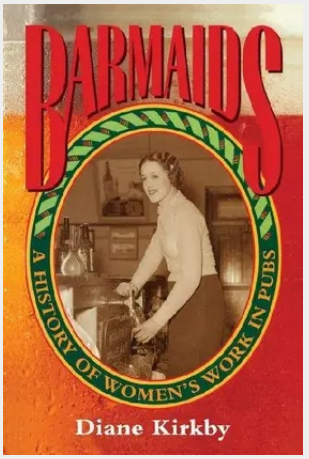
Kirkby

Barmaids

A History of Women's Work in Pubs

Popular imagination has made the pub an enduring cultural icon in Australian life. Since colonisation the pub has played a quintessential part in Australian life, both socially and economically. In this innovative mixture of labour history and cultural history, Diane Kirkby explores the central figure of the barmaid. Now a dying breed, she once played the combined roles of mate, confidante, surrogate-mother and sexual object. Drawing on previously unused archives, new documentary sources and oral history, Barmaids traces the sexualisation of the industry and the feminist and temperance debates about it. It covers women's demands for equal pay and drinking rights in the post-war period and concludes in the mid-1990s with the labour market changes and drinking customs which saw the end of the old pub culture and the place of barmaids within it.

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