Australian wool

For many years, wool was the most important product to the Australian economy. The wool industry dates from 1797, when John Macarthur[1] and Reverend Samuel Marsden imported Spanish merino sheep to attempt to start a wool industry. Up until then, the only sheep in the colony were the fat-tailed sheep which the First Fleet brought with it from the Cape of Good Hope. These were used primarily for meat, rather than wool.

It took almost a quarter of a century for Macarthur’s breeding program to produce enough wool to auction. In 1821, the first Australian wool was sold at Garraway’s Coffee House in London. Before 1840, Australia was producing more than two million kilos of wool each year. The success of the wool industry made many squatters and pastoralists immensely wealthy and by the 1880s the wool business was booming. Sheep breeders gathered in numbers in large metropolitan centres to buy and sell stock and wool each year. The Sydney Mail described the scene at the Sydney Wool Exchange in 1897:

>'One of the most remarkable sights in Sydney is that of the Wool Exchange in full blast. both buyers and brokers are men of weight and substance and responsibility in the community, but when the auctioneer puts up a lot the buyers spring to their feet, wave their catalogues over their heads, and shout their bids frantically at the seller... It is not unusual for 100,000 [pounds'] worth of wool to be put through during an afternoon.’

Sydney Mail, October 16, 1897[2]

[a1528038h.jpg][3]
Exchange Wool Sale Rooms, Sydney, 1900?

View collection item detail [5]a1528038

Sydney wool
INTRODUCTION.

In presenting the prospects of the Sydney Wool Institute, the
proprietors of the South-Penrith Business College (Messrs.
F. JOHN SMITH and C. HENDRICKS, A.S.I.A.) have the
highest confidence that they are meeting a long-felt want in New
South Wales, viz., the establishment of a training school conducted
by practical wool experts in the interest of that staple product of
our State.

The importance of the undertaking will be seen when it is
pointed out that, whilst we have schools for Agriculture, Mining
and Engineering, no systematic provision has been made to afford
a practical training to those who desire to enter the Wool Trade
on a different footing from that of the few who, fresh from school,
center a wool warehouse in the ordinary way. There he is usually
left to pick up technical knowledge or not at all as he makes
tradesman generally used.

System of Instruction.

A student enters the Institute as an apprentice and is taken,
step by step, through a practical course, which is made as inter-
testing as possible, familiarising him with the store he is learning
to handle, and teaching him gradually but thoroughly all the
methods and practices of marketing wool which prevail in the
present day. The opportunity thus offered to students for ob-
taining a thorough all-round practical knowledge of the Wool
Trade is really unique in Australia, and will be eagerly availed of
by parents who wish to give their sons the most favorable start in
the Wool or Fashionable industry.

The Instructor.

The Institute is under the direction of Mr. Henshaw
Jackson who, by reason of his varied practical knowledge
and experience in every branch of the trade during the
past sixteen years, is specially fitted as an instructor. Mr.
Jackson holds high testimonials for ability and thoroughness
and, in addition to a long and practical connection with the Wool Trade,
was at one time a teacher in the wool class at the Sydney
Technical College; when, during the period of his engagement,
the passes obtained by the students in that class at the annual
examination were 14½ higher than in any previous year.
The Aim of the Wool Institute.

The aim of the Institute is to provide thorough practical training in the handling and preparation of wool for market, in accordance with the requirements of the trade.

The work is so graded that every pupil obtains knowledge and gains proficiency irrespective of class position, and a student may join at any time and commence his training without prejudicial effects to himself or others.

The Curriculum.

The curriculum includes instruction in the ordinary business routine involved in the dispatch of wool from shearing shed and its receipt into store, so that students, in addition to becoming expert in the technical sense, are at the same time made thoroughly familiar with the treatment of wool as merchandise.

Purchases of Wool.

Unskirted and unclipped wool will be purchased as required. These varieties of wool furnish exactly the requirements for classing and sorting, besides being a means of giving students instruction for station life a thorough knowledge of skirting, rolling, and making up the fleeces in the best marketable styles.

Wool Classing for the Trade.

Arrangements will be made with smaller wool-growers through their agents, whose lots of wool are too small for station classing, to send such lots to the Institute for classication. All wool classed under this arrangement will bear the brand of the Institute.

Students on Stations.

Capable students will be offered engagements on stations at shearing time, and also at the country scoring works connected with the Institute.

The Premises.

