



**Muriel Wheldale** (left) sat with biochemical colleagues at Cambridge, 1914. **Huia Onslow** (above), working from his bed, n.d.

Cambridge University Archives, Biochemistry Department Photograph Albums.

### Research and romance

Muriel Wheldale married **Huia Onslow** in 1919. They met at Cambridge, where they had collaborated on research since 1916/17.

Such partnerships were far from uncommon. Indeed, so numerous were the marriages between male and female biochemical researchers at Cambridge, that its laboratories became known locally as 'Hoppy's Dating Agency'! Amongst others to wed within their academic departments were **Mary Christine Tebb** and **Otto Rosenheim** (1910); **Dorothy Moyle** and **Joseph Needham** (1924); and Gowland Hopkins's own daughter **Barbara** and **Eric Holmes** (1928) <sup>1</sup>

It is clear that for Wheldale at least, this marriage had an important bearing on the direction of her research. Marsha Richmond has identified the marriage as a turning point in Wheldale's investigations. On the basis of their shared work, she began to concentrate upon the role of amino acids in germinating seedlings amongst other interests.<sup>2</sup> Mary Creese has suggested that the paraplegic Huia's 'considerable professional achievements in the face of extreme physical handicap owed much to the assistance of his wife'.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast to the 63 years of **Dorothy and Joseph Needham's** marriage, Muriel and Huia were married for just three years before his death in June 1922. Muriel wrote and published *Huia Onslow: A Memoir* in 1924.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. King, 'Sigmund Otto Rosenheim, 1871-1955', *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society* **2** (1956), p. 263; Harmke Kamminga, 'Hopkins and Biochemistry', in Peter Harman and Simon Mitton (eds), *Cambridge Scientific Minds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 179.

<sup>2</sup> Marsha L. Richmond, 'Muriel Wheldale Onslow and Early Biochemical Genetics', *Journal of the History of Biology* **40** (2007), p. 417.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Muriel Wheldale, *Huia Onslow: A Memoir* (London: Edward Arnold & Co, 1924).