Adam Marshall  
**Observing variable stars using the Mt. John observatory 1m telescope, New Zealand**

During my time at the observatory, I was working as part of the MUSICAN programme, research led by the University of Canterbury into a number of different types of variable stars, such as one type known as Gamma Doradus. Overall, I was provided with six weeks of telescope time to collect data for six high priority stars, some of which had previously never been observed for this type of scientific research before. I feel that my time at the observatory has strengthened my knowledge into the key skills of astrophysics research, and, hopefully, my experience may aid me in getting into such a field in the near future.

New Zealand has a very varied landscape, and I saw both the dense rainforests at the very North of the North Island, and well as the fjords and ice-capped mountains down in Milford Sound on the South Island. I enjoyed greatly my time travelling around the country, and would love to be able to come back again one day.

I would very much like to thank my sponsors for the opportunity to travel over to New Zealand and get involved with this research project. Without their generosity, this would not have been possible.

Frances Vick Bursary

Ailish Byrne  
**Researching Chronic Pain, Sydney, Australia**

Dr Schabrun’s department at the University of Western Sydney is running exciting, up to date research investigating chronic pain, and my time spent as an intern in the department helped develop my knowledge of the field and personal skill set. My role as an intern covered several main points, the highlight for me personally was to observe and participate in some of the studies currently being run by the department’s PhD students. I now am considerably more knowledgeable and aware of where chronic pain research is currently at, and where my own future research may fit in. Before the project I had only a vague idea as to what my PhD project proposal would be, whereas now I have a specific idea that I intend to expand upon in coming months.

Away from the academic side of my trip, weekends gave me time to visit some of Sydney’s famous landmarks, including Sydney Harbour Bridge and Sydney Opera House. I owe a huge thank you to the York Society Trust for granting me the bursary, without it I would never have been in a position to fund the project, a project which really was a once in a lifetime opportunity and has caused massive personal development.

York Society Trust Fund
Aleasha Nambalirwa  
Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences, Tanzania

I was privileged to undertake an elective study placement at Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences rotating in the Psychiatry and Mental Health department for a four-week period in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. I attended and observed numerous psychotherapy sessions including cognitive behavioural therapy and motivational interviewing. I attended the weekly child and adolescent clinic to gain understanding of the diagnosis and prognosis of developmental psychological disorders. This sparked an emotive response from myself and has inspired me to continue doing research on this area on my return to the UK. In several communities across Tanzania, mental health is regarded as a taboo and many individuals presented challenges with managing their mental health. It made me reflective of how fortunate I am to be in an environment that encourages and governs mental health.

With aspirations to become a clinical psychologist, this experience allowed me to gain more clarity into this chosen career path. I would like to thank my sponsors for supporting me on this unforgettable trip. They truly aided my chance to seize this great opportunity.

York Society Trust Fund

Jessica Byrne  
The Surin Project, Thailand

I was fortunate enough to spend a week at The Surin Project, one of the lesser known projects by the Elephant Nature Park and the Save the Elephant Foundation. Social and economic changes have forced many of the elephants into the tourism industry through attractions such as elephant rides or circuses. The Surin project aims to stop these cruel practises by changing the views of tourists, meanwhile also providing an alternative income for the elephant owners (mahouts). I have been fortunate enough to live with a mahout family during my week stay. This truly enriched my experience as I was able to fully embrace Thai culture. Throughout the week I spent several hours a day caring for the elephants. Occasionally we would witness the elephants playing in the mud after a big downpour. This was particularly joyous to watch. Each afternoon we took part in different activities to help develop our bond with the community. For example, some days we went to a local primary school to teach the students English.

My time in Thailand has urged me to continue travelling and experiencing different cultures. I really appreciate the financial aid given to me from my sponsors to help cover the voluntary fees and other aspects of my journey. This experience will truly stay with me forever.

The Company of Merchants of the Staple of All England, York Society Trust Fund
Karl Walker
Teaching English and Socialism in Hebron, Palestine

I taught English to several groups of young people, ranging from beginner to intermediate level as well as teaching a student one to one for 4 weeks. This entailed volunteering in the centre five to six days a week, as well as participating in several events organised throughout my stay. This included time spent in refugee camps, Bedouin villages that were pending demolition and visits to holy sites in the West Bank. With the intermediate group, I was given control over topics. I ran classes on feminism, atheism, utilitarianism, climate change, western culture and animal rights. We also went on several student-led trips together into the Old City of Hebron with them as the guides, speaking in English and immersing me further into their culture.

I learned an immense amount about Palestinian culture and the reality of the situation there, as well as gaining a great amount of confidence and developing a passion for teaching. In addition to this, I believe that my Palestinian students learned about a vast array of different perspectives and ideologies, and improved their English-speaking skills. I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the support from the sponsors of this bursary.

