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Running for Research

A Hall for All

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Jurassic Scotland

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Note to Friends

Once again, I am delighted to share with you the results of your generous support for the University through this magazine. Such contributions are invaluable to us, and the more that we can achieve with your help, the more pride you can take in the University of Edinburgh as your alma mater, business partner or chosen charity.

I am proud to say that Edinburgh is an international university and, indeed, has been since its very early days.

The breadth of our international partnerships has a really positive impact on the overall student experience at Edinburgh. That is not only manifested in the cultural diversity of campus life but also in the unique relationships we have with our international alumni, who offer support from funding bursaries to mentoring students. This year I have been fortunate enough to visit alumni around the world, including those in North America and the Far East, and have been heartily encouraged by the passionate support we receive in such far-flung places.

Closer to home, I also had the privilege to address a strong cohort of alumni at a Burns Supper in London. Always an active and passionate group, the London Alumni Network is a shining example of how the initiative of individual graduates can instil great pride in Edinburgh, long after alumni have left the University and indeed the city. In this magazine, we hear from one of the Network's organisers, Ann West, about why she feels moved to devote her own time to us.

We also hear from two medical students who have been helped in their studies here by alumni-funded bursaries and scholarships, vital support which is allowing them to enrich their Edinburgh experience by participating in clubs, sports and activities. Then there is Deborah Kerr, a student who is competing professionally as a sprint canoeist. Again, the support of a bursary is allowing her to combine study with her sporting passions, something which may not have been possible without the contributions of our donors.

Innovation is also at the heart of this magazine, as it is at the University. From Dr Tanya Ekanayaka's impactful use of music as therapy for traumatised children in Sri Lanka, to a project that aims to explore a major discovery of dinosaur fossils on the Isle of Skye, I am sure you will be heartened to know that the University is using your donations for the advancement of its students, staff and research.

Please accept Edinburgh Friends as a thank you for your support. I do hope you will continue to work with us to achieve even more in the year ahead.



Professor Charlie Jeffery
Senior Vice-Principal



Above: James Lane

Supporting Invaluable Experiences

James Lane, a promising medical student, speaks about the impact of the support on not just his educational journey (which involves a lot of travel), but also his ability to take part in extra-curricular activities and enjoy student life to the full.

James, who comes from a tiny village in the Midlands and has no medical background in the family, was initially drawn to the University by its Hogwarts-esque feel. After attending an open day and falling in love with the city, as well as being impressed with the University's rankings, he decided to take the leap and submit his application to study medicine. Initially, James was not accepted to the University but, as a 'near miss student', was placed on a shortlist.

Alongside the direct benefits to study, the award has also supported James in his extra-curricular activities. Being a member of the Medics Football Team in particular has forged some of James's most precious memories from his time at Edinburgh.

"Every year the medics sports teams hold national tournaments. We're lucky in Scotland to have two such

"There have been many activities and opportunities that I have taken which I would not have been able to without the help of the award. These opportunities have been some of the best moments of my University time, and I cherish them greatly."

JAMES LANE

"After consoling myself and deciding to reapply next year, I had planned to spend the next year working. To do this I would need some form of transport, so after a few weeks, my parents (with little in the way of savings) decided to buy me a car on a credit card.

"Immediately after we had put a deposit down on a car, the University decided to accept me as a student! So I digested this bittersweet news, and realised I was overjoyed about coming to Edinburgh, but less so about the prospect of working so many hours over the summer to pay off the debt of the new car."

Since being accepted, James hasn't looked back and has been enjoying the experience of student life at the University of Edinburgh.

Medicine at Edinburgh is a 5 to 6 year course, which is "pretty tough", as described by James. Students are required to travel to various areas across Edinburgh and beyond, and are rarely based in one place for a long time after the first year. The support James has received has enabled him to fulfil this aspect of his course, sometimes working in multiple locations in a single week.

"This is one major area of how the award has enhanced my learning experience – it has allowed me to reach places much more easily. Having caught numerous buses in years 1 to 3, it has since then allowed me to invest in a road bicycle which has the added benefit of improving my fitness."

tournaments – SNIMS (Scottish & Northern Irish Medic Sports) and NAMS (National Association of Medic Sports) – which rotate around different venues each year. It's great because you get to see new cities and meet new teams from across the whole of the UK."

It's been a great year for the club, winning the SNIMS football tournament, as well as achieving a win and a joint first in the Wednesday and Sunday intermural leagues.

Bursaries support students by relieving the financial burden that often comes with attending University. This enables promising undergraduates to not only excel in their studies but also to get involved in extra-curricular activities, leaving them with invaluable memories and experiences from their time at Edinburgh.

"I would say the most important thing the bursary has supported me with is the ability to travel as part of my studies. However, I feel the best thing the bursary has allowed me to do is travel the UK during SNIMS and NAMS, which I probably wouldn't have had the funds to do otherwise."

If there were one word to describe James Lane's feelings towards this award, it would be appreciative, and it is clear from speaking to him just how much of an impact this award has had on his time at Edinburgh thus far.



The Power of Music

Alumni funded Innovation Initiative Grants enable the staff and students of the University of Edinburgh to engage in a wide range of projects. Dr Tanya Ekanayaka's music composition project, which has been working with war-affected and impoverished school children since 2012, relies entirely on external funding.

"The survival of this project pivots on funding being available for the annual music-composition workshops. My contribution and that of all those involved in my project is entirely voluntary. It was an Innovation Initiative Grant that covered the major expenses incurred in facilitating a series of workshops for the project in 2014, enabling me to work with around 800 war-affected and impoverished school children from across Sri Lanka. The workshops in 2014 would not have taken place had it not been for this grant, and I remain deeply grateful to the grant sponsors for their generosity."

For Dr Ekanayaka, music has always played an important role in her life, beginning with her introduction to the piano at the age of five. It is this passion for music, and knowledge of the power it possesses, that has been the driving force behind her work.

"I see music as one of the most powerful and wonderful modes of human communication and bonding." **DR TANYA EKANAYAKA**

"Exploring and expressing our inner feelings can be cathartic and facilitate healing. However, expressing our feelings through human language, which by nature demands clarity of expression, can be difficult and perhaps not always healthy, particularly when it comes to feelings that are traumatic. Poetry is perhaps the closest to conscious ambiguity that human language permits.

"As a linguist and performer-composer, I am acutely aware of the distinct differences and parallels between music and human language as modes of creative expression. Music is by nature



2014 workshops in Jaffna, Katuwana Hambantota and Killinochchi

abstract in that it is not possible to express specific meanings through musical sound. This is the case with most artistic modes of expression, and I have found that it is this defining nature of the musical communicative mode that underlies the peculiar and special healing property of musical expression, especially when involving the composition and performance of one's own music."

Dr Ekanayaka has been deeply inspired by the unique abilities of music composition to not only help people express their inner feelings, but also to aid in the healing process.

"I know that music possesses a powerful ability to affect our emotions in positive ways. It is this awareness that inspired my work, coupled with my yearning to empower young people who are traumatised - be it as a result of war or poverty - in enabling them to be creative through musical composition.

