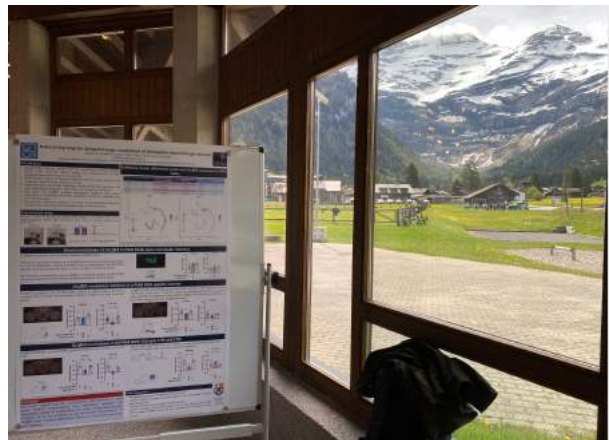


I am very grateful to the Melandra Castle Fund and Pembroke College for supporting me in attending and presenting my research at the Gordon Research Seminar 'Integrating Diverse Approaches to Understand Neural Mechanisms of Behavior' and the Gordon Research Conference 'Mechanisms that Underlie Flexible Neural Coding'. The Melandra Castle Fund enabled me to travel to Les Diablerets to present my poster titled 'Roles in learning for octopaminergic modulation of *Drosophila* dopaminergic neurons' at my first international conference and receive constructive feedback from neuroscientists at the forefront of their field. In addition to the opportunity to present my research, I was inspired by the variety of talks on the computational modelling of neural networks, neuromodulation of conserved behaviours across different organisms, and novel tools and reagents that I hope to employ to understand the role of octopamine in the neuromodulation of *Drosophila melanogaster* learning and memory.

During the Gordon Research Seminar, I heard various talks from postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows. I particularly enjoyed the talks about zebrafish autonomic nervous system development, serotonin's role in modulating egg laying in *Caenorhabditis elegans*, and how mother mice's hunger state can modulate parenting and caregiving. The final event of the seminar was a discussion about Open Science, and it was very eye-opening to learn about how trainees can gain experience in sharing their scientific findings, how we can make science more accessible to the public, and how science communication can reshape the public's trust in science. Aside from academic presentations and discussions, the seminar was a valuable opportunity to meet fellow trainees and hear about their scientific careers and academic experience in their respective countries.



The talks during the conference allowed me to learn about the breadth of computational and genetic tools available and how we can use them to understand complex and conserved behaviours across the animal kingdom. There were several talks that were related to my work that I particularly enjoyed, such as a talk on *Drosophila melanogaster* odour detection and the role of dopaminergic neurons in mediating this behaviour, a talk on the epigenetic inheritance of aversively entrained experiences, and a talk about the variety of genetically encoded sensors that his lab has developed. I also got the opportunity to hear my PI, Professor Scott Waddell, present the lab's recent work on multisensory learning and memory. Outside of the allocated talk times, I got the opportunity to ask several speakers follow-up questions about

their talk, and they were very kind in taking the time to chat with me. Aside from academic inspiration, I found it incredibly valuable to observe the different speaker's presentation styles, and I hope to apply some of the useful tips that I picked up.

The poster presentation sessions during the conference were insightful and helpful for me to present my research to a diverse audience and have discussions about where I hope to take my work going forward. Despite attendees being neuroscientists, I learned to adapt my presentation depending on the person's research background and clarify background concepts where necessary. I was initially nervous, but thankfully I gained confidence with practice and with thought-provoking discussions during and outside of the poster sessions.



I am extremely thankful to be jointly awarded the Melandra Castle Fund to support my trip to the beautiful Les Diablerets to attend the Gordon Research Seminar and Gordon Research Conference on the modulation of neural circuits and behaviours. As this was my first time attending and presenting my work at an international conference, I found the scientific community that I met to be supportive and inspirational. I hope to apply the constructive feedback that I received to enrich our understanding of octopaminergic modulation associative learning and memory, and I look forward to the next opportunity to share my research and learn from others at the forefront of the field.