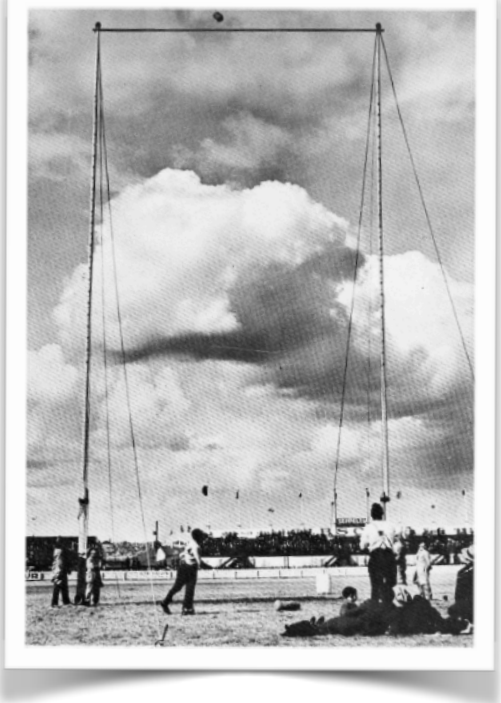
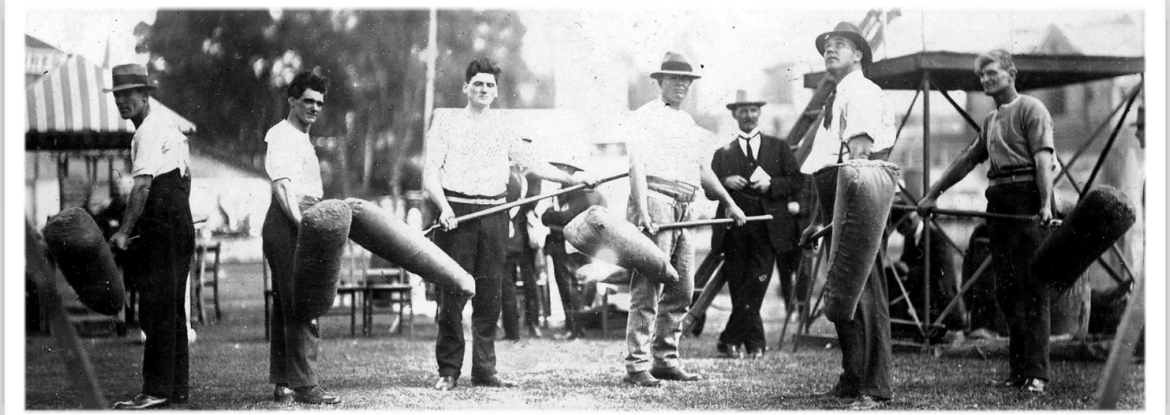
SHEAF TOSSING

Originating hundreds of years ago, the sheaf toss is described as a traditional Scottish agricultural sporting event, traditionally contested at country fairs. A pitchfork is used to toss a burlap bag of straw weighing 8lbs (3.6kg) over a horizontal bar above the competitor's head. Three attempts are given to clear the bar before the height is raised for the remaining challengers.

In South Australia, the first official sheaf tossing competition was likely held at the 1914 Royal Adelaide Show. Soon after, members of the Schwerdt family began competing, becoming state champions and record holders for many years. In 1920 the state record was a throw of 36ft. (11m). By the 1950 the world record was 53ft (16m), jointly held by brothers Jack and George Schwerdt.

Both Jack and George competed at the Angaston show on a number of occasions in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Jack was also involved in stewardship of this event, being a resident of Angaston for some time.



Above: Schwerdt family (John, George, George Jnr, circa 1924.
Right: John Schwerdt with world record 50ft in Melbourne, 1936.
Below: Schwerdt family members, Adelaide Exhibition Ground, circa 1917