"The children who participate in my project workshops compose and then perform their own music. They are encouraged to create new music of whatever form they wish using a variety of instruments, including their own indigenous instruments as well as voice. The combined process of creation and rendition is what is intended to heal and inspire them."

Standard workshops usually involve several hundred children from a range of schools, all of whom are given the

opportunity to work together and identify with one another over shared experiences.

"Knowing that they are not alone, but that they are with others who have endured similar hardships, can in my view give them confidence to explore and express such feelings because the experience is a shared one.

Dr Ekanayaka's work is nothing short of inspiring, and in many cases enlightening.

"Many children and adults alike are unaware of their innate musical sensibility and so sadly, many people live their entire lives never having discovered this dimension of their being. One of the major consequences of severe trauma is the loss of self-esteem. Discovering the creative abilities that they never knew they possessed, the process of creating and performing their own music helps rekindle the confidence of these young people, and is hopefully a step towards restoring their self-esteem."

Find out more about Dr Tanya Ekanayaka's work on her website: www.tanyaekanyaka.com

Running for Research

Marathon running has become increasingly important in community based fundraising at the University, especially in the support of medical research centres.

It's first thing on a Wednesday morning, and the rain is battering the windows of the Anne Rowling Regenerative Neurology Clinic at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh. I'm greeted by a complete contrast to the weather in the warm and enthusiastic smiles of Jen Durkin and Denise Cranley: staff members, morning people, and organisers of the Marathon Relay for the Euan MacDonald Centre for Motor Neurone Disease Research.

competitiveness it was all good-humoured and it's been the same every year. A huge part of it is the team banter and atmosphere when everyone's hanging around between the legs. Obviously our main focus is crossing the finish line and raising lots of money for motor neurone disease research, but we also make sure everyone can make it to the pub afterwards for a good lunch and some celebratory drinks – that's what it's all about!"

“Before we knew it we had three teams of four in the first year, and it was all grown by word of mouth. It just kept growing from there. In 2014 we had four teams and then in 2015, this May, we had six teams, plus Chris Major from Development and Alumni who ran the full marathon.”

DENISE CRANLEY

The Euan MacDonald Centre's participation in the Hairy Haggis relay event, held at the end of May each year alongside the Edinburgh Marathon, began in 2013 when a couple of staff members decided to put a team together. The event blossomed – seemingly unexpectedly – from there.

The teams managed to raise over £1,500 in 2013, just under £2,000 in 2014, and £2,500 in 2015 thus far. Every single donation makes a difference to the Centre and goes towards motor neurone disease research.

The donations are used in a number of ways, as Denise explains: “It could go towards travel bursaries for students who need to present their work at a conference, or it could go towards a PhD studentship, helping to foster young researchers in developing a scientific career, right down to getting pipettes or supplies for the labs.”

Alongside the obvious goal of raising money for a good cause, a major draw is the experience of the event itself; you can almost feel the atmosphere and the team spirit of the run just from Jen and Denise discussing the event.

Jen's enthusiasm is clear as she speaks about the run over the years: “It was brilliant from the start, and though we joke about

It's clear from the excitement and friendly banter in the room that the relay is a great social event and chance for everyone to meet. It brings together the various departments involved with the Centre, from those working in the labs, to the clinical workers, to fundraisers and marketing.

“If you work in our sort of environment you can actually see the research that's taking place and know that it is made possible by fundraising,” Jen explains.

Participants are not limited to those associated with the Euan MacDonald Centre; staff from a range of research centres across the College of Medicine and Vet Medicine, as well as staff from the Communications and Marketing department and Development and Alumni, all take part in the race. “Some of the runners don't have anything to do with motor neurone disease research, but they are colleagues who appreciate what we're trying to do; it's a cross-college initiative, and we welcome anybody who wants to take up running or try a new challenge,” says Denise.

Aside from the blisters and battling the Scottish weather, the relay runs have been enjoyed by all so far, and their popularity and success continues to grow with each year. Jen beautifully captures the atmosphere of the end of the run in her closing statement: “by the end of it, it's just a sea of happy, tired, sunburned faces.”

It's clear from the excitement and friendly banter in the room that the relay is a great social event and a chance for everyone to meet.



Left to right: University staff members Lara Campana, Anna Gibbons, Sandra Chilton, Jen Durkin and Denise Cranley



A Hall for All

On Bristo Square, McEwan Hall Project sees restoration meeting reinvention. Careful renovation work is returning this inspirational building to its 19th century splendour - and equipping it for a whole new 21st century public and purpose.

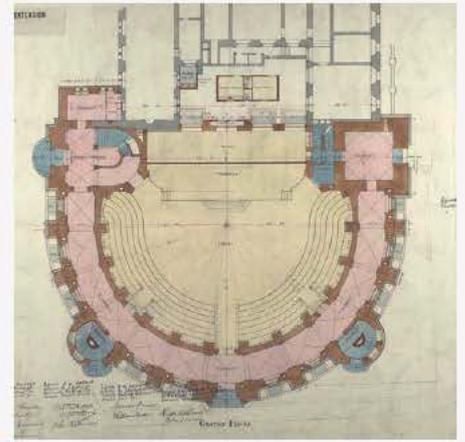
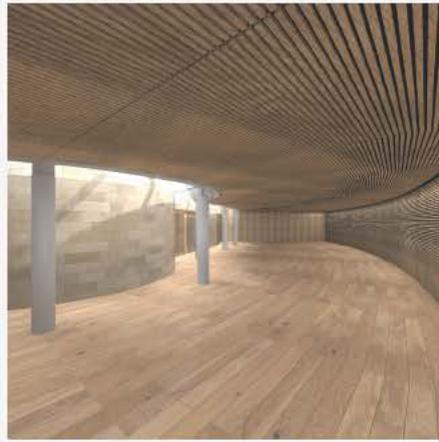
Designed by the preeminent Scottish architect Sir Robert Rowand Anderson, McEwan Hall began construction in 1888, with building work completed in 1893. A further three years were devoted to interior decoration. This included a series of murals and mosaics by the artist William Palin, the 'Temple of Fame' being the central piece. The Grand Inaugural Concert, celebrating the completion of McEwan Hall, occurred on December 15th 1897.

Edinburgh's LDN Architects have been appointed to develop the renovation proposals. "The interior of McEwan Hall auditorium is simply stunning," says LDN's Michael Hamilton. "It is magnificent in scale and detail, an inspiring setting for the graduation ceremonies. The other public spaces, particularly the ceremonial staircase, are also very successful.

Rowand Anderson's use of high-quality finishes and applied decoration creates rich and delightful interiors."

The D-shaped building was funded by Sir William McEwan, a successful brewer and local politician. Using £115,000 of his own money, his funding metaphorically laid the first brick of the structure that would bear his name.

McEwan's vision was for the hall to be utilised and celebrated by the people of Edinburgh. And for a small number of years it was. Until now, though, the space has never fully realised McEwan's wishes. Whilst it has provided a splendid setting for examinations, graduations, public lectures and concerts, the truth is that the building has remained largely underused. Opened for only a few days each year, it was acknowledged that the very fabric of the hall was consequently being put at risk.