The premises of the Institute are central and commodious, and are fitted up exactly like the wool room at a shearing shed. Work is conducted as nearly as possible on the lines of a shed in full swing, so that students may become perfectly acquainted with the proper working and organisation of the wool shed at shearing time.

Scale of Fees.

(Including two Evening Lectures per week on Theory.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours Daily</th>
<th>One Month's Tuition</th>
<th>Three do</th>
<th>Six do</th>
<th>Twelve do</th>
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<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>1 2 6</td>
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<td>Six</td>
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<td>9 9 6</td>
<td>15 16 6</td>
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Note: The above arrangements will be varied in respect of length of term and duration of lesson to suit special cases.

Students in Wool Classing may arrange to take a course in Station Bookkeeping.

Time Table.

Practical Work.

Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays
9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Theory (only).

Tuesday and Friday,
7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Term dates are at the Commencement of work.
In 1894, the *Australian Pastoralists’ Review* called the Sydney sheep sales of July 2 - July 6 a 'Carnival' and produced a small booklet for the sheep breeders which included essays on cross breeding, the New Zealand sheep experience and more. Interestingly, the sheep industry had become so important by this time, that the advertisements contained within the booklet give an idea of whole side industries which had sprung up alongside the merino industry, including wool consigners, book keepers and cargo shipping.

In the late 1890s, lower wool prices and the infamous Federation drought devastated the industry. Sheep numbers dropped by half and industrial action by shearers seeking better wages and conditions also took its toll. The unions formed by the shearers became the Australian Workers Union in 1894 and eventually helped give rise to the Australian Labor Party. The industry recovered from these setbacks and the first half of the twentieth century saw the formalisation of education for those wishing to enter the wool industry, and colleges such as the Sydney Wool Institute were set up to provide a grounding in all areas of the business.
Two world wars and a depression affected both wool prices, demand and labour negatively, but the industry boomed again in the 1950s. By now, however, other agricultural industries – particularly wheat and cattle – had overtaken wool in terms of economic importance.

Australian sheep producers now tend to focus on the production of meat – the demand for prime lamb has increased over the past half century – but Australian merino wool is still considered to be a high quality, luxury item, much in demand by the fashion and textile industry. In 2011-2012, the Australian wool industry is expected to produce 355 million kilograms of wool worth almost two billion dollars.
The Sheep-breeders Sydney carnival, July 1894.

View collection item detail [20]a5478023
Volume 03: Photographs of New South Wales : [volume] 3, country life, etc. ca. 1870-1915
Call # PXE 676 / vol. 3 [22]
Digital ID: a4296015
View collection item detail [23]
Paddle steamer 55 'Lancashire Lass' and barge with 1,158 bales of wool - Wilcannia, NSW c 1905

Call # At Work and Play - 05540 [28]
Digital ID: bcp_05540
View collection item detail [29]

a4477020h.jpg [30]
Wool scourers with wool from 'Morendah' - Walgett, NSW c 1912
Photographed by - A Kirkham, travelling photographer Hayes' wool scouring staff
Call # At Work and Play - 03261 [37]
Digital ID: bcp_03261
View collection item detail [38]
Classing ewes at Welltown - Goondiwindi, QLD Call # At Work and Play - 02748
Digital ID: bcp_02748
View collection item detail
Dipping sheep. Albert starting the sheep down the slide - Nyngan, NSW Leila Green

Call # At Work and Play - 03425 [47]

Digital ID: bcp_03425

View collection item detail [48]

bcp_06573h.jpg [49]
Rams at "Wanganella" Estate (part of "Boonoke") - Deniliquin, NSW

Call #: c 1930 [50]
Digital ID: bcp_06573
View collection item detail [51]

hood_13886h.jpg [52]
Wool clips, Pyrmont 19/1/1937
Call # Home and Away - 13886 [53]
Digital ID: hood_13886
View collection item detail [54]
Sheep show at Showground 16/6/1937
Call # Home and Away - 15278 [56]
Scraping the wool from the hides, Australian Wool Products Ltd wool treatment & fleecing works
October 1940
Hood, Sam, 1872-1953
Call # Home and Away - 10276 [59]
Digital ID: hood_10276
View collection item detail [60]

a1780118h.jpg [61]
Mort family - pictorial material, ca. 1857- ca. 1857-ca. 1910
Call # PXD 993 [62]
Digital ID: a1780118
View collection item detail [63]
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