

Survey of Songs and Poetry from Australian Newspapers 1890–1893

Mark Gregory

ABSTRACT: Sixty years ago the *Canberra Times*¹ reported a Literary Fund lecture, delivered by then PhD student Russel Ward, surveying bush songs:–

Australia's founding fathers were an integral part of an old and very stable Society, and they tended to take for granted the basic assumptions on which that society rested. Mr. Ward said this spirit quickly changed in Australia. Respect for the squire, based on traditional obligations, which were at least to some extent mutual, was not transformed into respect for a commercial slave-master whose wealth was often ill-gotten and always recently acquired.

The first folk-songs composed in Australia reflected quite different feeling ... Honest men, it was felt, should defy authority, rather than submit to it ... Long before the gold rushes, folk-lore came to regard the bush-worker, ex-convict or free as the 'typical Australian', truculently independent towards his employer; in proportion as he was dependent upon the collective strength of 'mateship'. The folk-hero was the 'wild colonial boy' who robbed squatters and judges, fought policemen; and forever galloped over the plains with his fellow bushmen, he said.

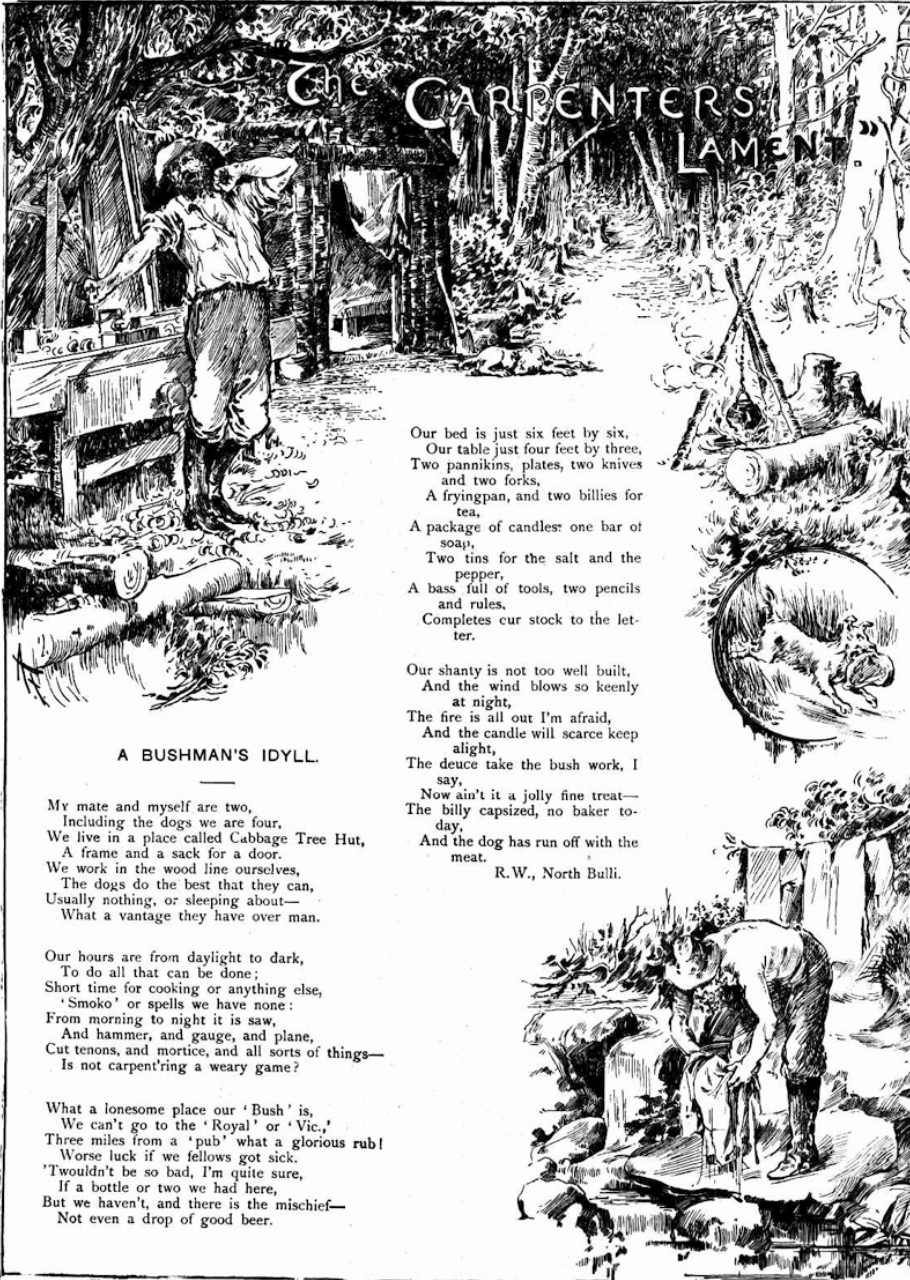
KEYWORDS: Australian Folk Songs, TROVE, newspapers, workers, Lawson, Patterson.