Three years were spent on interior decoration. Today, the hall's Category A listed status underlines its architectural significance.

It is these aspects - restoration and reinvention - that lie at the heart of the £33m McEwan Hall Project. By restoring and reimagining the building now, its life will be lengthened, its purpose redefined.

It's an ambitious project that is seeing the hall's damaged exterior stonework restored. The Bristo Square area itself is being landscaped too. This work, as well as improving accessibility and safety, will deliver a public space that's ideal for activities, events and performances. And, complementing the improvements outside of the building, as visitors enter the hall they'll do so through a newly designed entrance in the square.

Once inside, visitors will enjoy greatly improved access to all levels of the building. The new entrance leads to the redesigned and redeveloped basement level, where visitors are greeted by a new reception area with a staircase and lift, providing access to the upper floors. The first floor opens with the new entrance hall, leading into the principal space: the McEwan's fully-restored main hall. Here, the non-original additions that have accumulated over the years are being carefully removed. The basement area too is being renovated, and new visitor and breakout facilities are being built.

It's a careful balance, this meeting of the historic and the modern. A unique Victorian setting and up-to-the-minute facilities will help position the McEwan Hall as both a historically significant location and a flexible, multi-functional space. These are changes that are honouring William McEwan's inclusive legacy. But more than that, they're also extending his vision. The hall will appeal to a diverse local, national and international audience, and for events and uses McEwan - and Rowand Anderson - could never have foreseen.

As the project approaches completion, McEwan Hall will be many things to many people. For some, it will be a memorable conference venue or exhibition space. For others, it will be a must-see on the tourist map, or a dignified backdrop for a selfie. And, as always, it will remain a spectacular place in which to graduate. But above all, it will be a magnificent building for all to enjoy. Which is precisely what William McEwan always envisioned for it.

The McEwan Hall Project is being undertaken in phases and is scheduled for completion in December 2016.

Blood, sweat, tears – and a Russian president. The grand old hall has seen them all.

A selection of past graduates share their memories of the McEwan Hall.

On a very dark November evening the servitor sneaked me in (at the very last moment) to a lecture by Mikhail Gorbachev. He was accompanied by his wife Raisa, who looked very glamorous. I had a top-tier seat, and a grandstand view of the packed audience and the VIPs.

McEwan Hall was a wonderful setting for this historic occasion. It was a great thrill to watch the Gorbachevs arrive by helicopter in the Meadows that afternoon. The chance to attend the lecture was a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

HEATHER ELLIOTT (MBA 1992)

These are my late father's favourite experiences from his days as a student in the 1920s. His name was Alexander James Houston, MA English & History, and he was a contemporary of many returning servicemen from the First World War.

During Rectorial Addresses in McEwan Hall, apparently it was common to launch missiles, such as bags of flour, from the top gallery on to the audience below. On at least one occasion, live hens were released from the gallery. History does not relate if my father was guilty.

One year he was kidnapped by the opposing political group and put aboard a trawler about to sail on the North Sea. The weather was atrocious, but he was an excellent sailor and arrived unscathed when the boat docked in Aberdeen.

His father, a captain of one of the North of Scotland steamers, was in port that day. He was absolutely furious at the prank because, if the person kidnapped had not been a good sailor, the experience could have killed him.

At my previous university, our graduation ceremony was held in a local theatre. Consequently, there was no sense of "belonging" to that university. We could have been graduating from any institution.

McEwan Hall was different. A spectacular building, and an integral part of the University of Edinburgh. When you pass through the hall door in your gown, you can only be graduating from one university, and that was important.

KATERINA STRANI-JEFFERSON (POLITICS 2002)

The first time I entered McEwan Hall I fell in love with its architecture and atmosphere. I was there for a postgraduate welcome session back in 2008. It was a pleasure to mix with students and staff in such a beautiful and historic environment.

I've enjoyed the building on several more occasions – most notably for my two MSc graduations. Each time, that battle of emotions – anxiety, illusion, excitement, happiness and nervousness – delivers McEwan Hall's unique, emotive atmosphere.

One of the most beautiful feelings I've experienced in the hall has been pride. I'm proud to remain a part of the University of Edinburgh, and proud to count myself among the many innovative graduates who have celebrated their achievements in such a striking location.

ELENA BURGOS MARTINEZ (EDUCATION 2009, SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY 2011)

The memory that I wake up screaming about is sitting degree exams in McEwan Hall. I seemed always to be sitting under the mural of 'Perseverance'.

GEORGE R ROSS (CHEMISTRY 1967)

It's hardly a favourite memory, but it is an everlasting one: staring in terror at an exam paper and looking up to find a statue (was she called 'Knowledge?') looking down at me with disapproval.

ISOBEL M MILLER (ARTS 1966)

In our 3rd year (1964) four or five of us volunteered to give blood at McEwan Hall. It was quite calming lying back and gazing at the beauty of the ceiling high above. Afterwards, we sat to enjoy the complimentary tea and biscuits. One of the group, now my wife, felt faint and was taken for another lie-down, enabling the rest of us to enjoy an extra "round".

RALPH LEONARD GORDON (HISTORY 1965)

I attended Moral Philosophy in McEwan Hall, alongside a huge group of fellow students. There was much hissing and stamping of feet, and it didn't feel at all like a learning situation – more like entertainment! I think most of the learning must have happened in tutorials.

I also graduated there – I can't remember what year – probably 1961. Afterwards, a friend and I chatted to the Vice Chancellor, Sir Edward Appleton. We took the opportunity to complain that dye was running out of the containers that our certificates were in and he said he had the same problem with a pair of red pyjamas!

HELEN COOPER (FRENCH 1961)

Setting fine examples to generations of students, the hall is home to figures representing Perseverance, Intelligence, Imagination and Experience.

Sir Robert Rowland Anderson, architect



Sir William McEwan



Artist's impression looking towards Bristo Square and Teviot Row House, showing the planned new entrance to McEwan Hall

Lewy body dementia has similarities to both Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease, and similar treatment is used across the three. However there is, as of yet, no cure.



Above: Professor John Starr

Progress through Prevention

Harold Wedgewood, known as Roland, bequeathed £12,000 in support of research into Lewy body dementia. We spoke to Professor John Starr, head of the Alzheimer Dementia Research Centre, about the disease and the research made possible by Roland's legacy.

Whilst the number of people with Lewy body dementia - roughly 15% of people with dementia - is relatively low, it is an incredibly confusing and disturbing condition.

"It is a cruel disease because it affects people's judgement," explains Professor Starr. "There are various dementing diseases, the one people are most familiar with being Alzheimer's disease. In Alzheimer's disease it's very often to do with memory, but in Lewy body dementia, what is more prominent is the difficulties with visuospatial abilities.

