

# Shearing

*Promoting our industry, sport and people*

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*Mike Bool's blade gang at Black Forest Station (merino stud), on the north-eastern shores of Lake Benmore. (See page 3 for names.)*



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**Next edition due 15 April 2015.**  
**Deadline for all material**  
**two weeks prior.**

## UNDER COVER STORY

Greetings readers, and welcome to the November 2014 edition of your magazine. We first appeared in the summer of 1984, which by my calculations means we are now 30-years-of-age. In the ever uncertain world of newspapers, magazines and publishing, that is surely a notable milestone.

Such longevity has been made possible only by the fantastic and sustained support from our industry over that time – from the many contractors and advertisers, contributors of stories and photographs (professional and amateur), as well as the rural merchandise stores and country pubs that provide the distribution network. Without that wide “whanau support” the magazine would have disappeared without trace years ago.

And while there is cause to celebrate that milestone, there is sadness that this time (December 2014) apparently marks the end of a shearing industry training scheme started by the New Zealand Wool Board and the late Godfrey Bowen some 60 years ago. I say ‘apparently’ in reference to the demise of Tectra. Popular rumour has it that Tectra will close its doors on 5 December, though confirmation from the company itself has not been forthcoming as we go to print.

Much has been written in recent editions of this magazine about the changes afoot in training and most concerns seem to focus on the question of “who now is going to train the learners?” PrimaryITO concentrates on training people already in work. Tectra catered for young people looking to get a start in the industry.

In the “good old days” a youngster got taken on by a contractor as a shed hand or presser and, if aspiring to be a shearer, eventually graduated to a stand by doing a few at smoko and lunchtime and then going off to a course or two. As a contractor remarked just this week: “All of a sudden we have this bloody great vacuum in our system. What is going to emerge in order to fill that vacuum?”

Good question. See you all in April 2015.

*Ka kite ano*

*Des Williams (editor)*

*Cover photo: Mike Bool gang at Black Forest Station. From the stairs back to front: Ben Innes, Richard Turner, Peter Corder, Matt Parsons, Ross Kelman, Jarrod Bool, Justin Perniskie, Tim Sugrue. Middle: Jamie McKeown (blue check shirt), Ashleigh Bool, Neil Strachan, Grant Anderson, Malcolm Boyne, Shane Childs. Front left: Kate Wilson, Shanie Mennie, Kara Purcell, Lavenda Collins, Ramari Rogers, Sarah Stark, Fern Ormond. Inset: Allan (station farmhand).*



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# Boyle the right royal oil

By Des Williams

Australia's Damien Boyle appeared in five New Zealand Merino Shears finals at Alexandra between 1999 and 2009 before winning his first title in 2010. Now he's won it five times on the trot, and most of them at a canter you might say, to continue the equine analogy.

His latest, fifth title-winning display, which gave him margins of 15 points over Colin O'Neill and nearly 20 points over Nathan Stratford, puts him up on the Honours Board ahead of Brian Quinn and Samson Te Whata, and one shy of equalling Mana Te Whata's big six.

(Students of history note, Quinn won his second in 1970 then retired for eight years until coming back in 1978 and '79, when he won again. He might have let a few go in those years away!)

But however you read the statistics, Boyle clearly belongs in select company when it comes to shearing fine wool sheep. Some very good Aussies have come before him in the past 50 years, with only Ian Kneen and Ian Wratten previously taking home the pure wool sash. Consider the likes of Mark Conlan, Michael Mephram, Gene Mills, Cameron Griffiths, Hilton Barrett, Shannon Warnest, Matt Phillipson and others – visitors since the 1990s. Most were good enough to make finals but not good enough on the day to win.

A few years back the likes of Barry Taylor, Darin Forde and Grant Smith dealt with the Boyle threat by putting a couple of sheep around him, but that doesn't work anymore – like a vintage Fagan on crossbreds, when you've got best job inside and out and close enough to best time as well, you are a difficult customer to beat.

Seasoned Kiwi campaigners, Nathan Stratford and Colin O'Neill lined up in the final together with Aussie, Mark Buscumb (2008 finalist) and a couple of newcomers, Southland lads Troy Pyper and Leon Samuels. For Leon, one of the four-stand lamb kings from Centre Hill in February 2013, it was his first time at the NZ Merino Shears, let alone his first final. He brought that record-setting speed to his task here too, forcing the pace after a tentative start.

Buscumb eventually got the speed stakes job done in 23.43; Leon persevered to finish less than 20 seconds back and Boyle also closed within a minute of the pace. O'Neill and Pyper both switched off around 25.21, leaving 2006 and 2009 champion, Stratford alone to finish 45 seconds last. (No rippers in that pen of sheep, Strattie!)

So, the big questions then awaiting answers were, "who came second?" and "who was the best Kiwi to shear his way into a New Zealand blazer for tests against Australia in November and again in March?" And no one in the goodly crowd disagreed when popular local man Colin 'Mouse' O'Neill was announced runner-up and blazer-winner.

## Woolhandling

Neither was there any major disagreement from the goodly crowd when Rocky Hape-Taite was announced winner of the open woolhandling contest ahead of defending champion Joel Henare. Apart from an involuntary and barely audible 'no, that's wrong' from Tina Rimene.

And so it proved, when the initial announcements were completed and Rocky had enjoyed his moment of supreme



*New Zealand Merino Shears open woolhandling finalists, before getting down and dirty: Joel Henare, Foonie Waihape, Tia Potae and Rocky-Hape-Taite (at back).*

## Results: New Zealand Merino Shears Alexandra 3/4 October 2014:

### Shearing:

Open final (12 sheep): Damien Boyle (Australia) 106.43 1; Colin O'Neill (Alexandra) 121.14 2; Nathan Stratford (Invercargill) 125.09 3; Troy Pyper (Invercargill) 129.49 4; Mark Buscumb (Australia) 130.01 5; Leon Samuels (Tuatapere) 143.78 6.

Senior final: Cody Beck (Taumarunui) 99.56 1; Ethan Pankhurst (Masterton) 106.53 2; Ian Flett (Alexandra) 113.50 3; Logan Burton (Taumarunui) 120.21 4; Corey Smith (Rakaia) 126.79 5; Paulie Smith (Taumarunui) 160.32 6.

Trans-Tasman merino challenge (5 sheep): New Zealand Merino Shears (Charlie O'Neill and Grant Smith) (152.76) beat Royal Perth Australia (Damien Boyle and Mark Buscumb) (166.83).

### Woolhandling:

Open final: Joel Henare (Gisborne) 204.95 1; Rocky Hape-Taite (Dannevirke) 241.39 2; Tia Potae (Milton) 311.26 3; Foonie Waihape (Gisborne) 349.81 4.

Senior final: Sharnie Keefe (Taihape) 195.16 1; Creedence Culshaw (Raupunga) 201.97 2; Ruby O'Neill (Alexandra) 210.79 3; Melanie Barrett (Invercargill) 228.25 4.

Junior final: Clarissa Lewis (Gisborne) 208.92 1; Chiquita Tamepo (Gisborne) 251.85 2; Jade Culshaw (Raupunga) 262.43 3; Aiesha Thompson (Hastings) 286.34 4.

### Shearing and woolhandling:

Teams event (5 sheep): Tectra (shearers Tony Coster/Aaron Haynes, woolhandlers Joel Henare/Robynne Murray) 317.15 1; No Worries (shearers Damien Boyle/Mark Buscumb, woolhandlers Keryn Herbert/Taiwha Nelson) 386.98 2; Oh Yeah (shearers Troy Pyper/Joe Tumohe, woolhandlers Kelly Luke/Foonie Waihape) 476.50 3.

joy there came that awkward pause when everyone knew something was amiss. It fell to compere Norm Harraway – perhaps the only person in the stadium tall enough to look Rocky in the eye and say, “Sorry mate, the real set of points from the computer has Joel Henare first and you second, so we’re going to have to swap those cheques and ribbons, if you don’t mind.”

Clearly, Rocky did mind, and who could blame him? But he handled it all with dignity, and Joel Henare was equally magnanimous in accepting first prize and expressing heartfelt sympathies for his opponent.

Some tension-easing banter came a few moments later when cheeky Johnny Fraser told Norm Harraway that he “should have gone to Specsavers.” Norm protested (rightfully so!) and reckoned it wasn’t his fault, but Johnny was having none of that: “Well I’m blaming you!” he said, before scuttling away out of arm’s-reach! (Or harm’s way!)

### How best to right the wrong?

*For the moral doesn’t matter/broken rules are all the same/ to the broken or the breaker/who’s to bless and who’s to blame?* (If you want some words to fit an occasion, chances are Kris Kristofferson has already written them!)

Once the mistake is made you can’t get all the spilt milk back in the bucket and it doesn’t matter who’s to bless and who’s to blame. So which of two options best rights the wrong: by taking corrective measures immediately the error is discovered – as here, and as done on at least three other occasions at other competitions in this writer’s memory?

Or do you wait until the crowds have all have gone home and then quietly set things to rights away from the spotlight and avoid public embarrassment for the blessed and the blamed? This writer also recalls it being done that way, at least a couple of times in years gone by.

Does Shearing Sports New Zealand have a policy or protocol on it, someone asked. If they don’t, should they? For my few bob’s worth, Alexandra got it right – they discovered a mistake and fixed it at the first opportunity. If we cock something up in our own jobs, don’t we like to hear about it sooner rather than later?

The botch-up will fade from memory but two things will remain: Rocky Hape-Taite’s dignity in accepting the bad news with the same grace that he had accepted the good news a few minutes earlier.

And Joel’s words of genuine regret to Rocky that true champions sometimes have to come second.



*Top: New Zealand Merino Shears senior shearing champion, Cody Beck of Taumarunui, continues to impress as one to watch for the future, with obvious skills on fine wool and crossbreds. Above: Foonie Waihape of Gisborne – like Leon Samuels (shearing), she gate-crashed her way into the open woolhandling final. Having arrived too late for her senior heats, she entered the open instead and finished fourth. That’s what we call open classy work, Foonie!*

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Left: the momentary winner, Rocky Hape-Taite lets the fleece fly in the open final. Above: Winning teamsters – The Tectra line-up comprising Joel Henare, Tony Coster, Aaron Haynes and Robyne Murray.



Above: that cheeky judge Johnny Fraser (see page 6) poised with technology in hand to dock any second cuts that senior finalist Ian Flett may slice into the fleece wool. As one to benefit from others' misfortune (promoted into the semi-finals when a couple of Southland lads who went home Friday night to tend their lambs in the snow, failed to make it back in time), Flett (from Alexandra) made the most of his good luck to finish third behind Cody Beck and Ethan Pankhurst.



Above: senior shearing finalists from left: Greg Stuart (NZ Shears President); Tom Wilson (Acto-Agriculture / Lister, sponsor); Cody Beck (Taumarunui), Ethan Pankhurst (Masterton), Ian Flett (Alexandra), Logan Burton (Taumarunui), Corey Smith (Rakaia) and Paulie Smith (Taumarunui). Beck received the Lou Campbell Memorial Trophy for best quality in the senior event, but then had to hand it back to the committee for safe-keeping.

