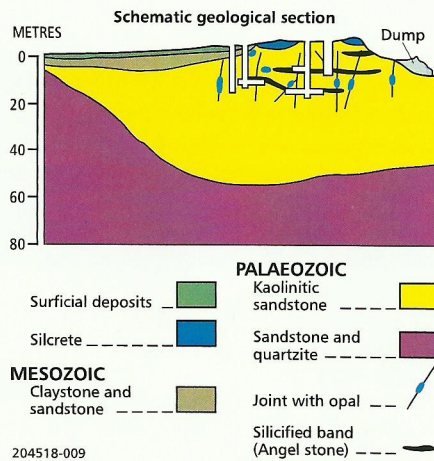


MINTABIE

During the First World War, Aborigines sold black opal at Coober Pedy which probably came from Mintabie, 350 km to the northwest. White opal miners discovered the field in the 1920s, but it was worked only on a very small scale or remained deserted for many years. In 1976, heavy earth-moving machinery moved in and since then there have been many large finds. From 1985 to 1993, Mintabie was the largest producer of precious opal in South Australia and probably Australia. Over 500 miners lived and worked on the field.

Host rock is a kaolinitic sandstone of probable Ordovician age, with the opal found as seams in horizontal or arcuate levels, or infilling steeply dipping verticals down to depths of 25 m. The sandstone is strongly silicified near the surface and has to be drilled and blasted before bulldozing or sinking a shaft.

Opal Miners holding a current Precious Stones Prospecting Permit which has been endorsed for Mining at Mintabie may enter the field. Under the *Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Land Rights Act 1981* visitor permits must be obtained by tourists and visitors prior to entry. These can be obtained from the Marla police station.



Miners' camp amongst workings, c. 1979.
(Photo 038367)