"If you could, imagine that we view the world how you might see it in a renaissance painting. If you have Lewy body dementia, the space within your world gets distorted, so it's rather like a cubist painting. Imagine living in a world that is a Picasso and trying to work out exactly where you are in that world. It would be quite difficult and, worse still, in Lewy body dementia it fluctuates from minute to minute. One moment you're in a fairly straightforward world, and the next moment you're in the cubist world. It's very distressing."

Lewy body dementia has similarities to both Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease, and similar treatment is used across the three. However there is, as of yet, no cure.

"People with Lewy body dementia get a tremor. They get rather stiff, so they slow down and aren't able to do things as quickly as they once did, much like with Parkinson's disease. The underlying brain changes are also similar to Parkinson's disease, it's just that the parts of the brain affected are slightly different, and we don't know why that is."

"The drug treatments for these diseases are the same as those we use for people with Alzheimer's disease, and they are fairly effective in controlling some of the symptoms. However, because these treatments are not curative, there is on going destruction in the brain, and you are over time losing brain cells."

There are a number of research routes you can go down to help those suffering with Lewy body dementia: improving care and support, seeking a cure for the condition, and - the area in which the Centre is focussing its efforts - preventing people from getting Lewy body dementia in the first place.

"One thing that has been observed for Parkinson's disease is a non-random geographical variation, meaning in some places the rates of the disease are higher than in other places. What we are doing is a programme of research to look at dementia and Parkinson's disease in Scotland. If we just look at Lewy body dementia, there are not enough cases to determine whether there are hot spots or not. What we can do is look at dementia, which we've already done, and look at Parkinson's disease, which is what we are in the process of doing, to see if there is a non-random distribution and if there are any overlaps between the two, which might give us a clue about common causes."

Whilst cross-examining diseases is vital, as is studying the common factors of a disease, it is also important to remember that people are affected in different ways.

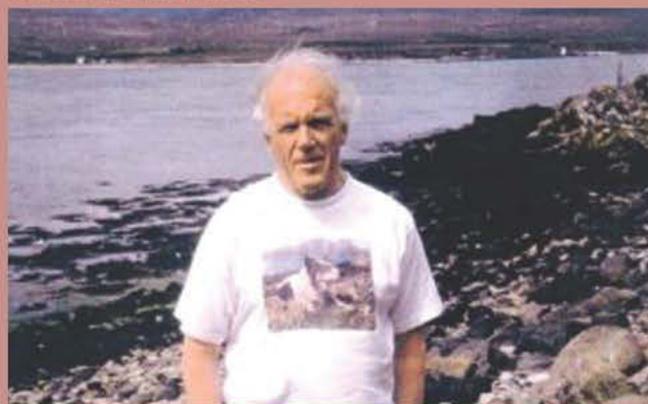
"Dementia isn't all the same," Professor Starr explains. It's often portrayed as such in the media, but it isn't at all. People are all different, so the people who are affected are all different. That's very important for people to understand."

"As a doctor, I treat people rather than diseases. As a researcher, I have to research into diseases to see how they're interlinked, and I have to understand how they impact on an individual."

The legacy of Harold Wedgewood has enabled the Centre to extend their research into Lewy body dementia whilst continuing to conduct research into other areas, such as support and care for people with dementing diseases.

"Legacies can be very helpful, and if people have a particular cause that they feel is close to them, they can make a big contribution even with relatively small legacies."

Below: Roland Wedgewood



A Vital Gift

Sarah Wedgewood, Roland's niece, explains her uncle's commitment to the University of Edinburgh and how they came to the decision to support this area of research.

I took the decision in naming the University in his Will on his behalf as he declined in health from Lewy body dementia. I had power of attorney and his Will had said an equal proportion of his estate should be donated to significant charities. When I started to look through all his records I found he'd donated a significant amount of money throughout his life to the Brain Trust, as well as supporting nearly 100 different charities.

We couldn't find the list of charities so, in consultation with the rest of the family, we decided that four should get a significant amount rather than lots of charities getting a little. When I talked Roland through this, he didn't demur, and I knew that if he didn't demur he was generally supportive of the direction of travel.

Professor John Starr, the most inspiring person and a lovely man, helped us very much through the journey of Roland's illness. Roland was his patient for many years, and I found it incredibly hard because at the beginning I had no idea of how ill he would become. John helped me massively in all of that, and he was part of the inspiration. I know, having been in the health service all my life, and having been a recipient of NHS care, I wouldn't be here without it and neither would my children. So I thought it's a valid thing to do, to give to the research side of it.

My uncle had a long interest in the University because he worked for them when the war ended. I found out from John Starr that there was a research branch into Alzheimer's Scotland. It's grown over the last few years in terms of the public awareness, but when I first came across it, it was struggling to survive. They're now making significant progress.

Research is so vital, especially in my mind because cancer has dominated the research scene and that's fair enough. However, as we get good statistics showing that there are so many people suffering from dementia and Alzheimer's, where life is absolutely miserable, we need to do something about it.

A Lasting Impression

Dr Helen Caldwell, born in 1929, graduated with the MBChB from the University of Edinburgh in 1952 before pursuing a career as a GP. Here Dr Caldwell reflects on her time at Edinburgh and speaks about the reasons behind her past, present and future support of medical students at the University.

Why did you choose Edinburgh?

I would say I didn't choose Edinburgh; I applied to Glasgow, Edinburgh, and maybe even St Andrews, as people did in those days. I was offered a place by Edinburgh but not by Glasgow, and I've always been quite glad of that! Mainly because I grew up in Ayr, and a lot of people from Ayr went to Glasgow University and commuted each day. Going to Edinburgh meant I got to come and live here, which was just so much nicer; I enjoyed my time at the University very much.

Has your time at the University left a lasting impression?

I think the University was very significant in shaping my life. My particular year at university was interesting because it was just the end of the war years and we had a lot of people who had all been in the army, so it was quite something!

I'm still in touch with one of the people I met at Edinburgh. There used to be a lot of us, but I'm well into my 80s now so the numbers have dwindled. The person I do keep in touch with is Alison Brown; we stayed in the same residence when we were students.

Can you tell us about some of your experiences since leaving the University?

I started off by doing what we all did, which was 6 months in a medical ward and 6 months in a surgical ward. I did that down in Ayr, because my mother and father weren't very well at the time and I needed to be somewhere nearby. Otherwise I'd have probably gone further afield, but it suited me very well at the time.

My mother died not long after I had finished my first year working in hospitals, and I wrote to my cousins in Ottawa to tell them. They wrote back, inviting me out to Canada to see them. I thought, 'why not?' I'd only been there for about two weeks and I thought, 'why not stay?' I did something I had never done here: I walked into the hospital and asked if I could see the superintendent! They gave me an appointment and he asked if

I'd like to join the staff there. Just like that. So I had gone for a holiday and ended up staying for nearly two years.

I hadn't expected to be away that long, and I decided I really had to come back home. I can remember getting out of the train and stepping onto Princes Street, looking around and thinking, 'yes, I think I'll stay here'.

Having been to the University of Edinburgh, you could travel to different countries around the world and you would almost always meet somebody who'd been to Edinburgh! It really does have a worldwide network.

