



James Herriot: The Life of a Country Vet

Graham Lord

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Lord has researched and written a detailed and affectionate biography of a remarkable man whose charm and modesty remained unchanged by phenomenal success and adulation. Alf wrote amazingly little about his parents, his poor childhood in a crowded Glasgow tenement or his schooldays, but Lord describes them all in vivid detail after interviewing friends of Alf's from his earliest days in Glasgow up to the end in Yorkshire, where he worked for over fifty years with his partner Donald Sinclair, whom he called 'Siegfried' in his books, Lord has also uncovered some extraordinary events and hidden tragedies in Alf's life and he asks a series of pertinent questions. How much of the Herriot books was true? How much was fiction? And what was his real relationship with the various characters who inhabit the books. This warm but incisive portrait will be enjoyed by James Herriot's countless admirers but will also dispel the myths that have already grown up around the life of the most famous and deeply loved vet the world has ever known.

James Herriot: The Life of a Country Vet Details

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Author : Graham Lord

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Carol Tilson says

Will the real James Herriot please step forward

I am a binge reader, I love reading books in the same series and or by the same author whenever possible. I knew this book was not by the original author, James "Alf" Wigt, aka James Herriot but about him.

However, the description of this book proved a bit misleading. There was a great deal of idiosyncrasies that were discussed as to the characters, the city, the time periods, etc. I don't even remember how many times the theory of what percentage Alf's books were fact or fiction, but I can tell you it was way too often. I must give the author credit in trying to keep with the authenticity of who James/Alf was. It was evident that they knew each other.

At several points of the book, I felt frustration from the author as to correcting so many beliefs about the subject and his life that his only goal of the book was to show the rest of the world that they are wrong and only he knows the truth.

The book felt long and wordy, but at the same time it was interesting to learn about the man behind-the-scenes. I would not have minded one bit if the discussions about some very private human medical conditions treated by his vet partner were left out. However it just solidified the "too much info" theme carried throughout the book. Stick with the work by James Herriot, you might enjoy them better.

Robyn says

UGH! What a horrible book. All the writing talent Alf Wight (James Herriot) had his biographer seems to be lacking. The book is dry, boring and mechanical. Graham spends literally pages upon pages describing the poor Scottish tenements of the early 1900s--dry statistics and detailed facts--and then proceeds to state that Wight's childhood, although very financially poor, was not as bad as most the Scottish tenements he just spent boring his readers with. Too bad, Herriot deserves more than this after years of entertaining readers with his wit and beautiful prose.

Garth Mailman says

Don't buy this book. One of the worst books I've started in decades.

Booksingarden says

This is both poorly written and a hatchet job.

The book written by his son is an excellent biography. It is well written and written with affection - just like his Dad's books: The Real James Herriot: A Memoir of My Father.

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/3...>

Ruth-Anne says

Gave up on this one. As much as I love the James Herriot books, this bio was uninteresting and never captured my attention. Too much speculation about early life (based on apparently no hard facts). Save yourself some time and read Herriot's books instead. They may be highly fictionalized, but they're funny and compelling.

Alan says

Not very good. Seems to be concerned about debunking other biographical material and cross referencing.

Fred says

so much speculation that I just stopped reading it, terrible book

Deborah Jones says**Bit dry reading**

I read this through hoping it would get better. It didn't . Nice to learn a bit more about my favorite vet but I wish the story was less like an obituary.

Kim Hampton says

A fantastic biography of the world's best known vet, although several of his "facts" were later disputed by James Herriot's son in his biography of his father. Still an interesting read with some neat pics.

Manybooks says

I purchased Graham Lord's James Herriot: The Life of a Country Vet in of all places, a tourist shop in Banff, Alberta, in the summer of 1998 because the book happened to look interesting, and I was hoping (and perhaps even a bit desperate) to read a decent and enlightening biography of Alfred Wight (the real persona behind James Herriot). And yes indeed, even before I ever purchased Graham Lord's book I already well knew that Alfred Wight's, that James Herriot's veterinarian memoirs are only semi-autobiographical at best, that some of the stories are in fact entirely fictitious, that certain clients are conglomerates and that especially Donald Sinclair (who was Siegfried Farnon in All Creatures Great and Small and its sequels) was not always all that

happy at how he had been portrayed. And guess what, Mr. Lord, this did not and still does not matter at ALL to me (and thus, when I started reading your James Herriot: The Life of a Country Vet, I quickly became both disgusted and angry that your so-called biography really was and remains nothing but cheap trash talk against a beloved author who is also no longer able to even defend himself due to being deceased, and frankly, your nastiness towards Alfred Wight's wife Joan, that not only has annoyed me, but it has also made me very tempted to toss your James Herriot: The Life of a Country Vet into the trash bin).

One star, and absolutely not in any way recommended is James Herriot: The Life of a Country Vet. And if you are, indeed, interested in the actual and true life story of Alfred Wight, of the person who wrote under the pseudonym of James Herriot, I would strongly and vociferously suggest skipping Graham Lord and reading Jim Wight's The Real James Herriot: A Memoir of My Father instead, which might not read as smoothly as James Herriot's, as his father's memoirs, but is a loving and honest portrayal of Jim Wight, and not the nasty bit of hearsay and rumourmongering that James Herriot: The Life of a Country Vet represents (and yes indeed, in order to post an actual review, I did actually attempt to reread the latter and I think I was even more offended and angry now than I was in 1998, especially considering that according to Jim Wight, Alfred Wight had always considered Graham Lord a personal friend).

Julie says

I was disappointed in this book - it contained way too much intimate and uninteresting detail eg the address of the person who rented Alf's parents a cottage (!?). Alf Wight (James Herriott's real name) sounded a lovely man, but I am saddened by the forensic exploration of his trials and tribulations (some only guessed at).

It has however inspired me to reread the books, and I couldn't give a toss what is real and what made up. They will remain lovely, gentle and humorous books.

Terry says

James Harriot was one of my favorite authors. Not for those who aren't interested in the country life of a veterinarian or his experiences. He was quite humorous to read and I enjoyed all his books but this one that is about him. I think it is one I would check out from the library to see if it is actually worth buying.

Cindy says

Detailed, yes. Affectionate? I don't think so.

Sue says

Looks like the author jumped onto the bandwagon of someone else, who was famous. I was looking for animal stories.

Sidney says

The author began theorizing all about the guy, his parents, etc. It was supposed to be a biography.
