

# The Man Who Was George Smiley: The Life of John Bingham

Michael Jago



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Investigator, interrogator, intellectual hero: the perfect inspiration for the perfect spy. This first full-length biography traces the life of the remarkable and engaging John Bingham, the man behind John le Carré's George Smiley. The heir to an Irish barony and a spirited young journalist, John Bingham joined MI5 in 1940; his quiet intellect, wry wit and knack for observation made him a natural. He took part in many of MI5's greatest wartime missions - from the tracking of Nazi agents in Britain to Operation double cross that ensured the success of D-Day - and later spent three decades running agents in Britain against the Communist target. Among his colleagues his skills were legendary and he soon became a mentor to many a novice spy - including one David Cornwell, the later le Carré. Bingham, too, was an innovative writer who perfected the psychological thriller, marrying cold objectivity with an explanation of the darkest reaches of human behaviour. His early novels were applauded but, for all his success, Bingham struggled to match the fame of the man he had inspired. Drawing on Bingham's published and unpublished writings, as well as interviews with his family, Michael Jago skilfully tells the riveting yet poignant tale of the man who was George Smiley.

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