Since 2011 I too have been hunting for songs and poems much aided by the digitisation of hundreds of newspaper titles by the National Library of Australia TROVE project. Largely due to poaching from this archive I have been able to increase the number of songs, poems and newspaper reports like the one above, on the *Australian Folk Songs* website.² From an initial 101 back in 1994 the number of songs and poems has now grown to over 400. Presented and discussed here are a number of songs and poems selected from the years 1890–1893, most of them of them published in that period.

¹ *Canberra Times*, 30 September 1955, p. 6.

² <<http://www.folkstream.com>> [accessed 11 October 2015].

Below is a poem published in the *Illustrated Sydney News* of 1 May 1890, under the title 'A Carpenters Lament':³



The illustration is a woodcut-style drawing. At the top, the title 'The CARPENTERS LAMENT' is written in a decorative, serif font. The scene is set in a bushy, wooded area. On the left, a man in a light-colored shirt and dark trousers stands in a simple wooden shanty, working with a tool. In the center, a dog is curled up on a log. On the right, another man is shown working on a large log, with a circular inset showing a close-up of his hands. The background is filled with trees and foliage, creating a sense of a remote bush setting.

A BUSHMAN'S IDYLL.

My mate and myself are two,
Including the dogs we are four,
We live in a place called Cabbage Tree Hut,
A frame and a sack for a door.
We work in the wood line ourselves,
The dogs do the best that they can,
Usually nothing, or sleeping about—
What a vantage they have over man.

Our hours are from daylight to dark,
To do all that can be done;
Short time for cooking or anything else,
'Smoko' or spells we have none:
From morning to night it is saw,
And hammer, and gauge, and plane,
Cut tenons, and mortice, and all sorts of things—
Is not carpent'ring a weary game?

What a lonesome place our 'Bush' is,
We can't go to the 'Royal' or 'Vic.,'
Three miles from a 'pub' what a glorious rub!
Worse luck if we fellows got sick,
'Twouldn't be so bad, I'm quite sure,
If a bottle or two we had here,
But we haven't, and there is the mischief—
Not even a drop of good beer.

Our bed is just six feet by six,
Our table just four feet by three,
Two pannikins, plates, two knives
and two forks,
A fryingpan, and two billys for
tea,
A package of candles: one bar of
soap,
Two tins for the salt and the
pepper,
A bass full of tools, two pencils
and rules,
Completes cur stock to the let-
ter.

Our shanty is not too well built,
And the wind blows so keenly
at night,
The fire is all out I'm afraid,
And the candle will scarce keep
alight,
The deuce take the bush work, I
say,
Now ain't it a jolly fine treat—
The billy capsized, no baker to-
day,
And the dog has run off with the
meat.

R.W., North Bulli.

³ *Illustrated Sydney News*, 1 May 1890, p. 16.

My mate and myself are two,
Including the dogs we are four,
We live in a place called Cabbage Tree Hut,
A frame and a sack for a door.
We work in the wood line ourselves,
The dogs do the best that they can,
Usually nothing, or sleeping about—
What a vantage they have over man.

