Teaching, learning and performance facilities across the campus have now benefited from the generosity of one of the University’s most dedicated supporters. For over 70 years, Diana Young (BSc General – Chemistry, Zoology and Physiology 1937, Hon MA 1968) contributed to the life of her Alma Mater, both financially and as an active member of our alumni community.

Diana, who was present at the opening of the original Students’ Union building in 1936, married industrialist Gerard Young (Hon LLD 1962) shortly after her graduation. Through Diana’s introductions, Gerard became a member of the University Council and was Pro-Chancellor for 16 years. An energetic member of the Building Committee, he was involved in the development of the Arts Tower, Western Bank Library, and Sorby, Ranmoor, Earnshaw and Tapton Halls. Diana took a great interest in the development of the women’s hall of residence, and also participated in many University extramural classes.

In addition, the couple gave a huge amount to the city of Sheffield through their involvement in various charities and the Crucible Theatre. Diana was a magistrate for many years, and Gerard served terms as Master Cutler and as the last High Sheriff of Hallamshire and the first Lord Lieutenant of South Yorkshire. In memory of their long relationship with Sheffield and the University, Diana kindly donated £25,000 in 2006 to create the Diana and Gerard Young Scholarships for undergraduate students.

We were very sad to hear of Diana’s death on 13 October 2012, in her 97th year. She generously bequeathed £40,000 to the University in her Will. It is these funds that we have used to transform the Western Bank Library, the Physical Chemistry Undergraduate Teaching Laboratory and the Drama Studio.

Miles Stevenson, Director of Alumni & Donor Relations, said, “Diana was a wonderful friend of the University and I, and many others, had tremendous admiration for her. We are very grateful for her generosity in remembering the University in her Will, as she did throughout her life. I was delighted that four of the 12 Diana and Gerard Young Scholarship recipients graduated with first-class degrees – testimony to the transformative effect that philanthropy has in supporting our talented students.”
Celebrating our benefactors

Welcome to the latest issue of our Legacy newsletter and thank you for your continued interest in the University of Sheffield.

Each year we are able to enhance the student experience here at Sheffield by carefully managing the monies we receive from the generous bequests left to the University. In these challenging financial times for higher education, it is heartening to know that our supporters continue to make this kind gesture when they consider how best to contribute to the University’s success.

One of our benefactors described to me why she had chosen to remember the University in her Will: “I do so in the thought of the great privilege it has been throughout my life to belong to the University.” It is this sentiment that I hope will be echoed in the future by our students who have the opportunity to fulfil their potential, regardless of their means or background, through the generous care of our alumni, staff and friends.

Miles Stevenson
Director of Alumni & Donor Relations

Over 600 people have now remembered the University by a gift in their Will.

Encouraging a love of Portuguese

Memories of an inspirational French professor encouraged Dorothy Atkinson (BA French and Spanish 1944, MA Spanish 1948) to leave £2,000 in her Will to the University for research into Portuguese: “[Professor Clapton] could make you feel an ignorant worm, but also that you’d better do something about it!”

The Department of Hispanic Studies decided to spend the bequest by creating four travel bursaries. Dr Carmen Ramos Villar said, “I would like to say a heartfelt ‘thank you’ to Dorothy for the opportunity she has given to four of my students – this will be a wonderful boost to them.”

One of the bursary recipients, Michael Ladyman, used the funds to spend a month in Lisbon, improving his Portuguese at the local university. He is full of enthusiasm for the experience, commenting, “I enhanced my language skills and, equally as importantly, I was able to appreciate the culture, history and traditions of what I see as one of Europe’s greatest cities. I must extend my gratitude to the family of Miss Atkinson – without them I would never have been able to have such a fantastic and useful summer.”

An inspiring donor

Dr Rachael Brook (MB ChB Medicine 1956) was the first graduate to contact the University’s then new Development & Alumni Relations Office in 2002. Miles Stevenson, Director of Alumni & Donor Relations, took the call: “Rachael explained that she had struggled financially as a student and could really empathise with today’s students. She made a generous donation straight away – and continued to donate every year until her death in 2012. In her lifetime, she donated over £20,000 to provide support for scholarships and hardship bursaries.”

Dr Brook felt strongly that women should have the same opportunities as men, and recalled that, when she was thinking of studying Medicine here, someone at her school tried to persuade her to become a nurse instead of a doctor. She had to cash in her National Savings certificates to help pay for her first year: “At one point I was desperate – living on beans on toast. The Dean of the Medical School took a real interest in helping me and was able to point me in the direction of two charities. I applied to both and was successful. The financial help I received meant a great deal to me. I was so grateful to be helped with my studies.”

Dr Brook also remembered the University in her Will, leaving a very generous legacy of £30,000 to help fund further scholarships for medical undergraduates. The University is proud to recognise her gift through The Dr Rachael Brook Scholarships, and her name is inscribed on the Donor Honour Board at the entrance to Firth Court.

Scholarship recipient Jena Mamdani said, “I would like to say thank you, not only for the financial help but also for being an inspiration. I have been driven to work even harder because someone has invested their money and believed in me. I feel inspired to do the very best I can, not only for myself, but to make Rachael Brook proud.”

