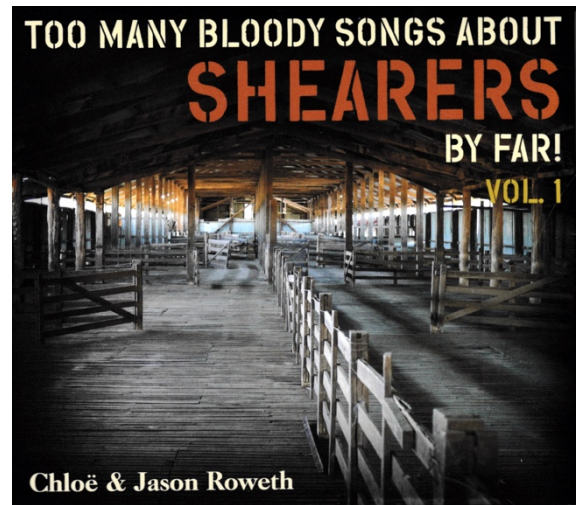


### **Introduction**

This album is part celebration, and part tribute. It is our contemporary exploration of the characters who shored sheep in Australian past times, and who, in doing so, helped to build a modern nation. The material has a natural, but not exclusive focus on our home in central west NSW. Recent discoveries from song collectors Mark Gregory and Rob Willis, amongst others, have added significantly to the “map and compass” of shearers’ songs we have to guide us, and while parts of the map are lost, the fragments we have reveal a landscape of diverse characters, vibrant and vital...



### **Australia rides on the sheep's back!**

These stories and songs all come from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Through these years, the wool industry paid for modern Australia in good times, and shaped our political DNA in bad. Grand, progressive Australia founded a world first - a political party formed by and for the workers, The Australian Labor Party, born from the shearers' strikes of the 1890s. The wool industry was built on four pillars - there were sheep (who rarely sang), there was the country (if the country could have sung, it would not have been a happy song), and of course, there were "the men who owned the acres" (who sang their own songs), and then there were the shearers, tens of thousands of shearers - and these men sang! Their songs capture a spirit, a character, and a humour that were defining elements in the birth of modern Australia.

### **Too many bloody songs about shearers by far!**

There is a long tradition of shearing songs in the Australian folk revival. The Bush Music Club and The (original) Bushwhackers (including John Meredith), the stage production 'Reedy River', Gary Shearston, and many more organisations and song collectors made sure that as 'Bush Music' was being rediscovered, reinvented, and popularised, shearing songs took their place alongside bushranging, gold rush, and convict songs in the assembled canon of Australian 'Bush Songs'. John Dengate's yarn on the back cover of this booklet indicates a typical reaction to the abundance of shearers' songs sung by revival 'Bush Bands' since the 1950s. But this strong representation does seem to reflect the relative proportions, if not the full range, of Australian songs sung in the bush before the revival. Life in the shearers' huts seems to have been well suited to song creation, and these gems from the great days of Australian shearing are still being uncovered today.

### 1. The Shearer / The Old Schoolmaster

Mark Gregory has uncovered many fine shearers' songs through The National Library of Australia's Trove website – including 'The Shearer'. We don't know when the song was written, but it stuck its head above water when text of the song was published in *The Northern Argus, Clare, S.A.*, 3rd April 1874 and credited to 'Coonatto'. Sometimes a tune is lost when a song is found only in print. In this case, the "Hurrah, Hurrah..." chorus alone was enough to tell us that 'Coonatto' was probably using the traditional American tune 'Marching Through Georgia', and we were able to sing the song straight off the 1874 newspaper article.

'The Old Schoolmaster' is a traditional Australian dance tune collected from Tom Walsh.

Now the pen is full lads, we'll have another run,  
Toil away like jolly dogs until we get them done;  
And when they are finished off, and waiting more to come,  
Each man his Ward and Payne will sharpen.

Hurrah! hurrah! the yoke is up to-day,  
Hurrah! hurrah! We'll work and sing away;  
Then let us all be jolly boys, light-hearted and gay,  
As we go "wiring" in at shearing.

The "ringer" he is ready now, rush oh lads again,  
Nimbly step into the "pen" while others do the same;  
Then take your "nanny" on the board, and keep it free from pain,  
Whilst off its back the fleece is rolling.

Hear the clicking of the shears as they swiftly glide,  
Down the belly, up the neck, and o'er the whipping side;  
And watch Groves biting out his open Sorby wide,  
Trying all he can to pass the "ringer."

Now the cry is wool, wool, ringing near and far,  
Whilst another two or three loudly bawls for tar!  
And as the "larrikins" bring it, and daub it on the scar,  
Oh! what a rush to get the cobbler.