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To do all that can be done;
Short time for cooking or anything else,
' Smoko ' or spells we have none:
From morning to night it is saw,
And hammer, and gauge, and plane,
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'Twouldn't be so bad, I'm quite sure,
If a bottle or two we had here,
But we haven't, and there is the mischief
Not even a drop of good beer.

Our bed is just six feet by six,
Our table just four feet by three,
Two pannikins; plates, two knives and two forks,
A frying pan, and two billies for tea,
A package of candles: one bar of soap,
Two tins for the salt and the pepper,
A bass full of tools, two pencils and rules,
Completes our stock to the letter.

Our shanty is not too well built,
And the wind blows so keenly at night,
The fire is all out I'm afraid,
And the candle will scarce keep alight,
The deuce take the bush work, I say
Now ain't it a jolly fine treat—
The billy capsized, no baker, today,
And the dog has run off with the meat.

Songs and poems reflecting the working life and working conditions of bush workers may be plentiful but songs about carpenters seem to be rare, and I have not found another. The poem reflects on the loneliness and long working hours of the two carpenters in the bush. Work with little respite and no access pubs like the 'Royal' or the 'Vic'. In contrast their two dogs have it made and one even runs off with the meat.

In 1924 the Australian Workers Union's (AWU) Brisbane newspaper the *Worker* published 'A Song of '91'⁴ with this informative and intriguing introduction:—

Dear 'Worker',

During the shearers' strike of 1891 Charters Towers was not behind with a helping hand. I remember we got up a play, and the Charters Towers O'Callagan Opera Company collected over £100 in one night. The following song which was sung by Corp. Callagan, which was composed by the late John Plumper Hoolan. Your humble servant was one of the artists on that occasion. Being a reader of the 'Worker' from the days of Billy Lane and Monte Scott, I am delighted with your articles re the shearers' strike, and thought I would send this bit along.

With best wishes,

Yours, etc.,

J. J. Sweeney.

Co District Hospital, Charters Towers.

The song Sweeney remembered from his hospital bed a third of a century after it was performed is a lampoon of the police and military action against the striking shearers in the momentous year. Its performance in Charters Towers during the strike must have been quite daring given the special laws devised to cripple the shearers at the time. As well as boosting their funds it would have certainly boosted the morale of the shearers and their supporters in the audience.

Your brave defenders are engaged in battle's stern array,
They're going into the bush to fight for glory, not for pay;
On shearers and on rouseabouts we'll make the bullets,
We're Queensland's standing army, and we're ordered on to war.

Chorus.

To the war, to the war; we'll all go marching to the war;
When the drums are beating and the sheep are bleating
and all the little lambs go 'Baa, baa, baa!'

⁴ *Worker*, 10 April 1924, p. 4.

Then a-tramping, a-stamping, and a-ramping with a rush,
We'll guard against stray bullets at the war out in the bush.

There's no one knows what we can do when we go to the West,
But we can give a guarantee to do our very best;
We'll keep our bellies full of grub; its orders and the law
Of Queensland's bold defenders when they're marching on to war.

Among the squatters' mutton we will promise to succeed;
We'll grease our chops with fine fat lambs of pure merino breed;
So let the trumpet sound again, we hear the battle roar.
We'll glory gain in hatfuls when we're fighting in the war.

So sling your best leg forward, boys, and buckle on the gun,
For scabs and blacklegs roll along; there'll soon be whips of fun;
Though every shearer in the land with bullet holes we'll bore,
For none can stand before us when we're fighting in the war.

With deeds of cruel carnage, with battles lost, and won,
You'll shed a tear of sympathy for every mother's son;
For every way-worn sodger who perished in his gore
When out as scab-protectors in that cruel sheepskin war.

This historic song from the Charters Towers O'Callagan Opera Company is one of a number of vernacular lyrical items from that year. A year later the *Worker* published another song from the O'Callagan Opera Company play titled 'The Daydawn of Labour'.⁵

The following song was composed by the late John Plumper Hoolan for the O'Callaghan Opera Co. and was sung for the O'Callaghan Opera Company, and was sung for the benefit of the shearer's strike, 1891.

