

BETWEEN THE FLAGS: ONE HUNDRED SUMMERS OF AUSTRALIAN SURF LIFESAVING, ED JAGGARD (ED). SYDNEY: UNSW PRESS, 2006; PP. 262 PHOTOGRAPHS, ILLUSTRATIONS, NOTES, BIBLIOGRAPHY, INDEX; PAPERBOUND \$49.95

Ed Jaggard, in the editorial introduction to *Between the Flags: one hundred years of Australian surf lifesaving*, acknowledges that, with a few exceptions, the ninety or so Ed largely amateur individual histories of surf lifesaving clubs produced to date have kept to 'a familiar script' of self-affirmation – 'progress, mateship, self-help, legendary stories, competition success and notable acts of bravery'. While celebratory in part, this history of the surf lifesaving movement, the largest volunteer-based organisation in Australia, offers a comprehensive examination and critique of the subject. The book is a collection of chapters exploring particular themes of the movement's history, including its origins in the emergence of Australian beach culture, the development of surf lifesaving techniques and technologies, courageous rescues, the place of surf lifesaving as a national and international sport as well as an examination of club culture.

The eleven contributors represent an impressive line up of academics and other writers either involved in the lifesaving movement or with an interest in Australian beach culture and sport. Among them are Professor Douglas Booth, who has written extensively about the history of Australian beach culture, and Nancy Cushing, a lecturer in Australian history at the University of Newcastle (one of the three female writers).

A departure from the more traditional chronological narrative form that most institutional histories take, this thematic approach allows for a more layered and rigorous treatment which captures the many different perspectives and strands of the movement's history. It provides insights into the broader factors, mentalities and ideologies which shaped and underpinned the movement's development. The darker and more controversial aspects of its history are embraced, such as its notorious sexism, racial exclusiveness and 'larrikinism' – binge drinking and vandalism. It is, however, disappointing that the iconic place of the lifesaver in the Australian national identity and its links to the Anzac legend is not explored in any great detail.

The history also covers the movement's decline in membership from the 1960s following the rise of surf and other youth cultures – which rejected its conservative ethos of civic-mindedness, volunteerism and military-styled discipline and challenged its monopoly on Australian masculinity – and its struggle to adapt to social change. The movement's renaissance following its modernisation program – which included the admission of women in 1980 – is similarly traced, although a discussion of its corporatisation (the breakfast cereal Nutri-Grain comes to mind) is notably absent.

The history also recognises the acts of bravery and selflessness of surf lifesavers over the years, reinforcing the crucial role they play in beach safety. The Honour Roll,

which lists those who lost their lives while conducting a rescue, is an appropriate tribute to their heroism and a sober reminder of the dangers of surf lifesaving.

Although the book has been written for a general audience, like surf lifesaving itself, the work will not be for everyone. For those interested in the history of the surf lifesaving movement, beach culture and sport in Australia it is an essential addition to the reference collection.

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