## 2. Shearing at Castlereagh

*This poem by A. B. 'Banjo' Paterson was written in 1895. Our instrumental incorporates the tune 'The Old Schoolmaster' collected from Tom Walsh and some other meanderings by us.*

The bell is set a-ringing, and the engine gives a toot,  
There's five and thirty shearers here are shearing for the loot,  
So stir yourselves, you penners-up, and shove the sheep along,  
The musterers are fetching them a hundred thousand strong,  
And make your collie dogs speak up - what would the buyers say  
In London if the wool was late this year from Castlereagh?

The man that 'rung' the Tubbo shed is not the ringer here,  
That stripling from the Cooma side can teach him how to shear.  
They trim away the ragged locks, and rip the cutter goes,  
And leaves a track of snowy fleece from brisket to the nose;  
It's lovely how they peel it off with never stop nor stay,  
They're racing for the ringer's place this year at Castlereagh.

The man that keeps the cutters sharp is growling in his cage,  
He's always in a hurry and he's always in a rage -  
'You clumsy-fisted mutton-heads, you'd turn a fellow sick,  
'You pass yourselves as shearers, you were born to swing a pick.  
Another broken cutter here, that's two you've broke to-day,  
It's awful how such crawlers come to shear at Castlereagh.'

The youngsters picking up the fleece enjoy the merry din,  
They throw the classer up the fleece, he throws it to the bin;  
The pressers standing by the rack are waiting for the wool,  
There's room for just a couple more, the press is nearly full;  
Now jump upon the lever, lads, and heave and heave away,  
Another bale of golden fleece is branded 'Castlereagh'.

### **3. The Bare Belled Ewe (Click Go The Shears)**

Another song found by Mark Gregory on Trove. These lyrics (with slight variations from us) are drawn from the earliest known version published in the Bacchus Marsh Express, and credited to 'C. C. Eynesbury, Nov. 20, 1891'. We have sung the song to the tune 'Ring The Bell Watchman'. Arguably Mark's most important shearers' song discovery to date, this is by far the earliest version of Australia's best known shearing song, 'Click Go The Shears' or more correctly 'The Bare Belled Ewe', ever found. We can now chronologically link our best known shearers' song, the shearers' strikes, and that other well known Australian folk song 'Waltzing Matilda'. A new history emerges every day!

Oh, down at the catching pen an old shearer stands,  
Grasping his shears in his long bony hands  
Fixed is his gaze on a bare belled ewe,  
Saying "If I can only get her, won't I make the ringer go."

Click goes his shears click, click, click.  
Wide are the blows, and his hand is moving quick,  
The ringer looks round, for he lost it by a blow,  
And he curses that old shearer with the bare belled ewe.

At the end of the board, in a cane bottomed chair,  
The boss remains seated with his eyes everywhere  
He marks well each fleece as it comes to the screen,  
He watches where it comes from if not taken off clean.

The "colonial experience" is there of course.  
With his silver buckled leggings, he's just off his horse  
With the air of a connoisseur he walks up the floor  
And he whistles that sweet melody, "I am a perfect cure."

"So master new chum, you may now begin,  
Muster number seven paddock, bring the sheep all in  
Leave none behind you, whatever you do,  
And then we'll say you're fit to be a Jackeroo."

The tar boy is there, awaiting all demands,  
With his black tarry stick, in his black tarry hands.  
He sees one old ewe, with a cut upon the back,  
He hears what he supposes is—" Tar here, Jack."

"Tar on the back, Jack, tar, boy, tar."  
Tar from the middle to both ends of the board.  
Jack jumps around, for he has no time to sleep,  
And tars the shearers' backs as well as the sheep.

So now the shearing's over, each man has got his cheque,

The hut is as dull as the dullest old wreck  
Where was many a noise and bustle only a few hours before,  
Now you can hear it plainly if a pin fall on the floor.

The shearers now are scattered many miles and far  
Some in other sheds perhaps, singing out for "tar."  
Down at the bar, there the old shearer stands,  
Grasping his glass in his long bony hands.

Saying "Come on, landlord, come on, come!  
I'm shouting for all hands, what's yours—mine's a rum "  
He chucks down his cheque, which is collared in a crack,  
And the landlord with a pen writes no mercy on the back!

His eyes they were fixed on a green painted keg,  
Saying "I will lower your contents, before I move a peg."  
His eyes are on the keg, and now are lowering fast  
He works hard, he dies hard, and goes to heaven at last.

#### 4. Goorianawa

*A traditional song shared by H. P. C. 'Duke' Tritton. This is the song that eluded A. B. 'Banjo' Paterson in his significant efforts at collecting and preserving 'Old Bush Songs'. Duke Tritton was a shearer who sang the old bush songs in situ, and was also present through the early years of the Bush Music Club in Sydney. Duke was one of our most important tradition bearers, and a crucial bridge of authenticity from the bush to the revival of "Bush Music".*

I've been many years a shearer and I fancied I could shear,  
I shore for Rouse of Guntawang and I always missed the spear;  
I shore for Nicholas Bayely, and I declare to you  
That on his pure merinos I could always struggle through.

