



Belles and Whistles: Journeys Through Time on Britain's Trains

Andrew Martin

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In the heroic days of rail travel, you could dine on kippers and champagne aboard the Brighton Belle; smoke a post-prandial cigar as the Golden Arrow closed in on Paris, or be shaved by the Flying Scotsman's on-board barber. Everyone from schoolboys to socialites knew of these glamorous 'named trains' and aspired to ride aboard them. In *Belles and Whistles*, Andrew Martin recreates five of these famous train journeys by travelling aboard their nearest modern day equivalents. Sometimes their names have survived, even if only as a footnote on a timetable leaflet, but what has usually - if not always - disappeared is the extravagance and luxury. As Martin explains how we got from there to here, evocations of the golden age contrast with the starker modern reality: from monogrammed cutlery to stirring sticks, from silence on trains to tannoy announcements, from compartments to airline seating. For those who wonder whatever happened to porters, dining cars, mellow lighting, timetables, luggage in advance, trunk murders, the answers are all here. Martin's five journeys add up to an idiosyncratic history of Britain's railways, combining humour, historical anecdote, reportage from the present and romantic evocations of the past.



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Effie Morris:

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