(Air: 'Marching to Georgia')

Oh listen to the distant sound that spirit wings have borne,
Bidding all awaken to the breaking of the dawn.
Sons of toil arising to welcome the bright morn
Ushering in the daydawn of Labor.

⁵ *Worker*, 5 November 1925 p. 3.

Chorus:

Arise, arise and usher in the day;
 Arise, arise and battle for fair play.
 Down with every obstacle, the unions lead the way;
 And up with the standard of Labor.

Onward we are marching, onward let us roll;
 Spread the gospel freely, boys, spread from Pole to Pole.
 Throw your lives in with it, it's salvation to the soul;
 And cast in defence of your labor.

Land of full and plenty, O land of liberty;
 Land where honest sons of toil will never bend the knee
 To purse-proud, mocking masters in meek humility;
 So fight in defence of your labor.

Apart from Helen Palmer's 1950s commemoration of the shearers strike 'The Ballad of 1891', the most famous strike song is without doubt Henry Lawson's 'Freedom on the Wallaby' which was published in the Brisbane *Worker* on 6 May 1891. The continuing interest in 'Labour Songs' during the years selected can be seen in the AWU's Wagga NSW newspaper the *Worker* of 24 September 1892 in a verse titled 'Water in the Bore.' It takes up the often precarious nature of farming in drought prone country and the relief sought through the artesian water drawn from below. The constant hegemonic battle lines between the squatter and the intonement bush worker is also explored:–

LABOUR SONGS.

Take any squatters' paper up
 From Brisbane to Barcoo,
 Artesian water and the bore
 Pervade it through and through.
 At balls and parties it's rehearsed
 In parlour, pub, and store,
 Oh, so and so's a lucky dog,
 There's water in his bore.

A jackeroo or squatter meet
 In bush, or pub, or town,
 Who hasn't struck artesian yet–
 He'll pass you with a frown.

By his demeanour you will see
His heart within is sore,
You sympathise, poor wretch, with him,
He's got an empty bore.

The squatter frowns when up you ride
And pass your ration bags,
He looks as though he'd like to tear
The blooming things to rags.
But if you ask him for a job
He'll fume and rave and roar,
He's doing nothing now at all
But putting down a bore.

Or meet a 'lizard' coming in
To get his week's supply,
He wears a proud and mighty air
And shows it in his eye.
You mention that the day is hot
He'll move his head, no more;
You'd think he owned the blooming lot—
The station and the bore.

But when at length the water's struck
A wondrous change there'll be,
They grow as sweet as sugarloaf,
And open, kind, and free.
The rations—sugar, flour and tea
Into your bag they'll pour,
They're only so because you know
The water's in the bore.

They'll tell you all the latest news,
They'll call you Dick or John,
They'll tell you it was foolish—oh !
That strike of ninety—
You'd fancy by their pleasant pitch
They're union to the core,
They're only so because you know
There's water in the bore.

I do not wish the squatters' ill,
Indeed I wish them joy,

But often trouble at the thought
 If e'er the bore goes dry.
 You know I'm but surmising this,
 I wish them luck galore;
 May each and every one of them
 Strike water in their bore.

OWEN MAGUIRE, Hughenden.

It is also worth considering 'Farewell To Prison Walls' a poem written by the most famous of the gaoled shearers strike leaders, Julian Stuart, when he was released in 1893. This version come from the Wagga Christmas edition of the *Worker*.⁶

To-morrow the gates of my prison unfold—
 To-night is my last in the cell;
 The lingering years to their climax have rolled,
 I hear with emotion that cannot be told
 The clang of the midnight bell.

I am thinking of those of a similar fate—
 Of my mates in the gaol by the sea—
 And I picture their eagerness while I await
 For the dawn that shall come to my prison gate
 To wake me and set me free.

