

## **Time capsule celebration to mark new cancer research centre**

A time capsule has been buried on the site of the University of Southampton's new Centre for Cancer Immunology.

The Centre, which is expected to open next year, is to be the first in the UK dedicated to cancer immunology research.

On Thursday 30 June, University scientists, patients and senior members of staff from both the University and Southampton General Hospital, where the building is being built, came together to bury the time capsule. They were joined by ex-Saints centre forward Matt Le Tissier.

The time capsule contains a pledge which reaffirms both organisations' commitment to curing cancer. It also includes a signed shirt from Le Tissier and a drawing from three-year-old Phelan who was diagnosed with neuroblastoma when he was 18 months old.

Initially Phelan's prognosis looked bleak, however he is now doing really well, following participation in a cancer immunotherapy trial at Southampton.

The new Centre will bring world-leading cancer scientists under one roof and enable interdisciplinary teams to expand clinical trials and develop lifesaving drugs.

It is a year since the University launched its campaign to raise £25 million to fund the new building. The campaign has received huge support, with the University having raised 75 per cent of the target and now looking for additional supporters to raise the remaining £6.3m. Construction of the new Centre is under way with the foundations laid and the concrete frame being erected.

Professor Sir Christopher Snowden, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Southampton, said: "This time capsule represents our strong commitment to developing treatments that provide long-lasting defence against cancer. Through our successful partnership with the University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust, we have developed a unique 'bench to bedside' approach, taking our scientific discoveries directly to the clinic where they are helping many people fight cancer. But there is still a lot to learn. By pooling our understanding and extending our resources in the new Centre, we will accelerate our research progress and save many more lives."

Fiona Dalton, Chief Executive of University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust, commented: "We are very excited to see the progress of the new Centre for Cancer Immunology and strongly believe that it will reinforce Southampton as the UK leader in cancer immunology research. The University of Southampton, supported by University Hospital Southampton, has made a number of advances in tumour immunology and immunotherapy over the past 40 years and through this

innovative new Centre we will be able to continue to work together to help many more people with cancer become free of the disease."

Immunotherapy is a revolutionary new treatment, supercharging the body's natural defences to find and destroy cancer. The new treatments being developed by Southampton scientists, in the form of vaccines and antibodies, direct special immune cells against cancers. These 'killer' cells can control and shrink cancer and give long-lasting protection. The University is developing treatments to target some of the most aggressive forms of the disease including cancers of the lung and skin, and childhood neuroblastoma.

Results from clinical trials are very promising with more than 20 per cent of participants living cancer free.

Tim Elliott, Director of the new Centre for Cancer Immunology, said: "Our new Centre will allow us to build on our expertise and expand the research teams in Southampton to make even greater progress in developing new treatments. The next few years will see great advances in immune therapies for cancer with the University of Southampton at the very forefront of discovery."

Members of the media are welcome to attend the burying of the time capsule. Please contact Becky Attwood on [r.attwood@soton.ac.uk](mailto:r.attwood@soton.ac.uk) or 02380 593212.

Ends

#### **Notes to editors**

1. Photos taken by the University will be made available to the media after the event, however members of the media are welcome to attend. Contact Becky Attwood to arrange a press pass.
2. Additional quotes from George Phelan and Matt Le Tissier:

George Jordan, Phelan's father, comments: "I had no idea trials like these were being led from Southampton. This trial was a lifeline that gave us hope. And as a dad of a patient I believe in hope. And I believe society would not look on as observers but act as the givers of a chance to live. Because from our experience, I believe that there is hope for a cure that could save more lives than the percentage we are able to rescue at present. So I would say to anyone: please consider making a donation to the campaign. It may not be about you today but it could be about your family tomorrow. Your contribution today could benefit you tomorrow."

Matt Le Tissier, who heard about the University's campaign through being a patron for the Dave Wellman Trust, said: "I am delighted to be able to support this campaign. Cancer is a devastating disease affecting so many people from across our region but immunotherapy is one of the most exciting new forms of cancer treatment. I hope the University's new Centre will allow them to expand their already fantastic research capability for the benefit of more patients."

3. Building on its cancer immunology research expertise and recent successes in immunotherapy trials, the University of Southampton has launched a major fundraising campaign to raise £25m to open the UK's first dedicated Centre for Cancer Immunology at Southampton General Hospital in 2017. The Centre will be the first of its kind in the UK and will bring together world-leading specialists in a unique state-of-the art centre. The aim of the new Centre is to accelerate research progress, conduct more clinical trials and save more lives from cancer. Find out more about it at [www.southampton.ac.uk/youreit](http://www.southampton.ac.uk/youreit)

### **For more information**

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