

# The Thomas Reid Circular

AUTUMN 2022

Dear Friend,

**As the campus is once again buzzing with activity and glowing in all its autumnal splendour, I want to send my best wishes to you and welcome you to the first Thomas Reid Circular.**

Legacy gifts to the University date back over 400 years, when the first known gift was from Thomas Reid himself. Thomas Reid was Regent of Marischal College, and Latin Secretary to King James VI and, through his royal connection, came into possession of a book known as the *Aberdeen Bestiary*. His **gift of opportunity** through a bequest of 1,350 books and manuscripts, including the now priceless *Aberdeen Bestiary*, formed the foundation of our university's library and special collections today.

Now all supporters who have pledged a legacy gift to the University of Aberdeen are welcomed into the **Thomas Reid Circle**. The Circle is named to recognise that the powerful gifts of legacies continue to provide the **gift of opportunity** to generations to come and offers you, as a member, a range of engagement opportunities to honour and celebrate your own generosity.

I'm delighted to be able to share the recent impact of some of our legacy gifts with you in this newsletter and hope you enjoy reading how they have made a difference to your alma mater.

We are beginning to plan the first of our **Thomas Reid Circle** gatherings for May and will share the details, and an invitation for you and a guest, for the event in the New Year.

For now, thank you for your wonderful support of our university.

*With warmest wishes*

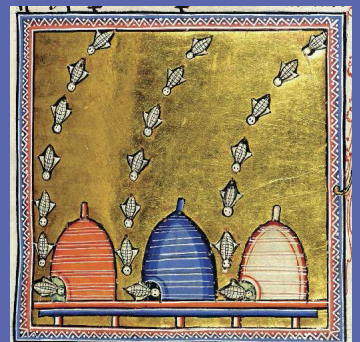
*Vanessa*

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.







## TRANSFORMING RESEARCH WITH MEDICAL IMAGING

Dr Myrtle Farquharson lived a remarkable life and, on leaving a gift in her will for cancer research, her legacy will continue to help countless people live happier and healthier lives for generations to come.

**Dr Farquharson graduated MBChB in 1954 and worked in general medicine, surgery, orthopaedics, obstetrics, and anaesthetics in the UK before travelling to Canada and then the Middle East to work in government, military, and private hospitals.**

Her name hit the headlines in 1962 when she became the first female doctor to assist Aberdeen's RNLI on a lifeboat rescue, heading 80 miles out to sea in a force nine gale. Every one of the crew paid tribute to her courage and devotion.

On her retirement in 1993, having moved back to Aberdeen, Myrtle took up various voluntary roles and continued a very busy social life.

Myrtle dedicated her life to others and was passionate about medicine, medical education and helping people. Just this month, it has been announced that her substantial legacy to the University will support the relocation of two highly experienced imaging staff, and their equipment, from Switzerland to Aberdeen along with the purchase of new equipment. This will benefit the entire imaging team as well as their internal collaborators in other research groups.

Myrtle's legacy gift will have a major impact on this vital, growing area of expertise with the long-term aim of transforming medical research and the treatment of patients worldwide. This will further reinforce Aberdeen's position as a world-leader in medical imaging since our researchers' development of the first diagnostic-quality full-body MRI scanner in 1980.



## PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO ACCESS EDUCATION

Originally from South Uist, Dr Mary Duncan came to Aberdeen and graduated from the University MBChB in 1953.

**She undertook the degree course as an arts student with no scientific background but excelled in medicine and, after graduating, worked for Glaxo as a pathologist before moving to Italy with her husband to work as a pure research scientist. From Italy she moved to London, and then to Edinburgh where she lived for a number of years.**

Mary was passionate about enabling students to have the same opportunities she had and in 1999 established the **Jim Duncan Scholarship** through a lifetime gift, named after her father, to support students in financial need. She wanted the scholarship to be open to all students who had chosen to go to university after a break in their education, or who were resuming their studies at the University after an interruption and required financial assistance. Over the years her generosity benefitted many students, and she was held in very high regard by her scholars whom she often befriended and mentored. When she died in 2012, three of her students travelled to Edinburgh for her funeral.

By remembering the University in her will, with a gift for both the Scholarship and medical research, Mary's lasting legacy is to ensure that the **Jim Duncan Scholarship** can be awarded in perpetuity, removing barriers to those who may otherwise have missed their opportunity to undertake or complete a degree.



