TOMORROW BEGAN YESTERDAY
WHY HISTORY MATTERS

Patricia Fara
Clare College, Cambridge
Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.

Søren Kierkegaard (1843)
Oxford
‘A LADY OF SCIENTIFIC HABITS’

Early 19th century

© J A Secord
Marie Skłodowska Curie
Edith Stoney

(1869-1938)
Dr Elsie Inglis

‘Go home and keep still’...the commanding officers ‘do not want to be troubled with hysterical women.’

War Office, 1914
Scottish Women’s Hospital at Troyes
Cistercian Abbey at Royaumont

Scottish Women’s Hospital
Stoney in France

‘50 candle power were lamps I had stuck in cocoa tins for shelter – we dared show no light of course – but had to run the engines for the X-rays.’
Scottish Women’s Hospitals
Isabel Hutton
‘Edith Stoney...

could carry heavy loads of equipment, repair electric wires sitting astride ridge-tents in a howling gale, and work tirelessly on an almost starvation diet’
Scottish Women’s Field Hospitals
From silk factory to hospital

‘The dark room was partly in the flue of the tall factory chimney, and the blizzard streamed through the outhouse, where I was, and up the chimney. When I creaked up the ladders in stockinged feet to the loft where 54 of us now slept, there could be no thought of washing with ice already in the jug.’
Edith Stoney
A letter to London

‘Our candles are almost finished and we have to sit in darkness most of the time...the smells horrible. Dead horses & dogs lie about, heaps of dirty dressings are thrown all over the station...bitterly cold and snowing.’

Ellie Rendell, 26 Mar 1917
Ray Strachey
(1887-1940)
'the more Mathematics I learn, the more I wonder that anyone can call them dull or useless. They seem to me to be the most exciting & beautiful ideas, exquisitely expressed'

Letter to aunt, 1904
‘we have started a society which has now got more than ¾ of the college, & which has joined with Girton & amalgamated to the national Society... Cambridge has become a centre of activity – meetings, debates, plays, petitions etc all through the term’

Letter to aunt of 1907
Suffrage placards

PHILIPPA FAWCETT COLLECTION
War Work for Women
To her mother, 1917

‘Pippa (sister-in-law)...and I have wound ourselves into the very thick of the intrigues, and we found ourselves dictating the leading article of The Times one day and sitting up until 4 a.m. preparing draft schemes ...I am packed so tight with interviews that I can hardly breathe, and find myself panting from one Cabinet Minister at dinner time only to breakfast with another the next day.’
WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE AND WOMEN'S SERVICE

THE HISTORY OF THE LONDON & NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SERVICE

By RAY STRACHEY
'I have decided I must go to London next winter for my engineering... The various people I have seen all advise it. I saw Mrs Ayrton, who is, as you know, a shining light in the world of electrical arc lamps, and she was most encouraging, & gave me a letter to the head of the Technical College...’

Letter to aunt
HERTHA AYRTON (1854-1923)

Jewish Women's Archive

Girton College, Cambridge
Hertha Ayrton
Jewish Women’s Archive

• **1881** Gained a Certificate in Mathematics at Cambridge (Girton College)

• **1889** Became first female member of the Institution of Electrical Engineers

• **1904** First woman to read her own paper at the Royal Society

• **1906** Won Hughes’ medal at Royal Society
Ayrton’s line divider

‘...a very handy instrument for architects, engineers and practical drawing...’

*Nature*, 1885

SCIENCE MUSEUM LONDON
Electric arc lighting
Margate in 1897
Sand ripples
Sand ripples

Three papers at the Royal Society
Flapper fans during World War One

SCIENCE MUSEUM LONDON
Hertha Ayrton Curie
(1854-1923)

Marie Skłodowska Curie
(1867-1934)
1911
Skłodowska Curie cared for by Ayrton in England
How can I answer all these questions if I have not the intelligence to choose between two candidates for parliament? I will not supply these particulars until I have my rights as a citizen.

Votes for Women
Hertha Ayrton
‘I do not agree with sex being brought into science at all. The idea of “woman and science” is completely irrelevant. Either a woman is a good scientist, or she is not.’

1919

Jewish Women’s Archive
\[ p(\overset{\uparrow}{\sigma}) \neq p(\overset{\downarrow}{\varphi}) \]
...But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs...
‘The establishment of equality of pay and opportunity for women may lie far ahead in the future; but that it does lie there is beyond question. The day of economic emancipation will come, just as the day of political emancipation came’