Jack Fagan was not so lucky in the trophy department, He should have been presented with the Murphy Memorial for best quality in the open heats, but the silverware is missing and no-one seems to know where it is.

Just to be argumentative however, Fagan had 28.000 out the back and 18.333 on the board (46.333 "quality points"). Damien Boyle had 30.667 out the back and 7.000 on the board (37.667 "quality points"). So who really had best quality? Would Mr Farmer prefer 18.333 second cuts in his fleece, or seven? If you say board points aren't part of the equation, perhaps it's time they were!



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*"That Damien Boyle might be a gun but I'm going to win the New Zealand Merino Shears SIX times when I grow up!" And who knows, with a world champion Dad's moccasins to fill, young Israel Ferguson may well some day deliver!*



*Leon Samuels giving it heaps in the NZ Merino Shears open final and Eru Weeds in the pen, holding the next one ready and steady.*



*Kelly Hokianga has already shorn a couple of million sheep or more in his long career and was quite content to sit and watch others do it for a change – at the Fine Wool champs!*

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# The good ol' stay-out

By Stu Rich

They say the hardest thing about shearing is giving it up, and once it's in your blood – good luck with that!

After shearing my first sheep as a 15-year-old at a Wool Board course run by Colin Gibson at Oamaru, it has been an interesting road back to where I started – full circle, you could say.

So how is it, I ask myself after 20 years, thousands of sheep and two or three career changes in-between, I find myself drawn back to the sheds? For what reason I'm not sure – the money, the lifestyle, the travel, the people, the gang, our gang, or whatever team you're in on any given day in any shearing shed is your gang.

So how is it that a bunch of widely varied individuals can come together on any sheep farm world-wide and almost instantly become a working team machine? Arguably it is the only industry where this scenario happens. It is the unwritten code of shearers and woolhandlers that regardless of what is going down, we have a task in hand, a job to do. That common goal of cutting the shed out in the best possible standard and time with all factors considered, including weather.

It is true that the travel is an attraction of this job and this is certainly the case for myself. Being a licensed builder and living in Christchurch it is fair to say that since 9 September 2010, work has been hectic and in abundance with the post-earthquake rebuild being in full swing. As lucrative as it is for a lot of tradespeople like myself, however, it is also stressful and has evolved into a fairly sterile, red-taped, thankless working environment.

So when an opportunity came up earlier this year for this half broken-down, middle-aged shearer to travel to Devon and Somerset in England for the 2014 season, it was the travel that encouraged me to say "yes" and accept the stand that was on offer there.

I knew well from two previous seasons shearing in the United Kingdom that it is foolish to assume anything will be well presented. As my Aussie battler crew mate Craig (aka the Duck) would say, when you learn to expect nothing you can then never be disappointed.

Despite all factors when shearing



*The Woolly Travellers - back left: Big Dave Stud, Stu Rich, Vallence (the Pink Panther). Middle: Jerry the cruiser, Sugar, Tony "Scissor-hands" Macdonald. Front left: Honey, Miss S Falconer, Dallas (Aunty), Mr G Goodger (aka Richie McCaw), Eugene Goodger, Kunta (winegums) Smith.*

in that part of the world that make a tough job even harder, i.e., wet sheep, full sheep, daggy sheep, daily setting up and taking down of trailers, pens and machines, warm beer and soccer matches, it is still a great way to see the world and meet and experience how the other half lives.

On returning to New Zealand, as shearing-fit as this 38-year-old Otago-bred shearer/builder can be, a timely return date coincided with my mate's merino flock start date in my old stomping ground of Tarras, Central Otago. After a few phone calls a gang is put together in the days prior which includes a couple of previous mainstay shearers and shed hands, including my local Canterbury mate and myself. Two other shearers from Central Otago and beyond makes up this season's four-stand Merivale shed, which is set in the beautiful Lindis Pass area of the South Island.

It is my mate's first go at working in a fully operational four-stand merino shed and with only two days prior experience on fine wool sheep it can be a daunting task as one gazes at a pen full of wrinklies. A new packet of fine wool combs is opened and it's "away you go, son!" The stay-out shed is under way; I throw my expectations away and settle into my usual "anything over 30 a run I'm happy with" mode. Because it's not about the numbers, not for me anyway. It's the peace and quiet of the high country sheep station. It's the hum of the shed in full swing with

the mean-as tunes pumping; it's the chat and banter in the catching pen on the hour and who cares what day we cut out? It's just another day.

I like this no-pressure environment where stress levels don't even register – a far cry from the fluoro coat and clipboard-lined streets of Christchurch. And I am asked what the hell I am doing back shearing with so much building work up there in the Garden city. My answer is simple. This is stress-free mate, I am my own boss and I'll work where I'm happy at a pace that suits me and my lifestyle. We are freelance shearers and shed staff, in an open shed making good dollar for a good job done.

Five o'clock comes, machines off and as usual Mr Scissor-hands Tony has his couple of hundred out; Kunta my mate does 70 on his first day and Val and myself are both somewhere in-between. The boss is happy, they're well shorn sheep out there, socks off front and back. A box of Speight's with the cocky and all on the board at day's end, then it's down to the Quarters for shower and tucker. This is the life, it's a good balance. It's good to be back and it's a shame there aren't more stay-out sheds around these days.

But it ain't over yet. The more things change, the more they stay the same. I think it's the people of our industry that draws you in. But it is also in the blood. God bless the old days and old ways. We are the travellers, the woolly travellers! Where's the next gig ...



# The Yes/No simple answer question!

By Tom Harding

It was a simple enough question: "Should Scotland be an independent country?"

The day had finally come when the Scottish National Party (SNP) had secured an independence referendum. The 18th of September 2014 could have gone down in history as the day England and Scotland finally parted company since uniting in 1707 to form the Kingdom of Great Britain.

The two sides, 'Yes Scotland' and 'Better Together', fought tooth-and-nail in a bloody battle for every last vote, in a campaign that energised political involvement to levels almost unprecedented in modern days.

Debate raged fiercely about issues such as what currency an independent Scotland would use, EU membership, public expenditure and about just how much oil was actually left under the North Sea.

'Yes Scotland' built a steadily rising momentum, and when on 6 September a YouGov poll put them ahead for the first time, the Prime Minister David Cameron and leaders of the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties wiped their diaries to head north.

A BBC journalist speaking on the Today programme put it bluntly: "Some in the media this morning are saying that the three main party leaders' actions could be interpreted as panic: let's be quite clear about this – it is panic – this is the real thing. They have finally woken up to the fact that in twelve days' time the union could be broken up forever."

The implications of this simple question were anything but simple: it would have meant a newly independent Scotland taking control of North Sea Oil tax revenues; the relocation of the UK's Trident nuclear submarine fleet; and carving up the NHS, Army and RAF like a CD collection in a messy divorce. It wasn't to be however, as on the day 55.3% of Scots said "No, Thanks", to borrow the political slogan of 'Better Together'.

Leaders of banks and large businesses breathed a big sigh of relief; regardless of their political persuasions, it meant that life went on as normal without fear of currency change, market turmoil or a new international border slicing through their client base.

Ian Hartley, CEO of the British Wool Marketing Board (BWMB), explained that they decided to wait to see the result of the referendum before making any plans regarding the future of the organisation.



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*Any country clever enough to design the Falkirk Wheel is probably clever enough to split ties with the rest of the United Kingdom and govern itself. But the people (and at least a couple of woolhandlers we know) voted against it.*

**"As agriculture had already been devolved to the Scottish Parliament and we already report to the Scottish Executive I think in the immediate future there would have been no change [for the BWMB]", he said.**

Scottish open woolhandler **Leanne Bertram** voted 'No' in the referendum: "I'm very proud to be a Scot but I'm also a proud Brit," she says. "Although the idea of an independent Scotland had its appeal, I felt there were too many unanswered questions regarding Scotland's future as an independent country. Things like currency, EU membership, passports and driving licences were all up in the air and the 'Yes' campaign wanted people to take a leap of faith and trust it would be OK in the event of a 'Yes' vote.

"Things like the health and education systems were also uncertain, I felt the future country for my children could be a very different one and not necessarily for the better, at least in the immediate future.

"I think many of the 'Yes' voters were swayed towards independence because we wouldn't be governed by Westminster any longer."

**George and Kirsty Donald** from Argyll, Open competitors in shearing and woolhandling respectively, also voted 'No'. They also both judge at shearing and woolhandling competitions, and George is a registered instructor.

"We both had in mind our industry, agriculture," they explain. "A separate Scotland would, by necessity spend time outside the EU until membership was renegotiated but all our subsidies are governed from the EU so where would the money come from?

"As a separate country Scotland would be subject to import/export tariffs that would impact on farm gate prices. Our wool industry is geared towards the BWMB's selling



strategy. Although wool is graded in Scotland it is marketed through Bradford so there would be a possibility for wool prices to drop with the knock-on effect of less money to the farmer so less to the shearer. It probably wouldn't make much difference to competitions but foreign shearers might have found that coming to Scotland just wouldn't pay enough to make it worthwhile.

"Much was made of the value and reserves of North Sea Oil but many well respected people in the industry spoke out about how inaccurate the 'Yes' supporters' figures were. It doesn't make sense either to put all the fiscal faith in one industry. Some of the policy promises that were made if the 'Yes' side won are already devolved to the Scottish government so why not implement them anyway?

"The world is becoming a global village and being on the fringes as a separate country would limit any say or influence in world affairs.

"When I was at school independence meant out there, on your own, but Scottish independence seemed conditional on being a member of the EU. All independence would do is cut out the middle man (Westminster)."

With so many unknowns (including those unknown unknowns, to quote Donald Rumsfeld), we will never know now exactly what the repercussions would have been had Scotland said 'Yes' on 18 September 2014. But, just as it is for Scots and businesses based in Scotland, for international shearers and woolhandlers who travel there to work, it will be life as normal next season.

## Two hundred years of sheep!

On-site celebrations at Oihi Bay (near Rangihoua, north-east of Kerikeri) planned for 21 and 25 December 2014 will mark the bi-centennial of Rev. Samuel Marsden's Christmas Day sermon to a Maori and Pakeha audience in 1814.

Generally regarded as the first christian service on New Zealand soil, Marsden's sermon on 25 December 1814 was delivered in English and (according to some sources) partly translated by Maori Chief Ruatara (Nga Puhi) for an audience of some 400 people. Historians note this occasion as a significant milestone in New Zealand's bi-cultural development, one that would eventually lead to the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840.

Ruatara, who had earlier worked on sealing boats and had, in 1809 sailed to England in hopes of meeting King George III (hopes that were not realised), met with Marsden during the course of his return travels. After spending time with Marsden in Australia, Ruatara (on his return to Rangihoua) was influential in developing relationships between his people, Marsden's missionaries and other European settlers.

That may be of no more than passing interest to magazine readers, but apart from his religious works, Marsden was first to establish a flock of sheep in New Zealand. Two previous attempts by Captain James Cook had failed when his woolly imports did not survive long enough to breed.

