



On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain

Patrick Wright

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The hulk of Henry VIII's flagship is raised from the seabed in an operation that captures the mind of the nation. The leader of the Labour party wears an informal coat at the Cenotaph and provokes a national scandal. An elderly lady whose ancient house is scheduled for demolition dismantles it, piece by piece, and moves it across the country...

On Living in an Old Country probes such apparently fleeting and disconnected events in order to reveal how history lives on, not just in the specialist knowledge of historians, archaeologists and curators, but as a tangible presence permeating everyday life and shaping our sense of identity. It investigates the rise of 'heritage' as expressed in literature, advertising, and political rhetoric as well as in popular television dramas, conservation campaigns, and urban development schemes. It explores the relations between the idea of an imperilled national identity and the transformation of British society introduced by Margaret Thatcher.

This is the book that put 'heritage' on the map, opening one of the defining cultural and political debates of our time, and showing why conservation is a subject of such broad significance in contemporary Britain. This new edition includes an extensive new preface and interview material reflecting on the ongoing debate about the heritage industry which the book helped to kick-start.

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