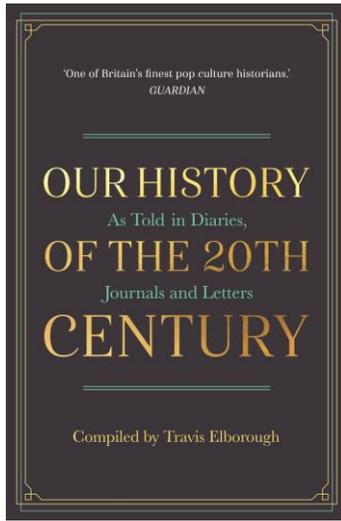


Embargoed until publication date: 28 September 2017



Our History of the 20th Century:

As Told in Diaries, Journals and Letters

Compiled by Travis Elborough

28 September 2017 £25 hardback, ISBN 9781782437352

'one of Britain's finest pop culture historians' *The Guardian*

'Travis Elborough is becoming a latter-day Alan Bennett'. *Spectator*

'I begin today a new year & a new century, full of anxiety & fear of what may be before us!...' Queen Victoria, 1 January 1900

'My whole life I thought I'd be at a wild party at the end of the millennium. Instead I was queuing outside Stratford Tube station. It was the only way to get to the Dome...' Oona King, 31 December 1999

What better way to understand the epic 20th century than through the eyes of those who experienced it at first hand? Travis Elborough's compilation offers brilliantly candid and intimate insights not only into the headline-grabbing events but also the domestic and personal moments of those who lived through it.

The book draws on over one hundred diarists. They include the great and the good – from Beatrice Webb to Tony Benn, from A. C. Benson to Alan Bennett from Virginia Ironside to Hanif Kureishi – as well as many less-well-known individuals such as Gladys Langford and Kathleen Tipper, whose writings for the Mass Observation Project offer brilliant glimpses into what the man or woman on the street really made of the stuff of history at the time.

We have first-hand accounts of the home front during two world wars, the ins and outs of Britain and Europe, strife on these shores and conflicts overseas, and radically changing attitudes towards the monarchy, women, gay rights and immigration. From the Easter Rising to email, from the Boer War to New Labour,



Press contact Ruth Killick 07880703741
publicity@ruthkillick.co.uk

Michael O'Mara Books Press Release

here are responses to the death of Princess Diana, the resignation of Margaret Thatcher, the Moon landing, the Beatles and much more.

We meet Kenneth Williams praying for the CND marchers, Michael Palin deciding to give the Common Market 'a whirl', Alex Wheatle describing the Brixton Riots, Joe Orton discussing marijuana with Paul McCartney, and Barbara Pym's unflattering view of Mae West ('a purely physical appeal and crude technique'). We read Beatrice Webb on a divided Britain, V. S. Naipaul's thoughts about snow and British food on arrival in London from Trinidad, Anita Sethi's hurtful encounters with racist schoolmates as well as her first night at Manchester's legendary Hacienda, and miners' accounts of the beginning, and collapse, of the Miners' Strike. We read reactions to ground-breaking novels, art, architecture and plays – from *Death of a Salesman* to *The Caretaker* ('Nothing happens except that somehow it does...' Noel Coward).

Finally, **Our History of the 20th Century** reminds us too that in the middle of great world events, we can be otherwise preoccupied. As Rae Earl reported in her *Fat Mad Teenage Diary* in 1989 'I've just realized something depressing: even bloody Communism has collapsed and I still haven't lost my bloody virginity.'



Travis Elborough has co-edited two previous anthologies of diaries, *A London Year* and *A Traveller's Year*. A freelance writer, author and cultural commentator for nearly two decades, his other books include *The Long-Player Goodbye*, a hymn to vinyl records; *Wish You Were Here*, a survey of the British beside the seaside and most recently *A Walk in the Park: The Life and Times of a People's Institution*, described as 'a fascinating, informative, revelatory book' by William Boyd in the *Guardian*.



Press contact Ruth Killick 07880703741
publicity@ruthkillick.co.uk