



Challis Bequest Society News

10 years of the Challis Bequest Society

Robert Storr's bequest transforms research into liver disease



Just before Robert Storr passed away from liver cancer in 1992, he decided to donate money to support medical research into this devastating illness and related conditions.

Robert's visionary bequest of more than \$8 million to the University of Sydney is making a major contribution to the fight against liver cancer and other common liver diseases. His significant gift has not only funded decades of innovative medical research but will continue to fund, in perpetuity, the Storr Liver Centre.

Part of the Westmead Institute for Medical Research, the Storr Liver Centre is making ground-breaking advances in the fight against liver cancer and the prevention and treatment of liver disease. The centre's research covers liver cancer, metabolic liver disease, genetics of liver disease, viral hepatitis, liver immunology, liver injury and fibrosis, and drug metabolism. Researchers are also investigating the



Staff of the new Storr Liver Centre, established by a bequest from Robert Storr

bioinformatics of human liver and metabolic diseases, natural history and outcomes of liver disease, and conducting clinical trials for the treatment of viral hepatitis, metabolic liver disease and liver cancer.

Professor Jacob George, Director of the Storr Liver Centre and Head of the Department of Gastroenterology and Hepatology at Westmead Hospital and Sydney West Local Health District, is a renowned hepatologist and liver research scientist. He currently holds the position of Robert W Storr Professor of Hepatic Medicine, a professorial chair in liver cancer that was also established by the bequest.

“The Storr bequest, without a doubt, has been the biggest philanthropic gift for liver research in Australia,” says Professor George, who was appointed to the position in 2006.

“It has established the Storr Liver Centre as an internationally-acknowledged centre of excellence for research on viral hepatitis, fatty liver disease, genetics, gene regulation, liver cancer and other aspects of liver pathobiology. The centre publishes on average 70 papers per year in the highest impact journals, including *Nature Genetics*, *Nature*, *Nature Communications*, and *Cell*.”

The centre is one of the top liver research centres in the world, and its work has led directly to improved outcomes for patients with liver cancer. This year, the centre made a world-first discovery by identifying the specific protein that causes liver disease – providing hope for new targeted treatments for liver disease.

“None of this would have been possible without the vision of Robert Storr. His legacy and the centre will remain a beacon of research excellence under the stewardship of the University of Sydney.”

Professor Jacob George
Director of the Storr Liver Centre

The Storr Liver Centre enables researchers to conduct end-to-end research – from the patient to the lab and back to the patient. Attracting researchers from across the world, the centre has made ground-breaking discoveries that have significantly impacted understanding of liver diseases.

Between 1996 and 2017, Robert’s donation funded more than \$8.6 million in medical research at the Storr Liver Centre. Today, the centre is tackling the rising rate of liver cancer in NSW through a large-scale project that involves a combination of surveillance, epidemiology, better treatment and the creation of a tissue bank for basic science research.

“This has transformed our understanding of liver diseases in general, but more importantly has impacted the lives of patients with liver diseases, leading to greatly improved outcomes,” says Professor George.

Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University, Dr Michael Spence says: “We are so grateful for the ongoing benefit the University derives from bequests such as these and their power to do good in the field of medical research.”

“Thanks to Robert Storr’s generous gift, the Storr Liver Centre is leading the charge in translational research and achieving life-changing outcomes for people suffering from liver disease.”

If you would like more information on how your gift can support research and education, please call Angela Topping on +61 2 8627 8824.

Advancing Japanese language and literature in Australia

Member profile: Honorary Associate Professor Sakuko Matsui has dedicated her life's work to Japanese language and literature.

Professor Matsui divides her time between Australia and Japan as she continues her work transcribing and publishing 18 volumes of the 32-year diary of Hirao Hachisaburō (1866–1945), a Japanese businessman, politician and philanthropist who established the Konan School and University, of which she is a graduate.

"I've been involved in the project for 13 years," she explains. "We just finished volume 15 in June. It's going to take two more years. Until it is finished, I need to maintain this lifestyle of half my time in Japan."

