

George Franki, *The Balmoral Beach Club - 75 Years: 1914-1989* (Balmoral: Balmoral Beach Club, 1989). Appendices, illus., pp. viii + 96. \$10 available from the Balmoral Beach Club, the Esplanade, Balmoral, NSW

All too little is written on and known about the many and varied amateur sports. We are all guilty of preferring to research about the high profile, more glamorous and more visible sports. So a history of a beach club - a voluntary association organised primarily for the love of sport - is welcome. All the more so because it is written by one of our members who has been active in the club since 1971. George Franki in fact must have been (and probably still is) no mean swimmer as he was club champion at various distances from 150 to 750 metres in the mid-1970s. He has also been a club official and is currently the winter race handicapper. His son, Brian, has won a number of trophies in the 1980s.

Although this history is written primarily for the consumption of past and present members, there is much of interest to the sports historian. The club, from its inception, has been extremely successful

in terms of membership and it has continued to grow. From 196 members in 1992 (figures are not available before that date) the club has grown to 1,780 in 1989. Such was the popularity of the club in 1985 that there was a waiting list of three years.

It is interesting, too, to read how the role of the club has changed over time. Initially it had strong links with the surf life saving movement and some of the first objectives, which were later rejected, included supervising the beach, providing a patrol boat and First Aid Services, and a shark lookout. In more recent times the club has become a focus for competitive swimming and allied events, including iron man and cross country (a run around the rocks) and organises an all-year program of upwards of ninety races on Saturday and Sunday mornings. With its attractive club building it is also a social club and community meeting place.

There also has been significant change in terms of female involvement in the club. Whether women should be admitted was an issue of some controversy in 1920 but there was a breakthrough of sorts then when the wives and daughters of members were permitted to become members. Although part of the same club, there was a separate Ladies' Division and Ladies Club House. A measure of segregation continued into the 1950s when men-only 'Smoker Socials' were part of the club program. Since then, the club has moved with the times and has introduced more mixed activities such as dinners.

Unlike many sporting associations, the Balmoral Beach Club has a good set of records. Further research into clubs, such as this one, would reveal much about a very large body of people who engage in 'sport for fun'.

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