



Wellcome Images

Harriette Chick in the conservatory 'animal house', Roebuck House, Cambridge, 1939.

Wellcome Library, SA/LIS/R.18.

The Centenarian Scientist

In 1939, the evacuation of staff from the London-based Lister Institute led Chick to occupy Roebuck House, the Cambridge home of its Director, **Charles Martin**.¹ This photograph shows Chick at work in the newly instated Animal House set-up in the Martins' conservatory.

Few can match the longevity of Harriette Chick's engagement with scientific research and policy, which spanned nine decades from 1890s to the 1970s. Most of this working life was spent at the Lister Institute's laboratories at Chelsea. The two world wars, however, both led to temporary relocations: to Vienna from 1919 and to Cambridge in order to be near Martin's temporary Cambridge laboratories in 1939.

Chick's diaries reveal that even in middle age, she would often spend many hours absorbed in her laboratory-based research. The 44 year-old Chick wrote in January and February 1919 that she had slept overnight at the Institute. It is perhaps, therefore, unsurprising that one so closely wedded to their research should remain closely involved in the Lister Institute's work for the remainder of her lengthy life. She remained employed at the Institute for a further seven years after this picture was taken (to 1946).² Even then, Chick continued to serve on the Lister's Council. Remarkably, she continued to attend its annual meetings beyond her 100th birthday. The ever-diligent Chick (then 102) sent her apologies for non-attendance of the Lister's 1977 meeting just a fortnight before her death.³

¹ Harriette Chick, 'Charles James Martin', *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society, Vol II* (London: Royal Society, 1956), p. 186.

² Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine, Lister Institute, Council Minutes, SA/LIS/1/5, 19 June 1946.

³ *Ibid.*, 27 June 1977.