Now aged 84, Professor Matsui spent 41 years as a lecturer and professor at the University of Sydney, joining the Department of Oriental Studies in 1961 and retiring in 2001.

"I came from Kobe to Sydney on a Japanese cargo ship, and was seasick for nine of the 11 days of my voyage," she recalls. "When I arrived, I went straight to the Women's College. I loved living there. People were so good to me, not only at the Women's College, but also at the University and in general. I found Australian people very nice."

Professor Matsui lived at the Women's College for 10 years.



Honorary Associate Professor Sakuko Matsui with her medal.

She recalls that "it was hard for Australian students to make Japanese friends in those days, so I started holding a Japanese speaking night every month. At first, my students were meeting a few Japanese, but eventually, I had 100 people coming."

She came to Sydney by invitation of Professor AR Davis, Head of the Department of Oriental Studies, and Dr GW Sargent and Mr BC McKillop, lecturers in Japanese. Inspired and assisted by them, she taught modern Japanese novelists, and translated and published some of their works while publishing her own PhD thesis on Japanese novelist, Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916).

"I taught the history of Japanese literature – ancient, medieval

and early modern in a cycle over three years," she says. "I even taught Japanese oral tradition. But I was much more interested in Japanese literature."

In 2016, Professor Matsui was honoured for her work by the Japanese Government, which awarded her *The Order of the Sacred Treasure, Gold and Silver Rays*, in recognition of promoting Japanese language and Japanese studies. Her former student, Professor Emeritus Hugh Clarke, also received an Imperial Medal.

"I was very pleased and proud," she says. "All the good things I have received while working at Sydney is thanks to my students."

She would like traditions to be upheld and the study of Japanese literature and culture to continue to flourish at the University.

"I have established a prize for undergraduates and a scholarship to enable students to travel to Japan during their postgraduate studies in Japanese culture. I have also decided to leave a bequest to the University to support research in the study of Japanese literature," she says.

If you have a story to share, we would love to hear it. Please call Angela Topping on +61 2 8627 8824.

Transformative bequests

These are just a few of the bequests that facilitate some of our greatest research, teaching and facilities.



The Seymour Centre under construction, 1974

1937

Thomas Lawrence Pawlett

The Thomas Lawrence Pawlett bequest has provided continued support for agriculture students since 1937, for up to eight research and undergraduate scholarships each year.

Agriculture
\$1.3m to date

1966

Everest York Seymour

Everest Seymour's bequest funded the construction of the Seymour Theatre.

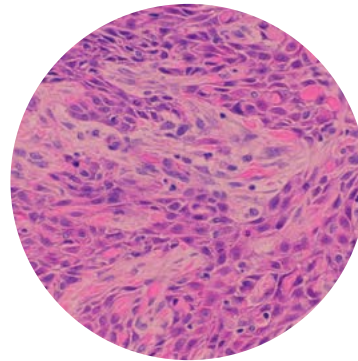
Seymour Theatre
More than \$2.8m

1905

Sir Peter Nicol Russell

Engineering has been greatly supported through Sir Peter Nicol Russell's endowments which established scholarships and provided support for teaching.

Engineering
GBP£100,000
(more than A\$14m today)



1940

Sir Hugh Denison

Sir Hugh Denison's gifts have made a profound difference to scientific research.

Science
\$8.2m to date

1982

Francis George and Helena Melville Clark Endowment

In 1984, the Book Repository at Darlington was constructed with funds from this endowment.

