

# Historical Happenings



Casterton Community Museum

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## The Roll Call at Merino Downs by Jack Cleary of Sandford

The setting for the following poem was written by my father, Jack Cleary, who was at Merino Downs about 1900. Merino Downs was then administered by the family of Francis Henty, who had passed on some years earlier. In 1908 the property was divided into three properties called Merino Downs, Talisker and Wurt Wurt Koort.

The shearing of the sheep until then had been conducted by hand shears known as "the blades". Sheep were washed prior to shearing at a series of dams and enclosures in a gully east of the Mocamboro Road. The Roll Call was conducted on the first morning to see if all men had arrived who had been invited from the previous year had applied personally or by other contact. It is not known if the author worked at the property but he would have known many of the men named.

John L. Cleary



### *The Roll Call at Merino Downs*

Now the shearers and the shed hands  
from Western District towns  
had all rolled up at Sandford  
enroute for Merino Downs.

There were some astride of horses  
and some who did it grand  
in rabbit carts and old pushbikes  
and Jile's four-in-hand.

So at last they got together  
at the shed long waited for

### Next Meeting of the Historical Society

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup>  
March**

**Annual Dinner:**

**"Beneath the  
Dardanelles"**

Guest speakers and co-  
authors John & Hatice  
Basarin.

Albion Hotel – 6.30pm for  
7pm

2 course Dinner and  
Presentation - \$20.00 per  
person.

RSVP: 1st March ASAP  
Contact Ros Coventry

5581 2875 or

[roscov@iprimus.com.au](mailto:roscov@iprimus.com.au)

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[jlier3@bigpond.com](mailto:jlier3@bigpond.com)

## Casterton New Cemetery Mapping Project



Held on the 2nd and 4th Saturday from 10 am to 12 noon  
We only have 2 more rows to go in the C of E Section.  
Almost there!



There were Nash, Bob Meade and Barker who had all shorn there before.  
Also Black, Moore, Baker, Heart, Murtagh and McPhee had all shorn there in previous years and suited to a Tee.

There were more locals I could name they were all along the board had all their twenty first years there and broken some good records.

So the roll was called at Merino Downs on October the twenty sixth the rep and cook were voted in and everything was fixed.

So on that night the rain set in which made each shearer frown you can guess the looks on some of them after three weeks sitting down.

The weather brightened up a bit the clouds looked high and light some restless shearers could be heard upon their beat all night.

The time then came, the whistle blew the wheels commenced to turn each shearer made a start his weeks board to earn.

Now Bob Meade with splendid style had let the first sheep go while Bill Nash was on his wheel with a good old New South blow.

And the days rolled by and by until a week had passed.  
The shearers who felt tired and sore had settled down at last.

Then each one with a bloody rush the choice grill chops to get with a rouseabout well out in front is a certain bloody bet.

