

Book Reviews

The Lake District: a Landscape History, by W. H. Pearsall and Winifred Pennington. Collins, £3.15.

Monks Wood: a Nature Reserve Record, edited by R. C. Steele and R. C. Welch. Nature Conservancy, London, £2.25.

Both these books are in the high tradition of British natural history, perhaps one might be allowed to say English natural history, for Scotland and Wales are distinctly late comers in this field. In *The Lake District*, which is no. 53 in the New Naturalist series, now rising thirty years old, the late Professor Pearsall and his pupil, now Mrs T. G. Tutin, write about their natal region as only two real and dedicated naturalists can, with a personal knowledge based on tramping the whole area on foot. Much foot-tramping must also lie behind the remarkably complete survey of Monks Wood, one of our premier national nature reserves, by a 33-man team, few if any of whom can be natives of Huntingdonshire. One group of authors summarise their and our knowledge of a whole region with a breadth of understanding that takes many years to achieve. The other group have gone over their 156.8 ha with a fine tooth-comb, listing not only the whole Plant Kingdom, except the Algae, but a remarkably high selection of invertebrates: a dozen insect orders and ten other groups.

It is good that Professor Pearsall's last great work could be rescued from the oblivion that threatened it. Seven chapters have been written by his co-author from his own notes; five more she has done herself to complete his plan. Eleven other authors fill in the gaps with their own specialisms. The result is one of the most satisfying in the New Naturalist series, and it is illustrated by 32 pages of excellent black and white photographs. Note especially the 'history' in the sub-title. There is a great deal of both archaeology and history in this book, without which the present fascinating patchwork of habitats cannot possibly be understood.

History also helps us to understand Monks Wood, as indeed any other significant habitat in this palimpsest of an island. At the end is an invaluable section on conservation, which is, after all, the main reason why the book could be written.

RICHARD FITTER

Memories II, by Julian Huxley. Allen & Unwin, £4.95.

'Not just a travel book', says Sir Julian himself about the second volume of his *Memories*, and says so with complete justice. Nevertheless, he describes, with much penetrating comment, a series of journeys taken far away and, if not long ago, yet before the winds of change had begun to reach gale force. Throughout one is sensible of the enlivening presence of his wife, Juliette. At the age of eighty-four, he describes himself as 'ageing but still active', and we may hope that the demon which possessed him in his younger days and drove him into all sorts of activity will not now let his pen rest idle.

Encounters with personalities able to influence affairs or aspects of development within the scope of the work of UNESCO were, of course, bound to form part of Sir Julian's duties when he became the first Director General of that international organisation. These opportunities he used to the full to promote the ideas and policies which he did so much to shape. An early acquaintance at UNESCO was Père Teilhard de Chardin, to whose defence he rallied when Chardin was arraigned by the French Catholic

University in Montreal and solemnly rejected as theologian, scientist and philosopher. Huxley, then a visiting Professor at McGill, was given an opportunity to speak and, in a spirited intervention in favour of Chardin's life work, gave a brilliant example of one of his own most engaging characteristics—his readiness to back a friend in time of need. This same quality has led him to support wholeheartedly causes and movements which he has once espoused, and chief among them the conservation of nature. He himself declares over-population and its dire consequences to be his King Charles's head, and he was quick to foresee and predict how serious these consequences could rapidly become. He gives many telling examples of them as he takes us about the world in this book.

The fortunate decision to appoint Sir Julian as the first Director General of UNESCO (into whose title as a piece of pre-natal influence he had managed to inject the 'S' for science) ensured that 'his passionate interest in conserving wild life and natural beauty' would, in spite of opposition and difficulties, become accepted internationally as part of culture and progressive humanity. An important step was the establishment of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as an agency affiliated to UNESCO.

In a life which has embraced a bewildering range of activities, conferences and journeys such as few men have the physical or mental energy to undertake, Sir Julian has had the opportunity and found the time to visit a variety of areas, abroad and at home, extensive sites of special scientific interest and importance, which few naturalists and ecologists even in these days of easy travel can have surpassed. Nothing can have given him more pleasure than to see the fruits of his handiwork in so many places, and the descriptions of successes, and even of opportunities lost or waiting to be seized, run like an unbroken thread, for readers of *Oryx*, throughout this book. In matters of wild life and the conservation of nature generally, it is impossible to be optimistic. But if neither optimism nor pessimism are, as we are told, valid categories of thought, on a realistic view, we are bound to learn the lesson of this book and say that their future lies with Man now that he has gained such immense power over Nature.

HURCOMB

World National Parks: Progress and Opportunities. Compiled by Jean-Paul Harroy, edited by Richard van Osten. Hayez, Brussels, \$10.00.

A total of 49 authors, many of them the big names of conservation, wrote this book. It is the brain-child of Jean-Paul Harroy and was timed to mark the Yellowstone centennial. The chapter headings are both enticing and embracing, for they mention history, the general principles, the world situation, scientific research, tourism, economics, management and AD 2000. All in all, with the authors coming from 21 nations, it would seem a most excellent package, with its 394 pages wrapped up in a 'plastified cover' for a mere 10 dollars.

Reading the book is less satisfactory. The authors were each given their brief but were frequently lengthy in getting down to the particular subject accredited to them. Presumably no author saw any other contribution before he made his own, and there is much repetition of concept, of sentiment, of advice. A quantity could have been deleted to tighten up the material, quite apart from the removal of obvious statements, such as: 'How often do we forget about the damage done to frequently delicate land or water ecosystems by the multitudinous floods of visitors!' Do we ever? More important, does anyone who is likely to pick up this book?

A difficulty for dignitaries, for the president of this or that conservation