General purpose
More than \$2.3m



Left: Engineering students in 1907: GE Cowdery, HA Roberts, JM Royle, S Dennis, JL Mort, HF Swain, LH Lemaire, EW McKeown, RD Wardrop

Right: Students at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music



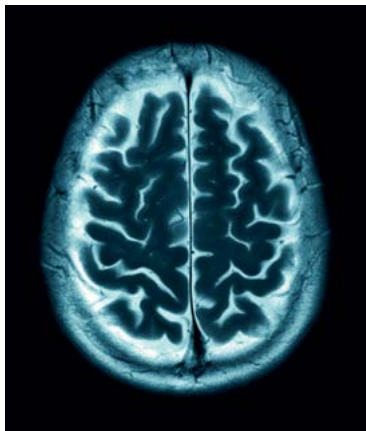


1992

Jacqueline Diana Oscar Paul

The JDO Paul Trust supports research into the causes and treatment of mental disorders.

Medicine
\$2.1m to date



Tom Austen Brown



John Rowe OAM

2011

Tom Austen Brown

Tom Austen Brown's bequest and lifetime gifts are supporting research and attracting expertise in the area of prehistory. It funds the Tom Austen Brown Chair of Australian Archaeology.

Arts
\$7m bequest +
\$1.8m lifetime gifts

2017

John Rowe OAM

John Rowe's bequest will help us remain at the leading edge of study and research in Australian literature.

Arts
\$3m

Below: The JL Shellshear Museum of Physical Anthropology and Comparative Anatomy

2003

George and Margaret Henderson

The George and Margaret Henderson bequest supports scholarships for students of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

General purpose
More than \$17.3m



2012

Ann Margaret MacIntosh

Ann Macintosh established the NWG Macintosh Memorial fund (in honour of her late husband) through lifetime gifts and a bequest to support anatomy and histological research and the JL Shellshear Museum.

Medicine
\$5.8m + \$1.6m lifetime gifts



Mabs Melville scholarship recipients win L’Oreal-UNESCO For Women In Science Fellowships

Extraordinary advances in veterinary science are being made thanks to a bequest from Mabs Melville.

Dr Angela Crean and Dr Camilla Whittington are early career researchers in the University of Sydney School of Veterinary Science. Both are conducting research in the area of fertility and reproduction, and both won last year’s coveted L’Oreal-UNESCO For Women In Science Fellowships, worth \$25,000 each. Angela and Camilla were also recipients of a scholarship made possible by a generous bequest from the late Mabs Melville.

Dr Angela Crean is a marine biologist who was recently awarded the prestigious 2017 Young Tall Poppy Science Aware. Her current focus is male fertility. “My research looks at how a male’s environment – his diet and social group – affects his sperm quality and how changes in sperm quality affect his offspring,” she explains. “In the past, I did this from an evolution ecology viewpoint. I was working with sea squirts and flies. It dawned on me that the research could be applied to human reproduction.”

Angela’s initial research showed that males can not only adjust sperm quality and quantity in response to reproductive competition, but that the quality has adaptive consequences for fertilisation and offspring survival.

Angela now hopes to apply what she has learnt to mammalian reproduction, including, human infertility.

“The Mabs Melville bequest has allowed me to join the veterinary scientists at Sydney, learn about mammal reproduction, and test the ideas I have been generating,” she says.

These ideas will be tested for use with assisted reproductive technology. Using a mouse model, Angela has conducted an initial trial on sugar in a male’s diet and has discovered sperm swim faster on a high sugar diet.

From left to right: Dr Camilla Whittington, Professor Trevor Hambley, Dr Angela Crean, photo courtesy of L’Oreal



“I will be starting work with an IVF group to see whether we can use seminal fluid to boost sperm quality and motility,” says Angela. “If we can do that, reproductive technologies may work better and inter-uterine insemination success rates may increase, so we can eliminate the final step of IVF. That is the ideal I am working towards.”

On another side of the fertility equation, Dr Camilla Whittington (PhD, VetScience, '11) is undertaking fundamental research to understand the biology of the placenta and how nutrients are transported during pregnancy. This investigation will assist her to determine the causes of foetal malnutrition and disease in mammals, including humans.

“The Mabs Melville scholarship specifically funded research into mammalian pregnancy,” says Camilla. “It helped us to understand how pregnancy works in a range of different species, and has allowed us to leverage further funding for research into pregnancies in reptiles and sharks.”