When we entered the prison, a captive band,
 At the close of a bloodless fray,
 'Twas like marching for years in a desert land;
 But we travelled in unity, hand in hand,
 Till one grew faint by the way.

But though days of immurement have left their trace
 On body and brain and heart,
 Yet I feel more of pride than I do of disgrace
 At being condemned to a criminal's place
 For acting a freeman's part.

The loss of my birthright I bore as long
 As the criminal garb I wore—

⁶ *Worker*, 23 December 1893, p. 5.

'Twas for aiding the feeble against the strong—
And to lighten the burden of human wrong
I'd suffer it all once more.

I will not brand them as barren days,
Nor days to be linked with regret,
For after the future its verdict displays—
When the scroll of Time shall unroll to our gaze—
They may yield a harvest yet.

I can find no thanks for the debt I owe
To the friends who have been so true;
Oh! friends, whom I know not, and may not know,
But whose kindness shall cheer me wherever I go,
What thanks can I render you?

But this: To endeavour, in days to come,
Through all that our fates may unfold,
To merit your trust till my lips grow dumb;
To fight in your fights till my heart grows numb,
And the blood in my veins grows cold.

JULIAN STUART.
Toowoomba Gaol,
November 17, 1893.
—*Queensland Railway Times*.

As we can see this poem was first published in the *Queensland Railway Times* which was a widely quoted and well-known union journal.

The Wagga *Worker* of 22 August 1891 published a Lawson poem 'Spread The Truth!'⁷ under one of his pen names 'Jack Cornstalk'. It was later published in the NSW newspapers the *Windsor and Richmond Gazette* of 24 October 1891 (under the title 'Pen the Truth') and the *Weekly Herald* of 12 October 1894.

Brave the anger of the wealthy! Scorn their bitter lying spite!
Pen the Truth in simple language, when you know that you are right!
And they'll read it by the slush-lamps in the station huts at night.

I have seen the People's triumph in the visions of my dreams.
It is pictured by the camp-fires down the lonely western streams;

⁷ *Worker*, 22 August 1891, p. 3.

And the teamsters talk about it as they tramp beside their teams.

Write the Truth in simple language and you shall not write in vain!
Sing a ringing song of freedom and you'll hear the same refrain
Where the drovers ride together far across the western plain.

Write of wrongs that you are hating with the grand old burning hate!
For the lonely digger reads it when the western day is late,
And he marks it in the paper he is sending to his mate.

Write the Truth in simple language when you feel it in your breast:
It will reach the far selections in the wide Australian west
Where the bushmen yarn together on a sunny day of rest.

Oh! the workers new religion spreads beneath the southern skies,
And the bearded fathers read it for its words are kind and wise,
And the little children listen to the Truth with wond'ring eyes.

Three generations of the Kendall family had published verse in the *Illawarra Gazette*. Henry Kendall's mother Melinda Kendall, published two songs about local miners strikes. Melinda's 'Clifton Miners' Song' was published on May Day 1890 and I was alerted to its existence by folklorist and collector Rob Willis.

(AIR—The Rising of The Moon.)

Can you tell me, young Australia,
When the day is going to be,
When the masters and their colliers
Are to mutually agree;
When poverty and discontent,
We'll banish from the land,
And capital and labor
Are seen working hand in hand.

Chorus—
Are seen working hand in hand,
Are seen working hand in hand;
When capital and labor
Are seen working hand in hand.

When the masters they won't curse and damn,
And tell us to our cheek
We must suffer a reduction
Down to a pound a week?
When the collier and his little ones
In the profits they will share,
And the purse-proud bloat of capitalists
Will treat their miners fair.

Chorus—
Will treat their miners fair,
Will treat their miners fair;
When the purse-proud bloated capitalists
Will treat their miners fair.

Fretrade or protection our wages will not raise,
But unity will, my boys,
So we'll always sing its praise.
It stands against all tyranny,
And we proclaim it now with pride,
That we never will surrender
While we've justice on our side.