But it's oh my! I never saw before  
The way we had to knuckle down at Goorianawa.

Well I've been shearing down the Bogan as far as Dandaloo,  
For good old Reid's of Tabratong I've often cut a few;  
At Haddon Rig and Quambone, even Wingadee,  
I could close my shears at six o'clock with a quiet century.

I've been shearing on the Goulburn side, and down at Douglas Park,  
Where every day it was "Wool Away!" and 'Toby' did his work.  
I shore for General Stewart whose tomb's up on The Mount  
And the sprees I've had with Scrammy Jack are more than I can count.

I've been shearing at Eugowra – I'll never forget that name,  
That's where Gardener robbed the escort that from the Lachlan came.  
I shore for Bob Fitzgerald down at the Dabee Rocks,  
McPhillamy of Charlton and your Mister Henry Cox.

I shore for John McMaster down at the Rockedgial Creek  
And I could always dish him up with thirty score a week.  
I shore at Terramungamine and on the Talbraga  
And I ran McDermott for the cobbler when we shore at Buckingbar.

But that was in the bad old days – you might have heard them say  
How Skellycorn from Bathurst rode to Sydney in one day.  
Now I'm broken mouthed, my shearing's at an end,  
And although they call me Whalebone, I was never known to bend.

I've shorn in every woolshed from the Barwon to the Bree,  
But I got speared at Goorianawa before I'd barbered three.  
But it's by the living Joseph I never saw before  
Such sheep as made us knuckle down at Goorianawa.  
Spare me flamin' days!  
I never saw before the way we had to knuckle down at Goorianawa.

### 5. Shearing, Shearing, Shearing (Sweet Belle Mahone)

*A traditional shearers' parody of a song by Sam Bagnall, 1885. We learned the song from an arrangement by Alan Musgrove. 'Shearing, Shearing, Shearing' is a typical Australian folk song - it is like a carefully bred mongrel dog. We thank composer Sam Bagnall, collector Rob Willis, sheep graziers and entertainers 'The Baulch Brothers', collector Banjo Paterson and his 'Old Bush Songs', Alan Musgrove, and who knows how many other unknown contributors for this beauty. No song on the album better demonstrates the unfolding mysteries and ongoing creative endeavours that go into presenting something as "simple" as a folk song. These songs are truly "of the people"! Alan Musgrove understands this process better than anyone we know, and he has unmatched skills in this kind of work - in our opinion. His work in the creation of this song is much appreciated.*

When shearin' comes lay down your drums  
Step to the board yer spankin' chums  
But who will greet me when shearin's done?  
Sweet Belle Mahone

Lonely like a withered tree  
Light and life were all in thee  
You were all the world to me  
Sweet Bell Mahone

Soon be on the railway bar  
Shall the train transport me far  
away in the west, like a wanderin' star  
Sweet Belle Mahone

I wish I was upon a log  
Sitting like a great big frog  
Waiting for a Murray cod  
Sweet Belle Mahone

Shearin', shearin', shearin'  
Always jolly well shearin'  
Wait for me at heaven's gate  
Sweet Belle Mahone

Land of snakes and cockatoos  
Native bears and big emus  
Ugly blokes and kangaroos  
Sweet Belle Mahone

For here I am in NSW  
Shearin' sheep as big as whales  
With wrinkly necks and daggy tails  
Sweet Belle Mahone

Shearin', shearin', shearin'  
Always jolly well shearin'  
Wait for me at heaven's gate  
Sweet Belle Mahone

## 6. Jog Along 'Til Shearing (Home Sweet Home)

*A traditional song from Joe Cashmere, set to the tune 'Bow Wow Wow'. Joe was a bush worker from Booligal, NSW. He was a renowned bush entertainer, singer, fiddler and mass-hypnotist. He may very well have written some, or all of this song.*

The truth, is in my song so clear  
Without a word of gammon:  
The swagmen travel all the year  
They're waiting for the lambin'.  
Now when this dirty trick is done,  
To the nearest shanty steering,  
They meet old friends, their money spend,  
Then jog along till shearing, singing...

Home sweet home,  
That is what they left it for,  
Their home sweet home.

Now when the shearing season comes,  
They hear the price that's going;  
New arrivals meet old chums,  
And start away their blowing.  
They say that they can shear each day  
Their hundred pretty handy,  
But eighty sheep is pretty hard  
When the wool is close and sandy.

When the sheds have all cut out,  
They get their bit of paper.

