

Miss Eileen Guppy

c.1904 –1980



In 1927 two women with degrees in Geology were appointed as technical assistants. One in the Palaeontology Dept and the other Miss Eileen Guppy in the Petrological Dept. Miss Guppy graduated in Geology from Bedford College around 1925. She subsequently worked for the next two years as research assistant to Prof Leonard Hawkes at the College, publishing a paper in the Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society of London.

Originally she was employed by the Survey as an Assistant. However by 1935 she was of sufficient status to be given the job of organising the entire move of the Petrology rock and thin section collections from the old Museum of Practical Geology in Jermyn Street to the new Geological Museum in Exhibition Road. Almost certainly because of her gender and despite her qualifications she worked mostly as an assistant to senior staff firstly the Chief Petrographer and later with the Director. She was renowned for her thoroughness and attention to detail and much of her work was collating and organising data and creating and checking bibliographies e.g. for the significant Memoir

"Chemical analyses of igneous rocks, metamorphic rocks and minerals (1931)". She worked for the Director Sir John Flett and did much of the work for the centenary book "The first hundred years of the Geological Survey of Great Britain" published in 1937. She was promoted to the rank of assistant geologist in 1943 and thus became the first woman geology graduate to be appointed to the scientific staff of the Survey. However, despite her abilities Miss Guppy was summarily demoted after the war. It is not clear if this was related to completion of 'war duties' or DSIR regulations!

She continued, however, working in a unique position as a personal scientific assistant at Senior Experimental Officer grade to the Directors Sir William Pugh and Sir James Stubblefield. Latterly she worked as Secretary for the new Atomic Energy Division and during 1963 - 1965 she worked with Inspectors from the Public Record Office evaluating the older records from the Geological Survey and Museum. When she retired in 1966 she was awarded the MBE for her loyal service.



Freedom and Equality: Women in Geology

