

From the Boer war to the Suez Crisis. From Kaiser Wilhelm and the Tsar to Khrushchev and Kennedy. From the footman and the hansom cab to the satellite and the supermarket. Harold Nicolson not only lived through an extraordinary period of history, he helped shape it. And he interpreted it for posterity in a series of remarkable books. Nicolson was a successful diplomat, politician, writer, and early media personality, yet he struggled with a nagging sense of failure. A homosexual at a time when exposure would have meant professional and social ruin, he was also one half of a strange, passionate and undoubtedly successful marriage which lasted forty-nine years. The tides of history swirled around Nicolson - so, too, did a cast of characters which reads like a whos who of the first half of the twentieth century. He worked alongside Balfour, Lloyd George, Curzon and Ramsay MacDonald. He was a spokesman for the anti-appeasement group which centred on Eden and Churchill. Everyone from John Betjeman and King George V to Vladimir Nabokov and Igor Stravinsky praised his writing. And he still found time to design one of Englands most beautiful gardens. Drawing on his own experience of diplomacy and Whitehall, Laurence Bristow-Smith has written a new and authoritative life of one of the twentieth centurys most complex characters - a man who always kept half-an-eye on history.

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