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The Long Weekend: Life In The English Country House, 1918-1939



Synopsis

As WWI drew to a close, change reverberated through the halls of England's country homes. As the sun set slowly on the British Empire, the shadows lengthened on the lawns of a thousand stately homes. In *The Long Weekend*, historian Adrian Tinniswood introduces us to the tumultuous, scandalous and glamorous history of English country houses during the years between World Wars. As estate taxes and other challenges forced many of these venerable houses onto the market, new sectors of British and American society were seduced by the dream of owning a home in the English countryside. Drawing on thousands of memoirs, letters, and diaries, as well as the eye-witness testimonies of belted earls and bibulous butlers, Tinniswood brings the stately homes of England to life as never before, opening the door to a world by turns opulent and ordinary, noble and vicious, and forever wrapped in myth. We are drawn into the intrigues of legendary families such as the Astors, the Churchills and the Devonshires as they hosted hunting parties and balls that attracted the likes of Charlie Chaplin, T.E. Lawrence, and royals such as Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson. We waltz through aristocratic soirées, and watch as the upper crust struggle to fend off rising taxes and underbred outsiders, property speculators and poultry farmers. We gain insight into the guilt and the gingerbread, and see how the image of the country house was carefully protected by its occupants above and below stairs. Through the glitz of estate parties, the social tensions between old money and new, the hunting parties, illicit trysts, and grand feasts, Tinniswood offers a glimpse behind the veil of these great estates—and reveals a reality much more riveting than the dream.

Customer Reviews

Library Journal 147; [Tinniswood] reveals the English country house as a vibrant enterprise, benefitting from new owners, money, and architects bringing contemporary ideas to the art of country living. Informative and entertaining, Tinniswood's meticulous research brings us familiar names, such as the Astors and Edward VIII, while introducing us to lesser-known homeowners who wished to create their own modernist vision. — Publishers Weekly

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