

Colebrook Tasmania Sheep and Schools

When this contact began, I didn't intend for it to be an every week event; however, the information that is arriving each week from Tasmania I find to be fascinating, and according to our editor, Mike Marciano, so do the readers, so on a day-to-day basis, we will continue to unfold the news from Down Under as it becomes available to us. Colebrook Connecticut is sending photos and information to them as well, and it appears that there are readers there who are getting a continuous flow of news about us. Here is the latest. I had asked about the productivity of the merino sheep, and also expressed my desire to know more about their school system. Here is what Lynette Munnings had to say:

“Hello Bob. Thanks for all the wonderful photos.

Shearing was completed on Friday [May 21], Thank Goodness!! I am always pleased when it is over. We have border leister/merino cross ewes and Suffolk rams. The ewes have just cut approximately 5 kilos of wool [11 lbs.]. Fine wool merinos not far from here cut 9 kilos of wool average off 400 sheep. [19.8 lbs.] We shear at this time of the year because we lamb in July/August and if the mothers feel the cold, they take the lambs to shelter. My Dad was also a farmer and he started the trend in the 1950/60s. Lambs were dying and he found that losses were minimized. Most farmers now shear about this time of the year. We do not get the temperature dropping to -12 and -19 as you mentioned. Rarely does it go below zero.”

“In a day most shearers would shear more than 100 sheep. Some can do as many as 200. The best day we had just now was 170 sheep shorn each by the 2 shearers. That would be almost 3 minutes per sheep.

The farm we live on is called ‘The Meadows’ and is predominately a fat lamb property. Run in conjunction with property at Yarlinton, it gives a land area of 331.34 hectares. [132.5 acres] My husband, Denis, and his brother have owned it since 1971. Denis has farmed the property all this time.

Our house was built in 1950 and was renovated in 1972 and again in 1998. The kitchen and service area was enlarged and the building clad firstly in brick-board and then in brick. The gables were replaced with a green colorbond hip roof.

The area has a cool temperate climate with the occasional snowfall, frosty mornings, sunny days and beautiful sunsets and sunrises.

In September 2001 202 lambs sold at \$100.02 a head – the best price received in 37 years of fat lamb production on ‘The Meadows’. The average weight was 29.51 kg. [65 lbs.] It was a big increase from the 1000 fat lambs sold in January 2000 at \$24 to \$25 a head and \$49 received in November 2000.

Our stock agent said it was the best price he had seen in 40 years in the business. Never before had \$100 come “within cooee” for lamb prices. He recalled \$76 a head about 12 years ago.

EDUCATION IN THE COAL RIVER VALLEY.

Campania School has been providing children with quality education for 116 years, even though 10 schools once existed in the Coal River Valley; these schools were at Tea Tree, Rekuna, Ticehurst, Mercer, Yarlinton, Native Corners, Brown Mountain, Rhyndaston, Eldon and Colebrook.” [With the exception of Colebrook, none of these towns show up on my map of Tasmania, but they would be scattered along the north-south valley northeast of the capitol city, Hobart.]

“The school at Campania was established in 1886, 10 years after the town first grew up around the new railway. In 1949 the school became an area school bringing in children from the other schools, which had been forced to close down because of the war or staff shortages.

The old Campania flour mill (circa 1865) was used by the school for classrooms from 1949. The present Campania District High School was opened in 1965 with a new home arts section, gymnasium, library and two new classrooms completed in 1986.

It was at this time that the Colebrook Primary School closed on August 29, 1986 with the children transferring to Campania at the commencement of Term 3.

Angry parents picketed, but the decision had been made. The school’s only teacher died of a heart condition two weeks earlier. She was much loved and had been teaching at the school since 1967.

Originally Jerusalem School in 1840 had 22 children enrolled. However, it appears to have been closed from 1844 to 1849. In 1851 17 boys and 19 girls enrolled. From 1855 to 1859 Jerusalem School appears to have been called Colebrook Dale. In 1860 Jerusalem had 56 children enrolled. By the turn of the century, the Colebrook School had a higher total enrollment and average daily attendance than Richmond.” [My map, which I made while an editor at the Hammond Map Co. in 1961, lists the population of Colebrook as 330, and Richmond at 557.] “From 1909 to 1919, Colebrook, Richmond and Rhyndaston were the only schools that were not provisional or subsidized. From August 18 to October 6, 1919 all schools throughout the state were closed due to the [worldwide] influenza epidemic.

The Colebrook School built in 1857 was destroyed on February 7, 1967 during the bushfires. It was rebuilt using the Unison Panel System that offers speed and flexibility of construction.

After the school closed, the building was moved to Dodges Ferry. The Colebrook history Room was built on the site of the school and the opening was on November 16, 1997. Attached are photos.”

Our Colebrook school system underwent a very similar series of events that eventually led to one regional school, although we still retain our primary school. In size, the old Colebrook (Tasmania) School was comparable to our Colebrook River School. As the Metropolitan Water District bought up land in The River and their population fell, the Colebrook Center School became our primary school and remained so until the new Consolidated School was finished in 1949.

Historic Bytes
Bob Grigg