

Women and Geology

Documents in the British Geological Survey Archive tell the story of one woman's struggle to establish herself in this traditionally male-dominated profession.

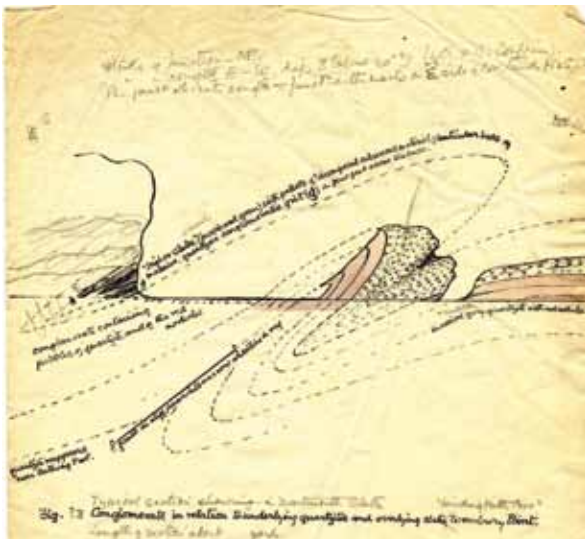


E.M.L. Hendriks (British Geological Survey Archives, GSM/GL/He/10). Copyright NERC.

Although there have been many notable female geologists, they were still a relative rarity in the first half of the 20th Century. The Geological Survey of Great Britain was very much a male bastion at this time. One of those who tried to change this was Eileen Mary Lind Hendriks.

Born in Birmingham in 1887, Hendriks began studying science at an early age. She graduated from the University of Aberystwyth in 1919 with a BSc, later completing a PhD at the University of London. Between 1926 and 1928 she was employed on a temporary basis by the Geological Survey of Great Britain to assist in the preparation of a catalogue of the Survey's photographs. This work resulted in the publication of *Classified Geological Photographs: From the Collection of the Geological Survey of Great Britain* (1928).

In 1930, Hendriks attempted to become the first female geologist at the Geological Survey when she applied for a permanent position. She was unsuccessful and her subsequent attempts to secure a permanent job in



Geological diagram by E.M.L. Hendriks (British Geological Survey Archives, GSM/GL/He/4). Copyright NERC.

her field of interest proved fruitless. In a letter of 1941, held in the British Geological Survey (BGS) Archive, she referred to "the absolute death of openings in her main subject". Infuriatingly for her, in 1943 the Geological Survey appointed Eileen Guppy as its first female geologist. Undeterred, Hendriks continued her geological research well into the 1970s, focussing primarily on the geology of Cornwall and Devon. She died in 1978.

“
In 1930, Hendriks attempted to become the first female geologist at the Geological Survey when she applied for a permanent position.”

A testimonial from O.T. Jones (Woodwardian Professor of Geology at the University of Cambridge), which is also held in the Archive, states that Hendriks "has had a very good training and is extremely enthusiastic, but has received very little encouragement in her work, and has, in fact, suffered from a good deal of discouragement from some."

The Hendriks collection in the BGS Archive includes geological notebooks, geological diagrams and notes, university certificates, correspondence from the 1890s to the 1970s, testimonials, diaries, photographs and watercolour paintings. It provides an overview of Hendriks's life in general and offers insight into her work as a geologist. The impression it leaves is one of a lady with great potential which was never fully realised and great enthusiasm which was never dampened.

.....
Andrew L Morrison

British Geological Survey
.....