Marsden's venture, motivated partly at least by a need to feed his people, met with more success and saw him shipping



*Marsden Cross, Oihi Bay, Bay of Islands*

in merinos from New South Wales. "His sheep began New Zealand flocks, their shearing and wool export," Marie King records in *A Most Noble Anchorage* (NHPS Inc., 1992).

Some 21 years later, John Bell imported a flock of merinos to Mana Island for the purpose of feeding local whalers. And then, from the 1840s and 1850s, the likes of Charles Bidwill, Charles Clifford, Frederick Weld and others brought sheep in large numbers to the Wairarapa, Marlborough and other parts of New Zealand. The rest, as they say, is our history!

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# A call to (50,000 pairs of) arms

By Clive Dalton

By 10 years time, the Minister of Agriculture is demanding that 'agriculture' double its export earnings, for which he says, 50,000 new people will be needed to enter the industry at all levels. I wonder how he came up with 50,000?

It was probably aimed mainly at dairying, until the recent shock. Wool probably didn't figure in his calculations, as few would see more income from wool and, with declining sheep numbers, there surely couldn't be a doubling of quantity.

Beef and lamb could save the ship, but that's happened by chance after years of depressing returns. And nobody is talking long term prosperity from the hills and dairy support won't be the saviour of hill country farmers as in the past.

The way the world is changing, but nobody can predict what farming will be like in 2025. If we get foot and mouth disease (FMD), which could happen any day with increasing tourists and containers arriving, all animal exports would stop in the time it took for an email to reach our embassies around the world.

I assume the 50,000 are people who are established in the industry, and are happy in their work. What worries me is to get to that level, we'll have to train (at a guess) ten times that number, simply because of the pathetic retention rate of folk in all levels of farming, especially in dairying.

There's a host of reasons for this, the main one being employers and employment conditions. Sadly from what I read and hear from today's young folk on farms, things haven't changed since I was tutoring at The



*Symbolic of the future? Today's youngsters (50,000 of them?) will need to enter agriculture over the next decade in order to maintain our agricultural industries. Focus will remain on dairying while meat and wool (see that partly obscured white thing!) will probably remain somewhere in the background!*

Waikato Polytech 20 years ago.

Thank goodness we teaching providers got paid on the number of students starting courses, and not the number who completed their first year in employment when the big dropout seemed to occur! That first employer (and his wife/partner) were critical. So many students used to remind me that they had two bosses in the milking shed and in the house after work – who regularly couldn't agree on instructions!

I once asked a class of 20 dairy herd manager students what was the biggest deficiency on farms in spring? I was expecting 'pasture cover' to be the answer, but one lad rightly said it was 'sleep'! Some had worked for 100 days in spring without a day off.

The old AgITO and now the new PrimaryITO can quote numbers 'in training', which suits training providers as they are paid on numbers signed on – and never the number that completed the courses.

Farm training needs a good sort out, first of all, to stop the many different trainers offering courses in each other's back yards, and in my view

wasting public and learners' money. Classic proof of this nonsense was a piece in the farming press about new developments at Taratahi which said 'Taratahi seems to be everywhere these days. The residential campus is based near Masterton with non-residential campuses in Northland, Rodney, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Taranaki, Hawke's Bay, Manawatu, Wairarapa and Southland.' How stupid is that from the point of view of taxpayer's and learner's money.

The massive learning resources which could be shared by all providers and learners by using the Internet 'cloud' have not been exploited, when we know that with today's young generation with tablets in preschool, learning in small groups from an Internet interactive sources is much more effective than sitting in traditional classes, no matter how attractive the tutor is! They are great for social contact but not efficient learning.

Shearing and woolhandling has the big advantage that it's very much a 'hands-on' learning experience with much less background theory needed. But will this change in future with technology yet to be invented? Who would know? It could be very exciting so be ready for it and encourage and promote Internet learning at all levels.

But I suppose there's probably no need to worry about recruiting 50,000 Kiwis for the industry, as the way the world is going with increasing conflicts, there'll be no shortage of new immigrants, especially from the Middle East (where, at least they know sheep) who will fill the needs.

The Golden Shears could have some interesting range of Kiwi names taking top honours by 2025.

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From the “camera that was about to be thrown away” department. Doug Laing explains: *The technical details are – the battery connection was crapping out, I didn't know if it would shoot each time, the sun was shining across the board, I could hardly see the digital display, so I clicked a few times and put the effing camera away. I couldn't even get a pic of Dion separately, even though it was obvious he was going to win. Was planning to retire the camera and buy a new one but I got all emotional when I saw this photo and thought, 'if me horse had just won the Melbourne Cup, would I put it down?' In the best traditions of earlier successful campaigns such as “Free Bernie” (Toowoomba 2005) we plead: “Let the camera live, Doug!”*



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Southern hemisphere suntans  
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Like an elite troop of soldiers.

Waiting for the open class they sit  
dressing their combs - in pursuit of perfection, sanding  
sanding with fingers thickened by skilled labour,  
wearing head-strap magnifiers they shape  
each tooth - a micrometre less of metal  
a millisecond saved on the board,  
the thickness and shape of steel  
sliding through warm wool, slicing, slicing  
the difference between conquest and defeat.

Bang go the pen doors  
the machines whine  
the scent of hot sheep hangs in the air  
white faces gaze from between their thighs,  
bronze arms pump in the blows  
polished with sweat and sheep's grease.

Thirty six seconds  
and the first sheep  
slithers down the chute  
wiping out the Welsh  
sweeping aside the Scots  
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## Eric Onyon obituary

Cambridge-based shearer Eric Onyon has died at his home after a lengthy illness. He was 66 years-of-age. Eric confined his shearing mainly to the greater Waikato area and worked the sheds in conjunction with his farm, located on the slopes of Maungakawa Hill, near Cambridge. He worked open sheds with the likes of Jack Dowd and Doug Mienie in his early days, and in later years with Julian Stone, Pat McConnell, Dean Redman and Gerard Christensen.

Eric was also a leading exponent of judoka, having represented New Zealand in America. He won titles at both national and North Island championships. Eric also competed at Oceania level at a time when Cambridge (with Onyon, Mienie, Murray Scott and Rick Dawick all New Zealand representatives) was something of a stronghold in the sport.

Dean Redman says he once saw Eric putting his judo skills to good use in the shearing shed. "We were shearing big stroppy rams and it was as much as I could do to tip them over in the catching pen and drag them out. One tried to give Eric some trouble so he just used brute strength to pick it up, carry it out onto the board and settle it down as if to say, 'right, I'm the boss here!' He's probably the only shearer to use a judo move on a big ram!"

An Auckland University judo club newsletter available on-line contains a note from a friend who had visited Eric (a non-smoker) in 2012 to find him battling lung cancer. Eric had told him he'd shorn 300 a few days earlier and it hadn't been a problem as long as the sheep didn't struggle! The friend related how Eric always smelled of sheep during their many battles on the mat in the 1970s.

"Eric wasn't hanging around home, moping. While some of us may dream of dying with our judogi on, Eric told me he dreams of dying while shearing sheep, ha ha!"

Yep, that sounds like Eric Onyon, sheep shearer!



### It's a Sheep SheepWorld we live in, Master Jack!

Above: the blokes and dogs who entertain the crowds at SheepWorld, north of Warkworth, just about every day of every week. From left: Cocoa, Rob Allen (with Jack), Boy, John Green and Sam, doing the nuzzling on the right. Rob Allen is from England and came to New Zealand 12 years ago to learn to shear sheep. He attended a Tectra course run by Dean Te Huia, and has been working at SheepWorld for more than a decade.

John (the Kiwi) went to Western Australia in 1987 and learned to shear there while working for Bill Bailey at Ongerup, after a stint of rousieing and pressing. John also attended a couple of courses when he returned home in the early 1990s, having his skills honed by Broadwood-based [Northland] instructor, Tony Clutterbuck.

Rob and John do two shows a day, many of them for overseas audiences and tourists. The day *Shearing* called in they had just completed a session with a group of Japanese and German students from Kristin Senior School at Albany.



Kristin's International Services co-ordinator Cindy Tong (pictured above, front left above with Rob, John and part of the group) says she has been bringing groups of overseas students to SheepWorld for more than 10 years. For most it's their first introduction to New Zealand's rural culture, where they see the dogs working and sheep being shorn by skilful wielders of the handpiece. They get to touch the sheep and the wool in a real "hands-on" experience.

Behind the venture is another Englishman, John Collyer, who came to New Zealand in 2000 and took over the business in 2004. With his own up-bringing on an English sheep farm, and later work in tourism, John says the SheepWorld enterprise is able to combine both elements of that background quite nicely.

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Here we have the Bruce Marshall gang from Middelmarsh, photographed at Springburn Station in August. Sorry we didn't get the names in right order, but somewhere in there you'll find Angus Russell, Simon Armishaw, Braughton Taiwhanga, Mitchell Murray, Rob Taylor, Eddie Laxon, Lou Hakiwai, Rawiri Scia Scia, Kehoma Hokianga, Hoera Eriha, Mihima Wanoa, Holly White, Angela Hiriwini, Kaylarni Kuti, Annie Tisdale, Lara Hokianga, Connise Tareha, Dardie Pakai, Lauren McDougall, Lucan Tipene, Mahi Jackson, Wiremu Hokianga, Jonson Howell and Nate Hulme. Photographer Llana Williamson reports her Dad, Tom Bryant has been wool classer at the shed for 15 years. Getting through this season was particularly satisfying because of Tom's recent ill-health. *Kia kaha Tom!*

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- No hospital
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# Things that bite

By Roger Leslie

There are pests that bite and pests that fly. I have shorn in places where my only recollection is the flies, and while flies might be annoying, they are limited to that. Annoyance.

They might be proverbially associated with ointments and soups, and blamed for the spread of disease, and be militant unionists, in that they strike at a moment's notice, but they are relatively harmless.

There's something far worse, pests that fly and bite!

Now take the mosquito. They are in a class of their own. They have helped shape the world and at times protected it from being shaped. More than one conquering army went home defeated by them. To quote the poet:

*'Twas not by bullet, bow or spear, or military might,  
but by that tiny insect that, came whining in the night.*

I was never bitten by mosquitoes while shearing in New Zealand. Some sandflies, yes, and the odd cantankerous ram, and even once by a particularly excitable rousie, but not mossies. I was therefore unprepared for the German mosquitoes, or 'mücken', as they call them (although this generally covers all flying insects that bite).

As many sheep in Germany are found near water, so too are the mücken, or that's where they find you! I have seen sheep tipped over to be shorn and a black, humming cloud rising from the bare skin of their briskets and legs. This malevolent cloud, seemingly unhappy at being disturbed, proceeded to take it out on the one person who had both his hands busy and couldn't defend himself. Once while shearing in a moor, I was so badly bitten during the day I became light headed and had blurred vision and a buzzing in my ears that wasn't of external source.

I found the best way to keep them from landing on me was to forget all I'd learned of the smooth shearing action as this is too predictable. I developed instead, a jerky style with quick indecisive movements, arm flapping and even (in desperate circumstances) maniacal laughter. If you've ever seen me shearing like that, you'll know why.

