The Surfing Tribe: a history of surfing in Britain


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Abstract / Summary

“The Surfing Tribe" presents a unique insight into the forgotten story of Britain's pioneering surfers. How did a sport practised in Hawaii find its way to the chilly Atlantic shores of Britain? How did a photo in a 1929 encyclopedia inspire a Newquay ice-cream man to become Europe's first regular surfer? How did the British surf industry grow from a handful of backyard board builders into the multi-million pound industry it is today? "The Surfing Tribe" tells the full story of the history of surfing in Britain. It explains how a quirky seaside pastime transformed itself over seven decades into a phenomenally popular sport and lifestyle. From Newquay to Newcastle and from Jersey to Swansea, the origins of Britain’s separate surfing tribes are revealed and all the top British surfers from the various eras are profiled. The book also charts the evolution of British surfboards, and looks back at the films and magazines that have portrayed British surfing over the decades.

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"The Surfing Tribe" charts the history of British Surfing over the past 50 years as told by renowned surfing historian Roger Mansfield. The book describes how a minority pastime transformed itself into a major sport and lifestyle and presents a unique insight into the forgotten story of Britain's pioneering surfers. How did a sport practised in Hawaii find its way to the chilly Atlantic shores of Britain? In "The Surfing Tribe" the origins of Britain's separate surfing tribes are revealed, and all the top British surfers from the various eras are profiled. The book also charts the evolution of British surfboards and looks back at the films and magazines that have portrayed British surfing over the decades. News. Surfing. Somehow surfing had survived the cynicism that had tarnished the end of the Swinging Sixties. It remained even in those jaded days as cool as it had been when it had first burst on the scene a decade earlier. It still conjured up Californian girls, Beach Boys, bikinis and Good Vibrations. And it was an image Britain loved. However the number of surfers was still not large because of the difficulty of the sport. In Britain at about that time surfing was considered no more than a quirky pastime with at best a few Cornish locals riding the North Atlantic waves on bellyboards. There were occasional stories of swimmers commandeering bits of driftwood but it was never considered more than a lark. Roger Mansfield, author of The Surfing Tribe, a history of Britain's board riders, says he has noticed a cultural shift take place in the 47 years he has spent surfing in the UK. "It's been incredible. In the last 10 years what's been noticeable is the number of people turning up and treating it as a recreational sport like any other. The north-east is also a surprising surfing hub, with some of Britain's most perfect waves to be found near Hartlepool, Redcar and South Shields. The growth of the sport in such places is partly attributable to modern wetsuits as they have got cheaper, lighter and more flexible, they have made braving the North Sea slightly less foolhardy."