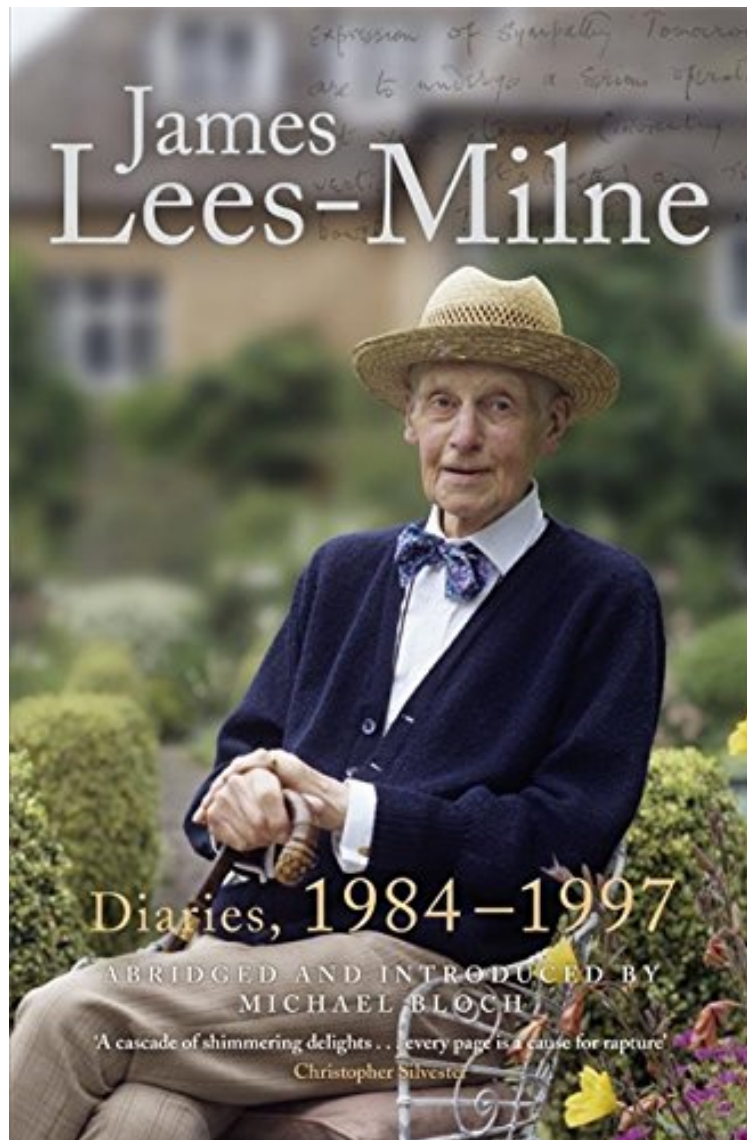


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Diaries, 1984-1997 (v. 3)

James Lees-Milne

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James Lees-Milne : Diaries, 1984-1997 (v. 3) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Diaries, 1984-1997 (v. 3):

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. An English Gentleman By Christian Schlect 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."

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 Alville, 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.

Praise for the earlier volumes in the series
A master of the diary form, he combines the profound and the inconsequential with his pithy descriptions of personalities and places ... For their range of interests and emotions, their piquant observation and judicious shifts of self-analysis, Lees-Milne's diaries deserve their august reputation -- Christopher Silvester, *Daily Express*
These diaries, superbly abridged by Michael Bloch, have a fin de Proust atmosphere of delicate regret, sprinkled with gossipy asides -- Miranda Seymour, *Guardian*
Lees-Milne's latecomers will find no better introduction to the diarist than this anthology of his earliest journals ... Reading these is a mix of shame and delight ... He's the best company, beautifully frank, funny and addictive -- *Evening Standard*
James Lees-Milne's beautiful style and pace remind one how it should be done ... His passion for buildings and for literary heritage runs through the diary and yet is equalled by a passion for understanding character -- *Observer*
These diaries offer a peerless portrait of stately homes and their owners at their lowest ebb ... James Lees-Milne is the Man who Saved Britain -- Max Hastings, *Daily Mail*
'A very good writer' -- *Contemporary About the Author*
Michael Bloch was appointed James Lees-Milne's literary executor in 1997 and is currently writing his biography.