I've never heard of anyone being sucked completely dry by mücken but as my head wool classer is allergic to them and swells up at the very passing of one, I have to take them seriously. There's nothing like the high pitched whine in the night to ruin a perfectly good sleep. Light on, window closed and sealed, and the offending intruder hunted down and destroyed. I often wondered if histamine comes from the same root word as hysteria.

Europe has sandflies too but unlike our Fiordland variety, they are so small you can hardly see them. But oh, you can feel them. With most of these you can usually keep from the sharp end by constant movement. Like carrier-based aircraft, they seem to need favourable landing conditions.

There is a time when the advantage is all theirs and that's when one needs to go about one's toilet business in the wild. As this situation requires a certain amount of stillness (and bareness) it is much to the liking of the mücken. No matter how efficient you are, by the time you have your sensitive bits covered again, your once baby-smooth bottom looks like the surface of the moon. If, as sometimes happens, shearing in these areas coincides with a bout of diarrhoea your situation can become quite desperate.



The sign says "Look out – Nature" Say no more!

I have discovered by experimentation that you can't outrun the menace. They have troops everywhere, and extremely efficient lines of communication.

I can't leave this subject without a mention of the bremsen (brakes or horseflies). These are shaped like a large blow fly but have a bite like pygmy blow-pipe. They have no inhibitions or apparent concern for danger or moving targets. They come straight in and bite as they land. If the mosquito is compared with a carrier aircraft, the bremsen is like a drone, impervious, quiet and deadly. They can bite through a thick tee shirt and laugh at most insect repellents. You can never really enjoy shearing in the company of bremsen. You just want to get the job done and get out of there.

While Germany may have mücken, they are nothing compared to lands like Finland. I was once there for a brief visit and arrived on a mid-summer day. This also as it turned out was the first nice Summer day they had had that year. I had heard of the famous Finnish mosquito but saw none, just a clear blue sky that went on all night. I mentioned this to the hotel manager and she said "Ah yes, the mosquitos. Today is the first day of Summer. Tomorrow they will come!"

And they did!





# Jackie Howe festival 2014

*By Bernie Walker*

By setting fastest time and achieving best board and pen scores, Daniel McIntyre from Glen Innes, NSW, comfortably won the 2014 Jackie Howe Festival of the Golden Shears open shearing title at the Jondaryan Woolshed Heritage Festival on 29-31 August. Scores this year were – Daniel 56.91, Jovan Taiki 60.85, Evo Hennessy 63.16 and Dan Marz 66.60.

McIntyre also won the inaugural event in 2012, but was relegated to second place in 2013 by Tasmanian Rob Glover. Unfortunately Glover was unable to defend his title. He'd hit a patch of black ice in his vehicle early in June which caused him to crash and resulted in a broken leg. When his Dad came looking for him, he too hit black ice, wrecking his vehicle and receiving a broken vertebrae in his neck. Both are now well again and Rob had hoped to be fit for Jondaryan, but with a 35cm steel pin still in his leg, he was unable to compete.

In the woolhandling championship, Sophie Cameron of Woorndoo, Victoria, with 33.49 points, retained the title she won in 2013, defeating Michaela Laneyrie, NSW, 37.93, Raelene Bowden, Longreach, Qld, 45.69 and Luke Rowbottom, Mortlake, Vic, 52.63.

Blessed with perfect weather over the three days of the Festival, more than 500 caravans and campervans were on-site from early the previous week. Many of the campers, some in period costume, became volunteers assisting with the activities during the weekend. A large group of students from nearby Pittsworth and Oakey attended a woolhandling workshop on Friday, with some returning on Saturday to put new-found skills into practice during the shearing and woolhandling competitions. The Grand Banquet and fashion parade on Friday was a well-attended highlight featuring local district and Toowoomba models.

Officially opened on Friday evening was the impressive new café/restaurant adjoining the Woolshed. As well as serving the general public and visitors, it will also provide the kitchen facility catering for the many functions, including wedding receptions, regularly held in the grand old Woolshed.

Some 9500 people attended the Festival to see the many

fascinating vintage displays and exhibitions, which ranged from blacksmithing and whip making (and cracking) to utility dog trials, as well as woodwork and photography.

Really interesting working displays included a steam driven thresher, an operating sawmill and a collection of old engines and scale windmills. There was also a Grand Parade of vintage machinery, tractors and vehicles. About 45 trade displays were on site. A colourful highlight of the Festival again this year was the precision riding demonstration on the arena by members of the Toowoomba Trail Ride Club with their flags and uniforms.



*Top: Daniel McIntyre on the way to his second win at the Jondaryn Jackie Howe Festival. Above from left: woolhandlers Sophie Cameron, Michaela Laneyrie, Raelene Bowden and Luke Rowbottom.*

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# Career paths in the industry ...

By Gabriela Schmidt-Morrell

Is the shearing industry your choice of career or did you end up working in the sheds by default? Do you feel stuck and stagnant with no exciting career opportunities in sight because shearing/woolhandling is all you know? And wondering about whereto from here?

Consider these few career paths the shearing industry may give you:

Become an all-rounder: learn to press, pen-up, woolhandle, crutch, shear, cook, grade wool. If you become reasonably handy at all these skills, you are making yourself very attractive to any shearing contractor. You will get work any time of the year.

Start as a cross-bred shearer, then learn how to shear Half-bred, Quarter-bred, Merinos. With those skills you can shear anywhere in the world, travel and earn good money at the same time.

Start as a cross-bred shearer and enter the competition shearing circuit. Learn to be fast and clean by moving around the country and become well known within the industry. The faster you are, the better work you will get, the higher your profile and your income will be.

Be a highly skilled shearer or woolhandler and become an in-shed instructor with one of the training organisations.

Be a top woolhandler, then learn how to grade, then become a wool classer, possibly going on to be a wool buyer or wool adviser.

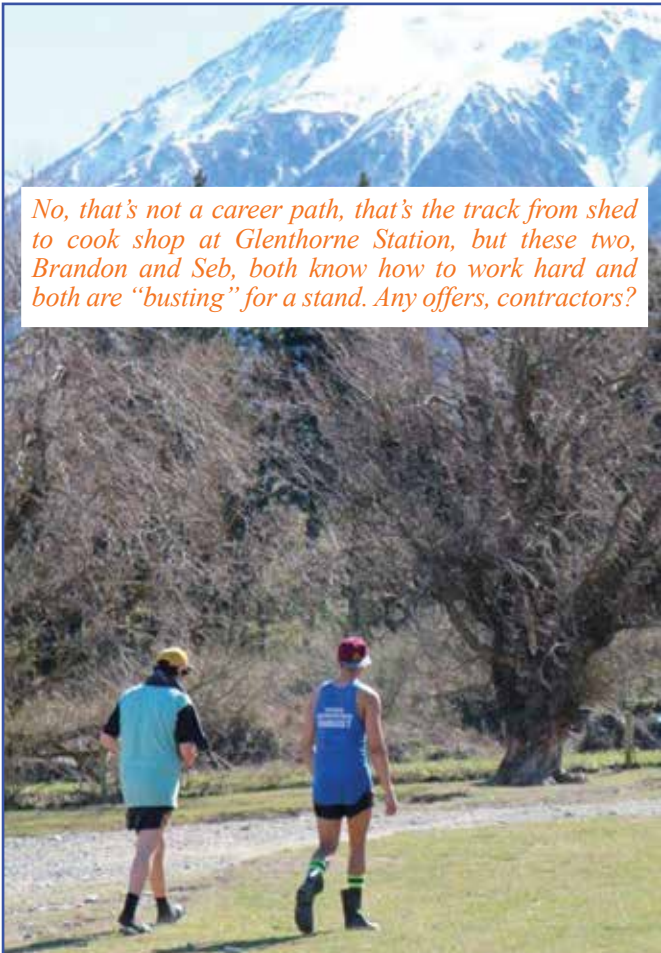
Commit to one shearing business over a few years, become more involved and start in a managerial role or part owner of the business.

Commit to an area, do a business course, then start or buy your own shearing contracting business.

How do you get there? Be reliable, keen, open minded, drug free, constantly up-skilling, learning, have a full license, communicate, talk to people that are doing what

you want to do, ask questions, read, do courses, save money, work hard. In my opinion, if you manage to be substance free, everything else will follow.

Just contact your local training provider or contractor for course advice and to help identify your desired pathway.



*No, that's not a career path, that's the track from shed to cook shop at Glenthorne Station, but these two, Brandon and Seb, both know how to work hard and both are "busting" for a stand. Any offers, contractors?*

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**GET THE EDGE, MAKE THE CUT**



## Short story in a book

By Des Williams

Chances are, at some time over the past decade or so you have bought something on Trademe. You spy an item that you need (or just want!) and put in a bid, or perhaps you add it to your watchlist and wait until nearer the closing date. You might gauge wider interest in the item meantime by checking on the number of views.

So, unless there's a "buy now" option you wait, patiently. Then you get notice of your successful bid and, in the days before it arrives, you wonder if it will be as good as it sounded, will it be a bit tattier than the auction photo or ... even, did I really want this thing?

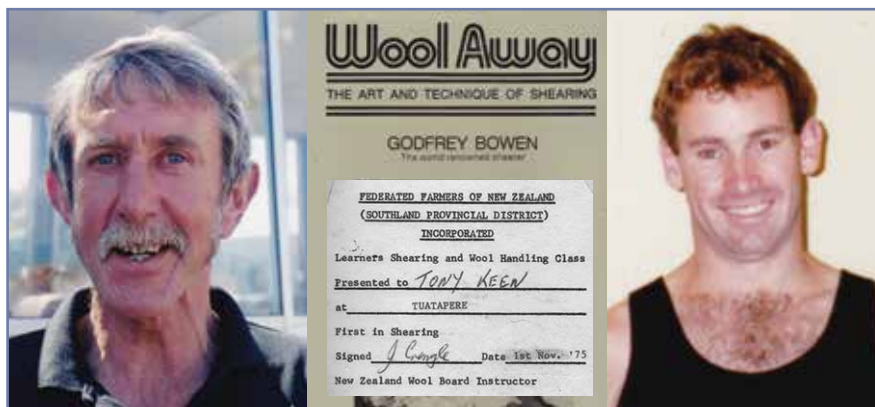
An item came up recently that this writer thought would be worth having – a copy of the famous Godfrey Bowen shearing instruction book, *Wool Away*. (He's already got two copies, including one signed by the man himself, but sometimes people from overseas call up and ask if you could find a copy for them. "Yep, should be able to, mate – just give us a couple of weeks!")

It is clear from the dust jacket photo that the book on offer is not a first edition [that featured a brown cover – this copy is green], but it does look in very good nick. In fact it arrives at Box 102 in what could be said very close to pristine condition.

