



Staff photograph, Lister Institute, c. 1907.

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'I Saw One or Two Women at Work': The Lister Institute, c.1900-1910s

This staff photograph illustrates the minority position women held within the Lister Institute in 1907.

Two women are shown – **Harriette Chick** (1875-1977: *front row, second from right*) and **Janet Lane-Claypon** (1877-1967: *front row, far left*). Chick had become the first woman at the Lister Institute two years earlier, in 1905. The Lister Institute's Director **Charles Martin** (1866-1955: *second row, fifth from left*) had faced opposition from existing staff upon the announcement of Chick's appointment. Chick would later recount how two researchers had 'implored the Director not to commit the folly of appointing a woman to the staff'.¹ Martin remained steadfast and awarded the Jenner Memorial Research Studentship not only to Chick (1905) but also later to Lane-Claypon (1908). If the date of the photograph is accurate, Lane-Claypon would have commenced the studentship in the following year.

It was likely to these women that **Sir Henry Butlin** (1845-1912) referred in October 1911, when he recorded his surprise at having recently found 'one or two women at work' in the Lister Institute's laboratories. Despite his advanced age and position within the male-dominated medical establishment (as surgeon at St Barts and a recent President of the British Medical Association: 1910), Butlin welcomed the prospect of more women scientists. In contrast to those who had attempted to block Chick's appointment in 1905, Butlin concluded women were eminently suited to scientific research.

Nevertheless, Butlin also condemned the lack of openings for prospective women scientists. Funding bodies, Butlin argued, too often overlooked eligible women researchers or openly excluded them from eligibility altogether.² Chick and Lane-Claypon both managed to secure Jenner awards. The predominance of male faces in this photograph, however, also attests to the greater opportunities for advancement available to men in this period.

¹ Harriette Chick, Margaret Hume and Marjorie MaxFarland, *War on Disease: A History of the Lister Institute* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1971), pp. 87-88.

² Henry T. Butlin, 'Research in Medicine and Women in Research', *British Medical Journal* (7 October 1911), 835-837.