In 1891 Melinda Kendall's grandson, and Henry's son Frederick Clarence Kendall composed 'Stand Together, Men, As Brothers', which perhaps alludes to the looming shearers battle although it clearly has a broader international horizon. It was published in the *Illawarra Mercury* on 21 April 1891. The song was also published in other newspapers in the same locality, the *Kiama Independent*, and the *Shoalhaven Advertiser* on 24 April 1891. We can conclude that local newspapers were not averse to be broadcasters of political song and poetry, especially if they had a broad working class readership.

Stand together, men, as brothers,
While the last long battle rages;
Nobler far, our fight than others,
Than the selfish strife of ages.

Now no robber's tower defending,
Now about no cruel throne;
Not with brother slaves contending,
Purposeless, oppressed alone.

No! Our battle-field is vaster,
And around the changing world
Now our armies gather faster—
Faster round the flag unfurled.

Hearts that feel for hearts of others,
Count the distances as dreams;
And when men seek men their brothers
Oceans are as little streams.

Land to land the watchword passes,
Freedom flashes zone to zone
As the armies of the masses
Stand together for their own.

Stand together, men, as brothers!
Shall we look behind us now
At the past that blinds and smothers?
No! The light is on our brow.

While he sneers, see! Mammon shivers;
While he lies, ah! Mammon, fears;
For the blood he shed in rivers
Floats us to the fuller years.

Often to the heart a hollow,
Sinking voice may seem to say:
Fevered man, the dream you follow
Leads you but an endless way.

Bitter journey of the ages!
Ever gleams the mirage sweet,
And along the stricken stages
Ye must drag your bleeding feet.

But a pulse of high sensation,
Nurture'd in us, spurns the lie;
We can make a consummation—
Hunger, toil for it and die.

Though the deep, dark, hidden river
Plunges in the cavern gloom—

Where the long, loud echoes quiver,
Dying in the depths of doom—

Soon beneath the bright day gleaming,
Lo! it lingers lit with love,
And the cool, white moonlight, streaming,
Trickles through the leaves above.

So from out the past of sorrow
On we toil into the light,
While the music of the morrow
Breaks into the dark to-night.

Stand together, men, as brothers!
Lo! the light is on our brow.
Sneer and doubt we leave to others;
Ours' to conquer Mammon now.

—F. C. Kendall.
Sydney, 1891.

Lawson composed his famous poem 'Saint Peter' in 1893 and the first newspaper to publish it was the *Westralian Worker* on 30 August 1901, following its inclusion in Lawson's collection 'Verses Popular And Humorous' in 1900.

Now, I think there is a likeness
'Twixt St Peter's life and mine,
For he did a lot of trampin'
Long ago in Palestine.
He was 'Union ' when the workers
First began to organise,
And—I'm glad that old St Peter
Keeps the gate of Paradise.

When the ancient agitator
And his brothers carried swags,
I've no doubt he very often
Tramped with empty tucker-bags:
And I'm glad he's Heaven's picket,
For I hate explainin' things,
And bell think a union ticket
Just as good as Whitely Kings.

He denied the Saviour's union.
Which was weak of him, no doubt;
But perhaps his feet was blistered.
And his boots had given out.
And the bitter storm was rushin'
On the bark and on the slabs,
And a cheerful fire was blazin',
And the hut was full of 'scabs'.

* * *

When I reach the great head-station—
Which is somewhere 'off the track'—
I won't want to talk with angels
Who have never been out back;
They might bother me with offers
Of a banjo—meanin' well—
And a pair of wings to fly with,
When I only want a spell.

I'll just ask for old St. Peter,
And I think when he appears,
I will only have to tell him
That I carried swag for years.
'I've been on the track', I'll tell him.
'An' I've done the best I could.'
And he'll understand me better
Than the other angels would.

They won't try to get a chorus
Oat of lungs that's worn to rags,
Or to graft the wings on shoulders
That is stiff with humpin' swags.
But I'll rest about the station
Where the work-bell never rings,
Till they blow the final trumpet
And the Great Judge sees to things.

—HENRY LAWSON.

