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Those Dry-stone Walls



By Bruce Munday
Wakefield Press, \$39.95

Book review Stephen Davenport

THOSE Dry-stone Walls: Stories from South Australia's Stone Age is an interesting coffee-table book. Bruce Munday's passionate narrative helps make it a kind of social history as seen through the eyes of wall builders and custodians and their admirers.

In another respect, it's also a photographic celebration. Kristin Munday's images of walls without mortar stunningly capture the spirit and grit of early settlement and historic rural life, and also document the beauty of gravity-defying barriers and partitions.

At first glance, this work would seem to have limited appeal. Even the author states that, "it is difficult to appreciate dry-stone walls until you have built at least one". Yet the husband and wife team's fascination with stone is infectious as they trail across SA.

On their journey they meet colourful characters who have many remarkable anecdotes to share. Bruce Munday is a farmer, rather than an historian or anthropologist, so the tales read naturally with all the eccentricity, fun and passion that people have when they unleash their zeal on new converts. Much to his own surprise, his journey reveals much about himself, our history and our society.

Anyone interested in South Australia's rural heritage will find much to enjoy in this book.