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Dunn Institute, 2011 (left), 1924 (right).

Images author's own; Cambridge University Archives, Biochemistry Department Photograph Albums.

The Dunn Institute of Biochemistry, Cambridge University

Then and now... *Left*: the steps of the Dunn Institute of Biochemistry in Cambridge, 2011; *Right*: the same steps the year it opened in 1924. On the right of the 1924 photograph, **J.B.S. Haldane** (1892-1964) stands against the pillar. It was Haldane whose nomination would later help secure **Marjory Stephenson** a Fellowship of the Royal Society (1945) – a first for a woman in any scientific discipline.

Women had already secured several places in Cambridge's biochemistry department. In 1914, **Frederick Gowland Hopkins** (1861-1947) was appointed Professor in Biochemistry at Cambridge. Harmke Kamminga has commented upon 'the unusually high number of women who contributed to the research and teaching of the department'.¹ Indeed, Joan Mason indicates that in 1920 the numbers of men and women were fairly evenly matched.²

In 1924, Hopkins became the Director of the new Dunn Institute. This imposing building reflects the growing status of biochemistry in this period. Women continued to be well-represented under Hopkins's continued leadership within this new unit. Its researchers included **Muriel Wheldale**, **Dorothy Needham** and **Marjory Stephenson**.

To get a feel what it was like behind its walls, it is useful to refer to the laboratory's in-house magazine, *Brighter Biochemistry*. Staff produced the whimsical short articles on the labours, loves and lives of staff, typically written as parodies of recognisable literary tropes. One feature from 1923, for example, playfully evoked the smells, sounds and sights of Cambridge's labs within a rustic idiom:

'It was good to hear again the roar of pump and blowpipe, and the rattle of the centrifuge; to see colour where it shone through Winchesters of Wood-Ost or Permanganate; to smell the old familiar smells of charring crab, chlorine and coffee'.³

Women played a large part in both the writing of this magazine and in the life of the laboratory itself. Such scenes, in Hopkins's Dunn Laboratory, were no longer the preserve of the archetypically male scientist.

¹ Harmke Kamminga, 'Hopkins and Biochemistry', in Peter Harman and Simon Mitton (eds), *Cambridge Scientific Minds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 179.

² Joan Mason, 'The Admission of the First Women to the Royal Society of London', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* **46** (1992), p. 295.

³ Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine, Sir John Gaddam, GC/213/B/21, *Brighter Biochemistry*, D.M.M. [Dorothy Moyle], 'All for Love', December 1923.