To the nearest pub they run,  
They cut a dashing caper.  
They call for liquor plenty  
They're happy while they're drinking,  
But where to go when the money's gone,  
It's little they are thinking.

Sick and sore next morning,  
They are when they awaken,  
To have a drink, well of course they must,  
To keep their nerves from shakin',  
They call for one, and then for two,  
In a way it's rather funny,  
Till the landlord says, "Now this won't do;  
You lads have got no money."

Now they're lounging on verandahs  
And they're sleeping out on the sofas,  
Then to finish off their spree,  
They're ordered off as loafers.  
They've got no friends, their money's spent,  
And at their disappearing  
They give three cheers for the river bend  
Then jog along 'til shearing.

## 7. Shearer's Song

*A Henry Lawson poem first published in 1888, that we set to music in 1997.*

*The instrumental tunes at the end are 'Jumble Springs' (1997 - C. & J. Roweth) and the 'Home Sweet Home Mazurka' (Traditional, learned from Jacko Kevans).*

The shearing is over, the season is done,  
The Wages are paid and the sprees have begun,  
But never a shanty draws sight of my cheque,  
For far down the Murray, my Annie expects  
A heart that is faithful, a head that is clear,  
And sufficient provisions to last for a year.



## 8. The Big Gun Shearer

*A well known traditional song. The text we sing has come from Mike Martin and Jacko Kevans, amongst others. Thanks to John Harpley and Rob Willis for adding their voices to this recording.*

The Big Gun toils with his heart and soul,  
Shearing sheep just to make a roll,  
Out in the back-blocks, far away,  
Then it's off to Sydney for a holiday.

In the city he's a terrible swell,  
He takes a taxi to the Kent Hotel.  
The barmaid says, "Why you look ill,  
It must have been rough tucker, Bill."

In the city he looks a goat,  
In his Oxford bags and his Seymour coat,  
Spends his money like a fool, of course,  
That he's worked for like a bloomin' horse.

He shouts for everyone round the place  
It's off to Randwick for the big horse race,  
He dopes himself on backache pills,  
He talks high tallies and tucker bills.

When his money's gone, he's sick and sore,  
The barmaid's looks aren't kind any more,  
His erstwhile friends don't give a hoot,

So it's back to the bush per what? - per boot.  
And back in Bourke where the flies are bad  
He talks of the wonderful times he's had,  
He talks of the winners he shouldn't have  
missed,  
And he skites of the dozens of girls he's kissed.

Now he stands on a corner cadging fags,  
His shirt tails showing through his Oxford bags,  
He's pawned that beautiful Seymour coat.  
Well, he's got no money - oh, what a goat!

No, he's got no tucker, he's got no booze,  
And the soles have gone from his snake-skin  
shoes.

He camps on the bend in the wind and rain,  
And he waits for shearing to start again.

So all you blokes with a cheque to spend,  
Don't go to the city where you've got no  
friends.

Head for the nearest wayside shack,  
It's not so far when you gotta walk back.

### **9. The Sheep-Washer's Lament**

*A traditional song, learned from Alan Musgrove.*

When first I went out washing sheep, in days of long ago,  
The master was a worker then, no servant stood so low,  
But now the squatter's plump with pride, he treats us with disdain -  
Lament with me those bygone days that will not come again.

From sixty-one to sixty-six, the bushman stout and strong,  
Would smoke his pipe and whistle a tune, and sing his cheerful song,  
As wanton as the kangaroo that bounds across the plain -  
Lament with me those bygone days that will not come again.

I had a pair of ponies once to guide me on my road,  
I earned a decent cheques\ at times but blew it like a lord,  
But lonely now I hump me drum, in sunshine and in rain -  
Lament with me those bygone days that will not come again.

Let bushman all in unity combine with heart and hand,  
Till bloody cringing poverty is driven from our land.  
Let never Queensland come to know the tyrant's ball and chain,  
And bushmen all in times to come their banished rights regain.

### 10. The Mad Shed Rep.

*A traditional song collected from Pat Nightingale. The dance tune we have incorporated in the arrangement is the traditional 'My Father Was A Dutchman' which we learned from Mike Martin. 'The Mad Shed Rep.' is a song that eluded and frustrated collector John Meredith, known to him only from a fragment. When Rob Willis and John Harpley found the song in the repertoire of Pat Nightingale, the dust blew off a large piece of Australian folklore. We are especially glad to have Rob and John playing and singing on our arrangement of this song.*

There was a mad shed rep and a bastard they say,  
Who had for his motto, "Work eight hours a day",  
When the rousies would barrow you'd hear that rep yell,  
And he'd get as hot as the tomcats in hell.

Now the rousies, poor bastards, were having their fun,  
When up jumped the rep like a shot from a gun,  
He said, "You can't barrow, you know it's a farce",  
And he pissed them all off with a kick up the arse.