Then you open up the item for a closer examination, and that's where the interest in this book suddenly ramps up. There's an inscription inside. The book was presented as a prize for "first in shearing" at a New Zealand Wool Board course held at Tuatapere (the old home town!) on 1 November 1975. Signed by one "J Crengle, New Zealand Wool Board instructor". The recipient, however, a bloke named Tony Keen, is a name unfamiliar to the editor of *Shearing* mag.

So where has this book been for the past 40 years? Presented at Tuatapere in 1975, bought from a Motueka vendor in 2014. Hasn't spent any time in a greasy woolshed in the years between. So what can we find out? (It's called investigative journalism!)

A phone call to Jeff Crengle (a legend down there in the South) – yes, he remembers the course very well. A young fellow named Edsel Forde was also at the course – might have shorn



*The tutor (JJ Crengle), the book, the inscription and the learner who went on to win the Golden Shears open and represent his country many times (Edsel Forde).*

his first sheep there. The bloke Keen too left a lasting impression – he'd clearly done some shearing prior to attending the course ("In fact he knew quite a lot, actually, but didn't improve much between Monday and Friday," says Mr Crengle, meaningfully!)

The course was held at Goldie Davidson's property in the Lillburn Valley, Mr Crengle recalls, the first of several held at that venue. "In fact, I've probably still got the book recording the names of everyone on the course. I'll look for it, and get back to you!"

Impatiently, you jump the gun with a phone call to Edsel Forde, now living in the Waikato. Yes, he attended the course at Goldie Davidson's and remembers taking young Mark Kollat to the shed from his home on the outskirts of Tuatapere. There was a woman on the course, too ...

And then, a couple of days later as promised, Mr Crengle ("JJ") calls back. As befitting a New Zealand Wool Board shearing instructor, his record-keeping is at an exemplary level, as is his ability to find a 40-year-old notebook. The names he has recorded are James Harland, Anthony Keen, Barbara McLean, Mark Kollat, Rowland Broughton, Garry Mainland, Trewyn Wallis and Edsel Forde.

So where are they now, and did they prosper from the tuition of Mr Crengle,

### Two steps toward a healthier body

1. Drink more water. 2. Eat less crap.

From *Run Fat Bitch Run* by Ruth Field. (Little, Brown, 2012)

New Zealand Wool Board instructor? "Most of them probably saw the light early and went on to other careers," Edsel Forde had suggested, somewhat prophetically, during our discussion.

We discover that Mark Kollat lived at Tuatapere most of his life, driving land development machinery until his death in 2007 at the early age of 47. He didn't spend much, if any, time as a shearer after attending the course.

Long-time Lillburn Valley farmer Brian Hampton recalls visiting the shed while the course was in progress and remembers his near-neighbour, Rowland Broughton was one of those receiving tuition. Mr Hampton reports Broughton has lived and worked on the family farm all these years since and has not shorn sheep for a career.

Garry Mainland (Makarewa) is now a stock buyer for Silver Fern Farms, having undertaken a variety of rural-related work in his career – but not shearing. (We're not doing too well so far, Mr Crengle, though Garry's son Kelvin is a most accomplished shearer, so all was not lost there!)

Of the others – Harland, McLean, Wallis and Keen – we've been unable to trace. But if every Wool Board course involving eight learners produced just one Edsel Forde from its midst, Mr Crengle could rightfully claim to have upheld Godfrey Bowen's legacy. Even allowing that he didn't quite recognise the talent back then, having rated Keen the best shearer and Trewyn Wallis as "most promising".

After all, so the story goes, even Edsel's Dad all those years ago had famously told him he'd never make a shearer!



## Trainers, training and trained, 1954-2014





## Trainers, training and trained, 1954-2014





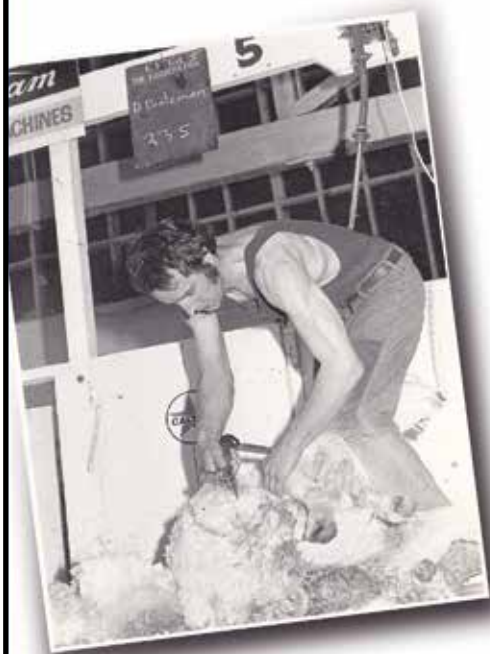


From the NZ Merino Shears, top left: Three pig hunters dropped in for a look on Saturday afternoon. Someone said it was the Maniototo Maggots rugby team front row, but the bearded one claimed to be the Heiniger rep for Patearoa. We've sent the photo to Police Seven for positive identification. Bottom left – we know these three – Amy Ruki, Elsie Lyon and Creedence Culshaw. Right: senior shearer M Anderson gets his second cuts counted by judge Tony Michelle.

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# Shearing the health care

## Redpath Communications

Shearers, rousies, pressers and sheepos who rarely see a doctor have access to more health care, now Turanga Health is working alongside them.

As part of the Tū Mahi Workplace Wellness programme Turanga Health is targeting primary industries. Turanga Health staff have stepped into woolsheds around the district and the first contractors to be involved, Kevin and Donna Williams from K Williams Shearing, couldn't be happier.

"The fact that they bring the service to us is amazing," says Donna Williams. She and husband Kevin had always had concerns that shearers and other crew members seemed reluctant to take days off to see a doctor when they were unwell. "It's seasonal work and they make good money so they don't want to take days off when they are sick."

Turanga Health first met the K Williams Shearing crew back in June when Dallas Poi and Karen Staples donned gumboots and visited a farm-

ers' woolshed in Muriwai. When they called in the crew was taking their first break of the day, perched on pressed bales drinking tea and refuelling for the next run.



*Errol Kapene from K Williams Shearing receives a health check from Turanga Health Kaiawhina, Geraldine Nepe.*

tion actually cared; cared so much that they brought the service to them. "They really enjoyed having the conversation about their health. It was something that hadn't happened for some."

Turanga Health staff discovered one tāne who had not been to a doctor in over 30 years. Staff have begun a process on his behalf to track down his notes and help re-engage him with primary health care. Ten out of the 15 staff seen are smokers and they have been referred to smoking cessation services.

Dallas said there was an opportunity to talk to some staff about the importance of taking their blood pressure pills, managing their arthritis, and quitting smoking. "We always knew that shearing crews were probably filled with whānau we could help and our experience with the Williams' business confirmed that."

Kevin and Donna say investing in their staff is investing in their future as well. "It is not enough to just give someone a job. As employers we have a responsibility to

make sure that they are OK.

"Health and wellbeing, industry education, and making sure they know the options available to them during down-time – it's all part of being a good employer."

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Dallas said she and Karen introduced themselves and described what the service could offer including a basic health check and advice. Two weeks later Turanga Health joined that crew, and other shearing staff, back at the Williams' home on Nelson Road. The Piki te Ora Bus was parked up. Geraldine Nepe and Lou Kemp worked out of the Williams' staff room and kitchen taking basic measurements like blood pressure, height and weight; and Lisa Cottle, Laura Pepere and Karen Staples worked out of the bus managing the clinical side of the health check.

Fifteen shearing staff took part and the feedback according to Donna was positive and loud! "When they came out of the bus they were buzzing. We had one staff member who stood in the doorway after her health check and shouted 'that was the shiz, seriously that was the shiz!'"

Donna says the shearing staff felt for the first time that a medical organisa-

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# Norm Blackwell obituary

By Des Williams

Norman (Norm) Blackwell, Golden Shears Open champion for 1974 and 1975, died at Whangarei on 18 October 2014, having earlier this year marked the milestone of his 70th birthday.

Known as a worker of limitless energy and strength for the first 49 years of his life, Norm spent the last 21 years a tetraplegic, paralysed and in a wheelchair. The mishap so cruel, and to one so undeserving, happened when Norm, having been sent home from hospital following surgery, slipped, fell and broke his neck. He is survived by Shirley, his wife of 49 years, and their grown children, Gary, Shannon, Cherie and Adam.

If winning the Golden Shears open championship in successive years was not enough to cement Blackwell's name in the everlasting Shearing Hall of Fame, Norm's later claim that he "fluked" both victories certainly did it, for this writer at least. That, plus the fact he didn't know what a second cut was until he went to Golden Shears for the first time in 1973. He was then 29 years of age and had been a career shearer for more than a decade.

The conversation revealing these facts came during an interview for *Last Side to Glory*, a 30th anniversary review of the Golden Shears open championship, published in 1991.

"Norm – tell me about your win at Masterton in 1974."



*Norman Blackwell 1944-2014*

'Oh, that was just a fluke.'

"Okay, what about 1975?"

'Yeah, that was just a fluke, too!'

At about the same time, and in the same book, three-times open champion and 1977 world champion Roger Cox analysed Norm's contention. Roger suggested that it was possible to eliminate half the competitors who made it through to the quarter finals (top 30) just by looking at their records.

"You can see the guys that have fluked their way through. There are not many flukies still there by the time you get down to the last twelve." (And none in the top six, Mr Cox agreed.)

Norm spent his first few years on Great Barrier Island. His father and grandfather before him had both been born on the island, and they owned a 700-acre sheep farm. As well, they supplemented the farm income with some semi-commercial cray-fishing.

The land was never able to be farmed properly, Norm explained, because there was no such thing as top dressing to assist pasture improvement. Nor was there any power or motor vehicles.

"It was all danthonia, and every year they used to burn it off – match box farming, it was called. It also helped to clean up a few fences!"

The family left the island when Norm was just six years old, because of the onset of an illness which eventually claimed his mother's life. (To page 25.)



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While those first six years had been spent very much in the same place, the next few were to be the exact opposite: "I got shifted around to all the aunts and grandparents and I think I went to about fourteen different schools in my career. I was shifted all over Auckland and ended up at Otahuhu College."

Norm was at school with some 'really famous' people – Mac Herewini, Waka Nathan and Roy Christian all came to mind, as well as a big fella named David Lange.

For three years after leaving school, Norm worked on a fat lamb property at Karaka, and started thinking about the prospect of some day buying his own farm. His boss, who had done some shearing, was the first to raise that spark of interest in the mind of the youngster. While there, he met Ian Laing and Barry Kidd, who came to do the shearing.

Then, as Barry's other commitments grew, Laing would sometimes have need of another shearing partner and Norm's boss was happy for him on occasions to go and 'hold up a stand'. By the time he got to be shearing 150 a day, Norm realised there might be a faster way toward owning a farm than just working on someone else's.

By the time he was 21, Norm had bought a small farmlet at Riverhead, north of Auckland, and he used that as a working base. Then followed a succession of strategic moves onto bigger or better properties before, in 1979, finding the ideal place, at Parua Bay near Whangarei. Getting there was not achieved without calling heavily on the determination and strength, both mental and physical, for which Norm had meantime become known in the shearing sheds.

