

Alan Bennett

Looking back over all four diaries, what do they say about Britain – and you – over this time?

A diary is a daily contribution both to yourself and to a reader. When I write mine, it makes me feel like I'm part of the world. I'm not sure what looking back over 40 years of diaries tells me about Britain: that it's still a democracy and that people still matter.

One of the things that can be said about keeping a diary is that it gets you into literature by the back door. This isn't literature, you tell yourself. It's just jotting, the things that occur, the stuff that happens. I've not always found people easy to talk to. But I've found it easy to talk to myself, which is what a diary is.

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