Now the rousies were gloomy, their pleasure was done;  
They couldn't see why they'd been stopped from their fun.  
They had no ideas 'til the penner-up said,  
Let's put a death adder in the mad bastard's bed. (repeat last line melody)

Now the rousies next morning were first out of bed,  
They tore round to see if that shed rep was dead.  
As stiff, stark and cold, with a smile as he lay,  
And the rousies all murmured, "We'll barrow today".

Now one stand lay idle where the shed rep had been.  
He never was heard of or ever was seen.  
For the rousies had buried him deep in the pit,  
And covered him over with big lumps of shit.

Now the shed rep has gone where all bad shearers go,  
He's down underground where they're shovelling coal,  
And his motto that "You must work only eight hours",  
Was changed by the rousies to, "Please bring no flowers".

### 11. About a Shearers' Cook / The Greenhand Rouseabout

*'About a Shearers' Cook' is a traditional poem collected from Pat Nightingale.*

*'The Greenhand Rouseabout' is by Henry Lawson. The accompanying music is 'Round Plain' (C & J Roweth), 'The Shearer's Dream' (Traditional – Learned from Mike Martin), and 'Dick's Pig' (Traditional - Learned from David De Santi).*

#### *About A Shearers Cook*

There's a cook on Mumble-Bumble oughta be in gaol they say,  
For his numerous offences in the culinary way.  
Most everything the beggar had - curried, hashed or fried,  
Would create a revolution in an Ostrich's inside.

All the Crows and the Goannas get most awful stomach aches,  
Taking chances on the fragments of the dampers that he bakes.  
And no self-respecting emu ever ventures on his cake,  
For they get appendicitis if they eat them by mistake!

#### *The Greenhand Rouseabout*

Call this hot? I beg your pardon. Hot! — you don't know what it means.  
(What's that, waiter? lamb or mutton! Thank you — mine is beef and greens.  
Bread and butter while I'm waiting. Milk? Oh, yes — a bucketful.)  
I'm just in from west the Darling, 'picking-up' and rolling wool.'

Mutton stewed or chops for breakfast, dry and tasteless, boiled in fat;  
Bread or brownie, tea or coffee — two hours' graft in front of that;  
Legs of mutton boiled for dinner — mutton greasy-warm for tea —  
Mutton curried (gave my order, beef and plenty greens for me.)

Breakfast, curried rice and mutton till your innards sacrifice,  
And you sicken at the colour and the smell of curried rice.  
All day long with living mutton — bits and belly-wool and fleece;  
Blinded by the yoke of wool, and shirt and trousers stiff with grease,  
Till you long for sight of verdure, cabbage-plots and water clear,  
And you crave for beef and butter as a boozier craves for beer.

Dusty patch in baking mulga — glaring iron hut and shed —  
Feel and smell of rain forgotten — water scarce and feed-grass dead.  
Hot and suffocating sunrise — all-pervading sheep yard smell —  
Stiff and aching green-hand stretches — 'Slushy' rings the bullock-bell —  
Pint of tea and hunk of brownie — sinners string towards the shed —  
Great, black, greasy crows round carcass — screen behind of dust-cloud red.

Engine whistles. 'Go it, tigers!' and the agony begins,  
Picking up for seven devils out of Hades — for my sins;  
Picking up for seven devils, seven demons out of Hell!  
Sell their souls to get the bell-sheep — half-a-dozen Christs they'd sell!  
Day grows hot as where they come from — too damned hot for men or brutes;  
Roof of corrugated iron, six-foot-six above the shoots!

Whiz and rattle and vibration, like an endless chain of trams;  
Blasphemy of five-and-forty — prickly heat — and stink of rams!  
'Barcoo' leaves his pen-door open and the sheep come bucking out;  
When the rouser goes to pen them, 'Barcoo' blasts the rouseabout.  
Injury with insult added — trial of our cursing powers —  
Cursed and cursing back enough to damn a dozen worlds like ours.

'Take my combs down to the grinder, will yer?' 'Seen my cattle-pup?'  
'There's a sheep fell down in my shoot — just jump down and pick it up.'  
'Give the office when the boss comes.' 'Catch that gory sheep, old man.'  
'Count the sheep in my pen, will yer?' 'Fetch my combs back when yer can.'  
'When yer get a chance, old feller, will yer pop down to the hut?'  
'Fetch my pipe — the cook'll show yer — and I'll let yer have a cut.'

Shearer yells for tar and needle. Ringer's roaring like a bull:  
'Wool away, you (sons of angels). Where the hell's the (foundling) WOOL!!'

Pound a week and station prices — mustn't kick against the pricks —  
Seven weeks of lurid mateship — ruined soul and four pounds six.

