

Ernest Gowers Plain Words and Forgotten Deeds

Ann Scott

During his long career as a British civil servant Ernest Gowers was close to the centre of many of the momentous events of the first half of the twentieth century. However, he only became famous in 1948 when *Plain Words*, originally written as a training pamphlet for the British Civil Service, became an instant best-seller for HMSO.

Ann Scott has had access to Gowers' family archives. Using these and other previously untapped primary sources she builds a portrait of the career of one member of a cohort of high-flying civil servants who began their careers at the turn of the century. Gowers' final task as a civil servant was to run London's civil defence during WW2. Because of the wealth of original material available, two chapters are devoted to the way in which civil defence was planned and the many challenges he had to face, using his own words and those of his colleagues.

Described as Britain's 'No 1 Chairman' he chaired many inquiries after the war. The Royal Commission into Capital Punishment had a profound effect on him, turning him into a convinced and influential abolitionist. At the age of 75 he began the task that engaged him for the final ten years of his life: revising Fowler's *Modern English Usage*.

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ANN SCOTT is Adjunct Professor in Criminology at the University of Queensland, Australia and also lectures in public policy. She has degrees in education and government and was a civil servant in Queensland for 20 years, 10 as a senior executive in the Queensland Police Service. She holds the Australian Public Service Medal.

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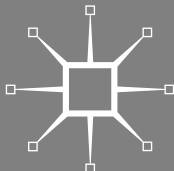
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