

1/3/1

James Ritchie's Diary
April 1841 to 1850

3 sheets.

James Ritchies Diary
Copy

In April 1841 it was my destiny to be landed on the shore of New South Wales at Williamstown with £— in my pocket and as free as the wind to roam over the land of my adoption. Freedom was my National (natural) inheritance from God and I meant to keep it against the World. I therefore left the town in three days bending my steps westward till arriving at a splendid sheep station 25 miles from Melbourne belonging to Mr. Aitken where I was induced to remain for a few days and then induced to invest my little fortune in 70 cattle to be kept for one year. In consequence no doubt of representation. This step was foolishly taken. I would therefore

engrave an adamant let not the sons of men prevail against ^{my} mine own judgment. I at once agreed to remain with Mr. A. for the present and did so for six months during which time I was mostly occupied with sheep and it being the winter season I was very much pleased with the delightful climate, there was one slight shower of snow which was near all the wet we had till the latter end of August when we had three days of heavy rain from the south east which ushered in the spring with such a gush of light & life. - In November ¹⁸⁴¹ I left to make a tour to the West where I spent two months and then returned to Mr. Aitken where I remained for the next twelve months during this time there was nothing particular occurred

The summer was dry and the winter almost without a shower so trifling that the water pools was not perceptibly augmented but in January there was a thunderstorm came with so much violence to raise a — flood in a few hours. In November ¹⁸⁴² after my Brother's arrival in the Colony we entered into company with Mr. Scales and purchased the station on the Deep Creek with 1600 sheep for £400. The sheep was in a shocking state with scab, poverty, and footrot. We dressed the scab with $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce of sublimate to the gallon of water which cured them. The first year Mr. Scales was six months off the station. We shored 2700 sheep in the end of December ¹⁸⁴³ and took an advance of 9^d per lb. on it from Firms in Geelong. That year the weather was most splendid the

creek not running till September.
In August our hut was burnt-
down with the destruction of
almost everything we possessed.
We dissolved partnership with
Mr. Scales in April 1844
receiving for our share 500 ewes
and 500 hoggets which we took
to the West side of the run and
formed the station Blackwood.
That year we shored 1500 sheep
& took 1/- of advance.
The weather that year was very
rigorous beginning to rain about
the 15th June & continued for
four months & half causing the
sheep to be shocking lame.
This year I threw up a dam
on the 24th Sept. which filled
in 24 hours $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile in
length & 400 yards in breadth
by $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet in depth.
This is a most extraordinary wet-
part of the Colony. No next
year we shored 2500 sheep

2^d sheet

having 3 lb. 6 oz. off all old sheep and sold it at $\frac{1}{4}$ per lb. — The weather this year was very fine there being so little rain in winter as to fill the fore mentioned dam only 18 inches

In 1846 we shored 3100 the wool of which we took $\frac{1}{4}$ per lb. advance upon. Weather this year was moderate it being wettest for about $3\frac{1}{2}$ months. In December my Brother & I dissolved partnership he having bought Cape Wrath for £250 and put his sheep upon it which was 1200. This year we cut about seven miles of drains.

In 1847 I shored 3200 sheep having clove on 3 lb. of wool per sheep which I took $\frac{1}{4}$ per lb. of advance upon & upon receiving the return sale had to refund £132 on the Cl. It brought on average $11\frac{1}{2}^d$ & there being $3\frac{1}{4}^d$

of expense I realized $8\frac{1}{4}$ per lb. This was rather a wet season commencing in July & continuing for 3 months without injuring the sheep much however. The rain did not come on to any extent till Sept.

The year 1848 set in uncommonly when it did so to excess & dry, month after month passing continued on for $3\frac{1}{2}$ months keeping away without bringing a shower the country in a state of flood the old grass was almost entirely all the while and producing burnt off and the drought such an affliction of foot rot preventing the young from springing as was seldom seen in the stock had in a great measure Colony some of the stations having to live upon the stubble in many 95 per cent. etc. places for three months.

I had a flock of sheep lambing 13,454 lbs. of wool which was in February which I attended to considerably above 3 lb. per sheep myself with the greatest care I took 8^d per lb. advance on 10509 which only produced 50 per cent. 5^d per lb. on 2945 £380 "12"6

I had another flock of dry sheep 2000 which ran over 5000 acres and so badly did they flock that an active shepherd lost mow of them almost every day. One night I had 70 bit which kept the old grass from

Year 1849 This year was most remarkable for the great abundance of grass in consequence of the constant supply of refreshing rains.

burning which is of the greatest
~~importance~~^{moment} to the squatter. I had
4000 sheep running in one flock
with abundance of grass all winter
and not more than about 100
lame without being pared. They
were camped out which all sheep
ought to be if possible. My dry
sheep were greatly dead lame
they being yarded although upon
very dry land. But as the summer
set in all the sheep became so lame
that I think there would be 70
per cent. bad. I attributed it to
partly to not having pared them
all over as I now consider it
necessary to keep the feet in a small
healthy state. This year has been
one of the most favourable I have
seen in the Colony for grass,
notwithstanding it having been
a wet season the creeks running
strong for more than three months.
I have received from surplus on the
wool of 1848 £362 making 13^d

3^d sheet

per lb. with 3^d per lb. expenses.
For the wool of this year 1849
I refused 13^d per lb. in Port-Fairy
shipped for sale in Sydney where
it was sold under 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ per lb.
contrary to instructions. I shorn
6000 sheep which yielded 17,769
lb. of wool. In January I sold
1000 weathers at 4/9 which
melled down 25 lbs of fat.

1850 This year was ushered
in by a very unfortunate event
in the bush taking fire and
burning the whole of my run in
two days along with every inch
of fencing upon the ground.
The sheep were turned in to
the stubble next day to make
shift the best way they could
and had enough they were no
doubt for about eight days
when the rain came showering
on for about two days which
made the young grass come rushing

up in grand style so that the
stock was never known upon
it and continued the same fine
weather up to this time in Aug.
but notwithstanding foot-rot has
been as prevalent as usual.
I have pared a weather flock
five times since shearing time
without succeeding in curing them.
There never was a more favourable
lambling with judicious management
90 per cent was common.
The greatest misfortune was the
general infection of foot-rot in
the month of June when I believe
there was 80 per cent of the
lambs lame.

Copied from Original
in possession of
Blackwood Ritchie
14th Dec. 1896.

Arthur Ritchie