



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Challis Bequest Society News

Edition 20, 2020



Advocates for life

How John and Mary Holt's passion for animal welfare and veterinary care will last more than a lifetime.

Few at the Sydney School of Veterinary Science would disagree with the assessment that Dr John Holt is a legend at the University. As a renowned veterinarian, academic, and mentor, it is impossible to know just how many people and animals benefited from his work. His honesty and his love for animals were passed on to the next generation and have remained key characteristics of the school, even since his death in 2013.

Dr Holt's wife, Mary Holt, has spent much of her life striving towards the same goals as her husband.

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Above: Dr John Holt with his dearly loved dog, Toby.

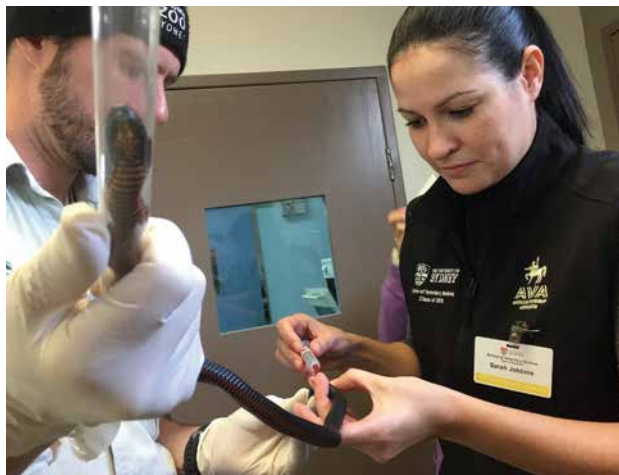
Together, they sought to improve animal welfare and raise up a new generation of veterinarians. In fact, she's still working as a pharmacist, providing medications for St George Animal Hospital and five other practices that they owned throughout Sydney.

“John used to say to me, ‘You’ll be the oldest pharmacist in Australia!’” Mrs Holt jokes. “And I said to him, ‘I’m doing what I’m passionate about. I have been passionate about it all my life.’”

It’s their shared vision that inspired an exceptionally generous gift of \$135,000 in 2014 to establish the Dr John Holt Scholarship for Animal Welfare. Mrs Holt explains that the idea was two-fold: to encourage younger veterinarians, and to leave a legacy in his honour.

“After John died, I felt it would be nice to do something in his memory in some way and help encourage a young person to become a veterinarian.”

Mary Holt



Scholarship recipient, Sarah Jobbins, inserting a microchip into a red-bellied black snake at Taronga Wildlife Hospital.

Sarah Jobbins is the first recipient of the scholarship. She recently graduated and has begun her career as Associate Veterinarian at Tamworth Veterinary Hospital. Mary shares that Sarah is regularly in touch to express her gratitude:

“It’s really wonderful to see somebody get this opportunity. Sarah writes me letters saying that her ultimate aim is to be as passionate a veterinarian as John was.”

Dr Holt’s work began many years ago, in a time when animal welfare was very minimal. His hard work laid the foundations for a new era of animal treatment. **Thanks to the generosity of Mary, their lives’ work will continue well into the future.**



Sarah Jobbins with Dusty the Fjordland penguin at Taronga Wildlife Hospital.

The amateur historian changing the future

How a lawyer from Broken Hill changed the face of archaeology and prehistory in Australia.

The late Tom Austen Brown's (LLB '46 BA '74) passion for archaeology spawned, remarkably, from his legal career as a solicitor in the far west of NSW. Travelling long distances to clients' remote outback properties, he became fascinated by the Aboriginal artefacts that were often scattered across country. In the process, he accumulated one of Australia's most significant archaeological collections which he kept in his home laundry.

In 1969, Emeritus Professor Richard Wright, then archaeologist and specialist in Aboriginal stone technology at the University of Sydney, travelled to meet Brown and see his remarkable collection. After persuading Brown of the importance of understanding and recording the full context of the stone tools he was finding, Wright encouraged him towards a career in archaeology, which he duly embraced. As a result, Brown re-entered life as a student and spent much of his later years refining the recording and understanding of Aboriginal stone tool technologies. His ground-breaking work (and passion) have proven instrumental in the advancement of the subject and remains important to this day.

Mr Brown's deep love and commitment to the study of prehistory also extended to his Will, leaving 50% of his estate "to the discipline of prehistory in such manner as the Senate may determine". His exceedingly generous gift will empower and sustain the study of prehistory at the University for many years to come. Professor Keith Dobney, Head of School (School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry) says such a generous gift has made an extraordinary difference.



Professor Annie Clarke waiting to take off from Groote Eylandt in the Northern Territory in 2019 after an archaeological fieldwork trip.

"His generous gift has already supported a range of academic endeavours, including research projects both in Australia and beyond. It has supported investment in advanced imaging equipment, which we can use to digitally capture objects and artefacts which can then be both analysed for research purposes and used for teaching, exhibitions and other forms of outreach. The funds also support research into various aspects of Australian and world prehistory of some of our academic staff, as well as PhD students, conferences and publishing. And that's really only just the beginning."