What's that? waiter? me? stuffed mutton!  
Look here, waiter, to be brief, I said beef! you blood-stained villain!  
Beef — moo-cow — Roast Bullock — BEEF!

## 12. The Shearers' Jamboree

*This song was composed by Joan Martin and Eric Tutin of the early Hillbilly duo 'The Sundowners'. Rob Willis is responsible for teaching us 'The Shearers' Jamboree', and thus encouraging Chloë to yodel for the first time. Rob is responsible for many things...*

We were shearing down at Mungindi,  
The going had been rough,  
We reckoned when we finished work that we had worked enough!  
The chinaman jumped in the creek, the cook went on a spree,  
We rounded up the countryside and had a jamboree.

### Chorus

There was music down in the hollow,  
There was singing and dancing and beer,  
There was never such a shindig from Surat to Gundawindi  
When the shearing was done for the year.

Yodel-lay-ee etc.

There were seven concertinas and a gadget made of wood,  
A fellow on a trombone got a note in where he could!  
A fiddle and a cornet and a bloke who played the leaf,  
He knew "The Swanee River" so we voted him the chief.

It was nearly nine o'clock next day before we found the cook;  
The whiskey he'd been drinking must have made him awful crook -  
He was sleeping in the pigsty with his head upon the sow,  
And when they both woke up at once, you should have heard the row!

### 13. One of the "Have Beens" / Sally Sloane's Mazurka

*A traditional song to the tune 'Polly Perkins'. Original words by Robert Stewart, 1875. We learned 'Sally Sloane's Mazurka' from Mike Martin. This arrangement of the song is similar in structure to one we made and played with Mike in the Bathurst based band "Jindi", in the mid nineties. Some of the lyrics we sing are also artefacts from this time. Good on you Mike! And good on you Rob Willis and John Harpley for adding your voices and instruments.*

I am one of "the have beens,"  
A shearer, I mean;  
I once was a ringer,  
And I used to shear clean,  
I could make the wool roll off,  
Like soil off a plough -  
Though you may not believe me,  
'Cause I can't do it now.

Chorus.

Now I'm awkward as a new chum,  
Quite used to the frown,  
That the boss often shows me  
Saying, "Keep your blades down."

I have been at the Yanko,  
Steam Plain, and Bundore,  
And in most of the big sheds  
Down there I have shore.  
And although you may smile,  
When I talk about speed,

Among sixty-eight shearers  
I have taken the lead.

Do you remember Jack Bright,  
Billy Boyd and Jack Gunn,  
Big Leyton, Tommy Fergus  
And the great Roaring Dunn?  
They have brought from Launceston  
The best they could find,  
But there's not one amongst them  
Could leave me behind.

Still it's no use complaining,  
I'll never say "die,"  
Though the days of fast shearing  
For me have gone by;  
I'll take the world easy,  
Shear slowly and clean;  
And I merely have told you  
Just what I have been.

#### 14. The Shearer's Lament

*Discovered by Mark Gregory using Trove, in The Blue Mountain Echo, Friday 16th November, 1917, p. 4. The melody for this beautiful lyric is currently lost. The structure of the text seemed to indicate that it could be a parody of a hymn. We searched widely, but unsuccessfully, for the original song. We chose to set the words to the traditional hymn tune 'Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling', by Will L. Thompson, 1880. While this is probably not the right tune, with a little panel beating, it fit nicely, and 1880 puts the tune at the right vintage. The paper is dated 1917, but the inference in the introduction is that the song is already an old one. The spoken introduction is taken verbatim from the newspaper article.*

*Spoken:*

*And now to the humorous side of way-out beyond, for humour there is in all things.*

*"The Idiot" once struck a whaler on the Barwon, and as the day registered 113 in the shade, the query arose as to whether Hades was hotter than Walgett. "Not on your life," said Whiskers, "Why, don't you know that the blokes who die in Walgett find it so cold below that they have to wear blankets." The same evening, the veteran became sentimental, and I found that he was nil intellectual derelict, an M.A. of Oxford University. After the fifth go at the bottle, he became maudlin, and, to lull him to sleep, I sang him the "Shearer's lament."*

I hear the jumbucks sweetly callin',  
Callin' to me;  
I see their fleeces fallin', fallin',  
Shorn by me.  
Oh for the land of the Never Never,  
Oh for the old machine hum,  
Oh for wet sheep, bad cooks, and spoilt tucker  
Jumbuck I come, jumbuck I come.

Oh the many long miles that were travelled,  
Travelled by me.  
Oh for the many big cheques that were busted,  
But not by me.  
Oh for the face of the old growler,  
Who once on his lyre did strum,  
A song of bad huts, rough sheep, and low tallies -  
Jumbuck I come, jumbuck I come.

