

## **Katherine Warrington (1897 – 1993)**

**Katherine Warrington** was born in Harpenden, Hertfordshire on 5 September 1897, a twin and one of the five daughters of Helen Louisa Makins and the agricultural chemist Robert Warrington FRS [Jnr]. She was educated at the all-women Holloway College, University of London graduating with a B.Sc (Hons) in Botany in 1921. Katherine joined the staff of the Botany Department at Rothamsted later that year.

In the 36 years she worked at Rothamsted agricultural research station in Harpenden, Katherine Warrington carried out investigations into the weed species that grow in wheat and the nutritious properties of boron that are valued to the present day, and form the basis of modern experiments in Britain and overseas.

Warrington was the first person to demonstrate that boron, in the form of boric acid, is essential to the healthy growth of broad beans and by 1923 she had published her groundbreaking research and proof.

Dr Hugh Nicol commented *“It is not given to everyone to found a minor industry with her first piece of research, yet this, in effect, happened in her case.”*

This work earned Warrington world-wide recognition from scientists interested in plant nutrition. She went on to investigate the response of other crops to boron, and later she used similar techniques to investigate other so-called 'minor elements' or trace elements, eg manganese and molybdenum.

In 1928 she studied spectrographic methods of analysis under Professor Lundegårdh at Experimentalfältet, Stockholm. Her work on boron was the basis for her D.Sc. from the University of London

Warrington was respected by all who met her professionally, but she was a quiet and modest person. The few people privileged to become her friends admired her greatly for her strength of character and fortitude in adversity, based on a deep and abiding faith. While she lived in Harpenden she worshipped regularly at the parish church, St Nicholas, and after her retirement she did voluntary clerical work in the parish office. Eventually she became too frail to live alone and moved to a residential home in St Albans. Katherine died in St Albans on 3rd July 1993 following a stroke at the age of 95.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

<http://www.hertshiddenheroines.org.uk/portfolio/katherine-warrington-winfred-brenchley/>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-katherine-warrington-1460063.html>