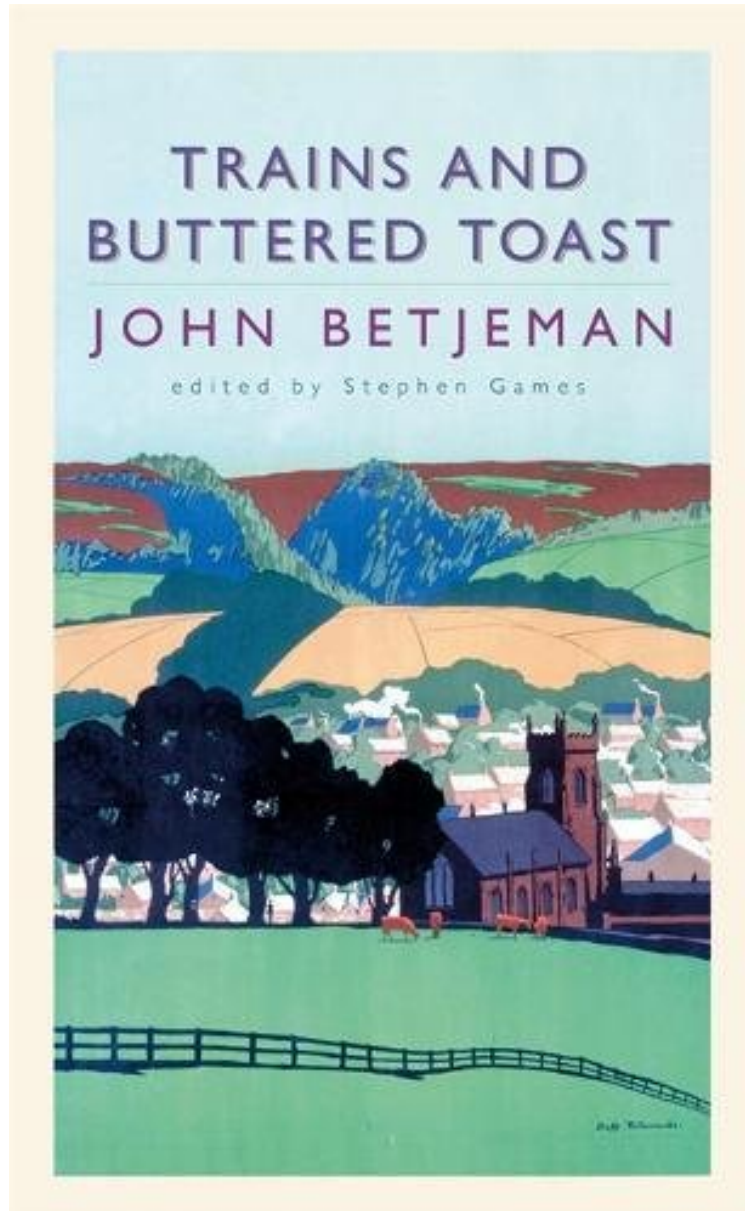


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Trains and Buttered Toast

Sir John Betjeman

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Sir John Betjeman : Trains and Buttered Toast before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Trains and Buttered Toast:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Pleasant tour of old England By John the Reader The BBC (British Broadcasting Service) felt that it had, under its Chairman Lord Reith, a moral obligation to educate and elevate the

taste of 'the masses' - their listeners. In 1938 John Betjeman gave his first radio talk, on the architecture and renovation of Waterloo Bridge in London, and launched a broadcasting career that ran until the 1960s. His areas of interest were architecture and the 'trashing' of the English countryside, religion and, of course, books, authors, literature and poetry. One of his last radio talks, in 1959, was a celebratory reading of his own - by then - immensely popular poetry. He became, according to The Times, the 'first Teddy Bear of the nation', and that nation erected a charming statue of him, holding onto his hat whilst peering about in perpetual enthusiastic curiosity in the now renovated St. Pancras Railway station, whose architectural facade he was instrumental in preserving from demolition. His popularity was established by these hundreds of radio talks and his participating in "The Brains Trust" a quiz show in the common knowledge format, where this self-proclaimed "semi-intellectual" was able to show off a flexible extemporizing intelligence which appealed to those broad 'masses' of the BBC listeners. One of his producers, the later infamous spy Guy Burgess asked him to give a series of interviews and talks on the 'British Eccentric', explaining that he thought to himself '.... who more suitable to than you to talk about one of the others?' John was not a handsome man, Wilhelmine Cresswell, once briefly his fiancé, recalled in an interview later " ...his hair was like last year's birds nest and his teeth were covered in slime"! Despite this, he made an equally successful migration to the medium of television and became one of the most popular British Poets Laureates. Betjeman published over a hundred books of Victorian architectural comment, hymns, country guides and - of course - dozens of his poetry. His keystone work "Summoned by bells" was autobiographical and was made into a film. It is from that work that the title of this book was taken; Safe in a world of trains and buttered toast Where things inanimate could feel and think. The pieces in the book are from his radio talks and cover a broad spectrum of his thoughts and interests - I would have liked more of his train-travel narratives or period pieces like those I enjoy from J.B. Priestley or Eeh Bah Goom Priestley as Betjeman described him with that wicked sense of humour he sometimes flashed. However; Betjeman's poetry, as distinct from the marvelously evocative town and country descriptive pieces in this book does not engage me very much, but, with that humour again, he writes "I ought to warn you that my verse is of no interest to people who can think. It jingles for the slaves of their own passions". 11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. A nostalgic journey back to the golden days of travel and broadcasting

By Michael A. Roodyn This is a most enjoyable read for anyone interested in John Betjeman or indeed anyone longing back to the times when trains had windows that would open! Stephen Games has skilfully edited JB's talks broadcasted by the BBC during a period of 40+ years. The range of topics, clearly indicating the diversity of the broadcaster, poet and architectural buff (self taught), range from the wit of Wordsworth to a lament of modernism encroaching on metropolitan and rural life with many interesting talks covered in between. Anyone interested in " how we lived then" should buy this book now. Michael Roodyn

Eccentric, sentimental homespun, John Betjeman's passions were mostly self-taught. He saw his country being devastated by war progress he waged a private war to save it. His only weapons were words - the poetry for which he is best known, even more influential, the radio talks that first made him a phenomenon.

'Stephen Games has made a useful, entertaining selection of Betjeman's radio talks' * Sunday Telegraph * 'In Trains and Buttered Toast Betjeman's voice is gloriously new again' * The Times * 'Informative and entertaining' * Scotsman * 'Excellent' * Spectator * 'Beautifully produced... Betjeman was evidently a comic writer of the highest class' * Guardian * 'What a joy' * Sunday Herald Magazine * 'Games... has produced a volume which no Betjemaniac will be without.' * Evening Standard: A.N. Wilson * 'A real treat ... A lovely, lovely anthology' * Daily Mail, Val Hennessy, Critic's Choice * About the Author John Betjeman was born in 1906 and educated at Magdalen College, Oxford. He gave his first radio talk in 1932; future appearances made him into a national celebrity. He was knighted in 1969 and became poet laureate in 1972. He died in 1984. Stephen Games was educated at Magdalene College, Cambridge, made documentaries for BBC Radio 3 and was the first arts correspondent on the Independent. He has been a columnist for the Los Angeles Times and deputy editor of the RIBA Journal.