The story of Norm's first experience at the Golden Shears is almost as interesting as the second and third, when he actually won the Open: "I went down there in 1973 with one handpiece, one comb and one cutter. I just went down there to shear five sheep and then come home again."

He got through the heats and quarter-finals with his two bits of metal and found himself in the last twelve. Northland friends Brian Waterson and Merv Bayer then decided Norm's gear needed a touch up and they disappeared out to a distant shed where they'd last used a grinder.

"The time came for the semifinals and I was still standing there with my unloaded handpiece. The guys hadn't got back, something had happened to hold them up, the call had gone out for the shearers to appear and the other five were already up on the stage. I was tearing up and down, trying to borrow a comb and cutter from someone – anyone! Nobody believed I could have got to the semifinals and had no gear to use!" Despite that, he ended up next into the final.



Norm Blackwell (centre) with 1975-76 trans-Tasman test series team mates, Roger Cox and Kerry Johnstone. Norm shore with Don Morrison and Eddie Reidy in the 1974-75 home and away series at Euroa and Masterton and won three of the four contests in which he was involved.

The next year was 1974 and Norm said he was 100% better prepared. "I took two combs and two cutters." And while fluking his way to the coveted purple ribbon, he won the YFC final and the invitation lamb shear for good measure.

According to the observer who reported the event for the *Dominion* newspaper, it was actually the qualities of speed and staying power which enabled the 30-year-old farmer from Wellsford, to win the Open. "*Blackwell's achievement is all the more notable because he led throughout the event: He finished only half a minute and half a point ahead of Ray Alabaster of Taihape.*"

The following year, Norm shore his way through 51 competition sheep in three events on Saturday night – in the test match against Australia, the open final and the invitation lamb shear. So busy had he been, concentrating on his farming responsibilities, that he wasn't going to enter the Golden Shears open, though he was committed to shearing for New Zealand against Australia, having won his way into the team the previous season. Fortunately, Norm lodged a late entry for the Open.

"I shore in the test, in the open final and the invitation lamb shear, all within an hour. I was first off in all three events, so I was able to give myself a bit of time to rest between each. One thing about it, I didn't have time to get nervous!"

Norm served as a New Zealand Wool Board instructor for ten years or more, organising three or four schools a year – not only 'out on the farm' (including his own farm), but also in the cities and schools.

Lynne Rosandich says she once heard the persuasive instructor convince a city audience that the plastic ear tag on the sheep he was shearing was in fact a hearing aid. That was so the sheep would be able to hear the farmer calling them, come muster time!

And sadly, muster time has come for Norm Blackwell, a champion at just about everything he did. About five years ago Norm had struggled with pen and paper until he'd completed the task of (successfully) nominating his wife, Shirley, for a Television One "Good Sorts" Award. He reckoned she deserved some recognition after all those years of caring for him, as well as running the farm and working as a volunteer at Whangarei Hospital.

Clearly, it takes more than a couple of decades in a wheelchair to diminish the strength of mind and purpose of a true blue, two-times Golden Shears open champion (an exclusive club where no flukies are allowed).

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## Book Review

Leading Australian shearing historian Bernie Walker has produced a comprehensive history of the Australian Golden Shears – a competition that survived for a decade despite Union interference at every step of the way.

From 1974 to 1984, straddling the height of the wide comb dispute, the Trans-Tasman rivals battled bi-annually on the boards of Euroa and Masterton, in competitions that really were a test for the best!

Though 30 years have passed since 1984, Bernie Walker has recreated this fascinating saga in fine detail, relying on meticulously kept records of events that bring them all to life once again.

If you lived through these turbulent times, Bernie's account will have you nodding your head as you recall the drama of it all. If you're under 45-year-of-age you will read and shake your head at some of the bullshit behaviour that supposedly grown and educated men could exhibit.

It is a comprehensive resume of the period between 1974 and 1984 when Golden Shears became established in the small country town of Euroa until competition with New Zealand was banned. The book comprises 294 pages containing 330 photos and includes full results and judges lists. Also included are some 18 poems and ballads, mostly written by Bernie, including a number not previously published.

Such was the success and popularity of the Shears, it was said one couldn't buy a beer, a bed or a meal in town that weekend. But behind the scenes, there was anxiety and frustration, big challenges and triumph, culminating in shattering disappointment.



Read of these triumphs and disappointments, the humour and the characters, and the struggle to establish the bi-annual Shears despite Union opposition. The wide comb dispute, the rise and demise of the ambitious Seven Creeks Run project and how Golden Shears World Council was formed in Euroa are among the subjects covered.

Meet the great shearers of the era, true champions of their profession, enjoy amusing anecdotes and stories of key figures as they quickly built a bridge of friendship, understanding and keen rivalry across the Tasman. Bernie Walker advises that his book 'A Test for the Best', the history of Golden Shears in Australia is at the printers and will be available in New Zealand at Golden Shears 2015 and from The Woolshed, Dixon Street, Masterton, or direct from the author (PO Box 191, Euroa, Vic, Australia, 3666). Details of actual price are yet to be established. *(Des Williams)*

## SOUTHERN SHEARS

### 50th Anniversary Gala Dinner

Thursday 19th February 2015  
Heartland Hotel, Croydon –  
100 Waimea Street, Croydon,  
Gore

The Southern Shears Committee is pleased to be celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Southern Shears. To commemorate this event, the Committee will hold a Gala Dinner at the Heartland Hotel, Croydon on Thursday 19th February 2015.

Tickets will be \$60.00 per person which includes a drink on arrival, buffet dinner, entertainment and guest speaker. The evening will be hosted by Jamie Mackay.

Pre-dinner drinks commence at 6 pm and we ask guests to be seated by 6.45 pm for a 7.00 pm start. Tickets are strictly limited and can be purchased from our website or by sending a cheque to the Southern Shears Committee, PO Box 166 Gore, 9740.

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# Heiniger

## News 4 Ewes



### Welcome Kevin

Heiniger would like to welcome Kevin Thirkell to the Heiniger Team. Kevin has been recently appointed as the local Territory Sales Manager for the Upper North Island; from Napier to Whangarei.

Kevin comes to Heiniger with a wealth of industry experience having been a professional shearer as well as a commercial sales person. He has spent 8 years shearing and presenting in the AgriDome in New Zealand as well as in Japan.

Kevin has a great understanding of the New Zealand and global shearing, farming and rural merchant industries. For any local enquires contact Kevin Thirkell on 027 252 8484.



### Are you ready to do Battle?

Heiniger was excited to release the KOMBAT comb in October.

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### Do you want to see a Heiniger rep?

Our Heiniger Team pride themselves on customer service. Our Territory Sales Managers (TSM) are out in the sheds doing the business. With a focus on field work, our TSMs are actively conducting product demonstrations and trialling. If you would like a TSM to visit you, please give your local TSM a call:

**Upper North Island**  
Kevin Thirkell - 027 252 8484

**Lower North Island**  
Tony Hoggard - 027 252 8585

**Upper South Island**  
Geoff Holmes - 027 252 8787

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This can only be achieved when the tension is off the handpiece so that there is space between the cup and the post for the oil to fill to. Handpiece should be tipped upside down to enable fork to drop away from centre post. Without constant lubrication between the post and cup, steel to steel contact will cause excessive friction which will lead to heat and premature wear. In addition handpiece will cut incorrectly and vibrate.

**\*\*Note this can happen to any handpiece with lack of lubrication. Save yourself time and money and use this oiling procedure every time you change your cutter or comb.**

For more information or to offer any feedback, please give us a call on 03 349 8282 or email: [mail@heiniger.co.nz](mailto:mail@heiniger.co.nz)

## Battle of the Guns - SCFA Reunion

On 4 October, 2014 a reunion of Shearing Competition Federation of Australia (SCFA) shearers was conducted at "The Dag", a tourist sheep station in the foothills of Nundle, NSW, Australia. Some 230 people attended from various states across Australia including Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

Event co-ordinator Cameron Griffiths said the event was a huge success in a very sociable and electric atmosphere, very well supported by an enthusiastic crowd.

"This has been a unique and historical gathering of some of the greatest shearers this country has ever seen and is the first time a reunion of this nature has been organised. Some were catching up with people they hadn't seen for 30 years," Cameron Griffiths said.

"The SCFA was the first official organisation to conduct shearing competitions in Australia, beginning in the 1950s and finishing in approx. 2000. SCFA competitions were run with a set time for the required sheep to be shorn (time set by the judges) and were judged to a very stringent and heavy judging system focusing on high quality shearing. For every second over the set time a shearer was penalised one point per second so it was crucial to use up all your time to do the best possible job without going overtime."

Cameron Griffiths said an invitation shearing event called the Battle of the Guns was run on the day in the historic, 10-stand shearing shed (originally part of Wombramurra Station), with shearers being invited who were past State, National and Diamond Shears Champions.

"Some high profile shearers could not make the event due to other commitments so a few shearers were granted a Wild Card Invite to fill the field. The invitation shear was run with two categories, with a field of 12 in the Over 60s and 18 shearers taking part in the Under 60s. We also had an event for local shearers. Shearers were competing for Belt Buckles imported from Montana, USA, with all finalists receiving one due to the great sponsorship raised by John and Belinda Krsulja, owners of The Dag."

"After the shearing events were concluded the SCFA reunion commenced in the Mess Hall with a real buzz in the air with a lot of sheep being shorn at the bar. A book was also compiled as part of the reunion, being called "Legends of the Board", with shearers and judges sending in their



*Over 60s, from left: Paddy Kavanagh, VIC; David (Daffy) Ryan, QLD; Bob Stewart, NSW; Terry Byrnes, NSW; Gill Wenke, QLD; Neil Lett, VIC.*



*Under 60s, back left: Andrew Croxon, NSW; Cameron Griffiths, QLD; Danny Hunt, SA; Ian Elkins, ACT; Brian Sullivan, NSW; Michael Mephram, NSW. Front left: Daryl Andriske, SA; Anthony Selmes, NSW; Greg Drew, WA.*

profile and photo as well as items of interest in the back of the book. A couple of items in the back of the book that are of great interest are the Australian Open Champions from 1953-2000 and the winners of the prestigious Diamond Shears, Longreach, QLD from 1980-2000.

"The praise, gratitude and response was overwhelming from the people who travelled near and far and they all need to be congratulated for making the huge effort to attend this great event," Cameron Griffiths said.

(And there's a book to go with it – see page 35.)

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Cameron Hicks won the second UK Southern Shears open final at Faygate, West Sussex, in July 2014, beating fellow Kiwi Dean Herlihy in a close contest.



A photo from down Memory Lane – or 1963, to be exact. These are the six men who shored before Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II in the Royal Invitation Open event at Fraser Park, Lower Hutt in February of that year. It was described as a “Special Golden Shears” arranged to coincide with the Queen’s visit (she wasn’t going to be in the country a couple of weeks later when the “real” Goldies would be happening at Masterton, as usual). The Royal invitees were the Golden Shears open finalists from 1962 – pictured from left: Colin Boshier, Stewart Symon, Bing Macdonald, Kevin Sarre, Allan Williamson and Joe Ferguson.

