



Historic win for Rebekah

Rebekah Ingle with her parents, Eunice and John, outside Corpus Christi College

A STUDENT at South Wilts School has won a top prize in a history essay competition organised by Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

Rebekah Ingle won a runner-up prize for her essay on Imperialism and the Origins of its Writings.

The sixth-former, who attended an awards ceremony on Saturday at the col-

lege, hopes to study history at degree level.

During the ceremony, Dr Andrew Spencer, admissions tutor of Corpus Christi, commented on the standard of entrants in the competition being exceptional, and on a par with the current history undergraduates studying at Cambridge.

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Project team parent representatives Georgia Chappels and Julie Watkinson. Picture: Roger Elliott DC3243P09

Women help to create an 'amazing gift'

TWO women who suffered the heartache of losing a baby have been part of the project board overseeing the development of the Benson Suite at Salisbury District Hospital.

Georgia Chappels and Julie Watkinson helped to design the unit and shared their personal experiences at Monday's emotional opening ceremony.



Lady Benson cuts the ribbon to officially open the Benson Suite at Salisbury District Hospital. From the left, Sir Christopher Benson, Julie Watkinson, Lady Benson, Georgia Chappels, Lady Pembroke, Lord Pembroke and chairman of Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust Luke March. DC3243P04



Peaceful place for grieving parents

By Jill Harding

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A NEW unit that will offer a private and peaceful environment for grieving parents who have lost a baby has opened at Salisbury District Hospital.

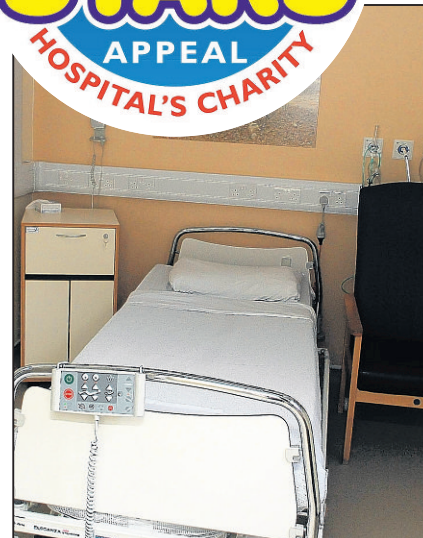
The Benson Suite will enable mothers to receive medical treatment and emotional support in a dedicated area away from the main labour ward.

Previously, women who suffered a late miscarriage, faced a medical termination or whose baby died shortly after birth, had to stay in the labour ward, often hearing the cries of healthy newborn babies coming from neighbouring rooms.

The unit was made possible thanks to a donation to the Stars Appeal from Sir Christopher and Lady Benson, who performed the official opening ceremony on Monday, joined by the Earl and Countess of Pembroke, hospital staff and parents who had experienced the heartache of losing a baby.

"This is something so needed, so obvious and so important," said Sir Christopher.

"At certain times in life all one wants is a place of peace and the company of loved ones. We hope this suite will be such a place for people at a time of great tragedy when peace and quiet memory are so important. Jo and I feel very honoured to





## Julie's story

"SEVEN years ago, at 20 weeks into my pregnancy, I suffered a late miscarriage. An awful medical description - to me, I had a baby," Julie Watkinson told the invited guests.

"We had a baby girl who we named Rebecca Louise. She was perfect, just very small. It is impossible for me to put into words the amount of pain and heartache we felt at our loss.

"Sadly, like many parents, we had our baby on the labour ward. In our room the world stopped but outside life still carried on. Our room was silent, no baby crying, other rooms were full of new-born baby cries which we could hear. It ripped our hearts out.

"The difference the Benson Suite will make is huge. It will have an impact on how parents reflect on the traumatic time they have had to go through. To have a safe, comfortable, calm and private environment in which to go through such a harrowing experience is so important.

"It will enable parents to spend precious moments with their babies as well as allowing other family members, including siblings, to do the same. I would give anything to turn back the clock just so we could spend time with Rebecca.

