

= Margaret Gowing =

Margaret Mary Gowing née Elliott , CBE , FBA ( 26 April 1921 ? 7 November 1998 ) was an English historian . She was involved with the production of several volumes of the officially sponsored History of the Second World War , but was better known for her books , commissioned by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority , covering the early history of Britain 's nuclear weapons programmes : Britain and Atomic Energy 1939 ? 1945 , published in 1964 , and the two @-@ volume Independence and Deterrence : Britain and Atomic Energy 1945 ? 52 , published in 1974 .

Through her work in the Cabinet Office from 1945 to 1959 , she knew personally many of the people involved . As historian archivist at the UK Atomic Energy Authority from 1959 to 1966 she had access to the official papers and files of the British nuclear weapons programmes . She was the first occupant of a chair in the history of science at the University of Oxford , which she held from 1972 until her retirement in 1986 . As co @-@ founder with physicist Nicholas Kurti of the Contemporary Scientific Archives Centre in Oxford , she helped ensure the preservation of contemporary scientific manuscripts .

= = Early life = =

Margaret Elliott was born on 26 April 1921 in Kensington , London , the youngest of three children of Ronald Elliott , a motor engineer , and his wife , Mabel née Donaldson , a school teacher . She had an older sister , Audrey , and an older brother , Donald . The family was poor ; her father suffered , and ultimately died , from tuberculosis and was frequently unemployed , while her mother was barred from working as a school teacher after she was married . The family therefore often had to live on a weekly sickness benefit . For entertainment , they took advantage of free entry to art galleries , museums and libraries . Elliot 's direct experience of poverty led to her becoming an ardent socialist later in life . She attended Portobello Elementary School in North Kensington , and won a London County Council scholarship to Christ 's Hospital in 1932 . She excelled academically , was a prefect , and played hockey for her house .

Elliott completed her School Leaving Certificate in 1936 , earning distinctions in Latin , English and French and a pass in German . She won a Leverhulme Entry Scholarship to the London School of Economics ( LSE ) , which she entered in 1938 . Her first @-@ year studies advisor was the economist Vera Anstey , who considered that Elliott had " a decided bent for economic history " , Elliot later attributed her interest in the subject to lectures by her second @-@ year studies advisor , Eileen Power , who urged her to pursue an academic career . She won both the Gladstone Memorial Prize and the Lillian Knowles Scholarship for economic history in 1939 . Later that year , with the outbreak of the Second World War , the LSE was evacuated to Oxford , where Elliott graduated in 1941 with a BSc degree in economics with first class honours .

= = Civil Service = =

Academic jobs in history were not easy to find in 1941 , so Elliott joined the Civil Service , working in the Prices and Statistics Section of the Iron and Steel Control directorate in the Ministry of Supply . She subsequently moved to the Board of Trade , and the Directorate of Housing Fitments , where she rose to the rank of Assistant Principal , before moving to the Cabinet Office in 1945 . There she became involved with the Official History of the Second World War , as assistant to Keith Hancock who was overall editor of the United Kingdom Civil Series of books within the Official History . As an official historian of the History of the Second World War : United Kingdom Civil Series , Gowing had access to unpublished official papers and files . She came to know personally many of the politicians and senior civil servants involved .

On 7 June 1944 , Elliot married Donald James Graham Gowing at the Wimbledon Registry Office . He was a vocalist who had also attended Christ 's Hospital before winning a choral scholarship to Kings College , Cambridge , in 1939 . He had joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in 1941 , and was serving at Combined Operations Headquarters . They married shortly before he was

shipped overseas . He was taught Japanese in the United States and went on serve in the Pacific as a translator . The marriage bar was suspended for the duration and Gowing was allowed to remain in the Civil Service . They had two children , both sons : Nicholas Keith ( Nik ) , a journalist who was born in 1951 and named after Hancock , and James , born in 1954 . Her husband , frustrated by his lack of professional success compared to hers , became an alcoholic , and died from a massive stroke in 1969 .

In 1950 , Sir Norman Brook attempted to have Gowing retained in the Cabinet Office as the permanent historian , but was stymied by the Treasury and the Civil Service Commission . In 1951 , she was told that she had no chance of being appointed to the grade of Principal , which would have carried retirement benefits with it . She later said that her years at the Cabinet Office were the happiest of her life , but she began looking for another position . In 1955 , she applied for a chair in economic history at Oxford , and for a readership at LSE , but was unsuccessful . Sir Norman exploited various administrative loopholes to allow her to be retained at the Cabinet Office , and was prepared to make her the Cabinet Office Archivist , but he could not offer her a pension .

The Public Records Act 1958 required all government departments to set up archives and records management systems . The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority ( UKAEA ) was nominally exempt from the act , being a government corporation rather than a department , but voluntarily asked to be included under the Act . This created a position at the UKAEA for an historian and archivist . Gowing applied for and secured the job in 1959 . This involved organising systems and criteria for the selection for preservation of scientific , engineering and administrative records , and writing the history of the British atomic project since it began in 1939 , the UKAEA having inherited the files of predecessor organisations including the Tube Alloys Directorate .

