or courses or short trips away, to enhance their time here. Those in non-academic roles may be able to further their career by having opportunities not otherwise open to them.

I have been inspired by the medical students who have spent time in my lab on the Aberdeen Summer Research Scholarship scheme and it would be good to give more people the opportunity to work in labs over the summer, particularly as medical student numbers are now increasing greatly. My legacy gift will ensure that medical students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, will be able to afford to spend time over the summer to experience working in a lab. Hopefully this will inspire some of them to pursue a career in academic medicine, enhancing the workforce in Aberdeen and North East Scotland.



If you would like to speak to someone in confidence about the gift in your will to the University of Aberdeen please contact Vanessa Holmes, Legacy Giving Officer, on **+44 (0)1224 274132** or email vanessa.holmes@abdn.ac.uk.

All donations to the University of Aberdeen are administered through the University of Aberdeen Development Trust SCIO which is a charity registered in Scotland No. SC050996.

The University of Aberdeen is a charity registered in Scotland, No. SC013683.