

My main focus for this scholarship was to gain research experience, and I was very fortunate to have been a Visiting Student at the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit. I was supervised by Dr A. B. who I contacted once I found out I was accepted. I am thankful to have been able to assist in her research and the work of other PhD students at the unit. For example, I provided some feedback for a foraging task as part of an upcoming experiment about to be piloted. I was also assigned with scoring participant responses from the Cattell Culture Fair Intelligence Test which assessed fluid intelligence - this was a really good link to my lectures in my Cognitive Psychology module and was a great way to improve my current knowledge. I also transcribed participant interviews based on the LEAS which focuses on emotional awareness.

Furthermore, I was given the opportunity to observe a behavioural/neuropsychological testing session with one PhD student, whose work is based on mood and spatial awareness. Prior to arriving at the unit, I signed up for the volunteer panel and also participated in a behavioural fMRI experiment where I did cognitive tasks in an fMRI scanner, and also got to take home a picture of my brain! My biggest advice for students applying is to reach out to staff whose work interests you. It is a great opportunity to connect with inspiring people and I will definitely continue to keep in touch with them.

We were also provided with an itinerary with tasks arranged for us. I particularly enjoyed the Rooftop Chapel tour and learned a lot about the history of Cambridge and King's College. We also took advantage of the student punting available, and I had a really fun time with the other students trying to navigate the river by ourselves! The time of the scholarship is also perfect for visiting the Cambridge Botanical Gardens and Jesus Green Park. I also watched several musical performances, including a jazz performance at the gardens, the Cambridge Wind Band at the Cherry Hinton Hall, and there were several busking performances right on King's Parade. I also highly recommend hiring a bike to help travel around Cambridge and take in the views in the area - Cambridge is definitely the perfect place to cycle.

### **J.E - 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Psychology**

The Cambridge Long Vacation Scholarship Program was an incredible experience. I initially applied to this experience to gain an independent and educational experience at one of the most prestigious institutions in the world and I was not disappointed. King's College campus is beautiful- on multiple occasions I sat near the river and did my work there.

However, the library was the true highlight of the experience, with its wide variety of books and proximity to the accommodation. As someone who works better at night but is easily distracted, late night library trips were the best part of my stay in Cambridge where I was the most productive. You have plenty of time in this program to really research what academic route you want to go into after university, which was exactly what I needed.

I would also definitely encourage students going into this program in upcoming years to speak to their advisors well in advance and see if they know any professors or PHD students at the colleges they are interested in so they can meet and network with them during their stay, as many professors have quite busy schedules.

### **T. M -2<sup>nd</sup> Year Chemistry**

I think I left my heart in Cambridge; there is something very intoxicating about it as a place to find yourself in academically. From the moment I walked down King's Parade, absolutely effervescent with excitement and overseen by the jumble of towering architecture, I knew I was

stepping into somewhere I would feel at home. I didn't know any setting could be so capable of catalysing my motivation – I was completely revitalised in my research and study just by being there, and maniacally keen to squeeze every drop out of what was presenting itself to me with Cambridge.

At home was the right way to say it. Barbara at King's took excellent care of us all, with an itinerary of just enough activities to give our time there some bones, but not so much that you're starved of time for self-guided study and exploration. Afternoon tea, art tours with Jean-Michel Massing (what a wonderful character!), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on the lawn, and a trip up the seemingly thousands of steps to the roof of King's Chapel... the College really treated us. It gave me a wealthy head start with the opportunity to speak to all sorts of professors, admissions staff, and PhD students about my future studies.

I hired a bicycle for the month and whiled away many hours in Grantchester Meadows and by the pond in the Botanic Gardens, reading and writing in the summer haze – it gave reading in the beautiful King's Library a fierce run for its money. The standalone memory for me, though, was the morning I spent in the King's Archive Centre reading a big bundle of Sylvia Plath's archived letters. It was wonderfully surreal. After gorging on her work for so many years of my girlhood, to be touching, holding and *really* reading it left me dizzy for the rest of the day (and admittedly many days since).

If you don't know whether or not to take the chance – this is a sign to you. I would not trade my time in Cambridge for anything. My only counsel is to find friends in those on the exchange with you! They gave me endless joy and helped create such lovely memories in an unfamiliar place. Your time at King's will only be whatever you make it.

### **E.E -2<sup>nd</sup> Year English**

I had the privilege of spending a month at St John's College, Cambridge, an experience that was both enriching and memorable. From the moment I arrived, I was warmly welcomed by the staff, who made my transition smooth and comfortable. The porters, in particular, were incredibly friendly and contributed to making the college feel like a true home away from home. The breathtaking views at St John's added to the charm—I often found myself spending afternoons in the stunning gardens or taking leisurely walks around the city, soaking in the beauty of my surroundings. The college's facilities were excellent, providing everything I needed to make my stay as comfortable as possible. Having previously attended a summer school at another Cambridge college during my A-levels, this visit brought back many fond memories, making the experience even more special.

