

from the historical perspective, the work has much relevance to the present age of air travel, where more people than ever before are visiting all parts of the globe and where the impact of travel and tourism on the health of local people must be considered.

The author, John Mills, states that he was the former Head of Department and Professor of Microbiology at the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. John Mills further indicates that 'he has had a long interest in the history of infectious diseases in the Pacific', and has worked in several countries in the Pacific, including Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. He has also worked at the South Pacific Commission (now Secretariat of the Pacific Community) and been a consultant for the World Health Organization.

Infectious Diseases: Colonising the Pacific? is a delight to the reader because of its scientific and historical descriptions and disease-based presentation. It will appeal to physicians and other health professionals, as well as to students and the non-medically trained who have an interest in the history of medicine, particularly those concerned with the impact of colonisation on disease patterns in the Pacific. *Infectious Diseases: Colonising the Pacific?* is a worthy edition to the exclusive portfolio of historical books covering the impact of travel on health of non-immune populations.

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* Many of the University of Otago Press titles, including this one, are available at the University Book Shop, Dunedin (visit: <http://www.unibooks.co.nz>; last accessed 31/1/2003).

Men of the Ninth: A History of the 9th Australian Field Ambulance 1916–1994. By Robert Likeman (Slouch Hat Publications, 2003).

THIS IS THE SECOND OF TWO HISTORIES TO BE WRITTEN ABOUT THIS UNIT since 1919 and follows its fortunes until the unit's dissolution in 1993. At 224 pages the author has not been well served by his editor for the text is cramped and the type might present a challenge for some readers. This reviewer also found the use of underlined words a distraction from the overall text. Despite this the maps throughout are crisply rendered and the book itself is profusely illustrated. The index, however, contains only personal names and, while the endnotes are extensive, far too little material has been adequately sourced. This shortcoming will be disappointing for those wishing more information on the many individuals who Likeman has so painstakingly researched.

Although classically trained at Oxford the author, a medical doctor, is not a historian, which means the book lacks critical analysis in some areas. While his rank identifies him as being a specialist in his subject, it also presages a lack of distance from his subject matter that causes Likeman to commit several errors of historiography. He makes a number of predictions or generalisations, which would be automatically precluded in historiography. Other assertions, for example that the demise of the field ambulance was founded in the availability of helicopters in the Vietnam conflict, are inadequately explained or supported. The use of the word 'now' throughout the text—with respect to ranks, appointments, and addresses—will also date the book quickly.

Likeman's detail of the men who served in the unit over two wars and subsequently until close to the end of the last century is detailed and fascinating. He neatly encapsulates the relevant tactical background in those periods of war or operations which set the scene for many of his chapters. But he jumps between past and present in the first chapter, and later there is some confusion between titles long outmoded, for example in his use of the terms 'militia' and 'CMF' for recent times. There are also unfounded (no sources are provided) assertions, such as Surgeon-Major Nisbet being the first individual to use x-rays in the Australian military. Medical terms are not always explained, for instance 'macular petechial rash', which will leave the lay reader uninformed. An appropriate glossary might have been a useful addition.

However, one does get a real sense of 'family' while reading the book and the author's pride in his unit is evident. *Men of the Ninth* is a most readable and welcome addition to the literature; and a timely one in this the centenary year of the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps.

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The Final Common Path: Muscle Action and the Evolution of Knowledge Concerning Neuromuscular Disease, Including some Vignettes of those who Contributed to its Understanding. By John H. Pearn (Amphion Press, Royal Children's Hospital, University of Queensland, and the Meryon Society, UK, Brisbane, 2002, 1st edn, illus., \$19.95, ISBN 1-86499-561-0) 96 pp.

THE FIRST LIMITED EDITION OF THIS COPIOUSLY ILLUSTRATED BOOK, *THE Final Common Path*, has a frontispiece, which precedes a preface, acknowledgments, one main section dealing with the evolution of neu-