The Melbourne newspaper the *Bacchus Marsh Express* published the first and longest version of the iconic shearers song 'Click Go the Shears' under the title 'Bare Belled Ewe' which may be one of the reasons it was not discovered till June 2013.

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,
And 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'r 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 an 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 shearer's 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 are now lowering fast;
He works hard, he dies hard, and goes to heaven at last.

C. C.
Eynesbury, Nov. 20, 1891.

The existence of these verses clears up a long mystery about the song since the only published version of it seemed to be that of Dr. Percy Jones in a 1946 magazine. Jones did not give it a title until the 1952 tour of Australia by the American singer Burl Ives who recorded it and a number of other Australian songs from the Jones collection. Recent research also shows that the song was published in two NSW newspapers in 1939, versions that had fewer verses than 'Bare Belled Ewe' and were simply titled the 'Shearers Song' and it is likely that one of these published versions was given to Jones. Like the version he collected they both ended with the phrase 'He works hard, he drinks hard, and goes to hell at last.' The 1891 date places this most famous shearer song in the year of the Queensland shearers strike mentioned above. The song concentrates on the various tasks in the shearing shed and give two verses to the Jack the tar boy. The ringer looms large of course while the 'colonial experience' is lampooned. The worker-centred nature of the song indicates the attention being paid to shearers in the year of the strike, which the employers won but the union managed to continue to fight another day. As historian Professor Ross Fitzgerald explains;⁸

⁸ <http://media.uow.edu.au/news/UOW165770.html>, accessed 10 October 2015.

‘The colonial government used armed and mounted troops and militia to deal with the armed strikers,’ he said. ‘It was a very, very inflammable situation.’ He said the shearers’ defeat in 1891 and 1894 led the Queensland labour movement to move away from direct action into parliamentary representation via the Labor Party. ‘That happened so quickly after 1895 that by 1899 for a week Queensland had the first labour government in the world, led by a man named Anderson Dawson from Charters Towers ... Most people don’t realise that Queensland had the first labour government in the world from December 1 to December 7, 1899.’

The *Wagga Worker* of 26 August 1893 published ‘The Land For The People’:⁹

Ye men of Australia, to you I appeal!
I hope not in vain, for I’m sure you must feel,
That the time has arrived when we need to be strong—
Then rush to the standard, and help us along.
Oh! help us along in our fight for reform;
‘Tho’ a poor ‘Band of Workers,’ we’ve deeds to perform.

In unlocking the lands and assisting the poor.
To redress all the wrongs they’ve been forced to endure.
For here in Australia are thousands who toil,
Being robbed of their birthright—a share of the soil.
All houseless and homeless must aimlessly roam,
Then let us endeavour to get them a home.

Yes, give them a home, for ‘tis their’s as a right,
Which has long been withheld by the power and might
Of corrupt legislators, and the opulent few,
Who never yet gave to the workers their due.
But they treat them like slaves, and the money they earn,
Is absorbed by taxation at every turn;

And thousands must work, so that one wealthy drone,
Gets richer on profits not justly his own.
But the flag of the masses is waving on high,
The ‘Land for the People!’ their watch-word and cry.
Then, men of Australia, arise in your might,
If you wish for reforms you must join in the fight.

⁹ *Worker*, 26 August 1893, p. 3.

Pat Carroll.
Humula, August 6th.

'My Mate Bill' by the poet Ironbark was published in the *Bulletin* and then the Melbourne newspaper the *Independent*.¹⁰ Like Lawson's 'Saint Peter' above it is a story of a bush worker going to heaven and uses the same humorous trope of the fiercely independent 'daddy of all stockmen' faced with the imagined forms of work available for those who end up there.

That's his saddle across the tie-beam an' them's his spurs up there
On the wall-plate over yonder, you kin see's they ain't a pair.
The 'daddy' of all the stockmen as ever come must'rin' here—
Killed in the flamin' mallee, yardin' a scrub-bred steer!