During my time at Cambridge, I took full advantage of the opportunity by planning an elective at the Royal Papworth Hospital in cardiothoracic surgery. Under the guidance of Mr. J. A.i, I embarked on an educational journey that allowed me to delve deeply into the complexities and demands of this specialty. My elective began with an induction and quickly progressed to my first surgical experience—a coronary artery bypass graft (CABG). Despite some initial apprehension, this procedure was a pivotal learning moment. It emphasized the critical importance of preparation and provided me with a detailed understanding of the surgery's intricacies.

I also participated in surgical ward rounds and engaged in a case involving a 68-year-old patient with infective endocarditis. My time spent with the anesthesia team was particularly enlightening, as I learned the protocols for line and cannula placement using ultrasound guidance. The surgery was challenging due to the patient's tissue fragility from long-term steroid use, reinforcing the need for tailored care in complex cases.

Additionally, I observed a high-risk pulmonary thromboendarterectomy (PTE) that involved deep hypothermic circulatory arrest (DHCA), and assisted in a myomectomy for a patient with hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy (HOCM). These experiences underscored the precision and skill required in cardiothoracic surgery. One of the most hands-on aspects of my elective was assisting in an aortic valve replacement, where I had the opportunity to suture the skin. I also enjoyed teaching suturing techniques to sixth-form students from Cambridge, which was a particularly rewarding experience.

This month at St John's College, coupled with my elective at Royal Papworth Hospital, has been one of the most enriching experiences of my medical education. I am deeply grateful for the scholarship that made this possible, and for the inspiring environment that has further fueled my passion for pursuing a career in cardiothoracic surgery.

### **M. K - 4<sup>th</sup> Year Medicine**

Before I went to King's College, Cambridge, I was expecting to meet interesting people and gain access to a wide range of resources. Without a doubt, this is the case. You will have a bunch of opportunities, and each one of them can open up new worlds for you. However, nobody tells you the gravity and profundity of the place. If you stop and look around once in a while, you might think, "This is where Alan Turing also ate" or "Newton probably walked on this same exact street and maybe even sat down right here." I found this fascinating to think about.

Other than this feeling of being at a very important place for western academia, I can say that staying at the college and feeling like a member of the community really pushes you to be at your best in terms of productivity. Furthermore, being a member of the college makes connecting with fellows and other members of the college extremely easy. For example, I contacted multiple academicians who are working in the engineering field, which is also my field; moreover, I was able to easily meet some other experts who specialised in economics, art, film studies, and philosophy. So, my point is, if you want to learn more about anything, just find somebody in the college who knows about it, and then you can have a genuine, thought-provoking conversation.

The best advice I can give to other recipients of the scholarship is to have a plan and put your plan on your calendar. Also, contact people who you want to meet a few weeks beforehand and send follow-up emails at a closer time to meet. Since it is summer, fellows might be on vacation or about to go on a vacation; therefore, by contacting them early, you can lock in a meeting before they leave. Lastly, I would say don't forget to explore Cambridge and the events outside the college, such as concerts, recitals, and art shows. But most importantly, have fun.

### **B. Z -1<sup>st</sup> Year Aerospace Engineering**

The Cambridge Long Vacation Scheme was an eye-opening opportunity. The best thing about the experience was my proximity to some of my academic idols, who were friendly and accommodating towards any and every question I had about further education at Cambridge University. The staff members in general worked their hardest to make our experience equal parts academic and fun. We were able to use many facilities from King's College, including and especially the library, to supplement our visit.

Additionally, they are very welcoming of students who are also working part-time during the summer, so you won't have to put your life on hold to enjoy this opportunity. The main thing that I would caution future applicants of the scheme to do is to contact professors and staff

members of interests very early on. Since it is summer, many people will be out of office- so it is good to get an idea of which people will be available to contact and meet during your stay. I would also say to create a schedule of the research you are going to carry out during your stay.

The Cambridge Long Vacation is very independently led- there is not much organised for you on your behalf. It would be important to discipline your time so that you can make the most of your visit. Overall, I am incredibly grateful that I was able to take part in such a scheme and would definitely recommend it.

### **I.L -2<sup>nd</sup> Year History and Politics**

Going into the scheme, I expected to dedicate most of my time to academic work, with access to resources that would enhance my research. The organisation of the scheme was thorough and well thought out, providing a structured yet flexible schedule that made it easy for me to dive into my research while also enjoying what Cambridge has to offer. While the organised events were valuable, they can be time-consuming and often focus heavily on history. If you're pressed for time, it's helpful to ask about their length and focus in advance to plan accordingly.

