

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON CONFERENCE

**Expedition/Project/
Conference Title:** The Batsheva de Rothschild Seminar on Frontiers in Parasitology

Travel Dates: 05/03/18 - 09/03/18

Location: Rehovot, Israel

Group member(s): Kirsty McWilliam (PhD Student, Keith Matthews Lab)

Aims: Present a 4 minute 'Flash Talk' and Poster
To network and build relationships with researchers in field

OUTCOME (a minimum of 300 words):-

Generous funds awarded from the James Rennie Bequest in 2017 allowed me to attend the Kinetoplastid Molecular Cell Biology Meeting (USA) last year, a meeting which was instrumental in allowing me to develop my communication skills through poster presentation, and in introducing me to a group leader from America, with whom I have now worked in collaboration with. I am therefore incredibly grateful that in April 2018 the James Rennie Bequest kindly provided me with a second award in order to facilitate travel to the Batsheva de Rothschild Seminar on Frontiers in Parasitology in Rehovot, Israel.

The Batsheva de Rothschild Seminar on Frontiers in Parasitology, held at the Weizmann Institute in Rehovot, was a rare meeting in which leading parasitologists from laboratories around the globe were brought together to discuss the molecular biology and biochemistry of parasitic protozoa, kinetoplastida and helminths, thus placing an emphasis on the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to progress the field. The intimate setting maximised the chances for discussion and ideas exchange. Over the course of three days 25 oral presentations and ~50 posters were presented. As well as myself, my PI Keith Matthews, and a post-doc from the Matthews Lab, Mathieu Cayla, attended the meeting.

On this occasion, my work had not only been selected for the poster presentation sessions, but also to be presented in the format of a 4 minute 'Flash Talk'. Being half way through the third year of my PhD, I had a lot more to offer compared to my previous conference experience and by talking in front of an international audience this provided me with an excellent platform to gain more 'exposure'. I was very happy with how I spoke at the seminar and had many stimulating conversations with senior researcher both within and out with my field regarding my research. As with my previous attendance at an international conference, I have left with useful feedback which will help me as I reach the final stages of my PhD.

All work and no play makes parasitologists a dull bunch however, which is why, following the completion of the seminar, we treated to an incredible day trip. From the lush North to the hot and barren South, the country is absolutely steeped in history. After a brief stopover at the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem, we travelled to Masada, an ancient fortress in the Judean Desert and then onwards to the Dead Sea and a spa. All conferences should end with a spa.

The Batsheva de Rothschild Seminar on Frontiers in Parasitology was a hugely beneficial experience and provided me with the chance to visit a beautiful country which I otherwise

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may never have visited. I would like to thank the James Rennie Bequest again for kindly providing the funds which made attendance at this meeting possible.