
Reviews

ECOLOGY IN THE 20th CENTURY: A HISTORY by Anna Bramwell. Yale University Press, Newhaven and London. 1989. Paperback. £9.95.

This book explores the intellectual and political history of the ecological movement from its beginnings in the late nineteenth century to the present time. Dr Bramwell 'examines the thinkers who represent most significantly the roots of ecological ideas. They are located in the biological and physical sciences, in geography and land planning, and in some works of literature.'

It is Chapter Seven, 'The Literary Ecologist' (p. 133), which is based mainly on the work of Henry Williamson, and also on that of the Norwegian novelist, Knut Hamsun, a Nobel Prize winner, that makes this present work of such particular interest to members of our Society. Anna Bramwell's argument is clearly and objectively drawn although there is the occasional careless phrase which would appear to derive from a total acceptance of the printed word as absolute truth, which reference to primary source material would have obviated.

Henry would probably have been gratified but surprised (or not?) at finding himself considered a leader of thought in the ecology movement. Interestingly, Dr Bramwell has not taken into account the fact that in necessarily improving 'The Norfolk Farm', Henry actually destroyed one of the best areas of original chalk grassland in that area, because for her ecology is seen entirely from a political slant and not as a conservation movement, involved in natural history or humanist ideals.

Despite a heading on the contents page, 'The Jefferies Tradition', there is little depth to this section (and sadly it is difficult to follow up footnote 2, which doesn't appear to refer to its stated source).

However these are quibbles, for the book has powerful food for thought and its perusal in depth will certainly be necessary for serious researchers into Henry Williamson's life and work.

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THE NIGHTJAR, Yesterday and Today by Margaret Grainger and Richard Williamson, illus. by John Davis. WSIHE, Otter Memorial Paper No. 3. 1988. £2.50.

Drawn to your attention because of the involvement of your President, this interesting small booklet examines the occurrence of the nightjar in the work of Charlotte Smith and Gilbert White, and also John Clare; and has an account of the folklore, behaviour and present status of the nightjar by Richard, and including a powerful and mystical poem by him. Obtainable from Dr Paul Foster, West Sussex Institute for Higher Education, Bishop Otter College, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 4PE. If ordering, I suggest you mention, for interest, that you are a member of the Henry Williamson Society.

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