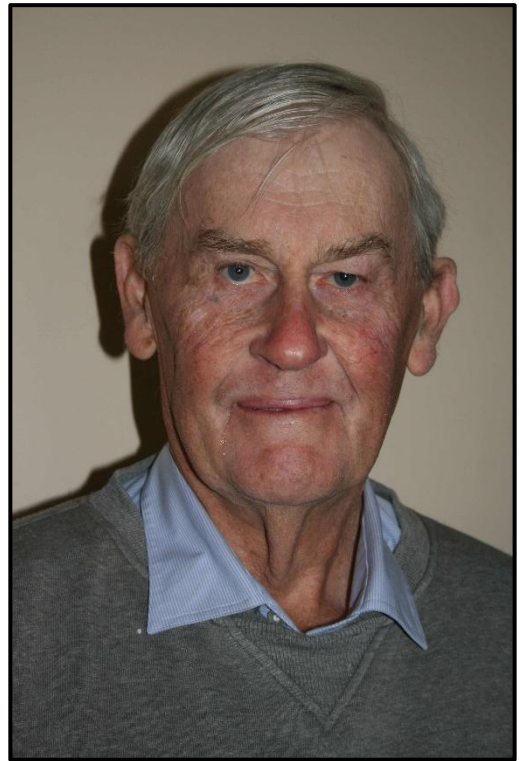


Kevin Webb

My dad was William Irvine Webb. He was born in 1898. Mum was Edna Albina Luther, one of the Luther girls from Edith. I'm their third child, born in 1946 at Oberon Hospital. Mum and Dad lived at a property at Edith called "Fairview", They were farmers and Dad was an older dad. He was 48 when I was born. He was actually a First World War veteran. My siblings are Margery Ada Webb, born in 1944, and Barry Irvine Webb born in 1941. We grew up at Edith and I think, looking back, we had a great life.

We had great parents, they worked hard at farming and a lot of changes have taken place since that time with machinery and everything. In those days it was all manual work and they had sheep, a few cattle and they grew peas as everybody did in those days. I started school at Edith and had a great time at school with Mr. Mitchell, our teacher. A good man, a good community man and a good teacher I always believed.



When I was a child I never drank milk - I guzzled it, morning, noon and night. Dad always had a milking cow and we had plenty of milk and I just loved it and I still do. I had to take my bottle of milk to school because we didn't have free milk. Mrs Mitchell saw that and she said to me one day, "If you'd like to bring the milk over to the school residence, I'll put it in the fridge for you." Which I did every morning from then on. And at lunchtime I would go and get it, which I thought looking back, was a very nice thing for her to do and I really appreciated it.

So at school we learnt the basics that they started us off with, and I remember the big charts in the school room with the sounds and everything. Looking back, I think Mr Mitchell did a very, very good job and he used to play with us at lunchtime. We played rounders a lot and he would be backstop. And I remember one day though somebody pitched the ball, hit him right in the face and broke his glasses. He didn't go off. It was one of those accidents that happened and he took it all in good faith. I look back very fondly on Mr and Mrs Mitchell. We used to have a concert every year at Christmas time. Every child had a part in a play or a performance of some sort. And that was always held in the old Edith Hall, which was actually the Catholic Church.

Dad grew peas, everybody grew peas and there were thousands of acres of peas grown in the Oberon district in those days. And it was one of the things that really got people going, because they had land but they were cash poor and they could make money, all going well, out of growing peas.

As kids we picked peas, and that was one thing Dad always did... if we picked peas, he paid us.

One of the things too that I remember in those days with pea farming and growing up was a business in Oberon, H A Cunynghame and Son. Dad and I dealt with them all our life until Ray sold out. The best business I've ever dealt with. They stood by the people if they didn't have the money to pay for seed and fertiliser and so forth, and you paid for it when the crop came off. And he did that for a lot of people.

We didn't travel a great deal in those days. I remember in June 1951, Dad bought a new Morris LC3 truck from the service station in the Main Street, a funny little shop that used to be there, a little service station. That was his first vehicle. All the roads were dirt in those days, every single road with the exception of a bit up the Main St, and the roads were horrendous. And to go to say even to Oberon you could see vehicles bogged in the road and trucks getting bogged. And to go to Bathurst – that was a big trip. The bitumen in Bathurst I remember being out nearly to Scots School. The rest was dirt.

Mum and Dad decided to sell (the property) in 1958, and moved to Grose Vale, and bought a dairy farm. That's when Lynne and I met. We were 11 years old and her family was just down the road from us, from where we bought and her parents invited us over to meet the new neighbours. And so we've known each other ever since we were 11.

I went to Richmond High School and did my intermediate certificate and two of the things I was always interested in was woodwork and metalwork. I wasn't an academic.

