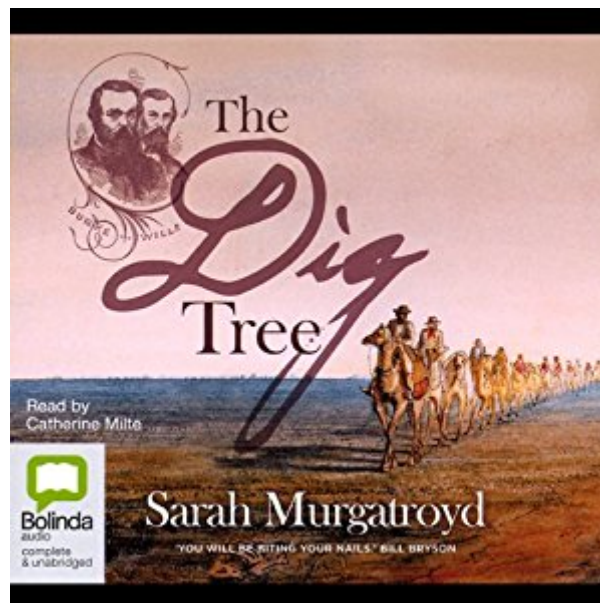




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The Dig Tree: A True Story Of Bravery, Insanity, And The Race To Discover Australia's Wild Frontier



Synopsis

In 1860, an eccentric Irish police officer named Robert O'Hara Burke led a cavalcade of camels, wagons and men out of Melbourne. Accompanied by William Wills, a shy English scientist, he was prepared to risk everything to become the first European to cross the Australian continent. A few months later, an ancient coolibah tree at Cooper Creek bore a strange carving: 'Dig Under 3ft NW'. Burke, Wills and five other men were dead. The expedition had become an astonishing tragedy. Sarah Murgatroyd reveals new historical and scientific evidence to tell the story of the disaster with all its heroism and romance, its discoveries, coincidences, and lost opportunities. This is a spell-binding book.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Australian Encyclopedia renders a clear verdict on the Burke-Wills Expedition. ..."largely owing to Burke's impatient temperament and complete ignorance of bushcraft, it failed hopelessly." Ms. Murgatroyd fully justifies this verdict; but how did such a man (perhaps best known for his ability to get lost) come to lead an expedition across an empty continent? The architects of the disaster were the members of Australia's Royal Society who combined incompetence with greed. One might also ask why Burke would accept such a mission. He was a man desperate to become famous and to impress the teenage actress he was infatuated with. The actual expedition is described in exciting detail. No less interesting are the questions that remain. This is a book to be read and thought about.

For those of us who are not Australians, The Dig Tree provides a look into an iconic moment in exploration of that continent. The tale is highly engaging, and all-in-all is well written. Occasionally Murgatroyd ventures off to the side of the main narrative, and seems to be adding fluff to fill the story line, but in the end, all those sidetracks clearly are well connected to the story. Not only was the story itself interesting, but the book also offers a considerable amount of information about the physical landscape of interior Australia that most stateside folks lack. This is a book well worth reading both for information and for enjoyment.

fascinating

Haven't read this "used" book yet but on skimming it , it looks great. In very good shape. I did see the movie and want the book to fill out the history.

The late Sarah Murgatroyd has written a well researched and poignant account of this tragic expedition. Though I hesitate to use the word expedition, as it was poorly led and planned, perhaps a mad rush in the bush is a better description. Many times as a child I used to gaze at the statue of Burke and Wills, (Melbourne is my home town), when I visited the Museum and wondered how they died and why was that statue there. My schoolbooks portrayed them as tragic heroes, but I felt sorry for John King as these books seemed to minimize his achievement of survival. This book finally gives King the credit he deserves for his amazing survival and the tenacious ability he displayed to achieve this. Unfortunately his health was broken by the experience and he suffered much mental anguish for the remainder of his short life. This anguish, I suspect, derived from the charade he was forced to be a part of upon his return to Melbourne. He was very critical of the Exploration Committee on the way back to Melbourne after his rescue but was stunned by the reception he received in Victoria on the way back to Melbourne where he was lauded as some type of hero. It was just too much for this quiet and unassuming man. He had to play along and hold his true thoughts about the Exploration Committee to himself. He was up against too much public emotion and powerful interests to upset the applecart, I also believe he felt very guilty about his survival. This book captures the vastness and emptiness of the Australian interior and yet also describes the beauty of the outback. I have lived in the outback myself while working at remote weather stations. The description of the climate, landscape and vegetation of the part of the outback that the expedition traversed is concise and correct. This book also gives an account of the expeditions of the explorer; the very able and resourceful John Macdougall Stuart and gives him the credit he richly

deserves as a an explorer and a surveyor.

This book can be read as a historical account of an important event in Australia's history, an adventure story, or (I think, most importantly) as an essential lesson in team leadership. Just by chance I read "The Dig Tree" immediately after reading "Endurance" by Lansing (story of Shackleton's expedition to Antarctica). In my opinion an entire Leadership seminar curriculum could be devised by simply comparing the styles of the two expedition leaders. Shackleton recovered from near certain disaster and everyone survived. Burke's expedition, however, suffered one debacle after another. Highly recommend reading the two books as a pair!

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