

When Brant Webb and Todd Russell were buried alive in the Beaconsfield gold mine in April last year, most Australians held their breath until they were rescued. *Bad Ground* gives the authorised version of the drama. Journalist Tony Wright has collaborated with the miners in a comprehensive account not only of the events at the mine but much besides, some of it of marginal interest, and some in questionable taste as well. Brant missed the dawn service, apparently, because he wanted ‘breathe in the scent of [his wife’s] golden curls’. There is a good deal of gruff sentiment about what men, and women, need in a crisis – mates, family, casseroles, etc. And for a journalist who was covering the story himself, Wright is scathing about the voracious media descending on the town.

Nevertheless, he explains the mine’s geography and workings clearly, and the story of the rescue itself is quite gripping, and sometimes even clever: I was struck by an interesting figurative use of Newton’s Third Law, for instance. For what it is – a book for the mass market – *Bad Ground* isn’t at all bad. Cut down to half the length, it may even be a good book.