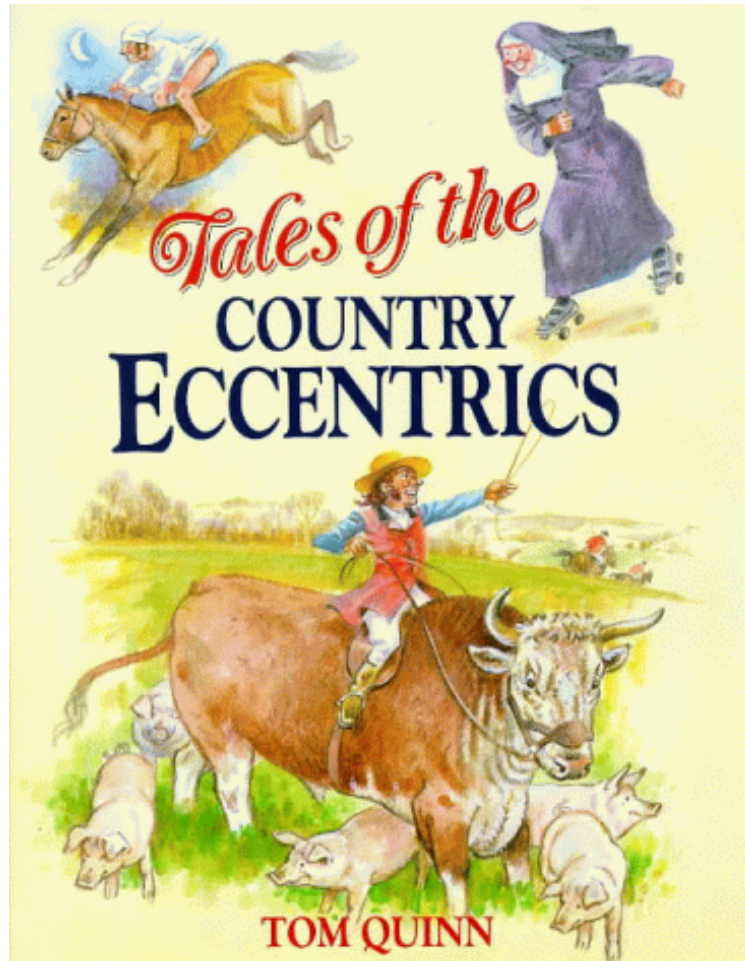


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Tales Country Eccentrics

Tom Quinn

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Tom Quinn : Tales Country Eccentrics before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Tales Country Eccentrics:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Britain is full of nuttersBy Peter Durward HarrisI've been called a nutter (and worse) many times in my life, so have some empathy with the people featured in this wonderful book. As the author explains in his introduction, defining eccentric (a polite word for nutter, though the author doesn't say so) is imprecise, since different people have different opinions on the matter. As I've learned in the last few years, plenty of people think you have to be a nutter to write lots of reviews just for fun (see the comments on my Lulu Together review on 's UK site), yet many do it so they obviously don't agree. The author doesn't mention that hobby, though perhaps he can be persuaded to if he writes a sequel about urban eccentrics, but one of the chapters here features several characters with unusual hobbies and interests, plus other chapters about different types of eccentric people. Make up your own mind about them. I suspect that you'll agree that most of them are eccentric.The first chapter is the

one about hobbies, and the first character is an inventor. He is clearly a skilled craftsman, making all his own furniture as well as any number of strange gadgets. Other unusual hobbyists include a conker champion and a woman who briefly became a nun but eventually ended up as a collector of Lego sets. Inevitably, my favorite is a farmer (and amateur jockey) who organizes sheep races. The sheep run in one-furlong steeplechases knowing that it's feeding time when they reach the end. The four fences are each a foot high and animal welfare is the absolute priority. Other chapters cover aristocrats and academics, sportsmen and dandies, gardeners and gadabouts, mystics and military men. After reading about the sheep racing, the sport of lawnmower racing seems normal by comparison, but while the racers refuse to consider commercial interests that might ruin the sport as they see it, they nevertheless have a set of rules that must be adhered to, with three groups of lawnmower (run behind, the towed seat and the sit-on with wheels front and back) each having different races. Odd as the sport may be, it has been more successful than cheetah racing, which was tried out on greyhound tracks in London for a few years in the first half of the twentieth century. I would have been most disappointed if this book hadn't included a gnome fancier, but of course Ann Atkin, famous for her gnome reserve, is featured. This is an entertaining book that contains many other characters besides those I've mentioned, some nuttier than others, but your favorites may well be different from mine.

A celebration of all that is quirky about the way the British live, told through the words of a range of living eccentrics and some examples from the past. Figures include the former nun who now collects Lego sets, the car salesman who races lawnmowers and the inventor who rides a penny farthing.