



THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

CITATION DELIVERED BY PROFESSOR KEN McKINNON, VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG, ON THE OCCASION OF THE ADMISSION OF ALLAN ROY SEFTON TO THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, HONORIS CAUSA, ON 11 MAY, 1989.

Chancellor, I present to you the citation for ALLAN ROY SEFTON. Although he knew of this award, regrettably, Mr. Sefton died last week before it could be formally conferred.

Mr. Sefton was born in Hobart in 1921 and moved to Thirroul in 1929. Thirroul had been the home of his mother's family. He died in the neighbouring suburb of Bulli on 2 May, 1989.

In his 60 years as a citizen of the Illawarra, Allan Sefton became an acknowledged expert on the varied ecology of the region. He tried, with recognised success, to communicate to others a sense of wonder and caring for the natural world.

Mr. Sefton's formal schooling took place during the Depression. He completed his qualifications at Wollongong Technical College and gained employment in the Chief Electrical Engineers Department at the steelworks. At that point, began his remarkable dual career of service to heavy industry and to the preservation of the environment.

As a member of the Chief Electrical Engineers Department, Allan Sefton was one of the team involved in the design and drafting of the entire Flat Products Division and subsequent major installations. As a valued technician for 46 years, he helped to give physical shape to what is now the BHP plant at Port Kembla - the major workplace and economic centre of the region. He also worked to give industry what might be called a conscience. He was largely responsible for the formation of an environmental section directly responsible to the Engineering Manager.

As a naturalist, Allan Sefton observed, classified and sought to explain the many forms and behaviours of Illawarra flora and fauna. He published over 200 papers, letters and articles and spoke on radio and television. Readers of the local press will recognise his name as a constant contributor for over forty years.

Mr. Sefton was initially an amateur astronomer, but he turned his eyes to the nearer heavens in the 1940's. He began a study of ornithology, which was to make him a national authority on Australia's unique birdlife. He was, for a



long term, the Chairman of the Five Islands Nature Reserve Management Committee and a founding member of the New South Wales Albatross Study Group. That Group's work with the fabled Wandering Albatross has received international acclaim.

Mr. Sefton's repertoire as a naturalist expanded to include other species ranging in size from whales to funnel web spiders. He was always conscious of the impact of breakdowns in the natural balance, often caused by the interference of the human species. He lobbied unrelentingly to maintain a reasonable ecological balance in the Wollongong region. His appreciation of both sides of the argument gave extra credence to his views which were valued by national politicians, leaders of industry and the average citizen.

In 1975, Mr. Sefton was awarded the British Empire Medal for "services to the community as a natural historian, ecologist, conservationist and ornithologist". In 1978, he won the coveted Australian Natural History Medallion. This year he was awarded Membership of the "Order of Australia. He was also granted Life Membership of many prestigious environmental societies including the Illawarra Natural History Society; the Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales and the Wildlife Research Foundation of Australia.

Allan Sefton was a rare man, a man of the Illawarra region, whose reputation became known nationally and internationally. He was an amateur scientist in the tradition of the natural scientists who made the great discoveries about man and nature in earlier centuries. The University recognises its kinship with such a scholar. Its staff and students can feel envy of his freedom to seek and find the intricate patterns in nature. For as, Jacob Bronowski, remarked, "we increase our understanding of nature by the free inquiry of the human mind". Bronowski also stated, with great relevance to Mr. Sefton's work, that "we can practice science only if we value the truth."

The University makes this award to Allan Sefton in recognition of his contribution to the search for the truth. In doing so, it acknowledges the great and lasting value of his service to the Illawarra community and to the environment in which we all live. The striking feature of Mr. Sefton's work was a great ability to bridge the gap between science and the community. In this, he provides a great model for the University in general.

Chancellor, while it is a matter of great regret that he did not live long enough to receive this award personally, it is a great privilege to ask you to admit ALLAN ROY SEFTON to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, *Honoris causa*.