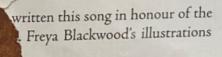


A Short History of a Long Tradition

'Waltzing Matilda' is said to have been composed to fit a tune that Banjo Paterson heard a young woman playing in January 1895. The young woman was Christina Macpherson, whose father was a rich squatter who owned the Dagworth station in northern Queensland.

Just before Paterson visited, there had been a number of big strikes in the area. These strikes were led by sheep shearers. The shearers wanted better pay, but the station owners (who were mostly rich squatters) didn't want to give it to them. So the shearers refused to work until they were offered more money. There was a lot of violence and suffering. The shearers' families went hungry, and fights broke out when other workers (known as 'scabs') were brought in to do the shearing.

One story claims that a shearing shed at *Dagworth* was burnt to the ground by angry strikers, and that the lence got so bad that shots were fired. This story says strike leader was found dead beside a billabong



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Glossary

billabong: a waterhole that only fills up during the rainy season.

billy: a tin container with a wire handle for boiling water and making tea.

coolibah tree: a type of eucalypt that grows in places that are regularly flooded.

jumbuck: another word for a sheep.

matilda: a swag, or a bedroll that is carried like a backpack. Matilda is also a slang word for something that has been stolen.

squatter: in the past, those who settled on land without permission were called squatters; they usually chose the best land available and became very wealthy.

swagman: a man who travels around the countryside with his swag, and who survived by doing odd jobs for farmers, or by begging.

tucker: food.

tuckerbag: a bag used for carrying food.

waltzing matilda: this can mean either carrying your swag about the countryside, or carrying away a stolen item (in the case of this song, a sheep).