The event, and the presentations that followed led to winner Williamson earning the extra distinction of being “the only man in the world ever to keep the Queen waiting.” When Boshier and Williamson left the board to go and wipe down their sweaty bodies in a nearby tent, they were caught short getting back into the presentation area, as the late Allan Williamson recalled in *Last Side to Glory*. The crowd had gathered around, several lines deep and it wasn’t until Boshier gave Allan a mighty push from behind that he was able to break through the throng to line up and receive his prize.

As Murray McSkimming would reveal many years later, the Queen then informed Williamson of his newly-earned status – the only man to keep her waiting. [We-thinks the sometime rascally Prince Phillip may have got himself added to the list in the years since, but that can only ever be conjecture on our part and we wouldn’t want to be quoted to that effect in high places!]

For the record, placings in the Royal Invitation were Williamson (83.15 points); Symon 82.40; Macdonald 81.90; Boshier 78.25; Ferguson 74.68 and Sarre 68.30.

The Fraser Park event is the only “Golden Shears” to be held away from Masterton’s War Memorial Stadium. (Joe Ferguson photo collection)



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# Kyle Balme - living with Autism

By Des Williams

Kyle Balme is a country boy, of that there is no doubt. The light that shines in his eyes and face when he's in the shearing shed with Dad couldn't be replicated by any experience he might gain in the big city.

He's a north King Country farm boy, 11-years-of-age and of slender build wearing his Westline shearing jeans. Whenever hopping into a vehicle to go somewhere he makes sure Dad has with him the orange toolbox containing shearing gear (handpiece, combs, cutters, moccas). He's always hopeful the contents of the box are going to be used somewhere on that particular journey.

Kyle loves animals of all sorts – the family cats get their fair share of attention. The farm dogs stand on parade in their kennels when Kyle walks from the farm house to the shearing shed and he has greetings for them all.

There's a coop full of chooks, too, in the back yard. Kyle can let them out to enjoy roaming the yard for a while, then he gets them all back home and locked up. This he does with the assurance of a Waikato dairy herd manager or a South Island high country musterer. The chook round-up exercise may be repeated several times a day.

There's always fencing to be done on a King Country hill farm and Kyle will be out on the job with enthusiasm, to help where he can. And he knows what it's like to sit up on a saddled horse.

He's also adept at running the rams up the ramp into the woolshed – a possible recipe for disaster, given that his chances of getting bowled over in the process are quite high. But it hasn't happened yet, and maybe those rams know that on a kilogram for kilogram basis, they don't need to exert any authority over one so obviously enjoying himself.

If he does have to be inside, Kyle would prefer every night to be Saturday night because when that unmistakable jingle introducing "Country Calendar" comes through the TV screen, he's all eyes and ears. It's only slightly disappointing if a particular programme doesn't include sheep somewhere in the story. Similarly when the All Blacks do their haka before a test match – a signal for more compulsive and compulsory viewing.



*Kyle Balme and (former pet) Brownie. And he knows there's another sheep in the pen, about to be shorn!*

Kyle attends Otorohanga South School, but somehow that never seems to be quite as much fun as a day at a shearing competition. If he passed the school on a weekend, there may be no special signal of recognition.

Unlike the Te Hape woolshed, away down towards Benneydale, where he's attended several world records involving Stacey Te Huia. Coming home that way from a trip to Rotorua, Kyle knows the location of that big shed, even though it's several hundred metres off the main road, and he indicates to Dad when he's seen it.

There are many things Kyle can do, and many things for which parents Dig and Cheryl Balme are grateful about their third child, who followed 15-year old Josh and daughter Taylor (TJ), a year or so younger.

But there are also a million things the young man can't do, and never will be able to do, for Kyle is an "autistic child". He was 17 months old when Dig and Cheryl received the diagnosis. They'd known something was "not quite right" because the youngster was not measuring off against the progress the older two had made in those first months and years of their lives.

"Kyle was just constantly crying, forever attaching himself to my legs and not wanting to let go. He wasn't making any attempt to walk, but once we knew exactly what the problem was, we were able to start adjusting our lives to what it would mean for our future, and for his," Cheryl explains. "He doesn't talk, but communicates with sound and signs, and just a few words."

Dig regards it as a major blessing that they live on a farm, for although the conventional wisdom suggests regular and constant routine is the safest way of managing an autistic child, he reckons for sure that just wouldn't work for Kyle.

"There's no way in hell you can live a routine way of life on a farm because every day can be so different from yesterday, or from tomorrow. If we lived in a house in the city, routines would be possible, and outside assistance more readily available, but Kyle just wouldn't have the quality of life that he gets here on the farm."

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Life on the farm never-the-less, is a high risk proposition. Kyle knows nothing of fear and has no appreciation of danger. Roads and water are special attractions that entice him. He just loves water, Cheryl says. The time it took between digging a swimming pool, filling it with water and then having it protection fenced meant that Kyle had to be kept under close supervision. He started with the aid of floaters but can now dog-paddle around by himself.

The extra care and support that might be available from agencies such as Autism New Zealand Inc, if they did live closer to Hamilton (for instance) has been compensated in various other ways. When Kyle was younger, a pair of girls from Germany and the United Kingdom provided help for Josh and Taylor when parental attention had to focus on Kyle. Josh and Taylor are

### The Characteristics of Autism

The degree to which people with autism are affected varies, but they generally experience three main areas of difficulty:

- **Social interaction:** difficulty with social relationships; appearing aloof or indifferent to other people
- **Social communication:** difficulty with communication, verbal and non-verbal; not understanding common gestures, facial expressions or tone of voice
- **Imagination:** difficulty with interpersonal play and imagination.

Up to 40,000 people in New Zealand have some form of autism. Further information is available from:

Helpline: Autism New Zealand Inc.  
Freephone 0800 AUTISM (288 476).  
Website [www.autismnz.org.nz](http://www.autismnz.org.nz)



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now at boarding school, giving them deserved breaks from the constant demands that Kyle presents. The support from both sets of grandparents (Dig's and Cheryl's parents) has also been a major factor in their being able to have some normality in their lives.

Invaluable too has been the support from many people in the shearing industry who have taken the time to get to know Kyle. "If you talk to him and treat him well he will respond to you too, in his own way," a friend recently observed.

And that's the way family friends such as Alan and Ronnie Goss, Johnny and Raelene Kirkpatrick and others have expressed their friendship with Kyle. And Kyle remembers them. At Tauranga one year (for instance) he saw the Guy brothers sitting near the shearing board. He hadn't seen them for 12 months but was soon back there amongst them, his old friends.

He can spot Sarah Goss on television, playing rugby sevens for New Zealand, and picks her out from the other players. He has "high fives" for all of them, though reserves special "high tens" for Tipene Te Whata and handshakes for Darren Alexander.

If she could change anything, Cheryl might hope for a little more tolerance from people who don't know Kyle but think that he's just misbehaving.

"The thing is with autism, unless the child is moving you might not have a clue that something is not quite right.

"It's only when Kyle is 'stimming' [banging his wrists together in a



*Kyle pushing the handpiece down the last side, with help from Dad. Maybe someday, he'll do the rest.*

clapping motion] that you might realise for the first time that he's autistic."

Dig and Cheryl look back five years and see the improvements that Kyle has made in that time. They look forward five years and hope that he will continue his progress. Dig's aim is to eventually get Kyle to shear a sheep. He already knows how to push the handpiece down the last side.

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# Training - an investment in your business

*(From Pullin Shearing)*

The training saga in the industry has been the talking point for too long now. The past is the past, it is time to realise it is nearly 2015 and times have changed. Gone are the days where businesses were told what training they would do and what qualifications their staff would have.

The government made this quite clear last year when it is said “for productivity and efficiency in New Zealand workplaces, training **MUST** be designed to meet the employers need for trained staff”.

Employers need employees who meet their business requirements, not employees who have a qualification but can't actually do the job or even worse staff with qualifications who have had no training.

For many, the thought of taking responsibility for their own training (and ultimately taking control of their own business direction) has been so daunting they would rather bury their heads in the sand and do nothing.

Pullin Shearing has always pushed the boundaries. We have always aimed high and have always challenged the mind set of if it isn't broke don't fix it. A progressive business cannot operate on the “that's the way we have always done it” philosophy. Despite what a lot of people think, this forward thinking is not directed from just one person but from all members of the management team, a number of whom have worked outside the industry (in the real world).

The shearing industry's work is unique, agreed, but that's where it stops. In all other aspects the shearing industry is no different than any other industry. Health & Safety, employment contracts, lawful entitlements (paid first week ACC, sick & bereavement leave), filing PAYE and GST, paying taxes (provisional and terminal), vehicle WOF's & registrations to name but a few, are the here and now.

Shearing businesses are based around two main components. The first being the business management skill, structure and systems. The second being the staff they employ as they are the businesses' extension into the woolshed workplace.

How do you get the best out of both of these components?

## **The keys are UPSKILLING and TRAINING.**

The management brain upskilling is the hardest. To come from the wool shed floor to the demands and complexity of running a successful business is hard. In the wider economy, 75% of new businesses fail within 3 years of operation. For shearing contractors that fail, the only accomplishment in their failure is keeping the shearing rates down. The irony is they often do this by ripping off their staff and not paying their lawful dues.

### **Why does this happen?**

1. **No business plan – just another ‘me too’ operator with no point of difference**
2. **No operating goals/objectives and failure to measure them**
3. **Cash flow – underfunded for start-up, poor debt recovery, robbing Peter to pay Paul (never, ever try to use PAYE and GST as your own)**
4. **Don't understand the target customers' needs**
5. **No marketing skill except by being the cheaper option**
6. **Poor staff management**

Points 1 and 5 can be summed up by doing your business professionally. Training and upskilling management plays a large part in this. This is hard when you are working flat out in your business. Get a plan, take it step by step and tick off one thing at a time. There is plenty of help out there, don't be afraid to ask for it. Your accountant should be your first point of call and if they can't help – change accountants!

Pullin Shearing has always had a 100% commitment to training of itself and its team. What we have done is taken the opportunity in the new environment to optimise and

customise training that suits our business need. The traditional training and qualification is to us only part of the journey in getting ourselves to our ultimate goal which is the person that best fits our business need.

Good staff management is about positive team culture with people having the right skills and attitude for the job that they are expected to do. We firstly had a staff meeting outlining the options and the overwhelming response was that they wanted to learn on the job. To accomplish this has been quite a bit of work. The option we have chosen is to have a blended model with on job training occurring, utilising a trainer that is not part of the working crew. This is in fact no different than a lot of the training that has gone on not only in our business but in others over the years. If someone wants skills that we cannot deliver the option remains to use an off job provider.

To accomplish this we firstly had to get a good understanding of the options available. By working with Primary ITO and Vanessa McAlister (our Training Advisor) we have sharpened our understanding. Together we now have a clear vision of what we are trying to achieve.

