



Close-up of **Harriette Chick**, from Lister Institute Staff Photograph, 1907.

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PDF 1: From resistance to acceptance

At the point that this picture of the Lister Institute's staff was taken in 1907, Harriette Chick had begun to establish her reputation as a biochemist. Nevertheless, she had encountered some resistance on the way.

Chick obtained her early education at Notting Hill High School for Girls (founded 1873), which had an excellent reputation for science tuition. Even so, relatively few women entered the pure sciences in the period when Chick graduated. When Chick won an 1851 Exhibition Research Scholarship to study bacteriology in 1899, she was one of just two women out of sixteen successful applicants.¹

The academic sciences were primarily a male preserve into the 1900s. Consequently, it remained possible for men to question the suitability of women such as Chick for scientific careers. In 1905, Chick was selected for a Jenner Memorial Studentship at the Lister Institute. At this point, two existing members of staff implored the Lister Institute's Director to reconsider, on the basis that as a woman, Chick would be unsuited to the work.² The Director – **Charles Martin** – appointed Chick regardless.

Here, Chick stands out as a rare female face, alongside **Janet Lane Claypon**. If the date of this photograph is accurate (1907), it shows these two women on the cusp of personal achievements at the Lister Institute. In 1908, Claypon would follow Chick in becoming a Jenner Scholar at the Institute. Also in 1908, Chick firmly established her name, through her ground-breaking work on disinfection, which became enshrined in 'Chick's Law'.

¹ 'Science Research Scholarships', *The Times* (Friday 10 August 1894), p. 11.

² Harriette Chick, Margaret Hume and Marjorie MacFarlane, *War on Disease: A History of the Lister Institute* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1971), pp. 87-88; E.M. Tansey, "'To Dine with Ladies Smelling of Dog'?": A Brief History of Women and the Physiological Society', in Lynn Bindman, Alison Brading, and Tilli Tansey (eds), *Women Physiologists* (London: Portland, 1993), p. 21.