In addition to her financial bequest, Rachael donated a beautiful Joannes Varotti violin to the Department of Music – the department has a collection of 35 reproduction and original period instruments, one of the largest collections of any UK university. Made in Bologna in 1791, the violin will now be used by students for performances and educational activities.
A pioneering study by researchers from the Sheffield Institute for Translational Neuroscience (SITraN) is identifying a group of drugs that could actually slow down the progression of Parkinson’s disease.

All degenerative diseases – including Alzheimer’s and motor neurone disease – cause brain cells to die. As Dr Oliver Bandmann, Reader in Neurology at SITraN, said, “If we can unlock ways to stop cells from dying, then the progression of the disease would be slowed down dramatically, which would hugely improve a patient’s quality of life.”

Dr Bandmann and his team have now received a donation of £2,000 from Mary Wragg, the widow of Dr Brian Wragg (BA Architecture 1937, MA Architecture 1947, PhD Architecture 1977), a member of staff in the School of Architecture for many years who sadly suffered from Parkinson’s for over 10 years before his death in 1995. The gift was made specifically for Parkinson’s research at the University after Mrs Wragg heard Dr Bandmann speak at a reception for former staff, held in the Medical School.

In response, Dr Bandmann said, “We are exceptionally grateful for any donations as they help us to carry out investigations more quickly and in turn help to attract further funding from other charities and organisations – they really make a huge difference.”

The Soil Fertility and Wheat Initiative, based within the cross-faculty Project Sunshine, has benefited from a gift of £16,667 from the estate of Mary Olga Illingworth. The trustees of Mrs Illingworth, who was born and raised in Bradwell, a village in the Derbyshire Peak District, allocated the money to the University as her Will stated that she wished to support an appropriate environmental charity or charities.

The gift has helped to establish The Mary Olga Illingworth Environmental Fund, which will provide a group of 20 academics and PhD students – who are investigating the range of fungi in the soil with the aim of creating a more sustainable form of wheat that is resistant to diseases – with bursaries, travel grants and equipment.

Phil Waywell, Project Sunshine Manager, commented, “I am delighted to have received this gift from the estate of Mrs Illingworth. The funds will support our world-leading work in fields relating to the global challenge of Food Security.”

Donations help to attract further funding for medical research.

An Engineering graduate, Harry Myers (MEng Electrical Engineering 1963), kindly left a bequest of £1,000 to the University; his gift will help an Engineering scholarship student. Mr Myers followed a career as an engineering lecturer, latterly at Manchester Metropolitan University.

He went on to become an HM Inspector, specialising in engineering courses. As part of our acknowledgement of this bequest, David Meadows, Development Officer for Legacies and Individual Giving, sent Mrs Olga Myers a Silver Arrows pin badge. She replied, “Harry would have been delighted to receive it and would certainly have put it on his jacket straight away!”

“As a good Yorkshire man he always wore an enamelled white rose which I gave to our daughter as she was very proud to have been born in Yorkshire.”

The Alumni Fund supports projects that most directly affect our students’ University experience, helping them to achieve their full potential. We distribute Alumni Fund Scholarships, enhance student facilities, and provide Alumni Foundation grants to student clubs and societies.

Please visit www.sheffield.ac.uk/ alumni/support/fund for details of how your gift, large or small, can make a difference today.
The Students’ Union continues to win the highest honours for student satisfaction across the UK university sector: highlights for 2013 included topping the Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey and the National Student Survey.

At the beginning of the academic year in September, new and returning students were greeted by a refurbished Students’ Union, which now fully integrates University House into the building and features a connecting bridge with the Octagon. The £20 million scheme was complete in time for the 50th anniversary of the opening of University House.

New features include an amphitheatre-style space for special events within a new Octagon Piazza, as well as more social and study spaces open for longer hours. There are also exhibition and business spaces as well as improvements to music and arts venues.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Sir Keith Burnett said,

The refurbishment reflects the strong partnership between the Students’ Union and the University and demonstrates our commitment to providing an unrivalled student experience – something we’re really proud of.

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"Leaving a legacy to the University is a very personal decision,” said David Meadows, Development Officer for Legacies and Individual Giving, “and one which many people wish to do in private. However, I would welcome the opportunity to meet you if you have already made this decision or are in the process of drafting a Will. This way, we can ensure that your donation will be used as you intended.

"In the first instance, you may find it useful to meet and discuss – in complete confidence – the ways in which a legacy gift can provide support. I can also offer suggested wordings and advice about endowments.

"It is always a pleasure to take alumni, former staff and friends on tours of the campus, to relive memories, revisit an old department or see the revamped Students’ Union. The University has developed dramatically in recent years: giving you a first-hand experience of the campus today can help to clarify your thoughts on the most effective use of your future gift.”

Please contact David by calling 0114 222 1073 or email d.meadows@sheffield.ac.uk

We have a section on our website devoted to leaving a gift in your Will: www.sheffield.ac.uk/legacies

The University of Sheffield, 40 Victoria Street, Sheffield, S10 2TN
www.sheffield.ac.uk/alumni
The University of Sheffield is an exempt charity (X 1089).