

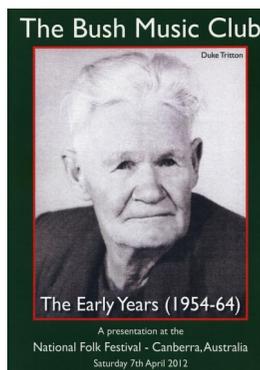
SINGABOUT

DECEMBER 2015

THE DUKE

It is now 50 years since the passing of Harold Percy Croydon (Duke) Tritton, one of our founders and the second of our life members. He was a strong singer, songwriter and poet and was one of the earliest sources of traditional songs and verses for the Australian folk revival. His knowledge came from a wide variety of jobs out in the bush, including shearing, gold mining, boxing (where he gained the nickname Duke), busking, labouring, timbercutting and rabbiting.

Mike Martin has penned a tribute to Duke which you will find on page 4. "Time Means Tucker" is the title of Duke's autobiography and is a reference to Duke's shearing days.



The Sandy Hollow Line

By HP "Duke" Tritton

The sun was blazing in the sky and waves of shimmering heat,
Glared down on the railway cutting, we were half dead on our feet,
And the ganger stood on the bank of the cut and he snarled at the men below,
"You'd better keep them shovels full or all you cows 'll go."

I never saw such a useless mob, you'd make a feller sick,
As shovel men you're hopeless, and you're no good with the pick."
There were men in the gang who could belt him with a hand tied at the back
But he had power behind him and we dare not risk the sack.

So we took it all in silence, for this was the period when
We lived in the great depression and nothing was cheaper than men.
And we drove the shovels and swung the picks and cursed the choking dust;
We'd wives and hungry kids to feed so toil in the heat we must.

And as the sun rose higher the heat grew more intense,
The flies were in their millions, the air was thick and dense,
We found it very hard to breathe, our lungs were hot and tight
With the stink of sweating horses and the fumes of gelignite.

But still the ganger drove us on, we couldn't take much more;
We prayed for the day we'd get the chance to even up the score.
A man collapsed in the heat and dust, he was carried away to the side,
It didn't seem to matter if the poor chap lived or died.

"He's only a loafer," the ganger said. "A lazy, useless cow.
I was going to sack him anyway, he's saved me the trouble now."
He had no thoughts of the hungry kids, no thought of a woman's tears,
As she struggled and fought to feed her brood all down the weary years.

But one of the government horses fell and died there in the dray,
They hitched two horses to him and they dragged the corpse away.
The ganger was a worried man and he said with a heavy sigh:
"It is a bloody terrible thing to see a good horse die."

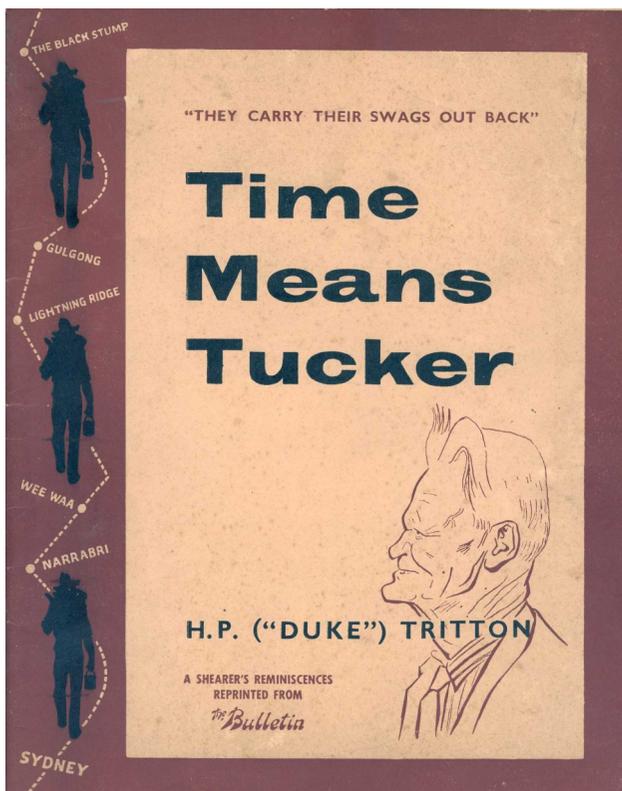
"You chaps get back now to your work, don't stand loafing there,
Get in and trim the batter down, I'll get the Engineer."
The Engineer came and looked around and he said as he scratched his head,
"No horse could work in this dreadful heat or all of them will be dead."

"There much too valuable to lose, they cost us quite a lot
And I think it is a wicked shame to work them while it's hot.
So we will take them to the creek and spell them in the shade,
You men must all knock off at once. Of course you won't be paid."

And so we plodded to our camps and it seemed to our weary brains,
We were no better than convicts, though we didn't wear the chains,
And in those drear depression days, we were unwanted men,
But we knew that when a war broke out, we'd all be heroes then.

And we'd be handed a rifle and forced to fight for the swine,
Who tortured us and starved us, on the Sandy Hollow Line.

The Sandy Hollow Line was written about Duke's experiences in the Depression. John Dengate sang it to the tune of *Dunlaven Green* and insisted that it should be sung unaccompanied.



Ode to Duke Tritton

By Mike Martin

If “Time means tucker”, then tramp you must
You can always sing for your supper, pass the hat and busk
You took a bite out of life, made a dream come true
Never to let life make a meal out of you.

You crossed the great divide, the plains and red dust
Where there’s seldom a track that a man can trust
You worked for your rations, carried water by your side
Never one to run, you were never one to hide.

Chorus

All day long through the dust and the heat
You carried your swag outback.

A pen full of cobblers is a shearers dream of hell
You’ll only shear your hundred in a shed that breeds them well
Good enough to pick a stand, for next seasons run
Never a ringer, you were never a gun.

You drove the cattle south, you fenced in rough terrain
You camped on the river bend, left the drinking to other men
You loved those country shows and in the boxing tent were known
Never a fighter, you were never a pro.

Chorus

You sniffed at the gold, caught the fever in your soul
Always seeking that elusive, that nugget of gold
You panned and you slushed, you dug and shot the hole
Never to stop, you were never too old