Oh when they wanted top prices for tucker;  
They charged it up to me,  
And when I was hunted by bugs from my blankets,  
I sang merrily,  
But those were the days before we united,  
The days of black sugar and rum,  
Of ten, ten, and two, with quarter chucked in -  
Jumbuck I come, jumbuck I come.

I long now for hollow trees which have been dossed in,  
Dossed in by me,  
When I sleep 'neath the mulga with saddle for pillow,  
I was careless and free,  
Yet I longed then for nights of bedwarmers and  
bedsteads,  
But how oft you'll hear this chick hum,  
Oh give me the smell of the warm fleece a-fallin' -  
Jumbuck I come, jumbuck I come.



### 15. Wooyeo Ball

*Verses written by Vox Silvis of Euabalong, in 1888. This is another of Mark Gregory's Trove discoveries. Our version is influenced by the later well known song, 'Euabalong Ball'. The Wooyeo Ball and horse race meeting seem to have been substantial affairs! We've added some traditional central west NSW dance tunes, in order, 'Under the Willow' (from John Warn), 'Sad the Cuckoo is Calling' (from Joe Cashmere), 'Harry Schaeffer's Waltz', 'Binda Heel and Toe Polka' (from John Warn) and 'Bill Cooper's Polka'. We enlisted the help of our talented mates Olya Willis, Rob Willis and John Harpley in attempting to bring to life the 'Wooyeo Ball'.*

O, who hasn't heard of the old Wooyeo Ball,  
Where the clans of the Lachlan, the great and the small,  
Come bent on diversion, from far and from near,  
To shake off dull care at least once a year.

The lairds of fat wethers assembled, in force,  
And with them their dames as a matter of course,  
While here may be seen the spruce manager, too.  
With the best of good fellows, the gay Jackeroo.

There were maidens in plenty - some two or three score,  
Some weaners, some two-tooths, it may be some more,  
And their fleeces so puffy, so fluffy and clean,  
Hid the daintiest creatures that ever were seen.

The bachelors seemed to be frisky and stout,  
But the old fellows suffered immensely from drought;  
If the water was scarce, sure the whisky was there,  
And the way they tucked in was a caution, I'll swear.

There was music and dancing, and going the pace.  
Some went at a canter, some went at a race;  
There was bobbing and sliding, and twisting and gliding,  
And, to vary the measure, some couples colliding.  
Much hugging and squeezing - of course on the sly -  
And tender emotions when bidding "Good-bye."  
The men swore they all were as right as a trivet,  
As they gulped down their 20th nip of "Glenlivet."

Oh, the old Wooyeo Ball was a wonderful sight,  
As the dancing went on through the whole blessed night,  
And many there were who will love to recall  
The polkas they danced at the old Wooyeo Ball.

## 16. The Springtime it Brings On The Shearing / The Shearers

A combination of a well known traditional song with Henry Lawson's poem, 'The Shearers', first published in 1902.

### *The Springtime It Brings On The Shearing*

Well the springtime it brings on the shearing  
And it's then you will see them in droves  
To the west country stations all steering  
Seeking a job off the coves

### Chorus

With me ragged old swag on my shoulder  
And a billy quart pot in my hand  
Well I tell you we'll astonish the new chums  
When they see how we travel the land

Well from Boonabri up to the border  
To the far Tartiara and back  
On the hills and the plains you will see them  
The men on the Wallaby Track

You might talk of your mighty explorers  
Maybe Landsborough, McKinley or King  
But I feel I would only be boring  
Of such frivolous subjects to sing

For when it comes to crossing great rivers  
There's one for a gallon I'd back  
Well they'd beat all your Stuarts to shivers  
The men on the Wallaby Track

### *{Poem – The Shearers}*

And now that the shearing's all over  
And the wool season's all at an end  
Well it's then you will see us flash shearers  
Making johnny cakes round in the bend

### *The Shearers*

No church-bell rings them from the Track,  
No pulpit lights their blindness —  
'Tis hardship, drought and homelessness  
That teach those Bushmen kindness:

The mateship born of barren lands,  
Of toil and thirst and danger —  
The camp-fare for the stranger set,  
The first place to the stranger.

They do the best they can to-day —  
Take no thought of the morrow;  
Their way is not the old-world way —  
They live to lend and borrow.  
When shearing's done and cheques gone  
wrong,  
They call it 'time to slither' —  
They saddle up and say 'So-long!'  
And ride — the Lord knows whither.

And though he may be brown or black,  
Or wrong man there or right man,  
The mate that's honest to his mates  
They call that man a 'white man'!\*  
They tramp in mateship side by side —  
The Protestant and 'Roman' —  
They call no biped lord or 'sir,'  
And touch their hats to no man!

They carry in their swags, perhaps,  
A portrait and a letter —  
And, maybe, deep down in their hearts,  
The hope of 'something better.'  
Where lonely miles are long to ride,  
And all days seem recurrent,  
There's lots of time to think of men  
They might have been — but weren't.