The benefits, she says, are twofold. Firstly, understanding the biology of some of Australia’s endangered native species could assist future captive breeding programs. Secondly, by learning how pregnancies evolve over millions of years, we may discover more about human reproductive biology.

Camilla is investigating how the complex placenta has evolved in many different species and will compare placenta transport mechanisms of critical nutrients in mammals, reptiles and fish. She aims to identify the genes specific to nutrient transport across all three species.

“We are studying species which are abundant, easy to work with, and good models for intractable species that are endangered,” she says. “If we can understand how placenta functions work normally, we can work out what may be going wrong in conditions such as foetal malnutrition. It’s the first step towards developing treatments for this problem. And we can apply it to humans, companion animals and livestock as well.”



Mabs Melville

The University was one of eight beneficiaries of the estate of the late Mabs Melville, receiving more than \$6 million towards veterinary science.

“The gift presents priceless opportunities to enhance teaching and research,” says Rosanne Taylor, Dean of the Sydney School of Veterinary Science.

“We have been able to attract the most outstanding talent to advance our understanding of the fundamental biology of reproduction. Their insights will inform new applications in assisted reproductive technology

and support of pregnancy, benefiting our animal breeding of domestic animals and wildlife. Past advances in reproductive physiology, pioneered here in Veterinary Science have made major contributions, and we have high hopes that Camilla and Angela’s research will open exciting new avenues to enhancing reproductive performance in animals and in people.”

Mabs Melville’s bequest contributes to INSPIRED – the campaign to support the University of Sydney. Every dollar raised through INSPIRED helps fund the pursuit of ideas that will shape the world in which we live.

To find out more about INSPIRED, please contact Angela Topping on +61 2 8627 8824

Message from the bequest team

We bring you the second of the newsletters for 2017 which celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Challis Bequest Society.

In this edition, we are honoured to introduce Associate Professor Sakuko Matsui and her lifelong passion for Japanese language and literature, and to highlight a further group of extraordinary individuals whose bequests continue to support University programs many years after they were received or whose gift at the time enabled an enduring capital development.

We would love to hear from anyone who has made a similar commitment of support to the University or who has a story to share.

We look forward to seeing our members at the 10th anniversary Challis Bequest Society lunch on Thursday 26 October in the University's Great Hall.

Please also join us in welcoming our latest member to the Alumni and Development team, Kara Bloukos. We're delighted to have her on board.

Contact us

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Challis Bequest Society events

Thursday 26 October, 12–2.30pm
Challis Bequest Society lunch
Great Hall, the Quadrangle

Nicholson Museum events

Saturday 7 October, 2–3pm
Amarna: Egypt's City of the Sun
Dr Conni Lord

Wednesday 18 October, 6pm
Aerial Photography and Archaeology in Syria and Lebanon
Dr Daniela Helbig

Wednesday 15 November, 6pm
A small woman and a big tell: What Jane Dieulafoy found at Susa
Heather Rossiter

Saturday 2 December, 2–3pm
Camino de Santiago: treading the ancient path to the end of the earth
Judy Roberts

Complimentary tickets to Nicholson Museum events are available for Lifetime and Legacy members. To make a booking, please contact Angela Topping.
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Sydney Ideas

This unique program of regular and free forums brings together leading academics and researchers to converse and present on a diverse range of subjects. Below are two events that may be of interest to Challis Bequest Society members.

Thursday 12 October, 6–7.30pm
X Factor in the Reformation
A forum hosted by Rachel Kohn, featuring Professor Carole Cusack, Reverend Dr Michael Jensen, the Hon. Kristina Keneally, and Reverend Dr Mark Worthing.
Venue: Law School Foyer

29 November, 6 to 7.30pm
Luther and Dreams
Professor Lyndal Roper
Venue: Law School Foyer

Sydney Ideas events are free, but registration is requested. For bookings and program information, please visit sydney.edu.au/sydney-ideas

For details of all University of Sydney events, please visit whatson.sydney.edu.au/events