University Travel Bursaries

Max Haydon
Eco-Agriculture Conservation, Guatemala

My trip to Guatemala was one of the most thought provoking, culturally rich experiences I have ever had. This was catalysed by the time I spent at the coffee cooperative De la Gente. De la Gente works with coffee farmers in the area to create economic opportunities that improve the quality of life for them and their community. Most of the work involved sorting the already picked coffee beans. This involved meticulously hand sorting the ‘good’ beans from the ‘bad’. I helped two farmers called Manuel and Edwardo hoe the fields, remove weeds from the younger coffee plants and spread fertilizer over all 3,000 of Manuel’s coffee plants. One of the best things about working for De la Gente was the authenticity of the project. You were not only accepted but welcomed into the homes of the farmers and truly see how they live day to day.

I want to thank the Company of Merchants of the Staple of All England and the York Society Trust Fund for allowing me to commit to this extraordinary experience. I have come back to England with more than just an experience, but with friends from around the world, an even greater interest in coffee production and finally, a new favourite country.

The Company of Merchants and the Staple of All England, York Society Trust Fund
Natalie Alt  
Law internship, Sri Lanka

The project which I partook in was a law internship in Sri Lanka. The internship consisted of shadowing a barrister as well as independently taking part in researching the laws and systems in Sri Lanka and then comparing them to those practiced in the United Kingdom. As my ambition is to be a barrister in the future, shadowing a barrister was an opportunity which is difficult to come by in the United Kingdom particularly so when I am not studying law currently and therefore such an opportunity will hopefully boost my chances of gaining a place on a law conversion course.

After completing my internship in the law firm, I had two weeks in which I worked in Ragama boy’s town. This is a massive farm where children live, work for their keep and study. My voluntary help with the children improved both my public speaking skills and ability to lead a group which are skills which are essential in the career of a barrister.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the York society trust fund for giving me the bursary, which enabled me to partake in such a programme. I am immensely grateful, as without it, I would have never had the opportunity to participate in such an internship. From it, I have not only gained experience but also life memories, friends and values and for that I could not emphasise enough my gratitude.

York Society Trust Fund

Rachel Sterling  
The Justice School 2017, Thailand

The Justice School is a 5 week intensive course in the Prevention, Rescue, Release, Restoration and Response to Sex Trafficking in Pattaya, Thailand. It was simultaneously the hardest and best thing I’ve ever done. The course consisted of lectures from guest speakers in all areas of the field, visiting local NGOs and organisations within the city of Pattaya who were fighting against sex trafficking, documentary and discussion sessions, debates, group projects, working with Thrives’ own survivor children and, the most impactful for me- outreaches to the bars and red light districts.

At the graduation ceremony of The Justice School, I was given the Sabai Sabia award. It was for someone who had shown adaptability, grace and ease throughout the programme and someone who had taken on the culture of Thailand with respect and honour. I was hugely grateful to receive this award. I believe in every voluntary trip you go on or even holiday, it is vital to respect and uphold the culture that you’ve entered. This trip was the start of my education, tore down many preconceptions and showed me the type of organisation that I’d want to work for or even start in the future.

This would not have been possible without the generous support from York Society and for that I am truly appreciative.

York Society Trust Fund
Anna Fraine  
Independent Research Project, Swaziland

The aim of this project is to investigate the way in which aid is received and perceived in Swaziland, with regards to the relationship between MEDCs (More Economically Developed Countries) and this developing country in southern Africa. To achieve this, I first spent time talking to a variety of Swazi nationals about the type of history they were taught at school, from what they can remember, particularly on the history of Swaziland. My research also included visiting the Swaziland National Archives, the University of Swaziland, the National Museum in Lobamba and the King Sobhuza II Memorial Park of which my findings will be recorded in this report.

I would like to thank the Centre of Global Programmes at the University of York for making the undertaking of this research project possible. I thoroughly enjoyed being able to return to Swaziland, spend time researching it’s history and speak to a wide variety of people about issues that face the development of the country. Conducting this research project made me realise that I would like to go into a career in either international relations and development, or NGO / charity management. I believe this experience has allowed me to utilise skills that I have acquired throughout my degree in English and History and I look forwards to sharing my experience and findings with my friends, family and peers in the UK.