Our training programme is no different than setting up a business. It needed to have a plan, a structure and systems. We have kept these as simple as possible to still accomplish our goals and objectives. We will measure and check back against our performance. Financially our training is not about making a profit but utilising funding for subsidisation. Our business philosophy is that training should cost us because that reinforces our commitment to the importance of training in our operation.

Training is an investment. Its return and payback will be long term based on a step by step building platform that empowers not only the trainee but the business.

The options for training are about choice, flexibility and customisation. Taking control of your own training is not daunting. What do you want from your staff? Start at the start with job descriptions.

Do you train your own staff now – think about this, most people do and don't even realise they are!

**Have you checked  
the pressure in  
your car or van  
tyres this week?**



## No Name

When I was a young man I started up fencing  
I ran my first fence line up Blue Gum Tree Lane,  
It ran from an old road way down at the bottom  
To a gate at the top end where I tied my last strain.

A track from the gate wandered into the distance  
Where a girl on a paint horse came down once a week,  
To pick up the mail away down at the road side  
She'd smile at me but she never would speak.

I'd smile at her but I kept my distance  
I didn't call out, but I thought it a shame,  
Was she a Ruby, a Mary, a Sally?  
I didn't know so I named her No Name.

Away down the lane there stood a small farm house  
Where a young couple lived with their son aged about  
three,  
A little blond toddler who played in the garden  
Under the shade of an old apple tree.

When he saw the two passing he'd come running over  
He'd stand by the farm gate and rattle the chain,  
He'd wave to the girl and call to the paint horse  
And she'd wave and smile but she never drew rein.

Some times Casey's cattle came down the old roadway  
To whip cracks and dog barks and oaths now and then,  
They never came into the Blue Gum Tree entrance  
Though the cattle were wild ones and so were the men.

But one day for no reason they broke and they bolted  
I looked up in surprise when I heard them stampede,  
And there was the small boy caught out in the open  
And no cowboy handy to challenge the lead.

Then between fence line and wild bawling cattle  
Came the paint horse stretching out at full speed,  
There on his back was the girl I called No Name  
Urging him on as they fought for the lead.

And as she caught them and as she crossed over  
I knew to her, danger was something to scorn,  
And as she gathered the boy to her saddle  
She whisked him away from the hoof and the horn.

I stood like a statue reliving the picture  
The dash and the dust and the danger all came,  
The purpose of the paint horse and the nerve of the rider –  
And I fell in love, that day, with No Name.

Next day my job finished on Blue Gum Tree Lane way  
And long before dusk I was packed up and gone,  
I vowed I'd be back in the not too distant future  
But that's hard to do when you keep rolling on.

But today I returned and my fence is still standing  
But the little farm house is deserted and dead,  
And where Casey's cattle roamed the range over  
The dairy cows grazed the green pastures instead.

And where is the track that ran into the distance?  
The winds and the weather have wiped it away,  
And though time and the years may ring a few changes  
No Name and her paint horse forever will stay.

© Blue Jeans 2014

## Americans doing it for charity

The American Sheep Shearers Council (ASSC) is to undertake a charity fundraising event during the month of January 2015, in aid of St Jude's Children's Hospital and Research Center, located in Memphis, Tennessee. St Jude's is a non-profit pediatric treatment and research facility for children with cancer and other catastrophic diseases. It is the only pediatric cancer research center where families never pay for treatment not covered by insurance.

The event is in the final stages of planning, organised by Minnesota's Doug Rathke, founder of the American Sheep Shearers Council, together with Hilary Gietzen of Minot, North Dakota who is current president of the Council.

Sheep shearers and woolhandlers can contribute to this common cause from anywhere in the United States during the month of January. Everyone can participate without having travel expense and extra time involved so that 100% of the funds raised will be donated. Shearers, woolhandlers, and others in the industry are asked to pledge a donation beginning now until the event begins.

Doug Rathke says any form of donation will be accepted. "For example, a shearer can donate a portion of their earnings or they can designate so much per head to the fundraiser. Sheep farmers are invited to match the funds of the shearer. Many farmers may choose to contribute by offering a pledge per pound of wool, or money."

"The idea has been getting a great deal of support, sheep shearers will be working together for an admirable cause and, in return, St Jude's will be giving ASSC and shearers national support and publicity," said Gietzen.

American shearers have been active in the past, raising funds for needy causes. Their previous performance raised \$6000 for the Farmer Veteran Coalition to help develop a new generation of farmers and to assist returning veterans find viable careers and means to heal on America's farms.

Anyone wishing to participate should contact Hilary at 701-240-0488, [hilaryminot@aol.com](mailto:hilaryminot@aol.com) or Doug at 320-583-7281, [doug@LambShoppe.com](mailto:doug@LambShoppe.com). Funds may also be mailed to Jim Bristol, ASSC secretary/treasurer at 589 East Ogemaw Center Road, West Branch, MI 48861.



Doug Rathke, shearing for America at the 2005 world champs (Toowoomba), and soon to shear for charity.

# Love that wool!

By Des Williams

You spend your days and months working in the sheds – shearing wool off sheep, or processing the wool from board to bin, or cramming fleeces into the press. Crossbred wool, merino wool, half bred wool, lambs wool – you know that fibre like you know your own Facebook password.

In that regard then, chances are you know more about wool than 7.125 billion other people in the world.

Yes, it's a sad fact that 97% of the world's population know absolutely nothing about wool. That's part of the reason why HRH Prince Charles in 2010 launched his Campaign for Wool – to raise global awareness of our fabulous fibre and its special qualities.

So what are those special qualities possessed by wool and that are being promoted by the Campaign for Wool – let's undertake a little refresher course:

**Natural:** wool is grown on sheep that graze freely on the countryside.

**Sustainable:** wool is an annually renewable fibre and therefore is a resource that is naturally replenished.

**Warm:** wool is the original fibre for warmth, it has insulating properties and can keep you warm and cosy in the coldest conditions.

**Cool:** wool is also a fibre that stays



cool – it breathes and will adapt to suit its environment or its wearer, so that you do not feel any discomfort.

**Comfortable:** the flexible, tactile nature of wool makes it very comfortable to wear or to feel underfoot.

**Technical:** the complex cell structure makes wool a working fibre, the key attributes of the fleece that protect the sheep continue to perform even after it has been shorn.

**Versatile:** the endless suitability of wool for many applications from fashion to floors to insulation show that wool is capable of adapting to its use.

**Naturally fire-retardant:** as a result of its high water and nitrogen content, wool will naturally resist fire and does not melt, drip or emit noxious fumes, which are key causes of fatality in fire situations.

**Bio-degradable:** the natural ability of pure wool to biodegrade is an asset to the world as the “eco agenda” grows.

**Durable:** wool's unique resilience ensures that it can withstand wear and tear over a long period.

**Long-lasting appearance:** appearance

retention is a key attribute of wool so that it will look beautiful for many years.

**Natural bounce-back:** on the floor, wool has the ability to resist flattening and in a garment it will resist creases. This is due to its natural spring-like character.

**Quality and style:** the enduring quality and style of wool is still seen by the world's fashion and interiors champions as being superior to other fibres.

**Safe and slip-free:** wool is the perfect flooring for the home – young children or the elderly can be protected from accidents with a soft flooring.

**Carbon-efficient:** an effective insulator, wool will reduce the need for heating and protect against heat loss, making it highly carbon-efficient.

**Non-allergenic:** able to trap dust within its microscopic scales, wool prevents floating dust in the home so that it can be vacuumed later. This keeps the air cleaner for breathing.

Live naturally – choose wool! Better still, wear some wool. Buy a woollen jersey and get your mate to buy a synthetic jersey at the same time – see which one lasts the longest!

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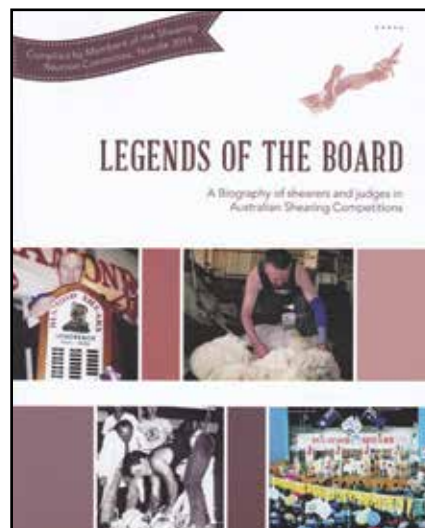
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Above: Colin Watson-Paul and Mere Waikato (in front) together on the day that Mere retired after 54 years in the shearing sheds. Colin says he and "some of the crew" had the privilege of being there to share the occasion with Mere. "The young ones could learn a lot from Mere about getting out of bed every day and going to work, day in and day out. She never failed," Colin says. Pictured from left: Maunsal Edmonds, Matu WhauWhau, Marc Ludlow, Doug Smith, Ronnie Eriha, Duane Belshav, Wayne Grace, Michelle Eriha. Seated, Charlie Aramakatū, Ana Tito and Dion Skipper.

Below: Yep, that's Colin again, right of centre on cell phone: he says "This team came over from the King Country and crutched for two days at Waitara Station for a sandwich and a cup of tea. They were preparing sheep for Stacey Te Huia's record attempt in January." Top marks, you willing workers!



When former Australian fine wool and Diamond Shears champion Cameron Griffiths organized a reunion of his peers, he produced a book to go with it! The reunion, of former Shearing Competition Federation of Australia (SCFA) competitors and judges, is reported on at page 29 of this magazine.

*Legends of the Board* profiles more than 100 former champions. Some are described in more depth than others but even a quick flick reveals the likes of Mark and John Conlan, David Ryan, Gene Mills, Paul Walls, Mike Mephram, John Hutchinson – all familiar names on our side of the Tasman. To order a copy, email Cameron Griffiths for further details:

[diamondshearer@hotmail.com](mailto:diamondshearer@hotmail.com)

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Marechal; Sophie Thomas-Tait; Paul Trevor Coker;  
Nathan William Watt.

**Wool Classing 2013:** Kelly Raukawa MacDonald;  
Michelle Odette Webster; Rose McGee.

**Wool Classing 2014:** Rose McGee; Dawn Kiri  
Ratana; Mereew Tewhe Davidson.



*A laundry hamper with a sturdy rope added makes a perfect home for your amp to hang safely in the shearing shed; top idea Nick Owen, who is pictured here just after cutting out the ewes at Glenthorne Station, Canterbury.*

**Wide-combing it with ...**

© Last Side Publishing 2014

*I see they left us out of the last edition!  
Prob'ly didn't want us saying anything  
rude about all those poncy Pollies in  
the lead up to the election!*



*Oh yeah no, definitely!*



**Buck Naked .... and .... Doug Deep**

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Canterbury Tales, 2014. Top left: Junior shearers; right: Ageless Tony Dobbs, open blades winner for the 57th time. Centre left: Shun Oishi of Japan, competing in the blades; right: Ireland's Ivan Scott, NZ Corriedale Shears open champion. Bottom left: Kahlo Tuuta, senior woolhandler; right, champion woolhandlers Stephanie Smith (junior), Kahlo Tuuta (senior), Pagan Rimene (open).



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