## Daniel's Story

**Daniel Vonnak is a 3rd year medical student and a recipient of the Jim Duncan Scholarship.**

I moved to Scotland from Hungary in September 2020 in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic with some money saved up, but nothing had prepared me for how hard it was to find a job at that time. Without receiving this scholarship, I would have had to leave Scotland and either study from home or even take another break in my studies. But with the scholarship, my savings, and some

work I did for the Covid test centre, I managed and finally got a job in the hospital where I've worked ever since as a healthcare support worker.

I'm committed to a career in surgery, and I am currently a committee member of the Ogston Surgical Society. I'm trying to take advantage of all the opportunities I can while studying so I'd just like to say a heartfelt thank you to the donor of the **Jim Duncan Scholarship** as the fact is, without this scholarship, I would not have been able to come so far in my journey.



## Supporting Students in Financial Hardship

**Having been a regular supporter of the alumni annual fund, Dr Mike Passway was inspired to offer further support to students in need by leaving a gift to the University in his will.**

Dr Passway's meaningful gift established the **Dr Michael Passway Bursary**, providing vital assistance to a student in their final year of a PhD in Organic Chemistry experiencing financial hardship.



## OPHTHALMOLOGY GIFT TO FOCUS ON MAJOR CAUSES OF BLINDNESS

Alistair G Lynn CVO CBE QPM was born in Carradale, Argyll in 1926. On leaving school at the age of 15 he enjoyed a varied career in the Merchant Navy, Royal Navy, and the Post Office before starting a 42-year career with the police, rising through the ranks to become Chief Constable of Grampian Police in 1983.

During his time as Chief Constable he led Grampian Police's response to the Piper Alpha disaster and was responsible for the security of The Queen during her stays at Balmoral and her travels throughout the region.

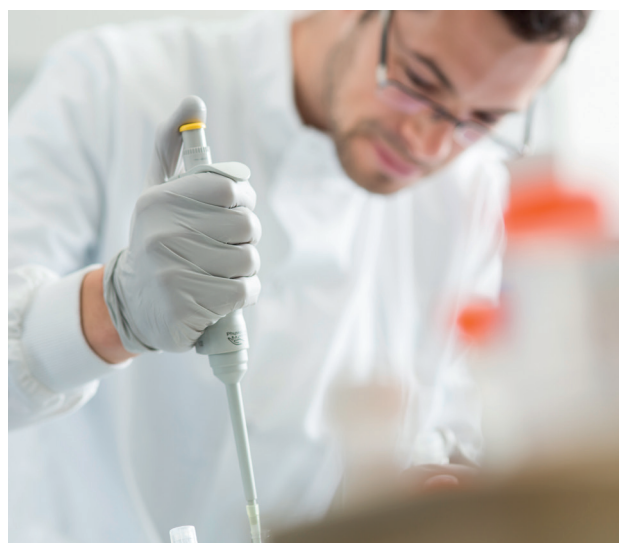
By the time he retired in 1990, Alistair's contribution to British society had been recognised by his being awarded The Queen's Police Medal, a CBE and Commander of the Royal Victorian Order in recognition of his personal service to The Queen.

Alistair was registered blind and was under the care of Professor John Forrester. On his death in 2021, he left a generous gift in his will to be used by the **Department of Ophthalmology Eye Research** for the purpose of research into the causation, diagnosis, and treatment of blinding diseases of the eyes. This added to a substantial lifetime gift in 2020, also for ophthalmology.

Research in disorders of the eyes has grown from strength to strength at Aberdeen since the establishment of the Department of Ophthalmology in 1984 and has focused mainly on three major causes of blindness: diabetes, corneal disease, and uveitis (inflammation inside the eye). Much has been achieved during this time, mainly in understanding how these diseases develop and the introduction of new treatments, but blindness due to these causes remains a major world-wide issue.

Alistair's considerable contribution will have a powerful and long-reaching effect on our research. It will allow Professor John Forrester and his team to continue to build on their wealth of expertise in ophthalmology with the aim of providing preventions, treatments and cures for people affected.

Alistair was not a graduate of the University but recognised the importance of the research we undertake and its ability to help improve the lives of so many people.



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## ANONYMOUS LEGACY GIFT FOR MEDICAL LIBRARY FACILITIES

An anonymous transformative legacy gift is enabling crucial improvements to be made in the University's Medical Library.



Over summer, work began on the redevelopment of the basement of the Medical Library with the relocation of 3,200 metres of older stock to the library store. We are delighted that the space is now being reconfigured to create a brand new flexible collaborative study space which will include new learning clusters digitally enabled to support group work and a bookable IT classroom. This is the first phase of an exciting refurbishment programme for the whole Medical Library.

This anonymous legacy gift will have a hugely positive impact on generations of medical students by helping ensure our university can extend its world-class library facilities and offer a level of medical education that is second to none.

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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**.