Professor Annie Clarke, Professor of Archaeology, says "Mr Brown's gift is also being used to help get the next generation of budding archaeologists and prehistorians excited by this subject. One of our aims is to use the endowment to engage with school kids, particularly those from Indigenous and socio-economically deprived backgrounds. We want Tom's passion for the study of our prehistoric past to be an inspiration to everybody."

"Through his gift, Tom Brown has contributed to the future potential of Australian peoples, and of the knowledge base of Australia generally."

It is a bold vision of the future, and one that has only been made possible through the generous bequest of a small-town lawyer from Western NSW.

Searching for a breakthrough

After caring for his wife, Anne, during her battle with liver disease, John Brinson decided to leave a gift in his Will to care for more people like her in the future.

Of all life-threatening diseases, liver disease and liver cancer remain some of the least understood and most fatal. They are also the most underfunded when it comes to research.

Before finding the help they needed at the University, John and Anne Brinson's experiences at previous hospitals and GPs were very discouraging. But for the last few years of Anne's life, they received help that far exceeded their expectations from Professor Jacob George (PhD Med '95), Robert W Storr Professor of Hepatic Medicine at the University.

After a long journey with liver disease, Anne and John came to Professor George, who is based in Sydney's Westmead Hospital. As John describes, the care they received from Professor George was life-changing.

"Professor George and his team demonstrated to me during Anne's prolonged treatment a dedication and commitment that was sincere. Nothing seemed too much trouble and he was always available to help."

John Brinson

John was so struck by the care and professionalism that he and Anne received from Professor George, that he made the decision to leave

a gift in his Will to support the Robert W Storr Chair of Hepatic Medicine position into the future, as well as scholarships for early career researchers studying in the field of liver disease.

Thanks to John's gift, Professor George is excited about the potential for future breakthroughs in liver disease treatment.

"To improve human health, we must do more research to first understand the disease process. Through this, we can actually treat diseases. That's why gifts like John's are so incredibly important."

Tragically, Anne passed away before she was able to access a liver transplant. John is committed to helping researchers make more breakthroughs in this area, to help care for other people with liver disease in the future.

"I want to help improve the quality of liver research in Australia and make it easier for older Australians to receive transplants rather than the seeming priority given to younger people," he says.

By deciding to give a share of his Will to the Chair and to creating a new scholarship, John has actually continued a tradition that began more than 20 years ago. The Storr



John and his late wife, Anne in the Alaska Arctic Circle in 2007.

Liver Centre, where Professor George is based, was established after the late Robert Storr dedicated a portion of his Will to research, after his own battle with cancer.

As one of the world's most renowned liver disease experts, Professor George is grateful for the vision of Robert Storr.

"Undoubtedly in terms of productivity, we're number one in the country [at the Storr Liver Centre] ... That's the recognition we get, but it all started small and it started small with Robert Storr having that vision."

Professor Jacob George

Professor George says careers in medical research are incredibly difficult to maintain without the generous support of people like John. The uncertainty of grant money and other support mechanisms means the best researchers are often drawn into other research areas.

That is why he is so thankful for John's generous bequest which will help enable long-term stability for leading researchers in liver disease. John's generosity will support them in discovering the next major breakthrough for people like Anne.

How COVID-19 highlighted the importance of research

For Professor Tania Sorrell AM, one moment of inspiration can lead to better outcomes for billions of people worldwide.



Professor Tania Sorrell AM



As the University's Professor of Clinical Infectious Diseases, Professor Tania Sorrell AM has certainly had a challenging year.

While Professor Sorrell has worked for many years on infectious diseases as Director of the Marie Bashir Institute for Infectious Diseases and Biosecurity, the impact of COVID-19 has brought her work squarely into the public spotlight.

High quality research and open channels of communication with policymakers have been fundamental for the NSW response to COVID-19. Professor Sorrell and her team at Westmead Hospital produced a new diagnostic test specific to the disease within

two weeks of seeing their first case. Her team were also able to sequence the entire length of the virus, which has driven a significant amount of the response across the State.

Professor Sorrell says Australia is uniquely positioned as a global leader in medical research. She says that we can strongly contribute to the fight against serious infectious diseases like COVID-19 in the future, but the key is continued funding of vital research.

That is one of the reasons Professor Sorrell has generously decided to create a legacy beyond her working lifetime. She will be leaving a significant portion of her estate towards research into, and prevention of, infectious diseases.

"I very much have wanted, from the time of my appointment, to build up infectious diseases and potentially leave it as a legacy of excellent research and education and student support within the University of Sydney."

Professor Sorrell

Professor Sorrell says she also wants to support early career

researchers. New researchers often struggle to turn promising starts into fully-fledged careers with a long-term impact in their disciplines, due to funding shortages.

"I think we're all aware that government is funding medical research to a lesser extent than it used to. That's why philanthropic funding is becoming a really important mechanism by which emerging young researchers can be assisted in achieving their aims."

A better world is one without COVID-19, or other infectious diseases – and it is one which Professor Sorrell is working hard to create, now and well into the future.

