



Eleven Minutes Late: A Train Journey to the Soul of Britain

Matthew Engel

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Britain gave railways to the world, yet its own network is the dearest (definitely) and the worst (probably) in Western Europe. Trains are deeply embedded in the national psyche and folklore - yet it is considered uncool to care about them.

For Matthew Engel the railway system is the ultimate expression of Britishness. It represents all the nation's ingenuity, incompetence, nostalgia, corruption, humour, capacity for suffering and even sexual repression. To uncover its mysteries, Engel has travelled the system from Penzance to Thurso, exploring its history and talking to people from politicians to platform staff.

Along the way Engel ('half-John Betjeman, half-Victor Meldrew') finds the most charmingly bizarre train in Britain, the most beautiful branch line, the rudest railwayman, and - after a quest lasting decades - an Individual Pot of Strawberry Jam. *Eleven Minutes Late* is both a polemic and a paean, and it is also very funny.

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