

BOOK REVIEWS

Alan Clarkson,*Lanes of Gold. 100 Years of the NSW Amateur Swimming Association*, **Lester Townsend Publishing, Sydney, 1990. Illus., tables, pp. 207.**

For all those afficianados of swimming who've been waiting for an entertaining, well-illustrated read about the swimming heroes and events of the past, Alan Clarkson's *Lanes of Gold: 100 Years of the NSW Amateur Swimming Association* fits the bill. A timely catalogue of the development of the swimming industry in NSW, *Lanes of Gold* is written in a fast-moving, journalistic style, littered with fascinating facts and quotes, and is entertainingly illustrated with photographs of people, places and events. However, a warning must be posted for those in search of in-depth analysis, for although Clarkson provides many interesting anecdotes and details which can serve as pointers for further research, the absence of analysis and, above all, the total lack of footnoting, referencing and bibliographical information, could prove to be frustrating for more serious scholars.

Divided into eighteen chapters - plus a well laid out and illustrated records section - *Lanes of Gold* provides a chronological history of the great performers and events of NSW amateur swimming. Beginning with the legislation and public controversy surrounding the development of the sport of swimming in the young colony, Clarkson moves on to detail the achievements of the swimming stars - stars such as the Cavills, Durack, Wylie, Kellerman, Lane, Charlton, Dennis, Rose, Fraser, Gould - against the background of a changing swimming administration. Not forgetting those 'behind the scenes', Clarkson gives ample space to the officials of the NSW Amateur Swimming Association, and to the coaches, their methods, practices and comments. Also, Clarkson does not neglect those often missed heroes on the fringes of mainstream aquatic sport - the divers and the water polo players - although the attention paid to their

feats is rather skimpy - especially the total lack of mention of the nineteenth and early twentieth century women divers.

Notwithstanding the well detailed facts and figures, some entertaining anecdotes and some rarely-seen photographs, there are many issues surrounding the development of swimming in NSW which Clarkson does not touch on - issues such as the controversy around the formation of the first women's swimming association, the thorny, long-standing problems of professionalism, the internal rebellions against the conservatism of the NSW Associations etc. But they are issues beyond the scope of this book. *Lanes of Gold* was not intended to be an 'in-depth' analysis - although it can provide some useful background information for the more serious researcher. Whether used as a prompt for more serious research, or simply as an entertaining Sunday afternoon's read, in its own terms *Lanes of Gold* is a welcome addition to the slim literature on swimming.

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