



The Last Englishman: The Life of J.L Carr

Byron Rogers

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J.L. Carr was the most English of Englishmen: a man who spent most of his working life in the middle of Middle England, as headmaster of a Northamptonshire school, an enthusiastic follower of cricket and a tireless campaigner for the conservation of country churches. But he was also the author of half a dozen of the quirkiest, most comic novels in English, a publisher (from his own back bedroom in Kettering) of some of the most eccentric, collectable - and smallest - books ever printed, and an enigmatic, elusive individual. Among Carr's novels are "A Month in the Country", his moving story of a World War I survivor that is now a Penguin Classic - which won the Guardian Fiction Award, was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and made into a highly successful film starring Kenneth Branagh and Colin Firth; "How Steeple Sinderby Wanderers Won the FA Cup", now published as a Prion Humour Classic and acclaimed as one of the funniest novels ever written about football, and "The Harpole Report", acknowledged to be one of the funniest novels ever written about a school. Meanwhile his own self-published "Carr's Dictionary of Extraordinary Cricketers" became the smallest bestseller ever printed. This biography tells the life story of this fascinating man - a life both surprising and varied, from war service on a West African flying-boat base to a strange interlude teaching in the heart of South Dakota - and discovers a headmaster who would hold arithmetic races on sports day, a mysterious individual who buried all his treasures in his garden and was someone different to everyone who met him, and a novelist whose fiction is partially autobiographical.

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