By this time , the UKAEA employed some 40 @, @ 000 people in offices , laboratories and factories scattered around Britain . Gowing knew little about atomic energy ; she once remarked that when she was appointed , she " didn 't know an atom from a molecule " . This was rectified , and she won the respect of Sir Christopher Hinton and Sir James Chadwick , and became friends with Nicholas Kurti , Sir Rudolf Peierls and Niels Bohr . At one point she asked Chadwick what he intended to do with all the documents in wooden filing cabinets in his attic , and he just said " burn them " . Such heart @-@ stopping moments led her to help establish the Centre for Scientific Archives in 1972 .

Gowing 's first volume , Britain and Atomic Energy 1939 ? 1945 , was published in 1964 , and achieved widespread acclaim . Stephen Toulmin declared that " No better example of contemporary narrative history of science has yet appeared " . It prompted Mark Oliphant to seek the appointment of a historian to the Australian Academy of Science in Canberra , and the Cabinet Office to commission a new series of peacetime official histories in 1966 .

= = Academia = =

In 1966 , Gowing became Reader in Contemporary History at the new University of Kent , Canterbury , covering scientific , technical , economic and social history . The UKAEA retained her as a consultant , paying her ? 1 @, @ 000 per annum for three years . Her main task was to write a two @-@ volume sequel to Britain and Atomic Energy 1939 ? 1945 covering the period from 1945 to 1952 . To help out , the UKAEA brought in Lorna Arnold from its Health and Safety Division in 1967 to become the Departmental Records Officer ( DRO ) and Gowing 's Assistant Historian . Despite their being accredited as official historians , the Atomic Weapons Establishment would not let them take their notes away , so they had to do their writing on site , under the watchful eye of Aldermaston 's DRO . To get there Gowing had to catch the train each day from Canterbury to London Waterloo station , and then the Tube to Paddington and the railway to Reading , where Arnold picked Gowing up in her car and drove to Harwell .

Gowing attempted to negotiate better conditions at the University of Kent that would allow more time to work on the books , but this was denied . She applied for a vacant chair in the History and Philosophy of Science at University College London in 1970 , without success . Then , in February 1972 , Sir Rudolf Peierls and Nicholas Kurti informed her that the University of Oxford had created a new chair in the history of science , the first of its kind in the university 's long history . She did not

expect to get the chair , but Peierls , Sir Frederick Dainton and Hugh Trevor Roper were on the selection panel , and in the end offered the chair in the history of science to Gowing , a woman who did not have a degree in history or science .

Gowing was based at Linacre College . Her appointment , Roy MacLeod wrote , " struck a conspicuous blow for modern , as against medieval and early modern , science , and for a reading of history that favoured social , economic and political perspectives , as against the examination of scientific practice . " She delivered her inaugural lecture , What 's Science to History or History to Science ? , on 27 May 1975 . In this lecture , she examined the reasons why the history of science had grown apart from other forms of history , and endeavoured to reconcile them and bring them together again . In her subsequent Wilkins Lecture in 1976 she examined the history of British prejudice against science dating back to Victorian times .

The two volume opus , Independence and Deterrence : Britain and Atomic Energy 1945 ? 52 , finally appeared in 1974 . The publication of her books brought accolades . Gowing was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1975 , and was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire ( CBE ) in 1981 . She received honorary doctorates in literature from the University of Leeds in 1976 , the University of Leicester in 1982 , and Manchester in 1985 , and in science from the University of Bath in 1987 . When she was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1988 under the provisions of Statute 12 of its Charter , which allowed for the election of non scientists who had made distinguished contributions to science , she became only the third person to become a Fellow of both the British Academy and the Royal Society , after Sir Karl Popper and Joseph Needham . Gowing never got around to writing a planned sequel to Independence and Deterrence that would take the story up 1958 , when the nuclear special relationship between Britain and the United States resumed . Arnold would later write three books to fill in this gap .

In the 1980s , Gowing served as a trustee of the Science Museum , London , and the Imperial War Museum but , remembering her own childhood , she resigned from the latter in protest at the introduction of entry fees . She was also a trustee of the National Portrait Gallery from 1978 to 1992 . She began suffering from what was most likely Alzheimer 's disease , and retired from Oxford in 1986 , two years before the official retirement age . Although she had worked in the Civil Service and Academia for 45 years , only 27 of them counted , so she was not eligible for a full pension ; her son Nik supported her . She died at Kingston Hospital in Kingston upon Thames on 7 November 1998 . An archive of her papers is held by the Museum of the History of Science in Oxford , presented by her in 1991 , with additions on her death .

= = Published works = =

= = History of the Second World War : United Kingdom Civil Series = =

British War Economy ( with W.K. Hancock ; 1952 ) . London : Her Majesty 's Stationery Office / Longman 's , Green and Co .

Civil Industry and Trade ( with Eric L. Hargreaves ; 1952 ) . London : Her Majesty 's Stationery Office / Longman 's , Green & Co .

= = British nuclear weapons programmes = =

Britain and Atomic Energy , 1935 ? 1945 ( 1964 ) London : Macmillan Publishing .

Independence and Deterrence : Britain and Atomic Energy , 1945 ? 52 . Volume 1 : Policy Making ( assisted by Lorna Arnold ) . ( 1974 ) . London : Macmillan Publishing , ISBN 0 @-@ 333 @-@ 15781 @-@ 8 .

Independence and Deterrence : Britain and Atomic Energy , 1945 ? 52 . Volume 2 : Policy Execution ( assisted by Lorna Arnold ) . ( 1974 ) . London : Macmillan Publishing , ISBN 0 @-@ 333 @-@ 16695 @-@ 7 .