So I will leave it at that and close with the following relevant extracts from Robert Stewart's *One of the Have Beens*," printed in the 'Manaro Mercury' November, 1875: http://folkstream.com/115.html

> I've been at the Yanko,
> Steam Plain, and Bundore,
> And in most of the big sheds
> Down there I have shore.
> And although you may smile,
> When I talk about speed,
> Among sixty-eight shearers
> I have taken the lead.
>
> I've shorn with Jack Bright,
> Billy Boyd and Jack Gunn,
> With Big Leyton, and Fergus.
> And the great Roaring Dunn,
> And they've brought from Launceston
> The best they could find,
> But there's not one among them
> Could leave me behind.

'Yanco' and 'Bundore' (these days spelled 'Bundure') are in the Jerilderie district and 'Steam Plain' is towards Deniliquin. They all appear to be viable properties in the present day.

Dave de Hugard, Castlemaine, Victoria

Jack Howe memorials, and his shears

SHEARING RECORDS

The Capricornian Saturday 14 November 1908 p. 47. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article68906010

"Vagrant," writing in the "North Queensland Register," says:- The shearing figures' quoted in the"Western Champion" of the 12th of September as to shearing tallies, are not quite correct. Andy Brown did not shear at Evesham in 1886. In 1887 "Jimmy" Fisher shore fifty lambs in one run before breakfast there. I do not know the time; but they used to ring the bell mighty early those days. I have seen spectral-like forms creeping across the silent space between the galley and the shed long before the kookaburra woke the push with his laughing song, and he is a pretty early bird.

The same year "Black" Tom Johnson got bushed in the gloom of that space, and lost half a run before breakfast. Fisher shore 288 at Kynuna the following year; he was a wonderful man for his 8 st. of humanity. The same year Alf. Bligh shore 254 at Isis Downs; he and Charlie Byers were the first two men to cut 200 sheep on the Barcoo. The same year "Bill" Hamilton, now M.L.A., shore 200 sheep at Manfred Downs, and to him belongs the credit of shearing the first 200 on the Flinders. The next year Bill died at Cambridge Gulf; but as he is alive and all right now, the account was exaggerated.

"Bill" says: "That 200 at Manfred Downs was no 'cake walk.'" He used twelve gallons of water cooling down. Alick Miller shore 4163 sheep in three weeks and three days at Charlotte Plains in 1885, and Sid ("Combo") Ross shore nine lambs in nine minutes at Belalie, on the Warrego, the year before. In the early eighties there were a good number of 200 a-day men in New South Wales; but none of those celebrated personages ven-

tured a pilgrimage northwards until 1887, when quite a number of fast men stormed the west, and their advent started a new era in the shearing world, improved tools and methods entirely superseding the old Ward and Payne, and Sorby school, and the old rum drinking ringers of the roaring days were gradually relegated to the "snagger brigade." Paddy M'Can, Jack Bird, Tom Green (the Burdekin ringer), Ned Hyles, Jack Ellis (Bendigo), Mick Hoffman (the Peak Downs ringer), Billy Cardham, Jim Sloane, Jack Collins, and George Taylor ("the Native") had to give way to the younger brigade with improved Burgon and Ball tools, and new ideas, and, with the advent of Jack Howe, Christy Gratz, "Chinee" Sullivan, Billy Mantim, George Butler, Jimmy Power, Alick Miller, Jack Reid, Allan M'Callum, and others, 180 and 200 were common enough.

Later, when machinery was introduced, tallies took a further jump. Jimmy Power shore 323 at Barenya. in 1892 by machines. The same year Jack Howe shore 321 by hand at Alice Downs, his tallies for the week previous being 249, 257, 259, 263, 267, 144, a total of 1439 for the week. I doubt if this record has ever been beaten. I will say right here that Jack Howe was the best shearer I have ever seen at work. The only one approaching him was Lynch, of the Darling River, New South Wales.

No doubt figures get enlarged in circulation, and tall tallies in the bar-room mount up with the fumes of bottled beer - there is a lot of sheep shorn there. Shearers do not lie, as a rule: they boast and make mistakes casually. Jack Howe once told me the biggest mistake he ever made was in trying to shake hands with himself in a panel mirror in an hotel in Maoriland. He had just landed, and made for the first hotel.

You see, he had grown a beard on the trip over, and looked like a chap he used to know on the Barcoo. The mistake was considerably intensified by the barmaid's smile, as she watched Jack's good-natured recognition of an old shearing mate from Queensland.

At Kensington Downs in 1885, a big Chinaman named Ah Fat rang the shed. He could shear all right, too. The men used to take day about to run him; but the Chow had too much pace. A shearer named George Mason made great preparations to "wipe him out" one day, and, after nearly bursting himself up to dinner-time, discovered that Ah Fat was not on the board: he was doing a lounge in the hut that day. I think that Chinaman must have died; everyone loved him, and, like Moore's "Young Gazelle," with its gladsome eye, he was sure to go —

> "To that shed beyond the sky,
> Where the angel tarboys fly,
> And the 'cut' will last for ever, and
> the sheep are always dry."

These records may be of interest to the survivors of the old school, and may, perhaps, stir up the dormant memories of the younger ones. They have been culled from past records, written on the backs of stolen telegram forms from almost every post office between Burketown and Baringun, and are given for what they merit.

Dave de Hugard read the article and responded thus:

I have checked out the stations mentioned and as expected they are all in Queensland. It's a nice touch isn't it, that …written on the backs of stolen telegram forms from almost every post office between Burketown and Baringun. Burketown incidentally is on the Gulf of Carpentaria and Baringun is on the Queensland border west of Hungerford. I am reminded a little of the lines from 'Goorianawa':   I've shorn in every woolshed from the Barwon to the Bree (Brewarrina).

Anyway, the supplier of the article for 'The Capricornion' mentions 'Vagrant' as quoting the shearing figures from 'The Western Champion'. I am wondering whether similar sources of information might just be available somewhere for various parts of New South Wales?

The particular area of interest is the Riverina. It is a 'long shot' of course and may be going back way too far, but it would be interesting to discover if there may be any actual information available relating to the shearers mentioned in Robert Stewart's *One of 'The Have Beens* - including any about Robert Stewart himself. The names we have are Jack Bright, Billy Boyd, Jack Gunn, 'Big' Leyton, Fergus (Christian name or surname?) and the 'Great Roaring' Dunn.

We do know a little about Robert Stewart. In a footnote to 'The Man with the Concertina' in 'Old Bush Songs' Stewart & Keesing p.251 (reprint 1964), a Mrs G.L. Ginns of Merrylands, NSW tells us :

> 'My father Robert Stewart, was born in 1838, at Five Islands…spent the
> early part of his life droving, horse-breaking, shearing and gold-digging…
> My earliest recollections are of him singing the songs he heard composed
> 50 or 60 years before.'

When Stewart's *One of The Have Beens* was published in 1875, according to Mrs Ginn's information he would have been about 37 years old. This does seem to me to be rather young to qualify as a 'has been'? Still, assuming that he is actually talking about himself and not passing on somebody else's story, the likelihood is that he has just 'given the game away' and turned his hand to horse-breaking, gold digging and so on – while trying his hand at a bit of shearing from time to time. This might reasonably account for his being awkward as a new chum - although I suspect there might be just a touch of self deprecation in relation to his assessment of his actual shearing ability.

The Man with the Concertina would have been written we assume, when Robert Stewart was at the height of his shearing powers.