Independent Travel Project Bursary

Rebecca Johnson  
Mental Health Volunteering Placement, Indonesia

I spent four weeks in Indonesia volunteering in a range of facilities with SLV Global. The first week was orientation, where we received training on safeguarding and Indonesian culture and language lessons. Wednesday to Friday was spent at a camp in the jungle, where we did a number of team building games and competitions, learned to make Hindu offerings and made traditional Balinese cake. We also went white water rafting through the rivers and waterfalls of the jungle. Our second and third weeks comprised of working in Bali, running sessions in schools for the deaf, centres for children with learning difficulties, community outreach programmes for adults who had been socially isolated, and teaching English in orphanages. Then in the fourth week we took a coach to East Java and ran sessions in a psychiatric hospital and an outpatient mental health unit. We used what we have learned from our degrees and applied it to real people, which was a challenging but valuable experience. While staying in Bali we lived in homestays with local families in Tarukan village. This was a great experience as we were really immersed in the culture. At the weekends we travelled around Bali with friends we had made from projects, and I was lucky enough to visit amazing places.

I would like to thank the Centre for Global Programmes and the sponsors for supporting my application, as I would not have been able to have this experience without your help, so I am extremely grateful.

Nancy Richards Bursary, York Society Trust Fund, and University Travel Bursaries Fund
Sophie James  
Rainforest Biological Conservation Project, Operation Wallacea, Indonesia

The first few nights of my project were spent with a local family in their home in Labundo Bundo, this was an incredible experience. During each day, we drove into the local forest to learn and practice surveying techniques. I also had the opportunity to assist in the REDD+ Scheme, it was the most valuable survey I completed. This is an application that involves assessing the carbon content of the rainforest and feeding this information back to the government so the local communities receive money; making the rainforest, for them, more valuable standing up. The local Indonesian guides showed us how they survive in the jungle. They taught us how they build their camps from rattan, how to set traps to catch food, which leaves can be eaten and which are poisonous and how to find fresh water in vines. The next time we trekked into the rainforest was for Bala Camp, one of the camps that Operation Wallacea has set up in the rainforest on Buton Island. I assisted the bird scientist by being his scribe and writing down the birds we heard and their approximate direction and distance. This was the most difficult survey I went on and I am still amazed by the scientist’s ability to pick out bird sounds amongst the loud calls of cicadas and hammering rain.

A massive thank you to The York Society Trust Fund for sponsoring me on my Indonesian rainforest expedition. I certainly have discovered a passion for travel and am already planning my next trip to Indonesia and then onto the rest of the world.

York Society Trust Fund

Charlotte Watson  
Volunteering, India

I attended workshops at both the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuroscience (NIMHANS) and the Ancient School of Wisdom (ASW). At the facility we learnt about its daily running, the clinics they provide and the stigma attached to mental health issues in India. We undertook workshops involving; Multicultural aspects in mental health practices in India, Cultural diversity of India, Need for understanding cultural foundations of psychiatry, Mental health services in NIMHANS; Tour, Psychiatric social workers in community mental health teams and Challenges and solutions towards working with families and couples from diverse sociocultural backgrounds. Followed by an observational visit of outpatient facilities and a visit to the Brain Bank. The outpatient facilities do not have set appointment times and all patients will be seen by a doctor and that day, meaning one doctor at NIMHANS will on average see 450 patients in a day. We also participated in Chakra meditation and a session about learning yoga practices. In Mysore we explored the local markets, visited the Chamundeswari Temple and the Palace of Mysore. During my trip, I achieved an understanding of the differences in cultures and how important it is to be able to understand and respect this when treating patients.

This experience was a truly once in a lifetime opportunity and was made special by the amazing SLV co-ordinators and the awesome people I met on the journey. I want to thank the sponsors who made this trip a reality for me.

YuFund
Darcey Nicholls  
Volunteering for European Bulgaria

During the 4 weeks, I visited many places such as addiction centres, severely mental ill health centres and foster homes. The lack of funding in Bulgaria means that mentally ill people are placed into a home regardless of the severity of their condition. We spent the day sitting down with these men and colouring in with them. Although they spoke Bulgarian, it made no difference to the experience as it wasn’t language that was important on this trip. It was the love and affection shared which brought a smile to the patient’s faces. We also visited a severely mentally ill home with patients aged between 18 and 25. This was one of the hardest challenges I’ve faced. One of the patients who made a significant impact on me was a girl named Maria who had cerebral palsy and was severely mentally ill. She would grab me and hit me, and scream because she didn’t want me to leave her which resulted in me walking her for two hours in the sun. But what I had learned was that the love I gave to her was one which she did not want to lose. My passion to pursue a career as a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist deepened as such first-hand experience had opened my eyes to the effects of mental health and how important it is to raise awareness.

I would like to take this opportunity to say a sincere, heartfelt and deep thank you to those who sponsored me. If it were not for you I would not be so clear sighted in my ambitions in the future, that being a career in psychology.

