



Lister Institute Staff Photograph, 1933.

Wellcome Library, SA/LIST/R.6

The 40 per cent: The Lister Institute, 1933

The Lister Institute's staff in 1933.

Compare this with a comparable staff photograph from 1907 ([PDF 4: 'I Saw One or Two Women at Work'](#)) and it becomes evident how extensive women's involvement in the Lister's research activities had become. In 1907, women accounted for just 2 out of 24, or c.8 per-cent of those photographed. By 1933, there were 25 women on a staff of 60 – making up more than 40 per-cent of the total.

What had encouraged this shift in the composition of the Institute's staff? The attitude of individual figures such as Director **Charles Martin** undoubtedly helped those such as **Harriette Chick** who from the 1900s had applied to work in its laboratories. Perhaps more significant, however, was the impact of the First World War.

The 1914-18 conflict promoted the position of women scientists in two ways. Firstly, the war incentivised the recruitment of additional staff to research into the vital area of nutrition and produce more preventive sera.¹ Indeed, at the outbreak of hostilities, the Lister's management began to enlarge its site at Elstree to meet anticipated demand. Secondly, the enlistment of able-bodied men to war service created a supply-side deficit in trained male scientists able to meet these demands. Women increasingly took their place and proved their aptitude for research science.

An editorial in *The Times* from March 1919 reflected upon the achievements of the women who, it felt, had demonstrated they possessed 'the training and enterprise necessary to carry out essential scientific research'.² Henceforth, women would obtain much greater representation on the Lister Institute's staff, a change strikingly apparent from a comparison of its pre- and post-war membership.

¹ Harriette Chick, 'Charles James Martin', *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society, Volume II* (London: Royal Society, 1956), p. 182.

² 'Women Researchers', *The Times*, 22 March 1919, p. 9.