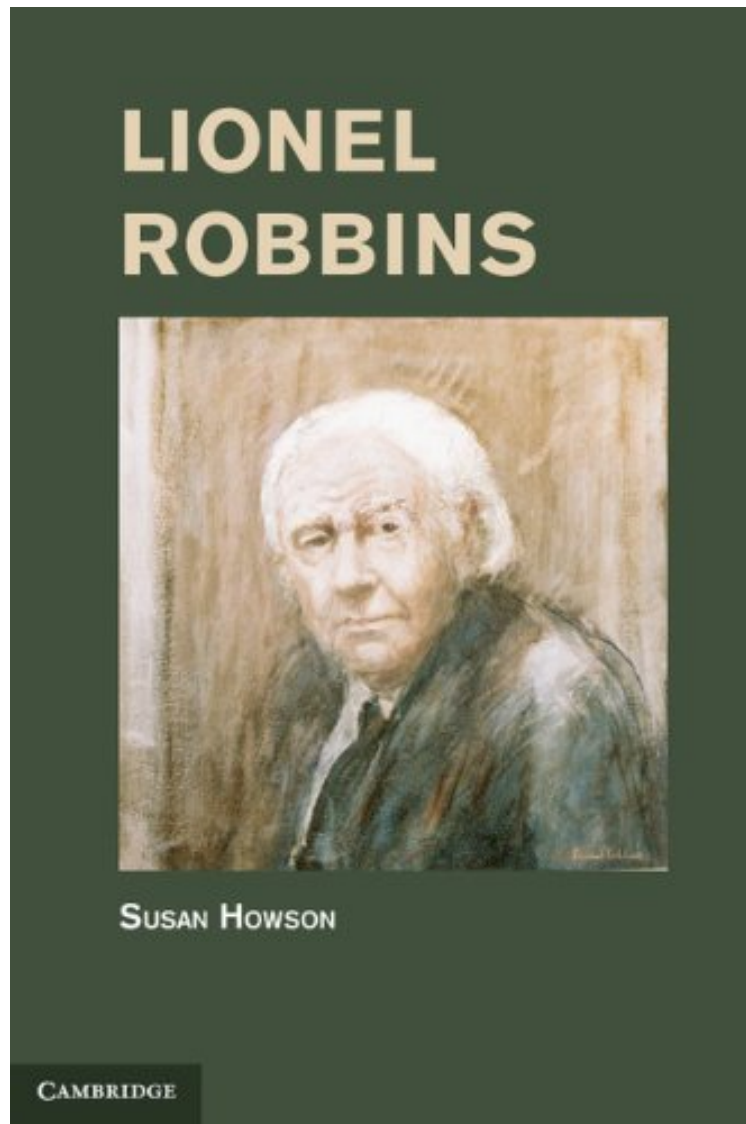


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Lionel Robbins (Historical Perspectives on Modern Economics)

Howson

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Howson : Lionel Robbins (Historical Perspectives on Modern Economics) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Lionel Robbins (Historical Perspectives on Modern Economics):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Nature and Significance of the Intellectual Life of Lionel Robbins. By Junglies I do not normally give a 5 star rating but in this case the book thoroughly deserves it, My recognition of the name of Robbins came long before reading for my first degree. I had discovered the publications of the Institute of Economic Affairs and set about a project of reading each and every one of them which I eventually completed with the invaluable help of the Alternative Bookshop in Covent Garden, Blackwells Bookshop in Oxford

and many other book shops besides. Later on, with a closer relationship with the people of the Institute of Economic Affairs themselves I had a clearer perspective of the history and creation of the Institute. Having worked my way through the standard history of the Institute *Thinking the Unthinkable: Think-tanks and the Economic Counter-revolution, 1931-83*, I often recalled that Ralph Harris was very fond of saying that he and Arthur Seldon were the last two remaining free market economists in Britain but clearly from the growing number of publications being produced by the Institute since 1955 that clearly was not the case. My interest picked up when a purchase of an early IEA sponsored book contained a little acorn of a discovery: a brief note from Seldon to Arnold Plant. From this my interest in Lionel Robbins and his relationship with the London School of Economics has grown. Alas, this superbly researched, written and edited book, does not provide me with any answers but is rather like doing a jigsaw puzzle without a picture to guide you in the process. Name recognition of IEA authors from the LSE suggest a milieu wherein strong debates went on almost continuously despite the all out war effort which utilized the talents of some of the greatest economic brains of Britain in a socialist enterprise required to defeat the onslaught in World War II. Howson's book makes for compelling reading and I was struck the whole journey through it of how much more material must have been considered before consignment to the cutting room floor. What results is word film of a colossus, intellectually and administratively and his place in the academic pantheon of greats (no pun intended) in Britain over the centuries. I suspect that there is a story to be told of the relationship between Robbins and Keynes which I hope that Howson may consider writing at some point. The endorsements of those specialists among the *Historians of Economic Thought* are a testament to the high regard with which Robbins was held and I fully support their views of the place which this book has in providing a starting point of research into Lionel Robbins, economist. It is a highly polished piece of work which holds the reader's attention throughout and provides a superb view of Robbins and his intellectual interests. I had a wonderful time reading it from cover to cover but must admit to have been a little lackadaisical in following up some points but it was an intellectual journey well worth travelling and I do feel that I have a much clearer understanding of the transformation of Britain due to the war than I had done previously. I highly recommend this book.

