

Alicja Dabrowska MRSB

**Marine Microbes 2016: The Evolution, Nature and Function of Microbial Interactions
– Gordon Research Seminar and Conference**

Thanks to the Royal Society of Biology Early Career Travel Grant, I have recently attended the Gordon Research Seminar and Conference entitled Marine Microbes: The Evolution, Nature and Function of Microbial Interactions, which was held in the historic city of Girona in the northeast of Spain. It was an invaluable opportunity to meet and talk to world-class scientists in the field of marine microbiology, but also to network and socialise with researchers of all levels of experience, from many different backgrounds.

Gordon Research Seminars and Conferences are small, week-long events, which aim to provide participants with time and space to interact and discuss unpublished research. There is a strict no photographs-no recording policy to encourage scientists to share information and all participants are expected to contribute to the discussions and informal activities. The first part of the meeting, the Gordon Research Seminar, is for early career researchers only and offers an opportunity to present and discuss research, but also to talk about the challenges, perspectives and plans for our careers in science. It was also a great time for meeting like-minded people and making friends. The Conference starts right after the Seminar. The organisers have to approve all applications for the Conference, which ensures that there is a good mixture of experts from a range of scientific fields related to the marine environment and microbiology – biomedicine, mathematics, epidemiology and biogeochemistry just to name a few.

The Seminar was a great opportunity for me to present my research to other early career scientists, to get feedback on my work and presentation skills before the main Conference. I met lovely people who are working on very exciting projects and we shared our experiences, plans, ideas and worries about the future of the field and our careers. The Conference was a truly inspirational experience, which broadened my knowledge of microbiology and allowed me to see the directions marine microbes research is going to take in the next years. Being able to talk to authors of ground-breaking papers during meals or free time was an invaluable opportunity to network, ask all the burning questions and to disseminate my own work. The feedback I received about my project and the up-to-date knowledge of other researchers' work will influence not only my current work, but also my future research plans. The skills I have gained through attending this event, especially presentation skills, will help me achieve my career goals, engage with the scientific community and the general public.

Without the generous support of the Royal Society of Biology, my attendance at this career-changing event would not have been possible. I would like to thank the Society for their help and to encourage other early career members to apply for the Travel Grants to develop their skills and gain experience in presenting their work to an international audience.