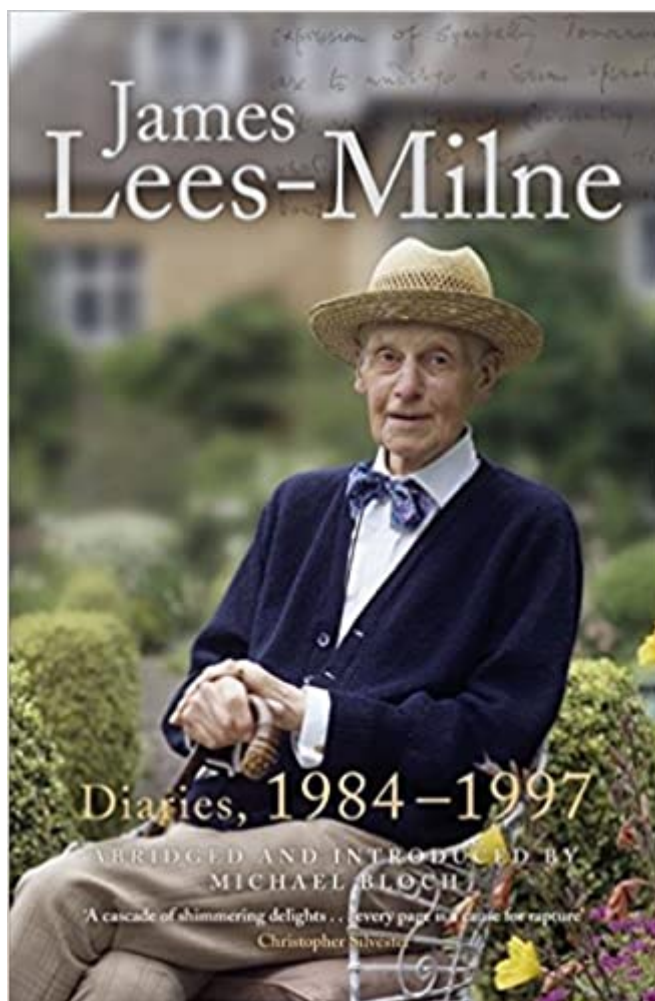


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Diaries, 1984-1997 (v. 3)



Synopsis

James Lees-Milne (1908-1997) was a noted expert on the English country house and perhaps the greatest British diarist of the 20th century. Funny, indiscreet, candid, touching, and sharply observed, his journals reveal a fascinating personality and hold up a mirror to historical events large and small. Despite advancing years, James Lees-Milne's descriptions of the people he meets, the houses he visits, and country life on the Duke of Beaufort's Badminton estate are sharper than ever. He continues to enjoy a wide variety of experiences and vividly recaptures a weekend at Chatsworth, a monastic retreat, a journey in a helicopter, an encounter with Mick Jagger, and an intimate lunch with the Prince of Wales. As the grand old man of country house conservation, he becomes a media celebrity, but declines a CBE and refuses to be photographed by Lord Snowdon. In old age, he draws close to his formidable wife Alvilde, whose death in 1994 both shatters and liberates him, but he remains emotionally interested in members of his own sex. As always, he is a penetrating commentator on the times. A tour of the Cotswolds makes him ruefully aware of the yuppie trends of the Thatcher era, while he predicts that the victory of New Labour will herald a descent into American-style vulgarity and job culture. Witty, waspish, poignant, and self-revealing, James Lees-Milne's last diaries contain as much to delight as the first, and confirm his reputation as one of the 20th century's great English diarists.

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Praise for the earlier volumes in the series A master of the diary form, he combines the profound and

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Michael Bloch was appointed James Lees-Milne's literary executor in 1997 and is currently writing his biography.

Nicely edited diaries covering the later life of one amongst the social and artistic elite of England. An excellent writer, James Lees-Milne lived to see a modern era that, in turns, both bemused and horrified him. Readers interested in old country houses; gardens; upper-crust social conventions; the royals (especially Prince Charles); the Mitford sisters; Mick Jagger (!); and clear sparkling prose should buy this book. How many people aged ninety (or at any age) can describe a frail elderly person so: "[He] like a feather. Or like a crisp old leaf, that's what he is, bent and hollow in the middle as he scuttles like a crab upstairs."

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