

## Barry Webb

My father was William Irvine Webb and my mother was Edna Albina Luther. They were married at St Barnabas in Oberon. I was born in 1941, the eldest of three children. There was myself, Margery Ada Webb and Kevin Lachlan Webb.

I went to school at Edith. We used to walk to school. It was not far really, about half a mile or a bit more. Later I went by bus to Oberon for secondary school. When I was in First Year there was no classroom available so we had to cart chairs and tables up on Monday mornings to the little building behind the Methodist Church. Then, on Friday afternoon we had to cart them all back again. We used to take a shortcut through the then Council yard.



In First Year we had to study Art, which I called silly art and I wasn't much good at it. In Second Year they introduced Woodwork and Technical Drawing, in the next two years, I got the top marks in the year.

In 1958 Dad and Mum sold the property at Edith and bought a dairy farm at Grose Vale, not far from Kurrajong. We milked the cows by machine and I kept the cow yard tidy with no cow shit around. I used to cart that up to the veggie patch.

When I was at Grose Vale I started doing a correspondence course on radio service engineering and television servicing. I was quite keen on that and built a lot of stuff and had some test equipment which I built.

In 1962 Dad bought Sydmouth Valley from his older brother Uncle Ern Webb. When we moved there we got Sid Bartlett to come down to put some extra power points in the house and he saw what I had built so he offered me a job. Sid was an electrician and he had a shop in Oberon. I looked after the TV and radio side of things, doing repairs and also doing some electrical work under his supervision as I was not qualified. Just things like wiring and power points.

I worked for Sid Bartlett for quite a few years and then I did some more study. I already had my Intermediate Certificate so then I got my School Certificate. After that I went to Sydney and studied at Sydney Technical College and got my Higher School Certificate. I did that in one year and then applied to go to University. I did a year at University and was studying Engineering which I thought I wanted to do but then I decided it wasn't really what I wanted to do so I came back to Oberon.

I became my own boss and for years I repaired TV sets. I started off with valves which seem to have passed now. I wouldn't want to fix TV sets now. I also put up aerials but when I got old

enough to get an old age pension I decided it was time to get out of it. I had plenty to keep myself occupied.

I got interested in family history when we had the Webb family reunion in 1990. It was the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of William and Anne Webb arriving in Sydney from England. I joined the Lithgow Family History Society and would go down one day every week to do some research. I went to the Lithgow Library and got a lot of information out of the Lithgow Mercury. I made photocopies including details about the construction of the Oberon Tarana Railway. I also joined the Bathurst Family History group and photocopied a lot of stuff from the Western Advocate. The result was three books of scrapbooking:

- Oberon 1963-1995
- Oberon Tarana Railway 1921-1979
- Glyndwr Cemetery 1850s on

I actually sold a few copies of the Oberon book.

(Barry also has three beautifully presented albums of Oberon Railway photographs)

I started working at cemeteries after the family reunion. First was the Mutton Falls Cemetery where I did things like mowing and whipper snipping. I also collected information about the people who were buried there, birth and death certificates. The Gwyndr or old Wesleyan cemetery was another one. I began working on it and one day Trevor Armstrong and his brother Bruce came down to dig their mother's grave. This spurred me to get stuck in and clean up the cemetery before the funeral. I then became interested in other people who were buried there and the scrapbook I made includes obituaries and other information relating to them.

I also worked on cleaning up the railway line. The Museum helped save the railway station from vandals or maybe demolition by the railways. Then some people had the idea of using the railway line as a walking track. I think if they had their way they would have ripped the line up and put the walking track where the line is.

At one stage the Council 'vandalised' (dug up) the railway line to put a water pipe from the station through the trucking yards to the factory. I put the rails and sleepers back into place, and then uncovered and cleaned up the line for 6 kms to Hazelgrove, including cleaning up the stockyards.



(With his whipper snipper and lawn mower Barry then maintained the vegetation growth along the railway line, around the station precinct, and the old stockyards. He has done this by himself many times for many years).



Overgrown lines near the stockyards

I've been given honorary life membership of the Show Society. I started working there after going over to the showground to pick up some pine cones for my wood heater. It was just before the Show and there was a lot of long grass around the office and it was like a jungle on one side of the hall. I happened to have my whipper snipper and bush lawn mower with me so I got a bit carried away. I cleaned the bottom side of the hall before the Show and just kept it up over the years including building a short, half post high fence to keep people off the cutting on the top side of the hall. But, I'm getting slack now. Last year I did a bit but not very much and I decided that's enough.

I did a fair bit of bushwalking in my younger days. I went to visit a cousin in Newcastle and she was a member of the Sydney Bushwalking Club so I went as a guest. I got involved with them and used to do walks, mainly in the Blue Mountains, occasionally acting as a leader. I've also walked the Six Foot Track which is from Katoomba to Jenolan Caves. When my knees started to go I had to give up bushwalking but there were plenty of other things to do.

Oberon has changed a lot over the years. Occasionally I go down the street, maybe to do a bit of shopping, and I hardly know anyone. If there was no timber industry it would be a dead town. When I went to school I would pick peas in the summer holidays and earned a bit of money. Now, I'm the biggest pea grower in Oberon, in my back yard!

(On two occasions Barry has been Oberon's Citizen of the Year)

"It was a bit of a surprise. I think I'm the only one who has been Citizen of the Year twice"

(March 2025)