Was it your own experience, both as a student and as an Edinburgh alumna, which encouraged you to support Medical Access Bursaries at the University?

I received a bursary when I was at Edinburgh, and that's very much why I support the Medical Access Bursaries now. I think the connection with the University also played a part in my decision.

As well as supporting medical access bursaries, you have also pledged to leave a legacy to the University in your Will. What prompted your decision to support the future of medicine at Edinburgh?

This is partly because I have no family or children of my own. A lot of my friends who had their own family were paying children through university and I wasn't doing that, so I thought it was an opportunity to support somebody else coming through. The legacy is being left to support those doing medicine; it's that much longer a course, so there are big financial pressures there.

It's been a very rewarding thing to do, and I've had quite a lot of feedback about it. I had a nice visit just two or three weeks ago from the young man who received the bursary I'd given this past year. He had just graduated, so he came to see me! He'd done quite well and passed all of his exams.



Above: Dr Helen Caldwell with one of her beneficiaries, Sam MacKenzie



“I know that it’s going to be so much easier with the scholarship and the support of the University. It gives me the motivation to push harder in training because I know there’s absolutely nothing holding me back.

DEBORAH KERR

Above: Deborah Kerr

A Sprint to Success

Donors supporting the University's sports scholarships are making a phenomenal difference in helping student athletes attain their sporting ambitions.

The Eric Liddell High Performance Scholarships, named after the legendary runner and the University's first Olympic hero, have been offering support to the University's elite athletes since they were set up three years ago. A number of donors have contributed to these Scholarships, which are endorsed by two of the University's distinguished Olympians, rower Katherine Grainger and cyclist Sir Chris Hoy.

For Deborah Kerr, a first year Economics student and keen sprint canoeist, this support has already had a huge impact on her time at the University. The £500 scholarship has enabled Deborah to focus on her training without the added financial pressures that accompany such a sport.

"It's not a cheap sport to say the least. A boat can be upwards of £2,500, paddles can be £250 to £300, and you also need all the extra waterproof things. It's a lot of money, especially for a first year student."

This, alongside a free gym membership, physiotherapy, and strong connections with the Institute of Sport, has given Deborah the much-needed support to excel in both her studies and her sporting commitments.

"I know that it's going to be so much easier with the scholarship and the support of the University. It gives me the motivation to push harder in training because I know there's absolutely nothing holding me back. I've got all of these tools in front of me and all these people willing to help and support me, so I've got no excuse not to do well!"

Deborah Kerr's introduction to sprint canoeing came in her final year of primary school, and has been a large part of life ever since.

"A man from the council came to our school and told us what sprint canoeing is – I don't think anyone had heard of it back then – and invited us to join. I continued it on after the initial introduction, and it grew and grew from there."

For many, the prospect of juggling a degree with a demanding sports regime would be daunting, but Deborah is keen to

be thrown in at the deep end and is filled with enthusiasm, confidence, and excitement for the four years ahead.

"Juggling my studies with a full-on sports schedule in high school was difficult, but you're not constantly snowed under with all these different things. Obviously I've never had to do University exams, but with this support I think I'll be okay! I've got everything in front of me."

Since being introduced to the sport, Deborah's sprint canoeing journey has had a number of high points. One of these came in August this year when she earned double bronze medals at the Junior World Championships.

"I couldn't believe it; it was just such an amazing experience and I don't know how I'm going to top it."

As for the future, Deborah has hopes of not only securing a career in Economics, but also competing in the 2020 Olympic Games.

"After graduation, as I'm studying Economics, I'd like to go into a big corporation, starting from the bottom and working my way up. It will also be perfect timing, if my kayaking is still going the way it's going right now, to compete at Tokyo 2020. I will have graduated a year beforehand and I'm on-track to be selected. Fingers crossed!"

Next year also marks the 150th anniversary of the University of Edinburgh Sports Union, a sporting community devoted to supporting students in their sporting ventures. Made up of 64 clubs with over 8,000 members, the University has a number of promising athletes hoping to triumph at the 2016 Olympics. And Deborah hopes that being a part of this Union will help her in her mission to raise the profile of sprint canoeing, not only within the University, but also across the whole of the UK.



Jurassic Scotland

This fact is not widely known, but the Isle of Skye is a world-class fossil site and the only place in Scotland where dinosaur fossils can be found. But this is by no means the end of Skye's significance in the world of palaeontology.

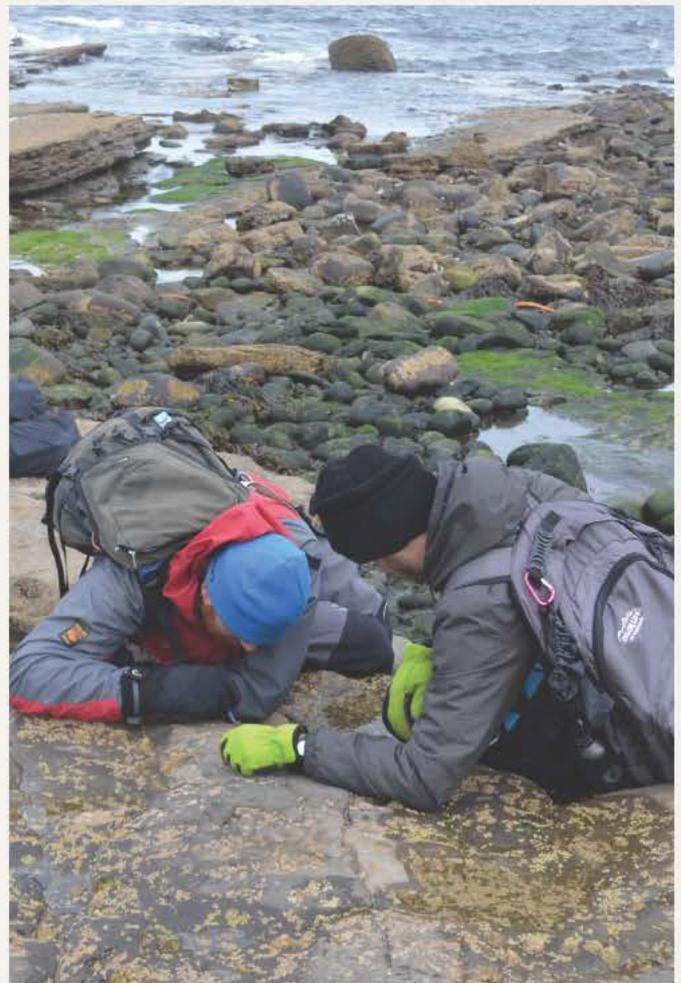
In the 1960s, an employee of the (now) SSE Hydro plant on Skye found a fantastic fossil of a 'sea monster' that roamed the seas of Scotland around 170 million years ago. He donated the fossil to the National Museums Scotland, where it remains today, encased in its rock. The fossil is likely to be one of the most significant ever to have been found in Scotland from the age of the dinosaurs, and it may even be of a new species.