I spent most days immersed in work, and thanks to the excellent environment and resources provided, I was able to complete a significant amount of valuable work, which led me to interesting conclusions. The access to the King's College library was particularly beneficial and I spent many hours there, especially due to the quiet, scholarly atmosphere of the library, coupled with the vast collection of books, which created an ideal setting for studying.

Beyond all that, I found the city of Cambridge itself to be beautiful and a source of inspiration. Everything in the city is so accessible, whether you are walking or cycling (I would definitely recommend bringing a bike—it is the best way to get around). Some of my favourites included walking to Grantchester and visiting the Tea Garden, which I highly recommend to future participants as well as visiting the universities, small art shops all around the city centre, doing punting on the river and going to the Botanic Garden.

One aspect of my experience that I would have approached differently was socialising. I was so focused on my work that I missed out on some of the social aspects of the scheme, which could have made the experience even better. Cambridge and being a part of the scheme offers a welcoming community, and it is important to find a balance, especially since being in a new environment can sometimes feel a bit lonely.

All in all, this scheme gave me more than just academic progress. It offered me a chance to experience Cambridge as well, which is a beautiful place. If you are considering the scheme, I would say go for it, and make sure to take in everything it has to offer.

### **G.V -2<sup>nd</sup> Year Hispanic Studies**

The Cambridge Long Vacation Exchange was an incredible opportunity to experience life at Cambridge University. The program allowed me to meet professors, visit various colleges, and connect with like-minded individuals, including those from the Hildenberg, Germany exchange. Highlights included chapel and chapel roof tours led by esteemed fellows of King's College and notable professors. Immersing myself in the Cambridge lifestyle, from punting to dining in the historic halls, was initially a culture shock, but I quickly adapted and learned how the administrative structure and colleges operate. I also made significant progress in my studies with Dr. J. P. and visited three different robotics labs, even participating in the third robotic thumb study with the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit.

Regarding organizing meetings with professors or departments, I was advised to reach out in the months leading up to the program. However, many professors were unsure of their availability during the program, making them difficult to contact. Understandably, the lead admin team couldn't reach out on our behalf. In the future, it would be beneficial if students could select two departments to contact, with the admin team sending notifications about the program to add weight to our requests. I found it best to reach out once at Cambridge and to remain persistent, even if initial contact with a specific fellow isn't successful. Keeping an open mind and asking for help from QMUL contacts can also be valuable.

In conclusion, I highly recommend this exchange to anyone considering MPhil or PhD opportunities. It offers a rare chance to meet potential supervisors and present yourself beyond the application. Though it can be challenging to establish contact, persevering and allowing yourself to be inspired by the university's history is a truly special experience. I hope everyone who participates makes the most of this enriching opportunity.

### **H.H -2<sup>nd</sup> Year Robotics Engineering**

Having the opportunity to attend King's College, Cambridge as part of the Cambridge Long Vacation Scholarship Scheme has been such a privilege. I had the opportunity to utilise the vast resources and books available from King's College Library, Seeley Historical Library and Cambridge University Library – in particular, I found the online resources provided by Cambridge University Library to be very plentiful in number, with these online resources, as well as the physical books I've consulted at Seeley and King's to be very fruitful during my time at Cambridge.

During my second week at Cambridge, I got the opportunity to meet a faculty member of the School of History, in which we discussed my academic interests in intellectual history, in particular relating to my final year dissertation. I found this meeting to be very useful in determining the remainder of my study programme at Cambridge, as this conversation made me realise that I was overly ambitious in my dissertation ideas, and my study up to that point reflected that ambition, to the point where I had no concrete idea of what I intended to do. Coming away from this conversation, I gained a more concrete understanding of what I intend to do for my dissertation, as well as my academic interests in intellectual history. Taking advantage of this newfound, firmer understanding of my intellectual interests, I endeavour to continue developing and researching these interests, continuing with the research that I commenced at Cambridge University as I enter my final year of study.

King's College hosted a few events, including a tour of the roof of the chapel (which I really enjoyed!), and a cream tea where we got to meet current students at King's, gaining more insight into life at Cambridge. I also took the opportunity to visit some of the other Cambridge colleges during my stay, including Pembroke, Gonville and Caius and Darwin College, and I would highly recommend future scholars doing the same. However, despite Cambridge offering of a plethora of opportunity from the academic side of things, its city centre should not be underestimated – from high street brands to independent names, I highly recommend future scholars take as much advantage of it as possible!

Overall, I highly enjoyed my stay at Cambridge and would highly recommend the scholarship to those who are intent in furthering their intellectual interests.

### **A.A -2<sup>nd</sup> Year History**