Supporters' Lunch 2026

JRF Showcase

Vicky Tan
Fulford Junior Research Fellow

Talk: *Finding the spark in melanin and melanoma*

Dr. Tan is a cancer cell biologist in the laboratory of Professor Richard White at Ludwig Cancer Research.

She completed her PhD in the laboratories of Associate Professor Andrew Cox and Professor Mark Dawson at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and University of Melbourne. Her current research focuses on understanding how pigmentation in our skin may influence how skin cells communicate with one another and potentially be involved in tumour initiation.

The White Laboratory have previously shown that skin cells (melanocytes and keratinocytes) communicate through electrical signalling and intriguingly, melanin, the pigment produced by melanocytes has electrical properties. This led Vicky to ask whether melanin may modulate electrical behaviour in skin cancer (melanoma) cells, and play a role in cell-cell communication and melanoma progression. To address this, Vicky will use melanoma cell lines with differing pigmentation levels and develop a new unique model to study calcium activity in melanocytes as a readout for electrical activity. With new models to assess electrophysiology, Vicky aims to understand whether pigmentation is involved in initiating melanoma, which could ultimately inform new therapeutic strategies targeting cancer.

Mariana Sontag González
Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow; Fulford Junior Research Fellow

Talk: How old is this sand? Uncovering the first Europeans

Dr. Sontag González works on spatially-resolved luminescence approaches to date old archaeological sites in Spain.

Through innovative methods including infrared-radiofluorescence and infrared-photoluminescence of feldspar minerals, Dr. Sontag González is targeting Middle and Early Pleistocene localities relevant for human evolution studies to test the limits of state-of-the-art luminescence dating of sediment.

Previously, Dr Sontag González has worked as a postdoc at the University of Heidelberg (Germany), Stony Brook University (USA), and Justus Liebig University of Giessen (Germany), primarily investigating IR-RF dating methodologies and the complex interplay between luminescence characteristics and chemical composition. During her PhD at the University of Wollongong (Australia), she focused on improving available approaches to date samples from volcanic regions in Indonesia. She originally trained in molecular biotechnology and then transitioned into archaeological sciences.

Martin Fellermeyer
Fulford Junior Research Fellow, Former Oxford Thatcher Scholar

Talk: Activating the immune system to fight cancer

Martin's research focuses on developing drugs that manipulate the activity of immune cells in our body, with a particular emphasis on finding new ways to activate immune cells to fight cancer. His work bridges fundamental immunology and protein engineering.

Martin pursues two complementary approaches. First, he studies how T-cell receptors – the immune system's 'detectors' – recognise cancer-specific molecular patterns, to inform the design of more specific and effective therapies. Second, Martin engineers proteins to block tumour 'stop signals' (inhibitory ligands) that suppress immune responses, aiming to restore and amplify anti-cancer activity.

Martin completed his PhD in 2023 at Somerville College with the support of a Oxford-Thatcher Graduate Scholarship and is now a Fulford Junior Research Fellow with the college.'

Lucy Garner
Fulford Junior Research Fellow

Talk: Rethinking vaccine immunity: the role of unconventional T cells

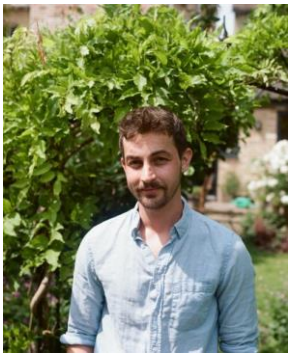
Dr Lucy Garner is a Senior Postdoctoral Scientist in Professor Paul Klenerman's group within the Nuffield Department of Medicine (NDM).

Lucy's research focuses on how the human immune system responds to infections and vaccinations. She specialises in T cells (critical defenders that destroy infected or damaged cells and coordinate the immune response) and uses advanced omics tools, including single-cell RNA-sequencing (scRNA-seq), to study the types, functions, and interactions of immune cells during disease.

Her recent work examined two types of COVID-19 vaccines – adenoviral vector and mRNA – uncovering the networks of cells and molecules underlying their distinct early immune responses after the first and second doses, as well as the reduced side effects seen with longer gaps between mRNA doses (Amini and Garner et al., Sci Immunol, 2025).

Lucy also works closely with the Oxford University Clinical Research Unit (OUCRU) in Vietnam to study major infectious diseases in Southeast Asia, with the long-term goal of developing new vaccines and treatments. These collaborations have resulted in important studies on dengue (Gregorova et al., Nat Commun, 2025) and tuberculosis (Tram and Garner et al., J Immunol, 2025).

Kieran Brown – Early Career Researcher in English



Kieran works primarily on the intersection of literature and economics (in the 'Economic Humanities'), and have published works on modernism, economics, critical theory and the philosophy of language.

He is a Rhodes Scholar, and is currently working on turning his dissertation on Walter Benjamin into a book. This project not only tries to demonstrate how Benjamin's philosophy allows us to think traditional approaches to economics anew, it also helps us see how, in Benjamin's words, we might begin to work ourselves free of "the net in which we are caught."

He also has an edited collection with Palgrave Macmillan due to be published at the beginning of next year, entitled Inflationary Modernities: Literature, Culture and Economy.