

# PROPLANET

Enhanced Safe and Sustainable  
coatings for supporting the Planet



11 FEB Celebrating International Day of Women & Girls in Science

## THE MATILDA EFFECT



[www.proplanet-project.eu](http://www.proplanet-project.eu) | [info@proplanet-project.eu](mailto:info@proplanet-project.eu)



Funded by  
the European Union

Funded by the European Union under the GA no 101091842. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or HADEA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

# THE MATILDA EFFECT

The Matilda Effect describes the systematic overlooking or downplaying of women's contributions in science and research, with their work often attributed to male colleagues or receiving far less recognition than it deserves. This booklet brings attention to eleven women scientists and researchers whose portraits and stories challenge that pattern, restoring visibility, credit, and legacy to women whose work has helped shape our understanding of the world.



Photo: © www.alchetron.com

## Theano of Thuria (Ancient Astronomy)

6<sup>th</sup> century BC - 6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century BC

**Field:** Mathematics & Astronomy

**Overshadowed by:** Historians of antiquity

### Why she matters

Theano was a pioneering Greek mathematician and astronomer. A student and the wife of Pythagoras, she taught at his schools and actively promoted his teachings after his death. Historical evidence suggests that key concepts, including the "Golden Ratio," may have originated from her work. Though celebrated in her time, her contributions were later diminished or overlooked by many historians.



Photo: © www.odysseum.educol.education.fr

## Hypatia of Alexandria (Teachings)

350-370 AD - 415 AD

**Field:** Mathematics & Philosophy

**Overshadowed by:** Later historical narratives

### Why she matters

Hypatia, living in 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century Alexandria, was a brilliant mathematician, philosopher, and teacher. She contributed to the development of mathematics and astronomy, but her work was largely erased from historical accounts after her tragic death.



Photo: © www.exparticus.it

## Trotula of Salerno (Medicine)

11<sup>th</sup> century - 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century

**Field:** Medicine & Gynecology

**Overshadowed by:** Medieval scholars & historians

### Why she matters

Trotula was a leading medieval physician whose medical texts on women's health were widely used across Europe. Because her expertise challenged gender norms, later scholars questioned her authorship, claimed she was a man, or even suggested she never existed, erasing her contributions for centuries.

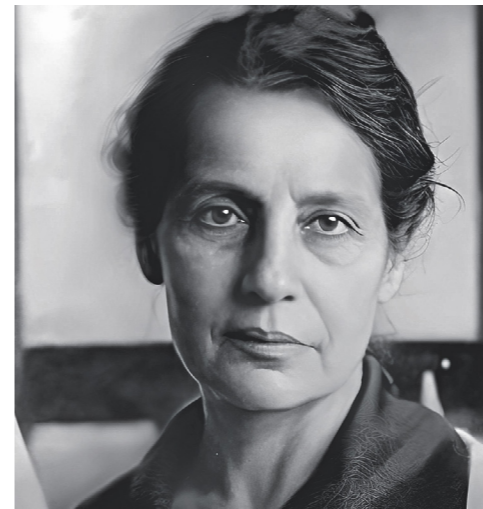


Photo: © www.elcorreo.com

## Lise Meitner (Nuclear Fission)

07/11/1878 - 27/10/1968

**Field:** Nuclear physics

**Overshadowed by:** Otto Hahn

### Why she matters

Meitner co-discovered nuclear fission and provided the theoretical explanation behind it. Hahn received the Nobel Prize alone, despite Meitner's central role in the discovery.



Photo: © www.shinemycrown.com

## Alice Ball (Leprosy Treatment)

24/07/1892 - 31/12/1916

**Field:** Chemistry & Medicinal Science

**Overshadowed by:** Arthur Dean

### Why she matters

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Alice Ball developed an effective treatment for leprosy while working at the University of Hawaii. She was the 1<sup>st</sup> African-American woman to earn a graduate degree there and the 1<sup>st</sup> female chemistry professor. After her death, her work was claimed by another chemist, and the treatment was credited as the "Dean Method" for decades.



Photo: © www.facts.net

## Chien Shiung Wu (Parity Violation)

31/05/1912 - 16/02/1997

**Field:** Experimental physics

**Overshadowed by:** Tsung Dao Lee & Chen Ning Yang

### Why she matters

Wu conducted the groundbreaking experiment that disproved the conservation of parity, a discovery that earned Lee and Yang the Nobel Prize. Wu's contribution was indispensable but unrecognised by the Nobel committee.

