

AUSTRALIAN MINING HISTORY ASSOCIATION BOOK REVIEW

Burra. A Photographic Journey

Compiled by Eric Fuss and Meredith Satchell, 2009. Burra History Group Inc.

At its peak in the 1850s Burra, in the dry mid-North of South Australia, was the largest copper producing region in the world. Miners, managers and speculators poured in from all around the world, with Cornish miners predominating. By 1851 the population had jumped to around 5,000. Socially and culturally, Burra had joined the nineteenth century Cornish diaspora. When the mines closed in 1877, the pastoral industry became the mainstay of the economy. For much of its history – from 1876 to 1977 - Burra had the great good fortune of having its own newspaper, documenting the life of the region and the comings and goings of the townspeople in work and leisure.

Burra's fascinating history is beautifully told in the text and photographs assembled by Eric Fuss and Meredith Satchell. No-one knows the historical record better than they do. The shifting fortunes of the town have been meticulously researched and charted. Churches and hotels, businesses and bridges, floods and droughts, along with the cycle of births, deaths and marriages are presented in wonderfully evocative photographs. While the compilers have done the old town proud, their history tells a larger story of settlement, adaptation to a hard climate and historical change. *Burra: A Photographic Journey* is both a visual treat and a pleasure to read.

David Walker
15 April, 2009

David Walker is Professor of Australian Studies at Deakin University in Victoria. His family has strong ties to Burra dating from the 1870s.