The decision of Dr Steve Brusatte (Chancellor's Fellow in the School of GeoSciences) to move from the US to Scotland was partially influenced by the significance of Skye's fossils, which have become the basis of much of his research.

'Skye is a globally important place if you're interested in fossils,' notes Dr Brusatte. 'Once I came to Edinburgh, I started

to work with others here at the University and across the country to really try to figure out how Skye's fossils fit into the bigger evolutionary story. Our group includes people from the University, the National Museum, the Hunterian Museum, locals in Skye itself, and also Scottish Natural Heritage. I think we have a really bright future for the project.'

Glancing around Dr Brusatte's office, you can catch glimpses of Skye's history in the form of tiny fossil jawbones and teeth on the desk, large rocks showing partially uncovered spine-like features on the floor, and curious objects, partially encased in hard rock, that glimmer in the sunlight atop the various shelves.



"All this stuff in my office is what we brought back from our last field trip in April. We find dinosaurs, mammals, crocodiles, lizards, amphibians, but some of the other things you can find are these great 'sea monsters' – these things that were living in the oceans when the dinosaurs were living on land."

It is these 'sea monsters,' several of which have been discovered on Skye, that Dr Brusatte wishes to investigate further. The first of these studied by Dr Brusatte, a collection of four bones that was discovered by an amateur collector named Brian Shawcross, was named as an entirely new species earlier this year.

"When we looked at it we realised that it was a new type of ocean reptile. It's called an ichthyosaur; it looks like a fish or a dolphin, but it's actually a reptile. There are lots of these all over the world, but this was a type of ichthyosaur that nobody had ever seen before. We described the bones, announced it as a new species, and gave it a Gaelic name: Dearthmhara, meaning marine lizard, and shawcrossi, after Brian Shawcross."

However, it is the second 'sea monster' that Dr Brusatte is particularly interested in studying. Where the fossil Brian

Shawcross discovered consisted of four bones, this specimen is almost a complete skeleton.

"It could very well be another new species, or maybe it's the same as *Dearthmhara shawcrossi*. Either way, it's going to tell us a whole lot about what these animals looked like and how they behaved. It's at the museum today in the storehouse, still partially encased in hard rock. That's the biggest issue with studying it; we need to get it out of this hard rock, conserved, cleaned up, and secured. This would enable us to study it and compare it to other specimens worldwide, and to get it on display. It will be a beautiful display specimen, and by far the best one of these ocean reptiles that's ever been found in Scotland."

To enable Dr Brusatte to take such steps, there are a number of obstacles standing in the way, the main handicap being lack of scientific funding.

"All of this work needs to be funded or it just can't happen. Funding for scientific research has been slashed, and this is one of the toughest times scientists have ever seen for support, especially in the UK. As the funding pot gets smaller and smaller, that money is going into projects that have immediate benefit such as developing new drugs – things that we want and need, of course – but it means research such as this, that isn't going to create a new product that's going to make millions of pounds, is pushed to the side."



The Spanish Connection

Tom Challands, an energetic young palaeontologist, is currently conducting research into fossil fish to figure out how they could help us advance modern innovations. This research is funded by Dave Montgomery through his one-man company, Callidus Services Ltd.

Tom is currently a half-time teaching fellow at the University of Edinburgh, spending the other two and a half days a week focussing on his own research and childcare commitments.

“The money Dave gives me is fundamentally important,” Tom explains. “It allows me to top up my salary so I can devote time to research. It provides me with the means for facilities and equipment; attendance of conferences; publication fees; hardware, like this all-singing-all-dancing computer [Tom’s work requires graphics-intensive computer facilities]; and it covers everything needed for research.”

All of this stemmed from the pair meeting in a Spanish field, where Tom was leading a field trip. Dave was interested in learning about the area, and what better way to learn than by joining an expedition with the University of Edinburgh?

“We have a third year course in the Geology degree here at the University, where students go to Spain to study the evolution of the geology of the area. Dave wanted to learn more about

the area that he has his holiday apartment in, so he got in touch with staff here and said ‘Hey, do you mind if I come along? I’ll pay my own way’.”

This, as described by Tom, turned out to be a ‘win-win situation’, with Dave gaining knowledge on the geology of the area, and the students learning about industry. As well as sharing his business insights, Dave also ended up driving the van!

“We were just in the field, chatting, looking at rocks, then talking over a few beers and glasses of wine in the evening, and that’s how it came about.”

The support Dave has provided since has enabled Tom to not only expand the research he had already been working on, but also to present at conferences and become involved in other projects. In short, Tom has been able to establish himself as an early-career researcher, an increasingly difficult task in the modern funding climate.

“Dave’s support highlights how kind people can be. I think it rubs off because I’ve used some of the funding to train undergrads, and I’ve put some into joint projects including the Skye project with Steve Brussatte; Steve and I are in that together. The consortium we are working with, PalAlba, is a great and exciting collaboration.”

“I am also conducting a project that involves documenting and preserving fossil fish that have been found in the pavements around Edinburgh. In fact, they’re all over the country, even in London. We’re developing an online app that shows where you can find them.”

The majority of Tom’s research revolves around fossil fish and, in very simplified terms, using this information to develop tangible technologies. With recent cuts in scientific funding and pressure to conduct research that is applied, Tom believes it is important for people to understand the impact palaeontology can have on modern innovations, and for palaeontologists to understand what societal benefits their science can offer.

“I think palaeontology will only fit into the modern day idiom if one has the foresight to see what it is capable of. Don’t look at it in the traditional ‘cataloguing fossils and stone-collecting’ point of view. The unique thing about fossils is that you have this extra dimension of time available to you; you can see how something evolved over millions of years, during changes of environment, changes of climate. If you can see how a biomechanical function operated and evolved in changing circumstances, you then have the potential to understand how something, taking sonar as an example, might be developed to operate under changing circumstances.

“I love every part of my job. It’s fantastic. I love the research and I love working with the students. This is unfortunately the last year Dave is going to fund me, but that’s fair enough, he’s given me a lot of support.”

It’s certainly been quite a journey, from meeting in a field, to finding fossils in pavements, to studying sea monsters on Skye. Despite the challenges that may lie ahead, Tom is full of enthusiasm for his next find.

“You’re only as good as the next thing you’re doing. I’ve been finding out some really interesting things, and I suppose it’s the realisation of where I can now take my research, the people I work with, and the discoveries we make that inspires me to make the next move. Even if, at one level, each step seems very small, the realisation that each piece of work is new and has a real benefit to science and society is a very exciting feeling.”



Protopterus annectens (African lungfish) are the most closely related living fish to human beings and land animals. Tom researches the evolution of the senses in such fish, to see how these senses evolved from a fish to a land animal.

Below: Dave Montgomery and his grandson



Why I give

Dave Montgomery currently supports Tom’s research through his one-man company Callidus Services Ltd. Here he explains why he decided to donate to the Geology department.

I’m a petroleum engineer but my first degree is in geology. I’ve been interested in geology since I was four.