"We've been very fortunate to have donors contribute in the past," she says. "We're just giving back to those who've given so much – that's very much part of the ethos."



Edmund Mitterski and Stephen Garrood are leaving a gift in their Wills to support scholarships.

“I think often that we can actually leave a legacy, a leg up or an inspiration for those students who often are going through hardship, for generations to come.”

Edmund Mitterski
(GradDipPublAdmin '08
MPublPol '09)

A dream for equality

Edmund Mitterski and Stephen Garrood are making sure that LGBTQI+ students can make their mark on the world.

“I always daydreamed of coming to Sydney University, and fortunately I managed to do that,” says alumnus and former scholarship student, Edmund Mitterski.

Edmund fondly remembers his time studying a Graduate Diploma in Public Administration (2008) and Master of Public Policy (2009). Along with lifetime partner Stephen Garrood, they know that the opportunity to attend the University of Sydney offers a wealth of opportunity that few can access.

Edmund and Stephen are set to fund two scholarships, with a preference towards LGBTQI+ students who face inequality and disadvantage.

The first scholarship, for students studying business at the University, will help disadvantaged students

begin to make their way in the business world. Edmund and Stephen understand the difficulties that LGBTQI+ people can face in business. They believe creating a scholarship will provide a stepping stone towards helping others succeed.

“The business world can be very aggressive and not normally an area known to support people of minority groups,” he says.

The second will be devoted to the veterinary school, in memory of beloved pet and family member Misha. The pair experienced first-hand the benefits of the University’s care for pets. In response, they want to help support a new generation of veterinarians. Stephen says that it is exciting to know that the scholarship will also help to advance human medical

knowledge, because veterinary research often applies across species to humans.

Aside from their generous commitment, both Edmund and Stephen are passionate about their involvement in the Challis Bequest Society. Stephen says that being part of the Society affords them the opportunity to meet people from all walks of life, with fascinating stories and passions.

“Everybody has got a really good story as to why they want to leave their bequest. I met an older gentleman, and he said, ‘I’ve never been to university in my life. I was a butcher and my wife got cured of cancer. And I just thought I’d really like to give some money into medical research’. And I thought, ‘wow’.”

Stephen Garrood



Jane Francis



Jane Francis (middle) with her parents Stan and Joan Stebbing on Graduation Day 1973.

Golden memories

How Jane Francis (BA '73 DipEd '74 MA '86 MPHlth '99) wants to create opportunities that her mother never had.

Ms Jane Francis has almost too many fond memories to choose from as she thinks back on her time at the University in the 1970s. Between waiting in line to enrol on her very first day, sitting on the alcoves within the sandstone walls around the Quad, meeting new friends, and the 'old book' smell of Fisher Library, there are so many memories to choose from! Leaving a gift to the University, she says, is a great way of giving back to a place that gave her so much to remember.

“When I thought about giving to the University, I knew I wanted to support a woman to undertake studies in medicine. My mother always wanted to be a nurse but as the second eldest of a large family, living in the country, there was, to her regret, neither the money nor the opportunity,” says Jane.

Jane knows that her gift will help someone enjoy similar experiences to those she recalls so fondly. Plus, she also knows it will also make a difference in the world, empowering a new generation of doctors, nurses, and researchers.

“I'd be very happy if my contribution provided some textbooks, or a computer, or paid for accommodation. Every gift, no matter how big or small, can make a difference.”

Jane Francis
(MA '86 BA '73 DipEd '74 MPHlth '99)

As a member of the Challis Bequest Society, Jane enjoys meeting people with similar outlooks on helping people undertake studies for a brighter future. Hearing stories from a diverse range of backgrounds has helped her to realise that every gift counts.

The Planned Giving team would be delighted if you attended the next Challis Bequest Society Lunch, tour or virtual event. Please contact us on +61 2 8627 8811 or planned.giving@sydney.edu.au for more information.

From the Planned Giving Director

As an alumna of the University of Sydney, I understand the significance of the education I received and the opportunities I was given as a student.

That's why I'm passionate about helping to provide these same opportunities to the next generation of students here at the University.

Whether you are already a Challis Bequest Society member, or are considering leaving a gift in your Will, I would love to hear from you – because everyone has a story to tell.

There are also many wonderful ways to stay connected with the University, including:

- Tune in to our Sydney Ideas podcast for ground-breaking research and discussions
- Visit the newly established Chau Chak Wing Museum
- Attend a virtual or live concert at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music
- Take part in lifelong learning in your areas of passion
- Talk with our team about your very own guided campus tour.

We are always on the lookout for members we can feature in our newsletter, so do say hello if you think that could be you.

Warm regards,
Alexandra Miller



From R-L, Alexandra Miller with Mrs Carmela Lavezzari and her solicitor and friend, Ms Lisa Hirst at the Challis Bequest Society Luncheon in the Great Hall.

“A conversation about a planned gift is a celebration of life. I am very grateful to have a chance to talk with our supporters about their stories, their values and the vision for the future that they want to achieve through the University.”

Alexandra Miller (BAS '10 MPACS '11)

Contact us

Planned Giving
The Advancement Portfolio

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