Dad's elder brother, Uncle Ern Webb, decided to sell Sydmouth Valley and he gave Dad the first offer. So in 1962 he bought it and we moved back to Sydmouth Valley. Uncle Ern lived in Sydmouth Valley along with his older brother, Uncle Alf Webb. They were both old bachelors.



Sydmouth Valley's been in the family since 1871 when my great grandmother Ann Webb bought it at a mortgagee sale for her youngest, Burnard Webb. Thomas married Mary McGowan Irvine. They raised nine children in Sydmouth Valley, as I said, and Dad was the 2nd youngest.

When we came there in 1962, the main part of the house hadn't really been lived in. The two old uncles lived in what was the original kitchen. It was very basic. And so we had to set about making the main house liveable. No kitchen, no bathroom, no laundry at all. That was one of our first jobs - to organise the old house. The old house was built in 1826.

We did a lot of work there, all of us, Barry and I and Margery helped. And of course we had to make a living farming, which we did and we did a lot of work on the house and made it very liveable.

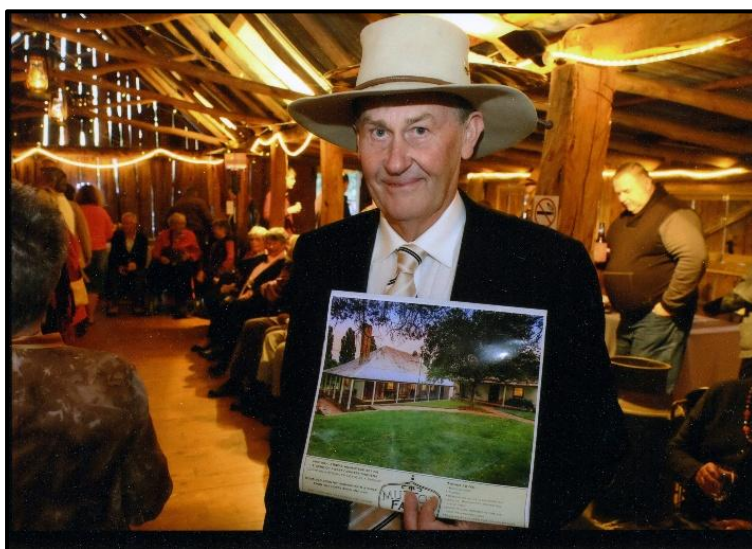
Dad died in 1967. He was only 69. With what he put up with I think he probably did pretty well, given that he'd been involved in trench warfare and injured in the First World War.

When Dad passed away I was running the place with my mother and then my brother Barry. He was always into electronics and electricity and when we first went there in 1962 an electrician Sid Bartlett came down to do some wiring for us. He saw all Barry's electrical stuff and gave him a job of fixing televisions,

We grew sheep and cattle, but not many peas, peas were nearly finished more or less in that time. We put in crops for feed and, yeah, that was basically it. We didn't have much equipment in those days and as the years went by, we bought better equipment to be able to put more crops in and so forth a lot quicker and easier.

From what I've been told the flats at Sydmouth Valley were a swamp originally known as Lowes Swamp after the original owner Robert Lowe. The creek just sort of ran in the top and oozed through and out the bottom. Dad told me that his father did some of the drainage with a single furrow plough, and they got the creek running. The flats now consist of deep black clay soils and are very productive. The soils are actually in demand for cricket pitches for various ovals in Sydney and we have sold a small amount for this purpose over the years.

Sydmouth Valley is one of the oldest homes West of Blue Mountains. It'll be 200 years old in 2026. There was quite a lot of work needed doing. We made what was a small bedroom into a kitchen. The back verandah was put on as an addition in the late 1890s by my grandparents. It was an open verandah to the west which let in the rain, so we made a bathroom in part of that, and built a laundry.



Rising damp was a problem on the western brick wall and in the cellar, so I had to insert a lead damp course into the wall 15 inches (425mm) deep and a deep drainage pipe to keep moisture out of the cellar. The interior walls also needed replastering with lime plaster.

Another thing we've started to do more recently is conducting tours of the house. A lot of people are interested in history and we conduct a tour and have morning or afternoon tea in the cellar, which is quite unique for a lot of people. We have got to meet some very interesting people.



Horses have always been a part of Sydmouth Valley and I learnt to ride from a young age. As I got a bit older I took up camp drafting and travelled around to a number of camp drafts, and I built a float from a truck in later times so we could cart the horses and camp. In 2000, I was lucky enough to get to a National final in Tamworth. It was the Encouragement Camp Draft and I had my ol' mate Ben and I actually won it.

(October, 2024)