I have a house in Spain, and I do my own little bit of geology when I’m there. For my 60th birthday I hired a local geologist to take me round and give me some more insight into the geology of southeastern Spain. When I came back to the office I was telling some of my colleagues about the site I’d been to. This chap overheard the conversation and said he’d been to that location on a field trip with the University of Edinburgh. I made contact with Rachel Wood, who was leading that particular trip, and asked if I could join the next field trip. Rachel wanted to know if I could drive because they were always short of drivers. That’s the main reason I got on the field trip!

I got to know Tom there and he was applying for research grants when we were at the field centre. He told me what his research was about, and I have an interest in fish because I like to go and catch them! As a result of that I was looking at my company accounts at the end of the tax year and we had some surplus funds. So I thought here’s a good cause and I offered to give the department some cash, which was tax-deductible for me, so it was a tax-efficient way of helping Tom in his research.

Since then Tom has published several papers on his work and he also took my grandson, Thomas, around the Museum of Scotland. Because my granny helped me get into Geology, I’m helping my grandson with that, shall we say, desire. Most little kids are into dinosaurs and fossils, and he’s now very interested in rocks too. It’s just starting them on that journey to become a geologist.

I think we need to support universities and researchers in general. If you don’t do research then humankind comes to a standstill. We would never progress.

Enhancing the Student Experience

Studying medicine is renowned for its intense nature and long hours. For Rebecca Ross Browne, the incredible support of student bursaries has helped to relieve the financial pressures of attending University, allowing her to excel in her studies whilst enjoying the fun and friendships of student life.

Hailing from a small fishing village on the West Coast of Scotland, Rebecca has enjoyed a quiet upbringing in a beautiful yet remote part of the country. Her father is a fisherman, and her mother works in a shop close to the local comprehensive school that Rebecca attended. It was here that she discovered her passion for science, sparking her initial interest in studying medicine. This choice was cemented after spending time with members of the family who work in the medical profession.

me; I have very little time to work in order to supplement my student loan, as I am either in class or studying. I am now in my fourth year and appreciate the award more than ever as I no longer get a long summer – during which I would usually work – but instead have been in University.”

Reducing the pressure at such a vital stage in Rebecca’s educational career has had an astronomical impact on her overall experience of student life. She has been able to spend

“This money has helped me to succeed in my course and embrace University life. My time at Edinburgh has really been enhanced by the help and support offered by this award.”

“A few of my aunts and uncles are doctors, and I was very lucky to do some work experience with them; this made me realise that this was what I wanted to do.”

For Rebecca, Edinburgh was always the number one choice. This was not because of the University’s merits alone, but a combination of the reputation of it’s academic institution, the enchanting city surrounding it, and an interest in discovering pastures new. Being raised on the west coast, Glasgow was something of a familiar sight, and Rebecca was drawn to the notion of exploring a new city.

“I applied to study medicine not really expecting much, and was delighted to get in; I absolutely love medicine and Edinburgh and feel very lucky to be here. It is such a beautiful city with so much history and a well-regarded medical school, and this made it a very attractive choice.”

After hearing about the bursary via email in her first year, Rebecca decided to apply in a bid to relieve some of the financial pressures of University life. This award has had a profound impact on her experience at Edinburgh, especially considering the demanding nature of her studies.

“Studying is incredibly intense and very time-consuming, but I absolutely love it. The award has been so important to

time enjoying extra-curricular activities, and has become a part of academic societies within the University.

“In my spare time I do medic’s netball and I am the academic lead for the University Obstetric and Gynaecology Society. I also enjoy going to the gym and being outdoors and active. I used to be involved with more clubs, but have given them up as my clinical placements and studying have become more demanding.”

Despite the challenging nature of the course, Rebecca has formed many precious memories and made friends for life during her time at Edinburgh.

“My award enables me to enjoy university and medicine without financial stress. Without my award there would be increased pressure to get a job in my very limited spare time. Instead, I can do activities, see my friends, and study without the pressure and worry of money.”

These awards continue to support promising students, enabling undergraduates such as Rebecca to thrive in the University environment. “The bursary has helped me to succeed in my course and embrace University life. My time at Edinburgh has really been enhanced by the help and support offered by this award,” Rebeca says. Many of the University’s bursaries and scholarships are made possible by generous donations from individuals and companies.



Above: Rebecca Ross Browne



This research strives to aid the development and evaluation of therapies, with a vision to improve the lives of women and children who suffer complications in pregnancy and the newborn period.

Above: Dr James Boardman

Invested in Early Life

Globally, 15 million children a year are born prematurely – a leading cause of health and learning problems that extend throughout the course of a life. Many of these children will go on to experience difficulties that will prevent them from reaching their full potentials due to the effects of premature birth on the developing brain.

It is this fact that drove Dr James Boardman, now Reader in Neonatal Medicine and Director of the Jennifer Brown Research Laboratory at the Centre for Reproductive Health, to focus his research on the problems that can arise when pregnancies don't go to plan. He works with a team of researchers, including obstetricians, computer scientists, and physicists, in a laboratory that also helps train future perinatal scientists with an active MD and PhD programme.

“This birth cohort will include a large number of preterm babies, and also a number of healthy babies born at the end of a full pregnancy. It is being launched to study, in the most detailed way to date, maternal and infant factors that lead to brain injury, the long term effects of early birth on brain growth, and outcome for children and their families. We will also use cells from the baby's blood to discover potential new treatments. We plan to study placentas of women who agree to take part, and to follow-up with the children and families over

“The funding is absolutely critical; none of this could have happened without the vision for improving mother and child health held by the programme funders and their supporters.”

The current research being conducted by the laboratory has been made possible by funding from the charity Theirworld – established by Sarah Brown, wife of former Prime Minister and Edinburgh alumnus Gordon Brown – with support from the NHS. It is clear when speaking with Dr Boardman just how vital this funding is, and the immense feelings of gratitude he has towards donors and fundraisers.

“We run a translational programme of research that uses sophisticated MRI scanning of the mother and her baby in the womb to try and work out when fetal development falters in some pregnancies – which could help influence the timing of delivery. A large part of our work involves the use of state-of-the-art MRI on newborns soon after birth to work out the effects of being born too early or too small on the developing brain; this helps to identify factors that confer risk or resilience, and to see whether scanning helps to identify a group of children who might benefit from therapies in early infancy, when the brain is most able to adapt. The information about prognosis that we hope to gain from our studies is very important to parents.”

This research strives to aid the development and evaluation of therapies, with a vision to improve the lives of women and children who suffer complications in pregnancy and the newborn period.

Theirworld funded the establishment of the Jennifer Brown Research Laboratory in 2004, and has supported perinatal research at the University for over a decade. This year sees the launch of a new project, the Edinburgh Birth Cohort, which builds on past successes and will enable the researchers to take their studies to the next level.

the next 25 years. It's very exciting because, in addition to addressing questions about perinatal risk that may impact on how care is delivered, we'll have a unique opportunity to work out to what extent birth events determine life outcome, compared to later events in childhood; and we'll gain new insights into childhood determinants of adult illnesses and cognitive decline, which seem to have origins in early life for some people.”

