

Review by Nick Aitken, June 2013.

**Those dry-stone walls: stories from South Australia's stone age.**

Author - Bruce Munday with photographs by Kristin Munday.

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192 pages

The book retails for AU\$39.95 (plus postage) and can be obtained from: Bruce Munday, Box 375, Mt Torrens, SA 5244, Australia or <http://www.storiesbehindstonewalls.com.au/>

Readers may be familiar with the description of Australian drystone walls in 'If these walls could talk', a report of the Corangamite Dry Stone Walls Conservation Project first published in 1995 which dealt with the basalt walls in the Western District of the state of Victoria - roughly west of Melbourne.

Bruce and Kristin Munday add more information to the history and techniques of Australian drystone construction as they take the reader into the east of the state of South Australia around Adelaide in this colourful and entertaining travelogue through drystone country.

Bruce is quite clear about the intention of the book, it is not an inventory of walls nor is it a 'how- to' book though it does have a small section describing how he built some of his own walls. The history of drystone is well covered with much insight into the people who built the walls and their working conditions.

During the 1800's there was a boom in wall building associated with the expansion of sheep farming and the need to control rabbits. Walls were also found to be advantageous in controlling bush fires and were cheaper than post and wire fences.

The men, and women, who built the South Australian walls were not convicts but mainly Scots, Irish and English immigrants. Much later, internees in the Second World War added to the mix.

In 1878 a typical team of 2 men and two boys completed a mile of stone wall in 16 weeks for a payment of about £88 per mile.

Wall building has continued up to the present day, mostly by individual enthusiasts, one of whom said "Stone wallers need three things that must never bend: a crowbar, a back and a will."

Kristin Munday contributes many fine images. Many of the walls are instantly recognisable – single, double and consumption walling styles which could have come from Donegal, Galloway, North Wales or Yorkshire.

Drystone construction was also used for retaining walls, sheep pens, stables, sheds, and the inevitable dunny.

An entertaining chapter considers the natural stone faces in the Australian landscape, some international stonework and examples of modern stone art, including pieces designed by Andy Goldsworthy whose work is well represented in South Australia.

Interesting chapters on quarries in Australia and local wall builders, amateur and professional, past and present, helps prove that they have much in common with northern hemisphere stoneworkers, though kangaroos are described as a wall's enemy number one - in addition to the sheep, cattle, rabbits and stone thieves we are familiar with.