They say as he's gone to Heaven, an' shook off his worldly cares,
But I can't sight Bill in a halo set up on three blinded hairs.
In Heaven! what next, I wonder, for, strike me pink an' blue,
If I savey what in thunder they'll find for Bill to do.

He'd never make one o' them angels with faces as white as chalk,
All wool to the toes, like hoggets, an' wings like a eagle 'awk:
He couldn't 'arp for apples, his voice 'ad tones as jarred,
An' he'd no more ear than a bald-faced bull, or calves in a brandin'-yard.

He could sit on a buckin' brumbie like a nob in an easy-cheer,
An' chop his name with a green bide fall on the flank of a flyin' steer,
He could show the saints in glory the way that a fall should drop,
But, sit on a throne?—not William—unless they could make it 'prop.'

If the Heav'nly hosts got 'boxed' now, as mobs most always will,
Why, who'd cut 'em out like William, or draft on the camp like Bill?
An 'orseman 'ud find it awkward, at first, with a push that flew,
But, blame my cats, if I knows what else they'll find for Bill to do.

He mightn't freeze to the seraphs, or chum with the cherubim,
But if ever them seraph-johnnies get 'pokin' it,' like, at him,
Well, if there's hide in Heaven, an' silk for to make a lash,
He'll yard the lot in the Jasper Lake in a blinded lightnin' flash!

¹⁰ *Independent*, 28 October 1893 p. 2.

Its hard if there ain't no cattle, but p'raps they'll let him sleep,
An' wake him up at the Judgment for to draft them goats an sheep.
It's playin' it low on, William; but p'rhaps he'll buckle-to,
Just to show them high-toned seraphs what a mallee-man kin do.

If they saddles a big-boned angel—with a turn o' speed, of course—
As can spiel like a four-year brumbie, an prop like an old camp-horse,
If they puts Bill up with a snaffle, an' a four or five-inch spur,
An' eighteen foot o' green-hide for to chop the blinded fur,

He'll draft them blamed angoras in a way, it's safe to swear,
as'll make them loney seraphs sit back on their thrones an' stare.

IRONBARK. (From the *Bulletin*.)

We know that this brand of 'world turned upside down' verse in Australia goes back a long way. The convict effusions of 'Frank the Poet' come to mind and many of the bushranger ballads. A surprising number of them end in proclaiming victory over the powers that be, a vital part of the hegemonic make up of society that constantly advertises that all is just, equal and fair in the face of intolerable inequality.

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Conclusion

Today we have access to much more of this tradition of vernacular lyrical material than ever before and are therefore faced with a task to 'yard the lot' in order to make ourselves feel more at home like Bill the stockman above.

In his introduction to *Old Bush Songs* in 1905 Banjo Paterson writes that he was attempting to rescue such verse for posterity, and he made a comment that the young bush workers of that time were more interested in politics than singing the old songs. In thanking Paterson for his pioneering work we might respond that we are happy that they were so interested in politics and that perhaps that because of that the singing of the old songs 110 years later continues in a way that would make him 'sit back in his saddle and stare.'

Among the archives to which I found most useful in my research there are books of course, particularly collections of broadside ballads. This street literature was sold on the streets of the same towns and cities that sent convicts to Australia from the First Fleet onwards. Hugh Anderson in

his rich archival book *Farewell to Judges and Juries* brings together some 140 ballads that deal with transportation and Australia. This collection claims as its expressed purpose a desire to inform and alert historians of the usefulness of this kind of vernacular lyrical material. This literature after all can be argued to be part of the cultural baggage the convicts brought to their far-flung prison. Another collection is James Hepburn's two volume *A Book of Scattered Leaves*. Its sub-title *Poetry of Poverty in Broadside Ballads of Nineteenth-Century England* indicates the author's selection choice. This archive of street literature reveals how common was the lyrical protest against the 'dark satanic mills' or Queen Victoria's Inferno—the empire building industrial revolution that grew to be the largest invasion and takeover of other nations in history. Both these ballad collections provide important examples of the voice from below that has been so vital in the centuries old articulations of insistence on democracy, freedom and equality.

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