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Origin: Australian Folk Songs
Source: Eureka: The Songs That Made
Australia; Omnibus Press

F Dm Bb C

I came from the south and my name it's Field

F Dm C C7

and when my er - ly steeled,

F

A hun - dred and more I have ve - ry of - ten peeled

F Bb C C7 F

and of course I'm a rye - buck shear - er

History:

In the thirty years between 1820 and 1850, the number of sheep in Australia had escalated from approximately 120,000 to 16 million from natural increase and the importing of sheep.

Sheep were typically shorn once a year. During the shearing season, there was a high demand for itinerant sheep shearers.

The man in this song describes himself as being “from the South”. Like many shearers, this man probably travelled from one sheep property to another looking for work. He calls himself a “ryebuck shearer”. This means he would be one of the best shearers around - certainly the best in the shearing shed he was working in.

In the song, he is taunted that he “couldn’t shear a hundred sheep in a day”. Ryebuck shearers, (sometimes called Flash Shearers, as in the song, “The Springtime It Brings On The Shearing”), would consistently shear 300 sheep a day.

The most acclaimed shearer was Jackie Howe, who set a record in October 1892 for shearing 321 sheep in 7 hours and 40 minutes using blade shears. His record was only beaten in 1950 - but that was by someone using machine shears.

The Ryebuck Shearer

Partner:

Scale: Major

CSP: C

Age: Upper Primary - Middle Secondary

Tones: s, l, t, **d**, r, m, f, s

Rhythm:  :   :  : tie

Melodic: s₁ d₁ d₁ t₁ l₁ s₁ ; d₁ r₁ m₁ d₁ m₁ r₁ m₁ ; m₁ f₁ s₁ ; s₁ m₁ r₁ d₁ ; d₁ t₁ (d₁) ; d₁ r₁ d₁ ; s₁ m₁

Prep: tie

MC: tie

Prac: tie

Theme: Australian

Form: Verse & Chorus

Games:

Song Type:

The Ryebuck Shearer

1. I came from the south and my name it's Field,
And when my shears are properly steeled,
A hundred and more I have very often peeled,
And of course I'm a ryebuck shearer.

CHORUS

- If I don't shear a tally before I go,
My shears and stone in the river I'll throw,
I'll never open Sawbees to take another blow,
And prove I'm a ryebuck shearer.
2. There's a bloke on the board and he's got a yellow skin,
A very long nose and he shaves on the chin,
And a voice like a billy-goat dancing on a tin,
And of course he's a ryebuck shearer.
3. There's a bloke on the board and I heard him say,
That I couldn't shear a hundred sheep in a day,
But some fine day I'll show him the way,
And prove I'm a ryebuck shearer.
4. Oh, I'll make a splash, but I won't say when,
I'll hop off me tail and I'll into the pen,
While the ringer's shearing five, I'll shear ten,
And prove I'm a ryebuck shearer.

Glossary:

Ryebuck Shearer: The expert sheep shearer - the best shearer in the shed.

Steeled: Sharpened.

Peeled: Shorn. (As in a shorn sheep)

Tally: A system for counting.

Stone: Used to sharpen shears

Sawbees: Hand shears.

Blow: A long, sweeping shearing cut.

Bloke: A man.

On the Board: The shearing board is that area where sheep are shorn and let out of the shearing shed.

Yellow Skin: Possibly a man from China.

Make a Splash: Get a lot of attention.

Hop off me tail: Stop being lazy and start working hard.

Ringer: Fastest shearer in the shed.