

Geoff Sherington, *Shore, A History of Sydney Church of England Grammar School*. Sydney Church of England Grammar School and George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1983. Illus., statistical appendices. pp.370. \$29.95.

With the publication of Mangan's *Athleticism in the Edwardian and Public School* the subject has been placed high on the history of sport research agenda. So it's pleasing to welcome this readable and well-researched history of a prominent Sydney grammar school which deals with some aspects of athleticism in an Australian context.

While there are a number of subjects in Sherington's history, athleticism is one of the more all-pervasive themes and is one which he treats best. Sherington shows that from 1889 there has been a very strong commitment to games which are seen both as character-building and a means of building up the image and strength of the school. All five headmasters have had a strong background in sport. Second headmaster Hodges, for instance, was a Rugby 'coloniser' who achieved Oxford blues in rowing and athletics. Shore's last two headmasters have both been Rhodes Scholars.

Sherington also tells us that some masters, such as Iven Mackay, were actually appointed (in 1905) 'obviously for his sporting talents, as much as his undoubted academic ability'. And the appointment of Mackay proved a success in that it 'heralded a new era in both rowing and football' as well as continued success in cricket. Shore's teams have also benefited from the provision of superior facilities and the attentions of top coaches such as former Kiwi international, K.D. Anderson. Sherington also suggests that sport at this time was the 'dominant passion' outside class even among the 'more scholarly boys'. From the time when Shore acquired its Northbridge grounds, at the end of World War 1, 'universal sport became a realistic possibility' and by the 1940s 'it was now virtually compulsory for boys to play in the major game of football'.

While idealism was a central reason for the dominance of games at Shore, Sherington suggests that there were some more practical and even pecuniary reasons why games were so dominant at Shore. The inter-school competition increased 'public interest in GPS schools' and presumably added to growing enrolments. Such was the public interest in the spectacle of school sport that the GPS headmasters took the important decision in 1916 to hold all rugby matches on Saturday rather than in the mid-week. The regatta was moved to a Saturday in 1919. It's also clear that one of the main concerns of the Old Boys' Union, founded in 1894, was that Shore should perform well (and win) at sport. Since this was a very important and supportive group to the school, their commitment to success in public sport could not be ignored.

Because games became so important at Shore, there were regular controversies about the 'unsatisfactory condition of school sport'. While the Old Boys' Union defined this problem in narrow terms (that is, Shore's failure to win competitions), a succession of headmasters worried about the sporting 'mania' and the emphasis on winning which 'was destroying the very moral foundation which "athleticism" was meant to support'. In fact headmaster, L.C. Robson, was 'so disturbed by the continuing spectator interest in schoolboy sport' and all that resulted from this that he wanted to maintain the wartime (World War II) suspension of the GPS competitions. Competitive sport was too well established and the support

of the Old Boys' Union was too important for this radical plan to be implemented.

While this is a worthwhile and pioneering study, there are several areas of the book where the analysis could have been pushed much further. Sherington has gone to great pains to analyse the academic program of the school by looking at performances at public examinations and later careers of Shore students and has an extensive set of tables on generations of boys at Shore. So one wonders why he didn't attempt to evaluate the impact of athleticism in the same way. What were the results of athleticism in terms of the number of state and international representatives produced? There is an intriguing statement that Shore, aided by professional coaches including Victor Trumper, was a nursery of Shield and Test cricket and in fact produced five Test cricketers and another three Shield players from the teams of just 1899-1914 (251). Sherington then leaves unanswered why Shore hasn't produced one Test cricketer since then, nor does he tell us how many rugby internationals and top rowers came out of Shore.

Looked at in a broader perspective one would like to know whether schools which practised athleticism produced more top sportsmen than schools where athleticism was less prominent. Why was it that the neighbouring North Sydney Boys' High School, with much more primitive facilities, less coaching, many fewer spectators and a diminished ideology of sport produced four Test cricketers after 1945 (Craig, Hole, Philpott and Border) while Shore produced none? While it may not be fair to expect Sherington to answer such a question, an analysis of state and international representatives produced by Shore would have been a useful start to exploring this issue and explaining the great mystery as to why Sydney GPS schools produced so many Test cricketers in the period up to 1939 and so few after 1945. Was it because rugby and rowing developed more of a cult following than cricket in this period?

Sherington has suggested another approach to this subject by dropping a few hints - all too few - about the comparative status of sports at Shore. We are told that rowing was pre-eminent by 1918 in that the regatta was the 'gala occasion' and there is a reference to 'the major game of football' in the 1940s (had cricket lost some ground to football?), that tennis was introduced in 1922

but that 'blues' were not awarded until 1953, and that boxing fell from grace in that it was no longer recognised as a school sport in the 1950s.

Finally, it seems quite extraordinary that in a history of Shore there is no mention of its most famous international, John Newcombe.

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