YuFund

Helena Werthern  
Volunteering for European Bulgaria

During our volunteering placement we visited different services for children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly. Our aims in the different services was to gain insight into the setup of services in Bulgaria, gain better understanding and hands-on experience with a range of mental health issues and mental disabilities, and to help care for and stimulate individuals with special needs. Some were eager to interact with us, while others needed more time and motivation to join into activities. We usually commenced with some physical games which included activities such as ball games, playing with Frisbees, or playing on swings. We then carried on with indoor activities, these included art therapy sessions, playing games like ‘Ludo’, or simpler activities like sticking stickers on doors. Ludjene was the service we visited most, fostering 12–18 year-olds with previous deviant/criminal behaviour. As they had no mental or physical disabilities, we played different games, card games, did each other’s nails and hair. We were introduced to Biofeedback, which is often used in Bulgaria, however not in the UK. This is a range of equipment designed to, e.g. through galvanic skin response or head temperature, make individuals more aware of their bodily responses and therefore emotions.

I would like to thank YuFund very much, for supporting me and thus allowing me to be part of this experience, which has shaped me and will definitely influence my future career choices.

YuFund
Ilayda Ulku Cakir
The Underdog Project, Cape Town - South Africa

This summer I spent four weeks in Hout Bay, a town near Cape Town, South Africa where I interned in a non-profit organisation called The Underdog Project. The Underdog Project facilities workshops for children from underprivileged schools and as well as teaching them life skills classes, they teach them how to look after and build a relationship with the rescue dogs that live at the Domestic Animal Rescue Group shelter in Hout Bay. The training kids give to the dogs helps them overcome kennel stress and prepares them for adoption. Another integral aspect of the work the Underdog Project does is to address the social and emotional needs of at risk youth who live in the surrounding townships, and use animal assisted activities like dog training, to help them overcome their issues. I assisted Anya, with delivering school and holiday workshops. I also assisted Jenna, with administrative and operational tasks such as putting up the fundraising page. I’ve learned a lot about Animal Assisted Therapy, how communication is carried out and how much impact their project is making for the kids and the dogs! I’ve learned how to be patient and learned so much about social and emotional needs of at risk youth who live in the surrounding townships.

I’ve met some incredible people and my experience was humbling, rewarding and something I will never forget. Thank you Global Programmes for the funding to make this possible!

YuFund

Katherine Urmston
SLV Bali Mental Health Placement

I volunteered with SLV Global; an organisation which runs mental health placements abroad for psychology students. The first week involved orientation, with training and information on such things as the Balinese culture, a short language lesson, information about the projects and codes of conduct. We also had an afternoon of session planning. Everything we planned was linked to our psychological understanding; it meant our knowledge was being put to use and we could ensure that the activities we would be doing with the service users were appropriate. The second half of the first week was spent in the jungle on an adventure camp! We attended workshops, all of which were about the psychology field in Bali. We ran sessions in a variety of settings: Schools, centres for children with special needs, centres for adults with special needs, orphanages and psychiatric wards. The sessions always incorporated yoga and relaxation exercises and we would also play a number of icebreakers at the start. The main would be based on dance therapy, art therapy, teaching English, decision making and problem solving or memory. At the weekends I had the opportunity to travel and experience different parts of Bali. I met Elephants, swam with a turtle, visited temples and relaxed on the beach.

I greatly value my experience and I am so grateful I had the opportunity to go, so I would like to say a big thank you to YuFund and the Beaumanoir-Hart Fund. I will always have fond memories of my time in Bali.

Beaumanoir-Hart Fund and YuFund
Niamh Hawthorne  
Rainforest Conservation with Operation Wallacea, Peru

I spent a month in the Pacaya-Samiria national reserve, Peru. The reserve is an area of flooded rainforest around the Samiria river. The aim of the project was to investigate how climate change has affected the animal populations and overall biodiversity of the rainforest. I lived on a research ship moored on the river and my days were made up of 3 surveys and lectures about rainforest ecology, conservation and the history of the reserve. Wading birds are indicators of fish production and were surveyed with a shore-line transect. During this survey I saw many three-toed sloths. Caiman are indicators of past resource use as they were previously hunted. This was one of my favourite surveys as the baby caiman were so cute! They even liked their bellies rubbed to calm them down while being measured. One of the most interesting surveys was the habitat surveys. The local name of every tree species, the diameter of each tree and the number of saplings in each subplot were recorded.

This was an amazing opportunity and I gained so many fieldwork skills, which will greatly help my biology course. Thank you so much for sponsoring this trip, as it would not have been possible otherwise. I’m so proud that with your help, I was able to not only visit the rainforest but contribute towards securing its future and helping preserve it for generations to come.

YuFund