By the time of his death the English economist Lionel Robbins (1898–1984) was celebrated as a 'renaissance man'. He made major contributions to his own academic discipline and applied his skills as an economist not only to practical problems of economic policy – with conspicuous success when he served as head of the economists advising the wartime coalition government of Winston Churchill in 1940–45; and of higher education; the 'Robbins Report' of 1963; but also to the administration of the visual and performing arts that he loved deeply. He was devoted to the London School of Economics, from his time as an undergraduate following active service as an artillery officer on the Western Front in 1917–18, through his years as Professor of Economics (1929–62), and his stint as chairman of the governors during the 'troubles' of the late 1960s. This comprehensive biography, based on his personal and professional correspondence and other papers, covers all these many and varied activities.

"This impressive biography opens a window into the life of the person who was at the centre of the economics profession in Britain for four decades. It will be an invaluable resource for anyone who wants to understand what happened to British economics in the twentieth century." Roger Backhouse, University of Birmingham
"Sue Howson has produced the definitive account of the life and work of one of the most versatile economists of the twentieth century. An impressive achievement!" William Barber, Wesleyan University, Connecticut
"The legacy of Lionel Robbins is vast and deep, spanning economic analysis and policymaking, post-World War II reconstruction, the arts, and higher education. Susan Howson brings all of this to life in her painstakingly researched biography. Hers is an amazing achievement, and this book will be the starting point for all future research on this giant of twentieth-century British intellectual and social life." Steven G. Medema, University of Colorado, Denver
"This biography of a leading figure in twentieth-century British academic and public life is far more than an authoritative account of the career of an exceptional economist. Susan Howson's command over a remarkable combination of personal and public documentation has enabled her to make important contributions to the political and economic history of the period and the institutions and policies with which Lionel Robbins was intimately connected: the London School of Economics, the official conduct of war and post-war economic planning, the future of higher education, and the administration of the British arts scene from the perspective of the National Gallery and the Royal Opera House." Donald Winch, University of Sussex
"This is, no doubt, a decisive work on the life of Lionel Robbins, the economist who is probably safe to be viewed as having left a greater legacy on contemporary British society than on the history of economic thought ... the book is not exclusively written for an audience of economists. Historians interested in British art policy, for instance, will surely profit from this book, and historians working on the US-UK negotiation during WWII will also gain another window to this high-profile, very complex, international policy-making process ... It is, no doubt, a great work by a prominent historian; the scope is broad and the treatment of each issue is even-handed." Norikazu Takami, *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*
About the Author
Susan Howson is Professor of Economics and

Fellow of Trinity College, University of Toronto. She was educated at the London School of Economics (1964-1969) and at the University of Cambridge, where she obtained her PhD in 1975. She has held visiting positions in the International Division of the Bank of England (1979-1981); Nuffield College, Oxford (1984-1985); and Wolfson College, Cambridge (1991-1993). Professor Howson is the author of *Domestic Monetary Management in Britain 1919-38* (Cambridge University Press, 1975) and *British Monetary Policy, 1945-51* (1993) and co-author with Donald Winch of *The Economic Advisory Council* (Cambridge University Press, 1977). She edited *The Collected Papers of James Meade* (3 volumes, 1988) and co-edited with Donald Moggridge the wartime diaries of Lionel Robbins and Nobel Laureate James Meade, and the Cabinet Office diary of James Meade (1990). Professor Howson began research on the life and work of Lionel Robbins in the early 1990s. She edited a selection of his major articles in economic theory and economic policy under the title *Economic Science and Political Economy* (1997). Her work on British economic policy has been published in *The Economic Journal*, *the Economic History*, *History of Political Economy*, *the Journal of Economic History* and *Oxford Economic Papers*, among other publications. She is also a contributor to the *Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain (Structural Change and Growth, Volume III, 2004)*. The recipient of two prizes for research in economic history, Professor Howson has also held two Connaught Senior Research Fellowships in the Social Sciences, in 2004 and 2007, for her work on Lionel Robbins.