They turn their faces to the west  
And leave the world behind them —  
(Their drought-dried graves are seldom green  
Where even mates can find them).  
They know too little of the world  
To rise to wealth or greatness:  
But in this book of mine I pay  
My tribute to their straightness.

Excerpt from:

*The Capricornian*

ROCKHAMPTON, QUEENSLAND

14 November 1908 p. 47.

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article68906010>

### **SHEARING RECORDS**

"Vagrant," writing in the "North Queensland Register," says :—

The shearing figures' quoted in the "Western Champion" of the 12th of September as to shearing tallies, are not quite correct. Andy Brown did not shear at Evesham in 1886. In 1887 "Jimmy" Fisher shore fifty lambs in one run before breakfast there. I do not know the time; but they used to ring the bell mighty early those days. I have seen spectral-like forms creeping across the silent space between the galley and the shed long before the kookaburra woke the push with his laughing song, and he is a pretty early bird. The same year "Black" Tom Johnson got bushed in the gloom of that space, and lost half a run before breakfast. Fisher shore 288 at Kynuna the following year; he was a wonderful man for his 8 st. of humanity. The same year Alf Bligh shore 254 at Isis Downs; he and Charlie Byers were the first two men to cut 200 sheep on the Barcoo. The same year "Bill" Hamilton, now M.L.A., shore 200 sheep at Manfred Downs, and to him belongs the credit of shearing the first 200 on the Flinders. The next year Bill died at Cambridge Gulf; but as he is alive and all right now, the account was exaggerated. "Bill" says: "That 200 at Manfred Downs was no 'cake walk.'" He used twelve gallons of water cooling down. Alick Miller shore 4163 sheep in three weeks and three days at Charlotte Plains, in 1885, and Sid ("Combo") Ross shore nine lambs in nine minutes at Belalie, on the Warrego, the year before.

In the early eighties there were a good number of 200 a-day men in New South Wales; but none of those celebrated personages ventured a pilgrimage northwards until 1887, when quite a number of fast men stormed the west, and their advent started a new era in the shearing world, improved tools and methods entirely superseding the old Ward and Payne, and Sorby school, and the old rum drinking ringers of the roaring days were gradually relegated to the "snagger brigade." Paddy M'Can, Jack Bird, Tom Green (the Burdekin ringer), Ned Hyles, Jack Ellis (Bendigo), Mick Hoffman (the Peak Downs ringer), Billy Cardham, Jim Sloane, Jack Collins, and George Taylor ("the Native") had to give way to the younger brigade with improved Burgon and Ball tools, and new ideas, and, with the advent of Jack Howe, Christy Gratz, "Chinee" Sullivan, Billy Mantim, George Butler, Jimmy Power, Alick Miller, Jack Reid, Allan M'Callum, and others, 180 and 200 were common enough. Later, when machinery was introduced, tallies took a further jump. Jimmy Power shore 323 at Barenya, in 1892 by machines. The same year Jack Howe shore 321 by hand at Alice Downs, his tallies for the week previous being 249, 257, 259, 263, 267, 144, a total of 1439 for the week. I doubt if this record has ever been beaten.

I will say right here that Jack Howe was the best shearer I have ever seen at work. The only one approaching him was Lynch, of the Darling River, New South Wales. No doubt figures get enlarged in circulation, and tall tallies in the bar-room mount up with the fumes of bottled beer — there is a lot of sheep shorn there. Shearers do not lie, as a rule: they boast and make mistakes casually. Jack Howe once told me the biggest mistake he ever made was in trying to shake hands with himself in a panel mirror in an hotel in Maoriland. He had just landed, and made for the first hotel. You see, he had grown a beard on the trip over, and looked like a chap he used to know on the Barcoo. The

mistake was considerably intensified by the barmaid's smile, as she watched Jack's good-natured recognition of an old shearing mate from Queensland.

At Kensington Downs in 1885, a big Chinaman named Ah Fat rang the shed. He could shear all right, too. The men used to take day about to run him; but the Chow had too much pace. A shearer named George Mason made great preparations to "wipe him out" one day, and, after nearly bursting himself up to dinner-time, discovered that Ah Fat was not on the board: he was doing a lounge in the hut that day. I think that Chinaman must have died; everyone loved him, and, like Moore's "Young Gazelle," with its gladsome eye, he was sure to go — "To that shed beyond the sky, Where the angel tarboys fly, And the 'cut' will last for ever, and the sheep are always dry."

These records may be of interest to the survivors of the old school, and may, perhaps, stir up the dormant memories of the younger ones. They have been culled from past records, written on the backs of stolen telegram forms from almost every post office between Burketown and Barringun, and are given for what they merit. - m