



Marjory Stephenson and Judith the dog outside the Dunn Institute, Cambridge, c. 1920-30s.

Cambridge University Archives, Biochemistry Department Photograph Albums.

'M.S.'

Marjory Stephenson and Judith the dog outside the Cambridge labs. To friends (and often in her writing) she was known simply as 'M.S.'.

Like **Harriette Chick**, Stephenson never married and for much of her life lived close to where she had grown up. Also like Chick, however, she was widely travelled. Joan Mason recounts that Stephenson's visit to the USSR in 1936 with fellow biochemist **Dorothy Needham** ('Dophi': 1896-1987) left her both 'impressed and disappointed'.¹

Her mind wandered equally freely, evident both in her novel approach to her biochemical investigations and her independently-minded approach to politics. She was concerned with the plight of displaced émigrés and became involved with both feminist and pacifist movements. Nevertheless, D.D. Woods would later comment that 'her independence of judgement did not permit her to adhere consistently to any "party-line"'.²

The same was true of her biochemistry. Robert Kohler and Rebecca Meyer Mondhardt have both argued that the novelty of Stephenson's physiological bacteriology lay in her willingness to meld insights from different subfields. Mondhardt has characterised Stephenson as an 'independent thinker who matured slowly in her professional life', yet through hard work 'left her mark on the scientific world'.²

¹ Joan Mason, 'Marjory Stephenson (1885-1948)', in Edward Shils and Carmen Blacker (eds), *Cambridge Women: Twelve Portraits* (Cambridge, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press), p. 130.

² Robert Kohler, 'Innovation in Normal Science: Bacterial Physiology', *Isis* **76** (1985), pp. 170-171; Rebecca Meyer Mondhardt 'Marjory Stephenson (1885-1948)', in Louise S. Grinstein (et al.), *Women in the Biological Sciences: A Bibliographic Sourcebook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997), p. 514.