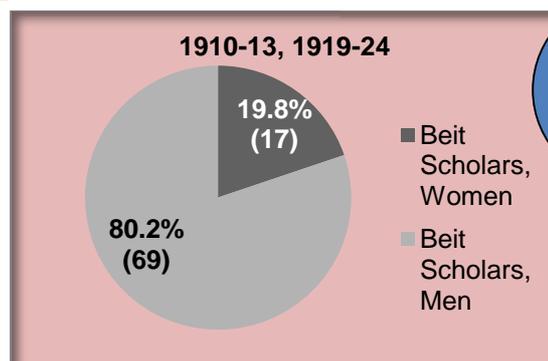
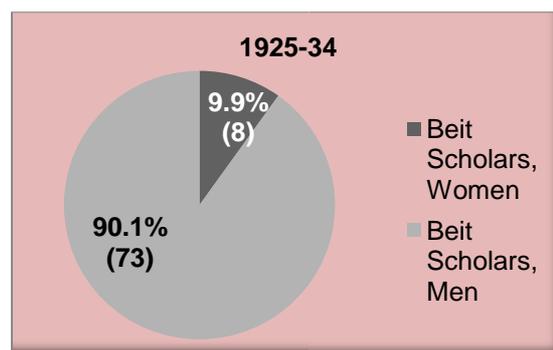




Menu for a dinner held for the first Beit Scholars, c.1910s-20s.
Wellcome Library, Beit Fellowships Newscuttings Album and Commemorative Book, SA/BMF/G.1.



4



Beit a yes or a no?: funding and fairness

Left: A menu recording the signatures of attendees at a celebratory dinner for the first recipients of Beit Memorial Scholarships, first awarded in 1910. Right Two tables showing the proportion of male and female recipients of Beit awards, (1) 1910-13, 1919-24; and (2) 1925-34.

Included are the names of **Ida Smedley** (fourth from bottom) and **Annie Homer** (sixth from bottom). These two women shared a remarkably similar career trajectory. Both passed from KES (Birmingham) to undergraduate studies at Newnham College, Cambridge and thereafter progressed to the Lister Institute in London.¹

Beit awards made it possible for such women to gain a foothold in academia. It is to some extent a sign of the openness of the funding bodies in this period that women consistently obtained awards, albeit at a lower level than men.

What is perhaps more surprising is that the number of women recipients fell over time. Women received c.20 per cent of Beit Scholarships in the first ten years of awards (to 1924); yet this dropped to just 10 per cent in the next decade (to 1934).

Mary Creese and Ruth Watts have both speculated that opportunities for women scientists in the early twentieth century tended to emerge within less prestigious disciplines – which in the 1900s and 1910s might have included biochemistry. Is it possible that women were increasingly squeezed out from the 1920s, as the status of biochemistry rose, as manifested in Nobel Prizes, new laboratories and rising popular interest in genetics and nutrition?

¹ Mary R.S. Creese, 'British Women of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries who Contributed to Research in the Chemical Sciences', *British Journal for the History of Science* 24 (1991), p. 284.