"From now on anyone having to go through the unbearable loss of a baby will do so in private, away from the labour ward, still with caring, understanding staff who are sensitive to their situation but in an environment which puts their needs first.

"I am glad that I have had the chance to make a difference to others and to me that has given Rebecca a purpose. She would be very proud, as am I."



The women with Lady Benson.

## Georgia's story

"MY SON Eddie Jack was born weighing a tiny 11b 4oz after an emergency Caesarean section at Salisbury Hospital at just 30 weeks," said Georgia Chappels.

"He was placed in NICU, where he spent the next few days with me by his side, but when evening came I had to leave him. Eddie Jack's condition deteriorated and he died at just a few days old.

"I was crushed, frightened and helpless. The staff instantly became my rock, taking me through the necessary procedures and helping me with my emotions. These moments were a complete daze - all I wanted was to be with my son. I asked to see Eddie Jack that evening and he was brought to me in a tiny basket. I held him for as long as I possibly could and the next morning I left him and made my way home.

"When the phone rang last year and they spoke of the proposed development of the Benson Suite, I immediately thought wow, what an amazing gift. A space that can be used by whoever needs it, at a time when it is most needed. I soon realised by being part of the team I could look back at my experiences with Eddie Jack and help make a difference.

"My journey was desperately uncomfortable, and this is what the Benson Suite will change. It will offer comfort in the most tragic of circumstances, and give hope and positivity by focusing on the individual requirements of parents and families. Being part of this project has been a healing process for me. I feel humbled that my experiences could make a difference.

"Life is great now, and I am truly blessed. I am happy, healthy, getting married and have my beautiful boys, little Buster, who is seven months, Ted, who is nearly two, and Frank, who is now six. I am enormously proud of Eddie Jack - he has made me into the person and mummy I am today. Each year, we all wish him happy birthday - his brothers look up to the stars in the sky and we now can smile."

have had the opportunity to help a little."

The new suite has two delivery rooms, a kitchen and family room and has already been used by grieving families who want to spend precious time with their babies.

Mothers, who may need to be in the unit for several days, can receive specialist care and support, including from the hospital's chaplain the Rev Kim Stephens.

"We can't change the tragic circumstances but we can give support at the most terrible of times," she said.

"Now we have a space and environment where we can do that in the most sensitive and caring way."

The suite will also be available to families who have experienced the birth of a critically ill child or for fathers and babies when a mother is very unwell and needs to be treated in the intensive care unit.

Although maternity staff have always worked hard to give women who have lost a baby a quiet space, it could be difficult on the busy main labour ward, where thousands of babies are born each year.

"This is something we have needed for a long time," said head of maternity and neo-natal care Fiona Coker.

"For most families giving birth is a happy and joyful experience but sometimes tragedies happen for a variety of reasons.

"In those cases we need to offer somewhere peaceful and private and we want to give heartfelt thanks this will now be possible."

A new Precious Moments fund has been established by the Stars Appeal to provide extra help for families receiving care in the Benson Suite.

## Chris mobilises for climb

A STORE manager from the EE phone shop in Salisbury is busy preparing to take on the Three Peaks Challenge in August.

Chris Brown, with nine of his friends, began training for the mission, which involves tackling Britain's three highest mountains in 24 hours, back in May last year.

Inspired by close family members who battled cancer, Mr Brown is raising money for Macmillan Cancer Support.

The group, who are almost halfway to their target of £3,000, climbed Snowdon over Easter.

Mr Brown, 29, said: "The training is going really well and we're extremely grateful to local businesses that are sponsoring us.

"Macmillan Cancer Support has been so supportive towards my family, and I'm determined to smash our £3,000 target."

Mr Brown's grandfather Peter



Chatfield, died of lung cancer earlier this month.

To donate text ICEE69 and the amount to 70070 or visit [justgiving.com/teams/AsCoolAsIce](http://justgiving.com/teams/AsCoolAsIce). For more information see [truthonthethreep-eakschallenge.blogspot.co.uk](http://truthonthethreep-eakschallenge.blogspot.co.uk).



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