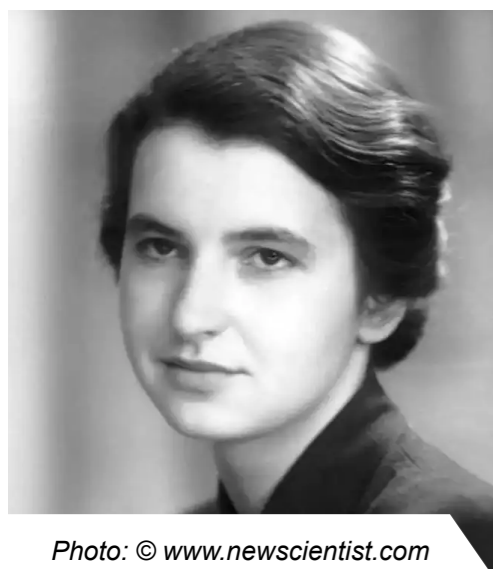


Photo: © www.newscientist.com

## Rosalind Franklin (DNA)

25/07/1920 - 16/04/1958

**Field:** Molecular biology

**Overshadowed by:** James Watson & Francis Crick

### Why she matters

Franklin's X ray diffraction images were essential to discovering the double helix structure of DNA. Her data was used without her knowledge, and she received no credit in the Nobel Prize awarded to Watson, Crick, and Wilkins.



Photo: © www.bbc.co.uk

## Henrietta Lacks (HeLa cells)

01/08/1920 - 04/10/1951

**Field:** Cell Biology

**Overshadowed by:** The medical establishment

### Why she matters

Lacks' cervical cancer cells, taken without her consent in 1951, became the first immortal human cell line, driving decades of medical research. For decades, her identity and contribution went unrecognised, highlighting systemic inequities in science and medicine.

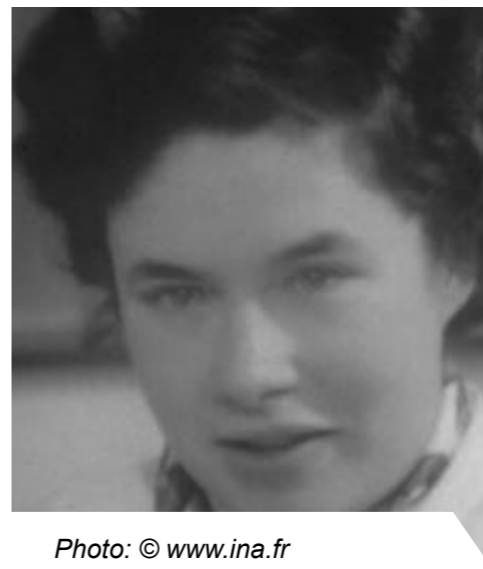


Photo: © www.ina.fr

## Marthe Gautier (Down Syndrome)

10/09/1925 - 30/12/2022

**Field:** Medical Genetics

**Overshadowed by:** Jérôme Lejeune

### Why she matters

Gautier was the first to identify the extra chromosome associated with Down syndrome. Although she made the initial discovery, her work was published under Lejeune's name, with her contribution minimised and even misspelled, delaying recognition of her role for decades.



Photo: © www.fity.club

## Jocelyn Bell Burnell (Radio Pulsars)

15/07/1943 - Now

**Field:** Astrophysics

**Overshadowed by:** Antony Hewish

### Why she matters

As a graduate student, Bell Burnell discovered the first radio pulsars. The Nobel Prize for this discovery went to her supervisor, Antony Hewish, while she was excluded despite making the initial breakthrough.



Photo: © www.bournhall.co.uk

## Jean Purdy (In Vitro Fertilisation)

25/01/1945 - 16/03/1985

**Field:** Embryology & IVF

**Overshadowed by:** Local health authorities

### Why she matters

Jean Purdy, an embryologist and nurse, was instrumental in the birth of the first baby conceived through in vitro fertilisation in 1978. Despite her pivotal role, she was excluded from the commemorative plaque at the hospitals involved. Professor Sir Robert Edwards, one of the credited scientists, advocated for her recognition but was overruled by local authorities.



# PROPLANET

Enhanced Safe and Sustainable coatings for supporting the Planet

[www.proplanet-project.eu](http://www.proplanet-project.eu)  
[info@proplanet-project.eu](mailto:info@proplanet-project.eu)

#PROPLANET



## PROPLANET PARTNERS

 idener.ai



Funded by  
the European Union

Funded by the European Union under the GA no 101091842. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or HADEA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.