“The new project is fundamentally interdisciplinary, and Edinburgh has proven to be a very good place for doing the work – people with a great deal of expertise across a range of disciplines have come together to launch the Edinburgh Birth Cohort.”

Dr Boardman's passion lies within early life research for a number of reasons, the most prevalent revolving around longevity. This project in particular strives to not only save lives, but to offer people the opportunity to reach their full potential within that life.

“Investing in research in early life brain problems is very valuable because what happens in the womb and first few months after birth affects the whole life course. Getting it right for mothers and children at the beginning is crucial for setting children on the best track and helping them achieve their full potential.”



“I have oversight of candidates training for ministry, and also of church endowments that are held in New College for the benefit of our students, our library and, more broadly, the life of the School of Divinity.”

PROFESSOR DAVID FERGUSSON

Above: Professor David Fergusson.

Devoted to the School of Divinity

Theology has been taught at Edinburgh since its foundation in 1583, and how times have changed since then. Unchanging, however, is people's devotion to the School of Divinity. Professor David Fergusson, Principal of New College, discusses his own history with the School, its continuous development and the philanthropic support that has been enabling it to thrive for centuries.

I've been at New College at different stages in my life. I was a student here from the late 70s until 1980, began my teaching career here from 1986 and, having gone to Aberdeen for 11 years, returned here in 2000 to take up the Chair of Divinity, which is the oldest chair in the University. It was in 2008 that I became Principal of New College.

The post of Principal is an appointment of the General Assembly for the Church of Scotland, which I think reflects the close relationship between the Church and the University.

and multi-disciplinary. This is in contrast to 30 to 40 years ago, when I was a student and most people were training for ministry, in either the Church of Scotland or the Church of England.

This development is partly a response to changes in our society, partly it's a response to important intellectual pressures, and partly the fostering of a better environment for the students that we hope to attract here. To that extent, we're no different to the rest of the University.

“New College today has a distinctive identity, with its buildings, its collegiate atmosphere and its place in the broad-spectrum University.”

I have oversight of candidates training for ministry, and also of church endowments that are held in New College for the benefit of our students, our library and, more broadly, the life of the School of Divinity. My position is Professor of Divinity within the University, with all the academic responsibilities that that entails. In addition I have this role that I exercise on behalf of the Church of Scotland, while also exercising within my role at the University. I see this as a mutually beneficial partnership of Church and University, and it's one that's served us very well since the foundation of the University of Edinburgh in 1583. It continues to do so under very different conditions today.

The School of Divinity in Edinburgh has a long and distinguished record in the study of Theology. We have produced many leading scholars in the different disciplines associated with the study of theology and religion; many of these have been leading figures in the Scottish church. We have also been a popular destination for overseas students for many years now.

Our history is complex because the college was originally the site of the Free Church College of Edinburgh. Through a process of church union, the church college was merged with the University's faculty of Divinity. It migrated here from Old College in 1935 to create the combined faculty of Divinity within the New College buildings here on the Mound.

In the recent past we have become a more ecumenical school; we have introduced the teaching of religions other than Christianity, and we have produced a very successful religious studies program. So the School of Divinity is much more broadly based today than it has ever been. It is ecumenical, multi-faith,

Our generation has a responsibility to continue to raise funds that will ensure that the School remains in good health for subsequent generations. Here we're talking in particular about student scholarships; support for the library and the infrastructure of the school including the New College buildings; and ways of promoting partnerships with external users including the churches. It's become increasingly important to me to secure funds that will enable the school to prosper in the years ahead.

I've recently become aware of how important the 19th century endowments have been, in maintaining student scholarships, providing opportunities for our students to travel overseas, and in supporting the work of the New College library.

I often think of the legacy of Miss Jane Jeffrey. Miss Jeffrey, the daughter of a Stirlingshire farmer and sister of a minister of the Church of Scotland, bequeathed £5,000 to the University of Edinburgh in 1887. Today, well over a century later, the fund continues to support student travel each year. It's made a difference to the experience of many generations of students, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

I would say - and I do say - to potential donors: don't underestimate the importance an endowment can have in the lives of our students over a long period of time. This is obviously of particular importance in a time of mounting student debt; we have to continue to work hard at ways of alleviating the financial hardship of many of our students, both overseas and at home. We're incredibly grateful to our supporters for enabling us to do this.

A Volunteer by Nature

Ann West has given the gift of time and money to the University of Edinburgh since graduating in 1966.



Retired since 2008, Ann is a regular volunteer and incredibly active in the University of Edinburgh London Alumni Network, both in the organisation of events and the recruitment of new members. And her devotion to the University does not end there; Ann also makes annual contributions to the Edinburgh Fund, and has named the University in her Will. Here she shares her memories of Edinburgh, and her experiences as a volunteer.

“I’d always liked Edinburgh very much,” says Ann. “It’s a lovely city, and I was delighted to be able to go there. It seemed to me a centre of civilisation. Those were the days when people didn’t travel abroad much; the first time I went abroad I was well into my 20s. In the 1960s, I didn’t have much experience of what the world had to offer. Edinburgh seemed to me very cosmopolitan, with masses of stuff going on and a great mix of people. I remember going home to my parents and saying, ‘Edinburgh is my town now. Not Falkirk any longer.’”

“When I left University, I did a year at Moray House and trained as a teacher. I’ve never actually worked in Scotland. My then husband was a doctor and he was finishing his medical degree. We then moved down to England, so all my working life has been in England.

When asked if I miss Edinburgh, I would say after so many years it’s no longer an ache because it’s been over 50 years since I left. But I still like Edinburgh very much, and it’s always a joy to go back.

“I have always felt a sort of link with the University, and this is one of the reasons for my annual donations and naming the University in my Will. Becoming a member of the committee, which runs events in London for Edinburgh alumni, really reinvigorated my interest in the University, so that is also a key factor.

“The Network started up in 2009. I remember receiving an invitation to go along to a meeting about the setting up of the group, which turned out to be the group I am now secretary to, so it all stemmed from there.

“I am a volunteer by nature, and I volunteer in a number of ways. It has been fantastic to be really securely linked back to the University; I’ve enjoyed every moment of the past few years. It was of course hard work getting things in place, but we’re well practiced now and we have superb support from the University.

“What began as a handful of people has become a group of around 1,000 members. It’s clearly one of the many ways in which these young people coming to London – a huge city in which to come to and to find your way – can meet like-minded people and have the link with the University, which is really the hook that draws them all in.

“We run a number of events, but the biggest yet was our recent Burns Night event. Most of the events attract 60 to 100 people, but there were 212 that evening. It was certainly a big deal to organise and a real high point.

“It is great to be able to keep in contact with something that’s been a character-forming experience; University shapes your life in so many different ways. You perhaps don’t realise when you’re there, but as an older person, on reflection, I can really understand and appreciate how much the University has given and how much it continues to give. Volunteering serves to strengthen that connection with the University, with the friendships you have made and the links you have built. When you graduate, it doesn’t have to be the end of it.”



Interested in
supporting a project?

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